

Perspectives on Wearing School Uniforms in Korea - Perceptions of Students, Parents, and Teachers -

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The tension between dressing for conformity or individuality is balanced differently based upon one's culture. Miller (1999) suggests that school uniforms present an insightful example of this tension. On a societal level school uniforms are an important topic, but there is evidence that culture is by no means the defining statement that it once was. According to Wickliffe (1999), contemporary Americans and Koreans are more similar than different regarding their consumption patterns, though historically Koreans have been more collective in nature with behavior focused upon the good of the group and Americans more focused upon the individual good.

Koreans have a long history of wearing uniforms throughout most of the 20th century, and for both middle school and high school. In the 1980s, they ceased wearing school uniforms altogether. A primary reason for giving them up was because they perceived that not wearing uniforms would allow for more student expression and individuality (Wickliffe, 1999). However, today the majority of Korean students in both middle and high school wear uniforms.

In the United States students in public schools do not like to wear uniforms. But stricter dress codes are being adopted in some schools because of the perception that uniforms provide a safer context within the school. The motivation for stricter codes is based upon the perception that some clothing worn to school may be distracting in an academic environment and may increase juvenile delinquency. Students in the United States are not used to the idea of wearing uniforms so implementation may present a problem (Holloman, 1995; Wilkins, 1999). Furthermore students may perceive that their individuality and freedom of expression are being curtailed in the process.

In a previous study three U.S. high schools in an urban area of the United States were assessed where uniform dress codes varied from restrictive, to flexible, to no required uniforms (Kim, DeLong, & LaBat, 2001). Students, teachers and parents were surveyed about their perceptions concerning students wearing uniforms. In general, teachers and parents were more positive about students wearing uniforms than were students. However students in schools with flexible dress codes and with a history of

wearing uniforms were more positive than were students with inflexible dress codes and no history of wearing uniforms. Such a study assists policy makers in understanding what factors need to be considered in making decisions about school dress codes and wearing uniforms.

The objective of this research was to examine the perceptions of students, teachers and parents concerning wearing school uniforms in South Korea. Using a similar procedure as in the U.S. study (Kim, DeLong, & LaBat, 2001), Korean high schools with varying dress code policies were identified. The following were the research questions: What are perceptions about wearing school uniforms based upon the type of uniform worn and the dress code policy? How do students' perceptions compare with their teachers' and parents' perceptions? The analysis summarizes current perceptions of school uniforms in South Korea and provides a sense of the influence of cultural traditions and globalization.

Scope of study.

The framework for the study considers three aspects from which meaning is derived: the form, context and viewer (DeLong, 1998). To perceive involves giving meaning to the form as the unit of focus. Interpretation requires the interplay of these three aspects.

The form itself affects interpretation of meaning and includes the particular arrangement of all parts of the uniform on the body. For example, the formality of a jacket and tie may be interpreted differently from more casual attire such as jeans and a sweater. Perceptions of the form may vary among students, parents, and teachers. A tailored jacket and a tie may represent a Korean school uniform to some parents, but not to students.

The context involves the school culture, time and event and the resulting values. Through similar experiences, individuals within cultures develop their own meanings of the physical form. The context incorporates the current time period in which globalization is occurring, with increased technology in mass communications. The context of school also affects the meaning of the form. For example, the uniform worn by students in school may be interpreted as a sign of belonging, especially if the uniform identifies the students, both with each other and with a particular school.

The viewer's past experiences play a part in interpretation. Adolescents, parents and teachers perform various roles that help mold their perceptions. Parents' and teachers' roles are authoritarian and help to enforce the 'web of informal control' that may be prevalent in Korean society. In this study, viewer perceptions were examined based upon varying the uniform. Viewer perceptions include viewpoints of Korean students, parents, and teachers towards wearing school uniforms. The context was six gender-based public high schools.

Literature Review

Uniforms in Korea

Korean students have a history of wearing uniforms. Uniforms were initially implemented as a result of the Japanese occupation in the early 20th century. However, in the 1980s Korea went through a liberalization process that included the elimination of the school uniform. Koreans have always preferred a somewhat formal appearance, even during the time when school uniforms were out of favor. Maintaining a neat and modest appearance is part of the Confucian tradition handed down from generation to generation (Geum & DeLong, 1992). Other social factors such as age and gender are assumed to influence Korean social judgments (Wickliffe, 1999). Traditional Korean society strictly defines gender roles as male and female. Male roles are characterized as stern and include leading the family, deciding issues about education, and economic planning. Female roles are characterized as nurturing, with duties such as managing the household and teaching the children about their roles in Korean society (Korean Overseas Information Services, 1993).

Koreans value education. The emphasis on education is rooted in Korean history that goes back as far as 372 A.D. with the development of Taehak, the first institute of higher education. The Confucian university, Sungkyunkwan, was founded in 1397 A.D. and still plays an important part in maintaining Confucian values and traditions. A Confucian value requires a disciplined personality emphasizing teaching and learning and a general disregard for material comfort. Education was originally developed to train men to be competent government officials. Eventually Korean parents knew that the way to a successful career was through education (Lavin, 1999). Today, education of children is considered the highest priority of parents. School pride is defined solely through academic achievement, rather than through activities such as sports. During the 1950s and 1960s exams were of great value because they stipulated school placement and the uniform signified the rankings among schools indicating academic levels. Attending school may occupy a major portion of a student's time, as many Korean high school students attend school through the evening.

In Confucian philosophy a "we" consciousness is valued, in direct contrast to an "I" consciousness. Decisions that are usually considered to be individual in the United States become family decisions in Korea (Rohner, & Pettengill, 1985). The individual in Korea is still viewed as a part of a more significant whole (Song, Smetana, & Kim, 1987). Overall, strong friendships develop among Korean high school students as a result of Confucianism (Lavin, 1999).

The consciousness of "we" helps to influence a Korean's use of language. The

words “I” and “you” are restricted. These are in accordance with status rules. “I” which indicates individualism is concealed when around the family. Before a person is an individual, the family and others around the person should be counted. Koreans therefore prefer to use the word “we.” Finally, Koreans are racially homogeneous, with a long and continuous tradition that may decrease an individual’s separation and conflicts among the entire population (Korean Overseas Information Services, 1993).

Thus Korea has a strong Confucian tradition with a homogenous population that may impact perceptions of school uniforms. A study by Tanioka (1989) of Japanese youths may apply to Korean society as well. He focused on the informal control system in Japanese society to explain why there are so few delinquent acts among Japanese youths. The informal web of social control is defined as any societal control that is not formal, such as laws. Family relationships are a source of strong informal control. Uniforms are a part of informal control as students are more identifiable in uniforms and they may prevent them from participating in a visible and public crime. The reason for the low crime rates among youths in Japan is a result of a strong informal control arising from the Confucian tradition, homogeneity of Japanese population and the system and practice of Justice.

The Influence of Globalization

Globalization may be defined in several ways. Globalization may be considered to result from the current technologies in mass communications. It has become more common to find changes occurring cross culturally. The internet has made perspectives of other cultures more available and this, along with other media, may be influencing this trend. The term, globalization also may be used to mean that a country is specifically emulating another culture (Peter, & Olson, 1999). For example, people may purchase blue jeans or drink cola because these products are symbolic of the United States. For some countries the United States symbolizes freedom and individuality (Felten, 1991).

The trend toward globalization is considered by some authors to result in a dilution of Korean tradition. Sometimes the Korean family is described as incorporating both Confucian and Western values. Two different cultures are described in the Korean family as existing side by side. There are some cross-cultural exchanges occurring, such as in social roles for women (Peter, & Olson, 1999). Korean women work outside the home more today and may take on a social role not considered as traditionally female. Women may participate in the “stern” roles once associated only with men.

Song, Smetana, and Kim, (1987) found that like American children, Korean children develop moral and social conventional orientations to their social world.

Moral convention was measured in terms of social transgression such as hitting, stealing, and not paying back borrowed money. Both Americans and Koreans found moral transgression to be wrong, independent of rules and cultural context. Like western cultures Korean children did not exhibit a unitary orientation to the world. The authors warn against using characteristics such as “individual” or “collective” in describing a culture. In the 1950s and 1960s Koreans respected their parents and teachers as role models. Individualism is perceived today as influencing students, with parents and teachers losing some of their respect and dignity.

Confucian philosophy contrasts with the American value of individualism and emphasis on freedom. From the perspective of the students, respect of parents and teachers is important. Rohner, & Pettengill (1985) discovered that strict parental control was perceived by adolescents in Korea as maternal control and parental warmth with high involvement and low neglect. In contrast, Americans tended to perceive strict parental control as hostile and with rejection. In a recent poll, 74.7 percent of Korean teachers thought that they should be allowed to discipline students using physical measures (“Majority of Parents,” 1999). Respect for authority is cited by Yook and Albert (1998) who demonstrated that Koreans are less likely to negotiate with their instructors at school. They had a more difficult time thinking about negotiation situations than their American counter parts. They also found negotiation inappropriate in more situations. Though Koreans today are not as authoritarian or as formal as previously, they still show respect for their teachers.

The conflict around the practice of corporal punishment illustrates global values challenging Korean tradition. In previous generations, it was common for teachers to use physical contact to control their students. Today, students are reported in the Korea Times to call emergency telephone numbers when a teacher gives a mild slap (Park, 1999). In one incident where a teacher disciplined a student, the student assaulted the teacher (“Student Assaults,” 1999). When polled today, more than 65% of Korean students said they endured physical punishment in the classroom (“Four of 1,000,” 1998). Korean schools have banned corporal punishment, but recently the Education Ministry has decided to partially lift the ban as a result of student misbehavior (“Ban on Corporal,” 1999).

Uniforms in the United States

There are several contextual reasons why American schools may struggle when implementing a dress code that includes school uniforms. Implementing uniforms in school is a new experience for most teenagers in the United States. Kim, DeLong, & LaBat, (2001) noted that an extended experience wearing uniforms resulted in more positive attitudes.

In general American students do not like to wear school uniforms which may be viewed as limiting individuality and too formal in a casual school environment. Kernike (2002) reported that the uniform craze of the 1990s is being abandoned by at least 50 schools in California alone, because of reported increases in discipline problems and the huge distraction created by attempts to uphold the rules. An American value affected by uniform adoption is individualism and freedom of expression. In classrooms, disruption is somehow perceived as the fault of students who do not do as they are told, leading to volatile situations.

Kohn (1996) believed schools should foster a sense of community. But individualism in the United States was promoted as students are given solitary work assignments, solitary homework assignments, followed by solitary tests. A student was therefore given a sense of responsibility for his or her own behavior and freedom to choose. In the study of perceptions about wearing school uniforms, students reported that individuality declined when they wore uniforms, which was counter to their experiences. Parents and teachers were less concerned about individuality of the students who wore uniforms and more concerned with benefits such as safety (Kim, DeLong, & LaBat, 2001). Related to the value of individuality is the freedom to choose and wearing a uniform inhibits the ability to freely choose what to wear on a given day (Peter, & Olson, 1999).

A pervasive trend in the United States is to dress casually (Peter, & Olson, 1999). Uniforms counter this trend by forcing students to be formally dressed. When asked, American students and teachers indicated a preference for casual dress (Kim, DeLong, & LaBat, 2001). Thus uniforms were more likely to be accepted when they were a part of a flexible dress code resulting in a casual appearance.

Methodology

Sample

Six high schools, three boys' schools and three girls' schools, were selected for this study. The sample included teachers, parents, and students from schools in the northwest area in Seoul, South Korea. All six schools were similar in urban location and social economic class. One boy's school and one girl's school with similar dress codes were selected as pairs. Each pair of schools was selected because they had a different uniform policy ranging from (1) a restrictive school uniform policy that required students to wear specific items of apparel; (2) a flexible school uniform policy, that allowed a choice for one garment in the uniform; and (3) no school uniform policy.

A total of 1360 completed questionnaires were collected for this study, including 549 students, 508 parents and 303 teachers. The majority of students were 11th graders, aged 16 to 17.

School Dress codes and uniform policies

The six schools chosen for this study had varying policies for wearing school uniforms. A boys' school (labeled B) and a girls' school (labeled G) were chosen for each type of uniform. Schools B-1 and G-1 have a restrictive school uniform policy requiring students to wear specific items of apparel. Schools B-2 and G-2 have a flexible school uniform policy based on the students' freedom to choose a part of the uniform. School G-2 students could choose either a two-piece or a jumper skirted uniform. These flexible uniform codes were not as flexible as the U.S. schools in the previous study (Kim, DeLong, & LaBat, 2001). The schools labeled B-3 and G-3 did not wear uniforms.

1. Schools B-1 and G-1: Restrictive school uniform policy/dress code

In B-1 and G-1 schools, students were required to wear specific jacket and slacks styles for boys and skirt styles for girls that changed according to the season. School B-1 students were required to wear a plaid vest, long sleeved beige shirt, and string tie with khaki slacks in the spring and fall. In the summer the students were required to wear short sleeved light khaki shirts. In the winter students were required to wear a khaki jacket with a china collar, plaid vest, a beige shirt, and string tie with khaki pants. There were no restrictions for shoes or socks. Students in the G-1 school were required to wear a navy blue vest and white blouse with a navy blue pleated skirt in the spring and fall. In the summer students were required to wear a navy blue pleated skirt. During the winter students were required to wear a navy blue pleated knee-length skirt with no restrictions on shoes except they could not be high heels. Stockings and socks complemented the seasons, with black stockings and socks required for spring, fall and winter, and white stockings and socks required for the summer.

2. Schools B-2 and G-2: Flexible school uniform policy/dress code

Schools B-2 and G-2 also varied according to season. The uniforms were considered flexible because students had a choice for part of the uniform. Students in School B-2 were required to wear a gray knit vest and a white shirt with gray slacks in the spring and fall. During the summer they were required to wear a pale blue short-sleeved shirt with gray slacks. During the winter the students were required to

wear a navy blazer, and a gray knit vest with a white shirt and gray slacks. The white shirt required during the spring, fall and winter could be varied. Students could choose among any type of white shirt including a polo shirt, a white turtleneck, and a white round T-shirt. Shoes and socks or stockings were not restricted except students could not wear boots.

School G-2 required, during the spring and fall, either a navy blue wool cardigan with a plaid vest and a white blouse or a plaid jumper skirt and a white blouse. Skirts were either blue or green plaid pleated skirts. During the summer students were required to wear short-sleeved blouses and a blue or green plaid pleated skirt. During the winter students had the choice of a navy blue wool blazer with a plaid vest and a white blouse or a plaid jumper with a skirt and white blouse. The pleated skirt was blue or green plaid fabric. Shoes were not restricted, except students could not wear high heels. Socks and stockings were appropriate to each season. During the spring, fall, and winter, students were required to wear black stockings or socks and during the summer they were required to wear white stockings or socks.

3. School B-3 and G-3: No uniform/dress code

Students in Schools B-3 and G-3 were expected to dress appropriately in school, but with no stipulated types of clothing for uniforms. Appearance was considered primarily the responsibility of students and parents and thus the dress code was flexible.

Instruments: Questionnaires on perceptions towards wearing school uniforms.

For this study, three different questionnaires were developed based on viewer perceptions. Each one was for teachers, parents, and students. These questionnaires were used for the study of Kim, DeLong, and LaBat (2001). The questions were adopted from the studies of Shere (1995), and Woods and Olgetree (1992). The questions written in English were translated into Korean for this study. Most of the questions were designed to be answered using a numeric rating scale from one to five, with 1 representing strongly disagree and 5 representing strongly agree. The first 14 questions were the same for all respondent categories, and the remaining questions were developed to address different concerns of students, parents, and teachers about wearing school uniforms. Some question words were modified slightly to make them more equivalent for each school.

Data Analysis and Results

Statistical procedure

Data were treated with one-way analysis of variance conducted to investigate if students, parents, and teachers differed significantly in perceptions of wearing school uniforms. Tukey HSD test was used to perform multiple comparisons between group means. Also the t-test was used to investigate if there was a significant difference between students' satisfaction with a restrictive dress code and students' satisfaction with a flexible dress code. Open-ended questions were summarized into categories related to student's preferences about school clothing as it was done for the study of Kim, DeLong, and LaBat (2001).

Perceptions of teachers, parents, and students toward wearing school uniforms

Comparisons by perceivers: teachers, parents, and students

For this comparison, the following hypothesis was tested: the perception toward wearing school uniforms does not significantly differ among teachers, parents, and students.

The first 14 items are the same on all of the teacher, parent, and student questionnaires. Table 1 presents the means and standard deviations of each item by each of the three subject groups and the results of the one-way analysis of variance. Note that questions were slightly rephrased (as in the parentheses) for the schools not wearing uniforms.

Of the first fourteen questions asked of all three groups seven showed significant differences in means among students, teachers, and parents. Five questions showed significant differences in the means between the student and teacher groups, and student and parent groups. One question showed significant differences between parents versus teachers and students.

Responses to three questions: #1 Sometimes students are ridiculed by peers about the type of clothes they wear, #2 Peer pressure regarding fashions among students declines due to wearing of uniforms, and #3 A uniform dress code helps to eliminate some of the competition over clothes students wear, address peer pressure and competition while wearing a uniform. Students did not agree that uniforms helped eliminate peer pressure. Teachers responded that uniforms helped eliminate peer pressure and the parent opinions ranged in between students and teachers.

Questions 4, 5, and 6 were as follows: # 4 school climate and environment do

not (would not) improve when students wear uniforms, # 5 students behavior improves (would improve) when they wear uniforms, and # 6 students have (would have) a positive self-image when (if) they wear uniforms. Students generally responded that school uniforms did not help to improve environment or behavior. Teachers were more likely to disagree with students; however parents also disagreed with students. All three groups, teachers, parents, and students showed positive response to the improvement of the sense of belonging to a school due to wearing school uniforms (Question # 7). The reasons for the connection to a sense of belonging could reflect the culture's still pervasive "we."

Question # 8 addressed pride, a student's pride in their school improves (would improve) when they wear uniforms. Teachers and parents responded positively more than did students. This could be a result of the long history of wearing school uniforms in Korea and Korean adults were used to perceiving a school reputation as related to school uniform. However, with equalization of schools in terms of academic level and administration system, students did not believe that school pride would be improved because of wearing school uniforms.

Question # 9 stated, student individuality declines (would decline) when they wear uniforms, and in Question #10, wearing uniforms restricts (would restrict) freedom of expression in school. Parents believed individuality did not decline when wearing uniforms. Korean students were more concerned with losing their individuality than parents and teachers. Students responded that individuality declined while wearing uniforms. Question 11 stated, wearing uniforms helps (would help) students in learning that style of dress does not make a person. This statement was supported by teachers and parents, but not so much by students. Younger generations may be more influenced by American values. This contradicts results about belonging in Question # 7.

Perceptions on money differed among parents, teachers, and students. When given the statement, the amount of money families spend on purchasing student clothing declines (would decline) when students wear uniforms, parents and teachers agreed that wearing school uniforms might help decrease the family budget for school clothing. The mean score of students was close to neutral. Students may not consider the cost for school clothing as much as do parents and teachers.

Question # 13 stated, wearing uniforms provided a degree of safety against gang presence in school. Teachers were most concerned about safety against a gang presence. Teachers may feel more obligated to protect students from gang violence.

Question # 14 related clothing to economic differences: wearing uniforms makes economic class difference less visible. Students disagreed with the statement the most which may mean that they think clothing or appearance is not the only way to show their economic differences. Teachers agreed with the statement more than the parents did.

To summarize, in this study Korean teachers and parents, had a more positive attitude toward students wearing uniforms than did students. Teachers were just as positive about uniforms and often times more positive than parents were about school uniform wear. The majority of students indicated a more negative response to wearing uniforms. Teachers could feel more responsible for students' welfare in school because education is valued highly in Korean culture and students spend so much time there. As a result, the hypothesis for each question, the perception toward wearing school uniforms does not significantly differ among teachers, parents, and students, was rejected except for the question # 7. The hypothesis for the question # 7 was accepted.

Table 1. One-way ANOVA: Comparison of teachers, parents, and students

n	Subject			Total 1360	F
	Teacher 303	Parent 508	Student 549		
1. Sometimes students are ridiculed by peers about the type of clothes they wear. (Sometimes students are ridiculed by peers about the type of clothes they wear.)					
M	2.86 ab	2.56 ab	2.21 ab	2.45	48.42***
SD	1.09	1.10	1.11	1.14	
2. Peer pressure regarding fashions among students declines due to the wearing of uniforms. (Peer pressure regarding fashions among students would decline if students wore uniforms)					
M	3.56 ab	3.29 ab	2.97 ab	3.22	30.82***
SD	1.05	1.09	1.09	1.10	
3. A uniform dress code helps to eliminate some of the competition over clothes students wear. (A uniform dress code would help to eliminate some of the competition over clothes students wear.)					
M	4.03 ab	3.69 ab	2.91 ab	3.45	157.31***
SD	.87	.90	1.07	1.07	
4. School climate and environment do not improve when students wear uniforms. (School climate and environment would not improve when students wore uniforms.)					
M	2.52 ab	2.76 ab	3.22 ab	2.89	46.60***
SD	1.05	1.03	1.14	1.12	
5. Students' behavior improves when they wear uniforms. (Students' behavior would improve when they wore uniforms.)					
M	3.50 a	3.39 b	2.57 ab	3.09	108.20***
SD	1.06	1.02	1.11	1.14	
6. Students have a positive self-image when students wear uniforms. (Students would have a positive self-image when students wore uniforms.)					
M	3.20 a	3.22 b	2.83 ab	3.06	22.39***
SD	1.00	1.04	1.05	1.05	
7. The sense of belonging to a school increases when students wear uniforms. (The sense of belonging to a school would increase if students wore uniforms.)					
M	3.78	3.73	3.64	3.70	2.22
SD	.96	.90	1.09	1.00	
8. A student's pride in their school improves when they wear uniforms. (A student's pride in their school would improve if they wore uniforms.)					
M	3.34 a	3.31 b	2.91 ab	3.16	21.97***
SD	1.06	1.04	1.25	1.15	

9. Student individuality declines when they wear uniforms. (Student individuality would decline when they wore uniforms.)					
M	3.05 a	2.78 ab	3.08 b	2.96	11.80***
SD	1.10	1.08	1.07	1.09	
10. Wearing uniforms restrict freedom of expression in school. (Wearing uniforms would restrict freedom of expression in school)					
M	2.60 ab	2.84 ab	3.22 ab	2.94	32.70***
SD	1.16	1.06	1.16	1.15	
11. Wearing uniforms helps children in learning that style of dress does not make the person. (Wearing uniforms would help children in learning that style of dress does not make the person.)					
M	3.16 a	3.22 b	2.90 ab	3.08	16.36***
SD	.89	.95	.98	.96	
12. The amount of money families spend on purchasing student clothing declines when students wear uniforms. (The amount of money families spend on purchasing student clothing would decline when students wore uniforms.)					
M	3.76 a	3.63 b	3.19 ab	3.48	32.47***
SD	1.07	1.08	1.20	1.15	
13. Wearing uniforms provides a degree of safety against gang presence in school. (Wearing uniforms would provide a degree of safety against gang presence in school.)					
M	3.61 ab	3.33 ab	2.45 ab	3.03	138.20***
SD	.98	1.11	1.15	1.20	
14. Wearing uniforms makes economic class difference less visible. (Wearing uniforms would make economic class difference less visible.)					
M	4.03 ab	3.79 ab	3.48 ab	3.72	32.00***
SD	.83	1.02	1.02	1.00	

Note:

1. Questions are slightly rephrased (in parentheses) for School B-3 & G-3.
2. All variables are based on five-point scale: (1) "Strongly disagree" to (5) "Strongly agree"
3. M(mean), SD(standard deviation), & n(numbers in a sample)
4. The same superscripts(e.g. , a a or b b) indicate a significant difference between the two groups as tested by Tukey HSD test.

*p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001

Comparison of students' perceptions toward wearing uniforms by school

For this comparison, the following two hypotheses were tested: (1) the students' perceptions toward wearing uniforms were not significantly different among the three boys' schools; (2) the students' perceptions toward wearing uniforms were not significantly different among the three girls' schools.

Students were asked eleven questions about wearing or not wearing school uniforms and open ended questions about their school attire preferences and the amount of time they wore uniforms. Table 2 presents the means and standard deviations of each item by each of the three subject groups and the results of the one-way analysis of variance. Again note that questions were slightly rephrased (shown in parentheses) for students at the school not wearing uniforms.

In regard to the look of the school uniform, students from the boys and girls schools answered questions in a similar way. Question # 16, I am satisfied with design and colors of my school uniform, was given to students who wore uniforms. For those who did not wear uniforms they were given the statement, I think our school should adopt a school uniform. Of the uniform policy schools, the flexible groups were not as enthusiastic about the design and color of their school uniform. The G-2 uniform was typical of a school uniform with a plaid skirt and a jacket. Results from Question # 18 supported this finding: my school uniform doesn't reflect current fashions. The B-2 and the G-2 schools both agreed with the statement more than did the other two schools.

There were no significant differences between students at different schools concerning the fit of school uniforms (Question # 17). There were no significant differences in opinion about fit among both the B-1, G-1 and B-2, G-2 schools, and those that did not wear uniforms. Alterations were available for students; therefore they may be satisfied with the fit of their uniforms even though they were more structured. Question # 19, my school uniform is difficult to care for, was not supported in the girl's school by those wearing the flexible uniform (G-2). Regarding Question #20, the G-2 uniform included a wool blazer and cardigan that may have helped them adjust to temperature changes. Those not wearing uniforms supported the statement, if they wore uniforms they would not adjust well to temperatures. The answers were similar among the boys' schools.

In Question # 21, my school uniform doesn't enhance prominent physical characteristics, the uniform policy schools, both the boys and girls agreed with this statement more than the non- uniform policy group. The G-3 and B-3 schools favored uniforms, supporting the idea that uniforms enhance physical characteristics. Results from Question # 25, I am satisfied with my school uniform, all of the students wearing uniforms were satisfied with their clothing and did not resist wearing uniforms.

When asked what they would prefer to wear to school, e.g., a formal uniform, a flexible uniform, or casual wear, about above 50% of girls and boys in all preferred a formal uniform. Less than 50% of students was divided into two categories, such as a flexible uniform and casual wear.

The G-3 students who did not have a uniform policy and B-2 students having a flexible uniform policy preferred the formal school uniform. The students of G-3 responded that the look of a formal uniform was very neat and feminine. The students of B-2 showed their preferences about a formal uniform with a more masculine look, such as the uniform of the B-1 school. Many students responded that nice looking of uniforms was related to masculine look.

When asked why they preferred wearing a type of uniform, the students said the formal uniform was easy to select. The majority of boys who preferred casual wear

emphasized the importance of comfort for school clothing (Figure 1). About 80% of girls who preferred a formal uniform emphasized the feminine look of the formal school uniform (Figure 2). The students were then asked what they preferred for daily wear in school, if a school uniform was optional. The girls preferred the school uniform policy. The students of B-3 non-uniform policy, also supported a school uniform policy. The students were asked about the number of years they had worn uniforms. The majority of the students have worn school uniforms at least one year. The students showed equal preferences for a restrictive uniform, a flexible uniform, and casual clothing.

In summary, despite thinking that uniforms restricted individuality as indicated in the first fourteen questions, this set of questions indicated that students would prefer to wear a more formal uniform. Fit and comfort of uniforms were not perceived as a problem for students and the amount of time they wore the uniform did not influence perceptions of wearing uniforms. As a result, the hypotheses for questions, #16, #18, #20, and #21 were rejected for both boys and girls. And also, the hypothesis for the question # 19 was rejected only for girls.

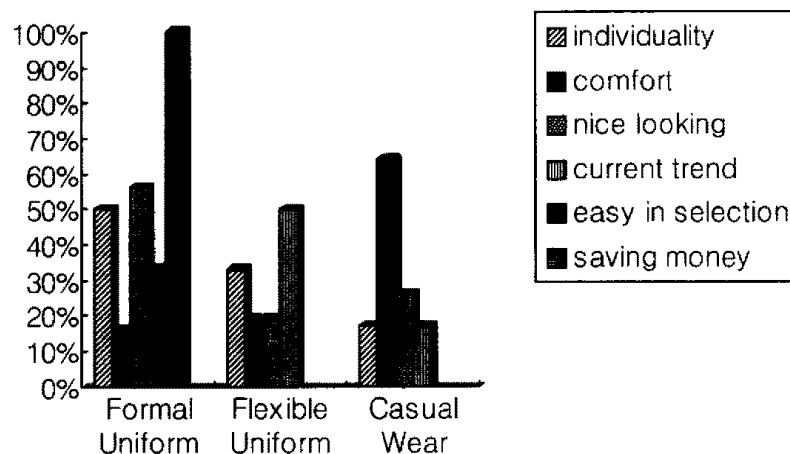


Fig. 1. Preference Reasons for boys

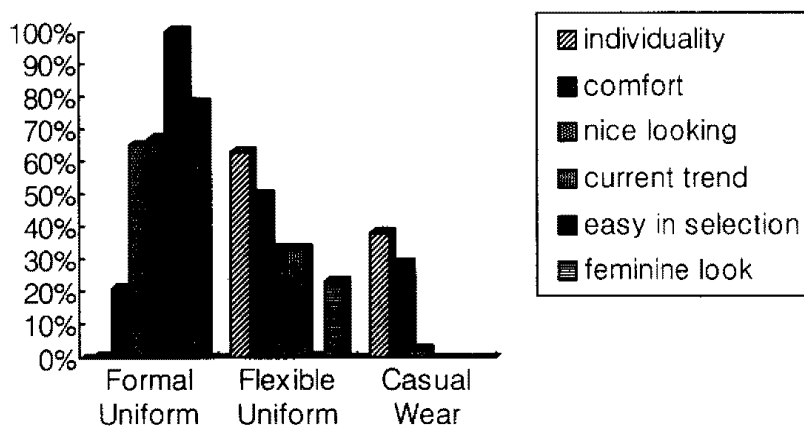


Fig. 2. Preference Reasons for girls

Table 2: One-way ANOVA for students' perception toward uniforms
Boys' School Comparison

	School			Total	F
	B-1 (Restrictive)	B-2 (Flexible)	B-3 (Non-uniform)		
n	85	91	93	269	
15. Wearing uniforms helps to make appearances inoffensive. (Wearing uniforms would help to make appearances inoffensive)					
M	2.79	2.69	2.92	2.80	1.10
SD	1.09	.96	1.14	1.07	
16. I am satisfied with the design and colors of my school uniform. (I think our school should wear a school uniform.)					
M	2.76 a	2.05 ab	3.16 b	2.66	17.47***
SD	1.35	1.03	1.44	1.36	
17. My school uniform inhibits movement because of its poor fit. (A school uniform would inhibit movement because of its poor fit.)					
M	2.96	2.79	3.08	2.94	1.95
SD	1.01	.71	1.17	.99	
18. My school uniform doesn't reflect current fashions. (A school uniform would not reflect current fashions.)					
M	3.33	3.71 a	3.17 a	3.41	5.19**
SD	1.21	1.13	1.18	1.19	
19. My school uniform is difficult to care for. (A school uniform would be difficult to care for.)					
M	3.15	3.00	3.08	3.07	.52
SD	1.03	.76	1.16	1.00	
20. My school uniform doesn't adapt well to temperature changes. (A school uniform would not adapt well to temperature changes.)					
M	3.00 ab	3.46 a	3.43 b	3.30	4.95**
SD	1.19	.97	1.09	1.10	
21. My school uniform doesn't enhance prominent physical characteristics. (A school uniform would not enhance prominent physical characteristics.)					
M	3.42 a	3.47 b	3.05 ab	3.31	5.19**
SD	1.00	.72	1.12	.98	
22. The repetition of wearing school uniforms day after day becomes tedious. (The repetition of wearing school uniforms day after day would become tedious.)					
M	3.36	3.11	3.22	3.23	.86
SD	1.30	1.30	1.27	1.29	
23. I often wear my school uniform outside of school. (If I wore a uniform, I would often wear my school uniform outside of school.)					
M	2.24	2.16	2.23	2.21	.08
SD	1.31	1.27	1.23	1.26	
24. I think that regular clothing is more comfortable out of school.					
M	4.27	4.08	3.96	4.10	2.17
SD	.89	.91	1.19	1.01	

Girls' School Comparison

n	School			Total	F
	G-1 (Restrictive)	G-2 (Flexible)	G-3 (Non-uniform)		
	95	85	100	280	
15. Wearing uniforms helps to make appearances inoffensive. (Wearing uniforms would help to make appearances inoffensive.)					
M	2.93	3.31	3.04	3.03	.89
SD	1.03	1.00	1.04	1.03	
16. I am satisfied with the design and colors of my school uniform. (I think our school should wear a school uniform.)					
M	3.74 a	3.22 a	3.55	3.51	4.63*
SD	1.00	1.12	1.27	1.15	
17. My school uniform inhibits movement because of its poor fit. (A school uniform would inhibit movement because of its poor fit.)					
M	2.41	2.51	2.66	2.53	1.72
SD	.93	.88	1.02	.95	
18. My school uniform doesn't reflect current fashions. (A school uniform would not reflect current fashions.)					
M	3.09	3.25 a	2.83 a	3.05	4.12*
SD	.98	.80	1.17	1.02	
19. My school uniform is difficult to care for. (A school uniform would be difficult to care for.)					
M	2.51 a	2.94 ab	2.59 b	2.67	5.03**
SD	.84	1.00	1.05	.98	
20. My school uniform doesn't adapt well to temperature changes. (A school uniform would not adapt well to temperature changes.)					
M	3.22 a	2.66 ab	3.39 b	3.11	13.15***
SD	.94	.88	1.14	1.04	
21. My school uniform doesn't enhance prominent physical characteristics. (A school uniform would not enhance prominent physical characteristics.)					
M	3.21 a	3.11	2.88 a	3.06	3.38*
SD	.96	.83	.92	.92	
22. The repetition of wearing school uniforms day after day becomes tedious. (The repetition of wearing school uniforms day after day would become tedious.)					
M	2.54	2.55	2.71	2.60	.67
SD	1.09	1.09	1.25	1.15	
23. I often wear my school uniform outside of school. (If I wore a uniform, I would often wear my school uniform outside of school.)					
M	2.85	2.68	2.73	2.76	.44
SD	1.25	1.22	1.32	1.26	
24. I think that regular clothing is more comfortable out of school.					
M	3.75	3.51	3.73	3.67	1.50
SD	1.04	1.00	1.06	1.04	

Note:

1. Questions are slightly rephrased (in parentheses) for School B-3 & G-3.
 2. All variables are based on five-point scale: (1) "Strongly disagree" to (5) "Strongly agree"
 3. M(mean), SD(standard deviation), & n(numbers in a sample)
 4. The same superscripts(e.g. , a a or b b) indicate a significant difference between the two groups as tested by Tukey HSD test.
- *p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001

Conclusions and Implications

Uniforms were studied in Korea using the framework of form, viewer, and context. The form was varied from restrictive, flexible, to no uniform within the school context in Korea. The viewers were students, parents, and teachers and their responses to a series of questions formed the basis of comparison of their perceptions.

Results revealed the influence of the Korean cultural context and viewers' perceptions related to students, teachers and parents. For example, students expressed a desire for individualism but then indicated a desire to adopt the school uniform. Gender differences were apparent among the perceptions of school uniforms reflecting the traditional perception of gender in Korean society. Especially female students indicated preferences for clothing stereotypical to their gender. Both male and female students more preferred formal uniforms than uniforms of flexible dress codes or casual wears. That major reason that it was easy to select what to wear every in the morning. Other than that, in case of females students, feminine look was considered as another significant point rather than comfort or individuality. The value of traditional Korean female role might be reflected on their appearance, such as what they want to be looked like. Boys preferred nice looking related to masculine look. In addition students said they preferred a clean and neat appearance.

This study indicated the strong influence that cultural context had on perceptions of school uniforms. Students supported wearing uniforms and at times preferred uniforms for reasons that can be linked to gender role cultivated by Korean cultural values. Thus results demonstrated evidence of some ambivalence towards traditional Korean Confucianism and globalization.

Results can be applied to other cultures as they begin to implement uniforms, but only if cultural context is considered. For example, the underlying values of the United States may contradict the idea of a school uniform and may require thoughtful adaptation to be successful. Unlike Korea, students in the United States preferred casual clothing, individualism, and freedom of expression that deterred their appreciation of wearing uniforms (Kim, DeLong, & LaBat, 2001). Alternative solutions may cater to individual values by allowing students to choose among a wider variety of school uniforms. Students could differentiate themselves by altering a portion of their uniform. There are other more specific interpretations from this study that could be applied. For example, in a previous and similar study, American students reported their uniforms did not fit well (Kim, DeLong, & LaBat, 2001). In Korea access to alterations has eliminated such fitting problems and such a solution has merit when applied within another culture.

Further studies should explore the notion of wearing school uniforms within the

context of cultural values and whether the uniform could be associated with promoting acceptable student behavior in the classroom. The school uniform needs to be considered not just as a panacea for larger social and behavioral problems, nor without regard for the cultural context and the viewer.

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