

WORKPLACES DRESS CODE: EFFECT AND IMPORTANT

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Abstract: Nowadays, a formal workplace dress code is no longer implemented by many organizations. The employees are being encouraged to dress comfortably as it is believed that this will enhance the performance and productivity. There is quick a number of issues occur even the organization has established a dress code policy for their employee as the dress code was constructing using ambiguous terms like “acceptable”, “professional” without outlining a precise policy. The objective of the study is to discuss why dress code is important in the workplace as well as the positive effect and negative effect of workplace dress code towards an organization. To highlight, this study discussed several factors that make dress code important in the workplace such as ensure pride and responsibility, prioritizes safety and create a great first impression. Moreover, the second part explained and justified the positive effects of workplace dress code like enable employees to save more money, reduces social conflict and pressure, enhances the image of an organization and equality and professionalism as well as the negative effects like kills down creativity, arises discomfort for some employee, outdated concept and dress codes are anachronism. The researcher discussed on the best company which has dress code policy as benchmark which are Amazon and Walmart. Hence, this research suggested through meet with the employees privately and send out reminders when necessary could help to eliminate dress code issue in the workplace.

Keywords: Workplace dress code, important, effect

Introduction

According to Tatum (2022), dress codes are defined as the guidelines that indicate exactly which attire is and isn't acceptable for a certain occasion or event. However, workplace dress code consists of a set of regulations constructed by the organisations in order to ensure that their employees acknowledge about what is the permissible attire to wear to the workplace (Heathfield, 2019). In addition, the set of regulations that constructed by an organisations regarding the proper attire at the workplace is also known as a dress code policy (Indeed Editorial Team, 2021). Dress code policy will establish a standard for the image that the

organization intends to project and specifies the appropriate workplace attire for the employee. By having a set of clear dress code policy, employees could get to know exactly what attire that the organizations consider as suitable and acceptable to be wear at the workplace.

Workplace dress code is very important for an organization as the way the employee present themselves will reflects their professionalism and personal style. The way the employee of an organization dress matters since the employee will only get one chance to make a good impression. First impressions have a big impact on how the employee will be perceived in the future if you encounter the same person again. The image and reputation of the company is fundamentally influenced by the dress code of their employees. In order for the organizations to make sure that their employees represent the business well in some major events as well as while dealing with customers and clients, organizations might construct a well-established dress code policy. The key to success is adhering to dress regulations, especially for business. Moreover, dress code is extremely vital in organizations that entail direct contact with customers. The degree of interactions between the employees with the customers at the workplace while performing their duties will also typically dictates how professional or formal the dress code at the workplace should be.

Organization has established several types of dress code that fall under the various dress standards. According to Holmgren (2021), there are four standard dress code guidelines that various organizations may consider when constructing the dress code policy for their company. The four standard dress code are business formal, business professional, business casual, and casual. Firstly, business formal apparel is more likely to be use by conventional industrial sectors that usually involve with several high-level meetings. The standard attire for business formal is a fitted suit or a skirt and blazer with a white shirt. Normally, the fitted suit will come in colors like black, grey, navy, or other similar colors. Secondly, business professional apparel is still seemed to be formal but a little more relaxed compared to business formal. For business professional apparel, the employee can opt to wear elegant dress pants with a blazer instead of a full suit. This type of dress code provides the employees with more choice in term of the colors of their shirts, blouses, as well as ties. Moreover, it also opens up the door for accessories or jewelry to be worn. Thirdly, business casual apparel is normally referring to the dress code where a shirt will be worn with classy trousers. Casual dresses or blouses without collars are typically welcomed in this type of dress code. However, the employee should avoid wearing garish patterns or overt statements because the employer may forbid them in its rules. Lastly, casual apparel is the most laid-back type of dress code among the four standard dress code, and it is normally implemented by those creative industries.

When constructing dress code policy, it is critical for the employers to consider about any applicable industry laws and safety guidelines that have an impact on how employees should dress and present themselves in the workplace. For instance, some of the organizations like law firm and accounting firm might have strict dress code policy where the employees are only allowed to wear business formal or professional attire at the workplace, a uniform for the flight attendants, and casual or business casual attire for employees who work in a creative work environment. Appropriate clothing is playing crucial role in every workplace as an appearance of professionalism and presentability is created by appropriate attire. Being professional is crucial in any employment. Hence, what you decided to wear to the workplace must be appropriate with the workplace. It is important to dress appropriately especially when working in a professional context like a school.

Dress code is an important aspect that is closely related to the issue of employee safety and health. The safety and health of employees at work is an important aspect for an organization that aims to protect the safety, health and welfare of employees. It is a heavy responsibility that needs to be borne by an organization which is enshrined under the Occupational Safety and Health Act 1994 (AKPP 1994). It is intended to protect workers from being involved in unwanted things such as injuries, health disorders and more serious loss of life while at work. The National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) defines occupational safety as a work environment that is free from the danger of accidents not only for the people who work but also for the general public that will affect the work activities carried out.

Accident issues that occur are often linked to risky job sectors such as the manufacturing sector which contributes a lot to the occurrence of accidents. According to statistics released by the Occupational Safety and Health Department (2023), a total of 34,216 workplace accident cases were investigated until the end of 2022. The manufacturing sector recorded the highest number of cases compared to other employment sectors. Therefore, awareness of safety and health at the workplace such as using PPE contained in the employee dress code rules should be taken seriously by employees and employers alike in ensuring the lack of risk that could result in accidents at the workplace (Bakar et al., 2018).

Therefore, this concept paper will discuss why dress code is important in the workplace as well as the positive effect and negative effect of workplace dress code towards an organization. Moreover, this study will identify several factors that make dress code important in the workplace such as ensure pride and responsibility, prioritizes safety and create a great first impression based on the literature review.

Discussion

Importance of dress code in workplace

As the old saying goes, “don’t judge a book by its cover”, even though we have always been taught not to “judge a book by its cover” but it is actually a part of the human nature to do so. Humans are prone to make judgments and are fast to form an opinion based on their observation (Entwistle, 2020). Often, a person’s appearance is the very first thing a person notice about other. Putting on a good appearance will create a positive first impression on the employees. In commercial and professional encounters, a positive first impression may take a person to go for a long way (Hebert, 2022). Not only the way you speak or communicate with employees or employers is taken into account, but a neat personal appearance will also be seen and evaluated by employers and other employees in your company. When you wear neat, clean and beautiful clothes it will give a good impression of your appearance (Wardhana & Harsono, 2020). In addition, your appearance also reflects your personality whether you are a stylish person, following the current fashion or not. Moreover, it is crucial to have a good appearance particularly when attending an interviews and meetings with top executives who decide on recruitment and promotion. The long-term thoughts of a person on others can be influenced by the initial impressions. Therefore, dressing professionally and neatly according to the dress code established by the company will make the employees to appear in a smart and professional look. Even while there are various ways for this to show up in appearance, especially from organization to organization, however, dressing to appear the best in the professional field might open up new doors for the employees.

Established a workplace dress code may provide a safe dress sense even if professional attire or equipment is not required (Sapbamrer & Thammachai, 2020). There are some of the industries that have been establish a dress code guideline which mandate their employees to wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and protective clothing in their workplace for safety reason. According to Adtrak (2018), protective clothing is crucial in the workplace because it protects employee from potential health and safety hazards. PPE makes sure that everyone is work safely and productively in an environment by reducing the chance of accidents, illnesses, and legal problems. Safety boots, safety glasses, hard hats, and particular work attire are examples of safety equipment of PPE. However, it depends on the kind of job conducted by the organization and the type of work activities that need to be protected. Any industry where there is a possibility of being exposed to hazardous conditions such as loud noises, dust, fumes, heavy objects and falling debris should invest in the list of protective clothing (Garrigou et al., 2020). For instance, a protective clothing in the hospitality sector can be an embroider apron with a nameplate or badge to identify which doors and premises that the employees are accessible. Established a formal dress code can make it simpler and safer for everyone to distinguish employees from clients when performing door security services.

The sense of accomplishment, accountability, and the organization image will be reduced if every employee is dressed professionally, for example in a well-fitting suit, and that only one person in the organization is dressed improperly (Wardhana & Harsono, 2020). It is important for an organization to establish a workplace dress code in order to foster dignity and accountability among the employees. By established a clear dress code policy, employees will be aware that they are the representatives for the organization, and they will happily follow the dress code policy and dress appropriately at the workplace. Employees will be feeling proud and inspired to work as a team if they are dressed professionally at the workplace and this will help increase productivity. Moreover, establishing a dress code policy at the workplace will also encourages a stronger sense of pride in the employees as it could help to develop a sense of belonging. To give an example, consider a sports team and how belonging to that team produces similar emotions. In addition, dress guidelines according to religion are very relevant to employees in order to protect the welfare and dignity of women (Azam et al., 2019). This can reduce unwanted cases such as molestation due to the clothes worn can bring lust for men due to not covering the aurat perfectly.

Positive effects and negative effects of workplace dress code

According to Corporate Vision (2021), dressing up appropriate workplace dress code for the working days tends to be a process that is stressful and costly. The workplace attire can indeed be costly even though the employees do not even prefer or choose to buy those high-end brands that are pricey. Since the trend for dress code is continuously changing, it is not surprising that people who must go to work and interact with the others on a daily basis feel pressure to stay up. “Dress approximately” at the workplace could be confused with “being fashionable” and “keeping up with the current trends”, if there is organization does not establish any dress code. This isn’t necessarily a terrible thing because, to put it mildly, it might give your workplace a more contemporary appearance (Entwistle, 2020). However, it will reduce the income of the employees as they may spend a significant portion of their wage on new clothing each month in an effort to appear attractive and keep up with the latest trends. There is not necessary for the employee to purchase new attire for the sake of avoiding wearing the same dress to work. Instead of concentrating on how well their attire matches, employees should be more concentrating on their productivity. Hence, it is preferable for the organization to establish a dress code at work so that such problems can be avoided.

It is common for conflicts to happen among employees at any workplace (Tom, 2019). Conflict may begin as a straightforward dispute but frequently turn into heated arguments that hinder teamwork. This typically is a result of the reality that everyone in your company is completely different. Each of them has their own culture, routines and religious convictions, dress sense, and even social standing (Rahman, 2019). Although none of these are within control, yet social conflict and peer pressure that causes by apparel. In addition, some employees may wind up pressuring themselves on buying new attire to keep up with their stylish coworkers, which related to the spending problem mentioned in the preceding section. For instance, staff members might discuss the current or up-and-coming fashion trends while on breaks. Employee who lacks financial resources to purchase a specific item of clothes or accessories may feel excluded or self-conscious. Employers need to be aware that disgruntled workers might cause a reduction in productivity, which in turn decreases sales. It is believed that social conflict and pressure could be reduce when everyone needs to wear the same attire at the workplace. Hence, setting boundaries at work by established a dress code policy can assist in resolving this issue.

According to Bechervaise (2018), the reason why most of the organization choose to established a dress code policy is because standardizing the workplace dress code may improve employee engagement, boost brand recognition, and boost revenue. It is important for organization to present an appealing image in order to stand out from the competitors. This entails leaving a great, professional first impression on their potential customer in order to attract and keep new clients. Establishing workplace dress code policy is one of the best options that the employers can chose to enhance the image and reputation of the brand (Entwistle, 2020). No one should be exempt from following the dress code policy, including the higher management of the organization. Employers need to keep in mind that every employee serves as a spokesperson for the whole organization where their appearance will always affect the image of the organization. On the other hand, when the attire of an employee is distracting, it might have an impact on the organization's meeting as it is possible for ladies to be wearing clothing that is too exposing or too casual for the setting of the organization (Azam et al., 2019). Therefore, workplace dress code should establish an equitable playing field to prevent such kinds of scenarios. To ensure that all the employees in the organization is on the same page, everyone must adhere to the dress code policy that have been put in place.

For many working adults, wearing proper clothing to work is second nature. Established workplace dress code also promotes equality since all of the employees dresses the same in the organization which reduces discrimination and inculcate a feeling of fairness among the employees (Oliver, Marder, Erz, & Kietzmann, 2022). Moreover, having all the employees dress the same type of dress code might offer the organization a more professional appearance than a scenario where some of the employees were dressed in suits, others in formal attire, and even some others in t-shirts. The word "professionalism" should not be associate with a suit when discussing how to dress for the organization (Toddin, 2022). The most important aspect of professionalism is not about the formal clothing but to ensure that the employees are dressed appropriately for their job. For instance, the workplace dress code at a construction area should mandate that all the employees should put on personal protective equipment like safety boots, protective clothing, hard hats and other safety gear while employees who work in an office should dress professionally. The objective of imposing workplace dress code is to convey a sense of professionalism (Olorunda, 2022). The dress code that has been impose should convey information to the clients that the employees of the organization take what they do seriously as well as that you mean business. Generally speaking, one of the key drivers because most of the organization enforce dress code policy is to promote professionalism and conformity.

The personality of a person is normally revealed by dresses. The personal style of a person might reflect their self-assurance and creativity as an employee. According to Reddy (2022), establishing a dress code in the organization might limit employees' creativity as the employees are no longer able to freely express their opinions and creativity in terms of the dress code at the workplace. Employees are entitled to express themselves, thus limiting them to a particular appearance may restrict them from being creative. Employee who works in more modern, relaxed settings typically dislike having to adhere to dress codes. The employees believe that when they may follow a relaxed set of dress codes, they can perform better. Employees that are creative use their clothing to convey their personalities and this demonstrates an employee's self-assurance. Therefore, it will kill the creativity of the employee when the workplace dress code is established. Moreover, established workplace dress code will in some way hinder both performance and performance of the employee. There is a probability that top level management of the organization won't enjoy the same dress code as their subordinates. These issues usually affect employee who isn't used to formal settings.

Established workplace dress code may cause discomfort to the employees as the choice of clothing may not be suitable for everyone in the organization. According to Locke (2022), employees may feel uncomfortable because of requirements like constantly wearing ties for males or being required to wear business suits for women, particularly in hot day. These outdated concepts of dress code are impracticable for further reasons. When the employee is dressed according to their body type, mood, and responsibilities, they feel better and are more motivated to give their best effort. They are able to focus on the task at hand since they are aware that they have a variety of options. Discomfort can result in issues like low output, employee reluctance to cooperate, decreased work efficiency etc. For instance, the employee is accustomed to wear business casual attire or jeans but the dress code that has been established requires for a suit, shirt-pant, tie, etc., the adjustment will probably be uncomfortable for everyone in organization.

In today's day and age, the whole idea of dress code at the workplace is an outdated concept in which the idea of working at the office is almost obsolete and employees are working from home (AdvantagesNDisadvantage, 2022). Throughout the pandemic, most of the employees were working from home and they use to dress in casual wear and this has shown that employees can perform their duties well without wearing business attire (Bhasin, 2022). It demonstrates that attire which was before the pandemic is no longer socially accepted for the modern workplace, whether it be online or in person. Instead, casual attire seems to be the way of the future. Employees nowadays would like to have flexibility whether that is linked to their work timing or the way they dress since it will be the outcome of the employees which matters the most while everything else is secondary throughout the end.

According to Locke (2022), workplace dress codes are an extension of the concept of the school uniform, in which the pupils are intentionally forbidden from dressing uniquely. Females will be more at risk because of society's expectations for job conformity. Female employees will be humiliated if they fail to follow the guidelines. For both genders, dress codes ought to be as equal as possible to prevent female employee from feeling overly scrutinized. Employers may establish a dress code policy that disfavors employees who feel obligated to adhere to their cultural or religious beliefs (Rahmat, 2019). For instance, an organization that mandates that it is a must for all female employees to wear dresses or skirts may offend Muslim women who prefer to dress in pants. In addition, the issue of banning veiled women in the hospitality

industry raises questions for some parties. They think that this ban is one of the existing international policies or a mere discrimination (Azam et al., 2019).

Examples of best company which has dress code policy as benchmark

- **Amazon Dress Code for Employees**

Amazon is known as the biggest and most popular retail platforms in the world that ships a wide variety of goods. The achievement of the organization is the outcome of the efficient and well-coordinated operation of the warehouses of Amazon that serve as a hub for all parcels before they are delivered to their receivers. The warehouse crew of Amazon must adhere to the set of rules and regulations that covering everything from their job duties to their work attire in order to protect their safety. The warehouse crew of Amazon are not required to wear uniforms. However, Amazon fosters the warehouse crew to dress whatever attire they feel most comfortable since the duties of the warehouse crew frequently involve with strenuous activities including loading, unloading, and transporting things (Nuoptima, 2022). The work attire needs to be comfortable enough for the warehouse crew to work for long days. In order to enhance the comfort of the warehouse crew, Amazon offers its employees some instructions and suggestions regarding the dress code they should adhere to.

There are three reasons why the employees of Amazon are requiring following the established dress code policy. Firstly, the employees at each Amazon warehouse are still considered to be a part of the organization even if they simply serve as packaging and storage centers and do not represent the business to other entities. Hence, dress code policy is established in order to preserve a cohesive workplace while allowing the employees some freedom in their appearance. Secondly, dress code policy also prevents employees from injuring at the warehouse or damaging the parcels. Packaging, sorting, and delivering the packages to different locations are indeed the warehouse job. Additionally, employees also make use of big, heavy equipment like pallet jacks and forklifts. Hence, wearing high heels or loose-fitting clothing may make it more challenging for staff to do their jobs. Thirdly, Amazon need to keep an eye on their warehouse crew and guard against theft and damage as the warehouse crew are given full access to all of the items that sells and delivers to Amazon. The established dress code policy will help Amazon to prevent shipping disasters.

The phrase “dress code” which is typically refer to clothing, is also used by Amazon to describe a person’s overall appearance which includes any clothing, jewelry, accessories, or other personal items they may bring to work. There are a few general standards that the employees of Amazon warehouse must adhere to. Firstly, the attire that Amazon required their employees to wear must be comfortable to them. It is crucial to keep in mind that the temperature within the warehouse may change, therefore the staff should dress appropriately. Secondly, according to the dress code policy of Amazon, the employees must wear clothing and jewelry that won’t easily get caught in tools or machinery while performing their jobs. The hair and nail of the employees need to be maintained in a way that doesn’t interfere with their ability to perform their jobs. Thirdly, Amazon has established a prescribed policies to prevent discrimination against anyone on the ground of race, religion, gender, or handicap due to its inclusive hiring practices. Therefore, it is forbidden for warehouse employees to wear clothing that features offensive images, signs, or slogans.

- **Walmart Dress Code for Employees**

Walmart is a global store that offers anything from groceries to furniture at discounted prices. Customer of Walmart may purchase things through the websites of Walmart and apps in addition to its physical locations. There are numerous locations where you can find a Walmart. The stores of Walmart are mainly found in commercial area. These commercial areas are frequently found next to supermarkets, pharmacies, and other kinds of retail establishments. Hence, the attire worn by the employees of Walmart need to be appropriate for the setting in which they work. In 2018, Walmart has adopted a somewhat flexible dress code policy (along with a more forgiving late policy) that permits their employees to “dress and express their own style at the workplace”.

According to the dress code policy of Walmart, the employees must present a professional appearance which is in line with the company’s goal. The employees are allowed to wear casual clothing in the workplace as long as the attire they wear fall under the category of acceptable clothes and its clean, wrinkle and stain-free (Nayak et al., 2019). Under the current dress code policy, the employee may wear denim pants and shirts of any colour. However, the employees are not permitted to wear loungewear or sportswear like yoga trousers or leggings while working. Those employees that wear leggings or yoga trousers can be breach of the dress code. Moreover, employees are not allowed to wear frayed-edged pants, damaged denim, bedazzled pants, or shredded jeans as it may pose a safety threat. In addition, Walmart is now permitting their employees to experiment with their hair color, get piercings, and even sport tattoos. No matter what attire an employee wear, they are required to wear the recognizable vest and name tag of Walmart while on the job. The Walmart vest does not need to be tucked in, but it must be worn over a shirt while the name tag needs to be worn on the left side of the chest so that it will always be clearly visible.

Even though the dress code policy of Walmart has been modified into a more lenient and relaxed standards, there are still repercussions if the employees break the rules. Employee that does not adhere to the dress code policy that established by Walmart might anticipate a warning or formal reprimand. Moreover, Walmart also has the right to ask their employee to remove particular items if they fail to adhere to the dress code established even, they are permitted to wear practically any type of apparel. Employees need to dress appropriately and only bring appropriate personal stuff to the workplace. Hence, attire that can be perceived as offensive, inappropriate, or otherwise improper should not be worn by employees.

Research Methodology

This qualitative study is a study that uses a systematic literature review (SLR) method to identify, critically evaluate and integrate research findings (Baumeister & Leary, 1997). The justification of the methodology used is because of its appropriateness and relevance in systematically evaluating the entire study related to the importance of dress code in the workplace from year to year as well as explaining new issues from one angle to another. This method applies a systematic search to identify factors that make dress code important in the workplace. The research methodology used is document analysis of articles, journals, theses and books written by scholars.

Recommendation and Conclusion

The simplest approach to handle a minor “dress code violations” is to occasionally send out a short “company-wide email” or put a list of reminders on the board in the break room. This subtly worded reminder might be all that’s needed to draw the offender’s attention as well as

any employees who might be tempted to wear unsuitable work attire. Moreover, it's crucial for the organizations to make sure that any adjustments to the dress code policy are communicated to the existing employees and that the policy in the guidebook are updated to reflect the updates if the organization there is any amendment in the policy, or the organization decides that some items of the policy are no longer essential or implements new ones. Additionally, it might be appropriate to send out reminders about the dress code policy if no amendment to the policy is made but a few employees start to break the rules. If the dress code violation does not really threaten health and safety, this might be a practical and effective strategy. In many instances, employees will rectify their mistakes and the attire their wear to the workplace.

Communicating with the employee individually may assist to settle the issue if they consistently disobey the dress code that have been establish by the organization. Top management or administrators of the organization should make sure that there is a witness so that he or she could narrate what happened during the meeting if necessary. Attempting to make the employee to feel comfortable, discussing the particular dress code violations, and providing solution are crucial throughout the discussion. The particular employees might not comprehend generalizations and might become humiliated if they are being called "messy" or "inappropriate" looking. Administrators should explain to the employee on how to remedy violation and restate the purpose for the dress code. Dress code violation must be eliminated as soon as feasible, yet delicacy and consideration must also be imposed. There are several employees may unintentionally break the rules and may be willing to address the issues, but they may not know how to address the issues properly. Administrator can help to address the issue through a cordial and helpful way, prior to enforcing discipline.

In a workplace manner, the employees and employers should take into account on how they present themselves in the way they dress, groom, behave, and even their body language. The image of the organization is influenced by the dress code in addition to being professional and courteous at work. The dress code at the workplace should constantly be taken into account since it has an impact on how well employees accomplish their jobs, how safe it is at work, and how well their careers develop. Additionally, employees who work at the places such as healthcare facilities, fire departments, security forces, and other places where it may be dangerous or harmful to their health are mandate to wear protective attire.

It has been determined that several employees are motivated by the desire to improve their careers and integrate well at work. Hence, majority of the employees are typically favoring clear communication about dress requirements at the workplace and treating them like adults. The dress code for an organization's employee should reflect how formal the organization is. Business formal attire is the most appropriate degree of attire in a workplace context. Likewise, business formal attire was created and recognized in conventional job settings. Presently, majority of the professional business locations which including the financial institutions, and cooperates organizations still enforce it as a policy. Even though most of the organization have strict dress code policy, however, casual attire is still permitted in some business-related workplace that demand a low level of formality. In casual attire, denim jeans, t-shirts, athletic shoes, and shorts are work attire that are acceptable. Even in these situations, the employee needs to be avoided of wearing offensive attire.

To conclude, establishing a dress code policy as a guideline for the employees in an organization is crucial in a workplace context as a way to maintain the reputation of the organization as well as to ensure that the employees look professional. It's crucial for the

employers to take the needs and preferences of the employee into account while establishing the dress code guidelines as this will bring the sense of belonging to the employees. As a result, the employees will become more responsible and productive.

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