

Manicure as Dopamine Modulation: A Theoretical Framework Linking Beauty Practice, Neurobiology, and Emotional Well-Being

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Abstract: *This paper presents a theoretical relationship between the manicure procedure and the modulation of dopamine—a neurotransmitter that participates in the sensation of pleasure and activation of the brain's reward system. This work attempts to trace both psychological and biochemical ways that might rationalize the favorable impact a manicure has on its clients' emotional state, comparing professional and self-care treatments. The study increasingly becomes relevant due to rising self-care interests as stress-remedying tools in contemporary society. The actual novelty of this research lies in performing an integral role analysis of dopamine within the milieu of cosmetic procedures, plus studying master-client communication impacts on client psychology. The study was methodologically based on the analysis of 7 scientific sources on the neurobiology of dopamine, beauty psychology, and the nail care industry. Results showed that manicure is both a cosmetic and psychological practice in which emotional release and self-esteem enhancement take place. Indeed, the professional salon service has much more therapeutic potential because it adds social interaction to quality care. Typical small talk seems to enhance the effects more; individual talking diminishes them. Professionals should be trained in supportive but non-intrusive communication skills to maximize positive impact. This will be of help to psychologists, neurobiologists, or specialists in the beauty industry and many others who are concerned with self-care rituals and their consequences on emotional health.*

Keywords: manicure, dopamine, psychological well-being, reward system, psychology, emotional state, social interaction, survey

1. Introduction

Dopamine acts both as a neurotransmitter and hormone with vital functions in the body, mainly concerning the reward system of the brain. It controls pleasure and motivation and reinforces goal-oriented behavior in an individual when it gets activated by pleasurable stimuli or events that the brain considers rewarding. This biochemical is central to creating positive feelings and keeping oneself engaged in particular activities, therefore attracting much interest in studies concerning mental health [1].

Contemporary society shows beauty perception that is multiple and goes beyond looks to include health care, environmental care, and emotional wellness. The consumer interacts actively with the beauty industry in this process by seeking products for maintenance as well as enhancement of attractiveness, hence market development.

In the present circumstances of life, where stress and tension today are common phenomena, the importance of finding cheap ways to lift mood and well-being is important. Self-care touches on manicures gaining popularity as one of the ways to achieve psychological comfort. These works do not only make one look good but also help relax and raise self-esteem; most importantly, they might trigger the dopaminergic system. The attractive physical eye plays a very key role in social relationship formation. Research shows that good-looking people are very often considered to be competent, successful, and well-adapted socially [3]. In early dating interactions, appearance serves as a non-verbal marker that has an effect on interpersonal attraction.

2. Materials and Methodology

The relationship between manicures and the production of dopamine, which is the biological substrate for the feeling of satisfaction, was conducted in a study based on seven sources: academic articles, reports, and psychological studies. The theoretical base comes from works specifically devoted to neurobiological mechanisms relating to the dopamine system. One such work, that by T. Yao [1], disclosed how "reward prediction error" plays an important role in developing feelings of satisfaction and became central to interpreting psychological effects related to manicures. Another two studies [2, 4] provided data about nail care socio-cultural contexts; they stressed that cosmetic practices relate to self-esteem and emotional stability. Statistics [5] about the global nail care market also confirmed its phenomenological nature by indicating mass character towards industry growth. Methodologically, this study synthesized interdisciplinary data through a systematic review with qualitative behavioral analysis. For example, Lee and K.-H. Kwon [6] found two kinds of manicure value-emotional and economic, which correspond with dopamine pathways being activated. A comparative method was utilized to compare results from studies: the experiment conducted by A. Kawakubo and T. Oguchi [7] proved that salon manicure with shallow self-disclosure improves psychological vitality, thus supporting the theory of dopamine being a "motivation hormone" [1]. An analysis of content done on D. J. Kellie et al.'s work revealed a paradox: though there are risks in self-objectification, women see manicure as an image control tool—thus it can autonomous and expressive mechanisms through which it may release dopamine.

3. Results and Discussion

Dopamine is a neurotransmitter and hormone that plays a key role in regulating a number of physiological and psychological processes in the human body [1]. This chemical is synthesized in the brain from the amino acid tyrosine in areas such as the substantia nigra and ventral tegmental area. Dopamine acts by binding to receptors on neurons, which ensures the transmission of signals between brain cells. It regulates mood, motivation, and the feeling of reward, influencing emotional state and behavior. Its presence in certain areas of the brain, such as the nucleus accumbens, is associated with the activation of the reward system, making it indispensable for maintaining psychoemotional balance and stimulating goal-oriented activity. Dopamine's connection with pleasure is manifested in its ability to cause a feeling of satisfaction after performing pleasant or meaningful actions. When a person eats tasty food, plays sports, or achieves a goal, dopamine is released in key areas of the brain, which is

accompanied by positive emotions. This process not only provides an immediate feeling of pleasure, but also reinforces the behavioral response, increasing the likelihood of repeating such actions in the future. In addition, dopamine is involved in reward anticipation: the expectation of a positive result itself stimulates its release, which encourages actions aimed at achieving the goal.

Cosmetics have become the main tool for correcting perceived attractiveness. Modern products visually change facial features: they emphasize the eyes, lips, narrow the eyebrows, add blush, which corresponds to the standards of femininity. Numerous studies confirm that makeup increases assessments of attractiveness, competence and warmth [4].

Like makeup, manicure performs a decorative function, but is distinguished by its visual accessibility: nails are always in sight, unlike the face, which requires a mirror. The nail care industry is developing dynamically, which is illustrated in Figure 1.

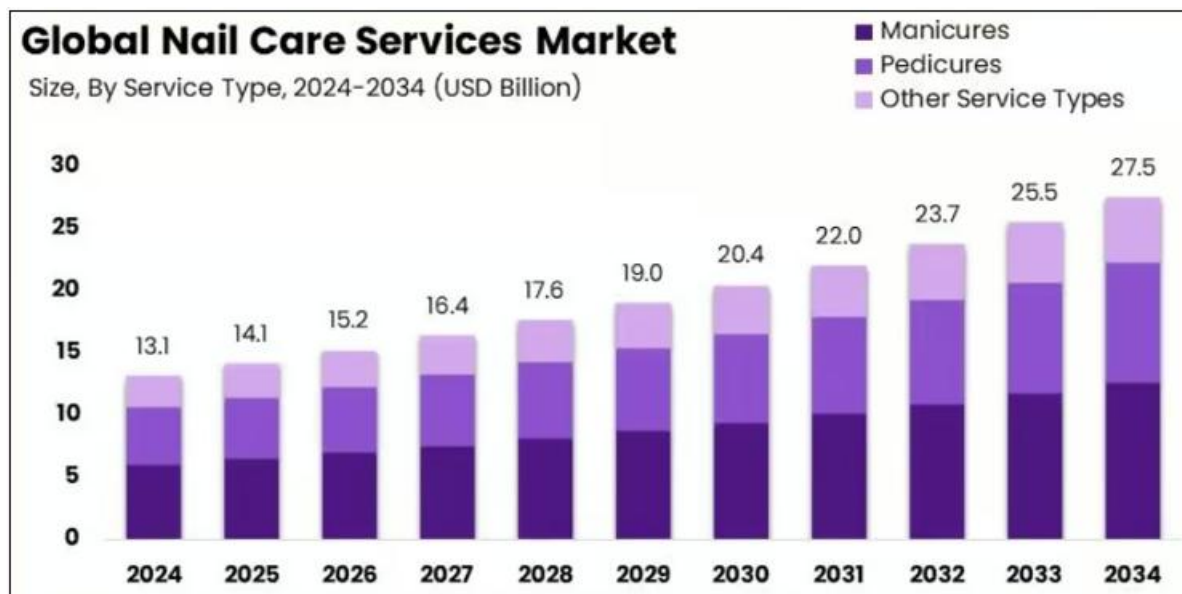


Figure 1: Global Nail Care Services Market, USD Billion [5]

Regular manicures have been linked to heightened productivity and quality of life. The novelty of this study lies in its focus on the subjective psychological effects of nail care, an aspect that has not previously come under the rays of systematic analysis.

Manicure is the treatment of nails and hands for their beauty, health, and general well-being. It comprises various techniques, each with a particular function and different goals towards the main aim of making sure hygiene comes first and improving the appearance of the hands and nails by creating conditions for their physiological comfort. Manicure can be personalized to fit different clients' needs based on different approaches which speaks much about its versatility as a self-care procedure [6].

A characteristic of manicure shall be that the procedure gets professionally done in salons, as against self-application of makeup. One of the usual types shall be the classical manicure which comprises cuticle trimming, nail plate processing, and giving nails a desired shape with help from hand tools such as

scissors and files. That methodology would get distinguished by its accessibility plus an old approach that makes it popular among so many users. On the other hand, hardware manicure will employ specialized electric instruments with attachments of different degrees of abrasiveness making possible treatment for nails and skin around them more accurate and gentle. This procedure reduces damage risks; hence it is most appropriate for clients with sensitive skin or a complicated nail structure.

Another trend is decorative manicure, which places emphasis on the aesthetic component and includes varnish application, gel polish or other decorative elements like rhinestones, drawings and stickers. This type of manicure is most likely used for self-expression and highlighting individual style, thus its popularity in the scope of actual trends in beauty ways. Besides this, other types may be European (unedged) manicure or spa manicure among others which might combine elements of care and relaxation thus extending the function of the procedure. Manicure as a ritual for self-care has several mechanisms by which it can induce dopamine

production due to feelings of completeness and self-care [1]. The dopamine system is essentially a reward pathway within the brain and pleasurable or rewarding actions invariably lead to its activation. As far as manicure is concerned, the completion of the procedure makes one feel good about achieving an aesthetically pleasing result-neat and well-groomed nails. It can be interpreted by the brain as having achieved a goal, hence activating the dopaminergic system and subsequently causing the release of dopamine. Also, self-care manifests through time and attention dedicated to one's appearance increases feelings of satisfaction that can be related to a dopamine response. Such processes are comparable to that in the brain when there is some task completion or positive feedback wherein dopamine serves to drive up motivation and emotional uplift.

Scientific study [7] proves that there is a link between good sensory feelings and the turning on of the reward system in the mind; this goes on to explain more how a manicure helps in making more dopamine. An online questionnaire was organized for the study and 500 Japanese women aged 20 to 39 years responded, whose average age was 30.64 years with a standard deviation of 4.78. All respondents lived in metropolitan areas (Tokyo and three neighboring provinces) and used smartphones or computers to fill out the questionnaire. To ensure data reliability, a control question was included in the questionnaire; "Please select not at all", therefore only those who answered it correctly were included in the analysis which would filter out inattentive respondents. The final data set comprised 334 women with an average age of 30.70 years who had never undergone a manicure. These women were classified into salon clients having an average age of 30.57 ± 4.39 years and home care practitioners having an average age of 30.83 ± 4.92 years descriptive statistics for each sample group is given in table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics for each sample group [7]

Variables	Group 1 ($n = 167$)		Group 2 ($n = 167$)	
	n	%	n	%
Household income				
Under 400	39	23.4	54	32.3
401-600	35	21	37	22.2
601-800	31	18.6	22	13.2
801-1, 000	18	10.8	18	10.8
1, 001-1, 200	7	4.2	8	4.8
1, 201-1, 500	10	6	3	1.8
More than 1, 500	13	7.8	6	3.6
Refused to answer	14	8.4	19	11.4
Marriage status				
Married	74	44.3	68	40.7
Never married	87	52.1	94	56.3
Divorced	6	3.6	5	3

The demographic data collected included age, place of residence, household income, marital status, as well as information about manicures (e. g., cost per session and frequency of salon visits per month) and monthly cosmetics expenditure. "Manicures" were defined as nail painting, including color manicures, nail art, and gel nails. The first question of the survey asked whether the participants visited a nail salon, dividing them into three categories: those who use salon professionals and those who do their own manicures; and those who do not paint their nails or visit a salon. To assess the psychological effects of manicures, participants were asked to rate changes in emotions and attitudes caused by manicures on a four-point scale from 1 ("not at all") to 4 ("to a great extent"). They were asked to select the answer that reflected their typical feelings during the procedure. In addition, a 24-item scale measuring the depth of self-disclosure in salons was used, which captured four levels of interactions: hobbies and daily life (Level I, $\alpha = .92$), difficult experiences (Level II, $\alpha = .94$), weaknesses and shortcomings (Level III, $\alpha = .97$), and negative personality traits (Level IV, $\alpha = .97$).

Clients who came to the salons remembered usual talks with their nail artists and gave a score for how much each topic was said on a seven-point scale from 1 ("not at all") to 7 ("very much"). The study looked at the average values for each level of self-sharing. It found that the mental effects of manicures grew with greater levels of talk with the nail artist. A model joining these two factors was made to check the link between self-sharing and mental impact.

The psychological benefits of manicures find support in the resemblance to effects of cosmetics. Clients derive happiness and satisfaction from the procedure, feeling this much more in terms of calm and relaxation. Besides, better-nails people become more open and communicative, an aspect also confirmed in studies on cosmetic procedures. Stable psychological effects shown by manicures thus expand our understanding about appearance influence on emotional state.

Comparing self-care to salon services, it appears professional manicures tends to evoke emotions much more positive and relaxation. It is a trend that is becoming more popular with an increase in the number of nail technicians. People are willing to spend money on this service because fingers are one of the most visible body parts and nail care does not need a mirror; judgment can be made visually and easily. Detailed data presented in Figure 2 shows professional manicures to be particularly effective in motivation boost and mood enhancement.

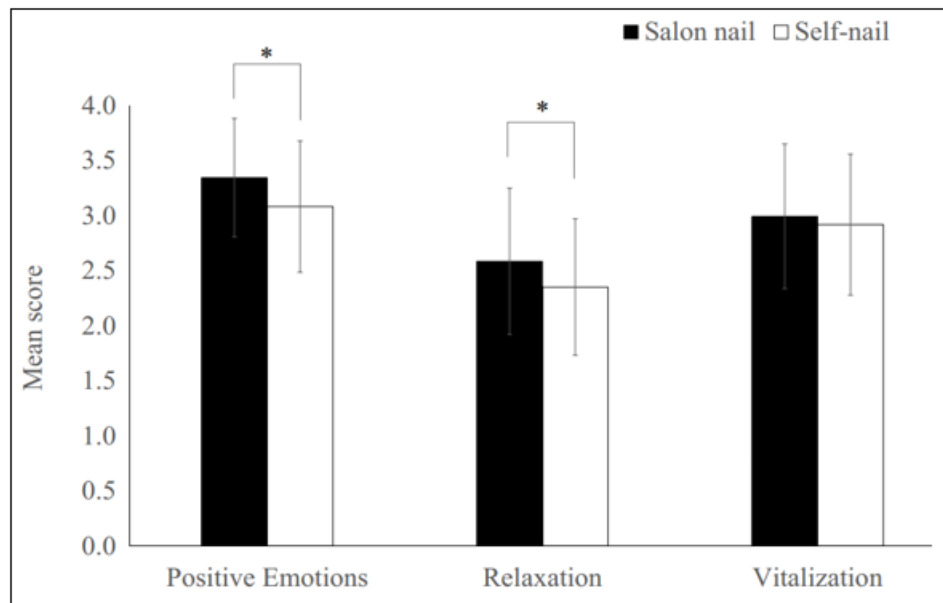


Figure 2: Variations between groups in the mean scores of nail care's effects. The error bars represent the standard deviation of the measurement [7]

Negative traits and abilities that were discussed seemed to bring a lowering of positive emotions in the clients. Equally, when self-disclosure was limited to hobbies or daily life, it worked positively toward the three main psychological effects of manicures. People generally try to share their thoughts, feelings, and experiences with others in a typical day. In the beginning stages of any form of communication, self-disclosure usually remains at a superficial level involving preferences and hobbies; however, as intimacy develops, it moves into more personal aspects like worries and shortcomings. Results from this study seem to imply that superficial self-disclosure is more appropriate in client-manicurist interactions. Manicurists should consider these traits to add value to their services and create an edge over competitors.

There are several challenges, though, that this study comes up with and needs to be acknowledged. First, accurate comparison results could not be established in the absence of a control group. An alternative data set from non-manicured participants to compare with manicured ones would make conclusions more credible. Since the scale used is based on subjective assessment after nail care, objective data for a so-called control group could not be collected. This may introduce some degree of selection bias since probably only people who are already interested in nails entered the study and that can skew the results.

Also, the info on mental effects came from the self-reports of the users; this makes it tough to find a clear cause-and-effect link. Making causality is still one of the big jobs of today's psychology.

It can be concluded that manicure is not only a cosmetic procedure, but a very important self-care treatment with influence on psychological condition. Decorative manicure, varnish, gel polish and other elements of design like rhinestones and drawings give an accent to individuality and aesthetic value, thus raising the feeling of self-expression. European and spa manicures add relaxation features to the

whole service possible. The procedure of manicure itself causes dopamine production because of sensation of achievement and self-care; it activates the reward system in the brain leading to an uplifting effect. Professional salon manicures have more positive emotions attached to them than home care provides and they are more relaxing as well; this holds true as long as communication with the manicurist does not go beyond casual hobbies. It brings out the possibility of manicures as a way for helping mental health and opens up ways for more study, including making rules for manicurists and looking into other ways of doing procedures.

4. Conclusion

To conclude, several key findings have been elaborated to illuminate the relationship between manicures as a self-care ritual and psychological well-being. First, manicures results in dopamine release that can be associated with feelings of accomplishment and self-care thereby activating the brain's reward system. Aesthetic satisfaction derived from seeing well-groomed nails and perceiving the process as an act of self-care serves to further boost this effect. Second, client-professional relationships in salons cultivates more positive psychological effects than mere self-care, relaxing clients and elevating their positive feelings most probably due to the quality of services they receive as well as the social interactions with manicurists. Third, however, nature of interaction with the manicurist seems to matter: casual chat on day-to-day subjects like hobbies tends to evoke positive emotional responses; bringing in negative matters like personal problems may spoil it. These results point out how important is the context of the procedure for achieving maximum psychological impact. These findings contribute significantly to understanding the importance of self-care in maintaining mental health in a society where stress and burnout are increasingly common. This study proves that manicure can be more than just a cosmetic procedure; it can be something that will positively influence one's emotional status by activating the dopaminergic system. It also reveals the social aspects of cosmetic services, how the quality of

interaction with the master modulates psychological effects. These findings carry practical implications for the beauty industry: training masters in supportive but superficial communication skills can increase customer satisfaction and enhance positive procedure outcomes. The study thus broadens scientific understanding regarding external care and internal well-being linking that with an interpretation of such practices as potential implements in combating our times' emotional challenges. It appears forward-looking to consider the impact of different manicure methods-classic, hardware, or artistic-on the mental condition so as to fix the best ways. The growth of advice for manicurists to improve talk with customers, based on ideas of simple self-disclosure, could be a useful outcome of coming work, making service quality better and opening new opportunities for cross-field study in the area between psychology and the beauty sector.

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