Vietnamese Nail Salon Pricing, Wages, and Worker Health

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Introduction

Nail salons in the United States have been associated with Vietnamese immigrants living in the US since the 1970s, when some came to America to seek refuge because of the Vietnam War. A Hollywood actor, Tippi Hedrin, introduced a number of them into the nail art industry, and they have managed to develop themselves to the extent that they affect the entire nation and even the economy (David and Linor, 25). Due to the increased number of nail salons, pricing has become a problem, and some of them are receiving payments that do not add up to the services they offer. This essay, in that case, seeks to deliberate on reasons as to why pricing at Vietnamese nail salons should be a priority, depending on the lives of the manicurists. The paper contains valid reasons justifying the proposed increase in the cost of services at the nail salons with respect to the tremendous decrease in service cost. The decrease in prices, though, has provoked many arguments, with some supporting the decreased prices and others opposing it. The essay will cover the arguments from both sides of the story and conclude why the pricing at Vietnamese nail salons should be increased. Owners of Vietnamese nail salons should raise their services to raise prices to pay workers better; this action would help improve the quality of life for Vietnamese in America, considering the nature of their work and the challenges they face both socially and economically.

Why Most Vietnamese Are Manicurists

Nail art, popularly known as manicure, dates back to the 1970s when Tippi Hedrin introduced some Vietnamese women to the art (David and Linor, 32). Since then, they have shown their resilience in the industry by taking the whole of America with their increasing number of salons in different parts of the nation. Estimation shows that the Vietnamese own 48% of Neil salons in the United States. Most of the Vietnamese immigrants are manicured. This is because a number of them who were trained by Hedrin have since then introduced their colleagues to the blooming business in the United States. It acted as a lucrative business for unskilled Vietnamese immigrants. They never hesitated to take the business opportunity but acted with a lot of seriousness, making them open up several salons where they employed their colleague Vietnamese. Statistics show that 60% of the attendants in the salons are Vietnamese despite their 48% ownership of the total businesses. This increasing number of Vietnamese in the market of nail art made them construct a beauty college of their own in

1987, with training being done in their native language (Hoang et al.120). This beauty college further increased their participation in this business. The growing number boomed in the United States of America in the mid-1970s right up to the 1980s. From this time, Vietnamese nail salons picked momentum and took the market with a blast. Vietnamese nail salons became a linchpin between them and other cultures during this time, as well as Vietnam's economic autonomy and the American classic dream story. This is supported by a preview documentary, which shows that Vietnamese own 48% of nail tech industries in the United States, and even the workers in these salons are mostly Vietnamese. Nails magazine also supports these statistics, and according to them, the nail salon industry is one of the fastest-growing Asian businesses in the United States.

Competition between Salons

Salon owners in the United States will tell you how tenacious the salon industry has been in the country, but this has not remained the same in the recent past. Just a few salons existed in the business before. Since the recruitment of many others in the market, there has been an increased level of competition (Eckstein et al. 26). As we all know, different business organizations use different strategies for handling competition and ensuring customer satisfaction. Most salon owners in the past received quite a substantial amount of money, but profit levels have decreased due to the developing competition and congestion in the market. Because of the low profit margins created, salon owners find it difficult to hire more manicures and pay them as per the standards or the wage rate as stated by the government. From a business perspective, we say an increase in supply leads to a decrease in demand, and this will force business owners to lower their prices since a reduction in price leads to an increase in demand. Salon owners are forced to lower their market prices, hence a decrease in payment rates for their workers (Keefe and Colleen, 10). On the other hand, competition has led to an increase in the quality of work done by manicurists, making nail art perfect and quality-oriented. The quality and timely work offered by manicurists helps them develop customer relations, which may even lead to them being permanent customers. This happens after they have developed the full trust of the client. Healthy competition is meaningful in every business, and it should be encouraged, but it does not necessarily involve lowering workers' pay rates below the stipulated amount. Competition can be in different avenues but not necessarily price reduction. In my opinion, a price should be set so that competition would only entail quality work (Eckstein et al. 32). Competition exists internally where employees of the same industry are trying to do their manicurist fast to make more money. Such competition is advisable since it involves quality and time but not payment terms and rates.

Nail Technicians Wage Very Low despite Long Working Hours

Due to the industry's infiltration, many salon owners have increased working hours and reduced the wage rate to maintain the commission and profits. There is reduced payment per hour, considering

the saturation in the industry is making employees earn much less than what the constitution says about the minimum wage rate. The decreased wages of the nail technicians have made the living standards of these workers even worse. In a growing economy, one would expect salary increments, not salary cuts. Economic growth comes with an increase in prices of commodities. This means all workers expect a positive deviation in the pay when it has to change. Lowering wage rates by salon owners makes their workers' living standards worse, and there is no one would expect in a growing economy. All Americans deserve a better lifestyle, and this can only be achieved if the government and its citizens ensure that no one is underplayed. Individually speaking, salon prices should go up. Manicures spend much time and long hours on our nails performing beautiful arts on our nails as we relax on the luxurious couches they have in their industries (Hoang and Kimberly, 125). Their hard work should not be ignored as a kind, easy job but should be highly appreciated to encourage and empower them in the community. Having such a job (manicure) takes heart and dedication, and since it is someone's work, we should appreciate them by paying them promptly. Art is different from the profession. Art involves hard work and perseverance. During festive seasons, nail salons are open from 7 am-7 pm just to satisfy the customers. As customers, we should sense the good work done by these workers, and we reward them tentatively. Such periods as the eve of the New Year, Valentine's Day days, and the Christmas holidays are some of the times when the salon industry experiences prom periods since, during these times, there are some customers readily waiting for these services offered. Summer is the busiest part of the year, it is the time, when we have key holidays and even events organized. Considering the FLSA federal minimum wage of $7.25 per hour for covered nonexempt workers, as well as any higher applicable state or local minimum wage and payments such as overtime, manicurists' pay may be lower than the amount they should receive. My feeling is that these people should have good salaries despite their job being unprofessional; they do much to ensure that we look good on the nails.

Chemical Hazards

From science, we all know that chemicals are not fit for human beings. Their use should be regulated to the highest level possible. As an advocate for increasing the salon price for the Vietnamese, I say this in consideration of the health problems these workers are exposed to while working on their nails. Imagine a condition where you use hazardous chemicals a whole day, six times a week. There is a high probability that at one point in life, you will suffer health problems. In as much as we consider the work done by manicurists to be simple, we should also take into consideration the kind of health problems they are exposed to in their work conditions. These are highly exposed to health problems resulting from the toxic gases they inhale all day while working. When inhaled directly on a daily basis, such chemicals as acrylic and acetone can cause breathing problems since they interfere with the internal organs (Keefe and Colleen, 15). We find that in the hive of a good salon, there are ranks of workers, with the topmost being the Big Job level, which consists of veterans whose main job is sculpting acrylic dust found in our nails. Even though this is the most exciting job in a salon, most young women prefer it because of its health hazards. Most of those who work in that stage suffer from

serious health problems like miscarriages and cancer, which are all associated with inhaling clouds and fumes from plastic materials. This demonstrates how dangerous the work these guys do, and therefore, I feel the law, which makes the lowest rate of pay per hour 8.5 dollars, should apply to even these workers as well, and they should not be left out as they are now. They do work that most people in society are not willing to do. Most experienced manicurists earn around 50-70 dollars a day, and this is still much lower than the minimum wage rate in the United States. They work considerably longer than other workers who fall under the minimum wage rate. Manicurists take this risk just to ensure that our nails remain fantastic (Keefe and Colleen, 10). Depending on this, I feel deeply convinced that their payment rate does not justify the same. Many people cannot take such risks, and the brave in society who can do it should receive a good payment, which can cater to their health complications later in the future when they develop such complications.

Lack of social activity

Social entails so much in life. It involves all participation in community activities, which range from family issues to community activities. Participating in community-based programs like games and even social groupings is essential in one's life. It has a greater connection with an individual's mind and heart. Some doctors say that a lack of social life can be dangerous to our lives at times. Lack of social activity involves detachment from the community and family for some reasons. In this case, we are relating social activities to the life of manicurists. Doctors have proven that when one misses the social life, there is a risk of dementia. Interaction with members of society and family members exercises the brain cells and, hence, the proper connection between these brain cells. Through this, we feel safe since our brain reserves are protected, and there is a lower risk of dementia in one life. Being social involves a series of activities that interest you, and one would always feel relaxed when they do what they enjoy and mix with people they love seeing around, like family. Regarding social activities, the work of a manicurist is a bit challenging. Working as a manicurist is a very involving activity that deprives one of some life demands. Their long hour of work does not give them the opportunity to have a social life. Most of them are even unable to have time with their families because of the long working hours in a day. These make them very prone to both health issues and being detached from the family, which may have serious impacts on one's family.

Support for my discussion

Starting with health issues, manicurists risk suffering from dementia in their old age, which may cut short their life and dementia; there are a series of health conditions related to lack of social activities, to mention a few: cardiovascular disease, heart problems due to lack of exercise and many others. Manicurists risk family problems because of the nature of their work. It is very important that one gives family priority (Phan et al. 85). When it comes to a manicurist's job, it is very challenging to balance family and work. Their work has long hours a day, and they leave their homes very early in the morning to go to work, where they again very late at night. This means most of them will not have

time to spend with their families, making them unable to guide their children as they grow. This may cause children to develop unwanted characteristics in their lifetime because they lack the parental guidance that all children need in their course of growth. All these are the risks manicurists are susceptible to. It is, therefore, essential that they get better pay. Imagining one taking the risk of raising a crooked family just to get paid that cannot justify the risk is such a disappointment. This is one of the reasons why I feel these worker's wage rates should rise.

From my personal experience as a manicurist for ten years, rising to the level of a salon manager, I am pretty convinced that manicurists deserve something better in society. Just as naysayers say, they deserve low payments because they are casual workers since there are no legal qualifications for one to do the job, it is a very wrong argument since this worker risks a lot and still, they are a commitment to offering quality service we should think of manicurists in a wiser way. My experience as a manicure made me learn a lot about the job they do, and as someone who was once a manager of a salon, I feel what it takes to do the job and the risky conditions it entails. A debate on the pay would justify their low payment, but looking at the pros and cons tentatively, it comes out that these people are so important in a community. They make the world a better place by improving our beauty. Vietnamese in the nail industry are unique just from the geographical range of their industrial dominance in the nail industry. They own and operate salons in almost every state in the US. Professor William Kerr of Harvard School of Business only compares their dominance in the nail industry to the Indian Gujarati in the hotel management business. According to the professor, Indians also own about 40% of all motels in the US, but their dominance in the motel business does not traverse the Vietnamese dominance in the nail industry. This is because Vietnamese have dominated the US market and beyond towns and cities in other countries like Canada, England, and Australia. Professor Kerr quotes that such an achievement requires not only a balance in the ethnic group size balance but also tight cohesion and good industrial conditions. A sociologist, Susan Eckstein, says that the Vietnamese created and expanded the nail market (Eckstein, Susan, and Giovanni, 30). Susan's research at Boston College focused on the ethnic niche industries, and she even considered writing a book about the diversity of the Vietnamese business of nail salons. In her paper published in 2011, International Migration Review, she mentioned that the Vietnamese offered conveniently low prices for nail art, which drove the industry's increased demand for more pedicures and manicures, which made nail art essential for everyone, not only wealthy families. Susan concluded that the Vietnamese changed the standards of beauty in the entire US.

In an interview with one of the Vietnamese who owns a salon in West Point, Virginia, Nguyen says that the business is full of vicissitudes at different times of the year. She says it is uncommon that even in summer, a stall can miss customers, and you would wait for customers for quite a while before you see one walk into your stall. Despite that, Nguyen expressed her happiness as an immigrant who has owned a business in a foreign land American town for over 20 years, and the business is what has been her source of livelihood for all these years. Her dream, though, was to be a nurse, but since she loves taking care of people, the help she always offered to her mom in the salon transformed her into a manicurist, she looks forward to becoming someone better because no one can dream of becoming people's feet scrub, as she says.

Some people, especially economists, argue that my business is my price. Despite arguments on the pricing of Vietnamese nail salons, the sole decision lies with the business owner. I can decide to charge whatever I feel like so long as it lies in the minimum and maximum expectation on the wage rate and bills as stated by the law. A stipulated pricing is an employer's decision. Some argue that low prices mean more customers and high prices mean fewer customers (Phan et al. 82). They then resort to having many customers, which at the end of the day only affects the nail technicians working because the decrease in prices is cut from their wage rate. This, though, is not the case from my perspective as an individual. This is not the correct way of running a business. One should consider both the positive and negative nature of the work done before deciding on the pricing of the labor. My sense tells me that nail art is more involving and requires better payment than what the Vietnamese take as the price of it. My sense tells me that these workers may be unaware of the nature of the health problems their work comes with, and since they are desperately looking for a living, they take whatever comes across them to have a person's nails done. The argument on pricing solemnly lies with the unity of these industries and the feelings of the clients they deal with. I feel these salon owners can create universal pricing for all salons. This will make competition fair since the number of customers you have will depend on the quality of your work. Again, as clients, you should have the sixth sense that those people deserve a better life than what they do.

Conclusion

In conclusion, pricing at Vietnamese nail salons is very diverse, and discussing this topic will raise unending arguments from both sides, opponents and proposers. The reality of this topic depends on a person's understanding of the real setup. Humanitarians will support the motion since this topic is based on humanity and not the nature of the work being done. Vietnamese had managed to impact the US economy from their nail industry, which had become their area of specialization since 1970 when Hedrin introduced them to this art. They have proved that even immigrants or refugees can also impact an economy if given a chance to prove their worth. They have shown their resilience in the nail industry by dominating the US market and other countries, as mentioned earlier. Pricing in Vietnamese nail salons should be increased to offer them a better life because they deserve it.

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