

## Colour Choice in Manicure and Pedicure and Self-Image Satisfaction Among Female Postgraduates in Abia State University, Uturu, Nigeria

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### Abstract

Colour plays a significant role in the fashion cycle, including manicure and pedicure. Manicure and pedicure are not simply acts to look beautiful, but also a means of communication to express oneself and to strengthen one's image and personality. This paper, therefore, focused on ascertaining the motives behind the colour choices for manicure and pedicure procedure among female postgraduates, as well as its impact on their self-image satisfaction. A campus-based cross-sectional study was conducted among postgraduate students at Abia State University, Uturu. A sample of 40 students was purposively drawn. Data was collected using a structured, face-to-face interview schedule which was titled "Colour choice and Self-image Schedule". The schedule was validated by four Hone Economics lectures. Findings indicated that social media influence (72.5%), beauty purposes (57.5%), the need to express oneself (67.5%), follow the trend of the day (47.5%), and build alliance (12.5%) were among the determinants of colour choices in manicure/pedicure among postgraduates; in the same way as, self-confidence (60%), being trendy (72.5%), beauty (77.5), status conferment and self-care (52.5% %) came up as the influence of manicure/pedicure colour choices on the image satisfaction of participants. The paper therefore recommended among others, the need for colour to be incorporated in beauty styling with clear consideration for self-images of women.

### **Background to the Study**

Appearance is believed to be incredibly important, just as the value of visual experience is related to and enriched by the capacity to perceive not only light and shade, but also colour. The effect of colour is that it changes people's image and appearance, resulting in a psychological synergistic effect and positive thinking that gives confidence and joy in everything. There is a commonly held view that if a person wears strong, bright colours, such a person expresses a strong, outgoing personality, while muted colours suggest an inward-looking personality (White, 2001). Colour plays a significant role in the establishment of new codes and rules in the fashion cycle. White further noted that as a signifier of change, it is colour which dictates the mood or ambience of a season, and it is colour which supports the whole towering edifice of fashion (White, 2001). Colour also plays a significant role in the nail and pedicure industry. This is because colour can be used to complement a person's natural colour and as well neutralize unwanted tones of the nail colour resulting from fungal infections or nutritional deficiencies (British Council, ND).

According to Moon & Kim (2021), beauty design is a communication that emotionally communicates the direction of human beauty and life. It coexists with style and colour. Thus, the expression of individuality to show one's own beauty, which is different from others, gives an important meaning to the visual and outward appearance of colour in the formation of women's image and beauty style. As their image is judged important by the perspective of others (Kim, 2016), women use clothes, accessories, hair, makeup, and nail art as tools to express their individuality (Woo & Kim, 2011). Colour is an important asset in personal image that can be evaluated positively and is used as a means of communication, and even other characteristics of individuals, including images, are positive factors for natural expression of personality and social interpersonal relationships. It plays an important communication function. Unequivocally, colour is the surest way to express oneself (Oh & Cho, 2018); and can express one's own image direction and characteristics suitable for social activities (Byun & Lee, 2019).

As the competitiveness of appearance becomes more important in modern society, interest in colour is increasing as a way to quickly improve one's image, create a good image, and express one's personality (Lee & Kim, 2020). Images are made up of subjective judgments, but one of the roles that shape and influence them is colour (Kim, 2016). Colour is a unique linguistic and visual image that exclusively stimulates people's emotions and is a key factor in determining an image in the field of nail art (Oh & Cho, 2018). They, therefore, noted that colours can express various and universal image characteristics in a formative language, and these characteristics can be expressed in a variety of ways in nail art styles.

Nail art is a method of complementing imperfections and expressing beauty on the hands and feet using colors that appear visually. Nail art communicates several messages to viewers, one of which is status. As DeMello (2007) stated, women who work with their hands cannot maintain carefully decorated, long, or even very well-groomed fingernails, fingernail length and grooming, therefore, is a sign of status and wealth. Beyond wealth

and prestige, the image or design portrayed in nail art can convey affiliations, beliefs, or style. Langman (2008) asserts that, “in some contemporary forms of fashion and adornment, the decoration of the body itself has become a template upon which aesthetic sensibilities are inscribed and through which selfhood is articulated”. The images, texts, and designs chosen for nail art reflect facets of a woman's self. Body adornments, like nail art may, however, not be perceived in the way the wearer desires. Adesanya (2014) states that body adornment presents a contradictory situation where the identity image generated by the self is perceived differently by others. Body adornment then becomes a means of communication and mediation between people. Against this backdrop, this paper intends to find out the propelling factor behind the colour choices for manicure/pedicure procedure among female postgraduates.

### Objectives of the study

- i. To ascertain what factors that influence the colour choices of female postgraduates in manicure and pedicure.
- ii. To determine the impact of manicure/pedicure colour choice on self-image satisfaction.

### Methodology

The paper is a qualitative study, wherein the researcher used in-depth interview to obtain responses from the respondents. A cross-sectional survey design was adopted for the study. The population of the study was made up of postgraduate students at the Abia State university, Uturu. A sample of 40 female postgraduate students was drawn from among the students. Purposive sampling method was used to select the students. The reason for using this sampling technique was because only female students who did manicure/pedicure were needed for the interview session. The researcher also had to obtain the consent of the respondents to participate in the study. Data was collected using a structured, face-to-face interview schedule which was validated by four Home Economics lectures. Data was collected over a period of four days and each interview session was recorded and later transcribed.

### Findings

**Table 1:** Age Distribution of Respondents

Variable	Freq (n)	%
18 - 23	9	22.5
24- 29	27	67.5
30 and above	4	10

Table 1 indicates that 67.5% of the respondents were within the age bracket of 24 -29 years.

**Table 2:** Factors that Determine Manicure/Pedicure Colour Choice

Variable	Freq (n)	%
Trend	19	47.5
Creativity	11	35
Expression	27	67.5
Fun	13	32.5
Social Media	29	72.5
Fashion/beauty	23	57.5
Social construct	9	22.5
Alliance	5	12.5

Responses on Table 2 show that the need to express oneself (67.5%), following the trend of the day (47.5%), social media influence (72.5), beauty purpose (57.5%), alliance (12.5%) were among the determinants of colour choices in manicure/ pedicure.

**Table 3:** Impact of Colour Choice on Self-Image Satisfaction

Variable	Freq (n)	%
Confident	24	60
Trendy	29	72.5
Beautiful	31	77.5
Confer status	18	45
Self-care	21	52.5

In table 3, confidence (60%), trendy (72.5%), beauty (77.5), status conferment and self-care (52.5%) came up as the impact of manicure/pedicure colour choices on the image satisfaction of participants.

### Discussion of Findings

The first goal of the study was to establish the driving force behind a particular colour choice. Data indicated that beauty/fashion purposes were responsible for the colour choice made, just as most of the respondents affirmed their conformity to manicure/pedicure colour and designs because of what is trending at each point in time. They observed that the manicure/pedicure tips and information gotten from social media space, was not just for try outs, but for reassurance, to follow the trend and not be considered 'old fashioned' and out of league. The global nail care industry continues to grow due to ever-changing fashion trends among women; consequently, in as much as colour plays a crucial role in the expression of individuality, the choice for a particular nail colour could be considered as a means of reassurance of self-image. White (2001) therefore writes, in an atmosphere where individuals may feel overwhelmed by the diversity of

goods and out of control, they may seek relief by adopting the code of a fashion: a set of rules which relieves them from the need to examine their own motivations and decision-making process. Fashion advice of this kind is therefore seen as something which guides and maneuvers the individual through the fashion cycle, referred to, as the 'continual process of standardization.

The respondents equally agreed to social media being a huge determinant of their manicure/pedicure colour choices. This could be because social media has played an influential role in the development and widespread appeal of nail art (Pierce, 2021). Social media has paved the way for more exciting and innovative nail art. According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), social media is "a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations...and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content." Social media platforms have made nail art accessible for everyone and everyday wear. Nail art is no longer a luxury privy only to celebrities. Social media use is becoming a part of daily life for people all over the world, and nail art has a large presence on various social media platforms. Thus, since young people are frequent users of social media, it is possible that they will at some point see an attractive nail art. Social media is a major factor in the color brands that women who wear manicures choose because images, videos, and tutorials on how to create manicures and pedicures are shared on various platforms, inspiring viewers to try to recreate the manicures and pedicures of their favorite influencers, artists, or celebrities. One of the respondents explains how her choice of colour has been patterned after a number of celebrities: "I believe myself and a number of other girls follow celebrities on their Facebook and Instagram pages and are attracted to the kind of manicure designs they wear on their hands and feet. But most importantly, they do so to get the latest styles, and they try to use the same nail length and colour to replicate exactly what they have seen. In fact, most of us go with our phones to the salon so that we can show the manicurist the videos or pictures." Another student of Estate Management said she is a regular visitor of blogs and YouTube where she learns how to work on her nails. "Sometimes the bloggers tell you what colour to use and the need to be conscious of your skin colour. They provide a range of colour, how to mix them, and what suits what, and all that..., and when I practice them, the results are often wonderful." In this way therefore, social media is serving as source of inspiration for nail artists, as well as a platform to share their work and build their businesses (Pierce, 2021).

Colour choice as a form of creativity (35%) and self-expression (67.5%) received affirmative responses. Expression is the process in which a person relates their thoughts, feelings, and ideas. According to Kim and Ko (2007), because "the individual" has become almost a god in our culture, expressiveness is one of the most highly valued and revered virtues in Western civilization. One of the prevalent perspectives among the postgraduates in this study was that nail colours and designs serve as a major instrument for self-expression, both for creative and expressive reasons. In the opinion of Brown and Bousalis (2017), "the creative act is also associated with self-identification, being completely involved in, and with, the work that an individual creates. During the process,

the creative work becomes an extension of the self who is completely immersed in the action. In view of this, a colour choice in manicure/pedicure can be a way for women to express themselves which in turn reflects their individuality. Such inventiveness is articulated through designs, images, colors, or text. Accordingly, another of the respondents stated: "I love dark colours, and I always want a touch of black to my appearance. Although some of my friends consider painting my nails in black weird, but I usually guide the manicurist on what to do especially with the tips of my nails, because I know what is on my mind. The good thing is that the result is often amazing... and my friends are beginning to love it. Some are beginning to try it out." It is just a way to tell how you feel, what you like, and how you want to look." To another respondent, one of the most appealing things about manicure/pedicure being a means for creativity is the fact that it allows one to play with colours. She explains that she could use more than one nail polish for her manicure/pedicure and could refurbish or change them as many times as she wants. Thus, "I love trying out colours on my nails... sometimes I want it shouty, sometimes dull, sometimes just plain, you know," and looking at the hands of some girls on campus makes you want to get yours done because the colour mix are really lovely and classy." Pierce (2021) aver that personal adornment is "a communicative symbol that serves crucial functions within human lives. Women can also express themselves through nail art.

Furthermore, findings show that aside for the fun of trying out assorted colours and designs on one's nails, another premise that materialized was colour choice borne out of social construct. 22.5% of the participants affirmed this concept, noting that they wear colours that were completely in contrast with their beliefs and social values. Among those who shared this opinion was a 28-year-old student who stated that manicure/pedicure was like an accessory, hence she could not wear any colour beyond the gentle and natural, as they both agreed with her upbringing and her sense of beauty, maintaining that, her mother would frown at her if she were to try something provocative. She maintained that even though she was old enough to make her own decision, she found it difficult to slip away from the morals already ingrained in her from childhood, hence, her sticking to moderation when it comes to colours. She opined that some manicures/pedicure look offensive.

In addition, 12.5% choose alliance as a determining factor. One of the respondents stated that "it is a girls-girls thing," hence, the colour choice develops out of the desire to bond, especially among a group of girlfriends. Another respondent however noted that such decision could be spontaneous particularly if such friends happen to be at the salon at the same time, or if they are getting their nails done by one of the group members, or it could be a deliberate decision by each girl to wear the same nail colour as everyone else. This agrees with the position of Kauth (2020) who asserts that bonding took place as a matter of circumstance and survival. Women grew close to one another, forged alliances, and provided support. In contemporary times, women still participate in activities that facilitate bonding. Keltner (2010) further adds, holding hands while painting nails is a platonic touch that kindles feelings of bonding. It is also important to note that the

touching done while painting nails is often accompanied by talking. The dual process of touching and talking promotes a level of comfort between women and supports the theme that wearing nail art offers women the opportunity to bond.

Data further revealed that manicure/pedicure contributes to self-image satisfaction among the respondents, in that it produces the feeling of self-confidence (60%), being trendy (72.5%), the feeling of being beautiful (77.5%), status conferment (45%) as well as self-care (52.5%). Supporting this line of thought, Tylka (2011) writes that, body image dissatisfaction can make an individual withdraw from society and among peers. It is common knowledge that in modern times, beauty especially among females is defined partly by body structure. Once the individual perceives either through remarks from people or by self-evaluation that their body appearance is incomparable to that of others, it tends to affect their general feeling and well-being (Dotse and Asumeng, 2014).

### **Conclusion/Recommendations**

Colour is said to say something about one's personality. Also, personal colors are colors that harmonize with body color and make skin color look beautiful and healthy. As such, it is recognized as a valuable tool that can satisfy the desire for beauty. Manicure/pedicure is not simply an act to look beautiful, but also a means of communication to express oneself and to strengthen one's image and personality. Accordingly, the results of this study indicate that female postgraduate students gained more satisfaction with their self-image through the colour choices made for their manicure/pedicure and are readier to delve into the process to express their individuality through different nail arts and colours.

In this regard, the paper recommends the following:

- i. There is need for colour to be incorporated in beauty styling with clear consideration for self-images of women.
- ii. Beauty agents should utilize social media platforms to adequately guide women on appropriate colour choices that will enhance their appearance as well as their images during manicure/pedicure.

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