THE COST OF BEAUTY: EXPLORING THE EFFECTS OF UNLICENSED WORK ON FAMILY DYNAMICS

Abstract. This article explores the impact of illegal employment and unlicensed products in the beauty industry on family relationships. The study aims to examine the social and medical consequences of operating beauty salons without proper licensing for both clients and their families. The research employed general scientific methods of cognition, such as analysis, synthesis, induction, deduction, and statistical modeling. The findings indicate that illegal employment in beauty salons is widespread in the United States, leading to a decline in service quality and significant health risks for clients. Many beauty salons hire undocumented workers, often migrants, who lack the necessary documentation, making them vulnerable to exploitation. These workers are deprived of social security and protection, exposing them to exploitative and hazardous working conditions, which adversely affects their health and well-being and, by extension, their families. The beauty industry frequently attracts clients with reduced prices made possible by illegal labor. However, consumers are often unaware of the health risks associated with using such services and products. Cosmetic products may contain harmful chemicals, posing particular dangers to children. Additionally, the use of non-certified products can lead to allergic reactions, hair loss, skin redness, and other undesirable side effects. Improperly performed cosmetic procedures can have significant physical and psychological repercussions, negatively affecting family dynamics. Failed procedures can cause facial deformities, chronic pain, and loss of employability, increasing the risk of family conflicts and stress. The use of invasive procedures, such as Botox, without proper oversight, can result in serious complications, including symptoms similar to botulism. The practical significance of this research lies in raising consumer awareness about the risks associated with services and
products linked to illegal labor in the beauty industry and in developing policies to protect the rights of both workers and clients.

**Keywords:** illegal labor, beauty industry, exploitation, health, family relationships.

**Problem statement.** In the modern world, where appearance often takes precedence over other personal attributes, the beauty industry is experiencing rapid growth. This sector is one of the most profitable but also one of the most vulnerable to abuse, especially in the use of illegal labor. In the United States, beauty salons have become a hotspot for various violations, including illegal employment, leading to serious social and economic consequences.

Illegal employment in beauty salons frequently involves migrants who, in search of a better life, find themselves in extremely vulnerable situations. These workers accept low wages and long working hours without adequate social protection, which ultimately undermines labor standards and fosters exploitation. The problem is exacerbated by a lack of proper regulation and oversight, allowing employers to evade responsibility for violating labor laws.

On the other hand, the practice of using illegal labor helps reduce service costs, which is appealing to consumers. However, this also results in lower service quality and increased health risks for clients, who may encounter unprofessional procedures and the use of substandard or even dangerous cosmetic products.

These challenges lead to not only economic but also profound family consequences. The use of low-quality cosmetic products can cause allergies and skin diseases, and in severe cases, chronic illnesses or even cancer, necessitating additional expenses for treatment and rehabilitation. Such issues disrupt family life, raising stress levels and even causing family conflicts.

Thus, illegal employment and the use of unlicensed products in beauty salons represent a serious socio-economic and familial problem that requires state attention. Necessary interventions should include strengthening the legislative framework, increasing oversight of salon operations, and providing education and social protection for the most vulnerable categories of workers.

**Analysis of recent scientific research and publications.** The issue of the impact of unauthorized cosmetic activities on family dynamics is not well-covered in the literature. Numerous studies address two key aspects of this problem: the harm caused by the use of unsafe cosmetic products and the negative consequences of illegal employment in the beauty industry.

Research focusing on the harm from using harmful cosmetic products highlights the health risks associated with unregulated products. Boer et al. analyze how the improper use of cosmetics can damage the skin barrier, leading to serious dermatological issues [2]. Borowska and Brzóska [3] and Marinovich et al. [9] focus on the toxic effects of metals in cosmetics, emphasizing the health hazards posed by
these components. Tsatalis et al. explore the history of toxic ingredient usage in cosmetics and underscore the need for stricter regulation in this field [16].

Other researchers, such as Perez et al. [13] and Wang et al. [17], examine the risks for children and adults using cosmetic products with high levels of metals and metalloids. These works highlight the importance of strict quality control over cosmetic products.


These studies demonstrate that poor-quality cosmetic products and illegal employment in the beauty industry can have serious repercussions for individuals and their families. Moreover, expert publications in contemporary online outlets like "Natural Home" [12] and "Personal Care Insights" [14] underscore the relevance of these issues and the need for stricter regulations to protect consumers and workers. Despite a substantial amount of literature on this topic, there is a noticeable lack of a systematic approach to its study. Therefore, various scientific methods have been employed to analyze, group, and systematize information to better understand the impact of unauthorized cosmetic activities on family dynamics.

The aim of the study is to highlight the state of negative employment practices and the use of low-quality and unregistered medical products in the industry and their impact on family dynamics.

**Results.**

**The issue of informal employment in beauty salons.** In the beauty salons of the United States, the widespread issue of illegal employment often accompanies problems with the quality of beauty services and, notably, negative health impacts for clients. According to the National Hair & Beauty Federation (NHBF), many salons face legal and ethical challenges due to the use of illegal labor. This phenomenon is prevalent across various types of salons, where workers may be employed without the proper documentation that permits legal employment [11].

Beauty salons frequently hire workers who are migrants without proper documentation, making them particularly vulnerable to exploitation. These workers typically accept low wages and long working hours because they often have no other means to earn an income. According to Starpil Wax [15], in many cases, such workers may be victims of human trafficking, forced to work under conditions that do not meet labor law standards. One aspect of this problem is the risk of children being drawn into illegal employment. It is estimated that by 2025, around 140 million children worldwide may be at risk of forced labor, potentially including work in beauty salons and other sectors of the personal care industry. This situation requires urgent intervention to ensure the protection of children's labor rights and to prevent their exploitation [14].
Economic factors also play a crucial role in sustaining the system of illegal employment. Beauty salon owners often seek to reduce costs by hiring illegal workers willing to work for lower wages and under conditions that violate labor laws. This creates unfair competition for businesses that comply with the law and encourages the continued spread of illegal labor [1].

Illegal workers in beauty salons are often deprived of access to social guarantees and protection, making them susceptible to exploitation. The lack of proper oversight of working conditions results in these workers facing forced overtime, low pay, and hazardous working environments. This also negatively affects their health and well-being [15].

The use of illegal workers in beauty salons is a significant factor that allows for offering services at reduced prices. This approach attracts a large portion of clients looking for economically favorable options. In an economic climate where competition for customers is high, the ability to lower costs is crucial for many businesses in this sector.

Each year, the consumption of cosmetic products increases globally. However, consumers may not be fully aware of the health risks associated with using these products and services [9]. Concerns about product composition have risen, increasing pressure on the cosmetic industry.

Negative impact of services and products in the beauty sector on family dynamics.

**Threats from children's cosmetics.** Research indicates serious health threats associated with the use of substandard cosmetic products, particularly among children. Studies show that many cosmetic products contain high levels of harmful chemicals, such as PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances), which can be toxic even in very low doses. Special attention should be given to facial products, lip products, and mascara, which have been found to contain significant levels of fluorine, a marker for PFAS.

The statistics on the use of beauty products for children are especially alarming [12]. In 20% of the analyzed products, ingredients were found that can lead to the formation of volatile organic compounds. Laboratory tests detected lead and cadmium in 10% of face paints. In 5% of scented products, developmental toxins such as toluene were found. Four out of 39 products have the potential to cause significant long-term medical consequences. This data pertains to certified products; the findings would likely be much worse for uncertified cosmetic products.

Among the toxic substances identified were dangerous components such as parabens, which can disrupt hormonal balance, and preservatives that release formaldehyde, known for its carcinogenic effects. Furthermore, the study revealed the presence of lead, a neurotoxin, and cadmium, a hormonal disruptor, in face paints. Developmental toxins like toluene and potential carcinogens such as ethylbenzene and vinyl acetate were also found in scented products.
It is important to highlight that the presence of such toxic chemicals is not limited to children's cosmetics but also extends to other household products. Unfortunately, consumers often remain uninformed about the actual composition of the products they purchase, making it difficult to protect children from harmful exposure. Therefore, it is crucial to provide parents with the ability to buy safe products for their children [12].

Sadly, statistics show a significant number of consumer complaints about side effects from using cosmetic products, which manifest in various forms. Research conducted by Farah & Farah [7] underscores the diversity and prevalence of these issues.

Moreover, it has been found that cosmetic products often contain heavy metals as contaminants, including arsenic, lead, and cadmium, which can also have a significant harmful impact on health.

Particularly concerning are the side effects of cosmetic products for children and infants. Despite being marketed as safe and gentle, these products can cause rashes, severe itching, and hives in children. This highlights the necessity for stringent control and research into the composition of children's cosmetics [7].

**Physical impacts of procedures.** Family consequences of using low-quality cosmetic products and procedures. The use of low-quality cosmetic products and procedures can lead to significant physical and psychological effects, including facial deformities, chronic pain, and even loss of employability. These outcomes can cause considerable stress and conflicts within families, increasing the risk of family breakdowns.

Hair loss. Companies producing hair care products often employ marketing tactics and catchy slogans to attract consumer attention, claiming that their products are natural, organic, or nourishing. However, even those cosmetic companies that promise high standards of quality and safety do not always meet consumer expectations. One of the most common side effects associated with these products is hair loss. According to research, 61.4% of reports on hair care products included complaints about hair loss.

Skin redness. Skin redness is another frequent side effect reported by consumers, particularly associated with hair removal products, which often contain harsh chemical components. According to reports, 16.8% of users experienced skin redness after using such products.

Rashes from body lotions. Body lotions, intended to moisturize and care for the skin, can also cause unwanted reactions. Data shows that 33.8% of consumers reported rashes after using body lotions, indicating the possible presence of allergenic components or substandard ingredients in these products.

Pain from nail care products. Nail care products, such as polishes, gels, and other items, can also cause side effects. Specifically, 28.2% of users reported pain after using these products. This may be due to the aggressive chemical substances in these products or reactions to certain components.
Botox and botulism. Generally, Botox treatments for cosmetic purposes are considered safe and straightforward. Botox procedures are very quick, usually taking less than 20 minutes, with minimal recovery time, allowing most people to resume their normal activities immediately afterward [5]. However, previously mentioned side effects of Botox include drooping eyelids, eyebrow asymmetry, crooked smile, dry eyes, or excessive tearing. Although very unlikely, there is a possibility of the botulinum toxin spreading to other parts of the body, potentially causing symptoms similar to botulism [5].

In November 2006, Chertow and colleagues published a series of cases involving 4 patients with symptoms similar to natural botulism. On November 27, 2004, there were reports of 4 suspected cases of botulism related to cosmetic botulinum toxin injections. In all cases, the patients had received high-concentration, unregistered preparations of botulinum toxin type A, possibly at doses exceeding the human lethal dose by up to 2,857 times [6].

Harmful composition of cosmetic products for the whole family. It is crucial to pay attention to the ingredients of cosmetic products and choose items from manufacturers who adhere to high-quality standards. Using quality cosmetics can reduce health risks and help avoid negative social and psychological consequences for families.

Some metal-based pigments used as dyes in face paints may contain toxic elements, such as heavy metals, raising concerns about their safety [3]. The use of these products can lead to various levels of exposure, including skin contact and accidental ingestion.

The presence of toxic elements is well-documented in traditional cosmetic products like lipsticks, eye shadows, and skin creams [16]. Despite this, there is still some uncertainty about acceptable usage levels for these products. Moreover, exposure scenarios are difficult to assess as they can vary depending on the cultural habits of each country. Wang et al. [17] found a high likelihood of cancer development due to lifetime exposure to elevated levels of heavy metals in face paints used by Chinese actors. Perez et al. [13] reported that costume makeup contains As, Co, Ni, Pb, and Sb, which can exceed recommended values under professional exposure but do not pose a risk for occasional users in the studied usage scenarios.

In 2009, the Campaign for Safe Cosmetics in the USA found that all commercial face paints tested contained lead, and 60% contained known skin allergens, such as nickel, cobalt, and/or chromium, at levels exceeding recommendations [17].

The most threatening aspect for families is the high potential for cancer, a disease that can affect any family member. Studies have shown that the skin, as the largest organ of the human body, forms a protective barrier that shields the body from microorganisms and physical and chemical agents [4]. However, it can also
allow substances to penetrate the body, influencing physiological processes and causing adverse, including toxic, effects. Lipophilic molecules without an electrical charge and with a molecular mass under 500 Da can passively penetrate the skin, and factors such as temperature or skin occlusion can enhance and facilitate the absorption of substances used in cosmetics. Given the prolonged contact of the skin with cosmetic products over many hours, there is a risk of transdermal absorption of certain substances and their accumulation in the body. Particularly dangerous are factors that contribute to the development of cancer, one of the leading causes of mortality in developed countries [10].

Due to the sharp rise in cancer incidence and mortality, knowledge about carcinogens is the subject of many studies and publications. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), approximately 30% of cancer cases could be prevented through proper prevention, which includes limiting exposure to potentially oncogenic agents [18].

Despite significant progress in toxicology, the presence of compounds with potentially harmful properties in commercially available products cannot be entirely ruled out [2]. Ingredients with potential carcinogenic properties pose a particular danger [8].

Statistical information on health issues from the use of beauty salon products and services. Consumers not only report adverse reactions to cosmetic products but, in some cases, they also experience serious consequences. In 2016, there was a sharp increase in the number of medical consultations due to side effects from cosmetic products. More than 2,300 people reported visiting a doctor that year, compared to just 57 in 2010. Each year after that saw a steady increase, except for 2017, when there was a decline to 954 cases.

![Graph showing hospitalization and medical interventions after using cosmetics](image)

*Fig. 1. Hospitalization and medical interventions after using cosmetics [7]*
Projected data for 2025 suggests that, given the trend up to 2019, the expected number of medical consultations could exceed 4,000, creating new challenges for the country's healthcare system. Migration flows to the USA from developing countries continue to be a significant phenomenon in the global context. Economic and social conditions in many countries motivate a large portion of the population, especially women, to seek better opportunities for living and working in the United States. One of the popular employment sectors for migrant women is the service industry, particularly beauty salons and small private establishments. These jobs often attract women due to relatively low entry barriers and the possibility of working flexible hours. However, a significant portion of these workers are forced to accept work at nominal prices, which can mean low pay and a lack of social protections.

Employment in the informal sector, especially in cosmetic and private services, poses substantial health and safety risks for both workers and clients. The use of uncertified or substandard cosmetic products can lead to serious medical complications. The lack of adequate state oversight and regulation creates conditions where unscrupulous entrepreneurs can ignore safety and hygiene standards.

The state must play an active role in regulating this sector to protect the rights and health of both workers and consumers. Firstly, attention should be focused on creating conditions for the legal employment of migrants. This includes not only support through education and training but also ensuring access to social protections and legal assistance.

The second important task for the government is to regulate the quality of cosmetic services and products. Implementing safety and hygiene standards, as well as ensuring compliance with these standards, are crucial elements in reducing health risks.

Conclusions. Illegal employment in beauty salons, especially among migrants, is a significant issue in the USA, with serious consequences for the quality of services provided and the health of both workers and clients. The illegal use of labor is often accompanied by exploitation, low pay, and deplorable working conditions that do not meet labor law standards. This creates a highly competitive market environment where legally operating businesses struggle against the unfair practices of their competitors.

Economic motives of salon owners often lead to the use of illegal labor, which allows for cost reductions and the provision of services at lower prices. To make beauty services even more accessible, salon owners cut corners on materials, using uncertified and potentially dangerous cosmetic products. This can result in serious medical complications, such as allergic reactions, hair loss, and even cancer. The risks associated with toxic elements in cosmetic products commonly used in salons particularly highlight the need for strict quality control of cosmetic products and services.
To improve the situation in the beauty industry, actions must be taken on several levels. Firstly, the state should strengthen the regulation of working conditions and ensure compliance with labor laws to prevent worker exploitation. This includes creating conditions for the legal employment of migrants, which involves access to education, training, and social protections. Secondly, it is crucial to introduce safety standards for cosmetic products and services to protect consumers from potential harmful effects. Finally, raising consumer awareness about the possible risks of using uncertified products will encourage more informed choices and support responsible businesses.

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