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Identifying Factors Influence Individuals' Intention to Quit Tanning: Sociocultural Perspective

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Keywords: Body-Tanning Attitudes, Skin Aging, Tanning Dependence.

Significance. Motives for UV exposure have been shown to be related to enhancing appearance, yet little research has examined specific factors related to individuals' intention to quit tanning. Body-tanning research aimed at understanding the factors leading to the development of skin cancer has focused primarily on sun-protection. With respect to factors related to UV exposure intentions and behaviors, research has been identified as particularly relevant as the following: perceived premature skin aging (Cafri et al., 2006) and tanning dependence (Hillhouse et al., 2012). Previous research suggests that positive attitudes toward a tanned appearance are the best indicators of intention to engage in UV exposure. Therefore, it is important to incorporate individuals' tanning dependence and perception of skin aging in order to understand body-tanning behaviors and to develop an effective skin cancer prevention strategy.

Theoretical Perspective. Sociocultural influences (i.e., media, family, peers) were identified as important variables in the formation of tanning attitudes (Cafri et al., 2006). Internalization of sociocultural influences and an ideal standard of beauty promote the notion that failing to achieve an ideal appearance makes individuals feel they are responsible for their appearance. Body-tanning is one of many appearance-related behaviors that young women are motivated to practice as part of their control of appearance management. For example, a tanned appearance is a current standard for attractiveness which makes bodies appear thinner (O'Riordan, 2006). However, it is notable to mention that no studies have yet examined skin aging concerns and tanning dependence as connections to the intentions of body-tanning. Therefore, the following research hypotheses are established:

H1-H4: A general tan attractiveness (H1), media influence (H2), family/friend influence (H3), and physical fitness (H4) have a negative influence on intention to quit tanning.

H5: Skin aging has a positive influence on intention to quit tanning.

H6-H9: The negative relationship between a general tan attractiveness (H6), media influence (H7), family/friends (H8), physical fitness (H9) and the motivation and intention to quit will be stronger among people who have a higher tanning dependence.

H10: The positive relationship between skin aging and intention to quit will be stronger among people who have low tanning dependence than those who have high tanning dependence.

Method. Participants were 402 college students who were contacted by a web link to the survey online and asked for their permission to participate. The majority of the participants were Caucasian (78.6%; n = 316), African American (8.7%; n = 35), Asian (5.7%; n = 23), multiracial (3.5%; n = 14), and Hispanic Americans (2.2 %; n = 9). A preliminary analysis revealed that the average age of the respondents was 20.63 years old. Participants were asked to indicate how much they disagree and agree on a five-point Likert scale. The questionnaire was developed from existing measures of sociocultural influence (Cafri et al., 2006) and body

tanning dependence (Hillhouse et al., 2012). This includes seven sections of survey included general attractiveness, media, family/friend, physical fitness, skin aging motivations, tanning dependence, and intention to quit tanning. The last part of the questionnaire included three items of intention to quit tanning which was modified from the Ajzen (1988)'s generalized intention (e.g., "I intend to quit tanning"). Lastly, demographic variables included subjects' gender, age, and ethnicity.

Results. To examine hypothesized relationships, a multiple regression was used. There was a negative relationship between general attractiveness motivation and intention to quit tanning ($\beta = -.240$, $p < .01$), supporting H1. There was also a positive relationship between skin aging motivation and intention to quit tanning ($\beta = .265$, $p < .01$), supporting H5. However, media, family/friend, and physical fitness motivations were not significantly related to intention to quit tanning, not supporting H2, H3, and H4. The interaction terms between skin aging motivation and tanning dependence were statistically significant ($\beta = -.136$, $p < .01$), supporting H10. However, H6, H7, H8, and H9 were not significant. The moderating effect of tanning dependence was partially detected.

Discussion and Conclusion. Findings provide important implications for the development of skin cancer prevention and intervention program. The results support the idea that tanning behavior is influenced by positive attitudes toward tan attractiveness and perception of skin aging. The important theoretical relevance emerged as skin aging was expected to increase the intention to quit tanning. Emphasis on skin aging will certainly be a body-tanning deterrent especially for those who make the best effort to enhance their appearance. Current appearance-based interventions should emphasize the damaging effects of UV exposure on skin, in particular, and this will increase individuals' the intentions to quit tanning. Moreover, the role of tanning dependence in which the addictive properties of tanning is significant may override the appearance-based tanning motives. In order to develop skin cancer intervention strategy, it is important to understand the vulnerable group who are addictive to tanning. This group is less likely to be concerned with valuation of skin aging as a result of tanning. Therefore, future studies should identify the body-tanning dependence so that further development of effective healthy tanning behaviors can be established.

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