



Influences of Parental Attachment and Life Satisfaction on Social Tanning Behaviors among College Students

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Significance. The goal of this study is to assess the effect of parental attachment and life satisfaction on social tanning behaviors. Due to the perceived attractiveness of tanned skin, body-tanning behavior via outdoor and indoor tanning bed use is increasingly popular. The evidence supporting appearance-motive tanning indicates that indoor UV tanning is highly motivated by social influences (Hillhouse, Turrisi, Holwiski, & McVeigh, 1999). Previous studies have identified the significance of social tanning (i.e., tanning with others) in that people define the self-concept in terms of groups with whom individuals associate (Rubin, Bukowski, & Parker, 2007). An in-depth analysis of factors influencing social tanning behavior is critical for the development of effective, yet novel interventions designed to reduce harmful tanning behaviors. Therefore, the specific questions are addressed as follows: “What influences do parental attachment and life satisfaction have on college students’ social tanning behavior?”

Literature Review. Social tanning has been identified as a source of tanning motive because of friends’ perceptions; as a result, individuals may feel that a tan is important in making one attractive (Dennis, Lowe, & Snetselaar, 2009). Previous research on indoor-tanning behaviors has revealed that parents’ use of tanning devices is a significant predictor of children’s tanning device usage (Cokkinides & Weinstock, 2003). In addition, body image has emerged as an important aspect of life satisfaction. Individuals with an attractive appearance demonstrate higher satisfaction with life (Donaghue, 2009). It has been found that perceived feedback from parents and peers influence life satisfaction, especially among obese individuals (Forste & Moore, 2012); therefore, parental attachment and life satisfaction as a predictor of social tanning will deepen our understanding of body-tanning behavior motives.

Methods. After gaining institutional review board approval, data were collected from 333 college students using a self-administered online survey tool. The majority of the participants were female (80.2%) and Caucasian (76.9%). A preliminary analysis revealed that the average age of the respondents was 19.8 years old. The measurement items used were selected based on a review of the literature: Parental Attachment Scale (Chapple, 2003); Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985); and Social Tanning Behavior items were developed by the researchers. Participants responded to measurement items using five-point scales (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree).

Results. Factor analysis was performed to assess the dimensionality and measurement properties of social tanning behaviors (i.e., “I use a tanning bed with my siblings,” or “I sun tan with my friends.”) on tanning bed use ($\alpha = .78$) and sun-tanning ($\alpha = .80$). The measurement items of parental attachment (“My mother seems to understand me”) and life satisfaction (i.e., “I am satisfied with my life”) yield a reliability of $\alpha = .86$ and $\alpha = .91$, respectively. Tests of dimensionality for the canonical correlation analysis indicate that the two canonical dimensions were statistically significant at the .05 level. Function 1 had a canonical correlation of .18 between the sets of variables, while for Function 2, the canonical correlation was lower at .14. Interestingly, “Social Sun Tanning,” with a standardized canonical weight of .86, was a more important variable in the dependent set of the first canonical function. “Social Tanning

Bed Use” had a relatively small standardized canonical correlation weight of -.52. In summary, the first function is considered to be related to those individuals who enjoy social outdoor tanning. In the second canonical function, “Social Tanning Bed Use” was a more important variable with a weight of -.85, whereas “Social Sun Tanning” had a weight of -.51. Thus, the second function is considered to be related to those individuals who do not engage in social indoor tanning. Next, the standardized canonical coefficients for the two functions across both sets of variables were examined. The first canonical function was more strongly influenced by Parental Attachment in Social Tanning (.88), whereas the second function was more strongly influenced by Life Satisfaction (.88). These results indicate that college students with high (versus low) scores on perceived “parental attachment” tend to engage in “Social Sun Tanning.” On the other hand, college students with high life satisfaction are less likely to use tanning beds with friends and families.

Discussion and Conclusion. Parents’ sunbathing behaviors may have been frequently observed such that outdoor sun-tanning can be seen as an outdoor family activity. Parents should advise their children of the danger of UV exposure from outdoor sunlight, as well as indoor tanning bed use; moreover, they should instill the ability to incorporate skin cancer prevention behaviors into their families. Although indoor tanning is motivated by an enhanced appearance (Asvat, et al., 2010), individuals with high life satisfaction may not actually engage in frequent tanning bed use with other people. Having a strong desire to achieve an ideal tan by using a tanning bed may counteract individuals’ desires to have better life circumstances. Interventions that aim to deter harmful body-tanning should be designed to consider ways of improving people’s quality of relationships and life. Demographic variables (e.g., gender, age, education, income, occupation, marital status) related to using indoor tanning would be of great interest to further analyze body-tanning behaviors

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