

Using Concept Mapping to Inform the Measurement of Flavor Outcome Expectancies among Youth Adults

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3P50DA036105-04S1

Abstract:

The benefits and harms of flavor additives in combustible and noncombustible tobacco products is one of the most controversial debates facing regulatory policy. Some researchers and advocates suggest that all characterizing flavors should be banned in all tobacco products, while others suggest the need for unlimited or limited characterizing flavors as a strategy for harm reduction and youth prevention. Flavor additives in electronic cigarettes (ECIGs) may play a critical role in ECIG initiation, dual use, and switching among young adult combustible tobacco users (cigarettes and cigars), but critical gaps remain in the availability of psychometrically sound measurement tools that can assess accurately how flavors influence ECIG use behaviors. The goal of this application is to develop a flavor outcome expectancies scale that can help quantify the role of flavors in ECIG trajectories among young adult tobacco users aged 18-35. The proposed study builds on five concept mapping studies completed as part of Project 4 of the VCU Center for the Study of Tobacco Products (P50-DA036105; PI: Thomas Eissenberg), that yielded over 100 user-generated statements that describe positive and negative flavor experiences. The proposed study will use the statements to develop items for the flavor outcome expectancies scale (Aim 1), establish the content validity of the scale, test the scale items using cognitive interviews (Aim 2), pilot test the scale, examine the internal consistency and factor structure, and investigate the concurrent and construct validity of the scale (Aim 3). In Phase 1 (item reduction and content validity) our team will reduce and revise relevant concept mapping statements and obtain feedback from an expert panel on the content validity and structure of the items. In Phase 2 (qualitative assessment), we will conduct cognitive interviews (n=10) and focus groups (n=24) among adult combustible product users (cigarettes and/or little cigars/cigarillos) ages 18-35 to examine their understanding and comprehension of the items. In Phase 3 (quantitative assessment and testing), Craigslist will be used to recruit combustible product users who have never used ECIGs (n=140) and combustible tobacco product users who currently use ECIGs (n=14) to complete an online survey that will allow us to examine the structure of the scale and test its validity.