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BSN Honors

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Narrative Literature Review and Bibliography

Topic: Mindfulness

Narrowed Topic: Mindfulness in Postpartum Body Image

Problem: Body image is a crucial component of self-concept, impacting both psychology and quality of life (Cash, Thériault, & Annis, 2004). It encompasses body satisfaction, internalized ideals, and related emotions (Cash, Thériault, & Annis, 2004). As with all aspects of mental and physical health, a person's body image can sometimes be poor. Body dissatisfaction can be defined as "negative evaluation of one's body or appearance" (Ehlinger & Blashill, 2016). A preliminary study found that negative body image is negatively correlated with physical and mental health-related quality of life, even more than BMI (Wilson, Latner, & Hayashi, 2013).

The dramatic and rapid physical changes that occur during pregnancy such as weight gain, breast changes, and clothes no longer fitting may trigger feelings of body dissatisfaction in some women. Negative body image has particular implications for pregnant and perinatal women and their infants. There is an association between body dissatisfaction and the onset of prenatal and postpartum depression (Silveira, Ertel, Dole, & Chsan-Taber, 2015). Negative body image has also been linked to decreased likelihood that the mother will initiate and continue breastfeeding (Brown, Rance, & Warren, (2015). Healthy People 2020 has goals both to decrease postpartum depression (MICH-34) and to increase rates of breastfeeding (MICH-21.1) (2014), making interventions to reduce postpartum body dissatisfaction potentially significant for public health. During the postpartum period, women may have an unrealistic expectation of regaining their "pre-pregnancy body", particularly regarding the timeline for weight loss (Gow., Lydecker, Lamanna, & Mazzeo, (2012). This expectation based on comparison to a social ideal (represented in this article by celebrities in the postpartum period) can result in body dissatisfaction. Objectification Theory explains that "women in western cultures are socialized to see themselves as objects...to be viewed and evaluated by others on the basis of appearance", and that constant comparison of the corporeal self to a social ideal is central in women's lived experiences (Shannon & Mills, 2015).

Mindfulness training is a potential intervention to promote positive body image in women during pregnancy and postpartum. Mindfulness is defined as "the awareness that arises from paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally" (Bardacke, 2012). The foundational attitudes of mindfulness include Beginner's Mind (an open perspective), non-judging, patience, trust (self-reliance), acknowledgment of things as they are, and kindness (especially to oneself) (Bardacke, 2012). Through mindfulness practices, women may become

aware of negative or self-judging thoughts, and be better equipped to accept their bodies as they are and treat themselves with kindness. Several studies explored mindfulness and related attitudes as potential antidotes to negative body image. One study found that body appreciation protects against body dissatisfaction related to thin-ideal exposure (Andrew, Tiggemann, & Clark, (2015). Another study found that gratitude has a similar effect (Homan, Sedlak, & Boyd, 2014). A final article found that that women with high self-compassion (as defined by formal mindfulness practice) had less depression, body shame, body surveillance, and negative eating attitudes (Liss., & Erchull, (2015). These observational studies suggest that mindfulness-based interventions may improve body image, but no studies have tested this idea on a large scale. There is a gap in research on the specific subject of mindfulness interventions for body dissatisfaction in pregnancy or the postpartum period. The purpose of our study is to explore how women who were trained in Mindfulness-Based Childbirth and Parenting experienced their postpartum bodies, among other questions.

Research Question: Do women who have completed a prenatal Mindfulness-Based Childbirth and Parenting (MBCP) class find mindfulness to be helpful in accepting their postpartum body?

Purpose: The purpose of my research is to explore individually reported effects that formal and informal mindfulness practice had on women's postpartum body image. The way that women describe their postpartum bodies and the expectations and feelings surrounding them can indicate their physical self-esteem. If mindfulness was helped women to accept their postpartum bodies, that benefit of mindfulness might be more intentionally and commonly used for that purpose.

Methods: We created an interview guide with questions covering baseline information (how many children do you have, do you still practice mindfulness formally, etc.) as well as questions more specific to postpartum body image (has mindfulness changed how you think about your body, how would you describe your current body satisfaction, etc.). We then invited graduates from a local Mindfulness-Based Childbirth and Parenting (MBCP) class to participate in our study. Those who choose to participate and give proper consent were interviewed individually, using the questions in the interview guide as prompts. Interviews were recorded and transcribed for qualitative analysis. The results of this analysis were compiled in a poster to be presented on UW's campus at the Undergraduate Research Symposium. The poster was also presented at the Nurses Recognition Banquet.

Female participants of a local Mindfulness-Based Childbirth and Parenting (MBCP) class who graduated within the past year were invited to participate in the study by their instructor, after being given opportunity to opt out of receiving the invitation. There was a small incentive of a gift card for participants in the study. Participants met with one researcher in a location of their choice within a given area, where private conversation can be achieved in a public place (i.e. a reserved room at the library or at a café). The researcher obtained informed consent, and

gave the participant a demographic questionnaire to fill out. The researcher then used a previously written IRB-approved interview guide to facilitate conversation. The interview guide used open-ended questions about the overall pregnancy experience, and postpartum experiences related to lactation, body image, and mindfulness. Audio recording was used and later transcribed. 11 total participants were interviewed.

Analysis: Once interviews were completed, the researchers used qualitative description to analyze and assess trends in the transcribed data (Sandelowski, 2000). This method of qualitative analysis involves breaking down manifest and latent content from the interviews into content areas, meaning units, and codes (Graneheim, 2004). Qualitative description is not meant to result in abstractions, and so is not as interpretive as other forms of qualitative analysis (Sandelowski, 2000).

To ensure trustworthiness, the researchers met to discuss the meaning of interview data using the methods described above, and reach consensus on how phrases ought to be categorized into themes (Graneheim, 2004). This serves to illuminate the experience of postpartum mothers regarding any interactions of body image and mindfulness practice.

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