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Predictors of Postpartum Depression: Body Dissatisfaction, Disordered Eating, and Perfectionism

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Abstract

Eighty percent of women with postpartum depression are undetected and untreated. The literature suggests that disturbances in body image and eating behavior during pregnancy may predict the development of postpartum depression. Early research also suggests that maladaptive perfectionism may play a role in this relationship. This study assessed body dissatisfaction, disordered eating, and maladaptive perfectionism in an ethnically diverse sample of 46 women during the 3rd trimester of pregnancy. Postpartum depression was assessed at least 2 months postpartum using the EPDS. Findings revealed that body dissatisfaction predicted symptoms of postpartum depression, after controlling for previously established risk factors. Body disparagement, a component of body dissatisfaction, accounted for the most variance in symptoms of postpartum depression and this relationship was moderated by maladaptive perfectionism. Contrary to hypotheses, in this sample, maladaptive perfectionism served as a protective factor. No significant relationships emerged between disordered eating, maladaptive perfectionism, and postpartum depression. The findings of this study provide additional information regarding risk factors for postpartum depression in a diverse sample of women.