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New Vistas

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Abstract

Background

Pregnancy is a complex time for body image, numerous biopsychosocial changes occur in a short space of time. Body image research in pregnancy has often been approached using perspectives rooted in body dissatisfaction. Positive body image refers to an overarching love and respect for the body. Currently, little is known about positive body image during pregnancy. Thus, it is important to explore body image during pregnancy, more specifically to understand the positive characteristics of body image during this time.

Research Questions

- 1) How do pregnant women view their body image
- 2) What characteristics, if any, of positive body image do pregnant women experience?

Purpose

This study aimed to explore how pregnant women view their body image and understand how positive body image is experienced in this time. Conducted as part of a wider doctoral research thesis to develop a perinatal-appropriate measure of positive body image. These qualitative findings will inform the development of inventory items.

Methods

One-to-one online semi-structured interviews with seven pregnant participants (1 first trimester, 2 second trimester, 4 third trimester; aged 30-42 years). Participants were asked about their experiences of pregnancy, their body image and their understanding of positive body image. Transcripts were analysed using a reflexive thematic analysis.

Results

Five themes related to positive body image were developed: Getting to know the pregnant body; Accepting the pregnant body; Attending to the pregnant body; Celebrating the pregnant body; and Implicit positive body image.

Conclusions

Participants were aware of and understood the core aspects of positive body image but were not always able to notice that they demonstrated these aspects of positive body image, particularly appreciating body functionality. Findings will be essential in developing inventory items and highlight key areas where pregnant women may benefit from targeted support, providing an opportunity for research aimed at improving positive body image during this time.

Keywords

body image, pregnancy