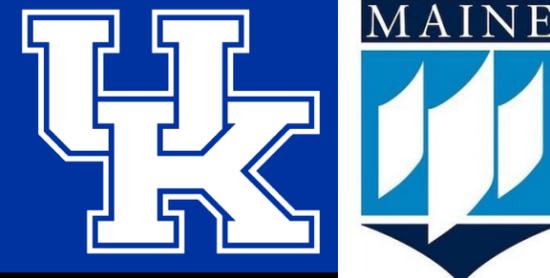# Cross-sectional examination of Dietary Quality and Mindful Eating Behaviors among Pregnant and Postpartum Women

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Introduction

As most lifestyle support during a female's journey through motherhood happens in the pregnancy period, limited resources are maintained or promoted for postpartum (PP).

Objectives

To assess dietary quality and mindful eating behaviors between pregnant and 1-year PP women to determine need of dietary support measures.

Methods

An online anonymous cross-sectional survey was nationally distributed to (1) currently pregnant and (2) women within one year of giving birth.

Data collected included demographics (age and rural or urban residence), descriptive statistics (pregnancy status, number of pregnancies and biological children, body mass index (BMI)), Perceived Stress Scale (PSS: 0-40 score) short Healthy Eating Index (sHEI; score 0-100), and likert item mindful eating behaviors (1=strongly agree to 7=strongly disagree; (Q1) "I trust my body to tell me how much to eat", (Q2) "I stop eating when I am full"). Wilcoxon rank sum tests were used to detect differences between pregnancy and PP among mindful eating behaviors. Linear regression was used to predict mindful behaviors while controlling for BMI and age.

Results

Women (n=52) were between 20-34 years of age, 92.3% married, 98.1% white, 50% rural residents, a sHEI of 49.81±10.31, 70.6% were classified as overweight or obese, 82% moderately stressed (perceived stress score(PSS)), had average pregnancies of 2.06±1.09 and had average of 1.64±0.74 biological children. PP women were less likely to agree on mindful behaviors Q1 (pregnant: 1.82±0.73, 1-year PP: 2.60±1.35; p=.03) and Q2 (pregnant: 2.29+0.69, PP: 3.54±1.77; p=.02). PSS (β=0.40, p<.01), pregnancy/PP group (β=-0.34, p=.01), number of biological children (β=0.43, p=.03) and number of pregnancies (β=-0.42, p=.04) significantly predicted mindful behavior Q2 ($F_{(7,37)}$=3.24, p=.01).

Descriptive Data	N/%/Mean±SD
n	52
Age years	28.2±3.6
Postpartum	66.7%
# of pregnancies	2.06±1.09
Married	92.3%
White	98.1%
Rural	50.0%
Overweight or Obese	70.6%

PSS=19.4±4.9

sHEI= 49.8±10.3

Likert Question	Pregnant	Postpartum	P-value
Q1	1.82±0.73	2.60±1.35	.03
Q2	2.29+0.69	3.54±1.77	.02

(Q1) "I trust my body to tell me how much to eat"
(Q2) "I stop eating when I am full"

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Linear Regression: mindful behavior (Q2) ($F_{(7,37)}$=3.24, p=.01).

- PSS (β=0.40, p<.01)
- pregnancy/PP group (β=-0.34, p=.01)
- number of biological children (β=0.43, p=.03)
- number of pregnancies (β=-0.42, p=.04)

Controlled BMI, age (sHEI not significant pred.)

Conclusions

Findings suggest the unique potential to improve self-efficacy of new moms regarding mindful eating behaviors. Promoting the practice of mindfulness has the potential to foster stress reduction and overall healthy lifestyle habits throughout the PP journey.