MATERNAL PSYCHOSOCIAL FACTORS RELATED TO DURATION AND EXCLUSIVITY OF BREASTFEEDING PRACTICES AMONG RURAL WOMEN: THE HEALTHY MOMS & BABIES STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Rural populations continue to have breastfeeding rates that fall below the national goal for both exclusivity and duration. Some women within this population are successful at breastfeeding both exclusively and for the recommended length of time. This study aimed at identifying antenatal psychosocial characteristics that may be predictive of breastfeeding exclusivity rates. A sample of 90 women in 27 rural counties completed instruments to measure self-esteem, breastfeeding self-confidence, partner/social support, depression, abuse and motivation during their third trimester of pregnancy and four months post-delivery. Demographic findings previously associated with exclusivity were not supported within this sample, with age, income and educational level approaching but not achieving significance. Measurements of breastfeeding self-confidence and motivation were significantly associated with breastfeeding exclusivity. Women who were more motivated and confident in their ability to breastfeed were more likely to exclusively breastfeed. The findings of this study may assist in developing future nursing interventions to improve breastfeeding outcomes, as psychosocial characteristics are potentially modifiable.