

Differences in Pregnancy Distress and Infant Feeding Plans Between Employed and Unemployed Pregnant Individuals during COVID



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Introduction

- The COVID-19 pandemic posed unique challenges and opportunities for pregnant individuals (CDC, 2022).
- Both pregnancy distress and infant feeding choice have important implications for infant and maternal health (Hossain et al., 2020).
- Being unemployed increases the odds of depression and other mental health disorders among pregnant individuals (Ho-Fung et al., 2022).
- Furthermore, unemployed mothers have been found to be twice as likely to breastfeed their infants than mothers who are employed full time (Ryan et al, 2006).
- The present study addressed whether employment status was linked to pregnancy distress and infant feeding plans during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Method

N = 544 Pregnant Individuals (Mean = 28.0 years old, SD = 9.2)

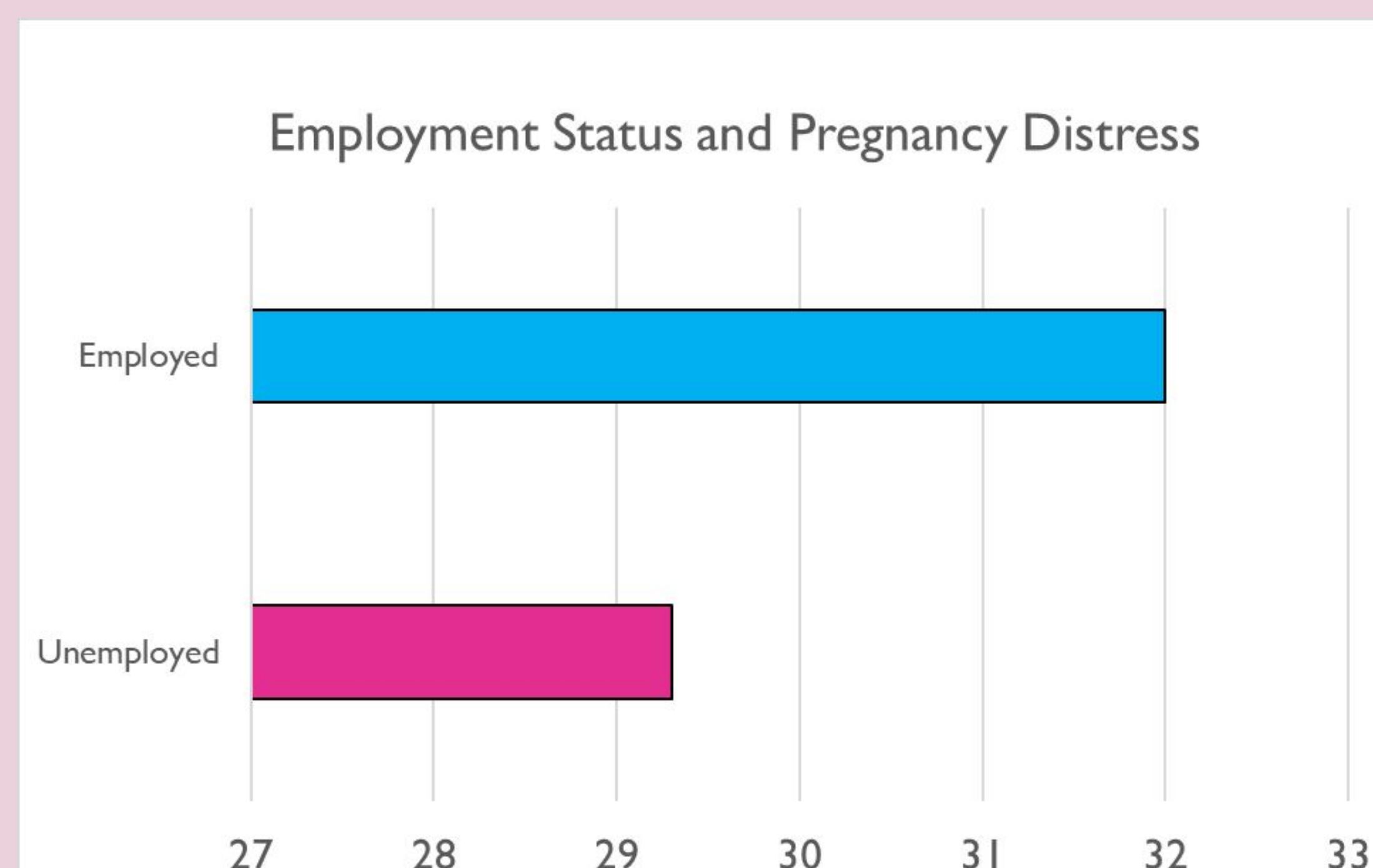
- **Pregnancy Distress:** Prenatal Distress Questionnaire (e.g., “I find weight gain during pregnancy troubling”).
- **Infant Feeding Plan:** Participants rated the following 5 infant feeding plans on a 6-point likert scale: Formula feed exclusively, Attempt breastfeeding, and Exclusively breastfeed for 1, 3, and 6 months.
- **Employment:** “Are you currently working?” Responses were re-coded as ‘Employed’ or ‘Unemployed’.
- Employed individuals = 53.5%
- Unemployed individuals = 36.9%

Results

Plan of Analysis: Independent-samples t-test.

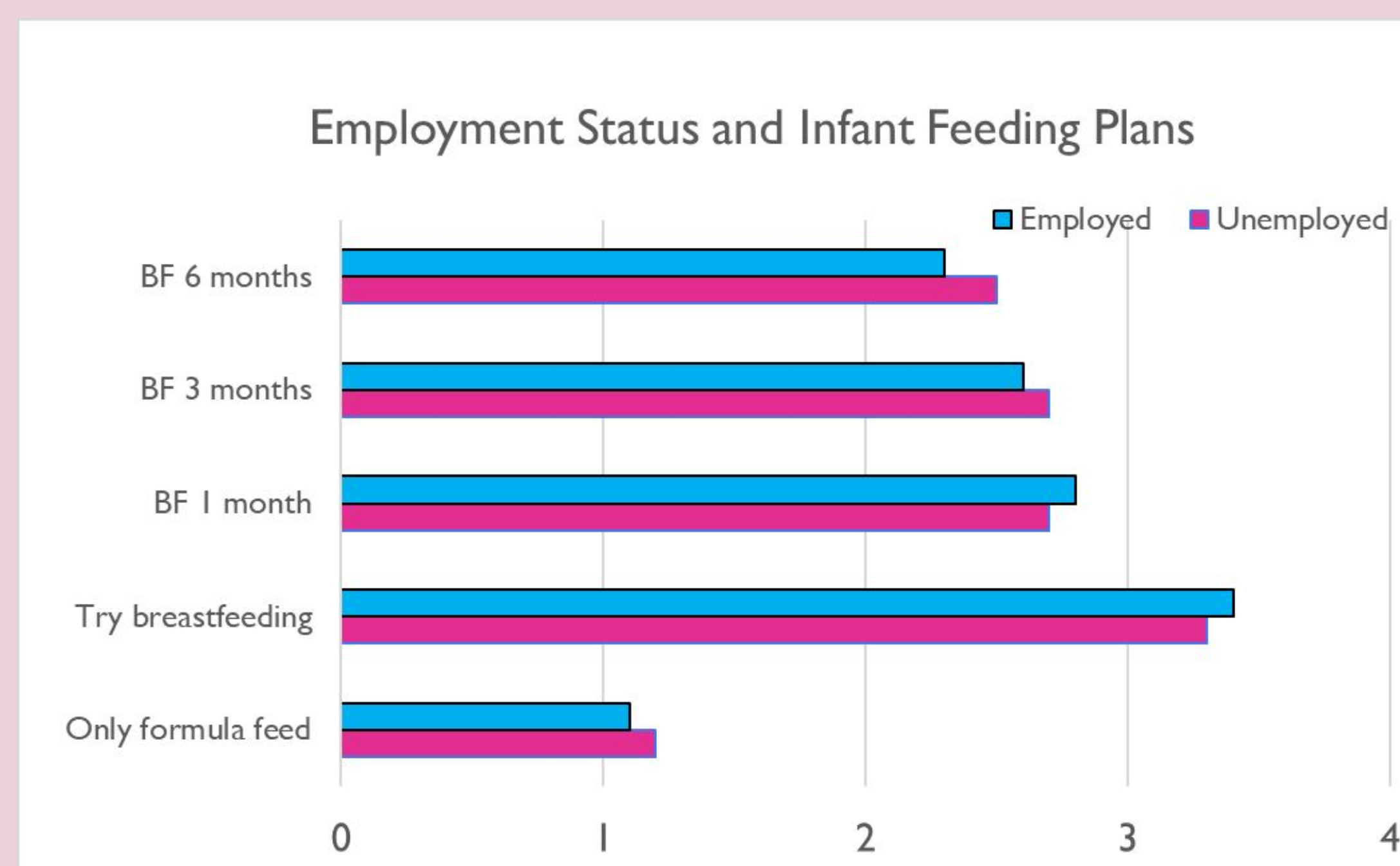
Pregnancy Distress

- There was a significant main effect of employment status on pregnancy distress $t(490) = -2.95, p = .003; 95\% \text{ CI } [-4.53, -.90]$.



Infant Feeding Plans

- Employed and Unemployed individuals did not differ on any of the infant feeding plans, all p 's > .05.



Discussion

- Employed individuals reported higher pregnancy distress scores compared to unemployed individuals. This is consistent with prior research (Kotlar et al., 2021) that showed that certain jobs may have put pregnant individuals at risk for contracting COVID-19.
- In contrast to past research, our results showed that employed and unemployed individuals did not differ in their infant feeding plans (regarding both breastfeeding and use of formula).
- Future research is needed to explore whether infant feeding intentions align with actual feeding behaviors postpartum, when mothers are tasked with managing the stress and time commitments of a job (Gordon et al., 2021).
- Additionally, more research is needed to examine changes in flexible working conditions (e.g., remote work) on intent and actual infant behaviors.

References

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