

Exploring Unpaid Labor and Mental Health in Lebanon: A National Cross-Sectional Study

P1 – R16

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This study shows that unpaid labor, especially when combined with employment, is significantly associated with mental health. Women in Lebanon spent significantly more hours on unpaid labor, especially in housework and childcare, compared to men; yet unpaid labor was associated with higher odds of anxiety and depression for both genders.

BACKGROUND

- Research on unpaid labor is an emerging area, especially the association between unpaid labor and health, which is still under-researched
- Globally, women bear the burden of spending more hours performing unpaid labor than men
- The double burden of paid employment and unpaid labor has been linked to mental health implications

Study Objective

This study assesses the association between unpaid labor and mental health in Lebanon, exploring the potential moderation effects of gender and employment

METHODS

- Cross-sectional study from January to July 2024
- Telephone survey was conducted in Lebanon, recruiting adults 19-64 years and over-sampled employed females
- The survey covered information on socio-demographic characteristics, employment, health, and self-reported number of hours spent in the previous week doing 11 different tasks

Exposure of interest:

- **Total hours spent in the past week on unpaid labor** overall;
- Separated into domains: hours spent on housework, maintenance/gardening tasks, childcare, and adult care
- Categorized into quartiles.

Outcomes of interest:

- **Anxiety** - 10+ points on the General Anxiety Disorder scale (GAD-7)
- **Depression** - 10+ points on the Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9)

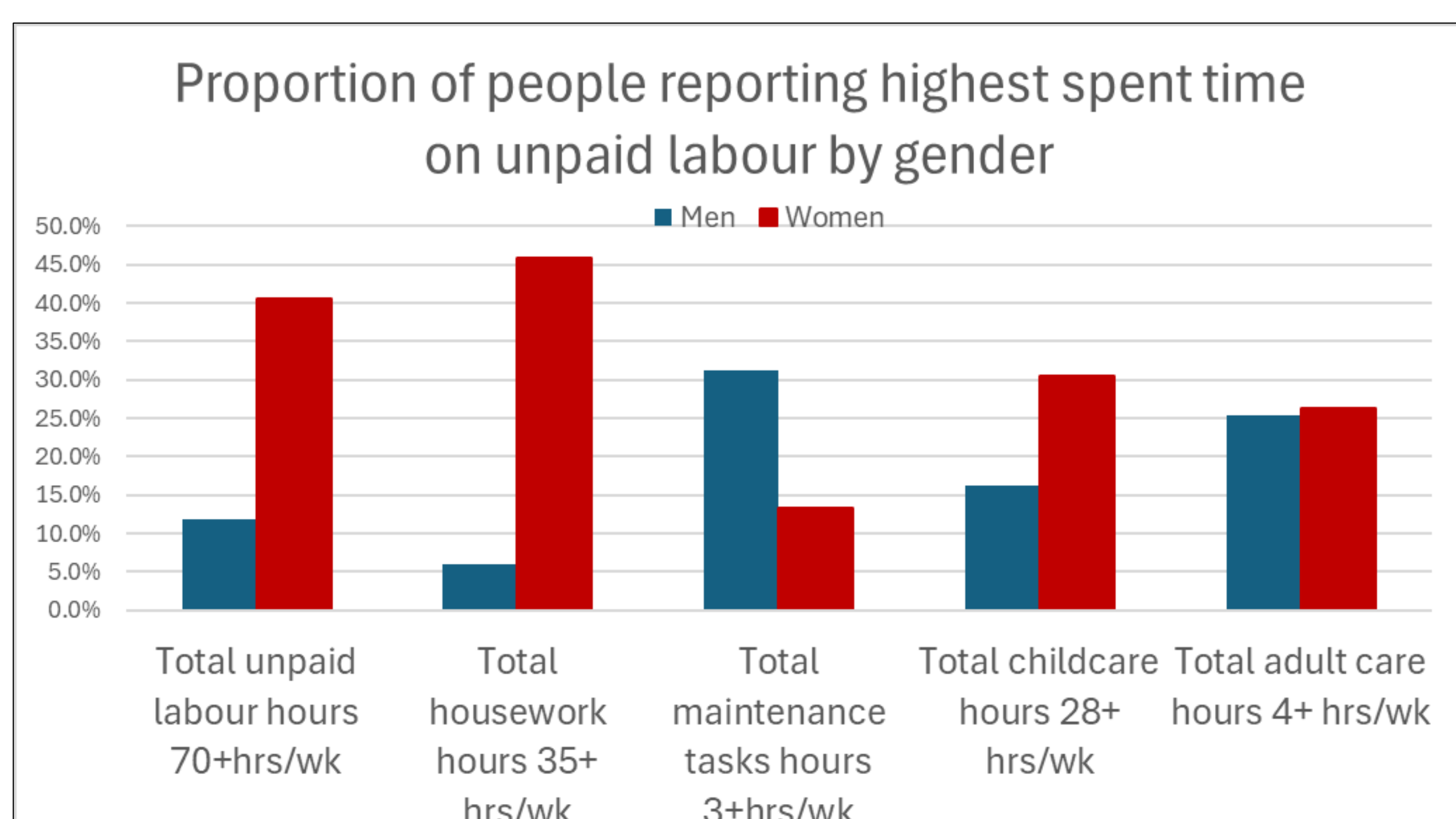
Covariates: Gender, age, education, marital status, household structure, employment status, income, urbanicity, having chronic illness/es, and having a disability were considered potential confounders

Statistical Analysis:

- Multiple logistic regression models
- Gender and employment interaction terms were tested

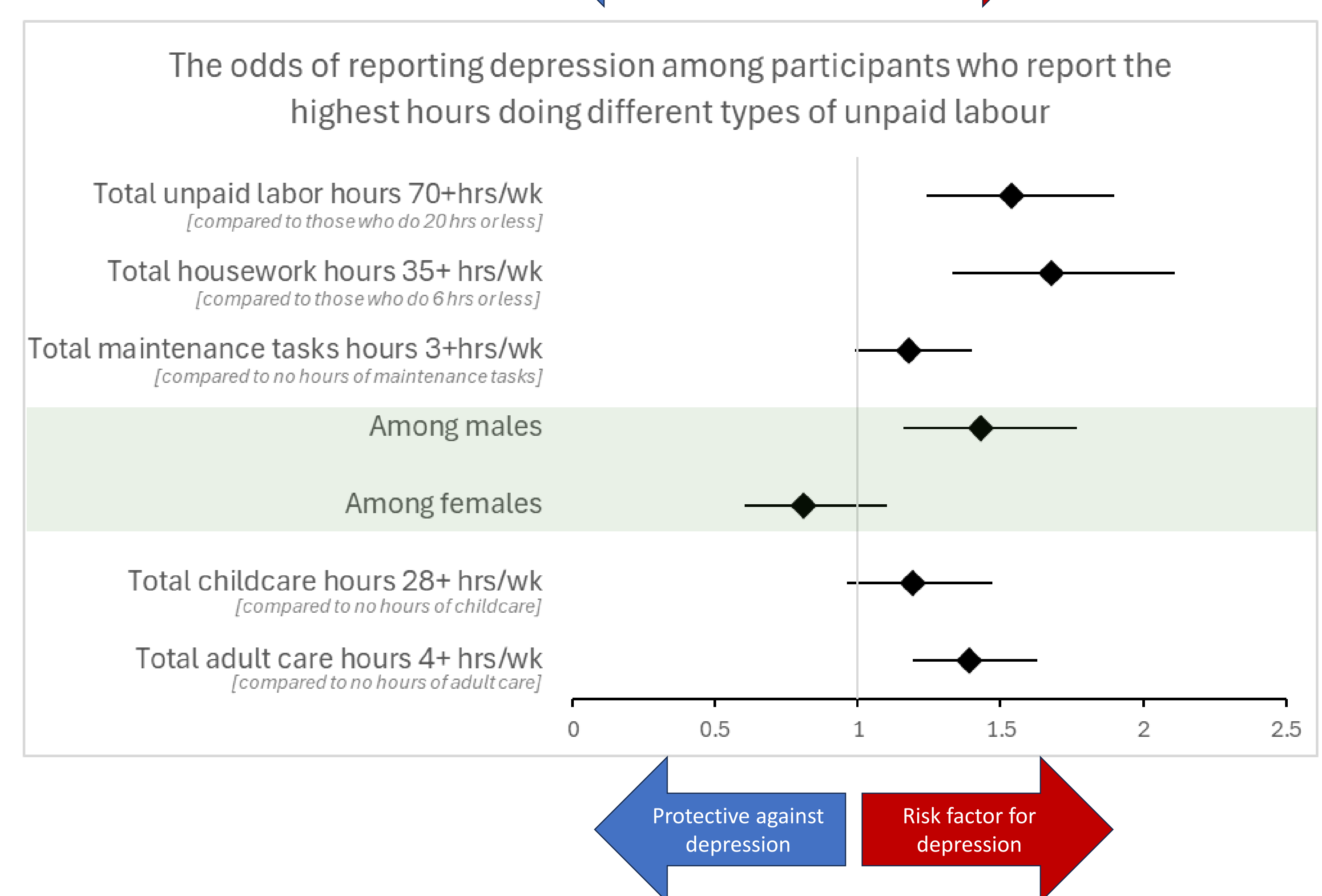
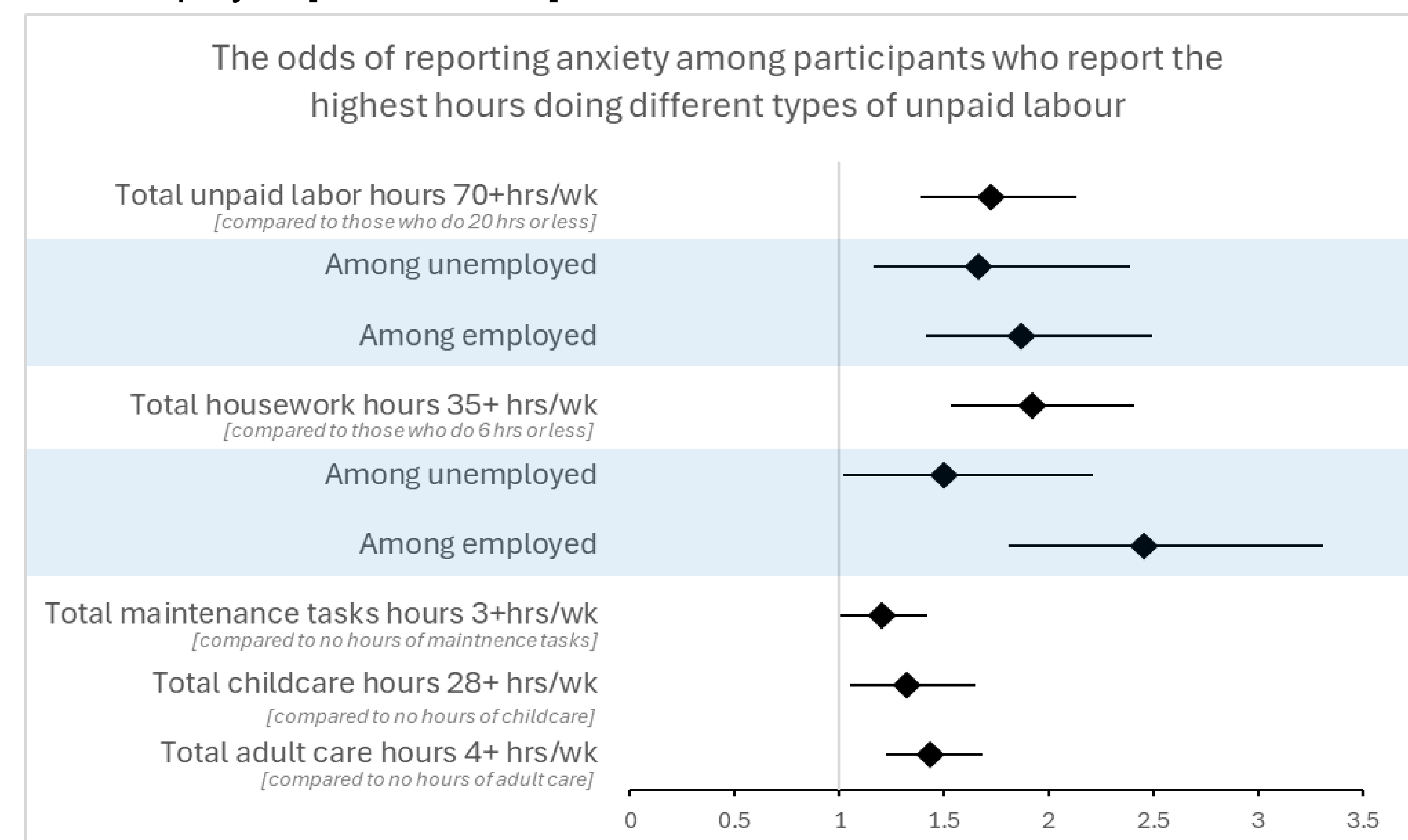
RESULTS

- 4,725 participants included: 49.6% females and 57.4% employed
- Women were much more likely than men to report spending more hours doing unpaid labor, specifically, housework and childcare
- Men only spent more hours than women in maintenance work, and few hours per week.
- Hours spent doing adult care was similar among women and men



RESULTS CONTINUED

- Reporting spending the highest number of unpaid labor across all domain increased the odds of both anxiety and depression
- Gender interaction was significant only in the model of maintenance tasks domain and depression [Rows in green]. Only among the males doing the highest number of hours of maintenance increase the odds of depression
- Employment was a significant moderator in the relationship between overall unpaid labor and anxiety and between housework and anxiety, where the employed had slightly higher odds of anxiety compared to unemployed [Rows in blue]



CONCLUSIONS

These findings underscore the importance of considering the **multifaceted nature of unpaid labor** in understanding its relationship with mental health. **Gender did not moderate the relationship** between unpaid labor and mental health, as hypothesized. Further consideration of **socio-cultural expectations** of unpaid labor is necessary to understand how gendered responsibilities may influence mental health.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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