Determinants and impact of role-related time use allocation on self-reported health among married men and women: a cross-national comparative study

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Abstract

Background: Research on the effects of marriage on health has largely maintained that there is a distinctly gender-specific gradient in health, with men deriving far greater benefits than women. One reason provided for these differences is the disproportionate amount of time spent by women on housework activities and childcare. However, this hypothesis has yet to be explicitly tested for these role-related time use activities. This study provides empirical evidence on the associations between role-related time use activities (i.e. housework, childcare and paid work) and self-reported health among married men and women.

Methods: Data from the Multinational Time Use Study (MTUS) on 32,881 men and 26,915 women from Germany, Italy, Spain, UK and the US were analyzed. Seemingly unrelated regression (SUR) models and multivariable logistic regression were used to estimate the association between role-related time use activities and self-reported health among married men and women.

Results: The findings showed that education, occupation and number of children were the most consistent predictors of time allocation among married men and women. Significant gender differences were also found in time allocation, with women sacrificing paid working time or reducing time devoted to housework for childcare. Men, in contrast, were less likely to reduce paid working hours to increase time allocation to childcare, but instead reduced time allocation to housework. Allocating more time to paid work and childcare was associated with good health, whereas time spent in housework was associated with poor health, especially among women.

Conclusions: Time allocations to role-related activities have differential associations on health and these effects varies by gender and across countries. To reduce the gender health gap among married men and women, public policies need to take into account social and gender roles.

Full Text

Due to technical limitations, full-text HTML conversion of this manuscript could not be completed. However, the manuscript can be downloaded and accessed as a PDF.

Figures

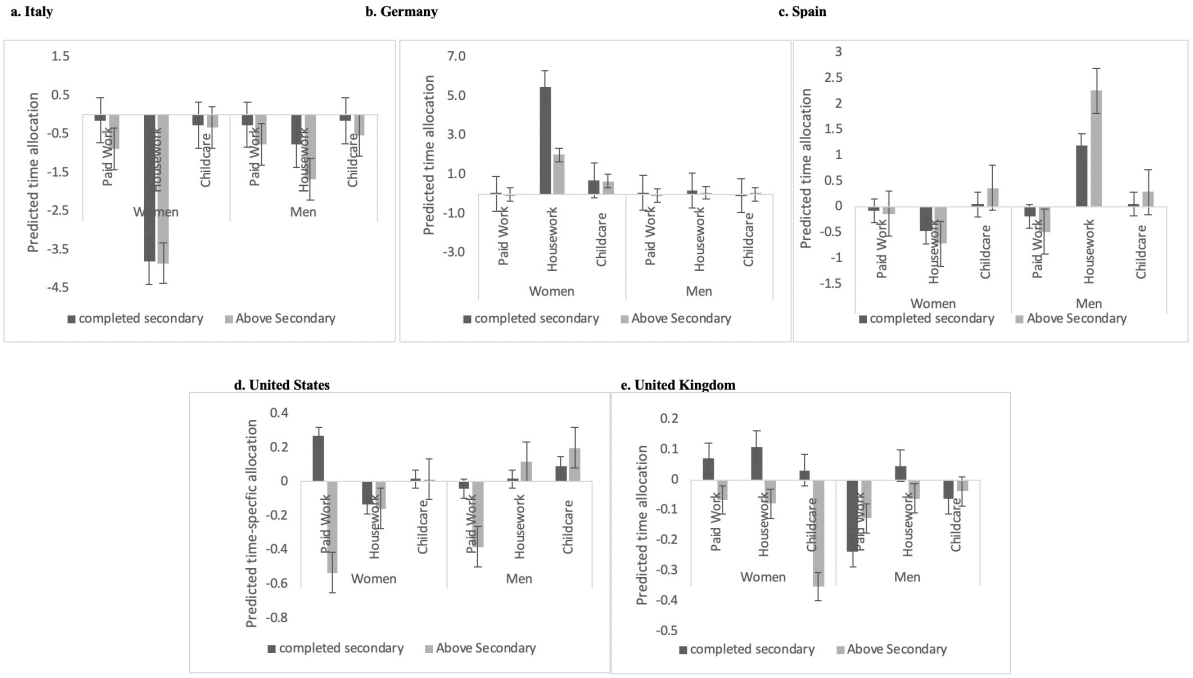

Figure 1

Estimated effect of education on time allocated to paid work, household work and childcare among married men and women, by country. Notes: Models included adjustment for age, age squared, number of children under 18 in the household, household size and mean hours by occupation. Time allocation is measured in minutes per day, and selection bias is corrected using Mills-ratio.

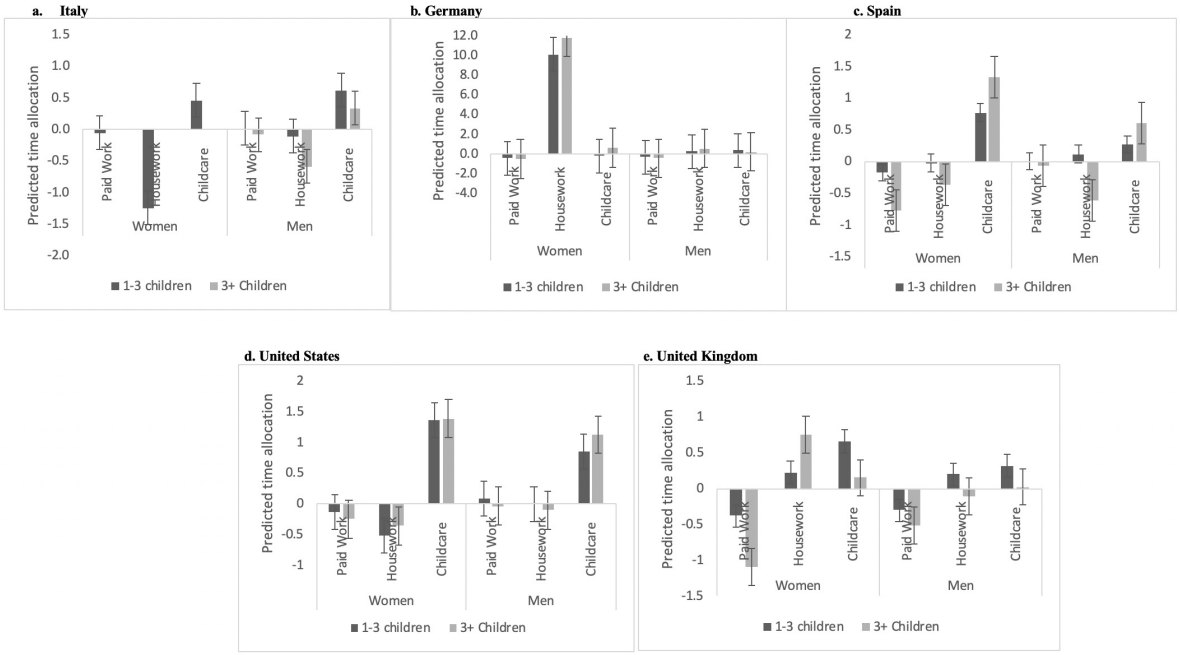

Figure 2

Estimated effect of number of children younger than 18 on time allocated to paid work, household work and childcare among married men and women, by country. Notes: Models included adjustment for age, age squared, education, household size and mean hours by occupation. Time allocation is measured in minutes per day, and selection bias is corrected using Mills-ratio.

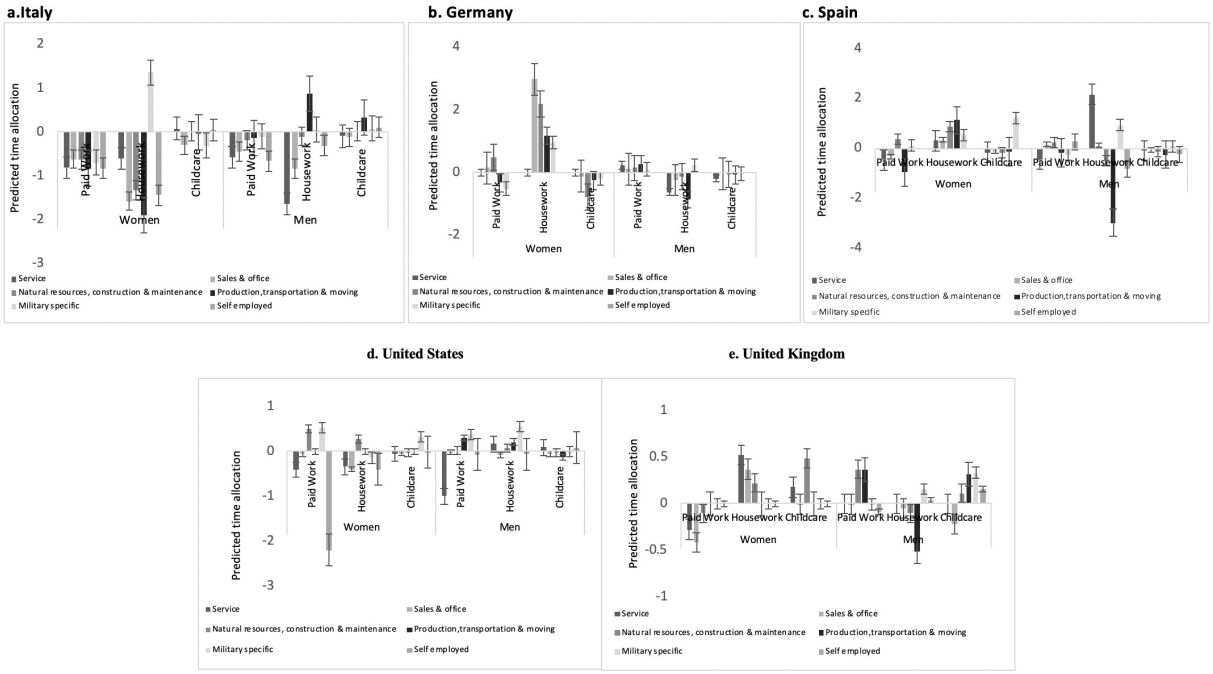

Figure 3

Estimated effect of mean hours by occupation on time allocated to paid work, household work and childcare among married men and women, by country. Models included adjustment for age, age squared, education, number of children under 18, and household size. Time allocation is measured in minutes per day, and selection bias is corrected using Mills-ratio.

Supplementary Files

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supplementary appendix.doc