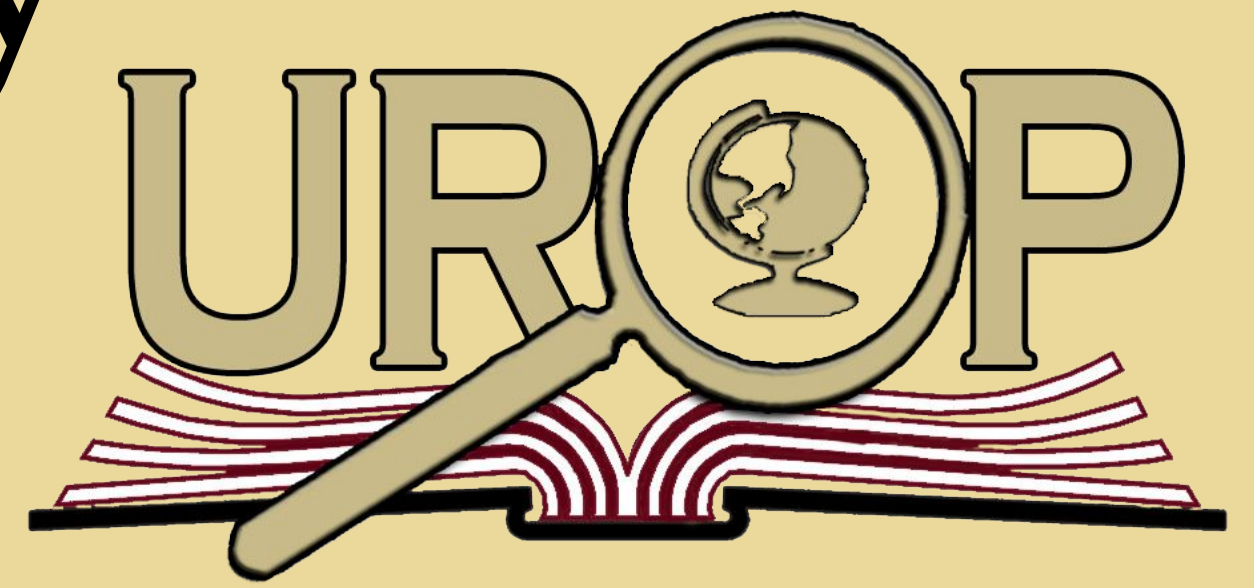




The Consequences of Caregiving in the US: Why Time Commitment Matters



Pavitra Chall, & Katrinell M. Davis, PhD (Faculty Mentor)

Introduction

- Unpaid care providers, also known as informal caregivers, assist individuals with chronic illnesses or disabilities with tasks like eating, walking, bathing, using the restroom, and other necessities like meal planning, grocery shopping, budgeting, and housekeeping.
- Caregivers are a vital part of society that face many social inequalities through their attempts to take care of others, usually relatives.
- Many caregivers are a part of a minority, primarily being Black. They are also commonly facing poverty and unemployment.
- This leads to extremely low physical and mental health for most caregivers.
- Caregivers are in many cases unable to afford outside help, leading to all money going towards care, creating a large time-commitment due to the time-sensitive work.
- Previous studies have been done on this topic, but use older data.

Methods

- Using data from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System's Caregiving Module, a state-based survey which collects data on the demographics of participants, information on chronic health problems, health-related risk factors, and the utilization of preventative services.
- The data is examined for the association between time-intensive caregiving, defined as 20 or more hours per week, and the sociodemographic traits of the caregiver and care receiver populations.
- Caregiving time commitment was measured with a categorical variable of crgvhrs1, which was dichotomized to create a binary variable of 0 for less than 20 hours and 1 for more. The measure of mental health used a survey that judged how many days were spent with negative emotions on a scale of 0-30
- Analysis of all of the survey data was conducted via STATA. Chi-square and t-tests were used to determine significance between predictors and variables. These associations were then examined using logistic regression. After that, an OLS regression was conducted to analyze depressive symptoms.

Results

- People who are poor, a racialized minority (e.g. Black American), and a relative are more likely than others to provide care more than 20 hours per week.
 - Demographic characteristics like race and poverty status have a positive and significant relationship to time-intensive caregiving.
 - Caregivers taking care of their parents as well as individuals whose care recipients are their children are three times more likely to have a significant time commitment to caregiving.
- Time committed to caregiving is related to specific ailments.
 - Caregivers who provide care for a care recipient with a developmental disability are more than three times as likely to need more than 20 hours of weekly caregiving support compared to care recipients with other categories of impairment.
 - People with dementia are about twice as likely to require significant caregiving support as those with other categories of impairment.
- There is a positive Association between Time Committed to Caregiving and Poor Mental Health
 - The number of days in poor mental health is positively and significantly related to the amount of expressive support caregivers with large time commitments need.
 - Caregivers who work longer hours (more than 20 hours per week) are more likely than those who work less hours to report a need for support services such as respite leave and caregiver training.

Conclusions

- All of these findings are very important in informing what the most affected groups of caregivers are and what support is needed, as they receive very little, as found by the data.
- Being able to find the most at-risk communities and provide them with support will lead to better health and caregiving for all.
- This study backs initiatives aimed at giving caregivers greater resources, which could reduce the strain that a substantial caregiving commitment places on unpaid friends and family members.
- The results further emphasize the need for customized assistance for caregivers with particular impairments, as these caregivers are more likely than others to experience burnout when caring for patients with certain conditions.

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Figure 1: Employment Distribution of People with a Substantial Time Commitment to Caregiving

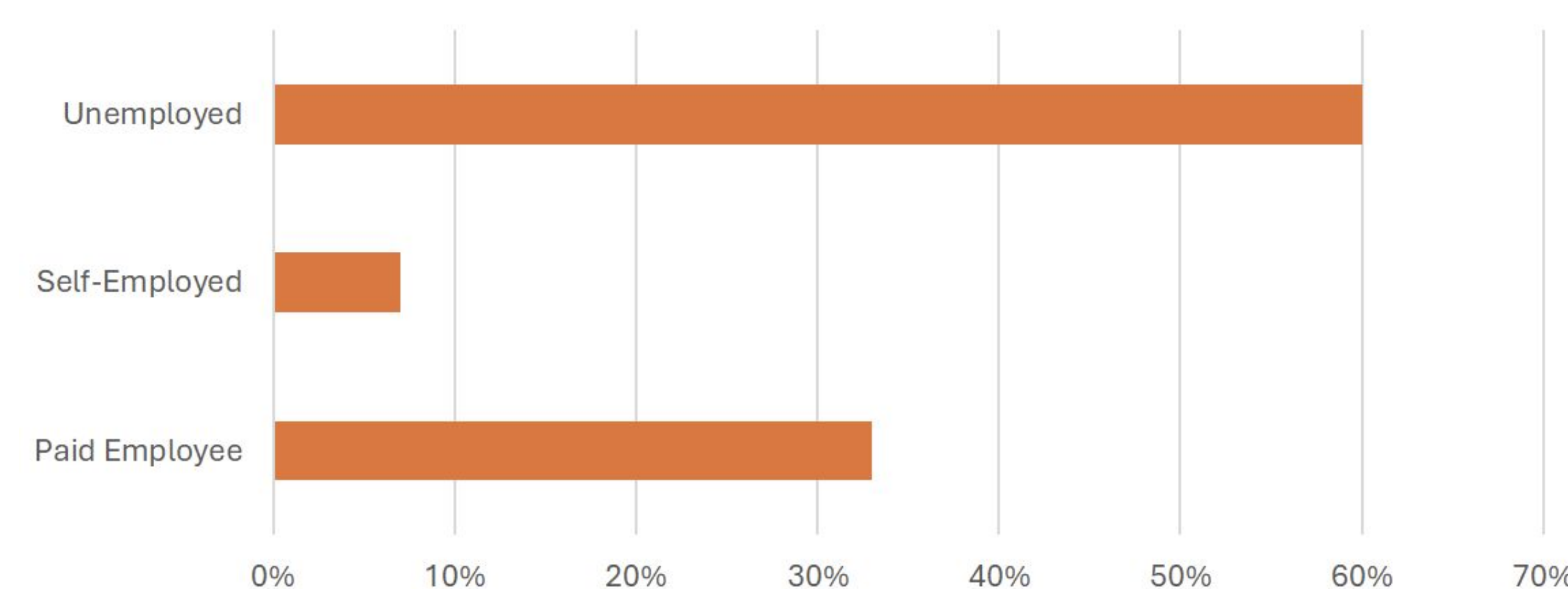


Figure 2: Poverty Distribution among People with a Substantial Time Commitment to Caregiving

