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Differences between women and men with and without children in the household during the Covid-19 lockdown 2020 in Switzerland

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The COVID-19 pandemic was an external shock, which provoked countries over the globe to put in place different versions of lockdowns, described as the closure of many services. In Switzerland from March 16, 2020 to May 11, 2020 most schools remained closed and most families had to take care of their children and other dependent household members. In this moment, the potentials, and freedoms to aim for what each person likes to reach in life was restricted to a high extend. However, not everyone was affected to a similar extend.

This paper is based on an online survey with about 1 000 people – students and employees from the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts – Social Work – living in Switzerland during the lockdown. We analyzed the data that was answered between April 23 and May 21, 2020. The following research questions were asked for the four groups of interest; women and man with or without children in the households: Which differences between the groups emerge in the lockdown in the change of (Q1) behavior, (Q2) consequences from the lockdown as well as (Q3) the support system?

Our results show for all three research questions main differences between persons with children in households, who were restricted more than persons without children in households. By focusing on gender differences in households with children, we find that women with children in the household were restricted the most in how they could realize their good life. This is true, by looking at their behavior, which was constrained through childcare activities, at the consequences from the lockdown, such as more conflicts, as well as a lack in their private support system, specifically around support in the private area.

From our results we conclude that women did most of the care-work, however, our results also reveal some unexpected gender-patterns: Men with children in the HH, same as women expressed restrictions in their behavior and felt a lack of institutional support even stronger than women, which could have positive effects on gender equity. Our analysis suggests a need for a better-elaborated family policy for Switzerland, as well as a concrete support in childcare in the moment of a lockdown.