

Effects of COVID-19 day care centre closures on parental time use: Evidence from Germany ^[1]

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Excerpted from introduction

As of 9 April 2020, more than 90% of the learners enrolled in pre-primary, primary, lower-secondary, and upper-secondary levels of education were affected by school closures across the world (UNESCO 2020). The resulting sudden increase in childcare responsibilities represented a massive shock to their parents' time allocation. The way parents respond to this shock can have significant implications for children's development, household income, gender equality, family stability, and general wellbeing. A recent VoxEU column by Moroni et al. (2020) discusses the effects of a stressful home environment, exacerbated by COVID-19, on children's socio-emotional skills. In order to support families through this crisis with sensible policies, we need to know what impact such closures have on the time that parents allocate to childcare, paid work, housework, and other activities such as leisure or sleep.

In this column, we ask what the impact of day care closures are on time use for parents of pre-school-aged children. Burgess and Sivertsen (2020) provide an excellent discussion of learning impacts for school-aged children; we decided to focus on younger children because they demand substantially more attention and need to be supervised almost constantly. As such, day care closures represent an arguably larger shock to parental time allocations than do school closures. Furthermore, the literature tells us that pre-school education may offer the greatest potential for addressing long-term outcomes and social inequality (e.g. Cornelissen et al. 2018, Havnes and Mogstad 2015), such that parents of pre-schoolers may feel pressure to deliver a similar educational environment at home.

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