

Are Television and Video Games Really Harmful for Kids?

- Empirical Evidence from the Longitudinal Survey of Babies in the 21st Century -¹

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Abstract

Are watching television and playing video games really harmful for children's development? This is very intriguing question for both parents and policy circles, although measuring the rigorous effects is difficult due to data and methodological limitations. By making use of a unique longitudinal dataset with detailed information on children's development and health, we examine the effect of hours of television watched or of video games played on school-aged children's problem behavior, positive orientation to school, and obesity. The results drawn from the fixed and random effects models while controlling for the time-invariant unobserved omitted variables in this paper suggest that the answer to the question is yes and that the negative effect would be dramatically increased by an excessive amount of exposure to television or video games. However, the magnitude of the effect is small enough to be negligible. The results are robust to within-twin fixed effects.

Key words: Behavior Problem Index, Positive Orientation to School, Obesity, Endogeneity

JEL classification codes: I10, I20

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