

Centre For Health Economics Seminar Series 2018

SOCIAL MEDIA USE AND CHILDREN'S WELLBEING



Presenter: Prof Jenny Roberts, University of Sheffield
Date: Wednesday 24 October, 2018
Time: 12.00pm - 1.00pm
Venue: RB Scotton Room
Centre for Health Economics

Abstract

Childhood circumstances and behaviours have important persistent effects in later life. One aspect of childhood that has changed dramatically in the past decade, and is causing concern among policy makers and other bodies responsible for safeguarding children, is the advent of social media, or online social networking. This research explores the effect of children's digital social networking on their subjective wellbeing. We use a large representative sample of 10-15 year olds over the period 2012 to 2016 from the UK Household Longitudinal Study, and estimate the effect of time spent chatting on social websites on a number of outcomes, which reflect how these children feel about different aspects of their life. We deal with the potential endogeneity of social networking via an instrumental variable approach using information on local broadband speeds. Our results suggest that spending more time on social networks reduces the satisfaction that children feel with all aspects of their lives; and that girls suffer more adverse effects than boys. Our most stringent IV specification suggests that a 1 standard deviation increase in the time spent using social media leads to a 0.3 standard deviation reduction in how happy children feel about their life overall. As well as addressing policy makers' concerns about the effects of digital technology on children, this work also contributes to wider debates about the socioeconomic consequences of the internet and digital technologies more generally, a debate which to date has largely been based on evidence from outside of the UK.

Presenter

Jennifer Roberts is Professor of Economics at the University of Sheffield, UK. She is an applied economist, specialising in health, work and wellbeing. Her research is published in journals such as Health Economics, Journal of Development Economics, Journal of Health Economics, Journal of the Royal Statistical Society - A and Oxford Bulletin of Economics and Statistics. Jenny has also carried out research and consultancy work for many UK public sector clients including the Treasury, the Department of Health and the National Lottery, as well for a number of private sector companies such as GlaxoSmithKline, Pfizer and IMS Health. She is a core member of the NICE Public Health Advisory Committee. She is currently leading a project for the Health Foundation on the causal effects of health on work, and collaborating on an ESRC project on commuting behaviour and wellbeing. Jenny also holds a Leverhulme Trust International Academic Fellowship, which is enabling her to spend a research semester in Boston, Massachusetts to develop her growing interest in urban economics and spatial econometrics

VISITORS ARE MOST WELCOME

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