The Virtual Arena: A Call for a New Domain of Child Subjective Well-Being

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## Sample

Eight focus groups of children from diverse communities in Israel. the groups were relatively
homogeneous and small. That is, while they reflected the diversity of the Israeli context, each one included children from the same culture, nationality, age and socioeconomic status. In those communities that are more strictly gender-divided (i.e., ultra-Orthodox Jews), they were also homogeneous in terms of gender. Thus, the eight focus groups consisted of 4–5 children each (N = 35) between the ages of
8–12 (22 girls, 13 boys) belonging to one of the following populations: secular Jews, national-religious Jews, ultra-Orthodox (Haredi) Jews and Muslim Arabs.

# Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore subjective perceptions, perspectives and ascribed meanings of well-being among children aged 8–12 in diverse communities in Israel. Thirty five children participated in the study in eight focus group interviews. One major theme that emerged from the focus group analysis is children’s lived experiences in the virtual arena, including new media and social media (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp). Within this theme, three main sub-themes were identified, delineating different aspects of children’s lives in the virtual arena: between risk and protection, negotiating peer relationships, and the absence or engagement of adults. Our findings point to both positive and negative aspects of our participants’ experiences in the virtual arena and indicate the centrality and significance of technology in their lives, especially as an arena through which children communicate with friends and family and in which their social relationships are practiced. Based on our findings, we propose that the virtual arena has become central to children’s lives and, as such, can be considered a new domain in exploring children’s subjective well-being.

# Outcome

Findings indicate that children related to adult involvement in the virtual arena as occurring mostly after the fact (e.g., when Abigail’s mom recognized her distress and learned of her friend’s suicide threat), while none of the children referred to adult engagement prior to something bad happening in the virtual arena (Nadan Kaye-Tzadok, 2019). It was found that in the virtual arena, children can experience affiliation with peers, partnership and social engagement