

Stories of Digital Technology and Online Safety: Storytelling as a Tool to Find out Young Children's Views on Digital Technology and Online Safety

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Abstract : This research is aimed at facilitating and listening to the voices of younger children, recognising their contributions to research about the things that matter to them. Digital technology increasingly impacts on the lives of young children, therefore this study aimed at increasing children's agency through recognising and involving their perspectives to help contribute to a wider understanding of younger children's perceptions of online safety. Using a phenomenological approach, the paper discusses how storytelling as a creative methodological approach enabled an agentic space for children to express their views, knowledge, and perceptions of their engagement with the digital world. Setting and parental informed consent were gained in addition to an adapted approach to child assent through the use of child-friendly language and emoji stickers, which was also recorded verbally. Findings demonstrate that younger children are thinking about many aspects of digital technology and how this impacts on their lives and that storytelling as a research method is a useful tool to facilitate conversations with young children. The paper thus seeks to recognise and evaluate how creative methodologies can provide insights into children's understanding of online safety and how this can influence practitioners and parents in supporting younger children in a digital world.

Keywords : early childhood, family, online safety, phenomenology, storytelling

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