Exploring **collective engagement** for **equity of access** to digital health interventions
Lessons from Indonesia

Broadening the concept of 'engagement' in mHealth interventions for equity of access

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Introduction

Part of the appeal of digital health solutions, including mHealth interventions, is their potential to overcome traditional barriers to health information including socio-economic status, region and gender. In order to realise goals of universal access to digital interventions, it is essential to understand **how those without direct access to digital technology engage with and benefit from mHealth interventions.** Based on an evaluation of *Thrive by Five* (Tb5), a childrearing app to promote socioemotional and cognitive development in early childhood in Indonesia, we attended to non-digital dissemination channels and informal sharing mechanisms that surfaced alongside the mHealth intervention.

Methods

1. Qualitative interviews and workshops with parents and caregivers (n=47), local experts on early childhood development & local partner organisations (n=6) and funders (n=4).

2. Citizen ethnography - 2 highly engaged users recorded audio-diaries over 4 weeks to capture reflections and conversations on Tb5 use

A "Collective Action" in the Thrive by Five app
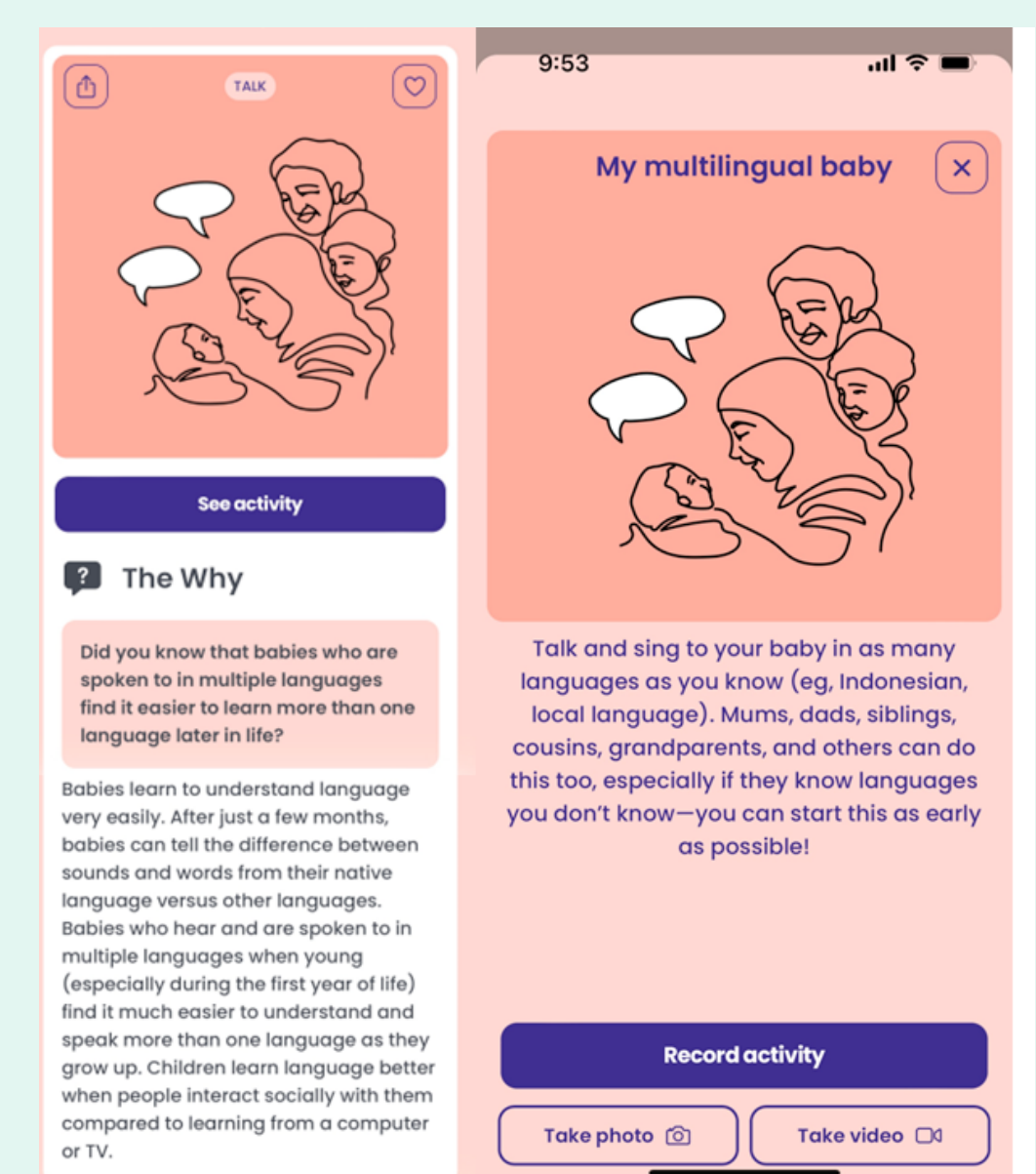
"The app tells you to learn things by yourself. In Indonesia, we have a strong interest in early childhood education, but they do it together so it is more enjoyable for them to do so. It is different with this app, you have to do it yourself"

Key lessons from Indonesia

'Engagement' with the mHealth intervention did not necessarily involve interaction with the app itself. Many users were informally disseminating simple messages from the app across their families (e.g. parents sharing safety advice with grandparents) and other non-digital networks such as community meetings or kindergartens. This was particularly evident in rural areas, where mobile phone usage and literacy (language and digital) were low.

Structures and networks that enabled interactive and collective learning (e.g. community networks in rural villages) facilitated app engagement. This worked by allowing people to make sense of, communicate and embed app use within existing relationships, interconnections and evolving understandings of childhood development.

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