

# Does a tailored instant messaging program for parents improve early child development? A randomized controlled trial among pre-k children in Uruguay during the school year

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<b>Registration date</b> 25/07/2024	<b>Overall study status</b> Completed	<input type="checkbox"/> Statistical analysis plan <input type="checkbox"/> Results
<b>Last Edited</b> 23/07/2024	<b>Condition category</b> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Individual participant data <input type="checkbox"/> Record updated in last year

## Plain English summary of protocol

### Background and study aims

Evidence suggests that small aids in the form of instant messaging can facilitate changes in parenting practices, which are crucial factors in enhancing child development and School Readiness.

General objective: To evaluate an instant messaging intervention program aimed at promoting parenting practices and child development in preschool children.

### Who can participate?

The participants in this study are parent-child dyads in pre-K (around 4 years old).

### What does the study involve?

The FODI (Fortalecimiento Oportuno del Desarrollo Infantil) Program lasts 21 weeks, during which families receive three weekly messages, through digital notifications. These messages contain information aimed at promoting positive parenting practices that can improve the cognitive development of their children.

Participants will be randomly assigned to one of three groups:

- Tailored treatment: personalized messages containing the names of the participants and adjusted according to developmental levels measured using INDI;
- General treatment: personalized messages containing the names of the participants but not necessarily adjusted to the developmental level; and
- Active control group: generic messages related to health and cultural curiosities, with no content aimed at stimulating development.

### What are the potential benefits and risks of participating?

The tailored treatment of the FODI messaging program is expected to have a positive impact on parenting practices (compared to the general and active control conditions).

Likewise, the tailored treatment is expected to have a positive effect on cognitive development

or aspects of it.

There are no anticipated risks for participation in this study, but in case of discomfort, parents and children can withdraw from the study at any time.

Where is the study run from?

Espacio Interdisciplinario - Universidad de la República (Uruguay)

When does the study start and how long is it expected to last?

October 2021 to December 2024

Who is funding the study?

Universidad de la República and Fundación ReachingU (Uruguay)

Who is the main contact?

Dr. Alejandro Vásquez-Echeverría, alejandro.vasquez@pedeciba.edu.uy

## Contact information

### Type(s)

Public, Scientific, Principal investigator

### Contact name

Prof Alejandro Vásquez-Echeverría

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## Additional identifiers

### Clinical Trials Information System (CTIS)

Nil known

### Protocol serial number

RU\_072024

## Study information

### Scientific Title

Do pre-k children benefit from a tailored instant messaging program designed to improve parenting practices and child development, as compared to a non-tailored and control condition? A randomized controlled trial during the school year

### Study objectives

1. The treatment of the messaging program (FODI) (in the general and tailored conditions) will have a positive impact on parenting practices, compared to the active control group, and the

effect will be greater in the tailored condition

2. The treatment (in the general and adjusted conditions) will have a positive effect on cognitive development or on any of its components, compared to the active control group, and the effect will be greater in the tailored condition

3. Quartiles 1 and 4 of the tailored condition (but not quartiles 2 and 3) will show greater impact on development and parenting practices as compared to the general condition

4. Parenting practices will exhibit a mediating effect between treatment (tailored and general conditions) and development

## **Ethics approval required**

Ethics approval required

## **Ethics approval(s)**

approved 25/05/2022, Faculty of Psychology Research Ethics Committee - UdelaR (Dr. Tristán Narvaja 1674, Montevideo, 11200, Uruguay; +598 24008555; comiteeticainv@psico.edu.uy), ref: 25052022

## **Study design**

Single centre experimental intervention with an active (strong) control group

## **Primary study design**

Interventional

## **Study type(s)**

Prevention, Quality of life, Treatment, Efficacy

## **Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied**

Child development/Parenting practices

## **Interventions**

The Program duration is 21 weeks, during which families receive three messages per week, through instant messaging. The messages contain information intended to promote parenting practices that could enhance their children's cognitive development.

Stratified randomization was performed by baseline cognitive ability quartile at the individual level. A total of 1274 participants were assigned, with one-third allocated to each of the following conditions: general treatment, tailored treatment and active control.

1. Tailored treatment: personalized messages containing the names of the participants and adjusted according to developmental levels measured using the INDI scale;

2. General treatment: personalized messages containing the names of the participants but not necessarily adjusted to the developmental level; and

3. Active control group: generic messages related to health and cultural curiosities, with no content aimed at stimulating development

## **Intervention Type**

Behavioural

## **Primary outcome(s)**

Measured before and after the program implementation, unless noted otherwise:

1. Child development is assessed using the Spanish adaptations of the following tests:

1.1. School Readiness-Child Development Inventory (INDI; Vásquez-Echeverría et al., 2022)

1.2. Bracken School Readiness Assessment (BSRA-3, Bracken, 2007)

- 1.3. Theory of mind Task Battery: ToMTB (Hutchins & Prelock, 2014)
- 1.4. Wechsler Preschool and Primary Scale of Intelligence (WPPSI-4, Wechsler, 2014), specifically the Cancellation and Picture Naming subtests.
- 1.5. Preschool Self-Regulation Assessment (Smith-Donald et. al, 2007), specifically the Pencil tap subtest
2. Parenting Practices are evaluated using the Inventory of Characterization of the Home Environment for the Promotion of Child Development (not published yet).
3. Sociodemographic information is collected at baseline using an ad-hoc scale including parents' age, parent's educational level, number of members in the household, number of siblings the child has, diagnosed difficulties/disabilities if any, type of technical treatment if any, etc.

### **Key secondary outcome(s)**

1. Motor development outcomes measured using the School Readiness-Child Development Inventory (INDI; Vásquez-Echeverría et al., 2022) before and after intervention
2. Social-emotional development outcomes measured using INDI before and after intervention
3. Attitudes toward learning outcomes measured using INDI before and after intervention

### **Completion date**

31/12/2024

## **Eligibility**

### **Key inclusion criteria**

For parents:

1. Being the primary caregiver of a child in pre-K
2. Having a phone that supports WhatsApp

For children:

1. Being in pre-K (around 4 years old)
2. Attending one of the schools selected for the project

### **Participant type(s)**

Healthy volunteer, Carer

### **Healthy volunteers allowed**

No

### **Age group**

Mixed

### **Sex**

All

### **Total final enrolment**

1280

### **Key exclusion criteria**

1. Children with severe disabilities as reported by teachers and parents
2. Twin siblings (in these cases one sibling was randomly selected)

**Date of first enrolment**

01/03/2024

**Date of final enrolment**

26/06/2024

## Locations

**Countries of recruitment**

Uruguay

**Study participating centre****Interdisciplinary Center for Cognition for Education and Learning**

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**Study participating centre****Faculty of Psychology**

Tristán Narvaja 1674

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11200

## Sponsor information

**Organisation**

Espacio Interdisciplinario - Universidad de la República

## Funder(s)

**Funder type**

Charity

**Funder Name**

Fundación ReachingU

# Results and Publications

## Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan

The datasets generated during and/or analysed the current study are not expected to be made available due to Uruguayan legislation of data protection concerning INDI.

## IPD sharing plan summary

Not expected to be made available

## Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
<a href="#">Participant information sheet</a>	Participant information sheet	11/11/2025	11/11/2025	No	Yes
<a href="#">Study website</a>	Study website	11/11/2025	11/11/2025	No	Yes