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DEVELOPMENT AND USABILITY TESTING OF A MOBILE HEALTH APPLICATION ON CHILD GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT MONITORING

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Abstract

Monitoring children's health is of fundamental importance. With the widespread use of Android phones, applications to improve health services have become an option. This study aimed to comprehensively describe the development phase of an Android application (app) for healthy children in Indonesia, conducted in March-October 2021. The DEPA app was developed in the Indonesian Language (Bahasa) and is an acronym for Desain Aplikasi Pertumbuhan dan Perkembangan Anak or children's growth and development app. The DEPA app uses 4D theory which includes defining, designing, developing, and disseminating. Focus group discussions were conducted with stakeholders to determine the needs assessment, find concepts, and develop content, features, and functions. The eligibility score for the assessment by media and material experts was 4.12, while the usability testing using PSSUQ was 1.8. Results showed the DEPA app was successfully created and available on the Play Store. The analyses showed that the media and content scores were 4.5 and 4.3, respectively, while the PPSUQ was 1.8, which means it has good usability. The DEPA app is a new approach to health children monitoring which has the potential to be implemented by mothers, cadres, early childhood teachers and health programs.

Keywords: *Usability; PSSUQ; M-Health; Children; Development; Growth*

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Vol: 60 | Issue: 11 | 2023

1. INTRODUCTION

Monitoring the growth and development of children is a strategy for preventing malnutrition[1]. In general, observing the children's nutritional status is done by comparing age, weight and height/body length with the standard [2].[3]. plotting it on a growth curve and interpreting whether the child is growing normally or experiencing growth faltering[3].[4]. In Indonesia, cadres or village volunteers measure the children's weight and height as well as provide information, counselling, and referrals according to children's health problems to improve children's well-being through the Integrated Service Post (*Posyandu*)[5].

In developing countries, monitoring children's growth and development is sub-optimal, due to limited resources[6]. In Indonesia, access to health facilities and the availability of skilled health workers remain issues[7]. Quality health services are needed to establish early detection of child malnutrition as well as appropriate interventions[8], [9]. More than 1.5 million health workers performed growth monitoring and counseling in the communities. Most of them were regarded as non-professional health workers[8]. Thus standardized growth monitoring and evaluation systems would be helpful[7]. Moreover, generally, during the pandemic, mobility restriction regulations were established and enforced to reduce the spread of COVID-19[10]. The 'stay at home' policy also occurred in Indonesia and harmed the monthly health promotions and face-to-face monitoring of the growth of children[7]. Children's health status has potentially declined due to delays in vaccination, restrictions on access to health services, and lack of monitoring of their growth and development, thereby increasing the likelihood of becoming malnourished and developing new cases of malnutrition[11].

To date, smartphones have become a main part of our daily life. The health sector is no exception, and the technology of smartphones helps support programs such as health promotion[12],[13], delivery of services, health information and education[14], health behavior management[15],[16], disease control[17], improving health behavior, and natural history of well-documented behavior[17],[18] as well as reducing health in-equality[19]. Several experts have developed nutritional applications (apps) such as the MyNutricart for the promotion of a healthy diet and food selection[12], the Nutri'calc app for calculating nutrition[13], the e-Nutrimet© app as a nutritional assessment of inpatients[20], and the *Ibu Sehati* application for prevention of anemia, consumption of iron, and healthy food for pregnant women[21], SmartLoss for health promotion and weight management[22], SmartLossSM for individual weight loss intervention[23], proper eating for patient diabetes mellitus and treatment[24] and many more apps related to food and nutrition[25].

Mobile health (m-Health) apps on smartphones provide many benefits, are easy, cheap, effective and safe[26], and can reach underprivileged communities[14][15][18]. In addition, the m-Health apps contribute to community participation by facilitating health monitor and self-surveillance, while passively collecting data, reducing survey costs, and avoiding data loss[18][26]. Moreover, they have multiple benefits such as providing a cohort to monitor child growth and development[18], encouraging self-monitoring, and reducing the burden of assigning cadres. This last concern is strategically important considering that the ratio of cadres and toddlers is overloaded[27] and often faces a scarcity of resources[28]. However, with the online children monitoring app, health providers can potentially overcome the difficulties of monitoring children's growth and development in remote and under-served areas[7],[29], and can better use health data in program monitoring and routine evaluation as well as serving as a promotion strategy to support child health and nutrition programs during the COVID-19 pandemic[7].

We have observed some children's healthcare Android apps on the Google Play Store. Remarkably, most of the available apps presented separately cover growth, developmental, and nutritional apps. The existing apps use the old standards even though the Ministry of Health has issued several recently

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Vol: 60 | Issue: 11 | 2023

revised regulations[30]. It is necessary to update the m-health applications to monitor child growth and development under Infant Young Children Feeding (IYCF) guidelines.

We describe the process for developing the m-health application similar to the previous study[31], which consisted of (1) defining by conducting an FGD for review stakeholder assessment, (2) designing the application with IT expertise, (3) developing content and dashboard using multi-tested by expertise and user, and (4) disseminate to programmer and user. We developed a child growth monitoring app based on the updated Regulation of the Minister of Health of the Republic of Indonesia No.2 of 2020[30] and the Pre-screening Developmental Questionnaire (PDQ) available in the Maternal Children Health book published in 2020[32]. This study aimed to determine the usability test of a mobile app for monitoring children's growth and development for end-users such as mothers, cadres, early childhood educators and Primary Health Center (PHC) programmers.

2. METHODS

This research and development tailored the usage of m-health using the 4D (define, design, develop and disseminate) theory[33]. The study was conducted from March – October 2021. An Android platform was selected because Android users tended to increase in rural and urban areas in Indonesia.

Development of the DEPA app

Listed below are the phases of m-health tailoring as also shown in Fig. 1.

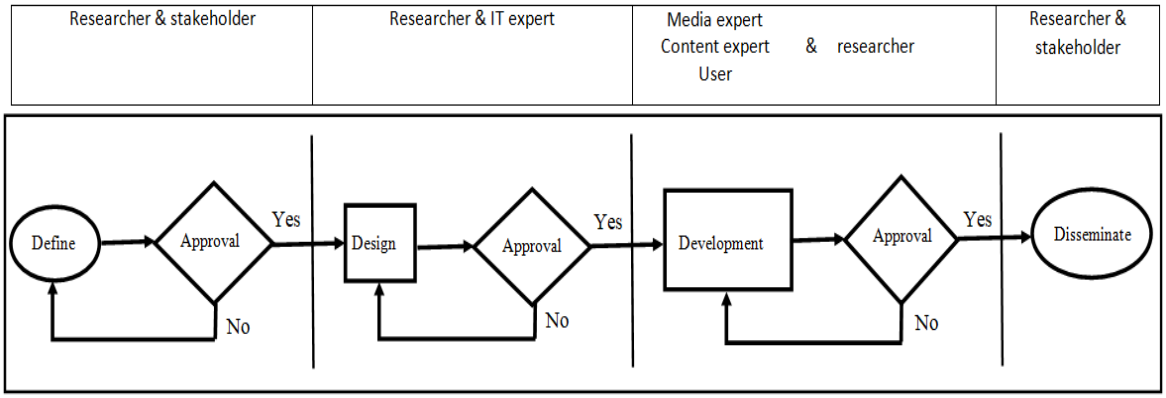

Fig 1: The DEPA app tailoring flowchart.

1) Defining

First, a novelty search was done through the Google Play Store regarding similar apps. We found as many as 27 applications, and then downloaded and recorded the available information. The available applications include 16 apps that provide toddler growth, six apps that provide development monitoring, four apps that provide growth and development of children monitoring, and two apps that provide food for children. We found that the existing growth app used the anthropometric standards of 2010, so it is not relevant nowadays. Most of the apps present developmental growth information of children and IYCF separately. Focus group discussions (FGD) were done in the defining stage[34]. We invited stakeholders such as nutritionists, psychologists, health promoters, surveillance, communication experts, mothers of toddlers, cadres, early childhood educators, and health officers. The FGD covers context, content, features, flow, and output.

ISSN：1674-2974 | CN 43-1061 / N

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Vol: 60 | Issue: 11 | 2023

2) Designing

Second, we collaborated with information technology (IT) experts to design good user interface components and user-centered design. This step aimed to create ease of using the app. We designed the app based on the previous stages, considering context, context, flow, feature, and dashboard and comprehensively involved children's growth monitoring, children development monitoring and IYCF. The application was successfully tailored to feature and dashboard applications including login, registration, home, growth and development children and report page[35].

3) Development

The third stage was the development of the app based on a user-centre development red approach, which also aimed to create an easy-to-use app. Usability testing was done comprehensively by media, material experts and users.

4) Dissemination

The final stage is offline dissemination, aiming to introduce it to the public and encourage wider use of this app[36]. We recruited 70 people consisting of 20 early childhood educators, 20 mothers, 15 cadres, and 15 health workers.

Usability testing

Study population and design

Following the DEPA app development, we used a cross-sectional design to determine the media testing, content testing, and user testing usability. We also evaluated the user testing usability by conducting in-depth interviews with users about their experience using the app.

We involved participants based on the type of testing usability. First, for media testing usability, participants included three media experts from academia, health promotor practitioners and the information communication service. Second, content testing usability involved nine material experts, including two psychologists, two public health promotors, three nutritionists, and two midwives. For both content and media testing of usability, we chose a low-cost survey method but potentially had fast responses from the experts by email[37].

Considering the distance, time and resources as well as restrictions on population mobilization during the pandemic, we held a virtual conference with experts to discuss the overall DEPA app.

Third, for user testing usability, participants included 130 stakeholders, which was considered adequate for a minimum sample of usability testing[38]. All participants fulfilled the inclusion criteria: agreed to participate in this research, installed the DEPA app, completed all steps then filled out the PSSUQ. Additionally, we selected ten informants to participate in in-depth interviews to gain a deeper understanding of their experience using the DEPA app.

Data collection and analysis

Participants' sociodemographic characteristics and DEPA app testing scores were summarised using descriptive statistics. Numerical data analysis was done by comparing the mean score with the cut-off[39]. We performed the quantitative analysis for each type of usability testing. For media and content testing, we used the cut-off of 0-1.8 for not very feasible; 1.81-2.6 was not feasible, 2.61- 3.40 was somewhat feasible, 3.41-4.20 was feasible, and 4.21-5.00 was very feasible. For user testing, the maximum limit value for each category indicated the app was very usable for attributes PSSUQ: 2.82, SYSUSE: 2.80, INFOQUAL: 3.02, and INTERQUAL: 2.49[40].

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Vol: 60 | Issue: 11 | 2023

All these analyses were conducted by using Microsoft Excel. Afterwards, we evaluated the development of the DEPA app by conducting the user reviews qualitatively to understand the users' perceptions of the app. This evaluation was done twice during the usability testing and dissemination. We considered the ease of installation, content, benefits, difficulties, and opportunities of the DEPA app adopted by healthcare providers or individuals. Interview data were transcribed verbatim and then analysed using thematic analyses.

3. RESULTS

We successfully developed a child growth monitoring app in the Indonesian language based on the latest standards from the Minister of Health of the Republic of Indonesia number 2 of 2020 and the 2020 MCH book. The DEPA application is available and downloadable on the Google Play Store by installing DEPA 2.1 using the link https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.depaapp. We provided detailed guides and instructions covering easy-to-use and step-by-step installation. We have presented DEPA application profiles in previous studies[41]. The DEPA app dashboard provides information as detailed in Table 1.

Table 1: Dashboard of DEPA app

Aspect	Detail information
Installation	Search on the Google Play Store, choose DEPA 2.1, or by clicking the link https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.depaapp Then install and open the app.
Start page	Introduction of the DEPA app including definition, aim, benefit, and feature
Login	Sign in with Google using *an* email address connecting to android
Registration	Maternal profile (ID number, name, email), children profile (name, sex, date, and place of birth, birth weight, length of birth), address, hand phone number, gestational age
Home/dashboard	Menu of DEPA app including profile, growth, develop, report, recommendation
Growth monitoring children)	Input body weight and height, method of body height measurement (standing or recumbent), MUAC
Development monitoring children	Input and check the child's development list according to age
Report	The output of growth children monitoring (z-score and its interpretation of WAZ, HAZ, WHZ) and developmental children monitoring (normal or delayed)
Recommendation	Complementary feeding including energy, textures, frequency, and portioning size

Development of the DEPA app

Three media experts from academicians, practitioners, and information communication services assessed the implementation of the software and visual communication. The result of the assessment was 4.5+0.14. This value exceeds the cut-off of >4.21, which means that the application is considered very feasible, as detailed in Table 2.

ISSN：1674-2974 | CN 43-1061 / N

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.10122975
Vol: 60 | Issue: 11 | 2023

Table 2: The score of media testing the DEPA app

Attribute	Sub-attribute	$\bar{x}$±SD
Software Implementation	Appropriate size	4.7±0.6
	Easy installation	5.0±0.6
	Clear instructions	5.0±0
	Easy registration	4.7±0.6
	System runs well	5.0±0
	Does not cause the phone to hang	4.7±0.6
	Simple operation	4.7±0.6
	All types android friendly	4.7±0.6
	Clear problem helper	4.3±0.6
	Clear program flow	4.3±0.6
Mean ±SD		4.7±0.3
Visual communication	Good visualization/images	4.0±0
	Attractive look	4.3±0.6
	Good color	4.3±0.6
	Font	4.7±0.6
Mean±SD		4.3±0.4
The mean score of media testing		4.5±0.14

SD: standard deviation.

Nine content experts including public health experts, midwives, nutritionists, health promoters, and psychologists gave content assessments with a mean score of 4.3±0.14. The results show that the mean score exceeds the cut-off (>4.21), indicating that the DEPA app is considered very feasible. The assessment can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3: The score of content testing DEPA app

Attribute	Sub-attribute	$\bar{x}$±SD
Logic thinking	Dashboard	4.7±0.6
	Valid growth algorithm	4.7±0.6
	Valid development algorithm	5.0±0
	Flow	4.0±0
	Valid result	4.0±0
	Valid interpretation	4.7±0.6
	Appropriate recommendations	4.7±0.6
Mean±SD		4.5±0.08
Language	Communicative and common	4.7±0.6
	Appropriate terms and statements	4.3±0.6
Mean±SD		4.5±0
Implementation Possibility	Potential implementation	4.7±0.6
The mean score of content testing		4.3±0.14

SD: standard deviation.

ISSN：1674-2974 | CN 43-1061 / N

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.10122975
Vol: 60 | Issue: 11 | 2023

DEPA app usability

We recruited 130 users to assess the usability of the DEPA app using PSSUQ. Most of the users were 40-59 years old (58.5%), female (92.3%), completed senior high school (39.3%), cadres (66.9%), and from Yogyakarta Province (66.9%). Although some of the users are from Java Island, however, there are participants from the remote areas (Kalimantan and Sulawesi). By having many users with various characteristics, further subjectivity testing can be minimized[42]. User characteristics are detailed in Table 4.

Table 4: Characteristics of users

Characteristics	n	%
Age (Years)		
<20	4	3.1
20-29	9	6.9
30-39	31	24.1
40-59	76	58.1
>60	10	7.7
Gender		
Male	10	7.7
Female	120	92.3
Education		
Elementary school	7	5.4
Junior High school	25	19.2
Senior High school	51	39.2
University	47	36.2
Occupation		
Early Childhood teacher	3	2.3
Housewife	23	17.7
Cadres	87	66.9
Nutritionist	13	10.0
Midwife	2	1.5
Public health expert	2	1.5
Origin participants		
DI Yogyakarta	87	66.9
Central Java	11	8.5
West Java	10	7.7
South Sulawesi	7	5.4
West Kalimantan	5	3.8
North Kalimantan	6	4.6
Jakarta	4	3.1

User tests using PSSUQ showed the DEPA app score was 1.8±0.01 or in the very usable category (<2.82). Details of the SYSUSE, INFOQUAL and INTERQUAL scores are presented in Table 5.

ISSN：1674-2974 | CN 43-1061 / N

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.10122975
Vol: 60 | Issue: 11 | 2023

Table 5: Usability testing of the DEPA app using PSSUQ

Attribute	Sub attribute	$\bar{x}$±SD
SYSUSE	Overall, I'm satisfied with how easy it is to use this system	1.8 ±0.7
	It was simple to use this system	2.1 ±0.7
	I was able to complete the tasks and scenarios quickly using this system	1.9 ±0.7
	I felt comfortable using this system	2.2 ±0.7
	It was easy to learn to use this system	1.8 ±0.7
	I believe I could become productive quickly using this system	1.9 ±0.7
SYSUSE mean±SD		1.9 ±0.02
INFOQUAL	The system gave error messages that clearly told me how to fix the problem	1.9 ±0.7
	Whenever I made a mistake using the system, I could recover easily and quickly	1.8 ±0.7
	The information provided by the system was clear	1.7 ±0.7
	It was easy to find the information I needed	1.9 ±0.8
	The information was effective in helping me complete the tasks and scenarios	1.7 ±0.7
	The organization of information on the system screens was clear	1.9 ±0.7
INFOQUAL mean±SD		1.8 ±0.04
INTERQUAL	The interface of this system was pleasant	1.8 ±0.7
	I liked using the interface of this system	1.7 ±0.8
	The system has all the functions and capabilities I expect it to have	1.6 ±0.7
	Overall, I am satisfied with the system	1.7 ±0.7
INTERQUAL mean±SD		1.70 ±0.04
PSSUQ		1.8 ± 0.01

SD: standard deviation.

Findings from the qualitative interviews with users indicate that they have positive comments. They feel satisfied and are very happy with the app. Another positive response is that this app can strongly facilitate community empowerment, monitor children's health independently, and guide feeding practices. We categorized the information into the following themes: installation, content, benefits, difficulties, and opportunities.

All participants successfully installed the DEPA app. For example, a participant stated, *"It's very easy to be installed"* (female, 40 years old, and cadre).

Most informants stated that the contents of the app provided easy instructions, as reflected in the opinion of the following informants:

"This is very simple, giving guidance and can be opened anywhere, anytime to find out the health status of toddlers" (female, 43 years old, cadre).

"M-Health is MCH book electronic, it cannot be lost unless uninstalled"(female, 30 years old, and nutritionist).

The DEPA app was very useful for the education and promotion of children's health, as stated by the following participants:

ISSN：1674-2974 | CN 43-1061 / N

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.10122975
Vol: 60 | Issue: 11 | 2023

"Oh, I can see my child's growth curve… I haven't been able to MCH book, with this app I can get growth monitoring instructions in an interesting color chart" (female, 28 years old, mother)

"I can understand the stages and achievements of my child's development. My son is a bit retarded in the field of fine motor skills" (female, 21 years old, mother)

"I can practice stimulating children's development according to their age stage and provide appropriate food" (female, 23 years old, mother)

Another benefit was to monitor the growth and development of children independently, as stated by the health professional: *"Mother can carry out self-surveillance, so it saves our time to survey and the data will not be lost"* (male, 41 years old, and health promotor)

In terms of growth monitoring services for toddlers at Posyandu, the implementation of the DEPA app greatly reduced the burden on cadres and helped solve the problem of missing growth monitoring during the COVID-19 pandemic, as stated by the following informant: *"It's so great, really reduces our burden for face-to-face child health monitoring"* (female, 41 years old, cadre).

During this pandemic COVID-19 period, the DEPA app was very helpful for monitoring the health of the children, such as reflected in the following mother's opinion: *"I am very happy if I am absent to Posyandu I can still monitor my child's growth and development"* (female, 29 years old, mother)

Further, the DEPA app supported cadre and maternal efforts to control their toddlers' growth, avoiding missing data, and effectively decreasing the cadre's burden. One cadre said: *"Due to face-to-face restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic, this application fully supports the growth and development of children monitoring. I don't lose the cohort because I can see in the dashboard"* (female, 30 years old, cadre)

In the field of early childhood education, the app supported child health services in early childhood programs, as the early childhood program teacher said: *"This application strongly supports early childhood programs school accreditation, so it is very useful"* (female, 40 years old, early childhood educator)

Dissemination

We invited stakeholders, namely mothers of toddlers, cadres, early childhood educators, and health programmers, to socialize and share this app face-to-face. At this meeting, all participants completed the simulation. The goal was for the participants to understand the DEPA application well. Through this meeting, the researchers encouraged the participants to use other apps so that they could monitor the children's growth and development with infant and young child feeding.

4. DISCUSSION

We succeeded in developing a novel application to support toddler health, including growth, development, and user recommendations. In the stage usability test, all participants stated that this application was easy to use and provided benefits for monitoring the health of children. The development of this app considers the user needs and has high benefits[34],[37] and simple operation by various user characteristics, as stated in the previous research[37],[43]. The impact of user-centered applications will encourage positive perceptions which will empower the users to utilize them continuously[44].

All respondents are satisfied with the DEPA app because of its integrated content which includes information on growth, development, recommendations, and IYCF guidelines. Mothers will implement the application according to their child's characteristics including age, gender, height,

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Vol: 60 | Issue: 11 | 2023

weight, and state at birth. This integrated app is preferred because the user experiences many benefits in a single application. Users only need to enter data once, but they will get several sources of related information. This finding is consistent with the previous observations. In addition, this app was designed through several stages. Each stage must exceed the cut-off value before proceeding to the next step. These stages include application design agreements between researchers and stakeholders, teamwork between researchers and IT experts to design applications according to the user-centred approach, application development stages done by researchers with media experts and new materials with predetermined cut-off values, and then usability testing by users. Accordingly, even though as a new user, it is the first time install, the user does not experience any difficulties because it has gone through the strict stages of development and testing.

Media and content experts and users find the DEPA app highly worthy of praise. The PPSUQ test results provide information indicating that this application is very useful. The results of the assessment of the SYSUSE, INFOQUAL and INTERQUAL components have a narrow range, indicating that there are no extreme differences between users. The number of users is quite large with various characteristics such as age, education level, occupation, and place of origin of users. This app does not require special skills and can be applied more widely. Stonbraker et al. (2018) stated that these considerations are important because people with middle and low education have great possibilities and opportunities to use it[16]. Application developers should consider user culture such as color[45]. This app has an adaptable background color depending on the user's preference, with basic black or white. In this study, the types of graphics, language and layout also met the users' preferences[46]. Other considerations are user experience, intention and frequency of implementation, perceived usefulness, convenience, and ease of application which are closely related to the potential and challenges of wider application usage[47]. The next consideration is accessibility. The participants of this research came from several provinces in Indonesia, such as Kalimantan, Sulawesi, and Java. They not only live in the city but also in remote areas. This has several advantages because health interventions can reach a very wide area by utilizing technology[16], minimize health disparities, and geographical disparities related to health care[19], provide a better quality of health services and ability to assist peoples' behavior change while enabling active engagement and independent living with minimal travel time for in-person sessions[28].

Another reason for the positive appraisal is the DEPA app is available in the Google Play Store Market with which most people are familiar[48], so they can easily find DEPA. All Android OS types 5.0 and above can use this app[49], which is a type of phone that most people have. This app requires only a small memory space, as little as 10.31 MB so it does not consume more digital data storage. The app instructions on the Google Play Store are user-friendly and assisted by a tutorial video as guidance[50] which is very helpful and can provide solutions[51]. Muhamat et al. (2021) explained that the instructions for using the app were worthwhile in the app installation process[39].

Finally, we identified that the DEPA app was very usable as an Android application for monitoring the growth and development of children and their surveillance. This finding answers the need for child growth monitoring without face-to-face meetings[7] and relieves the cadres of some responsibility while facilitating community empowerment through active reporting[28]. The intensive and widespread use of the DEPA can provide valuable growth, development, and recommendation information for mothers, early childhood programs, cadres, and child welfare programmers. This study found that the DEPA app encourages community empowerment and programs to monitor the growth and development of children both in Posyandu and early childhood programs. This finding is similar to the app used to monitor mothers' and children's health in rural areas in India[52] and Kenya[18].

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.10122975
Vol: 60 | Issue: 11 | 2023

However, the app has weaknesses including internet consumption, data storage space, and other complexities[39]. Besides that, the app is only implementable as long as the guidelines used are still valid. In addition, the design of any application or media with a 4D concept takes a relatively long time because each stage requires approval, and the design cannot be continued if the previous stage is not clear. The DEPA app is a new approach to providing comprehensive education and promotion of toddler health including growth, development and IYCF. With this versatility, these findings have policy and practical implications for the use of similar health apps in Indonesia with diverse geographical conditions including rural and urban areas, islands, remote areas, sub-optimum health care facilities, potential areas for outbreaks, disasters and other unfavorable conditions.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The DEPA app has been successfully developed in the Indonesian language and has gone through multiple tests covering media, content, and varied user characteristics. This app contains comprehensive information on growth, development and infant and young child feeding in one installation. Based on multi-testing by media experts, material experts and users, this app is considered very useful for mothers of toddlers, early childhood program teachers, cadres and programmers at the health department level. Of course, the program manager's advocacy is needed so that this application can be adopted and used widely both locally and nationally.

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Conflict of Interest

We declare no conflict interest

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Vol: 60 | Issue: 11 | 2023

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