

SESAME WORKSHOP

# Watch PLAY Learn



## Semillas de Apego *Watch, Play, Learn* Integration

### *Executive Summary*

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## Executive summary

This report outlines the design, results, and impact of the pilot integration between the Semillas de Apego program and Sesame Workshop's *Watch, Play, Learn* content. The pilot integration incorporates socioemotional learning (SEL) videos directed at children into the curriculum of a community-based psychosocial program that promotes maternal mental health as an outcome and as a vehicle to stimulate early child development. Semillas de Apego's standard approach targets children indirectly by supporting their caregivers. The integration aims to reach children directly through the delivery of these contents. The objectives of the pilot integration were to 1) strengthen caregivers' understanding of children's social-emotional development; 2) increase caregivers' use of age-appropriate social emotional managements strategies for children; and 3) strengthen parenting teams, by enabling other family members to also understand children's emotional experiences better.

Implementation of the integration was carried out in two municipalities in Colombia, and across two cohorts. In the first cohort, we delivered 23 WPL videos and 3 visual aids for seven weeks, effectively reaching 83 caregivers and their children. We used Facebook as the primary dissemination platform and complemented the strategy with short WhatsApp messages. This first cohort, spanning from April to July 2023, was designed to assess the integration's impact through a Randomized Control Trial of 311 caregivers, three focal groups with caregivers, and seven individual interviews of the technical team.

For the quantitative data, we administered a battery of psychometric scales to analyze impact in five indices: i) primary caregiver's mental health, ii) healthy caregiver-child emotional relationship, iii) caregiver-child interactions, iv) child's mental health, v) and child's socioemotional development. Each scale is composed of different subdimensions that allowed us to identify which subscales drive impact in the larger scales and indices. For qualitative data, we transcribed focal groups and interviews and, following an inductive approach, clustered themes into four categories to understand the mechanisms behind the observed quantitative outcomes: implementation research, acceptability, adoption, and accessibility.

In the second cohort, which took place between August and December 2023, we delivered 37 WPL videos in the last seven weeks of the Semillas de Apego program. We used WhatsApp as the principal dissemination tool and reached 337 caregivers and their children. This second cohort aimed to refine the delivery mechanism of the videos and expand the reach of caregivers within the municipalities. In this sense, the data from this cohort is mostly anecdotal coming from check-ins with facilitators and supervisors, qualitative data from the monitoring system, and Facebook statistics on the evolution of weekly engagement.

From the implementation process, we acquired several key learnings regarding different themes: technology, delivery strategies, content, reception and use, and impact. First, internet connectivity is a structural barrier. Second, the role of facilitators in successful implementation should not be undermined. Their understanding of delivery mechanisms, perceived value of the integration, and constant encouragement of caregivers is key in the access and engagement of caregivers, propelling the consolidation of a digital community. Third, the delivery mechanism requires adaptations depending on the internet connectivity of implementation sites, the sample size of the intervention and the familiarity of caregivers with the platforms. Finally, caregivers value WPL content for its impact on child behavior, its relationship building capacity, and its emotional education component. This perception is consistent across cohorts.

Our results indicate that the added value of the integration is manifold. First, it serves as a tangible tool that directly engages children, as evidenced by caregivers' reports of children's response to the videos and their ability to internalize the content. The videos foster open discussions about emotions, contributing to emotional recognition and awareness and communication skills. Second, integration enhances early child socioemotional development, reflected in children's increased capacity to recognize, and express their feelings, as well as the practical application of emotional management strategies. Finally, WPL content complements the thematic focus of Semillas de Apego by facilitating meaningful interactions between caregivers and children, nurturing familial bonds, and enriching the learning experience surrounding coregulation and healthy child-rearing practices.

The results from the impact evaluation reveal a meaningful impact in the caregiver-child relationship and early childhood development indices of 0.28 and 0.21 standard deviations, respectively, for children who had access to WPL content relative to those who did not. These results are statistically significant at the 10% and 5% level, respectively. The caregiver-child relationship index measures the quality and stress of the relationship as well as the parenting experience. The early childhood development index measures the social-emotional competencies of children. Our analysis suggests that impact is driven by children's improved adaptive functioning, enriched interactions, and heightened social communication. These results, however, should be taken with caution since our evaluation is limited by the sample size and has low-statistical power.

Additionally, the qualitative results were mapped into three areas of implementation outcomes, which include: i) acceptability, ii) adoption and iii) accessibility. In terms of acceptability, participants mentioned that their children and them enjoyed the videos, found them entertaining, attractive, and appropriate, and identified with the situations presented in the videos. In terms of adoption, caregivers and their children applied the emotion management strategies of the videos to regulate their emotions. The videos increased emotion recognition in both caregivers and

children. This allowed caregivers to understand children's emotions and get involved in the coregulation process. In parallel, the videos helped children improve their ability in managing their own emotions and even other people's emotions. In terms of accessibility, several difficulties in accessing the videos were reported: lack of electronic devices with video playback capabilities, difficulties in accessing and understanding Facebook groups, conditions of high vulnerability and poor internet connectivity. Simultaneously, two mechanisms appeared to counteract these obstacles: the preview delivery through WhatsApp and the construction of community groups to watch the videos.