

# Structural and Collaborative Mechanisms Shaping Children's Transition and Adjustment in Kindergarten

Sanja Tatalović Vorkapić

*Faculty of Teacher Education, University of Rijeka, Croatia*

## Abstract

Early childhood transitions from home to kindergarten, as well as children's adjustment to kindergarten settings, often represent challenging periods in children's lives due to a range of interpersonal and intrapersonal factors. Drawing on two national scientific projects examining the quality of children's transitions and adjustment to kindergarten, briefly introduced in this paper, the present study aims to explore structural and collaborative mechanisms that shape the quality of transition and adjustment processes in early childhood education settings. A survey was conducted with a sample of 77 early childhood educators, who rated their perspectives using a five-point Likert scale. Descriptive analyses indicated the highest levels of agreement with four items reflecting educators' perceived central role in supporting children's transitions and adjustment, as well as in providing meetings, information, and guidance for parents during the adjustment period. Overall, educators expressed agreement with the majority of survey items ( $N = 29$ ), suggesting the presence of well-developed structural and collaborative mechanisms supporting children's transitions and adjustment to kindergarten. Moderate levels of agreement were identified for four items related to collaboration between early childhood educators and professional associates, transition practices prior to children's enrolment, and state investment in early childhood and parenting support. Correlation analyses confirmed the expected significant relationships between the quality of transition and adjustment, socio-demographic variables, and the examined mechanisms. The findings are discussed within the Ecological-Dynamic Model of Transitions and the national educational context. The study's implications include evidence-informed guidelines for enhancing early childhood transitions and adjustment processes, which continue to be further explored within the ongoing national scientific project *Adjust\_Well*.

**Keywords:** adjustment in kindergarten; early childhood educators; kindergartens; preschool children; transition from home to kindergarten