

CLOSENESS AND CONFLICT BETWEEN TODDLERS AND EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS: WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THEIR PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS?

Sanja Tatalović Vorkapić

Faculty of Teacher Education, University of Rijeka (CROATIA)

Abstract

One of the most important tasks of the preschool educators in kindergarten is the development of positive relationships as a basic prerequisite for the healthy and optimal socio-emotional development of children. Starting from the definition and operationalization of the relationship between educators and children in terms of two basic areas: Closeness and Conflict. This paper analyses these two aspects, as well as the role of personal characteristics of educators and children in their development. At the same time, it is important to emphasize that the younger the children, the greater the specifics and challenges in developing the relationship between educators and children, so this paper focuses on analysing some aspects between educators and toddlers. Since previous research has shown that the relationship between educators and children is significantly determined by several variables (the personality traits of educators, their well-being, the temperament of children, and socio-demographic characteristics such as the gender and age of children and educators, as well as the difficulty of working with children), closeness and conflict between educators and children are analysed in relation to these variables. The relationship between them and whether it is possible to predict closeness and conflict between educators and toddlers based on the above variables are investigated. A total of 22 kindergarten teachers from 6 randomly selected kindergartens in the counties of Primorje-Gorski Kotar and Istria participated in the study. The kindergarten teachers assessed their relationship with toddlers in their groups, their temperament, the difficulty of working with them, their own personality traits, optimism, life satisfaction, and happiness. A total of 77 children (35 boys and 42 girls) with a mean age of $M=2.74$ were assessed in the range of 1 to 3 years. The educators evaluated 1 to 8 children in the groups they work with, maintaining anonymity and confidentiality of the data at the highest level. On average, they rated working with children as easier, closeness as greater, and conflict with young children as less. After performing correlation analyses, high and significant correlations of closeness and conflicts with ease of work, gender and age of children, age of educators, and temperament of children were found. Accordingly, the regression analyses performed showed that significant predictors of high closeness between educators and young children were high ease in working with children, high sociability and emotionality, and low activity of children, and low happiness in educators. For conflict between educators and children, greater difficulty at work, same as higher age and activity and lower sociability in children and in relation to boys showed to be significant predictors. Although this is one of the few studies in this area, the results indicate the importance of developing the quality of the relationship between educators and young children and professional programs to support educators, taking into account the described results on significant predictors of closeness and conflict in their relationship.

Keywords: closeness, conflict, early childhood educators, personal variables, toddlers.

1 INTRODUCTION

Kindergartens in Croatia provide high quality early childhood education programs for children from 6 months to preschool age (in the year before enrollment in elementary school, i.e. in the 6th or 7th year), which are implemented in accordance with the developmental characteristics and needs of children and the social, cultural, religious and other needs of the family [1]. The main goal is to ensure the well-being of each child, which includes holistic growth and development, education and acquisition of child competencies [2]. The basic task of all employees of an educational institution is a common vision of the child and joint action with the aim of optimal growth and development of the child by creating a safe and pleasant atmosphere in which educators respond to the needs of children ([3], [4], [5]). One of the most important tasks of educators in a preschool setting is to build positive relationships in the setting. Positive relationships will be reflected in the child's development, and " *each moment that teachers and children interact with one another is an opportunity to develop positive relationships*" [6, p.2]. The first link in the realization of this important vision is the educator. The relationship he or she builds with children should be full of understanding, respect, and love for both - the children and their families. The

role of the educator is demanding, because the relationship depends not only on him/her, but also on the characteristics of the children and their families. The educator responds to the child's needs and interests, provides emotional support, promotes cooperation among children, encourages learning through various activities, and organizes an environment that promotes the child's learning and development [7]. These professional skills are even more important in the context of working in daycare centers with toddlers. All of this can be achieved in a nursery where the educator understands the importance and crucial role of the relationship (s)he develops with each child in the group. Each relationship determines the personality and characteristics of the individual, and in the educational context, the relationship between educator and child determines the personality and well-being of the educators as well as the temperament of the children. Desirable positive characteristics of educators lead to positive relationships in the group, which lead to the development of the child's full innate potential. " *For infants who are not yet verbal, early childhood educators (ECEs) need to be highly sensitive to the child's communication, and they need to develop a relationship with the child to interpret their signals and facilitate their communication.*" [8, p.709]. These authors clearly demonstrated that the relationship between educators and toddlers should be used as a tool to ensure appropriate learning experiences. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to explore significant correlates and predictors of their relationship that could serve as guidelines for improving practice.

1.1 Early childhood educators' personal characteristics as determinants of their relationship with children

Numerous previous studies have pointed to the significant effect of a number of different personal variables that implicitly affect work quality ([9], [10], [11]). Numerous studies show that good relationships with children in educational contexts have long-term positive effects on the child's socio-emotional and cognitive development [12] and on the overall development of a range of child competencies from infancy to adolescence [13]. Numerous studies show that negative relationships between children and caregivers educators are significantly associated with poor developmental outcomes in children ([7], [14], [15], [16], [17], [18], [20], [21], [22]). To a positive relationship with the child, closeness and warmth of the educator towards the child are crucial [23], while conflicts and misunderstandings with the child lead to a demotivating atmosphere within the group. The aforementioned elements are significantly related to educator personality traits and well-being. The educator-child relationship and the overall atmosphere in the learning group depend on the personality of the educator, because learning and teaching is not a purely cognitive or technical process, but a complex, personal and social process that involves the whole person ([9], [10], [11], [24]). Personality is defined in different ways, and in this paper it is operationalized within the framework of the theoretical Big Five model, which describes personality in terms of five factors: Extraversion, Emotional Stability, Conscientiousness, Agreeableness, and Openness to Experience [25]. Previous research has shown that this theoretical model is recognized in the professional identity of educators [26] and that educators have high scores on all of the aforementioned personality traits, with the exception of neuroticism, which is significantly lower ([9], [10], [11], [27], [28], [29]) and is lower compared to teachers ([30], [31]). Extraverts are generally happier, experience positive emotions much more intensely, and interact with others more frequently. A conscientious educator will respond to the child's needs as best as possible and at the right time, and will do his or her work in accordance with the rules. A very pleasant educator is approachable and friendly, understanding, and treats children with respect. The emotional stability of educators is very important, as they can adequately cope with the challenges of the job. In addition, a high level of openness to experience in educators means a greater willingness to change, innovate, and be creative, which is extremely important when working with children. The results of domestic research [32] showed that educators' personality is significantly related to their life satisfaction, more specifically, that extraverted and more open educators are more satisfied with life and less emotionally exhausted, and that neuroticism is negatively related to life satisfaction, which is reflected in increased emotional exhaustion and negative evaluation of educators' personal achievements. These findings suggest that, in addition to personality traits, certain aspects of educators' well-being are important for job quality. Therefore, this paper examines life satisfaction, optimism, and happiness.

Life satisfaction indicates the degree of subjective well-being of the individual and how satisfied the individual is with certain areas of his life [33]. Since the main role of an educator is to build positive relationships with children, it is very important that he is satisfied with his life. An educator who is satisfied with his life can convey and generate positive emotions and be empathetic towards children [28]. Research has shown that people who are satisfied with their lives have better marriages, have better social relationships, are more stress resistant, have better emotional relationships, are more stable, and are more efficient at work [34]. Optimism is a form of positive thinking and refers to a person's

expectation that more positive things will happen in their life than negative things [33]. An educator who feels and thinks positively is an excellent role model for a child who has the opportunity to develop in this direction. The feeling of happiness is synonymous with the overall level of fulfilment of pleasant emotions in a person's life [33]. The feeling of happiness is largely determined by the person himself, his perspective on life and his own actions. Numerous studies show that the happiness of educators determines the happiness of the child, which in turn influences the child's success in school [35]. The relationship between creativity and happiness was examined in a sample of one hundred Singaporean teachers [36], and a significant positive relationship was found between positive perceptions of creativity and subjective ratings of happiness. The results of this study suggest that positive emotions facilitate cognitive activities, including creative thoughts and imagination, which would imply that creativity is positively and significantly positively correlated with positive emotions. The happiness of the educator largely determines the environment, i.e., the overall atmosphere in the group. A happy educator will transfer his positive emotions to the child and accordingly develop a positive climate in his group. Previous studies in Croatia indicated the importance of the described personality variables and well-being of educators when working with children and identified moderate levels of life satisfaction, optimism, and happiness in educators, which were significantly positively related to each other as well as to all personality traits except neuroticism ([28], [30], [31], [32], [33], [37]). A recent Croatian study showed that certain aspects of caregiver well-being were significant predictors of the relationship between the child and the caregiver [38]. In addition, the importance of the variables of educator age and perceived difficulty of work must be emphasised, as research has shown that difficult and challenging work conditions lead to higher levels of stress [39], and higher educator age is associated with lower levels of various aspects of educator well-being [28].

1.2 Children's personal characteristics as determinant of their relationship with early childhood educators

The child's temperament plays a major role in the process of interaction, both with other children and in the relationship with educators. Temperament is a set of behavioral dispositions that influence the way a child expresses emotions and moods. It is highly biologically determined, evident early in childhood, and relatively stable over time and in different situations [40]. Although there are several theoretical models of temperament, the frequent use of the EAS model of temperament ([41], [42]) in research is an argument for its use in this work as well [43]. According to the EAS model, a child's temperament consists of three dimensions: Emotionality, Activity, and Sociability [44]. The first dimension, emotionality, i.e., negative emotionality, refers to how quickly the child becomes agitated and begins to react negatively to environmental stimuli. Some children react more quickly and are more agitated than others. A child high on this dimension will become upset, agitated, cry, and fearful more quickly, while a child lower on this dimension will be more relaxed and react less violently. The second dimension, activity, refers to the child's pace, that is, speed and energy. It determines how lively the child will be, whether he or she is constantly moving and exploring the environment. The third dimension of temperament, sociability, determines how the child connects with others and responds to social stimuli. Children scoring high on this dimension often seek interaction, like group activities, form relationships with others easily, and are less likely to be alone. Children with lower levels of socialization tend to experience anxiety in the company of strangers and in new situations. Previous research has found moderate levels of emotionality and activity and increased levels of sociability in preschool children, higher ratings of the dimensions of temperament in parents than in educators, the dependence of these ratings on the personality characteristics of educators and on the gender and age of children and their special needs ([15], [43], [45], [46], [47]). At the same time, the development of preschool children's attachment is largely determined by the relationship between educators and children ([48], [49]), which is particularly pronounced in infancy and in the phase of transition from family to daycare [50]. As for age, higher levels of sociability and lower levels of activity and emotionality were found with increasing age, which is to be expected given the developmental milestones in children's social-emotional development. In terms of gender, the aforementioned studies found higher activity scores in boys and higher sociability scores in girls. In addition to the Croatian studies, Pianta et al [13] found that the child's gender, age, difficulties, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity are important determinants of relationship formation. The paper has already highlighted that numerous studies have shown that younger girls are more likely to form close and conflict-free relationships with the teacher compared to boys, and that relationships with boys, African Americans, and children with behavioral difficulties are more difficult and conflictual [14]. At the same time, the child's temperament determines the educational methods used by educators in the care and education process. It is also proved that the relationship between the teacher and the student is related to the child's temperament [51]. However, the question arises as to what role

the teacher's relationship with the child plays in this, as different characteristics of the child produce different reactions from the teacher.

2 RESEARCH AIM, TASKS AND HYPOTHESES

As stated in the introduction, the main findings of previous studies have shown that personal variables of educators, such as their personality and well-being, and those of children, such as their temperament, have a strong influence on the relationship between educators and children. Therefore, the aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between early childhood educators and toddlers (closeness and conflict) as a function of different personal variables (educators' personality characteristics, their well-being, toddlers' temperament, and socio-demographic characteristics such as gender and age of toddlers and educators, and ease of working with toddlers). The relationship between them and whether it is possible to predict closeness and conflict between educators and toddlers based on the above variables will be investigated. Taking into account previous research findings, it is expected that high levels of closeness and low levels of conflict, moderate to high levels of all personal variables except neuroticism and emotionality, and significant positive correlations between the educator-toddler relationship and the personal variables (and negative with neuroticism and emotionality) will be found. It is also expected that the personal variables studied have significant predictive power for the educator-toddler relationship.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Participants

A total of 22 kindergarten teachers from six randomly selected kindergartens in Primorje-Gorski Kotar and Istria counties participated in the study. They assessed 1 to 8 children in the groups they work with, maintaining anonymity and confidentiality of data at the highest level. Therefore, 77 children (35 boys and 42 girls) with an average age of $M=2.74$ ($SD=.52$) were assessed in the range of 1 to 3 years. Five children (6.5%) had developmental difficulties: Autism, motor difficulties, muscular dystrophy, deafness, and communication difficulties. The mean age of the educators was $M=36.86$ ($SD=9.45$) and ranged from 26-63 years. The mean work experience was $M=12.57$ ($SD=9.46$) and ranged from 2-37 years of work experience. They rated the ease of working with children as high in some cases ($M=3.76$, $SD=1.12$) and ranged from 1-5.

3.2 Measures & Procedure

To measure all focused variables in this study, a total of 6 standardised scales were used, which were adapted and validated in Croatia. All scales have shown satisfactory reliability values, and the educators rated the toddlers and themselves on a 5-point Likert scale (from 1 - *I do not agree at all* to 5 - *I fully agree*). The STRS (Student-Teacher Relationship Scale, [52], [15]), which includes 15 items, was used to measure closeness and conflict between educators and toddlers. Personality traits were assessed with the Big Five Inventory (BFI; [53], [54]), which consists of 44 items measuring five dimensions of personality: Extraversion, Neuroticism, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Openness to Experience. Educators' well-being was assessed using three variables: Life Satisfaction, Optimism, and Happiness. For self-assessment of the first variable, the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) was used [55], which includes 5 items. Optimism was measured with the Life Orientation Test - revised (LOT-R; [56]), which consists of 6 items. Finally, happiness was measured with the Subjective Happiness Scale [57] with four items. All well-being scales were adapted to the Croatian language and validated by Rijavec et al [33]. For the measurement of temperament in young children, the EAS questionnaire was used ([41], [42], [44]). It measures three temperament dimensions: Emotionality, Activity, and Sociability with a total of 15 items. Sociodemographic variables of kindergarten teachers and toddlers were assessed by simple introductory questions at the beginning of these six scales used by kindergarten teachers. Prior to this, each kindergarten was asked by the researchers for formal permission to conduct this study. After obtaining informed consent from kindergarten directors, educators, and parents, the researchers provided simple instructions for educators to complete the scales, distinguishing between self-assessment scales and toddler rating scales. Anonymity and confidentiality of the collected data were ensured, and SPSS 28 was used for descriptive, correlation, and regression analyses.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Descriptive parameters of closeness and conflict between educators and toddlers and their personal characteristics

Table 1 shows descriptive parameters (Means, Standard Deviations and Ranges) for two STRS-dimensions (closeness and conflict), early childhood educators' personality traits (openness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, extraversion, and agreeableness) and well-being (optimism, life satisfaction and happiness), and toddlers' temperament (emotionality, activity, and sociability). On average, early childhood educators rated their closeness to toddlers higher and their conflicts with them lower than expected. In addition, they rated their personality traits and aspects of well-being as moderately to slightly high, with the exception of neuroticism, which was rated lower than other personality traits. These results were expected and confirmed by previous studies described in the introduction to this article. Finally, the temperament dimensions of toddlers were rated as moderate to high, and the emotionality dimension was rated as the lowest, which was also expected.

Table 1. Descriptive parameters (Means, Standard Deviations and Ranges) for STRS-dimensions, early childhood educators' personality traits and well-being, and toddlers' temperament

<i>Variables</i>		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Range</i>
Students-teacher relationship	Closeness	4.09	.74	2-5
	Conflict	1.88	.81	1-4.14
Early childhood educators' personality traits	Openness	3.73	.44	3-4.8
	Conscientiousness	3.90	.61	2.78-5
	Neuroticism	2.25	.46	1.5-3.13
	Extraversion	3.72	.52	2.75-4.75
	Agreeableness	4.08	.43	3-4.67
Early childhood educators' well-being	Optimism	3.20	1.27	1.33-5
	Life satisfaction	4.02	.64	2.4-4.8
	Happiness	4.42	.59	2.5-5
Toddlers' temperament	Emotionality	2.79	1.04	1-5
	Activity	3.31	.89	1.6-5
	Sociability	3.59	.77	1.4-5

4.2 The relationship between closeness, conflict and personal characteristics of educators and toddlers

Table 2 shows the calculated Spearman correlation coefficients (bold are those that are statistically significant at the 5% and 1% levels) between the student-educator relationship variables (closeness and conflict), the educators' personality traits and well-being aspects, the toddlers' temperament dimensions, and the toddlers' and educators' sociodemographic variables. High and significant correlations of closeness and conflict with ease of work, toddlers' gender and age, kindergarten teachers' age, and children's temperament were found. As expected, higher levels of closeness with toddlers are associated with lower levels of conflict. Higher levels of closeness are significantly related to higher levels of sociability in toddlers, are higher in relationships with girls, and are related to ease of work. On the other hand, a higher level of conflict with toddlers is significantly related to higher activity and emotionality, it is higher in the relationship with boys, in older educators with greater work experience and with high work diligence. All identified correlations were expected as previously described.

Table 2. Correlation coefficients with significance levels between student-teacher relationship variables (closeness and conflict), early childhood educators' personality traits and well-being aspects, toddlers' temperament dimensions and socio-demographic variables of toddlers and educators

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Closeness</i>	<i>Conflict</i>
Conflict	-.439**	1.000
Openness	-.080	.004
Conscientiousness	-.040	-.068
Neuroticism	.035	.039
Extraversion	-.029	.151
Agreeableness	.013	-.267*
Optimism	.008	.037
Life satisfaction	.054	-.209
Happiness	-.088	-.187
Emotionality	-.078	.402**
Activity	-.071	.445**
Sociability	.600**	-.144
Toddlers' gender	.171	-.249*
Toddlers' age	.254*	.028
Easiness of work	.467**	-.632**
Educators' age	-.130	.304**
Educators' work experience	-.099	.276*

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

4.3 The predictive role of personal characteristics of educators and toddlers for closeness and conflict in their relationship

Regarding the predictive power of personal variables of educators and toddlers for student-teacher relationships (closeness and conflict), a hierarchical regression analysis was conducted separately for each of the relationship dimensions with four regression steps (first: educators' personality traits; second: educators' well-being dimensions; third: toddlers' temperament dimensions; and fourth: toddlers' age and gender, educators' age and easiness of work with toddlers). Following the parsimonious principle, only significant predictors are presented here. Thus, for higher closeness between educators and toddlers, the third model ($F=11.396$; $df(3,46)$, $p < 0.001$; $R=.702$) is significant and explains 37% of the total variance and the final fourth model ($F=9.728$; $df(4,42)$, $p < 0.001$; $R=.858$) is significant and explains 64% of the total variance of closeness. Significant predictors in the third model for closeness are toddlers' activity (as negative one contributed 2%) and sociability (as positive one 42%). In the fourth model, the positive significant predictors are easiness of work (contributed 49%), emotionality (contributed 2%) and sociability (contributed 18%) and negative predictor is educators' happiness (contributed 1%).

Similarly, for higher conflict, the third model ($F=4.113$; $df(3.43)$, $p < 0.012$; $R=.669$) is significant and explains 31% of the total variance and the final fourth model ($F=13.601$; $df(4.39)$, $p < 0.001$; $R=.877$) is significant and explains 68% of the total variance of closeness. Although the first model is not significant, the contributions to explaining the conflict variance of openness (11%) and agreeableness (10%) were significant, as was openness (12%) in the second model. It must be remembered that openness was determined to be a positive predictor of conflict and agreeableness a negative predictor. The third model showed that significant predictors of high conflict between educators and toddlers were high toddler activity (explaining 17% of the variance) and low toddler sociability (explaining 5% of the variance). Finally, the fourth model revealed five significant predictors: higher toddlers' emotionality (contributed with 8%), higher age of educators (contributed with 9%), lower easiness of work (contributed with 58%), higher age of toddlers (contributed with 2%) and in relation to boys (contributed with 5%).

5 CONCLUSIONS

Although this study has some methodological limitations (e.g., a small sample of toddlers) it is one of the few studies in this area and therefore should serve as a solid foundation for further research on this important topic. This study clearly demonstrated that personal variables (educators' personality traits, well-being as measured by optimism, life satisfaction, and happiness, and toddlers' temperament with both educators' and toddlers' sociodemographic variables) have strong predictive power in relation to closeness (explained 64% of the total variance) and to conflict (explained 68% of the total variance). The findings identified have confirmed the results of previous studies that were conducted with preschool-aged children ([9], [10], [11], [28], [32], [37], [38], [44], [45], [48], [49]), even though this sample is relatively small in relation to the number of variables studied and refers to toddlers. It can be concluded that educators' and toddlers' personal variables are even more important when it comes to toddlers' needs and educators' higher competencies to meet these needs, especially due to toddlers' nonverbal language stage. These findings point to the importance of developing the quality of the relationship between educators and toddlers and professional programs to support educators, taking into account the described findings on the significant predictors of closeness and conflict in the relationship. Finally, it is critical to conduct similar studies, as this is one of the rare studies in this area of research that has toddlers as research participants and provides the opportunity to use more diverse raters (parents as raters of toddler's temperament in addition to educators as raters).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work has been supported in part by the University of Rijeka under the project number (uniri-drustv-18-11): "Children's well-being in transition periods: the empirical validation of ecological-dynamic model."

REFERENCES

- [1] Act on preschool education and education (Zakon o predškolskom odgoju i naobrazbi, 1997, Narodne novine, 10/97, 107/07). Retrieved from: https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/1997_01_10_152.html , 1997.
- [2] Croatian National Curriculum for Early and Preschool Education. (*Nacionalni kurikulum za rani i predškolski odgoj i obrazovanje*). Zagreb: Ministry of science and education, Croatia, 2014.
- [3] E.M. Albers, J.M., Riksen-Walraven, & C. de Werth, "Infants' interactions with professional caregivers at 3 and 6 months of age: A longitudinal study". *Infant Behavior and Development*, 30, 631-640, 2007.
- [4] M.B. Drugli & A.M. Undheim, "Relationships between young children in full-time day care and their caregivers: A qualitative study of parental and caregiver perspectives", *Early Child Development & Care*, 182, 9, 1155-1165, 2012.
- [5] M. Ebbeck & B.Y.H. Yim, "Rethinking attachment: Fostering positive relationships between infants, toddlers and their primary caregivers". *Early Child Development & Care*, 179, 7, 899-909, 2009.
- [6] M.M. Ostrosky & E.Y. Jung, "What Works Briefs: Building Positive Teacher-Child Relationships. Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning". 2010. Retrieved from <http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/briefs/wwb12.pdf>
- [7] S. Tatalović Vorkapić, "Psihologija privrženosti i prilagodba u dječjem vrtiću – Psihologija dobrobiti djece vol. 1." (The Attachment Psychology and adjustment in kindergarten – The Psychology of Children's Well-being vol. 1. In Croatian). Rijeka, Croatia: University of Rijeka, Faculty of Teacher Education, 2020a.
- [8] C. Brebner, L., Hammond, N., Schaumloffel & C. Lind, "Using relationships as a tool: Early childhood educators' perspectives of the child-caregiver relationship in a childcare setting", *Early Child Development and Care*, 185(5), 709–726, 2015. doi: 10.1080/03004430.2014.951928
- [9] S. Tatalović Vorkapić, "The significance of preschool teacher's personality in early childhood education: Analysis of Eysenck's and Big Five Dimensions of personality". *International Journal of Psychology and Behavioral Sciences*, 2(2), 28-37, 2012. doi: 10.5923/j.ijpbs.20120202.05

- [10] S. Tatalović Vorkapić, "How much personality is important in educational context? in: International Conference EDUvision 2015: "Modern Approaches to Teaching Coming Generation" (M. Orel), 75-83, EDUvision, Stanislav Jurjevčič, Ljubljana, Slovenija, 2015.
- [11] S. Tatalović Vorkapić, "Personality and Education: Contemporary issues in Psychological science about Personality in Teacher Education". In: *Handbook of Research on Teacher Education and Professional Development Professional Development* (C. Martin & D. Polly), 163-186, 2017a. A volume in the Advances in Higher Education and Professional Development (AHEPD) Book Series. USA: IGI Global, 2017a. DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-1067-3.ch009
- [12] M.R. Burchinal, J.E., Roberts, R., Riggins Jnr., S.A., Zeisel, E., Neebe & D. Bryant, "Relating quality of centre-based child care to early cognitive and language development longitudinally", *Child Development*, 71, 2, 339-357, 2000.
- [13] R.C. Pianta, B., Hamre & M. Stuhlman, "Relationships between teachers and children". In: *Comprehensive handbook of psychology* (W. Reynolds & G. Miller, eds.), vol. 7, pp. 199–234. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2003.
- [14] B.K. Hamre & R.C. Pianta, "Early teacher–child relationships and the trajectory of children's school outcomes through eighth grade", *Child development*, 72(2), 625-638, 2001.
- [15] S. Tatalović Vorkapić, "Psychometric properties of student-teacher relationship scale – short form: Croatian validation study from preschool education context", In: *ICERI2017 Proceedings, 10th International Conference of Education, Research, and Innovation*, November 16th-18th, 2017, (L. Gómez Chova, A. López Martínez, I. Candel Torres eds.), pp. 155-161. IATED Academy, Seville, Spain, 2017b.
- [16] S. Tatalović Vorkapić, "Children's well-being during transition periods in Croatia: The proposal of empirical validation of Ecological-dynamic model", in *INTED2019 Proceedings, 13th International Technology, Education and Development Conference*, 11th-13th March, (L. Gómez Chova, A. López Martínez, I. Candel Torres eds.), pp. 265-276., Valencia, Spain: IATED Academy, 2019a.
- [17] S. Tatalović Vorkapić, "Podrška socijalno-emocionalnoj dobrobiti djece u Hrvatskoj: Prikaz tri znanstveno-stručna projekta" (Support to socio-emotional well-being of children in Croatia: The presentation of three scientific-professional projects. In Croatian). In: *EDUvision 2019 – Sodobni pristopi poučavanja prihajajočih generacij* (M. Orel ed.), pp. 69-83., Ljubljana, Slovenija: EDUvision, Stanislav Jurjevčič s.p. 2019b.
- [18] S. Tatalović Vorkapić, "Socio-emocionalna dobrobit i otpornost djece rane i predškolske dobi: Kako omogućiti da djeca (p)ostanu dobro?" (Socio-emotional well-being and resilience in children of an early and preschool age: How to achieve for children to be(come) well? In Croatian). *Dijete, vrtić, obitelj*, 89, pp. 2-6., 2019c.
- [19] S. Tatalović Vorkapić, "Kako bez suza u dječji vrtić i osnovnu školu?: Podrška socijalno-emocionalnoj dobrobiti djece tijekom prijelaza i prilagodbe, Psihologija dobrobiti djece vol. 2." (How to go to kindergarten and primary school tear-free? – Support for socio-emotional well-being of children during transition and adaptation, The Psychology of Children's Well-being vol. 2. In Croatian). Rijeka, Croatia: University of Rijeka, Faculty of Teacher Education, 2021.
- [20] S. Tatalović Vorkapić & J. LoCasale-Crouch, *Supporting Children's Well-being during Early Childhood Transition to School*. Hershey, PA: IGI Global, USA. 2021.
- [21] C. Cefai, L., Camilleri, P., Bartolo, I., Grazzani, V., Cavioni, E., Conte, V., Ornaghi, A., Agliati, S., Gandellini, S., Tatalović Vorkapić, M., Poulou, B., Martinsone, I., Stokenberga, C., Simões, M., Santos, A.A., Colomeischi, Promoting Mental Health in Schools: Evaluating the effectiveness of the PROMEHS Programme in improving students' and teachers' social and emotional competence, resilience and mental health, Resilience and Health by the Centre for Resilience and Socio-Emotional Health, University of Malta, Malta, 2022a.
- [22] C. Cefai, L., Camilleri, P., Bartolo, I., Grazzani, V., Cavioni, E., Conte, V., Ornaghi, A., Agliati, S., Gandellini, S., Tatalović Vorkapić, M., Poulou B., Martinsone, I., Stokenberga, C., Simões, M., Santos & A.A. Colomeischi, "The effectiveness of a school-based, universal mental health programme in six European countries". *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13:925614, 2022b.. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2022.925614
- [23] J.T. Thijs, H.M.Y., Koomen & A. van der Leij, "Teacher-child relationships and pedagogical practices: Considering the teacher's perspective". *School Psychology Review*, 37(2), 244–260, 2008.

- [24] J. Oakes & M. Lipton, *Teaching to change the world*. New York; McGraw-Hill, 2003.
- [25] P.D. McAdams & L. Pals, "A new big five: Fundamental principles for an integrative science of personality". *American Psychologist*, 61(3), 204-217, 2006.
- [26] S. Tatalović Vorkapić, L., Vujičić & R. Čepić, "Pre-school Teacher Identity" in: *Cases on Teacher Identity, Diversity, and Cognition in Higher Education* (P. Breen), 22-60, A volume in the Advances in Higher Education and professional Development (AHEPD) Book Series, IGI Global, 2014.
- [27] S. Tatalović Vorkapić, "Personality traits and psychological needs satisfaction as predictors of early childhood teachers' job satisfaction". In: *INTED2020 Proceedings, 14th International Technology, Education and Development Conference*, (L. Gómez Chova, A. López Martínez, I. Candel Torres), 2nd-4th March, Valencia, Spain, 7703-7711, 2020b.
- [28] S. Tatalović Vorkapić & J. Jelić Puhalo, "Povezanost osobina ličnosti, nade, optimizma i zadovoljstva životom odgajatelja predškolske djece", *Napredak*, 57(1-2), 205-220, 2016.
- [29] S. Tatalović Vorkapić, L., Ljevar & M., Batistić Zorec, "Personality traits and subjective theories of future early childhood educators as determinants of their professional identity. In: *EDULEARN2020 Proceedings, 12th Annual International Conference on Education and New Learning Technologies*, (L. Gómez Chova, A. López Martínez, I. Candel Torres), 6th-7th July, IATED, Palma de Mallorca, Spain, 2234-2243, 2020.
- [30] S. Tatalović Vorkapić, R., Čepić & I. Šekulja, "Are there any differences in personality traits and life satisfaction between preschool and primary school teachers?", *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, 30(3), 361-373, 2016.
- [31] S. Tatalović Vorkapić & I. Pelosa, "Exploring the personality traits and well-being among pre-school and primary school teachers in Croatia", *Current Issues in Personality Psychology*, 5(1), 21-31, 2017. doi: <https://doi.org/10.5114/cipp.2017.65830>
- [32] S. Tatalović Vorkapić & D. Lončarić, "Posreduje li profesionalno sagorijevanje učinke osobina ličnosti na zadovoljstvo životom odgojitelja predškolske djece?", *Psihologijske teme*, 22 (3), 431-445, 2013. Preuzeto s <https://hrcak.srce.hr/111876>
- [33] M. Rijavec, D., Miljković & I. Brdar, *Pozitivna psihologija [Positive psychology]*. Zagreb, Croatia: IEP-D2, 2008.
- [34] A. Brajša Žganec & Lj. Kaliterna Lipovčan, "Kvaliteta življenja, životno zadovoljstvo i sreća osoba koje profesionalno pomažu drugima", *Društvena istraživanja Zagreb*, 4-5 (84-85), 713-728, 2006.
- [35] M. Tadić, "Pregled nekih istraživanja u kontekstu subjektivne dobrobiti". *Društvena istraživanja*, 1-2(105-106), 117-136, 2010.
- [36] A.G. Tan & D. Majid, "Teachers' perceptions of creativity and happiness: A perspective from Singapore". *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 15, 173-180, 2011.
- [37] S. Tatalović Vorkapić & R. Čepić, "Personal and professional well-being among Croatian early childhood educators: Are they related?" In: *Psycho-Social Perspectives on Mental Health and Well-Being. A volume in the Advances in Psychology, Mental Health, and Behavioral Studies (APMHBS) Book Series* (S. Padmanaban & C. Subudhi, eds.), pp. 255-280. Hershey PA: IGI-Global, 2020.
- [38] S. Tatalović Vorkapić, "The role of early childhood educators' well-being in their relationship with children". In: *ICERI2022 Proceedings, 15th International Conference on Education, Research and Innovation*, (L. Gómez Chova, A. López Martínez, J. Lees), November 7th-9th, 2022, IATED Academy, Seville, Spain, 4128-4137, 2022a.
- [39] I. Živčić-Bećirević i S. Smojver-Ažić, "Izvori stresa na poslu odgojitelja u dječjim vrtićima", *Psihologijske teme*, vol.14., br. 2., str. 3-13, 2005.
- [40] M. Oren, *Child temperament, gender, teacher-child relationship, and teacher-child interactions*. USA: Florida State University Libraries, 2006.
- [41] A. Buss & R. Plomin, *A temperament theory of personality development*. New York: Wiley, 1975.
- [42] A. Buss & R. Plomin, *Temperament: Early developing personality traits*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1984.

- [43] S. Tatalović Vorkapić, "Assessing the child temperament: Contemporary challenges regarding the various raters". In: International Conference EDUvision 2016: "Modern Approaches to Teaching Coming Generation" (M. Orel), 274-285. EDUvision, Stanislav Jurjevčič, Ljubljana, Slovenija, 2016.
- [44] S. Tatalović Vorkapić & D. Lončarić, "Measuring preschool children temperament: Implications for preschool care and education practice", *International Journal of Educational Psychology*, 4(3), 280-304, 2015. doi: 17583/ijep.2015.1483
- [45] S. Tatalović Vorkapić & J. Žagar, Is the evaluation of children's temperament independent from preschool teachers' personality? In: *The European Proceedings of Social & Behavioural Sciences (EpSBS), XX*, (Z. Bekirogullari, M. Y. Minas & R. X. Thambusamy), 84-96, 5th icCSBs 2017 The Annual International Conference on Cognitive-Social, and Behavioural Sciences, Future Academy Conferences, Brno, 9-11. January, 2017.
- [46] S. Tatalović Vorkapić & M. Slaviček, Preschool children's temperament and their strengths and difficulties: Teachers' assessment of their relationship. In: *Protection and promotion of the well-being of children, youth, and families: Selected Proceedings of the 1st International Scientific Conference of the Department of Psychology at the Catholic University of Croatia* (S. Nakić Radoš), 11-28, Zagreb, Croatia: Catholic University of Croatia, 2018.
- [47] S. Tatalović Vorkapić, E., Skopljak & I. Lučev, Are we looking through the same glasses? – The analyses of children's temperament assessment by various ratters. In: *ICERI2020 Proceedings, 13th annual International Conference of Education, Research and Innovation Seville (Spain)*, (L. Gómez Chova, A. López Martínez, I. Candel Torres), 9th- 11th of November, 2020, IATED Academy, Seville, Spain (pp. 2897-2097, 2020).
- [48] S. Tatalović Vorkapić, I., Mihić & A. Smolić Batelić, Student-teacher relationship and children's attachment – is there a connection? In: *ICERI2022 Proceedings, 15th International Conference on Education, Research and Innovation*, (L. Gómez Chova, A. López Martínez, J. Lees), November 7th-9th, 2022, IATED Academy, Seville, Spain, (pp. 4688-4698, 2022).
- [49] S. Tatalović Vorkapić, S. Children's attachment patterns and their relationship with early childhood educators in: *The 28th International conference "Educational research and school practice" – The state, problems and needs of the modern education community* (J. Stevanović, D. Gundogan & B. Randelović), 211-217., Beograd, 9th December, Institute for Educational Research, Belgrade, Serbia, 2022b.
- [50] S. Tatalović Vorkapić, Ž. Pregelj-Čargonja and I. Mihić, "Validacija ljestvice za procjenu privrženosti djece rane dobi u fazi prilagodbe na jaslice" (Validation of the attachment assessment scale for toddlers during their adaptation time in nursery. In Croatian), *Hrvatska revija za rehabilitacijska istraživanja*, vol. 51, no. 2, pp. 1-15, 2015.
- [51] J. Viljaranta, K., Aunola, S., Mulla, J., Virkkala, R., Hirvonen, E., Pakarinen, & J-E. Nurmi, "Children's temperament and academic skill development during first grade: Teacher's interactions styles as mediators". *Child Development*, 86(4), 1191-1209, 2015.
- [52] R.C. Pianta, "*Student-Teacher Relationship Scale: Professional Manual*", Odessa, FL: Psychological Assessment Resources, Inc., 2001.
- [53] O. P. John & S. Srivastava, "The Big Five Trait taxonomy: History, measurement, and theoretical perspectives" in *Handbook of personality: Theory and research* (L. A. Pervin & O. P. John), 102-138., New York: Guilford Press, 1999.
- [54] I. Kardum, A. Gračanin & J. Hudek-Knežević, "Odnos crta ličnosti i stilova privrženosti s različitim aspektima seksualnosti kod žena i muškaraca," *Psiholgijske teme*, vol. 15, no. 1. pp. 101-128, 2006.
- [55] E. Diener, R.A., Emmons, R.J., Larsen & S. Griffin, "The Satisfaction with Life Scale. *Journal of Personality*". *Assessment*, 49(1), 71–75, 1985. doi:10.1207/s15327752jpa4901_13
- [56] M.F. Scheier & C.S. Carver, "Optimism, coping, and health: Assessment and implications of generalized outcome expectancies". *Health Psychology*, 4, 219-247, 1985.
- [57] S. Lyubomirsky & H. Lepper, "A measure of subjective happiness: Preliminary reliability and construct validation". *Social Indicators Research*, 46, 137-155, 1999.