

**EDITORIAL – FIRST YEARS: DEVELOPMENT, EARLY
CHILDHOOD INTERVENTION, AND INCLUSION**

**EDITORIAL – OS PRIMEIROS ANOS: DESENVOLVIMENTO,
INTERVENÇÃO PRECOCE NA PRIMEIRA INFÂNCIA, E
INCLUSÃO**

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This Special Issue of the Child Studies journal aims to address areas of research and intervention with an increasing projection for children's well-being. Aligning development, early childhood intervention, and inclusion in early years, we seek to revisit the conceptual meaning of these key concepts in research studies featuring the interconnectedness of knowledge of scholars and professionals in the context of routine care practice.

Early childhood intervention is a crucial period for learning and development, encompassing the physical, cognitive, social, and emotional growth that lays the foundation for a child's future well-being. During these years, children experience rapid brain development, making early childhood intervention essential for identifying and addressing developmental delays or risk factors (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). The early childhood intervention field is at a crucial turning point in our changing world. We have the chance to combine new scientific insights with the real-life experiences of families and decision-makers from various sectors, cultures, and political backgrounds. This presents a strong way forward, and shared leadership is urgently needed (Shonkoff, 2022).

Inclusion in early childhood settings is equally crucial because it creates a sense of belonging and acceptance for all children, regardless of their abilities or backgrounds. Inclusive practices ensure children with special needs have equal opportunities to participate in all activities. This benefits children with disabilities by giving them the same learning experiences as their peers and fosters empathy,

understanding, and acceptance among all children. By creating an inclusive environment, professionals and caregivers help build a foundation for a more equitable society where every child can reach their full potential (Soukakou, Dionne, & Palikara, 2024).

Albeit being socially and legally recognized the importance of providing children and families the support they need to enhance their development during the early years of life, implementation of a research-guided practice is crucial, particularly concerning, training and capacity-building of skilled practitioners to cover the needs identified. Despite existing training programs, the early childhood system of care has to improve according to the family-centered framework and evidence-based defined quality criteria to narrow the gap between the discourse of professionals and actual practices. Furthermore, families and children's participation should be promoted not only for their empowerment and competence enhancement but also as a critical contribution to the evaluation of the quality of the service they receive.

The five papers assembled in this thematic issue on First years: development, early childhood intervention, and inclusion showcase these theoretical and practical assumptions. Moreover, the first three papers bring us the perspective of the high-affinity context of research on early childhood intervention, while the last two expand the topic to universal aspects of children's education in the family context and early education centers.

The first paper, "Early childhood intervention: the perspective of families", by Vânia Oliveira and Catarina Grande from the University of Porto, Portugal bears witness to the generative features of the family-centered approach to increase the opportunities for parental involvement and participation. Addressing participating families about their perceptions and appraisals of the early childhood intervention, this research study discloses the relevance of meaningful participation for the family's empowerment. Difficulties and challenges are evidenced and instigate the reflection on processes to continue promoting the family and children's active roles throughout collaborative practices with the ECI professionals.

The second paper, "Evidence-based Practices in an Early Childhood Intervention Service in Spain: The Voice of families", by Patricia Carla de Souza Della Barba from the Federal University of São Carlos and Margarita Cañadas Perez from the Catholic University of Valencia, analyzes the implementation of evidence-based practices in early childhood intervention (ECI) in the Centro de Atención Temprana y Escuela Infantil L'Alqueria, Catholic University of Valencia. Using a qualitative paradigm inquiry, the study listens to family voices, and uses three instruments answered by the families, to understand how child outcomes, capacity building /empowerment practices, and family quality of life are interconnected in the support received by the children and their families.

The third article, "Interaction between children in preschool: perception of differences in the school inclusion process for children with autism" by Andrea Perosa Saigh Jurdi & Alanis Raabe Honorio da Silva from the Federal University of

S. Paulo, Brazil highlights the importance of peer interactions, with a focus on children with autism. It also highlights the importance of the influence and mediation of the early childhood educator as an enabler of greater involvement and understanding between pairs of children, with and without autism. This study challenges us to create support strategies and methodologies that underpin the right to belong and participate for all children in their life contexts.

The fourth paper entitled “Family’s childbearing challenges during the transition to preschool: a qualitative study”, by Rafaela Rosário, from the University of Minho, focuses on the family’s developmental transitions and the challenges with three-year-old childbearing. The study describes the personal experiences of families that integrated two focus groups partnering with professionals from their routine care practice (family nurse, family physician, kindergarten educator). While families face new needs and demands with childbearing at transitional periods such as entry in preschool, it is crucial for them to find the support they need in primary care units. In line with family support policies, this study showcases the importance of designing interventions that strengthen meaningful liaisons both for families and professionals.

The fifth article “Enhancing communicative skills in early childhood education: the role of oral tradition and phonics”, authored by Ana Maria Montero Ramirez from the University of La Rioja, is an opinion paper that pinpoints the importance of the oral tradition and phonics in the communicative experience in early childhood education. Young children's pedagogy is to be considered an immense cultural environment where the communicative experience in early childhood education is enriched through the oral tradition. The author's perspective highlights the educational value of exploring methods of teaching that embed the process of learning in the children’s culture and ways that are sensitive to the development of their communicative skills.

Welcoming the readers of *Child Studies* to this special issue on First Years: Development, Early Childhood Intervention, and Inclusion, the journal is eagerly committed to giving the stage to research studies that focus on families and professionals working together to help children thrive.

References

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