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E-READINESS OF PRESERVICE KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS FOR TEACHING PRACTICES DURING THE COVID-19 LOCKDOWN PERIOD [ABSTRACT]

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ABSTRACT

Aim/Purpose	This study examined the distance teaching practices that early childhood pre-service teachers chose for working with kindergarten students during the COVID-19 lockdown.
Background	The spread of the coronavirus resulted in a state of emergency, lockdowns, isolations, and social distancing in Israel. As a result of the lockdown, kindergartens were closed, and learning continued distance teaching.
Methodology	In this study, we examine the perception of the role of the coaching kindergarten teacher in the process of integrating and coaching students at the beginning of their practicum in kindergarten, during the COVID period, from the perspective of the students. The study involved 32 female preservice teachers studying at teacher training institutions in Israel. The study used the qualitative research method.
Contribution	Imparting knowledge, tools, and skills for working in this environment could have led to more significant teaching during the COVID-19 lockdown period by some of the participants in the study.
Findings	The data analysis revealed that preservice teachers could be divided into three categories: (a) those who adopted distance teaching (12.5%), (b) those who sent asynchronous messages (21.8%), and (c) those who initiated distance learning activities (65.6%). Participants raised three issues: (a) communication and interactions, (b) characteristics of the preservice teachers, and (c) attitudes, tools, and technological skills of the preservice teachers. The findings revealed differences in the resilience and efficacy of the preservice teachers, including creativity,

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	<p>endurance, independence, flexibility, and the degree of e-readiness for teaching in a digital environment. These differences affected the choice of distance teaching practices.</p>
Recommendations for Practitioners	<p>Knowledge strengthens the sense of mental resilience; therefore, it is necessary to enhance the digital readiness of students in early education teaching programs. The process of training preservice teachers must include teaching practices in a digital environment, thereby expanding the students' "toolbox" and increasing their e-readiness for effective integration of the digital environment.</p>
Recommendations for Researchers	<p>The findings of the study can be applied in periods when it is not possible to meet face-to-face, with remote populations in the periphery, and in joint learning of kindergarten teachers, parents, and children within the framework of homeschooling in geographically distant areas, carried out remotely and not face to face.</p> <p>All the preservice teachers who participated in the study and all the parents of the children in the kindergartens had full access to the Internet and applications; therefore, the findings of the present study can be applied only to populations that have access to the Internet. For populations that have partial access, the data may be applied only partially.</p>
Impact on Society	<p>It is important that kindergarten teachers initiate distance learning with the children and parents on an ongoing basis, not only during emergencies and crises, on various topics, for example, the online activities program focusing on the seasons of the year. Parents can write texts with their children and all kindergarten children can see them; they can document trees in various situations—the falling of leaves and blossoming—and share with all the kindergarten children and their parents in a dedicated forum; watch a show online with the all the children and their parents; send videos and allow responses on the common forum to the kindergarten staff, children, and parents. In addition, in the process of preservice teacher training, students must acquire social-emotional skills and cultivate a sense of resilience, empathy, self-efficacy, growth mindset patterns, decision-making ability, self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, interaction management, and responsibility.</p>
Future Research	<p>The sample included 32 preservice teachers in early education, in the final year of their training, and examined the practices chosen by the preservice teachers during the first COVID-19 lockdown. Further studies, following subsequent closures, may show a better adaptation to distance teaching because of the experience gained in the meantime. Future studies should examine the distance teaching practices that teachers have used in practice during the closure periods, and what factors advanced and hindered distance learning.</p>
Keywords	<p>distance teaching practices, COVID-19, practical experience, e-readiness, kindergartens, field experiences, preservice teachers</p>

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