Rallying round the flag of the Star of David
during the first wave of Covid-19: Increased popular support for
Netanyahu in the time of crisis

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The new coronavirus epidemic was perceived as a national crisis, and Israel mobilized all its security agencies to formulate countermeasures. Prime Minister Netanyahu seems to have successfully capitalized on this national crisis to boost support for himself in the short term. Prime Minister However, as discussed below, even if the growing death toll from the outbreak was reversed, there were other countries whose successes did not translate into increased support for the government, one of which was Japan.

This study analyzes the surge in support for the prime minister during the first wave of the coronavirus epidemic in Israel within the framework of the rally effect. Israel was chosen as a case study for two reasons. First, the country was repeatedly polled during the first wave of infection. Second, a special policy that met the requirements for natural experimentation—a strict compartmentalized blockade limited to certain areas—had been in place for a while. These two conditions mean that a study of Israel during the first wave of the epidemic will allow us to make discoveries about the conditions under which a society supports its political leaders in the face of a national crisis.

keywords: rally effects, Israel, natural experiment, lockdown, coronavirus

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Introduction

A woman aboard the *Diamond Princess* cruise ship was Israel's first case of a new coronavirus (COVID-19) infection, discovered on February 21, 2020. Two days later, the Israeli Ministry of Health announced a 14-day quarantine policy for all people entering Israel from an East Asian country after a stay of more than two weeks. The outbreak then spread mainly among returnees who had travelled to East Asia and Italy, and special polling stations were set up for the Knesset elections on March 2 for those in isolation at home. During the period of coalition negotiations leading up to the formation of the new cabinet, countermeasures against the new coronavirus were continuously launched: on March 9, foreigners without Israeli citizenship were banned from entering the country, and the first curfew, often called “lockdown,” order was issued by the government on March 19.

The new infectious disease, a coronavirus, was first detected in Wuhan, China in November 2019 and quickly spread around the world and changed our lives forever. Many countries adopted curfews similar to those in Israel, preparing for the first wave of increased infections. The economic and social impact of such curfews was significant, with unemployment skyrocketing and schools closing in many countries around the world. As the number of infected people began to increase, medical services came under increasing strain, and governments faced the urgent necessity of preventing their collapse. The curfew was imposed to prevent the collapse of the medical care system as a top priority.

As mentioned earlier, governments around the world implemented policies to prepare for the first wave of increased infections. The public response to these policies was widely divided. Some countries, such as Australia, Canada, Germany, and the United Kingdom, saw a surge in support for their prime ministers, while others, such as the United States, Japan, and Brazil, saw little or no change in support for their leaders or governments. Israel belongs to the group of countries where the prime minister's approval rating increased. At the time, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was awaiting indictment and

trial by the public prosecutor after a number of corruption allegations emerged during his 12 years in office. In the state of Israel, the existence of an indictment does not require a prime minister to stand down, so Netanyahu used every opportunity to stay in office.

The new coronavirus epidemic was perceived as a national crisis, and Israel mobilized all of its security agencies to formulate countermeasures. Prime Minister Netanyahu seems to have successfully capitalized on this national crisis to boost support for himself in the short term (Figure 1), with The Economist Intelligence Unit (Economist 2020) citing Israel as one of the countries that had successfully contained the rising death toll. Prime Minister Netanyahu himself declared victory over the first wave in a speech on the evening of May 4: "We have achieved great success." (*The Times of Israel*, May 4, 2020). However, as discussed below, even if the growing death toll from the outbreak was reversed, there were other countries whose successes did not translate into increased support for the government, one of which was Japan.¹

In the United Kingdom, where the Economist Intelligence Unit (Economist 2020) rated the country's coronavirus control measures as "poor," Prime Minister Boris Johnson appeared to be suffering from a new corona infection but nonetheless enjoyed increased short-run popular support. Cunningham (2020) argues in using data from 27 countries affected by Covid-19 that the spread of the new coronavirus disease has had a "rally-round-the-flag-effect,"² due in part to the media's reluctance to criticize governments. His research shows that as the new coronavirus disease spread, in eleven countries (Germany, Canada, the Netherlands, Sweden, Ireland, Portugal, New Zealand, Denmark, Norway, Finland, and Austria) such "rallying" saw the ruling party's support expand by more than five percentage points. Germany had more than 1,000 deaths during March, but support for Merkel and the ruling coalition increased by more than ten points. As can be seen from the case of Germany, the public does not necessarily associate good performance with the reputation of the prime minister or the ruling party.

When the Covid-19 disaster struck, some countries experienced a sharp rise in support, what is termed the "rally effect," while others experienced no change in support for their leaders or the ruling party, or even a decline. The same is true for the original subject of the analysis, wars, which are as much threat as Covid-19, where spikes in government approval ratings at the start of a war do not always occur. If this assumption is true, then the study of public opinion under the spread of the new coronavirus may help us to understand the mechanism by which the rally effect occurs.

¹ The EIU report only gives Japan a Fair rating, so maybe it's not so strange that Abe's approval rating has fallen.

² Muller (1970: 20) suggested that the rally effect meant international crises and similar phenomena will give major political leaders a short-term boost in popularity.

This study analyzes the surge in support for the prime minister during the first wave of the coronavirus epidemic in Israel within the framework of the rally effect. Israel was chosen as a case study for two reasons. First, the country was repeatedly polled during the first wave of infection. Second, a special policy that met the requirements for natural experimentation—a strict compartmentalized blockade limited to certain areas—had been in place for a while. This special policy divided the country of Israel into two groups: those who were directly affected by the measures and those who were not. These two conditions mean that a study of Israel during the first wave of the epidemic will allow us to make discoveries about the conditions under which a society supports its political leaders in the face of a national crisis.

The “rally” effect in the time of COVID-19

At the time of writing, August 2020, effective methods to induce remission in infected people or prevent infection in uninfected people (through vaccination, for example) have not been found for novel coronavirus infections. In most cases, the common cold-like symptoms of fever, cough, and general malaise resolve over time without causing severe illness. However, the disease can be severe and even fatal in the elderly and those with underlying medical conditions. The incubation period is long, up to fourteen days, during which time the disease is thought to spread through contact with uninfected people. At present, the authorities are requesting the public to take measures on an individual basis, such as keeping a distance of two meters from other people, so-called “social distancing,” wearing masks, practicing hygiene management (e.g. washing hands) and not leaving home if symptomatic. Governments have also adopted measures to alleviate current financial difficulties by conducting real-time PCR testing to identify infected people, distributing masks and providing benefits to individuals, and providing management support grants to small business owners. In addition to these short-term measures, the governments of developed countries have been pushing for the development of a vaccine to reduce new coronavirus infections to the level of ordinary seasonal influenza.

Because the disease spread around the world almost simultaneously, with a time lag of only one to two months, governments had little time to prepare their responses. Therefore, the initial policy adopted by most countries was curfew. So-called “lockdown” policies ranged from those issued in Japan as a declaration of a state of emergency with no penalties, to others issued as advisories to the public, to more stringent ones limiting people to shopping for daily necessities, requiring them to carry ID cards, and imposing penalties for violating regulations. In response to this simultaneous spread of an unknown infectious disease around the world, governments implemented similar policies. However,

and interestingly, there were significant differences in the public perception of governments (Economist 2020, 73).

The short-lived surge in support for some political leaders from mid-March to early May 2020 is very similar to the spike in support for leaders at the start of a war. In other words, the national-level crisis of the spread of an unknown infectious disease and the start of an interstate war seem to be similar. Thus, the mechanism for public evaluation of governments in response to crises may also be clarified by contrasting the results with those of the rally effects study (Mueller 1970, 1973).

First of all, what criteria do people use to evaluate and trust³ a government that formulates COVID-19 measures? Intuitively, the criterion seems to be their reassurance or insecurity⁴; some studies using the social-psychological approach of rally effects have focused on insecurity (Huddy et al. 2005; Lerner et al. 2003; Skitka et al. 2006). Huddy et al. (2005, 601) found a negative correlation between attitudes of support for the president, support for military intervention in Afghanistan, and approval of U.S. activeness in world politics and anxiety about terrorism.

Political scientists indicate that the basis for these attitudes is a short-term, intuitive assessment of performance, which may be based on whether government measures have provided reassurance to the people themselves and to those around them; Landau et. al. (2004), using the 9/11 terrorist attacks as a subject, first pointed out that threats to survival are a prominent concern for people. Then, they argued that people trust the entity that eliminates threats and provides reassurance.

Baekgaard et al. (2020) applied Landau's approach to try and explain the effect of new coronavirus outbreaks on public confidence, making use of the Interrupted Time Series Design to rigorously infer the causal effect of the lockdown on confidence in the prime minister. They demonstrate the mechanism of the rally effects: the implementation of the policy reassured the Danish public, which in turn increased their confidence in the prime minister.

Bol et al. (2020) carried out an empirical study of the effects of lockdown on satisfaction with democracy and trust in government, and the popularity of political leaders in 15 European countries, by conducting a simultaneous web survey in March and April. This study showed that Lockdown increased satisfaction with democracy and trust in government and the popularity of political leaders. Shino and Binder (2020) also

³ Empirical studies of trust have been accumulating since Putnam (1993). The measurement of trust is comprehensively discussed by OECD (2017).

⁴ Some studies have explained that when terrorism is the cause of the threat, anger at terrorists, rather than anxiety, drives Rally (Lambert, Schott, and Scherer 2011). However, because directing anger at an inanimate virus seems unnatural, this paper will focus on previous studies based on anxiety.

examined the relationship between Lockdown and the popularity of political leaders in a web-survey. This paper is a case study of Florida, where the political leader is a governor from the Democratic Party. The paper uses Regression Discontinuity Design to flesh out the causal inference. In the case of Florida voters, Lockdown was found to have reduced support by 7 percentage points, and the Democratic governor got a poor evaluation even from Democrats in Florida; Shino and Binder attributed the drop in ratings to the state residents' poor response to state government as a result of the "Safer at Home" notice arriving too late.

Although not yet the subject of scientific research, Chen Shih-Chung, Minister of Health and Welfare, who heads the coronavirus task force in Taiwan, represented the administration at daily press conferences and answered all reporters' questions. South Korean President Moon Jae-In also introduced a system of drive-through PCR testing, allowing a large number of citizens to be checked for infection in a short time. Thus, President Tsai's approval rating in Taiwan reached an all-time high and the ruling party won the general election in South Korea (*Asahi Shimbun*, June 16, 2020). If empirical studies by Baekgaard et al. (2020) and others are correct, the rally-round-the-flag effect may have occurred in Taiwan and South Korea because the government's measures reassured the public.

Prior research on rally effects supports a mechanism whereby military crises escalate to the point where the public perceives a threat and this leads to support for the leader (Baum and Groeling 2010; Berinsky 2009; Berinsky and Druckman 2007; Brody 1991; Gartner and Segura 1998; Gelpi, Feaver, and Reifler 2006, 2009; Mueller 1971, 1973). Nevertheless, a threat-aware public does not always blindly support political leaders. For example, the spike in support for the Israeli prime minister during Operation Protective Edge was observed not at the start of the war, but only at the start of ground operations (Hamanaka 2019). As this case study shows, the assumption that the public, faced with a threat over which they have no control, will cling to a government that has the capacity to respond is not correct. Rather, as Baekgaard et al. (2020) and Bol and Binder (2020) argue, the government should be proactive in developing policies that meet the expectations of the public and seek to explain its policies to the public so that they can understand them. At the same time, if the public sees the policy as a product of the prime minister's political leadership, then the Rally effect appears. Shino and Binder show that the governor's approval ratings dropped because Florida's policies have not lived up to citizens' expectations.

That said, with policies that only impose costs on families with minors, such as the request to close all schools set out in the coronavirus measure, the burden is likely to

affect whether or not the Prime Minister can be trusted. This is the interest of this paper. In other words, when the cost of policy implementation is imposed on specific social groups for the benefit of society as a whole, can it be said to work on the attitudes of the public that form the rally-round-the-flag effect?

In other words, the challenge is to find out if the emergence of the Rally effect is not only about public emotion and enthusiasm but also about rational calculation. Colaresi (2007) demonstrated that the rally is a rational response of the public to an international crisis. Although this study was a groundbreaking one that challenged the rationality of the rally, the empirical part of the study (a macro-level-analysis of 63 cases of observational data) was limited in that it was based on aggregate-level observations and did not allow the implications of the analysis to be extended to individual behavior. It is difficult to capture rational public responses in terms of the rally phenomenon in a study based on survey data, and so far, this rational approach seems to have been unsuccessful. Social psychological research often focuses on emotional factors (e.g., Hamanaka 2018; Lambert, Schott, and Scherer 2011), making it difficult to extract judgments based on dispassionate calculations from survey data. This is the significance of carrying out this study.

The first wave in Israel and Ultra-Orthodox Jews

According to the Israeli Ministry of Health, the number of people in the country who became infected in one day passed 200 for the first time on 19 March. The first wave of the spread of the disease began around this date and may be considered to have ended around May 2 (Figure 2), when the number of people infected in a single day fell below one hundred (Worldometer, 2020). Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced on March 9 that all returnees from abroad would be required to self-isolate for two weeks, a measure that began immediately (*Haaretz*, March 10, 2020; *Mainichi Shimbun* March 10, 2020). At the same time, many citizens were essentially called upon to remain at home. This was followed by a series of requests from the government to prevent droplet infections by maintaining a distance from others (two meters), regulating the time with others (less than ten minutes) and distance from home (within 100 meters), regulating deliveries to avoid face-to-face contact, and requiring people to wear masks (*Haaretz*, March 13, 2020; *Asahi Shimbun*, April 25, 2020). At 20:00 local time, Prime Minister Netanyahu held a press conference to try to explain the situation to the public. Then, on March 19, a seven-day curfew was imposed, not as a request, but as a government order (i24news, 2020).

Immediately after the March 2 Knesset election, the prime minister summoned senior

officials from the defense forces, other security agencies, and the Ministry of Health, and set up a joint operations room at the main hospital. He also had Mossad procure medical supplies and accumulate a sufficient supply of medical goggles, masks, and respirators to reassure the public. They also established a tracking system for infected people using mobile phone location data, and bypassed parliamentary approval to implement emergency provisions to prioritize the prevention of the spread of infection (Eiran 2020, 44–45). Thus, the Israeli government formulated and implemented all possible steps. However, by mid-April, in the middle of the first wave, the number of infected people had risen to over 15,000 and about 70 per cent of those infected were Haredim, the most orthodox of all groups within Orthodox Judaism, often referred to as “ultra-Orthodox” (*The Times of Israel*, May 10, 2020).

Most of the people infected in the first wave were concentrated in the Haredim, with clusters forming in their residential areas. This fact seems to have been widely recognized by the end of March. The Israeli government attempted to contain the spread of the virus by prohibiting people from entering and leaving the country, controlling the movement of people within the country, securing hospital beds and medical supplies, and running a mobile electronic tracking system. However, it was the ultra-orthodox Jews who fell through the net of the tracking system. They have no mobile electronic devices and do not watch television, so government information is passed on by word-of-mouth and street-corner billboards. They live together in large families with many children in cramped apartments⁵ and worship together in crowded synagogues, adhering to traditional lifestyles in an environment where cluster infections are extremely likely to occur.

The Haredim community is subject to hierarchical leadership; on March 15, Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky's ordered Haredi people to ignore the government order to close schools. This decision resulted in serious harm to the Haredi community. Numerous seminary students gathered in a large classroom and continued the traditional Torah study of face-to-face discussion at a Yeshiva in Bnei Brak district in Tel Aviv that contains one of the largest communities of ultra-orthodox Jews (*The Times of Israel*, March 16, 2020). The Haredim are a tight-knit community, and it is customary for large numbers of people to attend weddings and funerals under the guidance of a rabbi (personal Facebook communication from a Jerusalem resident on April 1, 2020). They emphasize the importance of collective religious life, including the celebration of festivals like Purim, daily prayers, and gatherings on the Sabbath. Thus, the Haredim community, separated

⁵ Even a nuclear family consisting of a father, mother, and children will have about ten members (Takahashi 2020, 13.)

from the secular outside world, was the worst possible environment for preventing this infection. Health Minister Ritzman and his wife, both Haredim, contracted COVID-19.

On April 2, the government finally decided to completely seal off the city of Bnei Brak, which has the highest population density in Israel and is a major Haredim population center. With a population of only 200,000, it had more than 900 cases of infection, the same number as Jerusalem with its 900,000 people. The next day, April 3, a unit of the Israel Defense Forces was sent to implement the blockade policy. On April 8, a nationwide curfew was imposed by the government to coincide with the beginning of the Passover holiday. On April 10, in the midst of Passover, a decision was taken to extend the Bnei Brak blockade until April 14 and it was eventually extended until April 20 (*Haaretz*, April 2–16, 2020).

The study regards the complete blockade of Bnei Brak, a policy that targeted only the Haredim community, as a quasi-experimental situation, or natural experiment. The blockade of the area represented a "border control" and a "community-level isolation policy" that completely separated the area of the new corona outbreak, where clusters had formed in a concentrated manner, from the rest of Israel. Although other areas of Israel were also under curfew, the blockade of Bnei Brak was a thorough separation measure in which the army was deployed and surrounded the area. Similarly, ultra-orthodox communities in other cities, such as Jerusalem, were subjected to a more restrictive policy of action than the secular community (*The Times of Israel*, April 12, 2020). This blockade of specific areas is an example of imposing a heavy burden on certain groups of society in the interest of society as a whole; this is also the main interest of this paper.

Data and Measurement

As noted in the introduction, during the first wave of COVID-19, more specifically from March 29 to July 12, the Israel Democracy Institute conducted 10 polls, Corona Special Surveys. These consisted of ten single-shot surveys and were not in a panel format. The survey was conducted via the Internet, supplemented by a telephone survey as some social groups were not accessible by Internet. The population was Israeli citizens over 18, and this included Arabs with citizenship status. Each survey had a sample size of roughly 600 and we expect a sampling error of up to 3.7% at the 95% confidence level.

We merged the data sets from the first (29 March), second (1 April), third (5 April), fourth (12 April), and seventh (3 May) surveys for analysis in this study. The data sets from the fifth and six surveys were omitted as neither contained the key dependent variable of "attitude towards the Prime Minister." The dataset includes a number of variables that measure political and social attitudes such as supportive attitudes towards

the Prime Minister, religious identity, subjective stress, optimistic outlook on life, economic insecurity, and the party for which people voted in the March 2 general election. Data on public opinion can support the theoretical framework of the flagship rallying effect. However, the data are only observational and do not fully guarantee the causal effect, or internal validity, of the flagging effect.

The Corona Special Survey, on the other hand, is both valuable and innovative, as it is the only publicly available dataset from this time period, conducted during the first wave of the Israeli outbreak. The survey repeatedly asks Israelis about their support for the Prime Minister and also asks about religious identity as an attribute of the respondents. The Haredim that this paper is interested in, as noted above, do not have mobile electronic devices and do not have internet access at home, and therefore are the subject of a telephone survey in the Corona days survey. The representativeness of the data is problematic because much of the sample was collected via the Internet. For this reason, the Israel Democracy Institute assigns a weighted adjustment variable to the dataset. In this paper, the analysis was run using this weighted adjustment variable. Then, with the use of an appropriate research design, it would be possible to approach the causal effects as well as conform to the theoretical framework of the flag-gathering effect.

Trust in the Prime Minister, which is the dependent variable of the rally effect, is measured by the four-case method. The survey also asked for trust in actors other than the prime minister, such as a group of medical experts, a group of financial and economic experts, and the minister of health, with the phrase "leading the fight against coronavirus" as the lead sentence. In other words, the prime minister is being evaluated by the public in the context of whether or not he is trustworthy as one of the political actors in the fight against the coronavirus.

Research Design

As mentioned above, since a strict residential blockade was imposed on the Haredim community from April 2 to 20 during the period of the first wave of coronavirus in Israel, we can treat them as a policy "treatment group." Other communities, such as the secular and traditionalist communities, could be positioned as a policy "control group." As a means of financial support in the period before Passover, the government provided 500 shekels per child, up to a maximum of four children per family. This was a measure that disproportionately benefited Haredim families who, though they were enduring the most restrictive policies, tended to have large numbers of children (Shtrasler 2020).

If the people trusted the government to implement the Covid-19 measures because they felt secure, then the Haredim distrusted the government because of the burden that they

themselves were bearing, while secular and traditional Jews trust government because of not incurring that burden. This argument lets us assume that individual trust in political leaders depends on the burden imposed on his/her community. Then, we can derive the following two hypotheses from this assumption.

H1: The confidence of the Haredim in the PM is reduced as they are paying the greatest price for the blockade policy.

H2: The confidence of the non-Haredim in the PM increases as they are being reassured while not having to bear the main burden of the blockade policy.

In testing the above hypothesis, the dependent variable is trust in the prime minister and the independent variable is the interaction between ultra-orthodox Jews and blockade policies. In doing so, the following two points need to be taken into account. First, ultra-Orthodox Jews usually support the prime minister more than citizens of other religious identities because their political parties are part of the ruling coalition. Second, ultra-Orthodox households often belong to the poorer levels of Israeli society, and income levels need to be controlled in order to differentiate Haredim from low-income secular and traditional Jews. In addition to this, we control for attitudes on an individual basis, such as stress levels and their economic well-being, we get clearer results.

The Corona Special Survey dataset includes a number of variables that measure political and social attitudes such as religious identity, subjective stress, optimistic outlook on life, economic insecurity, and the party for which people voted in the March 2 general election. Since the third and fourth surveys include the period when blockade action was implemented against the Haredim, we created a policy dummy variable, Haredi Area Closure Policy, that takes a value of one to indicate data from the third and the fourth surveys and zero to indicate other surveys. The five categories of religious identity asked of Jewish Israelis are Haredi, national religious, traditional religious, traditional not religious, and secular. From this variable, we created a dummy variable for Haredi. We treat this policy dummy variable and the Haredi dummy variable as independent variables in the quantitative analysis.

Analysis

Table 1 shows the results of ordinary least squares (OLS) estimations to examine how the variable of closure policy and an interaction term between policy and the Haredi dummy affect the trust in Prime Minister Netanyahu. Model-1 estimates the main effect

of the Haredim district blockade policy. It shows that the blockade policy is not statistically significant and that Haredim are more likely to support Netanyahu than non-Haredim such as secularists. All control variables are included in Model-1 except Income Level and Voting for Likud; the question about the Income Level variable is not included in the dataset of the second survey (April 1), and a model including this variable significantly reduces the number of observations available for analysis because the dataset from the second survey could not be included. The signs of the coefficients indicate that the more stressed, the less economically insecure, and the more optimistic Israeli society is about overcoming the corona crisis, the more they support Prime Minister Netanyahu.

Model-2 contains an interaction term between blockade policy and the Haredim dummy. The sign of this term is negative and statistically significant at the 5% level. Hence, it can be said that the Haredim are aware of the burden of blockade measures that target only its community, which in turn lowers their confidence in Netanyahu. This implies that our first hypothesis (H1) is true. The effects of the control variables are the same as in Model-1 and do not change.

Model-3 is populated with a dummy variable (Voting for Likud) that distinguishes between citizens who voted for the Likud Party and those who voted for other parties in the March 2 election. Although the main effect of the blockade policy is not significant, we find that the value for the effect is larger than those in Model-1 and Model-2. Also, the Haredim's trust in the prime minister is stronger than in the other models though few Haredim vote for Likud because they are more likely to vote for religious parties. It can be argued that the Haredim's trust in the prime minister in the face of the coronavirus disaster increases when they control the variable of voted party.

Model-4 is the full model containing Income Level. It can be seen that the number of observations decreased from 3,467 to 2,573. However, controlling for income level distinguishes between non-Haredim poor and Haredim, who often belong to the poorest group⁶. This makes the Haredim district blockade policy term statistically significant at the 5 per cent level, indicating that this policy boosted confidence in the prime minister. This implies that our second hypothesis (H2) is also true. Figure 3 shows that the difference between the results of Model-3 and Model-4 becomes clear: Income Level itself does not affect trust in the Prime Minister. We also find that there is a large effect from the Haredim dummy and voting dummy, the interaction between blockade policy and the Haredim, and the effect of optimistic attitudes, while the main effects of blockade

⁶ "The poverty rate among ultra-Orthodox families is the highest among Jews (54% in 2014 compared to 19% in the overall population)" (Galnoor and Blander 2018: 741).

policy, stress, age, and economic insecurity are small.

Discussion

This study revealed the following facts. First, the strict blockade imposed on the Haredim community alone reduced their confidence in the prime minister, as they believed that they alone were bearing the burden of stopping the new coronavirus infection. For secular and traditionalist Israelis, other than the Haredim, the policy was implemented in the interests of society as a whole without their having to bear its burden. Hence, their confidence in the prime minister increased. Controlling for emotions such as stress, economic insecurity, and an optimistic or pessimistic outlook, the relationship between blockade policies and trust in the prime minister is statistically significant. This means that the two hypotheses raised in the research design have been tested and the test is passed.

We also find that people suffering from economic insecurity and with a pessimistic outlook on society's ability to respond to crises tend not to trust Prime Minister Netanyahu. This result is due in part to the treatment of this result as a control variable but is consistent with the view of Huddy et al. (2005), who analyzed the relationship between anxiety and supportive attitudes toward political leaders. On the other hand, we find a positive correlation between stress intensity and trust in the prime minister. It can be inferred that, at least in the short term, the more stressed people are about the spread of infectious diseases, the more reassured they feel by the government's measures.

The policy of tightly sealing off the ultra-Orthodox community, where the coronavirus infection was running rampant, and preventing the spread of the disease to neighboring communities was rational in the sense that it served the public interest of Israeli society as a whole. However, this policy also imposed a burden on certain social groups for the benefit of society as a whole. In the midst of the coronavirus crisis, an increasing trust in PM Netanyahu, the rally-round-the-flag effect, was also confirmed.

The statistical outcomes identified in this study prove that the emergence of the rally effect is not only based on public sentiment and enthusiasm, but also on rational costing. In other words, rational responsiveness to the rally as indicated by Colaresi was not only confirmed at the macro level of the aggregate variable but also at the micro level, where the individual was the unit of observation. This means that the survey data approach, which is better at dealing with emotional factors, succeeded in detecting rational reactivity, which is the contribution of our findings to rally effects studies.

The main reason for the success in detecting rational reactivity in using survey data is that we can apply the blockade policy in the Haredim area as a natural experimental

design. The appearance of the natural experiment allows us to make rigorous causal inferences. This suggests that the natural experimental design can be an aid to inference if we are forced to do observational research. On the other hand, one limitation of this study is that full external validity of the findings of this study, which dealt with the ultra-Orthodox community in Israel, is not possible.

In June 2020, a number of outbreaks occurred, mainly in schools that had reopened, and by the end of the same month, the spread of what appeared to be the second wave was confirmed (Figure 2). As if in response to the spread of the infection, anti-government demonstrations in the streets became more frequent for a variety of reasons, including denunciation of Netanyahu's alleged corruption, opposition to the annexation of the West Bank, and dissatisfaction with the measures in response to the second wave. Accordingly, the Corona Days Survey #10, conducted from July 9–12 by the Israel Democracy Institute, showed that trust in the prime minister plummeted to 29.5 per cent from 44 per cent in the previous survey (Figure 1). After the successful containment of the first wave, the public's distrust and dissatisfaction with the Prime Minister has exploded as Israeli society enters the second wave of infection.

This phenomenon, in which trust in a prime minister plummets in a short period as a manifestation of “inverse rally,” could also be the subject of rally effect studies. The fact that Netanyahu, who lost public support due to allegations of corruption, made a strong appeal on behalf of the new anti-coronavirus measures could be an example of Diversionary Theory.⁷ Further studies should attempt to elucidate various other phenomena related to the rally effect that were not covered in this paper.

⁷ Diversionary theory is the idea that political elites often seek an adventurous or belligerent foreign policy in order to divert popular attention away from domestic political issues (Levy 1989: 260).

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Figure 2: Daily New Conformed Cases of COVID-19 in Israel

(source: <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/country/israel/> accessed on 8th August 2020.)

Figure 3: Coefficient Plots from Model 3 and Model 4

Table 1: OLS estimations of Rally Effects

VARIABLES	(1) model 1	(2) model 2	(3) model 3	(4) model 4
Closure policy on Haredi area	-0.0153 (0.0379)	0.00886 (0.0401)	0.0238 (0.0352)	0.0971** (0.0398)
Haredi Dummy	0.532*** (0.0607)	0.650*** (0.0760)	0.939*** (0.0743)	1.051*** (0.103)
Closure*Haredi		-0.286** (0.119)	-0.282** (0.115)	-0.372*** (0.136)
How would you rate your stress levels	0.0330*** (0.00855)	0.0324*** (0.00855)	0.0207*** (0.00737)	0.0186** (0.00845)
How old are you?	-0.0739*** (0.0121)	-0.0741*** (0.0121)	-0.0573*** (0.0106)	-0.0595*** (0.0124)
Fear or not fear for your economic wellbeing	0.175*** (0.0234)	0.174*** (0.0234)	0.153*** (0.0208)	0.154*** (0.0245)
Optimistic or pessimistic about Israeli ability	-0.385*** (0.0257)	-0.386*** (0.0257)	-0.316*** (0.0227)	-0.331*** (0.0259)
Income Level				0.00955 (0.0158)
Voted for Likud			1.153*** (0.0354)	1.180*** (0.0413)
Constant	3.078*** (0.115)	3.076*** (0.115)	2.655*** (0.102)	2.600*** (0.120)
Observations	3,467	3,467	3,467	2,573
R-squared	0.135	0.136	0.321	0.337

Standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1