



Full Length Research Article

CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE DIGITAL AGE

***Osnat Akirav**

Department of Political Science, Western Galilee College, Israel

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 12th May, 2014
Received in revised form
25th June, 2014
Accepted 21st July, 2014
Published online 31st August, 2014

Key words:

Accountability,
Digital Age,
Legislators' Behaviour.

ABSTRACT

For legislators, the digital age creates two major changes. On one hand, they can now connect directly with their voters without mediators such as TV or newspapers, but on the other hand, their actions become increasingly transparent. Are legislators adjusting to the new era? What does the public think? Most importantly, does the transparency that the digital era facilitates affect the accountability of legislators? Using questionnaires, we asked both Israeli voters and legislators about their perceptions regarding channels of communication and accountability. We found that the voters had low expectations of the legislators' accountability, but they did believe that they could use elections to reward or punish legislators. Furthermore, the voters used fewer traditional channels of communication to learn about the legislators' activities, preferring the digital channels. In contrast, the legislators regarded themselves as very accountable but considered their colleagues to be less so. In addition, while some legislators make use of digital channels of communication, many still cling to the more traditional formats.

Copyright © 2014 Osnat Akirav. This is an open access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

INTRODUCTION

Scholars have tried to understand the essence of representation in democracies. Wahlke *et al.* (1962) offered a typology of the functions of representatives as delegates and trustees. According to their definition, as delegates, representatives focus on their constituents' demands, while as trustees they focus on the welfare of all citizens. Hence, as Pitkin (1967) argued, the cornerstone of representation is responsiveness to the will of the voters. The studies of responsiveness are nearly always about the relationship between constituents and representatives, and focus on both the representatives' behavior and their re-election as the electorate's reaction to their representatives (Grant and Rudolph 2004). One of the key words regarding the above connection is the accountability of representatives to their voters. The current research will examine one explanation for accountability--transparency in the context of the digital age.

Transparency – New Channels of Communication

The digital age has made transparency inevitable. Like the statement of Heraclitus, the pre-Socratic Greek philosopher, who said, "everything flows," today we can say, "everything

exposes." In order to understand the degree of the exposure, first we need to understand the definition of transparency and then examine it within the context of the digital age. Transparency is generally defined as the open flow of information and the ability to find out what is going on inside government (Holzner and Holzner 2006; Piotrowski and Van Ryzin 2007). Furthermore, in the past governments and legislatures provided information passively and only on request. Today they are more active in providing information (Hood 2006; Hazell *et al.*, 2010; Park and Blenkinsopp 2011). Some scholars have claimed that governmental transparency lacks a shared meaning and understanding, making it difficult to operationalize (De Jong and De Veries 2007; Florini 2007).

Previous studies have established that transparency deters corruption and poor performance in local government, and has a positive influence on trust and accountability (O'Neill 2006; Park and Blenkinsopp 2011). Pina *et al.* (2007) examined the effect of e-government on transparency, openness and, hence, accountability in 15 countries of the EU. Governmental transparency has been linked to the growth of global media, the technology boom and national security issues, all of which have allowed various publics to learn about their governments' activities (Finel and Lord 2000). Transparency is also a factor in the implementation of correct governmental actions based on legislation and procedures (Hood 2006). The adoption of web-based technologies to deliver government services has

***Corresponding author: Osnat Akirav**

Department of Political Science, Western Galilee College, Israel

become a global trend in public administration as well as an essential element of the modernization of public administration in Western democracies (Pina *et al.*, 2007). More information delivered in a more timely fashion to citizens is expected to increase the transparency of government and empower citizens to monitor government performance more closely. Transparency in web sites refers to the extent to which an organization makes information about its internal workings, decision processes and procedures available (Gant and Gant 2002; Margetts 2006). Piotrowski and Van Ryzin (2007) noted several points about transparency and elected representatives. First, the representatives should use transparency as a control and evaluation tool that affects their behavior both in terms of their ethics and their performance. Second, the freedom of information law that was considered one of the important steps in improving the level of transparency actually had little impact on the transparency and accountability of representatives in local government. Third, information and communication technology (ICT) is a tool for enhancing accountability and transparency among representatives in local government. Finally, there are differences in the representatives' perceptions about transparency and accountability. Piotrowski and Van Ryzin concluded that the existence of transparency in local government improves the accountability of the representatives. Scholars agree that governmental transparency is important and have offered several justifications for this assessment.

From Piotrowski's (2007) point of view, government transparency is equivalent to open government. Tomkis (2000) believes that transparency is significant because it leads to accuracy in records management. The public can see the information that led decision makers to their decisions and hence, can act to change unreasonable decisions. Furthermore, transparency promotes a more just distribution of public resources. It also creates the ability to report to the public, allowing citizens to participate more actively in a democracy. Without government transparency and freedom of information, it would be difficult to demand accountability from elected or appointed members of the public sector. Transparency is no longer a passive right of citizens. Instead, governments are obligated to adopt a proactive policy to make information accessible (Curtin and Meijer 2006). How can we increase transparency? Margetts (2006) suggested three key ways in which ICT could make governments more transparent than in the pre-digital era. ICT can aid the implementation of legislation on transparency, help provide higher quality information and offer better access to information. For example, ICT can enhance the accessibility to information and improve the interaction with that information by making it available online. Assessing how successful such actions are can be measured by the numbers of clicks one needs to reach the desired information (Glasse and Glasse 2004).

Transparency and the Digital Era

Political communication after World War II changed in three waves. First, two decades after the war, political parties were the main vehicles of political communication with the voters (Blumler and Kavanagh 1999). Second, the emergence of TV during the sixties and the decline of the power of political parties enabled TV to become the main channel of political communication (Mayhew 1997). The third wave involves

multiple channels of communication such as TV, radio and the Internet (Perry 2004). This third wave enables politicians to connect directly to their voters, reinforcing the belief that democracy functions best when it is based on the bilateral and effective flow of information (Coleman *et al.*, 1999). Nevertheless, politicians need to ask themselves, do they want to use the new digital media and to what extent? Coleman *et al.* (1999) suggested that politicians pass through four stages in their adjustment to the use of the Internet as a political tool: ignorance, exaggeration, ripening, and maturation and acceptance. Electronic communication technologies have transformed the visibility of political actors, making them visible to a mass audience of citizens who are not necessarily present at the same time in the same place (Gulati 2004). The emergence of a personality-focused electorate means that effective self-projection through the media is increasingly essential for building a bond with the voters and ensuring electoral success (Corner and Pels 2003). A growing number of studies examining strategic self-presentation by politicians in various democracies revealed the growing emphasis placed on projecting the right image in the media (Schutz 1995; Pels 2003; Gulati 2004). Recent research in Europe shows that party leaders increasingly use various media outlets to emphasize the qualities that they believe their constituents see as positive (Mughan 2000; Campus 2002; Pels 2003).

Elected representatives use a range of media outlets to project an appealing image of themselves to their constituents. The Web is one increasingly important outlet that they use to project their persona (Stanyer 2008). The use of ICT by individual representatives for wider citizen engagement somewhat mirrors the situation found in many parliaments. While most representatives now have an online presence in the form of a website, we are really just starting to see the incorporation of interactive features such as polls, surveys, and blogs into these sites. Studies from the UK have shown that only about 8% of sites offer such features (Ward and Lusoli 2005), and evidence from other parliamentary democracies, such as Canada, have shown similar trends (Francoli 2007). While both parliamentary institutions and individual legislators have adopted ICT to varying degrees, there are some institutional factors that impact the success of its implementation and the extent to which it is used (Francoli 2000). In sum, we can see that transparency as a concept has changed in the digital age, and both governments and legislators in the democratic world have tried to adjust to it.

Accountability

One of the key questions in a democracy is, how can the public delegate authority to its representatives and simultaneously keep its essential sovereignty? The electoral systems of modern democracies create a trustee connection between the representatives and the represented. Under the obligation to report, the latter need to know the actions of the former. Without knowing what has happened, it is impossible to demand accountability. What does accountability mean in daily political life? To answer this question, we must first define the meaning of accountability. Scholars agree that accountability is a broad ranging and amorphous concept (Arian *et al.* 2003; Koppel 2005; Bowens 2007). The conceptualization of accountability has changed and expanded during the last two decades (Mulgan 2000; Dubnick 2005).

The term “accountability” is rooted in the field of bookkeeping where accountholders must provide justifications for their possessions to pre-determined bodies based on grounded procedures (Mulgan 2003; Bowens 2007). However, when we are talking about the state’s being answerable for its actions, this definition is too narrow (Vigoda 2000; Arian *et al.*, 2003; Koppel 2005). The expanded concept can be categorized into five different types of accountability: political accountability, bureaucratic accountability, personal accountability, professional accountability (Erkkilä 2007) and public responsibility (Doron and Meydani 2012). While public responsibility may create a powerful and effective social glue, we argue that two groups of political variables can impede the implementation of public responsibility: cultural variables, such as a liberal political culture, a process orientation versus an outcome orientation and coalition discipline, and institutional political variables such as the politics of lists, the presence of one constituency and a multi-party system (Doron and Meydani 2012). Later on in the paper we will demonstrate the effect of these variables on attempts to improve public responsibility in Israel.

The current research will concentrate on the political accountability of legislators. The concept of political accountability is connected to concepts of democracy and legitimacy (Mulgan 2003; Skogstad 2003). Those who are in power, whether elected or appointed, have to respond to their audiences. If they fail to do so, they can be replaced in the next election, in what Mayhew (1974) called the “electoral connection.” Furthermore, political accountability is very dependent on the publicity of decision-making and the decline of openness in the policy process (Bovens 2005; Erkkilä 2007). However, it is constrained by the prevailing power relationships, institutional design and political culture (Moncrieffe 1998). How can a broad ranging, amorphous concept be defined? Scholars have suggested several elements of accountability: obligation, control ability, responsibility and responsiveness (Mulgan 2000; Dubnick 2005; Koppel 2005). Koppel (2005) suggested an additional dimension--transparency--but based on the works cited earlier, we consider it a separate variable, the explanatory variable of accountability.

Arian *et al.* (2003) suggested defining accountability as the demand from position takers in public service to report to the public regarding their performance and the way they fulfill their obligations. Furthermore, in response to appropriate criticism, they must act to fix their failures. Bowens (2007) offered a similar definition, defining accountability as the relationship between an actor and his/her audience, with the actor having the obligation to explain and justify his/her acts. The audience can criticize the actor, forcing him or her to face the consequences of their acts. The common meaning of these definitions is that the decision makers, elected and appointed as well, are obligated to act based on the public’s preferences, and are obligated to report their actions and plans to the voters. Actual accountability can be achieved through several democratic procedures: election to the legislature (vertical accountability), and reporting on decisions and actions that decision-makers have made before or after the events (horizontal accountability) (Foweraker and Krznaric 2000). We will expand the idea of vertical accountability by examining the elected Israeli representatives’ perceptions

about their accountability and the Israeli public’s perceptions about their elected representatives’ accountability. Arian *et al.* (2003) developed a Democracy Index in which they operationalized accountability as the ability of the public to replace the representatives by an institutionalized electoral method. Like most democracies, Israel achieved the highest score on the Democracy Index in vertical accountability, because the elections in Israel are free, frequent, organized and secret. Recent studies about the legislators in the Israeli parliament found that there is an essential tension between the different demands of the legislators’ roles and hence, their obligations towards different audiences (Chazan 2012; Akirav 2013). These tendencies are the result of different approaches to representation that dictate different patterns of behavior and even contradict the idea of public accountability. Furthermore, Chazan (2012) believes that the citizens of Israel are quite right to have a lack of trust in their elected representatives, because they do not vote for these representatives directly. Instead, they vote for a political party that then apportions the people on its list of candidates to the Israeli parliament based on the proportion of votes the party received. Therefore, if one of the major indicators of accountability--re-election--has no significant connection to the actual activities of the legislators, how can we expect Israeli legislators to be accountable? Chazan (2005) claimed that representation without accountability does not serve the public interest. The burden of public responsibility lies on the shoulders of the public as well as on the elected representatives.

Research Hypotheses

Many studies about accountability have indicated that transparency is one of its explanations (Stiglitz 2003; Holzner and Holzner 2006; O’Neill 2006; Ball 2009; Park and Blenkinsopp 2011). Holzner and Holzner (2006) claimed that transparency is related closely to accountability because it allows citizens to oversee the quality of public services and encourages civil servants to strive for good governance. Ball (2009) suggested that transparency has begun to subsume accountability in the public discourse about good governance. Most of the mentioned studies examined accountability through elections and transparency by the number of open channels the public has to their representatives. The current research will examine the perspectives of legislators and citizens regarding the ability to be accountable and transparent. Hence, the research hypothesis is as follows.

H1: There will be a positive connection between the citizens’ perceptions about the transparency of their legislators and the citizens’ perceptions about their legislators’ accountability.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

We examined members from the most recent term of the Israeli parliament (Knesset) that began in 2013. Of the 120 members of the Knesset, 69 legislators who were not ministers, deputy ministers, or the speaker of the House and served the whole term were in the 18th Knesset (2009-2013) before the election to the 19th Knesset, which is the term to which we refer. Data from other legislatures indicated that legislators in office have a 68% probability of being re-elected (vertical accountability) (Matland and Studlar 2004). Forty-eight new legislators were elected to the 19th Knesset. The

question is, what happened to the 69 members who served in the 18th Knesset? Of them, 19 (27.5%) ran but were not re-elected, 38 (55.1%) ran and were re-elected, and 12 (17.4%) decided not to run. In the 19th Knesset term there are 84 representatives who are not ministers, deputy ministers or the speaker. We used questionnaires to assess the representatives' and voters' perceptions about transparency and accountability, and their use of digital technology in order to communicate with each other. The Israeli electoral system is proportional with one constituency, so, the concept of a local representative is absent (Akirav 2013). We decided to concentrate on the northern region of Israel because it is a peripheral area of the country in which the majority of the non-Jewish minority resides, making it an interesting region in which to examine the voters' perceptions about accountability and transparency. Based on the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics data in 2013, there were 7,984,500 people in Israel; 5,999,600 Jews and 1,647,200 non-Jews, most of them Muslim Arabs. In the northern region there was a total population of 1,320,800–574,300 Jews and 705,200 non-Jews. The interesting statistic is that 42.8% of the non-Jewish population lives in the northern region, while just 9.6% of the Jewish population lives in that area.

We used non-probability, non-proportional quota sampling for the questionnaires. In total, 360 people responded: 277 (77.6%) Jews and 80 (22.4%) non-Jews. In terms of gender, the surveys were equally divided among men and women. The average age was 31 and ranged from 18 to 71. Sixty percent of the sample population had an academic degree, but their average income was below the average income in Israel. We also sent questionnaires to the 84 legislators who were not ministers, deputy ministers or the speaker and asked them for a phone interview. Ten responded and agreed to be questioned on the phone. This response rate accords with that of similar research, but was a bit disappointing because we would hope that elected representatives would respond to a request from their potential voters. The first part of the questionnaire for the voters was about accountability and was based on the four dimensions in the research (Mulgan 2000; Dubnick 2005; Koppel 2005): obligation, control ability, responsibility and responsiveness. The answer scale ranged from 1 for very low to 5 for very high, and we added the option of "I don't know" (9). Based on previous studies, we assumed that there would be some voters who were not interested in political events, so we expected them to not know some of the answers. Once we developed the items for the questionnaire, we checked its reliability and found that the Cronbach's alpha was 0.864.

The second part of the questionnaire was about transparency as defined by several scholars (Holzner and Holzner 2006; Piotrowski and Van Ryzin 2007) and mainly concentrated on the definition part about the open flow of information. The answer scale was similar to that for accountability. The third part of the questionnaire was about the use of varied forms of communication to reach the voters such as local newspapers, local TV channels, general newspapers, general TV channels, personal websites, SMS, and face-to-face meetings. In addition, as mentioned above we conducted telephone interviews with legislators asking similar questions about accountability and transparency, and how they use communication channels to reach their voters. Transparency and Accountability in Practice – Voters' Perceptions

The Digital Age and the Israeli Parliament

Since 2000 when the first personal Internet site of an Israeli legislator was established, a great deal has changed. Today, many Israeli legislators use online channels such as a personal blog, personal website, politician's page, Facebook, Twitter, Internet news, and social media simultaneously. Furthermore, during the election period there is intensive use of online tools to reach the voters (Haleva-Amir 2011).

Accountability

The first interesting finding regarding political behavior is that in every question about accountability, 15% chose to answer, "I don't know." Dahl (1989) argued that democracy functions best when there is effective participation on the part of the citizens; they must have adequate and equal opportunities to formulate their preferences, put questions on the public agenda and express reasons for one outcome over the other. Our finding shows that some citizens do not want to participate in this process. Second, in questions that asked whether legislators report on their performance, fulfill their duties, fix their failures, and admit their mistakes in decision-making, most respondents answered that such actions exist only to a very limited degree (average, median and mode around 2). Third, the respondents scored only four questions at a moderate level (4 average, 3 median and 3 mode). Those questions were about the fact that it is possible to punish legislators for their mistakes especially by the election system. This is a particularly interesting finding given the nature of the Israeli electoral system in which there is only one constituency. These three groups of findings can be explained by the fact that most people are not interested in their legislators' activities on a daily basis or, therefore, in their accountability for such activities. Second, some of them do believe that the people have the power to reward or punish legislators through the electoral process.

In order to strengthen the concept of the ability to reward or punish legislators for their behavior, we asked two more questions that addressed this issue specifically, "Do you agree with the follow: the public has the ability to replace the prime minister using the electoral system, and the public has the ability to replace legislators using the electoral system." In these questions just 7% to 8.6% chose to answer, "I don't know." In both questions there was a moderate level of agreement (3.3 average, 3 median and 3 mode). Furthermore, we wanted to see if there was a connection between local voting and national voting. Two other questions asked, "Do you usually vote in local elections?" and "Do you usually vote in general elections?" Of the respondents, 69.3% did vote in local elections and 78.7% in general elections. Here we can see that people do use the procedure that enables them to reward or punish legislators, even though they may not be interested in politics on a daily basis and think little of the accountability of their legislators. We ran a t-test for independent samples with the questions "Do you usually vote in general elections?" and "Do you agree with the follow: the public has the ability to replace the prime minister using the electoral system, and the public has the ability to replace legislators using the electoral system." Only the statement, "The public has the ability to replace legislators using the electoral system" was significant ($F=6.589$, $\text{sig}=0.011$). The

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the sources of information

Source	Average	Median	Mode	Standard Deviation	Doesn't exist	I don't know
26. National TV	3.2	4	4	1.38	%0.8	%5
27. Local TV	2.8	3	1	1.43	%4.2	%5.8
28. National newspapers	3	3	3	1.35	%1.4	%2.5
29. Local newspapers	2.5	3	1	1.35	%2.5	%7.8
30. Meeting in which legislators are present	1.8	1	1	1.1	%10.8	%7.5
31. Talks with friends	2.7	3	3	1.29	%5.6	%5.6
32. Emails from legislators	1.7	1	1	1.14	%16.4	%10
33. Knesset's website	1.8	1	1	1.21	%12.5	%7.2
34. Private interest site of legislators (such as Facebook)	1.8	1	1	1.2	%13.9	%5.8
35. SMS from legislators	1.5	1	1	0.96	%27.5	%6.1
36. Local Internet news	2.5	3	1	1.39	%8.3	%8.6

final step in the analysis of the accountability variable was when we gathered all of the 17 items together and ran a Pearson's correlation with the question "Do you agree with the follow: the public has the ability to replace the prime minister using the electoral system, and the public has the ability to replace legislators using the electoral system." Again, only the statement, "The public has the ability to replace legislators using the electoral system" was significant and had a high correlation (Pearson=0.602, Sig=0.000). These analyses demonstrate that voters have a low opinion of the accountability of their legislators, but they do believe that legislators can be rewarded or punished for their activities.

Transparency

As mentioned in the literature review, transparency was defined as the open flow of information and the ability to find out what is happening inside government (Holzner and Holzner 2006; Piotrowski and Van Ryzin 2007). In order to operationalize this definition, we asked two different groups of questions. The first group consisted of four questions that asked respondents to indicate whether they sought information about the prime minister and legislators actively or passively. The second group of questions presented a list of information sources and asked the respondents to indicate to what extent they used them. The list included national TV, local TV, national newspapers, local newspapers, emails from legislators, the Knesset website, the personal website of legislators, SMS and face-to-face meetings. Most respondents obtained their information about the activities of the prime minister and legislators passively (average 2.8, median 3, mode 3). However, when they wanted information about the prime minister alone, they did seek it actively (average 2.3, median 2, mode 3). Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the second group of questions. The answers ranged from 1 for "very low" to 5 for "very high," and included 8 for "does not exist" and 9 for "I don't know."

As Table 1 demonstrates, the largest percentage of responses in the "does not exist" category is for SMS and emails from legislators. These results are not surprising given the fact that in the Israeli electoral system, there is no direct connection between the voters and the legislators. Questions 33-34 about the presence of legislators online as an institution also received a large percentage of "does not exist" responses. We can see that the traditional mass communication vehicles such as TV and newspapers still have their place as information sources. Up until now we have looked at accountability and transparency separately. In order to test our hypothesis about the connection between the citizens' perceptions about the

transparency of their legislators and their perceptions about their legislators' accountability, we ran a Pearson's correlation and found that for each information source, there was a positive and significant correlation.

Table 2. Pearson's correlation between transparency and accountability

Source	Pearson's correlation	Significance
26. National TV	0.153	0.005
27. Local TV	0.297	0.00
28. National newspapers	0.223	0.00
29. Local newspapers	0.374	0.00
30. Meeting in which legislators were present	0.328	0.00
31. Talks with friends	0.132	0.00
32. Emails from legislators	0.356	0.00
33. Knesset's website	0.338	0.00
34. Private interest site of legislators (such as Facebook)	0.314	0.00
35. SMS from legislators	0.349	0.00
36. Local Internet news	0.268	0.00

We combined all of the information sources into one variable and called it transparency. Then, we ran a Pearson's correlation and found strong, positive and significant correlations between transparency and accountability (Pearson= 0.516, sig=0.000), providing support for our hypothesis. In addition, we ran a stepwise regression with accountability as the dependent variable and all of the transparency questions as the independent variables. Three components of transparency were found significant to accountability: local newspapers, talks with friends and the personal web sites of legislators ($R^2=0.232$ $F=19.409$, Sig=0.000). The finding regarding the personal web site is not surprising and is consistent with previous research indicating that the Web is one increasingly important outlet that legislators use to project their persona (Stanyer 2008). When the personal web site is interactive (Haleva-Amir 2011), the legislators can report their actions to the voters before or after they engage in them (horizontal accountability) (Foweraker and Krznaric 2000). Our findings about the perceptions of voters regarding the connection between transparency and accountability accord with those of previous studies (Stiglitz 2003; Holzner and Holzner 2006; O'Neill 2006; Ball 2009; Park and Blenkinsopp 2011). Do we found the same pattern regarding legislators' perceptions?

Transparency and Accountability in Practice – Legislators' Perceptions

To measure the perceptions of Israeli legislators about the connection between transparency and accountability, we

created a similar questionnaire with some additional questions in which the legislators were asked to grade their legislative colleagues regarding their accountability. We asked the sampled legislators the questions by phone. Regarding transparency, we presented the legislators with the same list of information sources and asked them to indicate which ones they use to keep their voters informed.

Accountability

Legislators graded themselves quite high (4 to 5) on accountability, but rated their legislative colleagues much lower (2 to 3). All of the respondents gave the highest score (5) to the questions, "I am accessible to the public" and "I am attentive to the public's needs." However, when they were asked the same questions about their legislative colleagues, they gave them a moderate score (3). Such a discrepancy accords with previous studies in psychology in which people rate themselves higher than their colleagues. Questions regarding the ability of the public to replace legislators and the prime minister through elections also received a high score (4 to 5). Thus, the results imply that the legislators see themselves as individually accountable, their colleagues as less accountable than them, and the electoral system as a tool for rewarding or punishing legislators for their degree of accountability. The third finding is surprising when we remember that the Israeli electoral system has only one constituency, so there is no real connection between the voters and legislators as in other legislatures.

Transparency

When the legislators were asked to indicate which sources of information they use to keep their voters informed, they gave the highest scores to the meetings in which they are present and to voters talking with their friends. In contrast, they gave low scores (1 to 2) to national TV, local TV, SMS and local digital news. There was variance in the two questions about local newspapers and emails the legislator sends to his/her voters. In these questions we can see the different point of view regarding the way information sources should be used. Furthermore, it was interesting to see that some legislators regarded personal websites as important information sources while others did not. These findings are consistent with Coleman *et al.*'s (1999) four stages in the adjustment of politicians to the Internet as a political tool: ignorance, exaggeration, ripening, and maturation and acceptance. Here we can see that some of the legislators were in the ignorance stage while others were in the other three stages. Furthermore, as Piotrowski and Van Ryzin (2007) noted, there are differences in the representatives' perceptions regarding transparency.

Conclusion

Are legislators adjusting to the new digital era? What does the public think about it? Most importantly, does the transparency that the digital era facilitates increase the accountability of legislators? The digital age, which is the third revolution after the print and industrial revolutions, has transformed the field of politics, particularly with regard to transparency and accountability. The Israeli public has some contradictory perceptions about accountability. While many of them seem to

lack much interest in how legislators behave, they do believe that elections are a tool for rewarding or punishing legislators for their behavior even though Israel has only one constituency. Furthermore, they do have some expectations and believe that legislators should be accountable for their actions. In addition, both the voters and the legislators vary in their use of digital communication channels. Some use them or consume them on a daily basis, while others prefer the traditional means of communication. While other studies have examined the connection between accountability and transparency, this study is unique in investigating the perceptions of the voters and of the legislators with regard to these two issues. Both believe that elections are a political tool for rewarding or punishing legislators, but they have different perceptions regarding the component of accountability and the use of various communication channels. As time goes on, we expect to see the twilight of the traditional means of communication. As legislators and voters adjust to the options of the digital age, we should see an increase in the open flow of information that should lead to greater transparency and accountability.

REFERENCES

- Akirav, o. 2013. "Re-election: Different Skills for Different Roles". *Government and Opposition*. November. 1-29.
- Arian, A., Nachmias, D., Navot, D., and Shani, D. 2003. *Auditing Israeli Democracy 2003*. The Israeli Democracy Institute and The Guttman Center. Israel. (Hebrew).
- Ball, C. 2009. "What is transparency?" *Public Integrity*, 11(4), 293-308.
- Blumler, J.G. and Kavanagh, D. 1999. "The Third Age of Political Communication: Influences and Features". *Political Communication*. 16:209-230.
- Bowens, M. 2007. "New Forms of Accountability and EU Governance". *Comparative European Politics*. 5:104-120.
- Campus, D. 2002. "Leaders, Dreams and Journeys: Italy's New Political Communication". *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*. 7(2):171-191.
- Chazan, N. 2012. "The Public Responsibility of Knesset Members". In Cohen-Almagor, R. and Arbel-Ganz, O. (eds) *Public Responsibility in Israel*. Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishing House and Jerusalem Center For Ethics. pp. 193-217. (Hebrew)
- Coleman, S., Taylor, J. and Van De Donk, W. 1999. "Parliament in the Age of the Internet". *Parliamentary Affairs*. 52(3):365-370.
- Corner, J. and Pels, D. 2003. "Introduction: The Re-Styling of Politics". In Corner, J. and Pels, D. (eds). *Media and Re-Styling of Politics*. London: Sage.
- Curtin, D. and Meijer A.J. 2006. "Does transparency strengthen legitimacy", *Information Polity*, 11(2):109-122.
- Dahl, R.A. 1989. *Democracy and Its Critics*, Yale University Press.
- De Jong, J. and De Vries, M.S. 2007. "Toward Unlimited Transparency? Morals and Facts Concerning Leaking to the Press by Public Officials in the Netherlands". *Public Administration and Development*. 27(3):215-225.
- Doron, G. and Meydani, A. 2012. "Each employee and representative has a name and an address - Public Accountability Based on Rational Choice Theory". In Cohen-Almagor, R., Arbel-Ganz, O. and Kasher, A. (eds). *Public Responsibility in Israel*. Hakibbutz Hameuchad

- Publishing House and The Jerusalem Center for Ethics. pp. 123-136.(Hebrew).
- Dubnick, M. 2005. "Accountability and the Promise of Performance: In Search of the Mechanisms". *Public Performance and Management Review*. 28(3):376-417.
- Erkkilä, T. 2007. 'Governance and Accountability – A Shift in Conceptualisation'. *Public Administration Quarterly*. 31(1):1-38.
- Finel, B.I. and Lord, K.M. 2000. "Transparency and World Politics". In Finel, B.I. and Lord, K.M. (eds). *Power and Conflict in the Age of Transparency*. New York: Palgrave. Pp. 1-12.
- Florini, A.M. 2007. "The Battle over Transparency". In Florini, A. (ed). *The Right to Know: Transparency for an Open World*. New York: Columbia University Press. Pp. 1-16.
- Foweraker, J. and Krznic, R. 2000. "Measuring Liberal Democratic Performance: an Empirical and Conceptual Critique". *Political Studies*. 48:759-787.
- Francoli, M. 2000. "Parliaments Online: Modernizing and Engaging?" *Oxford Internet Institute, Forum Discussion Report 13*. pp. 4-10.
- Francoli, M. 2007. "E-Participation and Canadian Parliamentarians". Anttiroiko, A.V. and Mälkiä, M. (eds). *Encyclopedia of Digital Government*. Hershey: Idea Group.
- Gant, D.B. and Gant, J.P. 2002. "Enhancing E-Service Delivery." *E-Government Series, State Web Portals: Delivering and Financing E-Service*. Price water house Coopers Endowment.
- Glasse, O. and Glassey, O.F. 2004. "A Proximity Indicator for e-Government: The Smallest Number of Clicks". *Journal of e-Government*. 1(4):5-20.
- Grant, J.T. and Rudolph, T.J. 2004. "The Job of Representation in Congress: Public Expectations and Representative Approval". *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 29: 431–445.
- Gulati, G.J. 2004. "Members of Congress and Presentation of Self on the World Wide Web". *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics*. 9(1):22-44.
- Haleva-Amir, S. 2011. "Online Israeli Politics: the current state of the art". *Israeli Affairs*. 17(3):467-485.
- Hazell, R., Worthy, B. and Mark Glover, M. 2010. *The Impact of Freedom of Information on British Central Government: Does FOI Work?* Palgrave Macmillan: London.
- Holzner, B. and Holzner, L. 2006. *Transparency in Global Change: The Vanguard of the Open Society*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Hood, C. 2006. "Transparency in historical perspective", in Transparency: the key to a better governance? By C. Hood and D. Heald, Oxford University Press, 2006, p.3
- Koppell, J. 2005. 'Pathologies of Accountability and the Challenge of Multiple Accountabilities Disorder', *Public Administration Review*, Vol. 65, No. 1, pp. 94–108.
- Margetts, H. 2006. "Transparency and Digital Government". In Hood, C. and Heald, D. (eds). *Transparency, The Key to Better Governance?* Oxford University Press. US. Pp. 197-207.
- Matland, E. R., Studlar, T. D., 2004. Determinants of Legislative Turnover: A Cross-National Analysis. *British Journal of Political Science*. 34, 87-108.
- Mayhew, D.R., 1974. *Congress: The Electoral Connection*. New Haven. Yale University Press.
- Mayhew, L.H. 1997. *The New Public: Professional Communication and the Means of Social Influence*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Mughan, A. 2000. *Media and the Presidentialization of Parliamentary Elections*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Mulgan, R. 2000. Accountability: an ever-expanding concept? *Public administration*, 78(3), 555-573.
- Mulgan R. 2003. "One Cheer for Hierarchy – Accountability in Disjointed Governance". *Political Science*. 55(2):6-18.
- O'Neill, O. 2006. 'Transparency and the ethics of communication'. In: Hood C and Heald (eds) *Transparency: The Key to Better Governance?* New York: Oxford University Press, 75-90.
- Park, H. and Blenkinsopp, J. 2011. "The roles of transparency and trust in the relationship between corruption and citizen satisfaction". *International Review of Administrative Sciences*. 77(2):254-274.
- Pels, D. 2003. "Aesthetic Representation and Political Style: Re-balancing Identity and Difference in Media Democracy". In Corner, J. and Pels, D. (eds). *Media and the Re-styling of Politics*. London: Sage.
- Perry, Y. 2004. *Telepopulism: Media and Politics in Israel*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Pina, V., Torres, L. and Royo, S. 2007. "Are ICTs Improving Transparency and Accountability in the EU Regional and Local Governments? An Empirical Study". *Public Administration*. 85(2): 449–472.
- Piotrowski, S.J. and Van Ryzin, G.G. 2007. 'Citizen Attitudes toward Transparency in Local Government', *American Review of Public Administration* 37(3): 306–323.
- Pitkin, H. F. 1967. *The Concept of Representation*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Schutz, A. 1995. "Entertainers, Experts, or Public Servants? Politicians; Self-presentation on Television Talk shows". *Political Communication*. 12(2):211-222.
- Skogstad, G. 2003. "Who Governs? Who Should Govern?: Political Authority and Legitimacy in Canada in the Twenty-First Century". *Canadian Journal of Political Science*. 36(5):955-973.
- Stanyer, J. 2008. "Elected Representatives, Online Self-Presentation and the Personal Vote: Party, Personality and Webstyles in the United States and United Kingdom". *Information, Communication and Society*. 11(3):113-131.
- Stiglitz, J. 2003. "Democratizing the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank: Governance and Accountability". *Governance*. 16(1):111-139.
- Tomkins, A. 2000. 'Transparency and the emergence of European administrative law', in *Yearbook of European Law*, 1999-2000, Vol.19, Oxford University Press. pp 217-256.
- Vigoda, E. 2000. 'Are you being served? The responsiveness of public administration to citizen's demands: An empirical examination in Israel', *Public Administration*, 78:165–191.
- Wahlke, J.C., Eulau, H., Buchanan, W., and Ferguson. L.C., 1962. *The Legislative System*. New York: Wiley.
- Ward, S., and Lusoli, W. 2005. From Weird to Wired? MPs, the Internet and Representative Politics in the UK. *Journal of Legislative Studies*, 11 (1): 57-81.