

A QUARANTINE THAT LED TO OPENNESS? DISTANCE LEARNING IN THE ULTRA-ORTHODOX SECTOR DURING THE CORONA PERIOD

Hananel Rosenberg¹, Chen Sabag-Ben Porat² Miriam Billig^{1,3}

¹*Ariel University (ISRAEL)*

²*Ariel University & Sapienza University of Rome (ISRAEL)*

³*Ariel University & Eastern R&D Center, Ariel*

Abstract

The Corona epidemic has forced education systems to adapt a suspension of the routine activities of education frameworks and to make a transition to distance learning (DTL: Distance Teaching Learning). The vast majority of institutions have been assisted by web-based distance learning systems. In the Israeli context, at the beginning of the period, these were online classroom learning spaces combined with synchronized lessons produced by the Ministry of Education and broadcast from such dedicated studios for age distribution. Within a short time, the system itself adapted to integrated learning that allows two-way interaction using software between the classroom of Google and the Microsoft team, and soon most of the learning was based around the 'zoom' software that enables a variety of communication and pedagogical functions (Stephanil, 2020). It seems that it is not surprising that the word 'zoom' is ranked at the top of the Google search table in Israel after the first outbreak of the epidemic (Leshem, 2020).

The ultra-Orthodox sector, whose attitude to the digital space is complex and negative - certainly when it comes to the involvement of children and youth in this space - has had to adapt to the new challenges posed by the epidemic and offer distance learning alternatives in a way that conforms to social norms and conservative values. Indeed, during the Corona period, a variety of alternative learning channels were tried in the ultra-Orthodox educational institutions, including independent guided learning with the help of textbooks, listening to asynchronous voice lessons by telephone and synchronous lessons on "content lines", dedicated telephone exchanges. Only a few institutions use video software such as Zoom for learning purposes (Katzburg, 2020, Nachshoni, 2020; Rabina, 2020).

The aim of this study is to describe the characteristics of distance learning in the Corona period in the ultra-Orthodox sector, to examine the variety of alternatives developed and tried for this purpose and to analyze the attitudes of parents, teachers and principals regarding the quality of learning in their various channels, their limitations and their effectiveness. We believe that these findings will help the ultra-Orthodox educational institutions to improve the efficiency of distance learning in accordance with the unique media climate in the sector, and the supervisory and authority bodies in the Ministry of Education to assist, support and refine learning, in future emergencies.

Keywords: Distance learning; Covid-19; Ultra-Orthodox Society; Online Learning; Enclave culture

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The ultra-Orthodox society in Israel

The ultra-Orthodox sector occupies a large and significant place in Israeli society, and according to recent estimates numbers over one million women and men, constituting about 12 percent of the total population in Israel (Kahaner and Malach, 2019). Its unique characteristics as an ideological and social "enclave culture" (Sivan, 1995) stem from the attempt to ensure that the modern way of life in the surrounding society does not harm the values, way of life and conservative education of their children. The founding core values of ultra-Orthodox society include, among other things, a commitment to the Jewish tradition and halakhah and the definition of Torah study as an ideal vocation for the realization of the individual lives of men in the community; Adherence to modesty in the areas of interpersonal skills; Obedience to the teaching of 'Da'at Torah' by the rabbinical leadership, sometimes even in areas that are not

clearly 'halakhic'; And instilling the values of tradition from generation to generation while emphasizing the importance of education as first and foremost in personal and community priorities (Brown, 2017; Stadler, 2009). In this sense, ultra-Orthodox society can be seen as a 'counter-culture' to Israeli society and to Western culture in general, a position that is expressed in a sharp critique of the values of modern society, including those that are considered fundamental principles (Brown, 2017). In order to realize these values, the ultra-Orthodox society uses seclusion and patterns of physical segregation - for example, community living in different spaces - and symbolic differences, expressed in their unique attire and avoidance of exposure to secular content and culture worlds, including the general media and the Internet space (Rosenberg & Rashi, 2017). However, despite their social isolation, the ultra-Orthodox leadership is involved and perceived as having great influence in parliamentary politics in Israel, both in achieving sectoral goals and in shaping the character of the state (Brown, 2017).

It is customary to divide the main sub-currents in ultra-Orthodox society into three: The Lithuanian, Hassidic, and ultra-Orthodox-Sephardic sectors. The differences between the groups are due, among other things, to their attitude to Torah study, work and modernity. In Lithuanian society it is accepted that most married men continue to study Torah as 'students' in the 'coilel' framework, while among the Sephardic Haredim it is more common to enter the labor market a few years after marriage and sometimes even before (in the three groups it is customary for women). Yet the Lithuanian public, and to a greater extent the Sephardic ones, are more open to general education and modern phenomena than the Hasidim, but these too consider themselves committed to the core values of the ultra-Orthodox described above. Alongside the three main streams of equal size (about 32% each) there are other small groups, with unique sociological characteristics, such as Chabad followers (about 4%) and small communities of converts (Askaria, 2020).

A key component in the differences between the ultra-Orthodox sector and the surrounding Israeli space is the separate education system. In the 2018/2019 school year, approximately 322,000 students, 18.5% of students in Israel and about a quarter of all students in the Jewish sector, studied in ultra-Orthodox and post-primary education. These students belong to one of three types of institutions that differ from each other in the nature of state supervision. (74% study in a non-formal recognized institution, 23% study in exemption institutions (the vast majority are boys) and only 2.5% study in formal education ('state-Haredi') established in recent years (Kahaner and Malach, 2019). Among modern groups, children can be found in schools and yeshivas that combine general studies, some include studies for the matriculation certificate, while others will use the informal systems to complete 'secular studies' (Kahner, 2020).

1.2 The battle for digital space

The attitude of the ultra-Orthodox society towards the mass media is, as stated, a complex attitude (Blondheim & Rosenberg, 2017). While television, for example, has been completely rejected and can hardly be found in ultra-Orthodox homes, the press and sectoral radio channels serve as a popular communication channel, as well as the personal (pre-Internet) computer as a learning tool. With the beginning of the diffusion of the commercial internet network in the 1990s, the new medium was perceived as a serious threat to the values and boundaries of the community, and was accompanied by a stubborn struggle and a massive campaign to prevent its adoption. At first it seemed that this campaign was a success, but with the establishment of the Internet as a necessary tool for work purposes, more moderate rabbinical voices began to be heard allowing limited and functional use of the Internet, with strict restrictions including installing filtering software and removing computers from home and especially children (Neria Ben-Shahar and Lev-On, 2013). It is important to note that these permits only affected the adult public, men and women who need the Internet for a living, while strict adherence to the non-exposure of boys and girls, youth and yeshiva students to the Internet space - even for educational purposes - remained strict and rigorous. Over time, Internet use also began to be established for the purpose of disseminating religious content, both to the general public and to ultra-Orthodox users (Cohen, 2015; Tzarfati and Blaise, 2002) and the rise of sectoral news channels on the Internet began (David & Badem, 2020).

An even more serious challenge arose with the introduction of the mobile phone, followed by the smartphone, for everyday use. Mobile enables access to content and Internet services, the dissemination of unsupervised information as a journalistic distribution among community

members, and the formation of non-kosher relationships between the sexes (Rosenberg, Blondheim, & Katz, 2016). But unlike the computer, the features of the phone - its personal aspect and being portable and hideable - posed an even more complex challenge that led to a massive campaign to stop the use of regular phones and distribute unique devices to community members (Rosenberg et al., 2014). In the beginning it was the kosher phone, a customized device with no internet connection and no text messages, and then kosher smartphones with varying degrees of supervision, from devices that allow access to mailbox only, through restricting app stores to include functional widgets such as finance and health only, to devices that allow browsing Internet that includes filtering offensive content at various blocking levels.

Indeed, in practice, the vast majority of members of the ultra-Orthodox community adhere to the use of customized digital technologies, albeit in a wide range of options. Recent surveys show that 44% of ultra-Orthodox homes are connected to the Internet, with significant differences between sub-streams: The Hasidic public is the most conservative (about 20% connected) compared to the Sephardic public (about 35%), the Lithuanian (about 56%) and Chabad (80%). The level of modernity is also positively correlated with the Internet connection, so that ultra-Orthodox who are defined as 'modern' are connected to the Internet on average twice as much as conservative ultra-Orthodox, as is the average family income level (Askaria, 2020; see Kahner, 2020 similar data) Over half of Internet users are connected at home, but it is important to note that on average about 10% of home Internet connections are made through a network connection (in the Hassidic public more than the rest), with this connection allowing strict control over family members' home browsing.

1.3 The corona and its implications for the education system

Disabling routine activities in schools has led the system to urgently look for ways to distance learning that will allow continuation of learning, even if in a different format than usual. Models for distance learning have been familiar to the education system for many years, even before the advent of the digital media. Back then, distance learning was based on traditional means of communication such as sending printed study materials by mail, synchronous telephone conferencing, and preparing pre-recorded asynchronous audio and video lessons (Moore, 1991). Telephone distance learning (such as computerized audio systems) has been found to add a new dimension to teachers' work and is effective in transmitting information to large groups of people simultaneously (Evans & Haase, 2001) but has been found to not add enough value to students (Holmberg, 2005).

As mentioned above, with the outbreak of the corona epidemic, the gates of schools in Israel as well as in sixty other countries in the world (UNESCO, 2020) were closed and forced to switch to distance learning within a short time. For some, this step was integrated into experiences and programs to expand online learning in schools that preceded the advent of the Corona (Sandars, 2020). For others the transition was challenging and required them to make many cultural and technological adjustments in a short time, by teachers and students alike. Some argue that this crisis will cause those institutions that have preferred to avoid incorporating online learning methods - to now adopt and implement modern learning technologies (Al et al., 2020). The Ministry of Education and other institutions supported these processes, budgeting and guiding school staff in technological literacy workshops with the new tools. The transition to distance learning at home also forced the parents of the students to be involved in the learning process, in making the technology accessible to their children, in parallel with their daily functioning and the need to continue their work (Al et al., 2020). In practice, most of the distance learning in elementary schools and public high schools in Israel took place through a combination of several digital channels: Online classroom learning spaces and group video software from Google and Microsoft, especially the zoom software that became most identified with the distant learning (Stathonikos et al., 2020; Wiederhol, 2020).

1.4 The ultra-Orthodox society and the ultra-Orthodox education system during the Corona period

The characteristics and lifestyle of the ultra-Orthodox society made it particularly difficult for it to adapt to the new reality of the corona virus (Malchi, Malach and Friedman, 2020). The

reasons for this are due, among other things, to the demographic characteristics of this society: Housing density, the large number of children per family (in 2017 the average fertility of an ultra-Orthodox woman was 7.1 children per woman, more than twice the average in Israel: Kahaner and Malach, 2019), low socioeconomic status of many of its members, Higher dependence on public transport and especially intensive community life - all of which are tragically consistent with the description of the environmental factors that encourage the spread of the corona virus (Waitzberg, 2020). Another challenge is related to the characteristics of the ultra-Orthodox public's media consumption and its ability to keep abreast of rapidly changing events. The updates on details and information about the spread of the disease and the guidelines of the health authorities, which were made available to the general public, mainly on the Internet and in new editions, were not available to large sections of the ultra-Orthodox public but through mediated press Institutions of municipal government in ultra-Orthodox concentrations (Isaacovich, 2020).

At the beginning of the Corona crisis, ultra-Orthodox-Ashkenazi educational institutions - Talmud Torah, Yeshivot, Kollels and Beit Midrash - continued to operate almost as usual, despite the Ministry of Health's guidelines, in accordance with the instructions of many rabbinical leaders (Malchi and others, 2020). The decision to continue studying was due to a number of reasons. First, it was the media gap: The ultra-Orthodox society's partial closure of the digital media created a significant and critical gap in the first weeks of the outbreak, between the sense of urgency surrounding the Israeli public due to the flood of reports, and assimilating the ultra-Orthodox population's awareness of the event. On another ideological level, Torah study - especially of children - is perceived as a central value that constitutes the core of Jewish existence and should be avoided at almost any cost. In addition, there is a built-in mistrust between state authorities and the ultra-Orthodox public and its leaders (The ultra-Orthodox Institute for Policy Studies, 2020). Compared to 'boys' institutions', almost all 'girls' schools' were closed immediately. Similarly, in the ultra-Orthodox-Sephardic sector, the dominant tendency was to obey government directives and close schools in light of the position of their leaders (Malchi and others, 2020), and for certain periods some ultra-Orthodox-Ashkenazi educational institutions were also closed.

The ultra-Orthodox education system's response to the need to move to distance learning was even more complex. As mentioned, digital communication has occupied a dominant place during the Corona epidemic as a key tool for interpersonal communication and the ability to continue functioning in workplaces that have moved to remote activity (Stathonikos et al., 2020). Indeed, surveys have shown a significant increase in the use of digital communication among the entire population in Israel and that the Internet has become a critical infrastructure for social and economic activity (Ministry of Communications, 2020). In the ultra-Orthodox society, there has been a marked increase both in the use of the Internet, both among those who were connected to the Internet even before the Corona (Internet Association, 2020; Bezeq, 2020; Ministry of Communications, 2020) and also among new connected people who have now joined home Internet (Askaria, 2020). However, when it comes to the use of the Internet by children for learning purposes - the situation was completely different. While 70% of homes in Israel use online channels for distance learning (Ministry of Communications, 2020), only a minority of the ultra-Orthodox public has benefited from the digital space for learning. Although one could find phenomena of zoom-friendships and Torah lessons of rabbis in online video broadcasts - sometimes even of senior rabbis and yeshiva leaders such as Rabbi Gershon Edelstein, these too hardly touched on the official educational frameworks. Opposition to exposing children and youth to the Internet did not allow for the widespread adoption of online distance learning systems. As a solution, a variety of alternative distance learning strategies have been adopted, some of which have been described above, such as recorded telephone broadcasts and "content lines" (Brightkopf, 2020b; Weisberg, 2020).

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Question

- (1) What were the distance-learning channels actually used during the corona period in educational institutions in the variety of streams in the ultra-Orthodox sector?
- (2) What are the challenges that have arisen in using these channels and how have they been addressed?

(3) How did parents, teachers and principals evaluate the effectiveness of the various learning channels?

2.2 Study Design

In order to get a comprehensive picture of the issue under discussion and in an attempt to include the multiplicity of perspectives of the 'actors', we included in the study the prism of (a) directors of institutions [of boys and girls], (b) teachers [teachers / rabbis], and (c) The parents of the children. The combination of the three user groups is intended to provide as complete a perspective as possible regarding the online learning process during the Corona period in the ultra-Orthodox public, while addressing all the key figures related to online learning.

The research was done in several stages:

A. In the first phase, five exploratory interviews were conducted with parents (2), teachers (2) and the director of one institution from the ultra-Orthodox sector, in order to get a general picture of what is happening and the main challenges they faced, in order to build the interviews' questionnaire.

B. In the second phase, a questionnaire for the interviews was constructed that examined the attitudes and perceptions of parents from the ultra-Orthodox sector regarding distance learning during the Corona period. The questionnaire examined the ways in which distance learning takes place in schools and Torah studies, with an emphasis on the attitude toward the Internet.

C. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with parents, principals and teachers in ultra-Orthodox schools. The qualitative approach is consistent with our intention to provide rich information that will help in an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon and in identifying the attitudes, perspectives, and influencing factors that shape the behaviors discussed and treated (Maxwell, 1996). The interviews included questions seeking to outline learning strategies across a variety of existing platforms and pedagogical, educational, and cultural considerations for choice in one way or another; In perceiving the effectiveness of learning channels in the personal perspective and in the key challenges posed by each of these channels; In personal attitudes towards the possibility of online learning and in relation to the proposed alternatives; The parents' interactions with the institution's management and teachers on these issues, as well as perceptions and consequences for the continuation of the corona period or, God forbid, for similar events (for the full questionnaire, see Appendix 2).

The process of collecting the interviewees included distributing messages on the social networks of the researchers, research assistants, students and other colleagues, in order to gather contacts from the ultra-Orthodox sector. The contacts were asked to assist in gathering interviewees from among their family members, friends and the educational institutions they know. At the same time, the interviewees themselves were asked to recommend additional names for interviews using the snowball method. During the collection of subjects, we made an effort to reach a wide range - gender and intra-sectoral - of interviewees, in a way that would reflect a variety of possible perspectives and attitudes. This phase is 'stretched' deliberately over several months, along the 'waves' of the corona eruption, between the closures and during them, in order to get a situation that is not focused on a specific point in time where the study conditions may be different from other times. It is important to note that despite of the high response before the first request for approval in principle to the interview, in a significant number of cases it was difficult to coordinate time for the actual interview, due to the workload and family these days, as the interviewees explained. However, in these cases we have nevertheless tried to be flexible and conduct the interviews with these participants as well, avoiding possible biases and also incorporating the personal perspective of those who experience load and pressure perhaps more than others.

Due to the limitations of the period, the interviews were conducted by telephone and lasted between 25 minutes and an hour and a quarter (on average about 45 minutes per interview), between April 2020 and January 2021. The interviews were recorded, transcribed and analyzed using the thematic organization method. In accordance with the research questions (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). In conducting the research and writing it, we paid special attention to the ethical aspects, to maintaining privacy and anonymity both of the interviewees and in the case of individual stories from their work described by them during the interview. The names of the interviewees who will appear below have been changed, while maintaining their gender and position, and in a number

of cases, technical and biographical details have been changed from the transcripts of the interviews (Allmark et al., 2009).

3 RESULTS

The interviews reveal a variety of forms of distance learning that have been adopted in the educational institutions of the ultra-Orthodox society. The most dominant form of distance learning was telephone lines, in which the participants attended a multi-participant conference call, or more commonly: An offline phone call, where one can hear recorded lessons. In addition, there was also reduced usage of other forms of distance learning: Printed pages, home-recorded MP3 lessons distributed at students' homes, textbooks placed and picked-up from school and at a few schools that used zoom learning.

In the light of the interviews, the dominant voice emerged with frustration from the current situation: Disappointment with distance learning platforms, age-related challenges, blame directed at parents by the education system and guilt directed at teachers and principals at lack of parental involvement. In practice, distance learning was carried out in most of the learning institutions by telephone, in "content lines" which are in fact telephone classrooms to which the lessons were pre-recorded by the teachers. In this method the students could enter the lessons at any time they wanted and listen to the recording. This teaching method has many advantages that are relevant to the ultra-Orthodox sector, but this platform has nevertheless also created many difficulties. Rivka (40), a mother of three students, with the elder studying at a yeshiva and the other two at Talmud Torah, describes significant disadvantages in using telephone lines:

"If they are physically in class then they must concentrate, they come to school to study. If I ask him, is it more effective over the phone? He says it is more difficult for him on the phone".

Orit (a mother of three students) also describes the difficulty of learning by phone:

"[The method] is very ineffective. In the end it does not replace a frontal lesson. The lessons are relatively short, it is not that the teacher does a three-quarter hour lesson. It is to pass the time, there is no other choice. Optimal it certainly is not".

Teachers were also dissatisfied with learning through the telephone lines. Dina (38) is a principal and teacher at an ultra-Orthodox educational institution for girls. Sarah described a situation where the phone lines were ineffective and therefore her school switched (relatively rarely) to zoom. When asked why they stopped learning by phone, she answered as follows:

"I think there it is very important to learning live, when the teacher meets with the girls. Over the phone? I can tell you that it is not really [effective], especially when many times the line has fallen".

Another significant aspect that came up in the interviews, was the age-mismatch of the phone lines. Rivka (40) a mother of three students, notes that phone lines are becoming irrelevant for young children:

"At younger ages it's less successful over the phone [...] frontally in class, he is more invested, on the phone, he is less invested".

Chaya (mother of five students) also refers to the differences in use between the ages, noting that due to the great difficulty in learning over the phone, it is better for the student not to study at all:

"I think that especially for kids who have a hard time, these studies over the phone are not an option at all. It is either not teaching at all, or over the phone for older children only".

As mentioned, one of the consequences of dealing with the corona virus, is the impairment of regular learning in school. The changes in learning habits disrupt the children's learning routine. Naturally, a large proportion of children find it difficult during this period to keep track of class progress, which can lead to the formation of significant learning gaps. These gaps make it difficult to re-integrate into learning when frontal teaching will be back, and tend to intensify over time without any reference and treatment. according to the parents interviewed, the teachers and the institutes does not do enough. Teachers, on the other hand, tend to blame the parents'

unsatisfactory lack of involvement, blaming the accumulated gaps. Aaron (29, father of two students) addresses the gaps that have been created and worries him as a parent:

"There is no follow-up, no indication of whether there is a lesson or no lesson. After they get back to the routine, they will have to somehow bridge these gaps and not leave the less strong children behind".

Miri (27, mother of a student) adds and says:

"This period will create the class gaps between the children. Children whose parents are uneducated, without degrees, will have a very difficult time. For my children specifically it did well because I have a degree in education and I can teach and promote them".

On the teachers part as stated, there is an accusation against the parents of the students. Rachel (52, second grade teacher):

"There are children who will not learn, who will not be able to progress, because even at home they [the parents] do not sit with them that much".

Similarly, according to Tami (30, first grade teacher) there were parents who did not help or remind their children to listen to the conversations she recorded every day:

"There were parents who ignored the method. They forgot, and their girl missed most of the lessons because there was no one to remind her. I tried to fill the gap for her, but there are things the parents have to worry about".

So is Miri (27, mother of a student), and a teacher herself:

"The more involved the parent, the more effective it is [the learning]. The more passive the parent, the more it will fade away. In distance learning the parent has a very significant part in his child's progress. You cannot give the child computer and tell him to manage on his own."

Despite the dissatisfaction with the alternatives, there is still a reluctance among most interviewees regarding zoom and use of the internet. The interviewees referred to the possibility of distance learning via the Internet in general and zoom in particular, as a major medium for distance learning during the Corona period around the world. However, using it is not technically or ideologically relevant. In this context, Hannah (25, first grade teacher) notes:

"We will not learn through the zoom or through the computer because we are against this thing".

Moshe (31, father of two students) notes that alongside the fact that the school will not allow the use of zoom due to the ultra-Orthodox society's ban on using the Internet, the non-use of the medium is due to other reasons, such as technical difficulties:

"It's a mess on zoom. Everyone is suddenly talking and interfering, and there is no reception. This is not a platform that flows properly. And in any case, it is not something that is possible because the school will not approve it".

Despite the ideological motives and the claim that educational institutions will not allow distance learning through zoom, it was possible to hear in the margins of society, individual voices that would actually prefer learning zoom:

Ruhami (a mother of three students), whose children study by phone, claims that in her opinion the zoom is an applicable and preferable tool:

"I prefer zoom, is a much better option".

Like her, Tzipi (a mother of four students) expands on the advantage of zoom, given the difficulties her young children experience in learning over the phone:

"I think zoom is easier because it has the effect of sight, they see the teacher. It's something else when you talk to someone and you know he also sees you and you have to be attentive. It's a much better option".

4 CONCLUSIONS

This study deals with the characteristics of distance learning during the corona period in the ultra-Orthodox sector. It examines the various alternatives found for online learning, evaluates the effectiveness of the alternatives as well as the perceptions of teachers, parents and principals from the ultra-Orthodox sector towards these measures. With the advent of the corona pandemic, which forced social alienation, many were forced to stay in their homes so that distance learning methods were perfected and applied in many areas of life (Stathonikos et al, 2020). There are divided opinions about the effectiveness of different distance learning methods, with their success measured by how well the teacher can engage in quality dialogue with his or her student (Moore, 1991). The ultra-Orthodox sector has also adopted various such methods, the main one is being the use of telephone classrooms, called "content lines", but many parents feel frustrated by the many problems that arise from using this alternative.

First, the use of telephone lines does not allow for social interaction between the members themselves, and between the teachers and the students. This is in contrast to Zoom, where one can make a personal connection. In addition, there is a difference between the effectiveness of distance learning in different ages, where at older ages the usage process is more efficient and intuitive, and they have the ability to work more independently, while for the younger ages it is difficult and can create distractions and lack of concentration in learning process. If children in lower grades do not have a close supervision - follow-up and participation in distance learning decrease. The attempt to create mixed-use students on a platform based on telephone lines and lacking a frontal interaction is very challenging for the ultra-Orthodox public, although it is still perceived as "Lesser of Two Evils".

Another significant point that came up in the interviews, is the frustration of the parents towards the system and its method, while the teachers are frustrated by the lack of involvement of certain parents, and blame the lack of success of distance learning alternatives on them. During the interviews, voices were heard from some parents in favor of zoom and Internet usage in light of the above difficulties, but those parents also admitted that the chances of educational institutions agreeing to put these platforms into use are nil. This illustrates the gap between the individual ultra-Orthodox person, and his subordination to educational and rabbinical institutions, sometimes while paying a price for this affiliation. Eventually, the corona virus can be perceived as a challenge and an opportunity for the ultra-Orthodox population in terms of exposure to the Internet on the one hand, but on the other hand, especially among the more conservative groups, this period further widens the existing digital divide. Ultimately, The conditions of this crisis may be a significant breakthrough in the use of digital and online tools (staff of the Haredi Institute for Policy Studies, 2020).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors express their gratitude for support from the Ministry of Science and Technology, Ministry of Education and from the Eastern R&D regional Center, Israel.

REFERENCES

- [1] A.E. Al Lily, A.F. Ismail, F.M. Abunasser & R.H.A. Alqahtani, "Distance education as a response to pandemics: Coronavirus and Arab culture," *Technology in Society*, no. 63, 101317, 2020.
- [2] P. Allmark, J. Boote, E. Chambers, A. Clarke, A. McDonnell, A. Thompson, et al, "Ethical issues in the use of in-depth interviews: Literature review and discussion," *Research Ethics Review*, vol. 5, no. 2, pp 48-54, doi:10.1177/174701610900500203, 2009.
- [3] C. S. Asterhan, & H. Rosenberg, "The promise, reality and dilemmas of secondary school teacher–student interactions in Facebook: The teacher perspective," *Computers & Education*, vol. 85, pp. 134-148, 2015.
- [4] W. Bao, "COVID-19 and online teaching in higher education: A case study of Peking University," *Human Behavior and Emerging Technologies*, vol. 2, no. 2, pp. 113-115, 2020.
- [5] S.J. Bartley, & J.H. Golek, "Evaluating the cost effectiveness of online and face-to-face instruction," *Journal of Educational Technology & Society*, vol. 7, no. 4, pp 167-175, 2004.

- [6] M. Blondheim & H. Rosenberg, "Media Theology: New Communication Technologies as religious constructs, metaphors, and experiences," *new media & society*, vol. 19, no. 1, pp 43-51, 2017.
- [7] H. Breitkopf, "Following the 'Square': The 'committee' found an annoying idea," 2020a. Retrieved from <https://www.kikar.co.il/357320.html>.
- [8] H. Breitkopf, "Accusations and explanation: Why do the institutions' phone lines are collapsing?" 2020b. Retrieved from <https://www.kikar.co.il/356798.html>.
- [9] B. Brown, "Haredim from the 'rule of the people': Haredi critique on Israeli democracy." Jerusalem: The Israel Democracy Institute.2017.
- [10] H. Campbell, "Religion and the Internet in the Israeli Orthodox context," *Israel Affairs*, vol. 17, no. 3, 364-383, 2011.
- [11] J. Cohen, "The age of information and religious ultra-Orthodox identity" *Kesher*, vol. 44, 9-3. 2017.
- [12] Y. Cohen, "The Israeli Rabbi and the internet," *Digital Judaism*, pp 183-204, 2015.
- [13] T.C. COVID & R. Team, R, "Severe Outcomes Among Patients with Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)-United States," February 12-March 16, 2020.*MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep*, vol. 69, no. 12, 343-346, 2020.
- [14] Y. David & C. Baden, "Reframing community boundaries: the erosive power of new media spaces in authoritarian societies," *Information, Communication & Society*, vol. 23, no. 1, pp 110-127, 2020.
- [15] S. Doron, "Hazra bitshuva" and "Yetziha Beshe'ela": transition ceremonies and personal definition ceremonies." *Social Issues in Israel*, vol. 9, 90-53. 2010.
- [16] J.R. Evans & I.M. Haase, "Online business education in the twenty-first century: an analysis of potential target markets," *Internet Research*, vol. 11, no. 3, pp 246-260, 2011.
- [17] A.S. Fauci, H.C. Lane & R.R. Redfield, "Covid-19—navigating the uncharted," 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/nejme2002387>.
- [18] A. Fontana & J.H. Frey, "Collecting and interpreting qualitative materials" in *Interviewing: The art of science* (N. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln eds.), pp. 47–78, Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1998.
- [19] M. Friedman, "The ultra-Orthodox society: sources, trends, processes." Jerusalem: Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies. 1991.
- [20] R. Gal, "The ultra-Orthodox in Israeli society." Haifa: Shmuel Ne'eman Institution .1995.
- [21] R. Gombo And S. Schwartz, "The value system of religious-ultra-Orthodox young women in a comparative perspective," *Megamot*, vol. 3, pp 360-332,1989.
- [22] Haredi Institute for Policy Studies' stuff, "Corona virus crisis in the ultra-Orthodox population in Israel," 2020. Retrieved from <https://machon.org.il/publication>.
- [23] B. Holmberg, *Theory and practice of distance education*. Routledge, 2005.
- [24] Kahaner and Malach, *Yearbook of Haredi Society*. The Israel Democracy Institute, 2019.
- [25] E. Katzburg, "Creativity in the 'kipa': This is how ultra-Orthodox entrepreneurs fight in Corona," 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.globes.co.il/news/article.aspx?did=1001335261>.
- [26] T. Kilby, "The direction of Web-based training: a practitioner's view," *The Learning Organization*, vol. 8, no. 5, pp 194-199, 2001.
- [27] A. Kohn & H. Rosenberg, "Collapsing walls and the question of commemoration: Graffiti in the Israeli withdrawal," august 2005. *Social Semiotics*, vol. 23, no. 5, pp 606-631, 2013.
- [28] Leshem, 2020. Retrieved from <https://www-haaretz-co-il.mgs.ariel.ac.il/captain/net/.premium-1.8857188>.
- [29] C. Malach, & R. Gorbet, "The corona has created an opportunity for a change in the ultra-Orthodox sector." Jerusalem: The Israel Democracy Institute. 2020.
- [30] A. Malchi, C. Malach, & S. Friedman, "How does the ultra-Orthodox sector deal with the corona virus?", Jerusalem: The Israel Democracy Institute. 2020.
- [31] R. Man, "The annual report: The media in Israel 2016. Agendas, uses and trends." Ariel: Institute for New Media Research, Society and Politics. 2017.
- [32] Y. Marianchik, "The use of online technologies in Hebrew teaching. European Institute of Hebrew Studies," vol. 17, pp 200-191, 2015.
- [33] J.A. Maxwell, *Qualitative research design*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1996.

- [34] Media Metrix, "National Survey of Hardware Ownership, January. 2015.
- [35] Ministry of Communications, 2020. Retrieved from https://www.gov.il/BlobFolder/news/18052020/he/using_internet_corona.pdf.
- [36] M.G. Moore, "Distance education theory," *The American Journal of Distance Education*, vol. 1, no. 25, 1991.
- [37] K. Nachshoni, "Distance learning in the ultra-Orthodox sector: 11 children on one telephone line," 2020. Retrieved from: <https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-5717962,00.html>.
- [38] R. Neria Ben-Shahar, "Being the wife of a 'Talmid Haham'": how the socio-economic reality of the "society of learners" is perceived by ultra-Orthodox women. *The Study of Haredi Society*, vol. 2, 192-169, 2015.
- [39] R. Neria Ben-Shahar And A. Lev-on, "Gender, Religion and New Technology: Perceptions, Attitudes, Behavior Patterns. And Internet use among ultra-Orthodox women working in computerized work environments," *Megamot*, vol. 49, no. 2, pp 306-272, 2013.
- [40] R. Neria-Ben Shahar, "Negotiating agency: Amish and ultra-Orthodox women's responses to the Internet," *New Media & Society*, vol. 19, no. 1, pp 81-95, 2017.
- [41] R. Neria-Ben Shahar, "Negotiating agency: Amish and ultra-Orthodox women's responses to the Internet," *New Media & Society*, vol. 19, no. 1, pp 81-95, 2017.
- [42] H. Nishiura, H. Oshitani, T. Kobayashi, T. Saito, T. Sunagawa, T. Matsui, & M. Suzuki, M. "Closed environments facilitate secondary transmission of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)." Yale: medRxiv. 2020.
- [43] A. Rabina, "Study Outline: Chassidim are looking for campuses for Yeshivot," 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.kikar.co.il/357415.html>.
- [44] Rat, Ricky, "Digital protection: How will the epidemic change ultra-Orthodox society?," 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.makorishon.co.il/news/225509>.
- [45] H. Rosenberg & T. Rashi, "Pashkevilim in Campaigns against New Media: What Can Pashkevilim Accomplish That Newspapers Cannot?," *Digital* pp 169-190 ,*Judaism*, Routledge, 2015.
- [46] H. Rosenberg, M. Blondheim, and A. Katz, "Breaking the Walls": Supervision, Boundaries, and the Campaign for 'Kosher Cellular' in Haredi Society," *Israeli Sociology*, vol. 17, no. 2, pp 115-136, 2016.
- [47] G.W. Ryan, & H.R. Bernard, "Techniques to identify themes." *Field Methods*. 2003.
- [48] J. Sandars, R. Correia, M. Dankbaar, P. de Jong, P.S. Goh, I. Hege & A. Webb, "Twelve tips for rapidly migrating to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic," *MedEdPublish*, vol. 9, 2020.
- [49] A.R. Setiawan, "Scientific Literacy Worksheets for Distance Learning in the Topic of Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19)." 2020.
- [50] R.N.B. Shahar & A. Lev-On "Gender, religion and new media: Attitudes and behaviors related to the internet among Ultra-Orthodox women employed in computerized environments," *International Journal of Communication*, vol. 5, pp 21, 2011.
- [51] Y. Shilhav And M. Friedman, "Spreading in Closure - The Haredi Community in Jerusalem," *Megamot*, vol. 4, pp 127-124, 1985.
- [52] E. Sivan, "The enclave culture" in *Fundamentalisms Comprehended* (M. E. Marty & R. S. Appleby eds.), pp. 11-69, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.
- [53] N. Stadler, *Yeshiva fundamentalism: Piety, gender, and resistance in the ultra-Orthodox world*. NYU Press, 2009.
- [54] N. Stathonikos, N.C. van Varsseveld, A. Vink, M.R. van Dijk, T.Q. Nguyen, W.W. de Leng & P.J. van Diest, "Digital pathology in the time of corona," *Journal of Clinical Pathology*, 2020.
- [55] A. Stefanile, "The Transition From Classroom to Zoom and How it Has Changed Education," *Journal of social science research*, vol. 16, pp 33-40, 2020.
- [56] H. Sofer-Ferman, "Integration of minority groups in the labor market: the case of the ultra-Orthodox in Israel." Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Tel Aviv University. 2012.
- [57] A. Tzarfati And D. Blaise, "Between the "cultural enclave" and the "virtual enclave": the ultra-Orthodox society and the digital media," *Kesher*, vol. 32, pp 55-47, 2002.
- [58] UNESCO, "COVID-19 educational disruption and response," 2020. Retrieved from <https://en.unesco.org/news/unesco-survey-highlights-measures-taken-countries-limit-impact-covid-19-school-closures>.

- [59] T. Volery & D. Lord, "Critical success factors in online education," *International journal of educational management*, vol. 14, no. 5, 2000.
- [60] M. Weisberg, "Special: The Rosh Yeshiva and its students at 'Simchat Hag' by telephone," 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.bhol.co.il/news/1094040>.
- [61] T. Weiss, "Synchronous distance learning," *Israeli Journal of Occupational Therapy*, vol. 12, no. 2, pp 116-114, 2003.
- [62] B.K. Wiederhold, B. K. "Connecting through technology during the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic: Avoiding "Zoom Fatigue"." 2020.
- [63] World Health Organization, "Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19): situation report-72," 2020. Retrieved from <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/331685/nCoVsitrep01Apr2020-eng.pdf>
- [64] C. Zicherman, *Black and blue-white: a journey into the ultra-Orthodox society in Israel*. Tel Aviv: IQ (Yedioth Books), 2014.
- [65] Z.Y. Zu, M.D. Jiang, P.P. Xu, W. Chen, Q.Q. Ni, G.M. Lu & L.J. Zhang, "Coronavirus a perspective from China :((COVID-19 2019 disease," 200490 ,*Radiology*, 2020.