AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE TAIWANESE PUBLIC'S UNDERSTANDING OF KEY COVID-19 EVENTS AND TRUST IN THE GOVERNMENT DURING THE PANDEMIC

[1]YU-KANG LEE, [2]YA-TING WANG

Department of Political Economy, National Sun-Yat-San University, Taiwan
Institute of Education, National Sun Yat-Sen University, Taiwan
E-mail: [1]yklee@mail.nsysu.edu.tw, [2]wayating@gmail.com

Abstract - This study investigates the impact of public emotions and party consciousness on trust in the government during the Covid-19 pandemic in Taiwan.

The public's satisfaction, support, and trust in the government's handling of the Covid-19 pandemic in Taiwan are examined. The empirical results indicate a significant upward trend in these three aspects. The first noticeable increase occurred from the "Vaccine Purchase Event (September 2021)" to the "Announcement of the Replacement of SMS Contact Tracing with the Taiwan Social Distancing App (April 2022)", indicating a rise in public satisfaction, support, and trust. However, a noticeable decline was observed during the "Minister of Health's Resignation for Election (July 2022)" event, suggesting public dissatisfaction and lack of support and trust. The second noticeable increase was from this event to the "Implementation of 0+7 Quarantine Exemption System in Taiwan (October 2022)", which received the highest satisfaction, support, and trust among all events. The study concludes that the government's handling of the pandemic significantly influences public sentiment, with specific events causing noticeable shifts.

The first hypothesis posits that fear, heightened by the pandemic, increases public trust in the government. Empirical data from six major events during the pandemic supports this hypothesis, suggesting that fear drives the public's need for government leadership, thereby increasing trust. The second hypothesis proposes that anger decreases public trust in the government. The survey data confirms this, indicating that the public's anger, stemming from losses and inconveniences due to the pandemic, leads to a decrease in trust. The third hypothesis suggests that party consciousness intensifies the effects of fear and anger on trust in the government. The data shows that respondents with extreme party consciousness experience a more significant impact of anger and fear on their trust in the government. In conclusion, the study confirms that public emotions and party consciousness significantly influence trust in the government during a pandemic.

Keywords - Political Trust, Covid-19 Pandemic, Anger, Fear, Emotional Foundations.