

Local Support for the Government Coalition: An Analysis of Endorsements Before and After the Parliamentary Elections in Romania

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Abstract: This paper aims to analyze the local support for the government coalition in Romania by examining the political endorsements made by mayors and local councilors from the country's 103 municipalities. The study focuses on assessing the level of support for electoral platforms of candidates and political parties both before and after the parliamentary elections, using social media activity as a key data source.

Context and Relevance:

Recent studies highlight the increasing role of social media platforms, such as Facebook, in shaping electoral outcomes and mobilizing voter support. According to research by Chadwick (2009), social media serves as an influential tool for engaging citizens, especially during electoral periods. The shift from traditional media to digital platforms has enabled local leaders to reach broader audiences, providing a new avenue for political endorsements and public messaging.

Furthermore, Surowiecki (2004) emphasizes the power of collective wisdom in decision-making processes, suggesting that insights gathered from social media interactions can reflect broader public sentiment. In line with this, Brabham (2013) argue that crowdsourcing and online engagement can enhance democratic processes by involving a wider range of contributors in political discussions.

The research methodology involves a detailed analysis of social media activity, specifically Facebook pages, where local officials publicly endorse candidates or political platforms. By examining posts, statements, and endorsements, the study seeks to measure the extent of political alignment at the local level and its impact on electoral outcomes.

To achieve this, the study will employ a mixed-methods approach:

1. Qualitative Analysis: Drawing on the findings of Howe (2008) and Linders (2012), the research will include semi-structured interviews with political analysts, local councilors, and mayors to understand their motivations for public endorsements on social media.
2. Quantitative Analysis: Inspired by Linders (2012), this study will analyze sentiment and engagement metrics using data from Facebook posts. By leveraging techniques such as sentiment analysis and network mapping, the study will quantify the reach and impact of endorsements on voter behavior.

Implications and Expected Outcomes: The study is expected to reveal patterns in how local political leaders influence voter perceptions through digital platforms. According to Brabham (2013) and Aitamurto (2016), engaging citizens via social media can help overcome traditional barriers to participation and create a more inclusive democratic process. By leveraging data from social media, this research aims to offer insights into how local endorsements shape voter behavior and support for the government coalition. Additionally, findings from studies such as "Winning! Election Returns and Engagement in Social Media" suggest that social media endorsements can significantly affect voter turnout and engagement. This paper will provide practical recommendations for political parties and policymakers in Romania on how to effectively use social media to enhance political support and engagement.