

# The Influence of Social Groups on the Voting Behavior of the Resita Voter

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## Abstract

*The paper aims to highlight the way in which social groups influence voting behavior.*

*For centuries, the individual's behavior has been influenced by several categories of internal or external factors, one of them being the social groups they belong to.*

*The specialized literature sheds light on the complex mechanisms by which the behavior at the polls is influenced by the group to which it belongs.*

*In order to achieve the purpose of the research, we used a sociological survey based on a questionnaire, which has three identification questions and six content questions.*

*The questionnaire contains three identification questions and six content questions. The collected data were analyzed and interpreted, later, following the application of the research methodology, we formulated the research conclusions.*

**Key words:** elections, social behaviour, exogenous factors

**J.E.L. classification:** M31

## 1. Introduction

Ever since the emergence of social groups, man has been in the position to make choices, this being one of the common links between the members of a social group. (Dinu, 2013)

Specialists distinguish between the consumption behavior of individual consumers and the consumption behavior of civil society organizations. They suggest that regardless of the form of organization, various entities such as economic agents, trade unions, professional organizations and others can engage in political activities as long as they do not directly involve themselves in matters of power. Instead, these organizations can participate in politics when they advocate for the interests of the groups they represent, whether these are socio-professional or related to other group interests.

## 2. Theoretical background

Strictly individual consumption behavior can be influenced by belonging to social groups. The idea is that individual interests can be polarized within the group, and individuals might alter their behavior to align with group interests to avoid exclusion. (Dinu, 2013)

Social groups are the groups of belonging, to which the individual belongs, even if they are not the ones to which he aspires, as well as those with which the individual identifies, even if he has no formal connection with them, respectively the reference groups. (Bornschiefer *et al*, 2021)

Social groups, in any form, whether it is a membership group or a reference group, influence decisions, through the information transmitted and even by exerting pressure, so that the individual conforms to the rules and sets of values. People appeal to the opinions of social groups, especially when they lack information, are unsure of their own decisions, do not take responsibility for personal implications towards the political phenomenon, when they are very attached to the group, when the

political product is discussed in public, but especially when the political products are beneficial for the functions of the group. (Pripp, 2002)

We emphasize the distinction between individual consumption behavior and the consumption behavior of organized entities, pointing out that organizations can engage in political activities when they advocate for the interests of the groups they represent. Organizations are considered apolitical as long as they avoid direct involvement in power issues.

The influence of social groups on voting behavior is a subtle and complex process rooted in social interactions and human group dynamics. Social pressure plays a significant role, with individuals likely to adopt views or behaviors similar to those of the group in order to avoid isolation or social tensions. Conformity to group norms and social identity contribute to the formation of political perceptions and voting choices, often consistent with collective values and identity.

In-group communication is a crucial channel through which individuals can form and consolidate their political beliefs. Arguments and information presented in a social context can shape the understanding and perspective of group members, thereby influencing voting decisions. Social identity, often linked to characteristics such as ethnicity, religion or social class, can serve as a catalyst for political preferences.

However, there are also a variety of factors that can counterbalance group influences. Individuals can add a personal and independent dimension to decision-making by resisting social pressures and considering a wider range of perspectives. Thus, understanding the depth of social group influences on voting behavior requires a holistic approach, integrating individual and collective factors into a larger societal context.

### **3. Research methodology**

First of all, I would like to highlight that the purpose of this study how social groups influence voter behavior in Resita.

In order to complete the study, we chose several objectives in order to understand what the voters from Resita are thinking:

- Studying voting behavior among voters;
- Establishing the influencing factors at the level of behavior;
- Highlighting their implications at the level of voting participation;
- Highlighting their implications at the level of taking the voting decision;

We developed a questionnaire that is composed by 9 questions (6 closed questions with choices and 3 questions of identification), in order to have a better picture of the influence of social groups on voting behavior. the identification questions refer to questions of age, sex and occupation of subjects.

I opted for the survey approach in my study. The essence of this method is to create a reduced representation of the investigated population, taking into account its known characteristics. This type of sampling presupposes the availability of statistical data on the studied population.

We have analyzed the impact of social groups on voter behavior and find that this influence is significant, being shaped by various types of social groups. The constant objective of marketing research is to explore how voter behavior is affected by a variety of factors.

The purpose of the research is to study the influence of social groups on the voting behavior of the the Resita city population.

The aim of this research (Dinu & Dinu, 2020) is to analyze the impact exerted by social groups on the way in which the inhabitants of the city of Resita express their options in terms of voting.

Limiting the risk associated with the relative freedom of the interviewers in the case of the respondents requires the use of quota sampling associated with the survey of the (geographical) areas, thus ensuring representativeness for Resita. The questionnaire was designed exclusively for the population of Resita. (Dinu & Dinu, 2014)

The survey was conducted during November-December 2022.

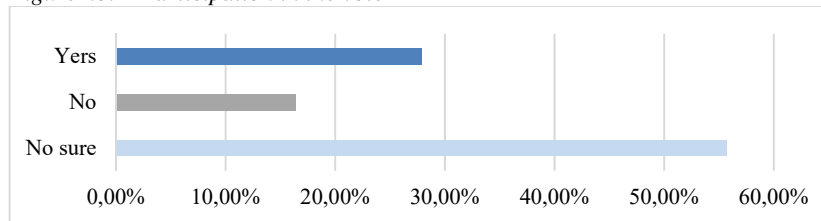
#### 4. Findings

The responses given by 366 participants to questionnaire questions 1-6 will be presented, analyzed, and interpreted in the subsequent discussion. Criteria for result analysis, such as age and gender, pertaining to questions 7-9 will also be addressed, with individual analysis of the study not deemed necessary.

Additionally, we came to understand the interpretation of research findings:

1. Regarding voting participation for question number 1 in the entire sample of 366 individuals surveyed, the majority (54.64%) express a definite intention to participate in the 2024 parliamentary elections. A notable percentage (18.48%) indicates that they will not partake in the parliamentary elections. A significant portion, considering the importance of everyone's future, comprises those who remain undecided (26.88%) and have not yet determined whether they will participate in the parliamentary elections.

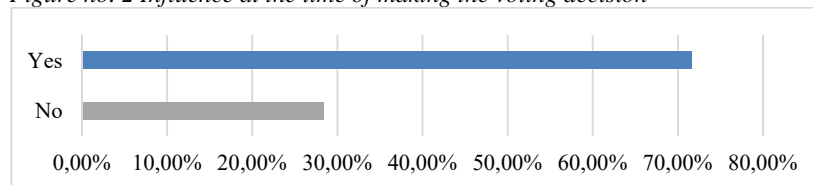
Figure no. 1 Participation in the vote



Source: Authors' contribution

2. Regarding influence at the time of making the voting decision, on the hole sample, most subjects (71.58%) did not receive influences regarding participation in the elections (36.61%, women 34.97%). An important aspect is that 28.42% of those questioned answered affirmatively, saying that they were persuaded to participate in the elections, of which men 11.75%, women 16.67%.

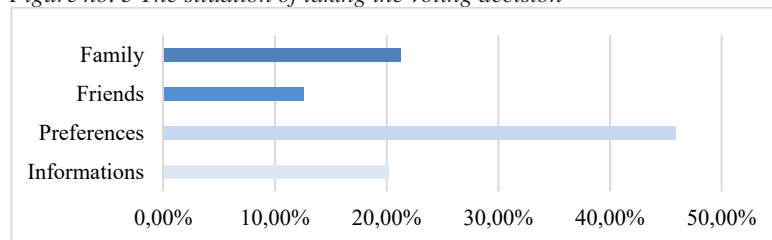
Figure no. 2 Influence at the time of making the voting decision



Source: Authors' contribution

3. Regarding the situation of taking the voting decision, on the total sample, one's own preference is important for 45.9% of voters (22.68% men, 23.22% women). Then, 21.31% consult with their family before voting (8.46% men, 12.84% women). Followed by those who prefer to gather information in the electoral campaign before voting with 20.22% (9, 29% men, 10.93% women). Some of the respondents choose to consult their colleagues or friends, before voting (12.57%, of which 7.93% men, and 4.64% women).

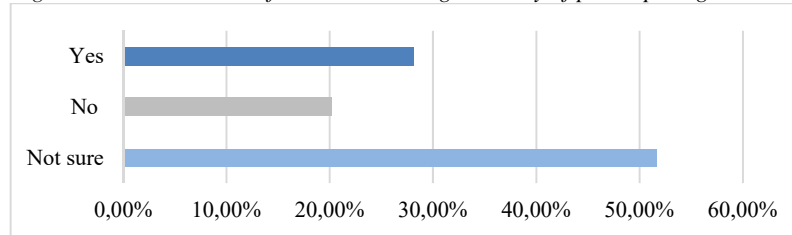
Figure no. 3 The situation of taking the voting decision



Source: Authors' contribution

4. In terms of opting for electronic voting as a means of participating in elections, the majority of participants in the overall sample (53.72%) express uncertainty about whether electronic voting could serve as a viable electoral alternative. Among those who view the implementation of electronic voting positively, the percentage is 27.24%, while those who perceive the use of electronic voting negatively constitute 19.04%.

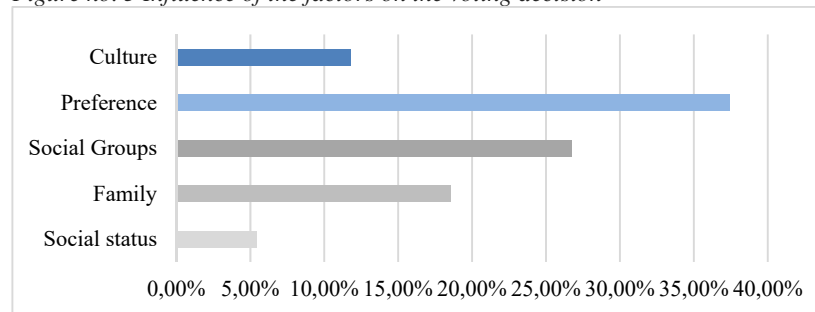
Figure no. 4 The choice of electronic voting as a way of participating in the elections



Source: Authors' contribution

5. Concerning the impact of factors on voting decisions, a majority of respondents, comprising 36.34%, base their votes on personal preferences. Following closely are those who prioritize their group affiliation, accounting for 27.87%. Notably, a minority considers cultural factors in their voting choices, constituting 10.57%. Additionally, 19.47% of participants vote in alignment with their family's decisions, while a smaller percentage, 5.75%, prioritize social status in their voting considerations.

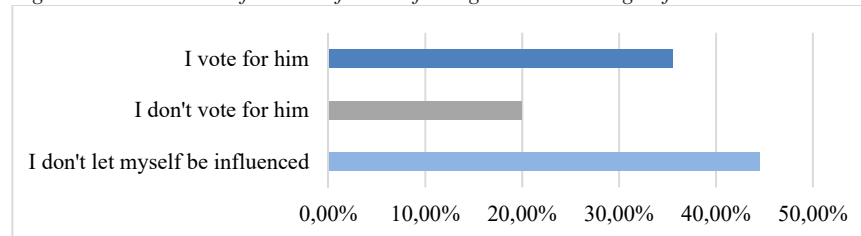
Figure no. 5 Influence of the factors on the voting decision



Source: Authors' contribution

6. Regarding the identification of the self-image with the image of a candidate, on the total sample, most subjects (44.54%) would not be influenced by such a similarity. Also, 35.52% of the respondents state that they would vote for that candidate whose image identifies with their self-image. 19.95% of the respondents say that they would not vote even if there were similarities in terms of image between the voter and the candidate.

Figure no. 6 The identification of the self-image with the image of a candidate



Source: Authors' contribution

## 5. Conclusions

Many believe that numerous changes have already occurred in our lives. Romanians are still tributary to many mental and behavioral clichés from the totalitarian era. Perhaps the most serious thing is that the communist regime acted in the direction of reducing the personal initiative of the citizens. (Dinu & Dinu, 2014)

Continuous indoctrination and totalitarian control had consequences on two complementary levels: on the behavioral level, it led to passivity, evasion of responsibility, opportunism, obedience, on the mental and attitudinal level, a compensatory model was established, characterized by the adoption of duplicitous standards of speaking. (Gisbert, 2018)

One key observation derived from a basic examination of the study's findings is that the majority of participants were not swayed in their decision to vote. While some sought input from family or friends before casting their votes, a significant number predominantly trusted their personal preferences. When considering a specific political candidate or proposition that left a positive impression, individuals often sought additional information, yet their ultimate voting choice remained largely intact.

The answers to the questions of the questionnaire, it also emerged that the inhabitants of the municipality of Resita vote according to their culture, preference or belonging group.

In conclusion, the structure of this collection of cognitive, attitudinal, or behavioral tools is adaptable and can be described as a dynamic framework. Its transformation is closely linked to the substantial amount of information that Resita voters must comprehend, along with their individual processing and the incorporation or assimilation of this information in alignment with their lifestyle.

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