

Research Article | Araştırma Makalesi

# The Use of Music in Political Communication: A Study on The Election Songs Used by Ruling and Main Opposition Parties in Türkiye's Local Administration Elections on March 31, 2024

## Siyasal İletişimde Müzik Kullanımı: 31 Mart 2024 Mahalli İdareler Seçimlerinde İktidar ve Ana Muhalefet Partilerinin Kullanmış Oldukları Seçim Şarkıları Üzerine Bir İnceleme



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### Abstract

This study aims to analyze the election songs used in the election campaigns of the mayoral candidates of the Justice and Development Party (AK Parti) and the Republican People's Party (CHP) in İstanbul, Ankara, and İzmir on March 31, 2024, Türkiye's Local Administrations Elections. The data collected using the case study methodology was analyzed using the content analysis method in the MAXQDA program. The findings showed that both party candidates preferred moving/exuberant songs which appealed to the voters at a high level in their election campaigns. They moderately preferred original election songs, adapted popular songs, and songs conveying socio-psychological messages. They showed a low preference for songs that criticized the policies of the opposition or government, slow or stationary songs, songs promising prosperity, and message-oriented songs. Therefore, there is little possibility for the two parties' candidates to differentiate from each other in the use of music. The results of the similarity analysis revealed that the songs belonging to the same party showed a high level of similarity with each other. In contrast, the songs of different parties showed low similarity. The study implications are helpful for researchers conducting studies on similar issues.

**Keywords:** Political Communication, Elections, Election Campaigns, Election Music, Election Songs.

### Öz

Siyasal iletişimde müzik kullanımı konusunda yapılan bu çalışmanın amacı, 31 Mart 2024 Mahalli İdareler Seçimlerinde İstanbul, Ankara ve İzmir'de, Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AK Parti) ve Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (CHP) belediye başkan adaylarının yürütmüş oldukları seçim kampanyalarında kullanılan seçim şarkılarının analiz edilmesidir. Nitel araştırma desenlerinden durum çalışması yöntemiyle yapılan çalışmanın verileri MAXQDA programında içerik analizi yöntemi ile analiz edilmiştir. Elde edilen bulgular değerlendirildiğinde; iki parti adayları da seçim kampanyalarında hareketli/coşkulu ve seçmene hitap eden şarkıları yüksek düzeyde tercih etmişlerdir. Orijinal seçim şarkılarını, uyarlama popüler şarkıları ve sosyo-psikolojik mesaj veren şarkıları ise orta düzeyde tercih etmişlerdir. Buna karşın muhalefetin/iktidarın politikasını eleştiren, slow/durağan, refah vadeden ve mesaj odaklı şarkılara ise düşük düzeyde yer verdikleri görülmüştür. Bu bağlamda iki parti adaylarının müzik kullanımında birbirinden ayırma imkanının az olduğu belirlenmiştir. Benzerlik analizi sonuçları ise aynı partiye ait olan şarkıların birbiri ile yüksek düzeyde, farklı parti şarkılarının ise düşük düzeyde benzerlik gösterdiğini ortaya koymuştur. Elde edilen bulgular ve sonuçlar incelendiğinde ortaya konulan bu çalışmanın, benzer konularda çalışma yapan araştırmacılara faydalı olacağı düşünülmektedir.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Siyasal İletişim, Seçimler, Seçim Kampanyaları, Seçim Müziği, Seçim Şarkıları.



## Introduction

Throughout history, political leaders, administrators, and politicians have relied on political communication to engage with the public and secure their legitimacy (Özer & Kartal, 2023). Political communication, which merges politics and communication (Demir, 2018), lacks a single definition, encompasses a broad scope, and is fundamentally rooted in persuasion. Politicians generally aim to persuade their target voters either to change their attitudes and behaviors in a desired direction or to maintain their existing stance (Kocağa & Lokmanoğlu, 2023).

Persuading people on any subject is difficult, and convincing them on political issues is even more challenging, as it is a sensitive area for many individuals. Therefore, politicians use various political communication methods and techniques to persuade voters. One of these methods is music. Music, which has been an integral part of human life since ancient times and serves as a fundamental element of culture, has been used as a tool for political communication by various political entities and governments throughout history (Tanyıldızı, 2012). Music is often employed in in-depth historical research as an element that has accompanied, influenced, and at times shaped political developments throughout history (Erol, 2005).

Although music was first utilized as a tool for political communication globally between the two world wars and in Türkiye in 1965, a review of the literature shows that scientific studies on this subject began to emerge internationally around the 2000s. In Türkiye, as late as the 2010s (Öztürk, 2014), a limited number of studies have been conducted. This situation highlights the need for further research on the use of music in political communication from various perspectives. In this study, the election songs used by the AK Parti and CHP mayoral candidates during their campaigns in İstanbul, Ankara, and İzmir for the March 31, 2024, local elections were analyzed using the content analysis method.

## Political Communication

The purpose of communication with people is not only to convey information but also to persuade the other party (Okumuş & Taşcıoğlu, 2023). One area where the persuasive aspect of communication is especially prominent is in political communication. This is because, in political matters, people frequently seek to influence and persuade others while defending their ideas, ideologies, and policies. Therefore, in political communication, transmitting information is only one component; the primary goal is to persuade others to adopt, support, or act on a particular viewpoint. This connection forms the core link between communication and political communication.

The concept of political communication merges politics and communication and encompasses a broad scope. As a result, it is difficult to define political communication with a single, concise explanation (Demir, 2018). Then, there are many definitions of political communication in the literature (Binark, 1994; Bongrand, 1992; Denton & Woodward, 1998; Erdoğan, 1997; Kalender, 2000; Kentel, 1991; Uslu, 1996; Wolton, 1991). According to Öztürk, who approaches the concept from a narrow perspective, political communication is “an interdisciplinary academic field consisting of research on the relationship between political processes and communication processes” (2008, s. 257). From the broader perspective, political communication is “the use of various types and techniques of communication by political actors to impose their ideological goals on certain groups, masses, countries or blocs, and to transform them into action and put them into practice when necessary” and “to ensure social unity and integrity, and to consider

the good of society by realizing general interests instead of private interests.” (Aziz, 2014, s. 3). Political communication is also defined as “to ensure social unity and integrity, to think about the good of society by realizing general interests instead of private interests” (Öztekin, 2000, p. 2).

The political communication proceeds in a very similar way to the communication process (Okumuş & Taşcıoğlu, 2023). The elements involved in the communication process are the source, message, channel, receiver, noise, and feedback (Yılmaz, 2003). These elements are also involved in the political communication process. In political communication, the source is usually a person or community with a political identity. Conversely, the message is the information that should be conveyed for political purposes. The message for political purposes should be in a language that the recipient can understand. Additionally, the choice of channel is essential for identifying which mass media are used most intensively by the target audience. The receiver addresses the target audience, including individuals who have gained the right to vote. Feedback is the response of recipients who are the targets of political messages. These messages must address the key aspects of healthy communication progress in political communication (Aziz, 2014).

While communication between the rulers and the ruled is always present, it becomes even more intense during elections (Okumuş & Taşcıoğlu, 2023). Election periods are the most critical times for convincing voters. Therefore, at the point of persuasion, the effectiveness of the message and the attitude it will evoke in the receiver are significant. In political communication, politicians use various tools and methods to ensure the message is compelling enough to create an attitude in the receiver. Using multiple tools and techniques in different combinations has a more substantial impact on the target audience. However, while the effect of all communication tools and methods used in political communication has an essential place in the target audience, it is known that the impact of verbal messages is more effective. Voice, intonation, and emphasis enhance the effectiveness of verbal messages (Çakmak & Kazan, 2023). These phenomena are also present in music. In this context, politicians who recognize the impact of music on political communication have historically incorporated music into their election campaigns.

Although the use of music, an oral communication tool, in political communication dates back to ancient times, it has recently become more intense. In Turkish political history, the place and time given to songs in election campaigns have increased (Budak, 2018). Therefore, the connection between political communication and music is strong; both fields influence each other and contribute significantly to social dynamics.

### **Music In Political Communication**

Music is a concept combining rhythm, sound, harmony, and melody components (İmik & Haşhaş, 2020). Music, as the expression of a culture, is deeply influenced by society and is considered one of the determinants of social development. The musical development of a nation can be viewed as a reflection of the cultural and social structure of that nation. Therefore, social perceptions, values, and preferences related to music can reflect the level of development of a society. In this context, music is an art form intertwined with social dynamics and plays a vital role in the evolution of culture (Çuhadar, 2008).

Plato and Aristotle emphasized music’s importance and explored its role in increasing freedoms, education development, and city-state governance (Öz, 2001). The Chinese philosopher Confucius also expressed the following views on music: “If you want to know

whether a nation is governed happily and morally, listen to the music of that country. Music builds and destroys states” (İçli, 1988, p. 221). Mass culture, popular culture, ideology, art, and politics are interconnected today. For this reason, it is possible to say that politics and music are intertwined and significantly related (Tanyıldızı, 2012).

Since its emergence, music has always played an influential role in human life. In every era, songs have shaped society’s feelings, thoughts, and behaviors, leaving their mark on history. In this context, politicians must choose songs that have left their mark on the period when selecting music for election campaigns to influence voters more. Moreover, election campaign songs are sometimes used in their original form, but their lyrics are often modified (Okumuş & Taşcıoğlu, 2023). This varied style of use depends on the meaning of the lyrics, the harmony of the music, the structure of the target electorate, and the type, place, and timing of the election.

Looking at the history of the use of music in political communication, it is seen that the use of political songs in the US has a long history dating back to the 1700s. The use of political songs in an election campaign in 1734 was so successful that the governor of New York could not remain indifferent to this situation and gave an award to the writers of “slandorous songs or ballads.” In the US during the 1780s, songs like “God Save Washington,” used in election campaigns, played a crucial role in the election of the first president of that era (Lull, 2000; Tanyıldızı, 2012). In countries such as China, the Soviet Union, Germany, and Italy, music was used for political purposes, particularly in the 19th and 20th centuries (Kaygısız, 2004). This demonstrates that music plays a crucial role in global political communication and is widely used in election campaigns. Furthermore, the incorporation of music in political communication is a significant area of focus within academic research (Behr, 2022; Guenauer, 2016; Johnson et al., 2021; Sylvanus & Ezeugwu, 2024; Wheeler, 2011).

Election songs have been used in Turkish political history for a long time. For example, “Song of Tomorrow” for the Turkish Labor Party in 1965, “Zühtü” (Zühtü) for the Justice Party in 1977, “Yeni Bir Türkiye” (A New Türkiye) for the CHP in the 1977 election, “Arım, Balım, Peteğim” (My Bee, My Honey, My Honeycomb) for the Motherland Party in the 1980 election, and the songs. “Bize Her Yer Türkiye, Söyle Varısın, Selam Olsun, Aşk ile Seveda ile, Haydi Bir Daha” (Everywhere is Türkiye for us, Tell us if you are in, Greetings, With love and passion, Let us do it again) has recently been used by the AK Party in election campaigns, CHP’s “Milletçe Alkışlıyoruz, Zamanı Geldi, Sarı Saçlı Mavi Gözlü, Bir Işık da Sen Çal” (We Applaud as a Nation, The Time Has Come, Blonde-Haired, Blue-Eyed, You Whistle Too) and MHP’s “Ölürüm Türkiyem” (I Would Die, My Türkiye) song (Budak, 2018, p. 35). These examples show that music has played an essential role in influencing political processes throughout history.

In a study conducted by Tanyıldızı, it was concluded that election songs do not directly make the voter vote for a particular party, but instead ‘they have the effect of mobilizing the voter and increasing the political participation of the voter by making the voter remember political parties and messages’ (Tanyıldızı, 2012, p.108). Therefore, music, one of the auditory tools, comes to the forefront with its reminder feature (Demir, 2022). The good side of the reminder feature of music is that it emphasizes the actions that leaders have done or promised to do (Okumuş & Taşcıoğlu, 2023) and keeps them in the memory for a long time.

Moreover, songs used in election campaigns do not only emphasize messages about the actions and branding of parties or candidates. They also emphasize social issues. For example, songs that include various social issues such as women's rights, labor rights, pro-freedom and anti-slavery populist songs (Tanyıldızı, 2012) are used by politicians during election periods. The use of such songs in election campaigns can influence voters and increase the tendency to vote in the desired direction. This situation can be considered as one of the factors that show how important the use of music in political communication is in terms of winning elections.

The use of music in political communication is a pioneering phenomenon in terms of raising emotions and giving identity and character to the candidate (Murphy et al., 2013). Therefore 'music reveals constitutive elements such as beliefs, assumptions and commitments that define character and shape society' (Mattern, 1996: p.15). Similarly, music can be used to gain public recognition and even influence one's vote (Schoening & Kasper, 2011). Therefore, the power of music as one of the most important strategies used by political parties in branding a candidate is increasing (Mas et al., 2017). Moreover, songs used in election campaigns do not only emphasize messages about the actions and branding of parties or candidates. They also emphasize social issues. For example, songs that include various social issues such as women's rights, worker rights, pro-freedom and anti-slavery populist songs (Tanyıldızı, 2012) are used by politicians during election periods. The use of such songs in election campaigns can influence voters and increase the tendency to vote in the desired direction. This situation can be considered as one of the factors that show how important the use of music in political communication is in terms of winning elections.

### **Aim Of The Study**

Political rulers use mass media effectively to seize power, to hold it or to replace it by overthrowing it with strong opposition, or to manipulate and spread their ideology to the public (Kılıç, 2014). Music is one of the most critical mass communication tools used in political communication due to its universality, ability to appeal to many people simultaneously, and ability to influence many people. In this context, the purpose of this study on the use of music in election campaigns is to analyze the songs used in the election campaigns of the mayoral candidates of three big cities (İstanbul, Ankara and İzmir) in the 31 March 2024 Local Administrations Elections.

### **Method**

#### **Design**

This study employed the case study method, a qualitative research design. A case study is a methodology in which a single event or situation is analyzed comprehensively, and data is collected regularly (Subaşı & Okumuş, 2017). The study data were collected through document analysis. Document analysis is a research method defined as collecting, examining, questioning, and analyzing various documents that are the primary source of scientific research (Sak et al., 2021). The data were analyzed using the content analysis method in the MAXQDA program. Content analysis is a method that enables researchers to reach objective, measurable, and verifiable information by systematically working on a series of documents or texts. This technique allows materials to be analyzed within specific rules and standards in the research process. Sampling, coding, and categorization are established techniques in content analysis that facilitate researchers in comprehending and interpreting data (Metin & Ünal, 2022).

## Sample

The sample for this study comprises all election songs utilized in the electoral campaigns of the AK Parti and CHP mayoral candidates in İstanbul, Ankara, and İzmir during the local administration elections held on March 31, 2024. The reason for choosing these two parties' candidates as the study sample is that AK Parti is the ruling party, CHP is the main opposition party, and the overwhelming majority of the Turkish electorate casts their votes for these two political parties. However, since it was not possible to analyze all election songs used in the election campaigns of AK Parti and CHP mayoral candidates for İstanbul, Ankara and İzmir, the study was limited to ten election songs. In the selection of these ten songs, the ten most popular songs were selected based on the popularity of the songs. In the distribution of songs by provinces, based on the number of voters, six songs were chosen from İstanbul, which has the highest number of voters with 11.314.534 voters according to the data of the Supreme Electoral Institution for 2024, and 2 songs each from Ankara with 4.304.874 voters and İzmir with 3.459.970 voters. In the distribution of songs by party affiliation, an equal number of songs—specifically, five from each party—were selected. The sample songs utilized in this study are presented in Table 1 below.

## Data Collection Tool

The study utilized a survey form developed by Okumuş (2023) as its data collection instrument, with the author's permission. This instrument encompasses categories of election songs, including province, party, clip, originality, appeal, symbol/convocation, person, message, ideological focus, and others. The main codes and sub-codes within the data collection tool are given in the findings section of the study. The ten election songs analyzed in the study were accessed through the YouTube platform.

**Table 1.** Election Songs Used in the Study

No	Turkish Song	English Translation	Party	Candidate
1	Aşkımız Eser Olur	Our Love Becomes Work	AK Parti	Murat Kurum
2	Müjdelerimizle Geliyorum	Coming with Good News	AK Parti	Murat Kurum
3	Çoğu Gitti Azı Kaldı	Most Gone, Less Remains	AK Parti	Murat Kurum
4	Oy Ver	Vote	CHP	Ekrem İmamoğlu
5	Bir Daha İmamoğlu	One More Time, İmamoğlu	CHP	Ekrem İmamoğlu
6	Ula Tam Yol İleri	Ula Full Way Forward	CHP	Ekrem İmamoğlu
7	Canım Başkentim Ankara	My Beloved Capital, Ankara	AK Parti	Turgut Altınok
8	Az Laf Çok İş	Less Talk, More Work	CHP	Mansur Yavaş
9	Sevdik Sevdalandık	We Loved, and We Loved	AK Parti	Hamza Dağ
10	Kurtuluştan Kuruluşa Giden Öncü Şehir İzmir	Pioneering City, İzmir: From Liberation to Establishment	CHP	Cemil Tugay

## Results

The main codes and sub-codes related to each code are given in Table 2 below.

**Table 2.** *Frequencies of the Codes*

Main codes and Sub-codes	F
<b>Province</b>	
İzmir	2
Ankara	2
İstanbul	6
<b>Party to which it belongs</b>	
CHP	5
AK Parti	5
<b>Election Songs</b>	
Verbal message in election song	0
No verbal message	6
Verbal message	4
<b>Video clip of the election song</b>	
No	0
Yes	10
<b>Originality of the election song</b>	
Adaptation of popular song	4
Original popular song	0
Original election song	6
<b>The rhythm of the election song</b>	
Slow/Stationary	1
Moving/Enthusiastic	9
<b>Lyrics of the election song</b>	
<b>Party name oriented</b>	
The name of the party	0
Abbreviated name of the party	0
Full name of the party	0
<b>Promise-driven</b>	
Prosperity	2
Hope	0
Future	8
<b>Address</b>	
To the electorate	8
Leader	1
<b>Ideology-driven</b>	
Islamism	0
Liberalism	2
Kemalism	2
Conservatism	1
Nationalism	2
<b>Message-oriented</b>	
Socio-psychological	4
Socio-political	0
Economic	0

Main codes and Sub-codes	F
<b>Focused on criticizing the opposition/government</b>	
Criticizing the policies of the opposition/government	3
Criticizing the opposition/leader in power	0
Criticizing the opposition/ruling party	0
<b>Icon/Reference-oriented</b>	
Party ideology	0
Party name	0
Logo	0
Leader	7
<b>Person-oriented</b>	
Voter	2
Political actor	0
Leader	6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>108</b>

A sample coding system for the codes presented in Table 2 is provided in Table 3.

**Table 3. Sample Coding System**

Code	Short Definition	Sample Quotations	Time of Use
Original Election Song	They are songs specially designed for the upcoming elections.	For example, Murat Kurum's song "Aşkımız Eser Olur" was not used before and was specially prepared for the 2024 elections. Likewise, Ekrem İmamoğlu's song "Oy Ver" can be shown as an example in this context.	From the beginning to the end of the song
Adaptation of Popular Song	It is the use of a popular song by changing its lyrics.	For example, by changing the lyrics, Hamza Dağ uses the song "Sevdik Sevdalandık."	From the beginning to the end of the song
Use of Verbal Messages	To deepen the meaning of the words, some sentences to be emphasized are vocalized with background accompaniment.	In Murat Kurum's song "Aşkımız Eser Olur", the lyrics "We are ready for the duty that this unique city calls us to and we are determined to work only for İstanbul" are used as a verbal message.	Between 1.36 and 1.44 seconds
Video Clip	A short movie or visual content that visually presents a song or music.	Video clips were used in all of the songs used.	All songs, from beginning to end
Upbeat/Energetic Election Song	Energetic and joyful songs	For example, Ekrem İmamoğlu's song "Ula Tam Yol İleri" belongs to the moving song group. Murat Kurum's song "Çoğu Gitti Azı Kaldı" is also in the category of upbeat election music with its fast tempo.	From the beginning to the end of the song
Slow/Stationary Election Song	It includes static songs.	There is one slow/stationary song in the study. This song is "Müjdelermizle Geliyorum" by Murat Kurum.	From the beginning to the end of the song
Person-centered lyrics of the election song "Leader"	Leader-oriented discourse in the song	For example, Cemil Tuğay's lyrics "Cemil Tuğay başkanım biz seninleyiz" in the song "Kuruluştan Kurtuluşa Giden Öncü Şehir İzmir"	Between 36 and 44 seconds

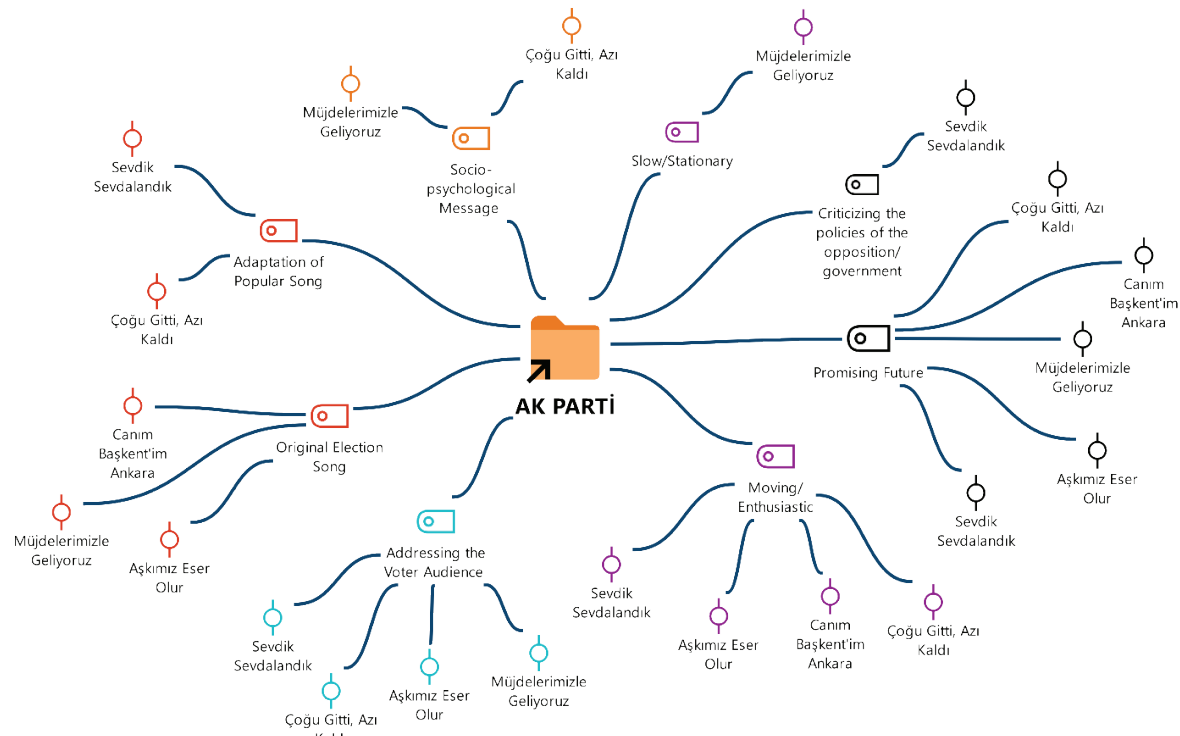


Code	Short Definition	Sample Quotations	Time of Use
Person-oriented lyrics of the election song "Voter"	The song contains lyrics that appeal to voters	In the song "Çoğu Gitti Azı Kaldı" by Murat Kurum, the words "Love İstanbul" refer to the people of İstanbul, the voters.	Between 45 and 50 seconds
Icon/Calling Focused "Leader"	Use of words evocative of the leader in election songs	All of the songs analyzed in this study are leader-oriented. For example, the lyrics "Mansur Yavaş Mansur Yavaş is like a father, like a son, like a friend" in Mansur Yavaş's song "Az Laf Çok İş" are an example of a leader-oriented song.	Between 45 and 60 seconds
Criticizing the Opposition's / Government's Policy	Parties or leaders criticize rival parties through songs.	Within the study's scope are criticism-oriented songs of the ruling and main opposition parties. For example, in the song "Ula Tam Yol İleri" used by İmamoğlu, there is criticism of the words "they threw slanders, they said he was not working."	Between 52 and 56 seconds
"Sociopsychological Message" within the scope of message-oriented analysis	The message to be conveyed is a message that 'contains people's thoughts.'	There is a sociopsychological message in the song "Az Laf Çok İş" used by Mansur Yavaş. The lyrics "Protecting your trust like your life, reaching out like speed when you are in trouble, defending your rights like a lion" contain a sociopsychological message.	Between 17 and 29 seconds
Ideology Driven "Nationalism"	Transferring the ideology adopted with the words: homeland, homeland, and flag	In the song "Ula Tam Yol İleri" used by Ekrem İmamoğlu, the ideology of nationalism is emphasized in words, "What a great history this nation has, great nation."	Between 30 and 33 seconds
Ideology Driven "Liberalism"	Transferring the ideology adopted with the words: freedom, justice, and equality	In İstanbul, İmamoğlu's song 'Bir Daha İmamoğlu' with the words 'one more vote one more vote one more vote one more' is an example of the conservatism ideology of the desire of the existing president to be re-elected, that is, to continue the existing one.	Between 1.09 and 1.11 seconds
Ideology-driven "Kemalism"	Adopting Atatürk's ideas and moving forward on that path	In the song "Ula Tam Yol İleri" Kemalism is emphasized with the words, "He is a son walking in the footsteps of Atatürk."	Between 24 and 27 seconds
Ideology Driven "Conservatism"	Maintaining the existing order	In İstanbul, İmamoğlu's words, "Bir Daha İmamoğlu" are an example of the ideology of conservatism, which is the desire of the current president to be re-elected, that is, to continue the existing one.	Between 36 and 42 seconds
Future Promise	Emphasis on service for the future	In the song "Canım Başkent'im Ankara," used by Turgut Altınok, the message that services will be made in the future is given with the words, "We are determined to work on every road and every stone."	Between 47 and 55 seconds

Code	Short Definition	Sample Quotations	Time of Use
Welfare Promise	A harbinger of peace and tranquility	In the song "Oy Ver" used by İmamoğlu, the lyrics "Vote for Ekrem İmamoğlu, let flowers bloom in İstanbul, let young people look to the future with confidence, if you want a smiling İstanbul, vote for Ekrem İmamoğlu" contain the promise of prosperity.	Between 24 and 39 seconds
Address "Leader"	Message-oriented songs to the leader as if sung by voters	In the song "İzmir, the Pioneering City from Liberation to Foundation" used by Cemil Tugay, the lyrics "we are retired, we are tradesmen, we are workers, we are young, Cemil Tugay mayor, we are with you" address the leader.	Between 50 and 58 seconds
Address "Voter Audience"	Message-oriented songs for an electorate that is being persuaded	In the election song "Aşkımız Eser Olur" used by Murat Kurum, the words "we are ready for the duty called by this unique city and we are determined to work only for İstanbul" are addressed to the electoral mass by considering İstanbul as the people.	Between 1.36 and 1.44 seconds

### Single Case Analysis: AK Parti

In the March 31, 2024, Local Administration Elections, a single case analysis was conducted on the election songs used by AK Parti's mayoral candidates in İstanbul, Ankara, and İzmir during their campaigns. The findings are presented in Figure 1 below.



**Figure 1.** Analysis of AK Parti Songs

In terms of originality, three songs (Canım Başkentim Ankara, Müjdelermizle Geliyoruz, Aşkımız Eser Olur) were original election songs specifically prepared for the election, while two songs (Sevdik Sevdalandık, Çoğu Gitti Azı Kaldı) were adaptations of existing

popular songs repurposed for the election. Additionally, one existing song was used in its original form, and no original popular songs were included.

Regarding tempo, only one song (Müjdelerimizle Geliyoruz) was identified as slow or stationary, while the others were upbeat and exuberant.

In terms of promising future, all the songs featured were those that promised a better future to voters; however, songs promising prosperity and hope were not included. Concerning appeal, four songs (Sevdik Sevdalandık, Çoğu Gitti Azı Kaldı, Aşkımız Eser Olur, Müjdelerimizle Geliyoruz) were found to resonate with the electorate, while songs appealing to the leader were excluded.

In terms of criticizing the policies of the opposition or the government, one song (Sevdik Sevdalandık) was identified as criticizing the policies of the opposition or the government, whereas songs criticizing the leader, and the party were not included.

In terms of socio-psychological message, two songs (Müjdelerimizle Geliyoruz, Çoğu Gitti Azı Kaldı) were found to contain socio-psychological messages, while songs with socio-political and economic messages were absent. Additionally, no songs with an ideological focus were utilized.

### Single Case Analysis: CHP

In the March 31, 2024, Local Administration Elections, a single case analysis was conducted on the election songs used by CHP's mayoral candidates in İstanbul, Ankara, and İzmir during their campaigns. The findings are presented in Figure 2 below.

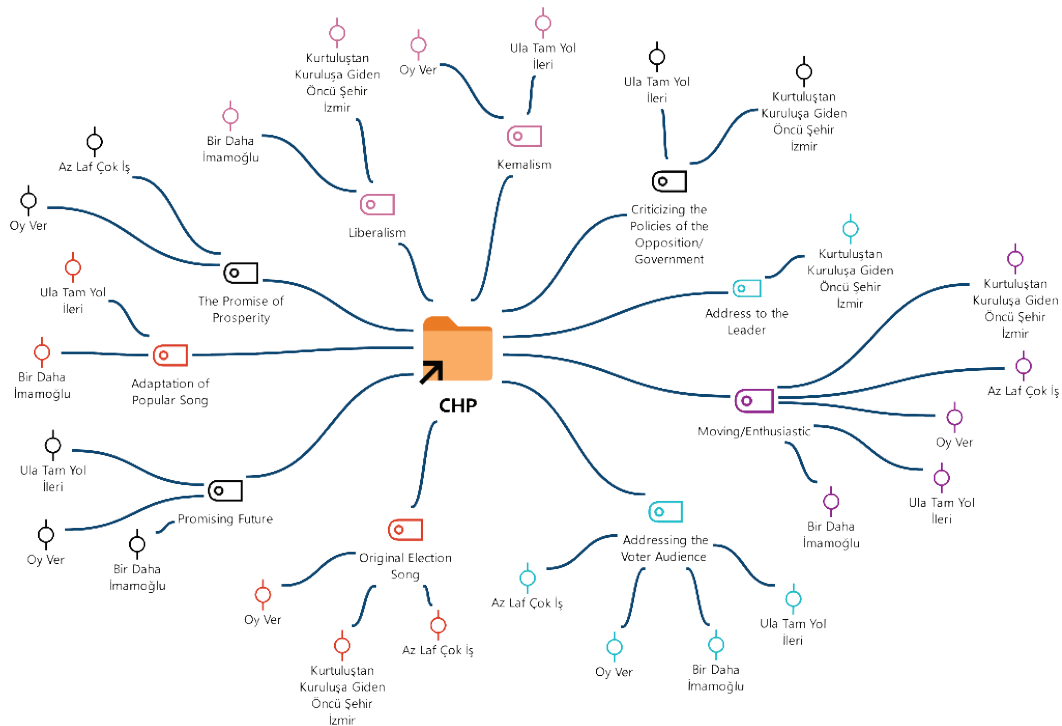


Figure 2. Analysis of CHP Songs

In terms of originality, three songs (Oy Ver, Az Laf Çok İş, Kurtuluştan Kuruluşa Giden Öncü Şehir İzmir) were original election songs specifically prepared for the election. Additionally, two songs (Ula Tam Yol İleri, Bir Daha İmamoğlu) were adaptations of existing popular songs. One song was used in its original form, and no original popular songs were utilized. Regarding rhythm, all of the songs used by the candidates were moving or exuberant, with no slow or stationary songs included.

In terms of promising future, three songs (Ula Tam Yol İleri, Oy Ver, Bir Daha İmamoğlu) were identified as promising, while two songs (Oy Ver, Az Laf Çok İş) were noted for their promise of prosperity. In contrast, no songs were found to convey a message of hope.

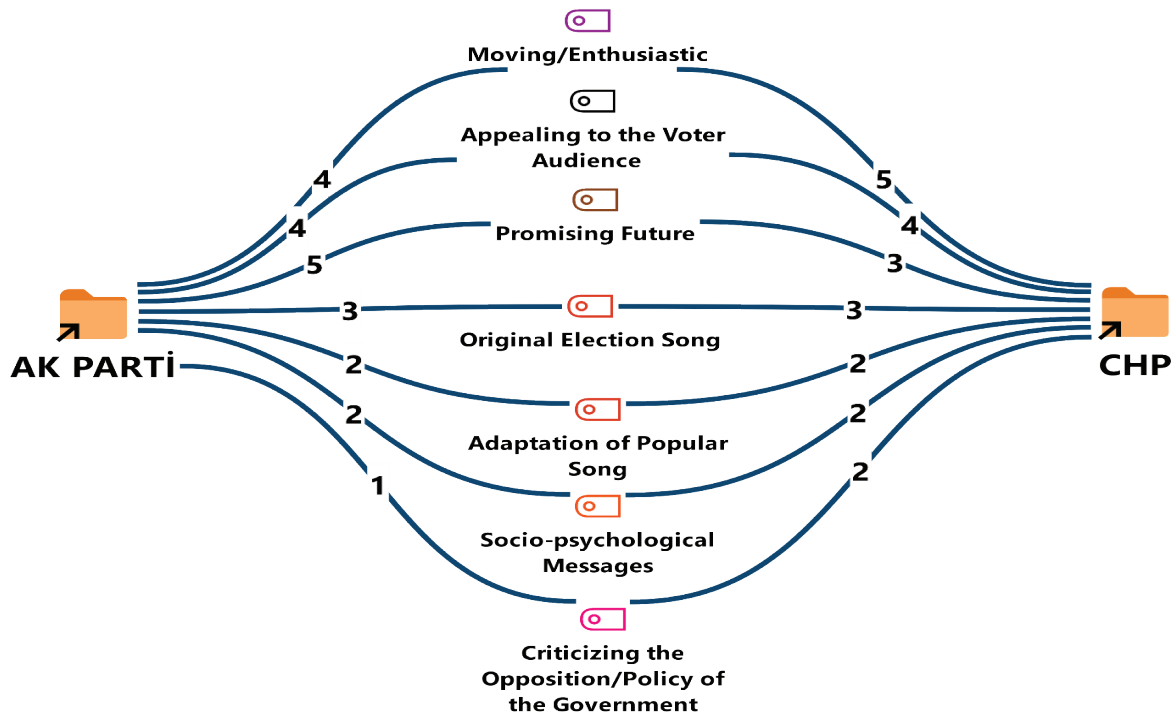
Regarding addressing the voter audience, four songs (Az Laf Çok İş, Oy Ver, Bir Daha İmamoğlu, Ula Tam Yol İleri) resonated with the electorate, while one song (Kurtuluştan Kuruluşa Giden Öncü Şehir İzmir) addressed to the leader.

When examining criticism of the policies of the opposition or the government, two songs (Kurtuluştan Kuruluşa Giden Öncü Şehir İzmir, Ula Tam Yol İleri) were identified as criticizing the policies of the opposition or government. However, no songs were found to criticize the leader of the opposition, the government, or the ruling party.

In terms of ideological orientation, two songs (Bir Daha İmamoğlu, Kurtuluştan Kuruluşa Giden Öncü Şehir İzmir) emphasized liberalism, while two songs (Oy Ver, Ula Tam Yol İleri) emphasized Kemalism. In contrast, no songs highlighted conservatism or nationalism. Additionally, it was observed that no songs were utilized in relation to message orientation.

### **Two Case Model Analysis Of AK Parti And CHP**

In the March 31, 2024, Local Administrations Elections, two case studies were conducted on the election songs used by AK Parti and CHP mayoral candidates in İstanbul, Ankara, and İzmir during their campaigns. The findings are presented in Figure 3 below.

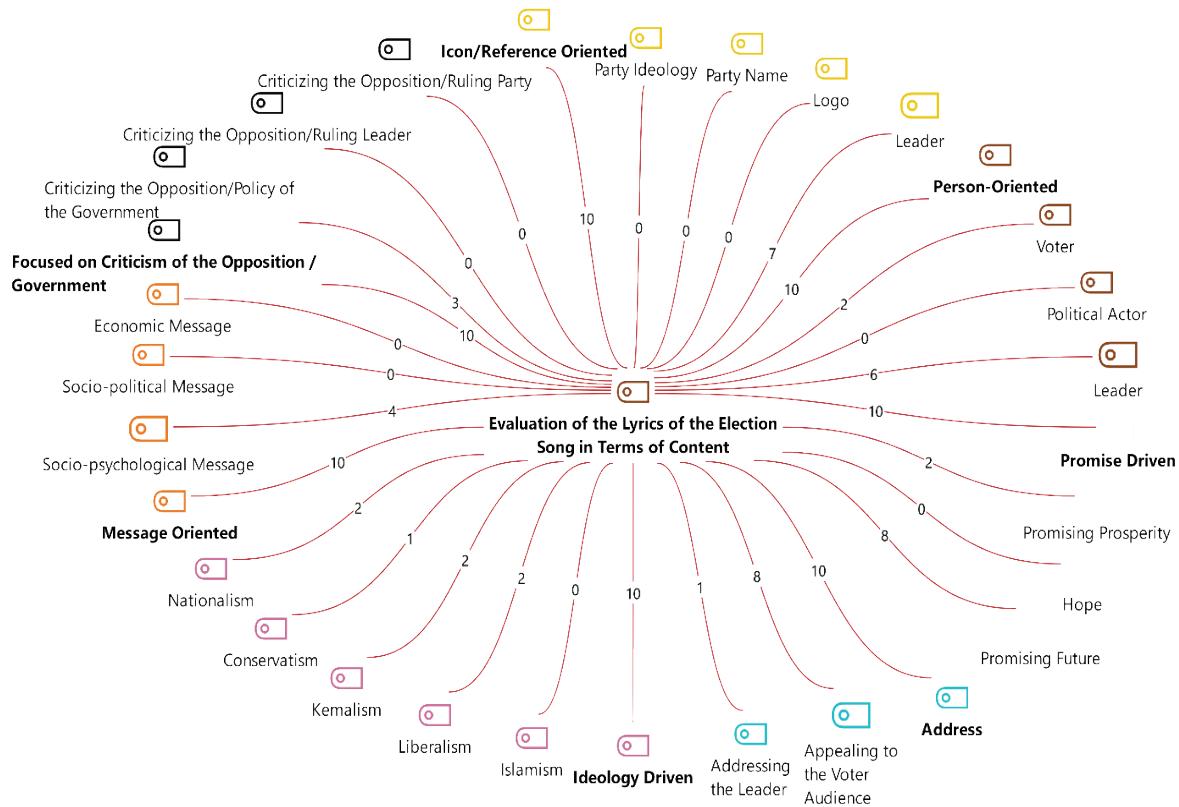


*Figure 3. Analysis of AK Parti and CHP Songs*

In terms of moving/enthusiastic, both party candidates emphasized moving and exuberant songs (AK Parti 5/4, CHP 5/5). Regarding appealing to the voter audience, both candidates used an equal number (4) of songs that resonated with the electorate. In terms of promise, both candidates focused on promising songs (AK Parti 5/5, CHP 5/3). Concerning originality, each candidate employed a moderate and equal number of original election songs (3) and adapted popular songs (2), while no original songs were used. In terms of socio-psychological message orientation, both candidates utilized an equal number of socio-psychological message-oriented songs (2). Finally, regarding criticism of the opposition and the government, both candidates featured a low number of songs criticizing the policies of the opposition and the government (AK Parti 5/1, CHP 5/2).

### **Evaluation Of Songs In Terms Of Content**

In the March 31, 2024, Local Administration Elections, the election songs used by the mayoral candidates of AK Parti and CHP in İstanbul, Ankara, and İzmir during their campaigns were analyzed for content. The findings are presented in Figure 5 below.



**Figure 5.** Songs in Terms of Content

Figure 5 shows that in terms of Icon/reference orientation, seven songs were leader-oriented, while there were no songs focused on party ideology, party name, and logo. Regarding person orientation, six songs were leader-oriented, two were voter-oriented, and none focused on political actors.

Regarding the promise of the future, eight songs were future-oriented, two were welfare-oriented, and none were with a promise of hope. Regarding addressing the voter, it was observed that eight songs addressed the electorate, and one song addressed the leader.

Regarding ideology orientation, it was observed that two songs each contained the ideology of nationalism, liberalism, and Kemalism, and one song contained the ideology of conservatism. At the same time, there was no song containing the ideology of Islamism. Regarding message orientation, four songs contained socio-psychological messages, while no songs had socio-political and economic messages.

In terms of criticism of the opposition/the government, three songs were found to criticize the policies of the opposition/the government. At the same time, there were no songs criticizing the opposition/the government leader or the opposition/the government party.

**Stylistic Evaluation Of Songs**

In the March 31, 2024, Local Administrations Elections, the election songs (10) used by the mayoral candidates of AK Parti and CHP in İstanbul, Ankara, and İzmir in their election campaigns in these provinces and discussed in this study were examined formally, and the findings obtained are given in Figure 4 below.

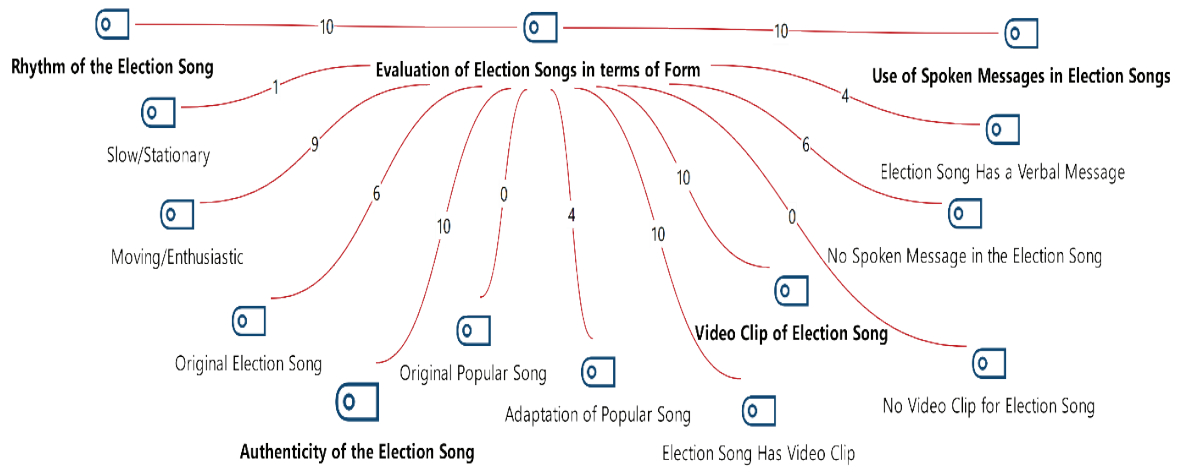


Figure 4. Songs in Terms of Form

In terms of rhythm, nine songs are categorized as moving/enthusiastic, while one song is classified as slow/stationary. Regarding originality, six songs are original selections, four are adaptations of popular songs, and there are no original popular songs. All songs have video clips, and concerning the use of verbal messages, four songs include verbal messages, while six do not.

**Similarity Matrix**

In the March 31, 2024, Local Administrations Elections, a similarity matrix was created to reveal the similarities among the election songs used by the mayoral candidates of the AK Parti and CHP in İstanbul, Ankara, and İzmir during their campaigns in these provinces. The findings are presented in Table 5 below. However, before analyzing the similarity matrix findings in Table 5, it is important to explain what a similarity matrix is and how it is calculated.

“Several options are available for calculating similarity. All calculations are based on a four-field table of the following type, created (in the background) for each paired document combination:

Table 4. Similarity Calculation Table

		<b>Document A</b>	
		Code/Variable value.	Code/Variable value not available.
<b>Document B</b>	Code/Variable value.	A	B
	Code/Variable value not available.	C	D

A = Number of codes or variable values that are the same in both documents.

d = Number of codes or variable values not found in both documents.

b and c = The number of scripts or variable values found only in a document.

Calculation options differ, among other things, according to the degree to which the absence of the “d” field or its presence in both documents is considered a match.

**Simple match** =  $(a + d) / (a + b + c + d)$  - Both presence and absence are counted as a match. The result is the match percentage.

**Jaccard** =  $a / (a + b + c)$  - Absence is wholly ignored.

**Kuckartz & Rädikers zeta** =  $(2a + d) / (2a + b + c + d)$  - Presence counts twice, absence once.

**Russel & Rao** =  $a / (a + b + c + d)$  - mere presence is considered a match, but absence reduces similarity” (MAXQDA, 2022, pp. 547-548)

There are values of 0 in the election music coding system discussed within the study’s scope. This indicates that coding was not done because there was no match for some categories or that the music preferred within the scope of the study did not relate to some codes. Since the purpose of the similarity matrix in this study is to reveal the similarity of the data in the study, the use of the Jaccard similarity coefficient, which completely ignores the absence of the similarity matrix, was preferred.

**Table 3: Similarity Matrix**

SONG NAME	Ula Tam Yol İleri	Sevdik Sevdalandık	Oy Ver	Müjdelerimizle Geliyoruz	Kurtuluştan Kuruluşa Giden Öncü Şehir İzmir	Çoğu Gitti Azı Kaldı	Canım Başkentim Ankara	Bir Daha İmamoğlu	Az Laf Çok İş	Aşkımız Eser Olur
Ula Tam Yol İleri	1.00	0.44	0.67	0.33	0.44	0.41	0.18	0.67	0.41	0.31
Sevdik Sevdalandık	0.44	1.00	0.29	0.24	0.28	0.50	0.31	0.38	0.24	0.38
Oy Ver	0.67	0.29	1.00	0.44	0.39	0.35	0.27	0.60	0.64	0.43
Müjdelerimizle Geliyoruz	0.33	0.24	0.44	1.00	0.26	0.57	0.38	0.35	0.38	0.58
Kurtuluştan Kuruluşa Giden Öncü Şehir İzmir	0.44	0.28	0.39	0.26	1.00	0.20	0.18	0.39	0.50	0.17
Çoğu Gitti Azı Kaldı	0.41	0.50	0.35	0.57	0.20	1.00	0.38	0.44	0.29	0.58
Canım Başkentim Ankara	0.18	0.31	0.27	0.38	0.18	0.38	1.00	0.19	0.29	0.67
Bir Daha İmamoğlu	0.67	0.38	0.60	0.35	0.39	0.44	0.19	1.00	0.44	0.33
Az Laf Çok İş	0.41	0.24	0.64	0.38	0.50	0.29	0.29	0.44	1.00	0.27
Aşkımız Eser Olur	0.31	0.38	0.43	0.58	0.17	0.58	0.67	0.33	0.27	1.00

When the similarity matrix findings in Table 5 are analyzed, it is seen that the lowest song similarity is 0.17 between the song “Kurtuluştan Kuruluşa Giden Öncü Şehir İzmir” used by CHP in İzmir and the song “Aşkımız Eser Olur” used by AK Parti in İstanbul. Apart from this, the lowest song similarity is 0.18 between the song “Canım Başkentim Ankara” used by AK Parti in Ankara, and the songs “Ula Tam Yol İleri” used by CHP in İstanbul, and “Kurtuluştan Kuruluşa Giden Öncü Şehir İzmir” used by CHP in İzmir.

There is a moderate similarity of 0.41 between the song “Ula Tam Yol İleri” used by CHP in İstanbul, and the songs “Az Laf Çok İş” used by CHP in Ankara and “Çoğu Gitti Azı Kaldı” used by AK Parti in İstanbul. There is also a moderate similarity of 0.43 between the song “Oy Ver,” used by CHP in İstanbul, and the song “Aşkımız Eser Olur,” used by AK Parti in İstanbul.

The highest song similarity is 0.67 between the song “Ula Tam Yol İleri” used by CHP in İstanbul and the songs “Oy Ver, Bir Daha İmamoğlu” used by CHP in İstanbul, and 0.67 between the song “Aşkımız Eser Olur” used by AK Parti in İstanbul and the song “Canım



Başkentim Ankara” used by AK Parti in Ankara. Apart from this, the highest song similarity is 0.64 between the song “Oy Ver,” used by CHP in İstanbul, and “Az Laf Çok İş,” used by CHP in Ankara.

When evaluating the similarity of the songs, it is evident that the lowest similarities occur between songs from different parties, while the highest similarities are found among songs from the same party. Additionally, most medium-level similarities are observed between songs from the same party, with fewer similarities between songs from different parties.

## Conclusion

In this study, the election songs used in the campaigns of AK Parti and CHP mayoral candidates in İstanbul, Ankara, and İzmir for the March 31, 2024, local administration elections were analyzed using content analysis.

According to the research results, all election songs used in the campaigns of the two-party candidates consist of original election songs and adaptations of popular songs. In a study conducted by Okumuş and Taşcıoğlu (2023), it was concluded that all the election songs used included both original compositions and adaptations of popular tracks. This finding, which supports the current study, demonstrates a strong preference for using original election songs and adapting popular songs in election campaigns. This preference likely stems from the fact that music is used strategically in election campaigns to establish an emotional bond with voters. Original election songs convey the identity and messages of the party or candidate more clearly and authentically, thus increasing their impact on voters. In contrast, adapted popular songs effectively communicate the messages of politicians through familiar and beloved melodies, allowing them to reach broader audiences in a way that resonates with popular culture and fosters strong emotional connections with voters (Street, 2012). The decision of both parties to exclude original popular songs from their campaigns can be seen as a strategy to connect more effectively with the electorate by emphasizing originality.

According to the research results, both party candidates extensively used uplifting and enthusiastic songs in their campaigns. It is well-known that upbeat songs can energize voters, excite and motivate them, and transform political campaigns into a celebration. In this context, both parties emphasize lively songs to conduct more successful campaigns and influence voters more effectively. A review of the literature reveals that previous studies on this subject have also focused heavily on uplifting and exuberant songs (Kumpasoğlu, 2017; Okumuş & Taşcıoğlu, 2023; Quevedo-Redondo et al., 2023), which indicates that the result aligns with the existing literature.

The campaigns of both party candidates focused on songs appealing to voters. This outcome can be attributed to the candidates’ aim to reach as broad an electorate as possible and to establish an emotional bond with voters, given that it is a local election. It is somewhat puzzling that CHP used one song addressing the leader while AK Parti, widely recognized for having a strong leader, did not include any songs addressing their leader. However, this inconsistency is mitigated by the finding that both party candidates’ campaigns included high levels of leader-oriented songs in terms of symbol/association orientation and “leader-oriented songs in terms of person-orientation.” Leader-oriented songs place party leaders at the center, emphasizing their charisma and characteristics to voters. This strategy aims to help voters identify with the leader and establish emotional

ties to the party. On the other hand, the absence of the party ideology, name, or logo in the campaigns of both parties, in terms of symbol/appeal orientation, can be explained by the candidates' intention to target all segments of society rather than a specific group with party symbols and ideology. In general elections, success often comes from obtaining a particular majority, even if the votes are concentrated in only a few regions. In contrast, local elections require winning the presidency of each province and district separately, prompting parties and candidates to conduct inclusive campaigns that appeal to all segments of the population.

According to the research results, all AK Parti songs are classified as promising, while three CHP songs are also considered promising, and two CHP songs are categorized as prosperity songs. The primary reason for this distinction is that the AK Parti is the ruling party, whereas the CHP is the opposition party. When the AK Parti promises prosperity, it may imply a lack of prosperity under the current government, leading to a negative perception among voters. In contrast, promising a better future than the current situation is generally perceived positively. From the CHP's perspective, it may be strategically advantageous for the opposition to offer welfare promises to the electorate. This approach allows them to influence voters by highlighting the poor welfare situation under the current government, proposing solutions to the existing economic challenges, and committing to enhance welfare levels if they come to power.

The study also showed that the campaigns of both party candidates included songs that criticized the policies of the opposition or the government at a low level, while songs criticizing the leader or the party of the opposition or the government were not included at all. These results indicate that both party candidates are avoiding aggressive language and polarization. Instead, they aim to attract a broader voter base by using positive language, conveying constructive messages, and creating a more favorable image. In contrast, these findings starkly differ from what we have frequently witnessed in previous election periods, where the rival party's leader, candidate, or policies were harshly criticized. This shift can be interpreted as an evolution of parties and candidates moving from negative strategies to positive ones in their election campaigns.

Finally, the analysis using the similarity matrix revealed that similar party songs exhibited higher levels of similarity with each other, while different party songs showed minimal similarity. These findings indicate that parties and candidates connect with voters by embracing specific themes in the songs they incorporate into their election campaigns. This strategy allows them to differentiate themselves from competitors and influence voters with their unique messages.

In sum, it is clear that using songs in political communication is a crucial tool for persuading voters. Songs in election campaigns are not chosen randomly or haphazardly; they are employed as part of specific strategies that consider various factors, such as party identity, leadership, candidate characteristics, and the voter's belief structure, place of residence, and socio-demographic characteristics. The data obtained in this study supports this notion, revealing that the songs used by AK Parti and CHP candidates in their election campaigns were created and deployed for specific strategic purposes. Researchers should conduct more in-depth studies on the use of music and songs in political communication from different perspectives within this context.

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# The Use of Music in Political Communication: A Study on The Election Songs Used by Ruling and Main Opposition Parties in Türkiye's Local Administration Elections on March 31, 2024

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## Extended Abstract

In almost every historical period, political leaders, administrators, and politicians have needed to communicate with the public and gain support to ensure legitimacy. This communication is achieved through political communication.

Political communication, which combines the concepts of politics and communication, lacks a single definition, encompasses a wide range of topics, and is fundamentally based on the phenomenon of persuasion. The primary goal of politicians is to persuade voters to either change their current attitudes and behaviors in the desired direction or to maintain those attitudes and behaviors.

Persuading people on any subject is challenging, and it becomes even more difficult when it comes to political issues, which can be sensitive for individuals. Consequently, politicians employ various methods and techniques of political communication to influence voters. One such method is music. With roots tracing back to ancient times, music is one of the essential building blocks of culture and has been used as a means of political communication by political organizations and governments throughout various historical periods.

Although the use of music in political communication was first recognized globally between the two world wars and in Türkiye in 1965, scientific studies on the topic began to emerge worldwide around the 2000s, with Türkiye seeing limited research as late as the 2010s. This situation indicates that the use of music in political communication is an area that requires further exploration from various perspectives, necessitating more research.

In this context, this study analyzes the election songs used in the campaigns of AK Parti and CHP mayoral candidates in İstanbul, Ankara, and İzmir during the March 31, 2024, local administration elections, employing a content analysis method. This research was conducted using the case study method, a qualitative research design. The research data were collected through document analysis, and the data obtained were analyzed using the content analysis method in the MAXQDA program.

The research sample consists of election songs used in the campaigns of AK Parti and CHP mayoral candidates in İstanbul, Ankara, and İzmir during the March 31, 2024, local administration elections. It includes six election songs from İstanbul, two from Ankara, and two from İzmir, totaling ten election songs (five used by AK Parti candidates and two by CHP candidates).

According to the findings from the AK Parti single case analyses, the election songs used by AK Parti mayoral candidates in İstanbul, Ankara, and İzmir during their campaigns comprised original election songs and adapted popular songs. All of these songs were

considered promising, with the majority featuring a lively and exuberant rhythm, appealing to voters. There was no significant difference in the number of songs used to criticize the opposition or incumbent, nor in terms of message orientation. Conversely, AK Parti candidates' campaigns did not include any original popular songs, songs promising prosperity and hope, songs addressing the leader, or songs criticizing the leader or party of the opposition/government. Additionally, they lacked songs conveying socio-political and economic messages, as well as ideologically oriented songs.

According to the findings of the CHP single case analyses, the election songs used by CHP mayoral candidates in İstanbul, Ankara, and İzmir consisted of both original election songs and adapted popular songs. All of these songs featured an enthusiastic rhythm, with the majority appealing to voters. There was no significant difference in the number of songs used in the categories of criticism of the opposition or government, focus on promises, and focus on ideology. However, CHP candidates' campaigns did not include original popular songs, slow or stationary songs, songs promising hope, songs criticizing the leader or the party, or message-oriented songs.

According to the results of the two case studies of the AK Parti and CHP, in which all the songs analyzed were evaluated together, the first striking finding is that all election songs used in the campaigns of both party candidates consist of original election songs and adapted popular songs. The research indicates that, in terms of intensity, both parties' campaigns feature a high level of moving/exuberant songs (10/9), songs appealing to the electorate (10/8), promising songs (10/8), and leader-oriented songs (10/7). Additionally, leader-oriented songs (10/6), original election songs (10/6), adapted popular songs (10/4), and songs with socio-psychological messages (10/4) were included at a medium level. In contrast, songs criticizing the policies of the opposition or government (10/3) and voter-oriented songs (10/2) were included at a low level. Furthermore, original popular songs, songs that promise hope, songs criticizing the leader or party of the opposition or ruling party, songs with socio-political and economic messages, songs emphasizing conservatism and nationalism, songs focusing on party ideology, party name, and logo, and songs centered on political actors were completely absent from the campaigns of both party candidates.

According to the analysis of the similarity of all ten election songs used by the AK Parti and CHP presidential candidates in this study, the lowest similarities were observed between songs from different parties. In contrast, the highest similarities were found among songs from the same party. Additionally, most medium-level similarities occurred between songs of the same party and those of different parties, albeit to a lesser extent.

**Keywords:** Political Communication, Elections, Election Campaigns, Election Music, Election Songs.

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