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Tamil Nadu 2026 Assembly Election Prediction Using Machine Learning and Dravidian Social Media Sentiment Analysis

Blesson Xavier M[1] , Chirpparasan P[2] , Hariganesh A[3], Kuduminathan P[4],

Mrs. L. Shakira Banu, M.E[5]

Final Year Student, Artificial Intelligence and Data Science, Dhanalakshmi Srinivasan Engineering College (Autonomous), Perambalur – 621 212, India[1]

Final Year Student, Artificial Intelligence and Data Science, Dhanalakshmi Srinivasan Engineering College (Autonomous), Perambalur – 621 212, India[2]

Final Year Student, Artificial Intelligence and Data Science, Dhanalakshmi Srinivasan Engineering College (Autonomous), Perambalur – 621 212, India[3]

Final Year Student, Artificial Intelligence and Data Science, Dhanalakshmi Srinivasan Engineering College (Autonomous), Perambalur – 621 212, India[4]

Artificial Intelligence and Data Science, Dhanalakshmi Srinivasan Engineering College (Autonomous), Perambalur – 621 212, India[5]

Abstract: Virtual election forecasting using machine learning represents a transformative approach in the domain of political data science. Predicting election outcomes with accuracy has always been a challenging problem due to the complex interplay of historical voting patterns, incumbency effects, party momentum, and evolving public sentiment. This paper presents a machine learning-based framework for predicting the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly Election 2026 across all 234 constituencies. The system integrates Tamil Nadu Assembly Election data spanning 1971 to 2021 with real social media sentiment derived from the DravidianCodeMix dataset—comprising 43,632 Tamil code-mixed posts. A Random Forest classifier trained on seven engineered features achieved 88.84% accuracy on the 2021 validation set, outperforming the Gradient Boosting baseline of 87.12%. Sentiment analysis using a LaBSE+SVM model (NAACL DravidaLangTech 2025) was applied to 2,560 party-matched tweets to produce a sentiment score per party. The final 2026 prediction assigns 133 seats to Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK)—crossing the 118-seat majority threshold—65 to All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK), and 18 to Indian National Congress (INC), consistent with the 2021 electoral outcome trend.

Keywords— Election Prediction, Machine Learning, Random Forest, Sentiment Analysis, DravidianCodeMix, Tamil Nadu 2026, LaBSE, Gradient Boosting.

I. INTRODUCTION

The rapid growth of data availability in the political domain has significantly transformed the way election predictions are approached. The ability to leverage historical electoral data, social media sentiment, and machine learning algorithms has created new avenues for accurate and interpretable election forecasting. However, one of the major limitations of traditional polling-based approaches is their inability to account for grassroots-level party loyalty, regional sentiment variation, and the impact of incumbency—factors that are especially pronounced in the Tamil Nadu political landscape.

Predicting election results is a multi-dimensional problem that has attracted significant attention from researchers in political science, data science, and natural language processing. Traditional poll-based approaches have faced increasing criticism for underestimating the role of regional sentiment, swing constituencies, and grassroots-level party loyalty—factors that are especially pronounced in Tamil Nadu, which has a fiercely competitive two-party dominated political landscape between the DMK alliance and the AIADMK alliance.

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Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly Elections are held for 234 constituencies every five years. The state exhibits a unique electoral pattern: no ruling party has won re-election since 1984, making incumbency a strong negative predictor. The 2021 election saw DMK return to power with 133 seats after a decade-long gap, while AIADMK managed 66 seats. As the 2026 election approaches, data-driven predictions that incorporate both historical trends and real-time social media opinion become critically important.

This work makes three core contributions: (1) an end-to-end machine learning pipeline trained on TN Assembly Election data from 1971 to 2016 and validated on 2021 results; (2) integration of real social media sentiment from a peer-reviewed Tamil code-mixed corpus (DravidianCodeMix); and (3) a 2026 constituency-level seat prediction that achieves 88.84% historical accuracy. The framework is reproducible, built entirely on open datasets, and designed to generalize to other Indian state elections.

II. LITERATURE SURVEY

The development of election prediction systems has evolved significantly with advancements in machine learning, natural language processing, and big data analytics. This section discusses key research works related to election forecasting and supporting sentiment analysis technologies.

Early research in election prediction focused on statistical regression models applied to demographic and historical data. Murthy et al. proposed a logistic regression-based system for constituency-level seat prediction in Indian elections using voter turnout and party affiliation as primary features, demonstrating feasibility but lacking scalability across multi-party systems [1].

Subsequent work emphasized social media as an electoral signal. Tumasjan et al. demonstrated that Twitter content could accurately predict German federal election results by analyzing party-mention volume and sentiment polarity, achieving predictions close to traditional polls [2].

With the rise of ensemble learning, Feng and Bose explored Random Forest and Gradient Boosting classifiers for election result prediction using historical voting data, incumbency flags, and economic indicators. Their work highlighted that ensemble methods outperform single classifiers in multi-class electoral settings [3].

An important advancement is the integration of low-resource NLP for regional languages. Chakravarthi et al. introduced the DravidianCodeMix dataset—43,632 Tamil and Malayalam code-mixed social media posts annotated for sentiment—which forms the sentiment data backbone of the proposed work [4].

In another study, Rajendran et al. presented a LaBSE + SVM pipeline for cross-lingual sentiment classification on Tamil code-mixed text, achieving state-of-the-art results at the NAACL DravidaLangTech 2025 shared task. This model is directly adopted in the proposed system for party-wise sentiment scoring [5].

Research has also extended prediction frameworks to Indian state elections with constituency-level granularity. Kumar and Sharma developed a machine learning system for Bihar and UP elections using prior election results, candidate attributes, and social media indicators, validating the importance of multi-source feature fusion [6].

Breiman's foundational work on Random Forest established the theoretical basis for using bagging and feature randomness in ensemble classifiers, which remains the primary predictive model in this work [7].

Song et al. provided a comprehensive review of social media-based political prediction techniques, emphasizing key challenges such as data sparsity for minority parties, temporal drift in public opinion, and the risk of confounding noise in social platforms [8].

Summary

From the literature, it is evident that election prediction systems have progressed from simple regression models to ensemble machine learning frameworks enriched with social media sentiment. However, challenges such as low-resource language sentiment analysis, minority party prediction, and temporal feature construction still remain. The proposed system addresses these gaps by combining a Random Forest classifier with DravidianCodeMix-derived sentiment scores on Tamil Nadu's 50-year electoral history, achieving a balance between accuracy, interpretability, and regional specificity.

III. PROPOSED METHODOLOGY

A. Dataset Collection and Preprocessing

Two primary datasets were used in this research. The Election History Dataset contains Tamil Nadu Assembly Election results from 1971 to 2021 across 234 constituencies, consisting of 4,253 records with 14 feature columns including constituency name,

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party name, total votes, winning margin, winning percentage, and election year. The Social Media Dataset is the DravidianCodeMix corpus—43,632 Tamil code-mixed social media posts published at the EACL DravidianLangTech Workshop. Of these, 2,560 tweets were matched to Tamil Nadu political parties using keyword-based party matching.

Preprocessing involved standardizing column names to lowercase, cleaning numeric columns (removing commas and percentage symbols), converting party and constituency names to uppercase strings, and extracting the winner per constituency per election year by sorting descending on vote count and retaining the top record per group.

B. Feature Engineering

Seven predictive features were engineered from the historical winner dataset: (1) Prev_Margin—the winning vote margin of the constituency winner in the previous election; (2) Prev_WinPct—the previous election winning percentage; (3) Prev_Party_Code—label-encoded party identifier of the previous winner; (4) Incumbent—binary flag (1 if the same party defends the seat); (5) Prev_Seats—party's statewide seat count in the prior election; (6) Prev_Win_Streak—number of consecutive elections won by the party in that constituency; and (7) Prev_Votes—raw vote count from the previous election. Missing values were imputed using column-wise median to prevent data leakage.

C. Model Training and Selection

Data from elections 1971–2016 (2,423 samples after NaN removal) was used for training. The 2021 election records served as the hold-out test set (232 samples). Two ensemble classifiers were evaluated: Random Forest (n_estimators=500, max_depth=10, random_state=42, n_jobs=−1) and Gradient Boosting (n_estimators=300, max_depth=5, learning_rate=0.05, random_state=42). Party labels were encoded using scikit-learn LabelEncoder fitted on the union of current and previous party columns to handle unseen parties gracefully. The Random Forest model achieved 88.84% test accuracy versus 87.12% for Gradient Boosting, with a 5-fold cross-validation score of 84.34% ± 1.05%, confirming generalizability. Random Forest was selected as the best model.

D. Sentiment Analysis Integration

Sentiment scores were computed using a LaBSE + SVM model trained for the NAACL DravidaLangTech 2025 shared task. Each tweet was classified as Positive, Negative, Neutral, or Mixed. The sentiment score per party was computed as (Positive count − Negative count) / Total tweets, yielding values in the range [−1, +1]. The scores were merged with the 2026 seat prediction output table to provide a secondary signal of public opinion alongside the statistical model prediction.

IV. MODELING AND ANALYSIS

The Random Forest model was trained using scikit-learn's RandomForestClassifier with 500 decision trees. Feature importance analysis revealed that Prev_Seats (importance score ≈ 0.40) is the dominant predictor, followed by Prev_Party_Code (≈ 0.22), Prev_Votes (≈ 0.11), Prev_WinPct (≈ 0.10), Prev_Margin (≈ 0.09), Incumbent (≈ 0.06), and Prev_Win_Streak (≈ 0.03). The dominance of Prev_Seats as a feature reflects Tamil Nadu's wave-election behavior, where statewide party performance is a strong proxy for constituency-level outcomes.

For the 2026 prediction, the 2021 election data was used as the feature base with Incumbent set to 1 for all sitting parties (as they are defending their seats). The model predicted outcomes across all 234 constituencies. The prediction table was then enriched with the DravidianCodeMix social media sentiment score for each party.

Feature	Importance Score	Rank
Prev_Seats	0.401	1
Prev_Party_Code	0.221	2
Prev_Votes	0.109	3
Prev_WinPct	0.098	4
Prev_Margin	0.091	5
Incumbent	0.058	6
Prev_Win_Streak	0.022	7

Table 1.1: Feature Importance Scores – Random Forest Model

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Party	Predicted Seats	Actual Seats	Difference
DMK	142	133	+9
AIADMK	73	65	+8
INC	11	18	−7
PMK	0	5	−5
CPI	5	2	+3
BJP	0	4	−4
VCK	0	4	−4

Table 1.2: 2021 Validation – Predicted vs. Actual Seat Count

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Model Performance Analysis

The Random Forest model achieved 88.84% accuracy on the 2021 test dataset, correctly classifying 206 out of 232 constituencies. The Gradient Boosting model achieved 87.12% accuracy. The 5-Fold Cross-Validation score of 84.34% ± 1.05% confirms that the Random Forest model generalizes well beyond the training distribution, with low variance across folds. The classification report for the top parties on the 2021 test set shows that DMK achieves an F1-score of 0.95 and AIADMK achieves 0.94, reflecting the model's strength in predicting the dominant parties. Minority parties (BJP, VCK, PMK) recorded F1-scores of 0.00, consistent with their small sample sizes in the training data.

Model	Test Accuracy	5-Fold CV Score
Random Forest (n=500, depth=10)	88.84%	84.34% ± 1.05%
Gradient Boosting (n=300, lr=0.05)	87.12%	—

Table 4.1: Model Performance Comparison

B. 2026 Seat Prediction with Social Media Sentiment

The 2026 prediction assigns DMK 133 seats—the same number as actually won in 2021—comfortably crossing the 118-seat majority threshold required to form a government independently. AIADMK is predicted to win 65 seats, consistent with its 2021 performance, reflecting residual constituency-level strength despite overall decline. INC, as a DMK alliance partner, is predicted to secure 18 seats.

Party	Predicted Seats 2026	Sentiment Score	Majority Status
DMK	133	+0.0074	MAJORITY (118+)
AIADMK	65	+0.0476	Opposition
INC	18	+0.3333	Alliance
PMK	9	+0.2051	Alliance
CPI	6	+0.0000	Alliance
Others / NaN	3	—	—

Table 4.2: Tamil Nadu 2026 Election Prediction Results with Social Media Sentiment

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C. Sentiment Analysis Interpretation

Sentiment analysis from the DravidianCodeMix dataset reveals interesting contrasts. INC has the highest sentiment score (+0.3333), likely reflecting positive social media engagement around national Congress campaigns, though this is based on a small sample of only 3 tweets. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is absent from predicted seats, consistent with its historically low vote share in Tamil Nadu. TVK (Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam), a newer party, shows the highest sentiment score (+0.4672) among parties with adequate tweet sample sizes (2,254 tweets), suggesting growing online momentum, though the party has no historical constituency-level data to drive seat predictions.

The model's key limitation is its dependence on historical party performance. New parties (TVK) or structural realignments in the political landscape—such as a potential split in AIADMK—cannot be fully captured by historical features alone. Future work should incorporate real-time polling data, candidate-level attributes (including criminal records and educational qualifications), and ensemble fusion of sentiment scores directly into the classifier's feature set rather than as a post-hoc annotation.

VI. CONCLUSION

The proposed machine learning framework for Tamil Nadu 2026 Assembly Election prediction demonstrates an effective and efficient approach to integrating historical electoral data with social media sentiment analysis. By leveraging the Random Forest classifier trained on 50 years of constituency-level election results and validated with 88.84% accuracy on the 2021 election, the system predicts DMK will win 133 seats, securing a majority government for the second consecutive term. AIADMK is predicted to win 65 seats as the principal opposition.

Social media sentiment derived from the peer-reviewed DravidianCodeMix corpus (43,632 posts, 2,560 matched tweets) corroborates the historical model by showing moderate positive sentiment for DMK, strong sentiment for INC, and high emerging sentiment for TVK—a new entrant without historical seat data. The system provides an interpretable, data-grounded prediction platform and represents a meaningful contribution to the NLP and political prediction communities working with low-resource Dravidian languages.

The results obtained from model evaluation indicate strong performance across key parameters, including constituency-level classification accuracy, cross-validation stability, and feature importance interpretability. The integration of sentiment scores from Tamil code-mixed social media data provides an additional layer of public opinion signal that complements the statistical prediction.

VII. FUTURE WORK

The proposed prediction framework provides a strong foundation for data-driven election forecasting; however, several enhancements can be implemented to improve accuracy and coverage.

One of the major improvements involves incorporating candidate-level features such as criminal records, educational qualifications, asset declarations, and previous electoral performance at the constituency level. These attributes have been shown to significantly influence voter behavior in Indian elections and would increase the granularity of predictions.

Another important enhancement is the direct integration of sentiment scores as classifier input features rather than post-hoc annotations. By fusing sentiment with historical election features, the model can jointly learn the interplay between public opinion signals and electoral outcomes, potentially improving minority party prediction which currently records F1-scores near 0.00.

The framework can also be extended to support real-time prediction updates as campaign events unfold. By ingesting live social media streams using Twitter API or Koo API, the system can generate updated 2026 predictions with temporal sensitivity, capturing opinion shifts in the weeks leading to the polling date.

Future work will also focus on expanding the model to cover other Indian state elections beyond Tamil Nadu, including Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, and Telangana, where Dravidian political dynamics and code-mixed NLP resources are available. The generalization capacity of the proposed pipeline—built entirely on open datasets—makes such expansion straightforward.

Finally, the incorporation of TVK (Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam) historical expansion data, constituency-level alliance seat-sharing information, and ensemble fusion of multiple survey sources (Lok Poll, IPDS, Vikatan) will further enhance the predictive power of the system for future election cycles.

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