

The Cold Spell That Never Happened: Climatological Assessment of the Winter 2025/26 Cold and Snowfall Episodes in Bucharest and Their Disproportionate Media Representation

Summary:

This study presents an analysis of a heavy snowfall event in Bucharest in mid-February 2026. ERA5 reanalysis data is utilized for a synoptic overview whilst long-running weather station data is used to place the temperature and precipitation associated with the event in a historical context. The article concludes with a discussion of the representation of the event in various media outlets, highlighting catastrophized emphasis in many cases, unreflective of the severity of the event when placed in a historical context. The article is very well written and presents novel insights on recency bias/sensationalization when precedent weather events are reported in media. I recommend the article for publication following a few minor changes.

My main comments are as follows:

Minor comments:

- 1) I believe the article would benefit from a slight restructuring, as currently all figures pertaining to the media representation are in the SI. Is there a reason (e.g. figure/word limit) that this is the case? If so, could Figure 1 (mainly used to illustrate that the positive temperature anomalies were present over all of Romania, not only Bucharest) and Figure 5 (mainly offering more detail on the information provided in table 1) be moved to the SI and Figures S4, S5 and S6 moved into the main article? Section 4 could then be an additional results section rather than discussion. I think these are important results, especially for the meteorologically and climate community who may have less perspective on how events such as this are portrayed/perceived by the media/public. Since the title mentions "Bucharest" and "Media Representation", the above edits would focus the article onto these points.
- 2) A question regarding the text search process. The authors clearly show how the 18th Feb 2026 event is not an extreme cold event and that the resulting snow accumulation is not historically unprecedented for Romania. Thus, any claim of such by the media would be inaccurate. In lines 436-437, it is stated "'unprecedented' appeared 40 times despite being factually incorrect for every observable metric of the 2026 winter". However, could it not be argued that, as a single day snowfall event in Bucharest specifically, it is unprecedented, e.g. lines 389-391? Is there any screening of the search results to identify this, admittedly specific, example?
- 3) Sect 3.4: For clarity, when you describe "The winter of 1954, ranked seventh with a cumulative intensity of 376.3 °C and a total duration of 33 days" you should mention that this consists of 3 individual cold spell events, as done earlier for 1929 - "The winter of 1929 ranked first with a cumulative intensity of 828.3 °C and a duration of 67 days distributed across four distinct events".

- 4) Line 376: Since you mention “no statistically long-term trend”, is there any reason this couldn’t be shown in figure 7 also?

Specific comments:

Line 79: “(IPCC, 2021)” should be an in-text citation.

Line 93: “(Amihăesei et al., 2026)” should be an in-text citation.

Line 138: “A number of 89 news articles and broadcast transcripts were assembled from 14 outlets” Sounds strange, presumably this should say something like “We compiled 89 news articles and broadcast transcripts from 14 outlets”.

Line 167: near-normal

Line 222 (and elsewhere, e.g. 241, 519, 539): Just write “18th February”, as in line 219.

Line 223: 2025/26

Line 295: “with some of the top positions”

Line 299: “2025/2026” use 2025/2026 or 2025/26 but be consistent throughout.

Line 331: CS needs to be defined in-text. Then also needs to be used consistently throughout (e.g. “cold spell conditions” in the line after).

Line 408: “cold days”?

Line 462: “might be not irrational”?

Line 526: “recoded” recorded.

Line 543: “near-nromal” near-normal

Figures 3 and 7e,f: Nitpicky detail but if you use sequential colouring in a plot you should also include a colourbar, alternatively set bars to a constant colour.

Figure 6: “Nevenber” November

Figure 7e and f: No description in of figures in caption.

Table 1: Explain N in caption.

Figure S5: Could the legend not be reduced to just the primary framing categories and perhaps moved to the bottom left so as not to obscure any results?