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Constructing political legitimacy through moral discourse: A discourse analysis of Moroccan electoral communication

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how Moroccan political leaders construct and communicate morality through political discourse during election periods. Rather than treating each quotation separately, the study argues that the selected quotations collectively construct a political discourse in which combating corruption, respecting the law, acting ethically, promoting participation, and serving citizens are presented as foundations of legitimate governance. The quotations do not, however, perform exactly the same function. For example, Saad Dine El Otmani's statements emphasize collective responsibility, Aziz Akhannouch emphasizes governmental integrity and responsiveness, Nizar Baraka emphasizes legal and institutional enforcement, while Abdellatif Ouahbi introduces legal nuance and the presumption of innocence. The analysis suggests that morality in Moroccan political discourse is predominantly constructed through an anti-corruption and ethical-governance framework. Moral discourse is not limited to personal ethics; it also concerns the way political life and governance should be conducted. The study therefore examines how political leaders use moral vocabulary to construct legitimacy, present themselves as responsible political actors, and address issues that are presented as important to citizens. The study identifies several recurring dimensions of moral political discourse, including anti-corruption and integrity, political responsibility, legitimacy and good governance, collective identity and inclusion, law and institutional ethics, fairness and public interest, and citizen participation. These dimensions show that morality is constructed not simply as a personal virtue but as a broader framework for political conduct and governance. The study argues that, in the Moroccan electoral context, moral language can serve as a means of constructing political legitimacy. Political leaders present themselves and their institutions as committed to integrity, accountability, legality, public interest, and responsiveness to citizens. At the same time, references to corruption and political responsibility reflect broader concerns within Moroccan political discourse. The study therefore highlights the context-dependent nature of moral political communication and shows how morality can become a resource for constructing political legitimacy during electoral periods.

KEYWORDS

Constructing Political Legitimacy; Moral Discourse; Discourse Analysis; Moroccan Electoral Communication

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1. Introduction

This study aims to investigate the relationship between politics and morality in the Moroccan context during elections. More specifically, it examines how Moroccan political leaders address morality during electoral periods. This topic is important in the Moroccan case for two main reasons. First, elections represent an important part of a politician's political life because they provide an opportunity to gain public support and political authority. Second, the type of government that emerges from elections depends, among other factors, on the political actors who seek to govern. Consequently, economic, social, and political realities may be addressed and represented through electoral discourse.

In the Moroccan context, morality is particularly significant because corruption has been a recurring concern in public and political discourse brcause of ot is systemayic and generalized., (Transparency Maroc, 2026). Concerns about corruption and

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political accountability may also contribute to reluctance to participate in elections in response to such concerns, ,(Moroccan Institute for Policy Analysis [MIPA], 2021).

To face this dilemma , Political parties may use speeches and political messages to present themselves as ethical actors and to emphasize that voting for them will contribute to better political choices and governance. Moral rhetoric has therefore important consequences for voter behaviour Jung (2020).

1.1. Objectives of the Study

The objective of this study is to uncover the strategies used by politicians in the Moroccan context during election periods to construct moral legitimacy and persuade citizens. More specifically, the study examines how political leaders use moral language to present themselves as committed to integrity, accountability, legality, and the public interest.

The second objective is to identify the assumptions and conceptions reflected in politicians' discourse regarding what they present as important to Moroccan citizens and which areas they believe should receive attention in order to establish political credibility and legitimacy.

1.2. Research Questions

This study seeks to answer two main questions:

What linguistic strategies are used by Moroccan political leaders to address and construct morality during election periods?

What issues and values constitute political and moral priorities in the discourse of Moroccan political leaders?

1.3. Literature Review

1.4. Morality and Political Communication

Morality is not separate from political communication. It can become an important way of interpreting and presenting political issues, which can be framed and understood in moral terms.

Politicians seek to win elections, and one way of challenging political opponents is to question their integrity or moral character. Attacks on the moral character of political opponents can contribute to affective and partisan polarization (Stoetzer et al., 2023)

The use of moral language may consequently influence how voters understand political issues and evaluate political actors. Moral appeals can make political questions appear to concern not only policy preferences but also questions of right and wrong, responsibility, fairness, and integrity.

Moral rhetoric can serve to frame public questions (Clifford & Jerit, 2013) or even affect the relationship between citizens' moral foundations and their political views (Feinberg & Willer, 2015). It can also contribute to the presentation of political candidates as responsible representatives of shared moral values (Lin, 2025). Moral language enables politicians to construct a positive image of themselves while presenting opponents or opposing groups negatively.

1.5. Language as a Means of Presenting Moral Values and Political Polarization

Language plays an important role in politics because it is one of the principal means through which political leaders present their moral values and perspectives. Political language helps shape political discourse by allowing politicians to express their positions on social, economic, and political issues. Widmann and Simonsen (2024) demonstrate the importance of moral and moral-emotional appeals in political and public discourse.

Political actors may also assign different meanings or associations to the same moral terms. Kraft and Klemmensen (2024), for example, examine lexical ambiguity in political rhetoric and show why moral language cannot always be understood simply by counting individual moral words. The meaning and political function of moral terms depend on how they are used within particular contexts.

The use of moral language can contribute to the construction of an "us" and an "other." Political actors may present themselves and their supporters as clean, trustworthy, responsible, or committed to the public interest, while representing opponents as corrupt, irresponsible, or lacking moral principles. Such characterizations may contribute to political polarization, particularly when political disagreements are framed as conflicts between morally different groups.

This makes the study of moral language particularly relevant during elections, when political competition is especially visible. Election campaigns provide an important context for examining how political actors use moral vocabulary to construct identities, distinguish themselves from opponents, and appeal to voters.

1.6. Moral Language and Political Competition

Recent studies confirm that moral issues are integrated into electoral politics. Shaughnessy et al. (2023) showed that moral considerations are included in the examination of political issues during elections. Moral rhetoric can create rhetorical connections between candidates and their audiences. Hackenburg et al. (2023)

It can also serve to distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate forms of political action (Takikawa & Sakamoto, 2020; Silva & Baptista, 2011).

Haidt and Graham (2007) argue that moral foundations can provide a framework for understanding how political leaders appeal to moral values when addressing voters. This is because political attitudes and objectives are often connected to moral values. For example, democracy as a form of political governance can be associated with moral values such as fairness and justice (Haidt & Graham, 2007).

Hackenburg et al. (2023) investigated moral rhetoric during the 2016 and 2020 election periods. They reported that moral vocabulary differed among political candidates and that patterns of moral rhetoric could be identified. Similarly, Bos and Minihold 2022) uncovered systematic differences in moral rhetoric among political elites in various European countries.

Drawing upon morality for political and other public purposes is often carried out by political elites (Eddy, 2026). For example, Atikcan and Hand (2024) show how campaigners from opposing sides used moral foundations, particularly care, in their campaigns to appeal to voters. Similarly, moral framing can be used to invoke moral feelings and shape how political issues are understood (Yang et al., 2024).

The issue of morality and language in the case of Morocco may be somewhat different. This is partly because of the perceived widespread corruption in the country and the resulting high level of voter abstention. This perceived reality may make politicians focus more strongly on issues of morality, giving moral discourse greater weight in their electoral communication. Politicians may have to struggle not only to present themselves as free from suspicion but also to convince citizens to participate in the electoral process.

This study seeks to fill a gap in the literature on morality and language use during election periods in Morocco. It also presents Morocco as an example of political language use during elections in a context characterized by large-scale voter abstention.

2. Methodology

This study uses a qualitative discourse-analysis methodology to examine Moroccan political discourse during elections. The approach treats political speeches not merely as sources of information but as linguistic practices through which politicians express and construct views about morality, political responsibility, and legitimate governance.

The analysis focuses on how Moroccan political leaders construct and communicate moral values and how these values are connected to political legitimacy. Three main criteria were used to select the speeches and statements::

-The speaker had to be a political leader.

-The speech or statement had to be related to an electoral or political context.

-The speech or statement had to be publicly available and attributable to the speaker.

2.1. Data Collection

The data were collected from trustworthy and publicly available sources, including official political-party sources and reputable newspaper and news-media sources. The researcher did not modify the wording of the original texts. The selected texts are in Arabic and French, and English translations are provided for analytical purposes.

Analytical Procedure.

The corpus consists of Moroccan leaders political speeches delivered on the occasion of 2021 electoral process. Although the statements may have been delivered at different stages of the electoral process,, they were selected because they communicate moral issues in connection with 2021 election process.

The analysis focuses on words and expressions related to morality, including justice, responsibility, trust, corruption, integrity, transparency, fairness, legality, and public interest. These expressions are examined in their linguistic and contextual environments in order to identify how moral values are constructed and interconnected.

Rather than treating each quotation as an isolated example, the analysis groups the quotations according to recurring themes. This makes it possible to develop a broader understanding of how morality is constructed across the political discourse examined.

2.2. Data Analysis

1.Saadeddine Othmani: Head of Government and PJD leader (during the 2021 electoral period) said:

إن الذي "يشتريك اليوم بالمال الانتخابي، كن على يقين أنه سيبيعك غدا"،

2.3. English Translation

"Whoever buys you today with electoral money, be certain that he will sell you tomorrow."

This quote indicates that according to Othmani , money given during elections is considered by Othmani as a form of corruption. The person giving you money is actually buying you, meaning that he considers you as a price rather than a human being, which is an insult to that person.

He also said:

فالعمل السياسي "مصداقية، وضمير الناس لا يجب أن يشترى بالمال

2.4. English Translation

"Political action is "credibility, and people's conscience should not be bought with money."

This quote considers credibility as the essence of political practice. It therefore links political legitimacy with integrity and clear conscience

https://www.pjd.ma/157033-81823.html

2.Aziz Akhannouch — President of RNI and candidate/party leader during the 2021 elections

said:

الإعداد الجيد للوائح المترشحين، في مختلف المؤسسات المنتخبة، ووفق شروط صارمة، في مقدمتها النزاهة والمصداقية و الكفاءة

2.5. English Translation

"The proper preparation of candidate lists for the various elected institutions, according to strict conditions, foremost among them integrity, credibility and competence.

The quotation constructs morality in terms of three key values: integrity, credibility, and competence. These are presented as criteria for selecting candidates.

He also said:

تصنعوا الفرق بالمشاركة ديالكم في العملية السياسية. وغادي نقدروا جنبا إلى جنب، مع الطاقات الشبابية، نحركوا الأمور نحو الأفضل لبلادنا"

2.6. English Translation

"Make a difference through your participation in the political process. Together, and alongside young people, we can move things forward for the betterment of our country."

In this quotation, he makes it clear that participation is the only way to make change. This is because integrity and credibility cannot be achieved if citizens choose corrupt candidates. Therefore, fighting corruption as a necessary step to improve the country's reality requires action, namely, participation in the political process (ibid.).

https://rni.ma/%d8%a3%d8%ae%d9%86%d9%88%d8%b4-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%a3%d8%ad%d8%b1%d8%a7%d8%b1-%d9%8a%d8%b1%d8%a7%d9%87%d9%86-%d8%b9%d9%84%d9%89-%d8%ad%d8%b3%d9%86-%d8%a7%d8%ae%d8%aa%d9%8a%d8%a7%d8%b1-%d9%88%d8%aa/English Translation

2.7. 3.Nizar Baraka — Secretary-General of Istiqlal Party

He said:

نعم، نحن مدعوُّون جميعا كأحزاب لِنَضَعَ اليد في اليد لصياغة ميثاق وطني لتخليق الممارسة السياسية

2.8. English Translation

"Yes, we are all called upon, as political parties, to join hands in drafting a national charter for the ethicalization of political practice.

The quote The quotation emphasizes collective political responsibility, clearly calls on political parties to jointly come up with a national charter for ethicalizing political operation especially during the electoral process.

He also said:

ومن أجل وضع حد لاستغلال السلطة سياسية كانت أو إدارية من أجل خدمة بعض المصالح الخاصة تقدمنا بمقترح تعديل يُجَرِّم الإثراء غير المشروع ومقترح قانون يمنع تضارب المصالح، ويضع حدا لاستغلال المنصب العمومي من أجل خدمة مصالح خاصة أو شخصية

2.9. English Translation

"In order to put an end to the exploitation of political or administrative authority for the purpose of serving certain private interests, we have submitted an amendment proposal criminalizing illicit enrichment, as well as a bill aimed at preventing conflicts of interest and putting an end to the exploitation of public office to serve private or personal interests."

The quotation links good and clean governance to separating the public interest from private interests, such as illicit enrichment and the misuse of authority.

https://www.istiqlal.info/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%AE-%D9%86%D8%B2%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%A8%D8%B1%D9%83%D8%A9-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%B9%D8%B1%D8%B6%D9%87-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%B3%D9%8A-%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AC%D9%84%D8%B3-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%88%D8%B7%D9%86%D9%8A-

%D9%84%D9%84%D8%AD%D8%B2%D8%A8-
%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%BA%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%A8%D8%A9_a5330.html?utm_source=chatgpt.com

4.Abdelatif Ouahbi — Secretary-General of PAM during the 2021 electoral period

He said:

حديث عن البرنامج الانتخابي ينطلق من فكرة "الإصلاح" وعلى تصور سياسي للقادم والتجاوب بشكل واقعي مع كل التحديات

2.10. English Translation

A discussion of the electoral program begins with the idea of "reform," a political vision for the future, and a realistic response to all the challenges.

This quotation highlights the importance of reform and political responsibility in order to address the challenges facing the country.

He also said:

نريد لبرنامجنا الانتخابي أن يكون بديلا يحمل حلولا واقعية فعالة لها جذور تضرب في أعماق خصوصيتنا التاريخية

2.11. English Translation

"We want our electoral program to offer an alternative with effective, realistic solutions rooted deeply in our historical particularity."

The quotation presents political legitimacy through the promise of realistic and effective solutions rooted in Morocco's historical and social context.

https://pam.ma/%D9%88%D9%87%D8%A8%D9%8A-%D9%83%D9%84-%D8%AD%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%AB-
%D8%B9%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A8%D8%B1%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%AC-
%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%AA%D8%AE%D8%A7%D8%A8%D9%8A-%D9%8A%D9%86%D8%B7/

3. Nabil Benabdellah — Secretary-General of PPS

He said:

اصطدام الحزبِ مُبَكِّـراً مع ظاهرة الارتكاز على المال في استمالة المرشحين، وتوزيع المساعدات على المواطنين لإغرائهم بطرقٍ غير مشروعة؛

3.1. English Translation

"The party's early confrontation with the practice of relying on money to attract candidates and distributing aid to citizens to entice them through unlawful means.'

The quotation refers to practice of using money and aid to lure citizen to vote for some candidates. Using such unlawful incentives are illigitamte according to him.

He also said:

إننا، بالتالي، أمام وضع هش، من سماته: ممارسةٌ ديموقراطية شكلية تفتقد إلى المضمون والعمق السياسيين، بالنظر إلى ما أشرنا إليه من اختراقٍ للفضاء الديموقراطي التمثيلي من قِبَـلِ أوساطٍ فاسدة

3.2. English Translation

'We are therefore facing a fragile situation characterized by a merely formal democratic practice lacking political substance and depth, given the aforementioned intrusion of corrupt circles into the representative democratic sphere.'

This quotation considers the use of money as a form of corruption that threatens elections. Corruption is seen as harmful to democracy because it weakens its foundations. This means that the functioning of democracy is conditional on the practice of democratic principles.

https://pps.ma/21641/

3.3. Results and Discussion

The main finding of this study is that, although political party leaders in Morocco differ in their interests and compete with one another for the limited number of available seats, their statements complement each other and provide a comprehensive picture of morality and legitimacy in the Moroccan political scene. Their statements appear to converge around a broader understanding of what constitutes political morality and legitimacy, even though each political actor emphasizes different dimensions of these concepts.

The selected statements converge in constructing morality as a central issue and that combating corruption is essential for constructing political legitimacy. In the discourse examined, corruption is associated with the use of money, personal interests, and public office for purposes that undermine the public interest. It is presented not merely as an individual moral failure but as a broader public concern involving citizens, political parties, political candidates, and the country as a whole. Corruption is therefore constructed as a threat to citizens' dignity, political integrity, and the future of the country, and

consequently as an issue related to patriotism and responsible political conduct. The following findings constitute the main themes identified in the analysis.

4. Morality as a Central Political Issue

Moral discourse is a recurring theme among the political leaders examined and constitutes a fundamental issue that needs to be addressed during electoral periods. References to corruption, integrity, responsibility, legality, participation, and public interest indicate that morality is presented as an important dimension of political practice rather than as a purely personal matter.

5. Morality Means Fighting Corruption

There is a clear convergence among the Moroccan political leaders examined in defining political morality primarily in terms of combating corruption. Corruption is represented as a major obstacle to legitimate political practice and responsible governance.

The use of money and material benefits for political purposes is presented as incompatible with morality and, consequently, with political legitimacy. This is particularly clear in the discourse of PPS leader Nabil Benabdellah, who connects the use of money to the distortion of democratic representation.

Corruption is also presented as affecting individual dignity, collective responsibility, and the future of the country. In this discourse, corruption can reduce the relationship between citizens and political actors to a relationship in which citizens are treated as objects that can be influenced or acquired through material benefits.

6. Morality as a Basis of Political Legitimacy

The construction of political legitimacy is closely connected to the representation of corruption as a moral issue. Corruption is presented as something that affects the legitimacy of the electoral process, the credibility of political leaders, and the relationship between political actors and citizens.

Morality therefore constitutes not only one dimension of legitimacy but also a condition associated with a broader set of qualities, including integrity, credibility, competence, accountability, and respect for the law.

This is particularly evident in Aziz Akhannouch's statement that candidates are selected according to strict conditions, particularly integrity, credibility, and competence. In this discourse, a legitimate electoral process is associated with political parties that select candidates according to ethical and professional criteria. Consequently, the legitimacy of political parties is connected to the legitimacy and qualities of the candidates they put forward.

7. Fighting Corruption as a Collective Responsibility

The responsibility for combating corruption is constructed as a collective responsibility rather than one that rests exclusively with political leaders or government institutions. Political morality is presented as a shared commitment involving political parties, candidates, citizens, and institutions.

Corruption is therefore represented as a problem that requires action at different levels. Political parties are responsible for selecting candidates who meet standards of integrity, credibility, and competence. Citizens are represented as responsible for making appropriate electoral choices, while political institutions are responsible for establishing and enforcing mechanisms that prevent the abuse of political power.

8. Political Participation as a Tool for Fighting Corruption

Political participation is presented as an important means of combating corruption because citizens who participate in elections contribute to the selection of political candidates. In this sense, voting is constructed not simply as an electoral right but also as an expression of collective responsibility.

Akhannouch's statement that citizens can "make a difference" through participation in the political process presents electoral participation as a means through which citizens can contribute to political change and the progress of the country.

Political participation is therefore connected to the broader moral framework identified in the discourse. Citizens are not represented merely as recipients of political decisions but also as participants who have a responsibility in determining who will represent them.

9. Fighting Corruption as Patriotism and a Means of Reform

The discourse also connects combating corruption with patriotism and national progress. Political participation can contribute to the selection of candidates who are expected to serve the country and improve its situation. In this sense, participation becomes connected to reform and national development.

The argument can therefore be understood as follows: political participation enables citizens to influence the selection of political representatives; the selection of candidates according to standards of integrity and competence can contribute to

reducing corruption; and reducing corruption is presented as necessary for reform and progress. Political participation is consequently constructed as an act of civic and national responsibility.

Similarly, the discourse of Nizar Baraka connects political action with institutional reform, while other political statements emphasize the need for effective political and institutional responses to corruption.

10. Reform and Moroccan Context

Reform is also associated with the development of realistic and effective solutions that are rooted in Morocco's historical particularity. This dimension is visible in the discourse of Abdelatif Ouahbi, who presents electoral programs in terms of reform, a political vision for the future, and realistic responses to existing challenges.

Taken together, these statements show that corruption is constructed not only as an electoral or legal issue but also as a form of moral decline, a threat to citizens' dignity, and an anti-patriotic practice. At the same time, combating corruption is connected to reform, political participation, and the improvement of democratic governance.

11. Corruption and Democracy

The discourse of Nabil Benabdellah further connects corruption with the quality of democracy. The use of money to attract candidates or influence citizens is presented as undermining the substance of democratic representation. Democracy is therefore constructed as requiring more than formal electoral procedures; it also requires conditions that allow citizens to participate freely and political representation to operate without corrupt influence.

12. From Abstract Morality to Concrete Political Practices

An important feature of the discourse is that corruption, although an abstract concept, is translated into concrete political practices. It can be identified through the figure of the corrupt candidate, the political use of money, the relationship between voters and candidates, and the abuse of political or public authority.

The political leaders therefore identify different ways of addressing corruption. These include filtering candidates through stricter selection criteria, encouraging citizens to participate in elections, discouraging the use of money to influence voters, and establishing institutional mechanisms to prevent abuses of political power.

In this sense, the discourse transforms an abstract moral concept—corruption—into a set of concrete political problems and proposed responses.

13. Discussion

The findings indicate that electoral integrity is not presented merely as a procedural requirement but as a moral condition for a legitimate relationship between politicians and citizens.

At the same time, the excerpts differ in the specific moral dimensions they foreground. Othmani emphasizes the rejection of electoral money and the protection of citizens' political choice; Akhannouch emphasizes the integrity, credibility, and competence of candidates as well as citizen participation; Baraka emphasizes institutional mechanisms against illicit enrichment and conflicts of interest; Ouahbi frames legitimacy through reform, realistic solutions, and legality; and Benabdellah highlights the threat posed by money and corruption to substantive democratic representation. These differences demonstrate that moral discourse does not operate through a single vocabulary or strategy. Rather, different political actors mobilize related ethical concepts to construct particular understandings of legitimate political practice.

At the same time, the convergence among these statements suggests an underlying pattern of political reasoning. Although the leaders do not necessarily express their positions in identical terms, their statements can be understood as contributing to a broader system in which political morality is associated with integrity, responsible participation, legality, institutional accountability, and the protection of the public interest.

A particularly important finding is that the discourse moves from an abstract understanding of corruption to concrete political actors, relationships, and practices. Corruption is not simply named as a general social problem. It is associated with the corrupt candidate, the use of money, the voter–candidate relationship, the abuse of public office, and the failure to respect institutional and legal constraints.

The discourse also identifies different actors as having different responsibilities in combating corruption. Political parties are expected to filter candidates and select individuals according to standards such as integrity, credibility, and competence. Citizens are encouraged to participate in elections and to make informed electoral choices. Political institutions are expected to establish mechanisms that prevent illicit enrichment, conflicts of interest, and the abuse of public office.

These concrete dimensions are translated into institutional concepts such as illicit enrichment, conflicts of interest, abuse of public office, and protection of the public interest. This represents an important feature of the discourse because ethical governance is presented as requiring institutional safeguards rather than depending exclusively on the personal morality of individual politicians.

This pattern suggests that morality in the selected Moroccan political discourse is not restricted to personal virtue. It is constructed as a principle governing political relationships and institutional practices. The "ethical" political actor is therefore represented not simply as an honest individual but as someone who respects electoral integrity, accepts accountability, protects public resources, and acts in the public interest.

Overall, the findings suggest that the selected political statements collectively construct a broad conception of political morality. Despite differences in emphasis among the political actors, morality is repeatedly connected to combating corruption, ensuring electoral integrity, encouraging citizen participation, promoting institutional responsibility, and protecting the public interest. In this sense, moral discourse functions as an important resource through which political actors construct and communicate political legitimacy.

14. Conclusion

This study has shown that Moroccan political leaders' discourse during electoral periods do not address morality only in terms of personal ethics. Rather, the selected discourse presents a broader conception of political morality that includes justice, participation, responsibility, consultation, integrity, legality, accountability, and public interest. morality in Moroccan political discourse is not constructed merely as a personal virtue. Rather, it is constructed as a way of conducting political life. Morality encompasses how political actors govern, how they relate to citizens, how they address corruption, how they respect laws and institutions, and how they present their political actions as serving the public interest.

Morality is constructed through political responsibility both individually and collectively Responsibility is not presented as belonging exclusively to government institutions or political leaders. Instead, some of the selected quotations construct the the promotion of ethical governance as a collective national undertaking involving politicians, citizens, institutions, and society more broadly.

A central finding is that corruption constitutes one of the most prominent elements through which political morality is constructed. References to corruption, transparency, integrity, rent-seeking, conflicts of interest, and the strict application of the law indicate that political morality is closely connected to the way political actors present the proper conduct of political life and governance.

Another important finding concerns the relationship between morality and political legitimacy. Political leaders use moral language to present themselves, their parties, or their institutions as responsible, trustworthy, lawful, and committed to the public interest. In this sense, morality serves an important legitimizing function. Political actors do not merely state that they possess particular moral qualities; they also connect these qualities to broader practices of governance, accountability, and service to citizens.

The Moroccan case is also significant because moral discourse operates within a context in which corruption, political accountability, and citizens' participation have been important subjects of public debate. The discourse examined in this study can therefore be understood as responding to concerns that political actors seek to address through references to integrity, justice, responsibility, and good governance.

Importantly, the selected excerpts do not primarily construct morality through direct attacks on the integrity of political opponents. Instead, they largely express positive positions regarding morality and political conduct. This distinguishes the discourse examined here from forms of political communication in which moral language is used mainly to condemn opponents or construct a morally inferior "other." In this respect, the study contributes to political discourse analysis by showing how political identity and legitimacy can be constructed through moral discourse. The findings suggest that, in the Moroccan electoral context examined, moral language functions not only to express ethical values but also to establish a relationship between political actors, citizens, institutions, and the broader conception of legitimate governance.

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