

Modeling corruption perception effects on non-electoral participation in Morocco (2018-2019)

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Abstract. Theoretical literature has two competing theories about the effects of corruption on society: the first group sees corruption as something that “Greases the Wheels of” the administrative and economic systems of countries and the second group calls it something that “Sands the Wheels” of those systems. This study examines the direct and indirect effects of corruption perceptions among Moroccan citizens on non-electoral participation using the fifth wave data of the Arab barometer, assuming the first group’s ideas. The fifth wave of this data was obtained in 2018-2019 and surveyed 2400 Moroccan citizens. Testing the hypothesis through the SEM indicates that, first, corruption perception directly affects the citizens’ negative evaluation of the government performance and increases the political distrust among citizens indirectly and significantly. Secondly, the results indicate that although perceptions of corruption by citizens do not directly have a significant effect on non-electoral participation, because all the mediating variables are significant, it can be argued that perceptions of corruption can have a positive impact on the expansion of non-electoral participation among citizens indirectly. It can happen through the variables of poor government performance and political distrust.

Keywords: Corruption perception; non-electoral participation; Morocco Political distrust; poor government performance.

[en] Modelaje de los efectos de la percepción de la corrupción en la abstención en Marruecos (2018-2019)

Resumen. La literatura teórica tiene dos teorías en competencia sobre los efectos de la corrupción en la sociedad: el primer grupo ve la corrupción como algo que “engrasa las ruedas” de los sistemas administrativos y económicos de los países y el segundo grupo la llama algo que “lija las ruedas” de aquellos sistemas. Este estudio examina los efectos directos e indirectos de las percepciones de corrupción entre los ciudadanos marroquíes sobre la participación no electoral utilizando los datos de la quinta ola del barómetro árabe, asumiendo las ideas del primer grupo. La quinta ola de estos datos se obtuvo en 2018-2019 y se encuestó a 2400 ciudadanos marroquíes. La prueba de la hipótesis a través del SEM indica que, en primer lugar, la percepción de corrupción afecta directamente la evaluación negativa de los ciudadanos sobre el desempeño del gobierno y aumenta la desconfianza política entre los ciudadanos de manera indirecta y significativa. En segundo lugar, los resultados indican que si bien las percepciones de corrupción por parte de los ciudadanos no tienen un efecto directo significativo en la participación no electoral, debido a que todas las variables mediadoras son significativas, se puede argumentar que las percepciones de corrupción pueden tener un impacto positivo en la expansión de la abstención entre los ciudadanos de forma indirecta. Todo ello puede producirse por las variables de mal desempeño del gobierno y por la desconfianza política.

Palabras clave: Percepción de la corrupción, abstención; desconfianza política en Marruecos; mal desempeño gubernativo.

Summary. 1. Introduction. 2. Theoretical framework. 3. Methodology. 4. Main findings. 5. Discussion and conclusion. 6. Bibliography.

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1. Introduction

In micro-level studies, researchers have consistently found that socioeconomic factors such as education and income are strong predictors of political participation in advanced democracies (Brady, Verba and Schlozmann, 1995; Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993). Besides, macro-level studies have found that participation in

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more developed countries is higher, which is why the researchers have argued that there is a strong relationship between economic development and political development (Almond, 1991; Dahl, 1989; Lipset, 1959). While some scholars view the phenomenon and experience of political participation in developing countries in a similar way to Western experiences, other scholars view developing countries' social, cultural, and political backgrounds. It differs from developed countries. Thus, given the differences in social and political contexts between developing countries and Western democracies, many scholars in their studies on those countries have been seeking new explanations for understanding political participation.

Although participation in elections is one of the most critical aspects of political participation in developing countries, in recent years non-electoral participation, especially protest methods, has also been expanding to influence governments. In this regard, it seems that one of the vital factors contributing to the development of new ways of political participation in these countries is the citizens' corruption perceptions (Bazurli and Portos, 2019; Kostadinova and Kmetty, 2019; Beyerle, 2014; Landell-Mills, 2013). In other words, as Van de Walle and Bratton (1992) argue, many citizens participate in protest activities in reaction to perceptions of corruption in society. When citizens feel that government leaders are corrupt, they will systematically have a negative attitude to government efficiency (Anderson and Tverdova, 2003), which will reduce citizens' trust in government and political institutions (Zmerli and Van Der Meer, 2017). It is clear that a decline in political trust in a society either results in political indifference in that society or that citizens are turned to non-electoral participation rather than conventional and electoral participation in society (Kriesi, 2012).

The present study investigates how perceptions of corruption affect non-electoral participation in Morocco, where the political sphere is characterized by features such as instability, corruption, and lack of transparency (African Development Bank, 2011). According to The Economist Intelligence Unit (2020), the country's political regime is a hybrid regime, which Morse (2012) defines as a semi-authoritarianism or electoral authoritarianism. The government in Morocco is currently in the hands of an Islamist party whose main slogan is the fight against corruption (Feuer *et al.*, 2018). Despite this, in 2019, according to Transparency International, Corruption, the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) among Moroccans was ranked 80th among 180 countries (Transparency International, 2019). Therefore, it is not surprising that some social movements in the country, dissatisfied with the *statu quo*, are trying to change Morocco's sociopolitical scene through protests and non-election practices, one of which appears to be a widespread sense of political corruption in society (Aljazeera, 2017; BBC, 2019).

The significance of this study is that, first, Morocco is a neighbor of the European Union and it is associated with it. The relationship between the two is regulated in the framework of the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) and the Union for the Mediterranean. Among ENP countries, Morocco is recognized as a country of advanced status, opening up to high levels of political cooperation, and this has increased the importance of understanding the political dynamics in this country (Wolff 2012). Secondly, Morocco has some features in common with the countries of the MENA region in terms of social, cultural and political characteristics. As a result, the findings of this study may be useful for the analysis of other countries in the region. Although extensive research has been conducted on the effect of corruption perceptions on the development of non-electoral participation in developed countries, it seems that very few studies have been conducted on the mechanisms underlying the effect of corruption knowledge on non-electoral participation- especially in developing countries. The present study aims to test the direct and indirect effects of corruption knowledge on non-electoral participation- with an emphasis on the mediating variables of evaluation of government performance and political trust in Morocco.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Literature on the consequences of corruption perceptions for political trust and perceptions of performance

Corruption is not a new phenomenon; its emergence and extension is as old as the history of human societies and the history of organizations and institutions. Corruption is one of the leading factors hindering institutions and communities from achieving their goals, and one of the major obstacles to their growth and development. For this reason, those who have been concerned about the health of the human social system and its growth and development have always been inclined to prevent and combat this sinister phenomenon. At the same time, the literature on the effects of corruption on efficiency or economic development includes two competing and conflicting schools under the heading of "Grease the Wheel School" and "Sand the Wheel of Economic Growth". Advocates of "Grease the Wheel of the Economic Growth" stress on the inefficiency of the laws and institutions in developing countries and regard corruption as a way to overcome the inefficiency of the laws and regulations. They believe that corruption plays a "grease" role for the dry wheels of these bureaucratic and economic systems, facilitating investment and economic growth. Leff (1964), Bailey (1966), Huntington (1968), and Lui (1985) are the advocates of the "Grease the Wheels School", viewing corruption as a cost to business whose benefits outweighs its costs in developing countries.

Although the Corruption Effectiveness School has been founded on some theoretical arguments, in recent years, especially after 1995, there has been much research into the effects of corruption, the results of which have challenged the arguments of the Corruption Effectiveness School. The research indicates that corruption slows the pace of development. Investigating the above-mentioned research shows that many have developed programs in the political, economic and legal fields to combat corruption. Most political and economic scholars have found the cause in low levels of political and economic development and have offered suggestions such as strengthening civil institutions, accountability, and market-based economics to combat corruption (Nwankwo, 2014).

In addition, there has been a great deal of evidence in recent decades showing that corruption has adverse effects on all areas (Theobald, 1990). Corruption has a negative, detrimental and effect on the investment and economic growth, the functioning of the administrative system, and the efficiency and political development of countries. The persistence of corruption in a country leads to economic problems and the depletion of public resources; reduces the efficiency of government performance; adversely affects public ethics in public services; impedes efforts for administrative reform and auditing scales, and increases social and economic inequalities (United Nations, 1990). Corruption also weakens administrative capacity, contributes to political collapse, and destroys stability, democracy and national cohesion.

According to what is known as the "Sand the Wheels" Hypothesis, corruption increases the likelihood of bribery and unlawful behavior (Habibov *et al.*, 2017). It has been theoretically and empirically proven that corruption has had a significant negative impact on development around the world (Chitakunye *et al.*, 2015). Many scholars have argued that corruption causes discouragement and disbelief in economic growth, condensing economic activity, creating barriers to economic reform, exacerbating inequality between the rich and the poor, and in turn decreases satisfaction with public services in the community (Habibov, 2016). Seligson (2002) showed that procedural injustice and partiality in the form of corruption have a very negative effect on citizens' perceptions of the effectiveness of the political system. In a study of eight Latin American countries, Booth and Seligson (2009) found that citizens who saw more corruption and had higher corruption perceptions had a relatively negative evaluation of their country's government and political system. Corruption, on the one hand, diminishes the trust of the regime in its ability to respond to citizens' concerns, and on the other hand, distrust of the government's potential for better governance extends the prevalence of bribery in society as a tool to influence government decisions (Morris and Klesner, 2010). Using barometer survey data in 18 African countries, Lavalee *et al.* (2008) concluded that perceptions and experiences of corruption undermine trust in government efficiency. According to their findings, corruption perceptions have a more negative effect on the experience of corruption. In the regression equation, corruption perceptions explain an 18% decline in trust in government efficiency and 7% in the experience of corruption. Their research findings also suggest that increasing the quality of public services (easy access to them) increases trust in the capabilities of the political system. Anderson and Yuliya (2003) showed that citizens in corrupt countries have worse evaluation of the political system. Porta (2000) argued that corruption impedes state action and diminishes citizens' appraisal of the state's ability to address its demands. Corruption both distorts the public interest and focuses resources and administrative activities on areas where the peripheral benefits of corruption are the most significant. Cho and Kirwin (2007) stated that a negative assessment of government capabilities causes people to bribe public services. This in turn enhances the experience of corruption and the perception of its extent. Thus, in this sense, the corruption perceptions and their continuation would reduce the social standing and reputation of the administrative system, lose public trust and respect for government institutions and administrative structures, and create and increase alienation and distance between the rulers and the masses. There is a feeling that the phenomenon of corruption perpetuated in the society benefits the richer sections of society, which results in the loss of this phenomenon by the poorer and weaker sections of society. Naturally, this affects people's assessment of the effectiveness of government.

Corruption donfalls the administrative system, puts the government policies against with majority resources, wastes national resources, increases the cost of managing the tasks, makes competitive growth difficult and reduces the effectiveness of governments in guiding things. Corruption hinders investment and makes obstacles for economic development, and by misleading the potential and actual human resources towards misguided activities to achieve easy-to-access revenues, creates a recession in all economic and political dimensions (Tarling, 2005; Gupta and Abed, 2002). Della Porta (2000) argues that corruption undermines the government performance and drastically reduces public confidence. Therefore, when the general public's perception is that there is widespread corruption in political institutions and government officials, it is to be expected that the level of public confidence in government efficiency will also decline. Accordingly, based on the above theoretical discussion, we put forward the hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Corruption perception has a positive effect on the citizens' evaluation of poor government performance.

Researchers believe that political trust is another variable that perceptions of corruption can affect. In this regard, two theoretical explanations are provided to explain the roots of political trust: institutional and cultural theories. The difference between institutional theories and cultural theories is whether political trust is perceived as endogenous or exogenous. While cultural theories see political trust as exogenous, institutional theories consider political trust as endogenous resulting from institutional performance (Mishler and Rose,

2001). In particular, an institutional approach based on a rational choice perspective assumes that political trust stems from the citizens' rational responses to the performance of political institutions (North, 1990). Therefore, advocates of this view place great emphasis on government performance and how citizens are evaluated by political institutions (Kim, 2010).

From this point of view, to increase the government's political trust, it must show that it is capable of delivering good policymaking from the people's point of view. Political institutions that perform well and significantly in society can play a role in raising the level of political trust. In contrast, the inability of political institutions will generate skepticism and distrust in government. From this perspective, it is expected that if people evaluate the existing political system as a corrupt system that cannot perform well on government performance, political distrust will increase. Of course, government performance is not just about economic issues. Government practices in the areas of security, reducing class divisions, etc. can also influence the level of political trust in the society (Mishler and Rose, 2001; Wan and Hsiao, 2011).

In this regard, Rothstein (2005) argues that corrupt institutions reduce the cost of corrupt agreements. However, efficient institutions play a deterrent role in committing corruption. According to Rothstein, the result of such a situation is that if corrupt public institutions cause people to define life in terms of corruption, building trust in the society will not be possible. Rothstein and Stolle (2008) outline four critical mechanisms for explaining institutional characteristics and generalized trust, as follows: A) The institutional efficiency and justice affect one's perception of their security; in other words, fear of others makes them distrustful of them; B) The justice and efficiency of the institutions determine the individual's perception of the custodians of the public interest. If institutions are not trustworthy, people will not trust each other; C) The justice and efficiency of institutions shape the attitude towards the behavior of citizens. If a person sees bribery among citizens, they may do so to meet their needs; thereby. It reduces their trust in others and the system; (D) Institutions may, in direct contact with citizens, cause discrimination and injustice to them, which may have a negative effect on generalized trust. Thus, in institutional theory, it is believed that trust is influenced by factors such as corruption, discrimination, and injustice; in other words, according to Rothstein Stolle, the lack of a dependent variable of trust is influenced by government corruption and inefficiency. Also, Rothstein and Uslander (2005) studied 84 countries. They found that in the surveyed countries, there is a negative relationship between the level of corruption and trust. With the decrease in the level of corruption, the level of trust of citizens has increased. Experimental findings also support these theories and emphasize the direct or indirect negative effects of corruption or perceptions of corruption on political trust (Catterberg and Moreno, 2006; Chang and Chu, 2006).

Also, some experimental research has been conducted on the impact of corruption on political trust at the national level using data of Transparency International Corruption Perception Index, which confirms the negative impact of corruption on political trust (van der Meer and Hakhverdian, 2017; Rose and Mishler, 2011; Dahlberg and Linde, 2018). Therefore, using the theoretical and empirical literature of the research, hypothesis 2 can be formulated as follows:

Hypothesis 2: The relationship between corruption perception and political trust is mediated by the citizens' evaluation of the government performance.

2.2. the literature on drivers of non-electoral participation

For decades, scholars have been discussing political distrust and explaining why it affects people's participation in political demonstrations and protests (e.g. Barnes and Kaase, 1979; Gamson, 1968; Gurr, 1970; Inglehart, 1977; Muller *et al.*, 1982). Researchers have previously viewed non-electoral political activity as a rebellious behavior and a threat to political systems. At the same time, citizen participation in forms of representation was seen as a stabilizing factor. These scholars believed that political distrust was the root cause of the political protests. In the modern age, too, most scholars have shown a positive relationship between political distrust and participation in protest activities (Schoene, 2019). The important point of these findings is that people who trust the government and political institutions have no incentive to use political protest as a tool to make their voices heard by political officials and others.

Confidence in political institutions is strengthened by the shared malady of those countries in transition and the new corruption of democracies (Kaufmann, 1997). Unofficial payments to access goods and services reduce citizens' trust in the efficiency of political institutions. Studies show that grand corruption, which mainly affects high-ranking officials and politicians, has more negative consequences than petty corruption, which is more for employees and administration staff (Shleifer and Vishny, 2002). Such corruption will reduce people's trust in political authorities and institutions and provide space for protests. Citizens who do not trust political institutions, by supporting anti-systemic political parties and groups, challenge the preferences of the populist political literature and the protest behaviors in the country's political space (Kriesi, 2012).

Norris (1999) argued that citizens' critical views of a political system should not be seen as a symptom of political alienation. Rather, the expansion of the new generation of "critical citizens" is making the people to become inactive and engage in the more challenging forms of political participation. Rosanvallon (2008) maintains that in the modern age, political officials are not supposed to unconsciously trust the citizens. The citizens are assumed to

scrutinize the actions of political authorities, and if necessary, they will respond in a non-elective manner to their actions. Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2001) claimed that political distrust not only incites unnecessary methods of political participation, but it rather incites all kinds of engagement as “people often view their political involvement as medicine they must take in order to keep greedy politicians and special interests from getting further out of hand” (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, 2001: 5). Within social movement theory, especially among the adherents of the theory of reasoned complaint, there is no major complaint about the political system and institutions of political action, especially in the form of political protests (Craig and Maggiotto, 1981). Therefore, the above critical approach allows us to acknowledge that distrust of political institutions can be a dominant and motivating factor for people’s participation in non-election and protest political activities:

Hypothesis 3: The fewer citizens trust political institutions, the more likely they are to take part in non-electoral participation.

Moreover, one of the key elements of the rational choice paradigm, i.e. the grievance model, is the citizens’ dissatisfaction that forms the core of people’s motivation to organize and participate in protests (Regan and Norton, 2005). Thus, one of the main reasons for the link between perceptions of corruption and political actions is citizens’ complaints about their socio-economic status in society (France24, 2019). In this regard, a number of studies explain that perceptions of corruption can have a relatively strong impact on protest actions, especially when corruption is the cause of economic problems in a society (Inman and Andrew, 2009).

Bratton and van de Walle (1992) studied the protests of the 1990s in several African countries and they argue that “... the issue of elite corruption served as a vehicle for narrow economic grievances. Protesters began to draw a connection between economic failures and the lack of political accountability in single-party states” (p. 430). Ber-nburg (2015), focusing on the demonstrations of the people of Iceland in 2009, finds that perception of widespread corruptions was an important predictor variable for people’s participation in protests. The protesters in Iceland believed that the manifestations of neoliberalism and the constant corruption of the authorities were the main cause of the economic downturn in the country, so they viewed the situation as a moral and democratic crisis.

Some scholars believe that in the early 2010s, when some Arab countries became involved with the Arab Spring and that people used non-electoral methods to achieve their goals, the role of citizens’ attitudes toward widespread corruption among political officials—including institutionalized practices of bribery, nepotism and cronyism, and the blurred boundaries between executive, legislative and judicial institutions—was very prominent in their willingness to participate in protest political activities (Nucifora *et al.*, 2015; Peleg and Mendilow, 2014). Evidence suggests that protesters in these countries believed that their country’s inefficiency and poor economic situation were rooted in the corruption in political institutions. Evidence also suggests that in countries where people believe that the level of corruption in society is high, they have not had a good view of the ability of the government to manage economic resources.

When citizens’ trust in the ability of the government and the political system is diminished, it can undermine the legitimacy of the decisions of that political system and thus diminish the rulers’ demands for obedience to the law (Lindström, 2008). In other words, citizens with low levels of political confidence are less likely to follow the government regulations. Then it can be argued that low levels of political trust among citizens can create a social environment where it will be much harder for political leaders to enforce the rules (Marien and Hooghe, 2011). In addition to dissatisfaction with the existing policies, political distrust causes people to protest and challenge the existing political regimes. As Dalton (2008) suggests, citizens’ distrust of rulers and political institutions causes them to shift from traditional and conventional actions to channels of “alternative” or “unconventional” political participation. Accordingly, the fourth research hypothesis can be formulated as follows:

Hypothesis 4. Corruption perception has an indirect positive correlation with non-electoral participation, mediated by government performance and political trust.

However, certain researchers believe that government effectiveness and control of corruption are the variables that are both closely related to the concept of Good Governance. For example, the World Bank identifies Corruption Control and Government Effectiveness among the six components of Good Governance that can influence the political and social development of countries (Kaufman and Kraay, 2002). The International Monetary Fund (IMF) (2020) also attributes many of the problems in the political structure of developing countries to the close relationship between poor government performance and corruption, so that the two variables interconnectedly can affect many political, economic and social areas. Therefore, in this paper, we will test the second model, where the two variables of poor government performance and corruption perception can simultaneously affect political trust and non-electoral participation.

3. Methodology

3.1. Data and method

The analysis uses data collected through Wave V (2018-2019) of the Arab Barometer Project, conducted in collaboration with the Universities of Michigan, Princeton, and other universities and research centers in the

MENA region (www.arabbarometer.org/). Barometer Arabic data includes a survey of attitudinal and behavioral attitudes of citizens of Arab countries in wave V of 12 countries, especially in the political, cultural and social spheres (Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Sudan, Tunisia and Yemen).

The latest wave of Arab barometer data, based on which the present study was conducted, has surveyed 26,780 citizens of the twelve aforementioned Arab countries. The Moroccan citizens who contributed to the data are 2,400. In the statistical sample obtained from Morocco, 50% were male and 50% female, ranging in age from 18 to 95. In terms of education, 17.4% were illiterate, 16.8% held elementary education, 14.3% basic education, 17.1% secondary education, 14.1% tertiary education, 12.3% bachelor education and 8% education higher than Masters. Besides, 14.8% of the respondents could not afford living expenses, 34.6% had difficulty managing their living expenses, and 31.9% could afford their living expenses. 18.7% of the people could save money in their lives. Finally, these data were collected from various Moroccan cities and villages, with 86.7% of the study population being Sunni, 12.1% being merely a Muslim, and the rest is from other religions.

In the present study, structural equation modeling (SEM), run in AMOS, was employed to analyze the data and test the hypotheses. AMOS is among the first generations of structural equation modeling software provided by IBM along with SPSS and is able to analyze multivariate methods, including regression and factor analysis, correlation and variance analysis (Byrne, 2010). SEM predicts a set of multiple regression equations by specifying the SEM used in AMOS and is therefore more accurate for testing hypotheses than linear regression used in SPSS (Byrne, 2010). Given that the research hypotheses address the indirect effects of public corruption perceptions on political distrust and support for political Islamism, the SEM method can test hypotheses better than other methods. However, before testing the SEM, the measurement models of the research were examined and in this regard some of the measurement models eliminated items with factor loadings below 0.30 (Kline, 2015).

3.2. Measurement of variables

1. Corruption Perceptions: Corruption perception means the view of people in a society about the state of corruption and its examples in that society. The United Nations has defined corruption as the abuse of (public) power for personal gain, so as to jeopardize the public interest (UNODC, 2001). Corruption can occur at both petty and grand levels. Petty corruption is synonymous with the term corruption, which refers to the abuse of power by public service officials and government officials (Amundsen, 1999). But grand corruption refers to the abuse of power by senior political officials in the political system, leading to a rapid decline in the rule of law and the people's trust in the government (2009) (Kenny and Soreide). In this study, in order to measure the perception of corruption, the two aspects of people's views on the level of corruption at the national and local levels have been used (Mean= 2.85; Std. Deviation= 0.74; Cronbach's Alpha= 0.69). The mean scores obtained on the perception of corruption shows that the perception of corruption by Moroccan citizens is slightly higher than average, which is almost in line with the data of Transparency International. The degree of corruption perception for Morocco in 2019 was perceived as more corrupt, according to the institute.

2. Poor government performance: In political literature, the efficiency of the government is defined as the objective realization or the power of the system in the realization of the basic functions of a government. Thus, the political system has a good and efficient performance when it has the ability to perform the tasks that the ruled expects (Lipset, 1981). In this regard, in order to measure the variable of poor government performance, there were used 4 items from the perspective of the citizens in the success or failure rates of the government in creating employment opportunities, narrowing the gap between rich and poor, providing security and order, and keeping down the prices (Mean= 2.91; Std. Deviation= 0.58; Cronbach's Alpha= 0.66). The average obtained for the variable poor government performance in Morocco shows that the government's performance is somewhat poor for the citizens of this country. This finding is in line with World Bank data for 2019. According to the World Bank, in 2019, the efficiency of the government in Morocco was -0.1. It shows the poor performance of the government in solving the problems and challenges of society.

3. Political distrust: Political distrust can be defined as a relational attitude that reflects perceptions of untrustworthiness relative to the entire political system or some of its elements (Bertsou, 2019). To measure the variability of political distrust, three items of citizens' confidence in the government, courts and legal system and the elected council of representatives were used (Mean= 1.30; Std. Deviation= 0.47; Cronbach's Alpha= 0.68). Thus, the results show that Moroccan citizens have little trust in political institutions. These results are consistent with other findings, including Masbah *et al.* (2020). They also found in their findings that Moroccan citizens have low political confidence.

4. Non-Electoral Participation: While electoral participation is organized by the government and only during certain periods and according to official laws, non-electoral participation is based on the indirect impact on the decisions of government actors. Institutional contexts do not limit this type of participation, and people are free to choose the time of non-election activities. Also, there is no official law to regulate the manner and type of participation (Vráblíková, 2017). To measure non-electoral participation, three items were used to mea-

sure people's participation in activities such as meeting/petition, political protest and use of force for political causes (Mean= 2.79; Std. Deviation= 0.74; Cronbach's Alpha= 0.62)³. Thus, the results show that Moroccan citizens are somewhat more inclined to Non-Electoral Participation. People's desire for Non-Electoral Participation seems to be in line with Moroccan realities. However, in Morocco, the Arab Spring did not take shape as it did in the years after 2010 in North Africa. But the country has faced many political protests in recent years. This shows the tendency of citizens to use non-electoral methods to solve their problems.

4. Main findings

4.1. Descriptive statistics

Table 1. provides a breakdown of the preliminary correlations between the study variables.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Age	1.000							
2. Gender (female)	.187	1.000						
3. Education	-.552	-.237	1.000					
4. ncome	.004	.048	.288	1.000				
5. Corruption	-.299	-.224	.167	-.254	1.000			
6. Poor performance	-.316	-.176	.131	-.323	.590	1.000		
7. Political distrust	-.347	-.253	.224	-.241	.661	.688	1.000	
8. Non-electoral Participation	-.159	-.239	.332	.100	.183	.162	.208	1.000
Mean	39.02	1.50	3.62	2.54	2.85	2.91	2.79	1.30
Std. Deviation	15.87	0.50	1.89	0.95	0.74	0.58	0.74	0.47

Notes: bold numbers indicate a significant relationship between scores ($p < 0.05$).

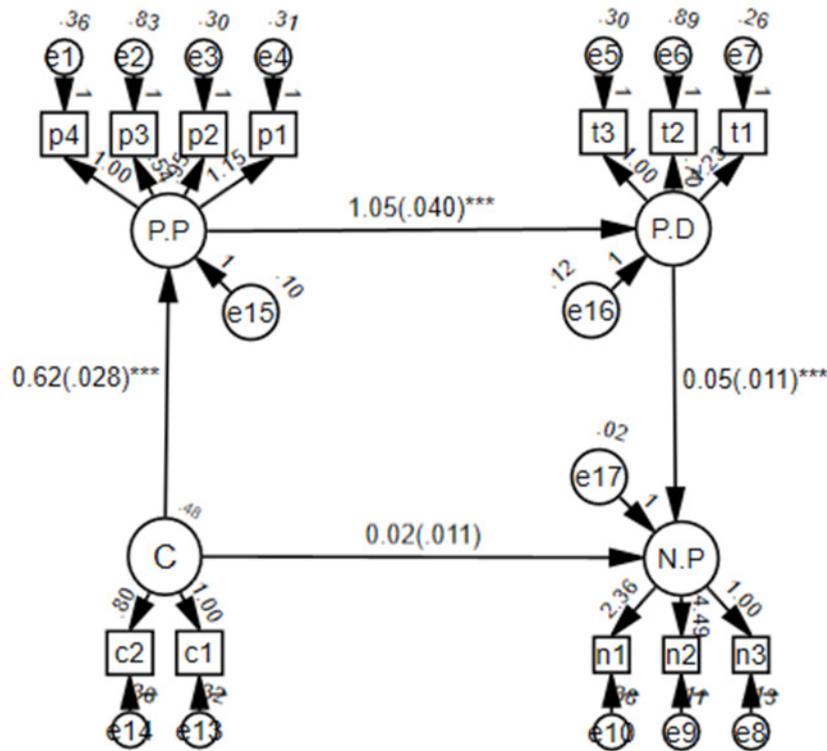
According to the results, except for age and gender, other variables had a significant relationship with political distrust. While democracy has had a negative relationship with political distrust, there has been a relationship between education degrees, income status, corruption perceptions, poor government performance and a negative impression of the country's future with positive political distrust. The results also show that women were more inclined to political Islamism than men. Nevertheless, the relationship between education levels, perceptions of corruption, poor government performance, negative perceptions of the country's future and political distrust have been negatively correlated with political Islamism.

4.2. Hypothesis testing

The research hypotheses were tested by Amos graphics, the results of which are reported below.

3 The Arab Barometer website defines the three items mentioned in this section as non-electoral participation, and this article, referring to this website, uses the same concept.

Figure 1. Specified structural equation model is showing unstandardized path coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.



Note: This theoretical model was also bootstrapped based on the standard errors with 1,000 iterations and with a 95% trust interval. In this Figure, C= corruption perception, P.P= poor government performance, P.D= political distrust, and N.P= Non-electoral Participation. Notes: *p < 0.05 **p < 0.01 ***p < 0.001

Fig. 1 presents the empirical model of the research in the form of structural equation modeling. Regarding the goodness of fit and coefficients of the model, it should be noted that the research model fits in well with the data collected to support the theoretical framework of the research: (the Model GOF: CMIN/DF= 2.679, RMSEA = 0.026; PCLOSE = 1.00, CFI = 0.993, GFI = 0.993, AGFI = 0.985, TLI = 0.987, IFI = 0.993, PNFI = 0.599). Also, in this figure, nonstandard path coefficients and standard error represent the robustness of the relationships between independent and dependent variables in the model.

Table 2. Direct and indirect standardized effects on dependent variables

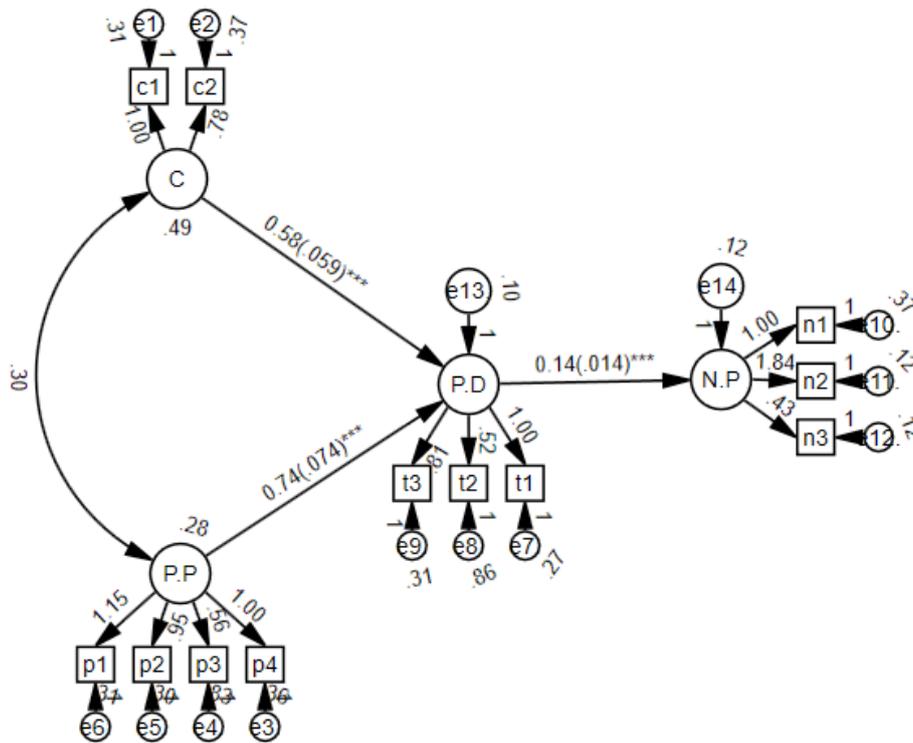
	Poor performance		Political distrust		Non-electoral participation	
	Direct		Direct	Indirect	Direct	Indirect
Corruption	0.806***			0.690***	0.090	0.149***
Poor performance			0.856***			0.185***
Political distrust					0.216***	
R ²	0.65		0.73		0.08	

Notes: *p < 0.05 **p < 0.01 ***p < 0.001.

Table 2 examines the direct and indirect effects of the research variables. The structural equation modeling test results show that corruption perception had a significant positive effect on poor government performance ($\beta = 0.80, p < 0.01$). The indirect effect of corruption perceptions on political distrust was significant among citizens ($\beta = 0.69, \text{Sobel's } z = 2.60, p < 0.01$) and increased political distrust. Also, the indirect effect of corruption perceptions on non-electoral participation is positive and significant and increases the tendency towards political protests in citizens ($\beta = 0.14, p < 0.01$). However, the critical point in this study is that corruption perceptions did not directly affect Non-electoral Participation ($\beta = 0.09, p > 0.05$).

The research standard coefficients indicate that poor performance directly affects political distrust and increases political distrust ($\beta = 0.85, p < 0.01$). On the other hand, the indirect effect of poor performance on Non-electoral Participation is also significant. Results show that Poor performance increases Non-electoral Participation ($\beta = 0.18, \text{Sobel's } z = 4.47, p < 0.01$). The results also show that political distrust directly and significantly reduces Non-electoral Participation ($\beta = 0.08, \text{Sobel's } z = -3.26, p < 0.01$). Finally, R2 indicates that the research variables account for 8% of the variance of non-electoral participation.

Figure 2. Specified structural equation model is showing unstandardized path coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.



Note: This theoretical model was also bootstrapped based on the standard errors with 1,000 iterations and a 95% trust interval. Notes: *p < 0.05 ** p < 0.01 ***p < 0.001

Fig. 2 examines the second model of the study without considering the control variables. As noted in the section on theory, some existing theories suggest a correlation, not necessarily a causal relation, between corruption perception and poor government performance. In this regard, Table 1 also confirms the existence of a correlation between these two variables. Therefore, to test the second research model, structural equation modeling was used, as reported in Fig. 2. The statistical results of the research show that according to the coefficients of goodness and fit of the model, it can be said that the research model has a relatively good fit and the collected data support the theoretical framework of the research: (Model goodness of fit: CMIN / DF = 4.488, RMSEA = 0.038, PCLOSE = 1.00, CFI = 0.981, GFI = 0.985, AGFI = 0.976, TLI = 0.973, IFI = 0.981, PNFI = 0.695). Fig. 2 also shows the nonstandard path coefficients and the standard error of the strength of the relationships between the independent and dependent variables in the model.

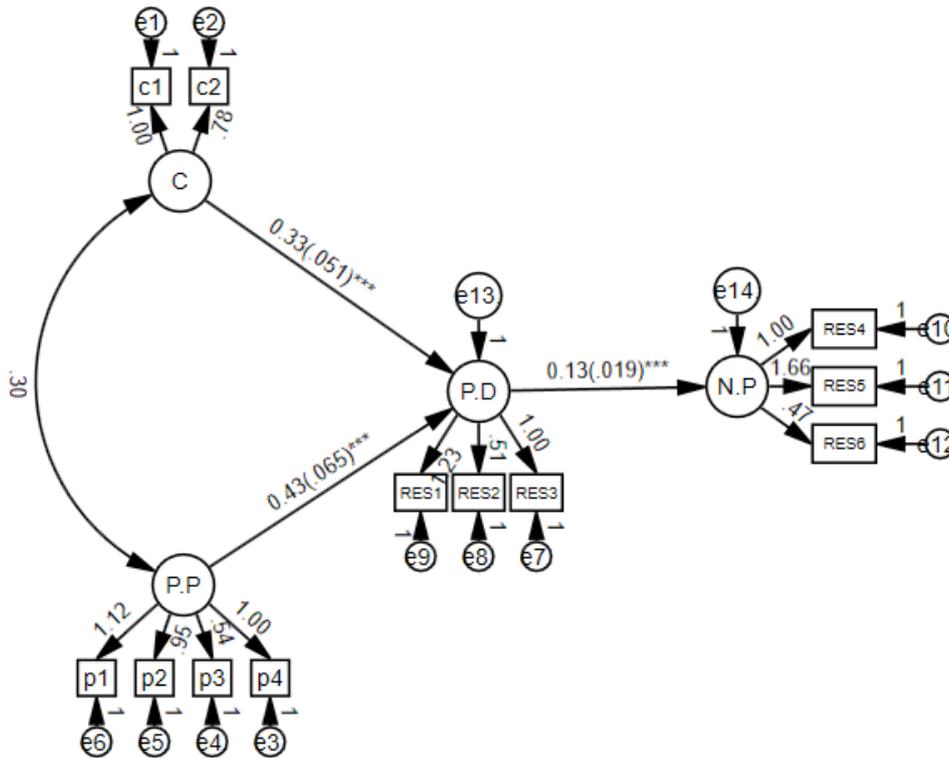
Table 3. Direct and indirect standardized effects on dependent variables

	Political distrust		Non-electoral Participation	
	Direct		Direct	Indirect
Corruption	0.500***			0.151***
Poor performance	0.467***			0.141***
Political distrust			0.301***	
R ²	0.85		0.09	

Notes: *p < 0.05 **p < 0.01 ***p < 0.001.

Table 3 reports the direct and indirect standard coefficients of the effects of corruption perception and poor government performance on political distrust and non-electoral participation. The structural equation modeling test results show that the perception of corruption and poor government performance has a positive and significant effect on political distrust and increase the level of political distrust among citizens ($\beta=0.50$, $p<0.01$; $\beta=0.46$, $p<0.01$). Also, the results show that the indirect effect of corruption perception on non-electoral participation was positive and significant ($\beta=0.15$, *Sobel's z*=6.94, $p<0.01$) and increased people's willingness to participate in non-electoral activities. Also, the indirect effect of poor government performance on non-electoral participation is positive and significant and increases people's willingness to participate in non-electoral activities ($\beta=0.14$, *Sobel's z*=6.86, $p<0.01$).

Figure 3. Specified structural equation model is showing unstandardized path coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.



Note: This theoretical model was also bootstrapped based on the standard errors with 1,000 iterations and a 95% trust interval. Notes: *p < 0.05 **p < 0.01 ***p < 0.001

Fig. 3 re-examines the second model of the study after removing the effect of control variables (age, gender, education and income) on political distrust and non-electoral participation. As the results of Table 1 show, there is a significant correlation between demographic variables with political distrust and non-electoral participation. Therefore, to control the effects of demographic variables, first, in SPSS software, control variables on political distrust and non-electoral participation variables were completely eliminated. Then new data were tested in SEM. The statistical results of the research show that according to the coefficients of the criteria of goodness and fit of the model, it can be said that the research model still has a relatively good fit and the collected data support the theoretical framework of the research (Model goodness of fit: CMIN / DF = 2.81, RMSEA = 0.027; PCLOSE = 1.00, CFI = 0.987, PCFI = 0.600, TLI = 0.979, IFI = 0.987, PNFI = 0.599). Fig. 3 also shows the nonstandard path coefficients and the standard error of the strength of the relationships between the independent and dependent variables in the model.

Table 4. Direct and indirect standardized effects on dependent variables by controlling demographic variables

	Political distrust		Non-electoral Participation	
	Direct		Direct	Indirect
Corruption	0.398***			0.091***
Poor performance	0.397***			0.090***
Political distrust			0.228***	
R ²	0.57		0.05	

Notes: *p < 0.05 **p < 0.01 ***p < 0.001.

Table 4 shows the direct and indirect standard coefficients of the effects of corruption perception and poor government performance on political distrust and non-electoral participation, after removing control variables on political distrust non-electoral participation. The structural equation modeling test results show that the perception of corruption and poor government performance continues to positively and significantly affect political distrust and increase the level of political distrust among citizens ($\beta=0.39, p<0.01; \beta=0.39, p<0.01$). Also, the results show that the indirect effect of corruption perception on non-electoral participation was positive and significant ($\beta=0.09, Sobel's z=4.74, p<0.01$) and increased people’s willingness to participate in non-electoral activities. Also, the indirect effect of poor government performance on Non-electoral Participation is positive

and significant and increases people's desire to participate in non-electoral activities ($\beta=0.09$, Sobel's $z=4.80$, $p<0.01$). Thus, the results of Table 4 show that by controlling the demographic variables, the test results of the research model did not change dramatically. However, the r square decreased by 0.28 for the political distrust variable and 0.04 for the non-electoral participation variable.

The research results show that even with the control of demographic variables, the theoretical model of the research is still approved. Citizens' corruption perception and poor government performance significantly reduce political trust among them. The R2 value of 0.57 indicates that the effect of these two variables on political trust is high. These two variables account for more than 57% of political trust in Morocco. Besides, the research hypothesis on the indirect effects of perceived corruption and poor government performance is confirmed. In other words, the results show that one of the main reasons for the increase in political protests and the use of unconventional methods in Morocco is corruption perception and poor government performance. Corruption perception of and poor government performance by reducing citizens' trust in political institutions causes them to distrust the current situation and try to use non-electoral methods to solve society's problems.

5. Discussion and conclusion

According to the research findings, despite being one of the dimensions of political participation in developed countries, elections in developing countries such as Morocco tend to participate in non-electoral methods (such as political protest) instead of participation through formal electoral methods. To change the policy of the rulers, more. One of the influential factors in developing this new type of political participation in these countries is citizens' corruption perception. Accordingly, in Morocco, corruption has eroded confidence in the regime's ability to respond to citizens "concerns, and citizens" perceptions, and experiences of corruption have eroded confidence in the government's efficiency.

The present study addressed the direct and indirect effects of corruption perceptions on the spread of political distrust and non-electoral participation. The results of this study, consistent with Anderson and Yuliya (2003), Cho and Kirwin (2007), showed that perceptions of corruption by citizens cause them to have a negative assessment of government performance. The citizens' corruption perceptions in Moroccan society does not act as grease for development wheels. However, it can perform as sands for the wheels, leading to the widening of the nation-state gap, which is an issue for many developing countries, and it deepens the conflict between the government and the people. This belief among people who do not adequately manage the political authorities in the country undermines the social prestige of the political system. It also causes them to have a negative assessment of the performance of the government, so that the citizens' expectations arise, so they will not have a positive view of the future of the country. Second, according to the second hypothesis of the study, which deals with the relationship between the perception of corruption and the evaluation of government performance by individuals, the gap between citizens' expectations of the power structure and the existing realities in the political arena has led to the perception of corruption and political distrust in Morocco. In a way, sometimes this distance has become unbearable for the citizens and has paved the way for political protests in this country instead of political participation in the form of elections. Accordingly, the inability of the ruling structure to meet the expectations of the people in Morocco has at times led to the spread of political distrust and political protests.

Political trust or distrust is a process that takes shape in society. The main force shaping it is political power. Due to its ability to make important and effective decisions, it has a significant impact on trust or distrust in the political system. Accordingly, the poor performance of those in power in various social, political, economic or cultural areas leads to the formation of citizens' distrust of the power structure. Increasing political trust leads to more and better interaction between the people and the government on the one hand, and people's political participation on the other hand. Instead, a decline in political trust leads to a lack of public support for the perpetrators, a lack of compliance with laws and regulations, a lack of support for government programs, a decline in political participation, political distrust, and, ultimately, political protests and a crisis of legitimacy.

Second, consistent with the findings of Catterberg and Moreno (2006) and Wan and Hsiao (2011), the results of the study indicated that corruption perceptions not only negatively affect citizens' assessment of government performance, but also indirectly affect the decline of citizens' political trust. The present study argued that there is a strong causal relationship between the corruption perceptions and the destruction of trust in political institutions. Corrupt behavior creates a vicious circle, meaning corrupt institutions reduce the cost of corrupt agreements, but weak institutions have a deterrent role in committing corruption. According to Rothstein (2005), it is the case that if people define life based on corruption, there will be no chance for trust-building in a society. In other words, if one witnesses corruption in the bureaucratic and political system, he or she may do so in the role of a rational actor to meet his/her needs, thereby reducing his or her trust in others and in the political system. Therefore, it should be borne in mind that all these processes can affect the reproduction of social capital, in general, and political trust, in particular. It seems that confirming the fourth hypothesis is consistent with Rosanvallon's (2008) view, suggesting that citizens' trust can indirectly reduce

citizens' assessment of poor government performance in political institutions, and it will lead to the spread of protests in the political arena among citizens.

Finally, regarding the fourth research hypothesis, the latest finding of this study is about the direct and indirect effects of citizens' corruption perceptions on the development of non-electoral participation. The results show that corruption perceptions have no significant effect on non-electoral participation. In other words, the results of the study indicate that perception cannot directly affect individuals' objective behaviors; rather, it can indirectly have effects through the influence of subjectivity and attitudes on government performance and political trust. Consistent with the theories of Teti, Abbott and Cavatorta (2018), the present study showed that political perceptions initially cause citizens to have a negative assessment of government performance in the economic, social, and cultural spheres. As a result, people's trust in the government is reduced, and it forms a basis for citizens' participation in protest behaviors in society.

Finally, based on the results of the structural equation modeling test in Morocco, it shows that the perception of corruption has had a positive and significant effect on government's poor performance. The indirect impact of the perception of corruption on political distrust among the Moroccan people has been effective and has led to an increase in political distrust. Also, the indirect impact of the perception of corruption on non-elected participation has been positive and significant, increasing political protest among Moroccan citizens. The point to consider here is that corruption perception has not significantly impacted non-electoral participation. According to the research findings, the government's poor performance has a significant direct impact on political trust. Besides, the indirect effect of poor government performance on non-participation in elections is significant. The results show that political distrust in Morocco has directly reduced voters' participation.

As the results show, as much as a violent act can threaten political stability, corruption, the accumulation of unanswered citizens' demands, negative attitudes toward government performance, and declining public trust in political institutions can threaten political stability in countries. This issue is because many countries in the Mena region have faced a lot of political instability in the last decade. The present study points to the impact of corruption perception on the spread of non-electoral practices of political participation among citizens. Therefore, the political leaders of these countries must improve the relevant conditions such as the rule of law, transparency, accountability of political institutions, the responsibility of political officials and the sense of effectiveness to expand the citizens' political participation in the legal and conventional methods, especially in the current situation. Due to the expansion of cyberspace and media technologies, the possibility of protest movements and organizing political campaigns has become easier than the past. Accordingly, those in power in Morocco must reduce corruption at the national and local levels to reduce the level of poor performance of the government. This issue increases national trust and, by its nature, significantly increases national security and political stability.

Finally, it should be noted that this study's independent, mediating and control variables explain only 9% of the variance of non-electoral participation. 91% are other factors that affect non-electoral participation, but have not been tested in this study. Therefore, it is suggested that different researchers use existing theories to identify other essential variables and test them.

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