

# Effect of training on reflection about ethics and corruption

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The challenge of curbing corruption requires public organizations to implement ethics management, deploying a myriad of instruments to reinforce ethical frameworks of public employees. Ethical training is among the most used instruments to achieve this goal, which should provide elements to public officials to face ethical dilemmas effectively. Yet, is that the case? How efficient are ethical training efforts for public servants? Do they have the same effect among different types of employees? In order to answer these questions, this article shows the results of pre and post-test questionnaires applied to participants of ethics training workshops for employees in the central and local government in Chile. The exploratory findings show that after the workshops, it is possible to see an improvement in the ethical frameworks among participants, showing a positive effect for women and those who recently started working in the public sector. More research is required to improve the instrument and strengthen public integrity. The article concludes with proposals to improve these kinds of training activities.

**Keywords:** public ethics; integrity; corruption; training; Chile.

## Efecto de las capacitaciones en la reflexión sobre ética y corrupción

El desafío de controlar la corrupción ha hecho evidente la necesidad de que las organizaciones gestionen la ética, desplegando instrumentos para reforzar los marcos éticos de los servidores públicos. Entre los instrumentos más usados para lograr este objetivo, están las capacitaciones en ética, que proporcionarían elementos para que un funcionario enfrente de mejor forma una situación o un dilema ético. Pero, ¿es así?, ¿cuán eficientes son las capacitaciones en ética para los funcionarios públicos?, ¿tienen el mismo efecto entre los distintos tipos de funcionarios que forman parte del sector público? Para resolver estas cuestiones, en la presente investigación se presentan los resultados de la aplicación de un cuestionario previo y posterior al desarrollo de una capacitación en ética para funcionarios que se desempeñan en la administración central y local en Chile. Los resultados indican de manera exploratoria que luego de la capacitación existe una adecuación de los participantes a los marcos éticos, identificando un efecto positivo diferenciado en mujeres y personas de reciente ingreso a la administración pública. Se requieren más investigaciones para perfeccionar el instrumento y así aportar de mejor forma a una administración pública más proba. El texto finaliza con algunas propuestas de mejora a este tipo de intervenciones.

**Palabras clave:** ética pública; integridad; corrupción; capacitaciones; Chile.

## Efeito das capacitações na reflexão sobre ética e corrupção

O desafio de controlar a corrupção deixou clara a necessidade das organizações fazerem uma gestão da ética, implantando instrumentos que reforcem os marcos éticos dos servidores públicos. Entre os instrumentos mais utilizados para atingir esse objetivo está o treinamento em ética, que forneceria elementos para que um funcionário possa enfrentar melhor uma situação ou dilema ético. Mas é assim? Quanto eficiente é o treinamento em ética para funcionários públicos? Eles têm o mesmo efeito entre os diferentes tipos de funcionários que fazem parte do setor público? Para resolver essas questões, esta pesquisa apresenta os resultados da aplicação de um questionário antes e depois do desenvolvimento de um treinamento em ética para funcionários que atuam na administração central e local no Chile. Os resultados indicam de forma exploratória que após a formação ocorre uma adequação dos participantes aos referenciais éticos, identificando um efeito positivo diferenciado em mulheres e pessoas que ingressaram recentemente na administração pública. Mais pesquisas são necessárias para aperfeiçoar o instrumento e, assim, contribuir melhor para uma administração pública mais proba. O texto termina com algumas propostas de aprimoramento para este tipo de intervenção.

**Palavras-chave:** ética pública; integridade; corrupção; capacitações; Chile.

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/0034-761220200658>

Article received on July 31, 2020 and accepted on December 02, 2020.

[Translated version] Note: All quotes in English translated by this article's translator.

ISSN: 1982-3134



## 1. INTRODUCTION

Do ethics trainings have the same effect on different types of public officials who are exposed to these activities? This question addresses two topics of great relevance for public ethics and corruption studies. First, whether organizations should manage ethics (ethics management), in order to generate a better standard of behavior for those who work in public institutions (Menzel, 2001, 2007). Secondly, whether public officials can be trained in public ethics, and, therefore, be better prepared to face situations in which their principles and values are challenged. In this document, we will refer in particular to the ethics of public officials, differentiating from the public ethics that political authorities or similar positions should observe. We understand the relationship between the two, but in this document we will focus on the ethics that public officials should observe in particular.

The literature shows that there are different forms and effects of ethics training for public sector officials. Following the traditional form of facing ethical issues in Latin America, training in public ethics tends to be oriented more toward information on ethical matters, following an approach of obedience, over one of integrity. Although the subject of ethics training has long-standing consideration, there are still matters that have not been adequately addressed. Special mention should be made regarding whether or not trainings have the same effect among different groups of civil servants. This issue is particularly relevant since, in the event of different effects, it would be necessary to design differentiated instruments by types of officials, to achieve a greater impact. This article aims to contribute to this field of academic inquiry, where only a few articles have addressed this topic (Cochrane, 2020; Toro & Rodríguez, 2017).

In this exploratory study, we seek to answer the question, what is the effect of ethics training on different types of public officials? To demonstrate this effect, we will compare the results we obtained from the application of a test before and after the training. The instrument contains a group of behaviors that show everyday situations that public officials could face. Each participant is asked to indicate on a likert-scale how reprehensible and/or punishable each of the actions described seems to them. From a practical point of view, this work provides elements that makes it possible to highlight the contribution ethical training has had on the trained officials. From a theoretical point of view, the present work contributes in recognizing the differences that exist between groups of female and male civil servants, at the time of training activities with a training model focused on integrity. In particular, the differentiated effect between men and women, and employees with less work experience stands out. Once the relevant literature and the context where the research is carried out has been presented, the design of the survey application and its results are presented. The article ends with practical and theoretical contributions on the subject.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Governments have confronted the problem of public ethics from two approaches (Huberts & Hoekstra, 2016; Jiménez Asensio, 2017; Maesschalck, 2004; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2020). On the one hand, there is the so-called “obedience approach” (compliance approach), which has placed special emphasis on a normative perspective on ethics, focusing on what the legal bodies prescribe for the expected behaviors, also known as the “low road” (Rohr, 1989). It is an approach that has been based on supervision and control over other considerations. In contrast, the “integrity approach” emphasizes the values and responsibilities that people must take into account when acting as a public official (Lewis & Gilman, 2012, p. 14). To reinforce the ethical behavior of officials, it is not sufficient to focus on controls and punishments, but rather on the values and principles that each individual observes. As Roberts (2009) points out, the dominant strategy has been to ethically intervene in organizations from an obedience perspective. The main forms of intervention have been organizational changes, dismissals or other forms of sanction for conduct that conflicts with probity. These types of interventions become insufficient, since they do not create the conditions for public officials to adequately face potential ethical dilemmas in the future.

This more complex level of addressing the problem of ethics and corruption has led to thinking about the problem of organizational interventions in the matter, in a more comprehensive way. In particular, we can see this approach in what Kaptein (2009) calls “ethics programs,” which are types of formal, organizational monitoring to create an ethical culture, and prevent deviant behavior or corruption. The effectiveness of this type of action has been documented in various studies (Beeri, Dayan, Vigoda-Gadot & Werner, 2013; Kaptein, 2015; Osorio & Rodríguez, 2018; Park & Blenkinsopp, 2013; Yizraeli & Shilo, 2001), where it is shown that both in the public and private sectors these formal components can and should be installed, in order to reinforce the ethics of the organization and its officials. Among the elements that are incorporated in these ethics programs are the codes of ethics, ethical leadership, the ethical climate, those in charge of ethics, and reporting systems, among others (Kaptein, 2009). Along with these instruments, the need to include training to achieve the objectives of the programs is recognized.

Like any training process, ethics trainings are useful, because not only do they allow the delivery or updating of information on the subject, but they also create an adequate space to reflect on particular situations that occur during regular work in organizations (Frisque & Kolb, 2008), since those who work in an entity do not always have the cognitive sophistication, or moral literacy as Tuana (2007) points out, or even the courage to face complex situations in this area (Trevino & Brown, 2004). However, the literature is unclear about how effective these trainings are in significantly reinforcing the ethical behavior of different groups of public officials. To some extent, all ethics training is assumed to have an impact on those who participate in these activities. Van Montfort, Beck and Twijnstra (2013) point out that the literature in the social sciences on the subject is very limited. This uncertainty is not monopolized by the public sector, in fact the subject has already been present in business literature for some time (Delaney & Sockell, 1992; Thompson, 1990), where it was pointed out that although the subject is relevant, in the companies themselves, training was limited or non-existent, or it is not clear how effective they are. Lately, the subject has regained interest (Steele et al., 2016), largely due to the global trend of higher ethical standards in companies.

In the public sector, reflection on this matter has been present in a more limited manner (Cochrane, 2020; Pallai & Gregor, 2016). In fact, in one of the most relevant publications in this area of academic reflection, the magazine *Public Integrity*, there are several texts on the subject, however, in a very limited number with respect to other areas of academic reflection (Menzel, 2015). In the case of other important journals in the disciplinary field of public administration, academic production is also very limited, highlighting rather descriptive texts (Dwivedi & Engelbert, 1981; Worthley & Grumet, 1983) or propositional texts (Worthley, 1981). In the case of Latin America, in the main journals in the area, as presented in Pliscoff (2019), academic production on ethics in public service is limited, and even more so in training on the subject. The text by Van Montfort et al. (2013) is undoubtedly the most relevant to the subject we address in this article.

Contrary to the limited production of knowledge on the subject, the OECD (2020) has shown that governments currently implement ethical training regularly. From a theoretical point of view, these efforts take different forms. As pointed out by Hejka-Ekins (2001), it is possible to differentiate the focuses, characterizations, results, controls and learning methods that will vary according to the ethical control model adopted, as can be seen in Box 1.

**BOX 1**      **TYOLOGY OF ETHICS TRAINING MODELS IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR**

Factor	Obedience	Integrity
Focus	Individual	Individual
Characterization	Legal	Normative
Result	Legally correct behavior	Ethically correct conduct
Control	Laws on ethics, rules and regulations	Ethical standards and decision-making processes
Learning Method	Pedagogical	Andragogy

**Source:** Adapted from Hejka-Ekins (2001, p. 89).

From this typology, it is understood that training can represent a contribution to organizations in two ways. In the first place, through the definition and socialization of norms and rules that guide ethical behavior (Hejka-Ekins, 2001, p. 83) and, secondly, by strengthening the reflective capacity of organizations' members. (Cooper, 2006; Gomes, 2014). This reflective capacity allows both for the detection of ethical problems and for the ways in which they can be addressed (Tuana, 2007). In this sense, the ideal effect that an ethical training should have is to increase the knowledge and use of ethical norms, as well as the capacity to distinguish acceptable from unacceptable behaviors.

Cochrane (2020) states that one of the problems in determining whether ethics training is relevant or not is due to the lack of adequate instruments to account for the effect that these actions have. But even if evaluation techniques were improved, showing adequate techniques for the desired objectives (D. Kirkpatrick & J. Kirkpatrick, 2006), there are still some unclear issues, which influence the effect of these organizational efforts. For example, some doubts remain as to how the effect of training might differ between the different types of staff in an organization. Medeiros et al. (2017) state that the effect of training differs between undergraduate students and graduate students or those with professional experience, but this study is in the business field and lacks distinction between people with more or less professional experience. Swamy et al. (2001), on the other hand, state that women tend to have an attitude of greater rejection of unethical practices, which could have an effect on the impact of training in ethics matters (Ritter, 2006).

In this article, we will try to contribute to this discussion, based on the analysis of the results before and after the training in ethics. Therefore, the originality of the work lies in analyzing the effect of training on public ethics in a professional context such as Chile, in which few studies exist. In addition, it aims to contribute to the theoretical discussion that there is a greater effect on groups of people who have had training with an emphasis on integrity.

### 3. RESEARCH CONTEXT

Since 2017, the “*Centro de Estudios de la Administración del Estado*” (CEA), under the “*Contraloría General de la República de Chile*” (CGR), has taught the course “*Inducción a la Administración del Estado*” (Induction to State Administration) whose objective is to improve knowledge, skills and values of people who have recently joined the State Administration at the national and local level.

The final module of this course, referred to as “Public Ethics, Integrity and Transparency,” seeks that the participants know the meaning and scope of ethics, integrity and transparency as tools in the fight against corruption. During the four-hour duration of the block, these three concepts are presented with a theoretical and normative scope; the phenomenon of corruption is conceptualized and it ends by reflecting on the role that public officials play in strengthening administrative probity.

The module is taught by the CGR representatives to groups ranging between 10 and 35 officials maximum. During the activity, the rapporteurs in charge of the activity combine expository instances with participatory elements where reflection is promoted by people in common situations that public servants face.

To comply with the stated objective and based on the typology indicated in the previous section, a methodology focused on strengthening the integrity of the participants has been chosen. In this sense, the activity emphasizes socially accepted behaviors in the public sphere and the relevance of raising ethical standards in decision-making processes. Following the classification proposed by Medeiros et al. (2017) this course has the following attributes:

**BOX 2 CLASSIFICATION OF ACTIVITY TYPE**

Attribute	CEA CGR Course Case
1. Category	Ethical awareness.
2. Mechanism for assessing the impact of the training course	Single group with pre and post evaluation.
3. Purpose	Professional training with mandatory attendance.
4. Contents	Limited review of contents (norms, codes of ethics, ethical behaviors).
5. Delivery method	Limited use of methodologies (group problem solving).
6. Processes involved in the training activity	Limited (group ethical awareness).

**Source:** Elaborated by the authors.

**4. METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN**

In order to identify the differentiated impact that this activity has on the different groups of participants, we will use a pre-post technique, where we will compare the results of the trained group, before and after the activity. Thus, it is intended to identify differences between the types of people through an analysis that considers the control variables associated with gender, age and years in public administration. We believe that this methodology analyzed by Steele et al. (2016) and previously applied in similar studies of the public (Van Montfort et al., 2013) and private (Ritter, 2006) sectors allow us to verify in particular the short-term effect of this training, since the instrument was applied before starting the training and after it.

Regarding the instrument to detect the effect of ethics training among officials, we opted to create an instrument that included a list of 15 situations that any person who works in a public institution could be faced with during their daily work. This research design decision is based on what Neu et al. (2015), propose, in terms that the norms and codes are important, but the essential thing in the reflection on ethics, are the daily practices. To address different types of actions that could violate the correct behavior of a public servant and with the aim of facilitating the subsequent analysis of the situations, the questionnaire considered three types of action presented in no particular order<sup>1</sup>. Thus we have three types of situations associated with different forms or types of ethical misconduct:

1. **Group 1:** actions and/or situations in which the individual would be violating a legal norm in the administrative or even criminal sphere. This refers to more classic and obvious forms of corruption that, in certain cases, involve a direct monetary benefit. In this sense, they should be easier to identify as undesirable situations. In this group we find actions of bribery, disclosure of professional secrecy and administrative prevarication.

<sup>1</sup> These three types of actions are based on Bermúdez (2017).

2. **Group 2:** situations that could violate some type of administrative or penal code, nevertheless, referring to less obvious actions than subornation or bribery. More sophisticated forms of corruption are included where, in general, money is not the direct benefit to the individual involved. For this reason, it is considered that they could be more difficult situations to identify as incorrect practices. Faults associated with conflicts of interest, incompatible negotiation or influence peddling are found here.
3. **Group 3:** includes actions that do not necessarily involve clear criminal or administrative figures. On the contrary, these are undesirable situations since they affect the integrity of the public staff. Based on this, it is considered that they would be practices that are in a gray area where there is not total awareness of their possible link with corrupt actions. In general, actions such as the misuse of public resources for personal purposes or bad administrative practices are included.

The ethical situations classified according to this methodological distinction are detailed below:

### BOX 3 CLASSIFICATION OF ACTIONS ACCORDING TO GROUPS OF SITUATIONS

Group 1
Accept a gift from a supplier of the institution.
Claim sick leave without actually being sick.
Relay confidential institutional information to friends and/or family.
Modify information in work documents to obtain a desired but unrealistic result.
Request a gift from a user of the entity in exchange for speeding up a procedure.
Group 2
Inform the person in charge of a hiring process of the application of a friend/relative in order for it to be considered.
Alter the order of attention of requests to prioritize that of an acquaintance.
Streamline the process of a friend/relative/colleague to whom you owe a favor.
Inform the person in charge of a procurement process of the application of a provider that is a friend/relative in order for it to be considered.
Use the institutional mail to try to obtain personal benefit.
Group 3
Use the institutional printer for personal purposes.
Failure to comply with promised work deadlines.
Arrive to work late on a frequent basis.
Disproportionately distribute work among people with the same responsibilities.
Clock in and then carry out personal duties.

**Source:** Elaborated by the authors.

Thus, each participant was asked to evaluate on a scale of 1 to 9 how reprehensible these situations were, where 1 was “Irreproachable or admissible” and 9 was “Totally reprehensible, should have a criminal sanction.” The expected result, in which it would become evident that the training fulfills its purpose, is that at the end of the day, the participants indicate that the actions subjected to evaluation are ethically reprehensible or unacceptable. This should be translated into an increase in the rating that people make of the severity of the situations indicated.

The questionnaire was applied on paper at the beginning and at the end of the training. To give the participants context, the official who performed the role of rapporteur for the course were informed about the objective of the study and asked to explain that the only purpose of the instrument was to evaluate and perfect the impact that the training had on the participants. In the same way, they were encouraged to explain that although the survey was anonymous, it was very relevant that they complete the characterization, where they were requested to indicate: gender, age, and years working in the public administration. The instrument was applied in the classes given in April and October of 2019 by the rapporteurs of the courses and then centralized by the authors of this study who processed and analyzed the results obtained.

### 5. ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

After carrying out all of the planned interventions, a total of 170 surveys were obtained; 89 corresponded to responses before training and 81 to questionnaires after training. The general results are presented in the following graphs.

**GRAPH 1 CHARACTERIZATION OF PARTICIPANTS**



Source: Elaborated by the authors.



The participating group is mainly made up of women between the ages of 30 and 39 who have worked for more than a year in Public Administration, with the average age of the participants being 35.8 years and the average number of years working in Public Administration being 4.9 years. Finally, it is highlighted that the distributions between the characteristics of the participants remain similar before and after the intervention. The descriptive statistics of each dimension can be reviewed in Annex (Table 1). The reliability of the instrument was evaluated separately, obtaining satisfactory results, with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.895 before training and 0.914 after. In Annex (Table 2) the results for each situation evaluated pre and post training can be seen.

As the first point to highlight in the analysis of the results, we can point out that there was an increase in ethical perception in all the situations presented. While the global average of the score assigned to the actions before the training is 6.65, after the activity this overall score reaches 7.07. This rise could show that the training managed to modify the way in which people faced and rated the seriousness of the situations presented. Following Tuana (2007), the purpose of this training would be fulfilled, since this change would show a development of ethical reasoning skills, stimulating ethical reflection, which facilitates the identification of situations that could affect the honest behavior of the members of the institution.

Then, when controlling for the three groups of situations that the questionnaire indicated, it is possible to identify that the scores have different modifications according to the type of action. While the cases corresponding to the third level of corruption have an increase of 0.61 points (from 5.96 to 6.57); the situations corresponding to the second level of corruption rise 0.41 points (from 6.67 to 7.08); and the shares of the first level increase only by 0.24 points (from 7.34 to 7.58). These changes would lead to the supposition that the training manages to modify the ethical perception in a differentiated way according to the type of action that the person faces.

The following box shows those actions that present the highest variation of scores when compared before and after the training.

#### BOX 4 ACTIONS WITH THE GREATEST DIFFERENCE PRE AND POST TRAINING

Action	Pre	Post	Difference
i) Inform the person in charge of a hiring process of the application of a friend/relative in order for it to be considered.	5.90	6.74	0.84
ii) Clock in and then carry out personal duties.	6.63	7.47	0.84
iii) Failure to comply with promised work deadlines.	5.96	6.77	0.81
iv) Arrive to work late on a frequent basis.	6.07	6.63	0.53

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

The greatest variations are not found in those situations that are more complicated, have the greatest financial impact, or are clearly related to cases of corruption. On the contrary, the main changes are found in those matters that refer to apparently simple situations, of low impact for the operation of the institution or without direct damage to public resources. This is quite striking, since the intervention seems to make it easier for people to identify the impact that the occurrence of these actions generates on the ethical climate within the organization, beyond the proprietary or reputational damage that these situations could imply. As Park and Blenkinsopp (2013) point out, interventions in ethics are conditioned by the ethical culture of organizations. We believe that this type of training which takes place in a space other than the institutional one, allows the official to “remove” themselves from the ethical culture of the organization, and allows them to recognize that some accepted practices in the organization, although apparently trivial, are undesirable.

This reinforces the idea that changing the focus of ethics interventions from one focused on obedience to one focused on integrity (Hejka-Ekins, 2001), allows officials to recognize that there are practices that can be legally accepted, but not necessarily ethically justifiable.

This claim is reinforced by the following opposite statements, that is, those with the least difference after the intervention:

#### BOX 5 ACTIONS WITH THE LEAST DIFFERENCE PRE AND POST TRAINING

Action	Before	After	Difference
i) Request a gift from a user of the entity in exchange for speeding up a procedure.	7.78	7.78	–
ii) Inform the person in charge of a procurement process of the application of a provider that is a friend/relative in order for it to be considered.	7.29	7.30	0.01
iii) Accept a gift from a supplier of the institution.	6.44	6.51	0.06

**Source:** Elaborated by the authors.

These actions have two elements in common. The first of them is that all the situations refer to actions that could be related to criminal offenses that are classically considered as corruption, that is, bribery and influence peddling. The second element, associated with cases (ii) and (iii), is related to the fact that both refer to the same area: public procurement. These matters are widely regulated in the country. In practice, this has resulted in a high degree of knowledge by public personnel of the rules, prohibitions and good practices that involve public procurement (Inter-American Development Bank, [IDB] 2008; Dirección Chile Compra, 2018; Lara A., 2017; Meyer & Fath Meyer, 2012). Based on the above, it is possible to establish that this type of training would have a less evident effect in situations in which an action regulated directly through a norm is contravened. That is, in actions

where corruption is more evident as a result of clear regulation (as in criminal proceedings) or due to a broad knowledge of the rules (as in public purchases), this type of intervention tends to have a lesser effect.

On the other hand, those cases that had greater modifications after the training were analyzed. Under this criterion, two variables stand out: “Inform the person in charge of a hiring process of the application of a friend/relative in order for it to be considered” and “Clock in and then carry out personal duties,” both receiving an increase of 0.84 points. The first of these receives an initial rating of 5.90 and then an evaluation of 6.74 points and when performing an analysis of the results it is observed that the variation is explained by the specific behavior of participating women, which will be explained further ahead.

Similarly, the second case progresses from 6.63 to 7.47, and — unlike the previous one — the data does not show relevant relationships or results associated with any particular group that adjusts the mean score. The answer can be found if we analyze the structure of the training and the way in which this situation is addressed during the day. Considering what is indicated in Annex (Table 1) “Structure of the module,” while most cases are generally addressed, the case of people who clock in and then carry out personal duties is addressed in a differentiated way. The methodology used is presented in detail below:

**BOX 6**      **METHODOLOGY USED IN THE CASE OF MISUSE OF COMPANY TIME**

N°	Objective	Description
1	Framing	Group reflection on the relevance of bad administrative practices as a third level of corruption.
2	Application	Group reflection on the impact that the aggregated sum of daily bad practices has on the State.
3	Connection	Group reflection about which habitual situations could be classified as bad practices, emphasizing the act of clocking in and then carrying out personal duties.
4	Example	Group reflection on the implications of this bad practice, pointing out the guideline defined by the CGR.

**Source:** Elaborated by the authors.

The methodological structure used to address this issue was not replicated in other cases and would be the specific factor that would allow for understanding the existing variation in the ethical perception of the group. Consequently, carrying out a concrete, detailed and applied analysis of certain cases that could violate organizational integrity would modify the ethical perception in a more efficient way. In other words, the targeting of integrity training on certain ethical situations seems to be an essential element to ensure the effectiveness of these activities.

A second major issue that arises from the analysis of the results is related to identifying the presence of possible similar behaviors among the different groups of participants. Therefore, we proceeded to analyze the Pearson correlation coefficient between the 15 ethical situations examined and the three available control variables: gender, age and years of work in Public Administration. As can be seen in Annex (Table 2), the results of this exercise do not allow us to identify significant correlations in any of the intersections made. Notwithstanding this, when carrying out a specific review on the variations that occur within the different groups, it is interesting to highlight the behaviors that are evident in the participants according to their years in Public Administration and according to their gender.

When controlling for seniority in the Public Administration those cases associated with the first and second group, present similar differences in the different participants. However, when reviewing the variation in the third group, that is, those actions that are closer to ethical misconduct than to criminal offenses, we observe that participants with more than one year of seniority modify their ethical perception to a lesser extent (0.49) than those who have been in the public sector for less than a year (0.70). The foregoing is especially evident in the case of “Failure to comply with promised work deadlines” where people with less than one year in the Administration slightly modify their perception compared to the other group of participants: 0.56 and 1.12 respectively.

This finding is something that has not been recognized in the literature previously. There is a certain relationship with the work carried out by Medeiros et al. (2017) who establish that there is a difference in ethics training or education between university students and professionals doing their MBAs. But as can be seen, these data are with a different audience. In our case, we believe that this effect can be explained; the attitude that these actions are not crimes, implying they are ethical faults, must be recognized as inappropriate, based on the logic and specificity of the public sector (Boyne, 2002), which develops over time. In the same way, it can be reflected that these subjects, to those who have not had experience in the public sector, do not assign them the relevance they have, but that after training, they recognize their significance.

Secondly, when analyzing the general average of the behavior of ethical perception according to gender, a relevant difference is identified between both groups. While women increase their average score by 0.73 points, men decrease their average evaluation by 0.13 points. This is repeated if it is analyzed according to actions of the first, second and third groups of ethical situations. Men have variations of -0.27, -0.30 and 0.20 and women of 0.53, 0.83 and 0.85 respectively. This is seen with greater clarity in the scenario: “Inform the person in charge of a hiring process of the application of a friend/relative in order for it to be considered” in which after the training men decrease 0.36 points and women increase their score by 1.63 points.

The results that have been achieved are similar to studies carried out previously in administration students (Ritter, 2006) in which it was shown that men and women had different reactions after being subjected to ethics classes. This situation is explained, argues the author, by the type of moral reasoning to which women resort to solve ethical problems. While men tend to resolve dilemmas through rule-based behaviors, women resort to context-specific analysis. This would lead to the supposition, in this case, that during the day women incorporate into their contextual analysis those legal norms or social rules that the training seeks to deliver. This situation would

have promoted women to reflect from a new path on the cases presented, increasing their critical vision regarding which situations are ethically acceptable and which are not. But along with this, it has been suggested that women tend to fall into fewer acts of bribery than men (Swamy, Knack, Lee & Azfar, 2001), which would speak of a greater sensitivity to ethical issues and susceptibility to training. Although these results are not conclusive, they hope to be a contribution to the theoretical discussion on the matter (Alatas, Cameron, Chaudhuri, Erkal & Gangadharan, 2009; Dawson, 1995; Evans & Palermo, 2005) and to current international efforts to advance in the challenge of linking ethics, corruption and gender (Transparency International, 2020; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2020).

## 6. CONCLUSION

From a practical point of view, this exploratory study has made it possible to know the effects that the module “Public Ethics, Integrity and Transparency” has on the people who participate in the “Inducción a la Administración del Estado” [Induction to State Administration] course taught by the CEA of the CGR.

From a theoretical point of view, it is necessary to recognize some limitations this research presents. The first refers to the limited number of participants analyzed, an issue that we believe is important for future research. The second refers to the fact that other factors were not incorporated into the study, such as the type of instructor conducting the training sessions, and the ways in which the training was carried out, which could also have an impact on the results.

Despite the above, a series of relevant conclusions have been established for the study of integrity training in the public sector. In the first place, we believe that the research shows the usefulness of the trainings in the improvement of the ethical frameworks of the participants. In general terms, the participating group demonstrated a willingness to consider the cases presented after the training as less ethically acceptable, allowing for the conclusion that people improve the alignment of their individual values with those of the civil services and become more critical of those actions that could violate institutional integrity. The challenge in this conclusion is to evaluate if this change in ethical perception has an effect only in the short term or, on the contrary, when returning to their job, the staff sustains this ethical framework that the training has adjusted for the medium and long term period (Van Montfort et al., 2013).

A second contribution to the theoretical discussion refers to the differentiated effects between types of officials. We believe that it is relevant to recognize that ethics training has a different influence on officials with different seniority in the public sector and by gender. On the other hand, the focus with which the methodology of an ethical training activity is structured seems to be a relevant element to evaluate the effectiveness of these interventions. As was initially pointed out in the theoretical review carried out and based on Cooper (2006), the trainings are more useful if they are understood as instances of reflection on specific ethical situations. This has been reaffirmed by the results obtained, where modifications were identified in the ethical frameworks of those situations that were approached in a detailed, careful manner and with a relevant contextual analysis. It is pending for further investigations, if the effect detected persists with time (Warren, Gaspar & Laufer, 2014).

The theoretical evidence and the conclusions reached in this research allow us to identify practical recommendations to improve the effect of ethical training. Thus, it seems essential to advance in two specific lines. On the one hand, through the design and implementation of activities with reflective methodologies in simple and everyday instances for the trainee group and, on the other hand, through the use of different ethical situations and cases according to the type of participant to whom the training is directed. The results achieved allow us to establish that these are fundamental factors to increase the effectiveness of ethical training in our organizations.

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## ANNEX

**TABLE 1** AVERAGE SCORES FOR EACH SITUATION BEFORE AND AFTER THE TRAINING AND THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE TWO EVALUATIONS

	Situation	Before		After	
		Average	Est. D.	Average	Est. D.
1	Use the institutional printer for personal purposes.	4.70	1.79	5.10	2.05
2	Arrive to work late on a frequent basis.	6.07	1.81	6.63	1.54
3	Failure to comply with promised work deadlines.	5.96	1.45	6.77	1.39
4	Clock in and then carry out personal duties.	6.63	1.65	7.47	1.15
5	Inform the person in charge of a hiring process of the application of a friend/relative in order for it to be considered.	5.90	2.09	6.74	1.69
6	Alter the order of attention of requests to prioritize that of an acquaintance.	6.67	1.71	7.20	1.19
7	Streamline the process of a friend/relative/ colleague to whom you owe a favor.	6.81	1.49	7.14	1.35
8	Disproportionately distribute work among people with the same responsibilities.	6.41	1.64	6.89	1.66
9	Modify information in work documents to obtain a desired but unrealistic result.	7.69	1.56	8.09	1.28
10	Use the institutional mail to try to obtain personal benefit.	6.67	1.71	7.04	1.66
11	Relay confidential institutional information to friends and/or family.	7.69	1.61	7.86	1.47
12	Claim sick leave without actually being sick.	7.13	1.56	7.68	1.48
13	Inform the person in charge of a procurement process of the application of a provider that is a friend/relative in order for it to be considered.	7.29	1.69	7.30	1.52
14	Accept a gift from a supplier of the institution.	6.44	1.99	6.51	1.84
15	Request a gift from a user of the entity in exchange for speeding up a procedure.	7.78	1.51	7.78	1.57

**Source:** Elaborated by the authors.

**TABLE 2** R<sup>2</sup> COEFFICIENTS OF CORRELATION FOR PRE AND POST TRAINING SCORES

ACTION	Gender (PRE)	Gender (POST)	Age (PRE)	Age (POST)	PA Years (PRE)	PA Years (POST)
1	-0.018	0.284	0.088	0.115	0.083	-0.005
2	-0.076	0.120	0.053	0.193	0.038	0.047
3	0.134	0.296	0.056	0.104	-0.113	-0.141
4	0.010	0.193	0.037	0.052	-0.074	-0.160
5	-0.206	0.368	0.048	0.074	-0.055	0.007
6	-0.046	0.311	-0.067	-0.137	-0.158	-0.294
7	0.046	0.333	-0.132	-0.021	-0.100	-0.146
8	0.132	0.308	-0.049	0.031	-0.081	-0.153
9	0.002	0.285	0.079	-0.040	-0.041	-0.040
10	0.089	0.394	-0.008	0.066	-0.166	-0.204
11	-0.030	0.286	-0.031	-0.017	-0.095	-0.181
12	-0.025	0.247	0.098	0.175	-0.058	0.022
13	-0.022	0.344	0.139	0.097	0.059	0.037
14	0.028	0.265	0.062	0.110	-0.053	-0.146
15	0.048	0.292	-0.035	-0.042	-0.072	-0.186

Source: Elaborated by the authors.