Civil Service Reform and Anti-Corruption

Can Ethics Training Reduce Corruption in the Civil Service?

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Main points

- Focusing on *preliminary* findings from an ethical leadership training of police officers in Bangladesh
    1. High prevalence of unethical behaviour
    2. Considerable change of ethical attitudes over time
    3. Ethics training can make a difference

       Example: Effect on willingness to decline gifts (cf. behavioural control)

- Ethics trainings as a (surprisingly) novel instrument, positively received, and potential starting point for larger scale initiative

Problem Statement

- Ethics trainings well known as an anti-corruption tool and component of ethics programmes in the public and private sector
  - Limited evidence beyond observational studies in private sector and with (business school) students

- **This project:** Develop ethics trainings of public servants in two developing countries and evaluate impact through field experiment

How does ethics training reduce corruption?

- Social learning theory (Bandura)

- Ethics training
  - Provide models of positive and negative behaviour
  - Provide guidance on rules, codes and methods and opportunities for practical application
  - Raise salience of ethical issues

⇒ Raise ethical awareness – acquire knowledge and confidence – update attitudes – change intentions and actual behaviour (cf. Ajzen)

- Develop 'comprehensive ethics training' accordingly

This project

- Ethical leadership training with public servants
  - Nepal: Inland Revenue Department
  - Bangladesh: Bangladesh Police

- Field experimental design
  - Step 1: Baseline survey
  - Step 2: Treatment group training
  - Step 3: End line survey
  - Step 4: Control group training

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Ethical Leadership Training with the Bangladesh Police

Preliminary findings

Police District of Comilla

- Population: 5.5m

- 38 stations and 22 HQ units

- Police officers: 2,480

- Training of officers at station level + *selected* HQ units:
  - **1,404 participants**

Ethical leadership training:
'Everybody can be an ethical leader'

Intro

Ethics & integrity

Policing values

Police misconduct

Ethical dilemmas

Ethical leadership

Evaluation & certificate

- One day training

- Approx. 30 participants per session

- 2 trainers (Prof T Rahman, Prof KM Islam) and 1 co-trainer (K Kumar Saha)

Evidence from the base and end line survey: June and December 2021

	Statistic[1]
Age	38.6
Gender: Female	4.3%
Gender: Male	95.7%
Rank: ASI and SI	15.0%
Rank: Constable[2]	80.2%
Rank: Other ranks[3]	4.8%

[1] Average for Age. Percentages for qualitative variables. Statistics are based on a balanced panel.

[2] Includes Nayeks.

[3] Includes inspectors, officers-in-charge, and TIs
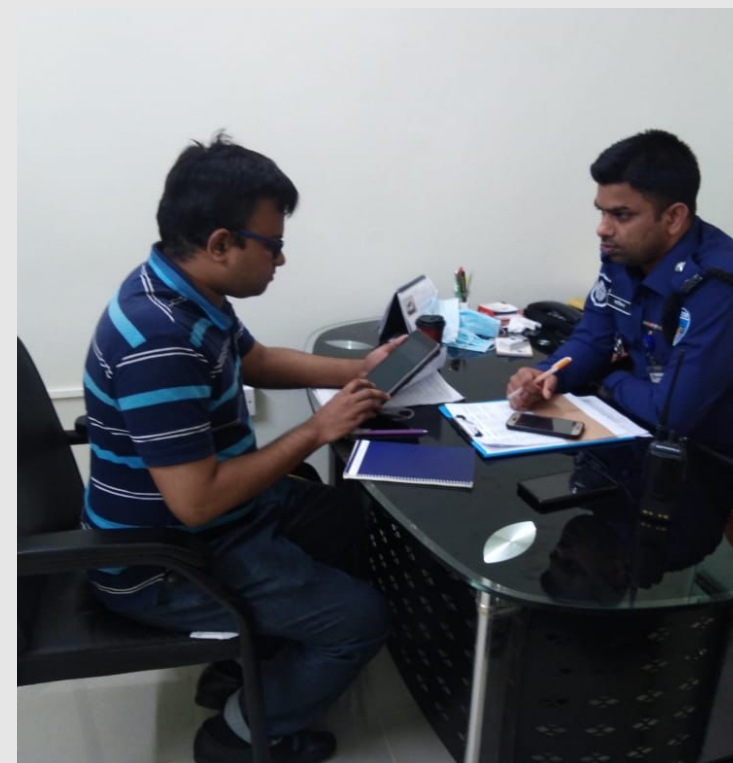
Measuring unethical behaviour

Preliminary evidence from the base line survey

Observing unethical behaviour

- Focus on observation of unethical behaviour of colleagues during the *last month*
- 7 – 13% of officers observe that their colleagues engage in unethical behaviour
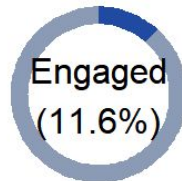- Prevalence depends on type of behaviour
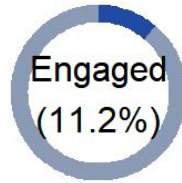
Engaged (11.2%) — Colleagues using office equipment (e.g. stationary, tea) for private purposes
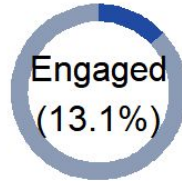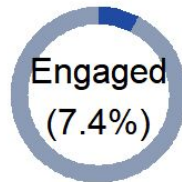
Engaged (13.1%) — Colleagues using their position to help a family member or friend
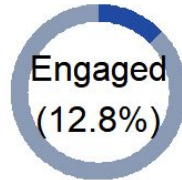
Engaged (12.8%) — Colleagues using their position to help a party, politician or person with political links

Engaged (11.6%) — Colleagues receiving a gift or otherwise personally benefiting from their position in the police

Engaged (7.4%) — Colleagues accepting informal payments or discounts from citizens

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# Unethical behaviour *intentions* in response to police ethical dilemmas

Story I

- Police Officer Palash stops a car for ignoring a traffic signal. He asks the driver to show his driving license and car papers. The driver indicates that he really needs to get home to take care of his sick children and asks Officer Palash to turn a blind eye on this occasion. <u>He offers Officer Palash a small amount of gratitude money</u> for buying refreshments. <u>Officer Palash accepts</u> and allows him to continue on the road to get to his sick children without delaying him getting home by writing up a fine.

Story II

- During their patrol, Police Officers Tajul and Jamal take a <u>tea and snack</u> at a local restaurant. When they want to pay the bill, the <u>owner tells them that they are guests of the restaurant</u>. The Officers nonetheless try to pay, but the owner refuses repeatedly to take any money and returns the money to them. Tired of trying and not wanting to appear impolite, the Officers give up and <u>accept the gesture</u>.

Unethical behaviour intentions

- 43 – 56% of officers with intention to behave unethically in dilemma situations at work (i.e. do not strongly disagree)
- Behavioural responses depend on situation

Intent (43%)
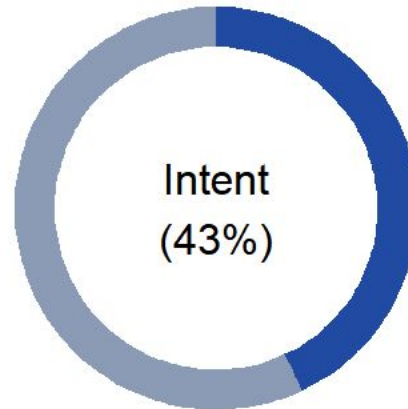
If I were in the Officer's situation, I would also accept the offer

Intent (56.3%)
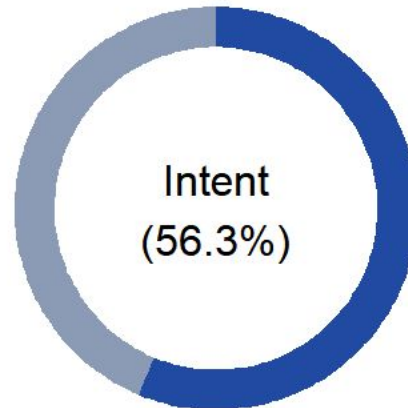
If I were in the Officers' situation, I would also accept the tea and snack

Evidence of unethical *behaviour* through lab-in-the-field tasks

Completion of five matrices:

- Each matrix contains eight numbers and one missing number

- Participants have 10 seconds to find out the missing number

- If they indicate that they have found the correct answer, they receive a reward of 50 taka

- But only 1 out of 5 matrices is solvable

⇒ Claiming to have solved unsolvable matrices as indicator of behavioural dishonesty

Evidence of behavioural dishonesty

Showing results for four unsolvable matrices:

- Participants claim to have solved 2.2 out of 4 unsolvable matrices correctly

- More than 80% of the participants claim to have solved 1 or more matrices correctly

- Substantive prevalence of unethical behaviour among officers
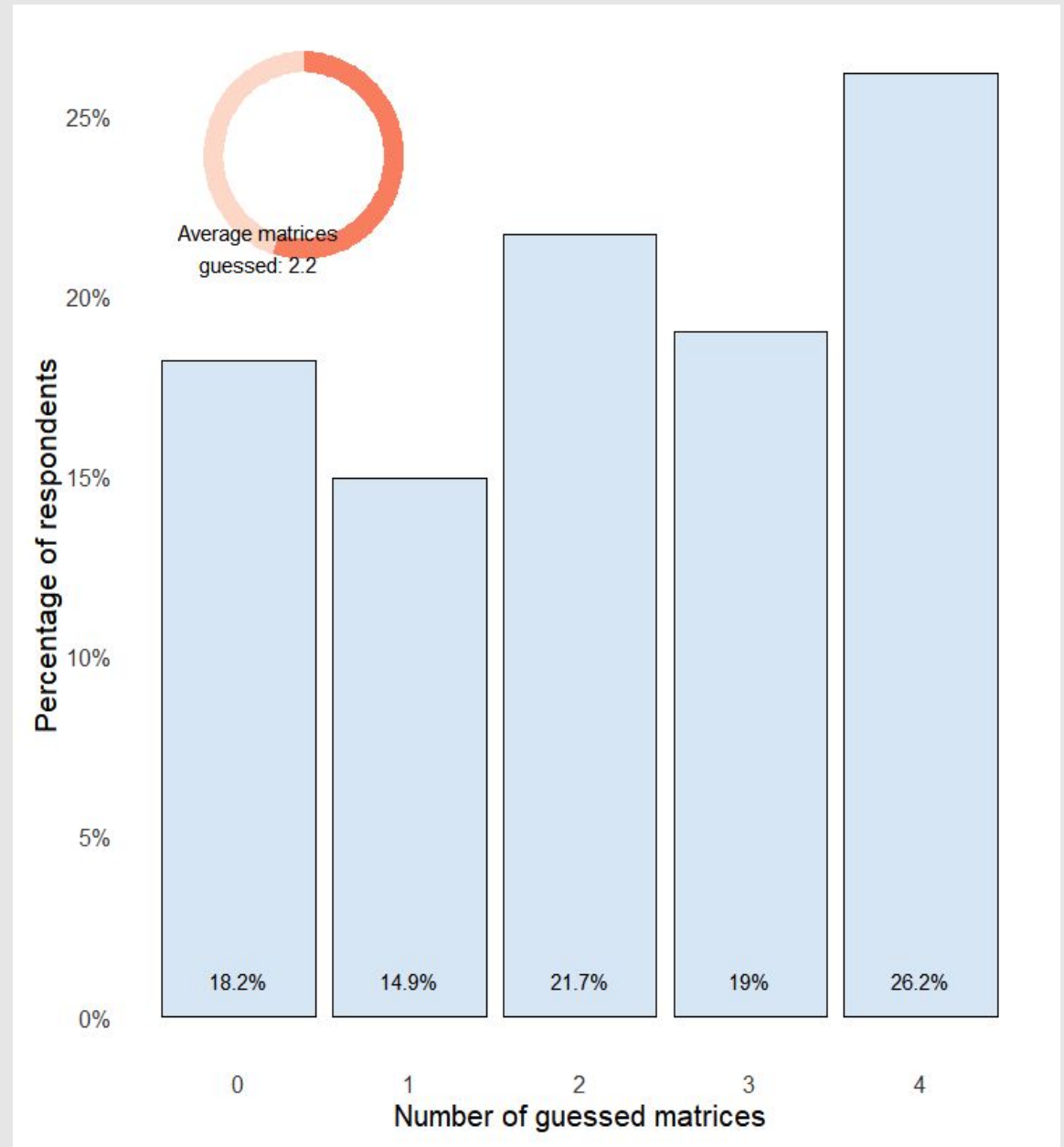
Measuring change of ethical attitudes

Preliminary evidence from the comparison of base and end line data

Changes in unethical attitudes over time

Example: Rationalization strategies to justify unethical behaviour

- Only 39% of officers provided the same answer in June and in December

- Ethical attitudes less stable than often assumed?

- What accounts for short-term fluctuations?

Police officers cannot be blamed for not following procedures if their superiors told them to do so

June 2021 — December 2021
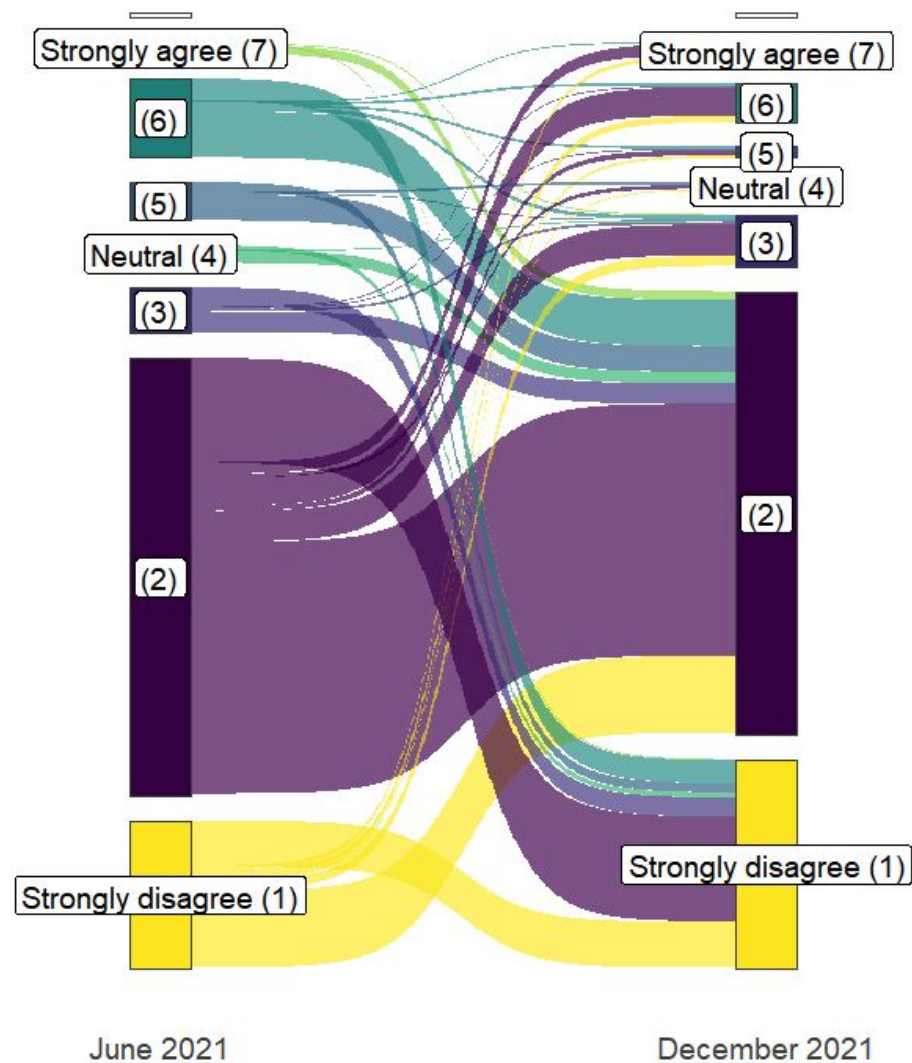
Measuring the effect of the ethics training

Preliminary evidence from an example that seeks to identify the treatment effect of training participation

Effects of ethics training participation

Preliminary evidence: Data cleaning still in progress

- Example:

- *Positive* effect of training participation on willingness to decline gifts (cf. behavioural control)

- Participants may have gained confidence to confront ethical dilemma situation?

Treatment effect estimate: 0.175
Difference-in-difference estimator
P = 0.043

June 2021   December 2021
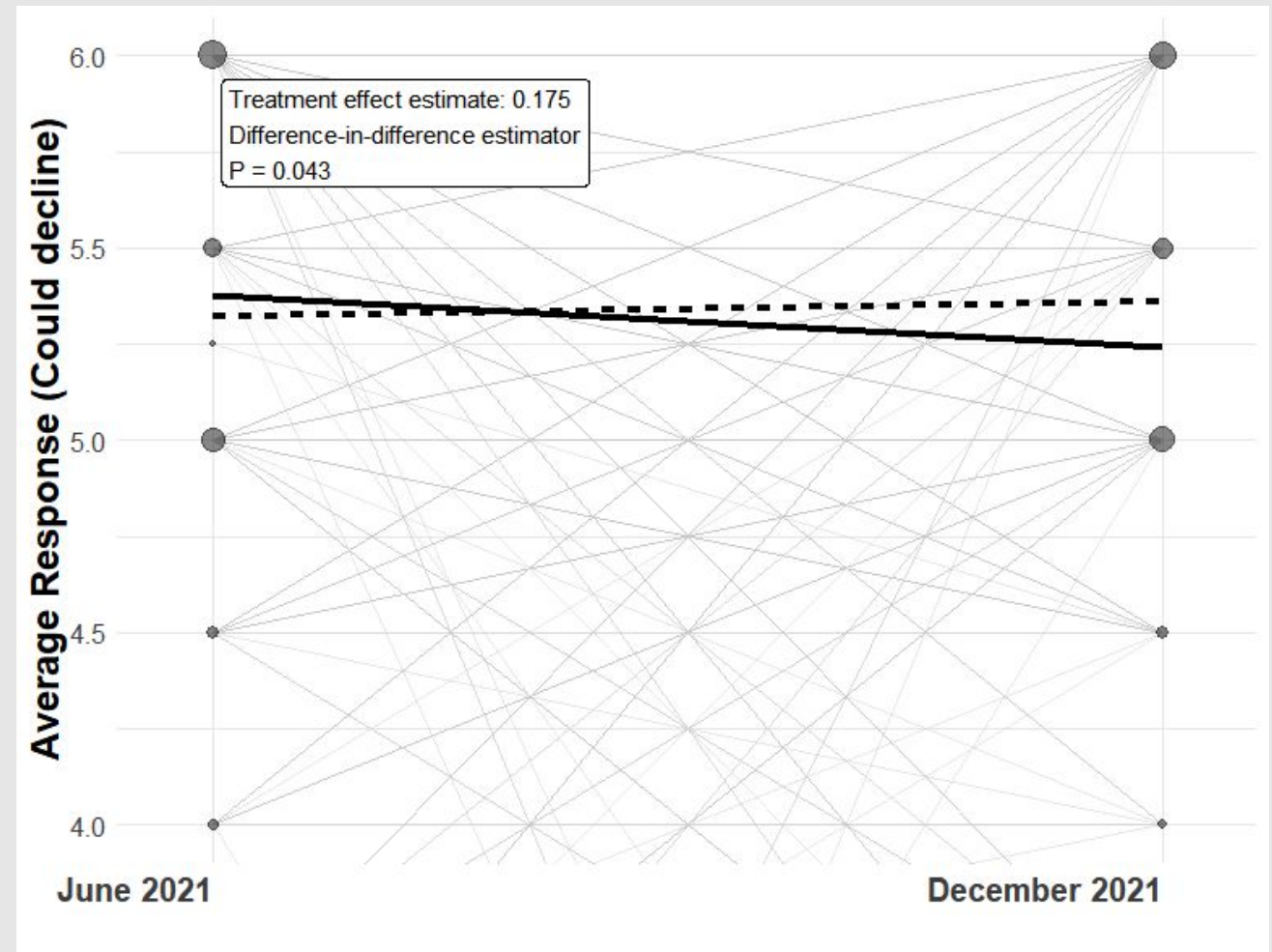
Conclusion and what next

- Insights from the field experiment
  - It's early days …
  - High prevalence of unethical behaviour among police officers
  - Ethical attitudes change over (short periods of) time
    - Need for continuous monitoring to better understand fluctuations
  - Ethics training can make a difference
    - Plausible preliminary findings but need for more analysis

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Practical points for further discussion

- Ethics trainings (surprisingly) novel for our cases
  - Positive evaluations from participants and superiors
- What next
  - Bangladesh: Other Police Districts; expand to higher ranks; potential collaboration with Police Training Academy
  - Nepal: Expand to local government administration
  - Interest in initiatives beyond trainings

- How to make it work
  - Support from the organizational leadership
  - Adaptation (tailoring) of training to the organizational context
  - Experiential learning, importance of trainers and training environment
- Be realistic what can be achieved