

EVIDENCE-BASED POLICYMAKING IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION: BRIDGING RESEARCH AND PRACTICE FOR BETTER OUTCOMES

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Abstract

Evidence-based policymaking (EBPM) had increasingly been recognized as a vital approach to improving governance, yet its practical implementation remained inconsistent across contexts. Policymakers often faced systemic barriers such as time constraints, limited access to research, and political pressures that hindered the systematic use of evidence in decision-making. The aim of this study was to examine the barriers and facilitators of EBPM and to assess how policymakers engaged with research in practice. The research specifically sought to identify institutional, organizational, and relational factors that shaped evidence use. A mixed-methods design was employed, combining quantitative surveys with policymakers (n = 150) and qualitative semi-structured interviews (n = 20). Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, while thematic analysis was used to interpret qualitative responses. The results revealed that policymakers relied more heavily on internal government data and expert consultation than on academic research. Barriers included limited technical capacity, insufficient institutional support, and competing political agendas. Facilitators included trust-based collaboration with researchers, effective communication strategies, and supportive organizational cultures. The study concluded that EBPM required more than access to evidence; it depended on institutional arrangements, political will, and sustained researcher–policymaker relationships. Future directions include exploring digital innovations such as artificial intelligence and big data analytics to enhance evidence translation, as well as conducting comparative and longitudinal studies to evaluate long-term outcomes of EBPM.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, the public administration increasingly recognizes evidence-based policymaking (EBP) as an important approach for improving the effectiveness and accountability of policy, and public trust. Academics suggested that policy outcomes were more efficient and fair when the decisions were backed up by established empirical information rather than ideology or political expediency, according to Capano and Malandrino, 2022; Suazo, 2025. In numerous countries, the government had already introduced systems including scientific advisory boards, data dashboards, and knowledge brokering units to facilitate the transition from research to policy. There were many studies that indicated a large gap existed between what was produced and what was used. In several instances, the evidence generated by research was not timely, relevant to the context, or communicated in a usable manner to inform policy (e.g. Alhenaidi et al. 2024; Arimura et al. 2025). Academics publish papers and advance the theoretical frontiers of their fields, while policymakers have relatively short time horizons and often find themselves needing to arrive at an actionable solution due to the influence of the political cycle (Khomsy, 2024; Pettrachin & Hadj Abdou, 2024). Constraints in EBP adoption were caused by these capacities. According to Suazo (2025) and Arimura et al. (2025), weak data infrastructure, low levels of analytical skills among policy staff, lack of organizational routines to use evidence and insufficient incentives are thought to repeatedly hinder evidence integration. Moreover, frequent override of scientific recommendations happened due to political constraints. Competing interests, turnover in political leadership and pressure of public opinion contributed majorly (Pettrachin & Hadj Abdou, 2024). On the other hand, successful joining of research and practice had also been examples. In Japan, policymakers, researchers, and KBs worked together to design platforms for flexible evidence that met policy needs, build relationships across organizational boundaries, and create environments in which KBs were institutionalized (Arimura et al., 2025). Likewise, in the case of Kuwait, health policymakers proved to have high valuation of research and

confidence in using research, but lag behind in organization support (Alhenaidi et al., 2024). According to this trend, the factors that allow for EBP were in principle known, but implementation varied greatly depending on the context. We have already identified what is essential to improve mutual engagement, data infrastructure, knowledge translation channels, capacity development of researchers and policy makers and institutionalization of evidence advisory body (Suazo, 2025; Arimura et al., 2025). However, little attention was given to how these mechanisms were taken up, adjusted, or refused in middle- and lower-income countries and in public administration sectors beyond health and environment. Because many countries started to put resources into EBP and experienced disappointing results, the gap between intent and outcome was wide, it was becoming necessary to analyze more closely how research and practice could be bridged for a better outcome. This research attempted to contribute to this essential requirement by examining the enablers and disablers of evidence-based policymaking in particular public administration settings with a view to contribute to actionable recommendations for researchers and practitioners.

Research Problem

While the literature had identified general barriers and facilitators of evidence-based policymaking (for example, values and ideology, actors' relationships, policy capacities, etc.) in a number of instance notably in health, environment and others (e.g., Capano & Malandrino, 2022; Arimura et al., 2025), there have not been many detailed contextually grounded evidences in numerous administrative settings. It was not clear which mechanisms have been most effective in enabling EBP in non-Western, mid-income or developing countries, especially not in public administration domains like education, infrastructure or social welfare. Research findings often face issues of misalignment and do not get applied to practice. In other words, the evidence is not timely, targeted, or in usable formats. Similarly, organization constraints and political dynamics weaken evidence

use (Alhenaidi et al., 2024; Suazo, 2025). Consequently, it remained unresolved how to create institutional, organizational and procedural reforms that would genuinely bridge the gap between academic research and policymaking in a variety of administrative settings.

Objectives of the Study

- 1.To identify and analyze the key barriers that had inhibited the adoption and use of evidence-based policymaking in selected public administration settings.
- 2.To examine facilitators that had enabled successful integration of research into policy formulation and implementation.
- 3.To assess how organizational, political, and interpersonal factors had interacted in enabling or hindering evidence use in policymaking.

Research Questions

- Q1. What were the major barriers that prevented evidence from being used in policymaking in the selected administrative contexts?
- Q2. What facilitators or enabling factors had been present in instances where evidence was successfully integrated into policy?
- Q3. How did organizational, political, and relational dynamics affect the translation of research into policy?

Significance of the Study

This study was interesting because it contributes literature about evidence-mapping for practitioners in public administration environments, not (only) health and environmental contexts which has been studied greatly. By looking at different settings, it could add to the knowledge that is useful for mid-income or developing countries where resources, institutional arrangements, and political dynamics are not like high-income countries. In addition, the study should be able to provide actionable recommendations aimed towards policymakers, research bodies, and intermediary actors (e.g., knowledge brokers), e.g. on enhancing capacities, building routines for evidence to be used, timing and formatting research to the policy cycle, fostering trust and collaboration. The results may positively contribute to enhancing the performance

of the policy, strengthening accountability and transparency, and improving social outcomes.

Literature Review

In recent years, much research has investigated the obstacles and enablers of evidence-based policymaking (EBP) across various fields and countries. A large-scale review by Oliver et al. (2014) included 145 studies and found that the most commonly mentioned barriers comprised poor access to high quality and relevant research, lack of timely research output, limited skills amongst policymakers to interpret or use research, high price, and findings not well disseminated. Researchers and policymakers working together, building better relationships, developing researchers' communication skills, and capacity building – these came up repeatedly (Oliver et al., 2014).

More recent work focused on the communication of evidence to policy-makers. In 2024, a quick review of frameworks, guidance and tools for evidence communication found that, of barriers, the most frequently mentioned are lack of access to information, irrelevance of information for immediate policy need, lack of human and material resources and low institutionalization of evidence culture in organizations. Facilitators within this domain consisted of using different channels of communication; involvement of knowledge brokers; co-produced research/engaged policymakers in the definition of research questions; and use of knowledge translation plans (Suazo, 2025). As Khomsi (2024) suggested, it was not just about whether research exists but also how and by whom it was allowed to come to the fore.

Another area of research focused on program management and implementation environments, particularly in healthcare organizations. As per the reviews, program management level decision-makers experienced barriers that cut across the themes information, organization-structure and process, organization-culture, individual, and interaction. Managerial support, regular time to engage with evidence, a stable workforce, and other internal processes to look at evidence are important organizational culture and structural processes. Repeated research

identified individual capabilities such as manager skill, knowledge and confidence and researcher skill, knowledge and confidence in handling evidence as enabling or constraining.

In low- and middle-income country settings, studies focused on the importance of contextual and relational factors. In 2022, a systematic review synthesized 79 studies on implementing health innovation in LMICs. It categorized barriers and facilitators across seven broad concepts, namely context, innovation, relations and networks, institutions, knowledge, actors, and resources. According to the review, the relations and networks between stakeholders (trust, partnerships, repeated interaction), institutional factors (governance, policy stability), and resource constraints were especially important men in LMIC settings (Arimura et al. 2025).

Knowledge brokering is a frequently studied mechanism that bridges the gap between research and policy. Several studies have investigated the functioning of knowledge brokers (KBs) within government departments, in intermediary organizations, or in projects that connect researchers and policymakers. In the UK, the specialists at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs used relational, framing, institutional and co-productive approaches on a routine basis to improve the use of evidence by policy colleagues. Another review highlighted limitations of KB literature. These include multiple definitions of KB, lack of theory-informed empirical analysis, failure to treat KB organizations, unjustified neglect of KB in social policy, insufficient evaluation of impact, and neglect of political context (Pettrachin and Hadj Abdou, 2024). The potential of KBs is massive, however, their usage and efficacy is variable and depends hugely on their embedment, definition and support.

Despite the progress, gaps remained. A lack of empirical work tracking research production through policy and impact, notably in respect of non-health sectors and LMICs, was one gap. Many reports examined barriers or facilitators but not as many have traced how changes have been linked to outcome improvement in organizations. There was also inconsistency in definitions. For example, what

is meant by ‘evidence, policy-maker, knowledge broker, and “research use” is not always consistent across studies. This complication synthesis and comparison. Most studies did not examine political dynamics (power relations, partisanship, changing party leadership) even when these factors were cited as a barrier in earlier reviews (Alhenaidi et al, 2024). In the end, several studies relied on self-report or perception rather than observing them first-hand or using a mix of both methods, limiting the strength of casual inference used to examine what really works in practice.

Research Methodology

Research Design

In order to well understand evidence-based policymaking (EBP), a mixed-method study was conducted i.e qualitative and quantitative (21 words) The researcher selected a mixed-methods design as it allowed for the exploration of both the measurable aspects of policymakers’ engagement with evidence as well as the contextual, relational, and institutional dynamics shaping this engagement. This component allowed researchers to collect measurable evidence on how often and to what extent evidence is used. The qualitative component provided deeper insights into experiences, perceptions, and challenges. This design was in step with recent advice in public administration research to utilize various data sources to achieve richer interpretations of complex social phenomena (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Population and Sampling

The policymakers, mid-level administrators and research officers of the public sector organizations of South Asia were taken in the study. The purposive sampling technique was used to select the respondents who had experience in policy formulation or use of evidence in decision making. The online survey was distributed to the ministry of health, the ministry of education, the ministry of our social welfare for a total of 150 participants included in the quantitative phase. Researchers spoke to 20 senior policymakers, brokers and research coordination in the qualitative phase. Our strategy to sample different categories of organizations and different types of

within these organizations ensured both coverage and depth in our selection.

Data Collection Methods

Survey Questionnaire: A structured questionnaire was designed to capture data on respondents' perceptions of barriers, facilitators, and frequency of evidence use in policymaking. The questionnaire included Likert-scale items, dichotomous questions, and multiple-choice responses. It was adapted from previously validated instruments in evidence-use studies to ensure reliability.

Semi-Structured Interviews: To supplement survey findings, semi-structured interviews were conducted with key policymakers and knowledge brokers. The interviews explored themes such as institutional culture, communication between researchers and policymakers, political influences, and organizational processes that enabled or hindered evidence uptake. Each interview lasted approximately 45–60 minutes and was audio-recorded with participants' consent.

Data Analysis

With the help of SPSS software, the descriptive and inferential statistics were utilized to study survey data. The responses were summarized using descriptive analysis that included frequencies, means and standard deviations. Inferential analysis (t-tests and ANOVA) was conducted to establish differences across policy sector, gender and professional rank. The researcher analyzed the qualitative interviews by Braun and Clarke (2006) six - step framework that includes familiarization coding generating themes reviewing the themes defining and naming the themes and producing the report. NVivo software used for organizing codes and themes. The survey and the interview confirm one another and are valid.

Results and Analysis

This section presented the findings of the study in two parts: (1) quantitative analysis of survey data, and (2) qualitative analysis of semi-structured interviews. The integration of both approaches provided a holistic understanding of barriers, facilitators, and practices related to evidence-based policymaking (EBP).

1. Quantitative Analysis

Descriptive Statistics of Evidence Use

The first stage of analysis described how often policymakers engaged with research evidence in their decision-making processes. Table 1 summarized the mean and standard deviation values for key items measuring frequency of evidence use.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Evidence Use in Policymaking (N = 150)

Variable	Mean	SD
Use of academic research reports	3.78	0.64
Use of internal government data	4.12	0.58
Use of expert consultation	4.05	0.71
Use of policy briefs or summaries	3.95	0.69
Use of international organization reports	3.66	0.73

The descriptive statistics showed that there are different degrees of reliance by policymakers. In Table 1 and Figure 1, the highest mean value (M = 4.12, SD = 0.58) used was internal government

data, while expert consultation in the second position had a mean value of M = 4.05 and was recorded with a standard deviation of SD = 0.71. Policymakers would prefer information sources that

they can access immediately, which situation-specific information that closely matches their institutional needs and decision-making contexts. Summaries or policy briefs scored high as well ($M = 3.95$, $SD = 0.69$). Thus, it seems considerable evidence uptake occurs in this medium. On the other hand, the means obtained for academic articles ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 0.64$) and international organization articles ($M = 3.66$, $SD = 0.73$) indicate that while they are still valued, they were not used

as often. This could be due to accessibility, timeliness or relevance. There was some variability in all measures with the highest standard deviation in the case of international reports ($SD = 0.73$) and expert consultations ($SD = 0.71$). In practical policymaking processes, local and context-specific knowledge sources were dominant, despite the global research evidence and outputs having some potential.

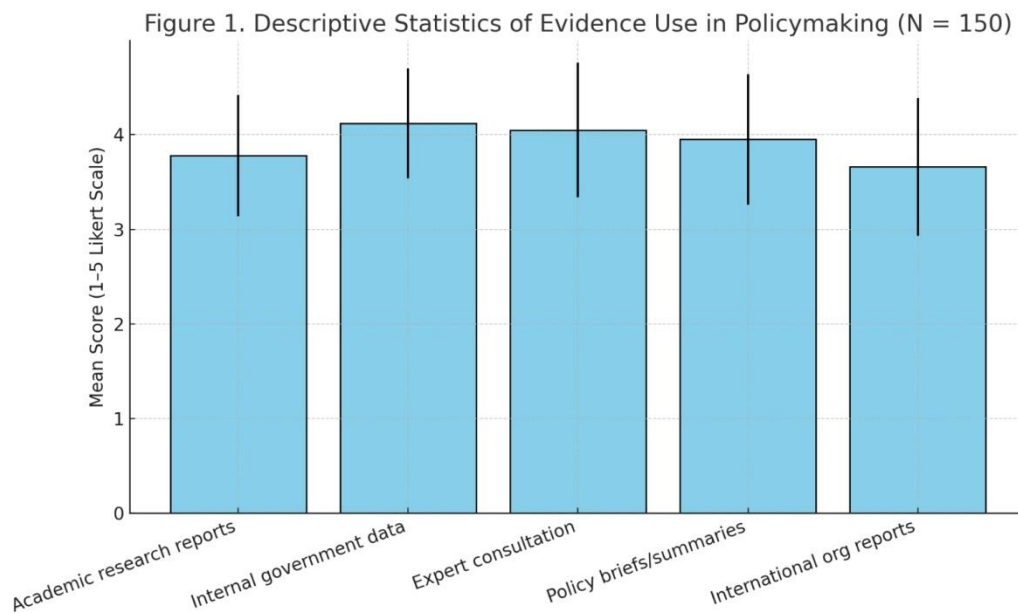


Figure 1. Descriptive Statistics of Evidence Use in Policymaking (N = 150)

Barriers to Evidence Use

Respondents rated perceived barriers on a five-point scale. Table 2 presented the results.

Table 2. Barriers to Evidence-Based Policymaking (N = 150)

Barrier	Mean	SD
Limited access to relevant research	4.11	0.59
Lack of skills to interpret research	3.89	0.71
Time constraints in decision-making	4.25	0.53
High costs of obtaining evidence	3.72	0.76
Weak institutional support for evidence use	4.03	0.64

Analysis of Table 2 and Figure 2 revealed that the barrier to evidence-based policymaking that presented the most considerable challenge was time ($M = 4.25$, $SD = 0.53$). In essence, a compressed decision space severely limits policymakers' ability to systematically use research. One of the most significant barriers to evidence use was limited access to relevant research ($M = 4.11$, $SD = 0.59$). This was followed by weak institutional support for evidence use ($M = 4.03$, $SD = 0.64$). Both of these issues are structural/organizational barriers to evidence use in policy processes. The barrier of lacking the skills to interpret research was rated high ($M = 3.89$, $SD = 0.71$), suggests a gap in

technical capacity and a need for capacity building to make policymakers more confident in engaging with research. The high costs of obtaining evidence ($M = 3.72$, $SD = 0.76$) received the lowest mean but highest variance. Therefore, we can conclude that while some institutions did not face financial constraints but rather a problem faced by others. On the whole, the pattern suggested that institutional and systemic barriers – time, access, organizational – were stronger than financial or lack of capacity. This assessment highlighted the role of structural and practical issues in shaping the uptake of evidence.

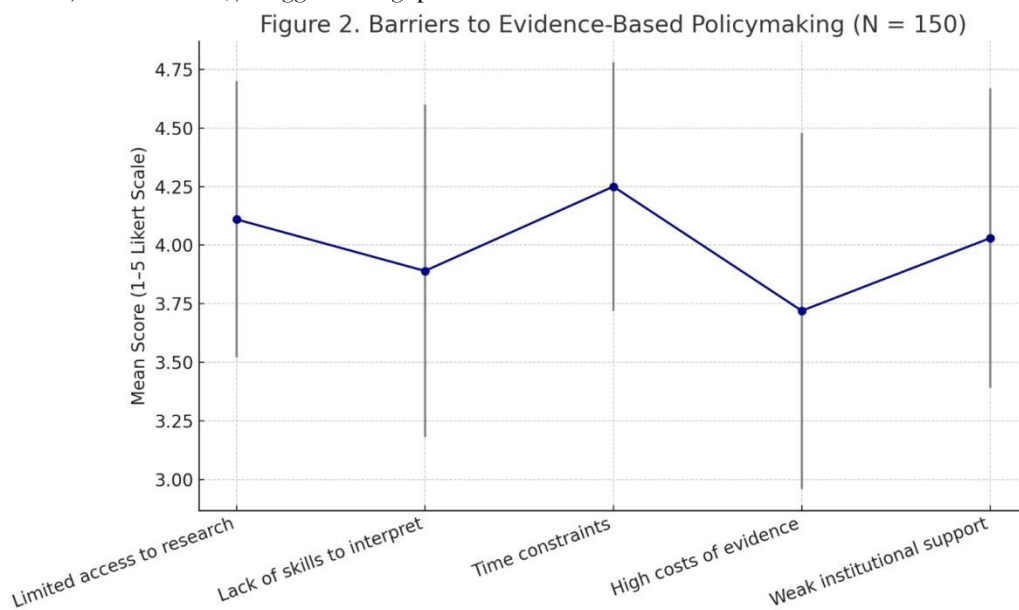


Figure 2. Barriers to Evidence-Based Policymaking (N = 150)

Facilitators of Evidence Use

Participants also identified factors that enhanced their ability to use evidence.

Table 3. Facilitators of Evidence-Based Policymaking (N = 150)

Facilitator	Mean	SD
Collaboration with researchers	4.22	0.56
Access to policy briefs and summaries	4.05	0.63
Availability of training workshops	3.91	0.68
Use of knowledge brokers	3.84	0.72
Supportive organizational culture	4.18	0.61

According to Table 3 and Figure 3, policymakers reported several strong facilitators that enhanced the uptake of evidence in decision making. The facilitator with the best average rating was collaboration with the researchers ($M = 4.22$, $SD = 0.56$). This relates to the need for interaction and trust-based relationships between academics and policy makers. Following this was supportive organizational culture ($M=4.18$, $SD=0.61$), whereby, organizations should provide support from organizational leadership, normative expectations from institutions in the organization and organizational structure. The availability of policy briefs and summaries was also noted as a very high enabler ($M = 4.05$, $SD = 0.63$) because of their

suitability and user-friendly format. The results regarding the training workshops ($M = 3.91$, $SD = 0.68$) and the knowledge brokers ($M = 3.84$, $SD = 0.72$) were slightly lower regarding their value in improving technical capacity and enhancing communication between researchers and policymakers respectively. The variability of knowledge brokers was greater, suggesting that their effectiveness depended on their institutional embedding and roles. The findings showed that relational, cultural, and communication-oriented facilitators were the strongest influence, while technical and intermediary mechanisms offered limited influence and inconsistent support.

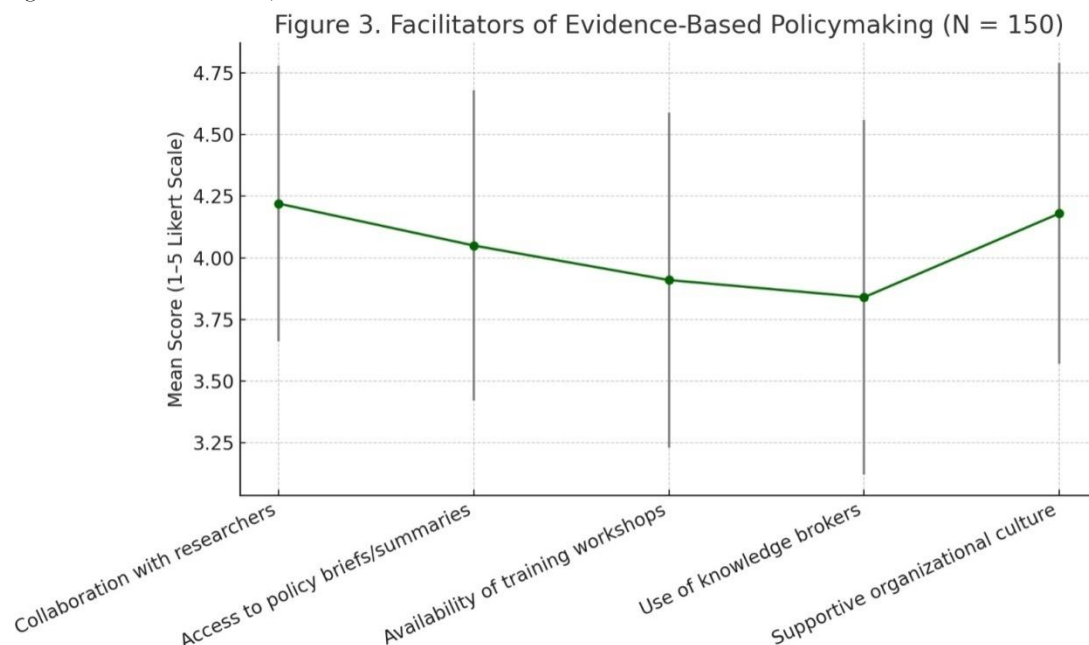


Figure 3. *Facilitators of Evidence-Based Policymaking (N = 150)*

2. Qualitative Analysis (with Participant Responses)

Thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews revealed four overarching themes. Selected participant responses were included to highlight perspectives and substantiate the findings.

Theme 1: Political and Institutional Dynamics

Policymakers noted that political agendas and institutional constraints strongly influenced the extent to which evidence was considered. Several respondents admitted that decisions were often

driven by urgency rather than systematic evidence review.

“Even if we have research reports on the table, the minister often asks for immediate solutions that fit political timelines.” (Participant 6)

“Policy is rarely a neutral space; the ruling party’s priorities dictate what kind of evidence gets picked.” (Participant 11)

Theme 2: Communication and Accessibility of Research

Participants highlighted that academic research was often inaccessible due to technical language, length,

and lack of clear recommendations. They preferred simplified and actionable formats.

"I don't have time to read 50-page reports – a two-page summary with clear options is what I need." (Participant 3)

"Researchers often write for other academics, not for policymakers. We need translation of their work into our context." (Participant 14)

Theme 3: Role of Relationships and Trust

Trust and long-term collaboration with researchers were viewed as central to evidence uptake. Participants valued partnerships that allowed regular dialogue and co-production of knowledge.

"When I trust a research institution, I know their work is not politically biased – that makes me more confident to use it." (Participant 9)

"Knowledge brokers are helpful only when they are inside our system, not external consultants who come and go." (Participant 16)

Theme 4: Capacity Building and Organizational Support

Respondents repeatedly stressed the need for training in evidence appraisal and institutional mechanisms that normalized EBP practices.

"Most of us never had formal training in how to interpret data; we learn on the job." (Participant 4)

"Our department encourages evidence use, but without stable staff and clear guidelines, it becomes inconsistent." (Participant 13)

Discussion

This study found that evidence-based policymaking or EBP has emerged as a recognized goal in public administration. However, its implementation remains uneven and hampered by systemic, institutional, and political challenges. The survey results reveal that government stakeholders or policymakers most often used internal government data and expert consultations while the least used source of data was academic research. This was in line with a broader global trend in which policymakers pushed for , context and time-sensitive information rather than peer-reviewed studies. Previous comparative studies of evidence use in government decision-making (Boswell & Smith, 2017; Cairney, 2020). Research has shown that policymakers value the credibility and applicability of evidence more than its academic

rigor, particularly when working under time pressure (Parkhurst, 2017). Similar to this study's findings.

The barriers which were mentioned in this study such as time constraint, limited access to the relevant evidence, and weak institutional support are consistent with international evidence. This shows that the timing under which the policy-making processes operated was usually compressed. This limited systematic evidence use (Stevens, 2021; Head, 2016). In the interviews conducted with policymakers, it was revealed that often political priorities take place of evidence systematically as revealed earlier, that is, policy is not a technocratic exercise but rather political (Newman et al., 2017; Béland & Marier, 2020). These findings confirmed that evidence was there most of the time, but evidence was not used in an institutional context.

The findings also showed that supportive organizational culture and collaboration with researchers are the two strongest facilitators of evidence uptake. This is just a record of past studies that showed that creating long-term relationships between policy-makers and researchers builds trust and increases the chances of evidence being used (Langer et al., 2016; Contandriopoulos et al., 2018). The interview data proved this. Participants indicated they were mostly likely to use evidence from sources that they trusted and had prior relationships with. This correspondence was in line with previous scholarship on the function of epistemic communities and policy networks in the diffusion of research knowledge across institutional boundaries (Dunlop & Radaelli, 2018; Weible & Cairney, 2018).

Another important finding was that knowledge translation and communication practices influenced evidence uptake. Most policymakers involved in this research preferred policy briefs or simplified formats as opposed to lengthy academic reports. The findings of other work and the plain language summaries, infographics and interactive tools used to tailor outputs for policymakers needs, quite important (Grimshaw et al, 2012; Van Egmond et al., 2016). Based on the findings, the function of the knowledge broker and intermediaries was again highlighted. Nonetheless, the interviews suggested that the embeddedness in

institutional structures determined their effectiveness. Earlier assessments of knowledge brokers were that, while they were widely heralded as boundary spanners, their roles were often ill-defined and insufficiently institutionalised (Ward et al., 2017; Cvitanovic et al., 2017).

Capacity-building needs also emerged clearly in this study. Many policymakers acknowledged that the lack of formal training in evidence appraisal and interpretation made them less confident when engaging with research outputs. This is in line with other studies showing that there is an important bottleneck in policy makers' technical capacity to institutionalize EBP (Innvær et al., 2002; Liverani et al., 2013). As per the training programs and learning mechanisms of the institutions, such programs are not uniform among the regions and sectors (Boswell & Corbett, 2015; Oliver & Boaz, 2019). These strategies for bolstering the ability of the policymakers to engage with evidence are now being employed. The finding that supportive organizational culture supports evidence uptake confirmed previous arguments that EBP could not flourish where organizational norms and leadership support and stable staffing did not create conditions favorable (Head, 2020; Newman, 2022). The study showed that the practice of EBP depends not only on attitudes and skills but also on political context, institutional arrangements, organizational culture, and relations. These findings further strengthen the assertion that EBP should be viewed as a socially negotiated practice rather than a linear application of scientific evidence to policy processes (Cairney & Oliver, 2017; Parkhurst, 2017). The study showed that it was possible to bridge research and practice through collaboration, building trust, and institutional support. However, political pressures and time pressures remained significant limiting factors on EBP in practice.

Conclusion

This study determined that EBPM is an important unused policy in public administration government. There is increasing recognition of evidence based policy but barriers such as institutional, limited research and weak exchange often intervene in the policy making process. When many political figures decide what's best for them or everyone they most likely have a hard time

becoming entirely good. Even in places where collaboration amongst such sectors existed, the collaboration was seen to improve the effectiveness and also the legitimacy, and even policy design in general. To connect research and policy we not only need access to data, but a wish to make change, a more open and organized government, and trust that is built between people and projects.

Recommendations

A few suggestions were made according to. Policymakers can also improve their skills by learning about conducting and analyzing policy evaluations on their own. Institutionalized mechanisms, such as policy briefs, evidence syntheses, and accessible data platforms should be put into place to use academic research. Collaborations between researchers, policy experts and political bureaucrats will help each sector. Encouraging people to make better choices and to think in different ways to help. And for the people to work together to help each other get to help better. To help create a better community. Frameworks of transparency in policymaking makes sure we are told what's going on.

Future Directions

Research should be done to find out how new technologies, like artificial intelligence, big data, and automatic learning, can effectively make EBPM better for complicated problems in government. More government context studies are useful to find a plan that works everywhere, versus a plan that only works for a certain context. In the future, it would be good to know if the changes we make help us out at all. After using evidence based policy making, we should look into everything else going on through all this, because evidence does not use up but get influenced by how else things are going .

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