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Evidence-Based Policymaking for Sustainable Public Administration

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Abstract

Evidence-Based Policymaking has become an increasingly important governance approach for improving policy quality and supporting sustainable public administration amid growing societal complexity and rapid technological change. This study aims to examine the strategic role of Evidence-Based Policymaking in strengthening sustainable public administration through an integrated analysis of institutional capacity, digital transformation, collaborative governance, and organizational learning. The study adopts a qualitative systematic literature review following the PRISMA framework to synthesize recent international studies on evidence-informed governance. The findings reveal that sustainable public administration depends not only on the availability of scientific evidence but also on governments' capacity to institutionalize evidence generation, knowledge management, digital innovation, stakeholder collaboration, and continuous policy evaluation throughout the policymaking process. The study proposes an integrated conceptual framework demonstrating how these governance dimensions collectively enhance policy effectiveness, institutional accountability, adaptive governance, and long-term public value creation. The novelty of this research lies in integrating institutional, technological, and collaborative perspectives into a comprehensive model of Evidence-Based Policymaking for sustainable public administration. The findings contribute to governance theory by providing a holistic understanding of evidence utilization while offering practical recommendations for policymakers seeking to strengthen institutional resilience, improve policy quality, and advance sustainable governance in increasingly dynamic policy environments.

INTRODUCTION

Modern governance is becoming more complex as the nature of governance has shifted dramatically, impacting the way public policies are designed, delivered and assessed. Policy environments are uncertain and interdependent, owing to rapid technological change, climate change, public health crises, demographic change, budget pressures, and growing public demands. It is difficult to use traditional methods that are mainly based on political intuition, bureaucratic routines and short

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term interests to solve multidimensional public problems (Ates, 2026). In response, governments globally have adopted Evidence Based Policymaking (EBPM) as a strategy to enhance the quality of policies by systematically incorporating scientific evidence, administrative data, policies and policy evaluation, and the knowledge of stakeholders into policy decisions (Cairney, 2022; World Health Organization, 2023). Evidence-based approaches are known to be vital tools for enhancing the effectiveness of government, increasing public accountability, and making public interventions measurable and sustainable (Agu et al., 2024; Matlala, 2025; Rassanjani & Meesonk, 2025).

The Sustainable Development Goals have also gained popularity, giving even more reason to emphasize evidence based governance in public administration (Silva et al., 2023; Rădulescu et al., 2023; Rassanjani & Meesonk, 2025). Governments need to strike a balance between economic growth, environmental protection and social inclusion, building institutional resilience over the long term to ensure sustainable development. The multi-dimensional goals require flexible, transparent and evidence-informed policies, not only based on disjointed political factors (Almulhim & Yigitcanlar, 2025; Bandelow et al., 2025). Public administration, in the sense of an administrative system for the enforcement of rules, is no longer the place it used to be, but is now a system of collaboration responsible for creating public value by using knowledge in decision making that is sustainable. In the recent years, the importance of sustainable public administration has been connected to the learning capacity of institutions, interactions between different sectors, digitalization and continuous policy review with trusted evidence.

But, in a multitude of nations, Evidence Based Policymaking is not put into practice consistently. Despite significant investments in digital government projects, in open data platforms, monitoring systems, and policy evaluation tools, evidence is often not used when formulating policies. There are ongoing challenges to evidence use in the form of political pressure, institutional disarticulation, inadequate analytical capacity, weak coordination between government actors, and limited linkages between researchers and policy makers (Suazo-Galdames et al., 2025; Ansah et al., 2024; Zheng, 2026). This results in gaps in implementation, inefficient allocation of resources and low policy sustainability, with many public policies still being reactive rather than preventive. These challenges are exacerbated in developing countries where administrative capacity and institutional coordination may differ greatly by government level.

Advances in today's digital world have given governments unprecedented opportunities to improve evidence use, including the use of artificial intelligence, big data analytics, geographic information systems, integrated administrative data sets and predictive policy analysis. Such technological advancements support policy-makers to have access to real-time information, a more accurate assessment of the policy impact, and faster responses to the new challenges facing societies. However, digital technologies can by themselves not ensure evidence based governance (Xu et a., 2022). The other factors that influence the success of Evidence Based Policymaking are still very significant: institutional arrangements, organizational culture, leadership commitment, data quality, public participation, and accountability mechanisms. Thus, technological innovation should go hand in hand with institutions that can enable the creation of actionable policy knowledge, and an integrated governance ecosystem is needed to ensure sustainable public administration.

Previous scholarship has made a significant contribution to the understanding of evidence informed governance in many ways. Some existing research has focused on the challenges and opportunities of using evidence in policy formulation, digital transformation and public administration, sustainability oriented governance,

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accountability of policy and institutional resilience. There are other systematic reviews that have examined sustainability integration in public management, green governance and digital public administration (Dylian & Pribadi, 2026; Mountasser & Abdellatif, 2023). Through these studies, it has been thoroughly shown that evidence, technology and collaborative governance are integral aspects of modern governance reform.

Although, there is a large body of knowledge that has accumulated, some important research gaps still exist. First, there is an existing literature that focuses mainly on the technical dimension of the process of knowledge utilization in the EBP, without giving sufficient attention to the strategic dimension of EBP in the area of public administration for sustainable development. Second, research on sustainability often focuses on aspects of environmental governance or SDG implementation, rather than fully considering the interplay between evidence generation, institutional learning and policy accountability within the policy-making process. Third, existing literature tends to approach digital governance, policy evaluation, collaborative governance, and sustainability as distinct parts of the whole, thus offering disjointed ideas and theories that offer little support for a coordinated public administration reform. These constraints suggest that a more holistic analytical framework is required that can link evidence use to long-term institutional sustainability, and to the creation of public value.

Recent advances in the state of the art have shown how the creation, understanding, dissemination, and use of evidence across the policy process is as critical to sustainable governance as is the effective implementation of policy. There is a growing body of literature that highlights the adaptive governance, participatory governance, data-driven governance, integration of knowledge, and continuous learning of policies as key attributes of resilient public institutions. Furthermore, accountability has moved from the compliance aspect to the evidence of the choices that have been made in the policy, so there is a need for transparency and credibility. This is a change in paradigm of public administration in which the principle of rule-based bureaucracy is replaced by a learning-based governance that is able to meet the challenges of complex society and retain its democratic legitimacy.

Based on these advances, this study suggests a more integrated approach, in which Evidence Based Policymaking is perceived as a strategic base for sustainable public administration, and not just a tool for policy analysis. The novelty of this study is that it provides a full conceptualization of the interrelationships between evidence generation, institutional capacity, collaborative governance, accountability and sustainability in public administration. This research combines these dimensions into an integrated analytical model to frame the contribution of evidence driven governance to resilient, adaptive, transparent and sustainable public institutions, as opposed to the previous studies that treat these dimensions separately. With this, the goal of this study is to analyse the strategic role of Evidence Based Policymaking in the purpose of strengthening sustainable public administration, at the same time, to add theory enrichment and give policy recommendations to policy makers who want to enhance the quality of governance, the effectiveness of the policy and long term public value creation in more complex governance environment.

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design using a systematic literature review (SLR) to examine the strategic role of Evidence-Based Policymaking (EBPM) in promoting sustainable public administration. A qualitative SLR was considered appropriate because it enables researchers to synthesize existing knowledge, identify emerging trends, evaluate theoretical developments, and construct comprehensive

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conceptual frameworks from previous empirical studies. Unlike conventional narrative reviews, the SLR approach follows transparent and replicable procedures that minimize selection bias while improving the credibility of synthesized findings (Page et al., 2021; Snyder, 2019). The review was further guided by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA 2020) framework to ensure methodological rigor throughout the identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion processes (Page et al., 2021).

Data Sources and Search Strategy

The literature search was conducted using three internationally recognized scientific databases, namely Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar, which collectively provide extensive coverage of peer-reviewed publications in public administration, governance, and public policy. The search focused on studies published between 2020 and 2026, reflecting the rapidly evolving discourse surrounding evidence-based governance, digital transformation, sustainability, and public sector innovation.

The search strategy combined several keywords using Boolean operators, including *"Evidence-Based Policymaking," "Evidence-Informed Policy," "Sustainable Public Administration," "Public Governance," "Policy Evaluation," "Collaborative Governance," "Digital Government," "Public Sector Innovation,"* and *"Institutional Capacity."* Additional manual searches were conducted through reference tracking to identify relevant studies that were not captured during the initial database search. Restricting the review to recent publications ensured that the synthesized evidence reflected current theoretical developments and practical experiences in public governance.

Study Selection

The study selection process followed four sequential stages based on the PRISMA 2020 framework. The first stage involved the identification of potentially relevant publications from electronic databases. Duplicate records were subsequently removed before proceeding to the screening stage, during which titles and abstracts were evaluated against predefined inclusion criteria. Eligible articles were then subjected to full-text assessment before final inclusion in the review.

The inclusion criteria comprised peer-reviewed journal articles published in English between 2020 and 2026 that explicitly discussed Evidence-Based Policymaking, sustainable public administration, governance reform, policy evaluation, or institutional capacity within the public sector. Conference proceedings, book chapters, dissertations, editorials, opinion papers, and publications lacking sufficient methodological transparency were excluded to maintain the overall quality and consistency of the synthesized evidence.

Table 1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Publication Type	Peer-reviewed journal articles	Books, conference papers, theses, editorials
Language	English	Non-English publications
Publication Year	2020–2026	Before 2020
Research Topic	Evidence-Based Policymaking, Sustainable Public Administration, Governance	Irrelevant policy topics
Accessibility	Full-text available	Abstract only

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As presented in Table 1, these criteria were established to ensure that only high-quality and relevant studies contributed to the conceptual synthesis developed in this research.

Data Collection and Research Instrument

The primary data consisted of secondary data extracted from eligible scientific publications. A structured data extraction matrix served as the principal research instrument, enabling systematic recording of essential information from each article. The extracted variables included publication characteristics, research objectives, methodological approaches, governance dimensions, evidence utilization mechanisms, sustainability perspectives, principal findings, and identified research limitations. The use of a standardized extraction matrix improved consistency during the review process by ensuring that comparable information was collected across all selected studies. Furthermore, analytical memos were prepared throughout the review to document emerging concepts, recurring themes, and theoretical relationships identified during data analysis.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using qualitative thematic analysis following the six-phase analytical procedure proposed by Braun and Clarke (2021). The process began with repeated reading of the selected literature to achieve familiarity with the data. Relevant concepts were subsequently coded according to recurring themes related to evidence utilization, institutional capacity, collaborative governance, digital transformation, accountability, sustainability, and policy effectiveness.

Following the coding process, conceptually similar codes were grouped into broader analytical categories that represented the core dimensions of Evidence-Based Policymaking within sustainable public administration. These categories were continuously refined through iterative comparison between studies until coherent thematic patterns emerged. The final analytical stage involved synthesizing these themes into an integrated conceptual framework illustrating the relationships among evidence generation, institutional learning, collaborative governance, accountability, and sustainable public administration.

Rather than statistically aggregating previous findings, the thematic synthesis emphasized conceptual integration, allowing this study to develop a broader theoretical understanding of how Evidence-Based Policymaking contributes to institutional sustainability and long-term public value creation.

Trustworthiness of the Study

To enhance methodological rigor, this study adopted several strategies to ensure the trustworthiness of the review findings. Credibility was strengthened through comprehensive database searches, clearly defined eligibility criteria, and adherence to the PRISMA 2020 reporting framework. Dependability was supported by documenting each stage of the review process, thereby enabling transparency and potential replication by future researchers. Confirmability was maintained through systematic coding procedures and continuous comparison across multiple studies to minimize researcher bias. Finally, transferability was enhanced by providing detailed descriptions of the review procedures, study characteristics, and analytical processes, allowing readers to assess the applicability of the findings in different public administration contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Nowell et al., 2017).

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study employed a systematic literature review to examine the role of Evidence-Based Policymaking (EBPM) in advancing sustainable public administration. The analysis focused on identifying major themes, institutional dimensions, governance mechanisms, and emerging trends discussed in contemporary public administration literature. Rather than evaluating individual policy cases, the review synthesized existing empirical and conceptual studies to develop a comprehensive understanding of how evidence contributes to sustainable governance practices.

The findings indicate that recent scholarship increasingly recognizes Evidence-Based Policymaking as a strategic governance approach rather than merely a technical decision-support tool. Across the reviewed literature, evidence utilization extends beyond statistical analysis and policy evaluation to encompass organizational learning, collaborative governance, digital innovation, public participation, and institutional accountability. These interconnected dimensions demonstrate that sustainable public administration depends not only on the availability of evidence but also on governments' capacity to integrate scientific knowledge into policymaking processes.

The synthesis further reveals that the literature has evolved considerably during the past several years. Earlier studies primarily emphasized the technical aspects of evidence production and policy evaluation, whereas more recent publications increasingly examine institutional resilience, adaptive governance, data-driven decision making, and cross-sector collaboration. This shift reflects a broader transformation in public administration toward governance systems capable of responding to complex societal challenges through continuous learning and evidence-informed innovation.

To facilitate systematic analysis, the findings are organized into four major themes that consistently emerged across the reviewed studies. These themes include institutional capacity for Evidence-Based Policymaking, digital transformation and data-driven governance, collaborative governance and stakeholder engagement, and evidence utilization for sustainable public administration. Each theme represents an essential component of contemporary governance and collectively illustrates how Evidence-Based Policymaking contributes to improving policy effectiveness and long-term institutional sustainability.

Table 2. Major Themes Identified in the Literature Review

Theme	Main Focus	Contribution to Sustainable Public Administration
Institutional Capacity	Leadership, organizational learning, analytical capability	Improves evidence utilization and policy quality
Digital Transformation	Digital government, big data, artificial intelligence, integrated information systems	Enhances policy analysis, monitoring, and decision making
Collaborative Governance	Government, academia, civil society, private sector collaboration	Strengthens policy legitimacy and knowledge integration
Sustainable Public Administration	Accountability, resilience, adaptive governance, policy effectiveness	Supports long-term public value creation and sustainable governance

Source: Synthesized by the authors from the reviewed literature.

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As shown in Table 2, the reviewed studies consistently emphasize that Evidence-Based Policymaking functions through the interaction of multiple governance dimensions rather than through isolated institutional reforms. Institutional capacity provides the organizational foundation for evidence utilization, while digital transformation improves data availability and analytical capability. Collaborative governance broadens the range of knowledge incorporated into policymaking, and sustainable public administration represents the ultimate outcome of these integrated governance processes. Collectively, these findings provide the conceptual basis for the thematic discussions presented in the following sections.

Institutional Capacity for Evidence-Based Policymaking

Institutional capacity emerged as one of the most dominant themes across the reviewed literature, highlighting its critical role in determining the successful implementation of Evidence-Based Policymaking (EBPM). The synthesis demonstrates that the availability of scientific evidence alone does not automatically lead to better policy decisions. Instead, governments require organizational structures, skilled human resources, supportive leadership, effective knowledge management systems, and institutional cultures that encourage the systematic use of evidence throughout the policy cycle. These institutional characteristics collectively determine whether evidence can be translated into practical policy interventions capable of addressing increasingly complex public challenges.

A recurring finding in the reviewed studies is that leadership commitment serves as the primary driver of evidence utilization within public organizations. Public leaders who prioritize transparency, accountability, and organizational learning are more likely to establish mechanisms that facilitate data sharing, policy evaluation, and interagency coordination. Such leadership encourages policymakers to base decisions on empirical findings rather than political preferences or administrative traditions. Conversely, weak institutional leadership often results in fragmented decision-making processes, limited investment in analytical capacity, and inconsistent policy implementation. These findings suggest that evidence-based governance is fundamentally an institutional process that depends on strategic leadership as much as on technical expertise.

The literature further indicates that organizational learning is an essential component of institutional capacity. Public institutions that routinely evaluate previous policies, document implementation experiences, and integrate lessons learned into future decision making demonstrate greater adaptability when responding to emerging societal issues. Continuous learning enables governments to refine policy instruments, reduce implementation failures, and improve service delivery over time. Several studies also emphasize that learning-oriented organizations foster innovation by encouraging experimentation, cross-sector knowledge exchange, and reflective policy practices, thereby strengthening long-term institutional resilience.

Another significant finding concerns the importance of analytical capability within public administration. The reviewed studies consistently identify shortages of policy analysts, limited research competencies, and inadequate statistical skills as major obstacles to effective evidence utilization, particularly in developing countries. Even where governments possess large volumes of administrative data, insufficient analytical expertise frequently prevents these data from being transformed into actionable policy recommendations. Strengthening analytical capacity therefore requires sustained investment in professional development, policy research units, partnerships with universities, and specialized training in data analysis, program evaluation, and policy assessment.

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Institutional coordination also emerged as a key determinant of Evidence-Based Policymaking. Many studies report that evidence is often dispersed across ministries, government agencies, research institutions, and statistical offices without effective mechanisms for integration. Fragmented governance structures create duplication of effort, inconsistencies in policy implementation, and difficulties in sharing reliable information across organizational boundaries. In contrast, governments that establish integrated coordination mechanisms are better positioned to consolidate diverse sources of evidence, improve policy coherence, and develop more comprehensive responses to complex public issues. These findings underscore the need for institutional arrangements that facilitate communication, collaboration, and knowledge exchange among multiple governmental actors.

The review also highlights the growing importance of knowledge management systems in supporting institutional capacity. Modern public organizations increasingly rely on centralized databases, digital repositories, policy evaluation reports, and organizational learning platforms to preserve institutional knowledge and improve evidence accessibility. Such systems enable policymakers to retrieve previous experiences, compare policy alternatives, and monitor implementation outcomes more efficiently. Moreover, effective knowledge management reduces information asymmetry between agencies and enhances the continuity of policymaking despite changes in political leadership or administrative personnel. Table 3 summarizes the principal institutional dimensions identified across the reviewed literature and their respective contributions to the implementation of Evidence-Based Policymaking.

Table 3. Institutional Capacity Dimensions Supporting Evidence-Based Policymaking

Institutional Dimension	Primary Function	Expected Governance Outcome
Leadership Commitment	Promotes evidence-oriented decision making	Greater policy consistency and accountability
Organizational Learning	Facilitates continuous policy improvement	Increased institutional adaptability
Analytical Capacity	Strengthens data interpretation and policy evaluation	Higher quality policy formulation
Interagency Coordination	Integrates evidence across government institutions	Improved policy coherence
Knowledge Management	Enhances accessibility and utilization of policy information	Sustainable organizational learning

Source: Synthesized by the authors from the reviewed literature.

As presented in Table 3, institutional capacity is multidimensional and extends beyond the technical production of evidence. Effective Evidence-Based Policymaking requires the integration of leadership, organizational learning, analytical expertise, institutional coordination, and knowledge management into a coherent governance system. The interaction among these dimensions enables governments to transform evidence into strategic policy actions that are adaptive, accountable, and responsive to evolving public needs.

Digital Transformation and Data-Driven Governance

The second major theme identified in the reviewed literature concerns the growing role of digital transformation in strengthening Evidence-Based Policymaking (EBPM). The synthesis indicates that digital technologies have fundamentally changed the way governments collect, process, analyze, and utilize evidence throughout the policymaking cycle. Rather than functioning solely as administrative support tools,

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digital platforms increasingly serve as strategic infrastructures that enable governments to generate timely information, monitor policy performance, and respond more effectively to rapidly changing public needs. Consequently, digital transformation has become an indispensable component of sustainable public administration because it enhances governments' capacity to make informed, transparent, and adaptive decisions.

Across the reviewed studies, digital government initiatives are consistently associated with improved evidence availability and accessibility. The integration of administrative databases, electronic government services, open government data platforms, and cloud-based information systems enables public institutions to obtain comprehensive datasets that support policy formulation and evaluation. These integrated systems reduce information fragmentation by connecting data across government agencies, thereby facilitating more coherent and coordinated decision making. Moreover, the increasing availability of real-time administrative data allows policymakers to monitor policy implementation continuously rather than relying exclusively on periodic evaluations.

Another significant result is the increased use of big data analysis and AI (Artificial Intelligence) in public administration. Advanced analytical technologies have been used in the literature to deftly detect policy trends and forecast future policy problems, to allocate resources optimally, and to assess the impact of public programs. Governments can use predictive analytics, machine learning algorithms, and geographic information systems (GIS) to process and analyze vast amounts of structured and unstructured information, data and information that is challenging, if not impossible, to analyze through traditional statistical tools. These technological advances enhance the quality of the policy forecasts, and help with more proactive and preventive governance strategies.

Despite these opportunities, the reviewed literature clearly states that digital transformation cannot ensure efficient Evidence Based Policymaking. There remain a number of institutional and technical challenges to the effective implementation of data-driven governance. The most common problems reported are inadequate data quality, lack of data systems integration, lack of compatibility of digital infrastructure, cybersecurity threats and the disparities of technology between public organizations. In many developing countries these constraints are exacerbated by the lack of information systems financial resources and lack of digital literacy of public officials. Therefore, technological investment needs to be matched with organizational changes that enhance institutional preparedness and the capability of human resources.

This also underscores the need for data governance to ensure the reliability, transparency, and ethical handling of digital evidence, as mentioned in the literature. Good data governance also involves standardised data collection processes, quality control systems, data privacy, interoperability frameworks and defined institutional roles on data management. Well-designed data governance policies can help governments generate trustworthy evidence and ensure citizens have confidence in digital policymaking. On the other hand, poor governance can lead to low trust in government data, poor policy legitimacy, and less use of evidence for decision making.

Another discovery from the studies analyzed is the link between digital transformation and transparency of policy. Digital platforms can offer the opportunity for governments to share policy information, performance indicators, budget information and evaluation reports in formats that are accessible to citizens and stakeholders. Open government initiatives thus play a role in the generation of evidence, but also in making government more accountable for its decisions, allowing

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external actors to look at the evidence on which its decisions are based. This transparency allows for better public engagement, and helps limit discretionary or politically-based policymaking.

The review further demonstrates that digital transformation facilitates continuous policy learning. Integrated monitoring can help governments assess implementation outcomes in real time, which can help them uncover implementation challenges and adjust policy interventions while problems are still small. This adaptive governance is a significant shift from the more usual administrative governance, where assessment is typically ex-post and after the policy has been fully implemented. Making digital evidence accessible in a continuous way enhances governments' capacity to learn from the experiences as they unfold and to make better policies over time.

Table 4. Digital Transformation Dimensions Supporting Evidence-Based Policymaking

Digital Governance Dimension	Main Function	Contribution to Sustainable Public Administration
Integrated Information Systems	Consolidate administrative data across agencies	Improve policy coordination and evidence accessibility
Big Data Analytics	Analyze large-scale datasets and identify policy patterns	Enhance predictive policymaking and resource allocation
Artificial Intelligence	Support forecasting and decision support	Improve policy accuracy and responsiveness
Open Government Data	Increase public access to government information	Strengthen transparency and accountability
Data Governance	Ensure data quality, security, and interoperability	Enhance evidence credibility and institutional trust
Digital Monitoring Systems	Monitor policy implementation continuously	Support adaptive governance and policy improvement

Source: Synthesized by the authors from the reviewed literature.

As shown in Table 4, digital transformation strengthens Evidence-Based Policymaking through multiple complementary mechanisms rather than through technological innovation alone. Information systems improve data integration, analytical technologies generate actionable insights, open data initiatives promote transparency, and robust data governance ensures the reliability and ethical use of information. Together, these dimensions establish the digital infrastructure necessary for sustainable public administration.

Collaborative Governance and Stakeholder Engagement

The third major theme emerging from the reviewed literature is the growing significance of collaborative governance in strengthening Evidence-Based Policymaking (EBPM). The synthesis demonstrates that contemporary public administration increasingly recognizes policymaking as a collective process involving multiple actors rather than a function performed exclusively by government institutions. As public problems become more complex, uncertain, and interconnected, governments require diverse forms of knowledge, expertise, and experience that extend beyond bureaucratic structures. Consequently, collaboration among government agencies, academic institutions, the private sector, civil society

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organizations, and local communities has become an essential mechanism for generating comprehensive evidence and improving policy quality.

A consistent finding across the reviewed studies is that collaborative governance enhances the diversity and credibility of policy evidence. Scientific research contributes rigorous empirical findings and methodological expertise, while government agencies provide administrative data and regulatory perspectives. At the same time, private organizations offer technological innovation and operational knowledge, whereas civil society organizations and local communities contribute contextual understanding derived from practical experience. The integration of these complementary sources of knowledge enables policymakers to develop a more comprehensive understanding of policy problems and formulate solutions that are responsive to diverse societal needs.

The literature also indicates that stakeholder engagement strengthens the legitimacy of public policies. Policies developed through inclusive consultation processes are generally perceived as more transparent, accountable, and socially acceptable because affected stakeholders have opportunities to participate in policy formulation. This participatory approach reduces information asymmetry between governments and citizens while improving mutual trust throughout the policymaking process. Several studies further report that early stakeholder involvement facilitates policy implementation by increasing public acceptance and reducing resistance during later stages of policy execution.

Another important finding concerns the role of academic institutions in supporting Evidence-Based Policymaking. Universities and research organizations increasingly function as strategic partners that provide scientific evidence, policy evaluations, and technical expertise to government agencies. Beyond conducting independent research, these institutions contribute to policy capacity by developing analytical tools, evaluating program effectiveness, and translating scientific knowledge into practical policy recommendations. The reviewed studies consistently suggest that stronger partnerships between governments and academic institutions improve the scientific quality of policy decisions while promoting continuous institutional learning.

The private sector also plays an increasingly important role within collaborative governance arrangements. Technological companies, consulting organizations, and industry associations contribute specialized expertise in digital innovation, data analytics, and public service modernization. Public-private partnerships facilitate access to advanced technological infrastructure, enabling governments to improve evidence collection, policy monitoring, and service delivery. However, the literature emphasizes that collaboration with private actors must be governed by clear accountability mechanisms to prevent conflicts of interest and ensure that policy decisions remain aligned with public values rather than commercial objectives.

Civil society organizations constitute another critical source of policy evidence identified in the reviewed literature. These organizations frequently possess direct knowledge of local conditions, vulnerable populations, and implementation challenges that may not be captured through administrative data alone. Their participation enriches policymaking by incorporating qualitative insights regarding social realities, citizen priorities, and community needs. In many cases, civil society organizations also act as intermediaries between governments and citizens, facilitating communication, monitoring policy implementation, and strengthening democratic accountability.

Despite these advantages, the review reveals several persistent barriers to effective collaborative governance. Institutional fragmentation, overlapping organizational responsibilities, inconsistent communication, unequal distribution of resources, and

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differences in organizational priorities frequently hinder meaningful collaboration among stakeholders. Power imbalances may also influence whose knowledge is incorporated into policymaking, potentially limiting the inclusion of marginalized groups or local communities. Furthermore, insufficient trust among participating institutions often reduces the willingness to share information and coordinate policy activities. These findings indicate that successful collaboration depends not only on stakeholder participation but also on governance structures capable of fostering mutual trust, transparency, and long-term institutional relationships.

The literature additionally highlights the growing contribution of digital technologies to collaborative governance. Online consultation platforms, digital participation mechanisms, virtual stakeholder forums, and open data portals facilitate broader citizen engagement while expanding opportunities for evidence sharing among multiple organizations. Digital collaboration enables governments to gather feedback more efficiently, improve policy responsiveness, and integrate diverse perspectives into evidence-based decision making. Nevertheless, digital participation should complement rather than replace direct engagement, particularly when addressing complex policy issues requiring deliberative dialogue and consensus building.

Table 5. Stakeholder Contributions to Evidence-Based Policymaking

Stakeholder	Primary Contribution	Governance Benefit
Government Agencies	Administrative data, policy implementation, regulatory authority	Policy coordination and institutional accountability
Academic Institutions	Scientific research, policy evaluation, analytical expertise	Improved evidence quality and policy learning
Private Sector	Technological innovation, digital infrastructure, operational expertise	Enhanced policy innovation and service efficiency
Civil Society Organizations	Community knowledge, advocacy, implementation monitoring	Greater policy legitimacy and social inclusion
Local Communities	Contextual experience, public needs, local knowledge	Increased policy relevance and responsiveness

Source: Synthesized by the authors from the reviewed literature.

As presented in Table 5, collaborative governance relies on complementary contributions from multiple stakeholders, each providing unique forms of knowledge that strengthen the evidence base for policymaking. Government agencies ensure regulatory consistency, academic institutions contribute scientific rigor, private organizations introduce innovation, civil society organizations represent public interests, and local communities provide contextual insights regarding policy implementation. The interaction among these actors creates a more comprehensive evidence ecosystem capable of addressing increasingly complex governance challenges.

Evidence-Based Policymaking as a Foundation for Sustainable Public Administration

The last theme found in literature reviewed indicates that the process of Evidence Based Policymaking (EBPM) is not only a tool for facilitating better policy making, but it is also a strategic base for sustainable public administration. The synthesis indicates that governments that have the capacity to systematically incorporate evidence into policy making, enacting, tracking, and assessing are more likely to meet their governance goals in the longer term and to apply to dynamic social, economic, and environmental issues. The studies reviewed illustrate the following

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key characteristics of sustainable public administration that are dependent on effective evidence use: adaptability, accountability, resilience, innovation and continuous policy learning.The reviewed studies consistently link effective evidence use to the following characteristics of sustainable public administration: adaptability, accountability, resilience, innovation, continuous policy learning.

One key conclusion from the literature is that evidence is effective at decreasing uncertainty in the public decision making process, making the policy more effective. Governments often work in situations where there are conflicting interests, a shortage of resources, and shifting social change. In such cases, it is likely that policy interventions would not be effective and results would not be uniform as they would be based on political judgment or administrative procedures. In contrast, policies supported by evidence are more likely to be derived from empirical analysis, measurable indicators, and systematic evaluations that enhance the linkage between policy goals and the implementation strategies. As a result, evidence is a tool to reduce policy risks and to ensure the efficient allocation of public resources.

The reviewed studies also show that Evidence Based Policymaking enhances institutional resilience. Public institutions are resilient if they are able to foresee new challenges, adjust to new conditions, and learn how to overcome policy failures continuously. Evidence is important for this adaptive capacity as it can help governments track the effects of implementation, find unintended impacts of the policy interventions and fine-tune policy interventions before they enter the systemic pathway. Unlike the idea of a “Failure,” evidence-based institutions see policy failure as an asset when learning what went wrong and what can be done better in the future to enhance policy. This cycle contributes to the sustainability of the institutions in the long-term, as it promotes flexibility and innovation within public administration systems.

The second major finding is related to the evidence use and public accountability. The literature is unanimous that accountability goes beyond legal compliance and the numbers in the accounts to whether or not governments are able to explain their policies in transparent and credible ways. Public institutions that provide clear arguments, evidence, and anticipatory outcomes of policy decisions are usually regarded as more trustworthy and legitimate. Furthermore, clear evidence use facilitates external checks of policy performance – such as by citizens, researchers and oversight institutions. This transparency improves democratic governance and promotes good quality of policy, ethical decision making by governments.

The synthesis also illustrates that sustainable public administration needs a constant assessment of policies and not an ad hoc assessment. A number of the studies reviewed in this report make a case for embedding policy evaluation from the outset of agenda setting, into implementation, monitoring, revision and, long-term, impact assessment. On-going evaluation helps governments identify implementation gaps, evaluate the effectiveness of policies, and create new evidence for further decision-making. This approach involves "learning by doing" in the policy process and helps to progressively enhance institutions.

Another discovery relates to the strategic incorporation of digital innovation, institutional capacity and collaborative governance in sustainable public administration. The literature reviewed indicates these dimensions are not independent governance reforms but are interdependent aspects of an integrated evidence ecosystem. Institutional capacity sets the organizational groundwork for evidence utilization, digital transformation enhances the availability and quality of information, and collaborative governance extends the array of knowledge that is integrated into the process of making policy. These dimensions contribute together

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to enhance the capacity of governments to develop adaptive, transparent and sustainable policies that can respond to more complex, public problems.

The review also shows a number of ongoing issues that remain a barrier to the institutionalisation of Evidence Based Policymaking. Many public administrations continue to experience political influence, short term policy priorities, weak governance systems, inadequate budgets, lack of analytical capacity and unequal access to quality data. Increasingly, governments recognise the importance of using evidence in strategic decision making, but this is often constrained by these factors. In order to realize sustainable public administration, an institutional reform that encompasses all aspects of strengthening governance capacity, digital infrastructure, policy evaluation systems and collaborative networks between various actors is necessary.

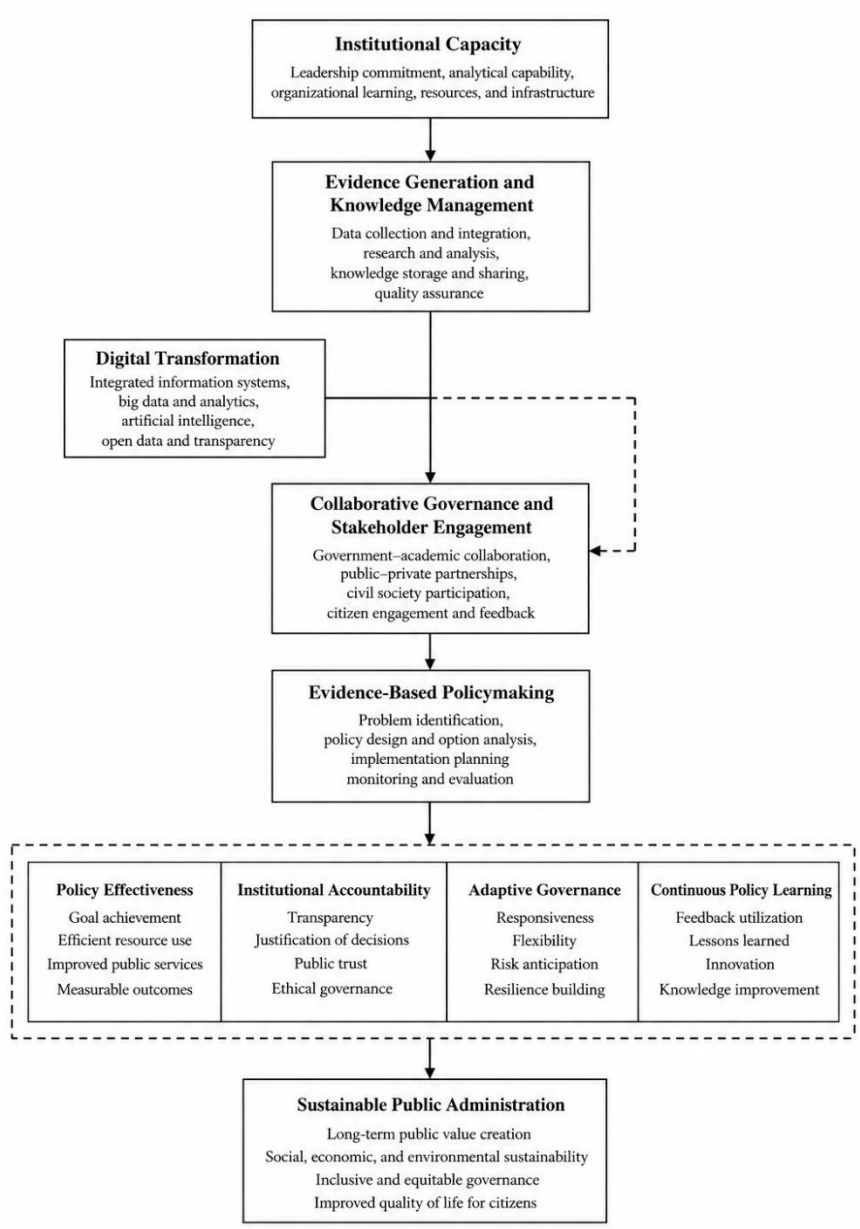


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of Evidence-Based Policymaking for Sustainable Public Administration

Source: Developed by the authors based on the synthesized literature.

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As illustrated in Figure 1, sustainable public administration emerges from the interaction of several interdependent governance dimensions. Institutional capacity enables governments to generate and interpret reliable evidence, while digital transformation enhances data integration and analytical capability. Collaborative governance broadens the evidence base through stakeholder participation and knowledge sharing. These interconnected elements collectively strengthen Evidence-Based Policymaking, which subsequently improves policy effectiveness, institutional accountability, adaptive governance, and continuous organizational learning. The framework therefore demonstrates that sustainable public administration is achieved through an integrated governance ecosystem rather than through isolated institutional reforms.

Evidence-Based Policymaking as a Strategic Driver of Sustainable Public Administration

The results of this research show that Evidence Based Policymaking (EBPM) is not just a tool or method for assisting public decision making, but is a broader governance approach. The thematic synthesis indicates that sustainable public administration can be realised by combining institutional capacity, digital transformation, collaborative governance and ongoing organisational learning, thereby enhancing the capacity of governments to develop adaptive, transparent and accountable policies. These results suggest that evidence is not a standalone entity but part of an integrated governance system where organization capacity, collaboration of stakeholders, and technological innovation all shape the effectiveness of policy. This view builds on the traditional EBPM focus on the implementation of scientific evidence in policy making, but gives comparatively less focus to the institutional processes that ensures evidence is used throughout the policy making process generally (Cairney, 2021; Head, 2022; Parkhurst, 2021).

The findings in the present study are in line with recent research that has indicated that institutional capacity is the most essential precondition for the successful implementation of Evidence Based Policymaking. Governments with strong leadership commitment, organizational learning cultures, analytical capabilities and effective knowledge management systems are better able to act on evidence for more effective policy interventions (Newman et al., 2022; Peters, 2022; Howlett et al., 2023). But this review also shows that institutional capacity is not enough, unless there are arrangements of integrated governance that enable the flow of ideas and information between institutions. This study challenges previous research that often focuses on one element of leadership, one element of learning or one element of analysis as a standalone influence on policy quality, instead defining these as interdependent elements of a larger institutional framework that supports sustainable policy making.

Digital transformation and Evidence Based Policymaking is another key contribution, especially in terms of the link between the two. Digital government, artificial intelligence, big data analytics and integrated information systems are increasingly being acknowledged as important enablers of evidence-informed governance (Mergel et al., 2022; Wirtz & Müller, 2023; Sun & Medaglia, 2024). This review echoes this opinion and also highlights the need to 'not take technology for granted'. In other words, technology investments and digital transformation efforts are only part of the solution for sustainable public administration if the technology infrastructure is integrated with supportive institutional arrangements that include strong data governance, qualified human resources and accountability mechanisms. This view is in contrast to technology-focused perspectives that assume digital innovation is a quality-enhancing solution without critical consideration for the actual quality of the policy. Instead, the evidence collected for this study shows that organizational readiness is just as crucial to the benefits of digital governance.

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The findings also reinforce the growing importance of collaborative governance in addressing increasingly complex public challenges. Previous studies have consistently demonstrated that public policies become more legitimate, responsive, and effective when governments actively engage academic institutions, civil society organizations, private sector actors, and local communities throughout the policymaking process (Ansell & Torfing, 2021; Emerson & Nabatchi, 2022; Bryson et al., 2023). The present study confirms these observations while extending the discussion by positioning collaboration as an essential mechanism for evidence generation rather than solely for policy implementation. This distinction is theoretically significant because it broadens the conceptualization of evidence beyond scientific research to include administrative experience, stakeholder knowledge, local expertise, and participatory learning. Consequently, evidence should be viewed as multidimensional knowledge generated through continuous interaction among diverse governance actors.

This study, from a theoretical perspective, is a contribution to the public administration literature by providing an integrated conceptual framework which links institutional capacity, digital transformation, collaborative governance, and Evidence Based Policymaking with the goal of sustainable public administration. Such dimensions have been studied separately in the past, leading to fragmented arguments for how governments can build adaptive and resilient functioning of their governance systems (Meuleman, 2022; Pollitt, 2023; OECD, 2023). This work attempts to integrate these understandings into a single analytical model to better explain the role of evidence utilization in sustaining long term institutional value and public value. The suggested framework thus builds on current governance theories by showing the interdependence of the three organisational capabilities, the technological innovation and the involvement of the stakeholders and the use of evidence in the policymaking process.

The implications of this research are also of practical importance. The results indicate that implementing Evidence Based Policymaking must go beyond the expansion of research activities and investment in digital technologies for policymakers. At the same time, governments need to enhance analytical capacities, interagency coordination, integrated data governance systems, organizational learning as well as meaningful engagement of stakeholders. Such reforms are expected to increase the consistency of policies, make them more public, and raise the resilience of institutions to address complex societal issues. In addition, there is a need to build closer ties between universities and research institutions and the government agencies to enable the transfer of knowledge, policy review and the evidence translation to practical governance solutions. These partnerships may help to narrow the long-standing divide between research and practice.

This study is novel because it takes an integrated approach to the study of sustainable public administration. This study shows how the three dimensions—Evidence-Based Policymaking, digital governance, collaborative governance and institutional capacity—can be seen as complementary parts of a more holistic evidence ecosystem, rather than being treated as distinct research areas as is typically done in other studies. Sustainable public administration is then understood as an effect of the learning of institutions, technological innovation, collaborative governance and constant use of evidence rather than as the result of single administrative measures. This holistic approach offers analytical depth to better comprehend governance reform in more complex policy fields.

Some caveats are warranted, however, in regard to these contributions. First, this study is based exclusively on a systematic review of published literature and therefore does not include primary empirical evidence from specific governmental contexts. Second, the review was conducted by searching mainly in English-language

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publications that are included in major academic databases, which may have overstated the number of relevant studies. Third, institutional variations between countries can affect the extent to which the aggregated results can be broadly applied, especially between developed and developing administrative systems. Therefore, the suggested conceptual framework should not be understood as a governance prescription to be applied to all situations.

The proposed framework needs to be validated in future studies with empirical studies that involve different government contexts and administrative levels. Comparative studies between countries would offer insights into the impact of institutional, political and socio-economic contexts on the implementation of Evidence-Based Policymaking. The causal relationships between institutional capacity and the other variables could be further explored through quantitative analysis techniques such as structural equation modelling or multilevel analysis. Future research should also delve into the growing influence of AI, predictive analytics, and digital ecosystems in informing evidence-based governance, taking into account ethical considerations such as algorithmic transparency, data privacy, and democratic accountability. This type of research would also reinforce the theoretical and practical knowledge of Evidence-Based Policymaking as a strategic basis for sustainable public administration.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Evidence-Based Policymaking (EBPM) provides a strategic foundation for sustainable public administration by integrating institutional capacity, digital transformation, collaborative governance, and continuous organizational learning into the policymaking process. Effective evidence utilization extends beyond the technical application of research findings and requires institutional arrangements capable of generating, interpreting, and applying diverse forms of knowledge throughout the policy cycle. The proposed conceptual framework shows that sustainable public administration emerges from the interaction of evidence generation, technological innovation, stakeholder collaboration, accountability, and adaptive governance, strengthening governments' capacity to generate long-term public value. Theoretically, this study contributes to public administration scholarship by integrating Evidence-Based Policymaking, digital governance, institutional capacity, and collaborative governance into a unified analytical framework. Practically, the findings highlight the importance of strengthening analytical capabilities, integrated data governance, interagency collaboration, and stakeholder engagement to institutionalize evidence-informed decision making and enhance policy effectiveness.

This study is limited by its reliance on secondary literature and the absence of empirical validation across specific governmental contexts. Its primary focus on English-language publications may also limit the representation of relevant regional perspectives and locally grounded evidence. Future research should empirically examine the proposed framework through comparative cross-country studies, quantitative modeling, and mixed-method approaches to assess its applicability across different institutional and governance settings. Further research should also investigate how emerging technologies, particularly artificial intelligence, predictive analytics, and advanced data systems, can support evidence generation, policy evaluation, adaptive governance, and sustainable public administration while addressing challenges related to institutional capacity, data governance, accountability, and stakeholder participation.

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