Supplemental material

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BMJ Global Health

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

Appendix A: Interview Guide

[If they agreed to be recorded]. We have turned on the audio-recorder. Washington, USA law requires us to audio record your consent, so we will repeat the last two questions:

Do you consent to participate in this interview?

Do you consent to have this interview recorded?

Interview Questions

1. Could you start by telling me a little bit about your role in addressing the COVID-19 outbreak in _____ ?

2. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, can you describe how and when you engaged with policy makers in _____?

3. Can you please describe the types of policy makers (e.g., elected, public health, emergency response, transportation officials) you worked with on decision-making during the COVID-19 response?

    a. What triggered your engagement with policy makers?

    b. Were you involved in advising decision-makers regarding school closure, mask ordinances, or stay-at-home ordinances specifically?
        [if "Yes": we'd like to focus the remainder of the interview on your role advising on [school closure, mask, and/or stay-at-home ordinances]. Please do feel free to discuss other examples of decision making if relevant to the question, but we ask that you consider the question with your role advising on [school closure, mask and/or stay-at-home ordinances] in mind.]

    c. What roles did you play?

    d. How were you engaged?
        i. Did you have an informal or formal role in the decision-making process?
        ii. Did you feel you had sufficient power to advocate for evidence in the decision-making process?

    e. What was the impact of your engagement with policy makers?

4. What were the procedures in place to integrate evidence on COVID-19 into decisions (and were they followed)?

5. Where did you access evidence regarding COVID-19?

6. What types of evidence did you think was most valuable to inform decision making for the pandemic response and recovery in _____? Why?

7. What other factors aside from ones already mentioned facilitated evidence-informed decision-making?

8. Can you describe an example of when there was conflicting evidence, and walk us through how you evaluated it to inform decision-making?

9. What were the limitations of the COVID-19 evidence you had access to?

   a. Do you think the evidence you had access to was appropriate for your country's contexts (political, geographic, socioeconomic, cultural)? Why or why not?

10. What were the primary barriers for integrating evidence into decision-making?

11. What other considerations, besides evidence, were influential in the decision- making processes during COVID-19 [response and recovery activities/school closures/mask ordinances/stay-at-home orders] in _____?

12. To what extent do you feel the key decisions about COVID-19 [response and recovery activities/school closures/mask ordinances/stay-at-home orders] that you informed were "evidence-informed"?

13. From your perspective, what are the main lessons learned from this pandemic with respect to evidence-informed decision-making?

14. What do you think should change with respect to evidence-informed decision- making processes and procedures to make them more effective during pandemics?

Appendix B. Coding Scheme

Code Name[1]	Definition
Interviewee Background	Information specific to interviewee role, including both formal and informal role(s)
Policymakers	Types of policymakers interviewee engaged with, as well as their relationships with policymakers, before and during the pandemic, and how they engaged with them
Pre-Pandemic	Attribute code referring to excerpts from the text having to do with roles, decisions, and other factors before the COVID-19 pandemic; not COVID-19 pandemic related
COVID-19 Decisions/Measures	Interviewee reference to COVID-19 measures and decisions, what they entail, and how interviewee was involved in these decisions, if at all. This included 5 subcodes: mask ordinances, school closures, Stay-at-home and reopening, testing, and vaccination
Information Used	Types of data, information and/or evidence used for informing COVID-19 decisions, including sources
Limitations of Evidence/Information	Limitations with or criticism of evidence/information; not having enough evidence or information, evidence not available or accessible; issues with applicability
Quality of Information	Interviewee's explanation of what they consider as important or valuable about the type or quantity of evidence for informing decisions or recommendations
Institutional/Advisory Process	Reference to or explanation of COVID-19 or pandemic advisory structure or processes at country, state, of regional level; pulled from Lomas framework (Lomas 2000)
Integrating Evidence/Information	Captures processes for integrating evidence or information into decision-making, including interviewees personal experiences in participating in or witnessing these processes

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[1] Bolded and italicized codes indicate high-level codes. Non-bolded and italicized codes are subcodes positioned beneath their accompanying high-level codes.

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External Factors	External factors that influenced decision-making around COVID-19 response and recovery, including political, social, and economic factors/ideologies - distinct from 'information used' in that this highlighted somewhat immeasurable, yet influencing factors on decision-making
Capacity	Includes both capacity to respond (healthcare capacity, government capacity, etc. that affects feasibility of measures) and capacity for research (ability to conduct/use research for decision-making)
Unintended consequences of decisions	Any mention of unintended consequences that followed COVID-19 measures or decisions (e.g., social and educational implications of school closures)-
Lessons Learned	Capturing any references to lessons learned either when explicitly asked or as provided throughout interview, including implications for preparedness efforts moving forward
Explicit lessons learned	These include instances where the interviewee explicitly describes lessons learned
Process lessons learned	These include lessons that are inferred by the coder
Challenges	An umbrella code to capture all references to challenges interviewees shared regarding access to evidence, informing decisions within the context of a pandemic, external constraints to informing decisions, limitations to access information or evidence, etc.
Explicit challenges	These include instances where the interviewee explicitly describes challenges
Process challenges	These include challenges that are inferred by the coder
Key Quotes	Powerful or stand-out quotes that exemplify themes and codes present within the data