

Comparative Analysis of the Government Structure and Policies to Disaster Response Adopted by the BRICS: Perspectives on the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

Disasters have increased in severity, diversity, and frequency over the years. Consequently, disaster response requires the involvement of different stakeholders, which makes managing disaster and humanitarian operations a challenge. Thus, the present research aims to compare the government structure and policies of the BRICS countries (i.e., Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) to disaster response operations, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. The research adopts the case study by investigating official government documents and public information. The results identified that the BRICS developed: (i) a vertical and centralized coordination approach within their territories in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, (ii) some cases of independence and misalignment between national and local governments in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and (iii) creation and adjustment of particular policies and programs for the pandemic period with little consideration of government structures and policies for disaster response developed before the COVID-19 pandemic. Future research might compare the response to other disasters faced by all the BRICS countries and collaboration opportunities among them.

Keywords: disaster response; disaster management; humanitarian operations; stakeholder management.

Introduction

Over the years, disaster events have increased in number, severity, diversity, and frequency (Behl and Dutta, 2019; Lu, 2022). The last CRED report registers for the year 2021, 85 disasters more than the annual average of the previous two decades (CRED, 2022). This report does not account for the COVID-19 pandemic declared by the World Health Organization (WHO) as a disaster that has affected millions of people around the world since the identification of the SARS-CoV-2 virus in December 2019 in China (WHO, 2020a).

Since the WHO declaration, COVID-19 has infected more than 643 million people and killed more than 6.6 million worldwide (WHO, 2022a). The emerging countries Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, members of the BRICS, are among the most affected (Khambule, 2022). According to WHO (2022b), more than 115 million cases and 1.7 million deaths in the mentioned countries have been confirmed. However, these numbers might be considerably higher due to underreporting cases

in developing countries with fragile medical systems (Djalante et al., 2020). Moreover, analyzing the dynamics of response in the BRICS countries to the COVID-19 pandemic is essential, initially because the disease started in China and, in addition, India, Brazil, and Russia occupied the first positions in the world ranking of cases of the disease, and South Africa was among the hardest-hit countries at the start of the pandemic (De Sá, 2021).

Based on several factors, such as the national health system, population structure, and pandemic situations, the BRICS countries and all other countries adopted different policies, including restrictive measures, control measures, border prevention, and critical population control measures (Jiao et al., 2022). In this sense, this research aims to answer the following question: "What were the government structures and policies adopted by the BRICS countries to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic?". The research adopts the case study to address this research question by considering official government documents and public information as the primary sources for the analysis.

The first section of this paper presents a brief introduction to the theme. The second section presents the theoretical foundation involving stakeholder management in the disaster context and an overview of COVID-19 pandemic policies. The third section describes the methodology adopted in the research. The fourth section presents the structure and policies for disaster response of BRICS countries before the COVID-19 pandemic. The fifth section presents the policies adopted by the BRICS countries to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. The sixth section provides an overview analysis of the changes in the disaster response of BRICS countries before and after the COVID-19 pandemic. The seventh section offers the conclusions and suggestions for future research.

Theoretical foundation

This section is divided into two subsections that address Stakeholder Management in the disaster context and policies to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Stakeholders Management in Disaster and Humanitarian Operations

Stakeholders are individuals or groups that are affected or that affect the business (Freeman, 2010). In this sense, Besiou and Van Wassenhove (2021) argue that the number and diversity of stakeholders in disaster and humanitarian operations (DHOs) have grown in recent years, which enhances the complexity of operations and makes management decisions difficult. Nevertheless, the collaboration between the different humanitarian stakeholders is essential due to the broad nature and extension of DHO (Bealt et al., 2016). Consequently, recognizing and understanding stakeholders in DHO (Fontainha et al., 2017) and attending to their satisfaction becomes vital for the success of the DHO (Fontainha et al., 2022).

Fontainha et al. (2017) identified 10 DHO stakeholders through a systematic literature review: Government, Military, Legislative and regulatory, Direct supplier, Private sector, Media, International aid network, Donor, Local aid network, and Beneficiary. These stakeholders can implement their response operations from the perspective of centralized or decentralized coordination (Balcik et al., 2010). Centralized coordination refers to partnerships formed between organizations, with the possibility of sharing resources and information, joint decision-making, and division of tasks (Akhtar et al., 2012; Balcik et al., 2010). Decentralized coordination refers to autonomous operations without the possibility of collaboration between organizations (Balcik et al., 2010). Coordination according to position in the supply chain can also be understood as vertical and horizontal (Balcik et al., 2010). Vertical coordination is established between the different levels of the chain, and operations are managed independently (Balcik et al., 2010). Horizontal coordination occurs in the relationship

between organizations operating at the same chain level and sharing the same attributions and capabilities, that is, shared management (Balcik et al., 2010).

Policies to Respond to the COVID-19 Pandemic

The first case of COVID-19 was registered in December 2019 in the city of Wuhan, China (WHO, 2020b), and in March 2020, it was declared a pandemic (WHO, 2020c). Considering the effects of the pandemic and the rapid spread of COVID-19, a range of government responses needed to be taken. The primary and initial policies adopted by several countries worldwide were travel restrictions, restrictions on face-to-face meetings, school closures, case tracking, and emergency investment in health systems, among other actions (Hale et al., 2021). In addition, mass vaccination was an essential strategy to reduce hospitalizations and deaths (CDC, 2022).

Dergiades et al. (2021) demonstrated that government interventions are more effective and positively impact the reduction of deaths from COVID-19. In addition to the effects on public health from the hesitation to adopt such policies, data analyzed in the United States of America showed that populations that did not adhere to the vaccination were considered responsible for blows to the country's economy (Farrenkopf, 2022).

Research Methodology

The research adopted the case study methodology to meet the research objective. According to Yin (2014), this method is characterized as an empirical study in which the borders between the phenomenon and the context are generally not determined. In addition, the author argues that it is used when one wants to deepen an investigation of a phenomenon within its real context. This perspective is aligned with this research due to the need to deepen the understanding regarding the policies adopted in response to COVID-19 by the BRICS countries.

The six steps proposed by Yin (2014) were performed for this study as follows:

- **Plan:** consists of adapting the method to the research objective (Yin, 2014). For this research, the plan focused on investigating which measures were implemented by the BRICS countries to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Project:** consists of defining the research question, the strategy to gather data, and the unit of analysis (Yin, 2014). For this research, the research question concerns the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This study uses explanation construction and time-series analysis to assess pre- and post-pandemic disaster response policies. Considering that they are among the countries most affected by the pandemic (Khambule, 2022), the BRICS countries are selected as the unit of analysis for this research.
- **Preparation:** consists of elaborating a research protocol (Yin, 2014). In this research protocol, the focus was on the government structures and policies of disaster response of the BRICS countries in the pre and post-COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Data collection:** consists of gathering several sources of evidence (Yin, 2014). In this study, we used official documents and public information as sources of evidence.
- **Data analysis:** consists of verification, categorization, classification, or recombination of evidence (Yin, 2014). In this research, the explanation construction technique and time-series analysis were used for data analysis.
- **Sharing:** consists of presenting relevant information regarding the research by exposing the results (Yin, 2014). This step is contemplated in this research.

Pre-pandemic policies

This section will briefly present the disaster management system of the BRICS countries before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Brazil

In Brazil, the first record referring to assistance to disaster dates back to 1966 with the Civil Defense Master Plan that organizes the State System of Civil Defense in the extinct State of Guanabara (DCERJ, 2018). At the national level, it was only after the 1988 Federal Constitution that a national system was created – the National Civil Defense System. This System denotes the responsibility of acting in emergencies and states of public calamity to the Civil Defenses (Brazil, 2020).

In 2005, the National Center for Risk and Disaster Management (CENAD) was created, the body responsible for managing distributed resources (Brazil, 2005). Subsequently, the entire system undergoes successive changes initially affected by decrees, normative instructions, and laws, such as Law No. 12,608 of April 10, 2012 (Brazil, 2012).

Currently, the National Civil Defense and Protection System in Brazil (SINPDEC) is composed of the public administration of the Union, States, Federal Districts and Municipalities, and also civil society entities, namely: the National Council for Civil Protection and Defense (CONPDEC), National Secretariat of Civil Defense (SEDEC), State Civil Defense Coordinations (CEDEC), Regional Civil Defense Coordinations (REDEC), Municipal Civil Defense Coordinations (COMDEC), Community Centers for Civil Defense (NUDEC), public administration bodies at the three levels of government (sectoral) and public and private entities, non-governmental organizations, associations, and others (support) (Brazil, 2013).

The disaster management policy in Brazil sees events as unpredictable and natural phenomena, a perspective related to the paradigm of preparation and response, working reactively to disasters and emergencies as they occur (Ribeiro, 2018). In addition, Ribeiro (2018) points out that the large territorial extension makes communication between the different stakeholders of the SINPDEC difficult. In addition, the author points out that it is necessary to overcome significant vulnerabilities, better articulate civil society, organizations, and academia, and that the private sector must be more proactive to minimize the risks of disasters.

Russia

The absence of an efficient system for disaster management was identified after the high number of victims of the Spitak earthquake in 1988, which forced the signing of a decree for the transformation of the Russian Rescue Corps into a State Committee of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (Presidential Library, 1990). In 1994, this committee was restructured and derived from the Ministry of the Russian Federation for Civil Defense, Emergencies and Mitigation of the Consequences of Natural Disasters (EMERCOM of Russia) (ADRC, 2019). EMERCOM is a federal agency that coordinates civil defense, disaster prevention, and response activities, and it cooperates with federal agencies, entities of the Russian Federation (regions and republics), and local community administration (ADRC, 2019).

The Russian System of Disaster Management (RSDM) is the first disaster prevention and response system that guides activities according to several principles and the current situation (ADRC, 2019). According to ADRC (2019), the system is composed of state bodies at different levels, local community administrations, various industrial and economic entities, and organizations whose

activities are connected with problems of protecting the population against disasters and the units and facilities necessary for disaster responses.

Despite Russia's disaster prevention and response system, the Russian government claims to continue to work systematically to improve their protection and have effective management (Russian Federation, 2022). Furthermore, they claim that Russia's EMERCOM works on the principle that it is cheaper to prevent than eliminate disaster consequences, but there is still a need for additional efforts, such as consistently including disaster warning and early prediction elements (Russian Federation, 2022).

India

Disaster management is of paramount importance to the political structure in India because the predominant population in the country - the poor and most vulnerable - are the most affected by disasters (CEDMHA, 2018). According to CEDMHA (2018), the Indian government developed a new approach to disaster management at the beginning of the first decade of the 21st century.

The Government of India recognizes the lack of proactive pre-disaster approaches, including preparedness, mitigation, and prevention phases (CEDMHA, 2018). For this, the government has developed some policies, namely: enactment of the Disaster Management Law in 2005, the National Policy on Disaster Management in 2009, and adopted international agreements in 2015: Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change (CEDMHA, 2018).

According to research by Chakrabarti (2011), despite significant advances regarding disaster management in India, the country still faces significant challenges: for example, disaster management policies must incorporate programs for the most vulnerable (e.g., poor, women, and disabled), adopt governance and accountability issues to deal with left-wing extremism, must manage regional cooperation approaches, among others.

China

The main trigger for China's emergency management system reform was the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in 2003 (Zhe et al., 2016). Four years later, the government enacted the Emergency Response Law of the People's Republic of China, which has the main objectives: prevention and reduction of occurrences; control, mitigation, and elimination of social harm; regulation of response and emergency activities; protection of lives; and maintenance of national, public, environmental security and public order (Zhe et al., 2016).

Despite the reform, the Chinese government recognizes that the mitigation is neglected when compared to the response and recovery phases (Zhe et al., 2016). In this sense, the authors argue that creating a department to manage operations in all phases of the disaster life cycle might have several benefits, such as standardizing information and disseminating risk communication guidelines to improve the communication system. Some years later, in 2018, the Ministry of Emergency Management was created, which assumes powers and resources for disaster management, becoming the country's only agency responsible for emergency response (Yue, 2018).

South Africa

Disaster management in South Africa is the responsibility of the Department of Cooperative Governance (South Africa, 2016a). Among the various responsibilities of the department is the

search for poverty alleviation, mainly with the creation of job opportunities, in addition to improving proactive planning to reduce the impacts of disasters (South Africa, 2021).

In 2003, the Disaster Management Law was enacted, establishing the National Center for Disaster Management (South Africa, 2016 a,b). This organization aims to promote the integrated and coordinated management of the disaster management system focused on prevention and mitigation, in addition to being responsible for the administration of the Fire Department (South Africa, 2016b).

South Africa's disaster management provides a legislative and political mandate to all levels of government; however, Van Niekerk (2014) suggests that policy and legislation implementation has yet to be entirely successful. The author adds that there is a need for new amendments so that disaster risk reduction becomes a reality for the most at-risk communities in the country.

Post-pandemic policies

This section presents the main changes in disaster response policies that BRICS countries have undergone to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Brazil

Like all countries, Brazil has adopted urgent measures to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. The main objective of these measures was to channel public bodies and intuitions towards efficient action (Brazil, 2020b). The Brazilian National Health System (SUS) - which offers access to free health care at the point of care, including primary care to tertiary services - is the main driver of the response to COVID-19 in the country (BRICS, 2020).

The Brazilian government responded to the WHO alert before declaring a Public Health Emergency due to COVID-19 (Cimini et al., 2020). On February 3, 2020, a Public Health Emergency of National Importance due to COVID-19 was declared through Decree MS No. 188 and approved Law 13,979, which provides measures to deal with the pandemic (BRICS, 2020). Both measures were adopted before the confirmation of the first Brazilian case (BRICS, 2020). The country established an Emergency Group in Public Health that aimed at developing preventive measures and monitoring cases in the country and adopted policies such as the law that guided authorities on isolation and quarantine to prevent the spread of the virus (Cimini et al., 2020).

According to BRICS (2020), Brazil established the Intersectoral Crisis Committee led by the Chief of Staff of the Presidency of the Republic to coordinate and monitor the impacts of COVID-19 in the country in active partnership with various ministries such as the Ministry of Health. Among the central policies adopted by the country, the following stand out: border control (BRICS, 2020), restrictions on entry into Brazil for passengers on international flights from countries with high sustained community transmission (BRICS, 2020), creation and amendment of laws and ordinances geared towards tackling COVID-19 (e.g. Law No. 14,458 - Provides for the establishment of protective sanitary barriers indigenous areas - Ordinance No. 678 - Provides for exceptional and temporary measures for entry into the country, according to Law No. 13,979 and Law No. 13,979 - Provides for measures to deal with the public health emergency of international importance resulting from the coronavirus responsible for the 2019 outbreak (Brazil, 2019)); distribution of financial aid to informal workers, individual micro-entrepreneurs, the self-employed and the unemployed (Brazil, 2020b); advance payment of the 13th salary of retirees (IMF, 2021); inclusion of more than 1 million beneficiaries of the Bolsa Família program (IMF, 2021); reduction of duty and import rates on essential medical supplies (IMF, 2021). As the primary fiscal measure, the creation of the COVID-19

Relief Fund stands out, which accounted for around 1.1% of the Brazilian Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to finance wage subsidies and training exemption (IMF, 2021).

Despite the response measures adopted, mainly aimed at reducing the spread of the virus, the country became, for a period, the main center of the disease, a fact that can be justified by the political crisis established after declarations of underestimation of the pandemic, as well as the incentive for the use of drugs without scientific basis made by the Brazilian president (Cimini et al., 2020).

Russia

The first cases of the disease in Russia were detected in February 2020, and only after this, the country decided to close its borders with China to avoid contagion (De Sá, 2021). The Russian government started activities in different directions to establish policies and actions to support the population (IMF, 2021). Russia changed its political strategy, which was previously focused on infrastructure investments, to focus on crisis management measures (Åslund, 2020).

In addition to adopting varied strategies to combat the virus, Russia also provided help to foreign countries, which was seen as actions for propaganda purposes (CSIS, 2020). The CSIS (2020) states that despite the varied response, measures were generally adopted late beyond inconsistency. In addition, the Russian government implemented a well-established system of measures for the detection and prevention of spread, which prevented the explosive development of the pandemic in the country (BRICS, 2020).

The Russian government instituted an interdepartmental working group for high-level operational decisions and adopted a national plan to prevent the importation and spread of the COVID-19 virus (BRICS, 2020). In addition, the Russian Ministry of Health has created a three-tier model for pandemic response: a ministry operational headquarters, headquarters working groups, and remote federal centers for counseling critically ill patients (BRICS, 2020).

At the same time, to prevent and contain the spread of COVID-19, Russia has taken other solid and timely measures, such as widespread testing combined with patient tracking and isolation, encouraging rapid manufacturing of pulmonary ventilators and other individual medical equipment, and launching education programs online with preventive measures (The World Bank, 2020).

The primary fiscal measures adopted by the country are payment of sick pay and paid leave for quarantined individuals; payment of unemployment insurance in the same amount as the salary for those who lost their jobs as of March 1, 2020, and sole proprietors; subsidy payment for families with children up to 3 years old; exemption from import tariffs on pharmaceutical products and medical supplies and equipment, among others (IMF, 2021). According to the IMF (2021), such measures adopted by Russia affected GDP by a reduction of 7.8% per year in the second quarter of 2020 and 3% in the year as a whole.

India

Even before reporting the first case of COVID-19, India implemented immigration control to block the import, supply, and export of medicines, to guarantee the country's internal needs (Jiao et al., 2022). On February 3, 2020, a group of High-Level Ministers (GoM) - Ministries of Health & Family Welfare, Civil Aviation, External Affairs, Home Affairs, Shipping, Chemicals, and Fertilizers - was constituted to review, monitor, and evaluate the measures of country preparedness and response to the COVID-19 (BRICS, 2020). At the same time, "Empowered Groups" were created to speed up

decisions on managing the pandemic (BRICS, 2020). The government also created the Committee of Secretaries under Cabinet Secretary to monitor and review the public health response to COVID-19 (BRICS, 2020).

India has a high population density, and its challenges are proportional; so after the confirmation of the first cases, the country implemented policies to close factories and public transport with a continued focus on containing the disease while the government sought to develop safe and effective vaccines against COVID-19 (Jiao et al., 2022; Lancet, 2020).

Another problem was the dissemination of untrue information in India, which caused a wave of Fake News, negatively impacting the population's ability to face the effects of the pandemic (De Sá, 2021). In this way, more than 400 Indian scientists led an initiative to combat misinformation (Lancet, 2020). The Indian government has focused on showing that the pandemic, especially the number of infections and deaths were under control, even though the country was considered "home to the worst outbreak of COVID-19" (Távora and Távora, 2020).

India's GDP has suffered a historic decline marked by two months of national confinement to combat the coronavirus pandemic (IMF, 2021). GDP fell 23.9% in the first quarter of the fiscal year of 2020-2021 (IMF, 2021). In response to fiscal actions, the government released an economic stimulus package of 20 trillion rupees (US\$ 266 billion) to help the sectors most affected by the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which focused mainly on workers, farmers, the middle class, and small and medium-sized companies, and industries affected by the pandemic (IMF, 2021). In addition, India launched a package of 1.7 trillion rupees, including cash payments to the poorest part of the country's population (Ahmed and Alam, 2021).

China

On December 31, 2019, the local authority of Wuhan, China, announced a group of infected people (De Sá, 2021). In early January 2020, Chinese authorities determined that such an outbreak of pneumonia in Wuhan was caused by a new coronavirus (IMF, 2021). To efficiently respond and control the virus's contagiousness, the Communist Party of China created the Central Leading Group for COVID-19 Prevention and Control (BRICS, 2020). According to BRICS (2020), the Council of State established the Joint Prevention and Control Mechanism, and the provincial, municipal, and district levels established their own command mechanisms.

The government immediately imposed strict containment measures, such as large-scale nationwide mobility restrictions and social distancing (IMF, 2021). After some months of research, the country granted conditional market approvals for four COVID-19 vaccines and approved three vaccines for emergency use (IMF, 2021). The country also adopted a strategy called Zero-COVID, which aims to reduce the consequences of the pandemic on health to an "insignificant" status, representing a limited or non-existent local transmission (Su et al., 2022).

Emergency prevention actions directly impacted the country's economy, which contracted 6.8% in the first quarter of 2020 (IMF, 2021). In this way, the Chinese government has taken several measures to limit the local financial shortage to the point of providing financial relief to affected households, businesses, and regions facing payment difficulties (IMF, 2021). An estimated amount of RMB 4.9 trillion (or 4.7% of GDP) of discretionary fiscal measures was announced, of which RMB 4.2 trillion was implemented in 2020. The main measures include: (i) increased spending on epidemic prevention and control, (ii) production of medical equipment, (iii) accelerated disbursement of unemployment insurance and extension to migrant workers, (iv) tax relief and exemption from social security contributions, and (v) additional public investment (IMF, 2021).

Despite being considered the birthplace of the disease, China, the most populous country in the world, managed to manage the contagion and reduce the number of cases in its territory compared to other BRICS countries (De Sá, 2021). However, after the relaxation of containment measures and the end of the Zero-COVID policy at the end of 2022, the country faces a significant increase in cases and deaths from COVID-19 (EURONEWS, 2022; Palmer et al., 2022).

South Africa

South Africa reported its first confirmed case of COVID-19 in March 2020, and the government automatically declared a state of national calamity. The South African government adopted containment measures, including social distancing, travel bans on visitors from high-risk countries, screening at ports of entry, school closures, and the introduction of mobile technology to track contacts of infected people (IMF, 2021). In addition, the government established the National Coronavirus Command Council (NCCC), which, together with the National Joint Operations Center (NATJOINTS), facilitated decision-making and resource mobilization to respond to COVID-19 (BRICS, 2020). At the same time, it established the Ministerial Advisory Committee (MAC) and created the Establishment of Incident Management Teams to support policy decisions (BRICS, 2020).

Faced with the violent economic impact of the pandemic, the country's GDP suffered an annualized contraction of 51% in the second quarter of 2020, the most significant drop in GDP in at least 100 years (IMF, 2021). In March 2020, the Department of Commerce and Industry introduced regulations against price manipulation and measures to control the exporting of essential goods, respectively (IMF, 2021). The government has also outlined measures for COVID-19 emergency procurement, including specifications for essential health items and maximum prices for personal protective equipment (IMF, 2021). The government also helped struggling businesses and workers through the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) and special programs from the Industrial Development Corporation (IMF, 2021). Workers with income below a certain threshold received a small tax subsidy for four months, and the most vulnerable families received temporarily higher social contributions until the end of October 2020 (IMF, 2021). The number of food baskets for distribution has been increased, and additional funds have been allocated in the 2021 budget for public works programs (IMF, 2021).

Overview Analysis

When comparing the structure and government policies of the BRICS countries to disaster response operations, especially the response to COVID-19, it is noted that no country in the BRICS was guided using a specific emergency policy for cases of response to global level disasters (IMF, 2021; De Sá, 2021; Oliveira et al., 2021). The government of the BRICS assumed centralized coordination within their territories; despite some misalignments observed in Brazilian and Russian strategies. The BRICS countries developed their own emergency political, economic, and social strategies to deal with the violent impact of COVID-19. However, few of the robust structures and policies for disaster response developed previously to the COVID-19 pandemic were considered in the pandemic response.

Faced with the interruption of the trade flow, all countries immediately presented a drop in GDP, evidencing the economic dependence of the BRICS, which faced challenges as they found themselves compulsorily "isolated" and disconnected from the globalized flow (IMF, 2021). In this sense, one of the first response actions adopted by the BRICS countries was the release of funds and other financial resources to subsidize the population's basic needs on an emergency basis. This might represent horizontal coordination as defined by Balcik et al. (2010); nevertheless, such actions were not directly discussed by the BRICS combined. Nevertheless, the specific policies and programs created and adjusted for the pandemic period represented vertical coordination in the supply chain

as the BRICS governments directly supported several other national stakeholders, as indicated by the IMF (2021).

Conclusions and suggestions for future research

Disasters are complex events that require the engagement of several stakeholders and strategic policies in response. The COVID-19 pandemic, as a biological disaster, has affected various areas and sectors of society worldwide (Carvalho, 2020). Due to different cultural, economic, and other factors, the BRICS and all countries differed in their strategies when facing the pandemic scenario, and these differences range from control and prevention measures to restrictions aimed at the population (Jiao et al., 2022). Therefore, the research aimed to compare the government structures and policies adopted by the BRICS countries in the COVID-19 pandemic response.

The case study revealed that all BRICS countries suffered an immediate impact on the value of their GDP (FMI, 2021), a lack of capacity to manage the response to a disaster of global impact (Jiao et al., 2022), a lack of alignment between governments, identified because of the structural independence of countries (FMI, 2021), and finally, creation and adjustment of policies and programs specifically for the pandemic period (IMF, 2021). Moreover, only some previous government structures and policies for disaster response were considered in the COVID-19 pandemic scenario, which reinforces the need for an all-embracing and complete perspective for disaster in BRICS countries.

The consequences and impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic also point to the need for the BRICS to develop more robust economies, focusing on the development of horizontal coordination strategies and local development. In addition, there is a need to create specific government policies for the global-level response to disasters and the best political alignment between the BRICS countries (Garcia et al., 2020; Oliveira et al., 2021; Chapungo et al., 2022).

Due to the focus of this research on the COVID-19 pandemic and consideration of official documents and public information, future research might discuss the government structure and policies for other specific disasters such as floods, famine, and refugee crises. Moreover, future research might also develop a deep investigation into the current and possible new horizontal coordination action by BRICS countries in terms of disasters and humanitarian context.

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