Covid-19 Policy Failure and Success: A Configurational Perspective

Abstract

We adopt a configurational perspective to analyze the complexity of Covid-19 policies, which must balance public health outcomes and economic ones. Through a fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis (fsQCA), we reveal multiple, nonlinear combinations of the policies leading to failure and success of health and economic outcomes, using 1,543 cases built from a variety of sources. The results provide a multiple-policy, complementary and substitutive strategy to policymakers in navigating a complex, unstable environment. Our analysis reveals several noteworthy findings. The outcome can be achieved through different pathways. Specifically, three configurations lead to Low COVID-19 deaths. While on one hand, one of the pathways suggests an all-in approach, an alternative pathway suggests a combination of present and absent conditions. Further, we note that the causal-effect relation is asymmetric and not consistent across outcomes. Strict School Closures reduce COVID-19 deaths and improve economic growth. Further, we find that school closures are associated with the worst and the best outcomes (Low and High COVID-19 deaths). The reason is that the impact of a policy also depends on other policies undertaken as well as the characteristics of the economy.