



CRISIS MANAGEMENT AND PUBLIC POLICIES. THE TREND TOWARD REGULATORY PRACTICES IN SOME COUNTRIES

Gestão de crises e políticas públicas. A tendência para as práticas regulamentares em alguns países

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ABSTRACT

The article aims to investigate whether governments tend to implement regulatory policies in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and to examine the type of citizen response to different types of policies. Given that active and collaborative citizen participation is an essential element of adequate crisis management, citizen resistance, active opposition, and demonstrations in public spaces are detrimental to the successful outcome of government policies in the face of a crisis. We employ the crisis management and institutional analyses theoretical perspectives, as well as the qualitative methods of study case and the comparative studies. We review the different types of policies implemented in different countries. Our analysis shows that there is indeed a tendency for implementing regulatory policies. It also identifies that the places where regulative policies are created and implemented without taking into account contextual aspects, it usually catalyzes citizen's discomfort. Therefore, we argue that the type of policy used is relevant to deciding what governments' responses should be and their effect on legitimacy during crises.

Keywords: COVID-19, Crisis Management, institutional analysis, normative, regulative.

RESUMO

O artigo pretende investigar se os governos tendem a implementar políticas reguladoras em resposta à pandemia de Covid-19 e examinar o tipo de resposta dos cidadãos aos diferentes tipos de políticas. Dado que a participação ativa e colaborativa dos cidadãos é um elemento essencial de uma gestão adequada da crise, a resistência dos cidadãos, a oposição ativa, e as manifestações em espaços públicos são prejudiciais para o êxito das políticas governamentais face a uma crise. Utilizamos as perspectivas teóricas de gestão de crises e análises institucionais, bem como os métodos qualitativos de estudo de casos e os estudos comparativos. Analisamos os diferentes tipos de políticas implementadas em diferentes países. A nossa análise mostra que existe de fato uma tendência para a implementação de políticas de regulação. Também identificamos que os locais onde as políticas reguladoras são criadas e implementadas sem ter em conta aspectos contextuais, geralmente catalisam o desconforto do cidadão. Portanto, defendemos que o tipo de política utilizada é relevante para decidir quais devem ser as respostas dos governos e o seu efeito na legitimidade durante as crises.

Palavras-chave: COVID-19, Gestão de Crise, análise institucional, normativa, reguladora.



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Introduction

At the onset of crises, citizens expect leadership from political, administrative, or social authorities since it is in their competence to define and characterize the problem, provide information, and implement prompt actions to avoid or minimize harm and guarantee the safety of the community (Boin et al. al, 2005). Government officials in charge of crisis management hold political/administrative positions whose responsibility is to design policies to deal with elements that risk social welfare during and after a crisis (Boin et al., 2005). In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, each country's government and leaders implemented different types of policies, such as hygiene measures; closing businesses; voluntary or mandatory population confinement and face mask use; recommending or rejecting treatments; guaranteeing vaccine availability, and sometimes mandating vaccination. In some cases, non-compliance with these measures resulted in sanctions.

These policies are proof of the state's power over people, but they have two main drawbacks. First, they cannot always contain crises within the borders since they are constantly changing (Boin, 2020; Boin & Lodge, 2019), and sometimes two critical events, or more, appear during the same period of time, known as dual crises (Pot et al., 2022). Second, citizen reactions vary, and they can take the form of acceptance, discontent with the government due to skepticism concerning the disease or the vaccines, discomfort due to restrictions disrupting daily life, anxiety about the end of the crisis and the return to normal activities (Hart, 2022; Garcia, et. to, 2022), anger due to the perception that liberties are being violated, and even open opposition, often in combination with other problems in each country (García et al., 2022; Kishi et al. l., 2021). In addition, there is evidence of increased social unrest due to the inequality produced by previous pandemics (Sedik & Xu 2020).

From an institutional perspective, policies can be analyzed on the basis of their regulatory and their normative aspects. The first case, according to Scott (2008), consists of establishing or imposing rules, supervising individual behavior, and providing rewards or sanctions depending on compliance with such rules. The second consists of desirable social norms and values aimed at building something that is preferred over existing structures and behaviors, specifying how things should be done. Both have positive and negative aspects. Regulatory measures can be implemented quickly and they yield results in the short term, but they can generate public discontent and are not designed for the long run. For their part, normative measures produce lasting results and generate collective learning, but they emerge slowly and are not a response to the urgency of an event (Scott, 2008).



Faced with a critical event, governments must choose between effective and appropriate policies (Boin et al., 2005). Many actors rush to implement measures created in haste that often need constant readjustment or modification, even though their legitimacy may be undermined when they lose effectiveness (Hart, 2022). These actors implement regulatory policies even though, in the face of a crisis, strategic and normative considerations must prevail in leaders' reasoning and decisions (Boin et al., 2005).

Considering these premises, the present analysis is focused on selected countries and seeks to respond to the following questions: Is there a tendency in the world toward implementing regulatory policies? How can we prioritize the type of policy to use in a critical long-term scenario? Finally, how have different societies received such policies? Thus, we will link adopted measures with the legitimacy of each government.

Our purpose is to inquire about the existence or inexistence of a tendency to implement regulatory policies and to examine the citizenship's response to such practices; active and collaborative cooperation with regulatory policies can be an essential element for adequate crisis management, whereas citizen resistance, active opposition, and protests in public squares hinder the success of the policies adopted by a government to face a crisis. For the analysis, we selected countries whose management has been covered by the international press, researchers, and organizations. Theoretically and methodologically, this study is based on institutional approaches and a comparative analysis of case studies. The information was obtained mainly from documentary sources.

1. THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

NORMATIVE, REGULATORY, AND CULTURAL ASPECTS FROM INSTITUTIONAL ANALYSIS

Institutions are mainly sets of rules created by people to guide social interaction; these rules can evolve or be altered by individuals but at a slow pace (North, 1995; March et al., 2011). Rules are predominant and socially transmitted, symbolizing potentially codifiable normative mandates. Therefore, they structure relationships, generate stable behavioral expectations, and represent social systems established and internalized by the actors (Hoodgson, 2006). They contain regulative, normative, and cognitive-cultural elements, which, together with associated activities and resources, provide stability and meaning to social life (Scott, 2008). Each of these aspects of rules has specific and essential characteristics necessary to understand institutions, their effect, and their general structure.



The regulatory approach refers to the ability to establish rules, inspect the actions of others according to these rules, and, if necessary, assign rewards or sanctions to shape behavior. Therefore, strength, sanctions, and timely responses, in addition to moderating behavior through rules, are informal customs, or formal laws and rules, which are the essential ingredients of regulation. Frequently, this orientation leads to perceived repression or restriction, although many regulations also encourage social action by granting licenses, special powers, or benefits (Scott, 2008).

As for the normative aspect of institutions, social systems are integrated by norms and values. Values are ideas concerning what is desirable or preferred; they construct standards against which existing structures or behaviors can be compared. For their part, norms specify how things should be done, which can also generate standards, behaviors, and comparisons. Normative systems define goals or objectives and indicate the appropriate way to pursue them. Some norms and values apply to the whole group, whereas others can only be directed at a specific actor or position. Their adoption generates roles that specify which type of actor must behave in which way, and silent actors have expectations concerning the behavior of the actor in question (Scott, 2008).

Normative systems are generally seen as restrictions imposed on the behavior of individuals, and even if they are, they also encourage and enable social action; their attention is focused on social obligations. Rules can provoke strong feelings of grief or misfortune when they are violated or pride and honor when rules are followed exemplarily; the ensuing self-evaluation produces remorse or self-respect (Scott, 2008).

To attain social acceptance and credibility, also known as legitimacy, institutions need both types of structure, the normative and the regulatory, and both contribute in their particular way. Regulatory guidance achieves legitimacy through legal or quasi-legal instruments. Normative guidance has a deeper foundation, identified with morality. Normative controls are more easily internalized than regulatory ones, and their comfort incentives carry internal and external rewards (Scott, 2008).

The cultural cognitive stream refers to symbolic representations in the environment, such as words, gestures, signs, and beliefs internalized by society, which provide meaning to relationships, objects, or activities. This internalization can be reflected in confidence, certainty, rejection, or uncertainty (Scott, 2008). Informal norms and values change significantly from one social group to the next, so a highly valued trait in one society has little or no value in another. This is so because, within an organization, members are indoctrinated into the collectively accepted norms. However, some scholars consider it inadequate for institutions to highlight cultural aspects (Christensen et al., 2007), which are a source of legitimacy when they form common positions before a situation. (Scott, 2008).



Thus, institutional characteristics transform an organization into an appreciated and significant element of society. Therefore, a public organization with norms and values collectively accepted and seen as desirable is given a positive sign (Christensen et al., 2007). In our case, the government can be perceived as an organization in charge of managing the crisis.

CRISIS AND LEADERSHIP DURING CRISIS MANAGEMENT

It is increasingly common for crises to cross borders, whether geographic, administrative, cultural, or infrastructure-related (Hart, 2022; Boin, 2020). Sometimes, several crises can coincide (Pot, et. to the. 2022), such as the conjunction of Covid-19 and the war in Ukraine with inflation and global warming, or in the case of Mexico, insecurity with Covid-19. For this reason, it is becoming increasingly difficult for public policy designers, regulators, and administrators to establish administrative structures that allow for coordinated responses and integrate stability and organizational preparation with the flexibility and effectiveness required (Christensen et al., 2016).

Critical events can be understood as situations, shared perceptions, or socio-linguistic constructs about a severe threat to the basic structure or fundamental norms and values in a system demanding urgent actions from the authorities to prevent adversity since the peace and order of societies are frequently disturbed by the crisis (Backman & Rhinard, 2017; Boin et al., 2005; Christensen et al., 2016; Matthews, 2012). A crisis can potentially involve a person, a group, an organization, a culture, a society, or even the whole world (Boin et al., 2005); it can take the form of a natural disaster, terrorist attack, pandemic, industrial or transport accident, or infrastructural failure, to name a few.

The main cause of its appearance is the inability of a system to face alterations to the context. Therefore, the system's vulnerability frequently resides deep within itself and can be unnoticed or neglected by public policymakers (Boin, Hart, & Kuipers, 2018). A crisis has three main structural components: threat, uncertainty, and urgency (Boin et al., 2005).

Acting in the face of a crisis will always be one of the fundamental roles of a government because its actions are crucial to support the population's resistance and safekeep critical infrastructure networks (Baubion, 2012). When a critical situation emerges, the need for clear leadership, a primary direction, adequate and precise responsibility allocation, and a hierarchical chain of command are essential (Christensen et al., 2016) since leaders gain trust through relationships and contexts established on a shared norm (Christensen et al., 2007). However, when actions are based on



a mixture of biased evaluations and the leadership engages in blame-passing—pointing to others as responsible for the appearance and consequences of the crisis—it cannot provide citizens with an informed evaluation of the real social capacities to deal with the critical event (Boin, Kuipers & Overdijk, 2013).

Under this perspective, crises are also defining moments for institutional leaders; first, they must take the responsibility of creating a line of action to deal with the source of loss of legitimacy and the consequences of the crisis rather rapidly, and secondly, throughout the crisis, the leadership may be forced to initiate strategic changes in values, technological tasks, or structures to restore the lost legitimacy (Boin, 1998).

In the present article, leadership is not considered as an individual who turns an organization into an institution or deals with a crisis relying solely on their efforts, but rather as the implementation of strategies and practices to guide an organization through the cyclical processes of the norm, providing a more decentralized, direct and dialogue-based vision where formal government instruments are not extensively used (unlike its structure). That is to say leaders are influenced by the cultural-institutional context in which they have been molded (Boin and Christensen, 2008; Christensen et al., 2007).

For its part, crisis management is considered a set of activities aimed at minimizing the impact of the crisis on the population, the infrastructure, and public institutions. Adequate crisis management saves people's lives, protects the infrastructure, and restores trust in public institutions (Boin, Kuipers, & Overdijk, 2013). Crisis management theory recognizes the vital role of prevention and risk management while accepting that crises can always happen (Boin, Hart, & Kuipers, 2018). Crisis management effectiveness can be assessed based on ten executive tasks: early recognition; sense-making; critical decision-making; vertical and horizontal coordination; coupling and decoupling; meaning-making; communication; accountability; learning; enhancing resilience (Boin, Kuipers & Overdijk, 2013).

The increasing complexity of contemporary crises forces us to reflect on the importance of the strategic use of time. In doing so, Pot et al. (2022) set forth five linked strategies to increase the system's robustness for it to continue performing its critical functions: synchronization (choosing the right moment to take action), creation of time horizons (broad or narrow, encompassing the past and the present, addressing the immediate reality, formulating future responses), rhythm (modulating the speed of actions), future (exploration of scenarios), and cyclical adaptation (making adjustments and changes in policies).



Thus, the present article argues that, from an institutional perspective, the policies implemented during crises, both for prevention and management, can be differentiated by their normative or regulatory nature. The following section presents some examples from different parts of the world to determine the most frequently used type of policy, which type should be promoted during a prolonged crisis (such as the Covid-19 pandemic) or a short one (an earthquake or a natural event). We will also analyze citizen responses to one either type of policy. The relationship between capacity and legitimacy, the two central dimensions of governance in successful crisis management, is also examined (Christensen et al., 2016; Christensen & Lægreid, 2020a, Christensen & Lægreid, 2020b). Finally, we discuss governance capacity, which refers to the skill with which the government fulfills its obligation to provide essential services to the population, to quality of government (QoG) (Rothstein & Teorell, 2008).

2. NORMATIVE AND REGULATORY POLICIES IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE WORLD

Different kinds of policies have been implemented during the Covid-19 crisis in countries worldwide. Until November 2022, seven viral waves had occurred in countries such as France, Germany, or Belgium; six waves in the United States, Japan, or Russia; in others such as Mexico, Argentina, or Colombia, there have been five waves; in some only four, for example in India, Brazil, China, or Yemen (Worldometer, 2022). The intensity, duration, and number of deaths differ in each case, and the data is not always entirely reliable. The number of tests applied, the percentage of vaccinated people, and the capacity of each country to care for patients are also very different. Obviously, the policies used also differ.

A significant difference has to do with how governments have implemented such actions, whether they promote normative or regulatory features; that is to say, if they are based on what is socially perceived as adequate, be it through conviction, communication, or other means, or if the measures are based on swift or punitive actions, assuming the citizenry as the agent that should comply with them. The reactions of the citizenry to such actions must also be considered.

In the European Union, the measures that dealt with the covid-19 pandemic caused reactions specific to different countries (BBC, 2021a). For example, in Vienna, Austria, in 2021, for four consecutive weeks, between 35,000 and 44,000 people protested against the mandatory general confinement measures, which were also applicable to vaccinated citizens, and the obligation to be vaccinated as of February 2022; although the vaccine was not mandatory, a fine of up to three



thousand six hundred euros for not getting vaccinated was approved (BBC, 2021b; The Guardian, 2021).

In Brussels, Belgium, in 2021, thousands of peaceful demonstrators protested against the restrictions in response to the Omicron variant. Although vaccination was not required by the state, no fines were imposed on those who failed to get vaccinated, and the authority limited its actions to recommend that the citizens do so strongly; considerable police presence was observed during the protests using water cannons and tear gas due to the violent history of such demonstrations (ABC, 2021; Bloomberg, 2021).

In 2021 and 2022, in several German cities, sporadically violent protests gathered thousands of participants, some of whom faced criminal charges or fines for breaking Covid-19 rules; these protests were against mandatory vaccination and the vaccination of children (ABC, 2022; DW, 2021). In Amsterdam, the Netherlands, in 2022, in defiance of a ban on large gatherings, thousands of people demonstrated against sudden measures imposed to deal with the omicron strain, such as a new stricter lockdown, mandatory vaccinations, and a ban on meetings of more than two people; the government used riot police to clear the city's central museum square (CNN, 2022; DW, 2022).

In 2020 and 2021, in Italy, to contain the spread of the virus, the government decided to restrict civilian movement, proposed confinement, and closed schools, businesses, and restaurants, and sporting events were forbidden. Lombardy and Veneto were declared red zones, and their populations were not allowed to leave. The authorities established multiple control points to reinforce compliance with the measures (Mattei & Del Pino, 2021). As a result, on several occasions, demonstrations became violent riots; groups of citizens clashed with the police, looted businesses, burned containers, and threw Molotov cocktails, flares, firecrackers, stones, and bottles (Pacho, 2020).

In Norway, the policies were similar to those implemented in other parts of the world: restricted contact between citizens, closed borders and businesses, and limited people's movement in their localities and regions. This is an example of a deterministic principle in which commensurate measures are implemented in the face of an extraordinary situation. The Norwegian government's management differentiated from others in four aspects. First, particular importance was attached to maintaining daily communication with the citizenry, explaining the measures and their cause, appealing to people's solidarity to comply with the regulations, and gathering general support. Second, moral symbols related to sacrifice for the common good were invoked. Third, a suppression strategy, not a plan, was enacted to foster collaborative decision-making, sense-making, and constant communication. Fourth, the measures were voluntary, not mandatory, although sanctions were



applied to those who failed to comply with the policies. Citizens responded favorably to government measures. Satisfaction with democracy and institutions went from 57% to 72% (Christensen & Laegreid, 2020a).

In Australia, the policies were designed and implemented taking into account the history of past epidemics such as avian influenza and Ebola. They consisted of recommended precautions at borders and during travel, personal confinement and voluntary quarantine, social distancing, closure of establishments, and the instruction to avoid mass gatherings, among others. Citizen response took the form of cooperation regarding working at home, voluntary confinement, social distancing, and sanitary measures, but lack of cooperation concerning shopping restrictions. The government implemented drone-based surveillance in response to the non-compliance (Moloney & Moloney 2020).

In China, the measures were more easily implemented due to the characteristics of its authoritarian regime, such as the centralization of decision-making powers. The main policies focused on implementing mandatory population confinement, social distancing, quarantines, movement restrictions, and cancellation of holidays, in addition to creating agencies and drafting contingency plans. For thirty months, the general public responded with acceptance, discipline, understanding, and collective comprehension, which was probably due to the continuous dissemination of information via conferences, speeches, or other means, which was perceived as the response of an open and accountable regime, although this is relative, since media censorship provoked strong criticism and citizen discontent for some time (Christensen & Ma, 2021). Small protests motivated by the exhaustion of the covid-19 zero policy emerged during mid and late 2022; this policy signified severe quarantine for millions of people (CNN Español, 2022; BBC, 2022a; BBC, 2022b).

In South Korea, the main measures were taken from past crises, such as those caused by SARS and MERS; examples of these measures were text messages, the use of mobile applications to disseminate health alerts, and a color code to indicate the alert level (blue for minimum risk of infection, yellow for moderate risk, orange for high risk, and red for the highest probability of infection). Other examples include the recommendation to practice social distancing and self-confinement and to wear face masks; action guides distributed to local governments and citizens; active communication, agile information flow, and daily informative sessions; promotion of open government, transparency, and democracy; and citizens' involvement in the creation of prevention measures. However, mandatory compliance with the regulations was not required. Most people complied with the general measures presented by the government, whose handling of the crisis is



considered one of the most successful cases in mitigating the aftermath of the virus, and there was no need to decree substantial interruptions to daily activities in the economic, political, and social spheres (Lee, Hwang, & Moon, 2020).

Five countries stand out on the American continent. In Ottawa, Canada, early in 2022, the regulatory measure requiring truckers crossing the border with the United States to be vaccinated against COVID-19 sparked demonstrations. Dissatisfied truckers closed international bridges; the result was chaotic, and the mayor was forced to declare a state of emergency in view that such expressions of dissatisfaction represented a risk to the population's security (BBC, 2022c). After fifteen days, the situation normalized.

In Colombia, after a short delay requested by the Senate, the President's Office decreed a state of emergency (Directive No. 002 of 2020, Senate of the Republic; Decree 417, 2020). After that, mandatory preventive isolation was mandated, and only one or two people per family were allowed to go out to obtain food, due to economic activities, or in case of emergency (Decree 457, 2020); crowds were forbidden, and a curfew (from 8:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m.) was enacted (Decree 420, 2020). In March 2020, entry of non-residents and non-nationals into the country was restricted. Between 2016 and 2019, there were several protests due to the economic crisis. The crisis returned in 2021, and when a tax reform intended to reactivate the economy was passed, new protests flared up, and some demonstrators were imprisoned (El País, 2021). In public management, problems related to coordinating national governments with governors and mayors are common (Rodríguez, 2020).

In Brazil, a part of the federal government assumed a passive position in line with the President's claims that Covid-19 was a "fantasy" or a "flu" (Congreso em foco, 2020). The Ministry of Health changed ownership four times, and a segment has been dismantled (Paraguassu, Lisandra (2020). The federal government failed to recommend social distancing, confinement, and suspension of activities, showing a lack of institutional coordination at the federal level (Abrucio, et. al., 2020). Vaccination began after significant delays. Due to Brazil's atypical federal system in which states and municipalities have health competencies, local governments assumed these measures as non-mandatory and achieved a degree of coordination in some regions (Boullosa et al., 2020). The President disavowed specialists and mayors (Agência Senado, 2020), which confronted him with the Federal Supreme Court (AP News, 2021).

The federal government led the crisis management efforts in Mexico, which is characterized by a fragmented health system. The President gave full support to epidemiologists with experience in the AH1N1 pandemic, which forced the suspension of activities between March and May 2009



(WHO/WHO, 2009). Thus, during the Covid-19 pandemic, the federal government restricted educational, economic, and recreational activities and provided financial support to small businesses, but population movement remained unrestricted. Crossing borders in either direction also remained unrestricted, confinement at home was recommended, and hospital capacity was increased to prevent the health system's collapse. Vaccines were rapidly obtained, and a color-coded system (green, yellow, and red) was established to open or close activities after the first wave. The second wave was characterized by greater participation of subnational governments in managing the crisis. Except for protests by medical personnel at the beginning due to a lack of protective equipment, the population voluntarily accepted the measures. The federal government maintained its legitimacy (Méndez et al., 2021; Culebro et al., 2021; Cruz et al., 2020).

In the United States, the Federal government was ill-prepared to face Covid-19. President Donald J. Trump refused to accept the WHO-recommended Covid-19 test kit, disparaged the disease (Carter, 2021; Parker & Stern, 2021), and even disavowed his administration's medical advisers, for example, Anthony Fauci (NYT, 2021). Trump promoted a dubious Covid-19 test, which presented severe problems. Consequently, government action in dealing with the pandemic was delayed (Carter, 2021). In public events, he downplayed the impact of the virus and promoted distrust of scientific knowledge (Ibid.). This situation is not surprising; as stated by Parker and Stern (2021), crisis management is a highly political matter.

In the US, the implemented policies were of a mixed nature in terms of their regulatory and normative aspects. On the one hand, the President recommended hydroxychloroquine to prevent the virus, and he challenged the use of face masks as a measure recommended by experts such as Dr. Anthony Fauci. He also promoted the use of ultraviolet rays and the injection of disinfectant materials to kill the virus, among other non-mandatory, non-normative measures (Carter, 2021). However, the responses and measures to cope with the crisis were varied given that the individual states have a high degree of autonomy regarding public health (Ibid.). In some States, there were demonstrations to eliminate restrictive measures (Ibid.) such as confinement and restricting economic activities and movement (BBC, 2020). However, some measures appealed to voluntariness, among them the application of vaccines, loans and assistance to small businesses, and benefits in case of unemployment due to Covid-19, among others (USA.GOV, sf).



3. NORMATIVE AND REGULATORY POLICIES: TRENDS AND CONSEQUENCES

The experiences described in the previous section provide an overview of how world governments implemented policies to deal with the crisis. Some involve primarily regulatory policies and sanctions, others use regulatory policies supported by normative actions based on conviction, and other governments lean toward normative measures when informing the population and communicating with it to explain the benefits of complying with the measures.

Now we will try to determine the nature of the actions carried out by the selected countries. Based on the theoretical foundations presented above, this section focuses on the analysis of the predominant—normative, regulatory, or mixed—nature of the measures and their consequences. For this purpose, Table 1 shows the country of origin, the nature of its measures, how mandatory it was, and consequences.

Regulatory policies are those in which plans, regulations, or actions aimed at monitoring the behavior of individuals are imposed and formulated expeditiously, disregarding contextual issues such as the norms, values, and customs of a society to obtain results in the short term and alleviate social pressure. Such actions may entail sanctions or the use of repressive means. Normative policies are planning measures that consider contextual aspects, seek to obtain long-lasting results without ruling out immediate ones, seek to generate collective learning, and are not mandatory or carry sanctions. They are instead based on discernment and voluntary compliance since their essence focuses on what is preferred, what is desirable, and the socially accepted ways of doing things.

The mandatory or voluntary nature of the measures has to do with how authorities determine and explain how citizens must abide by the mandates, actions, regulations, or policies created, whether they must do so forcibly or whether they leave to individuals the decision to comply or not. Sanctions are the way in which authorities enforce the oversight of their policies, and they can take the form of fines, surcharges, police repression, dispersal, or surveillance, among others. They do not necessarily depend on the nature of the policy nor on whether or not compliance is mandatory. Consequences are how citizens respond to the measures implemented by the government, regardless of their nature. Examples are protests, peaceful or violent demonstrations, voluntary or involuntary compliance, and discernment.

Table 1 reveals that, in the selected countries, there is a trend toward creating and implementing regulatory policies, which points to a hurried design of plans unrelated to the context and the presence of sanctions and citizen repression due to a lack of compliance with regulations.



Table 1. Policies: their nature and consequences

Country	Nature	Mandatory/voluntary	Existence of sanctions and type	Consequences
Australia	Regulative	Required, but not forced	Yes	Citizen protests
Belgium	Regulative	Voluntary	No, but repression present	Increasingly violent demonstrations
Germany	Regulative	Mandatory	Yes, fines and criminal charges	Demonstrations
Holland	Regulative	Mandatory	No, but police were deployed to disperse crowds	Protests and challenge to bans
Canada	Regulative	Mandatory	No	Demonstrations
Italy	Regulative	Mandatory	No, with control points to monitor compliance with measures	Violent demonstrations
Austria	Mixed	Voluntary	No, but surveillance with drones was used	Compliance with certain measures
China	Regulative	Mandatory	N/A	Acceptance, discipline, and citizen discernment; recently, minor demonstrations
Norway	Normative	Voluntary	Yes	Favorable response and increased satisfaction with democracy and institutions
South Korea	Normative	Voluntary	No	Compliance with measures
United States				
Brazil	Passivity	N/A	No	Confusion, lack of coordination, demonstrations against municipal measures
Mexico	Normative	Voluntary	No	Acceptance and widespread compliance with measures; early demonstrations due to lack of supplies.
United States	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed response. Compliance with measures and demonstrations.
Colombia	Regulative	Mandatory	Sanctions, curfew, prison for non-compliance	Discontent, violent demonstrations, confrontations with police.
Source: Elaborated by the authors based on referenced sources.				

The first group of countries includes those where policies, mainly of a regulatory nature, led to citizen discontent and resulted in protests and demonstrations, violent in some cases. Austria, Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, and Canada are examples of outbreaks of citizen rejection, probably stimulated by the ideal of individual freedom and respect for privacy that prevails in some European countries. However, the discontent resulted in moderate problems only. In Belgium, regulatory policies were voluntarily complied with, and no sanctions were established. When riots occurred, the government responded with repression, which indicates the coexistence of voluntary compliance and repression. Austria implemented both normative and regulatory measures. They were expeditious measures relying on historical processes and persuading the civil population through recommendations concerning the benefits of compliance. However, drones were also used as a means of surveillance to verify compliance. The population's response was also mixed: some policies were complied with, and others were not.

Another group of countries, including Brazil, Colombia, and the United States, shows cases of untimely initiation of crisis management; leaderships that confused the citizens and disavowed specialists; marked discrepancies between the federal government, governors, and mayors; evident lack of coordination between agencies, which ended up paying heed to fake news, and in the case of Colombia, confrontation with the National Legislature. Similarly, in the United States and Colombia, mandatory measures caused unrest, and the government's legitimacy was deteriorated. In Brazil, the federal government was often idle. Perhaps, as mentioned in the theoretical section on legitimacy and crisis management, the inadequate management of the crisis that characterized the presidents of these three countries may be related to their defeat in the ballots.

In contrast, the group including Norway, South Korea, and Mexico represents cases in which policies were mostly normative and non-mandatory, which resulted in a favorable citizen response where government recommendations were readily complied with. In these countries, government legitimacy was not affected by the crisis. In Norway, normative, non-mandatory guidelines included penalties for citizens who failed to comply. The strategy contemplated national norms, values, and customs, appealed to the use of symbols and persuasion regarding the benefits of compliance and sought to maintain daily communication with the population. A favorable factor is a high degree of legitimacy, a healthy economy, and government confidence. The citizenry responded favorably.

China is a special case. It was the only country in the world where a Zero Covid policy was still in effect three years after the beginning of this prolonged crisis. This policy consists of establishing mandatory quarantine in regions or cities with millions of inhabitants in the event of a small outbreak.



In November 2022, perhaps due to exhaustion after 36 months of the strict policy, minor signs of disagreement emerged, which contrasted with the general acceptance, discipline, comprehension, and understanding attributed to the “authoritarian advantages” of the regime (Christensen & Ma, 2021) and the information constantly presented to the population. In December, the policies became more flexible, resembling those of other countries. However, crisis management has been adequate in terms of health and employment.

4. CONCLUSIONS

As we describe in this article, the crisis caused by the Covid-19 virus has generated different types of government responses. Institutional theory and two of its main pillars, normative and regulatory aspects, were used for the analysis. In addition to demonstrating the state’s power over people, each approach has advantages and disadvantages in designing and executing tasks, such as expeditious development and short-term results or learning and collaboration.

Our hypothesis asked about the existence of a general lean toward regulatory measures in the form of plans, regulations, or other actions that fail to acknowledge the context, such as norms, values, customs, or what the population desires, and we also focused on the consequences of implementing of one or another type of policy, on which type should be prioritized, and on how the policy affects crisis management. To verify the hypothesis, we used theoretical tools from organizational studies concerned with the normative and regulatory approaches and crisis management leadership. We also analyzed a selected group of countries where the nature of the policies and their consequences could be clearly differentiated.

As a result, we were able to identify a tendency to implement policies of a regulatory nature, which was to be expected because decision-makers are inclined to create and exercise tactical and symbolic measures instead of strategic and planned actions; critical situations generate citizen pressure and, as a consequence, reduced legitimacy (Boin et al., 2005). However, we also observed how the use and execution of regulatory policies, which disregards the particular context, norms, values, and customs, often leads to social discontent, which can manifest itself in violent acts enacted by part of the citizenry against the government. The protests ceased shortly after in some countries, such as Austria, Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, and Canada. In others, such as Colombia, Brazil, and the United States, they were associated with older issues.



Similarly, we identified situations where governments, despite their regulatory guidelines, achieved the citizens' cooperation and comprehension, for instance, in China. This can be attributed to the characteristics of the Chinese regime, but we mainly relate it to its constant communication with the citizenry. Similarly, Norway is an example in which, despite the penalties against people who failed to comply with the measures, the government's actions were received with sympathy and understanding, and the citizens' satisfaction with democracy and institutions increased. This event seems not to be isolated; where information was openly provided, and communication with the public was maintained (China, Norway, South Korea, and Mexico), crisis management resulted in greater citizen understanding and cooperation.

In short, adequate crisis management, one in which legitimacy is maintained, implies the application of suitable measures that respond to particular contexts. Implementing regulatory policies in combination with government surveillance or sanctions generally results in negative citizen responses, whereas a normative orientation promotes positive reactions. The theory has already considered this outcome (cf. Boin et al., 2005). Decision-makers must choose between effective (regulatory) and adequate (normative) policies (Boin et al., 2005). The examples presented in the present article show how the context, type, and duration of the crisis are critical in deciding the nature of the measures to create and implement and that the successful approach—normative, regulatory, or mixed—will depend on the individual case. In the same way, the contextual aspects and particular characteristics of a crisis can make one type of measure work where another used to work. Some governments have correctly read their conditions, while others have failed to, resulting in a loss of legitimacy.

Thus, in response to the question of which type of policy should be prioritized during a critical situation, our analysis presents a simple answer: it depends on the context. Since each country and crisis have particular characteristics, the type of crisis and its context dictate the nature of the measures to be prioritized. Regulatory policies will work in some cases, normative in others, and mixed in yet other cases, and given that the context is often diverse, the same policy may not work in two different places. Therefore, leaders and decision-makers must channel considerable energy to the two main executive measures of crisis management: early recognition, that is, being timely prepared, and sense-making, or examining and describing what exactly is the imminently critical scenario. These efforts will be the basis for making decisions representing the least possible disruption to the citizenry. In this endeavor, theoretical formulations attaching great importance to the time factor in the analysis



of governance strength and considering it essential to address the presence of dual crises (Pot et al., 2022) can help leaders in reading the context around each new crisis.

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