Brief Research Article

Confirmed cases and deaths by COVID-19: A comparison among the BRICS countries

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Summary

This work seeks to compare the number of confirmed cases and deaths caused by COVID-19 among the BRICS member countries using data from Johns Hopkins University. The situation experienced by the BRICS is worrying. Brazil, Russia, India, and South Africa are among the five countries with the highest number of confirmed cases. Special attention should be given to Brazil, which ranks in second place regarding to the number of confirmed cases in the world. In addition, India will have the highest number of infections in March 2021, according to projections of Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

Keywords: SARS-CoV-2, COVID-19, BRICS

The first reports of an unidentified respiratory disease were in the city of Wuhan in the Chinese province of Hubei in late December 2019. After this identification, in January 2020, Chinese authorities reported having identified a new strain of coronavirus, which in February 2020 was named SARS-CoV-2, the causative agent of the disease COVID-19 (Wu et al., 2020). In March 2020, after detecting a rapid transmission of the virus, caused mainly by the intense flow of international tourists (Farzanegan, 2020) and a worsening health situation of patients, the World Health Organization declared it to be a pandemic (Liu et al., 2020).

Despite the various warnings issued by the World Health Organization about the severity of the disease and the most used forms to combat the virus in an environment where there are no medicines or vaccines (Lewnard and Lo, 2020), these responses differed among countries, both at the level of public policies and at the individual level (Bavel et al., 2020).

In this sense, this work seeks to compare the number of confirmed cases and deaths caused by COVID-19 among the BRICS member countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), and to ascertain the number of cases in each country to the total number of cases isolated worldwide. The data on COVID-19 used in this study were taken from the “Center for Science and Systems Engineering (CSSE)” at Johns Hopkins University (JHU) on July 27, 2020 (Johns Hopkins University, 2020).

The BRICS population corresponds to almost 42% of the world’s population, which is equivalent to almost 3.2 billion people. The total number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in 27th July in these countries was almost 5.2 million, equivalent to 32% of all cases identified in the world. Of these, 145 thousand people died, equivalent to 22% of all deaths recorded due to COVID-19.

According to Graph 1, Brazil is the country with the highest number of confirmed cases in July 27, 2020. China, although it was the first country to register a case, is the one with the lowest number of confirmed cases among BRICS members. Regarding the number of deaths, Brazil appears in first place, with almost 90,000 cases registered in July 2020, almost three times the number of registered cases registered in India. Once again, China ranks last among the BRICS countries, with 4652 cases registered since the beginning of the pandemic.

Graphic 1 - Confirmed Cases and Deaths by COVID-19 in the BRICS Countries

Source: JHU, 27-07-2020

Graph 2 shows the percentage of the population identified COVID-19 cases and deaths in the BRICS countries, in relation to the global total with COVID-19. As shown, Brazil has the biggest discrepancies. The country population represents 2.75% of the world population, but the number of confirmed cases is almost 15%, and deaths have reached almost 14% of the total recorded globally. Among the BRICS countries, in addition to Brazil, Russia and South Africa have the same trend, but in a much smaller proportion.

Graphic 2 – Proportion of confirmed cases and deaths by COVID-19 in the BRICS countries in relation to total cases at the global level

Source: JHU, 27-07-2020.

The figures presented do not reflect the reality experienced by these countries, as they are underreported, and there must be differences in underreporting between countries (Baudi et al., 2020). In any case, the situation experienced by the BRICS is worrying. Brazil, Russia, India, and South Africa are among the five countries with the highest number of confirmed cases up to July 27, 2020 (JHU, 2020). Special attention should be given to Brazil due the lack of support from the federal government in combating the disease (Dias Jr, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic outbreak in India is also worrying, since Projections by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) put the country at having the highest number of infections in March 2021 (MIT, 2020). China, on the other hand, despite being the most populous country in the world, has very low indicators, and these factors seem to have been controlled as a result of more effective actions from social isolation to the sanitary cords implemented by the government (Pan et al., 2020).

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