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# Market Reactions to COVID-19: Does Systemic Risk Vary Across Industries? A Markov-Switching CAPM Approach

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## ABSTRACT

Despite a broad consensus on the response of US stock market volatility to the coronavirus outbreak, our micro-level understanding of its variation across industries still needs to be improved. This study contributes to the existing literature by providing an industry-level analysis of the COVID-19 pandemic with two different states. Evidence from the MS-CAPM model indicates the role of portfolio diversification. Specifically, the results reveal that some industries, such as materials, real estate, communication, and utilities, have much higher expected returns. On the other hand, other sectors, including consumer discretionary, industrials, and information technology, become less volatile than the market during the lockdown period.

## KEYWORDS

COVID-19; stock market volatility; the MS-CAPM

## JEL CLASSIFICATION

C22; C58; G12

## Introduction

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, numerous studies have examined its effects on the economy and financial system regarding several dimensions (Akhtaruzzaman, Boubaker, and Sensoy 2021; Amar et al. 2021; Ashraf, 2020, 2021; Baek, Mohanty, and Glamboosky 2020; Choi 2020; Engelhardt et al. 2021; Goodell 2020; Sharif, Aloui, and Yarovaya 2020; Takyi and Bentum-Ennin 2021). Nevertheless, a limited number of studies have examined the impact of the pandemic on stock market volatility. The studies on volatility during the COVID-19 pandemic tend to focus on the entire market. For instance, Baker et al. (2020) examine the impact of COVID –19 on US stock market volatility and find that the pandemic harms US stock market volatility. Likewise, Albuquerque et al. (2020) analyze the interaction between financial market volatility and the COVID-19 pandemic in the US and the world. The results indicate that the pandemic increased volatility in US financial markets. Engelhardt et al. (2021) look into the impact of trust on stock market volatility during the pandemic for 47 countries. They report that the stock markets' volatility in high-trust countries was negatively and significantly affected. Besides, the authors find that trust in governments matters during pandemic times. Zarembo et al. (2020) analyze whether the government response to COVID –19 reduces international stock market volatility. They report a significant increase in stock market volatility in countries where governments took stricter measures.

Furthermore, Onali (2020) find a significant increase in volatility for US equity markets in response to reports of COVID-19 cases and deaths in several countries. On the other

hand, some studies have focused on industry-level volatility. He et al. (2020) report for the Chinese stock market that the outbreak has affected the traditional industries adversely and more seriously, but it has helped bring opportunities for the development of high-tech industries. Hung, Hue, and Duong (2021) find that the impact of COVID-19 on stock market volatility in Vietnam is not robust across eleven sectors. Yagli (2020) reveals substantial volatility deterioration for all industries during the COVID-19 period in the Turkish stock market, with a greater impact on the service sector.

Despite a relatively large number of studies focusing on the sectoral impact of COVID-19 on stock market volatility, the US has not yet received enough attention<sup>1</sup>. Haroon and Rizvi (2020) examine whether coronavirus-related news causes a shift in industry-level volatility in the US and report that panic-laden news has led to greater volatility in sectors perceived to be affected most by COVID-19. Baek, Mohanty, and Glambsky (2020) analyze the relationship between COVID-19 and stock market volatility in the US and conclude that changes in systematic risk vary across industries. Investigating industry-level volatility in the U.S., Choi (2020) finds that COVID-19 has affected the volatility in all sectors and the magnitude is even larger than the global financial crisis.

Most industry-level analyses are mainly based on event study methodology (Kwan and Mertens 2020; Chowdhury and Abedin 2020; Ahmad, Kutan, and Gupta 2021) or linear models such as the liquidity network model (Farzami et al. 2021; Chebbi, Ammer, and Hameed 2021). In addition, a few studies perform the non-linear model applications of industry-level analyses. However, they neglect the volatility of asset prices (Salisu, Vo, and Lucey 2021; Haroon and Rizvi 2020; Corbet, Larkin, and Lucey 2020). In addition, many studies divide their sample as pre-Covid and Covid periods. Still, they do not consider the possible different structures (volatility) of the same periods, as investors do not restrict their investments only for a certain period. So they can spread their investments over different periods of the economy. Applying the Markov-Switching Capital Asset Pricing Model (MS-CAPM), this study aims to analyze the sectoral response of the US stock market volatility to the COVID-19 outbreak.

Unlike previous studies, we show that asset prices might have different volatility structures of beta coefficients at different periods, even in the pre-COVID period itself, on a sectoral basis during the COVID and pre-COVID periods, with the relatively novel MS-CAPM model. We compare the beta coefficients of sectors for similar regimes for both the pre-COVID and the COVID periods. As the pandemic is an ongoing phenomenon, our sample period is relatively large and allows us to examine the effect of the pandemic from a vantage point. Our findings reveal that most aggressive sectors, such as consumer discretionary, industrials, and information technology, with betas higher than one prior to the COVID-19 period, exhibit market risk decreases ranging from 0.01 (industrials) to 0.23 (information technology). While sectors with betas lower than one have the highest market risk increases ranging from 0.01 (consumer staples and communication) to 0.96 (real estate). As such, our results are in line with the findings of Alfaro et al. (2020) and Baek, Mohanty, and Glambsky (2020), and Dias and Serrasqueiro (2022) suggesting that at least some sectors - Information technology, consumer discretionary, telecom services, consumer staples, and energy) - show statistically significant differences. Overall, our findings for individual sectors show that the coronavirus outbreak contributed to volatility in the market in general, even if systematic risks in some sectors, including industrials, information technology, and consumer discretionary, decreases. In addition, we observe that the

probability of transition from a low volatility regime to a high volatility regime is higher in the COVID period compared to pre-COVID times. That is, the probability of transition from one regime to another is comparably higher in extreme times.

The study proceeds as follows: Section two describes data and methodology, section three reports empirical results, and section four concludes.

## Data and Methodology

### Data

We retrieve sectoral returns and risk-free rates from spglobal.com and Kenneth French's data library, respectively. Our data starts a year before January 22, 2020, when the first case of COVID-19 in the US appeared, according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and ends on January 22, 2022. That is, the data covers two separate periods. The first period defines pre-COVID data, while the second period determines the COVID period data. The study uses eleven sectors' daily adjusted returns for non-trading days. The sectors in the analysis are consumer discretionary, consumer staples, health care, industrials, information technology, materials, real estate, communication services, utilities, financials, and energy.

In the first phase of the analysis, we have investigated the descriptive statistics of the sectors and S&P 500 return series for pre and peri-COVID periods. As shown in Table 1, except for the energy sector, all sector means are positive in both periods. Almost all sectors exhibit a left tail feature in both periods, while utilities sector has a right tail in the COVID period. All sectors are more volatile in the COVID period compared to the pre-COVID period, and energy sector has the highest volatility. In contrast, consumer staples sector has the least in both periods. Besides, the kurtosis of the return series is close to normality before the COVID outbreak. Yet, after the pandemic, it has increased remarkably. That is, the normality of the series starts to spoil. Correspondingly, the results of the Jarque-Bera test are statistically significant, suggesting that all variables are not normally distributed. In addition, Figure 1 plots the returns series of the S&P 500 and 11 sectors for the entire period. It is clear that the volatility of all return series has increased, and the means of the series have a slide. Hence, MS-CAPM is a reasonable approach to apply.

### Methodology

We analyze the importance of changing risk premiums and return variability over time. In this context, we first apply the traditional or standard CAPM and then the MS-CAPM for the sake of comparability.

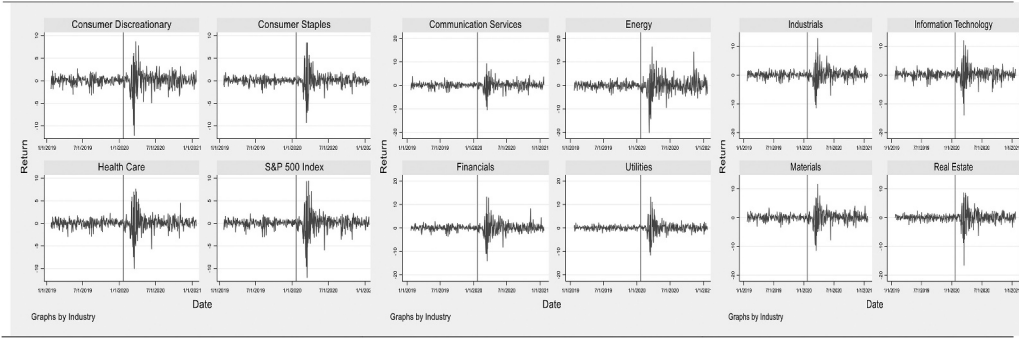
#### Standard CAPM Model

The relationship between risk and expected return is a substantial challenge to the financial economy (Campbell 1996). One of the most common models used for addressing this problem is the capital asset pricing model (CAPM), which was first proposed by Sharpe (1964), Lintner (1965), and Mossin (1966) based on Markowitz's portfolio theory. The basic proposition of the CAPM is that the expected excess return on any asset is given by its sensitivity to the market (beta) times the market risk premium. The beta parameter ( $\beta$ ),

Table 1. Descriptive statistics.

	Pre-COVID						COVID Period							
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Minimum	Maximum	Skewness	Kurtosis	J-B	Mean	Std. Dev.	Minimum	Maximum	Skewness	Kurtosis	J-B
S&P 500	0.08	0.74	-2.98	2.13	-0.89	2.66	4382.87*	0.08	2.17	-11.99	9.38	-0.55	7.80	654.86*
Consumer Discretionary	0.06	0.86	-3.15	2.63	-0.55	1.44	3144.25*	0.14	2.11	-12.09	8.63	-0.95	7.23	589.20*
Consumer Staples	0.07	0.66	-2.70	1.81	-0.58	1.43	1657.70*	0.02	1.76	-9.24	8.40	0.05	8.39	742.44*
Health Care	0.06	0.80	-2.90	2.20	-0.68	1.29	2053.33*	0.06	1.94	-10.00	7.58	-0.12	5.73	346.51*
Industrials	0.07	0.93	-3.00	2.36	-0.55	1.00	2417.26*	0.05	2.51	-11.45	12.75	-0.25	5.85	363.28*
Information Technology	0.16	1.06	-4.08	3.26	-0.56	1.67	2709.11*	0.16	2.56	-13.92	11.96	-0.30	6.75	484.26*
Materials	0.05	0.94	-3.26	3.41	-0.25	1.09	1922.69*	0.11	2.44	-11.44	11.63	-0.43	5.23	296.33*
Real Estate	0.07	0.78	-2.39	2.32	-0.41	0.16	5510.88*	0.00	2.56	-16.56	8.63	-0.90	8.40	301.91*
Communication Services	0.09	0.93	-3.07	3.73	-0.28	1.97	4432.81*	0.09	2.07	-10.45	9.20	-0.45	5.37	742.44*
Utilities	0.09	0.70	-2.16	2.13	-0.17	0.48	4699.65*	0.01	2.48	-11.55	13.11	0.29	7.54	602.94*
Financials	0.07	0.93	-3.57	2.70	-0.64	1.78	2895.47*	0.03	2.90	-14.00	13.22	-0.14	5.98	377.41*
Energy	-0.02	1.18	-4.13	3.28	-0.23	0.39	2480.69*	-0.06	3.84	-20.09	16.31	-0.32	5.31	301.91*

Note: J-B denotes Jarque-Bera test statistics. \* indicates rejection of the null hypothesis referring that series are normally distributed.



**Figure 1.** Returns of S&P 500 Index and Eleven Sectors in the Pre-COVID and the COVID Period.

indicating the level of sensitivity of the change in return on securities compared to the market as a whole, has a critical role in modern finance theory as a measure of systematic risk or volatility. Therefore, the most critical step in the CAPM framework is measuring the beta or asset systematic risk. Considering that the expected returns on a given asset are equal to the risk-free rate plus the portfolio's beta multiplied by the expected excess returns on the market portfolio (Chen and Huang 2007; Kayo et al. 2020), the beta is typically estimated by the following standard linear regression model (Korkmaz et al. 2010; Urom, Chevallier, and Zhu 2020; Yamaka and Phadkantha 2021).

$$(R_{i,t} - R_{f,t}) = \alpha + \beta * (R_{M,t} - R_{f,t}) + \varepsilon_t \quad (1)$$

where denotes the time horizon.  $R_{i,t}$  is the rate of return of security  $i$  at time  $t$ ,  $\alpha$  is the fixed rate of return,  $R_{f,t}$  is the risk-free rate, and is the rate of return of the market portfolio. Hence,  $(R_{i,t} - R_{f,t})$  presents the excess return on asset  $i$  while  $(R_{M,t} - R_{f,t})$  denotes the excess return on the market portfolio. The error term  $\varepsilon_t$  is assumed to be an independently and identically distributed random variable that follows the normal distribution ( $\varepsilon_t \sim N(0, \sigma^2)$ ). Note that  $\beta = 1$  means that the relevant security moves in the same direction as the market. That is, the systematic risk of the security and the market are equal. However, means that the security is more volatile or riskier than the market (but potentially more profitable), while means that the security is less volatile than the market.

Following the assumptions of the Sharpe-Lintner CAPM (Sharpe 1964; Lintner 1965), which assumes that performing the expectation operator  $E_t(\bullet)$  of Equation (1) conditionally on information set up to time  $t$ , the condition below must hold:

$$E_t(r_i) = \beta E_t(r_m) \quad (2)$$

where  $r_i$  and  $r_m$  denote returns on asset  $i$  and market portfolio, respectively. The above condition implies that the intercept term  $\alpha$  in Equation (1) must not be statistically different from zero (Cortazar, Kovacevic, and Schwartz 2013; He, O'Connor, and Thijssen 2018; Urom, Chevallier, and Zhu 2020).

### Markov-switching CAPM Model

One of the most important assumptions in the standard CAPM is that investors focus on a single period. As a result, they consider the average return and volatility for only one period.

In addition, the beta of a risky asset estimated from the standard CAPM by employing the ordinary least squares (OLS) regression is assumed to be constant through time (Fama and MacBeth 1973; Bos and Newbold 1984). However, investors do not restrict their investments only for a certain period, so they can spread their investments over different periods of the economy or adjust their decisions over time according to the expectations of future investment opportunities. Therefore, investors can be curious about the covariances of asset returns with state variables that influence future investment opportunities, even if they favor high expected returns and low variance (Urom, Chevallier, and Zhu 2020). In this case, the constant beta coefficient assumption of the traditional CAPM is likely to fail in the real investment environment (Chen, 1981; Ang and Chen 2007; Vendrame, Guermat, and Tucker 2018). Several lines of evidence suggest that many beta coefficients tend to vary significantly through time rather than remain stable as the OLS model presumes because of macroeconomic and microeconomic factors affecting the investment decisions of companies and their cash flow balances, such as business cycle, technological change, and consumer preferences (see Blume, 1971; Levy, 1972; Blume and Friend 1973; Fabozzi and Francis 1977; Fama and French 1993; Jagannathan and Wang 1996; Groenewold and Fraser 1999; Ghysels 1998; Caporale 2012; Vendrame, Guermat, and Tucker 2018; Wang et al. 2021; Yamaka and Phadkantha 2021).

Furthermore, Lettau and Ludvigson (2001) and Beach (2011) revealed that the CAPM with a time-varying beta outperforms the standard CAPM with a constant beta. Therefore, the present study seeks to derive a reliable test by considering that the betas of underlying sectors can vary over time (as many economic time series) or be less stable over the business cycle. To this end, we apply the Markov-switching model proposed in Hamilton (1989) for the analysis of the non-stationary time series analysis of the business cycle to test whether there are regime shifts in those betas within the CAPM framework. Indeed, following Huang (2000), Huang (2001), and (2003), Chen and Huang (2007), Korkmaz et al. (2010), He, O'Connor, and Thijssen (2018), and Urom, Chevallier, and Zhu (2020) we try to find out if two different states exist between returns on the market portfolio and returns on asset  $i$ . We consider that Markov-switching model, which estimates regime shifting endogenously, allows beta to come from two different regimes. These regimes can be expressed as bull and bear due to the fact that when economic growth is expanding/contracting, the market is deemed to be bullish/bearish.<sup>2</sup>

Conversely, during recessionary/expansionary periods, correlations of assets with the market may increase/decrease depending on the industry (Urom, Chevallier, and Zhu 2020). As Vendrame, Guermat, and Tucker (2018) states, the main limitation of this idea is that the true market regime is unobservable. The sign of the market return is spurious because it is a deterministic predictor of market regimes. They tackle this problem by recognizing that, at any given period, a market's bull or bear regimes are random variables that can only be known with a certain probability. The Markov-switching model is helpful for determining these time-varying probabilities (Vendrame, Guermat, and Tucker 2018). Following Huang (2001), we denote  $s_t$  as a state variable that reflects the regime of the market at time  $t$  and assume that the market model is well specified in two different regimes. The Markov-switching CAPM equation, therefore, takes the form of equation (3) as follows:

$$(R_{i,t} - R_{f,t}) = \delta_{st} + \beta_{st}(R_{M,t} - R_{f,t}) + \varepsilon_{st} \quad (3)$$

where  $\varepsilon_{st} \sim iid(0, \sigma^2)$  and  $\delta_{st}$  indicates two states of the model. In this model, conditional betas are not constrained which makes the model tempting.  $s_1$  and  $s_2$  denote regime 1 and 2, respectively. The coefficient reflects the measure of correlation with the market for regimes 1 and 2. The unobserved state variable,  $s_t$ , takes only binary values of 0 and 1. Hence, it evolves according to the first-order Markov process as described in Hamilton (1989):

$$Prob[s_t = 1 | s_{t-1} = 1] = p \quad (4)$$

$$Prob[s_t = 1 | s_{t-1} = 2] = q \quad (5)$$

$$Prob[s_t = 1 | s_{t-1} = 2] = 1 - q \quad (6)$$

Note that  $p$  and  $q$  determined endogenously are the fixed transition probabilities of being in low and high volatility regimes.

## Empirical Results

This study applies the methods introduced in the previous section to the database of eleven sectors (namely, consumer discretionary, consumer staples, health care, industrials, information technology, materials, real estate, communication services, utilities, financials, and energy) to form a basis for comparison. To this end, we first examine the standard CAPM with the traditional measure of market beta, and then we apply the MS-CAPM implying that the betas can vary over the business cycle.

### CAPM Results

Applying the OLS regression model, the results of the CAPM are estimated based on equation (2). The null hypothesis is that beta coefficients are zero against a two-sided alternative, assuming that the fixed coefficients are not statistically significant from zero. To test whether standard CAPM holds, we construct excess returns by subtracting the risk-free return from the market return. In addition, we analyze the validity of the model using the Durbin-Watson test for residual autocorrelation and R-squared coefficients for the explanatory power of stock market returns for the sample sector returns.

Table 2 reports the beta coefficients and intercepts obtained from the standard CAPM. First, it is seen that the assumption of no intercept in the CAPM holds because all estimates (except for information technology and energy sectors in the pre-COVID period) are found to be statistically insignificantly different from zero. This result indicates that standard CAPM makes mainly correct estimations for the risk premium in our sampled sectors. Second, the beta coefficients or the systematic risk measures are highly statistically significant, with positive values in each period. The beta coefficient for Consumer Discretionary, Industrials, Information Technology, Communication, Financials, and energy is greater than one during the pre-COVID period, indicating that these sectors are more volatile or riskier than the market. This provides an opportunity for the investors of such sectors to have higher returns. On the other hand, the beta coefficient of consumer staples, health care, materials, real estate, and utilities sectors is lower than one during the pre-COVID period, indicating that securities of such sectors are less risky or less profitable than the market.



Table 2. Results of the CAPM model.

Sector	Consumer Discretionary	Consumer Staples	Health Care	Industrials	Information Technology	Materials	Real Estate	Communication	Utilities	Financials	Energy
<b>Panel A</b>											
Intercept	−0.02 [0.32]	0.03 [0.41]	−0.01 [0.72]	−0.02 [0.50]	0.05 [0.07] <sup>c</sup>	−0.03 [0.45]	0.04 [0.39]	0.01 [0.80]	0.07 [0.11]	−0.02 [0.47]	−0.11 [0.04] <sup>b</sup>
Beta	1.05 [0.00] <sup>a</sup>	0.56 [0.00] <sup>a</sup>	0.83 [0.00] <sup>a</sup>	1.09 [0.00] <sup>a</sup>	1.34 [0.00] <sup>a</sup>	0.97 [0.00] <sup>a</sup>	0.39 [0.00] <sup>a</sup>	1.03 [0.00] <sup>a</sup>	0.20 [0.00] <sup>a</sup>	1.08 [0.00] <sup>a</sup>	1.08 [0.00] <sup>a</sup>
R-squared	0.82	0.39	0.59	0.75	0.86	0.57	0.14	0.66	0.05	0.73	0.45
Durbin	1.84	2.19	1.85	2.06	2.09	2.08	1.89	2.02	1.88	1.94	1.97
Watson											
<b>Panel B</b>											
Intercept	0.07 [0.13]	−0.03 [0.49]	−0.00 [0.98]	−0.03 [0.60]	0.07 [0.16]	0.03 [0.67]	−0.08 [0.28]	0.02 [0.73]	−0.07 [0.44]	−0.06 [0.43]	−0.17 [0.28]
Beta	0.91 [0.00] <sup>a</sup>	0.72 [0.00] <sup>a</sup>	0.82 [0.00] <sup>a</sup>	1.06 [0.00] <sup>a</sup>	1.13 [0.00] <sup>a</sup>	1.03 [0.00] <sup>a</sup>	1.05 [0.00] <sup>a</sup>	1.15 [0.00] <sup>a</sup>	0.94 [0.00] <sup>a</sup>	1.20 [0.00] <sup>a</sup>	1.33 [0.00] <sup>a</sup>
R-squared	0.88	0.79	0.85	0.84	0.91	0.83	0.79	0.85	0.67	0.81	0.57
Durbin	1.81	1.65	2.07	1.81	1.86	1.95	1.87	2.13	1.94	1.99	1.95
Watson											

Note: <sup>a</sup>, <sup>b</sup> and <sup>c</sup> represent significance of regime switching betas at 1%, 5% and 10%, respectively.

More importantly, the magnitude of beta estimates for consumer goods, the industrials, and the information sectors are lower. In contrast, the estimates for consumer staples, materials, real estate, utilities, financials, and communication sectors are higher in the COVID-19 period compared to the pre-COVID-19 period. This result shows that the consumer goods, the industrials, and the information sectors are adversely affected by COVID-19 whereas the pandemic positively impacts other sectors. Besides, there is no significant change in the health sector for both periods. This finding is consistent with Baek, Mohanty, and Glamboosky (2020), suggesting that industries such as healthcare and medical exhibit less exposure to the pandemic.

The results indicate that household consumption priorities move toward basic needs during periods of uncertainty. Our findings show that discretionary and entertainment-related expenditure has declined relatively during the pandemic. As the government-imposed curfew is enforced, discretionary expenditure drops significantly. Meanwhile, people have started to spend more time at home and increase their demand for the utilities and communication sector, such as Netflix (Elhini and Hammam 2021). The positive impact of COVID-19 on the utility sector is consistent with the previous literature (Mazur, Dang, and Vega 2020). Also, the monetary policy implemented by the government and the stimulus package has positively affected the housing and financial markets during the COVID-19 period (Apergis 2021). In addition, the beta coefficient of the materials sector (including related chemicals, construction materials, mining, paper, and forest products) has increased due to the increase in demand during the COVID-19 outbreak.

### **MS-CAPM Results**

Considering that betas can vary over the business cycle, the study analyzes the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on eleven sectors in both high and low-volatility regimes<sup>3</sup> by employing MS-CAPM with two states. As Korkmaz et al. (2010) state, in models that allow regime change, the volatility in the regimes is interpreted by looking at the standard errors of coefficients. Table 3 summarizes the estimation results for pre and pre-COVID periods.

As is seen in the table, the total risk of underlined sectors has increased significantly during the COVID period (see Table 4). During the COVID period, the total systematic risk increased, ranging from 1.26 to 3.44 in low and high volatility regimes compared to the pre-COVID period. The rise in the utility and real estate sectors are the main factors that have affected the sectors' total risk. The finding is consistent with Alfaro et al. (2020) and Baek, Mohanty, and Glamboosky (2020), suggesting that more capital-intensive and leveraged sectors are likely to experience larger shifts in systematic risks. Interestingly, except for financials and energy sectors, aggressive sectors such as consumer discretionary, industrials, and information technology with betas higher than one prior to the COVID-19 period exhibit market risk decreases ranging from 0.01 (industrials) to 0.23 (information technology). While sectors with betas lower than one have the highest market risk increases ranging from 0.01 (consumer staples and communication) to 0.96 (real estate). As such, our results are in line with the findings of Dias and Serrasqueiro (2022), suggesting that at least some sectors Information technology, consumer discretionary, telecom services, consumer staples, and energy) must show statistically significant differences. Overall, our findings for individual sectors show that the coronavirus outbreak contributed to volatility in the market

Table 3. Results of the MS-CAPM model.

Sector	Consumer Discretionary	Consumer Staples	Health Care	Industrials	Information Technology	Materials	Real Estate	Communication	Utilities	Financials	Energy
PANEL A											
Regime 1											
Intercept	0.11	0.16	0.02	-0.06	0.08	-0.04 <sup>b</sup>	0.32	0.16	0.08	0.01	-0.14
Beta	1.06	0.63	0.83	1.04	1.25	1.04	0.39	0.63	-0.38	1.11	1.11
Regime 2											
Intercept	-0.10	-0.06	-1.13	0.06	-0.02	0.13	-0.21	-0.06	0.08	-0.08	0.13
Beta	1.05	0.52	0.67	1.23	1.46	0.47	0.39	0.52	0.42	1.01	0.64
p12	0.72	0.45	0.99	0.70	0.88	0.95	0.56	0.45	0.62	0.80	0.97
p21	0.83	0.65	0.68	0.34	0.80	0.46	0.61	0.65	0.82	0.52	0.83
PANEL B											
Regime 1											
Intercept	0.04	-0.06	-0.04	-0.20	0.16	-0.03	0.04	-0.06	-0.13	-0.04	-0.28
Beta	0.91	0.64	0.87	0.93	1.23	1.14	0.90	0.64	1.20	0.87	1.34
Regime 2											
Intercept	0.13	0.08	0.12	0.24	0.01	0.06	-0.35	0.08	-0.02	-0.09	0.19
Beta	0.91	0.78	0.85	1.22	1.08	1.01	1.35	0.78	0.55	1.26	1.33
p12	0.91	0.97	0.98	0.87	0.60	0.93	0.90	0.97	0.77	0.97	0.99
p21	0.81	0.87	0.95	0.80	0.76	0.95	0.73	0.87	0.90	0.97	0.95

Note: <sup>a</sup> and <sup>b</sup> represent the significance of regime-switching betas at 1% and 5%, respectively whereas p12 and p21 refer to the probability of moving from one volatility regime to another.

**Table 4.** Systematic and total risk for pre-COVID and COVID periods.

Low Volatility Regime	$\beta$ Pre-COVID	$\beta$ COVID	$\beta^A$
<i>Consumer Discretionary</i>	1.05	0.91	-0.14
<i>Consumer Staples</i>	0.63	0.64	0.01
<i>Health Care</i>	0.83	0.85	0.02
<i>Industrials</i>	1.04	0.93	-0.11
<i>Information Technology</i>	1.25	1.08	-0.17
<i>Materials</i>	1.04	1.01	-0.03
<i>Real Estate</i>	0.39	0.9	0.51
<i>Communication</i>	0.63	0.64	0.01
<i>Utilities</i>	0.42	1.2	0.78
<i>Financials</i>	1.11	1.26	0.15
<i>Energy</i>	1.11	1.34	0.23
<b>Total Risk</b>			1.26
High Volatility Regime	$\beta$ Pre-COVID	$\beta$ COVID	$\beta^A$
<i>Consumer Discretionary</i>	1.06	0.91	-0.15
<i>Consumer Staples</i>	0.52	0.78	0.26
<i>Health Care</i>	0.67	0.87	0.2
<i>Industrials</i>	1.23	1.22	-0.01
<i>Information Technology</i>	1.46	1.23	-0.23
<i>Materials</i>	0.47	1.14	0.67
<i>Real Estate</i>	0.39	1.35	0.96
<i>Communication</i>	0.52	0.78	0.26
<i>Utilities</i>	-0.38	0.55	0.93
<i>Financials</i>	1.01	0.87	-0.14
<i>Energy</i>	0.64	1.33	0.69
<b>Total Risk</b>			3.44

in general, even if systematic risks in some sectors, including industrials, information technology, and consumer discretionary, decreased.

Table 5 summarizes the comparison of sectors to the market in the high and low volatility regimes for both pre-COVID and COVID periods. In the low volatility regime of the pre-COVID period, the estimates of beta coefficients of consumer discretionary, industrials, information technology, materials, financial, and energy sectors are statistically significant and more than one, meaning that these sectors are riskier than S&P 500 index. However, estimates of beta coefficients of consumer staples, healthcare, real estate, communication, and utilities are less than one and statistically significant except healthcare sector. That is, these sectors are less risky than the market in the low volatility regime of the pre-COVID period. On the other hand, in the low volatility regime of the COVID period, the estimates of beta coefficients of information technology, materials, utilities, financials, and energy sectors are statistically significant and more than one. Hence these sectors are riskier than the market in the mentioned period. In the low volatile regime of the COVID period, the estimates of beta coefficients of consumer discretionary, consumer staples, healthcare, industrial, real estate, and communication sectors are statistically significant and less than one. In the COVID period, these sectors are less risky than the market.

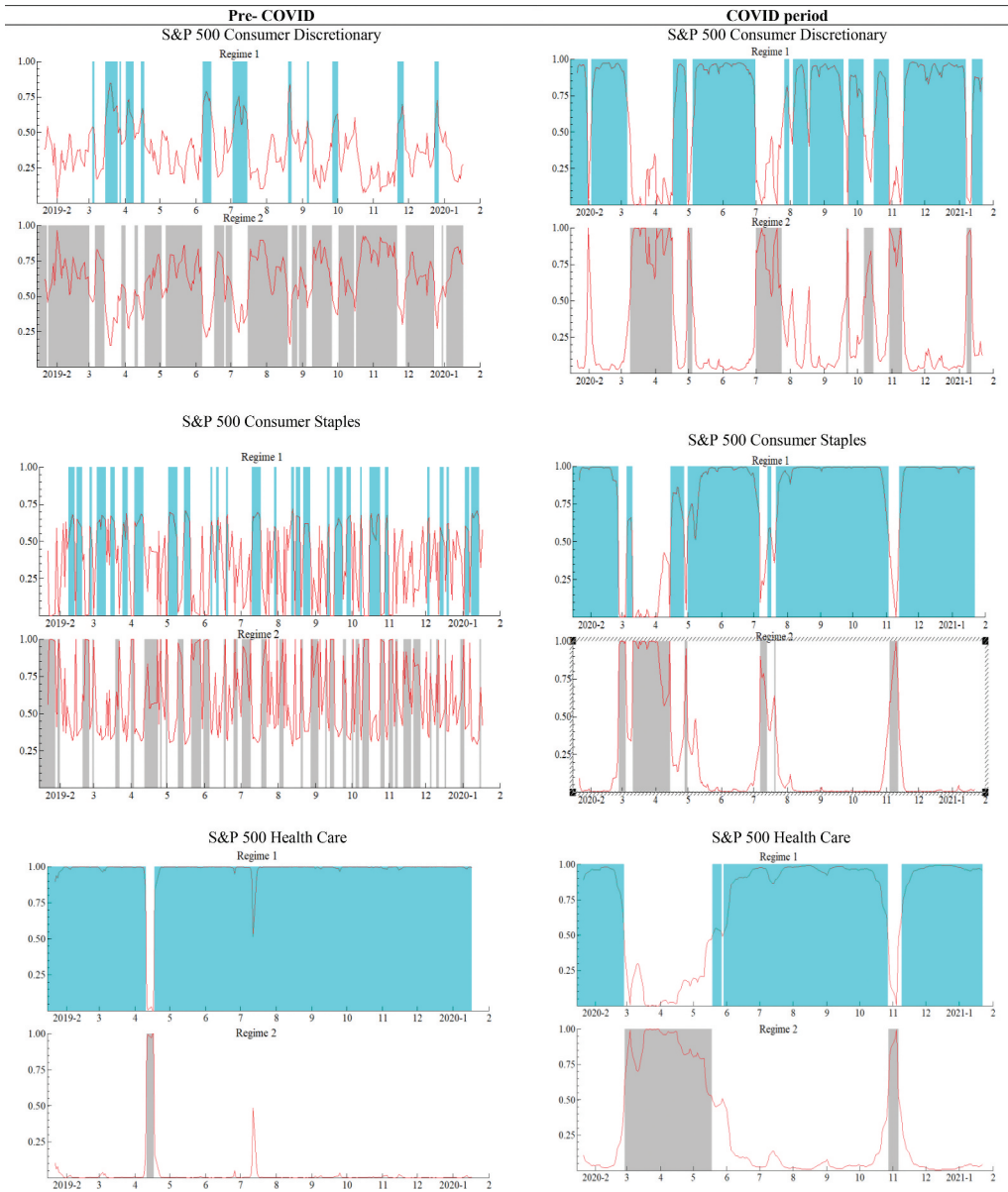
Besides, in the high volatility regime of the pre-COVID period, the estimates of beta coefficients of consumer discretionary, industrials, information technology, and financials sectors are significant and more than one. These sectors are riskier than the market. Yet, the beta coefficients of consumer staples, materials, real estate, communication, and utilities sectors are significant and less than one, showing that these sectors are less risky than the market. Meanwhile, the healthcare and energy sector beta coefficients are less than one but insignificant. In the high volatility regime of the COVID period, the beta estimates of

**Table 5.** Summary of estimates of beta coefficients of sectors.

	Pre-COVID $\beta > 1$	COVID-Period $\beta > 1$
Low Volatility Regime	1. Consumer Discretionary 2. Industrials 3. Materials 4. Financials 5. Information Technology 6. Energy	1. Information Technology 2. Materials 3. Utilities 4. Financials 5. Energy
High Volatility Regime	1. Consumer Discretionary 2. Industrials 3. Information Technology 4. Financials	1. Materials 2. Real Estate 3. Energy 4. Industrials 5. Information Technology
Low Volatility Regime	1. Consumer Staples 2. Health Care 3. Real Estate 4. Communication 5. Utility	1. Consumer Discretionary 2. Consumer Staples 3. Health Care 4. Industrials 5. Real Estate 6. Communication
High Volatility Regime	1. Consumer Staples 2. Health care 3. Materials 4. Real estate 5. Communication 6. Utilities 7. Energy	1. Consumer Discretionary 2. Consumer Staples 3. Health Care 4. Communication 5. Utilities 6. Financials

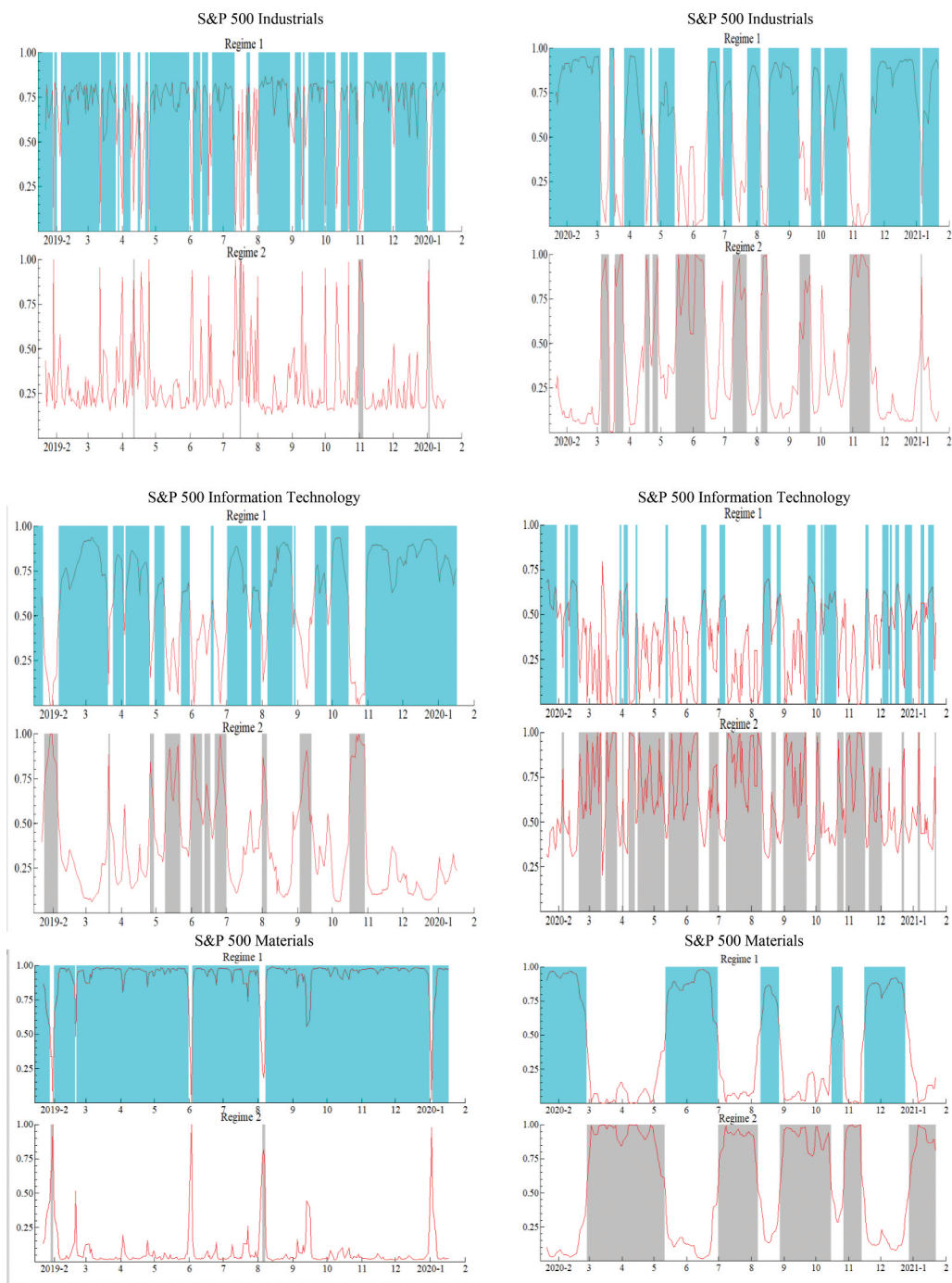
information technology, materials, real estate, and industrials are more than one and statistically significant. Although the beta estimate of the energy sector is more than one, it is not statistically significant. In the same regime of the COVID period, consumer discretionary, consumer staples, healthcare, communication, utilities, and financials sectors have a beta coefficient of less than one. Also, the beta coefficients of these sectors are statistically significant. These results show that only the information technology sector is relatively stable for both regimes and periods. Its beta coefficient stays more than one, whereas it decreases during the COVID period. In addition, in the low volatility regimes, the transitivity of the beta coefficients of the sectors is more stable compared to high volatility regimes. In the high volatility regimes, the transitivity of beta coefficients of the sectors is much more than in low volatility regimes. Moreover, the beta coefficient of the utilities sector turns positive from negative during the COVID period. These findings imply that investors' perceptions differ too much in crisis periods and high volatility regimes.

Table 3 and Figure 2 tabulate the transition probabilities of one regime to the other. It is generally likely to switch from a low volatility regime to high volatility regime, as shown by high values of P12 for the pre-COVID period. The highest value of P12 is 0.99 for healthcare. However, the probability of transition from high volatility to low volatility is relatively lower, as indicated by P21 values. To illustrate, the P21 energy and consumer discretionary sectors are 0.83. These results are very similar in the COVID period, as well. Yet, we observe that the probability of transition from low volatility regime to high volatility regime is higher in the COVID period compared to pre-COVID times. These results suggest that the probability of transition from one regime to another is comparably higher in extreme times, supporting our findings. A possible interpretation of our results is that economic relief packages announced by the US government might have affected sectors differently as the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic forced governments to support the



**Figure 2.** MS-CAPM state probabilities for eleven sectors.

economy with different kinds of fiscal and monetary actions. For instance, the US government has announced American Rescue Plan Six Month, Economic Impact Payments, Homeowner Assistance Funds, and Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds to support the economy. These relief packages, for instance, propped up real estate sectors as many individuals have a chance to save more with the help of government cheques and buy a new house.



**Figure 2.** (Continued).

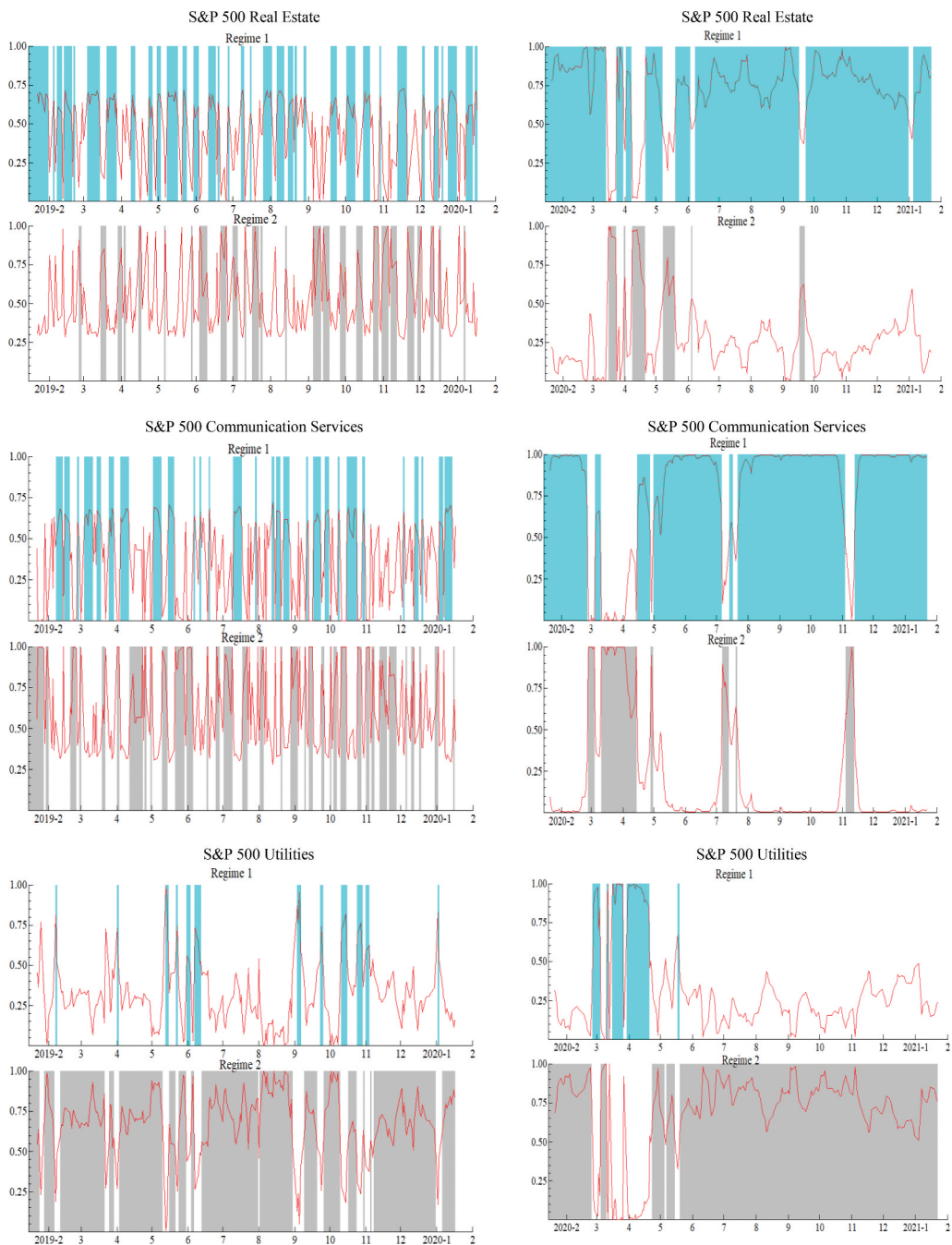
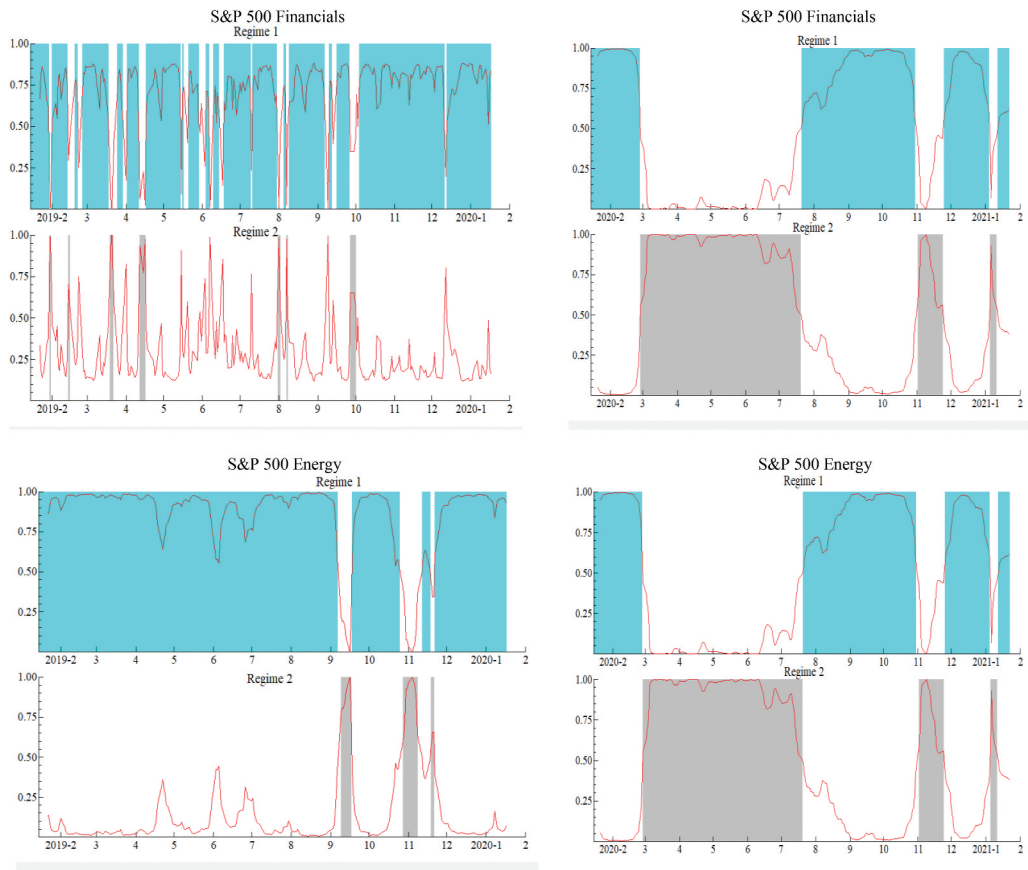


Figure 2. (Continued).





**Figure 2.** (Continued).

## Concluding Remarks

This paper conducts an MS-CAPM model to examine the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the US stock market volatility. It makes mainly two contributions to the literature. First, to our knowledge, it is the first study that divides the sample into low-volatile and high-volatile regimes for both pre-COVID and COVID periods and analyses four betas for each economic sector. Second, we compare the standard CAPM model with the MS-CAPM model and show that even in normal times, the betas of the sectors depend on the volatility of the regime of the economy (high volatile or low volatile regime). Our findings for individual sectors show that the coronavirus outbreak contributed to volatility in the market in general, even if systematic risks in some sectors, including industrials, information technology, and consumer discretionary, decrease. In addition, we observe that the probability of transition from low volatility regime to high volatility regime is higher in the COVID period compared to pre-COVID times. That is, the probability of transition from one regime to another is comparably higher in extreme times. These results have significant implications for investors and policymakers interested in different sectors and monitor the economy, respectively. To illustrate, policymakers might focus on negatively impacted

sectors and announce relief packages accordingly, and investors redesign their portfolios based on the changing volatility of sectors' returns.

## Notes

1. Note that concentrating on the U.S. is due to the fact that markets in the U.S. are the main driver of the contagion effect around the world (Bekaert et al. 2011). As Aloui, Aïssa, and Nguyen (2011) assert, markets prone to commodity price risk start co-moving with the markets in the U.S. during higher levels of uncertainty. Hence the movements in the U.S. enable us to get a hint of movements in other markets across the globe.
2. Vendrame, Guermat, and Tucker (2018) defines the regimes as a bullish quiet regime and a bearish high volatility regime that might lead to swings between high positive and high negative returns.
3. Although financial market behavior is usually defined by two states (namely, bull and bear), this study also considers that the market may has more than two states. Therefore, the study has performed MS-CAPM with three and four states. However, the findings show that MS-CAPM with two states is the best suitable model for all sectors according to the loglikelihood, Schwartz Information Criteria (SIC), and Akaike Information Criteria (AIC). Results with three and four states is available upon request from the authors.

## Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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