

Exploration on the Path of Common Prosperity from the Perspective of Bourdieu's Practical Theory—Qualitative Comparative Analysis Based on 31 Provinces in China

Yahui Lv¹, Shitong Wang^{2,*}, Siqi Zhang³

^{1,2,3}College of Economics and Management, Hebei Agricultural University, Baoding 071000, China

¹junelyh@163.com, ²874633630@qq.com, ³782059821@qq.com

*Correspondence Author

Abstract: ***Objective:** To examine the impact of economic, social, and cultural capital on promoting common prosperity across 31 Chinese provinces (including municipalities and autonomous regions). **Methods:** Grounded in Bourdieu's theory of practice, employs the fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA), five dimensions are selected as forms of "practice" that influence the realization of common prosperity: the level of digital economy development, the extent of digital financial inclusion, the degree of urban-rural integration, the level of educational development, and the degree of marketization. **Conclusions:** The results reveal three distinct paths toward achieving common prosperity: a finance-led path centered on digital financial inclusion; a finance-market emphasis path where both financial development and marketization play critical roles; and an education-market Emphasis path driven by the combined forces of educational development and market mechanisms. Given the variation in capital endowments across provinces, it is essential to develop a nuanced understanding of the complex interactions among the factors influencing common prosperity, so as to identify paths that are best suited to specific regional contexts.*

Keywords: Bourdieu's Theory of Practice; Common Prosperity; Fuzzy-Set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA).

1. INTRODUCTION

Common prosperity represents the essential requirement of socialism and constitutes a defining feature of Chinese-style modernization. In the current context, China continues to face emerging situations, novel problems, and evolving challenges in advancing the goal of common prosperity. On the one hand, in 2023, China's total economic output surpassed 126 trillion yuan, firmly securing its position as the world's second-largest economy. With a per capita GDP of 89,400 yuan and a per capita disposable income of 39,200 yuan [1], the country has reached an upper-middle-income level, creating favorable conditions for advancing common prosperity. On the other hand, China re-mains—and is expected to remain for a prolonged period—in the primary stage of socialism. Moreover, challenges of unbalanced and insufficient development persist, with certain population groups and regions continuing to face relative poverty and development lags [2,3]. Against the backdrop of a new development stage, the implementation of a new development philosophy, and the construction of a new development paradigm, identifying viable pathways toward common prosperity—ones that align with China's national context, adhere to economic and social development laws, reflect the institutional strengths of socialism, and respond to people's aspirations for a better life—constitutes a pressing theoretical and practical challenge.

In recent years, extensive academic research has been conducted on this topic, including conceptual discussions on the connotation, pathways, and measurement methods of common prosperity [4-6], as well as empirical investigations based on quantitative analyses [7,8] and case studies [9]. In recent years, extensive academic research has been conducted on this topic, including conceptual discussions on the connotation, pathways, and measurement methods of common prosperity, as well as empirical investigations based on quantitative analyses and case studies. However, in terms of theoretical frameworks and methodological applications—particularly those grounded in the perspective of social practice—there remains a relative paucity of in-depth research that systematically addresses regional heterogeneity and diversity. Building on this research gap, the present study focuses on 31 provinces (municipalities/autonomous regions) in China and adopts a configurational perspective using fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA) to explore the practical pathways toward achieving common prosperity across diverse regional contexts.

The research design is as follows: First, drawing on the theoretical framework of Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice, a qualitative comparative analysis is conducted on the economic structures, social policies, and education levels of 31 provinces (municipalities/autonomous regions) in China. The research design is as follows: First, drawing on the theoretical framework of Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice, a qualitative comparative analysis is conducted on the economic structures, social policies, and education levels of 31 provinces (municipalities/autonomous regions) in China. Second, the fsQCA method is employed to identify which configurations of these factors constitute effective pathways to achieving common prosperity. Finally, based on the empirical findings, the study offers concrete policy recommendations for advancing common prosperity in a targeted and effective manner. The main contributions of this study are as follows: (1) From a configurational perspective, this study applies the fsQCA method to explore concrete pathways toward achieving common prosperity across different regions, thereby providing a comprehensive and systematic lens for understanding and addressing the practical challenges of common prosperity in China. (2) Grounded in Bourdieu's theory of practice, the study conceptualizes variables such as the level of digital economy development, digital inclusive finance, urban–rural integration, and education development as various forms of “practice” that influence common prosperity, and analyzes how these practices interact, offering a novel analytical framework for interpreting the mechanisms underlying common prosperity. (3) The study identifies three distinct models for achieving common prosperity, each reflecting different configurations of financial, educational, and market development levels. These models offer empirical insights and practical references for regions in selecting context-appropriate pathways to promote common prosperity.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

2.1 Progress in Research on Common Prosperity

2.1.1 The Impact of Digital Economy Development on Common Prosperity

The digital economy has played a critical role in facilitating the achievement of common prosperity in China. Through coordinated inclusive mechanisms, it effectively fosters a “trickle-up” effect where the affluent help uplift the less well-off [10], contributing to narrowing income gaps and promoting fairness in the distribution among different groups, regions, and between urban and rural areas [11]. The digital economy has a profound impact on regional balanced development and labor allocation, significantly promoting labor mobility, fostering entrepreneurial opportunities, and enhancing anticipated earnings for the workforce [12,13]. At the same time, the steady development of the digital economy has invigorated urban entrepreneurship, significantly advancing the progress toward common prosperity [14].

2.1.2 The Impact of Digital Inclusive Finance on Common Prosperity

Digital inclusive finance drives regional economic development by enhancing the efficiency of capital allocation and entrepreneurship, narrowing income gaps, and advancing urban–rural integration. Scholarly research indicates that: (1) Digital inclusive finance improves the effective use of financial resources to foster innovation and entrepreneurship [15], which in turn boosts economic vitality and facilitates industrial transformation. Innovation plays an intermediary role in linking digital inclusive finance with common prosperity [16,17]. (2) Digital inclusive finance significantly contributes to improving household income, thus helping to reduce income inequality [18]. It enhances income levels by broadening access to non-agricultural employment and encouraging family-based entrepreneurship, promoting both efficiency and equity in development [19]. Nevertheless, its influence on common prosperity varies across regions, being notably stronger in western China, whereas eastern and central areas have not yet fully realized its potential benefits [20]. (3) Digital inclusive finance serves as an important channel for fostering urban–rural integration by reducing disparities and promoting the efficient allocation of resources across regions [21]. In rural settings, it enhances financial literacy and market engagement, thereby facilitating credit availability and supporting entrepreneurial activities among households, ultimately contributing to rural common prosperity [22]. Additionally, the revitalization of rural industries mediates this relationship, suggesting a pathway whereby digital inclusive finance influences common prosperity through rural industrial development [23].

2.1.3 The Impact of Urban-Rural Integration on Common Prosperity

Urban–rural integration represents a county-level self-governance process that involves the integration of resource structures and spatial patterns [24]. Bridging the development divide between urban and rural regions is both a

primary goal of integration and a significant indicator of achieving common prosperity [21]. During urban–rural integration, the integration of spatial, resource, and institutional elements—via spatial reconfiguration, efficient resource allocation, and institutional innovation—stimulates endogenous momentum in both urban and rural areas [25]. The interaction among these dimensions collectively facilitates progress toward achieving common prosperity. Urban–rural integration advocates for equality between urban and rural regions and the unrestricted mobility of production factors. Closely linked to the concept of common prosperity in terms of material well-being [26], rights assurance, opportunities for development, cultural enrichment, and environmental sustainability, it operates through mechanisms of resource distribution, market expansion, income equalization, and sustained support. These mechanisms together foster a high-level synergy between efficiency and equity, thus advancing the realization of common prosperity [27].

2.1.4 The Impact of Educational Development on Common Prosperity

Education is a key driver of common prosperity, functioning as a mediator [28]. It contributes to this goal primarily by improving workers' skills and knowledge, thus directly driving high-quality economic growth and providing the material basis for shared prosperity. Moreover, by cultivating civic consciousness and a sense of social contract [29], education strengthens public acceptance of redistribution policies and promotes an integrated approach to achieve both material and spiritual prosperity [30]. The primary effects are: (1) reducing income inequality and fostering social justice. Education levels and the urban–rural income gap exhibit an inverted U-shaped relationship, with substantial regional differences—the impact is most pronounced in central regions, moderate in the west, and least significant in the east and northeast [31]. Enhancing educational infrastructure plays a pivotal role in promoting common prosperity [32]. Achieving balanced education and equitable access is essential for laying the foundation for shared prosperity [33]. (2) Education serves as a key mechanism in restructuring income distribution and preventing the intergenerational transmission of poverty. Fair and high-quality education enhances labor market efficiency, expands the tax-paying population, strengthens the government's redistributive capacity, and supports the growth of tertiary distribution mechanisms [34]. Prioritizing equitable access to educational resources for low-income groups disrupts the cycle of inherited poverty and facilitates the achievement of common prosperity [35]. (3) Education plays a vital role in advancing rural revitalization and fostering urban–rural integration. By mobilizing multi-stakeholder resources to establish an educational support system for farmers, education serves as an innovative pathway toward their holistic and sustainable development [36]. Rural education enhances human capital, which is transformed into social capital through initiatives such as “bringing literacy to the countryside” and “transferring technology to rural areas,” thereby driving rural transformation and facilitating common prosperity [37]. Promoting education also supports the urbanization process, narrows urban–rural disparities, and strengthens integrated development [35].

2.1.5 The Impact of Digital Economy Development on Common Prosperity

As a crucial mechanism for optimizing resource allocation, marketization constitutes a necessary foundation for the realization of common prosperity. Reforms toward a more market-driven economy enhance fairness in income distribution and help promote shared prosperity across the population [38,39]. However, the influence of marketization on the urban–rural income gap is characterized by distinct non-linear dynamics. Research has revealed an inverted U-shaped relationship [40,41], indicating that income inequality first widens and then narrows with rising marketization. Other studies report a U-shaped trend, where early-stage marketization reduces income disparities before widening them again [42]. These non-linear effects highlight the stage-specific and intensity-dependent nature of marketization's role in shaping pathways to common prosperity.

In terms of factor marketization, optimizing the allocation of labor, land, and technology plays a critical role in promoting common prosperity. The market-based allocation of labor facilitates industrial restructuring, which significantly contributes to shared prosperity [43]. Higher efficiency in allocating agricultural labor also promotes the common prosperity of rural populations [44]. Furthermore, studies reveal an inverted U-shaped relationship between land marketization and the urban–rural income gap, suggesting that the urban–rural income gap can only be narrowed after land market reforms reach a certain threshold [45]. Reforms aimed at financial marketization contribute positively to narrowing the urban–rural income gap [46]. Nevertheless, the intensified outflow of rural capital magnifies the inequality effects of financial marketization, largely due to rural populations' insufficient financial literacy [47]. Regarding social capital, the income returns associated with social class networks become significantly stronger under higher degrees of marketization [48].

2.2 Bourdieu's Theory: Foundations and Applicability to This Study

From the perspective of Bourdieu's theory of practice, variables such as the level of digital economy development, the level of digital inclusive finance, the degree of urban–rural integration, the level of educational development, and the degree of marketization can be regarded as various forms of “practice” that influence the realization of common prosperity. Among them, the development levels of the digital economy, digital inclusive finance, urban–rural integration, and education can be viewed as different types of capital. These forms of capital hold different values and functions across various social fields [49]. The development level of the digital economy, as a form of economic capital [50], reflects a region's economic strength and technological advancement, indicating the extent of investment and output in this sector. The level of digital inclusive finance can be regarded both as economic capital and as social capital, reflecting the inclusiveness and service efficiency of a region's financial system [51,52]. The level of urban–rural integration can be regarded as a form of social capital, reflecting the interconnection between urban and rural areas and the efficiency of resource allocation across regions [53]. The level of educational development can be seen as cultural capital, serving as an important indicator of the quality of human resources and regional innovation capacity [54]. Different regions function as distinct social fields, within which individuals and groups pursue common prosperity through the accumulation and exchange of various types of capital [49]. Habitus, as a product of socialization, is shaped by the distribution of capital and the rules governing the field. The degree of marketization can be understood as a key factor influencing the structure and dynamics of the field [55]. To a certain extent, the level of marketization determines the liquidity and efficiency of capital flows, thereby affecting the realization of common prosperity [56].

The theoretical framework of this study is presented as follows.

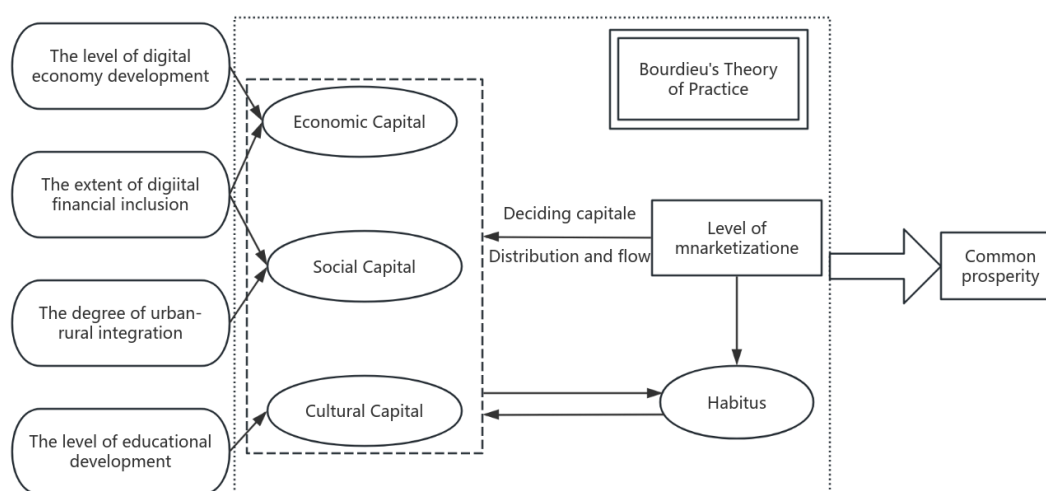


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework of the Study

3. RESEARCH METHODS AND DATA SOURCES

3.1 Research Design

Fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA) is a methodological approach that integrates both qualitative and quantitative research strategies [57,58]. It is particularly suited for exploring causal complexity while acknowledging the diversity and uniqueness of individual cases. Grounded in set theory and Boolean algebra, fsQCA is capable of handling multiple and nonlinear causality, as well as examining the interactions and combinational effects among condition variables [59]. This makes it especially appropriate for analyzing complex social phenomena. Given that the realization of common prosperity involves multifaceted social and economic factors, fsQCA offers valuable insights into how these factors combine and interact to influence outcomes.

Specifically, this study adopts fsQCA based on the following three considerations: (1) fsQCA values the diversity and uniqueness of cases, which aligns well with Bourdieu's theory of practice. (2) Bourdieu's theory emphasizes the dynamic nature of social phenomena and the heterogeneity of social fields. fsQCA enables the exploration and interpretation of the diverse and context-specific pathways to common prosperity across different provinces (municipalities/autonomous regions). (3) In Bourdieu's framework, capital encompasses multiple dimensions—including economic, social, and cultural capital [49]—and these forms of capital interact with one another to shape individual and collective behaviors. fsQCA is particularly effective in capturing such multidimensional interactions, and can reveal complex causal configurations (“causal recipes”) that explain how

various forms of capital contribute to the realization of common prosperity.

3.2 Sample Data and Calibration of Measurements

In this study, each condition (i.e., the five influencing factors) and the outcome (the level of common prosperity) is treated as an independent set. Direct calibration is applied by assigning membership scores to each case based on its degree of belonging to these sets [57].

3.2.1 Outcome Variable

Common Prosperity Level (CP). This study draws on the evaluation index system and empirical findings developed by Zhang Hailiang. The concept of common prosperity is structured around three core dimensions: the level of affluence, the degree of shared development, and sustainability. It further includes six secondary indicators—material affluence, cultural and spiritual well-being, balanced and coordinated development, comprehensive basic security, stable economic growth, and improved development quality—along with 20 tertiary indicators [60].

3.2.2 Condition Variable

Digital Economy Level (DE). The data are sourced from the 2020 Digital Economy Index published by Caixin Insight Group. This index comprehensively measures the development of the digital economy across three core dimensions: informatization development, internet development, and digital transaction development. It further breaks down into eight secondary indicators, including informatization infrastructure, informatization impact, fixed internet infrastructure, mobile internet infrastructure, fixed internet impact, mobile internet impact, digital transaction infrastructure, and digital transaction impact. Additionally, the index incorporates 14 tertiary indicators such as optical cable density [61], providing a comprehensive assessment of the overall development status of the digital economy.

Digital Financial Inclusion Level (DF). The data are mainly sourced from the Digital Finance Research Center at Peking University, specifically from the Peking University Digital Financial Inclusion Index (2011–2020). The index includes three primary indicators: coverage breadth, usage depth, and degree of digitalization. It further comprises ten secondary indicators such as payment usage, money market fund usage, and credit usage, and thirty-three tertiary indicators, including the number of Alipay accounts per ten thousand people, comprehensively reflecting the development of digital financial inclusion.

Urban–Rural Integration Level (URI). The data are primarily drawn from Lei Xingchang's study, Comprehensive Evaluation of Urban–Rural Integration Development Levels across Provinces and Regions in China (2020). The index is composed of five key indicators: per capita income of all residents, the ratio of urban to rural per capita income, the ratio of urban to rural per capita consumption, the urbanization rate of the population, and the proportion of the secondary and tertiary industries. These indicators collectively reflect the degree of coordination and integration between urban and rural areas [62].

Educational Development Level (ED). The data are primarily sourced from Zhang Wei and Zhou Hongyu's China Education Index 2021. This index evaluates the level of educational development across 12 dimensions: scale, investment, quality, information, equity, contribution, innovation, entrepreneurship, creativity, health, ecology, and rule of law. Together, these dimensions provide a comprehensive assessment of the overall status and progress of education development in each region [63].

Marketization Level (ML). The data are mainly derived from the Report on Marketization Index by Province in China: 2021. This index evaluates marketization across five dimensions: the relationship between government and the market, the development of the non-state-owned economy, the maturity of product markets, the development of factor markets, the growth of market intermediary organizations, and the legal environment. These dimensions collectively reflect the extent and effectiveness of market-oriented reforms at the provincial level [64].

Following the approach of Fan et al. (2017), the threshold for full membership is set at the 95th percentile, the threshold for full non-membership at the 5th percentile, and the crossover point at the 50th percentile [65]. During data calibration, cases with scores exactly at the crossover point (0.50) are adjusted to 0.501 to avoid ambiguity in set membership, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Description and Calibration of Outcome and Condition Variables.

Variable	Full Membership	Crossover Point	Full Non-Membership
Common Prosperity Level (CP)	62.330	52.440	42.940
Digital Economy Level (DE)	0.642	0.271	0.229
Digital Financial Inclusion Level (DF)	412.380	334.820	305.790
Urban–Rural Integration Level (URI)	0.594	0.467	0.378
Educational Development Level (ED)	7.153	5.030	4.188
Marketization Level (ML)	11.340	8.920	5.265

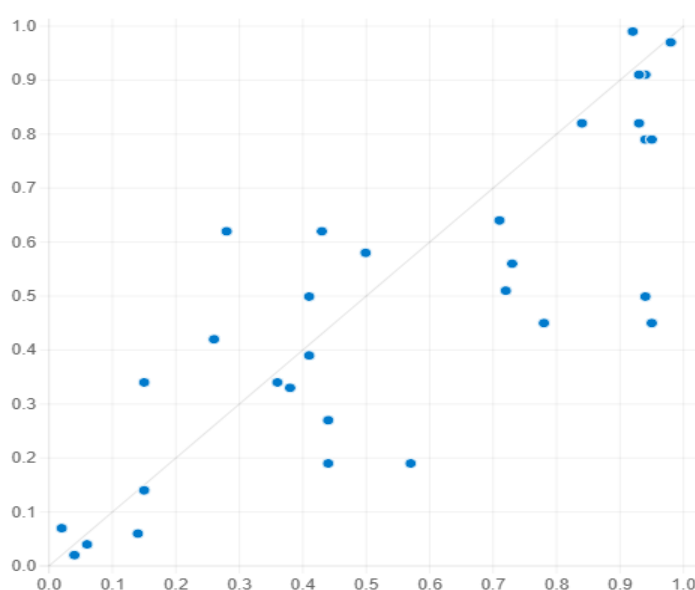
4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Necessity Analysis of Individual Conditions

To begin with, we test whether any single condition (or its negation) constitutes a necessary condition for achieving common prosperity. In fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA), a condition is considered necessary for an outcome if it is always present when the outcome occurs—typically indicated by a consistency value of 0.9 or higher [57,58]. As shown in Table 2, none of the conditions exhibit a consistency exceeding 0.9 in cases of high levels of common prosperity. In cases of low common prosperity, the condition of low digital financial inclusion shows a consistency of 0.923 and a coverage above 0.5. However, nearly one-third of the cases are distributed above the diagonal line in Figure 2, suggesting that despite passing the consistency threshold, this condition still does not qualify as a necessary condition for low levels of common prosperity.

Table 2: Necessity Analysis of Conditions for Achieving Common Prosperity

	High Level of Common Prosperity		Low Level of Common Prosperity	
	Consistency	Coverage	Consistency	Coverage
High Level of Digital Economy Development	0.741	0.843	0.529	0.580
Low Level of Digital Economy Development	0.631	0.581	0.857	0.762
High Level of Digital Financial Inclusion	0.795	0.915	0.442	0.491
Low Level of Digital Financial Inclusion	0.558	0.509	0.923	0.813
High Level of Urban–Rural Integration	0.815	0.872	0.538	0.557
Low Level of Urban–Rural Integration	0.586	0.568	0.877	0.821
High Level of Educational Development	0.789	0.888	0.493	0.535
Low Level of Educational Development	0.587	0.545	0.897	0.804
High Level of Marketization	0.805	0.880	0.490	0.518
Low Level of Marketization	0.559	0.532	0.886	0.814

**Figure 2:** Case Distribution Plot

4.2 Sufficiency Analysis of Condition Configurations

Configuration analysis examines the sufficiency relationship between multiple combinations of antecedent conditions and the outcome, assessing from a set-theoretic perspective whether the set of condition configurations constitutes a subset of the outcome set. Although the sufficiency test also adopts the consistency metric, it differs from the necessity analysis in terms of threshold setting (typically ≥ 0.75) and computational methods. In empirical studies, the threshold is often adjusted based on sample characteristics: for small or medium-sized samples, the frequency threshold is usually set to 1, while for large samples, a higher threshold is recommended to enhance statistical validity. In this study, considering both the distribution of cases and the depth of analysis, we adopt a dual-threshold criterion—a consistency threshold of 0.8 and a frequency threshold of 1—which accommodates the requirements of medium-sized sample analysis and avoids spurious configurations, thereby ensuring the rigor of causal inference.

Existing studies exhibit theoretical divergence regarding the causal relationship between the five antecedent conditions and common prosperity, making counterfactual analysis difficult. Therefore, this study adopts a binary “presence-absence” logic to generate an intermediate solution, focusing on the causal mechanisms by which configurations of conditions lead to common prosperity. According to the operational rules of fsQCA 3.0, we select the intermediate solution that balances theoretical relevance and model parsimony as the core result, while also presenting the parsimonious solution to conduct robustness checks [66]. Table 3 presents the results following established conventions in the literature [66,67]: a solid circle indicates the presence of a condition, a crossed-out circle indicates its absence, and a blank space represents an irrelevant or non-essential condition. By comparing the intermediate and parsimonious solutions, conditions that appear in both are identified as core conditions, while those that appear only in the intermediate solution are considered peripheral. Configurations are categorized based on the consistency of core conditions and ranked according to their coverage. As a key evaluation metric, coverage reflects the explanatory breadth of a configuration for the outcome cases. The data indicate a positive association between coverage and the empirical explanatory power of configurations: configurations with higher coverage account for greater case variation through specific combinations of conditions.

Table 3: Path Analysis for Achieving a High Level of Common Prosperity

Causal configuration	Finance-led Path	Education-Market Emphasis Path	Finance-Market Emphasis Path	
Level of digital economy development	⊗	⊗	●	
Extent of digital financial inclusion	●	⊗	●	●
Degree of urban-rural integration	⊗	⊗	●	●
Level of educational development		●	⊗	
Level of marketization	⊗	●	●	●
Consistency	0.980	0.983	0.997	0.975
Raw Coverage	0.370	0.370	0.376	0.628
Unique Coverage	0.053	0.059	0.010	0.276
Solution Consistency		0.967		
Solution Coverage		0.802		

(Note: ●/● = condition present; ⊗/⊗ = condition absent; ●/⊗ = core condition; ●/⊗ = peripheral condition; blank = condition may be present or absent.)

The four Paths presented in the table all exhibit consistency levels exceeding the acceptable minimum threshold of 0.8, with the overall solution consistency reaching 0.967. This indicates that these four configurations are logically reliable in explaining the outcome of common prosperity. The overall solution coverage is 0.802, suggesting that these configurations account for approximately 80.2% of the observed cases, and can thus be regarded as sufficient condition combinations for achieving common prosperity across different regions.

From a vertical (within-configuration) perspective, Configuration 1 highlights the core role of digital financial inclusion. Configuration 2 is driven by the joint effect of educational development and marketization levels. In Configurations 3 and 4, both digital financial inclusion and marketization act as the key driving forces for common prosperity. Accordingly, the results can be classified into three primary configurations toward common prosperity: Finance-led, Education-Market Emphasis, and Finance-Market Emphasis Configurations.

5. THEORETICAL EXPLANATION AND CASE ANALYSIS

5.1 Finance-led Path

The finance-led model represents a pathway to achieving common prosperity centered on financial innovation and services. By leveraging the positive effects of financial development—such as the efficient allocation of financial resources—this model promotes economic restructuring, industrial upgrading, job creation, and income growth, thereby contributing to the coordinated development of the economy and society. It is characterized by a medium- to long-term orientation. The development of inclusive finance serves as a key driving force for realizing common prosperity. The concept of “developing inclusive finance” was formally introduced at the Third Plenary Session of the 18th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China in 2013. Through deepening reforms in inclusive finance, expanding access to financial services, and optimizing the financial structure, common prosperity can be achieved via effective capital allocation and financial innovation. Representative regions following this pathway include Henan Province and Hainan Province.

Data show that digital inclusive finance in Henan Province has developed significantly. From 2017 to 2020, the median of the county-level inclusive finance development index increased by 192%, with some counties reaching a momentum index of 278—well above the median value of 186. Inclusive finance has rapidly expanded in rural areas, effectively achieving the goal of “credit access for all and loans for every household.” [68] Lankao County pioneered digital financial products based on local government data, with cumulative loans reaching RMB 6.7 billion, benefiting approximately 70,000 rural households [69]. Similarly, in November 2016, Hainan Province issued the Implementation Guidelines for Inclusive Finance to enhance financial service coverage and accessibility, particularly for micro and small enterprises and vulnerable groups. The Hainan Rural Credit Cooperative has driven inclusive finance through technological innovation, supporting agriculture and small businesses while building a localized financial ecosystem to boost the real economy. One of its innovations was the launch of China’s first 2.4GHz RCC mobile payment card with financial functions—Woxinshun [70].

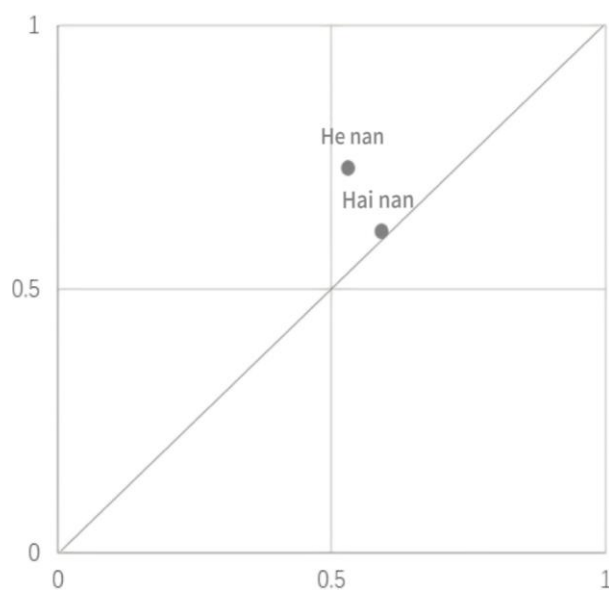


Figure 3: Case Explanation of Causal Configuration (1)

5.2 Education-Market Emphasis Path

The education–market-driven model promotes human capital development and social advancement through sustained investment in and reform of the education sector. Its core lies in the ability of education to enhance human capital, improve income distribution, and foster upward social mobility, while market competition simultaneously provides equal opportunities and performance incentives. These dual mechanisms jointly contribute to the long-term realization of common prosperity. Hunan Province exemplifies this model, with its successful practices reflected in multiple dimensions. First, in terms of education investment, Hunan’s education expenditure reached RMB 137.363 billion in 2021—significantly higher than the national average. The province

has strengthened policy support through documents such as the Opinions on Accelerating the Development of Modern Vocational Education. In vocational education, Hunan has promoted industry–education integration and school–enterprise cooperation to better align educational outputs with local industrial demands. As of 2020, the province had 530 secondary vocational schools, with more than 1.5 million students enrolled and 500,000 new admissions annually, producing a large number of highly skilled technical personnel. In basic education, initiatives such as the “Xu Teli Project” led to the addition of 66,000 high-quality public school seats in 2024 and the completion of 357 standardized boarding schools in townships, significantly narrowing the urban–rural education gap [71]. In the field of higher education, the total value of technology transfer contracts signed by universities in Hunan reached RMB 5.68 billion in 2024, marking a 56.09% year-on-year increase and a notable improvement in the commercialization of research achievements. Collectively, these measures have enhanced human capital, optimized income distribution, and improved social mobility in the province, offering strong and sustained support for the attainment of common prosperity.

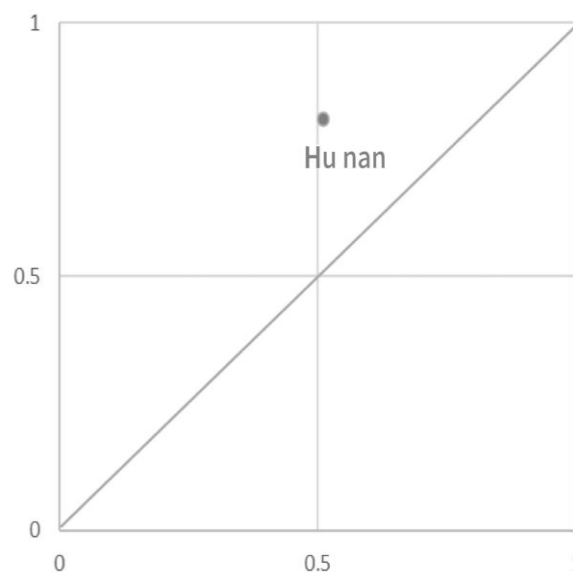


Figure 4: Case Explanation of Causal Configuration (2)

5.3 Finance-Market Emphasis Path

The finance–market dual-driven model emphasizes the simultaneous development of inclusive finance and the decisive role of market mechanisms in resource allocation. It seeks to enhance economic efficiency and social equity through market competition and regulatory oversight. The core of this model lies in striking a balance between inclusive financial development and market competition. By improving property rights systems, mitigating financial risks, maintaining market order, fostering innovation, and addressing public welfare needs, the model aims to reduce income disparities and promote sustainable socio-economic development. This model is characterized by a medium- to short-term orientation. It values both the efficient resource allocation function of inclusive finance and the role of market competition in driving innovation and productivity. Through these mechanisms, it contributes to the achievement of common prosperity. Representative regions following this approach include Beijing, Zhejiang, Jiangsu, Shanghai, Guangdong, Fujian, Anhui, Shandong, Tianjin, Jiangxi, and Chongqing.

As China’s national financial governance center, Beijing has demonstrated strong financial performance, with total financial assets reaching RMB 215 trillion. By the end of 2024, the city had 476 A-share listed companies with a combined market capitalization of RMB 26.31 trillion, ranking first in the country [72]. Jiangsu led the nation in incremental social financing, reaching RMB 2.89 trillion [73], followed by Zhejiang with RMB 2.64 trillion [74]. Shanghai, aiming to become an international financial center, experienced a historic surge in cross-border RMB settlement, with total inflows and outflows reaching RMB 29.8 trillion [75]; Guangdong ranked first nationwide with 875 A-share listed companies [76]. Anhui promoted enterprise listings through a “sci-tech + industry” model, with strategic emerging enterprises accounting for 51% of all listed companies [77]. In addition, provinces such as Shandong, Fujian, Tianjin, Jiangxi, and Chongqing have significantly improved financial services for micro and small enterprises as well as rural areas through policy support and financial innovation.

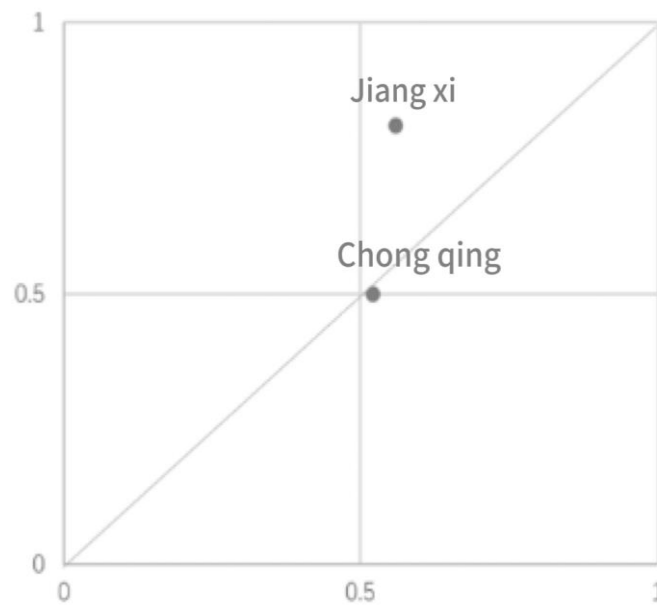


Figure 5: Case Explanation of Causal Configuration (3)

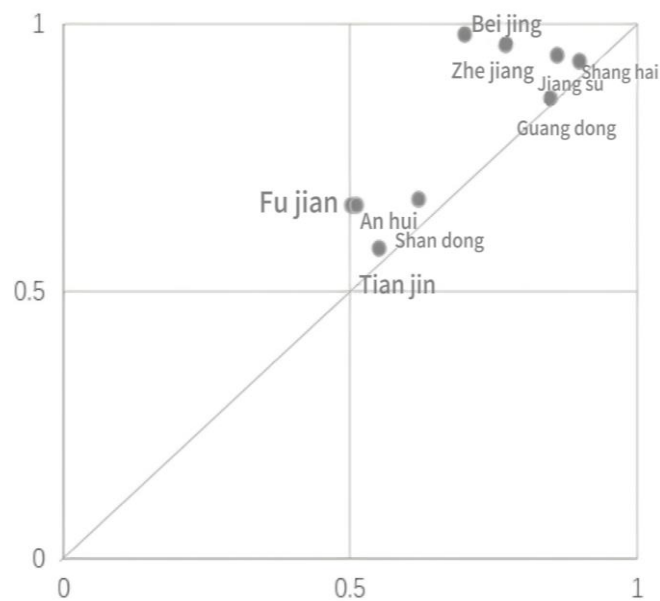


Figure 6: Case Explanation of Causal Configuration (4)

6. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This study focuses on exploring the pathways to achieving common prosperity across 31 provinces, municipalities, and autonomous regions in China. Employing the fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA) method, it examines the effects of various factors—including the level of digital economy development, digital financial inclusion, urban–rural integration, educational development, and marketization—on common prosperity. The study further validates the differentiated impacts of Bourdieu’s theory of practice, particularly the “capital types–field rules” framework, in shaping diverse regional pathways to common prosperity. The key findings are as follows:

There is considerable diversity and complexity in the pathways to achieving common prosperity, indicating that different regions should adopt models tailored to their specific conditions and characteristics. (1) Finance-led path: This pathway identifies financial development as the core driving force of common prosperity. Inclusive finance can rapidly improve access to financing for rural areas and micro-enterprises. This model requires policy support and financial innovation, and is most applicable to central and western regions with relatively weak economic

foundations but strong government support. It is oriented toward medium- to long-term development. (2) Finance–market emphasis path: This model emphasizes the decisive role of market mechanisms in resource allocation while simultaneously developing the financial sector. The combination of competitive market structures and concentrated financial resources can accelerate improvements in economic efficiency and industrial upgrading. It is particularly suitable for the more market-oriented and financially developed eastern coastal regions, and has a medium- to short-term orientation. (3) Education-Market emphasis path: This pathway is led by the education sector and promotes human capital accumulation and social advancement through sustained investment and reform. It is well-suited to provinces with abundant educational resources and urgent needs for economic transformation. Due to the time required to accumulate human capital, it is oriented toward long-term development. Future research may further explore mechanisms for interregional coordination and the synergistic effects of policy portfolios, thereby promoting a more systematic realization of the common prosperity goal.

FUNDING

2023 Hebei Provincial Social Science Development Research Project (Project No. 20230302023).

REFERENCES

- [1] National Bureau of Statistics of China. National Bureau of Statistics of China. Available online: <https://www.stats.gov.cn/> (accessed on 14 July 2025) .
- [2] Luo, B.-L. Governing Relative Poverty: Nature, Strategies, and Long-Term Mechanisms. *Qiuzuo* 2020, (06), 18–27.
- [3] Ye, X.-Q.; Yin, H.-D. From Eliminating Absolute Poverty to Alleviating Relative Poverty: China’s Poverty Reduction Journey and Post-2020 Strategy. *Gaige* 2019, (12), 5–15.
- [4] Liu, P.-L.; Qian, T.; Huang, X.-H.; et al. Connotation, Realization Paths, and Measurement Methods of Common Prosperity. *Management World* 2021, 37(08), 117–129.
- [5] Li, S. Goals and Path Selection for Achieving Common Prosperity. *Economic Research* 2021, 56(11), 4–13.
- [6] Jiang, Y.-M.; Xie, Q. Steadily Promoting Common Prosperity: Logical Framework and Realization Paths. *Economic Panorama* 2021, (04), 15–24+2.
- [7] Zou, K.; Ni, Q.-S. Inclusive Finance Promotes Common Prosperity: Theory, Measurement, and Empirical Evidence. *Journal of Financial Economics Research* 2021, 36(05), 48–62.
- [8] Zhang, J.-L.; Dong, X.-F.; Li, J. Can Digital Inclusive Finance Promote Common Prosperity? An Empirical Study Based on Microhousehold Data. *Journal of Finance and Economics* 2022, 48(07), 4–17+123.
- [9] Xu, F.-Z.; Xi, W.; Xu, Y.-H. Governance Mechanisms and Their Roles in the Process Toward Common Prosperity in Rural Areas: A Dual-Case Study. *Management World* 2021, 37(12), 134–151+196+152.
- [10] Liang, D.-L.; Lai, X.-L. Research on Digital Economy Promoting Common Prosperity: From the Perspective of Balanced Growth. *Theoretical Exploration* 2022, (03), 57–62.
- [11] Liu, C. Digital Economy and Common Prosperity: A Theoretical Analysis Based on Income Distribution. *Social Science Digest* 2022, (06), 16–18.
- [12] Xin, H.; Wan, B.-W.; Luo, K. The Influence of Digital Technology on Rural Common Prosperity and Its Spatial Spillover Effect. *Emerg. Mark. Financ. Trade* 2025, 61(12), 3797–3820.
- [13] Zhou, S.-J.; Chen, B.-W. Does the Digital Economy Affect the Spatial Allocation of Labor? Micro Evidence from China’s Floating Population. *Journal of Yunnan University of Finance and Economics* 2023, 39(02), 96–110.
- [14] Li, M.-C.; Yu, Y.-Y. Promoting Rural Consumption by Engaging in Digital Finance: Based on the Triple Perspective of Consumption Scale, Consumption Structure, and Consumption Propensity. *Emerg. Mark. Financ. Trade* 2025, 61(11), 3500–3513.
- [15] Yu, J.-L.; Zhou, J.; Cui, M. Digital Inclusive Finance and Interregional Common Prosperity: Theoretical Logic and Empirical Evidence. *Journal of Shanxi University of Finance and Economics* 2022, 44(10), 1–15.
- [16] Ye, S.-Q.; Tu, A.-P.; Ye, Y.-L.; Liao, F.-M. Digital Divide, Agricultural Supply Chain Finance, and the Urban-Rural Income Gap in China. *Sustain. Futures* 2025, 10, 100863.
- [17] Yang, Y.-W.; Zhang, Y.-X. Digital Inclusive Finance, Entrepreneurial Vitality, and Common Prosperity. *Journal of South-Central University for Nationalities (Humanities and Social Sciences Edition)* 2023, 43(06), 129–138+186.
- [18] Yi, S.; Zhang, M.; Huo, Z.-H.; Mao, Y.-T. The Configuration Path of the New Rural Collective Economy to Promote the Common Prosperity of Farmers: Based on Qualitative Comparative Analysis Method and the Rural Cases in Zhejiang, China. *Systems* 2024, 12(7), 256.

- [19] Yang, F. How Does Digital Inclusive Finance Affect Urban–Rural Common Prosperity? *Journal of Northwest Normal University (Social Sciences)* 2023, 60(05), 114–125.
- [20] Zhou, J.; Yang, S.-Y. Common Prosperity in the Era of Technological Transformation: Digital Inclusive Finance, Technological Progress, and the Income Distribution of Migrant Workers. *Financ. Res. Lett.* 2025, 81, 107486.
- [21] Wang, Z.-F.; Lü, J.-G. The Impact of Digital Inclusive Finance on Urban–Rural Integration under the Vision of Common Prosperity and Its Threshold Effect. *Exploration of Economic Issues* 2023, (11), 142–158.
- [22] Yang, S.-R.; Lei, X.-K. Digital Inclusive Finance and Common Prosperity of Rural Residents: Impact and Mechanism. *Statistics and Information Forum* 2024, 39(02), 56–68.
- [23] Wei, L.-R.; Di, J.-X.; Zhou, Q. Exploring the Pathways Through Which the Digital Economy Drives Common Prosperity in the Context of Sustainable Development. *Sustainability* 2025, 17(8), 3709.
- [24] Zhai, K.-Z.; Mao, L. County-Level Autonomous Governance for Urban–Rural Integration in Chinese Modernization: A Case Study of Zhejiang’s Common Prosperity Demonstration Zone. *Theory and Reform* 2024, (01), 110–125.
- [25] Li, N. The Internal Mechanism and Path of Urban–Rural Integration Driving Common Prosperity. *Journal of Agricultural and Forestry Economic Management* 2022, 21(04), 473–480.
- [26] Chen, Z.; Jiao, F.-Y. The Impact of Economic Financialization on the Income Gap Between Urban and Rural Residents: Evidence from China. *Sustainability* 2025, 17(8), 3484.
- [27] Gao, F. How Urban–Rural Integration Affects the Achievement of China’s Common Prosperity Goals. *China Economic Issues* 2022, (05), 12–24.
- [28] Zhu, L.; Yang, X.-W. Education as a Driver of Common Prosperity: Preconditions, Limits, and Pathways. *Educational Development Research* 2024, 44(01), 27–33+57.
- [29] Fu, H.-M.; Zhang, H. Research on the Measurement and Practical Paths of Common Prosperity in Zhejiang from the Perspective of Higher Education. *Adult Higher Educ.* 2024, 6(5).
- [30] Huang, B.; Li, B.; Fang, C. The Unique Role of Education in Promoting Common Prosperity: Normative Theory and Empirical Reality. *Journal of East China Normal University (Educational Sciences)* 2023, 41(10), 12–26.
- [31] Zheng, S.-F.; Ling, W.-B.; Zhou, R.; Zheng, J. Rural Industrial Revitalization and the Common Prosperity of Rural Inhabitants in China: Exploring Synergies Between Efficient Governance and Effective Markets. *Sustainability* 2025, 17(8), 3298.
- [32] Ji, M.; Zeng, X.-H.; Wang, Z.-J. The Common Prosperity Effect of Transportation and Educational Infrastructure: A Heterogeneity-Based Perspective. *Journal of Nanjing Audit University* 2023, 20(03), 1–10.
- [33] Yang, X.-W. Promoting Common Prosperity through Balanced Development of Education. *People’s Tribune* 2023, (13), 30–33.
- [34] Cao, X.-J.; Min, W.-F. An Empirical Study on How Education Narrows Income Gaps and Promotes Common Prosperity. *Educational Research* 2023, 44(11), 127–138.
- [35] Min, W.-F.; Cao, X.-J. A Study on the Mechanism of Education in Promoting Common Prosperity. *Education Economics Review* 2022, 7(06), 3–20.
- [36] Li, Y.; Liu, Y.-B. Innovative Pathways for Empowering Farmers through Education from a Strength-Based Perspective. *Journal of Jiangsu University (Social Science Edition)* 2023, 25(03), 112–124.
- [37] Li, P. Pro-Poor Growth: Patterns, Dilemmas, and Strategies of Rural Education in Promoting Common Prosperity. *Journal of Southwest University (Social Sciences Edition)* 2023, 49(03), 191–199.
- [38] Xing, X.-F.; Wang, Y. The Evaluation of Shared Prosperity: A Case from China. *Sustainability* 2025, 17(2), 621.
- [39] Yang, X.-H.; Li, Q.-C.; Luo, S.; Li, Q. How Does Labor Mobility Affect Common Prosperity?—An Empirical Study Based on a Panel of Chinese Cities. *Sustainability* 2023, 15(8).
- [40] Ruan, J.; Zou, L.; Liu, R.-Q.; Pan, H.-Y. The Impact of Digital Economy Development on Regional Income Gaps: A Perspective on Multidimensional Inequality Decomposition and Threshold Effects. *Mathematics* 2024, 12(24), 4024.
- [41] Deng, J.-Q.; He, A.-P. Government-Led, Marketization Process, and Urban–Rural Income Disparity. *Issues in Agricultural Economy* 2018, (06), 44–56.
- [42] Hui, A.-L. Research on the Path of Digital Economy Empowering Urban and Rural Common Prosperity under the New Development Pattern. *Econ. Soc. Humanit.* 2024, 1(8).
- [43] Li, C.-Y.; Wang, Z.-R. The Impact of Labor Market Allocation on Common Prosperity in China. *Review of Economy and Management* 2023, 39(05), 86–97.
- [44] Tu, S.-W.; Yang, X.-X. Market-Based Allocation of Production Factors, Urban–Rural Income Gap, and Farmers’ Common Prosperity. *Guizhou Social Sciences* 2022, (09), 148–159.

- [45] Qian, Z.-H.; Mou, Y. China's Land Market Reform: Institutional Changes and Their Characteristics. *Issues in Agricultural Economy* 2013, 34(05), 20–26+110.
- [46] Shao, C.-L.; Han, L. An Evaluation of the Impact of Financial Market Reform on the Urban–Rural Income Gap in China. *Journal of Tianjin University (Social Sciences)* 2015, 17(03), 226–231.
- [47] Zhong, T.; Wu, W.-X.; Ma, X.-G. Financial Marketization, Rural Capital Outflow, and Urban–Rural Income Gap. *Nankai Economic Studies* 2020, (04), 144–164.
- [48] Chen, Y.-T.; Zhang, W.-H. The Impact of Social Capital on Gender Income Inequality under Marketization: Based on 2009 JSNet National Data. *Society* 2015, 35(06), 178–205.
- [49] Bourdieu, P. *The Forms of Capital* (1986). *Cultural Theory: An Anthology* 2011, 1(81–93), 949.
- [50] Schwab, K. *The Fourth Industrial Revolution*; World Economic Forum: Geneva, Switzerland, 2016.
- [51] Schwab, K.; Martin, X. S.; Samans, R.; et al. *The Global Competitiveness Report: 2016–2017*; World Economic Forum: Geneva, Switzerland, 2016.
- [52] Morgan, J. Will We Work in Twenty-First Century Capitalism? A Critique of the Fourth Industrial Revolution Literature. *Economy and Society* 2019, 48(3), 371–398.
- [53] Cotula, L. The International Political Economy of the Global Land Rush: A Critical Appraisal of Trends, Scale, Geography and Drivers. *Journal of Peasant Studies* 2012, 39(3/4), 649–680.
- [54] OECD. *An OECD Learning Framework 2030. The Future of Education and Labor* 2019, 23–35.
- [55] Bourdieu, P. The Economics of Linguistic Exchanges. *Social Science Information* 1977, 16(6), 645–668.
- [56] Lazonick, W. When Managerial Capitalism Embraced Shareholder-Value Ideology: Comments on Duménil and Lévy. *International Journal of Political Economy* 2015, 44(2), 90–99.
- [57] Ragin, C. C. Measurement versus Calibration: A Set-Theoretic Approach. *Redesigning Social Inquiry: Fuzzy Sets and Beyond* 2008, 240, 190–212.
- [58] Wagemann, C.; Schneider, C. *Set-Theoretic Methods for the Social Sciences*; Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK, 2012.
- [59] Pappas, I. O.; Woodside, A. G. Fuzzy-Set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA): Guidelines for Research Practice in Information Systems and Marketing. *International Journal of Information Management* 2021, 58, 102310.
- [60] Zhang, H.-L. Construction and Empirical Study of the Common Prosperity Evaluation Index System. Master's Thesis, Lanzhou University of Finance and Economics, Lanzhou, China, 2022.
- [61] Sichuan Provincial Big Data Center. *Sichuan Provincial Digital Economy Index 2021*. Available online: <https://www.scdsjzx.cn/scdsjzx/zhishufabu/2021/1/14/4b785adb4600446aabb41dfa0bfc0eef.shtml> (accessed on 14 July 2025).
- [62] Baidu Baijiahao. Available online: <https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1702731528367760907&wfr=spider&for=pc> (accessed on 14 July 2025).
- [63] Zhang, W.; Zhou, H.-Y. *China Education Index 2021*; Hubei Education Press: Wuhan, China, 2021.
- [64] China Marketization Index Database. Available online: <https://cmi.ssap.com.cn/> (accessed on 14 July 2025).
- [65] Fan, D.; Li, Y.; Chen, L. Configuring Innovative Societies: The Crossvergent Role of Cultural and Institutional Varieties. *Technovation* 2017, 43–56.
- [66] Fiss, P. C. Building Better Causal Theories: A Fuzzy Set Approach to Typologies in Organization Research. *Academy of Management Journal* 2011, 54(2), 393–420.
- [67] Ragin, C. C.; Fiss, P. C. Net Effects Analysis versus Configurational Analysis: An Empirical Demonstration. In *Redesigning Social Inquiry: Fuzzy Sets and Beyond*; Ragin, C. C., Ed.; University of Chicago Press: Chicago, IL, USA, 2008; Volume 240, pp. 190–212.
- [68] Rural Development Institute of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. *Report on the Development Index of County-Level Digital Inclusive Finance in China (2021)*; CASS: Beijing, China, 2021.
- [69] Chen, G. The Gap in County-Level Digital Inclusive Finance Between Central and Eastern China Is Narrowing. *Economic Daily*. Available online: <http://rss.jingjiribao.cn/static/detail.jsp?id=381958> (accessed on 14 July 2025).
- [70] Hainan Provincial People's Government. Available online: <https://www.hainan.gov.cn/hainan/xdjr/201711/a371d1ad27cf46b28f0ae52dd215bc15.shtml> (accessed on 14 July 2025).
- [71] Xuexi Qiangguo. Available online: <https://hn.rednet.cn/content/646946/54/14690440.html> (accessed on 14 July 2025).
- [72] Beijing Municipal Science and Technology Commission; Zhongguancun Administrative Committee. Available online: https://kw.beijing.gov.cn/xwdt/kcyx/xwdtyqqy/202502/t20250205_4003106.html (accessed on 14 July 2025).
- [73] Jiangsu Provincial People's Government. Available online: https://www.jiangsu.gov.cn/art/2025/2/2/art_84322_11483580.html (accessed on 14 July 2025).

- [74] Zhejiang Provincial People's Government. Available online: https://www.zj.gov.cn/art/2025/1/23/art_1229823372_60253871.html (accessed on 14 July 2025).
- [75] Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China. Available online: <https://dzswgf.mofcom.gov.cn/news/phone/182/2025/1/m-1737612945254.html> (accessed on 14 July 2025).
- [76] Guangdong Provincial People's Government. Available online: https://www.gd.gov.cn/zwgk/zcjd/mtjd/content/post_4659518.html (accessed on 14 July 2025).
- [77] National Development and Reform Commission of China. Available online: https://www.ndrc.gov.cn/xwdt/ztzl/cjsjyth1/xwzx/202108/t20210824_1294471.html (accessed on 14 July 2025).

Author Profile

Yahui Lv PhD, Lecturer, School of Economics and Management, Hebei Agricultural University. Research direction: Rural Talent Development.

Shitong Wang (Corresponding Author) postgraduate student of Hebei Agricultural University. Research direction: Agricultural Economics and Management.

Siqi Zhang postgraduate student of Hebei Agricultural University. Research direction: Agricultural Economics and Management.