COVID19 research paper on a comparison between India and the US at the United Nations' UNESCO MOST colloquium by Dr Varun Dutt and IIT Mandi students (21st-22nd October 2021)

The French Presidency of the Bureau of the Intergovernmental Council (IGC) of UNESCO's Management of Social Transformations (MOST) Programme organised a symposium entitled "Social Sciences and the COVID-19 Pandemic: State of Knowledge and Proposals for Action" on 21 and 22 October 2021. The symposium focused on the use of social science research in the management of health crises. The paper titled, "Risk Perception, Fear, Social Distancing, Masks, and Treatments Regarding Covid-19 in India and the United States of America," presented by Dr Varun Dutt, Associate Professor, IIT Mandi, highlighted the attitudes of people of India and the USA towards risk perception, fear, social distancing, mask-wearing, and treatments during the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of the salient points from the presentation involving 405 respondents across India and the USA are the following:

Risk Perception
Indians were concerned about their economic losses after getting ill due to COVID-19. However, Americans believed that they were less likely to get infected by COVID-19.

Fear
Indians believed that news and stories about the pandemic in media cause nervousness or anxiety. Also, Indians were more likely to stockpile essential items during the pandemic than Americans. Americans more likely believed in the adequacy of the healthcare system in their country.

Social distancing
Americans had reported a high number of domestic violence cases during the lockdown, causing stress and anxiety levels to increase. Indians agreed that their locality had been involved in religious and social gatherings despite being aware of social distancing norms due to COVID-19.

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RISK PERCEPTION, FEAR, SOCIAL DISTANCING, MASKS, AND TREATMENTS REGARDING COVID-19 IN INDIA AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

INDIA

Risk Perception
Indians believe that they might get severely affected, both physically and economically

Fear
Felt more nervous and anxious about pandemic due to reporting on news and social media

Social Distancing
Involved in religious and social gatherings despite being aware of social distancing norms

Mask Wearing
Believed homemade masks to be effective against COVID-19

Treatment
More likely to believe in the effectiveness of alternate treatments against COVID-19

USA

Risk Perception
Americans are less concerned about getting infected due to COVID-19

Fear
Less afraid about the adequacy of healthcare system in their country

Social Distancing
Agreed to an increase in reported cases of domestic violence due to stress and anxiety

Mask Wearing
More likely to wear masks in public even after cases drop

Treatment
More likely to accept COVID-19 vaccine for their family

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Mask wearing
Indians believed in the effectiveness of homemade masks against COVID-19. In contrast, Americans were more likely to wear masks in public even after COVID-19 cases dropped.

Treatments
More Americans showed likeness towards vaccination of their family members than Indians. Indians more likely believed in the effectiveness of alternative treatments (such as Ayurveda) against COVID-19 than Americans.

Demographics

Table 1. Demographics of the participants recruited for the study from India and the US conducted in April 2021.

	India	USA
No. of participants	201	204
No. of female participants	35%	51%
No. of male participants	65%	49%
Mean age of participants	34.5 (SD = 8.25)	38.7 (SD = 13.08)
Vaccination status	Fully vaccinated: 3%	Fully vaccinated: 12%
	Vaccinated with one dose: 31%	Vaccinated with one dose: 32%
	Not Vaccinated: 66%	Not Vaccinated: 56%
Infected with COVID-19 after vaccination	After first dose: 10%	After first dose: 6.3%
	After second dose: 0.5%	After second dose: 0.9%