

Application of Hofstede's Model to Study the Role of Indian Culture for Sustenance during COVID-19

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 crisis has impacted all dimensions of our lives say it as the public health, the labour system, the social interaction, the political debate, the use of public spaces, the economy, the environment, and last but not the least it has proved to be a major contributor to the cultural value system of the individual living in society. This research paper is to analyse and understand the changes enforced by this pandemic on Indian culture and individual of the society. It also analyses the context of COVID-19 scenario with special reference to Indian culture and Hofstede's theory of cultural dimension. This research paper is an attempt to emphasize the changes in culture and value system during the COVID-19 pandemic faced by India. India is enriched enough in cultural dimensions to combat COVID-19. The Hofstede's model analysed in depth also leads to this finding that it also fits well in the present context. Thus, it is hereby summed up that as India is enriched in its cultural values it has posed itself as a fighter for this pandemic.

Key words: COVID-19 pandemic, Indian culture, Hofstede's theory of cultural dimensions, SWOT Analysis, Lockdown, Social Distancing, quarantine, Power Distance , Uncertainty Avoidance

Introduction

1.1 Covid-19 scenario

The humanity is facing an enormous challenge due to Covid-19 outbreak. According to WHO, "a disease outbreak is the occurrence of disease cases in excess of normal expectancy. The figure of cases varies according to the disease-causing agent, the size and type of

previous and existing exposure to the agent.” In other terms, an outbreak is a sudden increase in a number of cases of a disease. For example, “COVID-19” is a global pandemic outbreak.

The term “corona virus disease” generally recognized as “Covid-19” is an infectious disease caused by “severe acute respiratory syndrome corona virus 2 (SARS-COV-2).” Corona virus is well-defined as a type of shared virus that causes infection in your respiratory tract and touch your immune system. The Covid-19 virus spreads primarily through droplets of saliva or discharge from the nose when an affected person coughs or sneezes. It is said that the first case of Covid-19 was reported in Wuhan (China) in December 2019. According to WHO, “Pandemic is the worldwide spread of a new disease.” For instance, an influenza pandemic occurs when a new influenza virus emerges and spreads around the world, and most people do not have immunity. The most fatal pandemic documented in human history was the “Black Death”, also known as “The Plague”. Recently, the “Covid-19” or “corona virus” was declared a pandemic by the WHO on 11 March 2020.

1.2 Culture

“Culture is an integrated system of learned behaviour patterns that are characteristic of the members of any given society. Culture is the total way of life of particular groups of people. It includes everything that a group of people thinks, says, does and makes — its systems, attitudes and feelings. Culture is learned and transmitted from generation to generation”.

-Robert Kohl's

“Culture is the set of basic values, perceptions wants, behaviours learned by a member of society from family and other important institutions.”

-Philip Kotler

“Culture includes both conscious and unconscious values, ideas, attitudes and symbols that shape human behaviour and that are transmitted from one generation to the next.”

-Warren J. Keegan

Culture is the identity of a nation and country. It may vary for various reasons. In common word culture is the sum total of beliefs, values, customs, and attitudes that distinguish one society from another. Culture is the human made part of human environment and is the sum of total knowledge beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs and other capabilities and habits

acquired by humans as members of society.

Culture is a word which explains the “way of life” of group of people, which means the way they do things. Culture is Relative that guide the behaviour of people in a society/community and that are passed on from one generation to the next. This simple meaning connotes the following core elements of culture: Culture has normative value. It prescribes do’s and don’ts which are binding on the members of a society, culture is group behaviour; the cultural values are passed on from generation to generation.

Culture, is that complex of whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society (E. B. Tylor 1871). The sum total of knowledge, attitudes and habitual behaviour patterns shared and transmitted by the members of a particular society(Ralph Linton 1940). The pattern of life within a community, the regularly recurring activities and material and social arrangements are characteristic of a particular group (Ward Goodenough 1957).

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1.3 Indian Culture

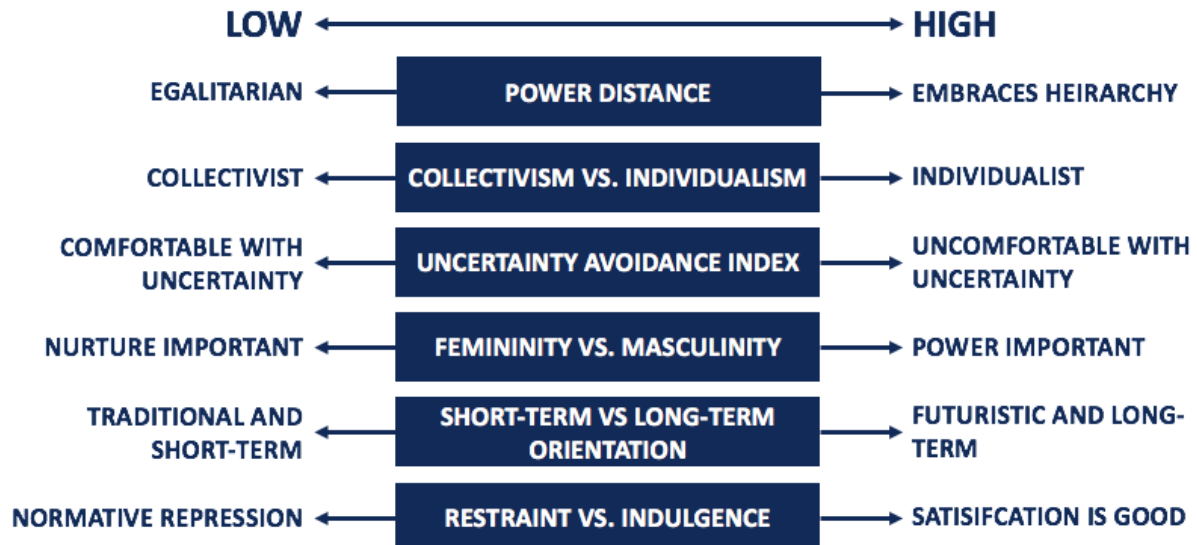
When we talk about any organisation or a society or in wider perspective even when a country faces any kind of unexpected emergency or calamity it is the culture of that particular group which acts as a shield to overcome that situation. If we analyse present condition of the world the pandemic of COVID-19 has caused global social and economic disruption, including the largest global recession since the great depression. During last six months this pandemic has penetrated into 188 countries and territories, resulting in 521,000 deaths. If we compare India’s state with rest of the world India has been able to cope up with the current situation in a better way due to its rich culture. Indian culture which includes welcome guests with folded hands, washing hands and feet after entering the house, taking proper care of every day hygiene, eating fresh food and vegetables and various other habits which are already prevalent in Indian culture has helped Indians to be better equipped during this pandemic.

1.4 Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions Theory

The Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions framework, developed by Geert Hofstede, in 1980 is used to understand the differences in culture across countries and to discern the ways that business is done across different cultures. In other words, the framework is used to distinguish between different national cultures, the dimensions of culture, and their impact

on achieving individual goal, organisational goal and societal goal.

The aim of the study was to determine the dimensions in which cultures vary.



Source-<https://corporatefinanceinstitute.com/resources/knowledge/other/hofstedes-cultural-dimensions-theory/>

2. Literature Review

Pogrebna, Ganna& Kharlamov, Alexander. (2020)In the absence of the cure or vaccine, the COVID-19 outbreak created pressures for the humanity to develop prevention mechanisms to decrease the individual propensities of potential infection. One of the recommended prevention mechanisms is frequent hand washing, yet, there is a significant heterogeneity in hand washing habits around the globe, meaning that for some cultures it might take longer to adapt to the new COVID-19 hygiene protocols. While many factors may have contributed to the current differences in the new coronavirus spread around the globe, we show that hand washing culture alone is an important factor allowing us to understand much about the currently observed heterogeneity in the outbreak magnitude.

Joffe Alex(2020).Trade and tourism, foundations of modern economies, have now undone entire countries, including in the medical sense. These features of modernity will have to be rethought, along with the depth of economic, financial, and demographic interconnections between states brought about by globalization. Rebuilding global systems to survive a health crisis requires an ability to impose and enforce borders, distribute manufacturing and supply chains, adjust wage and profit expectations to local levels, build shared surge capacity,

enhance rapid research and development capacities, and relocate strategically important industries to national territories.

Arya Khushi (2020).When a pandemic hit, it does not see race, class, ethnicity, gender or nationality — it affects everyone. Some people are certainly more privileged than others, but during this time of social distancing, we are really left with our loved ones. People have concerns about their job, school and vacations, but all of that comes secondary to the health and safety of the people. After all, we all are social beings and no amount of wealth can compensate for the value of relationships. Regardless of whether you're in the U.S., India or any other country, it all comes down to cherishing happy memories with all the people you love.

3. **Research methodology**

This research paper is based on descriptive study in which the author has attempted to analyse secondary data to achieve the objectives which are used to understand the factors related to culture equipping Indians to sustain this pandemic in a better way. The current study explores various aspects associated with the COVID-19 outbreak in India and the significance of role of culture to control and fight against this pandemic.

The objectives of the study include:

- To identify the role of culture in meeting the challenges of COVID 19.
- To analyse SWOT of COVID-19 with special reference to India.
- To study the cultural aspect of India with reference to Hofstede's framework which plays an important role in any crisis period.

The Geographical Location of the study being India, the Indian culture has been taken as a reference of the study.

4. **Analysis and Findings**

Role of Indian Culture in Meeting the Challenges of COVID-19 Scenario

A country has some invaluable assets which cannot be stolen or taken away like its culture, history, traditions, practices, ethics, diversity and many more intangible properties. And India has been a blessed country in all these aspects with its rich heritage and high cultural values.

One of the worst pandemics in history, COVID-19 has almost penetrated every corner of the world whether developed or developing countries, leading to numerous deaths. This deadly virus causes respiratory problems, tiredness and fever. The spread of this disease from one person to another can be through small droplets from when the nose or mouth of a person with COVID-19 coughs or exhales. These droplets may land on a surface which the other person may come in contact with and then consequently touch his eyes, nose or mouth, which could trigger the spread.

All governments' basic precautionary advisories include wearing a mask, keeping hands away from your face, washing hands with soap for around 20 seconds, avoiding shaking hands or touching a person, etc. As a consequence the world has started noticing something spectacular in those advisories –and the most of them have been already a part of Indian cultures and traditions from thousands of years.



Source-<https://www.magzter.com/article/Entertainment/Wishesh/Indian-Cultures-and-Traditions-Significant-With-Relevance>

The most famous Indian tradition of a 'namaste' has led people to avoid shaking hands. 'Namaste' is the Indian way of greeting each other. It is basically the joining of two palms together before the chest while slightly bowing to the person in front. 'Namaste' is originated from the Sanskrit words 'Namah' and 'te' – which after combination gives 'Namaste', meaning “I bow to you” or “my greetings to you”. As it is now known that coronavirus can spread

through touching each other's hands so rather than shaking hands 'namaste' has done a magnificent effort in reviving the traditions of bowing and joining palms while greeting.

To wash hands for at least 20 seconds with water or with alcohol, which kills the germs effectively is also one of the advisories against coronavirus. Hinduism embodies certain ways to sustain health and hygiene. As per Hindu fundamentals washing hands and keeping them clean on a regular basis is inculcated while childhood. It has already been recognised by the World Health Organization (WHO) where it has stated that washing hands on a regular basis is being followed by Hindus and is part of the Hindu fundamentals, in order to prevent the spread of diseases and is in conformity with the principles of non-violence ('ahimsa') and care for others' well-being ('daya'). Thus in light of the current pandemic, it is necessary to wash hands every hour or two, before and after meals, after touching any surface or a person at a public place, etc.

Hinduism has given extraordinary things to the world, one of them happens to be yoga which is referred to be the heart of all Hindu cultures and traditions and now it is being followed by almost all nations. "To unite the mind with the spirit" is the true meaning of yoga. Its origins are from the Sankrit word "Yuj", meaning "to cause unison of mind, body and soul". Yoga practically involves various "asans" or exercises which are carried out with controlled breathing. Yoga contributes to our overall well-being by propagating a healthy body in which harmonisation of mind and body takes place. Yoga is also referred as meditation which involves rejuvenation and reformation process. It aims at releasing all stress and tensions accumulated throughout a person's life with a healthy mind, body and soul, which immediately boosts our immunity and our ability and power to fight off diseases and ailments of every kind. At present as COVID-19 is largely affecting those people who have low immunity levels therefore, it is necessary to boost our immunity levels through yoga.

The rich and varied wildlife of India has an intense impact on its culture. In Hinduism, the cow is regarded as a symbol of mother goddess and bringer of good fortune and wealth. Therefore cows are respected in Hindu culture and hence feeding a cow is seen as an act of worship. Beef is considered as a taboo food in mainstream Hindu and Jain society.

Michelin-starred chefs mentioned about Indian food to be as diverse as India. As per him, no country on earth can match India as milk is their primary ingredient. Indian cuisines include various ingredients; adopt a wide range of food preparation styles, culinary presentations, and different cooking techniques. Indian cuisine is invariably complex from spices to sensuous,

from bread to desserts, from salads to sauces, from vegetarian to meat and many more varied recipes depending on the different region, reflecting the local produce, cultural diversity, and varied demographics of the country. Due to this the immune systems of Indians is quite strong as compared to people of western countries and hence are in a better state of health to fight against coronavirus.

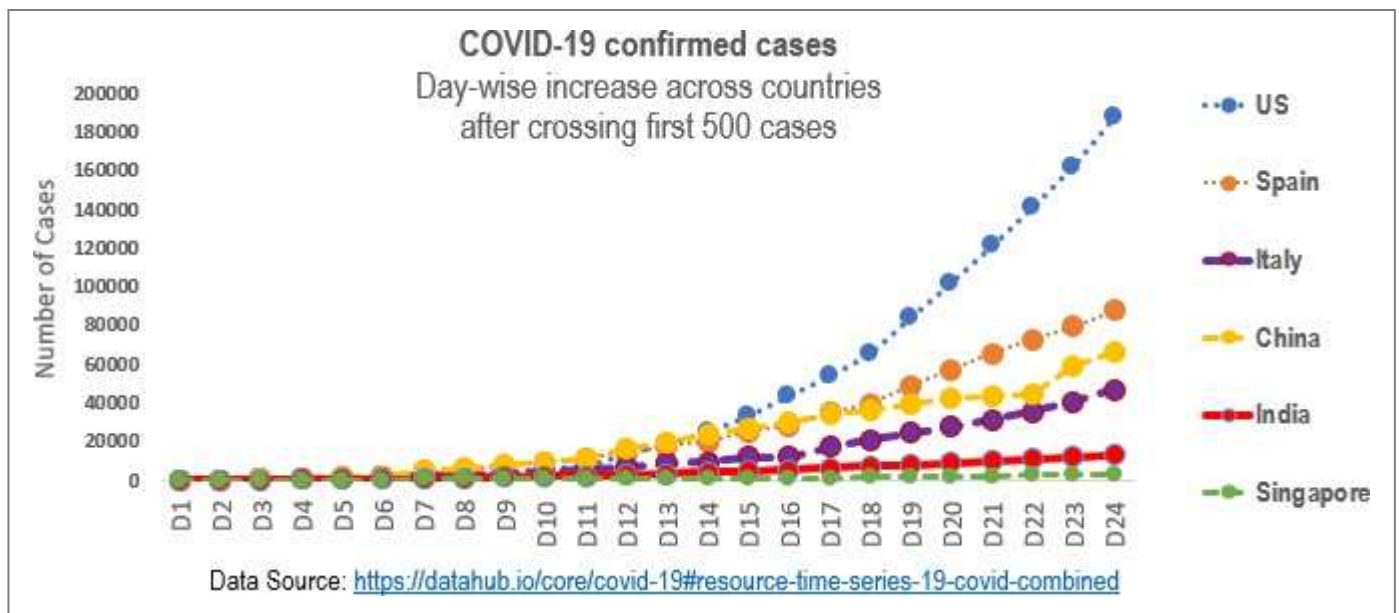
When it is a question of sustained healing of a human body, the most ancient treatments and cures are found in ayurveda, also known as the “mother of all healing”. For more than 5,000 years ayurveda has been a part of Indian culture. It has also been referred in Ramayana when Hanuman brought the ‘Sanjeevani Booti’ for Laxmana. In Sanskrit, ayurveda means “The Science of Life”.

As there is no known cure or vaccine against COVID-19 till date, ayurveda has drawn the attention of majority of Indians and has also been advocated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi where he has suggested that Indians must follow various guidelines of ayurveda as mentioned by the Ministry of AYUSH in order to boost immunity.

Some of these include drinking warm water all day; using turmeric, cumin, coriander and garlic in food; eating Chavanprash everyday in the morning (sugar-free for diabetics); drinking herbal tea twice a day with basil, cinnamon, black pepper, dry ginger, raisin; taking half tablespoon of turmeric with a glass of hot milk.

The basic precautionary advisories by all governments around the world include various steps that have already been a regular part of Indian cultures and traditions from thousands of years.

Position of INDIA with respect to covid-19 cases as of 26 April2020 (5:00PM), a total of 26917 COVID-19 cases (111 foreign nationals) in 32 states/union territories, including 5913cured/discharged, 1 migrated, 826 deaths.



SOURCE- WHO COVID-19 Situation Update Report-13

The above graph signifies the position of India as compared with other major affected countries like USA, Spain, Italy, China & Singapore. India has remained consistently lower. The rise in cases in other countries has been steep whereas it has been linear, but modest and mild is the case of India. India has been much more stringent and proactive in undertaking measures aimed at arresting the spread of the virus. Stringent measures as travel bans, school closures, public transport closures, restrictions on the outside and within the country movement, AarogyaSetu App which has been developed to track the corona infected patients to be tracked within the vicinity, testing policies and contact tracing are being taken so as to control the spread of coronavirus.

SWOT Analysis of Indian Culture during COVID-19

SWOT stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. Strengths and weaknesses are internal things that can be controlled over and can be changed. A SWOT analysis is designed to facilitate a realistic, fact-based, data-driven look at the strengths and weaknesses of a particular concept prevailing.

<p>STRENGTHS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Value System - Cultural Heritage - Leadership - Loyalty towards Country - Faith In The Leader - Humanity - Federal system - Hygiene - Fresh Food - Avoidance of Packaged Food - Preference for Vegetarian Food 	<p>WEAKNESS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Over Population - Uneducated - Multicultural-Different Perspective. - No Proper Infrastructure in Villages - Unemployment - No Proper Social Security - Unemployment - No Proper Medical Facilities - Opposition Government in States - Workers in Unorganized Sectors are very large.
<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - E- Learning - E-Business - Expansion of Pharmaceutical Business - Opportunity to become Self reliant - Research on COVID-19 	<p>THREATS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Threat to Life - Decreasing Economy Rate - Heavy Loss to Small Entrepreneurs & Sole Proprietors. - Export Obligations Suffered - Laborers Returned Back to Villages. - Heavy loss to Tourism Industry.

Above mentioned SWOT Analysis is an attempt by the researcher to explain the various factors which have come up as strengths of India in terms of its culture which is the belief system of a society, and so directs, in general, what is acceptable for the population. It also tries to find out the opportunities which can be utilised and provide a new direction and dimension to sustain and stabilise in this adverse situation. The weaknesses and threats can be taken up as challenges to fight against to work upon this pandemic.

Geert Hofstede's theory of cultural dimensions in context of COVID-19

Hofstede (2011) identifies cultural dimensions that are globally applicable and are reflected altogether aspects of life, including family life, child-rearing practices, education, employment, and health care practices.

Individualism-Collectivism

The individualism-collectivism dimension relates to a societal, not an individual's, characteristic and classifies the extent to which people in a society are combined into groups. In an individualist society, there is an anticipation that individuals look after themselves and

connections between individuals are loose; while in a collectivist society, individuals are integrated into strong, cohesive groups, which may often involve extended family. After suffering an injury, an adult with a highly individualistic cultural background could also be focused on self-sufficiency and independence. Caretakers may see their role as mainly to facilitate a return to self-care. For individuals and caretakers with a collectivist contextual, the focus may be on providing ongoing assistance to an individual. Extended family may be very involved in caretaking.

Power Distance

Power distance refers to the extent to which less powerful members of administrations and institutions (including the family) accept and expect unequal power distributions. This dimension is measured not only from the viewpoint of the leaders, who hold power, but from the factions. In regard to power distribution, Hofstede notes, "all societies are unequal, but some are more unequal than others."

In a large power detachment society, parents teach children obedience, while in a small power distance society parents treat children as equals. Subordinates expect to be opened in small power distance societies, versus being told what to do in large power distance civilizations.

Clinicians may find that individuals from a high power distance cultural background may refrain from expressing disagreement with goals and/or therapy activities, albeit they do not decide to implement suggested goals in the long term. Clients view the clinician as the expert and expect him/her to direct intention and interventions. Individuals with a low power distance cultural background may more openly express agreement and difference with clinician advice and suggestions, ask questions, and expect to be involved in the development of interference plans.

Masculinity-Femininity

Masculinity-femininity cultural dimension is spoke as a societal, not an individual's, characteristic and "refers to the distribution of values between the genders ..." (Hofstede, 2011). A society is named feminine when there's not a robust differentiation between the genders for emotional and social roles—both men and ladies should be modest and caring and both boys and girls may cry, but neither should have competition. In masculine societies, both men and ladies are assertive and competitive; however women are no less than men. For individuals from a highly masculine cultural contextual, mothers may tend to feel easier

handling the emotional proposals of a diagnosis from a clinician, while fathers may feel more relaxed handling the factual aspects of the situation and show less emotion in response to a diagnosis. In a clinical situation, this may include nomination preparation, payment, and questions for the clinician. In a feminine culture, these roles in clinical communications could also be more evenly split across the male and feminine members of a family, and emotional replies could also be more evidently observed across both genders.

Uncertainty Avoidance

The uncertainty avoidance dimension indicates the extent of comfort with unstructured situations, during which unstructured situations are "novel, unknown, surprising, and different from usual" (Hofstede 2011). The uncertainty avoidance dimension is different from "risk avoidance" (Hofstede 2011). It encompasses a culture's tolerance for ambiguity. Cultures high in uncertainty avoidance avoid unstructured situations with "strict behaviour codes, laws and rules, disapproval of deviant opinions, and a belief in an absolute Truth ..." (Hofstede 2011).

Clinicians often encounter questions on prognosis and outcome when working with both children and adults. Individuals from a strong uncertainty avoidance cultural related may feel a strong need for a definitive prognosis, time line, and outcomes prospects. Individuals from a weak indecision avoidance cultural background may feel more contented with the unknown and have less need for a definitive prognosis.

Long- and Short-Term Orientation

The long- versus short-term orientation refers to whether a society exhibits a practical future-oriented perspective or a conservative historic point of view. A long-term orientation fosters virtues focused toward the future—in particular, perseverance and thrift and ordering relations by status. A short-term orientation fosters virtue related to the past and present—in specific, respect for tradition, preservation of "face," and personal stability.

The short-term orientation cultures squeeze of tradition and focus on "saving face" may affect how an individual and caretakers approach restoration. Individuals may have a sense of shame or feel strongly that it is necessary to "hide" a disability.

Individuals from a long-term alignment culture tend to order relationships according to status, which may influence how an individual and caretakers respond to a diagnosis.

Indulgence versus Restraint

This dimension recognizes the extent to which a society allows "relatively free satisfaction of basic and natural human desires related to enjoying life and having fun," as characterized by the "indulgence" point on the continuum, relative to a society that "controls gratification of needs and regulates by means of strict social norms" (Hofstede 2011).

Indulgence as a cultural value also tends towards awareness of personal life control, while restraint as a cultural value tends towards a perception of helplessness and that what happens in one's life is beyond his/her own control.

Clinicians may find that, in response to a incapacity, individuals from a culture of indulgence feel that they have control over their future level of function and contribution in life activities; meanwhile, individuals from a background of cultural limitation may have a sense of helplessness and be less actively tangled in taking control over their participation in functional activities outside of the clinic.

Furthermore, in cultures valuing restraint, leisure activities are of lesser value, which may prove important to consider in selecting practical therapy actions. Cultures valuing understanding place higher importance on leisure and so activities measured enjoyable may be more appropriate for individuals with this cultural trait.

Relation of Hofstede's Model with special reference to present scenario of India's COVID-19 pandemic.

DIMENSION	CHARACTERISTICS	INDIAN CONTEXT
High PDI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acknowledge a leader's status. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indians have lit the lamp, rang utensils and also followed lock down rules in majority as demonstrated by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi

Low IDV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This refers to the strength of the ties that people have to others within their community. • Maintaining harmony among group members overrides other moral issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indian society collectively following the advice of quarantine which is the only way to overcome the pandemic COVID-19
High UAI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservative, rigid and structured, unless the danger of failure requires a more flexible attitude. • Many societal conventions. • People are expressive, and are allowed to show anger or emotions, if necessary. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indian population is spiritual and is known for its cultural values. • They are highly dependent on God's wish and are linking this pandemic situation with various mythological stories.
Short-Term Orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People tend to place more emphasis on principles, consistency and truth, and are typically religious and nationalistic. • Strong convictions. • As people tend to oversell themselves, others will assess their assertions critically. • Values and rights are emphasized. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indian economy has extended its financial year and delayed other economic activities as major focus has been shifted towards Indian population health issues, prevention and cure measures.

Conclusion:

This study presented an all-inclusive analysis of the COVID-19 epidemic situation in India.

The cases are rising very fast and they need destructive control strategies from the administrative units of India. The paper observes and explores the role of Indian culture and value system which has acted as a powerful shield and tool to deal with the severity of the random virus which continues to wreak havoc across over 200 countries across the world.

The basic precautionary advisories by all governments around the world include various steps that have already been a regular part of Indian cultures and traditions from thousands of years. India has been much more severe and proactive in undertaking measures aimed at arresting the spread of the virus. As a result of the strict and decisive measures taken by India, the rate of growth in cases shows a relatively stable trend. SWOT Analysis of Indian culture during COVID-19 describes the various factors which have come up as assets of India in terms of its culture which is the belief system of a society, and so directs, in general, what is suitable for the population. It also tries to find out the opportunities which can be utilised and provide a new direction and dimension to sustain and stabilise in this adverse situation. The haziness and threats can be taken up as challenges to fight against work upon this pandemic.

As per the analysis of the model of Hofstede's theory of cultural magnitudes there are dimensions of the model namely, Individualism- collectivism, Power distance Index, Masculinity- feminism, Uncertainty Avoidance. Restraints do apply under the present scenario of pandemic COVID-19. After in-depth study of published literature review so far and analysing it in the standpoint of Greet Hofstede's theory of cultural magnitudes it can be inferred that Indians are adhering to what their leader expects them to do, Indians are nationalist, typically religious with convictions and strong faith in God. However, only time will tell that the decisions taken so far are adequately strong enough to protect the mainstream of Indians during on-going COVID-19 pandemic.

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