



A comparative study of the tribal related content in the websites of major Indian English Dailies: A study

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Abstract

This research paper examines the representation of tribal-related news in three websites of major Indian English dailies: *The Indian Express*, *The Hindu*, and *The Times of India*. Using a systematic sampling method, 108 news articles from the year 2022 were analyzed across 10 thematic categories, including education, health, rights & protest, political development and forest-related issues. The study aims to assess the visibility, framing, and thematic emphasis of tribal concerns in mainstream media. The findings highlight trends in media portrayal, dominant themes, and gaps in coverage, leading to discussions on media inclusion and policy contribution. Additionally, this research investigates the depth of news reporting, whether the coverage is episodic or longitudinal and how tribal voices are included in the narratives.

Keywords: Tribal representation, content analysis, Indian English dailies, systematic sampling, media framing, thematic analysis

1. Introduction

The media representation of tribal communities plays a crucial role in shaping public discourse and policy-making. However, many factors attribute to the gap in understanding how tribal-related news is covered by major Indian English newspapers. This study aims to analyze the coverage of tribal issues in websites of major Indian English dailies: *The Indian Express*, *The Hindu* and *The Times of India* during the year 2022 through a systematic convenient sampling of method. The research seeks to determine how tribal communities are framed in these newspapers and whether their perspectives are adequately represented.

2. Objectives of the Study

- To examine of major issues of tribal communities covered in the news
- To analyze the framing of tribal issues across various categories.
- To understand the thematic distribution of the news coverage



- To assess the prominence given to tribal concerns in mainstream media.
- To identify gaps in coverage and suggest areas for improvement in media representation of tribal issues.

3. Methodology

3.1 Data Collection

A total of 108 news articles were selected using convenient sampling method, ensuring proportional representation from each newspaper (*The Indian Express* - 36, *The Hindu* - 36, *Times of India* - 36). Articles were selected from each 10-day period of every month in 2022. The selection ensured coverage of diverse tribal issues while avoiding bias in article selection.

3.2 Categorization Framework

Articles were categorized under 10 major themes:

1. Education
2. Health
3. Political
4. Empowerment
5. Development
6. Culture
7. Language & Literature
8. Rights & Protest
9. Conflict & Security
10. Forest & Environment

Each theme was further divided into subcategories based on the nature of the news coverage, ensuring detailed classification of the news articles.

3.3 Analytical Approach

A qualitative and quantitative content analysis was conducted. Frequency analysis was used to determine the distribution of news across categories, while thematic analysis was applied to understand media framing and representation.



4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 Thematic Distribution of News Coverage

Comparative Analysis of Tribal Coverage across The Hindu, Indian Express, and The Times of India' websites

This analysis compares **36 news articles** from each of the three newspapers—*The Hindu*, *Indian Express*, and *The Times of India*. The comparison evaluates their **focus areas, thematic coverage, and the depth of subcategories** related to tribal issues.

1. Overall Distribution of Topics across Newspapers websites

Topic	The Hindu (36)	Indian Express (36)	The Times of India (36)
Conflict & Security	1	1	3
Culture	4	3	4
Development	7	1	6
Education	2	5	3
Empowerment	5	3	10
Forest & Environment	4	4	—
Health	2	3	2
Language & Literature	—	4	1
Political	4	8	5
Rights & Protest	6	1	2
Irrelevant	1	3	—

Key Observations:

- *The Hindu* has a **balanced coverage**, with a strong emphasis on **development (7 articles) and rights & protest (6 articles)**.
- *Indian Express* focuses heavily on **political issues (8 articles) and language & literature (4 articles)**.
- *The Times of India* places **strong emphasis on empowerment (10 articles) and development (6 articles)**.

2. Thematic Comparison across Categories

(1) Conflict & Security



- *The Hindu* and *Indian Express* have **only one article each**, while *The Times of India* has **three articles**, highlighting a greater emphasis on **Maoist areas and security challenges**.
- *The Hindu* and *Indian Express* focus on **welfare actions in Maoist regions**, whereas *The Times of India* includes an article on **security operation challenges**.

(2) Culture

- All three newspapers give **moderate attention** to cultural issues.
- *The Hindu* emphasizes **cultural imposition, cultural significance, and cultural festivals**.
- *Indian Express* covers **heritage preservation, tattoo tradition, and tribal icons & heroes**.
- *The Times of India* includes **cultural representation in media, heritage preservation, and tribal icons & heroes**.

(3) Development

- *The Hindu* has the **strongest focus on development** (7 articles), covering **holistic development, infrastructure, tourism, rehabilitation, and administrative challenges**.
- *Indian Express* has **only one article** on **administrative challenges in development**.
- *The Times of India* (6 articles) covers **infrastructure development, corruption, and administrative challenges**, similar to *The Hindu*.

(4) Education

- *Indian Express* gives **maximum attention** to education (5 articles), covering **tribal language promotion, infrastructure problems, and pandemic-related challenges**.
- *The Hindu* has **only 2 articles**, focusing on **innovative education and achievements**.
- *The Times of India* (3 articles) highlights **educational support services and digital literacy**.

(5) Empowerment

- *The Times of India* **dominates this category (10 articles)**, with diverse subcategories such as **women empowerment, agricultural empowerment, capacity building, and social inclusion**.
- *The Hindu* (5 articles) includes **social inclusion, women empowerment, role models, and livelihood promotion**.
- *Indian Express* (3 articles) covers **social activism, land rights advocacy, and economic empowerment**.



(6) Forest & Environment

- *The Hindu* and *Indian Express* both have **4 articles** on this topic.
- *The Hindu* covers **human-wildlife conflict, forest rights entitlement, community conservation, and environmental education.**
- *Indian Express* focuses on **forest rights & conservation (3 articles) and indigenous conservation (1 article).**
- *The Times of India* **has no articles on this topic**, suggesting a gap in its coverage.

(7) Health

- *Indian Express* has the **highest number of health-related articles (3)**, including **disease control & prevention and health screening programs.**
- *The Hindu* and *The Times of India* both have **2 articles each**, with *The Times of India* focusing **only on health infrastructure development.**

(8) Language & Literature

- *Indian Express* gives **significant attention (4 articles)**, covering **cultural representation in language, language preservation, and documentation.**
- *The Times of India* (1 article) covers **literature preservation.**
- *The Hindu* has **no articles** in this category, revealing a major gap.

(9) Political

- *Indian Express* has **the highest number of political articles (8)**, with coverage of **identity politics, reservation politics, political violence, leadership legacy, and electoral politics.**
- *The Hindu* (4 articles) focuses on **political empowerment, opposition and governance policy, reservation politics, and identity politics.**
- *The Times of India* (5 articles) covers **political empowerment, political persecution, and representation issues.**

(10) Rights & Protest

- *The Hindu* **leads this category (6 articles)**, covering **reservation demands, land rights, and cultural identity issues.**
- *The Times of India* (2 articles) covers **physical violence and reservation demands.**



- *Indian Express* has **only 1 article** under **development demands**.

Discussion:

The Hindu provides **stronger coverage of development (7 articles) and rights & protest (6 articles)**. *Indian Express* prioritizes **politics (8 articles) and language & literature (4 articles)**. *The Times of India* highlights **empowerment (10 articles) and development (6 articles)**.

The Hindu offers a **balanced** approach, covering a **broad spectrum of tribal issues**. *Indian Express* is **politically inclined**, with **substantial coverage of political representation, governance challenges, and identity politics**. *The Times of India* **focuses more on socio-economic issues**, with significant attention to **empowerment and development** but neglects **forest & environment issues**.

Gaps and Underrepresentation

The Hindu **neglects language & literature**. *Indian Express* **underrepresents conflict & security and rights & protest**. *The Times of India* **largely ignores forest & environment topics**.

This analysis also examines 108 news articles from three major Indian English dailies—The Indian Express, The Hindu, and The Times of India’s news websites. The articles have been analyzed based on their premium content, geographical focus, writer attribution, and photo usage.

Premium News & Accessibility: Out of 108 news articles, 23 are premium (22 from Indian Express and 1 from The Hindu), showing that The Indian Express relies more on exclusive, paywalled content compared to the other two newspapers. The Hindu and TOI maintain a more open-access model, which makes them more publicly accessible but might indicate a lower emphasis on exclusive content.

1. **Geographical Focus:** Among the 108 news articles, 84 focus on regional issues, 22 on national topics, and only 4 on international news. The overwhelming regional focus (78%) suggests that these newspapers prioritize localized news, catering to state and community-based readerships. TOI has the highest regional focus (34 out of 36), whereas Indian Express provides the most balanced coverage with 21 regional, 15 national, and 2 international news pieces.
2. **Writer Attribution & Gender Representation:** Across 108 news articles, all have a byline except 5 articles in TOI, which lack writer attribution—a potential issue for transparency. Only 8% (9 out of 108) of articles are written by female journalists, indicating poor gender representation in journalism. The majority of articles (61 out of 108) are authored by the "Other" category (news agencies and web



desk writers), reducing individual accountability. TOI heavily relies on agency-based writing, with 29 articles falling under this category, making it the least personalized in terms of authorship.

3. **Photo Usage & Transparency:** Among the 96 photos used across 108 articles, Indian Express leads in visual engagement (48 photos), followed by The Hindu (28 photos), and TOI (20 photos). However, 16 news articles in TOI and 11 in The Hindu lack photos, reducing their visual impact. The lack of images in over 25% of the articles (27 out of 108) weakens storytelling effectiveness.
4. **Captioning & Source Attribution:** Of the 96 photos, 81 have captions, while 15 lack them. Captioning enhances clarity and journalistic credibility, so the absence of captions in TOI (12) and Indian Express (2) is a concern. Photo source attribution is weakest in TOI, where none of the 20 photos have sources mentioned, raising ethical concerns about authenticity and photo rights. In contrast, Indian Express and The Hindu maintain better transparency, with 40 and 21 photos having proper sourcing, respectively.

Final Critical Perspective

- The Indian Express stands out in terms of photo engagement, balanced geographical coverage, and high premium content, but its reliance on a paywall model may limit public access.
- The Hindu maintains strong regional coverage and editorial accountability but lacks diversity in photo use and has fewer premium articles.
- The Times of India, despite its extensive regional focus, has weak writer attribution, the lowest photo usage, and lacks transparency in photo sourcing, raising concerns about journalistic credibility.

Among the three, Indian Express is the most professionally structured, The Hindu is the most regionally grounded, and TOI needs significant improvements in transparency and sourcing practices.

Conclusion:

Each newspaper approaches tribal issues with **different thematic priorities**:

The Hindu focuses on **development and tribal rights activism**. **Indian Express** leans toward **political representation and language-related concerns**. **The Times of India** highlights **empowerment and socio-economic issues**.

This comparative analysis of 108 news articles from *The Indian Express*, *The Hindu*, and *The Times of India* reveals distinct editorial priorities, strengths, and shortcomings in covering tribal-related news. *The Hindu* provides the most balanced thematic coverage, particularly excelling in development and rights & protest issues. *The Indian Express* has a political inclination, with significant coverage of political representation,



governance, and identity politics. *The Times of India* prioritizes empowerment and development but shows gaps in forest & environment reporting.

In terms of geographical focus, *The Indian Express* offers a better mix of regional, national, and international news, while *The Hindu* and *The Times of India* focus more on regional coverage. *The Indian Express* leads in photo engagement, ensuring captioning and source attribution, whereas *The Times of India* shows the weakest photo transparency, with no sources for any of its images.

Writer attribution also varies significantly: *The Indian Express* and *The Hindu* ensure that all articles have a byline, while *The Times of India* lacks clear attribution for several reports, raising concerns about journalistic accountability. The paywall model of *The Indian Express* may restrict public access to critical information, whereas *The Hindu* and *The Times of India* provide more freely accessible content.

This comparative analysis **exposes gaps in each newspaper's coverage**, showing that no single source provides a **comprehensive perspective on tribal affairs**. A combination of all three perspectives offers a **holistic understanding** of how mainstream media covers tribal issues in India.

Recommendations:

1. Newspapers should incorporate more tribal voices in news articles to provide an insider's perspective on issues.
2. Investigative journalism should be encouraged to explore structural challenges rather than just reporting events.
3. More emphasis should be placed on women-centric tribal issues to ensure a holistic representation of tribal concerns.

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