



Comparative Analysis of Reporting Pattern of English and Tamil Dailies of Tamil Nadu on the depiction of Conflict: Special reference to Police Lawyer Conflict in Madras High court

KEYWORDS

Conflict, Media, communal harmony, journalists

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ABSTRACT *The conflicts in the society are as old as the society itself. In any society or nation-state, the resolutions of conflict, and restoration of normalcy is a cyclic process, which can be controlled by inculcating the values of coexistence and syncretism among the citizens. Media of all types has one of the most important roles in promotion and establishing the principle of non-violence in conflict resolution. Media propagates the message and values directly. It creates big impact among people. With the availability of audio-visual, audio media with print media, the importance of media has grown many-fold. At on set the core objectives of the study are compare and analyze the depiction of conflict in the Tamil and English newspapers of Tamil Nadu; to study the significant similarity and differences between the Tamil and English newspapers reporting pattern on conflict and communal harmony; to compare the news presentation style of Popular Tamil and English newspapers of Tamil Nadu with reference to Police-lawyer conflict.*

Introduction

The growing recognition of the crucial role played by the media in resolving the conflict has led many to examine how the media can play a constructive role in resolving conflict. This created considerable controversy - should journalism stay detached, even from horrific events unfolding around them, or should it take up the stance suggested by Martin Bell and become attached to a cause – even that of peace. The obvious problem with such an approach is that it might involve taking sides in a conflict – after all, conflicts require a solution that addresses the underlying problems and this means assessing the weight of the different claims in a conflict and seeking to resolve them. Peace is something more than the absence of war. The dangers of journalists taking sides in a conflict are obvious – professional independence is impossible to maintain, access to the other sides' combatants will disappear and journalists will become even more of a target than they already are. However, in addition to the representation of the groups they are reporting on – in this case parties to the conflict – journalists also present their own views and interests. In this respect the media itself becomes an actor in the conflict, for example when it takes an editorial position or when the media focus on certain issues or aspects of the conflict leads to the exclusion of others. The idea that the journalist sits outside of the events they are covering, whatever their perspective on "peace journalism" is misleading. The media, in this sense, are themselves actors or agents in the conflict and their behavior will have an effect on the way the conflict develops.

Policy makers therefore need to focus on the media's role in constituting the public sphere of society – how that can be fostered and nurtured in such away as to allow non-violent resolution of conflict. To function properly, a public sphere must have free flowing access to information and enable the views of ordinary citizens to be heard. In the words of Jurgen Habermas it is "a discursive arena that is home to citizen debate, deliberation, agreement and action. As suggested by Habermas, media can either pacify or intensify the conflicts that arise in the country. In the year 2002 Zaffiro ascertained, "Governments use media to help build or reinforce value consensus among key support groups, as well as to promote cooperation from integral state institutions in service of policy goals". Interestingly, the policies associated with media outlets often focus on the interrelations created by opposition, power across political bodies, and conflict .Hence media can act as a prime promoter of harmony at the instances of communal conflicts.

Media is the key for building Communal Harmony

Successive evolutions in communication technologies have significantly altered the conduct of conflict, warfare, and conflict resolution. Compared to people of earlier ages, people around the world today know much more and much sooner about major developments in international relations. Global news networks that broadcast live from all corners of the world and via the Internet provide immediate access to unfolding events and, under certain conditions, could influence the way those events develop and end. Evolutions in communication technologies have changed the meaning of power in international relations, the number and nature of actors participating in international political processes, and the strategies these actors employ to achieve their goals. Governments have lost much of their monopoly on information, and non-state actors and individuals have become much more active and significant participants in world affairs, both in warfare and conflict resolution. State and non-state actors are increasingly employing soft power, or smart power, which integrates soft and hard power, and public diplomacy, which translates soft power assets into concrete actions. Successful utilization of soft power and public diplomacy depends to a large extent on global communication.

Despite the critical significance of the roles played by media in conflict and conflict resolution, this area has been relatively neglected by both scholars and practitioners. Most existing studies focus on the often negative contributions of the media to the escalation and violence phases of conflict. Very few studies deal with the actual or potential media contributions to conflict resolution and reconciliation. Indeed, the media, particularly radio and television, were instrumental in fomenting conflict and violence in places such as Rwanda and Bosnia. As referred in the Eytan Gilboa (2009) research paper 'The Danish cartoon controversy also demonstrates that the media can even cause a violent conflict. Scholars and practitioners have noticed how the media exacerbate conflict and have concluded that the media's role can be reversed and converted into positive contributions to conflict resolution. This reversal, however, is difficult to achieve. It is always easier to foment conflict than resolve it, and the media's role in conflict resolution is more complicated than the roles of those dominating the violence phase'. The pro active role of the media and strategically approach of the journalists alone can prevent and reiterate peace in the society.

Method of study

This Paper intended to study the portrayal of conflict and

communal harmony in the popular Newspapers of Tamil Nadu with special reference to Madras High Court Police – Lawyer conflict, which started when a group of lawyers assaulted Dr. Subramanian Swamy, a prominent politician, inside the Madras High Court on 17.02.2009. Quantitative analysis as research technique allows the researcher to contextualize published contents within a theoretical frame work. We have selected ten leading dailies of Tamil Nadu; four English mornings, four Tamil mornings and two Tamil evenings, namely; The Hindu, The New Indian Express, Deccan Chronicle, The Times of India, Dhina Thanthi, Dinamalar, Dinakaran, Dinamani, Maalai Murusu and Maalai Malar for our study. The entire news cycle of the conflict, which starts from February 17 to December 19 of 2009, is being covered in this study.

Data Presentation and Discussion

The construction of Headline is divided into four categories and they are compared against each other for the English and the Tamil newspapers as shown in the table-1. The Headline construction is one of the major factors in the sales of the newspaper. All the newspapers were habitually constructed the headline reflecting the tone of raise the conflict.

Table-1: Construction of Headline (In percentage)

Name of the Newspaper	Neutral	Raise the Conflict	Reduce the Conflict	Communal Harmony
Hindu	10.95	53.28	32.85	2.92
The New Indian express	9.18	59.18	31.63	0
Deccan chronicle	0.82	64.75	33.61	0.82
The Times of India	1.75	71.05	25.44	1.75
Average	5.675	62.065	30.8825	1.3725
DhinaThandi	1.58	46.32	51.05	1.05
DhinaMalar	14.2	52.84	24.43	8.52
Dhinakaran	2.92	47.95	49.12	0
Dhinamani	5.91	55.91	34.95	3.23
MaalaiMurasu	0	87.91	10.99	1.1
MaalaiMalar	8.41	64.49	17.76	9.35
Average	5.503333	59.23667	31.38333	3.875

There is not much variation in the average percentage of the classification Neutral, Raise the Conflict and Reduce the Conflict between the English and the Tamil News papers. But there is variation in the reporting pattern of the individual newspapers of both English and Tamil, which can be easily observed from the above table. But one important unexpected painful observation is that most of the newspapers are not reporting in such a way to bring Communal Harmony. But it is a surprise to note that on an average the percentage of the reporting by the Tamil newspapers are three times than that of the English newspapers in such a way to bring Communal Harmony.

Though sensitive and provocative headlines should be avoided, it is startling to find that India’s leading English daily The Times of India and Tamil Daily Malai Murusu have a major part in raising the conflict. This can be interpreted into various angles. One, in India, media is looked as a styled pro-

fession often hyped by the movies that projected journalist characters very heroic. Through the words in headlines, the newspapers landed with more and more exorbitant web of news for some days to come. Freedom of press was fully used in their favor. Scandalous, sensational and provocative messages sell faster. However though the Press Council of India has prescribed guidelines on reporting communal violence; it has no legal provision which prevents journalists from inciting more violence.

The News Content description is also similarly divided into the same four categories and they are compared against each other for the English and the Tamil newspapers as shown in the table-2.

Table-2: Descriptions in the News Content (In percentage)

Name of the Newspaper	Neutral	Raise the Conflict	Reduce the Conflict	Communal Harmony
Hindu	8.76	56.93	31.39	2.92
The New Indian express	7.14	62.24	30.61	0
Deccan chronicle	0.82	64.75	33.61	0.82
The Times of India	1.75	71.05	25.44	1.75
Average	4.6175	63.7425	30.2625	1.3725
DhinaThandi	1.58	46.84	50.53	1.05
DhinaMalar	14.77	52.27	24.43	8.52
Dhinakaran	2.92	48.54	47.95	0.58
Dhinamani	4.84	55.91	36.02	3.23
MaalaiMurasu	0	87.91	10.99	1.1
MaalaiMalar	8.41	65.42	16.82	9.35
Average	5.42	59.48167	31.12333	3.971667

The result of the news content standpoint and the headline stand point are almost same. There is not much variation in the news content standpoint of the between the English and Tamil newspapers. On an average about 60% of both the English and Tamil newspapers, the reporting in such a way to raise the conflict and only about 30% of the reporting is to reduce the conflict. Very similar to the headline standpoint only a very negligible percentage of the reporting by both English and Tamil is for bringing communal harmony and just about 5% of the reporting by both language newspapers are in the neutral category.

To explore from a methodological standpoint of contents used, most of the newspapers have induced/provoked violence. The aggregative contents published in all the newspapers bears greater significance as it looks that there has been a discretionary use of the editorial policies once framed for guiding ethical writing for journalists. The findings of this standpoint are too strong and directive as it provides a clear indication of Press violation. The statistic indicates there is not much a correlation among the English and Tamil newspapers. All the newspapers have raised the conflict in their content and their standpoints.

The Treatment of the news appeared in the newspapers is divided into five categories and compared between the English and the Tamil newspapers as shown in the table-3.

Table-3: News Treatment (In percentage)

Name of the Newspaper	General News	Feature	Criticism	Editorial	Column
Hindu	83.94	0	14.6	1.46	0
The New Indian express	91.84	0	7.14	1.02	0
Deccan chronicle	90.16	0.82	9.02	0	0
The Times of India	66.67	0.88	32.46	0	0
Average	83.1525	0.425	15.805	0.62	0
DhinaThandi	90	1.05	8.95	0	0
DhinaMalar	95.45	1.7	2.84	0	0

Dhinakaran	69.59	1.75	28.07	0.58	0
Dhinamani	77.96	1.61	18.28	0.54	1.61
MaalaiMurasu	71.43	8.79	19.78	0	0
MaalaiMalar	83.18	0	16.82	0	0
Average	81.268333	2.4833333	15.79	0.1866667	0.2683333

It is important to note that almost all the papers in both English and Tamil categorized the conflict news into the general Page. It is a good sign that on an average approximately 15% of the stories were in the nature of criticism both in English and Tamil Newspapers. But the amount of editorial appeared for such a vital conflict is very negligible. The editorial is four times higher in English newspapers than the Tamil newspapers. It is worth to note that even the leading papers like Times of India and The New Indian Express have not published even a single editorial on this important issue. This

gives an impression that they are evading their social obligation because of the fear from police or lawyers, who are the parties of the conflict.

The comparison between English and Tamil newspapers based on the classification of the news published by them on the basis of the words which gives the meaning anger, threat, violence, peace, harmony and name of the caste are shown in the table-4.

Table-4: Discourse of the content (In percentage)

Name of the Newspaper	Anger	Threat	Violence	Peace	Harmony	Caste Name
Hindu	10.95	46.72	10.22	22.63	9.49	0
The New Indian express	6.12	52.04	12.24	24.49	4.08	1.02
Deccan chronicle	1.64	68.85	7.38	18.03	4.1	0
The Times of India	1.75	61.4	10.53	22.81	3.51	0
Average	5.115	57.2525	10.0925	21.99	5.295	0.255
DhinaThandi	0	60	10.53	23.16	6.32	0
DhinaMalar	6.82	38.07	11.36	36.93	6.25	0.57
Dhinakaran	1.17	45.61	7.6	36.84	8.77	0
Dhinamani	1.08	52.15	15.59	23.66	7.53	0
MaalaiMurasu	0	75.82	16.48	5.49	2.2	0
MaalaiMalar	1.87	49.53	23.36	11.21	14.02	0
Average	1.8233333	53.53	14.878	22.826	7.754	0.114

It is very important to note that there is not much variation between the English and the Tamil newspapers based on Discourse. One English newspaper and one Tamil newspaper published the name of the caste of the person(s) involved in the conflict, which is against the interest of humanity because

it will divide the citizens based on the caste and may sow the seeds for caste conflict.

The vocabulary used in their headlines is classified into five categories and comparison is done between the English and the Tamil newspapers as shown in the table-5, below.

Table-5: Construction of Headline Vocabulary (In percentage)

Name of the Newspaper	Educative	Informative	Sensational	Tittilative	Trivialisation
Hindu	6.57	54.74	37.96	0.73	0
The New Indian express	2.04	60.2	37.76	0	0
Deccan chronicle	0	74.59	25.41	0	0
The Times of India	2.63	51.75	45.61	0	0
Average	2.81	60.32	36.685	0.1825	0
DhinaThandi	0	68.95	31.05	0	0
DhinaMalar	4.55	52.84	42.61	0	0
Dhinakaran	0	55.56	43.86	0	0.58
Dhinamani	6.45	40.86	52.69	0	0
MaalaiMurasu	0	14.29	85.71	0	0
MaalaiMalar	5.61	38.32	56.07	0	0
Average	2.7683333	45.136667	51.998333	0	0.0966667

It is important to note that the Tamil newspapers used much higher percentage of the sensational vocabularies in the headline. This may be internationally done to attract the readers to boost the circulation of the newspaper. It is also important to note that the higher percentage of the news published by the English newspapers than the Tamil newspapers comes under the classification informative. The net

effect is the English newspapers are more informative and less sensational than the Tamil newspapers. Both the English and Tamil newspapers made very negligible contribution to educate the customers through its headline vocabulary.

The tones of the stories published by the papers are also classified into five categories and comparison is done between the English and the Tamil newspapers as shown in table-6.

Table-6: Tone of the Story (In percentage)

Name of the Newspaper	Educative	Informative	Sensational	Tittilative	Trivialisation
Hindu	2.19	48.18	49.64	0	0
The New Indian express	0	73.47	26.53	0	0
Deccan chronicle	18.85	60.66	20.49	0	0
The Times of India	1.75	59.65	38.6	0	0
Average	5.6975	60.49	33.815	0	0

DhinaThandi	0.53	66.32	33.16	0	0
DhinaMalar	6.25	50	43.75	0	0
Dhinakaran	0	65.5	34.5	0	0
Dhinamani	2.15	58.06	39.78	0	0
MaalaiMurasu	0	9.89	90.11	0	0
MaalaiMalar	4.67	39.25	56.07	0	0
Average	3.4	72.255	74.3425	0	0

The Tamil newspapers published approximately 2.5 times higher times sensationalized news than the English newspapers. This may lead to increase the conflict, which is not good for the society. As for as giving more information in the story the Tamil papers are much better than the English. Though the contribution towards educating the readers are lesser by both categories of the newspapers, the English dailies are little better.

Conclusion

The study results have found that there is a significant difference between English and Tamil newspapers of Tamil Nadu. The study results articulate that there is no significant variation in the construction of headlines. But there is variation in

the reporting pattern of the individual newspapers of both English and Tamil. It is a Conventional belief that an English newspaper always maintains highest standards in its content. Irrespective of the language both language newspapers the reporting descriptions were intended to raise the conflict and only about 30% of the reporting is to reduce the conflict. It is important to note that the Tamil newspapers used much higher percentage of the sensational vocabularies in the headline. This may be internationally done to attract the readers to boost the circulation of the newspaper. Regional Newspapers approach, attitude, and presentation style of the Police lawyer conflict news is significantly differs from the English language papers.

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