

Health and Ethnic Minorities in the Media: An Analysis of the Coverage of Indigenous Peoples' Health Before and During the COVID-19 Pandemic in Peru

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ABSTRACT

This essay about the media coverage of Indigenous peoples' health in Peru reveals a consistent lack of depth and nuance. Pre-pandemic, national outlets echoed governmental perspectives without critical analysis of the Indigenous healthcare conditions. At the same time, international media, though acknowledging discrimination and primarily focused on environmental issues, did not make explicit connections between both topics and the limited access to health services in these communities. This trend continued during the pandemic, with national coverage remaining superficial and international media largely ignoring the pandemic's impact on Indigenous communi-

ties. It reveals a persistent racism within the press, so it is possible to affirm the historical power imbalances stemming from colonialism continue shaping news framing, agenda-setting, and the determination of news value, both nationally and internationally, being that media representations in a postcolonial context reinforce stereotypes of formerly colonized people, whose voices and issues are considered newsworthy only when they fit certain narratives.

RESUMEN

Este ensayo sobre la cobertura de la salud de los pueblos indígenas en el Perú revela falta de profundidad y matices. Antes de la pandemia, los medios nacionales hacían

eco de las perspectivas gubernamentales, pero sin realizar un análisis crítico de las condiciones sanitarias de los indígenas. Por otro lado, los medios internacionales, aunque reconocían la discriminación y se centraban en cuestiones medioambientales, no establecían conexiones explícitas entre ambos temas y el limitado acceso a servicios sanitarios en estas comunidades. Esta tendencia continuó durante la pandemia: la cobertura nacional siguió siendo superficial y los medios internacionales ignoraron el impacto de la pandemia en las comunidades indígenas. Este hecho revela la persistencia del racismo en la prensa, lo que reafirma que los desequilibrios históricos de poder derivados del colonialismo siguen configurando el encuadre de las noticias, el establecimiento de la agenda y la determinación del valor de las noticias, tanto nacional como internacionalmente, ya que las representaciones de los medios de comunicación en un contexto poscolonial refuerzan estereotipos sobre personas anteriormente colonizadas, cuyas voces y problemas solo se consideran de interés periodístico cuando encajan en determinadas narrativas.

SUMARIO

Este ensaio sobre a cobertura da mídia sobre a saúde dos povos indígenas no Peru revela uma falta consistente de profundidade e nuance. Antes da pandemia, os meios de comunicação nacionais ecoavam as perspectivas governamentais sem análise crítica das condições de

saúde dos indígenas; enquanto a mídia internacional, embora reconhecesse a discriminação e se concentrasse principalmente em questões ambientais, não fazia conexões explícitas entre ambos os tópicos e o acesso limitado aos serviços de saúde nessas comunidades. Essa tendência continuou durante a pandemia, com a cobertura nacional permanecendo superficial e a mídia internacional ignorando amplamente o impacto da pandemia nas comunidades indígenas. Isso revela um racismo persistente dentro da imprensa, de modo que é possível afirmar que os desequilíbrios históricos de poder decorrentes do colonialismo continuam a moldar o enquadramento das notícias, a definição da agenda e a determinação do valor das notícias, tanto nacional quanto internacionalmente, sendo que as representações da mídia em um contexto pós-colonial reforçam estereótipos de pessoas anteriormente colonizadas, cujas vozes e questões são consideradas dignas de notícia somente quando se encaixam em determinadas narrativas.

KEYWORDS / PALABRAS CLAVE /
PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Indigenous peoples, framing, content analysis, health, COVID-19 pandemic, post-colonial theory / pueblos indígenas, *framing*, análisis del contenido, salud, pandemia de COVID-19, teoría poscolonial / povos indígenas, *framing*, análise de conteúdo, saúde, pandemia de COVID-19, teoria pós-colonial

The Indigenous peoples are groups that have their origin in times before the State, preserve their customs, and self-identify as Indigenous (Ministerio de Salud del Perú, 2024). As around 25% of the population in Peru considers themselves as Indigenous (Ministerio de Salud del Perú, 2024). This social group is an ethnic minority in the country. However, after more than two hundred years of independence from colonial rule in Peru, Indigenous peoples still face racism (Ministerio de Cultura del Perú, 2017).

Since journalism plays a role in shaping public opinion and citizen perception, it could make a difference for ethnic minorities—especially in times of crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic. Indigenous peoples and the most deprived sectors of society were the primary victims of a global pandemic (Mamo, 2021). This has had a detrimental effect on the native population, resulting in a historical and fatal legacy (Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe, 2020). The pandemic has highlighted the vulnerability of Indigenous peoples, primarily because of their limited access to healthcare (Mamo, 2021). While Indigenous peoples have demonstrated resilience during the pandemic, COVID-19 has also highlighted and exponentially amplified the profound inequalities they continue to experience (Mamo, 2021).

However, mainstream media have portrayed Indigenous peoples in a stigmatizing and stereotyping manner in countless

situations. Studies have demonstrated that mainstream media tend to use overt racial bias when reporting on segments of minority communities, which may be construed negatively if the audience is not provided with a detailed and intelligent background on the topic (Price and Tewksbury, 1997, as cited in Jenkins, 2011). Poor coverage of information needs for disadvantaged groups can significantly harm those already facing significant structural barriers in many areas of life.

Routine journalistic news and events are shaped by the “preferred meanings” of dominant groups, defaulting to fair and factual coverage while systematically omitting the viewpoints of those historically denied a voice (Arguedas et al., 2023). Given that, many journalists may not realize the biases and stereotypes deeply ingrained in the cultural and cognitive forces of non-minority life (Campbell, 1995, as cited in Jenkins, 2011).

The systematic misrepresentation of certain groups in newsrooms leads to the status quo bias in political coverage, which leads to over-indexing of debate among those already in power (Arguedas et al., 2023) and the rejection of the political agenda commonly endorsed by minority leaders (Entman, 1990, as cited in Jenkins, 2011). Consequently, mainstream journalists tend to take an episodic approach to covering events (Jenkins, 2011), rather than look for solutions to profound social problems elsewhere than the crim-

inal justice system (Price and Tewksbury, 1997, as cited in Jenkins, 2011), and news media feed negative stereotypes, sensationalizing, and ignoring key groups (Arguedas et al., 2023).

Regarding the health communication field, there is a variety of research in it: “[I]n studies of non-fiction media content, some analyses focus on tracking whether health news is reported accurately” or what “tone” is prevalent, as with studies of news coverage and other analyses focus on representations of individuals in the health context (Neuendorf, 2002/2017, p. 397). Content analysis is the chosen method for numerous news framing studies, like the causes, treatments, and prevalence of illnesses and certain health conditions, or the ones about “news images to shift from conflict to human interest” (Neuendorf, 2002/2017, p. 400). Thus, “[a] lot of research has been devoted to the systematic content analysis of images of racial and ethnic minorities,” like “research on racial differences in both real-life communication behaviors and mediated portrayals” (Neuendorf, 2002/2017, p. 409). In general, these groups continue to be severely under-represented, and stereotypical portrayals remain prevalent, even when positive (Neuendorf, 2002/2017).

For all the above, this essay aims to evaluate how extensive was the journalistic coverage made by national and international media about Indigenous peoples’

health in Peru and to compare this coverage before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. It means from 2016 to 2019 and from 2021 to 2022, respectively, to determine if there is an identifiable difference in reporting about Indigenous people in Peru in times of health crisis. To perform such a study, the author will seek to critically analyze—through the lens of post-colonial theory—to what extent historical power imbalances—stemming from colonialism—shape news framing, agenda-setting, and the determination of news value perpetuating cultural biases.

Methodological Approach and Sampling

The research conducted has a descriptive scope since it seeks to characterize the speech present in the media (Consejo Nacional para la Integración de la Persona con Discapacidad, 2023), specifically concerning Indigenous peoples. For this purpose, the method used is content analysis, a technique to study any type of communication in a systematic way that quantifies messages or content into categories and subcategories and then submits it to statistical analysis (Hernández Sampieri et al., 1991/2006).

This technique was applied to online news published by three national media outlets that represent Peru’s media landscape and three public-funded international media outlets from countries with

development cooperation agreements with Peru, so Indigenous peoples' issues could result in public interest. The news was then classified by quarters and picked by random sampling, consisting of 120 online news (Table 1).

The news used in the content analysis included certain keywords based on the historical evolution of the denomination of Indigenous peoples of Peru based on the

training material *Derechos de los pueblos indígenas en el Perú. El rol garante del estado en la protección y promoción de los derechos humanos [Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Peru. The Guarantor Role of the State in the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights]*, published by the Ministerio de Cultura del Perú (2017), as well as common journalistic terms used to refer to Indigenous peoples present in the sample (Table 2).

Table 1
Sampling

Media		Number of online news	
		Before the pandemic	During the pandemic
National media	<i>El Comercio</i>	10	10
	<i>La República</i>	10	10
	<i>RPP</i>	10	10
International media	<i>Voice of America</i>	10	10
	<i>BBC</i>	10	10
	<i>France 24</i>	10	10

Table 2
Framing of Indigenous Peoples

Terms	Related terms
Indigenous	indigenous people indigenous community indigenous language indigenous area indigenous group
Native	native native indigenous native community
Peasant	peasant peasant community
Farmer	farmer farming community
Rural	rural area rural zone rural community rural people
Tribe	tribe tribal uncontacted tribe indigenous tribe
Ethnic	ethnic ethnicity ethnic group
Other terms	

Predominant Focus of the News

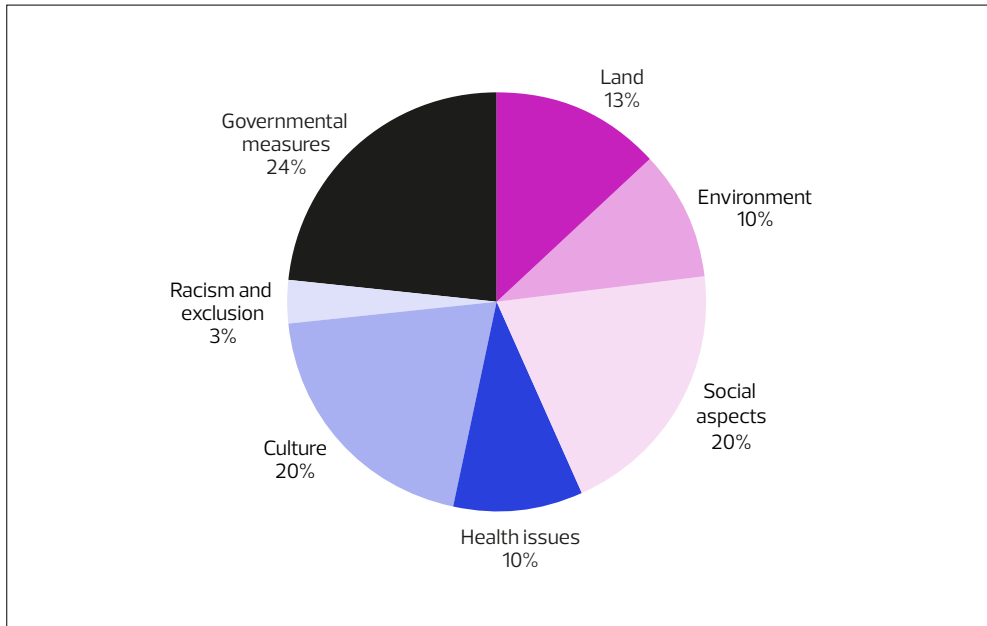
The thorough investigation of these news sources shows (Figure 1) that, in the period before the pandemic, the predominant focus in Peruvian articles was on governmental measures (23%), social aspects (20%), and culture (20%), followed by a lesser extent by land (13%), environment (10%), health issues (10%), racism, and exclusion (3%). In this phase, national media acted as the Peruvian state's mouthpiece, mainly replicating its content about governmental measures in relation to Indigenous peoples. Although it

is important that the media report on the activities carried out by public institutions, it is needed to bring a more critical perspective to contrast, for example, the effectiveness of health coverage for Indigenous populations.

The data shows that another recurrent topic in the Peruvian press coverage was social aspects, linking Indigenous peoples with crimes, illegal activities, and social conflicts not only as victims (e.g. environmental defenders assassinated), but also as victimizers (e.g. creators of social conflicts). In any case, a more detailed

Figure 1

Predominant Focus of the News in National Media Before COVID-19, November 1, 2016, to March 15, 2019



report explaining the roots of the social situation faced by Indigenous peoples is required to fully understand the logic underneath. On the other hand, reporting about the racism and exclusion faced by Indigenous peoples—which limits their access to health care—was incipient, showing the little relevance this issue had for national media.

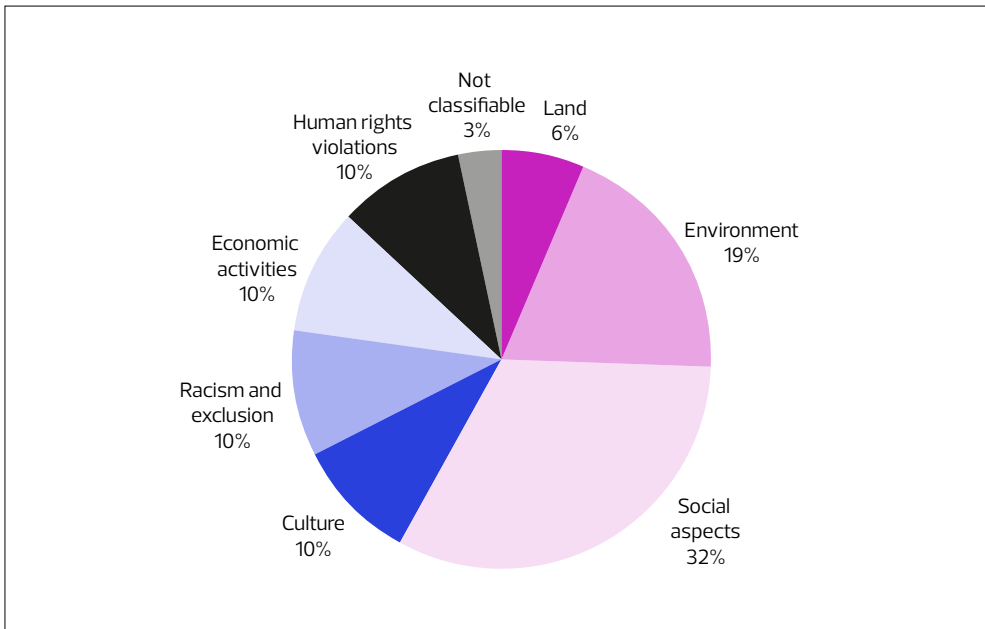
Before COVID-19, international media (Figure 2) focused mainly on social aspects (32%), environment (19%), and to a lesser extent on culture (10%), racism and exclusion (10%), economic activities (10%), human rights (10%), and land (6%). During the period preceding the

pandemic, international media focused their coverage of Indigenous peoples on social aspects.

In contrast to national media, the international press provided more context on crimes, terrorism, illegal activities, and social conflicts. Another frequent topic in international reporting was the relationship between Indigenous peoples and the environment, particularly in terms of conservation efforts in the areas they inhabit, as well as the impact of pollution, extractive activities, and climate change on their lives. However, links between environmental matters and Indigenous peoples' health were not made (for example,

Figure 2

Predominant Focus of the News in International Media Before COVID-19, November 1, 2016, to March 15, 2019



how oil spills pollute water sources and intoxicate the population).

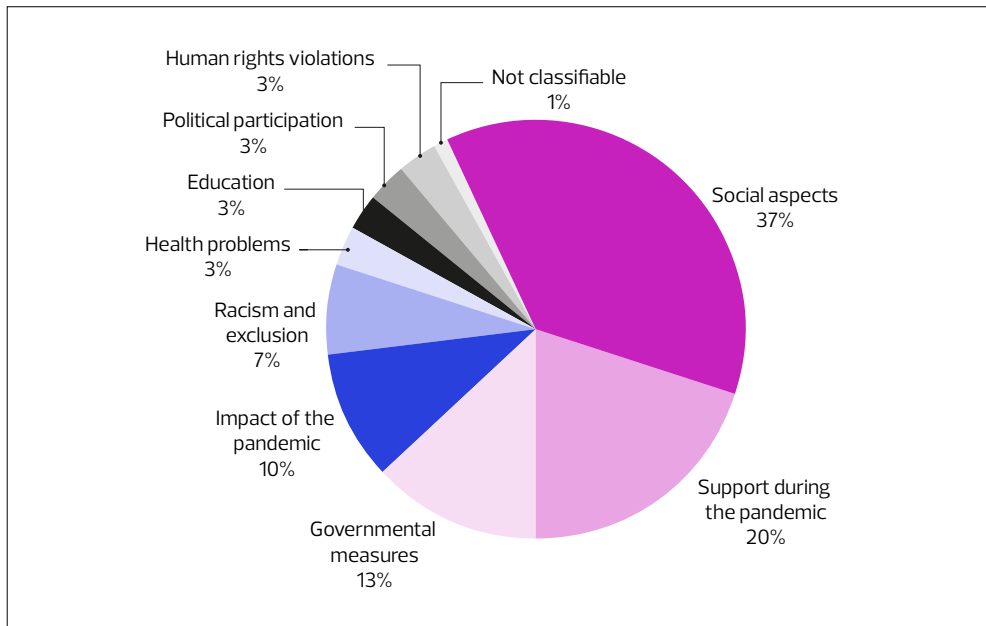
The content analysis highlights, when the pandemic was in progress (Figure 3), that national media focused mainly on social aspects (37%), support during the pandemic (20%), governmental measures (13%), and to a lesser extent on issues about the impact of the pandemic (10%), racism and exclusion (7%), health problems (3%), education (3%), political participation (3%), and human rights violations (3%). During the pandemic, there was more coverage of social aspects than governmental measures, probably because the government did not take rapid action to alleviate In-

igenous peoples from COVID-19 and this exacerbated their social problems.

For this period, there was an increase in the coverage of health problems faced by Indigenous peoples, given that those issues were more evident with the latent health crisis, which was also covered in a bigger proportion. With respect to Indigenous peoples' support during the pandemic, the news reflected more self-assistance among Indigenous peoples than from the government. The coverage of racism and exclusion was more than doubled since these problems became more noticeable due to the pandemic, as well as topics like education and human rights

Figure 3

Predominant Focus of the News in National Media During COVID-19, March 16, 2020, to October 27, 2022



violations. Finally, reporting on political participation occurred mainly due to the general elections that took place during the pandemic.

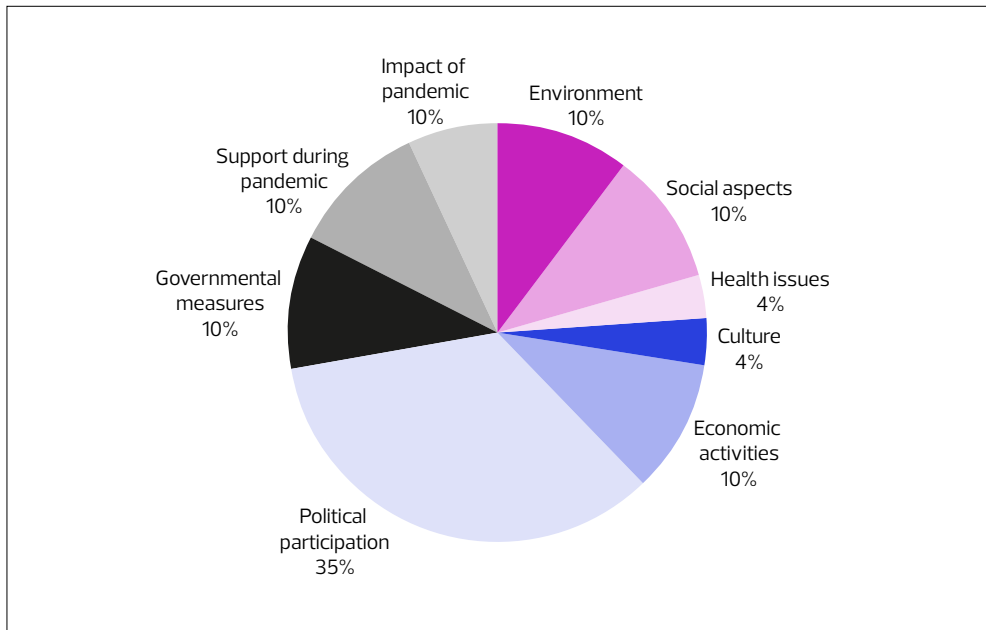
International media (Figure 4) focused on political participation (34%), and to a lesser extent on social aspects (10%), economic activities (10%), governmental measures (10%), support during the pandemic (10%), environment (10%), impact of the pandemic (7%), health issues (3%), and culture (3%). There was a significant drop in the reporting of Indigenous peoples' social aspects of crimes, terrorism, illegal activities, and social conflicts, being their political participation the most

covered topic. Nonetheless, coinciding the pandemic with the electoral period in Peru, international media reduced Indigenous peoples to a mass of voters who supported the left-wing presidential candidate at that time.

The content analysis shows that, although it was a small percentage, it is striking that the proportion of economic activities covered by international media was the same in both the preandpandemic years. This reflects how foreign press considered it valuable to report about Indigenous people's livelihoods no matter the context, reflecting national and international governmental interests in keeping a productive

Figure 4

Predominant Focus of the News in International Media During COVID-19, March 16, 2020, to October 27, 2022



economy reflecting the capitalist perspective of colonialism. During the COVID-19 period, like national media, international media decreased environmental coverage. This happened even though extractive activities did not stop during the pandemic period and increased Indigenous peoples' risks as sources of contagion. At the same time, the coverage of Indigenous peoples and land rights disappeared from the international reporting.

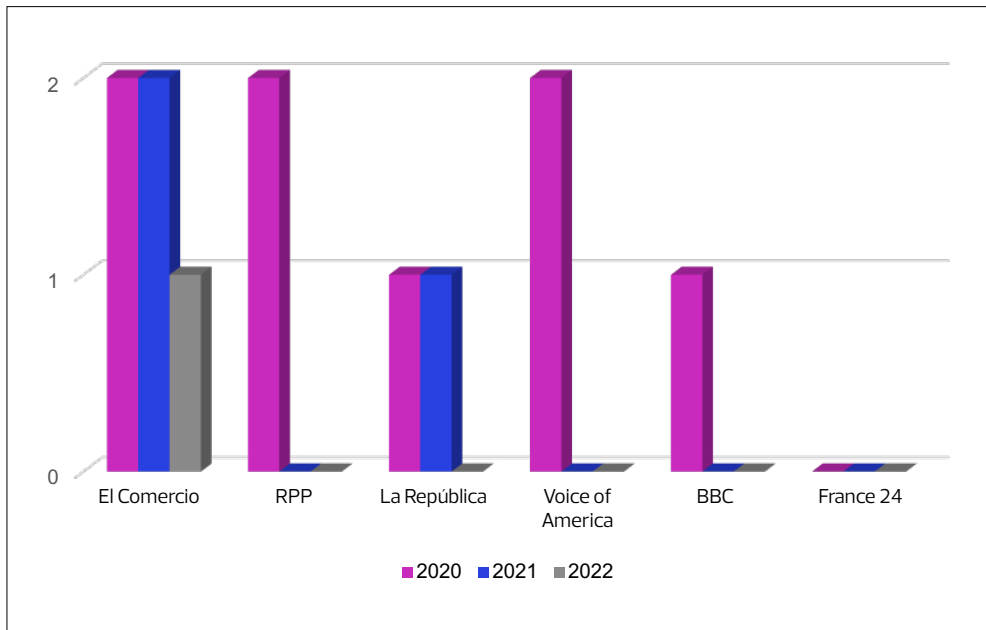
The governmental measures reported by the international press were not always related to the pandemic but with other developments ongoing. Likewise, the news about support during the pandemic, the

impact of the pandemic, and health issues were covered by the foreign press in a low proportion, downplaying the vulnerability faced by Indigenous peoples during the pandemic. Similarly, there was no coverage of human rights violations as a primary topic and, in this period, most of the attention was given to how the Indigenous vote could affect the election results.

A valuable result of the data analysis shows that, during the COVID-19 pandemic, national media presented greater news coverage in the context with respect to international media (Figure 5). This was decreasing for the second and third years of the pandemic, with only two Peruvian

Figure 5

Total Number of News Stories About Indigenous Peoples and COVID-19, March 16, 2020, to October 27, 2022



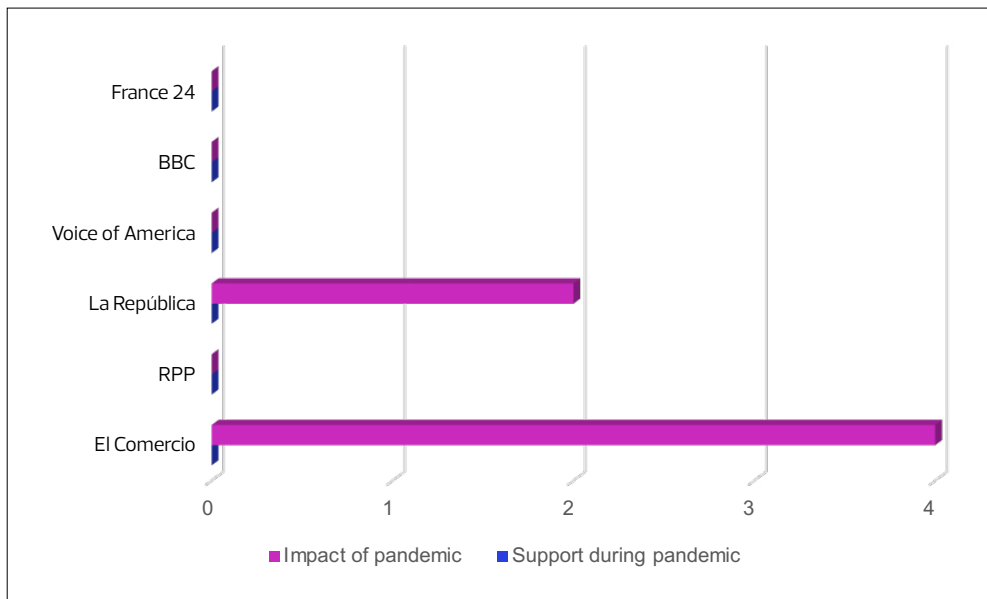
media outlets reporting on the issue in 2021 and just one publishing an article in 2022. Meanwhile, in the first year of the pandemic, international media presented three news about the topic in relation to indigenous peoples.

However, for the second and third years, there is no record of them in the sample used for the study. These numbers demonstrate how not only international, but also Peruvian media did not make an extensive reporting on how the pandemic was affecting Indigenous peoples' lives. Certainly, their coverage of COVID-19 was focused on urban areas which were easier to reach and concentrate bigger populations. Nevertheless, the omission of how devastating

the pandemic was for Indigenous peoples shows the racism of the press.

During the pandemic, only national media mentioned the support provided to Indigenous peoples in this period, treating it as a secondary topic. Likewise, international media did not mention this issue or the pandemic's impact on Indigenous peoples in this timeframe (Figure 6). Once again, national media made a limited mention of COVID-19 and its relation to Indigenous matters, whilst international media did not even mention the pandemic as a secondary topic in their coverage of Indigenous peoples. This fact proves how the media prioritized the coverage of any other topic over Indigenous lives.

Figure 6
Mentions of COVID-19 as a Secondary Topic in the News, March 16, 2020, to October 27, 2022



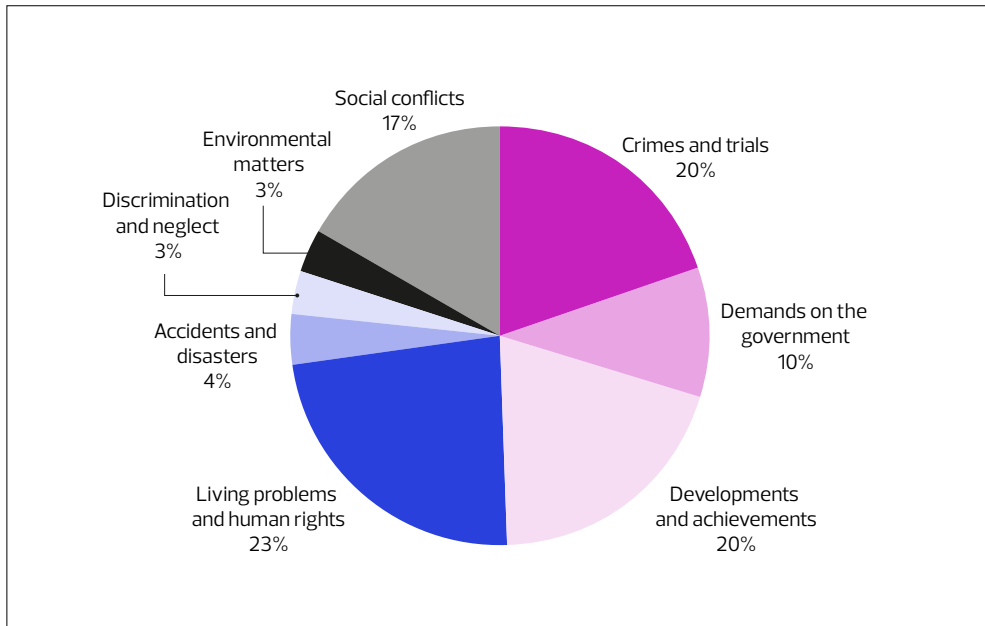
Most Predominant Topics in the Coverage

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the predominant topics in national media (Figure 7) were diverse and related to living problems and human rights (23%), crimes and trials (20%), developments and achievements (20%), social conflicts (17%), demands on the government (10%), and to a lesser extent on accidents and disasters (4%), discrimination and neglect (3%), and environmental issues (3%). The national media approach to Indigenous peoples highlighted their needs, as well as felonies or prosecution in which they might be involved as victims or victimizers.

Also, national media considered important to report on current events involving Indigenous peoples' participation. On the contrary, only a small percentage of articles were about the discrimination and neglect faced by indigenous peoples, minimizing the prevalence of this problem in Peruvian society and its implications for access to health services. There was also an important proportion related to social conflicts, which in many cases were covered in a superficial manner depicting Indigenous peoples as against economic development. It reflects the prevalence of the colonial discourse of the press, stigmatizing Indigenous peoples as unruly, or, in other words, "savages." This is re-

Figure 7

Predominant Topics Covered by National Media before COVID-19, November 1, 2016, to March 15, 2019



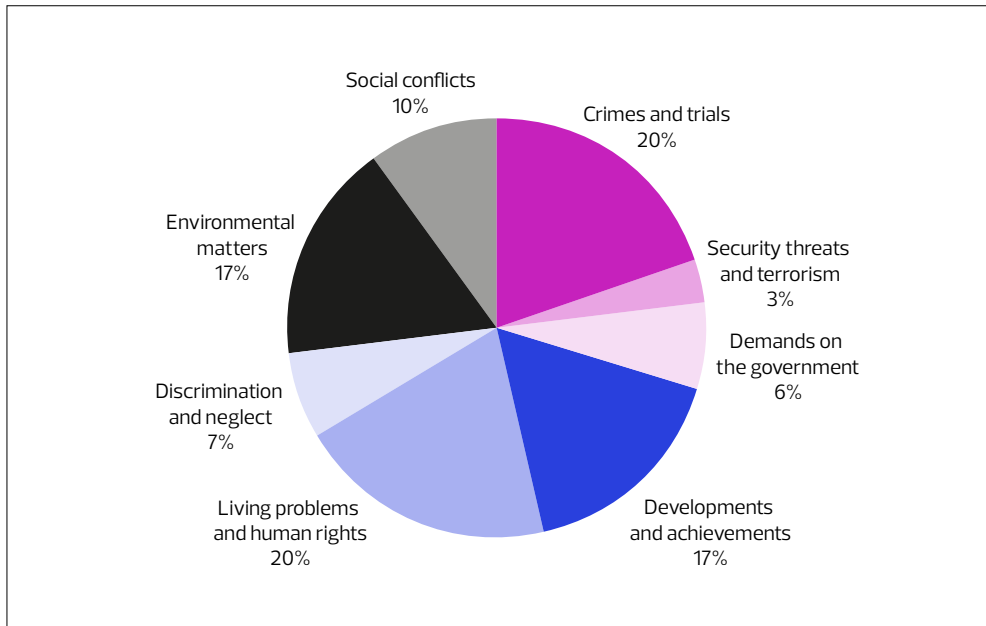
lated to the poor coverage of environmental issues affecting their health and traditional livelihoods.

In international media, the topics covered (Figure 8) were about crimes and trials (20%), living problems and human rights (20%), developments and achievements (17%), environmental issues (17%), social conflicts (10%), demands on the government (7%), discrimination and neglect (7%), and security threats and terrorism (3%). International media covered to a lesser extent social conflicts and demands on the government involving Indigenous peoples than national media.

Similar to national media, the international press made frequent coverage of crimes and trials, living problems and human rights, and development and achievements. On the other hand, the coverage of environmental issues was greater than that in Peruvian media. International media also included more news about Indigenous peoples' discrimination and neglect. Nevertheless, none of these topics was related to Indigenous peoples' health.

The topic of security threats and terrorism was only covered by international media, while the topic of accidents and disasters was covered solely by national me-

Figure 8
Predominant Topics Covered by International Media Before COVID-19, November 1, 2016, to March 15, 2019



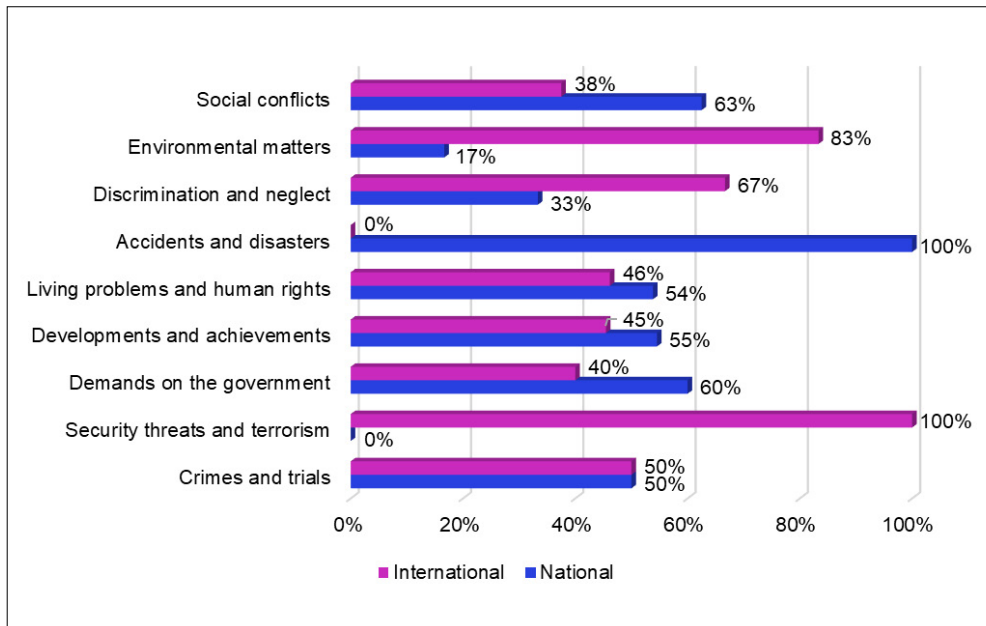
dia (Figure 9). The first case reflects how, before the pandemic, national media did not report on ongoing terrorism developments, even though Indigenous peoples are the main victims of Peruvian guerrillas and women's sexual and reproductive health continues to be compromised by forced sterilizations committed as state policy during those years (Subcomisión Investigadora de Personas e Instituciones Involucradas en las Acciones de Anticoncepción Quirúrgica Voluntaria, 2002). It demonstrates how, for the Peruvian press, events in cities are more relevant than those in other areas of the country, which is a synonym for racism. This fact is also linked with the stigmatization of In-

digenous peoples as terrorists, typical in right-wing elites echoed by the traditional media (Christian, 2023).

The second case shows that accidents and disasters involving Indigenous peoples appeared relevant only at a national level, but their impact was largely overlooked by the foreign press. It can also be observed that no media covers issues on national politics in relation to Indigenous peoples. In all other topics, the variation with respect to media origin is not as significant as in the cases indicated above.

The research shows that, during the pandemic, the predominant topics in

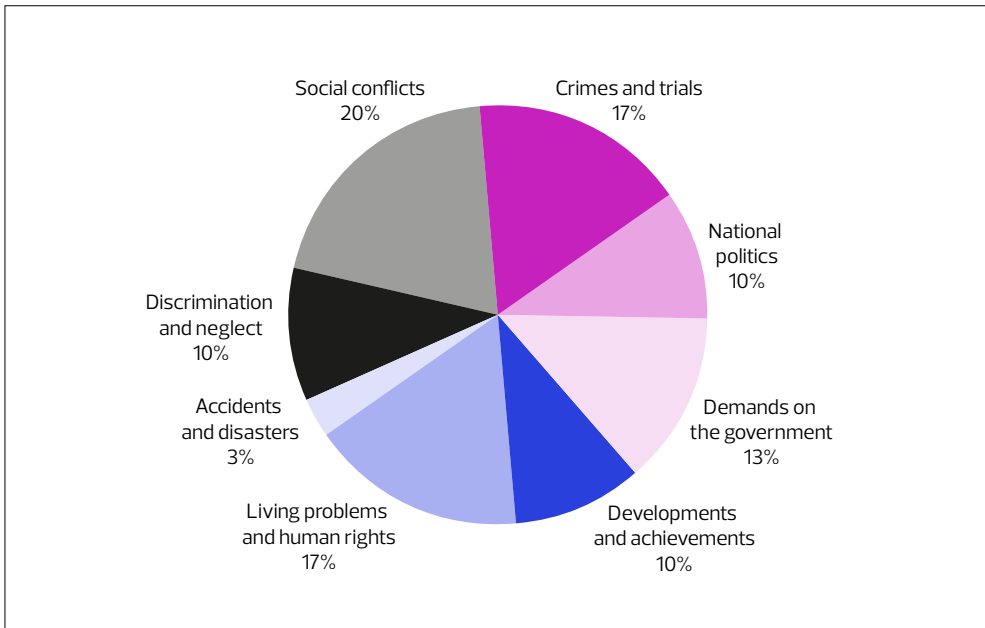
Figure 9
Predominant Topics Covered by Media Outlet Origin Before COVID-19, November 1, 2016, to March 15, 2019



national media (Figure 10) were social conflicts (20%), living problems and human rights (17%), crimes and trials (17%), demands on the government (13%), developments and achievements (10%), national politics (10%), discrimination and neglect (10%), and accidents and disasters (3%). With respect to the previous period, the coverage of living problems and human rights, crimes and trials, as well as developments and achievements, decreased in national media. This might be caused by the urgency in reporting COVID-19 as a phenomenon affecting all the spheres of social life, so some other topics received less attention.

On the other hand, there was an increase in social conflicts, demands on the government, as well as discrimination and neglect reporting. This change may have been triggered by the pandemic since the mentioned topics were exacerbated by it. While national politics were discussed during this period, environmental issues did not appear in the media. It is safe to assume that the first instance occurred as a result of the Peruvian presidential elections, where Indigenous peoples were going to exercise their right to vote. Conversely, national media neglected environmental matters, given that there was so much less governmental control over activities negatively affecting the envi-

Figure 10
Predominant Topics Covered by National Media During COVID-19, March 16, 2020, to October 27, 2022



ronment and, consequently, Indigenous peoples' lifestyles. At the same time, the harsh conditions imposed by the pandemic might have caused difficulties in reporting from the field.

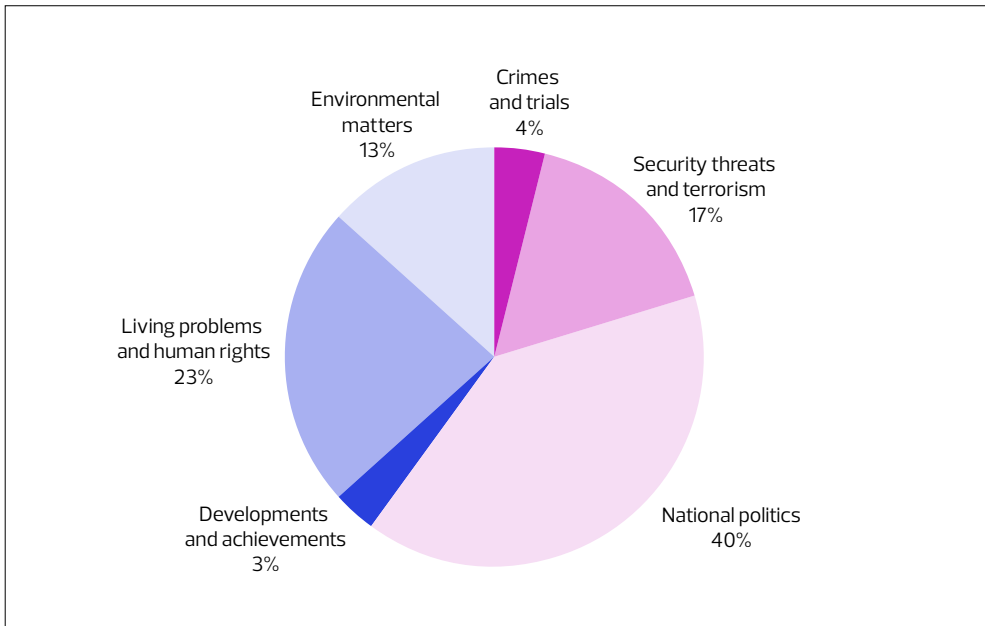
The findings of this research suggest that, in the international media, the topics covered (Figure 11) were national politics (40%), living problems and human rights (23%), security threats and terrorism (17%), environmental issues (13%), crimes and trials (4%), and development and achievements (3%). Topics like social conflicts, demands on the government, or discrimination and neglect did not appear anymore in this period. The main

coverage was of national politics, a topic that was not covered before the pandemic by the international press. For sure, this change occurred due to the presidential elections, as the exercise of citizenship of Indigenous peoples was not considered relevant before to that.

The coverage of living problems and human rights remained almost the same with just a little increase during the pandemic, while reporting about environmental issues slightly decreased. On the contrary, topics such as crimes and trials or developments and achievements showed a considerable increase during the pandemic. The topic of security

Figure 11

Predominant Topics Covered by International Media During COVID-19, March 16, 2020, to October 27, 2022



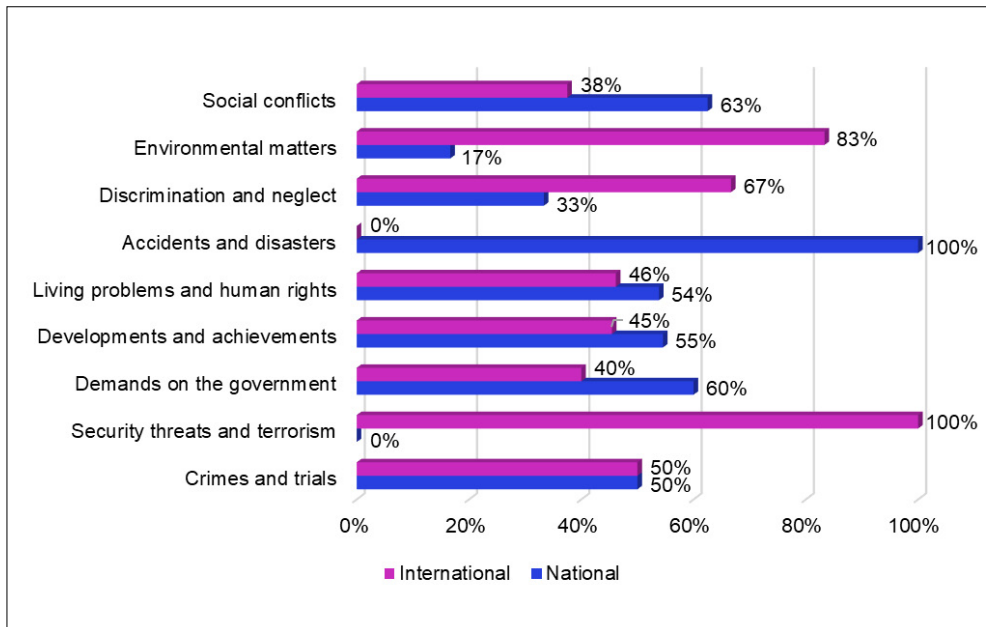
threats and terrorism showed a considerable rise in this period, a fact important to highlight given the ongoing developments regarding terrorist leadership and the former dictatorship in Peru, both responsible for thousands of crimes against Indigenous peoples for 20 years (Transfer Commission of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Peru, 2004/2010).

During the pandemic period (Figure 12), security threats and terrorism continued to be reported only by the international media. It is very striking that the national media have not reported on the issue about Indigenous peoples, considering the relevant events that occurred in this

period, such as the death of the Shining Path [Sendero Luminoso] founder. Memory seems to be more relevant in the international arena than in the territory where tragic events occurred. Also, only the international press covered environmental matters, even though it was made in a very small proportion. The pandemic was a dark period where many threats to the environment and Indigenous peoples took place, not only on the field but also on the legislative level. However, this has been ignored by national media.

On the other hand, only national media covered demands on the government, accidents and disasters, discrimination and

Figure 12
Predominant Topics Covered by Media Outlet Origin During COVID-19, March 16, 2020, to October 27, 2022



neglect, as well as social conflicts. Overall, national media reported on different aspects affecting Indigenous peoples during the pandemic. However, it did not happen with international media, which omitted the critical situation at that time. It is observed that the international media covered mostly news about national politics (80%), compared to the national press (20%). In this period, the international press mainly reported on Indigenous peoples in relation to the Peruvian presidential elections. This shows the interest the media outlets' countries of origin might have in Peru at the political level.

Conclusions

After evaluating journalistic coverage of Indigenous peoples' health in Peru, notable differences were identified between national and international media, as well as between the periods before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, both in terms of the topics covered and those omitted. Overall, there is a consistent lack of depth and nuance.

Before the pandemic, national media covered Indigenous peoples superficially, publishing reports without explaining the roots of the social problems they faced. This is connected to the fact that, in this period, national media acted as the Peruvian state's mouthpiece, mainly replicating its content about governmental measures concerning Indigenous peoples and lacking a more critical perspective

to report not only on public institutions' activities. Therefore, the Peruvian press might lack data about Indigenous peoples different from the government's official information and, consequently, it was not possible to fully understand the logic underneath Indigenous peoples' situation through the national news, including their limited access to healthcare.

Thus, the dominant discourse in the media reflects colonial ethnocentric prejudices that exclude Indigenous peoples and normalize the hegemony of Euro-descendant power groups. This is related to the poor coverage of environmental issues affecting their health status and traditional livelihoods, which are not compatible with the neocolonial development modes. Even if these problems are limiting Indigenous peoples' access to health services, reporting about the racism and exclusion faced by them was incipient, showing the little relevance this issue had for national media and minimizing the prevalence of this problem in Peruvian society. As elaborated by Entman (1993), local news promotes "enlightened racism" rejecting the political agenda endorsed by minorities and denying the existence of racism in today's world.

A frequent topic in international reporting was the relationship between the environment and the Indigenous peoples regarding conservation efforts where they inhabit, as well as the impact of pollution, extractive activities, and climate

change on their lives, all this to a greater extent than Peruvian media. However, environmental matters are part of the “global challenges” built by capitalists, academics, and policymakers to set the agenda for material interventions that reflect transnational corporations’ interests (Dutta & Mahuya, 2020). On the other hand, they included more news about Indigenous peoples’ discrimination and neglect, without necessarily linking these problems to the communities’ access to health services.

Besides, there was an increase in the coverage of health problems faced by Indigenous peoples, given that those issues were more evident with the latent health crisis. As to Indigenous peoples’ support during the pandemic, the news reflected more self-assistance among Indigenous peoples than from the government. In part, this led to an increase in the positive tone of the national news regarding Indigenous peoples’ actions to cope with the pandemic. Paradoxically, this shows the absence of the State in the areas where these social groups inhabit, being themselves in charge of measures to survive the pandemic effects. In times of crisis, this was a media strategy to tell people that they were responsible for saving themselves, being a result of colonialism that the national government followed strict racial and ethnic hierarchies (Gonçalves, 2021), and consequently did not pay enough attention to Indigenous groups in terms of health care provision.

After the pandemic outbreak, international news covered mainly Peruvian politics, a topic that was not covered before the pandemic by the international press. Indigenous peoples’ political participation was not considered relevant before, outside the election period. Between 2020 and 2022, international media reduced Indigenous peoples to a mass of voters who supported the left-wing presidential candidate at that time. The attention was given to how the Indigenous vote could affect the election results, considering that it would mean a risk to the neoliberal political and economic approach and the growth-obsessed monolithic models of capital expansion spread by Western imperialist nations (Dutta & Mahuya, 2020), whose interests are represented by the international press.

Although a small percentage, the proportion of economic activities covered by international media was the same in both the pre-and postpandemic years, showing how foreign press considered it valuable to report about Indigenous people’s livelihoods, no matter the context. This reflects national and international governmental interests in keeping a productive economy from the capitalist perspective of colonialism, regardless of the risks to the lives and health of Indigenous peoples—even during the pandemic.

While national media reported on different aspects affecting Indigenous peoples during the pandemic, the same did not

happen with international press, which omitted how the pandemic was affecting their lives. The omission of how devastating the pandemic was for Indigenous peoples shows the racism of the press. The news about support during the pandemic, the impact of the pandemic, and health issues were covered by the international press in a low proportion, downplaying the vulnerability faced by Indigenous peoples during the pandemic.

From all empirical findings discussed in this research, it follows that there is persistent racism within the press. The coverage or omission of Indigenous issues can be seen as evidence that historical power imbalances rooted in colonialism continue to shape news framing, agenda setting, and determining news value both nationally and internationally. In a post-colonial context, media representations still reinforce stereotypes of formerly colonized people, whose voices and issues are considered newsworthy only when they are in harmony with certain narratives. Further research on this topic should be conducted continuously and critically to corroborate its evolution through time.

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