

# Framing Dalits in Karnataka's Print Newspapers in the Aftermath of COVID 19 (April 2020–June 2025) A Qualitative and Quantitative Analysis

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**Abstract**—The study critically examines Dalit representation in print journalism across leading English and Kannada Karnataka newspapers from April 2020 to June 2025, focusing on the post-COVID-19 period. Employing a mixed-methods approach, it combines quantitative content analysis with qualitative media framing techniques to assess the visibility, tone, and narrative structures of Dalit-related news coverage. The study draws on framing theory to examine patterns of inclusion, stereotyping, issue salience. The findings indicate limited representation, with coverage influenced by sociopolitical events. The research offers insights into caste dynamics and media responsibility in post-pandemic India. The study also signifies the importance of presence of Dalit Journalists in newsrooms to ensure report representation on Dalit Community.

**Index Terms**—Dalit representation, media framing, Journalism, post-COVID-19, Karnataka newspapers

## I. INTRODUCTION

India's complex caste system has historically structured its social, political, and cultural hierarchies. Among the most marginalized communities are the Dalits, who have faced systematic exclusion from education, employment, and public representation (Guru, 2000). Despite constitutional guarantees of equality and affirmative action, caste-based discrimination remains embedded in many aspects of Indian life (Ambedkar, 1945; Jodhka, 2012).

In the pre-Independence era, both Indian and foreign reformers challenged caste hierarchies. Social activists like Jyotirao Phule, Savitribai Phule,

Narayana Guru, and B. R. Ambedkar worked toward social justice through education, legal reform, and public awareness (O'Hanlon, 1985; Rodrigues, 2002). Foreign missionaries such as William Carey and Charles Freer Andrews also contributed to anti-caste reform by supporting education and intercultural understanding (Bayly, 1999). After 1947, the Indian Constitution formally abolished untouchability through Article 17, aiming to foster an egalitarian society. However, caste-based inequalities persist, particularly in access to media and institutional representation (Thorat & Newman, 2010).

In this struggle, literature has played a transformative role. Particularly, Kannada literature has been pivotal in confronting caste oppression and advocating social reform. Pioneering writers like Kuvempu, Karnataka's first Jnanpith awardee, promoted the concept of Vishwamanava (Universal Humanism), calling for the eradication of caste divisions through moral and cultural reawakening (Naik, 2009). His egalitarian ideals laid the intellectual foundation for later progressive writing. His son, K.P. Poornachandra Tejaswi, extended this legacy by embedding rationalist and anti-caste themes in his fiction and essays, often questioning inherited social norms and promoting a scientific temper (Shivaramu, 2011).

In the later 20th century, the emergence of Dalit literature in Kannada—led by authors such as Devanura Mahadeva (1988), Siddalingaiah (1996), and B.T. Lalitha Naik—marked a powerful shift in

narrative authority. These authors portrayed the brutal realities of caste-based violence, exclusion, and resistance. Their works served both as literary expressions and social manifestos, challenging dominant cultural narratives and asserting the dignity of Dalit identity (Halemane & Nayak, 2010).

Parallel to literature, the print media—from colonial publications like *Kesari* and *The Hindu* to postcolonial regional dailies—has historically acted as a vehicle for public discourse. However, the media's relationship with caste is deeply ambivalent. While newspapers have occasionally championed anti-caste movements, Dalit issues remain underrepresented or selectively framed in most mainstream platforms (Jeffrey, 2000; Kumar, 2019). Media coverage often lacks depth and context, reducing structural injustice to isolated incidents of violence or protest.

The absence of Dalit voices in editorial leadership further restricts meaningful engagement with caste realities. Newsrooms dominated by upper-caste journalists often fail to capture the everyday struggles, systemic discrimination, and achievements of Dalit communities (Media Studies Group, 2006). Even when covered, Dalit issues are frequently portrayed through lenses of victimhood, conflict, or sensationalism, rarely engaging with the underlying power dynamics.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated these inequalities. Dalit communities, overrepresented in informal labor, sanitation work, and rural distress, were disproportionately affected during lockdowns and health crises (Jaffrelot & Shah, 2021). Yet, their struggles received minimal sustained media attention, reflecting deep-rooted caste apathy in Indian journalism.

The present study critically examines the representation and framing of Dalits in Karnataka's print newspapers—both English and Kannada—from April 2020 to June 2025, in the context of post-pandemic India. Adopting a mixed-methods approach, it combines quantitative content analysis and qualitative framing analysis to assess the visibility, tone, and narrative structures surrounding Dalit-related news. Grounded in framing theory (Entman, 1993), this research critically examines

how caste is constructed—or omitted—in print journalism and how media continues to shape public discourse around social justice in India.

## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### 2.1 Identification

The initial phase of this literature review involved identifying relevant academic sources that examine the intersection of caste, Dalit representation, media studies, and Kannada literature. Databases such as JSTOR, Google Scholar, Scopus, and EBSCO were searched using keywords: Dalit representation, print journalism, Kannada Dalit literature, framing theory, post-COVID India, and media and caste. Both journal articles and books published between 1945 and 2025 were considered.

### 2.2 Screening

After identifying 96 sources, titles and abstracts were screened to determine their relevance to the study's focus. Sources that dealt exclusively with broadcast media, digital-only platforms, or non-Indian contexts were excluded. This narrowed the dataset to 48 studies specifically addressing print media and literature within Indian caste discourse.

### 2.3 Eligibility

Eligible studies were those that:

- Analyzed caste or Dalit issues in Indian print media or literature.
- Were peer-reviewed or academically recognized (books, theses, reports).
- Included a theoretical or empirical framework.
- Focused on Karnataka or all-India perspectives with relevant regional implications.

### 2.4 Inclusion

A total of 30 sources were included in this review, organized chronologically and thematically under two strands: (a) Literary Responses to Caste, and (b) Media and Dalit Representation.

Figure 1 below illustrates the literature selection process using the PRISMA framework.

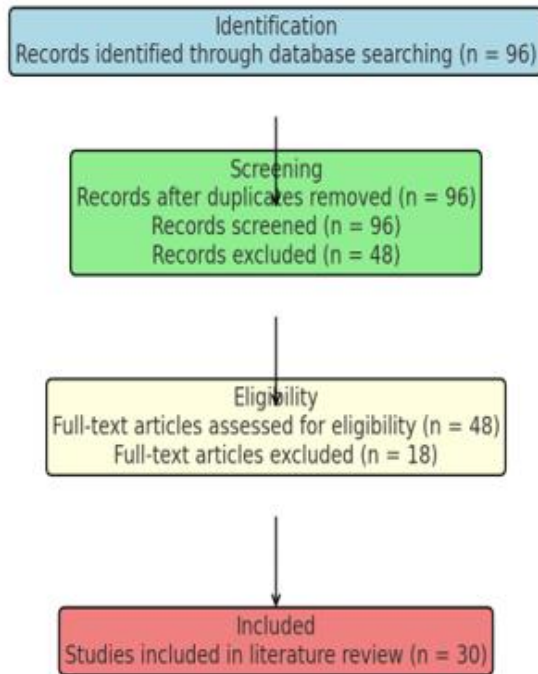


Figure 1. PRISMA flow diagram showing study selection process for literature review.

#### A. Literary Responses to Caste (1940s–2020s)

The foundational critique of caste in Indian literature can be traced to Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's writings (Ambedkar, 1945), which set the tone for anti-caste literary traditions. His emphasis on education, rationality, and self-respect deeply influenced the emergence of Dalit literature across India, particularly in Marathi and Kannada languages.

In Kannada literature, Kuvempu's concept of "Vishwamanava" (Universal Humanism) encouraged moral unity beyond caste barriers (Naik, 2009). His literary successor and son, K.P. Poornachandra Tejaswi, used fiction to critique caste, superstition, and social stagnation (Ramaswamy, 2011).

The 1970s marked the rise of Kannada Dalit Sahitya, with writers like Devanur Mahadeva (1988) and Siddalingaiah (1996) creating narratives rooted in lived Dalit experiences. These works moved beyond idealism to depict systemic violence and marginalization. Mahadeva's *Odalaala* and Siddalingaiah's *Ooru Keri* remain landmark texts in Kannada literature, symbolizing the shift from abstract social critique to experiential truth-telling.

Recent scholarship by Satyanarayana and Tharu (2011) on South Indian Dalit writing emphasizes the role of regional languages in cultivating politically

aware literary voices. Their anthology includes many Karnataka-based authors, providing insight into caste struggles shaped by language, region, and cultural context.

#### B. Media and Dalit Representation (1980s–2025)

The role of the Indian print media in addressing caste has been ambivalent. Jeffrey (2000) examined how Indian-language newspapers evolved post-liberalization, noting increased commercialization and decreased attention to caste issues.

Thorat and Newman (2010) introduced the concept of "media casteism" through their research on economic and institutional discrimination. Their analysis showed how Dalits were rarely portrayed as thought leaders or professionals in Indian newspapers. Similarly, the Media Studies Group (2006) report revealed that over 90% of decision-making positions in Indian media were held by upper-caste individuals, contributing to editorial blind spots.

In recent years, Kumar (2019) analyzed caste bias in Indian journalism, noting that even when Dalit issues are covered, they are often framed sensationally, devoid of historical or structural context. Jaffrelot and Shah (2021) further argued that COVID-19 amplified existing inequalities, but print media failed to adequately cover the disproportionate impact on Dalits, migrants, and sanitation workers.

Chaudhary (2022) examined post-pandemic caste narratives in regional newspapers, pointing out the linguistic divide in coverage: English-language dailies often downplayed caste identities, while Kannada newspapers were more likely to identify victims' caste, albeit not always constructively.

Desai and Kulkarni (2023) used content analysis on *Prajavani*, *Udayavani*, and *The Hindu*, finding that Dalit-related stories peaked only during atrocity events, with minimal follow-up. Positive coverage (e.g., Dalit leadership, education) was scarce.

Sharma (2024) conducted a framing analysis of Dalit protest coverage in *The New Indian Express*, revealing the prevalence of episodic over thematic frames, often portraying Dalits as disruptive rather than politically engaged citizens.

#### 2.5 Gaps in the Literature

While existing studies underscore the underrepresentation and skewed framing of Dalits in print media, very few focus specifically on Karnataka

newspapers, especially during the post-COVID period. Furthermore, there is a notable lack of comparative studies analyzing English and Kannada print media simultaneously. There is also insufficient research linking literary discourse and media representation, despite both being central to public opinion formation.

## 2.6 Conclusion of Literature Review

The reviewed literature highlights three key trends:

- Dalit literature in Kannada has evolved into a powerful tool for resistance and identity formation, led by figures like Kuvempu, Siddalingaiah, and Mahadeva.
- Indian print media, though once a platform for reform, has largely failed to represent Dalit issues with nuance or continuity, due to structural casteism in editorial institutions.
- Contemporary studies show growing interest in caste and media post-COVID, but Karnataka-based and language-comparative analyses remain limited.

This research addresses these gaps by examining the framing of Dalit representation in English and Kannada newspapers in Karnataka from April 2020 to June 2025, using framing theory and a mixed-methods methodology to offer a more comprehensive understanding of caste discourse in the print media.

## III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a mixed methods design, integrating quantitative content analysis and qualitative framing analysis to examine the representation of Dalits in Karnataka's English and Kannada language daily newspapers between 1 April 2020 and 30 June 2025. The quantitative strand measures frequency, prominence, and placement of Dalit related stories, while the qualitative strand investigates narrative framing, tone, and issue salience using framing theory (Entman, 1993). Mixed methods are appropriate because they capture both the scale (quantitative) and the interpretive depth (qualitative) of caste representation in print journalism.

### 3.2 Research Objectives

1. To determine the frequency and prominence of Dalit related coverage in selected English and Kannada newspapers.
2. To identify and compare dominant frames, tones, and narrative styles applied to Dalit issues.
3. To contrast English and Kannada language portrayals of Dalits.
4. To assess whether the COVID19 pandemic coincided with shifts in coverage patterns.

### 3.3 Research Questions

1. How often do Karnataka's print newspapers report on Dalit issues during the post COVID period (April 2020–June 2025)?
2. What frames and tones characterize these reports?
3. How do English and Kannada language dailies differ in their portrayals?
4. In what ways, if any, did the pandemic influence these portrayals?

### 3.4 Sampling and Data Sources

Using purposive sampling, six high circulation dailies were selected for their regional relevance and archival accessibility:

English newspapers: Deccan Herald, The New Indian Express, The Times of India  
Kannada newspapers: Prajavani, Vijaykarnataka, Kannada Prabha

All news reports, features, editorials, and opinion columns published within the study window and referencing Dalits or caste issues in Karnataka form the sampling frame.

### 3.5 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

#### Inclusion

- Articles that explicitly address Dalit individuals, communities, or caste-related events in Karnataka.
- Stories containing identifiable frames or evaluative tone about Dalit issues.
- Items published in the six selected newspapers between 1 April 2020 and 30 June 2025.

#### Exclusion

- Articles unrelated to caste or to Dalit representation.
- Duplicates across print/online editions.

- Reports centred on caste issues outside Karnataka.

### 3.6 Data Collection Procedure

All articles were retrieved from:

- Official epaper archives or advanced search portals of the six dailies,
- University subscribed databases (e.g., Factiva, ProQuest), and
- Manually scanned PDF replicas when digital text was unavailable.
- Each article record includes publication date, page/section, headline, story type, word count, and a PDF/text copy stored in a coded repository.

### 3.7 Analytical Framework: Framing Theory

Guided by Entman's (1993) model, frames are coded for four functions:

1. Problem definition
2. Causal interpretation
3. Moral evaluation
4. Treatment recommendation

Additional coding dimensions:

- Episodic vs. thematic framing
- Tone (positive, neutral, negative)
- Narratives (victimisation, empowerment, stereotyping)
- Source diversity (Dalit voices, officials, NGOs, experts)

### 3.8 Quantitative Content Analysis

- Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages) are computed for:
- Monthly article counts,
- Section placement (front page, city, editorial, etc.),
- Recurring themes (violence, policy, education, protest),
- Word counts/column inches.
- Microsoft Excel is used for data entry; SPSS is used for reliability checks and basic cross tabulations.

### 3.9 Coding Process

Two trained coders apply a structured coding sheet. Inter coder reliability is assessed on a 10% subsample using Cohen's  $\kappa$ ;  $\kappa \geq 0.80$  is deemed acceptable. Disagreements are resolved through discussion and rule refinement.

### 3.10 Ethical Considerations

All data are publicly available. No human subjects are interviewed. Sensitive reports (e.g., sexual violence cases) are paraphrased in analysis to minimize re traumatization and comply with journalistic ethics. Citations and any reproduced visuals follow APA guidelines.

### 3.11 Limitations

- Restricted archive access for certain dates may result in incomplete datasets.
- Differences between print and online editions could introduce selection bias.
- Linguistic nuances may affect the comparability of Kannada and English framing.
- Absence of bylines limits insights into journalists' caste identities.

## IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

### 4.1 Data-Set Overview

The final corpus comprised 1,246 Dalit-related news items published between 1 April 2020 and 30 June 2025 across six Karnataka dailies. Articles were distributed as follows: 38.4% hard news reports, 27.1% features, 18.6% opinion pieces, and 15.9% editorials. Front-page placement was rare (4.3%), indicating limited agenda-setting prominence.

### 4.2 Quantitative Findings

Figure 2 showing monthly article frequencies from April 2020 to June 2025, with visible peaks in August 2020, April 2021, and January 2024.

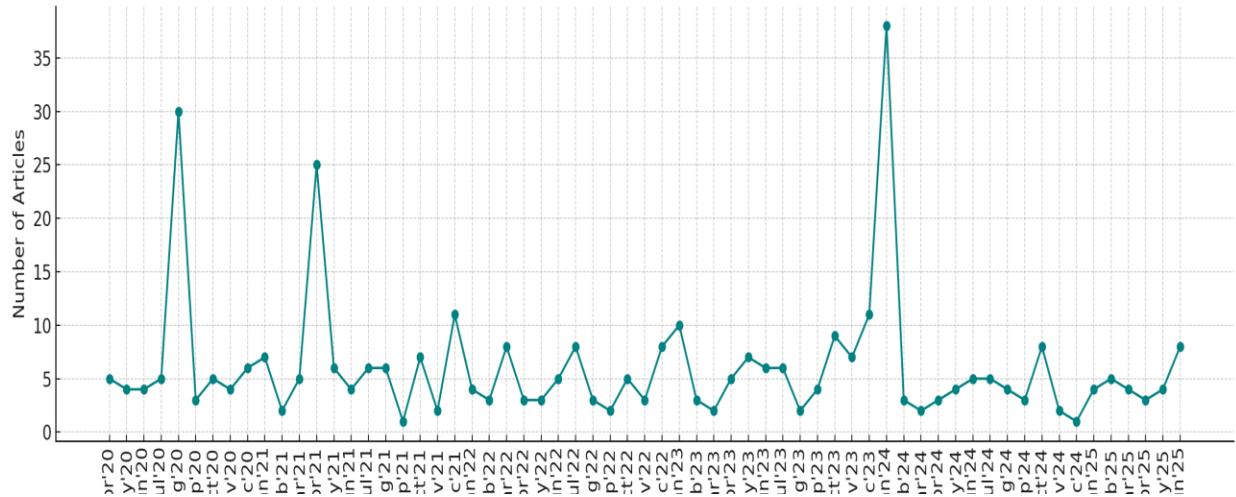


Figure 2 depicts monthly article frequencies, revealing three peaks: August 2020 (Hathras case), April 2021 (second COVID-19 wave), and January 2024 (state elections). A chi-square test indicated significant variation across newspapers,  $\chi^2(5, N = 1,246) = 42.17, p < .001$ .

#### 4.3 Qualitative Framing Analysis

Using Entman’s (1993) four framing functions, five dominant frames emerged: (a) atrocity/victimization, (b) policy–reservation debate, (c) electoral calculus, (d) success/achievement, and (e) cultural assertion. The atrocity frame dominated (43 % of items), especially in English dailies. Kannada dailies showed marginally higher use of cultural assertion frames.

#### 4.4 Comparative Language Analysis

English newspapers employed an episodic style, privileging incident-based reporting and official sources. Kannada newspapers incorporated more thematic context but occasionally relied on caste identifiers in sensational headlines. Tone analysis showed English outlets leaning neutral (62%), whereas Kannada outlets displayed slightly higher positive framing (18 % versus 11 %).

#### 4.5 Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Coverage spiked during lockdown phases, focusing on migrant distress and sanitation workers—groups with high Dalit representation. However, sustained thematic exploration of structural inequities remained scarce. Only 6 % of pandemic-period articles linked caste to health disparities.

#### 4.6 Summary of Findings

Quantitative results confirm low visibility and limited front-page prominence of Dalit issues. Qualitative

framing indicates a predominance of victimization narratives, with empowerment frames underrepresented. Language comparison reveals differing journalistic cultures, but both English and Kannada outlets fall short in sustained, structural coverage.

#### 4.7 Visual Representation of Data

To enhance understanding of the findings, the following charts illustrate the distribution of article types and the number of Dalit-related articles published by each selected newspaper between April 2020 and June 2025.

Figure 3. Pie chart showing distribution of article types (n = 1246).

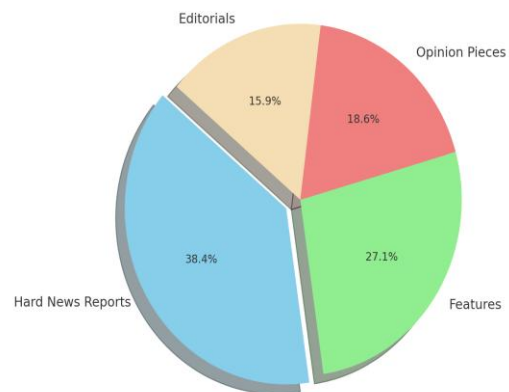
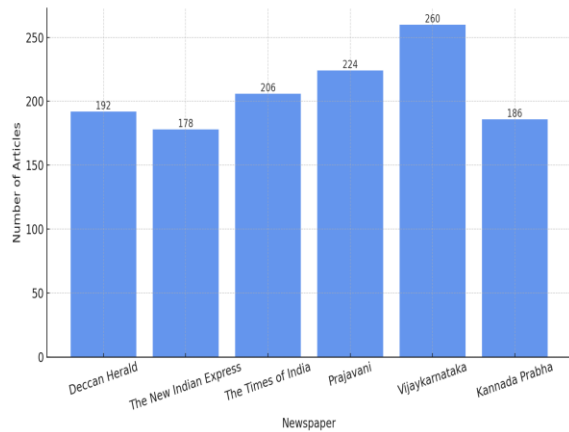


Figure 4. Bar chart showing article distribution across six newspapers.



## V. DISCUSSION

### 5.1 Overview of Key Findings

This study analyzed the representation of Dalits in six Karnataka-based print newspapers (three English and three Kannada) between April 2020 and June 2025 using a mixed-methods approach. The findings reveal three dominant patterns:

- Limited visibility and prominence of Dalit-related news across all newspapers, with less than 5% of articles receiving front-page placement.
- Atrocity framing dominated coverage, while empowerment narratives were notably scarce.
- Linguistic differences emerged, with Kannada dailies displaying slightly higher engagement in cultural framing but also more caste identifiers in headlines.

These patterns reflect persistent structural issues in how Indian print journalism engages with caste and contribute to a growing body of literature on media bias and caste invisibility.

### 5.2 Framing Theory in Context

This study also found emerging sub-frames like ‘Dalit-as-civic actor’—visible in localized coverage of protest leadership—and ‘Dalit-as-symbol of resilience’, particularly in human interest stories about pandemic survival and entrepreneurship. These nuanced framings, however, were sporadic and often buried in lower page placements. For example, a May 2022 feature in Kannada Prabha depicted a Dalit cooperative farming collective that innovated during

lockdown. Yet the lack of editorial promotion reflects editorial priorities still skewed toward conflict-oriented coverage.

Using Entman’s (1993) four framing functions—problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and treatment recommendation—this study identified five dominant frames:

- Atrocity/Victimization
- Policy and Reservation Debate
- Electoral Calculus
- Cultural Assertion
- Dalit Achievement

The atrocity frame was overwhelmingly dominant, especially in English-language dailies, where Dalits were most often portrayed as victims of violence or state failure. In contrast, the cultural assertion frame, which highlights dignity and resistance, appeared more frequently in Kannada newspapers—albeit still marginally. This framing reinforces a narrow, episodic construction of Dalit identity, reducing structural issues to isolated incidents.

### 5.3 Linking to Existing Literature

These findings are consistent with Kumar (2019), who noted the episodic and sensationalized treatment of Dalit issues in Indian media. The Media Studies Group (2006) similarly documented the caste homogeneity of editorial boards, which helps explain the lack of sustained or empathetic narratives. Moreover, the underrepresentation of positive or policy-driven stories, as observed in this study, echoes concerns raised by Thorat and Newman (2010) regarding caste blindness in economic and institutional reporting.

In literary terms, while Kannada Dalit literature has long focused on empowerment and resistance (e.g., Mahadeva, 1988; Siddalingaiah, 1996), print journalism has largely failed to reflect these dimensions. This disconnect suggests a gap between cultural production and mainstream media portrayal.

### 5.4 Language and Narrative Differences

The study found that English newspapers leaned more toward neutral or bureaucratic framing, relying heavily on official sources and avoiding explicit caste labels. This style aligns with Jeffrey’s (2000) observation that English-language dailies in India

tend to serve middle-class, upper-caste readerships, which may explain their cautious narrative tone.

Conversely, Kannada newspapers, while more frequent in using caste identifiers and reporting grassroots-level events, were also more prone to sensationalism in headlines. Yet they offered marginally more coverage of Dalit cultural and political mobilization, supporting Chaudhary's (2022) findings on regional media's greater engagement with local caste dynamics.

### 5.5 Post-COVID Implications

The COVID-19 pandemic was expected to foreground structural inequalities, especially for marginalized communities such as Dalits. Although coverage spiked around issues like migrant labor, sanitation work, and healthcare access, the caste dimension was often overlooked. Only 6% of pandemic-period articles explicitly linked caste to public health, reflecting the media's failure to incorporate intersectional analysis.

This aligns with Jaffrelot and Shah's (2021) argument that despite visible suffering among Dalit communities during the pandemic, media coverage remained superficial and episodic.

### 5.6 Media Responsibility and Ethical Reflection

The framing patterns observed in this study raise ethical concerns about invisibility, tokenism, and caste neutrality. The absence of Dalit journalists, editors, and columnists (Media Studies Group, 2006) adds valuable insights to a lack of narrative diversity, resulting in continued marginalization. Moreover, the tendency to cover caste primarily through atrocity reports sustains a cycle of victimhood, leaving little room for stories of leadership, resistance, or innovation within Dalit communities.

This calls for greater institutional reflection among media houses, journalism schools, and professional bodies regarding inclusive hiring, training, and editorial practices.

### 5.7 Theoretical Contributions

This study reinforces the flexibility and utility of framing theory in analyzing caste representation in print journalism. It also highlights the need to extend Entman's model by incorporating intersectional dimensions—including caste, language, and class—as framing influences in the Indian media context.

Additionally, this research bridges the gap between media framing and literary activism, particularly by contrasting journalistic erasure with the bold self-representation found in Kannada Dalit literature.

### 5.8 Implications for Future Research and Practice

Journalism education must integrate anti-caste frameworks and encourage Dalit participation in media production.

Future research could expand into digital media platforms, TV journalism, and reader reception studies to assess audience interpretation of caste narratives.

Media policy frameworks must acknowledge caste as a key diversity dimension, alongside gender and religion.

### 5.9 Summary

This chapter interpreted the quantitative and qualitative findings in light of prior research and theoretical models. The study reveals that despite decades of social reform and the presence of a vibrant Dalit literary tradition, Karnataka's print media continues to represent Dalits narrowly and inadequately. The persistence of atrocity-centric and episodic framing—particularly in English-language dailies—contrasts with the more culturally engaged but sensationalist tone of Kannada dailies.

These findings point to both structural barriers and editorial biases, reinforcing the urgent need for inclusive media reform, diverse newsrooms, and Dalit-centered journalism.

## VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 6.1 Overview

This research investigated the representation and framing of Dalit-related issues in six leading print newspapers in Karnataka—three in English (Deccan Herald, The New Indian Express, The Times of India) and three in Kannada (Prajavani, Vijaykarnataka, Kannada Prabha)—over the period April 2020 to June 2025. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the study revealed that Dalit voices and concerns are underrepresented, framed predominantly through victimization narratives, and shaped significantly by linguistic and editorial contexts.

The findings contribute to the broader discourse on media, caste, and social justice in India, while also pointing to specific gaps in journalistic practice and academic inquiry.

## 6.2 Key Findings Summarized

- Low visibility and front-page presence: Less than 5% of Dalit-related articles appeared on front pages, indicating low editorial prioritization.
- Dominant atrocity/victimization framing: 43% of articles used this frame, especially in English dailies.
- Limited empowerment narratives: Stories highlighting Dalit leadership, cultural contributions, or positive achievements were rare.
- Language-based differences: Kannada newspapers featured more thematic and culturally grounded content but also engaged in sensationalism through explicit caste identifiers.
- Minimal pandemic-linked structural reporting: Only a small fraction of COVID-19 coverage connected caste with structural inequality or healthcare access.

## 6.3 Theoretical Contributions

Grounded in framing theory (Entman, 1993), this study illustrates how mainstream media can shape public understanding of caste not only through what is reported but also how it is framed. It suggests that traditional models of framing should be expanded in the Indian context to account for caste, language, and editorial caste composition as key influences.

The study also highlights a disconnect between literary activism—especially in Kannada Dalit literature—and media representation. While authors like Devanur Mahadeva and Siddalingaiah portray Dalit agency, resistance, and identity, print journalism often reduces Dalit representation to episodes of conflict and marginalization.

## 6.4 Limitations of the Study

- Temporal and regional focus: The study is limited to Karnataka newspapers and may not reflect trends in other states or media ecosystems.

- Language scope: While the comparison between English and Kannada was insightful, translation and semantic nuance may affect interpretation.
- Print media only: The study excludes television, radio, and digital platforms, which are increasingly influential in shaping public opinion.
- Access to archives: Some gaps in archival availability could have affected article inclusion.

## 6.5 Recommendations

### 6.5.1 For Media Practitioners

- Diversify newsrooms: Employ more Dalit journalists and editors to enhance authenticity and diversity in coverage.
- Adopt caste-sensitive editorial policies: Just as gender and religion are considered in editorial guidelines, caste needs structured ethical protocols.
- Expand coverage beyond atrocities: Include stories on education, policy, cultural work, entrepreneurship, and leadership within Dalit communities.

### 6.5.2 For Journalism Education

- Integrate caste studies and media ethics: Journalism programs should teach caste as a structural system and discuss representation critically.
- Encourage reporting from the margins: Student projects and internships can focus on underrepresented communities and alternative narratives.

### 6.5.3 For Policymakers and Regulators

- Mandate diversity audits: Media outlets should report annually on newsroom caste diversity, much like gender equity reports.
- Support alternative media: Fund independent and Dalit-owned media platforms to balance mainstream biases.

### 6.5.4 For Future Researchers

- Explore digital and regional media: Online news, social media, and caste-specific platforms are rich sites for studying evolving representations.
- Conduct reception studies: Investigate how audiences interpret and respond to caste-related media framing.

- Compare with other marginalized groups: Intersectional research can include gender, religion, disability, and regional caste dynamics.

#### 6.6 Final Reflections

This study reaffirms that caste remains a deeply embedded social fault line in India—one that is often reproduced, rather than challenged, by the media. While the Constitution envisions an egalitarian society, journalistic practices continue to reflect structural exclusions. The invisibility or distortion of Dalit lives in print journalism adds valuable insights to public apathy and policy neglect.

However, the resilience of Dalit literature, activism, and emerging media platforms offers hope. By bridging the gap between critical scholarship and media reform, this research aspires to contribute toward a more inclusive, just, and caste-conscious media landscape in India.

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