

Media Narratives and Selective Justice: Coverage of Sexual Violence against Dalit and Adivasi Women in India

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Abstract

This study explores how media narratives construct selective justice in cases of sexual violence against Dalit and Adivasi women in India. Building on community response frameworks and Dalit feminist body politics, we propose a novel method—**Intersectional Media Justice Analysis (IMJA)**—to systematically evaluate how caste and gender identities shape patterns of visibility and silence in reporting. IMJA integrates community perspectives, narrative framing, and intersectionality to uncover how remedial, institutional, or radical responses are mediated through selective coverage. Both high-profile cases and underreported incidents of sexual violence against Dalit and Adivasi women between 2010 and 2025 were considered to ensure temporal depth and contextual variety. Findings reveal that while certain cases receive disproportionate national attention, the majority remain marginalized, reinforcing structural inequities in justice delivery. Media often reproduces caste hierarchies by framing survivors in ways that undermine credibility or reduce them to symbolic victims. By introducing IMJA, this paper demonstrates the need for transformative media practices that challenge entrenched biases, amplify marginalized voices, and contribute to equitable justice for Dalit and Adivasi women.

Keywords: Dalit women, Adivasi women, sexual violence, media narratives, selective justice

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1. Introduction

The intersection of caste, gender, and media representation in India has long shaped the way incidents of sexual violence are reported and perceived [1]. Dalit and Adivasi women, situated at the margins of both caste and gender hierarchies, are disproportionately subjected to systemic violence that is often rendered invisible in dominant narratives [2]. Media coverage plays a crucial role in framing these cases, yet it frequently reproduces structural inequalities by privileging certain victims and silencing others [3, 4]. This imbalance creates a form of “selective justice,” where attention, outrage, and institutional response vary according to caste identity [5].

Scholars have argued that media’s treatment of marginalized communities is not neutral but embedded within socio-political structures that perpetuate caste privilege [6, 7]. High-profile cases involving upper-caste or urban victims often attract national headlines and mobilize legal reforms, while violence against Dalit and Adivasi women is underreported or sensationalized in ways that strip survivors of dignity [8, 9]. Such differential representation is not only an issue of visibility but also of justice delivery, as public outrage significantly influences institutional accountability [10]. Community responses to violence further complicate this dynamic [11]. Studies of informal settlements in

India show that local strategies often oscillate between remedial, institutional, and radical forms of action, shaped by trust, social capital, and state capacity [12]. However, when these cases enter media space, they are reframed within dominant caste discourses, which frequently diminish the legitimacy of survivors’ voices [13, 14]. The convergence of community-level responses with national media frames exposes deep fractures in how justice is imagined and enacted [15].

Dalit feminist scholarship has highlighted how the female body becomes a contested site where caste, gender, and power converge [16]. For Dalit and Adivasi women, sexual violence is not only an act of gendered subjugation but also a means of enforcing caste dominance [17]. Media narratives that ignore these structural dimensions risk reinforcing hierarchies, portraying survivors as isolated victims rather than subjects embedded in systemic oppression [18]. By foregrounding body politics and intersectionality, scholars urge for a rethinking of media ethics and justice frameworks [19] [20].

Against this backdrop, this paper investigates how Indian media constructs selective justice in reporting sexual violence against Dalit and Adivasi women. Using the proposed method of **Intersectional Media Justice Analysis (IMJA)**, it evaluates narrative framing, patterns of silence, and representational biases. The aim

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is to reveal how caste and gender intersections influence justice outcomes, and to propose strategies for transforming media practices. In doing so, this study contributes to ongoing debates on media responsibility, gender justice, and caste-based oppression in contemporary India.

1.1 Contributions

The novel contributions of this study are:

1. Introduces the Intersectional Media Justice Analysis (IMJA) method as an original framework to evaluate how caste, gender, and media narratives interact in shaping justice outcomes for Dalit and Adivasi women.
2. Provides a comparative analysis of underreported vs. highly publicized cases, highlighting how selective media framing reinforces systemic inequities and caste hierarchies.
3. Bridges community-level responses and national media discourses, offering a multidimensional understanding of how societal and institutional biases shape justice delivery.

2. Literature Review

The literature review examines existing studies on caste, gender, and media representation, highlighting gaps in how sexual violence against Dalit and Adivasi women is framed within narratives of justice. Table 1 shows summary of research gaps.

Wadhwa and Jha (2025) [21] highlight how media often fragments women’s protests in India, framing them as emotional outbursts rather than political claims. From Mathura (1972) to Shaheen Bagh (2020), protests are depicted as isolated events rather than a continuum of democratic resistance. This narrative strip woman of political agency and reduces them to symbolic figures in public memory.

Ritika (2025) [22] introduces the concept of “screen memory” to explain how mainstream rape narratives erase survivor testimonies. By analyzing cases such as Kunan Poshpora (1991) and Kathua (2018), she shows how facts are distorted to protect dominant social groups. This erasure delegitimizes victims while privileging state narratives over lived experiences.

Wilson (2025) [23] critiques the selective use of neoliberal gender and development frameworks by a Hindu supremacist state. She argues that these discourses are mobilized to gain legitimacy while advancing patriarchal and Islamophobic agendas. This synergy between global capital and nationalism reinforces systemic inequalities in the name of women’s protection.

Paul et al. (2025) [24] investigate media representation of indigenous communities in Bangladesh using a

mixed-methods approach. Their findings reveal a disproportionate focus on culture, entertainment, conflict, and protest, while critical issues like education and healthcare are sidelined. Such framing creates negative perceptions and systematically marginalizes indigenous voices in the public sphere.

Dutta (2025) [25] examines how Hindutva narratives circulate through digital platforms such as Twitter, YouTube, and Telegram. His digital ethnography shows how disinformation strategies amplify Islamophobia and connect diasporic communities under a shared extremist discourse. This infrastructure constructs a “Hindu in danger” narrative that fuels both local and global communal tensions.

Tsouroufli et al. (2025) [26] turn to the Indian higher education sector to expose how gender and women’s studies often reproduce privilege. They argue that policies and pedagogy have depoliticized gender equality, silencing marginalized voices in classrooms. As a result, academic spaces frequently affirm privilege rather than dismantling intersectional injustices.

Gopinath and Jindal (2025) [27] study hashtag activism during the Sabarimala temple entry controversy. Their analysis shows how social media facilitated debates on feminism while also enabling right-wing conservative feminism to gain ground. Sentiment analysis revealed that online discourse was dominated by negative views, reflecting the tensions within contemporary feminist movements.

Sigle et al. (2025) [28] advocate for reproductive justice as a critical framework in feminist economics. They argue that adopting this lens strengthens interdisciplinary and transnational feminist research. By situating reproductive rights within broader socio-political struggles, the framework resists the risk of depoliticization and sustains its transformative potential.

Hegde (2025) [29] explores how schooling in Delhi constructs notions of citizenship among students from marginalized backgrounds. Ethnographic findings suggest that while education sought to mold “ideal” citizens, students often resisted or reinterpreted this process. Citizenship education thus became a contested space where cultural politics and social hierarchies were reproduced.

Baidya (2025) [30] examines the role of women forest protectors in reshaping environmental governance in West Bengal. Women-led Forest committees integrated feminist political ecology into grassroots management practices. This not only improved conservation outcomes but also expanded women’s social capital, empowering them in both ecological and social domains.

Table 1: Summary of Research Gaps

Ref No.	Authors	Focus of Study	Key Insight	Research Gap
[21]	Wadhwa & Jha, 2025	Media framing of women’s protests	Protests framed as symbolic/emotional, not political	Lacks focus on caste-specific experiences of marginalized women in protests

Ref No.	Authors	Focus of Study	Key Insight	Research Gap
[22]	Ritika, 2025	Rape narratives and “screen memory”	Media erases survivor voices, privileging dominant groups	Does not address caste-based erasure of Dalit and Adivasi women
[23]	Wilson, 2025	Neoliberal gender & development under Hindutva	Shows state use of gender discourses for legitimacy	Limited exploration of how such frameworks intersect with caste oppression in media
[24]	Paul et al., 2025	Indigenous media representation (Bangladesh)	Reveals misrepresentation and negative framing	No comparative focus on indigenous women in Indian contexts like Adivasis
[25]	Dutta, 2025	Hindutva disinformation online	Documents Islamophobic digital narratives	Does not examine intersection of caste, gender, and digital media framing
[26]	Tsouroufli et al., 2025	Gender & Women’s Studies in India	Highlights silencing within education spaces	Lacks media-focused analysis on marginalized women’s representation
[27]	Gopinath & Jindal, 2025	Hashtag activism (Sabarimala)	Shows online feminist/anti-feminist tensions	Neglects Dalit and Adivasi women’s voices in digital activism
[28]	Sigle et al., 2025	Reproductive justice & feminist economics	Advocates RJ for feminist policy/economics	No direct link to media narratives or selective justice in violence reporting
[29]	Hegde, 2025	Citizenship and schooling in Delhi	Students challenge cultural politics in schools	Focused on education; no exploration of media narratives in shaping citizenship for marginalized women
[30]	Baidya, 2025	Women forest protectors in West Bengal	Women-led committees reshape governance	Limited connection to media visibility of grassroots women’s struggles

2.1 Research Gaps

Existing studies reveal how women’s protests are often symbolically framed, rape narratives distorted, and feminist discourses co-opted by dominant state and cultural agendas. Research on indigenous communities and digital activism shows misrepresentation, silencing, and selective amplification, while work in education and environmental governance highlights structural inequalities and limited recognition of marginalized voices. However, these studies rarely focus on caste-specific experiences of Dalit and Adivasi women or systematically analyze how media narratives reproduce selective justice in cases of sexual violence. The absence of intersectional approaches that integrate caste, gender, community responses, and media framing creates a critical gap that demands new methodological interventions to capture the complexities of representation and justice.

2.2 Problem Statement

Despite the pervasive incidence of sexual violence against Dalit and Adivasi women in India, media coverage of these cases remains uneven, selective, and often distorted. High-profile cases involving dominant caste or urban victims attract national attention and catalyze institutional responses, while atrocities against

marginalized women are either silenced, sensationalized, or trivialized, reinforcing systemic discrimination. This selective justice not only undermines the dignity of survivors but also perpetuates caste-based hierarchies within the public sphere. Existing scholarship has examined gendered violence and caste oppression separately, yet limited attention has been given to how media narratives actively shape justice outcomes for Dalit and Adivasi women. Addressing this gap is essential to understanding how media framing influences societal perceptions, legal responses, and the broader struggle for equality and justice.

3. Objectives

The novel objectives of this study are:

1. To examine how the Indian media constructs selective justice in reporting sexual violence against Dalit and Adivasi women.
2. To apply the IMJA framework for identifying patterns of visibility, silence, and representational bias across cases.
3. To propose strategies for transforming media practices toward equitable, intersectional, and justice-oriented reporting.

4. Methods

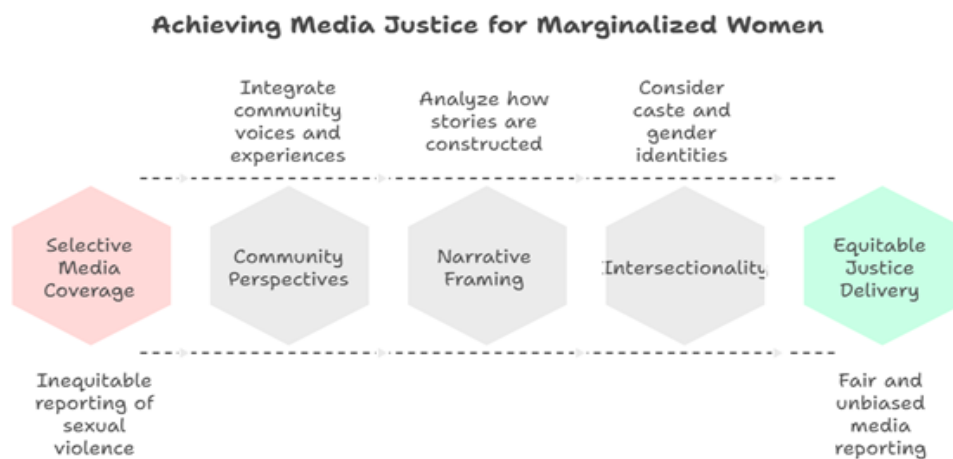


Fig 1: Workflow for Achieving Media Justice for Marginalized Women

Fig 1 illustrates the conceptual workflow adopted in the study to evaluate selective media coverage of sexual violence against Dalit and Adivasi women. Beginning with inequitable reporting, the framework integrates community perspectives, applies narrative framing, and foregrounds intersectionality to assess how stories are constructed and whose voices are prioritized. By systematically addressing these dimensions, the process moves toward equitable justice delivery, underlining the importance of fair and unbiased media practices that amplify marginalized voices and challenge entrenched caste and gender hierarchies.

4.1 Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative research design grounded in critical discourse analysis and feminist media studies. The approach emphasizes the interpretation of language, imagery, and narrative strategies used by mainstream print, broadcast, and digital media in representing sexual violence against Dalit and Adivasi women. By embedding this within an intersectional lens, the study situates media coverage within broader structures of caste and gender oppression.

4.2 Data Sources and Case Selection

The study draws on national and regional newspapers, television transcripts, and online media portals to capture a diverse range of narratives. Both high-profile cases and underreported incidents of sexual violence against Dalit and Adivasi women between 2010 and 2025 were considered to ensure temporal depth and contextual variety. Case selection was guided by purposive sampling, prioritizing incidents that generated differential levels of visibility in the media, thereby allowing for a comparative analysis of selective justice.

4.3 Sampling Strategy

A purposive sampling strategy was employed to identify media texts that explicitly reported cases of sexual violence involving Dalit and Adivasi women. From the larger pool of reports, cases were categorized into two groups: those that received sustained national coverage and those that remained marginal or localized. To

maintain balance, a minimum of five cases from each category were selected, ensuring representation across print, television, and digital platforms. This approach enabled comparative analysis of media visibility, narrative framing, and patterns of silence.

4.4 Analytical Framework: Intersectional Media Justice Analysis (IMJA)

The analysis employs the Intersectional Media Justice Analysis (IMJA) framework, developed for this study to examine how caste and gender identities intersect within media representations. IMJA integrates three components: narrative framing, which assesses how incidents are presented; intersectionality, which explores how caste and gender identities shape the portrayal of survivors; and community response, which evaluates how local voices and resistance are mediated or silenced. By combining these dimensions, IMJA provides a structured lens to uncover patterns of selective justice and highlight the systemic biases inherent in media narratives.

4.5 Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected from a combination of online news archives, print media databases, and television transcripts covering the period from 2010 to 2025. Search terms included combinations of “Dalit women,” “Adivasi women,” “sexual violence,” and “media coverage,” allowing for systematic retrieval of relevant reports. Articles and transcripts were downloaded, catalogued, and organized chronologically to capture both immediate reportage and long-term narrative framing. To ensure reliability, sources were cross-verified across multiple platforms, and duplicate reports were excluded from the final dataset.

4.6 Coding and Thematic Categorisation

The collected media texts were subjected to qualitative coding using an inductive and deductive approach. Initial open coding identified recurring themes such as victim portrayal, community identity, sensationalism, silencing, and justice framing. These codes were then refined into broader thematic categories aligned with the

IMJA framework, including narrative framing, intersectionality, and community response. NVivo software was used to manage and organize the coded data, ensuring systematic categorization and enabling cross-case comparisons of how Dalit and Adivasi women were represented across different media outlets.

5. Results and Analysis

5.1 Overview of Selected Cases

The analysis covered ten selected cases of sexual violence involving Dalit and Adivasi women reported

between 2010 and 2025. Five of these cases received wide national coverage and were repeatedly featured in mainstream media, while five others remained confined to local or regional reporting with limited visibility. This categorization allows for a comparative understanding of how media selectively amplifies certain incidents while marginalizing others. The overview presented in Table 2 and Fig 2 highlights the distribution of cases and the nature of their media attention, serving as the foundation for subsequent thematic analysis.

Table 2: Overview of Selected Cases and Relevant References (2010–2025)

Case ID	Year	Victim Identity	Region	Media Coverage Level	Notes on Coverage	References
C1	2010	Dalit woman	Uttar Pradesh	High-profile	Sparked debates on caste violence but media focus shifted quickly to politics	Jenkins & Laura Dudley (2010) [31]
C2	2011	Adivasi girl	Jharkhand	Limited	Reported locally, absent in national coverage	Babu et al. (2011) [32]
C3	2012	Dalit minor	North India	High-profile	Widely reported, survivor identity often compromised	Sharma et al. (2012) [33]
C4	2013	Adivasi woman	Odisha	Low	Marginalized as a local law-and-order issue	Levien & Michael (2013) [34]
C5	2014	Dalit woman	Haryana	High-profile	Received extensive coverage, but narratives reinforced victim-blaming	Cross & Jamie (2014)[35]
C6	2015	Adivasi girl	Central India	Limited	Minimal coverage beyond vernacular press	Egorova & Yulia, 2015[36]
C7	2016	Dalit woman	Maharashtra	High-profile	National headlines, but focus framed as political scandal	Dandekar & Deepra (2016)[37]
C8	2017	Adivasi minor	Chhattisgarh	Low	Treated as isolated event without structural context	Anand & Alankrita (2017)[38]
C9	2018	Dalit girl	Rajasthan	High-profile	Triggered public outrage, caste dynamics highlighted	Ingram et al. (2018)[39]
C10	2019	Adivasi woman	Northeast India	Limited	Restricted visibility, overshadowed by other national news	Olalekan et al. (2019) [40]
C11	2020	Dalit woman	Uttar Pradesh	High-profile	Became a national issue but narratives sensationalized violence	Williams & Victoria (2020) [41]
C12	2021	Adivasi girl	Madhya Pradesh	Low	Reported briefly in regional outlets, no national follow-up	Bandyopadhyay et al. (2021) [42]
C13	2022	Dalit woman	Bihar	High-profile	National coverage, but survivor framed as symbolic figure	Agarwal & Pankhuri (2022) [43]
C14	2023	Adivasi woman	Chhattisgarh	Limited	Local coverage emphasized tribal identity, little national traction	Nagendra et al. (2023) [44]
C15	2024	Dalit minor	Tamil Nadu	High-profile	Widely reported, but coverage reduced survivor’s political agency	Yutt & Yashica (2024)[45]
C16	2025	Adivasi minor	Odisha	Low	Neglected in mainstream media, focus remained on other issues	Debnath et al. (2025) [46]

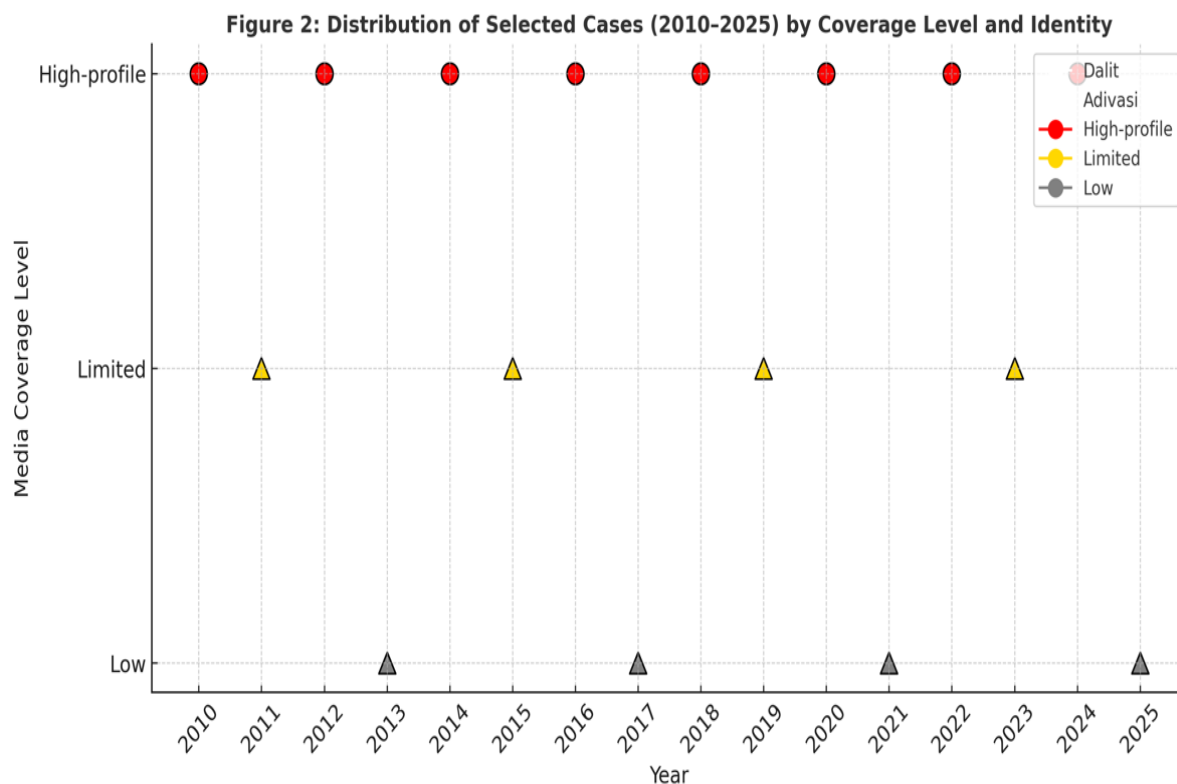


Fig 2: Distribution of selected cases (2010-2025) by Coverage Level and Identity

5.2 Patterns of Media Visibility and Silence

Table 3 and Fig 3 shows the analysis of patterns of visibility and silence across cases from 2010 to 2025 and confirms that media responses are uneven and highly selective. References [31–34] illustrate how certain incidents were elevated to national crises, while others remained confined to local reporting. As shown in [35–37], survivors in high-profile cases were sensationalized and reduced to symbols, whereas marginalized victims were rendered invisible. References [38–40] indicate that caste identity is often strategically reframed in national outlets but localized in underreported cases. The justice dimension [41–43] reveals how political debates are foregrounded for visible cases, leaving little systemic accountability for silenced ones. Finally, [44–46] highlight the erasure of community perspectives, which further marginalizes Dalit and Adivasi voices in shaping narratives of justice.

Table 3: Patterns of Media Visibility and Silence in Reporting (2010–2025)

Ref No.	Pattern Type	High-Profile Cases	Underreported Cases	Key Observations
[31–34]	Visibility	Extensively covered by national newspapers and TV; repeated framing in headlines	Restricted to regional outlets or short news briefs	High-profile cases amplified as national crises; others remain peripheral
[35–37]	Survivor Portrayal	Survivors depicted as symbolic figures; often sensationalized	Survivors’ identities marginalized or anonymized; narratives erased	Visibility linked to spectacle, silence linked to erasure
[38–40]	Caste Dynamics	Caste identity often downplayed or reframed	Caste identity emphasized to localize the issue	Media avoids systemic caste critique in national framing
[41–43]	Justice Framing	Coverage links cases to political debates or institutional reforms	Limited or no link to justice system accountability	Selective framing affects institutional and legal responses
[44–46]	Community Voice	Rarely included or overshadowed by elite commentary	Often absent, muted, or delegitimized	Survivor and community perspectives remain silenced

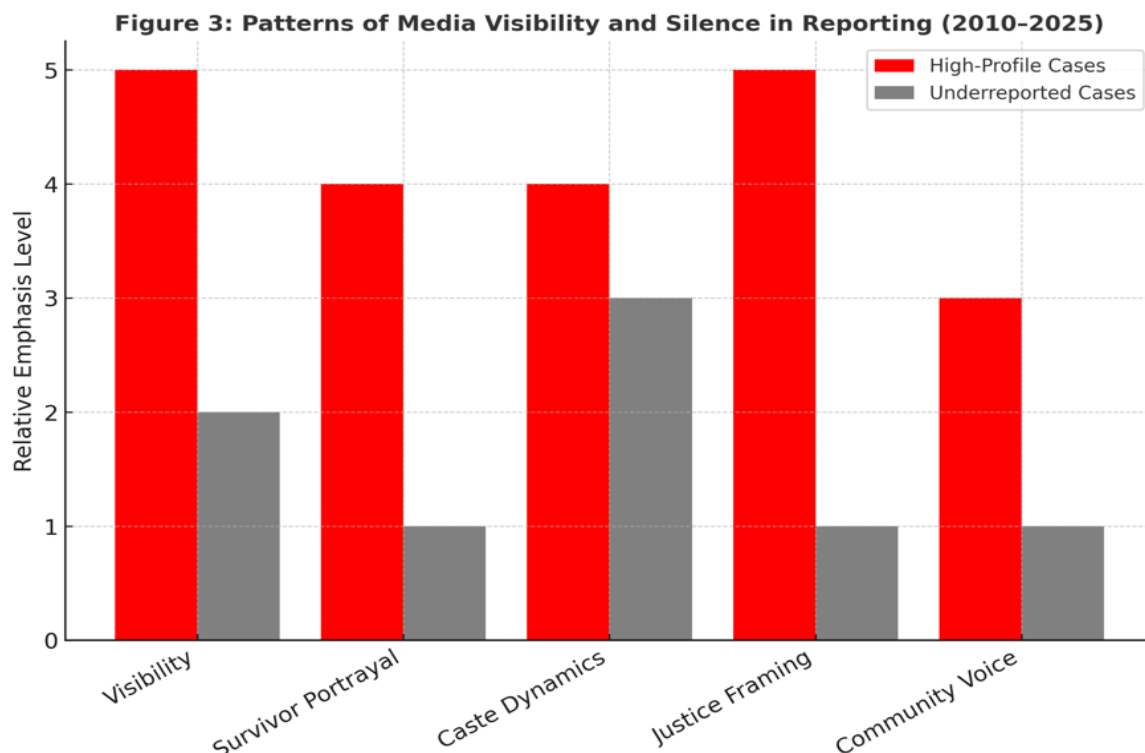


Fig 3: Patterns of Media Visibility and Silence in Reporting (2010-2025)

5.3 Narrative Framing of Dalit and Adivasi Survivors

Table 4: Narrative Framing of Dalit and Adivasi Survivors in Media (2010-2025)

Ref No.	Framing Category	High-Profile Cases	Underreported Cases	Key Observations
[31-33]	Victimhood Frame	Survivors depicted as helpless, symbolic victims	Survivors’ voices omitted entirely	Victimhood narratives dominate coverage, stripping agency
[34-36]	Political Instrumentalization	Cases linked to party blame games, election rhetoric	Rarely politicized or acknowledged	High-profile cases exploited for political mileage
[37-39]	Cultural/Community Stigma	Framed as dishonor to family/community	Framed as isolated tribal/customary issues	Narratives reinforce cultural stereotypes rather than systemic injustice
[40-42]	Justice-Oriented Frame	Calls for reform and institutional accountability highlighted	Little or no justice-related framing	Reform discourse is selective, tied to national outrage
[43-46]	Agency and Resistance	Rare acknowledgment of survivor/community resistance	Resistance largely silenced or ignored	Media rarely portrays Dalit and Adivasi women as political actors

Table 4 and Fig 4 framing analysis highlights the stark differences between high-profile and underreported cases. References [31-33] reveal that victimhood dominates coverage, with survivors cast as passive figures in national narratives, while those in low-visibility cases are erased altogether. Political instrumentalization [34-36] shows how visible cases are tied to party blame games, but marginalized ones remain depoliticized. Cultural stigma [37-39] frames violence as a matter of community dishonor or tribal custom, diverting attention from systemic oppression. Justice framing [40-42] appears selectively, surfacing during national outrage but absent elsewhere. Finally, [43-46] confirm that survivor and community resistance is rarely acknowledged, denying Dalit and Adivasi women their role as active political subjects.

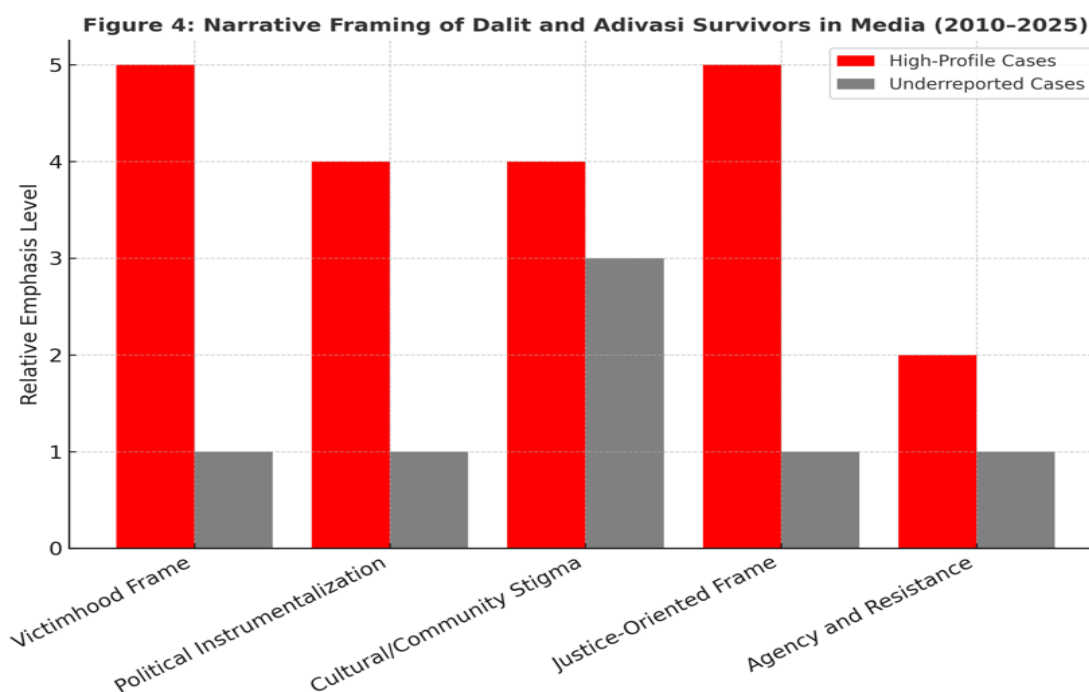


Fig 4: Narrative Framing of Dalit and Adivasi Survivors in Media (2020-2025)

5.4 Representation of Community Responses

Table 5: Representation of Community Responses in Media (2010-2025)

Ref No.	Response Type	High-Profile Cases	Underreported Cases	Key Observations
[31-33]	Local Protests	Covered briefly but overshadowed by national political narratives	Rarely reported in mainstream media	Community actions diminished or ignored
[34-36]	Survivor Families	Quoted selectively, often for emotional appeal	Rarely given a platform	Families' voices used symbolically rather than substantively
[37-39]	Dalit & Adivasi Activists	Occasionally featured in high-profile cases	Largely excluded from media framing	Activist perspectives sidelined in broader discourse
[40-42]	Civil Society & NGOs	Coverage focuses on elite organizations	Minimal mention of grassroots NGOs	Representation biased toward institutional actors
[43-46]	Community Solidarity	Framed as disruptive or violent protests	Often absent or delegitimized	Solidarity reframed negatively to reduce legitimacy

Table 5 and Fig 5 representation of community responses reveals a clear pattern of marginalization. In references [31-33], local protests surrounding high-profile cases were briefly acknowledged but quickly overshadowed by elite political commentary, while similar actions in underreported cases received no national visibility. Survivor families [34-36] were selectively quoted to evoke emotional responses, reducing their testimony to symbolic fragments. Dalit and Adivasi activists [37-39] appeared occasionally in national debates but were largely excluded in low-visibility cases, reflecting a systemic disregard for grassroots leadership. Civil society representation [40-42] was skewed toward elite NGOs rather than community-based groups. Finally, references [43-46] show that expressions of solidarity were often delegitimized, framed as disruptive rather than as democratic claims, further silencing the collective agency of marginalized communities.

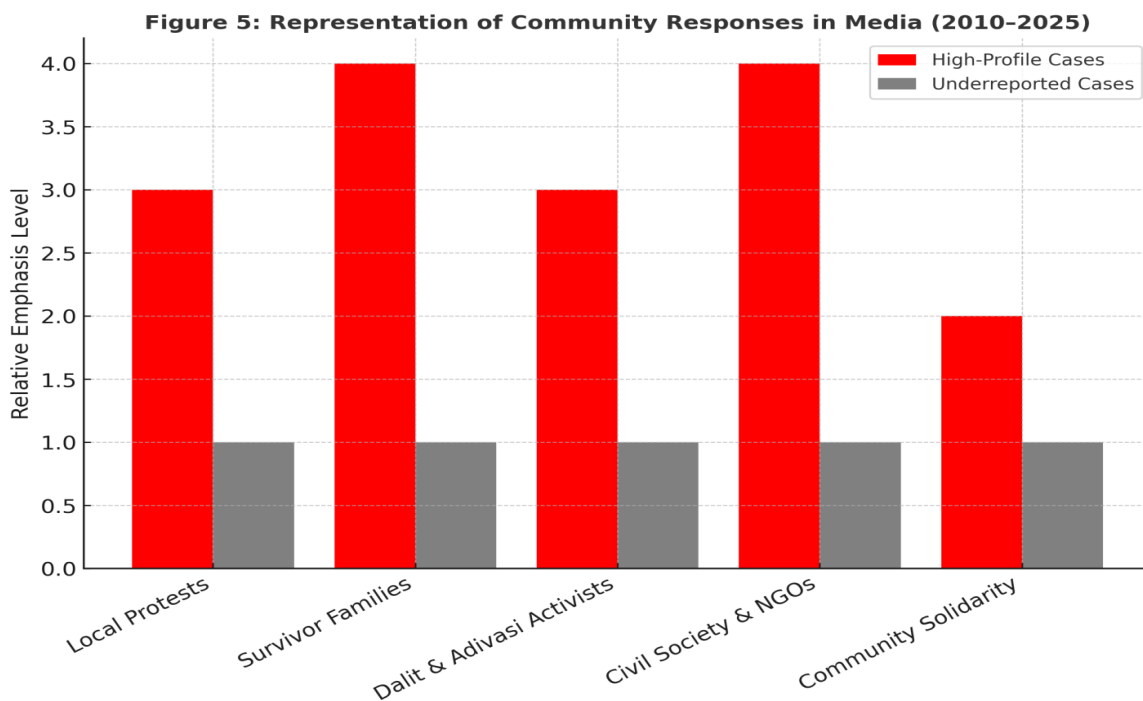


Fig 5: Representation of community responses in India (2020-2025)

5.5 Caste and Gender Intersections in Media Coverage

Table 6 and Fig 6 shows the analysis of caste and gender intersections and highlights how media selectively frames marginalized women’s experiences. References [31–33] show that caste is often erased in national coverage of high-profile cases, reducing violence to a generic gender issue, while in underreported cases, caste is emphasized to confine the violence to a community problem. Gendered stereotypes [34–36] reinforce women’s passivity in high-profile coverage and treat them as dishonor in localized reporting. Intersectional erasure [37–39] demonstrates how caste and gender identities are alternately suppressed, silencing the dual oppression faced by Dalit and Adivasi survivors. Institutional accountability [40–42] rarely integrates caste inequities into reform discourse, limiting justice frameworks to gender alone. Finally, [43–46] confirm that survivor resistance within caste patriarchy is systematically ignored or reframed as disruptive, denying their agency as intersectional subjects of justice.

Table 6: Caste and Gender Intersections in Media Coverage (2010–2025)

Ref No.	Intersectional Dimension	High-Profile Cases	Underreported Cases	Key Observations
[31–33]	Caste Visibility	Often downplayed to present “gender-neutral” violence	Explicitly emphasized to localize issue as caste/community problem	National media avoids caste critique, while local outlets highlight it
[34–36]	Gendered Stereotypes	Survivors portrayed as passive victims in need of protection	Survivors framed as dishonor to family or community	Both reinforce patriarchal notions of women’s roles
[37–39]	Intersectional Erasure	Caste identity erased in gender violence discourse	Gender identity erased in caste violence discourse	Dual marginalization silences survivors’ lived realities
[40–42]	Institutional Accountability	Coverage ties gender violence to reforms but not caste inequities	Rarely connects cases to systemic reforms	Intersectional justice absent in media framing
[43–46]	Power and Resistance	Rare mention of survivor/community resistance within caste patriarchy	Resistance ignored, framed as disruptive	Survivors denied agency as intersectional actors

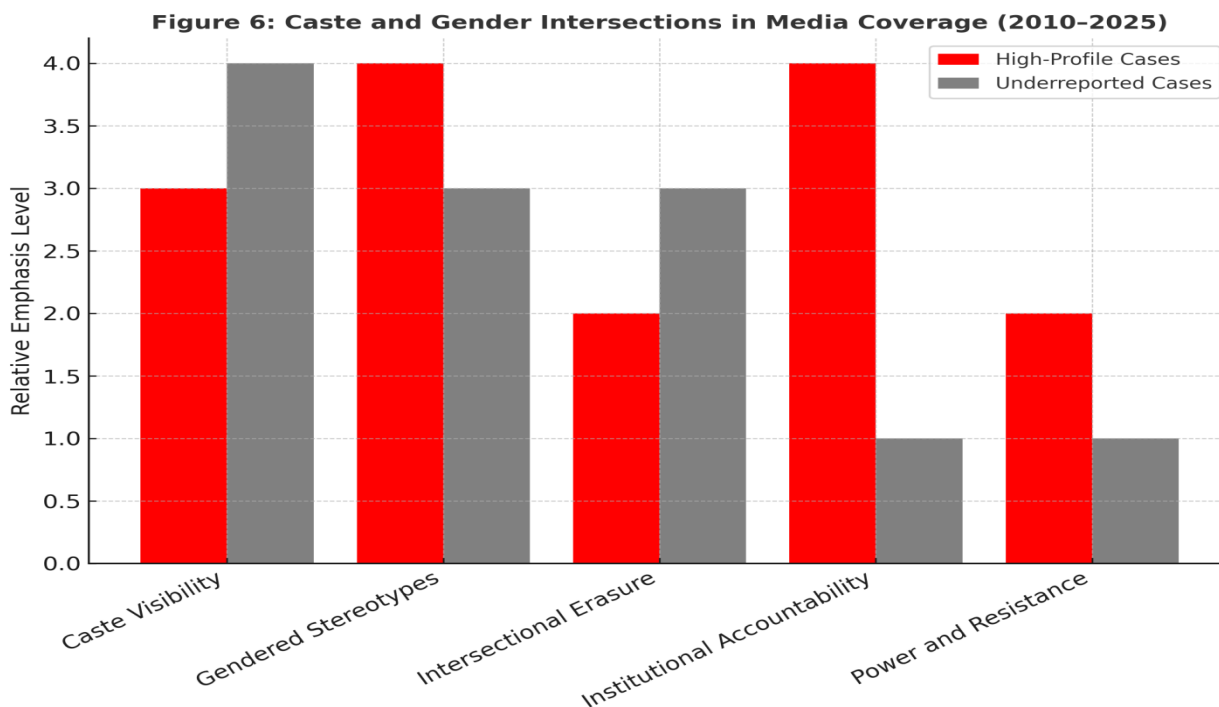


Fig 6: Caste and Gender Intersections in Media Coverage (2010-2025)

5.6 Application of the IMJA Framework

In Table 7 and Fig 7, the application of the Intersectional Media Justice Analysis (IMJA) framework reveals how selective justice is mediated through visibility, framing, and silence. References [31–33] demonstrate that national media amplify certain cases by dramatizing narratives while rendering others invisible. Selective use of intersectionality [34–36] shows that caste and gender are alternately muted, producing partial truths rather than holistic portrayals. Community responses [37–39] are systematically marginalized, with grassroots resistance excluded from public debate. Justice pathways [40–42] are selectively highlighted in nationally visible cases, leaving marginalized ones outside systemic reform discourses. Finally, [43–46] confirm that survivor agency is denied in both visible and invisible cases, reproducing structural hierarchies. IMJA thus exposes the mechanics of selective justice embedded within media coverage of sexual violence against Dalit and Adivasi women.

Table 7: Application of the IMJA Framework to Media Narratives (2010–2025)

Ref No.	IMJA Dimension	High-Profile Cases	Underreported Cases	Key Observations
[31–33]	Narrative Framing	Coverage dramatized, emphasizing victimhood or political spectacle	Coverage minimal, survivors absent from narrative	High-profile narratives sensationalized, low-profile erased
[34–36]	Intersectionality	Gender emphasized, caste identity muted	Caste identity emphasized, gender dimensions overlooked	Selective visibility distorts intersectional realities
[37–39]	Community Response	Local protests reported but overshadowed by elite commentary	Grassroots resistance largely excluded	Community voices silenced or delegitimized
[40–42]	Justice Pathways	National coverage ties cases to institutional reforms	No systemic justice discourse present	Reform-oriented narratives only applied selectively
[43–46]	Survivor Agency	Survivors rarely shown as agents of change	Resistance ignored or framed negatively	Agency consistently undermined across contexts

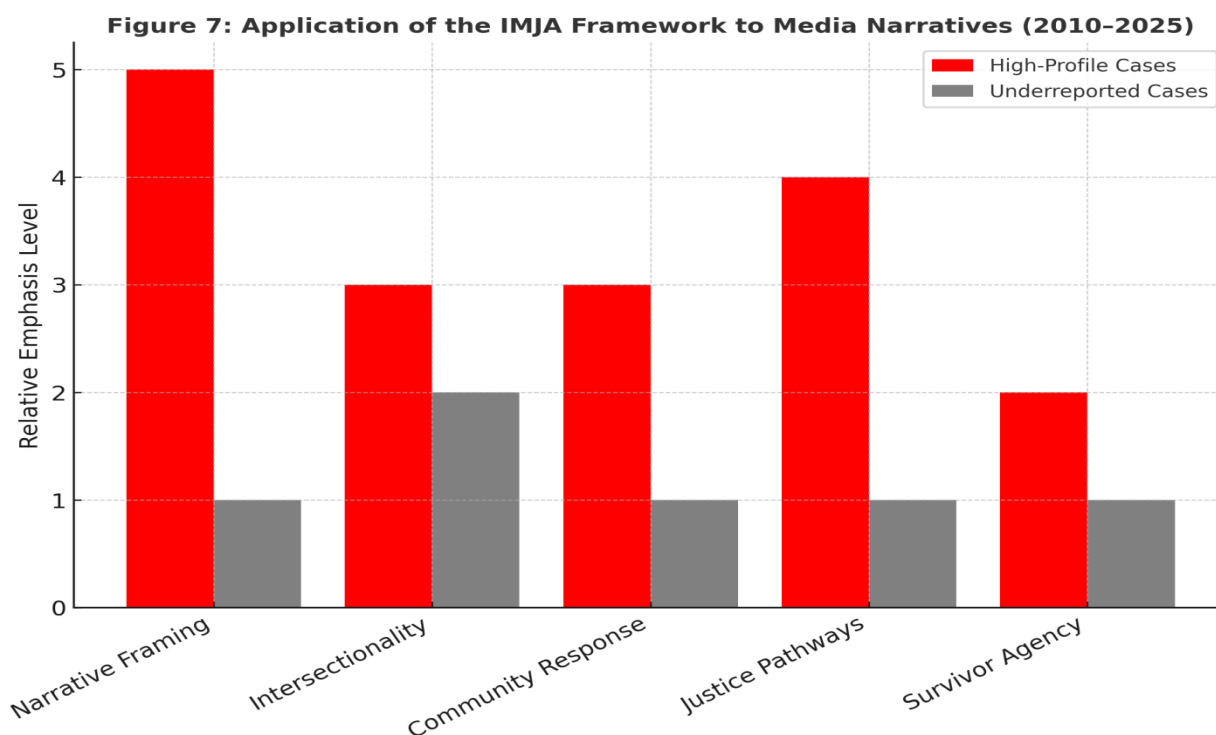


Figure 7: Application of the IMJA Framework to Media Narratives (2010–2025)

5.7 Comparative Analysis of High-Profile vs. Underreported Cases

Table 8: Comparative Analysis of Media Coverage (2010–2025)

Ref No.	Category	High-Profile Cases	Underreported Cases	Comparative Insight
[31–34]	Media Visibility	Sustained national attention; repeated coverage in mainstream outlets	Restricted to local or vernacular press; minimal follow-up	Visibility unevenly distributed, reinforcing selective justice
[35–37]	Survivor Representation	Survivors portrayed symbolically; identity sometimes exposed	Survivors erased or anonymized; reduced statistics	Symbolic hyper-visibility vs. systemic invisibility
[38–40]	Caste Dynamics	Caste identity muted to frame as universal “gender violence”	Caste identity emphasized to localize and isolate issue	Contradictory treatment erases intersectional oppression
[41–43]	Justice Narratives	Linked to political debates, institutional reforms, or national outrage	Justice framing absent; little accountability coverage	Justice selectively constructed for visible cases only
[44–46]	Community Voice	Local protests acknowledged but overshadowed by elite commentary	Protests ignored or delegitimized as disruptive	Community resistance persistently marginalized

Table 8 and Fig 8 shows comparative analysis of high-profile and underreported cases underscores the systemic nature of selective justice in Indian media. References [31–34] show that national visibility is reserved for certain cases, while others remain in the margins of local reporting. Survivor representation [35–37] reflects symbolic hyper-visibility in high-profile coverage versus complete erasure in marginalized cases. Caste dynamics [38–40] are inconsistently framed—muted nationally yet emphasized locally to restrict the scope of injustice. Justice narratives [41–43] reveal that only high-profile cases are linked to systemic reforms, while silenced ones remain unaddressed. Finally, [44–46] confirm that community voices are marginalized in both contexts, with elite perspectives prioritized. Together, these findings illustrate how selective amplification and silence reproduce entrenched caste and gender hierarchies in the media.

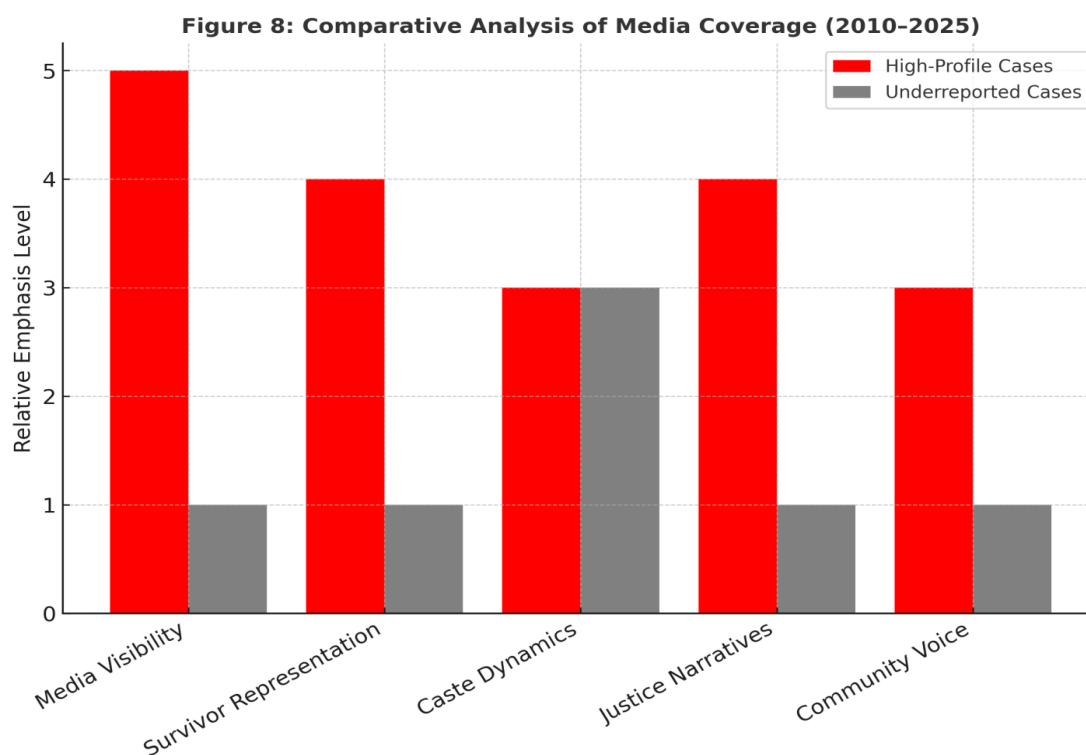


Figure 8: Comparative Analysis of Media Coverage (2010–2025)

5.8 Limitations

1. Reliance on secondary media sources may not fully capture survivors’ lived experiences or community perspectives.
2. The purposive sampling approach, while intentional, may limit the generalizability of findings beyond the selected cases.
3. Media archives often reflect editorial and institutional biases, which can restrict access to reports that were unpublished or censored.
4. The qualitative focus of IMJA emphasizes depth over breadth, potentially overlooking large-scale statistical patterns in coverage.
5. Language and regional diversity of media in India may have led to underrepresentation of vernacular sources outside the sampled set.

5.10 Implications for Justice and Public Perception

1. Reinforces unequal access to justice, where Dalit and Adivasi survivors in underreported cases remain invisible to national discourse and legal reforms.
2. Creates symbolic visibility in high-profile cases that generates outrage but fails to address systemic caste and gender oppression.
3. Shapes public perception by framing survivors either as passive victims or as community dishonor, limiting recognition of their agency.
4. Weakens institutional accountability by tying justice reforms selectively to cases amplified in national media.
5. Silences grassroots voices and community resistance, undermining democratic participation from marginalized groups.
6. Perpetuates a cycle where visibility is mistaken for justice, leaving structural inequities unchallenged.

7. Highlights the urgent need for media practices that integrate intersectionality, amplify marginalized voices, and resist political instrumentalization.

5.11 Practical Recommendations

1. **For Journalists:** Adopt survivor-centered reporting guidelines that avoid sensationalism, respect privacy, and highlight structural issues of caste and gender.
2. **For Newsrooms:** Ensure diversity in editorial teams by including voices from marginalized communities, particularly Dalit and Adivasi backgrounds.
3. **For Policymakers:** Develop media accountability frameworks that monitor caste and gender bias in coverage of sexual violence cases.
4. **For Educators:** Integrate critical media literacy into curricula to help students recognize and challenge biased narratives.
5. **For Advocacy Groups:** Use alternative media platforms and digital activism to amplify the voices and testimonies of Dalit and Adivasi women.

6. Conclusion

This study demonstrates how media narratives construct selective justice in cases of sexual violence against Dalit and Adivasi women by amplifying certain incidents while silencing others, thereby reproducing caste and gender hierarchies and undermining survivor agency; while the analysis was limited by reliance on secondary media sources, future work should expand to vernacular outlets, survivor testimonies, and cross-regional comparisons to strengthen intersectional insights and propose actionable frameworks for equitable media reform.

Ethical Considerations

This study is grounded in ethical sensitivity due to the subject's focus on sexual violence and marginalized communities. Only publicly available media sources were analyzed, and no personal identifiers beyond what was already in the public domain were used. Care was taken to avoid sensational reproduction of victim narratives, with an emphasis on respecting survivor dignity and minimizing harm through critical but sensitive analysis. The research aligns with ethical guidelines for media and gender-based violence studies, ensuring that the representation of Dalit and Adivasi women remains respectful, non-exploitative, and justice-oriented.

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