CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

3.3 CONTENT ANALYSIS

3.4 FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

3.5 IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW
3.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the study was to examine the coverage of Dalits' participation in politics in the southern districts of Tamil Nadu in Tamil dailies.

The aims of the study were to

- Examine the coverage of Dalit news particularly news about Dalits' political participation by the Tamil dailies.
- Explore the views and the opinions of the Dalit scholars and journalists regarding the coverage of Dalits political participation in Tamil newspapers.
- Seek the perceptions of Dalit politicians, newspaper reporters and editors about the Tamil dailies coverage of Dalits political participation.

RESEARCH QUESTION 1: THE EXTENT OF COVERAGE GIVEN TO THE PARTICIPATION OF DALITS IN POLITICS IN TAMIL DAILIES

a. What is the extent of news about the Dalits in Tamil dailies?

b. What are the various types of news concerning the Dalits being covered and not covered?

c. What kind of placement is accorded to the news pertaining to the Dalits?

d. What are the various types of news on the political participation of the Dalits being covered?

e. What is the vocabulary and lexical choice in the text of the news being covered about the Dalits?
RESEARCH QUESTION 2: THE PERCEPTIONS OF THE DALIT SCHOLARS AND JOURNALISTS REGARDING THE COVERAGE OF DALIT NEWS IN TAMIL NEWSPAPERS.

a. Which of the Dalit news are covered and which are neglected by the Tamil press?

b. Does the Dalits are stereotyped in the coverage of Tamil Press?

c. Do the newspapers attempt to uncover Dalit news?

d. How are the Dalit political parties and Dalit politicians are portrayed in the Tamil press?

RESEARCH QUESTION 3: POINT OF VIEW OF THE DALIT POLITICIANS, NEWSPAPER REPORTERS AND EDITORS ABOUT THE TAMIL DAILIES COVERAGE OF DALIT POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

a. Whether Dalit issues need special space in the newspapers?

b. What major issues of the Dalits political participation are covered in Tamil newspapers?

c. How is the Dalit political participation during election campaigns in Tamil newspapers portrayed?

d. What is the status quo of the Dalit journalists in Tamil dailies?

This chapter reports the research design, the method of data collection and data analysis of the study.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

In order to ascertain the relevant data and inferences, triangulation method was employed. Triangulation in social research is ‘the process of looking at something from several
different angles rather than in only one way' (Neuman, 2003). It is a key strategy for reducing the effects of research bias. Triangulation within research design pertains to four areas viz. the data, the investigator, the theory and the method.

Data triangulation in the current study refers to the empirical information gathered from three sources: quantitative and qualitative data collected through content analysis, qualitative data collected through a focus group study and semi-structured interviews. Triangulation of method constitutes a research strategy in which ‘different methods are employed for data gathering and analysis surrounding a single object of a study’ (Jensen & Jankowsi, 1995). Neuman (2003) suggests that the complementary mixing of methods can occur in several ways, including sequentially, as in this study, where it is seen as ‘first one then the other’. The current study involves a content analysis, focus group discussion and qualitative in-depth interviews with Dalit politicians, editors and reporters of sample newspapers.

Both qualitative and quantitative research methods are used in the current study, strengthening research data collection and analysis through triangulation. The use of content analysis, focus group study and in-depth interview data adds to the external validity contributing to the process of case study. The following sections will inform further on specific research procedures used in each phase of the study.

**STUDY PHASE 1**

The whole study was structured in three phases. The first phase was to study the coverage of the political participation of the Dalits in Tamil dailies. In this phase, Content analysis was used to examine the research question 1. Following the traditions of Kerner Commission, Van Dijk, Wolsfeld et al, Dilara Sezgin and Melissa A. Wall, Signorelli where content analysis technique was used primarily in studying coverage of minority in
the media, this study employed content analysis method. Both qualitative and quantitative
data were collected through content analysis technique.

**STUDY PHASE 2**

The second phase was data collection from focus group discussion. It was resolved to use
this methodology to explain the research question 2. As focus group discussions have
been considered as a research method for studying media audiences and it is used as a
complementary method of data collection. Focus group interviews are invaluable both in
terms of providing pointers to relevant issues, themes and concerns (Hansen, 2006 &
Jensen, 2005), it was incorporated to get comprehensive data pertaining to the coverage
of Dalits in Tamil dailies.

**STUDY PHASE 3**

The third phase was the construction and the application of in-depth interviews. To
interpret the research question 3, in-depth interview was incorporated in the study. The
interviews were held with newspaper editors, reporters, and Dalit political leaders.
The first research question was addressed by applying content analysis technique to study
the coverage of Tamil dailies about the Dalits participation in politics in the southern
districts of Tamil Nadu.

3.3 **CONTENT ANALYSIS**

According to Wimmer & Dominick (2003) most content analysis in mass media involves
multistage sampling. This process consists of three stages: sampling of content sources,
selection of dates and selection of content.
SAMPLING STAGE 1: SELECTION OF TAMIL NEWSPAPERS

In this study, the Tamil newspapers, namely Dinamalar, Dinamani and Dina Thanthi were chosen by purposive sampling method. They are the largest circulated dailies in Tamil Nadu based on the Audit Bureau of Circulation. According to January 2004 reports of the Audit Bureau of Circulation, Dina Thanthi had a circulation of (10,40,800), Dinamalar (6,70,400) and Dinamani (3,50,500). Also all the newspapers have their roots in the southern districts. The founder of Dina Thanthi, Si.Pa.Adhithanar was the son of the soil and he started the newspaper from Madurai. The founder of Dinamalar, T.V.Ramasubbaiyer belonged to Nagarcoil shifted Dinamalar from Travancore to Tirunelveli. The initial editors of Dinamani T.S.Chockalingam and A.N.Sivaraman were staunch congressmen of Tirunelveli shifted later to chennai and joined dinamani.

SAMPLING STAGE 2: SELECTION OF DATES

In many studies, the time period from which the issues are to be selected is determined by the goal of the project. The goal of the present study is to examine the coverage of Dalits participation in politics in Tamil dailies. Hence the study is restricted to the period during 1999 to 2004 as it was very crucial for Dalits political participation. The Dalit political parties Puthiya Thamizhagam, Viduthalai Siruthaigal Ammaippu was very active during this period. Puthiya Thamizhagam was active in raising voices for the Manjolai tea estate workers. Viduthalai Siruthaigal Ammaippu entered democratic politics by contesting in the elections. The Dalits were opposed by the caste Hindus to contest in the four reserved panchayat seats. Regular and by-elections were conducted during this period but Dalits gained nothing from this. In 1999, Puthiya Thamizhagam and Viduthalai Siruthaigal Ammaippu joined hands with Tamil Maanila Congress in 1999 Lok sabha elections. But in 2004 Lok Sabha elections, no major political parties in Tamil
Nadu invited the Dalit political parties for coalition. Hence this period was significant to study the coverage of Dalits participation in politics in Tamil dailies.

**SAMPLING STAGE 3: SELECTION OF CASE STUDIES**

The content for the analysis were selected from the dailies published during 1999 to 2004. The issues for the case studies were selected from the southern districts since the research was done in the context of the Dalit issues and the Dalit political participation in the southern districts. Caste clashes and caste based violence against Dalits were excessive in the southern districts of Tamil Nadu viz. Tirunelveli, Tuticorin, and Madurai. Dalit panchayat leaders were not allowed to exercise their democratic rights. In Madurai and Tirunelveli districts, some of the Dalit panchayat presidents were even murdered. Dalit political parties like *Puthiya Thamizhagam* and *Viduthalai Siruthaigal Ammaippu* had their roots in the southern districts. *Puthiya Thamizhagam* was expanded mostly in Tirunelveli and Tuticorin districts. *Viduthalai Siruthaigal Ammaippu* strengthened its base in Madurai district. Hence the case studies were selected within the time frame of 1999 to 2004 and from the southern districts.

Case study method was done to get an in-depth understanding of the research topic that provided enormous wealth of information and details about the research topic. They were case study 1 - the coverage of Tirunelveli massacre in Tamil dailies, case study 2 - the coverage of Dalits political participation in the panchayat elections in Tamil dailies, case study 3 - the coverage of everyday reporting of Dalits in Tamil dailies and the case study 4 - the coverage of Dalits' participation in 14th Lok Sabha elections in Tamil dailies.

**RATIONALE FOR CASE STUDY OF TIRUNELVELI MASSACRE**

The case study on “Tirunelveli Massacre” has provided a scientific approach to the understanding of the coverage of Tamil newspapers on Dalits political participation.
particularly the procession led by the Dalit political party PT along with other major parties in Tamil Nadu. Tirunelveli Massacre led to the formation of third front in Tamil politics. TMC, PT and communist parties formed the third front and they faced the 1999 Lok Sabha elections. The Dalit movement *Viduthalai Siruthaihal Ammaippu* led by Thol.Thirumavalavan contested in the elections for the first time. Hence it is inevitable to study the coverage of this incident.

**RATIONALE FOR CASE STUDY OF PANCHAYAT ELECTIONS**

The case study on “Panchayat elections” helped understand the coverage of Dalits participation in local body politics particularly at the panchayat level. Here participation refers to the nomination process and contest of Dalit candidates.

**RATIONALE FOR CASE STUDY OF EVERYDAY REPORTING**

The case study on “everyday reporting” was used to observe the nature and extent of the coverage of Dalit news in Tamil newspapers.

**RATIONALE FOR CASE STUDY OF 14TH LOK SABHA ELECTIONS**

The case study on “14th Lok Sabha elections” helped understand the nature of coverage of Dalits participation in parliamentary politics. In 2004 Lok Sabha elections, no major political parties in Tamil Nadu invited the Dalit political parties for coalition. Hence it was chosen for the study.

**METHODOLOGY OF CASE STUDY ON THE COVERAGE OF TIRUNELVELI MASSACRE**

To study the coverage of ‘Tirunelveli massacre’ in Tamil newspapers, two Tamil dailies, namely, *Dina Thanthi* and *Dinamani* were chosen. The Chennai editions of these two newspapers were selected for the study under the impression that they reflect the state level perspective The main purpose of the analysis of reporting was to develop concepts for further analysis and to interpret the coverage of Dalits in the media during a specific
incident. The researcher employed a purposive sampling method for the selection of issues. One month's newspaper issues from the date after the crisis i.e., from 24th July 1999 to 23rd August 1999 were chosen for the study. All the articles, editorials, letters to the editors concerning the incident in the two Tamil dailies were analysed content wise. Every page of every issue in the sample was analysed for news, editorials, comments features, and letters to the editor pertaining to the Tirunelveli massacre. Measurements were made in column centimeters.

CATEGORIES AND VARIABLES OF THE STUDY

Five content categories were developed drawing on those in previous studies (Sands (2003), Wilson & Guteirrez (1985), Mahtani (2001)). The content analysis identified the content categories and their variables. The content categories were measured in terms of the frequency of Dalit news in newspapers and the columns devoted to it (Bansal, 2002 & Vilanilam 1975), placement, lexical choices of headlines (Van Dijk, 1995) and themes. The analysis of vocabulary or lexical choice continues to be a central component of many content analysis, often drawing also on a wider linguistic and discourse analytic framework. Van Dijk, for example commences his discourse analytic study of dailies reporting of race with a lexical content analysis of headlines. In his words, headlines not only globally define or summarize an event, they also evaluate it. Hence, the lexical style of headlines has ideological implications.

- "News" is the timely report of events, facts, and opinions that interest a significant number of people. Here "News" also means a direct, matter-of-fact rendering of events related to Dalits.
- Space – The news stories with 5 and above 5 columns, one column and box news, between 2 – 4 columns
- Placement - Front Page, Other pages
• Headlines - death, mutiny, violence, drowning

METHODOLOGY OF CASE STUDY ON THE COVERAGE OF DALITS POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN THE PANCHAYAT ELECTIONS

To study the coverage of Dalits political participation in the Panchayat elections, three Tamil dailies, namely, *Dina Thanthi*, *Dinamalar* and *Dinamani*, were chosen. The researcher employed a purposive sampling method for the selection of issues. This case study was chosen to study the participation of Dalits in panchayat i.e. local body elections in terms of nomination and contest in elections.

In this study, the researcher analysed the content published between the date of announcement of election and the date of resignation of Dalit Presidents during the two bye-elections held in 2002 and 2004. The Madurai editions of these newspapers were used for the study. All the articles, editorials, letters to the editors concerning the event in the three dailies were analysed.

CATEGORIES AND VARIABLES OF THE STUDY

Five content categories were developed drawing on those in previous studies. The content analysis identified the content categories and their variables. The content categories were frequency of news, Space, lexical choice, accuracy of reporting, sensitiveness of reporting and neglected issues. The content categories accuracy of reporting, sensitiveness of reporting and neglected issues was developed by the researcher for this case study.

• Space – space allotted in col/cm for news and headlines

• Lexical choice - Use of a word with positive or negative connotations

• Accuracy of reporting- Spell checking of the names of the constituencies

• Sensitiveness of reporting – Terminologies used to refer Dalits as *Adi dravida*, *SC* and *Dalit*
• Neglected issues – Whether the terms untouchability, PCR act and Panchayat act were included in the news stories.

METHODOLOGY OF CASE STUDY ON THE COVERAGE OF EVERYDAY REPORTING OF DALITS IN TAMIL DAILIES

To study the everyday reporting of Dalits in Tamil dailies with respect to the 14th Lok Sabha elections, two dailies namely Dinamalar and Dina Thanthi were selected. The sample period for the study was the first half year of 2004. The samples of the composite week from January 2004 to June 2004 were taken. Tirunelveli editions of the newspapers were taken for the study.

CATEGORIES AND VARIABLES OF THE STUDY

Five content categories were developed drawing on those in previous studies. The content analysis identified the content categories and their variables. The content categories were frequency of news, space, placement, photographs and Themes.

- Frequency of news - within the sampling period, the appearance of the news story
- Space – The news stories with 5 and above 5 columns, one column and box news, between 2 – 4 columns
- Placement - Front Page, Other pages
- Themes - Political news, Dr. Ambedkar, Education, Culture, Human rights violation, Negative news and Dalits support to other parties

METHODOLOGY OF CASE STUDY ON THE COVERAGE OF DALITS’ PARTICIPATION IN 14TH LOK SABHA ELECTIONS

The researcher employed a purposive sampling method for the selection of issues. One month’s newspaper copies before the date of election i.e from April 10 to May 10 were chosen for the study. All the articles, editorials, letters to the editors concerning the incident in the three newspapers Dinamalar, Dinamani and Dina Thanthi were content
analysed. Here the chennai editions of these newspapers were selected to study the coverage of Dalits political participation at state level.

CATEGORIES AND VARIABLES OF THE STUDY

5 content categories were developed drawing on those in previous studies. The content analysis identified the content categories and their variables. The content categories were frequency of news, space, placement, origin/source of story, attitude of the news coverage and Themes.

- **Space** – The news stories with 5 and above 5 columns, one column and box news, between 2 – 4 columns
- **Placement** - Placement under the Geographic Header – Local, National, International, State, Regional and None
- **Origin/Source of story** - Wire/News Service, Staff, Reader and Unknown
- **Attitude toward Dalit** – Favorable, Unfavorable, Mixed and Neutral
- **Dalit Political Participation** – Contest, Nomination, Campaign, Procession, Coalition, Political Leader, Political Party, Reserved Seat

UNITS OF ANALYSIS

The search keywords were “Dalits, Scheduled Caste, Adi Dravida, oppressed people, lower castes”. The units of analysis were General news, Editorials, Letters to the Editor, Photographs and Interpretative Pieces. The coding schedule was prepared and finalised in consultation with peer group scholars in the university, research supervisor, and journalists.

DATA COLLECTION

Data collection for the content analysis was achieved by coding each item within a sample newspaper directly into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet across each of the
categories of the content analysis. The direct application of coding into a computer
limited errors in transferring data for analysis.

DATA ANALYSIS

Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the data collected from the case studies
employing content analysis. Descriptive statistics such as frequency distributions,
percentage distributions, percentages, graphs, were used.

GENERALIZABILITY

Generalizability of findings is the extent to which findings may be applied to other cases,
'usually to a larger set that is the defined population from which the study’s sample has
been drawn' (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 12). This study used multiple cases within a large case
to increase generalizability.

3.4 FOCUS GROUP STUDY

The main concern of this study was to explore the views and opinions of the Dalit
scholars and journalists regarding the coverage of the Dalit issues in Tamil newspapers.
The objectives of focus groups were to gain an understanding of the range of opinions
held about several key issues related to the newspaper coverage of Dalit issues and Dalit
political participation and to explore journalists’ perceptions and attitudes towards
reporting.

The issues explored in the Focus Groups were:

• which of the Dalit issues were covered and which were not covered
• portrayal of Dalit politicians and political parties in Tamil newspapers
• journalists experience in reporting the Dalit issues
• exclusion of the Dalits in the news coverage
• stereotyping of Dalits in the newspapers

The focus group workshop provided an in-depth analysis of implicit meanings related to the Dalit images in Tamil dailies as perceived by the researchers and journalists. The researchers were not from the similar academia but were drawn from different fields like History, Economics, Media, Sociology but Dalits scholars constituted the majority. The different elements in the composition of the research scholars were deliberated and finally assumed to be homogenous in nature. The FGD was conducted in Tirunelveli at a local meeting hall on 22.02.08. The group discussion was conducted in both Tamil and English. The research scholars were avid watchers of Tamil newspapers in Tamil Nadu and also freelancing to the Dalit magazines. The sample journalists were drawn from various Tamil newspapers. One focus group was organized with 11 participants. Among them six were research scholars and five journalists. All but one of the participants was a female journalist. The duration of the session was kept flexible to allow unhindered flow of discussions. Some of the important questions raised included whether

- newspapers mentioned or referred to untouchability in the coverage of Dalit issues,
- newspapers give due prominence to Dalit political parties,
- the Dalit issues appeared in the front pages of the newspapers,
- the Dalit issues which got space in Tamil Newspapers.

The opinions that emerged from the deliberations were recorded verbatim, transcribed and annexed in the study. The data was categorized and analyzed by labeling the responses, statements, arguments and exchanges recorded in the interview transcripts. The categories were the headings used in the interview guide. They were the Dalit issues which were covered and not covered by the Tamil Dailies, portrayal of Dalit politicians and political parties in Tamil newspapers, the journalists experience in reporting Dalit
issues, the exclusion of Dalits in the news coverage, the reasons for the misrepresentation of Dalits in news coverage and stereotyping of Dalits in the newspapers.

LIMITATIONS OF FOCUS GROUP STUDY

The objective of this research initiative was exploratory and therefore best addressed qualitatively. Qualitative research provides insight into the range of opinions held within a population, rather than the weights of the opinions held, as would be measured in a quantitative study. The results of this type of research should be viewed as indicative rather than projectable. The intent of this research was to provide insights into the range of issues and opinions, and not the weight of those issues, among the target population. However, the FGD would provide collaborative proof of the empirical study conducted for this purpose.

3.5 IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

Using a purposive sampling, editors and reporters of the sample newspapers, Dalit politicians were identified and deliberately sought as being able to provide the most comprehensive perspective. Data were gathered from semi-structured face to face and phone interviews. Respondents were asked the same set of open ended guiding questions. Each interview lasted between 20 minutes and an hour.

This technique was used to collect qualitative data by setting up a situation (the interview) that allowed a respondent the time and scope to talk about their opinions on a particular subject. The focus of the interview was decided by the researcher and there were specific areas the researcher was interested in exploring.

The objective was to understand the Dalit politicians, newspaper reporters and editors point of view about the Tamil dailies coverage of Dalit political participation. It used
open-ended questions which were prepared by the researcher. The researcher tried to build a rapport with the respondent and the interview was like a conversation. Questions were asked when the interviewer felt it appropriate. The wording of questions was not necessarily the same for all respondents.

The purpose of the in-depth interview was three-fold as they provided –

a. data on the roles of editors and reporters in the coverage of Dalits participation in politics

b. the views of the Dalit politicians on the coverage of Dalit political participation in Tamil newspapers and

c. a resource for comparison with the results of the content analysis.

Dalit politicians like Krishnasamy and Ravikumar were selected purposively as they belonged to the major Dalit political parties like Puthiya Thamizhagam, Viduthalai Siruthaigal Ammaippu. Reporters and editors were selected from the sample Tamil newspapers namely Dinamalar, Dinamani and Dina Thanthi.
Methodological Framework

Dalit Issues and the Tamil Press:
The Coverage of Dalits Participation in Politics in
the Southern Districts Of Tamil Nadu

Triangulation
(Research design)

Phase 1: Content Analysis

Research question 1: extent of coverage given to the Participation of Dalits in Politics in Tamil Dailies

a. What is the extent of news about Dalits in Tamil dailies?
b. What are the various types of news concerning Dalits being covered and not covered?
c. What kind of placement is accorded to international news pertaining to Dalits?
d. What are the various types of news on political participation of Dalits being covered?

Phase 2: Focus Group Discussions

Research question 2: The Perceptions of the Dalit scholars and Journalists regarding the coverage of Dalit news in Tamil newspapers.

a. What types of Dalit news are covered and what are not by the Tamil dailies?
b. Does the coverage of Dalits stereotyped in the Tamil dailies?
c. Do the newspapers attempt to not cover Dalit news?
d. How are Dalit political parties and Dalit politicians portrayed in the coverage of Tamil dailies?

Phase 3: In depth Interviews

Research question 3: Point of view of the Dalit politicians, newspaper reporters and editors about the Tamil dailies coverage of Dalit political participation

a. Whether Dalit issues need special space in the newspapers?
b. What major issues of Dalits political participation are covered in Tamil newspapers?
c. How are Dalit political participation during election campaigns in Tamil newspapers portrayed?
d. What is the status quo of the Dalit journalists in Tamil dailies?
Steps in Content Analysis

Content Analysis

Print Medium

Tamil Newspapers
(Universe)

Multistage Sampling

Selection of Tamil Newspapers

Dinamalar, Dinamani,
Dina Thanthi
(Sample)

Selection of Dates

Time Period 1999 - 2004

Selection of Case studies

1. Tirunelveli Massacre
   (24th July to 23rd August)
2. Panchayat Elections
   (Between Date of announcement of elections and Date of resignation in 2002 and 2004)
3. Everyday Reporting
   (Composite week from Jan 2004 to June 2004)
4. 14th Lok Sabha Elections
   (April 10 2004 to May 10 2004)