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## **Revisiting the ‘Observed Vulnerability’: How Media Representation Frames Vulnerability**

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### **Abstract**

Aiming to advance the notion of ‘observed vulnerability’ (Hill & Sharma, 2020; Sepehr et al., 2023), and drawing on Stuart Hall’s representation theory (2013), we investigate how Indian migrant workers’ situation during COVID-19 lockdowns was observed by media. The findings of our critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2013) underscore how migrant workers’ representation during and beyond the pandemic results in marketplace exclusion (Saren et al., 2019), representing them as ‘outlaws’, which exposed them to different forms of ‘justified violence’ (Varman & Vijay, 2018). Theoretically, this study advances the current conceptualisation of observed vulnerability based on empirical evidence. Practically, this study provides marketing practice and especially public policy with insights about how the observation of consumer vulnerability can obstruct or facilitate policy initiatives to deal with vulnerability, especially in its systemic forms.

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