

### INTRODUCTION

#### What are large-scale solar projects (LSSP)?

- Utility-scale projects which are situated on **thousands of acres of land** and produce 10 megawatts (MW) or more renewable energy
- 3000 solar panels need to be installed for 1 MW of solar energy capacity
- **Requires large swathes of contiguous land for installations**

### THE CASE OF INDIA

- **4<sup>th</sup>** rank globally in renewable energy capacity
  - **500** Giga-Watt national renewable target for 2030
  - **42** large scale solar parks exist in India
  - **87%** of India's new solar capacity in 2022 is from LSSP
- Economies-of-scale, cheap equipment & installation costs, beneficial political climate with ambitious climate goals led to massive proliferation of LSSP in the country
- Through literature review, unregulated land acquisition strategies state & non-state actors and procedural injustice in LSSP were identified. For example:
- **Kasargod LSSP** : Panchayats & Adivasis opposition reduced a 200 MW LSSP to 50 MW (Bedi, 2019)
  - **Charanka mega SP**: Procedural injustices, lack of participation (Yenneti and Day, 2015, 2016)
  - **Pavagada LSSP**: Unequal distribution of socio-economic benefits (Ghosh et al., 2022)
- Newspapers play an influential role in societies by framing opinions and creating awareness about new energy systems. Very few media scans done about India.

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How are large scale solar projects (LSSP) represented in Indian newspapers?
  - a) What are the major themes (via content analysis) that are being reported about LSSPs in Indian newspapers?
  - b) Over the past 5 years, how did major Indian newspapers cover social conflicts such as land ownership issues, lack of public engagement in LSSPs, and benefits and disadvantages?
2. What are the implications for equitable energy transitions in India?

### METHODOLOGY

#### Step 1: Newspaper selection & article shortlisting

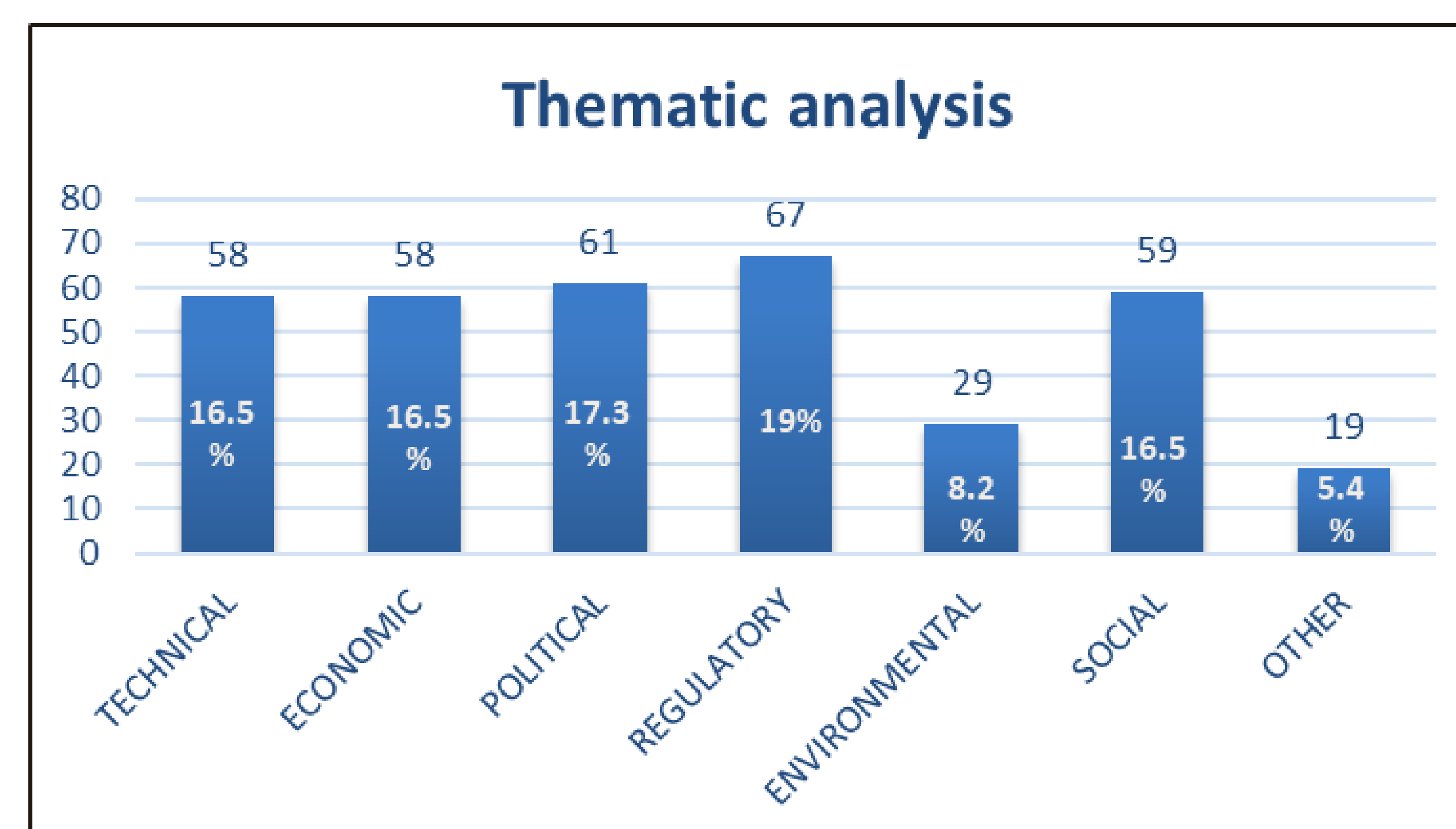
- Criteria: High readership & circulation rates, English language, available in Global Newsstream database
- Newspapers selected – **The Hindu, Times of India, Hindustan Times, Indian Express, The Mint**
- Full text keyword search performed with 'last 5 years' filter: solar AND (farm OR park OR project OR power OR "power farm" OR "large scale" OR "utility scale" OR "plant" OR "mega" ) AND (farmer OR local OR land OR rural OR village OR state OR district)

#### Step 2: Coding in nVivo

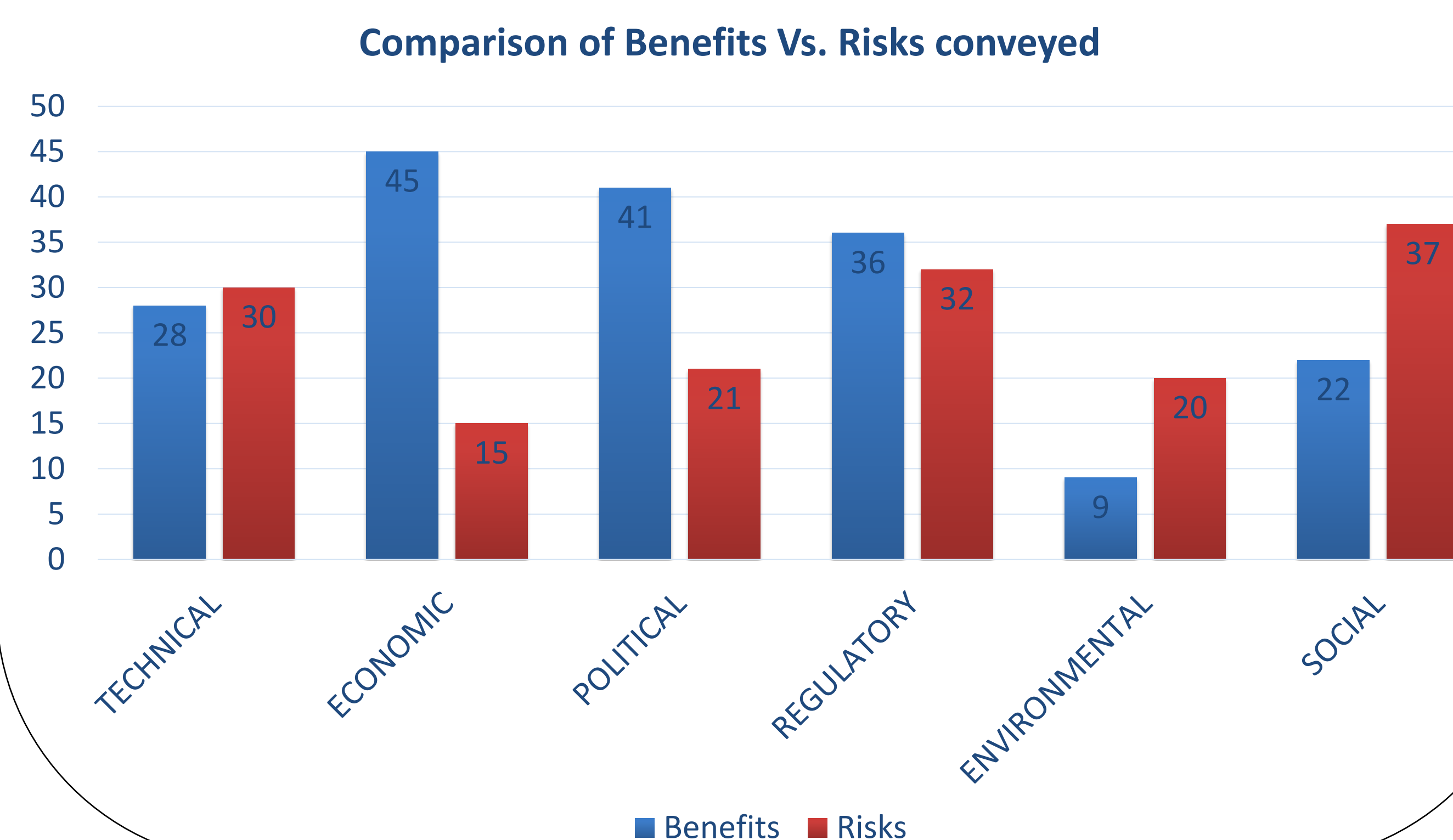
- News articles (n=106) were imported into nVivo V12 qualitative data analysis software
- Coding was done to categorize the content into **six pre-defined themes** based on the **enhanced SPEED (Socio-political evaluation of energy deployment) framework** (Stephens et al., 2013). Benefits & risks were identified.

### RESULTS – NEWS CONTENT

1. **Top themes:** Regulatory, political and economic  
Lesser-reported theme: Environmental



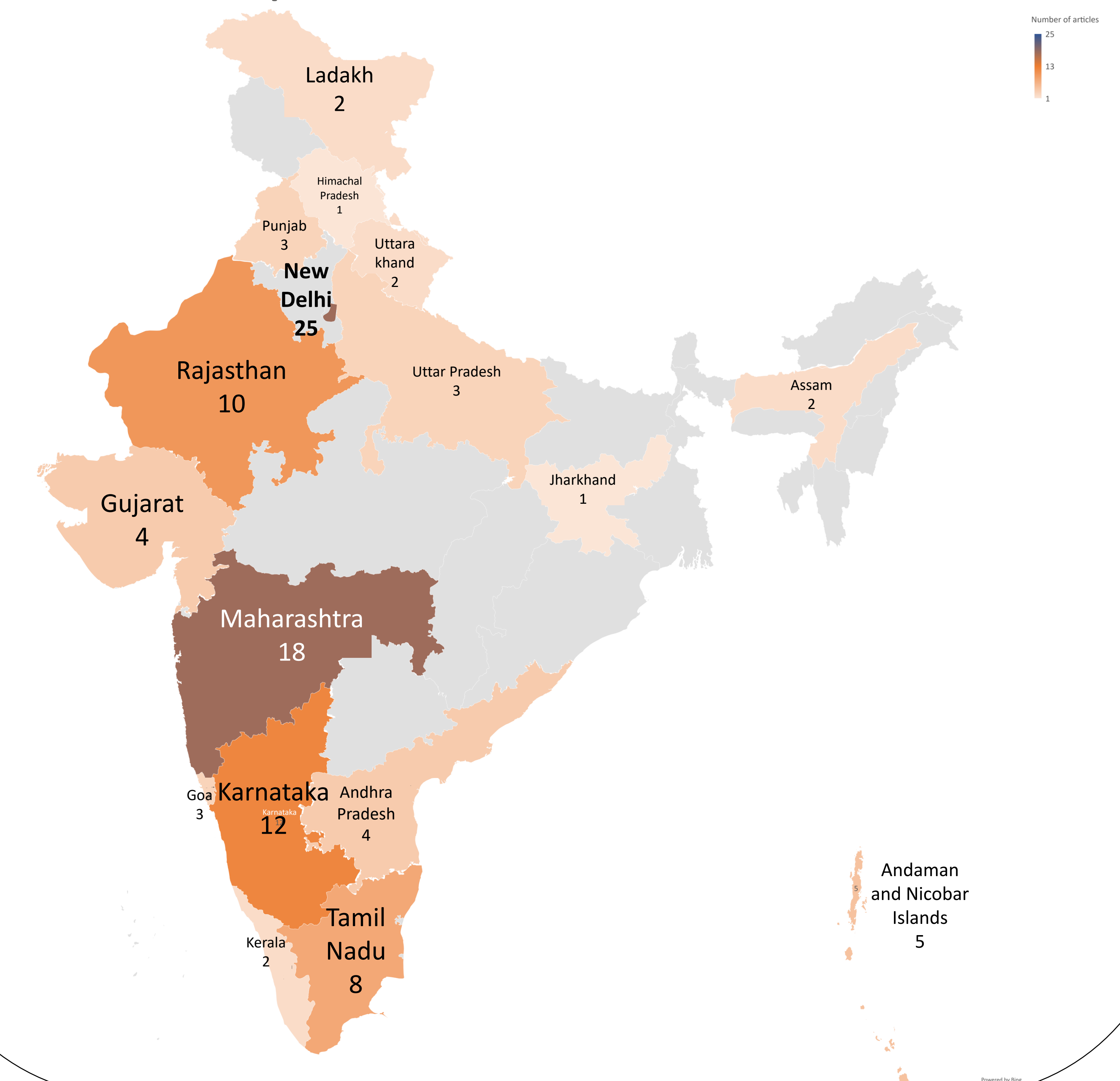
2. **Heavy focus on economic and political benefits**



### RESULTS - GEOGRAPHIC

3. **Highest voices** (25%) recorded from national capital (New Delhi), followed by high-performing states. Covers 70% of Indian states & UTs

Heat Map: State-wise distribution of news articles



### DISCUSSION

- The news media market in India is highly politicized. Heavy political undertones in narratives about LSSP. Articles focused on macroscopic economic and political benefits, rather than providing microcosmic, useful information to readers.
- The pro-LSSP and anti-LSSP arguments in news articles suggest that ambiguity and polyvalence is preferred over consistency in framing strategies of newspapers.
- A common thread reported about the economic woes of LSSP were bottlenecks due to prohibitive capital costs, financial stress of farmers with small landholdings and as a result, laggard progress in achieving grid parity of these parks. This resonated with findings from our literature review

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