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The Role of Courts and Support Systems in Upholding the Rights of Child Sexual Abuse Victims under the POCSO Act, 2012: A Case Study of Rajasthan

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Abstract

The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012 was enacted to provide a comprehensive legal framework for protecting children from sexual abuse, exploitation, and related offences, while ensuring a child-friendly system of investigation and judicial proceedings. This study examines the role of courts and institutional support systems in upholding the rights and interests of child sexual abuse victims under the POCSO Act, 2012, with particular reference to Rajasthan. The study focuses on the functioning of Special Courts, child-friendly procedures, protection of victim identity, access to legal assistance, counselling, medical support, rehabilitation, compensation, and protection from secondary victimization. It also examines the role of police authorities, Child Welfare Committees, Special Public Prosecutors, support persons, medical professionals, and other stakeholders involved in the justice process. The analysis highlights the importance of judicial sensitivity, timely investigation and trial, effective victim participation, and coordinated institutional support in ensuring meaningful access to justice. At the same time, challenges such as delays in proceedings, inadequate awareness of legal rights, shortage of trained personnel, limited psychosocial support, procedural difficulties, and gaps in coordination can adversely affect victims and their families. The study emphasizes that legal protection alone is insufficient without effective implementation and comprehensive support mechanisms. Strengthening victim-centred judicial practices, institutional coordination, legal aid, counselling services, rehabilitation measures, and monitoring mechanisms is essential for ensuring that the objectives of the POCSO Act are effectively realized in Rajasthan.

Keywords: POCSO Act, 2012, Child Sexual Abuse, Child Victims, Special Courts, Victim Rights, Child-Friendly Justice, Legal Aid, Rehabilitation, Rajasthan.

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