

# A Study Of Legal Rights And Protections For Minor Victims In The Criminal Justice System: With Special Emphasis On Cases Involving Domestic Violence

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**Abstract**—Focusing on both legislative frameworks and the practical implementation issues, this study investigates the legal entitlements and protections for minor victims of domestic violence in India. It investigates important constitutional and statutory provisions, including the Domestic Violence Act, the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO). The work also investigates the historical evolution of legal protections for children, stressing the changing function of India's courts and legal reforms. Particular focus is on the legal scene in Punjab, where regional issues, including cultural norms and lack of knowledge, are addressed and the efficacy of current enforcement tools is evaluated. The study also addresses implementation gaps such as delayed justice, insufficient psychological support, and the absence of a child-friendly procedure infrastructure. Comparative viewpoints from international frameworks, including the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), are combined to indicate best practices for enhancing legal reactions. In the end, the article offers legal reform ideas, institutional capacity-building, and policy changes to guarantee complete protection for minor domestic violence victims.

**Index Terms**—Domestic Violence, Minor Victims, Legal Protections, Juvenile Justice, POCSO Act, Child Welfare, Judicial Reform.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

A major but sometimes ignored problem in India's criminal justice system is domestic violence against children. In Punjab, traditional beliefs, strong family hierarchies, and a deep-seated culture of silence exacerbate this issue. Often without any way to find help or justice, children, especially those from rural or conservative homes, suffer many kinds of abuse—emotional, physical, and psychological.

Cultural values in Punjab emphasise family honour and obedience, which can stop victims and their guardians from reporting violence. Many times, abuse is normalized or ignored [1], making legal intervention difficult. National laws such as the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act and the Juvenile Justice Act notwithstanding, state-level enforcement remains uneven because of low awareness, social pressure, and poor implementation strategies. Furthermore, legal actions are seldom planned with the emotional needs of child victims in mind.

Child-friendly settings in courts and limited access to trauma treatment exacerbate their chances of recovery even more. Laws have to be more than just punitive if they are to be useful; they should also provide rehabilitation and preventive help.

This study intends to investigate these legal deficiencies and cultural obstacles in Punjab, so suggesting changes that preserve the rights and welfare of minor victims of domestic violence.

## II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### A. Research Design

Using both doctrinal (library-based) and non-doctrinal (empirical) approaches, this paper applies a qualitative and analytical research design. Aimed at assessing the efficiency, scope, and shortcomings of current legal frameworks addressing domestic violence against minors in Punjab, the study uses a socio-legal approach. The study aims to evaluate whether legal entitlements are really accessible and effective by means of statutory provisions, judicial interpretations, institutional practices, and lived experiences of minor victims, especially in culturally rigid environments.

### B. Doctrinal Legal Research

A critical examination of both primary and secondary legal materials drives the doctrinal component of the study. Among the primary sources are laws including the relevant portions of the Indian Penal Code, the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012, the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, and procedural rules under the Code of Criminal Procedure. A major component of the study is judicial rulings from other pertinent courts, the Supreme Court of India, and Punjab and Haryana High Court.

Legal commentaries, scholarly papers published in respected journals, Law Commission of India reports, state policies, UN and UNICEF publications, and statistical data from the National Crime Records Bureau make up secondary materials. Reports and studies by non-governmental organisations and child rights advocacy groups operating in Punjab are also examined to grasp practical consequences and ground-level reality.

### C. Non-Doctrinal (Empirical) Research

To enrich doctrinal findings, empirical research is undertaken through qualitative methods. Semi-structured interviews are conducted with legal experts, police officials, child protection officers, social workers, psychologists, and staff from child welfare organizations. This provides practical insight into the effectiveness of law enforcement and institutional response mechanisms.

Additionally, case study analysis is used to examine incidents of reported domestic violence involving minors in Punjab between 2015 and 2023. Government publications, media investigations, and responses received via the Right to Information (RTI) Act from legal aid institutions and Child Welfare Committees are studied. This empirical segment highlights procedural obstacles, institutional lapses, and socio-cultural resistance encountered during the pursuit of justice by child victims.

### D. Jurisdictional Focus

The research focuses specifically on the state of Punjab. The region is chosen for its distinctive socio-cultural characteristics, including strong patriarchal family systems, entrenched honor-based norms, and a significant occurrence of unreported domestic abuse against minors. The study seeks to explore whether central legal frameworks are adequately adapted and implemented in the state's legal and administrative machinery.

### E. Analytical Framework

An interdisciplinary lens is used to understand the layered dimensions of the issue. Legal theory, human rights principles, child development psychology, and socio-cultural constructs are integrated to assess the nature and extent of harm inflicted upon minors. The study examines the adequacy of procedural fairness, victim protection services, legal literacy, and the presence or absence of child-sensitive mechanisms within Punjab's justice system.

#### F. Objectives of the Methodology

This research aims to achieve the following goals:

Identify legal and procedural gaps in the protection of minors affected by domestic violence

Examine how cultural expectations, family hierarchies, and gender biases affect legal access and outcomes

Recommend legal, procedural, and policy reforms that align with both statutory mandates and ground realities

#### G. Limitations

The study is limited by ethical constraints, particularly regarding direct interviews with minor victims. Hence, data from reported case studies and consultations with professionals substitute for direct testimonies. Additionally, access to reliable data from rural districts remains inconsistent due to chronic underreporting, lack of official documentation, and the reluctance of families to engage with formal legal institutions.

### III. LITERATURE REVIEW

The legal entitlements of minor victims within the Indian criminal justice system—particularly those impacted by domestic violence—are shaped by a complex interplay of legal, cultural, and institutional dynamics. The literature underscores that while India has made significant legislative strides in child protection, substantial gaps remain in implementation, especially in regions like Punjab where socio-cultural factors heavily influence judicial outcomes.

Coker (2001) presents a critical review of domestic violence laws [2] through a feminist legal reform lens, highlighting that many protections, while well-intentioned, fail to fully address the unique vulnerabilities of minor victims. Her work critiques the over-reliance on punitive criminal justice responses and emphasizes the need for holistic reforms that consider the lived experiences of minors. This view is echoed in the work of Holt (2016), who explores adolescent-to-parent abuse as an underrecognized form of domestic violence, revealing how legal definitions often exclude the nuanced realities faced by children.

In the Indian context, Karanjawala and Chugh (2009) provide a detailed analysis in [3] of the evolution of domestic violence laws, particularly in relation to child custody battles [3]. Their findings indicate that judicial interpretations often sideline the best interests of the child, despite the presence of protective laws such as the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (2005) and the Guardians and Wards Act. Their focus on Punjab reveals how regional dynamics and patriarchal judicial reasoning can skew child custody decisions, sometimes placing minor victims at continued risk. Anu (2016), through her field research in [4] the Malwa and Doaba regions of Punjab, identifies a critical gap in judicial training related to domestic violence. Her study underscores the lack of sensitivity and specialized knowledge among judges handling such cases, which often results in judgments that do not account for the psychological trauma experienced by child victims. Rai (2018) complements this argument by identifying structural and procedural barriers that impede minors' access to legal remedies in Punjab. Her qualitative interviews with victims and legal practitioners reveal how stigma, limited awareness, and institutional apathy collectively prevent justice.

Wallace et al. (2019), in their broader discussion of family violence, analyze how legal and medical frameworks intersect in domestic violence cases [5]. They assess judicial responsiveness and find significant variability in how judges interpret "best interest of the child," a term often left to subjective discretion. This issue is particularly acute in Punjab, where deeply embedded gender norms can color judicial attitudes.

Desai and Desai (2020) contribute a historical and institutional review of service delivery systems for child protection in India. Their research traces how child welfare mechanisms have evolved in response to legislative reforms like the POCSO Act (2012). [6] They argue that although the legislative frameworks are robust, implementation continues to lag, particularly in semi-urban and rural districts of Punjab.

The transnational perspective is brought in through Murtaza and Manj (2022), who study child sexual abuse survivors in Punjab [7], Pakistan. Their findings, although outside India's jurisdiction, offer

comparative insights into how cultural taboos, weak institutional structures, and inadequate cross-sector collaboration affect child protection systems. Their work emphasizes the role of interdisciplinary collaboration among mental health professionals, legal advocates, and child protection officers in delivering justice to minor victims.

Further extending this comparative approach, Javed and Javaid (2020) examine the psychological toll of child custody litigation on minors within the judicial systems of Pakistan [8]. They critique the adversarial nature of legal proceedings and advocate for mediation and restorative practices, a sentiment echoed by Verma in her work on alternative dispute resolution (ADR) mechanisms in Punjab.

Kumar (2023) offers an empirical assessment of reforms under the POCSO Act, analyzing how legal reforms have influenced access to justice for minor victims in India [9]. Through surveys and case studies in Punjab, Kumar identifies persistent barriers such as delayed trials, lack of child-friendly court environments, and inadequate victim support services.

Collectively, the literature reveals a pressing need for context-sensitive, child-centric legal reforms that address not only the legal entitlements but also the social and psychological well-being of minor victims. The evidence points toward systemic shortcomings in Punjab, ranging from cultural stigmatization and insufficient judicial training to poor integration of support services [10]. As such, there is a critical imperative to translate existing laws into actionable protections through interdisciplinary, community-rooted, and culturally informed strategies.

#### **IV. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR MINOR VICTIMS IN INDIA**

##### **A. Constitutional Provisions**

Particularly in the framework of domestic violence, the Constitution of India offers a solid basis for the protection and welfare of minor victims. Fundamental to obtaining justice for all people, including minors, is Article 14, which guarantees equality before the law and equal protection of laws. Article 15(3) empowers the State to make special provisions for children, thereby enabling the creation of child-specific laws and policies [11]. Essential for minors suffering abuse is Article 21, which guarantees the right to life and personal liberty read to include the right to live with dignity and protection against harm. Part of the Directive Principles of State Policy, Articles 39(e) and 39(f) require the State to make sure kids are not mistreated and that their youth and childhood are shielded from moral and material abandonment as well as exploitation. These clauses taken together highlight the constitutional dedication to protect children from domestic violence and other kinds of abuse.

##### **B. Statutory Provisions**

India's statutory framework provides comprehensive legal protections for minors, particularly those affected by domestic violence. The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 (POCSO), is a significant legislation that criminalizes sexual offenses against children and mandates child-friendly procedures during investigation and trial. Though its primary focus is sexual abuse, it implicitly addresses domestic environments where such abuse might occur, thus providing a layer of protection to minor victims within the home.

The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, further strengthens the protection of minors by laying down procedures for the care, protection, treatment, and rehabilitation of children in need [12]. It covers children who are victims of abuse, neglect, or exploitation and ensures a child-friendly justice process. The graph1 demonstrates the trends in domestic violence cases involving minors over the period 2010 to 2022. The data visualizes three key aspects:

- **Cases Reported (Blue Line):** This shows a steady increase in the number of domestic violence cases reported involving minors, reflecting a growing awareness and reporting of such cases.

- Convictions (Green Line): There has been a consistent rise in the number of convictions over the years, indicating improvements in the judicial response to these cases, although the gap between reported cases and convictions is still significant.
- Victim Support Services (Red Line): The availability of victim support services, such as counseling and

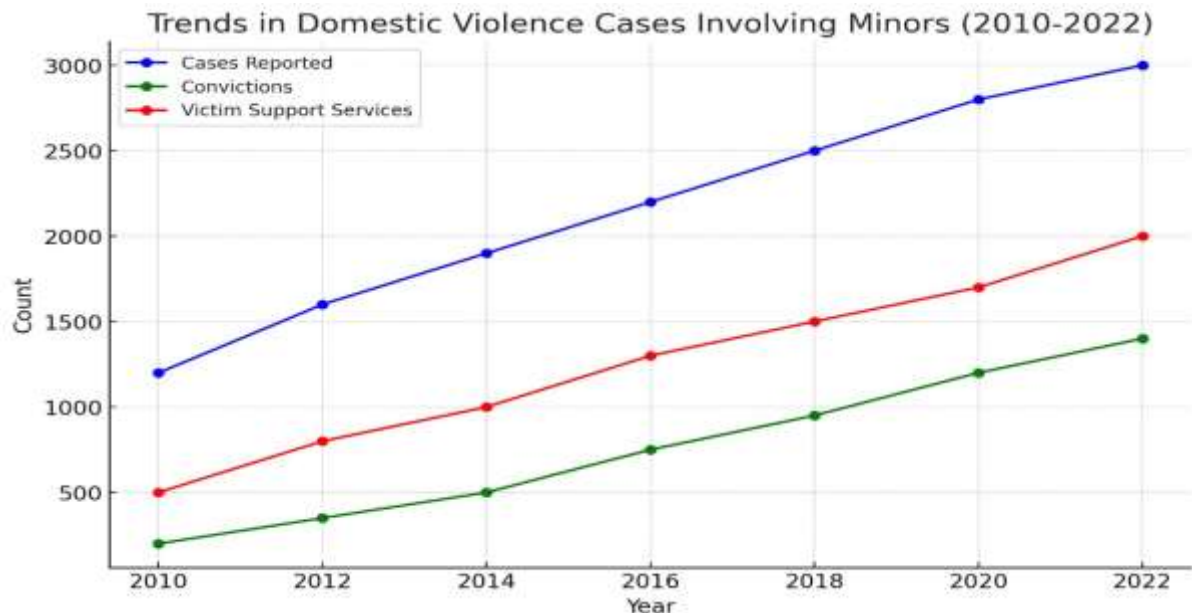


Fig. 1. Trends in Domestic Violence Cases Involving Minors (2010-2022)  
rehabilitation, has also increased, though it still lags behind the reported cases.

This analysis reflects the progress in handling cases of domestic violence against minors, but it also highlights the challenges in ensuring timely justice and adequate support for victims

The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, although primarily focused on women, extends its purview to children, especially those who witness abuse or are indirectly affected by domestic violence. It recognizes children as aggrieved persons and entitles them to the same protections and remedies as adult victims.

Provisions under the Indian Penal Code, 1860, such as Sections 319 to 338 (relating to bodily harm), Section 354 (assault or criminal force on a woman with intent to outrage her modesty), and Section 498A (cruelty by husband or relatives), provide additional mechanisms for prosecuting offenders who harm children within domestic settings.

Procedural safeguards under the Criminal Procedure Code, 1973, such as recording statements in-camera (Section 327), ensuring confidentiality, and provisions for child witnesses, promote a more sensitive and effective judicial process for minor victims. These laws taken together seek to establish a strong legal framework acknowledging and addressing the particular vulnerabilities of children in the setting of domestic violence.

## V. ROLE OF THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

Especially in cases involving domestic violence, the criminal justice system is essential in guaranteeing the protection and rights of minor victims. This system, comprising various components such as law enforcement agencies, courts, and child welfare bodies [13], must work collaboratively to safeguard the welfare of

vulnerable children. Particularly with regard to the police, courts, and child welfare committees, the following parts address the functions of important system participants.

#### A. Police and First Responders

In the early phases of dealing with domestic violence against minors, the function of police and first responders is crucial. Ensuring that victims get quick protection and help depends on reporting systems and child-friendly policies. Law enforcement agencies have to be properly equipped to handle cases sensitively and make sure they follow suitable procedures when dealing with children who are victims of domestic violence. This means designing settings that let incidents be reported safely and privately, therefore guaranteeing the child's emotional and psychological well-being.

Apart from the development of efficient reporting systems, police officers and first responders must undergo specialised training and sensitisation as well. This training should focus on identifying the unique needs of minor victims, understanding the trauma they experience, and knowing how to interact with children in a manner that fosters trust and cooperation [14]. Sensitisation initiatives can help to correct prejudices or misunderstandings held by officers, therefore guaranteeing that they handle such situations with the needed compassion and professionalism.

#### B. Courts and Judicial Approach

The protection of their rights depends on the judicial approach to cases of domestic violence against minors and the function of courts. Special clauses have been included to guarantee that the judicial process does not further traumatise minor victims, such as in-camera trials and the creation of special courts under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act. In-camera trials aim to offer a child-friendly and safe space for minors to testify, therefore shielding them from more emotional pain or public exposure.

Setting bail terms and protective custody arrangements for domestic violence offenders also depends much on the court. Courts have to closely evaluate the danger the accused presents to the child and set strict criteria to stop more damage. Often, protective custody is a required action to guarantee the minor victim is taken from the unsafe surroundings while the legal process continues. Furthermore, court decisions have underlined the need to prioritize child rights throughout the legal procedure, so guarantee that the child's best interests are always taken into account.

#### C. Role of Child Welfare Committees and Protection Officers

The care, monitoring, and rehabilitation of minor victims of domestic violence are mostly dependent on Child Welfare Committees (CWCs) and Protection Officers. CWCs are responsible for making sure minor victims get the required care and protection, including access to shelters, medical treatment, and psychological counselling. Their function goes beyond simple protection to include the general well-being of the kid, therefore guaranteeing that the child's emotional and psychological needs are addressed as they heal from the trauma of domestic violence.

But difficulties in inter-agency cooperation sometimes undermine the efficacy of these committees. Successful intervention requires seamless collaboration between various stakeholders, including law enforcement, health services, social workers, and educational institutions [15]. Uncoordinated actions among these agencies can cause delays in delivering required assistance to victims, therefore aggravating the problems experienced by minor victims. Dealing with these coordination issues is essential to guarantee that every facet of the child's welfare is attended to quickly and effectively.

## VI. GAPS AND CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTATION

Although important progress has been made in India to strengthen the legal and institutional framework for minor victims of domestic violence, certain gaps and obstacles remain in guaranteeing proper execution of these provisions.

These problems impede the prompt and effective administration of justice as well as the protection and rehabilitation of minor victims.

*a) Delayed Justice and Secondary Victimization:* The delay in justice delivery is among the most notable difficulties in the legal system. Often, little victims of domestic violence must suffer drawn-out court battles that can cause more trauma and secondary victimisation. Delays in trials not only extend the child's suffering but also may reduce the effect of legal remedies. For minor victims, the protracted wait for justice complicates even more the emotional and psychological healing process, usually aggravating their suffering.

*b) Insufficient Legal Representation and Psychological Support:* Another important gap is the insufficient legal representation and psychological support for minor victims. Often, children do not have access to qualified legal advice trained to deal with delicate matters relating to domestic violence. Furthermore, in the court cases psychological support is frequently ignored, therefore endangering the kid to the long-term consequences of trauma. A lack of comprehensive mental health services and counselling exacerbates [16]the emotional toll of such cases, making it difficult for the victim to navigate the judicial process effectively.

*c) Lack of Infrastructure for Child-Friendly Procedures:* India still struggles to build adequate infrastructure for child-friendly legal and judicial systems despite legislative attempts to develop child-centric policies. This covers child-friendly courtrooms, special facilities for interviewing children, and a dearth of qualified professionals able to handle the specific needs of minor victims. The lack of such infrastructure sometimes results in a system ill-equipped to manage the complexity of cases involving children, so compromising their ability to participate actively in legal processes.

*d) Poor Rehabilitation and Follow-Up Mechanisms:* Minor victims sometimes struggle with insufficient rehabilitation and follow-up systems after a case is decided. Although legislation like the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act stresses the importance of rehabilitation, there are still major gaps in offering complete care for minors following legal action. Often, a lack of appropriate rehabilitation programs and post-judgment follow-ups leaves minors without ongoing support, therefore heightening their susceptibility to re-victimization or more damage.

*e) Gendered and Cultural Dimensions Limiting Justice for Female Child Victims:* In India, cultural and gendered biases also present obstacles in the delivery of justice for female child victims of domestic violence [17]. With society stigma sometimes dissuading victims from coming forward, gendered views can shape the handling of cases involving female minors. Furthermore, cultural standards could lead to disbelief in or a lack of support for female victims, particularly if they come from underprivileged or rural backgrounds. This makes the legal procedure more difficult and reduces the chances for female victims to obtain justice and help. Graph 2 shows the gender distribution of child victims in domestic violence cases depending on the type of abuse. The graph depicts the proportion of male and female victims in different types of abuse including physical, emotional, sexual, neglect, and economic. The information offered sheds light on the frequency of several kinds of abuse among male and female children caught in domestic violence situations.

## VII. COMPARATIVE AND INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Looking at the international frameworks and best practices from other nations could provide insightful analysis on enhancing the legal and judicial handling of minor victims of domestic violence. National policies and global treaties guide the protection and rights of minors; nations with progressive systems could provide pertinent lessons for change in India.

a) UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC): Global child protection law is based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). It sets out the comprehensive rights of children, including the right to be protected from violence and exploitation [18]. The Convention underlines the need of child-friendly legal procedures and the need for governments to foster settings that support minors' safety and well-being. Though there are still discrepancies in the actual implementation of these ideas, India's child protection laws are based on its alignment with the UNCRC.

b) Guidelines Issued by the UN on Child Victims and Witnesses of Crime: The UN has also published particular recommendations to meet the needs of crime witnesses and child victims. These policies underline the necessity of legal procedures giving child victims' psychological well-being top priority, appropriate legal representation, and safe environments for their involvement in court cases. Following these recommendations would help India to make sure the legal system benefits the child, protecting them from more harm and secondary victimisation.

c) Best Practices from Countries like the UK, U.S., and Scandinavian Nations: Looking at the best practices from other nations could offer insightful analysis of how India might strengthen its legal system and processes. The Children Act (1989) of the United Kingdom emphasises the need of child welfare in all processes, therefore guaranteeing that the child's best interests are at the core of legal choices, especially in domestic violence and abuse situations. The UK's strategy underlines the necessity of a strong child protection system, including several organisations cooperating to protect children.

Likewise, the U.S. Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) requires states to run initiatives for the prevention, investigation, and treatment of child abuse. CAPTA's emphasis on multidisciplinary cooperation among legal, social, and medical services provides a model for India to strengthen the coordination between agencies and improve results for child victims of domestic violence.

Child protection in Scandinavian countries is part of a larger social welfare system comprising educational initiatives for victims, rehabilitation, and psychological support. These nations also stress the need of a trauma-informed approach, therefore guaranteeing that kids are not re-traumatized during court processes. India could build a more child-sensitive and efficient legal system for handling domestic violence against minors by using some of these best practices.

## VIII. CASE STUDIES AND LANDMARK JUDGMENTS

Examining important judicial rulings offers vital insights on the development of legal protections for minor victims in domestic violence situations, therefore helping one to grasp the evolution of such protections in India's legal system. Focussing on judicial activism, progressive interpretations, and situations where enforcement has failed, the following landmark cases underline the function of the court in interpreting and enforcing laws safeguarding minor victims of abuse.

a) Vishal v. State of Haryana (2008): The Punjab and Haryana High Court in this instance handled the problem of minor domestic violence. The court underlined the need of using the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 to protect the rights of children living in an abusive situation. The ruling underlined the convergence of child protection and domestic violence statutes, therefore stressing the damage done to children indirectly exposed to abuse. The court's forward-looking reading underlined the need of protecting children, especially in situations where they were not direct victims of abuse but were impacted by their mothers' domestic violence.

b) M.C. Mehta v. Union of India (1987): Though mostly an environmental matter, M.C. Mehta v. Union of India established a vital precedent on children's rights in relation to state responsibility for their protection. The Supreme Court's ruling strengthened the state's obligation to protect minors' welfare and broadened the constitutional guarantee of protection to them. Particularly in domestic violence situations, this case highlighted the importance of judicial supervision in guaranteeing that children's rights were



safeguarded from exploitation, abuse, and neglect. Although the case did not specifically address domestic violence, it has been important in later decisions regarding children's safety.

c) *Sakshi v. Union of India* (2004): Though it has more general relevance for minor victims of violence, *Sakshi v. Union of India* was a historic decision in which the Supreme Court of India handled concerns connected to child sexual abuse. The case emphasised the need for legal changes to guarantee that child victims were not subjected to the trauma of court cross-examinations. It resulted in in-camera trials for child witnesses, which are now included in the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012. As the court took proactive measures to protect children from the negative consequences of conventional legal processes, this case signified a notable development in judicial activism.

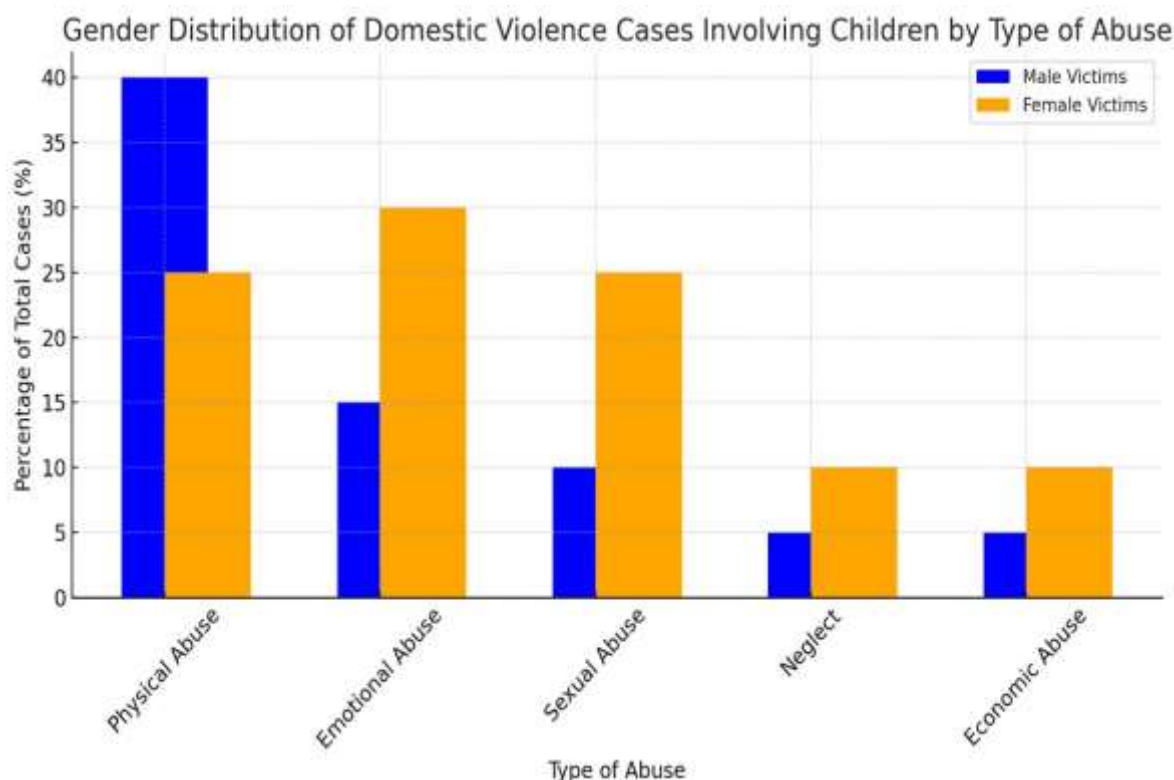


Fig. 2. Gender Distribution of Domestic Violence Cases Involving Children by Type of Abuse

d) *Laxmi Kant Pandey v. Union of India* (1984): *Laxmi Kant Pandey* was a key case on the adoption and care of children in India that also handled the treatment of children in abusive circumstances. Though not directly connected to domestic violence, the Supreme Court's decision set the stage for a more comprehensive approach to the welfare of children harmed by violence. The court's decision underlined the need of specialised child care units and the state's responsibility in guaranteeing the welfare and protection of minors exposed to violence. Later on, this case affected laws like the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015.

e) *Indu v. State of Madhya Pradesh* (2017): This case underlined how the courts support minor victims' rights in domestic violence circumstances. The court decided to prioritise the minor's best interests by ruling to protect the child from a violent parent. The ruling underlined the idea that legal procedures should give children's welfare first priority and that, particularly in situations of domestic violence, they should not be forced to suffer negative surroundings.

*f) Judicial Activism and Progressive Interpretations:* The above-mentioned instances highlight a rising pattern of judicial activism in which Indian courts have increasingly read current laws to offer more protection for minors. For instance, in cases like Sakshi and Laxmi Kant Pandey, the judiciary took proactive steps in implementing mechanisms like in-camera trials and advocating for better institutional frameworks for child protection [19]. These court decisions show a developing awareness of the particular vulnerabilities of minor victims in domestic violence situations.

Still, there are times when the implementation of these decisions has been delayed despite these forward-looking judgements, resulting in practical discrepancies. Significant obstacles remain in delayed justice, lack of child-friendly facilities, and uneven application of legal provisions.

## IX. SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Dealing with the issues and deficiencies noted in earlier parts calls for systematic changes and a multidimensional strategy. The following recommendations emphasise policy-level changes, institutional capacity-building, legal reform, and the incorporation of comprehensive care models to guarantee improved protection and support for minor victims of domestic violence.

### A. Policy-Level Reforms to Bridge Gaps in Victim Protection

Improving victim protection policies to close current gaps is one of the main areas for reform. This might mean simplifying the procedures for reporting domestic violence and making sure minor victims are shielded from secondary victimisation during court actions. Policies should mandate the creation of child protection cells within police stations to handle cases of minor victims, and greater focus should be placed on child-sensitive investigations and prosecutions [20]. The policy framework should also give top priority enhancing victim support services, such legal aid and counselling, so enabling thorough care for minor victims.

### B. Institutional Capacity-Building

The efficient execution of current legislation calls for considerable institutional capacity-building. This could involve the creation of committed child protection cells inside law enforcement agencies and the designation of special prosecutors educated in dealing with domestic violence involving children. Training courses should emphasise arming professionals with the tools to handle the particular needs of child victims, therefore guaranteeing that the system operates in a coordinated and child-centric way.

Moreover, child welfare committees should be authorised to take a more proactive part in monitoring domestic violence cases, therefore guaranteeing the child's welfare is preserved during the legal procedure. This would call for not just judicial supervision but also close cooperation among law enforcement officials, child psychologists, and social workers.

### C. Law Reform Suggestions: Integration of Child-Friendly Provisions in the Domestic Violence Act

Among the main suggestions for legal reform is changing the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, to include particular clauses meeting the needs of minor victims. Though the Act now emphasises mostly women, its reach might be broadened to acknowledge domestic violence's effects on children. This might cover specialised rehabilitation programs, protection orders for minor victims, and child custody decisions.

Furthermore, including child-friendly legal clauses in domestic violence laws would enable children to engage in legal procedures free of trauma or intimidation. This might mean changing procedures to guarantee children don't have to go to court and that their testimonies are documented in a child-sensitive way.

#### D. Holistic Care Models: Legal Aid, Psychological Counseling, Safe Housing

A whole care approach should be adopted to guarantee the long-term well-being of minor victims of domestic violence. This approach would guarantee that children have access to legal representation from professionals qualified in child rights and domestic violence cases by including legal aid services tailored to their needs.

The rehabilitation process must include psychological counselling. Their healing depends on giving children who have seen or experienced domestic violence trauma-informed treatment. Additionally, the creation of safe housing facilities [21] for minor victims would provide them with a secure environment away from the abusive situation, allowing them to heal and rebuild their lives.

At last, a strong follow-up mechanism is required to guarantee that minor domestic violence victims are not left behind once the legal case ends. Regular check-ins with child welfare agencies would be part of this system, therefore guaranteeing the child's continuous safety and emotional well-being.

### X. CONCLUSION

Protecting minor victims of domestic violence in India calls for a thorough approach combining legal, institutional, and social changes. Although great strides have been made, issues including delayed justice, insufficient legal representation, and absence of child-friendly processes remain. With landmark decisions showing progressive legal readings, the court system has come to increasingly acknowledge the vulnerability of minor victims. Child protections are not fully realised, though, because of enforcement gaps and insufficient inter-agency coordination.

Adopting worldwide best practices—like those in the UK and US, which give child welfare top priority in legal proceedings—would help India. Long-term victim recovery depends on holistic care models including legal aid, psychological counselling, and rehabilitation. Policy changes should include child-friendly clauses into domestic violence laws guaranteeing sufficient protection for children who see or suffer abuse.

Strengthening institutional capacity, creating specialised child protection cells, and enhancing inter-agency cooperation are vital to close these gaps. Sustained efforts from the government, judiciary, and civil society to build a legal framework that properly protects the rights and well-being of minor victims in India will determine their future.

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