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Role of Special Courts under the POCSO Act, 2012 in Ensuring Speedy Justice: An Empirical and Doctrinal Study

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Abstract

The Protection of Children from Sexual Offenses Act, 2012 (POCSO Act) brings a major new instrumentality, a legislative makeover, to the arsenal of Indian responses to safeguarding children from sexual abuse, exploitation, and offenses connected thereto. Yet, the most important institutional intervention by the Act is its creation of Special Courts dedicated for child-protection concerns that provide time-sensitive and child-sensitive conduct of trials. Under the Act, Section 28 authorizes the State Government to appoint a Court of Session functioning in a district as a Special Court to try offenses under the law, while Section 35 sets forth a statutory presumption for the speedy recording of the child's evidence and consolidation of the case. In addition, the setup of Special Court trial is complemented by a wide variety of child-compatible procedural capabilities ranging from in-camera trial, avoidance of direct confrontation with the accused, provision of interpreters and child-ready clerks, prevention of aggressive oral during trial and confidentiality of child's identity.The present review article analyzes the mechanism for speedy trial available for child victims through the Special Courts under the POCSO Act through a combined doctrinal and empirical method. The doctrinal approach applies a statutory analysis of the relevant provisions of the POCSO Act, Protection of Children from Sexual Offenses Rules, 2020 and recent judicial decisions considering child-oriented procedures for a speedy trial based upon the social science literature on child victims. The empirical approach comprises of a review of the recent government statistics on the expansion and disposal of Fast Track Special Courts and exclusive POCSO Courts and the continued backlogs in these courts. It also contains an examination of recent studies on the current experiences of child victims, the courtroom infrastructure, the preparation of children for testifying and the implementation of child sensitive procedures.The conclusions are clear that Special Courts have closely interacted with the institutional structure to help an effective judicial system and by creating a specialized structure intend to provide for the productively reduced delays. The mere presence of Special Court cannot by any means help for speedy justice. From undue pendency, increasing inflow, issue of inadequate judicial and para judicial manpower, forensic delays, intervening adjournments, lack of child friendly infrastructure and uneven implementation of statutory safeguards; the system continues to operate sub-optimally. This article concludes by arguing that the concept of speedy justice in this area should not be merely limited to disposal figures but viewed in a broader perspective that looks at its aims of prompt investigation, speedy recording of evidence, continuous trial, procedural fairness, protection from secondary victimization and holistic rehabilitation and care. An effective mental health setup in the entire institutional chain around the Special Court is because of this imperative to actually achieve the legislative purpose of the POCSO Act.

Keywords: POCSO Act, Special Courts, Speedy Justice, Child Sexual Abuse, Fast Track Courts, Child-Friendly Justice, Judicial Pendency, Vulnerable Witnesses, Access to Justice

1. Introduction

Child sexual abuse is one of the most heinous categories of violence committed against children, and creates, complex, problems, and predicaments for criminal justice institutions. Unlike many other more traditional categories of offenses, sexual offenses having a child victim are known for the presence of vulnerable witnesses, trauma, and traumatization, family pressures, social stigma and liabilities, communication difficulties with adults and the judiciary. The criminal justice process that means risk becoming a fresh source of trauma, since a delay, repetitiveness, or insensitive treatment of it with the age and known capacities of the victim can make the process a new trauma leading to death in the minds of the child too. The issue of speedy justice related to cases of children- is because of this not just to provide some solace to the litigating side, but is a matter of not having the child live out the rest of her/his life with a consummated trauma, and of recording evidence at the time and place where it can become available in court proceedings efficiently, accurately, and with minimum traumatization.India had a new chapter in 2012 with the enactment of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offenses Act, 2012[1]. Till then, child sexual abuse offenses were

prosecuted under the general criminal law, which lacked a specialized approach that could effectively address the vulnerable and peculiar position of children in cases of sexual abuse. The POCSO Act established not only gender-neutral protection for children but also separate offenses against penetrative sexual assault and aggravated penetrative sexual assault, sexual assault and aggravated sexual assault, sexual harassment and using children for pornographic purposes. Special procedural provisions were also enacted.The Special Court is among the most important institutional structures it seeks to create. Section 28 of POCSO gives that the State Government, after consultation with the Chief Justice of the High Court concerned, shall designate a Court of Session in every district as a Special Court having jurisdiction to try offenses under this Act. The language of legislation is crucial and has importance because it includes the purpose for speedy ruling of offenses under the Act. The Special Court does not merely something operating in a different jurisdiction than the ordinary criminal Court; it is a good example of an institutional mechanism being created to alter the medium of criminal trial for children.The POCSO structure then prescribes a whole host of procedural safeguards to assist in child- friendly ruling. Section 33 allows a Special Court to formulate child friendly procedures and rules; Section 35 of it fixes the trial to record the child's evidence and to wrap up the trial within 60 days; Section 36 seeks to keep the child away from the accused as much as possible; Section 37 lays down the procedure of conducting the Court proceedings in camera and 38 brings for help from interpreters, translators, and special educators. In this manner, the legislator's idea of speedy trial is so an extension of the child's dignity, privacy, and mental well being.

The institutional advancement of Special Courts was then supplemented by the Fast Track Special Court Scheme put in place by the Government of India. The scheme had benefited from the design of Fast Track Special Courts and POCSO Courts to fast-track the disposal of rape and POCSO cases respectively. Data available with the Government reveal a marked increase in specialised judicial wings over the last many years. Simultaneously, significant pendency resources otherwise also prevailed indicating that the setup of Special Court did not entirely overcome the structural breach of delay in the functional working.

That's why this article is an attempt to analyze the functioning of the various Special Courts in providing quick justice under the POCSO Act from a doctrinal perspective as well as an empirical perspective. The aim of the article will be to find out how far the statutory scheme has been actually implemented in the judicial process and the institutional and legal/administrative bottlenecks that bedevil the process of timely disposal of these cases[2].

2. Objectives of the Study

The main intention of this study is to explore how Special Courts functioning under the POCSO Act, 2012 aids in delivering speedy justice to the victims of sexual offenses committed against children. The study aims at analyzing the statutory system regulating the operation of a Special Court, and how the provisions of sections 28 31 33 35 36, 37 and 38, provide for a unique procedural setup in a POCSO Court. The study also takes into consideration the latest empirical observations on the functioning of the Fast Track Special Courts and the single POCSO Courts, about infrastructure and capacity, disposal, and pendency.

The study also intends to study the emerging trends in judicial approach towards Special Courts and child friendly procedures and relevant issues for implementation of the time frames envisaged under the POCSO Act. Another objective is to study the structural and procedural factors that contribute to delay, which include investigative delays, forensic delays, judicial vacancies, gaps in infrastructure and adjournments. Lastly, the study intends to make suggestions for strengthening the special court system to efficiently deliver speedy justice without compromising on procedural fairness and the dignity of the child.

3. Research Methodology

This paper relies on a doctrinal and empirical review of method. The doctrinal aspect is based on a study of the provisions of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offenses Act 2012 the Protection of Children from Sexual Offenses Rules, 2020 and jurisprudence and case law related to the construction and administration of Special Courts and child friendly procedures during trials. Constitutional rights including access to justice, dignity, and speedy trial are examined for the statutory structure.

The empirical part is based on secondary sources: information collected from various government documents and documents of the Department of Justice, the Press Information Bureau, the National Crime Records Bureau and several recent academic socio-legal studies. The empirical aspect refers mainly to the issue of creation of Fast Track Special Courts and only POCSO Courts; no. Of cases being dealt and disposed of; ongoing pendency and evidence on the child's authentic experience in the courts.

The article is not asserting conducting any original primary field research. It is synthesizing various new empirical studies and official data, to study the working of the Special Court mechanism. This is significant as the study aims at a review based conclusion instead of because working of the mechanism is not based on an independently conducted field survey.

4. Evolution of the POCSO Special Court

Framework

The POCSO Act was drafted in 2012 due to the necessity to bring in a holistic law dealing exclusively with the sexual offences against children. The legislation set out guidelines not only for the offences but also towards the manner in which children arrive at the criminal justice system. The formation of Special Courts is one of the most significant parts of this variation.Section 28 states that to secure a speedy trial, the State Government shall, with the concurrence of the Chief Justice of the High Court Direct that each district be assigned a Court of Session as a Special Court for the trial of offences under this Act. This implicitly try to draw a connection between judicial specialisation and speedy trial. The Special Court has the institutional capacity and procedural flexibility to try cases involving child victims.

The legislative model was thereafter refined through the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Rules, 2020. The Rules improved the system on support persons, compensation, and reporting, monitoring, and child-sensitive procedures in the commission. The Rules stated thatthe judicial process cannot be separated from the support system that is necessary for the child transacting in the criminal justice system[3].

The scheme sought to build upon this statutory structure it was formulated in 2013 to provide special institutiona lmechanism for the fast disposal of rape and POCSO cases by implementing dedicated judicial capacity. Only POCSO Courtts instated under the scheme symbolize move towards institutionalized concentration of experience and case-management ability, respectively.

Based on the Government 640 Fast Track Special Courts, with 338 sole POCSO Courts, were operational in 2021. In 2024, the number had risen far higher and the Government reported hundreds of operational Courts throughout States and Union Territories by 2026. This increase in the number of Special Courts suggests that the Special Court mechanism is well integrated into the children's protection justice system across India.

5. Statutory Role of Special Courts under the POCSO Act

5.1 Section 28 and the Concept of Specialisation

Section 28 brings the most comprehensive statutory template for the setting up of Special Courts under POCSO. Its focus on 'speedy trial' reveals that the formulation of POCSO legislator perceived the existing ordinary judicial machineryfirst and foremost Court of Sessiona bit too strained to cope with both the sheer number and peculiar nature of child sexual offence cases. The appointment of Court of Session as a Special Court, because of this, would permit the machinery of justice to be structured in a manner befitting the concrete needs of each case of POCSO.There are two issues involved in the question of specialisation. Institutionally there is the issue of a designated court gaining expertise on the POCSO. Procedurally there is the issue of the court having to implement the special safeguards built into the Act by the legislature. Specialisation because of this involves not only the assignment of a specific category of cases to a specific court.

5.2 Section 33 and Child-Friendly Procedure

Section 33 is important for the functioning of Special Courts. The provision states that the Special Court may proceed with the recording of evidence and trial in a child friendly manner. The court shall see that the child is not required to attend the Court unnecessarily or to answer questions and that the environment is suitable to the age and mentality of the child.

This provision is relevant to speedy justice since repeated or stressful appearances might cause delays and secondary victimization. So, state intervention in the questions asked, breaks, and the time allowed to repeats of the child's statement is aimed at expediting the trial as well as safeguarding the child.

5.3 Section 35 and Statutory Time Limits

The legal provision 35 makes the most explicit objective of the speedy justice. It states that the child's evidence should be reduced into writing within 30 days of the Special Court taking cognizance of the offence and the case should be disposed of as far as possible within 1 year of the date of such cognizance.

While the section gives a significant guiding principle for the Court, it also acknowledges at the same time the complexities involved in a criminal trial with the wording 'as far as possible'. The section should not be interpreted to enable shoot-in-the-foot delay, nor should it be read as imposing a court's responsibility at the expense of the principle of fairness to the accused to satisfy mere numerical requirements[4].

Actual efficiency of these types of the legal guidelines is determined by case method, certain prosecutor, target witnesses, forensic proof, and how both of these authorities exterior and interior courses of action cooperate.

5.4 Section 36 and Protection from the Accused

Section 36 aims to eliminate contact between the accused and the child during the child's evidence. Based on the nature of the case, the Special Court may, by technological or other means, enable the child to communicate with the court without having to face the accused.This provision has both psychological and evidentiary importance. A frightened or intimidated child may have trouble communicating. A child-sensitive environment can because of this assist with child protection and trial efficacy.

5.5 Section 37 and In-Camera Proceedings

Under section 37, the proceedings must be held in camera. This is of fundamental importance for sexual offence cases, as the child may suffer ''serious injury'' from the disclosure of their identity or other personal details. It is duty of the Special Court to ensure that this does not happen.

5.6 Section 38 and Special Assistance

Children will vary widely in age, developmental level, language abilities and communication skills. Children are acknowledged to vary in these respects under section 38 of the Act by the Court's power to seek the help of translators, interpreters, special, educators, or those experienced in the child's particular means of communication.This type of help becomes mostly crucial in situations where the child has a disability or communication impairment. It strengthens the wider credo that justice is to be provided to the child not just formally.

6. Constitutional Dimensions of Speedy Justice

The concept of speedy justice has a strong constitutional basis in article 21 of the Constitution of India. Judgement of "A" in interpreting the scope of article 21 have implied that for the question of personal liberty not to be vitiated unless in exceptional circumstances, the process of criminal justice should not stand unnecessarily prolonged. Speedy trial is That's why connected to "right of life" and "personal liberty".The constitutional aspect is also crucial, given that the victim in a case of POCSO is always a child. Here, the rights to dignity and personal liberty expressed in the Constitution, and the right to be protected from sexual exploitation, are juxtaposed with the obligations placed by POCSO law. So, the Special Court is situated at the confluence of constitutional rights, criminal procedure, and child protection.

Alongside, speedy trial cannot be divorced from the rights of accused. The child's interests need to be balanced with the preservation of natural justice, presumption of innocence and equitable treatment. It is the conviction though, that the purpose of the Special Court is not just to speed-up the trial but also to ensure justice[5].

This balance forms the cornerstone of the legitimacy of the system of POCSO. A trial, which is overly prolonged can be prejudicial to the well-being of the child as well as to the integrity of the evidence, but this way trial without proper safeguards can be inimical to fairness. A proper notion of speedy-trial must accommodate both these elements.

7. Fast Track Special Courts and Exclusive POCSO Courts

The Fast Track Special Court Scheme is a significant institutional response to rape and child sexual offences case backlog. The scheme was first initiated in 2019 and has been renewed. Within this scheme, the Special Courts set up were exclusive POCSO Courts set up for POCSO Act cases. Government data shows that the number of functional courts has grown much from the time the scheme started. In 2021, about 640 FTSCs (~ 338 exclusive POCSO Courts) are reported as functional. In 2024, there is an increase in number to more than 700 functional FTSCs (more than 400 exclusive POCSO Courts reported at some point). By 2026, the Government had reported functional FTSCs including 398 POCSO exclusive courts across 29 States and Union Territories.

The expansion would seem to suggest that the dedicated judicial infrastructure is at the forefront of India's response to POCSO cases. Still, simply counting the number of courts is not an indicator of effectiveness in and of itself, as a designated court could easily be overwhelmed and experience delay because of lack of judges prosecutors support staff or infrastructure.

8. Empirical Evidence on Disposal and Pendency

The data from the recent sources of the government also help in providing valuable evidence for the working of the Special Court system. The government of India Department of justice informs that, as on 31st December 2025, of the total 774 massed track Special Courts functioning 398 exclusive POCSO Special Courts were functioning and, the 579 cases were dis there before the FTSCs 2 24, 572 cases are of POCSO Act. These figures show the two faces of the system of the Special Courts. For one thing, specialised courts have asserted their capacity to process a large volume of caseloads. However, the back log is still heavy.

Government data in 2023, 2024 and 2025 for registration, disposal, and pendency reveal such shifts. The inflow of cases rose during this time period, but disposals did not keep pace. This created an increasing tendency of cases. As this data does, the efficacy of Special Courts should be seen in the light of this information of inflow and disposal. The data also bring out the point that, evidently the problem is not only of existence of courts. The entire criminal justice system involves processing cases through investigation, medical examination, forensic analysis, charge-sheeting, cognizance, and trial. Delays at any stage may ultimately manifest itself as pending cases in the judiciary.

9. State-Level Differences in the Functioning of Special Courts

The information available suggests that the State of Uttar Pradesh has the largest number of functional courts and huge pending caseload. States like Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Kerala, Odisha, and West Bengal also have sizable POCSO caseloads and specialised courts.

These variations illustrate the need for case management tailored to local conditions. While

national minimum standards can be set, implementation must be nationally-led but locally interpreted to reflect caseloads and required infrastructure and judicial capacity[6].

10. Judicial Interpretation of the Role of Special Courts

Judicial pronouncements have played an important role in delineating the functional domain of Special Courts under POCSO. Courts have time and again stressed that the legislation seeks to shield children during proceedings.

Some recent decisions by the courts have covered the concern of re-examination of children and unnecessary adjournments. Courts have acknowledged the significance of children-friendly environment in the court-room and there should be necessary policies to prevent child against accused.Finally, the Supreme Court and High Courts have spoken on the jurisdiction of the POCSO Special Courts and on the relation of proceedings under POCSO with other offences, which may stem from the same facts. Such pronouncement makes clear the understanding that the Special Court is to be a specialised judicial forum adept in dealing with multiple offences under the law.

The judicial approach suggests that the success of Special Courts depends not just upon whether a particular court is declared special or not, but on how the judges employ their procedural powers.

11. Child-Friendly Justice and the Experience of Child Victims

One of the primary intentions behind POCSO was to ensure that the legal process does not act as a second trauma in the child's life. This is the reason that the child friendly provisions of the Act are of real significance.

Recent socio-legal research into how children victims partake in the criminal justice system has pointed to discrepancies between law and institutional realities. In a study conducted in West Bengal, for instance, research touched upon issues of specialized staff, infrastructure, and children's sensitive procedures. These findings tell us that case disposal figures alone do not give an adequate picture of how a Special Court is functioning. We need to consider the child's perspective on the justice process. A proceeding may end fairly quickly but not achieve the legislative purposes if the child feels scared or intimidated, needs to be asked questions over and over or does not receive the support to participate appropriately in the courtroom.

Judicial efficiency and social and psychological support, namely child-friendly justice then require to be treated together.

12. Courtroom Infrastructure and Special Courts

The setting can have an impact on how usefull a court will be for vulnerable witnesses. The traditional courtroom layout is aimed at adversarial proceedings, rather than playing to the child's developmental needs. POCSO Special Courts must so have the necessary infrastructure to carry out the child-centred goals of the Act.

Separate waiting rooms to prevent child meeting accused or his associates, Video-conferencing facility for giving evidence, child being comfortable with simplified words, and adequate amenities, child-friendly room to reduce anxiety[7].

Recent research on the design of courthouses dealing with child sex abuse cases has found that the design of the courtroom should be examined as part of the access to justice issue and not just as an administrative concern as the physical environment can either boost or detract from the effect of statutory protections.

Because of this, infrastructure is related to the idea of speedy justice. If a child cannot testify due to the lack of facilities, cases must be adjourned. Widespread investment in child-sensitive facility can so have a dual benefits enabling efficient and protection.

13. Preparation of Child Witnesses for Deposition

Recording the child's evidence can be one of the most difficult parts of a POCSO trial. Children might not understand what will happen in court, who the judges and lawyers are or what different questions mean. Not being guided through this can make children more anxious.

Children's views on preparation for deposition17 show that pre-trial orientation and familiarization enables children to better anticipate the conditions of the trial. Good preparation could involve explaining courtroom proceedings in terms that children can understand and ensuring that children are introduced to participants in the courtroom and that there are support persons present during their testimony

This is not a matter of coaching the child about the evidence. It is a process familiarization.

It helps to say this distinction because a child friendly trial must both protect the integrity of evidence and minimize needless anxiety.

14. Investigation and Forensic Delays

The efficiency of special courts depends so much on nature and swift investigation. Court is unable to have a prompt trial if the charge-sheet has not been filed or the relevant evidence has not been received.

The investigation of POCSO maybe involves medical examination, forensic examination, digital evidence, statement of many witnesses and examination of electronic devices. On top of that, forensic laboratories may be under high workload, which causes delay in reports.

The evident significance of these delays, which Yes can be crucial is that the statutory trial clock, which begins under Section 35 begins from the stage of cognizance, and so if significant time has been paid before that point, the total time in fact being spent by the child may still be considerable even if the judicial stage moves swiftly.

The solution must be a co-ordination between police, forensic institutions, prosecution, and Special Courts. One cannot expect judicial monitoring alone to do away with the delay generated out of the court[8].

15. Role of Prosecutors and Court Personnel

The efficiency of a Special Court is not just linked to the efficiency of the judges presiding over it. Special Public Prosecutors and court staff also have a role to play, as they often come into direct contact with child witnesses and need to identify and help child-sensitive procedures.

Prosecutors need technical knowledge of POCSO provisions, basic evidentiary principles, child's development, and approaches for managing vulnerable-witnesses. Court staff need training on safeguarding confidentiality, scheduling of proceedings, interacting with the child, and shielding the child from excessive exposure.

While there may be judicial officers, inefficient staffing arrangements can tend to create practical delays. This is where cases are jumped and adjourned as witnesses cannot be brought in, documents are not ready or administrative matters are yet to be sorted.

A specialized court also needs a specialized institutional ecosystem. If institutions have not been built to support judicialisation, nominating a specialized court would be ineffective.

16. Speedy Justice and the Quality of Adjudication

The key consideration in evaluating the Special Courts are the issue of speed versus quality. While disposal figures shed light on the extent of judicial activity, they alone cannot determine that justice has been provided.

There are various disposals and they could relate to complaint, founding outcome conviction, acquittal, discharge, or other procedural outcome. The counting of a particular disposal on its own, in these circumstances, does not indicate the protectiveness towards children in an individual case or the quality of the procedural safeguards for the accused in the case.

Again, a longer trial does not necessarily imply a failing on the part of the judiciary. If the evidence was complex, there were several accused, there were forensic needs, expert witnesses and true issues of process involved, then more time was needed.

Because of this the correct condition is not just speedy disposal but speedy and fair trial in line with the constitutional protections provided under POCSO and the principles of criminal justice.

17. Victim Compensation and Rehabilitation

The aspiration to justice within POCSO still does not end with the termination of the criminal trial. Children who have been subjected to sexual offenses stand in need of not only medical care and psycho-social intervention but also educational aid and monetary re dressage[9].

The rules designed in respect of compensation and support are also in place viz. Protection of Children from Sexual Offenses Rules, 2020. So the role of Special Court is significant about this for providing compensation as far as possible.

More immediate compensation may have practical significance for families bearing a heavy burden of medical, educational, or psychological care. It may also be a means by which the system acknowledges the wider impact of the offence.

So, the impact of compensation mechanisms should be, to evaluate future Special Courts.

18. Monitoring and Accountability (National Commission for Protection of Child Rights, 2022–2026)

The POCSO Rules bar monitoring at the National and State Commissions for the Protection of Child Rights. The role of these monitoring institutions has to be emphasized because they are critical for the POCSO regime to function effectively.

Monitoring must go further than counting the number of courts opened and cases disposed. It must look at tracking that evidence is taken within the prescribed period, that trials are completed within the required period, children are able to seek accompaniment, that the room block has functioning infrastructure and that compensation reaches the child.

Quantitative indicators alone may not be sufficient to monitor timely enforcement. A system that combines quantitative and qualitative indicators would be more conducive to effective monitoring. Good court performance dashboards can inform strategies to detect cases delaying beyond the statutory time limits and enable administrative authorities to identify patterns of delay.

19. Major Institutional Challenges

In reality POCSO cases are still awaiting disposal shows that a number of structural issues have yet to be redressed. One of these is that there is a huge influx of cases into the system. While this could imply higher levels of awareness, greater reporting of crimes, it also has the inevitable consequence of over-burdening judicial and investigative bodies.

The second challenge relates to judicial capacity. Special Courts would need sufficient number of

judges and support staff. If there are judicial vacancies, or if judicial resources are divided in POCSO cases and other matters, the court's capacity for continuous trial would decrease.

The third general challenge is for forensic infrastructure. POCSO investigations are now more likely to include medical, DNA and computer evidence. Delay in forensic analysis can delay trials[10].

Challenge four, repeated adjournments. This can be a problem even if some adjournments are inevitable, since excessive delay in the child's case may mean prolonging the child's time involved with the justice system.

Another challenge is child-friendly infrastructure. The protections under POCSO being statutory, call for adequate child friendly physical and technological infrastructure.

20. Discussion

Both doctrinal and empirical evidences indicate that Special Courts are an integral part of India's POCSO justice system. The law itself is comprehensive in a way and overtly acknowledges the importance of quick and child-sensitive trial.The last indicator is institution all commitment to developing specialized courts. Establishing FTS and POCSO courts alone cannot be said to institutionalization commitment. The high levels of penned reflects otherwise.The key conceptual result of this research is that attaining speedy justice under the POCSO is a system goal, and not merely a goal or concern of the Court. The Court performance with time is only one aspect of proceedings; other stages like time from commission of offence to reporting the incident, from reporting to investigation to forensic examination are equally significant.

The second major conclusion is that speed and child friendly procedures need not be considered competing priorities. Child friendly procedures can, in fact, improve the efficiency of the legal process by limiting the number of times the child has to testify and preventing delays due to the child's distress, and helping the child to communicate.A third area for research relates to measurement. Traditional disposal statistics offer information but not enough on quality of justice. Any future assessment would need to include information about trial length, age of awaiting cases, adjournment rates, compliance with Section 35, presence of support services and application of child-focused safeguards[11].

21. Limitations of the Study

Given that this review relies heavily on secondary sources it is not able to produce any new data about primary conditions such as views from judges prosecutors police, child victims and their families. Government data sets are also not directly comparable over the same reporting periods due to differences in the reporting periods and institutional coverage.The statistics available mostly depict institutional activity but do not provide an overall picture of the quality of cases handled by individual courts. And, differences across States might be due to differences in population reporting case registration, judicial infrastructure and administrative set up. That's why, the findings that are established from the empirical evidences be treated as one of "the broad institutional trends" and not as the performance of individual courts or States.

22. Scope for Future Research

Further work could involve multi state empirical research into the real length of POCSO proceedings from filing of the FIR to final decision, presented as separate analysis of investigation delays and court delays, investigation delay analysis of adjournments and their causes, analysis of the time between lodgement and completion of forensic reports, recording of evidence in 30 days, and disposition of cases within one-year statutory limit.

Additional research into the roles played by judges prosecutors support persons, court staff and legal-service agencies would be a significant aid to understanding how Special Courts function in practice. Research into the experiences of children would be mostly pertinent, as a child's ability to participate meaningfully in a child-protection statute is its success.

Cross-State comparative analyses may further shed light on institutional practices and approaches that are linked to high pendency and child-sensitive methods of case processing and could help inform the path of policy formulation in the High Courts as well as in the field.

23. Conclusion

Special Court mechanism instituted by the 2012 Act is the most innovative institutional innovation designed to meet the unique contours of child sexual offence cases. While section 28 makes specific mention of the Special Courts with the goal of speedy trial, section 35 offers for the statutory guidelines for prompt recording of evidence by the child and full completion of the trial. Sections 33 36 37 & 38 reinforce Truth is the concept of speedy justice, as envisaged by the legislature, is integrally connected with child friendly procedure, privacy, and protection from secondary victimization.

The establishment of Fast Track Special Courts and dedicated POCSO Courts has contributed greatly to the increased institutional capacity in regards to specialized courts in India. Data from government sources (covering the period 2021- 2026) illustrate that this aspect of institutional capacity is still expanding into India's courts, with large numbers of cases being disposed of, but that there also remains considerable pendency with these cases even in specialised courts.

The doctrinal analysis makes evident that the POCSO system establishes a robust statutory basis for swift, child-sensitive justice. The empirical findings reveal a disconnect between the design and execution of the statutory structure in various jurisdictions. Judicial vacancies, rising caseloads, logistical delays, frequent adjournments, deficient infrastructure and significant dearth of skilled human resources compromise the functioning of the system. The role of such Special Courts Because of this needs to be understood for the entire architecture of child-sensitive criminal justice. A Special Court can ensure speedy justice only if investigation is timely, forensic services are accessible, police, and prosecution resources are well-trained, child-friendly infrastructure is accessible and case flow management works well. Speedy disposal should not be understood in the process but rather as time-sensitive just humane and child-sensitive response.

Yet, as we look ahead to the future reinforcement of the POCSO systems of justice, we must consider how we can shift from the original limited, court-centred approach to a truly integrated justice perspective. Special Courts are a crucial institutional platform; they are only one part of a broader challenge and imperative to performance that would need to include a collectively coordinated functioning of the entire justice chain. Informed planning, substantial resources, evidence-based monitoring through detailed court reports, adequate framing of implementation guidelines, evaluation of the courts' procedural application vis-a-vis the statutory safeguards, and a child friendly, integrated infrastructure that means are what can actually lead to the realization of the legislative mandates and discourse of the POCSO Act.

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