

Evaluating the effectiveness of the rajasthan victim compensation scheme: A legal and policy analysis

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Abstract: Victim compensation is now an established component of Indian criminal procedure, but the Practical value of a compensation scheme depends upon whether relief reaches the victim promptly, adequately and without avoidable procedural burden. This article evaluates the Rajasthan Victim Compensation Scheme as a legal and administrative mechanism for restorative and rehabilitative justice. It situates the Scheme within Articles 14, 21 and 39-A of the Constitution of India; the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987; the former section 357-A of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973; and section 396 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023. It also considers the nationally applicable framework developed for women survivors of sexual assault and other crimes, special protections under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012, and the jurisprudence of the Supreme Court on compensation, dignity and rehabilitation. The article uses a doctrinal and policy-oriented method, examining legislation, schemes, judicial decisions, institutional design and recurring implementation problems. It argues that Rajasthan possesses a sound normative foundation, but effectiveness may be weakened by low awareness, inconsistent referral, documentation difficulties, fragmented coordination, delayed inquiry, inadequate interim relief and compensation schedules that may not reflect the full cost of long-term rehabilitation. Compensation must not be treated as charity or as a substitute for investigation and prosecution. It is a public-law response to victimisation and a means of enabling medical treatment, shelter, education, counselling, livelihood recovery and social reintegration. The article proposes a victim-centred model based on automatic referral, single-window assistance, time-bound digital case management, reasoned and trauma-informed decision-making, periodic revision of compensation bands, direct benefit transfer with safeguards, independent monitoring and convergence with health and social-welfare services. It concludes that the Scheme should be evaluated not merely by the amount sanctioned, but by speed, accessibility, rehabilitation outcomes, procedural fairness and the degree to which it restores the victim's agency and dignity.

Keywords: Victim Compensation, Rajasthan Victim Compensation Scheme, Section 396 BNSS, Restorative Justice, Rehabilitation, RLSA, DLSA, Victims' Rights, Access to Justice, Constitutional Compensation

1. INTRODUCTION

The traditional criminal trial is organised around the relationship between the State and the accused. The victim supplies information, gives evidence and waits for an outcome, while the formal questions before the court concern guilt and punishment. This structure is indispensable to legality and fair trial, but it can leave the person who has suffered the crime at the margins of the process. A conviction does not pay immediate medical bills, replace lost income, secure

safe accommodation or provide psychological care. An acquittal, an unidentified offender or an absconding accused may leave the harm entirely uncompensated. Victim compensation responds to this gap by recognising that the State has responsibilities extending beyond prosecution.

The idea is both corrective and restorative. It is corrective because a public system that monopolises criminal justice cannot remain indifferent to serious injury suffered by a person who may have no realistic civil remedy. It is restorative because financial assistance can support recovery, autonomy and social reintegration. Money cannot undo sexual violence, an acid attack, trafficking, permanent disability or the death of a family member. Nevertheless, timely assistance may determine whether a survivor can obtain surgery, continue education, relocate from danger, support dependants or avoid exploitative debt. The real measure of compensation is therefore not symbolic recognition alone, but its capacity to enable recovery.

In India, constitutional adjudication first developed public-law compensation for grave violations of fundamental rights. Statutory reform later created a structured victim compensation mechanism through section 357-A of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 (CrPC). The provision required every State Government, in coordination with the Central Government, to prepare a scheme for providing funds to victims or their dependants who suffered loss or injury and required rehabilitation. The responsibility for determining compensation was assigned to the State and District Legal Services Authorities. The Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 (BNSS), which replaced the CrPC from 1st July 2024, substantially continues this framework in section 396. The continuity confirms that compensation is no longer peripheral to criminal procedure.

Rajasthan operationalises this duty through its victim compensation scheme and the institutional network of the Rajasthan State Legal Services Authority (RSLSA) and District Legal Services Authorities (DLSAs). The Scheme must also be read with the NALSA Compensation Scheme for Women Victims/Survivors of Sexual Assault/Other Crimes, 2018, relevant Supreme Court directions and special legislation. Multiple legal sources can broaden protection, but they can also create uncertainty for victims and front-line officials regarding eligibility, competent authority, documents, interim relief and the relationship between different benefits.

This article evaluates effectiveness in a multidimensional sense. A scheme is legally valid when it is properly notified and administered by competent authorities, but it is effective only when an eligible person can discover it, enter the process, obtain a fair assessment and receive useful assistance within the period of urgent need. Five criteria are central: accessibility, timeliness, adequacy, procedural fairness and rehabilitative impact. The analysis is doctrinal rather than a claim to statistically measure outcomes. It identifies structural strengths, recurring risks and reforms capable of making the Rajasthan framework more victim-centred.

1.1 Research Methodology and Scope

The study follows a doctrinal and qualitative policy-analysis method. Primary materials include constitutional provisions, the CrPC, the BNSS, the Legal Services Authorities Act, special criminal legislation, the Rajasthan Scheme, the NALSA compensation framework and leading decisions of the Supreme Court. International standards and institutional materials are used to identify the purposes against which the State mechanism should be assessed. The method is evaluative: it examines whether the design of the law is capable of producing accessible, timely, adequate and rehabilitative relief.

The article does not present a statistical audit of every application decided by RSLSA or the DLSAs. Statements concerning implementation are therefore framed as institutional risks and recurring administrative problems requiring empirical verification, rather than as unsupported numerical findings. This distinction is important. A doctrinal study can reveal duplication, gaps in procedure, weak accountability and inconsistency between legal purpose and administrative design, but only reliable case-level data can measure their frequency.

Effectiveness is assessed through six questions: whether potential beneficiaries are informed; whether an application can be initiated without excessive formality; whether interim and final relief are decided within meaningful time; whether the amount and services respond to actual rehabilitative needs; whether similarly situated applicants receive reasonably consistent treatment; and whether decisions are reasoned, reviewable and protective of privacy. The geographical focus is Rajasthan, while national and international materials supply the broader legal context. The analysis concerns compensation as a public scheme and does not attempt a complete treatment of civil damages, restitution, insurance or offender-funded compensation.

2. CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS OF VICTIM COMPENSATION

Victim compensation rests on several overlapping theories. The welfare rationale views assistance as an expression of social solidarity: the cost of serious victimisation should not fall exclusively upon the individual. The rights-based rationale connects compensation with life, dignity, equality and access to justice. The restorative rationale focuses on repairing harm and rebuilding agency. A public-law rationale arises where State action, inaction or systemic failure contributes to the violation. These theories differ, but all reject the notion that compensation is a discretionary favour.

Compensation under a statutory scheme should be distinguished from other monetary remedies. A criminal court may order an offender to pay compensation from the fine or otherwise under the procedural law. A civil court may award damages based on established liability. Constitutional courts may grant public-law compensation for violation of fundamental rights. Special statutes may create separate relief. Ex gratia assistance may be granted under executive policies. A victim compensation scheme fills gaps across these routes, especially when the offender is not traced, the trial has not concluded, the offender lacks resources, or the court's award is inadequate for rehabilitation.

This distinction explains why the victim's entitlement should not depend entirely upon conviction. The purpose is to address qualifying harm and rehabilitative need, not to impose criminal punishment through an administrative proceeding. At the same time, the authority must verify the occurrence, injury, relationship of dependants and other relevant facts through a fair but sensitive inquiry. The standard and method of this inquiry should not reproduce the rigour or hostility of a criminal trial. Requiring a traumatised survivor to repeatedly narrate events or produce documents controlled by police and hospitals can itself become a form of institutional harm.

Compensation should also be understood as one element of a larger rehabilitation plan. A lump-sum payment without counselling, medical continuity, shelter, education or livelihood support may be quickly consumed by urgent expenses without producing durable recovery. Conversely, an overly paternalistic system that controls how every rupee is used can undermine autonomy. Effective design combines immediate cash support, access to services and reasonable safeguards based on age, disability and risk of exploitation.

3. CONSTITUTIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATIONS

The Constitution does not contain a single express article titled 'victims' rights', yet its guarantees supply the normative basis for compensation. Article 14 demands equal protection and guards against arbitrary administration. Article 21 protects life and personal liberty, which the Supreme Court has interpreted to include dignity and meaningful conditions of existence. Article 39A directs the State to ensure that the legal system promotes justice on the basis of equal opportunity and to provide free legal aid. These provisions require more than formal access to a court; they support institutional arrangements that enable a victim to survive and participate with dignity.

In *Rudul Sah v. State of Bihar* (1983), the Supreme Court granted compensation for unlawful detention, demonstrating that constitutional remedies could include monetary redress. *Nilabati Behera v. State of Orissa* (1993) clarified the public-law character of compensation for violation of fundamental rights. These decisions concerned State wrongdoing and are doctrinally distinct from a general victim compensation scheme, but they helped establish the principle that monetary relief can be necessary to make rights effective.

International standards reinforce the victim-centred approach. The United Nations Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power (1985) calls for access to justice, fair treatment, restitution, compensation and assistance. It encourages States to provide financial compensation where the offender cannot fully meet the loss, particularly for victims who suffer significant bodily injury or impairment and for families of persons who die or become incapacitated. The UN framework also emphasises medical, psychological and social assistance and training for justice-system personnel. Although the Declaration is not a directly enforceable treaty, it offers an influential interpretive standard for domestic policy.

The constitutional and international foundations yield three principles. First, compensation must be administered without discrimination based on gender, caste, disability, residence, social status or the identity of the accused. Second, procedure must be reasonable and responsive to trauma. Third, the State's responsibility cannot end with issuing an order; disbursement and access to rehabilitation services are part of effective relief.

4. EVOLUTION OF THE STATUTORY FRAMEWORK IN INDIA

Before section 357A was enacted, the CrPC primarily enabled courts to direct compensation from fines and, in limited circumstances, even where fine did not form part of the sentence. This court-centred model depended heavily on conviction and the offender's capacity to pay. The Law Commission of India's 154th Report recommended a broader scheme funded by the State. The Code of Criminal Procedure (Amendment) Act, 2008 inserted section 357A, marking a structural change from offender-funded compensation to a public scheme designed around rehabilitation.

Section 357A required each State Government to prepare a scheme in coordination with the Central Government. When a court recommended compensation, the DLSA or SLISA was to determine the quantum. The authority could also act where the offender was not traced or identified and no trial occurred, upon an application by the victim or dependants. The provision contemplated completion of inquiry within a defined period and empowered the authority to order immediate first aid, medical benefits or other interim relief. These features are vital because the period before trial is often when need is greatest.

The Supreme Court strengthened the statutory framework. In *Ankush Shivaji Gaikwad v. State of Maharashtra* (2013), it emphasised the duty of criminal courts to apply their mind to compensation rather than treating it as an afterthought. In *Suresh v. State of Haryana* (2015), the Court highlighted the importance of interim compensation and early judicial attention to section 357A. *Laxmi v. Union of India* (2014) linked compensation for acid-attack survivors with minimum relief and rehabilitation. *Nipun Saxena v. Union of India* (2019) advanced a nationally coordinated compensation framework for women survivors of sexual assault and other crimes and reinforced confidentiality and sensitivity.

The BNSS carries the scheme forward in section 396. Its structure substantially reflects section 357A: State schemes, court recommendations, determination by the DLSA or SLISA, access where the offender is untraced or no trial occurs, inquiry and interim medical or other relief. Section 397 further requires hospitals, public or private, to provide immediate first aid or medical treatment free of cost to victims of specified offences and to inform the police. The move to the BNSS should not be treated as a mere renumbering exercise. It offers an opportunity to update forms, training, digital systems and inter-agency protocols so that victims are not disadvantaged during transition.

The Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 supplies the institutional structure. Legal Services Authorities were originally associated mainly with free legal aid and Lok Adalats, but victim compensation places them in an adjudicatory and welfare-coordination role. That role requires trained staff, predictable budgets, speaking orders, financial administration, confidentiality and links with police, prosecution, hospitals, courts, shelters and welfare departments.

5. STRUCTURE AND OPERATION OF THE RAJASTHAN SCHEME

The Rajasthan Victim Compensation Scheme provides the State-level mechanism through which statutory compensation is assessed and paid. RLSA performs the coordinating and supervisory role, while DLSAs ordinarily provide the most accessible district-level forum for claims and recommendations. The applicable schedule categorises injuries or offences and indicates compensation parameters, subject to the current notification and legally applicable national framework. Because schemes are amended, applicants and authorities must rely upon the version in force and any judicial directions governing minimum relief.

A claim may reach the authority through a court recommendation, an application by the victim or dependants in cases contemplated by the statute, or institutional referral. In practice, the quality of referral is decisive. A survivor who is informed at the police station, hospital or one-stop centre can apply early; a survivor who learns about the Scheme after trial may lose the rehabilitative advantage of timely assistance. Every serious qualifying case should therefore trigger information and referral without requiring the victim to identify the correct statutory provision.

The authority must verify eligibility and assess relevant circumstances. These may include the nature and gravity of injury, medical and counselling expenses, disability, loss of income, educational disruption, dependants, pregnancy, need for shelter, age and vulnerability, and financial assistance received from other sources. The object is not mathematical valuation of human suffering. It is a reasoned estimation of what rehabilitation requires within the permissible scheme.

Interim relief is central. Medical treatment, relocation and subsistence cannot wait for final verification or completion of trial. A two-stage model is preferable: rapid prima facie assessment for interim assistance, followed by fuller inquiry for final compensation. The final order should state the material considered, amount awarded, adjustment of prior relief and

mode of disbursement. Reasons are necessary for transparency, appellate or supervisory review and consistency across districts.

Payment through direct transfer can reduce delay and leakage, but financial inclusion cannot be assumed. Some victims lack an independent account, identity documents, safe access to a phone or control over family finances. Children and persons with cognitive disabilities require protective arrangements that preserve funds while permitting necessary expenditure. Digital efficiency must therefore be combined with assisted access and individualised safeguards.

6. EVALUATING EFFECTIVENESS: ACCESSIBILITY, TIMELINESS AND ADEQUACY

Accessibility begins with knowledge. The most carefully drafted scheme is ineffective if victims, police officers, medical personnel, lawyers and trial courts do not understand when and how it applies. Information must be available in Hindi and accessible formats at police stations, hospitals, courts, prisons, one-stop centres, shelter homes and DLSA offices. Oral explanation is especially important for persons with limited literacy. Application should be possible in person, through an authorised representative, by digital means and through institutional referral.

Procedural accessibility also requires minimal documentation. A victim may not possess a certified FIR, medical report, income certificate, disability assessment, death certificate, bank details and residence proof at the same time. Many documents originate within government departments and should be obtained through inter-departmental channels rather than demanded repeatedly from the applicant. Lack of a document should trigger assistance and verification, not immediate rejection, where identity and prima facie eligibility can otherwise be established.

Timeliness is the second criterion. Compensation delayed until the end of trial may cease to be rehabilitative. Trials can last for years, while medical costs and lost wages arise immediately. The statutory design recognises this through interim relief and an inquiry period. Administrative workflow should distinguish urgent cases, establish internal milestones and automatically alert senior officers when a deadline is crossed. Pendency should be published in anonymised form by district, showing applications received, interim orders, final decisions, disbursements and age of pending cases.

Adequacy has both quantitative and qualitative dimensions. Scheduled amounts promote consistency and budget predictability, but fixed figures may become obsolete due to medical inflation and changing living costs. The same physical injury may produce different consequences depending on occupation, age, disability, caregiving responsibility and access to family support. Authorities need structured discretion to consider actual rehabilitative need within lawful limits. Periodic revision should use health-care costs, wage indices and evidence from victim-support services.

Adequacy also means convergence. Compensation should connect the victim with free treatment, mental-health services, shelter, legal aid, witness protection, education and livelihood programmes. Without case management, a survivor may be sent from office to office, required to disclose traumatic facts repeatedly and left to coordinate agencies personally. A named victim-support officer or paralegal volunteer can guide the case from referral to closure.

Procedural fairness requires notice, an opportunity to provide relevant material, confidentiality and a reasoned decision. A claimant should know whether the application is incomplete and be allowed to cure defects. Rejection based on stereotypes, delay in reporting or perceived conduct is inconsistent with a rights-based approach. Authorities should be trained to distinguish credibility assessment from moral judgment and to avoid importing the criminal standard of proof into a rehabilitative administrative inquiry.

7. JUDICIAL CONTRIBUTION TO VICTIMS' RIGHTS

Indian courts have played a constitutive role in moving victims from the periphery of criminal procedure. *Delhi Domestic Working Women's Forum v. Union of India* (1995) called for legal assistance, anonymity and compensation for rape survivors, recognising that the consequences of sexual violence continue beyond the trial. *Bodhisattwa Gautam v. Subhra Chakraborty* (1996) accepted the possibility of interim compensation in a sexual-offence context. These cases helped frame compensation as part of meaningful justice rather than an incidental payment.

Ankush Shivaji Gaikwad is important for judicial practice because it rejected routine silence on compensation. A sentencing court should consider the issue and record reasons. *Suresh* reinforced the need to engage the State scheme early and not leave the victim without support

pending final adjudication. Laxmi addressed the exceptional medical, social and livelihood consequences of acid attacks and contributed to minimum compensation standards. Nipun Saxena promoted uniformity for women survivors and protected identity and dignity.

The jurisprudence suggests that courts have three responsibilities. They should identify potential entitlement at the earliest appropriate stage; make a clear recommendation with available information; and monitor whether the matter reaches the competent authority. Referral should not be confused with final determination, but a vague observation that the victim 'may apply' can shift the entire administrative burden back to the person whom the system is meant to assist.

Judicial review also remains available against arbitrary administration. Legal Services Authorities exercise statutory public power and must act fairly, reasonably and consistently. Non-speaking rejection, irrelevant considerations, unexplained disparity or prolonged inaction may invite constitutional scrutiny. At the same time, routine litigation should not become necessary to obtain scheme benefits; internal review and grievance redress should resolve most errors quickly.

8. SPECIAL CONCERNS OF VULNERABLE VICTIMS

Women and children affected by sexual offences face acute risks of stigma, intimidation and secondary victimisation. The POCSO Act, 2012 establishes child-friendly procedures, and compensation assessment must reflect the child's long-term needs, including education, therapy, relocation and the effect of trauma on development. Privacy is essential. Orders and dashboards must use anonymised identifiers, and financial processes should not reveal sensitive offence details unnecessarily.

Acid-attack survivors may require repeated surgeries, assistive devices, long-term medication, psychological care and livelihood support. A single scheduled payment may be inadequate unless connected with continuing health and social services. Survivors of trafficking may need safe housing, identity documents, repatriation, education and protection from re-trafficking. Victims of caste-based atrocities may also have entitlements under the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act and Rules. Authorities should coordinate benefits while preventing arbitrary duplication or denial. Receipt of relief under one lawful scheme should not automatically erase a distinct entitlement serving a different purpose.

Persons with disabilities require accessible communication, reasonable accommodation and supported decision-making. Rural residents may face distance, transport and digital-connectivity barriers. Migrants may lack local documents or stable accounts. Dependants of deceased victims may include children, older parents or partners whose financial dependence is informal. A rigid documentary model can exclude precisely those for whom the Scheme is most important.

Victims of cyber-enabled financial and sexual offences present emerging questions. Financial fraud may cause severe loss, but not every monetary offence falls within a traditional compensation schedule. Non-consensual intimate imagery, deepfake sexual content and technology-facilitated stalking can cause psychological harm and livelihood loss without visible bodily injury. Future revision should examine principled thresholds for such harm while preserving the Scheme's focus and fiscal sustainability.

9. INSTITUTIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE CHALLENGES

Fragmentation is the central administrative problem. Police record the offence, hospitals document injury, courts conduct proceedings, Legal Services Authorities determine compensation, treasuries release funds and welfare departments provide services. If each agency uses separate forms and communication channels, delay becomes structurally inevitable. A victim-centred system should move information between institutions with consent and lawful safeguards instead of making the survivor carry files.

Variation between districts can also affect equality. Differences in staffing, awareness, interpretation and workload may lead to inconsistent outcomes for comparable harm. RLSA can reduce disparity through standard operating procedures, model orders, periodic training, peer review and a searchable repository of anonymised decisions. Standardisation should guide discretion without eliminating individual assessment.

Budget administration is another concern. A legal entitlement requires predictable and timely funding. Delays caused by exhausted allocations or multi-level financial approval undermine the statutory purpose. Annual planning should use past applications, pending cases, offence trends and medical-cost data. Emergency reserves should support interim relief, followed by replenishment through regular budgeting.

Monitoring must go beyond aggregate amounts. A high total disbursement may conceal long delays or district inequality. Useful indicators include median time to interim relief, median time to final decision, percentage of court referrals acted upon, proportion of rejected applications, reasons for rejection, disbursement time after order, district-wise pendency and access to rehabilitation services. Data should be disaggregated carefully without compromising privacy.

Accountability must remain humane. Officials need manageable caseloads, training and technological support; merely imposing personal blame for every delay can encourage defensive rejection. The better approach identifies workflow bottlenecks, assigns responsibility for each stage and creates escalation where delay persists. Victims should have access to a helpline, case-status facility and independent grievance channel.

10. TECHNOLOGY AND DIGITAL GOVERNANCE

Digital administration can transform the Scheme if designed around the victim rather than departmental convenience. An integrated platform could generate a compensation referral when an eligible offence is recorded, permit hospitals and courts to upload verified documents, track statutory timelines, issue notices, record reasons and initiate secure payment. A case dashboard could be accessed by authorised officials and, in simplified form, by the victim or representative.

Technology cannot be the only door. Digital-only filing would disadvantage persons without devices, literacy, connectivity or private access. DLSA front desks, paralegal volunteers and one-stop centres should provide assisted filing. The system should accept a minimal initial application and permit later supplementation. Multilingual interfaces, screen-reader compatibility and accessible authentication are essential.

Data protection is particularly sensitive because compensation files may reveal sexual offences, health information, caste, disability, addresses and bank details. Role-based access, encryption, access logs, limited retention and breach-response protocols are necessary. Data should not be used for unrelated profiling. Public dashboards must be anonymised and should suppress small cells that could enable re-identification.

Artificial intelligence may help identify missing documents, prioritise urgent medical cases or detect unusual delay patterns, but it should not determine credibility or final entitlement.

Historical data may contain bias, and opaque scoring can reproduce unequal treatment. Any automated tool must remain advisory, auditable and subject to human review and correction.

11. COMPARATIVE POLICY LESSONS

Indian State schemes vary in schedules, procedures and administrative maturity. Comparative study can reveal useful practices such as online applications, dedicated victim assistance units, automatic police referral, published timelines and integration with one-stop centres. The objective should not be uniformity for its own sake. Local cost, geography and institutional capacity matter, but minimum national standards protect equality and prevent a victim's relief from depending excessively on place of residence.

Internationally, compensation programmes often combine public funding with criminal-injury boards, emergency awards, counselling and recovery from offenders in appropriate cases. The best lesson is functional: a victim should encounter one coordinated pathway rather than separate legal, medical and welfare systems. Foreign models must be adapted to India's constitutional structure, fiscal capacity and extensive Legal Services Authority network.

Rajasthan has an institutional advantage in the district presence of DLSAs and paralegal volunteers. These structures can connect remote victims with formal administration. The policy opportunity is to convert the network from a passive application office into an active referral and rehabilitation service.

12. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REFORM

First, Rajasthan should adopt a consolidated, publicly accessible version of the Scheme incorporating current amendments, BNSS terminology, nationally mandated standards and clear explanations of overlapping entitlements. Every form and information sheet should be available in Hindi, English and accessible formats. Front-line police and medical forms should contain a mandatory field recording whether the victim was informed and referred.

Second, the process should use a single-window model. A minimal application submitted to any DLSA, court, police unit, hospital or authorised support centre should be routed to the competent authority. Government records should be obtained electronically wherever possible. The victim should not be required to secure multiple certified copies from agencies already possessing them.

Third, interim relief should be operationally prioritised. Urgent categories should receive prima facie assessment within a short administrative timeline, with immediate treatment, shelter and subsistence support where necessary. Final inquiry can follow without delaying emergency assistance. Every delay beyond the prescribed period should generate an electronic escalation and require recorded reasons.

Fourth, compensation schedules should be reviewed periodically through a transparent committee including RSLSA, finance, health, social justice, women and child development departments, medical and mental-health professionals and victim-support representatives. Revision should consider inflation, treatment costs, minimum wages, disability and long-term rehabilitation. Structured discretion should permit enhancement within lawful bounds based on recorded factors.

Fifth, compensation must be linked with an individual rehabilitation plan. The plan may include medical care, counselling, education, skill development, shelter, witness protection and legal aid. A designated case coordinator should facilitate access without controlling the victim's choices. For children or persons at risk of financial exploitation, protective deposit arrangements should allow necessary withdrawals through a simple process.

Sixth, RSLSA should publish anonymised performance data and annual analytical reports. District comparisons should be used for improvement, not crude ranking. Independent audits can examine random files for timeliness, reasoning, confidentiality and actual disbursement. An accessible grievance and review mechanism should correct errors without requiring writ litigation.

Seventh, regular interdisciplinary training should cover legal eligibility, trauma-informed interviewing, disability accommodation, caste and gender sensitivity, digital privacy and reasoned decision-writing. Judicial academies, police academies, hospitals and Legal Services Authorities should use common modules so that institutional responsibilities are understood across the chain.

Finally, technology should support, not replace, human assistance. An integrated platform should track referral, inquiry, order, payment and services while maintaining strict security. AI-based tools, if introduced, should be limited to administrative support, tested for bias and subject to transparent human oversight.

13. FUTURE SCOPE OF RESEARCH

The present doctrinal analysis should be supplemented by empirical work. District-wise studies can measure the time from offence to referral, application to interim relief, decision to disbursement and disbursement to access of services. Interviews with survivors, DLSA officers, judges, police, prosecutors, doctors, counsellors and paralegal volunteers can reveal barriers invisible in official files.

Comparative research across Indian States can evaluate which institutional designs produce quicker and more equitable results. Cost-of-rehabilitation studies are needed to assess whether scheduled amounts reflect actual treatment, disability, livelihood and counselling expenses. Longitudinal research can examine whether compensation improves education, employment, health and safety outcomes rather than measuring success only at the moment of payment.

Emerging areas include cyber victimisation, deepfake abuse, cross-border trafficking, mass-casualty offences and climate-related displacement interacting with crime. Research should also examine privacy in digital compensation systems and the lawful use of data analytics. Most importantly, future studies should include victims as participants in policy design rather than treating them only as objects of administration.

14. CONCLUSION

The Rajasthan Victim Compensation Scheme expresses an important transformation in criminal justice: the victim is not merely a witness to the State's case but a rights-bearing person whose recovery matters independently of conviction and punishment. The Constitution, section 396 of the BNSS, the Legal Services Authorities framework, special legislation and Supreme Court jurisprudence together provide a strong legal foundation.

The decisive question is implementation. Relief that is unknown, delayed, procedurally exhausting or disconnected from services cannot fulfil the promise of rehabilitation. Effectiveness requires early identification, automatic referral, simple documentation, meaningful interim assistance, reasoned decisions, adequate and periodically revised compensation, secure payment and coordinated access to health and welfare support.

Rajasthan can strengthen the Scheme by using the district Legal Services Authority network as an active victim-support system, supported by digital case management and accountable

through transparent data. Reform should preserve individual assessment and human judgment. Compensation is not charity, a reward for conviction or a substitute for prosecution. It is a component of the State's obligation to make justice real for persons whose lives have been disrupted by crime. A genuinely victim-centred Scheme will be judged by whether it restores agency, dignity and the practical capacity to rebuild life.

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