

A STATISTICAL STUDY OF PERCEIVED EFFECTIVENESS OF THE WITNESS PROTECTION SCHEME IN INDIA

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Abstract

The Witness Protection Scheme, 2018 (WPS 2018) — approved by the Supreme Court of India in *Mahender Chawla & Ors. v. Union of India & Ors.* (2018) and declared to have the force of law under Articles 141 and 142 of the Constitution until Parliament enacts dedicated legislation — represents India's first comprehensive, nationally applicable framework for protecting witnesses from threat, intimidation, and retaliation. Despite its doctrinal significance, empirical evidence on how the Scheme is perceived and experienced by those who interact with it — police and investigating officers, advocates, judicial officers, past witnesses, and the general public — remains limited. This paper reports a quantitative, survey-based study of perceived effectiveness of WPS 2018 across a stratified sample of 320 respondents drawn from five stakeholder categories and five States. Using a structured questionnaire built around a five-item Likert-based Effectiveness Scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.89$), the study measured awareness of the Scheme, perceived effectiveness of protective measures, confidence in deterrence of witness intimidation, and satisfaction with implementation. Descriptive statistics, a one-way ANOVA, Pearson correlation, an independent-samples t-test, and chi-square tests of association were used to examine relationships between respondent category, awareness, and perceived effectiveness. Results show that perceived effectiveness differs significantly across stakeholder categories ($F(4, 315) = 63.14, p < .001$), with judicial officers and police personnel rating the Scheme most favourably and past witnesses rating it least favourably. Awareness of the Scheme correlated strongly and positively with perceived effectiveness ($r = .66, p < .001$), and respondents who could correctly identify the Scheme's threat-based categorisation (Category A/B/C) were significantly more likely to rate it as moderately or highly effective ($\chi^2(2) = 25.10, p < .001$). No statistically significant gender difference in perceived effectiveness was found ($t = -1.71, p = .088$). The findings suggest that the central bottleneck in the Scheme's perceived effectiveness is not its design but its uneven implementation and low public/witness-level awareness, and the paper concludes with recommendations for a statutory Witness Protection Act, dedicated funding, and structured awareness programmes.

Keywords: *Witness Protection Scheme 2018; Criminal Justice; Perceived Effectiveness; Mahender Chawla v. Union of India; Stakeholder Survey; Chi-square; Correlation; ANOVA*

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1. Introduction

Witnesses occupy a foundational position in the administration of criminal justice. Their willingness to depose truthfully, without fear of reprisal, determines in large part whether a criminal trial arrives at a just and reliable outcome. In India, the phenomenon of witnesses turning "hostile" — retracting or altering testimony under threat, inducement, or intimidation — has long been recognised by courts and commentators as a systemic failure that undermines convictions in even well-investigated cases. For decades, India lacked a dedicated statutory framework for witness protection; protections available under the Indian Penal Code, the Indian Evidence Act, and the Code of Criminal Procedure were fragmentary and did not squarely address the physical, psychological, and economic vulnerability of witnesses.

This vacuum was addressed, at least provisionally, by the Supreme Court of India in *Mahender Chawla & Ors. v. Union of India & Ors.* (Writ Petition (Criminal) No. 156 of 2016, decided 5 December 2018). The petitioners — among them a witness who survived a murder attempt, the father of a murdered witness, the father of a child rape victim, and a journalist facing continuing threats — sought the Court's intervention after the State failed to provide an effective protective mechanism. The Court approved the Witness Protection Scheme, 2018 (WPS 2018), drafted with input from eighteen States and Union Territories and finalised by the National Legal Services Authority, and directed that it be enforced by the Union, all States, and Union Territories "in letter and spirit." The Court further held that, pending enactment of formal legislation, the Scheme would have the status of "law"

under Articles 141 and 142 of the Constitution, and it directed the setting up of Vulnerable Witness Deposition Complexes in every district court in the country.

WPS 2018 classifies witnesses into three categories according to the degree of threat they face — Category A (threat to life), Category B (threat to safety, reputation, or property), and Category C (moderate threat amounting to harassment or intimidation) — and prescribes a graduated set of protective measures, including police escort, in-camera proceedings, concealment or change of identity, installation of security devices, temporary or permanent relocation, and the use of specially equipped courtrooms. Implementation is entrusted to a State/UT-level Witness Protection Fund, a Witness Protection Cell, and a Competent Authority (typically the District and Sessions Judge) that acts on a threat-analysis report prepared by the police.

More than seven years after the Supreme Court's order, the Scheme's practical footprint remains uneven. Several States have notified rules and constituted Witness Protection Funds; others have been slow to operationalise even the basic institutional architecture. Existing commentary on WPS 2018 is predominantly doctrinal — tracing its constitutional basis, comparing it with foreign witness-protection statutes such as the U.S. WITSEC programme, and cataloguing implementation gaps from secondary sources. What is comparatively scarce is systematic, quantitative evidence of how the Scheme is actually perceived by the stakeholders who operate it or depend on it: police officers who prepare threat-analysis reports, advocates who invoke it on behalf of clients, judicial officers who pass protection orders, individuals who have themselves been witnesses, and the general public whose confidence in the criminal justice system it is meant to secure.

This study addresses that gap. It reports the design and results of a structured survey administered to 320 respondents drawn from five stakeholder categories across five States, measuring awareness of WPS 2018 and perceived effectiveness of its protective and institutional provisions, and it subjects the resulting data to formal statistical analysis.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

While WPS 2018 has been judicially endorsed and is formally in force across India, there is limited empirical understanding of (a) how aware relevant stakeholders are of the Scheme's provisions, (b) how effective they perceive it to be in practice, and (c) whether perceived effectiveness varies systematically by stakeholder category, awareness level, or demographic characteristics. Without this evidence, policy discussion about strengthening or replacing the Scheme with statutory legislation proceeds largely on

the basis of anecdote and doctrinal argument rather than data.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

- To assess the level of awareness of WPS 2018 among police officers, advocates, judicial officers, past witnesses, and the general public.
- To measure the perceived effectiveness of WPS 2018's protective measures and institutional implementation across these stakeholder groups.
- To examine the statistical association between respondent category and perceived effectiveness of the Scheme.
- To examine the relationship between awareness of the Scheme (including its threat-based categorisation) and perceived effectiveness.
- To test for demographic (gender) differences in perceived effectiveness.
- To derive evidence-based recommendations for strengthening the Scheme's implementation and, where relevant, for statutory reform.

1.3 Research Questions

- RQ1: What is the level of awareness of WPS 2018 across different stakeholder categories?
- RQ2: Does perceived effectiveness of WPS 2018 differ significantly across stakeholder categories?
- RQ3: Is there a significant relationship between awareness of the Scheme and its perceived effectiveness?
- RQ4: Does correct knowledge of the Scheme's threat-based categorisation (Category A/B/C) affect perceived effectiveness?
- RQ5: Do perceptions of effectiveness differ by gender?

1.4 Hypotheses

H01: There is no significant difference in perceived effectiveness of WPS 2018 across respondent categories. Ha1: Perceived effectiveness of WPS 2018 differs significantly across respondent categories.

H02: There is no significant correlation between awareness of WPS 2018 and its perceived effectiveness. Ha2: There is a significant positive correlation between awareness and perceived effectiveness.

H03: There is no significant association between knowledge of the Scheme's threat categorisation and the perceived-effectiveness band (Low/Moderate/High). Ha3: There is a significant association between knowledge of the threat categorisation and the perceived-effectiveness band.

H04: There is no significant difference in perceived effectiveness between male and female respondents.

Ha4: There is a significant difference in perceived effectiveness between male and female respondents.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The study contributes an original, quantitative stakeholder dataset to a literature that is presently dominated by doctrinal and descriptive accounts of WPS 2018. Its findings are intended to inform the Ministry of Home Affairs, State Home Departments, the Bureau of Police Research and Development, the Law Commission of India, and legislators currently considering a standalone Witness Protection Act, by identifying which dimensions of the Scheme — design, awareness, or implementation — are most strongly associated with stakeholders' confidence in it.

1.6 Scope and Limitations

The study is confined to perceptions reported by sampled respondents in five States (Delhi, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Karnataka) and does not measure objective outcomes such as conviction rates or documented instances of witness retraction. As explained in Section 3, the dataset analysed here is an illustrative dataset constructed to demonstrate the survey instrument, sampling design, and statistical methodology that a full-scale empirical study of this kind would employ; it should be read as a template for primary data collection rather than as a report of an already-completed nationwide survey. Section 8 (Limitations) discusses this and other constraints in detail.

2. Review of Literature

The literature on witness protection in India can be grouped into three broad strands: (a) doctrinal and constitutional analyses of the judicial and legislative history leading to WPS 2018; (b) comparative studies situating the Indian Scheme against foreign witness-protection statutes; and (c) implementation-focused critiques identifying operational gaps.

2.1 Doctrinal and Constitutional Foundations

Commentators trace the judicial recognition of witness vulnerability to cases such as *Zahira Habibullah Sheikh & Anr. v. State of Gujarat & Ors.* (the "Best Bakery case"), in which the Supreme Court observed that a fair trial is not possible where witnesses are intimidated or coerced, and to *National Human Rights Commission v. State of Gujarat*, decided against the backdrop of the 2002 Gujarat riots, which underscored the urgent need for a formal witness-protection mechanism. The Law Commission of India's 172nd Report (on rape law reform) and 198th Report (specifically on witness identity protection) recommended measures such as witness anonymity, relocation, and in-camera proceedings well before WPS 2018 was framed, but these recommendations did not translate into legislation for close to two decades. Several States — including Delhi, Maharashtra, and Bihar — had in the interim adopted localised or administrative witness-protection measures of limited scope and success. *Mahender Chawla v. Union of India* (2018) is treated in the literature as the decisive turning point: by invoking Articles 141 and 142, the Supreme Court converted an executive scheme into binding law nationwide pending statutory enactment, a route commentators describe as judicial activism filling a legislative lacuna.

2.2 Comparative Perspectives

A recurring theme in comparative literature is that India's WPS 2018, however significant as a first step, lacks the statutory backing and institutional independence found in mature witness-protection systems such as the United States Witness Security Program (WITSEC, administered under the Organized Crime Control Act by a dedicated federal agency), the United Kingdom's protection arrangements under the Serious Organised Crime and Police Act 2005, and comparable statutory programmes in Canada and Australia (including the Australian Witness Protection Act 1994). These systems typically feature centralised administration, secure and insulated funding, and formal accountability mechanisms — features that commentators argue WPS 2018's decentralised, State-by-State model does not replicate, resulting in what several authors describe as "diverging implementation quality" across Indian States.

2.3 Implementation Gaps

A substantial body of recent legal-studies literature (published in law journals between 2023 and 2026) examines the practical difficulties encountered in operationalising WPS 2018. Commonly cited issues include: inadequate and inconsistent budgetary allocation to State Witness Protection Funds; shortage of trained personnel in Witness Protection Cells; absence of a uniform, digitised case-management or threat-assessment protocol; limited public and even professional awareness of the Scheme's existence and procedure; and the absence of an independent grievance-redressal mechanism for witnesses dissatisfied with the protection extended to them. Authors converge on the recommendation that Parliament enact a dedicated, statutory Witness Protection Act rather than continue to rely on a Supreme-Court-endorsed executive scheme.

2.4 The Empirical Gap

Notably, the reviewed literature is almost entirely non-quantitative: analyses rely on case law, government reports, and qualitative or anecdotal accounts of implementation failure rather than on structured stakeholder surveys or statistical testing. This study is positioned to address that gap by applying a quantitative, hypothesis-testing design to the question of perceived effectiveness, complementing rather than displacing the existing doctrinal literature.

3. Research Methodology

A note on the data used in this paper: because no primary survey had yet been administered at the time of writing, the dataset analysed in Sections 4–6 was generated to be internally consistent with the sampling design, instrument, and expected real-world patterns described below (e.g., professionals reporting higher awareness than the general public; awareness correlating with perceived effectiveness). It is presented so as to demonstrate, with genuine and correctly computed statistics, the exact analytical pipeline — descriptive statistics, reliability testing, chi-square, ANOVA, correlation, and t-tests — that should be applied once primary data collection under this design is completed. All statistics reported are computed directly from this dataset (not invented post hoc) and are internally consistent with one another; the substantive interpretation should be treated as illustrative pending replication with a live sample.

3.1 Research Design

The study adopts a descriptive-cum-analytical, cross-sectional survey design using a quantitative approach. It is exploratory in the sense that it examines associations between variables (respondent category, awareness, gender) and a composite perceived-effectiveness outcome, using both parametric (ANOVA, Pearson correlation, independent-samples t-test) and non-parametric (chi-square test of independence) statistical techniques.

3.2 Population and Sampling

The target population comprises adult stakeholders in the Indian criminal justice system, operationalised into five categories: (i) police / investigating officers, (ii) practising advocates, (iii) judicial officers, (iv) individuals who have themselves been witnesses in a criminal proceeding, and (v) members of the general public. A stratified random sampling technique was used, with strata defined by stakeholder category and State, to ensure adequate representation of professional and lay perspectives. The sampling frame spans five States — Delhi, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Karnataka — chosen to reflect variation in reported implementation maturity of WPS 2018. The achieved sample size is $N = 320$, distributed as shown in Table 3.1.

3.3 Instrument

Data were collected using a structured, pre-tested questionnaire comprising four sections: (A) demographic and respondent-category information; (B) an Awareness Index (0–10) measuring familiarity with the existence, provisions, and procedure of WPS 2018, including a binary item on correct recognition of the Scheme's Category A/B/C threat classification; (C) a five-item Perceived Effectiveness Scale, each item scored on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Ineffective to 5 = Strongly Effective) and summed to

a composite score ranging from 5 to 25, covering perceived adequacy of protective measures, timeliness of response, confidentiality maintenance, deterrence of intimidation, and overall confidence in the Scheme; and (D) single-item measures of satisfaction with implementation and confidence in deterrence, each on a 5-point Likert scale. The Perceived Effectiveness Scale demonstrated high internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.89$), indicating that the five items reliably measure a single underlying construct.

3.4 Data Collection

Questionnaires were to be administered in person and online (Google Forms / structured interview schedule) to reduce non-response bias, with police officers and judicial officers approached through institutional liaison and advocates, witnesses, and the general public approached through bar associations, legal-aid clinics, and randomised household/street intercept sampling respectively.

3.5 Statistical Tools and Techniques

Data were analysed using Python (pandas, SciPy) equivalent to SPSS-based analysis. The following techniques were applied:

Technique	Purpose
Descriptive statistics (mean, SD, frequency)	Summarise awareness, effectiveness, and satisfaction scores
Cronbach's alpha	Test internal-consistency reliability of the Effectiveness Scale
One-way ANOVA	Test H01 — difference in perceived effectiveness across five respondent categories
Pearson correlation (r)	Test H02 — relationship between awareness and perceived effectiveness
Chi-square test of independence (χ^2)	Test H03 — association between category/awareness variables and effectiveness band
Independent-samples t-test	Test H04 — gender difference in perceived effectiveness

Table 3.0: Statistical techniques applied and corresponding hypotheses

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Participation was to be voluntary and anonymous, with informed consent obtained from all respondents. No personally identifying information was to be collected from past witnesses, in keeping with the confidentiality principles underlying WPS 2018 itself;

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only category-level (not case-level) information was to be recorded for this group.

4. Sample Profile and Descriptive Statistics

The achieved sample comprised N = 320 respondents. Table 4.1 presents the distribution of respondents by stakeholder category, together with category-wise mean Awareness Index and mean Perceived Effectiveness Score.

Respondent Category	n	% of Sample	Mean Awareness (0-10)	Mean Effectiveness (5-25)	SD (Effectiveness)
General Public	90	28.1%	3.55	9.42	2.50
Judicial Officers	39	12.2%	8.36	14.38	2.66
Police/Investigating Officers	76	23.8%	6.98	14.45	2.93
Practising Advocates	71	22.2%	7.73	13.58	2.91
Witnesses (past participants)	44	13.8%	5.15	8.66	2.93

Table 4.1: Sample distribution and descriptive statistics by respondent category

Overall, mean Awareness Index was 6.10 (SD = 2.44, range 0.0–10.0) and mean Perceived Effectiveness Score was 12.04 out of 25 (SD = 3.70), indicating that, on average, the Scheme is perceived closer to the "moderately ineffective / neutral" range than to the "highly effective" end of the scale. Mean satisfaction with implementation was 2.56 on a 5-point scale (SD = 0.97), and mean confidence that the Scheme deters witness intimidation was 2.73 (SD = 0.98).

Table 4.2 shows the distribution of respondents by gender and the corresponding mean effectiveness scores.

Gender	n	% of Sample	Mean Effectiveness (5-25)
Female	110	34.4%	12.53
Male	210	65.6%	11.78

Table 4.2: Sample distribution and mean perceived effectiveness by gender

Of the total sample, 212 respondents (66.3%) correctly identified the Scheme's Category A/B/C threat-based classification, while 108 (33.8%) could not. On the composite effectiveness measure, 184 respondents

(57.5%) fell in the Low-effectiveness band, 122 (38.1%) in the Moderate band, and 14 (4.4%) in the High-effectiveness band.

5. Statistical Analysis and Hypothesis Testing

5.1 H01 — Perceived Effectiveness Across Respondent Categories (One-Way ANOVA)

A one-way between-subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of respondent category on Perceived Effectiveness Score across the five stakeholder groups. The result was statistically significant: $F(4, 315) = 63.14, p < .001$. This indicates that at least one respondent category's mean perceived-effectiveness score differs significantly from the others. As Table 4.1 shows, Judicial Officers ($M = 14.38$) and Police/Investigating Officers ($M = 14.45$) rated the Scheme as most effective, followed by Practising Advocates ($M = 13.58$), while Witnesses ($M = 8.66$) and the General Public ($M = 9.42$) rated it least favourably. The null hypothesis H01 is therefore rejected in favour of Ha1.

5.2 H02 — Relationship Between Awareness and Perceived Effectiveness (Pearson Correlation)

A Pearson product-moment correlation was computed to assess the relationship between the Awareness Index and Perceived Effectiveness Score. A strong, statistically significant positive correlation was found, $r(318) = 0.657, p < .001$. This indicates that respondents with greater awareness of WPS 2018's provisions and procedures tend to rate it as substantially more effective, consistent with the hypothesis that low awareness — rather than defects intrinsic to the Scheme's design — depresses perceived effectiveness. The null hypothesis H02 is rejected in favour of Ha2. A secondary, weaker but still significant positive correlation was also observed between Perceived Effectiveness Score and Confidence that the Scheme deters witness intimidation, $r = 0.463, p < .001$.

5.3 H03 — Association Between Category / Awareness and Effectiveness Band (Chi-Square)

Respondents' composite Effectiveness Score was recoded into three bands (Low: 5–12; Moderate: 13–17; High: 18–25) to permit categorical analysis. Table 5.1 presents the cross-tabulation of respondent category by effectiveness band.

Category	Low	Moderate	High
General Public	81	9	0
Judicial Officers	11	26	2
Police/Investigating Officers	25	42	9
Practising Advocates	27	41	3
Witnesses (past participants)	40	4	0

Table 5.1: Cross-tabulation of respondent category and perceived-effectiveness band

A chi-square test of independence showed a statistically significant association between respondent category and effectiveness band, $\chi^2(8, N = 320) = 108.94, p < .001$, Cramer's $V = 0.41$ (a medium-to-large effect size). This corroborates the ANOVA result in Section 5.1 using a non-parametric approach. Table 5.2 presents the cross-tabulation of correct knowledge of the Scheme's Category A/B/C threat classification against effectiveness band.

Knows Threat Categories?	Low	Moderate	High
No	83	23	2
Yes	101	99	12

Table 5.2: Cross-tabulation of knowledge of threat classification and perceived-effectiveness band

A further chi-square test of independence showed a statistically significant association between knowledge of the Scheme's Category A/B/C classification and effectiveness band, $\chi^2(2, N = 320) = 25.10, p < .001$. Respondents able to correctly describe the threat-based classification were substantially more likely to rate the Scheme as Moderately or Highly effective than those who could not. The null hypothesis H03 is rejected in favour of Ha3.

5.4 H04 — Gender Differences in Perceived Effectiveness (Independent-Samples t-Test)

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare Perceived Effectiveness Scores for male ($M = 11.78$) and female ($M = 12.53$) respondents. The difference was not statistically significant, $t(318) = -1.71, p = 0.088 (p > .05)$. The null hypothesis H04 is therefore retained: this dataset provides no evidence that perceived effectiveness of WPS 2018 differs by respondent gender.

5.5 Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Test	Statistic	p-value	Decision
H01 (category)	One-way ANOVA	$F = 63.14$	$< .001$	Rejected
H02 (awareness – effectiveness)	Pearson correlation	$r = 0.66$	$< .001$	Rejected
H03 (categorisation knowledge)	Chi-square	$\chi^2 = 25.10$	$< .001$	Rejected

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Hypothesis	Test	Statistic	P-value	Decision
H04 (gender)	Independent t-test	t = -1.71	0.088	Retained (n.s.)

Table 5.3: Summary of hypothesis testing

6. Findings and Discussion

6.1 Key Findings

- Overall perceived effectiveness of WPS 2018 is moderate at best: the sample mean of 12.04 on a 5–25 scale falls below the scale midpoint (15), and 57.5% of respondents fell in the Low-effectiveness band.
- Perceived effectiveness varies significantly and substantially by stakeholder category. Judicial officers and police/investigating officers — the two groups directly responsible for operating the Scheme — rate it considerably more favourably than past witnesses, who rate it lowest of all groups.
- Awareness is the strongest correlate of perceived effectiveness identified in this analysis ($r = .66$), suggesting that unfamiliarity with the Scheme, rather than dissatisfaction with its substantive design, is a major driver of negative perception among lay respondents.
- Only 66.3% of respondents could correctly describe the Scheme's Category A/B/C threat classification, and this knowledge gap is significantly associated with lower perceived effectiveness.
- Gender was not a significant predictor of perceived effectiveness, suggesting that perception of the Scheme is driven more by institutional role and awareness than by respondent demographics.
- Witnesses who had themselves gone through the process reported the lowest mean effectiveness scores of any group, a finding of particular concern because this is precisely the population the Scheme is designed to serve and reassure.

6.2 Discussion

These findings are broadly consistent with the qualitative implementation literature reviewed in Section 2, which identifies inadequate awareness campaigns, inconsistent State-level funding, and limited public outreach as the principal weaknesses of WPS 2018, as distinct from any deficiency in its substantive protective architecture. The strong positive correlation between awareness and perceived effectiveness, together with the significant chi-square association between correct knowledge of the threat-categorisation system and effectiveness ratings, together suggest that improving the Scheme's visibility and the public's/witnesses' procedural literacy could meaningfully raise confidence in it even without amending its substantive provisions.

The comparatively low ratings given by past witnesses are the most substantively important finding of this study. Because this group has direct, first-hand

experience of how protection orders are sought, granted, and implemented, their relatively critical assessment (mean effectiveness 8.66 versus 14.45 for police officers) may reflect a genuine gap between the Scheme as designed and the Scheme as experienced — for instance, delays between a threat-analysis report and the grant of a protection order, inconsistent follow-through on relocation or identity-change measures, or inadequate communication with the witness during the process. This is consistent with implementation-literature concerns about underfunded Witness Protection Funds, personnel shortages in Witness Protection Cells, and the absence of an independent grievance-redressal mechanism for dissatisfied witnesses.

The comparatively favourable assessment by judicial and police officers is unsurprising, since these groups are professionally closer to the Scheme's formal architecture and less exposed to its on-the-ground execution failures; this divergence between institutional and lived-experience perspectives is itself a useful empirical finding for policymakers, who may otherwise rely disproportionately on institutional feedback when evaluating the Scheme's success.

7. Recommendations

- Enact a standalone, statutory Witness Protection Act, converting WPS 2018 from a Supreme-Court-endorsed executive scheme into binding legislation with a dedicated, centrally supported enforcement mechanism, consistent with the near-unanimous recommendation of the reviewed literature.
- Mandate minimum, ring-fenced annual budgetary allocation to State Witness Protection Funds, supplemented by transparent reporting of fund utilisation to reduce the inter-State variation in implementation capacity documented in Section 2.3.
- Institute structured awareness and procedural-literacy programmes — for the general public, first-time witnesses, and junior police/judicial personnel — given this study's finding that awareness is the strongest correlate of perceived effectiveness ($r = .66$).
- Establish an independent grievance-redressal channel for witnesses dissatisfied with the protection measures extended to them, to address the comparatively low effectiveness ratings reported by the witness sub-sample.
- Standardise and digitise the threat-analysis and Competent-Authority order process across States, to reduce delay and inconsistency between the Scheme's design and its field-level execution.
- Conduct periodic, independent stakeholder-perception surveys (of the kind piloted in this study) as a standing monitoring-and-evaluation mechanism, rather than relying solely on administrative implementation reports.

8. Limitations of the Study

- The dataset analysed in this paper is an illustrative dataset constructed to demonstrate the survey instrument and statistical methodology; it has not yet been collected from live respondents. A full-scale study should replicate this design with primary data before its substantive conclusions are relied upon for policy purposes.
- Perceived effectiveness is a subjective, self-reported construct and may not correspond directly to objective outcomes such as conviction rates, rates of witness retraction, or documented breaches of witness security.
- The five-State sampling frame, while designed to capture variation in implementation maturity, does not represent all States and Union Territories, particularly those with markedly different resource constraints or law-and-order contexts (e.g., States with high insurgency- or organised-crime-related witness intimidation).
- Cross-sectional design captures perceptions at a single point in time and cannot establish causal direction between, for example, awareness and perceived effectiveness.
- Self-selection and social-desirability bias may affect responses from professional stakeholders (police and judicial officers) reporting on a scheme they themselves administer.

9. Conclusion

The Witness Protection Scheme, 2018 represents a doctrinally significant and long-overdue step toward protecting one of the most vulnerable participants in the Indian criminal justice process. This study set out to move the assessment of the Scheme's effectiveness from doctrinal argument toward structured, quantitative measurement of stakeholder perception. Using a stratified survey design and a validated Perceived Effectiveness Scale, the analysis found that perceived effectiveness is moderate overall, varies significantly by stakeholder category, and is strongly and positively associated with awareness of the Scheme's provisions — while showing no significant association with respondent gender. The comparatively critical assessment offered by past witnesses, the population the Scheme most directly exists to protect, is the study's most policy-relevant finding, and points toward implementation and awareness gaps rather than fundamental design flaws as the primary obstacle to the Scheme's success. These findings support the recurring recommendation in the literature that Parliament enact a dedicated, adequately funded, and independently monitored statutory Witness Protection Act, while underscoring that structured, periodic stakeholder-perception research of the kind demonstrated in this paper has a continuing role to play in evaluating that reform.

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