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THE POCSO AND THE ROMEO JULIET CLAUSE

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Abstract

This paper explores the possibilities and complexities of the "Romeo and Juliet" clause, following a recent Supreme Court of India judgment directing the government to consider exempting consensual sexual interactions within the 16–18 age group. While many jurisdictions globally have adopted such "close-in-age" exceptions for adolescent relationships, the Indian state faces unique challenges, including socio-cultural dynamics and a surge in POCSO (Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act) litigation involving consensual acts with partners. This paper questions whether introducing such an exemption will effectively resolve legal friction or create new systemic problems. By examining judicial evolution, biological drivers, and international models, this research evaluates if the Romeo-Juliet clause is a viable solution for the Indian state or if a different legislative approach is required.

Introduction:

The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012, was landmark legislation for the Indian state that enabled the legal protection for the children against sexual assault, abuse, harassment, exposure to porn, etc. As the time passed, many accused had been convicted as per the relevant provisions of the said act, but there was also a surge of the cases involving the accused aged 16-18 years. The approach of the courts shifts from a regular model to a complex "Preliminary Assessment" model under the Juvenile Justice Act, 2015 when the age of the accused is below the age of majority. This creates a complex litigation in which the technicalities are against the accused, the consent is a legal "nullity, and the remedy is the morality of the court¹.

If we look at the data from National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) report, Crime in India 2023, a total of 67,694 cases were registered under the POCSO Act (Data only includes female victims), representing 38.2% of all recorded crimes against children². Particularly, the 16–18

¹Manupatra Academy, 'Navigating Adolescent Romance vis-à-vis POCSO Act' (Manupatra Academy, 12 June 2024) http://www.manupatracademy.com/LegalPost/Navigating_Adolescent_Romance_POCSO_Act

²National Crime Records Bureau, Crime in India 2023 (Ministry of Home Affairs 2024) https://ncrb.gov.in/uploads/statistics/Crime_in_India_2023_Book_1.pdf

age demographic remains the primary focus of the "Romeo and Juliet" clause debate, as over 52% of penetrative sexual assault cases involve victims within this specific age bracket. The judicial disposal of these cases provides some evidence of "reluctant prosecution" only in adolescent consensual scenarios. In 2023, while 295,531 cases were listed for trial, only 10,906 resulted in convictions, whereas acquittals reached 25,320 meaning acquittals were more than double the number of convictions. When combined with 180 quashed cases and 1,132 compounded or compromised matters, these figures underscore the significant legal friction between statutory protection and adolescent relationships.

While the POCSO Act correctly recognises that a child's safety is often compromised by known individuals, the 2023 data exposes a disproportionate concentration of cases in a single, problematic category: "Friends, Online-Friends, or Partners on Pretext of Marriage³." In many states, this category has become the primary driver of POCSO litigation, eclipsing even familial or neighbor-related abuse. For instance, in Gujarat, this category accounts for a 74.9% (1,708 out of 2,279) of all penetrative sexual assault cases., In Tamil Nadu, it constitutes 66.9% (2,280 out of 3,407) of cases. The high prevalence of the "pretext of marriage" label suggests a systemic legal loop; since consent is legally void for those under 18, consensual adolescent elopements are frequently recharacterized under this specific heading to secure a prosecution. This suggests that the Act's rigorous "no-consent" framework is being utilised less for shielding children from predatory abuse and more for policing adolescent romantic choices. But also we cannot ignore that there is sufficient data which also shows (3224 of 40434) were known family members; (15146 of 40434) were known family friends and others.

The Judicial Evolution:-

If we look at the judicial approach of the cases containing the "romantic angle," there is a great evolution. If we look at the constitutional courts, like the high courts for several states and the supreme court of India, we can find many liberal views regarding the "romantic angle" in the POCSO cases, but as we shift the focus to the lower courts or special courts for the POCSO cases, the shift is reluctant and sometimes harsh. The lower courts in India strictly follow the statutory provisions of the concerned act, and there are cases that resulted in punishments regarding the consensual relationships.

³National Crime Records Bureau, 'State/UT-wise Offenders Relation to Child Victims under POCSO Act (Section 4 & 6) during 2023' (Open Government Data (OGD) Platform India, 2024) <https://www.data.gov.in/resource/stateut-wise-offenders-relation-child-victims-pocso-act-section-4-6-during-2023>

*While the constitutional courts have taken a context-driven approach, the supreme court precedent in **Independent Thought v. Union of India (2017)**⁴ had established the clear age of consent, which is 18. The supreme court had struck down section 375 (Exemption - 2) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), which had decriminalized sexual intercourse by a husband with his wife between the ages of 15 and 18 years. The court ruled that the said provision in the IPC was violative of Articles 14, 15, and 21 of the Constitution of India. Further, the court observed that the other statutes, like POCSO, the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 (PCMA), and the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 (JJ Act), recognize a person below 18 years as a child and prescribe the age of consent for sexual intercourse as 18 years.*

This ruling struck down the exemptions for minors and cemented the age of consent at 18 years across all respective statutes. For a special court trying the POCSO cases, this precedent had clarified the age of consent; once the age of the victim is established, the consent is a legal nullity. As a result, the lower courts had followed the strict provision and precedent established by the Supreme Court.

*While the strict provisions are there in the POCSO cases, the constitutional courts over time had taken a more socio-humane approach towards the cases in **Atul Mishra v. State of U.P. (2022)**⁵ the Allahabad High Court had interpreted the POCSO Act in a broad manner. The court said that following the strict statutory provisions seems to be a conservative approach. Further, the court interpreted that there are certain grey areas where the severity of the sentences provided under the Act should be diluted, keeping in view the facts of each case. If not done well, it could damage the reputation and future of young people whose actions have been only innocuous and may lead to spoiling the future life of those innocent lovers or couples who, out of sheer innocence, have initially developed and thereafter established that relationship, which, if seen in the bioscope of the penal provisions of the POCSO Act, would fall within the realm of the offense.*

*Similarly in **State v. Hitesh**⁶ the Delhi High Court had interpreted that the legal system should not criminalize the “consensual and respectful adolescent love”. The Adolescents are allowed to express their feelings and start relationships as far as it is consensual. In the latest judgement*

⁴*Independent Thought v Union of India* MANU/SC/1298/2017.

⁵*Atul Mishra v State of UP* 2025: AHC: 91963.

⁶*State v Hitesh* 2025: DHC: 944.

of the Supreme Court in *State of Uttar Pradesh v. Anurudh and Anr*⁷, the Supreme Court had recognized the misuse of the POCSO, especially by the parents of the girl, to stop or take revenge on the boy. The court further noted that the various High Courts had taken this issue very seriously, but there is a limit to which the judiciary can exercise its powers. The Supreme Court, in the said judgment, directed the Government of India to introduce a **Romeo-Juliet** clause exempting genuine adolescent relationships from the stronghold of the POCSO Act, enacting a mechanism enabling the prosecution of those persons who, by the use of these laws, seek to settle scores, etc.

The Romeo-Juliet Clause:-

The **Romeo-Juliet** clause is a legal exception that protects the young adults (aged above 16, varies state by state) who engage in consensual sexual intercourse from being prosecuted for the statutory sexual offenses as long as both individuals are close in age. Originated from the William Shakespeare's famous young lovers, Romeo and Juliet, who were teenagers in a consensual but forbidden relationship. The first state for the legal development of this concept is United States of America and parts of the European Union. In the United States, at least 39-42 states have some exception, although the age gap varies from state to state. But also there are certain states in the United States itself that have no **Romeo-Juliet** exception as of 2026. There are 7 states in the United States with no exceptions or age gap defenses, the examples being **California, Louisiana, Massachusetts, etc.**

The evolution of the **Romeo-Juliet** exception in the United States came from both legislative reforms and judicial decisions. *Wilson v. State (Georgia 2006)*⁸ is one of the landmark cases that shaped the legislative reform later wherein the Supreme Court of Georgia acquitted Genarlow Wilson, who was engaged in consensual oral sex with a 15-year-old while he was 17. Wilson was convicted for aggravated child molestation and sentenced to 10 years in prison, but in 2007, because of the public and judicial outcry on the severity of the sentence, the Georgia General Assembly passed a '**Romeo-Juliet**' Amendment in 2006. This case shaped more legislative reforms, which were seen in states like **Indiana, Texas, and Michigan.**

In some states of the European Union, the age of consent and the gap are even less; it can go

⁷State of Uttar Pradesh v Anurudh and Anr 2026 INSC 47.

⁸Wilson v State 279 Ga App 459, 631 SE 2d 391 (2006) Docket No A06A0637;

as low as 14 years with an age gap of 3 years, examples being *Austria, Germany, and Italy* (subject to the provisions and exemptions of the *Lex Loci statutes*).

Table - 1:

Age of consent, statutory provision, and exemptions of Romeo-Juliet laws across different Jurisdictions.

Sno.	Jurisdiction	Age of Consent	Statutory Provision
1	Bangladesh	16 years	Section 375 of the Bangladesh Penal Code, 1860 ⁹
2	Bhutan	16 years	Section 183 of the Penal Code (Amendment) Act of Bhutan, 2021 ¹⁰
3	Canada	16 years	Section 150.1(2.1) of the Canadian Criminal Code (R.S.C., 1985) ¹¹
4	South Africa	16 years	Sections 15 & 16 of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act, 2015 ¹²
5	Srilanka	16 years	Section 363(e) of the Sri Lankan Penal Code, 1883 ¹³
6	Japan	16 years	Penal Code - Articles 176-177 (Amended 2023) ¹⁴

The Justifications of States:

The initials of the **Romeo-Juliet** exception are from the United States of America. The said exemption was a response to a trend in the late 20th century wherein strict statutory laws were increasingly used to prosecute teenagers and young adults in consensual dating relationships, often resulting in life-altering penalties like sex offender registration.

The research article by David M. Bierie and Kristen M. Budd titled “Romeo, Juliet, and Statutory Rape”¹⁵ provides several legal and social justifications that states have used to decriminalize or create exceptions for consensual adolescent relationships. It lists out some

⁹Penal Code 1860 (Bangladesh), s 375.

¹⁰Penal Code (Amendment) Act 2021 (Bhutan), s 183.

¹¹Criminal Code, RSC 1985, c C-46 (Canada), s 150.1(2.1).

¹²Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act 2015 (South Africa), ss 15–16.

¹³Penal Code 1883 (Sri Lanka), s 363(e).

¹⁴Penal Code (Japan), arts 176–177 (as amended 2023).

¹⁵David M Bierie and Kristen M Budd, ‘Romeo, Juliet, and Statutory Rape’ (2016) 28 Sexual Abuse 746.

major factors that the legislatures have used to enact the exception of 'Romeo-Juliet' into their statutory provisions.

Some main core aspects are:-

1. The Distinction of Power and Cognitive Capacity:-

The primary legal premise of consent laws is that minors lack the cognitive capacity to guard against manipulation by adults. But the states justify the exceptions by recognizing that when the partners in the sexual act are close in age, the physical, cognitive, and social power imbalances that allow for adult-child exploitation are significantly diminished. This is different from adult-minor interactions, where these factors are often seen as 'predatory,' which the laws intend to tackle.

2. Alignment with Public Opinion:-

Legislative reforms are often driven by the disconnect between the law and the public's moral judgement. Research indicates that there is broad public support for prosecuting the older adults who engage in sexual acts with minors; the public is generally skeptical of criminalizing teens who engage in sexual acts with similar ages. Surveys have shown that less than 10% of the public believes that criminal charges should be possible when teens of the same age engage in consensual sex. States justify these clauses to ensure that the legislation reflects the community's perception of justice.

3. Recognition of Normative Adolescent Behaviour:-

The states also justify these exceptions by acknowledging the commonness of adolescent sexual activity. The statistics indicate that a large portion of adolescents engage in sexual intercourse, and the vast majority of the teenagers deem their sexual intercourse consensual. Because sexual relations in teenagers in close age are common, strict criminalization is often viewed as impractical intrusive involvement of the justice system in the normative developmental behavior of humans as teens.

4. Mitigation of Long Term Social Harm:-

The states implement these clauses to prevent the lifelong social "hunting" that occurs when the minor age differences result in sex offender convictions. There are cases wherein the minor age differences between the partners resulted in conviction and also criminal records of individuals who were involved in consensual sexual activities with their partners. States justify Romeo and Juliet exceptions as a necessary "legal recourse" to protect adolescents from these permanent and disproportionate legal stigmas.

Scientific and Psychological Dimensions of Adolescent Consensual

Relationships: -

The development of adolescent consensual relationships is governed by a complicated interaction between biological triggers and cognitive shifts. The normal sexual development of adolescents is not merely a social milestone but a physiological necessity driven by neuroendocrine changes.¹⁶

(Neuroendocrine changes¹⁷ refer to alterations in the body-wide network where the nervous system (brain/nerves) and endocrine system (hormones) work together to maintain balance (homeostasis).

1. The Biological Dimension:-

The primary scientific driver for adolescent relationships is activation of the Hypothalamic-Pituitary-Gonadal (HPG) axis¹⁸. This axis is essential for the physical landmarks of puberty, which “color” an adolescent’s thoughts and responses sexually. Other factors include:

- ⑩ ***Hormonal Influence:*** *In males rising levels of testosterone are directly associated with the initiation of sexual activity and the frequency of both coital (coital interactions involve penile-vaginal intercourse, often considered a primary sexual act) and non-coital (non-coital interactions include kissing, manual stimulation, oral sex, and anal sex) interactions.*
- ⑩ ***Neurobiological development:*** *The brain undergoes significant remodeling during the adolescent phase. Cognitive development transitions from logical to creative thinking, allowing adolescents to begin reasoning through complexities of intimacy and long-term consequences.*

2. The Psychological Dimension:-

The psychological landscape of adolescent relationships is defined by the search for identity and the impact of self-perception.

¹⁶Sujita Kumar Kar, Ananya Choudhury and Abhishek Pratap Singh, ‘Understanding normal development of adolescent sexuality: A bumpy ride’ (2015) 8 Journal of Human Reproductive Sciences 70.

¹⁷Canadian Cancer Society, ‘The neuroendocrine system’ (Canadian Cancer Society) <https://cancer.ca/en/cancer-information/cancer-types/neuroendocrine/what-is-neuroendocrine-cancer/the-neuroendocrine-system>

¹⁸Jan Pringle and others, ‘The physiology of adolescent sexual behaviour: A systematic review’ (2017) 1 The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health 337.

⑩ **Cognitive and Emotional Identity:** *During the adolescent phase of life, the need for intimacy and lovemaking with peers increases. This is a period for "behavioral experimentation," where the psychological drive for social involvement and sexual interest becomes a central component of an adolescent's identity.*

⑩ **Gender-Specific Psychological Responses:-**

Males: *Early physical maturity often correlates with higher confidence, independence, and a positive body image, though it may also increase aggressiveness due to hormonal surges.*

Females: *Psychosocial factors, particularly peer influence and social context, play a much larger role in female sexual decision-making as compared to males. Early maturing girls often face higher psychological stress, including self-consciousness and insecurity, which can affect the power dynamics in their consensual relationships.*

3. The Intersection:

The consensual relationships in adolescence are a "bumpy ride" because the physiological drive (hormones and sexual desire) often develops ahead of the psychological "scaffolding" (risk assessment and emotional regulation).

⑩ **Social and Cultural Mediators:** *While biology provides the drive, the expression of consensual relationships is mediated by social factors such as parenting styles, religious tendency, and media exposure.*

⑩ **Risk and Readiness:** *The scientific data suggests that the "stage of readiness" to engage in healthy, consensual relationships differs based on gender and physiological maturity. Interventions must, therefore, look beyond age alone and consider the "physiological influences" that drive these behaviors.*

The view of Indian State:-

The stance of the Indian State regarding the age of consent and the exception of "Romeo and Juliet" clause in POCSO Act is characterized by a protectionist and conservative approach, primarily voiced through the legislature and the Law Commission of India. While the judiciary has increasingly shown liberal views towards recognizing adolescent autonomy, the official state position remains anchored in the "bright-line" rule of 18 years as the absolute age of consent.

The Legislative Rejection and the 283rd Law Commission Report:-

In its 283rd report (2023)¹⁹, the Law Commission of India (LCI) categorically rejected lowering the age of consent from 18 to 16 years. This rejection is built upon several specific concerns that reflect the state's view of adolescent vulnerability:

The Child Marriage: *The Law Commission of India argues that maintaining the age of consent at 18 is essential to the fight against child marriage. Lowering this threshold is seen as a regressive step that would "dial back years of progress" in social reforms aimed at preventing early marriages.*

Health and Awareness: *The state maintains that adolescents are often unaware of the physiological and social consequences of sexual intercourse, such as sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and unintended pregnancies.*

The Digital Risk: *The expansion of internet access is cited as a primary reason for maintaining strict laws. The state views the digital landscape as an environment that heightens the risk of "grooming, online child abuse, and cyberbullying".*

Procedural "Revictimisation": *The Law Commission expressed concerns that introducing a consent-based exception for minors would force trials to focus on the victim's conduct. This process is viewed by the state as potentially "revictimising" the child by subjecting them to psychological distress during cross-examination to guess the "genuineness" of their consent.*

The Psychological Risk: "Relationship Eclipsing"

The Indian state's insistence on 18 as the threshold for consent aligns with psychological concerns regarding the intensity of adolescent connections. A significant risk in early romantic relations is "relationship eclipsing"²⁰ where an individual's identity, personal goals, and broader social development are completely overshadowed or consumed by a single romantic partnership. For adolescents, whose identities are still in a state of flux, such intense "liaisons" can lead to the neglect of academic pursuits, loss of autonomy, and a total reliance on a partner for emotional stability.

¹⁹Law Commission of India, Age of Consent under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 (Report No. 283, 2023) <https://cdnbbsr.s3.waas.gov.in/s3ca0daec69b5adc880fb464895726dbdf/uploads/2023/09/20230929466194485.pdf>

²⁰Mark Travers, 'A Psychologist Explains Relationship Eclipsing And Why It's A Problem' (Forbes, 13 May 2024) <https://www.forbes.com/sites/traversmark/2024/05/13/a-psychologist-explains-relationship-eclipsing-and-why-its-a-problem/>

The Intersection of Reform and the Threat of Sexual Exploitation:-

*The push for legislative reform reached a significant peak in the case of **Nipun Saxena & Anr v. Union of India & Anr**,²¹ where Senior Advocate Indira Jaising, appearing as amicus curiae, argued for a contextual reduction in the age of consent from 18 to 16 years. She contended that the current "bright-line" threshold of the POCSO Act fails to differentiate between exploitation and the natural romantic relations of adolescents, resulting in the unintended criminalization of consensual acts. Her advocacy for a "close-age exception" centers on the belief that the law should shield genuine adolescent relationships from the draconian penal provisions that was originally designed for predators.*

But, this proposal has sparked intense debate regarding its potential impact on Indian State's struggle with child trafficking. Critics and the Law Commission of India (LCI) express concern that any dilution of the age threshold could be weaponized by organized trafficking networks to legitimize the commercial sexual exploitation (CSE) of minors.²² In its 283rd report, the LCI highlighted that India remains a primary hub for trafficking, where children under 18 are frequently recruited through deceptive marriages, poverty-driven debt-bondage, or fraudulent promises of employment.

Beyond physical trafficking, scholars have also warned about the rise of "sextortion" rackets and digital grooming. The Law Commission specifically identified the rise of internet access as a factor that increases an adolescent's vulnerability to online child abuse. There is a fear that a Romeo and Juliet exception could provide a legal "loophole" for those who use minors to manipulate and extort money from individuals, thereby complicating the task of distinguishing between a "consensual peer" and a "sophisticated exploiter".

The Lack of Sex Education:-

If we look at the several states that have the Romeo and Juliet exemptions, we see that the sex education programs in those states are strong and are integrated into formal schooling.²³ Studies show that where there are robust sex education programs, adolescents' knowledge and attitudes toward sexuality and protection improve significantly. However, if we look at the Indian state,

²¹*Nipun Saxena v Union of India* (2019) 2 SCC 703.

²²Christine Joffres and others, 'Sexual slavery without borders: trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation in India' (2008) 7 International Journal for Equity in Health 22.

²³Sonia Barriuso-Ortega, Maite Garaigordobil and Jose Ramon Landarroitajauri, 'Sex education in adolescence: A systematic review of programmes and meta-analysis' (2024) 100(7) Journal of Adolescence 1242.

sexuality remains a largely "reserved" topic, often discussed with such hesitation that it remains an "enigma" for youth. Formal sex education in Indian schools is frequently nonexistent or inadequate (mainly in rural areas), hampered by a lack of transparency and a focus on purely biomedical approaches rather than holistic well-being. This void often forces adolescents to turn to unreliable peers or sexually stimulating media for information, leading to misconceptions and increased vulnerability to high-risk behaviors.²⁴ Addressing this gap is essential for any state, but the Indian state is still in a phase of transition.

Conclusion:-

The debate surrounding the introduction of a Romeo-Juliet clause in the POCSO Act reflects a deep-seated structural tension between the protective objectives of statutory provisions and the necessary recognition of adolescent autonomy. Statistical evidence, specifically from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) and the UNICEF/Enfold study,²⁵ reflects a significant prevalence of cases involving a "romantic angle," where approximately 24.3% of POCSO judgments studied were found to involve consensual peer relationships. While constitutional courts have increasingly adopted liberal, context-driven views, lower special courts remain strictly bound to statutory provisions, leading to a pattern where consensual elopements are treated as heinous crimes. This divergence explains why the majority of such cases reach the higher judiciary through appeals and writs, seeking a remedy for what has to be solved by trial courts.

When examining this issue through a global lens, the most logical policy approach is to refer to international standards, where the age of consent is frequently set between 14 and 16 years, accompanied by close-in-age exemptions ranging from 2 to 5 years. These jurisdictions justify such exceptions based on significant public and judicial outcry against over-criminalization, alongside a scientific understanding of adolescent development. From a biological and psychological standpoint, sexual interaction in late adolescence is a natural act of human development, driven by neuroendocrine changes and the activation of the HPG axis.

²⁴Jan Pringle and others, 'Identity, Relationships and Sex Education (IRSE): A Systematic Review of Adolescent Experiences' (2020) 17(19) International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health 7175.

²⁵Saundarya D Nair and Priyasha Pattnaik, "Romantic Cases" under the POCSO Act: An Analysis of Judgments of Special Courts in Assam, Maharashtra and West Bengal (Enfold Proactive Health Trust 2022)

But, for such development to occur safely, sex education is essential. In many states with these exemptions, sex education is a pillar of formal schooling that improves knowledge and attitudes; if we look at the Indian state, sexuality remains an "enigma" for youth, hampered by a lack of transparency and formal instruction. This void leaves adolescents vulnerable to misinformation and high-risk behaviors. Simultaneously, the concerns articulated by the Law Commission's 283rd Report—including child trafficking, online grooming, and "relationship eclipsing"—cannot be ignored when considering a legislative shift.

The feasibility of a Romeo-and-Juliet exemption must be viewed through the unique prism of Indian society—a context where public displays of affection are often taboo even as protective measures like condom sales rise.²⁶ It is a society where class and caste differences frequently force individuals to elope without family acceptance, leading to the weaponization of POCSO as a tool for parental control rather than child protection.

To balance these complex socio-cultural realities with the scientific methods and legal necessity for adolescent autonomy, the Indian State shall move beyond the binary "Protect & Punish Model" to a tripartite reform model in the areas of "legal thresholds, medical ethics, and social infrastructure."

The Legal Threshold: *The State should introduce the Romeo-Juliet exception by amending the definition of consent. The minimum age of consent shall be set to 16 years, provided the age gap between the partners should not exceed 3 years. This aligns with the international standards.*

Judicial Discretion for Age 15: *To allow for a context-driven approach, special courts should be empowered to recognize consent for individuals as young as 15, provided the court "deems fit" based on a lack of predatory grooming or power imbalance.*

Medical Autonomy and Reproductive Health: *To ensure that the adolescents can access reproductive health, sections 19, 20, and 21 of the POCSO Act shall be amended, and the medical care records shall be confidential.*

Socio-Educational Integration: *The states must address the information void that leaves their youth vulnerable to misinformation and unscientific methods to ensure the proper integration of not only sex education programs but also reproductive health programs, which shall not only*

²⁶Global Market Insights, 'India Condom Market Size, Share and Industry Analysis' (Global Market Insights, July 2024)
<https://www.gminsights.com/industry-analysis/india-condom-market>

be limited to the youth but must also extend to the parents too. The state must ensure rural reach via anganwadis, government & private schools & colleges. This utilizes existing grassroots infrastructure to normalize conversations about consent and safety.

Parental Counseling Protocols: *Since data suggests POCSO is mostly weaponized by parents to "settle scores" or resist relationships, the law should mandate counseling sessions for parents. When a child denies charges of abuse in a peer-romantic scenario, the focus should shift from prosecution to family mediation and psychological support.*

Lastly, the POCSO Act shall withhold the concept of "innocent until proven guilty rather than guilty until proven innocent" by amending sections 29 and 30 of the POCSO Act.

