

## ABSTRACT

Witnesses play a vital role in all stages of criminal proceedings, from initial reporting of a crime, to the end of the trial. Their contribution to the efficacy of the fine-tuned criminal justice system is paramount. Therefore, it is a duty of the government and all the law enforcement authorities to protect them with utmost priority.

The focus of this study is encouraging practically implemented witness protection programme, against the witness intimidation and the widespread culture of impunity as an urgent need to the Sri Lankan criminal justice system. Ultimately it is expected to encourage the witnesses to come forward to testify in courts without fear of being persecuted or secondary victimization under the shelter of well established witness protection programme. The objective of the research is to examine whether the newly introduced Act relating to the protection of the witnesses and victims of crime is practical enough to provide utmost protection to the witnesses whose lives are at risk. The research further emphasizes the importance of the practicality of the protection measures to prevent witnesses from various hardships that they undergo in both physically and psychologically.

Although, the laws are on a paper, research argues that due to the inadequacy of the protection measures and the failure of providing certain acceptable ways regarding how these measures are implemented, and lack of resources sustained, Sri Lanka is still in a dream of witness protection scenario, comparing to other selected countries. While reviewing the law of the Sri Lanka, the study is engaged in comparative study of witness protection programmes of selected countries with the idea of getting valuable lessons to our country. The key objective of the study is therefore, to discover the grey areas and loopholes in our witness protection laws and explore the challenges and issues related to.

Eventually the research has found that the mere enactment of laws is not enough to address the issue, without bringing those in to practicality. Findings of the research reveal that there is an urgent necessity of bringing the Act in to practicality through acceptable methods. After examining these problematic areas, the study presents number of solutions with the belief that, those solutions will assist in overcoming the identified challenges and issues in the area, which will be useful in bringing the witness protection laws in to practice. Finally, with the aim of contributing to protect the rule of law of the country through a comprehensive criminal justice system, by creating a fearless environment for witnesses to come forward to testify, this research is concluded by providing number of recommendations for the future development in the area of witness protection of Sri Lanka.

Key words: Witness Protection, criminal Justice System, Sri Lanka