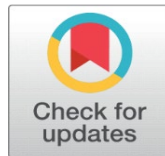


EXPLORING THE DARK SIDE OF FAME: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE CASTING COUCH CULTURE IN THE ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY

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ABSTRACT

The Casting Couch issue has long been a controversial and widespread problem in the Indian Entertainment Industry. The Casting Couch is when someone asks for sexual favors in exchange for career opportunities, especially at the time of audition and during casting process. This practice has been a dark underbelly within the industry, with aspiring actors facing exploitation in desperation for opportunities. The Casting Couch issue has remained a challenge in the industry despite occasional revelations or scandals, which have shown the need for stringent measures to balance or stop these exploitation incidents, and the cultural stigma and fear of repercussions associated with such incidents have contributed to keeping this issue on the left.

On comparison, the Casting Couch issue is not specific to the Indian entertainment industry alone, it is a social concern that affects various film and television industries worldwide. Casting Couch incidents have been reported in Bollywood, Hollywood, and other international regional film industries. Further similarities in these cases highlight broader systemic issues that transcend geographic boundaries. In these cases, less legal action has been taken against the perpetrators. Comparison with other countries highlights the need for collective industry-wide commitment to promote a culture that condemns exploitation practices and creates a safer environment.

Keywords: Casting Couch, Exploitation, Sexual Harassment, Environment, Entertainment, Industry, Incidents, Opportunities, Culture, Career

1. INTRODUCTION

"You're not a victim for sharing your story. You are a survivor setting the world on fire with your truth, and you never know who needs know your light, your warmth, and raging courage."

~ Alex Elle

Casting Couch is practised in the entertainment industry by influential people such as co-actors, producers, directors, and casting directors. These people misused their powers to seek sexual favours from aspiring actors or actresses in exchange for providing them roles in films or television shows.

This occurrence is considered unethical and a form of sexual harassment and exploitation towards some desired newcomers who always remain eager to establish their careers in the entertainment industry. Powerful predators take advantage of the vulnerability of new actors and actresses in the industry who strongly want to begin their journey at any cost. The victims of the casting couch may feel pressured to comply with such requests, if not risking their own

prospects to get roles or face realization in the media industry. It is important to note that the casting couch is not bare to the Indian film industry only. Such similar issues are reported in the world entertainment industry as well. Casting Couch is a severe issue against equality, professionalism, and respect in the workplace.

Awareness has increased in recent years and many discussions related to the casting couch have also been taking place in media industry. Some individuals who belong to the entertainment industry have come forward, shared their experiences and raised their voices against this evil. The #Me Too moment, an awareness movement around the issue of sexual harassment and sexual assault of women at workplace gained momentum globally and in India. This moment has shed light on the harassment and abuse as well as the casting couch that occurs in the entertainment industry.

The Advocates, Entertainment Bodies, and Authorities are working to address and combat this unethical practice. The industry must foster accountability, create safe reporting mechanisms, and ensure that everyone who engages in exploitative behaviour is responsible for their actions. The essential step for preventing and addressing the casting couch is to raise awareness and promote a supportive environment for all the victims of the casting couch phenomenon. Recently, Ravi Krishna, a versatile personality known for his dual roles as an actor and a politician, became a powerful spokesperson for women's rights in the Indian entertainment industry during the Lok Sabha debate in March 2023¹. As a Member of Parliament, he threw light on the status of women, and very enthusiastically and persuasively spoke about issue of the Casting Couch and pointed out that women have to endure a lot of harassment and exploitation to pursue their dreams in the entertainment industry. Highlighting the urgency to protect aspiring actors from the insidious practices of casting couch, Ravi clearly expressed the need for stringent laws to stop this menace. Appealing to the Government, he said there is a need of reform for women and correct the entertainment industry.

The entertainment industry is known for glitz and glamour, but for a long time, it has been known for its dark and uncertain fate in the form of the casting couch too. This pervasive issue has been a stain on the entertainment industry for decades, in which power has been abused. Those who want to make a name for themselves in showbiz face a compromising situation. There are many stories related to this which took the limelight also.

2. HISTORICAL INTERPRETATION OF CASTING COUCH

Not being a new concept, it has a long and complex history. It's historical roots can be traced back in early times of Bollywood. It is said that the casting couch originated in the silent film era, when powerful studio heads and directors had uncontrolled power over the careers of aspiring actors. It is believed that the allure of fame and success tempted weak aspirants to compromise their integrity in the hope of securing a prestigious role.

It is believed that the phenomenon of the casting couch has existed in the entertainment industry since the 20th century. During the period from 1920 to 1950, the studio system lived, where few major studios kept their power over actors and actresses, which meant they could control not only their careers but also personal lives. The speciality of some significant studios was that they dominated the industry through the studio system. The studios had exclusive contracts with the actors and actresses, which allowed them to control the performers' careers and personal lives. There were some reports about influential studio executives and directors taking advantage of actors by influencing them for sexual favors.

In the 1930s, the Indian film Industry, particularly Bollywood, started making its mark. During this period, the industry was on the rise, and stories of exploitation were often suppressed due to the lack of societal norms and mechanisms to report such incidents. However, rumors and anecdotes about influential figures taking advantage of aspiring talent came to light during this time. If we are taking about the social and cultural factors, the Indian society in the mid-20th century was quite conservative, and discussion of sexual harassment issues was largely taboo. This silence behind closed doors has contributed to the casting couch culture, in which victim actors were often forced not to speak out due to backlash and to protect their career.

Between 1960s to the 1980s period, with the influence of Western cinema and globalization, the significant changes have occurred in the Indian film industry. The film industry began to become more professional, more power dynamic in the world of entertainment industry. From 1990s to 2000s, Bollywood emerged as a new global phenomenon and

¹ Ravi Krishna, 'Need to make Laws against Casting Couch and Exploitation in Film and TV industry' (Lok Sabha Debate 20 September 2020) <[Need To Make Laws Against Casting Couch And Exploitations In Film And Tv Industry. on 20 September, 2020 \(indiankanoon.org\)](#)> accessed 24 January 2024

grew in terms of production value and international reach. However, Casting Couch culture was also developing simultaneously, that was often driven by few individuals enjoying concentration of power within their hands. But, it was only during this period that some actors and actresses began to raise their voices against the sexual harassment they faced, although their voices were often completely ignored.

#Me Too Movement: The #Me Too movement, which had gained global momentum, also profoundly impacted the entertainment industry 2018. Many actors, filmmakers, and industrial professionals came forward and shared their stories of sexual harassment that happened to them, and that also includes instances of the casting couch. During this movement, victims raised allegations against some high-profile figures, which led to a public reckoning. This movement encouraged discussions about the need for mechanisms and reforms in the entertainment industry to reduce sexual harassment. Some production houses started addressing grievances and creating a safer work environment for struggling aspirants. Whereas the Indian entertainment industry is not the only industry affected with the problem of casting couch but it is also a concern of the global entertainment industry.

3. ELEMENTS INFLUENCING UNETHICAL AUDITION PRACTICES

Many elements contribute to the existence of the sexual harassment phenomenon in the entertainment industry. The hierarchical structure of the entertainment industry creates a power imbalance between those who make decisions about casting and those who seek opportunities. Further, there are some cases in which neither stringent regulations nor oversight to prevent or address unethical practices helped in any way. Rather, the industry's weak or non-existent guidelines or regulations contribute to this amoral culture, making corrupt practices more likely to occur. The limited opportunities in the entertainment industry prompt many individuals to grab existing opportunities that turns the industry into a highly competitive industry. Aspiring actors due to intense rivalry and desperation, become more susceptible to exploitation. Furthermore, with the prevailing culture of silence within the industry, victims refrain from speaking out against incidents to protect their careers or to face social stigma. Reluctance to report these incidents allows problems to persist without exposure. Besides these, the inadequate awareness of newcomers to behave in a professional manner is also a contributing factor. Due to the lack of awareness, it can make actors more vulnerable to exploitation. To add to this, Gender stereotypes or dynamics also play a role in making women victims of casting couch practices. Paradoxical social norms also contribute to victims not coming forward, speaking out, and seeking justice. Lastly, many people in the entertainment industry rely on networking and personal connections to secure chances. Due to this dependency factor, opportunistic can take advantage of the situation and demand personal favors from them in exchange for career advancement. Addressing these types of incidents requires a multifaceted approach, including maintaining the industry's strict rules and regulations, fostering an accountability culture, promoting awareness, and providing a support system for victims to speak forward.

4. EFFECTS OF CASTING COUCH PRACTICES ON INDIVIDUALS AND INDUSTRY

Victims of the Casting Couch phenomenon experience not only psychological trauma but significant emotional distress also. Sometimes, they have to comply such requests to move their careers forward, which makes them feel pressured and can lead to feelings of powerlessness and guilt. The newcomers who resist such pressure may face professional repercussions, which can hurt their career prospectus. Those actors or actresses who succumb to unfair demands attribute their success more to exploitation than their talent, which can be detrimental to their self-esteem. Victims of the Casting Couch phenomenon face stigmatization in the entertainment industry, which makes it difficult for them to pursue future opportunities. Victims coming forward and speaking out against these incidents can also lead to social and professional isolation. Due to casting couch, the entertainment industry has tarnished its reputation at both national and international levels. This can dissuade talented actors from pursuing a career in entertainment industry and limit the pool of creative professionals. Further, the prevalence of the casting couch in the entertainment industry may contribute to the lack of diversity, as talent may be overshadowed by people who engage in exploitation practices. Genuine talent can be overlooked in favor of those who are generally willing to compromise their principles.

Moreover, the casting couch practice phenomenon does not allow for the penetration of legal and regulatory scrutiny in the entertainment industry as it is a hidden activity and not done in public.

5. LEGISLATION ADDRESSING CASTING COUCH INCIDENTS IN THE ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY

There is no particular Act for Casting Couch, but there are some legal provisions to prevent sexual harassment against women, mentioned in the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2024 (IPC)², which protects women such that whenever any person demands sexual favours without the consent of any person, then action can be taken against that person. According to “Section 74”, a spectrum of behavior aimed at insulting the modesty of women, which includes unwelcome physical contact with women, demanding sexual favours without her consent, and making sexually coloured remarks and for this offence, the accused can be punished with one year to five years imprisonment along with a fine. “Section 75” covers unwelcome sexual behaviour with women, including showing pornography, demanding sexual favours without the consent of that person, or making sexually coloured remarks, and the accused can be punished with one year to three-year imprisonment along with a fine for these offences. “Section 78” states that when a person stalks someone through social media or calls or some other way against another person, it will cause them apprehension of fear, or if it is related to sexual harassment, it will be an additional offence. “Section 64” states that if a person only demands sexual favours alone, then that does not constitute rape, the accused will be charged with a more serious offence if the demand is made by threat, force, or physical force. Section 79 penalizes those persons who use any word, gesture, or act intended to insult the modesty of women, address sexual harassment and safeguard women's dignity.

6. LEGAL AND ETHICAL PERSPECTIVE

In the entertainment industry, casting couch, which refers to the practice of sexual favours trading for career advancement, is both legally and ethically problematic. So, these legal and ethical perspectives need to be considered.

Legal Perspective:

1. Sexual Harassment: Sexual Harassment in the Indian Entertainment industry is as serious an issue as sexual harassment in any other workplace or is subject to legal regulations. The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act, 2013³ is primary legislation on sexual harassment in the workplace. Sexual Harassment is very broadly defined under Section 2(n) of the Act, as it also covers comments, unwelcome acts, and behaviour of a sexual nature which creates a hostile or intimidating work environment. As per Section 4 of the Act, employers must keep their working environment safe or free from sexual harassment. For this, there is a need to establish an Internal Complaints Committee to address complaints of sexual harassment in the workplace. Section 9 is an invaluable resource that outlines the exact procedure to be followed when conducting complaint inquiries. The guidelines presented in this section are designed to ensure that investigations are conducted fairly, transparently, and thoroughly. The Act specifies a time limit of three months for filing a complaint, but the time can also be extended depending on the circumstances.

Further, Section 16 of the Act emphasises the need to maintain the confidentiality of complaints or witnesses and protect proceedings from adverse consequences. It also provides Redressal measures from counselling to monetary compensation, and if any person is dissatisfied with the outcomes of the internal proceedings, then they can approach the Local Complaints Committee⁴ or file a complaint with the police under the relevant sections of the IPC. The ICC offers a safe and secure platform for victims of the casting couch to seek justice with a commitment to due process and confidentiality. The ICC investigates complaints thoroughly.

In the entertainment industry, individuals must know their rights or the legal mechanisms to deal with situations like sexual harassment. To address or prevent sexual harassment in the Entertainment Industry or workplace, awareness should be created, respect culture should be fostered, and compliance with the law should be ensured.

2. Contractual Agreement and Consent of Individuals

The issue of the casting couch is a matter of concern in the entertainment industry and raises ethical or legal questions. It is crucial to note that engaging in these practices is morally shameful and illegal. To address Casting Couch's

² The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita 2023

³ The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act 2013

⁴ The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act 2013, s 6.

problems, consent, which is a fundamental aspect of any relationship or interaction, is paramount. It is very important to emphasize that any form of coercion, manipulation, or pressure to engage in unwanted sexual activities is a violation of any person's right to consent freely. Consent should be explicit, voluntary, or without any external pressure.

The purpose of contractual agreements in the entertainment industry is to define the terms or conditions that govern professional relationships. Individuals should be placed or promoted based on their merit and talent rather than any form of exploitation, ensuring that they strictly adhere to legal and ethical standards. Including a condition such as sexual favors for a professional is not only unethical but may also violate anti-harassment laws.

3. Labour Laws

Labour laws in India regulate employment relations, and actors in the entertainment industry are often bound by contractual agreements. The agreement also includes sections relating to workplace safety, ethical conduct, and laws against exploitation. Violating these Sections can lead to legal consequences for the parties involved. "The court held that the Factories Act is a social legislation, and it provides for the health, safety, welfare, and other aspects of the workers in the factories. In other words, the labour legislation serves a dual purpose, to protect workers from being exploited at the workplace and provide recourse in case of violation of the same."⁵

4. The Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986

This Act prohibits women from being indecent represented through advertisements, publications, writings, paintings, figures, or in any other manner.

5. The Constitution of India

Casting Couch issues in the Indian entertainment industry raises serious concerns regarding violating Articles 14 and 15. The casting couch issue that aspiring actors are forced to exploit in exchange for a career violates Article 14⁶ by creating a situation where one has to agree to unwanted demands to get an opportunity. Casting Couch also Violates Article 15⁷ by perpetuating the discrimination system, disproportionality affecting aspiring actors based on gender, and compromising the principles of equality or non-discrimination enshrined in the Constitution.

7. ETHICAL PERSPECTIVES

The ethical perspectives of the casting couch phenomenon in the entertainment industry involve various moral principles or values to be considered. To cultivate a healthier and more equitable Indian entertainment industry, we must fundamentally uphold the inherent dignity and worth of every individual, ensuring everyone from seasoned professionals to newcomers receives equal respect, fair treatment, and freedom from exploitation or coercion. This demands absolute justice and equal opportunity, where casting and advancement rely solely on merit and skill, actively rejecting personal favours, nepotism, and all forms of discrimination based on identity. Building trust requires unwavering honesty and transparency in all decisions and communications, fostering clear processes and discouraging manipulative behaviour. Crucially, we need strong accountability, where individuals take responsibility for their actions and face consistent consequences for misconduct like harassment. Finally, fostering continuous ethical education and open dialogue among all stakeholders is essential to collectively navigate challenges and embed these principles deeply. Embracing these core values is vital for dismantling the pervasive issue of the casting couch and building a truly just, inclusive, and respectful environment for all.

7.1. MEDIA'S IMPACT ON HIGHLIGHTING AND SUSTAINING CASTING COUCH PRACTICES

The Indian entertainment industry, encompassing Bollywood and regional cinema, has been under investigation for a long time for its alleged involvement in the casting couch incidents. The media's role in confronting the persistent shadow of the casting couch within Bollywood and regional cinema is deeply double-edged. While vital investigative journalism courageously exposes abuses, verifies victims' harrowing accounts, and provides essential platforms for silenced voices, empowering survivors and pushing for systemic reforms through urgent dialogue, certain media practices tragically sustain the very problem they aim to highlight. Sensationalising these painful stories for clicks or

⁵ Ravi Shankar Sharma v State of Rajasthan [1993] AIR Raj 177.

⁶ The Constitution of India 1950.

⁷ Ibid.

ratings can perversely glamorise exploitation instead of focusing on solutions, while victim-blaming narratives, questioning survivors' credibility, create a chilling atmosphere that deters others from speaking out. Furthermore, pressure from powerful industry connections or financial interests can lead some outlets to shy away from exposing perpetrators, fostering a dangerous culture of silence and impunity. For the media to truly be a catalyst for healing and justice, it must consistently prioritise truth and empathy over sensationalism, stand firmly with survivors, and resist the industry pressures that allow exploitation to fester, transforming its complex influence into an unwavering force for positive change.

7.2. UNDERSTANDING PUBLIC VIEWS ON CASTING COUCH PRACTICES

In the Indian entertainment industry, public perception of casting couch issues is multifaceted. While some people may see it as a systemic issue deeply embedded in the industry, others may see it as an isolated problem affecting a few people. Social media platforms have provided a platform for public expression where people can share their experiences, and activists can demand accountability. There has been an increase in awareness level regarding the issue of casting couches in India in recent years. The #Me too movement, high-profile cases, and testimonials from actors have contributed a lot in shedding light on the pervasiveness of such practices. Celebrities have challenged the prevailing culture of silence or stigma on the casting couch and have played a significant role in raising awareness against these issues.

7.3. INSTANCES WHERE MEDIA POSITIVELY INFLUENCED THE RESOLUTION OF CASTING COUCH CONCERNS

Tanushree Dutta-Nana Patekar Incident (2018)⁸ the issue of the casting couch started in Bollywood due to allegations of harassment by Nana Patekar on the sets of a film by Tannu Shree Dutta that received widespread coverage in the media. In Vinta Nanda- Alok Nath's Case (2018)⁹, the media coverage drew attention to the issue of harassment in the television industry, television producer Vinta Nanda accused actor Alok Nath of rape. "Subhash Ghai Accusations (2018)"¹⁰, filmmaker Subhash Ghai was accused by an unknown woman of drugging or molesting her, and the media covered her allegations or contributed to the widespread discussion on casting couch issues. "Sajid Khan's Misconduct Allegations (2022)"¹¹ During the # MeToo movement, Director Sajid Khan had to face many allegations of sexual harassment, due to which media coverage highlighted the prevalence of this type of behavior in the film industry. "Rajat Kapoor Controversy (2018)"¹², actor-filmmaker Rajat Kapoor faced allegations of inappropriate behavior. The media covered the incident and shed light on the casting couch issue "Kangana Ranaut Speaking Out Various Instances"¹³, media coverage has contributed to the exploitation of new people in the industry as Kangana Ranaut has started speaking out about her experiences with the Casting Couch. "Payal Ghosh Accusation against Anurag Kashyap (2020)"¹⁴ filmmaker Anurag Kashyap was accused of exploitation by actress Payal Ghosh, because of which the media covered the allegations

⁸ Interview with Zoom, 'Tanushree Dutta's Shocking Revelation on Female Casting in Bollywood, Hypocrisy of Actors' (India Times 25 September 2018)< [Tanushree Dutta's shocking revelation on female casting in Bollywood, hypocrisy of actors \(indiatimes.com\)](https://www.indiatimes.com/entertainment/bollywood/tanushree-dutta-shocking-revelation-on-female-casting-in-bollywood-hypocrisy-of-actors)> accessed 24 January 2024

⁹India Today Web Desk, 'Me Too: Alok Nath accused of rape by a writer-producer' (India Today 9 October 2018) <<https://www.indiatoday.in/television/top-stories/story/metoo-alok-nath-accused-of-rape-by-writer-producer-vinta-nanda-1358998-2018-10-09>> accessed 14 January 2024

¹⁰ HT Correspondent, 'Me too movement: Filmmaker Subhash Ghai accused of drugging, raping woman' (Hindustan Times 11 October 2018)<[MeToo movement: Filmmaker Subhash Ghai accused of drugging, raping woman | Bollywood - Hindustan Times](https://www.hindustantimes.com/entertainment/bollywood/metoo-movement-filmmaker-subhash-ghai-accused-of-drugging-raping-woman)> accessed 24 January 2024

¹¹ Kritika Vaid, 'Here's a List of Women Who Raised Their Voices to Accuse Bollywood Director Sajid Khan' (India 20 January 2021)<<https://www.india.com/photos/entertainment/metoo-list-of-9-women-who-have-accused-filmmaker-sajid-khan-of-sexual-harassment-197750>> accessed 5 January 2024

¹² Divya Goyal, 'Actor Rajat Kapoor, Accused of Harassing 2 Women, Apologizes for Causing Pain, Hurt, Trauma' (NDTV Movies 8 January 2018)<<https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.ndtv.com/entertainment/actor-rajat-kapoor-accused-of-harassing-2-women-appologises-for-causing-pain-hurt-trauma-1928495/amp/1>>accessed 4 October 2024

¹³ Interview with Times Now, 'Kangana Ranaut's Shocking Talks about Casting Couch in Bollywood, Says There are Expectations from Heroines to Behave like Wives on Set!' (India Times 17 September 2020)< [Kangana Ranaut talks about casting couch in Bollywood, says there are expectations from heroines to behave like wives on set! \(indiatimes.com\)](https://www.indiatimes.com/entertainment/bollywood/kangana-ranaut-talks-about-casting-couch-in-bollywood-says-there-are-expectations-from-heroines-to-behave-like-wives-on-set)>accessed 24 January 2024

¹⁴ India TV Entertainment Desk, 'Actress Payal Ghosh accuses Anurag Kashyap of Sexual harassment, demand action against him' (India TV News 19 January 2020)<[Actress Payal Ghosh accuses Anurag Kashyap of sexual harassment, demands action against him – India TV \(indiatvnews.com\)](https://www.indiatvnews.com/news/entertainment/actress-payal-ghosh-accuses-anurag-kashyap-of-sexual-harassment-demands-action-against-him)> accessed 4 January 2024

extensively the discussion on power dynamics or exploitation in the industry started. "Legal Action against Vikas Bahl (2018)"¹⁵ filmmaker Vikas Bahl also had to face allegations of sexual harassment, and then media coverage not only brought the issue to the front but also started raising concerns about the importance of legal action against those accused of such misconduct.

8. MEN ARE ALSO VICTIMS OF CASTING COUCH

In the entertainment industry, the issue of casting couch is a widespread problem that crosses gender boundaries. It is believed that this issue is associated with the exploitation of only female actresses, but it is not so, men also face the casting couch problem, but it is crucial to acknowledge it. Both men and women face unscrupulous individuals, who take advantage of their intelligence in exchange for career opportunities. Many such instances may have to be repeated due to inherent power dynamics in the industry. For example, "Ayushman Khurana", a very good actor and singer, opened up surprisingly about a worrying casting couch incident in an interview with "Pinkvilla"¹⁶. He said that during the initial phase of his career, a director gave him a proposal saying that if he would show him his tool, then he would secure the lead role for him, for which Ayushman immediately refused his offer.

Another example is "Ravi Krishan, a Bhojpuri actor", who spoke openly about a disturbing incident related to the casting couch on "Aap Ki Adalat." he refused to reveal the name of a lady but said that she had become a big shot. She told Ravi, "Coffee Peene Raat Me Aaiyega." Ravi was quite shocked by this proposal, and he understood that, so he immediately refused the offer. There are many male actors or female actors with whom the casting couch incidents are happening, and everyone is gradually sharing their incidents through social media, news channels, and interviews.

11. PIONEERING JUDGMENT

1. X V. State of Maharashtra, 2023¹⁷

On March 17, 2023, the Supreme Court was hearing the bail plea related to the Casting Couch issue. In this case, a bench of two Judges, "Justice AS Bopanna" and "Justice Hema Kohli," heard the matter and said that by adding more severe offences, the FIR could be taken as a condition for cancelling the bail granted by the court. In this case, a woman has filed an appeal before the Supreme Court bench in which she alleges that a businessman had raped her in a hotel room on the pretext of some modelling assignments. She also alleged that she tried several times to call the police to lodge an FIR, but the police also reduced the charges in favour of the accused. "The Supreme Court has stated that the offence under Section 376 of the IPC was added to the same FIR, and the crime was escalated under Sections 376, 354, 354B and 506 (2) of the act"¹⁸. The bench said an approach would be equivalent to failure in recognizing the right of the accused to oppose his application for anticipatory bail. When the second impugned order refused the first impugned order in favour of the accused, the appellant was denied a meaningful hearing, which was an additional issue that led to the impugned arguments of the Casting Couch case with the Supreme Court and was vital to interfere. To protect the identity of the Appellant, she has been identified in the proceedings as Ms. X. Further, the Supreme Court has held that the two impugned orders cannot be sustained for granting anticipatory bail to the accused and are quashed and set aside.

2. Vishaka V. State of Rajasthan, 1997¹⁹

By this landmark judgement, the Hon'ble Supreme Court has laid down the guidelines for protecting against the incidents of women who have incidents of sexual harassment at the workplace, that also includes the entertainment industry. Employers should provide a mechanism for these guidelines to redress sexual harassment complaints, conduct awareness programs, and take strict action against perpetrators.

¹⁵ ET Online, 'Me too: Woman who accused Vikas Bahl won't pursue case, but says she still stands by her claims' Economics Times (Economic Times 24 October 2018) <[Vikas Bahl | #MeToo: Woman who accused Vikas Bahl won't pursue case, but says she still stands by her claims \(indiatimes.com\)](#)> accessed 5 January 2024

¹⁶ Interview with Nayandeep Rakshit, 'Exclusive: Ayushmann Khurrana Open up on Shocking Casting Couch Experience: He Asked to Show Him My Tool' (Pinkvilla 25 May 2020) <[EXCLUSIVE: Ayushmann Khurrana opens up on SHOCKING casting couch experience: 'He asked me to show him my tool' | PINKVILLA](#)> accessed 25 January 2024

¹⁷ X v State of Maharashtra [2023] Criminal Appeals No. 822-823

¹⁸ The Indian Penal Code 1860

¹⁹ Vishaka v State of Rajasthan [1997] AIR SC 3011

3. Marathi Actress Case, 2010²⁰

In this case, a 17-year-old girl filed an FIR against the director and alleged that the director had demanded sexual favors from her in exchange for making her the top most heroin. In the FIR, she alleged that director Ashok Londhe and local politician Bhagwan Vairat tried to molest her. The girl stated in the FIR that Naidu, Ashok, or Bhagwan Vairat took the girl to Ramesh Bhatkar's farmhouse, who is an actor, where they consumed alcohol. Then Bhatkar told her that he would make her the top most heroine and pay her uncle, but in return, she would be spending the night with them. The girl refused to do all this. In this case, the Court observed that due to Naidu's pressure on the girl, the names of the other three directors also got registered in the FIR. Only Naidu has been the culprit. Jadhav said that in the absence of material evidence, an innocent person would have to go through the ordeal of trial. After that, the court upheld that Ramesh Bhatkar, Ashok Londhe, and Bhagwan Vairat were discharged.

4. Sandhya Rani Case²¹

In this case, a PIL by Sandhya Rani and six other social activists before "Chief Justice T.B. Radhakrishnan" and "Justice Murti Shri Ram Subramanian" to demand the formation of a high-power committee to deal with the allegations of exploitation of women artists. Counsel Vasudha Nagraj, appearing for the petition, told the bench that it has to be ensured that the film industry should emerge as one of the safe workplaces for women as the state is getting huge revenues from the sector. Giving the example of Kerala, the Chief Justice said the High Court of Kerala had earlier noted that safety laws for women are applicable only where women are asked to work. Hence, it is necessary to enforce the same on the premises of a particular place like a film development corporation. Chief Justice also said that denying the opportunity or giving any threat will lead to denial of opportunity or something like this will also come under the ambit of the law. CJ also expressed his opinion that no particular action will be taken from the internal committees of any region of the cinema, and the bench wanted to know from the Telangana home Department's lawyer, Shrikant, what the existing laws say about it or whether express its views on it.

4. Women in Cinema Collective V. State of Kerala, 2022²²:

In this case, women filed a petition against Casting Couch in which the Kerala High Court took an important decision to stop the exploitation and the court directed the film production companies in the film industry to constitute an Internal Complaints Committee by implementing the "Prevention of Sexual Harassment Act" to protect women under the "Sexual Harassment (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act", and when the division bench of "Chief Justice S Manikumar" and "Justice Shaji P Chaly" was hearing the petition of women in cinema collective, they passed the order that this Act will be applicable only where ten or more than ten people work in production companies. The petition also mentioned that political parties should be included in this matter. Those political parties whose employees do not have direct relations with party members have been free to form Internal Complaints Committees.

9. EFFORTS BY INDIVIDUALS TO TACKLE THE CASTING COUCH PHENOMENON

1. To address the issues related to sexual harassment, production houses and entertainment companies were encouraged to establish internal committees. These committees were formed to investigate complaints and take appropriate action.

2. Many organizations and industry bodies are working to create awareness and sensitization programs to educate individuals about their rights and promote a more respectful and safer environment, namely the "#MeToo movement, ICC, Anonymous reporting system, Casting Bay, Anit-Casting and Kabiku Productions" etc.

3. Some industry organisations are considering developing and implementing a comprehensive code to ensure ethical behaviour, namely, "Women in Cinema Collective, Film and Television Producers Guild of India, Indian Film and Television Directors' Association, and Cine and TV Artistes Association and #Me Too Movement". This includes guidelines for professional conduct, the casting process, and zero tolerance for harassment.

²⁰ Telegraph India, 'Casting Couch Shadow on Marathi Actor' (Telegraph India 27 December 2007)< [Casting couch shadow on Marathi actor - Telegraph India](#)> accessed 3 January 2024

²¹ News Indian Express, 'Casting Couch in Tollywood: Hyderabad High Court Tells Telangana Government to set up Enquiry Panel (The News Indian Express 19 September 2018)<[Casting couch in Tollywood: Hyderabad High Court tells Telangana government to set up enquiry panel \(newindianexpress.com\)](#)> accessed 18 January 2024.

²² Women In Cinema Collective v State of Kerala [2022] W.P (C) No. 33994

4. Another approach was collaborating with NGOs specializing in Women's empowerment and workplace harassment. These organizations can provide industry support, guidance, and training to create a safe and secure environment.

5. The critical aspect is ensuring safety for victims who come forward to report harassment cases. By putting in place mechanisms to protect whistleblowers, more people may be encouraged to speak out against misconduct.

6. Some initiatives are also taken to address the root causes of casting couch issues with the help of conducting workshops and seminars on gender sensitivity or creating a healthy work culture.

10. INTERNATIONAL COMPARISONS AND INSIGHTS

The legality behind Casting Couch varies widely across countries. Casting Couch means the demand for sexual favors in exchange for roles or other career opportunities. So, here's a general overview of the legalities of some countries:

Australia:

If we talk about the laws to address sexual harassment in the entertainment industries of Australia and India, laws have been made in both countries to solve this problem. Both differ in terms of their legal framework and specific focus areas within their entertainment industries. Australia has a legal basis to address sexual harassment in workplaces, including the entertainment sector, which makes harassment illegal, stemming from the "Sex Discrimination Act of 1984". This country strongly focuses on the entertainment industry and has demonstrated this with initiatives such as the "Australian Screen Industry Code of Practice". To create a safe work environment, this code of practice explicitly targets harassment, bullying, and discrimination within the screen industry and emphasizes clear processes, reporting mechanisms, and comprehensive guidelines. There have also been several high-profile cases of sexual harassment in Australia's entertainment industry. If we talk about recent times, "Nine Entertainment"²³ highlighted the widespread issues of bullying and harassment happening within its broadcast influence and the incident of workplace harassment. If talk about the #metoo movement in the entertainment industry of Australia, then it is not only in the film industry but also the music industry, such as "Dennis Handlin"²⁴, the former CEO of Sony Music Australia, has faced allegations of promoting a disturbing workplace culture by sexual harassment or "Dr Jeff Crabtree's report on Tunesmith and Toxicity publication"²⁵ and platforms like "Beneath the Glass Ceiling"²⁶ have shared anonymized stories of inappropriate behaviour, such as a case involving a music industry intern and a record label executive.

After this incident came to light, Australian authorities and industry bodies such as the "Australian Screen Industry Code of Practice" have now implemented strengthened code of conduct functions to directly address these issues.

A code was created by "Screen Producers Australia"²⁷ and the "Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance" to set expectations for a harassment-free workplace and aim to stop such behaviour before it happens. These moves are part of Australia's broader effort to ensure the creative and collaborative nature of the entertainment industry is not affected by toxic workplace behaviour.

New Zealand

In the entertainment industry of New Zealand, "the Human Rights 1993 and the Harassment Act 1997" are central to addressing sexual harassment instances. If any person engages in sexual harassment instances in the industry then "The Human Rights Act, of 1993", makes it illegal and offers both criminal and civil remedies to victims and punishment for the accused. "The Harassment Act, of 1997", purpose is to protect against harmful behaviour and to provide legal resources for sexual misconduct. The #Me too movement seeks to expose widespread gender bias and exploitation

²³ Nassim Khadem, 'Nine Culture of Bullying and Sexual Harassment Revealed after Review Finds Company Lacks Accountability' (ABC News 17 October 2024)< [Nine's culture of bullying and sexual harassment revealed after review finds company 'lacks accountability' - ABC News](#)> accessed 27 February, 2024

²⁴ Anna Rose, 'Ex-CEO Denis Handlin issues statement on sexual misconduct allegations at Sony Music Australia' (NME, 1 September 2021)< [Ex-CEO Denis Handlin issues statement on sexual misconduct allegations at Sony Music Australia \(nme.com\)](#)> accessed 27 February 2024

²⁵ Lars Brandle, 'Australia's Music Biz to Address Abuse Within its Ranks Following Explosive Study' (Billboard, 17 May 2021)< [Australia's Music Biz to Address Abuse Within its Ranks \(billboard.com\)](#)>accessed 27 February 2024

²⁶ Poppy Reid, The Alleged Abusers of Music's #MeToo Movement Where Are They Now (Rolling Stone 10 July 2024) < [Music's #MeToo Movement: Where Are They Now? \(rollingstone.com\)](#)> accessed 25 February 2024

²⁷ By Screen Australia, "Screen Australia's Code of Conduct Replaced by Industry Code from 1 July 2019" (Screen Australia)< [Screen Producers Australia](#)> accessed 27 February 2024

within the the local music and film industry. These laws have brought new attention to sexual harassment instances in the entertainment industry. According to the “Amplify Aotearoa report,”²⁸ exposed that 70% of women in the music industry have faced sexual harassment and gender-based discrimination, and some of the actresses or singers have felt unsafe in the industry. Some recent incidents of sexual harassment in the music industry have been intense, such as “Scott MacLachlan”²⁹ and “Paul McKessae’s”³⁰ harmful behavior. If we compare the laws of New Zealand and India, the harassment act in New Zealand, like special laws, directly addresses the exploitation issues, but India has a broader perspective, so with less focus on persistent industry-specific issues.

France:

In France, prostitution is legal, but under anti-corruption law, sex for professional advantages is considered illegal. Sexual harassment is criminalized by “Loi Sauvadet in 2013”, and created a specific offence, “Abuse of a Position of Authority,” which means when someone uses their position of power to get sexual favors in exchange for career opportunities, for example, casting directors, etc.

2. United States:

When we talk about Hollywood, where actors or actresses have also faced exploitation or abuse like scams, especially with the rise of the # Me Too movement, there have been many cases involving high profiles in the industries, one of which was the case involving “Harvey Weinstein” which has highlighted the spread of this type of initiative³¹. The #Me too movement was a movement that led to widespread discussion about exploitation and power dynamics within the industry. In the US, there are no federal laws related to the casting couch, but there are some laws in individual states relating to coercion and sexual harassment. The most prominent “US actor’s union, SAG-AFTRA”, has announced a partnership with major networks “ABC, CBS, NBC, and Fox” to confront and combat sexual harassment within the entertainment industry. This agreement aims to minimize the need for actors to undergo private auditions or meetings in hotel rooms or residences, thereby ensuring their safety and comfort. This is a step towards changing industry culture and ending the casting couch issues.

3. UK:

In UK, there is no specific law related to Casting Couch under which the victims of sexual assault, harassment, or blackmail can file a case against the accused. But there is an Act named “The Equality Act, 2010”³², which prohibits discrimination based on sex at the workplace, which could potentially cover Casting decisions based on unwanted sexual advantages.

4. California:

In California, for the prohibition of sexual harassment in the workplace, there is an Act named the “Fair Employment and Housing Act”, and one more Act is there, namely, “The Unruh Civil Rights Act,”³³ for the prohibition of businesses that discriminate based on sex. In the case “Mogilefsky V. Superior Court of Los Angeles County,”³⁴ the court recognized two theories of sexual harassment that span the spectrum of entertainment industry workplace misconduct. The Quid Pro Quo is the first theory, which tells that tenure of employment is contingent on the victim’s compliance with unwanted sexual advances. The hostile work environment is the second theory, and it expands the harassment workplace in such a way that it creates chaos that is both pervasive and abusive or even alters employment conditions. The court provided a broad framework for understanding and addressing harassment and fostering an equitable work environment.

5. South Korea

²⁸ A Report Drawn From Amplify Aotearoa, ‘A Report Drwan From Amplify Aotearoa’ (2020) < amplify-aotearoa-gender-diversity-report.pdf (apraamcos.co.nz)> accessed 24 February 2024

²⁹ Monika Barton, ‘Lorde’s Former Manager Fired after Admitting to Sexual Harassment’ (Newshub, 25 January, 2021) < [Lorde's former manager Scott MacLachlan fired from Warner Music after admitting to sexual harassment | Newshub](https://www.newshub.co.nz/home/entertainment/article/lorde-s-former-manager-scott-maclachlan-fired-from-warner-music-after-admitting-to-sexual-harassment) > accessed 25 February 2024

³⁰ Lars Brandle, ‘Paul McKessar Admits ‘No Excuse’ for crossing Boundaries’ (The Music Network, 25 January 2021) < [Paul McKessar admits ‘no excuse’ for crossing boundaries \(themusicnetwork.com\)](https://www.themusicnetwork.com/news/paul-mckessar-admits-no-excuse-for-crossing-boundaries) > accessed 25 February 2024

³¹ BBC, ‘Harvey Weinstein Scandal: Who has accused of him of what?’(BBC10 January 2019) <[Harvey Weinstein scandal: Who has accused him of what? - BBC News](https://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-48844444)> accessed 24 February 2024

³² The Equality Act 2010

³³ The Unruh Civil Rights Act 1959

³⁴ *Mogilefsky v Superior Court* [1993] 20 Cal.App.4th 1409 (Cal. Ct. App.)

There have also been cases of casting couches in South Korea's entertainment industry, and there have been some reports revealing the sexual exploitation of aspiring actors by influential and powerful figures. South Korea has seen an increase in awareness and discussion of the need for reforms to address Casting Couch issues in recent years. Strict laws have been enacted to deal with sexual assault and harassment that cover the Casting Couch cases also. The Act passed in 2018 is named as "Act on the Aggravated Punishment, etc. of Specific Crimes Concerning Sexual Violence," which created harasser penalties for people who are exploited in exchange for career opportunities, such as aspiring actors.

6. European Film Industry:

Casting Couch allegations have had their share in various European film industries, but each may vary in extent and visibility. The "#Me too movement" had a global impact in Europe as well, and it also inspired discussion and revelations about sexual exploitation in the film industry.

7. South Africa:

Casting Couch issues have not been widely reported in the South African film industry, but these issues and challenges have been discussed on various platforms, lack of security measures, and lack of power for new people have been raised. In Africa, casting couch practices and laws relating to these issues are quite diverse and complex. There is no single law that directly addresses the releasing couch issues. Still, there are some laws pertaining to sexual assault, harassment, abuse of power, or discrimination that deal with these matters. An Act, namely, "The Employment Equity Act, 1998", prohibits workplace discrimination, covering unwanted sexual advances for casting aspiring actors. Sexual offences are defined and criminalized under "The Sexual Offences Act, 2000," and another Act which protects aspiring actors from sexual harassment in the entertainment industry, namely "The SWIFT Sexual Harassment Code of Good Conduct."³⁵

8. Japan: Like the stated country, Japan also has no specific law for Casting Couch, but some other laws on assault and coercion can deal with the Casting Couch issues. further, Japan has a culture of silence in matters of sexual harassment, which makes it difficult for victims to come forward.

To sum up, legal comparisons between countries are quite difficult because all countries have specific laws and power dynamics as per their existing conditions. Moreover, Casting Couch is not illegal in all countries as the author did not find dealing legislation in all countries in the world, like European countries, though it can still be considered inappropriate and harmful. The aspiring actors who experience sexual favours experience emotional distress, their careers get damaged, or they even suffer physical harm. The # MeToo movement has played a massive role in bringing to light the issues of sexual harassment and abuse happening in the entertainment industry worldwide. It can bring some changes in laws and policies and increase awareness.

11. NOTEWORTHY ALLEGATIONS OF CASTING IMPROPRIETY

"Aditi Govitrikar"³⁶ opened up about her unsettling experience with the casting couch in South Africa during the shoot of a blockbuster film in an episode of Siddharth Khanna's Show. When she went to South Africa for a big film shoot, the director demanded inappropriate advances from her. She refused and said to the director, "Are you Stupid?" the director's ego was hurt by her refusal and very, and the next day, Aditi or her team asked to pack up and were sent back to Bombay. "Charlize Thereon"³⁷ shared her casting couch experience with "Ok! Magazine" at the age of 19, she said that a producer invited her on Saturday night to his house, offered her a drink, and Charles understood the situation and told the director. "This is not going to happen! You got the wrong girl buddy". "Myleene Klass"³⁸ revealed that Harvey Weinstein had asked her to sign a sex contract in an interview, she refused the same. "Megan Fox"³⁹ revealed in an interview that when she became a famous actress, then she experienced the casting couch issue she shared how

³⁵ Code of Good Practice: Handling in the Film and Television Industry 2021

³⁶ NDTV Movies Desk 'Aditi Govitrikar On her Casting Couch Experience: I Refused and They Removed Me From the Film' (NDTV 5 December 2023)<[Aditi Govitrikar On Her Casting Couch Experience: "I Refused And They Removed Me From The Film" \(ndtv.com\)](#)>accessed 24 February 2024

³⁷ News India Express 'When Charlize almost felt into casting couch' (News India Express 16 May 2012)<[When Charlize almost fell into casting couch \(newindianexpress.com\)](#)> accessed 5 February 2024

³⁸ Luke Morgon Britton 'Myleene Klass told Harvey Weinstein to Fuck Off after being offered a sex contract' (NME 17 October 2017)<[Myleene Klass told Harvey Weinstein to "fuck off" after being offered a "sex contract" \(nme.com\)](#)> accessed February 2024

³⁹ Yash Singh 'Megan Fox opens up about her casting couch experience in Hollywood' (First Curiosity 3 March 2023)<[Megan Fox Opens Up About Her Casting Couch Experience In Hollywood - FirstCuriosity](#)>accessed 24 February 2024

producers wanted to bed her once she became famous. “Lisa Rinna”⁴⁰ revealed how she had lost the role in a Big TV series only after refusing inappropriate demand of the producer. “Goldie Hawn”⁴¹ also faced a Casting Couch incident when she met her producer for a movie role.

12. LESSONS FROM AROUND THE GLOBE

For the Indian entertainment industry, lessons from other countries can provide valuable insight or lessons to address the casting couch issues. There are some lessons to be considered, are as follows:

- 1) Whenever Casting Couch issues have come up in other countries, they have mainly introduced transparent reporting mechanisms. It is essential to establish such channels to enable victims to report their harassment without any retribution safely. If we talk about mechanisms, these mechanisms may include hotlines, designated committees to investigate complaints and self-reporting options.
- 2) Addressing power imbalances requires a broader commitment to gender equality and inclusivity in the entertainment industry. Those countries that have made progress in these issues have always taken the lead in improving diversity, equal opportunity, or fair representation at all levels in the industry.
- 3) Implementing strict consequences against those involved in Casting Couch incidents is very important. Strict regulations, blacklisting by industry, or other punitive measures can send a strong message.
- 4) Regular inspections and assessments of industry practices can help identify areas that need improvement. The discussions can be conducted through independent bodies where actors or other professionals can participate and from whom feedback can be gathered to take further initiatives.
- 5) To stop this evil practice, the benefit can be taken from collaborating internationally and by sharing best practices. Progress can be accelerated by adapting strategies to create a safe working environment and learning how other countries have dealt with similar issues.
- 6) Sustained and devoted commitment is required from all stakeholders to achieve meaningful change. It is essential to view the fight against the casting couch as an ongoing process that includes continuous improvement, adaptation to challenges, and collective commitment to creating a safer and more equitable industry. Tailoring the path to the specific context of the Indian film industry participants can contribute to creating more transparent accountability and a respectful work environment.

13. RECOMMENDATIONS

To effectively deal with the issue of Casting Couch, some recommendations have been proposed-

- 1) Strict anti-harassment policies should be implemented in production houses, studios, and other places related to the industry. A confidential reporting system should be created to allow victims of abuse to disclose incidents of abuse without retribution safely. Must ensure prompt and fair legal action to hold criminals accountable.
- 2) Any newcomers to the industry should be provided with educational programs to understand their rights and opportunities to report harassment. Mentorship programs and support networks should be established throughout the industry to guide newcomers without compromising their dignity. Open community and awareness campaigns should be encouraged within the sector to destigmatise reporting and facilitate a culture of respect.
- 3) The Entertainment industry should encourage diverse but equal opportunities in casting, production, and decision-making roles for all genders. Gender sensitivity training should be implemented for industry professionals to promote a culture of mutual respect and understanding. The industry should celebrate and promote diverse narratives that challenge traditional gender stereotypes in media content.

⁴⁰ Katherine Thomson, ‘Lisa Rinna’s Casting Couch Horror Story’ (HuffPost 11 October 2010) <[Lisa Rinna's Casting Couch Horror Story | HuffPost Entertainment](#)> accessed 24 February 2024

⁴¹ Beatrice Verhoeven, ‘Goldie Hawn details Casting Couch Moment with Al Capp when she was just 19’ (The Wrap 11 May 2017) <[Goldie Hawn Details 'Casting Couch' Moment With Al Capp When She Was Just 19 - TheWrap](#)> accessed 25 February 2024

- 4) Production houses, casting directors, and talent agencies should be encouraged to adopt transparent and fair practices in dealings. Industry practices should be regularly audited and monitored to identify areas of concern and bring about improvements.

The Indian entertainment industry can work in a good direction by implementing these recommendations to create a more inclusive, safe, and respectful environment. Industry leaders call for a broad and collective effort from government bodies and advocacy groups to combat that the casting couch and bring about lasting change.

14. CONCLUSION

The problem of Casting Couch, hidden behind the glamour and glitz of the film world or television, has been a darkness in the Indian entertainment industry for a long time. If we conclude by saying that casting couch practices are due to an imbalance of power, systemic loopholes, and a lack of strict laws. However, there is still hope on the horizon because the industry's legal reforms and increasing awareness campaigns that are slowly reshaping the landscape. Legal reforms in India have played an essential role in removing the menace of the Casting Couch. In recent years, the industry has focused on creating a safe environment for aspiring actors and other professionals. The Sexual Harassment of Women (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 takes an essential step by mandating the establishment of internal complaints committees in entertainment and organizations. To maintain a culture of accountability or come forward to seek redress without the fear of reprisal, this legal framework provides a platform for all the victims of the casting couch phenomenon.

The #Me too movement, which came in 2018, has played vital role in highlighting the instances of sexual harassment and assault in India. The movement creates a collective voice against exploitation and inspires survivors to share their stories. Alleged criminals were expelled from the industry in a wave of revelations that conveyed greater accountability, transparency, and change. If we compare with other countries, other countries are also being considered for Casting Couch issues, and all countries' legal procedures differ. For example, the US has seen high-profile cases like the Harvey Weinstein Scandal in the entertainment industry, promoting legal and cultural changes. This exploitative practice is illegal in the United States and is considered a form of sexual harassment. In India, the Supreme Court has underlined the significance of considering the gravity of offences while granting or revoking bail⁴². Meanwhile, in the United States, this exploitative practice is explicitly prohibited. Similarly, a hot moment appeared in the UK to draw further attention to gender-based pay inequality and workplace exploitation in the entertainment industry. Challenges persist at the global level despite so many efforts. Inherent power dynamics in the industry stop victims from coming forward due to fear that their careers will be affected. This is a global issue with a strict legal framework, zero tolerance for harassment should be prioritized, and culture change is required. Regulatory reforms to address the Casting Couch, a multifaceted approach incorporating cultural change and industry-wide practice, is needed in the entertainment industry. Legal progress in recent years indicates a positive trajectory, with the impetus provided by the #Me too movement. However, where virtue is recognized based on its ability to be free from exploitation, sustained efforts are required to end the deeply entrenched power structure and prevent such an environment. The global landscape provides lessons and inspiration and highlights the need for collaborative efforts to make the entertainment industry a safe and equitable space for all.

15. SUGGESTIONS

- 1) Social media platforms, blogs, and other media outlets should be used to increase awareness of the prevalence of Casting Couch and should encourage those who remain to share their harassment stories, breaking the silence on this issue.
- 2) Within the industry, workshops, ethical practices, and seminars on consent are conducted. The aspiring actor should be educated about their rights and the opportunities available to them in harassment cases.
- 3) There should be specially developed confidential support systems, helplines, or support services to advocate for people experiencing abuse and provide mental health support resources to encourage industry organizations.

⁴² X. V. The State of Maharashtra and Another [2023] CRA No. 822-823

- 4) Implementation and change of strict anti-harassment policies should be advocated by production houses, casting agencies, and industry leaders, and also ensure that the consequences for violations of these policies are clearly outlined and will be vigorously enforced.
- 5) Boycott those producers/actors/directors known to be involved in the organization's projects or exploitative practices. A culture should be promoted in which harassers are held accountable for their actions.
- 6) Maintain an open and ongoing dialogue by regularly addressing issues related to harassment within the industry. Encourage discussion on cultural shifts and changes that help create a more inclusive and respectful work environment.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None.

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