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**Interrogating the Normative Tradition of Ukukhuzela  
(court praises) in the Age of Rape Culture in a  
Cosmopolitan Society: Insights from Zulu Students from  
the University of KwaZulu-Natal**

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**Majola, Khanyisile Berlinda**

*Department of Criminology and Forensic Study,*

*School of Applied Human Sciences,*

*College of Humanities,*

*University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard Campus, Durban*

**Mkhize, Sazelo Michael**

*Department of Criminology and Forensic Study,*

*School of Applied Human Sciences,*

*College of Humanities,*

*University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard Campus, Durban*

**&**

**Akpan, Udoh James**

*Post-Doctoral Fellow,*

*Department of Criminology and Forensic Study,*

*School of Applied Human Sciences,*

*College of Humanities,*

*University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard Campus, Durban*

*udohja2000@yahoo.com*

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## **Abstract**

Social and cultural norms are guidelines or expectations for behaviour and thought that are based on common beliefs within a social or cultural group. What is (and is not) appropriate in interpersonal relationships is governed by norms, which are frequently unstated rules for acceptable and undesirable behaviour. Within societal groups, these normative practices can then translate into a cultural normative construct that becomes exercised. The Zulu cultural normative practice of *ukukhuzela* is put in question here. The author interrogates its existence in today's cosmopolitan communities through in-depth interviews and focused group discussion with university students of Zulu extraction at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The participants included male and female students. Secondary sources of data in the form of published literature, including research monographs and journal articles, were consulted to meet the study's aims. Findings suggest that *ukukhuzela* has been discrepantly identified and associated with the social normative practice of rape culture antics due to insufficient knowledge of its practice. Narratives of *ukukhuzela* vary, as some identify it as a violation of their space, noting that it has notions of hyper-sexualising attention. With other participants seeing it for its true purpose, which is the admiration and endearment of women. The study noted that times have changed, modernity has challenged the dominance of tradition, and there is a need for concerted and deliberate efforts to create an atmosphere of social cohesion through mass and cultural education

**Keywords:** *Rape, Cosmopolitan Society, Zulu Students, Normative Tradition of Ukukhuzela*

## **Introduction**

Culture has been characterised as a wide variety of phenomena, ranging from the "man-made element of the environment" to the meaning system that people use to comprehend the world and guide their conduct. Nonetheless, most theorists and researchers believe that culture, as a belief and value system, is concerned with features that are shared and generally approved by the majority in society (Chen, Fu, and Zhao, 2015). Social and cultural norms are standards or expectations of conduct and cognition that are founded on shared views within a cultural or social group. Norms, which are often unsaid, provide societal standards for suitable and unacceptable behaviour that control what is (and is not) acceptable in interpersonal relationships.

Patriarchal norms can be identified as the drivers of certain social and cultural norms. According to feminist theory, stronger patriarchal beliefs in society are associated with a higher incidence of male authority over women (Sultana, 2010). Cultural and social normative standards can be pioneered by societal groups as they determine habitual behavioural

patterns for interaction. Zulu society is a tribe that is proud and resilient towards the practice of culture. Although this may be a positive acknowledgement, it can also pose a threat as it denies the opportunity to conform through evolution.

According to Gail Weiss (2010), habit allows us to inhabit our reality by allowing the unfamiliar to be turned into the familiar, allowing us to easily orient ourselves within experientially similar circumstances. Habit is thus more than just the fact that we engage in habitual behaviours in our daily lives; it also signifies how the bodily self absorbs and absorbs meanings—how we construct 'the' world, 'our' world. When explored in this way, the broad idea of 'walking in a park at night is risky' is taken in as a type of physical knowledge, a method of living female embodiment. Through habit supported by social normativity, society creates a convergence of signals received as a child that men's intrusion is inevitable and women's bodies are the source.

The main aim here is to articulate and discuss the cultural normative practice of rape culture in relation to the practice of ukukhuzela. While both of these practices can be scrutinised for their insistent interference with women by men, this paper will draw on an analysis of their differences through practice and origin.

### **Ukukhuzela being Court Praises as a Zulu Cultural Imperative**

Kippenberger (1996) agrees with the notion that a cultural imperative is a cultural norm, custom, or behaviour that one must do in order to belong to a culture. It was worthy to note that within every culture, there are rules that define social interactions, values, and identity, and Bebawi (2016) submits that cultural imperatives shape the way of thinking and that culture is a soft power of influence. There is no doubt that the Zulu culture has a strong influence on the amaZulu.

Ntombela (2016) notes that isiZulu-speaking people are renowned for cherishing their traditions, such as ukukhuzela intombi (chanting and shouting while courting a maiden). Even though this habit is not widely practiced in metropolitan areas, it remains dear to the hearts of people in rural regions. Maskandis (Zulu traditional musicians) such as Thwalofu Khoza and Bhekumuzi Luthuli had incorporated this culture into their songs to pass it on to future generations.

An example of "Ukukhuzela" is when a male (usually a young man) sees an unmarried girl, he will naturally recite *izikhuzelo* to express his

appreciation. He will call her *Dudlu ntombi!* (Plump girl!), a typical line in the first or second line of the entire stanza. In terms of the structure of the wording, this is a short line with only two words, but it is condensed with meanings. For the benefit of the girl, who does not have the time to stop and listen, the young man will make exceptionally economical use of words in his speech.

### **Ukukhuzela as a Means of *Courting and Praise***

Ukukhuzela is the act of speaking words of endearment in admiration of a woman, known to be performed by men. The act can be identified as a short poem comprising a single stanza. It is usually done outside of dwellings. Its main goal is to say something to a female through terms of endearment. Its sentiments state that it is a sin in Zulu culture for a guy to remain silent as girls walk by. According to Molefe (1993), the very least a young man can do is yell love vocatives. He argues that:

Ukukhuzela' is an oral practice in which a young Zulu man recites, in a shouting manner, traditionally structured, short poetic words directed to one or more young girls with the aim of initiating courtship. This process takes place outside homesteads, mainly in the field (i.e., when girls go to collect firewood, to draw water from fountains and rivers, and when going out to attend ceremonies). These days, it would be appropriate when girls go to the shops. It seems to be a common tradition that the subject withholds active response to these words. She simply blushes. This custom conforms to the universal custom of paying compliments to women

### ***Ukukhuzela: An Unexplored Oral Tradition, Molefe, (1993), Page 33***

However, due to some factors that hinge on modernity like economic pursuit and urban migration, the amaZulus seem to have been separated from their suitable settings, such as springs and woodlands, where they would ordinarily perform 'ukukhuzela' and romance. Religion has also eliminated most Zulu cultural practices, including the one of 'ukukhuzela', though the practice is still semi-active in Natal's rural regions (Molefe, 1993). In recent times, the practice of ukukhuzela has been scrutinised dividedly among the Zulus. Some who have advanced themselves through education now believe that its practice is close to barbaric. Others (also educated) see the practice as part of a cultural

tradition worth preserving since it encourages women's fondness and admiration.

More so, there has been some sort of clash between the Zulus that still wish to hold on to the culture and those that see it as outdated. There is an instance of a Transnet employee who was fired for sexual harassment and assault after declaring that "if a man wanted a lady, he could take her" and that "it is usual for black people to touch each other". In modern societies, this notion cannot be allowed to go unchallenged. Duma (2008) argues that in trying to wriggle out of indecent behaviour, some people try to seek refuge in old institutions and customs, whether they practice the culture they claim to ascribe to or not. This, according to the scholar, is a slap in the face to black people in general and the Zulu people in particular.

Women are encouraged to be proud of themselves in Zulu culture, but this does not imply that they should be taken without consent. Men are allowed to congratulate beautiful women (*ukukhuzela*) on their appearance in Zulu society, even if they have no intention of proposing or asking them out. It is sexual predation to corner a woman in a remote region and attribute such barbarous behaviour to Zulu culture. Such activities help to propagate the unsubstantiated and misleading impression that women in Zulu culture have few or no rights and are treated like mere objects (Molatlhwa, 2012).

An article extracted from a News24 Online article of 5<sup>th</sup> March, 2016<sup>1</sup>, quoted the erstwhile South African president, Jacob Zuma, as supporting the practice of *ukukhuzela*. He was quoted as saying that modern women were too quick to say they were being harassed when men were innocently complimenting them.

President Zuma further said in the News24 article:

*"It's a pity we live in a white man's world. You can't even shout 'Gqezu, Gqezu ntomazane! Nongenazo izinkomo uyayidla inyama!"*

The comment is loosely translated to mean that you can get married even if you don't have the money to pay the lobola. President Zuma went on to remark that when men compliment women, women are ready to accuse them of harassment. As a result, rather than assessing its existence based on what men do now as "*ukukhuzela*," the narrative within society should seek facts about what exactly *ukukhuzela* comprises, because that is where the problem and conflict start without a

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.news24.com/news24/women-too-sensitive-to-compliments-zuma-20160305> - Accessed on the 4<sup>th</sup> December, 2022

clear understanding of the practice Quintal (2016). While Zulu patriots protect the existence of ukukhuzela. It is faced with a significant amount of negative narrative.

### **Ukukhuzela is not Street Harassment**

Harassment on the street is a big problem. Despite the fact that the majority of society considers it a minor concern, women do not dismiss it. Its occurrence has created a barrier for women's access to public spaces. This is due to its degrading, humiliating, and intrusive components.

Street harassment can include any act or comment perpetrated in a public space that is unwanted, threatening, and motivated by gender; it may include sexually suggestive comments, unwanted touching, invasion of space, and rape (Campos et al., 2017). This understanding is very much consistent with the norms that the concept of rape culture attempts to eradicate or address. This includes and is not limited to unsolicited whistling, leering, sexist, homophobic, or transphobic slurs, persistent requests for someone's name, number, or destination after they have said no, sexual names, comments, and demands, following, flashing, public masturbation, groping, sexual assault, and rape (Flores, 2016).

Another scholar, Fileborn, and O'Neill (2021), in their study, argue that street harassment forms part of the normalised mannerisms that may be found to comprise rape culture. The most prevalent method portrays street harassment as a sort of sexual harassment committed overwhelmingly against women in public spaces by male strangers. Catcalling, kissing noises, horn honking, gazing or leering, following someone, unwanted dialogue (e.g., repeated requests for a date or phone number), sexualised gestures, frottage, unwanted touching, indecent exposure, and public masturbating are examples of this type of behaviour. Other studies, on the other hand, have included acts like physical abuse and violence, sexual assault, and rape Fileborn, and O'Neill (2021).

Though some individuals argue in defence of street harassment, stating it to be a benevolent, harmless, or even accepted and socially acceptable deed, feminist scholars like Ferrer-Perez, Delgado-Alvarez, Sánchez-Prada, Bosch-Fiol, and Ferreiro-Basurto (2021) forcefully reject such a narrative, saying it is a domineering act that restricts women's

sexual freedom and freedom of movement by sending the message that harassers have the right to dominate public spaces and control, assault, or damage women. It implies the imposition of one's demands over another's (or others'), and it has a degrading sexual connotation, objectifying, humiliating, and threatening the woman, causing discomfort or anxiety in her (Ferrer-Perez *et.al*, 2021).

Street harassment entices various feelings of concern for one's safety in public. This is more so because some of its victims also walk the streets in fear of possibly being raped, as the comments relayed usually express an expression of hypersexualisation. According to a study done by Southgate and Russell (2018), evidence shows that girls and women are disproportionately the targets of harassment, whereas boys and males are disproportionately the perpetrators. They argue that some males may use public harassment, such as groping, as a 'rape test,' in which they try rape based on how assertive a woman responds to street harassment. These incidents are known to occur public spaces such as in public transport, busy central areas, out at night, and more especially when walking alone. In the focus group discussions in the UK, the girls' examples tended to be quite location-specific, centred around a particular underpass or cluster of stores, for example. One young woman expressed her version of going through a specific underpass without her partner since there was often a group of boys there who would stare, shout things at her, and purposefully frighten her. Another detailed her commute to school, including the older boys who would shout sexualised comments at her near the same bus stop and along a specific stretch of road. Each session began with the girls looking at a map of the city and identifying specific locations where much of the harassment they had encountered had occurred, with several of them sharing their experiences (Southgate and Russell, 2018).

The characteristics of street harassment include agitating behaviour, slander, and other forms of ill treatment. Its unwanted attention is followed by harsh and derogatory insults. Contrary to this, Ukukhuzela is the opposite. Ukukhuzela is a principled act for admiration of women. Its practice has been closely linked to being a poetic expression of love and appreciation for women (Molefe, 1993)

## **Ukukhuzela does not Promote Rape Culture**

Rape culture is an environment in which rape is prevalent and in which sexual violence is normalised and excused in the media and popular culture (Keller and Mendes, 2018). Rape culture is perpetuated through the use of misogynistic language, the objectification of women's bodies, and the glamorisation of sexual violence, thereby creating a society that disregards women's rights and safety (Pâquet, 2018). Rape culture theory has also expanded to encompass a culture or prevalent ideology in which male sexual aggression is viewed as the norm and victims are thus blamed for their own attacks. The prevalence of rape culture has seen huge growth over the years and has become an apparent reality within an evolving society (Pâquet, 2018). Thus, the living phenomenon of normalising and trivialising sexual violence sees the vulnerable group (women) as being at the forefront of its existence, as they fall victim to its traits while its perpetrators are conditioned to believe that its existence is not an epidemic.

Rape culture correlates to the beliefs or actions that excuse or normalise sexual violence (Ridgeway, 2017). Theories have persistently submitted that victims are somewhat or completely responsible for their victimisation, slut shaming, and shaming women for supposed sexual activity, all of which are represented in social media surrounding deliberations of sexual assault cases in mainstream media (Danielson, Friesz, Hotsetter, Kapsch, and King, 2013). Rape myths are a part of a rape culture and are upheld at the macro-level through media, laws, institutional practices, community level, shared societal consensus, beliefs, and individual level. Rape and rape myth acceptance are closely tied to gender inequality in society, as gender is a primary frame for organising social relations (Ridgeway, 2017).

For years, feminists and rape modification activists have drawn attention to what is often described as the "rape culture" presence in the United States (Ridgeway, 2017). In Susan Brownmiller's ground-breaking 1975 work *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape*, she began with a discussion of the "mass psychology of rape" and explained that "Man's discovery that his genitalia could serve as a weapon to generate fear must rank as one of the most important discoveries of prehistoric times, along with the use of fire and the first crude stone axe. From prehistoric times to the present, it is believed that rape has played a critical role. It is nothing more or less than a conscious process of intimidation by which all men keep all women in a state of fear (Zalesne, 2002).



Even though there is no conclusive or comprehensive citation of the numerous components that constitute rape culture in the United States, several socio-cultural and legal elements intersect to construct and substantiate a rape culture (Ridgeway, 2017). Sexual violence and rape are authorised, justified, and obfuscated, and the constraints on women and their behaviour are key parts in rape culture (Daum and Boux, 2015). However, in addition to the violence itself, the discourse actively discusses these issues as central factors of rape culture. The customs in which society voices out issues of sexual violence and rape serve to reinforce, normalise, and rationalise the sexual violence itself (Ridgeway, 2017). Significantly, these discourses also condition and often govern how institutional companies within the criminal justice system, such as law enforcement, prosecutors, judges, and jurors, respond to and evaluate rape allegations (Hypatia, 2004).

According to Eyewitness News (2021), one in every five South African children is a victim of sexual abuse, accounting for 19.8% of all children, compared to a global average of 18% for females and 8% for boys. More than 24,000 minors were sexually abused in South Africa, according to the 2019/2020 Annual Crime Statistics report. Statistics for schools are difficult to come by, and there is a lot of underreporting, but it is believed that 22.2 percent of schoolchildren have been victims of violence. In and around schools, rape and other types of violence reflect a larger problem in the country. President Cyril Ramaphosa called the scourge of sexual abuse a cruel war against women and girls during a joint session of parliament on gender-based violence in 2019. Despite political and financial commitments to address the situation, the problem persists.

In April 2016, students from South African university campuses staged rallies and hashtag campaigns such as *#endrapeculture*, *#nakedprotest*, *#endpatriarchy*, and *#chapter212* (referring to the South African constitution, which strives to defend the rights, safety, and dignity of all students) to raise awareness of institutions' policies dealing with sexual assault and rape on campus, which were criticised for promoting a rape culture (Orth, Andipatin, and van Wyk, 2021). The 2016 *#Endrapeculture* demonstrations primarily targeted university administrations for their involvement in promoting rape culture through victim-blaming procedures. The policies were put into question, with much scrutiny placed on the procedures and processes taken on incidents of sexual harassment within campuses.

According to the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), 47 rapes occurred on South African university campuses in 2017. However, another university disputed these figures, claiming that its Gender Equity Office gave the DHET a list of 29 documented rape incidents in 2017. Compared to the previously given national figures, the number of rapes recorded at South African institutions appears to be comparatively low. This calls into question the efficiency of the colleges' rape and sexual assault policies (Orth, Van Wyk, and Andipatin, 2020). The *#EndRapeCulture* demonstrations exposed the prevalence of gender-based violence in South African universities. The demonstrations sprang from the *#RhodesMustFall* and *#FeesMustFall* rallies, which highlighted tertiary institutions' colonial heritage as well as the hefty tuition that university students must pay in order to acquire a postsecondary education (Ndelu, 2017:64).

Rape culture can be relevantly noted through the language used by men, which normalises sexual violations. In a study conducted in South Africa by Moffett in 2006, taxi drivers participated. The author narrated the way in which these participants would openly say they would go 'cruising to find girls to gang bang'. They would go as far as saying that "women force us to rape them." Stating that "...*they ask for it by being cheeky and walking around as if they own the place.*" (Moffett, 2006). Such talk is concerning as it indicates that men are, in fact, aware that they are violating their victims. They do so because their entitlement makes them believe that it is a violation that is deserved.

It is imperative to note here that these vices and crimes are not consistent with the concept and practise of Ukukhuzela, which is basically a cultural heritage of wooing a lady in the most respectful and poetic way (Molefe, 1993).

## **Theoretical Framework**

The research is guided by Feminist Theory as the main theory, with a sub-theory of Social Learning Theory. The standpoint of each of these theories represents the question of the relative existence of Ukukhuzela in an era where rape culture is rife and problematic. Although these theories exclaim differing opinions on the opportunity for rape culture, they do, however, depict the possibility of its manifestation and the possibility of tolerating each other.

The feminist theory was derived from the social movement feminism, originating from a conflict perspective, by concentrating on the stratification and disparities in the public eye. This theory essentially examines women's roles and experiences in a diversity of fields, like family, education, and the workforce (Kelner, 2013). Feminist theory looks past the more common male-construct point of view to focus on the gender inequalities in society. Towards women, there is judgement, which is the unjust treatment of a group of people because they belong to that group. According to Ponzanesi (2007), there is objectification, which is when someone is regarded as an object and can be treated as less important, while oppression is where women are treated unjustly and strongly encouraged to occupy gender-based social roles. Stereotyping is the place where all women are seen under the same distorted image (Ponzanesi, 2007). There are constraints on social gender attributes in a patriarchal society. Men are related to the mind, while women are linked to the body. This is utilised as justification with the goal that women can be viewed as objects or property. Women are objectified. It is an alternative point of view on society to call out the imbalances that exist among men and women due to establishments in our society (Ponzanesi, 2007 as cited in Kelner, 2013).

Until recently, cultural and societal norms have always been controlled by the wisdom of men; this can also be traced through our legislation. Societal norms are the main cause of habits such as Ukukhuzela and street harassment because, in the past, women have not been recognised for bringing societal attention to the violations posed by some of the existing norms. The feminist theory has thus played a significant role in addressing these habits of violations against women and making a call towards their sanction through introducing the notion of systems like rape culture.

The Social Learning theory propounded by Psychologist Albert Bandura, on the other hand, suggests that social behaviour is learned by observing and imitating the behaviour of others. This is central to the other men learning the act of ukukhuzela by observing other men in the community perform it, and other vices that come with street harassment and rape culture also come with social learning theory.

## **Methodology**

The study aims at analysing the Zulu phenomenon of ukukhuzela and the relevance of its existence amongst rape culture through the lens of university students' experiences and views. The study took place at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, with university students as participants.

The research design utilised by the study is the Phenomenological research design, which was used with the aid of describing the meaning that experiences hold for each subject. The study also adopted a qualitative research approach to collect, interpret, and analyse the data. The qualitative research approach entails understanding individuals' subjective meanings of their social worlds. The approach was viewed appropriately because it enabled the researcher to obtain the detailed experiences of the study participants. In-depth interviews were conducted with 10 participants, made up of 5 male and 5 female students. The Focus Group Discussion also had 5 male and 5 female students. As a result of this approach, the researcher was able to gain an understanding of different perceptions of the issues of rape culture and sexual identities.

### **Recruiting of Participants**

The researchers obtained an ethical clearance from the University of KwaZulu-Natal with a reference code of HSS/0685/018M so as to be able to recruit and speak with participants through in-depth interviews and Focused Group Discussion. Informed consent was sought and obtained from each participant before any further engagement, with the understanding that they could withdraw from the session if they wished to or felt distressed.

Purposive sampling technique was used to recruit participants. A sample from the University of KwaZulu-Natal Howard College under the criminology department was selected by the researcher. This was to maintain confidentiality and allow for an in-depth discussion on the subject matter. The interviews were audio-recorded by the researcher with the permission of the participants. The interviews took approximately 60 minutes per individual. Thematic content analysis was applied to analyze data.

### **Findings**

This section of the study is focused on the analysis, interpretation, and presentation of the raw data that were collected from the study location using a qualitative methodological approach that employed in-depth interviews as the research instruments. The names used are not the real names of the participants but pseudonyms.

During the focus group discussion, this was the most talked-about topic, and all women could attest that they had experienced street harassment at some point in their lives.

Thandeka had this to say in support of this submission:

I have experienced street harassment quite a few times, especially at taxi ranks. There is always a man who will first make comments like “dudlu ntombazan, zayikhahlela. Akukho ntombiyagan’ inyamazane, Zal’ abantu ziy’ ebantwini, Gege lagege ntaba zonke ziyangigegele” which can be translated to [Du, there they kick her. No girl has ever fallen in love with a buck; they reject people and fall in love with other people. Duck and dive all mountains shy away from me.”] then attempt to court you. In situations where you ignore them or resist, they become aggressive and turn to either grabbing and groping you so that you react or respond, and again, if you don’t submit to how they’d wish you react, you are then hurled insults like “you are ugly anyway” or “I just did that to make you happy; don’t let it get to your head.

Nonhle describes her experience:

In my opinion, “ukukhuzela” links greatly with rape culture. I am a Zulu girl, born and bred. However, the experience of how men talk to me when walking through the taxi rank. The looks and sometimes approaches I get from taxi managers and drivers have been the most character-building torment. It almost feels humiliating to have men you have never spoken to approach you with vile remarks, which they believe are a method of ‘flattery’ and ‘endearment’. The worst part about this is that people will watch as you are tormented right up until you find your taxi and jump in. That is only when you start regaining your mind and feel calm and safe.

Londeka attested to her statement, saying:

It is very common in their townships as well as taxi ranks. It is something that, as a woman, you almost expect to happen, and when you anger the men at taxi ranks by not submitting to them, they become easily aggressive and lose their tempers. I guess it is because it may seem humiliating because they do this in the presence of other people at the rank, so your nonresponse almost seems to them like a high level of rejection, which dampens their egos, so I can say that lento [this] has a lot to do with the fact that they are men, and I am a woman and should entertain their wishes.

Lwandle responds to experiencing the aggression of being non-responsive to ukukhuzelwa at a taxi rank:

My experience turned out to be a lot more aggressive. It resulted in an elderly lady, “ugogo omdala” intervening. I had been called out by a guy as I walked into the rank, I ignored him for a while as I walked to the other end of the taxi rank, where my taxis were. He followed me, and because I made no response or recognition, he began to call me names, referring to my body by saying “vele awumuhle kangako” [you are not that pretty] and other derogatory words.

A critical look at the above expressions reveals that the ongoing occurrence of street harassment can be cited as part of the social learning theory based on the fact that men who occupy taxi ranks work at these taxi ranks, whether as street vendors, taxi drivers, taxi operators, or general bystanders. Therefore, the influence of acting in such mannerisms can be a result of social bonds they, as men, pick up from each other. Thus, a new or younger man who becomes a part of such an environment is likely to learn such behaviour as they become surrounded by it turning such behaviour into normative values. It becomes a way of life. Seeing that ukukhuzela hails from old folk law, it is something to be passed on from generation to generation, making it a habit that stems from social learning. However, it is very imperative to note that although ukukhuzela was a recurring “issue” its interpretation should not steer away from its Zulu cultural folk law ways. Its understanding ought to be understood away from rape culture, as it does not construe the same outcomes.

Most of the respondents were indifferent to attitudes towards gender roles; they were therefore indifferent to statements such as “...*being whistled at in public is like getting a compliment*”. When asked about the impact of gender roles on rape culture perpetuation, the respondents argued on this point. Male respondents argued that old folk law in African ideologies of ukukhuzela, which in modern-day society would be equal to being whistled at in public. The male participants believe that this practice is known to be done as a mechanism to admire the beauty of women by yelling words like “*dudlu ntombazane*” which admires the allure of a woman. Male participants argued that ukukhuzela is a good thing, as expressed below:

Siyanda was noted as saying:

Ehhh sis wami ukukhuzela is part of Zulu folk law. It's an act that is admirable among men that was done at the river. Men would visit the river where a woman they were interested in would go to fill up their buckets with water for their families. They would use persuasive language that would flatter women. The minute the guy courting the woman touched her, she would pour the bucket in his face and walk away. So, from my understanding, according to what has been discussed, ukukhuzela and this ideology of street harassment are not the same concept and shouldn't be linked to one another. What has been noted to be done by our brothers' in terms of how they perceive themselves in terms of their insecurities? Being rude is not part of the prescribed teachings of ukukhuzela.

Wandile said:

Here on campus, I'd say as guys, or at least my friends and I do make comments about girls when they walk past us. My friends and I would sit by the Shepstone foyer just to watch girls walk by. While doing so, we would make comments among ourselves, maybe trying to get some girls to notice us, and it served as a way to see how many of us would get the attention of girls and how many girls would smile back at our comments. But to be honest, it does kill our egos if girls react negatively, like we would tease each other's skills in courting girls and in some instances, it could get personal towards how manly we are. One guy who was once a friend would go as far as insulting girls who rejected his advances.

From the responses made by male participants, it is apparent that the ukukhuzela has been passed on to them through folklore practice. It is associated more with the act of chivalry and courting of the opposite sex. From the interpretation of their responses, it is clear that they do not associate the slander of women with the act of ukukhuzela. Their responses indicate that the slander of women is an act of its own, which in some instances may be instigated by failure to receive rejection gracefully.

## **Discussion**

Culturally, ukukhuzela presents itself as a normative practice that denotes an appreciative declaration for women by men. It is a poetic form of approach to capture the attention of female counterparts through esteemed phrases that are endearing, affectionate, and adoring.. From an analysis of relevant literature, its practice has mainly been controlled by

folklore, which, of course, can easily be lost in translation as it moves from one generation to the next.

Findings captured through data identify that ukukhuzela is still a common practice within South African societies, especially in Zululand; however, its practice has in some circumstances been misconstrued as being related to the rape culture epidemic. This can be identified through the authors' findings. In some circumstances where ukukhuzela is practiced and the courter is met with an backlash or rejection from the lady they seek, they may then respond with act of anger whereby they end up calling the lady derogatory words. Data indicates that this occurs because rejection is a bitter pill for the masculine ego to swallow.

According to feminist theory, this is a clear identification of masculine entitlement over women in that rejection from the lady being courted triggers them to behave outside the scope of a reasonable person. Then, ukukhuzela becomes misconstrued as street harassment. For some of the female participants, they understood ukukhuzela for the normative construct it was. Their sentiments on the topic identified that, although understood well, it did also trigger feelings of discomfort as it was unsolicited attention, which might not be necessary. In retrospect, the ukukhuzela was an accepted norm by women as they understood its scope of courtship and endearment. However, women in modern society cannot relate in the same way. This is because of the many issues of Gender Based Violence (GBV) within modern societies, which prioritise women's caution.

Findings from this study identify that women and men understand the practice differently, and this can be hugely influenced by their socialisation. For men, ukukhuzela has no negative or derogatory elements and can also be linked to a masculine realisation of oneself. However, for women in receipt of the practice, ukukhuzela has been misrepresented to connect with the act of cat calling, which is a western practice connected to street harassment and other violations construed under rape culture. This interplays with the notion of knowledge over oppressive ideologies, which is directly what feminist theory aims to oppose.

## **Conclusion**



According to the Zulu perspective, the practice stems from the notion of affection, which is seen to make women feel unique when in the presence of men. In relation to rape culture, street harassment and ukukhuzela share one commonality. This is the perpetuation of masculine misogyny at the expense of women's peace. Although it is understood to rely on and profess poetry and romanticism, with the motive of sustaining tradition and practice, its reception by modern-day women has been misunderstood. Thus, being made to seem like a different form of street harassment. The act of public courting can be humiliating and unnecessary for some women. It makes individuals feel uneasy and draws unwanted attention to themselves.

Findings state that, to some degree, women are uncomfortable with this type of attention. Also, times have changed and seem to have left some men who are either still insisting on the Zulu traditional culture in modern societies that are most now built up cities and cosmopolitan, are not necessarily endowed with western education that comes with a different sort of philosophies and norms, and cannot understand or appreciate why things are not how they used to be culturally.

### **Recommendation**

Since this has become a social problem for the female gender and sometimes can lead to violent or criminal situations if not checked early, there is now a need for the government of KwaZulu-Natal to roll out an educational campaign on how the culture of the past can be integrated, tolerated, and practise in modern and cosmopolitan societies where some ladies are not Zulu. The media and the cultural custodians will need to partner with the government, at the instance of the government, to evolve social cohesion between the genders in modern and multi-cultural communities in KwaZulu-Natal.

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