



Culturally Responsive Marital Relationship Education: Translating *Assikalabineng* into a Film-Based Educational Resource

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Abstract

This study examines the transformation of Assikalabineng, a Bugis knowledge tradition concerning marital relationships, into a film-based educational resource through Rumah dalam Rumah. It specifically investigates how its relational principles are translated into film language and the educational meanings generated through this process. The study employed a practice-based research design in which film creation functioned as both the process of inquiry and its principal outcome. The research materials comprised the completed film, screenplay drafts, location observations, blocking notes, shot-design documents, production reports, editing materials, and reflective records. The completed film was analysed by focusing on character interactions, bodily positioning within domestic architecture, regulation of visual access, use of sound, and the development of spatial pressure. The findings demonstrate that Assikalabineng was transformed into situational dramaturgy, controlled gestures, regulated visual representation, off-screen sound, and spatial organisation. These strategies communicate emotional readiness, reciprocity, self-restraint, responsibility, dignity, and mutual care without relying on overly explicit instruction. The findings also indicate that respectful marital relationships are influenced by domestic density, family presence, limited privacy, economic constraints, social judgement, and physical safety. The study concludes that Rumah dalam Rumah has potential as a culturally responsive educational resource for facilitating reflection on respectful and responsible marital relationships. However, it should be used within facilitated learning activities rather than regarded as a stand-alone curriculum or an educational intervention whose effectiveness has already been established.

Introduction

Education concerning intimate and marital relationships is often approached through biological knowledge, risk prevention, or moral regulation (Carmody, 2005; Sonafist et al., 2026; Alqurashi, 2026). Although these dimensions remain important, they do not fully address the relational competencies required to build respectful and responsible relationships. Recent research demonstrates that comprehensive education should also develop communication, decision-making, emotional awareness, respect, personal boundaries, and responsibility toward others. Goldfarb and Lieberman (2021), for example, found that comprehensive approaches produce broader educational benefits than programmes limited to biological information or risk avoidance. Similarly, Griffes et al. (2024) identified interactional skills, individual awareness within relationships, partner bonding, and relationship motivations as central components of couple relationship education. These findings suggest that education about marital relationships should not merely communicate information but should also cultivate the ethical

and interpersonal capacities needed to negotiate closeness, responsibility, and mutual care (Goldfarb & Lieberman, 2021; Griffes et al., 2024).

A relational educational approach is particularly important because personal intentions and emotional closeness operate within unequal social expectations and power relations (Sapir & Mizrahi-Shtelman, 2026; Bordoloi, 2026). Sell et al. (2023) demonstrated that educational programmes addressing gender and power are more meaningful when they connect formal content with learners' experiences, reflection, and open discussion. Their study indicates that respectful relationships cannot be developed solely through rules; learners also need opportunities to recognise power, consider another person's perspective, and understand how individual choices affect others. Bergam et al. (2022) similarly found that young people viewed self-respect, self-confidence, and self-love as essential educational needs in understanding relationships. Together, these studies support an educational orientation that foregrounds readiness, reciprocity, dignity, self-restraint, and sensitivity to another person's condition (Sell et al., 2023; Bergam et al., 2022).

Nevertheless, the educational discussion of intimate relationships cannot be separated from culture. Ideas about marriage, personal boundaries (Amirkhani et al., 2026; McGuire, 2026; Amzat et al., 2025), modesty, responsibility, and appropriate communication are shaped by local traditions, religious orientations, family structures, and social expectations. Chavula et al. (2022) found that cultural, religious, political, institutional, and economic conditions substantially influence the acceptance and implementation of relationship and sexuality education, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. Educational content that is technically accurate may still be resisted when it is perceived as disconnected from community values. Caruso et al. (2023) therefore advocate community-responsive and flexible educational approaches that reflect the experiences and cultural circumstances of their intended audiences. These arguments indicate that cultural relevance is not merely an additional feature of education but an important condition for its legitimacy and meaningful reception (Chavula et al., 2022; Caruso et al., 2023).

However, cultural grounding requires a critical rather than romanticised approach. Mukoro (2023) explains that culture may operate as a source of authority, conflict, political mobilisation, or educational opportunity. Cultural traditions can make sensitive educational subjects more understandable, but they can also reproduce unequal assumptions when they are treated as fixed and unquestionable. Mukoro et al. (2025) further demonstrate that cultural conflicts in sensitive education involve negotiations among educators, families, learners, religious communities, and policymakers. Consequently, local knowledge should neither be rejected as outdated nor repeated as an untouchable doctrine. It needs to be interpreted in relation to contemporary educational principles, including dignity, reciprocity, equality, autonomy, responsibility, and the avoidance of coercion (Mukoro, 2023; Mukoro et al., 2025).

Bugis culture provides an important context for examining this relationship between local knowledge and contemporary education. Within Bugis-Makassar families, discussions concerning intimate matters are influenced by modesty, shame, family responsibility, and the moral authority of parents. Awaru (2020) found that parents construct their educational roles through cultural and religious values, although discomfort and limited communication may restrict the discussion of sensitive topics. This condition illustrates an educational paradox: family and culture provide moral legitimacy, yet the sensitivity of the subject may prevent relational knowledge from being communicated clearly (Awaru, 2020).

At the same time, Bugis manuscript culture preserves *Assikalabineng*, a body of local knowledge concerning relationships within marriage. The manuscript does not merely address

the physical dimensions of marital life but connects them with spiritual preparation, emotional composure, responsibility, mutual consideration, and household harmony. Basri et al. (2025) demonstrate that the *Assikalaibineng* heritage combines Qur'anic practices, Bugis cultural interpretation, and respect for one's spouse. Their study confirms that this tradition represents a complex ethical and spiritual framework rather than a simple collection of physical instructions. This complexity makes *Assikalabineng* relevant to culturally grounded marital relationship education, provided that its principles are critically interpreted and translated into a form accessible to contemporary audiences (Basri et al., 2025; Abdul-Jabbar, 2026; Nuraida et al., 2026).

One possible medium for this translation is film. Audiovisual narratives can communicate sensitive educational meanings through characters, situations, emotions, sounds, gestures, and consequences instead of relying entirely on direct explanation. Carolin (2022) showed that the close reading of an animated film enabled pre-service teachers to engage with sensitive relationship issues through narrative analysis. The film provided sufficient interpretive distance for participants to examine representation without immediately centring their personal beliefs. Allen (2024) likewise demonstrates that audiovisual narratives can address emotional, relational, and social dimensions that are often absent from formal educational programmes. Film can therefore create a reflective space in which audiences observe how relational choices develop and consider their ethical implications (Carolin, 2022; Allen, 2024).

Film, however, does not automatically function as an effective educational medium. Scull et al. (2022) found that media-based education becomes more effective when audiences are encouraged to critically analyse the messages, norms, and relationship models represented in audiovisual content. This finding is important because viewers may interpret the same scene differently depending on their experience, cultural background, and media literacy. Film should therefore be treated as a pedagogical stimulus that supports guided reflection, not as a self-explanatory substitute for educational facilitation (Scull et al., 2022).

The representation of marital closeness also raises questions concerning visual ethics (Lucchesi & Lobinger, 2025; Wei et al., 2026; Hanifansyah et al., 2025). The educational value of a film depends not only on the values expressed by its narrative but also on how the camera positions the audience in relation to the characters. Excessive visual access and bodily fragmentation may contradict educational messages about dignity and mutual respect. Sørensen (2022) demonstrates that ethical representation begins with production decisions involving boundaries, consent, choreography, and performer safety. Horeck and Berridge (2024) similarly argue that carefully coordinated production practices can expand creative possibilities while generating more responsible representations of intimacy. These studies indicate that framing, blocking, camera distance, movement, and visual restriction are not merely technical decisions; they also determine the ethical relationship between the film, its characters, performers, and audience (Sørensen, 2022; Horeck & Berridge, 2024).

Marital relationships are also shaped by material and spatial circumstances. Privacy is not simply an individual preference but is influenced by housing conditions, household density, economic limitations, and family arrangements. Ruiz-Tagle and Urria Yáñez (2022) demonstrate that increasing household overcrowding is associated with declining mental well-being. Weber et al. (2024) further found that perceived privacy mediates the relationship between residential density, subjective crowding, and aggression. These findings suggest that education about respectful relationships should acknowledge that emotional readiness and communication are affected by whether individuals have sufficient control over their physical and social environments. A film representing marital relationships within a crowded household

can therefore broaden educational discussion from individual conduct to the socioecological conditions that enable or constrain privacy, safety, and mutual care (Ruiz-Tagle & Urria Yáñez, 2022; Weber et al., 2024).

Previous studies have separately examined comprehensive relationship education, cultural responsiveness, Bugis manuscript traditions, film-based learning, ethical screen production, and the psychological implications of crowded housing (Rocchi et al., 2026). However, limited attention has been given to how Bugis marital knowledge can be critically transformed into film language as a culturally grounded educational resource. In particular, insufficient research has examined how dramaturgy, performance, sound, framing, visual restriction, and spatial organisation can jointly communicate relational values without reducing local knowledge to folklore or presenting marital intimacy in an overly explicit manner.

To address this gap, the present study examines the practice-based creation of *Rumah dalam Rumah*, a fiction film portraying Ali and Dara, a married couple whose efforts to develop personal closeness are repeatedly affected by a crowded household and wider social pressures. *Assikalabineng* is not reproduced through direct quotation or instructional exposition. Instead, its relational principles are translated into dramatic situations and cinematic strategies that foreground emotional readiness, reciprocity, self-restraint, dignity, responsibility, and mutual care.

Accordingly, this study investigates how the relational values contained in *Assikalabineng* are translated into the film language of *Rumah dalam Rumah*, what educational meanings emerge from this transformation, and how the film contributes to culturally grounded marital relationship education. The study argues that film can function as a relational educational medium when cultural knowledge is critically interpreted and communicated through ethically controlled narrative, visual, auditory, and spatial forms.

Methods

This study employed a practice-based research design in which artistic creation functioned both as the research process and its principal outcome. Through this approach, knowledge was developed by creating, testing, revising, and critically reflecting on the artwork. The study focused on the production and analysis of *Rumah dalam Rumah*, a fiction film that translates Bugis cultural knowledge into an educational representation of ethics and values in marital relationships.

This design follows the account of practice-based research developed by Barrett and Bolt (2007) and Candy (2006), in which artistic creation is understood to generate forms of knowledge that discursive analysis alone cannot fully recover, and in which the making process itself constitutes a primary mode of inquiry. Because the first author occupied the dual position of filmmaker and analyst, a reflexive stance was maintained throughout production and analysis: creative decisions were documented as they were made, and later analytical claims were checked against these production records rather than reconstructed after the fact. This reflexive documentation was intended to reduce the risk that interpretation would be shaped solely by hindsight, while recognising that the researcher's insider position remains a constitutive feature of practice-based inquiry rather than a limitation to be removed.

The research materials comprised the completed film, screenplay drafts, location observations, blocking notes, floor plans, shot-design documents, production reports, editing materials, and reflective records produced during pre-production, production, and post-production. These materials were examined to understand how cultural principles were transformed into narrative, visual, spatial, and auditory elements carrying educational meaning.

Given the intimate content represented in the film, production included a dedicated Intimacy Coordinator (IC), a role functioning much as a choreographer does for an action sequence: bridging communication between direction and the two performers so that every touch, body position, and duration of contact was planned and mutually agreed before it was attempted in front of the camera. This agreement was built through informed consent: before rehearsal began, performers were told in detail which parts of the body would be visible and which actions would take place, removing the space for sudden improvisation that could exceed a performer's comfort. Modesty garments, including skin-toned undergarments and coverings for sensitive areas, were used throughout rehearsal and filming, and a closed set restricted attendance around intimate scenes to the crew members whose presence was required for direction, camera, sound, continuity, safety, and the IC. Decisions negotiated with the IC are treated as part of the research materials: they informed the blocking, framing, and duration choices examined in the Results section, and are discussed further in relation to the intimacy-coordination literature below.

The cultural foundation of the study was examined through Hadrawi's Indonesian edition of *Assikalabineng* and his English-language discussion of Bugis and Makasar manuscripts. The reading focused on values relevant to marital relationship education, including emotional readiness, calmness, gradual interaction, mutual attentiveness, self-restraint, avoidance of harm, responsibility, and awareness of consequences. These principles were not transferred literally into the film. Instead, they were critically interpreted as relational and educational values that could be communicated through dramatic situations and film language.

The creative process was conducted through three iterative phases. The first phase involved reading the cultural sources and observing interactions and movement within dense domestic spaces. This phase established the cultural, spatial, and educational foundations of the film. The second phase consisted of testing gestures, character positioning, camera placement, frame-within-frame compositions, sound cues, and the relationship between the characters and domestic space. These experiments were used to determine how marital values could be represented respectfully without relying on explicit visual presentation. The third phase involved producing and editing the film while evaluating the consistency between its cultural foundation, educational purpose, and audiovisual form.

The completed film was analyzed through four interconnected aspects: the development of interactions between the married couple, the positioning of their bodies within domestic architecture, the regulation of visual access, and the progression of spatial pressure from the household to the wider social environment. Particular attention was given to how dramaturgy, gesture, framing, sound, duration, and spatial arrangement conveyed readiness, reciprocity, restraint, dignity, responsibility, and mutual care. Scenes were selected for close analysis when they completed a full cycle of need, action, disturbance, restraint, consequence, and new situation, or when they tested a distinct camera configuration against the same blocking; scenes that repeated an already-documented configuration without producing a new relation between visual access and legibility were treated as supporting rather than primary evidence. Each selected scene was traced back through the comparative process by which it was produced: alternative camera positions and mosquito-net configurations were tested against one another during rehearsal and camera tests, and a configuration was retained only once its relationship to the surrounding footage had been checked at the editing table, so that a claim about meaning could be tied to a documented comparison rather than asserted from the finished image alone.

The analysis was conducted by comparing the selected principles of *Assikalabineng* with their cinematic realization and the educational meanings generated through that transformation. This

process enabled the study to identify how local cultural knowledge could support culturally grounded marital relationship education through film. Although audience responses obtained through focus-group activities contributed to the broader dissertation project, they were not the primary data analyzed in this article. Accordingly, the present study concentrates on the artistic process, the completed film, and its educational meanings as a knowledge-bearing audiovisual artefact.

Results and Discussion

Assikalabineng as a Foundation for Marital Relationship Education

The analysis demonstrates that *Assikalabineng* provides a cultural foundation for communicating ethical values in marital relationships. In *Rumah dalam Rumah*, these values are not presented as literal instructions but are transformed into narrative, visual, spatial, and auditory elements. The film particularly emphasizes emotional readiness, gradual interaction, reciprocity, self-restraint, responsibility, dignity, and mutual care.

These values are represented through Ali and Dara, a married couple whose efforts to establish personal closeness are repeatedly affected by domestic and social circumstances. Their relationship is presented as a shared process in which the emotional condition and response of each partner must be considered. Closeness is therefore not portrayed as a unilateral expectation but as an interaction that requires mutual understanding, appropriate timing, and sensitivity to the surrounding conditions.

Table 1 summarizes the relationship between the selected principles of *Assikalabineng*, their cinematic articulation in *Rumah dalam Rumah*, and the educational meanings generated through this transformation.

Table 1. Translation of Assikalabineng Values into Film Form and Educational Meaning

Principle in <i>Assikalabineng</i>	Filmic articulation in <i>Rumah dalam Rumah</i>	Educational meaning
Readiness and calmness	Pauses before interaction and attention to emotional and spatial conditions	A marital relationship requires emotional preparedness rather than unilateral urgency
Graduality	Controlled gestures, extended duration, and progressive interaction	Closeness develops through a process that allows both partners to respond
Repetition	Recurring attempts under different pressures and circumstances	Relational understanding develops through changing experiences and reflection
Self-restraint and avoidance of harm	Restrained performance and avoidance of abrupt actions	Personal intentions must remain guided by care, respect, and non-coercion
Reciprocity	Actions and responses are presented within a shared frame	Each partner is positioned as an active participant in the relationship
Awareness of consequences	Family presence, interruptions, and sounds outside the frame	Marital relationships remain connected to responsibility and social circumstances

Relational dignity	Avoidance of excessive exposure and bodily fragmentation	Visual representation must preserve the dignity of the individuals portrayed
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The findings presented in Table 1 indicate that the educational relevance of *Assikalabineng* lies primarily in its relational values. Readiness is translated through pauses and attention to the situation, while graduality is expressed through controlled movements and extended duration. Reciprocity becomes visible when the actions and responses of Ali and Dara remain within the same dramatic and visual context. Responsibility is conveyed through interruptions, family presence, and sounds originating outside the frame.

These cinematic elements enable the audience to understand the values through the experiences of the characters rather than through direct verbal explanation. Consequently, *Assikalabineng* functions as a culturally grounded educational resource for understanding respectful and responsible marital relationships without being presented as rigid or explicit instruction.

Situational Dramaturgy and the Education of Self-Restraint

The narrative structure of *Rumah dalam Rumah* is organized through recurring situations involving personal intention, an attempt to establish closeness, interruption, restraint, and adjustment. Although the pattern recurs, each situation occurs under different emotional, spatial, and social pressures. Repetition therefore develops the characters' awareness of each other and of the circumstances affecting their relationship. This recurring movement is proposed in this study as situational dramaturgy: a mode of dramatic construction that runs through need, action, disturbance, restraint, consequence, and a resulting new situation. Within this structure, a disturbance produces dramatic development only when it leaves a traceable consequence that reshapes the situation that follows; a disturbance that merely halts the action without altering what the characters can subsequently do or risk produces repetition rather than progression.

The interruptions arise from the crowded household, domestic noise, the presence of family members, and the limited availability of private space. These conditions prevent the narrative from moving directly from personal intention to fulfilment. Instead, the characters must pause, observe the situation, and reconsider their actions. The interruptions consequently function as an integral part of the film's educational structure rather than merely as dramatic obstacles.

Ali's intentions are continuously reconsidered in relation to Dara's readiness and response. Their interaction consequently depends on attention, hesitation, and adjustment. This pattern demonstrates that personal intention does not automatically justify further action. A respectful marital relationship requires sensitivity to the partner's condition and a willingness to stop or adjust one's actions when the situation is not appropriate.

The situational dramaturgy also translates the principle of graduality into narrative time. Extended duration and recurring interruptions create opportunities for reflection and response. Self-restraint is therefore represented not as passive withdrawal but as an active expression of respect, responsibility, and relational awareness. The educational meaning emerges through both the characters' actions and their decisions to pause or reconsider those actions.

	Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3
 Main Frame			
 Blocking	Ali and Dara remain within the same mosquito net; their bodies are close together, but their movements are not fully synchronized.	Ali and Dara sit closely together inside the pedicab, maintaining physical proximity within a temporarily enclosed space.	Both characters occupy a more enclosed pedicab space; their physical proximity has only just been established.
 Dramatic Action	The interaction is brief and is immediately interrupted.	The interaction lasts longer than in Unit 1.	The interaction is brief because the situation changes immediately.
 Source of Interruption	Limited intimate space and the lack of synchronized readiness.	External spatial pressure and the absence of stable privacy.	Third-party interference caused by the opening of the pedicab cover.
 Withheld Response	The attempt at intimacy is suspended, while emotional closeness remains perceptible.	Physical proximity is temporarily achieved but does not lead to resolution.	Privacy collapses, and the attempt at intimacy fails again.

Figure 1. Comparison of three successive attempts at closeness between Ali and Dara, showing blocking, duration, source of interruption, and restrained response across each unit, illustrating the repetition-with-consequence structure of situational dramaturgy.

Relational Gestures and Ethical Visual Representation

The film represents the development of closeness through bodily orientation, interpersonal distance, controlled movement, and reciprocal response. The interaction between Ali and Dara progresses through small relational changes, beginning with awareness of each other's presence, followed by a gradual approach, initial interaction, and adjustment when the situation changes.

Each stage is determined by the responses of both characters. Bodily orientation establishes mutual awareness, while the gradual approach reduces the distance between them without immediately leading to further action. When an interruption changes the emotional or spatial conditions, their movements and responses are adjusted accordingly. Gestures therefore function as a form of relational communication through which readiness, hesitation, and mutual awareness become visible.

The controlled movements demonstrate how the principle of graduality is translated into cinematic action. The characters' gestures are slowed and restrained so that their responses remain observable. This arrangement shifts the educational emphasis away from physical display and toward the process through which two individuals establish respectful closeness.

The film further develops this approach through a visual strategy this study terms peeking cinematography: the deliberate use of obstruction, distance, and framing to regulate, rather than deny, the audience's visual access to intimate action. Five interlocking elements coordinate this regulation: a sightline boundary formed by an object placed between camera and character, a threshold camera position held at the edge of the intimate space rather than inside it, controlled occlusion that withholds visual information without erasing the characters' responses, an ethically calibrated distance, and the sustained legibility of each character's

action. Mosquito nets, doorways, partial obstruction, medium camera distances, and stable camera angles regulate the audience’s visual access to the characters. These elements prevent unrestricted visual exposure while retaining the emotional and domestic contexts of the scenes.

The mosquito net and doorway function simultaneously as spatial boundaries and visual frames. They allow the audience to recognize the characters’ interaction without presenting excessive visual detail or isolated bodily fragments. Medium camera distances keep both the characters and their surroundings visible, while stable angles direct attention toward posture, facial response, hesitation, and interpersonal distance.

The findings demonstrate that restricted visual access does not reduce the educational meaning of the film. Instead, it encourages the audience to interpret the relationship through mutual responses and situational context. The camera therefore supports the educational orientation of the film by preserving the dignity of both characters and presenting them as relational subjects rather than visual objects.



Figure 2. Regulated visual access through the mosquito net, a threshold camera position, and a view through a threshold, each frame annotated to distinguish the zone still visible from the zone withheld from view.

Domestic Space and the Social Conditions of Privacy

The analysis reveals that space is not merely a background for the story but an active element shaping the relationship between Ali and Dara. The crowded household, limited physical boundaries, domestic noise, and continuous presence of family members affect the characters’ movements and opportunities for private communication.

Within the house, the mosquito net symbolically marks a personal area. However, it cannot completely prevent sound, observation, or interruption. Similarly, doorways and thin domestic boundaries visually separate spaces without fully protecting the activities occurring within them. These conditions show that the existence of a physical boundary does not necessarily guarantee privacy.

Sound plays an important role in revealing the limitations of the domestic environment. Voices, movement, and other sounds originating outside the frame remind both the characters and the audience that other family members remain nearby. Off-screen sound therefore expands the

perceived space beyond what is visible and transforms family presence into a continuing form of spatial pressure.

The findings indicate that privacy depends not only on physical separation but also on household arrangements, recognition of personal boundaries, and respect among family members. The couple's difficulty in obtaining personal space is consequently connected to domestic density and the distribution of access within the household rather than solely to their interpersonal relationship.

Leaving the house does not remove these limitations. Instead, the alley, shop-house area, wharf, and riot zone introduce different forms of pressure. The alley restricts movement, while the shop-house area introduces property boundaries and limited access. The wharf exposes the couple to social observation and moral judgement, whereas the riot zone transforms spatial pressure into direct physical danger.

Figure 3 maps the progression of these spatial conditions, beginning with limitations within the household and developing into broader social and physical pressures.

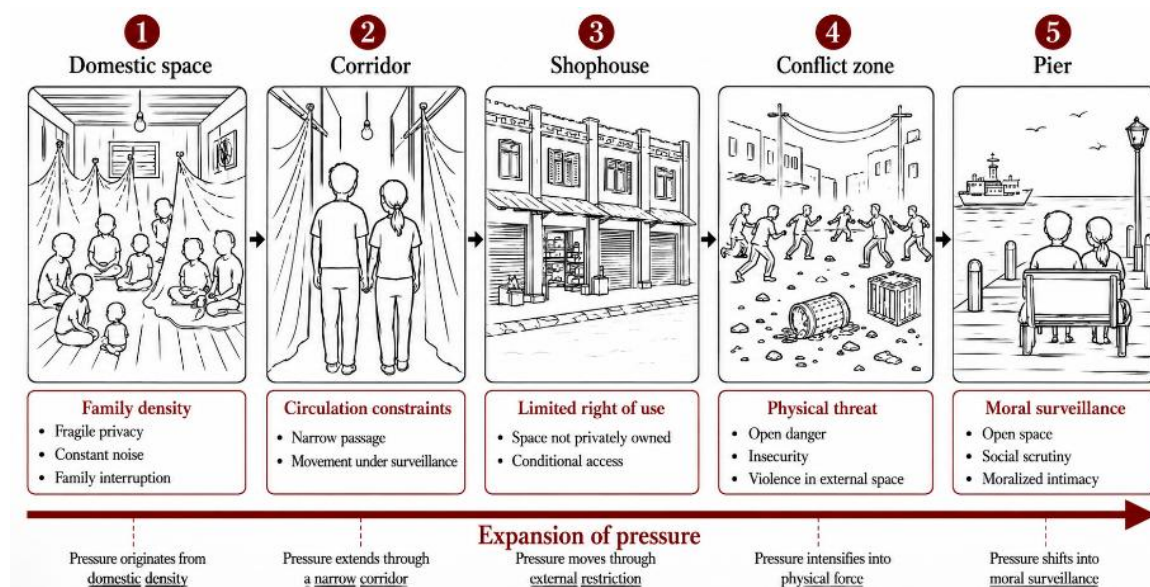


Figure 3. Progression of spatial pressure from domestic limitations to social judgement and physical danger.

The progression presented in Figure 3 shows that the challenges experienced by Ali and Dara are not caused solely by personal incompatibility. Their relationship is also shaped by housing conditions, economic limitations, public judgement, and bodily safety. The educational meaning of the film therefore extends beyond interpersonal conduct by demonstrating that respectful marital relationships also require adequate privacy, security, and supportive social conditions.

Educational Meaning Developed through Artistic Practice

The production records demonstrate that the educational meanings of *Rumah dalam Rumah* were developed through an iterative creative process. Observations of movement within restricted domestic spaces, blocking experiments, rehearsal adjustments, sound mapping, and camera trials contributed to the final film language. These processes connected the cultural interpretation of *Assikalabineng* with concrete artistic decisions.

The observation and blocking notes show that the available space influenced how the characters could approach, face, and respond to each other. Their movements were restricted by the

narrow domestic environment, requiring gestures to be slowed and carefully positioned. These spatial limitations were incorporated into the dramatic construction instead of being treated merely as production obstacles.

Camera trials were used to regulate the audience's visual access to the characters. The positioning of the camera behind or through domestic boundaries allowed the film to maintain narrative clarity while preserving relational dignity. Sound mapping also identified noises originating outside the visible frame as active elements that could signal the presence of other people and interrupt the characters' sense of privacy.

Decisions concerning movement, framing, and sound were developed before filming and subsequently refined through rehearsal, production, and editing. Ethical representation was therefore embedded in the design of the scenes rather than added only during post-production.

The practice-based process shows that educational meaning in film can be generated through the combined organization of performance, framing, duration, sound, and space. These elements transformed the relational principles of *Assikalabineng* into an audiovisual form that can be understood by contemporary audiences without relying on direct or overly explicit instruction.

Repositioning *Assikalabineng* as an Educational Resource

The findings position *Assikalabineng* not as a collection of explicit instructions, but as a source of relational knowledge that can support culturally grounded marital relationship education. This interpretation is consistent with Goldfarb and Lieberman (2021), whose review demonstrates that effective comprehensive education must extend beyond biological information to relationships, communication, decision-making, respect, and personal responsibility. However, the present study expands this position by showing that these educational dimensions can be communicated through locally rooted cultural narratives rather than exclusively through formal curricular explanations (Goldfarb & Lieberman, 2021).

The emphasis on readiness, reciprocity, and self-restraint also corresponds with Sell et al. (2023), who found that educational programmes addressing gender and power become more effective when learners are encouraged to reflect on relationships and connect educational content with lived experience. In *Rumah dalam Rumah*, reflection is not produced through classroom instruction but through situations in which personal intentions are continually negotiated against another person's readiness and response. The film therefore translates relational power into observable ethical choices without presenting the subject in an overly explicit manner (Sell et al., 2023).

This interpretation is further supported by Bergam et al. (2022), whose participants identified self-respect, self-confidence, and self-love as essential components of relationship education. Their study indicates that young people require more than risk-prevention information; they also need relational values that help them understand dignity and personal boundaries. The present study adds mutual care and self-restraint to this educational framework, thereby shifting attention from avoiding negative outcomes to developing responsible ways of relating to another person (Bergam et al., 2022; Asiimwe et al., 2026).

Cultural Grounding without Uncritical Traditionalism

The cultural grounding of *Rumah dalam Rumah* is important because the acceptance of sensitive educational content is strongly influenced by local values. Chavula et al. (2022) found that cultural, religious, political, and institutional contexts can either facilitate or obstruct the implementation of comprehensive education. Their findings explain why direct or

decontextualized educational messages may encounter resistance (Miarta et al., 2026; Faishol, 2026; Zolfaghari et al., 2025). By embedding relational values in a Bugis cultural framework and presenting them through a married couple, *Rumah dalam Rumah* creates an educational entry point that is more closely connected to the audience's cultural environment (Chavula et al., 2022).

Nevertheless, cultural relevance should not be interpreted as the unquestioned preservation of tradition. Mukoro (2023) identifies several ways in which culture operates in sexuality education: as an explanation, a source of authority, a site of conflict, a political instrument, and an educational opportunity. The present study corresponds most closely with the final perspective. It treats Bugis culture as an opportunity for educational interpretation while avoiding the assumption that every traditional formulation remains automatically applicable to contemporary relationships (Mukoro, 2023; Holmes et al., 2026; Agunuru, 2025).

Mukoro et al. (2025) further demonstrate that conflicts surrounding sensitive education often arise among teachers, families, communities, religious groups, and policymakers rather than from educational content alone. This suggests that replacing explicit terminology with culturally familiar language may improve acceptance, but terminological refinement cannot substitute for substantive ethical clarity. Accordingly, the film's emphasis on dignity and mutual care should be accompanied by facilitated discussion that explicitly addresses autonomy, equality, and non-coercion (Mukoro et al., 2025).

Caruso et al. (2023) similarly argue for community-responsive and flexible educational models, particularly when standardised programmes fail to represent the experiences of particular communities. *Rumah dalam Rumah* responds to this concern by drawing its educational language from Bugis cultural knowledge and everyday domestic conditions. However, its cultural specificity should be treated as a basis for contextual dialogue rather than as a universally transferable model. Application in other communities would require reinterpretation based on their own relationship norms and educational needs (Caruso et al., 2023).

Within the specific Bugis context, Basri et al. (2025) interpret *Assikalabineng* as a complex heritage containing ethical, spiritual, and ritual dimensions rather than merely physical knowledge. This supports the present study's decision to foreground relational responsibility. Its additional contribution lies in demonstrating how these ethical principles can be transferred from manuscript culture into contemporary audiovisual education while preserving cultural meaning and avoiding literal reproduction (Basri et al., 2025).

Film as Reflective and Relational Pedagogy

The use of film is pedagogically significant because audiovisual narratives allow viewers to encounter ethical issues through characters, emotions, and consequences. Carolin (2022) found that an animated film could support pre-service teachers' engagement with sensitive relationship issues by creating interpretive distance and encouraging reflection. *Rumah dalam Rumah* performs a similar function: it enables audiences to examine responsibility and personal boundaries through Ali and Dara rather than requiring immediate disclosure of their own experiences. This distance makes the subject discussable while maintaining cultural sensitivity (Carolin, 2022).

Allen's (2024) analysis of the Netflix series *Sex Education* demonstrates that popular audiovisual narratives can address dimensions frequently absent from formal education because they present relationships as complex, emotional, and socially situated. However, popular media may also rely on explicitness to attract attention. *Rumah dalam Rumah* offers a

different cinematic route: educational meaning is carried through duration, hesitation, sound, framing, and spatial restriction. It therefore suggests that pedagogical effectiveness does not depend on the quantity of visual information but on how carefully viewers are guided to interpret relationships (Allen, 2024).

Scull et al. (2022) provide empirical evidence that media-literacy-based education can improve knowledge, communication, and critical evaluation of mediated relationship messages. Their findings indicate that merely watching a film does not guarantee educational understanding; audiences need analytical tools to examine what the film normalises or challenges. For this reason, *Rumah dalam Rumah* should be used as a discussion stimulus rather than a self-contained curriculum. Guided questions could direct learners toward readiness, boundaries, communication, environmental pressure, and the ethical consequences of personal choices (Scull et al., 2022).

The film's educational orientation also corresponds with Griffes et al. (2024), who identified interactional skills, the self within a relationship, partner bonding, and relationship motivations as recurring components of couple relationship education. More importantly, Griffes et al. noted that socioecological conditions remain insufficiently represented in many programmes. The present study addresses that limitation by connecting interpersonal conduct with family presence, housing limitations, economic pressure, public judgement, and safety. It therefore broadens marital relationship education beyond communication skills alone (Griffes et al., 2024).

Ethical Visuality and the Production of Care

The restrained visual approach in *Rumah dalam Rumah* has implications beyond protecting cultural sensitivity. It challenges the assumption that intimate relationships must be represented through extensive visual access. By retaining both characters and their surroundings within the frame, the film positions intimacy as a relational and contextual experience instead of reducing either character to a visual object.

This approach parallels Sørensen's (2022) analysis of intimacy coordination in film and television. Sørensen shows that ethical representation begins with production practices that clarify boundaries, choreograph movement, and recognise performer consent. The present study reflects this principle directly: production included a dedicated Intimacy Coordinator, who briefed performers on the boundaries of intimacy-related scenes and agreed choreography with them in advance of rehearsal and filming. Read alongside the blocking experiments, controlled movements, and camera trials described earlier, this confirms that ethical meaning was built during pre-production and performance, rather than imposed only through censorship during editing (Sørensen, 2022).

Horeck and Berridge (2024) similarly argue that intimacy coordination can expand cultural understandings of intimacy while enabling safer and more creative production. Their study is particularly relevant because it rejects a false opposition between artistic freedom and performer protection. *Rumah dalam Rumah* likewise demonstrates that regulated visual access can strengthen rather than weaken cinematic expression. Obstruction, distance, off-screen sound, and restrained choreography become creative devices through which dignity and mutual awareness are communicated (Horeck & Berridge, 2024).

The educational contribution of this visual strategy is therefore twofold. For audiences, it models a respectful way of looking at intimate relationships. For film students and practitioners, it demonstrates that ethical representation involves decisions about blocking,

framing, performance, and sound. The film thus functions not only as relationship education but also as a practical example of ethically responsible filmmaking.

Privacy as an Educational and Socioecological Issue

The spatial pressures represented in the film extend marital relationship education beyond individual behaviour. Ruiz-Tagle and Urria Yáñez (2022) found that increasing household overcrowding was associated with declining mental well-being, demonstrating that housing conditions influence emotional life rather than merely physical comfort. Applied to the present study, this evidence supports the interpretation that the difficulties experienced by Ali and Dara cannot be explained only through individual communication. Their capacity to develop a calm and respectful relationship is constrained by material living conditions (Ruiz-Tagle & Urria Yáñez, 2022).

Lorentzen et al. (2024) further report that overcrowded housing is associated with stress, insecurity, conflict, limited resources, shame, and restricted opportunities. Although their study focuses on children's environments, its socio-spatial implications are relevant to the film. Domestic density affects how household members move, communicate, withdraw, and establish boundaries. *Rumah dalam Rumah* therefore makes a valuable educational intervention by showing that privacy is produced through both architectural arrangements and respect among household members (Lorentzen et al., 2024).

Weber et al. (2024) provide a more specific explanation by demonstrating that perceived privacy mediates the relationship between residential density, subjective crowding, and aggression. This finding deepens the interpretation of domestic space in the film: the central difficulty is not simply the number of people within the house, but the couple's limited control over when and how they can withdraw from others. Consequently, relationship education should recognise privacy regulation as part of emotional well-being and conflict prevention (Weber et al., 2024).

These studies show that readiness and mutual care cannot be treated solely as personal virtues. Their practice depends partly on access to safe and supportive environments. This is an important development beyond conventional relationship education because it connects ethical conduct with housing, economic conditions, family organisation, and public safety.

Contribution, Educational Application, and Limitations

The main contribution of this study is the formulation of a culturally grounded model of marital relationship education in which local knowledge is critically transformed through film language. The model combines three dimensions: relational values derived from *Assikalabineng*, audiovisual strategies that protect dignity, and socioecological awareness of the conditions shaping private life. This integration distinguishes the study from approaches that treat relationship education as either technical information, individual communication training, or cultural preservation alone.

In educational practice, the film is most suitable as a facilitated learning resource. Educators may use it to initiate discussion about emotional readiness, mutual response, self-restraint, personal boundaries, family respect, privacy, and environmental pressures. The discussion should also clarify contemporary principles that the film communicates indirectly, especially autonomy, equality, affirmative consent, and non-coercion. Such facilitation would preserve the film's culturally sensitive language while preventing ambiguous interpretations.

The study nevertheless has several limitations. Its analysis centres on one short fiction film and one Bugis manuscript tradition; consequently, the findings should not be generalised to all

Bugis families or educational contexts. Audience responses were not the primary analytical focus, so the study cannot yet establish how different viewers understand or apply its educational meanings. It also does not compare film-assisted learning with other educational methods. Future research should therefore test the film with educators, married adults, cultural custodians, and other relevant groups; examine differences in audience interpretation; and evaluate whether facilitated viewing improves understanding of respectful marital relationships.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that *Assikalabineng* can be critically transformed into a film-based educational resource for culturally responsive marital relationship education. Through the practice-based creation of *Rumah dalam Rumah*, its relational principles are communicated through situational dramaturgy, controlled gestures, regulated visual access, off-screen sound, and the organisation of domestic and public spaces. These cinematic strategies foreground emotional readiness, reciprocity, self-restraint, responsibility, dignity, and mutual care without relying on direct or overly explicit instruction.

The study also shows that respectful marital relationships are shaped not only by individual behaviour but also by material and social conditions. Domestic density, family presence, limited privacy, economic constraints, public judgement, and physical safety influence the ability of couples to establish personal boundaries and develop responsible relationships. Accordingly, marital relationship education should connect interpersonal values with the environments in which relationships are experienced.

The principal contribution of *Rumah dalam Rumah* lies in its potential to make culturally grounded relational values visible and open to educational reflection. However, the film should be positioned as a facilitated learning resource rather than a stand-alone curriculum or an educational intervention whose effectiveness has already been established. Future research should examine audience interpretations and evaluate its use in structured educational settings involving educators, married adults, cultural custodians, film practitioners, and relevant professionals. Such research would clarify how film-based cultural resources can support learning about respectful and responsible marital relationships across different social and educational contexts.

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