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EDUCATING FILMMAKERS: BALANCING CREATIVITY AND ETHICS UNDER VIETNAM'S CINEMATOGRAPHY LAW

ĐẶNG THU HÀ
Ho Chi Minh City University of Theatre and Cinema (Vietnam)

Dr. **Đặng Thu Hà** (b. 1982) is a screenwriter, producer, and film lecturer. Having produced over 400 television episodes, she has authored numerous research papers and two specialized textbooks: *Digital Storytelling* and *Constructing Structures and Storytelling in Feature Film Scripts* (2023), alongside a 2024 CILECT book chapter.

Corresponding author
Đặng Thu Hà
University of Theatre and Cinema,
125 Cong Quynh St.,
Nguyen Cu Trinh Ward, District 1,
Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
dangthuhaskda@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Within the legal framework of Vietnam's Cinematography Law, this paper examines how film education institutions can equip learners with the capacity to reconcile creative individuality with ethical and social responsibility through cinematic works. The study focuses on managing sensitive topics, such as spirituality, superstition, violence, and sexuality, which often encounter censorship barriers in Vietnam. In doing so, the paper aims to contribute to fostering conscience, ethics, and humanism in twenty-first century cinema.

Employing a qualitative methodology, the research combines a statutory analysis of current regulations (Cinematography Law 2022, Circular 05/2023/TT-BVHTTDL), benchmarking age-based film classification systems, and a case study analysis of three publicly controversial Vietnamese films: *The Third Wife*, *Taste*, and *The Outcasts of Cho Lon*. The findings reveal that the decisions of the Film Appraisal Council are substantially influenced by context, artistic intention, and the potential harm to audiences rather than by the mere presence of sensitive content. On this basis, the paper contrasts legal provisions with practice, and proposes a set of ethical principles to be integrated into film education. These guidelines are intended to help future filmmakers address sensitive content in ways that are legally compliant and culturally appropriate, without diminishing artistic value or audience appeal.

Keywords: *Film education; censorship; sensitive content; ethics; social responsibility.*

1. INTRODUCTION

As global cinema expands its creative frontiers, increasingly dissolving the boundaries of form and medium to engage with complex social issues, film is no longer merely a vehicle of entertainment but also a medium for reflecting and shaping cultural values, ethical standards, and humanity's engagement with profound moral questions. In Vietnam, the Cinematography Law, first enacted in 2006 and revised in 2022, has established a crucial legal framework for the domestic film industry, encompassing regulations on production, distribution, promotion, archiving, and workforce training. It simultaneously serves as a guiding mechanism to ensure the sustainable development of the film industry while preserving cultural norms and community ethics.

One of the most notable provisions of the Law is its detailed list of eleven types of prohibited content in cinematographic activities, aimed at protecting public interests, safeguarding humanistic values, and preventing negative social impacts. Among them, the three categories of sexuality, violence, and spirituality are particularly significant, as they constitute indispensable components of global cinema and other art forms. Sensitive depictions of sexuality, violent imagery, and mystical spiritual elements are not only powerful emotional tools for audiences but also carry profound artistic value. They help portray psychological depth, accentuate dramatic conflict, and reflect universal ethical dilemmas. However, the mismanagement or excessive use of these elements may result in serious consequences, such as film bans, public controversy, and uncertainty among creators, thereby posing a challenge for filmmakers seeking to balance artistic freedom with legal compliance.

This raises critical questions: How should these prohibited categories be understood? How can film education enable students to responsibly engage with content deemed sensitive, ensuring both artistic intention and audience appeal without violating legal and ethical standards? Such questions are not only theoretical but also carry profound practical implications for filmmakers, policymakers, and film education institutions in the rapidly evolving landscape of new media platforms, short-form entertainment, and user-generated content; factors that increasingly blur the boundaries between creative freedom, film distribution, and state regulation.

To address these concerns, this paper first analyses the fragile boundary between permissible and prohibited depictions of spirituality, sexuality, and violence. It then situates the discourse within the ethical foundations of creative responsibility and professional conscience as essential elements in defining the limits between artistic freedom and social accountability. Through film education, particularly via the in-depth classroom analysis of specific cinematic works, emerging filmmakers should be equipped with the knowledge and skills to explore these sensitive yet compelling subjects in ways that are humane, innovative, socially responsible, and, above all, legally compliant. Accordingly, the overarching objective of this study is to contribute to promoting conscience, ethics, humanism, and social responsibility in twenty-first century cinematic practice, a theme closely aligned with the special issue of the *International Journal of Film and Media Arts (IJFMA).*

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Concerning the impact of violent and sexual representations on audience experience, previous debates in cinema have emphasised the role of mise-en-scène, artistic intention, and the ways in which viewers are "guided" to perceive images. Sontag (2003/2004) warned of the risk of emotional numbness in the repeated reproduction of violent imagery, calling for critical reflection on the power of framing and perspective. Williams (1991), in her analysis of "body genres," highlighted how aesthetic pleasure is tied to sensory stimulation, arguing that explicitness does not necessarily equate to immorality;

rather, the key lies in the artistic rationale and ethical positioning of the work.

With respect to film classification frameworks and the determination of acceptability based on scenes, mature rating systems have shifted away from absolute prohibitions toward contextual assessments, considering the degree of explicitness and potential harm to vulnerable groups. The Motion Picture Association (MPA, U.S.) provides age ratings as guidance for audiences, prioritising informed choice over direct intervention in content (MPA, n.d.). The British Board of Film Classification (BBFC, UK) issues regularly updated guidelines, establishing criteria related to violence, sex, abuse, discrimination, and language, with a strong emphasis on context and intent (BBFC, 2024). The Korea Media Rating Board (KMRB, South Korea) applies a detailed and consistent framework across both cinema and video games, exemplifying a normative approach with transparent procedures (KMRB, n.d.).

In Vietnam, the Cinematography Law (2022) has also shifted toward a classification-based mechanism rather than a heavily prohibitive pre-censorship model, introducing specific criteria for different audience age groups. In practice, appraisal decisions often revolve around contextualisation and the potential risk of harm. For example, *The Third Wife* (2019) was withdrawn due to controversy regarding a minor actress in sensitive scenes; *Taste* (2021) was denied release owing to prolonged nudity; and *The Outcasts of Cho Lon* (2013) was banned for violence. These three cases serve as representative examples of the ethical-legal boundary currently enforced in the country (Reuters, 2019; VnExpress, 2021; Tuổi Trẻ, 2013). From a sociological perspective, the public's strong reactions to films such as *The Third Wife* can be understood through the theory of "moral panic," in which a group or behaviour is identified by the media and public opinion as a threat to social values. Understanding this mechanism helps filmmakers anticipate potential media risks and recognise that controversy arises not only from the film's content but also from the broader social discourses at play. Although films are banned almost every year, no formal research has yet examined the relationship between filmmaking and censorship, individual artistic ambition and social responsibility, or legal frameworks and creative solutions. While news articles and public debates document the outcomes of censorship decisions, a systematic academic analysis that connects these incidents to concrete strategies for film education remains conspicuously absent. This constitutes a significant gap that warrants scholarly discussion to ensure the sustainable development of Vietnamese cinema.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative methodology structured into three integrated stages to bridge the gap between legal frameworks and artistic practice.

First, it employs a doctrinal analysis of Vietnam's *Cinematography Law 2022* and *Circular 05/2023* to clarify the legal boundaries on sensitive content. This is complemented by comparative benchmarking with international standards, specifically the BBFC (UK), MPA (US), and KMRB (South Korea), to situate the Vietnamese context within global regulatory trends.

Second, the research utilises a case study analysis of three representative Vietnamese films that have faced censorship or public controversy, alongside selected international examples for contrast. Through close film analysis, the study examines the interplay between cinematic language (mise-en-scène, narrative structure) and authorial intent.

Finally, drawing on reception theory, the study assesses the public and critical responses to these works. This multi-layered approach connects the legal constraints with social impact providing the empirical foundation for developing an ethical guideline framework in film education.

4. LEGAL AND ETHICAL FRAMEWORK IN CINEMA

Vietnam's amended Cinematography Law (2022) functions as the primary legal framework governing domestic production, distribution, and exhibition. Central to this legislation is the protection of public interest, cultural values, and social stability. To this end, the Law proscribes eleven categories of prohibited content within the industry:

In the legal framework, three categories are most frequently leveraged as expressive tools, yet they represent a constant negotiation between artistic freedom and legal boundaries:

- Religion and Spirituality (Clause e): While designed to safeguard cultural diversity, this clause creates a conceptual grey zone. In films exploring mysticism or the supernatural, the lack of a clear demarcation between "creative expression" and "insult" often forces genres like spiritual horror into a state of regulatory uncertainty. This ambiguity suggests that the law acts not just as a static barrier, but as a subjective filter for cultural sensitivity.
- Violence (Clause h): The law establishes a dialectic between graphic representation and humanistic value. The permissibility of violence is strictly contingent upon its moral function: scenes of crime or murder are evaluated based on whether they glorify evil or serve as a tool for social critique. Ethically, this shifts the burden to the filmmaker to ensure proportionality, where violence is narratively indispensable and its graphic detail is kept to a functional minimum to uphold justice rather than incite aggression.
- Sexuality (Clause i): Beyond clear-cut bans such as incest, terms like "obscenity" and "depravity" function as interpretive instruments. This inherent subjectivity regarding what constitutes a "detailed depiction" allows for a narrow yet viable corridor for artistic nuance. Sexuality, therefore, is treated not as a total exclusion but as a context-dependent element requiring high ethical alignment and artistic intent to avoid being labelled as purely prurient.

In summary, these provisions do not operate as static hurdles but as a dynamic creative boundary. The very elements most

Prohibited Content under the Cinematography Law (Article 9)	
a)	Violating the Constitution and laws; inciting opposition to or sabotage of constitutional enforcement.
b)	Propagating against the Socialist Republic of Vietnam; undermining national unity; harming national interests, culture, or values; insulting the national flag, Party flag, national emblem, or anthem.
c)	Inciting aggressive war, hatred, or discrimination between ethnicities; promoting reactionary ideologies or social evils; undermining culture or social morality.
d)	Distorting national history, denying revolutionary achievements; insulting the nation, national heroes; violating sovereignty; defaming or insulting organizations or individuals.
đ)	Promoting terrorism or extremism.
e)	Inciting or insulting religious beliefs; promoting illegal religious activities.
g)	Disclosing state secrets or personal secrets.
h)	Depicting explicit violence, torture, or inhumane acts, except in works intended to condemn such acts and uphold justice.
i)	Depicting obscene, pornographic, or incestuous acts.
k)	Violating the legal rights of children and minors.
l	Violating gender equality principles; gender discrimination.

restricted are also those most vital to cinematic storytelling. Consequently, film education must pivot from rote legal memorisation to the strategic interpretation of these "grey areas."

In practice, the Central Council for Film Appraisal and Classification operates as the de facto "interpreter" of these legal abstractions. Their evaluations transcend literalism, relying on a synthesis of three core criteria:

1. Teleological Purpose: Is the scene's intent to condemn or promote prohibited behaviour? (for example, a torture scene is judged by whether it exposes wrongdoing or provides a technical manual for incitement)
2. Graphic Thresholds: How detailed are the images and sounds?
3. Audience Impact: The anticipated effect on vulnerable groups.

By internalising these gradations of impact, filmmakers can adopt a proactive approach, self-regulating from the scriptwriting stage to prevent irremediable violations during final censorship.

Vietnam's approach reflects a broader global tension. While Western models (MPAA, BBFC) and South Korea prioritise audience autonomy through transparent age-based classification, Vietnam's system prioritises cultural and ethical stability. This rigorous oversight, where the Council acts as a moral guardian, contrasts with systems that emphasise standardised thresholds. Ultimately, the role of the filmmaker, guided by academic insight, is to achieve a sophisticated balance between creative liberty and social responsibility.

The comparative data reveals a fundamental divergence in regulatory philosophy. Vietnam employs a rigorous censorship-oriented approach, characterised by the integration of legal mandates with ethical oversight. This model relies on absolute prohibitions and centralised evaluations to safeguard national interests. In sharp contrast, the frameworks of the UK, the US, and South Korea function as facilitative systems.

Comparative summary table of the censorship regulations between Vietnam and other countries (Quốc hội, 2022; Bộ VHTTDL, 2023; BBFC, 2024; MPA, n.d.; KMRB, n.d.)

Criteria / Country	Vietnam (Cinematography Law 2022)	UK (BBFC)	US (MPA)	South Korea (KMRB)
Regulatory Mechanism	Age classification and the absolute prohibition of 11 categories; decisions made by Appraisal Council	Age-based classification, regularly updated, transparent criteria	Age ratings (G, PG, PG-13, R, NC-17); no absolute bans	Detailed age-based classification applied to films and games
Sexuality	Prohibits "obscenity, pornography, incest"; permitted if artistically justified and not explicit	Allowed but rated according to explicitness, context, and purpose	Allowed; age-based restrictions	Very detailed age criteria; separate R18 category
Violence	Prohibits detailed depictions of crime; allowed if condemning or upholding justice	Permitted but assessed according to details, consequences, and audience vulnerability	Permitted; restricted by age rating	Clear criteria for gore, blood, and consequences
Religion/ Spirituality	Prohibits insults and superstition; must respect cultural traditions	Allowed unless promoting hate or discrimination	Restricted mainly if overtly offensive	Strict, especially with superstition and demonic themes
Key Features	Hybrid of a legal and ethical review; large "grey zones"	Contextual and intent-based	Self-regulated, audience choice-oriented	Transparent, normative, consistent

By prioritising transparent age-based classifications, these countries shift the focus from state-led restriction to audience autonomy and contextual flexibility.

Regarding the sensitive themes of sexuality, violence, and religion, Vietnam's stringent restrictions reflect a commitment to cultural and ethical preservation. Conversely, Western and South Korean models emphasise standardisation and explicitness thresholds, allowing content to reach the public provided it is appropriately categorised. Essentially, while Vietnam's system acts as a moral guardian, the others operate as information providers for a self-regulating audience.

A critical variable in the execution of these regulations is the functional subjectivity of the Central Council for Film Appraisal and Classification. Comprising a multifaceted assembly of administrators, critics, and artists, this body serves as the definitive "interpreter" of the law. Their role is not merely clerical; it is an intellectual process where the rigid legal text is filtered through professional experience, aesthetic sensibilities, and the evolving social climate.

Consequently, the pedagogical mission for future filmmakers must transcend simple legal literacy. It requires a profound grasp of the Council's evaluative logic, empowering creators to construct sophisticated artistic arguments that justify their vision within the legal framework. The synergy between filmmakers and educational institutions is vital in navigating the tension between creative liberty and social, ethical, and legal accountability.

5. APPROACHES TO ADDRESSING THE THREE PROHIBITED CATEGORIES UNDER THE LAW ON CINEMA

5.1. Sexuality

There was a time when cinema was widely believed to be inseparable from sexuality and violence. Sexuality was considered to be an indispensable ingredient in both narrative content and cinematic expression. Together, sex and violence drew audiences to theatres and immersed them in the captivating world of film. A study conducted by the Russian Institute of Cinematographic Art (2001), in a country often regarded as having one of the "cleanest" cinemas in the world, revealed that one in four young viewers in Moscow aged 11-14 and 15-18 attended theatres to watch films containing sexual scenes.

Sexuality in cinema not only enhances the authenticity of emotional relationships and character psychology but also engages with deeper social issues such as gender equality, personal freedom, and shifting moral values. Many international works have achieved critical acclaim and major awards for their nuanced treatment of sexual themes. For example, *Call Me by Your Name* (2017) was praised for portraying sexuality as part of the character's journey of gender and identity exploration. Similarly, *Titane* (2021), winner of the Palme d'Or at Cannes, employed erotic imagery to convey powerful messages about identity and social prejudice. Ang Lee's *Lust, Caution* (2007) combined sexuality with complex psychological and political dimensions, succeeding both artistically and commercially.

Nevertheless, sexuality frequently provokes controversy and presents major challenges for censorship, especially in cultures that prize discretion. In Vietnam, *The Third Wife* (2018) is a clear example. Despite winning nine international awards, the film was withdrawn from domestic cinemas due to the controversy over sensitive scenes involving a 14-year-old actress (Reuters, 2019). Similarly, *Taste* (2021) was banned from release for its extended group nudity sequence, which was deemed as being inconsistent with cultural norms and in violation of the Cinematography Law (National Assembly, 2022; VnExpress, 2021).

A comparative analysis of successful and unsuccessful films in relation to censorship in Vietnam suggests that the decisive factor lies not in whether a film contains sexual content but the purpose and mode of depiction. Many feminist film analyses, originating from Laura Mulvey's concept of the "male gaze," point out that the camera's objectification of women's bodies solely to satisfy the male viewpoint is easily perceived as obscene. In contrast, films such as France's *Portrait of a Lady on Fire* (2019) depict intense intimate scenes through the "female gaze," focusing on exchanged glances, subtle gestures, and inner emotions, creating a profound artistic experience rather than a pornographic spectacle. This offers a valuable lesson on using cinematic language to portray intimacy in a humane and thoughtful manner. Scenes that merely seek to gratify base desires, provoke shock, or that lack aesthetic value are likely to be judged as vulgar and banned. By contrast, when sexuality is treated with subtlety and artistry, serving to deepen character development, convey meaningful messages, or to reflect social realities with humanistic resonance, it can stimulate a critical reflection on pressing issues such as gender, love, and human rights. In essence, sexuality should never be the end goal of a film (except in pornography); rather, it should be a means of expressing emotion, advancing dramatic conflict, developing narrative, and communicating ideas.

5.2. Violence

Violence has long been a staple element across multiple film genres, from action, crime, and horror to historical and war films. It generates dramatic tension, shocks audiences, elicits strong emotions, and exposes harsh social realities or profound human tragedies. Yet the line between employing violence for artistic purposes and exploiting it for sensationalism, shock value, or dangerous incitement remains fragile.

In Vietnam, the Law on Cinema prohibits "detailed, meticulous depictions of criminal acts" due to their potential negative influence, particularly on young audiences. Prolonged or excessively brutal violent scenes risk being interpreted as glorifying crime or inciting imitation (National Assembly, 2022). This was the rationale for banning *Bụi đời Chợ Lớn* (2013) (Tuổi Trẻ, 2013). Similarly, Stanley Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange* (1971) was criticised in the press as a "time bomb" poised to turn London's streets into a nightmare of gang violence (Jack, 2021).

Conversely, several Vietnamese films, such as *Brilliant Darkness* (2022) and *Sleeping City* (2023), were released and went on to win domestic and international awards despite containing violent elements. The difference often lies in genre. Violence in a historical war film, aimed at depicting the brutality of conflict, is evaluated differently from violence in a contemporary gangster film. *Bụi đời Chợ Lớn* was partially banned because it portrayed violence in a contemporary social context without a sufficiently strong condemning message, creating the risk that it could be interpreted as endorsing a gangster lifestyle. This indicates that violence is permissible when used to condemn, expose, or denounce wrongdoing; when it upholds justice (National Assembly, 2022; Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, 2023); or when it does not pose a foreseeable risk of inciting violent behaviour among viewers.

5.3. Religion and Spirituality

Cinema serves as a powerful medium for exploring spirituality and religious belief, especially in horror and fantasy genres. Images of ghosts, rituals, curses, or demons not only deliver striking visual effects but also invite reflection on morality, belief systems, and human existential dilemmas. Since the early twentieth century, horror has grown into a genre that enriches cinematic art, combining artistic, commercial, and social value.

Across Asia, horror cinema has flourished. In Thailand and Indonesia, ghost films dominate the box office, with dozens released annually across the subgenres of horror and horror-comedy. In China, ghost stories often draw on folklore

traditions such as *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*. In South Korea, horror blends the real and the supernatural, often highlighting moral lessons; and in Japan, horror films frequently revolve around vengeful spirits.

In Vietnam, horror films have been less prominent but have included notable works such as *Muoi*, *Infernal Junction*, *The Blood Curse*, *House in the Alley*, and *Vengeful Heart*. Common horror motifs include ghosts, vengeful spirits, torture, gore, skeletons, mummies, curses, amulets, demons, vampires, haunted houses, zombies, and possession. Yet such elements often face censorship hurdles due to fears of offending cultural traditions, promoting superstition, or undermining religious values, presenting challenges for both regulators and filmmakers. The challenge for Vietnamese filmmakers is how to draw on the rich treasure trove of folk culture and indigenous beliefs without falling into the depiction of harmful outdated practices. A successful example is the film *The Immortal* (2018), which skilfully incorporates spiritual elements such as amulets and immortality into a thrilling narrative, situating them within a magical framework of the past. In doing so, these elements are perceived as a cultural exploration rather than an endorsement of superstition in real life.

By contrast, Na Hong-jin's Korean horror film *The Wailing* (2016), replete with demonic possession, religious provocation, and supernatural dread, was released internationally, praised at the Cannes Film Festival, and won major domestic awards for Best Film and Best Director. Its acceptance illustrates that religious and supernatural themes are not automatically condemned. Instead, the key lies in their artistic purpose: rather than serving as mere shock devices. Horror imagery has been deployed to explore profound philosophical questions about the struggle between humanity and evil, and the coexistence of human and demonic impulses in society.

When approached with innovative cinematic techniques and philosophical depth, the use of spirituality and religion in film becomes an effective tool for narrative construction, authorial expression, and positive audience impact.

Thus, the portrayal of belief systems in cinema demands cultural sensitivity and respect. When spirituality is employed to illuminate ethical dilemmas, human existence, and faith, it can emerge as a powerful artistic vehicle. Conversely, when exploited solely for shock or commercial gain, it risks provoking negative reception and censorship.

6. THE "GOLDEN TRIANGLE" MODEL: A STRATEGY FOR CREATIVE NEGOTIATION

To navigate the complex overlapping zone between international integration and domestic standards, this study proposes the "Golden Triangle" model, a conceptual framework designed for principled creative decision-making. This model shifts the filmmaker's perspective from external compliance to internal accountability through three strategic vertices:

- Artistic Purpose: This vertex compels filmmakers to interrogate the thematic necessity of a sensitive scene, moving the focus from "What can I do?" to "Why is this essential?"
- Mode of Representation: This involves the technical "how," leveraging oblique techniques such as sound design or metaphor to externalise sensitive material without violating legal thresholds. According to Sontag (2003, 2004), this approach is vital because constant exposure to graphic depictions of suffering can lead to emotional desensitisation where the audience becomes a mere spectator rather than an empathetic participant.
- Anticipated Impact: This requires a proactive internal assessment of the consequences, especially within the unpredictable global digital environment.

While the interpretation of these vertices remains subjective, the model's value lies in fostering a conscious self-interrogative process. It transforms the filmmaker's mindset from one of mere compliance to one of principled responsibility. This is

particularly relevant when navigating legal exceptions in the 2022 Cinematography Law, where sexual or violent content is permissible if it serves a "thematic proposition" rather than mere "pornography" or "gratuitousness."

7. ETHICAL EDUCATION AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

The "Golden Triangle" is not only a theoretical construct but also a pedagogical necessity. To internalise this model, film education must transcend technical training and cultivate ethical reasoning as a foundational compass. This educational framework is built upon several core pillars that expand the model into professional practice:

- Humanistic Creativity and the Principle of Necessity: Sensitive content must be leveraged only when it is indispensable to the character arc, narrative progression, or a social reflection. This principle of proportionality demands that elements like sexuality or violence avoid "shock value," instead prioritising metaphorical language and aesthetic intent over graphic explicitness. Sontag (2003, 2004) suggests that images of pain and violence, when stripped of a clear humanistic context, risk becoming a form of voyeuristic entertainment that demeans the subject's dignity.
- Social Impact and Harm Prevention: Filmmakers must function as social architects, evaluating the potential influence of their work on vulnerable demographics. This involves a proactive assessment of how cinematic representation shapes public perception and social values, moving from mere entertainment to cultural contribution.
- Respect for Human Dignity and Aesthetic Integrity: Artistic representation should never demean the human subject. Violence and sexuality must be framed through sophisticated cinematic language, utilising symbolism, lighting, and sound design to evoke reflection rather than provide prurient stimulation or glorify harm.
- Interdisciplinary Pedagogical Integration: Film education should synthesise perspectives from law, sociology, psychology, and theology. A multidimensional analytical model is required; for instance, examining a censorship case through the triple lens of (1) legal violation, (2) sociological impact, and (3) alternative artistic solutions. By synthesising Sontag's (2003/2004) warning against emotional desensitisation with Bordwell and Thompson's (2008) principles of cinematic form, film education can train creators to utilise sophisticated aesthetics that preserve human dignity while achieving a profound narrative impact.

By internalising these ethical and professional standards, filmmakers can achieve principled autonomy, balancing their unique creative voice with their profound responsibility toward the law and society.

Finally, film education must equip students with the ability to articulate their creative vision through a structured artistic rationale. When submitting works for classification, this document serves as a vital bridge between the filmmaker's intent and the regulatory body. By clarifying the "teleological purpose" (the intended goal) behind sensitive scenes, filmmakers can facilitate a more informed appraisal process. This proactive communication increases the likelihood of approval while ensuring that the film's humanistic and aesthetic values are clearly understood by the authorities.

8. CONCLUSION

This article addresses the central paradox of cinematic art: the very elements that touch the depths of human truth - sexuality, violence, and belief - are those most likely to collide with legal and social norms. The core argument here is that the solution lies not in exclusion or resistance, but in the clarification of purpose.

By establishing a "Golden Triangle" of intention, representation, and impact, filmmakers can navigate the "grey areas" of the law with confidence. At its deeper level, this study

emphasises that film education must be the bedrock of sustainable development. It must transcend technical training to cultivate professional conscience and critical evaluative skills.

When law defines the boundaries, ethics provide the orientation, and education builds the capacity, cinema ceases to be trapped between censorship and permissiveness; it becomes a space of responsibility, a forum where creative conviction guides audiences through the complexities of human existence. This vision directly aligns with the spirit of *Courage, Conviction, and Compassion* championed by the IJFMA. Future research should continue to refine these frameworks, tailoring them to the evolving digital platforms and shifting cultural tastes in Vietnam. At the same time, while legal frameworks will continue to evolve, the filmmaker's internal compass remains irreplaceable. In the age of algorithmic consumption and fragmented media engagement, a steadfast professional conscience is essential for cinema to preserve its creative integrity and profound humanistic significance.

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