

Embodied Knowledge in Traditional Bugis-Makassar Dance Practice

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Abstract

Traditional dance is often documented as a visible movement repertoire, while the knowledge developed through bodily experience receives less explicit attention. This study examines how embodied knowledge is formed and transmitted through traditional Bugis-Makassar dance practice. This study employs an exploratory, interpretive qualitative approach grounded in local cultural hermeneutics was used to analyze documented observations, interviews, focus group discussions, and supporting materials concerning Bosara, Pakarena, and Anging Mammiri in South Sulawesi, Indonesia. The preliminary findings indicate that the body functions as a site of artistic knowing, a repository of movement memory, a medium of cultural interpretation, and a means of transmission. Demonstration, imitation, repetition, correction, rhythm, spatial interaction, and practitioner–learner relationships connect tacit knowing with cultural meaning. The analysis informs a provisional formulation of embodied cultural knowledge. Traditional dance is a living cultural practice in which meaning is experienced, remembered, and transmitted through bodily participation. Preservation and arts education should combine documentation with sustained practice and contextual interpretation. Further practitioner verification and educational trials are needed to assess the proposed formulation.

Keywords: embodied knowledge; Bugis-Makassar culture; traditional dance; cultural transmission; cultural meaning

INTRODUCTION

Traditional dance is not merely a performing art whose value lies in aesthetic form. In many communities, dance is embedded in social relations, cultural memory, identity, ritual, and processes of intergenerational transmission. Consequently, understanding traditional dance requires attention not only to what is visible on stage but also to the knowledge, experience, values, and meanings that make the practice meaningful for its practitioners and communities. Studies of traditional arts in Indonesia have repeatedly demonstrated that dance can carry educational values, local wisdom, and cultural identity (Bahardur, 2018; Edinon, 2022; Murtafiah, 2025).

In the Bugis-Makassar cultural context of South Sulawesi, traditional dance provides an important field for examining how culture is experienced and reproduced through artistic practice. Earlier studies have shown that Pakarena contains philosophical, symbolic, and religious dimensions and is connected with aspects of Makassar social life (Jamilah & Mulumbot, 2017). Other research has identified Pakarena as a medium through which local wisdom and character values can be transmitted (Rahman et al., 2025; Sudarmin et al., 2025). These studies establish that traditional dance carries meanings beyond movement technique. However, an important question remains: how does cultural knowledge become embodied in the practitioner and how is that knowledge transmitted through bodily practice?

The question is significant because the body is often treated in arts education and dance documentation as an instrument for executing predetermined movement patterns. Such a view risks separating bodily performance from the experience and cultural knowledge that

accompany it. In actual artistic practice, practitioners learn by observing, doing, repeating, correcting, sensing, remembering, and adjusting their bodies. What is known by a dancer is therefore not necessarily equivalent to what can be stated verbally. Polanyi (1966) describes this dimension as tacit knowledge, in which practical knowing can exceed explicit verbal articulation. In dance, this tacit dimension may appear in timing, balance, movement quality, expression, bodily orientation, and the ability to respond to rhythm and space.

The theoretical perspective of embodied knowledge provides a way to understand this phenomenon. Varela et al. (1991) argue that cognition is inseparable from bodily experience and the interaction between body and environment. Merleau-Ponty (2012) similarly places the lived body at the center of perception and engagement with the world. In arts education, Bresler (2004) emphasizes the role of the body in teaching and learning, while Gallagher (2005) explains how bodily organization supports action and perception. From a practice perspective, Barrett and Bolt (2007) position artistic practice as a potential site of knowledge production rather than merely the application of knowledge already established elsewhere.

Embodied knowledge, however, should not be understood as purely individual or physiological. The body learns within social and cultural environments. Repetition occurs in relation to teachers or practitioners; movement is coordinated with music, space, and other performers; and artistic conventions are learned through participation in communities of practice. Lave and Wenger (1991) explain learning as participation in socially situated practices, while Bourdieu (1977) demonstrates how repeated practices can become embodied dispositions. Thus, the body can be understood as a site where individual experience and collective cultural knowledge intersect.

This cultural dimension is particularly important for traditional dance. Cultural knowledge is not transmitted only through verbal explanation or written documentation. It may also be transmitted through demonstration, imitation, correction, repeated practice, and participation. Recent research on Pakarena Anida illustrates how movement, costume, music, and ritualized gestures can operate as cultural codes through embodied and participatory processes, while rehearsals and performances can become spaces for intergenerational transmission of values (Pramana et al., 2025). This supports a broader understanding of cultural heritage as something lived and enacted rather than merely preserved as an object.

The distinction between a cultural form and the practice that sustains it is also important for intangible heritage. UNESCO (2003) defines intangible cultural heritage through practices, expressions, knowledge, and skills that communities recognize as part of their heritage and continually recreate in relation to their environment and history. This perspective supports the argument that traditional dance is not preserved simply by retaining a choreography or recording a performance. It remains culturally meaningful when practitioners and communities continue to enact, interpret, and transmit it. Connerton (1989) similarly explains how social memory is sustained through bodily practices and commemorative performance, offering a useful framework for understanding movement as a carrier of cultural memory.

An interdisciplinary cultural perspective is necessary because dance simultaneously operates as movement, performance, social action, and a mode of cultural communication. Kaeppler (2000) argues that dance can be approached as a culturally structured system of movement, while Sklar (2000) demonstrates that movement analysis becomes more meaningful when researchers attend to the cultural knowledge through which people move. These perspectives help avoid treating choreography as a universal language with meanings that can be decoded independently of context. In the present study, the gestures and movement qualities of Bosara, Pakarena, and Anging Mammiri are therefore interpreted in relation to practice, practitioners' explanations, accompaniment, spatial arrangements, and the social contexts in which the dances are learned and performed.

The present study examines Bosara, Pakarena, and Anging Mammiri dance practices. It draws on field exploration conducted as part of a 2026 research project on embodied knowledge and local cultural hermeneutics. The documented fieldwork involved practitioners Maryam and Kurni and examined movement quality, posture, expression, rhythm, spatial use, responses to accompaniment, repetition, correction, interaction, movement memory, and artistic experience. These practices were selected because they offer opportunities to examine relationships among movement, bodily experience, artistic practice, and the Bugis-Makassar cultural context.

This study shifts attention from traditional dance as a cultural product to dance practice as a site of embodied cultural knowledge. It asks how meaning is experienced, learned, remembered, and transmitted through the body, extending inquiries into the symbolic meanings represented by particular movements. Bringing phenomenology, embodied knowledge, hermeneutics, and cultural studies into dialogue, the study addresses the following research question: How does embodied knowledge emerge in traditional Bugis-Makassar dance practice, and how does bodily experience contribute to the formation and transmission of cultural meaning? Its objective is to develop a contextual interpretation of embodied knowledge as a cultural process in Bosara, Pakarena, and Anging Mammiri.

METHOD

1. Research design and context

This study employed an exploratory, interpretive qualitative approach grounded in local cultural hermeneutics. The approach was selected to examine traditional dance as a cultural practice in which bodily action, lived experience, meaning, and values are interconnected. The study sought to interpret how artistic knowledge is experienced and transmitted through practice. Local cultural hermeneutics provided an analytical orientation for connecting bodily experience with symbolic meaning and cultural values.

The research was conducted in Makassar City, Gowa Regency, and Takalar Regency, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. The documented field exploration included activities at the dance studio and Baruga Colli Pujie, Faculty of Arts and Design. The artistic practices examined were Bosara, Pakarena, and Anging Mammiri. The research progress report identifies Maryam and Kurni as practitioners who contributed practical knowledge, alongside other participants involved in the dance activities.

2. Data sources and collection

The material analyzed included primary and secondary sources documented in the research progress report. Primary material comprised observations of artistic practice, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions (FGDs) with practitioners and other relevant participants. Secondary sources included written documents, photographs, audiovisual records, and scholarly literature. Together, these sources addressed bodily experience, artistic and tacit knowledge, cultural meaning, and the potential translation of experience into learning resources.

Observation focused on movement form and quality, posture, expression, spatial use, response to accompaniment, rhythm, bodily coordination, repetition, correction, practitioner-participant interaction, movement memory, and artistic experience. Interviews and FGDs were used to deepen interpretation of how practitioners understand bodily experience and the cultural context of practice. Documentation provided supporting visual and textual evidence. The use of several sources and methods enabled triangulation between observed practice, practitioner explanation, collective discussion, and documentary material.

3. *Analysis and interpretive scope*

Data analysis followed four hermeneutic stages. First, the researchers identified bodily actions, including movement, posture, rhythm, expression, spatial use, interaction, and repetition. Second, they examined the experiences associated with these actions, including bodily sensation, emotion, concentration, movement memory, and artistic feeling. Third, they interpreted these experiences in relation to practitioner accounts, social relationships, cultural context, and inherited practice. Fourth, they identified the cultural values associated with the practices. The analysis thus moved from bodily action to experience, meaning, and cultural value.

The interpretive process also considered the difference between describing a movement and interpreting its cultural significance. Descriptive notes recorded observable actions before cultural claims were formulated; interpretations were then checked against practitioner explanations and the broader practice context. This separation is important because, as Geertz (1973) suggests, cultural analysis requires contextualized interpretation rather than the assignment of meanings based solely on visible behavior. The analysis also treated the researcher's understanding as provisional and revisable through movement between individual observations and the larger cultural whole, consistent with Gadamer's (2004) hermeneutic circle.

Interpretation was informed by Gadamer's (2004) hermeneutic understanding of the relationship between part and whole, Ricoeur's (1971) account of meaningful action, and Geertz's (1973) interpretive anthropology. These perspectives were not used to impose predetermined meanings on the dances. Rather, meaning was traced through the relationship among bodily practice, practitioner experience, transmission, social context, and cultural tradition. The research therefore distinguishes between the researcher's interpretation and meanings that can be supported by field data.

The study was ongoing at the time of writing. The findings therefore represent a preliminary interpretation of the documented field exploration and analysis. Prototype development and limited trials of learning resources were still underway; the conceptual formulation presented here should accordingly be treated as provisional rather than as a validated model.

FINIDNGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

1. **Bodily and cultural dimensions of dance practice**

The documented field exploration indicates that Bosara, Pakarena, and Anging Mammiri are situated cultural practices in which bodily performance, interaction, accompaniment, space, memory, and interpretation are interconnected. Examining movement sequences alone provides an incomplete account of the knowledge involved in learning and performing these dances.

In Bosara practice, observation focused on movement quality, posture, expression, bodily coordination, spatial use, responses to accompaniment, demonstration, and repetition. In Pakarena, the focus included movement character, bodily control, expression, rhythm, space, responses to accompaniment, repetition, and correction. In Anging Mammiri, observation addressed movement quality, expression, bodily responses to accompaniment, spatial use, movement memory, and artistic experience. Table 1 summarizes these bodily and cultural dimensions.

Practitioners provided explanations of experience and cultural context alongside movement demonstrations. These explanations helped participants relate bodily practice to meaning. The hermeneutic analysis interprets this relationship as a process through which

movement carries cultural symbols and bodily practice contributes to the transmission of values.

Table 1. Bodily and cultural dimensions identified in the three dance practices

Dance practice	Observed bodily dimension	Cultural knowledge dimension
Bosara	Posture, coordination, expression, spatial adjustment, repetition	Learning through demonstration, imitation, correction, and practice
Pakarena	Bodily control, rhythm, expression, space, accompaniment	Symbolic and value-laden practice connected with Makassar cultural life
Anging Mammiri	Movement quality, expression, movement memory, artistic feeling	Embodied experience connected with Makassar cultural context and artistic memory

2. Artistic knowing and movement memory

A central finding is that the body functions as a site of artistic knowing. The documented field material presents the body as a medium through which movement knowledge is formed, retained, and transmitted. This interpretation broadens an account of learning based on technical reproduction by attending to the knowledge developed through bodily engagement.

The observed sequence of demonstration, observation, imitation, repetition, and correction illustrates this process. When a practitioner demonstrates movement, participants receive more than a visual model. They attend to bodily position, direction, tempo, quality, rhythm, and expression. When they attempt the movement, these dimensions become bodily problems to be solved through sensation and adjustment. Knowledge therefore emerges through an iterative relation between seeing and doing.

The field material also indicates a tacit dimension of artistic knowledge. Some movement experiences were difficult to explain fully in words because knowing involved the capacity to perform and feel a movement. Such tacit knowing can be understood in relation to bodily sensitivity to timing, balance, expression, and coordination, even when the basis of a judgment is not fully verbalized. Figure 1 summarizes the interpreted relationship between dance practice and the formation of embodied knowledge.



Figure 1. Formation of embodied knowledge through dance practice

Source: Research progress report, 2026.

Repetition emerged as a central process in the formation of embodied knowledge. The documented observations describe repeated attempts, correction, and adjustment during movement learning. Repetition and bodily habituation were also identified as themes in the hermeneutic interpretation.

Repetition involved correction and adjustment, giving learners repeated opportunities to refine perception and movement. A practitioner observed a participant, identified a difference, demonstrated the movement again, and guided another bodily response. In this sequence, repetition was both a social interaction and a process of interpretation. Figure 2 brings together the bodily, experiential, and contextual dimensions identified in the analysis.



Figure 2. Bodily and contextual dimensions of embodied knowledge in artistic practice
Source: Research progress report, 2026.

3. Bodily experience and cultural interpretation

The hermeneutic analysis related bodily action to lived experience, meaning, and cultural values. It moved from describing what a movement looked like to considering what was experienced, how that experience was interpreted, and which values were associated with the practice. Figure 3 presents this interpretive sequence; Table 2 summarizes its analytical layers.

This approach is important because the meaning of a traditional dance movement cannot be reliably inferred from physical appearance alone. A gesture may have different meanings depending on the practice, performance context, historical development, practitioner interpretation, and community understanding. Therefore, the present study treats cultural meaning as contextual rather than universal.

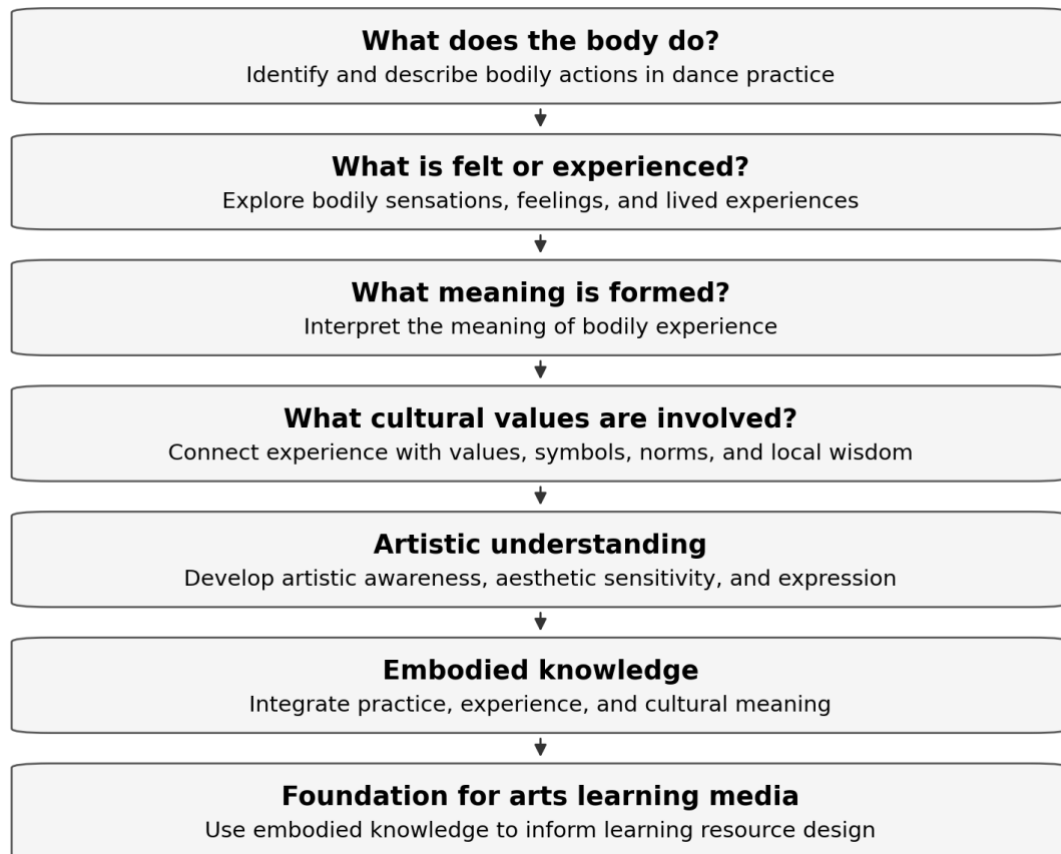


Figure 3. Hermeneutic interpretation of bodily experience in the formation of embodied knowledge

Source: Research progress report, 2026.

Table 2. Hermeneutic interpretation from bodily action to cultural meaning

Interpretive layer	Question	Analytical result
Bodily action	What does the body do?	Movement, posture, expression, rhythm, space, interaction
Lived experience	What is experienced?	Sensation, emotion, concentration, movement memory, artistic feeling
Cultural meaning	What does the experience mean?	Meaning connected with practice, context, symbols, and community
Cultural value	What is culturally valued?	Identity, continuity, social learning, preservation, responsibility

4. Cultural transmission and identity

Cultural transmission took place through embodied interaction. Demonstration, observation, imitation, correction, repetition, and participation were identified as linked processes through which practical knowledge passed from experienced practitioners to learners. The practitioner provided a living bodily reference, while learners tested, adjusted, and gradually internalized movements through their own participation.

The hermeneutic synthesis further indicates that practitioner explanations of experience and cultural context helped participants connect bodily experience with cultural meaning. Movement was interpreted as a carrier of cultural symbols, and bodily practice as a means of transmitting values and sustaining cultural continuity.

The findings suggest a relationship between embodied knowledge and cultural identity. Repeating inherited movements, responding to traditional accompaniment, learning culturally recognized forms of expression, and participating in transmission practices provided bodily ways of engaging with cultural identity.

Practitioner explanations also connected personal bodily experience with inherited cultural practice. The analysis interpreted this relationship as a dialogue between individual experience and collective tradition, through which cultural meaning and identity were continually reproduced.

5. A preliminary formulation of embodied cultural knowledge

The synthesis of documented observations, interview summaries, FGDs, and supporting materials led to a preliminary formulation of embodied cultural knowledge. Here, the term refers to cultural knowledge formed, experienced, retained, interpreted, and transmitted through bodily participation in repeated, socially situated, and culturally contextualized artistic practice.

The formulation contains six interrelated characteristics. First, it is practical because knowledge emerges through doing. Second, it is experiential because the learner knows through bodily sensation, emotion, concentration, and artistic feeling. Third, it is relational because knowledge develops through interaction with practitioners, other performers, music, space, and environment. Fourth, it is contextual because movement gains meaning within a cultural practice. Fifth, it is tacit because some dimensions of knowing cannot be completely verbalized. Sixth, it is transmissible because knowledge can move across generations through demonstration, imitation, correction, repetition, and participation.

The analysis identified six related themes: the body as a medium of movement knowledge; habituation and bodily memory; expression and artistic experience; relationships among the body, accompaniment, and space; interaction and transmission; and cultural meaning and values. Figure 4 synthesizes these themes into a provisional conceptual model.

The proposed relationship links bodily practice, lived experience, bodily memory, cultural interpretation, values and identity, and intergenerational transmission. These elements are analytically connected; the formulation does not establish a fixed developmental sequence or a tested causal pathway.

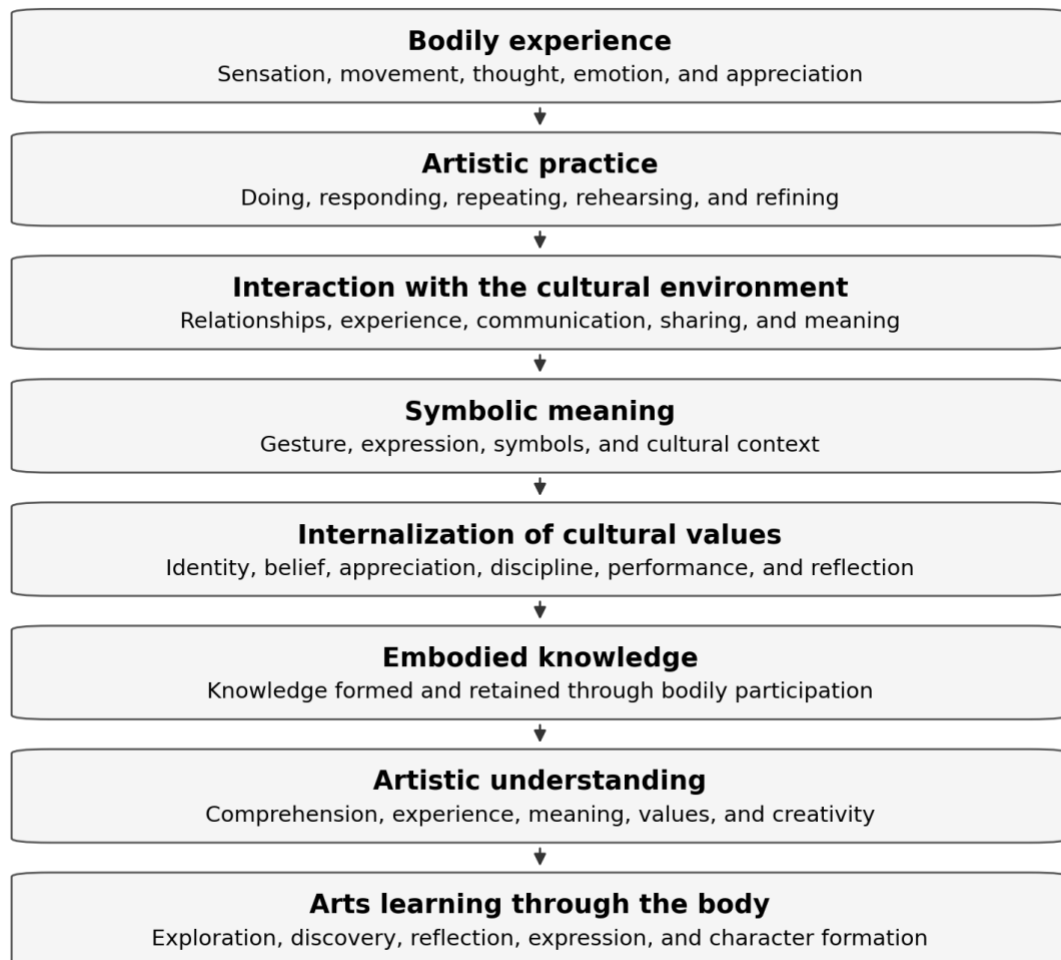


Figure 4. Provisional conceptual model of embodied cultural knowledge and its educational applications

Source: Research progress report, 2026.

Discussion

1. Embodied knowledge as situated cultural practice

Differences among the three dance practices suggest that embodied knowledge is multidimensional. A dancer learns not only a movement form but also how to respond to rhythm, space, accompaniment, expression, and the expectations of a practice community. This interpretation is consistent with Dewey's (1934) account of artistic experience as developing through interaction between action and environment. Dance practice is therefore simultaneously physical, perceptual, social, and cultural.

This finding is consistent with research on Pakarena that identifies philosophical and symbolic dimensions within its movement structures and connects them to Makassar social life (Jamilah & Mulumbot, 2017). It also corresponds with recent studies that position Pakarena as a culturally grounded medium for character and local wisdom transmission (Rahman et al., 2025; Sudarmin et al., 2025). The present study extends these discussions by focusing on the bodily mechanism through which cultural knowledge becomes experience.

The cultural significance of a dance should therefore not be reduced to a single symbolic translation. A movement may communicate through its quality, timing, relation to music, interaction with other bodies, and place within a performance sequence. Kaeppler's (2000) account of dance as a culturally patterned system and Sklar's (2000) emphasis on movement knowledge are useful here because they direct attention to the conventions through

which a community recognizes a movement as appropriate, expressive, or meaningful. This is particularly relevant to Pakarena, whose movement and accompanying poetry have been examined in relation to Makassar philosophical and symbolic life (Jamilah & Mulumbot, 2017). The present findings extend this discussion by asking how such knowledge is acquired and carried through bodily participation.

This interpretation resonates with Merleau-Ponty's (2012) phenomenological account of the lived body. The body is not simply an object that a person possesses; it is the condition through which the world is encountered and action becomes possible. In dance, this means that movement knowledge is inseparable from the dancer's bodily engagement with rhythm, space, other bodies, and the performance environment. Varela et al. (1991) similarly reject a strict separation between cognition and bodily action, emphasizing the embodied character of knowing.

This finding should not be taken to mean that embodied knowledge is inaccessible to reflection or language. Rather, verbal explanation and bodily demonstration contribute different kinds of access to the practice. The practitioner may explain the intention or cultural context of a movement, while demonstration enables learners to notice its weight, rhythm, trajectory, and expressive quality. Polanyi (1966) provides a vocabulary for this relationship between explicit explanation and tacit knowing, while Sheets-Johnstone (2011) argues that movement is a primary dimension of lived experience and meaning. The field material suggests that verbal and non-verbal modes of transmission work together: explanation contextualizes movement, and practice gives that explanation a bodily reference.

The implication is that traditional dance should be understood as a form of embodied cultural literacy. Learning the dance means learning how to inhabit a movement vocabulary and how to respond to a cultural practice. This is why the knowledge cannot be fully captured by a list of movement names or written descriptions. Documentation remains important, but documentation alone does not reproduce the experiential conditions through which embodied knowledge is acquired.

2. Repetition and the transmission of cultural memory

Repetition is important because it transforms movement from an externally observed form into a bodily resource. At the beginning of practice, participants may need conscious attention to posture, sequence, direction, or rhythm. With repeated engagement, some dimensions become increasingly available through bodily memory. This is consistent with Bourdieu's (1977) understanding of embodied dispositions and with Gallagher's (2005) discussion of bodily organization in action.

The cultural significance of repetition lies in continuity. A traditional movement survives because bodies continue to perform it. The continuity of cultural practice is therefore dependent on living practitioners who can reproduce not only the visible form but also the practical knowledge that enables the form to remain meaningful. This interpretation is consistent with research on cultural transmission that emphasizes learning processes as important spaces for passing artistic knowledge to younger generations (Rahmawati & Putri, 2025).

Repetition can also be understood as a form of social memory. Connerton (1989) distinguishes bodily practices from memory stored exclusively in written or verbal records, emphasizing that communities remember through repeated actions and performances. In traditional dance, repetition does not simply reproduce the past; it gives the past a present bodily form. Each practice session renews the movement while also exposing it to the learner's capacities, the practitioner's corrections, and the immediate performance setting. This perspective helps explain why video documentation, although valuable, cannot fully substitute for sustained participation with knowledgeable practitioners.

Coldiron's (2018) discussion of embodied knowledge transmission in traditional performance is also relevant: traditional performance knowledge is often learned through sustained practice until technique becomes incorporated into the body. The present study similarly shows that repetition is a process through which movement becomes bodily memory. The difference is that this study places the process specifically within Bugis-Makassar cultural practice and interprets it through local cultural hermeneutics.

This finding is compatible with Lave and Wenger's (1991) concept of situated learning. Learning occurs through participation in a social practice rather than through the passive reception of information. In traditional dance, the learner enters a practice community by observing, imitating, practicing, receiving correction, and progressively participating more fully. The cultural knowledge is therefore embedded in the activity itself.

Recent research on Pakarena Anida reinforces this interpretation. Pramana et al. (2025) found that ritualized gestures, costumes, and music can function as cultural codes and that rehearsals and performances can become spaces for intergenerational transmission of moral and ecological values. Similarly, research on Pakarena in elementary education demonstrates that repeated participation can support the internalization of discipline, cooperation, responsibility, creativity, curiosity, and confidence. The present study contributes a different emphasis: rather than beginning from educational outcomes, it begins from the bodily process through which cultural knowledge is transmitted.

Cultural transmission through the body also complicates the distinction between preservation and change. A tradition remains alive not because it is frozen, but because practitioners repeatedly enact it in changing circumstances. Each new learner receives an inherited movement vocabulary while simultaneously experiencing it through a contemporary body and context. Embodied transmission is therefore both conservative and transformative: it maintains continuity while allowing practice to remain lived.

3. Interpreting cultural meaning and identity

Gadamer's (2004) hermeneutics provides a useful basis for this approach. Understanding emerges through a movement between the part and the whole: a particular movement is interpreted in relation to the broader dance practice, while the broader practice is understood through its concrete gestures, interactions, and experiences. The researcher therefore does not isolate movement from the cultural world in which it exists.

Ricoeur (1971) further helps explain why bodily action can be interpreted as meaningful action. A performed movement is not merely a physical event; it can be read in relation to intention, social practice, tradition, and cultural context. Geertz's (1973) notion of thick description strengthens this interpretation by emphasizing that cultural actions require contextual understanding. The report explicitly adopts this principle by tracing meaning through practitioner experience, context, transmission processes, and community understanding rather than through formal movement analysis alone.

This hermeneutic orientation also protects the analysis from reducing culture to a catalogue of symbols. Meaning is not simply attached to movement as a fixed label. It is produced through the relationship between body, experience, social interaction, history, and cultural context. The study consequently understands embodied knowledge as a process of meaning-making rather than merely a repository of traditional techniques.

Jamilah et al.'s (2024b) study of Maraga is especially relevant because it positions the dance as a resource for preserving Bugis-Makassar cultural identity and transmitting values such as courage and solidarity. That work focuses on the cultural role of Maraga; the present article develops a complementary analytical angle by examining how cultural knowledge becomes embodied through the processes of learning, remembering, and performing. The two perspectives can be read together: cultural identity is represented in a dance tradition, but it is

also reproduced through bodies that acquire and enact the practice. This interpretation avoids treating identity as a fixed attribute and instead understands it as sustained through cultural participation.

Pakarena provides a particularly visible example because its symbolic dimensions have long been discussed in relation to Makassar cultural life. Jamilah and Mulumbot (2017) describe Pakarena as a dance whose movement structures and accompanying poetry contain philosophical, symbolic, and religious dimensions related to community life. More recent work likewise identifies Pakarena as a contextually grounded cultural practice carrying local wisdom and character values. The present study does not seek to replace these symbolic interpretations; instead, it adds the dimension of embodiment by examining how such cultural knowledge is learned and lived through practice.

Thus, embodied cultural knowledge can be understood as a point of intersection between body and identity. The body stores movement memory, but memory is not merely technical. It is connected to the cultural world in which the movement has significance. When that knowledge is transmitted through practice, what is inherited is not only choreography but a way of participating in cultural meaning.

The proposed formulation also draws on the distinction between archive and repertoire developed by Taylor (2003). The archive preserves documents, images, and records, whereas the repertoire transmits knowledge through embodied acts, gestures, and performance. Applied to Bugis-Makassar dance, this distinction suggests that photographs, notation, and video can preserve important traces, but the repertoire remains dependent on people who perform, teach, interpret, and adapt the dance. This is not an argument against documentation. It is an argument for combining documentation with living practice, so that records remain connected to the bodies and communities that make them meaningful.

4. Cultural preservation and arts education

The concept also clarifies the relationship between preservation and education. If cultural preservation focuses only on recording forms, it may preserve the visible surface while losing the experiential knowledge needed to reproduce the practice meaningfully. By contrast, preserving embodied cultural knowledge requires maintaining opportunities for people to observe, practice, interact, reflect, and interpret within cultural contexts.

The cultural implications of the findings are broader than the immediate development of learning media. First, preservation strategies should recognize practitioners as carriers of embodied knowledge, not merely as performers who can reproduce a choreography. Documentation should therefore be accompanied by records of practice processes, practitioner explanations, cultural context, correction techniques, and experiences of transmission.

Second, cultural education should provide opportunities for learners to encounter traditional arts as lived practices. Learning should not stop at identifying the name of a dance, memorizing movement sequences, or describing symbolic meanings. Learners need opportunities to observe, practice, experience, reflect, and interpret. This orientation is consistent with the research report's finding that embodied knowledge requires a learning process in which learners do not only know the movement but know through movement.

Third, the findings suggest a basis for learning resources that connect movement with cultural context. The preliminary resource structure outlined in the research progress report comprises an opening, cultural context, bodily exploration, artistic practice, reflection, meaning making, and evaluation. This structure is a proposed pedagogical application of the cultural findings; its effectiveness remains to be examined.

Fourth, digital technologies may support cultural participation by widening access to demonstrations, contextual explanations, and opportunities for repeated observation. The

present interpretation suggests that these resources are most useful when they represent both the visible movement and the experiential processes through which it is learned.

Jamilah et al.'s (2025) study of documenting the Pattennung dance through 360-degree video and artificial intelligence further demonstrates the growing role of digital technologies in cultural documentation. Read alongside the present findings, this work raises an important cultural question: what aspects of a dance can be documented visually, and what aspects require embodied explanation? Video can show a movement's visible trajectory, but it may not by itself explain why a particular quality, timing, or relationship matters to practitioners. Documentation strategies should therefore pair audiovisual records with contextual metadata, practitioner commentary, descriptions of learning processes, and community review.

Earlier work by Jamilah et al. (2024a) on the integration of virtual reality into the preservation of Tari Paduppa illustrates how 360-degree media can widen access to traditional dance and create an interactive point of entry for younger audiences. Sahnir et al. (2025) likewise report the use of immersive 360-degree VR for learning and preserving several traditional dances from South Sulawesi. These studies are relevant to the present argument, but their implications need to be framed carefully: digital immersion can support observation and repeated viewing, yet the embodied knowledge described here also depends on correction, interaction, contextual explanation, and sustained participation. A digital resource is therefore most culturally useful when it supports rather than replaces relationships between practitioners and learners.

Finally, embodied cultural knowledge has implications for cultural sustainability. A tradition remains sustainable when communities continue to possess the knowledge and social conditions needed to practice it. This means that cultural preservation must support practitioners, learning communities, intergenerational relationships, and opportunities for practice. The body becomes a crucial site of sustainability because it is where cultural knowledge is repeatedly enacted and renewed.

5. Contribution and limitations

The study offers a conceptual and interpretive contribution to research on traditional dance. It connects embodied cognition, artistic practice, and cultural transmission through a contextual formulation of embodied cultural knowledge. Its empirical basis lies in the documented exploration of three Bugis-Makassar dance practices; local cultural hermeneutics provides the means of relating bodily action to lived experience, meaning, and values.

The contribution is not to claim that all traditional dances transmit identical values or that every gesture carries a stable symbolic meaning. Rather, it offers an interpretive framework for investigating how knowledge is embodied in specific practices. Such a framework can be adapted to other cultural settings only through renewed attention to local terminology, practitioners' interpretations, and historical circumstances. This qualification is important in interdisciplinary cultural research because it balances conceptual transfer with respect for the specificity of each community's artistic knowledge.

The study has several limitations. The research was ongoing, and the formulation is a preliminary interpretation of the field material available at the time of writing. Further practitioner verification and educational trials are needed before it can be considered a validated model. The available research progress report summarizes interview findings rather than providing complete verbatim transcripts; practitioner perspectives are therefore represented through documented summaries and interpretive synthesis. The findings should be read as contextual interpretations of the practices examined, rather than as evidence that all Bugis-Makassar dance traditions embody identical meanings or values.

CONCLUSION

Traditional Bugis-Makassar dance can be understood as a living cultural knowledge system in which the body supports artistic practice, movement memory, meaning making, and intergenerational transmission. Across Bosara, Pakarena, and Anging Mammiri, the documented material indicates that embodied knowledge develops through observation, practice, repetition, correction, sensation, expression, interaction, and interpretation within a cultural setting. The study proposes embodied cultural knowledge as a provisional concept for describing these relationships. This perspective supports preservation strategies that combine documentation with sustained opportunities for practitioners and learners to work together. It also suggests that arts education should connect movement learning with experience, reflection, and cultural interpretation. Further research should deepen practitioner-led interpretation, examine differences among the dance traditions, and assess the proposed formulation and its educational applications.

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