

Religion and Gender in Repatriate Families: A Comparative Analysis of the Adaptation of Traditional Roles in Asian Countries

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Abstract: The study examines how religious prescriptions, family law, and economic constraints shape the redistribution of gender roles in repatriate families under reverse mobility. It identifies mechanisms for adapting traditional roles at the household level and factors behind cross-country variation. Using a comparative design with institutional analysis, content analysis of normative acts, and administrative statistics, the research highlights four cases. Kazakhstan shows early codification of repatriation and legacies of traumatic 20th-century migrations; Kyrgyzstan is marked by cyclical labour mobility and the special status of ethnic migrants; India has a multi-level diaspora infrastructure and stable external employment regulation; the Philippines demonstrates institutionalised foreign employment and organised channels of departure and return. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan display idealised traditionalism alongside expanding women’s economic autonomy. India reconciles egalitarian attitudes acquired abroad with extended-family hierarchy. The Philippines sees economic role inversion but formal male leadership. These changes are context-dependent and combine continuity with specific redistributions of authority.

Keywords: Labour migration ; diaspora ; adaptation ; crisis ; secularism

1 Introduction

The research relevance is determined by the fact that the return of repatriates formed significant and heterogeneous flows over time, which overlapped with long-term demographic shifts, institutional mechanisms for interaction with diasporas, and legal regimes for reception and registration. Within this framework, the family level was the key field of adaptation, where the distribution of labour, care practices, and final decision-making procedures were redefined under the influence of religious norms, local family law rules, and economic constraints.

Hibanada and Celero (2023) analysed the reintegration trajectories of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) into school teaching through the “Sa Pinas, Ikaw ang Ma’am/Sir” programme (SPIMS), demonstrating that institutionalised mechanisms for retraining and recognition of qualifications reduced barriers to entry into the profession. Administrative and accreditation bottlenecks, regional unevenness in distribution, and the need for supportive measures during the internship phase were noted. The sustainability of the results depended on the coordination

of educational, human resources, and social services, as well as on the consideration of gender aspects of employment. Inakhiya (2024) characterised the impact of return migration in Central Asian countries on labour markets, social services and household strategies, revealing heterogeneity of effects across countries and sectors. The analysis identified reintegration challenges related to data gaps, fragmented programmes and weak inter-agency coordination. The study emphasised that the effectiveness of measures depended on the combination of macro-regulation with local employment and social support services. Mavroudi and Nagel (2023) presented a systematic overview of global migration processes, in which return migration was examined in the context of migration systems, multi-level governance and comparative citizenship regimes. The study justified methodological approaches (comparative design, mixed methods) and typologies of mobility, which created a framework for analysing reintegration and gender dynamics at the intersection of institutional and everyday levels.

Roche (2020) analysed the evolution of family structures in Central Asia, examining the influence of historical, social and economic factors, including the Soviet legacy and post-independence transformations. The study addressed gender roles, particularly the role of women in marriage strategies and health care, as well as the consequences of migration and mobility for families in countries such as Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The study highlighted the value of a comparative approach, identifying both commonalities and unique changes in family practices caused by conflicts, transnational ties, and demographic shifts. Sharimova (2024) analysed the phenomenon of “repatriation” in Kazakhstan, showing that terminological uncertainty and variability of categories made it difficult to interpret data and adjust social adaptation mechanisms. The results of the sociological study indicated the need to unify the conceptual framework and target support measures depending on the status and profile of households. Dall’Agnola (2024) examined the gender roles of women in Kazakhstan in the digital age from a decolonial feminist perspective, showing how platform practices and network infrastructures redefined access to resources and public representation. The analysis revealed the simultaneous coexistence of opportunities for expanding agency and constraints reproduced by cultural norms and uneven digital inclusion.

Previous research has highlighted gendered differences in reintegration experiences among returnees. Female returnees often face barriers related to employment recognition, social integration, and the persistence of traditional role expectations, while male returnees frequently encounter status loss and economic uncertainty. These dynamics underscore the need for gender-sensitive approaches to repatriation and for comparative analyses that consider the interaction of cultural norms, institutional frameworks, and household-level adaptation processes.

A lack of cross-national comparisons covering repatriate households and religiously conditioned mechanisms of gender role redistribution persists in the literature. At the same time, unified operationalisation of indicators at the meso level of religious parishes, communities, and local authorities remains insufficient, reducing comparability and reproducibility of conclusions.

The study aimed to conduct a comparative analysis of the mechanisms of gender role adaptation in repatriate families in Asian countries, covering the interaction of religious norms, legal frameworks, and economic incentives. To achieve this goal, interrelated tasks were defined: to identify the institutional and demographic prerequisites for returns and the influence of these prerequisites on family practices; to explain the role of religious legitimisation, kinship

networks and transnational economic circulation as moderators of gender adaptation trajectories.

2 Materials and methods

The study was based on publicly available regulatory, statistical, and institutional-analytical sources. The selection of countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, India, and the Philippines) was determined by their contrasting models of migration and repatriation management, which facilitated a comprehensive comparative analysis with a reference date of 19 August 2025. Other major labour-sending or repatriation countries were not included to preserve analytical depth and comparability, as the selected cases represent distinct institutional and religious configurations that illustrate the principal models of gender role adaptation under reverse mobility. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan represent a post-Soviet model combining ethnic reunification and labour circulation. India is characterised by a multi-level and long-established policy of engagement with the diaspora, while the Philippines has a unique state system of labour export and return management. The time frames were differentiated according to the institutional and historical trajectories of each country and analytically integrated to trace the evolution of repatriation regimes and gender role adaptation. The period from 1974 to 2025 was used to reconstruct the long-term institutional genealogy of organised labour migration and return management (particularly for India and the Philippines), while 1991-2025 was applied to analyse post-Soviet transformations in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan following independence. The shorter period of 2020-2022 was examined across all cases as a synchronising analytical point, capturing peak return waves during the COVID-19 pandemic and enabling cross-country comparison under shared global conditions. This differentiated yet integrated temporal design ensured comparability while preserving the historical specificity of each national context.

The material base included analytical and policy documents as well as legal and statistical sources. Among them were an analytical report on the digitalisation of remittances to the Kyrgyz Republic (World Bank, 2023a), a study on the impact of the pandemic on overseas Filipino workers (Asis, 2021), and data on the share of private remittances in the GDP of the Kyrgyz Republic (World Bank, 2023b), together with the Philippine Jobs Report (World Bank, 2023c). The legal and regulatory frameworks analysed comprised India's Emigration Act No. 31 (1983); the Labour Code of the Philippines (Presidential Decree No. 442, 1974); Republic Act No. 10022 (1995); the decree establishing the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (Office of the President of the Philippines, 1982); and official materials on the Vande Bharat Mission (Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 2022). Additional empirical sources included the Baseline Mobility Assessment (International Organization for Migration (IOM), 2024) and official data from the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population of the Republic of Kazakhstan (2025). The legal framework of Kyrgyzstan was analysed at two levels: supranational, through the Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union (2014), which reduces barriers to labour migration; and national, through the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic No. 175 "On State Guarantees for Ethnic Kyrgyz Resettling in the Kyrgyz Republic" (2007), which establishes a special legal regime for repatriates.

The comparative-historical method was used to compare four national configurations over the long term, which enabled the construction of consistent axes of comparison: institutional (genesis and modes of departure/return), demographic (scale and pace of repatriation) and household (areas of labour redistribution within the family). The historical-genetic approach was used to reconstruct the origin and sequence of decisions linking the early periods of the 1970s and 1980s with the subsequent regimes of the 2000s and 2020s. Tracing the line from

the norms of 1974/1982/1995 to post-pandemic return practices established a causal link between “institutional density” and the manageability of flows. Institutional and legal analysis was applied to a body of normative acts and organisational decisions. In particular, data from government digital platforms and centralised databases were analysed, such as the Indian portal “e-Migrate” for recording migration flows and the “MADAD” platform for communication with the diaspora. The analysis of these regulatory practices and interaction mechanisms was based on the study by Dhulipudi Pandit (2024). During further analysis, the norms were broken down into operational variables, status categories of returnees, competences of authorities, licensing of intermediaries, guarantees of access to basic services, and mechanisms for interagency interaction.

The demographic and migration-system approach interpreted the observed results as elements of a unified system of exchanges between donor and recipient countries. Documentary reconstruction was used as necessary to restore the sequence of administrative operations and regime adjustments based on official materials and reports. Continuous chronologies were formed from heterogeneous blocks, recording “turning points”, the launch of specialised institutions, adjustments to guarantees and services, and the parameters of large-scale repatriation operations. The inclusion/exclusion criteria also applied to indicators: data with clear and comparable operational definitions for key variables were included in the comparative model. These included, in particular, official legal status (“repatriate”, “kandas”, “returning labour migrant”) and the documented time period of return. This strict selection ensured the comparability of data between countries and minimised the risk of bias in estimates due to differences in national accounting systems.

3 Results

3.1 The genesis and institutional prerequisites of repatriation: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, India, the Philippines (20th-21st centuries)

In the context of post-Soviet Eurasia and the Asia-Pacific region, the repatriation of compatriots is not a spontaneous phenomenon and has complex historical, socio-political and economic preconditions. It was preconditioned by long-term demographic shifts, the creation of transnational kinship networks, and the gradual institutionalisation of ties with diasporas. In each of the four cases, different sets of factors were decisive: in Kazakhstan, the traumatic migrations of the 20th century and the early institutionalisation of reunification as a strategic state goal; in Kyrgyzstan, the establishment of mass labour circulation and a special legal status for ethnic migrants; in India, a multi-level “diaspora infrastructure” built since the 1980s; and in the Philippines, the transformation of the state into an “architect” of labour export, creating corridors not only for departure but also for return.

In Kazakhstan, the historical prerequisites for repatriation were associated with major demographic and spatial shifts in the 20th century and with the early regulatory formulation of migration policy priorities during the period of independence. These processes led to the formation of stable external Kazakh communities outside the republic. These settlements reproduced kinship and information networks, maintained exchanges, and preserved knowledge about transport hubs and trusted intermediaries, which became the infrastructure for future reverse mobility. Mass displacements and cross-border movements created durable diaspora chains that later facilitated return mobility (Ohayon, 2013; Volkov, 2025a).

In the second half of the 20th century, cross-border mobility continued and strengthened diaspora connections (Rice, 2024). These processes formed extensive transnational networks through which information about legal conditions, resettlement opportunities, and access to basic services was transmitted in the post-Soviet period. Subsequent waves further reinforced these channels of return (Kraus, 2019; Volkov, 2025b).

Starting in 1991, basic acts were adopted that defined the categories of arrivals, the quota mechanism, the registration procedure, and the competencies of public authorities (Kurganskaya et al., 2024). In subsequent years, the regulations were updated and consolidated in the form of comprehensive laws on population migration. The regulatory framework was accompanied by the development of specialised departments in central and regional government structures, the creation of procedures for distribution across settlement regions, and the introduction of administrative mechanisms for confirming ethnic group membership and recording family composition (Valle, 2025; Asipova, 2023). As a result, a stable institutional structure was formed, within which historically accumulated cross-border networks and state mechanisms for reception and initial integration operated in a coordinated manner and ensured the manageability of return movements.

In Kyrgyzstan, the prehistory of repatriation was determined by a combination of long-term labour mobility and a special legal regime for ethnic migrants. Starting in 1994, part of the economically active population left to work in neighbouring countries. Remittances consistently accounted for a significant share of GDP, which cemented mobility as an economic institution for households. This produced cyclical mobility patterns shaped by seasonal work and family needs (Zhang & Tsakhirmaa, 2022).

This configuration created expectations of reversible mobility and facilitated return decisions. Economic disparities between domestic and external labour markets sustained outward migration and shaped return trajectories (World Bank, 2023b). Migration infrastructures and remittance systems further reduced transaction costs and stabilised mobility cycles (World Bank, 2023a).

Under these circumstances, state authorities consistently developed regulatory decisions aimed at supporting ethnic Kyrgyz who decided to resettle in their historical homeland. A special status was established for resettlers (“kairylman”), procedures for granting it were defined, and the powers of the responsible agencies and basic social guarantees were established (Law of the Kyrgyz Republic No. 175, 2007). Additional context was created by participation in an integration association, which reduced barriers to the movement of labour within the common market and, at the same time, simplified return migration to the territory of the republic (Eurasian Economic Union, 2024). Overall, a codified legalisation system was formed, within which return movements were granted recognised status and accompanied by administrative services at the central and local government levels. While the kairylman status does not contain explicit gender-specific provisions, it indirectly shapes gender roles through access to employment support, documentation procedures, and social integration measures. These mechanisms influence household labour distribution and adaptation strategies, particularly for women, who often assume primary responsibility for administrative navigation and family stabilisation during the resettlement process.

In India, the context of repatriation was linked to the regulation of export employment and the formation of channels for structured interaction with the diaspora. Starting in the 1970s, there

were steady flows of labour migration to the Persian Gulf countries, as well as to other regions where concentrated communities of immigrants from certain Indian states had formed. From the 1980s onward, legislation institutionalised protection mechanisms for emigrants and regulated recruitment channels. As regulatory practices became institutionalised in India, centralised databases such as the e-Migrate portal for recording migration flows were developed, and technological solutions for two-way communication were introduced, including the MADAD platform (Dhulipudi Pandit, 2024).

Government-led diaspora engagement platforms supported information exchange and coordination with migrant communities (Yea, 2020; Satybaldieva et al., 2024). In the mid-2000s, the Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) legal regime was introduced for persons of Indian origin, which facilitated entry and extension of stay, as well as simplified access to certain administrative services. Subsequently, the regimes for different categories were unified, which reduced duplication and improved the manageability of information databases.

By the time major external crises struck, such as COVID-19, which led to the Vande Bharat Mission – India’s large-scale government-led repatriation operation launched in 2020 to evacuate citizens stranded abroad – and military conflicts that required the mass evacuation of citizens from countries such as Ukraine, Libya, and Kuwait, there was a high degree of institutional saturation, manifested by the presence of specialised units, regulated procedures for interagency cooperation, and operational readiness to use existing information channels when organising return movements (Dhulipudi Pandit, 2024). Long-term labour migration and institutionalised diaspora engagement ensured the administrative readiness for large-scale return operations. Regulatory consolidation further strengthened migration governance (Emigration Act No. 31, 1983).

In the Philippines, the repatriation process was based on the early institutionalisation of overseas employment as one of the government’s labour policies. From the mid-1970s, labour export was regulated through codified recruitment and supervision mechanisms (Presidential Decree No. 442, 1974). A centralised administrative system coordinated recruitment and interaction with foreign employers. Financial and organisational support instruments were also introduced (Office of the President of the Philippines, 1982). These mechanisms later formed the institutional basis for migrant support systems (Saguin, 2020).

In 1995, a law was passed that defined standards for the protection of workers going abroad and the responsibilities of intermediaries and employers (Republic Act No. 10022, 1995). Subsequent administrative reforms consolidated migration governance within specialised state structures. Programmes maintaining links with migrants encouraged circular mobility and facilitated reintegration. Structural labour market pressures combined with state-led migration policies sustained outward mobility and shaped return dynamics. Overall, the institutionalisation of labour export and migrant support created predictable procedures and reduced risks associated with return movements.

3.2 The scale and spatio-temporal dynamics of repatriation and gender transformations in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, India and the Philippines

Repatriation across the countries examined involved the return of substantial groups of citizens and co-ethnics and generated measurable flows that varied across time and regions (Table 1). In Kazakhstan, the process followed a stable multi-year pattern: according to official data, since 1991 more than 1.1 million ethnic Kazakhs have returned, and by the end of 2024, 18,035

individuals had been granted kandas status (Ministry of Labour and Social Protection..., 2025). In Kyrgyzstan, return migration intensified in the post-pandemic period: by October 2024, 48,012 individuals had decided to return, and 110,977 returns were verified in surveyed communities between 2022 and October 2024 (IOM, 2024). In India, return flows peaked in 2020-early 2021, when 6,092,264 citizens returned under emergency repatriation measures (Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 2022). In the Philippines, returns were prolonged and occurred through multiple channels: an estimated 923,652 OFWs had returned by February 2022, while 454,796 repatriations were carried out directly through government operations (IOM, 2022). Exact figures and gender distribution are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Repatriation and gender models of adaptation

Country	Period	Primary repatriation model	Total number of returnees (official data)	Gender distribution (M/F)	Dominant religion norm (function)	Resulting gender adaptation model
Kazakhstan	1991-2025	Ethnic reconnection	>1.1 million (since 1991)		Islam (hierarchy)	Conflicting: Double burden on women
Kyrgyzstan	2000-2025	Labour migration	~111.000		Islam (traditional roles)	Compensatory: men control
India	2020-2022	Mass evacuation	>6 million		Hinduism (flexibility)	Hybrid: negotiations and model mixing
Philippines	2020-2022	Labour export	~924.000	516.000/~407.000	Catholicism (sacrifice)	Inversion: women leaders, men – symbolic status

Note: Gender-disaggregated return statistics are systematically available only for the Philippines. Comparable data for Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and India are not consistently reported in official open-access sources and therefore are not included in the table.[A10.1][A10.2]

Source: compiled by the authors based on Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India (2022), Asis (2021), IOM (2024), Shapoval et al. (2025).

In Asian countries, return migration was accompanied by a reconfiguration of gender roles under the influence of religious norms, legal regimes, and economic conditions (Chiu & Yeoh, 2021). At the household level, this involved redistribution of care, budgeting, and decision-making. Urban contexts tended to reinforce hybrid models, whereas rural settings strengthened kinship-based divisions of labour.

The adaptation of gender roles in the families of ethnic repatriates in the Central Asian context was a complex process determined by the clash of two different socio-cultural paradigms: the idealised traditionalism brought by the repatriates and the post-Soviet secularised reality of the host societies (Zhapakov et al., 2020). This conflict became the main arena for redefining family structures and gender behaviour patterns among repatriate families in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, many of whom arrived from China, Mongolia, Afghanistan, Iran and other Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries and carried diasporic cultural memory shaped abroad.

During prolonged residence in a foreign ethnic environment, the ethno-cultural identity of communities was maintained primarily through the preservation of language, the reproduction of traditional norms, and the consistent practice of religious rites. Islam (mainly Sunni Hanafi madhhab) in this environment performed not only a spiritual function, but also an ethno-preserving one (Khamidov & Nolle, 2024; Rysbekova et al., 2017). These norms reinforced a gendered hierarchy in which men retained formal authority, while women carried primary responsibility for household labour and cultural transmission.

In the case of Kazakh repatriate communities, the image of the “proper” woman was closely linked to the concepts of modesty, obedience and religiosity.[A11.1][A11.2] This way of life, often idealised in the context of living as a national minority, was perceived by repatriates as the “true” and “unspoiled” way of life of their ancestors (Kaiser & Beimenbetov, 2020). At the same time, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, where the repatriates arrived, underwent profound social transformation during 70 years of Soviet rule. Soviet-era policies normalised women’s education and labour participation, and post-1990s economic pressures reinforced the “working woman” model, creating tension when repatriate households arrived with more conservative gender expectations (Toktarbekova et al., 2025).

Secularism, inherited from the Soviet era, remained the dominant norm in the public sphere, and religion was perceived more as part of cultural tradition than as a strict regulator of everyday life (Abubakirova et al., 2025; Zhandossova et al., 2017). Upon arriving in Kazakhstan or Kyrgyzstan, repatriate families were confronted with a reality that did not match their idealised notions (Shapoval et al., 2025). The local population seemed “secularised” and detached from “true” traditions. Particularly jarring was the image of local women as economically independent, educated, socially liberated, and often not adhering to strict religious precepts. This culture shock was projected within repatriate families, creating tension. In the context of changes in household income and employment structures, which reduced male exclusivity in income generation and decision-making, there was a noticeable strengthening of mechanisms of intra-family control in the private sphere as a way of maintaining status and managerial prerogatives.

During the adaptation period, strict adherence to traditionally prescribed norms of behaviour was enforced as a means of neutralising the influence of the host social environment. The position of female members of households was determined by the imposition of two sets of expectations: economic involvement and the performance of traditional domestic functions. In the economic sphere, they were expected to seek employment, engage in wage labour, participate in the formation of family resources, and interact regularly with labour market institutions. At the level of intra-family arrangements, norms remained in place that prioritised male authority, maintenance of the household, socialisation of children within a conservative value system, and demonstration of religious practice. The combination of these requirements

created a persistent tension between modern economic practices and the prescriptions of the private sphere, which manifested itself in conflicts over the distribution of time, managerial authority, and symbolic status. From an intergenerational perspective, there were conflicts between the attitudes of the older generation and the orientations of their daughters, who had learned more egalitarian models of participation and decision-making in educational institutions. The corresponding discrepancies were interpreted as a deviation from the proper order and became the subject of disputes. As a result, the transformation of employment and income patterns, coupled with unchanged normative expectations in the private sphere, led to recurring areas of tension in family organisation and required regular readjustment of daily routines.

The return of Indian expatriates, mainly from countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada, initiated a complex process of socio-cultural adaptation, centred on the family. Intra-family dynamics became a venue for informal “negotiations” about gender roles, where egalitarian values acquired abroad came into direct conflict with deeply rooted Hindu traditions. Religion played a dual role: on the one hand, reinforcing conservative normative expectations, and on the other providing resources for legitimising and arguing for institutional and everyday reforms (Pande, 2021). Repatriates were typically highly educated professionals who, during their years living in the West, had integrated ideas of gender equality, partnership in marriage, the importance of women’s self-fulfilment outside the home, and joint participation in decision-making and household management into their worldview. In this model, religious duty (dharma) and family hierarchy have historically legitimised gendered divisions of labour and authority.

The clash between these two paradigms did not take the form of open conflict, but rather a constant process of negotiation and rethinking of roles. Several areas became key points of tension. First, there were women’s career ambitions (Bunn et al., 2023; Aliyeva, 2025). While in the West, a wife’s professional growth was seen as normal, in India, it often conflicted with the expectations of the extended family, which required fulfilment of duties as a daughter-in-law (bahu) first and foremost, with power and decision-making distributed accordingly. The model of joint decision-making, familiar to returnees, clashed with the traditional hierarchy, where the older men in the family retained the final say. The idea of dividing household responsibilities between spouses seemed alien to the older generation, who had been raised to believe that the home was exclusively a woman’s sphere of responsibility. Within the framework of these agreements, religion was seen as a flexible ideological resource used by both sides to legitimise their positions (Coffey et al., 2022).

The older generation typically appealed to the ritualistic and dogmatic aspects of Hinduism to preserve the status quo. They referred to sacred texts and emphasised the importance of women performing domestic rituals and duties for the well-being of the entire family, thereby sacralising their traditional role. In turn, the younger, more educated generation of repatriates found other meanings in Hinduism to justify egalitarian relations. They referred to the philosophical aspects of Hinduism, such as the idea of the equality of all souls (atman), or cited the images of powerful female deities (Durga, Lakshmi, Saraswati) as proof that Hinduism does not prescribe a subordinate position for women. Reformist trends in Hinduism, which emerged as early as the 19th and 20th centuries and emphasised the significance of education and women’s rights, also served as a source of argumentation for them. Thus, religion was transformed from a rigid set of rules into a field for interpretation. As a result of these complex interactions, hybrid gender models were formed in the families of Indian repatriates, where

elements of Western egalitarianism were carefully woven into the fabric of the traditional way of life, creating a unique synthesis of modernity and cultural heritage (Dixit et al., 2022; Doszhan, 2023).

The phenomenon of gender role adaptation in the families of Filipino returnees, particularly women who had returned home after working abroad, demonstrated a unique social paradox. This reflected a contradiction between economic role inversion and prevailing Catholic family norms. In this context, religion acted not as an instrument for restoring the traditional order, but as a complex mechanism of “moral compensation” that facilitated the adaptation of the family to radical changes in functional roles while preserving the formal ideological structure.

Mass female labour migration from the Philippines (Table 2), mainly in the domestic labour and healthcare sectors, was accompanied by a steady redistribution of household income. Women’s remittances often became the primary basis of household welfare and social mobility (Liao, 2025). The return of such women after many years of working abroad created a new economic reality: they frequently retained financial decision-making power (World Bank, 2023c). This inevitably led to a de facto inversion of roles, with the husband who remained at home often taking on a significant portion of the responsibilities of running the household and caring for the children. This economic inversion conflicted with Catholic family ideals that sustain men’s formal headship and women’s caregiving identity.

Table 2: Gender transformations in the context of socio-economic change

Country	Macro-factor	Changes in the economic role of women	Changes in the economic role of men	Socio-cultural adaptation mechanism	Result: New gender dynamic
Kazakhstan	State policy on ethnic reunification.	Mandatory participation in the labour market to provide for one’s family.	Loss of sole provider status.	Islamic norms: used to strengthen control in the private sphere.	Double burden on women (work + home)
Kyrgyzstan	Cyclical labour migration and economic necessity.	Active participation in shaping the family budget through earnings.	Decline in economic dominance within the family.	Islamic traditions: maintain male authority in decision-making.	Compensatory control of men in everyday life
India	Integration into the global labour market; influence of	Growing career ambitions and a desire	The need to adapt to a working wife and joint	Flexible interpretation of Hinduism: Both sides	“Negotiations” about roles; formation of hybrid models

	Western norms.	for financial partnership.	decision-making.	use religion to support their arguments.	
Philippines	State policy of exporting predominantly female labour.	Status as the main provider and financial manager of the family.	Loss of economic dominance; greater involvement in everyday life.	Catholic ethics of “sacrifice”: women’s labour is framed as a sacrifice, preserving men’s symbolic status.	Economic inversion while maintaining formal patriarchy

Source: compiled by the authors based on World Bank (2023c), Valle (2025), Rajan (2020).

Analysis of the table shows that, despite differences in macro factors (from government policy to economic necessity), all countries have seen an increase in the economic role of women. This has led to a weakening of the traditional role of men as the sole breadwinners. In response to changes in each society, its own mechanism of socio-cultural adaptation, closely linked to the dominant religion, is activated. Islamic norms in Central Asia are used to strengthen male control in everyday life as compensation for the loss of economic dominance. In India, the flexibility of Hinduism can be used for “negotiation” of roles, leading to hybrid models. In the Philippines, the Catholic ethic of sacrifice helps to preserve the formal status of men by interpreting women’s economic contributions as acts of self-sacrifice, leading to a reversal of roles while maintaining the appearance of patriarchy. In this setting, religiosity also helps preserve family prestige and avoid stigmatisation (hiya) while accommodating role inversion.

Thus, repatriation reflects long-term institutionalisation rather than spontaneous mobility, with country-specific migration histories shaping return regimes. Across cases, the central consequence is the reconfiguration of gender roles, as households negotiate tensions between inherited norms and post-return socio-economic realities.

4 Discussion

A comparative analysis of four countries revealed a consistent link between types of migration history and trajectories of gender re-establishment in households. Institutionalised “diaspora infrastructure” and state support for organised departure/return (India, Philippines) ensured the manageability of reverse mobility and shaped the redistribution of roles, while the experience of traumatic outcomes and subsequent codification of returns (Kazakhstan) or temporary labour circulation with legal support (Kyrgyzstan) set more fragmented and context-dependent models of household decisions.

The key finding of the analysis was that the repatriation process acted as a catalyst for the transformation of the family institution into an arena for the reconfiguration of gender roles. The main determinant of this process was identified as the collision between traditional normative systems, preserved in the diaspora environment, and the current socio-economic

realities of the host society. This circumstance, in turn, actualised adaptation strategies aimed at redistributing role models and preserving status positions in the context of changing economic functions of household members. A comparative analysis correlated the conclusions with the results of a study by Celero (2023), devoted to the analysis of international marriages and the maintenance of family life in conditions of cultural heterogeneity. Convergence was identified in terms of recognising the influence of religious and legal regimes on the distribution of intra-family powers. At the same time, fundamental divergences were identified: the aforementioned study focused on mixed marriages and transnational practices, while the present study addressed repatriate households and institutional factors of return migration. The difference in the objects of study determined the divergence in the conclusions. In the author's study, the emphasis was shifted to the mechanisms of maintaining social ties, while in the conducted study, it was shifted to the processes of role transformation in the post-migration period.

The analysis conducted in this study, which focuses on socio-cultural mechanisms of adaptation (confessional regimes, local legal practices, density of kinship networks), was compared with the findings of the study by Garabiles and Asis (2022), which examined the determinants of remigration among Filipino workers during the pandemic crisis. This comparison revealed both points of conceptual convergence and fundamental differences in methodological approaches and conclusions. The commonality of the analytical framework was determined in terms of recognising the importance of the institutional dimension of reintegration. Both studies proceeded from the assumption that the success of return cannot be reduced solely to individual decisions, but is determined by structural conditions, including government policies and economic incentives. Nevertheless, fundamental differences were noted. Discrepancies in the object and time frame of the analysis. The aforementioned study focused on a single national group (Filipino citizens) and the specific, short-term context of the COVID-19 pandemic. In contrast, the subject of the analysis was the long-term historical trajectories and post-return practices in four different national regimes, which identified stronger and more consistent patterns.

The study found that macro-level conditions, in particular government policy and historically established cross-border networks, were key factors in the adaptation of gender roles in repatriate families. This conclusion differs from micro-level explanations that link the return of migrants primarily to family circumstances and subsequent changes in their economic activities. These results can be compared with the study by Banerjee and Das (2023), which used the example of rural areas in India to demonstrate that the return of migrants is driven by family factors and leads to a significant change in their economic activity, in particular, a transition to self-employment. The main discrepancy in the conclusions is explained by the difference in the research focus. While the authors' analysis in the aforementioned work focused on the microeconomic aspects of reintegration within a single region, the present study was comparative and macrosociological in nature. In addition, the differences were due to the methodology: this study conducted a quantitative analysis of a field survey, while the other study conducted a qualitative analysis of regulatory documents and historical materials. Differences in the criteria for including respondents and the time frame of the analysis – a narrow cross-section in the first case and a long historical period in the second – also contributed to the discrepancies in the conclusions.

The results of the analysis demonstrated that the actual adaptation of gender roles in repatriate families was determined not so much by formal legal codifications as by informal practices

based on religious norms. These norms were used by households as the main tool for managing socio-economic transformations and redistributing intra-family powers. These conclusions were compared with the study by Gautier (2020), which proposed a typology of family law regimes based on a quantitative analysis of the legal systems of 189 countries. The key discrepancy in the conclusions was due to a fundamental difference in research focus. While the aforementioned work analysed codified legal systems at the macro level, the conducted analysis addressed informal practices within families at the micro level. This shift in perspective revealed a significant gap between the *de jure* status of women enshrined in legislation and their *de facto* position, which is governed by everyday religious prescriptions. This difference, in turn, was dictated by dissimilar methodological approaches: global quantitative analysis of legal databases in the first case contrasted with qualitative case studies based on historical and sociological materials in the second.

The analysis revealed that Islamic norms in repatriate families contributed both to the preservation of traditional gender roles and to the formation of hybrid models in which women became economic partners. It was found that economic conditions in the host society could lead to a reversal of roles, despite the preservation of traditional ideas in the private sphere. A comparative analysis with the results of Omirzakova's study (2023) revealed both points of convergence and fundamental differences. A commonality of approaches was identified in the recognition of Islam as a key factor shaping the social functions and status of women, including their subordinate position and role as guardians of cultural values. At the same time, significant differences were noted. While the author's study emphasised radical ideology as a motive for travelling to conflict zones, the analysis focused on the processes of adaptation after return and the formation of complex, hybrid gender models. This difference in focus was largely due to the types of data used: qualitative interviews with women and experts made it possible to reconstruct individual subjective motives, while the analysis of normative acts and statistics identified generalised, structural models of migration and adaptation.

The findings indicate that, despite the determining role of religion in the reproduction of traditional gender hierarchies, the economic conditions of repatriation often acted as a catalyst for a significant redefinition and inversion of roles. The study determined that women's assumption of the role of primary breadwinner led to normative dissonance between prescribed cultural models and actual household economic practices. A comparative analysis with the results of Marschall's (2025) study revealed a commonality in the recognition of the determining role of religion and cultural continuity in the formation of hierarchical structures in repatriate families. At the same time, a fundamental divergence in the conclusions was noted, due to differences in both the analytical focus and the methodology used. While the aforementioned study focused on the mobility of men as bearers of political and ethnic identity, the subject of the study was the processes of role inversion initiated by changes in the economic status of women. This difference was determined by methodological choices: the use of ethnographic methods made it possible to reconstruct individual narratives, while the analysis of normative acts and statistics in the study identified generalised structural shifts.

The analysis concluded that repatriation acts as a catalyst for the transformation of gender roles, turning the family into a place for their redefinition. This process is determined by the clash between traditional norms preserved in the diaspora and new socio-economic realities in the homeland. The study established that the trajectories of this adaptation depend on macro-level factors, such as migration history and state policy, and not only on family circumstances. Although religious and cultural values contribute to the reproduction of traditional hierarchies,

economic necessity often leads to the formation of hybrid models and even to role inversion, with women taking on the role of primary breadwinners.

5 Conclusions

The conceptual framework of “institutional richness” interprets the manageability of repatriation and return flows as dependent on the density of legal norms, the stability of institutional competencies, and the existence of formalised channels of communication with diasporas, thereby bridging the gap between normative models and the actual trajectories of repatriate households. Religion is viewed as a changing institutional variable and a resource for legitimising intra-family redistributions rather than a fixed set of prescriptions. This perspective describes mechanisms of role coordination without violating socially supported norms.

In Kazakhstan, the repatriation process provokes a clash between the idealised traditional views of repatriates and the post-Soviet secularised reality. This has led to a double burden on women, who are forced to combine economic involvement with a full range of domestic responsibilities. In response, there has been an increase in private control by men as a compensatory mechanism for preserving status privileges. The Islamic norms of the Hanafi madhhab serve as a resource for neutralising the influence of the host environment and maintaining cultural identity.

Kyrgyzstan is characterised by cyclical labour migration, supported by the special legal status of migrants and integration mechanisms within the Eurasian Economic Union, which ensured the reversibility of movements. In terms of gender, the post-Soviet standard of female economic activity is superimposed on the traditional Islamic expectations of returnees, leading to tension in the distribution of time and authority within the family. Religious traditions, including rituals and appeals to family honour, are used to justify the redistribution of responsibilities, preserving symbolic continuity.

India has demonstrated its capacity for mass organised returns thanks to its developed institutional infrastructure. In terms of gender, this has initiated a process of forming hybrid models, where egalitarian attitudes acquired abroad are reconciled with the hierarchical Hindu norms of Dharma. This process occurred through everyday religious rituals and community practices. Changes in decision-making and the distribution of responsibilities took place gradually, and philosophical aspects of Hinduism, such as the concept of the equality of the Atman, were used to legitimise egalitarian shifts.

In the Philippines, the state system of labour export management has led to an economic inversion of roles, with women often becoming the financial leaders of their families. This reality coexists with Catholic norms regarding the sanctity of the traditional family. The maintenance of formal male authority and shared religious practices serves a stabilising function, interpreting women’s economic contributions as acts of sacrifice within Christian ethics, which reduces the risks of stigmatisation and ensures the psychological stability of households in the context of radical role transformation.

The limitations of the study were due to differences in statistical definitions, incomplete accounting for unregistered returns, and limited access to administrative data. Prospects for further research included harmonising the concepts of return and repatriation, constructing longitudinal panels, and analysing the role of religious organisations and diaspora networks as mediators of integration.

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