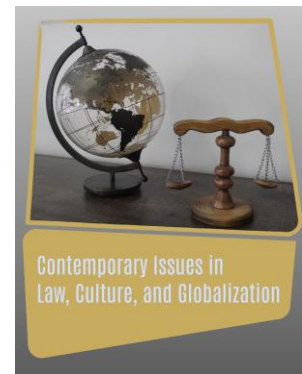




Globalization and the Transformation of Family Law Norms: A Qualitative Inquiry Into Cross-Cultural Legal Adaptation

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to explore how globalization reshapes family law norms through cross-cultural legal adaptation, with particular attention to marriage, divorce, gender equality, child welfare, and the negotiation of cultural legitimacy among legal professionals in Tehran. A qualitative research design was employed using semi-structured interviews with 27 participants in Tehran, including family law attorneys, legal scholars, court-affiliated counselors, family court personnel, and civil society legal advocates. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, followed by snowball sampling to access information-rich cases. Data collection continued until theoretical saturation was achieved, meaning that later interviews no longer generated substantially new conceptual insights. Interviews focused on participants' experiences of globalization-related changes in family law discourse, including international human rights norms, transnational family disputes, migrant family practices, digital legal awareness, and comparative legal borrowing. Interviews were audio-recorded with consent, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed through thematic analysis. NVivo software was used to organize transcripts, generate initial codes, compare patterns across participants, and develop final categories. Trustworthiness was enhanced through peer debriefing, member checking, reflexive memo-writing, and an audit trail. Five main categories emerged from the data: normative hybridity and selective legal adaptation; renegotiation of gender equality within marriage and divorce; child-centered reasoning and transformation of parental authority; procedural adaptation in transnational family disputes; and cultural legitimacy, resistance, and legal consciousness. Participants described globalization not as a uniform replacement of local family law norms, but as a selective and contested process in which international standards, domestic legal traditions, religious norms, and everyday family expectations interact. The findings suggest that globalization transforms family law through layered adaptation rather than direct transplantation. Cross-cultural legal adaptation depends on institutional interpretation, cultural legitimacy, public legal consciousness, and the capacity of legal actors to translate global norms into locally meaningful forms.

Keywords: globalization; family law; legal pluralism; cross-cultural adaptation; qualitative research; legal consciousness; gender equality; child welfare; Tehran.

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Introduction

Family law has historically been one of the most culturally embedded areas of legal regulation. Unlike commercial law, procedural law, or certain fields of public administration, family law directly governs intimate relations, kinship obligations,

marriage formation, divorce, parental authority, custody, inheritance-related expectations, and the moral ordering of private life. Because of this close connection with religion, culture, gender norms, and social identity, family law often appears resistant to rapid legal harmonization. Yet globalization has increasingly placed family law systems under new pressures. Migration, transnational marriage, international human rights discourse, digital communication, comparative law, and cross-border family disputes have intensified contact between legal cultures. As a result, family law norms are increasingly shaped not only by domestic legal traditions but also by global and transnational normative frameworks.

Globalization does not operate in family law as a simple movement from local tradition to global uniformity. Rather, it produces complex forms of normative interaction. Twining (2000) argued that globalization requires legal theory to move beyond state-centered assumptions and examine law across multiple levels of social ordering. This insight is especially important for family law, where state law, religious norms, customary practices, professional interpretation, international conventions, and everyday legal consciousness frequently coexist. Transnational legal pluralism similarly emphasizes that contemporary legal life is shaped by overlapping normative regimes rather than a single sovereign legal order (Zumbansen, 2010; Berman, 2012). In family law, this plurality becomes visible when couples marry across borders, when custody disputes involve more than one jurisdiction, when courts interpret international standards, or when families negotiate between cultural expectations and formal legal rights.

International human rights law has played a significant role in reshaping family law debates. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women addresses equality in marriage and family relations in Article 16, making family law a central site of gender justice rather than a purely private or cultural matter (United Nations, 1979). Similarly, the Convention on the Rights of the Child has transformed legal approaches to children by emphasizing the best interests of the child and the child's right to be heard in matters affecting them (United Nations, 1989). These instruments have contributed to a global vocabulary through which marriage, divorce, custody, guardianship, and parental responsibility are increasingly assessed. However, the movement of these standards into domestic contexts is rarely straightforward. Merry (2006) described this process as the "translation" of international law into local justice, emphasizing that global norms must be interpreted through local institutions, cultural meanings, and social practices.

The concept of legal transplantation is also relevant to understanding family law transformation. Watson (1993) argued that laws often move across societies through borrowing and adaptation, while later scholars criticized overly mechanical accounts of legal transfer. Legrand (1997), for example, argued that legal rules cannot be transplanted without the interpretive culture that gives them meaning. Teubner (1998) similarly suggested that imported legal concepts may function as "legal irritants," producing unexpected changes in the receiving system rather than simple convergence. These debates are particularly useful for family law because borrowed norms concerning marital equality, custody, mediation, adoption, or domestic violence may acquire different meanings in different cultural and institutional settings. In practice, family law adaptation may involve selective incorporation, symbolic reform, procedural adjustment, resistance, reinterpretation, or hybridization.

The Hague Conference on Private International Law provides another example of globalization's influence on family law. Its family law instruments cover areas such as child abduction, intercountry adoption, child protection, child support, divorce, and protection of adults, demonstrating the extent to which family disputes increasingly require international coordination. The 1993 Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption, for instance, establishes cooperation mechanisms in intercountry adoption and reflects the globalization of child protection standards. The 1980 Hague Child Abduction Convention similarly responds to cross-border parental child removal by creating procedures for return and cooperation. Although not all countries participate in all Hague instruments, their normative influence extends

beyond formal ratification because they shape professional discourse, comparative legal reform, and expectations about cross-border family justice.

At the same time, family law globalization raises difficult questions about culture, sovereignty, and legitimacy. Family law is often treated as a marker of collective identity, especially in societies where marriage, divorce, inheritance, and parental authority are connected to religious jurisprudence or long-standing cultural norms. In Muslim-majority legal contexts, for example, reform debates often involve negotiation between Islamic legal traditions, state legislation, constitutional principles, women's rights advocacy, and international human rights standards (An-Na'im, 2002; Mir-Hosseini, 2006). Mir-Hosseini's scholarship shows that Islamic family law is not static; rather, it is interpreted, contested, and reformed through social and political struggle. This is essential for avoiding simplistic narratives that frame globalization as a conflict between universal rights and fixed local culture. Instead, the relationship between global standards and local family law norms should be understood as a dynamic process of legal reasoning, institutional mediation, and cultural negotiation.

Iran provides a particularly significant context for examining these issues. Iranian family law has been shaped by civil legislation, Islamic jurisprudence, judicial interpretation, social reform movements, and changing family practices. Earlier reforms, including the Family Protection Law of 1967, altered several aspects of marriage, divorce, and custody, although subsequent political and legal developments reshaped the direction of family regulation (Mir-Hosseini, 1993). Contemporary family law debates in Iran continue to involve questions of marital authority, divorce access, women's legal agency, custody, guardianship, dowry, maintenance, and children's welfare. Tehran, as a major metropolitan and legal center, offers an important site for studying how legal actors encounter globalization-related pressures in everyday professional practice. Lawyers, scholars, counselors, and court personnel are frequently exposed to comparative legal discourse, international family disputes, online legal information, and changing public expectations.

Despite extensive theoretical work on globalization, legal pluralism, and family law reform, there remains a need for qualitative research examining how legal professionals and related actors interpret cross-cultural legal adaptation in practice. Much of the literature discusses family law transformation at the level of doctrine, policy, or comparative law. Less attention has been paid to the lived professional meanings through which global norms enter local legal consciousness. How do legal actors understand the relationship between international standards and domestic family law? Which family law norms are perceived as most open to adaptation? What forms of resistance emerge when global legal concepts are seen as culturally external? How do professionals reconcile gender equality, child welfare, family stability, religious legitimacy, and state law? These questions require qualitative inquiry because they concern interpretation, meaning-making, and normative negotiation.

This study therefore investigates globalization and the transformation of family law norms through a qualitative inquiry into cross-cultural legal adaptation among Tehran-based legal professionals and related actors. The study is grounded in socio-legal theory, particularly legal pluralism, legal consciousness, and the literature on vernacularization of global norms. It conceptualizes globalization not as legal homogenization, but as a field of interaction in which global norms are translated, resisted, localized, and selectively institutionalized. By focusing on interviews with participants who work within or near the family law system, the study contributes to understanding the practical mechanisms through which family law adapts under global conditions. It also highlights the tensions between formal reform and cultural legitimacy, suggesting that durable family law transformation depends not only on legislative borrowing but also on interpretive acceptance, institutional capacity, and socially meaningful translation.

Methods and Materials

This study used a qualitative research design to explore how globalization influences the transformation of family law norms through cross-cultural legal adaptation. A qualitative approach was appropriate because the purpose of the study was not to

measure the prevalence of legal attitudes, but to understand the meanings, interpretations, and professional experiences through which legal actors make sense of changing family law norms. Qualitative inquiry is particularly suitable for examining complex socio-legal phenomena in which law is experienced as both a formal institution and a cultural practice (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The study was conducted in Tehran, Iran. Participants were selected because Tehran contains a dense concentration of family courts, legal practitioners, academic institutions, civil society organizations, and families affected by cross-cultural and transnational legal issues. The final sample consisted of 27 participants. These included 10 family law attorneys, 5 university faculty members or legal scholars specializing in private law, family law, or human rights law, 4 court-affiliated family counselors, 3 family court administrative or judicial personnel, 3 civil society legal advocates, and 2 legal consultants with experience in transnational family disputes. Inclusion criteria were: professional experience related to family law, at least three years of relevant legal or socio-legal practice, residence or professional activity in Tehran, and willingness to participate in an audio-recorded interview. Participants who lacked direct professional exposure to family law issues were excluded.

Purposive sampling was used at the initial stage to identify information-rich participants with relevant expertise. Snowball sampling was then used to reach additional participants recommended by initial interviewees. Sampling continued until theoretical saturation was achieved. Saturation was considered reached when additional interviews repeated already established categories and no longer generated substantially new themes. This approach is consistent with qualitative research practice, where sample size is determined by information depth and saturation rather than statistical representativeness (Guest et al., 2006).

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews were selected because they allowed the researcher to follow a consistent set of guiding questions while also giving participants space to elaborate on their experiences, examples, and interpretations. The interview guide included questions about perceived changes in family law norms, the influence of international human rights discourse, cross-border family disputes, gender equality, child welfare, marital roles, divorce, custody, cultural resistance to legal reform, and the role of digital communication in changing public legal awareness.

Examples of interview questions included: “How do you think globalization has influenced family law norms in recent years?” “Which areas of family law are most affected by international or cross-cultural legal ideas?” “How do legal professionals balance cultural or religious values with global rights-based standards?” “Have you encountered family law cases involving cross-border marriage, migration, or transnational custody?” and “How do clients refer to foreign legal systems or international rights language in family disputes?”

Interviews lasted between 45 and 80 minutes. All interviews were conducted in Persian and later translated into English for manuscript preparation. With participants’ consent, interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Field notes were written after each interview to document contextual observations, emerging analytic ideas, and the researcher’s reflections.

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis was selected because it provides a flexible and systematic method for identifying, organizing, and interpreting patterns of meaning across qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis followed six broad phases: familiarization with the data, generation of initial codes, searching for potential themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final analytic report.

NVivo software was used to manage and organize the data. All transcripts were imported into NVivo, and initial coding was performed line by line. Codes were both deductive and inductive. Deductive codes were informed by the literature on globalization, legal pluralism, family law reform, and human rights. Inductive codes emerged directly from participants’ narratives. Examples of early codes included “international rights language,” “selective borrowing,” “fear of cultural erosion,” “gender equality in divorce,” “child best interests,” “transnational custody,” “digital legal awareness,” “judicial discretion,” and “religious legitimacy.”

After initial coding, similar codes were grouped into subcategories and then broader themes. Constant comparison was used to identify similarities and differences across participant groups. For example, attorneys tended to emphasize procedural difficulties in transnational disputes, while scholars more often discussed normative tensions between global standards and domestic legal traditions. Court-affiliated counselors emphasized family stability and mediation, while civil society advocates emphasized rights awareness and gender justice.

Trustworthiness was enhanced through four strategies. First, credibility was supported by member checking with selected participants, who reviewed summarized interpretations. Second, dependability was strengthened through an audit trail documenting coding decisions and theme development. Third, confirmability was supported through reflexive memo-writing to identify the researcher's assumptions and interpretive choices. Fourth, transferability was addressed by providing thick description of the research context, participants, and findings. These strategies reflect established criteria for trustworthiness in qualitative inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Findings

The study included 27 participants from Tehran. In terms of professional background, 10 participants were family law attorneys, 5 were university faculty members or legal scholars, 4 were court-affiliated family counselors, 3 were family court administrative or judicial personnel, 3 were civil society legal advocates, and 2 were legal consultants with experience in transnational family disputes. Regarding gender, 15 participants were women and 12 were men. Participants' ages ranged from 31 to 62 years, with most participants between 35 and 50 years old. In terms of professional experience, 6 participants had 3–7 years of experience, 11 had 8–15 years, and 10 had more than 15 years of experience. With respect to educational level, 9 participants held a bachelor's degree in law or a related field, 10 held a master's degree, and 8 held a doctoral degree or were doctoral candidates. Frequency in the findings refers to the number of participants who referred to each theme during interviews: normative hybridity and selective legal adaptation was identified in 23 interviews, renegotiation of gender equality in 21 interviews, child-centered reasoning in 19 interviews, procedural adaptation in transnational family disputes in 16 interviews, and cultural legitimacy and resistance in 22 interviews.

The first category, reported by 23 participants, concerned normative hybridity and selective legal adaptation. Participants emphasized that globalization does not simply replace domestic family law norms with foreign or international norms. Instead, global ideas enter local legal discourse selectively and are interpreted through domestic law, religious reasoning, judicial discretion, and public expectations. Participants described family law as a “hybrid field” in which multiple normative sources coexist. One attorney explained, “In family cases, people may speak about Islamic rules, civil law, women's rights, children's rights, and even European laws in the same consultation. They do not see these as separate worlds; they use whatever language helps their claim.” A legal scholar similarly stated, “Globalization has not created one family law model. It has created comparison. People compare, lawyers compare, judges compare, but the result is adaptation, not copying.” Participants suggested that legal adaptation occurs most easily when global norms can be framed as compatible with local values, such as justice, protection of children, dignity, or prevention of harm. However, when norms are perceived as externally imposed, adaptation becomes slower and more contested.

The second category, identified in 21 interviews, concerned the renegotiation of gender equality within marriage and divorce. Participants reported that clients increasingly use rights-based language when discussing marital roles, divorce, financial rights, dowry, maintenance, employment, and decision-making within the family. Female attorneys and civil society advocates particularly emphasized that globalization has expanded women's legal consciousness by exposing them to comparative models of marital equality and divorce rights. One civil society advocate stated, “Many women now come to legal consultations already knowing the vocabulary of equality. They may not know the exact law, but they know that unequal access

to divorce or custody is not the only possible model.” A family law attorney added, “The internet has changed the first meeting with clients. Before, lawyers explained everything from the beginning. Now clients come with examples from other countries and ask why our law is different.” However, participants also noted that gender equality remains one of the most contested areas of family law adaptation. Several participants argued that reforms are more likely to gain acceptance when linked to fairness within marriage, responsible fatherhood, protection from harm, and economic justice rather than framed only as imitation of Western legal systems.

The third category, reported by 19 participants, involved the increasing influence of child-centered reasoning. Participants observed that the language of the child’s best interests has become more visible in legal practice, counseling, custody disputes, and public discussion. Although parental authority remains culturally and legally significant, participants suggested that professional reasoning is gradually shifting from parental entitlement toward child welfare. A court-affiliated counselor explained, “In custody disputes, parents often speak as if the child belongs to one side. But in counseling sessions, we try to change the question: not who wins, but what protects the child.” Another participant stated, “Global child rights discourse has influenced even those who do not explicitly refer to international conventions. The idea that the child should be heard is becoming more familiar.” Participants connected this shift to international child rights norms, psychological knowledge, media discourse, and changing expectations among educated parents. However, some participants warned that the best-interests principle can remain vague unless supported by professional assessment, judicial training, and clear procedural safeguards.

The fourth category, identified in 16 interviews, concerned procedural adaptation in transnational family disputes. Participants reported that globalization has increased cases involving cross-border marriage, migration, dual nationality, foreign residence, international divorce, child relocation, and recognition of foreign judgments. Attorneys described practical difficulties when domestic family law rules encounter foreign legal systems, especially in custody, maintenance, marital property, and enforcement matters. One legal consultant stated, “The hardest cases are not always about the legal rule itself; they are about coordination. A divorce may be recognized in one country but create uncertainty in another. A child may live abroad, while one parent files in Tehran.” Participants emphasized the need for better institutional capacity to manage transnational family disputes, including improved knowledge of private international law, clearer procedures for foreign documents, and stronger professional training. Some participants referred to international conventions as useful models, even when not directly applicable, because they show how cooperation between legal systems can be structured.

The fifth category, reported by 22 participants, focused on cultural legitimacy, resistance, and legal consciousness. Participants repeatedly emphasized that family law reform cannot be effective if perceived as culturally alien or morally threatening. Resistance was not limited to conservative actors; even some reform-minded participants warned that legal borrowing without cultural translation can produce symbolic laws with weak practical effect. One legal scholar stated, “A law may be modern in wording but ineffective in society if people believe it attacks family identity.” A family court participant added, “People accept change more easily when they feel it solves a real family problem, not when it is presented as an imported model.” Participants suggested that globalization has expanded public legal consciousness by making alternative legal arrangements more visible. However, this visibility creates both pressure for reform and anxiety about cultural erosion. The data therefore showed that cross-cultural legal adaptation depends on translation, persuasion, institutional trust, and the ability to connect global norms with locally recognized concepts such as justice, dignity, welfare, responsibility, and protection of the vulnerable.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore how globalization reshapes family law norms through cross-cultural legal adaptation among Tehran-based legal professionals and related actors. The findings show that globalization does not transform

family law through direct uniformity or simple transplantation. Instead, it produces a layered process of normative hybridity, selective borrowing, cultural translation, and institutional negotiation. This finding aligns with legal pluralist scholarship, which argues that contemporary legal systems are shaped by overlapping normative orders rather than a single closed system (Berman, 2012; Zumbansen, 2010). Zumbansen's work on transnational legal pluralism is particularly relevant because it emphasizes that legal norms increasingly circulate across state borders and interact with non-state forms of ordering. In this study, participants described family law as a space where civil law, religious norms, international standards, professional practices, and public expectations intersect. The result is not legal convergence in a strict sense, but adaptive hybridity.

The first main finding concerned normative hybridity and selective legal adaptation. Participants explained that global norms are not accepted automatically; rather, they are filtered through domestic legal culture, professional interpretation, and perceived compatibility with local values. This finding supports Merry's (2006) argument that global human rights norms must be translated into local justice frameworks before they become socially meaningful. Merry's work shows that international law becomes effective not merely by entering legal texts, but by being vernacularized through local actors, institutions, and narratives. The present study extends this insight to family law by showing that legal professionals play a mediating role in translating global concepts into locally acceptable arguments. For example, participants suggested that norms concerning equality or children's rights gain legitimacy when framed through concepts such as fairness, harm prevention, family welfare, and dignity. This confirms that adaptation is interpretive rather than mechanical.

The second finding concerned gender equality in marriage and divorce. Participants reported that globalization has expanded the vocabulary through which women and families understand marital rights, divorce access, and economic justice. This result is consistent with international legal developments that position equality in marriage and family relations as a core human rights issue. CEDAW Article 16 explicitly addresses equal rights and responsibilities in marriage and family relations, making gender justice in family law part of international legal discourse (United Nations, 1979). However, the findings also show that equality-based reform remains contested when perceived as culturally external. This supports Mir-Hosseini's (2006) argument that Muslim family law reform is most persuasive when it engages internal interpretive resources rather than presenting equality as an imported legal demand. The findings also align with Volpp's (2001) critique of simplistic oppositions between feminism and multiculturalism, because participants did not describe culture as static or rights as culturally neutral. Instead, they described gender equality as a field of negotiation in which legal consciousness, religion, social change, and comparative awareness interact.

The third finding concerned child-centered reasoning and the transformation of parental authority. Participants observed that the best-interests principle and the idea of listening to children have become more prominent in family law discourse. This finding aligns with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, particularly the principles that children's best interests should be a primary consideration and that children should be heard in matters affecting them (United Nations, 1989). The finding also supports broader socio-legal scholarship showing that modern family law increasingly shifts from parental power toward parental responsibility and child welfare (Eekelaar, 2004; Freeman, 2007). However, participants emphasized that child-centered reasoning can become vague if not supported by institutional procedures, psychological expertise, and judicial training. This is important because the best-interests principle is powerful but indeterminate. Its practical value depends on how courts, counselors, and legal professionals operationalize it in custody, visitation, relocation, and guardianship disputes.

The fourth finding concerned procedural adaptation in transnational family disputes. Participants described increased legal complexity arising from migration, cross-border marriage, dual nationality, international divorce, and child relocation. This result is consistent with the work of the Hague Conference on Private International Law, whose family law instruments address cross-border child abduction, adoption, child protection, child support, divorce, and protection of adults. The 1993 Hague

Adoption Convention and 1980 Hague Child Abduction Convention illustrate how globalization has required procedural cooperation between legal systems in family matters. Even when specific conventions are not directly applicable in a particular domestic context, they influence professional expectations about coordination, recognition, documentation, and child protection. The present study adds qualitative evidence that legal professionals experience globalization not only as abstract normative pressure but also as daily procedural difficulty. Cross-cultural legal adaptation therefore requires practical institutional capacity, not only legislative reform.

The fifth finding concerned cultural legitimacy, resistance, and legal consciousness. Participants emphasized that family law change is more likely to be accepted when it is framed as solving concrete family problems rather than importing foreign models. This finding is consistent with critiques of legal transplantation. Watson (1993) emphasized the historical importance of legal borrowing, but Legrand (1997) argued that legal rules cannot be meaningfully transferred without the interpretive culture that gives them social meaning. Teubner (1998) similarly argued that imported legal ideas may become irritants that trigger unpredictable transformations in the receiving legal system. The participants' narratives strongly support this more complex view of legal adaptation. They did not reject cross-cultural borrowing, but they warned that borrowed norms must be institutionally interpreted and culturally translated. In this sense, the findings suggest that family law globalization is best understood as a process of legal translation, not legal copying.

Overall, the study contributes to socio-legal scholarship by showing that the transformation of family law norms occurs through interaction between global legal discourse and local legal consciousness. Participants described globalization as increasing comparison: clients compare legal systems, lawyers compare arguments, scholars compare reform models, and families compare possible futures. This comparative awareness expands the field of legal imagination. However, comparison alone does not produce reform. Transformation depends on whether legal actors can connect global norms to local values, whether institutions can implement procedural safeguards, and whether affected communities perceive reform as legitimate. Thus, the findings support a relational model of cross-cultural legal adaptation: global norms become influential when they are translated through domestic institutions, professional practices, cultural narratives, and lived family problems.

The findings also have implications for the relationship between family law and identity. Family law is often treated as a protected cultural domain, but the data show that culture itself is debated and reinterpreted. Participants did not describe Iranian family law culture as fixed; rather, they described a field of internal disagreement, generational change, professional reform, and rights-based awareness. This supports scholarship arguing that religious and cultural legal traditions are dynamic and internally plural (An-Na'im, 2002; Mir-Hosseini, 1993, 2006). Therefore, the challenge is not whether family law should choose between globalization and culture. The more precise question is how legal systems can adapt to global conditions while maintaining legitimacy, protecting vulnerable family members, and respecting meaningful cultural frameworks.

This study has several limitations. First, the sample was limited to 27 participants in Tehran and therefore cannot represent all legal professionals, families, or cultural contexts in Iran. Tehran is a metropolitan legal and academic center, and participants may have greater exposure to comparative and international legal discourse than professionals in smaller cities or rural areas. Second, the study relied only on semi-structured interviews; it did not include courtroom observation, analysis of judicial decisions, or interviews with litigants. Third, because family law is a sensitive field, some participants may have moderated their responses when discussing gender equality, religious norms, or institutional limitations. Fourth, the use of translated excerpts may involve some loss of linguistic nuance. Despite these limitations, the study provides in-depth insight into how legal professionals interpret globalization-related changes in family law norms.

Future research should examine cross-cultural legal adaptation in family law across multiple cities and legal contexts. Comparative qualitative studies could include participants from different provinces, different religious or ethnic communities,

and families directly involved in cross-border disputes. Future studies could also compare the perspectives of lawyers, judges, counselors, litigants, and policymakers to identify differences between professional discourse and lived family experience. Mixed-methods research may be useful for examining how widespread certain forms of legal consciousness are among the general population. In addition, future research should analyze court judgments, legal aid records, and mediation files to investigate how global norms are actually used in legal reasoning. Longitudinal research would also be valuable for tracking how family law adaptation evolves over time.

Family law reform should be approached as a process of culturally grounded legal adaptation rather than simple borrowing from foreign systems. Legal professionals need training in comparative family law, private international law, children's rights, gender-sensitive legal reasoning, and culturally competent mediation. Courts and legal aid centers should develop clearer guidance for transnational family disputes, especially those involving custody, relocation, foreign divorce documents, and dual nationality. Public legal education should explain family rights in accessible language and connect reform-oriented concepts to locally meaningful values such as justice, responsibility, dignity, child welfare, and prevention of harm. Policymakers should involve legal professionals, religious scholars, women's rights advocates, child specialists, and affected families in reform discussions so that family law transformation is both normatively progressive and socially legitimate.

Conclusion

This qualitative study explored how globalization contributes to the transformation of family law norms through cross-cultural legal adaptation. Based on semi-structured interviews with 27 Tehran-based participants, the study found that globalization reshapes family law through selective adaptation rather than direct legal transplantation. Participants described five major processes: normative hybridity, renegotiation of gender equality, child-centered reasoning, procedural adaptation in transnational disputes, and the struggle for cultural legitimacy. The findings suggest that family law is not isolated from global change, but neither is it simply absorbed into a universal legal model. Instead, family law transformation occurs through translation, negotiation, resistance, and institutional interpretation. Global norms become meaningful when they are connected to local legal consciousness and framed through culturally resonant values. The study concludes that effective family law adaptation requires more than formal reform; it requires institutional capacity, professional training, public trust, and interpretive strategies that bridge global standards and local legitimacy.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this study.

Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

All ethical principles were adhered in conducting and writing this article.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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