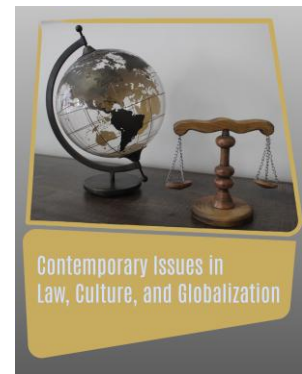




Global Norm Diffusion and Local Legal Resistance: Cultural Contestation in Practice

1. Reza. Shahbazi*: Department of Public Law, Allameh Tabatabai University, Tehran, Iran. Email: reza.shahbazi.publaw@gmail.com (Corresponding Author)
2. Amir. Ahmadi: Department of Public Law, Allameh Tabatabai University, Tehran, Iran
3. Sina. Karimi: Department of Private Law, Allameh Tabatabai University, Tehran, Iran

ABSTRACT

This study aimed to explore how globally circulating legal norms are interpreted, translated, resisted, and selectively incorporated within local legal and socio-cultural practices in Tehran. This qualitative study used semi-structured interviews to examine the everyday meanings attached to global legal norms among legal professionals, civil society actors, academics, and community-based practitioners in Tehran. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, followed by snowball recruitment to identify individuals with practical experience in law, rights discourse, institutional policy, or community mediation. A total of 28 participants were interviewed, and theoretical saturation was reached after the twenty-fourth interview, with four additional interviews conducted to confirm the stability of the emerging categories. Interviews were audio-recorded with consent, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed through thematic analysis. NVivo software was used to organize transcripts, code segments, compare categories, and construct thematic relationships. Four main categories were identified: global norms as aspirational legal language, cultural translation and vernacularization, institutional gatekeeping and selective compliance, and everyday resistance through pragmatic negotiation. Participants described global norms as symbolically powerful but socially contested when they appeared detached from local moral vocabularies, institutional capacity, or culturally recognized forms of legitimacy. Resistance did not appear only as rejection; rather, it often operated through reinterpretation, delay, selective enforcement, and translation into locally acceptable language. Participants emphasized that the practical acceptance of global legal norms depended on trust, institutional credibility, cultural resonance, and the ability of local actors to connect abstract legal principles to concrete social problems. The study suggests that global norm diffusion is not a linear process of legal transfer but a contested socio-legal practice shaped by cultural meaning, institutional mediation, and everyday negotiation. Local resistance should not be understood merely as opposition to global law; it may also function as a mechanism through which communities test, reinterpret, and domesticate global legal ideas.

Keywords: global norm diffusion; local legal resistance; cultural contestation; legal pluralism; vernacularization; qualitative research; Tehran.

How to cite this article:

Shahbazi, R., Ahmadi, A., & Karimi, S. (2025). Global Norm Diffusion and Local Legal Resistance: Cultural Contestation in Practice. *Contemporary Issues in Law, Culture, and Globalization*, 1(6), 53-62. <https://doi.org/10.61838/cilcg.1.6.6>

Introduction

Global legal norms increasingly shape the vocabulary, expectations, and institutional practices of contemporary legal systems. Human rights, gender equality, children's rights, environmental responsibility, due process, anti-discrimination, and participatory governance are no longer confined to international treaties or diplomatic forums; they circulate through courts, universities, civil society organizations, professional networks, media discourse, development programs, and local advocacy campaigns. Yet the movement of legal norms across borders is rarely smooth or uncontested. When global norms enter local legal fields, they encounter historically embedded moral orders, religious and cultural traditions, bureaucratic routines, political sensitivities, professional hierarchies, and everyday ideas about justice. The central problem addressed in this study is therefore not whether global norms diffuse, but how they are received, translated, resisted, and put into practice within local socio-legal contexts.

The literature on international norm diffusion has long challenged the assumption that states and institutions respond only to material interests. Finnemore and Sikkink (1998) famously argued that international norms follow a "life cycle" involving emergence, cascade, and internalization, with norm entrepreneurs, organizational platforms, and legitimacy pressures playing major roles in shaping state behavior. This perspective remains important because it shows that legal change cannot be reduced to coercion or formal rule adoption. International norms may become influential because actors want recognition, legitimacy, and membership in a wider community of accepted legal and political practice. However, the norm life-cycle model also raises questions about local reception. Even when norms appear to cascade globally, their meaning may remain unstable at the local level. A treaty may be ratified, a policy may be adopted, or a legal reform may be publicly endorsed, while everyday legal practice continues to reflect older hierarchies, selective enforcement, or culturally specific interpretations of justice.

Subsequent scholarship has therefore placed greater emphasis on localization, translation, and contestation. Acharya (2004) argued that norm diffusion is more likely to succeed when external norms are reconstructed through local beliefs and institutional practices rather than simply imposed as universal templates. His concept of norm localization is particularly useful for socio-legal research because it highlights the agency of local actors. Local actors are not passive recipients of global law; they actively select, modify, reinterpret, and sometimes transform imported norms in order to make them compatible with existing moral and institutional orders. This argument is especially relevant in societies where global legal language is simultaneously attractive and politically or culturally sensitive. In such settings, local professionals may support the substance of global norms while avoiding terminology that appears externally imposed or culturally alien.

The anthropological literature on human rights similarly shows that international law becomes meaningful only when translated into local moral worlds. Merry (2006a, 2006b) argued that human rights ideas do not simply travel intact from global institutions to local communities; rather, they are vernacularized by intermediaries who translate abstract legal principles into locally intelligible narratives. This process may involve simplification, adaptation, selective emphasis, and strategic reframing. For example, a global norm such as gender equality may be framed not only as an individual right but also as a matter of family dignity, social welfare, religious ethics, or community stability. Vernacularization helps explain why local acceptance of global law depends not only on legal validity but also on cultural resonance. A norm may be formally binding yet socially weak if it lacks connection to locally recognized values.

At the same time, local resistance should not be interpreted too narrowly. Resistance to global legal norms may take the form of explicit rejection, but it may also operate through delay, silence, bureaucratic reinterpretation, symbolic compliance, selective enforcement, or the production of alternative normative vocabularies. The sociology of law and legal pluralism provide important tools for analyzing these patterns. Legal pluralism emphasizes that multiple normative orders may coexist

within the same social field, including state law, religious norms, customary expectations, professional ethics, family authority, community mediation, and international legal standards (Berman, 2009; Merry, 1988; Santos, 2002). From this perspective, local legal resistance is not merely a failure of compliance; it is often a manifestation of competing normative authorities. Individuals and institutions may move between different normative registers depending on context, audience, risk, and desired outcome.

The concept of transnational legal orders further expands this analysis by showing how legal norms are constructed across transnational, national, and local levels. Halliday and Shaffer (2015) conceptualized transnational legal orders as legal formations that emerge beyond the nation-state but depend on national and local institutions for settlement and implementation. This framework is useful because it avoids a simple global-local binary. Global norms do not float above society, and local legal systems are not isolated containers. Instead, legal norms are produced through interaction among international organizations, professional networks, domestic institutions, courts, ministries, universities, NGOs, and community actors. Legal meaning emerges through this multi-level process. Therefore, studying global norm diffusion requires attention to the practical sites where law is interpreted, justified, contested, and applied.

The relationship between international law and domestic practice has also been examined through the lens of compliance, mobilization, and socialization. Risse, Ropp, and Sikkink (1999, 2013) argued that international human rights norms may influence domestic politics through pressure, persuasion, institutionalization, and socialization. Simmons (2009) further showed that international human rights law may affect domestic outcomes by empowering internal actors and providing legal and rhetorical resources for mobilization. Goodman and Jinks (2013) emphasized mechanisms such as coercion, persuasion, and acculturation in explaining how international law influences state behavior. These approaches are valuable, but a qualitative socio-legal perspective adds another layer: it asks how actors experience these processes in everyday institutional life. A legal professional may invoke global norms in court, avoid them in public conversation, translate them into constitutional language, or use them strategically in private negotiation. Such practices reveal the micro-politics of norm diffusion.

The present study focuses on Tehran as a dense urban legal and cultural setting in which global legal norms are encountered through professional education, international treaties, civil society discourse, media, policy debates, and legal advocacy. Tehran provides an appropriate field for examining cultural contestation because it contains diverse legal actors who engage with global legal language while also navigating local moral expectations, institutional constraints, and socio-political sensitivities. The study does not treat “local culture” as fixed, homogeneous, or opposed to global law. Rather, it approaches culture as a contested interpretive field in which actors debate the meaning, legitimacy, and practical relevance of legal norms. In this sense, cultural contestation refers to the process through which actors negotiate whether a global norm is perceived as useful, threatening, compatible, irrelevant, or in need of translation.

This study contributes to existing scholarship in three ways. First, it shifts attention from formal legal adoption to everyday legal meaning. Many studies examine whether states ratify treaties or adopt reforms, but fewer explore how legal professionals and community actors interpret global norms in practical settings. Second, it conceptualizes resistance as a productive and interpretive practice rather than merely a negative reaction. Resistance may obstruct implementation, but it may also reveal the conditions under which global norms can become locally meaningful. Third, it highlights the role of intermediary actors who translate, soften, reframe, or strategically deploy global legal language. These actors occupy the space between international law and local practice, and their interpretive labor is central to the social life of global norms.

Accordingly, the study was guided by the following research question: How do legal and community-based actors in Tehran interpret, translate, and resist globally circulating legal norms in everyday legal and institutional practice? By answering this

question through semi-structured interviews, the study aims to provide a grounded account of how cultural contestation shapes the diffusion of global legal norms at the local level.

Methods and Materials

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore the meanings, interpretations, and practices through which global legal norms are received and contested in local legal contexts. A qualitative approach was selected because the study sought to understand participants' lived experiences, professional interpretations, and socially embedded accounts of legal practice rather than to measure predetermined variables. The research was informed by an interpretivist epistemology, assuming that legal norms acquire meaning through social interaction, institutional practice, and cultural interpretation.

Participants were recruited from Tehran using purposive sampling. Inclusion criteria were: being at least 25 years old, having direct professional or civic experience with legal norms, rights discourse, policy implementation, community mediation, legal education, or civil society advocacy, and willingness to participate in a recorded interview. The sample included lawyers, legal academics, NGO workers, policy-related professionals, community mediators, graduate students in law and social sciences, and individuals with experience in rights-oriented civic work. Snowball sampling was used after the first round of interviews to identify additional participants who had practical exposure to the topic.

A total of 28 participants took part in the study. Theoretical saturation was reached after 24 interviews, when no substantially new codes or categories emerged from the data. Four additional interviews were conducted to confirm the adequacy and stability of the thematic structure. This procedure was consistent with qualitative sampling logic, in which sample size is guided by informational richness and saturation rather than statistical representativeness. Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) note that saturation often occurs within a relatively limited number of interviews when the participant group is sufficiently focused, while Braun and Clarke (2006) emphasize the importance of analytic depth and pattern recognition in thematic analysis.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews. The interview guide included open-ended questions about participants' understanding of global legal norms, examples of their use in local legal or institutional settings, perceived sources of resistance, strategies of cultural translation, and experiences of conflict between global legal language and local expectations. Example questions included: "How do you understand the term global legal norms in your professional or social context?", "Can you describe a situation in which a global legal idea was accepted, resisted, or reinterpreted locally?", "What makes a global legal norm appear legitimate or illegitimate in local practice?", and "How do legal professionals or community actors translate global norms into acceptable local language?" Probing questions were used to clarify meaning and elicit concrete examples.

Interviews lasted between 40 and 75 minutes and were conducted in a private and comfortable setting selected by the participant. All interviews were audio-recorded after informed consent and transcribed verbatim. Participants were assured that their identities would remain confidential and that they could withdraw from the study at any stage. Pseudonyms or participant codes were used in all transcripts and reporting. Ethical principles of voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, and secure data storage were observed throughout the research process.

Data analysis followed thematic analysis. First, the researchers read the transcripts several times to become familiar with the data. Second, initial codes were generated inductively from meaningful units of text. Third, codes were grouped into preliminary categories based on conceptual similarity. Fourth, categories were reviewed across the full dataset to ensure internal coherence and external distinction. Fifth, final themes were named and defined. NVivo software was used to organize transcripts, manage codes, compare coded segments, and support the development of thematic matrices. The software was not used as a substitute for interpretation; rather, it supported systematic organization and retrieval of data.

To enhance trustworthiness, several strategies were used. Credibility was supported through prolonged engagement with the transcripts, repeated reading, and peer debriefing among the research team. Dependability was strengthened by maintaining an audit trail of coding decisions, category revisions, and analytic memos. Confirmability was addressed through reflexive memo-writing, in which the researchers documented assumptions and potential interpretive biases. Transferability was supported by providing thick description of the research context, participant characteristics, and thematic findings. Reporting was guided by qualitative research standards such as the Consolidated Criteria for Reporting Qualitative Research, which provides a 32-item framework for transparent reporting of interviews and qualitative methods (Tong et al., 2007).

Findings

The study included 28 participants from Tehran. Participants ranged in age from 26 to 58 years. Fifteen participants were women and thirteen were men. In terms of professional background, eight participants were practicing lawyers, five were legal academics or university lecturers, four were NGO or civil society workers, three were policy-related professionals, three were community mediators, three were postgraduate students in law or social sciences, and two were independent legal consultants. Regarding educational level, six participants held a bachelor's degree, fourteen held a master's degree, and eight held a doctoral degree or were doctoral candidates. Participants' professional experience ranged from 3 to 27 years. This diversity enabled the study to capture different perspectives on the relationship between global legal norms and local legal practice.

The first main category concerned the way participants understood global norms as a form of aspirational legal language. Many participants described global norms as powerful because they offered a vocabulary for justice, dignity, equality, participation, and accountability. However, this vocabulary was often perceived as aspirational rather than fully embedded in everyday practice. Participants explained that global norms were frequently cited in academic writing, NGO training, legal education, and policy discussions, but their influence became uncertain when they entered courts, administrative offices, or community disputes. One lawyer stated, "When we talk about international standards, people listen, but they also ask what this means for the real case in front of them. The language is strong, but practice needs something more local." Another participant, a legal academic, explained, "Global norms give us a horizon. They show what law can become. But between the horizon and the office desk, there are many filters." This category shows that global norms were not rejected by participants; rather, they were often respected as ideals while being viewed as difficult to operationalize. Participants associated this gap with institutional constraints, limited public trust, bureaucratic caution, and uncertainty about how far international legal language could be used in domestic settings.

The second category related to cultural translation. Participants repeatedly emphasized that global legal norms became more acceptable when translated into familiar moral, religious, constitutional, or social vocabularies. They argued that direct use of global terminology sometimes created defensiveness, especially when norms were perceived as externally imposed or culturally disconnected. However, when the same principles were reframed through local concepts such as fairness, dignity, family responsibility, social welfare, public interest, or ethical obligation, they became easier to discuss. An NGO worker explained, "If I say this is an international right, some people become suspicious. If I say this protects the dignity of the family or prevents harm, the conversation changes." A community mediator similarly stated, "People do not always resist the value. Sometimes they resist the packaging." Participants described translation as a practical skill used by lawyers, educators, activists, and mediators. This translation did not merely simplify global norms; it changed their social meaning. For example, equality could be discussed as non-humiliation, participation as consultation, and rights awareness as legal literacy. Participants believed that successful diffusion depended on the ability to connect global norms to everyday experiences and culturally legitimate narratives.

The third category concerned institutional gatekeeping and selective compliance. Participants described institutions as crucial mediators between global norms and local practice. Courts, administrative offices, universities, professional associations, and public agencies could either facilitate the circulation of global norms or restrict their use. Several participants explained that institutions often accepted global norms symbolically while limiting their practical consequences. A policy-related participant stated, “Sometimes the institution accepts the language because it looks modern, but implementation is another matter. The norm is welcomed in documents and controlled in practice.” A practicing lawyer observed, “You learn which words can open a door and which words can close it. The legal argument may be the same, but the vocabulary matters.” Participants noted that selective compliance occurred through procedural delay, narrow interpretation, avoidance of controversial terminology, and preference for domestic legal references over international ones. This category indicates that resistance was not always ideological; it was also institutional and procedural. Participants emphasized that local legal actors often adjusted their strategies according to what institutions were willing to hear. Global norms therefore entered local practice through negotiated and selective channels rather than through direct application.

The fourth category captured everyday forms of resistance and pragmatic negotiation. Participants argued that resistance to global norms was often subtle, situational, and practical. It appeared in ordinary conversations, family disputes, workplace policies, community mediation, legal consultations, and administrative interactions. Some participants described resistance as fear of social disruption; others linked it to mistrust of institutions, concern about foreign influence, or uncertainty about the consequences of legal change. However, resistance was not always permanent. Participants explained that people who initially rejected global legal language sometimes accepted specific aspects of it when connected to concrete problems such as safety, dignity, education, work, or access to services. One postgraduate participant stated, “At first, people may say these ideas are foreign. But when the discussion becomes about their daughter’s education, their work contract, or unfair treatment, the same idea becomes personal.” A mediator added, “In practice, nobody wants abstract conflict. They want a solution that does not destroy relationships.” This category shows that local resistance can also function as negotiation. Rather than simply blocking global norms, everyday resistance forces norms to be justified, translated, and adapted to local expectations. In this way, contestation becomes part of the diffusion process itself.

Discussion

The first finding showed that participants viewed global norms as aspirational legal language: normatively powerful but not automatically operational in local practice. This finding is consistent with international norm theory, which argues that norms influence behavior not only through formal obligation but also through legitimacy, identity, and social expectation (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). However, the participants’ accounts complicate any linear model of norm diffusion. They suggested that global norms may be admired as ideals while remaining institutionally fragile and practically uncertain. This supports the argument of Risse et al. (1999, 2013) that international norms enter domestic contexts through complex processes of socialization, pressure, institutionalization, and internal debate. The finding also aligns with Simmons’ (2009) view that international law can empower domestic actors by providing a language of mobilization. In the present study, lawyers, academics, and civil society actors treated global norms as resources for argumentation, but not as self-executing mechanisms. Their effectiveness depended on whether they could be connected to domestic legal categories, institutional incentives, and locally recognizable problems. Therefore, the study suggests that global norms operate first as symbolic and argumentative resources before they become stable legal practices. This symbolic function should not be underestimated, because aspirational legal language can gradually expand the boundaries of what is publicly sayable and professionally arguable.

The second finding concerned cultural translation and vernacularization. Participants repeatedly emphasized that global legal norms became more persuasive when translated into local moral and social vocabularies. This finding strongly

corresponds with Merry's (2006a, 2006b) work on the vernacularization of human rights, which shows that global rights ideas must be translated into local categories in order to become meaningful. It also aligns with Acharya's (2004) theory of norm localization, according to which external norms are more likely to gain acceptance when reconstructed through pre-existing local beliefs and practices. The present study extends these insights by showing that translation is not merely linguistic; it is strategic, cultural, and institutional. Participants did not simply replace international terms with local equivalents. They reframed potentially contested norms through concepts such as dignity, fairness, harm prevention, family welfare, ethical responsibility, and legal literacy. This finding suggests that the success of norm diffusion depends heavily on intermediary actors who understand both global legal discourse and local moral expectations. These actors act as translators, brokers, and negotiators. However, translation also involves risk. If a global norm is translated too extensively, its critical content may be softened or depoliticized. Thus, vernacularization is both enabling and limiting: it increases local resonance but may reduce the transformative force of the original norm.

The third finding identified institutional gatekeeping and selective compliance as central mechanisms shaping local legal resistance. Participants described institutions as accepting global norms in documents, education, or formal discourse while restricting their use in practice. This finding is consistent with socio-legal scholarship on the gap between law on the books and law in action. It also reflects Halliday and Shaffer's (2015) argument that transnational legal orders depend on settlement across multiple levels, including national and local institutions. Global norms do not become effective simply because they exist at the transnational level; they must be interpreted, authorized, and routinized by domestic institutions. The finding also resonates with Goodman and Jinks' (2013) discussion of socialization and acculturation, because institutions may adopt global language to appear legitimate while maintaining existing practices. In this study, selective compliance appeared through procedural delay, cautious vocabulary, narrow interpretation, and preference for domestic references. These practices show that resistance is often bureaucratic rather than openly ideological. Institutional actors may not deny the value of a norm, but they may limit its practical effects through ordinary administrative routines. This suggests that research on norm diffusion should pay closer attention to micro-institutional practices, including drafting habits, acceptable terminology, professional risk, and the informal boundaries of legal argument.

The fourth finding showed that everyday resistance often functioned as pragmatic negotiation rather than absolute rejection. Participants described resistance in family, workplace, community, and administrative settings as situational and problem-oriented. This finding is supported by legal pluralism, which emphasizes the coexistence of multiple normative orders within the same social space (Berman, 2009; Merry, 1988; Santos, 2002). Individuals may evaluate global legal norms in relation to state law, religious ethics, family expectations, community reputation, professional norms, and practical consequences. From this perspective, resistance is not simply a refusal to comply with international law; it is a process of navigating competing normative authorities. The finding also supports socio-legal accounts that treat law as a lived and interpreted practice rather than merely a formal system. Participants' accounts suggested that global norms became more acceptable when attached to concrete experiences of unfairness, harm, exclusion, or vulnerability. This supports the view that legal consciousness develops through everyday encounters with institutions and social relationships. Importantly, everyday resistance may reveal the conditions required for deeper norm acceptance. When people challenge a norm as foreign, disruptive, or abstract, they are also identifying the interpretive work necessary for that norm to become locally persuasive. Therefore, contestation should be understood as part of diffusion, not merely as evidence of diffusion failure.

The study has several limitations. First, because the research was qualitative and limited to participants in Tehran, the findings cannot be generalized statistically to all legal actors or communities in Iran or other contexts. Second, the sample focused on individuals with some degree of legal, civic, academic, or institutional engagement; therefore, the perspectives of

less formally educated or more marginalized groups may be underrepresented. Third, the study relied only on semi-structured interviews. Although interviews are appropriate for exploring meaning and interpretation, future studies could strengthen the analysis by combining interviews with document analysis, courtroom observation, organizational ethnography, or analysis of legal education materials. Fourth, the politically and culturally sensitive nature of the topic may have influenced participants' willingness to speak openly. Some participants may have moderated their language, avoided specific examples, or described institutional resistance indirectly. Finally, because interpretation is central to qualitative analysis, researcher positionality may have shaped the coding and categorization process despite the use of reflexive strategies.

Future research should examine global norm diffusion and local legal resistance across multiple cities and institutional settings. Comparative studies could explore whether patterns of vernacularization differ between courts, universities, NGOs, administrative agencies, and community mediation spaces. Future studies could also compare professional groups, such as judges, lawyers, policy-makers, social workers, educators, and religious or community leaders. Longitudinal research would be especially valuable for understanding how global norms move from symbolic language to routine practice over time. Another useful direction would be to examine specific legal domains, such as women's rights, children's rights, environmental law, disability rights, labor rights, or digital rights, because each field may produce distinct forms of cultural contestation. Further research should also investigate the role of younger legal professionals and students, who may be more exposed to global legal discourse through digital media, international education, and transnational academic networks.

In practice, the findings suggest that legal reform and rights-oriented advocacy should avoid treating global norms as ready-made solutions that can simply be transferred into local settings. Effective implementation requires culturally sensitive translation, institutional trust-building, and practical demonstration of relevance. Legal educators should train students not only in international legal standards but also in the skills of contextual interpretation, ethical communication, and culturally grounded legal reasoning. Civil society organizations may improve local acceptance by connecting abstract norms to concrete everyday concerns such as dignity, safety, fairness, access to services, and protection from harm. Policy-makers should also recognize that symbolic adoption without institutional capacity can produce cynicism and resistance. Therefore, implementation strategies should include professional training, clear procedural guidance, accessible legal language, and spaces for dialogue among legal professionals, community actors, and affected groups.

Conclusion

This study explored how global legal norms are interpreted, translated, resisted, and negotiated in local legal practice in Tehran. The findings show that global norm diffusion is not a simple process of transmission from international institutions to domestic law. Rather, it is a contested socio-legal process shaped by cultural meaning, institutional mediation, professional strategy, and everyday negotiation. Participants viewed global norms as important aspirational resources, but they emphasized that such norms become effective only when they are translated into locally meaningful language and supported by credible institutions.

The study identified four main categories: global norms as aspirational legal language, cultural translation and vernacularization, institutional gatekeeping and selective compliance, and everyday resistance through pragmatic negotiation. Together, these categories show that local resistance is not always a rejection of global law. In many cases, resistance reflects concern about legitimacy, social disruption, institutional uncertainty, or the perceived foreignness of legal terminology. When global norms are reframed through local values such as dignity, fairness, harm prevention, and social responsibility, they may become more acceptable and practically usable.

The study contributes to socio-legal scholarship by emphasizing the interpretive labor of local actors. Lawyers, academics, NGO workers, mediators, and policy professionals do not merely apply or reject global norms; they translate, filter, repackage,

and strategically deploy them. This finding suggests that the future of global legal norms depends not only on treaties and reforms but also on the everyday work of cultural and institutional mediation. For global norms to become socially meaningful, they must be capable of speaking to local experiences without losing their critical and protective force.

Acknowledgments

We would like to express our appreciation and gratitude to all those who helped us carrying out this study.

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.

Funding

This research was carried out independently with personal funding and without the financial support of any governmental or private institution or organization.

References

- Acharya, A. (2004). How ideas spread: Whose norms matter? Norm localization and institutional change in Asian regionalism. *International Organization*, 58(2), 239–275. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818304582024>
- Berman, P. S. (2009). The new legal pluralism. *Annual Review of Law and Social Science*, 5, 225–242. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.lawsocsci.093008.131539>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Finnemore, M., & Sikkink, K. (1998). International norm dynamics and political change. *International Organization*, 52(4), 887–917. <https://doi.org/10.1162/002081898550789>
- Goodman, R., & Jinks, D. (2004). How to influence states: Socialization and international human rights law. *Duke Law Journal*, 54(3), 621–703.
- Goodman, R., & Jinks, D. (2013). *Socializing states: Promoting human rights through international law*. Oxford University Press.
- Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability. *Field Methods*, 18(1), 59–82. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X05279903>
- Halliday, T. C., & Shaffer, G. (Eds.). (2015). *Transnational legal orders*. Cambridge University Press.
- Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, S. (2009). *InterViews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. SAGE Publications.

- Merry, S. E. (1988). Legal pluralism. *Law & Society Review*, 22(5), 869–896. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3053638>
- Merry, S. E. (2006a). *Human rights and gender violence: Translating international law into local justice*. University of Chicago Press.
- Merry, S. E. (2006b). Transnational human rights and local activism: Mapping the middle. *American Anthropologist*, 108(1), 38–51. <https://doi.org/10.1525/aa.2006.108.1.38>
- Risse, T., Ropp, S. C., & Sikkink, K. (Eds.). (1999). *The power of human rights: International norms and domestic change*. Cambridge University Press.
- Risse, T., Ropp, S. C., & Sikkink, K. (Eds.). (2013). *The persistent power of human rights: From commitment to compliance*. Cambridge University Press.
- Santos, B. de S. (2002). *Toward a new legal common sense: Law, globalization, and emancipation* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Simmons, B. A. (2009). *Mobilizing for human rights: International law in domestic politics*. Cambridge University Press.
- Tong, A., Sainsbury, P., & Craig, J. (2007). Consolidated criteria for reporting qualitative research: A 32-item checklist for interviews and focus groups. *International Journal for Quality in Health Care*, 19(6), 349–357. <https://doi.org/10.1093/intqhc/mzm042>