

CULTURAL REINTEGRATION AND GENDERED EXPECTATIONS: THE CHALLENGES OF 'RETURNING HOME'

Dr. Farooq Abdullah^{*1}, Riffat Sultana², Nida Nisar³

^{*1}Lecturer, Department of Sociology, Mirpur University of Science and Technology (MUST)

²Visiting Lecturer, Department of Sociology, Mirpur University of Science and Technology (MUST), Mirpur, AJK, Pakistan.

³Lecturer, Department of Sociology, Mirpur University of Science and Technology (MUST), Mirpur, AJK, Pakistan.

^{*1}farooq.abdullah@must.edu.pk, ²riffat.sociology@must.edu.pk, ³nida.soc@must.edu.pk

Corresponding Author: *

Dr. Farooq Abdullah

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.16948961>

Received	Revised	Accepted	Published
01 March, 2025	09 April, 2025	09 May, 2025	01 July, 2025

ABSTRACT

Migration is considered gendered experience the world over. This journey is often marked by opportunity, exploration, and the pursuits of better livelihoods. However, the moment of return—especially for women—is no less significant or transformative. For many female migrants, returning home is not a return to familiarity and acceptance but an encounter with gendered expectations, cultural dissonance, and patriarchal control. We conducted this research with Mirpuri-Britishers in Mirpur, Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK). Mirpur predominantly has considerable diaspora in Europe in general and England in particular. We interviewed 12 women who returned to origin after spending many years in Europe. We identified and interviewed them at their respective places. We concluded that women's return migration is far more than a logistical process; it is a deeply gendered and political negotiation. Reintegration unfolds within families and communities where expectations, surveillance, and moral policing seek to reassert patriarchal authority. For returnee women, this journey is not only about adapting to a changed lifestyle but also about confronting cultural scripts that shape their roles, rights, and respect.

Keywords: Culture, Migration, Gender, Women, Europe, Reintegration.

INTRODUCTION

The contemporary migration narratives are often marked by opportunity, exploration, and the pursuits of better livelihoods (Etzold, 2017). However, the moment of return—especially for women—is no less significant or transformative (Abdullah, Nisar, & Ahmed, 2025; Benson & O'reilly, 2009). For many female migrants, Giri (2024) revealed that returning home is not a return to familiarity and acceptance but an encounter with gendered expectations, cultural dissonance, and patriarchal control. We aimed to know the causes and implications of families returning home as well as examining the impacts on women's adjustment and reintegration at the origin. We also explored the intersection of gender, culture, and

power in the return migration process, using qualitative narratives to understand how women experience, negotiate, and sometimes resist the challenges of returning home.

Migration is often a gendered experience (Abdullah, Habib, & Gillani, 2021; Morokvasic, 2015; Morokvašić, 2014). While abroad, Piper (2005) argued that women frequently gain new forms of economic independence, social mobility, and decision-making autonomy (Rafiq, Abdullah, & Rehmani, 2024). Yet, upon return, Freedman (2017) asserted that these gains are often devalued or erased by traditional expectations of domesticity and submission. Kofman (2019) identified one of the primary challenges returnee women faces is the

re-negotiation of gender roles within the home and society. Kofman (2004) provided explanation that families and communities expect women to “re-assume” their pre-migration roles—such as caregivers, obedient daughters, wives, or homemakers—regardless of the personal growth or autonomy they acquired while away. These shifts in domestic expectations are often abrupt and disempowering. Many returnees, Piper (2006) analysed, find themselves caught in a conflict between the independence they developed abroad, and the dependency expected at home, resulting in emotional distress, resistance, or strategic conformity.

Further compounding this struggle is the experience of reverse culture shock—a profound sense of dissonance between the woman’s transformed identity and the static cultural environment she re-enters (Rafiq, Abdullah, & Rehmani, 2024; Boyd & Grieco, 2014). They also viewed that returnees often find that the values, norms, and freedoms they embraced abroad are now viewed with suspicion or hostility. Nawyn (2010) contended that their new ways of thinking, dressing, or expressing themselves may conflict with traditional codes of femininity and morality, leading to a reinforcement of patriarchal norms by families and communities. For many, Mahler and Pessar (2006) and Abdullah (2016) stated that home no longer feels like a place of belonging but a space of constant moral evaluation and cultural alienation. This dissonance often leads to silence, self-censorship, or deep internal conflict.

An especially critical dimension of this reintegration is the surveillance, honour, and moral policing that women face. In patriarchal societies, women are perceived as bearers of family honour, and their transnational mobility often triggers concern over the perceived loss of purity or morality (Abdullah & Ullah, 2022; Erel, Morokvasic, & Shinozaki, 2003; Hondagneu-Sotelo & Cranford, 2006). While communities scrutinize returnee women’s behaviour, relationships, and appearance—frequently viewing time abroad as a source of “contamination.” In response, Phizacklea (2017) found many strategies to manage social expectations, including modifying their dress, restricting their speech, or avoiding public engagement. These are not merely acts of compliance, but tactical negotiations of safety and respectability in gendered spaces.

At the core of these experiences lie family dynamics and gendered power structures, which often determine the pace and shape of reintegration (Dannecker, 2009; King, Thomson, Fielding, & Warnes, 2006; Abdullah & Nisar, 2024). Within households, they argued, returnee women may be met with pressure to marry, resume caregiving responsibilities, or step back from public life. The domestic space becomes a microcosm of the broader patriarchal order, where women’s economic contributions and migration experiences are de-emphasized in favour of traditional roles (Abdullah & Ullah, 2016; Maupin, Ross, & Timura, 2011). The gendered division of labour reasserts itself, often without question. Yet, family responses are not monolithic. Some members offer subtle forms of support, challenge rigid expectations, or quietly enable women’s autonomy—highlighting the tensions between patriarchal norms and emerging gender consciousness within families (Abdullah, Sultana, & Nisar, 2025; Amrith & Sahraoui, 2018; Christou & Kofman, 2022).

Despite these constraints, Lutz (2010) said, many returnee women actively negotiate autonomy and voice in nuanced and strategic ways. They strived to retain control over decisions related to marriage, employment, or education. Green (2013) asserted their independence openly, while others adopt quiet forms of resistance—delaying marriage, redirecting conversations, or claiming public roles that were previously denied to them. In gendered spaces where overt defiance may be risky, women’s resistance often takes the form of silence, withdrawal, or subtle shifts in behaviour that signal transformation without provoking direct confrontation (Erel et al., 2003; Ghosh, 2009; Abdullah, Nisar, & Malik, 2024). These actions underscore the complexity of reintegration—not as a linear process but as a contested terrain of gendered negotiations.

Finally, Freedman (2017) these deeply personal and familial challenges reflect broader questions of gendered citizenship and political reintegration. Returnee women often encounter institutional barriers in accessing reintegration programs (Paul, 2015). Reintegration policies, where they exist, tend to centre male experiences—such as entrepreneurship or labour reinsertion—while ignoring the informal, emotional, and care-related contributions of women (Abdullah, Matloob, & Malik, 2024; Carling, 2005). Women’s migration

and return are often rendered invisible within official discourses, reinforcing their marginal status as conditional citizens—recognized only when they conform to idealized roles of modesty, obedience, and domesticity (Abdullah et al., 2024; Jolly, Reeves, & Piper, 2005).

The Pakistan Context: This study was conducted in Mirpur, AJK, a city with a significant diaspora, particularly in England, but also in Europe, America, and Australia. While most research focuses on migrants in their destinations, we examined families who returned home after years abroad, especially in the United Kingdom (UK) and European Union (EU). After nearly two years of effort, we identified a few returnee families and interviewed women to explore the causes and implications of return, as well as their adjustment and reintegration at the origin. Using qualitative narratives, we analysed how gender, culture, and power intersect in the return migration process, highlighting women's experiences of negotiation, resistance, and adaptation. Themes such as gender roles, cultural dissonance, surveillance, family power dynamics, personal agency, and political exclusion reveal reintegration as not just a physical return, but a contested process of identity, autonomy, and belonging.

Theoretical Framework

This study employs a feminist poststructuralist framework, drawing on gender performativity (Butler, 1990) and intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989). Feminist poststructuralism highlights gender as a fluid construct shaped by discourse, power relations, and social practices, enabling a critical analysis of how returnee women are repositioned within patriarchal societies. Gender performativity explains how these women renegotiate their identities—balancing resistance and conformity—while navigating norms that regulate their behaviour, appearance, and autonomy. Intersectionality further reveals how reintegration is shaped not only by gender but also by class, marital status, migration history, and rural-urban divides. Together, these perspectives

uncover the layered oppressions and privileges influencing women's reintegration, showing that returning home is not merely physical but a political and discursive process in which autonomy, citizenship, and voice are contested and reshaped.

Research Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research design to explore the experiences and perspectives of participants in depth. A purposive sampling technique was used to select 12 participants, ensuring they were directly relevant to the research objectives. Data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews, which provided participants the freedom to share their views while allowing the researcher to probe further for clarity. All interviews were conducted in a comfortable and confidential environment, recorded with participants' consent, and later transcribed verbatim. Thematic analysis was employed to analyse the data systematically. This involved familiarization with transcripts, coding, categorization of codes, and development of key themes that captured recurring patterns and meanings. To ensure credibility, peer debriefing and member checking were used. Ethical considerations such as informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation were strictly maintained throughout the process. Each participant was given pseudonyms as shown in the table 1. Through these steps, the methodology allowed for a nuanced and trustworthy understanding of the respondents' experiences, capturing the complexity of the research problem. Finally, we extracted five themes from data. These themes are analysed by thematic analysis.

Key Findings

This section of the paper presents the findings. A brief profile of the participants is tabulated, followed by a discussion of the results from thematic analysis.

The participants' information is summarized in tables, while the findings from the thematic analysis are interpreted in detail.

Table 1

Brief profiles of participants.

No	Participants' Pseudonyms	Age	Time at Destination
1	Participant-1	31	11
2	Participant-2	52	22

3	Participant-3	63	31
4	Participant-4	56	21
5	Participant-5	32	13
6	Participant-6	48	24
7	Participant-7	45	21
8	Participant-8	57	29
9	Participant-9	57	31
10	Participant-10	61	34
11	Participant-11	49	21
12	Participant-12	54	28

Table 1 presents the brief profiles of the twelve participants, showing their pseudonyms, ages, and the number of years they have spent at their current destination. The participants' ages range from 31 to 63 years, while their time at the destination varies between 11 and 34 years, reflecting diverse life stages and long-term settlement experiences. This variation highlights a mix of younger and older participants with differing lengths of residence, offering a broad perspective for the study.

Theme 1: Re-Negotiating Gender Roles in the Home and Society

The return of women migrants to their origin often marks not just a physical relocation, but a complex process of cultural re-entry and renegotiation of identity. One of the most critical aspects of this reintegration is the shifting expectations around gender roles in both the private and public spheres. While migration often enables women to develop a sense of autonomy, financial independence, and exposure to alternative gender norms, the act of returning home frequently repositions them within patriarchal and traditional frameworks, often leading to tension, resistance, or forced conformity.

In one narrative, a returnee from the Europe shared:

When I was abroad, I earned my own money, made my own decisions. Back here, my father says I must now behave 'like our women do'—no late outings, no talking too much in front of men, no opinions on family matters. It feels like I left my freedom at the airport.

Such stories reveal how returnee women are often expected to re-assume roles that conform to local cultural expectations of femininity—primarily centred on domesticity, submission, and silence. The economic and social capital they earned abroad may be undervalued or even resented within conservative home environments.

Another participant who returned after studying in Europe expressed: *"My mother said, 'Now you are home, your degree can wait—your marriage cannot.' It's as if everything I achieved doesn't count anymore because I'm still a woman first, and women here have duties."*

These excerpts reflect the conflict between personal transformation during migration and societal pressure to revert to conventional roles. Many returnee women find themselves caught between what they became while abroad and what is expected of them upon return. This results in emotional stress, strained family relations, and a sense of identity fragmentation.

Some women attempt to push back subtly. One returnee explained: *"I still wear my trousers and speak openly. They do not like it, but I would not pretend I have not changed. I cannot be the girl who left this village ten years ago."*

This demonstrates the acts of everyday resistance—where returnee women navigate the boundaries of tradition and autonomy. Yet, these negotiations often come with social penalties, such as gossip, reduced marriage prospects, or isolation.

The findings of this theme highlight that reintegration is not merely logistical; it is deeply gendered and political, involving a constant recalibration of roles, rights, and respect. Drawing on Butler's notion of performativity, women's return is marked by the repeated enactment and contestation of gendered scripts, where their migration experience both disrupts and reinforces cultural expectations of womanhood. Simultaneously, Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality reveals that this re-negotiation is not uniform; class, marital status, age, and diaspora networks intersect to shape differentiated experiences of power and vulnerability. Thus, re-entering home is not just a personal journey but a contested process, shaped by memory, power, and cultural scripts

Theme 2: Cultural Dissonance and the Reinforcement of Patriarchal Norms

The theme of cultural dissonance and the reinforcement of patriarchal norms captures a central challenge experienced by many women upon their return from abroad: the realization that the cultural and gender norms they were once socialized into no longer align with the self they developed during migration. This dissonance often results in reverse culture shock, where returning home—rather than feeling comforting—evokes confusion, alienation, and even distress. For women, the shock is often intensified by reimposed patriarchal expectations, especially when they have lived in relatively more egalitarian or liberal environments.

One returnee from the UK described her emotional reaction upon arrival back in her conservative rural hometown: “I thought coming home would be joyful, but everything felt foreign. The stares, the questions about marriage, the judgment about my clothes—it all made me feel like I no longer belonged.”

This excerpt reflects how the emotional geography of “home” becomes disrupted by the return experience. The woman’s newly expanded identity, shaped by education, exposure, and autonomy abroad, becomes incompatible with the rigid gender norms of her home community. Another woman who had worked in Denmark shared:

There, I walked freely. I handled my finances. No one told me how to behave. Back here, my brother told me not to go out alone anymore. They say ‘You’ve seen too much of the world; now behave like our women again.’

This illustrates how patriarchal norms are reinforced more strongly after return, as families and communities often view the returnee woman as “contaminated” or “westernized,” needing to be “re-domesticated” into the local moral and gender order. This re-domestication is not only physical but symbolic marked by dress codes, speech limitations, and surveillance of behaviour.

The experience of reverse culture shock also includes a sense of emotional and intellectual isolation. One participant, a returnee academic, remarked:

“I can no longer have conversations here that don’t turn into lectures on why I need to settle down. My ideas are dismissed as ‘foreign’ or ‘unnecessary’ for women.”

Here, the devaluation of her knowledge and voice underscores how cultural reintegration often entails intellectual suppression, particularly for women whose return is seen as threatening to traditional gender hierarchies.

While some women internalize these norms to regain acceptance, others attempt subtle forms of resistance. A returnee from Canada shared:

“I don’t argue anymore. I quietly do what I feel is right. I attend community meetings; I help local girls with education. I don’t need approval to make a difference.”

This indicates that resistance does not always take overt forms—women may adapt yet still reshape their environments in quiet but meaningful ways.

In conclusion, cultural dissonance for returnee women is not just about adjusting to a different lifestyle—it is about confronting the return of gendered control and moral policing. Butler’s notion of performativity helps explain how women are compelled to repeatedly enact and negotiate gendered expectations, where their migration history both disrupts and reinforces patriarchal scripts. At the same time, Crenshaw’s intersectionality underscores that these struggles are not uniform; they are mediated by class, marital status, age, and diaspora connections, producing differentiated experiences of empowerment and constraint. Recognizing these layered dynamics is essential for developing gender-sensitive return and reintegration policies that address not only logistics but also the emotional, cultural, and identity-based complexities of women’s return.

Theme 3: Surveillance, Honor, and Moral Policing

For many women who return to their home countries after a period of living or working abroad, the journey “back” is often not a return to safety or familiarity—but to scrutiny, surveillance, and moral judgment. In traditional, patriarchal societies, women are seen as carriers of family honour, and their migration is viewed with suspicion, especially when it challenges established gender roles. This theme highlights how women returnees are often subjected to intense community monitoring, as their mobility is interpreted not just through the lens of personal growth, but as a potential threat to cultural and moral boundaries.

One returnee explained:

“Since I came back, everyone wants to know what I was doing abroad. They ask: Did I live alone? Was I working with men? Did I change my religion? It’s like I’m on trial.”

This quote reflects the culture of surveillance that women face, where their past is constantly interrogated, not for understanding, but for judgment. The community becomes a moral courtroom, and women are often forced to prove that they remained within the bounds of “acceptable” behaviour, despite having been away from home.

This scrutiny is deeply tied to notions of honour and purity. In many settings, a woman’s time abroad is associated with moral decay or sexual impropriety, especially if she remained unmarried, lived alone, or adopted more liberal lifestyles. One woman who had worked as a nurse shared:

“They look at me like I’m not clean anymore. They say, ‘Girls who go abroad come back spoiled.’ Even my cousins avoid talking to me in public.”

Such experiences indicate that the perceived loss of “purity”—not actual behaviour—can lead to social exclusion and stigmatization. Even professional or economic achievements abroad are often dismissed if the woman is seen as having violated the community’s unwritten gender norms.

In response to this scrutiny, women adopt various strategies to manage or resist social expectations. Some choose to stay silent and limit their interactions to avoid gossip, while others perform culturally acceptable behaviours to “mask” the changes they’ve undergone.

A participant recounted:

“I started wearing the dupatta again, not because I wanted to, but because I needed to reduce the noise around me. It gave people less to talk about.”

Others find creative ways to reframe their experience within acceptable moral narratives. For instance, a returnee said:

“I now talk about how hard I worked, how I supported my family. That’s something they respect. I hide the freedom part, the friends, the late-night walks.”

These adaptive performances reflect how returnee women navigate between personal transformation and collective expectations, balancing selfhood with survival. While some internalize community pressures, others subtly challenge them—redefining honour on their own terms.

Here, surveillance and moral policing are key mechanisms through which patriarchal societies

attempt to reassert control over mobile women. The return of a woman is thus not merely physical but symbolic, marking a moment when patriarchy tests the limits of its authority. Butler’s concept of performativity helps illuminate how women navigate this terrain through the repeated enactment of gendered norms—sometimes conforming, sometimes subverting—where silence, performance, resistance, and resilience become strategies of negotiating power. Yet these negotiations are not experienced uniformly. Crenshaw’s intersectionality reveals how class, marital status, age, and transnational ties shape the intensity and outcomes of women’s encounters with patriarchal surveillance. Some women face silencing and alienation, while others draw on resources and networks to resist or transform expectations. Recognizing these layered dynamics is crucial to understanding the gendered realities of return migration and to developing reintegration policies that move beyond logistical concerns.

Theme 4: Family Dynamics and Gendered Power Structures

For women returnees, the reintegration process is often most intensely experienced within the private sphere of the family. The home, rather than being a space of comfort and welcome, often becomes a site of gendered power negotiations. Upon return, women face strong pressure to reassume traditional roles—such as marriage, caregiving, and submission to male authority—regardless of the independence or transformation they experienced during migration. This theme explores how familial expectations, power hierarchies, and emotional ties intersect to shape women’s post-return realities.

One returnee who had lived and worked in Malaysia shared:

As soon as I came home, my parents stopped asking about my work or savings. All they wanted to know was when I would get married. It was like all those years I worked didn’t matter. They only see me as a daughter who has to be ‘settled.’

This reflects a common pattern where migration is tolerated only as a temporary phase, while long-term reintegration is expected to align with patriarchal familial norms. Women are often urged—or even coerced—into fulfilling roles that re-establish male dominance and maintain the traditional structure of the household.

Caregiving duties are another immediate expectation. A participant recounted:

My brother had been taking care of our parents while I was away. Now that I'm back, it's assumed that I'll stay home and look after them, so he can focus on his job. No one asked if I had other plans. This quote highlights the gendered division of labour within families, where caregiving is often seen as a natural and unpaid responsibility of women, regardless of their qualifications or aspirations. For many returnees, this shift from economic contributor abroad to caregiver at home marks a reduction in social and familial status.

However, responses from family members can be complex and varied. While some resist the changes women bring with them, others offer support—though often quietly. A woman who returned after studying in Europe shared:

“My father doesn't say much, but he told my uncles to let me decide if I want to marry. That meant a lot to me. It gave me space.”

Such instances suggest that individual family members may act as allies, even within broader patriarchal systems. These micro-resistances within the family can empower returnee women to negotiate space and autonomy, though not without emotional costs or tensions.

At times, returnee women also experience generational or sibling conflicts, especially when they challenge the status quo. A participant narrated:

“My younger brother couldn't handle that I was earning more before I returned. Now he mocks my opinions. It's like my success made him insecure.”

This dynamic reflects how women's empowerment abroad can disrupt intra-family hierarchies, leading to subtle forms of backlash or rivalry.

In sum, the family remains a powerful site of reintegration, where women must constantly navigate expectations, assert agency, and re-negotiate their place. Butler's notion of performativity helps explain how these negotiations unfold through the repetition of gendered acts—where conformity, resistance, or subtle subversion becomes daily performances that either reinforce or destabilize patriarchal scripts. A woman's return is therefore not only a personal journey but also a performative act that tests the boundaries of cultural norms and family authority. At the same time, Crenshaw's framework of intersectionality shows that such struggles are not experienced uniformly: class, marital status, age, and transnational connections intersect to shape how much room women have to manoeuvre within

family and community structures. Some are silenced or constrained, while others find ways to assert autonomy. Understanding these layered, intimate dynamics is crucial for any gender-sensitive analysis of return migration.

Theme 5: Negotiating Autonomy and Voice

The return home for migrant women is often marked by a delicate and ongoing struggle to retain autonomy and reclaim their voice within social structures that may not recognize or value the transformation they experienced during migration. While time abroad may have fostered a sense of independence, confidence, and expanded horizons, the return to patriarchal societies frequently involves pressures to conform, silence, or submit. This theme explores how women navigate the tensions between internal empowerment and external expectations, often engaging in complex negotiations to assert their agency.

One woman, who returned to her rural hometown after working as a domestic helper in the West, reflected:

There, I made my own decisions—when to eat, when to rest, how to spend my money. Here, I have to ask my brother's permission to go to the market. It's like I've been reduced to half a person.

This excerpt highlights the sharp contrast between self-governance abroad and control at home, where even basic freedoms are retracted. Yet rather than accepting this shift passively, many women begin to strategically negotiate their place—not always through open defiance, but often through calculated compromises or subtle forms of resistance.

Another returnee shared:

“I didn't openly argue with my family about marriage. I said I need time to help the household first, then maybe I'll think about it. That gave me space. I'm saving money again. Quietly.”

Here, the woman employs a tactical delay, asserting her autonomy indirectly within acceptable boundaries. This reflects how resistance does not always need to be loud to be effective. In societies where overt defiance may result in backlash or punishment, many women adopt quiet resilience to maintain their agency.

The balance between silence and resistance is a recurring theme in these narratives. One woman who returned after receiving higher education abroad noted:

“I don’t challenge everything. But I speak when it matters. At community meetings, I ask questions. People are surprised, but they listen. That’s my way of showing I haven’t gone back to being invisible.” This statement demonstrates how voice becomes a tool of reasserting presence. Even in constrained environments, some women find ways to participate, influence, and express, without entirely clashing with cultural expectations. Their acts of speaking up, however small, reflect a reclaiming of power.

Yet, for others, silence can be both a shield and a cost. A woman explained:

“I’ve stopped sharing my opinions. People say I’ve changed too much. It hurts, but I choose peace. Maybe one day they’ll accept who I am now.”

This reflects the emotional toll of silencing oneself to preserve relationships, a sacrifice that many women feel forced to make during reintegration. Still, this silence is not necessarily surrender—it is often a temporary pause in an ongoing process of negotiation.

In conclusion, the negotiation of autonomy and voice is a daily, lived process for women returnees, shaped by fear, hope, resistance, and compromise. Butler’s concept of performativity highlights how these women continuously enact and re-enact gendered norms within the home and community, where silence, compliance, or defiance becomes performative acts that both sustain and challenge patriarchal order. Their return is not simply adaptation but a process of reshaping social and gendered spaces through repeated performances of identity. At the same time, Crenshaw’s notion of intersectionality underscores that these negotiations are not uniform. Women’s experiences of autonomy and constraint are mediated by class, age, marital status, and transnational networks, which create unequal vulnerabilities and possibilities for resistance. Some women are pushed into silence, while others mobilize resources to reassert agency. Together, these perspectives reveal return migration as a deeply gendered and uneven process of transformation.

Conclusion

Women’s return migration is far more than a logistical process; it is a deeply gendered and political negotiation. Reintegration unfolds within

families and communities where expectations, surveillance, and moral policing seek to reassert patriarchal authority. For returnee women, this journey is not only about adapting to a changed lifestyle but also about confronting cultural scripts that shape their roles, rights, and respect. Their responses vary—ranging from silence and compliance to resistance and resilience—yet all highlight the contested nature of re-entering home. Class, marital status, age, and transnational connections further influence how women experience autonomy, vulnerability, and power upon return. Some face silencing and alienation, while others draw upon resources and networks to challenge or reshape norms. Ultimately, return migration emerges as a transformative process, marked by tension, struggle, and possibility, demanding reintegration policies attentive to its emotional, cultural, and identity-based complexities.

REFERENCES

- Abdullah, F. (2016). Eliminating Lingual Heir of AJK Migrants in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. *International Journal of Scientific & Engineering Research -IJSER* 7 (11), 2101-2114.
- Abdullah, F., & Nisar, N. (2024). Women Academicians and Autonomy: Constructing Identities in Higher Education. *International Journal of Social Sciences Bulletin*, 2(4), 1053-1060. <https://ijssbulletin.com/index.php/IJSSB/article/view/161>
- Abdullah, F., & Ullah, H. (2016). Physical Violence on Women: A Comparative Study of Rural and Urban Areas of Muzaffarabad, Azad Jammu and Kashmir. *Journal of Gender and Social Issues*, 15(2), 113. <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A497793910/AONE?u=anon~54132f5b&sid=googleScholar&xid=c3282c17>
- Abdullah, F., & Ullah, H. (2022). Lived Experiences of Women Academicians in Higher Education Institutions of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. *South Asian Studies*, 37(02), 323-340. <https://sasj.pu.edu.pk/9/article/view/1292>

- Abdullah, F., Habib, A., & Gillani, N. (2021). Migration, Remittances and Well-being of Recipient Families. *Migration*, 8(02), 2021.
- Abdullah, F., Matloob, T., & Malik, A. (2024). Decision-Making Trajectories of Working Women in Azad Jammu and Kashmir. *Policy Research Journal*, 2(4), 2189-2197.
- Abdullah, F., Nisar, N., & Ahmed, N. (2025). Career Trajectories of Women Academics in Higher Education of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. *The Knowledge*, 4(2), 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.63062/tk/2k25b.42057>
- Abdullah, F., Sultana, R., & Nisar, N. (2025). Female Faculty Navigating Professional Journeys in Higher Education of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. *ProScholar Insights*, 4(2), 179-187. <https://doi.org/10.55737/psi.2025b42093>
- Abdullah, F., Ahmed, N., Shaheen, I., & Sultana, R. (2024). Women academicians' career progression in higher education of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. *Regional Lens*, 3(1), 86-94. <https://doi.org/10.62997/rl.2024.31042>
- Abdullah, F., Nisar, N., & Malik, A. (2024). Gendered higher education and women academicians' career development. *The Regional Tribune*, 3(1), 418-428. <https://doi.org/10.63062/trt/v24.076>
- Amrith, M., & Sahraoui, N. (2018). *Gender, work and migration: Agency in gendered labour settings*: Routledge.
- Benson, M., & O'reilly, K. (2009). Migration and the search for a better way of life: a critical exploration of lifestyle migration. *The sociological review*, 57(4), 608-625.
- Boyd, M., & Grieco, E. (2014). Women and migration: Incorporating gender into international migration theory.
- Butler, J. (1990). *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge.
- Carling, J. (2005). Gender dimensions of international migration. *Global migration perspectives*, 35(1), 1-26.
- Christou, A., & Kofman, E. (2022). Gendered migrations and conceptual approaches: Theorising and researching mobilities. In *Gender and migration: IMISCOE short reader* (pp. 13-31): Springer.
- Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 1989(1), 139-167.
- Dannecker, P. (2009). Migrant visions of development: A gendered approach. *Population, Space and Place*, 15(2), 119-132.
- Erel, U., Morokvasic, M., & Shinozaki, K. (2003). Introduction. Bringing gender into migration. In *Crossing Borders and Shifting Boundaries: Vol. I: Gender on the Move* (pp. 9-22): Springer.
- Etzold, B. (2017). Mobility, space and livelihood trajectories: New perspectives on migration, translocality and place-making for livelihood studies. In *Livelihoods and development* (pp. 44-68): Brill.
- Freedman, J. (2017). Women's experience of forced migration: Gender-based forms of insecurity and the uses of "vulnerability". In *A gendered approach to the Syrian refugee crisis* (pp. 125-141): Routledge.
- Ghosh, J. (2009). Migration and gender empowerment: Recent trends and emerging issues.
- Giri, A. (2024). In *Pursuit of Success: Transnational Migration and Livelihood Outcomes in Rural Nepal*. Case Western Reserve University,
- Green, N. L. (2013). Changing paradigms in migration studies: From men to women to gender. *Gender History Across Epistemologies*, 262-278.
- Hondagneu-Sotelo, P., & Cranford, C. (2006). Gender and migration. In *Handbook of the Sociology of Gender* (pp. 105-126): Springer.
- Jolly, S., Reeves, H., & Piper, N. (2005). Gender and migration: Overview report. *Trabajo y empleo*.
- King, R., Thomson, M., Fielding, T., & Warnes, T. (2006). Time, generations and gender in migration and settlement. *The dynamics of international migration and settlement in Europe*, 233(68), 1.

- Kofman, E. (2004). Gendered global migrations. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 6(4), 643-665.
- Kofman, E. (2019). Gender and the feminisation of migration. *The SAGE Handbook of International Migration*. SAGE, 216-231.
- Lutz, H. (2010). Gender in the migratory process. *Journal of ethnic and migration studies*, 36(10), 1647-1663.
- Mahler, S. J., & Pessar, P. R. (2006). Gender matters: Ethnographers bring gender from the periphery toward the core of migration studies. *International migration review*, 40(1), 27-63.
- Maupin, J. N., Ross, N., & Timura, C. A. (2011). Gendered experiences of migration and conceptual knowledge of illness. *Journal of immigrant and minority health*, 13(3), 600-608.
- Morokvašić, M. (2014). Gendering migration. *Migracijske i etničke teme*(3), 355-378.
- Morokvasic, M. (2015). Migration and gender. In *Routledge handbook of immigration and refugee studies* (pp. 54-63): Routledge.
- Nawyn, S. J. (2010). Gender and migration: Integrating feminist theory into migration studies. *Sociology Compass*, 4(9), 749-765.
- Paul, A. M. (2015). Negotiating migration, performing gender. *Social forces*, 94(1), 271-293.
- Phizacklea, A. (2017). Migration theory and migratory realities: A gendered perspective? In *International migration in the new millennium* (pp. 131-150): Routledge.
- Piper, N. (2005). Gender and migration. *Policy analysis and research programme of the Global Commission on International Migration*, 7.
- Piper, N. (2006). Gendering the politics of migration 1. *International migration review*, 40(1), 133-164.
- Rafiq, N., Abdullah, F., & Rehmani, T. (2024). Nexus of Familial Migration and Educational Credentials of Children of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. *International Journal of Human and Society (IJHS)* 4 (2), 950-959
- Rafiq, N., Abdullah, F., & Rehmani, T. (2024). MIGRATION AND IDENTITY CRISIS: A HOLISTIC PERSPECTIVE OF MIGRANTS. *International Journal of Contemporary Issues in Social Sciences* 3 (1), 2045-2053