HO CHI MINH NATIONAL ACADEMY OF POLITICS

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CHANGES IN GENDER RELATIONS IN HMONG FAMILIES IN THE NORTHERN MIDLANDS AND MOUNTAINOUS REGION OF VIETNAM TODAY

SUMMARY OF THE DOCTORAL DISSERTATION
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INTRODUCTION

1. Rationale for the Study

Gender relations are sociohistorical relations formed and transformed in connection with the economic conditions, livelihood patterns, cultural value systems, and social institutions of a community. The family is a fundamental social institution in which gender roles, responsibilities, and power relations are established, maintained, or adjusted in everyday life. Within the family, relations between spouses are central and are manifested primarily in the division of labor, access to and control over resources, decision-making processes, and the enjoyment of development outcomes. Studying family gender relations therefore helps identify the extent to which gender equality is realized and the social conditions that support the sustainable development of families and communities.

Internationally, gender equality (GE) is recognized as a principle associated with human rights and affirmed in United Nations instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979). The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development further calls for the elimination of discrimination and violence against women and for the sharing of care responsibilities within families. These commitments demonstrate that gender inequality in families not only directly constrains members' rights and development opportunities but may also reproduce inequality in other spheres of social life.

In Vietnam, equality between women and men has long received attention from the Communist Party and the State and has progressively been institutionalized in policies and legislation. The principle of equal rights for women and men was established in the 1946 Constitution and further specified in subsequent constitutions and legal documents. This provides an important foundation for building Vietnamese families characterized by progress, civility, prosperity, and happiness, as articulated in the documents of the Fourteenth National Party Congress. Nevertheless, gaps persist

between Party orientations, legal provisions, and everyday practices, particularly in certain ethnic minority areas where development conditions remain difficult and traditional cultural norms exert considerable influence.

The Hmong are one of the largest ethnic minority groups in Vietnam, residing predominantly in the Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region (NMMR). Socioeconomic conditions, together with distinctive cultural characteristics, customary law, and clan institutions, have profoundly shaped gender relations in Hmong families. During Vietnam's renovation process (Doi Moi), socioeconomic development, expanded access to education, and the implementation of gender equality policies have facilitated changes in gender relations between spouses, particularly through women's increased participation in economic and social activities and family decision-making. However, these changes have been uneven, with progressive developments coexisting with the continuing influence of patriarchal ideology. Women's expanding roles have not necessarily translated into substantive equality in decision-making authority and control over resources. This reality calls for a systematic examination of the dialectical relationship between changes in socioeconomic conditions and changes in gender relations, while also considering the relative autonomy of cultural factors, customary law, and traditional institutions and their reciprocal effects on changes in gender relations. Such an examination is essential for identifying the direction and extent of these changes and the factors shaping them, thereby providing a basis for proposing context-appropriate solutions.

Although studies have examined families and gender relations among ethnic minority communities, in-depth research on changes in gender relations in Hmong families from a social-philosophical perspective remains limited, especially amid rapid socioeconomic transformation and contemporary integration.

On these theoretical and practical grounds, the doctoral candidate selected ***"Changes in Gender Relations in Hmong Families in the Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region of Vietnam Today***" as the topic of a doctoral dissertation in Dialectical Materialism and Historical Materialism.

2. Research Aim and Tasks

2.1. Research Aim

By clarifying selected theoretical issues and analyzing changes in gender relations between spouses in Hmong families in Vietnam's NMMR today, the dissertation seeks to propose guiding perspectives and solutions to promote more egalitarian and progressive gender relations in accordance with the sustainable development needs of the region and the country.

2.2. Research Tasks

- Review research relevant to the dissertation topic.
- Systematize and synthesize theoretical issues concerning changes in gender relations in Hmong families in the NMMR.
- Analyze the current manifestations of these changes, their causes, and the issues they raise.
- Propose guiding perspectives and solutions to promote progressive and egalitarian changes consistent with current sustainable development requirements.

3. Research Object and Scope

3.1. Research Object

Changes in gender relations in Hmong families in the Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region.

3.2. Research Scope

In terms of content: The dissertation examines changes in gender relations between husbands and wives along two principal dimensions. First, changes in the division of labor, encompassing income-generating productive work, domestic and family care work, and participation in community activities. Second, changes in participation in decisions concerning production, expenditures, children's education, and other important family matters, assessed through participation in discussions, the influence of each spouse's views, final decision-making authority, and control over resources. These dimensions directly reflect the allocation of responsibilities and the relative positions of spouses. Indicators of asset ownership, family representation in social relations, and enjoyment of benefits provide

supplementary evidence. The dissertation does not equate spouses' "joint participation" with substantive gender equality.

In terms of geographical coverage: Vietnam's NMMR currently comprises nine provinces. Fieldwork was conducted in three locations: Dong Van Commune, Tuyen Quang Province; and Bac Ha Commune and Mu Cang Chai Commune, Lao Cai Province. Household respondents belonged to families in which both spouses were present and at least one spouse was Hmong. The dissertation consistently uses the Vietnamese ethnonym "Mông" in accordance with Official Letter No. 1488/UBDT-CSDT of 9 September 2022 issued by the Committee for Ethnic Minority Affairs; alternative spellings such as "Hmông" or "H'mông" are retained only in original source titles or verbatim quotations. For the purposes of the dissertation, gender relations are examined primarily between spouses.

In terms of time: The dissertation considers changes in gender relations from the implementation of the Law on Gender Equality (enacted in 2006 and effective from 2007). Primary data were collected through a cross-sectional research design in late 2024 and early 2025; consequently, the same households were not followed continuously throughout the study period. Changes over time are identified by comparing the dissertation's survey findings with historical materials, previous studies, and published data from earlier periods. Some pre-2007 sources are also used to establish a baseline and clarify the historical context.

4. Theoretical Foundations and Research Methods

4.1. Theoretical Foundations

The dissertation is grounded in Marxist-Leninist theory and methodology and Ho Chi Minh's thought on human beings, the family, women's emancipation, and equality between women and men. It also applies the Party's viewpoints and guidelines and the State's policies and laws on gender equality, family development, and the development of ethnic minority areas.

It selectively draws on domestic and international theories, research findings, and reports by international organizations concerning gender

relations, families, social change, and gender equality among ethnic minorities generally and Hmong communities in the NMMR specifically.

4.2. Research Methods

Grounded in the methodology of dialectical and historical materialism, the dissertation combines philosophical and interdisciplinary methods to clarify the interconnections among material conditions, social consciousness, institutions, and the agency of social actors in changing gender relations, as follows:

Historical and logical methods: to clarify the development and transformation of gender relations in Hmong families.

Analysis and synthesis: to systematize theoretical foundations and analyze current conditions and trends.

Comparison and contrast: to identify differences between traditional patterns and contemporary trends.

Gender analysis: to assess changes in roles, status, power, and resource allocation between spouses.

Ethnographic methods: through fieldwork to capture cultural characteristics and corroborate research findings.

Sociological survey methods: questionnaires and in-depth interviews were conducted at three study sites, covering 459 Hmong households and 125 local officials and teachers. Quantitative data were processed using SPSS 20 and combined with secondary documents and qualitative evidence to examine the current situation and trends in family gender relations.

5. Original Contributions of the Dissertation

- *Theoretical contribution*: The dissertation conceptualizes changes in gender relations as directionally neutral, distinguishing change itself from gender equality as an evaluative norm. It develops an analytical framework comprising two dimensions-the division of labor and decision-making processes-and explains the reciprocal interactions among material conditions, social consciousness, institutions, and the agency of social actors.

- *Empirical contribution*: By integrating three layers of evidence-published materials, a cross-sectional quantitative survey, and qualitative

evidence-the dissertation identifies uneven changes across spheres, generations, and localities, and highlights potential gaps between women's participation and their final decision-making authority, property rights, and control over resources.

- *Contributions to perspectives and solutions*: The dissertation links five identified issues to four guiding perspectives and five culturally specific groups of solutions. It emphasizes the shared responsibilities of women, men, families, clans, communities, and the political system in the context of the two-tier local government model and Phase II (2026-2030) of the National Target Program for Socioeconomic Development in Ethnic Minority and Mountainous Areas.

6. Theoretical and Practical Significance

6.1. Theoretical Significance

The dissertation contributes to applying dialectical and historical materialist approaches to gender relations as sociohistorical relations and clarifies the links among material conditions, social consciousness, institutions, and actors' agency in changing gender relations within Hmong families.

6.2. Practical Significance

The survey findings and arguments may inform the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of policies on gender equality, families, and ethnic minority development, particularly interventions relating to the division of labor, property rights, decision-making authority, and substantive participation by Hmong women.

The findings may also serve as reference materials for research, teaching, and learning on social philosophy, the family, gender equality, gender relations, and changes in gender relations among ethnic minority communities.

7. Structure of the Dissertation

In addition to the introduction, conclusion, list of the author's related publications, references, and appendices, the dissertation consists of four chapters and eleven sections.

Chapter 1
OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH RELEVANT TO THE DISSERTATION TOPIC

1.1. STUDIES ON THE THEORY OF GENDER RELATIONS, CHANGES IN FAMILY GENDER RELATIONS, AND HMONG FAMILIES IN THE NORTHERN MIDLANDS AND MOUNTAINOUS REGION

Studies on the theory of gender, gender relations, and changes in gender relations: Notable works by Phan Thanh Khoi, Do Thi Thach, Trinh Quoc Tuan, Nguyen Huu Minh, Nghiem Sy Liem, Truong Thu Trang, Pham Van Bich, and others have clarified the concepts of gender, gender relations, gender equality, the gender division of labor, decision-making authority within families, and factors influencing changes in gender relations. These studies establish that gender relations are historically conditioned social phenomena shaped by economic, cultural, political, and normative contexts.

Studies on ethnic minority and Hmong families: Works by Vuong Duy Quang, Nguyen Thi Ha, Tran Le Thanh, Ho Ly Giang, and Ma Thi Thanh Hieu elucidate Hmong family characteristics and the roles of clans, customary law, traditional cultural institutions, and gender norms. They thereby help identify the characteristics of patrilineal family structures and the mechanisms sustaining gender relations within Hmong communities.

1.2. STUDIES ON THE CURRENT CHANGES IN GENDER RELATIONS IN ETHNIC MINORITY AND HMONG FAMILIES IN THE NORTHERN MIDLANDS AND MOUNTAINOUS REGION

Representative contributions include those of Tran Huu Son, Dang Thi Hoa, Lanh Thi Bich Hoa, Vi Van An, Dam Thi Uyen, Phung Thi Sinh, Vuong Duy Quang, Nguyen Thi Ha, Ho Ly Giang, UN Women, the World Bank, and other scholars. Collectively, these studies document changes in family gender relations among ethnic minorities and the Hmong under the influence of market-oriented development, education, urbanization, cultural exchange, ethnic policies, and gender equality initiatives. They

indicate that women's economic roles and status have improved and that joint participation by spouses in production, family care, and decision-making has become more common. At the same time, they demonstrate the persistence of traditional culture, customary law, son preference, and patrilineal family structures in shaping the division of labor and power relations.

1.3. STUDIES ON PERSPECTIVES AND SOLUTIONS FOR PROMOTING MORE EGALITARIAN AND PROGRESSIVE GENDER RELATIONS IN ETHNIC MINORITY AND HMONG FAMILIES IN THE NORTHERN MIDLANDS AND MOUNTAINOUS REGION

Relevant authors include M. Evertsson, Nguyen Le Thu, Nguyen Thi Noi, Vu Thi Thanh Minh, and domestic and international organizations. Their studies propose measures to promote gender equality in ethnic minority families and communities, focusing on gender awareness, legal and policy improvements, household economic development, women's access to education and resources, and the roles of grassroots political institutions and respected community members. Regarding Hmong communities, the literature emphasizes combining gender equality with the preservation of positive traditional cultural values and strengthening women's status and agency.

1.4. SYNTHESIS OF THE REVIEWED RESEARCH AND ISSUES REQUIRING FURTHER INVESTIGATION

1.4.1. Synthesis of the Reviewed Studies

First, concerning the theory of changing gender relations in Hmong families in the NMMR: Previous studies have clarified gender, gender relations, gender equality, family gender relations, and their transformation, while initially examining the characteristics, dimensions, and determinants of change. Many identify the division of labor and decision-making authority as two central indicators of gender equality within families. These findings provide a theoretical basis for the dissertation's analytical framework.

Second, concerning the current situation, causes, and emerging issues: Existing studies generally indicate movement toward more egalitarian relations through greater sharing of labor and decision-making between spouses. They also identify the effects of socioeconomic conditions, culture,

education, and policy, together with persistent gender gaps, especially in ethnic minority areas.

Third, concerning perspectives and solutions: Previous studies recommend economic development, improved education, policy reform, stronger roles for women, and enhanced communication to promote gender equality. These provide important insights for developing context-sensitive perspectives and solutions for Hmong families.

Despite these contributions, no study identified in the reviewed literature has systematically examined changes in gender relations between spouses in Hmong families in the NMMR from a philosophical perspective while integrating theoretical foundations, empirical conditions, causes, emerging issues, and guiding perspectives and solutions. This constitutes the research gap addressed by the dissertation.

1.4.2. Issues Addressed by the Dissertation

First, the dissertation systematizes and synthesizes the theory of changing gender relations in Hmong families. By clarifying the concepts of gender, gender relations, gender equality, family gender relations, and changes therein, it establishes two analytical dimensions: the division of labor and decision-making processes. It also examines natural and material conditions, sociocultural factors, policy and law, marketization, modernization, integration, and digital communication. The framework emphasizes the interconnections among material conditions, social consciousness, institutions, and actors' agency.

Second, the dissertation analyzes empirical conditions using three layers of evidence: published materials and studies to establish historical context; a cross-sectional quantitative survey conducted in late 2024 and early 2025 to describe the sample; and interviews, group discussions, and observation for explanation and triangulation. Along the two analytical dimensions, it identifies the direction, extent, and unevenness of change, examines its causes, and identifies five issues. This design supports the identification of trends but does not establish causal changes within the same households since 2007.

Third, in response to the five issues, the dissertation formulates four guiding perspectives and five groups of solutions: awareness raising; livelihood development linked to control over resources; culturally responsive policy design and implementation; stronger grassroots coordination and engagement of respected community members; and women's agency alongside the responsibilities of men, families, and communities. These solutions are situated within the two-tier local government model and the National Target Program for 2026-2030.

Chapter 1 Summary

Chapter 2
CHANGES IN GENDER RELATIONS IN HMONG FAMILIES IN THE NORTHERN MIDLANDS AND MOUNTAINOUS REGION OF VIETNAM TODAY: SELECTED THEORETICAL ISSUES

2.1. KEY CONCEPTS OF THE DISSERTATION

2.1.1. The Concept of Gender

Gender is a social category reflecting the status, roles, responsibilities, and social relations of women and men formed under particular sociohistorical conditions. Unlike biological sex, gender is socially constructed, influenced by economic, cultural, and political conditions, and subject to change across stages of social development. Drawing on these theoretical perspectives, the dissertation defines gender as "*a social category referring to the status, roles, responsibilities, and social relations between women and men formed under particular sociohistorical conditions.*" Gender provides the starting point for examining social relations between women and men and for conceptualizing gender relations.

2.1.2. The Concept of Gender Relations

Whereas gender refers to the social attributes of women and men, gender relations concern their interactions under specific sociohistorical conditions. These relations encompass not only the allocation of roles but also the distribution of power and responsibilities and access to, control over, and

enjoyment of resources. Building on existing scholarship, the dissertation defines gender relations as *"the system of social relations between women and men that emerge, persist, and change under specific sociohistorical conditions, reflecting the allocation of and interaction among roles, status, power, and responsibilities, as well as the access of both genders to resources, their control over those resources, and their enjoyment of the benefits derived from them within the family and society."* This conception permits a comprehensive analysis of gender relations in particular social contexts and of the economic, cultural, and institutional factors shaping their change.

2.1.3. The Concept of Gender Equality

Gender equality is an objective of social development and a dimension reflecting the development of gender relations. It does not imply identical roles for women and men; rather, it requires equality in opportunities, rights, responsibilities, and conditions for development. Drawing on theory and Vietnamese law, the dissertation defines gender equality as "*a social condition in which women and men enjoy equal status, rights, responsibilities, and opportunities to participate in all spheres of social life, and are provided with equal conditions to develop their capacities, access development resources, and enjoy the benefits of development*." In this dissertation, gender equality serves as a criterion for evaluating the direction of changes in family gender relations.

2.1.4. Gender Relations within the Family

Family gender relations are the specific manifestation of gender relations within the family as a social institution. They reflect the allocation of roles, status, power, responsibilities, and access to and enjoyment of resources between women and men in performing family functions. Synthesizing previous perspectives, the dissertation defines family gender relations as the system of social relations between women and men within the family, reflecting the distribution of roles, status, responsibilities, and power, as well as access to, control over, and enjoyment of resources; these relations are formed and evolve under particular economic, cultural, and institutional conditions.

Within its defined scope, the dissertation focuses on gender relations between spouses along two closely related analytical dimensions. The first concerns the division of labor, including income-generating production, domestic and care work, and community participation. The second concerns decision-making, identified through participation in discussions, the weight accorded to each spouse's views, final decision-making authority, and control over resources. These dimensions directly reflect the allocation of responsibility and power between spouses; asset ownership, social representation, and benefit sharing are supplementary indicators. "Joint participation" is not treated as synonymous with substantive equality.

2.1.5. Changes in Gender Relations within the Family

Building on the concept of family gender relations and theories of social change, the dissertation approaches changes in gender relations as the evolution of spousal relations under economic, cultural, and social influences. It defines changes in family gender relations as "*The process of change in the extent, forms, and relative distribution of roles, responsibilities, status, access to and control over resources, and the weight of each spouse's voice in performing family functions; these changes are manifested primarily in the division of labor and decision-making processes under particular economic, cultural, social, and institutional conditions.*"

This central concept provides the theoretical basis for analyzing the current situation, trends, causes, and emerging issues and for proposing perspectives and solutions to promote egalitarian and progressive gender relations in Hmong families in Vietnam's NMMR.

2.2. GENDER RELATIONS AND THEIR CHANGES IN HMONG FAMILIES IN THE NORTHERN MIDLANDS AND MOUNTAINOUS REGION OF VIETNAM TODAY

2.2.1. Gender Relations in Hmong Families in the Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region: Concept and Characteristics

Hmong families share characteristics with Vietnamese families generally while also exhibiting distinctive historical, economic, cultural, and social features. Drawing on previous research, the dissertation conceptualizes gender relations in Hmong families in the NMMR as the system of social

relations between women and men within Hmong families, reflecting the allocation of roles, status, power, and responsibilities and access to, control over, and enjoyment of resources, formed and evolving under the specific economic, cultural, and social conditions of Hmong communities.

Gender relations in Hmong families display both general features of Vietnamese family gender relations and the following distinctive characteristics:

First, they are strongly marked by patrilineal and patriarchal structures. This fundamental characteristic reflects gendered power arrangements and provides a basis for identifying contemporary changes.

Second, they are strongly influenced by clan institutions and customary law. Spouses' autonomy in many family decisions therefore remains subject to constraints. Changes in the role of customary law, greater spousal autonomy, and reduced clan intervention are indicators of changing gender relations.

Third, traditional cultural gender norms exert substantial influence. Expectations regarding women's and men's roles, lineage continuity, son preference, ritual obligations, and customary practices continue to shape spousal status and responsibilities. While these norms help maintain cultural identity, they may also constrain women's opportunities and social standing.

Fourth, relatively pronounced inequalities persist in the division of labor, access to resources, and decision-making authority, demonstrating the continuing resilience of patriarchal structures.

These characteristics indicate both the relative stability of traditional cultural structures and the influence of socioeconomic development and integration. They provide a theoretical basis for examining the dimensions and trends of change.

2.2.2. Changes in Gender Relations in Hmong Families in the Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region: Concept and Dimensions

On the basis of the theory of changing family gender relations and the characteristics of Hmong families, the dissertation conceptualizes these changes as a process of movement and transformation in the relative roles,

status, responsibilities, and participation of spouses in fulfilling family functions, manifested primarily in the division of labor and participation in family decision-making, under the influence of economic, cultural, social, and traditional institutional conditions specific to Hmong communities.

The dissertation argues that change does not entail the complete replacement of traditional patterns by new ones. Rather, it is a transitional process in which continuity and innovation, traditional values and contemporary gender-equality orientations coexist. It reflects the influence of changes in social being on family gender relations. Accordingly, the analytical framework comprises two principal dimensions:

First, changes in the family division of labor, including (1) the division of productive labor between spouses; (2) the division of reproductive labor (domestic work and family care); and (3) the division of community-related labor. These dimensions capture changing economic roles, family responsibilities, and spousal sharing amid socioeconomic development.

Second, changes in participation in decision-making, including (1) decisions concerning productive activities and major household expenditures and (2) decisions concerning daily family life and routine spending. Changes are examined through spouses' participation, roles, and status in discussing, deciding, and implementing family matters.

These two dimensions constitute the dissertation's central analytical framework, ensuring consistency between its theoretical foundations, empirical investigation, and proposed solutions. They also underpin the evaluation of more egalitarian and progressive trends in Chapter 3 and the formulation of perspectives and solutions in Chapter 4.

2.3. FACTORS INFLUENCING CHANGES IN GENDER RELATIONS IN HMONG FAMILIES IN THE NORTHERN MIDLANDS AND MOUNTAINOUS REGION

2.3.1. Natural and Economic Conditions of the Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region

Natural conditions and the region's level of economic development form the material foundation directly shaping family organization and gender relations. Economic restructuring, infrastructure development, livelihood

diversification, and improved living standards gradually facilitate adjustments in labor allocation and expand women's family roles.

2.3.2. Sociocultural Factors among Hmong Communities in the Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region

Traditional cultural values, clan institutions, customary law, beliefs, educational attainment, and cultural exchange both shape Hmong identity and directly influence gender relations. Traditional cultural elements and contemporary gender-equality values coexist, contributing to the transitional and uneven character of change within families.

2.3.3. Party Guidelines and State Policies and Laws on the Development of Hmong Communities in the Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region

Party viewpoints, ethnic policies, gender-equality policies, and State legislation provide orientation and an institutional framework for changing gender relations in Hmong families. Socioeconomic development programs for ethnic minority areas, together with policies on gender equality, families, and human-resource development, have gradually improved women's status and encouraged more egalitarian and progressive relations.

2.3.4. Market Economy, International Integration, and Digital Communication

The expansion of the market economy, international integration, and digital communication has broadened Hmong communities' access to knowledge, employment, services, and new social values. These developments encourage changes in awareness, roles, status, and family organization and create impetus toward more democratic, flexible, and egalitarian gender relations.

The dissertation organizes these factors in terms of dialectical relationships among natural and economic conditions, sociocultural factors, institutional influences, and the contemporary development context. This framework supports the explanation of empirical patterns in Chapter 3 and the formulation of appropriate perspectives and solutions in Chapter 4.

Chapter 2 Summary

Chapter 3
CHANGES IN GENDER RELATIONS IN HMONG FAMILIES IN THE NORTHERN MIDLANDS AND MOUNTAINOUS REGION OF VIETNAM TODAY: CURRENT SITUATION, CAUSES, AND EMERGING ISSUES

3.1. CURRENT CHANGES IN GENDER RELATIONS IN HMONG FAMILIES IN THE NORTHERN MIDLANDS AND MOUNTAINOUS REGION OF VIETNAM

3.1.1. Changes in Gender Relations in the Family Division of Labor

3.1.1.1. Changes in the Division of Productive Labor between Spouses

The findings indicate a shift from rigid gender-based assignments of productive work toward more flexible arrangements and greater cooperation between spouses. “Joint participation by husband and wife” has become increasingly common; women’s economic roles have expanded, and gender differences in labor allocation tend to diminish. However, changes remain uneven across tasks, generations, and localities; work requiring technical expertise or physical strength, or involving symbolic authority is still predominantly performed by men.

3.1.1.2. Changes in the Division of Reproductive Work (Domestic and Care Work) between Spouses

In reproductive labor, greater sharing of responsibilities is increasingly evident, particularly among younger families. Men participate more in domestic tasks and childcare, while family life is organized through greater spousal cooperation. Nevertheless, women continue to undertake most reproductive labor, indicating the persistence of traditional gender norms.

3.1.1.3. Changes in Spouses' Participation in Community Activities

Women's participation in social and community activities tends to increase, but change is slower than in productive and reproductive labor. Men continue to dominate family representation, clan relations, and community institutions. The community sphere thus remains an area in which traditional gender norms are relatively resilient.

3.1.2. Changes in Gender Relations in Spouses' Decision-Making Authority over Family Matters

3.1.2.1. Changes in Decisions on Productive Activities and Major Household Expenditures

Women's participation in decisions on production, investment, and major expenditures has expanded, with increasing consultation and joint decision-making between spouses. Nevertheless, economic practices have changed more rapidly than asset ownership and decisions associated with symbolic authority. Men retain a predominant role in matters concerning property, clans, and family representation.

3.1.2.2. Changes in Decisions on Daily Family Life and Routine Expenditures

For decisions concerning everyday family organization and routine spending, "joint discussion and joint decision-making" has become increasingly common. Wives play a greater role in household financial management and family organization. Nevertheless, decisions concerning cultural and spiritual life, community relations, and symbolically significant activities remain strongly influenced by traditional patriarchal arrangements.

Overall, changes in Hmong family gender relations do not amount to the complete replacement of traditional patterns. They are transitional, combining traditional patriarchal values with contemporary gender-

equality orientations. Change is more rapid in economic activities and everyday life, but slower in matters associated with symbolic power, clan institutions, and cultural and spiritual practices. The extent of change also differs across generations and places of residence. These findings provide a basis for examining causes, emerging issues, and policy responses.

3.2. CAUSES AND EMERGING ISSUES ASSOCIATED WITH CHANGES IN GENDER RELATIONS IN HMONG FAMILIES IN THE NORTHERN MIDLANDS AND MOUNTAINOUS REGION OF VIETNAM TODAY

3.2.1. Causes of Changes in Gender Relations in Hmong Families

3.2.1.1. Socioeconomic Causes

The dissertation identifies socioeconomic development as a fundamental driver of change. Economic restructuring, livelihood diversification, commodity production, community-based tourism, expanded credit, and labor migration have helped strengthen women's economic roles and participation in household management and joint decisions. However, uneven development across localities and limited access to and control over resources, particularly land ownership rights, continue to constrain change.

3.2.1.2. Institutional and Policy Causes

Party guidelines and State policies and laws on gender equality, families, ethnic affairs, and development in ethnic minority areas have established an important institutional framework for change. Through development programs and projects and the activities of grassroots political institutions, gender-equality values have gradually entered norms of conduct in Hmong families and communities. Their effectiveness nevertheless depends on implementation conditions and the cultural characteristics of each locality.

3.2.1.3. Cognitive and Cultural Causes

Alongside the positive effects of education, communication, and cultural exchange, patriarchal values, customary law, beliefs, and clan institutions continue to shape the distribution of roles, power, and status between spouses. Changes in gender relations therefore depend not only on economic development but also on shifts in cultural norms and social consciousness.

3.2.2. Issues Arising from Changes in Gender Relations in Hmong Families

3.2.2.1. Contradiction between Changes in Practices and Slow Changes in Gender Awareness and Norms

3.2.2.2. Contradiction between the Requirement for Substantive Equality and Limited Access to and Control over Resources

3.2.2.3. Contradiction between Policy Orientations and Their Context-Specific Adaptation to Cultural and Local Conditions

3.2.2.4. Contradiction between Implementation Capacity and Coordination Mechanisms among Grassroots Actors

3.2.2.5. Contradiction between the Capacities of Women, Men, and Communities and the Conditions Enabling Their Participation in Changing Gender Relations

The analysis confirms that changes in Hmong family gender relations result from the combined influence of socioeconomic, cultural, and institutional factors. The process is conditioned by social being while also shaped by traditional cultural institutions and social consciousness. This provides the theoretical and empirical basis for the guiding perspectives and solutions advanced in Chapter 4.

Chapter 3 Summary

Chapter 4
GUIDING PERSPECTIVES AND SOLUTIONS FOR PROMOTING CHANGES IN GENDER RELATIONS TOWARD GREATER EQUALITY AND PROGRESS IN HMONG FAMILIES IN THE NORTHERN MIDLANDS AND MOUNTAINOUS REGION OF VIETNAM

4.1. GUIDING PERSPECTIVES FOR PROMOTING CHANGES IN GENDER RELATIONS TOWARD GREATER EQUALITY AND PROGRESS IN HMONG FAMILIES IN THE NORTHERN MIDLANDS AND MOUNTAINOUS REGION OF VIETNAM

4.1.1. Promoting Egalitarian and Progressive Changes in Hmong Family Gender Relations Must Be Linked to the Region's Sustainable Socioeconomic Development Strategy

Changes in gender relations must be situated within the overall development strategy for the NMMR. Socioeconomic development is both a condition and a driving force for changes in women's roles, status, and participation rights within families.

4.1.2. Promoting More Egalitarian and Progressive Gender Relations Must Be Linked to Building Prosperous, Progressive, Happy, and Civilized Vietnamese Families and Upholding Positive Hmong Cultural Values

Promoting egalitarian family relations requires combining the development of modern Vietnamese families with the preservation and promotion of positive Hmong cultural values, while gradually eliminating customs that hinder gender equality and family development.

4.1.3. Promoting More Egalitarian and Progressive Changes Must Ensure Consistency between Policy Orientations and Grassroots Social Realities

The implementation of gender-equality policies must be adapted to the economic conditions, culture, customs, and development levels of Hmong communities to ensure feasibility and effectiveness.

4.1.4. Promoting More Egalitarian and Progressive Changes Must Foster the Initiative and Capacity for Self-Transformation of Actors within Hmong Families and Communities

Women, men, families, and Hmong communities should be empowered as active agents in transforming gender norms. State support must be combined with communities' own capacity for change to achieve sustainable outcomes.

4.2. SOLUTIONS FOR PROMOTING CHANGES IN GENDER RELATIONS TOWARD GREATER EQUALITY AND PROGRESS IN HMONG FAMILIES IN THE NORTHERN MIDLANDS AND MOUNTAINOUS REGION OF VIETNAM

4.2.1. Raising Stakeholders' Awareness of the Significance and Importance of Egalitarian and Progressive Gender Relations in Hmong Families

Strengthen outreach, education, and communication to raise awareness and challenge traditional gender stereotypes and enhance stakeholders' responsibilities for building egalitarian and progressive families.

4.2.2. Developing Household Economies, Diversifying Livelihoods, and Strengthening Hmong Women's Access to and Control over Resources

Promote sustainable livelihoods, expand employment opportunities, and improve women's access to and control over economic resources to establish the material foundations for changes in gender relations.

4.2.3. Improving Institutions, Policies, and Policy Implementation for Gender Equality in Ways Appropriate to Hmong Cultural Characteristics

Continue improving policies and implementation effectiveness while strengthening gender mainstreaming in development programs for ethnic minority areas.

4.2.4. Improving Coordination within Grassroots Political Institutions and Mobilizing Respected Hmong Community Members to Promote Egalitarian and Progressive Family Gender Relations

Strengthen the roles of Party committees, local authorities, sociopolitical organizations, and respected community members in encouraging changes in gender norms and creating a supportive social environment.

4.2.5. Strengthening Hmong Women's Agency while Increasing the Responsibilities of Men, Families, and Communities in Promoting Egalitarian and Progressive Gender Relations

Improve women's capacities, status, and participation rights; encourage men to share responsibilities; and establish mechanisms enabling Hmong families and communities to participate actively in creating new, more egalitarian and progressive gender norms.

A notable contribution of Chapter 4 is its integrated system of guiding perspectives and solutions derived from the causes and issues identified in the process of change. It emphasizes not only economic development, institutional improvement, and preservation of positive cultural values but also the agency of Hmong women, men, and communities as a decisive condition for turning external influences into endogenous, sustainable changes in family gender relations.

Chapter 4 Summary

CONCLUSION

The study of "Changes in Gender Relations in Hmong Families in the Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region of Vietnam Today" is significant both theoretically and practically. Grounded in dialectical and historical materialism, the dissertation approaches gender relations in Hmong families as a distinctive form of social relations that continuously develop and change under the influence of economic, cultural, and social conditions and social institutions. The principal conclusions are as follows:

1. The dissertation systematically reviews and selectively analyzes domestic and international studies of gender relations, gender equality, ethnic minority families, and Hmong families, identifying established scholarly contributions and gaps requiring further investigation. The review finds that, despite extensive research on families, gender, and gender equality, no study identified has systematically examined changes in spousal gender relations in Hmong families in the NMMR from a philosophical perspective while integrating theory, empirical conditions, influencing factors, emerging issues, and a system of guiding perspectives and solutions. This finding informs the dissertation's research direction and theoretical framework.

2. The dissertation develops a philosophical theoretical framework for examining changes in Hmong family gender relations. Drawing selectively on previous research, it clarifies key analytical concepts, identifies two fundamental dimensions-the division of labor between spouses and family decision-making processes-and explains the relevant groups of influencing factors. The framework emphasizes the dialectical interconnections among material conditions, social consciousness, institutions, and actors' agency, thereby supporting the identification of the extent, direction, and unevenness of change.

3. The findings indicate a trend toward greater sharing of responsibilities and consultation between spouses and a gradual strengthening of women's voices in Hmong families in the NMMR. However, change is uneven across spheres, generations, and localities. It is more evident in labor allocation and everyday decisions, while property rights, final decision-making authority, ritual practices, and clan representation remain strongly influenced by patriarchal structures. The 2025

cross-sectional survey, interpreted alongside previous research and qualitative evidence, permits identification of trends but does not demonstrate a causal sequence of changes within the same households since 2007. Philosophically, changes in gender relations involve the coexistence of innovation and continuity, and tensions between socioeconomic development requirements and the resilience of cultural norms. On this basis, the dissertation identifies five issues to be addressed in promoting egalitarian, progressive, and sustainable gender relations.

4. Building on its theoretical and empirical findings, the dissertation establishes a set of methodological guiding perspectives and proposes five groups of solutions for changing gender relations in Hmong families in the NMMR. Its contribution lies not merely in specific recommendations but in an approach that understands change as a coordinated transformation of socioeconomic conditions, cultural institutions, and actors' capacities. Economic development, institutional improvement, shifts in awareness, the roles of grassroots political institutions, and the strengthening of women's agency are mutually connected and reinforcing. Accordingly, change cannot be achieved through any single factor: it requires combining economic development with cultural development, policy implementation with community capacities, and the preservation of positive traditions with the transformation of practices no longer appropriate to contemporary conditions. This also constitutes a methodological contribution to the study and promotion of gender relations in Vietnam's ethnic minority families.

Overall, the dissertation contributes to extending and deepening the philosophical foundations for studying changes in gender relations in Hmong families and provides scientific and practical grounds for designing, improving, and implementing policies on gender equality, families, and ethnic minority development. Its findings are relevant not only to promoting more egalitarian, progressive, and sustainable gender relations in Hmong families in the NMMR but also to developing social-philosophical approaches to gender relations in other ethnic minority families, thereby supporting research, teaching, and policymaking in the contemporary context of development and integration.

LIST OF THE AUTHOR'S PUBLISHED SCIENTIFIC WORKS RELATED TO THE DISSERTATION

1. Ta Thi Thanh Tam (2025), "Early Marriage among Hmong Communities in Vietnam's Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region: Current Situation and Causes", *Vietnamese Journal of Women's Studies,* ISSN 2615-9007, Vol. 30, pp. 43-50.
2. Ta Thi Thanh Tam (2025), "Hmong Families in Vietnam: From Traditional to Modern Value Systems", *Journal of Socialism: Theory and Practice*, ISSN 2615-9473, No. 39, pp. 44-51.
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5. Ta Thi Thanh Tam (2026), "Hmong Women's Candidacy for People's Councils: Opportunities, Barriers, and Emerging Issues", *Vietnamese Journal of Women's Studies,* ISSN 2615-9007, Special Issue 02, pp. 273-287. DOI: https://doi.org/10.65607/21sp226.