

When the Homeland Calls: Transnational Practices, Return Intentions, and the Political Integration of Vietnamese Migrants in Poland

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Submitted: 26 April 2025. Accepted: 28 November 2025. Published: 31 December 2025

Volume 34, 2026. pp. 859–883. <http://doi.org/10.25133/JPSSv342026.043>

Abstract

This study examines how Vietnamese immigrants' transnational practices shape political integration in Poland, focusing on both latent and manifest forms of political participation. It asks whether political and non-political transnationalism act as complements or substitutes, and how return intentions moderate these relationships. The analysis employs complementarity and substitution perspectives on transnationalism and incorporates Carling and Pettersen's model of return intentions as a moderating factor in explaining the integration-transnationalism nexus. Quantitative analyses with robustness checks assess the impact of political and non-political transnational practices on political integration, with particular attention to the moderating role of return intentions. Transnational practices significantly influence political integration, though effects vary by participation type. Political transnationalism generally fosters host-country political participation through spillover effects within corresponding domains. By contrast, non-political practices, particularly family visits, may weaken integration by sustaining attachment to the homeland. Return intentions have a limited direct effect but condition these relationships by amplifying some influences and moderating others. By disaggregating political and non-political transnational practices and testing return intentions as a moderator, this study sharpens debates on whether "home" is a distraction or resource for integration, offering new evidence from Central and Eastern Europe.

Keywords

Political integration; return intention; transnationalism; Vietnamese in Poland

Introduction

The Vietnamese constitute one of the largest non-European immigrant populations in Poland, originating in the 1950s through state-sponsored exchanges under the “socialist fraternity” initiative (Szymańska-Matusiewicz, 2019). After 1989, migration diversified to include contract workers and, more recently, independent students and laborers, forming a diaspora of over 27,000, among the largest Asian communities in Poland (Statistics Poland, 2020b). Pronounced sociocultural differences between Poland and Vietnam have triggered significant scholarly interest, particularly in Vietnamese immigrants’ socioeconomic adaptation, cultural identity, intergenerational relations, and transnational ties (Huu, 2021; Klorek & Szulecka, 2013; Nowicka, 2015; Szymańska-Matusiewicz, 2015, 2016).

The political dimension, however, has only recently attracted attention, with research on transnational activism (Szymańska-Matusiewicz, 2021, 2022), digital political engagement (An, 2022), and migrants’ participation in host-country politics (An, 2024; An & Phuong, 2024). Despite these contributions, systematic analysis of the interaction between transnational practices and migrant integration remains limited, even though this relationship has been extensively examined in international scholarship (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004; Morales & Morariu, 2011; Mügge, 2016).

Responding to this gap, the study asks two questions:

- (1) How do transnational practices affect Vietnamese immigrants’ political integration in Poland?
- (2) How do return intentions moderate the effects of political transnational practices on political integration?

To address these questions, the study adopts two contrasting frameworks on the nexus between transnationalism and integration: substitution and complementarity. The substitution view holds that strong transnational ties may hinder integration by reducing migrants’ engagement with the host society. In contrast, the complementarity perspective argues that transnationalism can facilitate integration by equipping migrants with transferable skills and political knowledge. These perspectives suggest that outcomes depend on the nature of transnationalism: non-political practices likely exert little influence, whereas political transnationalism may promote integration by providing resources relevant to participation (Morales & Morariu, 2011). Accordingly, this study examines both forms of transnationalism in shaping Vietnamese immigrants’ political integration in Poland.

Unlike prior studies treating return intention solely as an outcome of transnationalism, this analysis draws on Carling and Pettersen’s (2014) framework, which also views it as a driver of transnationalism and integration, to assess how return intentions moderate this relationship. Guided by these perspectives, the study expects that non-political practices inhibit integration, as they do not provide relevant knowledge and skills. In contrast, political transnationalism promotes integration by providing resources and competencies for political engagement. Moreover, the effect of political transnationalism is conditioned by migrants’ return intentions, which shape the extent to which cross-border engagement translates into host-country participation.

By doing so, the study carries broader implications for comparative migration scholarship. It extends debates on transnationalism and integration to Central and Eastern Europe, a region examined less systematically than Western Europe, and highlights the need to distinguish between political and non-political transnational practices while considering migrants' return orientations. These insights are particularly relevant for the Vietnamese in Poland, whose transnationalism is multifaceted, encompassing frequent geographical mobility—such as return visits—and the circulation of socioeconomic, cultural, and political remittances. Such practices reinforce ties between Vietnam and Poland and reflect the community's enduring loyalty to the homeland, rooted in the historical trajectory of state-sponsored exchanges with Eastern Europe during the communist era (An, 2022; Szymańska-Matusiewicz, 2014, 2016, 2019). In light of these dynamics, the study not only contends that Vietnamese migrants' political integration in Poland is shaped by their cross-border practices and sustained attachment to the country of origin, but also advances theoretical debates by demonstrating how transnationalism can simultaneously enable and constrain migrant incorporation depending on its nature and orientation.

Theoretical background

Transnationalism and political integration: What has been done in comparative perspectives?

Comparative scholarship on migration differs in focus, scope, and approach, and a review of international, Vietnam-focused, and Poland-based studies reveals both established insights and critical gaps, especially in understanding the political integration of Vietnamese immigrants in Poland. At the global level, research has produced extensive literature on integration and transnationalism, highlighting intersections between cross-border ties and migrants' social, economic, and political incorporation (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004; Mügge, 2016; Vertovec, 2003). Empirical evidence shows that transnational practices, including homeland political engagement and cross-border mobility, can foster civic participation in host societies (Bermudez, 2010) and reinforce political involvement (Morales & Morariu, 2011), though comparative studies also reveal trade-offs with host-country voting, as in the Netherlands (Mügge et al., 2019).

Vietnam-focused scholarship has broadly examined labor migration and socioeconomic outcomes, emphasizing remittances and household welfare (Dang et al., 2003; Nguyen & Locke, 2014). Remittances are shown to sustain rural livelihoods, expand access to education and health, and reshape household dynamics, including gender relations (Hoang & Yeoh, 2015; Nguyen & Locke, 2016). Reports further underscore Viet Nam's position as a leading remittance-receiving country (World Bank, 2016), yet political transnationalism and migrants' incorporation into host-country politics remain conspicuously absent.

In Poland, scholarship on the Vietnamese diaspora has broadly examined socioeconomic adaptation, cultural identity, intergenerational dynamics, and the roles of entrepreneurship, religion, and social capital in settlement (Grzymała-Kazłowska, 2015; Klorek & Szulecka, 2013; Nowicka, 2015; Szymańska-Matusiewicz, 2015, 2016, 2022). Another line of inquiry highlights the community's transnational character through cultural festivals, religious institutions, and networks linking Poland with Vietnam and other diasporic hubs (Szymańska-Matusiewicz, 2014, 2015, 2019). More recent work has turned to explicitly political themes, documenting

civic activism, participation in host-country politics, and digital engagement, but has yet to analyze the links between transnationalism and political integration systematically (An, 2022; An & Phuong, 2024; Szymańska-Matusiewicz, 2021, 2022). The main themes and gaps emerging from these three strands of research are summarized in Table 1, which provides a comparative overview of international, Vietnam-focused, and Poland-based scholarship on migration, transnationalism, and political integration.

Table 1: Comparative Overview of International, Vietnam-Focused, and Poland-Based Scholarship on Migration, Transnationalism, and Political Integration.

Dimension	International scholarship	Vietnam-focused scholarship	Poland-based scholarship
Focus	Integration; politics; transnationalism	Labor; remittances; welfare	Adaptation; identity; generations
Transnationalism	Political and non-political	Economic and social remittances	Cultural, religious ties
Political integration	Civic and political participation	Largely neglected	Activism; political integration
Return intentions	Linked to settlement	Rarely discussed	Fragmented

Note: Author's synthesis of international, Vietnam, and Poland-based migration literature

In sum, this comparative review highlights three interrelated gaps. First, while international research offers robust theoretical frameworks on the nexus between transnationalism and integration, these have not been systematically applied to Vietnamese migrants in Poland. Second, Vietnam-focused studies remain dominated by remittance- and development-oriented analyses, with little attention to migrants' political incorporation abroad. Third, Polish-based scholarship on the Vietnamese community has addressed socioeconomic adaptation and emerging activism but lacks theory-driven approaches in relation to transnational practices and return intentions. This study addresses these gaps by applying the complementarity-substitution model of transnationalism, incorporating return intentions as a moderating factor, and testing these relationships through the case of Vietnamese migrants in Poland.

Transnationalism, political integration, and return intentions: A theoretical framework for studying Vietnamese immigrants in Poland

Immigrant and political integration: A population studies perspective

Within population studies, migration is understood not only as the demographic movement of people across borders but also as a transformative process that reshapes both origin and destination societies. Integration is therefore regarded as a fundamental dimension of population research, linking demographic flows with processes of social incorporation (Castles et al., 2014). Immigrant integration denotes the complex, interactive process of reciprocal engagement and institutional adaptation (Penninx, 2019). In contrast to assimilation theories that framed this process as one-way and culturally reductive (Gordon, 1964), contemporary scholars emphasize integration as a reciprocal process involving both migrants and host societies (Penninx, 2019). Building on this perspective, political integration is defined as reciprocal adaptation in the political realm, encompassing both the responsibility of host societies to ensure equitable access and migrants' active participation as rights-bearing agents (Penninx, 2019; Sajir, 2018).

While grounded in this two-way model, the present study emphasizes the immigrant side, acknowledging the asymmetrical power of host institutions in shaping political opportunities (Penninx, 2019). Accordingly, political integration is examined through migrants' political participation in the host country (An & Phuong, 2024; Morales, 2011). The Polish context, where immigrant political rights remain limited, makes this approach particularly relevant for analyzing how Vietnamese migrants negotiate structural constraints and remain politically engaged despite restricted formal access.

Linking transnationalism and political integration: A complementarity-substitution perspective

Transnationalism highlights migrants' sustained and multidimensional ties across national borders (Basch et al., 1994; Glick Schiller et al., 1995; Vertovec, 2009). It challenges assimilationist assumptions that migration necessarily entails severing connections with the homeland. Empirical research demonstrates that migrants often live "dual lives," engaging simultaneously in origin and settlement societies (Portes, 1997). Scholarly debates remain divided over the implications of transnational practices for integration. Pessimistic perspectives argue that reliance on homeland networks fosters ethnic enclaves and hinders integration into host societies (Nagel & Staeheli, 2008).

In contrast, optimistic views contend that transnationalism enriches local participation and civic engagement (Levitt, 2003; Oeppen, 2013). To capture these dynamics, scholars have proposed various models: Tsuda (2012) distinguished between zero-sum and reinforcing effects, while Erdal and Oeppen (2013) differentiated between additive and antagonistic outcomes. Among these, Dekker and Siegel's (2013) substitution-complementarity model provides a parsimonious yet analytically robust framework that explicitly links the intensity of transnational practices to levels of host-country engagement. This study adopts the substitution-complementarity perspective to assess whether transnational practices operate as resources for or obstacles to migrants' political integration.

Two forms of transnationalism are distinguished in this framework. Non-political transnationalism includes home visits and socially targeted remittances, the latter viewed as transnational social involvement that sustains awareness of homeland affairs. Political transnationalism encompasses both latent engagement (interest in and discussion of homeland politics) and manifest participation (direct involvement in political activities abroad or in the origin country) (Morales & Morariu, 2011). Political integration is operationalized here through migrants' participation in host-country politics, following Ekman and Amnå's (2012) distinction between latent and manifest forms. Latent participation refers to political interest and awareness, while manifest participation entails direct action, including voting where eligible, engagement with institutions, and recognized forms of extra-parliamentary activism such as protests.

This operationalization provides a clear link between theoretical debates and measurable forms of migrant political behavior. In this study, particular attention is given to whether political and non-political transnational practices operate as complements or substitutes in shaping migrants' political integration in Poland. Accordingly, political transnationalism is hypothesized to foster host-country political integration (H1), whereas non-political transnationalism is hypothesized to have a limited or no effect (H2). This analytical focus provides the theoretical basis for Research Question 1 outlined in the introduction.

Return intentions as a moderating factor

Return intentions refer to migrants' strategic orientation toward either permanent settlement or eventual return, shaping both their adaptation in the host society and their engagement with the country of origin (Carling & Pettersen, 2014). As such, return orientations influence not only the intensity of transnational ties but also the extent of migrants' political integration abroad. Migrants with strong return intentions often disengage from host-country institutions while strengthening ties to their homeland. By contrast, those with weak or absent return plans are more likely to invest in host-country political life as a long-term strategy. International research supports this view.

Dustmann (2003) showed that migrants with return plans adopt distinctive savings strategies and limit their social investment in the host country. Similarly, King (2000) demonstrated that return orientations shape levels of community participation abroad. The findings highlight the importance of accounting for return intentions when analyzing the integration-transnationalism nexus. Building on this perspective, return intentions are expected to moderate the effect of political transnationalism on political integration, with weaker return intentions enhancing its integrative benefits and stronger ones constraining them (H3). This framework provides the conceptual link to Research Question 2 outlined in the introduction.

Data and methods

Data

This study draws on quantitative data from the doctoral project "Political Integration of the Vietnamese Diaspora in Poland" (2018–2023), receiving ethical approval from the University of Warsaw (ID: BSD-927/18). Survey data were collected between May and September 2020 in Warsaw and the Mazovian Voivodeship, where over 80% of legally residing Vietnamese migrants live (Statistics Poland, 2020a). The survey employed different sampling strategies targeting four key groups of the migrant community: students, academics, entrepreneurs, and wage employees (Szymańska-Matusiewicz, 2019). For entrepreneurs and employees, in-person interviews utilized center sampling (Baio et al., 2011) and random walking (Marcella & Baxter, 2000) due to the lack of a sampling frame. Students and academics were selected via simple random sampling from a merged list of participants from the 2019 4th Workshop of Vietnamese Students and verified Facebook profiles. These respondents completed a self-administered online survey via Google Forms. In total, 347 valid responses were collected, forming the basis of the quantitative analysis.

Variables

Dependent variables

The survey used a set of items to measure dependent variables representing latent and manifest forms of political participation. Latent participation was assessed using two indicators: *political interest*, reflecting respondents' concern with the host country's politics, and *political discussion*, indicating how often they discussed national politics with family, friends, or colleagues. Manifest participation was operationalized as *formal* and legally

permitted extra-parliamentary engagement, termed *legal participation*. *Formal participation* reflected involvement in conventional political activities over the past 12 months, such as supporting parties, contacting officials, and donating to political organizations. *Legal participation* included activities such as striking, boycotting, distributing leaflets, protesting, contacting the media, and signing petitions, all within the same period.

Independent variables

The survey included a set of items measuring the primary independent variables for non-political and political transnationalism. Non-political transnationalism was assessed using two indicators: *visiting the homeland* – the frequency and degree to which respondents traveled to Vietnam to visit family members – and *transnational social engagement* – donations made within the past 12 months to address social issues in the country of origin. *Political transnationalism* encompassed immigrants' political actions directly connected to their homeland and was divided into latent and manifest forms. *Latent political transnationalism* comprised two measures: *interest in homeland politics*, capturing concern with Vietnamese political affairs, and *following homeland politics*, assessing the frequency of consuming political news from Vietnam via print, social media, or television. *Manifest political transnationalism* was measured as a composite index of active political involvement related to Vietnam over the past year. This included contacting politicians, joining political groups, donating to political causes, signing petitions, participating in protests and boycotts, distributing leaflets, and contacting media outlets.

Moderating variables

In this study, *return intention* functions as a moderating variable. As the survey lacks direct items assessing this construct, a proxy measure is applied. Prior research suggests that return intentions are closely associated with economic and sociocultural transnational practices (Bilgili, 2014) and with financial investments in countries of origin (de Haas et al., 2015). Drawing on this literature, the frequency of business *visits to the homeland* is used as a proxy indicator. This operationalization is grounded in the assumption that individuals with stronger return intentions are more likely to invest and engage in entrepreneurial activities in their home countries, thereby increasing the likelihood of such travel.

Control variables

The survey also incorporated a set of control variables capturing *migration-related factors* and respondents' *demographic characteristics*. Migration-related variables include *Polish language proficiency*, *migrant generation*, *Polish citizenship status*, *length of residence in Poland*, and *degree of Polish identity*. Demographic variables consist of *gender*, *age*, *educational attainment*, *marital status*, *religious affiliation*, and *employment status*. All variables, along with their corresponding measurement strategies, are summarized in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Measurement of Variables

Variable	Measurement	Mean	SD	Min	Max	N
Political interest	4-point scale (1 to 4) 1 = not at all interested; 4 = very interested	2.45	0.81	1	4	331
Political discussion	4-point scale (1 to 4) 1 = never;	2.39	0.83	1	4	332

Variable	Measurement	Mean	SD	Min	Max	N
Formal participation	4 = almost every day 1 = yes 0 = no	0.11	0.31	0	1	334
Legal participation	1 = yes 0 = no	0.20	0.40	0	1	334
Interest in homeland politics	4-point scale (1 to 4) 1 = not at all interested; 4 = very interested	2.62	0.84	1	4	325
Following homeland politics	4-point scale (1 to 4) 1 = never; 4 = almost every day	2.82	0.94	1	4	331
Manifest transnational political participation	1 = yes 0 = no	0.24	0.43	0	1	331
Transnational social engagement	1 = yes 0 = no	0.41	0.49	0	1	332
Visiting family	1 = yes 0 = no	0.38	0.49	0	1	347
Return intentions (Visiting homeland for economic purposes as a proxy)	5-point scale (1 to 5) 1 = the least likely to return; 5 = the most likely to return	1.7	1.24	1	5	347
Polish language proficiency	5-point scale (1 to 5) 1 = I do not speak Polish; 5 = I speak Polish as my first language	2.58	0.97	1	5	347
Migrant generation	1 = First-generation 0 = 1.5 and second generation	0.89	0.313	0	1	347
Polish citizenship status	1 = yes 0 = no	0.19	0.40	0	1	333
Length of residence in Poland	Open (in years)	10.65	9.15	.4	43	339
Degree of Polish identity	4-point scale (1 to 4) 1 = I definitely disagree with myself as Polish; 4 = I definitely agree with myself as Polish	2.09	0.95	1	4	343
Gender	1 = Male 0 = Female	0.54	0.50	0	1	332
Age	Open (in years)	34.48	11.14	17	73	338
Level of education	Multiple-point scale (0 to 1)	0.75	0.24	0	1	344
Marital status	1 = Married 0 = Others 0 = No religion	0.59	0.49	0	1	347
Religious affiliation	1 = Following Buddhism 2 = Following Christianity and others 0 = Unemployed	0.78	0.75	0	2	347
Employment status	1 = Employed by others 2 = Self-employed	1.14	0.78	0	2	347

Note: Author's calculations, 2020 Vietnamese immigrants in Poland survey.

Methods

This study applies and runs separate regression models to estimate the effects of non-political and political transnational practices across different dimensions of political engagement within Polish society. Ordinal logistic regression is employed for latent political engagement because the dependent variables are ordinal, whereas binary logistic regression assesses manifest participation, which involves dichotomous outcomes (Long & Freese, 2006). To examine whether political transnationalism effects vary by return intention, interaction terms between return intention and key indicators, such as homeland political interest, following Vietnamese political news, and transnational political participation, are included (Brambor et al., 2006). Marginal and conditional effects are computed using the “mchange” command in STATA 15 (Long, 2003).

Robustness checks account for missing data and estimation bias. Since several variables contain incomplete observations, all models are re-estimated via multiple imputation (Newman, 2003). The imputed results reported in Appendices 1 and 2 are compared with those from the original dataset. When findings align across both sets in terms of model fit, significance, and coefficient magnitude, the robustness of the original estimates is strengthened.

Methodological limitations of this study include the use of economic visits to the homeland as a proxy for return intentions, which may not fully capture the multidimensionality of this concept. In addition, the lack of a comprehensive sampling frame may undermine the survey’s representativeness, despite efforts to diversify recruitment strategies. Finally, missing data on some variables required multiple imputation, which, while mitigating bias, may not eliminate it.

Empirical findings

The effects of transnationalism on latent political participation

Models 1a and 2a in Table 3 show a clear contrast between political and non-political transnational practices in shaping latent political participation. Political transnationalism is positively associated with both political interest and discussion, whereas most non-political practices exhibit negative or significant effects. These patterns, consistent across the original and imputed datasets (Appendix 1), highlight the divergent roles of cross-border ties: political links foster attentiveness, whereas non-political ties may discourage it.

Among non-political practices, transnational social involvement has no discernible relationship with political engagement, but frequent family visits to Vietnam significantly reduce political interest in Poland. This supports the substitution mechanism, where strong familial obligations and emotional attachment to the homeland can draw migrants away from host-country concerns.

Within political transnationalism, interest in homeland politics emerges as the strongest and most consistent predictor of political attentiveness and discussion, while following homeland politics has a smaller yet positive effect, limited mainly to discussion. These findings confirm

that cognitive engagement, especially interest in homeland politics, plays a central role in stimulating migrants' awareness and everyday conversations about politics in the host country.

Models 1a and 2a in Table 3 reveal that return intentions, proxied by economically motivated visits to Vietnam, show no significant direct effect on latent political participation but act as a key moderating factor. Interaction terms in Models 1b and 2b indicate that the benefits of political transnationalism depend on migrants' return orientations.

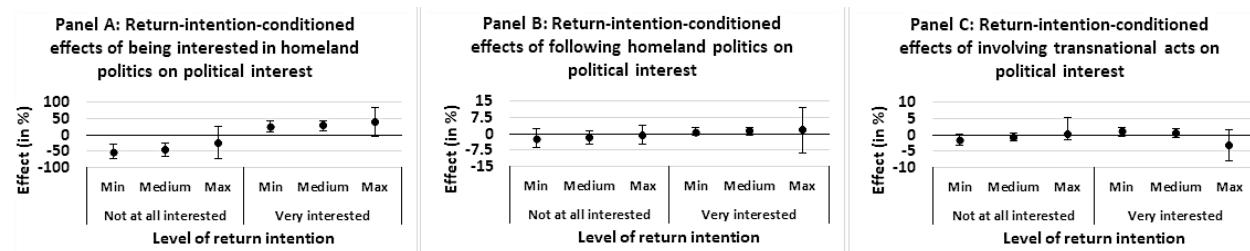
Table 3: Effects of Transnationalism on Latent Political Participation: Ordinal Logistic Regression Estimates

Independent variable	Political interest		Political discussion	
	Model 1a	Model 1b	Model 2a	Model 2b
Transnational practice variables: Political engagement				
Interest in homeland politics	2.289*** (0.270)	2.335*** (0.427)	1.212*** (0.227)	0.746* (0.372)
Following homeland politics	0.180 (0.199)	0.251 (0.341)	0.500** (0.191)	0.744* (0.322)
Manifest transnational political participation	0.207 (0.327)	1.129* (0.563)	0.489 (0.309)	1.446** (0.543)
Transnational practice variable: Non-political engagement				
Transnational social engagement	-0.084 (0.302)	-0.093 (0.306)	0.074 (0.284)	0.057 (0.288)
Visiting family	-0.598* (0.290)	-0.673* (0.295)	-0.263 (0.269)	-0.319 (0.272)
Return intentions				
Return intentions (proxy)	0.147 (0.114)	0.494 (0.416)	0.0515 (0.109)	-0.178 (0.390)
Interaction between political transnationality and return intentions				
Interest in homeland politics * return intentions		-0.045 (0.197)		0.276 (0.188)
Following homeland politics * return intentions		-0.013 (0.163)		-0.134 (0.157)
Involving transnational political action * return intentions		-0.471* (0.229)		-0.460* (0.221)
/cut1	6.501*** (0.990)	6.981*** (1.187)	6.393*** (0.932)	6.071*** (1.086)
/cut2	10.54*** (1.133)	11.08*** (1.327)	9.630*** (1.039)	9.344*** (1.185)
/cut3	14.21*** (1.283)	14.80*** (1.456)	13.00*** (1.173)	12.82*** (1.301)
Observations	301	301	302	302
Log pseudolikelihood	-231.491	-229.142	-265.142	-261.712
McFadden R2	0.356	0.363	0.274	0.283

Note: Main entries are unstandardized regression coefficients, and the numbers in parentheses are standard errors; *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, + $p < .1$ (two-tailed tests). Control variables included; full results in Appendix 1.

Figure 1 visualizes this conditional effect for political interest. Panel A shows that homeland political interest enhances attentiveness to Polish politics among migrants with weak or moderate return intention. Still, the effect diminishes and may even reverse when return intentions are strong. Panel B indicates a similar yet statistically weaker pattern for following homeland politics, while Panel C reveals that active transnational political participation supports engagement only under low or moderate return prospects.

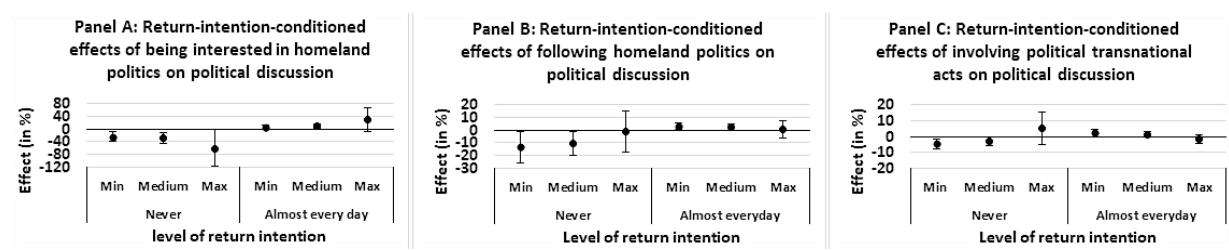
Figure 1: Effects of Transnational Political Practices on Political Interest Conditional on Return Intentions



Note: The figure shows predicted changes in the probabilities of category outcome as the independent variable shifts from minimum to maximum, holding other variables at their means. Dots represent means; bars denote 95% confidence intervals. Estimates are based on original data.

Figure 2 displays a comparable moderation pattern for political discussion. Panel A shows that homeland political interest increases the likelihood of discussing Polish politics when return intentions are low or moderate. Still, this effect weakens at higher levels of return intentions. Panel B shows that following Vietnamese politics produces a similar but smaller effect, while Panel C confirms that transnational participation reduces disengagement mainly among migrants with weak return intentions, with this effect weakening as return intentions intensify. Together, Figures 1 and 2 demonstrate that political transnationalism promotes civic attentiveness and discussion in the host society when migrants' return orientations are limited. Still, these integrative effects fade or reverse when the prospect of return dominates.

Figure 2: Effects of Transnational Political Practices on Political Discussion Conditional on Return Intentions



Note: The figure shows predicted changes in the probabilities of category outcome as the independent variable shifts from minimum to maximum, holding other variables at their means. Dots represent means; bars denote 95% confidence intervals. Estimates are based on original data.

Taken together, these findings show that cognitive and communicative forms of political transnationalism operate as complements to integration when return orientations are weak or moderate, but as substitutes when they are strong. In broader terms, the analysis supports H1, indicating that political transnationalism enhances migrants' political interest and discussion in the host country, and H2, showing that non-political forms of transnationalism exert limited or negative effects on integration. The results also provide partial support for H3, which posits

that the integrative benefits of homeland political engagement depend on migrants' return orientations – being strongest among those with limited or uncertain plans to return.

The effects of transnationalism on manifest political participation

Models 3a and 4a in Table 4 examine how transnational practices influence Vietnamese immigrants' manifest political participation in Poland. Non-political transnational practices, such as social involvement and family visits, show no significant effect on formal or legal political participation, confirming their limited integrative relevance. In contrast, political transnationalism, especially interest in homeland politics and active engagement in transnational political acts, significantly predicts both forms of manifest participation. These associations remain robust across the imputed models (Appendix 2), underscoring the centrality of political rather than social cross-border engagement in fostering civic involvement abroad.

As illustrated in Table 4, interest in Vietnamese politics exerts a more substantial impact on legal than on formal participation. At the same time, active transnational political involvement emerges as the most powerful and consistent predictor of both outcomes. These results highlight a direct spillover effect, as migrants who actively participate in homeland political causes are also more inclined to engage in host-country political life, providing evidence of the complementarity mechanism linking transnational activism and integration.

Regarding return intentions, the results show limited and mixed effects on manifest political participation. No significant association emerges in the original estimations, while a weak positive link appears in the imputed data, suggesting only marginal relevance for formal engagement. For legal participation, return intentions remain insignificant across all specifications (Appendix 2). To further assess potential moderation, interaction terms were introduced in Models 3b and 4b (Table 4). Although the coefficients are not statistically significant, the patterns visualized in Figures 3 and 4 provide clearer insight into these conditional dynamics.

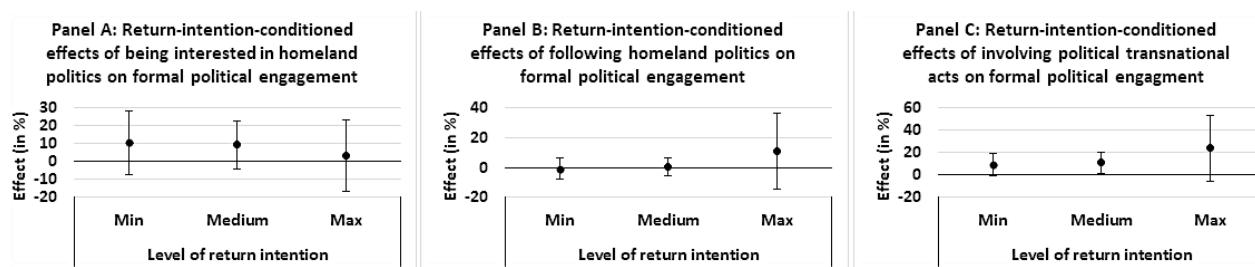
Table 4: Effects of Transnationalism on Manifest Political Participation: Logistic Regression Estimates

Independent variable	Formal participation		Legal participation	
	Model 3a	Model 3b	Model 4a	Model 4b
Transnational practice variable: Political engagement				
Interest in homeland politics	0.878+ (0.476)	1.458 (0.895)	0.674+ (0.374)	0.601 (0.664)
Following homeland politics	0.254 (0.407)	-0.377 (0.767)	0.230 (0.348)	0.049 (0.615)
Manifest transnational political participation	2.370*** (0.558)	2.047* (0.962)	3.150*** (0.511)	4.152*** (0.826)
Transnational practice variable: Non-political engagement				
Transnational social engagement	0.894 (0.575)	0.873 (0.587)	0.024 (0.481)	-0.023 (0.488)
Visiting family	-0.161 (0.547)	-0.075 (0.558)	-0.193 (0.445)	-0.210 (0.455)
Return intentions				
Return intentions (proxy)	0.275 (0.178)	-0.103 (0.922)	0.007 (0.164)	-0.107 (0.712)
Interaction between political transnationality and return intentions				
Interest in homeland politics * return intentions		-0.232 (0.305)		0.011 (0.269)
Following homeland politics * return intentions		0.285 (0.303)		0.108 (0.254)
Involving transnational political action * return intentions		0.172 (0.367)		-0.465 (0.301)
Constant	-8.79*** (2.081)	-8.30*** (2.545)	-7.19*** (1.635)	-6.98*** (1.943)
Observations	300	300	300	300
Log-likelihood	-63.495	-62.911	-85.743	-84.323
McFadden R2	0.377	0.382	0.434	0.443

Note: Main entries are unstandardized regression coefficients, and the numbers in parentheses are standard errors. *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, + $p < .1$ (two-tailed tests). Control variables included; full results in Appendix 2.

Figure 3 depicts the conditional effects for formal political participation. Panel A shows that homeland political interest continues to exert a positive influence across all levels of return intention, though its magnitude declines as return intentions increase. Panel B demonstrates that following homeland politics exerts a modest, somewhat fluctuating effect, becoming slightly stronger at moderate levels of return orientation. Panel C indicates that active engagement in transnational political activities also enhances formal participation, but the effect is weaker among those with firm return plans. This overall pattern suggests that migrants who expect to remain abroad convert their homeland activism into formal political behaviors in Poland, whereas those planning to return are less likely to do so.

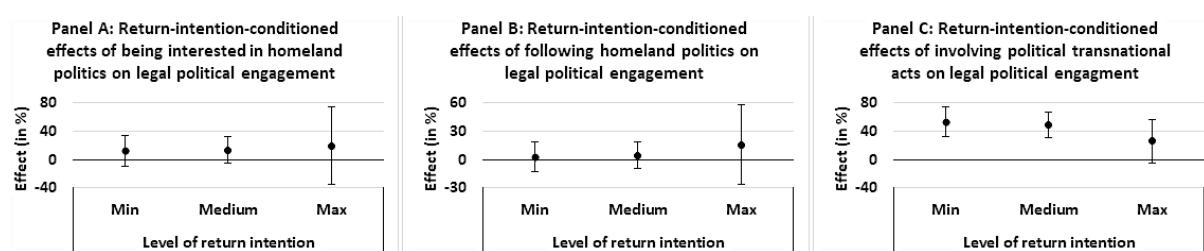
Figure 3: Conditional Effects of Transnational Political Practices on Formal Political Engagement



Note: The figure shows predicted changes in the probabilities of a binary outcome as the independent variable shifts from minimum to maximum, holding other variables at their means. Dots represent means; bars denote 95% confidence intervals. Estimates are based on original data.

Figure 4 presents the corresponding effects for legal political participation. Panel A shows that homeland political interest exerts a consistent effect. However, modest positive effect across all levels of return intentions, and Panel B demonstrates a similar pattern for attention to Vietnamese politics. Panel C, however, displays a distinct moderation effect whereby active transnational political involvement substantially boosts legal participation among migrants with weak or moderate return orientations but diminishes in strength when return intentions are high.

Figure 4: Conditional Effects of Transnational Political Practices on Legal Political Engagement



Note: The figure shows predicted changes in the probabilities of a binary outcome as the independent variable shifts from minimum to maximum, holding other variables at their means. Dots represent means; bars denote 95% confidence intervals. Estimates are based on original data.

Taken together, the findings from Figures 3 and 4 show that manifest political transnationalism complements integration when migrants intend to stay, but its integrative power erodes, and may partially substitute for host-country engagement when return aspirations dominate. Overall, political transnationalism promotes both formal and legal

political participation (supporting H1), while non-political practices remain insignificant (supporting H2). The conditional patterns linked to return intentions provide partial support for H3, confirming that the integrative benefits of homeland political engagement are most substantial among migrants with limited or uncertain plans to return.

Discussion

This study refines debates on the transnationalism-integration nexus by disaggregating political and non-political transnational practices and by modelling return intentions as a moderator. The results show that political transnationalism complements political integration in Poland, especially under weak or moderate return orientations, whereas non-political practices are neutral or substitutive. These patterns both converge with and nuance prior findings across contexts.

On complementarity, the parallel effects we observe, specifically latent political ties to the homeland (interest/following) mapping onto latent engagement in Poland (attentiveness/discussion), and manifest homeland activism mapping onto formal/legal participation, closely align with evidence that skills, networks, and political knowledge can “spill over” across borders (Bermudez, 2010; Levitt, 2003; Morales & Morariu, 2011). Like Morales and Morariu (2011), we found the strongest associations within corresponding domains, both latent and manifest, rather than across domains. Relative to work showing possible trade-offs in electoral arenas (e.g., Mügge et al., 2019, on voting in the Netherlands), our results point to a non-electoral pathway in a context where migrant political rights are more restricted, in which political discussion, contacting officials, petitions, and other legal forms appear more responsive to transnational political capital than voting *per se*. This complements classic accounts of civic incorporation under constrained institutional opportunity structures (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006).

With respect to substitution, this pattern is evident in the negative association between family-motivated return visits and political interest in Poland, which resonates with research on homeland pull and the diversion of attention and resources away from host-country engagement (e.g., Berger et al., 2004; Pantoja, 2005). By contrast, transnational social donations are essentially null, which represents an instructive nuance for studies of social remittances (Levitt, 2003), as not all non-political ties are politically generative, and practices lacking explicit political learning or organization appear less likely to convert into participation abroad. Together, these patterns fit a dual-mechanism view (Dekker & Siegel, 2013; Erdal & Oeppen, 2013; Tsuda, 2012), with complementarity characterizing political practices and substitution, or neutrality, characterizing non-political ones.

Regarding return intentions as a moderator, the analysis moves beyond viewing return as a downstream outcome (Bilgili & Siegel, 2017; Carling & Pettersen, 2014) to show that migrants’ future orientations condition the portability of transnational political resources. With weak or moderate return plans, political transnationalism more readily translates into attentiveness, discussion, and formal or legal participation in Poland, whereas strong (often permanent) return orientations diminish or partially reverse these integrative effects. This pattern dovetails with findings that temporary returns can coexist with local investment and dual participation (Bilgili & Siegel, 2017), whereas permanent returns redirect attention toward origin-country fields (Dustmann, 2003; King, 2000). The contribution here is to explicitly locate these dynamics within a Central and Eastern European setting, showing that moderation by

return orientation helps reconcile mixed results in the literature on whether “home” functions as a distraction or a resource.

In situating the Polish/Vietnamese case, Polish scholarship has richly documented adaptation, identity, entrepreneurship, religion, and transnational ties among Vietnamese migrants (Grzymała-Kazłowska, 2015; Kłorek & Szulecka, 2013; Nowicka, 2015; Szymańska-Matusiewicz, 2014, 2016, 2022), and has more recently turned to issues of political dimension (An, 2022; An & Phuong, 2024). Our findings extend this corpus by testing the complementarity-substitution model with disaggregated transnational practices and by identifying the conditional role of return orientations. In a polity where non-citizen electoral channels are narrow, the non-electoral repertoire of legal and formal but extra-parliamentary acts becomes the domain where transnational political capital is most effectively converted, an observation that helps explain divergence from Western European evidence focused on voting.

Conclusion

This study examined how Vietnamese migrants’ transnational practices shape political integration in Poland and how return intentions moderate these relationships. The results show that political transnationalism promotes both latent and manifest participation (supporting H1), while non-political practices have limited or negative effects (supporting H2). Return orientations condition these effects, amplifying integrative spillovers when returns are weak or temporary and dampening them when returns are strong or permanent (partially supporting H3).

The study extends the complementarity-substitution model by showing that both mechanisms can coexist within the same migrant population, depending on what migrants do transnationally and how they envisage their futures. It also embeds this mechanism in a Central and Eastern European context, offering an empirically grounded contribution to debates on political incorporation under constrained civic opportunity structures. Migrant associations, local authorities, and NGOs can leverage migrants’ homeland political competencies, issue knowledge, mobilization know-how, and organizational experience by channeling them into host-country civic venues. At the same time, interventions should recognize that strong return orientations dampen this portability. Programs that foster medium-term settlement imaginaries (e.g., pathways to legal status, language, and civic training linked to local issues) may increase the conversion rate from transnational activism to local participation, strengthening civic integration where electoral rights are limited.

Despite its contributions, this study has certain limitations. Using economically motivated homeland visits as a proxy for return intention may oversimplify this multidimensional construct, introducing potential measurement bias and limiting interpretive depth. Richer attitudinal and longitudinal measures could clarify the trajectories of temporary versus permanent returns. In addition, sampling challenges and missing data on key variables may undermine internal validity and reliability, affecting the robustness (even with multiple imputation) and limiting generalizability. These caveats are typical in research on hard-to-reach migrant populations and motivate future mixed-methods research. Panel designs to trace how return orientations evolve and shape civic conversion over time. In short, transnationalism is neither inherently integrative nor inherently divisive. Its political

dimension can serve as a bridge to host-country participation, provided that migrants' future horizons allow that bridge to be crossed.

Acknowledgments

This work was partially supported by Hue University under the Core Research Program, Grant No. NCTB.DHH.2025.13.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Effects of Transnationalism on Latent Political Participation: Full Ordinal Logistic Regression Estimates

Independent variable	Political interest				Political discussion			
	Original		Imputed		Original		Imputed	
	Model 1a	Model 1b	Model 1c	Model 1d	Model 2a	Model 2b	Model 2c	Model 2d
Transnational practice variable: Political engagement								
Interest in homeland politics	2.289*** (0.270)	2.335*** (0.427)	2.421*** (0.267)	2.488*** (0.416)	1.212*** (0.227)	0.746* (0.372)	1.201*** (0.223)	0.837* (0.361)
Following homeland politics	0.180 (0.199)	0.251 (0.341)	0.142 (0.195)	0.148 (0.340)	0.500** (0.191)	0.744* (0.322)	0.555** (0.185)	0.710* (0.315)
Manifest transnational political participation	0.207 (0.327)	1.129* (0.563)	0.147 (0.313)	0.901 (0.549)	0.489 (0.309)	1.446** (0.543)	0.279 (0.307)	1.156* (0.538)
Transnational practice variable: Non-political engagement								
Transnational social engagement	-0.084 (0.302)	-0.093 (0.306)	-0.060 (0.297)	-0.069 (0.299)	0.074 (0.284)	0.057 (0.288)	0.165 (0.271)	0.147 (0.273)
Visiting family	-0.598* (0.290)	-0.673* (0.295)	-0.536+ (0.280)	-0.585* (0.284)	-0.263 (0.269)	-0.319 (0.272)	-0.283 (0.256)	-0.327 (0.257)
Return intentions								
Return intentions (proxy)	0.147 (0.114)	0.494 (0.416)	0.138 (0.109)	0.379 (0.400)	0.0515 (0.109)	-0.178 (0.390)	0.039 (0.103)	-0.193 (0.382)
Interaction between political transnationality and return intentions								
Interest in homeland politics * return intentions		-0.045 (0.197)		-0.053 (0.192)		0.276 (0.188)		0.218 (0.187)
Following homeland politics * return intentions		-0.013 (0.163)		0.016 (0.159)		-0.134 (0.157)		-0.084 (0.153)
Involving transnational political action * return intentions		-0.471* (0.229)		-0.401+ (0.228)		-0.460* (0.221)		-0.443* (0.216)
Control variables: Migration-related variable								
Polish language proficiency	0.709*** 0.178)	0.762*** (0.183)	0.667*** (0.168)	0.692*** 0.171)	0.489** (0.166)	0.532** (0.169)	0.509*** (0.152)	0.532*** (0.154)
Migrant generation	0.512 (0.533)	0.495 (0.539)	0.604 (0.518)	0.589 (0.521)	0.460 (0.502)	0.551 (0.508)	0.639 (0.482)	0.707 (0.486)
Polish citizenship status	-0.739+ 0.422)	-0.771+ (0.422)	-0.609 (0.393)	-0.612 (0.392)	-0.486 (0.397)	-0.485 (0.404)	-0.104 (0.372)	-0.086 (0.379)
Length of residence in Poland	0.081** (0.027)	0.084** (0.027)	0.090*** (0.026)	0.093*** 0.026)	0.047+ (0.025)	0.054* (0.025)	0.047* (0.024)	0.054* (0.024)
Degree of Polish identity	0.121 (0.161)	0.0685 (0.166)	0.213 (0.152)	0.172 (0.157)	0.262+ (0.155)	0.222 (0.159)	0.317* (0.143)	0.285+ (0.147)

Independent variable	Political interest				Political discussion			
	Original		Imputed		Original		Imputed	
	Model 1a	Model 1b	Model 1c	Model 1d	Model 2a	Model 2b	Model 2c	Model 2d
Control variables: Demographic variable								
Gender	0.184 (0.268)	0.205 (0.270)	0.103 (0.260)	0.107 (0.261)	0.257 (0.250)	0.324 (0.252)	0.147 (0.244)	0.196 (0.248)
Age (years)	0.002 (0.021)	0.001 (0.020)	-0.003 (0.018)	-0.004 (0.018)	0.014 (0.019)	0.011 (0.019)	0.006 (0.018)	0.002 (0.018)
Level of education	0.447 (1.142)	0.252 (1.155)	0.075 (0.617)	0.055 (0.622)	1.942+ (1.092)	1.855+ (1.101)	0.585 (0.583)	0.586 (0.586)
Marital status	0.198 (0.330)	0.262 (0.333)	0.225 (0.322)	0.278 (0.325)	-0.328 (0.309)	-0.277 (0.311)	-0.146 (0.296)	-0.095 (0.297)
Religious affiliation (nonreligious)	Buddhist	-0.202 (0.309)	-0.182 (0.312)	-0.101 (0.293)	-0.093 (0.295)	0.009 (0.292)	0.007 (0.294)	0.025 (0.275)
Employment status (unemployed)	Christian and others	-0.396 (0.391)	-0.432 (0.395)	-0.421 (0.365)	-0.434 (0.369)	-0.389 (0.364)	-0.410 (0.365)	-0.397 (0.339)
	Employed	0.356 (0.355)	0.322 (0.357)	0.368 (0.342)	0.345 (0.344)	0.919** (0.335)	0.877** (0.337)	0.777* (0.322)
	Self-employed	-0.041 (0.441)	-0.112 (0.446)	-0.072 (0.422)	-0.111 (0.427)	0.879* (0.420)	0.824* (0.422)	0.619 (0.400)
/cut1	6.501*** (0.990)	6.981*** (1.187)	6.559*** (0.989)	6.874*** (1.164)	6.393*** (0.932)	6.071*** (1.086)	6.077*** (0.899)	5.733*** (1.053)
/cut2	10.54*** (1.133)	11.08*** (1.327)	10.71*** (1.135)	11.07*** (1.307)	9.630*** (1.039)	9.344*** (1.185)	9.229*** (0.992)	8.912*** (1.138)
/cut3	14.21*** (1.283)	14.80*** (1.456)	14.46*** (1.286)	14.85*** (1.437)	13.00*** (1.173)	12.82*** (1.301)	12.49*** (1.115)	12.25*** (1.242)
Observations	301	301	347	347	302	302	347	347
Log pseudolikelihood	-231.491	-229.142			-265.142	-261.712		
McFadden R2	0.356	0.363			0.274	0.283		

Note: Main entries are unstandardized regression coefficients, and the numbers in parentheses are standard errors. *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, + $p < .1$ (two-tailed tests).

Appendix 2: Effects of Transnationalism on Manifest Political Participation: Full Logistic Regression Estimates

Independent variable	Formal participation				Legal participation			
	Original		Imputed		Original		Imputed	
	Model 3a	Model 3b	Model 3c	Model 3d	Model 4a	Model 4b	Model 4c	Model 4d
Transnational practice variable: Political engagement								
Interest in homeland politics	0.878+ (0.476)	1.458 (0.895)	1.031* (0.452)	1.389+ (0.844)	0.674+ (0.374)	0.601 (0.664)	0.830* (0.361)	0.625 (0.629)
Following homeland politics	0.254 (0.407)	-0.377 (0.767)	0.0396 (0.367)	-0.249 (0.718)	0.230 (0.348)	0.049 (0.615)	0.045 (0.317)	0.042 (0.576)
Manifest transnational political participation	2.370*** (0.558)	2.047* (0.962)	2.115*** (0.509)	1.869* (0.872)	3.150*** (0.511)	4.152*** (0.826)	3.034*** (0.461)	3.961*** (0.752)
Transnational practice variable: Non-political engagement								
Transnational social engagement	0.894 (0.575)	0.873 (0.587)	0.434 (0.500)	0.423 (0.506)	0.024 (0.481)	-0.023 (0.488)	-0.069 (0.442)	-0.074 (0.449)
Visiting family	-0.161 (0.547)	-0.075 (0.558)	-0.121 (0.489)	-0.100 (0.493)	-0.193 (0.445)	-0.210 (0.455)	-0.219 (0.422)	-0.266 (0.428)
Return intentions								
Return intentions (proxy)	0.275 (0.178)	-0.103 (0.922)	0.338* (0.167)	0.310 (0.727)	0.007 (0.164)	-0.107 (0.712)	0.107 (0.151)	0.042 (0.619)
Interaction between political transnationality and return intentions								
Interest in homeland politics * return intentions		-0.232 (0.305)		-0.148 (0.290)		0.011 (0.269)		0.086 (0.260)
Following homeland politics * return intentions		0.285 (0.303)		0.125 (0.261)		0.108 (0.254)		0.017 (0.233)
Involving transnational political action * return intentions		0.172 (0.367)		0.121 (0.316)		-0.465 (0.301)		-0.453 (0.280)
Migration-related variable								
Polish language proficiency	0.740* (0.332)	0.685* (0.339)	0.491 (0.301)	0.476 (0.302)	0.292 (0.289)	0.354 (0.298)	0.316 (0.254)	0.364 (0.257)
Migrant generation	-0.209 (1.018)	-0.275 (1.048)	-0.247 (1.029)	-0.308 (1.056)	-0.319 (0.967)	-0.150 (1.007)	-0.268 (0.902)	-0.145 (0.938)
Polish citizenship status	0.258 (0.618)	0.310 (0.631)	0.139 (0.576)	0.126 (0.579)	0.741 (0.587)	0.836 (0.605)	0.726 (0.537)	0.784 (0.550)
Length of residence in Poland	0.002 (0.044)	0.002 (0.044)	0.023 (0.043)	0.018 (0.044)	0.039 (0.044)	0.039 (0.044)	0.022 (0.040)	0.027 (0.040)
Degree of Polish identity	0.554+ (0.314)	0.622+ (0.328)	0.630* (0.285)	0.670* (0.304)	0.958*** 0.277	0.969*** (0.295)	0.883*** (0.248)	0.860*** (0.264)
Demographic variable								
Gender	0.183 (0.535)	0.108 (0.543)	0.128 (0.501)	0.113 (0.506)	0.069 (0.432)	0.065 (0.437)	0.076 (0.416)	0.073 (0.418)
Age (years)	0.028 (0.041)	0.030 (0.042)	0.001 (0.039)	0.005 (0.040)	-0.039 (0.041)	-0.044 (0.042)	-0.040 (0.036)	-0.046 (0.036)

Independent variable	Formal participation				Legal participation			
	Original		Imputed		Original		Imputed	
	Model 3a	Model 3b	Model 3c	Model 3d	Model 4a	Model 4b	Model 4c	Model 4d
Level of education	-4.749* (2.186)	-4.651* (2.190)	-1.563 (1.152)	-1.593 (1.147)	0.009 (1.839)	-0.252 (1.859)	0.135 (0.964)	0.099 (0.972)
Marital status	-0.126 (0.610)	-0.170 (0.628)	-0.205 (0.574)	-0.261 (0.589)	-0.672 (0.532)	-0.566 (0.541)	-0.624 (0.498)	-0.513 (0.505)
Religion affiliation	Buddhist	-0.217 (0.583)	-0.204 (0.592)	-0.346 (0.520)	-0.351 (0.526)	-0.453 (0.518)	-0.371 (0.525)	-0.495 (0.467)
(nonreligious)	Christian and others	-0.512 (0.910)	-0.416 (0.912)	0.013 (0.753)	0.032 (0.755)	-0.091 (0.644)	-0.050 (0.655)	0.008 (0.583)
Employment status	Employed	-1.235+ (0.700)	-1.198+ (0.717)	-0.937 (0.635)	-0.919 (0.647)	0.444 (0.567)	0.302 (0.582)	0.531 (0.541)
(unemployed)	Self-employed	-1.166 (0.825)	-1.018 (0.840)	-0.782 (0.756)	-0.704 (0.773)	1.175 (0.731)	1.044 (0.742)	1.433* (0.679)
Constant	-8.79*** (2.081)	-8.30*** (2.545)	-8.01*** (1.925)	-8.08*** (2.292)	-7.19*** (1.635)	-6.98*** (1.943)	-7.185*** (1.549)	-7.04*** (1.812)
Observations	300	300	347	347	300	300	347	347
Log-likelihood	-63.495	-62.911			-85.743	-84.323		
McFadden R2	0.377	0.382			0.434	0.443		

Note: Main entries are unstandardized regression coefficients, and the numbers in parentheses are standard errors. *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, + $p < .1$ (two-tailed tests).