



## THE VIETNAMESE COMMUNITY IN POLAND: AN INVESTIGATION OF SOCIAL CAPITAL

Nguyen Huu An \*, Le Duy Mai Phuong, Nguyen Tu Hau, Nguyen Thi Anh Dao,

University of Sciences, Hue University, 77 Nguyen Hue St., Hue, Vietnam

Nguyen Thi My Van

Hanoi University of Natural Resources and Environment, Vietnam

\* Correspondence to **Nguyen Huu An** <nguyenhuuan@hueuni.edu.vn>

(Received: September 06, 2023; Accepted: February 28, 2024)

**Abstract.** Unlike previous migration studies that extensively concerned the adaptation issue, this study focuses on the social bases, investigating the configuration of the social capital of the Vietnamese community in Poland. It mainly concerns two main components of social capital: social networks and social trust. The data for empirical analyses in this study are employed from a research project examining the integration of the Vietnamese into the political sphere in Polish society. The project applies a mixed-research method design to collect quantitative data through an original social survey with 347 respondents and qualitative data from 15 semi-structured interviews. The findings reveal the social capital of the Vietnamese in Poland with a striking characteristic of a high level of bonding ties, primarily relying on close relations such as family or ethnic organizations to seek support and placing a very high level of confidence in family members. Nevertheless, this study also uncovers the accumulation of bridging social capital through developing out-group contacts and participating in cross-ethnic associations among the Vietnamese. The results of this study have significant implications for understanding the attachment tendency of the Vietnamese in Polish society.

**Keywords:** Vietnamese community, Poland, social capital, migration

### 1. Introduction

As a part of the global Vietnamese diaspora, the Vietnamese community in Poland is a result of the flow of Vietnamese migrations during the Vietnam and post-Vietnam wars. The formation of the Vietnamese community in the country is associated with the first migrant students sent by the socialist state of North Vietnam in the 1950s. The mobility was within the socialist fraternity project, where the Soviet Union and its Eastern European satellites aimed to assist their “younger brothers” in following the path of socialist modernization during the Cold

War era (Szymańska-Matusiewicz, 2016, 2019). After the fall of communism in Central and Eastern Europe in 1989, subsequent inflows of Vietnamese immigrants, whose migration purpose is primarily motivated by economic interest, have continued to arrive in Poland, constituting a crowded and diverse community. Undergoing seven decades of presence in Poland, the Vietnamese community has turned into a permanent settlement, becoming one of the biggest communities originating from Asia, with a population estimated at more than 27,000-30,000 (GSO, 2020).

Inspired by the considerable cultural distance between Poland and Vietnam, migration scholars have paid particular attention to the Vietnamese in the country. Many studies take the integration perspective as a theoretical framework for researching the migrant group's adaptation to Polish society (Bodziany, 2017; Aleksandra Grzymała-Kazłowska, 2015; Huu, 2021; Klorek & Szulecka, 2013; Szymańska-Matusiewicz, 2019). Others focus on identity dilemmas among 1.5 and second-generation Vietnamese immigrants (Głowacka-Grajper, 2006; Nowicka, 2015), intergenerational conflict in Vietnamese families (Szymańska-Matusiewicz, 2015), and the Vietnamese's transnational ties (Hũu, 2022; Szymańska-Matusiewicz, 2016, 2019). While these studies are crucial to shed light on the attachment of the migrant group in Polish society, they ignore social bases producing fundamental resources that condition adaptation to the host country. In this vein, social capital appears as an essential concept necessary for providing an alternative perspective to researching the Vietnamese in Poland. This concept is widely applied in migration studies to explain migration motivation and the participation of immigrants in the host country. Regarding migrant integration, the study on social capital helps to understand the resources deriving the degree of attachment to the receiving society by looking at immigrants' social networks and trustful attitudes towards people in the country of residence. Consequently, overlooking the social capital of the Vietnamese in Poland in previous studies has led to an insufficiency in understanding the nature of Vietnamese people's settling process in this country.

To fill the gap, the main objective of this study is to examine the configuration of the social capital of Vietnamese immigrants accumulated inside Polish society. To this end, we develop a theoretical framework in which the concept of social capital will be discussed with a center on social networks and trust – two principal components of social capital. In addition, we pay attention to bonding and bridging social capital of the migrant group. By doing so, this study is of significance in understanding the extent to which the Vietnamese attach to the residence country through the analyses of dimensions and typologies of social capital, contributing to expanding the knowledge about the Vietnamese in Poland.

## 2. Theoretical background

Social capital is one of the core concepts in social sciences. Although the term was coined by Lyda Judson Hanifan, an educator, in 1916, the notion of social capital capturing the important role of group participation in the cohesion of collectives appeared in the classical work of Durkheim and Marx (Portes, 1998). Prominent pioneers such as Bourdieu (1986), Coleman (1988), Putnam (1993a, 2000), and Nan Lin (2001) have produced fundamental foundations of social capital theory, by which the concept has been popularly employed in several disciplines, notably sociology, political sciences, and economics. The popularity of social capital can be figuratively described as the concept that we can now encounter in every corner of the social sciences (Ostrom & Ahn, 2009).

An overview of the literature reveals no standard definition of social capital widely accepted in scholarly studies. Meanwhile, the debate on conceptualizing and measuring social capital primarily bifurcates into two schools: collectivism and individualism. The collective account regards social capital as the public good, regarding the concept as property of communities or societies, facilitating the integration of members within societies to achieve common goals (Fukuyama, 1995; Putnam, 1993a, 1993b, 2000). In contrast, the individual perspective approaches social capital as private goods, interpreting the concept as a set of properties invested by a person or groups in relations or networks to secure benefits (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Lin, 2001). The following debate on which level the concept should be appropriately approached has drawn the interest of scholars, in which few attempt to reconcile the two contradictory positions by taking a neutral stance, approaching social capital as both private and public goods. In this vein, social capital refers to the information, trust, and norms of reciprocity (Woolcock, 1998) or the goodwill available to individuals or groups (Adler & Kwon, 2002) inhering in an actor's social relations or social networks.

Despite the divergence in discussing the concept, converging points in the theoretical approaches to social capital are evident. It is believed that the generation of social capital cannot happen without an actor's involvement in social networks (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000), in which the investment of actors in terms of social trust and reciprocity in social relations and social networks is the precondition (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Fukuyama, 1995; Portes, 1998; Putnam, 2000). Furthermore, scholars agree that social capital is resources embedded in social relations, social networks, or social structures (Bourdieu, 1986; Lin, 2001). Scholars also recognize that social capital includes two primary components: cognitive or attitudinal (shared norms, trust, reciprocity) and structural (social networks) (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 1995, 2000).

Putnam (2000) identifies bonding and bridging ties as two types of social capital based on different kinds of social connections, which is further developed by Szreter and Woolcock (2004). While the former refers to social connections between homogeneous individuals or groups who are similar in terms of their shared social identity, the latter concerns social relations connecting non-homogeneous individuals and groups of people who know that they are not alike in some socio-demographic (or social identity) sense (differing by age, ethnic group, or class). Szreter and Woolcock (2004) also propose another type labeled linking social capital, capturing connections between people interacting across explicit, formal, or institutionalized power.

Building on debates of social capital as discussed above, in this study, we approach the concept at the individual level of analysis, referring to resources of trust and reciprocity exchanges inhering in individuals' social networks, which individuals can access and use for their benefit through their engagement in those networks. We draw on two key dimensions, namely social networks (the relational component) and social trust (the attitudinal component), to investigate the configuration of the social capital of the Vietnamese in Poland. Regarding social networks, we focus on informal (connections with close people such as family members, friends, and neighbors) and formal (membership in associational organizations) ties. For social trust, we examine the particularized and generalized trust of the Vietnamese. We consider the former as an optimistic attitude in co-ethnic individuals (the Vietnamese), while the latter concerns such an attitude held by the Vietnamese in daily interaction with others in Poland. In addition, we pay attention to bonding and bridging social capital by analyzing homogenous and homogeneous social connections stemming from everyday social interactions and associations involved by the migrant group in the host country.

### 3. Research Methods

This study employs data from a research project investigating the integration of the Vietnamese into the political sphere in Polish society. The research project used a mixed-research method design to gather both qualitative and quantitative data for empirical analyses. The project's empirical phase for data collection was conducted from May 2020 to January 2021.

Quantitative data were collected by implementing an original survey in Warsaw – the capital city and surrounding area. The survey used a questionnaire as a research tool designed to measure variables capturing social networks and social trusts – two dimensions of social capital – of the Vietnamese in Poland. It applied different sampling strategies to target Vietnamese students, academics, business owners, and employees, the four main groups of the

Vietnamese community in Polish society (Szymańska-Matusiewicz, 2019). The business owners and employee groups were approached using the center sampling technique (Baio et al., 2011) and the random walking technique (Graffigna et al., 2010) to identify and access respondents. Meanwhile, the students and academics were recruited by applying the simple random sampling technique whereby these groups were selected from a sampling frame made up by combining a list of emails of participants joining the 4th Workshop of Vietnamese Students in Poland in 2019 with a list of Facebook addresses of members of a Facebook group of Vietnamese students in Poland. In total, 347 respondents joined the survey. Quantitative data are analyzed using descriptive statistics with the Chi-squared test to illustrate the dimensions of the social capital of the Vietnamese in Poland.

Qualitative data come from 15 semi-structured interviews with Vietnamese people who were accessed through the application of snowball sampling (Noy, 2008). The participants in the interview are those who have lived in Poland for at least one year, are at least 18 years old at the time of the interview and are actively participating in civic activities in Poland. The interviews were initiated with a brief introduction to the study's purpose and the permission requirement for recording, proceeded with an interviewing scenario probing informants' daily social interactions, social ties with the Vietnamese and other ethnic individuals, and attitudes towards the Vietnamese and other ethnic individuals. All interviews were conducted in Vietnamese. Qualitative data were analyzed using deductive content analysis (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008), which was processed in three steps: preparing, organizing, and interpreting the data to achieve the findings and results. This study used pseudonyms for the informants whose narrations are quoted in qualitative findings to guarantee their confidentiality in semi-structured interviews.

## **4. Findings**

### **4.1. Social networks**

As discussed in the theoretical section, this study focuses on the Vietnamese's relational dimension of social capital by investigating their informal and formal social networks. While informal networks encompass contacts with close people such as family members, friends, neighbors and daily social interactions, formal networks primarily refer to the involvement or membership of individuals in voluntary associations. This study also looks at homogenous and homogeneous social connections in social networks to consider bonding or bridging social capital the Vietnamese accumulate in the host country.

#### **4.1.1. Informal social networks**

In this study, we examined the informal social networks of the Vietnamese by focusing on three indicators: (1) social support from close ties for dealing with legal or financial problems, (2) talking with neighbors, and (3) social contact in daily interactions. For social support, in the survey, respondents were asked which sources from a wide range of subjects, namely family members (or relatives), close friends, neighbors, and people at work, they relied on to deal with financial or legal problems encountered during the last 12 months. The results illustrated in Figure 1 below show that respondents tend to rely on close ties, for example, family members or relatives and friends, to handle financial issues. Likewise, they also count on such social relations to solve legal problems. Most respondents receive support from family rather than other sources, be it legal or financial issues, while the evidence is that neighborhood plays an insignificant role in that support. More specifically, the percentage of the surveyed who got support from their families for financial problems is approximately 60%, and that percentage for legal affairs is around 35%. Overall, the percentage of respondents who received support from their family for financial or legal problems is about 62%. The findings suggest that close ties play a significant role in the life of Vietnamese immigrants in Poland.

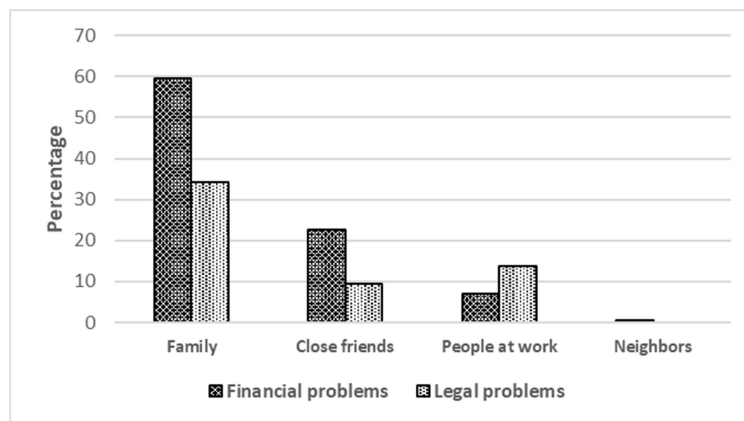


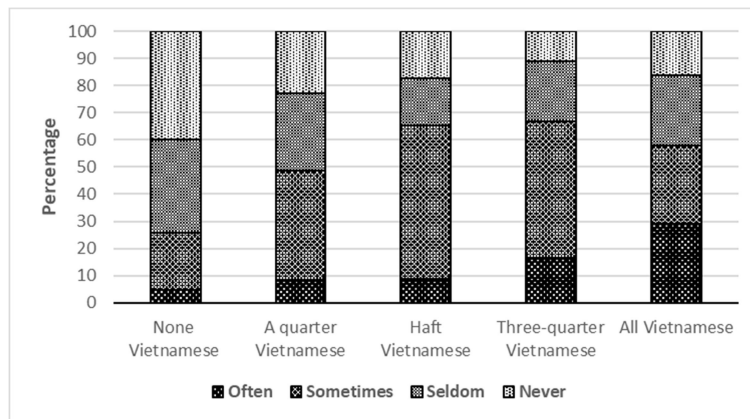
Figure 1: Getting supported by close ties

Qualitative data uphold the findings uncovered in the quantitative result. As narrated by the interviewee below, close ties such as contacts with family members, relatives, and friends play the adaptive role in assisting the Vietnamese in their mobility as well as adaptation to the new setting in Polish society (Szymańska-Matusiewicz, 2016, 2019). Support from this type of social network is significant in the initial time in the host society, particularly by providing housing and access to work.

*“I have relatives here, and they are my biological brother, brother-in-law, and uncle. It can be said that there are a lot of my relatives here. Accordingly, I was able to come here thanks to them. The first few days I was here were spent at their house,*

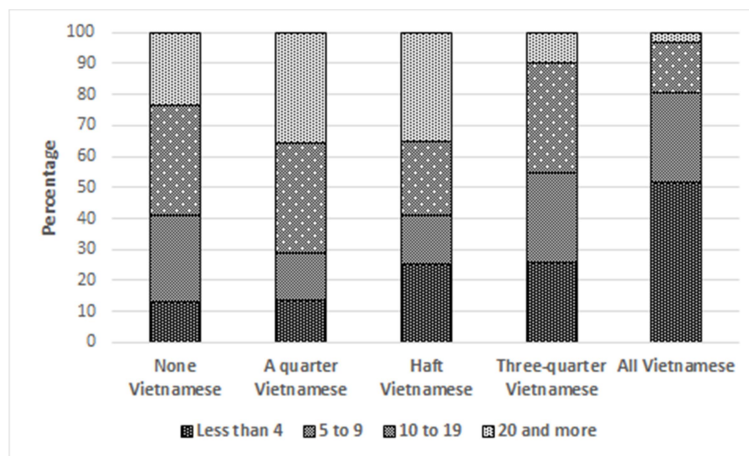
*and they connected me with a job so I could go to work. Initially, I relied on them to establish my own foundations here. I also anticipated that someone would help me if I came here, but I probably wouldn't have decided to go if I didn't have any familiar family members here". (Tuấn, man, 60 years old)*

Participants from qualitative interviews pointed out that Vietnamese people tend to concentrate on a geographical area when doing business. They often referred to “a Vietnamese population in Marywilka” to exemplify this phenomenon. This trend is also documented in previous studies where the Vietnamese community was found to organize itself as a “self-sufficient organism” or an ethnic enclave in its economic activities (Klorek & Szulecka, 2013, p.10). Nonetheless, the survey findings reveal a tendency of dispersed residence among the Vietnamese immigrants in Poland. Quantitative results show that a very high percentage of respondents, corresponding to 68.13%, indicates that their neighborhood background comprises non-Vietnamese people. This result contributes to understanding why the Vietnamese rely less on neighbors for financial or legal support, as mentioned above. It can be attributed to the account that Vietnamese immigrants’ level of interaction with neighbors is moderate in terms of immediate talks. In addition, the survey findings present 36.26% of the surveyed who reported talking with their neighbors from “sometimes” to “often.” More than 30% of respondents seldom have such interactions. The same proportion is for those who indicated that they never have conversations with their neighbors. Figure 2 illustrates the relationship between the neighborhood background and the frequency of talks with neighbors. Unsurprisingly, the results show that the more ethnically homogeneous the neighborhood background is, the more respondents talk with their neighbors ( $\chi^2(16) = 55.95, p = 0.000, \text{Gamma} = 0.45$ ). This finding is understandable because it reflects the Vietnamese community’s nature in Poland, emphasizing in-group contacts and privileging internal interactions (A. Grzymała-Kazłowska, 2015).



**Figure 2:** Relationship between talking with neighbors and neighborhood background

Regarding daily social interactions, the findings from quantitative data indicate that, on average, the Vietnamese have a relatively wide circle of people with whom they interact daily. A majority of the surveyed (57.84%) informally interact with at least ten people every day. Among those who have narrower circles of daily contact, more than one-fifth of respondents (21.22%) indicate their circle of daily interaction from five to nine people, and the same goes for the percentage of the respondents who have less than five people (20.93%). In addition, quantitative data also reveal the ethnic composition in the daily interaction of the Vietnamese. The results show that a minority of respondents, accounting for approximately 40% of the surveyed, pointed out that their daily informal connection comprises half of the Vietnamese or more, corresponding to about 60% of the respondents whose informal networks' ethnic composition is a quarter of the Vietnamese or below. Figure 3 portrays the relationship between the number of people in daily interaction and ethnic composition. Interestingly, respondents with less daily contact are more likely to connect with co-ethnic individuals. In contrast, those who reported a wider informal interaction tend to have more inter-ethnic connections. The relationship is striking and statistically significant ( $\chi^2(11) = 47.60, p = 0.000, \text{Gamma} = -0.20$ ).



**Figure 3:** Relationship between daily interaction and ethnic composition

This finding is quite surprising yet comprehensible. Although the Vietnamese are perceived as a closed entity, favoring in-group ties as interpreted previously, in addition to their co-ethnicity, Vietnamese-origin individuals' connection and cooperation with people from other minority groups or the native people are seen as irresistible in the integration process. An interviewee narrated that:

*“It is impossible to disintegrate here. It (the life in Polish Society) forces us to integrate. It is impossible to separate from the native people we would meet when*



*walking out the door. We breathe their air and enjoy everything, such as shops, houses, social and medical services.” (Duyên, woman, 45 years old)*

In this narrative, the female informant considered integration into the host country inescapable. When settling in the destination country, immigrants have to interact with the host society, notably the local people, and use the facilities offered in the society for their living. In this process, developing more out-group contacts in addition to in-group relations is inevitable and essential for the life of Vietnamese immigrants in Polish society.

#### **4.1.2. Formal social networks**

It should be acknowledged that the Vietnamese community in Poland is seen as a well-organized and institutionalized migrant group with the existence of various organizations established by the Vietnamese (Szymańska-Matusiewicz, 2017, 2019). The history of Vietnamese organizations in Poland can be traced back to 1986 when the first Vietnamese institution was set up, known as the Socio-Cultural Association of Vietnamese in Poland (Szymańska-Matusiewicz, 2019, p. 185). The exact number of Vietnamese associations is inconsistently provided in the literature, standing at around 20 to 30 organizations officially registered and informally operated (Halik, 2007; Szymańska-Matusiewicz, 2019, p. 183; Wysieńska, 2011). In reality, there is the existence of numerous fellow-countrymen groups along with the presence of notable thematic associations such as the Association of Vietnamese in Poland (Stowarzyszenie Wietnamczyków w Polsce), the Vietnamese Entrepreneurs Association (Stowarzyszenie Przedsiębiorców Wietnamskich w Polsce), the League of Vietnamese Women (Liga Kobiet Wietnamskich w Polsce), or the Club of Vietnamese Veterans.

The Association of Vietnamese in Poland (Stowarzyszenie Wietnamczyków w Polsce) represents all Vietnamese ethnic organizations in Poland. This kind of organization is termed “official” by most Vietnamese (Szymańska-Matusiewicz, 2019), with a striking characteristic regarding their close link to the Vietnamese authority in Poland. “Official” Vietnamese organizations mainly aim to promote solidarity among its members, retain Vietnamese culture for the community, and direct Vietnamese people’s attention to issues relating to the community and the homeland. Prevalent activities organized by those organizations are cultural festivals such as Lunar New Year and MidAutumn Festival, and commemorations according to the calendar of holidays celebrated in the homeland, for example, national holidays such as Independence Day on 2 September, Reunification Day on 30 April, and the newly created Hung Kings Festival (Szymańska-Matusiewicz, 2019, p. 200). The activities performed by those “official” associations, thus, are viewed as endeavors to forge a strong sense of Vietnamese community rather than promote bridging ties to the Polish majority society

(Szymanska, 2019: 202). A male interviewee also points out this function of the “official” associations as below:

*“I find that after many years, those (official) associations also organized a lot of activities and initiated innovative ideas in their activities. Nevertheless, I realize that the nature of those activities is still to tie the Vietnamese together and still closed.”* (Hùng, man, 43 years old)

Although several Vietnamese organizations, especially fellow-countrymen groups, stay closely connected to the Association of Vietnamese in Poland, the fact is that the level of being linked to the state varies significantly among Vietnamese associations in Poland. Put differently, numerous other Vietnamese organizations retain more autonomy or are entirely independent of the “official” associations. Qualitative findings indicate that those groups are formed based on the shared interest among their members, such as sports, art, culture-related groups, professional groups, charity groups, religious groups, environmental associations, or democracy-mobilized organizations. As indicated by the female interviewee below, these autonomous associations are highly characterized by promoting the integration of the Vietnamese into the host society.

*“There are associations of which the operation is based on the voluntary principle. For example, there were groups of Vietnamese people who organized Vietnamese Culture Day in Poland and organized talks about issues related to the Vietnamese community. They spend their own money without taking anyone’s money. Those groups aim to raise the awareness of Vietnamese people for integration, for example... I find that kind of group operates effectively.”* (Hồng, woman, 46 years old)

Most participants in qualitative interviews indicated that not many Vietnamese are interested and involved in activities mobilized voluntarily by cross-ethnic or native associations. Individuals who have membership in those organizations are often involved in charitable work or activities promoting multicultural diversity. As the male interviewee narrated below, he is motivated to be involved in a voluntary group comprising volunteers with ethnically different backgrounds because of charitable work delivered by the group to vulnerable people such as the homeless, poor, and lonely elders.

*“I was involved as a volunteer for an organization called Smile Warsaw; then, I became one of the board of directors of that organization. I was the first Vietnamese who joined the organization... This organization comprises only foreign individuals in Poland, mainly doing charitable work, cooking, and giving free clothes to the*

*homeless and the poor... I had been following this organization for a very long time, almost a year, and then I decided to join this group... I joined because I found their activities aiding the homeless very meaningful. Every Sunday, they cook and give out free clothes to the homeless, poor, and lonely elders. These people go to the square and will be delivered hot food, receive warm clothes, get a haircut, and share their life stories.” (Hùng, man, 43 years old)*

To have a more nuanced picture of Vietnamese immigrants’ associational life in Poland, we measured the associational membership of Vietnamese-origin individuals by probing whether they were involved in activities executed by organizations listed in the survey during the last 12 months<sup>1</sup>. Furthermore, to examine how much bonding and bridging social capital respondents have from associational involvement, I measured the number of ethnic and cross-ethnic organizations in which respondents participated. Membership in ethnic associations implies involvement in at least one activity conducted by organizations with 50% Vietnamese members or more. In contrast, involvement in cross-ethnic groups refers to the participation in at least one activity carried out by organizations with less than 50% Vietnamese members. Furthermore, we also distinguish the membership in ethnic associations from the involvement in Vietnamese fellow-countrymen groups. The latter indicates membership in co-ethnic organizations, denoting a stronger sense of bonding social capital through not only the composition of 100% Vietnamese ethnicity but also the exclusion of outsiders in its Vietnamese-orientated activities.

Table 1 summarizes the associational involvement of Vietnamese-origin individuals in Poland. The results show a high percentage of respondents having membership in voluntary associations. Remarkably, nearly four-fifths of the surveyed (79.09%) reported participating in at least one activity of at least one organization during the last 12 months. Clearly and unsurprisingly, the number of respondents involved in organizations with 50% of Vietnamese members or more (ethnic associational membership) is approximately ten percent higher than those joining associations with less than 50% of Vietnamese members (cross-ethnic associational membership), 46.06% compared to 36.97%. For the membership in fellow-countrymen groups (co-ethnic associations), more than 40% of respondents are involved in this type of ethnic association. The results suggest that Vietnamese immigrants’ associational life reflects bonding rather than bridging social capital.

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<sup>1</sup> Those associations include sports clubs, academic organizations, cultural associations, political parties, trade unions, business associations, charitable organizations, environmental protecting organizations, human rights organizations, religious groups, minority organizations, human-right advocated organizations, anti-racism organizations, youth organizations, women’s associations, veteran organizations, resident organizations, fellow-countrymen groups.

**Table 1.** Summary of Vietnamese immigrants’ associational involvement

| Associational involvement | Any association | Co-ethnic associations | Ethnic associations | Cross-ethnic associations |
|---------------------------|-----------------|------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|
|                           | %               | %                      | %                   | %                         |
| Yes                       | 79.09           | 42.38                  | 46.06               | 36.97                     |
| No                        | 20.91           | 57.62                  | 53.94               | 63.03                     |
| Total                     | 100.00          | 100.00                 | 100.00              | 100.00                    |
| N                         | 330             | 331                    | 330                 | 330                       |
| Non-response              | 17              | 16                     | 17                  | 17                        |
| Total sample              | 347             | 347                    | 347                 | 347                       |

Figure 4 below further displays the distributions of the involvement in ethnic and cross-ethnic organizations of Vietnamese individuals in the survey. The results reveal that over half of those surveyed indicated no membership in ethnic or cross-ethnic organizations during the last 12 months. The number is higher for cross-ethnic associations than for ethnic groups, 63.03% compared to 53.94%. Among those involved in associations during the last 12 months, the highest percentage is for the respondents who participated in only one organization. The proportion of associational participation decreases in parallel with the number of organizations involved by the respondents. In general, very few people reported engaging in four organizations or more in the last 12 months compared to the percentage of respondents who joined three organizations or less. This pattern is relatively the same for the involvement in both types of associations. For example, around 25% of the surveyed only participated in one voluntary group regarding ethnic membership. The proportion falls by more than half for respondents joining two organizations (10%). It decreases considerably to 3% when looking at the proportion of respondents taking part in three organizations. Similarly, while around 13% of the surveyed joined one cross-ethnic association, the ratio drops to more than 5% for those engaging in two cross-ethnic groups and more than 4% for people taking part in three cross-ethnic associations during the last 12 months. It is interesting when looking at the difference in the proportion between respondents involved in ethnic associations and those participating in cross-ethnic organizations. While the percentage of respondents who have membership in one or two associations is higher (approximately two times) in ethnic organizations than in cross-ethnic organizations, the contrast story seems to happen to the proportion of respondents who engaged in three organizations or more. This finding reveals that the Vietnamese-origin

individuals in Poland who emphasize cross-ethnic ties in their formal networks tend to expand the number of involved voluntary organizations than those who privilege ethnic relations.

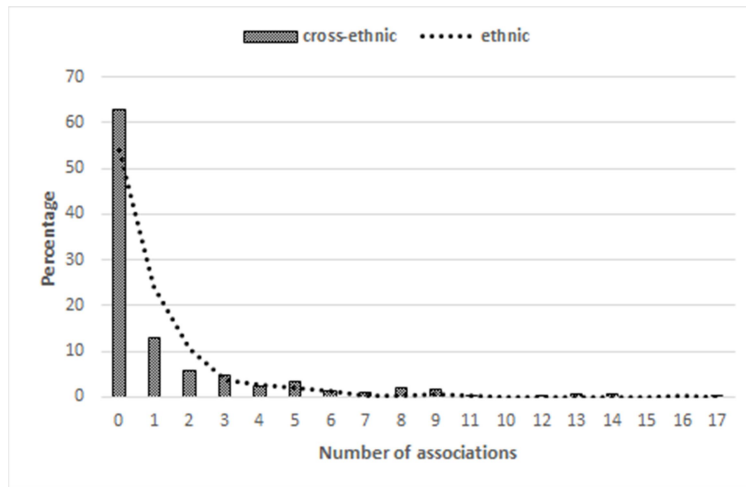


Figure 4: Involvement in ethnic and cross-ethnic associations

4.2. Social Trust

In this study, we focus on two types of social trust of the Vietnamese in Poland: generalized trust and particularized trust. We measured generalized trust in the survey by asking respondents: “Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you need to be very careful in dealing with people?”. For the particularized trust, I asked the respondent the question: “And what about Vietnamese-origin people? Would you say that most Vietnamese people can be trusted, or that you need to be very careful in dealing with Vietnamese people in Poland?” The answers of the questions were designed the same, a 10-point scale ranging from 0 – denoting “you need to be very careful” to 10 – implying “most people can be trusted.”

Figure 5 depicts the distribution of the generalized trust and particular trust of the surveyed individuals. The generalized and particular trust pattern is virtually identical, reflecting a bell curve with the highest percentage of respondents whose trust score falls at the middle of the scale. Smaller portions of respondents appear along with the two tails of the curve, implying that the proportion of the surveyed who have extremely high or low levels of trust is smaller than respondents whose level of trust is medium. The results generally reveal that the Vietnamese-origin individuals in Poland have a relatively moderate generalized and particular trust level, with a mean score of around 5 for both types of trust. Surprisingly, the mean score of generalized trust is slightly higher than trust in the Vietnamese, 5.15 (SD = 3.04) compared to 5.07 (SD = 2), respectively. Although this difference is unremarkable for a careful

interpretation of the results, the finding suggests that the Vietnamese seem more cautious with their co-ethnicity.

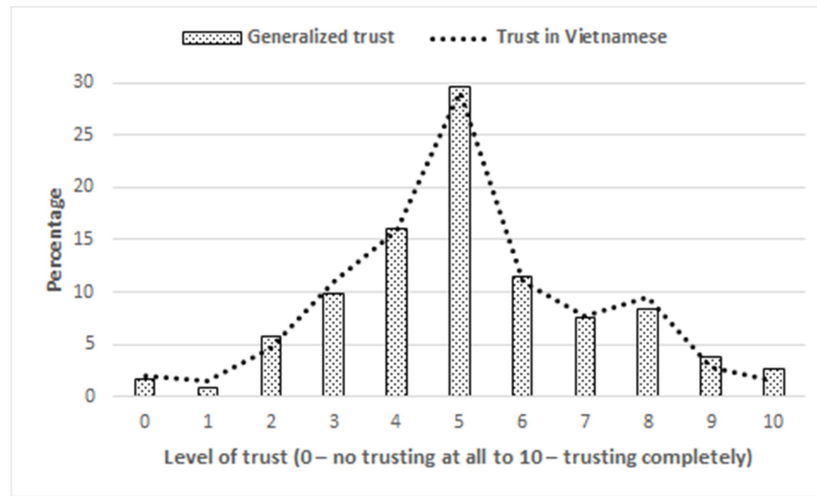


Figure 5: Generalized trust and particular trust of Vietnamese immigrants

In addition to generalized and particular trust, we measured the Vietnamese’s trustful attitudes toward more specific people in the survey. Table 2 presents respondents’ level of trust in family members and neighborhood trust. Among those responding to the questions regarding the two types of trust, a very high percentage of the surveyed (nearly 90%) hold a high level of trust in family members or relatives. Specifically, more than 50% responded to “quite a lot of trust,” and nearly 40% answered “a great deal of trust.” This finding is understandable and consistent with the results of previous studies on social trust in Vietnam, which found that the Vietnamese people consider families as very significant to their life and tend to place a high level of trust in these known people (An & Phuong, 2021; Dalton et al., 2002).

For trust in neighbors, the results indicate that respondents hold more cautious than trustful attitudes toward people living next to them. Notably, nearly 55% of the surveyed place a low level of trust compared to 45.8% of those with much trust in their neighbors. Further analysis reveals that Vietnamese people with a neighborhood background of more than half of the Vietnamese have the highest level of trust in their neighbors. This result is also understandable because, as discussed previously, nearly 70% of respondents reside in the area composed of non-Vietnamese people, reflecting the sense of ethnic diversity. As such, the racially heterogeneous sense of neighborhood background is more likely to foster cautious rather than trustful attitudes toward neighbors among Vietnamese immigrants.

**Table 2. Trust in family members (or relatives) and trust in neighbors**

| The level of trust            | Trust in family members/relatives | Trust in neighbors |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------|
|                               | %                                 | %                  |
| A great deal of trust         | 37.31                             | 6.13               |
| Quite a lot of trust          | 50.75                             | 39.67              |
| Not very much trust           | 11.57                             | 50.65              |
| Not at all                    | 0.37                              | 3.55               |
| Total                         | 100.00                            | 100.00             |
| N                             | 268                               | 310                |
| Not applicable/ None-response | 79                                | 37                 |
| Total                         | 347                               | 347                |

## 5. Conclusion

This study focused on the Vietnamese in Poland, one of the largest non-European migrant groups in the country. Unlike previous studies that extensively concerned the adaptation issue, this study focused on the social bases, investigating the configuration of the social capital of the migrant group in Poland. For the empirical analyses, this research centered on two main components of social capital: social networks and social trust.

The findings reveal the social capital of the Vietnamese in Poland with a striking characteristic of a high level of bonding ties. The migrant group tends to rely on close ties such as family or ethnic organizations to seek support privilege in in-group contacts regarding the connection to neighbors and daily social interactions. The associational life of the Vietnamese is highly instituted with the presence of numerous associations operated by the Vietnamese, especially those considered “official” organizations. Also, Vietnamese have a relatively high level of engagement in voluntary organizations, favoring ethnic associational involvement rather than engagement in cross-ethnic organizations. Nonetheless, the migrant group also tends to cultivate bridging social capital through informal and formal ties by expanding the circle of daily interactions or joining more cross-ethnic groups to enrich their associational lives. The results also suggest that the Vietnamese hold a similar pattern of generalized trust and trust in co-ethnic individuals, with a moderate level for both types of trust. To a narrower circle of

people, they place a very high level of confidence in family members but a relatively low level in their neighbors.

The findings of this study provide significant evidence reinforcing the understanding of the adaptation to Polish society, which was found in the previous studies. By figuring out the high level of bonding social capital of the Vietnamese, this study helps to comprehend the tendency of keeping a certain distance from the mainstream, remaining a hermetic ethnic group inside Polish society as a whole. However, the increase in investing in bridging ties through developing cross-ethnic contact and participating in voluntary associations, as shown in this study, contributes to understanding the transformation of the Vietnamese community in Poland from a marginalized and homogeneous to a much more self-aware and active migrant group.

#### Funding statement

*This work is funded by Hue University, Vietnam, under Grant number DHH2023 -01-205.*

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