

Influence of Home and Host Country Factors on Immigrants' Political Engagement*

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This study examines the political engagement of immigrants in South Korea based on social identity theory and the theory of transnationalism. This research is particularly interested in investigating two sets of factors—native country factors and host country factors. The present study argues that immigrants in South Korea should be understood as transnational political actors whose political participation may be influenced by their experiences with their native countries and their new country. The present study utilizes the 2012 Social Survey on Foreign Residents, conducted by the Ministry of Justice of South Korea. According to the results, host country variables, but not home country variables, are influential in increasing the political engagement of immigrants. These results imply that their host country experience might be important to the immigrants' political engagement, while the impact of their connection to the home country or their experience in the home country is limited.

Keywords: *transnationalism, native country factors, host country factors, social identity theory, South Korea, immigrants*

INTRODUCTION

This study examines the political engagement of immigrants in South Korea based on social identity theory and the theory of transnationalism. This research is particularly interested in investigating two sets of factors—native country factors and host country factors. The present study argues that immigrants in South Korea should be understood as transnational political actors whose political participation may be influenced by their experiences with their native countries and their new country.

The political participation of immigrants is significant because immigrants can settle successfully in their host society through political engagement, which ultimately promotes social integration in the host country. Few countries have managed to avoid the issue of immigration and the resulting social conflicts. South Korea is a case in point; according to the Korean Immigration Service, nearly 2.4 million immigrants reside in the country (Ministry of Justice, 2020). These immigrants come from China (44.2%), Vietnam (9.3%), Thailand (8.3%), the U.S. (6.3%), and Uzbekistan (3.1%) (Ministry of Justice, 2020). Recently, the number of non-national residents in South Korea has grown rapidly from 1,168, 477 in 2009 to 2,049,441 in 2016. By February 2020, this figure had reached 2,426,433, with immigrants accounting for about 4% of the country's total population. The foreign population in the country consists of two major segments. The first is marriage migrants from China and Vietnam, resulting from a government program engineered to address the problem of a low number of eligible Korean women willing to marry males in rural regions. The second group is foreign workers mostly from Central and Southeast Asian countries to fill short-term vacancies in the low-skilled and low-paying labor force (Kong 2010).¹ Despite this

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influx of people from other countries, there has been little serious discussion of the issue of immigration, and specifically the political participation of immigrants. This is partly because of South Korea's strong belief in ethnic homogeneity and pure-bloodism. According to the results of the survey, most Koreans are not strongly interested in the issue of immigration (Yoon and Song 2010). Furthermore, on the surface, it appears that while many Koreans take a tolerant view of immigrants, they are typically unwilling to forge intimate relationships with them, for example, through marriage, conversation, and other types of social exchanges. This highlights the significant social distance between native South Koreans and immigrants (Yoon and Song 2010).

In addition, South Korea is criticized as being assimilationist in that multiculturalism is interpreted as foreign individuals adapting to South Korean conditions without fundamentally changing the notion of citizenship (Hundt et al. 2019). In the country, 'citizenship remains a privilege that the majority grants, not one that minorities can demand' (Hundt et al. 2019, 447). Furthermore, the country does not have legislation that explicitly prohibits discrimination against immigrants, and this may prevent immigrants from becoming fully integrated in the country. In order for appropriate immigrant policies to be properly implemented, it is crucial to outline the specific supports necessary, rather than simply make statements about "working hard" to achieve integration. However, a review of the country's laws on immigration show many vague references to "working hard," and statements such as this effectively allow the Korean government to evade its active responsibilities and obligations to immigrants (Kim 2013). Additionally, in Korea, immigrants only have the right to vote three years after being granted residency or becoming naturalized. This might shape their political engagement by making them less interested in or less willing to participate in the political life of the host country.

Considering the South Korean context, this study aims to present an analysis of the factors that impact immigrants' political participation. The findings are expected to reveal ideas for policies that will enhance the political participation of immigrants and contribute to the achievement of social integration in South Korea.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

There has been much research regarding immigrants' political participation (e.g., Jennings 1991; Ramakrishnan and Espenshade 2001; Østergaard-Nielsen 2003; Wong et al. 2005; Masuoka 2008; Martiniello et al. 2008; De Rooij 2011; DeSipio 2011; Wong et al. 2011). For example, Ramakrishnan and Espenshade (2001) pointed out that previous studies on immigrants' social integration had not paid enough attention to political participation. Their study found that generation, length of residency, political socialization in a native country, and language ability are influential factors in immigrants' voting participation. With regard to the generational effect, Ramakrishnan and Espenshade found that language and cultural

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¹ From the 1960s to the 1980s, the country used to be one of the largest exporters of labor with thousands of young Koreans emigrating to North America, Germany, and the Middle East as guest workers and students. This phenomenon, with rapid economic growth that South Korea achieved during those periods, led to significant labor shortages, which caused companies to seek foreign workers (Chung 2020).

obstacles faced by first-generation immigrants may make it difficult for them to obtain sufficient political information, and they are thus less likely to turn out to vote. Length of residency is also a factor in voting participation; it is an important indicator of the extent to which immigrants are integrated into the host society. Ramakrishnan and Espenshade further found that if immigrants have experienced political repression in their native country, they are more likely to have a lower level of political trust and are thus less likely to turn out to vote. According to the authors, language ability is also important; if immigrants are able to use the language of the host country, they will be more likely to vote.²

Previous research has also investigated immigrants' party identification, which is one of the significant indicators among the multi-dimensional activities of political participation. For instance, studies on Latinos, Chinese, and Korean immigrants in California, US, found that immigrants who have resided in the country longer tend to have a higher likelihood of party identification, and their party identification tends to be stronger (Cain et al. 1991).

Østergaard-Nielsen (2003) examined transnational political engagement of immigrants. The author argued that these practices are influenced by the particular multi-level institutional environment, such as political institutions, global norms, and networks of other non-state actors. Similarly, in his work on immigrants in the US, DeSipio (2011) pointed out that the increase in the number of immigrants had not led to increased political rights. He argued that the encouragement of political participation of immigrants and their descendants should be institutionally established.

On the other hand, De Rooij (2011) studied the differences in the pattern of political participation between immigrants and the majority population in Western Europe. Utilizing the European Social Survey, De Rooij found that mobilization and the amount of time spent in the new country of residence³ are influential in immigrants' political participation, rather than levels of resources and engagement. In a similar vein, Wong et al. (2005) focused on Asian Americans and illuminated the role of other factors in immigrants' political participation; those factors included being a member of an Asian American organization and having feelings that their fate is linked with others of the same ethnic background.

Some studies have emphasized the role played by immigrants' experiences of discrimination (Schildkraut 2005; Wiley et al. 2013). For example, Wiley et al. (2013) investigated the "rejection" variable and found that first-generation Latino immigrants who perceived ethnicity-based rejection were less likely to have an affinity with Americans and to take part in politics. The above authors argue that the experience of discrimination makes immigrants less willing to identify with the host country, which leads to a low level of political participation. In a similar vein, Schildkraut (2005) examined the effect of the experience of discrimination on political engagement among Latinos in the US. The results showed that discrimination experiences can cause behavioral and attitudinal alienation, which, in turn, results in non-voting and lack of trust in American society.

In addition, remittances sent to the home country may be another important variable. Remittances can be viewed as a means of facilitating continued contact with the home country, demonstrating that migration is a complex process involving political, social,

² In previous literature, language ability has been found to be a significant factor influencing immigrants' political participation, for instance, DeSipio (1996), Espenshade and Fu (1997), Cho (1999), Wong, J. S. (2000), and Ramakrishnan and Espenshade (2001).

³ Length of residence has been found to be influential in previous studies, such as Cain et al. (1991), Chui et al. (1991), Guarnizo et al. (2003), Bueker (2005), and Portes et al. (2008).

cultural, and economic aspects (Luin 2003). Although studies focusing on the remittance variable in terms of migrants are widely available in various fields (Funkhouser 1995; Orozco 2002; Rosser 2008), most of these studies focused mainly on the migration process and on economic aspects. However, there is little research dealing with the effect of the remittance variable on political behavior.

This brief review of the literature on immigrants' political participation shows that, in spite of the large number of studies, little research has focused on two sets of variables together—native country factors and host country factors. Studies have instead emphasized experiences in either the countries of origin or the host country. The present study will examine the two sets of factors—country of origin factors and country of residence factors—and will investigate which set of factors has a greater impact on voting and political participation among immigrants. However, it should be noted that the two factors are not set up as competing variables. Rather, home country and host country factors could have interactive influence on each other. Thus, the present study emphasizes that immigrants have transnational experiences—experiences from both native and host countries—that form identity or attachment. Research on social identity theory and the theory of transnationalism are relied upon to base the argument of the present study.

(1) Social identity theory

Identity and sense of belonging may play an important role in immigrants' political attitudes and behavior. Relying on social identity theory, this study argues that immigrants may form an attachment and a sense of belonging toward their native country and their host country that will influence their political decisions.

Social identity theory is a theory of the role of self-conception in group membership, group processes, and intergroup relations (Tajfel and Turner 1986; Hogg 2006). The theory assumes that collective phenomena cannot be understood in terms of isolated individual processes alone and that people construe themselves in terms of shared attributes that distinguish them from other people (Hogg 2006). According to social identity theory, social identity is a person's knowledge that he or she belongs to a certain group (Tajfel and Turner 1986; Hogg and Abrams 1988). Self-categorization and social comparison are the two most important processes in one's formation of social identity (Hogg and Abrams 1988).

A number of case studies have applied social identity theory. For instance, Yuki (2003) agreed that social identity theory does not sufficiently explain collectivistic behaviors among East Asians. The author examined the difference between Japanese and Americans regarding identity formation. The results showed that for Americans, ingroup loyalty and identity with their small and large ingroups were correlated positively with perceived ingroup homogeneity and ingroup status. However, no such correlation was found for Japanese; instead, Japanese ingroup loyalty and identity were influenced by respondents' knowledge of the relational structure within the group, knowledge of the individual differences between members of the group, and feelings of personal connectedness with ingroup members (Yuki 2003). The social identity theory was applied to the case of South Africa as well. Gibson and Gouws (2000) examined the South African mass public and found that strong ingroup positive identities cause strong outgroup negative identities, which are related to antipathy toward one's political opponents and ultimately lead to political intolerance. Their research implied that people's perceptions of their group of belonging impact their political attitudes.

From a different perspective, Roccas and Brewer (2002) noted that the majority of

research on social identity had been conducted in the context of a single ingroup–outgroup categorization. The authors introduced the concept of *social identity complexity*, defined as “an individual’s subjective representation of the interrelationships among his or her multiple group identities” (2002, 88). Their argument relied on the findings of numerous studies showing that people have multiple group identities (Stryker and Statham 1985; Tajfel 1978). The concept of social identity complexity calls attention to the theory of transnationalism, which is another primary theoretical framework of the present study.

(2) Transnationalism

Previous studies on immigrants assume that they are “often bilingual”, have “dual citizenships”, “dual lives”, and “frequently maintain homes in two countries” (Portes 1997, 812). According to Schiller and Blanc-Szanton (1992), “a new kind of migrating population is emerging, composed of those whose networks, activities and patterns of life encompass both their host and home societies” (1992, 1). This phenomenon is referred to as *transnationalism*, defined as “the processes by which immigrants build social fields that link together their country of origin and their country of settlement” (Schiller and Blanc-Szanton 1992, 1). Immigrants develop and maintain multiple relations—familial, economic, social, organizational, religious, and political—that span the national borders of the home country and the country of settlement (Schiller and Blanc-Szanton 1992). They make decisions and develop identities within social networks that connect them to two or more countries simultaneously (Schiller and Blanc-Szanton 1992). Furthermore, technological improvements in communication and transportation enable the linking of immigrants’ countries of origin with their countries of settlement—politically, economically, and culturally—which encourages immigrants’ transnational behavior (Portes 2000). Even further, Kok and Rogers (2017) found the transnational networks of the Somali diaspora online, which they conceptualized as ‘transglobalization.’ Thus, the host and home country factors should not be considered as competing, but rather as connected to each other. Immigrants in the current era ‘keep their feet in both worlds—the societies of settlement and origin’ (Kemppainen et al. 2020, 1).

Transnationalism is a product of world capitalism (Schiller and Blanc-Szanton 1992). According to Schiller and Blanc-Szanton (1992) and Block (1987), because of the growing internationalization of capital, by the 1980s the structure of employment in the United States had undergone major transformations. Many jobs had been lost through the export of manufacturing industries and related jobs abroad, frequently to third world countries. Many transnational companies relocated to third world countries and the local economies of the third world were disrupted by the intrusion, which led to the creation of a displaced and underemployed labor force. These economic shifts increased migration as individuals from the third world countries moved to other countries (Schiller and Blanc-Szanton 1992; Block 1987). However, immigrants from third world countries often have difficulties establishing a cultural, social, and economic basis in their new host countries. These vulnerabilities lead migrants to form a transnational nature (Schiller and Blanc-Szanton 1992; Block 1987), or immigrants used transnational activities as a strategy for adapting to a new society (Şimşek 2019).

The earliest literature, from the 1920s and 1930s, focused mainly on immigrants’ adaptation processes; later studies examined the immigrant community. In the 1990s, the literature started to look into the concept of transnationalism (Vertovec 2001). Levitt and

Jaworsky (2007), for example, argued that many recent immigrants maintain various ties to their homelands even as they are incorporated into their host countries. The authors analyzed immigrant transnationalism in different arenas: economics, politics, society, culture, and religion.

Studies have applied the theory of transnationalism to the case study as well. Wong (2004), in his examination of transnationalism among Taiwanese immigrant entrepreneurs in Canada, found that immigrants maintain transnational social space, including transnational familial networks, transnational business circuits, and transmigration. The author further argued that there is a lack of harmonization among migration policy and other social and economic policies in Canada; whereas Canadian multiculturalism policy facilitates transnationalism, Canadian citizenship policy conflicts with transnational practices.

In the study on migrants in Chile, Finn (2020) criticizes that the binary of 'here' and 'there' is insufficient to examine migrant political involvement and introduces a typology comprising four categories (immigrant voting, emigrant voting, dual transnational voting, and abstention in either country). By describing immigrants' voting activities that can move back and forth between the four various types, Finn highlights the transnational nature of migrants' political lives.

Eckstein and Barberia (2002) presented two paradigms for analyzing immigrant experiences: *assimilationist* and *transnationalist*. The authors focused on the cross-border ties of two Cuban-American cohorts. The first cohort was individuals who had left Cuba between 1959 and 1979 for political reasons; they refused to have any ties with their home country and became assimilationists. In contrast, the second cohort, who emigrated largely for economic reasons, was enmeshed in transnational ties.

From a different perspective, Ghosh (2007) investigated the housing experiences of two South Asian subgroups in Toronto (Indian Bengalis and Bangladeshis). The research found that various transnational ties influence immigrants' choice of neighborhood and the type, tenure, and quality of housing.

Within the broad range of literature available on transnationalism and the social identity theory, there are studies that specifically focus on the influence of transnationalism on immigrants' political participation. In one such study, Wals (2011) analyzed the political participation of Mexican immigrants living in the United States, pointing out that existing transnational studies were conducted mainly by comparing migrants with different nationalities. The core question in this study is how immigrants' political party identification in their home country affects their political behavior in the host country. An examination of the 2003 Mexican Values Survey data showed that attachment to a Mexican political party heightened the prospects of political engagement in American politics, and that trust in the Mexican government was on a par with trust in the US government. These results suggest that the political behavior of immigrants is influenced by their engagement with politics in their home countries, and that a better understanding of migrants' political behavior requires careful consideration of the "imported socialization" process (Wals 2011, 608).

Karpathakis (1999) conducted a qualitative analysis of Greek immigrants in the US. In this study, the author argued that immigrants' linkages with the home country and its political system influence the process by which they assimilate into American society. Specifically, the allegiance of immigrants to their home country helps maintain their links to it, and at the same time, they form a new identity under the influence of the host country, which results in the creation of a binational identity. According to the author, this dual identity has a significant impact on immigrants' political participation in American society. Similarly, Smith

(1997) points out that recent immigrants to the US tend to have dual nationality and maintain political and cultural ties with their home countries. Therefore, it is argued that political engagement in a new country, such as forming a political community, is greatly influenced by home country factors.

Staton et al. (2007) investigated two contrasting views, namely, the traditional view that dual nationality negatively impacts the political integration of immigrants, and the transnational perspective that maintaining multiple identities promotes political assimilation. Supporting the traditional view, those authors' empirical results reveal that immigrants with dual nationality have weak linkages with American politics and are therefore less likely to be politically engaged. In a similar vein but with different findings, Chaudhary (2018) tests two competing perspectives on transnational political engagement, namely, the resocialization perspective and the complementarity perspective. The former assumes that transnational political involvement gradually declines as immigrants become socialized into the new host society, while the latter argues that immigrant integration increases transnational political participation. The findings support both the perspectives.

On the other hand, there are studies emphasizing the influence of host country rather than home country factors. For instance, Wong J. S. (2001) examined the political engagement of Asian-American and Latino immigrants and found that the most important variables of political engagement among the immigrants were socioeconomic status and acculturation into American life. Furthermore, Wong argued that mainstream political institutions do not offer many incentives to mobilize immigrants, while community-based institutions are more involved in helping them become engaged in politics.⁴

Leal (2002), utilizing the Latino National Political Survey, identified significant differences between citizen and non-citizen participation. Compared to Latino citizens, it appears that Latino non-citizens are less willing to take part in politics. Non-citizen immigrants who are young, fluent in English, have a better understanding of politics, plan to naturalize, and have a stronger ethnic identity are more likely to become engaged in politics. This finding highlights the strong impact of host country factors. Similarly, Hritzuk and Park (2000) emphasized the effects of host country factors, such as social networking, exposure to mobilization, and organizational affiliations. The authors argue that these social structural variables are likely to facilitate participation among Latinos.

In another example, Leighley and Vedlitz (1999) attempt to evaluate five models of political participation (the socioeconomic status model, the psychological resources model, the social connectedness model, the group consciousness model, and the group conflict model). An examination of an Anglo-American and African-American group, and a Mexican-American and Asian-American group revealed that the socioeconomic status, psychological resources, and social connectedness models had consistent effects in all four groups. In particular, Leighley and Vedlitz (1999) argue that long residency and home ownership in the host country increase affiliation with the host country, which, in turn, promotes political participation.

Drawing on literature from both social identity theory and transnationalism, this study

⁴ Regarding the role of the state and government, Weeks and Weeks (2015) offer a different perspective. On their work in Latin America, the authors found that the state's response to transnational pressures has made governments more active and relevant in certain ways compared to the past. The authors argue that Latin American states are working to make transnationalism mutually beneficial to migrants and the state.

will explore political participation of immigrants in South Korea by focusing on home country factors and host country factors. The empirical analysis will provide meaningful implications for understanding the political engagement of immigrants in South Korea, a group that has been understudied.

METHODOLOGY

The present study utilizes the *2012 Social Survey on Foreign Residents*, conducted by the Ministry of Justice of South Korea.⁵ The survey included two subsamples—774 permanent residents and 618 naturalized persons—with the total sample being 1,392.⁶ Interviewers visited respondents' households and utilized a structured questionnaire to interview each respondent. The survey, conducted from August 2012 to October 2012, was one of the rare surveys to ask immigrants in South Korea about politics; few previous surveys of immigrants residing in the country had included political questions.

The dependent variable used for the present study was political engagement, and this variable was measured on the basis of two dimensions: political participation and voting participation. Political participation, the first dimension, is measured by a combined index based on responses to questions regarding the following six indicators: (1) taking part in political discussion (on the internet, for example), (2) contact with politicians or government officials, (3) contact with civil society activists, (4) donation or fundraising for social and political activity, (5) signing petitions, and (6) taking part in rallies or demonstrations. The six questions measured how often respondents were involved in each activity on a five-point scale. With Cronbach- α being 0.848, this study combined all six responses and calculated a mean, which consists of a combined index of political participation.⁷

Second, voting participation was measured by asking the following question: "The right to vote is given after three years have passed since receiving permanent residency or naturalization. Have you ever voted since you came to South Korea?" The response categories were (1) "have not voted because I did not know if I was eligible," (2) "have not voted because I was not eligible," (3) "have not voted because I had no interest in the election," and (4) "have voted." The present study considered responses to (2) "have not voted because I was not eligible" as missing cases. Responses to (4) "have voted" were

⁵ I acknowledge that the data used is rather dated. To compensate for this issue, complementary datasets are utilized when possible. Also, I speculate that the main topic of the present research—immigrants' political participation—is not one that has changed very dramatically over the last 8 years, from 2012, the year of the data collection, to 2020, the current year.

⁶ The country of origin was asked differently depending on the immigration status of respondents. For this subsample of permanent residents, the country of origin was asked; thus, it includes China, Taiwan, Japan, Vietnam, U.S., Canada, Philippine, and Thai. However, the survey on naturalized persons was conducted for only four sending countries: China, Japan, Philippine, and Cambodia.

⁷ The results of factor analysis on the six variables of political participation showed that all the variables had a higher loading on the factor. The factor loadings for each variable were as follows: taking part in political discussions = 0.704; contact with politicians or government officials = 0.709; contact with civil society activists = 0.810; donations or fundraising for social and political activity = 0.715; signing petitions = 0.773; taking part in rallies or demonstrations = 0.774. Additionally, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test result was 0.868 and the results of the Bartlett's test were $\chi^2=2890.540$ (df=15, p=0.000).

recoded as "1," and responses to (1) or (3) were recoded as "0."

The main independent variables used in the study were home country and host country. Variables related to home country were a sense of belonging to one's home country and remittance of funds to one's home country. Sense of belonging to home country was measured by the question, "How much do you feel a sense of belonging to your home country?" (1 = not at all, 2 = somewhat so, 3 = moderately so, 4 = very much so). The remittance variable used the question, "Have you or your spouse remitted money to family in your home country?" (1 = yes, 0 = no)

Host country factors included a sense of belonging to South Korea, trust toward South Korean society, length of residence in South Korea, Korean language ability, and experience of discrimination in South Korea. Sense of belonging to host country was measured using the question, "How much do you feel a sense of belonging to South Korea?" (1 = not at all, 2 = somewhat so, 3 = moderately so, 4 = very much so). To measure trust toward South Korean society, this study used the question, "How much do you trust South Korean society?" (0 = distrust greatly,10 = trust greatly). To measure the length of residence, the present study used the question, "How long have you resided in South Korea?" The Korean language ability variable was created by combining four questions that asked about respondents' speaking, listening, reading, and writing ability. Lastly, the variable regarding experiences of discrimination was measured utilizing the question, "Have you ever experienced discrimination because you are a foreigner or from a foreign country?" (1 = yes, 0 = no)

This study included several control variables that might influence immigrants' political engagement. An external political efficacy variable was included, measured by responses to the statement, "It is difficult for people like me to have any influence on what the government does." (1 = totally agree, 2 = somewhat agree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = somewhat disagree, 5 = totally disagree). Internal political efficacy variable might impact immigrants' political engagement. This study used two questions that asked the extent to which respondents agree with the following statements: (1) "I have a good understanding of the important political issues that face South Korea," and (2) "I know better than most immigrants about the politics or administration of South Korea." The responses were on a five-point scale. The Cronbach- α for the two questions was 0.842; thus, the present study combined and calculated the mean of the responses to the two questions and used the combined index in the analysis. The responses to these questions were coded so that a greater value indicated the presence of stronger internal efficacy.

Next, the study included the following country of origin variables: China, Taiwan, Japan, Vietnam US/Canada, Thailand, Cambodia, and the Philippines. The Philippines was used as a baseline. The citizenship variable was also controlled (1 = naturalized citizen, 0 = permanent resident). Socio-demographic variables were also included. Gender (1 = female, 0 = male), age, education, and income were controlled. Education was measured by asking respondents to indicate the highest education level achieved, ranging from "no formal education," coded as 0, to "doctor's degree," coded as 8. Lastly, income was measured utilizing the question, "During the past year, what was the total monthly income before tax of your household?" (1 = 1,000,000 won, ... 8 = 7,000,000 won). Regarding the education and income variables, there have been a number of studies that show the impact of socio-economic status, such as education, income, and employment status, on a person's political participation (e.g., Campbell et al. 1960; Key 1964; Verb et al. 1995). Individuals with a higher socio-economic status have more political resources, time, and energy for political participation and lower costs of participation, which lead them to be more involved with politics.

With respect to the methodology, the analyses on political participation was employed in an ordered-logit regression, and for voting participation, logit regression was used.

RESULTS

Table 1 and Table 2 present descriptive statistics showing the characteristics of the main variables. First, according to Table 1, 72.7% of immigrants in South Korea feel a sense of belonging to their home country; this percentage is a combination of the responses “moderately so” (47.2%) and “very much so” (25.5%). Only 27.3% responded that they do not have a strong a sense of belonging to their home country. Also, regarding remittance, 51% of immigrants said that they have not remitted, while 49% said that they have. It can be said that about half reported remitting money earned from the host country to their families in their home country. These results indicate that immigrants in South Korea maintain their transnational ties to their home country while they reside in a new country.

Table 2 shows basic information about how immigrants in South Korea perceive the host country. First, 50.4% of immigrants said that they have a moderate sense of attachment to South Korea, while 30.3% responded that they have a strong sense of belonging. The percentage of respondents who reported having a sense of belonging to their home country was 72.7%; however, more respondents—80.7%—reported having a sense of attachment to a host country. Asked if they have experienced discrimination, 72.1% of respondents said “yes.” This result may reflect South Korean society’s strong prejudice against foreigners and immigrants. Regarding monthly income, 35.3% of respondents said that they earn 1 to 2 million won per month, 27.7% reported earning between 2 and 3 million won per month, and 12.9% reported earning less than 1 million won per month. High-income earners of more than 3 million won were few.⁸ These results indicate that the majority of immigrants in South Korea belong to low-income families. This may be due to the fact that most immigrants

Table 1. descriptive statistics for home country variables

		frequency	%
sense of belonging to home country	not at all	123	9.4
	somewhat so	233	17.9
	moderately so	615	47.2
	very much so	332	25.5
Total		1303	100
remittance	no	685	51.0
	yes	657	49.0
Total		1342	100

⁸ In 2020, the monthly household income of native Koreans was 4.77 million won (Statistics Korea 2020).

Table 2. descriptive statistics for host country variables

		frequency	%	
sense of belonging to host country	not at all	80	6.1	
	somewhat so	176	13.3	
	moderately so	666	50.4	
	very much so	400	30.3	
Total		1322	100	
experience of discrimination	no	383	27.9	
	yes	988	72.1	
Total		1371	100	
monthly income	less than 1 mill. won	162	12.9	
	1 mill. won ~ 2 mill. won	444	35.3	
	2 mill. won ~ 3 mill. won	349	27.7	
	3 mill. won ~ 4 mill. won	140	11.1	
	4 mill. won ~ 5 mill. won	69	5.5	
	5 mill. won ~ 6 mill. won	35	2.8	
	6 mill. won ~ 7 mill. won	17	1.4	
	more than 7 mill. won	43	3.4	
Total		1259	100	
		Mean	S.D	N
trust toward Korean society		7.48	2.02	1303
length of residence		10.55	11.57	1355
Korean language ability		3.69	1.00	1362

in South Korea work in simple service jobs, regardless of their former careers in the home country or their job preferences. According to the South Korean Ministry of Justice (2020), the majority of immigrants (91.87%) were engaged in the service industry or they were simple laborers; only 8.12% of immigrants were professionals.

Furthermore, the average work week was 51.6 hours for immigrants, which is more than that of South Korean natives, who work 42.5 hours a week (Ministry of Justice 2012). In spite of the economic difficulties of immigrants, they showed a relatively high level of trust toward the host society (7.48, with 10 being the highest level of trust and 0 being the lowest). Immigrants' length of residence in Korea was revealed to be about 10 years, on average, and their Korean language ability was at the intermediate level (3.69, with 5 being the highest level of proficiency and 0 being the lowest).⁹

⁹ To complement the data for the present study, I analyzed the *Survey on Immigrants' Living*

Table 3. sense of belonging

		host country				total
		not at all	somewhat so	moderately so	very much so	
Home country	not at all	47 (3.6%)	12 (0.9%)	34 (2.6%)	29 (2.2%)	122 (9.4%)
	somewhat so	5 (0.4%)	62 (4.8%)	117 (9.0%)	49 (3.8%)	233 (18%)
	moderately so	17 (1.3%)	70 (5.4%)	385 (29.7%)	142 (10.9%)	614 (47.3%)
	very much so	11 (0.8%)	30 (2.3%)	118 (9.1%)	170 (13.1%)	329 (25.3%)
	total	80 (6.2%)	174 (13.4%)	654 (50.4%)	390 (30.0%)	1298 (100%)

In addition, Table 3 presents data on how many immigrants claimed to have a sense of attachment to both countries or neither of the countries. The results showed that 3.6% of the respondents admitted to feeling no sense of belonging to either country, while 13.1% claimed to have a sense of attachment to both countries. Most of the respondents (29.7%) said that they perceived a moderate level of belonging to both countries.

In terms of the regression analysis, Tables 4–5 show the main factors that influence immigrants' political engagement. First, Table 4 presents the results based on political participation as a dependent variable. According to these results, some host country variables were found to be significant, whereas no home country variables were. A feeling of belonging to the host country was found to increase individuals' political participation, and those who admitted to having experienced discrimination, as well as those who had been resident in South Korea for a long time, were more likely to take part in politics. The impact of these three host country variables remained significant after home country variables were controlled for in Model 3. In line with the social identity theory, when immigrants form a sense of attachment to the new country and identify with the host country, they may be more interested in politics and more willing to take part in politics. The most significant impact of the experience of discrimination is that immigrants who feel discriminated against might perceive that participation in politics will help improve the unfair situation they are in, and this typically motivates them to be engaged in politics.¹⁰ The positive effect of duration

Conditions and Labor Force conducted by the Ministry of Justice and Statistics Korea in 2017. The results are basically very similar to those of the main dataset of the present research. Regarding immigrants' monthly income, the most respondents (33%) said that they earn "1–2 million won per month", which was followed by "2–3 million won per month" (23.9%), indicating poor economic conditions of immigrants in the country. Many respondents have lived in the country for a long time with 33.8% respondents choosing "5–10 years", followed by 31.8% saying "more than 10 years." Lastly, remittance was found to occur less compared to the data in 2012, with 84.1% of respondents saying they do not send money and 15.4% saying they do.

¹⁰ Şimşek (2019) argued that integration for Syrian refugees in Turkey refers to access to the labor

of residence might be due to the fact that long-term residence in a host country makes immigrants more accustomed to and knowledgeable about the politics of that country, which could be a useful resource for participation in politics.

In contrast, the two home country variables—a sense of belonging to the home country and remittances of funds to the home country—were found to have no effect on immigrants' political participation. Even when Model 1 included only these two variables, they had no impact on the dependent variable. The lack of impact of the home country variable is interesting, because according to the theory of transnationalism, immigrants have transnational ties, and linkages with their native countries influence their political life in the new country. Thus, in effect, the results of the present study are not in line with the theory of transnationalism. Further research with better data is necessary to examine the mechanism of these results; however, this study will attempt to offer some tentative explanations of the above phenomenon. It may simply be that the majority of immigrants under investigation were from countries with a level of democracy that is less mature than that of South Korea.¹¹ Among the sample, immigrants from China ranked first (58.9%), followed by immigrants from Vietnam (12.1%). Democracy is not developed in these countries. As indicated by the 2019 democracy index published in *The Economist*, China and Vietnam are categorized as authoritarian countries, with China ranked 153rd and Vietnam 136th, while South Korea is ranked 23rd. For immigrants from authoritarian countries, political activities, such as taking part in political discussions, contact with politicians or civil society activists, donating to or fundraising for social and political activity, signing petitions, or taking part in rallies or demonstrations, may seem new and unfamiliar. In such cases, linkages with their native countries might not have a significant impact on immigrants' political life in the host country. However, it should be noted that this is a tentative assumption requiring further examination in the future.

Several control variables turned out to be significant in this study. Both internal and external political efficacy variables tend to encourage political participation among immigrants, and education increases one's likelihood of political participation. These results are in line with previous findings (Finkel 1985; Niemi et al. 1991; Bandura 1993; Morrell 2003; Karp and Banducci 2008). Furthermore, young immigrants are more likely to take part in a variety of political activities. Country of origin variables were found to have a significant impact, with immigrants from Japan more likely to participate in politics, and immigrants from Thailand less likely to do so.

Table 5 presents the logistical regression results, with voting participation as a dependent variable. The results are similar to the results of the analysis in which political participation was the dependent variable. The two home country variables—a sense of belonging to the home country and remittance of funds to the home country—were found to have no impact on immigrants' turnout to vote. As previously mentioned, many immigrants in South Korea may not have had an opportunity in their native countries to vote as part of a democratic

market and having a secure legal status, rather than socio-cultural aspects. In measuring the experience of discrimination, the present study does not differentiate between different types of discrimination due to data availability. However, the positive impact of the experience of discrimination on political engagement implies that the process of integration is linked with immigrants' conditions in the host country and how they perceive their situations.

¹¹ Previous studies show that political and social situations in the country of origin influence the transnational involvement of immigrants (Bakker et al. 2014; Chaudhary 2018).

Table 4. political participation

		Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
home country variable	sense of belonging	0.106(0.075) ^{a)}		0.023(0.082)
	remittance	0.183(0.152)		0.194(0.158)
host country variable	sense of belonging		0.281*** (0.088)	0.298*** (0.093)
	trust toward Korean society		-0.011(0.037)	-0.032(0.037)
	length of residence		0.020*(0.012)	0.020*(0.012)
	language ability		0.000(0.074)	-0.023(0.075)
	experience of discrimination		0.491*** (0.159)	0.477*** (0.161)
political efficacy	internal	0.399*** (0.073)	0.381*** (0.077)	0.407*** (0.078)
	external	0.229*** (0.056)	0.206*** (0.058)	0.221*** (0.058)
	gender	-0.050(0.163)	-0.019(0.168)	-0.008(0.170)
	education	0.322*** (0.063)	0.322*** (0.066)	0.333*** (0.067)
	income	-0.041(0.045)	-0.059(0.046)	-0.044(0.047)
	age	-0.022*** (0.007)	-0.027*** (0.008)	-0.029*** (0.008)
	citizenship	0.228(0.162)	0.073(0.167)	0.152(0.171)
country of origin	China	0.267(0.334)	0.271(0.348)	0.434(0.368)
	Taiwan	0.604(0.432)	-0.198(0.551)	0.033(0.580)
	Japan	1.923*** (0.404)	1.746*** (0.399)	1.987*** (0.439)
	Vietnam	0.341(0.378)	0.614(0.395)	0.606(0.408)
	U.S./ Canada	0.696*** (0.485)	0.511(0.490)	0.673(0.516)
	Thailand	-0.398(0.572)	-0.361*** (0.583)	-0.176*** (0.592)
	Cambodia	0.346(0.488)	0.572(0.504)	0.545(0.288)
	<i>N</i>	1060	997	984
	Pseudo-R ²	0.150	0.166	0.173

*p<0.1, **p<0.05, ***p<0.01

^{a)} standard error

system. In such cases, voting participation in the host country may not be strongly linked with immigrants' experiences in their native countries.

Regarding the host country variables, one variable, length of residency, was found to have a positive effect, with those residing for a long time in South Korea showing a greater tendency to vote. The impact of this variable remained unchanged even when all other

Table 5. voting participation

		Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
home country variable	sense of belonging	-0.115(0.126) ^{a)}		-0.130(0.141)
	remittance	-0.292(0.268)		-0.364(0.283)
host country variable	sense of belonging		0.179(0.147)	0.234(0.156)
	trust toward Korean society		0.004(0.064)	0.017(0.066)
	length of residence		0.035*(0.019)	0.031*(0.019)
	language ability		0.082(0.127)	0.084(0.513)
	experience of discrimination		0.110(0.277)	0.173(0.280)
political efficacy	internal	0.044(0.121)	0.047(0.130)	0.034(0.132)
	external	0.084(0.097)	0.030(0.102)	0.013(0.104)
	gender	0.078(0.285)	0.044(0.304)	0.082(0.308)
	education	0.234**(0.113)	0.222*(0.121)	0.247**(0.122)
	income	0.005(0.071)	-0.022(0.075)	-0.022(0.077)
	age	0.061***(0.013)	0.042***(0.014)	0.049***(0.015)
	citizenship	4.079***(0.317)	4.215***(0.348)	4.157***(0.350)
country of origin	China	-1.054*(0.606)	-0.965(0.656)	-1.181*(0.676)
	Taiwan	0.696(0.690)	0.018(0.874)	-0.309(0.914)
	Japan	1.515**(0.680)	1.764**(0.686)	1.447**(0.736)
	Vietnam	0.507(0.706)	0.431(0.763)	0.476(0.760)
	U.S./ Canada	-0.497(0.818)	-0.140(0.829)	-0.441(0.856)
	Thailand	0.074(0.781)	0.248(0.832)	0.069(0.853)
	Cambodia	1.535(1.194)	1.272(1.219)	1.418(1.222)
	constant	-4.312***(1.105)	-5.248***(1.224)	-5.101***(1.279)
chi-square	377.352***	358.206***	358.677***	
-2 Log likelihood	557.995	518.549	507.883	
Cox & Snell R ²	0.406	0.409	0.414	
Nagelkerke R ²	0.560	0.565	0.571	
% correctly predicted	84.3%	84.6%	85.2%	

*p<0.1, **p<0.05, ***p<0.01

^{a)} standard error

control variables were included in the analysis. Contrary to the findings in Table 4, other host country variables were not significant. In particular, the experience of discrimination

and a sense of belonging to the host country were found to have no impact on voting. These results might be due to the fact that voting is different from other forms of political activity. In South Korea, immigrants have the right to vote three years after being granted residency or being naturalized, and there are no conditions for participation in other forms of political activity, such as taking part in rallies, engaging in political discussions, or signing petitions. Therefore, the results in regard to voting may differ from the results relating to other forms of political participation.

Some control variables, such as age, education, and citizenship, influence voting participation among immigrants. In particular, immigrants who are old, well-educated, and have citizenship are more likely to vote. Also, while immigrants from China are less likely to vote, there is typically a high voting turnout among Japanese immigrants.

CONCLUSION

To summarize the results of the data analysis, various factors appear to influence immigrants' political engagement in South Korea. However, the impact of home country variables was found to be limited. The sense of attachment to the home country and the remittance variable were not significant in both political participation and voting. In contrast, host country variables influenced the political participation of immigrants. The sense of belonging was influential; length of residence and experience of discrimination also showed strong effects in the model of political participation as a dependent variable. As Lien (1994) argued, experience of discrimination might offer motivation to take part in other political activities beyond voting, which is in line with the results of this study. This study found that immigrants in South Korea who have experienced discrimination tend to take part in political activities other than voting. This could reflect the immigrants' desire to achieve better treatment by actively engaging in politics. Also, sadly enough, this result might be reflective of the country's failure to protect the rights of foreign workers. The country's employment permit system prohibits foreign workers from choosing their workplaces without permission from their employers, which misleads employers into thinking they "own" foreign workers (Jo 2018). Thus, migrant workers in South Korea suffer from mistreatment and poor accommodations and living conditions. Additionally, as Hundt et al. (2019) rightly pointed out, frequently reported occurrences of violence and disregard toward migrant women indicate that discrimination against immigrants in South Korea is a serious issue. These conditions might provoke immigrants with experiences of discrimination to be more engaged in the political arena.

Length of residence have an effect both on political participation and voting. This indicate that immigrants who reside for a long time in the host country are more likely to be engaged in politics. This might be caused by the effect of time which promotes immigrants' understanding of the host country's politics.

Among sociodemographic variables, education and age have an influence on political engagement. In all of the analyses, the well-educated tend to be more actively engaged in Korean politics. This result is in line with the previous literature. Those with higher education levels are expected to have more resources, time, and energy for political engagement even in the receiving country. Regarding the age variable, the young are more likely to take part in political participation, whereas older immigrants are more likely to turn out to vote. These complex results may reflect the fact that the political participation variable was measured

by activities more commonly engaged in by young people, such as participation in rallies, demonstrations, or internet discussions.

The main purpose of this study was to examine and compare the impact of home country variables and host country variables. According to the results, host country variables, but not home country variables, are influential in increasing the political engagement of immigrants. These results imply that their host country experience might be important to the immigrants' political engagement, while the impact of their connection to the home country or their experience in the home country is limited. In the case of immigrants in South Korea, immigrants do have transnational ties with their home country, but these ties do not influence their active political engagement in the host country. From the perspective of the social identity theory, once they have arrived in the host country, immigrants begin to form a sense of attachment to the new country and integrate into the new society. These newly formed ties and experiences greatly influence their political decisions. On the other hand, linkages with the home country have been found not to be influential in increasing the political engagement of immigrants. This might be due to the difference in democracy level between South Korea and the home countries of immigrants, since many immigrants in South Korea are from countries with an authoritarian regime. Immigrants' engagement with democratic political activities may necessitate more experience of their host country than their native country. However, this does not mean that previous studies on transnationalism are problematic; rather, it simply reveals that immigrants' attitudes and behaviors may differ in different contexts. Also, this clearly shows that further case studies, particularly in non-Western countries, should be conducted to facilitate a more nuanced understanding of immigrants' political life.

These results highlight important implications for countries with high immigrant populations, including South Korea. The settlement and integration of immigrants is essential to a host nation's development and prosperity. In particular, political engagement is instrumental in incorporating immigrants successfully into the host society. The present study shows that fostering a sense of attachment to a new country encourages immigrants' political engagement. Thus, these results suggest that governments should be more focused on how immigrants feel about and perceive their host society.

There may be differences in each country, but many immigrants may experience one-sided and unilateral assimilation. Berry (2001) divides the immigration policies of each country into four categories (multiculturalism, exclusion, melting pot, and segregation) based on the strength of two criteria: the maintenance of the heritage culture and identity, and the relationships sought among groups. Applying the approaches of Berry, South Korea's immigration policies could be considered to belong to the exclusion category, because the government does not positively view immigrants unique trying to maintain their own culture and does not encourage contact between immigrants and various groups in society. How Koreans view their country and what it means to be a Korean also indicates the rigid and intolerant nature of South Korean multiculturalism. According to the survey results conducted by the East Asia Institute in 2013, 94.2% and 93% of respondents respectively responded that they are proud of being Korean and that Koreans should take pride in the country's culture. These results clearly indicate the coherence and patriotism of the Korean society, which in turn answers to the possible exclusivity exhibited toward non-Koreans.

Different countries may belong to different categories based on the manner in which they react to the cultural diversity resulting from an influx of immigrants. However, irrespective of the various migration policies that countries adopt, immigrants typically face difficulties

with the integration process. That is, immigrants would have to learn the language, customs, culture, and language of the new country as soon as possible to gain permanent residence or employment, while discarding home country's customs or culture. Of course, immigrants must adapt both socially and culturally in order to achieve social integration. But rather than forcibly requiring immigrants to assimilate into society in a short period of time, we should give them sufficient opportunities to experience their own culture and customs and encourage them to make their own efforts at adaptation to a new country, because, as this study showed, immigrants' perceptions and feelings about their new country play an essential role in their political engagement.

This study has limitations. First, the study did not include as many home country variables as originally intended. The study initially included maturity of democracy in the home country and home country GDP as variables, but these variables have high multicollinearity with the country of origin variable and were therefore excluded from the analysis. Furthermore, this study focused only on South Korea. Very little research had been conducted on immigrants' political behavior in South Korea. Given that, this study contributes to the literature by providing new information on an understudied area, but it should be also noted that the results of the present study are not generalizable. Future studies should examine cases from other countries to determine whether the findings from South Korea remain valid.

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