The U-Shaped Paradox: Political Stability and the Strength of the Association between National Pride and Happiness

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Abstract. This study examines the complex interplay between national pride, happiness, and political stability across 98 countries from 1996 to 2023, with particular attention to Global South contexts including Indonesia. Using data from the World Values Survey and Worldwide Governance Indicators, we uncover a paradoxical U-shaped relationship between political stability and the strength of the national pride-happiness correlation. In countries with low political stability, national pride strongly predicts individual happiness ($r > 0.15$), but this relationship weakens as political stability improves, reaching its lowest point at moderate stability levels before strengthening again in highly stable nations. Additionally, we find that the relationship between national pride and political stability itself differs by development context: positive in Global South countries but negative in Global North countries. These findings suggest that nationalism serves different psychological and political functions across the development spectrum. In unstable contexts, national pride may provide psychological compensation for political uncertainty, while in highly stable democracies, it may reflect genuine civic engagement. The weakest pride-happiness link in moderately stable countries suggests these transitional societies experience competing sources of life satisfaction. This research contributes to understanding why national pride remains universally high despite vast differences in political and economic conditions, offering new insights for policymakers in Global South nations like Indonesia who are navigating democratic consolidation.

Keywords: National Pride, Political Stability, Happiness, Civic Nationalism, Ethnic Nationalism

Abstrak. *Penelitian ini mengkaji interaksi kompleks antara kebanggaan nasional, kebahagiaan, dan stabilitas politik di 98 negara dari tahun 1996 hingga 2023, dengan perhatian khusus pada konteks Selatan Global termasuk Indonesia. Menggunakan data dari World Values Survey dan Worldwide Governance Indicators, kami menemukan hubungan berbentuk U yang paradoks antara stabilitas politik dan kekuatan korelasi kebanggaan nasional-kebahagiaan. Di negara dengan stabilitas politik rendah, kebanggaan nasional secara kuat memprediksi kebahagiaan individu ($r > 0,15$), tetapi hubungan ini melemah seiring peningkatan stabilitas politik, mencapai titik terendah pada tingkat stabilitas sedang sebelum menguat kembali di negara-negara yang sangat stabil. Selain itu, kami menemukan bahwa hubungan antara kebanggaan nasional dan stabilitas politik itu sendiri berbeda menurut konteks pembangunan: positif di negara-negara Selatan Global tetapi negatif di negara-negara Utara Global. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa nasionalisme melayani fungsi psikologis dan politik yang berbeda di seluruh spektrum pembangunan. Dalam konteks yang tidak stabil, kebanggaan nasional dapat memberikan kompensasi psikologis atas ketidakpastian politik, sementara di demokrasi yang sangat stabil, hal ini mencerminkan keterlibatan sipil yang tulus. Hubungan kebanggaan nasional-kebahagiaan yang terlemah di negara dengan stabilitas sedang menunjukkan bahwa masyarakat transisi ini mengalami sumber kepuasan hidup yang bersaing. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada pemahaman mengapa kebanggaan nasional tetap secara universal tinggi meskipun terdapat perbedaan besar dalam kondisi politik dan ekonomi, serta menawarkan wawasan baru bagi pembuat kebijakan di negara-negara Selatan Global seperti Indonesia yang sedang menavigasi konsolidasi demokrasi.*

Kata Kunci: *Kebanggaan Nasional, Stabilitas Politik, Kebahagiaan, Indonesia, Selatan Global, Konsolidasi Demokrasi*

1. INTRODUCTION

Why do citizens across vastly different nations, from war-torn states to prosperous democracies, consistently report high levels of national pride? This empirical puzzle challenges conventional wisdom that national sentiment should vary with objective national conditions. Despite dramatic differences in economic development, political stability, and quality of governance, surveys consistently show that the vast majority of people worldwide express pride in their nationality (Rose, 1985; Ni et al., 2023). This uniformity of national pride across diverse contexts raises fundamental questions about the nature of nationalism and its relationship to individual well-being and political conditions, particularly in Global South countries like Indonesia that are undergoing complex democratic transitions.

This paper examines how the association between national pride and individual happiness varies with political stability across 98 countries between 1996 and 2023, using 223 national surveys from the World Values Survey matched to the Worldwide Governance Indicators (World Values Survey, 2020; World Bank, 2025). Previous research has established that national pride is positively associated with individual happiness (Ha & Jang, 2014; Morrison et al., 2011), and that this association is not the same everywhere: national satisfaction predicts life satisfaction more strongly in poorer and non-Western countries (Morrison et al., 2011), while the link between pride and well-being depends on whether people conceive of the nation in civic or ethnic terms (Reeskens & Wright, 2011). Much less attention has been paid to political stability as the context in which this association takes shape, although stability is precisely the condition that decides whether national identity has to compensate for insecure institutions or can rest on functioning ones. In this regard, the paper treats the strength of the pride-happiness association, rather than the level of either variable, as the outcome to be explained.

Two research questions follow from this. The first, which is the central question of the paper, asks whether political stability has a non-linear relationship with the strength of the association between national pride and individual happiness across countries. The second asks whether the strength of this association, and the relationship between political stability and national pride itself, differ between Global South and Global North countries. For the first question we state one hypothesis (H1): the strength of the pride-happiness association is a U-shaped function of political stability, which means that the coefficient on squared political stability is positive and that the turning point of the fitted curve lies inside the observed range of stability rather than at its edge (Lind & Mehlum, 2010). The competing expectations against which H1 is set, namely the monotonic decline predicted by compensatory accounts and the monotonic rise predicted by evaluative accounts, are developed in Section 3.3. The second question is treated as exploratory, and no directional hypothesis is stated for it.

The results are consistent with H1. In each of the four periods examined, the correlation between national pride and happiness is strongest in countries with either very low or very high political stability and weakest in moderately stable ones, the fitted quadratic term is positive in every period, and every turning point lies well inside the range of the stability scale. The second question receives a more modest answer than the earlier literature might lead one to expect: once the regional means are formally compared, the strength of the association does not differ significantly between Global South and Global North countries in any period. We interpret the U-shaped pattern as the meeting point of two mechanisms, compensation for institutional weakness at the low-stability end and evaluation of institutional performance at the high-stability end. These mechanisms, however, are hypotheses suggested by the pattern rather than findings of the analysis, since the data contain no direct measure of either.

The Indonesian case runs through the paper, and it is therefore necessary to be clear about what it can and cannot demonstrate. Indonesia enters the analysis with two surveys, from 2006 (1,970 respondents) and 2018 (3,195 respondents), while its 2001 survey falls in a year without a WGI estimate and does not enter (Appendix Table A3). Indonesia is thus one country-level estimate among 57 in each of the two periods in which it appears. What the analysis can show is where a large Global South

democracy sits on the cross-national curve at two points in time. In 2006, Indonesia's political stability estimate of -1.17 placed it at the 14.9th percentile of all economies, among the low-stability countries rather than in the moderate zone, whereas by 2017 its estimate had risen to -0.51 (World Bank, 2025a). What the analysis cannot show is anything about Indonesia's own trajectory: two observations do not establish a within-country trend, the country-level correlations are not tested for Indonesia separately, and nothing in the design identifies the effect of Indonesian policies on national pride or happiness. The Indonesian material in the discussion should be read in this light, as an interpretation of where one country stands relative to a cross-national pattern rather than as evidence about Indonesia itself.

The paper makes three contributions. Firstly, it shifts attention from whether national pride is associated with happiness to how strongly it is, and documents that the strength of this association varies systematically and non-linearly with political stability. Secondly, it shows that this variation is not reducible to the division between Global South and Global North, since the two groups do not differ in the strength of the association once the comparison is formally tested. Thirdly, it brings together two accounts that are usually discussed separately, the compensatory and the evaluative, in a single framework in which each explains one end of the stability spectrum, and it states the conditions under which that framework could be tested. The remainder of the paper develops the theoretical framework, presents the data and the analysis, and discusses what the results do and do not imply, with particular attention to Indonesia and other Global South countries.

2. CONCEPTUALIZING NATIONALISM

Five concepts recur throughout this paper and are often used interchangeably in the literature: national identity, nationalism, national pride, civic nationalism and ethnic nationalism. Because the argument depends on keeping them apart, each of them is defined separately in the following paragraphs, after which we explain why national pride, rather than any of the other four, is the appropriate empirical indicator for the argument developed here.

Firstly, national identity refers to the individual's tie to the nation as a group. Hadarics (2026) defines it as "attachment to and identification with the national ingroup" (p. 2), and distinguishes within it national attachment, which reflects the subjective importance of belonging to the nation and need not involve any comparison with other nations (Hadarics, 2026). The nation to which people attach themselves is, in Benedict Anderson's formulation, an "imagined political community" held together by shared symbols and narratives rather than by face-to-face contact (Calhoun, 2016). Anderson, a historian of Southeast Asia whose work on Indonesia preceded his general theory of nationhood, set out this view in Imagined Communities (1983), which remains the standard reference on the cultural origins of the nation (Calhoun, 2016). Eugene Kamenka (1972), by contrast, treats the nation as a response to concrete historical conditions such as shared language, territory and political authority. Despite their different emphases, both perspectives treat national identity as psychological in character, a matter of "how individuals develop feelings about and attachments to groups" (Druckman, 1994).

Secondly, nationalism is a broader and more contested term. Bonikowski (2016) notes that research has increasingly approached nationalism "not only as a political project but also as a cognitive, affective, and discursive category deployed in daily practice" (p. 427). In political psychology, however, the term is usually reserved for forms of national identification that assign superior status to one's own nation, and Hadarics (2026) groups nationalism with national glorification and collective narcissism as chauvinistic forms of identification. Nationalism in this narrower sense is therefore not simply strong national identity: it adds a claim of superiority over other nations that neither attachment nor pride requires (Hadarics, 2026).

Thirdly, national pride is the positive affect that citizens feel toward their country (Smith & Kim, 2006). More precisely, "national pride refers to pride in the nation's achievements" (Hadarics, 2026, p. 2), and pride itself is a self-evaluative emotion more directly linked to performance contexts and status signalling than attachment is (Hadarics, 2026). Pride is therefore the evaluative component of national

identity: it presupposes some judgement that the nation has done something worth being proud of, whether that judgement is grounded in the country's actual achievements or imposed by social norms (Fabrykant & Magun, 2016). This is what separates pride from attachment, which concerns how much belonging matters, and from nationalism, which concerns how one's nation ranks against others.

Fourthly and fifthly, civic and ethnic nationalism are two conceptions of who belongs to the nation, rather than two degrees of attachment to it. Ethnic nationalism conceives of nations as historically given entities rooted in cultural inheritance, whereas civic nationalism represents a more inclusive form based on shared political values and institutions (Tamir, 2019). In survey research the distinction is usually operationalised through the criteria that respondents regard as important for being a true member of the nation, with ancestry marking an ethnic boundary and respect for the country's laws and institutions marking a civic one (Reeskens & Wright, 2011). Tamir (2019) cautions, however, that the distinction is less clean in practice than in theory, since civic nations also rest on a shared culture and history.

Of these five concepts, national pride is the appropriate empirical indicator for the argument of this paper, for two reasons. The first is theoretical. Both accounts set out in Section 3.3 are accounts of pride: the compensatory account concerns the consolation people draw from feeling good about their nation when other aspects of their lives are going badly (Morrison et al., 2011), and the evaluative account concerns pride that reflects the nation's actual achievements (Fabrykant & Magun, 2016). Attachment, which need not involve any judgement about how the nation performs, would speak to neither of them, and nationalism in the narrower sense adds a claim of superiority that neither account requires. The second reason is practical. The WVS national pride item (G006) is asked in comparable wording in waves 3 to 7, and only 3 of the national surveys fielded between 1996 and 2023 omit it (Appendix A, Section A.2), which makes it the only national identity measure that can be compared across 98 countries and nearly three decades (World Values Survey, 2020a).

This choice has a cost that should be stated at the outset. The WVS item asks about pride in general, and it does not distinguish pride in political institutions from pride in history, culture or ancestry. It therefore cannot tell civic pride from ethnic pride, nor grounded pride from normatively imposed pride, and Fabrykant and Magun (2016) find that general single-item pride is precisely the form most open to normative influence. Where the paper later interprets the U-shaped pattern in terms of civic and ethnic nationalism, those interpretations are theoretical readings of the pattern, not distinctions that the measure itself can make.

These conceptual distinctions have particular relevance for countries in the Global South, including Indonesia, where nationalism has played a complex role in post-colonial state formation and democratic development. As Aspinall (2009) notes, Indonesian nationalism has evolved from a unifying force against colonial rule to a more contested concept in the democratic era, with ethnic and civic elements often in tension. Similarly, Törnquist (2000) highlights how nationalism in Indonesia has been shaped by the interplay between state-led identity construction and popular movements, creating a dynamic that differs significantly from Western nationalism models.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section sets out the theoretical steps that connect political stability to the association between national pride and happiness. One distinction needs to be fixed before doing so, because the argument depends on it: the paper is about the strength of the association between national pride and happiness within countries, not about how proud or how happy people are on average. The section first reviews how national pride relates to political stability across development contexts (Section 3.1). It then distinguishes the level of happiness from the strength of its association with pride and sets out the steps from political stability to that strength (Section 3.2), before turning to existing expectations and the U-shaped hypothesis (Section 3.3).

3.1 National Pride and Political Stability across Development Contexts

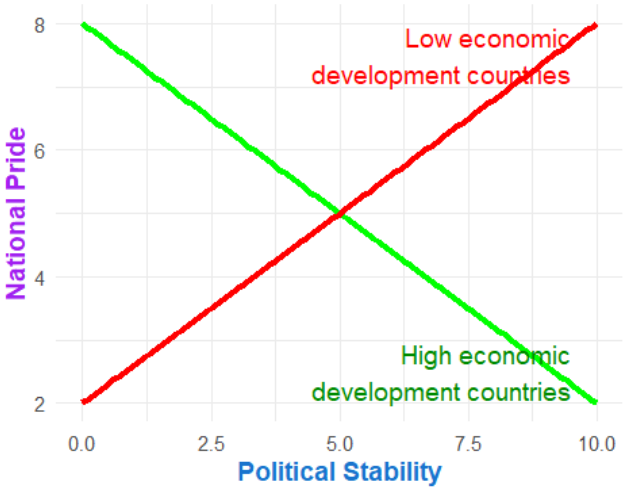
The relationship between nationalism and political stability is expected to differ between

developing and developed countries. In countries with lower development levels, economic inequality creates conditions where states actively deploy nationalism as a stabilizing force. As Solt (2011) shows, governments facing high inequality use nationalist rhetoric to "defuse the ticking time bomb of economic inequality," concealing unequal conditions and pre-empting calls for redistributive policies. National pride becomes a tool for maintaining political stability by diverting attention from material grievances and fostering unity around shared identity rather than class divisions.

This pattern is particularly evident in Southeast Asian countries like Indonesia, where nationalist narratives have been strategically employed by successive governments to maintain social cohesion amid ethnic diversity and economic inequality (RSIS, 2025). Following the fall of Suharto's New Order regime, Indonesian nationalism has evolved to accommodate democratic values while still serving as a unifying force in a fragmented political landscape (Purnomo & Kurniawan, 2025).

Nationalism can also work as a destabilizing force. Nordman's (2015) analysis of the Western Balkan states illustrates how political entrepreneurs weaponize ethnic nationalism to strengthen their grip on power, with conflict and instability as the result. In established democracies, the meanings that citizens attach to the nation have been linked to support for exclusionary policies and authoritarian politics (Bonikowski, 2016), which suggests that nationalism there competes with, rather than substitutes for, inclusive civic institutions. The difference between contexts where nationalism fills an institutional void and those where it competes with established democratic structures is examined in Section 5.2, although only descriptively.

Figure 3.1. Theoretical Relationship between National Pride and Political Stability in Low vs. High Development Countries



3.2 From Political Stability to the Strength of the Pride-Happiness Association

National pride is positively associated with individual happiness across a wide range of settings, in the sense that feeling good about one's country tends to go together with feeling good about one's life (Ha & Jang, 2014; Morrison et al., 2011). The association appears to strengthen during moments of collective celebration, such as national achievements that provide focal points for shared pride (Sullivan, 2013).

In the Indonesian context, Soedikto (2020) links national pride to subjective well-being among Indonesian millennials. At the global level, Morrison et al. (2011), using the Gallup World Poll across 128 countries, found national satisfaction to be a strong positive predictor of life satisfaction, with the relationship moderated by household income, residential mobility, country GDP per capita and region.

The distinction between the level of happiness and the strength of its association with pride is central to the argument and therefore needs to be made explicit. The level of happiness is how happy people in a country are on average, and it differs widely across countries, in large part with GDP per capita, social support, healthy life expectancy, freedom, generosity and perceptions of corruption (Helliwell et al., 2024). The strength of the pride-happiness association, which is what this paper sets out to explain, is a different quantity: it describes how much happier the prouder citizens of a country are than its less proud citizens, and it is measured here by the within-

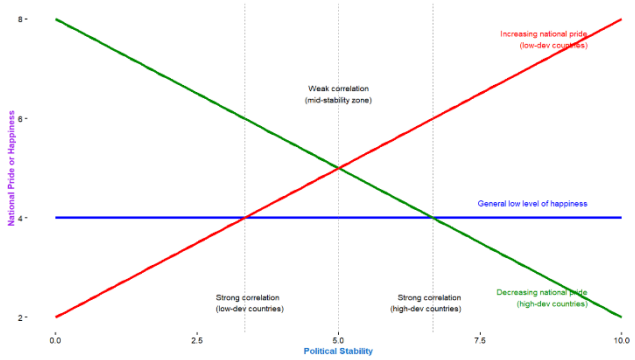
country rank correlation between the two survey items. The two quantities are logically independent. A very happy country can show a weak association, if its happy citizens are no prouder than its unhappy ones, and an unhappy country can show a strong one. The argument developed below therefore makes no prediction about whether the citizens of stable countries are happier or prouder on average; it predicts only how closely pride and happiness move together within them, and for the same reason it does not rely on any assumption about whether average happiness is stable across political contexts.

With this distinction in place, the theoretical steps from political stability to the strength of the association can be stated, and they are broken down in the following paragraphs. The first step concerns what makes the association strong or weak in the first place. Within a country, pride and happiness will move together to the extent that, firstly, people draw on their feelings about the nation when they evaluate their own lives, and secondly, pride and happiness respond to the same features of people's circumstances. Morrison et al. (2011) provide evidence for the first route, concluding that "people are more likely to use proximate factors to judge life satisfaction where conditions are salutary" (p. 166), while relying more on perceived societal success where conditions are poor. The second route is implied by the evaluative account: where pride is grounded in the country's actual achievements (Fabrykant & Magun, 2016), citizens who experience those achievements directly, through public services, personal security or the rule of law, have reason to be both prouder and happier than those who do not.

The second step is that political stability shapes how strong each route is. At low stability, the proximate domains on which people would otherwise base their life evaluations, such as income, work and personal security, are themselves insecure, so that the nation becomes one of the few remaining reference points and the first route is strong (Morrison et al., 2011). At high stability, institutions perform reliably enough for pride to track experienced performance, so that the second route is strong (Fabrykant & Magun, 2016; Reeskens & Wright, 2011). At moderate stability, neither condition holds well. Proximate domains have become usable bases for life evaluation, which weakens the first route, but institutions do not yet perform consistently enough for pride to reflect what citizens actually experience, which keeps the second route weak.

The third step follows from the first two. If the strength of the association reflects both routes together, and each route is strongest at a different end of the stability range, then the association should be strong at both ends and weakest somewhere in between. This is the U-shaped hypothesis, which is stated formally in Section 3.3. Each of these steps is a theoretical claim. The data used here measure pride, happiness and political stability, but not the two routes themselves, so the steps generate the hypothesis without being tested by the analysis.

Figure 3.2. Interplay between Political Stability, National Pride, and Happiness



3.3 Existing Expectations and the U-Shaped Hypothesis

Before stating the hypothesis, it is necessary to establish what the existing literature would lead one to expect about the strength of the association between national pride and happiness across levels of political stability, since the U-shaped pattern is paradoxical only relative to those expectations. Two bodies of work are relevant here, and each of them predicts a relationship that runs in one direction only. These two expectations are broken down in the following paragraphs, after which we explain why a U-shaped pattern contradicts both.

Firstly, a compensatory account predicts that the association should be strongest where conditions are worst and should weaken as political stability increases. Drawing on the Gallup World Poll, Morrison et al. (2011) found that national satisfaction predicted life satisfaction and that this relationship was

moderated by household income, residential mobility, country GDP per capita and region, concluding that "When individuals are impoverished or more bound to their culture and surroundings, national satisfaction more strongly predicts life satisfaction" (p. 166). System justification theory offers one mechanism for such a pattern, since endorsing system-justifying beliefs is expected to be positively related to general psychological well-being because this fulfils existential, epistemic, and relational needs (Vargas-Salfate et al., 2018). Using longitudinal data from 18 countries, the same study found system justification to be positively and significantly related to life satisfaction and negatively related to anxiety and depression, although this palliative effect was unaffected by society-level inequality, which already suggests that the compensatory gradient is less straightforward than the theory implies (Vargas-Salfate et al., 2018). The most recent evidence on national pride specifically points in the compensatory direction. Using the combined WVS/EVS data for 92 countries, Hadarics (2026) found that the association between national pride and perceived democratic quality is stronger in less democratic countries, and concluded that "pride functions as a blind spot for democratic deficit" (p. 14). If pride does its psychological work where institutions fail to provide security, the pride-happiness association should be strongest in the least stable countries and should decline steadily as stability rises.

Secondly, an evaluative account predicts the opposite gradient. On this reading, national pride is a judgement about how well the country actually performs, and such a judgement should be more closely tied to personal well-being where the state delivers the security and services on which people's lives depend. Working with ISSP 2003 data, Fabrykant and Magun (2016) distinguish grounded pride, which is cognitively processed and based on specific country achievements evaluated against expectations, from normatively imposed pride, and show that objective country achievements, indicated by GDP per capita, predict grounded pride but not normative pride. In a similar vein, Reeskens and Wright (2011), re-analysing the 2008 European Values Study, found that the relationship between national pride and subjective well-being operates through normative conceptions of the nation-state, with civic nationalists reporting higher well-being than ethnic nationalists. Hadarics (2026) adds a finding that cuts against his own democratic-quality result: the Human Development Index moderated the pride effect in the opposite direction, with stronger associations in more developed countries. On this account, the pride-happiness association should grow stronger as political stability increases.

Taken separately, neither account predicts what we observe. The compensatory account explains why the association is strong in unstable countries, but it cannot explain why the association rises again among the most stable ones. The evaluative account explains the high-stability end, but not the low-stability end. The U-shaped pattern therefore contradicts each expectation over half of the stability range, and it is in this specific sense that we describe it as paradoxical. Non-linearity as such is not foreign to this literature, since Ahlerup and Hansson (2011) identified "an inverted U-shaped relationship between nationalism and government effectiveness" (p. 431). However, that finding concerns the level of nationalism in a population, not the strength of the link between pride and individual well-being, and we are not aware of an existing account that predicts a curvilinear pattern in the latter. The interpretation developed below is that the two mechanisms are not rivals but operate at different ends of the stability spectrum, so that the trough at moderate stability marks the region where pride is neither a compensation for institutional failure nor a judgement on institutional success. This is a hypothesis about mechanisms that the present data cannot test directly, a point we return to in the discussion.

Formally, H1 concerns the curve that relates the strength of the pride-happiness association (Y) to political stability (PS), $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 PS + \beta_2 PS^2 + \varepsilon$, which is Equation (1) in Section 4.2. H1 states that the strength of the pride-happiness association is a U-shaped function of political stability, and this implies two conditions, both of which must hold. Firstly, the coefficient on the squared term must be positive ($\beta 2 > 0$), so that the fitted curve opens upward. Secondly, the turning point of the curve, $PS^* = -\beta_1/(2\beta_2)$, must lie inside the observed range of political stability, since a positive squared term with a turning point at or beyond the edge of the data describes a curve that merely flattens or steepens, not one that falls and then rises (Lind &

Mehlum, 2010). No sign is predicted for β_1 on its own, because it depends on where the trough lies: β_1 is negative if the minimum falls at positive values of political stability and positive if it falls at negative values.

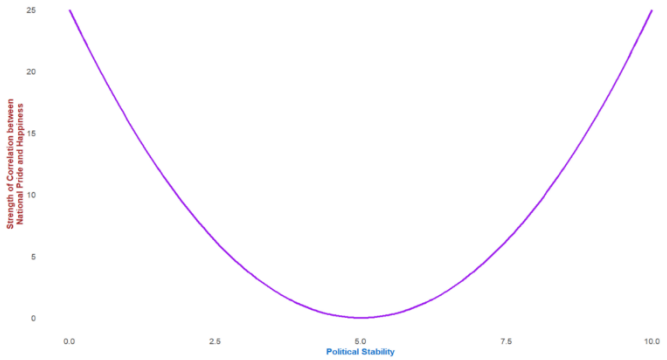
H1 is set against three competing hypotheses, each of which corresponds to a pattern that the data could equally have shown. The first (H0a) follows from the compensatory account: the association weakens monotonically as political stability increases, which implies $\beta_1 < 0$ and no positive curvature (Hadarics, 2026; Morrison et al., 2011). The second (H0b) follows from the evaluative account: the association strengthens monotonically with political stability, which implies $\beta_1 > 0$ and no positive curvature (Fabrykant & Magun, 2016; Reeskens & Wright, 2011). The third (H0c) is the null hypothesis that the strength of the association is unrelated to political stability, so that neither coefficient differs from zero. A fourth pattern, an inverted U with $\beta_2 < 0$, is logically possible, but it is predicted by none of the accounts reviewed here, and finding it would count against all of them.

Two further explanations could produce a U-shaped pattern without the mechanisms proposed here, and they are stated as alternatives rather than dismissed. The first is a measurement artefact. A rank correlation is attenuated when one of the two variables varies little, and the vast majority of people worldwide express pride in their nationality (Rose, 1985; Ni et al., 2023). If the share of respondents who are very proud itself varied non-linearly with political stability, part of the U-shape could reflect differences in the spread of pride rather than in how closely pride and happiness are linked. The second is confounding by development. Political stability is correlated with national income and with the other conditions that shape average happiness (Helliwell et al., 2024), so the curvature attributed here to stability may partly reflect development more broadly. Neither alternative is tested in the present analysis, and both are returned to in the discussion.

The mechanisms proposed in Section 3.2, compensation at the low-stability end and evaluation at the high-stability end, are hypotheses for future testing rather than claims that the present analysis can support, since the data contain no variable that measures either of them directly. Each of them nevertheless implies observable patterns that additional variables would allow researchers to check. If compensation operates, the pride-happiness association within low-stability countries should be stronger among respondents whose own circumstances are worse, for instance those with lower incomes, as Morrison et al. (2011) found for national satisfaction. If evaluation operates, the association within high-stability countries should be stronger among respondents who express confidence in their political institutions, and it should be carried by pride in specific achievements, such as the way democracy works, rather than by general pride (Fabrykant & Magun, 2016). The moderate-stability trough, finally, implies that neither of these conditional patterns should be pronounced in countries in the middle of the stability range.

The hypothesis also clarifies what would be expected for a country such as Indonesia, whose political stability score rose from -1.17 in 2006 to -0.51 in 2017 (World Bank, 2025a). If H1 holds, a country moving from low towards moderate stability would be expected to move down the left arm of the curve, with national pride becoming a weaker correlate of happiness as the proximate domains of life become more secure. The cross-sectional design of this paper, however, compares countries at given points in time and does not follow any country along the curve, so this expectation describes what the cross-national pattern implies for Indonesia rather than something the analysis observes in Indonesia.

Figure 3.3. Hypothesized U-shaped relationship



4. DATA AND METHODS

4.1 Data Sources

The analysis combines two data sources. National pride and happiness are taken from the World Values Survey (WVS), an international research programme devoted to the scientific

study of social, political, economic, religious and cultural values across the world (World Values Survey, 2020), using the WVS Time Series 1981-2022 cross-national file (data file version 5.0) and waves 3 to 7. Political stability is taken from the Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI), which capture perceptions of governance quality in over 200 economies (World Bank, 2025). Each WVS survey is matched to the WGI estimate of the same calendar year, with no interpolation between years, and the two sources are merged on country codes. Because the WGI was published for 1996, 1998 and 2000 and annually from 2002 onwards, surveys fielded in 1995, 1997, 1999 and 2001 have no matching estimate and do not enter the analysis (World Bank, 2025). The resulting dataset covers 98 countries, 223 country-years and 315,347 respondents between 1996 and 2023. The country list, survey waves, observation counts, missing-data rules, coding procedures and matching protocol are documented in full in Appendix A, and the 10 countries that fielded both survey items but do not enter the analysis are listed, with reasons, in Appendix Table A4.

National pride is measured with the WVS item "How proud are you to be [nationality]?", coded from 1 (very proud) to 4 (not at all proud), and happiness with the item "Taking all things together, would you say you are...", coded from 1 (very happy) to 4 (not at all happy) (World Values Survey, 2020a). Since both items run in the same direction, a positive correlation means that prouder respondents tend to be happier. All negative codes (don't know, no answer, not applicable, not asked and missing) are treated as missing, and missing responses are handled by listwise deletion within each country-year. Survey weights are not applied, for the reasons given in Appendix A (Section A.4). The number of respondents contributing to each country-level estimate is reported in Appendix Table A3; the median lies between 1,170 and 1,255 respondents per country-year in each period, and the smallest estimate rests on 397 respondents (Appendix Table A2). For the descriptive comparison in Section 5.2, national pride is additionally summarised as a country-year mean.

Political stability is measured with the WGI indicator Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism, which measures perceptions of the likelihood of political instability and politically-motivated violence, including terrorism (World Bank, 2025a). The estimate is expressed on a standard normal scale running approximately from -2.5 to 2.5, with higher values indicating greater stability (World Bank, 2025a).

4.2 Analytical Approach

The analysis follows a two-step design of the kind commonly used with cross-national survey data, in which a quantity is first estimated within each country and the estimates are then related to country-level characteristics in a second step (Achen, 2005; Lewis & Linzer, 2005). It proceeds in three stages, which are broken down in the following paragraphs.

Firstly, the association between national pride and happiness is estimated separately for each country-year as a Spearman rank correlation. The Spearman coefficient is appropriate because both items are ordinal four-point scales and because it makes no assumption that the relationship is linear. Each coefficient is computed over the respondents with valid answers on both items, without survey weights, and the number of respondents behind each coefficient is reported in Appendix Table A3 (see Appendix A, Sections A.3 and A.4). These coefficients are the dependent variable of the later stages.

Secondly, the paper addresses the exploratory second research question by comparing Global South and Global North countries. Following the literature on global development divisions (Dados & Connell, 2012; Khaefzadeh & Sadeghi, 2018), countries are classified using the list compiled by NORRAG (NORRAG, n.d.), which places 22 of the 98 countries in the Global North and 76 in the Global South (Appendix A, Section A.5). Two comparisons are made. The mean strength of the pride-happiness association in the two groups is compared in each period with Welch's t-test, which does not assume equal variances across groups (Welch, 1947). The relationship between political stability and national pride in each group is shown with scatter plots and fitted trend lines; this second comparison is descriptive, and no formal test of the difference between the two slopes is made.

Thirdly, H1 is tested by fitting, separately for each period, a quadratic curve that relates the strength of the pride-happiness association to political stability and its square:

$$Y_{ct} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 PS + \beta_2 PS^2 + \varepsilon_{ct} \qquad (1)$$

where Y is the strength of the pride-happiness association, PS is the WGI political stability estimate and ε is the error term. As set out in Section 3.3, H1 requires both a positive coefficient on the squared term ($\beta_2 > 0$) and a turning point, $PS^* = -\beta_1/(2\beta_2)$, that lies inside the range of political stability (Lind & Mehlum, 2010).

Two features of this design call for justification, since alternative specifications are available, and they are broken down in the following paragraphs. Firstly, a multilevel model in which the individual-level slope of happiness on pride varies across countries, and is predicted by political stability and its square through cross-level interactions, would be the one-step counterpart of the design used here. The two-step design is retained for two reasons. The quantity of interest is itself a country-level estimate, the within-country association, and the national samples behind each estimate are large, with a median of between 1,170 and 1,255 respondents per country-year in each period (Appendix Table A2). In addition, the number of countries per period is small, between 42 and 57, and Bryan and Jenkins (2016) show that with large samples of individuals within each country but only a small number of countries, individual-level effects can be estimated reliably while estimates of the parameters that summarise country effects are likely to be unreliable, so that multilevel modelling is no remedy for this limitation. A multilevel specification would therefore not remove the main constraint on the second stage, which is the number of countries rather than the method.

Secondly, the country-level correlations are estimated rather than observed, and their sampling error varies with the size of each national sample. Lewis and Linzer (2005) show that when the dependent variable of a regression is itself an estimate, the coefficients are not biased by its sampling error, but the errors become heteroskedastic, and the common remedy of weighted least squares will usually lead to inefficient estimates and underestimated standard errors. To gauge how much sampling error matters here, the average sampling variance of the country-year coefficients, approximated as $1.06/(n-3)$ on the Fisher-z scale (Fieller et al., 1957), can be compared with the observed variance of the coefficients across countries reported in Table 5.1. Sampling error accounts for between 18% and 45% of the between-country variance, and the share is largest for the Global North in 1996-2004 (45%) and 2018-2023 (34%) and smallest in 2011-2017 (18% in both groups). Most of the variation between countries is therefore real, but a substantial part is not.

Finally, the curves are estimated without country-level control variables. Political stability is correlated with national income and with other conditions associated with well-being (Helliwell et al., 2024), and with between 42 and 57 countries per period, adding several correlated controls would leave little information with which to estimate a curvilinear term. The estimates in Table 5.3 are therefore descriptive associations between political stability and the strength of the pride-happiness association, and the possibility that development more broadly accounts for part of the curvature, noted in Section 3.3, is treated as a limitation rather than ruled out.

4.3 Data Structure

The analysis is divided into four periods, 1996-2004, 2005-2010, 2011-2017 and 2018-2023, chosen so that each contains a similar number of country-years (49, 57, 60 and 57 respectively; Appendix Table A2). Analysing the periods separately serves two purposes. It keeps each second-stage regression to roughly one observation per country, since the WVS rarely surveys a country more than once within a few years, and it allows the U-shaped pattern to be examined for consistency across nearly three decades rather than inferred from a single pooled estimate.

The analysis includes every country-year that meets the inclusion rules set out in Appendix A (Section A.2). The WVS is designed to provide nationally representative samples within each country, but its country coverage varies across waves according to funding and access, and this creates selection effects that should be stated explicitly. The least stable countries are underrepresented, since fieldwork is hardest where instability is greatest. The exact-year matching rule also falls entirely on the first period: it removes 34 surveys fielded in 1997, 1999 and 2001 (Appendix Table A5), so

that the 1996-2004 estimates rest on 42 countries, against 54 to 57 in the later periods (Appendix Table A2). The coverage nevertheless spans the full range of political stability and of development, which is what a test of H1 requires, but the first-period estimates in particular should be read with the narrower sample in mind.

The cross-sectional nature of the analysis limits causal inference, and we interpret all relationships as associations rather than causal effects. Cultural differences in survey response styles and social desirability bias may affect absolute levels of reported pride and happiness, though our focus on correlations and relative patterns mitigates these concerns. The binary Global North/South categorization, while analytically useful, necessarily simplifies complex development realities. Despite these limitations, the consistency of patterns across multiple time periods strengthens confidence in our findings.

5. RESULTS

5.1 National Pride and Happiness: A Generally Positive Association

National pride and happiness are generally positively associated. The mean country-year correlation is positive in every period and in both development groups, ranging from 0.122 to 0.184, and the 95% confidence interval of every regional mean lies well above zero (Table 5.1). The country-level coefficients nevertheless vary considerably around these means, with standard deviations between 0.045 and 0.068, so the evidence supports a generally positive association across countries rather than a claim that the association is positive in every country and period. This is consistent with previous research reporting a positive link between national pride and individual well-being across diverse settings (Ha & Jang, 2014; Morrison et al., 2011).

Table 5.1 reports the mean and standard deviation of the country-level correlations by development group and period. These are unweighted means across country-years, so that each country-level estimate counts once regardless of its sample size (Appendix A, Section A.4). Global South countries contribute more country-years than Global North countries in every period, reflecting both the larger number of developing countries and the expansion of WVS coverage in these regions (Appendix Table A2).

To test whether the strength of the association differs between the two groups, we compared the group means in each period using Welch's t-test, which does not assume equal variances across groups (Welch, 1947). None of the differences is statistically significant. In 1996-2004 the Global North mean is 0.003 lower than the Global South mean (95% CI [-0.039, 0.033], p = .863), in 2005-2010 it is 0.009 lower ([-0.043, 0.025], p = .592), and in 2011-2017 it is 0.011 lower ([-0.057, 0.035], p = .621). Only in 2018-2023 is the Global North mean higher, by 0.031, but the interval includes zero ([-0.009, 0.071], p = .118) and the estimate rests on only 8 Global North country-years (Appendix Table A6). The conclusions do not change when countries rather than country-years are used as the unit of comparison (Appendix Table A6). In this regard, the descriptive impression that the association is stronger in the Global South does not survive a formal test: the strength of the pride-happiness association does not differ between the two development groups in any period, and whatever structures it across countries, it is not the North-South division as such.

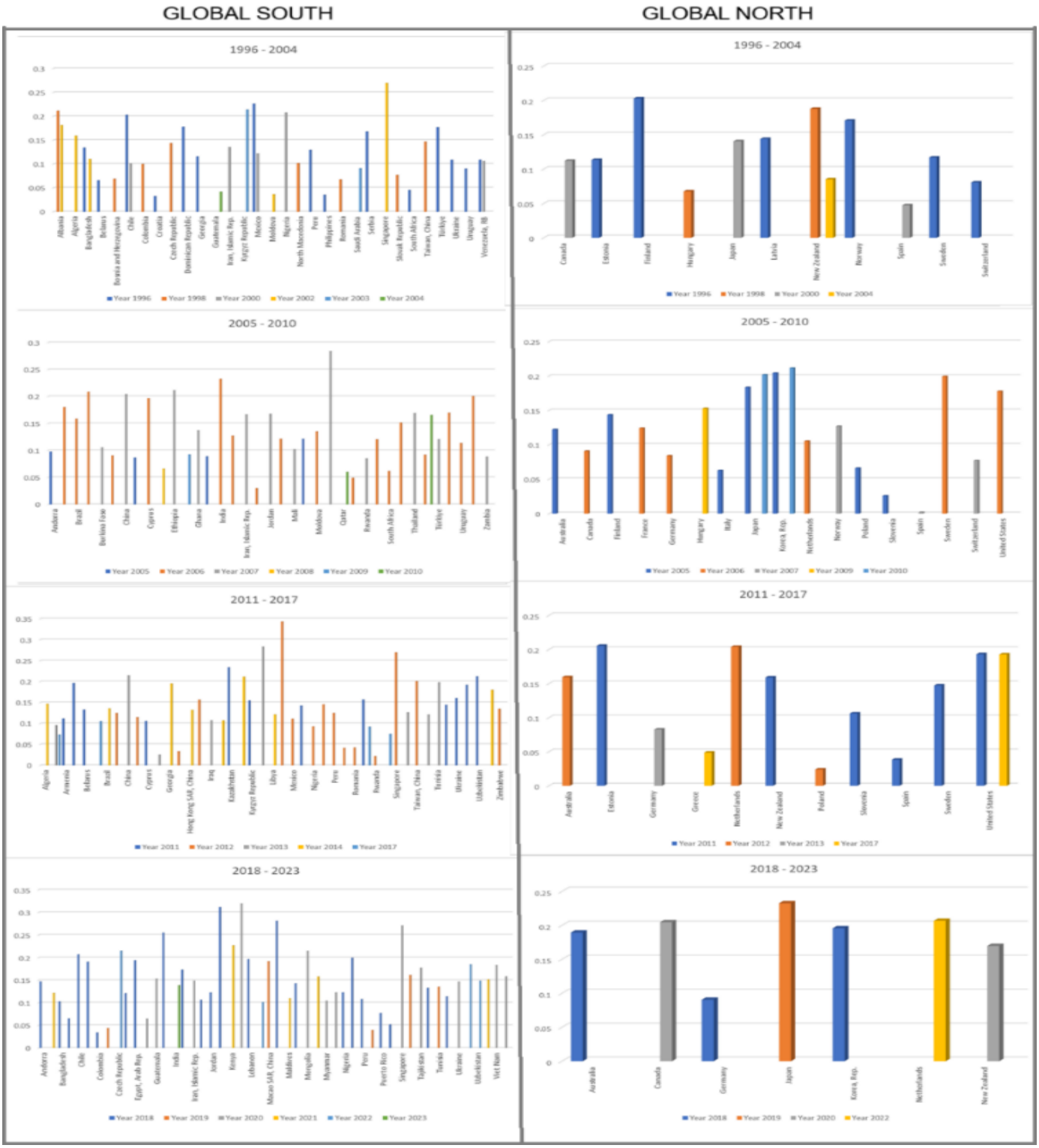
Table 5.1. Mean and Standard Deviation of National Pride-Happiness Correlations by Region and Time Period

Year	Statistical Attribute	Global South	Global North	95% CI (South / North)	Welch p
1996-2004	Mean	0.125	0.122	[0.105, 0.145] / [0.091, 0.153]	0.863
	Std. Dev.	0.060	0.049		
2005-2010	Mean	0.133	0.124	[0.114, 0.152] / [0.095, 0.153]	0.592
	Std. Dev.	0.056	0.062		

2011-2017	Mean	0.141	0.130	[0.122, 0.160] / [0.087, 0.173]	0.621
	Std. Dev.	0.066	0.068		
2018-2023	Mean	0.153	0.184	[0.134, 0.172] / [0.146, 0.222]	0.118
	Std. Dev.	0.066	0.045		

Note: Unweighted means and standard deviations of country-year Spearman coefficients. Confidence intervals and Welch tests are computed from the group means, standard deviations and numbers of country-years (Appendix Tables A2 and A6). Sources: authors' work.

Figure 5.1. Spearman correlation coefficients (Global South/North)



5.2 Divergent Relationships with Political Stability

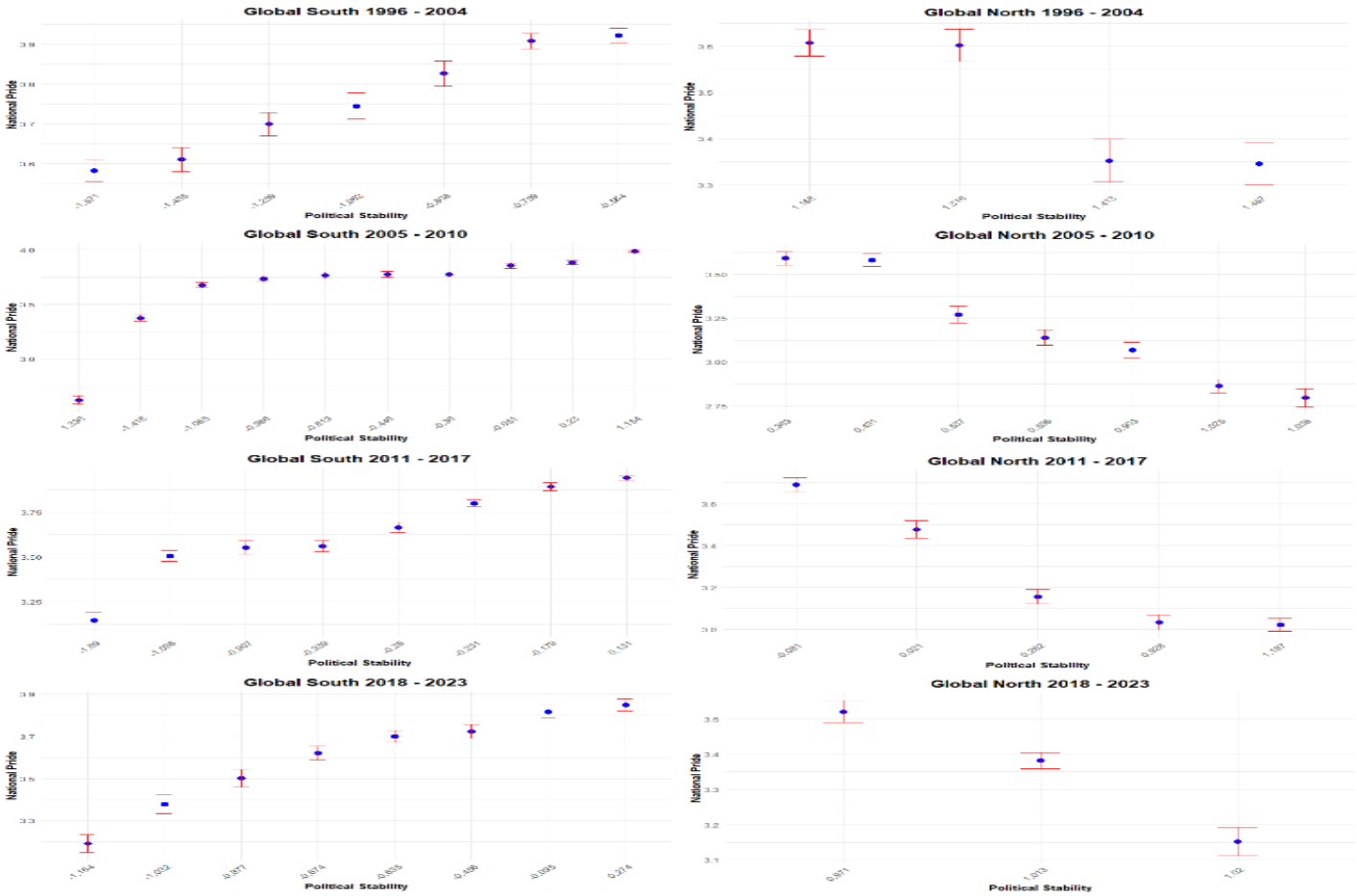
The relationship between national pride and political stability appears to differ between Global South and Global North countries. This comparison rests on fitted trend lines, and no formal test of the difference between the two slopes is reported; we therefore present it as an exploratory pattern rather than as a confirmed difference, although it is consistent with our theoretical expectations about development-contingent nationalism.

Figure 5.2 illustrates these contrasting patterns clearly. In Global South countries (left panels), the relationship between political stability and national pride follows an ascending pattern, where higher political stability is associated with higher national pride. This positive relationship aligns with theories suggesting that governments in developing nations actively cultivate national pride to maintain stability and legitimacy. As political institutions strengthen, they become more capable of fostering national unity through education, media, and symbolic politics.

This pattern is particularly evident in Indonesia, which has experienced increasing political stability following its democratic transition. During this period, successive Indonesian governments have promoted national pride through educational curricula, media campaigns, and symbolic politics, contributing to both stability and national sentiment (Hadiz, 2017). The Indonesian case exemplifies how national pride can serve as a stabilizing force in developing democracies navigating complex transitions.

Conversely, Global North countries (right panels) display a descending pattern, where higher political stability is associated with lower national pride. This negative relationship supports arguments that excessive nationalism can destabilize advanced democracies. In highly stable developed nations, lower levels of national pride may reflect healthy civic cultures where citizens feel secure enough to engage in critical reflection about their nations rather than defensive nationalism.

Figure 5.2. Relationship between political stability and national pride (Global South vs. North)



5.3 The U-Shaped Pattern: Political Stability and Pride-Happiness Correlations

The central hypothesis concerns the shape of the relationship between political stability and the strength of the association between national pride and happiness. The results are consistent with the U-shaped pattern predicted by H1, although the strength of this evidence is limited in ways set out below.

Figure 5.3 visualizes this relationship across all four time periods, with fitted polynomial curves showing consistent U-shaped patterns. Countries with low political stability show strong correlations between national pride and happiness, these correlations weaken as stability increases to moderate levels, then strengthen again at high stability levels.

Table 5.3 reports the coefficients of the fitted curves. The coefficient on squared political stability, which carries the first condition of H1, is positive in all four periods, ranging from 0.0245 (2018-2023) to 0.0548 (2011-2017), and it is statistically significant in each, although only at the 5% level in 2005-2010. The second condition concerns the turning point of each curve, $PS^* = -\beta_1/(2\beta_2)$, which can be computed directly from the reported coefficients. The turning points lie at 0.05 (1996-2004), 0.91 (2005-2010), -0.26 (2011-2017) and -0.75 (2018-2023), all well inside the -2.5 to 2.5 range of the WGI scale and away from its edges. Since every period includes countries at both extremes of political stability, with Iraq at the lower end and Western European or Oceanian democracies at the upper end (Appendix Table A3), the turning points lie inside the range spanned by the data.

Two further features of the turning points deserve attention. The trough does not sit at a fixed level of stability: it lies at moderately positive values in 2005-2010 and at clearly negative values in 2018-2023, so the moderate stability at which the association is weakest is a moving band rather than a fixed one. In addition, because the turning point for 2005-2010 lies as high as 0.91, the curve for that period is likely to resemble a decline over much of the sample, with the rise confined to the most stable countries.

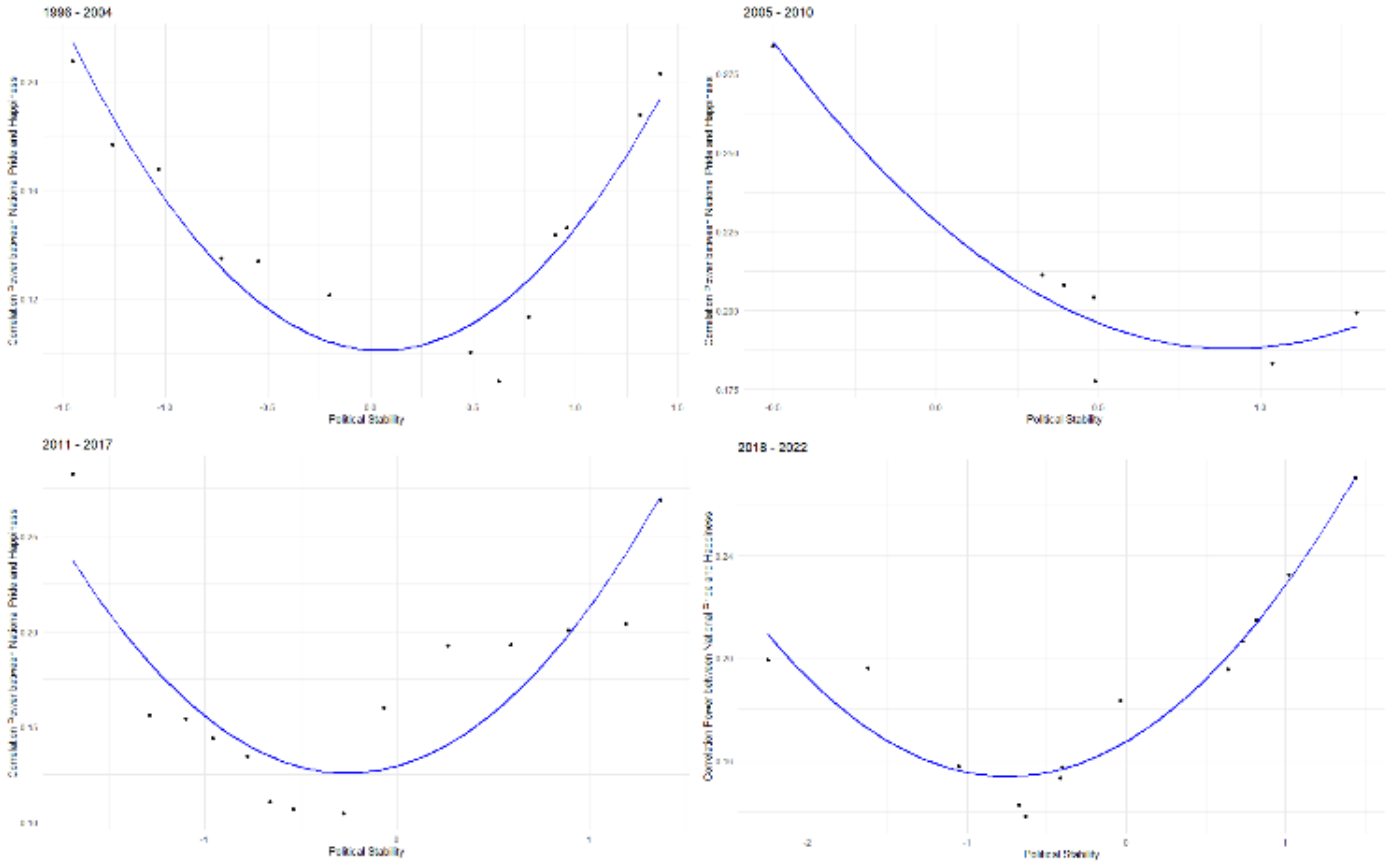
Table 5.3. Polynomial Regression Results for U-Shaped Relationship

Year	Intercept	Coeff. X	Coeff. X^2	Turning point
1996-2004	0.1012 *****	-0.0051	0.0501 *****	0.05
2005-2010	0.2283 *****	-0.0889 ***	0.0489 *	0.91
2011-2017	0.1294 *****	0.0286 **	0.0548 *****	-0.26
2018-2023	0.1675 *****	0.0366 *****	0.0245 *****	-0.75

*Note: Significance levels: * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.005, **** p<0.001, ***** p<0.0005. Turning point = $-\beta_1/(2\beta_2)$, computed from the reported coefficients. Sources: authors' work.*

The pattern is consistent across the four periods, despite changes in global politics, economic conditions and survey coverage over nearly three decades: in each period, the weakest pride-happiness correlations occur at intermediate levels of political stability, and the strongest among the least and the most stable countries. This consistency is the main strength of the evidence. Its main weaknesses are that the curves are estimated without country-level controls and that the location of the trough varies across periods. The U-shaped pattern should therefore be read as a recurring descriptive regularity in the cross-national data rather than as a precisely estimated functional form.

Figure 5.3. U-Shaped Relationships across Time Periods



6. DISCUSSION

6.1 What the Analysis Shows, What the Framework Suggests, and What Remains to Be Tested

The discussion distinguishes three kinds of claims that the earlier sections have kept apart: what the analysis itself shows, what the theoretical framework suggests about why the pattern arises, and what further evidence would be needed to test those suggestions. They are taken in turn in the following paragraphs.

Firstly, the analysis shows three things. National pride and happiness are generally positively associated within countries, with mean correlations between 0.122 and 0.184 in every period and development group (Table 5.1). The strength of this association is related to political stability in a curvilinear way: in each of the four periods the fitted curve has a positive quadratic term and a turning point inside the range of the data, so that the association is weakest at intermediate levels of stability and stronger at both extremes (Table 5.3). The strength of the association also does not differ significantly between Global South and Global North countries in any period (Table 5.1; Appendix Table A6). These are descriptive associations between countries. They recur across nearly three decades, but they come from cross-sectional comparisons without country-level controls, and the location of the trough moves between periods, from 0.91 in 2005-2010 to -0.75 in 2018-2023 (Section 5.3).

Secondly, the theoretical framework suggests why the pattern takes this shape, but these suggestions go beyond what the data show. On the account developed in Section 3.2, pride and happiness move together through two routes whose strength depends on political stability. Where stability is low, people have few secure domains on which to base their life evaluations and draw instead on their feelings about the nation, so that pride works as a form of compensation (Morrison et al., 2011). Where stability is high, pride can track the actual performance of institutions that citizens experience directly, so that pride and happiness come to share common sources (Fabrykant & Magun, 2016; Reeskens & Wright, 2011). At intermediate levels of stability, neither route is strong. This account fits the pattern, but so, in principle, could the two alternatives set out in Section 3.3: a measurement artefact arising from differences in how much national pride varies within countries, and confounding by

development more broadly. None of these explanations has been tested here, and the framework should be read as the most plausible interpretation of the pattern rather than as its demonstrated cause.

The Indonesian case illustrates the gap between what is shown and what is suggested. The two Indonesian surveys in the analysis come from 2006 and 2018 (Appendix Table A3). In 2006, Indonesia's political stability estimate of -1.17 placed it among the low-stability countries, well to the left of that period's turning point of 0.91, whereas by 2017 its estimate of -0.51 lay close to the turning point of -0.75 for 2018-2023 (World Bank, 2025a; Table 5.3). Read through the framework, this would place Indonesia on the compensatory arm of the curve in the mid-2000s and near its trough by the late 2010s, which is consistent with accounts of an Indonesian democratic consolidation marked by competing sources of identity and satisfaction, as citizens navigate between traditional ethnic identities, emerging democratic values and increasing economic opportunities (Kartasasmita & Stern, 2015). But this is an interpretation of where Indonesia sits relative to a cross-national pattern, and the analysis contains no estimate of how the pride-happiness association changed within Indonesia over that period.

Thirdly, testing the framework would require evidence that the present data do not contain, and this can be stated concretely. The compensatory route implies that, within low-stability countries, the pride-happiness association should be stronger among respondents whose own circumstances are worse, which could be examined with individual income in the WVS, following the approach of Morrison et al. (2011). The evaluative route implies that, within high-stability countries, the association should be stronger among respondents who express confidence in political institutions, and that it should be carried by pride in specific achievements rather than by general pride, which requires domain-specific pride items of the kind fielded by the ISSP (Fabrykant & Magun, 2016). The measurement alternative could be examined by comparing the within-country spread of national pride across levels of political stability, and the development alternative by adding national income and inequality as controls, in a design with more countries than any single WVS period provides (Bryan & Jenkins, 2016). Finally, because the analysis compares countries rather than following them, only repeated surveys within the same countries, ideally at the subnational level in a country as large and varied as Indonesia, could show whether a country's position on the curve actually shifts as its political stability changes.

6.2 Reconciling Ethnic and Civic Nationalism

The distinction between ethnic and civic nationalism offers one way of reading the two ends of the curve, but it is a reading rather than a result. As noted in Section 2, the WVS asks about national pride in general and cannot tell civic from ethnic pride, so the analysis cannot show which kind of pride predominates at any level of stability. It is nonetheless plausible that compensatory pride at low stability draws more on cultural and ethnic attachment, since it does not depend on how institutions perform, and that evaluative pride at high stability draws more on civic achievements, since it does (Fabrykant & Magun, 2016; Reeskens & Wright, 2011).

On this reading, the trough at moderate stability would be a zone in which ethnic and civic sources of pride coexist without either predominating, so that general pride relates less consistently to happiness. Tamir (2019) cautions, however, that civic and ethnic nationalism are less distinct in practice than in theory, and the pattern may equally reflect a continuum along which the content of pride shifts gradually, rather than a contest between two kinds of nationalism.

At high stability, the same reading would imply that civic pride predominates without eliminating cultural and emotional elements. It would also be consistent with the observation that nationalism can become destabilizing in established democracies when the meanings attached to the nation turn exclusionary (Bonikowski, 2016). Whether the content of pride actually differs along the stability spectrum in this way is a question for data that measure that content directly.

6.3 Implications for Political Development

The discovered patterns suggest that the relationship between nationalism and political development is more complex than linear modernization theories suggest. Rather than nationalism simply declining with development, its sources and functions transform. Political stability may shape this transformation by altering the institutional context within which national identity operates.

For developing countries, the results are consistent with the view that national pride matters more for well-being where institutions are weak. If this is so, attempts to suppress national pride where institutions remain weak may carry psychological costs, while governments seeking to sustain the link between pride and well-being as stability improves would need to build institutions whose performance gives citizens grounds for pride. These are implications of the framework rather than findings, and they presuppose the mechanisms that Section 6.1 identifies as untested.

For Indonesia, the democratic institutions established since the late 1990s coexist with continuing challenges in transforming ethnic nationalism into a more inclusive civic nationalism (Saepulmilah et al., 2025). If Indonesia has moved from the compensatory arm of the curve towards its trough, as its position in 2006 and 2018 suggests, national pride would be expected to matter less for citizens' happiness than it did when stability was lower, and the performance of institutions would be expected to matter more.

For more stable countries, the results suggest that national pride remains relevant to well-being even where institutions perform well. The descriptive pattern in Section 5.2, in which national pride is lower in the more stable Global North countries, may partly reflect citizens who feel secure enough to be critical of their nation, but it may equally reflect other differences between these countries, and it rests on fitted trend lines rather than on a formal test.

6.4 Implications for Indonesia

The implications of the U-shaped pattern for Indonesia need to be stated with the limits of the evidence in mind, since the analysis contains two Indonesian observations and no estimate of policy effects. With that caveat, three implications follow from the framework, and they are set out in the following paragraphs. Firstly, if Indonesia now sits near the trough of the curve, national pride is unlikely to sustain citizens' happiness on its own, and efforts to raise national pride would be expected to do less for well-being than improvements in the performance of the institutions that citizens deal with directly.

Secondly, Hadiz and Robison (2013) argue that Indonesia's democratic consolidation has been complicated by the persistence of oligarchic interests that often exploit ethnic identities for political gain. The framework suggests that such a strategy would yield diminishing returns in terms of citizens' well-being as stability rises, since the compensatory route through which ethnic and cultural pride supports happiness weakens, although this remains an implication to be tested rather than an observed effect.

Thirdly, Mariyono (2024) argues that Indonesia's democratic progress depends on developing forms of national identity that can accommodate the country's ethnic diversity while promoting shared civic values. If the evaluative route is what strengthens the pride-happiness link at higher levels of stability, then civic forms of pride grounded in institutional performance would be the kind most likely to support well-being as Indonesia's political stability continues to improve.

Whether education and media policy can shift the content of national pride from ethnic towards civic sources, as is sometimes proposed, is a question that the present analysis cannot address, and answering it would require designs that follow individuals or cohorts over time.

7. CONCLUSION

This paper asked whether political stability has a non-linear relationship with the strength of the association between national pride and individual happiness, and whether this relationship differs between Global South and Global North countries. Across 98 countries and four periods between 1996 and 2023, the answer to the first question is a qualified yes, and the answer to the second is no.

The theoretical contribution lies in how the pattern is explained. Existing accounts predict a gradient that runs in one direction only, with compensatory accounts expecting the

association to fade as conditions improve and evaluative accounts expecting it to grow. The framework developed here treats them not as rivals but as two routes that dominate at different ends of the stability spectrum, which is why their combination produces a curve that neither of them predicts on its own.

The more interesting questions now lie in the content of national pride rather than in its strength. If the trough of the curve marks the point at which pride is neither a consolation for weak institutions nor a verdict on strong ones, then the countries passing through it, many of them in the Global South and Indonesia among them, are also the places where the meaning of national pride is most open to change. Whether that meaning settles on civic achievement or reverts to ethnic attachment is something that cross-national snapshots cannot reveal, and it is where research that follows citizens and countries over time, and that measures what people are proud of rather than only how proud they are, would add most to what this paper has been able to show.

8. ETHICS STATEMENT

This study utilized secondary data obtained from the World Values Survey (WVS) and the Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI). It did not involve direct recruitment or interaction with human participants, nor did it involve interviews, experiments, or the collection of new primary data. The analysis was conducted using existing survey datasets and publicly available governance indicators. Therefore, ethical approval and informed consent for the present study were not applicable, as the researchers did not directly engage with participants or collect personally identifiable information. All data sources were properly acknowledged and used in accordance with the relevant academic and research integrity standards.

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