BG Pulse Journal USA
ISSN:1947-2536 http://www.bgpulseusa.com/index.php/bg
BG PULSE JOURNAL

# NATIONAL PRIDE, IDENTITY AND WELL-BEING MANAGEMENT: EVIDENCE FROM UZBEKISTAN

**Yulduz Yakubova**
Westminster International University in Tashkent, Uzbekistan
Email: [yyakubova@wiut.uz]

**Abstract:** This study examines the relationship between national pride, identity and subjective well-being (SWB) in Uzbekistan, with particular attention to the role of cultural heritage in shaping residents' identity-related perceptions. The study was motivated in part by qualitative fieldwork conducted by the author in Samarkand, where interviews with more than 200 local residents concerning the Registan heritage ensemble indicated that pride was the most frequently associated perception of the site. This observation suggested that heritage may be experienced not only as an architectural or tourism resource, but also as a source of collective identity and positive affect. Building on Social Identity Theory, the study therefore examined whether national pride, conceptualised as an identity-related affective dimension rather than a complete measure of national identity, is associated with subjective well-being. The quantitative component uses Wave 7 World Values Survey data for Uzbekistan (N = 1,098) and estimates an ordinary least squares regression model controlling for perceived income, age, religiousness, trust in others, gender, marital status, self-rated health, number of children, immigrant status, education, employment and perceived control over life. National pride is positively and statistically significantly associated with subjective well-being (B = 0.314, p = 0.002). Perceived income, age, self-rated health and perceived control over life are also positively associated with SWB, while religiousness shows a negative association. The findings support the relevance of identity-related affect for well-being and provide a basis for further investigation of how authentic heritage representation may interact with identity and resident well-being. The study does not claim that heritage perceptions cause national pride or that national pride mediates a heritage-branding-to-well-being relationship.

**Keywords:** national pride; social identity; subjective well-being; cultural heritage; heritage authenticity; Samarkand; Uzbekistan

## 1. Introduction

Subjective well-being has become an important outcome in research concerned with quality of life, social development and tourism and heritage management. Beyond material conditions, individuals' well-being can be related to social relationships, perceived control, health and the identities through which they understand their place within wider social groups. National identity is one such identity domain, while national pride can represent an affective dimension of attachment to the national ingroup.

The relationship between identity and well-being is particularly relevant in cultural heritage settings. Heritage sites are not only physical assets or attractions for visitors; for residents, they can represent history, collective memory, cultural continuity and belonging. Consequently, the way heritage is represented and interpreted may have implications for how residents perceive themselves and their community.

The present study emerged from research on heritage sites and residents' well-being in Samarkand, Uzbekistan. As part of the author's qualitative fieldwork, interviews were conducted with more than 200 local residents concerning their perceptions of the Registan ensemble. Among the responses, pride emerged as the dominant perception associated with the heritage item. This finding was important because it pointed toward an affective and identity-related meaning of heritage that was not captured adequately by descriptions of Registan as simply beautiful architecture or a tourist attraction.

The qualitative observation informed the formulation of the quantitative hypothesis tested in this article. Specifically, the study asks whether national pride is positively associated with subjective well-being in Uzbekistan. The qualitative and quantitative components address different levels of analysis: the Samarkand interviews concern residents' perceptions of a particular heritage site, whereas the World Values Survey analysis examines the statistical relationship between national pride and SWB using a national sample. The qualitative evidence therefore informs hypothesis development rather than serving as a direct test of the regression relationship.

The article contributes to the literature in three ways. First, it treats national pride as an identity-related affective dimension and examines its relationship with SWB. Second, it connects this quantitative relationship to qualitative evidence from a World Heritage context in Samarkand. Third, it discusses the implications for heritage authenticity and representation while avoiding an unsupported causal claim that heritage branding itself produces national pride or well-being.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Social Identity and National Identification

Social Identity Theory proposes that individuals derive part of their self-concept from membership in social groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Group membership can provide meaning, belonging and positive evaluations of the ingroup. Self-Categorization Theory further explains how people categorize themselves and others in relation to salient social identities (Turner et al., 1987). National identity can therefore be understood as one important form of social identification, although national identity, patriotism, nationalism and national pride are conceptually related rather than interchangeable constructs.

Huddy and Khatib (2007), for example, distinguish national identity from related orientations such as patriotism and nationalism and demonstrate the importance of examining the components of national attachment separately. In the present study, national pride is not treated as a complete measure of national identity. Instead, it is conceptualised as an identity-related affective dimension reflecting positive feelings toward the national ingroup.

### 2.2 National Pride as an Identity-Related Affective Dimension

National pride concerns positive evaluation and affect associated with one's nation. Because it involves an emotionally meaningful evaluation of the national ingroup, it can be situated within the broader social-identity literature. Importantly, this conceptualisation does not imply that national pride is synonymous with nationalism or that all forms of national attachment have identical consequences.

Empirical research has reported positive associations between national pride and happiness or life satisfaction. Ha and Jang (2015), for example, found a positive relationship between national pride, national identity and happiness in South Korea. More recent cross-national evidence using World Values Survey data also suggests that national pride can remain positively related to life satisfaction after accounting for a range of individual-level characteristics (Spiteri, Kim, & Lieder, 2026). These findings provide a rationale for examining national pride as an explanatory variable for subjective well-being in Uzbekistan.

### 2.3 Identity and Subjective Well-Being

Subjective well-being generally encompasses individuals' evaluations of their lives and their affective experiences (Diener et al., 1999). Identity can contribute to well-being when it provides belonging, continuity, meaning and positive self-evaluation. Research on cultural identity similarly emphasizes the connection between identity processes and psychological and social well-being (Ward & Szabó, 2023).

The present study focuses on national pride because it provides a measurable affective dimension that can be examined using the WVS. The purpose is not to suggest that identity is reducible to a single survey item or variable, but rather to test whether this particular identity-related dimension has a statistically significant association with SWB.

### 2.4 Cultural Heritage, Authenticity and Identity

Cultural heritage provides a particularly relevant setting for identity processes because heritage objects can embody historical narratives, collective memory and cultural continuity. Heritage authenticity is also increasingly understood as more than physical or architectural genuineness; it may involve meanings, interpretation and relationships between people and places.

Yi et al. (2024) provide particularly relevant evidence from the perspective of local residents at World Heritage Sites in China. Their study found that residents' perceived authenticity was positively associated with localized identity and cultural self-improvement, which in turn contributed to heritage responsibility. This evidence is important for the present study because it demonstrates that authenticity can have identity-related consequences among residents rather than only among tourists.

Other heritage research has linked perceived authenticity with well-being, place attachment and satisfaction, although much of this literature has focused on visitors rather than everyday residents. The resident perspective is therefore important for understanding heritage as part of community identity and quality of life.

### 2.5 Heritage Representation and Identity: Relevance to Samarkand

Samarkand provides a particularly appropriate context for considering these relationships. The Registan ensemble is internationally recognized for its architectural and historical significance, while for local residents it can also represent a symbol of cultural continuity and national pride. The author's fieldwork among more than 200 local residents provided an important empirical observation: when residents were asked about their perceptions of Registan, pride emerged as the

dominant response. This finding motivated the subsequent examination of national pride in the quantitative component of the research.

The observation should not be interpreted as evidence that Registan causes national pride, nor as evidence that heritage branding mediates the relationship between national pride and SWB. Rather, it provides contextual evidence that heritage and identity are meaningfully connected in the Samarkand setting and supports examining an identity-related affective variable in the broader Uzbekistan population.

## 3. Qualitative Context and Hypothesis Development

The qualitative component consisted of interviews with more than 200 local residents in Samarkand concerning their perceptions of the Registan heritage ensemble. The interviews formed part of the wider research project on heritage branding management and residents' well-being. Responses were examined to identify recurring meanings residents attached to the heritage site.

The most prominent perception identified in the interviews was pride. This result was analytically important because it differed from a purely tourism-oriented interpretation of the site. Whereas visitors and tourism platforms may emphasize architectural beauty, historical attractions or religious features, residents' emphasis on pride points toward an affective relationship between heritage and collective identity.

This qualitative finding informed the selection of national pride for quantitative investigation. The reasoning was theoretically consistent with Social Identity Theory: if a nationally significant heritage object is experienced by residents as a source of pride, national pride may represent a meaningful identity-related affective dimension relevant to well-being. The quantitative hypothesis was therefore formulated as follows:

**H1: National pride is positively associated with subjective well-being among residents of Uzbekistan.**

The hypothesis was tested using WVS data rather than the interview data. Thus, the interviews generated contextual insight and helped motivate the hypothesis, while the WVS regression provides the statistical test.

## 4. Methodology

### 4.1 Research Design and Data Sources

The study uses a mixed-methods logic in which qualitative fieldwork provides contextual understanding and informs hypothesis development, while quantitative secondary data are used to test the proposed statistical relationship. The qualitative component was conducted in Samarkand and involved interviews with more than 200 local residents regarding perceptions of Registan. The quantitative component uses Wave 7 of the World Values Survey for Uzbekistan, with an analytical sample of 1,098 observations.

The two components should not be treated as a single pooled dataset. They address complementary questions: the interviews explore how residents perceive a specific heritage site, while the WVS analysis evaluates whether national pride is associated with SWB across the Uzbekistan sample.

### 4.2 Variables

The dependent variable is subjective well-being. The main explanatory variable is national pride, operationalised as an identity-related affective measure. The regression also controls for perceived income, age, religiousness, trust in others, gender, marital status, self-rated health, number of children, immigrant status, education level, employment status and perceived control over life.

National pride is deliberately not described as a mediator. A formal mediation model was not estimated, and the data do not permit the article to establish a causal pathway from heritage branding to national pride and then to well-being.

### 4.3 Analytical Approach

An ordinary least squares regression model was estimated to examine the association between national pride and subjective well-being while holding the listed control variables constant. The estimated coefficient for national pride represents the expected change in SWB associated with a one-unit increase in national pride, conditional on the other variables in the model. Because the coefficients are unstandardized, they should not be interpreted as percentage changes.

## 5. Results

### 5.1 Qualitative Finding from Samarkand

The qualitative interviews with more than 200 local residents identified pride as the dominant perception associated with Registan. This finding provided a locally grounded reason to investigate an identity-related affective variable in the quantitative component. It also suggested that the heritage value of Registan for residents extends beyond its function as a tourism attraction or its architectural appearance.

The qualitative finding is used here as contextual and hypothesis-generating evidence. It does not establish a statistical relationship between heritage perceptions and SWB because the interview responses and WVS observations constitute different datasets and analytical levels.

### 5.2 Regression Results

| Variable | B | Std. Err. | t | p | 95% CI |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Income (perceived) | 0.420 | 0.123 | 3.42 | 0.001 | 0.179 – 0.661 |
| National pride | 0.314 | 0.102 | 3.08 | 0.002 | 0.115 – 0.515 |
| Age | 0.009 | 0.004 | 2.14 | 0.033 | 0.000 – 0.024 |
| Religiousness | −0.286 | 0.139 | −2.06 | 0.039 | −0.558 – −0.014 |
| Trust in others | 0.188 | 0.146 | 1.29 | 0.197 | −0.097 – 0.475 |
| Gender (male=1) | −0.089 | 0.140 | −0.64 | 0.524 | −0.395 – 0.185 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Married | −0.284 | 0.182 | −1.14 | 0.252 | −0.565 – 0.149 |
| Self-rated health | 0.408 | 0.088 | 4.63 | <0.001 | 0.235 – 0.581 |
| Number of children | 0.018 | 0.071 | 0.26 | 0.800 | −0.120 – 0.157 |
| Immigrant status | −0.476 | 0.691 | −0.69 | 0.491 | −1.834 – 0.881 |
| Education level | −0.062 | 0.145 | −0.43 | 0.666 | −0.341 – 0.218 |
| Employment status | −0.134 | 0.167 | −0.80 | 0.423 | −0.461 – 0.193 |
| Perceived control over life | 0.447 | 0.028 | 16.10 | <0.001 | 0.392 – 0.501 |
| Constant | −0.010 | 0.651 | −0.01 | 0.988 | −1.286 – 1.267 |

Note: N = 1,098. B = unstandardized regression coefficient; CI = confidence interval. Exact p-values are reported to avoid ambiguity in significance notation.

National pride has a positive and statistically significant association with subjective well-being (B = 0.314, p = 0.002). Holding the other variables constant, a one-unit increase in national pride is associated with a 0.314-unit increase in SWB. This is an association in the scale of the dependent variable and should not be interpreted as a 31.4% increase in well-being.

Perceived income (B = 0.420, p = 0.001), age (B = 0.009, p = 0.033), self-rated health (B = 0.408, p < 0.001), and perceived control over life (B = 0.447, p < 0.001) are also positively associated with SWB. Religiousness is negatively associated with SWB (B = −0.286, p = 0.039). Trust in others, gender, marital status, number of children, immigrant status, education and employment are not statistically significant in the reported model.

## 6. Discussion

### 6.1 National Pride and Subjective Well-Being

The quantitative results support H1. National pride is positively and significantly associated with SWB after controlling for socioeconomic, demographic, health and psychological variables. The finding is consistent with a social-identity interpretation in which positive identification with a meaningful social group can contribute to positive self-evaluation, belonging and well-being.

The finding also corresponds with previous research linking national pride and happiness and with broader evidence that national or cultural identity can be relevant to well-being. At the same time, the result should be interpreted as an association rather than a causal effect because the analysis is observational and based on cross-sectional survey data.

### 6.2 Why National Pride Rather Than National Identity as a Complete Construct?

The article uses national pride because it is the identity-related affective dimension available for examination in the selected WVS framework and because the qualitative fieldwork in Samarkand highlighted pride as a recurring resident perception of Registan. National pride is therefore theoretically and empirically relevant to the research question. It is not claimed to represent every dimension of national identity, which may also include cognitive, behavioural and institutional components.

### 6.3 Heritage, Authenticity and Resident Identity

The Samarkand interviews provide an important contextual complement to the regression findings. Residents' emphasis on pride suggests that heritage can carry identity-related meanings that differ from the representations most visible in tourism marketing. This is consistent with Yi et al. (2024), who found that perceived heritage authenticity among local residents was associated with localized identity and cultural self-improvement.

For heritage management, this suggests that authenticity should not be reduced to the preservation of physical appearance. Interpretation, historical narratives, inscriptions, scholarly significance and culturally meaningful stories may also matter because they influence how residents and visitors understand what a heritage site represents.

### 6.4 From Heritage Representation to Identity

The findings support a conceptual sequence in which heritage may function as a symbolic context for identity-related meanings, while national pride represents one measurable affective dimension of identity. The qualitative finding from Registan and the quantitative association between national pride and SWB point in the same conceptual direction, but they should not be treated as evidence of a single causal pathway.

Future research could directly test whether perceptions of heritage authenticity and authenticity-oriented heritage branding are associated with national or localized identity, and whether such identity processes subsequently relate to resident well-being. Such a design would require heritage-specific measures and an explicit mediation or structural model.

### 6.5 Implications for Heritage Branding Management

The findings have practical implications for heritage branding in Samarkand. If local residents experience Registan as a source of pride, heritage communication should recognize this identity dimension alongside architectural and tourism-oriented representations. Authentic branding could therefore communicate the site's historical, scholarly, cultural and symbolic meanings rather than relying primarily on visual beauty.

This does not mean that heritage managers should manufacture national pride through branding. Rather, branding and interpretation can more faithfully represent meanings that residents already associate with the heritage site. In Samarkand, this provides a basis for considering richer epigraphic interpretation, historically grounded narratives and educational content that connects the physical monument with its wider intellectual and cultural significance.

## 7. Conclusion

This article examined the relationship between national pride, identity and subjective well-being in Uzbekistan and connected the quantitative analysis to qualitative evidence from Samarkand. Interviews with more than 200 local residents concerning Registan indicated that pride was the dominant perception associated with the heritage item. This observation informed the decision to examine national pride as an identity-related affective variable in the quantitative analysis.

Using WVS Wave 7 data for Uzbekistan (N = 1,098), the OLS results show a positive and statistically significant association between national pride and SWB (B = 0.314, p = 0.002), alongside significant associations for perceived income, age, self-rated health, perceived control over life and religiousness. The results support the relevance of national pride to subjective well-being while not establishing causality.

The study therefore contributes to a growing understanding of heritage, identity and well-being by bringing together resident perceptions of a heritage site with national-level quantitative evidence. The findings also provide a foundation for future research that directly measures heritage authenticity, identity and well-being within the same resident sample and explicitly tests causal or mediating relationships.

## 8. Limitations

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the qualitative and quantitative components involve different samples and should not be interpreted as a single integrated statistical dataset. Second, the WVS does not directly measure residents' perceptions of Registan, heritage authenticity or heritage branding. Third, the cross-sectional observational design does not establish causality. Fourth, national pride is only one identity-related affective dimension and should not be treated as a complete measure of national identity. Finally, the present study does not estimate a mediation model; claims concerning a heritage branding → national pride → SWB pathway remain propositions for future research.

## References

1. Chi, C. G.-Q., Cai, R., & Li, Y. (2017). Factors influencing residents' subjective well-being at World Heritage Sites. Tourism Management, 63, 209–222. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2017.06.019
2. Diener, E., Suh, E. M., Lucas, R. E., & Smith, H. L. (1999). Subjective well-being: Three decades of progress. Psychological Bulletin, 125(2), 276–302.
3. Ha, S. E., & Jang, S. J. (2015). National identity, national pride, and happiness: The case of South Korea. Social Indicators Research, 121(2), 471–482. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-014-0641-7
4. Huddy, L., & Khatib, N. (2007). American patriotism, national identity, and political involvement. American Journal of Political Science, 51(1), 63–77. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5907.2007.00237.x
5. Spiteri, J., Kim, J., & Lieder, F. (2026). [National pride, national identity and life satisfaction study using World Values Survey data]. Scientific Reports, 16, 66. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-025-29471-8

6. Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In W. G. Austin & S. Worchel (Eds.), The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations. Brooks/Cole.
7. Tasci, A. D. A., & Gartner, W. C. (2009). A practical framework for destination branding. In Bridging Tourism Theory and Practice (Vol. 1, pp. 149–158). Emerald. https://doi.org/10.1108/S2042-1443(2009)0000001013
8. Turner, J. C., Hogg, M. A., Oakes, P. J., Reicher, S. D., & Wetherell, M. S. (1987). Rediscovering the Social Group: A Self-Categorization Theory. Basil Blackwell.
9. Ward, C., & Szabó, Á. (2023). Acculturation, cultural identity and well-being. Nature Reviews Psychology, 2, 267–282. https://doi.org/10.1038/s44159-023-00171-2
10. Wu, D., Shen, C., Wang, E., Hou, Y., & Yang, J. (2019). Impact of the perceived authenticity of heritage sites on subjective well-being: A study of the mediating role of place attachment and satisfaction. Sustainability, 11(21), 6148. https://doi.org/10.3390/su11216148
11. Yi, X., Fu, X., Lin, B., & Sun, J. (2024). Authenticity, identity, self-improvement, and responsibility at heritage sites: The local residents' perspective. Tourism Management, 102, 104875. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2023.104875
12. Yi, X., Fu, X., Lin, V. S., & Xiao, H. (2022). Integrating authenticity, well-being, and memorability in heritage tourism: A two-site investigation. Journal of Travel Research, 61(2), 378–393. https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287520987624