An Analysis of the Role of Urban Space Components in Enhancing Quality of Life within Iran's Historic Urban Fabrics (Case Study: The Historic Center of Tehran)

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Original article
Received: 2025-10-25
Revised: 2025-12-22
Accepted: 2026-01-02

Abstract

Historic urban fabrics in Iran face a dual challenge: preserving heritage while addressing the demands of contemporary life. In Tehran's historic center (District 12), this conflict has led to a decline in the quality of life and a disconnect between physical space and the lived experience of citizens. This study aims to clarify the role of urban space components in enhancing QoL and to provide a practical model for improving livability in such contexts. The research employs a mixed-methods (quantitative-qualitative) approach. Quantitative data were gathered via questionnaires, while qualitative insights were obtained through in-depth interviews with residents, managers, and experts. The results indicate a direct and multifaceted relationship between the quality of urban space and the quality of life. Quantitative analysis revealed that time management in public spaces (0/593), landscape quality and spatial continuity (0/588), and transportation and accessibility (0/477) have the most significant impact on the flexibility of development plans, social vitality, and maintaining demographic balance, respectively. Furthermore, the qualitative analysis emphasizes the pivotal role of citizens' positive perception of legible, vibrant, and human-centric spaces in sustaining social life. Integrating these findings led to the extraction of a three-level model (Physical-Environmental, Functional-Social, and Perceptual-Identity) for the regeneration of historic fabrics. Applying this model to the study area suggests practical solutions such as enhancing walkability, strengthening community-oriented spaces, and organizing the historic landscape. The primary contribution of this research is a context-specific, human-centric framework that serves as a practical roadmap for addressing recurring challenges in Iran's historic urban contexts specifically the conflict between heritage conservation and QoL improvement.

Keywords: Cultural Heritage, Historic Urban Fabric, Quality of Life (QoL), Tehran's Historic Center, Urban Public Space.

1. Introduction

Contemporary cities worldwide, particularly within their historic fabrics, face the fundamental challenge of integrating cultural heritage with the requirements of modern life (Chiu et al., 2019). Within this context, has evolved into a multidimensional concept that transcends mere physical and economic indicators. Today, it is understood as the result of a complex interaction between the spatial, social, and perceptual characteristics of the urban environment (Makki et al., 2025).At the core of this interaction lie urban spaces -including streets, squares, and parks-which serve as the primary setting for collective life and play a decisive role in shaping the lived experience and satisfaction of citizens (Ronael& Ertekin, 2025; Carmona, 2010). Extensive research demonstrates that high-quality urban public spaces can strengthen the sense of belonging, increase social interaction, and enhance security and economic dynamism. Conversely, placeless, disjointed, and low-quality spaces lead to social isolation, diminished life satisfaction, and functional decay (Abou El Ezz et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2025). Consequently, identifying the influential components of urban space and their role in enhancing QoL has become a central focus in urban planning and design studies (Mouratidis, 2021).

This relationship gains additional complexity and sensitivity in historic urban fabrics, which, as "living heritage," embody unique cultural, social, and physical values (Chahardowli & Sajadzadeh, 2022). The primary challenge in these contexts is not merely "museum-like" preservation, but rather achieving a dynamic balance between maintaining historical authenticity and addressing contemporary livability needs (Chandan & Kumar, 2019). Nevertheless, evidence suggests that many of these valuable fabrics have suffered from functional obsolescence, social stagnation, and a continuous decline in residents' QoL as a result of unbalanced urban growth, heterogeneous land-use changes, and a preoccupation with purely physical-restoration approaches (Long et al., 2025; Esmailpoor et al., 2023). Under these circumstances, urban interventions often lack a comprehensive understanding of citizens' subjective experiences and the role that qualitative spatial components play in their daily lives.

In developing countries, this situation is exacerbated by urban policies that prioritize physical renovation while neglecting human and spatial components. Most intervention programs in historic fabrics have emphasized physical rehabilitation, often disregarding a deep understanding of spatial quality and the lived experience of citizens (Long et al., 2025). Consequently, many of these areas have either transformed into desolate, soulless spaces or have lost their historical identity during the reconstruction process (Esmailpoor et al., 2023).Iran’s historic cities, including Tehran, serve as prominent examples of this condition. Despite its rich historical and cultural capital and its prime position within the city’s structure, the historic center of Tehran (primarily located in District 12) has witnessed a concerning trend over recent decades. This includes a decline in the resident population, the weakening of local social networks, a loss of public space vitality, and ultimately, a reduction in the quality of life (QoL). Past renovation and restoration efforts, which focused strictly on physical reconstruction, have failed to halt or reverse this decline. This suggests that the solution lies not merely in physical interventions but requires a reimagining and strengthening of the multidimensional role of urban space itself—as a vital mediator between the historical built environment and contemporary social life.Therefore, an evident research gap in this field is the lack of an integrated and indigenous analytical framework. Such a framework must simultaneously consider a wide range of influential urban space components—environmental, functional-accessibility, aesthetic, socio-cultural, and economic—while measuring the causal relationships and relative importance of each component in relation to various dimensions of QoL in historic contexts. By synthesizing quantitative (objective) and qualitative (subjective) findings, it should provide a practical model for human-centric regeneration strategies. Accordingly, the central question of this research is: How, and with what degree of importance, do urban space components contribute to enhancing the quality of life within the historic core of Tehran (District 12)?

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Urban Spaces and Quality of Life

Urban space is a dynamic stage for the manifestation of collective life, social interaction, and the reproduction of urban identity; its quality plays a decisive role in the lived experience of citizens (Sikorska et al., 2020). Jane Jacobs (1961) emphasizes the importance of street life, mixed-use development, and the continuous presence of people in public spaces as indicators of a city's social dynamism and health. According to Jacobs, urban vitality is the product of spaces that provide opportunities for encounters, interactions, and participation (Dogan & Lee, 2024).In urban design theories, numerous components have been proposed to define and evaluate the quality of urban space. Kevin Lynch (1960) introduced structural elements- including paths, nodes, edges, districts, and landmarks-as components that facilitate urban perception and legibility. From Lynch's perspective, environmental legibility is a prerequisite for a sense of security and belonging among citizens. Similarly, Gordon Cullen (1961) focuses on the visual and perceptual aspects of space, defining the quality of the urban environment through visual continuity, human scale, and the diversity of visual experiences (Zandiyeh& Zandiyeh, 2010: 28).In more recent approaches, researchers such as Jan Gehl (2010) have introduced the concept of "Cities for People," which focuses on the human experience of space, social interaction, and the quality of daily life in urban environments. Following Gehl, the field of urban studies entered a new phase where classical theories paved the way for interdisciplinary and data-driven perspectives. These contemporary theories demonstrate that urban spaces possess components that transcend the physical built environment, profoundly affecting the perception and Quality of Life (QoL) of citizens. Consequently, when optimized through effective planning, these spaces serve as tools for communication, venues for direct social encounters, and platforms for the management and coordination of civic life (Hosseini & Saberi, 2023: 176).

The concept of Urban Quality of Life emerges from the interaction between the physical environment and the citizens' perception of it. This implies that an individual's subjective experience of aesthetics, tranquility, spatial order, and environmental identity constitutes an inseparable part of their quality of life. Consequently, urban spaces function not merely as a physical setting for existence but as a fundamental agent in shaping the experience of livability.Broadly speaking, Quality of Life is a comprehensive and multidimensional construct (Hosseini & Saberi, 2023: 4) synonymous with life satisfaction, happiness, well-being, and comfort. It fundamentally reflects the extent to which human expectations and needs are fulfilled (Hosseini & Saberi, 2023: 116)

Quality of Lifeprofoundly influences numerous domains of human activity, including economics, population health, and healthcare expenditures, while simultaneously defining the requirements for development (Hosseini & Saberi, 2023: 4). The assessment of this concept is crucial for the sustainable development of regions, particularly within urban systems (Weziak-Białowolska, 2016). Within urban studies, QoL serves as a powerful instrument for policy evaluation and the monitoring of sustainable development, as it encompasses the diverse economic, social, and environmental dimensions of a community (Takano et al., 2023). Consequently, enhancing the quality of life in cities has increasingly become a **pivotal issue** for modern urban planning (Mouratidis, 2021).

2.2. Quality of Life in Historic Urban Fabrics

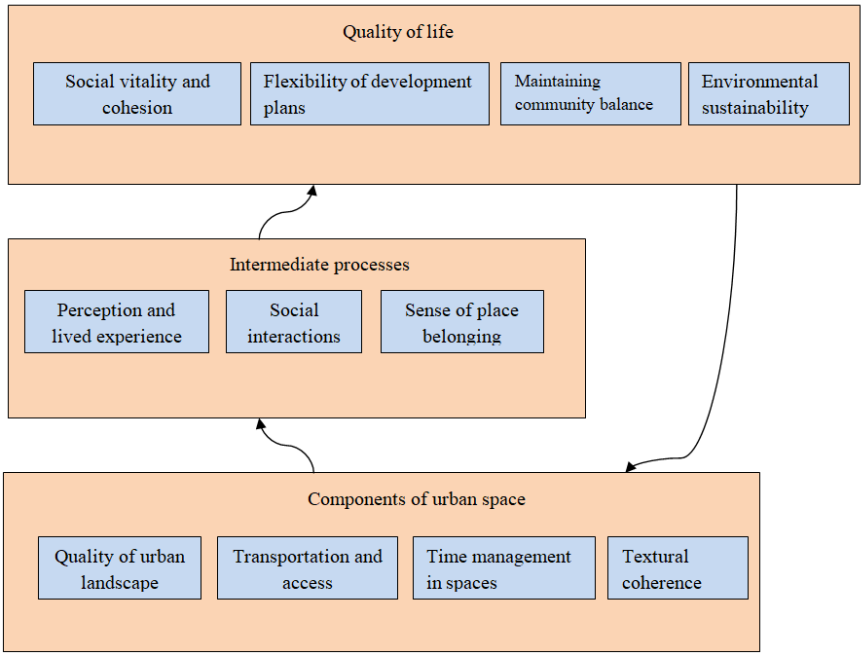
Historic urban fabrics are vital components of a city's social, cultural, and economic assets (Chahardowli & Sajadzadeh, 2022). In these areas, civic relationships, citizen perception, and Quality of Life (QoL) become increasingly complex. These fabrics are not merely vessels for historical and cultural values; they serve as the primary setting for contemporary daily life and social interactions (Ferretti & Grosso, 2019).The spatial characteristics of these contexts are traditionally rooted in principles such as human scale, functional diversity, and a profound nexus between the built environment and culture. However, driven by socio-economic shifts, many of these spaces have experienced functional stagnation and physical

deterioration, leading to a decline in the quality of life (Long et al., 2025). From a theoretical perspective, the continuity of life within historic fabrics necessitates an understanding of how urban space components contribute to fostering a sense of place, vitality, and resident satisfaction (Yang & Li, 2023).In support of this claim, it should be noted that rapid urban physical expansion in recent decades has created numerous problems, challenges, and bottlenecks. A primary negative consequence is the accelerated pace of change within historic and cultural districts, which has resulted in a diminished social standing, disruptions in spatial-physical organization, and the erosion of their economic and functional dimensions (Chahardowli & Sajadzadeh, 2022). Consequently, in historic contexts, the link between space and QoL gains double importance due to the intricate layers of identity and culture involved (Makki et al., 2025).As previously mentioned, these fabrics possess inherent structures based on human scale, functional diversity, and spatial continuity, which offer significant potential for enhancing QoL. However, in the face of contemporary urban transformations, many of these attributes have weakened, giving way to incoherent and fragmented spaces (Long et al., 2025).

The revitalization of Quality of Life (QoL) in these historic fabrics necessitates an approach capable of redefining spatial, social, cultural, and environmental components within an integrated framework. In such a framework, physical components (including spatial order, legibility, accessibility, scale, and visual quality), social components (including presence, interaction, participation, and security), cultural components (including identity, collective memory, and sense of place) (Molavi et al., 2021), and environmental components (including climatic comfort and urban greenery) (Kheirabadi et al., 2017) are placed in a dynamic nexus with both the subjective and objective dimensions of Quality of Life.Enhancing QoL in historic fabrics is not achieved through mere physical reconstruction; rather, it is realized through the regeneration of urban spaces. These spaces must respond to the demands of contemporary life while simultaneously preserving their historical authenticity. Such a perspective requires moving beyond sectoral and purely physical approaches toward a holistic understanding of space as a human-centric phenomenon.

Finally, it must be noted that the theoretical framework of this study is rooted in a human-centric approach to urban planning and design. This approach emphasizes lived experience, perception, and human interaction with space, drawing its conceptual foundations from theories of Urban Quality of Life, urban vitality, and spatial legibility.The framework is structured in three strategic steps:Defining the Dependent Variable: Theories of UQoL form the basis for the research's dependent variable. According to Schwanen (2003) and Marans (2012), quality of life is the result of the interaction between objective dimensions (such as infrastructure, environment, and urban services) and subjective dimensions (including satisfaction, sense of belonging, and environmental perception). This perspective underscores the necessity of addressing both the physical and perceptual dimensions of urban life within historic fabrics.Defining Independent Variables: Theories related to the quality of urban space and lived experience provide the foundation for the independent variables. Jane Jacobs' (1961) theory of urban vitality highlights the importance of human presence, mixed land use, and social interaction, while Jan Gehl (2010), in his "Cities for People" theory, emphasizes human scale, walkability, and the design of public spaces tailored to human behavior. Furthermore, Ozbil et al. posit a direct correlation between the design of pedestrian-friendly environments and UQoL, arguing that urban designers must prioritize these elements to achieve urban sustainability. Additionally, Kevin Lynch (1960), in "The Image of the City," defines the perceptual quality of the environment through legibility, visual identity, and spatial organization—concepts that form the basis for the aesthetic and perceptual dimensions of this study.Integrating Contemporary Regeneration: The framework is finalized with contemporary theories of human-centric regeneration and place-based

development. Following Landry (2012), the revitalization of historic fabrics is only successful when a balance is struck between heritage conservation, social dynamism, and contemporary livability.As a result, the conceptual model of this research is comprised of five primary dimensions: environmental, functional-accessibility, aesthetic, socio-cultural, and economic. These are organized into a three-level hierarchy:The Foundational Level (Physical-Environmental): Inspired by sustainable urban development theories.The Intermediate Level (Functional-Social): Derived from Jacobs' and Gehl's perspectives on vitality and presence.The Terminal Level (Perceptual-Identity): Based on Lynch's theory of urban imagery.Ultimately, this theoretical framework rests on the premise that enhancing QoL in historic fabrics is the result of a nexus between physical structure, social dynamism, and the subjective perception of citizens. This human-centric approach can provide a foundation for sustainable and participatory regeneration in Iran's historic urban contexts.



Source: Rajabi Amirabad & Rahmani, 2020; Heydarzadeh et al., 2024; Hatami Nejad et al., 2018; Zare et al., 2019; Eslami & Shokohi Bidhendi, 2024; Saadati et al., 2019؛ Godi, 1993; Coleman, 1987; Appleyard, 1987; Lynch, 1984; Bently et al,. 1990; Lee & Cho, 2025.

Source: Rajabi Amirabad & Rahmani, 2020; Heydarzadeh et al., 2024; Hatami Nejad et al., 2018; Zare et al., 2019; Saadati et al., 2019؛ Ahmadi, 2016; Dass, 2008; Vestavi, 2006; Vestavi, 2006; Mercer, 2007.

Source: Heydarzadeh et al., 2024; Eslami & Shokohi Bidhendi, 2024; Vahid Bafandeh and colleagues, 2023; 2022; Li et al., 2025; Almatar; 2024; Lynch,1984; Jacobs, 1961; Yazdani, 2014.

Figure 1. Conceptual research model

3. Literature Review

The present study explores three pivotal concepts: urban spaces, quality of life (QoL), and historic fabrics, as well as the intricate interrelationships between them. Consequently, the following section provides a comprehensive review of the most significant national and international studies addressing these themes:

Chen and Sekar (2018) investigated the impact of sense of place on environmental visitation rates based on pedestrian-oriented models in public spaces. Their findings indicate that identifying, measuring, and enhancing the core factors that create a sense of place can significantly improve the quality of environmental design. Mirzakhani et al. (2021) conducted a study titled "Key Stakeholders and Operational Processes in the Regeneration of Historic Urban Fabrics in Iran." Their findings reveal conflicts and contradictions among the various responsible institutions in the regeneration process, primarily due to the lack of codified duty descriptions and a deficiency in participation from local residents and NGOs.Cheadle and Sajjadzadeh

(2022) developed a "Strategic Development Model for the Regeneration of Historic Urban Cores," using the historic fabric of Hamadan as a case study. Their results suggest that a tourism-based economic approach can serve as the pivotal phenomenon for forming a strategic development model in Hamadan's historic core. In a more recent study, Alfaro-Navarro et al. (2024) explored the relationship between citizens' digital capabilities and their perception of quality of life (QoL) within the "digital human capital" paradigm. Their results showed a significant correlation between digital skill levels and various QoL determinants; specifically, residents in dense urban areas exhibit higher social happiness when they possess greater digital proficiency.In the Iranian context, Zareian et al. (2020) assessed QoL in the historic neighborhoods of Yazd, identifying seven major influencing factors: security, environmental quality, neighborhood relations, transportation, sense of belonging, physical characteristics of buildings, and infrastructure services. Saadati et al. (2021) formulated a conceptual model for the role of urban space in enhancing QoL in historic fabrics. Using the Delphi method and expert surveys, they refined 91 initial indicators into 64 validated items to establish their conceptual framework.Furthermore, Salami et al. (2021) examined the role of public spaces in realizing regeneration policies in the Imamzadeh Yahya neighborhood, concluding that improving residents' QoL is achievable through the enhancement of public spaces in distressed urban fabrics. Heidari Soureshjani et al. (2022) evaluated socio-cultural regeneration projects in the historic pedestrian ways of Kashan. Their quantitative results indicated that a one-dimensional approach to urban regeneration cannot succeed in isolation; rather, a cohesive and integrated structure encompassing physical-visual, functional, perceptual, semantic, and environmental dimensions must be considered, with citizen needs placed at the forefront. Finally, Eslami and Shokoohi Bidhendi (2023) compared QoL factors between the historic fabric and the wider city of Qazvin. They found that access to common urban services is significantly better in the city at large than in historic areas, reflecting a management bias toward modern urban planning over historic preservation.

A review of the literature indicates that while international studies generally emphasize perceptual and social dimensions, the sense of place, and the quality of spatial experience, they often overlook historic contexts and developing regions. Conversely, domestic research in Iran has primarily focused on physical and institutional issues or general quality of life (QoL) assessments, failing to explore the analytical link between "spatial quality" and "quality of life" through empirical modeling.Broadly speaking, none of the reviewed studies provide an integrated framework capable of synthesizing the physical, social, functional, aesthetic, and perceptual dimensions of space with QoL indicators specifically for residents of historic fabrics. Furthermore, there is a conspicuous absence of mixed-methods (quantitative-qualitative) approaches designed to elucidate the causal pathways of spatial impact on quality of life.Consequently, the theoretical gap addressed by this research lies in the fact that, despite numerous independent studies on spatial quality or QoL, the relationship between urban space components and QoL within historic contexts-particularly at the neighborhood scale—remains under-researched. Moreover, there is a lack of a context-specific, applied theoretical model for place-based interventions. To address this gap, the present study employs statistical analysis, field surveys, and qualitative interpretation to develop a three-level model that integrates physical-environmental, functional-social, and perceptual-identity dimensions.

4. Materials and Methods

4.1. Study Area

District 12 of Tehran covers an area of 16.91 square kilometers, comprising 6 districts and 14 neighborhoods. According to the 2016 census, the district's population was 237,503. Geographically, District 12 is bordered by Districts 6 and 7 to the north, Districts 15 and 16 to the south, District 11 to the west, and Districts 13 and 14 to the east.As the historical core of Tehran, this area encompasses 100% of the Safavid wall and over 70% of the Naseri wall, positioning it as the "historical heart" of the city. This zone is a key symbolic landmark, holding immense value both in terms of cultural-historical heritage and daily functional roles. However, despite its significant cultural, economic, and historical potential, the district has experienced a steady decline over recent decades. This trend is characterized by residential depopulation, stagnation in socio-economic activities, deterioration of the urban landscape and environmental quality, and severe accessibility constraints. These challenges make the study area a prime example for investigating human-centric urban space interventions.

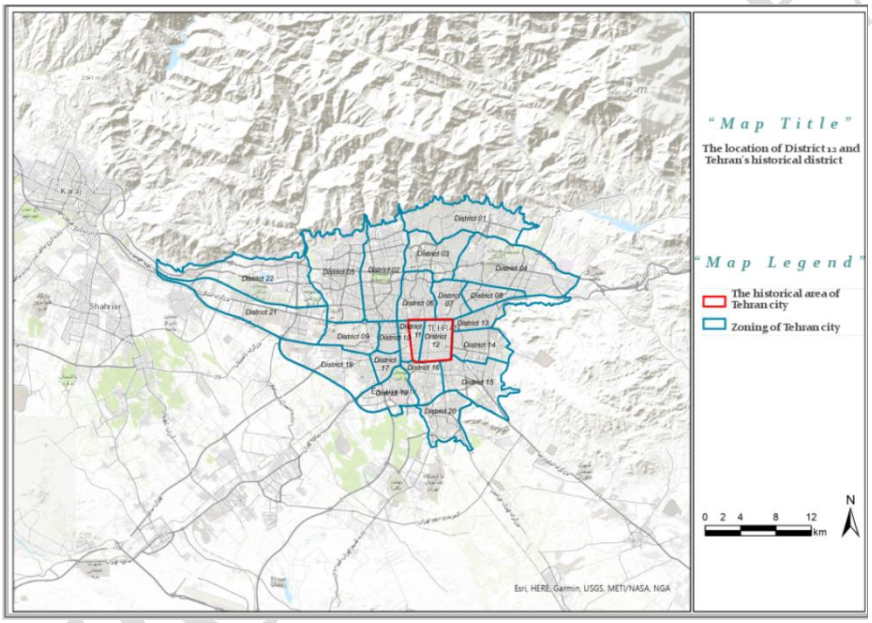


Figure 2. Location of District 12 and the historical area of Tehran

4.2. Research Methodology

The present study is applied in terms of its purpose and follows a descriptive-analytical approach using a case study strategy. As an applied research project, it builds upon previous studies to explore supplementary dimensions and thematic gaps. The questionnaire items were developed based on criteria and indicators derived from the theoretical framework, as detailed in Table 1. Field data were collected using a researcher-made questionnaire structured on a Likert scale.The statistical population consists of residents and public space users in Tehran's historic center. The population size for the selected neighborhoods within the Safavid and Naseri districts was determined based on the latest General Population and Housing Census. The sample size was calculated using Cochran's formula. Based on the 2016 census (population: 237,503), a sample size of 384 participants was determined with a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error. Data collection employed a multi-channel approach, utilizing both face-to-face distribution and online surveys via social media to ensure a diverse representation of age and occupational groups.In parallel with

the quantitative phase, a qualitative study was conducted to gain deeper insights through in-depth semi-structured interviews. The qualitative population comprised three primary stakeholder groups: long-term residents, executive managers and experts in urban renewal and cultural heritage, and academic experts in urban planning and restoration. Purposive sampling with a maximum variation technique was employed to capture a wide range of experiences and perspectives[*]. Interviews continued until theoretical saturation was reached, resulting in 40 interviews (15 residents, 15 managers/ experts, and 10 academics). The study's validity was confirmed by a panel of 40 experts. To assess reliability, Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) were used. As shown in Table 5, all variables exceeded the 0.7 threshold, indicating acceptable reliability. Furthermore, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for convergent validity was calculated to be above 0.5. Data analysis was performed using SPSS and SmartPLS.

Table 1. Components, criteria, and indicators obtained from the research (Alizadeh, J., & Mohammadi, 2021; Alfaro-Navarro et al., 2024; Chahardowli & Sajadzadeh, 2022; El Din et al., 2013; Ferretti & Grosso, 2019)

Variable	Component	Criteria		Indicator
Urban Space x	Urban living spaces	Waste management	1	Cleaning of streets, urban spaces and public places
			2	Quality of garbage collection at the neighborhood level and disposal of municipal waste
		Quality of micro-biomes of spaces	3	Pedestrian Climatic Comfort and Microclimate Quality of Urban Spaces
			4	Number and Quality of Parks and Green Spaces at the Neighborhood Level
	Functional (usability, movement and access)	Diversity of use of the environment	5	Establishing and equipping spaces for collective meetings in the historical context (being a meeting place in the historical context)
			6	Diversifying behavioral patterns in public spaces
			7	Paying attention to establishing diverse uses and mixing uses
			8	Providing the possibility of the presence of all strata with different age levels, genders, and abilities (inclusivity of the place)
			9	Paying attention to and the possibility of presence at different times of the day and night and equipping the environment with nightlife capacities
		Environmental vitality and quality	10	Evoking cultural-historical and memorable meanings
			11	Preserving urban and architectural values, including man-made and natural indicators in the urban and local context
			12	Quality of nightlife in the historical context, especially public spaces
		Environmental safety and security	13	Quality of urban environment security for various activities
			14	Paying attention to safety indicators in the urban environment
		Transportation and access	15	Strengthening the public transport access network
			16	Developing a safe pedestrian network
			17	Access to urban facilities and services

1. In addition to a minimum of ten years of residence or professional activity in the study area, the criteria for selecting interviewees included having direct experience with the public spaces of the area and the ability to provide experience-based analytical insights

	Aesthetic (physical form, public space)	Interconnection of old and new textures	18	Attention to native and authentic elements in the city and buildings
			19	Harmony of facades and urban landscape of buildings in defining the body of urban public spaces
			20	Attention to the architectural pattern of buildings with the functions required by today's life
			21	Attention to the geometric pattern of pedestrian-priority passages (which was also the case in the past) and its human scale
			22	Attention to the spatial structure and historical development and morphology of the texture
		Urban landscape quality and spatial connectivity	23	Paying attention to the human scale in the formation and revitalization of public spaces
			24	Paying attention to beautifying the urban landscape in the context and promoting diversity in urban walls and bodies
			25	Paying attention to visual values, including signs, signs, building decoration patterns, roofs, color palettes, etc.
			26	Improving the readability of the urban environment with an emphasis on public and communal spaces
			27	Strengthening the sense of place in the urban-local social context
	Time	Time cycles	28	Time management of activities in space
			29	Paying attention to the change of seasons, day and night, etc. in the possibility of social interactions
		Time management in public spaces	30	Designing and spending on public spaces for maximum use
			31	Mixing temporally diverse uses in spatial design
			32	Need for multiple buildings and constant activity in a 24-hour community (residential, etc.)
			33	Designing and implementing urban projects over time, not all at once
		The passage of time	34	Reading the city as a multi-layered text
			35	Paying attention to the sense of place and establishing the identity of place
		Continuity of place	36	How the environment adapts to time and change
			37	Recognizing the spirit of place and trying to preserve it
			38	In terms of the present, considering the continuity of the past
Quality of Life	Environmental	Environmental sustainability	39	Air pollution status, noise
			40	Energy efficiency, minimizing pollution and supporting ecosystems
		Regional native life	41	Environmental responsibility and proper use of native natural resources
			42	Paying attention to native and regional environmental links
	Social	Social vitality and cohesion	43	Possibility of holding various ad hoc and special events
			44	Participation in various urban decision-making (decision-making) and continuity of actions as an integrated factor

			45	Participation in various social activities and the desired impact of the action on residents' satisfaction with being in the neighborhood
			46	Event orientation and event orientation (political-ritual and religious)
			47	Attention to the satisfaction of those working in the historical context
			48	Sense of identity and belonging in the city
			49	Collective memory and sense of historical belonging
			50	Satisfaction with neighborhood relations
			51	Satisfaction with social spaces that create joy, happiness and pleasure in citizens
		Maintaining population balance in the texture	52	Paying attention to public supervision and taking necessary measures to control anomalies and crime in the environment by residents of the neighborhood
			53	Controlling the failures that cause danger and environmental hazards in the neighborhood
			54	Paying attention to the needs of all segments of society (social justice)
			55	Residents' access to supporting infrastructure (local shopping centers, green spaces, education, health, etc.)
			56	Safety of women and children in the neighborhood
	Economic production	Economic vitality and stability	57	Promoting small businesses with the authenticity and identity of the historical context
			58	Preventing land speculation and having a favorable impact on the economic value of properties located in the historical context
			59	Promoting tourism while respecting physical, social and environmental capacities
			60	A nightlife economy dependent on nightlife to restore vitality to urban centers
		Flexibility of development plans	61	Diversity of economic activities in the historical context (creative economy)
			62	Tools for attracting domestic and foreign capital
			63	Opportunities for economic interactions and effective and constructive communication between organizations involved in quality improvement

5. Findings

The measurement model was evaluated to assess the reliability and validity of the constructs, ensuring that the research instrument accurately and adequately measured the concepts related to urban space and quality of life. The reliability results indicated that all constructs—ranging from environmental and physical dimensions to perceptual and social components—exhibited acceptable internal consistency. Specifically, both Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values exceeded the standard threshold of 0.7 in all cases. This finding suggests that the items associated with each construct were internally consistent and appropriately reflected a shared underlying concept. For instance, the construct of local–regional habitat, which represents one of the most multidimensional constructs in the study, recorded the highest reliability values. This result indicates that residents hold a relatively stable and shared perception regarding the identity-related and environmental characteristics of the area. In terms of convergent validity, all constructs

achieved values above the recommended criterion of 0.5, demonstrating the adequacy of the measurement items in explaining their respective constructs. Among these, the constructs of local–regional habitat, waste management, and environmental sustainability showed the highest levels of convergent validity. From an analytical perspective, these findings suggest that, for residents of the study area, dimensions related to local identity and environmental quality constitute the most tangible and meaningful aspects of quality of life. This observation is particularly noteworthy in historical contexts, where identity-related and environmental components typically play a more prominent role in shaping citizens' perceptions. Overall, the satisfactory performance of the measurement model in terms of both reliability and validity provides a robust foundation for the structural analysis of the study and indicates that the collected data are not only reliable but also exhibit sufficient conceptual coherence for explaining the relationships between urban space components and quality of life in historical urban fabrics.

An examination of the factor loadings of the research items further revealed that all values exceeded the acceptable threshold of 0.5. This result indicates that each item effectively measured its corresponding latent variable and that none of the indicators demonstrated weak factor loadings. The overall results of this section (Table 2) confirm that the measurement model possesses the required reliability and validity, and that the measurement instrument is appropriate for conducting the structural model analysis.

Table 2. Results of evaluating the reliability and validity of research variables

Latent variable	Abbreviations	Factor loading	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	Extracted variance
Waste Management	AQ01	0/951	0/896	0/951	0/906
	AQ02	0/952			
Quality of Micro-spaces	BQ01	0/981	0/713	0/840	0/730
	BQ02	0/705			
Diversity of Environmental Use	CQ01	0/832	0/830	0/881	0/599
	CQ02	0/675			
	CQ03	0/638			
	CQ04	0/871			
	CQ05	0/827			
Environmental Vitality and Quality	DQ01	0/738	0/810	0/875	0/637
	DQ02	0/808			
	DQ03	0/827			
	DQ04	0/815			
Environmental Safety and Security	EQ01	0/785	0/792	0/882	0/791
	EQ02	0/982			
Transportation and Access	FQ01	0/855	0/787	0/875	0/701
	FQ02	0/842			
	FQ03	0/814			
Interconnection of Old and New Texture	G01	0/864	0/732	0/821	0/512
	G02	0/885			
	G03	0/550			
	G04	0/580			
	G05	0/873			
Urban Landscape Quality and Spatial Connectivity	HQ01	0/781	0/871	0/906	0/659
	HQ02	0/849			
	HQ03	0/737			
	HQ04	0/817			

	HQ05	0/868			
Time Cycles	LQ01	0/922	0/813	0/914	0/842
	LQ02	0/913			
Time Management in Public Spaces	JQ01	0/723	0/788	0/862	0/612
	JQ02	0/802			
	JQ03	0/690			
	JQ04	0/898			
Passage of Time	KQ01	0/867	0/723	0/878	0/782
	KQ02	0/902			
Continuity of Place	LQ01	0/932	0/767	0/865	0/683
	LQ02	0/751			
	LQ03	0/758			
Environmental Sustainability	MQ01	0/933	0/846	0/928	0/867
	MQ02	0/929			
Regional Native Environment	NQ01	0/969	0/921	0/962	0/927
	NQ02	0/956			
Vibrancy and Social Cohesion	OQ1	0/728	0/801	0/861	0/514
	OQ2	0/804			
	OQ3	0/589			
	OQ4	0/720			
	OQ5	۰/۷۶۵			
	OQ6	0/631			
	OQ7	0/623			
	OQ8	0/849			
	OQ9	0/700			
Maintaining Population Balance in the Texture	PQ01	0/869	0/881	0/904	0/562
	PQ02	0/888			
	PQ03	0/522			
	PQ04	0/652			
	PQ05	0/721			
Vibrancy and Economic Stability	QQ01	0/811	0/838	0/891	0/673
	QQ02	0/765			
	QQ03	0/866			
	QQ04	0/836			
Flexibility of Development Programs	RQ01	0/819	0/828	0/892	0/734
	RQ02	0/867			
	RQ03	0/884			

Following the confirmation of the reliability and validity of the measurement model, the structural (inner) model was examined to test the research hypotheses. To evaluate the overall model fit, a set of absolute, incremental, and parsimonious fit indices was employed. The results indicated that the values of the chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio (χ^2/df= 3.1, within the acceptable range of 1 to 5), the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA= 0.08 ≤ 0.08), the comparative fit index (CFI= 0.92 ≥ 0.90), the normed fit index (NFI= 0.93 ≥ 0.90), and the parsimonious fit index (PFI= 0.91 ≥ 0.90) all fell within acceptable thresholds (Hair et al., 2019). These findings indicate that the proposed structural model demonstrates an adequate fit to the empirical data, thereby allowing for meaningful interpretation of the relationships among the constructs.

To test the research hypotheses and assess the strength and statistical significance of the relationships among latent variables, standardized path coefficients and their corresponding t-values were calculated

(Table 4 and Figures 3 and 4). According to the results presented in Table 4, out of the 17 hypothesized relationships specified in the model, 13 were found to be statistically significant. The strongest positive and significant relationships were observed between time management in public spaces and the flexibility of development programs (path coefficient= 0.593, t= 15.310), urban landscape quality and spatial connectivity with social vitality and cohesion (0.588, t= 12.212), and transportation and accessibility with the maintenance of population balance in the urban fabric (0.477, t= 7.486). The relatively high path coefficients indicate that improvements in these three urban space components have a substantial impact on enhancing the associated dimensions of quality of life in the study area. In contrast, the analysis revealed that the relationships between waste management and social vitality and cohesion (path coefficient= 0.043, t= 1.120), integration of the old and new urban fabrics with social vitality and cohesion (–0.052, t= 1.402), the passage of time and social vitality and cohesion (0.077, t= 1.938), and place continuity with the maintenance of population balance in the urban fabric (0.086, t= 1.759) were not statistically significant. Accordingly, the hypotheses associated with these relationships were not supported.

The overall findings indicate that the five dimensions of urban space exert uneven and varying degrees of influence on the components of quality of life within the historical fabric of District 12. Functional-temporal dimensions (such as time management and accessibility) and perceptual-aesthetic dimensions (such as urban landscape quality) exhibit the strongest effects and are statistically highly significant. Additionally, certain components- such as diversity of land use on economic vitality and regional local habitat on environmental vitality- demonstrate positive and statistically significant relationships, albeit with moderate effect sizes. Conversely, some anticipated components, including waste management and the passage of time, did not show statistically significant relationships with the dependent variables within the proposed model and study area. These results clearly identify intervention priorities within the historical fabric of Tehran. Interventions that focus on improving temporal experience, accessibility, and the perceptual and aesthetic quality of urban spaces- given their strong effect sizes and high levels of statistical significance- are likely to have a greater impact on enhancing residents' quality of life. The findings provide an empirical, evidence-based foundation for designing human-centered urban regeneration strategies in this area and in similar historical contexts. In this regard, improving quality of life in the historical fabric of District 12 relies less on purely physical or infrastructure- based interventions and more on a strategic shift toward human-centered approaches.

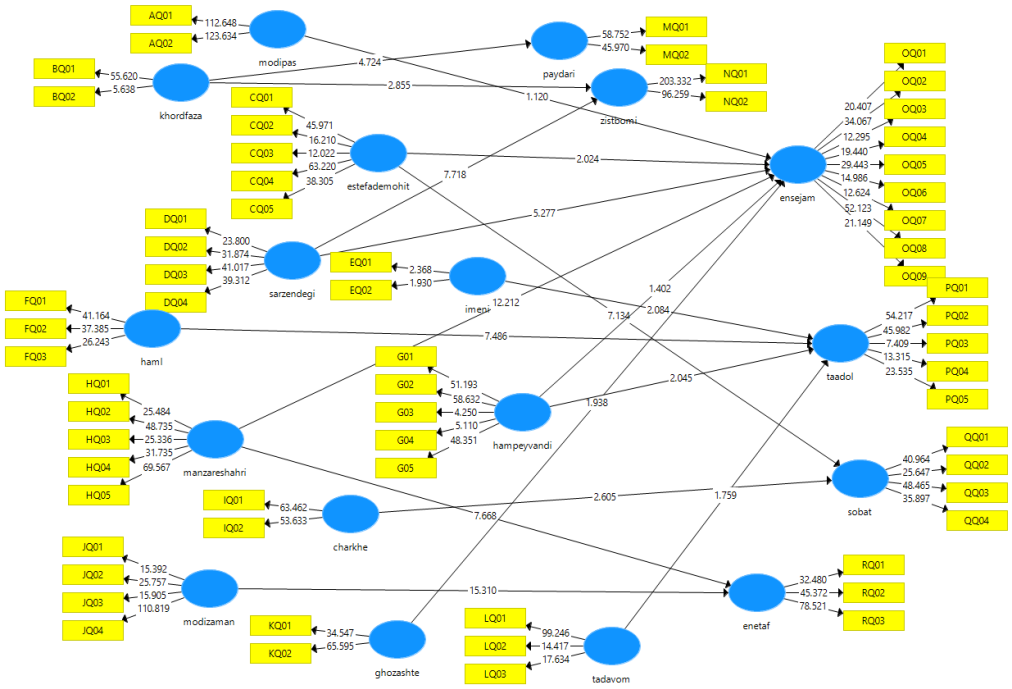


Figure 3. Structural model of the research (significant values)

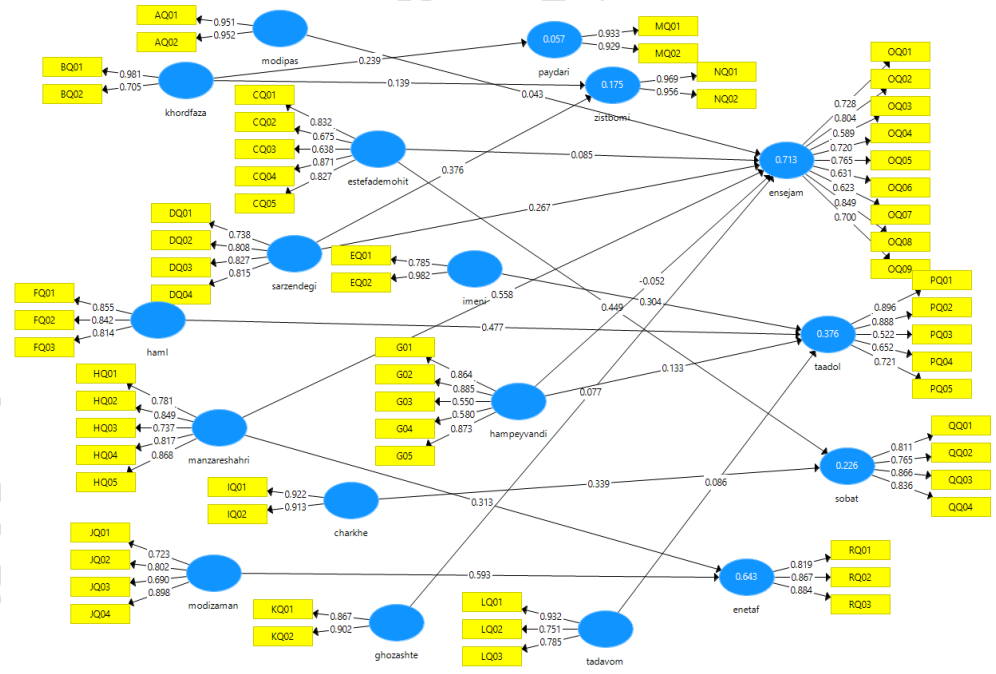


Figure 4. Structural model of the research (standard coefficients)

Table 4. Results of examining significant paths

Hypothesis	Impact coefficient	Significance coefficient	Test result
Waste management has a significant impact on vitality and social cohesion.	0/043	1/120	Reject
The quality of micro-biospaces has a significant impact on environmental sustainability.	0/239	4/724	Approve
The quality of micro-biospaces has a significant impact on regional ecology.	0/139	2/855	Approve
The diversity of environmental use has a significant impact on vitality and social cohesion.	0/085	2/024	Approve
The diversity of environmental use has a significant impact on vitality and economic stability.	0/449	7/134	Approve
Environmental vitality and quality have a significant impact on vitality and social cohesion.	0/267	5/277	Approve
Environmental safety and security have a significant impact on maintaining population balance in the context.	0/304	2/084	Approve
Transportation and accessibility have a significant impact on maintaining population balance in the context.	0/477	7/486	Approve
The interconnection of old and new contexts has a significant impact on vitality and social cohesion.	-0/052	1/402	Reject
The quality of the urban landscape and spatial connectivity have a significant impact on vitality and social cohesion.	0/588	12/212	Approve
The quality of the urban landscape and spatial connectivity have a significant impact on the flexibility of development programs.	0/313	7/668	Approve
Time cycles have a significant impact on vitality and economic stability.	0/339	2/065	Approve
Time management in public spaces has a significant impact on the flexibility of development programs.	0/593	15/310	Approve
The passage of time has a significant impact on vitality and social cohesion.	0/077	1/938	Reject
The continuity of place has a significant impact on maintaining population balance in the context.	0/086	1/759	Reject
The interconnection of old and new contexts has a significant impact on maintaining population balance in the context.	0/133	2/045	Approve
Environmental vitality and quality have a significant impact on local-regional life.	0/376	7/718	Approve

Subsequently, the coefficient of determination of the research model was examined. This index indicates the proportion of variance in the endogenous (dependent) variables that is explained by the exogenous (independent) variables included in the model. In other words, it reflects the explanatory power of the model in capturing the effects of exogenous constructs on endogenous constructs. Threshold values of 0.19, 0.33, and 0.67 are commonly used to represent weak, moderate, and strong explanatory power, respectively. The coefficients of determination (R^2) obtained for all examined variables are reported in Table 5. As shown, the R^2 values of the dependent constructs exhibit considerable heterogeneity. The proposed model successfully explains 71.3% of the variance in the construct of social vitality and cohesion and 64.3% of the variance in development program flexibility, indicating a high level of explanatory power for these two

key dimensions of quality of life. In contrast, the model demonstrates relatively low explanatory power for constructs such as environmental sustainability (5.7%) and regional local habitat (17.5%). This heterogeneity suggests that the predictor variables included in the model-primarily focused on urban space components- have a weaker influence on residents' perceptions of purely environmental dimensions of quality of life compared to social and socio-economic dimensions.

Table 5. Coefficients of determination of the variables under study

Dependent variable	Predictor variable(s)	Coefficient of determination
Environmental sustainability	Quality of micro-biospaces	0/057
Regional native ecology	Quality of micro-biospaces, vitality and environmental quality	0/175
Social vitality and cohesion	Waste management, diversity of environmental use, vitality and environmental quality, interconnection of old and new textures, urban landscape quality and spatial communication, passage of time	0/713
Maintaining population balance in the context	Environmental safety and security, transportation and access, continuity of place, interconnection of old and new textures	0/376
Economic vitality and stability	Diversity of environmental use, time cycles	0/226
Flexibility of development programs	Urban landscape quality and spatial communication, time management in public spaces	0/643

In the final step, to provide a comprehensive assessment of overall model performance, the goodness-of-fit (GOF) index was calculated, yielding a value of 0.508. According to commonly cited benchmarks, this value falls within the range of moderate model fit. It should be emphasized, however, that the interpretation of the GOF index in isolation does not provide a definitive basis for model evaluation. As reported earlier in this section, model assessment was conducted using a set of fit indices, including χ^2/df, RMSEA, CFI, NFI, and GFI, all of which fell within acceptable and desirable ranges. These results indicate that the structural model, overall, demonstrates an adequate and acceptable fit to the empirical data. Beyond these global fit measures, the practical and analytical value of the present model lies in its strong explanatory power for the core constructs of the study- such as social vitality (71.3%) and program flexibility (64.3%)- as well as in its ability to identify and rank statistically significant and robust structural relationships. Therefore, despite the moderate value of the GOF index, the model can be considered a valid and reliable framework for analyzing the relationships between urban space components and quality of life in the study area. The findings thus provide a solid foundation for both scientific inference and the formulation of practical, evidence-based recommendations

$$GOF = \sqrt{0.707 \times 0.365} = \sqrt{0.258} = 0.508$$

6. Discussion

This study aimed to elucidate the pattern through which urban space components contribute to enhancing quality of life within the historical fabric of Tehran's District 12. The findings confirmed a direct, statistically significant, and multidimensional relationship between these two concepts; however, this relationship follows a heterogeneous and hierarchical pattern. The strongest associations highlight the

central role of perceptual–aesthetic components (such as the effect of urban landscape quality on social vitality) and functional–temporal components (such as the influence of time management and accessibility on program flexibility and population balance). These results are consistent with the theoretical frameworks proposed by Lynch (1960), Jacobs (1961), and Gehl (2010), emphasizing that the regeneration of historical urban fabrics requires a shift away from purely physical interventions toward improving lived experience and everyday spatial performance. At the same time, the model analysis revealed several important limitations, providing a balanced and critical perspective. First, the limited practical significance of certain relationships (e.g., the effect of waste management) suggests that their influence may be indirect or marginal compared to more decisive factors. Second, notable heterogeneity was observed in the model's explanatory power (R^2). While the social and socio-economic dimensions of quality of life were well explained (with R^2 values of approximately 0.71 and 0.64), the model exhibited limited capacity to explain variance in environmental sustainability (0.057) and regional local habitat (0.175). This gap indicates that residents' environmental perceptions are likely influenced less by the neighborhood-scale physical variables examined in this study and more by broader metropolitan-scale factors or individual-level characteristics. Consequently, future research would benefit from revising the analytical framework through the inclusion of stronger and multi-level predictor variables. Third, several constructs were found to be at the threshold of adequacy, suggesting a potential need to refine measurement items to better capture the complexity of historical urban fabrics. Taking these considerations into account, the empirically derived three-level model—comprising physical–environmental, functional–social, and perceptual–identity dimensions—and its prioritized structure provide a concrete roadmap for action. This includes interventions focused on enhancing urban landscape quality, improving accessibility, and strengthening spaces for social interaction. As a context-sensitive framework, the model is adaptable to other historical urban fabrics in Iran, provided that regeneration efforts move beyond sectoral approaches toward participatory governance**.**

7. Conclusion

This study investigated the role of urban space components in enhancing quality of life within the historical fabric of Tehran's District 12. In contrast to purely conservation-oriented approaches, the study conceptualized urban space as a socio-perceptual phenomenon and analyzed quality of life from the perspective of residents' lived experience. The findings demonstrate a multidimensional and hierarchical relationship between these two concepts, albeit with a heterogeneous pattern of influence. Specifically, three key components were identified as decisive factors: time management in public spaces (with the strongest effect on planning flexibility), urban landscape quality and spatial connectivity (as the primary drivers of social vitality), and transportation and accessibility (as critical determinants of maintaining population balance). These results shift the focus of intervention priorities from purely physical measures toward enhancing the functional–temporal and perceptual–identity dimensions of urban space. Nevertheless, the findings also reveal notable limitations. Certain components, such as waste management, exhibited limited practical influence, and the model's explanatory power for environmental constructs was substantially lower than for social and economic dimensions. This suggests that residents' environmental perceptions are likely shaped by factors operating at broader spatial scales (urban or national) or by individual-level variables that were beyond the scope of the present study.

Based on these insights, the study proposes a three-level model (physical–environmental, functional–social, and perceptual–identity), whose principal innovation lies in offering an integrated and measurable framework that links urban space, quality of life, and historical urban fabrics within the Iranian context.

The model demonstrates that improvements in physical indicators contribute to quality of life only when mediated through strengthened social interaction and place identity. From a practical standpoint, this framework provides a roadmap for human-centered urban regeneration in District 12. Key action areas include enhancing landscape quality and spatial continuity along historical axes, transforming pedestrian accessibility and promoting sustainable mobility, planning for nighttime activities and temporal diversity of spaces, and developing community-oriented spaces at the neighborhood scale. The success of these strategies depends on a transition toward participatory governance that places residents' experiences at the center of decision-making.

Ultimately, this research shows that balancing heritage conservation with contemporary livability requires moving beyond a purely physical paradigm and adopting a holistic approach in which urban space is understood as a dynamic platform for social interaction and the shaping of quality of life.

Author Contributions

The authors contributed equally to all stages of the research and the preparation of this manuscript.

Acknowledgments

This article is derived from a PhD dissertation in Urban Planning entitled "Elucidating the Pattern of Urban Space Components' Role in Enhancing Quality of Life in Iran's Historical Urban Fabrics (Case Study: the Historical Center of Tehran, District 12)", conducted by the first author under the supervision of the second author and with advisory support from the third and fourth authors, and defended at Najafabad Branch, Islamic Azad University.

It is acknowledged that Gemini (Gemini Pro) was utilized to assist with English language editing, grammar review, and sentence structuring of the manuscript. The use of this tool was limited to language refinement.

Finally, The authors would like to express their gratitude to all individuals who contributed to the successful completion of this study.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the authorship and publication of this article

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