



## Article

# Social Resilience Promotion Factors during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Insights from Urmia, Iran

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**Abstract:** Social resilience is an essential need for societies faced with adverse events such as pandemics. The recent COVID-19 outbreak has affected many communities around the globe. In fact, in addition to unprecedented mortality and infection rates, it has also caused major anxieties and social problems. Iran has been one of the hardest-hit countries and is among those that have experienced multiple waves of the outbreak. In this study, we try to identify major factors that can contribute to urban social resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic in Urmia, a major city located in Northwestern Iran. Data for the study were collected via a field visit and a semi-structured interview survey involving 194 participants. Findings show that several factors related to the following three themes play a significant role in promoting social resilience: (1) participative and supportive governance, (2) resource accessibility, and (3) citizen participation and lawfulness. Results can inform local authorities in Urmia and other contexts to deal with COVID-19 and similar pandemics.

**Keywords:** social resilience; COVID-19 pandemic; promotion factors; Urmia; Iran



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## 1. Introduction

Since the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) was declared as a pandemic in early 2020, massive changes have occurred across the globe that have negatively affected people in all spheres. Based on global reports, the high rate of infections and death tolls (above 421 million confirmed cases and more than 5 million deaths by 19 February 2022) have had a shocking impact on the quality of life of many communities around the world [1]. The loss of millions of jobs [2], exacerbation of poverty and segregation [3,4], a significant increase in social vulnerability [5,6], and disruption in education and health systems [7,8] have been among the consequences of the pandemic since its initial outbreak in 2020. Moreover, central and local governments have imposed lockdown restrictions and self-isolation policies that have had major socio-economic costs and brought more tensions in many communities [9,10].

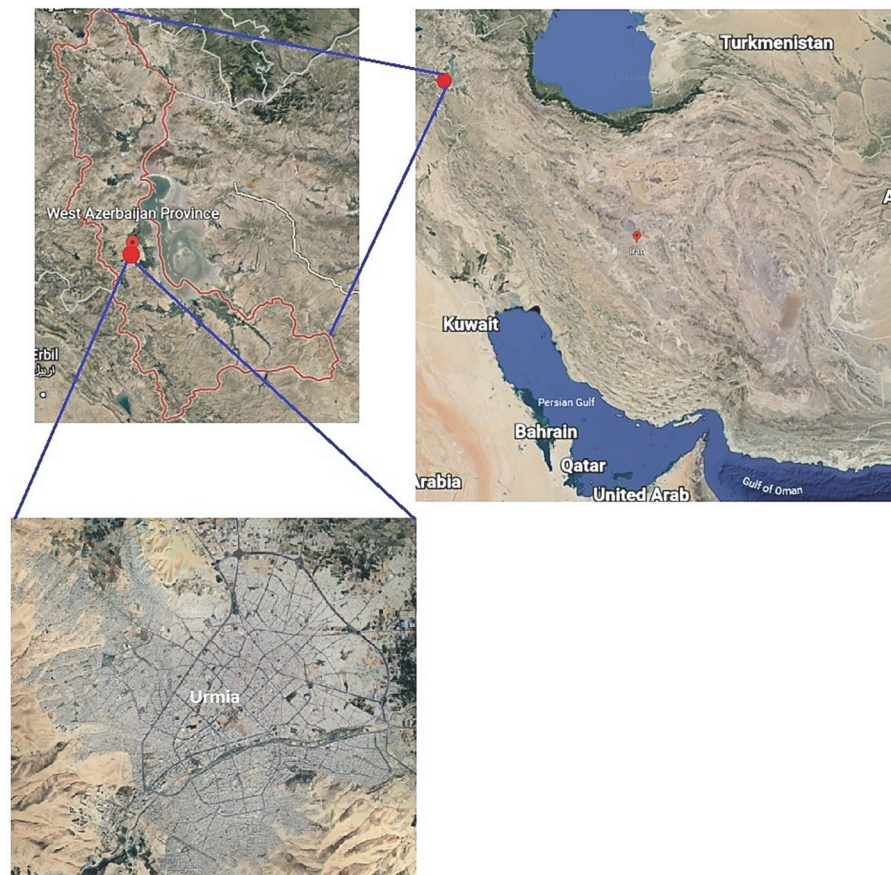
Such dire situations bring the importance of resilience into sharp focus. In particular, social resilience and its crucial role in responding to challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic is undeniable. There is no universal definition of social resilience and it is considered a multi-dimensional concept in diverse disciplines. However, it can be defined as the ability of a community to plan and prepare for, absorb, recover from, and adapt to adverse situations caused by any disruptive event. Based on Maguire et al. [11], social resilience can be recognized by three capacities: resistance, recovery, and creativity. In this regard, resistance shows the quality of the community's efforts to withstand a threat and its consequences. The capacity for recovery refers to the period of time it takes for a community to return to pre-event conditions. Beyond bouncing back to the initial equilibrium level, an optimal recovery capacity for a community can be considered a successful adaptation to new situations and the ability to learn from disruptive events to have a high quality

of functioning. This process leads to the capacity for creativity as a part of the recovery process when resilience is increased. Existing studies on social resilience have discussed the importance of collective action, participatory approaches, and the sense of community and social capital during threats [1,12–14]. According to Maclean et al. (2014, p.145), “social resilience is the adaptive and learning capacity of individuals, groups and institutions to self-organize in a way that maintains system function in the face of change or in response to a disturbance” [15]. Consequently, these capacities can play an essential role in the affected communities during a crisis such as the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Consistent with global conditions, the COVID-19 pandemic has had devastating socio-economic effects in Iran. According to the WHO COVID-19 dashboard, the number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Iran was about 7 million, and the death toll was over 134,000 by 19 February 2022. The widespread outbreak of COVID-19 in Iran, which is now reported to be at the beginning of the sixth wave, has had significant economic and social consequences. The escalation of poverty, the loss of thousands of jobs, the continued closure of educational and social centers, and the economic fallout have put widespread pressure on the social strata [1,16]. Similar to what happened at the macro level, in Urmia city, the capital city of West Azerbaijan province (Figure 1), rapidly increasing trends were observed. More than 7000 deaths have been reported due to the COVID-19 pandemic in the province, half of which have been in the city of Urmia. Unregulated entry and departure of domestic and foreign travelers due to the city’s proximity with Turkey, which has led to efforts to prevent the entry and departure of foreign nationals (<https://www.yjc.news/fa/news/8006669/>) (accessed on 9 February 2022), inadequate and unbalanced distribution of facilities and medical infrastructure and health centers, and the ethnic diversity in the city, which sometimes overshadows the social cohesion needed to comply with mandatory health laws and restrictions (<https://www.urmia-ag.ir/fa/news/detail/c0fb6ae8-c0b6-ea11-9c27-000c29ce98b8/>) (accessed on 9 February 2022), are the main reasons for the spread of COVID-19 in the city. Due to this situation, the everyday life of citizens and their livelihood have been disrupted, and many administrative, educational, and commercial centers have been closed. Some people have stayed in home quarantine for several weeks, claiming that they have experienced mental issues such as depression and anxiety. In fact, most people—especially minorities—have lost their jobs and have experienced many hardships due to the lack of adequate economic and social subsidies and facilities. This situation has been exacerbated by a sharp rise in prices and economic inflation. These circumstances highlight the need for social resilience to enhance community capacities to deal with the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Given this situation and considering the fact that there is no research on the situation in Urmia from the perspective of social resilience and the COVID-19 pandemic, in the present study, an attempt has been made to evaluate the factors that promote social resilience among the citizens of Urmia during the pandemic. This is important because the city has a multi-ethnic social fabric composed of Turks, Kurds, Christians, and Assyrians. This issue has led to the formation of various marginal contexts in the city and has highlighted the importance of realizing participatory governance for the fair distribution of resources and facilities in the city, as well as achieving social capital and cohesion.

Consequently, the results of this study can be used to understand the needs and priorities of citizens under COVID-19 pandemic situations. This, in turn, can provide useful insights for officials and policy makers in their efforts to develop effective measures to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic and similarly disruptive events.



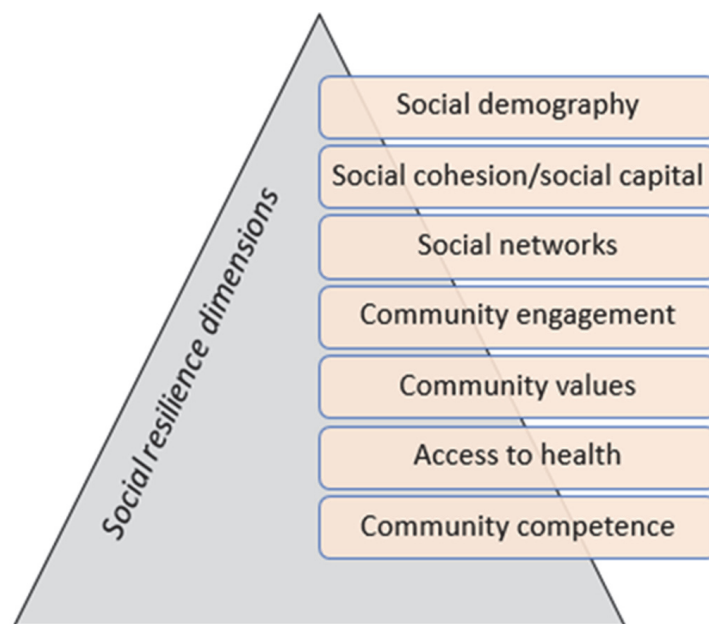
**Figure 1.** The location of the case study area (<https://earth.google.com/web/> (accessed on 10 January 2022)).

## 2. Literature Review

The concept of social resilience has been developed separately for several decades in both socio-ecological and psychology-mental health fields [1,17]. In the literature from the perspective of socio-ecological systems, the integration between ecological and human dimensions at large scales such as regions has been highlighted. However, limited attention has been given to the inclusion of social dimensions. In psychology and mental health fields, an approach is presented that aims to provide prevention and treatment solutions through resilience-building approaches [17]. Besides this, other fields, especially those that have focused on disaster and risk preparedness, have contributed to expanding social resilience knowledge and created a way to link the insights of the ecological literature [18].

Social resilience has a multifaceted essence, and both structural and cognitive qualities can play a vital role in its definition and evaluation [14]. According to Khalili et al. (2020, p. 249), social resilience can be defined as “the ability of a community to withstand external social shock toward enhancing social capacity to resist disaster losses during disaster and regenerate after disaster” [19]. Recent literature has highlighted both capital-based dimensions [20–22] and coping and adaptive capacities [23,24] for evaluating this capacity. In this regard, capital-based dimensions emphasize social capital and link different types of social assets to social resilience. Additionally, adaptive capacities focus on the dynamic qualities of a social system at various scales with possible combinations and interactions of different capacities to ensure the resilience of the system [25].

Besides this, there are seven dimensions for evaluating social resilience that have been used frequently in the related literature. Figure 2 provides these main dimensions.



**Figure 2.** Main dimensions of Social resilience, modified from [1,14,15,25–27].

During crisis times such as the COVID-19 pandemic, having resilient cities on a larger scope than social resilience is recommended and emphasized. The primary focus of resilience research has been on the impacts of climate change as well as seismic hazards. However, the recent COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the vulnerability of cities to other stressors. It has called for critical reflections and debates on other major issues that need to be addressed and lessons and actions that can be learned to respond appropriately [28]. A city is resilient when it can maintain its core functionality and rapidly returns to normal conditions following any adverse event [29].

Urban resilience is important because it can enhance urban sustainability [30]. In fact, when urban resilience is associated with sustainability, some major dimensions, such as social, cultural, economic, governance, and ecological dimensions, are allied to move towards novel forms of policymaking and planning with public engagement that leads to creating strategic actions at multiple temporal and spatial scales [31].

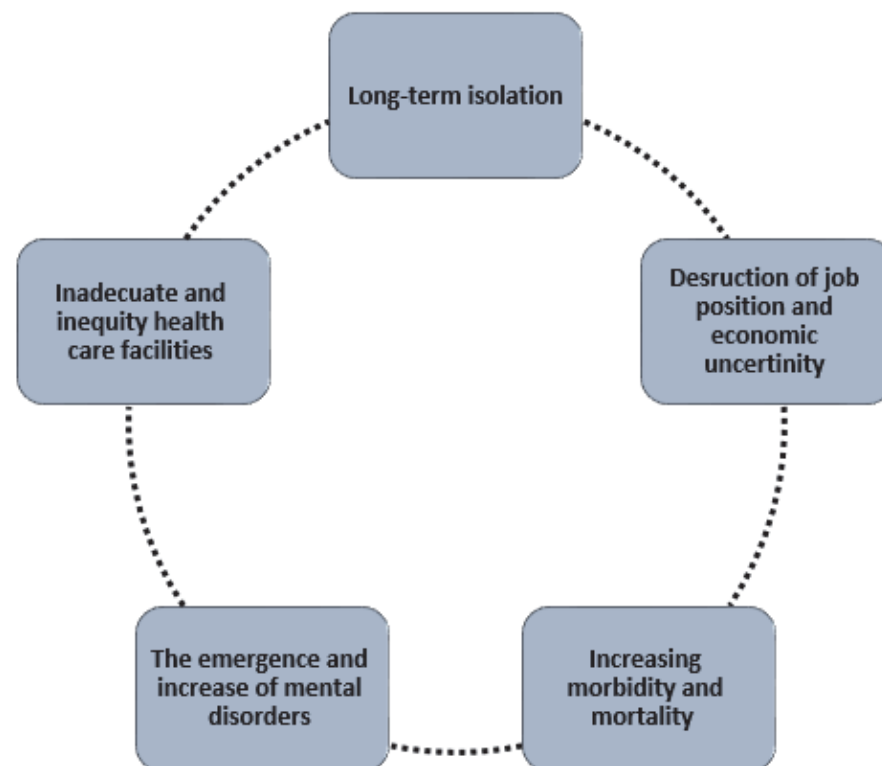
Beyond having resilience characteristics, such as flexibility, preparedness, redundancy, adaptability, and absorption capability [32], cities need good and resilient governance to deal with the dire situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. As Chu et al. (2021, p. 1) have stated: “ Unlike natural disasters, which are usually not under human control, the impact of pandemic disasters varies greatly in scale due to different levels of urban preparedness and intervention measure” [33]. In this regard, good and resilient governance can be the key to achieving better urban resilience and to dealing effectively with the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic in cities. Having a long-term perspective and a participatory view, investing in vital sectors such as healthcare systems, coordinating activities of different sectors and stakeholders, and integrating technology, information, and knowledge in the cities are essential for timely and effective responses to the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic [33,34].

As stated before, social resilience as a major dimension of urban resilience has a crucial role to play in the stability of communities and in preventing additional disruptive events during terrible crisis times, such as the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Proper realization of its dimensions and indicators and the measures that lead to its promotion are crucial in the current difficult times. Nowadays, we frequently hear ‘we are all in this together’ discourses calling for integrated and cohesive actions in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic. Compliance with some key recommendations such as ‘obedience to the restrictions placed on physical mobility’, ‘staying at home’, ‘washing hands’, ‘wearing masks’, and ‘keeping physical

distance' [35] requires certain levels of social cohesion. Such cohesion is characterized by underlying features such as social commitment, awareness, participation, trust, and sense of community.

Despite these, Lingam & Suresh Sapkal (2020) argue that it would be unreasonable to expect any success in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic without social justice or equitable access to welfare infrastructure [35]. Due to the massive impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, many people and healthcare providers are experiencing high levels of anxiety and stress. As LeCraw (2020) has mentioned, the increasing demand for healthcare services can have an overwhelming effect and result in mental anguish and loss of productivity among healthcare providers [36]. Subsequently, these conditions and the lack of access to adequate facilities can have negative psychological effects, especially on the elderly and disabled people. According to the American Medical Association (AMA), the stressful conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic can reduce resilience and increase the need for emotional support among people [36]. In reality, home quarantine and self-isolation, job loss, the growing number of patients and deaths, and, in some places, the lack of health facilities have reduced social resilience and, of course, increased stress and mental disorders among different groups in society [9,37]. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, various measures have been mentioned in the literature to reduce the adverse impacts and enhance social resilience. These include, but are not limited to, paying attention to the needs of vulnerable communities and receding societal inequalities [38]; addressing the needs of specific groups such as children, women, and the elderly; and providing psychological and emotional support to people who have been isolated for a long time and have lost their jobs [39–42]

To sum up, in the literature published on the COVID-19 crisis and its effects, some key factors that can have profound effects on social resilience have frequently been highlighted (Figure 3). As negative and declining stimuli, these factors must be addressed, and solutions must be provided to reduce their impacts and, accordingly, promote society's resilience against them.



**Figure 3.** Negative and declining stimuli of social resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic (Source: Authors).

### 3. Materials and Methods

This study focuses on the city of Urmia, a border city and the capital of West Azerbaijan Province in northwestern Iran. As mentioned earlier, the city has a population of more than 700,000 with a multi-ethnic fabric and features numerous marginal areas that suffer from a lack of balanced distribution of facilities and infrastructure and good governance to facilitate access to resources and crisis management, especially in the the era of COVID-19. Challenges that are considered to be serious obstacles to achieving social resilience in the city are inequitable access to resources and limited social cohesion. Given the importance of achieving social resilience in this city to reduce the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, this study has tried to identify the factors that promote social resilience.

In order to identify the factors that promote social resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic, the perspectives of 194 citizens of Urmia city were sought (See Table 1). For this purpose, a semi-structured interview was used during a field visit to Urmia city, Iran. Non-probability or non-random sampling as convenience sampling was employed [43]. This choice was made because the samples should be available quickly and easily according to the conditions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in the city. We tried to conduct interviews in public places such as the main streets (like: Daneshkadeh, Kashani, and Valiasr streets) and the city's parks (like: Laleh, Daneshju, Saheli and Janghali), all while respecting social distance and wearing masks. The interviews were conducted between 12–16 April 2021. Interviews were conducted in the morning and afternoon shifts, and each shift lasted about three hours.

**Table 1.** Participants' profile (Total Number = 194).

Characteristic		N	Percentage
Gender	Male	98	51%
	Female	96	49%
Education	Diploma degree	59	30%
	Bachelor's degree	77	40%
	Master's degree	42	22%
	PhD	16	8%
Age	25–30	23	12%
	31–35	37	19%
	36–40	11	6%
	41–45	35	18%
	46–50	57	29%
	More than 50	31	16%

According to [44,45], when an interview aims to identify and explore interviewees' opinions and beliefs about an issue or subject given the time and resources available, a sample of 15 people is sufficient. However, according to Hamidi et al. (2020, p. 7) "the adequacy of sampling in this study is determined based on the theoretical saturation rule, meaning that sampling continued until no new relevant data on the subject were obtained" [45]. Therefore, we used the opinions of 194 citizens of Urmia for identifying key factors that promote social resilience.

As stated, we tried to identify and explore factors that promote social resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic from the perspective of citizens of Urmia. We first explained the purpose of the research to citizens and briefly introduced the concept of social resilience and its importance during crises such as the recent COVID-19 pandemic. Then, we asked them to share their views on the factors that promote social resilience during the the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on [44,46], the process of obtaining and analyzing data was as follows: (1) we took notes on the citizens' statements during the interview,

(2) categorized and compiled citizen statements, and (3) prepared them for the coding and analysis stage via thematic analysis. At the end of the data collection process, we took statements from 194 interviews and analyzed them to determine the main factors with relevant extracted codes.

#### 4. Result and Discussion

The thematic analysis of citizens' statements led to the identification of three main factors that play an important role in promoting social resilience during the pandemic. These factors were participative and supportive governance, resource accessibility, and citizen participation and lawfulness. These are discussed in the following subsections.

##### 4.1. Participative and Supportive Governance

Social resilience has a multi-dimensional nature that requires strong social networks and consistent social cohesion and influences the political and economic conditions [14,26,47]. In this regard, having a participative governance approach can strengthen community resilience during times of crisis [48]. In fact, in the process of capacity building—particularly important in the creation of social resilience—the local and national governance supports, decisions and functions are all critical factors [27,49]. In stark contrast, however, lack of government attention and support can reduce social capital and thus social resilience [50]. Analysis of the interviews shows that one of the most critical factors in promoting social resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic is having participative and supportive governance. Table 2 explains participative and supportive governance as the first promotion factor for social resilience and its codes extracted from interviews with their explanation.

**Table 2.** Participative and supportive governance codes and their explanation.

<b>“Participative and Supportive Governance”</b>	<b>Per Cent of Interviews Containing This Code</b>	<b>Code Explanation</b>
Supplying essential needs of the people (In the form of subsidies and subsistence allowances)	( <i>n</i> = 167, 86%)	It is essential to meet the basic needs of the people by governing and improving their declining quality of life.
Paying attention to social insurance	( <i>n</i> = 160, 82%)	Ensuring all social strata fairly in critical situations is considered an important task for governance.
Supporting and investing in medical tools and infrastructure	( <i>n</i> = 155, 80%)	The development of the necessary equipment and infrastructure to deal with the harmful effects of the pandemic should be considered by the government.
Introduce strict hygiene rules for the community	( <i>n</i> = 150, 77%)	Binding laws should be defined and implemented in order to protect society as much as possible.
Publishing new, helpful and up-to-date news and information in case of the COVID-19 pandemic	( <i>n</i> = 142, 73%)	Clear and timely awareness should be provided to inform the public about dealing with the effects of the virus and take precautions.
Participate with citizens in solving social problems	( <i>n</i> = 138, 71%)	Having a participatory and flexible approach to the community and working with the community to solve challenges and problems.
Supporting social health providers	( <i>n</i> = 66, 34%)	All public and private institutions that meet the people's basic health needs during the pandemic should be supported.

In fact, given the nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, the most significant role that can be fulfilled during this period is increased government advocacy. In the following, some excerpts from the interviews are provided.

*“In this difficult and scary period, we need affordable social insurance. We also hope that the government will be able to support researchers in their efforts to detect the therapeutic drugs sooner rather than later with a consistent investment”.*

(Interview no. 5, 12 April 2021)

*“We expect that in this difficult period, all our livelihood options have been disrupted, and we have suffered many losses. The government should support us and support the damaged economic and social sectors through subsidies and grants”.*

(Interview no. 12, 12 April 2021)

*“In my opinion, the role of the government during the COVID-19 pandemic is essential through the continuous investment to equip of medical centers. Also, the protection of families and sectors affected by the virus is needed. Further, the government should develop social distancing regulations and enforce them to prevent the spread of the virus”.*

(Interview no. 67, 13 April 2021)

*“I think the government should first meet the needs of families affected by the virus. The next step is to introduce strict hygiene rules to prevent the spread of the virus. Of course, patients should not be forgotten. The government should support them and society in the face of this crisis by reducing medical costs and investing in the virus- related medical devices”.*

(Interview no. 113, 14 April 2021)

*“The most important thing in this critical period is the government’s support for the people. Suppose the government can provide financial support to the affected people, both those who are ill and those who have lost their jobs and livelihood options, and try to play a deterrent role in forcing the public to comply with health protocols. In that case, its role will be strictly significant”.*

(Interview no. 173, 15 April 2021)

According to the extracted themes, having a participative approach, paying attention to social insurance, supplying essential needs of the people, supporting and investing in medical tools and infrastructure, and introducing strict hygiene rules for the community were the most important components mentioned in this section. In fact, these four had the highest frequency of repetition among the interviews.

#### 4.2. Resource Accessibility

Availability and accessibility of resources, particularly healthcare facilities, are essential factors required for a society to survive, recover, and adapt after a disaster [51,52]. In fact, these can be considered protective factors that allow individuals, societies, and systems to alleviate the impacts of threats and stretch themselves to recovery [14,25,53]. Healthcare facilities are considered critical infrastructures due to their importance in ensuring the quality of life [54]. Therefore, providing sustainable healthcare facilities would drive a society toward resilience [55]. Analysis of interviews shows that this point has been considered one of the most important factors in promoting social resilience in the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. Table 3 provides information about the resource accessibility factor and its codes extracted from interviews and their explanation.



**Table 3.** Resource Accessibility codes and their explanation.

Resource Accessibility	Per Cent of Interviews Containing This Code	Code Explanation
Proper distribution of healthcare infrastructure per capita in the city	(n = 190, 98%)	Quick and easy access to health centers and hospitals during crisis time is essential.
Easy and low-cost access to health care services	(n = 189, 97%)	All sections of society should be able to access low-cost and convenient health services and tools.
Having skilled human resources	(n = 180, 93%)	It refers to having enough skilled professionals and doctors.
Expansion of mobile hospitals and medical centers	(n = 175, 90%)	Health care services should cover remote areas and people who are poor with low access.
Exchange medical findings and resources with other countries	(n = 108, 56%)	Rare tools and services must be provided through partnerships and relationships with other countries.
Access to treatment subsidies	(n = 105, 54%)	Free support services should be available to those affected.

Some excerpts related to this factor and its codes are as follows:

*“I believe that the saving factor in this situation is the appropriate and easy access to medical equipment and facilities for all groups of the society. The possibility of using new tools and effective drugs at the lowest cost should be available”.*

(Interview no. 8, 12 April 2021)

*“You see, the countries that have had some success in preventing and stopping the spread and mortality from the COVID-19 pandemic are those that have the health facilities and the expertise in this field. They have provided medical equipment to the public”.*

(Interview no. 57, 13 April 2021)

*“Easy access and fair distribution of health and medical supplies, such as masks and medical genes, disinfectants, and the expansion of hospitals that accept the COVID-19 pandemic patients, play important roles in the current crisis”.*

(Interview no. 111, 14 April 2021)

*“I believe that having modern medical equipment, fair access to medical centers and medical equipment, adequate number of specialist doctors, and providing low-cost health care to the public are some of the major factors that can help resolve this crisis”.*

(Interview no. 179, 16 April 2021)

*“If we can expand mobile hospitals and health care facilities, provide health care facilities easily and cheaply to the public, and also exchange of therapeutic experiences with other countries, I think we can minimize the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis”.*

(Interview no. 191, 16 April 2021)

#### 4.3. Citizen Participation and Lawfulness

Participation and social commitment can be weighted as the main axis of the formation of resilient societies [14,26,53]. This, in itself, can be remarkably effective in shaping social capacity in coping with events [21]. As Schauppenlehner-Kloyb & Penker (2016, p. 1) have stated: “for resilience building, cities need to foster learning and innovation processes among all actors in order to develop transformative capacities of urban governance regimes to manage extraordinary situations as well as continuous change. Therefore, a close collaboration of urban governmental actors and citizens is of high importance” [56]. As a matter

of fact, cooperatively dealing with or responding to external stresses and disturbances by society needs to have tremendous cohesion and participation [12,14]. Table 4 provides citizen participation and lawfulness factor's codes and their explanation.

**Table 4.** Citizen participation and lawfulness codes and their explanation.

Citizen Participation and Lawfulness	Per Cent of Interviews Containing This Code	Code Explanation
Observance of mandatory health laws	(n = 181, 93%)	To prevent the spread of the virus, all citizens must follow health rules.
Paying attention to social distance	(n = 176, 91%)	Social distance observance can be very effective in making society more resilient to the virus.
Collaborating with government officials and institutions to enforce health laws	(n = 159, 82%)	Citizens' participation and cohesion with the government are essential to counteract the COVID -19 pandemic.
Staying at home instead of being in vain in public spaces	(n = 156, 80%)	Law-abiding citizens and avoiding actions that accelerate the spread of the virus can be necessary for dealing with the effects of the virus and reducing its spread.
Encouraging and educating each other and children to follow the principles of health	(n = 87, 45%)	Educating and educating those around us and our children is essential to reducing the effects of the COVID-19 pandemics.

Based on Table 4, social participation and commitment to comply with health rules is one of the factors that has enhanced social resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic. Note the extracted statements below:

*"In my opinion, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, obligation to observe the principles of health and social distancing by society are obviously important. People must respect the government's restrictive laws and the authorities to reduce the spread of Coronavirus".*

(Interview no. 17, 12 April 2021)

*"If society does not cooperate with the authorities in observing social distance, home quarantine, and observing health standards, there will be no success in controlling the COVID-19 pandemic".*

(Interview no. 83, 13 April 2021)

*"In my opinion, the observance of health principles and quarantine laws, and the obligation to observe the social distance by the society are valuable and effective in line with the efforts of the government and the medical staff".*

(Interview no. 145, 15 April 2021)

*"Comply with government regulations and compliance with quarantine and turning away from attending meetings and public spaces can be very effective in reducing the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic".*

(Interview no. 189, 16 April 2021)

## 5. Conclusions

Social resilience has a pivotal role in maintaining the functionality of large human settlements in times of crisis. Accordingly, many social resilience frameworks have been developed, particularly in disaster contexts, to find a solution for how a community can plan for, mitigate, recover from, and adapt successfully to adverse consequences of any threat. These frameworks use specific dimensions and indicators to show the level of, and measure the quality of social resilience. However, given the dynamic nature of social resilience, it is possible to realize and use a series of effective incentives to help promote social resilience in affected communities in critical situations. Regarding this purpose, using a semi-structured

interview method, this study sought to identify how to help promote social resilience in Urmia city during the COVID-19 pandemic. This research is important because we have focused on a city that has a multi-ethnic fabric and suffers from a lack of adequate facilities and infrastructures, especially in the health sector, and a lack of supportive governance. These challenges can affect social capital, resource accessibility, and social cohesion, which are among the key indicators in achieving social resilience. This is while, in the current situation, having social resilience is very important in the city. In this regard, our extracted themes, from the perspective of citizens, generally fall into three main factors that promote social resilience during the COVID pandemic, namely, (1) participative and supportive governance, (2) resource accessibility, and (3) citizen participation and lawfulness.

Participative and supportive governance can play an important role in promoting social resilience and its dimensions, such as social capital and trust, the robust formation of social networks, the recognition of social values and norms, and the facilitation of the fair distribution of resources and facilities. All these enhance social cohesion and can create high levels of resilience in communities. Resource accessibility is the second important promoting factor that contributes to enhancing social capital and equity and social cohesion, particularly in multi-ethnic communities during crisis times. Moreover, this major factor can facilitate social competence and a sense of community, which are major components to measure social resilience. Citizen participation and lawfulness, as the third factor, can be the key to facilitating crisis management plans and strategies and facilitating social resilience. In fact, this factor arises from the existence of participatory governance and a high level of social capital in a community. Realizing this factor can facilitate and enhance many other factors that are needed for creating social resilience.

Actually, each of these factors can greatly assist in this critical period by improving the resilience of urban communities. The results of our research can demonstrate the factors that are needed in the COVID-19 pandemic period in Urmia.

### *5.1. Implications for Policymakers*

In this study, we tried to show what factors can promote social resilience in the city of Urmia during the COVID-19 pandemic. The highlighted results can inform the local authorities and decision-makers to lead the city toward resilience. To this end, of course, creating synergies and ensuring collaborative planning between local authorities and the national government to expand efficient strategies for enhancing resilience is highly recommended. Based on the results of this study, the following major policy implications can be highlighted:

- Social resilience plays an essential role in realizing resilient communities in the face of crises and destructive events. Therefore, improving the status of social resilience indicators should be a priority in local planning and policies.
- Realizing participatory and supportive governance can be a very effective strategy in achieving high levels of social capital, equity, and social trust, leading to a strengthening of social cohesion during crisis times, thereby enhancing social resilience. In this regard, local government policies and strategies should move towards realizing inclusive and participatory governance.
- Resource accessibility can be effective in promoting social trust, social capital, social cohesion, and a sense of responsibility, particularly in multi-ethnic communities like Urmia. Accordingly, policies and approaches that encourage the fair distribution of resources among all classes and ethnicities should be on the agenda of the local government.
- Citizen participation and lawfulness are essential factors in many approaches developed for the sustainability and resilience of communities. The realization of this factor can greatly assist the facilitation of plans and policies based on promoting resilience and risk management in communities. Constructive and flexible actions and participation in decision-making with citizens should be on the agenda of the local government.

### 5.2. Research Limitation and Future Studies

In conducting this study, we faced some limitations. First, there was no relevant literature or information regarding our topic. This issue caused some problems as there was no basis for comparative studies. Due to the nature of the research, the second issue was access to citizens and the ability to collect their views under the existing constraints created by the COVID-19 pandemic. We acknowledge that more inclusive and structured sampling approaches would be needed to obtain better results. However, we hope that the results of this study could be useful in revealing the factors influencing the promotion of social resilience, which is very critical in the current era.

To sum up, as mentioned previously, social resilience has positive feedback on the risk management process. City planners and policymakers should understand that low levels of social resilience can aggravate the consequences of threats and crises. Therefore, improving factors that promote social resilience during disruptive crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, should be prioritized and explored as effective risk management measures in future studies. Moreover, future research should further explore possible interactions of identified and discussed factors with other socio-economic and environmental measures.

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