

## “Political Factors, Health and Distribution of Power and Wealth”

### Abstract

The purpose of this study is to study power and politics, the influence of political factors, and the distribution of power and wealth on health. A topic that has received less attention from researchers in the political and social sciences.

To achieve the goal of the research, the articles written in the field of politics and health from reliable scientific databases such as; MEDLIN, Google Scholar, PubMed, WHO, and other sources. In total, more than forty articles were examined by searching the literature on the political nature of health, the link between power and health, doctors as political agents, and the effect of power and wealth distribution on health.

The finding of the research is that health is a political phenomenon by its nature and is related to the field of power. And as time goes on, the political color of health and its degree of connection with politics will increase. Considering that the main subject of the policy is the distribution of power and wealth; the source of most diseases is the inequitable distribution of wealth and power, and therefore the impact of political variables on health and illness should not be overlooked.

The following conclusions emerge from the total discussions of the text; Political power and power arising from health are intertwined, there is a significant relationship between the distribution of power in every country, the provision of health services and medical education, and this trend shows an increasing trend in today's world.

**Keywords:** *health, Political factors, Distribution of power, distribution of wealth.*

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### 1. Background:

Researchers who do not consider health as a purely medical matter, should examine the phenomenon of health in both micro and macro ways. The main purpose of this article is to investigate the influence of political factors such as the distribution of power and wealth on the quantity and quality of health. In this regard, it is necessary to analyze and combine health and policy literature. In this research, health is considered as dependent variable and distribution of power and wealth as independent variables.

The assessment of political, economic, socio-cultural, environmental influences on health care programs, proposals and organizational plans is becoming a recognizable step in the mechanisms of strategic planning and development of health services (Markwell (2009), Leigh-Hunt 2016).

The AIDS epidemic in the late 20th century, SARS in 2003, bird flu in 2005, Ebola in 2014, and the Corona epidemic in 2020 showed that public health and foreign policy can no longer be considered separately. Formulation of such policies requires close coordination and cooperation between health, foreign policy, economy and development policies. The recent health crisis has shown that unilateralism in health is no longer effective neither in hospital care nor in government health policies (Kavasini Dosi, 2017). For this reason, governments should pay special attention to the field of health in their diplomacy and foreign policy and consider this field as a source of power (Shafii Seifabadi and Bagheri Dolatabadi (2015), p. 136).

Science, public health, and policy are not only compatible, but all three are necessary to improve public health. The progress of each area of public health is related to the strength of other areas. (Kaplan (2004) pp. 2039-2043).

Significant inequities in access to health care and inequities in health outcomes are major features of health worldwide. How these differences are described and how they can be narrowed has become a very popular area of academic and political attention in recent decades. In a series of articles, many aspects of power and politics are explained in an effort to better understand their role in improving global health. Power appears in different dimensions such as financial, scientific and normative power and in the form of structural and production power, legitimacy and accountability. The multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary nature of global health work makes it more of a social science than public health and international health (world health organization, 2018).

Power is a complex concept and includes the ability or inability to do something and includes influence, control or coercion in various ways. These characteristics distinguish power from income and wealth as determinants of health inequalities. According to John Locke, political power is the right to exercise power for the public good (Hinds, 2001: pp. 59-61). Hannah Arendt defines power as: "the human ability to act in relation to a group" (Arendt (1970, p.50).

“WHO” has identified four different types of power in the "Conceptual Framework for Action on Social Determinants of Health":

- Power over – where some can influence others.

- Power to - where people are broadly able to organize and change existing hierarchies.
- Power with - the collective power of communities or organizations.
- Power in a person's capacity to exercise power (Public Health Scotland, 2017)

The relationship between medicine and political power can be discussed in different ways. The category of power is associated with more than sixty specialties, the medical profession including nurses, midwives, paramedics, nurse practitioners, health visitors, etc., which are governed by position and power (Leinster (2014), pp. 99-102).

Foucault believes that since the 18th century with the formation of modern medicine, doctors no longer only heal prophets and miracle workers, but can have tools to exercise power beyond healing. Throughout history, the most extreme form of exercising power over humans has been to decide about human bodies and whether they should survive or not (Noorbakhsh, 2019).

## II. Materials and methods:

This research is qualitative and theoretical. To achieve the goal of the research, the literature related to politics and health under terms such as; The political nature of health, the relationship between power and health, doctors as political agents, the influence of the distribution of power and wealth on health using reliable scientific databases such as: MEDLIN, Google Scholar, PubMed, WHO and other sources and a total of more than forty articles. Searched and reviewed.

In the research plan; background of Research, political science of public health, the nature of politics and health, the

contribution of doctors to political power, disease as a result of power and inequality, political factors determining health, analysis of power and politics in health policies and systems, public health in interaction with The political system, health professionals' views on the political system, the impact of politics on health, medicine and the health of the community of professionals as political factors, examining power in the global health system, the relationship between public health and the political issues of the system, covid-19 and power, how power affects Health, poverty and health, good policies and bad policies implemented regarding health and disease, the influence of social and political power on people's health, political analysis of health issues and the political economy of health have been discussed.

## III. Results:

The findings of the research are that health is a political phenomenon in nature and is related to the sphere of power. And as time passes, the political color of health and the degree of connection between health and power and politics increases, especially since the main issue of politics is the distribution of power and wealth. Based on this, the origin of most diseases is the unfair distribution of wealth and power, and therefore, the influence of political variables on health and disease should not be ignored. Maybe the face of power and wealth in the field of health is not as visible as it should be, but by studying the trend of programs and budgets for healthcare and education in each country, one can understand the impact of the distribution of power and wealth.



**Figure 1: Appropriate (A) and inappropriate (B) paths of public health policy development**

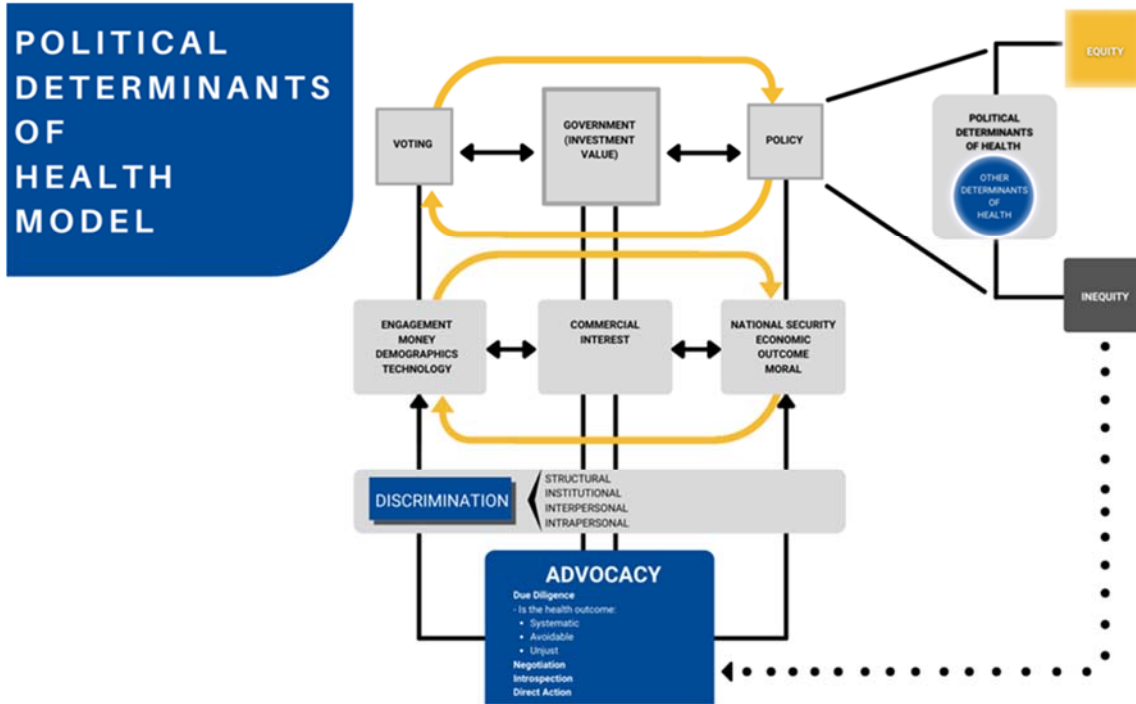
Political science approaches have been used to analyze public health problems related to social determinants of health and health inequality, as well as promoting healthy lifestyles. Public health researchers often criticize political scientists for being "theoretical" in their approach. On the other hand, political scientists often consider public health researchers to have a "simplistic" understanding of political reality. Our goal is to shed light on complex public health problems that are relevant to public health officials, political leaders, and indeed

the population at large (Cassola, Fafard, Palkovits, and J. Hoffman (2022) pp.293-328).

Some researchers have stated the effect of political determinants on health through people's vote and its effect on increasing cultural capital and becoming government policies, the result of which can lead to justice or injustice depending on the type of political system. Health is a channel of political participation, such as participation in various national and local elections. The cost of money in this way can sometimes be related to people's income, economic interests and national

security, and as a result, some policies adopted by the government lead to structural changes. Discrimination, an

institution between individuals and the defense of their rights and interests (Brown, Raza & D. Pinto (2020)).



**Figure 2: The effect of political determinants on health through people's vote and its effect on increasing cultural capital and becoming government policies.**

#### IV. Discussion:

Like the impact of social factors on politics and economy, political factors also affect the health of society. To create a healthy society, the focus should be changed from the individual and medical view to health in the context of the social and political environment (Wolf, 200). This means that the health of the individual and society is a product of the social environment and the choices that people make as members of society (Norris, 1994). Evidence shows that people who are poor and less educated have more health problems and die earlier than people who are richer and more educated. Better understanding and addressing the underlying causes of poor health is essential to influencing health equity improvements and providing patient-centered care (CMAJ (2016), pp. (17-18).

#### Healthy society and how to understand it

A healthy society is a society where all its inhabitants live in health. Signs of a healthy community include access to quality education, safe and healthy homes, adequate employment, transportation, physical activity, and nutrition, in addition to quality health services (Tanata, 2012). In the sociological approach to health, sociologists and other public health scientists do not try to understand why a person gets sick. Instead, they often look to disease rates to explain why people from certain social backgrounds get the disease more often than others. In this approach, people's social status—such as

social class, race and ethnicity, and gender—makes a fundamental difference in their level of health (Cockerham, 2009). Plausible theories suggest that increasing income inequality can affect health inequality. However, cross-sectional studies often find a negative bivariate correlation between income inequality and average life expectancy. Increasing income inequality can also have direct effects. Indirect effects of increasing income inequality can change political and economic institutions, social cohesion, culture and behavioral norms of society and affect people's health (Truesdale and Jencks (2016) Truesdale, pp 413-430).

Public health depends on political systems. New research suggests that watching political news may affect mental health. A University of Toronto research team asked 198 people in the United States to answer questions about political events. The team found that even when participants thought about political events that were not negative, they still evoked negative emotions; even when participants thought about political events that were not negative, they still evoked negative emotions (Drake, 2023).

#### The nature of politics and the nature of health

We are dealing with a discipline called Public Health Political Science. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that the choices governments make to deal with infectious disease threats are necessarily and inherently informed by scientific evidence and a host of other social, ethical, and economic considerations. Because public health is political, it only makes sense to draw

on insights from political science, a discipline that seeks to systematically understand how politics and government work. However, what some call the political science of public health is a relatively underdeveloped discipline, in part because of structural barriers that prevent meaningful interaction between the two disciplines (Farad (2022) pp. 14-3).

Medical sociology theories and political and social aspects of health:

Several sociological theories focus on how this particular group dominates the health profession as a whole.

1. Webern's approach, an early 20th century sociologist who argued that all workers compete for high status and rewards.
  2. Marxist Approaches - Doctors work on behalf of capitalism.
  3. Postmodernist approaches - reducing public trust in doctors.
  4. Feminist Approaches - Doctors behave in patriarchal ways.
- (Farad (2011), pp. 2 to 9).

In an era where the importance of public policy as a determinant of health is commonly acknowledged, there is no debate that politics, power, and ideology affect people's health. While the unhealthy policies of the Reagan and Thatcher administrations 20 years ago served as a stimulus for such debates, in the mid-1980s the introduction of the World Health Organization's Health for All strategy (WHO, 1985) dispelled this illusion. Some have argued that health and its promotion are deeply political, and it has been shown how awareness of the political nature of health leads to more effective health promotion strategies and more evidence-based health promotion actions. **(bambra, Clare Fox and Samuel (2004), pp. 187-193).**

How society and sociologists deal with health is a fruitful discussion. From the point of view of some in India, the purpose of most doctors choosing the medical profession is to accumulate more wealth. But such an idea is not specific to one person. Of course, this way of thinking is not very common among the economically weak strata that make up the majority of the society. **(Nike (2020), pp. 214-215)**

As the British general election approaches, some researchers are investigating the motivation of doctors to participate in parliament. Thirty-two doctors across the political spectrum sought selection **(BMJ. 2017)**. Last month, world governments elected the new Director-General of the World Health Organization as Minister of Health, an important appointment. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus is a doctor and a politician, and he brings with him the goodwill of the world. So Africa will determine the future of health and perhaps the planet. Doctors can influence policy more than they think **(BMJ, 2022)**.

Regarding the relationship between health and politics, some believe that patients should not enter into political discussions. Dr. Ed Schulenberg, director of the New Brunswick College of Physicians and Surgeons, points to the

traditional view that you should be above all of these things. "Suddenly becoming a doctor and ignoring politics is a lot like being an airplane pilot and ignoring the fact that we're flying with the cockpit doors wide open," says Dr. Farzon Nahoi, a writer in New York. He argues that avoiding politics is not only unethical, but also unprofessional **(Vogel, 2018)**.

### **Disease as a result of power and inequality**

Health disparities are systematic, avoidable, and unfair differences in health outcomes that may exist as gradients between populations, social groups within the same population, or populations ranked by social status **(McCartney et al. (2019). pp. 22-30)**.

What is the main cause or causes of the continuation of health inequalities? Various dimensions of socioeconomic status, including relative income, wealth, and power, are consistently associated with health outcomes and therefore underlie health inequalities **(Phelan e (2010), pp. 28-40)**. The unequal distribution of power across the population is a major contributor to health inequalities **(Improving NHS Health Scotland, 2017)**. Of course, power does not necessarily mean traditional political power. From Foucault's point of view, power is an expanding and efficient network of relations that is exercised through prisons, mental hospitals or various discourses such as psychiatry. Power is the generator of knowledge. **(Kohestani, 2014)**.

To better understand the role of power in health, at least four common definitions of the political subject are mentioned: politics as governance, politics as public life, politics as conflict resolution, and politics as power meaning the process through which he It has been achieved. Favorable results in the production, distribution and use of scarce resources in all areas of social existence. While health care is considered political only when the first definition is used, in the latter definition all aspects of health, including health inequalities, are part of the political system **(Bamira et al. (2007), pp. 571-574)**. Political scientists have been slow to understand how public health institutions and programs address central disciplinary issues such as budgeting, staffing, and development. The effect of constituencies on the performance of government institutions is not more than a passing reference to politics in any of the public health texts reviewed by Kaufman. On the contrary, he hardly talks about the politics of public programs in the study of political science texts **(Cassola, Fafard, Palkovits, and J. Hoffman (2022) pp.293-328)**.

### **Political roots of illness and health**

Star Field reminds us that poverty-related health outcomes cannot be fully explained by material deprivation, therefore, we need to elucidate the underlying mechanisms that link poverty to disease and develop interventions to reduce the effects of health disparities. In addition to biological roots, health and disease have social and political roots. Political

power creates an unequal distribution of income. Economic power can be the basis for further expansion of personal political power. A standardized training program on the appropriate use of political power may lead to improved leadership performance and possibly lead to greater social equality. (Vale (2000), 173(6): 376).

Social inequalities shape health inequalities among populations. These are driven by the distribution of income power and wealth. Inequality in income, wealth and distribution of power leads to the fact that any society that is better off can make the most of its situation. One consequence of this benefit is that they have better permanent health (Public Health Scotland, 2020).

#### **Political Determinants of Health**

Policymakers should be aware that democratic social welfare state types, countries that spend more on public services, and countries with lower income inequality have better self-rated health and lower mortality. Investors and researchers should be aware that there are significant gaps in the existing evidence base. One such area concerns the interrelationship between governance, politics, power, macroeconomic policies, public policy, and population health, including how these aspects of political economy create processes of social class and forms of discrimination that differentially impact across social groups. In some areas, there are lower-quality reviews, which creates uncertainty about the relationship between political economy and population health, and the need for high-quality reviews (Davies and Williams, 2020).

#### **Analysis of power and politics in health policies and systems**

Academic research on power issues requires bridging disciplines, bringing research concepts and analytical approaches from the humanities and social sciences to global health policies and systems. Furman argues for such a dialogue between human rights law and health policy. He uses the combination of insights from normative scholarly traditions, such as international law, philosophy, ethics, and political science, not only as a conceptual lens to understand how actors exercise power, but also as a practical tool for interpreting power asymmetries. He believes that policies and their basic reasons should be challenged and inequalities should be corrected. Forman found that discussions of power in global health—such as the Commission on Social Determinants of Health, the Lancet-Slomo Commission on Global Governance for Health, and working groups leading to the Sustainable Development Goals—acknowledge the normative component of power. (Gore and Parker (2019), pp. 481-488).

#### **Public health in interaction with the political system**

Public health depends on a constructive and sustainable interaction between public health and political systems. This study highlights the importance of such interaction and

suggests ground rules that can help bridge the current gap. Among public health professionals, the political system is commonly regarded as the third rail of the subway that should be avoided lest you get burned. Achieving public health goals depends on a constructive and sustainable interaction between public health and political systems. This commentary highlights the importance of such interaction and suggests ground rules that could help bridge the current gap. Public health champions are quick to point to examples where "politics trumps science" and politicians point to "overwhelming" public health agencies and advocates. Both parties benefit from a new working relationship that leaves suspicion and old habits in the past to create opportunities to save lives and money (Hunter (2016) Pp. 436–441).

#### **The impact of politics on health**

Politics, good or bad, play an important role in health. Politics has a fundamental role in determining how to identify and define the problems of citizens and policymakers with existing social conditions and policies, in facilitating certain types of public health interventions, and in creating different challenges in the implementation of policies. It is imperative that public health professionals understand the political dimensions of problems and proposed solutions, whether they are in government, advocacy groups, research organizations, or the health care industry. This understanding can help leaders anticipate both short-term constraints and long-term opportunities for change. Gustin argues, "Political society emphasizes the common bond between members: organized society protects the common goods of health, welfare, and security, while members subordinate themselves to the welfare of society as a whole." Public health can only be achieved through collective action, not through individual effort. (Annual Public Health Review, 2006).

Health should be considered as a political phenomenon insofar as it contributes to the formation of the political realm. The security perspective can be useful in analyzing the political dimensions of health. The first part proposes an approach to health as a form of politics, that is, a set of perceptions, understandings and social practices that influence the ways in which power is exercised and political societies are organized (Nunes, 2012). By integrating the analysis of social power and politics in health systems, a better understanding of barriers to health inequality and inequality can be achieved (Shir Kashmer, 2021).

The provision, planning and research of health and health care is, in the modern age of nation states, a wholly state enterprise. Bureaucracy is often one of the most concentrated activities of government and political actors in its preparation and regulation worldwide. More than any other area of society, health policy intersects with the most important and sensitive social, moral and cultural issues facing societies that shape

everyone's health and well-being. For this reason, medical and health professionals can be considered political agents of the bridge between medical science and society (**Warner (1985), pp. 399-420**).

### **Examining power in the global health system**

The mechanism through which political regime change may affect health is of considerable importance. There is a temporal relationship between the patterns of suicide and the change of the ruling party. What is particularly striking is the graded effect, with the highest rates when federal and national governments were conservative. In the UK, the effect was similar, as Lib Dem constituencies, which had a more moderate political position, had stronger relationships with the standardized ratio of all-cause mortality than Conservative or Labor constituencies (**Kelleher (2002), p.762**).

### **Public health and political systems**

Political nature of medicine; "What should we expect from scientists in society?" What can we expect from people who have different jobs such as engineers, musicians, economists or soldiers in society? A doctor can achieve great knowledge only by observing, hearing or directly contacting the real problems of society such as violence, poverty, inequality, corruption, loneliness, discrimination, land grabbing, addiction and all human beings. Facts that are the subject of political, legal and sociological choices as well as medical research. Scientists are a part of the whole human society and therefore the society should interact with them both politically and socially. Medical humanities (including politics, which Aristotle recognized as the highest form of ethics) are not ornaments (**Ghilardi, and Callegues( 2020) pp. 1340-1341**).

### **Covid 19 and power**

The development of safe and effective Covid-19 vaccines provides a clear path to ending the epidemic. However, the amount of vaccination shown in this direction depends on variable factors. One of the important factors in many people's choice not to get vaccinated is their political views. In one study, a path model was developed and tested to examine the effect of political views on vaccination rates and the number of COVID-19 cases and deaths per 100,000 residents in US counties. The data strongly support the model. In counties with a high percentage of Republican voters, vaccination rates were significantly lower and the number of Covid-19 cases and deaths per 100,000 residents was much higher. Moving forward, it is critical to find ways to bridge the political divide and rebuild trust in science and health professionals (**Albrecht, 2022**).

### **Poverty and health**

Poverty is bad for health. The poor are more likely to have trouble getting nutritious food, lack access to health care, or are overworked or stressed. This may predispose them to chronic diseases, contribute to faster aging, and shorten their

lifespan. For example, people lower in the social hierarchy report worse health outcomes, regardless of their income (**World Bank, 25 August 2014**).

### **Politics and the AIDS Experience**

Historically, many advances in public health have been rooted in the synergistic combination of political leadership and science. The power of this synergy between politics and science is illustrated by many public health developments in the late 19th and 20th centuries. Progress in dealing with AIDS is no exception. Indeed, the response to AIDS is perhaps the most striking contemporary example of the entanglement of politics, policy, and public health. The growing epidemic of AIDS reveals the weaknesses of a political system at the national and social level. Politics has been the main driver of action as well as inaction and denial about AIDS. (**Piot, Russell, and Larson (2007) Am J Public Health, pp. 1936-1934**).

### **The influence of social and political power on people's health**

Health policy is an interdisciplinary field of study that analyzes the impact of social and political power on people's health. Combining broad perspectives from sociology of medicine to international relations, health policy is interested not only in understanding politics as state/government, but also politics as civil society and as a process of power contestation. This broader understanding of politics should be seen at different levels of society - from the individual to the global. As such, health policy is a dynamic and ongoing social process that is carried out everywhere through the political analysis of health issues.

Politics, good or bad, play an important role in health. Health policy begins by examining how health issues become political agendas. Perceptions of the severity of the problem, responsibility for the problem, and the affected population all influence the government's response, and ultimately, the challenges facing officials and organizations responsible for implementing health policies must be examined (**Oliver( 2006), pp. 233-195**).

### **Political economy of health**

According to epidemiologist Krieger, as an analytical approach, the political economy of health "requires attention to the political and economic structures, processes, and power relations that shape the distribution of health and disease. In one chapter, Nancy demonstrates the value of this approach with reference to both domestic and global cases and organizes the discussion around three key messages: first, public finance; second, the role of transnational corporations in the spread of disease must be considered in public health. Third ethics, ethics and politics cannot be separated in public health (**Shkrecker, 2019**).

Medical centers are the only observers of social realities that depict and display what is happening in society. Obviously, in a society dominated by poverty, the share of health will be equal. Poverty is pathogenic, and the disease leads to double poverty, and this cycle will continue, or dependence on class, ethnicity, race, gender, etc. are among the factors that less allow this disease to reach its final line in the year. 1390 will arrive. 001-001) across the levels of our society (**Shir-I-Kashmir, 2021**).

#### V. Conclusion:

The results that are captured through discussion; despite the relationship between politics and health, looking at health is different from looking at politics. Depending on different conditions, sometimes a kind of hegemony is felt on one side of strength or health. The superiority of health is due to the fact that medical knowledge and skills pave the way for doctors to enter the stage of political power, while those in power can allocate the necessary funds and credit to health in their own way. From the point of view of political power, health and disease have a different concept from biomedicine. The subject of politics is the distribution of power and wealth, and its effects and results are reflected in health. From this point of view, the root of inequalities in receiving medical services should first be sought in the mechanisms of distribution of power and wealth. Just as health has social dimensions and roots, it also has political roots. Wrapping health in an envelope called power sometimes causes discrimination and deprivation of the target community. Conceptually, its power and scope, in addition to the relations between the government and the people, refers to a wide network of very complex, diverse and deep relations, and includes every level of society that requires relations and does not require official authority and subordination. will be In fact, power is part of the relationship between the top and the bottom in the field of political society and civil society, and dozens of such cases can be recognized in the private sphere, including; relations between employee and employer, teacher and student, doctor and patient; All this is the idea of disease in the name of society and disease in the name of the body, which is under the control of the doctor. The reproduction of power in health is from the point of view that, firstly, everyone's path eventually passes through the hospital, and on the other hand, the hospital is a place that includes the temperature and health of the positive social and political system.

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