Supervision of Health in Local Councils

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Abstract

It appears that the discussion on the health of local councils, specifically in terms of mental and physical well-being of individuals and society, despite its significant importance and sociologists' emphasis that a healthy individual is the cornerstone of sustainable regional development, has remained neglected. The promotion of health indicators in the region depends on influencing the social components of health. However, the Health, Environment, and Urban Services Commission, which was established with the aim of identifying deficiencies and addressing welfare, service, and hygiene shortcomings at the city level and proposing solutions for their improvement by utilizing experts in urban services, has not been able to effectively fulfill its primary role in advancing individual and societal health as expected. This highlights the necessity of proper supervision over the performance of councils and preventing negligence or misconduct by local council members. By holding these public power holders accountable, it becomes possible to promote both physical and mental health within the community, achieve a safe and healthy society, and create an appropriate model that opens the door to growth and prosperity for other commission-based and council institutions across the country.

Keywords: Local Councils, Health, Community Hygiene, Supervision.

Introduction

Decentralization, the establishment, and consolidation of local governments, is one of the hallmarks of democracy and represents the democratization of urban governance by the central government. This signifies a shift in the local management model from centralized state management to broad-based people's management and the distribution of power (1). In the legal system of the Islamic Republic of Iran, this decentralization is manifested and categorized into two main groups: grassroots councils and higher-level councils. Grassroots councils include urban and rural Islamic councils, whose members are directly elected by the public of their respective localities and operate under the supervision of higher-level councils. These higher-level councils are selected from among the representatives of grassroots councils and are primarily tasked with overseeing and controlling the decisions and actions of grassroots councils. These councils include district councils, county councils, provincial councils, and the Supreme Provincial Councils (15). The status granted to local councils in Articles 6, 7, 12, and 100of the Constitution underscores the importance of these institutions in governance. They function as local assemblies composed of various committees, including health, environment, and urban services committees, operating at the city level .(1)

Today, the concept of individual health has a direct relationship with the quality of the environment and society. Quality of life, as one of the primary prerequisites, encompasses the sense of well-being, comfort, and public satisfaction derived from physical-spatial, socio-economic, environmental, and symbolic factors of the living environment (14). Given that health, as a complex construct, can facilitate an individual's adaptation to their surroundings, it can be concluded that: Firstly, mental health for an individual requires a positive sense of well-being, successful adaptation, and appropriate behavior within the surrounding environment, which is influenced by environmental quality (14). Secondly, the risks posed by poor environmental quality, such as the dangers of solid waste on public health, are undeniable. If improperly managed or uncontrolled, the introduction of these materials into the environment leads to the degradation of landscapes, pollution of water, air, and soil, and jeopardizes the hygiene and health of the community .(21)

The Health Committee of Local Councils is one of the three main and permanent committees of the Health, Environment, and Urban Services Commission. It interacts with other committees of the commission and even other council commissions to promote health factors at the city level and ensure compliance with health standards (13). This is achieved by enhancing informed public participation in maintaining and improving their own health, as well as the health of their environment and community, based on the following principles :

Principle One: A healthy individual is the cornerstone of sustainable regional development .

Principle Two: In the concept of a healthy individual, all dimensions of health—physical, mental, social, and spiritual—are considered due to their interrelated impacts .

Principle Three: All governmental, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector play a role in the health of the region's population, achievable through fostering inter-sectoral collaboration .(16)

Principle Four: Sustainable improvement in regional health indicators depends on public participation in the

design, implementation, and evaluation of all health-focused interventions .

Principle Five: Utilizing the experiences of the country's healthcare network and existing service packages tailored to urban needs with a proactive approach is essential .

Principle Six: Instilling a sense of responsibility towards public health must be practically incorporated into the model .

An Examination of the Term "Health of Councils" in Broad and Specific Concepts

Health in the Broad Sense :

In every field of study, the term "health" carries its own specific meaning and function. However, a comprehensive definition of "health of councils" in the broad sense has not been provided in scholarly articles or books. Wherever the concept of health has been discussed, it has often been defined by contrasting it with opposing terms, such as corruption, to clarify its meaning. Alternatively, it has been explained through references to administrative health programs outlined in general administrative policies and similar contexts (7). In the broad sense, health is the antithesis of corruption. To achieve health, we must first strive for the elevation of ethical standards and maintain a firm belief that all our actions are under the watchful eye of the Almighty (3). If individuals constantly remind themselves that God is always observing their actions, behaviors, and intentions, they will remain free from any slip-ups, errors, or betrayals (2). The Prophet of Islam (PBUH) said: "Account yourselves before you are accounted" (2). Therefore, before taking any action, we should consider its consequences and then establish transparency by committing to a one-way, irreversible path to control administrative avenues. Transparency provides a supervisory platform that creates a sense of being watched by the public. This sense prompts officials to modify their behavior, thereby reducing deviations and corruption in governance (4). When this supervisory platform is made available to the public, the most significant benefit for those in positions of authority is self-regulation. Self-regulation is one of the key tools of social control, and no law or regulatory tool can be more effective than when individuals believe their words and actions are constantly monitored .(10)

Most political thinkers agree that corruption has been an undeniable disease in all societies and across all political systems, whether democratic, socialist, dictatorial, feudal, etc. With some leniency, this social illness can be traced back to the dawn of human civilization. Heiden Heimer categorizes administrative corruption into three types :

–Black Administrative Corruption: Activities that are despised by both the masses and political elites .

–Gray Administrative Corruption: Activities despised by political elites but ignored by the masses, such as employees' negligence in enforcing unpopular laws, like tax collection .

–White Administrative Corruption: Activities that appear to violate the law but are not considered harmful or significant enough by most members of society to warrant punishing the perpetrator.(7)

Health of Councils in the Specific Sense :

The health of councils in the specific sense refers to the mental and physical well-being of individuals and their surrounding environment, which serves as the cornerstone of all human development. It is one of the fundamental values and needs of every individual, acknowledged not only in divine teachings but also in international documents such as the World Health Organization's declaration (1). Maintaining and promoting health is a responsibility that falls on individuals, society, organizations, and governments, and is considered one of the key achievements in realizing sustainable development (17). To responsibly address the public's health needs, governments have established participatory systems known as health systems. These systems encompass all organizations, institutions, individuals, and resources involved in providing services aimed primarily at improving health .(18)

Articles 2, 3, 29, and 43of the Iranian Constitution enumerate justice, equity, and social cohesion as primary goals of the Islamic Republic of Iran's system. They recognize healthcare and treatment as essential needs of the nation and obligate the government to utilize all its resources to promote welfare, alleviate poverty, and eliminate deprivation in areas such as nutrition, housing, hygiene, insurance, and employment. Using public revenues and contributions from citizen participation, the government is tasked with ensuring access to social security services, including healthcare and medical care, for every individual in the country .(1)

Articles 100to 106of the Constitution assign local councils the responsibility of expediting social, economic, health, and other developmental programs, as well as managing local affairs. To prevent discrimination and foster collaboration in preparing and implementing provincial development and welfare programs, the Supreme Provincial Council was established. This council can propose plans directly or through the government to the Islamic Consultative Assembly (Parliament) and holds appointed officials such as governors, mayors, district chiefs, and other national authorities accountable to its decisions. Dissolution of these councils is deemed permissible only in cases of deviation from legal duties. The election of mayors, who are responsible for managing public and non-governmental executive bodies locally and tasked with keeping cities clean, maintaining order, and similar responsibilities, is among the first duties of these local institutions .(1)

Over the past three decades, Iran's health system has achieved remarkable successes in improving public health. However, over time, due to urban population

growth, increased awareness, and rising public expectations, urban health management has faced significant challenges. Most notably, the influx of migrants from rural areas to cities and their growing settlement in urban peripheries has complicated service delivery. Based on robust evidence, urbanization is now recognized as a key social determinant of health .(19)

Addressing these challenges requires policy-making and oversight of all service, health, and environmental processes through the development and approval of structured frameworks (flowcharts), identifying existing barriers, and integrating social determinants of health into the healthcare delivery system. The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends reforming health systems based on primary health care approaches to achieve universal and comprehensive health coverage and ensure sustainable financing, particularly in urban areas. Warning all countries, WHO proposes at least five strategies to improve the current situation and lay the groundwork for the future :

.1Promoting Urban Planning for Healthy and Safe Behaviors: Urban design aimed at increasing mobility, ensuring access to safe and acceptable water and food, providing health services for all, and enhancing street safety .

.2Improving Urban Living Conditions: Ensuring safe residential areas, improving living conditions, controlling indoor and outdoor pollution, guaranteeing safe water and improved sanitation .

.3Ensuring Participatory Governance in Cities: Sharing information on urban planning for health, encouraging public dialogue, involving citizens in decision-making, and creating opportunities for participation .

.4Building Age-Friendly Cities: Facilitating public transportation for people with disabilities, ensuring safe walking for those with special mobility needs, designing accessible public spaces and buildings, and promoting active urban lifestyles and sports for all .

.5Enhancing Urban Resilience to Disasters and Emergencies: Locating health facilities in safe areas and constructing them to be resilient, strengthening community preparedness and response capacities, and improving disease management .(20)

The Local Councils Law was enacted in 1995, and the first term of Islamic City and Village Councils was formed in 1999. Among the councils' responsibilities are identifying deficiencies, needs, and shortcomings in social, cultural, educational, health, economic, and welfare sectors within their constituencies. They are also tasked with preparing proposals and practical solutions, presenting them to relevant authorities, and

overseeing urban health matters according to Articles 1, 2, and 18of Article 71of this law .(32)

The Municipalities and Urban Associations Act, ratified in 1954, and the Municipality Law, approved on April 11, 1955, by Iran's National Consultative Assembly, state that "managing health and sanitation of city residents" is one of the main responsibilities of municipalities, which falls under the administrative domain of urban health services (16). However, the system of providing health services in cities is complex and challenging due to various reasons. If we define health across its four dimensions—physical, mental, social, and spiritual—it necessitates collective participation. Citizens, organized into defined structures and assuming responsibility in their respective fields, will undertake at least three key tasks :

.1Correcting risky behaviors that threaten their own and their families' health ;

.2Promoting health culture and transferring health skills to others ;

.3Advocating for and pursuing their civic rights to societal health from relevant health institutions.(13)

In today's world, the promotion of health has emerged as the most important strategy for achieving equality, democracy, and social justice (PAHO, 2013). Experiences from countries such as Canada, Bangladesh, Italy, Colombia (the city of Bogotá), Costa Rica, Cuba, Mexico, the Montevideo Commitment (1993), the Bogotá Declaration (1997), agreements that led to the formation of national networks of municipalities and healthy communities in Latin America, the Guatemala Declaration, and others demonstrate that municipalities play a fundamental role in ensuring, maintaining, and promoting the health of citizens. The essence of the slogans and experiences of these countries was summarized at the Global Conference on Urbanization and Health in Kobe, Japan (2010) into three key functions :

.1Identifying and addressing urban health inequalities to build healthier cities .

.2Providing leadership by integrating health into all urban policies through intersectoral collaboration .

.3Utilizing mechanisms to foster public participation in urban planning and policymaking .

Based on the model proposed by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2000for health systems, the objectives of ensuring regional health are categorized into a triad of factors: distal factors, proximal factors, and final outcomes. For each category of objectives, specific indicators can be defined, analyzed, and quantified. All services provided to achieve health

objectives are classified into two types: essential health packages (basic needs) and supplementary packages (prioritized and regionally agreed-upon needs) .

The Urban Health Management Center, through its board of trustees (or coordinating council), is responsible not only for assessing the health needs of the population across all dimensions but also for developing appropriate programs and interventions based on national policies, securing financial and non-financial resources, and monitoring proper implementation. Regarding the social determinants of health, the center plays a role in producing evidence, designing rational interventions, garnering support, and leading social change .(13)

The Urban Health Management Center adheres to the laws, regulations, and standards set forth by entities such as the County Health Center, the Tehran City Health Council, and the Tehran Province Food Security and Health Working Group. Examples of public participation in regional health include a spectrum of activities, from the inclusion of community mediators in the board of trustees or coordinating council, service delivery by NGOs and charities, to participation in health projects as health promoters or membership in health hubs, as depicted in the conceptual model .(13)

An important question arises: What is the ultimate authority for approving and legitimizing such a model? Is it the Ministry of Health, the Islamic Consultative Assembly (Parliament), the Supreme Council for Health and Food Security, the municipality, or the city council? It appears that the legislature has addressed this matter in Article 32, Section A of the Fifth Development Plan, designating the Supreme Council for Health and Food Security as the responsible body. This council was established to promote intersectoral collaboration, with the participation of various entities, including the Ministry of Interior (which oversees municipalities and rural Islamic councils), the Ministry of Health, and other ministries and organizations with significant roles in public health. The President of the Republic serves as the head of this council, and the approval of its charter ensures legal and operational obligations for cooperation among different sectors .

Although experts have proposed various strategies for financing the services of this center, such as establishing a virtual fund for integrated health financing from public, private, and community resources, none of these strategies have been operationally assessed. Given the novelty of the model, detailed and precise studies are required to determine the financing mechanism, which should then be implemented after consensus among stakeholders .(13)

Today, organizations strive to create a robust system to maintain and enhance a safe work environment free from accidents, injuries, and pollution. The HSE management system (Health, Safety, and Environment) is an integrated framework designed to ensure health and safety while preventing incidents and harm. The goal of implementing the HSE management system is to ensure that potential and actual hazards in the areas of safety, health, and the environment are accurately identified and effectively eliminated or controlled .(12)

The MS-HSE system, by providing an appropriate structure, manages all programs and policies. In addition to establishing a specific order for implementing these programs, it helps concentrate costs, improve the organization's economic status, and achieve sustainable urban development (13). Controlling or eliminating unsafe conditions and enhancing health and hygiene levels through the application of control and managerial tools at all levels safeguards human capital.(13)

Supervision of the Health of Councils

The relationship between the "essence" of supervision and its "purpose" is profound. Despite some commonalities in understanding the nature of supervision, no consensus has been reached on its essence. Consequently, it is impossible to propose a single purpose for supervision (5). The principle of supervision, as one of the established principles of public law, does not imply a lack of trust in those being supervised. Instead, it should be succinctly stated: "Trust within an organization is good, but supervision is necessary." These two concepts are not contradictory or mutually exclusive.

The general perspective on control and supervision should be reformative rather than punitive. A supervisory and control system should not send negative messages to those being supervised and must incorporate encouragement and motivation as a fundamental principle throughout all stages of the process. Some mistakenly believe that supervision and control are solely about identifying discrepancies and weaknesses. However, as defined, control or supervision is a form of comparison. In this comparison, both weaknesses and strengths must be identified and considered.(6)

In reality, when a plan is developed, organized for implementation, and its leadership and guidance are determined, it is expected that the objectives of the plan will be achieved. Furthermore, there must be assurance that the process is moving precisely toward the defined goals. Sometimes, even if the details of the plan are executed accurately, the overall direction of the implementation may deviate, leading us away from

the goal. Ensuring that the plan is implemented correctly and that corrective actions are taken upon observing deviations requires a process known as supervision and control.(8)

Supervision is an activity that compares "what should be" with "what is," "desirables" with "actuals," and "predictions" with "outcomes." The result of this comparison provides a clear picture of the similarities or differences between these two sets of factors.(6)

The philosophies of supervision can perhaps be categorized into two levels based on their purposes:

1. Philosophy of Encouragement: For instance, parents supervise their children out of care and concern, aiming to nurture and develop their abilities.
2. Philosophy of Prevention: In this case, supervision is conducted to prevent errors and misuse by others (e.g., employees).(2)

If we consider the essence of supervision to involve activity and movement, the greater the movement—whether broader, stronger, or more maneuverable—the more rigorous the supervision required. This is because the mistakes of those in higher positions are also greater. Therefore, in political, governmental, and managerial domains, the heavier the responsibilities of officials, the higher and more precise the level of supervision they require. Activities subject to supervision are not limited to practical and operational efforts; scientific and research endeavors also require oversight. Thus, the act of supervision itself requires supervision, as supervisory activity is itself a form of action and movement. From the perspective of "analytical levels," the supervisor can be an individual (God, angels, humans, etc.), a group, a government, or a supranational or transnational entity. Similarly, those being supervised can be individuals, groups, governments, or transboundary institutions. Supervision can also be overt or covert, direct or indirect, and so on.(6)

Supervision can be divided into two types:

1. Open and Overt Supervision: This refers to the process of monitoring and controlling the performance of the supervised organization or the implementation of its programs in a transparent manner. Individuals and those being supervised, whose performance or programs are being controlled, are aware of and informed about the process.(8)

2. Hidden and Covert Supervision: The necessity of hidden and secret supervision arises because if supervision of performance were always conducted openly and publicly, it would lack the necessary accuracy. When control is performed openly and formally, those whose performance is being reviewed

may pretend and attempt to deceive the supervisor through appearances. There are individuals who do not contribute meaningfully to the organization and lack satisfactory performance but always try to appear effective through pretense, making it seem as though they have accomplished many beneficial tasks for the organization. A review of the managerial conduct of the Prophet of Islam (PBUH) indicates that he employed hidden supervision to monitor the performance and behavior of his agents. His use of this method was not limited to one or a few instances but was applied in numerous cases to oversee his agents' performance.(2)

Covert and hidden supervision has positive effects and multiple benefits, two of which are highlighted in the illuminating statements of Imam Ali (AS). After advising Malik to always maintain covert agents, Imam Ali (AS) states: "For your covert supervision encourages them (those being supervised) to act with integrity and kindness toward the people." Hidden and secret supervision motivates and encourages those being supervised to act honestly and compassionately toward the public (2).

Supervision and Promotion of the Health of Councils: Practical Solutions and Oversight Mechanisms

At this point, after discussing these foundational principles, two key questions arise that must be addressed:

1. Is there a practical solution for supervising and consequently improving the health of councils?
2. Which oversight system governs the health supervision mechanism of local councils?

Answer to the First Question:

It must be acknowledged that there are two practical solutions for improving the health of councils, both in the broad sense and in the specific sense, as outlined below:

#A. Reforming the Council System

Councils, due to their direct connection with various social strata, their widespread geographic distribution across cities and villages, and their close interaction with the public, are among the most familiar social institutions with unparalleled potential to achieve development, health, prosperity, justice, and the flourishing of talents. However, the lack of proper oversight has led to the transformation of an institution that was established under the claim of being a fruit of democracy into its opposite. The justification for councils often included statements like "direct public voting eliminates rent-seeking," yet councils have not only failed to contribute to the advancement of democracy in Iran but have also turned into counterproductive entities, fostering negative perceptions (4). This raises the question: How do

individuals who lack the qualifications for public service gain access to these positions? Are the responsible institutions not diligently assessing the eligibility of candidates for council membership?

Do parliamentary representatives not prioritize revising oversight laws and promoting transparency to make the functioning of councils more transparent ?

The 11th Parliament took a step toward reforming the council system by proposing a proportional representation model for council elections, similar to the ongoing efforts in previous parliaments to reform parliamentary elections. This proposal was introduced early in the 11th Parliament's term and aimed to bring significant structural changes to councils. However, the process concluded with the establishment of a supervisory board tasked with overseeing councils. The formation of the supervisory board, its mandate, and the selection of its members marked the beginning of a new chapter in the 11th Parliament. Around early October 2019, news of the supervisory board's formation emerged, but less than six months before the sixth round of city and village council elections, the board had yet to begin its activities, and its members were still unknown. It was only by late November that the formation and appointment of its members were officially announced.(8)

The goal of adopting proportional representation is to create opportunities for various parties and groups to participate, allowing diverse opinions and preferences to influence decisions and moving away from uniformity and single-mindedness. However, implementing proportional representation may raise certain issues, such as the selection of mayors and similar matters. Therefore, while proportional representation can be a viable and effective proposal, it requires that critical decisions, such as the selection of mayors, be delegated to the public—similar to how the selection of the prime minister is outside the current scope of parliamentary authority. For this reason, proportional representation could enhance council functionality, provided that tasks like forming a government remain tied to the majority principle, ensuring stability. The same logic applies to the selection of mayors by city council members.

Another proposed solution for reforming the council election system is reducing the size of electoral districts within each city. In this approach, each urban area would have its dedicated representative in the city council, ensuring that councils consist of representatives from diverse economic and urban backgrounds.(9)

#B. Implementing Transparency Principles in City Councils:

Transparency in city councils is not limited to councils alone; it can serve as a gateway to broader transparency across the country. Many systems in Iran operate on a commission-based or council-based model, and a successful example in one area could pave the way for adoption in other institutions. Transparency principles in city councils can be divided into several key areas:(10)

1 .Live Broadcast and Archiving of Council Sessions

Each council's website should include a section for live broadcasts of sessions, followed by access to archives with details such as the presenter's name, session date, topic, and more.(10)

2 .Written Summaries of Discussions

This axis provides a concise overview of key information discussed during sessions. Session details, including date, location, topic, committee name, and a summary of discussions, should be clearly documented.(10)

3 .Detailed Records of Discussions

A verbatim record of sessions includes all details and timestamps without omission.(10)

4 .Attendance and Absence

This axis tracks attendance at council sessions through several indicators, including lists of attendees and absentees, guests, and those who leave sessions. Occasionally, individuals arriving late are also recorded as part of attendance tracking.(10)

5 .Public Disclosure of Votes

A crucial axis is the transparency of voting outcomes, as it determines the fate of proposals after discussions .(10)

6 .Agenda Disclosure

While councils are aware of upcoming session agendas, public transparency ensures that citizens are informed about future topics. Why? Because knowing the agenda allows stakeholders to participate effectively in discussions where their rights or interests are involved. Transparent agendas also facilitate the analysis and resolution of conflicts of interest.(10)

7 .Declaration of Conflicts of Interest

A vital axis is the declaration of conflicts of interest, which is the root cause of corruption. In Iran, this concept remains relatively new. Here, we provide a brief explanation of conflicts of interest .(10)

Conflicts of interest occur when personal or organizational interests interfere with public duties, leading to errors, mistakes, or misconduct. Addressing and declaring such conflicts is essential for maintaining integrity and trust in governance.

Supervision and Promotion of the Health of Councils: Practical Solutions and Oversight Mechanisms

In councils, where decisions are made, individuals may have personal interests in those decisions, placing them at risk of error. Instead of prioritizing public interest, they might favor their personal, ethnic, or provincial interests, which can lead to corruption.

For this reason, one of the first mechanisms to address conflicts of interest is the declaration of such conflicts. Individuals must disclose any potential conflict of interest they encounter (10).

This is a legal obligation, and failure to disclose a conflict of interest is considered a crime, with the minimum penalty being complete disqualification. Entering the national arena means earning public trust, and as long as that trust exists, the individual remains qualified to serve (4).

Here, the law requires members to self-declare any conflicts of interest. One mechanism for addressing this is leaving the session after declaring a conflict of interest. The declared conflict and subsequent actions taken in response are documented in the detailed minutes of the discussions (10).

A law in the UK states that individuals are required to self-declare their conflicts of interest (20).

In Canada, if a conflict of interest arises, the representative involved must leave the session, and this action is recorded in the detailed minutes of the council meeting (21).

8. Public Participation

When the general public is allowed to attend sessions, it enables the participation of stakeholders, guilds, and anyone who needs to be informed about the decisions (10).

9. Council Documentation

All directives and documents related to the session, including detailed minutes and other relevant materials, are accessible. Here, all files related to the session can be accessed. All documents are uploaded and numbered separately, and references are stated in the detailed report so individuals can refer to them (10).

10. Financial Transparency

The final axis concerns the financial transparency of council institutions, which includes several key components, such as:
- The salary structure for council members.
- The work-related expenses of council representatives.

Additionally, details of public expenditures are disclosed and accessible. For example, on what date, how much money was allocated for what purpose, and to whom it was given (10).

Answer to the Second Question

Upon examining the laws governing the supervision of city council elections and reviewing the responsibilities of these councils, we see that due to the decentralized nature and relative independence of local governments, the Guardian Council does not have the authority to oversee council elections. However, it should be noted that the independence of councils is relative, meaning central authorities still maintain oversight over these institutions. Legally, this oversight may take two forms:

1. Legal (Guardianship) Supervision: In this type of oversight, monitoring is conducted based on the law (15).
2. Hierarchical Supervision: In this type, higher-ranking authorities can overturn decisions made by lower-ranking ones (15).

The Law on the Organization, Functions, and Elections of Islamic Councils, ratified on 1/3/1996 and its amendments, outlines the mechanisms for supervising these grassroots institutions. Articles 79 to 82 of this law describe the methods of supervision over councils. Based on the council law and its recent amendments, several types of supervision can be identified for local institutions, each of which can be analyzed from various perspectives (15).

First, the central government supports local governments in improving public services through indirect oversight and guidance. On the other hand, the central government ensures compliance with the law by exercising its supervisory powers. If local officials deviate from the legal framework, they lose their granted authority. This type of oversight is carried out by central bodies in several ways, the most stringent of which is monitoring the establishment and overall functioning of councils and local institutions. However, this level of oversight may somewhat conflict with democratic principles and the decision-making rights of local communities (15).

Article 81 of the Law on the Organization, Functions, and Elections of Islamic Councils and Mayors identifies the criterion for deviation by local institutions as the "public interest." According to Article 81, the authority to determine deviation and dissolution is entrusted to committees tasked with investigating violations and deviations of local councils. These committees, composed mostly of central government officials who are inherently political rather than judicial, hold the highly sensitive responsibility of dissolving local councils.

In the current legal framework (the issue of supervising the health of councils), central government officials exercise authority both as complainants, i.e., reporting violations by local councils, and as judges, i.e., presiding over committees investigating council violations. Comparing these legal provisions with legal principles reveals significant shortcomings (15).

Article 85 of Iran's Local Councils Law states that in the event of the dissolution of city councils or the Tehran City Council, until their reformation, the governor and the Minister of Interior will replace them, respectively. This clearly demonstrates the dominance and authority of central government officials over local councils (15).

Another form of supervision involves oversight of local institution decisions. In this type, the decisions of local governments are monitored by central authorities, such as governors and district chiefs, in accordance with legal standards.

Third, there is oversight of council members regarding their eligibility for membership or continued participation in local institutions. This type of supervision is distinct from the previous ones and focuses on compliance with national laws (both ordinary and constitutional) concerning the general qualifications of candidates and their ethical eligibility. Central government authorities also engage in direct oversight by attending council sessions (15).

To supervise councils, a body called the Supreme Provincial Council, composed of provincial council representatives, has been established. According to Article 7 of the Constitution, councils are among the pillars of decision-making and governance in the country. A notable aspect of this system is that it operates under a distinct supervisory mechanism compared to other elections in Iran. What sets city and village council elections apart from other elections in Iran is the method of supervision over their implementation. According to Article 99 of the Constitution, the Guardian Council oversees elections for the Assembly of Experts, the presidency, the Islamic Consultative Assembly, and public referendums. Under Article 99, the Guardian Council generally oversees all elections in Iran, except for one case: the elections of Islamic city and village councils, where the Guardian Council has no role. Instead, the Islamic Consultative Assembly assumes duties similar to those of the Guardian Council. However, some critics argue that parliamentary oversight of council elections is inappropriate, citing MPs' need for public votes as a barrier to proper oversight. They believe another institution should assume responsibility for supervising these elections (1).

Despite this, just as the supervisory mechanism for council elections is unique, so too is the oversight of their health due to their direct connection with improving urban health management. By enhancing urban health management and ensuring proper oversight, the following important outcomes can be achieved:

.1 Proper Planning in the Realm of Social Determinants of Health

Evidence indicates that the majority of the burden of diseases and health inequalities stem from social and biological factors. For instance, according to a World Health Organization (WHO) report, the maternal mortality rate for Afghan mothers is one in every eight, compared to one in every 17,400 for Swedish mothers. This inequality persists even under similar regional conditions. As another example, an Indigenous Australian man lives 17 years less than other men in the same country. Additionally, maternal deaths among poor women in Indonesia are four times higher than those among wealthy women in the same country. Therefore, proper planning in the realm of social determinants of health can eliminate these disparities and enhance life expectancy and quality of life.(20)

.2 Preventing the Expansion of Informal Settlements and Developing Integrated Urban Management Policies

The phenomenon of informal settlements can be regarded as one of the hallmarks of the modern and advanced world. In traditional societies, although class differences existed, informal settlements in the sense we encounter today did not exist, and all individuals were part of the societal fabric.(21)

.3 Defining Health Centers for All Urban and Neighborhood Areas with a Neighborhood-Centric Approach

In modern urban planning, the concept of neighborhood centrism is interpreted as "micro-urbanism," which seeks to design and create sustainable neighborhoods and small-scale biotic communities. By leveraging the dynamism, health, and social interactions inherent in neighborhood structures, this approach fosters the sustainability and socio-cultural health of urban spaces.(20)

.4 Changing the Mindset of Urban Managers and Adopting a Health-Centric Approach in Municipal Development Activities and Other Sectors

.5 Promoting a Culture of Health

.6 Enhancing Accountability of Civil Organizations such as Municipalities and Non-Governmental Public Institutions

Thus, in the context of supervising the health of local institutions, central authorities adhere to the principle of legal (guardianship-based) oversight, meaning that decisions and actions of local authorities and institutions are governed by law. It appears that hierarchical oversight does not have a significant role in this system .(15)

However, more important than all legal oversight systems is another type of supervision: public and community oversight. By involving the public in oversight efforts through the framework of "enjoining good and forbidding evil," the broadest network of supervision is created. Although it may not be possible to articulate this form of oversight as a legal solution, it is considered the best, most effective, and least

costly type of supervision. Based on Article 8 of the Constitution, this responsibility has been placed on every individual in society by the Islamic religion. Every citizen, regardless of position, rank, or socio-political status, has the duty and right to invite leaders to do good and prevent wrongdoing. The survival of civilizations and nations depends on the proper fulfillment of this critical responsibility. If the public, who have direct and close ties with local councils, properly fulfill this vital duty, they will undoubtedly build a virtuous city where they experience nothing but peace, security, and the swift restoration of lost health.(1)

Conclusion:

The health of local councils, whether in the broad or specific sense, is one of the primary prerequisites for quality of life, encompassing a sense of well-being, comfort, and public satisfaction. It represents a fundamental value and need for every individual in a safe and healthy society, fostering the development of healthy individuals and serving as the axis of progress and sustainable urban development. However, it requires proper oversight, control, and management to prevent endangering public health. According to Article 101 of the Constitution, the Supreme Provincial Council has been designated as the entity responsible for legal (guardianship-based) oversight over these councils to prevent discrimination and foster collaboration in preparing development and welfare programs .

Nevertheless, there exists a more critical type of oversight that, although lacking a robust legal framework, serves as the cornerstone of all oversight systems and is referenced in Article 8 of the Constitution. This is public oversight under the concept of "enjoining good and forbidding evil." By operationalizing this principle, societal health can be guaranteed.

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