

Public Abstract

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Title:The Origins and Implementation of the National Health Insurance Policies in Korea, 1961-1979

This study examines the health politics of the Korean National Health Insurance Act in 1963 and in 1977. The study expands the welfare state theory by reflecting the historical institutional contexts of Korea. Korea's National Health Insurance Act of 1963 and 1977 were initiated by a strong state government with limited participation from interest groups of business and medical professions and labor.

This study has four key findings. 1) The administrative capacity of the state was the major factor that drove the successful implementation of Korea's 1977 National Health Insurance Act. The source of the state capacity was from an effective administration based on state autonomy and centralized power of President Park. 2) Interest groups did not have a strong resistance against NHI policies. The state and business maintained a symbiotic relationship under Park's regime. The state provided special financial resources for large businesses, which were the central players in the development of the Korean economy in the 1960s and the 1970s. Medical professions were involved in the policy making process and vocalized to protect their financial status. The state exercised repressive labor policies to keep wages low and to prevent collective action by labor. 3) Korean culture supported the strong state and gave the responsibility to the individuals and businesses with welfare concerns. In particular, Confucianism emphasized the familism that shifted responsibilities to individual families. 4) The state actively engaged in implementing social policies where it faced legitimacy crisis in the 1960s and the 1970s due to political turmoi