

Pressure Groups

[UPSC Notes]

What are Pressure Groups?

The term "Pressure Group" was first used in the United States of America. A pressure group is a collection of people who actively promote and defend the common interests among them.

- It is expected that by putting enormous pressure on the government, these Pressure Groups will effect change in society and public policy.
- The Pressure Groups are also called the vested groups or interest groups.
- The Pressure Groups should not be confused with any political party or group as they do not contest any election but they have certain programs or issues, for which they perform certain activities for their fulfillment.
- The common methods used by these Pressure Groups to influence the policy-making and implementation by the government are correspondence, publicity, propaganda petitioning, debating, and lobbying.

Characteristics of Pressure Groups

Pressure Groups are recognized to work for the common interest by dealing with the political system.

- The Pressure Groups finance the political parties as well as maintain connections with the bureaucrats.
- These Pressure Groups also engage in traditional social practices to gain publicity and influence, like targeting caste-related issues and engaging in religion-based politics to highlight their interests.
- Pressure Groups should not always be viewed negatively because they raise legitimate issues such as a lack of resources.
- If any social or economic condition changes immediately or after a certain period of time, these Pressure Groups take some time to adjust to them, causing disruption in their existing order.

Types of Pressure Groups in India

There are various types of Pressure Groups in India, and we have covered all of them below.

Business Groups:

The business groups include the industries and commercial bodies that are sophisticated and powerful and are the largest of all Pressure Groups in India.

For example, the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI).

Trade Unions:

Trade unions are not unknown to many UPSC aspirants as we know that these are the groups that raise their voices to demand the genuine requirements of the industrial workers. Trade unions are also known as labor groups. For example, the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC).

Agrarian Groups:

As the name implies, agrarian groups represent the farmers of India and their demands before the government. The very recent example that can be coded to this group is related to the farm bill brought by the Indian government which was protested by Bhartiya Kisan Union(BKU).

Professional Associations:

The professional associations include some major reputed professionals like the doctors' lawyers, engineers, teachers, and journalists who demand justice or full means of their criteria from the government. For example Indian Medical Association and the Indian Federation of Working Journalists.

Students Organizations:

India has many colleges which promote the elections within the Universities and also promote the student organizations. For example, the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP).

Religious Organizations:

There are certain organizations in India based on religion that play a very important role in Indian politics. Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, Anglo Indian Association, and Jamaat-e-Islami are some very common examples of religious organizations.

Caste Groups:

Like religion, caste has also got a very important place in Indian politics. In fact, most of the rivalries, clashes, and disputes among the groups in various states in India are because of caste-based issues only. For example Kaysth Sabha, Kshatriya Mahasabha, Marwadi Association, etc.

Tribal Organizations:

The tribal organizations are more prominent and active in regions of Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh Madhya Pradesh, and some of the northeast states of India. In order to get their demands fulfilled by the government, these groups at times carry out insurgencies and create disturbances in the areas. For example, United Mezo- Federal Organisation

Linguistic Groups:

India has over 100 types of languages which lead to the formation of different linguistic groups. For example Tamil Sangh, Andhra Mahasabha, and Hindi Sahitya Sammelan.

Ideology-Based Groups:

In recent times ideology-based Pressure Groups are also created which promote their personal ideologies and principles. For example Democratic Rights Organisations and Civil Liberties Associations.

Anomic Groups:

Anomic groups are sort dangerous kinds of groups who are intense to break through the political system and get their demands fulfilled by performing drastic activities like riots, assassinations demonstrations, etc. For example, the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front was headed by Yaseen Malik.

Roles of Pressure Groups

Pressure Groups, as their name goes, are badmouthed for creating nuisance in the society by creating pressure on the government about their demands. However, the pressure groups are not always bad. Pressure groups have a very important role to play in our society and modern political system.

- Pressure groups act as a strong link between the government and the public where it helps to keep the government more responsive to the needs and wishes of the community.
- One of the biggest and most important roles of pressure groups is that they are the voice of commoners and help to express the views of minorities who don't even receive a hearing.
- Pressure groups comprise some experts in their field who provide the government with some relevant information to work for the betterment of society.
- If taken seriously and actively then these pressure groups can also be an alternative source of advice to the government.
- The pressure groups mostly talk about the rights and freedom of the people either in a profession or on legal grounds.

Shortcomings of Pressure Groups

While on one hand, the pressure groups are of significance to the political system, it is also equally demeritorious to the society. Let's see what are the shortcomings of the pressure groups.

- Pressure groups are mostly biased. They prioritize their interests and overlook the essential issues of other people.
- The issues of minorities are sometimes overexaggerated by the Pressure Groups. Representing the minorities is a good cause, but in this propaganda, the various other important issues are sidelined and overlooked.
- Pressure Groups sometimes present offensive opinions before the government. The issues and protests raised by these groups are over-dramatized by the media, hence they distort the public opinions.
- These pressure groups use the method of lobbying for their promotion which leads to primary corruption that is ultimately harmful to the country and its development.
- It is not uncommon for pressure groups to pursue their narrow interest to the detriment of the welfare of the entire population.