

ISRG Journal of Economics, Business & Management (ISRGJEBM)



ISRG PUBLISHERS

Abbreviated Key Title: Isrg J Econ Bus Manag

ISSN: 2584-0916 (Online)

Journal homepage: <https://isrgpublishers.com/isrgjebm/>

Volume – IV Issue - IV (July – August) 2026

Frequency: Bimonthly



PRESSURE GROUPS AS AGENTS OF JUSTICE AND INJUSTICE: A CRITICAL APPLICATION OF SOLOMON ASCH'S CONFORMITY THEORY TO THE JUSTICE SYSTEM

Ven Dr Marcel Emeh

Dept. Of Psychology University on the Niger Umunya Anambra State Nigeria.

| **Received:** 15.08.2026 | **Accepted:** 18.08.2026 | **Published:** 20.08.2026

***Corresponding author:** Ven Dr Marcel Emeh

Abstract

The administration of justice does not occur in a social vacuum. Courts, law-enforcement institutions, governments, and other agencies responsible for justice operate within societies characterized by competing political interests, public opinion, media narratives, religious and ethnic affiliations, civil society activism, professional associations, and organized pressure groups. Solomon Asch's classical conformity experiments demonstrated that individuals may modify an otherwise correct judgment when confronted with a unanimous but incorrect majority. Although Asch's findings provide an important psychological explanation of how group pressure can threaten independent judgment, this article argues that group influence should not be interpreted exclusively as a negative phenomenon. Pressure groups may either undermine or advance justice depending on their objectives, methods, relationship with evidence, and respect for due process. Political intimidation, ethnic solidarity, religious sentiment, economic interests, misinformation, mob action, and trial by public opinion may exert destructive pressure upon justice institutions. Conversely, civil society organizations, human-rights movements, professional bodies, investigative media, community organizations, and peaceful social movements may exert constructive pressure that exposes injustice, promotes accountability, protects marginalized populations, and stimulates institutional reform. Through a critical application of Asch's conformity theory, this article proposes a Dual-Influence Model of Group Pressure and Justice (DIMGPJ), distinguishing constructive pressure from destructive pressure. It argues that a credible justice system must remain responsive to legitimate societal concerns while preserving its independence from coercive group influence. Justice institutions should therefore listen to society without surrendering evidence, law, fairness, and due process to majority opinion.

Keywords: Solomon Asch, conformity, pressure groups, justice system, social influence, judicial independence, social justice, public opinion, group pressure.

INTRODUCTION

Justice is one of the fundamental pillars upon which peaceful, stable, inclusive, and habitable societies are built. Rawls (1971) famously describes justice as “the first virtue of social institutions,” emphasizing its foundational position in the legitimacy of organized society. Similarly, King (1963) warns that “injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere,” underscoring the interconnected consequences of injustice within the social order. From the perspective of peace studies, Galtung (1969) further demonstrates that genuine peace transcends the mere absence of direct violence and requires social conditions capable of addressing structural inequalities and injustice. Sen (2009) likewise directs attention toward the removal of actual injustices experienced by people, while Tyler (2006) demonstrates that perceptions of procedural fairness significantly influence citizens’ trust in legal authorities and their willingness to accept institutional decisions.

Taken together, these perspectives suggest that justice is not merely a function of the courtroom; it is a psychological and social condition for sustainable peace, institutional legitimacy, human dignity, and societal stability. Where justice is perceived to be fair, accessible, impartial, and responsive, citizens are more likely to develop confidence in institutions and pursue grievances through legitimate channels. Conversely, persistent experiences of injustice, discrimination, exclusion, selective accountability, and institutional bias can generate frustration, distrust, alienation, and collective resistance.

Persistent experiences of injustice, discrimination, exclusion, selective accountability, and institutional bias can generate psychological consequences that extend far beyond the individuals immediately affected. Relative Deprivation Theory provides an important explanation of this process. Smith et al. (2012) demonstrate that perceptions of undeserved disadvantage, particularly when accompanied by justice-related emotions such as anger and resentment, are associated with important outcomes including collective action and intergroup attitudes. Similarly, Gurr (1970) argues that perceived discrepancies between people’s legitimate expectations and their actual opportunities can generate frustration and political discontent, while Tajfel and Turner’s Social Identity Theory demonstrates how perceived injustice against one’s social group can transform individual grievances into shared group consciousness. Grant and Brown (1995) further connect collective relative deprivation and threatened social identity with intentions toward collective protest.

The consequences of persistent injustice are equally important for institutional legitimacy. Tyler’s work on procedural justice demonstrates that people’s acceptance of legal and governmental authority depends considerably upon whether institutional procedures are perceived as fair and trustworthy. Thus, where citizens repeatedly encounter selective justice, discrimination, exclusion, or unequal application of the law, dissatisfaction may gradually develop into institutional distrust, psychological alienation, and collective demands for change.

This relationship may therefore be conceptualized as:

Perceived Injustice → Relative Deprivation → Anger and Frustration → Institutional Distrust → Shared Grievance → Group Mobilization → Collective Pressure/Resistance.

However, this progression should not be regarded as automatic or inevitable. Not every experience of injustice produces protest, and

not every protest becomes violent. Rather, social-psychological research suggests that perceived injustice creates important motivational conditions under which collective action becomes more likely, particularly where grievances are shared, group identity is salient, and people believe collective action can produce change.

This provides an important connection with Asch’s theory and the present discussion of pressure groups. Pressure groups may sometimes emerge not merely because individuals desire confrontation, but because accumulated experiences of perceived injustice have transformed private dissatisfaction into a shared social grievance demanding institutional attention. The challenge for a responsive justice system is therefore to address legitimate grievances before frustration, distrust, and alienation become deeply embedded within the social consciousness.

This relationship becomes particularly important in understanding pressure groups. Where formal institutions respond fairly and effectively to legitimate grievances, collective pressure may strengthen accountability and social reform. However, where citizens perceive established institutions as persistently indifferent to injustice, pressure groups may emerge as alternative voices demanding recognition and redress. The challenge for a stable society is therefore to ensure that pressure groups can legitimately call justice to attention without being permitted to substitute collective pressure for evidence, due process, and independent adjudication.

Thus, a truly habitable society requires a delicate equilibrium between justice, institutional independence, social responsiveness, and citizens’ freedom to challenge injustice.

Where citizens believe that justice institutions are fair, independent, accessible, and accountable, confidence in government and social institutions is strengthened. Conversely, where justice is perceived as selective, politically manipulated, ethnically influenced, economically purchased, or socially intimidated, public trust deteriorates.

However, justice does not operate outside society. Judges, police officers, prosecutors, lawyers, legislators, administrators, witnesses, and other actors within the justice system remain members of the same society whose disputes they are required to resolve. They encounter public opinion, political interests, ethnic and religious affiliations, media narratives, professional expectations, family relationships, and institutional pressures.

Consequently, the administration of justice raises an important social-psychological question: To what extent can pressure group influence supposedly independent judgment?

Solomon Asch’s conformity studies provide an important theoretical foundation for examining this question. Asch (1955, 1956) demonstrated experimentally that individuals could sometimes abandon an apparently correct judgment and conform to an incorrect majority position. His findings reveal the psychological power of social consensus and the difficulty individuals may experience when their personal judgment conflicts with the position of a group.

Applied to the justice system, Asch’s findings present an important warning. If human beings can yield to group pressure in relatively simple perceptual tasks, then decisions involving political power, criminal allegations, ethnicity, religion, public anger, economic

interests, institutional loyalty, and personal reputation may be even more susceptible to social influence.

Nevertheless, this article advances an important qualification: pressure group is not inherently inimical to justice.

History demonstrates that organized collective pressure has sometimes awakened institutions that had become indifferent to injustice. Civil-rights campaigns, anti-colonial movements, anti-apartheid struggles, women's rights movements, human-rights organizations, investigative journalism, professional associations, and civil society advocacy have at different times challenged established structures and contributed to legal and institutional reforms.

History and social-movement scholarship demonstrate that organized collective pressure can, under appropriate circumstances, awaken institutions that have become complacent, unresponsive, or indifferent to perceived injustice. Tarrow's analysis of social movements demonstrates how collective action enables citizens, including relatively powerless groups, to challenge established authorities and place previously neglected grievances on the political agenda. Similarly, McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly's submission on contentious politics illustrates the dynamic relationship between organized collective action and institutional or political change.

Andrews and Edwards (2004) further demonstrate that advocacy organizations can influence the political process through agenda-setting, access to decision-making arenas, policy outcomes, monitoring implementation, and reshaping the longer-term priorities of political institutions. Likewise, research on protest and institutional change indicates that collective mobilization can, under particular institutional conditions, contribute to reforms concerning workers' rights, women's political rights, and constraints upon governmental power.

Human-rights advocacy provides another important example. Keck and Sikkink (1998) demonstrate how transnational advocacy networks can mobilize information, international relationships, and accountability pressures to challenge governments where domestic channels of redress are ineffective. Investigative journalism can similarly perform an accountability function by exposing corruption, institutional misconduct, and matters that might otherwise remain concealed from public and official scrutiny.

Civil-rights campaigns, anti-colonial movements, anti-apartheid struggles, women's rights movements, professional associations, human-rights organizations, investigative journalists, and civil society organizations should therefore be understood not merely as sources of pressure upon institutions but, under appropriate conditions, as potential agents of democratic accountability and institutional correction.

However, the existence of collective pressure does not automatically establish the justice or correctness of its demands. Social movements and pressure groups can themselves be mistaken, prejudiced, politically manipulated, or driven by sectional interests. Their positive contribution to justice consequently depends upon the credibility of their evidence, legitimacy of their objectives, peacefulness and legality of their methods, respect for human dignity, and commitment to due process.

This qualification brings the argument directly back to Asch's conformity theory: the psychological power of collective pressure

is neither inherently just nor inherently unjust; its societal value depends substantially upon what the group is pressuring institutions to do and whether that pressure moves society toward or away from truth, fairness, accountability, and justice.

Therefore, the relevant question is not merely whether groups influence justice institutions. The more important question is:

When does pressure group advance justice, and when does it become a threat to justice?

Solomon Asch and the Psychology of Conformity

Asch's classical conformity experiments examined what happens when an individual's judgment conflicts with that of a unanimous majority.

Participants were presented with relatively straightforward visual comparisons involving lines of different lengths. Unknown to the actual participant, other members of the group were confederates who deliberately gave incorrect answers during designated trials. The experiment demonstrated that some participants conformed to the incorrect majority despite the apparent clarity of the correct response (Asch, 1955, 1956).

The significance of Asch's research extends beyond line judgments. It demonstrates a broader psychological reality: individuals do not always make decisions exclusively on the basis of what they personally perceive to be correct. Social acceptance, fear of isolation, confidence in others, uncertainty, status differences, and group consensus can influence judgment.

This creates a tension between:

Independent Judgment

and

Social Conformity.

Within a justice system, that tension can become consequential. A public official may know that a politically popular action violates procedure but fear opposing powerful interests. A member of an investigative panel may interpret evidence differently but hesitate to challenge colleagues. A community leader may know that an accusation has not been established but conform to popular sentiment. A judicial officer may encounter enormous public pressure demanding a particular outcome.

Asch therefore provides a useful psychological lens for examining the relationship between social pressure and justice.

Understanding Pressure Groups

Pressure groups are organized or semi-organized groups that seek to influence public policy, institutional behaviour, political decisions, or social outcomes without necessarily seeking direct control of government.

They may include civil society organizations, professional associations, labour organizations, religious bodies, business associations, community organizations, student movements, human-rights organizations, advocacy networks, media organizations, and informal social movements.

Pressure groups are neither automatically good nor inherently dangerous.

Pressure groups may broadly be understood as organized groups of individuals who share particular interests, values, concerns, or

objectives and seek to influence government policies, institutional decisions, legislation, or public opinion without necessarily seeking direct control of government. Unlike political parties, whose principal objective is ordinarily to acquire governmental power through elections, pressure groups primarily seek to influence those who exercise power and make public decisions.

This definition is important because it demonstrates that the concept of a pressure group is, in itself, value-neutral. A pressure group cannot reasonably be classified as good or bad merely because it attempts to influence decision-makers. Its societal value depends upon what it seeks to achieve, whose interests it represents, the methods it employs, the evidence supporting its claims, and whether its activities strengthen or undermine justice, democracy, human dignity, and the common good.

Pressure groups may include professional associations, labour unions, business organizations, religious bodies, student organizations, women's groups, human-rights organizations, environmental movements, community associations, civil society organizations, media advocacy networks, and other organized interests. These groups may legitimately provide citizens with channels through which they articulate concerns that governments and established institutions might otherwise neglect.

In this positive sense, pressure groups can function as agents of democratic participation and institutional accountability. They may draw attention to corruption, discrimination, environmental degradation, human-rights violations, poor working conditions, gender inequality, institutional failures, or policies that disproportionately disadvantage vulnerable populations. Through peaceful advocacy, research, litigation, petitions, public enlightenment, demonstrations, media engagement, and dialogue with policymakers, pressure groups can help institutions recognize problems and initiate necessary reforms.

For example, when a human-rights organization demands an impartial investigation into alleged abuse, its pressure may strengthen justice rather than undermine it. When a professional association challenges falling professional standards, it may promote institutional integrity. When environmental groups call attention to pollution that threatens communities, their advocacy may advance public welfare. Similarly, when citizens peacefully organize against discriminatory policies, collective pressure can become an instrument through which previously marginalized voices enter public decision-making.

However, the same capacity to influence institutions can also be employed negatively.

A pressure group may pursue narrow economic, political, ethnic, religious, sectional, or personal interests at the expense of wider society. Wealthy or politically connected groups may attempt to secure policies favourable to themselves while transferring costs to less powerful citizens. Ethnic or religious groups may pressure institutions to favour their members irrespective of merit or evidence. Political groups may attempt to intimidate justice institutions into pursuing opponents or protecting allies. Business interests may seek regulations that preserve monopolies rather than protect consumers.

Pressure therefore becomes dangerous when influence turns into intimidation, advocacy becomes manipulation, solidarity becomes prejudice, lobbying becomes corruption, and legitimate demand for justice becomes an attempt to predetermine judicial outcomes.

This distinction is especially important in relation to Solomon Asch's conformity theory. Asch's research demonstrates the psychological power that groups can exercise over individual judgment. However, the existence of group influence does not itself establish whether that influence is beneficial or harmful.

A group may pressure an individual to participate in wrongdoing.

Another group may pressure an institution to stop wrongdoing.

A group may demand discriminatory treatment.

Another may mobilize against discrimination.

A group may attempt to prevent the prosecution of an influential member.

Another may demand that nobody be placed above the law.

Thus, the central problem is not simply pressure group, but the direction, content, methods, and consequences of that pressure.

This distinction allows pressure groups to be understood through two broad pathways:

Constructive Pressure:

Legitimate Grievance → Evidence-Based Advocacy → Peaceful Mobilization → Institutional Attention → Accountability → Reform → Strengthened Justice.

Destructive Pressure:

Sectional Interest → Manipulation/Misinformation → Emotional Mobilization → Intimidation → Institutional Compromise → Unfair Advantage or Unjust Outcome → Erosion of Public Trust.

Pressure groups should therefore not be evaluated merely according to the popularity of their causes or the numerical strength of their supporters. A large group can advocate injustice, while a small minority can defend an important principle of justice. This is precisely where Asch's conformity theory becomes relevant: numerical majority should never automatically be equated with moral correctness or factual truth.

Accordingly, the legitimacy of pressure-group activity should be evaluated according to several fundamental questions: Is its demand supported by credible evidence? Does it respect the law and human dignity? Are its methods peaceful and transparent? Does it respect due process? Does it seek justice for society or preferential treatment for

its members? Does it permit contrary opinions? Does it strengthen institutional accountability without destroying institutional independence?

The argument can therefore be summarized in the following proposition:

Pressure groups are neither automatically good nor inherently dangerous because social pressure is fundamentally an instrument of influence. Its value depends upon the purpose for which that influence is exercised, the methods through which it is pursued, and whether its consequences advance or undermine justice, fairness, institutional integrity, human dignity, and the common good.

Within the context of Asch's conformity theory, therefore, a psychologically mature society should neither suppress pressure groups nor surrender blindly to them. It should protect citizens' legitimate freedom to organize, advocate, criticize, and demand

accountability while simultaneously protecting justice institutions from intimidation, manipulation, misinformation, and prejudicial interference.

The democratic balance may consequently be expressed simply:

Pressure groups should have the freedom to demand justice, but they should never possess the power to dictate justice.

Their proper role is to **awaken, inform, challenge, and hold institutions accountable—not to replace evidence, due process, or independent judgment.**

Their social value depends considerably upon their objectives, methods, respect for human rights, relationship with factual evidence, and commitment to peaceful and lawful processes.

This distinction is particularly important when applying Asch's theory.

The Negative Influence of Pressure Groups on Justice

Asch's theory becomes especially relevant when pressure groups attempt to substitute collective demands for independent legal judgment.

Political Pressure

Political actors may attempt to influence investigations, prosecutions, appointments, or judicial decisions. Where justice officials fear political retaliation, career consequences, removal from office, or loss of institutional support, conformity pressure may become powerful.

Justice then risks becoming an instrument of political convenience rather than an impartial institution.

Ethnic and Religious Pressure

In plural societies, allegations involving members of particular ethnic or religious communities can generate collective solidarity.

There is nothing inherently wrong with communities defending the rights of their members. The danger arises when identity becomes more important than evidence.

When people reason that *"he is one of us; therefore, he cannot be guilty,"* or conversely, *"he belongs to the other group; therefore, he must be guilty,"* social identity has displaced justice.

The danger of social identity influencing justice becomes particularly evident when membership of a political, ethnic, religious, or other social group begins to determine how society evaluates the behaviour of individuals. When people reason that *"he is one of us; therefore, he cannot be guilty,"* or conversely, *"he belongs to the other group;*

therefore, he must be guilty," social identity has displaced objective justice.

Tajfel and Turner's Social Identity Theory provides an important psychological framework for understanding this phenomenon. Individuals derive aspects of their self-concept from membership of social groups and may consequently distinguish between the in-group ("us") and the out-group ("them"). Although group identification is not inherently problematic, it becomes dangerous to justice when loyalty to one's group produces differential moral, political, or institutional standards for members and non-members.

A useful Nigerian political illustration can be drawn from a widely reported statement made by Adams Oshiomhole in January 2019,

while serving as National Chairman of the All Progressives Congress (APC). While welcoming politicians defecting from the opposition Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) into the APC at a campaign rally in Benin, Oshiomhole remarked that "once you join APC, all your sins are forgiven." The statement should not be interpreted literally as a declaration that criminal offences would legally disappear upon joining a political party; rather, within the present social-psychological discussion, it provides a useful metaphor for examining the dangers of in-group favouritism and shifting moral evaluation following changes in group membership.

From the perspective of Social Identity Theory, an important psychological question arises: Why should the evaluation of a person's conduct change merely because the person's group identity has changed?

If an individual is regarded as corrupt, incompetent, immoral, or unacceptable while belonging to an opposing political group but suddenly becomes celebrated, defended, or morally rehabilitated after joining one's own group, then the evidence concerning the individual's behaviour may not have changed; what has changed is the individual's social categorization—from "them" to "us."

Such reasoning represents a serious danger to justice and institutional accountability.

This same principle applies beyond political parties. If allegations against a person are condemned when the individual belongs to another ethnic group but excused when the accused is a kinsman; if wrongdoing is condemned in another religious organization but rationalized when committed within one's own; or if corruption is unacceptable when committed by political opponents but defended when allegations concern political allies, then society gradually develops identity-dependent morality.

Justice cannot flourish under such conditions.

The psychological sequence may be represented as:

Group Identification → In-Group Attachment → Preferential Interpretation → Rationalization of In-Group Misconduct → Selective Accountability → Institutional Distrust → Weakening of Justice.

The alternative should be:

Shared Standards → Evidence-Based Evaluation → Equal Accountability → Institutional Credibility → Public Trust → Social Justice.

This analysis also strengthens the application of Solomon Asch's conformity theory. Members of political, ethnic, religious, professional, or community groups may experience pressure to defend the prevailing position of their group even where their private judgment suggests otherwise. An individual may recognize wrongdoing but remain silent because condemning a fellow group member risks being interpreted as betrayal.

Consequently, conformity and social identity can interact dangerously: social identity determines who is regarded as "one of us," while conformity pressure encourages members to defend the collective position of "us."

A credible justice system must break this psychological cycle.

Justice must ask neither "Which party does the accused belong to?", "Which ethnic group is he from?", "What religion does she profess?", nor "Is this person politically connected to us?" Its

fundamental questions must remain: What happened? What does the evidence establish? What does the law provide? And has the same standard been applied fairly to everyone?

The principle can therefore be summarized:

“When group membership determines whether wrongdoing is condemned or excused, justice ceases to be impartial and becomes an instrument of social identity.”

For sustainable national development, political parties and other social institutions must therefore cultivate a culture in which loyalty does not mean defending wrongdoing. Indeed, genuine loyalty to an institution should include the courage to correct its members when their conduct threatens its values and credibility.

A psychologically mature democracy should consequently move from “right or wrong, he is one of us” toward “whether friend or opponent, the same standard of justice must apply.”

Only when evidence becomes stronger than affiliation, principle stronger than partisanship, and justice stronger than in-group loyalty can institutions develop the credibility necessary for national unity, public trust, and sustainable societal transformation.

Economic and Elite Pressure

Powerful individuals and corporations may possess financial and social resources capable of influencing institutions.

Where wealth determines access, protection, investigation, or legal outcomes, citizens may conclude that justice has different standards for different social classes.

Mob Pressure

Perhaps the most dangerous manifestation of destructive conformity is mob justice.

A crowd may become convinced that a suspected individual is guilty without investigation or trial. Individuals who might never commit violence independently can become participants when surrounded by a group demanding punishment.

Here, Asch's central insight becomes particularly relevant: the presence of a confident majority can weaken independent judgment.

Social Media and Trial by Public Opinion

Digital communication has created a new environment for conformity.

An accusation can become viral before authorities establish the facts. Thousands of people may repeat an allegation, creating an appearance of certainty.

But repetition does not transform allegation into evidence.

A justice system must therefore remember that:

Popularity is not proof, virality is not evidence, and public anger is not a judicial verdict.

Pressure Groups as Positive Agents of Justice

A critical application of Asch requires recognition that collective influence can also produce socially beneficial outcomes.

Sometimes institutions themselves conform to corruption, discrimination, silence, or established injustice. Under such

circumstances, pressure from society may become necessary to challenge institutional conformity.

Civil Society and Accountability

Civil society organizations can expose abuses of power, demand transparency, monitor government institutions, advocate reforms, and protect vulnerable populations.

Such pressure can strengthen rather than undermine justice.

Human-Rights Advocacy

Human-rights organizations have historically brought attention to abuses that powerful institutions might otherwise ignore.

They may give visibility to individuals whose voices lack political or economic power.

In this situation, pressure becomes an instrument for making justice institutions more responsive to human dignity.

Investigative Journalism

Responsible investigative journalism can uncover corruption, institutional misconduct, human-rights abuses, and failures of accountability.

However, journalism strengthens justice when it investigates and informs rather than pronounces guilt without due process.

Professional Associations

Lawyers, academics, medical professionals, psychologists, religious organizations, labour unions, and other professional bodies may use collective influence to challenge injustice and promote ethical standards.

Professional pressure can therefore become an important mechanism of institutional accountability.

Peaceful Social Movements

History demonstrates that laws and institutions sometimes change because citizens collectively refuse to normalize injustice.

Anti-slavery campaigns, civil-rights movements, anti-colonial struggles, anti-apartheid campaigns, women's rights advocacy, and democratic reform movements illustrate circumstances in which collective pressure contributed to societal transformation.

Therefore, not all resistance to established authority constitutes destructive conformity; sometimes collective resistance becomes the conscience of society.

A Critical Reconsideration of Asch's Theory

Asch convincingly demonstrated that majority influence can affect individual judgment. However, applying his theory to complex social institutions requires a broader interpretation.

The original experimental situation largely positioned conformity as movement away from an objectively correct answer toward an incorrect majority response.

Real societies are considerably more complex.

Sometimes the individual is correct and the group is wrong.

Sometimes the group is correct and the individual is wrong.

Sometimes both possess incomplete information.

And sometimes the established institution itself represents the dominant conformist position that requires challenge.

This produces an important criticism of any simplistic application of Asch:

Conformity itself does not determine whether an action is morally or socially right. The content, evidence, consequences, and ethical foundations of what people are conforming to must also be examined.

A citizen conforming to ethnic hatred may strengthen injustice.

A citizen joining collective resistance against ethnic discrimination may strengthen justice.

A public official conforming to corrupt institutional culture may perpetuate wrongdoing.

A group of officials collectively adopting transparent procedures may normalize integrity.

Therefore, social influence should be evaluated not merely according to its strength but according to its direction and ethical consequences.

The Dual-Influence Model of Group Pressure and Justice (DIMGPJ)

Based on this critical application of Asch, this article proposes a Dual-Influence Model of Group Pressure and Justice (DIMGPJ).

The model argues that group pressure can operate through two major pathways.

Constructive Group Pressure

Social Concern → Collective Mobilization → Evidence-Based Advocacy → Institutional Attention → Due Process → Accountability/Reform → Strengthened Justice.

Destructive Group Pressure

Group Interest → Emotional Mobilization/Manipulation → Prejudice or Misinformation → Institutional Intimidation → Compromised Independence → Unjust Outcome → Erosion of Public Trust.

The distinguishing factor is therefore not simply whether pressure exists.

The critical considerations are:

What is being demanded?

What evidence supports the demand?

How is the pressure being exercised?

Does it respect due process?

Does it protect human dignity?

Does it strengthen or compromise institutional independence?

Judicial Independence and Social Responsiveness

The relationship between justice institutions and society should not be understood as a choice between total isolation and total submission.

Courts and justice institutions cannot become completely detached from legitimate societal concerns. Neither should they become instruments of public sentiment.

The required balance may be summarized as:

Listen without surrendering.

Justice institutions should hear victims.

They should recognize legitimate grievances.

They should respond to evidence of systemic injustice.

They should remain accountable to constitutional and ethical standards.

But decisions concerning individual guilt, innocence, liability, or punishment must ultimately depend upon law, evidence, fairness, and due process rather than popularity.

Pressure Groups as the Conscience of Society

Where institutions become complacent, collective social pressure can perform an important corrective function.

A society in which nobody questions injustice may gradually normalize injustice.

Pressure groups can therefore serve as societal alarm systems. They draw attention to conditions that institutions may have ignored.

However, an alarm alerts; it does not adjudicate.

This distinction is fundamental.

Pressure groups may legitimately demand:

“Investigate this matter.”

They may demand:

“Do not ignore these victims.”

They may insist:

“Apply the law equally.”

But pressure becomes problematic when it demands:

“Convict this individual regardless of what the evidence establishes.”

Thus, constructive pressure **calls justice into action without dictating the outcome of justice.**

Recommendations

Justice institutions should establish strong safeguards protecting judicial, investigative, and prosecutorial independence from political, economic, ethnic, religious, and other inappropriate influences.

At the same time, governments should protect legitimate civil society advocacy, peaceful protest, investigative journalism, professional criticism, rule of law, and responsible public participation.

Media organizations and social-media users should distinguish advocacy from adjudication. Public allegations should not automatically become declarations of guilt.

Pressure groups should ground advocacy in credible information, peaceful methods, respect for human dignity, and commitment to due process.

Judges, investigators, public officials, and institutional leaders should also receive greater education concerning conformity, group

influence, social identity, groupthink, and psychological pressures upon decision-making.

Most importantly, society should develop a culture in which independent thought and constructive dissent are regarded as protections for justice rather than acts of disloyalty.

Conclusion

Solomon Asch's conformity research provides an enduring psychological explanation of the power groups can exercise over individual judgment. Applied to the justice system, his findings warn that political pressure, ethnic solidarity, religious sentiment, economic influence, mob behaviour, media narratives, and public opinion can compromise independent judgment.

Yet the relationship between group pressure and justice is not entirely negative.

Pressure groups can expose corruption, challenge discrimination, defend human rights, awaken complacent institutions, amplify marginalized voices, and stimulate legal and institutional reform.

The critical issue therefore is not whether society should exert pressure upon institutions, but what kind of pressure society exerts, by what means, and toward what end.

The central proposition of this article is consequently:

“Pressure groups become agents of justice when they awaken institutions to evidence, accountability, equality, and human dignity; they become agents of injustice when they pressure institutions to abandon evidence, fairness, independence, and due process.”

A psychologically mature justice system must therefore achieve an important balance:

Society must possess the freedom to demand justice, while justice institutions must possess the independence to determine justice.

Asch's theory consequently leaves contemporary society with a profound lesson. Majority influence is powerful, but majority opinion is not synonymous with truth. Equally, individual independence is important, but institutional independence must never become an excuse for indifference to legitimate social injustice.

The challenge is therefore neither blind conformity nor blind resistance, but the development of a society in which collective voices awaken justice while evidence, law, fairness, and human dignity ultimately guide its administration.

REFERENCES

1. Andrews, K. T., & Edwards, B. (2004). Advocacy organizations in the U.S. political process. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 30, 479–506. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.30.012703.110542>
2. Asch, S. E. (1951). Effects of group pressure upon the modification and distortion of judgments. In H. Guetzkow (Ed.), *Groups, leadership and men: Research in human relations* (pp. 177–190). Carnegie Press.
3. Asch, S. E. (1952). *Social psychology*. Prentice-Hall.
4. Asch, S. E. (1955). Opinions and social pressure. *Scientific American*, 193(5), 31–35.
5. Asch, S. E. (1956). Studies of independence and conformity: I. A minority of one against a unanimous majority. *Psychological Monographs: General and Applied*, 70(9), 1–70. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0093718>
6. Cialdini, R. B., & Goldstein, N. J. (2004). Social influence: Compliance and conformity. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 55, 591–621. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.55.090902.142015>
7. Deutsch, M., & Gerard, H. B. (1955). A study of normative and informational social influences upon individual judgment. *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 51(3), 629–636. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0046408>
8. Festinger, L. (1954). A theory of social comparison processes. *Human Relations*, 7(2), 117–140. <https://doi.org/10.1177/001872675400700202>
9. Galtung, J. (1969). Violence, peace, and peace research. *Journal of Peace Research*, 6(3), 167–191. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002234336900600301>
10. Grant, P. R., & Brown, R. (1995). From ethnocentrism to collective protest: Responses to relative deprivation and threats to social identity. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 58(3), 195–211. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2787042>
11. Gurr, T. R. (1970). *Why men rebel*. Princeton University Press.
12. Hargrave, T. J., & Van de Ven, A. H. (2006). A collective action model of institutional innovation. *Academy of Management Review*, 31(4), 864–888. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2006.22527458>
13. Hogg, M. A. (2001). A social identity theory of leadership. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 5(3), 184–200. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327957PSPR0503_1
14. Janis, I. L. (1982). *Groupthink: Psychological studies of policy decisions and fiascoes* (2nd ed.). Houghton Mifflin.
15. Keck, M. E., & Sikkink, K. (1998). *Activists beyond borders: Advocacy networks in international politics*. Cornell University Press.
16. King, M. L., Jr. (1963). *Letter from Birmingham Jail*.
17. Levine, J. M. (1999). Solomon Asch's legacy for group research. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 3(4), 358–364. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327957pspr0304_5
18. McAdam, D. (1982). *Political process and the development of Black insurgency, 1930–1970*. University of Chicago Press.
19. McAdam, D., McCarthy, J. D., & Zald, M. N. (Eds.). (1996). *Comparative perspectives on social movements: Political opportunities, mobilizing structures, and cultural framings*. Cambridge University Press.
20. McAdam, D., Tarrow, S., & Tilly, C. (2001). *Dynamics of contention*. Cambridge University Press.
21. Moscovici, S. (1976). *Social influence and social change*. Academic Press.
22. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2018). *The role of the media and investigative journalism in combating corruption*. OECD Publishing.
23. Rawls, J. (1971). *A theory of justice*. Harvard University Press.
24. Sen, A. (2009). *The idea of justice*. Harvard University Press.

25. Sherif, M. (1936). *The psychology of social norms*. Harper & Brothers.
26. Smith, H. J., Pettigrew, T. F., Pippin, G. M., & Bialosiewicz, S. (2012). Relative deprivation: A theoretical and meta-analytic review. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 16(3), 203–232. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1088868311430825>
27. Tajfel, H. (1978). *Differentiation between social groups: Studies in the social psychology of intergroup relations*. Academic Press.
28. Tajfel, H. (1981). *Human groups and social categories: Studies in social psychology*. Cambridge University Press.
29. Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In W. G. Austin & S. Worchel (Eds.), *The social psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 33–47). Brooks/Cole.
30. Tarrow, S. G. (2011). *Power in movement: Social movements and contentious politics* (3rd ed.). Cambridge University Press.
31. Tilly, C. (1978). *From mobilization to revolution*. Addison-Wesley.
32. Turner, J. C. (1991). *Social influence*. Open University Press.
33. Turner, J. C., Hogg, M. A., Oakes, P. J., Reicher, S. D., & Wetherell, M. S. (1987). *Rediscovering the social group: A self-categorization theory*. Basil Blackwell.
34. Tyler, T. R. (2006). *Why people obey the law*. Princeton University Press.
35. Tyler, T. R. (2007). Procedural justice and the courts. *Court Review*, 44(1–2), 26–31.
36. Tyler, T. R., & Huo, Y. J. (2002). *Trust in the law: Encouraging public cooperation with the police and courts*. Russell Sage Foundation.
37. Walker, I., & Pettigrew, T. F. (1984). Relative deprivation theory: An overview and conceptual critique. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 23(4), 301–310. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2044-8309.1984.tb00645.x>
38. World Bank. (2017). *World development report 2017: Governance and the law*. World Bank.
39. Awojulgbe, O. (2019, January 17). Oshiomhole: Once you join APC, all your sins are forgiven. *TheCable*.
40. Amenta, E., Caren, N., Chiarello, E., & Su, Y. (2010). The political consequences of social movements. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 36, 287–307. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-070308-120029>
41. Benford, R. D., & Snow, D. A. (2000). Framing processes and social movements: An overview and assessment. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 26, 611–639. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.26.1.611>
42. Drury, J., & Reicher, S. (2000). Collective action and psychological change: The emergence of new social identities. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 39(4), 579–604. <https://doi.org/10.1348/014466600164642>
43. Gamson, W. A. (1992). *Talking politics*. Cambridge University Press.
44. Klandermans, B. (1997). *The social psychology of protest*. Blackwell.
45. Olson, M. (1965). *The logic of collective action: Public goods and the theory of groups*. Harvard University Press.
46. Simon, B., & Klandermans, B. (2001). Politicized collective identity: A social psychological analysis. *American Psychologist*, 56(4), 319–331. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.56.4.319>
47. Van Zomeren, M., Postmes, T., & Spears, R. (2008). Toward an integrative social identity model of collective action: A quantitative research synthesis of three socio-psychological perspectives. *Psychological Bulletin*, 134(4), 504–535. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.134.4.504>
48. Van Zomeren, M., Spears, R., Fischer, A. H., & Leach, C. W. (2004). Put your money where your mouth is! Explaining collective action tendencies through group-based anger and group efficacy. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 87(5), 649–664. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.87.5.649>