

POL 101 (Power, Influence, Authority and Legitimacy)

Power: This is the possibility of imposing one's will upon the behaviour of other persons. It is the process of affecting the policies of others with the severe deprivation for non-conformity with the policies (Robert Dahl; Herbert Goldhamer and Edward A. Shills).

It is relational i.e. it exists when two or more people have a form of contact. Thus, exercise of power by an individual makes another individual does what he would not ordinarily have done.

It involves the use of sanctions, coercion and physical force.

Types of Power

- **Coercive Power:** This is where the leader can exercise physical force to sanction or punish the people for non-compliance. For example, threat of suspending any warring country membership in the international organisation is an exercise of the coercive power.

- **Legitimate Power:** This is where the power holder has the right to influence and obtain obedience from the people or subordinate, and on the other hand the people have the obligation to obey.
- This is used where the people believe and take orders from a person because of his position.

Reward Power: This is the power the power holder possesses over the followers as a result of his resources to accrue as benefits to the followers or the target population. It is attained by the promise and ability to give rewards to others.

- **Referent Power:** This is the form of power that makes the followers do as the leader bids because they believe in what the leader does.
- People who are liked, respected and whom others desire to emulate due to some qualities they possess, have referent power.

- **Expert Power:** This is based on the belief that the followers obey the power holder or the leader because they feel that he has monopoly over certain knowledge or skill. The greater a person's knowledge or specialized skill is, the greater her potential for expert power.

Influence

It is defined as a relationship among actors such that the wants, desires, preference or intention of one or more actors affect the actions of one or more other actors.

The exercise of influence is devoid of the use of sanctions. Influence can be either coercive or reliable.

Coercive influence involves the threat or expectation of sanctions while reliable influence refers to a situation where there is high level of compliance.

- **Forms of Influence**

Manifest Influence: This is a situation whereby an actor's behaviour is known clearly by others and noticeable to others. It is a situation where actor B is able to anticipate and know clearly what actor A wants.

For example, if the Nigerian Labour Congress refuses to go to work as a result of its demands for an increase in salary from the government, and government tends to implement the NLC demands, then NLC has exerted influence on the Nigerian government.

- **Implicit Influence:** This is a situation whereby the actor's behaviour is not being directly expressed.

- For example, if a state governor wishes to be re-elected for a second term, his present conduct regarding good governance and meticulous spending of state's funds will be guided by the implicit influence of voter's to vote him or vote him out.

Authority

This is the quality of being able to get people to do things because the individual or group has the right to tell them what to do.

It is the right of an individual to act.

Max Weber Classification of Authority

Traditional Authority: It is based on inherited positions as supported by the customs, norms and belief of the people. It justifies the power of kings, chiefs and other traditional leaders in Africa.

Charismatic Authority: This is based on the right to rule based on individual's possession of extra-ordinary abilities, personality, character, gifts etc.

People are drawn to obey individual on the strength of their uncommon traits. Examples are Mahatma Gandhi of India, Barack Obama

- **Legal-rational Authority:** This is based on the right to rule that is derived from established rules and agreed procedure. Individual right to rule and to command obedience is derived from existing laws, rules, regulations and policy decision of the state.

Legitimacy

This has to do with the acceptance of the right of an individual or group of people to rule by others within a particular community or society. It denotes the belief in the rightness of an individual to make authoritative and binding decisions.

- It refers to an attitude in people mind that the government role is rightful. Government is legitimate when its rules and decisions are respected and obeyed.