

UNDERSTANDING PRESSURE GROUPS

To mount pressure is to persuade someone or coerce the person into doing something. This makes a pressure group a formal or organized body with a common interest whose fundamental aim is to put pressure on any governmental institution with the goal of influencing government policies and laws to its own advantage. A pressure group promotes its interest regarding an issue; it seeks to influence government policies and decisions. For example, the Nigerian Bar Association represent the lawyers and solicitors, while Nigerian Medical Association represents doctors' interests. There is also the Academic Staff Union of Universities which champion the interest of academics and conditions of learning in Nigeria universities. Some other examples of pressure groups in Nigeria are: Afenifere, Oodua People's Congress (representing the Yoruba tribe), the Arewa Consultative Forum, Arewa People's Congress (representing the Hausa tribe), Christain Association of Nigeria (CAN), Nigeria Labor Congress, etc.

TYPES OF PRESSURE GROUPS

- Interest groups
- Cause groups
- Insider and outsider groups
- Anomic groups
- Associational and Non-associational

FUNCTIONS OF PRESSURE GROUPS

- Links government to the people
- Promotes participation in government
- Promotion of interest on the minority
- Serving as sources of information to the government
- Curtailing of dictatorial tendencies
- Influencing legislation

PRESSURE GROUPS LOBBYING

Pressure groups may adopt a variety of strategies to achieve their goals including lobbying elected officials, media advocacy and direct political action. Clearly, some pressure groups exert more influence than others. The degree to which such groups are able to achieve their goals may depend on their ability to be recognized as legitimate by their population, media and by those in power. For example, civil rights groups, trade unions and professional associations are more widely recognized and accepted than newly formed pressure groups or single issued pressure groups.