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IN TWO PAGES, SUMMARISE CHAPTERS 15 “AN OVERVIEW OF THE IDEA OF PRESSURE GROUPS” IN SALIENT ISSUES IN GOVERNMENT AND NIGERIA’S POLITICS BY TEMIDAYO DAVID OLADIPO AND IDOWU OLUSEYI OLALEYE.

WHAT PRESSURE GROUP IS ALL ABOUT

A pressure group is a formal body with a common interest whose fundamental aim is to put pressure on any governmental institution with the common goal of influencing or changing government policies and laws to its own advantages. The main idea is to represent different sectors of the society through their functions, usually done through their occupations. Examples of pressure groups are the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) which represents lawyers and solicitors, Nigerian Medical Association (NMA) which represents the medical practitioners, Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) which represents the academic and the educational condition of public universities in Nigeria, etc. There are five types of pressure groups mentioned classified based on the structure of exerting pressure and also by its purposes. They are;

**INTEREST GROUPS:** These type of groups are also called sectional groups, representing the society in itself. E.g trade units for instance such as the Convention on Business Integration (CBI).

**CAUSE GROUPS:** these groups are also known as promotional groups. They seek to promote particular causes. E.g the Amnesty International which campaigns of the need to end human right abuses, any group which champion social movement and is aimed at achieving at a single objective, even if it lacks formal structure is also seen as a cause group.

 **INSIDER AND OUTSIDER GROUPS**: Insider groups are regularly consulted by the government, and they have regular access to ministers and legislators. The Nigerian Bar Association is an example of these sort of groups. While on the other hand, outside groups have no access or links to the government and its machineries. They have to use other ways to impact on the government. Examples are the Animal Liberation front which fights for the rights of animals amongst others. These groups are usually radical in nature because they are mostly denied by the government. There are other types mentioned in the book such as Anomic groups, the Associational groups and Non-Associational groups.

There are many functions carried out by pressure groups which are;

1. Helps link government to the people

2. Helps to curtail dictatorial tendencies

3. Promotes interests of the minority

4. Helps to influence legislation amongst others.

5. Acts as a checkmate to make democracy better

6. Informs debates among citizens, etc

There also known benefits of this organization along with its disadvantages. For instance in the situation where pressure groups remain rigid thereby refusing to compromise, they risk a potential monopoly of the democratic process by focusing public debate on just a specific set of issues. Also in the case whereby a pressure group has selfish interests, it can mount pressure on the change of government policies not minding its limited resources. An example is whenever the Nigerian Medical Association (NMA) goes on strike pushing stakeholders and insist on the government accommodating their requests. It can result in incapacitated government due to shortage of resources and suffering citizens.

Pressure groups are said to be very similar and basically be the same thing as Political parties but this book has highlighted some differences in both organizations as well as a few similarities. The differences between pressure groups and political parties lie in the activities of each organization such as; political parties seek to control government while pressure groups seek to influence the decisions of the government; political parties have a wide range of policies while pressure groups have narrowed goals; political parties are held accountable for their actions once voted into power, but pressure groups cannot be held accountable for their actions; also political groups are more formal than pressure groups. Some similarities were the interaction between both to achieve certain social changes and the fact that pressure groups may align their interests with a political party capable of furthering their interests.

Pressure groups use different ways to achieve and get their goals, but the book focuses on the use of lobbying. This is the practice of actively trying to influence the legislation in one’s favor. Pressure groups can all find one way or another to exert pressure but obviously some pressure groups exert more pressure than the other one. This might be because of the legitimacy attached to such pressure groups by the people, media, and by those in power. For example civil rights group, trade unions and professional associations are more widely recognized and accepted by newer groups or single-issue pressure group.