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A 2- PAGE REVIEW OF “AN OVERVIEW OF THE IDEA OF PRESSURE GROUP” IN SALIENT ISSUES IN GOVERNMENT AND NIGERIA POLITICS.

Pressure group is a formal and 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. It can also be regarded to as “The Functional Representative” meaning that various pressure groups is based on their functions in the society, can be done based on their occupations e. g Nigeria Medical Association(NMA) that represents doctors interest, Academic Staff Union of Universities(ASUU) deals with the interests of academics and condition of learning in Nigerian Universities .

Anifowose (1990) describes pressure group as“ interest groups, lobby groups or even protest groups”. Pressure groups seek to ensure that the government does their biddings through the right means and channels. They can also determine the political structure of a society and forms of government. T his groups could be religious, business like, educational, gender sensitive, ethnic oriented, or social, among others. Examples: Oodua People’s Congress (representing the Yoruba tribe), Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Nigeria Labor Congress (NLC).

Pressure groups and Political parties look similar but are different. Firstly, Political parties seek to gain power while pressure groups do not rather they aim to influence political decisions. Secondly, Political parties have a range of policies while Pressure groups narrow down their goals. Thirdly, pressure groups are not accountable for their actions while political parties are. Also, political parties are more organized than pressure groups. Despite all this differences, they are still similar in a way because they relate well to achieve certain social changes. Pressure groups may align themselves with certain political parties that are perceived to be able to further their interests.

Pressure groups exist to checkmate and make democracy better, to treat the gaps in democracy, to encourage participation and enhance accountability in our society. However, problems may occur when the pressure groups are dominated by a set of people who become overly influential. In democracy, there has to be compromise from both parties in other to achieve a common goal. Sometimes, due to selfish interests of the pressure groups, pressure is mounted to alter the direction of government decisions not considering the limited resources available.

TYPES OF PRESSURE GROUPS

Interest groups: They are sectional groups representing the people in the society. E. g Trade units like CBI (Confederation of Business Integration) known for their relation to the business in the Nigeria.

Cause groups: They are promotion groups that promote a particular cause. They champion social movements even without a formal structure E. g Amnesty International that campaigns for the need to end human abuses. It is always aimed at achieving a single objective.

Insider and outsider groups: Insider groups are regularly consulted by the Government E. g The Nigeria Bar Association. However, an outsider group intend to influence government missions and visions through other means because they don’t have access to government and its machineries. E. g The Animal Liberation Front, that deals with rights for animals. This group are radical in nature because they are mostly denied by the government.

Anomic groups: They have unpredictable actions and behavior as they work based on the situations in the society. They are not well guided so they can be violent by protesting, rioting, strikes and sometimes revolution.

Associational Groups and Non associational groups: Associational groups are registered with the appropriate authorities in a state or country having their own offices, constitutions and so on while non associational groups are pressure groups without a formal organization, their arrangement is by virtue of kinship or family attachments, tribes, race and so on.

FUNCTIONS OF PRESSURE GROUPS

Links Government to the people: Pressure group stay up to date on relevant information and sensitize the people on the matter and also relates to the government what the opinion of the people is.

Promotes participation in Government: some group engage in demonstrations and other measures to put their views across to the government therefore promoting political participation and carries citizenry along.

Curtailing of Dictatorial Tendencies: Pressure groups criticize government policies ensuring that government do not perpetuate themselves in power drifting into dictatorship.

Promotion of the Interest of the Minority: Pressure groups champion the rights of the under privileged especially promotional groups. They ensure that the interests of minority groups, they serve as watchdogs on the government.

Influencing Legislation: They are instrumental in the mounting pressure on government so they can benefit citizens. They put pressure on the government to influence its policy, change a policy direction, withdraw a policy entirely if it doesn’t favor their citizenry.