

An Overview of the Idea of Pressure Groups

Pressure groups are formal or organized group with a common interest whose fundamental aim is to put pressure on the government institution with the goal of influencing government policies and laws to its advantage. Pressure groups are known as functional representatives because they represent different sectors of the society based on their functions. This is usually done through their occupation or profession. Examples are; Nigeria Bar Association (NBA) represent lawyers interest, Nigeria Medical Association (NMA) represent doctors interest and there are so many others. When pressure groups use the right channel, they can influence the decisions of the government to help them meet their goal. Pressure groups can be educational, business like, ethnic oriented, economic or social in nature. Examples of theses type of pressure groups are; Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) e.t.c

Pressure groups should not be confused with political parties as their functions differ. Political parties focus on seeking political power while pressure focus on influencing the government policies to their advantage. Pressure groups have specific goals unlike political parties that have a wide range of goals. Another difference is that pressure groups cannot be held accountable for their actions unlike the political parties. At the end of the day, political parties and pressure groups relate to each other to achieve social change. Pressure groups play a big role ensuring the rights of the minorities are protected. They checkmate and better democracy in the society.

As much the pressure groups have positive roles, they also have some negative roles. Sometimes, they focus too much on their goals and alter the government decisions without thinking about the government limited resources. This in turn affects the lives of the citizens. An example of this is the ongoing ASUU strike that has lasted for eight months. The pressure group wants to influence the government decisions without

considering the government limitations. This has caused thousands of undergraduates in public universities to seat at home idle.

There are different types of pressure groups. They include; interest groups, cause groups, insiders and outsiders group, anomic groups, association and non association groups. Interest group represent people in the society e.g trade unit like Convention on Business Integration (CBI). Cause groups have a particular cause they are fighting for e.g environmental and charity organization. Insiders groups have access to ministers or legislators which help them to influence the government decisions e.g Nigeria Bar Association (NBA). While the outside groups don't have access to government officials, so they have to for other means to make an impact e.g groups for rights of animals. Anomic groups are spontaneous group are not guided by a behavioral style.e.g the protesters at the #Endsars protest. The association groups are registered with appropriate authority in the state while the non association groups are pressure groups without formal organization.

There are different functions of pressure groups. They include; Links government to the people, promotes participation in government, serves as sources of information, curtailing of dictatorial tendencies, Promotion of the interest of the minority, influencing legislation and so many others.

For pressure groups to make their voice heard, they use various strategies. These strategies include; lobbying elected officials, media advocacy, and direct political actions like protest. Some pressure group can influence the government decisions more than others. Once the public and the government approve the of goals and aims of the pressure group , it makes it easy to influence the government decisions and policies.

Pressure groups makes live easy for the citizens. It is important that we recognize and participate in supporting the roles of pressure. There are numerous pressure groups around us fighting good cause, we should all endeavor to join the one that it's goals and ours align.