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AN OVERVIEW OF THE IDEA OF PRESSURE GROUP

WHAT IS PRESSURE GROUP?

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 governmental policies and laws to its own advantage. The pressure group is referred to as 'The Functional Representative'; this is the idea that various pressure groups represent different sectors of the society based on their functions. According to Anifowose [1999], pressure group is described as interest groups, lobby groups or even protest groups.

There are several types of pressure groups in Nigeria which are religious pressure groups, social PG, Educational PG, Business PG, and professional pressure group. Some of the examples are; Nigeria Bar Association [NBA], Christian Association of Nigeria [CAN], Academic Staff Union for University [ASUU] etc. It is believed that pressure groups and political parties are the same, mainly in Nigeria where people have superficial opinions rather than factual opinions but they are actually different in many ways which are: political parties seeks to gain government power while pressure groups aim is to influence political decisions; political parties have a wide range of policies while whereas pressure groups narrow their goals; pressure groups are not accountable for their actions while political parties are accountable for their actions.

The existence of pressure group is to checkmate and make democracy better to compensate for the tyranny of majority of people in the society, to treat the gaps in the democratic process, to inform debates among us, to encourage participations and to enhance good accountability in our daily society. However problems can come up when the democratic process becomes dominated by a few specific groups; in this situation, the voice of a small group of people with narrow interest can become overly influential i.e. when pressure groups becomes selfish and over ambitious, the interest of the society suffers and becomes second. For example, when ASUU goes on strike even

though they have genuine agitations, they hold other stakeholders to ransom and insist that Government accommodate their requests.

TYPES OF PRESSURE GROUPS

CAUSE GROUPS: These groups are promotional groups which seek to promote particular causes e.g. charities and environmental groups.

INTEREST GROUPS: This group is seen as sectional groups representing the people in the society e.g. Convection on Business Integration [CBI].

ANOMIC GROUPS: Here, they have unpredictable actions and behavior as they work based on the moment and situation in the society.

INSIDER AND OUTSIDER GROUPS: Insider groups are regularly consulted by the Government; they also have regular access to ministers or legislators. Outsider groups have no access or links to the Government and its machineries.

ASSOCIATIONAL AND NON-ASSOCIATIONAL GROUPS: Associational are usually registered with appropriate authorities in a state or country; Non-Associational groups are pressure groups without a formal organization.

FUNCTIONS OF PRESSURE GROUPS

The functions of Pressure Groups can be gotten from its explanation above however; the following points are the main functions of Pressure Groups and they are:

- ✓ It serves as a link between the Government of the day and the people it governs.
- ✓ It promotes public participation in the activities of Government of the day.
- ✓ Pressure group serves as sources of information to the Government.
- ✓ Pressure groups acts as watchdogs on the Government.
- ✓ They are instrumental in the mounting of pressure on government so that it can implement policies that are to the benefit of citizens.
- ✓ **CURTAILING OF DICTATORIAL TENDENCIES:** Activities of Pressure group ensures that Governments do not perpetuate themselves in power thereby drifting into a dictatorship.