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**CHAPTER 15: AN OVERVIEW OF THE IDEA OF PRESSURE GROUP**

A Pressure group is 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 interests regarding an issue; it seeks to influence government decisions and policies. These groups also referred to as “The Functional Representative” due to the fact that they represent different sectors of the society based on their functions. This is usually done through their occupations or profession, ethnic oriented, gender- sensitive. For example, the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), represents the Lawyers and Solicitors, while Nigeria Medical Association (NMA) represents doctor’s interests. Pressure groups came into existence with the aim of complementing, enhancing and protecting the interest of their groups. They also determine political structures and forms of government.

Pressure groups and political parties’ activities may sometimes appear similar, but they are different from each other. The first difference is that political parties seek to gain government powers while pressure groups do not but instead, they influence political decisions. Second, political parties have a wide range of policies but pressure groups narrow their goals. Also, pressure groups are not actually accountable for any of their actions, while political parties do account for their actions.

Pressure groups’ existence is to checkmate and make democracy better, to compensate for the tyranny of majority of people in the society and to treat the gaps in the democratic process.

Types of Pressure Groups.

Interest Groups, also known as Sectional groups representing the people in the society. For example, in Nigeria, Convention on Business Integration which is the voice of business in the country.

Cause Groups are promotion groups which seek to promote particular causes like charities and environmental groups. They consist of all groups that aim for social change e.g. ending human abuse.

Insider Groups and Outsider Groups: Insider groups are regularly consulted by the government and have regular access to government officials e.g. Nigerian Bar Association. Outsider groups have no access to the government or its machineries and use other ways to make impact e.g. Animal Liberation Front. They are radical in nature.

Anomic Groups are not guided by an appropriate behavior as they work based on the moment and situation of the society. They mount pressure through strikes, riots, protests etc.

Associational groups and Non- Associational groups: Associational groups are usually registered with appropriate authorities and have their own registered offices and constitutions. Non- associational groups are without a formal organization and are organized by virtue of race affiliations, kinship, family attachments etc.

Pressure groups perform different functions:

They serve as a link between the government of the day and the people it governs.

They promote participation in the activities of government.

They serve as sources of information to the government.

They help curtail dictatorial tendencies.

They promote the interest of the minority.

PRESSURE GROUPS’ LOBBYING: These are various strategies pressure groups adopt to achieve their goals through lobbying elected officials, media advocacy, direct political actions amongst others. Lobbying elected officials might be through friends, spouses and children. They may also sponsor bills in legislative houses and contact legislators to ensure the passage of the bills.

The recognition of these pressure groups depends on their ability to be recognized as legitimate by those in power, media and the population.

most importantly lobbying. Pressure groups lobby in order to achieve their goals, they even lobby with government officials directly. The degree to which such groups are able to achieve their goals may depend on their ability to be recognized as legitimate by the population, media and by those in power.