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An Overview of The Idea of Pressure Group ( Chapter fifteen).

What is pressure? This is to persuade someone or coerce someone into doing something, therefore a pressure group is a formal or organised group or body that promotes its interests regarding an issue and puts pressure on any governmental institution with the goal of influencing government policies and laws to it’s own advantage. It is referred to as ‘ The Functional Representative’, in the sense that they represent different sectors of the society based on their functions. Examples of pressure groups are The Nigeria Bar Association (NBA) representing lawyers and Solicitors interests and the Nigeria Medical Association (NMA) representing doctors interests.

According to Anifowose (1999), pressure group is described as “interest groups, lobby groups or even protest groups”. What they seek to achieve is to ensure that government do their bindings and with some pressure through the right channels and means, pressure groups are able to make government listen to them. In nature, pressure groups could be religious, business-like, educational, ethnic oriented, gender-sensitive ,economic or social among others. More examples of pressure groups include the Oodua People’s Congress, representing the yoruba tribe, Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) etc

Sometimes Political parties might appear similar to pressure groups but they are different fro each other. Firstly, political parties seek to gain government powers while pressure groups aim to influence political decisions. Secondly, political parties have a wide range of policies where as pressure groups narrow their goals. Another point is that Pressure groups are not actually accountable for their actions while political parties are. Not to say that they do not have anything in common but they actually do, they both relate together to achieve certain social changes, they may align their interests to increase the capability of achieving them.

Pressure groups existence is to checkmate and make democracy better, to compensate for the tyranny of majority of the society. Even though they are acknowledged as potentially beneficial to a democratic society, problems can arise when the democratic process becomes dominated by a few specific groups. If pressure groups remain rigid and refuse to compromise on specific issues, they can potentially monopolise the democratic process by focusing public debate on a few specific issues. Pressure groups have their importance in the scheme of things in a nation there are some down sides, for instance, sometimes due to their selfish interests, they undertake actions without considering how it will affect others, whether directly or indirectly, for example ASUU go on strike leaving students without teachers, delaying their education.

There are also different types of pressure groups, such as *The Interest Groups,* which is also seen as sectional groups, representing the people in the society eg the trade units. There is also *The Cause Groups* which are promotion groups, which seek to promote a particular cause. *The Insider and Outsider Groups,* where the insider groups are regularly consulted by the government and have regular access to ministers or legislators , for example the NBA ,while the Outside groups have no access or links to the government and its machineries, they have to use other ways to have impact ,for example the Animal liberation Front.

*The Anomic Groups,* which have unpredictable actions and behaviours as they work based on the moment and situation of the society. They mount pressure through riots, protests etc. Lastly *The Associational Groups and Non-Associational Groups.* The Associational groups are usually registered with authorities in a state or country and have their own registered offices , constitutions and so on. The Non-associational groups are groups without a formal organisation.

Functions of Pressure groups, they link government to the people, they stay up to date on relevant information and are able to sensitive the people on such matter and the same time relate to the government what the opinion of the people is. Promoting participation in government, by engaging in demonstrations and other measures to put their views across to the government. Serving as sources of information to the government, by lobbying government on various fronts, the interaction offers the government valuable information on aspects of issues they may not even be aware of. Curtailing of dictatorial tendencies, they ensure that government do not perpetuate in power thereby drifting into a dictatorship. Promotion of the interest of the minority, influencing legislation.

Pressure Groups lobby in so many ways, they lobby with government officials directly. They lobby legislators, ministers and other government machineries. They might sometimes lobby these government officials through friends , spouses, children, and other relatives, may even sponsor Bill’s in legislative houses and contact legislators to ensure the passage of the Bill’s.