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***AN OVERVIEW OF THE IDEA OF PRESSURE GROUP***

To mount pressure is to persuade someone or coerce a person into doing something. Hence, 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. 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 and this is usually done through their occupations or professions. These groups influence both public policy, administration, and even go a long way to determine political structures of the society and forms of government. In nature, these groups could be religious, business-like, educational, or social, among others. Some examples of pressure groups in Nigeria are; ASUU (Academic Staff Union for University), Afenifere, Oodua People’s Congress (representing the Yoruba tribe), Arewa Consultative Forum, Arewa People’s Congress (representing the Hausa tribe), Nigeria Bar Association of Nigeria (NBA), Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC).

Pressure Groups and political parties’ activities may appear similar but they are different from each other and below are some of the differences:

* Political parties seek to gain government powers while on the other hand, pressure groups do not seek to gain power. Rather, their aim is to influence political decisions.
* Political parties are more formally accountable for their actions whereas political parties do not account for their actions
* Political parties have a wide range of policies while pressure groups narrow their goals.
* Political parties are more formally organized than pressure groups.

However, pressure groups and political parties still relate together to achieve certain social changes. Pressure groups may align their interest with that of certain political parties that are believed to possess the capability to further their interests.

**IMPORTANCE OF PRESSURE GROUPS**

1. To checkmate and make democracy better, to compensate for the tyranny of majority of the people in the society
2. To treat the gaps in the democratic process
3. To inform debates among ourselves
4. To encourage participations
5. To enhance good accountability in our daily society.

If pressure groups remain rigid and refuse to compromise on specific issues, they can potentially monopolize the democratic process by focusing public debate on few specific issues. Sometimes, due to their own selfish interests, pressure is mounted to alter the direction of resources.

**TYPES OF PRESSURE GROUPS**

1. INTEREST GROUPS: This group is also seen as sectional groups, representing the people in the society. For example, the trade units, for instance, CBI (Confederation of British Industry) known as the voice of business in the country.
2. CAUSE GROUPS: These groups are promotion groups, which seek to promote particular causes. For example, charities and environmental groups. It is always aimed at achieving a single objective, like protesting about the expansion of airports, seaports, railways, etc.
3. INSIDER GROUPS AND OUTSIDER GROUPS: Insider groups are regularly consulted by the government. An insider group may be high or low in profile, nevertheless, they intend to have influence on government’s mission and visions. Outsider groups on the other hand, have no access or links to the government and its machineries. They have to use other ways to have impact. Examples include: Animal Liberation Front, Earth Liberation Front, etc.
4. ANOMIC GROUPS: These groups have unpredictable actions and behavior as they work based on the moment and situation in the society. These groups are not guided by an appropriate behavioral style or rule, and they may sometimes act violently. Protests (e.g. the END SARS protest), rioting, strikes, and sometimes revolution are some of the means through which they mount pressure.
5. ASSOCIATIONAL GROUPS AND NON-ASSOCIATIONAL GROUPS: Associational groups are usually registered with appropriate authorities in a state or country. Also, these groups have their own registered offices, constitutions, and so on. Non-associational groups on the other hand, are pressure groups without a formal organization. Their arrangement and gatherings are by virtue of kinship or even family attachment, social traditions, tribal or even race afflictions, just to mention a few.

**FUNCTIONS OF PRESSURE GROUPS**

1. Links government to the people
2. Promotes participation in Government
3. Serving as sources of information to Government
4. Curtailing of Dictatorial tendencies
5. Promotion of the interest of the minority
6. Influencing legislation

**PRESSURE GROUPS’ LOBBYING**

Pressure groups may adopt a variety of strategies to achieve their goals, including lobbying elected officials, media advocacy, and direct political action (e.g. organized protests). Some pressure groups exert more influence than others. 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. Pressure groups lobby in so many ways which includes lobbying with government officials directly. For example, they lobby legislators, ministers and other government machineries. Also, pressure groups may sponsor bills in legislative houses and contact legislators to ensure the passage of bills.