**OFOTOKU DOREEN.**

**MLS.**

**19/MHS06/023.**

**GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS [GST 203].**

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

**UNDERSTANDING PRESSURE GROUPS.**

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”. It is believed that pressure groups represent different sectors of the society based on what they do; this is usually done by their professions or occupations. Examples include Nigeria Medical Association [NMA], Nigeria Bar Association [NBA] and Academic Staff Union of Universities [ASUU]. Pressure group has so many definitions but what they seek to achieve is to ensure that government does their biddings. These groups influence public policies; administrations and can also determine political structures of the society and forms of government. These groups could be religious, business-like, educational, ethnic-oriented, gender sensitive, economic, or social among others. Sometimes the activities of pressure groups and political parties look alike, but they are not the same. Political parties seek to gain governmental powers but pressure groups do not rather they influence political decisions. Political parties have a wide range of goals and policies while pressure groups narrow their goals. Also pressure groups are not accountable for their actions and are not organized, while political parties account for their actions and are formally organized. The fact that they have differences does not mean that they do not have similarities, in fact they work together to achieve certain social changes and goals. Normally the presence of pressure groups is to check mate democracy; problems arise when the democratic process becomes dominated by few specific groups. Sometimes due to their selfish interests while not considering limited funds they cause government to make wrong decisions.

**TYPES OF PRESSURE GROUPS.**

**Interest Groups:** This group is seen as sectional groups, they represent the people in the society. For example, trade units [CBI-Confederation of British Industry].

**Cause Groups:** These groups are promotion groups, which emerge as a result of particular causes. For example, charities and environmental groups.

**Insider Groups and Outsider Groups:** Insider groups are regularly consulted by the government and have regular access to ministers or legislators. The Nigerian Bar Association [NBA] is an example. Insider groups have no access to the government and its machineries, nevertheless they have influence on the governments missions and visions. The Animal Liberation Front and Earth Liberation Front are examples.

**Anomic Groups:** These groups are not guided by an appropriate behavioural style or rule and sometimes act violently. They have unpredictable actions and behavior as they work based on the moment and situation in the society.

**Associational and Non-Associational Groups:** Associational groups are usually registered with appropriate authorities in a state or country. Non-Associational groups are pressure groups without a formal organization. E.g. kinship, family attachments, social traditions, tribal or even race afflictions etc.

 **Functions of Pressure Groups.**

**Links the Government to the people:** They relay relevant information to the people and relate to the government the opinion of the people.

**Promotes Participation in Government:** Promote public participation in activities of the government.

**Serving as Sources of Information to Government:** The interaction of the pressure groups offers government valuable information on aspects of issues they may not even be aware of.

**Curtailing of Dictatorial Tendencies:** The criticism of government policies curtail any dictatorial tendency government may have.

**Promotion of the Interest of the Minority:**

**Influencing Legislation**

**Pressure Groups Lobbying:**

They adopt a variety of strategies to achieve their goals. 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 those in power. Pressure groups lobby in various ways, they lobby with governmental officials directly.