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AN OVERVIEW OF THE IDEA OF PRESSURE GROUP

A pressure group is a formal or organised 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". They usually achieve these their interests through their occupations and professions. For example, the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), represents the lawyers and solicitors, while Nigeria Medical Association (NMA) represents doctor's interests, Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) which is in charge of the interests of academics and condition of learning in Nigeria's universities.

According to Anifowose (1999) pressure group is described as "interest groups, lobby groups or even protest groups". These pressure groups could be religious, business-like, educational, ethnic-oriented, gender-sensitive, economic, or social, among others. Some examples of pressure groups in Nigeria are: Arewa Consultative Forum, Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Nigeria Labour Congress(NLC), Oodua People's Congress (representing the Yoruba tribe, Arewa People's Congress (representing the Hausa tribe). There are certain distinctions between the pressure groups and political parties', the first is that the political parties seek to gain government powers, while on the other hand, pressure groups do not seek to gain power but to influence political decisions, political parties have a wide range of policies whereas 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. This does not mean that the two do not have any similarities. They do, as they both relate together to achieve social changes. There are about five different types of pressure groups and these include: Interest Groups, Cause Groups, Insider and Outsider Groups, Anomic Groups and Associational Groups and Non-Associational Groups.

The Interest Groups is also seen as section groups, representing the people in the society. For example, the trade units, for instance, the Convention on Business Integration (CBI) in Nigeria. Cause groups are promotion groups, which seek to promote particular causes. For example, charities and environmental groups. Any group that champions social movement is also seen as "cause group", even though the group lacks formal structure. The Insider groups are regularly consulted by the government. They have regular access to ministers or legislators. An example is the Nigeria Bar Association (NBA). On the other hand, outsider groups have no access or links to the government and its machineries. They have to use other ways to impact. An example is the Animal Liberation Front, which champions for a rights of animals. Pressure

groups in this category are radical in nature because they are mostly denied by the government. The Anomic 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 behavioural style or rule, and they may sometimes act violently. Protest, rioting, strikes are some of the means through which they mount pressure. Associational groups are usually registered with appropriate authorities in a state or country, these groups have their own registered offices and constitutions. While, Non-Associational Groups are groups without a formal organization, their arrangement is by virtue of kinship or even family attachment, social traditions and so on.

There are various functions the pressure groups perform and these include: it serves as a link between the government of the day and the people it governs. They stay up to date on relevant information so they can enlighten the people on such a matter. Another function is that they promote public participation in the activities of government of the day. The pressure groups also acts as sources of information to the government on issues the government may not be aware of. The pressure groups also acts to curtail the dictatorial tendencies of the government by ensuring they do not perpetuate themselves in power. Again, pressure groups champions the rights of the under-privileged, they ensure that the interests of minority groups are not trampled upon by the government. They achieve these functions by adopting a variety of strategies which include: lobbying elected officials, media advocacy and direct political action.