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COURSE: GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

**Understanding pressure groups**

A pressure group is a formal organized body with common interest whose fundamental aim is to put pressure on any governmental institution with the aim of influencing government policies and laws to its own advantage. It is referred to as “The Functional Representative”. This is because various pressure groups represent different sectors in the society based on their functions. They do this through their occupation and functions. Pressure groups can also be described as interest groups, lobby groups or even protest groups (According to Anifowose (1999) ). Pressure groups influence public policy, administration and political structures of the society. These groups can be:

1. Religious : Christian association of Nigeria(CAN)
2. Educational: Academic staff union for University (ASUU)
3. Ethic oriented: Arewa consultative form
4. Social
5. Business –like
6. Gender sensitive etc.

**Difference between pressure groups and political parties**

These two sometimes appear similar however they differ in the following ways

1. Political parties seek to gain governmental powers while pressure groups do not.
2. Political groups have wide range of policies while pressure groups narrow their goals.
3. Political parties account for their actions while pressure groups do not account for their actions.

**Similarities**

1. They relate together to achieve common changes
2. They may align their interest with that of certain political parties that are believed to possess the capability to further their interest.

**Types of pressure groups**

**.** Interest groups **.**Cause groups **.**Insider or outsider groups **.**Anomic groups

**.**Association and Non-association groups

Interest groups: This groups seen as sectional groups represent people in the society. For example, the trade units.

Cause groups: They are also called promotion groups, they seek to promote particular causes. Some examples are charities and environmental groups.

Insider and outsider groups: Insider groups are regularly consulted by the government eg the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA). Outsider groups have no access or direct links to the government and its machineries. They have to use other ways to achieve impact eg Animal Liberation Front.

Anomic groups: These groups have unpredictable actions and behaviors as they work based on the moment and situation in the society. They are nit guided by appropriate rule thereby they mightuse violent means to mount pressure

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 formal organization

**Functions of pressure groups**

1. Links government to people
2. Promotes participation in government
3. Serving as sources for information In government
4. Curtailing of dictatorial tendencies
5. Promotion of interest of minority
6. Influence of legislature

**Pressure group lobbying**

Pressure groups adopt various strategies to achieve their goals, including lobbying elected officials, media advocacy and direct political action. Some pressure groups exerts more influence than others. Legitimacy is the key to which the degree of the goals of the pressure groups can be achieved. This legitimacy is by the population, media and by those in power. For eg the civil rights groups,trade unions are more recognized than the newly formed pressure groups.

Pressure groups lobby with:

1. Government officials directly
2. Government officials through friends, spouses children and other relatives
3. Legislators and legislature houses by sponsoring bills to ensure safe passage of the bills.