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**CHAPTER 15**

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 aim of influencing government policies and laws to its own advantage. It seeks to promote its interest regarding an issue. It is referred to as the Functional Representative because various pressure groups represent different sectors of the society based on their functions. For example, the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), represents the lawyers and solicitors, the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), represents the interests of academics and conditions of learning in Nigerian universities.

Pressure groups exist to protect the interests of its members and to ensure that government does its biddings. Pressure groups may be social, ethnic-oriented, religious, educational, among other, in nature.

Pressure groups may appear to be similar to political parties but while political parties seek to gain governmental powers, pressure groups aim to influence government decisions, political parties have a wide range of policies while pressure groups have one common interest, political parties are accountable for their actions while pressure groups are not and political parties are more formally organized than pressure groups. Notwithstanding all these differences, pressure groups and political parties are similar in the sense that they relate together to achieve certain social changes.

Pressure groups make democracy better and fill the gaps in the democratic process, they also encourage participations and good accountability in the society. When pressure groups dominate the democratic process however, it may lead to those groups monopolizing the democratic process. Some make demands irrespective of the limited resources available and this gives rise to problems.

Interest pressure groups can also be referred to as sectional groups, representing the people in the society, for example the Convention on Business Integration (CBI). Cause pressure groups are promotion groups that seek to promote particular interests, for example the Amnesty International, which promotes the need to end human rights abuse. Insider pressure groups are regularly consulted by the government and have regular access to ministers or legislators, for example, the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), while the outsider pressure groups have no access to government and its machineries and have to use other means to impact, for example the Animal Liberation Front, which fights for the rights of animals. Anomic pressure groups that have unpredictable actions and behaviors as they work based on the moment and situation in the society, and the means of protest, rioting are some of the means through which they mount pressure. Associational pressure groups are usually registered with appropriate authorities in a state or country, while non-associational pressure groups are without formal organization.

Pressure groups can be seen as the link between the government and the people, they also promote participation in the activities of government, they serve as sources of information to the government, they curtail dictatorship or dictatorial tendencies of government, they promote the interests of the minority and they influence legislation by mounting pressure on the government to implement policies that are of benefit to the citizens.

Pressure groups adopt different methods to achieve their goals and this methods maybe through lobbying elected officials, media advocacy and direct political action. The degree to which these groups are able to achieve their goals depends on their ability to be recognized as legitimate by the people, media and the government. They may lobby government officials, and they may also sponsor bills in legislative houses and contact legislators to ensure the passage of the bills.