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**CHAPTER FIFTEEN: AN OVERVIEW OF THE IDEA OF PRESSURE GROUP**

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. Pressure group is referred to as “The Functional Representative.” This idea implies that various pressure groups represent different fields of the society based on their functions. For example, Nigeria Medical Association **(NMA)** represents doctor’s interests while the Nigeria Bar Association **(NBA)** represents the Lawyers and Solicitors, and Academic Staff Union of Universities **(ASUU)** which champions the interest of academics and condition of learning in Nigeria’s universities.

Pressure group came into existence to complement, enhance or even to protect the interest of their members or groups. What they seek to seek to achieve is to ensure that government does their biddings. 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, ethnic-oriented, gender-sensitive, economic or social, among others.

Although, pressure groups and political parties may seem alike, they differ from each other. The first difference is that political parties seek to gain government powers; while on the other hand, pressure groups do not seek to gain power. Second, political parties have a wide range of policies, whereas pressure groups narrow their goals. Pressure groups are not actually accountable for any of their actions, while political parties do account for their actions.

Pressure group’s existence is to checkmate and make democracy better, to compensate for the tyranny of majority of people in the society. They also treat the gaps in the democratic process, inform debates among ourselves, encourage participations, and enhance good accountability in our daily society.

However, though pressure groups are seen as beneficial to a democratic society, problems can arise when the democratic process becomes dominated by a few specific groups. While pressure groups have their importance place in the scheme of things in a nation, there is some downside. Sometimes, due to selfish interest, pressure is mounted to alter the direction of government decisions, while not considering government’s limited resources.

**TYPES OF PRESSURE GROUPS**

1. **Interest Groups:** this group is seen as sectional groups, representing the people in the society. For example, the trade units.
2. **Cause Groups:** these groups are promotion groups, which seek to promote particular causes. For example, charities and environmental groups.
3. **Insider Groups and Outsider Groups:** insider groups are regularly consulted by the government. They have regular access to ministers or legislators. An example of this group is the Nigeria Bar Association **(NBA).** On the other hand, outsider groups have no access or links to the government and its machineries. An example of this group is the Animal Liberation Front, which champions rights for animals, Earth Liberation Front, which argues for rights to earth exploitation and destruction.
4. **Anomic Groups:** These categories of group have unpredictable actions and behaviours as they work based on the moment and situation in the society and are not guided by an appropriate behavioural style or rule, and they may sometimes act violently.
5. **Associational Groups and Non-Associational Groups:** these groups are usually registered with appropriate authorities in a state or country. On the other hand, non-associational groups are pressure group without a formal organization.

**FUNCTIONS OF PRESSURE GROUPS**

1. It serves as a link between the government of the day and the people it governs.
2. It promotes public participation in the activities of government of the day.
3. They serve as a source of information to the government.
4. They ensure that governments do not perpetuate themselves in power thereby drifting into a dictatorship.
5. They are instrumental in the mounting of pressure on government so that it can implement policies that are to the benefit of citizens.

**Pressure Group’s lobbying**

Pressure groups may adopt a variety of strategies to achieve their goals, including lobbying elected officials, media advocacy, and direct political action. Some pressure groups exert more influence than others.

Pressure groups lobby in so many ways. They lobby with governmental officials directly. For example, they lobby legislators, ministers and other government machineries. They might sometimes lobby these government officials through friends, spouses, children and other relatives. Also, pressure groups may sponsor bills in legislative houses and contact legislators to ensure the passage of the bills.