Role of Library and Librarians in Preventing Fake News and Hate Speech for Political Stability and Development

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Abstract
The spate of hate speech, misinformation, and unguarded utterances in the Nigerian society has been on the increase. This has led to instances as kidnapping, banditry, dislike, enmity, unfair treatment, hatred and other expressions of disaffection. The effect on the society is further experienced loss of lives and properties. Thus, this paper discusses the role library and librarians in ameliorating such situation, in Nigeria, and beyond. From a librarian background, the paper argues that information is very fundamental when it is accessible and useful to the community. Apparently, no community can prosper when information delivered are not properly disseminated to the right person and at the right time, in a right format. Librarians and other information professionals are custodians and disseminators of information which have been playing very prominent role within the communities; they find themselves by providing and offering useful information services to the people. Libraries through the information services offered had provided the opportunity for people to interact and share ideas with others and foster a sense of belonging to the community. Hate speech and fake news are referred to as misinformation of which is characterized as false or inaccurate information deliberately intended to deceive. In a way of safeguarding the community, the library and librarians have fundamental role of disseminating accurate information, providing public enlightenment programmes through the use of radio, television, social media platforms and as well providing adequate and current information resources to the community in the most understanding language. The urge to spread misguided information lies on people's perception, religious sentiment, language barrier, cultural differences. etc. Conclusively, the pervasiveness of hate speech and fake news has become a major worry for the goodhearted Nigerians considering the impact of peace and security in the nation and the effort of information professionals have been disdained by miscreants serving as agent of mass destruction of life and properties day in day out in our societies. Recommendations were preferred as quick remedy to alleviate hate speech and fake news as to ensuring that sentiments are jettison in all ramifications and as well librarian should be adequately train and retrained on the job routine.

Introduction

The prevalence of fake news and hate speech has become a lingering issue, and the way information is disseminated is now a watchword in our dealings in the society and the stability of individual or group of persons largely depend on available, accessible, reliable and dependable information. Apparently, library and librarians have become the life wire of survival among populace sharing information for teaching, learning, social, economic and political development. No community can be so stable and developed without quality and sufficient information to act on daily activities (Abdul, 2020). However, the development of any community lies solely on well-informed and

educated personalities who adhere to the dos and don'ts as stipulated by constituted authorities for safety of life and properties. It is not out of place to state here that ''the stable the community, the develop it become and the develop it becomes the stable it remains'' when information is well dispensed in the right position and to the right person.

Library and librarians are notable engine room and disseminators of information and play a very prominent role within the communities they find themselves in by providing and offering useful information services to the people. Libraries through the information services offered and provide people with the opportunity to interact and share ideas with others and foster a sense of belonging to the community. In addition, library as part of the community, utilizes available resources by providing print and non-print resources which contain relevant information on agriculture, politics, economy and religious issues to meet the ever-increasing needs of the community. All these information services offered by the libraries are geared toward creating awareness on government programmes, social and political issues bordering the lives of the people and create a sense of belonging to the community.

Responses obtained by individuals or group of persons has been accompanied by a massive and overabundance of information; some accurate and some not; that makes it hard for people to find trustworthy sources and reliable guidance when they need it. In some situations, misinformation and rumors appear on the scene, along with manipulation of information with doubtful intent. This phenomenon is amplified through social networks, spreading farther and faster like a virus. Fake news and hate speech are as well seen as misinformation of which is

characterized as false or inaccurate information deliberately intended to deceive and distract. In the context of the current pandemic, it can greatly affect all aspects of life, especially people's mental health, since searching for COVIDI9 information during pandemic has jumped from 50% - 70% across all generations. Misinformation in a pandemic can negatively affect human health. Many false or misleading stories are fabricated and shared without any background or quality checking. Much of this misinformation is based on conspiracy theories, some introducing these elements into seemingly mainstream discourse. Inaccurate and false information has been circulating about all aspect of disease; how it originated, its cause, its treatment, and its mechanism of spread. Misinformation can circulate and be absorbed very quickly, changing people's behavior, and potentially leading them to take greater risks. All this makes situations and conditions much more severe, harming more people and jeopardizing the reach and sustainability of the global political system (Zarocostas, 2020). The increased global access to cell phones with an internet connection, as well as social media, has led to the exponential production of information and the number of possible paths for getting it, creating information is of major concern. In other words, there are situation where a lot of information is being produced and shared to every corner of the world, reaching billions of people of which very few are accurate. Many people believe information because it is political, cultural, emotional, sentimental, religiously inclined, while disregarding information because of what it portrays. It is no doubt that dissemination of information by non-professionals to some extent has caused mayhem, crisis, riot, anxiety, chaos, disagreement among individuals and group of persons in the society. Information dissemination is the act

of providing or making information available to the right user, in the right direction and in a manner that is convincing and appropriate. When information is disseminated, people should note where, how, and what the information is all about before taking action and making decisions.

Librarians are saddled with the responsibilities of selecting or identifying, processing or interpreting, storing or packaging and disseminating or transmitting valid, accurate, current and relevant information to potential users (Adewale, Tinuade & Olasehinde, 2015). Before the information is released, efforts are put in place to sieve and confirm the genuineness of the information in order to avoid being tagged as fake, misinformation, and misappropriate. Unverified information continues to spread in Nigeria as with most countries because of fear and reluctance to fact check information. In recent time, the United Nations set up ''Verified'', its fact checking initiative to tackle the spread of misinformation and fake news on COVID-19, increasing access and dissemination of trusted and accurate information of which the Verified campaign provides reliable information. However, misinformation still lingers in many communities (Oguntuase & Akinbode, 2007). This is why offline and online campaigns work effectively hand-in-hand. Initiative such as Migrants as Messengers (MaM), a regional peer -to-peer programme is carrying out activities through radio, television, in markets and other public spaces to raise awareness of COVID-19 among communities. As a whole, these initiatives can help tackle misinformation in Nigeria. Zarocostas (2020) opines that, those spreading these myths and misinformation must desist from doing so to avoid putting the lives of those they love in great danger; the first recipients of this information are usually family and friends. People need to check any information before believing it or passing it on. This is why information professional are very important towards ensuring that information gets to the right person, at the right time, in the right format. In view of this Ani (2009) stresses the fact that information is capable of making a society develop and at the same time destroying a nation. The author's statement is very gamine, and this is the reason why information professionals are so keen and committed in ensuring that information are carefully;

In another development, Metzger (2009) stresses that the role of library and librarians enable individuals to develop full potentials in the following ways:

a. Dissemination of Information: In order to establish a stronger and safer community, the free flow of information must be impactful and meaningful to the community. Because its absence can bring conflict.

b. Provision of Public Enlightenment Program: The information professionals provide laudable public enlightenment programmes on the right of individuals in the society, understanding social values and expected conducts in public life.

c. Provision of Information Resources: library and librarians are the most cost-effective means of providing reading materials for the greatest number of readership. This credible service is geared towards cultivating and maintaining reading culture amongst people.

d. Provision of Current Awareness Services: The library and librarians champion's the course of providing current information about happening surrounding the society

e. Collaboration with other Media Houses: librarians takes responsibility of

collaborating with other sister and allied media organizations for advocacy and creating linkages to circulate information.

f. Outreach Programme Service: Creating and organization of outreach programmes in conjunction with non-governmental organizations.

Associated Challenges to Information Dissemination

A lot of challenges have been described to have energized hate speech and fake news in the society. In view of this, Zarocoster (2020) stresses the following as notable challenges associated with hate speech and fake news around the society among which are:

1. Language Barrier: This is one of the challenges of hate speech and fake news in the society. People speak very badly of another person because he/she does not understand the language being spoken, which gives room for different interpretation and perception. To this effect, it can cause a lot of friction and chaos at any slighted provocation. Use of language that is not understood and appropriate can destroy a nation and it also depicts personality.

2. Cultural Differences: This is another challenge that makes people feel inferior to other culture, particularly if the community dominated by a particular culture. This cultural difference has brought people not to be united, and make it difficult to interact freely among people in a given society.

3. Religious Sentiments: Sentiments has destroyed many things, particularly unity among religions. Very few clerics and religious leaders are preaching peaceful coexistence in the society. They are more often preaching condemnations of other religions of which are capable causing chaos, rancor and misunderstanding among people of different religions. At any slightest provocation, it triggers riots, hatred, and tension among the populace in the society.

4. Political Motivation: The issue of democratic system of government has also contributed to issue of hate speech whereby some particularly derive interest in insulting another party aspirant on the basis of not sharing similar ideology. This and many more has caused a lot of political unrest where life and properties of innocent citizens were destroyed.

5. Attitudinal Challenges: People in a particular community have different attitude and every one tends to portray this attitude in the best interest of his understanding not putting into consideration of tolerating and being patient of any attitude portrays by others. People in a society have different attitude which of course could be favorable or unfavorable to one another. Where tolerance, respect and love is lacking; then the society will not know peace and harmony.

6. Personality Clashes: These are usually established by saboteurs who feel their interest should be one of the top priorities in the society. They always tend to dominate in every decision making and as well want their voices to be heard in a given situation. Where their interest can be achieved, they decide to create confusion and establish clashes which usually lead to killing and destruction of properties. When these are not controlled, they bring about hate speech and misguided information in the society and the country at large.

7. Inadequate professional Training: this task is usually overlooked. It is seemingly very important to train the information professionals to be keen and versatile in their profession towards knowing what to disseminate and in which format the

information would be best understood considering the time, place and audience.

Conclusion

The pervasiveness of hate speech and fake news has become a major worry for goodhearted Nigerians, considering the impact of peace and security in the nation. It has also become an agent of mass destruction of life and properties and has almost become the order of the day. The ugly trend has threatened people's lives and created a dreadful atmosphere that discourages kindhearted and goodhearted personalities in the nation. Apparently, it has also hampered the viability of our economy and the nascent democracy of our dear nation. There is undoubtedly serious security issues challenging the peace of the nation ranging from political violence, insurgency, communal violence, kidnapping, misinformation, hate speech, etc. these issues need to be addressed urgently and permanently to pave way for peaceful co-existence between individuals and groups trying to over access power, opportunities, and privileges that go with them. Therefore, current, adequate and reliable information to the right person, at the right time, in a right format to the community is a cardinal pointer to sustaining a safer and stronger community. Information is the key resource for development and progress of a nation which touches on the socio-economic, cultural and political development of its citizenry; and no nation can develop above her information infrastructure capacity and information service delivery. A society becomes moribund and motionless when information service system stagnates or when an effective information service delivery is lacking. Information is a vital commodity that is indispensable in any developmental process, and anchored by library and information services.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made towards alleviating hate speech and fake news in the society

1. There should be sensitization programmes by information professionals, community leaders, and government information agencies in different dialects for better understanding of certain situation from urban to rural through the use of radio, television, town criers, village heads, and social media. People should also learn to use appropriate language when addressing the issue of pandemic in the society

2. People should learn to respect other people's culture for peaceful coexistence and promotion of harmony in the society because culture is a life of people and the life of people is paramount.

3. Sentiments should not be allowed when valid information is being disseminated because it can destroy many things, particularly unity among religions. Clerics and religious leaders should preach peaceful coexistence in the society instead of preaching condemnations of other religions capable of causing chaos, rancor and misunderstanding among people of different religions.

4. Political interest parties should avoid the use hate speech on the basis of not sharing similar ideology among political parties. Many properties and live has been destroyed because of political unrest. Therefore, people should avoid being motivated by selfish politicians;

5. People with unfavorable attitude should be advice and mentored in their best interest to be safe in the society and as well people should learn to tolerate and being patient of any attitude portrays by others in the society.

6. The community should be careful of saboteur because they have a motive of destroying or causing confusion among people and when their motives are achieved, people in the society will be left with anxiety, lockdown and be placed on curfew.

7. librarians should be adequately trained by attending conferences, workshops and symposium to perfect their routine job

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