

LIBRARY AND SOCIAL MEDIA AS A CATALYST FOR NATIONAL UNITY

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Abstract:

National unity is as important as fuel is to a car. There is a common saying that "united we stand, divided we fall." The fall of Nigeria, politically, economically, etc. is as a result of disunity among individuals, organizations, ethnic groups, and even the government. Unity is the one of government and every Nigerian or the moment. Thus, libraries are gateway to information. Libraries serve as catalyst for national unity. Libraries have proven to be appropriate channels in urban and rural areas to provide information that can promote peace, unity, progress, peaceful co-existence, and harmonious relationship among communities. They are repositories of factual and valuable information for national building and unity which cannot be found anywhere else in the world. The advent of information and communication technology (ICT) and its appliances, internet, social media, intranet, etc. has given a green light to the library in information dissemination and collaboration. With social media, libraries are able to reach out to millions of Nigerians with information capable of resolving conflict, bridging the gap between government and citizens, building relationship between different ethnic groups, thereby promoting peace and unity among individual groups and the entire nation at large. This paper established the role of libraries and social media as catalyst for national unity. Some shortcomings on the side of libraries, librarians, government, and the general public were clearly stated and workable recommendations highlighted.

Keywords: Library, Social media: Catalyst: National unity RU8

What is a Library?

In the past, libraries were largely collections of books. This was in consonance with the word 'library' which comes from the Latin word *liber*, which means book (Wikipedia 2018). The picture of the library today is different. The contemporary library collects, organizes, preserves

and disseminates information through the application of information and communication technology. A library therefore is an organized collection of print and non-print Information resources for exploitation, research, reading and acquisition of knowledge. One distinguished feature of modern library is the integration of digital technologies such as the computers, social media and internet in the provision of and information services. With application of information technology, libraries can acquire, organize, preserve and disseminate up-to-information resources in a cyberspace or electronically without the constraints of time or physical location. The modern library system has distinguished features of (1) Nearly unlimited storage spaces (ii) No physical boundary (ii) Round the clock availability (iv) Multiple access 10 information sources (v) Enhanced information retrieval. (vi) Universal accessibility (vii) Inter-connectivity and easy resources sharing (viii) Up-to- minute information delivery (ix) Accuracy of services delivery (v) Advanced/experts reference service; etc.

What is Social Media?

Social media is the collective of online communications channels dedicated to community-based input, interaction, content-sharing and collaboration (Rouse, 2012). According to Hudson (2018), Social media refers to websites and applications that are designed to allow people to share content quickly efficiently, and in real-time. Whereas Vestopedi.com sees social media as a computer-based technology that facilitates the sharing of ideas and information and the building of virtual networks and communities Again SHRM (2018) posited that social media is an umbrella term and refers to "media" (a video, text, picture, podcast, etc.) being shared ("social" on Web applications for others to interact with by posting, sharing commenting. Social media therefore is a term that refers to communication channels or websites and that allows people to communicate share text, pictures, videos and interact with one another in real-time,

By design, social is internet based and offer users easy electronic communication of personal information and other contents. It originated as a tool to help people interact with family and friends, but it was later adopted by businesses that wanted to take advantage of a popular new communication method to reach out to their customers. Users engage with social media using computer, tablet or smartphone via web-based software or web application, utilizing it for messaging. The power of social media is the ability to connect and share information with anyone Earth (or multitudes of people) as long as they also use social media (investopedia.com) Examples of some social media websites are: (i) Social Networking - Facebook, Hi5, Last.FM, Linked in, Instagram, Google, etc (ii) Social Bookmaking Del.icio.us, Blinklist, Simpy, Digg.com, Reddi, Pintrest, StumbleUpon, etc, (iii) Blogs: wordpress, webs, Ghost, Tumblr, Weobly, blogge.com, etc (iv) Microblogs: Twitter, Friendfeed, Mysay, Moodmill, Emotionr, etc (v) Content Sharing YouTube, Flickr, Vimeo, Metacafe, PhotoBucket, Images Shack, Snapchat, etc (vi) Collaborative projects: Wikipedia, Wiki, Wikimedia, WikiHow. Wikitionary, etc (makeawebsitehub.com).

Unity:

A nation first of all is a large group of people with strong bonds of identity; and national identity is typically based on shared culture, religion, history, language or ethnicity, etc (Global Policy Forum 2018) The English dictionary sees a nation as a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological makeup manifested in a common culture. It can also be a group of people sharing aspects of language, culture and/or ethnicity (The English dictionary). Rodee et al. (1976) posited that a nation is a cultural entity that binds people together on the basis of culturally homogenous ties common or related blood, a common language, a common historical tradition, common customs and habits. Furthermore, Parekin, cited by Nna (2004), maintained that a nation is an exclusive group, and its essential features include, a homogenous cultural unit, specific and shared identity among members; deep attachment to a specific territory the earthly home; membership is limited by ties of blood. Inter-marriage, kinship and common descent, members have a shared understanding of who they are, how they originated and have developed over time, as well as collective belonging. Thus, the term national unity is not applicable to a single group of people, but involves two or more groups who come together to be united as one.

Unity on the other hand is the coming together of different parts to form a whole. According to Inyang (2013), unity is a positive, practical, progressive approach to Christianity based on the teachings of Jesus and the power of prayer. Unity honors the universal truths in all religions and respects each individual's right to choose a spiritual path. Again, unity is being together or at one with someone or something. It's the opposite of being divided; i.e when a bunch of people act as one and are on the same page, they're displaying unity. When people are bickering and disorganized, there's no unity (vocabulary.com). Singh (2017) sees unity as the quality of being united into one where harmony or agreement, freedom, happiness, and everything good is present. Unity is (uncountable) oneness; the state or fact of being one undivided entity.

National Unity:

According to enotes.com, national unity is a type of coalition (ie partnership/combination) government, which means that parliamentary parties or cabinets are working together in order to achieve an outcome. This type of government is usually formed during times of difficulty, such as during or when there are economic problems, A national unity government means that all or most of the parties in the government are working together, This is done in times of difficulty to demonstrate political legitimacy, which means that decisions made by the government have to be approved by a number of people with different backgrounds. For Pembancuh (2015), national unity is a process of unification in all aspects such as physical, social, economic and political. The author sees national unity as a process of forming a national identity among groups differentiated in many aspects such as beliefs, cultures, politics, sociology and location in a political unit. Inyang (2013) in support trace that national integration is the awareness of a common identity amongst the citizens of a country.

It is worthy to note that the concept of unity and integration are interlinked, both intended to bring different races, closer together. Racial unity and integration issues are two subjects that cannot be separated in efforts to unify ethnicities in a country, (Nigeria for example). If the concept of unity means a process of forming one national identity among groups segregated through culture, society and location in a political unit, integration on the other hand means an effort to bring closer different societies to form a nation with a unified identity. To Khurana (2012), national integration the awareness of a common identity amongst the citizens of a country. It means though belong to different castes, religions and regions and speak different languages we recognize the fact that we are all one. This kind of integration is very important the building of a strong and prosperous nation.

Libraries and Social Media as a Catalyst for National Unity:

A catalyst is something that causes activity between two or more persons or forces without itself being affected; it is a person or thing that precipitates an event or change (Dictionary.com). According to yourdictionary.com, a catalyst is a substance that increases the rate of a chemical reaction without itself undergoing any permanent chemical change. Example: chlorine acts as a catalyst promoting the breakdown of ozone. Thus, the statement "libraries and social media as catalyst for national unity" means that, library through the use of social media can precipitate national unity. National unity is needed in Nigeria where more than 371 ethnic groups are present, (Anuoluwapo, 2018). The plurality of ethnics groups and acceleration of crime, violence, terrorism and disunity in Nigeria has raised a concern for joined efforts to unite the nation -integrate the distinct ethnic groups to become a monolithic whole that shares a common identity and destiny, and this can be achieved by the services of libraries through social media and other channels of disseminating information that promote peace, coexistence and unity/oneness among ethnics groups.

Statistics have shown that disunity in Nigeria is caused by corruption, abject poverty, unemployment, high level of illiteracy, insecurity, economic marginalization of minority ethnic groups, religious differences, political domination of larger ethnic groups at the expense of small ones, diversity of ethnic groups, just to mention a few. Studies by Onifade and Imnobopi (2013), Nkem (2017) many others have suggested that to achieve national Integration in Nigeria, the different ethnic, religious, social and political groups need to discuss and agree on perceived thorny national issues. Thus, libraries are indispensable in the role of fostering unity among social, ethnic, cultural, religious and political diversities of the nation. The libraries (whether national, public, academic, school, special/private, archive and data bank, mineurn, etc) is the gateway to information and information helps in creating Enlightened and responsible It is a place where information is acquired, processed, organized, repackaged, preserved, and disseminated. They are important providers of information and knowledge required by the people on a daily basis.

The provision of state policies to prevent the dominance of one group at the expense of other groups, the initiation of programmes to de-emphasize differences among ethnic groups, and the promotion of harmony and understanding among various ethnic groups, programmes like National Youth Service Corps Scheme (NYSC) in Nigeria are all good efforts bringing about

national unity. However, the success of such policies and programmes is largely depended on literacy level of citizens which is only possible through formal and informal education. As pointed out by Inyang (2013), education makes a man moral, ethical, and inducts him into the shared values of the society. It also helps develop commitment to societal goals an individual and prepares the young members of a society for the future. The author that education defines behavioural patterns of individuals in a society and also enhances the productive capabilities of individuals to the benefit of the nation at large, Education is also noted for three political roles agent of political socialization into a nation's political culture; the training and selection of political elite, and the enhancement of political integration and national political consciousness (Fagerlind & Sahn, 1989 citeer by Ibaba, 2009). However, libraries remain the only powerful engines of any educational system/institution, (be it primary, secondary or tertiary level of education). According to Daniel (2004) cited by Akande & Bumise (2017), any educational institution without a library is as lifeless as a motor car without an engine and a body a soul.

Whereas the above reference emphasize formal education, it is imperative to note that libraries all over the world have solemn responsibility to ensure the transmission of cultural heritage from one generation to another in addition to the preservation of these cultures. Culture itself is a good tool for fostering peace and unity. An individual his cultural norms, values, beliers sentiments, rituals and other of life from the public libraries' cultural exhibition and shows, museums and achieves. Cultures are embedded with values and beliefs that encourage peace and unity. Over the years, libraries have proven to be appropriate channels in the rural areas to provide information that can promote peace, unity, progress, peaceful co- existence, and harmonious relationship among communities. In promoting access to this information, libraries act as catalyst for the promotion of communal peace and unity. Libraries (especially public libraries) have taken up the responsibility of enlightening children, youths other members of the society by presenting them with factual information in time of crisis that will guide their actions and help them make good conclusions that will ensure peace and unity (Ugulu & Oghuvwa 2015).

As catalyst for national unity, the library have practically demonstrated the concept of unity and oneness in its collection and mode of service delivery to users, i.e. there is no distinction between the rich and the poor, high or low educated groups, etc. All calibers of are given equal attention in the library and everyone have free and equal access to information sources (depending on their information needs), For instance, public libraries servos people from all age groups (children, young people, and adults), people with high and low levels of education, high and low income groups and people from different ethnic, social, cultural, religious and political backgrounds. There are no separate reading rooms for people of a particular ethnic group, or a special place reserved for the rich or poor and collection of information resources cut across literature of all languages/tribes.

Public libraries have gone a long way in organizing cultural shows where different cultural are made to come together to showcase their beauty and talents, thereby creating an environment where initially differentiated groups (politically, ideologically, culturally, educationally, economically, religiously, etc) are able to share a common ground and establish the fact that

they have more in common than otherwise thought, More so, children's story hour(s), games and sports session in libraries are aimed at inculcating in children the of and team work, these opportunities enable them to peaceably respect each other's differences and come together for the sake of a greater common goal as they grow.

Ugulu and Oghuvwu (2015) opines that almost all the conflicts in the society are caused by lack of information, inadequate information or wrong information. Thus, the library stands as an instrument, tool and weapon that can be used effectively to resolve conflicts by providing timely and adequate information by social media to the general public in violence situations. The author traced that youths in many countries (Nigeria inclusive) have become agents of conflict, in the pursuit of narrow interests or the instigation or manipulation of narrow minded leaders. The library therefore serves as a means for providing the required information that can enlighten communities to reduce the tension and uncertainty that translate to crises, application of internet and the social media, libraries are able to reach out to millions of people in a short possible time. This helps in bringing people from different ethnic groups, countries and continents all over the world to share ideas on how to resolve crises amicably thereby promoting unity among citizens, ethnic groups, nations and continents. The library is indeed an instrument for conflict resolution and a promoter of the culture of peace and unity.

Nkem (2017) reported that the inability of citizens to be gainfully employed has been fingered as a major factor to be considered in national integration as of the ripple effects of unemployment in a society is lack of interest and cooperation in nation building. Consequently, libraries in developed nations has taken the responsibility of eradicating unemployment by providing job opportunities, for example: shelves, security, etc. Many libraries (including Nigerian libraries also) have incorporated skills acquisition and recreation as part of their service to the community. For instance, the Beyond Access/IREX (International Research and Exchange Board) intervention in Nigerian public libraries is focused on equipping Nigerians with skills that will enable them find jobs or become self-employed as well as become more productive in their current workplaces (Nkem, 2017). According to Open Society Foundation (2012) cited by Nkem (2017), being employed does not only endow with the means to fend for one's self and dependents, it also gives fulfillment, a sense of responsibility and most importantly it delivers economic benefits and helps to strengthen social cohesion which is a prerequisite for national integration.

Security is another great impediment to the unity of Nigeria since there can be no unity amidst insecurity and brazen destruction of lives and property Ugulu & Oghuvwu (2015), defined security to include safety of life and property, economic, physiological, mental well-being and the freedom to pursue the attainment of legitimate objectives without hindrance. This definition is holistic and most of us it sees the objective of national security as elimination of all distractions in order to bring about growth of the society and its constituents. Libraries are engage in eradication of illiteracy tint normally push people into behaviors and terrorism. Organizing of adult education, skill acquisition and recreational programmes is in attempt by libraries to engage youths and adults in meaningful use of their time rather than staying idle to become devil's workshop. Idleness leads to crime and terrorism which is a threat to national unity in addition, libraries avails the general public with authentic information about security

situation of communities which may not be available in any other place. This helps individuals and communities in making informed judgments and decisions.

However, Nigeria as a nation is yet to fully exploit the potentials embedded in libraries as catalyst for national unity talk-less of being hubs for meaningful human existence. A lot of Nigerians still sees the library as a place to read for exams and carryout academic research. Sadly, even government is yet to catch a glimpse of the diversity of library and information science profession and its significance on nation building. But many developed nations have exploited the potentials of libraries in every sphere of life. The climax of it all is that libraries/librarians themselves don't know their worth! Many librarians don't know that they have answer to every challenge facing our nation (in terms of illiteracy, poverty, corruption, disunity, insecurity, unemployment, etc). They are slow in embracing new technological changes in general and its application in library operations in particular. This leads us to the question of social media.

Social networking is a specific type of social media that enables users to connect with others and create a community. It's more about building relationships than simply announcing or posting and not engaging with others (SHRM. 2018). Social media can be used to communicate/provide information to the public that has capability to change their perceptions and to create awareness regarding particular issues in the nation. African Peace (2017) agrees that social media can help spread peace, encouraging dialogue among people from different ethnic backgrounds and nationalities. It can affect perception on change attitudes, and promote tolerance and mutual understanding which is paramount to national unity. Thus it can bridge the divide between ethnic groups that wouldn't otherwise communicate with one another. For example: the social media peace awareness campaigns which impacted greatly in reconciling Kenyans after the post-election violence on 2007/08; In Taiwan, social media has been effective in rallying help for efforts after Typhoon Morakot. (African Peace, 2017). But what is obtainable in Nigeria is different. At the moment, social media is been used in Nigeria to fuel violence and disunity among individuals, ethnic groups, political parties, religious bodies, etc. Mostly, information been shared on social media raises ethical questions of reliability and journalistic objectivity.

The social media per se is not a force for peace or violence. It is the content that provides the message, whether of tolerance and peace or intolerance and war. Rather than leave the social media in the hand of selfish politicians and terrorists, it is the responsibility of libraries/librarians as information specialists to seize opportunities of reaching millions of people at a time through social media to disseminate information that can promote peace, unity, progress and sustainable development in the nation. Libraries can also organized rallies, workshops, conferences, seminars and cultural festivals to enlighten social media users to create/share contents that promote unity and sustainable development and discourage those elements that can breed violence and disunity. Librarians can also develop basic and communication technology (ICT) skills to linked different social media networks, to control and monitor social media contents in addition to sharing information facilitating access to diverse information sources.

Almost all business ventures in Nigeria have employed the use of social media in projecting, promoting and marketing their products and services. Social networking sites are extremely popular across age groups and are central forums for marketing of products and services in addition to accessing and sharing of information. It is time for Nigerian libraries/librarians to rise to their full potential by quickly harnessing the popularity of social networking sites and their expanding role in the creation, use, and sharing of information by engaging them as a central medium for conflict prevention/resolution, bridging the gap between government and citizens, building relationship between different ethnic groups thereby promoting peace and unity among Individual groups and the entire nation at large.

Today, the library is known to be more than just a building that house books and other materials. The library today is a hub for meaning fun human existence, it is a gateway to information and knowledge which are crucial to human survival growth. In this knowledge era, information has become the basic need of life for good health, security, education, employment, leadership, peace, unity, development, etc. it can be rightly said that without information, survival and development of human life is not possible. Thus, libraries are indispensable tools for survival of individuals and the nation because they are responsible for acquiring, organizing, preserving, repacking and dissemination of information that individuals need on daily basis. Timely and relevant information has capacity to spark literacy, innovations, growth and sustainable development which is key to national integration and unity.

It is a call for Nigerian libraries/librarians at a time when Nigeria is in grave need for unity to rise as catalyst for national unity by reaching out to individuals, communities, ethnic groups and the government with relevant that can disintegration, crime, violence, terrorism, corruption and illiteracy which antagonize peace and national unity. Attempt by few libraries in Nigeria to provide job opportunities, adult literacy education and skill acquisition is good initiative that can be imbibed by other libraries too as war against idleness and joblessness that normally leads to crime and terrorism as oppose peace and unity.

Libraries/librarians should harness the riches of social media by engaging every aspect of it to reach out to the public with life-saving information needed for establishment of peace and unity in Nigeria. The social media platforms are extremely popular across groups and are central forums for accessing and sharing of information and they offer good opportunities for libraries/librarians to reach out to millions of Nigerian within a short time. The current abuse of social media to promote violence, crime, terrorism and disunity is because libraries/librarians has gone to "sleep" leaving the information gateway open to non-experts/specialist. Nevertheless, if libraries/librarians as information experts arise by acquiring needed skills and expertise in social networks navigation of information, social media abuse shall be a thing of the past, peace and unity shall be the height of Nigeria in a near future

Recommendations:

- i. Libraries/librarians should have a rethink and thorough analysis of their role as catalyst for national unity. Is time librarians see themselves as answers to the cry for peace, unity and

sustainable development in Nigeria and not mere organizers of book and information materials.

- ii. Libraries/librarians should wakeup and embrace new information and communication technologies in order to be relevant in this information age. Those that need training should undergo training (sponsored by their institutions/organizations), and those who are not willing to upgrade their knowledge should be replaced!
- iii. Libraries/librarians should make haste and embrace social media as a tool for information sharing and dissemination. More harm has been done to Nigerian nation through social media and thorough mechanism have to be employ by libraries/librarians as they engage the media for information sharing. This will help to checkmate the ills and menace associated with social media platforms.
- iv. The government, institutions, organization, communities and individuals should be enlightened on the role, importance and relevance of libraries in education and nation building. At the moment, little attention is given to libraries/librarians from government, institutions, organizations, communities and individuals, partially because they don't know the worth of libraries/librarians and secondary, because they undermine libraries/librarians as having no special role to play in the nation apart from their primary role of acquiring, organizing, preserving, and disseminating of information.
- v. Librarians and information professionals only should be allowed to handle information sharing on library social media and other network platforms to ensure sanity of information been shared.

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