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IMPLICATIONS TO RULES-BREAKING IN SOME SELECTED NIGERIAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION (NLA) ONLINE GROUPS AND A WAY FORWARD FOR NATIONAL UNITY

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is aimed at taming the unacceptable behavioural pattern of some individuals in some professional groups as it has to do with rule breaking. Rules-breaking is a menace that could jeopardize a group if care is not taking. It does not just stop at that, rather it goes further to threaten the national unity as the nation is being represented by a small segment of group of professionals. This paper through observation and existing literature stated a brief overview of the meaning of rules and national unity and benefits of being in a group. The paper highlights some of the causes of rules-breaking, the importance of rules in a group and it also proffered a way forward. In conclusion, it was stated that professionals need one another and the need for co-existence is paramount to foster national unity in all.

Keywords: Rules-breaking, NLA, National unity, Online groups, Professionals

1.0   Introduction

The Nigerian Library Association (NLA) just like any other professional association is a specialized body because they have defined jobs, duties or work set aside by this profession which can only be performed by its members, who have been trained to carry out these jobs in various libraries and information centres. Some professionals still do not know they belong to the nest of people with different ideologies capable of changing a nation with what they have been entrusted with. The reason being that we do not understand the conduct, aims, or qualities that characterize or mark a profession. We still see our profession as 'inferior' otherwise there is absolutely no reason why one will not be proud and defend a profession you have chosen as an umbrella that guides and puts us out or showcase our relevance in the society and is capable of promoting national unity because there is a saying that 'charity begins at home'. It starts by what we believe in, and if we believe in it (profession), we owe the profession a whole lot of deed to seal the rating in the comity of professions.

It has been observed in some groups that professionals do not adhere to ground rules thereby breaking the professionalism we preach about and demoralise some professionals in their quest to knowledge. In as much as we count and recount the importance of social media

as a catalyst for national unity and security, it can still be threatened by what we do on its various platforms such as the Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, WhatsApp, Flickr, Instagram, etc.

The coming together of professionals in a group who may not have seen one another is an act of uniting people from different areas, tertiary institutions and like minds in order to achieve a purpose in their chosen career. National unity starts from somewhere and it grows to maturity, it is this growth that affirms how far a nation may develop through a body of people who have agreed to come together having drawn laid down rules but are disorganized by insubordination to the rules the authorities of such groups prepared for orderliness. This act most times leads to members leaving the groups, feel they are wasting their time and sees such groups as unprofessional.

In order to proffer solutions and throw light on why professional groups are formed, hence this study, because the researchers see this act as a menace which is likely to cause threat to the world of information that we sought for.

2.0   OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This paper aims at presenting the implications to rule-breaking in a group and a way forward for national unity. To achieve this, the paper will:

i.   state an overview of rules and national unity

ii.   state the benefits of being in a group

iii.   highlight the causes of this menace (rule-breaking)

iv.   present why it is important to have rules in professional groups

v.   state the way forward

3.0   SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The scope of this paper covers three NLA ONLINE GROUPS namely certified librarians group, NLA Information Technology (NLA IT) group, and Knowledge Managers group.

4.0   METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a literature based approach using existing literature and personal observations. The literature were sourced from the journals, web, and text books.

5.0   ABOUT THE GROUPS UNDER STUDY

CERTIFIED LIBRARIANS GROUP

The certified librarians group is different in its collection of librarians because it is made up of certified librarians of the Nigerian Library Association. It was created on the 6th of April, 2018, with the aim of bringing the certified librarians as professionals together for knowledge sharing, brainstorming, and collaboration on librarianship issues. The group has about 154 participants (librarians) from all over the country.

NLA IT GROUP

NLA IT platform was created on 26th July, 2018 with about 199 participants (librarians) as at the time this paper was written. It has four group administrators who oversee the activities of the platform. According to the administrators, the platform is for trending issues that concerns Information Communication Technology (ITC) vis-a-vis librarianship matters.

KNOWLEDGE MANAGERS GROUP

This group was created on the 2nd March, 2017. Presently, it has about 67 participating librarians from various institutions across Rivers State tertiary institutions and information centres. The aim is for the professionals to come together devoid of geographical barriers to share like-mind issues bordering on the profession and brainstorm to get well-articulated conclusion on library matters.

6.0 AN OVERVIEW ON RULES AND NATIONAL UNITY

Rules can be defined as any set of instruction put for the general public, in a group and other gatherings of individuals (Singh, 2016). Cambridge dictionary defines rules as accepted principle or instruction that states the way things are or should be done, and tells you what you are allowed or are not allowed to do. According to Elston (2014), rules are personal in nature and are often adjusted as the conditions and circumstances of the home or group change. Rules emphasizes on the description or criterion set for practices which should be accepted and adhered to in order to achieve a stated objectives (Okozor & Obidike, 2014). The objectives here relates to library matters which is the focus of the establishing or creating the various groups to promote and strengthen the profession. The rules are merely set and adjusted as the need arises. It helps us learn to prepare living in unity in society (Noa, 2017). Society without rules may end up facing disunity, chaos, and doom. So it is in a group.

One of the factors towards achieving progress through a professional body and then to the society is unity. Unity is the acceptance of different group of people from different angle of one nation to live together in harmony. Just as it sounds, in national unity according to Pilkington in Asaju, and Egberi (2015), it's never easy to attain because sacrifices are involved. It is easier when people in various strata have decided to obey laid down rules, laws and carry out salient obligations without being biased. According to Baba & Aeysinghe (2017), national unity is woefully threatened by intolerance due to ethnic diversity. Librarianship is a profession that cuts across the entire globe. Most of the members that make up the groups are from different background. Orderliness is key to strengthening the profession for national unity and cohesion irrespective of our differences. Promoting national unity is the work of everybody in the group, state and the country at large. To this end, Baba & Aeysinghe (2017) further opined that unity today is our greatest concern, and therefore, he maintained that it is a task and duty of every one of us to work collectively as a team towards strengthening and sustaining it. It

does not come by magic rather individuals must also be able to tolerate one another, be hospitable, show warmth and affection to others and develop promising relationships. It could be further achieved through instilling a strong believe in whatever you do, share your core values and create a common bond, communicate the vision and mission of the platform constantly, creating an atmosphere of working through adversity. All of these are applicable to the groups studied if they are to be maintained and achieved.

Research according to Lamson (n.d) shows that working in a group where incivility is present affects people's mental health even after accounting for general stress and individual personal experiences. National unity brings about the development of the nation, helps the government of the nation to understand the people's need, choices and it strengthens a nation because through it strong harmony is established.

BENEFITS OF BEING IN A GROUP

(1) **Networking/building relationships**: Networking is considered a strong or bases where people can interact with each other and strengthen relationship. According to Icha & Agwu (2015), relationship building and interactions are the major reasons for the adoption of social media networks by individuals. Members can utilize theses platforms for engagement where relevant information can be shared and disseminated to foster the interest of the group, profession and the society at large. Through networking also there is sustaining of motivation, facilitate communication among members of different libraries and reduce the isolation that many adult members of the group suffer from adult literacy providers (Ram, 2014).

(2) Knowledge acquisition & sharing (cross fertilization of ideas): The exchange of information and knowledge among members is key to achieving the aims and objectives of professional online groups. Knowledge is the ability of people to understand and act effectively. Knowledge sharing according to Ipe in Gaál, Szabó, Obermayer-Kovács &

Csepregi (2015) is the process by which knowledge of individuals is converted into a form that can be understood and used by other individuals. They further opined that knowledge sharing refers to the task to help others with knowledge, and to collaborate with others to solve problems, develop new ideas, or implement processes.

Acquisition of knowledge and sharing is vital because it supports active members to cope with their daily routine life activities and helps to deal with new situations and utilize them when necessary. This cross fertilization of ideas is made possible for members through the creation of these various online professional platforms or groups. Membership of the professional group guarantees an opportunity for members to generate idea that may influence creativity, create knowledge and innovation and make meaningful contributions that can translate into national unity and enhanced development.

(3)   Teamwork: It gives room for team work, which could lead to better outputs or results. It is often a crucial part of a group, as it is often necessary for colleagues to work well together, trying their best in any circumstance. Cooperation is enhanced, individual skills showcased and thus leading to constructive feedback and a show of genuine commitment.

(4)   Brain storming: It serves as a forum for feedback mechanism, issues, concepts are simplified, clarified and, where information is disseminated among members. Members brainstorm on issues raised in order to find solutions, give constructive criticisms, and arrive at an acceptable answer to any deliberated topic through generated ideas from members. Many members of a group learn through this process. According to Ram (2014) the participants of the brainstorming in a group build their solutions on the ideas of others, use the ideas and improve them.

(5)   Information censorship/filtering: by this, members are allowed high level of freedom

at the same time, maintaining high level of censorship/moderation to control disaster in the groups.

(6)   It widens information horizon: individual participation in social interaction share their ideas, experience to other members of the group platforms. This information sharing through informal interaction leads to the acquisition of ideas, skills and experiences by such individuals that can help them to solve their problems. (Hassan & Hamza, 2018).

(7) Educate oneself: the platforms help individual professionals to upgrade themselves through the ideas that are shared, contributed and discussed in the various groups by members.

(8)   To promote the purpose, mission and objective of such group (library advocacy).

CAUSES OF THIS MENACE (RULES-BREAKING)

1. Lack of understanding of who we are as professionals. If you say you are a professional you are tamed the way you talk, your dressing, your general life style shows who you are and a direct reflection of the profession one represents.
2. Lack of respect for constituted authorities and hierarchical negligence.
3. Pride/lack of courtesy-disrespect is defined as rudeness or a lack of courtesy. Some people don't understand when they are in a formal or informal gathering.
4. Lack of self-awareness:
5. Resistance to change or inability to embrace and adapt to laid down rules.

WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO HAVE RULES

1. Having rules in a group where professionals interact serves as a norm of conduct for everyone therein.

2. When rules are made and respected, they act as guidelines as to what is acceptable in the group otherwise there maybe conflicts such as wrong use of words, removal from the group, important professionals leaving the group and a rowdy atmosphere.

3. It is also important because there is promotion of orderliness.

4. There is need for a stable environment and co-existence in the group even when we do not know every member face-to-face.

5. Rules are invoked to develop a sense of fair play and safety and as well as safeguard the image of the profession.

6. To reduce or control negative or controversial comments

7. For clarity of purpose and enhance the attainment of stated objectives

8. To avoid the purpose for which the groups were created being defeated

WAY FORWARD

1. Positive response to derogatory comments and offer possible solution. Don't write off the negative attitude shown by a member of the group. Make the fellow understand by politely approaching him/her; maybe the situation isn't as bad as you think.

2. An action plan should be developed and surveillance placed to checkmate the activities of members at times. This will reduce the use of generic and irrelevant posts.

3. There should be a record keeping of each defaulter to ascertain if the member has a personal matter that is affecting his or her professional attitude. However, be sympathetic without condoning the behaviour (Parker(n.d))

4. There should be evaluation and review of guidelines from time to time to ensure the authenticity of information circulated within the groups to bring lasting positive effect on the profession.

CONCLUSION

It is obvious that professionals need one another. And in any environment or gathering where people, professionals or the public meet for deliberation of issues that concerns them, rules apply to foster unity, fair play and orderliness. Therefore, the various groups studied should adhere to rules for a better output, which will directly or indirect affect the nation at large. It follows that if, the objectives or aims of the various professional groups are grossly relevant, the necessity for a set of rules for their realization becomes imperative.

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