

The Strategic Roles of the Library in Mitigating the Spate of Hate Speeches in Nigeria

¹S. U. Mabera and ²A. M. Bande

^{1&2}Abdullahi Fodiyo Library Complex
Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto
shehu.umabera@udusok.edu.ng

Abstract

Nigeria, as a nation, is confronted with numerous security issues such as hate and dangerous speeches, political innuendos and propaganda messages, more especially during electioneering campaigns. The news media (print and electronic) as well as social media were used as vehicles and channels of hate and dangerous speeches. Ignorance and lack of information either intentionally or unintentionally lead to people adopting narrow world views that may accommodate hateful views of others. Against this backdrop, this paper attempts to identify information repackaging as one of the strategic roles of libraries in mitigating the spate of hate speeches in Nigeria. The purpose of this paper is to assist significantly in addressing this social complex problem of hate speech that has deepened the political atmosphere of the Nigerian polity.

Keywords: Hate Speech, Incitement, Peace, Security, Information Repackaging

Introduction

The prevalence of hate speeches in the country has become a significant concern for the well-meaning Nigerians, considering its negative impact on peace, security and development. Hate speeches have incited violence, intra- and inter-ethnic catastrophes, and sectarian killings, religious and communal clashes and genocide in many African countries, including Nigeria. Politicians use hate speeches to divide and rule the people already divided along ethnic and religious lines. The 2015 general election in Nigeria, witnessed a political atmosphere deepened with the proliferation of adverts, political innuendos, propaganda messages, hate and dangerous speeches which nearly set Nigeria at the verge of war. The news media (print and electronic), including social media, were used as vehicles and channels of hate and dangerous speeches.

The campaign period for the 2015 elections saw many hate speeches being used by politicians in the country. Most of these derogatory speeches and advertorials were used by the members of the two leading political parties in the country – People’s Democratic Party (PDP) and All Progressive Congress (APC) (Fasakin, Oyero, Oyesomi & Okorie, 2017). Advertisements, songs, rallies and documentaries were aired by television stations to attack and condemn the personality of people, their parties and ethnic backgrounds (Fasakin et al. 2017). Hate speeches took a more frightening dimension online via social media, notably Facebook, Twitter and YouTube by cashing in on the fault-lines: religion and ethnicity (Segun, 2015).

Hate speeches are parts of the significant security challenges confronting many countries of the world, and it is believed that the use of information can help wind down the effects of the series of hate speeches attacks. It is imperative that everyone in the communities is educated and well informed on the need for peaceful co-existence; this will help to mitigate the spate of hate speeches and civil unrest. The need for improved education and accessible information to counter hate speeches has also been advocated by the Director of Sentinel Project for Genocide Prevention, who maintained that ignorance is a common thread connecting both online and offline hate speeches (Gagliardone, Gal, Alves & Martinez, 2015). The Director further stated that lack of information either intentionally or unintentionally leads to people adopting narrow worldviews that may accommodate hateful views of others. Therefore, there is the need for a concerted effort in spreading information that will reveal facts and other world views to closed collaborative networks of information which circle false or misguided information (Gagliardone, Gal, Alves & Martinez 2015).

Against this backdrop, this paper attempts to identify information repackaging as one of the strategic roles of libraries in mitigating the spate of hate speeches in Nigeria. To achieve success in this direction, Part one deals with the ongoing introduction. Part two is on conceptual issues. Part three deals with the effects of hate speeches, and part four heightened some of the evidence of hate speeches in Nigeria. Part five discussed the strategic roles of the library in mitigating the spate of hate speeches in Nigeria; lastly, part six concludes the paper.

Conceptual Issues

Hate speech is considered as any speech, gesture, conduct, writing or display, which could incite people to violence or prejudicial action (Ezeibe, 2015). Hate speeches are utterances, typed documents, advertorials, musicals or any form of literature that are used to attack an individual, a group – religious, social, political, business - gender or race (Fasakin et al., 2017). The United Nation Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (2013) highlighted that hate speech includes: (a) all dissemination of ideas based on racial or ethnic superiority or hatred, by whatever means; (b) incitement to hatred, contempt or discrimination against members of a group on the grounds of their race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin; (c) threats or incitement to violence against persons or groups on the grounds of (b) above; (d) expression of insults, ridicule or slander of persons or groups or justification of hatred, contempt or discrimination on the grounds of (b) above, when it amounts to incitement to hatred or discrimination; and (e) participation in organisations and activities, which promote and incite racial discrimination.

Hate speech is a communication that denigrates people based on their membership to a particular group. This can include any form of expression, such as images, plays and songs as well as speech. It is a "war waged on others through words" (Kayambazinthu & Moyo, 2002). Cohen-Almagor (2013, p. 43) defined hate speech as:

A bias-motivated, hostile, malicious speech aimed at a person or a group of people because of some of their actual or perceived innate characteristics. It expresses discriminatory, intimidating, disapproving, antagonistic, and prejudicial attitudes toward those characteristics, which include gender, race, religion, ethnicity, colour, national origin, disability, or sexual orientation. Hate

speech is aimed to injure, dehumanise, harass, intimidate, debase, degrade, and victimise the targeted groups. Moreover, to also, foment insensitivity and brutality against them.

From the preceding, it can be understood that hate speeches, whether politically motivated or not, conveyed through text, images or sound, is injurious to individual and harmful to the society. It may fuel discrimination, hostility and violent attacks on innocent citizens. The next part presents some of the negative consequences of hate speeches on individual and society.

The Negative Impacts of Hate Speeches on Individual and Society

Hate speeches have far-reaching consequences on individuals, groups, community and the larger society. Hate speeches violate the individual's dignity, resulting in humiliation, distress fear, embarrassment and isolation as well as psychological or emotional pain (Leets, 2002; Nemes, 2002). Similarly, Parekh, (2006) avers it can also lead victims to become aggressive and dangerous, which may lead to violent reaction. Ezeibe (2015 as cited in Fasakin et al., 2017) reported that hate speeches laid the foundation for the first military coup and counter-coup in Nigeria; 1964/1965 electoral violence especially in Western Nigeria; massacres and civil war (1967-1970). Even though successive military governments in Nigeria suppressed hate speeches and its negative manifestations during 1979, 1993 and 1999 elections, it is still observed that the use of hate speeches have been reawakened since May 2010 after the death of President Musa Yar'adua and the abandonment of PDP's arrangement of zoning public offices between the north and south (Ezeibe, 2015 as cited in Fasakin et al., 2017).

Elsewhere, in 2007, Kenya held the most contested, and most violent, elections since it returned to multi party-ism in 1991, leaving more than 1,000 people dead and 600,000 displaced (Humanitarian Policy Group, 2008 as cited in Gagliardone, Gal, Alves & Martinez, 2015). In the Central African Republic, hate speech spread through the media and targeted attacks during 2013 were responsible for exacerbating, with little precedent. This sectarian climate resulted in the displacement of almost one million people and 75,000 refugees (Minority Right Group, 2013). Amid an otherwise non-sectarian conflict, hate speech urging revenge between Muslims and Christian anti-balaka groups in media and online platforms gained prominence. It became easier for members from both communities to regard the other group as collectively responsible for individual acts of violence. The impact of hatred spread through the media may extend beyond discrimination to more visible extremes, as in the Democratic Republic of Congo where it drives the continuation of inter-ethnic conflicts (Minority Right Group, 2013).

Hate speeches have many effects, causing untold suffering to individuals; worsening inter-community relations; increasing marginalisation; cumulative religious extremism; inciting real physical violence against minorities (Clarke, 2013). For example, it aggravated tensions during Kenya's post-election turmoil in 2007 and provoked inter-ethnic riots between Macedonians and Albanians in Skopje in 2011. It also fueled the violence in Burma's Rakhine state across 2012 and 2013 (Clarke, 2013). The problem is that hate speech is often the gateway to discrimination, harassment and violence as well as a precursor to harmful severe criminal acts.

It is doubtful if there will be hate-motivated violent attacks on any group without hate speech and the hatred it purveys (Adibe, 2015).

Evidence of Hate Speeches in Nigeria

In 2014, the UN Human Rights Council Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues expressed her concern over the spread of misinformation, hate speech and incitement to violence, discrimination and hostility in the media and Internet, mainly targeted against a minority community (Human Rights Council, 2015). As at 13th February 2015, National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) of Nigeria reported that the Commission had received 10 serious complaints from political parties, NGOs, legal practitioners and private individuals, alleging election-related violence or hate speech (NHRC, 2015).

According to the National Human Rights Commission of Nigeria, there has been notable growth in hate speech in the run-up to Nigeria's 2015 elections. Many examples have been published in print media as news reports or advertisements. Social or digital media also transmit a considerable volume of hate traffic through hand-held devices as well as in places of worship, including churches and mosques (NHRC 2015). Hate and divisive speeches take on more frightening dimensions online via social media, notably Facebook, Twitter and YouTube by cashing in on the fault-lines: religion and ethnicity.' According to Nigerian Civil Society (2015 as cited in Fasakin, et al. 2017), some of the hate speeches used during the 2015 general elections campaign include but limited to:

1. Katsina State Governor, Shema reportedly urged his supporters to attack opponents and referred to his political opponents as cockroaches urging his supporters to kill them as they kill cockroaches.
2. The Ekiti State Governor, Peter Ayodele Fayose in January repeatedly took out front-page newspaper advertorials warning voters not to vote for the APC presidential candidate Muhamadu Buhari. These adverts, now widely known as "death wish advertorials" insinuated that the presidential candidate was likely to die in office if elected, like the late President, Yaradua.
3. Speaking during the PDP women presidential campaign rally in Kogi State, the Nation's First Lady, reportedly described Gen. Buhari as unfit to be the country's president, calling him old and brain-dead.
4. Nigerian First Lady, Patience Jonathan was also recorded as having urged the members of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) to stone anyone that promises them to change. "Change" is the slogan of the All Progressives Congress (APC). In the same campaign speech given at a rally held on Monday, 2nd March, in Calabar, the capital of Cross River State, Mrs Jonathan was quoted as saying "Our people no dey born children wey dem no dey fit count. Our men no dey born children thruway for the street. We no dey like the people for that side." Thus making a derogatory statement referring to the Northern parts of the country where the awful practice of child abandonment known as "Almajiri" still occurs.
5. After emerging unscathed after the plethora of criticism that followed the documentary on General Muhammadu Buhari, presidential candidate of the APC earlier in the year, a

popular television Network, AIT, on 1st March aired a documentary titled "Lion of Bourdillon". The hour-long documentary, aired at 11 p.m. showcased various properties and companies across Lagos purportedly owned by Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu, a top leader of the APC describing him as "Nigeria's biggest landlord". It also alleged that the APC chieftain was "charged for narcotics" in 1993.

6. Oba Akiolu of Lagos on 3rd April 2015 said, "On Saturday, if anyone of you, I swear in the name of God, goes against my wish that Ambode will be the next governor of Lagos state, the person is going to die inside this water...For the Igbos and others in Lagos, they should go where the Oba of Lagos heads to"
7. Alhaji Mujahid Dokubo-Asari said, "2015 is more than do-or-die. You are a man, and I am a man, we are going to meet at the battlefield" (News Express 3rd May, 2014)
8. Mujahid Dokubo-Asari on Channels Television also said that General Muhammadu Buhari of the APC is a beast clothed in human skin. He (Mujahid Dokubo-Asari)vowed that he would ensure he does all in his power to make sure he does not become president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Strategic Roles of Library in Mitigating the Spate of Hate Speeches in Nigeria

The fight against hate speeches can be better fought and won through education and information. At this time, when Nigeria is still in democratic embryo, ideological divides which is the threshold upon which hate and dangerous speeches thrive can be countered through effective information dissemination (Ossai-Ugbah, 2013). Thus, there is an urgent need for the provision of the right information, in the right format, for the right people, at the right time, and in the right placeto stem the tide of ignoramus decadence (Ossai-Ugbah, 2013). This will help address the long years of political and religious distrust in the country which has fanned the flames for crises that have polarised the society and divided Nigerians across ethnoreligious lines. Therefore, to allow every Nigerian to read from the same page, it is essential to flash the searchlight of information dissemination on restive areas so that they cannot be used to destroy the hard-earned peace and unity the country is presently enjoying (Ossai-Ugbah, 2013).

Information dealing with dangers of hate speeches is abundant. However, the problem has been that the information has not been marched with their targeted audience. This is the reason why Zakari (2014) suggested the need for libraries and librarians to initiate strategic ways and means of informing the society and particularly the target audience on the need and how to promote and sustain peaceful co-existence in the society. This will be carried out using all available and relevant pieces of information irrespective of the source, format, structure, content and location. Against this backdrop, this paper recommends information repackaging as a strategic way of ensuring that the right information is a pass to the right user to mitigate the spate of hate speeches in Nigeria. Okoroma (2014) underscored the importance of information repackaging as a strategic way of the information provided to different categories of users in order to facilitate meaningful decision making in society. That repackaged information based on a user group need ensures broader access to relevant, reliable and usable information. This will ensure that the user groups are being kept updated on the latest information available and relevant to them. Ezema (2003) recommended ten information repackaging strategies for the

prevention of human trafficking. These are discussed and recommended for mitigating the spate of hate speeches in Nigeria.

Transforming printed information into oral form – Literacy level in Nigeria is not encouraging; according to Adamu (2017) about 75 million Nigerian are illiterate those who can read and write simple statements on their everyday life. Therefore, oral information delivery is the most suitable means of reaching out to the people especially those who cannot read and write. Much of the existing information on the dangers of hate speeches appear mainly in print formats and often through medium that is not easily accessible to the majority of the Nigerian people. Library and information professionals who are serving in public and community libraries can effectively repackaging the printed information into the oral form and make it available and accessible to their target audience.

Use of Focal Group Discussions - Another suitable method of repackaging information for mitigating the spate of hate speeches is the use of focal group discussion. Information related to hate speeches and their resultant consequences can be repackaged in the form of stories, songs and drama and presented to a particular target group such as youth who are usually actors and victims of violence resulting from hate speeches. The focal group can also be provided with training or assistance on how to access an information product.

Translation of Existing Information to Local Languages - Another approach in information repackaging is the translation of existing information on the dangers of hate speeches which appears in foreign languages into local languages. The intention here is to ensure that such useful information is disseminated to the target audience with ease. The information professionals and other stakeholders in peace and security should be involved in this translation project.

Use of Posters/Handbills - The use of posters and handbills is another useful technique of information repackaging. The technique here is to transform information on the menace of hate speeches which is not accessible to members of the community into posters and handbills to meet the information needs of the community. Such posters and handbills should be designed in such a way that it will attract the attention of the people. They should also be posted in strategic locations such as places of worships, hospitals, markets.

Radio Programmes - The radio remains a medium which permeates every location. A significant advantage of repackaging information through the radio is the depth of its penetration and affordability of radio by many families. Radio can reach communities at the periphery - people who live in areas with no phones and no electricity. Radio reaches people who cannot read or write. Thus, an average of one in ten people has a radio, which makes the global dissemination of information possible (Chisita, 2011). Therefore, much of the information on the negative impact of hate speeches in print and online resources would be repackaged in local languages and disseminated through the radios. However, the programme designers in the radio stations should equally use this repackaged information in radio jingles to create more awareness on the menace of hate speeches. Studies have shown that radio has been used in several cases to promote peace and reconciliation. For example, in Northern Uganda, radio has been used to create the common good for the people to promote peace (Struges, 2007). Mega FM has promoted peace in Northern

Uganda with positive effects since 2002. Evidence also suggests that the station played a significant part in encouraging LRA members to come out of the bush. Struges (2007) further noted that the LRA leadership was encouraged to listen to the station and on several occasions joined radio phone-in talk shows and held discussions with government and civil society representatives, a good step in peacebuilding.

Television/Home Video - The use of motion pictures creates a near real-life situation and therefore, deepens the penetration of the message. Television programmes and home videos are trendy in the viewing culture of Nigeria. These programmes not only entertain people but also get them sensitised, persuaded, mobilised, educated and informed about happenings in their environment and other faraway places on the need for peaceful co-existence. In providing adequate information on the dangers of hate speeches and the need for peaceful co-existence, libraries should repackage life experiences of violent attacks and its resultant consequences in the form of film shows in local languages. This will educate and enlighten the general public on the menace of hate speeches in society.

The Use of Information Centers - Information centres are potent tools for reaching out to the general public. Information centres such as schools, hospitals, mosques, churches, village square, civic centres, markets etc. are vital sources for information dissemination. Information on peace and security could be translated into the local language and disseminated through these centres. For instance, the teachers should be involved in enlightenment campaigns against hate speeches through the pupils and students. Libraries should take up the challenge of repackaging existing peace and security information into story, drama, handbills in exposing the dangers of hate speeches. This can be done during library meeting hours with youths. Similarly, mosques and churches are a mighty institution in information dissemination. Imams and Priests should be involved in the public enlightenment campaigns using the repackaged information.

Community-based Organisation - Community-based organisations (CBOS) have been recognised as very useful in reaching out to the general public (Ezema, 2003). CBOS can proactively mobilise and create local coalitions that can address emergent threats through various enlightenment programmes. They are vital in youth mobilisation, promoting peaceful co-existence, socio-economic development and the like. Among these organisations are clubs and societies, youth movement the like. Since these organisations are closer to the people, libraries armed with the repackaged information should reach out to these groups and educate them on the menace of hate speeches using the available information. Youth movements are a compelling force to reckon with in information dissemination in the community. Youths are the most involved in violent attacks. Therefore, it is imperative that focusing the enlightenment campaign on them would generate positive results. Existing information on the problem of hate speeches should be repackaged to suit them.

Community Leaders - Community leaders form the bedrock of information in rural areas (Ngimwa, Ocholla & Ojiambo, 1997). This group of people include political leaders, religious leaders, village heads, school heads and other people in the community that command a high degree of respect and followership. Being the light of society, they are strategically placed in

obtaining the right and timely information. They often serve as an intermediary between the sources of information and the people. As enlightened members of society, they are often involved in repackaging the information obtained for the general public. Libraries should therefore exploit these leadership roles and their exposure to formal education to get information on the dangers of hate speeches to the general public. The approach here is to organise meetings with this group and then use the forum to train them on how to use the repackaged information to address the problems of hate speeches in the community.

Use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) - The use of ICTs in reaching out to the broader community is very exceptional. It is a powerful enabler for information dissemination. With internet connectivity, libraries can repackaging the information and send it in a variety of format. For example, information can be repackaged and converted to 'YouTube' file and after that placed on 'YouTube' for anyone to access online. Other media through which information on the need for peaceful co-existence among Nigerian people could also be repackaged include Mobile phones, Bibliography (print or electronic), library websites and other Social Media.

Conclusion

It is strongly believed that, if the strategies proposed above are explored, the general public would be furnished with factual information necessary to guide their actions. It would also make the public to understand the implications of hate speeches; thus helping them to make reasonable conclusions that would promote peace and security. Ajegbomogun (2008) postulated that information is used to improve behaviour through new ideas or knowledge extracted from changes and increase efficiency in all human endeavours and environment. Omonobi (2014) avers that information is needed at all times by governments and citizens; it helps make them aware of happenings around them. When people are informed, they know how to act, what to do in times of crises and how to be more security conscious. Finally, useful information dissemination through libraries will put the leaders and the people at alert on facts of potential and conflicts, including their causes, evolution, consequences and solutions (Echezona, 2007).

References

- Adamu, A. (2017). The illiteracy rate in Nigeria – alarming. *Vanguard Newspaper*, 21st September 2017
- Adobe, J. (2015). Fayose's advert: Offensive or hate speech? Adapted from a paper presented at a roundtable on hate speech organised by The Kukah Centre, Abuja, on 27th January.
- Ajegbomogun, F.O. (2008). Information availability and the extent of use in a public library, Abeokuta. *Borno Library, Archival, and Information Science Journal*, 7 (1), 65-74.
- Chisita, C. T. (2011). Role of libraries in promoting the dissemination and documentation of indigenous knowledge agricultural information: A case study of Zimbabwe. Retrieved from: [https:// conference.ifla.org/past-wlic/2011/78-chisita-en.pdf](https://conference.ifla.org/past-wlic/2011/78-chisita-en.pdf)
- Clarke, T. (2013). Social media: The new frontline in the fight against hate speech. <https://minorityrights.org/2013/10/30/social-media-the-new-frontline-in-the-fight-against-hate-speech/>

- Cohen-Almagor, R. (2013). Freedom of expression v. social responsibility: Holocaust denial in Canada. *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, 28(1), 42-56.
- Echezona, R. I. (2007). The role of libraries in information dissemination for conflict Resolution, peace promotion and reconciliation: *African Journal of Library & Information Science*, 17(2), 153-162
- Ezema, I. J. (2003). Repackaging human rights information to rural dwellers in South-Eastern Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of unity and Development*, 1(1): 30-33
- Fasakin, A., Oyero, O., Oyesomi, K. & Okorie, N. (2017). Hate speech and the 2015 general elections in Nigeria. *International E-Journal of Advances in Social Sciences*, III (9), 948 – 953
- Human Rights Council(2015). Report of the special rapporteur on minority issues, A/HRC/28/64. Retrieved from: https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session28/Documents/A_HRC_28_64_ENG.doc.
- Itsekora, V. O., Jegbefumeb, C. M. & Fagbohuna, M. O. (2017). Towards national security and peace: The strategic role of libraries. *International Information & Library Review*, 49(2), 101 – 108.
- Kayambazinthu, E. & Moyo, F. (2002). Hate speech in the new Malawi. In: H. Englund (ed.) A democracy of chameleons: politics and culture in new Malawi. Stockholm: Elanders Gotlib.
- Leets, L. (2002). Experiencing hate speech: Perceptions and responses to anti-Semitism and antigay speech. *Journal of Social Issues*, 58(2), 341 - 361.
- Minority Right Group (MRG) (2013). Annual survey: Hate crime towards minorities and indigenous peoples in Africa. Minority Rights Group International. London: Commercial Street Press.
- National Human Rights Commission of Nigeria (2015). A pre-election report and advisory on violence in Nigeria's 2015 general elections.
- Nemes, I. (2002). Regulating hate speech in cyberspace: Issues of desirability and efficacy. *Information & Communications Technology Law*, 11(3), 193 - 211.
- Ngimwa, P., Ocholla, D.N.& Ojiambo, J. (1997). Media accessibility and utilisation by Kenyan rural Women. *International Information and Library Review*. Vol. 29, 45-66
- Okoroma, F. N. (2014). Information repackaging to target groups for a fee: A strategic plan. *Education Journal*, 3(5), 308 – 315
- Omonobi, K. (2014). *FG, Boko Haram battle for control of Gwoza*. Retrieved from: <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2014/08/fg-boko-haram-battle-control-gwoza/#sthash.Ro7cpvuh.dpuf>
- Ossai-Ugbah, N. B. (2013). The role of the library and librarians in promoting national security in Nigeria. *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 2(2), 100 -104
- Parekh, B. (2006). Hate Speech: Is there a case for Banning? Public Policy Research
- Segun, O. (2015). Nigerian 2015 elections and the Internet of hate. Retrieved from: <http://itedgenews.com/2015/01/20/nigerian-2015-elections-and-the-internet-of-hate/>
- Struges, D. (2007). Third-party techniques for preventing conflict escalation and promoting peaceful settlement. *International Organization*, No. 4: 653-681.

- United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (2013) General recommendation on combating racist hate speech, CERD/C/GC/35.
- Zakari, M. (2014). Library and information services initiatives for promotion and sustenance of peaceful co-existence and development in Nigeria. *Nigerian Libraries*, 47(2), 116 – 128