**Case-Based Essay**

“You discover that one of your friends (nursing student) has posted derogative and racist comments on Facebook about another student.”

**Introduction**

After the realization that one of my friends (nursing student) posted derogative and racist comments on Facebook about another student, it would be appropriate to take appropriate action to enlighten him or her on the essence of maintaining professionalism through exploring the relationship between social media and nursing ethics. The purpose of this essay is to develop and improve comprehensive understanding of the influence of the law, ethics, and professional guidelines in guiding nursing practice. This is through creating room to reflect on the values, as well as characteristics of professionalism in the healthcare setting based on the growing influence of social media.

**Background**

Notably, it is easier to utilize and explore social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to blow off steam. Nonetheless, it is valuable for social media users to understand that whatever they write may be seen by more people than they might intend. In the last decade, the online world has been able to generate substantive transformation, especially following the invention of social media. Thanks to technological advancements, it is now possible to encounter easy access to the digital sources of information or communication. According to Edge (2017, p. 1), “social media usage among youth adults has increasingly become a method, by which, almost every aspect of personal life is publicly communicated.”

The integration of social media, as well as other electronic communication, is on the exponential expansion based on the increased availability of the outlets, platforms, and applications. People tend to use social networking sites, blogs, video sites, and online chat rooms as valuable outlets to communicate professionally and personally with the others within the society. Notably, social media is a fascinating and exciting tool, which can pose risks through offering instantaneous posting platforms allowing little time for the individuals to reflect their thoughts while carrying the increased burden on legal and ethical platforms.

Assessment of these communications can offer a platform to conceptualize one’s social, political, and professional perceptions. Social media is becoming one of the increasingly effective tools for the nurses and nursing students. In the essence of navigating the social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter by nursing practitioners and students, there seems to be a dangerously thin line between professional and personal online etiquette calling for professionalism in the optimization of such sites (Denecke, et al., 2015).

It is obligatory for the healthcare employees and trainees to maintain confidentiality and privacy, as well as positive representation of the profession and place of employment. In most cases, inappropriate utilization of social media might lead to disciplinary action. In the extreme instances, inappropriate use of social media might affect nurses’ careers and licenses. Based on this, it is essential to note that communication in healthcare within the social media contexts tends to have important implications, particularly in the nursing profession. Conversely, unfitting utilization of Facebook might complicate issues such as affecting the efforts of the learners to secure employment following graduation.

**Immediate Action**

The immediate action aims at addressing a case in which my friend (nursing student) did engage in a practice of posting derogative and racist comments on Facebook about another student. Based on this knowledge, the first aspect would be disappointment about the friend in question. The friend should know better on the dangerously thin line between the professional and personal use of social media. Following this aspect of disappointment, it would be appropriate to organize a meeting with the friend in question to get to the bottom of this inappropriate use of social media. There is no valid reason to post derogative and racist comments on Facebook about another student or any other person (Duke, et al., 2017). In spite of this, it is critical to creating a valuable and interactive environment to get to the bottom of the issue. The encounter would provide a platform to obtain reasons why my friend crossed the thin line to post derogative and racist comments on Facebook about another student. The interactive environment will ensure that the friend in question is aware of the inappropriate action on the use of social media.

**Subsequent Actions**

Following the immediate action of understanding and reprimanding my friend for the act of posting derogative and racist comments on Facebook about another student, subsequent actions will focus on enabling him or her to understand and implement, in future, the guidelines for the use of social media. Based on the fact that social media provides platforms for the intriguing consequences, the subsequent engagement on the case will focus on enlightening my friend on the numerous principles. These principles will guide the development of ethical practices while operational within the online platform to maintain a reputation in the different settings.

**Principles of Ethical Use of Social Media**

First, it is critical for the nurses and aspiring practitioners to avoid transmitting or placing online the individually recognizable data regarding patients. Based on this principle, it is the duty of the nurses and aspiring practitioners to enhance their awareness of the legal, as well as ethical responsibilities and institutional policies with reference to their responsibilities in the protection of their patient privacy on online and offline platforms. Based on this, nurses and nursing students should focus on adhering to the code of ethics and principles set in International Council of Nurses (2012). The principles determine the assessment and handling of the privacy regarding the information of the patients. Secondly, the subsequent action will highlight the need for my friend to observe the ethically prescribed patient-nurse professional boundaries in the future interaction with the patients. These aspects prove to be similar in the online and offline contexts.

The encounter should also assess and enhance the awareness of my friend on the importance of evaluating all his or her postings on Facebook and other social media platforms with the perception of the potentiality of the patients, colleagues, educational organizations, and employers to view these interactions or postings. Another valuable principle in this action would relate to the optimization of the privacy settings on various social media outlets or networking sites for the personal and online activities. The approach will aid critical and comprehensive separation of the online professional and personal information, as well as sites. Critically, the utilization of the privacy settings, as well as separation of the professional and personal information on the online platforms does not guarantee inability of the information to replicate in less protected forums.

My friend should also improve his or her position and approach to participating in the development and implementation of the relevant procedures and policies within the learning institutions on reporting the online conduct, which might raise legal concerns based on the unethical or unprofessional practices. These official channels have sufficient influence in protecting the rights of the people participating in the interactions while offering remedial actions for the patients in action. The approach will also offer the desirable fairness, support, and the intriguing non-punitive correction, as well as training for the aspiring practitioners to avoid inadvertent mistakes.

**Positive Use of Social Media**

As an aspiring nurse or healthcare practitioner, it is valuable for my friend to have ideal information on the positive ways to use social media. One of the perfect approaches to use social media effectively is through blogging. This is through blogging on the industry or profession my friend loves in the positive and thoughtful way. In this way, my friend has the chance to become the subject matter expert while using the blog and social media presence as a reflection of the dedication to the nursing profession (Westrick, 2016). Increasing visibility through the online presence is valuable in enabling healthcare practitioners to go ahead in their careers while utilizing internet in a positive way. My friend should also have the chance to explore the importance of the real-time form of communication as an output of social media positive use.

Based on this, nurses and nursing students have the chance to offer quick responses and assistance to the audience while creating a health-related conversation with the public. The positive use of social media enables health practitioners to optimize networking sites to enhance the awareness of the preventative health campaigns. For example, positive use of Facebook offers the chance for the health practitioners to leave messages, as well as upload videos and post photos to connect with the audience while bridging the potential information gap between the patients and the healthcare providers.

**Professionalism and Social Media**

In spite of using a social media a communication tool to interact effectively and efficiently with the consumers and other components of the society, it is valuable for the friend in question to understand how he or she should not use social media. From a legal perspective, utilization of such platform by healthcare professionals and aspiring practitioners to reach out to individuals especially might pose a few major issues to do with the privacy. Similarly, it is critical to avoid utilizing such platform as a tool or platform to complain about, as well as comment on the health of the patients. The code of conduct for the nurses tends to warn against making weary comments about the patients on the internet platform (Marnocha, Marnocha, & Pilliow, 2015).

From this aspect, it is valuable for the practitioners to avoid making rude remarks on the patients such as how they look or their unhealthy state. Such actions are critical in facilitating the destruction of the perception of others on your character. Ethically, professionalism calls for avoidance of posting photographs of the patients on the social media. In one of the extreme cases, a nursing student had to deal with the expulsion from the learning institution for posting a picture of the young cancer patient on the social media platform, Facebook. In this encounter, the nursing program did bar the students from using the pediatric unit as a teaching platform based on the ease in the identification of the patient and the hospital from the photograph posted on social media.

It is also unethical to use derogatory or offensive language in voicing offensive comments. The friend in question must be able to understand this element as a tool to promote professionalism and ethics as a nursing student (Marnocha, Marnocha, & Pilliow, 2015). Notably, nurses and nursing students tend to function in the environments with the diverse flow of patients coming from a different range of racial, economic, ethnic, and religious backgrounds. From this perspective, when nursing students and nurses make comments, which are threatening, harassing, obscene, racial, homophobic, derogatory, and profane on social media, they have increased chances of experiencing discipline at the workplace or learning institutions.

Social media should not be a tool or platform for the practitioners to blow-off the work-related steam. This relates to the visibility such networking sites provide, thus, the need for the professionals and learners to engage in maintaining professionalism and composure at all times in the attempts to interact and relate with the consumers or their colleagues on the internet. Additionally, it is unethical for the nurses and nursing students to rant about the place of employment (Marnocha, Marnocha, & Pilliow, 2015).

Nurses and nursing students engage in different activities and practices based on the code of ethics to ensure that they offer quality services in accordance with the needs and expectations of the patients. Nonetheless, speaking negatively on platforms such as Facebook about administrators, co-workers, job duties, and place of employment might attract disciplinary actions. Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (2018) has codes of conduct that guide against bullying and harassing individuals by practitioners, both online and offline. Such negative attributes have negative implications on the personal and professional images or reputation of the practitioners and their workplaces or employers and profession. Categorically, the subsequent actions will focus on ensuring that the friend who posted derogatory and racial comments on Facebook about a friend is knowledgeable on the proper, professional, and ethical use of social media.

**Conclusion**

Healthcare communication in the social media platforms tends to have significant implications to the nursing profession. Alternatively, inappropriate social media communication can play a critical role in complicating the efforts of nursing students to secure employment positions following their graduation. In addressing the case identified in this essay, the first or immediate action would relate to getting at the bottom of the comments or issue while expressing disappointment on the actions by the friend who should know better. Additionally, the subsequent actions, it will be valuable to concentrate on enhancing the awareness of my friend on the positive use of social media and practicing ethics and professionalism to avoid the occurrence of such actions jeopardizing personal and professional reputations. **References**

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