Challenges and Prospects of Social Media: Upholding Social Values and Realizing Social Stability in Nigerian Society

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Abstract

Social changes are influenced by diverse multifaceted factors which are often triggered by human or environmental factors such as globalization, climate change, governmental systems, evolving socio-cultural/religious beliefs, and the growing tide of Information Communication technology (ICT). Change is an inevitable reality of the human society. Whatever form and shade these changes bring, it is a general expectation that these changes do not erode the very traits and values that define a people and society. This study through discourse analysis examined the role of the social media in upholding social values for social stability in the Nigerian Society. The study findings revealed that as much as the social media is a very reliable tool to uphold the social values of the society for social stability and education, this has come with an ultimate price tag on the core values of the Nigerian society. The menace of social media usage on Nigerian social values include decline in the Nigerian family values, increase in cybercrimes, increase in indecent dressing, sexual harassment, and sexual promiscuity among Nigerian youths. Social media has continued to pose a real threat to the preservation of Nigerian culture, and by extension, family values, especially with the widespread of depraved values and never-ending corruption of the identity of the Nigerian parent. The culture of individualism which is often promoted by the social media in the name of be yourself and express yourself is fast eroding the values and ideals of the extended family system which Nigerians are known for. The study findings revealed that if the growth and development of social media continues as it is today, it could lead to decline of face-to-face human contact skills and interpersonal relationships. Based on the findings, the study recommended the need for Nigerian parents to monitor their children's activities on social media platforms and uphold the social values that define Nigerians as a people and the government should play the lead way in this campaign.

Keywords: Social Media, Social Values, Social Stability, Nigeria and Society.

Introduction

The identity of a person is what makes him/her what he or she is and what posterity will remember him or her for. People are generally defined by the language they speak, the belief they carry, what they hold as social or cultural values, the mood of dressing, structures, etc. These different forms of cultural and social traits also define identity and how a person is seen and treated. According to Nwaolikpe (2003) "Culture plays a pivotal role in societal transformation and development. The stability of any society is ensured and greatly determined through the dynamic transmission of her cultural and social values. Culture influences what people communicate, to whom they communicate and how they communicate". Cultural heritage is either enhanced or changed because of diverse forms of communication taking place through the social media. Social changes are influenced by diverse multifaceted factors which are often triggered by human or environmental factors such as globalization, climate change, governmental systems, evolving

socio-cultural/religious beliefs, and the growing tide of Information Communication technology (ICT).

The ICT system with its growing dependence by the society has created a platform for other activities with different applications accessed by Internet users for various forms of interaction. The Internet creates innovation for social media applications which provide opportunities for chatting, sharing communication materials, downloading pictures, etc. The internet practically provides the freedom of expression in diverse ways, which unconsciously redefine, modify or change the culture of any given society. Consequently, Costa, Cuzzocrea and Nuzzaci (2014) affirmed that "for many people, the Internet is an essential part of daily life, and they have adopted the innovative linguistic practices, cultural forms, and costumes that have emerged." Furthermore, the development and rampant use of communication facilities has enhanced the intrusion of Western culture into the Third World communities. These intrusions result in changes in the African culture and practices. This is quite noticeable among young Nigerians because of their high rate of exposure to the internet and social media. Also, there is international influence these platforms create through inter-cultural interactions that occur among people of diverse cultures.

Akanle (2012) explained that "the Culture of people as veritable Social Capital could be deployed for growth and development and even translated to economic and technological capitals. Culture is a cure-all for growth and development". Nothing is achieved and could be achieved except it is operated within the culture. This re-emphasises the relevance of the culture in all societies." The influences of internet interactions on our culture are obvious in today's youth' dressing, language, and general family values such as greeting, absolute obedience to family rules and norms, children's expectations to always take permission from their parents or elders before engaging in any activity. The opposite of these values is mostly what youths adopt on the internet especially social media where continued communication exists among young people. This could occur on their favourite social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram Tictok etc. This is why social media easily enhanced social and cultural changes among youths. These changes might not necessarily be negative they are also changes that are also advancing the social values of the society.

Social Media has become a trending lexicon in media study such that many researchers have turned towards investigating and evaluating its impact and effect on society. This is so as several decades saw the dominance of the conventional (traditional) media in society especially in exercising the responsibility of information, education and entertainment. But with the turn of events in the new century, the evolution of technology and the ubiquitous power of the information and communication technology (ICT) which has converged the world to a global village. This position has become too obvious that Kaplan and Haenlein (2001) noted that the current trend toward social media can therefore be seen as an evolution back to the internet's root, since it re-transforms the World Wide Web to what it was initially created for: a platform to facilitate information exchange between users. So, this digital evolution has brought about creation of several social media platforms for interactions such that "this generational dynamism in communication tools and systems has resulted in outstanding evolution of a collaborative, participatory, democratic and user-generated-content pattern of communication." (Odii, 2013).

Many scholars have argued that because the social media have provided a plethora of opportunities for transforming societies and the advancement of humanity through interactive information exchange, it has also created catalogue of challenges that the society is presently contending with.

From the forgoing, this paper tends to outline the challenges and the prospects inherent in the use of social media to promote social values toward realizing a socially stable society in Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarifications
Social Value

A value is a belief, a mission, or a philosophy that is meaningful (Posner, 2008). Whether we are consciously aware of them or not, every individual has a core set of personal values. Values can range from the commonplace, such as the belief in hard work and punctuality, to the more psychological, such as self-reliance, concern for others, and harmony of purpose.

Social values are therefore an aggregate of thought patterns, beliefs, norms and customs that inform a people's collective behaviours and attitude as they relate among themselves (Chukwu & Onyema, 2019). It focuses on those things that are important to a people. According to Klamer (2003) a value to a society is understood through a collection of the collective individual values, with the assumption that these values reflect an underpinning preference of what is a value in that society or community. A value is therefore considered a social value when it is considered by that society or community as shared value that has inter-human social value or integration.

Social value is the quantification of the relative importance that people place on the changes they experience in their lives. Values are progressively formed in the lives of people and in corporate culture. They shape society's behaviour to guarantee adequate coexistence between participants. According to Macedo (2003) social values provide the boundaries between what is right and what is wrong, what is permissible, prohibited, illegal, desirable, legitimate, or punishable and, that the only way they can function is by a collective agreement, either explicit or implicit, that clarifies rules in a way that everybody knows and understands the boundaries (Macedo, 2003).

Tool (1990) in his submission observed that a social value, is the ability to choose or do that which provides for the continuity of human life and the non- invidious re-creation of community through the instrumental use of knowledge. This he went further to acknowledge that a social value has basically three instrumental value principle namely, continuity, non-invidiousness, and instrumental use (Tool, 1990). This means that what a society holds as a value must be able to advance that society, expunge hatred and conflict and be used as an instrument for social growth.

Social Values in Nigeria

Social values are embedded in the dominant culture of the society. The culture of any society speaks volume of the identity of the community. It tells the way other society will see and identify them. Therefore, the relevant societal culture becomes significant to any nation. Culture is reflected in the way of life, ranging from religion, system of government, language, attitudes, their dressing code, their expression of emotion and sadness. In essence, culture is the totality of the way of life of a people. According to Ekeanyanwu (2015);

> Some of the traditional values in Nigeria include honesty, moral rectitude, respect for elders, and respect for fellow citizens, respect and loyalty to family values, hard work, resourcefulness, and education. Understanding the diversity in religious beliefs is also considered a core value within the country, as there are several religious groups that make up the population in Nigeria. One of the most significant values that Nigeria holds to be of great importance is the wisdom of its elders. Age is a symbol of experience and

intelligence, and the mistreatment or disrespect of elders is viewed as taboo and therefore unacceptable.

These cultural heritages changed or are enhanced mainly through the communication process. The act of communication and forms of connection and interaction with other culture might not necessarily change an existing culture but could have a positive or negative effect on the already existing culture. Hosseini (2018) affirmed this when he explained that "Cultures evolve through interactions, culture is not just about where we are (spatially and chronologically), but also how 'we' (vs 'they') interact with the other societies/communities. While emphasizing that globalization is promoted through technology and a motivating factor for cultural change in Nigeria, Ekeanyanwu and Edewor (2009) accorded these changes to the 89% of western media content imported to Nigeria. This act of globalization is enhanced through information communication technology as communication technology device allows for inter-border communication paving the way for the exchange of culture. Considering the benefits ICT has provided for many, Ekeanyanwu and Okorie (2014) believed that the information flow between Nigeria and the western world is imbalanced as information coming into Nigeria from the western nations supersedes information exported from Nigeria to the western world especially through the Internet platform.

Social Stability

The idea of social stability is one that is shared by many sociologists, economists and most social scientists (Birner & Ege, 1999). This is because every social scientist is interested in the social stability of the society. Social stability according to Emile Durkheim can also be seen as a form of social solidarity or collective consciousness which he described as social forces that keep the society and its member bonded in mutual support and harmony (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008). This harmony and support is built around certain social, cultural, religious or economic rudiments that could serve as the bases on which people interact in the community. Talcot Parsons in articulating this idea observed that value consensus is the basis through which a society can attend social stability. This can be done when values are institutionalized, and behaviour is structured in terms of them, the result is a stable system and society (Haralambos *et al,* 2008). A society is therefore said to be socially stable when her social norms and values are able to articulate the aspirations of that society without it losing the very ideals that define that community or society. Hayek taking a different approach to the understanding of social stability made emphasis on the division of knowledge and on coordination as the fundamental stabilising forces of every society (Birner & Ege, 1999). This means that a society is said to be stable when there is a shared body of knowledge and coordination of this knowledge for a common good and progress.

Social Media

The term 'Social Media' has been variously defined by scholars from different perspectives over the past years, and with each professing what appears to be all encompassing until one read another. Thus, in this multitude of definitions, one tends to align with Jacka and Scott (2011) who contended that, "there is no single recognized definition for social media". However, some scholars have defined it in different perspectives over the past years. Among them are Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), who viewed social media as the interaction among people, through which they create, share, and/or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks via social media sites. Bertot, Jaeger and Grimes (2010) assert that the concept of social media is based on four main pillars covert strengths: partnership, participation, enablement and time. Similarly,

Selwyn (2012) defines it as the application that allows users to converse and interact with each other; to create, edit and share new forms of textual, visual and audio content, and to categorize, label and recommend existing forms of content. Duggan and Smith (2013) contended that it is some form of approval that permits a free forum for interactions. Essentially, the use of the social media as channels of communication is a growing trend in Nigeria now, like most parts of the world. According to Han and Kim (2010), social media are the emerging digital communication channels which create a user-oriented information sharing ground where people can generate or subscribe information content as both information provider and consumer. Further corroborating this position, Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) asserted that, "social media is a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of web 2.0 which allow the creation and exchange of user generated content".

Kietzmann and Hermkens (2011) elaborated on this, stating that "social media depends on Mobile and Web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms through which individuals and communities share, co-create, discuss, and modify user-generated content. They introduce substantial pervasive changes to communications between communities and individuals". The Oxford dictionary also defined social media as "websites and applications used for social networking". As social media continuously keeps changing, it is difficult to assign a fixed definition to it. In his conception, Buettner (2016) defined social media as "computer mediated tools that allow people or companies to create, share exchange information, career interest, ideas, pictures/ virtual communities and networks". Basically, no matter how social media is defined, it is considered to be the fastest growing web application in the 21st century and this rapid development is being backed by technological advancement (Heyam, 2014). Mankind has enormously benefited and continues to benefit from it and as such cannot underestimate its importance as far as communication is concerned.

A look at Social Media Usage Menace against Nigeria Social Values
Social Media and Decline in the Nigerian Family Values

The nucleus of every society is the family. Whatever affect the family, also affects the society. Social media has become a very special meal served in all homes in contemporary Nigerian society either consciously or unconsciously. The inability of parents and guardians to acknowledge the sudden change in conduct by the younger generations have left them frustrated and disillusioned. As a result, moral decadence appears to be a permanent feature of the present-day Nigerian society. Lamenting about the moral decadence in the society owing to social media, most authors in Nigeria, like Elechi Amadi, Pepper Clark, Wole Soyinka and Chinua Achebe have in their works given a comprehensive picture of what the Nigerian society was like before the advent of globalization and by extension, social media. Achebe (1983) succinctly expresses his view when he argues that Nigerians are, today, being faced with the deadly social problems of culture conflict and value confusion, which are not unconnected with the breakdown in traditional values, but subjection to foreign ways of life that are at variance with the days of yore. Essentially, the command of social media has deposited depravity on the door steps of family values. Thus, the subtle invasion, occupation and uprooting of the richly endowed Nigerian family values by social media is unfortunately, an affliction of the cancer of the bone marrow. As a terminal disease, the Nigerian family values has not only become insulated, but infatuated with social media platforms for directives. This crash of family values is similar to Achebe's narrative in his epic novel, Things Fall Apart as enunciated by Obierika in his accusation of the white man:

> The white man is very clever. He came quietly and peaceably with religion. We were amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay. Now he has won our brothers, and our clan can no longer act like one. He has put a knife on things that held us together and we have fallen apart. (Achebe, 1958).

Presently, social media is accessible to almost every individual that has a phone. Essentially the advent of social media has become the biggest platform for communication throughout the world and forever changing interpersonal communication and relationships (Mwaura, 2014). The effect social media usage has on interpersonal relationships is changing the way people communicates, while decreasing human social and behavioural skills. Sustaining his position, Mwaura (2014) argued that if the trend of social media and online interactivity and communication continues to rapidly grow and increase in the future, face-to-face human contact skills, as well as interpersonal relationships would diminish. However, the constant exposure to certain information, especially the stories of sexuality has increased risky sexual behaviour leading to moral decadence. With all these information coming from social media, children and adolescent are more often than not likely to take up to these behaviours via imitation. As a result, uneasiness from parents, professionals, and the populace at large about the impact of social media on the Nigerian society has grown steadily over recent years. From this point, social media has continued to pose a real threat to the preservation of Nigerian culture, and by extension, family values, especially with the widespread of depraved values and never-ending corruption of the true identity of the Nigerian parent and all that he represents and will be remembered for years to come. For example, these social media sites habitually provide space for consumers to upload and share nude pictures, videos and also some offensive pictures of themselves against the people's collective conscience.

Today, the rapid and aggressive spread communication technologies under the influence of Western multinationals have brought new impediments to the social value of Nigerian family. Nigerians now cultivate the materialistic and individualistic habits and values previously associated with Western culture. The culture of individualism is fast eroding the values and ideals of the extended family system, which Nigerians are known for (Obioha, 2008). Excessive materialism, for instance, has changed the religious character of the traditional Igbos (Obiora, 1996) and kneeling down to greet an elder has become alien to the young Yoruba girl.

Social Media and Cybercrime in the Nigerian Society

In Nigeria today, cybercrime is one of the most rapidly increasing forms of computer crime perpetrated by Nigerians of all walks of life, particularly the younger generation against the value of honesty. Succinctly put, it is an unlawful act whereby the computer is used to physically damage or steal unauthorized information with the intent to defraud unsuspecting victims among others. Corroborating this assertion, Tade and Aliyu (2011) averred that the advent of the cybercrime (yahoo-boys) subculture in tertiary institutions has introduced another dimension of youth's involvement in fraud in the present-day Nigerian society. Studies on Internet fraud in Nigeria have been based on the emergence of the 'yahoo-boys' subculture while neglecting the importance of the structure sustaining it. In Nigeria today, the country's undergraduate students and un-employed graduates engage in this form of anti-social behaviour for the purpose of living a life of splendour.

Fundamentally, fraud is not a new phenomenon because it has always been around since human history. Its definition and outcomes on victims have not changed. With social media, the method of perpetration of fraudulent activities has evolved to include online capabilities (Lee, 2003). However, the scary aspect of this type of new fraud is that perpetrators can now use the anonymous

advantage of the Internet to cause harm (PBI Media, 2003). One type of Internet Fraud is the Nigerian e-mail fraud. In this particular crime, the victim, for instance, receives an e-mail from an alleged Son of a deceased prominent Nigerian, who happens to be the heir to millions of dollars that are hidden in accounts all over the world. The e-mail recipient is made to believe that he/she is to receive some of the fortune. All that is asked in exchange is a lawyer's fee of several thousands of dollars in order to claim the money. The people who fall prey to this crime send their money and never receive their expected fortune (Koinange, 2002). This type of internet fraud using fake emails is known as phishing. Phishing is probably the most common and widespread variety of online fraud. It takes the form of various dubious and fake emails or websites, which are meant to induce users to disclose their bank accounts or the passwords to their accounts, which can be used to debit their account. As a relatively new form of crime, Internet fraud affects a substantial number of people on a daily basis. The effects of Internet fraud are often discussed in terms of financial losses, while the indirect effects go unnoticed. Essentially, internet fraudsters in Nigeria have recognized online opportunities to perpetrate online frauds.

Social Media Impacts on Indecent Dressing, Sexual Harassment, and Sexual Promiscuity among Nigerian Youths

More than half of Nigeria's population constitute youthful age. It is called the youth bulge and this youth bulge has been a target on social media sites. The level of moral decadence in Nigeria has become repugnant. The earlier valuable moral values and norms of yesterday have regrettably been ruined, while immorality now reigns especially among the youths. It is in this spectrum that Yaro (2013) observed that "gone are the days when morality and discipline were virtues. Today it is the exact opposite. Nigerians now live in a decadent society where morality and discipline are ancient, and outdated. This is evident in the current level of sexual promiscuity among the youths in the country. With each passing day, the society is confronted with more and more alarming cases of immoral behaviours in Nigeria, amidst each new case more shocking than the one before. From the foregoing, it is obvious that one of the most conspicuous features of social media has been the growing lack of interest in social values, particularly morality. One can uncommonly describe social media as a worldwide phenomenon, but the speed with which its influence is insulating all the nooks and crannies of the social values is really disturbing. On this basis, there is a positive correlation, one can contend, between the emergence of social media and the level of moral decadence in the Nigerian society, particularly when one views the decline in the Nigerian traditional social values. Pornography in the social media is a common place today, posing serious problem for the moral security of the country's teenagers who are so fascinated at how simple it is to watch pornographic content via their phones. As long as they keep downloading these obscene materials into their phones, the more morally bankrupt they become; they sit at home watching them and do not go out to meet real people; when they do, they want to experiment what they are watching with any opposite sex. It is in this vein that prompted Sandel and Ju (2019) to conclude that social media targets adolescents in general and make them vulnerable to sexual misconduct. Ani (2002) has observed that "sexual immorality has become the talk of the day in the Nigerian society as one is regarded as the greatest by the number of sexual partners, he/she has in the name of lovers. As a result, pre-marital sex, homosexuality and lesbianism are no more vices among youths. Apart from this, social media sites have also served as avenue for some youths to share risqué, nude and sexual images, especially of themselves. This has encouraged sexual immorality and promiscuity in the society. In Nigeria, the youths represent majority of the population (Omolo, 2014). This young population is often a good target in social media sites. According to Sandel and Ju (2019), the young are bombarded with videos, shows, advertisements, and movies with sexual

messages. In furtherance of this assertion, McCaskey (2012) explains that many people use the social media to prostitute or to promote prostitution.

The Positive role of Social Media toward Nigeria Social Stability

Sitting and sharing a cup of tea with an elderly man or woman, when the discussions come to the social media, a good number of them would often point out the numerous ills and how the social media has destroyed our beautiful world. This might seem truthful to a certain extent, we must however, note that there is still a silver lining to the whole phenomenon that social media has also made the world a better place. Some of these positives include;

Social Media as a Platform for Social Integration and Exchange:

Verster (2010), while commenting on the potentials and usage of Facebook, says: You can create a social space from where you can send notices, organize classroom events and aggregate learning feeds using Facebook's built-in array of tools. Thus, it is imperative to note that social media, by their very nature are drivers of social change, national development and organizational development.

Social media build interactive platforms on which media users create, share, discuss and modify user-generated content (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy & Silvestre, 2011). These media are currently most often used for the purpose of socialization, organization and mobilization (Correa, 2010). People who use social media connect, communicate and interact with their peers as well as other users (Ellison, Vitak, Steinfield, Gray & Lampe, 2011). Social media, including Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, Instagram, to name but a few, promote interpersonal contact, facilitate interaction among people, and connote a social value (Dijck, 2013). This has helped to create so many healthy relationships across Nigeria on business, religious, cultural and social bases bringing to bear the federal nature of the Nigerian state.

Social Media as the Watchdog for Political Activities of Government and Government Officials

Communication technologies and social networking sites (SNSs) are used not only as means to maintain social connectivity, but also as mobilizing tools to express social and political demands and promote human rights and democracy. In Nigeria, social media have contributed to a more active, critical and politicized citizenry, where citizens are no longer passive receivers of state-oriented media. Differently put, socially oriented and mediated connections do not merely express people's social ideologies but also generate, establish, and proliferate their social intent in public spheres. Successful political leaders are those who are able to achieve their objectives and settle social problems through dialogue, effective communication, and compromise. With this thought in mind, it should be stressed that social media represents a substantial change from traditional bureaucratic ways of running affairs to more innovative, creative, and representative forms of government (Wright & Street, 2007). This illustrates vividly the incident of End SARS campaign in Nigeria where twitter was employed as a social media platform to make social demands from the Nigerian government (End SARS, 2020).

Social Media Uphold Common Human Values Irrespective of Place and Time

One unique thing about the Nigerian state is her socio-cultural and linguistic diversity. This uncommon treasure has never been harnessed exhaustively for a better Nigeria. This is one area the social media in recent time has preyed on it showcasing our diversity as strength and tools for greater Nigerian state. Bennett (2003) captured this idea thus; social media affect the social norms

and behaviours of users and support their social engagement in the promotion and protection of human rights through creating connections with others. This connection brings in a synergy of various social and cultural values towards a holistic humane value.

Every human society harbours a culture in so far as it has values systems, religious practices, belief, customs and traditions handed on from generation to generation. An ethnic group is a distinct people with specific culture which differentiate it from another group. Culture remains a major content of socialization. This means that socialization within a given society entails inter-behavioural conformity to peculiar cultural demands and expectations of the society. Ezeokana (2010) viewed culture and socialization as interdependent psychological principles for defining a society. For him, "culture provides the content of the material in which people will learn and internalize. Socialization on the other hand, helps in passing over the evolved cultures down from generation to generation thereby making cultures to be enduring and sustaining. Promoting responsible social media usage for the purpose of cultural interaction among different ethnic groups in Nigeria will encourage and sustain social values.

Conclusion

National culture is a mixture of common subcultures of a country which has some common aspects that are found in different subcultures of different states or regions within the same country. Social media provide its users platform to interact with millions of people from hundreds of different cultural regions. Here they have no limit of conversation, sharing information and new knowledge. Social media can be seen as free media, where active users can express what-ever they want without any regional, lingual, religious, racial, social, and cultural barriers. Social media is a place where all its users are publishers as well as critics. Social media are also the largest platform where we can have more freedom of expression than any other form of conventional media. People from every walk of life are active users of Facebook, Twitter, You-tube, Instagram, WhatsApp, Snapchat, Tiktok, etc. When they share their daily based happenings and other interesting activities at their workplace that reflect their culture clearly, friends from other region of the country become familiar with the traditions, norms, values and way of living across community borders. This is how social media help to promote national social values in Nigeria.

Social media networks are mostly used by young people who play an important role in imbibing and spreading social values which inform their social behaviour. Nigerian parents and guidance are faced with the challenge to guide young people under their care in responsible use of social media to shape their social values.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made;
  i. The Nigerian parents should monitor their children's activities on social media platforms to know who and what they communicate with and about. Gadgets handed to young ones should have parental control functions toward internet and social media applications usage.
 ii. Moral Instructors/Guidance Counsellors can also engage in designing moral lessons and behavioural correctness by creating specialized blogs that can constantly checkmate the young people's engagement, attraction to negative post and interactions on social media platforms.
iii. The Nigerian government should, through the Ministry of Communications Technology, propose an enactment of social media use act to the National Assembly to enact an act that

would provide the users of the social media with their dos and don'ts. This is quite necessary, as many young Nigerians use social media to engage in fraud and cyber-crimes.

iv. As much as the social media is a common denominator to all irrespective of social status, class, religious beliefs or political or socio-cultural affiliation, users must guard against hate speeches or insinuating utterances that could endanger the peace and stability of the society. Social media users must therefore be guided by the principle of the golden rule 'do unto others what you will want others do unto you'.

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