



## TRUTH AND SOURCE CREDIBILITY ON THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS.

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### ABSTRACT

This paper analysed randomly selected information on the Covid-19 pandemic that is ravaging the world in order to ascertain the credibility of information got from sources. Anchored on the Correspondence Theory of Truth, the paper employed the Critical Discourse Analysis methodology. This centred on analysing words or information from news sources on Covid-19 pandemic issues. At the end of the analysis and juxtaposition, the paper arrived at the conclusion that the words of the news sources relating to certain aspects of the Coronavirus pandemic were not in line with the theory that anchored the paper. The paper recommends that news sources should weigh the truth or otherwise of the information they give to journalists in terms of such being what is tenable in the circumstances of the situation. Similarly, journalists should ensure they conduct credibility tests on pieces of information given to them by sources, which is one of the bastions of journalism.

**Keywords:** Analysis, Coronavirus, News, Sources, Truth.

### Introduction

People get information on happenings in the world through the mass media. One wonders how the world would be if the mass media ceased to exist and the flow of information stopped. How would people know what is happening around them and in the world? This explains the pervasiveness of the media and their stranglehold on the world, turning the world into a global living room (Arackal, 2015). Though the media service the people with information, they get most information from and through different ways, called sources. They rely on sources because a journalist cannot be in every place at the same time with the simultaneity of happenings in the world. *The News Manual* (n.d.) in Sources of Information states that even within small countries, journalist cannot be everywhere simultaneously to witness events as they unfold. Sources, therefore, provide them with information, underscoring the importance of sources in the news industry. Though journalists do witness some events, such can also be seen as sources. In the absence of witnessing an event, sources become the journalists lifeline. The sources thus work for society, through the instrumentality of the journalist. This spells a symbiotic relationship between sources and journalists. It can also be said that the relationship is parasitic, with the

journalist being the parasite, as averred to by Tiffen et al (2013, p. 1) that "news is, then, a parasitic institution; its product is the deeds and words of others..."

The present work sees the relationship as symbiotic, predicated on the inability of the sources to give out what they know without the news organizations. News is not news until it is reported and it is only the journalist that can do this. Even in this age of technological advancement, though some sources can put out information on their own, a vital question arises: are such sources "news organizations?" To buttress this, Ibrahim et al (2011) found from a research that "on the question of source-journalist relationships, an informant from the Ministry of Defence said: 'We are professionals. We help each other. The press needs us as news sources and we need the press to promote our cause'" (p. 8). A group editor, on his part, averred that news sources are important in news as "...we need news sources ...to give credibility to the news" (p.8). Reich (2011) affirms that information sources can be seen standing behind virtually all the news stories that we get and the news sources being afforded the opportunity of obtaining news access and public voice. Overall, Sigal (1984) categorically opines that there can be no news without the news sources. It could be added here that without the news vendors, there would be no news sources as well, as they both depend on each other. In spite of this apparent symbiotic relationship, the issue of information from the sources being true is important to journalism.

### **Objective of the study**

The general aim of this paper is to assess information given out by sources to journalists who then do the publishing. In doing this, the paper aims at critically examining the source while not judging the journalist. The specific objective, therefore, is to draw an analogy between the pieces of information made available to the public, by sources, on Coronavirus against the actuality on the ground as was stated by the sources.

### **Conceptual Clarifications**

#### **News Sources**

The terms "news sources, "sources of information" or "sources" are mentioned mean different things to different people. To some, any would mean where they get to know what happened where. These could be from books, scholarly works, newspapers, radio and television, and even from the "roadside radio" (*Investigative Journalism Manual*, n.d.). News sources for journalists are the human beings or things from which they get information on happenings that they did not witness. Though a reporter might have witnessed an event, he might still need to consult other people or things for more information. Fisher (2018) corroborates that journalism news sources refer to sources of information from which the reporter garners material to write a story like from individuals, written reports, social media, and data dumps via website. She further avers that the individuals "could be eyewitnesses to events, whistle-blowers, civic officials, police, politicians, business leaders, community and advocacy groups, and the communications professionals who represent them" (p. 1). It is, therefore, through these various ways that the journalist gets news stories apart from the ones he/she might have witnessed. In spite of the dependence of journalists on news sources for information, there are sources that are reliable while others are not. It is, however, the duty of the journalist to verify the authenticity or otherwise of information from a source before publishing, as one of the professional rules demands.

## **Dysfunction**

The everyday meaning of dysfunction is something not performing a function that it is supposed to perform; there is impairment or an abnormality in the way it operates. From the scientific sphere, somatic dysfunction is a diagnostic term defined as a related component of the somatic system (body framework) being impaired or altered in function (Rey-Mathias, 2018). In media communication too, the "news body framework" has several components that inter-relate before news goes out, with one of these "media somatic components" being the source. The media mediate between the sources and the audience as windows through which the world is seen, the interpreters of information, the platforms or carriers of information, the signposts that point out directions, the filters that screen out other pieces of information, barriers that block the truth and provide interactive communication (Rabiu, 2010). When news sources dysfunction, the media too become dysfunctional since they rely on sources for information.

## **Coronavirus**

The novel Coronavirus, COVID-19, Rath (2020) avers is from a family of several viruses. It is a highly transmittable viral infection caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). The virus originated in the Wuhan open-air "wet markets" in Hubei Province, China in December, 2019 and spread to other parts of the world. "Wet markets" are places where people buy fresh meat and fish, alongside animals killed on the spot, though with some species of animals banned. The World Health Organization (WHO) at the second meeting of the International Health Regulations Emergency Committee on the outbreak of Covid-19, held in Geneva, Switzerland on January 30, 2020 declared COVID-19 as meeting the threshold of a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) (WHO, 2020).

The world was, therefore, alerted to the danger the virus poses to humanity as it had spread to 18 other countries with 83 new cases. China had 7711 confirmed cases with 170 deaths from the virus by the end of January, 2020 (WHO, 2020) and still counting. The WHO later declared the Covid-19 outbreak a pandemic on March 11, 2020 (BBC, 2020). According to the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (2020) the symptoms for Covid-19, though not exhaustive, include fever and chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty in breathing, fatigue, muscles or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting and diarrhoea.

## **Literature review**

Literature review in this work is delimited to conceptual thoughts on the issue of sources and their credibility rather than drawing from empirical works. This has been occasioned by the dearth of such experienced by the researchers. Sources, known to be the bedrock of the media worldwide, provide information to journalists. Without sources, the quantum of information available to the consumers might be less than what they get now. This seeming over-dependence on sources by journalists for information still has a snag for the journalist. Is it every piece of information given by a source that the journalist must use? How correct is the information received by the journalist? The issue of the correctness of information disseminated by the journalist is clearly spelt out in many media codes of ethics the world over. It then behoves on the journalist to be responsible by reporting based only on credible sources. That is the albatross the journalist has on his neck. The truism, however, is that if something is not true from the published information that was got from a source, it is the

journalist/the media house that bear the brunt of the law. This counters Ibrahim et al (2011) assertion that it is the sources and not journalists who are responsible for the accuracy of the facts. It is interesting to note that in spite of this, it is the journalists duty to cross-check the facts given by the source. They, however, allude to the fact that journalists still have to rely on news sources to provide them with the facts about events as this will add authority and believability to their news. In essence, the journalist cannot do without news sources. It is to be noted again here that the main thrust of this paper is not on the journalists but the sources that provide the information.

Types of news sources, according to *The News Manual* (n.d.) include reporters, primary sources made up of written and leaked documents and secondary sources and tip-offs. It further states that reporters are one of the most reliable sources of information (although not completely reliable). These could be in-house or news agencies that supply an organisation. If they are well trained, experienced and objective, their reports will usually be accurate and can be trusted. Primary sources, often people that were/are at the centre of the event, are usually the best sources as they give accurate details and supply strong comments.

Still on primary sources, *The News Manual*(n.d) avers that written reports as primary sources make an excellent source based on their being written after much research and checks for accuracy before final publication with official approval. However, just because information is printed does not follow that it is infallible, since with typewriters, computers and modern technology, it is relatively easy to produce printed material. There is, therefore, the need to look at who the producer of the document is: do they have adequate knowledge about the topic as well as access to reliable facts? Do they have a reputation for reliability? Leaked documents, as a primary written source, deal with documents not yet released to the press officially but are given to a journalist for publication. These could be given by someone in an organization who wants to be seen shielded or he/she does not have the authority to give them out to the media. Though such are often leaked by people who believe in the public good without revealing themselves publicly, it is equally true that some are leaked by people who are primarily out to gain an advantage over someone else, especially the person(s) criticised in the report.

*The News Manual* (n.d.) further states that secondary sources are those that do not make the news but are in a privileged position to pass such information to the journalists. In this way, information from information offices of organizations is secondary. On eyewitnesses, *The News Manual* (n.d.) sees eyewitnesses as secondary sources because, although they are able to tell what they think they had seen, they are often not trained for such work and can be very inaccurate, without meaning to be. It further sees the tip-off as a source where a journalist is called and provided with information on an issue, especially one that is of public importance. In such a situation, the source may or may not disclose his/her identity. Some tip-off sources may only reveal their identity on the condition of being treated anonymously.

To Kleemans, et al (2015) the basic two sources for the journalist are elite or official/institutional and citizen/ordinary people. However, in-between these two, Tiffen et al (2013) saw a middle-of-the-way news source: 'civil society sources'. Kleemans et al (2015, p. 1) state that "traditionally, elite sources have been the 'primary definers' in the news. Elite members, such as politicians, officials, and experts, have consistently been the most frequently selected sources". These sources are those that "matter" or the "decision makers" or the "heavy weights." The citizen/ordinary people are those seen on the streets, the "have nots" who have no

institutional-group affiliation. These “have little direct influence on policy and public debate...” (Kleemans et al., 2015, p.5). The civil society sources “do not represent the elite or official/institutional sources but, in one way or the other, are recognized in social institutions that try to exert as much influence as possible” (Kleemans et al., 2015, p.5).

Levin (2000) cited in Rabiou (2014) sees three types of sources: primary, secondary and anonymous. Here, “a primary source is an expert, someone recognized as a leading authority on a topic...or a person with first-hand information on a topic...an original document or an official report.” Secondary sources are “reference books and other media people with informed opinions on a topic” while the anonymous sources are those used “to get inside information that the source might not otherwise offer” (Rabiou, 2014, p.393).

Though the foregoing discussion avers that sources are those people or things from where the journalist gets news for consumers, the journalist does not just get these pieces of information and publishes them. Certain yardsticks are considered before such information is given out, which form the guiding principles for the journalist. The first of such principles is the sources’ credibility or trustworthiness. Reich (2011, p.1) defines source credibility “as a person’s believability as a source of information or as the degree to which information from a source is perceived by a journalist as accurate, fair, unbiased and trustworthy.” Bracken cited in Lu (2015) opines that source credibility is the amount of credibility (believability) attributed to a source of information. Determining the credibility or otherwise of a source rests on some sources giving information that is accurate while others might give information that is not credible. The credible sources are referred to as reliable sources while those that give less credible information are said to be less reliable. It is important to note that information from less reliable sources could still be useful as it can lead the journalist to where he/she can either verify the credibility or otherwise of such information or get the information from a source that was previously unknown to the journalist before then. There are some other sources that can hardly be trusted at all. Since the journalist is ethically required to give out information that is true, balanced, accurate and fair, it implies that the sources he/she gets the news from must likewise be true, balanced, accurate and fair.

Since it is imperative that journalists trade in facts that are reliable, it becomes even more imperative that sources should also give out information that is reliable and factual (*The News Manual*, n.d.). With news sources that are reliable and credible at the disposal of the journalist, the sources would add authority and believability to the news (Ibrahim et al, 2011).

### **Theoretical framework**

This study is anchored on the Correspondence Theory of Truth (CTT), traced to Plato and Aristotle, though in a vague form then. According to *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* (2015) the view was advocated again by Russell and Moore early in the 20th century that the CTT holds the view that truth is correspondence to, or with, a fact. It further states that the truth label is usually applied to views that explicitly embrace the idea that truth consists in a relation to reality. In other words, truth is a relational property involving a characteristic relation, which has to be specified, to some portion of reality, which also has to be specified. It, therefore, follows that truth is seen as being present in a setup or situation when a statement or proposition made has a correspondence to the way the world is. In essence, a statement or proposition can only be true if a corresponding fact to it exists. *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* (2015) further avers that various concepts are employed to discern

the truth for the relevant relation. The concepts include correspondence, conformity, congruence, agreement, accordance, copying, picturing, signification, representation, reference and satisfaction. These are measured against relevant portions of reality concepts of facts, states of affairs, conditions, situations, events, objects, sequences of objects, sets, properties and tropes.

The Correspondence Theory of Truth guided the study by using the basic tenet of the theory to critically analyse the information provided by sources on issues relating to the Coronavirus pandemic. That is the statements or propositions of sources were measured against the truth label to see if they explicitly embraced the idea of truth consisting “in a relation to reality.” The truth in these propositions were viewed through the prism of a relational property of a characteristic relation, as specified by the sources, to the portion of reality, as was also specified by what was actually seen on the ground. This juxtaposition formed the correlation or otherwise of the characteristic of the statement or proposition to the actuality in the world, with reference to the Coronavirus pandemic.

### **Methodology**

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was used in this paper. CDA, according to Fowler et al, cited in Qianbo (2016) originated from the study of the relationship between language and ideology but gradually moved from concentrating on the “what” to encompass the “why” and “how”. Citing Fowler et al (2016) further states that the blending of historical background of the discourse and the processes of events led to an enquiry into the relationship between signs, meaning and the social and historical conditions, which were found inextricably bound with the speaker or writer’s thought, which over time developed into CDA. Consequent upon this, the relationship between language and ideology has been its central topic. CDA became a reference method in media studies too. Fairclough and Wodak cited in Ulinuha, et al (2013) state that CDA has an eight-point programme that defines it. These are addressing social problems; engaging power relations on a discursive basis; discourse constituting society and culture; discourse doing ideological work; discourse being historical; the link between text and society being mediated; being interpretive and explanatory as well as being a form of social action. The present study, however, used only the following programmes of CDA: addressing social problems, being historical, linking the text and society and being interpretive and explanatory.

These CDA programmes were deployed in critically analysing the propositions or words of the sources on issues on and related to the Covid-19 pandemic. Basically, their words were measured against what was actually on the ground at the time of the study. In other words, the study juxtaposed the news worthy offerings of the sources with present conditions available on the strength of those sayings so as to establish a nexus between them. In addressing the Covid-19 pandemic social problem through examining historical sayings and linking the words of the sources through interpretation and explanatory approaches, the nexus was established. Based on these parameters, information on Coronavirus issues were purposively selected and critically analysed against the background of what was prevalent at the time of the study, referring back to the prior words on the issues.

To put this work in proper perspective, the time frame for the analysis is from January to July, 2020 in spite of the Coronavirus pandemic still ravaging the world.

### **Data Presentation and Discussion**

The mass media disseminate information on happenings in the world. In performing this sacred duty, they brought the “invasion” of the world by the Coronavirus pandemic to the world’s attention. Once the media got this news out, it was their duty to continue informing and educating the people on various issues surrounding the novel Coronavirus. In essence, the media had to depend solely on their sources for the information that they gave out.

**What Donald Trump said:**

**Claim:** With the outbreak of the pandemic, human kind went in search of ways to combat and contain the virus. Various treatment regimens were brought forward. The United States of America (USA) president, Donald Trump, stated that hydroxychloroquine, “a drug used to treat malaria and severe arthritis, was approved by the Food and Drug Administration to test as a COVID-19 Coronavirus treatment, as the number of cases nationwide continues to increase” (*The Sun*, 2020). Milman (2020) also states that the USA president had touted several drugs that he claimed can help tackle the outbreak, especially promoting the use of hydroxychloroquine, a common anti-malaria drug, to treat Covid-19, saying: “I sure as hell think we ought to give it a try.”

**The truth:** President Trump’s endorsement and approval of hydroxychloroquine for the treatment of Coronavirus is information coming from an elite source. This is in tandem with Kleemans, et al (2015) assertion of the existence of elite sources or official/institutional sources who are basically the ‘primary definers’ in the news. The recommendation of hydroxychloroquine coming from the USA president is something that should not be toyed with. The weight of Trump’s endorsement is further buttressed by Noymer (2020) assertion that a president’s influence over a population’s attitude towards a medicine or drug is significant. It was thus taken as the real thing. Showing the dysfunction of this source, he was contradicted by other sources, especially health experts who called for “considered, accurate information to avoid exacerbating the pandemic.” However, before this rebuttal could take effect, many negative effects of this source’s dysfunction had already taken place. Milman (2020) reports that Trump’s endorsement led to a scarcity of the drug in the USA such that patients with other health challenges in need of the drug could not get it. He further states that a man died in Arizona leaving his wife critically ill after they used chloroquine phosphate, an additive used to clean fish tanks, also related to the composition of the anti-malaria treatment promoted by Trump. This shows the negative effect of a news source becoming dysfunctional. Wongin (2020) supports that Trump administration’s anointing of hydroxychloroquine as the miracle drug for Coronavirus treatment is a distinctly modern tale of misinformation.

**Melinda Gates’ statement:**

**Claim:** Melinda Gates, co-chair of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and wife of USA billionaire, Bill Gates, projecting the corrosive effect of Covid-19 on Africans wondered: “How in the world are they going to deal with these?...If you live in a slum, you cannot physical distance, you have to go out and get your meal, you do not have clean water to wash your hands” (Africa Check, 2020). She further stated that a lack of resources meant African countries could, like Ecuador, see people putting the bodies of Coronavirus victims out on the street. These statements imply that the streets of towns, cities, village paths another traffic routes would be literally littered with African dead bodies due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

**The truth:** Melinda Gates' hypothesis was asymmetrical to the actuality on the Africa continent. As at the time of this research, no African country had witnessed dead bodies being put out on the streets, as it did happen in Ecuador. The world seemed to have believed her despite her not being an expert on health matters, but basically because she is an influential personality. This agrees with Joan Donovan cited in Wongin (2020) that "When someone who is newsworthy or notable... has [a say] about something that could be... path-breaking... everyone is going to pay attention no matter if that person has expertise or not." This clearly epitomizes the dysfunctional role sources can and do play in the media world. Gates' position as a source completely aligns with Gans cited in Ibrahim et al (2011) who sees her position as a known source as she is an elite. Gates' assertion runs afoul of the Correspondence Theory of Truth as such was not observed in any part of Africa at the time of this study. As at July 9, 2020 confirmed COVID-19 cases from 55 African countries stood at 463,102 with 11,083 deaths and 222,009 recoveries (*allAfrica*, 2020). The USA, on the other hand, had 3,481,680 confirmed cases with 138,291 deaths and 1,550,471 recoveries as at July 14, 2020 (*worldometer.info*, 2020). Such statements, coming from an information source of her status, show a clear dysfunction of news sources for the media.

**Chikwe Ihekweazu's statement:**

The index Coronavirus case in Nigeria was reported on February 27, 2020. President Muhammadu Buhari approved the inauguration of the Presidential Task Force (PTF) on Covid-19, which was done on March 17, 2020 by the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Boss Mustapha (Ajimotokan, 2020). By March 25, 2020 Nigeria had only five testing laboratories, with three in Lagos (Human Rights Watch, 2020). The need, therefore, arose for the PTF to increase the number of Covid-19 testing laboratories to cater for the estimated more than 200 million Nigerians.

**Claim:** The Director-General (DG) of the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), Dr. Chikwe Ihekweazu, averred that "Our goal is to have a molecular Lab operating in each State in Nigeria. Our approach is a Hub-and-Spoke that will have the NCDC National Reference Lab in Abuja as the Hub, organizing the supply chain, data, IT support and is connected to all the other labs" (DG@ncdcGOV, 2020). This statement was made six weeks after the inauguration of the PTF, which raised hopes that the sending samples to laboratories in far locations would be jettisoned, thus bringing testing closer to the people. For example, samples in Benue State were sent to Abuja where, presumably, they queued up for laboratory attention, thereby delaying the release of the results and heightening patients' anxiety. Furthermore, the NCDC in its strategy document on April 15, 2020 said 68 testing centres and two mobile laboratories would be established within 45 days (*Weekly Trust*, 2020).

**The truth:** The situation on the ground, at the time of this research, was different from the propositions made above. This was diametrically opposed to the tenet of the Correspondence Theory of Truth as the proposition did not correspond to the world reality. As at May 25, 2020 there were 20 states without testing laboratories for Covid-19 (*Weekly Trust*, 2020). By July 2, 2020 Nigeria had 30 Covid-19 testing laboratories (Ehanire, 2020). This meant a shortfall of 38 laboratories, less than 50% of the promised number, and 78 days after the proposition! As stated by Levin (2000) cited in Rabi (2014) "a primary source is an expert, someone recognized as a leading authority on a topic or a person with first-hand information on a topic." This description fits the NCDC, headed by a DG, whose April 15, 2020 strategy document averred there would be 68 testing laboratories in the country within the next 45 days. What is more, as at May 25, 2020 there were 20 states

without Covid-19 testing laboratories! The NCDC, as a source, is being dysfunctional to the society that it ought to serve properly. If this good idea could not be achieved within the source's set time-frame, why give it out. This also touches on sources' credibility as enunciated by Reich (2011) and Bracken cited in Lu (2015) that credibility deals with the source's believability, accurateness, fairness and trustworthiness. Predicated on these, the source failed the test and became dysfunctional.

### **Statements from Cross River and Kogi States:**

Sequel to the report of the Coronavirus index case in Nigeria on February 27, 2020 other cases also followed.

**Claim:** By the end of the third month (May) from Nigeria's index case, all the states had Covid-19 cases apart from Cross River and Kogi States. However, the claimed non-existence of Covid-19 cases in these two states was mired in a drama of "we do not have Coronavirus cases in our states" against the believability of the statements from the governors and other officials of the two states. By June 8, 2020 the Kogi State Commissioner for Information stated that there was no Covid-19 case in the state (*Premium Times*, 2020). In Cross River State too, the Information Commissioner stated that mischief makers were desperately finding ways to ensure the state recorded a Covid-19 case (*Premium Time*, 2020). As Gans cited in Ibrahim et al (2011) states these are the known sources who are the elites and official sources like heads of government and official spokespersons.

**The truth:** With the Covid-19 pandemic state of affairs in the country, people were weary of the claims by the two states' authorities, variously through their governors and other officials. In Kogi State for one, it became a battle between the state and the NCDC. Issues of demanding to quarantine NCDC officials sent to the state or outright refusal of entry to NCDC officials into the state or accusations of NCDC officials offering money to state officials to agree that there were, indeed, Covid-19 cases in the states became the issues instead of Coronavirus. The sources of these information were highly placed government officials in these two states that are seen as primary sources. But here they were saying such did not exist whereas it actually did exist. For example, in Cross River State, it was the Chief Medical Director (CMD) of the University of Calabar Teaching Hospital (UCTH) that announced the presence of Covid-19 in the state on June 25, 2020 (*The Cable*, 2020). This was even after the death of Godwin Akwaji, a lawmaker representing Obudu constituency in the Cross River State House of Assembly, after showing symptoms of COVID-19 (*The Cable*, 2020). But the state government had repeatedly said the measures it put in place worked in making Cross River State Covid-19 free. Thus the CMD of UCTH had to state in a circular dated June 25, 2020 that "With recent developments, it does appear that the state may not be free of Covid-19 as generally believed" (*The Cable*, 2020). If the information from the known sources in Kogi and Cross River States are not being dysfunctional, it means the sources are not serving the people with true information, which negates the tenet of the Correspondence Theory of Truth.

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

The issue of reporting truth is a cardinal point in educating and informing the masses by the media. This covers all facets of life as everything that happens in the world affects the whole world or at least a great part of it. Since the Coronavirus pandemic is a novel disease, there is the overriding need to accurately inform the people on issues surrounding it. Since it is a well-known fact that journalists depend on sources for the news they

disseminate, the issue of sources cannot be underestimated. Sources are vital to the existence of the media world and the world itself. Predicated on the above conclusion, the paper makes the following recommendations.

Since sources are a crucial component in the news industry, the need arises, therefore, for them to be circumspect about the information they give to the world through the journalists. They should weigh the truth or otherwise of such information before passing them on. If they do not do this and the journalist finds out in the end that such news sources are not credible and reliable, they stand the risk of being jettisoned by the journalist.

Journalists, on their part, should endeavour to cross-check the information given out by a source before publishing such. The journalist owns the information consumers the unalloyed duty of feeding them with information that is the truth and nothing but the truth. This is one of the ethical demands on the journalist. As Jacquette (2010, p. 216) cited in Fisher (2020) asserts: "Truth is the gold standard by which journalists are judged." Just as a journalist's reputation can rest on the credibility of his or her sources, a source can also gain credibility when used in a story.

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