

The Effect of Journalist Credibility on Source Openness in News Interviews

Alvisyah Riani¹, Niky Rahmada Ilahi², Rehan Al Faruq³

^{1,2,3} Faculty of Social Sciences, Universitas Dehasen Bengkulu, Indonesia

¹ corresponding e-mail: alvisyahriani10@gmail.com

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Abstract. Journalist credibility is central to news interviewing because it shapes sources' trust and willingness to provide information. This study examines the effect of journalist credibility on source openness in news interviews. A quantitative survey was conducted with all 30 journalists working at BE TV and RRI Bengkulu, selected through total sampling. Data were collected using a five-point Likert-scale questionnaire and analyzed with SmartPLS 4. The measurement model met validity and reliability criteria: all outer loadings exceeded 0.70; Average Variance Extracted values were 0.594 for journalist credibility and 0.662 for source openness; the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio was 0.824; Cronbach's alpha values were 0.831 and 0.872; and composite reliability values were 0.880 and 0.907. Hypothesis testing produced a t-statistic of 4.676 and $p < 0.001$, indicating a significant effect of journalist credibility on source openness. The R-squared value of 0.555 shows that journalist credibility explains 55.5% of the variance in source openness. The findings confirm that journalists' expertise, trustworthiness, and interpersonal attractiveness encourage sources to provide more honest, complete, and in-depth information.

Keywords: *Journalist Credibility; Source Openness; News Interviews; Source Credibility Theory; Journalism.*

INTRODUCTION

Journalists play a central role in conveying information to the public. Information distributed through mass media is expected not only to be timely but also to satisfy standards of accuracy, objectivity, and credibility. Journalist credibility therefore helps determine the quality of information received by the public because journalists directly search for, verify, process, and communicate news. Professional competence and effective communication are essential for producing information that is accurate and accountable (Romli, 2021).

News interviewing is one of the principal techniques used by journalists to obtain information directly from sources. Interviews provide facts, data, explanations, opinions, and clarification concerning events or public issues. They enable journalists to explore a topic in greater depth and to construct reports that are more complete and balanced. A journalistic interview is not merely a question-and-answer exchange; it is an interpersonal communication process that requires preparation, strategy, and an appropriate approach to the source (Sumadiria, 2020).

In practice, interviews do not always proceed smoothly. Journalists encounter sources with different backgrounds, interests, experiences, and communication styles. Some sources are open and communicative, whereas others are cautious, defensive, or reluctant to answer particular questions. Such responses are often influenced by the source's level of trust in the journalist and the media organization represented. Trust is a fundamental condition for successful communication because it affects whether information is delivered and received openly (Nurudin, 2021).

Journalist credibility is therefore important in building a productive relationship with a source. It can be observed through the journalist's understanding of the issue, ability to formulate relevant questions, adherence to communication ethics, and professional behavior

during the interview. A credible journalist is more likely to gain the source's confidence and obtain useful information. In contrast, a journalist who appears unprepared, biased, or unprofessional may make the source uncomfortable and encourage the source to restrict the information provided.

The rapid development of digital media has made sources increasingly cautious about communicating with journalists. Statements can circulate quickly, be quoted outside their original context, or be interpreted differently across platforms. Sources may therefore fear inaccurate reporting, selective quotation, or misuse of information. Media professionals have a substantial ethical responsibility to maintain public trust amid rapid technological change (Haryatmoko, 2021). Journalists must combine technical reporting skills with integrity, transparency, and the ability to create a trustworthy professional image.

Source openness directly affects the quality of information collected in a news interview. Open sources are more willing to provide honest, complete, and detailed explanations, allowing journalists to construct accurate and meaningful reports. Limited openness, however, may leave essential questions unanswered and weaken the quality of news coverage. Effective communication is more likely to develop when communicators create trust and psychological comfort during interaction (Cangara, 2020).

This study investigates the effect of journalist credibility on source openness in news interviews involving journalists at BE TV and RRI Bengkulu. The study contributes to communication and journalism research by testing whether credibility functions as a strategic factor in obtaining information. Its findings are also expected to provide practical guidance for journalists seeking to improve professional conduct, interpersonal communication, and the quality of their interactions with news sources.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Source Credibility Theory

Source Credibility Theory explains that communication effectiveness is influenced by how the receiver evaluates the communicator. Messages delivered by a source perceived as competent and trustworthy are more likely to be accepted and to produce a positive response. Early experimental research demonstrated that differences in source credibility can affect audience judgments and persuasive outcomes (Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Hovland et al., 1953). The theory remains relevant for analyzing interpersonal and mediated communication because receivers do not evaluate messages independently of the people who deliver them (West & Turner, 2021).

In the present study, the journalist is positioned as the communicator, while the news source is the interaction partner who evaluates and responds to the journalist during the interview. Journalist credibility is operationalized through expertise, trustworthiness, and interpersonal attractiveness. These dimensions represent the source's perception that the journalist understands the issue, behaves honestly and responsibly, and is able to create a respectful and comfortable interaction. Credibility consequently provides a theoretical explanation for why some journalists receive more open responses than others.

Expertise

Expertise refers to the journalist's knowledge of the topic, command of the interview material, ability to verify information, and skill in formulating relevant and comprehensible questions. Well-prepared journalists can recognize important details, ask appropriate follow-up questions, and avoid misleading assumptions. Professional competence is also a central element of journalistic quality because it supports accuracy and strengthens the journalist's capacity to engage with sources (Ardiantika, 2024; Waluyo, 2018). A source who recognizes the

journalist's expertise is more likely to consider the interview purposeful and to provide substantive answers.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness concerns the source's perception of the journalist's honesty, objectivity, integrity, and professional responsibility. Sources are more willing to speak openly when they believe that their statements will be represented accurately, used for legitimate journalistic purposes, and handled in accordance with professional ethics. Credibility is weakened when journalists distort statements, ignore context, or appear to have a hidden agenda. The obligation to verify information and remain accountable to the public is therefore closely connected with the trust required in source relationships (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2021; Silvia & Paramita, 2019).

Interpersonal Attractiveness

Interpersonal attractiveness in this study does not refer only to physical appearance. It includes friendliness, courtesy, confidence, responsiveness, and the ability to adjust communication to the source's characteristics. Positive interpersonal behavior can reduce tension and create a supportive atmosphere in which the source feels respected. DeVito (2019) emphasizes that openness in interpersonal communication is facilitated by empathy, positive regard, and relational comfort. A journalist who communicates respectfully may therefore encourage the source to give fuller and more candid information.

METHODS

This study employed a quantitative approach with a survey design to examine the effect of journalist credibility on source openness in news interviews. A quantitative design was selected because the relationship between the variables was measured using numerical data and tested statistically. Survey research enables researchers to collect structured responses concerning participants' perceptions and experiences (Sugiyono, 2019).

The research was conducted at BE TV and RRI Bengkulu. The population consisted of all journalists at the two media organizations who actively carried out reporting and news interviews. Because the population was relatively small, total sampling, also known as census sampling, was used. All 30 journalists in the population were therefore included as respondents.

The study included journalist credibility as the independent variable (X) and source openness as the dependent variable (Y). Journalist credibility was defined as the perceived competence, professionalism, and integrity demonstrated by journalists in conducting interviews. It was measured through expertise, trustworthiness, and interpersonal attractiveness. Source openness was defined as the source's willingness to provide relevant information honestly, completely, and in depth. It was measured through honesty, completeness of information, and depth of information.

Data were collected through a questionnaire supported by observation and documentation. The questionnaire contained statements developed from the indicators of each variable and used a five-point Likert scale: strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), neutral (3), agree (4), and strongly agree (5). Observation was used to understand journalist-source interaction during interviews, while documentation provided supporting material such as field notes and activity records.

The data were analyzed using SmartPLS 4. The measurement model was assessed through indicator outer loadings, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT), Cronbach's alpha, and composite reliability. Indicators were considered satisfactory when outer loadings exceeded 0.70. Convergent validity was established when AVE

exceeded 0.50, discriminant validity when HTMT was below 0.90, and internal consistency when Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability exceeded 0.70.

After the measurement model met the validity and reliability criteria, the structural model was evaluated. The hypothesis was tested through bootstrapping by examining the t-statistic and p-value. The relationship was considered significant when t exceeded 1.96 and p was below 0.05. The coefficient of determination (R-squared) was used to assess the proportion of variance in source openness explained by journalist credibility.

RESULTS

Measurement Model Assessment

The measurement model assessment indicated that all indicators for journalist credibility and source openness had outer loadings above 0.70. The indicators therefore satisfied the recommended standard for indicator reliability and adequately represented their respective constructs.

Convergent validity was supported by AVE values of 0.594 for journalist credibility and 0.662 for source openness. Both values exceeded the minimum threshold of 0.50. Discriminant validity was also established because the HTMT value between the constructs was 0.824, which was below the threshold of 0.90.

The constructs demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency. Cronbach's alpha was 0.831 for journalist credibility and 0.872 for source openness. Composite reliability values were 0.880 and 0.907, respectively. All reliability coefficients were above 0.70, indicating that the instrument produced consistent measurements.

Table 1. Measurement Model Assessment

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Journalist credibility	0.831	0.880	0.594
Source openness	0.872	0.907	0.662

Note: All indicator outer loadings were above 0.70; HTMT = 0.824.

Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

Bootstrapping produced a t-statistic of 4.676 and a p-value below 0.001 for the effect of journalist credibility on source openness. The t-statistic exceeded 1.96 and the p-value was below 0.05. H1 was therefore supported, while the null hypothesis was rejected. Journalist credibility had a statistically significant effect on source openness in news interviews.

The R-squared value for source openness was 0.555. This result indicates that journalist credibility explained 55.5% of the variance in source openness. The remaining 44.5% was associated with other factors not included in the model, such as the personal characteristics of the source, issue sensitivity, previous experience with the media, organizational policy, and the situational conditions of the interview.

Table 2. Structural Model and Hypothesis Test

Relationship	t-statistic	p-value	Decision	R-squared
Journalist credibility -> Source openness	4.676	< 0.001	H1 supported	0.555

Source: Primary data processed with SmartPLS 4.

DISCUSSION

The study aimed to determine whether journalist credibility affects source openness in news interviews. The results support the proposed hypothesis and demonstrate that credibility is a meaningful factor in the information-gathering process. Journalists who are perceived as competent, trustworthy, and interpersonally effective are more likely to obtain honest, complete, and in-depth responses from sources.

Expertise helps a journalist conduct an interview that appears focused and professionally relevant. Understanding the issue enables the journalist to formulate clear questions, identify gaps in an answer, and ask appropriate follow-up questions. Such competence signals to the source that the journalist understands the context and is less likely to misinterpret technical or sensitive information. This interpretation is consistent with the role of professional competence in maintaining reporting accuracy and journalistic capacity (Ardiantika, 2024; Waluyo, 2018).

Trustworthiness is equally important because source openness involves perceived risk. A source may worry that a statement will be misquoted, taken out of context, sensationalized, or used for purposes not explained during the interview. When journalists demonstrate honesty, objectivity, respect for context, and responsibility toward the information received, they reduce this perceived risk. The result supports the central premise of Source Credibility Theory that a trusted communicator is more likely to receive a favorable response (Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Hovland et al., 1953).

Interpersonal attractiveness also contributes to an effective interview climate. Friendliness, politeness, confidence, active listening, and the ability to adjust one's communication style can make a source feel respected. A comfortable interaction does not eliminate the journalist's critical role, but it allows difficult questions to be asked without creating unnecessary hostility. The finding is compatible with interpersonal communication principles that link openness to empathy, positive regard, and relational comfort (DeVito, 2019).

Source openness in this study was reflected in honesty, completeness, and depth of information. The significant statistical relationship shows that successful interviewing depends on more than asking technically correct questions. It also depends on the journalist's capacity to establish a credible presence. The interview becomes more productive when the source believes that the journalist understands the subject, will handle the information responsibly, and will communicate fairly.

The R-squared value of 0.555 indicates that journalist credibility accounts for a substantial proportion of source openness, but it also shows that credibility is not the only determinant. Sources may remain guarded because of legal obligations, organizational restrictions, political interests, issue sensitivity, personal temperament, or previous negative experiences with media coverage. Future models should therefore integrate credibility with situational and source-related variables.

The practical implication is that media organizations should treat journalist credibility as a professional competency that can be strengthened. Training should not focus solely on writing and technical reporting skills. It should also develop issue preparation, verification, ethical decision-making, active listening, nonverbal communication, and transparent explanation of interview purposes. Consistent professional conduct can improve access to information and support the production of news that is accurate, balanced, and accountable to the public.

CONCLUSION

Journalist credibility has a significant effect on source openness in news interviews. The hypothesis test yielded a t-statistic of 4.676 with $p < 0.001$, supporting H1. The R-squared value of 0.555 indicates that journalist credibility explains 55.5% of the variance in source openness, while the remaining 44.5% is related to factors outside the research model.

Credibility is expressed through expertise, trustworthiness, and interpersonal attractiveness. Journalists who understand the issue, demonstrate integrity, and create a respectful communication atmosphere are more likely to encourage sources to provide honest, complete, and detailed information. The findings support Source Credibility Theory and confirm that credibility is both a professional identity and a strategic resource in journalistic information gathering. Journalists should continually improve subject-matter preparation, verification skills, ethical consistency, and interpersonal communication. Media organizations should support this process through professional development and clear editorial standards. Strengthening these areas can help build source trust and improve the accuracy, depth, and accountability of news reporting.

LIMITATION

This study involved only 30 journalists from BE TV and RRI Bengkulu. The limited sample and the concentration on two media organizations restrict the extent to which the findings can be generalized to journalists working in other regions, media systems, or types of news organizations. A larger and more diverse sample would provide stronger external validity.

The model examined journalist credibility as a single predictor of source openness and relied primarily on journalists' questionnaire responses. The research did not directly compare these perceptions with evaluations provided by the sources themselves. Future studies should include source assessments, interview observations, and additional variables such as issue sensitivity, organizational communication policy, prior media experience, and the source's personal disposition. Longitudinal or mixed-method designs could also provide a deeper explanation of how credibility and openness develop over repeated journalist-source interactions.

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