

## Correspondence

# The truth must prevail: citizens' rights to know the truth during the era of COVID-19

### ABSTRACT

In a recent short report, the necessity of sophisticated practices in gathering records that would facilitate data sharing yields data-driven analysis in time of COVID-19. Consequently, there is a need to present the truth in data analytics in the era of COVID-19. This paper discusses the urgent call for people handling the COVID-19 data to be ethically responsible in their handling, processing, and reporting that impacts the lives of ordinary people especially in this time of pandemic as public health crisis.

**Keywords** truth, data analytics, citizens' right, COVID-19, public health

In a recent short report from the setting of a Latin American country, it was mentioned that there must be sophisticated practices of gathering records so that the facilitation of data sharing would yield data-driven analysis in the time of COVID-19.<sup>1</sup> However, the issue is not just to come up with complex data gathering and analysis but also the need to unveil the truth behind the process of data analytics being reported to the ordinary people in social media and the internet that have greatly impacted how people learn about current events. COVID-19 pandemic data are being monitored by citizens as provided by governments and NGO's around the world with 55 659 785 confirmed cases worldwide since the pandemic started.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, in the Philippines, there are 413 430 COVID-19 cases<sup>3</sup> based on the reporting of the local government units and private institutions that reflect the impact of the disease on the population. However, there is a "mass recovery" issue that suddenly increased the number of recovered COVID-19 cases.<sup>4,5</sup>

In the global and local scene, data analytics plays an important role in quantifying information especially in this time of COVID-19 pandemic. Data analytics is an application of computer systems to analyze big data that support in decision making, which is adopted in the interdisciplinary field from many scientific disciplines; though, the potential benefit of data analytics is not fully understood in the health care sector.<sup>6</sup> Big data analytics capabilities support the formulation of more effective data-driven analytics strategies.<sup>7</sup> In the era of COVID-19, data come from different sources; people need to understand how these data are analyzed, which shows the truthfulness of the outcomes.

Considering the significance of conveying the truth of data analytics, especially among ordinary citizens, it adheres

to the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas<sup>8</sup> on 'the face of the other'. Levinas would argue the importance of phenomenology of intersubjectivity that 'the face is the only "thing" that metaphorically breaks through existence'.<sup>9</sup> It means that seeing the face of the other is a way of substitution, whereas it leads to the realization of putting oneself into the situation of the other person. People such as healthcare professionals, hospital administrators, data analysts, and government officials who handle the pandemic situation in every country, are responsible for the processing and communicating of data regarding COVID-19 infections, and are called upon to adhere to their ethical obligation in presenting the truth. Ordinary people are struggling with fear and worries to be infected by COVID-19. Their reliance on the data being presented by various institutions becomes their guide on how to make necessary adjustments and be mindful of health protocols especially on the situation of the pandemic locally and/or globally. In that manner, persons involved in COVID-19 data can see their faces to the faces of ordinary people who are badly affected by the pandemic as a public health crisis.

### Authorship Contribution Statement

PJDS and JFCY did the conceptualization; CAC the writing of the original draft and RPI and KAGE reviewed and edited the manuscript.

### Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest in this paper.

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