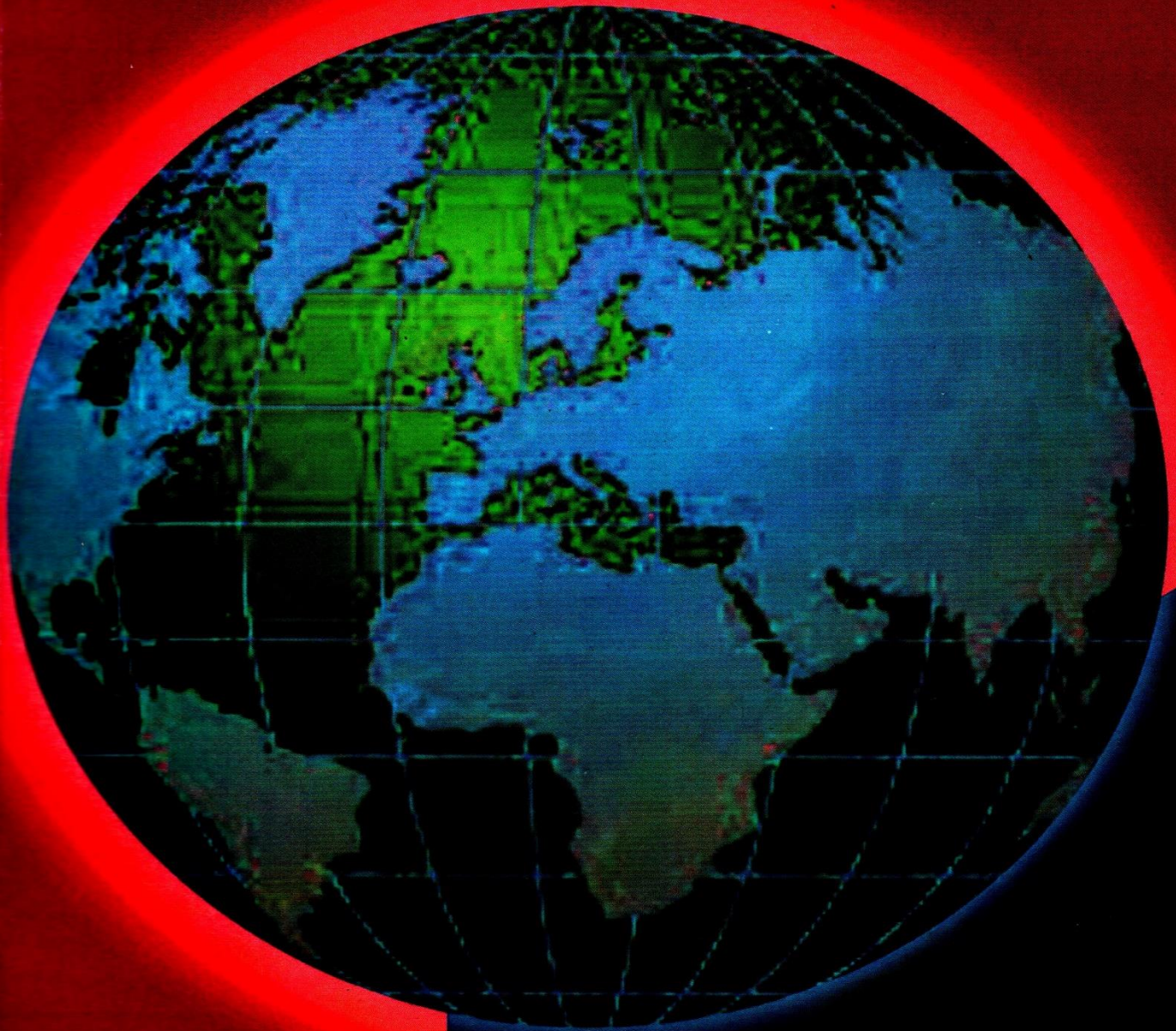


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**Strengthening Strategies in the Advocacy against Gender Inequality in the Phase of
COVID-19 Pandemic**

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ABSTRACT

The study sought to assess the strengthening strategies in the advocacy against gender inequality in the phase of Covid-19 pandemic. Need assessment survey design was adopted for the study. The study was conducted in Akwa Ibom State. The population of the study comprised legal practitioners, journalists and social scientists in Akwa Ibom State. Strategic sampling technique was used to select 150 respondents which constituted the sample size for the study. The Main Instrument used in this study was a Questionnaire titled "Strengthening Strategies against Gender Inequality Questionnaire (SSGIQ)". Face and content validation of the instrument was carried out to ensure that the instrument has the accuracy, appropriateness, completeness and the language of the study under consideration. Cronbach Alpha technique was used to determine the level of reliability of the instrument. The reliability coefficient obtained was 0.88 and this was high enough to justify the use of the instrument. The researcher subjected the data generated for this study to appropriate statistical techniques such as descriptive statistics and simple regression. The test for significance was done at 0.05 alpha levels. The study concluded among others that there is prevalence of gender inequality in Akwa Ibom State. With the above conclusion, it was therefore recommended that the government should adopt measures to prevent and mitigate sexual violence and gender-based violence associated with quarantine and social distancing, ensuring that healthcare staff has the appropriate information and skills to respond to reported situations or refer cases to specialized services.

KEYWORDS: Gender Inequality, Covid-19, and Mitigating Strategies, Gender Equality

Introduction

According to Cohen and Hsu (2020), the COVID-19 crisis is a systemic human development crisis, compounding risks to progress towards gender equality. The pandemic and its consequences hit a world wealthier than ever but facing deep divides in human development. The pandemic is deepening pre-existing inequalities, exposing vulnerabilities in social, political and economic systems which are in turn amplifying the impacts of the

pandemic. The immediate effects of COVID-19 on gender inequality are already showing themselves in health and education, on the burden of unpaid care work and gender-based violence.

According to Boniol, McIsaac, Xu, Wuliji, Diallo, & Campbell (2020), women are in the frontlines of the COVID-19 response, putting them at a higher risk of exposure to the virus. They make up 70 percent of the workers in the health and social sector globally and constitute most health facility service-staff. Across the very high, high, and medium human development groups, women make up more than 85% of nursing personnel, and women make up almost half of doctors for all counties except those with low human development. Women's health is also adversely impacted by the reallocation of resources and priorities away from crucial areas such as sexual and reproductive health services. This could lead to an increase in maternal mortality and morbidity, adolescent pregnancies, and HIV and sexually transmitted diseases. Within the context of the COVID-19 emergency, migrant and refugee women are in particularly precarious situations as they are exposed to xenophobia, which makes them targets of violence and limits their chances of finding fair employment particularly women who depend in a greater proportion from it (UN, 2020).

Statement of the Problem

Today, rising numbers of sick people, growing unemployment, increased anxiety and financial stress, and a scarcity of community resources have set the stage for an exacerbated gender inequality. Many victims find themselves isolated in violent homes, without access to resources or friend and family networks. With these preceding problems, this study therefore sought to assess strengthening strategies in the advocacy against gender inequality in the phase of COVID-19 pandemic.

Objectives of the study

The main objective of the study was to assess strengthening strategies in the advocacy against gender inequality in the phase of Covid-19 pandemic. Specifically, the study sought:

1. To find out the prevalence of gender inequality in Akwa Ibom State.
2. To examine the extent of contribution of covid-19 to gender inequality in Akwa Ibom State.
3. To determine the dependable strategies in the advocacy for gender equality in Akwa Ibom State.
4. To determine various benefits of gender equality

Research Questions

1. What is the prevalence of gender inequality in Akwa Ibom State?
2. What is the extent of contribution of covid-19 to gender inequality in Akwa Ibom State?
3. What are the dependable strategies in the advocacy for gender equality in Akwa Ibom State?
4. What are the benefits of gender equality?

Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant effect of covid-19 on gender inequality in Akwa Ibom State.

H0₂: There is no significant influence of mitigation of gender inequality on the national economy.

Conceptual Review

Concept of COVID-19

Coronaviruses (COV) are a large family of positive-stranded RNA respiratory viruses. Their name is owed to the crown-shaped tips present on their surface. In December 2019, unexplained pneumonia (later named as coronavirus disease 2019, COVID-19) broke out in Wuhan, China (Li, Guan, Wu, Wang, Zhou, Tong, et.al, 2020). The initial patient was related to a seafood wholesale market in Wuhan. COVID-19 is a respiratory illness with a clinical spectrum of mild to moderate disease (80%), severe disease (15%), and critical illness (5%) with an overall case fatality rate of 0.5–2.8% with much higher rates (3.7–14.8%) in octogenarians. The severe and critical illness categories (about 20% of all infections) have overwhelmed health systems worldwide.

According to Phelan, Katz, and Gostin, (2020), SARS-CoV-2 is reported to be transmitted between humans through direct contact, aerosol droplets, fecal–oral route, and intermediate fomites from both symptomatic and asymptomatic patients during the incubation period. The disease is characterized by fever, dry cough, Dyspnea, and diarrhea in 20–25% of patients who do not exhibit upper respiratory signs such as sneezing or sore throat. In severe cases, the disease is characterized by pneumonia, metabolic acidosis, septic shock, and bleeding. Several control measures are being instituted by nations around the world to extinguish the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, including the issuance of travel advisories or even flight bans to and from infected countries, strict quarantine measures and traveler screenings, implementation of mitigation measures by healthcare specialists, application of social distancing measures for schools and popular gatherings, strict personal hygiene such as frequent hand washing, and wearing face masks (Zhu, Zhang, Wang, Li, Yang, and Song, 2020).

Concept of Gender Inequality

Gender inequality is the idea that men and women are not equal and that gender affects an individual's living experience. These differences arise from distinctions in biology, psychology, and cultural norms. Some of these types of distinctions are empirically grounded while others appear to be socially constructed. Studies show the different lived experience of genders across many domains including education, life expectancy, personality, interests, family life, careers, and political affiliations. Gender inequality is experienced differently across different cultures (Wikipedia, 2020).

The transformation of gender relations since the beginning of the 20th century is one of the most rapid, profound social changes in human history. For more than 7,000 years of human history since settled agriculture and early states emerged, male domination has characterized the gender relations of these societies and their successors. Even at the beginning of the 20th century, men and women were generally viewed as occupying sharply different roles in society: a woman's place was in the home as wife and mother; the man's place was in the public sphere. Men had legal powers over the lives of their wives and children, and while wife beating was never strictly legal, its practical legal status was ambiguous and perpetrators of domestic violence rarely punished (Gornick and Meyers, 2009).

Contribution of Covid-19 to Gender Equality

Across every sphere, from health to the economy, security to social protection, the impacts of COVID-19 are exacerbated for women and girls simply by virtue of their sex. While the COVID-19 crisis affects everyone, women and girls face specific and often disproportionate economic, health, and social risks due to deeply entrenched inequalities, social norms, and unequal power relations. Understanding the gender-differentiated impacts of the COVID-19 crisis through sex-disaggregated data is fundamental to designing policy responses that reduce vulnerable conditions and strengthen women's agency, placing gender inequality at their centre. This is not just about rectifying long-standing inequalities, but also about building a more just and resilient world (UN, 2020).

The pandemic is expected to double the number of people facing food crises (World Food Programme, 2020). It constitutes a risk, especially for women and girls, as in times of crisis women tend to eat less to provide for children and other family members (UN Women, 2019). Furthermore, the gradual reopening will pose additional challenges for women as it could push them out of the labour force or into part-time jobs while increasing their responsibilities at home and this pressure intensifies for single mothers (Cohen and Hsu, 2020). Due to the COVID-19 lockdown, 243 million women and girls worldwide have been subjected to sexual and/or physical violence by an intimate partner (UN Women 2020a). For countries in medium and low human development groups, the percentage of women who ever-experienced intimate partner violence is on average greater than 30 percent. Still, 30 percent of people believe it is justifiable for a man to beat his partner (UNDP 2020b). Pre-existing toxic social norms, combined with increased economic and social stress caused by isolation measures and financial difficulties in the household, have driven an increase in gender-based violence as many women are in lockdown with their abusers (UNDP 2020c), while services to support survivors are being disrupted or inaccessible because of the pandemic. Child marriage is another manifestation of gender-based violence.

Many of the factors that drive child marriage are exacerbated in crisis and emergency settings. Effects of the pandemic such as loss of household income, higher risk of violence in the household, and lack of access to schooling can increase child marriage. Harmful practices such as child marriage remain higher than 25 percent across high, medium, and low human development groups. All these issues accumulate across the life course and affect well-being and social security in old age. An ability to deal with the effects of the pandemic is not only reflected at the household level but also through women's agency. Agency gives women the ability and freedom to make decisions over their own lives and bodies. During crisis, agency constitutes a powerful tool for resilience and overcoming new barriers.

Education is a tool for women to expand their ability to make decisions and act on them, but the pandemic is affecting education globally. Given school closures and lockdowns, 10 million girls in secondary school could be out of school due to the crisis (UN 2020). Another factor is that women are in the frontlines of the COVID-19 response, putting them at a higher risk of exposure to the virus. They make up 70 percent of the workers in the health and social sector globally (Boniol et. al., 2019) and constitute most health facility service-staff (UN, 2020). The pandemic's economic impacts that have left no country or population unscathed and women are, again, disproportionately affected (UNDP, 2020a). Compared to men, women have less capacity to absorb economic shocks because they have lower earnings, savings, and job security, and they are overrepresented in the informal sector 1213. They are now facing increased risks of bankruptcy due to gaps in financing.

Mitigating Strategies against the Impact of Covid-19 on Gender Inequality

From past experience, it is possible to project that the impacts of the COVID-19 will result in a prolonged dip in women's incomes and labor force participation, with compounded impacts for women already jobs participate in informal employment. Access to benefits such as health insurance, paid sick and maternity leave, pensions and unemployment benefits need to reach beyond formal employment and be accessible to women in all spheres of work. The UN advocates for support to countries with weak public health and social support systems, including countries in humanitarian situations, and supports awareness-raising especially targeted to women and girls, including higher risk groups such as pregnant women, people living with HIV, and persons with disabilities, about how to reduce the risks of contracting COVID-19 (UN, 2020).

Direct support to informal workers and women-led businesses is especially critical: Financial support needs to target hard-hit women-led enterprises and businesses in feminized sectors with subsidized and state-backed loans, tax and social security payment deferrals and exemptions. Governments could, for instance, support income replacement measures to informal workers, including measures that specifically cover domestic workers. Public procurement of food, basic supplies, sanitary and personal protective equipment could directly source from women-led businesses (UN, 2020). Women in the informal economy need to be supported to access cash transfers or unemployment compensation, especially those who don't have access to banking.

Ensure that women and girls have access to COVID-19 public health messages: Health care response must facilitate the development and dissemination of targeted messaging on public health to the different contexts and concerns of women and girls. With limited access to education and therefore low levels of literacy in some settings, messaging must be accessible, culturally appropriate and understandable by all (UN, 2020). Accurate COVID-19 prevention and medical information should also be distributed in conflict-affected contexts to reach all women and girls, including those in refugee and settlements for internally displaced people (IDPs), as well as in remote and rural communities.

Pay explicit attention to the role of women as frontline health workers: Special attention needs to be given to the health, psychosocial needs and work environment of frontline female health workers, including midwives, nurses, community health workers, as well as facility support staff. Personal Protective Equipment should be the appropriate size for women. It has been found that masks and covers that were sized using the 'default man' size often used in design and production leave women more exposed. It is important to include products such as essential hygiene and sanitation items (e.g. sanitary pads, soap, hand sanitizers, etc.) for female health workers, women and girls, particularly those quarantined for prevention, screening and treatment. Given the heightened vulnerability of female frontline workers and community volunteers, and cases of violence against them, clear measures need to be in place to prevent and mitigate abuse and gender-based violence. The voices of women on the front lines must be included in response planning (UN, 2020).

Make provisions for standard health services to be continued, especially for sexual and reproductive health care: Particular attention needs to be paid to health care services for older women, gender-based violence survivors, as well as antenatal, postnatal care and delivery services, including emergency obstetric and newborn care. Necessary infection control measures should be in place.

Care for older female person is also a critical need in the face of Covid-19: Across countries, women are over-represented among older persons, especially as they advance in age. Globally, women represent 57 per cent of those aged 70 years and 62 per cent of those above age 80.15 (UN, 2020). Older women tend to face lower life incomes and also lower pensions, with fewer possibilities to access care for themselves. Women of all ages provide the bulk of unpaid care for older persons, male or female; the continuity of this care will depend on their own health and wellbeing as well their ability to minimize the risk of contagion for people in their care.

But this response, whether at the national or international level, will be significantly weakened if it does not factor in the ways in which inequalities have made all of us more vulnerable to the impacts of the crisis. Or, if we choose to simply repeat past policies and fail to use this moment to rebuild more equal, inclusive and resilient societies. Instead, every COVID-19 response plans, and every recovery package and budgeting of resources, needs to address the gender impacts of this pandemic. This means: (1) including women and women's organizations at the heart of the COVID-19 response; (2) transforming the inequalities of unpaid care work into a new, inclusive care economy that works for everyone; and (3) designing socio-economic plans with an intentional focus on the lives and futures of women and girls. Putting women and girls at the centre of economies will fundamentally drive better and more sustainable development outcomes for all, support a more rapid recovery, and place us back on a footing to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (UN, 2020).

Benefits of Gender Equity

According to Howard (2018), one of the easiest ways of fighting against gender inequality, is spreading awareness and countering the myth that gender equality is simply a "women's issue". You don't have to look far for evidence that gender equality is relevant and beneficial to people of all genders. Therefore, it's in everyone's interest to support it.

Howard (2018) posited 5 ways that advancing gender equality can improve quality of life for everyone:

Where there's more gender equality, there's more peace: Gender equality is a more reliable predictor of peace than a country's GDP or level of democracy. Countries with lower levels of gender inequality are also less likely to resort to the use of military force. Although Canadian society is relatively peaceful, gender-based violence persists in many forms, including intimate partner violence, sexual assault and harassment, which are rooted in gender inequality.

Advancing Gender Equality Improves the National Economy: Women spend double the amount of time as men do on unpaid work such as care giving and household tasks. This prevents them from participating fully in the economy. Taking steps to decrease gender inequality in the workplace, such as eliminating barriers to women's workforce participation and promoting women's leadership could benefit the national economy. McKinsey estimates that were more women to be able to fully participate in paid work, and earn equal pay, that could add \$28 trillion to the global gross domestic product (GDP). That would be a 26% increase by 2025.

Gender Diversity in Leadership Roles Boosts Business Performance: Companies with the highest levels of diversity (either gender, ethnic, or racial) are anywhere from 15 per cent to 35 per cent more likely to have financial returns above their industry's national average,

according to the 2015 McKinsey report Diversity Matters. Gender equal workforces work better in many ways. One of the major benefits of improved gender equality in the workplace is a more cohesive and more productive workforce.

Sharing household work leads to happier relationships: Women continue to spend more time on unpaid housework and childcare than their male partners, study shows that gender imbalances around housework can lead to relationship friction and increase the likelihood of divorce. The time women spend on unpaid work is also a contributing factor to the gender wage gap.

Gender equality makes children’s lives better: Teens in countries with higher levels of gender equality, where social norms are likely to support both parents’ involvement in childcare, reported higher levels of life satisfaction than teens in countries with lower levels of gender equality.

Method

Ex-post facto research design was adopted for the study. The study was conducted in Akwa Ibom State. The population of the study comprised legal practitioners, journalists and social scientists in Akwa Ibom State. Strategic sampling technique was used to select 150 respondents which constituted the sample size for the study. The main instrument used in this study was a questionnaire titled “Strengthening Strategies against Gender Inequality Questionnaire (SSGIQ)”. Face validation of the instrument was carried out to ensure that the instrument has the accuracy, appropriateness, completeness and the language of the study under consideration. Cronbach Alpha technique was used to determine the level of reliability of the instrument. The reliability coefficient obtained was 0.88 and this was high enough to justify the use of the instrument. The researcher subjected the data generated for this study to appropriate statistical techniques such as descriptive statistics and simple regression. The test for significance was done at 0.05 alpha levels.

Research Question One

The research question sought to find out the prevalence of gender inequality in Akwa Ibom State. To answer the research question, percentage analysis was performed as can be seen in table 1.

Table 1: Percentage analysis of the prevalence of gender inequality in Akwa Ibom State

Prevalence Level	Freq	Percentage (%)
Very High Extent	97	64.67**
High Extent	37	24.67
Low Extent	12	8
Very Low Extent	4	2.67*
TOTAL	150	100

SOURCE: Field survey

The above table 1 presents the percentage analysis of the prevalence of gender inequality in Akwa Ibom State. From the result, it was observed that the highest percentage of the respondents 97(64.67%) stated that the extent is very high while the least percentage of the

respondents 4(2.67%) affirmed that the extent of the prevalence of gender inequality in Akwa Ibom State is very low.

Research Question Two

The research question sought to find out the extent of contribution of covid-19 to gender inequality in Akwa Ibom State. To answer the research question, percentage analysis was performed as can be seen in table 2.

Table 2: Percentage analysis of the extent of contribution of covid-19 to gender inequality in Akwa Ibom State

Extent	Freq	Percentage (%)
Very High Extent	89	59.33**
High Extent	42	28
Low Extent	14	9.33
Very Low Extent	5	3.33*
TOTAL	150	100

SOURCE: Field survey

The above table 2 presents the percentage analysis of the contribution of covid-19 to gender inequality in Akwa Ibom State. From the result, it was observed that the highest percentage of the respondent 89(59.33%) stated that the extent is very high while the least percentage of the respondents 5(3.33%) affirmed that the extent of contribution of covid-19 to gender inequality in Akwa Ibom State is very low.

Research Question Three

The research question sought to find out the dependable strategies in the advocacy for gender equality in Akwa Ibom State. To answer the research question, percentage analysis was performed as can be seen in table 3.

Table 3: Percentage analysis of the dependable strategies in the advocacy for gender equality in Akwa Ibom State

Dependable Strategies	Freq	Percentage (%)
Direct support to informal workers and women-led businesses	37	24.67
Ensure that women and girls have access to COVID-19 public health messages	44	29.33**
Pay explicit attention to the role of women as frontline health workers	34	22.67
Make provisions for standard health services to be continued, especially for sexual and reproductive health care	13	8.67*
Care for older female person is also a critical need in the face of Covid-19	22	14.67
TOTAL	150	100

SOURCE: Field survey

The above table 3 presents the percentage analysis of the dependable strategies in the advocacy of gender equality in Akwa Ibom State. From the result, it was observed that women and girls have access to COVID-19 public health messages 44(29.33%) rated the highest percentage affirmed by the respondents while provisions for standard health services to be continued, especially for sexual and productivity health care 13(8.67%) rated the least percentage of dependable strategies in the advocacy for gender equality in Akwa Ibom State.

Research Question Four

The research question sought to find out the benefits of gender equality in Akwa Ibom State. To answer the research question, percentage analysis was performed as can be seen in table 4.

Table 4: Percentage analysis of the benefits of gender equality in Akwa Ibom State

Benefits of Gender Equality	Freq	Percentage (%)
Where there's more gender equality, there's more peace	27	18
Advancing Gender Equality Improves the National Economy	22	14.67
Gender Diversity in Leadership Roles Boosts Business Performance	14	9.33*
Sharing household work leads to happier relationships	41	27.33
Gender equality makes children's lives better	46	30.67**
TOTAL	150	100

SOURCE: Field survey

The above table 4 presents the percentage analysis of benefits of gender equality in Akwa Ibom State. From the result, it was observed that gender equality makes children's lives better 46(30.67%) rated the highest percentage affirmed by the respondents while gender diversity in leadership roles boosts business performance 14(9.33%) rated the least percentage of the benefits of gender equality in Akwa Ibom State.

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis One

The null hypothesis states that there is no significant effect of covid-19 on gender equality in Akwa Ibom State. In order to test the hypothesis simple regression analysis was performed on the data, (see table 5).

TABLE 5: Simple Regression Analysis of the effect of covid-19 on gender equality in Akwa Ibom State

Model	R	R-Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. error of the Estimate	R Square Change
1	0.97a	0.94	0.94	0.40	0.94

*Significant at 0.05 level; df= 148; N= 150; critical R-value = 0.197

The above table 5 shows that the calculated R-value (0.97) was greater than the critical R-value of 0.197 at 0.5 alpha levels with 148 degree of freedom. The R-Square value of 0.94

predicts 94% of the effect of covid-19 on gender equality in Akwa Ibom State. This rate of percentage is highly positive and therefore means that there is significant effect of covid-19 on gender equality in Akwa Ibom State. It was also deemed necessary to find out the influence of the variance of each class of independent variable as responded by each respondent (see table 6).

TABLE 6: Analysis of variance of the effect of covid-19 on gender inequality in Akwa Ibom State

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	358.62	1	358.62		
Residual	23.57	148	0.16	2251.95	.000b
Total	382.19	149			

- a. Dependent Variable: gender inequality
- b. Predictors: (Constant), Covid-19

The above table 6 presents the calculated F-value as (2251.95) and the P-value as (.000b). Being that the P-value (.000b) is below the probability level of 0.05, the result therefore means that there is significant influence exerted by the independent variables Covid-19 on the dependent variable which is gender equality.

Hypothesis Two

The null hypothesis states that there is no significant influence of mitigation of gender inequality on the national economy. In order to test the hypothesis simple regression analysis was performed on the data, (see table 7).

TABLE 7: Simple Regression Analysis of the influence of mitigation of gender inequality on the national economy

Model	R	R-Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. error of the Estimate	R Square Change
1	0.93a	0.87	0.87	0.56	0.87

*Significant at 0.05 level; df= 148; N= 150; critical R-value = 0.197

The above table 7 shows that the calculated R-value (0.93) was greater than the critical R-value of 0.197 at 0.5 alpha levels with 148 degree of freedom. The R-Square value of 0.87 predicts 87% of the influence of mitigation of gender inequality on the national economy. This rate of percentage is highly positive and therefore means that there is significant influence of mitigation of gender inequality on the national economy. It was also deemed necessary to find out the influence of the variance of each class of independent variable as responded by each respondent (see table 8).

TABLE 8: Analysis of variance of the influence of mitigation of gender inequality on the national economy

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	311.78	1	311.78		
Residual	46.42	148	0.31	994.07	.000b
Total	358.19	149			

- a. Dependent Variable: national economy
- b. Predictors: (Constant), gender equality

The above table 6 presents the calculated F-value as (994.07) and the P-value as (.000b). Being that the P-value (.000b) is below the probability level of 0.05, the result therefore means that there is significant influence exerted by the independent variables gender equality on the dependent variable which is national economy.

Discussion of the Finding

The result of the data analysis in table 5 and 6 was significant due to the fact that the calculated R-value 0.97 and F-2251.95 were greater than the critical R-value of 0.197 at 0.05 alpha levels with 148 degree of freedom. The result implies that there is significant effect of covid-19 on gender equality in Akwa Ibom State. The result therefore is cognate with the research findings of UNDP, (2020c) who asserted that pre-existing toxic social norms, combined with increased economic and social stress caused by isolation measures and financial difficulties in the household, have driven an increase in gender-based violence as many women are in lockdown with their abusers while services to support survivors are being disrupted or inaccessible because of the pandemic. Also, the pandemic encourages child marriage that may bring about gender-based violence. COVID-19 crisis affects everyone, women and girls face specific and often disproportionate economic, health, and social risks due to deeply entrenched inequalities, social norms, and unequal power relations. (UN, 2020). The significance of the result caused the null hypotheses to be rejected while the alternative was accepted.

The result of the data analysis in table 7 and 8 was significant due to the fact that the calculated R-value 0.93 and F-994.07 were greater than the critical R-value of 0.197 at 0.05 alpha levels with 148 degree of freedom. The result implies that there is significant influence of mitigation of gender inequality on the national economy. The result therefore is in agreement with the research findings of UN (2020) who avowed that the impacts of COVID-19 will result in a prolonged dip in women's incomes and labor force participation, with compounded impacts for women already jobs participate in informal employment. But the UN has advocates support to countries with weak public health and social support systems, including countries in humanitarian situations, and supports awareness-raising especially targeted to women and girls, including higher risk groups such as pregnant women, people living with HIV, and persons with disabilities, about how to reduce the risks of contracting COVID-19. This response, whether at the national or international level, will be significantly weakened if it does not factor in the ways in which inequalities have made all of us more vulnerable to the impacts of the crisis. The significance of the result caused the null hypotheses to be rejected while the alternative was accepted.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic is affecting all countries, destroying jobs, increasing poverty, and putting at risk the hard-won gender inequality gains of the last few decades. Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that there is prevalence of gender inequality in Akwa Ibom State. The benefits of gender equality are numerous including: that where there's more gender equality, there's more peace. Advancing gender equality also improves the national economy: the study lastly concluded that there is significant effect of Covid-19 on gender equality in Akwa Ibom State therefore; developing dependable strategies in the advocacy for gender equality will help mitigate Covid-19 effect will promote gender equality and peaceful co-existence in Akwa Ibom State.

Recommendations

1. The government should adopt measures to prevent and mitigate sexual violence and gender-based violence associated with quarantine and social distancing, ensuring that healthcare staff has the appropriate information and skills to respond to reported situations or refer cases to specialized services.
2. Women should be involved in all phases of the response and in national and local decision-making processes, especially women's groups that are impacted the most by the crisis, for example women working in the healthcare sector.
3. The government should guarantee that the immediate needs of women working in the healthcare sector are met and improve their access to information, to personal protective equipment and menstrual hygiene and reproductive health products.
4. Non-pharmaceutical responses, like hand washing, use of face masks or social distancing, should take into account gender considerations. Women are more likely than men to adopt these types of practices.

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