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**COVID-19 Pandemic: The Implication on Domestic Violence in Akwa Ibom State**

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**ABSTRACT**

*This study sought to assess the implication of COVID-19 Pandemic on Domestic Violence in Akwa Ibom State. The study made use of Expost-facto research design. The population of the study consisted of social scientists and journalists in Akwa Ibom State. 40 respondents were obtained as the sample size through a stratified random sampling technique. The instrument used for data collection was an interview schedule titled “COVID-19 PANDEMIC: THE IMPLICATION ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE QUESTIONNAIRE” (CPIDVQ). Instrument reliability was tested using Cronbach reliability test at 0.98 coefficient. The data obtained was analyzed using the descriptive statistics for the research questions and simple regression for hypothesis. The result was tested for significance at 0.05 alpha level. The study concluded that the presence of COVID-19 has been identified in Akwa Ibom State and there is significant influence of COVID-19 on domestic violence in Akwa Ibom State. One of the recommendations made was that parents should be offered additional supports, including access to free legal services, measures to ensure that children are not residing with an abusive parent during the lockdown period and, in instances where this is identified to be the case, children should be provided with support to ensure their safe return to a non-abusive parent or guardian.*

**KEYWORDS: COVID-19, Pandemic, Domestic Violence, Remedial Strategies**

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**Introduction**

The coronavirus belongs to a family of viruses that may cause various symptoms such as pneumonia, fever, breathing difficulty, and lung infection (Wuhan Municipal Health and Health Commission’s (WMHC 2020). These viruses are common in animals worldwide, but very few cases have been known to affect humans. The World Health Organization (WHO) used the term 2019 novel coronavirus to refer to a coronavirus that affected the lower respiratory tract of patients with pneumonia in Wuhan, China on 29 December 2019 (CDC 2019, and WHO 2020). The WHO announced that the official name of the 2019 novel coronavirus is coronavirus disease (COVID-19) (WHO, 2020).

According to Melissa (2020), the devastating coronavirus pandemic could lead to a 20 percent surge in domestic violence as victims remain trapped at home with their abusers. Amidst

the COVID-19 pandemic many countries have reported an increase in domestic violence and intimate partner violence. Pandemics, financial insecurity, stress and uncertainty have led to increased aggression at home. Domestic violence also increases whenever families spend more time together, such as during Christmas vacations. The combination of economic and social stresses brought on by the pandemic, as well as restrictions on movement, have dramatically increased the numbers of families facing abuse, in almost all countries.

### **Statement of 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 domestic violence crisis. Many victims find themselves isolated in violent homes, without access to resources or friend and family networks. Abusers could experience heightened financial pressures and stress, increase their consumption of alcohol or drugs, and purchase or hoard guns as an emergency measure.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of the study was to assess COVID-19 pandemic: the implication on domestic violence in Akwa Ibom State. specifically, the study sought to:

1. Find out the extent of COVID-19 in Akwa Ibom State.
2. Determine the types of COVID-19 pandemic related domestic violence in Akwa Ibom State.
3. Examine the extent of COVID-19 pandemic caused domestic violence in Akwa Ibom State.
4. Determine the strategies needed to alleviate the COVID-19 pandemic caused domestic violence in Akwa Ibom State.

### **Research Questions**

1. What is the extent of COVID-19 in Akwa Ibom State?
2. What are the types of COVID-19 pandemic related domestic violence in Akwa Ibom State?
3. What is the extent of COVID-19 pandemic caused domestic violence in Akwa Ibom State?
4. What are the strategies needed to alleviate the COVID-19 pandemic caused domestic violence in Akwa Ibom State?

### **Hypotheses**

Ho<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant influence of COVID-19 on domestic violence in Akwa Ibom State.

### **Concept of Coronavirus**

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses which may cause illness in animals or humans. In humans, several coronaviruses are known to cause respiratory infections ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). The most recently discovered coronavirus causes

coronavirus disease COVID-19. The Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention (China CDC) dispatched a rapid response team to accompany health authorities of Hubei province and Wuhan city to conduct epidemiological and etiological investigations. The WHO confirmed that the outbreak of the coronavirus epidemic was associated with the Huanan South China Seafood Marketplace, but no specific animal association was identified (WHO, 2020). Although it is still too early to predict susceptible populations, early patterns have shown a trend similar to Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS) coronaviruses. Susceptibility seems to be associated with age, biological sex, and other health conditions (Fehr, 2017). COVID-19 has now been declared as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern by the WHO (WHO, 2020).

### **Concept of Covid-19**

COVID-19 is the infectious disease caused by the most recently discovered coronavirus. This new virus and disease were unknown before the outbreak began in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. COVID-19 is now a pandemic affecting many countries globally. Children and adolescents are just as likely to become infected as any other age group and can spread the disease. Children and young adults are less likely to get severe disease, but severe cases can still happen in these age groups. The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, dry cough, and tiredness. Other symptoms that are less common and may affect some patients include aches and pains, nasal congestion, headache, conjunctivitis, sore throat, diarrhea, loss of taste or smell or a rash on skin or discoloration of fingers or toes. These symptoms are usually mild and begin gradually. Some people become infected but only have very mild symptoms (Li, 2020).

According to Fehr, Channappanavar & Perlman (2017), people can catch COVID-19 from others who have the virus. The disease spreads primarily from person to person through small droplets from the nose or mouth, which are expelled when a person with COVID-19 coughs, sneezes, or speaks. These droplets are relatively heavy, do not travel far and quickly sink to the ground. People can catch COVID-19 if they breathe in these droplets from a person infected with the virus and it is important to stay at least 1 meter away from others. These droplets can land on objects and surfaces around the person such as tables, doorknobs and handrails. People can become infected by touching these objects or surfaces, then touching their eyes, nose or mouth. It is important to wash your hands regularly with soap and water or clean with alcohol-based hand rub.

### **Concept of Domestic Violence**

Domestic violence is not physical violence alone. Domestic violence is any vice behavior the purpose of which is to gain power and control over a spouse, partner, girl/boyfriend or intimate family member. Abuse is a learned behavior; it is not caused by anger, mental problems, drugs or alcohol, or other common excuses. Domestic violence (also named domestic abuse or family violence) is violence or other abuse in a domestic setting, such as in marriage or cohabitation. Globally, the victims of domestic violence are overwhelmingly women, and women tend to experience more severe forms of violence. (McQuigg, 2011; García-Moreno 2013). They are also likelier than men to use intimate partner violence in self-defense. In some countries, domestic violence is often seen as justified, particularly in cases of actual or suspected infidelity on the part of the woman, and is legally permitted.

Domestic violence is among the most underreported crimes worldwide for both men and women. (Strong, DeVault, & Cohen, 2010; Concannon, 2013). Due to social stigmas regarding male victimization, men who are victims of domestic violence face an increased likelihood of being overlooked by healthcare providers. As a result of abuse, victims may experience physical disabilities, deregulated aggression, chronic health problems, mental illness, limited finances, and a poor ability to create healthy relationships. Victims may experience severe psychological disorders, such as posttraumatic stress disorder. Children who live in a household with violence often show psychological problems from an early age, such as avoidance, hyper vigilance to threats, and deregulated aggression which may contribute to vicarious traumatization. (Schechter, Zygmunt, Coates, Davies, Trabka, McCaw, Kolodji, & Robinson, 2007).

### **Types of Domestic Violence/abuse related to Covid-19 Pandemic**

When the general public thinks about domestic violence, they usually think in terms of physical assault that results in visible injuries to the victim. This is only one type of abuse. There are several categories of abusive behavior, each of which has its own devastating consequences. Lethality involved with physical abuse may place the victim at higher risk, but the long term destruction of personhood that accompanies the other forms of abuse is significant and cannot be minimized. According to the U.S. DOJ, five types of domestic violence exist, and each has a devastating effect on those involved — including witnesses of the abuse. These include: Control, Physical Abuse, Sexual Abuse, Psychological abuse and Economic Abuse. According to Taub (2020), these cases of violence as can be seen below are also covid 19 pandemic related:

- ❖ **Control:** Controlling behavior is a way for the batterer to maintain dominance over the victim. It is often subtle, almost always insidious, and pervasive. This includes but not limited to:
  - Monitoring phone calls, using caller ID or other number monitoring devices, not allowing them to make or receive phone calls.
  - Calling or coming home unexpectedly to check up on the victim. This may initially start as what appears to be a loving gesture, but becomes a sign of jealousy or possessiveness.
- ❖ **Physical violence:** According to the AMEND Workbook for Ending Violent Behavior, physical abuse is any physically aggressive behavior, withholding of physical needs, indirect physically harmful behavior, or threat of physical abuse. This may include but not limited to:
  - Hitting, kicking, pushing, punching, choking, beating, scratching, stabbing, shooting, drowning, burning, threatening with a weapon, or threatening to physically assault.
  - Withholding of physical needs including interruption of sleep or meals, denying money, food, locking victim into or out of the house, refusing to give or rationing necessities.
- ❖ **Sexual violence:** The violation of an individual's bodily integrity (sexual assault) or using sex in an exploitative fashion or forcing sex on another person. Sexual abuse may involve both verbal and physical behavior. This may include, but is not limited to:
  - Using force, guilt, or manipulation or not considering the victim's desire to have sex.
  - Making contact with the victim in any nonconsensual way, including unwanted penetration (oral, anal or vaginal) or touching (stroking, kissing, licking, sucking or using objects) on any part of the victim's body.

- ❖ **Economic abuse:** Making or attempting to make the victim financially dependent on the abuser. This may include, but is not limited to:
  - Controlling the family income and either not allowing the victim access to money or rigidly limiting their access to family funds.
  - Preventing or forbidding an intimate partner from working or gaining an education. ETC.
- ❖ **Psychological abuse:** Intimidation, threats of harm and isolation. This include: instilling fear in an intimate partner through threatening behavior, such as damaging property or abusing pets, constant supervision or controlling what the victim does and who they talk to. Further, spiritual abuse may be included as a type of psychological abuse. It involves the misuse of spiritual or religious beliefs to manipulate or exert power and control over an intimate partner.
- ❖ **Emotional abuse:** Undermining an individual's sense of self-worth. Examples of emotional abuse include constant criticism, name-calling, embarrassing, mocking and humiliating.

### **Covid-19 Economic Effect on Domestic Violence**

Around the globe, governments have implored residents to stay at home to protect themselves and others from the new coronavirus disease, COVID-19. But for domestic violence victims—the vast majority of whom are mostly women and children—home is a dangerous place. Experts have characterized an “invisible pandemic” of domestic violence during the COVID-19 crisis as a “ticking time bomb” or a “perfect storm” (Lupri & Grandin 2004).

According to Smith, Zhang, & Basile, (2018), as the COVID-19 pandemic continues, individuals are required to stay home to protect themselves and their communities. However, the home may not be safe for many families who experience domestic violence, which may include both intimate partners and children. COVID-19 has caused major economic devastation, disconnected many from community resources and support systems, and created widespread uncertainty and panic. Such conditions may stimulate violence in families where it didn't exist before and worsen situations in homes where mistreatment and violence has been a problem. Violence in the home has an overall cost to society, leading to potentially adverse physical and mental health outcomes, including a higher risk of chronic disease, substance use, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and risky sexual behaviors. Further, victims of domestic violence including intimate partner abuse and child abuse are at great risk for injuries including death (APA 2020).

There is a concern that the numbers experiencing intimate partner violence will dramatically rise in as a result of social distancing and quarantine during COVID-19. Before the pandemic, a survivor or victim could flee a violent situation or file a protective order with the police. For many, such options aren't easily available right now. A stay-at-home order can force victims to stay in a dangerous situation (Melissa 2020). According to WHO (2020), children are specifically vulnerable to abuse during COVID-19. Research shows that increased stress levels among parents is often a major predictor of physical abuse and neglect of children. Stressed parents may be more likely to respond to their children's anxious behaviors or demands in aggressive or abusive ways. The support systems that many at-risk parents rely on, such as

extended family, child care and schools, religious groups and other community organizations, are no longer available in many areas due to the stay-at-home orders. Noted by Taub (2020), child protection agencies are experiencing strained resources with fewer workers available, making them unable to conduct home visits in areas with stay-at-home orders. Since children are not going to school, teachers and school counselors are unable to witness the signs of abuse and report to the proper authorities. Also, many at-risk families may not have access to the technology children needed to stay connected with friends and extended family.

As prisons have become hotbeds for the spread of COVID-19, some criminal justice authorities are halting arrests and releasing inmates. These are critically important public health measures that should be accompanied by alternative means to prevent and interrupt domestic violence, such as individualized risk assessments, efforts to notify victims of pending inmate releases, and safety-planning support for victims. Unless governments provide sufficient guidance, resources, and training to local authorities, people will continue to be at greater risk of domestic violence.

### **Remedial Strategies to Domestic Violence during and after Covid-19 Pandemic**

As the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the United Nations have emphasized, countries must incorporate a gender perspective in their responses to the COVID-19 crisis. Several countries and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have already taken innovative steps in this direction. New campaigns also use social media to spread awareness of resources available to survivors, including hotlines, text message-based reporting, and mobile applications.

According to Everson, Smith, & Hussey (2008), social distancing has increased people's reliance on technology and changed the way mental health, legal, and other social services are provided to survivors unable to leave their homes. With disruptions to the criminal justice system, countries have shifted to virtual court hearings, facilitated online methods for obtaining protection orders, and communicated their intentions to continue to provide legal protection to survivors.

Moving forward, it is critical that states support the development of alternative reporting mechanisms; expand shelter options; strengthen the capacity of the security and justice sectors; maintain vital sexual and reproductive health services, where domestic and sexual violence victims are often identified and supported; support independent women's groups; finance economic security measures for women workers, especially those serving on the front lines of the pandemic or in the informal economy, and other groups disproportionately affected by the pandemic, such as migrant, refugee, homeless, and trans women; and collect comprehensive data on the gendered impact of COVID-19.

### **During lockdown**

We must take action to alert victims of abuse that there is help available. We must work with law enforcement and other state and local personnel to understand that stay-at-home orders need to be relaxed when the home is unsafe. Schools should continue to offer virtual counseling or telephone check-ins whenever possible (Taub, 2020). The hotel and hospitality industry have played a large role in many jurisdictions helping to house the homeless or healthcare practitioners; businesses and localities must also remember the vulnerable population affected by domestic violence who can also benefit from these services. During this time, we must also

ensure that healthcare practitioners are screening patients for intimate partner violence and child abuse.

### After Lockdown

There is a possibility that the pandemic likely to affect long-term progress toward ending domestic violence. It is therefore necessary that some strategies be put in place to remedy this situation. Strategies such as publishing key messages via Twitter and other social media on how criminal justice systems should respond to domestic violence in the context of COVID-19 pandemic and to indicate what should be the priority in this area is necessary. According to Melissa (2020), advocate for programs to prevent potential negative coping mechanisms including resorting to substance use, household violence (access to mental health and stress relief services, tools for parenting in stressful circumstances, etc.), can reduce cases of domestic abuse.

Putting in place accessible, diversified and proactive systems to alert authorities and protect victims, this creates opportunity for victims to report any incident of domestic abuse to the authority. For instance, Taub (2020) reported that in China, police officers in the city of Jingzhou received three times as many domestic violence calls during the pandemic period than ever. Some high- and middle-income countries, such as Australia, France, Germany, South Africa, and the United States, have also reported significant increases in reports of domestic violence since the COVID-19 outbreak. There should also be expanding availability of alternative accommodation to avoid confinement with abusers.

### Methodology

The study made use of the Expost-facto research design. The population of the study consisted of social scientists and journalists in Akwa Ibom State. 40 respondents were obtained as the sample size through a stratified random sampling technique. The instrument used for data collection was an interview schedule titled "COVID-19 PANDEMIC: THE IMPLICATION ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE QUESTIONNAIRE" (CPIDVQ). Instrument reliability was tested using Cronbach reliability test at 0.98 coefficient. The data obtained was analyzed using the descriptive statistics for the research questions and simple regression for hypothesis. The result was tested for significance at 0.05 alpha level.

### Results and Discussions

#### Research Question One

The research question sought to find out the extent of COVID-19 in Akwa Ibom State. In order to answer the research question, percentage analyse was performed on the data, (see table 1).

**Table 1: Percentage analysis of the extent of COVID-19 in Akwa Ibom State**

EXTENTS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
VERY HIGH EXTENT	2	5*
HIGH EXTENT	5	12.5
LOW EXTENT	15	35.7
VERY LOW EXTENT	18	45**

<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100%</b>
**	<b>The highest percentage frequency</b>	
*	<b>The least percentage frequency</b>	

**SOURCE: Field survey**

The above table 1 presents the percentage analysis of extent of COVID-19 in Akwa Ibom State. From the result of the data analysis, it was observed that the highest percentage (45%) of the respondents affirmed that COVID-19 is of very low extent in Akwa Ibom State. This was seconded by those who affirmed that the extent is low extent (35.7%). The third group of the respondents (12.5%) affirmed that the extent is high extent while the least percentage (5%) of the respondents stated that the extent of COVID-19 in Akwa Ibom State is very high low. The result therefore means that the extent of covid-19 in Akwa Ibom State is very low. This result agrees with the opinion of WHO, (2005) that stated that susceptibility seems to be of high extent and associated with age, biological sex, and other health conditions and making COVID-19 declared as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern by the WHO.

**Research Question Two**

The research question sought to find out the types of COVID-19 pandemic related domestic violence in Akwa Ibom State. In order to answer the research question, percentage analyse was performed on the data, (see table 2).

**Table 2: Percentage analysis of the types of COVID-19 pandemic related domestic violence in Akwa Ibom State**

<b>VIOLENCES</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
Physical Violence	27	67.5**
Sexual Violence	13	32.5*
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100%</b>

\*\* **The highest percentage frequency**  
\* **The least percentage frequency**

**SOURCE: Field survey**

The above table 2 presents the percentage analysis of the types of COVID-19 pandemic related domestic violence in Akwa Ibom State. From the result of the data analysis, it was observed that physical violence (67.5%) was affirmed by the respondents to be the type of COVID-19 related domestic violence in Akwa Ibom State, while sexual violence (32.5%) was considered by the respondents to be the least of the COVID-19 pandemic related domestic violence in Akwa Ibom State. This means that physical violence is more encountered than sexual violence in Akwa Ibom State. This result agrees with the opinion of Taub (2020) who pointed out there are five types of domestic violence related to covid-19 pandemic and that each has a devastating effect on those involved, including witnesses of the abuse. These, according to him include Control, Physical Abuse, Sexual Abuse, Psychological abuse and Economic Abuse.

**Research Question Three**



The research question sought to find out the extent of COVID-19 pandemic caused domestic violence in Akwa Ibom State. In order to answer the research question, percentage analyse was performed on the data, (see table 3).

**Table 3: Percentage analysis of the extent of COVID-19 pandemic caused domestic violence in Akwa Ibom State**

EXTENTS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
VERY HIGH EXTENT	4	10*
HIGH EXTENT	8	20
LOW EXTENT	12	30
VERY LOW EXTENT	16	40**
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100%</b>

\*\* The highest percentage frequency

\* The least percentage frequency

**SOURCE: Field survey**

The above table 3 presents the percentage analysis of extent of COVID-19 pandemic caused domestic violence in Akwa Ibom State. From the result of the data analysis, it was observed that the highest percentage (40%) of the respondents affirmed that the extent of COVID-19 pandemic caused domestic violence in Akwa Ibom State is very low. This was seconded by those who affirmed that the extent is of low extent (30%). The third group of the respondents (20%) affirmed that the extent is high extent while the least percentage (10%) of the respondents stated that the extent of COVID-19 pandemic caused domestic violence in Akwa Ibom State is very high. This means that the extent of COVID-19 pandemic caused domestic violence in Akwa Ibom State is very low. This result agrees with the opinion of Lupri & Grandin (2004) that stated that experts have characterized an “invisible pandemic” of domestic violence during the COVID-19 crisis as a “ticking time bomb” or a “perfect storm”.

#### Research Question Four

The research question sought to find out the strategies needed to alleviate the COVID-19 pandemic caused domestic violence in Akwa Ibom State. In order to answer the research question, percentage analyse was performed on the data, (see table 4).

**Table 4: Percentage analysis of the strategies needed to alleviate the COVID-19 pandemic caused domestic violence in Akwa Ibom State**

EXTENTS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Adapting gender equality perspective in responses to the COVID-19 crisis	1	2.5*
Adoption of innovative steps by NGO in this direction	6	15
Creation of awareness and implementation of available resources for survivors	10	25**
Involvement of criminal justice systems	2	5
Adoption of effective finance and economic security measures	3	7.5

Counselling services to families	5	12.5
Adequate assistance by government to health care	6	15
Effective home food project execution for pupils	7	17.5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100%</b>

**\*\* The highest percentage frequency**

**\* The least percentage frequency**

**SOURCE: Field survey**

The above table 4 presents the percentage analysis of the strategies needed to alleviate the COVID-19 pandemic caused domestic violence in Akwa Ibom State. From the result of the data analysis, it was observed that creation of awareness and implementation of available resources for survivors 10(25%) was the highest affirmed strategy by the respondents, as needed to alleviate the COVID-19 pandemic caused domestic violence in Akwa Ibom State, while gender equality perspective in responses to the COVID-19 crisis 1(2.5%) was the least affirmed strategies.

### **Hypothesis**

The null hypothesis states that there is no significant influence of COVID-19 on domestic violence in Akwa Ibom State. In order to test the hypothesis simple regression was used to analyse the data, (see table 5).

**Table 5: Simple regression of the influence of COVID-19 on domestic violence in Akwa Ibom State.**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. error of the Estimate	R Square Change
1	0.72a	0.51	0.50	3.14	0.51

**\*Significant at 0.05 level; df = 38; N = 40; critical r-value = 0.312**

The table 5 shows that the calculated R-value 0.72 was greater than the critical R-value of 0.312 at 0.5 alpha level with 38 degree of freedom. The R-square value of 0.51 predicts 51% of the influence of COVID-19 on domestic violence in Akwa Ibom State. This rate of influence was moderately strong and therefore means that there is significant influence of COVID-19 on domestic violence in Akwa Ibom State.

It was also deemed necessary to find out the extent of the variance of each class of independent variable as responded by each respondent (see table 6).

**Table 6: Analysis of variance of the influence of COVID-19 on domestic violence in Akwa Ibom State**

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	402.42	1	402.42	40.79	.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	384.80	39	9.87		
Total	787.22	40			

a. Dependent Variable: Domestic Violence

b. Predictors: (Constant), COVID-19

The above table presents the calculated F-value as (402.42) and the critical F-value as (000<sup>b</sup>). Being that the critical F-value (000<sup>b</sup>) is below the probability level of 0.05, the result therefore means that there is significant influence exerted by the independent variables (domestic violence) on the dependent variable which is COVID-19. The result therefore is in agreement with the research findings of Smith, Zhang, & Basile, (2018) which asserted that COVID-19 pandemic continues, individuals are required to stay home to protect themselves and their communities. They also added, however, the home may not be safe for many families who experience domestic violence, which may include both intimate partner abuse and child abuse are at great risk for injuries including death (APA 2020). The significance of the result caused the null hypotheses to be rejected while the alternative was accepted.

### **Conclusion**

The negative consequential effects of the measures adopted by the UK and other countries to tackle the spread of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) on society are beginning to unfold. An area of concern is the impending crisis of domestic violence gender-based violence and child abuse and neglect, due to movement restrictions, loss of income, isolation, overcrowding, and stress and anxiety, all of which put women and children at a disproportionately increased risk of harm. It was therefore concluded that there is significant influence of COVID-19 pandemic on domestic violence in Akwa Ibom State.

### **Recommendations**

1. Relevant State authorities (e.g. Ministries of Interior, Justice, and Social Welfare) should clearly and publicly indicate that preventing and responding to domestic violence, even in times of pandemic and lock down, should be a priority for relevant criminal justice officials and specific warning and sanctioning measures should be in place for not following this policy.
2. Governments and policy makers adopting sustainable funding for NGOs is crucial, particularly where they provide essential services to victims and survivors.
3. Parents should be offered additional supports, including access to free legal services, measures to ensure that children are not residing with an abusive parent during the lockdown period and, in instances where this is identified to be the case, children should be provided with support to ensure their safe return to a non-abusive parent or guardian.
4. The government should ensure that those who break lockdown rules to report or flee from violence are exempt from punishment.

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