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Measures to Improve Women's Rights and Interests in Developing Countries in the Post-COVID-19 Era: Utilization of Educational ODA

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Summary

The disastrous effects of COVID-19 have been numerous, and among these has been an adverse effect on women's rights. This study aimed to examine the various types of impacts COVID-19 has had on women's rights, and to explore directions for solving the associated problems from the perspective of educational ODA. For this purpose, the text mining analysis method, one of the major such methods, was employed in order to analyse YouTube videos. The characteristics of the correlation between COVID-19 and women's rights were all compressed into seven. The seven topics are: 'Misinformation due to corona'; 'Home and family support and the burden of household chores'; 'Crisis of equality between men and women in agriculture'; 'Impact of the women's rights policy agenda'; 'Lockdown violence against girls'; 'A platform for resolving women's rights and interests'; and 'The role of a leader in relation to home security'. It was found that, in order to solve these problems in developing countries, aid-sharing countries may valuably adopt educational ODA programs as policy tools

Keywords

Corona and women's rights, text mining analysis, educational ODA.

1 Introduction

The number of confirmed COVID-19 cases reached 624 million as of 28 December 2022 (<https://coronaboard.kr/>), bringing an unprecedented global crisis. There are claims that the world has become equal in the face of indiscriminate infectious disease due to coronavirus, but in fact the impact of the infection itself has not been equal (Stewart, 2021; Bhuiyan et al., 2020; Bond,

2020; Crawford et al., 2020; Stewart & Lowenthal, 2021; Choi, 2021a). The situation in developing countries has been significantly different from that applying in developed countries. Developing countries must respond to crises that are different from those faced by developed countries, such as health vulnerability, deepening poverty, and malnutrition due to insecure food supply. In terms of gender, women in developing countries may suffer different long-term harms from women in developed countries. The importance of global solidarity and international cooperation cannot be overemphasized in a society where crises such as climate change, frequent outbreaks of infectious diseases and environmental pollution become commonplace and these crises spread rapidly (Coughenour et al., 2020; Choi, 2021b, 2021c, 2021d; Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020; Fischer, 2020).

One of the social groups most affected by COVID-19 is women, and this situation is not unique to developing countries. Globally, women's employment is more unstable than men's and is concentrated in lower positions; and since women are in charge of most care work, they are less likely than men to suffer from deteriorating levels of employment due to COVID-19 or from additional housework due to isolation. It has been found that women bear more of the caring burden. Even examining the state of healthcare reveals the relative vulnerability of women. Worldwide, 70 per cent of the healthcare workforce is female. However, most of these women take on, in the main, caring or nursing roles. They are active at the forefront of COVID-19 and have a high risk of infection due to frequent contact with patients (CCSA 2020). As a result, even in developed countries the infection rate among health workers is more than twice as high for women as for men.

However, in addition to these common difficulties, girls and women in developing countries are reported to be experiencing additional difficulties related to COVID-19 (Gur and Gur, 2020; Barzilay et al., 2020; Hwang, 2020; Jang, 2020; Barzilay, 2020).. For example, there are many cases of female students having a relatively greater burden of housework than male students as schoolwork is suspended. Moreover, if the academic hiatus is prolonged, there is a risk that more cases of pupils stopping schooling without returning to school will arise even after COVID-19 passes. In particular, too, women are exposed to extreme poverty and economic vulnerability. The 110 million girls in developing countries where there is high gender inequality in education are likely to be unable to return to school. The opportunity to return to school is blocked as the burden of housework and care work increases, creating risks of exposure to physical and sexual violence, early marriage to guarantee a living and support a family, or even entering the prostitution industry.

This disconnection from education has been witnessed also during other epidemics prior to COVID-19. Following the Ebola epidemic in 2014, many girls in Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone did not return to school (UNESCO 2020a). In short, an infectious disease crisis such as COVID-19 itself places a burden on women, and in addition can leave long-term damage due to education cut-off even after the actual crisis has passed

COVID-19 places women at increased risk of becoming victims of violence

(Sundarassen, et al., 2020; Gao et al., 2020; Stewart, 2020). According to WHO statistics, one-third of women worldwide have experienced physical or sexual violence at the hands of their husbands or partners. Unfortunately, the damage caused by domestic violence is predicted to increase further with the implementation of social distancing. This is because distancing and movement restrictions mean that violent perpetrators and victims will necessarily spend longer in unstable homes. When Ebola occurred, levels of crime against women, such as human trafficking, child marriage, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, increased (UN Women 2020). Following COVID, crimes against women in public places are also increasing in the Philippines and India as the streets are quiet due to social distancing (UN Women 2020). In El Salvador, complaints of violence against women increased by 70 per cent in 2021, compared to the same period in the previous year, and domestic violence and crimes of murder against women also increased in Central and South America, including an increase in Mexico during the coronavirus period.

COVID-19 is, then, as explained above, causing a deterioration in women's quality of life, which eventually acts as a factor that reduces women's rights and interests in various fields. Against this background, this study aims, first, to identify the major issues relating to women's rights and interests in developing countries following COVID-19, and secondly to seek the role and direction that educational Official Development Assistance (ODA) might take in resolving these issues.

2 Theoretical Discussion COVID-19 and Women's Rights

At first glance, gender and COVID-19 seem unrelated. However, a closer look reveals that the extraordinary disaster that COVID represents is deeply related to the gender order that supports our daily lives. According to reports received to date, women and men are infected at similar rates, but the mortality rate is slightly higher for men. Many men with underlying diseases such as high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease and lung disease have died following infection, and these diseases are believed to be closely related to smoking and alcohol intake. Experts cite the environment surrounding men and the norms of masculine behaviour as the reasons for this.

By contrast, women are exposed to different risks. Numerous studies have indicated that, in many countries, during lockdowns levels of pre-existing child and elderly care and domestic work, mostly performed by women, have increased, as has the risk of domestic violence. In addition, many studies report that, as public medical services become overloaded and public resources become insufficient, not only medical services but also general women's health services are disrupted, before and after childbirth. It is reported that, in many countries that actually imposed containment measures at the beginning of the pandemic, the number of calls to police stations or domestic violence counselling centres to complain of damage or to request counselling has increased. Also, globally, women account for 70 per cent of essential workers in the medical and social welfare sectors, which is

expected to increase the infection rate among female workers. Given all of this, the COVID-19 crisis tells us that the rights and interests of women are highly likely to be violated

Against this background, it is important to discover in which areas women's rights and interests are being seriously infringed owing to COVID-19. This will vary from country to country, but it is nevertheless expected that numerous such issues relating to COVID-19 will arise, especially in developing countries. If these issues are not resolved, the possibility will increase that women's rights and interests will continue to be violated in the future due to situations such as that brought about by COVID-19. In such cases, developing countries will require help from developed countries because their own economic conditions are poor. This help can suitably be provided via educational ODA.

3 Research Design

3.1 Analysis target

In order to analyse the cases of violation of women's rights in developing countries following COVID-19, this study analyses contents of YouTube. Among these contents, video data containing the keywords 'Corona 19', 'female' and 'assistance' are analysed. The analysis period ran from 20 January 2020, when the WHO first declared COVID-19 as a pandemic, to 31 December 2022.

3.2 Analysis method

First, 100 YouTube videos that contained the keywords 'covid 19', 'female' and 'assistance' were selected and analysed using the text mining method. The software used in the analysis was the Netminer 4.4 program, and the topic modelling and PFnet (Path Finder network) analysis methods were also employed.

4 Analysis Results

4.1 Basic analysis

Among videos containing all the three keywords, 'covid 19', 'female' and 'assistance', analysis was performed on 100 videos selected as being highest in terms of proximity. Word cloud analysis results for the selected keywords are shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1 Word cloud analysis result

The word cloud analysis results presented above are based on the frequency

of occurrence of the derived words. The results of this analysis are shown in Table 1. The word with the highest frequency of occurrence is 'woman', which appears 342 times, followed by 'person' and 'Africa'. What we can see here is that women in Africa are facing a great many problems.

Table 1 Words derived

		1	2	3	4
		Part of Speech(P	Frequency	Word length	Name Type
1	woman	Common Noun"	342.0	5.0	"_"
2	person	Common Noun"	291.0	6.0	"_"
3	Africa	Proper Noun"	180.0	6.0	phical Name"
4	country	Common Noun"	168.0	7.0	"_"
5	world	Common Noun"	138.0	5.0	"_"
6	goal	Common Noun"	110.0	4.0	"_"
7	man	Common Noun"	100.0	3.0	"_"
8	thing	Common Noun"	90.0	5.0	"_"
9	child	Common Noun"	87.0	5.0	"_"
10	way	Common Noun"	85.0	3.0	"_"
11	team	Common Noun"	84.0	4.0	"_"
12	life	Common Noun"	77.0	4.0	"_"
13	Cameroon	Proper Noun"	71.0	8.0	"_"
14	vaccine	Common Noun"	64.0	7.0	"_"
15	money	Common Noun"	63.0	5.0	"_"
16	health	Common Noun"	60.0	6.0	"_"
17	government	Common Noun"	58.0	10.0	"_"
18	water	Common Noun"	49.0	5.0	"_"
19	pandemic	Common Noun"	45.0	8.0	"_"
20	work	Common Noun"	43.0	4.0	"_"
21	guy	Common Noun"	43.0	3.0	"_"
22	girl	Common Noun"	43.0	4.0	"_"
23	issue	Common Noun"	41.0	5.0	"_"
24	family	Common Noun"	40.0	6.0	"_"
25	society	Common Noun"	39.0	7.0	"_"
26	right	Common Noun"	39.0	5.0	"_"
27	job	Common Noun"	38.0	3.0	"_"

4.2 Topic modelling analysis

Topic modelling analysis was performed in order to identify a certain pattern or cluster for the extracted words. In particular, since this study aims to identify issues relating to women's rights and interests, the 'ego network' analysis method was used, which adds and analyses keywords relating to women's rights and interests step by step. As a result of topic modelling analysis, seven topics were derived, as shown in Figure 2.

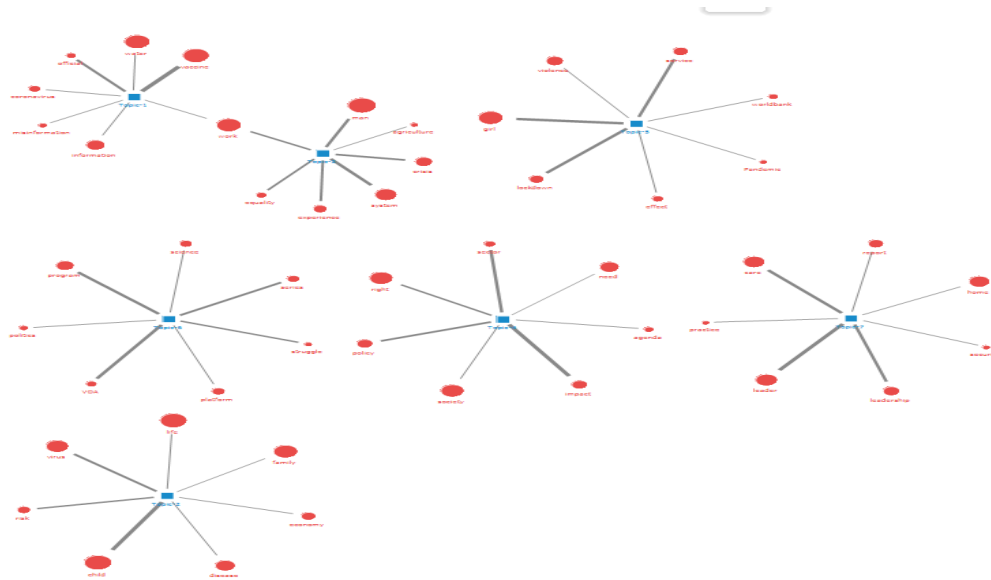
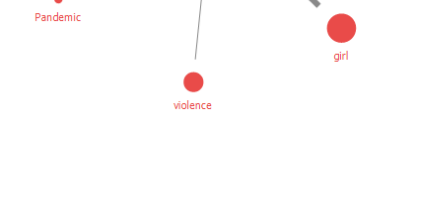
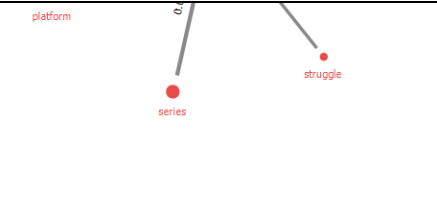
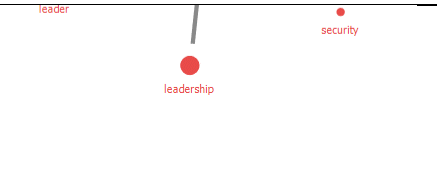


Figure 2 The seven extracted topics

The words that make up the above topics, and the characteristics of the topics that these words construct, are summarized in Table 2. The scores shown on the links between the nodes of each topic indicate the strength of the connection between the nodes.

Table 2 Structure and characteristics of topics

Topic	Topic network	Keywords included	Characteristics
1		coronavirus, information, work, official, vaccine, misinformation, water	Corona related misinformation
2		child, life, family, disease, virus, economy, household chores	The burden of home and family care and household chores
3		equality, work, man, crisis, system, agriculture, experience	The crisis of equality between men and women in agriculture
4		need, society, right, sector, agenda, impact, policy	Impact of the Women's Rights Policy Agenda

5		lockdown, effect, service, girl, violence, pandemic, world bank	Violence against girls due to lockdown
6		politics, program, science, struggle, series, platform, VOA	A platform for resolving women's rights and interests
7		home, care, practice, security, leadership, leader, report	Leader's role in security at home

It is apparent from Table 2 that the issue of women’s rights and interests in the context of coronavirus consists here of seven topics. These are: ‘Misinformation due to corona’; ‘Home and family support and the burden of household chores’; ‘Crisis of equality between men and women in agriculture’; ‘Impact of women’s rights policy agenda’; ‘Lockdown violence against girls’; ‘A platform for resolving women’s rights and interests’; and ‘The role of a leader in relation to home security’.

Figure 3 shows the structure via which the words that make up the seven topics are interconnected. It is important to understand this structure, since it can be helpful in designing future policy directions by identifying which words are connected to each other. The method applied here was the PFnet analysis method.

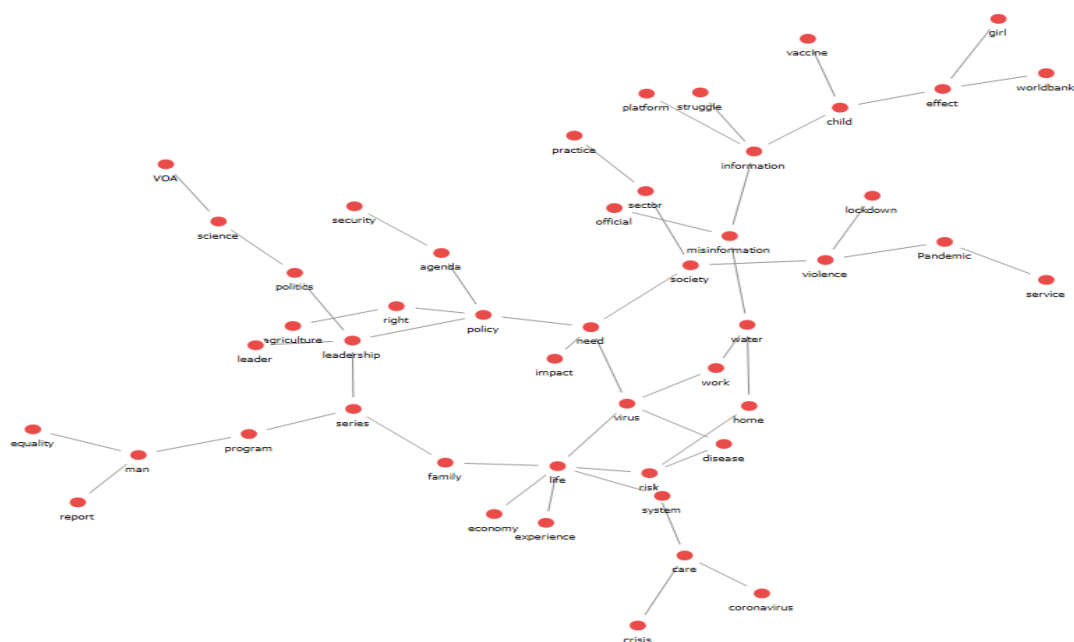


Figure 3 PFnet analysis result

It is necessary to establish an educational ODA platform to address women's rights and interests. Infectious diseases such as coronavirus are highly likely to recur in new mutations in the future. Considering these points, it is necessary to make efforts to include the establishment of a platform to address women's rights and interests within educational ODA programmes. This is due to the need for aid donor countries to provide educational ODA programmes to support a sound social safety net for developing countries in the face of external shocks such as COVID-19. If this is done, the damage to women's rights and interests will be alleviated even in situations of health crisis, shortage of daily necessities such as food, unemployment and reduced incomes.

It is necessary to make policy efforts to solve the problem of inequality between men and women in the agricultural sector through educational ODA programmes specially designed for this sector. It should be noted that in the case of developing countries, the problem of gender inequality is more severe for those engaged in agriculture than for those in other sectors. In the field of agriculture, since the time spent staying in the same space as a potential perpetrator of domestic violence is becoming longer, there is also the possibility that victims of such violence will have difficulty reporting it, or consulting advice bodies, via phone or e-mail.

5 Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact both on the world order and on individual lives. However, due to the impossibility of exact measurement, it is difficult to prepare countermeasures to cope with the post-Covid era.

Voices emphasizing the necessity and importance of such countermeasures are gradually growing louder. But on the other side of the equation, one of the most serious aspects of any future pandemic is the accompanying potential violation of women's rights. In particular, major international organizations such as the UN and WHO report that the outbreak and continuation of a pandemic raises level of tensions within households and increases the time spent in a space where violence occurs, thereby increasing the risk of women being exposed to violence and reducing the overall level of gender equality (UN Women, 2020; WHO, 2020).

Despite the raising of concerns about an increased risk of domestic violence and violence against women during a pandemic, current donor countries' responses to COVID-19 are primarily focused on the economic losses caused by the pandemic. As a result, studies on the violation of women's rights in the context of gender inequality have not received much attention. Neither has the work of analysing and academically exploring the relationship between the COVID-19 pandemic and the deterioration of women's rights attracted due attention. Few empirical studies or theoretical discussions have empirically analysed this. This problem is also related to the tendency to view the coronavirus pandemic as an event unrelated to gender. In many previous contagious disease studies too, gender was either not considered at all or was narrowly recognized solely as marking a difference in personal attributes. In the former case, infectious disease disasters are seen as the same

regardless of gender. In the latter, the effects of an infectious disease disaster may have a negative impact on women, but gender power and gender norms are reduced to personal differences arising from men's present conditions.

The discussion and interpretation of the relationship with COVID-19 makes women vulnerable to infectious disease disasters. There have been some studies that have identified the constitutive aspects of gender. In addition, some feminist studies have argued that infectious disease disasters should be analysed from a gender perspective. However, gender and women's rights issues have not as yet been recognized as central categories of analysis in the flow of mainstream policies and general awareness of infectious disease disasters. In the future, therefore, there will undoubtedly be a need to conduct many empirical in-depth studies on the relationship between infectious disease disasters and women's rights.

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