

The Magnificat and Online Gender-Based Violence: A Theological Framework for the Church's Role in Digital Justice Advocacy

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Abstract: Online Gender-Based Violence (OGBV) has become an urgent global issue, exacerbated by technological advancements and the widespread use of digital platforms. This study explores the intersection of OGBV and biblical theology by analyzing Mary's *Magnificat* as a framework for the Church's response to digital gender injustices. The study aims to provide a theological perspective on OGBV, highlighting the role of the Church in advocating for digital justice and supporting survivors. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, this research integrates biblical-theological analysis and literature review. The primary sources include the *Magnificat* (Luke 1:46-55), theological reflections on gender justice, and reports on OGBV from institutions such as Komnas Perempuan and SAFEnet. The study utilizes thematic analysis to examine how the *Magnificat* serves as a theological foundation for digital advocacy and ecclesial interventions. The findings indicate that the *Magnificat* is not merely a hymn of worship but a radical proclamation of justice, aligning with feminist and liberation theology. This study positions the Church as an ethical agent in digital governance, urging its involvement in advocacy, policy engagement, and pastoral care for OGBV survivors. Theologically, the research highlights the Church's responsibility to challenge oppressive digital structures and promote gender justice in online spaces. This study contributes to digital theology by bridging biblical insights with contemporary discussions on gender-based violence in digital contexts. It also emphasizes the need for interdisciplinary collaboration between theologians, legal experts, and digital rights advocates to develop faith-based interventions against OGBV. However, further research is needed to expand theological engagement beyond the *Magnificat* and explore the role of other religious traditions in addressing OGBV.

Keywords: Digital justice; gender inequality; Online Gender-Based Violence (OGBV); feminist theology; liberation theology.

Abstrak: Kekerasan Berbasis Gender Online (KBGO) telah menjadi isu global yang mendesak, yang diperburuk oleh kemajuan teknologi dan meluasnya penggunaan platform digital. Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi persinggungan antara KBGO dan teologi alkitabiah dengan menganalisis *Magnificat* Maria sebagai kerangka kerja untuk respons Gereja terhadap ketidakadilan gender digital. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memberikan perspektif teologis tentang KBGO, menyoroti peran Gereja dalam mengadvokasi keadilan digital dan mendukung para penyintas. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif, penelitian ini mengintegrasikan analisis teologis-alkitabiah dan tinjauan literatur. Sumber-sumber utama yang digunakan adalah *Magnificat* (Lukas 1:46-55), refleksi teologis tentang keadilan gender, dan laporan-laporan tentang KBGO dari berbagai lembaga seperti Komnas Perempuan dan SAFEnet. Penelitian ini menggunakan analisis tematik untuk memeriksa bagaimana *Magnificat* berfungsi sebagai landasan teologis untuk advokasi digital dan intervensi gerejawi. Temuan penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa *Magnificat* bukan sekadar nyanyian pujian, melainkan sebuah proklamasi keadilan yang radikal, yang sejalan dengan teologi feminis dan teologi pembebasan. Penelitian ini memposisikan Gereja sebagai agen etis dalam tata kelola digital,

mendorong keterlibatannya dalam advokasi, keterlibatan kebijakan, dan pelayanan pastoral bagi para penyintas KBGO. Secara teologis, penelitian ini menyoroti tanggung jawab Gereja untuk menantang struktur digital yang menindas dan mempromosikan keadilan gender di ruang daring. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada teologi digital dengan menjembatani wawasan alkitabiah dengan diskusi kontemporer tentang kekerasan berbasis gender dalam konteks digital. Studi ini juga menekankan perlunya kolaborasi interdisipliner antara teolog, ahli hukum, dan advokat hak-hak digital untuk mengembangkan intervensi berbasis agama dalam melawan KBGO. Namun, penelitian lebih lanjut diperlukan untuk memperluas keterlibatan teologis di luar *Magnificat* dan mengeksplorasi peran tradisi agama lain dalam menangani KBGO.

Kata Kunci: Keadilan digital; ketidaksetaraan gender; Kekerasan Berbasis Gender Online (KBGO); teologi feminis; teologi pembebasan.

1. Introduction

The phenomenon of Online Gender-Based Violence (OGBV) has escalated alongside rapid advancements in digital technology and the widespread use of social media. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated this issue by deepening social and economic inequalities, thereby increasing women's vulnerability to digital harassment (Zabel et al., 2023). According to UN Women (2020a), during the global lockdown, no fewer than 243 million women and girls aged 15–49 experienced sexual and/or physical violence from their intimate partners. Consequently, OGBV has been referred to as the “twin pandemic” of COVID-19, highlighting its severity and widespread impact (Dlamini, 2021).

In the Indonesian context, cases of OGBV have risen sharply. The National Commission on Violence Against Women (Komnas Perempuan) first documented 97 cases in 2018, and by 2021, this number had surged to 1,721 cases. The Commission reported that these cases were received from various civil society organisations and government institutions across nearly all provinces in Indonesia, as well as through direct complaints submitted via the *Unit Pengaduan Rujukan* (Referral Complaints Unit) or its official email channels (Mustafainah, Aflina, 2021; Suryanti & Muttaqin, 2023; Wirawan et al., 2022). This increasing trend underscores the urgent need for systemic intervention, particularly from religious institutions that uphold social justice and moral responsibility.

The Church understood not only as a hierarchical institution but also as a community of God's people, has a crucial role in addressing OGBV. Its involvement is rooted in the principles of solidarity, equality, and justice for all (Hermkens et al., 2022). One of the most profound biblical inspirations for the Church's struggle against gender injustice is found in Mary's *Magnificat*, recorded in the Gospel of Luke (Azcu, 2020). This *hymn* (a poetic song of praise) is not merely an act of worship but also a revolutionary declaration of God's preference for the oppressed.

Online Gender-Based Violence (OGBV) is a growing concern globally, manifesting in various forms such as cyber harassment, doxing, non-consensual image distribution, and technology-facilitated sexual violence (Champion et al., 2022; Sheikh & Rogers, 2024). Studies have shown that OGBV disproportionately affects women and marginalized groups, particularly female academics, journalists, and activists who are often targeted in online spaces (Kavanagh & Brown, 2020; Martin, 2018). The increasing prevalence of OGBV has significant psychological, social, and economic consequences, limiting women's participation in public discourse and exacerbating gender inequalities (Owusu-Antwi et al., 2024; Powell et al., 2020).

Several studies have explored the sociological and psychological dimensions of OGBV, examining institutional responses and the effectiveness of digital safety strategies (Phippen & Bond, 2022; Simelane et al., 2023). Legal research highlights critical gaps in the regulation and enforcement of laws against OGBV, as existing policies often fail to comprehensively address online violence (Powell & Henry, 2018; Suzor et al., 2019). Meanwhile, scholars have emphasized the responsibility of social media platforms in combating gendered violence, advocating for a human rights-based approach to digital governance (Abercrombie et al., 2023; Panda, 2023).

Despite these extensive sociological, legal, and technological analyses, few studies have systematically examined OGBV from a theological perspective. Previous theological research has primarily focused on Mary's Magnificat as a song of liberation and divine justice (Azcuy, 2020; Gaut, 2014; O'Regan, 2017). However, these interpretations have yet to be systematically linked to the Church's mission in resisting digital gender-based violence. The intersection between **liberation** theology, feminist theology, and digital justice remains an underexplored domain in theological scholarship.

This study seeks to fill that gap by offering a biblical-theological reflection on the Magnificat as a framework for the Church's response to OGBV. Drawing upon feminist and liberation theology, it explores how the Magnificat can inspire ecclesial advocacy, policy engagement, and community-based interventions to address gender-based violence in digital spaces. By integrating biblical insights with contemporary discussions on gender justice, this study aims to provide a theologically grounded strategy for combating OGBV, positioning the Church as an active agent in the fight for digital justice.

This study seeks to provide a biblical-theological perspective on Online Gender-Based Violence (OGBV) by analysing the Magnificat as a framework for the Church's response to digital gender injustices. While previous research has predominantly explored OGBV from sociological, psychological, and legal perspectives, there is a lack of systematic theological engagement with this issue, particularly through the lens of feminist and liberation theology. This study aims to bridge this gap by examining how the Magnificat, a biblical hymn of justice and liberation, can inform the Church's advocacy and resistance against OGBV. Specifically, the study will explore how theological ethics and biblical narratives shape the Church's role in advocating for digital justice, supporting victims, and influencing policy changes. By integrating theological insights with contemporary discussions on gender justice, this research seeks to establish the Church as a moral and ethical agent in combating OGBV, offering practical recommendations for ecclesial engagement in digital spaces.

This study argues that Mary's Magnificat is not merely a song of worship but a radical theological proclamation that aligns with feminist and liberation theology, advocating for justice and the dismantling of oppressive structures, including those perpetuating OGBV. Rooted in Gutierrez's liberation theology (Gutiérrez, 2004), which emphasises God's preferential option for the oppressed, the Magnificat underscores God's commitment to social justice and the elevation of the marginalised (Azcuy, 2020). Furthermore, feminist theological perspectives, such as those of Ruether (1985) and Fiorenza (1994), assert that the Magnificat embodies a counter-narrative against patriarchal and exploitative systems, making it highly relevant for addressing contemporary digital violence against women. Additionally, digital justice theories (Suzor et al., 2019) highlight the ethical responsibilities of institutions, including religious communities, in shaping digital governance and safeguarding vulnerable groups online. By applying these theological and ethical frameworks, this study hypothesises that the Church has both a doctrinal obligation and a social responsibility to resist OGBV actively, advocating for gender justice within both digital and physical realms.

2. Methods

This study focuses on theological reflections on the Magnificat of Mary and its relevance in addressing Online Gender-Based Violence (OGBV) within the Catholic Church's mission for social justice (Yalcinoz-Ucan & Eslen-Ziya, 2023). The unit of analysis in this research consists of biblical texts (primarily the Magnificat in the Gospel of Luke), official reports on OGBV, and theological perspectives on gender justice and Church activism. The study examines the role of the Church in advocating for gender justice through the lens of the Magnificat as a declaration of liberation for the oppressed.

This research employs a qualitative descriptive approach using biblical-theological analysis and literature review. The qualitative method was chosen because it allows for an in-depth exploration of theological texts, Church teachings, and social phenomena related to OGBV. The study seeks not only to describe the issue of OGBV from a Catholic theological perspective but also to interpret how the Magnificat can serve as a spiritual foundation for resistance against digital gender-based violence. A

descriptive approach is applied to illustrate the current state of OGBV, while biblical-theological analysis is used to contextualise the message of the Magnificat within the Church's mission for justice.

The primary data source for this study is the biblical texts on the Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55) serving as the main theological texts for analysis. Secondary sources include theological books, journal articles, and research reports related to OGBV, gender justice, and Catholic social teaching. Such as J. Darminta's *From the Song of Mary to the Spirituality of the Movement* (Darminta, 1995; Lettsome, 2021), which explores the spirituality of the Magnificat; Willy Gaut's *Christian Vision of the Dignity of Women*, which discusses women's liberation from a theological perspective; Woi & Kleden's *Feminist Hermeneutics* (Woi, 2004), which discusses the critical-emancipatory potential in the Christian tradition. It also draws from reports on OGBV in Indonesia, such as annual reports from Komnas Perempuan (National Commission on Violence Against Women, 2018-2021); SAFENet (Southeast Asia Freedom of Expression Network), a regional organisation advocating for digital rights in Southeast Asia; studies such as Mustafainah & Aflina (Mustafainah, Aflina, 2021), Rahmawati & Nabila (Rahmawati, 2022), and Kusuma & Arum (Kusuma & Arum, 2019) on gender-based violence and the legal framework in Indonesia. These sources provide a comprehensive understanding of VAWG, its increasing prevalence in Indonesia, and its intersection with Catholic theological reflections on gender justice.

The Data Collection Technique in this research was conducted by collating, categorising, and evaluating sources that discuss the impact of OGBV in Indonesia and the role of the Church in gender advocacy, the theological significance of the Magnificat as a model of resistance and empowerment, the Church's teachings on justice, human dignity, and the preferential option for the oppressed. The data was analysed using thematic analysis, focusing on the intersections between biblical theology, gender justice, and Church advocacy. The analysis was conducted by examining the Magnificat in its historical and theological context, exploring Mary's role as a prophetic figure in social justice, comparing theological themes from the Magnificat with contemporary feminist theology and liberation theology perspectives on gender justice, connecting theological-biblical insights with modern Church responses to OGBV, particularly in the Indonesian context, evaluating existing literature on OGBV and Church activism, highlighting gaps and proposing a theological framework for action (Kolimon, 2022).

3. Results

Understanding of Terms, Factual Data, and Models of the OGBVs

Online Gender-Based Violence (OGBV) is a form of gender-based violence facilitated by information and communication technology (ICT). SafeNet (2023) recorded a rising trend of gender-based violence occurring through digital platforms since 2018, aligning with the growing use of social media and technological applications (Rahmawati, 2022). This trend highlights the urgent need for structured policies and preventive measures to combat OGBV effectively.

Although this phenomenon is relatively new, definitions and understandings of OGBV continue to evolve. The United Nations (UN), through the Global Program on Cybercrime from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), employs various terminologies to describe this issue, including *ICT-facilitated violence*, *online violence*, *digital violence*, and *cyber violence*. The UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, for instance, initially used *ICT-facilitated Violence Against Women* before shifting to *Online Violence Against Women* as a more publicly accessible term.

In Indonesia, OGBV terminology lacks consistency. The National Commission on Violence Against Women (*Komnas Perempuan*) has documented gender-based violence cases in digital spaces since 2016. However, the terminology used has evolved over time, changing from *cybercrime* (2016–2017) to *Cyber-Based Violence Against Women* (CBVaW) (2018–2019) and finally to *Cyber-Based Gender Violence* (CBGV) in 2021 (Mustafainah & Aflina, 2021). This inconsistency reflects a broader challenge in legally categorizing and addressing OGBV cases.

Similar to gender-based violence in physical spaces, OGBV primarily aims to harass or harm victims based on their gender or sexuality (Kusuma & Arum, 2019). However, non-gender-based online

violence falls into the broader category of general cybercrime and is not classified as OGBV. The increasing prevalence of OGBV cases in Indonesia underscores the necessity of legal clarity and stronger protective mechanisms for victims (Lynch & Logan, 2023).

The following table 1 presents the trend of increasing OGBV cases based on the annual reports of Komnas Perempuan.

Table 1. Trends and Patterns in OGBV Cases in Indonesia

Year	Number of OGBV Cases
2016	12
2017	16
2018	97
2019	281
2020	940
2021	1,721

The following Figure 1 illustrates the rise in OGBV cases based on data from Komnas Perempuan:

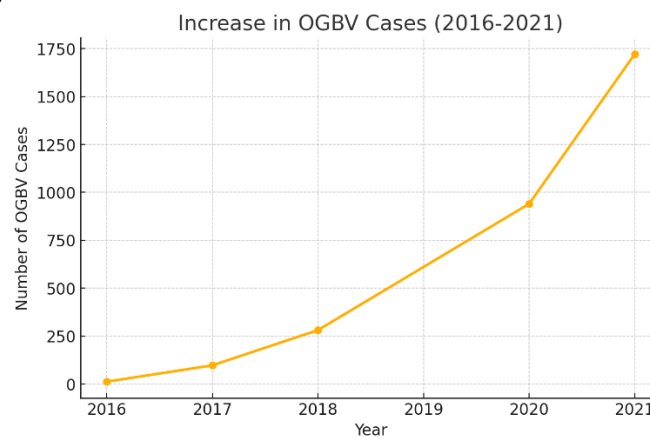


Figure 1. Increase in OGBV Cases (2016–2021)

This graph clearly illustrates the sharp and continuous increase in OGBV cases, particularly after 2019, emphasizing the growing severity and urgency of this phenomenon. The steep rise in cases between 2019 and 2021 suggests that digital platforms have become increasingly exploited as tools for gender-based violence. This trend attributed to the expanding reach of social media, the increased digital presence of individuals due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the lack of robust legal frameworks to protect victims (Sahoo et al., 2024). The data underscores the pressing need for more comprehensive policies, legal protections, and community-based interventions to address OGBV effectively and ensure a safer digital environment for vulnerable groups.

Over the past five years, Online Gender-Based Violence (OGBV) in Indonesia has surged, with cases rising from 16 in 2017 to 1,721 in 2021 (Komnas Perempuan). This increase is linked to the growing use of digital platforms, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which heightened online interactions and anonymity for perpetrators. Despite this escalation, legal frameworks remain inadequate, leaving many victims without protection or justice. Key forms of OGBV include *doxing* (malicious exposure of personal information), *sextortion* (coerced sexual exploitation), *trolling* (persistent online harassment), and the non-consensual distribution of intimate content.

The evolving terminology used to define OGBV in Indonesia—from *cybercrime* to *Cyber-Based Gender Violence (CBGV)*—highlights conceptual ambiguity, hindering policy development and law enforcement. The absence of clear definitions complicates victim support, allowing perpetrators to evade accountability. OGBV's psychological and social impacts are severe, leading to fear, anxiety,

reputational harm, and self-censorship among victims, especially in conservative communities where gender-based violence remains stigmatised.

Addressing OGBV requires a multi-pronged approach. Legal reforms must define and criminalise digital gender-based violence explicitly, while law enforcement agencies need specialised training to ensure the consistent application of regulations. Beyond legal measures, religious institutions, particularly the Church, play a crucial role in advocating digital ethics, supporting victims, and raising awareness. Faith communities can provide safe spaces for survivors and promote responsible online behaviour through education, sermons, and community engagement.

A comprehensive strategy—integrating legal policies, digital literacy programmes, and community-based support—is essential to combat OGBV effectively. Without coordinated efforts from government agencies, civil society, and religious organisations, digital spaces will remain unsafe, disproportionately harming women and marginalised groups.

The Vulnerability of Women in the Digital Age

In the second decade of this century, our attachment to digital technology has given rise to a *new culture*—one that reshapes social life profoundly. The evolution of media has moved from oral and written traditions to digital traditions, creating what is known as *cyberspace* (a digital interactive environment) and *virtual reality* (a simulated digital presence). These spaces are not mere illusions; rather, they form a *real virtuality*, a metaphorical realm where human interaction takes place beyond physical boundaries (Alfons Duka, 2017; Yalcinoz-Ucan & Eslen-Ziya, 2023).

Virtual communication, driven by the internet and creative technology, has opened new opportunities and risks. Social networks, an integral part of the digital age, enable interactions beyond geographical and cultural limits. However, this expansion has also redefined social norms, particularly regarding morality and gender dynamics (Kleden, 2018; Wirawan et al., 2022).

While digital platforms empower individuals, they simultaneously expose women to vulnerabilities. Social media enables economic opportunities, but it also creates a paradox: some women use digital platforms for self-promotion and financial gain, while others become victims of *Online Gender-Based Violence (OGBV)*, including harassment and exploitation. Instead of advocating for gender justice, some women willingly objectify themselves on digital platforms, driven by economic incentives (Cahyono & Samosir, 2023).

To better understand how OGBV affects women, the following table 2 different forms of victimization.

Table 2. The Impact of Online Gender-Based Violence (OGBV)

Psychological Losses	Sociological Losses	Loss of Economic Access	Limited Mobility and Self-Censorship
Victim gets stressed and depressed when surfing social media	Victims feel that their social relationships will be negatively impacted	Due to being threatened, victims can comply with the perpetrator's request to send goods or money to the perpetrator	Victims feel they have lost control over themselves
Victim's thoughts are disturbed when doing online activities	Victims feel unsafe and uncomfortable when gathering and interacting in the community	To sue the perpetrator in court, the victim certainly needs costs, such as a lawyer, expert witnesses who have a perspective on the victim, and the victim's accommodation costs to court.	Victims begin to limit their mobility both in cyberspace and in the real world

Victims feels that they are always “being watched” by others	Victims become inferior and anxious if other people find out about the OGBV case they are experiencing.	Victims can isolate themselves from society due to the OBGV cases they experienced.
Victims often consider other people whom they interact with as the perpetrators of OGBV.		

Based on the experiences of victims of GBV, there are potential losses as follows table 3

Table 3. Case Studies of Online Gender-Based Violence (OGBV)

Case Study	Psychological Vulnerability	Social Vulnerability	Economic Vulnerability
MJ and RO Case	The victim suffered depression and anxiety due to blackmail.	The victim felt socially isolated and fearful of being judged.	The victim was coerced into sending money to the perpetrator to prevent content leakage.
Cyber Grooming Case (AP and Children Victims)	Victims suffered trauma from coercion into sexual acts.	Victims feared their reputations would be ruined and hesitated to report.	Victims were manipulated into providing private content, risking economic extortion.

In the case of MJ, the perpetrator, RO, threatened to release intimate digital content unless she complied with his demands. He coerced her into choosing between paying him a sum of 2 million Indonesian rupiahs and engaging in sexual intercourse once, or paying 1 million rupiahs and engaging in sexual intercourse twice. When MJ pleaded with RO to delete the content, he ignored her requests (Rahmawati, 2022).

Cyber grooming, a form of *Online Gender-Based Violence (OGBV)*, continues to exploit minors, as seen in a case where ten children were coerced into live-streamed sexual interactions and blackmailed with recorded content (Hayati, 2021). Digital platforms, while providing economic opportunities, have also become spaces for exploitation, coercion, and harassment. Women, in particular, face a paradox: while some use social media for financial independence, others fall victim to sextortion, non-consensual content distribution, and psychological distress.

The growing *self-objectification* trend on platforms like YouTube, TikTok, and Bigo Live reflects shifting social norms, where economic pressures push women to monetise their appearance (Kılınc, 2022). However, this often leads to vulnerability, making them targets for online abuse. The anonymity and accessibility of digital platforms further enable perpetrators, with weak legal frameworks allowing such crimes to persist with minimal consequences.

Addressing OGBV requires more than legal and psychological interventions. Religious institutions, especially the Church, can play a crucial role by promoting digital literacy, ethical online behaviour, and victim support (Darminta, 1995). Faith-based education on digital safety can empower communities to navigate online spaces responsibly. Through mentorship, pastoral care, and advocacy, the Church can offer sanctuary to victims while pushing for stronger legislation against digital gender-based violence. By collaborating with policymakers and human rights organisations, religious institutions can contribute to legal reforms that ensure better protection for vulnerable groups in the digital age.

Mary and Her Magnificat in the Gospel of Luke: Biblical-Theological Reflections

The term *Magnificat* comes from the Latin word *magnificare*, meaning "to praise" (Hartman, 1963). The full phrase, *Magnificat anima mea Dominum*, translates to "My soul magnifies the Lord." It is a hymn of praise, also known as the *Song of Mary*, which she sang during her visit to her cousin Elizabeth after being greeted as "the blessed one" (Luke 1:39-45) (Pandžić, 2019). The text of the *Magnificat* is found in Luke 1:46-55 and reflects Mary's response to God's work of salvation. Despite her humble status, God called her to an extraordinary role in His redemptive plan (O'Regan, 2017).

Luke's Gospel was written within a context of social, political, economic, and religious oppression. His community faced severe hardships under the *Honostiores* (the ruling elite) who exploited the *Humiliores* (lower-class individuals). Poverty and socio-economic injustice were common, and faith crises emerged as some began to doubt the eschatological promise of salvation (Hakh, 2010).

In response to this, Luke portrayed Jesus as the liberator of the oppressed, particularly for the *Anawim* (the marginalized). The *Magnificat* embodies this message, declaring that God uplifts the lowly and brings justice to the downtrodden (Balch, 2017). Mary, as a humble woman chosen to bear the Messiah, became a symbol of God's intervention in history — affirming His commitment to justice and liberation. In the context of OGBV, the *Magnificat* offers a theological foundation for addressing gender-based violence. It is not merely a song of praise but a declaration of hope for the oppressed, including women suffering from digital exploitation.

To better illustrate the connection between the *Magnificat* and liberation from OGBV, the following table 4 compares its key themes with principles of advocacy against OGBV:

Table 4. Theological Themes in the Magnificat and Their Application in Combating Online Gender-Based Violence (OGBV)

Themes in the Magnificat	Principles of Liberation from OGBV
Exalting the Humble (Luke 1:52)	Empowering survivors of OGBV and restoring their dignity.
Bringing Down the Mighty (Luke 1:52)	Holding perpetrators accountable through advocacy and legal reform.
Filling the Hungry (Luke 1:53)	Providing material, psychological, and spiritual support for victims.
Remembering His Mercy (Luke 1:54-55)	Creating faith-based community networks to support survivors and promote digital safety.

The *Magnificat* is a hymn of faith and liberation. It reveals God's preferential option for the oppressed and serves as a model for contemporary struggles against injustice. Just as Mary rejoiced in God's intervention, women suffering from OGBV can find hope in God's promise of justice.

"Magnificat demonstrates solidarity and liberation that is relevant for women victims of OGBV."

In this light, *Magnificat* is not only a historical text but also a practical call to action. It urges communities, especially faith-based institutions, to side with the oppressed, advocate for justice, and work toward systemic change.

Several theological patterns emerge in the *Magnificat*, which can be applied to contemporary issues of OGBV: Mary's hymn aligns with God's justice for the marginalized. In the digital age, solidarity means recognizing the struggles of OGBV survivors, listening to their experiences, and ensuring their voices are heard in faith communities and advocacy efforts; The *Magnificat* proclaims God's active role in breaking the chains of oppression. This mission must be reflected in efforts to free women from digital violence through education, legal protection, and psychological support; The *Magnificat* is a bold declaration of transformation—overturning unjust structures. In today's context, this means challenging harmful patriarchal norms in digital spaces and advocating for safer online environments.

To contextualize these patterns in the digital era, the *Magnificat* can be applied through table 5.

Table 5. Practical Applications of the Magnificat in Addressing Online Gender-Based Violence (OGBV) in the Digital Age

Application of Magnificat in Digital Context	Description
Education and Awareness	Teaching women about digital safety and their rights to online dignity.
Advocacy and Legal Reform	Strengthening laws against OGBV and pushing for policy changes.
Faith-Based Digital Solidarity	Encouraging religious institutions to provide safe spaces for victims.
Community Support Systems	Establishing victim support networks within church communities.

The *Magnificat* serves as a theological foundation for the Church's role in addressing OGBV. Its themes of justice, liberation, and divine solidarity align with contemporary efforts to combat digital gender-based violence. The Church can apply the *Magnificat* in three key ways: *First*, Advocacy for Justice and Accountability. The *Magnificat* calls for the downfall of the powerful who exploit the weak. The Church must take a firm stance against OGBV perpetrators, advocating for stricter regulations and justice for survivors. Religious leaders should speak against digital violence and promote ethical online behaviour. *Second*, Education and Prevention Efforts. As Mary proclaims God's intervention, the Church must educate its members on digital ethics, self-protection strategies, and the impact of OGBV. Implementing digital literacy programs can equip communities to fight against cyber exploitation. *Third*, Psychological and Spiritual Healing for Victims. The *Magnificat* offers hope and restoration. The Church should create spaces where survivors find refuge, healing, and support. This includes pastoral care, survivor-led discussions, and access to mental health resources.

The Spirit of the Magnificat of Mary Against Online Gender-Based Violence

The *Magnificat* serves as a foundational theological text that reinforces the Church's mission to stand with the oppressed, particularly women experiencing OGBV. It embodies divine justice, calling for the elevation of the lowly and the dismantling of oppressive structures (Luke 1:52-53).

While theological reflections on the *Magnificat* are essential, practical applications are equally crucial. Several churches and faith-based organisations have initiated programs to combat OGBV, such as digital literacy workshops, advocacy campaigns, and survivor support networks. The following table 6 summarises these initiatives:

Table 6. Church Initiatives in Addressing Online Gender-Based Violence (OGBV)

Church Initiative	Description	Impact
Digital Safety Workshops	Churches in various countries collaborate with digital rights organisations to educate women on online safety.	Increased awareness and protective measures against cyber harassment.
Theological Advocacy for OGBV Victims	Faith-based groups issue pastoral letters and public statements condemning digital violence against women.	Greater recognition of OGBV as a moral and social issue within religious communities.
Survivor Support Networks	Churches create safe spaces where OGBV victims receive psychological, legal, and spiritual support.	Victims find community support, legal aid, and spiritual healing.
Liturgical and Social Engagement	Incorporation of prayers, sermons, and discussions on OGBV in religious gatherings.	Raised theological awareness and mobilisation of church members to support victims.

The Church's mission, inspired by the *Magnificat*, extends beyond theological reflection to tangible actions that protect and empower women in digital spaces.

The *Magnificat* is not only a hymn of praise but a call to action. It embodies God's justice, siding with the vulnerable and confronting oppressive power structures. In the context of OGBV, the *Magnificat* serves as a theological and moral mandate for the Church to speak out against digital gender violence, empower women through education and advocacy, support survivors with pastoral care and community networks, engage in legal and social efforts to hold perpetrators accountable. In summary, the *Magnificat* emphasises the Church's role in advocating for women's rights and digital security, demonstrating a theological response to contemporary issues of OGBV.

Several patterns in the *Magnificat* inform how the Church can address OGBV is Mary's *Magnificat* reveals God's preferential option for the marginalised, a principle mirrored in Church efforts to stand with OGBV victims (Wright, 2017). Solidarity involves active listening, advocacy, and creating support systems. Just as God uplifted Mary, the Church is called to empower women suffering from OGBV by equipping them with knowledge and tools for digital safety. Mary's hymn confronts oppressive power structures. Likewise, the Church must challenge patriarchal norms that normalise digital violence against women. Mary's visit to Elizabeth symbolises the importance of community solidarity. The Church can replicate this by forming networks that amplify the voices of OGBV survivors.

To illustrate these patterns, the following table 7 compares how Mary's *Magnificat* inspires modern approaches to OGBV advocacy:

Table 7. Thematic Application of the Magnificat in OGBV Advocacy

Magnificat's Themes	Application in OGBV Advocacy
"He has brought down the powerful from their thrones" (Lk 1:52)	Advocacy for stronger laws and policies against OGBV perpetrators.
"He has lifted up the lowly" (Lk 1:52)	Empowerment programs for women affected by digital violence.
"He has filled the hungry with good things" (Lk 1:53)	Church-based digital literacy initiatives to protect vulnerable users.
"He has remembered his mercy" (Lk 1:54)	Pastoral care and counselling for OGBV survivors.

The *Magnificat* compels the Church to take a proactive role in addressing *Online Gender-Based Violence* (OGBV), aligning its theological foundations with contemporary efforts to combat digital violence against women. As an advocate for digital justice, the Church is called to promote ethical digital engagement, participate in policy discussions on cyber laws, and raise awareness within religious institutions about the realities of OGBV.

In response to the vulnerability of victims, the Church must create safe spaces that provide psychosocial support, survivor groups, and educational workshops on digital self-defence and resilience. These initiatives reflect the Church's commitment to fostering justice and healing for those affected.

Furthermore, the *Magnificat* encourages a theological re-examination of gender justice, urging the Church to integrate gender perspectives into its teachings, develop faith-based responses to digital violence, and collaborate with secular organisations to strengthen advocacy efforts. Beyond theological reflection, the Church must mobilise communities against OGBV, drawing inspiration from Mary's solidarity with Elizabeth. Through public awareness campaigns, engagement with digital media, and training for clergy and lay leaders, the Church can drive cultural change and challenge the structures that perpetuate gender-based digital violence. In this way, the *Magnificat* serves as both an inspiration and a call to action for the Church to stand in solidarity with victims and work towards a more just and dignified digital space.

4. Discussion

This study highlights the significant increase in cases of *Online Gender-Based Violence* (OGBV) in Indonesia, particularly over the past few years. Data from *Komnas Perempuan* (the National Commission on Violence Against Women) indicates a surge from 241 reported cases in 2019 to 1,721 cases in 2021. This phenomenon corresponds with the expanding use of digital media and the growing dependence on technology, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. The most common forms of OGBV identified include *doxing* (unauthorised disclosure of personal information), *sextortion* (sexual extortion through blackmail), *trolling* (persistent online harassment), and the non-consensual distribution of intimate material.

This study also finds that, within the Indonesian context, the definition and understanding of OGBV remain inconsistent and are not yet fully recognised within national legal frameworks. Furthermore, the research identifies the *Magnificat* in the Gospel of Luke as a theological foundation for the Church in addressing OGBV. The *Magnificat* underscores God's preferential option for the oppressed, positioning it as a call for religious communities to actively engage in combating gender-based injustice in the digital era.

The rise of OGBV is not merely a digital issue but reflects broader societal structures of gender inequality. Digital platforms have not only provided new opportunities for connectivity but have also become tools for exploitation and control, disproportionately affecting women. Theologically, this aligns with the concept of structural sin in liberation theology, which critiques systemic injustices that perpetuate oppression (Gutiérrez, 2004). The *Magnificat* (Luke 1:46-55) serves as a theological response to such injustices by declaring God's preferential option for the oppressed and calling for the dismantling of oppressive structures. In this regard, the Church's role extends beyond moral condemnation to active advocacy and systemic reform.

Feminist theology also provides a critical lens in analysing OGBV. Scholars like Rosemary Radford Ruether (1985) argue that patriarchal interpretations of Christian doctrine have historically reinforced gender-based oppression. By reclaiming the *Magnificat* as a hymn of resistance, this study positions Mary not merely as a submissive figure but as a prophetic voice against structural gender injustice. This re-interpretation underscores the responsibility of religious institutions to confront digital violence against women as part of their broader mission for social justice.

Previous research on OGBV has primarily examined legal, sociological, and psychological dimensions. Studies by SAFE-net (2023) and UN Women (2020b) highlight the prevalence of digital violence and its impact on women's well-being. Dlamini (2021) further contextualises OGBV within the COVID-19 pandemic, emphasising how increased digital interactions have exacerbated gender-based violence. Furthermore, research by Powell et al. (2020) and Sheikh & Rogers (2024) has explored the impact of OGBV on female academics, journalists, and activists, revealing its far-reaching psychological and professional consequences.

While these studies effectively document the scope of OGBV, they lack a theological framework that integrates faith-based advocacy with digital justice. Prior works on digital harassment, such as Panda (2023) and Kurasawa et al. (2021), focus on feminist and human rights perspectives but do not address theological insights. Conversely, theological studies on the *Magnificat*, such as those by Azcuy (2020) and O'Regan (2017), focus on its role as a song of liberation but do not systematically connect it to contemporary gender justice issues in digital spaces.

This study bridges these gaps by positioning the *Magnificat* as a foundational text for the Church's engagement in digital advocacy. Unlike previous theological works that concentrate on historical and exegetical interpretations, this study applies biblical insights to a pressing contemporary issue, thereby expanding the scope of theological engagement with digital ethics. While theological discussions on digital ethics have largely focused on moral formation within Christian communities (Allen Jones et al., 2016) and the ethical implications of online identity (Kovács, 2021), this study uniquely connects the *Magnificat*—a biblical hymn of justice—with modern challenges of Online Gender-Based Violence (OGBV). Previous scholarship on *Ecclesial Ethics* (Allen Jones et al., 2016) has explored the notion of the 'virtual self' and how digital spaces reshape ethical norms, yet it has not addressed the role of biblical texts in resisting digital injustices, particularly those affecting marginalized groups. Similarly, wisdom

literature has been applied to digital media ethics (Sadgrove, 2014), emphasizing practical wisdom in navigating online interactions, but it lacks a framework for understanding how scripture directly inspires advocacy against digital violence. By drawing upon the *Magnificat* as a theological foundation for confronting OGBV, this study extends biblical business ethics (Havryliuk, 2024) beyond economic justice to include corporate social responsibility in digital governance, urging faith communities to advocate for ethical policies on digital platforms. Moreover, while *Digital Religion* (Campbell & Cheong, 2022) has examined the intersection of online religious practices and digital ethics, it has not systematically explored the Church's role in digital justice advocacy. This study, therefore, contributes to a growing theological discourse by integrating feminist and liberation theology into digital ethics, framing the *Magnificat* as a call to resist structural oppression, including gender-based violence in digital spaces. By linking scriptural narratives to contemporary digital activism, it provides a more comprehensive faith-based response to OGBV, positioning the Church not only as a moral voice but also as an active participant in shaping ethical digital engagement.

By integrating feminist and liberation theology, this study offers a new theological perspective on digital justice, demonstrating the Church's potential role in advocating for policy change and survivor support systems. While previous research has explored feminist theology's commitment to justice and its intersectionality with race, class, and sexuality (Daggers, 2015; Schneider & Trentaz, 2008), this study extends those discussions by applying them directly to the realm of digital justice, uniquely positioning the *Magnificat* as a theological tool for resisting Online Gender-Based Violence (OGBV) and shaping faith-based digital advocacy. Unlike prior studies that focused on feminist activism in digital spaces as sites of empowerment and vulnerability (Fotopoulou, 2016), this study contributes by integrating biblical theology into feminist digital resistance, demonstrating how the *Magnificat* aligns with feminist political organizing in the digital age. Additionally, while feminist strategies against digital violence have been explored through performative social justice and hack feminist self-defence mechanisms (Estrada, 2023), these frameworks lack a direct theological foundation, which this study addresses by incorporating biblical justice themes to position the Church as a theological and institutional force in combating OGBV. Furthermore, previous discussions on liberation theology have largely centered on economic and social justice (Daggers, 2007), with limited engagement in digital spaces; this study advances liberation theology by applying its principles to digital ethics, revealing how structural injustices persist in cyberspace and how the Church, inspired by liberation theology, can play a transformative role in advocating justice in digital domains. Unlike past studies that examined feminist theology as a critique of orthodox Christian themes (Schneider & Trentaz, 2008), this study utilizes feminist theological insights to propose actionable frameworks for Church-led digital advocacy, policy engagement, and survivor support, bridging theological engagement with contemporary digital justice movements and offering a theologically rooted framework for addressing OGBV that has been largely absent in prior feminist and liberation theological discussions.

The findings of this study contribute to a deeper understanding of how gender-based violence has adapted to technological advancements. OGBV is not merely a digital phenomenon but a manifestation of broader gender inequalities. The theological examination of the *Magnificat* also highlights how religious texts can serve as a source of empowerment in resisting social injustice in the digital age. Additionally, the theological implications of this study emphasise the Church's potential as an agent of social change in addressing OGBV. By adopting the themes of justice and liberation present in the *Magnificat*, the Church can play an active role in advocating for policies that protect women while fostering safer digital communities (Flattun, 2022).

This study identifies several implications of the rise in OGBV. On the positive side, increased awareness of OGBV has prompted various civil society organisations and religious institutions to take action. Campaigns promoting digital safety, legal advocacy, and educational programmes have been increasingly developed to assist victims in seeking justice. However, significant challenges remain. The inconsistency in defining OGBV within national regulations has led to difficulties in law enforcement and victim protection. Furthermore, the social stigma surrounding OGBV often discourages victims from reporting cases, exacerbating the cycle of silence and impunity. From the Church's perspective,

engagement with OGBV-related issues remains sporadic and has yet to become a central pastoral priority.

Based on the findings of this study, several measures are proposed to address OGBV more effectively: The government must adopt a clearer definition of OGBV and strengthen related regulations. Specific laws on OGBV are necessary to ensure that perpetrators are held accountable and that victims receive adequate legal protection. Public education on digital security and OGBV awareness should be expanded, particularly among young women and other vulnerable groups. The Church can play a role in disseminating this knowledge through sermons, seminars, and faith-based educational programmes. The Church and civil society organisations should collaborate in providing counselling services, legal assistance, and victim support groups. A pastoral approach rooted in compassion and solidarity can aid survivors in their recovery process. Social media platforms and digital service providers must proactively combat OGBV by implementing stronger content moderation policies and more accessible reporting mechanisms. The Church can use the *Magnificat* as a theological framework for advocating digital justice. By drawing inspiration from Mary's hymn, faith communities can be mobilised to engage in protecting women and preventing OGBV actively.

5. Conclusion

This study has explored the intersection of Online Gender-Based Violence (OGBV) and the theological significance of Mary's *Magnificat*, providing a biblical-theological framework for the Church's response to digital gender injustices. The findings highlight the alarming rise of OGBV in Indonesia, underscoring the urgent need for systemic legal, social, and theological interventions. While previous research has largely focused on legal, sociological, and psychological dimensions of OGBV, this study contributes a unique theological perspective by integrating feminist and liberation theology, demonstrating how the *Magnificat* can inspire faith-based advocacy and policy engagement in addressing digital violence against women.

One of the key contributions of this study is its re-interpretation of the *Magnificat* as a radical hymn of justice and resistance. Rather than viewing it merely as a song of worship, this research positions the *Magnificat* as a call to dismantle oppressive structures, including the patriarchal and digital injustices that sustain OGBV. By linking biblical narratives with contemporary discussions on digital justice, this study provides a foundation for the Church to engage in ethical digital governance, survivor support systems, and policy advocacy. Additionally, this research advances theological discussions on gender justice by applying liberation theology to digital ethics, illustrating how structural injustices in cyberspace reflect broader societal inequalities.

Despite its contributions, this study acknowledges several limitations. Theological engagement with OGBV remains an emerging field, requiring further research to expand digital ethics discourse beyond the *Magnificat*. While this study provides a theoretical framework for faith-based responses, practical implementation strategies need deeper exploration through interdisciplinary collaboration with legal experts and digital rights activists. Additionally, as the study focuses primarily on the Church, further research is needed on how other religious traditions contribute to combating OGBV. Future studies should assess the effectiveness of faith-based interventions, exploring how theological reflections on justice and liberation can shape digital safety policies and advocacy initiatives. Collaboration between religious institutions, policymakers, social movements, and technology companies would enhance the practical applications of this study, ensuring that the Church remains a vital force in advocating for digital justice and fostering safer online spaces for all.

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