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MAKING SENSE OF DIGITAL VULNERABILITY: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF WOMEN'S LIVED EXPERIENCES IN NYENGSERET URBAN VILLAGE

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Abstract

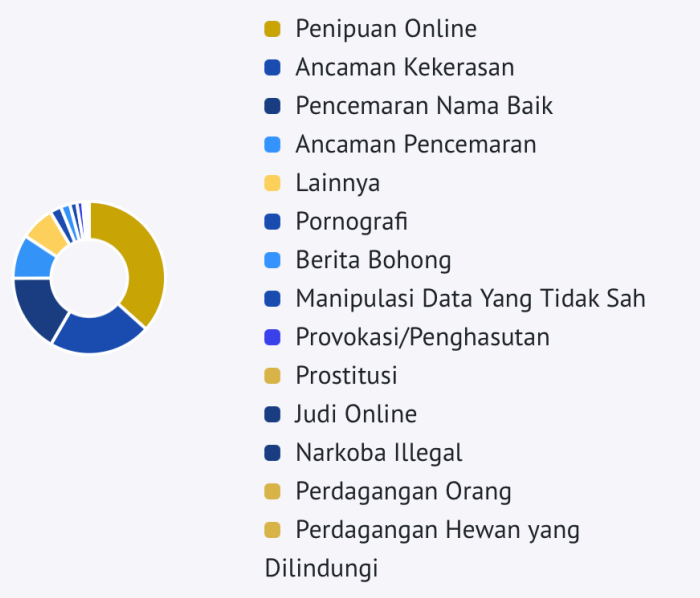
The rapid development of digital technology has increased women's exposure to various forms of digital vulnerability, including online harassment, identity fraud, personal data misuse, online loan intimidation, and technology-facilitated sexual exploitation. While previous studies have primarily examined digital vulnerability from technological or cybersecurity perspectives, limited attention has been given to how women themselves interpret these experiences in their everyday lives. This study aims to explore how women in Nyengseret Urban Village, Bandung City, make meaning of digital vulnerability through their lived experiences. Employing a qualitative phenomenological approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews with five female community leaders representing PKK, Working Group (Pokja), Posyandu, RT, and RW. The findings were analyzed using Sandra Harding's Feminist Standpoint Theory, encompassing situated knowledge, the privilege of the oppressed, experience as evidence, critique and reflexivity, and emancipatory goals. The findings reveal that digital vulnerability is not merely understood as a technological threat but as an experience that undermines women's sense of safety in everyday life. Women's knowledge of digital risks emerges from their social positions and shared community experiences, enabling them to recognize patterns of online fraud, digital sexual harassment, privacy violations, and financial exploitation. Furthermore, the study finds that women's collective experiences foster critical awareness, mutual support, and community-based strategies to address digital risks. Collaboration between the village government, universities, and law enforcement strengthens this process through digital literacy programs and the creation of safe spaces for sharing experiences without stigma. This study concludes that digital vulnerability is socially constructed through women's lived experiences and that community-based digital literacy serves as an emancipatory process that transforms individual vulnerability into collective resilience.

Keywords: digital vulnerability, women's lived experience, phenomenology, Feminist Standpoint Theory, digital literacy.

INTRODUCTION

The threat of digital violence can affect anyone, regardless of age. The rapidly accelerating digital landscape makes it difficult for users to set boundaries. In 2026, the personal data of millions of Bandung City residents was reportedly breached, creating a risk of misuse by hackers (Alhamidi, 2026). Instead of prioritizing digital literacy, the Bandung city government focused on providing infrastructure through a free internet program rolled out across various locations throughout the city starting in 2024 (Portal Bandung, 2024). This is evidenced by internet penetration survey results showing high figures in Indonesia, particularly on the island of Java. According to 2025 data from the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII), the number of Indonesians connected to the internet reached 229,428,417 out of a total population of 284,438,900, with West Java recording a penetration rate of 86.25% (APJII, 2025). These figures demonstrate the massive scale of internet access in West Java. The alleged data breach serves as a warning and highlights the need for further action; rising internet penetration does not shield the public from problems but instead gives rise to new issues manifesting through different mediums. These new problems include hoaxes, online scams, personal data theft, cyberbullying, and digital exploitation. Figure 1 shows that online scams rank highest among reported crimes, indicating that high internet penetration necessitates increased vigilance.

Figure 1. Categories of Online Crime Reports Filed by the Public



Source: (Patroli Siber, 2026)

Given the various categories of crime reporting, individuals cannot resolve these issues on their own. Consistent with the data in Figure 1, research by Siregar et al. (2025) indicates that the digital divide is influenced by factors such as age, education, and geography, thereby necessitating the presence of social actors capable of bridging the gap in public digital literacy. This is crucial because, in the era of digitalization, the public is most vulnerable to associated risks. Women, in particular, play a strategic role as the vanguard of digital education and support at both the family and community levels. They are no longer positioned merely as homemakers but as social agents who generate knowledge, influence communities, and drive social change (Stromquist, 2015). To date, research on digital security has largely focused on technological, regulatory, and general user-behavior aspects. Such approaches often overlook how women experience, perceive, and respond to digital vulnerabilities based on their social positions and daily lived experiences.

However, this position presents a paradox. On one hand, women act as conduits of information and support family members in navigating digital technology—dealing with everything from scam messages and the misuse of personal data to spam and concerns regarding personal information security. Women face specific risks, ranging from cyberstalking and online harassment to doxxing and the non-consensual sharing of images; all of these can have significant emotional, psychological, and even physical impacts (Anjum et al., 2026). In other words, women are not merely users of the digital space but also live amidst the various risks associated with it.

This paradox demonstrates that digital vulnerability is not simply a matter of whether someone falls victim to cybercrime; it also relates to how individuals understand, perceive, and respond to various digital risks based on their lived experiences. In this context, understanding women's experiences is crucial because the social positions they occupy shape distinct ways of interpreting security, trust, and protection within the digital realm (Harding, 1991). Comprehending digital vulnerability requires going beyond approaches focused solely on technological aspects or digital literacy levels; it necessitates examining how women's lived experiences shape their understanding of digital realities. This perspective frames women's experiences not merely as personal stories, but as a source of knowledge capable of providing deeper insight into social phenomena.

This view aligns with Feminist Standpoint Theory (FST), which posits that knowledge is "socially situated" meaning it is influenced by an individual's social position within society. According to Sandra Harding (2004), the experiences of groups historically situated on the margins including women hold epistemological value because they generate distinct perspectives for understanding social reality. Consequently, women's lived experiences are positioned not only as objects of research (Grasswick, 2016) but also as vital sources of knowledge for explaining phenomena. In the context of this study, women's experiences in facing various forms of digital vulnerability are viewed as a starting point for understanding how they perceive risk, develop protection strategies, and fulfill their roles within their families and communities. This study examines how women at the *Kelurahan* (urban village) community level occupy strategic positions in social life. Beyond their roles in household management, women are

active in various community organizations such as the *PKK* (Family Welfare Movement), *Posyandu* (Integrated Health Post), and *RW* (Community Unit) leadership as well as in community empowerment programs at the urban village level. These positions place women as information conduits, family support figures, and key actors who interact intensively with the community. With the increasing digitalization of public services and social communication, women are increasingly engaging in various digital activities, whether for family needs or community initiatives. This aligns with the statement by the Minister of Communication and Digital Affairs (Menkomdigi), Meutya Hafid, who has encouraged women to boldly assume significant roles within the national digital ecosystem (Komdigi, 2025). According to Kurniasih (2023), women can be considered empowered in the digital era based on their ability to optimize their potential to make the best life decisions, their possession of strong bargaining power, and their capacity to generate positive energy through the use of information and communication technology in developing themselves, their families, their immediate environments, and the wider community.

Research on women in the digital space has evolved to encompass diverse areas of inquiry. Suwana & Lily (2017) highlight a persistent digital divide between men and women in Indonesia that affects both access to and the utilization of digital technology. Furthermore, Linabary & Corple (2019) examine issues of digital privacy and personal data protection through a feminist lens, while Coopamootoo & Ng (2023) identify gender-based differences in how information is sought and digital security practices are implemented. Other research by Asriani (2024) focuses on women's experiences with gender-based violence in the digital realm. Meanwhile, Wessalowski et al. (2025) critique the prevailing cybersecurity paradigm—which has traditionally emphasized the concept of "freedom from threat"—and propose an approach that is more sensitive to power relations, vulnerability, and practices of "digital care" in understanding digital security.

While research on women and digital spaces continues to expand, much of it still positions women as objects vulnerable to various digital threats. Such approaches have largely failed to provide space for women's experiences to serve as a source of knowledge for understanding how digital vulnerability is interpreted and negotiated in daily life. Yet, experiences rooted in women's social positions have the potential to offer distinct perspectives on security, protection, and risk-management practices within digital spaces. Addressing this gap, this study explores how women in Nyengseret Urban Village interpret digital vulnerability, employing a phenomenological approach informed by Feminist Standpoint Theory.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The rapid development of digital technology has transformed the way individuals establish social relationships, access information, and carry out their daily activities. At the same time, this transformation has also generated increasingly complex forms of digital vulnerability, particularly among women. Previous studies have demonstrated that digital spaces are no longer merely platforms for communication but have also become environments in which online fraud, gender-based violence, personal data misuse, and technology-facilitated sexual exploitation occur. Nevertheless, existing research has largely examined these forms of digital vulnerability as separate phenomena, providing limited understanding of how women themselves make sense of digital vulnerability as part of their everyday lived experiences.

One of the most extensively studied forms of digital vulnerability is romance scam or love scamming. Whitty (2018) found that victims of romance scams are predominantly middle-aged women who exhibit high levels of interpersonal trust, making them more likely to develop emotional relationships with perpetrators. The study argues that victims' vulnerability is not solely attributable to limited digital knowledge but is also influenced by psychological characteristics such as impulsivity, trust in others, and the desire to establish intimate relationships. Consequently, vulnerability is understood as the outcome of an interaction between individual characteristics and the perpetrators' manipulative strategies.

This perspective was further developed by Cross (2023), who examined how victims eventually recognized that they had become targets of romance fraud. Based on an analysis of 1,015 victim reports, Cross (2023) identified five primary triggers that led to this realization: escalating requests for money, suspicious communication patterns, identity verification, perpetrators' behaviours that raised suspicion, and information obtained from third parties. These findings suggest that recognizing online fraud is a gradual social process rather than an immediate realization. Accordingly, the study emphasizes the importance of digital literacy, critical thinking, and social support in enabling individuals to identify various forms of online fraud.

In Indonesia, research on love scamming has also begun to emerge. Kumalasari and Wijaya (2024) employed Interpersonal Deception Theory to explain how perpetrators build victims' trust through information manipulation during interpersonal communication. Their findings indicate that the success of online scams largely depends on

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perpetrators' ability to establish emotional intimacy while carefully managing the information disclosed to victims. Consequently, the primary focus of their study remains on perpetrators' communication strategies and victims' perceptions of deceptive information throughout the fraudulent interaction.

A similar perspective is evident in the criminological study of love scamming conducted by Rahayu Sri Utami et al. (2024), which conceptualizes the phenomenon as a form of cybercrime. Their study highlights how false identities, perpetrators' anonymity, victims' loneliness, and limited digital literacy increase individuals' vulnerability to emotionally driven online scams. Furthermore, the authors emphasize the importance of public education and stronger regulatory frameworks as preventive measures against this form of cybercrime. Nevertheless, the study primarily focuses on the characteristics of the crime and its criminal mechanisms, providing limited insight into how victims themselves interpret and make sense of these experiences in their everyday lives.

Beyond online fraud, previous research has also examined technology-facilitated sexual violence (TFSV). Henry and Powell (2018) introduced the concept of TFSV to encompass a range of technology-enabled forms of sexual violence, including online sexual harassment, cyberstalking, the non-consensual distribution of intimate images, and sexual coercion through digital media. Drawing upon an extensive review of empirical studies, they found that young women constitute the group most frequently exposed to these forms of violence. However, the authors also acknowledged that research focusing on adult women remains relatively limited, highlighting the need for further investigation into how women experience and interpret technology-facilitated sexual violence in their everyday lives.

Meanwhile, Dragiewicz et al. (2018) proposed the concept of Technology Facilitated Coercive Control (TFCC) to explain how digital technologies extend coercive control within intimate relationships. Their study demonstrates that digital media enable perpetrators to engage in surveillance, intimidation, location tracking, and the dissemination of personal information, allowing coercive control to extend beyond physical spaces. These findings suggest that technology should not be understood merely as a communication tool but also as a mechanism through which gendered power relations are reinforced. Nevertheless, the study is confined to the context of intimate partner violence (IPV) and therefore does not address other forms of digital vulnerability experienced by women in broader community settings.

Similarly, Yalcinoz Ucan (2025) argues that digital technology plays a paradoxical role in the lives of women experiencing intimate partner violence. On the one hand, technology functions as a mechanism of surveillance, control, and intimidation. On the other hand, it also serves as a source of empowerment by facilitating access to information, support services, and social support networks. These findings demonstrate that women's experiences with technology are shaped by their social positions, histories of violence, and access to digital resources. However, the study remains focused on survivors of intimate partner violence and does not explore how women in community settings make sense of diverse forms of digital vulnerability that extend beyond abusive intimate relationships.

A critical examination of the existing literature reveals three major trends. First, most previous studies have investigated specific forms of digital vulnerability such as romance scams, love scamming, technology-facilitated sexual violence, or coercive control as separate phenomena. In everyday life, however, women often encounter multiple and overlapping forms of digital risk simultaneously. Second, previous research has primarily concentrated on identifying perpetrators' strategies, victims' characteristics, or the mechanisms underlying cybercrime, while relatively little attention has been devoted to women's subjective interpretations of digital vulnerability as part of their lived experiences. Third, women have largely been positioned as victims of digital harm, leaving limited discussion of how their experiences evolve into collective knowledge, self-protective strategies, and community empowerment.

Addressing these gaps, the present study adopts a different perspective by employing a phenomenological approach in conjunction with Feminist Standpoint Theory. Rather than merely identifying various forms of digital vulnerability, this study explores how women actively involved in community organisations including *PKK, Posyandu, RT, RW*, and Community Working Groups (*POKJA*) construct the meaning of digital vulnerability based on their social positions and lived experiences. Through the standpoint perspective, women's experiences are understood as legitimate sources of knowledge (situated knowledge) that subsequently develop into collective knowledge through social interactions within the community.

Furthermore, this study extends the existing literature by demonstrating that women do not perceive digital vulnerability solely as an individual concern but as a communal issue affecting the safety and well-being of families, neighbourhoods, and the broader community. Consequently, this research makes two primary contributions. Theoretically, it integrates phenomenology with Feminist Standpoint Theory to deepen the understanding of digital

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vulnerability from women's lived experiences. Practically, it demonstrates how women's experiences can be transformed into community empowerment through digital literacy initiatives, the creation of safe spaces, and collaborative efforts among local governments, universities, and community organisations.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative method utilizing Edmund Husserl's (1999) phenomenological approach to explore and elucidate the subjective meanings derived from individual experiences specifically, the experiences of women in Nyengseret Urban Village regarding digital vulnerability. Phenomenology enables researchers to understand phenomena as experienced by individuals through a reflective process, free from researcher prejudice or bias (Berliana & Arifputri et al., 2025). The study participants consist of five women who play active roles as community mobilizers in Nyengseret Urban Village. These informants include members and administrators of the Family Welfare Empowerment (PKK) program, *Posyandu* (Integrated Health Post) cadres, Working Group (*Pokja*) cadres, as well as women serving as Neighborhood Association (*RT*) and Community Association (*RW*) heads. These roles were selected because they provide the informants with diverse experiences in interacting with the community while simultaneously navigating various forms of digital vulnerability in the course of their duties and daily lives. To ensure participant privacy, the study adheres to principles of anonymity and confidentiality by using pseudonyms (Devinia & Arifputri, 2026) and removing all identifying information such as names, ages, specific positions, and other personal markers throughout all stages of the research. All five participants are middle-aged women (40–55 years old), as detailed in Table 1 Informant Profile.

Tabel 1. Profil Informan

Kode Informan	Jenis Kelamin	Peran di Kelurahan Nyengseret
P1	Women	Family Welfare Empowerment
P2	Women	Community Working Group
P3	Women	Integrated Health Post
P4	Women	Neighbourhood leader RW
P5	Women	Neighbourhood leader RT

This study also used a semi-structured interview guide designed based on the FST (see Table 2): Situated Knowledge, The Privilege of the Oppressed, Experience as Evidence, Critique & Reflexivity, and Emancipatory Goal (Harding, 2004).

Table 2. Guidelines for Using FST in Research

FST	**Objective**
Situated Knowledge	Understanding how women's social position shapes their understanding of digital vulnerability.
The Privilege of the Oppressed	Exploring the experience of facing vulnerability due to one's social position.
Experience as Evidence	Exploring life experience as a source of knowledge.
Critique & Reflexivity	Exploring reflections on social conditions and digital practices.
Emancipatory Goal	Exploring practices of empowerment and change.

This study employs an interpretive paradigm to emphasize understanding the social world through individuals' subjective experiences and uncovering meaning from the participants' perspectives (Burrell & Morgan, 2005) specifically, understanding the meaning of women's experiences with digital vulnerability from their own viewpoints. A phenomenological approach is used to explore "lived experience" (Husserl, 1999), following these phenomenological stages (Berliana & Arifputri et al., 2025): (1)phenomenon identifying the informants' primary experiences; (2)epoché suspending the researcher's preconceptions; (3) constitution making sense of experiences through individual consciousness (a crucial process that reveals how the informants' experiences are structured into coherent meaning through their subjective worldviews); (4)intentionality the connection between past experiences and present meaning; and (5)reduction filtering the essential meaning from each informant's experience to uncover an authentic structure of meaning. Meanwhile, FST (Harding, 2004) serves as an analytical lens to understand how

women's social positions shape the ways they interpret, negotiate, and construct knowledge regarding digital vulnerability.

Following the implementation of these five stages, the study analyzes the data by interpreting the informants' narratives through the lens of the five FST aspects. Each transcript undergoes in-depth examination to identify these aspects and frame how the informants perceive them within their daily lives. The author sets aside preconceptions and subjectivity by employing source triangulation specifically non-participant observation and documentation during the epoché stage; this ensures that the resulting interpretations reflect the informants' holistic experiences as subjective meanings, ultimately encompassing the final FST aspect: the Emancipatory Goal.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The phenomenological analysis reveals that digital vulnerability is not understood by participants as an isolated technological risk, but as a lived social experience embedded in their everyday roles as mothers, community volunteers, neighbourhood leaders, and caregivers. Across the interviews, participants described diverse forms of digital vulnerability, ranging from technology-facilitated sexual harassment and online scams to personal data exploitation and the offline consequences of digital financial crimes. Despite these differences, the participants shared a common understanding that digital vulnerability extends beyond online spaces and directly affects their sense of security, social relationships, and community well-being.

Interpreting these experiences through Sandra Harding's Feminist Standpoint Theory demonstrates that women's knowledge of digital vulnerability is situated within their everyday social positions and interactions. Rather than treating women solely as victims of digital risks, the findings illustrate how lived experiences become sources of knowledge, critical reflection, and collective action. Accordingly, the discussion is structured around five analytical dimensions of Feminist Standpoint Theory: Situated Knowledge, The Privilege of the Oppressed, Experience as Evidence, Critique and Reflexivity, and Emancipatory Goal.

Table 3. Analysis Results for Informant P1

Aspek Feminist Standpoint Theory	Data Informan P1	Analisis
Situated Knowledge	*"Saya pernah ditelepon berkali-kali, tidak saya angkat karena nomornya tidak dikenal. Tapi setelah video call saya angkat, ternyata langsung memperlihatkan kemaluan laki-laki."*	Knowledge of digital threats emerged from the participant's everyday experience as a woman using a mobile phone. Before experiencing the incident herself, calls from unknown numbers were perceived as ordinary communication. The experience subsequently changed how she understood digital communication, revealing that it could also become a space for technology-facilitated sexual harassment.
Privilege of the Oppressed	*"Kenapa ya kok saya ditelepon? Saya kan ibu-ibu tua."*	This statement reflects the participant's perception that she did not fit the stereotypical image of a sexual harassment victim. However, her experience demonstrates that women remain vulnerable in digital spaces regardless of age. From her social position as a middle-aged woman, she produced knowledge that digital sexual vulnerability is not limited to younger women.
Experience as Evidence	Spontaneous response*:* *"Astaghfirullah... Innalillahi..."*	Her spontaneous religious expressions provide experiential evidence of the psychological impact of digital sexual harassment. The response indicates shock, fear, disgust, and a disruption of her sense of safety when using communication technology. From a feminist standpoint perspective, this personal experience constitutes valid knowledge rather than merely an individual anecdote.
Critique and Reflexivity	*"Saya kan penggerak PKK, jadi memang sering dihubungi banyak*	The participant began to reflect on how her position as a community mobilizer made her telephone number widely

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Aspek Feminist Standpoint Theory	Data Informan P1	Analisis
	orang, dari bank atau beberapa sales provider untuk dihubungkan dengan warga terkait target mereka (menjual kartu)"	accessible, blurring the boundary between necessary public communication and exposure to digital threats. She recognized that the openness required by her community role simultaneously increased her vulnerability to unwanted contact and other digital risks.

The experience of Informant P1 demonstrates that digital vulnerability is understood through direct experience as a woman who actively uses communication media. Initially, calls from unknown numbers were viewed as a routine part of daily communication. However, when a video call exposed male genitalia without the informant's consent, the experience altered her perception of the digital space. For the informant, the mobile phone ceased to be merely a communication tool and became a space where digital-based sexual violence could occur. From the perspective of situated knowledge (Harding, 2004) which posits that all knowledge originates from a specific location our social position shapes what we see, know, and value. The informant's remark "I was confused; I'm an older woman had the caller dialed the wrong number?" reveals an assumption that age should shield women from sexual harassment. Yet, the incident demonstrates that digital sexual violence transcends age boundaries. This aligns with research by Devinia & Arifputri (2026), which identified a 60-year-old informant who fell victim to Non-Consensual Intimate Imagery (NCII) initiated through social media overtures. As a *PKK* (Family Welfare Empowerment) activist and a middle-aged woman, P1 frequently receives calls from both the local community and external parties. While this role necessitates making her phone number accessible an integral part of her work it simultaneously heightens her vulnerability to unwanted contact. Spontaneous religious exclamations, such as "*Astaghfirullah"* and *"Innalillahi,"* served as emotional expressions reflecting the shock and discomfort caused by the digital sexual harassment. Within the framework of "experience as evidence," these responses do not merely reflect an individual experience; they also provide evidence of the psychological impact women endure when digital spaces are exploited to perpetrate sexual violence.

Table 4. Analysis Results for Informant P2

Aspek Feminist Standpoint Theory	Data Informan	Analisis
Situated Knowledge	*"Saya pengguna Instagram aktif. Pernah di-chat sama bule. Foto profilnya laki-laki bule, rambut pirang, ngakunya pilot."*	Knowledge of digital vulnerability was constructed through the participant's experience as an active social media user, particularly on Instagram. Initially, communication initiated by a foreign account was perceived as a normal social media interaction. However, this experience transformed her understanding of social media, leading her to recognize it as a space where deception through false identities can occur.
The Privilege of the Oppressed	*"Saya ketemu sama ibu-ibu yang lain, ternyata akun ini nge-chat mereka juga. Jadi ada tiga orang yang di-chat."*	The participant's experience gained deeper meaning when it was compared with the experiences of other women within the same community. Their shared social position as women enabled the development of collective knowledge about the account's communication pattern. Through this shared experience, the participant recognized that the perpetrator systematically targeted multiple women, demonstrating how women's collective experiences can reveal patterns of deception that may otherwise remain unnoticed.
Experience as Evidence	*"Saya takutnya dia mau menipu. Pernah juga ada teman saya yang kena tipu,*	The participant's personal experience, combined with the experiences of people close to her, became the basis for recognizing the potential for online fraud. From the perspective of experience as

Aspek Feminist Standpoint Theory	Data Informan	Analisis
	ngakunya polisi, terus minta ditransfer."	evidence, knowledge of digital threats is constructed not only through formal information but also through lived experiences, whether directly experienced or observed through others. These experiences fostered greater vigilance when interacting with unfamiliar online accounts.
Critique and Reflexivity	*"Setelah tahu dia nge-chat ibu-ibu yang lain juga, saya nggak mau lagi berhubungan sama dia. Akhirnya saya blok."*	The participant critically reflected that the account's communication was not a personal interaction but part of a broader strategy targeting multiple women. This realization prompted her to reassess the credibility of online identities and ultimately discontinue communication by blocking the account as a form of self-protection against potential digital fraud.

Informant P2's experience demonstrates that digital vulnerability is not always understood through direct victimization but also through the process of recognizing suspicious patterns of interaction on social media. As an active Instagram user, the participant initially perceived messages from a foreign account as a normal form of online communication. The account presented a convincing identity, portraying a foreign man who claimed to work as a pilot. However, this perception changed when the participant discovered that the same account had also contacted two other women within her neighbourhood using an identical communication pattern. From the perspective of situated knowledge, the participant's understanding of potential digital threats was shaped by her lived experience as an active social media user. This experience illustrates that interactions on social media cannot be evaluated solely based on the identity presented in a user's profile. Rather, they require a more critical assessment of the communication patterns and behaviours demonstrated throughout the interaction.

Regarding the privilege of the oppressed, P2's experience did not stand alone but was reinforced by the experiences of other women in her community. Her role as a POKJA (Community Working Group) coordinator provided her with opportunities to discuss these experiences with women in her neighbourhood. Through these discussions, she realized that the same account had employed an identical strategy to approach multiple women. This shared experience generated a more comprehensive understanding than would have been possible through individual experience alone. Consistent with Feminist Standpoint Theory (Harding, 2004), the exchange of women's experiences revealed patterns of power relations and deceptive practices that might have remained invisible if each experience had been interpreted in isolation. This finding also reflects the principle of women supporting women, where mutual sharing of experiences strengthens women's awareness of digital risks.

Furthermore, experience as evidence is reflected in the way P2 connected her own encounter with the experiences of a friend who had previously fallen victim to an online scam. Although the participant herself did not experience any financial loss, her friend's experience served as sufficient evidence for her to recognize the interaction as potentially fraudulent. Thus, knowledge of digital threats was constructed not only through personal experience but also through the experiences of trusted individuals within her social network. These lived experiences became the foundation for developing greater vigilance toward unfamiliar online interactions.

The dimension of critique and reflexivity, the participant demonstrated her ability to critically reassess the credibility of identities presented on social media. After discovering that the same account had contacted several other women using a similar approach, she decided to terminate all communication and block the account. This decision reflects a process of critical reflection, through which she recognized that digital identities can be fabricated and strategically manipulated to establish trust before carrying out fraudulent activities.

Table 5. Analysis Results for Informant P3

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Aspek Feminist Standpoint Theory	Data Informan	Analisis
Situated Knowledge	*"Saya kan perwakilan RT... sering didatangi orang yang ngaku dari T********, *L, minta warga bawa KTP nanti dapat uang, minyak goreng, kuota."*	Knowledge of digital vulnerability was shaped by the participant's position as a neighbourhood (*RT*) leader who serves as a liaison between residents and external parties. This role exposed her to various promotional activities involving the collection of residents' personal data. Through these experiences, she came to understand that collecting personal information in exchange for incentives could pose significant risks to residents' data security and privacy.
The Privilege of the Oppressed	*"Saya takut warga saya jadi nggak aman."*	The participant's dual role as both a woman and a community leader provided her with a distinctive perspective on this practice. Unlike many residents who focused primarily on the immediate economic benefits, she recognized potential vulnerabilities that were not fully understood by the community. Her experience illustrates how women's close engagement with community life generates situated knowledge regarding the importance of protecting personal data.
Experience as Evidence	*"Saya sering lihat bungkus gorengan pakai fotokopi KK, kertas ujian, bahkan biodata penduduk."*	The participant's concerns were grounded in tangible experiences encountered in her everyday life. Witnessing personal documents being carelessly reused reinforced her awareness of the potential misuse of personal information. From the perspective of experience as evidence, these observations served as empirical evidence that strengthened her understanding of the risks associated with the improper handling and collection of personal data.
Critique and Reflexivity	*"Warga senang dapat uang, minyak, kuota. Tapi saya was-was."*	The participant demonstrated critical reflection by recognizing the contrasting perspectives between herself and the residents. While many residents prioritized the immediate financial benefits, she questioned the safety of surrendering personal identification documents in exchange for short-term rewards. This reflection highlights her awareness that temporary economic incentives may conceal long-term risks related to privacy, identity theft, and the misuse of personal data.

Informant P3's experience demonstrates that digital vulnerability is not only understood as a threat occurring in online spaces but also as a concern associated with the collection of personal data in everyday life. As a neighbourhood leader (RT), the participant frequently encountered individuals claiming to represent mobile network providers who offered various incentives, such as cash, cooking oil, or free internet data, in exchange for residents' national identity cards (KTP). Her position placed her in a situation where she had to consider not only her own interests but also the safety and well-being of the residents within her community.

From the perspective of situated knowledge, the participant's understanding of digital vulnerability emerged from her social position as a community leader. This experience enabled her to perceive the collection of personal data not merely as a promotional activity but as a potential threat to residents' privacy and data security. Regarding the privilege of the oppressed, the participant's experience revealed a perspective that differed from that of many residents. While community members primarily focused on the immediate economic benefits offered through incentives, the participant emphasized the potential risks associated with the misuse of personal data. This understanding arose from both her lived experience and her social responsibility as a woman entrusted with safeguarding the interests of her community.

Furthermore, experience as evidence is reflected in the participant's concern, which was informed by her observations of photocopies of family registration cards, examination papers, and even residents' personal records

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being reused as wrapping paper for food. These everyday experiences served as empirical evidence, leading her to recognize that personal documents could easily circulate beyond their intended purpose and become vulnerable to misuse. Consequently, these lived experiences became an important source of knowledge that heightened her awareness of the risks associated with personal data collection.

The dimension of critique and reflexivity, the participant demonstrated critical awareness of the differing perceptions between herself and the residents. She recognized that economic circumstances encouraged many community members to prioritize immediate financial rewards over the potential long-term risks of disclosing their personal information. This reflection suggests that digital vulnerability is shaped not only by technological factors but also by broader socioeconomic conditions that influence how individuals evaluate risks and make decisions regarding their personal data.

Table 6. Analysis Results for Informant P4

Aspek Feminist Standpoint Theory	Data Informan	Analisis
Situated Knowledge	*"Saya pernah dipanggil sama warga karena ada orang datang nagih utang anaknya sampai ke rumah."*	Knowledge of digital vulnerability was shaped by the participant's position as a neighbourhood (*RW*) leader, who frequently serves as the first point of contact when residents encounter problems within the community. This experience enabled her to recognize that digital risks are not confined to online spaces but can also have direct consequences for the safety, security, and social well-being of the community.
The Privilege of the Oppressed	*"Saya bingung apakah cara nagih seperti itu resmi atau tidak."*	From her position as a woman supporting community members, the participant developed knowledge about debt collection practices that she perceived as irregular and potentially unlawful. This experience illustrates that women at the community level are often among the first to confront the social consequences of digital-related problems, allowing them to identify forms of vulnerability that may remain overlooked by formal institutions.
Experience as Evidence	*"Katanya anaknya pernah judi online terus pinjam online." "Hutangnya cuma tiga juta, tapi ditagih sepuluh juta."*	The participant's understanding of the risks associated with online lending was constructed through the lived experiences of the residents she assisted. These experiences provided empirical evidence that the misuse of digital financial services can escalate into intimidation, psychological distress, and financial hardship, affecting not only the borrower but also their family members and the wider community.
Critique and Reflexivity	*"Saya bilang jangan langsung kasih uang. Kita harus pastikan dulu apakah yang nagih itu legal." "Kalau memang begitu, lapor saja ke polisi."*	The participant demonstrated critical reflection on the debt collection practices experienced by community members. Rather than accepting the collector's demands as legitimate, she questioned the collector's legal status, the amount of debt being claimed, and the procedures used during the collection process. This reflection highlights her awareness that community members need to understand their legal rights and available protections when confronted with potentially unlawful debt collection practices.

Informant P4's experience illustrates that digital vulnerability is understood not merely as a threat confined to online environments but as a social issue that extends into the safety and security of the local community. As a neighbourhood leader (RW), the participant often became the first person residents turned to when facing community-related conflicts, including debt collection cases suspected to be linked to online lending. These experiences led her to recognize that the consequences of digital financial services can directly affect not only individuals but also their families and the wider community. From the perspective of situated knowledge, the participant's understanding of digital vulnerability was shaped by her social position as a community leader.

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Supporting residents through these incidents enabled her to recognize that online lending is not merely a financial relationship between borrowers and lenders; rather, it creates broader social consequences that involve family members, neighbours, and local community authorities. Regarding the privilege of the oppressed, the participant's experience in assisting residents generated valuable knowledge about debt collection practices that she perceived as inconsistent with legitimate legal procedures. She questioned the legitimacy of the debt collectors, the substantial increase in the claimed debt, and the use of intimidation during the collection process. This understanding emerged from her direct involvement in resolving community disputes, allowing her to identify forms of digital vulnerability that extend beyond financial loss and into broader issues of social justice and community protection.

Experience as evidence is reflected in the way the participant connected the incident to the resident's involvement in online gambling and online lending. These lived experiences became the basis for her understanding that the misuse of digital technologies and financial platforms can evolve into economic hardship, psychological distress, and social disruption affecting not only borrowers but also their families and surrounding communities. The dimension of critique and reflexivity, the participant demonstrated critical awareness by questioning the legitimacy of the debt collection process rather than accepting it as a routine financial procedure. She encouraged residents to verify the identity and legal authority of the debt collectors before making any payment and advised them to report suspicious practices to the police. This critical reflection highlights her recognition that digital vulnerability is shaped not only by technological factors but also by legal awareness, financial literacy, and the broader socioeconomic conditions that influence how individuals respond to coercive digital financial practices.

Table 7. Analysis Results for Informant P5

Aspek Feminist Standpoint Theory	Data Informan	Analisis
Situated Knowledge	*"Saya lagi di rumah teman habis acara PKK. Dia mandi, HP-nya ditinggal. Ada video call masuk, saya angkat. Ternyata laki-laki itu langsung bertanya teman saya di mana."*	Knowledge of digital vulnerability was shaped through the participant's experience as part of a women's social network. Although she was not the intended target, witnessing the interaction enabled her to recognize that digital relationships can create opportunities for the exploitation of women through private online communication.
The Privilege of the Oppressed	*"Teman saya itu janda... mungkin kesepian. Tapi kan nggak harus lewat telepon begitu."*	The participant interpreted her friend's experience by considering the social circumstances faced by women. She recognized that widowhood may create vulnerabilities that can be exploited by others seeking to establish potentially harmful online relationships. From a woman's standpoint, she perceived emotional needs and social circumstances as factors that may increase women's vulnerability in digital interactions.
Experience as Evidence	*"Saya lihat berita ada yang videonya dijual ke website porno. Saya takut teman saya nanti begitu."*	The participant's observations of the interaction, combined with information obtained from mass media, shaped her understanding of the risks associated with the non-consensual distribution of intimate content. This experience became the basis for recognizing that private video calls may be exploited to produce and disseminate intimate material without the individual's consent.
Critique and Reflexivity	*"Sekarang mah nggak ada yang aman. Harus hati-hati."*	The participant demonstrated critical reflection by recognizing that technological developments have introduced new threats to women's privacy and digital safety. This experience transformed her perception of video-call communication, particularly when it involved intimate or private situations. She concluded that constant vigilance is essential for protecting oneself from potential digital exploitation.

Informant P5's experience demonstrates that digital vulnerability is not always understood through direct victimization but also through witnessing others encounter situations that may lead to digital harm. While visiting a friend's house after a PKK gathering, the participant unintentionally answered a video call intended for her friend. This incident revealed the existence of an intimate online relationship that the participant perceived as potentially leading to digital exploitation. From the perspective of situated knowledge, this experience shaped the participant's understanding as a member of a women's social community. Witnessing the interaction enabled her to recognize that digital spaces can be used to establish personal relationships that may subsequently expose women to privacy risks and digital exploitation.

Regarding the privilege of the oppressed, the participant interpreted her friend's experience by considering her social circumstances as a widow. Rather than blaming her friend, she attempted to understand how emotional needs and social isolation could be exploited by others to establish potentially harmful online relationships. This understanding emerged from a woman's perspective that acknowledges the lived realities and social dynamics experienced by other women within the community. Furthermore, experience as evidence is reflected in the way the participant connected this incident with media reports concerning the non-consensual distribution of private photographs and videos on pornographic websites. Although she did not experience such exploitation herself, witnessing her friend's interaction, combined with information obtained through the media, heightened her awareness of the potential risks of digital exploitation.

The dimension of critique and reflexivity, the participant demonstrated a shift in her perception of digital communication. She recognized that video calls involving intimate or private situations may become vulnerable if recorded or misused by others. Consequently, she emphasized the importance of exercising caution when using communication technologies, particularly in interactions involving personal or intimate content.

Emancipatory Goal

All participants reported that the Nyengseret Village Government collaborated with lecturers from Telkom University to organize a digital literacy programme for local residents. Fifty women actively involved in community organisations including PKK, Posyandu, RT, RW, and POKJA—participated in the programme. The training addressed various forms of digital vulnerability, including online fraud, personal data misuse, and technology-facilitated gender-based violence, while also providing participants with practical guidance on reporting digital crimes when they experience or witness them. In addition, the participants explained that the close proximity between the Village Office and the local Police Office facilitated coordination whenever legal assistance was required. They also emphasized the importance of creating a safe space where community members could openly share their experiences without fear of embarrassment, victim-blaming, or social stigma. From the perspective of Feminist Standpoint Theory, women's experiences do not end with understanding the vulnerabilities they encounter but instead become the foundation for broader social transformation—an emancipatory goal. The experiences shared by the participants, ranging from technology-facilitated sexual harassment and online fraud to personal data misuse and intimidation associated with online lending, demonstrate that digital vulnerability constitutes a tangible reality in the everyday lives of women at the community level.

However, the findings also reveal that these experiences did not result solely in fear or passive acceptance. Instead, women's lived experiences became the foundation for collective efforts to strengthen community capacity through the digital literacy programme facilitated by the Nyengseret Village Government in collaboration with Telkom University. The programme served as a platform for developing critical awareness of digital security, introducing reporting mechanisms, and enhancing participants' ability to identify and respond to various forms of digital threats.More importantly, the findings indicate that empowerment was achieved not only through the acquisition of technical knowledge but also through the establishment of a safe space for women. Participants believed that experiences of digital vulnerability should be openly discussed without shame or fear of social stigma. Such spaces enabled women to exchange experiences, provide emotional support, and collectively develop knowledge regarding strategies for protecting themselves and their communities. Accordingly, the emancipatory goal identified in this study extends beyond the implementation of digital literacy training. Rather, it represents a transformative process through which women's lived experiences are converted into collective action aimed at creating a safer, more inclusive, and supportive digital environment for the wider community.

The Essence of Women's Lived Experiences in Understanding Digital Vulnerability

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Phenomenology seeks to uncover the essential meaning embedded within individuals' lived experiences of a particular phenomenon. Drawing upon the experiences of all five participants, this study found that digital vulnerability is not understood merely as a technological threat but as an experience that undermines women's sense of safety in their everyday lives. The diverse forms of vulnerability experienced or witnessed by the participants demonstrate that digital spaces are no longer perceived as separate from everyday reality but have become deeply intertwined with social relationships, community engagement, and family life.

Although each participant encountered different forms of digital vulnerability, their experiences converged around a shared meaning. The first participant experienced technology-facilitated sexual harassment through an unsolicited video call; the second encountered identity deception and attempted online fraud through social media; the third expressed concern over the misuse of residents' personal data collected through promotional activities; the fourth assisted residents who experienced intimidation related to online lending; and the fifth witnessed a situation that potentially exposed another woman to digital sexual exploitation. Despite these different manifestations, all experiences ultimately reflected a common understanding: the erosion of women's sense of safety in digital environments.

The findings further reveal that women do not perceive digital vulnerability solely as an individual risk. Instead, they relate these experiences to the well-being of their families, neighbours, and the broader community. This is reflected in participants' concerns regarding the misuse of residents' personal data, aggressive online loan debt collection practices that disrupt community harmony, and the potential dissemination of intimate digital content capable of damaging women's social reputation. Consequently, digital vulnerability is understood as a social and communal issue rather than merely an individual concern.

Another important finding is that knowledge about digital vulnerability is constructed through women's collective experiences. Participants developed their understanding of various forms of digital crime not only through personal experiences but also through conversations with neighbours, discussions during PKK and Posyandu activities, meetings with RT and RW leaders, and everyday interactions within their communities. These shared experiences complemented one another, generating collective knowledge regarding emerging digital threats. In other words, individual experiences evolved into collective knowledge that strengthened women's ability to recognize and anticipate digital risks.

Furthermore, the findings demonstrate that experiences of digital vulnerability did not end with fear or passivity. Instead, they generated a collective need for safe spaces where women could openly share their experiences without shame, victim-blaming, or stigma. These safe spaces were further strengthened through collaboration between the Nyengseret Village Government, Telkom University, and the local police in delivering community-based digital literacy programmes. For the participants, digital literacy was understood not merely as improving technological competence but also as fostering the confidence to recognize, prevent, and report various forms of digital vulnerability.

Based on these findings, the essence of women's lived experiences in this study suggests that digital vulnerability is understood as a social experience that threatens women's sense of safety while simultaneously serving as the starting point for the development of collective awareness, female solidarity, and community empowerment through digital literacy. Thus, the meaning of digital vulnerability extends beyond the experience of victimization, evolving into a collective process of strengthening social protection through shared experiences, enhanced digital literacy, and cross-sector collaboration.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that digital vulnerability is understood by women not merely as a technological risk but as a lived social experience that influences their sense of safety, trust, and everyday interactions within their communities. Through a phenomenological approach, the findings reveal that women construct the meaning of digital vulnerability based on their social positions as community leaders, caregivers, and active members of local organisations. Their experiences encompass various forms of digital threats, including technology-facilitated sexual harassment, online romance scams, personal data misuse, online lending intimidation, and the potential exploitation of intimate digital content. Although these threats differ in form, they are collectively interpreted as experiences that disrupt not only individual security but also the well-being of families and communities. Using Feminist Standpoint Theory, this study further demonstrates that women's lived experiences constitute legitimate sources of knowledge for understanding digital vulnerability. The findings illustrate how situated knowledge emerges from women's everyday interactions, how shared experiences develop into collective awareness, and how critical reflection enables women to recognize, evaluate, and respond to digital risks. More importantly, the study shows that women's

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experiences do not remain at the level of victimization. Instead, they are transformed into collective knowledge that supports mutual learning, community protection, and the development of safer digital practices. This study contributes to the existing literature in three ways. First, it extends research on digital vulnerability by shifting the analytical focus from individual victimization to women's lived experiences and meaning-making processes. Second, it expands the application of Feminist Standpoint Theory by demonstrating its relevance in explaining digital vulnerability within community settings rather than institutional or organizational contexts. Third, it proposes that digital literacy should not be understood solely as the acquisition of technical competencies but also as an emancipatory process that creates safe spaces, strengthens female solidarity, and enhances community resilience through collaboration among local governments, higher education institutions, and community organisations.

Practically, the findings suggest that digital literacy initiatives should move beyond technology-oriented training and incorporate community-based approaches that encourage women to share experiences, develop critical awareness, and access appropriate reporting mechanisms. Strengthening partnerships between local governments, universities, law enforcement agencies, and community organisations may contribute to more inclusive and sustainable strategies for preventing digital vulnerability. This study is not without limitations. The findings are based on the experiences of five middle-aged women actively involved in community organisations within a single urban village, which may not represent the diversity of women's digital experiences across different socio-cultural contexts. Future research may explore digital vulnerability among women from different age groups, occupations, and geographical settings or employ comparative and mixed-method approaches to examine how social positions influence women's experiences of digital vulnerability across broader communities.

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