



CSA-SCS Student  
Concerns Subcommittee

## *Student Spotlight*



## **Farinaz Basmechi**

PhD Candidate, University of Ottawa,  
Dept. of Feminist and Gender Studies

Her research focuses on digital feminist activism, technology-facilitated gender-based violence, and comparative analyses of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) policies in Canada & Iran.

Farinaz is a researcher with the Digital Feminist Network, contributing to projects addressing online gender-based violence and she leads survey design initiatives. She has published on the Iranian #MeToo movement and has extensive experience in both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Her broader research agenda centers on decolonizing feminist knowledge production, advancing Middle Eastern feminist thought, and strengthening institutional responses to SGBV in higher education

### *About the Student Spotlight Program:*

The Student Spotlight is an initiative that highlights students' academic research, applied sociology work, activism and involvement in community engagement. You may nominate yourself and/or another student member. Selected nominees will be featured on our website, in our newsletter, and on our social media pages for up to one (1) year.

**For more information and nomination forms:**

<https://www.csa-scs.ca/student-spotlight>

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# Farinaz Basmechi

She/Her

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## **Digital Feminist Resistance and the Politics of Sexual Violence: A Comparative Study of Graduate Student Experiences in Canada and Iran**

This project examines how digital spaces shape feminist resistance & experiences of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) among female graduate students in Canada and Iran. Drawing on feminist materialist theory, intersectionality, and biopolitics, the project explores how broader socio-political contexts, liberal multicultural governance in Canada and state-regulated gender norms in Iran, inform both offline and online experiences of vulnerability, agency, and resistance.

The project analyzes how graduate students navigate dating, sexual agency, and institutional responses to SGBV, particularly during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. It pays specific attention to how digital platforms function as spaces for feminist consciousness-raising and solidarity, while also exposing users to harassment, surveillance, emotional labor, and health toll.

By centering comparative analysis, the project highlights both convergences and divergences in how state policies, university frameworks, & digital infrastructures shape students' lived experiences. It also evaluates the effectiveness of institutional policies & addresses the needs of marginalized communities.

Ultimately, the project contributes to feminist scholarship on digital activism and SGBV while offering policy-relevant recommendations for creating safer, more inclusive academic and online environments.



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## Additional project insights...

The motivation for pursuing this project stems from both academic commitments and lived concerns about the persistence of sexual & gender-based violence (SGBV) across different socio-political contexts. The comparative focus on Canada and Iran allows for a critical examination of how different state structures, cultural norms, and institutional policies shape experiences of vulnerability, agency, and resistance.

One of the most unexpected findings has been the extent to which digital platforms simultaneously function as spaces of empowerment and harm. While participants describe online spaces as crucial for solidarity, storytelling, and feminist consciousness-raising, they also highlight the emotional and health tolls of harassment, surveillance, and backlash, particularly for those from marginalized backgrounds. This duality complicates dominant narratives that frame digital activism as either wholly liberatory or entirely risky.

This project has the potential for both academic & social impact. *Academically*, it contributes to feminist scholarship on digital activism, SGBV, and comparative policy analysis. *Socially*, it offers policy-relevant insights for universities and policymakers seeking to improve responses to SGBV, particularly in increasingly digitalized environments.

## More About Farinaz Basmechi...

I am actively involved in applied research and community-engaged initiatives addressing technology-facilitated gender-based violence. As a researcher with the Digital Feminist Network, I contribute to collaborative projects that examine online harms and develop research-informed approaches to support safer digital environments. I also serve on a U. of Ottawa committee working to revise Policy 67b on sexual violence prevention, where I contribute to updating institutional frameworks to better address survivor needs, accountability, and prevention.

An important lesson I have learned, and would share with other students, is the value of patience and persistence when working toward institutional change. My experience with policy revision has shown me that meaningful transformation is often slow, complex, and requires navigating multiple perspectives. At the same time, it reinforced the importance of grounding this work in empathy, evidence-based research, and a commitment to centering survivor voices.