

## **Reflections on the ISTR PhD Seminar in Jakarta, Indonesia**

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The ISTR Asia-Pacific Conference in Jakarta, Indonesia, marked the first time I attended an ISTR conference. I came to know about ISTR when I was completing my candidacy requirements because scholars whose work I was reading had listed ISTR as one of their professional associations. One of the highlights of my trip to Jakarta in December 2017 was the opportunity to participate in the pre-conference PhD seminar. During the two-day seminar, I attended workshops about journal publishing, research methodology, and career strategies. The academics who presented these workshops were candid about their experiences in academic and shared practical tips about how to navigate different aspects of academic work.

For instance, in the publishing workshops, journal editors shared their perspectives about the features of a strong article. I learnt that 'writing to the journal' is not simply about conforming to the style and foci of the journals. Our research should be positioned either as an extension of a conversation (from previous articles or with the scholars we cite) or as a way to extend the coverage of the journal into a new topic and area. In another workshop about career strategies, we were asked to list the terms we want our name or research to be associated with if people search for us online. Thinking about our research in this way was a useful exercise in clarifying the trajectory of my research vision and the scholarly profile I want to build.

The PhD seminar was also an invaluable opportunity to receive feedback about my methodology and application of theories. Academics whose expertise and research interests were aligned with the themes of our projects were assigned as our mentors in the daily group feedback sessions. A conscious effort was made to group us based on our research topics, which allowed for focused and productive discussions. Even though everyone in my group was working on different research topics, their diverse perspectives added fresh insights to my analysis of how charitable fundraising appeals are operationalized to fund development projects. I also benefitted from the expertise and interdisciplinary knowledge of our mentors. Their feedback helped me to refine the

theoretical underpinnings of my analytical framework and see future extensions to my research topic.

For me, the impact of the PhD seminar extends beyond the two days of workshops and feedback sessions. Other than forming friendships with research students across the Asia-Pacific, the academics I met also became a source of inspiration for my research. Having interacted with them during the seminar, I found it easier to approach them during the conference and ask them questions about their research. They also took the time to send me articles that are relevant to my research, for which I am grateful!