

# APSA MENA Program Returns to In-Person Programming: Workshops in Doha and Amman

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After two years of virtual engagement, APSA's Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Program returned to in-person events this year, holding its first Arabic-language workshop in Qatar and an English-language workshop on public opinion research in Jordan. The programs were part of APSA's longstanding efforts to support early-career scholars from the Arab MENA region in their research, networking, and professional development. With support from Carnegie Corporation of New York, APSA organizes a series of workshops, departmental collaborations, research grants, and other opportunities to enhance the field of MENA political science and extend research networks linking American scholars with those from the MENA region. To learn more about these workshops or the APSA MENA Program, visit <https://web.apsanet.org/mena/>.

## ARABIC-LANGUAGE RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP—MAY 2022 IN DOHA

The Arabic-language Research Development Workshop, held in partnership with the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies in Qatar, was the first APSA workshop to use Arabic as the language of instruction. Bassel Salloukh (Doha Institute for Graduate Studies, Qatar), May Darwich (University of Birmingham, UK), and Ammar Shamaileh (Doha Institute for Graduate Studies, Qatar) led the 4-day hybrid workshop, which focused on providing opportunities for participants to discuss and advance their research. Fourteen fellows from nine countries across the Arab MENA region participated in the program, including advanced MA students, PhD students, and early-career scholars.

The program was intended to support fellows in advancing research towards publication. Prior to the start of the workshop, fellows shared their advanced research proposals with other attendees so that everyone could read and prepare feedback. Daily sessions were structured around small group discussions in which fellows received feedback from their peers, and one-on-one meetings with co-leaders. The program also included time for manuscript revision so that fellows could incorporate any feedback they received in the moment. These opportunities for feedback were enriched by lectures and discussions on refining research questions, methods and research design. The program also featured guest speakers from the Doha Institute on research ethics and professional development topics. On the last day of the workshop, fellows presented their revised research proposals and received one final round

of feedback from the group. Following their participation in the workshop, fellows received complimentary membership to APSA and join the growing APSA MENA Workshop alumni community.



Workshop fellow meets with co-leader Dr. Yuree Noh for an individual feedback session

## “STUDYING PUBLIC OPINION IN THE CONTEMPORARY MIDDLE EAST: CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES AND BEST PRACTICES”—JUNE 2022 IN AMMAN

In June, APSA held a workshop in Amman, Jordan, in partnership with Al Mustakilla (IIACSS), NAMA Strategic Intelligence Solutions, and the Center for Strategic Studies (CSS) at the University of Jordan. The 1-week program on “Studying Public Opinion in the Contemporary Middle East” brought together 18 fellows and four co-leaders to discuss the growing areas of MENA public opinion research on various issues, from gender to conflict to religion to democracy. Karl Kaltenthaler (University of Akron, USA), Mujtaba Isani (King Fahd University, Saudi Arabia), Yuree Noh (Middle East Initiative, Harvard, USA), and Daniel Silverman (Carnegie Mellon University, USA) led the workshop delving into the growing body of research that use surveys, experiments, and focus groups to better

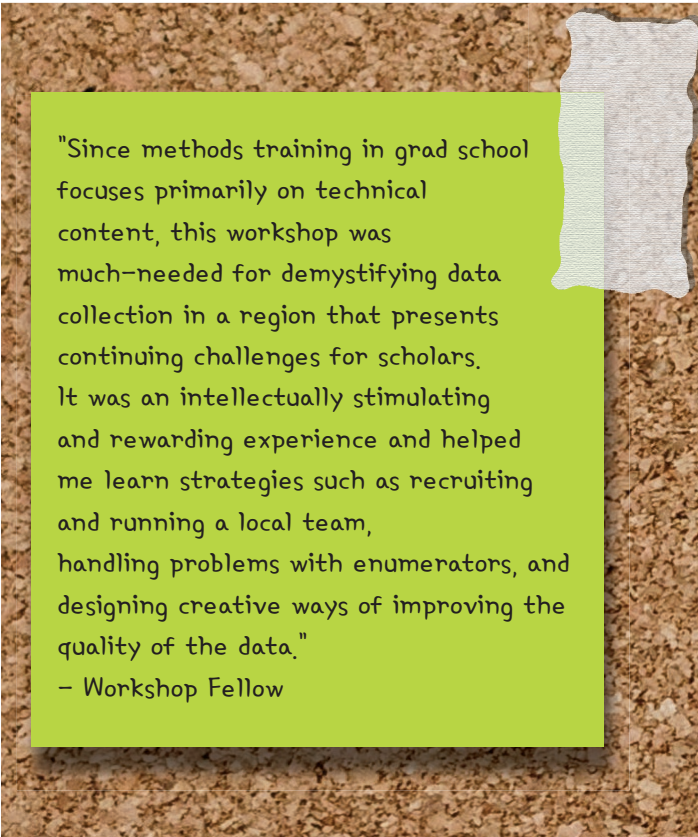
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understand what populations think and want in the region. Co-leaders and fellows shared methodological best practices and techniques designed to meet the increasing challenges facing researchers on the ground. A key component of the program included research panel sessions where participants presented their work examining public opinion in MENA and received feedback from peer discussants and

leaders. Participants also had the opportunity to meet with co-leaders individually for additional feedback throughout the week.

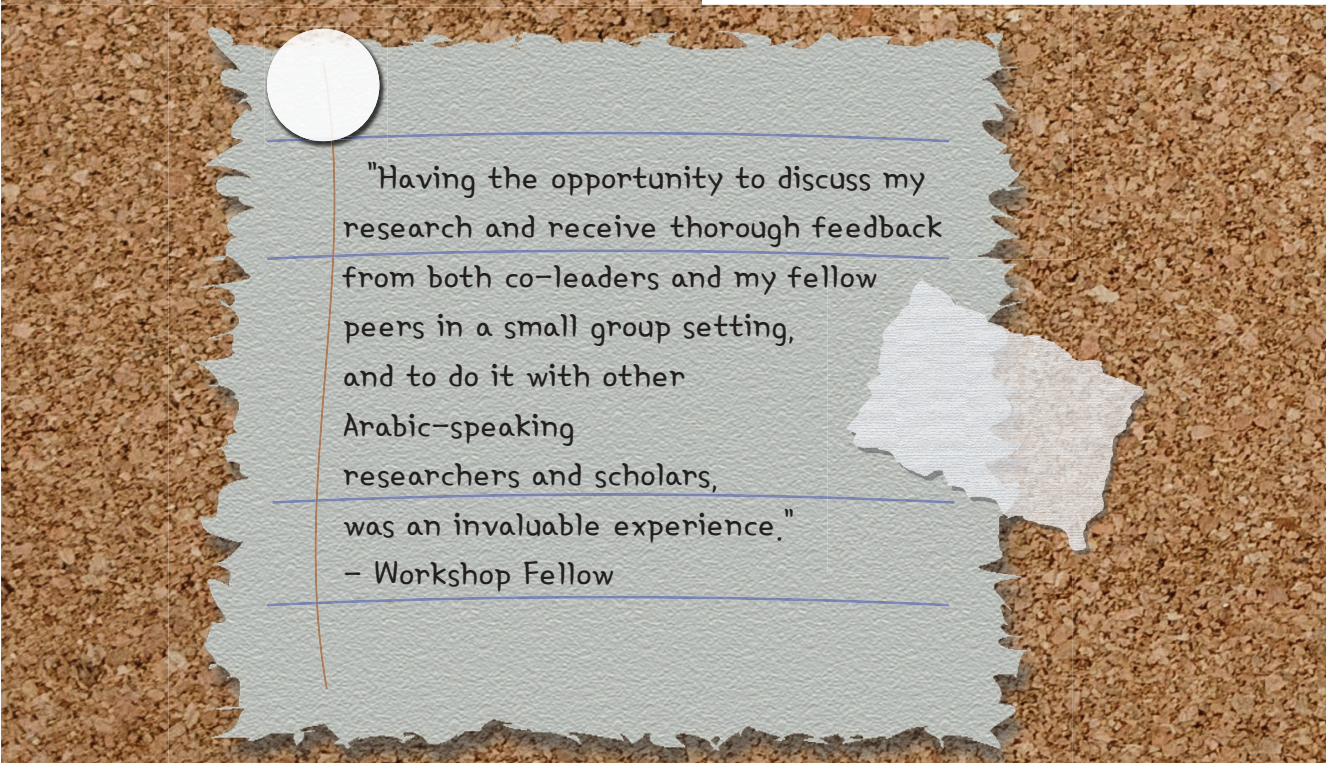
The program featured keynote speakers from local survey research organizations to draw on regional expertise in the field. Dr. Fares Braizat, head NAMA Strategic Intelligence Solutions, a leading research, polling and consultancy firm based in Amman, delivered a talk on the relevance of surveys to public policy and the role of survey research in providing public policy solutions. Dr. Munqith Dagher, the founder of IIACSS, a company specializing in conducting public opinion polls and population-based surveys in Iraq, spoke to the group about his twenty-year experience conducting survey work in conflict zones and quality control under challenging environments. On another day, workshop sessions were held on campus at the University of Jordan in partnership with the Center for Strategic Studies (CSS), an academic think tank that focuses on conducting studies and research in the field of regional conflicts, international relations, and security. Workshop fellows heard from CSS Director Professor Zaid Eyadat and Dr. Walid Alkhatib, head of Public Opinion Polls and Survey Department at the Center, who spoke about the importance of conducting public opinion research in the MENA region and the myriad of challenges it comes with. They also discussed the key role of CSS's work in exploring the views of citizens and opinion leaders in the region and the impact its surveys and polls have on government policy formulation in Jordan.

Following their participation in the workshop, fellows received complimentary membership to APSA and join the growing APSA MENA Workshop alumni community. ■



"Since methods training in grad school focuses primarily on technical content, this workshop was much-needed for demystifying data collection in a region that presents continuing challenges for scholars. It was an intellectually stimulating and rewarding experience and helped me learn strategies such as recruiting and running a local team, handling problems with enumerators, and designing creative ways of improving the quality of the data."

– Workshop Fellow



"Having the opportunity to discuss my research and receive thorough feedback from both co-leaders and my fellow peers in a small group setting, and to do it with other Arabic-speaking researchers and scholars, was an invaluable experience."

– Workshop Fellow