

Case Study 1:



Highlighted experiences:

- **Active member** of the part-time PGR network.
- **Benefits:** reduced loneliness; increased engagement with PGR communities; transformative network identity.
- **Challenges:** time commitment; institutional budget cut.

Gina has been an active member in the part-time PGR network. She has participated in five monthly events from September 2025 to May 2026, including a three-day in-person Writing Retreat. In addition, she had also made crucial contributions to the InFrame research by passionately sharing her experiences as a network member and insights about how to sustain and maximise the benefits of the PGR networks.

As a part-time PGR, she describes doing a PhD part-time as all about “*timing*” because she always finds it challenging to manage her multiple commitments (family-run business and caring responsibilities) while optimising her time to engage in more opportunities for her research and professional development. Attending events often becomes “*anticlimactic*” in her previous experiences because “*a lot of energy is involved*” in trying to find the time to participate. Internal communities at her universities also do not always suit her needs for social interactions due to time clashes and limited interests from her peers. This “*bizarre*” and “*lonely*” part of her PhD journey, as she shared, represents part-time PGRs’ typical experiences in time management and community-building.

One key part of Gina’s participation in interviews, focus groups, and video diaries is her acknowledgment of the tailored opportunities for learning and community-building provided by the part-time PGR network. PGR networks have become spaces that empower her to meet like-minded people to resonate with and other PGRs from international, part-time, and global majority PGR networks to enjoy the diversity of research and dialogues. Through the part-time PGR network, she had “*accidentally*” made a friend who works in the same building as her and such an encounter is what Gina appreciates. “*The space to chat and introduce themselves*” at network events is therefore important to make a difference for PGRs who are lonely and seeking connections with peers. The writing retreat, for example, had given her the needed headspace to be productive and focused, with her working and caring responsibilities switched off.

Gina’s consistent engagement with PGR network members and monthly events evidences the importance of these in her PhD journey, while challenges are also apparent from Gina’s perspectives. She transparently expressed her concerns about the sustainability of the networks in an environment where budget cuts are prevailing. At the same time, she also envisions a promising future in which PGRs can benefit from such networks through more cross-institutional budget collaboration and collective actions among PGRs. After observing the PGR co-leads’ great contribution to her engagement and the development of the networks, she shared with us that she is prepared to take on a greater role in contributing to the network too, which demonstrates a strong sense of ownership and collective responsibilities. From Gina’s case, such transformative power embedded in PGR networks is essential for nurturing future collaboration, ensuring long-term sustainability, and fostering an inclusive research culture.

1. Gina is a pseudonym chosen to protect the network member’s anonymity.