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Enhancing learning outcomes and work readiness through knowledge sharing and training transfer: a qualitative study of sales promoters

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ABSTRACT

In informal work environments, such as frontline sales promotion, workplace learning often occurs outside formal training channels. However, limited research has examined how knowledge sharing and training transfer affect individual preparedness for real-world work challenges. This study aims to analyze the role of knowledge sharing and training transfer in enhancing learning outcomes and work readiness among sales promoters at PT Unilever in Kendari City. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, the research involved 25 participants 22 sales promoters, one supervisor, one coordinator, and one beauty advisor. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and document analysis, and analyzed using Miles and Huberman s thematic coding technique. The study found that knowledge collecting occurred through informal peer learning and semi-structured supervisor-led sessions, reflecting principles of adult education and social cognitive theory. In contrast, knowledge donating was inconsistent, hindered by emotional disengagement and lack of organizational support. Training transfer was not automatic and required ongoing peer reinforcement, motivation, and contextual alignment to workplace demands. Learning in this setting is relational and emotionally mediated. Embedding counseling-based strategies such as peer mentoring, reflective dialogue, and feedback mechanisms into training programs can enhance individual development and organizational performance. This study contributes to the counseling and vocational education literature by emphasizing the importance of psychosocial support in knowledge transfer and learning continuity within informal employment settings.

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Introduction

In Indonesia s rapidly evolving retail sector, frontline promotional workers such as Sales Promoters serve as vital actors in brand visibility and product outreach. Particularly in urban centers like Kendari City, female promotional personnel commonly referred to as Sales Promotion Girls (SPGs) operate in high-pressure environments that demand product mastery, communication agility, and adaptive performance. However, their employment is often characterized by semi-formal contracts, minimal

institutional support, and limited access to structured learning systems. These conditions pose significant challenges to their capacity for skill development and long-term career readiness, especially in the absence of sustained organizational learning mechanisms.

Employee performance has long been regarded as a critical determinant of organizational sustainability and competitiveness. It is commonly defined as the ability to accomplish job tasks in alignment with established standards (Adamy, 2016), and is closely linked to employee engagement and the effectiveness of internal management systems (Awan et al., 2020). Among various human resource development (HRD) strategies, training remains one of the most widely implemented approaches for enhancing individual competencies, improving work processes, and contributing to broader organizational outcomes (Noe et al., 2019). However, in increasingly complex and uncertain work environments, especially in semi-formal or informal sectors, organizations are also challenged to adopt more adaptive and contextual HRM approaches (Kwong et al., 2021; Opara & Waheduzzaman, 2024).

Another equally important but often underutilized strategy is knowledge sharing, defined as the interpersonal and intergroup exchange of relevant experience, skills, and information typically occurring through informal conversations, mentoring, peer collaboration, and day-to-day interactions (Choudhary & Sarikwal, 2017; Kathiravelu et al., 2014; Suppiah & Sandhu, 2011). In workplace settings with limited formal learning infrastructure, such as promotional or retail labor, these informal mechanisms often serve as the primary mode of learning and adaptation (Yeboah, 2023). When adequately supported by a conducive performance management culture, knowledge sharing can enhance engagement, build collective competence, and foster organizational agility (Awan et al., 2020).

Empirical studies (Marjani et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2016) have shown that knowledge sharing fosters innovation, creative problem-solving, and organizational adaptability. It strengthens collaboration, enhances task understanding, and supports self-development (Sawan, 2021). Nevertheless, knowledge sharing initiatives face implementation barriers ranging from low employee engagement and lack of motivation to the absence of organizational policies that reward such behavior (Baharun et al., 2021; Hendrawan et al., 2020). A supportive culture and incentive structure are required to sustain these practices.

Parallel to knowledge sharing, the concept of training transfer defined as the extent to which employees apply learned skills in real work settings (Razak & Zahidi, 2024; Gautam & Basnet, 2021; Schoeb et al., 2021; Gautam and Basnet, 2021; and Tabiu et al., 2020) is crucial to converting training efforts into measurable performance. Effective training transfer demands practical reinforcement, emotional support, and alignment with task complexity (Al-Mottahar et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2022). Yet, training transfer in informal work environments is far from automatic. Research indicates that without appropriate feedback loops, motivation, or follow-up mechanisms, the intended learning outcomes are likely to erode over time (Rampun et al., 2020; Rahman, 2020).

The urgency of strengthening these learning mechanisms is particularly relevant for sales promotion personnel. Studies have found that knowledge sharing and training transfer significantly contribute to individual performance and organizational productivity (Harwaty et al., 2019; Indah et al., 2017; Fauzi et al., 2025; Memah et al., 2017; Aristanto, 2017). However, several investigations have also noted mixed or weak effects, especially in the absence of institutional scaffolding or when applied in informal job sectors (Hilmawati et al., 2023; Oktavian et al., 2021; Wairisal & Prajawati, 2017). Additionally, factors such as organizational commitment, cultural support, and feedback mechanisms can influence the success of knowledge-based interventions (Nurcahyo & Wikaningrum, 2020; Sunarta et al., 2020; Erwina & Mira, 2019).

In the context of high-pressure roles such as SPGs, training transfer has been linked to productivity, reduced errors, and performance enhancement (Mustafa-Sadiku, 2025; Najib et al., 2023; Pham et al., 2023). Scholars argue that effective training requires not only well-designed modules but also active learning strategies and continuous reinforcement (Bell et al., 2017; Dewayani & Ferdinand, 2019;

Hashish & Bajbeir, 2022). Furthermore, studies such as Mdhlalose (2022), Khoso & Akaraborworn (2022), Bhat et al. (2022), Al-Shargabi et al. (2021) have emphasized that poor training design and lack of emotional validation can diminish learning motivation, resulting in decreased knowledge retention and higher turnover rates (Kraai & Mashau, 2020; Salamon & Blume, 2021).

Despite these advancements, there remains a critical research gap: few studies have explored how knowledge sharing and training transfer manifest in informal, emotionally intensive, and semi-structured employment environments such as promotional work. Most existing literature centers on formal institutions and neglects the psychosocial realities of workers like SPGs. Furthermore, the role of career counseling or educational guidance particularly in understanding motivation, identity formation, and adaptive learning has yet to be fully integrated into such studies. Hence, a counseling-informed lens is needed to understand how learning occurs within relational, affective, and socially mediated contexts (Bernaud & Lemoine, 2021; Patton & McMahon, 2021).

Studies by Pilbeam & Karanikas (2023) and Yang et al. (2020) revealed that ineffective training transfer hampers the utilization of knowledge and skills in the workplace. Similar findings by Kodwani & Prashar (2021) suggest that poorly designed training programs, ineffective communication patterns, and weak employee engagement contribute to the failure of training transfer. Such conditions demotivate employees, minimizing the positive impact of training on performance (Bhat et al., 2022; Kodwani & Prashar, 2021; Yang et al., 2020). These insights underscore the necessity of investigating training transfer mechanisms, especially in informal and under-supported job environments.

In the domain of educational and career counseling, knowledge sharing and training transfer are seen not only as functional HR processes but also as transformative learning experiences. For sales promotion personnel, especially women working under dynamic and high-pressure environments, career readiness and resilience require not only technical knowledge, but also psychosocial support, peer learning, and narrative reflection   dimensions that are best understood through a counseling-informed qualitative approach (Brown & Ryan, 2000; Wijaya et al., 2025).

This study addresses the problem of how knowledge sharing and training transfer influence learning outcomes and work readiness among SPGs in Kendari City, within the framework of vocational and educational counseling. Initial field interviews reveal that while SPGs engage in informal learning and peer support, they often face emotional disengagement, low recognition, and poor structural support. These obstacles hinder the sustainability of knowledge sharing and weaken the practical implementation of training content. In light of these findings, the study asks: How do knowledge sharing and training transfer processes shape the career readiness of informal promotional workers in a retail-based urban setting?

To address this, the present research applies a qualitative descriptive approach to explore the lived experiences of SPGs in Kendari City, Indonesia. The study contributes to the literature in three ways: (1) by examining learning and training from the perspective of informal labor; (2) by integrating counseling-based theoretical frameworks into the analysis of workplace learning; and (3) by offering context-specific insights for improving HRD practices in precarious job sectors. Practically, it provides recommendations for improving mentoring systems, incentive structures, and psychosocial support in sales promotion environments. Theoretically, it bridges gaps between HRD, adult learning, and counseling scholarship demonstrating how informal workers construct, sustain, and apply knowledge under pressure.

Methods

Research Design
This study employed a qualitative case study approach using a descriptive method to explore how knowledge sharing and training transfer shape learning outcomes and work readiness among Sales Promotion Girls (SPGs) at PT Unilever in Kendari City. The case study design was selected due to the

contextual nature of the research problem, which investigates bounded social phenomena embedded in specific organizational environments. As emphasized by Hasddin et al. (2022), qualitative research prioritizes the exploration of contextual and subjective meanings behind individual and group experiences, allowing a more holistic and fair representation of the social reality being studied.

In line with the principles of career counseling and educational development, this qualitative approach is particularly appropriate for understanding how SPGs internalize, interpret, and apply the skills and knowledge acquired through formal training and informal peer-based learning processes. Unlike quantitative methods that emphasize causality and variable measurement, this design allows for in-depth exploration of transformative learning elements, motivational barriers, and psychosocial enablers in workplace behavior change. As Bernaud & Lemoine (2021) assert, qualitative inquiry in counseling contexts helps illuminate how learning environments contribute to personal growth and employability, especially in non-formal labor arrangements (Patton & McMahon, 2021; Rossier et al., 2020).

This study is positioned within a growing body of research that employs qualitative inquiry to examine performance improvement and human resource practices through an educational and counseling lens. Recent studies using similar qualitative approaches to explore workplace learning and individual development include works by Sari & Rizqi (2023), Muhamad et al. (2023), Ramdiani et al. (2023), Rivaldi & Sungkono (2023), Billa et al. (2023), and Rahmatillah & Rahmadani (2021). These studies demonstrate the analytical richness of qualitative designs in uncovering personal narratives and experiential learning in informal employment settings. Furthermore, Patton & McMahon (2022) emphasize the value of qualitative research in vocational guidance, particularly in contexts where non-formal and experiential learning processes shape career identity and readiness. This growing literature reinforces the methodological relevance of the current study in addressing the complex interplay between learning, adaptation, and psychosocial support in semi-structured work environments.

Research Setting and Participant Selection

This study was conducted in Kendari City, focusing on several modern retail centers and supermarkets that serve as the primary distribution hubs for Unilever′s promotional campaigns. These locations were selected not only based on logistical accessibility, but more importantly, due to their methodological relevance: they are characterized by a high turnover rate of promotional staff, frequent on-site product training sessions, and an organizational culture that relies heavily on informal peer mentoring systems. Such contextual features provide a fertile ground for examining how workplace learning processes, particularly knowledge sharing and training transfer, are enacted and sustained in daily routines. The selected sites thus represent a bounded social environment where formal and informal learning mechanisms intersect, aligning with the case study′s intent to explore embedded phenomena within real-life operational settings.

Participant recruitment employed purposive sampling (Komariah & Satori, 2014), aimed at identifying informants who possess specific knowledge, lived experiences, and learning exposure relevant to the study′s objectives. The inclusion criteria consisted of: (a) a minimum of one year of continuous work experience as a Sales Promotion Girl (SPG); (b) prior and active participation in Unilever-organized training initiatives; and (c) regular engagement in peer learning or informal knowledge-sharing practices on the job. Exclusion criteria were applied to individuals with less than six months of employment, or those in non-field, administrative, or supervisory positions not directly involved in sales floor activities. These criteria ensured the selection of participants who could meaningfully reflect on the personal, relational, and procedural aspects of learning within their roles.

A total of 25 informants were included in the final data set, comprising 22 SPGs, 1 direct supervisor, 1 area coordinator, and 1 beauty advisor. This composition not only reflected different hierarchical and functional roles within the retail promotion environment but also allowed for the capture of diverse perspectives across tenure levels and mentoring dynamics. The sample was further stratified to ensure variation in terms of years of experience, frequency of training attendance, and degree of

involvement in peer-to-peer learning interactions, thereby enhancing the representativeness and analytic richness of the qualitative data.

Although the sample size was determined in advance based on preliminary field mapping, the principle of data saturation was applied to guide finalization. Redundant themes and no new conceptual categories emerged after the 21st interview, at which point four additional interviews were conducted to confirm thematic consistency and saturation. This process reinforces the methodological rigor and trustworthiness of the sampling strategy.

The primary unit of analysis in this study is the individual SPG, as the research focuses on how each worker interprets, internalizes, and applies learned knowledge in context. However, supplementary attention was given to interpersonal interactions such as informal coaching and collaborative learning that occur within the social dynamics of the workplace. This dual-layered unit of analysis allows the study to capture both individual agency and the embedded social mechanisms shaping knowledge construction and career readiness in semi-structured labor settings.

Data Collection Techniques

To ensure comprehensiveness and enhance data validity, this study employed a triangulated approach comprising three qualitative data collection techniques: in-depth semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. Interviews were conducted face-to-face in informal rest areas or retail backrooms, lasting approximately 40 to 60 minutes. A flexible interview guide was used to explore participants narratives related to learning outcomes, training experiences, knowledge exchange practices, and workplace adaptation. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim, following the participants informed consent.

In addition to interviews, participant observation was conducted across eight retail work environments to capture real-time dynamics of peer mentoring, communication patterns, and the application of training in daily tasks. Each observation session lasted between 2 to 3 hours, with findings documented in structured field notes. Complementary document analysis was also carried out, focusing on materials such as training manuals, weekly performance reports, and informal communication logs. This helped identify how knowledge and training content are formally structured and informally reinforced within the organization. Data collection took place over a six-week period, allowing the researcher to build rapport, gain contextual familiarity, and detect consistent patterns in workplace learning processes.

Data Analysis

The data analysis in this study followed the descriptive qualitative model proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994), encompassing three interrelated phases: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing with verification. In the data reduction phase, raw data collected from interviews, observations, and documents were carefully filtered, coded, and grouped based on recurring patterns. Key themes were identified around core constructs such as knowledge sharing, training transfer, emotional constraints, peer dynamics, and indicators of career readiness. This initial stage helped streamline large volumes of qualitative data into manageable thematic units

In the data display phase, the coded information was organized into thematic matrices, diagrams, and flowcharts to visualize the interconnections between workplace learning mechanisms and individual development outcomes. This visual representation enabled the researcher to better interpret the dynamics of knowledge circulation, peer mentoring, and informal adaptation processes among SPGs within their organizational context

Finally, the conclusion drawing and verification phase involved iterative interpretation across all data sources. Patterns and findings were verified through member checks, where selected participants reflected on the interpretations, and through peer debriefing sessions to challenge potential bias and enhance analytical credibility. This systematic approach allowed for an in-depth understanding not only of the content of learning processes but also their contextual, relational, and functional significance in shaping the career readiness of informal promotional workers.

Validation and Trustworthiness Techniques

To ensure the credibility, confirmability, and overall trustworthiness of the findings, several validation strategies were systematically employed. First, member checking was conducted by sharing preliminary thematic summaries with five selected participants. This process allowed respondents to assess the accuracy of interpretations and clarify any discrepancies, thereby strengthening the authenticity and interpretive validity of the findings. This approach aligns with McKim s (2023) structured framework for meaningful member checking, which emphasizes participant engagement not merely as procedural confirmation but as a dialogical process for validating interpretive depth. Additionally, Soysal and Türkmen (2024) argue that member checking when viewed through a hermeneutic lens provides an opportunity to co-construct meaning between researchers and participants, allowing space for reflexive dialogue and epistemological rigor.

Second, methodological triangulation was implemented by cross-examining data derived from interviews, participant observations, and document analysis. This strategy helped establish internal consistency and reinforced the reliability of emergent themes across diverse data sources, thereby minimizing interpretive bias and enhancing analytical transparency.

Additionally, peer debriefing was carried out with two independent colleagues who possess expertise in qualitative research, human resource development, and counseling psychology. They reviewed the coding framework and offered critical feedback to improve conceptual clarity and analytical rigor (Jones et al., 2024). To further enhance transparency, a comprehensive audit trail was maintained throughout the research process, consisting of field notes, transcribed interviews, analytic memos, and coding logs. This documentation provided a systematic account of methodological decisions and interpretive processes, thereby ensuring that the study s conclusions were traceable, verifiable, and methodologically sound.

Researcher Positionality and Bias Management

The primary researcher entered the field as a non-affiliated external observer with no professional ties to PT Unilever. The absence of hierarchical influence enabled natural rapport-building. To monitor potential bias, the researcher maintained a reflexive journal throughout the data collection and analysis phases, recording subjective impressions, ethical tensions, and methodological decisions. Interviewing was conducted using neutral and empathetic facilitation techniques to minimize response distortion and ensure authenticity.

Ethical Considerations

Prior to data collection, all participants were informed about the study s aims, procedures, and their voluntary right to withdraw at any stage without consequence. Written informed consent was obtained from each participant. To ensure confidentiality, all names, store locations, and corporate references were anonymized during transcription and reporting. Data were stored in encrypted digital formats and used solely for academic purposes in accordance with institutional research ethics protocols.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the research findings, which are organized into three core themes derived from a rigorous thematic analysis of data collected from 25 informant transcripts. These themes are: (1) Knowledge Collecting through Informal Learning and Peer Counseling, (2) Knowledge Donating and Affective Barriers to Learning Collaboration, and (3) Transfer of Training into Practical Workplace Application. The identification of these themes followed a structured process involving open coding, development of sub-categories, and axial theme formation. The analysis was conducted using grounded theory procedures, informed by theoretical perspectives in adult education and counseling psychology.

Thematic derivation was systematically conducted by first identifying initial codes that frequently appeared in the transcripts. These were then grouped into meaningful sub-categories before being clustered under higher-order conceptual themes. Table 1 illustrates the analytical pathway from raw data to thematic categorization.

Table 1. Thematic Derivation from Coding Process

Initial Codes	Sub-Categories	Themes
Sharing, discussing with supervisor	Peer-mediated learning	Knowledge Collecting through Informal Learning and Peer Counseling
No appreciation, workload pressure, hesitant to teach	Emotional and motivational constraints	Knowledge Donating and Affective Barriers to Learning Collaboration
No follow-up, difficult to apply training, need feedback	Reinforcement and application challenges	Transfer of Training into Practical Workplace Application

The first theme, Knowledge Collecting, reflects how employees acquire knowledge informally through peer interactions and supervisor guidance. Initial codes such as sharing and discussing with supervisor indicate that learning in the workplace often occurs in non-formal, dialogical spaces. These peer-mediated exchanges become essential for experiential knowledge acquisition, especially in contexts lacking structured training mechanisms.

The second theme, Knowledge Donating, highlights emotional and motivational constraints that impede collaborative knowledge-sharing efforts. Codes such as no appreciation, workload pressure, and hesitant to teach suggest that participants often felt discouraged or emotionally disengaged from mentoring or transferring their skills, primarily due to the absence of institutional support or recognition.

The third theme, Transfer of Training, reveals significant challenges faced by participants when applying formal training content to their actual job roles. Statements like no follow-up, difficult to apply training, and need feedback indicate the absence of post-training reinforcement and a lack of systemic mechanisms to support learning transfer, ultimately hindering long-term professional development.

Importantly, the credibility and resonance of these themes were strengthened through member checking with selected participants and peer debriefing with qualitative research experts, reinforcing the trustworthiness of the analytical interpretations and ensuring alignment with the lived experiences of the informants.

Knowledge Collecting through Informal Learning and Peer Counseling

As outlined in Table 1, the process of knowledge collecting among Sales Promotion Girls (SPGs) at PT Unilever in Kendari City unfolded through two dominant modalities: informal peer-based learning and semi-formal supervisor-led guidance. This theme emerged from open codes such as sharing, discussing with supervisors, and peer coordination, which were then categorized under the broader subtheme of peer-mediated learning.

Informants consistently emphasized that their everyday work experiences were enriched through routine interactions with coworkers and supervisors. These interactions were not incidental but functioned as key mechanisms for knowledge transmission and skill adaptation.

If I want to gain knowledge about work, both technical and non-technical to support my performance as an SPG, I usually socialize with other SPGs. We routinely communicate, coordinate, and share information about the types of work and obstacles faced in the field. (SY, 28)

This quote illustrates that SPGs engage in dialogic learning embedded in social relationships. The act of exchanging information with peers in real-time reflects Bandura s Social Cognitive Theory (1986), which posits that learning occurs through observation, modeling, and reinforcement within interpersonal networks. The process is not isolated but socially constructed through peer imitation,

coordination, and experiential feedback. Recent evidence from Woreta, Zewude, and Józsa (2025) reinforces this perspective by demonstrating that peer context strongly influences learning engagement through its effect on self-efficacy and outcome expectations highlighting the critical role of social dynamics and interpersonal modeling in shaping behavioral change and knowledge retention.

In addition to informal exchanges, informants reported structured yet flexible practices such as supervisor briefings and self-directed recording of training materials:

> Beauty Advisors record all training materials in a large notebook so they can be studied and applied later in our work. We also routinely share knowledge with colleagues and superiors. (M, 25)

> I always communicate with colleagues and supervisors. If colleagues don t have the answer, I will go directly to my supervisor. (H, 27)

These responses illustrate the self-directed nature of learning, a core component of Knowles andragogical model (Knowles et al., 2015), which emphasizes the role of intrinsic motivation, experience-based relevance, and immediate applicability in adult learning processes. By voluntarily taking notes and actively seeking clarification, SPGs demonstrate initiative in shaping their own learning trajectories.

Furthermore, the SPGs reliance on group-based coordination and reflection such as WhatsApp group discussions or informal mini-briefings demonstrates how learning becomes embedded in a social environment. This is consistent with Wenger s (1998) concept of communities of practice, where learning is viewed as a function of participation, mutual engagement, and identity negotiation within a shared context.

From a workplace learning perspective, Ellinger (2005) underscores the importance of informal learning ecosystems in enhancing adaptability and ongoing competence. SPGs field-based learning behaviors embedded in collegial support and real-time collaboration confirm this view, especially in environments with limited formal training infrastructure.

While the overall pattern shows that SPGs rely heavily on informal interactions for knowledge acquisition, a deeper analysis reveals that the quality and structure of such interactions are shaped by social roles, levels of experience, and emotional positioning within the workplace. For instance, senior SPGs often take initiative in mentoring their peers, while junior SPGs tend to adopt a more observant and dependent stance:

> As a senior, I feel responsible for reminding others, but sometimes I feel drained when no one appreciates that effort. (M, 29)

> I mostly listen during briefings because I still don t feel confident enough to speak or ask questions. (L, 20)

This contrast illustrates a social hierarchy within peer learning that affects participation and motivation. Senior informants often express emotional fatigue, linked to perceived lack of institutional support, while junior informants struggle with confidence and voice in group learning.

Additionally, the psychological dimension of knowledge collecting appears to be mediated by a sense of belonging and validation. SPGs who reported feeling accepted and supported were more likely to initiate discussions and share notes, whereas others remained passive due to perceived exclusion or inferiority.

From a sociocultural perspective, the status of SPGs as young female workers in a commercial, target-driven environment adds another layer of complexity. The act of learning itself becomes not just a functional necessity, but a means of asserting competence, negotiating identity, and surviving emotional labor in a demanding role.

In synthesis, knowledge collecting among SPGs should not be narrowly interpreted as a linear transfer of information. Rather, it constitutes a psychosocial, collaborative, and meaning-making process, where learning is shaped by relational trust, social modeling, emotional reinforcement, and informal power dynamics. These findings both confirm established learning theories and extend them by highlighting the nuanced interplay between social context, personal agency, and emotional labor in informal work settings underscoring the importance of emic perspectives in workplace learning research.

Theoretical and Practical Contributions

Theoretically, this study reinforces core principles from Knowles   andragogical model and Bandura   s Social Cognitive Theory by demonstrating that adult learning in informal work settings such as among SPGs   is intrinsically driven, socially constructed, and contextually embedded. However, it also extends these theories by situating them within precarious, gendered, and emotionally charged labor environments. In doing so, the research integrates counseling-based perspectives (Patton & McMahon, 2021), emphasizing that informal knowledge exchange is not merely functional but also shaped by emotional labor, psychological safety, and identity work. Moreover, Wenger   s community of practice theory is refined through evidence of how internal hierarchies, gender roles, and emotional fatigue influence participation patterns in peer learning, offering a more nuanced understanding of informal learning in stratified labor contexts.

Practically, the study highlights the importance of designing inclusive, trust-based learning ecosystems where peer coaching and group reflection are normalized and emotionally supported. Structured mentoring frameworks are recommended to address asymmetries between senior and junior SPGs, enabling effective knowledge transfer without emotional burnout. The findings also support integrating counseling-infused elements   such as reflective journaling and informal debriefs   into training routines to enhance learning retention and career resilience. For policymakers and HRD practitioners, the study offers a model for developing holistic workforce strategies that go beyond technical training to foster relational, emotional, and adaptive capacities in semi-formal labor sectors.

Implications for Counseling-based Learning Interventions

The findings of this study confirm that the learning process among Sales Promotion Girls (SPGs) in semi-formal employment settings is not simply a functional response to workplace needs, but is inherently emotional, relational, and identity-forming. Their ability and willingness to acquire knowledge are strongly influenced by interpersonal trust, social validation, and the psychological climate of their work environment. Informal peer learning, while rich in contextual relevance, can be uneven, stratified, and emotionally taxing especially when unsupported by organizational structures.

From a counseling education perspective, these dynamics echo Patton and McMahon   s Systems Theory Framework (2014), which conceptualizes career development as shaped by the complex interactions between individuals   psychological dispositions, social roles, and institutional settings. The case of SPGs demonstrates that psychological safety, perceived recognition, and affective affirmation are equally essential to learning outcomes as technical content or delivery methods. Recent empirical evidence corroborates this claim. A 2025 study by McMahon and Abkhezr highlights that career adaptability significantly improves when individuals experience supportive networks, emotional validation, and acknowledgment within their socio-institutional environments, reinforcing the core assumptions of the Systems Theory Framework in counseling education (McMahon & Abkhezr, 2025).

Practically, this calls for a counseling-infused approach to workplace learning, one that embeds affective and developmental components within training routines. Recommended interventions include: a) Reflective learning journals that allow SPGs to critically examine their evolving identities and learning paths; b) Peer mentoring systems with psychosocial scaffolding to bridge knowledge asymmetries between senior and junior workers; c) Feedback circles and structured group reflection to normalize emotional validation and collaborative meaning-making; and d) Narrative-based career mapping tools that help SPGs connect daily tasks to long-term goals and vocational identities.

These elements align with Mezirow s Transformative Learning Theory (1997), which posits that adults construct meaning and reframe perspectives through critical reflection and dialogue. In emotionally intense roles like that of SPGs, relational dialogue and narrative work become foundational mechanisms for resilience, motivation, and self-development. This is reinforced by Eschenbacher (2025), who argues that transformation in adult learning often emerges at the intersection of vulnerability and reflection, where learners move from merely surviving to actively thriving through narrative meaning-making and dialogic engagement.

Moreover, the emotional labor performed by SPGs often unacknowledged indicates a need for strengths-based counseling strategies rooted in positive psychology. Such frameworks help workers reframe undervalued experiences, cope with ambiguity, and build psychological endurance within non-linear career paths.

In sum, this study highlights that effective learning interventions in informal service sectors must move beyond skills delivery. They must embrace counseling principles that foster identity clarity, social connectedness, and emotional continuity conditions necessary not only for sustained knowledge use but also for vocational growth and personal agency. For the field of counseling education, this reaffirms the imperative to extend its scope into non-traditional labor settings, providing tools for adult learners navigating uncertainty and fragmentation.

Contribution to Knowledge and Practice

This study advances scholarly discourse in workplace learning, adult education, and human resource development by offering four key contributions. First, it reframes knowledge acquisition among Sales Promotion Girls (SPGs) as a psychosocial process, emphasizing that informal learning is not merely about skill transmission but involves identity formation, emotional negotiation, and relational adaptation. This dual framing enriches the conceptual understanding of learning within precarious and gendered labor contexts. Second, the study extends training transfer theory by integrating emotional and motivational dimensions, demonstrating that the absence of recognition and affective reinforcement can hinder the internalization and application of training content. This insight positions emotional labor as a critical yet underexplored factor in learning outcomes.

Third, the research bridges counseling psychology and workplace learning by embedding principles such as psychological safety, peer affirmation, and reflective practice into the analysis of informal knowledge systems. This interdisciplinary approach offers a more humanized and relational model of workforce development, especially relevant for marginalized or transitional employment sectors. Fourth, the study contributes methodologically by employing a narrative-rich, qualitative lens that centers the emic experiences of informal workers. It surfaces dynamics often overlooked in quantitative HRD studies, such as social hierarchies, emotional fatigue, and asymmetries in learning participation.

Collectively, these contributions have significant practical implications. For organizations, the findings underscore the importance of designing emotionally responsive and inclusive learning ecosystems to support workforce capacity in semi-formal labor markets. For the counseling field, the study demonstrates its relevance beyond traditional career structures, highlighting the need for applied interventions that support adult learners operating in low-structure, high-pressure environments.

Knowledge Donating in Practice: Peer Teaching and Affective Barriers to Learning Collaboration

This thematic section, derived through axial coding of categories such as "hesitation to share," "emotional disengagement," and "peer support variance," examines how SPGs (Sales Promotion Girls) engage in knowledge donating. The theme builds from initial codes like "no appreciation," "busy with targets," and "comfort level in teaching," which were consolidated into sub-categories under "emotional and motivational constraints."

Knowledge donating refers to the voluntary process by which SPGs share experiences, skills, and strategies with peers across formal and informal contexts. Informants reported that these exchanges

occurred during structured monthly knowledge-sharing sessions as well as unstructured daily interactions.

We hold formal and semi-formal knowledge sharing sessions once a month. The trainers are usually supervisors or specialists from certain brand categories.   (SPG Coordinator, 2023).

This structured setting demonstrates organizational intent to facilitate knowledge exchange. However, the practice of donating knowledge often varied in intensity and motivation, especially in informal settings.

Each employee shares knowledge based on their comfort level. We maintain continuous communication and coordination... often asking for tips or suggestions.   (NF, 24)

This quote suggests that knowledge donating is often contingent on psychological readiness and interpersonal comfort rather than institutional obligation. It reflects a broader affective dimension where emotional safety and trust influence knowledge sharing behavior, in alignment with Staneiu (2022) and Decius et al. (2019), who argue that psychological safety is a prerequisite for informal workplace learning. This is further supported by recent evidence from Robinson and Held (2024), who show that in online interdisciplinary teams, psychological safety significantly enhances knowledge sharing and collaborative problem-solving, underscoring its critical role beyond formal structures.

Some informants explicitly stated emotional fatigue and lack of structural support as barriers:

"In terms of knowledge sharing skills, I think these are still limited. Some SPGs are slow to respond to requests for help because they are too busy with targets." (H, 27)

"Why should I bother teaching or sharing knowledge with others? There   s no appreciation from the company for doing so." (F, 29)

These responses point to a breakdown in the perceived reciprocity of learning indicating a gap between expected contribution and organizational recognition. This links to Crans et al. (2021), who demonstrate that absent feedback loops and recognition structures diminish peer learning motivation.

Moreover, knowledge donating is not only emotional but hierarchical. For example, disparities in technical knowledge between experienced and newer SPGs led to unequal participation:

"There is a clear gap in technical and non-technical knowledge... But we still share experiences informally." (SY, 28)

This comment illustrates how perceived competence shapes knowledge authority and peer dynamics. Senior SPGs often find themselves in reluctant teaching roles, while juniors hesitate to contribute due to perceived inferiority.

"Sometimes I want to help, but I don   t know how to explain things clearly. I feel more comfortable listening." (RA, 22)

From a sociocultural lens, this hesitation reveals internalized performance anxiety driven by competitive work environments and social comparison. The act of knowledge donating thus becomes embedded in identity negotiation, emotional labor, and perceived inclusion within informal learning hierarchies.

These insights confirm Teguh et al. (2022) who argue that frontline retail workers   willingness to share knowledge is shaped by emotional exhaustion and the lack of institutional affirmation. Therefore, knowledge donating is a socially embedded, emotionally negotiated behavior that depends on both internal disposition and external support systems.

To enhance peer teaching, organizations must address affective constraints by embedding recognition mechanisms, encouraging inclusive learning spaces, and developing structured mentorship programs. This aligns with the theoretical framework of supportive learning climates (Decius et al., 2019), which emphasize the importance of feedback, appreciation, and psychological

security in facilitating informal learning. Recent empirical studies further support this approach by demonstrating that psychological safety is not merely a passive condition but a construct that can be intentionally cultivated through relational and structural strategies.

For example, Laird et al. (2024) found that psychological safety in faculty peer-mentoring interventions significantly enhanced group cohesion and transformative learning outcomes. Sedigh et al. (2024) showed that peer mentoring improved both clinical academic performance and psychological resilience among health professional students in high-pressure environments. Meanwhile, Moffett et al. (2024) emphasized the importance of psychological safety in fostering collaboration and engagement in virtual design-thinking education. Together, these findings affirm that building a psychologically secure and appreciative ecosystem is essential to enabling SPGs and other frontline workers to participate meaningfully in peer teaching, overcome emotional barriers, and sustain informal knowledge exchange in semi-formal work settings.

Emic Variations and Psychosocial Dynamics

Not all SPGs experience knowledge donating in the same way. Some, especially those with longer tenure or supervisory aspirations, show greater confidence and initiative in mentoring others:

> "I feel it's my duty to share what I know with new girls... but after a while, it gets tiring when no one seems to care." (M, 30)

Meanwhile, SPGs who are new or unsure of their skills tend to withdraw from peer teaching, reinforcing knowledge asymmetries:

> "I still hesitate to speak up. I learn a lot from others, but I'm not sure what I could offer." (SL, 21)

This dynamic reveals a social gradient in knowledge exchange, where seniority, confidence, and perceived role legitimacy affect one's engagement. These differences must be acknowledged to create equitable peer learning systems.

From a counseling and human development perspective, the emotional friction in knowledge donating underscores the need for support interventions that foster self-efficacy and relational trust. Strategies such as guided peer mentoring, structured debriefs, and emotional affirmation can help alleviate the burden of informal teaching roles.

Theoretical and Practical Contributions

The findings from this study contribute to theoretical discourse by illustrating that knowledge donating in semi-formal labor sectors such as among Sales Promotion Girls (SPGs) is not solely a matter of technical competence, but rather a complex interplay involving emotional dynamics, identity formation, and informal power structures. This expands existing models of workplace learning ecosystems by incorporating affective and emic dimensions that either facilitate or inhibit peer collaboration. In doing so, the research not only confirms previous theories in adult learning and counseling psychology but also offers refinements that foreground lived experience and emotional labor in marginalized or transitional work environments.

From a practical standpoint, the study proposes several actionable recommendations. First, recognition systems should be implemented to formally acknowledge peer teaching and mentoring efforts within frontline roles. Second, mentorship programs need to be designed with a strong emphasis on emotional intelligence, enabling senior SPGs to guide juniors with empathy and structured psychosocial support. Third, it is essential to create safe learning environments that promote inclusive participation, where junior staff feel psychologically secure and unafraid to engage in skill-sharing without fear of judgment or failure.

These strategies aim not only to improve the circulation of informal knowledge but also to strengthen career preparedness, psychological resilience, and the long-term sustainability of the workforce. Collectively, they align with contemporary imperatives in counseling-based training, human resource development (HRD), and adult education, offering a more holistic framework for frontline capacity-building in emerging labor contexts.

Implications for Counseling-Based Learning Interventions

The findings demonstrate that knowledge donating among SPGs is a psychologically charged and socially negotiated act. While the practice is commonly associated with technical exchange, this study reveals that it is more accurately understood as a function of emotional readiness, identity validation, and perceived social support. Many SPGs hesitate to share their expertise not due to a lack of knowledge, but because of emotional exhaustion, performance anxiety, and organizational silence regarding their informal teaching roles.

From a counseling education lens, this behavior aligns with the affective dimensions of Patton and McMahon s Systems Theory (2014), where knowledge behavior is shaped by the interplay between personal disposition, social context, and systemic recognition. Knowledge donating thus requires more than structural opportunities; it demands relational safety, affective reinforcement, and purpose-driven engagement. Recent empirical studies reinforce this perspective most notably, McMahon & Abkhezr (2025) demonstrated that career adaptability and resilience improve significantly when relational support and institutional acknowledgment co-exist within a systems-informed intervention, thereby validating the critical role of emotional dimensions in career development frameworks

To operationalize these insights, counseling-based learning interventions should prioritize several key components. First, psychological safety protocols such as anonymous feedback channels and structured empathy training can help mitigate fear of judgment and foster open communication. Second, peer mentoring frameworks must be designed to nurture emotional intelligence alongside technical skill development, allowing mentorship to function as both a relational and instructional tool. Third, reflection and debrief sessions are crucial in enabling SPGs to process the frustrations and emotional fatigue often associated with unpaid affective labor. Lastly, the inclusion of recognition mechanisms that formally acknowledge peer contributions can reposition informal support as legitimate leadership, promoting a culture of mutual respect and learning.

These strategies align with Mezirow s Transformative Learning Theory (1997), in which knowledge donating transcends mere informational exchange and becomes an act of critical identity reflection, allowing individuals to reassess their roles, value, and agency within organizational ecosystems. In emotionally demanding settings where informal hierarchies shape access to learning and legitimacy, counseling-infused approaches serve to reduce inequities by amplifying marginalized voices, validating senior contributions, and fostering more democratic participation in knowledge exchange. Recent research by Carter and Nicolaides (2023) expands Mezirow s original model by emphasizing the emotional dimension of transformative learning, particularly the need for individuals to process edge-emotions through grief-like reflection before sustainable behavioral or identity shifts can occur. Such mechanisms dialogic engagement and narrative processing are especially effective in cultivating resilience, intrinsic motivation, and self-development among workers in emotionally intense roles like SPGs. Ultimately, this study affirms that counseling-informed training models are not supplementary, but essential for fostering inclusive, psychologically secure, and sustainable learning ecosystems within informal labor contexts.

Transfer of Training into Practical Workplace Application: Toward Career Readiness

This final theme was derived from open codes such as forgetting without application, lack of follow-up, peer reinforcement and demotivation due to lack of recognition. These were grouped into three analytical sub-categories (1) practical application barriers, (2) peer-based reinforcement, and (3) motivational and structural gaps forming the overarching theme of Training Transfer and Career Readiness.

The experiences of SPGs at PT Unilever Kendari reveal that the transfer of training the ability to apply newly acquired knowledge and skills in the workplace is not an automatic process. Instead, it is contingent upon the interplay of three enabling conditions: opportunities for practical application, peer collaboration, and motivational reinforcement.

The material was very comprehensive, especially on product benefits and how to interact with customers. But if not applied regularly, it is easy to forget.   (NF, 24).

This quote reflects the cognitive vulnerability of unpracticed knowledge, echoing Ebbinghaus forgetting curve, which shows that memory retention decays without repetition. It also signals a structural limitation: the absence of integrated spaces for reflection or application.

Another SPG shared:

"Sometimes the techniques taught are hard to apply in a stressful environment, but I try to revisit the materials during quieter times." (H, 27)

Here, the barrier is contextual and emotional   when training content is mismatched with real-time work demands, internalization suffers. This aligns with Kolb   s experiential learning theory, especially the stages of reflective observation and active experimentation, which require time, psychological safety, and iterative practice.

"After the training, I discuss the materials with colleagues so we can remind each other." (SY, 28)

This quote highlights how peer reinforcement acts as an informal support system, compensating for the absence of institutional follow-up. It confirms findings by Chiaburu & Tekleab (2005) and Pham et al. (2023) that collaborative reflection sustains training transfer more effectively than isolated recall.

However, not all SPGs experienced this positively:

"We try to apply the training, but when no one acknowledges our effort, we lose motivation." (F, 29)

This sentiment uncovers a psychological breach in recognition and value. Without feedback or acknowledgment, effort fades echoing Kodwani & Prashar (2021) who argue that under-resourced post-training ecosystems result in low retention and engagement.

A supervisor   s perspective adds another layer:

"We consistently remind them to apply what they learned, even under pressure." (Coordinator A, 30)

This shows managerial awareness, yet reveals a possible over-reliance on verbal reminders rather than systemic reinforcement tools (e.g., follow-up reviews, coaching sessions).

Emic Variations and Psychosocial Dynamics

Not all SPGs experience training transfer uniformly. Senior SPGs often showed higher initiative but also greater emotional fatigue:

"It   s easier for me to apply the training because I   ve been doing this for years, but sometimes I feel like I   m alone in it." (M, 30)

Junior SPGs reported uncertainty and a lack of guidance:

"I remember the training, but I don   t know when or how to use it. It   s not always clear." (RA, 22)

This contrast suggests a stratified learning environment where knowledge application is filtered through emotional confidence, tenure, and role clarity. These differences highlight the need for differentiated support mechanisms.

From a sociocultural lens, many SPGs, as young women in a target-driven retail space, associate performance with worth and recognition. When this connection weakens due to lack of feedback, motivation drops, and knowledge becomes inert. This confirms Savickas   (2023) argument that career readiness depends on contextual meaning-making not just skills acquisition, but identity formation and narrative integration.

Theoretical and Practical Contributions

Theoretically, this study confirms and contextualizes Kolb s experiential learning theory by showing how training effectiveness diminishes when opportunities for reflection and real-world experimentation are obstructed by emotional or operational barriers. It also extends counseling-based frameworks (e.g., Savickas; Patton & McMahon) by revealing that informal workers internalize learning not solely through competence acquisition, but through socially mediated experiences of self-worth and validation. Furthermore, the findings bridge the literature on training transfer and emotional labor, emphasizing that the absence of recognition and affirmation can significantly undermine both learning retention and career adaptability.

Practically, the study recommends embedding follow-up mechanisms such as mini-feedback loops and reflective debriefs to reinforce learning after training sessions. Support systems should be differentiated to accommodate junior staff through structured peer pairing and progressive skill-mapping. Additionally, the design of incentive structures even symbolic ones can visibly reward the application of knowledge, fostering motivation and behavioral change. Counseling-informed practices such as storytelling sessions, self-evaluation tools, and emotional affirmation should also be integrated into training systems to support psychological safety and learner resilience.

In essence, training transfer among SPGs is not merely about content delivery, but a dynamic process shaped by opportunity, emotion, and recognition. Achieving sustainable learning outcomes in semi-formal labor settings requires not only pedagogical structure but also psychosocial scaffolding. These insights underscore the importance of integrating perspectives from human resource development, adult learning, and counseling psychology to build inclusive and transformative learning ecosystems.

Implications for Counseling-Based Learning Interventions

The findings of this study highlight that the process of training transfer among SPGs is not solely a matter of instructional quality, but an emotionally embedded and socially conditioned process. Despite receiving technically sound training, many participants struggle to apply new knowledge due to stressful work environments, lack of feedback, and emotional disengagement. These realities call for a rethinking of workplace learning strategies from a counseling-informed perspective.

Drawing from Patton & McMahon s systems theory and Savickas career construction model, it is evident that learning does not become transformative without narrative reflection, affirmation, and contextual integration. SPGs accounts reveal that emotional safety, sense of belonging, and perceived value are prerequisites for sustaining learning behaviors in dynamic work settings.

To enhance training transfer outcomes, counseling-based interventions should be embedded into workplace routines through the following strategies: 1) Narrative-based tools, such as reflective storytelling and guided journaling, to help workers integrate training into personal meaning frameworks; 2) Structured debriefs and peer review sessions after training to encourage critical reflection, collective feedback, and learning reinforcement; 3) Differentiated support systems, particularly for junior SPGs, that combine practical guidance with affective mentoring; and 4) Recognition and affirmation mechanisms, including symbolic acknowledgments and verbal reinforcement, to maintain engagement and motivation post-training.

These practices align with Mezirow s theory of transformative learning, wherein adult learners evolve through cycles of dissonance, reflection, and perspective transformation. In emotionally demanding roles, learning must be socially supported and personally meaningful to ensure deep internalization and behavioral change.

Moreover, counseling principles provide the necessary scaffolding for resilience helping SPGs navigate the emotional labor, ambiguity, and power asymmetries that often inhibit full training

utilization. Thus, rather than treating counseling as peripheral, this study positions it as a core enabler of sustainable learning and career readiness in transitional labor environments.

Contribution to Knowledge and Practice

This study offers a nuanced contribution to the interdisciplinary fields of workplace learning, human resource development (HRD), and counseling psychology by reframing training transfer as a fundamentally psychosocial process. It challenges conventional metrics of training effectiveness by emphasizing that emotional validation, narrative meaning-making, and relational feedback are critical conditions for the successful application of knowledge particularly within informal or semi-formal employment settings. By bridging experiential learning theory with insights from emotional labor literature, the research establishes a new dialog between learning design and worker well-being, asserting that technical competence alone is insufficient without affective reinforcement and psychological safety.

Furthermore, this study advances HRD strategy by advocating for the integration of counseling-informed scaffolds such as self-evaluation tools, guided reflection sessions, and psychosocial mentoring into post-training ecosystems. These mechanisms enhance not only learning retention but also identity formation and adaptive capacity among workers facing uncertain or transitional career trajectories. Methodologically, the research amplifies emic perspectives by centering the lived experiences of SPGs, revealing the complex realities of learning, fatigue, and informal hierarchy in low-support environments. This approach contributes a grounded, context-sensitive layer to training transfer discourse, which is often dominated by top-down, policy-oriented narratives.

In practice, these contributions call for the development of holistic training ecosystems that integrate skill-building, emotional support, and identity work into a unified framework. For HRD practitioners, the findings provide actionable insights for enhancing workforce adaptability and psychological resilience. For the counseling profession, the study underscores the need to engage more directly with underrepresented labor sectors, thereby expanding the discipline s relevance and impact in shaping inclusive and sustainable models of adult learning.

Contextual Reflections on Organizational Culture

While the emotional and relational dimensions of learning have been emphasized throughout this study, it is also essential to recognize the broader organizational and structural context in which these dynamics occur. The learning constraints identified such as emotional fatigue, low recognition, and inconsistent training application are not only individual struggles but are also structurally embedded within a sales-driven, high-turnover organizational culture. At PT Unilever Kendari, performance targets, client-facing pressures, and rapid workforce rotation often lead to a prioritization of output over development. This work culture, while dynamic, may limit the availability of psychological support systems and diminish space for reflective learning. These contextual realities shape how SPGs perceive the value of training and influence their motivation to participate in peer-based knowledge exchange.

Reflexivity and Interpretive Diversity

Although many SPGs expressed frustration with limited institutional support and emotional burden, it is important to acknowledge variations in perspective that reflect different team dynamics or personal dispositions. A few participants particularly those in well-coordinated teams or under empathetic supervisors reported feeling valued and supported in their learning efforts. This diversity suggests that experiences of organizational climate and learning effectiveness are not monolithic, but may depend on specific managerial styles, peer group cohesion, or individual resilience. As researchers, we recognize the potential for interpretive bias, especially in privileging more dominant narratives of fatigue or disengagement. Greater reflexivity is needed to account for minority voices and to avoid essentializing participant experiences, thereby reinforcing the critical depth of qualitative inquiry.

Alignment with Research Objectives

The thematic findings presented in this study directly respond to the core research questions regarding the mechanisms by which knowledge sharing and training transfer influence learning outcomes and work readiness among SPGs. The theme of informal knowledge collecting addresses how learning is acquired through peer and supervisory interactions. The theme of knowledge donating highlights the affective and organizational barriers that inhibit collaborative learning. Finally, training transfer elaborates the challenges of applying formal instruction in real-world contexts. Together, these findings construct a comprehensive response to the study's objectives, offering a grounded understanding of how learning is socially constructed, emotionally negotiated, and contextually enacted in semi-formal employment environments.

Conclusion

This study has revealed that learning among Sales Promotion Girls (SPGs) in a semi-formal retail context is not a linear process of knowledge transmission but a multi-dimensional, socially mediated, and affectively charged phenomenon. By examining knowledge collecting, knowledge donating, and training transfer as interconnected processes, the research demonstrates that cognitive development, emotional labor, and identity work converge to shape how SPGs acquire, share, and apply knowledge.

First, knowledge collecting emerges not merely as task-related behavior but as a form of relational practice. Peer interaction, supervisor feedback, and self-initiated note-taking reflect an informal pedagogy rooted in trust, imitation, and social negotiation, validating theoretical constructs from Bandura, Wenger, and Knowles while contextualizing them within gendered and target-driven labor environments.

Second, knowledge donating is shaped by psychosocial asymmetries. Emotional fatigue, lack of institutional recognition, and performance anxiety create barriers that disrupt what might otherwise be fluid peer teaching. The act of sharing becomes an expression of both competence and vulnerability, positioning knowledge donation as a form of identity negotiation not just skill dissemination. This insight expands workplace learning theory by integrating affective and emic dimensions often ignored in traditional HRD models.

Third, the transfer of training into practical application is shown to depend less on the quality of instructional content and more on the presence of post-training support, recognition, and emotional validation. Training is not internalized unless it is affirmed socially, emotionally, and narratively underscoring theories from Kolb and Savickas that connect learning to reflective practice and career construction.

Together, these findings suggest that SPGs do not passively absorb knowledge; they co-construct meaning in emotionally complex spaces that lack formal support but are rich in informal dynamics. In such environments, learning becomes a survival tool, a source of identity, and a means of asserting social presence.

From a counseling education perspective, the study contributes a reconceptualization of workplace learning: not as a sequence of instructional inputs and outputs, but as a process of emotional reinforcement, narrative reflection, and relational engagement. By embedding counseling-informed strategies such as mentoring, peer affirmation, structured debriefs, and narrative scaffolding organizations can foster not only knowledge retention but also career readiness, emotional resilience, and long-term worker engagement.

In sum, this study provides a thematic and conceptual synthesis of how learning unfolds in informal, gendered, and emotionally demanding workspaces. It extends existing theoretical frameworks and offers practical pathways for building more inclusive, affectively attuned, and psychologically safe learning ecosystems within semi-formal employment sectors.

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