



Commentary

Learning Beyond Formal Training: Exploring Workplace Resilience in Policing

Fernanedeز Gimenez*

Institute of Natural Resources, Inner Mongolia University, Mongolia

Publication Information: March 16, 2026

Correspondence to: Fernanedeز Gimenez, Institute of Natural Resources, Inner Mongolia University, Mongolia.

Citation: Gimenez F. Learning Beyond Formal Training: Exploring Workplace Resilience in Policing. American Research Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences, Vol 12, no. 1, 2026, pp. 39-41.

Copyright © 2026 Gimenez F. This is an open access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

Introduction

In today's fast-paced world, Police work is a demanding profession that requires officers to respond to unpredictable situations, manage conflict, make timely decisions, and interact with people from diverse social backgrounds. Although formal education and structured training provide essential knowledge and professional skills, much of an officer's practical development takes place through everyday workplace experiences. Informal learning can occur through observation, peer interaction, mentoring, problem-solving, reflection on previous incidents, and participation in routine professional activities. These experiences are particularly important in policing because officers frequently encounter situations that cannot be completely anticipated or addressed through formal instruction. At the same time, the ability to adapt to pressure and recover from challenging experiences is an important aspect of professional resilience. Resilience can develop gradually through experience, supportive relationships, reflection, and opportunities to learn from difficult situations rather than being viewed only as a fixed individual characteristic. In this context, informal learning may provide police officers with opportunities to strengthen professional judgement [1], confidence, coping strategies, and adaptive behavior. The social and organizational environment also influences this process, as colleagues, supervisors, workplace practices, and professional culture can shape how officers interpret and learn from their experiences. This perspective is particularly relevant to police officers in Mongolia, whose professional experiences are influenced by the country's institutional, social, and cultural context. Therefore, examining the relationship between informal learning and resilience can provide a broader understanding of

how police officers develop their capacity to manage occupational challenges. This commentary explores how everyday professional experiences, reflection, observation, social interaction, and workplace participation may contribute to resilience among police officers in Mongolia, while also highlighting the importance of integrating informal learning with formal professional development and organizational support.

Informal Learning as A Foundation for Professional Resilience

Informal learning is an important but often overlooked part of professional development. Unlike formal education or structured training, it develops through everyday experiences, workplace interactions, observation, reflection, and problem-solving. Individuals may learn while performing routine duties, responding to unexpected situations, discussing problems with colleagues, or reflecting on previous experiences. Knowles associated this form of learning with self-directed learning, in which individuals take responsibility for identifying their learning needs, selecting appropriate approaches, and evaluating what they have gained from the experience [2]. Similarly emphasized that informal learning can emerge from workplace experiences when individuals reflect on problems and develop new ways of understanding or responding to them [3].

This form of learning is particularly relevant in occupations where employees regularly encounter unpredictable and demanding situations. Police officers, for example, must often make decisions under pressure, communicate with different members of the community, and respond to circumstances that cannot always be anticipated through formal training. Everyday professional experience can

therefore become valuable learning opportunities. Officers may develop practical judgement, communication skills, emotional control, and problem-solving abilities through repeated exposure to real-world situations.

Informal learning may also contribute to resilience. Resilience is increasingly understood not simply as a fixed personal characteristic but as a dynamic capacity that develops through interaction with experiences, relationships, and surrounding environments. Masten described resilience as “ordinary magic,” emphasizing the role of everyday adaptive systems in helping individuals cope with adversity [3]. From this perspective, resilience can gradually develop when people learn from difficulties, adapt their behavior, seek support, and apply lessons from previous experiences. Informal learning therefore provides an important pathway through which professional experiences can become sources of adaptation and growth.

Learning Through Experience, Observation, and Reflection

Experience is one of the most important sources of informal professional learning. Dewey argued that meaningful learning is closely connected with experience, while also noting that experience becomes genuinely educative when individuals reflect upon it and use what they have learned to guide future action [4]. This distinction is important because simply encountering a difficult situation does not automatically result in learning. The individual must have an opportunity to interpret what happened, consider possible alternatives, and apply the resulting knowledge to future situations.

Kolb’s experiential learning theory provides a useful explanation of this process [5]. Learning can develop through a continuing cycle in which an individual encounters an experience, reflects on it, develops an understanding of what occurred, and subsequently experiments with a different approach. In police work, this process can occur after routine encounters as well as during particularly challenging incidents. An officer may reflect on how a situation was managed, identify what worked well or what could have been handled differently, and use that understanding when facing a similar situation later [3].

Learning also takes place through observation and interaction with other people. Bandura’s social learning perspective emphasizes that individuals can acquire knowledge and behavioral responses by observing others and considering the consequences of their actions [6].

In police organizations, less experienced officers may learn from senior colleagues by observing how they communicate, make decisions, manage conflict, and respond to stressful circumstances. Informal conversations, mentoring, teamwork, and shared experiences can further strengthen this learning process.

These experiences can have implications for resilience. When officers learn practical ways of dealing with uncertainty or pressure, they may become better prepared to manage similar circumstances in the future. Learning from colleagues can also provide reassurance that difficult situations can be managed successfully. Thus, experience and observation do not merely contribute to professional competence; they can also strengthen the ability to adapt to occupational challenges.

The Social and Cultural Context of Police Learning

Informal learning does not occur in isolation. It is influenced by the social relationships, organizational practices, and cultural environment in which individuals work. Vygotsky’s sociocultural perspective emphasizes that learning is fundamentally connected with social interaction and is mediated by language, culture, and relationships with others [7]. Individuals can develop knowledge and skills through collaboration with people who have greater experience or different perspectives.

This principle is particularly relevant to police organizations, where professional knowledge is often shared through participation in everyday activities. New or less experienced officers may learn by working alongside experienced personnel, observing established practices, receiving guidance, and gradually taking greater responsibility. Billett highlighted the importance of participation in workplace practices, arguing that learning develops through individuals’ engagement with the social and practical activities of their work environment [4].

The organizational culture surrounding police officers can therefore influence the quality of informal learning available to them. A workplace that encourages cooperation, constructive feedback, mentoring, and open communication may provide more opportunities for employees to learn from everyday experiences. In contrast, limited communication or an unsupportive work environment may restrict opportunities for reflection and knowledge sharing.

For police officers in Mongolia, this social and cultural dimension deserves particular attention. Professional practices are shaped not only by formal policies and

training but also by relationships between colleagues, expectations within the organization, community interactions, and locally established ways of responding to difficult situations. Understanding resilience consequently requires consideration of both the individual officer and the environment in which learning takes place.

Strengthening Resilience Through Informal Learning

The connection between informal learning and resilience offers an important perspective for the future development of police education and professional support. Formal training remains essential for establishing legal knowledge, operational skills, ethical standards, and professional procedures. However, training alone cannot reproduce every situation that officers may encounter in practice. Informal learning provides a continuing mechanism through which officers can adapt formal knowledge to the realities of their work [5].

Encouraging structured reflection after challenging incidents, strengthening peer-support systems, developing mentoring relationships, and creating opportunities for experienced officers to share practical knowledge could help make informal learning more visible and purposeful. Such approaches would not replace formal police training. Instead, they could complement it by connecting classroom knowledge with the experiences officers encounter in their daily professional lives [6,7].

Conclusion

Informal learning represents an important but often underrecognized component of professional development and resilience among police officers. Unlike formal training, which follows planned curricula and defined learning objectives, informal learning develops through everyday experiences, observation, reflection, peer interaction, problem-solving, and participation in workplace activities. For police officers, these experiences can provide valuable opportunities to strengthen practical judgement, adaptability, confidence, communication, and coping strategies when dealing with unpredictable and demanding situations. The relationship between informal learning and resilience is also influenced by the social and organizational environment, particularly through supportive colleagues, experienced mentors, constructive communication, and opportunities to reflect on challenging incidents. In the Mongolian policing context, recognizing these everyday learning processes could complement existing formal training and contribute

to a more comprehensive approach to professional development. Rather than treating resilience solely as an individual responsibility, police organizations should create workplace conditions that encourage knowledge sharing, reflection, collaboration, and continuous learning. Strengthening these opportunities may help officers transform everyday professional challenges into meaningful learning experiences and develop greater capacity to adapt to the complex demands of police work.

References

1. Marsick, V. J., & Watkins, K. E. (2001). Informal and incidental learning. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 2001(89), 25–34.
2. Masten, A. S. (2001). Ordinary magic: Resilience processes in development. *American Psychologist*, 56(3), 227–238.
3. Billett, S. (2002). Workplace pedagogic practices: Co-participation and learning. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 50(4), 457–481.
4. Billett, S. (2002). Toward a workplace pedagogy: Guidance, participation, and engagement. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 53(1), 27–43.
5. Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education*. New York: Macmillan.
6. Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
7. Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.