



Exploring the Role of Engagement in Learning within a Rescue Department Community of Practice

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Purpose: The purpose of this study is to investigate the role of engagement in building a community of practice (CoP) within a rescue department and its influence on workplace learning, knowledge exchange, and professional growth.

Study design/methodology/approach: This qualitative study employed focus group interviews with firefighters and fire officers, preceded by an expert interview, to explore the context of work and learning within a rescue department.

Findings: Findings reveal that engagement in a rescue department CoP is fostered by factors such as peer support, facilitation, intrinsic motivation, and flexible participation. These elements, alongside supportive organizational structures and adaptive leadership practices are crucial for building and sustaining the CoP and influencing workplace learning, knowledge exchange, and professional growth.

Originality/value: This paper provides new insights into CoP dynamics in the emergency services, highlighting the importance of inclusive practices, adaptive leadership, and digital facilitation to foster engagement.

Introduction

Work in the rescue department consists of prevention, preparedness and rescue duties, often performed under high-pressure, dynamic and unpredictable conditions. Firefighters and fire officers require knowledge on procedures, various technologies, and how to work in teams. Social interactions, observation and imitation of others are integral parts of the workplace learning process (Bandura, 1977), especially critical in rescue services where much of the knowledge is tacit and learned through shared experience and mentorship. Most workplace specific competencies are acquired through experiences in and around work. As such, deliberate education strategies integrated into work provide workers with opportunities to learn, interact, support each other and augment their learning (Billett, 2023).

Traditional training often falls short in addressing complex workplace challenges as it is designed for simple, well-defined problems with known solutions, failing to fully account for workers' capacity to learn and adapt. Therefore, engagement is crucial for effective workplace learning and the development of a continuous learning culture. Engagement levels vary from proactive workers to those who complete tasks with minimal interest, highlighting the importance of fostering workplace engagement to enhance learning and adaptability in work (Rassameethes et al., 2021). A continuous learning approach requires both the active engagement of employees and sustained organizational endorsement to integrate learning into daily work practices (Shahlaei & Lundh Snis, 2023). This integration is key for individual and collective learning in dynamic environments such as rescue services. One way that this is achieved is through social learning structures such as communities of practice (CoP), where employees come together around shared interests to learn collaboratively. This aligns with situated learning theory, which posits that learning is fundamentally a social process integrated with the context of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

CoPs are born, grow, and can cease to exist, or undergo changes to adapt to the different needs and goals of its members. The level of engagement and activity is dependent on the topics and interests of the participants (Wenger et al., 2002). This fluid nature of CoP highlights the importance of adaptive management and leadership within such communities. CoP present a

means for employees to learn, ideate, and reflect together. Such collaborative practices elicit workers to discuss outcomes, generating learning loops within the CoP (Wenger-Trayner et al., 2023).

Although CoP have numerous implementations, the frameworks used to design and test them are diverse and work specific. However, successful CoP share common traits across different designs. Such as structured but rotating leadership, encouragement for participation, shared trust, commitment, and stimulating environments (Shaw et al., 2022). Few studies focus on CoP within rescue departments, where integrating prevention, preparedness and emergency response into daily learning routines presents unique challenges. For example, Brooks et al. (2020) found that participants from their study on the UK Fire and Rescue Service perceived CoP participation as valuable to both novices and experts. Moreover, participation demonstrated that knowledge is transferred both ways, beneficial to both experienced and inexperienced practitioners. While learning can be promoted through peer support, the design of a CoP requires strategies for initiating participation, sustaining engagement, and managing knowledge within the rescue department context. Engagement in CoP is vital for organizational learning, driven by shared practice and social connections (Probst & Borzillo, 2008; Wenger, 1998). However, the specific factors ensuring sustained engagement across different CoPs remain unclear, as does the interplay of individual and organizational influences on knowledge transfer (Mäkinen, 2022). Therefore, the research question of this study is, what factors foster engagement in a rescue department CoP?

Theoretical background

What makes a CoP work is deliberate mutual engagement of its members in social interactions, formation of relationships, and the sense of belonging. Engagement thus constitutes social and active participation in CoP and the construction of identities with them (Wenger, 1998). Such identity formation reinforces mutual accountability and shapes the evolving practices of the group (Wenger & Wenger, 2014). Within the hierarchical structure of rescue services, CoP identity formation involves navigating both formal roles and the more informal, collaborative relationships fostered within the community. Moreover, identity formation within a CoP is dynamic and continuous, requiring sustained interaction and reflection (Brown & Duguid, 2001; Orsmond et al., 2022). The affordances of social learning through a CoP create opportunities for workers to collaborate, exchange knowledge, create new networks, improve communications between participants and develop trust (Sánchez-Cardona et al., 2012), which are all essential elements for effective teamwork and decision making in emergency response scenarios. Effective CoP are characterized by an environment in which members feel a sense of ownership and responsibility, fostering greater collaboration and exchange of knowledge (Iaquinto et al., 2011).

Participants who identify a value in the CoP are more likely to actively contribute to knowledge construction and sharing of information, rather than being just passive consumers (Butson et al., 2012). Passive members exhibit a higher tendency to consume the information for a period and then disengage (Butson et al., 2012). Encouraging reflective participation and incremental responsibilities may transition these members into more active forms of engagement over time (Cox, 2005). Reflective participation is a key driver for the transformation of passive members into active contributors, and this transformation is often aided through mentorship or peer-to-peer learning within the CoP (Szteinberg et al., 2020). Peer support is essential for learning, as knowledgeable colleagues provide guidance, fostering trust and effective learning (Steinert, 2014). As such, the CoP requires a motivated core group who drive engagement, centred on defined functions such as facilitators and leaders (Ojasalo et al., 2023). These facilitators, as part of the motivated core group, play a key part in fostering engagement by moderating

discussions, providing scaffolding, and promoting progress toward learning goals (Irving et al., 2020). They establish the necessary structure, such as through organizing activities and guiding interactions, which helps create a collaborative space where participation is encouraged. Recognizing that participants' self-efficacy influences their willingness to share knowledge, facilitators can reinforce this engaged behaviour through positive feedback and acknowledgment (Nguyen et al., 2021).

The purpose of leadership in a CoP is to encourage and participate in discussions and knowledge sharing. This, however, requires the leader to take agency in knowledge management, to maintain communications, and serve as a role model on good practice within the CoP (Ergan et al., 2014). Beyond the leader and a small number of active core members, most participants contribute and engage in discussions with varying intensity. For example, time constraints or low self-efficacy beliefs. This distribution of participation resembles Wenger's 'constellation of practice', where varying levels of involvement still sustain knowledge circulation (Wenger, 1998). These members however still learn and benefit from the CoP through observation and conversations on the sidelines (Wenger et al., 2002). This indicates that even peripheral participation within a CoP contributes to the overall knowledge ecosystem, as these observations can later influence active contributions when members are ready (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Beyond the initial department or unit where the CoP is established, external persons can temporarily join as contributors or observers. Persons outside of the immediate network of the CoP provide additional perspectives, new knowledge, and may become members in the long term (Fam, 2017).

For the community to feel active, ongoing engagement from a sufficient part of the members is required. The members require that the community addresses pertinent topics, while providing added value for learning through participation (Wenger et al., 2011). Workers may be more inclined to commit when there are opportunities to interact with fellow members, perceive the environment as trusting, share knowledge and develop a sense of belonging. Fostering a psychologically safe environment where individuals feel free to share their ideas without fear of judgment can significantly enhance commitment. Affective dimensions like psychological safety and interpersonal trust have a critical function in this dynamic (Edmondson, 1999). Such opportunities can be facilitated through relationship building events and events where knowledge exchange is promoted (Li et al., 2009). Community champions play a vital part in stimulating engagement by serving as intermediaries that encourage participation. For example, by following up on threads, posting messages and replies, and the promotion of best practices (Ford et al., 2015).

Motivation is a key factor in fostering engagement and sustained participation in a CoP. Members are motivated by and thus remain engaged when they have positive self-efficacy beliefs, identify with the CoP, and use technologies that enhance interactions (González-Anta et al., 2023). Such digital interaction spaces afford opportunities for coworkers to bond, form a common workplace identity and co-construct knowledge together (Park & Hong, 2022), though successful implementation requires considering factors like digital access, literacy, and integration with hands-on operational realities, including physical training requirements, unpredictable emergency calls, and the use of specialized equipment (Lantz-Andersson et al., 2013). Thus, the focus shifts from individual learning goals towards strengthening the learning and knowledge of the CoP. For this to occur, the members require personal confidence and mutual trust as they explore new topics, identify their knowledge gaps, and seek practical solutions (Akinyemi et al., 2019).

For a community to retain its learning and facilitate the progress of future members, it is essential that the knowledge and artifacts generated within the community are systematically

collected and made accessible. In the context of the rescue department, knowledge is often embodied in the form of reports and notes, which capture key insights and practices. Through collaborative efforts, members of a CoP engage in dialogue, negotiating a shared understanding and collective representation of knowledge. These interactions are vital, as they create value not only by producing knowledge but also by fostering relationship-building and trust among members (Mavri et al., 2021). Moreover, they are crucial for externalizing and combining tacit knowledge, the practical 'know-how' gained through experience, transforming it into shared understanding and potential new explicit knowledge within the community (Nonaka, 1995). Strong relationships and recognition of expertise play a critical role in nurturing a culture of knowledge sharing, which in turn enhances the community's overall functionality (Omotayo, 2015). As the CoP matures within the workplace, it contributes to the generation and dissemination of knowledge, the development of innovative ideas, and the creation of strategies for addressing emerging challenges (Mohajan, 2017). Understanding these theoretical dynamics of engagement, participation, leadership, motivation, and knowledge management provides the necessary foundation for investigating the specific factors that foster a thriving CoP within the demanding context of a rescue department.

Methodology

The study used interviews to collect rich and contextual data from the firefighters and fire officers. Given the exploratory nature of this study and its aim to understand deeply rooted workplace practices and social dynamics, a qualitative approach with a small, but purposefully selected sample is methodologically sound (Morse, 2000). First, a one-to-one expert interview was held with a high-ranking officer of the rescue department. The purpose of the interview was to examine the workplace of the rescue department to gain an understanding of the working environment, its structures and specific aspects of work in civil protection. As such, the perspective of an insider provides valuable context for theory building (Döringer, 2021). Moreover, expert interviews are particularly useful in studies where organisational insight is needed to frame subsequent data collection and refine the relevance of emergent themes (Meuser & Nagel, 2009). The interview took 41 minutes and produced 4140 words of data. The need to conduct separate interviews with groups representing firefighters and fire officers emerged. Firefighters are practitioners who train regularly for emergencies and learn to use various equipment, while fire officers coordinate the many prevention and preparedness units, work with mission management technologies and carry out administrative work. Using focus group interviews, the opinions of the two groups are examined separately, ensuring that the findings are representative within the rescue department context (Tümen Akyildiz & Ahmed, 2021).

Through snowball sampling participants were identified for the interviews. Five officers participated in the fire officer interview, and five firefighters in the firefighter interview. The study was conducted in Finland using the English language to communicate. The ability to discuss in English was a criterion to participate. Before the start of the interviews, the purpose of the study was presented, what data is collected, and their explicit consent to the collection of data. Unlike one-to-one interviews, focus group participants go through the process of expressing individual perspectives and negotiating a group consensus with other participants, which allows for further analysis of the interactions itself (Candra Susanto et al., 2024). Therefore, the analysis can explore the social interactions taking place, such as the extensiveness, intensity and specificity of comments made in order to identify themes and topics for the study (Breen, 2006).

The interviews were scheduled in person at the rescue department. The sessions began with a brief introduction on the CoP concept and a presentation on the aims of the study. The semi-structured interviews explored what workers value in workplace learning approaches and how

it could be built into a CoP. The discussion included broad themes on motivation, facilitation, community structure, knowledge management and the rhythm of the community. The interviews were recorded and transcribed, and responses were pseudonymised. The fire officer focus group interview lasted 52 minutes and produced 3865 words of data, and the firefighter focus group interview lasted 57 minutes and produced 3260 words of data. The data was read through multiple times for immersion, notes were taken throughout the process, and codes were developed based on preconceived themes (Rabiee, 2004).

The initial stage of data analysis involved the development of preconceived themes, which were informed by the theoretical framework underpinning this study. Drawing from Wenger's (1998) conceptualization of CoP, the theme of engagement was anticipated with the underlying significance of motivation, participation and social connections. Bandura's (1977) social learning theory further highlighted the importance of good practices and the role of members in facilitating learning. This theoretical lens provided the foundational structure for the coding process and ensured that the analysis was grounded within the theoretical concepts of workplace learning and CoP. To ensure reliability of the data analysis and its interpretation, a member check was performed with a high-ranking officer after the preliminary analysis (Thomas, 2003). The member check validated the data interpretation and provided further context to quotes and codes, thus strengthening the themes (McKim, 2023). In combination with member checking, triangulation of data sources – expert input, separate focus groups, and theoretical framing – ensures trustworthiness, credibility, and analytical depth in qualitative research (Nowell et al., 2017).

Results

This section presents the findings of the study. The examples, organized into two themes provide data extracts from fire officers (FO) and firefighters (FF), to demonstrate the coding and interpretation process. The themes and associated codes are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Examples of data analysis

Themes	Codes	Concepts	Data samples
Engagement	Motivation	Factors that influence willingness to engage. (Correia et al., 2010)	"If there are people who are not interested in the slightest, it quickly erodes everyone else's motivation, too." -FO1 "The best motivator is, of course, free lunch paid by the employer. Or money" -FF5
	Participation	The members' level of participation in the CoP. (Wenger et al., 2002)	"I was thinking how motivating it is if we organised meetings remotely...it is possible that all just sit there quiet by their microphones. It requires a certain attitude from the participants if we are working at our own computers." -FO2
	Social connection	The social exchanges that contribute to learning and community building. (Euerby & Burns, 2014)	"It is quite difficult to interpret emotions in Teams because you can't see all expressions, hesitations and so forth, it's different to meet face-to-face than to have a remote meeting." -FO2
Effective practices and structures	Member roles	Significance of members adopting roles to guide, support the CoP. (Abos Mendizabal et al., 2013)	"If there is someone who will give information, go through the device and sort of leads the event, keeps the strings in their hands, so that [person] is in charge." -FF1
	Facilitation	The act of guiding and encouraging participation, discussion, and knowledge sharing within the CoP	"There would be a meeting, for example, in every few/two weeks when everybody comes together but in

		to maintain momentum and achieve its goals. (Ford et al., 2015)	between, if people had a place where they can talk about it, for example...send an email or something, what kind of technology could it be..." -FO4
	Knowledge management	Processes and methods employed by the CoP to capture, organize, share, and retrieve valuable information and insights generated through its activities. (Reitan et al., 2022)	"Somebody should perhaps keep some kind of record during the meetings. Perhaps in a form of a list, so that the ideas presented do not disappear into thin air, and perhaps as a final work a PowerPoint presentation that could be presented to colleagues." – FF2

Stimulating engagement in the CoP

Interviewees noted that when they are invited to join in new events or initiatives, they seek to identify the value of participation. Coworkers organically promote the initiative within their professional circle to peers with similar interests. While some employees note that joining a CoP is beneficial to them, others may not be interested or motivated by the same values. Forced participation may generate a negative effect. One of the fire officers explained:

The most important thing is that the topic is interesting, then it will also encourage other people who are interested. -FO3

Since employees have different tasks and roles, topics and interests within the department can misalign. There may be resistance to the adoption of new methods or technologies. The older staff are perceived by younger colleagues as more hesitant to embrace change, and more reserved when outsiders deliver the teaching or training. However, having colleagues who are seen as knowledgeable teach is seen as acceptable. The notion of teaching and guidance to less experienced colleagues was echoed by multiple participants. One of the participants explained:

It would motivate me to study the matter quite a lot if I knew that I'd be teaching it in detail to you. -FF2

Participants agreed on the importance of facilitation within the community. One of the community members should be responsible for planning, organization of meetings and assistance within the community. Facilitation of the community should be given to the person who has knowledge or familiarity with the current topic. During meetings however, the discussions should not have a distinct leader who directs the group. Participants explained:

We could think that someone enables it [CoP], creates the framework, and gives the opportunity for meetings but when the meeting takes place it would be unrestricted dialogue between equals. -FO2

Participants noted that remote participation to meetings does not motivate groups to fully engage, actively participate in discussions and collaborate. It is difficult to generate group dynamics through online meetings as opposed to in person meetings. This suggests that in-person occasions for meeting are required for all participants in the region. Firefighters mentioned that sustaining and growing any community would be difficult in the rescue department. Working in shifts means that some members would always miss meetings. For those unable to participate due to shift conflicts, meeting records could be kept. Services that allow messaging and sharing of files, such as Microsoft Teams could be used to start discussions on specific topics and allow all shifts to participate. The firefighter elaborated:

If you think how shifts are running...a PowerPoint summary [of meetings]. Yes, that could be the operating method. When it's written down, it's not up to anybody's memory...Perhaps Teams, you can create discussion there. -FF3

One officer elaborated on stereotypical expectations among peers to be knowledgeable and self-reliant. As a solution, the officer suggested an alternative to email communications, where the working groups could anonymously interact with each other to ask questions and receive guidance. Rather than a replacement to email and videoconferencing that are used as formal communication methods, the anonymous exchange is a supplement. This would allow the group to leverage the expertise of peers across the network. The participant commented:

People answer if and when they have time and it sort of gives a feeling, us being Finns, that it is embarrassing to ask a simple question because you assume that everyone else knows the answer. So, if there was an anonymous group where one could simply post questions, like how you deal with this and that. – FO3

Participants further noted the importance of cooperation between units. Beyond a worker's own responsibilities, understanding the other staff duties is considered beneficial when collaboration is needed. Having knowledge on the work of different units and their procedures is useful in improving cooperation and coordination in the field. One of the participants commented:

With divers, how would cooperation work, if one must drive a boat, how close can one go... This is not a simple task to read the echo sounder, learning how to use it. Yes, it may not happen in one hour or even two. That would be a good topic. It could be expanded to cover equipment issues. -FF4

Good practices for a rescue department CoP

An officer noted that working groups tend to generate useful ideas, which may not be pertinent to the current work, but no mechanisms exist on how to preserve and utilize such ideas in the future. Existing working groups could leverage these ideas, or new groups could be formed to pursue them. To preserve the knowledge, notes and power points were suggested. Both focus groups mentioned a need for preserving knowledge:

All discussions that take place, like 'hey, we have noticed this problem or development point, or a piece of equipment that would be good to purchase or so forth...'. They [staff] would bring these ideas forward and they would be saved. Some form of transcription could take place in the group. If a group finds out a very good idea, so it would be saved somewhere... -FO4

I guess it would be quite easy to save if it was like a Teams channel for these people where you can make a folder for a specific topic and there you can put like meeting notes or presentations. -FF5

An officer suggested that a platform should be chosen that could serve both internal and external CoPs. In addition to sharing and storing knowledge, the members on the platform could find information on current and future activities within the work of rescue services. The purpose of a shared space would be to engage peers within the domain to join and engage with the CoP and initiatives they are interested in. The officer commented:

If it would be possible to have a platform where one could find information on events and current issues, and they [Safety Communication Network] said that [Internal security portal] might not be the platform to use, so if there were something that would truly work. So, this is something that other units are discussing, too. Some sort of a platform would be needed. -FO4

Participants mentioned that the meetings should be informal, and the technology chosen should allow participants to create new spaces dedicated to specific topics. Similarly, the idea of free lunches was suggested as a motivator for participation. A joint lunch or block of time scheduled

around an informal activity signals organizational approval for the CoP to meet. Once more the challenge of shift work was mentioned, necessitating ways for all members to be able to review meeting contents and discuss if required. While the challenge of shift work remains, workers identify the importance of asynchronous collaboration as a means for inclusive participation. One officer concluded:

Then when we have Teams meetings, they are meetings where the chair goes through the agenda, they are not really places for small talk. Fifty people, maybe fifteen would be interested, for example, so you would have your own place to talk about it, and there is no formality. The only problem we have is that we are all separate and work at different times...A phone app would be good, one could send questions anytime, anywhere. - FO5

Discussion

This article explores the multifaceted nature of engagement within a rescue department CoP, identifying key factors that foster participation and knowledge sharing. The analysis reveals that engagement is shaped by a combination of social dynamics, including peer support, facilitation, collaboration, trust, and psychological safety, as well as organizational structures, particularly leadership and hierarchy, the affordances of technology and intrinsic motivation. A clear support structure, valued both before and during participation, is crucial for sustaining CoP engagement. Engagement practices, encompassing discussions, task completion, and cooperation collectively contribute to enhanced learning.

The study's findings indicate that implementing rotating leadership within the CoP—allowing members to lead discussions or initiatives regardless of formal rank—acts as a key mechanism for enhancing engagement and disrupting traditional hierarchical structures within the rescue service. This approach fosters individual self-efficacy by offering opportunities to demonstrate expertise and assume ownership (Wenger, 2010), while simultaneously strengthening community identity through shared responsibility and the valuing of diverse contributions. Such a shift away from rigid, rank-based leadership models is critical for promoting inclusion and cultivating a more egalitarian CoP environment (Edelmann et al., 2024).

However, while peer-led facilitation can effectively challenge entrenched power dynamics, it may also necessitate assistance and mentoring for those who lack prior experience or confidence in facilitative roles (Handley et al., 2006; Schmid et al., 2024). Not all members may inherently possess the skills required for effective leadership in a non-hierarchical context. Furthermore, distributing leadership responsibilities—whether focused on coordination, motivation, or group development—requires senior members to actively relinquish control and junior members to engage more deeply. This represents a significant departure from traditional expectations within rescue service culture (Wenger, 2010).

While fire officers and firefighters share overarching goals of risk reduction and safety, their distinct tasks within the workplace indicate a need for improved communication across ranks and teams. The findings underscore that interactions bridging these groups are pivotal for sharing knowledge, addressing knowledge gaps, increasing the understanding of working requirements, and fostering a higher-quality dialogue through informal exchanges (Rossignoli et al., 2024; Swaithes et al., 2023).

The findings show that motivation is a cornerstone in both initial worker engagement and their continued involvement in learning activities, particularly within the collaborative structures such as CoP. This study emphasizes intrinsic motivation as a key driver of CoP engagement, with participants emphasizing its importance over transactional considerations. Elements such as altruism, the desire for affiliation, pro-community behaviour, beliefs, and positive outcome expectations appear to cultivate a more profound and enduring dedication than transactional

motivators, such as rewards or expectations of reciprocity. This aligns with self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), which posits that intrinsic motivation, fulfilling basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness, leads to higher quality engagement and persistence. The identified intrinsic factors likely fuel a sense of purpose and belonging, making participation in a CoP inherently valuable. In practice, cultivating this intrinsic drive involves intentionally designing the CoP to facilitate member autonomy by offering choices in participation and contributions, and to foster relatedness by creating opportunities for meaningful interactions and connections among participants (Slemp et al., 2015; Slemp et al., 2018).

Moreover, the findings of this study underscored the importance of trust and peer support in nurturing engagement and knowledge sharing, echoing the emphasis by Hernández Soto et al. (2021). Trust likely acts as a catalyst, reducing perceived social risks associated with sharing novel ideas or admitting knowledge gaps, thereby creating psychological safety (Edmondson, 1999). Peer support, in turn, can bolster confidence and provide tangible assistance, reinforcing the value of CoP participation. These relational elements may serve as conduits for intrinsic motivation. For instance, an encouraging and trusting environment can enhance feelings of affiliation and make pro-community behaviours more likely and rewarding.

Participants recognised the importance of preserving knowledge generated through the CoP. The early integration of digital collaboration tools and knowledge repositories, alongside activities, was identified as essential for capturing insights and establishing robust knowledge management practices (Fernandez-Nieto et al., 2024). Leadership played a critical role in modelling knowledge-sharing behaviours and establishing a participatory culture conducive to long-term knowledge retention. Task delegation was observed to foster trust and shared responsibility, reinforcing collective ownership over the CoP's knowledge base (Inkinen, 2016). In this context, shared digital spaces serve not only as repositories but also as collaborative environments that enable reflection, foster psychological safety and facilitate the continuous evolution of CoP knowledge practices (Pyrko et al., 2017).

The findings of this study should be interpreted within the context of some limitations. The data was collected only in Finland, which has its own societal characteristics and work practices. Research and development activities that explore improvement to work have a positive perception in the rescue department. These factors may limit the generalizability of the findings to other contexts. Second, the study considered only the workplace context of one rescue department. The practices and ways of working may differ between regions, requiring different priorities in the CoP design for their purposes. However, it is important to acknowledge that the study also incorporates elements that strengthen the validity of its findings. Drawing on the principle that expert input and stakeholder engagement enhance the credibility of qualitative research (Monke, 2007), this study utilized an expert interview and, particularly, a member check with a high-ranking officer, whose extensive experience served as key validation points. The alignment of the findings with the officer's perspective reinforces the trustworthiness of the data interpretation, mitigating some of the concerns regarding single-context limitations.

Conclusion

This study explored the design considerations for implementing a CoP within the rescue department highlighting the importance of a robust facilitation and leadership framework to ensure consistency and effective knowledge management. A CoP fosters social engagement by providing a space for individuals with shared interests to connect, exchange ideas, and learn collaboratively. The findings emphasize that both organizational commitment and employee participation are crucial for a CoP to be successful in enhancing workplace learning. Ultimately,

this research contributes to a broader understanding of how CoP can be strategically designed to promote learning and knowledge sharing in professional settings.

Acknowledgements

Filip is a project manager on research initiatives that examine how technology can enhance and transform work practices. His current focus is on technologies used in the rescue department. The work examines how technologies influence work, generate new demands for skills and competencies, and disrupt established workflows. In addition to his project management role, Filip is a doctoral researcher at the University of Lapland, where he investigates workplace learning within the same context.

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