

RESOURCES FOR LEARNING OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH IN FOOD DELIVERY WORK ON PLATFORMS

Abstract for WORK2025.fi conference

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The rise of platform-mediated work has increased the individualized approach to participating in the labor market. For example, in food delivery work, self-employed couriers perform tasks (gigs) alone and must carry much of the new and old occupational risks on their own (Schor & Tirrel, 2023). Individual workers are more connected to digital applications than to organizations (Nilsen et al., 2022). In terms of learning, this shift necessitates to reframe what workplace learning is, particularly because traditional learning theories have been focused on social aspects of organizational learning. In platform-mediated work, where traditional organizational learning processes and practices are largely missing, a question arises: what elements sustain and support learning? More specifically, what types of learning resources are available for individual workers in food delivery work? By learning resources, we mean any tools, practices or symbolic elements in couriers' everyday work that may prompt learning in practice.

In this presentation, we explore these questions of learning within the context of occupational safety and health (OSH) in food delivery work. Learning has been recognized as a critical factor in OSH. Food delivery work includes not only OSH risks involved in traffic, isolation, deskilling and precarity but also risks from algorithmic management of the platform app (Bråten et al., 2024; Perkiö et al., 2023). Therefore, the consideration of OSH in food delivery couriers' work is an important competence to be learned. The status of the self-employed, prevalent among couriers in Finland, further aggravates this challenge. Compared to normal employment, for food delivery workers there is no employer who takes care of the safety and health of their employees. A variety of tools and practices—such as risk assessments, induction processes, and safety observation procedures—serve as valuable resources for learning in typical organisations and employment. These learning resources are absent in food delivery work. We are interested in understanding how workers learn safety when OSH responsibilities are individualized to them and the platform does not carry the OSH responsibilities of an employer. To address this, deeper insights are needed into what learning encompasses, who the learners are, what is learned, how and why learning occurs (Engeström, 2001).

In our presentation we will focus on describing and analysing learning instances of food delivery work. Learning is conceptualized as changes in orientations or actions of couriers in their practical everyday work. The data coming from a European study ([Occupational safety learning and management in platform work – TOPPA | Finnish Institute of Occupational Health](#)) are qualitative interviews of food delivery workers, which are analysed with the four questions of learning (who, why, what and how). In particular, the focus is in the resources (the how-question) available for workers. Inspired by both pragmatism (e.g. Dewey, 1938/86)

and activity theory (e.g. Engeström, 2001), problems and possibilities are revealed as resources for learning. Moreover, learning seems to be prompted especially by tensions or mismatches between workers' expectations and the reality of their delivery work. The expectations often come from comparing platform work with traditional employment.

The findings enable us to discuss various aspects of learning-work relations. First, as in safety research the learning at work is often associated with formal training, induction and instruction, these findings shed light on the motivational and practical-situational features of work that are indispensable, we argue, for learning. Our insights could possibly be used to make OSH preventive induction and instruction more efficient in food delivery work. Second, the outcomes of learning (the what-question) reveal that the learning of OSH is very much conditioned by platform practices such as rating systems, task-based payments, or ways of communicating. Third, the individual nature of learning is discussed. From our European consortium and literature, we will show examples of delivery workers' social initiatives that support OSH learning. Algorithmic management not only poses risks to OSH learning but also offer possibilities for it. Tools and practices enhancing OSH learning in new digitalized and fragmented work contexts are an important part of human and social sustainability.