

Comparative Perspectives on Supply Chain and Logistics Management: Insights from Business and Humanitarian Aid Organisations in Pakistan

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Abstract

Supply Chain Management (SCM) and Logistics Management (LM) are extensively studied fields; yet, their contextual clarification and practical differentiation remain inadequately explored, particularly in economically deprived and conflict-affected nations. This research addresses the theoretical challenge and examines the comprehension and implementation of SCM and LM in business and humanitarian relief companies in Pakistan, where economic and security factors are distinct and must be thoroughly considered. A qualitative research design was employed, utilising semi-structured interviews with six organisations (three business and three humanitarian aid organisations) within an interpretivist framework. The results suggest that, although both sectors are characterised by overlapping roles, i.e., efficiency, timeliness in delivery, and involvement of multiple stakeholders, the two sectors differ greatly in their strategic orientation and operational environment. Business organisations emphasize supply chain integration and long-term strategic planning, whereas Humanitarian Aid (HA) organisations prioritise responsiveness and adaptability to emergent needs. The study contributes to supply chain theory by contextualizing SCM and LM distinctions in a developing, conflict-prone setting of Pakistan and offers managerial insights to enhance sector-specific supply chain strategies under challenging conditions.

Keywords: Supply chain management, logistics management, humanitarian logistics, operational efficiency, disaster response, agility.

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1. Introduction

In the context of a growing complex network of suppliers, intermediaries and end users, Supply Chain Management (SCM) and Logistics Management (LM) are becoming key organizational capabilities to guarantee the continuous movement of goods, information and resources. Effective supply chain and logistics management are essential for any organization, whether commercial or humanitarian, to meet strategic goals and ensure business continuity, given the current globalized world, the rapid pace of technological advancement, geopolitical insecurity and evolving stakeholder demands. Though there is a close link between these two terms they may also be used almost interchangeably in practice, they have several significant differences in scope, strategic orientation and managerial intent.

SCM is basically defined as the strategic management of relationships within and between organizations to coordinate and integrate key business processes to create value for customers and other stakeholders (Cooper et al., 1997; Laseter & Oliver, 2003). It focuses on end-to-end integration, on-going cooperation, and connecting the activities in the organization with overall strategic goals like efficiency, responsiveness, and competitive advantage. LM takes a more specific approach to the planning, implementation and management of physical movement and storage of products and information. Core logistics activities encompass transportation, warehousing, inventory and handling, packaging, and order fulfilment (Schilleru, 2008). In this respect logistics is often perceived as an operational part of SCM.

The origins of logistics can be found in military operations, where the ability to mobilize and coordinate personnel, equipment, and supplies on time and on budget is crucial for mission success. Military logistics focused on the issues of disciplined planning, allocation of resources and activities under conditions of uncertainty; principles that are also applicable to commercial organizations to enhance operational efficiency and service reliability (Molana, 2009; Sarkar, 2007). With time, logistics became more than just a tactical tool focused on the issue of transport and warehousing, but more of a strategic tool. This development eventually led to SCM as an approach to supply chain management which is integrated and coordinated with all activities in the entire supply network (Zsidisin et al., 2020).



Effective SCM is no longer new in the commercial sector as it is well known to be a competitive advantage. SCI, strategic sourcing and collaborative planning cut costs, boost product availability, customer service and market performance. Organizations are also looking to increase their resilience and agility due to disrupted supplies, volatile demand and evolving regulations. Consequently, SCM has become more than just about efficiency, and it has become more strategic in terms of risk management, sustainability and innovation.

The humanitarian sector has also taken up SCM and LM as key tools to make disaster response and relief more effective and accountable. Humanitarian actors need to respond and reach people in need quickly, in contexts with poor infrastructure, shifting demand, lack of information, and competing actors with conflicting mandates. Logistics capabilities have an immediate impact on the speed and effectiveness at which relief is brought and, ultimately, on the ability to save lives and end human suffering in such situations (Dubey & Gunasekaran, 2015; Van der Laan et al., 2016). Although the basic concept of coordination and resource management is essentially the same, humanitarian supply chains are different in terms of goals, performance measures, and uncertainty of operations when compared with commercial supply chains.

Although there exists a large body of literature examining SCM and LM, there has been limited literature that attempts to systematically examine how these are conceptualized and applied across the two sectors, specifically in the developing country context. Previous research tends to focus on business supply chains or humanitarian logistics separately, and only a few studies consider practitioners' viewpoints on the boundaries between strategic supply chain management and operational logistics. Furthermore, a large share of the available literature relies on available data from more developed economies with different institutional environments, infrastructure quality and governance systems than fragile and emerging economies.

This study aims to fill this gap by performing a comparative qualitative analysis of business and humanitarian organizations in Pakistan. The context of this investigation is particularly relevant for Pakistan, where organizations from both sectors face severe logistical and institutional challenges, such as limited transport infrastructure, security problems, delays in the regulatory approval process, political instability and frequent humanitarian crises. These conditions set a



challenge for organizations that puts supply chain and logistic capacities at the center of organizational effectiveness and resilience.

The following study questions are used to guide the study:

- I. How do business and humanitarian organizations in Pakistan define Supply Chain Management?
- II. How do these organizations define Logistics Management?
- III. How is the conceptualization and operationalization of SCM and LM similar and different in the two sectors?

The study contributes to literature in several ways through the answers to the questions it poses. First, it offers one of the few comparative studies of SCM and LM in a single analytical framework, both in business and humanitarian organizations. Second, it builds upon the theory of supply chains by showing the contextual factors in a developing and institutionally limited environment influence the strategic and operational divisions between SCM and LM. Thirdly, it provides practical guidance for managers and policymakers aiming to improve the performance, coordination and resilience of their supply chains in complex contexts.

The results show that, despite the different nature of SCM and LM, the application of both is very dependent on the organization's goals and the surrounding environment. Business organizations place a very high value on strategic integration, profitability and customer satisfaction while humanitarian organizations value agility, reactivity and speed of mobilization of resources in a world of uncertainty. The findings indicate the similarities and contextual variations in supply chain and logistics practices.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Logistics Management as origin of Supply Chain Management

The origins of SCM can be traced back to LM, which has a long history in military operations. Historically, logistics focused on the movement, provisioning, and coordination of military personnel. It was critical in wartime because it ensured that troops on the front lines received weaponry, ammunition, food supplies, medical aid, and equipment on time. Kumar and Chia (2012) indicate that military logistics is developed to ensure that resources are delivered in an efficient manner to support combat preparedness and operational sustainability. The focus on



planning and coordination laid the groundwork of what contemporary LM. The initial comprehensive definition of logistics originated from the United States Department of Defense (DoD) in the 1950s. The DoD defines logistics as "the science of planning and carrying out the movement and maintenance of forces," which involves all necessary actions such as supply, repair, transportation, evacuations, and healthcare (Cooling, 2018). This definition highlighted logistics as an operational system (strategic and coordinated) that is needed during conflict as well as long-term operational preparedness. The protocols and organisational frameworks developed for military logistics were eventually adopted by the business sector, particularly after WWII, when global trade increased significantly. According to Sarkar (2007), the term "logistics" gradually entered corporate vocabulary and was used to refer to the transportation and storage of goods in business operations. Thus, Logistics evolved from a tactical military function to a strategic business tool, leading to the development of SCM as an integrated management technique for coordinating supply networks.

2.2. Transition from Logistics Management to Supply chain Management

LM transition from a military-originated discipline to a major component in modern business operations is one of the most significant academic transitions in management studies history. The high level of coordination and discipline required in military logistics operations served as a model for businesses. According to Zsidisin et al. (2020), the structured and mission-oriented character of military logistics laid the foundation for commercial sectors to take comparable approaches to managing uncertainty, complexity, and supply throughput. Businesses began to adapt comparable military logistics ideas, to better manage their increasing supply networks. As industries grew, the need for dependable systems to coordinate production, inventory, distribution, and customer support became essential. Logistics principles such as flow synchronisation, allocation of resources planning, and Professional organisations served to further institutionalise logistics in commercial setup. Walmart, based in the United States, is an example of how cross-docking, centralised distribution, and real-time inventory management transformed retail logistics. These improvements enabled Walmart to reduce expenses while improving service standards across its extensive retail network (Schileru, 2008). Similarly, DHL, based in Germany, established a global standard for logistics excellence. It set new standards in global logistics and supply chain



coordination by continually investing in digital technology and optimizing global networks (Yaroslavceva & Anisimova, 2022).

2.3. Definition of Supply chain Management in business at an early stage.

The term SCM was created by a consultant at Booz Allen Hamilton, Keith Oliver, in 1982, and it changed the way companies used to deal with operations and logistics (Ashcroft, 2022). In an interview with the Financial Times, Oliver described SCM as an end-to-end process that involves planning and management of all activities connected to sourcing, procurement, production, and logistics and coordination with channel partners (suppliers, intermediaries, third-party service providers, and customers). His idea switched the attention in terms of controlling the internal logistical activities towards managing a network of related organisations with the aim of enhancing value creation, agility, and efficiency throughout the supply chain network (Cooper, Lambert, and Pagh, 1997). Oliver's concept provided a more strategic viewpoint that aligned with all components of the supply chain, its business purposes, and customer expectations. Greater visibility, accountability, and competitiveness in the international markets were achieved as organisations started adopting this approach. The early vision of Oliver led to the fact that SCM is becoming a crucial business discipline that has impacted on the nature of the way modern organisations develop and manage supply networks in a world that is increasingly becoming interconnected (Laseter & Oliver, 2003).

2.4. Logistics Management and SCM interpretation in humanitarian sector.

A long-established concept of LM and SCM in the business sector started gaining popularity among HA sector to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of disaster response and relief efforts (Altay et al., 2023). This has changed because humanitarian organisations experience severe logistical problems that are no less than business sector. The problems that HA organisations have to deal with are highly unpredictable and involve variable risks (Beresford & Pettit, 2019). Over the past two decades, relief organisations have gradually implemented SCM concepts to meet rising expectations for accountability, transparency, and speed in aid delivery (Jayadi, 2024; Khan et al., 2019). In the business realm, SCM focusses on cost-effectiveness, profitability, and customer happiness. However, in the HA sector, the focus shifts to saving lives, reducing human suffering, and responding quickly to catastrophes. Despite the differences in end aims, many of the



underlying logistics principles remain unchanged. Humanitarian supply chain (HSC) handles the movement of goods, information, and services from donors to recipients, frequently in remote, insecure, or disaster-prone areas (Day et al., 2012). Researchers have demonstrated that implementing business supply chain (BSC) strategies such as demand forecasting, agile logistics, and lean inventory management can significantly improve the performance of humanitarian operations (Van der Laan et al., 2016).

Events such as the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, the 2010 Haiti earthquake, and the COVID-19 pandemic revealed substantial inefficiencies in disaster response systems (Aydin & Cetinkale, 2023). These instances prompted humanitarian organisations to implement more structured logistics methods, many of which were influenced by their business counterparts. Humanitarian organisations today recognise the need of investing in trained logistics specialists, technology infrastructure, and supply prepositioning to ensure speedy deployment during catastrophes. Jyoti and Gill (2012) underline that, although the degree of uncertainty in humanitarian situations, such as the location of the crisis, the time, and the availability of resources, are unknown, much of the SCM commercial principles still apply to address the limitations in their operations. Recent studies have explored the variations of the skills needed in BSC and HSC. Davtyan et al. (2024) have found that, in spite of the fact that commercial supply chains are focused on technical and IT-related competencies, HSC is based on functional logistics competencies and flexibility to rapidly evolving situations. This often means that humanitarian professionals need more extensive skills and increased operational flexibility. Collaboration and collaboration is another important difference. In contrast to supply chains of business organisations which are often centrally controlled and competition-based, HSC generally involve many actors, such as non-governmental organisations (NGOs), government, donors, and military. These institutions are essential in coordinating their efforts to prevent duplication of work and equitable delivery of aid to disaster victims. Cozzolino (2012) emphasises the complex nature of HSCM, in which many actors must coordinate their logistics activities in the face of great urgency and resource constraint.

2.5. Theoretical Base: Dynamic Capability Theory

DCT is useful in explaining how an organization can develop flexible competencies to help it responding to disruptions and move beyond traditional logistical functions (Dubey et al., 2023;



Akram et al., 2024). Dynamic capabilities such as digital adaptability, agility, visibility, collaboration and resource reconfiguration have been found important for supply chain resilience. The rapid mobilization of workforce, assets, information, transportation, and local partners is particularly essential for humanitarian organisations during crisis situations. Since BSC theories are not always readily relevant to humanitarian contexts, DCT is also useful for understanding HSCs. Humanitarian operations are distinguished from their business counterpart by unpredictable demand, disrupted infrastructure, donor fatigue, time limitation and a diverse array of stakeholders, including government departments, non-governmental organisations, armed forces, suppliers. Recent research indicates that dynamic skills such as digital flexibility, agility, visibility, collaboration, and resource reconfiguration are critical for supply chain resilience. For humanitarian agencies in crisis circumstances, the rapid mobilization of manpower, assets, information, transportation and local partners is particularly critical. DCT is particularly important for understanding HSCs because BSC ideas are not always easily applied to humanitarian contexts. Humanitarian operations are different from corporate operations due to uncertain demand, interrupted infrastructure, donor fatigue, time limitations and a varied range of stakeholders such as government departments, non-governmental organizations, military forces, suppliers,

2.6. The conceptual distinction between supply chain management and logistics management

Since SCM and logistics management LM are often used interchangeably in, particularly in developing and crisis-prone nations, a clear conceptual separation between the two is important, which is addressed in this study. However, the literature reveals that logistics is widely regarded as a part of SCM, and SCM refers to a broader, more strategic, and inter-organisational approach. LM is the management of movement, storage, handling, transportation, warehousing, inventory control and delivery of goods, services and information. Logistics is largely operational and aims to ensure that the right things get to the right place at the right time, in the best condition, and at a reasonable cost. Logistics is of even greater importance in humanitarian settings because delays in transit, warehousing, customs clearance or last-mile delivery can have direct impact on aid relief operations. It is essential to make sure the right things are delivered to the right place at the right time in perfect condition and at a reasonable cost. Delays in transit, warehousing, customs



clearance or last-mile delivery can have a direct impact on people's survival and welfare. Köstepen and Selim (2025) indicate the close relation of humanitarian logistics with disaster risk management, particularly in the areas of decision making, transportation, facility location, inventory management and distribution planning. SCM is a wider concept than LM and it involves many organisations, processes and people. SCM involves purchasing, supplier relationships, demand forecasting, coordination of activities, information exchange, risk minimization, collaboration, performance measurement and decision-making. Recent systematic reviews show SCM as a unified field that connects the internal functioning of organisations with external suppliers and partners to increase organisational efficiency and effectiveness SCM includes purchasing, supplier relationships, demand forecasting, synchronization of activities, information sharing, risk minimization, partnering, performance measurement and decision making. Studies have described SCM as integrated field that links the internal functioning of an organization with external suppliers and partners (Gera et al., 2022; Sinoimeri & Teta, 2024). The distinction is especially relevant to Pakistan's business and humanitarian spheres. LM is generally known as transport, warehousing, distribution and inventory control in commercial companies while SCM is defined as supplier integration, procurement planning, technology application, risk reduction and customer service performance. LM within humanitarian groups might comprise of emergency transport, relief warehousing, fleet management, and last-mile delivery whereas SCM could include donor coordination, needs assessment, purchasing, multidisciplinary collaboration, local supplier mobilization, and beneficiary-focused planning.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study employs a qualitative multiple-case study design based on the interpretivist research paradigm to study how Supply Chain Management and Logistics Management are conceptualized and operationalized in business and humanitarian organizations in Pakistan. The interpretivist paradigm is especially relevant when the research aims to understand the meanings, perceptions and live experiences of professionals working in supply chain and LM functions rather than testing pre-determined hypotheses or quantifying relationships between variables (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A qualitative approach was chosen for this research, given that the concepts of SCM and



LM are often understood differently. The literature has shown considerable historical, strategic and operational differences between LM and SCM in business and humanitarian setup (Altay et al., 2023; Davtyan et al., 2024; Kumar & Chia, 2012; Sarkar, 2007). Semi-structured interviews were considered the most suitable for acquiring data from the selected employees as this method allows capturing both explicit definitions and implicit interpretations.

The study is based on a multiple-case study of six organizations. This allows for systematic comparison across cases, and for the identification of patterns, similarities and differences between business and humanitarian sectors. The use of multiple cases enables analytical generalization and offers deeper insights as to how the distinction between SCM and LM is shaped by the organizational context. This is particularly relevant in the context of Pakistan. The country has a number of complex logistical and institutional challenges, such as infrastructure constraints, security issues, regulatory delays, and regular humanitarian emergencies. These contextual realities provide an important context for understanding how supply chain and logistics practices are adapted under conditions of uncertainty and lack of resources.

3.2. Sampling Strategy

Participants were purposively sampled based on direct and substantial experience in supply chain and LM. This technique is highly advocated in qualitative research where the goal is to get information-rich cases that can deliver deep and contextually grounded insights instead of statistically representative results (Campbell et al., 2020; Ketokivi and Choi, 2014). The sample is comprised of six organizations, equally divided between the two sectors under investigation:

- Business sector: Manufacturing and commercial activities of three organizations.
- Humanitarian sector: Three organizations involved in relief and humanitarian assistance activities.

One senior professional from each of the organizations was interviewed. Participants were in positions directly related to procurement, logistics, supply chain coordination or operations management. The selection criteria for respondents were:

- i. Have experience working in SCM or logistics related functions.



- ii. Understand the strategic and operational processes in their organization.
- iii. Have appropriate decision-making responsibility to precisely reflect organizational practices.

The choice of six cases was purposeful, consistent with qualitative multiple-case study methodology. Its aim was analytical depth and theoretical insight rather than broad statistical generalization. Qualitative research is usually based on smaller samples, especially when access to knowledgeable informants is challenging and when the focus is on a detailed understanding of complex organizational phenomena. The rationale for a narrow sample is even more evident in the humanitarian sector due to access restrictions, confidentiality issues and the nature of relief operations which are not always predictable.

3.3. Data Collection Procedure

The primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews with one representative from each organization. Semi-structured interviews provide a middle ground between consistency of approach across cases and flexibility to explore new themes and sector-related views. Every interview was conducted face to face or online depending on the availability and preference of the participant and lasted 45-60 minutes. The purpose of the investigation was explained to the participants before each interview was conducted and they were reassured that their responses would be kept confidential and data collected will be used only for academic research. Participants gave consent for their interviews to be audiotaped and transcribed verbatim for accuracy. Field notes were also taken during interviews to document contextual observations and initial analytic reflections Data collection was discontinued once satisfactory level of thematic consistency was obtained across the six cases.

To protect confidentiality of the participants, all organizations were anonymized and allocated identifiers ranging from Organization A to Organization F. Organizations A, B and C are business firms and Organizations D, E and F are humanitarian aid organizations.

3.4. Interview Protocol



The interview protocol sought the conceptual understanding and practical application of SCM and LM from the perspective of participants. The protocol included three main open-ended questions:

1. What is Supply Chain Management?
2. What is Logistics Management?
3. What similarities and differences exist between Supply Chain Management and Logistics Management in your view?

These questions were based on the literature about the historical development of logistics and supply chain management and their use in business and humanitarian contexts (Kumar & Chia, 2012; Sarkar, 2007). Where essential, follow-up questions were used to clarify responses and explore specific issues such as:

- Operational rather than strategic responsibilities.
- Performance goals.
- Coordination of stakeholders.
- Uncertainty and risks in the environment.
- Sector-specific operational issues in Pakistan.

The open-ended format enabled the participants to express their own understandings as well as giving the researcher the opportunity to probe for deeper meanings and contextual subtleties.

3.5. Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the interview data. Thematic analysis follows a six-step approach as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). This technique is particularly useful for finding, structuring and interpreting recurring patterns in qualitative data.

The analysis was carried out in the following steps:

- i. Familiarization: Reading and re-reading transcripts to develop an overall understanding of the data.
- ii. Initial Coding: Developing descriptive codes for meaningful text segments.
- iii. Theme development: Grouping similar codes.
- iv. Themes Review Comparison of themes across cases & refinement of their boundaries.



- v. Theme Definition: Clearly define and naming each theme.
- vi. Interpretation: Establishing relationships between themes to existing theory and literature.

A comparative analytical approach was used to examine similarities and differences between business and humanitarian organizations. The analysis concentrated on recurring themes. This approach allowed a structured comparison of how SCM and LM are understood and applied across different organizational settings.

3.6. Trustworthiness and Ethics

To increase the trustworthiness of the study, multiple approaches were used based on Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria for qualitative research. Semi-structured interviews, verbatim transcription and direct quotations from participants were used to support key findings and strengthen reliability. The data were subject to iterative analysis with raw responses being compared with emerging themes repeatedly to ensure the findings remained close to the actual views of participants. Findings were transferable because the context of the research, characteristics of participants, and analytical procedures were described in detail, allowing extent to which findings are applicable to other developing country contexts. Dependability was established through a transparent methodological process including adequate documentation of interview guides, coding procedures and analytical decisions. Confirmability was achieved by relating interpretations to participants.

4. Analysis and findings

Table 1: Comparative Definitions of Supply Chain and Logistics in Business and Humanitarian Organisations.

Organization Type	Organization	Definition of Supply Chain	Definition of Logistics	Similarities and Differences
Business	Organization-A	A supply chain is our integrated network involving suppliers, manufacturers,	Logistics refers to managing transportation, inventory,	Similarities: Both focus on efficiency and customer satisfaction.



		warehouses, and distributors, optimised for profitability and customer satisfaction.	warehousing, and timely delivery to customers, aiming for cost-efficiency.	Differences: SCM is strategic and holistic; logistics is operational.
Business	Organization-B	Our supply chain encompasses strategic sourcing, production scheduling, and customer fulfillment processes that ensure competitive advantage.	Logistics for us involves detailed operational management, particularly transport and storage, crucial for product availability and reliability.	Similarities: Both involve product availability and reliability. Differences: SCM includes strategic sourcing and planning, logistics is limited to operational execution.
Business	Organization-C	Supply chain is about end-to-end visibility and coordination across all processes from sourcing raw materials to product delivery to consumers.	Logistics primarily deals with executing transportation, storage, and handling of products efficiently.	Similarities: Emphasis on product delivery efficiency. Differences: SCM offers end-to-end process visibility; logistics focuses on executional efficiency.
Humanitarian	Organization-D	Our supply chain includes all activities	Logistics means organizing timely and	Similarities: Both emphasize timely



		from resource mobilization, procurement, and distribution to beneficiaries, ensuring rapid aid delivery.	safe transportation, storage, and distribution of relief supplies in unpredictable and challenging environments.	aid delivery. Differences: SCM involves overall resource mobilization and procurement; logistics is specific to operational handling in emergencies.
Humanitarian	Organization-E	SCM involves coordinating resources, including funding and goods, from donors through to affected populations in crisis zones.	Logistics for us is the operational backbone of disaster response, ensuring supplies arrive at the right location at the right time.	Similarities: Coordination and timely response. Differences: SCM covers strategic coordination including funding; logistics is strictly operational.
Humanitarian	Organization-F	Our supply chain covers the integrated planning and management of humanitarian aid from procurement to final distribution to communities in need.	Logistics refers to the operational tasks of transport, warehousing, and delivery, crucial for immediate and effective humanitarian response.	Similarities: Importance of effective distribution. Differences: SCM is strategic and integrative; logistics focuses specifically on

				tactical operations and execution.
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Table 1. shows the analysis of the conceptualisation of SCM and LM in business and humanitarian organisations in Pakistan. In both sectors, SCM is always defined as a strategic, integrative model that covers long-term, end-to-end processes like procurement, coordination, and mobilisation of resources with the objective of concentrating on long-term efficiency and effect. On the contrary, the operational part of SCM is called logistics, which is concerned with performing tasks related to transportation, warehousing, and delivery, to guarantee the service is timely and reliable. Although these two sectors have common objectives like efficiency, reliability, and responsiveness, their differences are in scope and orientation. SCM deals with the overall strategic planning and cross functional coordination, whereas LM deals with day-to-day operations. Humanitarian organisations also emphasise logistics as important to manoeuvre in unstable environments and focus on responsiveness when uncertain.

4.1. Conceptual Definitions

The analysis revealed consistency in the definition of business firms and they all highlighted that SCM is an integrated, strategic network comprising of procurement, production scheduling, and customer satisfaction. The definition of Organisation A was based on the profitability and customer satisfaction, Organisation B's definition was based on the competitive advantage through strategic sourcing and fulfilling procedures and Organisation C's definition was driven by transparency and coordination of all the stages of operations. This is strongly connected with the foundational definition of SCM (Oliver & Webber, 1982) as an integrated management approach enhancing organisational agility, efficiency and value creation. Humanitarian organisations, in contrast, positioned SCM more directly around the mobilisation and allocation of the donors to recipient resources with the overall objective of providing relief swiftly and efficiently in emergencies (Altay et al., 2023). Organisation D, for instance, gave priority to procurement and quick relief distribution, Organisation E prioritised on resource coordination, finance flows and Organisation F work on integrated planning and distribution. This difference of focus is the



strategic and integrative role of SCM in a business context, as compared to the critical role it plays in humanitarian contexts that demand flexibility and adaptation.

The business world has always defined logistics as process, involving the transportation, inventory, warehousing, and timely delivery of goods to guarantee reliability and availability of the products. Organisation A focused on the cost-efficiency of operations, Organisation B focused on transportation and storage, and Organisation C focused on efficiency in storage and handling activities. These ideas are close to the initial operational definitions of logistics in the middle of the twentieth century that focused on tactical efficiency in transportation and warehousing (Schileru, 2008). The humanitarian organisations, however, defined logistics as being characterised by a high level of operational urgency, where timely and safe shipment, warehousing and distribution of relief supplies in a situation of uncertainty are important. Organisation D particularly emphasised on operations logistics in calamities, Organisation E focused on logistics as the operational basis that facilitates rapid response in disaster and Organisation F focused on the criticality of operational execution in the effective humanitarian response. This operational urgency fits in with literature showing the humanitarian logistics need for operational flexibility and agility in rapidly shifting situations of emergency (Davtyan et al., 2024).

4.2. Similarities across Sectors

Despite sector-specific variations, there were similarities, particularly in operational performance, customer satisfaction within the business sector, and the prompt delivery of aid in the humanitarian sector. Both sectors stressed efficiency as an essential aspect of logistics, showing a well-known LM concept that applies regardless of setting. Business's centred on prompt delivery to boost consumer satisfaction, but humanitarian organisations emphasised rapid distribution as critical to saving lives. Thus, both sectors rely largely on efficiency in logistics, implying that transferable skills, habits, and strategic perspectives could improve performance in different settings. Furthermore, both sectors acknowledged the importance of strong collaboration, although it manifested differently. Business sector highlighted integrated cooperation for competitive advantage and profitability. In humanitarian contexts, however, coordination requires broader multi-stakeholder management, which includes NGOs, governments, and donors and is critical for maximising resource allocation during disasters. As a result, coordination emerges as



an essential shared skill across industries, with distinctions primarily based on scope and complexity rather than fundamental importance.

4.3. Differences across Sectors

The operating environments, risk management, and strategic objectives are the primary areas in which the key distinctions have been identified. Business organisations put a strong focus on profitability, customer satisfaction, competitive positioning, and they used logistics to deliver operational cost effectiveness and reliability without compromising on reliability. This shows that the classical SCM ideas focus on controlling costs, optimising inventory, and strategic vision in the stable environment (Zsidisin et al., 2020). Conversely, humanitarian organisations operate in environments that are dynamic and uncertain and they value the ability to act promptly, be mobile in their operations and adapt to the changing environment. The notable features of humanitarian logistics were urgency, unpredictability, and high stakes operations in emergency environments. These features were indicative of more general industry-specific problems, including security threats, lack of clarity in resource availability, and stakeholder divergent demands. The focus that Organisation D placed on Logistics in the face of unforeseen emergency conditions brings to light the operational challenges that are particularly prevalent in the humanitarian sector. Therefore, the essential distinctions are not just a result of strategic orientation, but also of environmental factors that are unique to the setting and have an effect on operational practices and strategic alignment of the organisation.

4.4. Application for the SCM Theory and Practice.

The results of the study provide important insights into SCM theory and practice, and specifically, the operational environment of Pakistan. Although the given research confirms the existing practice of distinguishing between the strategic outlook of SCM and operational role of logistics (Cooper et al., 1997; Zsidisin et al., 2020; Maatar et al., 2022; Ashcroft, 2022; Laseter and Oliver, 2003), it also shows that the regional environment, including socio-economic environment of Pakistan requires special changes, especially in the HSCM, where speed, risk management, and responsiveness of operations are prioritised over conventional business issues, such as profitability and efficiency. The comparative analysis shows that although the two sectors have key areas of



operations, such as timely delivery and the coordination of resources, there are unique strategic objectives that arise due to external influences. This uniqueness makes managing supply chains challenging, with the importance of situational-based tactics rather than generalised beliefs. Practically, such findings require specific training and capacity-building efforts that capture local realities of operations, which can result in enhanced cooperation among various stakeholders including the government, NGOs and the private sector.

Moreover, the results suggest that there is a great possibility of cross-sectoral collaboration in the region. Structured logistics methods applied in business may be highly useful to HA organisations, whereas businesses could enhance their adaptability by introducing the measures of humanitarian risk mitigation and disaster preparedness. This difference contributes to existing SCM literature and promotes the use of regionally efficient methods, which can be of great guidance to both policymakers and practitioners who aim at enhancing the efficiency and responsiveness of the supply chain in such equally complicated and challenging situations.

4.5. Future Research Directions

The comparative study may be extended in future research with the other geographical regions that would permit further generalisability and capture the local changes in settings that affect supply chain and logistics processes. Future studies may involve quantitative or mixed methods and explore larger samples to statistically confirm qualitative results. Research on sector-specific issues, including what has changed with the adoption of digital technology, infrastructural implications, or regulatory implications in various provinces, would provide more information. Furthermore, investigating the effectiveness of cross-sectoral transfer of knowledge through empirical interventions or case studies could provide practical frameworks for strengthening humanitarian logistics by utilising commercial strategies, and vice versa, leading to more integrated and resilient supply chain practices.



5. Conclusion

This study compares the concept and application of Supply Chain Management (SCM) with Logistics Management (LM) in business and humanitarian organizations in Pakistan. The results are based on qualitative evidence gathered from six organizations, and they validate the concept that SCM and LM are interrelated but different constructs. For both sectors, SCM is always defined as a strategic process and an integration process that combines suppliers, internal processes and external stakeholders to achieve the overall goals of the organization. The operational side of the whole Supply Chain is considered as LM and includes transportation and logistics, warehousing, inventory control and distribution which deliver goods and resources in an efficient and timely fashion.

The study shows that there is a strategic–operational dimension in both sectors, but also that the purpose and the way SCM and LM is carried out is significantly influenced by organizational objectives and environmental conditions. In the business world, supply chain activities are mostly focused on profit maximization, cost efficiency, customer satisfaction and competitive advantage. In contrast, humanitarian organizations focus on responsiveness, flexibility and rapid resource mobilization in order to save lives and reduce human suffering in highly uncertain, resource-constrained environments. The results confirm the perception of the capabilities required in the supply chain, which depend on the environment in which organizations are situated and the strategic goals they wish to pursue.

This study is significant in many ways, one of which is emphasizing the role of institutional and logistical environment of Pakistan in the supply chain and logistics practices in various sectors. While business organizations and humanitarian groups expressed that transport infrastructure, regulatory processes, political instability, security, lack of inter-institutional coordination and resource constraints were significant issues impacting operational performance, the challenges were also similar. These context-specific factors reinforce the need for supply chain strategies that are adaptive, resilient, and context-sensitive, especially in a developing economy with low institutional capacity and frequent disruptions.



Theoretically, it builds on the previous literature by examining the difference between SCM and LM in a developing and conflictual environment. The results confirm the main premise of Contingency Theory: that organizational arrangement changes based on the degree of uncertainty in the environment and the institutional context. They are also consistent with the Resource Based View as they show that the ability to coordinate, agile and integrate stakeholders are also valuable resources that will add value in terms of effectiveness in an organization in both commercial and humanitarian environments.

Besides its importance as research, there are practical implications to the study. The results highlight the need for managers in the business sector to incorporate strategic supply chain planning into operational logistics execution to enhance competitiveness and resilience. The findings underscore the importance of improving the logistics preparedness, inter-agency cooperation and adaptive capacity of humanitarian practitioners in order to prepare for and respond to emergencies successfully. These learnings can guide policy-makers in enhancing infrastructure, simplifying regulations, and enhancing the ability of public agencies, private sector companies and humanitarian organizations to work together.

Although the study contributes, there are some limitations. The analysis does not rely on the authority of a large random sample of organizations, but on a relatively small sample of organizations that were selected purposefully which may not be statistically representative. However, the multiple case qualitative approach yields in-depth and rich case-specific interpretations that allow for analytical generalization. Future studies could draw on this work and could include cross country comparisons, mixed-methods, and larger samples in order to better explore the interaction between SCM and LM and the influence of institutional and environmental factors.

Finally, this paper shows that whilst conceptually and operationally SCM and LM are different, their successful integration is vital for the performance of organizations in both business and humanitarian environments. The research provides comparative insights into supply chain theory and practice and offers recommendations to enhance the supply chain resilience in complex and uncertain environments, by bringing a perspective from Pakistan.



Conflict of interest

Authors have no conflict of interest

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Data Availability

All the data is available in the manuscript. And the datasets used and or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Authors contributions

All authors have contributed to various sections of this manuscript.



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