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# Humanitarian logistics supply chain management framework: a literature review

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**Abstract.** The increasing intensity of disasters worldwide has also increased the number of humanitarian supply chain management (HLSCM) studies. However, a literature review study on the "Humanitarian Logistics Supply Chain Management Framework" has never been conducted. Therefore, this study aims to identify the frameworks produced in the context of HLSCM through a traditional literature review. Using a traditional literature review and thematic analysis, this study examines 15 pieces of literature from the Journal of Humanitarian Logistics and Supply Chain Management (JHLSCM). The results of the review indicate that previous studies have examined the HLSCM framework in three main themes: Framework for planning and Preparedness in HLSCM, Framework for responding to the disaster in HLSCM, and Framework for enhancing performance and coordination between the actors in HLSCM. This study also identifies research gaps in the HLSCM framework and recommends future research in the field of mitigation framework.

**Keywords:** Humanitarian Logistics, Literature Review, HLSCM Framework

## 1. Introduction

Logistics has traditionally been a critical component of humanitarian assistance, linking preparation and response, procurement and distribution, and headquarters and field operations [1]. On the other hand, Humanitarian Logistics (HL) is defined as "the process of planning, managing, implementing, and controlling the efficient and cost-effective movement and storage of relief supplies, along with associated information and funds, from the point of origin (suppliers and donors) to the point of consumption to meet the needs of the ultimate beneficiaries" [2]. The importance of HL lies in its response to disasters, which severely impact infrastructure, disrupt supply chains, and affect the profitability and performance of companies [3], [4].

HL encompasses various activities, including needs assessment, procurement, resource mobilization, transportation, warehousing, and short-haul distribution. These logistics activities can account for up to 80% of the total cost of humanitarian assistance [5]. Therefore, good logistics management is needed in operating HL because of its crucial role in reducing human suffering. Humanitarian logistics management (HLM) is a particular branch of operations management [6], [7].



HL and HLM studies in humanitarian aid operations overlap with Humanitarian Supply Chain Management (HSCM) studies. The Council of Supply Chain Management Professionals (CSCMP) outlines that HSCM is a management plan for activities, including procurement and logistics management, with parallel coordination with channel partners [8]. While responding to emergencies, HSCM concentrates on victims and supplies that exhibit an erratic demand pattern. After the disaster, the demand would be determined quickly because the type and quantity of relief differed widely. Ensuring that human lives can be preserved even with limited natural resources is a crucial goal of HSCM, which focuses on natural disasters [5], [9]–[11].

HL and HSCM are closely related to logistics distribution. Therefore, researchers in the humanitarian field combine it with the term Humanitarian Logistics and Supply Chain Management (HLSCM) [12]. In its operation, HLSCM often faces many challenges. These include escalating conflicts, population vulnerability due to climate change, and the increasing frequency of natural disasters worldwide [13]–[15]. The phenomenon of disasters and their challenges that are developing throughout the world have increased studies in the form of literature reviews in the field of HLSCM [12], [16]–[27]. On average, previous studies review literature related to problems in HLSCM.

Previous studies have yet to focus their attention on frameworks developed in the HLSCM field. Therefore, this study aims to identify frameworks produced in the context of HLM through a traditional literature review. The urgency lies in several things. First, this study's findings will provide additional insight into publishing trends within the HLM framework. Second, this study helps map the research gap from previous research to produce recommendations for future research.

## 2. Methodology

This study uses a literature review approach to achieve its objectives, namely, to identify the fundamental structure of the subject or issue from previous research to find research gaps. Literature reviews help researchers define and map the subject of study fairly and keep them abreast of developments in the field [20], [21], [28]. This study uses a traditional literature review type, defined as a critical and objective analysis of a research topic [29]. A traditional literature review provides an interpretation of existing public relations. It aims to discover the relationships between the context of the studies and their contribution to the field and other studies. Finally, traditional literature reviews can help researchers find gaps in knowledge. Traditional narrative literature review only requires reviewing relevant studies without requiring specific literature search procedures [28], [30].

However, this method follows a six-stage review process [31]. Stage 1 involves formulating a research question to define the problem. In this study, the research question is, "What frameworks have been produced in HLSCM studies?". Next, stage 2 involves searching for literature to be included in the review. This study uses the electronic database Scopus with the search terms "Humanitarian" AND "Logistics" AND "Supply" AND "Chain" AND "Management" AND "Framework". The year of publication is limited between 2014 and 2024, and the document type is limited to "article." Furthermore, the source title is limited to "Journal of Humanitarian Logistics and Supply Chain Management (JHLSCM)." The justification is that JHLSCM is an international journal that focuses on HLSCM studies. The decision to limit the literature review to Journal JHLSCM was informed by its status as the leading publication in the field. This journal is renowned for its stringent peer-review process and focuses on disseminating the most up-to-date and

impactful research in Humanitarian Logistics. The literature search results found 15 articles to be reviewed.

Stage 3 involves selecting the studies that will be reviewed. The review process for this study included 15 articles. Stage 4 involves carefully reading the literature and thoroughly understanding the entire article. Stage 5 is organizing the data according to the specified theme. The 15 articles reviewed are organized according to the specified themes. The last stage is stage 6, which is thematically writing the review. Thematic analysis is popular among qualitative researchers and is defined as identifying, analyzing, and presenting patterns in texts as themes [32]. Using topic grouping, thematic evaluation of the literature allows researchers to draw attention to the issues often studied. In this study, thematic literature can be categorized according to the framework produced in the HLSCM field.

### 3. Literature Review

This section presents the results of the review of several articles that have been obtained. The analysis was guided by grouping article themes based on the framework previous researchers had produced in the HLSCM. The three themes determined are the Framework for Planning and Preparedness in HLSCM, the framework for responding to disaster in HLSCM, and the framework for enhancing performance and coordination between actors in HLSCM.

#### *3.1 Framework for planing and Preparednes in HLSCM*

According to [33], preparedness is the ability to apply the appropriate mechanisms in reaction to causes that societies have been unable to reduce. It also focuses on the strategy needed to enable the successful execution of operational response. During the preparation stage, everyone involved must work to reduce any unfavorable effects before the crisis occurs. Put another way, they prepare quickly by going over each situation and deciding how they will react during a crisis. In the meantime, during a disaster, all parties are involved in the response phase, which entails providing relief and other necessary steps.

Of the 15 articles reviewed, 3 were concerned with the framework for planning and preparation. [34] focused on producing a framework for aid procurement using a multi-attribute combinatorial auction. They also propose a two-round programming model with demand updates for post-disaster procurement. The model divides the post-disaster horizon into three periods, enabling a mixed procurement strategy for each period.

In the context of planning, [35] modified the European Flood Emergency Management System (FEMS), which contains a seven-dimensional framework to assess a country's preparedness for flood emergencies. The FEMS framework was modified to be applied to earthquakes using a multiple explanatory case study approach and data analysis. They reconstructed earthquake events in Pakistan (2005) and Japan (2011) with an applied ranking (1-5). The adopted framework found that Pakistan did not have a contingency plan before the 2005 earthquake. In contrast, Japan had a contingency plan before the disaster, which helped minimize casualties. The framework developed by the researchers ultimately enables practitioners to have a structured basis for prioritizing actions on the ground.

Another study was conducted by [36], which explored the link between humanitarian logistics (HL) and supply chain risk management (SCRM) to understand risk mitigation strategies used by humanitarian organizations to improve their logistics preparedness. A framework is developed based on systematic reviews of RMS in SCRM and supply chain strategies in HL literature. The framework identifies strategies for strategic stocks, postponement, and

collaboration but lacks strategies for sourcing and procurement, particularly on supplier relationships. The findings can help practitioners identify potential new supply chain strategies (SCS) and combine strategies to understand abnormal risks and address trade-offs between different risks. The results can support improvements in humanitarian supply chains, providing rapid, cost-efficient, and better-adapted responses to affected people.

### *3.2 Framework for responding to disaster in HLSCM*

Only 3 previous studies discussed the theme of a framework for responding to disasters. The various actions taken right away after a disaster are referred to as the response stage. This includes actions taken right away in the event of an emergency or disaster. Allocating resources, services, and emergency responders to the affected area should be the aim of response measures [15], [37]. Globally, disasters are becoming more frequent and severe, and HLSCM needs to be ready to react quickly.

In the emergency response phase, [38] produced a framework for optimizing food aid during disasters. To do so, it investigates customer food aid preferences and strategies for optimizing soup kitchen offerings. The study uses a personalized survey to assign preference scores, identify critical determinants, and categorize food items by customer preferences. Based on customer preferences, soup kitchen food weight and type restrictions, and an optimization algorithm, these rankings are then used to recommend the best combination of food products to store. According to the survey, customers prefer fresh and frozen foods over perishables; the main determinants of this preference are gender, age, and religion. These choices are fed into an optimization model. Although this study focuses on a specific food bank network, other food aid supply chains could benefit from the framework and accompanying optimization model by offering a unique decision support system for soup kitchen managers.

Furthermore, [39] revisited a framework of global events and their cascading impacts to include non-linearities and multiple disruptions from evolutionary disasters such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, [40] provided a framework for managing humanitarian supply chain operations in future disasters. The study highlighted the influence of humanitarian actor training and integrated management on the efficiency of individual humanitarian operations. However, the nature of these operations makes it impossible to assume they are free from challenges.

### *3.3 Framework for enhancing performance and coordination between actor in HLSCM*

Coordination has been reported as a primary issue in the humanitarian supply chain. [41] stated that the complex operating conditions of humanitarian action require a collaborative and coordinated effort from various stakeholders, including humanitarian aid organizations, local governments, domestic and foreign non-governmental organizations (NGOs), donors, the military, and those impacted.

The literature review results show that this area has received much attention from 9 reviewers. They highlight a valuable framework for enhancing performance and coordination between actors in HLSCM. [42] produced a framework that promotes coordination and trust among partners in humanitarian operations. The study also attempts to understand the Swift Trust (ST) phenomenon among rapidly formed logistics partners and resource management in such situations. Hence, a research framework has been developed for empirical testing and offers an exciting dimension for investigating Resource Management (RM) under Rapidly Formed Network (HFN) and Rapid Response Logistics (RRL) scenarios. The study supports that

information sharing (IS) is critical to reducing behavioral uncertainty. The study also reveals that when partners in HFN become more informed and aware of the situation, it will reduce uncertainty and help promote ST among partners, which is one of the most essential factors in engaging RRL partners effectively. Trust drives RRL partners to enhance their commitment and coordination with better utilization of resources to complete relief work, which is the ultimate goal of any RRL.

On the other hand, [43] proposes a framework for crafting case study research in humanitarian logistics (HL) based on an analysis of published case study-based research. The study classifies and compares the use of case studies in HL research, focusing on criteria such as purpose, data type, and analysis type. Findings reveal a lack of rigor in case study design, particularly regarding the chain of evidence and frameworks for rationale and analysis. The framework comprises four "check questions" that help researchers craft a case study. Practical implications include providing practitioners with a better understanding of case studies in HL research, helping them call for and evaluate such studies in their organizations, and offering an initial framework for conducting case studies in HL.

Other researchers, such as [44], did not produce a specific framework. However, they used frameworks, literature, and interview results to discuss the challenges of disaster planning and response in a multi-agency context involving government and non-government actors. This includes the challenge of achieving coordinated supply chain management, where mandated agencies must meet the expectations of stakeholders and local communities. Based on the analysis of existing frameworks, they offer 11 practical recommendations to help provide best practices in emergency logistics.

[45] also used the existing framework to deepen the understanding of HSCM from a theoretical perspective by identifying and evaluating the use of theories in the HSCM literature. Using Content Analysis, the study found that the use of theoretical approaches was not evenly distributed among the various phases of disaster relief. The strong emphasis on SCM as a background discipline was also reflected in the choice of theories used, indicating the condensation of humanitarian logistics as a primary supply chain discipline. The lack of use of other theoretical perspectives and significant theories was still evident, providing an exciting research agenda for future research.

[46] highlighted the tendency of "cross-border mandates" carried out by organizations involved in the distribution of aid tends to. This causes role ambiguity during the distribution of aid services to disaster victims. Due to the lack of clear roles, specialization affects the timeliness of services and causes duplication of resources among aid organizations. Therefore, their study produces a framework that can help managers in humanitarian organizations to understand two things. First, how complex adaptive system competencies can create organizational adaptability. Second, how organizational adaptability can help organizational networks and learning improve role clarity among humanitarian organizations by working together collaboratively.

Furthermore, [47] highlighted the importance of the SCM Framework in providing a platform for a strategic dialogue on issues within supply chain management (SCM), external peer organizations, and the donor community. It also compares perspectives on humanitarian logistics (HL), SCM, and logistics staff. The results suggest that a broader and more strategic interpretation of SCM, clearly differentiated from HL practices, can help to break down perceived jurisdictional boundaries, bridge the gap between program and logistics teams, and strengthen the influence of the demand chain and the "voice of the beneficiary."

[48] presented a performance measurement framework for logistics departments in humanitarian organizations, focusing on key stakeholders. The framework adapts the balanced scorecard (BSC) to reflect their views and characteristics. The study highlighted the challenges of measuring performance in humanitarian supply chains, where beneficiaries are the customers and donors hold the highest salience due to their power. The proposed framework can help humanitarian organizations focus on performance relevant to their key customer groups, balancing their diverging needs. Although the framework is conceptual, it has not yet been empirically tested.

[49] presented games as a research method and develop a framework that allows researchers to design and develop games for humanitarian logistics research. The framework has the potential to contribute to theory building and exploration of new technologies, especially in situations of limited access and high risk. The framework allows exploration of the interactions between interventions and work practices, decision-making, and team performance. The findings are also suitable for exploring and analyzing behavior and decisions in emergencies that require teamwork and collaborative problem-solving. On the other hand, [50] discussed a framework for humanitarian logistics coordination. The cluster concept has evolved from within-cluster coordination in response to including inter-cluster coordination in preparedness and, more recently, a focus on local preparedness.

#### **4. Discussion**

The review results show that the question "What frameworks have been produced in HLSCM studies?" has been answered. The frameworks are grouped thematically into three themes: (1) Framework for Planning and Preparedness in HLSCM; (2) Framework for responding to disaster in HLSCM; (3) Framework for enhancing performance and coordination between actors in HLSCM. A total of 15 articles have been reviewed thematically and classified into three themes according to the resulting framework.

First is the theme "Framework for planning and preparation in HLSCM." The findings in this area highlight the importance of preparedness in addressing HLSCM. Therefore, the reviewers concerned with this theme propose a framework that provides a structured basis for prioritizing actions on the ground. This is important in understanding the strategies used by humanitarian organizations to improve their logistics readiness. The proposed framework in this area can help practitioners identify potential new Supply Chain Strategies to map strategic stocks and priorities for assistance to victims. The results can support the improvement of humanitarian supply chains, providing rapid, cost-effective, and more tailored responses to affected communities. Second, the theme "Framework for responding to disasters in HLSCM" generally discusses the framework for optimizing resources, services, and emergency responders in affected areas. As disasters become more frequent and severe, HLSCM must be prepared to react quickly.

Third, the theme "Framework for enhancing performance and coordination between actors in HLSCM" was researched to improve relationships between stakeholders such as aid organizations, local governments, NGOs, donors, and military personnel. Previous research on this theme shows the highest number of the other two themes. Several frameworks have been developed, for example, to increase trust between humanitarian organizations. Other frameworks have been developed that address disaster planning and response challenges in a multi-agency context, including the challenges of achieving coordinated supply chain management. In addition, frameworks in this area have been created to improve role clarity among humanitarian organizations, thereby avoiding duplication of roles.

The literature review identifies research gaps in the HLSCM framework and recommends future research in "mitigation frameworks." Since HLSCM operations are highly context-specific and dynamic, the challenges vary depending on the type, intensity, location, and timing of a particular disaster [51]. Over the past decade, new factors have influenced humanitarian operations, such as advances in information and communication technology, regulatory changes, and the involvement of new actors. Therefore, future research can consider studies on mitigation frameworks, including understanding these challenges during HLSCM operations. Framework to Improve this understanding could enhance humanitarian response efforts and significantly reduce human suffering.

## 5. Conclusion

A literature review of articles focusing on HLSCM frameworks has been conducted. There are 15 articles in the "Journal of Humanitarian Logistics and Supply Chain Management (JHLSCM)" have gone through the review process. A total of 3 articles reviews the "Theme Framework for Planning and Preparedness in HLSCM." In planning and preparedness, the framework generally aims to help humanitarian actors manage the planning and prepare for disaster. The activities include preparing strategic stock and considering the priority needs of victims during a disaster. The same is true for the theme "Framework for responding to disaster in HLSCM," which only received attention from 3 previous articles. In responding to disasters, the framework aims to optimize aid to minimize challenges in HLSCM.

On the other hand, the third theme, "Framework for enhancing performance and coordination between actors in HLSCM," is the most widely studied, namely 9 articles. The framework produced in this field aims to promote collaboration and coordination among humanitarian actors in building trust between actors, avoiding role duplication, and bridging the humanitarian program and logistics team. Ultimately, the framework in this field provides best practices in emergency logistics.

The literature review highlights a gap in research on frameworks in HLSCM for further exploration of mitigation. HLSCM operations are context-specific and dynamic, with challenges varying based on disaster type, intensity, location, and timing. New factors, such as information technology advancements, regulatory changes, and new actors, have influenced operations. Enhancing the framework might improve humanitarian relief initiatives and lessen suffering among victims.

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