

Logistic Skills and Performance in the “for profit” and “not for profit” sectors

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- Phase 2 of a 3 Phase Project designed to help answer the question posed to use by the President of the Women's Institute for Supply-Chain Excellence (WISE):

“Why are there so few female humanitarian logisticians?”

- Sub-text of the question was based on the fact that in many Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO) the gender balance is 50:50 or even 60:40 in favour of females – except in the logistic community where the ratio is 25:75 at best.
- So WISE was interested to know if this was due to the HR policies (eg recruitment, retention, etc) or to external factors.

Logistics v Supply Network Management (SNM)

The “standard” definition of logistics used within the humanitarian community is:

“The process of planning, implementing and controlling the efficient, cost-effective flow and storage of goods and materials as well as related information, from the point of origin to the point of consumption for the purpose of meeting the end beneficiary’s requirements.”(Thomas & Mizushima, 2005)

In effect, the Humanitarian Community has adopted the re-labelling perspective of Larson *et al* (2007) – ie Logistics = Supply Network Management.

Phase 1

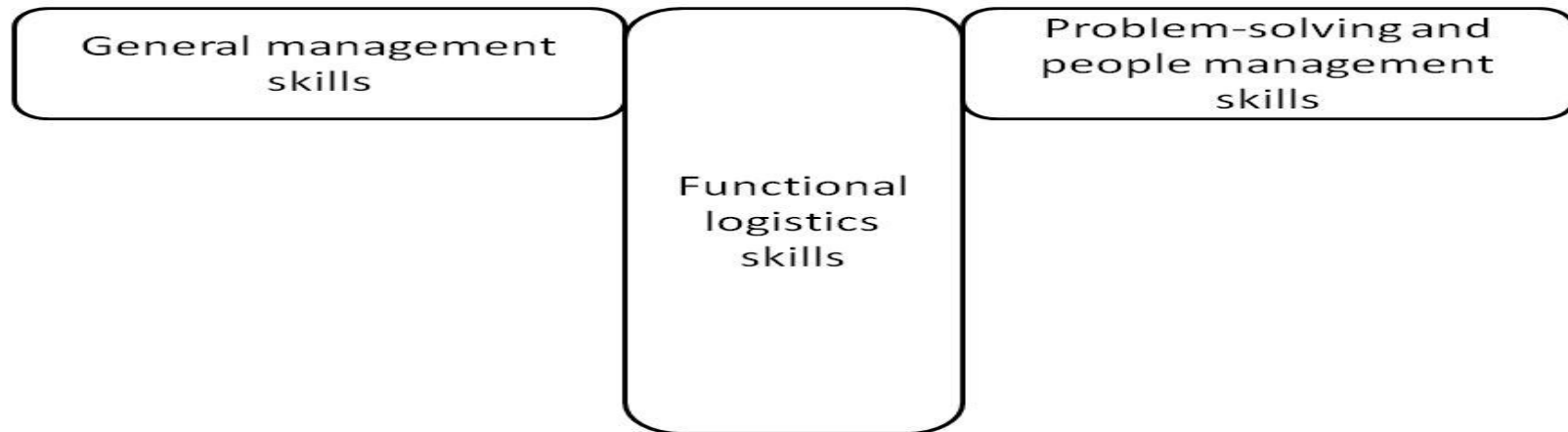
- In the humanitarian context, NGOs often have to act as the proxies for those affected by the disaster who are unwilling or unable to articulate their needs.
- Greater presence of female humanitarian logisticians would be of value in:
 - Improving the quality of logistic decision making that currently is unable to take the needs and concerns of female beneficiaries into account.
 - Achieving access to female beneficiaries in light of cultural sensitivities in many areas of the world.

Phases 2 & 3

- Phase 2: What are the skills and attributes that are perceived to be important for a logistician in different contexts (business; not for profit; military; academic)?
- Phase 3: Test findings in a post-disaster environment

Existing Research on Logistic Skills and Attributes:

- Training & Education Programme (eg Mangan *et al*, 2001)
- Career Development (eg Murphy & Poist, 2007)
- Logisticians v Supply Chain Managers (eg Gammelgaard & Larson, 2001)
- Logistic, Business and Problem Solving Skills (Mangan & Christopher, 2005)

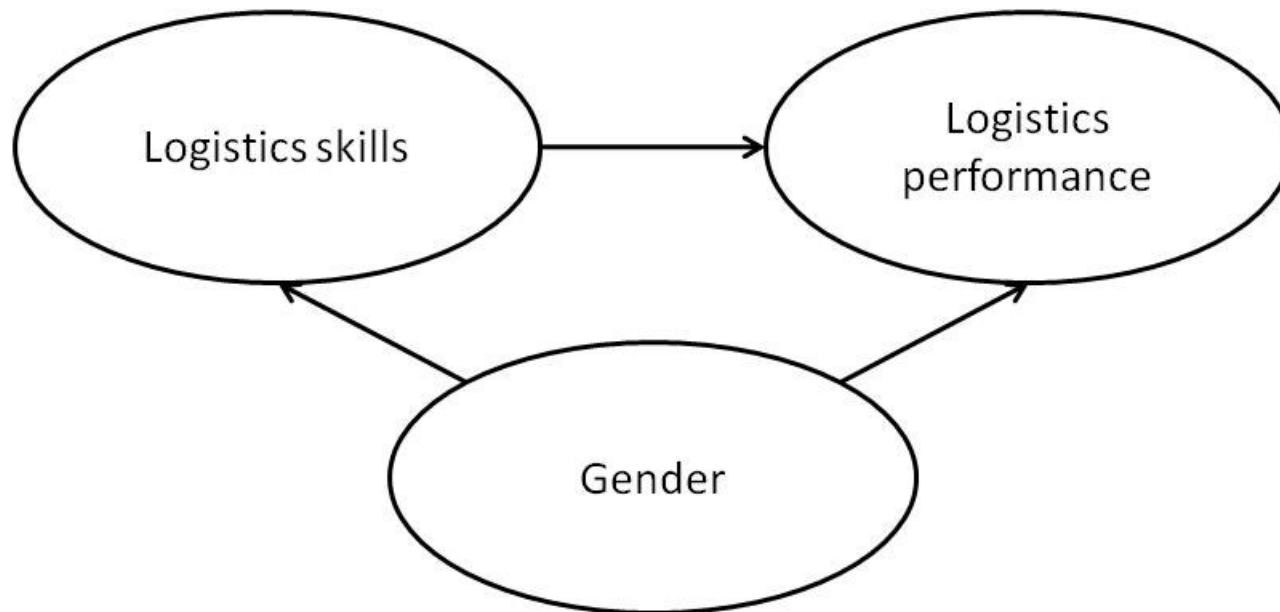


“supply chain managers regard themselves as managers first and logisticians second”

- Market Winning v Market Entry Skills?

- But interestingly, and notwithstanding the massive cannon of literature relating to logistic performance measurement (and management), **no literature located that directly links logistic skills/attributes to logistic performance.**
- Turning to gender, many studies (eg Ohio State/CSCMP) looking at issues of females in logistics profession, - but again, **no direct linkage to impact on logistic performance has been identified.**

Logistics Performance in the light of Gender



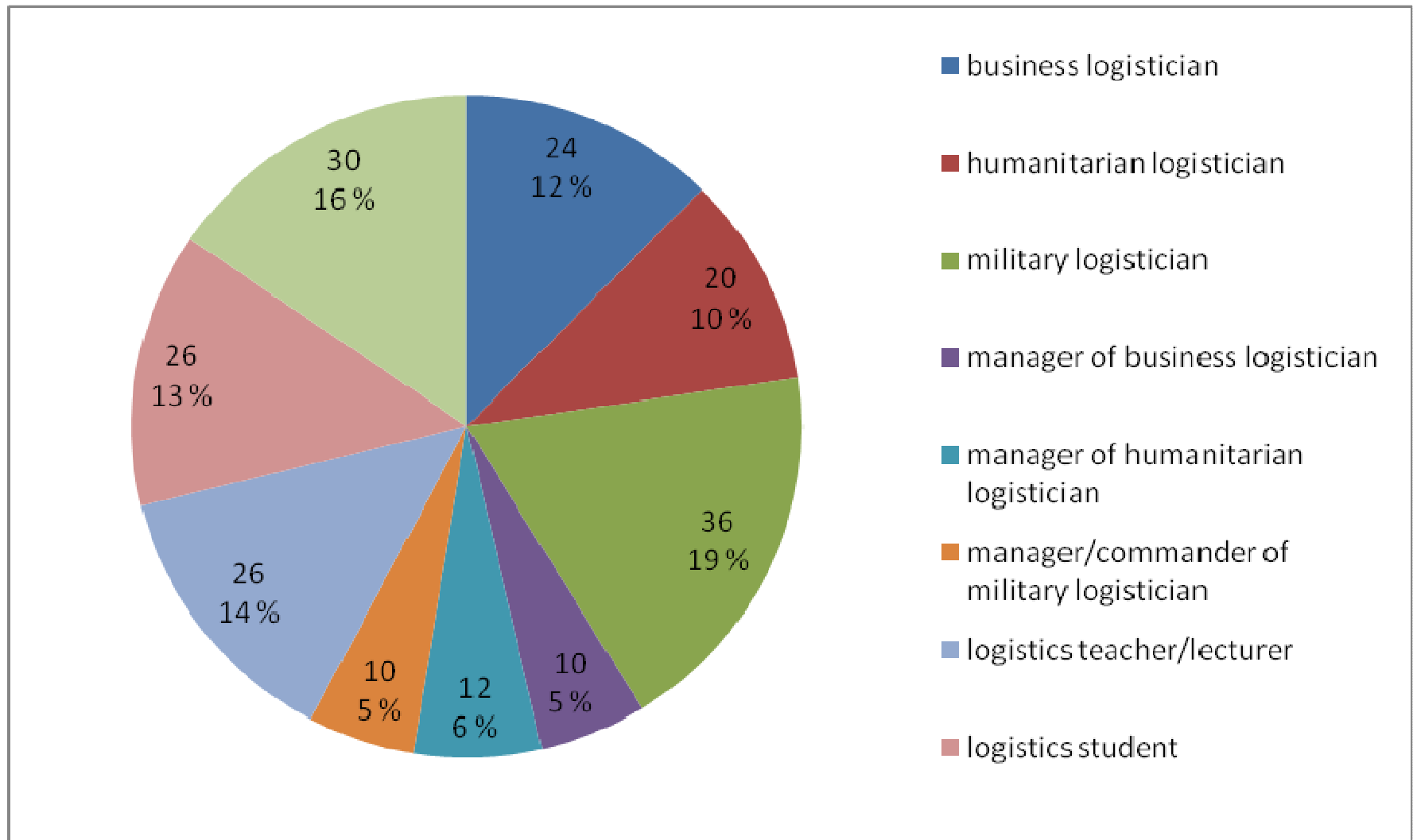
Breakdown of Skill Sets within the “T” shaped model

General Mgt Skills	Functional Logistic Skills	Problem Solving Skills	Inter-personal Skills
Finance & Accounting	<i>Legal</i>	Problem Identification	Listening
Information Technology	<i>Customs, Import & Export</i>	Information Gathering	Oral Comms
Change Mgt	Transport Mgt	Problem Analysis	Written Comms
Marketing	Inventory Mgt	Info Sharing	<i>People Mgt</i>
Project Mgt	Warehousing	Problem Solving	Mtg Facilitation
Strategic Mgt	Purchasing & Procurement		Negotiation
CRM	Forecasting		Stress Mgt
<i>SRM</i>	<i>Reverse Logistics</i>		<i>HRM</i>
<i>Risk Mgt</i>	<i>Port/Airport Mgt</i>		Leadership
	Logistic IS		

Questionnaire Details

- 505 visits to Web Site; 174 valid submissions (34.5%)
- Significant Experience Levels:
 - only 11% had < 3 years; 46% had > 10 years
- 37% of responses from UK, but responses received from > 30 countries.
- 41% of respondents were female.

Survey Respondent Demographics



General Form of the Survey

- Rate (Likert Scale 1-7) importance of skills/attributes as they contribute to logistic performance.
- In terms of logistic performance, are the functions best carried out by females (1); gender not important (4); males (7)
- Free format comments section:
 - Examples of when gender has had a positive or a negative effect.
 - Why do you think there are so few female humanitarian logisticians?

Overview of Findings

- “Problem solving” (PS) & “inter-personal” (IP) of greater importance than “general management” (GM) & “functional logistic” (FL) skills.
 - But all 33 skill sets considered to be important.
- Humanitarian logisticians considered PS & IP to be more important than Business, Military & Academic communities.
 - May be a real difference, or simply that Humanitarian logisticians are more polarised in their views.
- In terms of gender, overall perception was that it had no significant effect on performance in any of the four communities.
 - But free text section generated many examples of positive and negative impacts (27/174 respondents gave examples)

Positive Stories

Presence of female logistician had a positive impact in terms of better information sharing, improved coordination and record keeping.

Admin skills and customer orientation are usually better developed with women. On the other hand, technical skills seem to be better developed with men.

Women are more political and cultural sensitive.

Far less corruption problem so generally better on supply and procurement.

When dealing with female beneficiaries.

Females seem to be especially good at managing information systems.

In needs identification given that most of those who are normally affected are women so it is easier for women to access women, understand and interpret their actual needs.

In a case of managing delicate intimate needs of women, for example hygiene products which should include sanitary towels. Unless a man is a doctor, nurse or say has medical background then most of them shy off when it comes to dealing with such needs, besides they would not think of them but rather think of vehicles, generators shelter etc not the gender impact of their decision.

Negative Stories

Mostly due to cultural context. In some context it is not wise/possible to have a women to deal with authority or supplier (more generally external negotiation or relation)

In times of conflict.

Females being put in a position not because they are suitable, but because they are females. ie reflecting the gender policy of the organisation.

In Sierra Leone, when having community meetings with right holders for a logistics assessment, female logisticians sometimes faced harassment and strong opposition from the stakeholders. This fact in turn delayed the completion of the task in hand and created resistance and lack of collaboration during community assessments.

There are negative impacts for female logisticians in countries where there are serious security concerns and in some place has cultural issues.

Although humanitarian organizations are striving to increase the number of female logisticians, in most of the areas where we operate women are under respected or simply banned of performing certain activities. In this context performing logistics activities that requires direct interaction with men is challenging, time consuming and most of the time frustrating for women.

Overview of Findings

- Male logisticians are perceived to be more effective in “a man’s world”.
- Female logisticians are perceived to be less effective due to strictures of local cultures.
- Female logisticians are perceived to be better at communicating/negotiating.

Why do you think there are so few female humanitarian logisticians?” (92/174 respondents offering 124 observations)

Response	Number of Times Offered
Hazardous Environment	22
Profession is perceived to be dominated by males	17
Work life balance (including high travel content/separation)	22
Culture (in affected country)	15
Entry level jobs (eg trucking/warehousing) are male dominated	12
Perceived nature of job content, especially technical content, not appealing	14
Poor marketing of employment possibilities (eg in school)	10
Physically demanding job	2
Emotionally stressful job	2
Paucity of female logisticians overall	3
Living conditions	2
Job insecurity	1
Fewer females study technical subjects at school	1
Females prefer well bounded problems	1
Total	124

A More Detailed Analysis

- Following deemed by respondents to be “female” skills:
 - GM Skills: Finance & accounting; marketing & CRM.
 - FL Skills: Legal specifications
 - PS Skills: Info gathering & info sharing
 - IP Skills: Listening; oral comms & written comms.
- Following deemed by respondents to be “male” skills:
 - FL Skills: Transportation & warehousing
 - IP Skills: Leadership

Conclusions

- Validity of “T” shaped model reinforced.
- Greater emphasis on PS & IP skills in humanitarian area – but more research needed to confirm validity of this finding.
- Overall conclusion based on statistical evidence is that gender does not effect logistic performance, but further research needed in light of the many anecdotal stories.
- Humanitarian logisticians place particular emphasis on (“male”) skills of transport and warehousing.
 - Is this symptomatic of a failure to make the transition from (old style) logistics to SNM, and is this the cause of the paucity of females in this role?



Questions?