Freight Forwarder Company Selection from an Employee Perspective: A Multidimensional Analysis of Individual and Organisational Determinants

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Abstract: The selection of freight forwarding companies is a critical strategic decision-making process that directly impacts businesses' operational performance, cost structure and service quality within the scope of logistics and supply chain management. In the extant literature, this process has been predominantly examined from the perspective of the firm or the customer; however, the extent to which employees – who are the implementers of these selection decisions – perceive this process and the conditions under which they make decisions has been studied to a limited extent. The present study aims to analyse the freight forwarder selection process from the perspective of employees, examining the impact of individual and organisational factors on these decisions.

The research is designed as a qualitative literature review; academic studies published in the fields of human resource management, organisational behaviour, decision-making processes and the selection of logistics service providers have been evaluated using a holistic approach. The data obtained were then subjected to a thematic analysis, which resulted in the identification of four overarching themes: employee competencies, human resources practices, organisational support mechanisms, and environmental factors that influence decision-making processes.

The findings indicate that employees' individual competencies, including technical knowledge, sectoral experience, analytical assessment capacity, and risk perception, are pivotal in the selection of freight forwarders. Nevertheless, the effective incorporation of these competencies into decision-making processes is contingent upon the presence of organisational elements such as training and development opportunities, managerial support, standardised procedures and corporate policies. Moreover, it has been demonstrated that factors such as inadequate organisational support, high workload and staff turnover can have detrimental effects on the consistency and quality of selection decisions.

The present study demonstrates that the selection process of freight forwarders is not merely a rational mechanism based on technical and economic criteria; rather, it is a multi-dimensional decision-making process shaped by the human factor. The findings contribute a staff-centred perspective to the existing literature on the subject and offer practitioners significant insights regarding the development of staff competencies involved in the selection process and the institutional structuring of such processes.

Key Words: Maritime Management, Maritime Logistics, Selection of Freight Forwarders, Employee Perspective, Human Resources Management.

1. INTRODUCTION

The increasingly intricate nature of global trade and the expansion of supply chain networks have elevated the role of freight forwarding companies in the management of logistics operations to a critical level. Freight forwarders should not be regarded as mere intermediaries organising transport; rather, they should be considered strategic partners who can directly influence businesses' cost structures, operational efficiency and customer satisfaction. Consequently, the selection of the appropriate logistics partner has typically been addressed in the extant literature as a 'company-level' decision-making process based on concrete criteria such as cost, transit time and reliability. Nevertheless, the 'human' factor – which is fundamental to these decisions and directly manages the operational process – is often the most fundamental variable overlooked in the success of the selection process.

In dynamic and highly uncertain sectors such as logistics, decisions are shaped not only by algorithms or rigid company procedures, but also by the technical competencies and experience of employees, as well as the influence of the organisational climate in which they operate. Indeed, the extant literature highlights the impact of working conditions — extending beyond employees' technical skills — on the quality of decision-making. For

instance, Sultan-Taïeb et al. (2017) emphasised that organisational-level interventions and ergonomic working conditions enhance the effectiveness of business processes, demonstrating that an employee's physical and mental well-being is directly linked to operational outcomes. In this context, the performance exhibited by an individual in selecting a freight forwarder is not merely a matter of personal preference, but rather is influenced by the support mechanisms provided by the organisation.

Conversely, the skill sets required of workers in the digitalising logistics sector are also evolving. As McKeen and Gallupe (1995) have previously observed, the evolution of skills within industries necessitates the integration of technical knowledge with analytical abilities. In the selection of a freight forwarder, the capacity for analytical thinking and the ability to anticipate risks are pivotal to the financial sustainability of the organisation.

The present study aims to shift the traditional 'firm-focused' perspective to an 'employee-focused' one, thereby examining the individual and organisational factors in the freight forwarder selection process in depth. The fundamental research question pertains to the competencies employees draw upon when making decisions, and the manner in which organisational support (training, workload, motivation, etc.) impacts the quality of these decisions.

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

2.1. The Strategic Role of Individual Competencies in Selecting a Freight Forwarder

The selection of service providers, particularly freight forwarding companies which form the cornerstone of the logistics network, is directly dependent on the individual competencies of the staff responsible for making these critical decisions. It is well established that employers prioritise technical expertise alongside business or systems knowledge as key criteria in their recruitment processes (Todd et al., 1995). In this context, staff responsible for selecting transport partners must possess specific skill sets that enable them to analyse potential service providers not only from a cost-focused perspective but also in terms of operational efficiency and strategic alignment. Human resources management practices have been identified as a key factor in the development of these competencies, which are deemed essential for the effective execution of selection processes. A comprehensive approach encompassing recruitment, systematic training, performance appraisal and reward systems is fundamental to enhancing the quality of personnel selection and has maintained its validity for years (Youndt et al., 2017). Consequently, the ability of organisations to achieve sustainable success in logistics partnerships is contingent on employee competencies being supported by systematic HR mechanisms.

In a working environment where individuals can clearly demonstrate their knowledge, skills and attitudes, selection processes become both more transparent and simpler in structure (Youndt et al., 2017). This situation necessitates that employees involved in freight forwarder selection must effectively utilise competencies such as logistics performance evaluation, complex cost-benefit analyses, and multi-dimensional service quality measurement. A competency-based approach emphasises that decisions regarding both personnel and service provider selection must be based not on chance, but on pre-determined scientific criteria and the systematic assessment of competencies. Furthermore, the 'cognitive abilities' and 'confidence in decision-making' possessed by employees in the logistics sector emerge as factors that directly influence supply chain agility. Contemporary literature on the subject posits that the provision of employees with not only historical data but also with analytical competencies capable of anticipating future risks has a multiplier effect on business performance (Derwik and Hellström, 2017). Consequently, individual competencies are not merely inputs in the selection of freight forwarders, but strategic filters that ensure the integrity of the process.

2.2. Validity, Reliability and Organisational Usefulness in Selection Procedures

The success of an organisation is contingent not only on the identification of appropriate strategies, but also on the scientific underpinnings of the selection mechanisms that implement these strategies. Pioneering research in the field of personnel psychology has demonstrated a direct correlation between the scientific validity of a selection procedure and the tangible benefits that procedure provides to the organisation (Hunsley & Meyer, 2003). This fundamental principle is of critical importance in the selection of freight forwarding companies. The validity of the selection criteria used directly influences the operational efficiency to be derived from the chosen logistics partner. Consequently, in order to foster fruitful freight partnerships, it is incumbent upon employees to utilise systematic selection procedures that have demonstrated their validity, as opposed to placing undue reliance on arbitrary methods.

The development of reliable selection tools remains a priority today for the sustainability of organisational effectiveness. A review of the historical development of research-based selection tools in the literature reveals that these tools have the potential to minimise staff turnover and improve organisational outcomes (Hall and Hall, 2002). The utilisation of selection instruments that are characterised by low validity or flawed design has the potential to engender misleading results in the context of the freight forwarder evaluation process, thereby compromising organisational efficiency. This situation once again underscores the importance of ensuring that each criterion used in the selection process is measurable, objective and directly linked to performance outcomes.

While theoretical discussions concerning selection procedures initially concentrated on personnel selection, the fundamental discipline of developing valid and reliable tools has been successfully applied to partner selection processes in supply chain management. The methodological accuracy employed in measuring concepts such as 'strategic fit' and 'operational competence' is a decisive factor in the optimisation of logistics costs. Indeed, Flynn et al. (2010) posit that the clarity and reliability of the selection criteria employed in the context of supply chain integration exert a multiplier effect on both operational and financial performance. Consequently, the structuring of criteria used in the evaluation of transport companies with scientific rigour is not merely an administrative process, but also an organisational capability that provides a competitive advantage.

2.3. High-Performance Work Systems and the Integration of Strategic Choices

In contemporary management praxis, organisations that implement High-Performance Work Systems do not perceive recruitment processes as mere routine administrative tasks; rather, they regard these processes as strategic domains of investment. The fundamental practices within these systems are designed to enhance the organisation's overall human capital quality by focusing on attracting qualified personnel to the organisation, selecting the most suitable talent, and continuously developing this workforce (Garman et al., 2011). This holistic approach can be directly adapted to the recruitment process of transport companies. The "rigorous evaluation tools" that organisations provide to their staff to identify logistics partners capable of delivering the highest added value should be regarded as a reflection of logistics management. In this regard, evaluation mechanisms based on systematic and objective criteria ensure the identification of the most appropriate transport company. Furthermore, these mechanisms lay the groundwork for achieving operational efficiency, long-term strategic partnerships and a sustainable competitive advantage. Employees in decision-making roles require the analytical framework provided by these high-performance systems to make selections aligned with corporate objectives. Indeed, the integration of selection processes into broader organisational systems is a necessary condition for ensuring that decisions move beyond individual preferences to align with the company's vision.

In the context of logistics operations, the efficacy of this integration is contingent upon the congruence between the selection of transport companies and the prevailing supply chain strategies, quality management systems, and specific operational requirements. The extant literature highlights that the implementation of high-performance business systems improves overall system performance by enhancing trust and information sharing among supply chain partners (Takeuchi et al., 2007). Consequently, the selection process for a freight forwarder can be regarded as a strategic action situated at the intersection of an organisation's human resource quality and its logistics strategy.

2.4. Workforce Development Processes and the Preservation of Decision-Making Capacity

A comprehensive workforce development plan, when implemented in a holistic manner, is instrumental in ensuring organisational success. Such a plan necessitates the articulation of a coherent corporate message and strategy across all stages of the talent lifecycle, including recruitment, selection, placement, induction training, supervision, performance appraisal and career planning (Youndt et al., 1996). This comprehensive and holistic approach to workforce development ensures that employees are not only capable of performing operational tasks but also possess the technical and mental capabilities to make critical and informed decisions, such as the evaluation of freight forwarding companies. The integration of corporate training within the professional development framework of employees has been demonstrated to enhance their decision-making processes, thereby reducing the margin of error in logistics processes.

Nevertheless, considerable barriers exist that threaten organisational capacity and the quality of decision-making. The extant literature indicates that high staff turnover and the constant training requirements for new recruits are fundamental challenges that weaken an organisation's decision-making capacity (Combs et al., 2006).

A high rate of staff turnover among specialist personnel responsible for selecting transport companies is indicative not merely of a loss of personnel, but also of the loss of critical 'organisational knowledge' regarding supplier relationships, historical performance records and sectoral networks.

This loss of knowledge has the potential to compromise the quality of future selection decisions, thereby leaving the business vulnerable to logistical risks. Indeed, as Shaw et al. (2005) observe, high staff turnover can compromise organisational memory, leading to diminished performance in the realm of strategic supplier management. Consequently, organisations seeking consistent success in freight forwarder selection must focus not only on technological infrastructure but also on HR strategies aimed at retaining qualified staff and preserving organisational memory.

2.5. Strategic Human Resource Management and Employment Policies in the Context of Elections

Human resource management (HRM) practices constitute the foundational framework that enables the efficacy of operational processes by ensuring that employees possess the requisite knowledge and skills in alignment with organisational objectives. This process involves the careful selection of staff with experience in relevant fields, the provision of comprehensive training opportunities, and the prioritisation of organisational objectives in employment decisions (Lepak and Snell, 1999). When assessed specifically in the context of the freight forwarder selection process, organisations must ensure that the personnel making these decisions possess not only theoretical logistics knowledge but also crisis management skills, advanced negotiation abilities and complex analytical capabilities. In this context, the selection of personnel to evaluate freight forwarders necessitates the prior definition of specific competency requirements. Depending on their strategic preferences, businesses may choose to employ staff for specific areas of expertise, or they may opt for 'generalist' staff with a broader range of responsibilities. The employment of generalists has been demonstrated to enhance organisational operational flexibility by providing opportunities for 'cross-training' within the structure of the organisation (Derwik and Hellström, 2017).

Organisations may elect to acquire 'in-depth expertise' by recruiting logistics specialists with a sole focus on transport and forwarding relationships. Alternatively, the delegation of these responsibilities to generalist employees with broader operational authority has the potential to enhance the integration of logistics decisions with other departments, such as production, sales and finance. In the field of human resource management, Ployhart and Moliterno's (2011) seminal study posits that individual competencies, when amalgamated, coalesce to constitute a 'unit-level human capital resource'. This resource, as postulated by the researchers, exerts a direct influence on the precision of strategic decisions made within organisational frameworks. Consequently, the success of a freight forwarder selection is closely linked to the type of skill set in which the organisation invests.

2.6. Education and Development Strategies for Enhancing Electoral Competence

In enhancing organisational effectiveness, the critical role of tailored adaptation of recruitment strategies, resource management and developmental interventions to the target audience is evident. The integration of staff training with external expertise is a fundamental element that strengthens the organisation's operational capabilities (Combs et al., 2006). Targeted training programmes, meticulously designed for personnel entrusted with the selection of freight forwarders, have been shown to minimise operational and financial risks arising from erroneous choices. These programmes achieve this by developing three key competencies: technical evaluation skills, sector-specific knowledge, and strategic decision-making abilities.

The strategic importance of staff training can be attributed to the necessity of ensuring that employees have not only a comprehensive understanding of the company's brand, but also a thorough grasp of the complex criteria used in forwarder selection and the adept management of performance monitoring processes. As Derwik and Hellström (2017) argue, the preservation of institutional memory regarding freight selection and the assurance of organisational capacity are vital for any organisation. In order to achieve this, 'structured mentoring' or 'training programmes' must be implemented, with these designed with senior and competent staff to support new recruits. Such programmes function as a conduit, thereby establishing a correlation between individual development and the organisation's collective success.

The emphasis placed on training processes is, in fact, part of the company's efforts to develop "dynamic talent". Indeed, as Noe et al. (2014) observe, employees in organisations with a culture of continuous learning make far more accurate and rational decisions in complex market conditions. In this context, it is evident that the methodological accuracy employed in the selection of freight forwarders is enhanced by each training

opportunity offered to logistics staff. Consequently, this results in the business attaining a competitive edge within the global marketplace.

2.7. The Impact of the Working Environment, Ergonomics and Employee Health on Decision-Making Processes

The logistics sector is, by its very nature, an environment characterised by high levels of stress, dynamism and the constant need to make decisions. In this context, the physical and mental health of staff responsible for selecting freight forwarders constitutes a hidden variable that determines the rationality of the selection process. The physical conditions of the working environment and ergonomic arrangements have been shown to play a pivotal role in not only preventing accidents in the workplace but also optimising employees' cognitive performance and ability to concentrate. Research demonstrates that ergonomic interventions at the organisational level and improvements in working conditions significantly reduce the margin of operational error whilst increasing employee productivity (Sultan-Taïeb et al., 2017).

In processes requiring intense attention and analysis, such as forwarder selection, the physical fatigue experienced by the employee or unsuitable office/site conditions can lead to 'decision fatigue'. In environments where health and safety standards are stringent and ergonomic risks are mitigated, employees are able to maintain meticulousness and objectivity when evaluating candidate firms. Indeed, the extant literature indicates that the provision of physical and psychosocial support within the workplace has a direct positive impact on the ability of staff to solve complex problems (Sultan-Taïeb et al., 2017).

Moreover, a comprehensive strategy to enhance employee well-being must encompass not only physical ergonomics but also mental well-being. Staff experiencing elevated levels of stress, coupled with inadequate rest periods, demonstrate an increased propensity to overlook strategic risks when selecting a freight forwarder. Consequently, they are more likely to opt for the option that is perceived as the 'easiest' or 'first available'. Research by Vahle-Hinz et al. (2014) highlights that workplace environmental factors and health support measures enhance an employee's cognitive flexibility, thereby enabling more accurate commercial decisions. Consequently, an organisation's investment in employee health is, in fact, an investment in the quality of logistics partner selection and, indirectly, in supply chain security.

This study builds on the extensive literature on freight forwarder selection and employee-related decision-making factors. It is evident that multiple individual and organisational variables jointly influence the effectiveness of the selection process. Whilst the majority of preceding studies have concentrated on firm-level criteria such as cost, service quality and reliability, the role of employee-driven factors remains comparatively under-explored.

In order to address this gap, the present study identifies and synthesises the key constructs that shape employee-centred decision-making in the selection of freight forwarders. The constructs, definitions and expected relationships are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. Themes and Definitions of the Proposed Employee-Driven Freight Forwarder Selection Model

Theme	Definition	Key Components	Expected Effect	Supporting Literature
Individual Competencies	Employees' technical, analytical and experiential capabilities in evaluating freight forwarders	Technical knowledge, sectoral experience, analytical thinking, risk assessment	Direct positive effect on decision-making effectiveness	(Todd et al., 1995; Youndt et al., 2017; Derwik & Hellström, 2017)
HRM Practices	Organisational systems that develop and manage employee competencies	Recruitment, training, performance appraisal, reward systems	Enhances competency development and decision consistency	(Youndt et al., 1996; Lepak & Snell, 1999; Ployhart & Moliterno, 2011)
Selection System Quality	The scientific validity and reliability of selection procedures	Validity, reliability, standardisation, objective criteria	Improves accuracy and reduces decision errors	(Hunsley & Meyer, 2003; Hall & Hall,

				2002; Flynn et al., 2010)
High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS)	Integrated organisational systems supporting strategic decision-making	Structured evaluation tools, information sharing, system integration	Strengthens alignment between decisions and organisational strategy	(Garman et al., 2011; Takeuchi et al., 2007)
Workforce Stability & Organisational Memory	The continuity of skilled employees and retention of institutional knowledge	Staff retention, knowledge preservation, experience accumulation	Reduces inconsistency and improves long-term decision quality	(Combs et al., 2006; Shaw et al., 2005)
Training and Development	Organised learning processes enhancing employee decision capabilities	Technical training, mentoring, continuous learning	Improves analytical decision-making and reduces risk	(Noe et al., 2014; Derwik & Hellström, 2017; Combs et al., 2006)
Work Environment & Ergonomics	Physical and organisational conditions affecting employee performance	Workload, ergonomics, stress, working conditions	Indirect effect via cognitive performance and fatigue	(Sultan-Taïeb et al., 2017; Vahle-Hinz et al., 2014)
Employee Well-being	Psychological and physical state influencing cognitive capacity	Stress level, fatigue, mental health	Direct impact on decision accuracy and rationality	(Sultan-Taïeb et al., 2017; Vahle-Hinz et al., 2014)
Decision-Making Effectiveness	The ability to make accurate, consistent and analytical decisions	Risk evaluation, alternative comparison, judgment quality	Direct determinant of selection success	(Derwik & Hellström, 2017; Flynn et al., 2010)
Selection Performance	The operational success of freight forwarder selection outcomes	Cost efficiency, service quality, operational fit	Final outcome variable	(Flynn et al., 2010; Derwik & Hellström, 2017)

The following table presents the conceptual constructs and their theoretical foundations underlying the employee-driven freight forwarder selection model developed in this study. The model is founded on a comprehensive synthesis of the literature reviewed in Section 2, integrating both individual and organisational dimensions that shape decision-making processes in logistics contexts.

The constructs are structured to reflect a multi-layered framework in which individual competencies are supported and enhanced by organisational mechanisms, including human resource management practices, training and development systems, and high-performance work systems. Moreover, contextual factors, encompassing work environment conditions and employee well-being, are incorporated to capture the broader organisational setting in which decisions are made.

Within this theoretical framework, decision-making effectiveness is conceptualised as a pivotal mechanism that mediates the relationship between employee- and organisation-related factors and the ultimate outcome variable, namely selection performance. This structure underscores the notion that the efficacy of a freight forwarder selection is not predetermined by a single factor, but rather, it is the consequence of the interplay among numerous interdependent elements.

The model provides a theoretically grounded and systematically structured basis for understanding how employee-driven and organisational dynamics jointly influence the quality and outcomes of freight forwarder selection decisions. Furthermore, it establishes a foundation for future empirical research aimed at testing the proposed relationships.

3. METHOD

3.1. Research Methodology

The present study has been designed as a qualitative literature review with the aim of identifying employee-focused dynamics in the selection process of freight forwarding companies and analysing the individual and organisational factors influencing these dynamics. Rather than relying on empirical fieldwork, the study adopts a holistic approach based on a synthesis of existing theoretical knowledge and previous research findings. The study design is predicated on a descriptive and interpretative paradigm. Within this framework, the freight forwarder selection process is examined not merely as a logistical procedure, but within the intersection of disciplines such as competency-based human resource management, organisational behaviour theories and decision-making psychology.

3.2. Data Collection Process and Scope

The data for the study were obtained from secondary data sources using a systematic search protocol. In this context, a comprehensive search was conducted across international and national databases, including Web of Science, Scopus, Google Scholar and Dergi Park. The key terms and concept indices employed in the search process are as follows:

- Logistics and Supply Chain: The selection of suppliers, the evaluation of logistics service providers, and the selection of freight forwarders are all important considerations.
- The following text is concerned with Human Resources and Organisational Behaviour. Competency-based selection, organisational decision-making, organisational support, employee performance, cognitive competencies.

In view of the paucity of studies in the literature that directly address the selection of freight forwarders from the perspective of employees, the scope of the review has been expanded to include related disciplines such as personnel psychology, health management and industrial decision-making processes. This approach has enabled the identified gap in the logistics literature to be filled with findings from other disciplines that examine selection processes of a similar complexity.

3.3. Data Analysis and Thematic Classification

The data obtained were analysed using thematic analysis to organise the scattered information in the literature into a systematic framework. The findings extracted from the literature were classified under the following four main themes, in line with the study's research question:

1. Individual Competencies: The decision-maker's technical knowledge, experience and analytical capacity are all relevant factors in the decision-making process.
2. Human Resource Management Practices: The impact of recruitment, training and development strategies on the quality of selection.
3. The following essay will explore the organisational structure and support mechanisms in question. The following topics will be discussed in this essay: organisational memory, resource management and managerial climate.
4. The following factors are of environmental and managerial significance: The factors under consideration are workload, ergonomics, stress and external variables affecting decision-making processes.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A substantial body of research has indicated that one of the critical factors determining employee performance is the managerial approach and interpersonal relationships within the organisational context. In particular, the failure of managers to address employees' emotional needs and the weak internal communication which results in such failure have negative effects on job satisfaction and motivation. This situation directly leads to a decline in performance outcomes (Nafar et al., 2021). In tasks involving multi-criteria and strategic decisions, such as the selection of a transport company, it is evident that employees require not only technical knowledge but also managerial support and a psychologically safe environment. It has been determined that employees lacking

sufficient managerial support encounter heightened uncertainty in decision-making processes, exhibit an augmented perception of risk, and consequently exhibit a higher propensity to make sub-optimal choices.

Conversely, staff turnover and employee retention within an organisation are largely influenced by management style, leadership quality and the level of organisational commitment (Wakerman et al., 2019). The preservation and development of tacit knowledge accumulated over time is safeguarded by ensuring that teams responsible for selecting transport companies are stable and reinforced with institutional support. The aforementioned teams do not merely make selections based on technical criteria; they are also able to integrate experiential knowledge derived from long-term relationships with suppliers into their decision-making processes. Consequently, team continuity plays a critical role in both enhancing decision quality and developing sustainable supply chain relationships.

Conversely, high staff turnover has the potential to result in a weakening of organisational memory, inconsistencies in decision-making processes, and discontinuity in supplier relationships. The constant alteration of team structures can impede the implementation of standardised evaluation criteria, thereby resulting in fluctuations in companies' strategic procurement decisions. As emphasised in the extant literature, the strong relationship between leadership quality, organisational support and employee engagement emerges as a decisive factor for the sustainability of performance outcomes (Eisenberger et al., 2002; Huselid, 1995). In such contexts, when undertaking critical decision-making processes, such as the selection of a transport company, it is necessary to consider not only the technical competencies of the company, but also its human resources management practices and leadership approaches in a holistic manner.

4.1. Employee Well-being, Decision Quality and Operational Performance

Research findings indicate that employee well-being is not merely an indicator of individual satisfaction, but a strategic factor that directly shapes the quality of organisational decision-making processes. Indeed, the well-being of employees has been demonstrated to have a significant impact on cognitive capacity, levels of attention, and the quality of decisions made. Consequently, it is widely regarded as a critical factor in the performance of organisations. The adoption of a holistic approach to the multifaceted impacts of employee well-being by human resources management facilitates the development of sustainable support mechanisms that enhance individual well-being and improve the quality of organisational outcomes (Pilcher and Morris, 2020). In this context, the concept of well-being is examined within the framework of complementary and mutually interactive dynamics such as quality of working life, job satisfaction and well-being at work (Sirgy, 2012).

When assessed within this framework, it is observed that employees who are physically rested, psychologically supported and have high job satisfaction are able to make more analytical, rational and consistent assessments, particularly in multi-criteria decision-making processes such as freight forwarder selection. These processes are highly risk-sensitive and have low tolerance for error. The enhancement of employee well-being has been demonstrated to have a positive impact on both individual performance and the effectiveness of cognitive resources utilised in decision-making processes. This, in turn, has been shown to contribute to a more comprehensive analysis of alternatives and a more accurate forecasting of long-term outcomes.

Moreover, the findings suggest that the maintenance of employee morale, and more specifically, the prevention of burnout – a condition frequently encountered in decision-making roles – exerts a direct influence on the reliability and consistency of decisions. The extant literature supports the hypothesis that employees experiencing high levels of burnout exhibit increased distractibility, a tendency to make errors, and an increase in heuristic decision-making behaviour. Conversely, employees with high levels of well-being make more systematic and data-driven decisions. In this context, it is asserted that a series of relatively low-cost measures, including the strengthening of individual recognition mechanisms, the provision of opportunities for continuous learning and skill development, the ensuring of a balanced distribution of workload, and the enhancement of the perception of organisational support, have been shown to significantly improve employees' cognitive performance and analytical capacity (Chin, 2010; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

It is imperative for organisations to consider employee well-being not solely as a human resources policy, but also as a pivotal factor in determining the quality of strategic decisions. In processes with a high level of impact on the supply chain, such as the selection of freight forwarders, any improvement in employee well-being enhances decision accuracy, strengthens the sustainability of supplier relationships, and makes indirect yet significant contributions to overall logistics performance. Consequently, holistic and systematic approaches that

support employee well-being should be regarded as a pivotal management tool with the potential to generate a competitive advantage.

4.2. Quality Assurance and Risk Management in Electoral Processes

The extant research findings indicate that quality assurance programmes, accreditation processes and continuous performance evaluation mechanisms are complementary key elements in achieving sustainable operational success (Huselid, 1995). The aforementioned elements serve to ensure the standardisation of internal processes, thereby reducing uncertainty in decision-making processes. This, in turn, enables the establishment of more objective and comparable evaluation criteria. In this context, the systematic quality assurance frameworks developed serve as a critical decision-support tool in the selection of freight forwarding companies. They ensure that decision-makers act based on measurable performance indicators rather than intuitive approaches.

Consequently, employees in decision-making roles are required to establish clear and measurable performance criteria, set up data-driven control mechanisms that continuously monitor service delivery, and effectively implement structured feedback processes to address any performance deviations that arise. The utilisation of tools such as key performance indicators (KPIs) and service level agreements (SLAs) facilitates the objective evaluation of freight forwarders' operational competence. As emphasised in the extant literature, such structured monitoring and evaluation systems ensure the continuity of supplier performance and enhance the success of long-term partnerships (Gunasekaran et al., 2004).

In the context of error minimisation and the mitigation of operational risks, the training of staff and the regular evaluation of their competencies have been identified as critical requirements (Derwik and Hellström, 2017). This principle applies not only to internal staff selecting freight forwarding companies but also to the human resources structure of freight forwarding firms operating as service providers. The possession of a workforce that is both qualified and continuously developed has been demonstrated to have a direct impact on the reduction of operational errors and the standardisation of service quality. Consequently, during the selection process, it is imperative to consider not only technical criteria such as cost and capacity, but also the service provider's training policies, certification level and staff competency structure.

The findings indicate that successful logistics partnerships depend not only on selecting the right supplier, but also on the selected firm's corporate quality infrastructure and human resources competence. In this context, the concept of quality assurance evolves from a unidirectional control mechanism to a reciprocal monitoring and development process, whereby both the service recipient and the service provider assume a shared responsibility. Consequently, the comprehensive quality assurance system thus established enhances the overall reliability of the logistics network, minimises operational disruptions, and makes significant contributions to the sustainability of supply chain performance.

4.3. Multi-dimensional Risk Assessment and Management in the Selection of Freight Forwarders

Research findings indicate that, for the sustainable success of logistics partnerships, a risk management approach must be regarded not merely as an operational tool, but also as an integral component of selection processes. An effective risk management process is comprised of several stages, including the systematic identification of risks, the conduct of probability and impact analyses, the development of appropriate control strategies, and the elimination, mitigation or transfer of risk (Duncan, 1972). Within this framework, staff responsible for selecting freight forwarders must not limit the evaluation process to quantitative indicators such as cost and capacity; instead, they must consider qualitative factors, such as service quality, speed of information sharing, and transparency of communication, alongside critical criteria like financial stability, operational reliability, and regulatory compliance, within a holistic risk assessment perspective.

Moreover, the scope of elements evaluated in selection and monitoring processes is increasingly expanding; it is no longer limited to physical assets and operational capacity, but also encompasses corporate capabilities such as infrastructure adequacy, technological infrastructure, equipment quality, and quality assurance standards. In particular, the acquisition, development and retention of 'human capital' is emerging as a strategic factor for the performance continuity of logistics service providers (Flynn et al., 2010). It has been observed that firms with qualified human resources and systematic training and development processes manage operational disruptions more effectively and are able to respond more swiftly to customer expectations.

As emphasised in the extant literature, multi-dimensional and integrated risk assessment approaches have been shown to reduce supply chain vulnerabilities and enhance organisations' resilience to unforeseen circumstances (Christopher & Peck, 2004). In this regard, the expansion of risk management frameworks utilised in the freight forwarder selection process to encompass strategic, operational and human resources dimensions is conducive to the establishment of healthier and more sustainable partnerships.

It is imperative that personnel involved in the selection process are not only proficient in technical analysis, but also possess a comprehensive understanding of risk management. This capability enables the anticipation of potential risks that may arise within the company's logistics network, thereby making significant contributions to both ensuring operational continuity and safeguarding corporate performance in the long term.

4.4. Standardisation of Corporate Policies and Election Processes

Research findings indicate that organisations derive significant benefit from standardised procedures that ensure consistency in selection processes and mitigate the impact of individual biases on decision quality. In particular, the integrated implementation of corporate policies focused on risk mitigation alongside systematic staff training is considered one of the most effective approaches for institutionalising selection practices (Sultan-Taïeb et al., 2017). In this context, it is imperative that employees involved in freight forwarder selection operate within a framework of clearly defined evaluation criteria, multi-tiered approval mechanisms, and measurable performance monitoring standards. This contributes directly to enhancing objectivity in decision-making processes and minimising organisational risks.

In order to ensure the ongoing efficacy of selection practices, it is essential that organisational arrangements extend beyond the domain of policy and are operationalised through the medium of operational guidelines and procedural documents (Flynn et al., 2010). In this regard, it is imperative for businesses to establish a comprehensive governance structure that covers the freight forwarder selection process in its entirety. The findings emphasise that all stages of the process – from the initial supplier screening and pre-qualification phase through to detailed evaluation, contract management, continuous performance monitoring, contract renewal and, where necessary, termination criteria – must be supported by clear, transparent and standardised policies. The implementation of a standardisation approach serves to ensure that decisions are no longer contingent upon individual judgment, but rather, they are transformed into an institutional system and organisational culture.

Moreover, the systematic documentation of selection decisions not only enhances accountability but also makes a significant contribution to the development of organisational learning. As Grant (1996) observes, documentation processes have been demonstrated to play a critical role in strategic decision-making mechanisms. Furthermore, they are considered indispensable for the sustainability of organisational memory. In the process of selecting a freight forwarder, it is imperative that staff systematically record the evaluation scales utilised, the supplier scoring results, the decision justifications, and the historical performance data. This practice enhances the transparency of decision-making processes and establishes a reliable database for future evaluations of a similar nature.

A robust documentation culture and standardised procedures have been shown to enhance the quality of current decisions, thereby supporting the organisation's evolution into a learning organisation. This structure facilitates the institutionalisation of knowledge derived from past experiences, accelerates the onboarding processes for new staff, and makes significant contributions to establishing continuity, consistency and strategic alignment in the selection of freight forwarders.

4.5. Multi-Criteria Decision-Making and Objective Evaluation Frameworks

The results of the research indicate that the selection of a freight forwarder is a decision-making process of a complex nature, requiring the balancing of multiple criteria, which are often contradictory in nature. This multi-dimensional evaluation process necessitates the simultaneous consideration of various parameters, including cost, service quality, reliability, flexibility and risk. Consequently, it requires the development of weighting schemes based on scientific principles (Jacobs et al., 2018). At this juncture, it is imperative for decision-makers to employ analytical frameworks such as the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP), TOPSIS, or analogous multi-criteria decision-making (MCDM) methods to systematically evaluate disparate criteria and transform these evaluations into consistent, reproducible, and sustainable decision outputs.

Nevertheless, selection processes are inherently subjective due to a variety of factors, including personal relationships, intuitive approaches based on past experience, and institutional political pressures. This scenario has the potential to engender substantial risks, especially in high-cost and strategically significant logistics decisions. The findings indicate that the establishment of objective evaluation criteria and the implementation of standardised procedures are of critical importance in mitigating the impact of individual biases and external influences on decision-making processes (Garman et al., 2011). Consequently, organisations are obliged to develop transparent and auditable control mechanisms that base freight forwarder selection processes on data-driven performance indicators.

Conversely, the effective implementation of such analytical and systematic approaches is contingent upon the competence level of the decision-makers. The extant research findings indicate with a high degree of clarity that organisations must make strategic investments in developing the competency set of staff responsible for freight forwarder selection. In this context, it is essential to design comprehensive training programmes covering areas such as advanced logistics and supply chain management knowledge, strategic negotiation skills, financial analysis competence, and mastery of modern supplier management approaches. Nevertheless, the sustainable development of these competencies should not be confined to training activities alone; an integrated human resources strategy must be established, encompassing continuous training and development programmes, performance management systems, and reward and incentive mechanisms that encourage these competencies, starting from the recruitment process (Youndt et al., 2017).

The selection of a freight forwarder can be approached in a considered manner, with the objective of achieving a balance between quality and sustainability. This can be achieved through the implementation of multi-criteria analytical methods, the establishment of organisational structures that minimise subjective influences, and the strategic development of the human resources required to manage these processes. The simultaneous and coordinated management of these three elements has been shown to enhance organisations' logistics performance and contribute to their competitive advantage.

4.6. Structured Selection Processes and Continuous Performance Monitoring

The findings of recent research suggest that organisations are most able to benefit from selection processes that are structured, in which evaluation criteria are clearly defined, approval workflows are standardised and integrated audit mechanisms are incorporated into the process. Such systematic approaches enhance operational order and strengthen the principles of transparency, traceability and accountability in decision-making processes. The application of disciplined, data-driven processes in the domains of staff recruitment and strategic supplier selection has been demonstrated to enhance organisational effectiveness and significantly reduce decision-making errors (Garman et al., 2011). In the context of freight forwarder selection, this structured approach enables decisions to be made on a basis that is independent of individual judgement, grounded in organisational criteria, and justifiable.

However, the findings indicate that treating selection processes as static, one-off decision-making moments is insufficient; rather, these processes must be supported by dynamic, cyclical mechanisms and continuous feedback loops. In this context, the regular monitoring and evaluation of supplier performance, alongside the implementation of improvement actions based on the findings, is of paramount importance. In particular, periodic performance measurements conducted through tools such as key performance indicators (KPIs) and service level agreements (SLAs) contribute to maintaining the validity of the initial selection and ensuring adaptation to changing operational needs.

The integration of quality assurance programmes into the corporate structure represents a pivotal component in this dynamic process. The implementation of systematic quality assurance practices enables freight forwarding firms to evaluate service performance against objective criteria, whilst also ensuring that potential deviations are identified at an early stage (Huselid, 1995). Consequently, organisations are able not only to monitor current performance but also to manage risks proactively and continuously improve service quality.

A management approach that integrates structured selection processes with continuous monitoring and evaluation mechanisms plays a critical role in ensuring sustainable quality and performance in logistics operations. This cyclical process of selection and audit is regarded as a pivotal management instrument, facilitating the attainment of both immediate operational objectives and the establishment of long-term strategic resilience and competitive advantage.

The findings of this study are derived from a synthesis of the extant literature. In lieu of presenting empirical results, this section identifies recurring themes and their implications for the selection of freight forwarders.

Table 2. Synthesis of Literature-Based Findings on Employee-Driven Freight Forwarder Selection

Theme	Key Findings from Literature	Impact on Decision-Making	Implication for Freight Forwarder Selection
Individual Competencies	Employees with strong technical knowledge, sectoral experience and analytical skills make more accurate evaluations	Enhances analytical thinking and risk assessment	Leads to more reliable and effective forwarder selection
HRM Practices	Recruitment, training and performance management systems support employee capability development	Improves consistency and reduces individual bias	Enables structured and systematic selection processes
Selection System Quality	Valid, reliable and standardised selection criteria increase objectivity	Reduces errors and uncertainty in decisions	Ensures more accurate and performance-based forwarder evaluation
High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS)	Integrated organisational systems improve information sharing and decision alignment	Strengthens strategic consistency of decisions	Supports long-term and value-driven logistics partnerships
Workforce Stability & Organisational Memory	Employee retention preserves institutional knowledge and past experience	Reduces inconsistency and knowledge loss	Enhances continuity and long-term supplier relationships
Training and Development	Continuous learning and mentoring improve employee competencies	Increases decision accuracy and reduces risk	Strengthens evaluation capability in complex selection processes
Work Environment & Ergonomics	High workload, stress and poor working conditions negatively affect cognitive performance	Decreases attention and decision quality	May lead to suboptimal or biased forwarder selection
Employee Well-being	Psychological and physical well-being improve cognitive flexibility and focus	Enhances judgment accuracy and rationality	Leads to more consistent and high-quality decisions
Decision-Making Effectiveness	Central mechanism integrating all individual and organisational factors	Determines the accuracy and consistency of decisions	Directly influences success of forwarder selection
Selection Performance	Effective decisions result in better operational and strategic outcomes	Reflects overall success of the selection process	Improves cost efficiency, reliability and logistics performance

As illustrated in Table 2, a systematic synthesis of the literature-based findings has been conducted, with alignment to the conceptual framework introduced in Table 1. The findings suggest that the effectiveness of decision-making processes in the selection of freight forwarding companies is influenced by a combination of individual-level factors (e.g., competencies and well-being) and organisational-level factors (including HRM practices, training systems, and work environment conditions). In particular, the effectiveness of decision-making emerges as a central mechanism through which these factors translate into tangible selection outcomes.

The findings further demonstrate that organisational elements such as high-performance work systems, workforce stability, and structured training programmes not only enhance employee competencies but also ensure the consistency and reliability of decisions. Conversely, adverse working conditions, high workload, and insufficient organisational support have been demonstrated to weaken cognitive performance and lead to suboptimal decision outcomes (Smith et al., 2023). This underscores the significance of adopting a holistic and integrated approach in the management of both human and organisational resources within the context of logistics decision-making.

The synthesis indicates that the success of freight forwarder selection is not solely dependent on technical or economic criteria, but rather on the dynamic interaction between human capital, organisational systems, and the quality of decision-making. Consequently, organisations aspiring to enhance their logistics performance should accord priority to the development of employee competencies, the implementation of systematic HR

practices, and the establishment of supportive work environments that enhance decision accuracy and consistency.

5. CONCLUSION

The present study demonstrates that the selection process of freight forwarders is not merely a problem of supplier selection based on technical criteria such as cost, speed and service quality, as is commonly addressed in the literature. Rather, it is a multi-layered decision-making process shaped by the interaction of individual competencies, organisational structure and human resource management practices. In this respect, the study shifts the focus of freight forwarder selection away from a 'firm-centred' approach and re-positions it within an 'employee-centred decision-making perspective', thereby filling a significant gap in the literature.

The findings indicate that employees' individual competencies, including technical knowledge, analytical thinking capacity, sectoral experience and risk perception, are pivotal in the accuracy of selection decisions. However, the study also demonstrates that these competencies alone are insufficient. A seminal insight derived from the study is the recognition that individual competencies, in and of themselves, are capable of generating value only within the confines of an organisational context that is commensurate with their requirements. Indeed, factors such as organisational support, training opportunities, management style and the corporate policy framework determine the extent to which employees' potential is reflected in the quality of decisions. This finding underscores the indirect yet significant impact of competency-based human resources management approaches on logistics decision-making processes.

Another salient point of discussion highlighted in the study is the relationship between the scientific validity of selection criteria and organisational performance. The findings indicate that selection processes which are not based on systematically defined criteria, are not measurable, or are subjective may result in operational disruptions, increased costs, and deterioration in supply chain performance in the long term. This situation underscores the necessity for the tools and criteria sets employed in the selection of freight forwarders to be founded not solely on experience, but also on analytical and standardised frameworks. In this context, the study lends support to the broader implementation of multi-criteria decision-making (MCDM) methods and data-driven evaluation systems in the domain of logistics management.

When assessed at the organisational level, it is observed that high-performance work systems and structured decision-making mechanisms enhance consistency and sustainability in selection processes. In particular, elements such as information sharing, organisational memory and staff retention create a strategic advantage in freight forwarder selection. Conversely, high staff turnover signifies not only a loss of manpower but also a loss of supplier relationships, historical performance data and sectoral networks. This finding indicates that the relationship between human resources management and supply chain performance is significantly stronger than previously assumed.

The research also clearly demonstrates the impact of factors such as employee well-being, workload and psychological well-being on decision quality. It is understood that situations such as time pressure, high workload and burnout increase employees' tendency to make more intuitive and superficial decisions; conversely, a supportive and balanced working environment encourages more analytical and rational decisions. In this respect, the study demonstrates that the 'human factor' in logistics decision-making processes is not merely a technical variable, but also a critical element determining cognitive performance.

When evaluated from the perspective of quality assurance systems and risk management, it has been concluded that the freight forwarder selection process is not a static decision point, but a dynamic and cyclical process. It has been observed that successful organisations do not merely select the most appropriate supplier, but also provide ongoing support for this choice by means of continuous performance monitoring, feedback and improvement mechanisms. This underscores the necessity to approach the selection process as a dynamic component of supply chain management.

A significant contribution of the study is the demonstration of the role that corporate policies and standardised procedures play in reducing individual biases. The findings demonstrate that transparent, documented and auditable selection processes foster a corporate decision-making culture by preventing decisions from being dependent on individuals. In this context, documentation and organisational learning processes are regarded not only as tools for monitoring past decisions but also as strategic instruments that enhance the quality of future decisions.

From an implementation perspective, the study offers organisations significant managerial implications. Firstly, it is imperative that personnel tasked with the selection of freight forwarders are endowed with not only operational competencies, but also analytical and strategic aptitudes. In this regard, it is of critical importance for organisations to develop systematic training programmes, integrate multi-criteria decision-making tools into their processes, and make performance monitoring systems an integral part of corporate policy. In addition, human resources practices that support employee well-being and preserve organisational memory should be regarded as strategic investments that have a direct impact on logistics performance.

Consequently, the selection of a freight forwarder should be approached as a holistic decision-making domain situated at the intersection of human resources management, organisational behaviour, and supply chain management disciplines. This study makes a conceptual contribution to the existing literature by demonstrating that the aforementioned process is shaped by the interaction between individual competencies and organisational structures.

However, given that the study is based on a qualitative literature review, it necessitates the empirical testing of the findings. It is suggested that future research which analyses the relationships between employee competencies and freight forwarder performance using quantitative methods, conducts comparative studies across different sectors and country contexts, and examines the impact of digitalisation (such as AI-supported decision-making systems) on this process will make significant contributions to the literature.

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