

Logistics Capability, Supply Chain Resilience and SME Performance: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract: Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) face severe resource constraints, making them highly vulnerable to supply chain disruptions. While logistics capability, supply chain resilience, and firm performance are widely studied independently, their interrelationship remains fragmented within the SME context. Using PRISMA 2020 guidelines, this paper systematically reviews literature up to December 2023 to synthesize the connections between these three constructs. Findings indicate that core logistics capabilities—such as transportation, inventory management, information visibility, and coordination—enhance resilience by improving operational flexibility and recovery speed. Consequently, this resilience positively impacts SMEs' operational, market, and financial performance, though outcomes vary based on disruption type and industry context. Key enablers of this dynamic include digitalization, supply chain integration, and information sharing. Ultimately, this paper proposes an integrated framework linking logistics capability, resilience, and performance, while outlining a future research agenda focused on emerging economies and under-researched regional ecosystems.

Keywords: Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs), Logistics capabilities, Supply Chain Resilience.

1. Introduction

Small and medium-sized enterprises constitute a substantial component of economic activity and employment in most economies. However, SMEs frequently operate with fewer financial resources, narrower supplier bases, limited technological capabilities and lower levels of organisational slack than larger firms. These characteristics can make them particularly vulnerable to disruptions in supply, transportation, inventory availability, demand and market access.

The increasing frequency and complexity of supply-chain disruptions have consequently shifted attention from conventional supply-chain efficiency towards resilience. Supply chain resilience broadly concerns the capacity of a supply chain or organisation to anticipate, respond to and recover from disruptive events while maintaining or restoring desired operations. Early conceptual work by **Ponomarov and Holcomb (2009)** helped establish resilience as an important concept within logistics and supply-chain management, while **Pettit et al. (2010)** conceptualised resilience through the interaction between supply-chain vulnerabilities and capabilities.

The resilience literature subsequently moved towards identifying specific capabilities. **Brandon-Jones et al. (2014)**, for example, demonstrated relationships among information sharing, connectivity, visibility and resilience using evidence from UK manufacturing plants. **Ambulkar et al. (2015)** further showed that disruption orientation alone is insufficient to produce resilience and that resource reconfiguration and risk-management infrastructure are important mechanisms.

Within this literature, **logistics capability** represents an especially relevant but comparatively under-integrated dimension. Logistics capabilities determine how effectively firms manage transportation, inventory, warehousing, order fulfilment, information and distribution activities. Recent research explicitly identifies logistics capability as an enabler of supply-chain resilience. A 2022 study, for example, developed a logistics-based perspective on resilience and linked logistics capabilities with resilient supply-chain outcomes using dynamic-capability and contingency perspectives.

The importance of this relationship is particularly apparent for SMEs. **Bak et al. (2023)** conducted an SLR of 101 journal articles published between 2006 and 2019 and identified four major areas of SME supply-chain resilience research: collaboration and culture, SME capabilities, information systems, and cost and financing. However, their review was principally concerned with **SME supply-chain resilience**, rather than specifically integrating logistics capability, resilience and SME performance into one analytical framework. Similarly, **Mishra and Singh (2023)**, identified 46 relevant studies concerning supply-chain resilience in SMEs in the context of COVID-19, demonstrating the rapid expansion of the literature following the pandemic. These reviews provide an important foundation, but they also demonstrate the need for further synthesis of the specific pathway:

Logistics Capability → Supply Chain Resilience → SME Performance

2. Problem Statement

Three streams of research have developed substantially but remain partially disconnected.

- First, logistics research examines capabilities associated with transportation, warehousing, inventory, information management, distribution and coordination.
- Second, supply-chain resilience research examines how organisations prepare for and respond to disruptions through capabilities such as flexibility, agility, visibility, collaboration, redundancy and reconfiguration.
- Third, SME-performance research investigates how organisational and supply-chain capabilities contribute to operational, financial and competitive outcomes.

Although these streams overlap conceptually, the literature does not provide a sufficiently integrated understanding of how logistics capabilities become resilience capabilities and how resilience subsequently influences SME performance. This issue is important because the logistics function is often the operational mechanism through which SMEs experience disruptions. Transportation delays, supplier interruptions, inventory shortages, inadequate information and distribution constraints can directly affect production and customer service. Recent evidence reinforces this connection. **Nguyen's 2023** study of Vietnamese textile enterprises found that inbound logistics capability positively affected dynamic supply-chain capabilities and subsequently supply-chain resilience.

3. Review Objectives

1. Examine the evolution of research on logistics capability, supply-chain resilience and SME performance.
2. Identify the principal dimensions of logistics capability discussed in the literature.
3. Identify the principal dimensions of supply-chain resilience relevant to SMEs.
4. Examine the relationship between logistics capability and supply-chain resilience.
5. Examine the relationship between supply-chain resilience and SME performance.
6. Identify major theoretical, methodological and contextual gaps.
7. Develop an integrated conceptual framework.

4. Conceptual Foundations

4.1 Logistics Capability

Logistics capability can be understood as an organisation's ability to effectively configure and deploy resources for managing the movement and storage of goods, information and related activities. The literature commonly associates logistics capability with:

a. Transportation management: Mason, Ribera, Farris, & Kirk (2003) examined the integration of transportation and warehousing functions and showed the importance of linking transportation information with warehouse information for supply-chain decision-making. Shang & Marlow (2005) examined logistics capabilities and performance in Taiwanese manufacturing firms and established a relationship between logistics capabilities and logistics/financial performance. Salazar Otálora et al. (2022), in an SME-focused systematic review, identified logistics infrastructure, supply, storage and distribution among important components of SME logistics capability

b. Inventory management: For SMEs, this is particularly important because excess inventory ties up scarce financial resources, while insufficient inventory can result in production interruptions and lost customers. The SME logistics-capability literature identifies inventory/storage-related capabilities as important components of broader logistics capability.

c. Warehousing: Warehousing capability involves the firm's ability to receive, store, handle, retrieve and dispatch products efficiently. Mason et al. (2003) are particularly relevant because they examined warehousing and transportation integration, showing that warehouse and transportation information cannot always be managed effectively as isolated functions.

d. Order fulfilment: Cho, Ozment and Sink (2008) examined logistics capability and firm performance in e-commerce markets and found a positive relationship between logistics capability and firm performance.

Research on Indian third-party logistics providers has also examined order management as one component of logistics capability.

e. Distribution: The systematic review by Salazar Otálora et al. (2023) identifies distribution, together with supply, storage, infrastructure, technology and innovation, as important elements of logistics capability among SMEs. The 2022 study by Yakuttinah et al. also examined logistics capability and SME performance and explicitly included distribution within its SME context.

f. Information management: Shang and Marlow (2005), study of 1,200 Taiwanese manufacturing firms found that information-based capability was the most critical capability, influencing benchmarking capability, flexibility and logistics performance. It also had an indirect effect on financial performance through logistics performance.

g. Logistics coordination: Mason et al. (2003), for example, demonstrate why transportation and warehousing cannot always be treated as isolated functions. Similarly, research on supply-chain capabilities emphasises coordination and information sharing as mechanisms through which firms improve supply-chain outcomes.

h. Responsiveness: Lu and Yang's research on international distribution-centre operators identified customer response capability as one of three important logistics-service capability dimensions, alongside innovation and flexible operations. Shang and Marlow (2005) also found an important relationship between information-based capability, flexibility and logistics performance.

i. Flexibility: Shang and Marlow identified flexibility capability within their logistics-capability framework, with information-based capability influencing flexibility and logistics performance. Lu and Yang similarly identified flexible operation capability as a major logistics-service capability.

j. Logistics integration: Mason et al. (2003) provide a useful foundation by examining integration between warehousing and transportation. Shang and Marlow's findings similarly suggest that information capability can influence multiple logistics capabilities and ultimately logistics performance, which supports an integrated rather than purely functional view of logistics capability.

Importantly, logistics capability should not be reduced to transportation alone. Contemporary supply chains require coordinated physical and information flows.

The logistics-resilience study explicitly argues that logistics capability can function as an important enabler of supply-chain resilience.

4.2 Supply Chain Resilience

Supply-chain resilience has developed from a relatively broad concept into a multidimensional construct. **Ponomarov and Holcomb (2009)** contributed to establishing an integrated understanding of resilience within logistics and supply-chain research. **Pettit et al. (2010)** conceptualised resilience through the relationship between vulnerabilities and capabilities, proposing a framework containing vulnerability factors and resilience capabilities. A systematic review by **Tukamuhabwa et al. (2015)** consolidated these conceptual developments and identified several resilience strategies and theoretical foundations. More recent literature has expanded the field towards digitalisation, supply-chain risk management, innovation, sustainability and network-level resilience. **Chauhan et al. (2023)**, for example, identified digitalisation, Industry 4.0, innovation, capabilities, risk management, circular economy and sustainability as major themes in the resilience literature. **Bak et al. (2023)**, in a systematic review of 101 articles on SME supply-chain resilience, identified collaboration and culture, SME capabilities, information systems, and cost and financing as four major focal areas. These findings suggest that SME resilience depends not only on physical logistics resources but also on information, organisational and relational capabilities. Another important stream of research examines the performance consequences of supply-chain resilience. **Li et al. (2023)**, through a systematic review and citation-network analysis of 135 articles, identified supply-chain agility, risk management and supply-chain reengineering as major resilience strategy clusters and examined their effects on firm performance.

4.3 SME Context

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) occupy a distinctive position within supply chains because their operational structures, resource availability, and relationships with external partners differ considerably from those of large firms. Although SMEs contribute substantially to employment, innovation and economic activity, they commonly operate with comparatively limited financial resources, technological capabilities, managerial expertise and organisational slack. These characteristics can increase their exposure to supply-chain disruptions and constrain their ability to absorb, respond to and recover from unexpected events. In the context of supply-chain resilience, SMEs therefore require capabilities that allow them to manage uncertainty while maintaining continuity of operations. **Bak et al. (2023)**, in a systematic literature review of 101 studies on SME supply-chain resilience, identified four major areas of research: collaboration and organisational culture, SME capabilities, information systems, and cost and financing. Their findings indicate that resilience in SMEs is shaped not only by internal operational capabilities but also by relationships with supply-chain partners, access to information and financial resources.

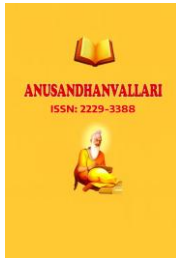
The resource constraints faced by SMEs can simultaneously increase vulnerability and encourage flexibility. Unlike large organisations, SMEs may have limited capacity to maintain redundant inventories, multiple suppliers, alternative distribution channels or dedicated risk-management systems. Consequently, relationships with suppliers, customers and logistics-service providers can become particularly important sources of resilience. Collaboration and information sharing can improve visibility and facilitate coordinated responses when disruptions occur. Research on SMEs during the COVID-19 pandemic similarly demonstrates the importance of digital communication and information technologies in maintaining relationships with suppliers, customers and employees and supporting organisational adaptation. Thus, SME resilience should be understood as a combination of internal capabilities and external relational resources, rather than simply as the ability of an individual firm to recover from a disruption.

5. Methodology

This study adopts a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to identify, evaluate and synthesise existing research on the relationship between logistics capability, supply chain resilience and SME performance. The review follows the PRISMA 2020 guidelines (Page et al., 2021) to ensure a transparent and systematic study-selection process. The literature search covers peer-reviewed English-language journal articles published between 2000 and 2023, with Scopus and Web of Science serving as the principal databases and other scholarly databases used for supplementary searches where required. The search strategy combines keywords and synonyms related to logistics capability, supply chain resilience and SMEs using Boolean operators. The principal search terms include “logistics capability,” “logistics competence,” “supply chain resilience,” “resilient supply chain,” “SME,” “small and medium enterprise,” and “small business.” Studies were included when they addressed logistics/supply-chain capabilities, resilience, SMEs or their relationship with organisational performance, while books, conference papers, dissertations, non-English publications and studies outside the research scope were excluded. The identification, screening, eligibility and inclusion of studies were conducted systematically, with duplicate records removed before title, abstract and full-text screening. Data from the selected studies were extracted using a structured framework covering publication characteristics, geographical and industrial context, theoretical perspective, research methodology, logistics capability dimensions, resilience mechanisms and performance outcomes. The review employs descriptive and thematic synthesis to identify recurring patterns and relationships in the literature. Particular attention is given to logistics capability dimensions such as transportation, inventory, warehousing, distribution, information management, coordination, responsiveness, flexibility and integration, and resilience dimensions including agility, robustness, adaptability, visibility, collaboration, risk management and recovery capability. The synthesis examines three principal relationships: logistics capability → supply chain resilience, supply chain resilience → SME performance, and logistics capability → SME performance, while also considering contextual factors such as digitalisation, information sharing, supply-chain integration, collaboration and resource availability. The findings are subsequently integrated to develop a conceptual framework and identify theoretical, methodological and geographical research gaps and future research directions.

6. Integrated Conceptual Framework

The relationship between logistics capability, supply chain resilience and SME performance can be conceptualised as an integrated capability–resilience–performance pathway. Logistics capability provides SMEs with the operational resources and competencies required to manage the movement, storage and coordination of products and information across the supply chain. Capabilities related to transportation, inventory, warehousing, distribution, order fulfilment, information management, coordination, flexibility and logistics integration can enhance an SME's ability to respond to changing supply and demand conditions. The literature on logistics capability suggests that these capabilities can contribute to operational efficiency, service quality and competitive performance, while the resilience literature indicates that flexibility, information visibility, collaboration and resource reconfiguration are important for responding to supply-chain disruptions. Thus, logistics capability can be viewed not only as an efficiency-oriented operational resource but also as a potential foundation for developing resilience. In particular, information management and logistics coordination can improve visibility and facilitate faster responses, while transportation and inventory capabilities can provide alternative options and buffers when normal supply-chain operations are disrupted. Supply chain resilience provides the connecting mechanism between logistics capability and SME performance. Resilience refers broadly to an organisation's ability to prepare for, respond to, adapt to and recover from supply-chain disruptions. For SMEs, this capability is particularly significant because resource constraints may increase their exposure to disruptions and limit their ability to maintain redundant resources, alternative suppliers or multiple distribution channels. When logistics capabilities are combined with agility, flexibility, collaboration, visibility, risk-management and recovery capabilities, SMEs



may be better positioned to maintain operational continuity during disruption. Consequently, resilience can influence performance through improved delivery reliability, continuity of operations, customer service, cost management, market responsiveness and the ability to recover from unexpected events. The conceptual relationship can therefore be expressed as **Logistics Capability → Supply Chain Resilience → SME Performance**, while a direct relationship between logistics capability and SME performance may also exist. The strength of these relationships may depend on contextual factors such as digitalisation, information sharing, supply-chain integration, collaboration, financial resources, technological capability and environmental uncertainty. Accordingly, the framework positions supply chain resilience as a potential mediating mechanism through which logistics capabilities are translated into sustainable SME performance, while recognising that the nature and strength of these relationships remain areas for further empirical investigation.

Linking Logistics Capability, Supply Chain Resilience and SME Performance

Proposed conceptual framework derived from the systematic literature review

LOGISTICS CAPABILITY

Transportation • Inventory • Warehousing • Order fulfilment • Distribution
Information management • Coordination • Responsiveness • Flexibility • Integration



SUPPLY CHAIN RESILIENCE

Agility • Flexibility • Robustness • Visibility • Collaboration
Risk management • Adaptability • Response • Recovery



SME PERFORMANCE

Operational performance • Financial/business performance
Market performance • Customer/service performance

Direct pathway

Logistics capability may also directly contribute to SME performance through efficiency, service quality and cost management.

Contextual factors

Digitalisation • Information sharing • Supply-chain integration • Collaboration • Financial resources • Environmental uncertainty

Core pathway: Logistics Capability → Supply Chain Resilience → SME Performance

7. Research Gaps

The systematic synthesis identifies several important gaps.

Gap 1: Fragmentation between logistics and resilience literature: Much resilience research focuses on broad organisational or supply-chain capabilities, while logistics research often focuses on efficiency and performance. The direct pathway from: **Logistics capability → resilience** requires further integration.

Gap 2: Limited SME-specific evidence: Although SME resilience research has expanded, the evidence remains smaller than the broader supply-chain resilience literature. **Bak et al.**'s review of 101 SME articles demonstrates the importance of this research stream but also identified substantial future research opportunities.

Gap 3: Limited evidence from emerging economies: Much of the established resilience literature is concentrated in developed economies. The emerging-economy evidence is growing, including research from Saudi Arabia, Vietnam, Nigeria and India. However, substantial regional variation remains.

Gap 4: Insufficient integration of digitalisation: Digital technologies are increasingly associated with resilience, but the literature has not fully established how specific logistics technologies transform logistics capability into resilience capability. Potential technologies include: ERP, IoT, AI, cloud systems, digital platforms, GPS/tracking, data analytics.

Gap 5: Regional and sectoral gaps: Existing research on logistics and supply chain resilience varies considerably across sectors, including manufacturing, agriculture, retail, services, food processing, textiles, and logistics providers. Similarly, geographical coverage remains uneven, with limited evidence from several emerging and regional economies. In particular, research on SMEs in India and the Northeast Indian region remains relatively limited, highlighting the need for context-specific studies examining logistics capabilities, supply chain resilience, and SME performance.

8. Discussion

The systematic review indicates that logistics capability, supply chain resilience and SME performance are closely interconnected, although previous studies have often examined these constructs separately. Logistics capabilities—including transportation, inventory, warehousing, distribution, information management, coordination and flexibility—provide SMEs with the operational foundation to manage uncertainty and maintain continuity. These findings are consistent with the logistics capability literature, which associates effective logistics capabilities with improved operational and organisational performance (Shang & Marlow, 2005; Cho et al., 2008). The review further indicates that resilience capabilities such as agility, flexibility, information sharing, collaboration and resource reconfiguration can strengthen SMEs' ability to respond to and recover from supply-chain disruptions (Pettit et al., 2010; Tukamuhabwa et al., 2015; Bak et al., 2023).

A key implication of the review is that supply chain resilience may serve as an important mechanism linking logistics capability with SME performance. Effective transportation, inventory and information capabilities can improve disruption preparedness and responsiveness, which may subsequently support operational continuity, customer service and market performance. Thus, the relationship can be conceptualised as **Logistics Capability → Supply Chain Resilience → SME Performance**, while logistics capability may also have a direct effect on performance. The review also highlights the potential importance of digitalisation, information sharing, supply-chain integration, collaboration and financial resources in shaping these relationships. From a theoretical perspective, the Resource-Based View and Dynamic Capability View provide complementary explanations: logistics capabilities represent valuable organisational resources, while resilience reflects the ability to adapt and reconfigure those resources under changing conditions. Overall, the findings support an integrated perspective in which logistics capability provides the foundation for resilience, and resilience helps SMEs sustain performance under uncertainty.

9. Conclusion

This systematic literature review examined the relationship between logistics capability, supply chain resilience and SME performance based on literature published up to 2023. The review indicates that logistics capability extends beyond routine transportation and inventory activities and encompasses a broader set of capabilities, including warehousing, distribution, information management, coordination, responsiveness, flexibility and integration. These capabilities provide SMEs with an operational foundation for managing uncertainty and maintaining supply-chain continuity.

The review further suggests that supply chain resilience represents an important mechanism through which logistics capabilities can contribute to SME performance. SMEs with stronger logistics and adaptive capabilities

may be better positioned to anticipate, respond to and recover from disruptions, thereby supporting operational continuity, customer service and business performance. The conceptual relationship proposed in this review is therefore **Logistics Capability → Supply Chain Resilience → SME Performance**, alongside a possible direct relationship between logistics capability and performance. However, the literature remains fragmented, particularly regarding SME-specific contexts, measurement approaches, geographical coverage and the mediating role of resilience. Future research should therefore empirically test this integrated framework across different SME sectors and emerging-economy contexts while examining the influence of digitalisation, collaboration, information sharing, financial resources and supply-chain integration. Overall, this review provides a foundation for developing a more integrated understanding of how logistics capabilities can contribute to resilient and sustainable SME performance.

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