

Exploring Behavior-Oriented Decision Optimization among Logistics Service Supply Chain Managers in China: A Phenomenological Inquiry

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Abstract. This study addresses the limited understanding of behavior-oriented decision optimization (BODO) among logistics service supply chain managers in China, despite its critical role in navigating the complexities of modern logistics. The research aimed to explore managers' lived experiences and decision-making behaviors employing BODO strategies. Using a Husserlian descriptive phenomenological design, the study was conducted from June 2024 to January 2025 with seven purposively selected logistics managers from Jiangxi Province, China. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using Colaizzi's method to extract significant statements and thematic clusters. Findings revealed seven key themes: (1) Navigating the dynamic logistics environment, emphasizing technology, collaboration, and sustainability; (2) The role of behavioral traits, such as visionary leadership and team synergy, in decision-making; (3) Behavioral excellence enhancing operational, organizational, and interpersonal dynamics; (4) Strengthening decision-making capacity through behavioral optimization; (5) Challenges in implementing BODO, including cultural and resource constraints; (6) Self-awareness as a foundational trait in refining decisions and communication; and (7) Strategic dynamics involving the integration of behavioral insights at multiple organizational levels. The results underscore that BODO is a multifaceted process shaped by personal, organizational, and contextual factors. Managers who effectively apply behavioral insights enhance decision quality, foster collaboration, improve customer experiences, and contribute to organizational adaptability and innovation. The study contributes to the literature by highlighting behavior as a critical dimension of decision optimization, offering practical insights for leadership development and strategic operations in logistics.

Keywords: Behavior-oriented decision optimization; Logistics service; Strategic leadership; Decision-making behavior; China.

1.0 Introduction

China's logistics service supply chain (LSSC) sector has undergone substantial transformation over the past decade, primarily fueled by the country's rapid economic expansion, accelerated urbanization, and escalating demand for high-performance logistics solutions (Li et al., 2023). As global integration and digital technologies continue to reshape the competitive terrain, logistics managers must make high-stakes decisions that simultaneously address cost efficiency, service quality, and sustainability imperatives (Havale et al., 2024). These decisions, often undertaken under conditions of uncertainty and complexity, necessitate a dual emphasis on technical proficiency and behavioral competence. In this context, Monjur and Akon (2023) assert that the strategic

success of supply chain operations is contingent upon the ability to make informed and adaptive decisions that facilitate the seamless flow of goods, services, and information.

Extant literature in the field of supply chain management has predominantly focused on digitalization, structural optimization, and operational efficiency (Fu et al., 2022; Stroumpoulis & Kopanaki, 2022; Jaboo et al., 2024; Yang et al., 2021). Although these studies provide foundational insights into performance enhancement, they often overlook the behavioral underpinnings of managerial decision-making. A growing body of research now emphasizes the critical influence of human factors, including leadership behavior, emotional intelligence, communication styles, and team dynamics, on organizational outcomes (Holloway, 2024; Fantozzi et al., 2024; Toufighi et al., 2024). Farinha et al. (2024) further argue that effective logistics management is fundamentally embedded in social and cultural contexts, highlighting the necessity for behavior-oriented approaches. This study centers on behavior-oriented decision-making (BODM), which is conceptualized as integrating behavioral attributes such as self-awareness, empathy, collaboration, emotional regulation, and resilience into the managerial decision-making process. Contrary to traditional rationalist paradigms that emphasize logic and efficiency, BODM recognizes the inherently human, emotionally responsive, and socially embedded nature of decision-making in logistics environments. It reflects a shift from purely mechanistic frameworks to those that incorporate psychological and interpersonal dimensions.

The study's theoretical foundation is anchored in Behavioral Decision Theory (Simon, 1955; Kahneman & Tversky, 1979), which posits that decision-makers operate within the bounds of cognitive and emotional limitations. Complementing this are Emotional Intelligence Theory (Cherniss, 2000), Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986), and Transformational Leadership Theory, all of which collectively assert that behavioral competencies significantly shape managerial efficacy. These perspectives suggest that decision optimization is a multifaceted process encompassing analytical, emotional, and relational domains.

This study adopts a qualitative phenomenological methodology to explore the nuances of behavior-oriented decision-making, specifically following the Husserlian descriptive tradition. This approach is appropriate for uncovering the lived experiences of logistics service supply chain managers, providing rich, context-sensitive insights into their behavioral and strategic decision practices. While quantitative studies dominate current discourse, they often fail to account for the subjective, experiential, and interpersonal realities that inform decision-making in high-pressure environments. This methodological gap underscores the relevance of qualitative inquiry to surface tacit knowledge, behavioral patterns, and emotional insights that are otherwise obscured in positivist models.

The research was conducted in Jiangxi Province, China, a region characterized by rapid industrial development and a growing demand for advanced logistics services. By examining how logistics managers in this context employ behavior-oriented decision strategies, the study seeks to illuminate the intersection between individual behavior and organizational outcomes. The findings contribute to a more holistic framework for understanding logistics leadership and provide actionable insights for enhancing agility, innovation, and human-centered decision-making within complex supply chain ecosystems.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a Husserlian descriptive phenomenological design to investigate the lived experiences of logistics service supply chain managers in applying behavior-oriented decision optimization (BODO). Rooted in the philosophical tradition of Edmund Husserl, this approach emphasizes *epoché* or bracketing, which involves the intentional suspension of the researcher's presuppositions to apprehend the phenomenon as experienced by the participants themselves. Phenomenology was selected for its capacity to elicit in-depth, first-person accounts and uncover the underlying structures of experience, particularly suited for examining managerial decision-making's affective, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions.

2.2 Research Locale

The study was conducted in Jiangxi Province, China, an emerging industrial and logistics hub characterized by expanding infrastructure and increasing participation in domestic and international trade networks. This locale provided a relevant and dynamic context in which managers confront decision-making challenges in real-time,

under conditions shaped by rapid technological adoption and shifting market demands.

2.3 Research Participants

A total of seven (7) logistics service supply chain managers were purposively selected based on the following inclusion criteria: (1) current managerial role in logistics or supply chain operations; (2) minimum of five years of relevant professional experience; (3) age of 30 years or older; (4) direct involvement in strategic and operational decision-making; and (5) willingness to participate in a one-on-one, in-depth interview. These criteria ensured experiential adequacy and relevance to the study objectives. The sample size reflects qualitative methodological standards emphasizing data richness over statistical generalizability. Guest et al. (2020) suggest that thematic saturation in phenomenological studies is typically reached within six to twelve interviews. In the present study, data saturation was attained by the sixth participant, as no new categories or themes emerged thereafter, affirming the sufficiency of the sample (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

2.4 Research Instrument

In alignment with phenomenological methodology, the primary research instrument was the researcher. A semi-structured interview guide, informed by literature and expert validation, was utilized to probe participants' behavioral tendencies, decision-making strategies, and leadership experiences related to BODO. The guide incorporated open-ended questions to facilitate narrative elaboration and was piloted to ensure clarity. Interviews were conducted in Mandarin, audio-recorded with consent, transcribed verbatim, and subsequently translated into English. Field notes and reflective memos were maintained to document contextual nuances and enhance interpretative depth.

2.5 Data Gathering Procedure

Data were collected between June 2024 and January 2025 through scheduled interviews, arranged via formal invitations and professional referrals. Interviews were conducted in private office settings or through secure digital platforms (e.g., Tencent Meeting, Zoom), depending on participant availability. Each session lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes. The interviews followed a semi-structured format with flexibility for probing emergent issues. Data collection continued until data saturation was achieved, confirmed through the recurrence of patterns and the absence of novel insights in successive interviews.

2.6 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was followed (Morrow et al., 2015) utilizing Colaizzi's seven-step method, ensuring systematic and rigorous interpretation of qualitative data. The steps involved: (1) thorough reading of all transcripts for comprehensive understanding; (2) extraction of significant statements; (3) formulation of meanings from these statements; (4) clustering of meanings into thematic units; (5) development of an exhaustive description of the phenomenon; (6) identification of the fundamental structure of the experience; and (7) Validation of findings through member checking with participants. Several validation strategies were employed to ensure analytical credibility and methodological integrity. Data sources, including interview transcripts, field notes, and memos, were triangulated to corroborate interpretations. Member checking was conducted to confirm the authenticity and resonance of findings with participants' intended meanings. An audit trail was maintained to ensure transparency of analytic decisions, and reflexivity was practiced managing researcher bias throughout the analysis. These strategies collectively supported the trustworthiness criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Carcary, 2020).

2.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance was granted by the Research Ethics Review Board (RERB) of Central Philippine University (Protocol No. CPU-RERB-2024-063). Participants received comprehensive information regarding the study's aims, procedures, and ethical safeguards. Written informed consent was obtained before participation. Confidentiality was maintained through pseudonyms, and all data were stored in encrypted digital formats accessible only to the research team. The study adhered strictly to the ethical principles outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki and the institutional research ethics guidelines.

3.0 Results and Discussion

This section presents the essential experiences of logistics service supply chain managers in Jiangxi Province, China, regarding behavior-oriented decision optimization (BODO). Through Colaizzi's method, five overarching

themes emerged, capturing decision-making's behavioral, operational, emotional, and organizational dimensions. The findings not only reflect Jiangxi's unique industrial dynamics but also offer broader insights into the evolving nature of managerial leadership and decision behavior in Asia's logistics sector.

3.1 Navigating Behavioral and Operational Challenges

Logistics managers consistently identified behavioral resistance, technological disruptions, and emotional inertia as key barriers to optimized decision-making. While advanced digital tools such as ERP and CRM systems were available, human-centered challenges such as resistance to change and fear of failure frequently undermined their effective implementation.

As Manager 2 stated, *"We had the system, but our people were not ready for the change. They doubted it until they saw results."* These challenges echo Liu and Wang (2021), who emphasized the importance of psychological safety and emotional readiness in adopting innovative practices. These findings underscore a critical tension between technological advancement and human adaptability in the context of China's accelerated digitalization agenda. Similar behavioral barriers are observable in other rapidly industrializing Asian nations, where workforce modernization is outpacing leadership development and organizational culture reform (Zhou et al., 2023). Therefore, addressing emotional friction, communication gaps, and cognitive biases is essential to achieving truly optimized logistics systems across Asia.

3.2 Behavior-Oriented Decision Processes in Practice

Behavior-oriented decision-making was reflected in practices emphasizing empathetic leadership, real-time behavioral insights, and collaborative adjustments. Rather than purely quantitative metrics, managers described how subtle human cues, such as staff morale, client behavior, and team dynamics, often informed decisions.

A vivid example came from Manager 3, who traced the issue to customer behavior patterns upon detecting a spike in weekend delivery complaints and adjusted staffing accordingly. This reduced complaints by 40%, underscoring how behavioral attentiveness leads to practical operational gains. These examples highlight how BODO supports the growing need for human-centered logistics management in China and Asia, where urbanization, consumer expectations, and e-commerce proliferation demand greater responsiveness. In Southeast Asia, similar strategies are being adopted to localize services in culturally diverse and behaviorally nuanced markets (Sanmee, 2024). As such, China's advancements in behavior-based logistics could serve as a model for neighboring economies aiming to blend technology with human-centric innovation.

3.3 Leadership Traits and Self-Awareness as Behavioral Catalysts

Emotional intelligence, empathy, and self-awareness were identified as foundational leadership traits enabling behavior-oriented decision optimization. Leaders who actively practiced reflection, transparency, and emotional regulation were perceived as more credible, trustworthy, and effective.

Manager 5 implemented a *"fail-forward"* initiative to normalize experimentation and mitigate fear of failure, while Manager 7 stated, *"The more self-aware I became, the more my team trusted my decisions."* These behaviors align with Goleman's emotional intelligence framework and are further supported by Zhang et al. (2021), who stress that behavioral maturity enhances leadership legitimacy. In China, where traditional hierarchical management styles often dominate, these findings signal a paradigm shift toward relational leadership, a model increasingly relevant across Asia's logistics sector, particularly in cross-cultural teams and fast-paced decision environments (Mehra, 2025). This shift can be instrumental in bridging generational gaps in leadership and empowering mid-level managers across the Asian region to lead adaptively.

3.4 Organizational Dynamics and Empowerment through BODO

Integrating behavior-oriented strategies fosters participatory decision-making, flattens hierarchies, and creates emotionally intelligent workplace cultures. Managers reported that BODO facilitated more transparent communication, stronger interpersonal bonds, and deeper employee engagement.

Manager 4's facilitation of a joint workshop to resolve interdepartmental conflict demonstrated how behavioral awareness, rather than procedural enforcement, led to long-term solutions. As Manager 2 noted, *"It is not just about making better decisions, it is about making people feel part of the process."* These findings support Pougajendy et al. (2024), who emphasize that inclusive, behavior-focused cultures drive innovation and resilience. In the broader

Asian context, where collectivist values often shape workplace norms, behavior-oriented leadership aligns well with cultural expectations around harmony, group cohesion, and mutual respect (Hofstede Insights, 2022). This suggests that BODO is viable in China and scalable across Asian economies where people-centered decision-making is culturally resonant.

3.5 The Holistic Value of Behavior-Oriented Decision Optimization

The final theme underscores BODO as an integrative framework that links behavioral insight with strategic foresight. Managers described BODO as a mindset that balances data with empathy, driving performance metrics, emotional investment, and organizational resilience.

Manager 6 observed, *“Behavioral optimization is not just smart, it is human. It respects people while improving outcomes.”* This holistic perspective aligns with Marta (2021) and Li et al. (2021), who argue that strategic planning must incorporate psychological and social dimensions to remain effective in complex systems.

This study explored the lived experiences of logistics service supply chain (LSSC) managers in Jiangxi Province, China, concerning behavior-oriented decision optimization (BODO). The findings advance a multidimensional understanding of how behavioral, emotional, and cognitive traits influence managerial decision-making under operational pressure. Crucially, the study provides empirical evidence that human-centered approaches in decision-making are not merely complementary to digital strategies but are foundational to sustainable logistics performance in the Chinese and broader Asian context.

The consistent identification of behavioral barriers such as resistance to change and fear of failure reinforces earlier assertions by Liu and Wang (2021) that psychological readiness is critical to the adoption of technological solutions in logistics. However, while previous studies have primarily emphasized structural enablers, this research highlights the pivotal role of emotional intelligence and behavioral leadership in bridging the readiness gap. These findings add nuance to Zhou and Zhou (2023), who documented the challenges of workforce transformation amid China’s digital push, by demonstrating that emotional agility and interpersonal trust can catalyze technological adoption in second-tier cities like Jiangxi.

In contrast to the prevailing rationalist paradigm in logistics literature, which privileges metrics and systems optimization (e.g., Yang et al., 2021), this study reveals that real-time behavioral insights, such as recognizing shifts in employee morale or customer sentiment, enable more responsive and tailored decision-making. This supports the work of Fontoura and Coelho (2022), who argue for integrating behavioral inputs into operational models. Moreover, the empirical accounts in this study demonstrate that leaders who embed behavioral feedback into routine practices, such as dynamic staffing or conflict resolution, achieve measurable outcomes, including reduced customer complaints and improved team cohesion.

Identifying self-awareness and emotional regulation as key leadership traits aligns with Goleman’s emotional intelligence framework. It corroborates findings by Alqarni et al. (2022), who emphasized that behaviorally mature leaders are likelier to foster innovation and engagement. Notably, this study advances the discussion by contextualizing such traits within China’s traditionally hierarchical management culture. While Pye (2024) highlighted the challenges of leadership transformation in East Asian firms, this research illustrates a subtle but significant shift toward relational leadership in logistics, driven not by external mandates but by the intrinsic value placed on trust, empathy, and collaboration in high-stakes decision-making.

Furthermore, the study’s emphasis on participatory decision-making and behavioral empowerment supports the theoretical assertions of Yousaf et al. (2024). It provides empirical backing to the view that emotionally intelligent cultures are more resilient and innovation-oriented. In the Asian context, where collectivism and interdependence are deeply embedded in workplace norms (Insights, 2022), behavior-oriented leadership is viable and culturally congruent. This finding challenges the assumption that Western-derived behavioral models require significant adaptation in Asian settings. Instead, this study suggests that BODO is intrinsically aligned with Asian managerial values, particularly in economies undergoing socio-technical transitions such as Vietnam, Indonesia, and the Philippines. The notion of BODO as a holistic framework integrating empathy, strategy, and data resonates with recent calls by Marta (2021) and Li et al. (2021) for decision models that go beyond linear optimization. While Zhang et al. (2021) stress the importance of predictive analytics, this study contends that human insight must complement such tools to be truly effective. This is relevant in Asia, where logistics networks increasingly rely on

hybrid decision environments blending algorithmic intelligence with human judgment. The implication is that leadership development in this sector should prioritize technical proficiency and psychological competencies.

Nonetheless, some limitations must be acknowledged. The study was conducted in a single province and reflects the experiences of a small, purposively selected sample. While data saturation was achieved, the cultural, organizational, or technological contexts in other regions of China or other Asian economies may yield different patterns. Additionally, while participant narratives provided rich detail, the subjective nature of phenomenological inquiry limits generalizability. Further research employing mixed-method approaches or larger comparative case studies could validate and expand on these findings. Theoretically, this study contributes to behavioral operations management by providing grounded insights into how emotional intelligence, leadership behavior, and cultural norms coalesce in shaping managerial decision quality. It also invites interdisciplinary dialogue with psychology and organizational behavior, particularly in developing leadership training programs that embed behavioral diagnostics into logistics strategy.

Integrating behavioral data with digital decision support systems presents a promising avenue for future research. Investigating how behavioral cues, such as emotional tone in communication or patterns of interaction, can be embedded into predictive tools may lead to more adaptive and responsive logistics platforms. Longitudinal studies could also examine how emotional intelligence evolves with managerial tenure or in response to organizational interventions. Finally, cross-cultural studies may reveal the extent to which BODO is universally applicable or shaped by national culture, thus informing the development of globally relevant yet locally grounded decision-making frameworks in logistics management. This study positions behavior-oriented decision optimization not as an ancillary leadership skill but as a core strategic competence for managing complexity, ambiguity, and transformation in the logistics service supply chain sector, particularly in China and Asia's dynamic and culturally rich contexts.

4.0 Conclusion

This phenomenological inquiry examined the lived experiences of logistics service supply chain (LSSC) managers to elucidate the complex dynamics underlying behavior-oriented decision optimization. The emergent themes and subthemes reveal the multidimensional interplay between operational efficiency, emotional intelligence, and strategic alignment in logistics decision-making. Notable contributions of the study include the identification of behavioral self-awareness, feedback-driven adaptation, and the ability to balance organizational agility with operational consistency as core enablers of effective decision outcomes. The findings affirm that behavioral excellence is not ancillary but integral to sustaining competitive performance. Managers who demonstrate empathy, foster collaborative cultures, and implement structured feedback mechanisms are better positioned to lead adaptive, resilient, and innovation-driven teams. Furthermore, emotional agility and self-reflective capacity equip decision-makers to manage uncertainty, build stakeholder alignment, and sustain engagement across complex logistics ecosystems.

The study also highlights several impediments to behavior-oriented decision optimization, including organizational inertia, communication deficiencies, and interpretive bias in data utilization. Addressing these barriers necessitates both strategic foresight and human-centric leadership practices. Cultivating a learning-oriented culture characterized by psychological safety, continuous feedback, and shared accountability is thus imperative for enhancing organizational adaptability and long-term success. This research extends the discourse in behavioral operations management by providing an empirically grounded, experience-based perspective on decision-making within the LSSC context. The theoretical and practical implications offer actionable insights for managers aiming to embed behavioral competencies into performance optimization, innovation strategies, and workforce engagement.

Future research may investigate integrating behavioral data with digital decision support systems to develop predictive frameworks that enhance real-time decision accuracy. Longitudinal studies could further examine the evolving influence of emotional intelligence within increasingly automated and data-intensive supply chains. Additionally, cross-cultural extensions of this research may uncover regional variations in behavioral decision-making, thereby informing the development of more inclusive, context-sensitive models for global logistics management.

5.0 Contributions of Authors

Liu Chun Bin- editing, writing, analysis, and coding. Gynny G. Gumban- Advising, Supervising, Final Editing.

6.0 Funding

No funding is received from this research.

7.0 Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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