

Governance Dynamics and Dependency of Organizational Resources in Diverse Contexts

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Abstract

Organizations increasingly operate in environments characterized by resource scarcity, uncertainty, and complex interdependence with multiple stakeholders. Under such conditions, organizational performance and resilience depend not only on internal capabilities but also on how effectively governance mechanisms manage resource dependencies. This study aims to synthesize recent literature that applies Resource Dependence Theory (RDT) to explain governance dynamics and organizational responses across diverse contexts. Using a qualitative literature review approach, this study analyzes five peer reviewed journal articles published within the last five years. The selected studies span heterogeneous organizational settings, including open innovation ecosystems, sustainable supply chains in healthcare, the global space industry, international nonprofit organizations during crisis, and internal leadership dynamics from a follower perspective. A thematic synthesis was employed to identify recurring patterns, conceptual extensions, and contextual variations related to resource dependence and governance. The findings reveal three core themes. First, RDT extends beyond interorganizational relationships to encompass internal dependencies on intangible resources such as knowledge and expertise. Second, organizations strategically combine contractual and relational governance mechanisms to manage interdependence and enhance cooperative performance. Third, environmental shocks intensify resource pressures and trigger adaptive, multi-level governance responses that support organizational resilience and

legitimacy. Overall, the study confirms that governance functions as a dynamic mechanism mediating the relationship between resource dependence and organizational outcomes. By integrating evidence across varied contexts, this review advances a more contextual and contemporary understanding of governance within Resource Dependence Theory.

Keywords: Resource Dependency, Organizational Governance, Literature Study Qualitative, Open Innovation, Crisis, Interdependent Relationships.

A. Introduction

1. Background

Organizations today operate in environments marked by growing complexity, uncertainty, and interdependence. Intensifying competition, resource constraints, regulatory demands, and rapid technological change have reshaped how organizations secure resources and sustain performance. Under these conditions, organizational outcomes are no longer driven solely by internal efficiency, but increasingly depend on how effectively organizations manage relationships with external and internal actors that control critical resources (Hillman et al., 2009; Boyd et al., 2021). This reality underscores the need for governance systems that are adaptive, strategically aligned, and responsive to diverse stakeholder interests.

Resource Dependence Theory remains one of the most influential frameworks for explaining organizational behavior under conditions of uncertainty. The theory posits that organizations are inherently dependent on external entities for essential resources such as capital, legitimacy, knowledge, and human expertise. To reduce vulnerability and preserve autonomy, organizations develop strategies that

include alliance formation, governance restructuring, and influence over their resource environment (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Hillman et al., 2018). In an era of globalized markets and digital platforms, these dependency relationships have become more complex and multidirectional.

In addition to external dependencies, contemporary organizations face increasing reliance on internal resource configurations, including specialized skills, organizational knowledge, and embedded routines. The interaction between internal and external dependencies creates governance challenges related to coordination, power asymmetry, and control. Organizations must manage internal alignment while simultaneously negotiating dependence and influence with external stakeholders, making governance a critical intermediary between resource access and performance outcomes (Casciaro & Piskorski, 2005; Xia et al., 2021).

Governance mechanisms such as board structures, ownership arrangements, formal controls, and contractual safeguards play a central role in managing resource dependencies and mitigating uncertainty. Recent studies demonstrate that effective governance enhances strategic decision making, accountability, and organizational resilience, particularly in volatile and highly regulated environments (Aguilera et al., 2020; Filatotchev et al., 2022). However, governance effectiveness is not universal, as it is shaped by contextual conditions including institutional settings, industry dynamics, and cultural norms.

Environmental pressures further intensify the complexity of governance and resource dependence. Economic shocks, regulatory reforms, digital disruption, and global crises compel organizations to adjust governance arrangements and diversify resource channels to sustain legitimacy and continuity (Meyer et al., 2020; George et al., 2021). These conditions highlight governance as a dynamic capability rather than a static structural feature, evolving through continuous interaction with environmental forces.

Recent literature increasingly emphasizes the alignment between governance mechanisms and resource dependency structures as a key determinant of organizational performance. Empirical evidence suggests that organizations with governance systems tailored to their dependency profiles are better positioned to promote innovation, strategic flexibility, and long term sustainability (Zona et al., 2018; Boyd et al., 2021). Conversely, misalignment between governance arrangements and dependency conditions can amplify risk exposure and constrain adaptive capacity.

Despite substantial advances in research on Resource Dependence Theory and corporate governance, many studies continue to address these constructs separately or within limited empirical contexts. There remains a lack of integrative analysis that systematically connects resource dependence, governance mechanisms, and organizational responses to environmental pressures across diverse organizational settings. Addressing this gap is essential for advancing a more holistic understanding of organizational adaptation and performance.

Responding to this need, the present study employs a qualitative synthesis approach to examine governance dynamics and resource dependency across multiple contexts. By organizing prior empirical and theoretical studies into three core themes, namely resource dependence and interdependent relationships, governance mechanisms and performance, and organizational responses to environmental pressures, this study offers an integrated framework that clarifies how governance mediates the relationship between resource dependency and organizational outcomes. In doing so, the study contributes to contemporary organizational theory by advancing a contextual and dynamic perspective on governance and resource management.

2. Focus and Relevance of the Review

This qualitative literature review synthesizes findings from five selected academic journals that explicitly or implicitly employ Resource Dependence Theory as a central analytical lens across diverse organizational contexts. The

selected studies represent a broad spectrum of domains, including open innovation within energy and carbon market synergies, sustainable supply chain management in the healthcare sector, organizational ecology in the global space industry involving public and private actors, responses of international nonprofit organizations to the COVID-19 crisis, and leadership dynamics viewed from the perspective of followers and upward influence.

The diversity of these contexts enhances the analytical depth of the review by enabling cross-contextual comparison of how core RDT constructs are operationalized and manifested. Specifically, it allows examination of how resource interdependence, governance choices such as relational versus contractual mechanisms, and organizational responses to environmental pressures or crises vary in form and consequence. This breadth strengthens the relevance of the review, as it moves beyond sector-specific insights and highlights the adaptive and contextual nature of governance dynamics under conditions of resource dependence.

By integrating evidence from heterogeneous organizational settings, the review provides a richer understanding of how similar dependency challenges give rise to different governance configurations and strategic responses. This comparative perspective is particularly valuable for advancing theoretical generalization and identifying patterns that transcend individual industries or institutional environments.

3. Objectives of the Literature Review

The primary objective of this literature review is to develop a comprehensive qualitative synthesis of the five identified journals by systematically integrating their theoretical arguments, empirical findings, and governance implications. To achieve this overarching aim, the review pursues three specific objectives.

First, the study seeks to map the application of Resource Dependence Theory across multiple levels of analysis. This involves examining how RDT is utilized as a theoretical framework at the inter organizational level, such as in

supply chains, innovation ecosystems, and public-private collaborations, as well as at the internal and micro levels, particularly in leadership processes and influence dynamics. Through this mapping, the review clarifies the versatility and explanatory scope of RDT across organizational boundaries.

Second, the review aims to explicate the role of governance mechanisms in managing interdependent resource relationships. This objective focuses on identifying and comparing governance choices, including relational governance, contractual controls, board-level responses, and informal influence mechanisms, that organizations employ to mitigate dependency risks and enhance performance. By contrasting these mechanisms across contexts, the review highlights how governance structures are strategically aligned with specific dependency conditions.

Third, the study seeks to document patterns of organizational adaptation in response to resource pressures and environmental turbulence. This includes synthesizing evidence on how organizations adjust governance structures, reconfigure relationships, and modify strategic activities when confronted with crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, market volatility, or institutional change. Emphasis is placed on understanding governance adaptation as a dynamic process that enables resilience, continuity, and legitimacy under conditions of uncertainty.

Collectively, these objectives position the literature review as an integrative effort to link resource dependence, governance dynamics, and organizational adaptation into a coherent analytical framework, thereby contributing to a more nuanced and context-sensitive understanding of organizational behavior.

B. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative literature review approach to systematically analyze and synthesize the core arguments, theoretical perspectives, and empirical findings of five selected peer reviewed journal articles. The qualitative review method is particularly appropriate for theory driven inquiries, as it

enables in depth interpretation of conceptual frameworks, mechanisms, and contextual variations rather than statistical aggregation of findings. In this study, the approach is used to integrate insights related to Resource Dependence Theory, governance dynamics, and organizational responses across diverse organizational settings.

1. Selection of Literature

The literature reviewed in this study consists of five academic journal articles that explicitly or implicitly employ Resource Dependence Theory as a central analytical lens. The selected journals were chosen based on three criteria. First, each study addresses issues of resource interdependence, governance mechanisms, or organizational adaptation under environmental pressure. Second, the articles represent diverse organizational contexts to enhance theoretical breadth and comparative insight. Third, all selected studies were published in reputable international journals within the last five years, ensuring conceptual relevance and scholarly rigor.

The five journals analyzed in this review are as follows:

1. Fang et al. (2023), which examines the choice of cooperative governance mechanisms in open innovation projects within the synergistic context of electricity and carbon markets.
2. Chiang and Chuang (2024), which investigates sustainable supply chain management and procurement environmental performance through the perspective of Resource Dependence Theory in the healthcare sector.
3. Morin and Beaumier (2024), which explores the organizational ecology of the global space industry, emphasizing interdependence between governmental and private actors.
4. Willems et al. (2022), which analyzes how international nonprofit organizations responded to resource pressures and governance challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic.
5. Tripathi (2021), which develops a theoretical framework linking Resource

Dependence Theory, upward influence, and leadership from the perspective of organizational followers.

2. Analytical Procedure

The analysis followed a thematic synthesis process. Each article was first examined individually to identify its theoretical grounding, research objectives, methodological approach, key findings, and governance implications. Subsequently, cross article comparison was conducted to detect recurring concepts, convergent findings, and contextual variations related to resource dependence and governance dynamics.

The synthesis process involved grouping insights into overarching themes reflecting patterns across the studies. These themes include resource interdependence and dependency management, governance mechanisms and performance outcomes, and organizational adaptation to environmental pressures and crises. Rather than treating the studies as isolated cases, the analysis emphasized relational interpretation to uncover how similar theoretical constructs produced different governance responses across contexts.

3. Validity and Rigor

To enhance analytical rigor, the review employed iterative reading and constant comparison techniques, ensuring that interpretations were grounded in the original texts. Conceptual consistency was maintained by anchoring all interpretations within the core assumptions of Resource Dependence Theory, while allowing contextual nuances to emerge inductively from the data. This approach strengthens the internal coherence of the synthesis and supports theoretical integration. Overall, this qualitative literature review method provides a structured and context sensitive framework for understanding how governance mechanisms mediate resource dependence across diverse organizational environments, thereby laying a solid foundation for the subsequent analysis and discussion.

C. Results and Discussion

The qualitative analysis of the five selected journals reveals a strong thematic convergence centered on resource interdependence and organizational efforts to manage such dependencies through strategic governance mechanisms. Across diverse empirical contexts, Resource Dependence Theory (RDT) emerges as a unifying framework for explaining how organizations navigate uncertainty, power asymmetries, and environmental pressures. The synthesized findings are organized into three main thematic segments.

1. Extending the Scope of Resource Dependence Theory

The findings reaffirm the centrality of RDT as a theoretical framework that applies not only to interorganizational relationships at the macro level but also to internal organizational dynamics at the micro level. This extension broadens the explanatory power of RDT beyond its traditional focus on external resource environments.

a. Dependence on Intangible Resources and Upward Influence (Journal 5)

Tripathi (2021) offers a novel extension of RDT by reversing its traditional managerial lens and focusing instead on organizational followers. In this framework, subordinates are conceptualized not as passive recipients of authority but as active holders of critical intangible resources, including job specific knowledge, specialized skills, and operational information essential for managerial decision making.

The possession of these intangible resources generates a condition of mutual dependence between managers and followers. Managers increasingly rely on subordinates for access to expertise and situational knowledge, thereby creating internal interdependence. This dependency grants followers a form of resource based power, which can be exercised through upward influence strategies.

This reconceptualization redefines leadership as a reciprocal process shaped by resource interdependence rather than a unidirectional authority structure. By shifting the focus from

external market relationships to internal power dynamics, this study significantly enriches RDT and aligns with recent organizational research emphasizing distributed power and micro level dependency structures (Uhl-Bien et al., 2022; Dinh et al., 2023).

b. Interdependence in Sustainable Supply Chain Management (Journal 2)

In the context of sustainable supply chain management in the healthcare sector, Chiang and Chuang (2024) apply RDT to examine how hospitals manage environmental uncertainty and stakeholder pressure to improve procurement environmental performance. The study explicitly tests two key RDT dimensions: resource substitutability and environmental uncertainty.

The findings demonstrate that these RDT characteristics significantly influence environmental relationship quality between hospitals and their suppliers. High quality relational ties facilitate access to environmentally compliant inputs, information sharing, and coordinated sustainability practices. As a result, hospitals are better able to integrate sustainable procurement practices, leading to improved environmental performance outcomes.

These results underscore that sustainability is not solely a technical or regulatory challenge but fundamentally a relational one. Organizations must actively manage interdependent stakeholder relationships to secure critical resources and mitigate uncertainty, reinforcing recent sustainability governance literature grounded in RDT (Touboulie et al., 2021; Jia et al., 2022).

2. Strategic Choices of Governance Mechanisms for Cooperative Performance

The journals focusing on collaboration and partnerships (Journals 1 and 3) highlight how organizations strategically select governance mechanisms to manage interdependence and enhance cooperative performance under complex environmental conditions.

a. Contractual versus Relational Governance in Open Innovation (Journal 1)

Fang et al. (2023) investigate how different forms of resource dependence shape governance choices in open innovation projects operating under the synergistic electricity-carbon market environment. The study distinguishes between contractual governance, which relies on formal rules and legal enforcement, and relational governance, which is grounded in trust, norms, and reputational mechanisms.

The findings indicate that collaborative dependence, where partners are mutually reliant on one another, has a significant positive effect on the adoption of relational governance. At the same time, contractual control also exerts a positive influence, suggesting that formal and informal governance mechanisms often function complementarily rather than as substitutes.

Importantly, both governance forms positively affect cooperative performance, with knowledge transfer acting as a key mediating mechanism. This evidence supports recent arguments that hybrid governance structures are particularly effective in innovation intensive and high uncertainty environments (Poppo et al., 2022; Lumineau et al., 2023).

b. Organizational Ecology and Mutualistic Relationships (Journal 3)

Morin and Beaumier (2024) shift the analytical focus from competitive resource acquisition to mutualistic interdependence in their study of the global space industry. Contrary to the dominant narrative that private space organizations have emerged by displacing government space agencies, the authors demonstrate that the sector has evolved through deeply interdependent relationships.

Government space organizations provide early stage capital, stable demand, regulatory legitimacy, and technology transfer, while private actors contribute innovation, efficiency, and rapid deployment capabilities. This mutualistic relationship has been instrumental in the growth and resilience of the private space sector.

From a governance perspective, these findings challenge zero sum interpretations of RDT and emphasize the importance of institutional support and ecosystem level governance in capital intensive and high risk industries. This aligns with recent ecological and ecosystem governance studies emphasizing co evolution and interorganizational symbiosis (Adner, 2022; Jacobides et al., 2023).

3. Governance Responses to Resource Pressures in Crisis Contexts

The crisis focused study (Journal 4) provides strong empirical evidence of how extreme environmental shocks intensify resource dependence and trigger adaptive governance responses.

a. Resource Pressures and Nonprofit Resilience during COVID-19 (Journal 4)

Willems et al. (2022) integrate RDT with stakeholder theory to examine how international nonprofit organizations responded to severe resource pressures during the COVID-19 pandemic. The analysis reveals widespread declines across nearly all stakeholder channels, including donations, operational capacity, volunteer availability, and field activities.

The study identifies differentiated governance responses across organizational levels. Boards of directors significantly increased their involvement and adopted a strategic orientation focused on organizational adaptation. Their primary responses included modifying organizational offerings, temporarily redefining missions, and strengthening external support through fundraising and network mobilization.

In contrast, executive managers concentrated on short term tactical responses aimed at maintaining financial stability and operational continuity, such as cost reductions and adjustments to service delivery under social restrictions. This functional differentiation between strategic board level governance and managerial level operational control illustrates governance resilience under extreme resource constraints.

These findings reinforce recent crisis governance literature suggesting that adaptive, multi level governance structures are critical for maintaining legitimacy and organizational survival during systemic shocks (Boin et al., 2021; Cornforth & Brown, 2024).

4. Integrated Discussion

Taken together, the synthesized findings demonstrate that resource dependence is not a static condition but a dynamic process shaped by contextual factors, governance choices, and environmental turbulence. Across sectors and organizational forms, effective governance mechanisms mediate the relationship between resource interdependence and organizational performance. The results extend RDT by incorporating internal power dynamics, hybrid governance structures, and crisis driven adaptation, offering a more nuanced and contemporary understanding of organizational governance in complex environments.

D. Conclusion

1. This study confirms that Resource Dependence Theory remains a relevant and effective framework for explaining governance dynamics and organizational behavior across varied contexts. The synthesis indicates that organizational performance and sustainability are strongly influenced by patterns of resource interdependence and by how governance mechanisms are structured to manage those dependencies.
2. The findings show that interdependence arises both within organizations and across organizational boundaries. Internally, reliance on intangible resources such as expertise and tacit knowledge reshapes power relations and positions leadership as a reciprocal process. Externally, dependence on partners, suppliers, and institutional actors continues to guide strategic coordination and decision making. Governance mechanisms grounded in trust and formal control jointly facilitate cooperation, knowledge exchange, and performance outcomes.

3. In addition, adaptive governance responses and collaborative public-private relationships play a decisive role in maintaining organizational resilience during periods of uncertainty and crisis. Overall, the study emphasizes that governance functions as a dynamic and context sensitive mechanism through which organizations navigate resource constraints and environmental complexity.

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