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Bibliometric review of resource dependence theory literature: an overview

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Abstract
This study aims to present a general overview of the Resource Dependence Theory (RDT) literature using bibliometric analysis. I included 474 articles published in 165 journals in the Web of Science database between 1975 and 2019 in the analysis. Firstly, an overview of the 474 articles has been presented based on specific bibliometric indicators. Later, bibliometric methods such as co-word, citation, and co-citation analysis were conducted on the articles. Utilizing bibliometric methods, it allowed us to map out the evolution of the RDT literature, providing a comprehensive view of the dynamics (or structure) of the field and identifying the fundamental studies, journals, authors, sub-topics (theme) and their interconnections and relationship networks. As a result of the study, two significant findings have been reached: (i) the scope of RDT is limited to strategic options rather than the main concepts and assumptions of the theory, and (ii) RDT has been studied along with other theories or perspectives. Especially, as a result of the co-word and co-citation analysis, it was concluded that there is a strong relationship between RDT and the discipline of strategic management.

Keywords Resource dependence theory · Bibliometric analysis · Strategic management · Co-word analysis · Co-citation analysis

JEL Classification C19 · C88 · D21 · M19 · L19

1 Introduction

This study aims to provide a better understanding of the RDT literature's current state of knowledge. The most significant reason leading the researcher to carry out such a study is the inadequacy of the empirical studies focus on the main

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concepts and assumptions of the theory. Pfeffer and Salancik (2003) have stated in the preface of the second edition of their books: "The External Control of Organizations (1978) is a most cited study in the field of organizational studies. As of the spring of 2002, there were 2321 citations to the book. Moreover, there was little evidence that the pace of citation to the book almost 25 years old was diminishing. Some 58% of the total citations received since the book's publication in 1978 had been received in the most recent ten-year period. So, one might interpret these data as reflecting the success of resource dependence ideas. Nevertheless, there is a limited amount of empirical work explicitly extending and testing resource dependence theory and its central tenets." Since 2003, orientation in the RDT literature has been continued in the same way. The orientation shows that the study is cited without understanding. It is thus aimed to assess the orientation in the RDT literature by mapping it through bibliometric analysis. For this reason, the current situation of the RDT literature has been addressed through specific bibliometric indicators and from a "critical" perspective.

Today, in the number of journals, congresses and other publications increase, and there are a large number of studies in a research field that need to be examined compared to the past. As well, there has been an increase in the number of articles by years in the RDT literature. This increase reveals the need to benefit from software(s), allowing for an examination in a way to consider the whole literature pool. These kinds of tools, which ensure the analysis of large data pools in this way, provide substantial benefits for the researchers when considering the whole field. Bibliometric analysis is one of the tools widely used by researchers in recent years for such a purpose (Cobo et al. 2011). However, bibliometric analysis on its own offers a limited perspective since it only takes on the task of taking a photograph of the field through quantitative-statistical indicators. Therefore, the findings obtained by bibliometric analysis should be interpreted as a result of a critical review of the literature. That is to say, statistical findings obtained through bibliometric analysis should be interpreted under the nature of the field by being associated with both the national and international context. In other words, a "qualitative" dimension should be added.

Bibliometric analysis is a kind of literature review. Literature reviews can summarize the content and structure of a particular research field. Narrative literature reviews aim to summarize the content of the studies of a particular research field. However, unlike other types of literature reviews such as narrative and meta-analysis, the bibliometric analysis focuses on assessing the structure of a particular research field (Block and Fisch 2020). This study aims to present a general overview of the RDT literature. In this study, bibliometric analysis is used for describing the structure of the RDT literature. The nature of the bibliometric analysis prepares the research questions. It relies on statistical methods to analyze bibliographically (articles, article publication years, authors, universities, countries, journals keywords, abstracts, article titles), and citation data. Based on such a goal that motivates this study, the following questions and sub-questions will be sought to be answered:

(1) What is the general view of the RDT literature?

- What is the annual number of articles within the scope of the RDT?
- Which journals have the highest number of publications?
- Who are the authors that have contributed to the field most?
- What is the situation of multi-authorship?
- Which countries have the highest publication?
- Which universities have the highest publication?

(2) Which words-concepts and sub-topics are studied most in the RDT field?
(3) What are the most-cited studies and journals?

- Does the distribution of citations comply with the Bradford Law?

(4) What are the studies that are most cited together?

2 Critical literature review

Few studies are examining the RDT literature (Davis and Cobb 2010; Drees and Heugens 2013; Hillman et al. 2009; Wry et al. 2013). The first of these studies, which is the most widely known and most cited one, is by Hillman et al. (2009). They critically examined "*what kind of strategic actions can be taken to reduce the environmental dependence*[1] *and uncertainty of the dependent organizations*." They discussed the strategic actions through five options (mergers and vertical integration, joint ventures and other inter-organizational relationships, boards of directors, political actions, and executive succession) based on the content of Pfeffer and Salancik (2003).

Another study examining the RDT literature is Davis and Cobb (2010). They focus on the dominance of Pfeffer and Salancik (1978, 2003) and Stanford University in the RDT field. Besides, they also presented the influence of The External Control of Organizations on many of the disciplines in social science such as political science, marketing, education, health, and public administration, particularly in management and sociology. This study is similar to Hillman et al. (2009) at two points: (1) expressing that RDT has an appropriate basis for empirical research and (2) limiting the framework of the RDT to strategic actions for managing organizational dependence. However, unlike Hillman et al. (2009), they also reviewed the origins, primary arguments, and basic concepts of RDT, such as power and dependence.

In their study on RDT with meta-analysis, Drees and Heugens (2013) similarly limited the framework of the RDT to strategic actions. However, unlike the other two studies, they dealt with the strategic actions within the focus of strengthening the "autonomy" and "legitimacy" of organizations. According to Drees and Heugens (2013), RDT is an organizational performance theory. The most obvious difference of Drees and Heugens (2013) from the other two studies as being the

[1] . This concept is used in a broad sense including "interdependence" throughout the study.

"meta-analysis," whereas the previous studies conducted a literature review examination in the form of "narrative reviews."

Wry et al. (2013) criticized the limitation of RDT's framework to strategic actions. Pfeffer and Salancik (2003) stated that "The theory no longer inspires much substantive research and now serves as little more than an appealing metaphor about organizations; so the effect of the theory on organizational studies decreased." Based on Pfeffer and Salancik (2003), Wry et al. (2013) handled the questions of (a) how the theory is primarily used or not used by researchers in the field of management and (b) what space does RDT occupy within contemporary organizational theories? To answer these questions, they analyzed 1772 articles with references to the book *The External Control of Organization* from 20 journals in the fields of management-psychology-sociology between 1978 and 2011. As a result of the study, it was obtained that although the book *The External Control of Organizations* continues to be cited at an enviable rate compared to other organizational theories, the vast majority of citations are ceremonial. The results also show that beneath an ever-growing citation count is a fragmented landscape of scholars whose primary interest is in the specific strategic options for managing organizational dependence.

Based on the inferences about the current literature, the aim of this study can be justified as follows:

- Pfeffer and Salancik (2003) criticized the inadequacy of empirical studies on the theory in the second edition of their books. However, some of the studies examined above (Davis and Cobb 2010; Hillman et al. 2009) have opposed criticism. They argue that the number of studies related to the theory has been increasing day by day. It is controversial that RDT has an appropriate basis for empirical studies, and it has been more empirically addressed year by year.
- Another inference about the RDT literature is related to the "scope" of the empirical studies within the scope of RDT. In most of the studies in the literature (Davis and Cobb 2010; Drees and Heugens 2013; Hillman et al. 2009), the framework of RDT is limited to the strategic options used by the dependent organizations to manage their organizational dependence. At this point, it is necessary to critically analyze the issues within the sub-topics included in the empirical studies within the scope of RDT and how the theory is used or not used by the researchers. As can be seen from the above evaluation of the current literature, empirical studies within the scope of RDT are limited within the framework of strategic actions used by dependent organizations to manage their organizational dependence. However, there is a lack of conceptual and theoretical studies on the main concepts or assumptions of the theory. This lack is a limiting situation for the theory itself. Therefore, limiting the scope of the RDT to only within the framework of strategic actions prevents a holistic examination.
- From these two inferences above, co-citation and co-word analysis were used in this study. Thereby the scope of the RDT is not limited to strategic options. All possible studies within the scope of RDT in WoS were analyzed.
- While some studies (Davis and Cobb 2010; Hillman et al. 2009) reviewed the RDT literature in the form of "narrative studies," another study (Drees and Heugens 2013) examined it as a "meta-analytic synthesis" based on the available

Table 1 Keywords used to identify relevant articles

Keywords
"Resource Dependence Theory" OR "Resource Dependence Approach" OR "Resource Dependence Perspective" OR "Resource Dependence Framework" OR "Resource Dependence Model" OR "Resource Dependence"

empirical evidence. There is only one study examining the RDT literature using bibliometric analysis (Wry et al. 2013). They conducted a bibliometric analysis based on the references to the book *The External Control of Organizations*. Therefore, they only provided a limited view of the RDT field. This limitation of the study prevented the identification of relations, current and potential research streams, and gaps in the field. Unlike Wry et al., this study is not limited to the book by Pfeffer and Salancik.

Based on the assessment of the current literature, the current study aims to make a systematic evaluation of the field of RDT by conducting a bibliometric analysis. In this way, a general picture of the previous studies in the RDT literature is presented in this study.

3 Methods

The following steps were applied in the Method section (Block et al. 2019; Block and Fisch 2020).

3.1 Literature search strategy

To identify academic studies in the RDT literature, we conduct a systematic literature review/search. Indeed, bibliometric analysis is a particular form of systematic literature review (Block and Fisch 2020). The literature search consists of two-stage processes: (1) identification of articles (database used and search terms/keywords), and (2) screening of articles (inclusion/exclusion criteria)

3.1.1 Identification of articles

The data needed for the bibliometric analysis is obtained from various databases. Many databases provide datasets for bibliometric analyses such as WoS, Scopus, Google Scholar, and PubMed (Cobo et al. 2011). WoS is the most widely used database, especially by researchers in the field of management (Zupic and Cater 2015). In this study, I used the WoS database for the literature search. The reasons why I used this database are; (i) WoS includes numerous journals in the social sciences. In this respect, it contains sufficient data for bibliometric analysis (ii) it is easy to access because of the membership through universities (iii) datasets for software can

Table 2 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion criteria
Article in the business and management fields
Article published in a peer-reviewed journal
Research or review article
Article in the English language
Keywords (in Table 1) included in the article's title, abstract, or keywords
Exclusion criteria
Book, book chapter, book review, proceedings paper, and the editorial material
Article not covering the RDT

be obtained in a suitable file type. These advantages provide substantial facilities in terms of obtaining the dataset, transferring it to the program, and performing the analysis. However, most of the journals in WoS have a high impact factor and the potential to lead the field.

After determining the appropriate database, I derived keywords from identifying relevant articles. To do this, I conducted a "topical query," including all possible naming forms (nomenclatures) related to the theory in order to ensure including all articles that accurately and thoroughly represent the RDT. Hence, I performed a search for articles using the keywords shown in Table 1. As a result of the search of relevant keywords in the title, abstract, or keywords, 937 studies were identified between 1975 and 2019.

3.1.2 Screening of articles and article selection

In this step, I performed screening (filtering/refinement) processes for the 937 studies; because the databases often find studies that are not in the scope of the review, and these irrelevant studies affect the results of the bibliometric analysis and the validity of the analysis. To do this, I defined the inclusion and exclusion criteria (see Table 2).

I only included articles (research or review articles) published in journals in the fields of "business" and "management" and English. I excluded proceedings papers because they are not considered validated knowledge. I also excluded books, book chapters, and book reviews because they are not based on empirical findings but are often a repetition of the descriptive and previous knowledge in books written on general organizational theories. I also excluded articles lacking the keywords (in Table 1) in the articles' title, abstract, or keywords (Block et al. 2019). After all of the filtering processes, 446 identified studies (not only articles) did not match the initial search/screening criteria and were excluded, while 491 articles proceed to further filtering/screening. Finally, I evaluated the titles, abstracts, and keywords of the remaining 491 articles manually to ensure that whether the articles are genuinely within the scope of RDT. However, I

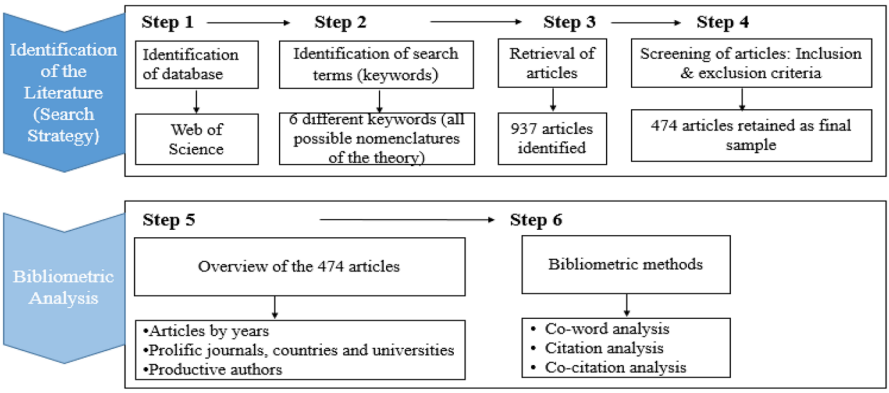

Fig. 1 Steps in the method section

eliminated the 17 articles because they are not within the scope of RDT. As a result, in total, 474 articles were included for further analysis.

3.2 Bibliometric analysis

Bibliometric analysis has been widely used in social science and business research to reveal research trends or provide an overview and evolution of the core themes. Bibliometric analysis is a method used to map the intellectual structure of any research field, subject, or journal based on specific indicators (Cobo et al. 2011). In particular, when someone intends to inquire about the evolution of a research field, the bibliometric analysis can be useful. It makes possible to have a systematic and holistic picture of the defacto structuring in the discipline, to identify research clusters that direct the field, to present the developments in the research field, and to see the big picture of the words or sub-topics and the relationships between these words (Zupic and Cater 2015). The aim of the bibliometric analysis is to (i) analyze and (ii) visualize the structure of the research field by dividing the items (articles, authors, journals, keyword, or sub-topics) into different groups (Ariaa and Cuccurullo 2017).

In the current study, I use bibliometric analysis to present an overview of the RDT literature. To provide an overview of the RDT literature, I performed a bibliometric analysis in two steps. (1) Based on the data in the WoS database, I presented a descriptive overview of the RDT literature (474 articles). (2) I performed three different bibliometric methods: co-word (co-occurrence of keyword analysis), citation, and co-citation analysis.

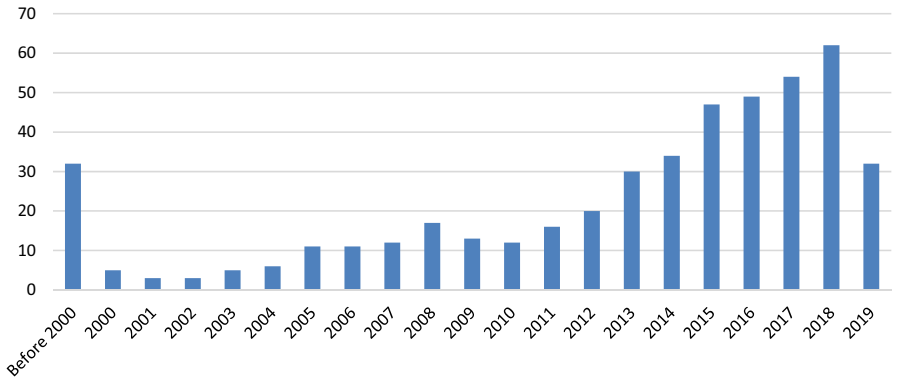

Fig. 2 Articles per year. Notes: Evolution of the number of articles over the years since 1975. Articles published until July 2019 were included. The figure is based on a sample of N = 474 articles

4 An overview of the field

This section provides a descriptive overview of the 474 articles based on specific bibliometric indicators. In this section, I show "the evolution of articles over the years," "most prolific journals," "most productive authors," and "contribution by countries and universities."

4.1 Articles by years

Figure 1 shows the evolution of the RDT literature in the WoS database based on the annual number of articles. First of all, 456 out of 474 articles are research articles, and the remaining 18 are review articles. From these counts, it can be understood that empirical studies have been carried out more within the scope of the RDT.

A small amount of article was published before 2000, in a total of 32 articles published in peer-reviewed journals, followed by a total of 16 articles published the period from 2000 to 2003. Considering the timeframe from 2003 to 2008, the number of articles in the RDT literature increased systematically. However, there was a decline in the number of articles in 2009 and 2010. Since 2010, the number of articles continues to increase continuously. Notably, the dataset includes only articles published by July 2019.

According to Fig. 1, approximately 7% of the articles related to the RDT were published before 2000. Approximately 3% of the articles were published during the 2000–2003 time period, and 17% of the articles were published during the 2004–2010 period. Approximately 73% of articles related to the RDT in the WoS dataset were published from 2011 to 2019.

It can be seen in Fig. 2 that the number of articles in the RDT literature has increased, especially after the statements in the second edition of Pfeffer and Salancik (2003) that "*the arguments of the theory have not been tested empirically in different contexts*." While the number of articles was fluctuating before 2003, the number of articles has increased remarkably and systematically since 2003. Nevertheless,

Table 3 Most prolific journals in the RDT field

Journal	No. of articles	Impact factor	Total citations
Journal of Business Research	22	4.02	299
Journal of Business Ethics	20	3.79	575
Corporate Governance An International Review	19	3.39	992
Journal of Management	19	9.05	3266
Strategic Management Journal	17	5.57	1380
Journal of Supply Chain Management	13	7.12	380
Academy of Management Journal	12	7.19	1647
Journal of World Business	12	5.79	163
Industrial Marketing Management	11	4.78	128
Management Decision	11	1.96	54
Journal of International Business Studies	10	7.72	663
Journal of Management Studies	9	5.84	696
Organization Science	9	3.25	449
International Business Review	8	3.64	140
International Journal of HRM	8	3.15	72
Journal of Business Venturing	8	6.33	352
Chinese Management Studies	6	0.93	14
Journal of Small Business Management	6	3.12	168
Management International Review	6	2.68	32
Supply Chain Management An International Journal	6	4.29	120
Academy of Management Review	5	10.63	1386
Administrative Science Quarterly	5	8.02	960
Human Relations	5	3.36	115
Management and Organization Review	5	2.40	80
Organization Studies	5	3.54	268
Journal of Product Innovation Management	5	3.78	65

Citation counts of the journals were obtained by using VOSviewer software. Citations are based on the Web of Science database as of July 2019. Journals' impact factor for 2018 was taken from their website and Clarivate Analytics

this will not be enough to understand from this situation, whether Pfeffer and Salancik's (2003) criticism of the lack of empirical work is fully answered. Some of the previous studies conducted to examine the literature of the RDT (Davis and Cobb 2010; Hillman et al. 2009) concluded that "RDT is empirically tested enough and that the theory is an appropriate framework for empirical basis." However, Wry et al. (2013) concluded that most of the studies (81%), referring to the book The External Control of Organization, had ceremonial citations.

4.2 Prolific journals

Table 3 shows the journals in which five or more articles related to the RDT are published. The final sample contains 474 articles published in 165 journals.

Approximately 55% of the 474 articles were published in the journals in Table 3. Table 3 also shows the 2018 impact factors and total citations of the identified journals. The *Journal of Business Research* is the most productive journal with 22 published articles, followed by the *Journal of Business Ethics*, *Corporate Governance an International Review, Journal of Management* and *Strategic Management Journal* with 20, 19, 19, and 17 published articles, respectively.

A journal's impact factor (IF) indicates the number of citations typically received by the articles in the journal and is an indicator of the quality (Block et al., 2019). All journals in Table 3 are impact factor journals, and they have a relatively high impact factor value. Therefore, I can say that journals in which articles related to RDT are published are relatively high-quality journals. Notably, the *Academy of Management Review* (IF: 10.63), *Journal of Management* (IF: 9.05), and *Administrative Science Quarterly* (IF: 8.02) have a very high impact factor value and are the highest-ranked journals among the journals in Table 3.

Table 3 also shows the citations received by the articles published in the most prolific journals. According to Table 3, the articles published in the *Journal of Management* had the highest total number of citations (3266), followed by those published in *Academy of Management Journal* (1647), Academy *of Management Review* (1386), *Strategic Management Journal* (1380), *Corporate Governance an International Review* (992), and *Administrative Science Quarterly* (960), respectively. When both total citation counts and impact factor values of the journals in Table 3 are taken into consideration; the Journal *of Management*, Academy *of Management Review*, *Academy of Management Journal*, S*trategic Management Journal* and *Administrative Science Quarterly* can be considered as the most prestigious and prolific journals for the RDT field.

An essential point in Table 3 is that American journals are dominant. When the aims and scope of the journals in the table are examined in detail, it can be seen that the journals in which only empirical articles are accepted have a higher share. Another essential point is the lack of a journal that only focuses on the RDT. The findings in the previous literature review studies can be re-interpreted based on these numbers. In previous studies, there was a common emphasis that the scope of the theory was limited to strategic actions. The fact that the *Strategic Management Journal (*which represents the field of strategic management) ranks highest among these journals in Table 3 based on the number of articles supports this emphasis.

4.3 Most productive authors

A total of 1056 authors contributed to the 474 articles in our sample. Table 4 shows the authors who contributed to three or more articles. Hillman is the most productive author in terms of the number of articles and contributed to seven articles that received a total of 1784 citations. She is also the most cited author, and her articles received the highest number of citations among the top authors in Table 3. The most cited works of the seven articles by Hillman are "Boards of directors and firm performance: Integrating agency and resource dependence perspectives" which was published by the *Academy of Management Review* in 2003 and "Resource

Table 4 Most productive authors in the RDT field

Author	No. of articles	Total citations
Hillman, AJ	7	1784
Yang, ZL	6	147
Liu, XH	5	22
Xia, J	5	179
Wu, J	4	33
Chen, HL	4	61
Ketchen, DJ	4	188
Mohr, A	4	31
Withers, MC	4	602
Cai, SH	3	112
Chen, LY	3	5
Eisenhardt, KM	3	624
Chiambaretto, P	3	31
Hoskisson, RE	3	41
Hsu, WT	3	33
Jorissen, A	3	19
Lai, JH	3	5
Marquis, C	3	117
Matopoulos, A	3	10
Peng, MW	3	488
Shirodkar, V	3	32

I only include authors who contributed to 3 or more articles. Citations are based on the Web of Science database as of July 2019. Also, citation counts were obtained by using VOSviewer software

Dependence Theory: A review" which was published by the *Journal of Management* in 2009. One of these works is a conceptual article, and the other is a review article. Hence, a review article has the potential to contribute to the evolution and development of a research field. This study also has the potential to be an essential study for the RDT field.

Furthermore, more than 80% of the 1056 authors contributed to a single study. These findings may raise questions about the existence of an academic group/clique that regularly studies the RDT field. Also, considering the single or multi-authorship status of the articles, I find that only 65 articles were single-authored. In this respect, more than 90% of the articles were written by multiple (two or more) authors. This ratio can be interpreted as the presence of the inclination and culture to work together among the authors. However, this can also be seen as a necessity rather than a choice. When the eclectic nature of the theory nurtured by other related disciplines is considered, the need to both have the theoretical background and to be proficient in methodological diversity, may make it difficult to carry out a study on RDT for a single researcher. When the difficulty of accessing the required data is added to these problems, researchers will tend to work with partners by nature.

Table 5 Most productive universities

University	No. of articles	Total citations
Arizona State University	12	1649
City University of Hong Kong	11	476
State University System of Florida	11	–
University of South Carolina	10	–
Texas A M University	9	697
Pennsylvania Commonwealth System of Higher Education	8	–
University of North Carolina	8	–
University of Texas Dallas	8	316
Indiana University	7	245
Insead Business School	7	463
National University of Singapore	6	216
Old Dominion University	6	16
Peking University	6	98
University of London	6	–
University of Missouri	6	–
Aston University	5	74
Bocconi University	5	78
California State University	5	–
Cornell University	5	184
Stanford University	5	626

I only include universities contributing to the field with five or more articles. Citations are based on the Web of Science database as of July 2019. Also, citation counts were obtained by using VOSviewer software

4.4 Contribution by countries and universities

Researchers from 590 different universities wrote a total of 474 articles. Researchers in 247 of these universities contributed to a single study. Table 5 shows the most productive universities in the RDT field, based on the number of articles. Table 5 contains the top universities that contributed to the RDT field with five or more articles. Most of the universities that most contributed to the RDT field in Table 5 are American universities. Arizona State University is the most contributing university to the field, with 12 articles that received a total of 1649 citations.

Researchers from 57 different countries wrote a total of 474 articles. Table 6 shows the most productive countries in the RDT field, based on the number of articles and total citation counts. Table 6 contains the top countries that contributed to the RDT field with five or more articles. The most active country is the USA with 207 articles, followed by China (with 77 articles) and England (with 53 articles). So, the USA is dominant in the RDT literature, as it contributed to approximately 43% of articles in the field.

Table 6 Most productive countries

Country	No. of articles	Ratio (%)	Total citations
USA	207	43.67	12,946
China	77	16.24	1211
England	53	11.18	873
Australia	38	8.01	1019
Canada	36	7.59	1307
Germany	29	6.11	596
Taiwan	26	5.48	219
France	21	4.43	565
Spain	21	4.43	259
Italy	16	3.37	200
Netherlands	15	3.16	449
South Korea	12	2.53	328
Singapore	10	2.10	310
Belgium	9	1.89	269
Sweden	8	1.68	157
Austria	7	1.47	258
Malaysia	7	1.47	65
Turkey	6	1.26	113
Denmark	5	1.05	211
Finland	5	1.05	140
India	5	1.05	3
New Zealand	5	1.05	217

I only include countries contributing to the field with five or more articles. Citations are based on the Web of Science database as of July 2019. Also, citation counts were obtained by using VOSviewer software

5 Bibliometric methods

In this section, I present the results of the applied bibliometric analysis. The goal of this section is to identify the most-used keywords (most studied sub-topics) and most-cited studies and journals and reveal the networks of the keywords, studies, and journals in the RDT literature. Therefore, I use three different bibliometric

methods[2]: i. co-word analysis (co-occurrence of keywords analysis), ii. citation analysis, iii. co-citation analysis (at the publication and journal levels).

In bibliometric studies, two essential processes are generally performed: analysis (classification) and visualization. In the process of analysis, similarity matrices and relationships among the items (articles, authors, journals, and words) are calculated. In the process of visualization, the visuals of these relationships and similarities are presented. For conducting these processes, researchers commonly use software(s) such as BibExcel, VOSviewer, SciMat, Bibliometrix, HistCite, Gephi, and Pajek (Aria and Cuccrullo 2017). In this study, I use BibExcel (Persson et al. 2009), Pajek (Batagelj and Mrvar 2004), and VOSviewer (Van Eck and Waltman 2010) as a bibliometric software.

5.1 Co-word analysis

Co-word analysis identifies the mostly/frequently used (key)words (or sub-topics), measures the power of the relationship between the (key)words, and reveals patterns and trends in a particular research field. Co-word analysis finds connections among concepts (words or topics) that co-occur in document titles, keywords, or abstracts (Zupic and Cater 2015). Furthermore, thematic networks or clusters formed as a result of the co-word analysis have the potential to synthesize and organize existing information in the field and to identify potential research streams for future research (De Bakker et al. 2005). Co-word analysis can be conducted based on titles, keywords, or abstracts of documents. I conducted this analysis based on keywords, rather than titles and abstracts. Because it is accepted that keywords fully reflect the content of a study. However, it can be conducted based on either the authors' keywords or keywords of papers (used in the respective papers' abstracts). I conduct it based on keywords of papers because I use this method to identify the most studied concepts or sub-topics in the RDT literature.

I used BibExcel and VOSviewer for conducting the co-word analysis. Because co-word analysis by VOSviewer can be conducted based on only the authors' keywords, firstly, I used BibExcel to identify the most frequently used keywords of the 474 articles in the sample. I performed the stages of the co-word analysis as follows: (1) I saved the data imported from Web of Science as plain text (*.txt file). (2) I downloaded from the WoS database the *.txt-file for the 474 articles and uploaded

[2] In a bibliometric study, for interpretation reasons, clusters based on co-word analysis (co-occurrence of keywords analysis) and/or co-citation analysis can be identified. However, I don't need to identify (thematic or citation-based) clusters. Because, I just aim to show the mostly used keywords (most studied sub-topics) and most-cited studies and journals and reveal the interconnection networks of the keywords, studies and journals in the RDT literature. The interpretation of the maps (and networks) resulting from these analyses for the RDT field is sufficient for this study. As a matter of fact, clusters are created subjectively by researchers according to the maps obtained from the software(s), and I do not think that such classifications and/or categorizations created by combining items have any consistency and validity. I also observe for the most part that the items in a created cluster do not exactly reflect that cluster and they do not have a high level of relationship among themselves to form such a cluster.

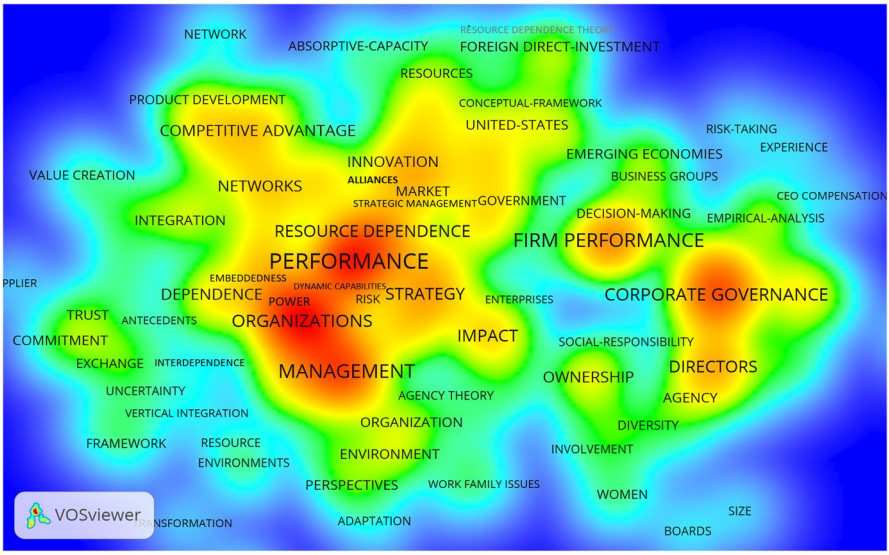

Fig. 3 Most frequently used keywords in the RDT field. *Notes:* Created by using BibExcel and VOSviewer based on a sample of N = 474 articles (included in Web of Science) (color figure online)

it to Bibexcel. (3) Because the *.txt-file needed to be restructured before it could be analyzed in BibExcel, I converted the *.txt-file in different file types in order to perform different bibliometric analysis. (4) I performed co-occurrence analysis of keywords by using BibExcel, and I obtained network data (a *.net file), which contains both the citation and co-citation network (also the frequency of use) of the keywords. (5) I found that, in total, 1001 different keywords (items) were used in the 474 articles. (6) However, in BibExcel, I set the minimum threshold at five appearances; thus, for a keyword to be included in my analysis, it had to be mentioned at least five times. (7) In total, 176 of the 1001 keywords had at least five appearances in the dataset of the 474 articles. (8) Then, I transferred the *.net-file to VOSviewer, and create a map based on the network data (*.net-file). (9) In VOSViewer, I set the minimum threshold at 50 for "total link strength" of a keyword, and 82 of the 176 keywords meet the threshold.

As a result of the co-occurrence of keyword analysis, VOSviewer identifies the most frequently used keywords in the 474 articles in the sample. Figure 3 shows the results. The red areas in the figure refer to the most frequently used words, the yellow areas show the less used words, and the green and blue areas indicate the least used words. Also, the font size indicates the frequency of use of the words. The most frequently used keyword is *performance* with 141 occurrences, followed by *management* with 82 occurrences, and *firm performance* with 80 occurrences. Other widely used keywords include *corporate governance*, *organizations, directors*, *power, resource dependence,* and *strategy*. Therefore, these words and sub-topics can be expressed as central issues within the scope of RDT.

VOSviewer also shows the position of the words in the total relationship (link) network and the total link strength (as stated in VOSviewer) in terms of their

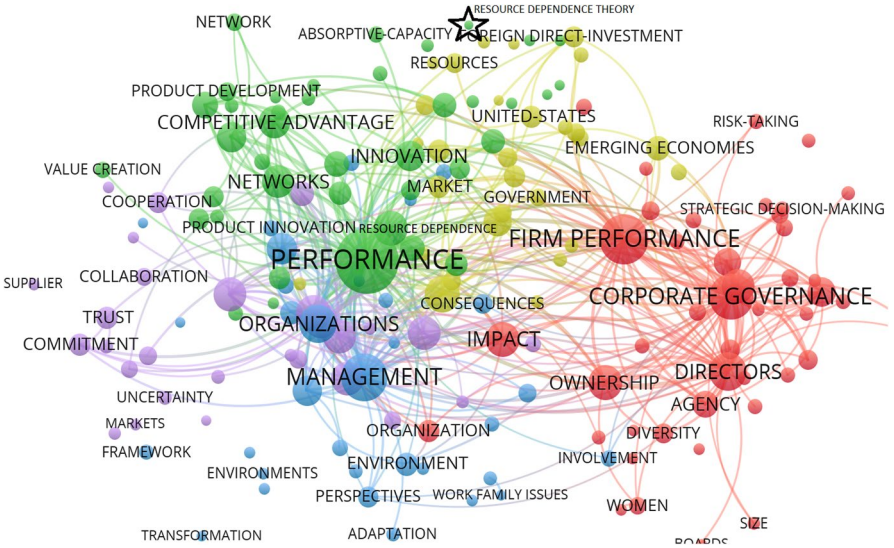

Fig. 4 Relationship networks and total link strengths of the keywords. *Notes:* Created by using VOSviewer based on a sample of N = 474 articles (included in Web of Science) (color figure online)

locations. Figure 4 shows the relationship networks and total link strength of the words used in the keywords of the articles. The size of the circles indicates the total relationship frequency (total link strength) of the words according to the use of each word with the other words, and the lines between the two circles represent the relationship networks of the words with each other. The position of the words in Fig. 4 indicates to what extent they are in the center or periphery in the relationship network.

From Fig. 3, it can be seen that words such as performance, firm performance, strategy, organization, management, competitive advantage, corporate governance and board of directors are used more frequently and intensively by the authors when describing their studies. These words thus play a crucial and central role in the RDT field. This result supports the finding that "the scope of RDT is limited to the strategic actions to manage organizational dependence." The "Resource Dependence Theory" label given in the asterisk in the figure is worthy of questioning both in terms of total link strength and being located outside the relationship network (periphery).

5.2 Citation analysis

Through citation analysis, it is possible to identify the most cited (or influential) studies, authors, or journals in a research field (Zupic and Cater 2015). Therefore, citation analysis provides information on the relative impact of studies in a given research field and how essential they are (Usdiken and Pasadeos 1995). I conducted a citation analysis to identify the most influential studies in the RDT field.

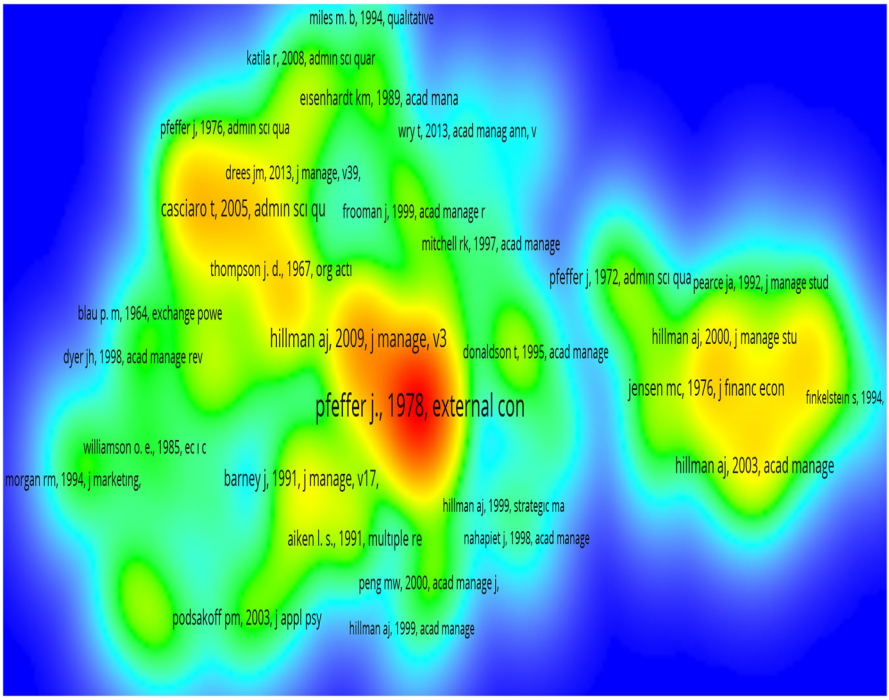

Fig. 5 Most influential studies in the RDT field. *Notes:* Created by using VOSviewer based on a sample of N = 474 articles (included in Web of Science). Citations are based on the Web of Science database as of July 2019. (color figure online)

In total, 24,491 studies cited by the 474 articles in the sample. However, I set the minimum threshold at 20 citations such that for a study to be included in my analysis, it had to be cited at least 20 times by the 474 articles. In total, 75 cited studies meet the threshold. Figure 5 shows the most influential (cited) studies in terms of Web of Science citations. It is an expected result that Pfeffer and Salancik (1978, 2003)[3] is the most cited study with a total of 436 citations. Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) is the first book[4] to cover the thoughts (conceptual framework) of RDT holistically.

The review article written by Hillman et al. (2009) received the second most citations (140 citations) and was published in the *Journal of Management*. The reason why Hillman et al. (2009) was highly cited is that it is the first review article in the RDT literature. Literature reviews are the first port of call visited by researchers who

[3] In Fig. 5, different editions of the same work (Pfeffer and Salancik 1978, 2003) are shown as separate studies. The first edition of the book (with 361 citations) more cited than second edition (with 75 citations). Because older studies have a greater chance of being cited.

[4] Table 8 gives the numbers of citations of the top most-cited articles to comprehend better the difference and the magnitude of the effect of the book in the literature.

want to have an idea about any literature or research field. In this respect, literature review studies are generally over-cited. This result also supports the finding that Hillman, with seven studies, ranks first among the most productive authors (Table 4) with the highest number of articles. These results provide a substantial clue to Hillman's influence in the RDT field. Another article by Casciaro and Piskorski (2005) received 105 citations and was published in *Administrative Science Quarterly*. Casciaro and Piskorski (2005) identified two distinct theoretical dimensions of resource dependence, "power imbalance" and "mutual dependence," which were combined in the construct of interdependence in Pfeffer and Salancik (1978, 2003). They found that these two dimensions of the resource dependence have opposite effects on an organization's ability to reduce dependencies by absorbing sources of external constraint. In this respect, in terms of the concept of dependence, it is perhaps the first unique contribution to Emerson (1962) and Pfeffer and Salancik (1978, 2003). Emerson (1962) formed the infrastructure of the main concepts, such as power and dependence, within the conceptual framework of the RDT. Emerson (1962) received 91 citations and was published in the *American Sociological Review*. So, the reason why these studies are the most cited work is that they are "a conceptual study" or "a conceptual contribution" to the RDT.

5.3 Co-citation analysis

Co-citation analysis is conducted to identify interconnections (similarities or/and relationships) among studies, journals, or authors in a research field (Vogel 2012; Zupic and Cater 2015). Co-citation analysis measures the frequency of two studies, authors, or journals cited together in one work (Small 1973). So, I also perform a co-citation analysis to identify links (the networks of interconnections) among studies and journals based on a sample of 474 articles retrieved from the Web of Science database. The co-citation analysis was conducted by using BibExcel, Pajek, and VOSviewer databases.

5.3.1 Co-citation analysis at the publication level

To perform co-citation analysis at the publication level, firstly, I downloaded the *.txt-file for the 474 articles from the WoS database and uploaded it to Bibexcel. Then, I performed co-citation analysis in BibExcel and obtained the *.coc-file, which is the result of co-citation analysis. I set the minimum threshold at 20 citations. Hence, I included studies cited at least 20 times by the 474 articles in my sample to co-citation analysis. Then, in order to visualize (map) the results of the co-citation analysis, I created a *.net-file which contains the co-citation network and uploaded this file to Pajek. Figure 6 shows the results.[5]

In Fig. 6, while the size of the circles shows the total citation frequency of the studies, the lines between circles show how much the two studies have been cited together

[5] Figure 8 (Appendix) shows the results of the same analysis obtained by using VOSViewer..

Fig. 6 Co-citation analysis at the publication level. *Notes:* Created using BibExcel and Pajek based on a sample of N = 474 articles (included in Web of Science) (color figure online)

by the 474 articles. So, the thickness of the lines shows the strength of the connection between the two studies. Moreover, a circle close to the center represents a central and impactful position in the citation network, whereas a circle at the periphery represents a less impactful position. The results of the co-citation analysis show that Pfeffer and Salancik (1978, 2003), Hillman et al. (2009), Casciaro and Piskorski (2005), and Emerson (1962) are the most cited studies and have a more central and impactful position in the citation network. Also, the thickness of the lines between the four studies shows the strength of the connection between them. They shape the RDT literature.

Furthermore, as can be seen from the Fig. 6, the RDT studies have been cited together with the pioneering works of several alternative theories or views such as institutional theory (DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Meyer and Rowan 1977; Oliver 1991), the resource-based view (Barney 1991, Penrose 1959; Wernerfelt 1984), agency theory (Fama and Jensen 1983; Jensen and Meckling 1976), transaction-cost economics (Williamson 1975, 1985), stakeholder approach (Donaldson and Preston 1995; Freeman 1984; Mitchell et al. 1997) and network perspective (Granovetter 1985; Uzzi 1997).

5.3.2 Co-citation analysis at the journal level

I also performed a co-citation analysis at the journal level. The 474 articles in the sample cited a total of 6942 journals. However, I set the minimum threshold at 50

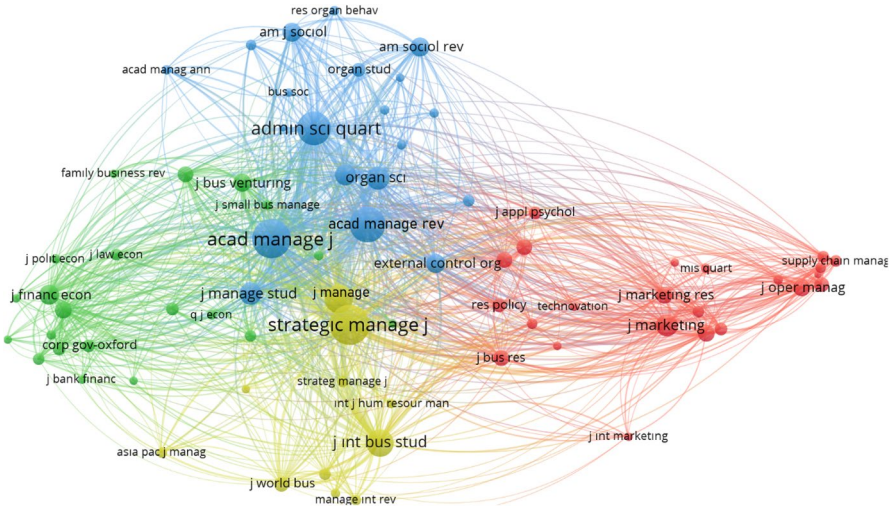

Fig. 7 Co-citation analysis at the journal level. Notes: Created by using VOSviewer based on a sample of N = 474 articles (included in Web of Science) (color figure online)

Table 7 Most-cited journals

Top 20 Journal	No. of citations
Strategic Management Journal	2329
Academy of Management Journal	2205
Academy of Management Review	1798
Administrative Science Quarterly	1565
Journal of Management	1064
Journal of International Business Studies	980
Organization Science	659
Journal of Marketing	601
Journal of Management Studies	586
Journal of Business Ethics	543
Journal of Financial Economics	485
American Sociological Review	425
American Journal of Sociology	409
Journal of Business Venturing	382
Journal of Marketing Research	342
Journal of Operations Management	331
Industrial Marketing Management	327
Journal of Finance	316
Journal of Business Research	304
Management Science	293

Created by using VOSviewer based on a sample of N = 474 articles

citations. A journal had to be cited at least 50 times to be included in my analysis. In total, 95 journals fulfilled this criterion. Figure 7 and Table 7 show the results.

The Strategic Management Journal is the most-cited journal with a total of 2329 citations. Other frequently cited journals with over 1000 citations include *Academy of Management Journal* (2205 citations), *Academy of Management Review* (1798 citations), *Administrative Science Quarterly* (1565 citations), and *Journal of Management* (1064 citations).

Furthermore, I examined whether the distribution of the most-cited journals complies with Bradford's Law. It is an assessment of the distribution of the journals in which articles in a research area or literature are published. According to this law, "there is always a small group of core journals that cover a significant percentage (1/3) of articles in a subject, field, literature, research area, or discipline. A second larger number of journals cover the other third of these articles, and a much larger number of journals cover the last third" (Garfield 1980). A total of 6942 journals were cited in the articles included in the analysis. A large part of the total citations by the 474 articles was made to very few journals such as Strategic Management Journal, Academic Management Journal, Academic Management Review, Administrative Science Quarterly, and Journal of Management. In this respect, according to journals, the distribution of citations seems to comply with Bradford's Law. Therefore, it can be argued that a core group of journals directing the field can be taken as a reference. The core journal group will provide substantial clues to follow what developments and gaps exist in the literature for future studies in RDT. Also, another finding that draws attention to the results of the analysis is that the *Strategic Management Journal* is the most-cited journal. This finding supports the finding that the "RDT literature tends to shift to the discipline of strategic management," which can be obtained especially from the results of the co-word analysis and the results of the existing literature review studies.

6 Conclusions

I present an overview of the RDT literature by using bibliometric analysis. I show that researches in the RDT field have greatly increased during the last years. To map (key)words and citations in the RDT field, I perform various bibliometric methods such as co-word and co-citation analysis. My comprehensive overview of the prior studies from different viewpoints allows me to obtain some crucial findings of the RDT literature, identify research gaps, and derive avenues and suggestions for future research in a substantiated way. However, this study is a descriptive review. In-depth content analysis of the articles in the RDT field was not conducted. Hence, this study identifies trends concerning RDT and presents a general overview of RDT. Findings obtained and suggestions given below are concerning overview and orientation of the RDT field. Now, determinations supported by findings associated with the general overview and orientation of the RDT field and suggestions will sequentially be given as follows:

Determination Despite Pfeffer and Salancik (2003) criticized that there are not enough empirical studies on the arguments of the theory,[6] the number of articles within the scope of RDT has increased over the years. Essential literature reviews (Davis and Cobb 2010; Hillman et al. 2009) also argue that RDT is an appropriate basis for empirical studies, and the number of studies related to the theory has been increasing by years. Nevertheless, the criticism of Pfeffer and Salancik (2003) may be a criticism of the orientation of the empirical studies rather than on the number of empirical studies. According to Pfeffer and Salancik (2003), the "scope" of the empirical studies may be considered inadequate. In the current study, it is assumed that the mentioned inadequacy is not regarded as an increase in the number of studies using the RDT label. However, it is considered instead to be an inadequacy regarding the scope and orientation of the RDT.

Suggestion In this respect, I see that the "inadequacy of empirical studies" in the RDT field continues in terms of the "scope" the empirical studies. The literature is still restricted mostly by the strategic actions undertaken by the dependent organizations. Therefore, the increase in the number of articles in this respect can be questioned.

Determination The orientation in RDT literature shifts focus away from its main concepts and assumptions and instead moves towards the strategic management discipline. This finding is consistent with the findings of the previous studies (Davis and Cobb 2010; Drees and Heugens 2013; Hillman et al. 2009). This finding is evident in the results of the analyses performed in this study. For example, the *Strategic Management Journal* is the most-cited journal within the 474 articles included in the analysis. As a cross-assessment to support this result, Ramos-Rodríguez and Ruíz-Navarro (2004), the first bibliometric study on strategic management literature, found that Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) ranked seventh in the top 50 among the most cited studies in the articles published in the Strategic Management Journal between 1980 and 2000. Moreover, they also found that the book *The External Control of Organization* received more citations than the studies of the prominent writers in the field of strategy (Andrews 1971; Ansoff 1965; Barney 1986, 1991; Dierickx and Cool 1989; Penrose 1959; Prahalad and Hamel 1990; Rumelt 1991; Teece 1982; Wernerfelt 1984). The results of the co-word analysis also support this finding. Co-word analysis was conducted only on articles related to the RDT. However, as a result of the analysis, it can be seen that performance, firm performance, competitive advantage, corporate governance, and board of directors, representing the discipline of the strategic management are most-cited keywords and they are more central in the relationship network. These results can be considered an indicator of the intertwined nature of the RDT with strategy.

Suggestion These two determinations focus on the relationship between organizational theory (OT) and strategic management disciplines. The intertwining of

[6] . Drees and Heuges (2013, 1666) stated in their meta-analysis study on RDT that the theory was inadequate for empirical studies. Therefore, although 10 years have passed after the studies of Pfeffer and Salancik (2003), nothing much has changed.

the RDT and strategic management can be explained by the fact that the RDT literature is limited by the strategic actions undertaken by dependent organizations to manage organizational dependence. The aim of presenting this finding of the RDT literature is not to position the strategic actions outside the theory. However, in this case, it seems that the framework of the theory consists only of these strategies. Through this, it can be possible to show the current orientation of the theory and to give ideas about where else the orientation can be shifted for future studies.

Suggestion Furthermore, according to the results of the co-word analysis, it was observed that the 474 studies within the scope of RDT used mostly concepts specific to the strategic management discipline. However, the main concepts, such as dependence, power, autonomy, resource, and resource dependence, have a more secondary appearance. This result is worthy of questioning in terms of the explanation field of the theory. It provides substantial clues about the tendencies within the RDT literature. At this point, for example, it could be used to perform questioning studies about the concept of "dependence." According to RDT, it is assumed that dependent organizations apply strategic actions to "get rid of organizational dependence" "or" change the structure of the dependence relationship. "In this case, within the RDT framework, it can be concluded that" "dependence" is considered undesirable. Therefore, inquiries about the nature of dependence in future studies have the potential to make a meaningful contribution to RDT. In this context, considering the orientation of the literature, the following questions about the concept of "dependence" can be asked in future studies: "Can independence/autonomy costs for firms be lessened in the current capitalist market system?", "Since being independent is a cost for firms, are the concepts related to strategy such as performance, firm performance, corporate governance, boards of director, networks, competitive advantage, innovation frequently studied within the scope of the RDT?", "Can dependence be desirable or a strategic option for a dependent organization?" and "Under which circumstances can dependence be considered as a strategic option?"

Determination According to the results of the citation analysis, Pfeffer and Salancik (1978, 2003), Hillman et al. (2009), Casciaro and Piskorski (2005), and Emerson (1962) are respectively the most cited studies. The common feature of these studies is that they make conceptual contributions to the concept of dependence. On the other hand, as can be seen from the co-word analysis and current literature review studies, the main interest of most of the studies in the RDT field is directed towards the strategic actions taken by dependent organizations to manage their organizational dependence. There are many articles for each strategy, and they do not say anything new for the RDT. Therefore, the impact levels of the studies that contribute to conceptual studies or strategies can differ from one another.

Suggestion This finding reveals the contradiction in the RDT literature: while the most studied topics are directed to strategic actions, the most-cited studies are directed to the main concepts of the theory. This finding is supported by Wry et al. (2013). They found that the vast majority of citations of the book *The External Control of Organizations* are ceremonial, and most of the ceremonial cita-

tions were variously used as a nod toward the main concepts of the theory, such as resources, dependence, power, and environment. This finding is thought-provoking regarding the nature of the citations. From this point of view, the nature of citations could be examined in-depth in future studies. Hence, an in-depth content analysis of the content of the studies in the RDT field could be performed in future studies.

Determination As can be seen from the results of the co-citation analysis, leading studies representing the RDT were cited together with the representatives of other macro theories, perspectives, approaches, or models. At this point, it can be seen that the theory was cited together with the representatives of institutional theory, resource-based theory, agency theory, transaction-cost economics, the stakeholder approach, network perspective, and relation-based view.

Suggestion This determination is related to the position of RDT in the discipline of the OT. It can be suggested for further studies to look into the integration of the RDT with other theories. Based on the results of this study and other relevant studies (Davis and Cobb 2010; Wry et al. 2013), certain research streams can be determined related to the relationship between the RDT and other theories in future researches. For example, the relationship between RDT and each of the other theories can be determined as a research stream. By conducting a more in-depth critical literature review and content analysis for each research stream, it can be possible to make a series of potential research topic suggestions for future studies on how the related two theories can be studied together. Also, it can be determined from such an in-depth critical literature review whether the RDT or the other perspectives are an auxiliary field of explanation. In the bibliometric study of Wry et al. (2013), it was concluded that the RDT was used as an auxiliary explanation field (theory) to contribute to the explanatory power of other theories, approaches, or perspectives. In future studies, as a way of contributing more to the RDT, a critical review can be conducted on how and in what way the other organizational theories can be exploited to improve the explanatory power (especially concerning the main concepts and assumptions) of the RDT. In this way, RDT can be in a more central position in terms of its relationship with other theories. Thus, it can contribute to the development of the main concepts and assumptions of the theory. For example, RDT and TCT can be used together to develop/expand the concept of dependence in future studies. In such a study, while with RDT, an explanation regarding the conditions (pre-contractual conditions) constituting dependence can be made, the post-contract conditions can be explained with TCT. In this way, a broader perspective on dependency can be introduced.

Determination Reviews related to the RDT literature are generally limited to the fields of business and management. Therefore, bibliometric studies do not include the entire sample of relevant studies in the RDT field. In this study, peer-review research and review articles published in journals in the fields of management and business are included.

Suggestion In future studies, an analysis can be carried out for a broader pool of articles. If a more general analysis is carried out in future studies, then it enables an interdisciplinary comparison. With such a study, it is possible to formulate a framework on how the RDT utilizes from other disciplines and which disciplines

are studied more intensively with RDT. Thus, the relationship of RDT with other disciplines will be examined.

Determination Another vital determination concerning bibliometric studies is related to the sample of the studies. Most of the bibliometric analyses use WoS and Scopus database in order to reach the related literature. Also, there is a limitation about timespan. These limitations cause not all articles that should be included in the analysis to be included in the study.

Suggestion Due to these two limitations emerging because of the nature of bibliometric studies, all relevant studies in the field of RDT could not be included in this study. In the study, analyzes were made on the articles published between 1975 and 2019 obtained from the WoS database. Also, I restricted the analysis to data retrieved from the WoS database. Besides, I could not include crucial articles before 1975 (for example, Pfeffer 1972a, b, c, 1973; Pfeffer and Leblebici 1973; Jacobs 1974; Pfeffer and Salancik 1974; Salancik and Pfeffer 1974),[7] since the database only allowed me to identify articles between 1975 and 2019. Hence, a certain body of literature was not considered in this study. In prospective researches, studies can be done with a broader sample. Hence, bibliometric analyses can also be performed on the studies in Scopus database, and the map of the area can be drawn.

Appendix

See Fig. 8, Table 8.

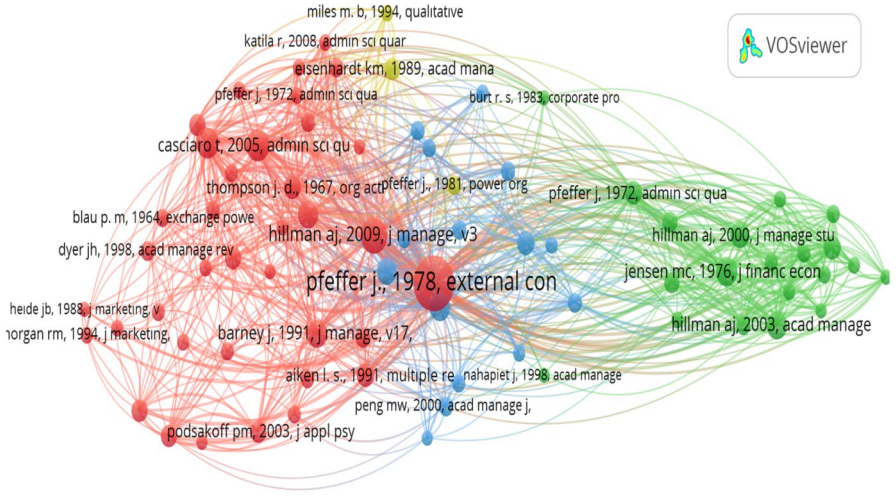

Fig. 8 Co-citation analysis at the publication level. *Notes:* Created by using VOSviewer based on a sample of N = 474 articles (included in Web of Science) (color figure online)

[7] *Note:* All studies here, except Pfeffer (1972c), has been published in the *Administrative Science Quarterly*.

Table 8 Most-cited studies according to Web of Science citations

Study	No. of citations
Pfeffer and Salancik (1978, 2003)	436
Hillman et al. (2009)	140
Casciaro and Piskorski (2005)	105
Emerson (1962)	91
Jensen and Meckling (1976)	80
DiMaggio and Powell (1983)	78
Barney (1991)	76
Hillman and Dalziel (2003)	75
Hillman et al. (2000)	63
Oliver (1991)	63
Thompson (1967)	54
Pfeffer (1972b)	54
Meyer and Rowan (1977)	51

I only include studies cited 50 or more times. Citation counts are based on the Web of Science database as of July 2019

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