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A Theoretical Framework for Supply Chain Resilience: Integrating Complexity and Network Theories to Understand Adaptive Capabilities

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary supply chains represent interconnected networks with interdependency, structural complexity, uncertainty, and open to disturbances that can be transmitted over organizational and geographical lines. supply-chain resilience has drawn attention in a considerable amount, but still research in the field tends to separate the analysis of structural resilience mechanisms and organizational adaptive capabilities. As a result, a rather small theoretical convergence still exists on the issue of the joint effects of network structure, adaptive capabilities, information visibility, organizational learning, and disruption characteristics producing a resilient performance collectively. This conceptual paper presents a unified setup through cross-disciplinary synthesis of work done in the area of resilience of supply chains, Complexity Theory and Complex Adaptive Systems, Network Theory, and Dynamic Capabilities Theory. Literature synthesis way through the four stages is applied: finding compatible concepts, formulating theoretical mechanisms, identifying overlaps among the concepts, formulating relations between features of the network and the consequences of the resilience.

This concept presents supply chains as complex adaptive networks. Within these networks, such characteristics as centrality, the degree of connectivity, redundancy in structure, modularity, and variety form simultaneously the vulnerability and the variety of the options for response. The ability through information visibility of disturbance and its meaning is a key step, whereas through the utilization of the capacity to adapt it is possible to convert structural resources into collective actions by sensing decoding reacting, re-designing, continuing the process with learning, and sometimes by a complete change if circumstances allow. A set of different attributes of disruptions like magnitude, length of the effect speed breadth, and predictability are all factors that influence the relationship between various occurrences. Resilience is presented as a construct with multiple facets covering the aspects before the incident - resistance, after the incident - response effectiveness and recovery, and finally adaptation and transformation of the supply network. A number of theoretically sound and well-justified propositions are put forward in the paper which can be empirically proven. And, the model features a feedback mechanism through which a disruption, a disruption-induced change, and a new state will lead to a reinforcement of adaptive capacities.

The study offers two contributions: Firstly, it brings structural and functional causes of supply chain resilience into the dynamic model. Secondly, it develops an operational model that offers a way to look at resilience from multiple perspectives and a method of combining structural and functional resilience. Future research is encouraged that will empirically support the relationships through structural equation modeling, longitudinal work, agent-based modeling, and simulation of disruption scenarios when talking about different industries, network configurations, and disruption types.

Keywords: supply chain resilience; complexity theory; network theory; complex adaptive systems; dynamic capabilities; adaptive capabilities; information visibility; organizational learning; disruption; supply chain networks.

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INTRODUCTION

Global supply chains aren't simple, step-by-step processes anymore. Instead of moving neatly from suppliers to manufacturers to customers, today's supply chains are sprawling webs. Now, they involve multiple layers of suppliers, logistics and technology partners, financial organizations, and institutional players, all closely linked. This web offers clear perks: more efficiency, tighter coordination, better specialization, and broader global reach. But there's a downside. The tighter the connections, the more vulnerable everyone becomes to ripple effects when trouble strikes. A disruption in one corner of the network can spread fast, crossing companies, industries, and even countries.

Because of these tangled challenges, supply chain resilience (SCR) has become a major focus for researchers. Back in 2004, Christopher and Peck argued that organizations facing uncertainty need resilience like visibility, collaboration, flexibility, and sound network design. Not long after, Sheffi and Rice showed that resilient companies not only absorb shocks but can also bounce back quickly. Ponomarov and Holcomb went further, describing resilience as an adaptive ability that involves preparation, swift response, and recovery. Jüttner and Maklan highlighted flexibility, speed, collaboration, and visibility as key ingredients for a resilient chain.

All these ideas have built a strong base for resilience research. Still, the traditional view is that resilience is just about resisting shocks and snapping back to the old normal and doesn't tell the full story. In reality, supply chains are made up of independent but deeply connected actors. A hiccup affecting one player can change sourcing, transport, production, information sharing, and even how customers behave. Those changes can add up quickly, making the overall impact much bigger than the original problem.

If we really want to understand this, Complexity Theory gives us some useful tools. Supply chains act like Complex Adaptive Systems: they're nonlinear, they self-organize, adapt, and evolve as their parts interact. Resilience isn't fixed as it grows from the way these actors respond and adjust together (Tukamuhabwa et al., 2015).

Network Theory adds another layer. It says supply chains are really networks of nodes and connections, with strengths and weaknesses tied to things like connectivity, centrality, redundancy, and diversity. The very features that help with coordination and resource sharing also open the door to more ways for interruptions to spread. For example, being highly connected can improve communication, but it also means trouble travels faster. Centralized networks might run more efficiently but carry bigger risks if a key hub fails.

Neither complexity nor network theories are enough on their own. Network Theory helps map structural risks and alternate paths, but doesn't fully explain how organizations adapt in real time. Complexity Theory speaks to adaptation and emergent order, but doesn't clarify which network structures aid or hamper that adaptation.

Enter Dynamic Capabilities Theory. Teece, Pisano, and Shuen (1997) introduced this idea and organizations need the ability to sense changes, build and adjust competencies, and quickly reconfigure themselves to keep up with shifting environments. In supply chains, dynamic capabilities are how firms spot problems, figure out what they mean, mobilize resources, rebuild relationships, and learn from the experience.

So, this paper isn't just asking whether network structure or adaptive capability makes supply chains resilient. The real question here is: how do network structures and adaptive processes work together to create resilience, especially when disruptions hit from different directions?

That leads us to this main research question:

How do network structure, adaptive capabilities, information visibility, learning, and disruption characteristics interact to create resilience in complex supply chain networks?

This study makes three big theoretical contributions. First, it treats supply chains as complex adaptive networks by melding structure and behavior. Second, it frames adaptive capabilities as the engine that turns the potential

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for resilience built into a network's structure into real-world resilience. Third, it introduces a recursive model: resilience isn't something you 'achieve' once and for all. Each disruption teaches the network something new, shaping adaptive capabilities and, in turn, reshaping the network itself.

Theoretical Foundations and Literature Review

Supply Chain Resilience

People started talking about supply chain resilience when they looked into supply chain risk, vulnerability, flexibility, continuity, and how companies bounce back after disruptions. Back in 2004, Christopher and Peck highlighted that supply chains need to handle surprises through smart design, teamwork, agility, and keeping an eye on what's happening. Sheffi and Rice in 2005 went further, showing that resilience in organizations comes down to absorbing shocks and quickly getting operations back on track.

A few years later, Ponomarov and Holcomb pushed the idea ahead by focusing on preparedness, response, and recovery as parts of resilience that are all linked. Jüttner and Maklan (2011) then brought in evidence showing that flexibility, visibility, speed, and working together matter a lot when big disruptions happen.

Over time, the research shifted away from viewing resilience as just returning to equilibrium, moving toward seeing it as something dynamic. Kamalahmadi and Parast (2016) show that supply chain resilience isn't one single thing but it's a mix of different principles and abilities. Similarly, Tukamuhabwa et al. (2015) list recurring strategies like flexibility, redundancy, collaboration, and agility, while pointing out that complex adaptive systems play a big role.

Wieland and Durach (2021) make an important distinction: some see resilience as simply getting back to how things were, while others focus on adapting. That difference matters, because going back to the old way might bring back the same weaknesses that caused trouble in the first place. A truly resilient supply chain may actually rebuild its network, update technology, switch sourcing, or change how it coordinates or basically, it adapts instead of just restoring old conditions.

In this framework, supply chain resilience means the whole network's ability to resist, respond, recover, adapt, and even transform after disruptions all while keeping or fixing critical functions.

This definition treats resilience as having many sides, and as something dynamic.

Complexity Theory and Complex Adaptive Systems

Complexity Theory basically challenges the idea that you can always find a neat, linear cause and effect in organizations. Complex systems are made up of lots of agents interacting, and their local actions can create unpredictable and sometimes surprising effects at the bigger system level.

Supply networks are a great example, since each organization makes decisions for itself but depends on others in the network. Suppliers, manufacturers, logistics providers, distributors, tech companies, and customers all react to changes using their own info, resources, incentives, and limits.

When a key supplier gets hit with a disruption, you really see this chain reaction. The manufacturer might shift orders to other suppliers. Those suppliers now face capacity issues, which impacts their other customers. Logistics providers might change routes, and customers cope with delays or shortages. In the end, it's not just the original disruption that matters but all the adaptations and interactions it triggers.

Three principles from Complex Adaptive Systems (CAS) are especially important for resilience:

- Nonlinearity: Not all disruptions are equal and small issues at a central node can absolutely ripple through the whole network, while bigger problems at less connected nodes might stay contained.

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- Emergence: Resilience doesn't just come from one big player. Instead, it happens because network members coordinate, solve problems together, share info, and take complementary actions all of which create results at the network level.
- Adaptation: Organizations change how they act or connect when the environment shifts. They might switch suppliers, tweak production, change logistics, redesign products, shuffle inventory, or build new partnerships.

So, supply chain resilience is best seen as an evolving feature of an adaptive system and not as a static asset belonging to one company.

Network Theory and Structural Resilience

Network Theory gives us tools to examine how supply chain relationships are structured. You can formally represent a supply network as:

$G = (V, E)$

where V stands for organizational or operational nodes and E for relationships connecting them.

Nodes could be suppliers, factories, distributors, logistics companies, customers, banks, or tech providers. Edges can show material flows, info sharing, financial links, contracts, or tech connections.

Five structural traits matter most in this framework:

Centrality

Centrality is about how much a given node matters structurally. If a key supplier, facility, logistics hub, or tech provider fails, the consequences can be huge because so many depend on that node.

Connectivity

Connectivity means how tied together the actors are. High connectivity helps with communication, coordination, and accessing alternatives, but dense networks can also let disruptions spread fast. So, it's got both upsides and downsides for resilience.

Redundancy

Redundancy is having backups like alternative suppliers, facilities, routes, inventory, tech, or other resources. This gives options to tap when the usual resources fail (Sheffi & Rice, 2005).

Modularity

Modularity shows how independent various network parts are. Modular setups can keep disruptions contained within certain subsystems, while still maintaining coordination across the wider network.

Diversity

Diversity is about variety with different suppliers, regions, technologies, logistics modes, and resources. It helps avoid depending on the same potential points of failure and opens more routes for adaptation.

These features lay out the network's structural options during disruptions. But just having options doesn't mean they'll get used well. That's where the tie between Network Theory and adaptive capabilities comes in.

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Dynamic and Adaptive Capabilities

Dynamic Capabilities Theory explains how organizations respond to environmental change by reshuffling their resources, routines, and relationships. Teece et al. (1997) say dynamic capabilities mean a firm knows how to integrate, build, and rework its strengths in fast-changing environments.

For supply chain resilience, adaptive capabilities show up in six related processes:

- Sensing – catching early disruption signals or vulnerabilities.
- Interpreting – figuring out how relevant these signals are, how bad things might get, and what it all means.
- Responding – using resources and taking quick action to mitigate.
- Reconfiguring – switching suppliers, routes, facilities, inventories, tech, or relationships.
- Learning – weaving lessons from disruptions into routines within and between organizations.
- Transforming – making big changes when the current setup just won't work anymore.

These abilities separate what the network could achieve from what it actually achieves. For instance, having backup suppliers is only useful if the organization can spot when to switch, compare alternatives, negotiate deals, transfer specs, arrange logistics, and make it all happen fast enough.

Adaptive capability is the behavioral link between structural resources and real resilience outcomes.

Information Visibility

Information visibility isn't exactly an adaptive capability, but it matters a lot. Visibility is about getting relevant info and having it be available, accessible, timely, accurate, and interpretable covering suppliers, inventory, transport, demand, capacity, and exposure to disruptions.

Visibility helps resilience because you need to spot changes before you can act. But visibility isn't resilience itself. Data only helps if people can analyze it and organize responses.

So, the logical sequence goes:

Visibility → Sensing → Interpretation → Coordinated Response

Not just:

Visibility → Resilience, magically.

Basically, information visibility boosts the sensing and response parts of adaptive capability.

Organizational and Interorganizational Learning

Learning ties today's disruption experience to future resilience. Organizations learn when they gather info about what caused a disruption, check how well their response worked, rethink moves, adjust routines, and lock in the practices that helped.

In supply chains, learning also happens between organizations. Since resilience relies on multiple players, lessons about coordination, switching suppliers, sharing info, logistics, deploying inventory, and making emergency decisions often have to cross company borders.

Learning has two big roles here: it strengthens future adaptive abilities, and it pushes changes to the network itself. That's a feedback loop which is what you learn from disruptions shapes how your network looks next time.

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Disruption Characteristics

Some resilience frameworks treat all disruptions as the same, but that's a problem having the same network and abilities won't always work equally well under different disruption conditions.

This framework considers five disruption features:

- Magnitude: how bad the initial disturbance is.
- Duration: how long the disruption lasts.
- Velocity: how quickly its effects show up and spread.
- Scope: how wide the disruption reaches (geographically, organizationally, or across the network).
- Predictability: how much you can see it coming.

These features shape whether structural and adaptive measures work. Redundancy might fix a localized supplier outage, but not if several suppliers in one area are hit at once. Fast detection is super valuable for disruptions that spread quickly, while transformation is important when disruptions linger or are deep.

So, disruption characteristics are more than background noise and they're critical context.

Research Gap

Three main theoretical gaps stick out in the research.

First, even though plenty of resilience factors are recognized like redundancy, flexibility, collaboration, visibility, agility, and learning their links aren't always rooted in a clear structure-to-behavior mechanism.

Second, Network Theory shows vulnerabilities and gives options, but it can seem static if you leave out adaptation and network changes.

Third, Complexity Theory walks through adaptation, nonlinearity, and emergence, but needs more detail about why some disruptions spread differently in supply networks.

The big gap, then, is the lack of a fully integrated look at network structure, adaptive behavior, information visibility, disruption traits, learning, and multi-dimensional resilience results.

This framework tackles that by treating supply chains as complex adaptive networks, where structure sets what's possible, and adaptive capability determines whether and how actors seize those opportunities in the middle of a disruption.

CONCEPTUAL METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study uses a conceptual research design built on an integrative literature review and theory-synthesis approach. The goal isn't to calculate empirical effect sizes or statistically test causal links. Instead, the method pulls together complementary theoretical explanations into a clear framework, so it's possible to develop empirically testable propositions later on.

An integrative approach fits here because the main topic that is supply chain resilience spans multiple theoretical fields. No single tradition really explains it all on its own.

Four areas build the theoretical base:

- supply chain resilience;
- Complexity Theory and Complex Adaptive Systems;

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- Network Theory and supply network structure;
- and Dynamic Capabilities Theory with adaptive organizational behavior.

Information visibility and organizational learning also stay in play as cross-cutting ideas, since resilience research always highlights them as key mechanisms for coordinated adaptation.

Literature Identification and Selection Logic

The literature-synthesis took a structured conceptual route, not just a loose narrative overview.

First, the review's theoretical boundaries focused on studies about resilience results, how disruptions spread, network structure, adaptation, information visibility, learning, and organizational reconfiguration.

Second, the main theoretical works and big synthesis studies were spotlighted in these fields. The focus went to peer-reviewed articles that either: (a) shaped key definitions of supply chain resilience, (b) used complex adaptive systems or network frameworks for supply chains, (c) built out dynamic-capability mechanisms tied to adaptation, or (d) brought together the empirical and conceptual resilience literature.

Third, studies were screened for conceptual fit. Papers had to contribute directly to at least one part of the suggested causal structure:

structural condition → information/adaptive process → resilience outcome → learning/reconfiguration.

Anything off-topic unrelated to supply chain resilience, network structure, organizational adaptation, disruption management, or the framework's core theory got dropped from the final synthesis. This rule also led to cutting out some side references from earlier drafts.

Fourth, the literature that stayed was compared using theoretical coding. Concepts with similar roles were grouped into broader categories. For example, having extra suppliers or routes fell under structural redundancy; supplier variety and geographic spread got linked to diversity; sensing, response, and reconfiguration became adaptive capabilities; and recovery, adaptation, and transformation counted as different resilience outcomes.

So, the method prioritizes theoretical relevance and integration, not just covering everything out there. That means this study is a theory-building integrative review and not a systematic review or meta-analysis.

Literature-Synthesis Procedure

The theory-building came in four main steps:

- Stage 1: Construct extraction.

Key ideas tied to supply chain resilience were pulled from all four theoretical areas.

- Stage 2: Construct classification.

These ideas were sorted by their theoretical roles like structural factors, enabling conditions, adaptive mechanisms, context, end results, or feedback loops.

- Stage 3: Mechanism specification.

Relationships between these ideas were worked out, mainly asking how each theory explains the spread of disruptions and how adaptation happens. Network Theory explains structural exposure and alternatives; Complexity Theory covers nonlinearity, emergence, and repeated adaptation; Dynamic Capabilities Theory details deliberate organizational response.

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- Stage 4: Proposition development.

Theoretical relationships with support across these perspectives became clear propositions. Each one could then translate into measurable ideas for testing in future studies.

This built the following theoretical structure:

$$\mathrm{SCR} = \mathrm{f}(\mathrm{NS}, \mathrm{AC}, \mathrm{IV}, \mathrm{L}, \mathrm{DC})$$

where:

SCR = supply chain resilience;

NS = network structure;

AC = adaptive capabilities;

IV = information visibility;

L = organizational and interorganizational learning;

DC = disruption characteristics.

This isn’t a statistical equation but it’s a conceptual map to lay out the important construct categories and how they relate.

Derivation of the Integrated Framework

The framework came together through careful theoretical mapping and not just by tossing in variables from other studies.

Network Theory forms the structural layer. Things like centrality, connectivity, redundancy, modularity, and diversity shape where vulnerabilities gather and what backup options exist.

Complexity Theory covers the system dynamics. Nonlinearity explains why similar shocks hit differently; emergence shows why resilience matters at the network level; adaptation and coevolution reveal how networks shift after disruptions.

Dynamic Capabilities Theory adds the action side like sensing, interpreting, responding, reorganizing, learning, and transforming so that actors actually use the network’s potential for resilience.

The supply chain resilience work brings the outcome side, from resistance and response to recovery, adaptation, and transformation with each step gets more dynamic.

So, the integrated framework works like this:

Network structure decides resilience potential → information visibility lets actors’ sense what’s happening → adaptive capabilities put those options into motion → disruption traits affect how well things work out → resilience outcomes appear → and learning loops back to shape both capabilities and the network itself.

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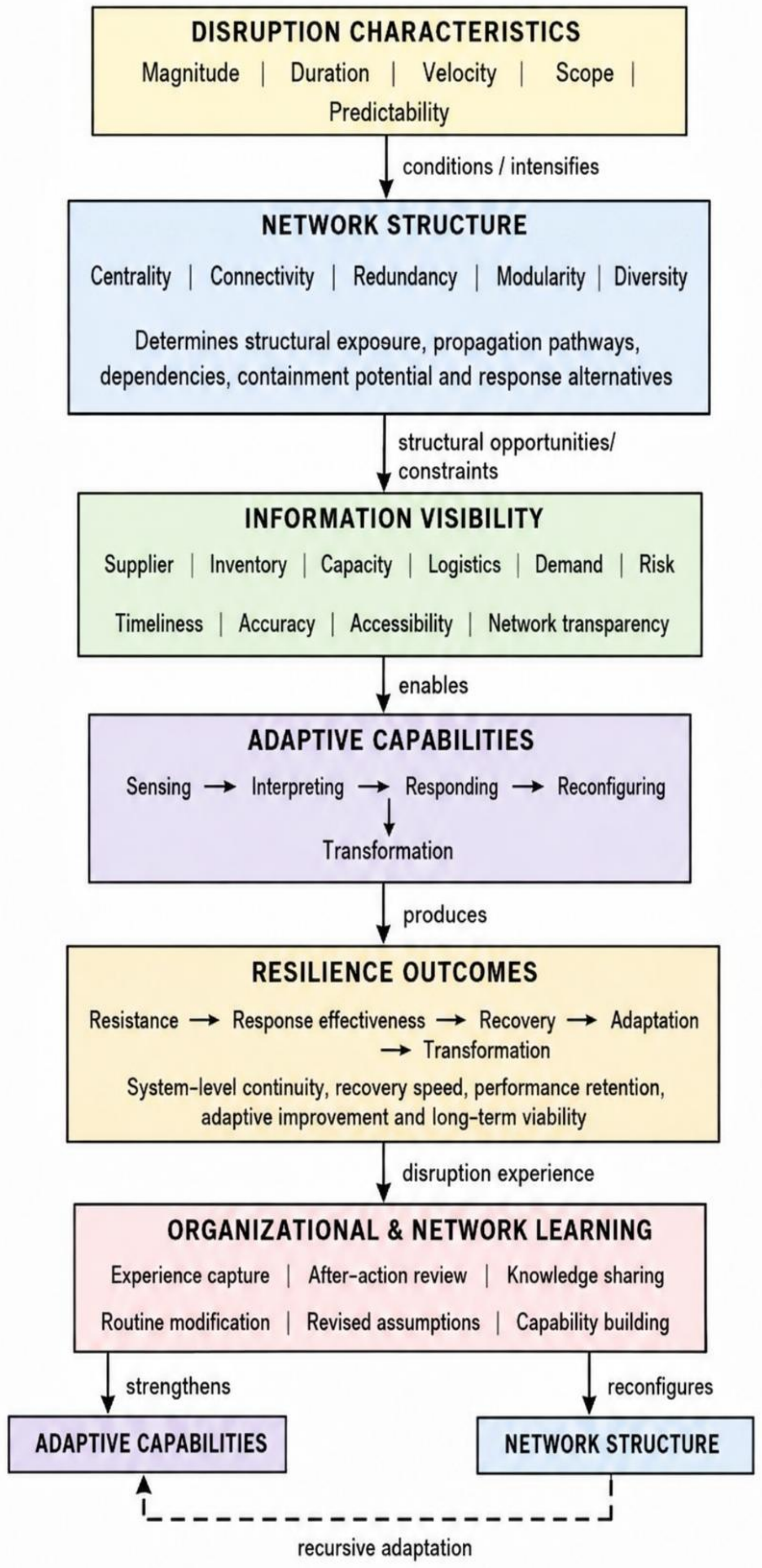
Proposed Theoretical Framework

Figure 1. Integrated Complex Adaptive Network Framework of Supply Chain Resilience



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The system highlights three relationships more explicitly. First, network structure does not mechanically lead to resilience; instead, it leads to the creation of vulnerabilities, constraints, and potential ways of response. Second, adaptive capacities are the key factor that allows structural options to be actually mobilized as a result. Third, resilience can generate feedback, i.e. changes in network through learning and reconfiguration, and thereby, the post-disruption network can differ quite a bit from the pre-disruption one.

Theoretical Propositions and Testable Constructs

Network Structure and Disruption Propagation

Network Theory says the impact of a disruption depends partly on where it hits the network and the positions of the nodes it affects. Highly central nodes connect a lot of players, so they become points where risks can concentrate. When a network is densely connected, it’s easier to coordinate, but this setup can also give disruptions more ways to spread.

- Proposition 1 (P1): The structure of a network has a big influence on how far and how fast disruptions move through supply networks.

You can measure P1 by looking at things like network centrality, how dense or connected the network is, path length, clustering, how quickly disruptions spread, and how many nodes get affected.

Redundancy, Diversity, Modularity, and Resilience

Different ways of structuring a network help cut down dependency on single nodes and create backup paths during disruptions. Extra suppliers, routes, facilities, and technologies help redirect resources and flows (Sheffi & Rice, 2005). Diversity lowers reliance on one type or source, and modular networks can keep disruptions locked within certain subsystems.

But these features only show resilience potential and they work only if used effectively during a crisis.

- Proposition 2 (P2): The more you have well-designed redundancy, diversity, and modularity, the more resilient your supply chain is, because you can substitute and contain disruptions better.

To test this, you can count qualified alternate suppliers, look at how concentrated your sourcing is, check geographic distribution, see what alternate routes are available, calculate network modularity, measure how fast resources can be switched, and track recovery.

Concentration and Interdependence as Vulnerability

Supply networks built for efficiency tend to depend on just a few suppliers, facilities, technologies, or transport routes. This creates single points of failure. Complexity Theory points out that tightly linked systems can behave unpredictably and escalate disruptions quickly across actors.

- Proposition 3 (P3): Concentrated networks and too much interdependence weakens supply chain resilience, especially if a disruption affects a highly central node.

You can test this with supplier concentration indices, node centrality, network density, dependence ratios, the number of items from single sources, disruption severity, and the performance impact.

The use of “particularly” means this: the negative effect of concentration gets worse as the centrality of the disrupted node goes up.

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Adaptive Capabilities as a Mediating Mechanism

Having extra suppliers doesn’t instantly create resilience. A company only benefits from redundancy if it can spot the disruption, evaluate options, shift orders, align requirements, organize logistics, and tweak its plans.

So, Dynamic Capabilities Theory connects structural resources to actually realized resilience.

- Proposition 4 (P4): Adaptive capabilities are the go-between for resilient network structure and real supply chain resilience.

You can think of adaptive capability as a bundle: sensing, interpreting, responding, and reconfiguring. This means redundancy, diversity, and modularity boost resilience because they give capable organizations more options to use when something goes wrong.

Information Visibility and Adaptive Response

Transparency is always called out as vital for resilience (Christopher & Peck, 2004; Jüttner & Maklan, 2011). Up-to-date details on suppliers, inventory, how much capacity is available, transportation, demand, and where disruptions might hit help cut down detection time and keep decisions in sync.

But visibility alone isn’t enough. Its real value is in improving detection and understanding those in turn make a faster, more coordinated response possible.

- Proposition 5 (P5): Good information visibility boosts an organization’s sensing and response skills, and these skills are what actually link visibility to supply chain resilience.

You might measure visibility through how timely, accurate, complete, or accessible across tiers the info is, how much real-time tracking you have, and how transparent things feel. Sensing can be measured by how quickly risks are spotted and recognized, while response is about decision speed and how well resources are mobilized.

Learning and Adaptive Capacity

Complex Adaptive Systems learn and change through feedback. Companies get better at handling disruptions if they capture, interpret, share, and work new experiences into routines.

Reviews after disruptions don’t count as learning if they don’t change how things are done. So, learning should be visible in changes to rules, plans, supplier policies, network setup, and day-to-day routines.

- Proposition 6 (P6): When organizations and their partners learn from past disruptions, they boost their adaptive skills and overall resilience down the line.

You can look at how often and how well post-disruption reviews happen, how knowledge gets shared, if corrective actions are taken, whether plans really change, how well disruption knowledge is kept, and whether response and recovery get better after each disruption.

Recursive Reconfiguration

Complexity Theory says adaptive systems grow and change through feedback. When a supply network is hit by a disruption, it doesn’t always bounce back to the old setup. Companies might swap out suppliers, spread out sourcing, move operations, rethink logistics, make new deals, or bring in new tech.

Resilience here is a cycle, not a straight line.

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- Proposition 7 (P7): Learning from disruptions and making changes leads to measurable shifts in how supply networks are built, setting up a feedback loop between resilience experience and future structural resilience.

This one is all about tracking changes over time and compare the network's centrality, concentration, redundancy, modularity, diversity, and relationship patterns before and after disruptions.

Complementarity Between Structural and Behavioral Resilience

Network Theory focuses on making sure there are enough structural alternatives, while Dynamic Capabilities Theory is about the ability to use and reorganize those resources. Combining the two shows a complementary effect.

If there's lots of redundancy but not enough adaptive capability, you've got backup options that no one can actually use. If the network is tightly limited, even the best response skills don't help much because choices are slim. The best resilience comes when you've got both resources to work with and the ability to use them.

- Proposition 8 (P8): Structural and behavioral (adaptive) resilience work together, so having both leads to better supply chain resilience than relying on one or the other.

In practice, P8 predicts that resilience is strongest when structural alternatives and adaptive skills are both present, and that together they deliver better results in resisting, recovering, adapting, or transforming.

Construct Operationalization for Future Empirical Testing

In order to put the structure into action by turning conceptual notions into something observable, a primary way to define the concept would be:

Construct	Conceptual meaning	Illustrative empirical indicators
Network centrality	Structural importance of specific actors	Degree, betweenness and eigenvector centrality
Connectivity	Extent of interconnection	Network density, average degree, path length
Redundancy	Availability of substitutes	Number of alternative suppliers/routes/facilities
Diversity	Heterogeneity of resources and locations	Supplier, geographic, technological and logistics diversity
Modularity	Structural separability of network clusters	Modularity index, cluster independence
Information visibility	Availability and accessibility of relevant network information	Timeliness, accuracy, completeness, tier visibility
Sensing capability	Ability to detect emerging disruptions	Detection time, monitoring capability, early-warning effectiveness
Interpretation capability	Ability to assess implications	Risk-analysis capability, decision accuracy
Response capability	Ability to mobilize immediate action	Response time, coordination speed, resource deployment
Reconfiguration capability	Ability to modify resources and relationships	Supplier switching, rerouting, capacity relocation
Learning	Institutionalization of disruption experience	Post-event reviews, routine changes, knowledge sharing
Disruption magnitude	Severity of disturbance	Initial capacity/performance loss
Disruption duration	Persistence of disturbance	Hours/days/months affected

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Disruption velocity	Speed of propagation	Time between initial event and network impact
Disruption scope	Breadth of impact	Number of nodes/regions/functions affected
Predictability	Anticipatory potential	Warning time, forecastability
Resistance	Ability to absorb initial shock	Maximum performance loss
Response effectiveness	Ability to stabilize operations	Time to containment, service continuity
Recovery	Restoration of required performance	Time to recovery
Adaptation	Improvement through operational change	Post-disruption process/network modifications
Transformation	Fundamental system redesign	Strategic sourcing/network/business-model changes

Using this method, the theories can be tested quantitatively (for e.g. a study of 12 weeks), over time (longitudinal), within networks (network-analytic), by simulating (simulation-based), or by combining several methods (mixed-method).

DISCUSSION

Supply Chains as Complex Adaptive Networks

The main point here is that we shouldn't think of supply chains just as networks, nor just as adaptive systems. The truth is, they're best understood as complex adaptive networks.

The way the network is put together tells you who relies on whom, where the biggest risks sit, and what options you really have. But it's the adaptive part that shapes how each player actually acts within those structures. Complexity pops up because once one player changes what they do, it shifts the situation for everyone else.

So, you can't just focus on how resilient each individual company is. Say you have a manufacturer who's really good at adapting but it doesn't matter if their key suppliers can't react quickly. On the flip side, several companies scattered around the network can build resilience at the system level just by adapting on their own, even if there's no one in charge.

That's what Complexity Theory really brings to the table here: resilience isn't something you can break down to just one part and it's a property that emerges from the whole network.

The Dual Effect of Network Structure

The second key idea here is about trade-offs in the network's structure. You can't just label certain network features as simply resilient or vulnerable.

If you connect more nodes, you get better info sharing but you also risk disruptions traveling faster. Centralization can make coordination smoother, but it also piles on risk if something goes wrong there. Redundancy gives you more backup options, but it costs more and makes things more complicated. Modularity can keep problems from spreading, but you might lose some benefits from integration.

So, structure and resilience aren't connected in a straightforward way.

The big management question isn't:

"Which network feature is most resilient?"

Instead, it's:

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"What setup gives us the right types of options for the disruptions this particular network is likely to face?"

That's why it's important to look at the kinds of disruptions that actually matter to your network.

Adaptive Capabilities Convert Potential into Realized Resilience

The framework makes a big distinction between what the network could do (its structural resilience potential) and what actually happens (realized resilience).

Having backup suppliers is just potential. Actually, switching production to them when something goes wrong is real adaptation.

Having lots of data available is potential. Noticing an issue and figuring out what to do with that data is adaptive sensing.

Alternative logistics routes? Potential. Getting everyone including transport, inventory, partners coordinated to use those new routes is adaptation in action.

What this all means is that the real mechanism turning options into real resilience is how well a network can adapt on the fly.

Information Visibility as an Enabling Infrastructure

The framework also clears up what information visibility really means. Visibility alone isn't the same thing as resilience.

Sure, information needs to be there available, accurate, quick to access, understandable but that's only step one. The organizations have to be able to act on it, too.

And as supply chains lean into advanced analytics, AI, digital twins, IoT, and real-time monitoring, this matters even more. Tech makes it easier to spot things, but if companies invest in visibility without building up the right decision-making and coordination skills, they'll just have more information, not better results.

From Recovery to Adaptation and Transformation

Old-school thinking about resilience usually stops at recovery. This framework moves past that by separating out recovery from adaptation and transformation.

Recovery's about getting back to acceptable functioning.

Adaptation means shifting practices, resources, or partnerships based on what you learn from disruptions.

Transformation takes it further and it means making really deep changes to the supply network, especially if going back to the old setup would leave you just as exposed.

This matches what Wieland and Durach (2021) argued: resilience isn't just snapping back to where you were before.

Let's say there's a long-term geopolitical problem. You probably need to regionalize sourcing, not just swap one supplier for another. If one supplier keeps causing risk, maybe it's time to redesign your product so you don't rely on specialized parts. And if you go through a big tech shake-up, you might need to change both how you run your processes and how the supply chain is managed.

So, resilience plays out more like this:

Resistance → Response → Recovery → Adaptation → Transformation

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not just

Disruption → Recovery.

7.6 Resilience as a Recursive Process

The framework doesn't treat resilience as a simple chain of steps—it builds in feedback loops.

The full cycle looks like this:

Network Structure → Disruption Exposure → Sensing → Interpretation → Response → Reconfiguration → Resilience Outcome → Learning → Future Network Structure and Capabilities.

This matters a lot because the way you handle one disruption could reshape your whole network. If you swap suppliers, your relationships change. Diversify where you get things from, and your geography shifts. New logistics deals tweak your connections. Go digital, and information flows differently. Stockpile key items, and how you depend on others shifts too.

Bottom line: the network you end up with after a big disruption can look and act very different from what you started with.

Theoretical Contributions

The study makes four main theoretical contributions:

- First, it brings together Complexity Theory and Network Theory by framing supply chains as complex adaptive networks. Network Theory helps pinpoint structural conditions, while Complexity Theory sheds light on how decentralized interactions and nonlinear responses lead to outcomes nobody could predict just from the pieces alone.
- Second, it uses Dynamic Capabilities Theory to explain the behavioral mechanism that links structure with resilience. This approach moves past the idea that things like redundancy, diversity, or modularity automatically make a system resilient.
- Third, the framework makes a clear distinction between information visibility and adaptive capability. Visibility means having the information for sensing and interpreting what's happening. But it's adaptive capability that decides whether that information actually leads to coordinated action.
- Fourth, the framework explicitly adds a recursive learning mechanism. Here, resilience isn't just an endpoint. When a disruption happens, organizations learn from experience, which can boost their capabilities and reshape the network, affecting how resilient they'll be to the next disruption.

Altogether, these contributions make for a more dynamic explanation of resilience than models that only focus on a network's structure or its ability to recover.

Managerial Implications

The framework has several takeaways for managing supply chains.

First, managers should look beyond just their direct suppliers. Hidden dependencies with lower-tier suppliers, logistics providers, tech platforms, and geographically concentrated resources can pose big risks.

Second, it's important to identify central nodes and single points of failure using network-based methods and not just traditional supplier risk checklists.

Third, when considering redundancy, you have to look at how easy it is to actually use those alternatives. Having backup suppliers does little good if contracts, product specs, or logistics arrangements make switching slow or impossible.

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Fourth, spending on visibility tech isn’t enough by itself. The organization needs the analytic and decision-making muscle to act on real-time information, or delays in interpreting and responding render the data almost useless.

Fifth, resilience strategies should fit the type of disruption. Short, local interruptions might call for inventory and backup options. But for long, widespread disruptions, reconfiguring or transforming the network might be necessary.

Sixth, companies should make post-disruption learning routine. After-action reviews shouldn’t just look at what failed operationally, but also question assumptions about the network, visibility, who calls the shots, and how organizations coordinate.

Finally, managers need to think about resilience on a network scale. Optimizing just one firm’s resilience can actually create vulnerabilities for the entire system, especially if cost savings increase reliance on highly central suppliers or bottleneck infrastructure.

Future Research Agenda

This conceptual study opens up many avenues for empirical research.

First, researchers should test the framework across industries with different network structures. For example, automotive, pharma, semiconductors, food, retail, healthcare, and e-commerce have big differences in product complexity, lead times, regulations, sourcing patterns, and tech dependence. Comparing them can reveal whether these relationships are universal or context-specific.

Second, future work should carefully distinguish between types of disruptions. Natural disasters, pandemics, geopolitical conflict, cyberattacks, supplier bankruptcy, transport failures, demand shocks, and technology outages all play out differently. These differences offer a way to test how disruption characteristics affect resilience.

Third, researchers can use structural equation modeling to test links between information visibility, adaptive capabilities, learning, and different aspects of resilience. They should focus on the mediating and interaction effects mentioned in the framework’s propositions.

Fourth, social network analysis is useful for quantifying centrality, connectivity, concentration, modularity, and how disruptions spread. Combining these network metrics with surveys on adaptive capability could provide a robust test of the integrated framework.

Fifth, longitudinal studies are needed to see if and how learning leads to structural changes in supply networks. Researchers should look at network structures before, during, and after disruptions.

Sixth, agent-based modeling is well-suited for investigating nonlinear and emergent outcomes. Simulations can show how different decision rules among actors add up to resilience or cascading failures.

Seventh, there should be research into potential thresholds and nonlinear effects. Things like connectivity, redundancy, and diversity aren’t always purely positive for resilience beyond a point, they might raise coordination costs or make networks more sensitive to disruption.

Eighth, future studies should also look at how new digital technologies like artificial intelligence, digital twins, advanced analytics, and real-time monitoring change the relationship between seeing and responding. Just improving visibility doesn’t guarantee better response if decision-making and organizational capacity fall short.

Finally, empirical work should clearly separate resistance, response, recovery, adaptation, and transformation instead of lumping all resilience into a single category. This makes it possible to track how structure and capabilities affect each stage.

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Limitations

The framework has its limits.

First, it's a conceptual study. It doesn't prove cause-and-effect between the key concepts so its propositions need to be tested and validated in the field.

Second, the literature review emphasizes the most important and relevant research, but doesn't claim to cover every publication on supply chain resilience. Future systematic reviews or bibliometric analyses could fill that gap.

Third, the framework simplifies a complex topic. Things like institutional context, regulation, power balances, culture, financial limits, and human decision-making all play roles in resilience, but aren't tackled directly.

Fourth, it doesn't explicitly model economic trade-offs. Redundancy and diversification, for example, can make a network more resilient but also drive-up costs. So, we need more research on how firms balance resilience with efficiency.

Finally, resilience varies depending on what level you look at that is firm, partnership, entire supply network, or industry. These layers shouldn't automatically be considered interchangeable.

CONCLUSION

This study develops an integrated theoretical framework that explains supply chain resilience by combining Complexity Theory, Network Theory, and Dynamic Capabilities Theory.

The framework starts with the idea that modern supply chains are best understood as complex adaptive networks. Their resilience depends partly on their structural features like centrality, connectivity, redundancy, modularity, and diversity but structure alone doesn't cut it. Structure determines where the network is vulnerable and what responses are possible; adaptive capabilities determine whether those responses can actually be mobilized.

Visibility gives organizations the information to sense and interpret disruptions. Sensing, responding, and reconfiguring are what turn that information and those options into coordinated action. Learning both within and between organizations connects today's disruption experience with tomorrow's capability. The nature of each disruption that is how big, how fast, how long, how widespread, and how predictable it is shapes how effective these mechanisms are.

To sum up, the central theoretical relationship looks like this:

Network Structure + Information Visibility + Adaptive Capabilities + Learning (conditioned by Disruption Characteristics) leads to Supply Chain Resilience.

The relationship evolves over time. Resilience after a disruption creates experience, experience leads to learning, and learning shapes both future capabilities and the structure of the network. So, the theoretical process is recursive:

Disruption → Sensing → Interpretation → Response → Reconfiguration → Recovery/Adaptation/Transformation → Learning → Network Reconfiguration → Future Resilience

The main takeaway is this: resilient supply chains aren't just networks with spare capacity or those that bounce back quickly. They're networks that spot changes, activate alternatives, coordinate adaptive responses, learn from disruption, and transform themselves when old arrangements stop working.

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By bringing together structural, behavioral, informational, contextual, and recursive mechanisms in one model, the framework lays the groundwork for a more complete theory of supply chain resilience and sets out propositions for researchers to test.

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