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How Resource Dependency Can Influence Social Resilience within a Primary Resource Industry*

N. A. Marshall, D. M. Fenton, P. A. Marshall, S. G. Sutton

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Abstract

ABSTRACT Maintaining a healthy balance between human prosperity and environmental integrity is at the core of the principles of Ecological Sustainable Development. Resource-protection policies are frequently implemented so as to regulate the balance between resource access and use, however, they can inadvertently compromise the ability of resource users to adapt and be resilient. Resource users who are especially dependent on a resource are more seriously compromised. But how do we define and measure resource dependency? And how do we assess its ability to influence social resilience? In this study, a conceptual model of resource dependency is developed in terms of: (i) occupational attachment, (ii) attachment to place, (iii) employability, (iv) family attitude to change, (v) business size, (vi) business approach, (vii) financial situation, (viii) level of specialisation, (ix) time spent harvesting, and (x) interest in and knowledge of the environment. The model of resource dependency and its effect on social resilience are (quantitatively and qualitatively) tested and explored using the commercial fishing industry in North Queensland, Australia. Results show that occupational attachment and employability were important influences as were business size and approach. Results can be used to identify vulnerability to institutional change and guide policy development processes.

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