

Rewrite The Recipe: A Gendered Examination of Social Exchange Theory in Leadership Research

ABSTRACT

Social exchange theory asserts that individuals generally reciprocate the positive or negative behavior shown to them. Given its broad applicability, social exchange theory has had extensive use within leadership research, primarily explaining why leader behavior influences follower outcomes. Despite social exchange theory's prominence in elucidating leader–follower dynamics, the literature exhibits a significant gap in addressing how gender shapes these relationships. My critical analysis identifies a pervasive omission of gender considerations in existing research, which has profound implications for the depth and accuracy of our comprehension of leader–follower exchanges. To redress this oversight, I introduce two gender perspectives to advance the social exchange literature: *gender in organizations*, which examines the role of gender within the existing organizational structures, and *gendering organizations*, which explores how organizational processes and interactions actively construct gender roles. These perspectives seek to advance and challenge our understanding of the gendered nuances in leader–follower social exchange relationships, offering new avenues for scholarly inquiry in the field of leadership.

Keywords: leadership, gender, social exchange theory, review, reciprocity