

Review of: "Promoting Pro-Environmental Behavior for Sustainable Water Resource Management: A Social Exchange Perspective"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

My primary concern regarding this paper is the absence of a clear definition of Social Exchange Theory. The study's documentary methodology also seems to present certain limitations, particularly in establishing the novelty of the research or its contribution to existing literature. It is plausible that this gap could potentially be addressed by exploring the full potential of Social Exchange Theory. With this in mind, it might be advisable to consider the exploration of concepts previously examined within Social Exchange Theory but not yet applied in the context of water resource management.

The paper emphasizes the Social Dilemma aspect of the problem without delving sufficiently into the principles of Social Exchange Theory. Although the tragedy of the commons and the conflicts between individual self-interest and collective interests have been extensively studied in the existing literature, there might be limited integration of these well-established concepts with the application of Social Exchange Theory in water resource management.

Nevertheless, Social Exchange Theory offers a potentially promising avenue for effecting behavioural change conducive to sustainable water resource management. The author suggests a multifaceted approach, encompassing education, pricing strategies, and applying social sanctions, which could foster effective water conservation.

However, it is essential to consider the potential hidden assumptions within Social Exchange Theory. This theory often assumes rational decision-making, where individuals meticulously weigh the costs and benefits of their actions. It might also presuppose uniformity in individuals' interests, universal social norms, and consistent effects of social sanctions and rewards within communities. Social Exchange Theory might also predominantly emphasize short-term considerations, potentially overlooking long-term implications. Therefore, examining these implicit assumptions becomes essential when considering their application in water resource management.

Furthermore, it's crucial to acknowledge the potential unintended consequences of developing policies based on Social Exchange Theory. While the multifaceted approach proposed by the author shows promise, it may lead to unanticipated outcomes, such as selective compliance, exacerbation of stress and anxiety due to social sanctions, or fostering an expectation of reciprocity that can lead to feelings of entitlement. The undue emphasis on social norms may inadvertently stifle innovation and creativity, and policies based on this theory may risk creating social divisions within communities. Thus, careful consideration of these potential consequences is vital when applying Social Exchange Theory to policy development in water conservation.

