

ScEI CLUB THEORY CORNER

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Leader-Member Exchange Theory

BACKGROUND

Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995) focuses on the quality of relationships between leaders and their team members, emphasizing that high-quality exchanges - characterized by trust, respect, and mutual obligation - lead to better outcomes.

In medical education, LMX theory is relevant to faculty-learner dynamics, where strong relational exchanges can enhance learner engagement, professional identity formation, and academic performance.

Educators who foster inclusive, supportive relationships often see increased learner motivation and collaboration. Applying LMX principles can also help address hierarchical barriers and promote psychological safety in clinical learning environments.

FURTHER READING

Bunin JL, Meyer HS, Durning SJ. Could application of leader-member exchange theory have saved a residency mentorship program? *Perspect Med Educ* 2020; 9: 264-267.

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Gerstner CR, Day DV. Meta-analytic review of leader-member exchange theory: Correlates and construct issues. *J Appl Psychol* 1997; 82: 827-844.

Graen GB, Uhl-Bien M. Relationship-based approach to leadership: Development of leader-member exchange theory of leadership over 25 years: Applying a multi-level domain perspective. *Leadership Q* 1995; 6: 219-247.

