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## **A Trickle-Down Model of I-Deals**

Integrating social learning and career customization theories, in this research we set out to explore a trickle-down model of i-deals- individually negotiated personalized agreements of a non-standard nature between employees and their managers (Rousseau, 2005). We argue that manager i-deals are positively associated with subordinate i-deals which, in turn, also relate positively to employee work performance and career promotability. Moreover, we integrate two types of contextual conditions to underline the social context of i-deals: From a managers' perspective, we propose that managers' servant leadership moderates the positive association between manager and subordinate i-deals. In addition, from a focal employee perspective, we propose that employees' prosocial motives is assumed to moderate the positive association between subordinate i-deals and their outcomes, i.e., work performance and career promotability. Results from a matched employee-manager data set supported our empirical model. This study contributes to i-deals research by: 1) integrating two contextual conditions that emphasize the importance of broader social elements inherent in i-deals; 2) revealing whether and how subordinate i-deals are beneficial both for themselves and for their organization, as predicted in i-deals' theory. From a practical point of view, if organisations and managers aim to use i-deals as a strategic tool to increase employee work performance and career promotability, they need to be transparent about how they expect these deals to be used.

**Key words:** Task i-deals, servant leadership, prosocial motives, work performance, career promotability.

## **A Trickle-Down Model of I-Deals**

In the context of changing careers and dynamic work settings (Bidwell & Briscoe, 2010; Eurostat, 2013), employees increasingly negotiate for personalized work arrangements that foster their performance and career growth at work (Call, Nyberg, & Thatcher, 2015). Rousseau (2005) defined these individualized arrangements as “idiosyncratic deals” (i-deals) which refer to individually negotiated agreements of a non-standard nature between an employee and a manager (Hornung, Rousseau, Glaser et al., 2010). I-deals may take the form of providing training, development and career growth opportunities (task i-deals), flexibility regarding when and where work is carried out (schedule flexibilities) and / or personalized financial package deals (Rosen, Slater, Chang, & Johnson, 2013). In this research we focus on task i-deals as they are relevant to exploring the impact on employees’ career and work related outcomes.

Research to date has focused primarily on i-deals that employees negotiate with their managers (Liao, Wayne, & Rousseau, 2016), however, earlier scholarly work in this field has ignored that managers themselves are also employees in organizations, having their own needs for i-deals and career advancement. In addition, despite the accumulating research on i-deals (Bal & Roussau, 2015), previous studies have tended to overlook what facilitates the provision of i-deals to a focal employee from the lens of managers’ own i-deals. This is problematic as it limits understanding of how i-deals unfold in a workplace. I-deals are negotiated in a social context (Bal, De Jong, Jansen, & Bakker, 2012) and the extent to which they benefit employee and organization will be determined strongly by how managers experience i-deals and to what extent they are willing to allow i-deals to be negotiated by their subordinates. More specifically, when managers experience the benefits of i-deals themselves, they may be more likely to grant their subordinates i-deals, as such benefitting both the

employee and organization from the i-deal (Liao et al., 2016). Yet, there is no research addressing the role of managers' own i-deals in granting i-deals to their subordinates.

To address this gap, this study focuses on the relationships between manager i-deals and subordinate i-deals, as well as two employee outcomes: one that is of relevance to the organization (*work performance*) and one that is of relevance to the individual employee career (*career promotability*). Thus, our first goal in this research is to explore the role of a manager's own i-deals in facilitating the provision of i-deals to his/her subordinate. By doing so, we study a *trickle-down effect*. Trickle-down models comprise an emerging perspective that has received considerable support, and wherein the effects of perceptions of one member of the organization (typically the supervisor) on other members (typically the supervisor's subordinates) are hypothesized (Ambrose, Schminke, & Mayer, 2013). To explain the trickle-down effect of i-deals, we build on social learning theory (Davis & Luthans, 1980), and argue that managers who have negotiated i-deals themselves, learn from their experiences, perceive i-deals beneficial and will be more likely to grant i-deals to their subordinates. We contribute to i-deals research by integrating the manager's perspective in an empirical model aimed at explaining how and why one's own ideals could be mutually beneficial for both parties (Bal & Rousseau, 2015).

Our second goal is to explore the contextual conditions that are likely to alter the trickle-down effects of i-deals. While some previous empirical research has identified individual factors that hinder or enhance a trickle-down effect (see for instance Aryee, Chen, Sun, & Debrah, 2007; Tepper & Taylor, 2003), there is still a lack of research that investigates the influence of contextual factors impacting the trickle-down effect. We argue that as the trickle-down effect occurs within a broader organizational environment, it should be taken into account when predicting employee outcomes (see also Johns, 2006). From a manager's point of view, we focus on servant leadership while from an individual employee's

point of view, we focus on their prosocial motives a possible moderator in our research model. Since i-deals are intended to contribute to the recipient's development at work (Guerrero, Jeanblanch, & Veilleux, 2016), we propose that managers' servant leadership, that refers to a desire or motivation to serve employees' interests, strengthens the association between managers' and subordinates' task i-deals. In a similar vein, because i-deals are intended to be beneficial for everyone in a team (Rousseau, 2005), we argue that the positive effects of subordinates' i-deals *only* translate into better work outcomes when employees with i-deals are motivated to help others at work, such that they spread the benefits of i-deals to others and not retain them only for themselves (Grant & Mayer, 2009). Our second contribution relates to our focus on the wider social context within which i-deals unfold (Bal & Rousseau, 2015). By incorporating managers and their leadership style on the one hand, and subordinates and their motives on the other hand, we provide a broader context of the relationship between i-deals and their outcomes, which supports that i-deals do not unfold in a dyadic vacuum (Kroon, Freese, & Schalk, 2015). Figure 1 visualizes the assumed relationship between our model variables. We develop our hypotheses in the following sections.

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Insert Figure 1 here  
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### **Theoretical Background**

Social learning theory accounts for the interaction between the person, the environment and the behaviour itself (Davis & Luthans, 1980). This interaction leads to new patterns of behaviour that develop through direct experiences and/or by observing others' behaviours (Bandura, 1971). By experiencing, observing others' actions and responding to them, one can also infer how he or she is expected to behave, and derive what the norms are in a certain environment (Postmes, Haslam, & Swaab, 2005). We contend that a) from a managers' perspective, experiencing the benefits of i-deals, and b) from a focal employee's

perspective, observing and learning from behaviours of managers is relevant for i-deals granting because a focal employee has to negotiate for these work arrangements with his or her supervisor. Relatedly, witnessing similar processes among peers leads to learning how to successfully negotiate for i-deals (Gibson, 2004).

Obviously, a similar line of reasoning applies when a manager negotiates for their own i-deals based on their previous observations and learnings from others. From the perspective of the manager, he/she will be more willing to grant access to i-deals when he or she has experienced the positive outcomes of i-deals and is convinced that they will entail positive outcomes for the focal employee (Bandura, 1971). After all, i-deals, by definition, deviate from standard HR practices, and it is in the best interest of organizations to ensure that these i-deals contribute to employee's performance and career growth (Rofcanin, Kiefer & Strauss, 2014). For this reason, managers personally experiencing beneficial outcomes of such i-deals, will gain insights and knowledge about how positive those arrangements could be. Moreover, manager i-deals also have a symbolic value, as it shows that successful i-deal negotiation is legitimized in the organization, thereby empowering the manager to grant i-deals to their subordinates as well. Thus, we expect that managers who benefit from their own i-deals will be more inclined to grant i-deals to focal sub-ordinates. We thus expect:

*H1: There is a positive association between manager and subordinate i-deals.*

#### *The Impact of Servant Leadership on the Association between Manager and Subordinate I-deals*

People are not '*passive recipients of environmental presses*' (Buss, 1987, p. 1220), and according to social learning theory (Davis & Luthans, 1980), their motivations and cognitive processes influence how they perceive external events, how they interpret them, and how their actions are driven by their observation of these external events (Bandura, 1971). An important set of beliefs for managers corresponds to the assumptions they have regarding

what they should do in their role as managers (McDermott, Conway, Rousseau, & Flood, 2013). Previous research underlines (see for example House, Javidan, Hanges, & Dorfman, 2002) that people hold conscious as well as unconscious beliefs of how leaders should behave. Accordingly, leaders' perceptions regarding norms and values about how to behave may be translated into helping subordinates and prioritizing their careers in relation to serving others (Liden et al., 2015). In the context of i-deals and building on social learning theory (Davis & Luthans, 1980), we integrate managers' servant leadership in our model to delineate the boundary conditions under which managers' own i-deals are more (or less) likely to translate into granting their subordinates' more (or less) i-deals. We argue that there is a positive association between manager and subordinate i-deals, in particular for those managers who are strong servant leaders. Servant leaders are described as those who go beyond their self-interests by committing themselves to supporting employees' personal growths and career advancements (Liden, Wayne, Zhao, & Henderson, 2008). The motivations behind servant leaders' behaviors are explained well by Liden et al. (2015), who supported that servant leaders are more likely to help their followers in advancing their careers. Hence, we expect that manager i-deals will be positively related to subordinate i-deals, *especially* when the manager is high on servant leadership.

*H2: Managers' servant leadership beliefs moderate the positive association between manager and subordinate i-deals. This association is stronger (vs. weaker) for managers who are high (vs. low) on servant leadership.*

#### *Outcomes of Subordinate I-deals*

A relevant question arising from the theoretical outlines given above is whether and how subordinate i-deals translate into better work outcomes. Adopting a career customization perspective, we argue that i-deals facilitates one's fit with the job and hence relates positively to work outcomes (Baltes, Briggs, Huff, Wright, & Neuman, 1999). We focus on two

outcomes relevant to understanding how i-deals could be beneficial for the employer granting i-deals and for the focal employee in receipt of i-deals. To capture the former, we focus on work performance which relates to the extent to which employees perform their task related duties at work (Gilboa et al., 2008). To capture the latter, we focus on career promotability which relates to one's potential in moving higher in the ladder of career enhancement and personal growth (Hoobler et al., 2009).

A strong fit between employees' job roles and career needs enhances their perceptions of being autonomous and in control of their tasks (Bal et al., 2012), which, in turn, relates to enhanced work performance (De Menezes & Kelliher, 2011). Previous empirical research supports this line of argumentation. For example, drawing upon a work adjustment perspective, Bal and colleagues (2015) found that individual career customization may enhance objective career success. In the context of this study, we argue that task i-deals are likely to provide employees with personal growth and development opportunities, which, subsequently, drive better work performance. Because obtained task i-deals entail new work experiences, they are, for example, likely to boost flexible thinking (George & Zhu, 2007) or result into the development of new ideas (Porath et al., 2012) that are related to better work performance. Moreover, experiencing the benefits of obtained task i-deals may increase work performance because of the risen opportunities to develop one's work-related skills and capabilities (Lavelle, Rupp, & Brockner, 2007). The latter are likely to enable the employee to be more attuned to his or her work context and to deal with task-related problems in more effective ways (e.g., Carmeli & Spreitzer, 2009).

As for the influence of task i-deals on employees' perceived promotability, person categorization theory supports our arguments. For example, when managers form impressions of subordinates (e.g., as a good fit with their organization), one way in which they confirm this assessment is through resource allocation such as promoting them to a higher position



(Liden, Wayne, & Stillwell, 1993). One way in which we suggest subordinates' fit should be rewarded is through promotions. Moreover, negotiating for and obtaining task i-deals which are unique to the focal employee could boost his or her self-confidence and trigger further career moves for promotion (Guerrero et al., 2016). Lastly, it was important to include managers' perceptions of subordinates' career promotability, as one of the untested assumptions of i-deals theory is that they relate to employees' career growth positively (Rousseau, 2005).

In sum, we argue that manager i-deals are positively related to subordinate i-deals, which are subsequently related to higher work employee performance and perceived promotability. This implies the trickle-down effects of manager i-deals on subordinate i-deals culminate into benefits for both employee and organization. Therefore, our third hypothesis is:

*H3 Subordinate i-deals are positively associated with their work performance and career promotability (H3a). Furthermore, subordinate i-deals will mediate the relationships of manager i-deals with subordinate work performance and career promotability (H3b).*

#### *The Impact of Prosocial Motives on the Association between Subordinate I-Deals and Employee Outcomes*

We content that the association between subordinate i-deals and their impact employee outcomes is not straightforward (Rofcanin et al., 2014). I-deals deviate from standard HR practices and they might not always be appreciated by managers and co-workers who might see these deals as favoritism (Greenberg et al., 2004). One way to render i-deals beneficial for everyone is to engage in socially connecting behaviors such as helping colleagues and caring for them (Rofcanin, Kiefer, & Strauss, in press), which is also referred to as prosocial motives (Grant, 2008). To further investigate when employees' task i-deals

translate into better work outcomes, in line with a key tenet of social learning theory (Davis & Luthans, 1980) stating that motivations influence how we observe and react to external stimuli (Bandura, 1971), we integrate employees' prosocial motives as a boundary condition between their own task i-deals and two key employee outcomes (i.e., work performance and perceived promotability). We propose that for employees high on prosocial motives, the association between subordinate task i-deals and employee outcomes is stronger. Supporting this argument, in a study of the relationship between employees' i-deals and their helping behaviours directed at co-workers, Guerrero and Challiol-Jeanblanc (2016) not only found that the relationship is not direct, but, they also found that this relationship was moderated by organizational-based self-esteem. In particular, the relationship between employees' own i-deals and their helping of peers is stronger when i-deal recipients believe that their co-workers do not have the opportunity to get i-deals for themselves.

The findings by Guerrero and Challiol-Jeanblanc (2016) are aligned with a core assumption of i-deals theory that, even though these deals are negotiated in a dyadic relationship of employees and their managers, the effects concern co-workers (peers) as well (Lai et al., 2009). Due to the individualized nature of i-deals, managers might be more inclined to evaluate more positively the behavioural outcomes of employees who engage in socially connecting behaviors toward their co-workers such as helping them or sharing the benefits of i-deals with them (Rofcanin et al., 2014). As i-deals may create resentment among coworkers (Greenberg et al., 2004), it will be more likely that those who have i-deals and are using i-deals to help others, will be perceived more favorably by their supervisors. More concretely, as a result of sharing the benefits of i-deals with co-workers and by helping them, the potential negative reactions and ramifications of co-workers who are not entitled to similar deals will be tempered (Marescaux, de Winne, & Sels, 2015). We thus propose:

*H4: Employees' prosocial motivation moderates the positive association between subordinate i-deals and their outcomes (i.e., work performance and career promotability). More specifically, this association is stronger (vs. weaker) for employees who are high (vs. low) on prosocial motives.*

## **Method**

### ***Design and Procedure***

To test our hypothesis, we invited 762 employees and 195 work team supervisors in VESSEL, a company with 1,986 employees in the Philippines. VESSEL is a Transocean Transport Corporation with over five decades of history. To increase the willingness to participate in our study and to increase the response rate, we offered the HR head a complete report showing the perceptions of employees regarding work-family policies and the receipt of i-deals. Moreover, we asked the company to allow respondents to complete the survey during working hours. The survey was web-based and located on a secure server at a Spanish university. Prior to the commencement of the data gathering, company managers and employees were briefed about the purpose, procedure and confidentiality of the study. We sent potential participants an invitation along with a cover letter assuring confidentiality and encouraging voluntary participation. Employees answered questions about the task i-deals their supervisors had granted them, their motivation to work, and their demographics. Supervisors responded to two types of surveys. One referred to their own data: their demographics their own task i-deals, and their servant leadership style. In a second survey, they evaluated employee outcomes.

We relied on power analysis to guide our sampling strategy (Ellis, 2010). It is a helpful approach since companies are reluctant to give access to all employees due to time and energy costs. In our case, there was another reason that prevented us from inviting all company employees: since most managers in a company are also 'subordinates' for a higher

hierarchical level manager, these employees would be receiving different questionnaires, one referring to their own perceptions and the other asking to rate their subordinates. Thus, we conducted basic power analysis, taking into account the dyads, and with the target of achieving 70% response rate and a 95% confidence interval for our selected sample. Although expecting this high response rate might seem optimistic, researchers had experience with companies in this geographical area and were confident they would get them.

Using e-mails as IDs to match the data coming from the subordinates and their direct supervisors, we managed to obtain a final usable sample that included 204 matched dyads, representing 102 supervisors and 202 employees. The average age of the participating subordinates was 33.4 years (SD = 5.6 years) and 42 percent were male. The average age of the participating supervisors was 43.5 years (SD = 7.2 years) and 54 percent were male.

### *Measures*

Unless otherwise stated, all items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree).

*Task i-deals.* We used six items from the scale developed by Rosen and colleagues (2013) to measure managers' own and their employees' task i-deals. An example item is: "*I have successfully negotiated for tasks that better develop my skills*" ( $\alpha = .78$  for managers' and  $\alpha = .83$  for employees' I-deals).

*Servant leadership.* Managers evaluated their servant leadership using seven items from Liden et al. (2013) which is a shorter form of Liden et al. (2008) and which has been widely used and validated in previous research (see for instance Van Dierendonck, 2011). An example item is: "*I put employees' interests ahead of my own interest*" ( $\alpha = .89$ ).

*Prosocial motives.* Four items from Grant (2008) were used. An example item is: "*I work because I want to help my co-workers through my work*" ( $\alpha = .87$ ).

*Employee outcomes.* Managers evaluated the work performance and career promotability of employees, using four items (Williams & Anderson, 1991) for the former,

and three items for the latter (Thacker & Wayne, 1995 validated in the study by Hoobler et al., 2009). An example item for work performance is: “*He/She adequately completes assigned duties*” ( $\alpha = .85$ ). An example item for career promotability is: “*If I had to select a successor for my position, it would be this subordinate*” ( $\alpha = .92$ ).

*Controls.* In line with research on i-deals (Anand et al., 2010), we controlled for age, gender and educational background for subordinates and their supervisors. Younger and male employees are shown to be better at negotiating i-deals (Bal et al., 2012). Moreover, it is possible that well-educated employees might have more power to negotiate with their managers for i-deals. To control for these confounding effects, we controlled these variables in testing our hypotheses. As the strength and directions of the results of our analyses did not change; hence they were excluded from our further analyses to achieve simplicity and parsimony (Becker et al., 2016).

#### *Analytical Strategy*

To control for the nested structure of our data (employee outcomes were evaluated by managers), we applied multi-level regression analyses using MLwiN software. In order to evaluate whether multi-level modelling was the right approach, we first calculated the ICC (1) values for manager rated outcomes. The ICC (1) for work performance was 28% and it was 32% for employee promotability (Hox, 2002). Second, we compared an intercept only model adopting a fixed random part at Level 2 for manager rated outcomes. The deviance statistics demonstrated that a model at Level 2 fit data significantly better ( $\Delta-2 * \log = 9.022, p < .01$  for performance;  $\Delta-2 * \log = 12.056, p < .05$  for promotability). These findings suggest that the use of multi-level analyses was appropriate. To adequately control for both within-group and between-group variances, we used grand-mean centered estimates for all Level 1 predictors, and unit-level mean-centered estimates for all Level 2 predictors (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002).

To test the indirect effects, consistent with recent research on multi-level mediation analyses (e.g., MacKinnon & Fairchild, 2009; Preacher, 2015), we conducted Monte Carlo (MC) simulations with 20,000 iterations to obtain confidence intervals for our proposed indirect effects. This method uses simulations with 20,000 iterations which relies on product-of-coefficients (ab) approach; where ab is equal to the product of a, the regression path between manager i-deals and subordinate i-deals, and b, the regression path between subordinate i-deals and employee outcomes (MacKinnon & Fairchild, 2009). We then used the distribution of the product method (Preacher, 2015) to calculate confidence intervals and validate our ab coefficients. When the confidence intervals do not contain zero, it means an indirect effect is established. As regard the testing of our moderation hypotheses, we followed the recommendations of Bauer and colleagues (2006). Following the suggestions of Dawson (2016), to interpret the results; we plotted simple slopes at one standard deviation below and above the mean of the moderator (Aiken & West, 1991).

## Results

Table 1 displays the means, standard deviations, correlations and internal reliability values for our study variables.

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We ran multi-level confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs) to explore the factorial structures of our measures using M-Plus software. We followed established recommendations (Hu & Bentler, 1999) to report our findings. The measurement model distinguishing between the model variables showed a satisfactory fit ( $\chi^2 = 554.783$ ;  $df = 422$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 1.31$ ,  $p < .01$ ; IFI = .90; CFI = .89; TLI = .89; RMSEA = .07). We compared this model to an alternative model where we combined prosocial motives and servant leadership into one factor ( $\chi^2 = 912$ .

254;  $df = 435$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 2.09$ ,  $p < .01$ ; IFI = .820; CFI = .83; TLI = .81; RMSEA = .12). Results supported the factorial structure and convergent validity of our model variables.

Hypothesis 1 proposed that managers task i-deals would be positively associated with subordinate task i-deals. Our empirical findings supported this hypothesis ( $\gamma = .22$ ,  $p < .05$ , see Table 2, Model 1). Hypothesis 2 proposed that managers' servant leadership would moderate the association between managers' and subordinates' task i-deals. The interaction between servant leadership and managers' own task i-deals was significant, offering initial support for our assumption ( $\gamma = 0.13$ ,  $p < 0.05$ , see Table 3). To interpret the meaning of this interaction, as seen in Figure 2, under the condition of high servant leadership, the association between managers' and subordinates' task i-deals was stronger ( $\gamma = 0.11$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Under the condition of low servant leadership, the association between managers' and subordinates' task i-deals was not significant ( $\gamma = -0.08$ ,  $p = 0.09$ ). Hypothesis 2 is supported.

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Hypothesis 3a proposed that subordinates' task i-deals would be positively associated with their work performance and career promotability. The results of our analyses supported this hypothesis ( $\gamma = 0.32$ ,  $p < 0.05$  for work performance;  $\gamma = 0.18$ ,  $p < 0.05$  for career promotability; see Table 2, Model 2 and 3, respectively). Hypothesis 3b proposed that managers' own task i-deals would be related to employees' outcomes indirectly via subordinates' task i-deals. As the confidence interval excluded the value of zero both for work

performance ( $\gamma = 0.12$ ; 95% CI = [0.024 / 0.112] and career promotability ( $\gamma = 0.21$ ; 95% CI = [0.098 / 0.126], Hypothesis 3b was also supported. See Table 2 for the details.

Hypothesis 4 proposed that subordinates' prosocial motives would moderate the associations between subordinates' task i-deals and their outcomes. The interaction term was only significant for employees' career promotability ( $\gamma = 0.22$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ; see Table 4, Model 4) and yet not for their work performance ( $\gamma = 0.04$ ,  $p = .19$ ; see Table 4, Model 2), herewith providing partial support for Hypothesis 4. To interpret the meaning of interaction for career promotability (Figure 3), we conducted simple slope analysis at high and low levels of the mean value of the moderator. Under the condition of high employee prosocial motivation, the association between managers' and subordinates' task i-deals was stronger ( $\gamma = 0.25$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Under the condition of low employee prosocial motivation, the association between manager' and their subordinates' task i-deals was not significant ( $\gamma = 0.05$ ,  $p = 0.11$ ). Hypothesis 4 was partially supported.

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## **Discussion**

This study shows that managers' own task i-deals influence subordinates' work outcomes via subordinates' task i-deals, signaling the role of employees' task i-deals as mechanism for this indirect effect. Moreover, the positive effects of managers' task i-deals on subordinates' task i-deals are stronger for those who perceive themselves as high in servant leadership. In a similar vein, the effects of employees own i-deals on work outcomes are



stronger for those employees who are high in prosocial motivation. We discuss our theoretical contributions to i-deals research as below.

### **Theoretical Contributions**

The first contribution of this study is that it offers evidence for the trickle-down effect of task i-deals; that is, our findings show that employees whose managers benefit from task i-deals are more likely to successfully negotiate task i-deals for themselves. Despite the recent surge of trickle down studies in areas such as leadership (Chen et al., 2015) and justice (Wo et al., 2015), to our knowledge, this is the first study that integrates the role of managers and investigates the trickle-down effect of manager i-deals on employee outcomes. Our findings show that the likelihood of managers' task i-deals translating into subordinates' task i-deals is higher for managers who are high on servant leadership.

Our focus on the role of managers as a boundary condition contributes to recent research on i-deals: The study by Rofcanin and colleagues (in press) revealed that how managers feel about employees' i-deals determine their decision to grant i-deals to their subordinates, underlining the critical role of managers in materializing negotiated i-deals. The study by Bal and colleagues (2015) revealed that when managers' support for career customization (i.e., i-deals) is high, employees benefiting from career customization report higher level of commitment and achieve better career success in terms of bonuses and career promotability. In relation to research on individualized HRM, a growing body of research has started to show that managers have the power to modify existing HR practices (e.g., Bos-Nehles, 2010; McDermott et al., 2013). While the range of formal policies defining HR practices might vary across organizations (Stanton, Young, Bartram, & Leggat, 2010), it is often observed that managers are likely to shape existing HR practices by introducing flexibilities or re-defining HR practices, giving rise to i-deals (Alfes, Truss, Soane et al., 2013; Khilji & Wang, 2006). For example, managers may provide an educational leave to

certain employees in order to let them take a year off for personal interests (Hochschild, 1997). While the implementation of i-deals is likely to be influenced by many factors (Dany, Guedri, & Hatt, 2008), our research results suggest that managers who benefit from task i-deals are more likely to grant task i-deals to their subordinates, when they prioritise subordinates' interests. Our focus on managers, particularly their leadership style, is important as research to date has exclusively focused on the subordinate i-deals, overlooking the other side of the equation, that is managers, who are ultimately responsible for materializing these deals (Liao et al., 2016).

Regarding the role of employees' prosocial motives, our finding contributes to recent research that has only recently started to investigate what seals the i-deals and the conditions that influence the effects i-deals have on their recipients (e.g., Lucianetti & Ng, 2016). For example, the study by Rofcanin et al., (in press) demonstrated that managers are more likely to grant i-deals to employees who engage in socially connecting behaviors toward their co-workers (e.g., caring for co-workers, sharing the benefits of i-deals with co-workers). Another study by Collins, Cartwright, and Hislop (2013) demonstrated that managers are willing and happy to provide I-deals (about homeworking) to their subordinates as long as managers can observe employees' performance and ensure that they are helping their co-workers. Research from flexible work practices (FWPs) has shown similar results: Managers support and implement FWPs in relation to focal employees who are less likely to be disruptive for team efficiency (Kossek, Olier-Malaterre, Lee, Pichler, & Hall, 2016; Den Dulk & de Ruijter, 2008). Our finding is in line with this line of empirical research and the theory of i-deals (Bal & Rousseau, 2015) which state that i-deals are intended to be beneficial for the entire team and that the benefits of i-deals are likely to increase if the recipients of i-deals show concerning and connecting behaviors toward their co-workers.

In relation to our focus on subordinates' prosocial motives, previous studies have specifically focused on organizational features as moderators, leaving us blind to the potential effect of motivational factors on the employee side. The findings from Bal et al., (2012) revealed that development climate at the group level moderates the relationship between task i-deals and the desire to continue working after the age of retirement. The study by Lemmon et al. (2016) demonstrated that organizational justice, as perceived by the employee, moderates the relationship between i-deals and life outcomes via continuous commitment. Our finding is of much relevance since it reveals that the motivation of the employee who is negotiating an i-deal is relevant, because it either boosts (or else diminishes) potential benefits for the organization and for the employee. This finding echoes a recent research by Ng & Lucianetti (2016) showing that achievement, status and communion striving relate to task and schedule I-deals, and via those i-deals they affect in-role job performance. Building on these findings, future studies could explore why employees negotiate i-deals in the first place and their intentions of using i-deals upon their receipts.

We also enrich i-deals literature by using social learning theory which is different from prior research (Liao et al., 2016). The review by Liao et al. (2016) on i-deals literature suggests that social exchange theory (SET) (Blau, 1964) has been key in providing a broad framework for explaining why some supervisors grant i-deals while others do not. However, recent empirical studies revealed that social exchange is insufficient to explain the effects i-deals have on employee outcomes (Bal et al., 2015; Rofcanin et al., in press). It is discussed that (Conway & Coyle-Shapiro, 2015) SET is not the only theory capable of explaining the effects i-deals have on outcomes, and that exploring other theoretical frameworks would enhance our collective understanding of the phenomenon. To contribute to this gap, we use social learning theory and reason that managers are more likely to grant i-deals when they experience i-deals. We argue, on the one hand, managers, based upon their experiences in

using task i-deals, can think of ways to make i-deals work for their employees. On the other hand, employees who witness their supervisors' use of task I-deals might understand that it is acceptable to do so, and they might be more encouraged to engage in an I-deals' negotiation with their managers. The latter emphasizes the possibility that managers' task i-deals may stimulate subordinates' i-deals through learning by role modelling. While other research including creativity (Zhou & Shalley, 2003) and emotional labour (Sanz Vergel et al., 2012) have emphasized learning by role modelling to understand employee behaviors, in this research we have not focused on learning by role modelling. Future research is suggested to explore the nature and direction of the learning processes that take place between managers' and employees' own i-deals.

Lastly, an added value of our research is that we explore the outcomes of i-deals from the manager's perspective. This is relevant as i-deals are personalized employment conditions which are meant to satisfy both the employers' and the employees' needs and preferences (Rousseau et al., 2006). Yet to date, most research has focused on outcomes that are valuable for the employees, such as increased self-efficacy, lower psychological strain (Hornung, et al., 2014), higher motivation (Hornung, et al., 2009) increased performance expectations and affective organizational commitment (Hornung et al., 2008). While most research studies these relationships based on employee evaluation, as an exception, Hornung et al. (2009) examines the managerial perspective. However, this study relies on single source data. Another exception is a study conducted by Lemmon, Westring, Michel, Wilson, & Glibkowski (2016), which explored the effects of I-deals on performance via affective commitment using a matched sample. In this study, we use matched data of employees and their supervisors, showing that supervisors evaluate the performance of i-deal recipients favorably.

## Limitations and Future Research Suggestions

Because of the cross-sectional design of this study, we cannot claim causality. However, previous research on I-deals has shown that access to I-deals is likely to be a stronger predictor for work performance rather than the vice versa (Ng & Lucianetti, 2016). Moreover, we derived our hypotheses from the predictions of social learning theory. Lastly, we conducted post-hoc analyses to test whether subordinate i-deals relate to manager i-deals, as opposed to manager i-deals relating to subordinate i-deals and explore if this association is stronger for employees who see themselves high on prosocial motives. We built on the argument that managers, by observing and learning from subordinates' i-deals, might seek i-deals for themselves. Moreover, we argued that this association might be stronger for employees who are concerned with co-workers, and who are likely to share their experiences with others (i.e., who are high on prosocial motives). Findings from our analyses did not support these arguments ( $\gamma = 0.09, p = 0.15$  for the association between subordinate and manager i-deals;  $\gamma = 0.04, p = 0.43$  for the moderating role of prosocial motives on the association between subordinate and manager i-deals). We suggest that future research should explore the associations we proposed using predetermined time intervals. Such a design would also permit understanding the nature and direction of the learning process that takes place between managers' and subordinates' own I-deals.

In relation to above, we did not measure some of the underlying processes that supported our hypotheses, for example experiencing the positive effects of manager i-deals, learning by observing or imitating others' behaviours. While this approach is in line with studies adopting social learning theory as over-arching framework (e.g., Bakker, Rodríguez-Muñoz, & Vergel, 2016), examination of these processes will provide a more nuanced picture of how I-deals unfolds.

In this study we focused specifically on task i-deals. Because the nature of flexibility and financial i-deals is different from that of task I-deals (Rosen et al., 2013), our findings cannot be generalized to all types of i-deals. Future studies might explore different theoretical mechanisms for the trickle-down effects of flexibility I-deals.

We investigated i-deals in an understudied context: The Philippines. Previous research is mostly built on Anglo-Saxon (Anand et al., 2010) as well as other European contexts (Hornung et al., 2010; Ng & Feldman, 2012). Given the cultural characteristics of this context emphasize high in-group collectivism and uncertainty avoidance (House et al., 1995), the practice of I-deals in these companies might not be representative of other companies in the Philippines. Future research is suggested to explore the extent to which company and national culture characteristics influence i-deals negotiations and their impact on employee outcomes.

Our findings related to prosocial motives reflect the national context of our study. The work environment in the Philippines is characterized by high collectivism in which group goals and values are more important than individual goals (House et al., 2004). Managers might thus be more likely to promote employees who care for co-workers, a particular indication of collectivism. Drawing upon cross-cultural characteristics, future research can explore other employee motives such as the tendency to avoid help and engage in impression management behaviours and determine which are most effective for establishing mutually beneficial i-deals.

### **Practical Implications and Conclusion**

Combining managers' and employees' perspective of i-deals, this study focused on the context in which task i-deals unfold and explored a trickle down model of managers' task i-deals. Important managerial implications derive from this study. Given the relevance of task I-deals for employees' career growth and work performance, organizations can offer task I-deals to their employees as strategic tools for HR development (Ng & Feldman, 2016).

Organisations should consider that employee task i-deals are strongly influenced by managerial decisions (Hornung 2009). In particular, the use of task i-deals by both managers and subordinates should be encouraged. In addition, monitoring and tracking employee task i-deals should be executed through human resources management systems.

Research has demonstrated the value of servant leadership for organisations (Liden et al. 2015). In response to the increasing need for such leaders, HR departments and organizations should pay particular attention to cultivating and developing servant leaders to ensure effectiveness of one's own and employees' I-deals. This may include training interventions and sponsorship programs aiming to breed helping and caring among employees. Such initiatives will be instrumental in creating a resourceful work environment.

From employees' point of view, results revealed that prosocially motivated employees were better at translating their I-deals into desirable employee outcomes, both for themselves and their organizations. This suggests that HR departments and organizations should 1) clarify how i-deals are intended to be used in a work environment 2) effectively communicate the organizational preference for granting task i-deals to prosocially motivated employees and 3) encourage and endorse a resourceful work environment of supporting and caring for others which are indications of socially connecting behaviors (Salas & Cannon-Bowers, 2001).

Additionally, our findings regarding the impact of managers' servant leadership styles align with past research findings that explore the role of dispositional factors, such as gender, as moderating trickle down effects in areas related to leadership but not specifically to I-deals. For instance, Chen, Friedman, & Simons (2014) found that the gender of the supervisor moderates the relationship between mid-level managers' satisfaction with senior managers' supervision and line employees' satisfaction with mid-level managers' supervision and, in turn, line employees' turnover intentions. Their findings also revealed that middle managers' gender affects the strength of this trickle-down is effect.

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**Table 1.** Means, Standard Deviations, Reliabilities, and Correlations

	<b>Variables</b>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>S.D.</i>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
1	Managers Task I-Deals	4.25	0.93	(0.78)					
2	Subordinate Task I-Deals	6.23	0.75	0.35**	(0.83)				
3	Servant Leadership	5.35	0.54	0.12*	0.09	(0.89)			
4	Prosocial Motives	4.55	0.85	0.18**	0.11*	0.07	(0.87)		
5	Subordinates' Work Performance	5.56	1.11	0.12*	0.05	0.12*	0.06	(0.85)	
6	Subordinates' Career Promotability	6.45	0.75	0.15*	0.14*	0.09	0.21**	0.24**	(0.92)

n = 202 subordinates; 102 supervisors.

\* p < 0.05; \*\* p < 0.01; \*\*\* p < 0.001.

**Table 2.** Direct and Indirect Effects of Manager Task I-Deals on Employee Outcomes (H1 and H3)

Variables	Subordinate Task I-Deals			Subordinates' Work Performance			Subordinates' Career Promotability		
	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	Estimate	SE	T	Estimate	SE	T	Estimate	SE	T
Intercept	3.88	0.06	64.66	1.92	0.07	26.62	1.92	0.06	31.39
Managers Task I-Deals	0.22	0.08	2.75**	0.15	0.06	2.51*	0.14	0.06	2.33*
Subordinate Task I-Deals				0.32	0.12	2.66**	0.18	0.07	2.57*
-2LL	297.06			255.26			248.15		
$\Delta$ in -2LL	35.765***a			36.81***b			7.11**		
D.F.	1			1			1		
Between-level Variance and Standard Error	0.12 (0.07)			0.48 (0.13)			0.44 (0.13)		
Within-level Variance and Standard Error	0.49 (0.07)			0.24 (0.03)			0.23 (0.03)		

Notes. a,b: Statistical comparison with an intercept-only model 1 (not shown in the table).

For all values, gamma coefficients, their corresponding standard error and t values are reported.

n = 202 subordinates; 102 supervisors.

The indirect effect is calculated using an on-line interactive tool that generates an R score: <http://quantpsy.org/medmc/medmc.htm>.

\* p < 0.05; \*\* p < 0.01; \*\*\* p < 0.001.

**Table 3.** Interaction of Servant Leadership and Manager Task I-Deals on Subordinate Task I-Deals (H2)

Variables	Subordinate Task I-Deals					
	Estimate	SE	t	Estimate	SE	T
Intercept	3.92	0.06	65.33	3.95	0.05	79.02
Managers' Own Task I-Deals	0.19	0.06	3.16**	0.17	0.06	2.83**
Servant Leadership	0.07	0.05	1.41	0.05	0.06	0.83
Manager Task I-Deals*Servant Leadership				0.13	0.05	2.61**
-2LL	234.78			242.61		
Δ in -2LL	8.23*a			7.83**		
D.F.	2			1		
Between-level Variance and Standard Error	0.03 (0.03)			0.02 (0.02)		
Within-level Variance and Standard Error	0.33 (0.05)			0.32 (0.04)		

Notes. a: Statistical comparison with an intercept-only model (not shown in the table).

For all values, gamma coefficients, their corresponding standard error and t values are reported.

n = 202 subordinates; 102 supervisors.

\* p < 0.05; \*\* p < 0.01; \*\*\* p < 0.001.

**Table 4.** Interaction of Prosocial Motives and Subordinate Task I-Deals on Employees' Outcomes (H4)

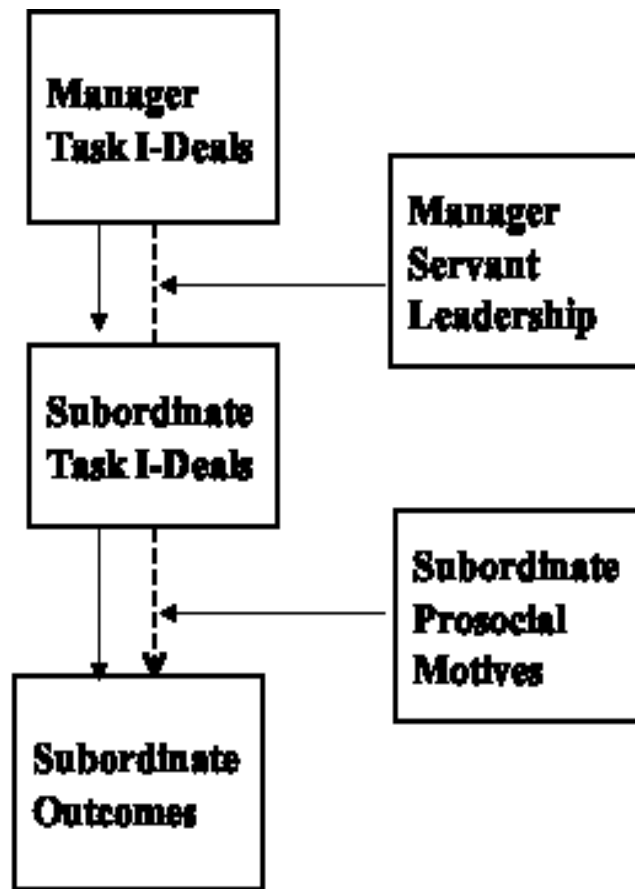
Variables	Subordinates' Work Performance						Subordinates' Career Promotability					
	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4		
	Estimate	SE	t	Estimate	SE	T	Estimate	SE	t	Estimate	SE	T
Intercept	3.33	0.06	55.51	3.36	0.05	67.21	3.55	0.06	59.16	3.78	0.05	75.61
Subordinate Task I-Deals	0.19	0.08	2.37*	0.17	0.07	2.42*	0.24	0.09	2.66**	0.23	0.09	2.55*
Prosocial Motives	0.09	0.05	1.81	0.08	0.06	1.33	0.11	0.05	2.21*	0.11	0.06	1.83
Subordinate Task I-Deals*Prosocial Motives				0.04	0.09	0.44				0.22	0.08	2.75**
-2LL	255.62			265.11			155.92			172.94		
Δ in -2LL	8.02*			9.49**			11.56**			17.02		
D.F.	2			1			2			1		
Between-level Variance and Standard Error	0.09 (0.04)			0.08 (0.02)			0.15 (0.04)			0.11 (0.02)		
Within-level Variance and Standard Error	0.28 (0.05)			0.28 (0.04)			0.25 (0.05)			0.25 (0.04)		

Notes. a,b: Statistical comparison with an intercept-only model (not shown in the table).  
For all values, gamma coefficients, their corresponding standard error and t values are reported.

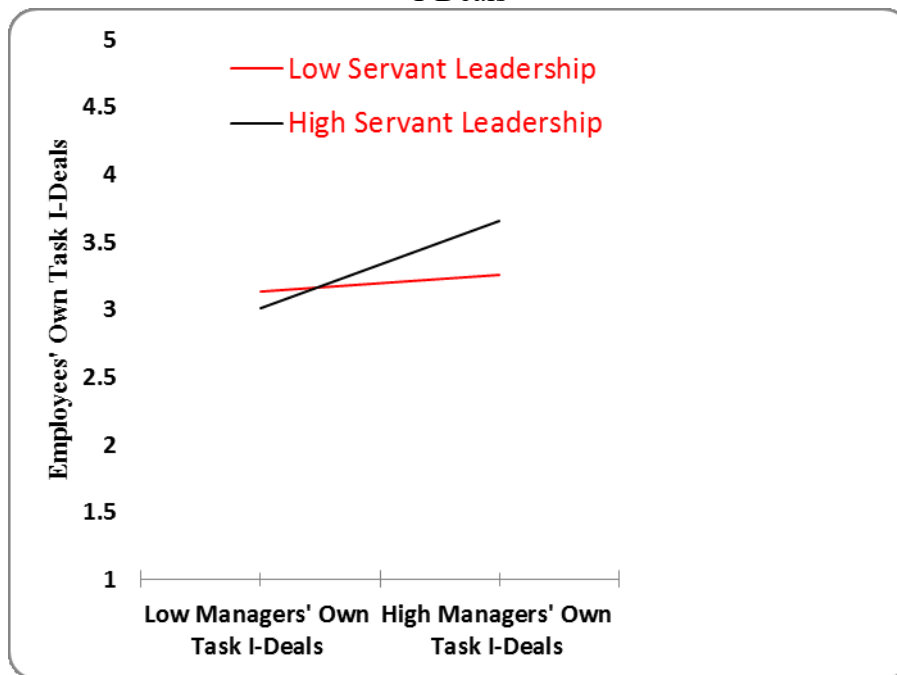
n = 202 subordinates; 102 supervisors.

\* p < 0.05; \*\* p < 0.01; \*\*\* p < 0.001.

Figure1. Conceptual Model



**Figure 2.** Interaction of Servant Leadership and Manager Task I-Deals on Subordinate Task I-Deals



**Figure 3.** Interaction of Prosocial Motives and Subordinate Task I-Deals on Employees' Career Promotability

