



The Relationship of Idiosyncratic Deals and Creative Self-Efficacy in Contemporary Organizations to Improve Employee Creativity
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Idiosyncratic deals (i-deals) are becoming more popular as a way to hire, keep, and motivate employees. For those whose careers depend on their creative abilities, this is extremely important. Using the social cognitive theory's emphasis on the role of creative self-efficacy (CSE) as a mediator, we examined the relationship between the two main types of i-deals (developmental and flexible) and employee creativity. A total of 201 full-time workers from a variety of companies provided us with data to support our hypotheses about the relationship between innovative business deals and professional growth. Our research shows that CSE acts as a mediator between i-deals and creativity. These findings demonstrate the positive impact I-deals have on employee motivation and indicate other applications of I-deals for fostering creative thinking. A novel approach to a business called i-deals is the focus of this research.



Introduction

In the context of today's swiftly changing business environment, creativity can be defined as the generation of novel and beneficial ideas regarding products, services, processes, and procedures (Shalley & Gilson, 2017). Significant progress has been made in determining the environmental and personal factors that encourage employee creativity (e.g., Nawaz et al., 2021). In the meantime, idiosyncratic deals (also known as "i-deals") have become a successful human resource management (HRM) technique that can accommodate each employee's desire for career advancement and assist employees in harmonizing their personal and professional lives (Rousseau, 2005).

I-deals are employee-employer contracts (Simosi et al., 2021). In 2015, 48% of American companies offer flexible work options, according to the Society for Human Resource Management (www.shrm.org). I-deals may stimulate creativity for a variety of reasons. Firstly, i-deals demonstrate confidence in employee performance and provide them with some autonomy (Hora et al., 2022). Second, flexible occupations need innovation (Gosain & Gutowski, 2022). I-deal employment is increasing for a variety of reasons. First, companies are offering such customized arrangements to attract and retain talent in a global market that is highly competitive (Atkinson & Sandiford, 2015). Second, the collapse of unions and career security has made working conditions less uniform. (Bal, 2022). Two dimensions i-deals are focused in this study named as 1) developmental i-deals, and 2) flexible i-deals. Workplaces love developmental and flexibility i-deals (Afacan et al., 2022). Developing i-deals provide challenging employment opportunities, specialized training, and multiple career paths (Anand et al., 2010). Flexible work schedules allow employees to balance their personal and professional lives, including rearing a family, while remaining productive company members (Atkinson & Sandiford, 2015). I-deals and originality are intertwined, and CSE is an essential component. Social psychological theory (Wang et al., 2018) correlates environmental signals to self-efficacy development. This research presents three novel concepts. First, the majority of i-deal research has investigated how employee interactions influence their attitudes.

Because unique work arrangements are more prevalent in occupations where creativity plays a significant performance role (Nawaz et al., 2022a), it is necessary to consider how they may affect the creativity of employees. Second, i-deals are frequently used to retain valuable personnel. who have a significant impact on the company. They help the company save money because they are a creative method to hire employees (Rousseau, 2001). Creativity, which is integral to the employment of knowledge workers, should play a significant role in these types of jobs for those who wish to conduct i-deals. For individuals seeking development opportunities, for instance, the primary purpose would be to learn how to be more creative at work, which would enable them to perform better. We believe that the availability of i-deals has an effect on the CSE of employees, thereby fostering greater creativity at work. This study may contribute to the literature on human resource management and creativity, as it examines a novel form of work environment that can help employees become more creative. Thirdly, we investigate how two



distinct types of i-deals influence the creativity of staff members. Current research investigates whether developmental and flexibility i-deals influence creativity in the same or distinct ways.

Literature Review

Social cognitive theory and CSE

Social learning theory was the basis for social cognition theory's development. (Allan, 2017) which explains how individuals acquire new behaviours by observing others. As a component of the social learning theory, high self-efficacy was devised as a motivating connection between an individual's environment and their actions (Lazarides & Warner, 2020).

People's motivation, sentiments, and decisions regarding what to do with their knowledge hinge on their confidence in their ability to perform a task and their level of expertise in it. Bandura (1986) proposed that four distinct categories of information combine to produce an individual's sense of self-efficacy: (a) social persuasion, which involves verbal confirmation from others that a person can do a task; (b) physiological states, which include a person's physical and emotional arousal to do a task, such as anxiety, fear, or failure; and cognitive states, which include a person's physical and mental arousal to do a task; (c) mastery experiences, which result from people having successfully completed tasks in the past; and (d) Observational learning.

Self-efficacy fuels the relationship between certain environmental variables and creativity, such as i-deals, because creativity requires employees to be confident in their abilities and to persevere despite obstacles when completing a task (Lazarides & Warner, 2020). For instance, Liao et al. (2010) discovered that employees' self-efficacy served as a link between their social interactions with managers and colleagues and their creative behaviour. CSE was also found to be involved in the relationship between transformational leadership, learning goal orientation, and creativity (Mittal & Dhar, 2015).

A recent meta-analysis (Liu et al., 2016) provides support for the notion that CSE mediates the relationship between contextual motivation and task-related motivation. According to studies by (Qiang et al., 2020), CSE is a type of self-efficacy that measures a person's confidence in his or her creative abilities. According to research of Javed et al. (2021), CSE is an integral part of the creative process, which requires people to exert effort and maintain focus despite the fact that the outcomes are unpredictable and potentially detrimental. If employees have confidence in their creative abilities and efforts, they are more likely to see such projects to fruition (Mumtaz & Parahoo, 2020). Higher CSE individuals are more likely to challenge conventional wisdom, actively seek out opportunities to flex their creative muscles, and persevere in the face of adversity (Tierney & Farmer, 2004).

Those with strong CSE beliefs are more resilient and possess more effective coping mechanisms. Therefore, CSE provides the motivation necessary to persevere when artistic



endeavours become difficult (Tierney & Farmer, 2002). A new meta-analysis tested the hypothesis that CSE motivates creativity and found that it does. (Wang et al., 2018) demonstrates what occurs when individuals fear that their creative efforts will fail. Then, we postulate that each of the two categories of ideals contributes to one of the four sources of self-efficacy and fosters an environment that is positively correlated with creativity (Shalley et al., 2009).

Developmental i-deals and employee creativity

The term "developmental i-deals" is commonly used to refer to i-deals that foster personal and professional advancement. In her pioneering work on creativity's component theory, Wang et al., (2018) stated that the primary influences on creativity are the task, the domain, and creative abilities. We believe that developmental initiatives are likely to increase employee creativity because they are beneficial for all of these factors. First, the concept of developmental ideals is self-explanatory: these arrangements are intended to enhance the knowledge and skills (KSAs) of the employee in the focal position. In addition to reinforcing or strengthening employees' commitment to their employment and organizational ties, developmental initiatives can also increase employees' motivation and effort (Rousseau et al., 2006). Add the relationship

Developmental agreements demonstrate that employers and employees are committed to assisting one another, and they frequently reaffirm the value of their relationships. For instance, Hornung et al. (2009) found that administrators' perceptions of employees' initiative were the most influential factor in determining whether or not they were given developmental opportunities.

These opportunities led to increased performance expectations and an employee's emotional commitment to the organization. In conclusion, it is anticipated that developmental initiatives will have a positive effect on the creativity of employees by enhancing their domain-based expertise, creative-related competencies, and task motivation.

Hypothesis 1: Developmental i-deals positively affects the employee creativity.

Flexibility I-deals and employee creativity

Flexibility i-deals aid employees in harmonizing their personal and professional lives in order to create the optimal conditions for sustained job performance. Flexibility in employment arrangements could attract and retain qualified employees. According to previous research, employees view flexibility arrangements as a monetary transaction that has little bearing on increased productivity or emotional investment in the company (Guest, 2017). However, because creativity requires a great deal of mental concentration, flexibility standards may be advantageous for employee creativity. A worker's cognitive processes may improve if they are alleviated of concerns regarding their schedules or other non-work-related matters. In addition, when employees do not have to worry about being discovered daydreaming about something other than work, they are more productive. They should have more mental capacity to think creatively on their own,



which should increase productivity (Nawaz et al., 2018). We argue that giving employees more control over their schedules may inspire them to devise innovative methods for completing their duties.

Hypothesis 2: Flexible i-deals positively affects the employee creativity.

According to research, self-efficacy mediates the relationship between these social interactions at work and creativity (Liao et al., 2010). We anticipate that CSE mediates the relationship between creativity and developmental i-deals, in light of its emphasis on social interaction and commitment. Moreover, we argue that developmental interactions contribute to at least two sources of CSE, thereby bolstering the case for the mediating effect. Initially, the knowledge and skills acquired through developmental i-deals may increase employee mastery (Hornung et al., 2008).

Therefore, it follows that those with more knowledge and experience will have greater self-assurance when engaging in creative endeavours that require intelligence and perseverance (Tierney & Farmer, 2004). The anticipated outcome is an increase in innovation (Liao et al., 2010). (Hornung et al., 2009) The organization frequently employs developmental incentives to motivate its best employees. Second, receiving a developmental incentive demonstrates a worker's standing among their peers, which can increase self-efficacy through social influence (Hornung et al., 2009). Therefore, it is anticipated that developmental initiatives will have a positive effect on people's CSE by providing a variety of sources of information about self-efficacy, resulting in increased creativity (Wang et al., 2018).

Hypothesis 3: Creative self-efficacy mediates the association of developmental i-deals and creativity.

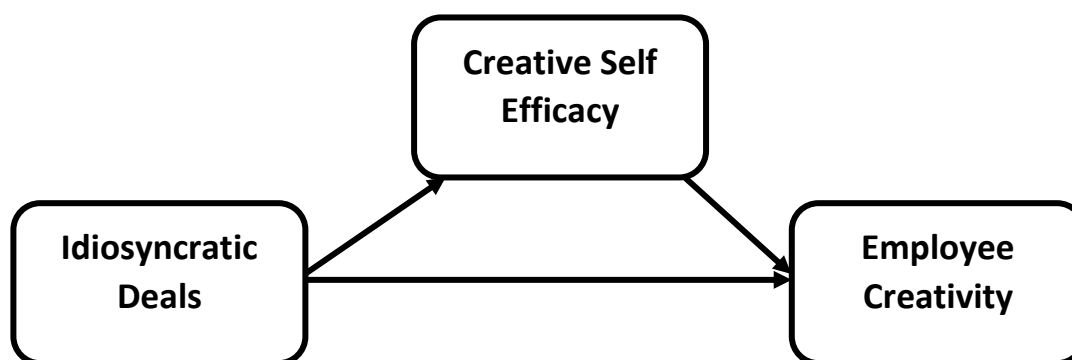
Flexibility Additionally, it is envisaged that i-deals will transmit data on self-efficacy to multiple sources. First, the development of self-efficacy-enhancing active mastery experiences is a likely outcome of flexibility-promoting programs as a result of the focus and control they exert over the work they produce. Secondly, by providing individuals with knowledge of social persuasion, effective flexibility in i-deal negotiations may also facilitate the formation of efficacy judgements. Specifically, it demonstrates to employees that management has confidence in their ability to handle work on their own, and it is likely to make them feel more capable of being creative, which may eventually lead to increased creativity. Thirdly, flexibility policies are likely to have a positive effect on employees' physiological conditions.

People with flexible work schedules are more likely to anticipate success in these independent contexts (Nawaz et al., 2022b), which according to social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1982) promote non-stressful and non-agitating arousal. This sense of control over the work process should generate positive emotions and promote feelings of competence and self-efficacy. According to research on creativity, those with greater job autonomy or flexibility are more

creative (Liu et al., 2011). In conclusion, we propose that flexibility initiatives can help employees feel less stressed about balancing work and personal obligations, thereby enhancing their focus and creativity. To be creative, they needed to exert effort into their labour. In addition, the company communicates to the employee that they are a valuable asset and will be able to complete their task thanks to these special arrangements. Together, these factors should enhance the CSE of employees and nurture their creativity.

Hypothesis 4: Creative self-efficacy mediates the association of flexible i-deals and creativity.

Figure No 1: Hypothesized Research Model



Methods

Sample and procedures

To take part in this study, organizations were chosen. First, one of the researchers talked to managers to make sure that i-deals are a real thing in the workplace and that employee innovation is a key part of the jobs in the businesses that took part. It was established during these discussions that all of these occupations required a creative approach, and that deals were made in some capacity in each of these organizations. This study is conducted by inspiring and following the model of Wang et al. (2018) but from Pakistani perspective.

By surveying, we were returned 201 answered. In particular, each translator worked on the translation independently before compiling and comparing the findings to ensure complete agreement. The distribution of the questionnaires to the participants was aided by the HR departments of the firms. Surveys were delivered to employees, and all firms let respondents respond to the questionnaire while on the job. Additionally, one of the researchers went to the break rooms of each of the three companies to personally and professionally welcome staff members and solicits their participation in the study.



Two sources of information were used to compile this survey: 1) employees, who responded on i-deals and CSE, and 2) managers, who evaluated their staff's creativity. The HR division offered the researchers' contact details for the professional-level workers and their immediate managers.

Measures

We used supervisor ratings of employees' creativity ($\alpha=.80$), which is consistent with previous research (Zhou, 2003; Zhou & George, 2001). A definition of originality was given to the supervisors, and they were asked to rate how creative the chosen employees were at work. "Suggests new strategies to achieve goals or objectives" and "comes up with new and practical ideas to boost performance" were two such things. A six-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 "strongly disagree" to 6 "strongly agree" was used to evaluate each of the 13 items. The majority of managers gave more than one subordinate. The i-deals dimensions of development and flexibility were measured using the scale created by (Liao et al., 2016). The audience was asked to rate on their current employment, the degree to which they "asked for and successfully negotiated individual arrangements differing from their counterparts." There were four items to measure developmental i-deals ($\alpha=.76$). "skill development possibilities" and "career development opportunities" were two examples of sample items. "Flexibility in starting and terminating the workday" and "Individually customized work schedule" were the two components that made up the flexibility dimension ($\alpha=.86$). Tierney and Farmer's (2002) three-item instrument was used to measure CSE ($\alpha=.82$). "I feel that I am good at developing fresh ideas" is an example item.

Results

Table No1: Respondent Characteristics.

Variables	Intermediate	Bachelor	Master	Total
Male	6	3	2	11
Female	5	68	118	190
Total	11	71	120	201

A sample of 201 full-time workers from service-based and manufacturing businesses made up the current study. The bulk of study participants ($n=190$) were female. The fact that most of the respondents in our sample data (120) and respondents (71), respectively, had bachelor's degrees, while only a small number (10) had intermediate degrees, suggests that our sample was well-educated enough to comprehend the language and terminology used in the survey instrument (see Table 1). In this study, the respondents' ages ranged from under 25 ($n = 22$), to 25–40 ($n = 151$), to 40–55 ($n = 24$), and over 56 ($n = 4$), (see Table 2).

**Table No 2: Age of Respondents**

Variables	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Below 25	22	10.9	10.9	10.9
25 to 40	151	75.1	75.1	86.1
40 to 55	24	11.9	11.9	98.0
56 to above	4	2.0	2.0	100.0
Total	201	100.0	100.0	

The reliability of each scale was examined before the survey was given out using Cronbach's alpha. All scales' high alpha coefficients (see Table 3) show that they were all trustworthy enough to be used to conclude the research population.

Table No 3. Reliability Statistics

Variables	Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Employee Creativity	13	0.80
Developmental i-Deals	04	0.76
Flexible i-Deals	02	0.86
Creative Self-efficacy	03	0.82

The study variables' means and standard deviations were computed to better understand the sample. The I-deals and CSE at work measures had the highest means, showing that most respondents scored highly on I-deals by the CSE at work (Mean = 0.265, SD = 0.062) and on I-deals overall (Mean = 0.189, SD = 0.63), respectively. Inline, utilizing correlational analysis, the study hypotheses were first initially tested, according to the correlation matrix (see Table 4), where employee developmental i-deals are significantly and positively correlated with CSE ($r = 0.408$, $p < 0.05$). Flexible i-deals are also significantly and positively correlated with CSE ($r = 0.426$, $p < 0.05$).

Table 4. Correlation Matrix

#	Variables	1	2	3	4
1	Developmental I-deals	1			
2	Flexible I-deals	.509**	1		
3	Creative Self-efficacy	.408**	.426**	1	
4	Creativity	.296**	.362**	.376**	1

Note: **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).



Additionally, both the developmental and flexible i-deals are significantly and positively correlated with creativity respectively ($r = 0.296, p < 0.05$), ($r = 0.362, p < 0.05$). CSE is also found to be significantly and positively correlated with creativity ($r = 0.376, p < 0.05$), (See Table 4).

By following the four steps suggested by Barron and Kenny for the mediation analysis (Sheikh et al., 2018), we found that all the paths are significant. For instance, in step 1, the developmental i-deals and flexible i-deals are significantly associate with creativity respectively ($\beta = .182, P < 0.01$), ($\beta = .235, P < 0.01$). Inline, in step 2, the developmental i-deals and flexible i-deals are significantly associate with CSE respectively ($\beta = .290, P < 0.01$), ($\beta = .320, P < 0.01$). In step 3, the mediatin variable that is CSE is significantly associated with creativity ($\beta = .325, P < 0.01$).

In step 4, the developmental i-deals in the presence of mediator (CSE) are significantly associated with creativity but the impact becomes reduced and remains significant ($\beta = .105, P < 0.05$), which shows that there is partial mediation of CSE between the association of developmental i-deals and creativity. Inline, the flexible i-deals in the presence of mediator (CSE) are also significantly associated with creativity but the indirect impact becomes reduced and remains significant ($\beta = .160, P < 0.01$), which shows that there is partial mediation of CSE between the association of flexible i-deals and creativity. Consequently, the mediation related hypotheses that are hypothesis 3 and 4 are also supported (see Table 5).

Table No 5: Regression Analyses

Variables	Un- Standardized Co-efficient		Significance
	β	Std. Error	<i>p</i> -value
Step 1			
Developmental I-deals → Creativity	.182	.042	***
Flexible I-deals → Creativity	.235	.043	***
Step 2			
Developmental I-deals → CSE	.290	.046	***
Flexible I-deals → CSE	.320	.077	***
Step 3			
CSE → Creativity	.325	.057	***
Step 4			
Developmental I-deals (CSE) → Creativity	.105	.044	**
Flexible I-deals (CSE) → Creativity	.160	.046	***

Note: *** $P < 0.01$, ** $P < 0.05$, CSE means creative self-efficacy



Discussion

In this investigation, we hypothesized that CSE would be the mediator of said relationships (see Figure 1). Then, we examined the effect of two essential i-deals (developmental and flexibility i-deals) on employee creativity. Through comprehensive CSE mediation, our findings indicate that developmental i-deals positively affect creativity. Additionally, we found that flexibility ideals also significantly affect the creativity.

The significance of this study goes beyond its scientific findings. First, human resource management (such as alternative work arrangements) and creativity research benefit from this theory's development. We did this because i-deals lead to social interactions (e.g., Anand & Rousseau, 2005; Hornung et al., 2008). Social exchange theory and reciprocity are the primary explanations for why people use i-deals. According to these theories, i-deal users develop strong connections with their employers and colleagues out of a sense of responsibility (Anand et al., 2010).

Second, the two categories of i-deals have effects on creativity. This study examines the effect of i-deals with diverse motivations on employee creativity and possibly other employment outcomes. The purpose of development initiatives is to enhance job performance and individual capacities. They also enhance creativity. Creativity and adaptability were unrelated. Even though flexibility initiatives help employees establish a healthy balance between their personal and professional lives, which leads to the best conditions for sustained job performance (Hornung et al., 2008), their overuse can be problematic. This study explains how to manage and implement diverse work arrangements to maximize employee creativity. Our findings show employers that i-deals can improve CSE and creativity in addition to job satisfaction and organizational civic behavior when employed properly (Ng & Feldman, 2015). Managers ponder whether or not they should offer more incentives with diverse objectives, given that developmental and flexibility incentives have distinct advantages. People with a high level of performance and motivation may benefit from development opportunities. This facilitates employee learning and innovation.

Flexibility i-deals can help employees reconcile their work and personal lives and increase their creativity. Our research indicates that ideas with moderate adaptability produced the greatest results. Both overuse and underuse diminished creativity. This study also suggests that managers shouldn't utilize flexibility i-deals and that providing employees with clear performance objectives may encourage them to generate innovative ideas. The data also supports our hypothesis that self-concepts, such as CSE, influence creative output and can be targeted. If you desire significant job enhancements, you may need to emphasize employee self-efficacy. Professional development enhances self-efficacy and performance.



Limitations and future research directions

When assessing the contributions of this work, its limitations must be taken into account. First, this study lacked information on the prior performance or originality of the participants, which could have served as a predictor of the employee with a successful track record of procuring i-deals. According to, employers are more inclined to offer i-deals to high-performing employees (Wang et al., 2018). Although it would be anticipated that such information about social approval would have a positive effect on CSE, it also provides an alternative explanation for the effects of ideals.

To completely rule out any other explanation, we propose that future research examine the effects using longitudinal data and consider past employee performance. The second element of this analysis is We did not anticipate that creativity and adaptability would go together. Even though we now have a clear understanding of why this occurred, it is still conceivable that it was simply a random occurrence. Therefore, future research is required to determine whether or not this is a significant discovery. Future research should investigate how prosocial and intrinsic motivation influence incentives, creativity, and work-related outcomes (such as productivity and work quality).

Conclusion

I-deals are becoming more prevalent in the workplace, and they may be a complex factor in how employees think and behave; therefore, it is essential to gain a deeper understanding of them. Current research indicates that i-deals play a significant role in encouraging employees to generate new ideas. We also examined CSE's function as a mediator and discovered that it served as an internal motivator in the link between i-deals and employees' creativity. These findings support our hypothesis and suggest that i-deals may be a reliable predictor of the innovativeness of future employees. Our theory and research findings have significant implications for the study of both creativity and human resource management.

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