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## **Understanding Flexibility I-Deals:**

### **Integrating Performance Motivation in the Context of Colombia**

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**Abstract**

The goal of this study is to explore the consequences of flexibility i-deals in work and non-work domains of employees. We argue that a performance motivation perspective is vital to understand the consequences of flexibility i-deals. Performance motivation of subordinates is likely to be a mechanism explaining why flexibility i-deals impact on employee's work and non-work outcomes. Furthermore, we integrate a boundary condition and argue that supervisor's performance motivation is likely to be a boundary condition shaping when the impact of flexibility i-deals unfold on employee outcomes. We tested our hypotheses using a matched supervisor-subordinate dataset collected in a security organization in Colombia (N= 586 subordinates matched with 107 supervisors). Results from multi-level analyses reveal that the interaction of performance motivation of subordinates and flexibility i-deals matters to performance motivation of subordinates. In turn, performance motivation reduces turnover intentions and work-family conflict of subordinates. Our findings highlight that performance motivation of subordinates is a mechanism explaining how and why flexibility i-deals impact on work and family outcomes. Furthermore, supervisor's performance motivation is a key boundary condition on these associations. Flexibility i-deals can be integral parts of the HR mechanisms.

**Keywords:** Performance motivation, flexibility i-deals, work-family conflict, turnover intentions.

## Understanding Flexibility I-Deals

### Integrating a Performance Motive Perspective in the Context of Colombia

In today's workplace characterized by high competition and individualized work arrangements (Rofcanin *et al.*, 2018), organizations find it increasingly difficult to keep their employees motivated and productive (Bal and Rousseau, 2015). Furthermore, individualization and individualized negotiation and agreements are starting to shape the exchange between the employee and the organization (Bal *et al.*, 2015; Las Heras *et al.*, 2017). That is, employees seek to work on their own time and prefer to have the flexibility to choose from where they work (Michelman, 2018). These changes point out the fact that organizations need to adapt their human resource management practices in order to meet these expectations. One strategy for organizations to respond to these demands is to grant idiosyncratic deals (i.e., i-deals) to employees, which is described as personalized and non-standard employment conditions negotiated between an individual employee and an employer (Rousseau, Ho and Greenberg, 2006).

As employees' expectations from organizations vary, the i-deals negotiated between the employee and the organization tend to vary as well (Liao, Wayne & Rousseau, 2016). Rosen *et al.* (2013) have identified four commonly occurring types of i-deals, namely flexibility, developmental, workload-reduction and task i-deals. In this study, we focus on flexibility i-deals that involve individualized flexibility regarding the timing and location of work (Hornung *et al.* 2014; Rosen *et al.*, 2013), such as scheduling their work to accommodate their needs by working away from the office on certain days or in non-standard shifts (Hornung *et al.*, 2010; Vidyarthi *et al.*, 2014). Prior research has underlined that flexibility i-deals were mainly granted to elderly employees for their transition period to

## Performance motives and flexibility i-deals

retirement, flexibility i-deals are becoming increasingly popular within the younger generation in the workforce (Bal *et al.*, 2012; Las Heras *et al.*, 2017). Thus, flexibility i-deals will continue to be relevant and popular in practice, as well as gain importance in times when it is challenging to keep employees motivated (Rousseau *et al.*, 2009).

Our first goal is to understand the consequences of flexibility i-deals in employee's work and non-work domains. In exploring the question of how flexible i-deals impact on employee work and non-work outcomes, we take a performance motivation perspective. It refers to a process of setting concrete work goals and working towards them in structured ways (McGee & Johnson, 2015). Performance motivation is characterized as embodying more extrinsic goals related to securing good performance metrics and demonstrating competence (McGee and Johnson, 2015). Since flexibility i-deals could be perceived as favouritism by others who are not the focal employee in the exchange (Marescaux *et al.*, 2019) integrating performance motivation into our model provides an opportunity to see these deals in an objective light and adds to a holistic view on how flexibility i-deals unfold. Specifically, we propose that subordinates who obtain flexibility i-deals from their organizations will be more performance motivated. Furthermore, we expand this association by integrating a boundary condition: the performance motivation of the supervisor. Supervisors, due to their formal and informal power in the hierarchy of an organisation, play a crucial role in granting i-deals to their subordinates. Our first contribution lies in answering the question "what are the consequences of flexibility i-deals from a performance motivation angle?". By integrating the performance motivation perspective of the supervisor, we contribute to the debate of the importance of basing these deals on transparent and clear performance criteria such as the congruence between performance motivation of subordinates and supervisor.

Our second goal is to explore the consequences of flexibility i-deals in work and non-work domains of the recipients. More specifically, we theorize that flexibility i-deals impact

## Performance motives and flexibility i-deals

on the work and non-work outcomes through its impact on employee performance motivation. In the literature, although there are multiple definitions of motivation, three main streams of motivation theory (goal-setting theory, expectancy theory and self-efficacy theory) use performance as their main criterion in analysing motivation of employees. Thus, we believe it is congruent with the literature to use performance motivation as a mediator in explaining how people are motivated as a result of obtaining flexibility i-deals from their organizations, and how this relationship impacts employee outcomes. Specifically, we pose the following question: Do flexibility i-deals, through its effect on the performance motivation of the subordinate, lower employees' conflict between their work and non-work domain and their intention to leave the organization?

Our third goal relates to understanding the nuances of the beneficial impact of flexibility i-deals in work and non-work domain of employees. Research to date have demonstrated that flexibility i-deals are oftentimes granted as a strategic tool to stimulate the subordinate's performance at work and at home (Liao et al., 2017). In the context of our research, we contribute to the i-deals literature that states that i-deals need to benefit the subordinate as well as the supervisor/organization (Bal and Rousseau, 2015). Through its association with performance motivation, we argue that flexibility i-deals are likely to yield outcomes which benefit both the organization and the focal employee who receive flexibility i-deals. As for our focus on work-family conflict, our contribution lies in supporting that these i-deals could help employees tackle with the conflict they experience at home due to work demands. This is important since work-family conflict is in itself an important predictor of different work and non-work outcomes (e.g., burnout; see meta-analysis of Amstad, Meier, Fasel, Elfering, & Semmer, 2011). Moreover, we add insight on whether flexibility i-deals are informal support policies and low costly tools supervisors can rely on to improve performance motivation, and thus retain employees. This is especially relevant given that high turnover

## Performance motives and flexibility i-deals

rates are detrimental and costly not only for employees but also for organizational performance (see Hancock *et al.*, 2013 for a meta-analysis).

A further strength of our research is our focus on the context of Columbia. Research on i-deals has mainly explored these arrangements in Anglo-Saxon and Eastern contexts (Laio *et al.*, 2016). However, understanding the conditions under which these deals are stroke in non-Western context is vital to shape the human resource policies and guide research in this direction. Responding to calls from the literature in scrutinizing the construct in different context in terms of data and sample (see also Liu, Lee, Hui, Kwan & Wu, 2013), our focus on Columbia can be considered an extension of prior research. The studies in which samples are from non-Anglo-Saxon and Eastern contexts are beginning to emerge (see Kelly *et al.*, 2020), but we believe this approach to data and sampling is at its infancy. In this context, we add to the recent discussions in the literature where different data sources in scrutinizing flexibility i-deals and performance motivation are encouraged.

[Insert Figure 1 about here]

## Hypotheses Development

### *Flexibility i-deals and Performance Motivation*

Flexibility i-deals refer to personalized flexible work conditions regarding the time and location of where employees conduct their work (Rosen *et al.*, 2013). Examples include working partly away from the office and having nonstandard work shifts (Hornung *et al.*, 2009). We argue that subordinates who obtain flexibility i-deals are more likely to feel performance motivated. This hypothesis is grounded in the central tenet of social exchange theory stating that partners in a relationship tend to reciprocate contributions and favours (Blau, 1964). A subordinate who obtains flexibility i-deals are likely to be motivated to contribute to the effectiveness and functioning of the company (s)he works for (i.e., reflected in his / her higher performance motivation). In this context, we conceptualize flexibility i-

## Performance motives and flexibility i-deals

deals as an antecedent of performance motivation of the subordinate. Furthermore, this suggests that in organizations, flexibility i-deals could be used as a way of establishing a work setting which is likely to prompt a desired behavior, in our case, enhanced performance motivation that emanates from the obtainment of flexibility i-deals (McGee & Johnson, 2015). This is likely because i-deals represent personalized deals employees obtain to address their unique needs and preferences and therefore they act important signals for the care the organization bestows on the employee (Hornung *et al.*, 2010). Consequently, we argue that the effort from the organization in addressing these personal needs and preferences of the employee in the shape of flexibility i-deals would in turn increase the performance motivation – a manifestation of motivation to contribute to the effectiveness of the organization (Ford *et al.*, 2007). Our first hypothesis is stated below:

*Hypothesis 1.* There is a positive association between flexibility i-deals and the performance motivation of subordinates.

Furthermore, we propose that the association between flexibility i-deals and subordinates' performance motivation will be stronger for subordinates whose supervisor is also driven by performance motivation. Drawing from a goal congruence angle (Kristof-Brown and Stevens, 2001), we argue that the benefits of flexibility i-deals are more likely to be reaped on performance motivation of the subordinate if subordinate's supervisors are also performance motivated. We argue that employees who obtain flexibility i-deals from their organizations and whose supervisors are performance motivated would be more performance motivated as a result of the flexibility i-deal granting process. A key tenet of goal congruence theory is the mutuality between the goals of the self and those of others positively influences one's subsequent attitudes, behaviours, and emotional reactions (Seong and Choi, 2014). If



## Performance motives and flexibility i-deals

subordinates observe that their supervisor is also driven by performance motivation in the process of obtaining flexibility i-deals (i.e., helping the company achieve its goals, being productive and effective), this is likely to result in increased performance motivation by the subordinate. This argument draws from the goal congruence theory, where the employee who receives the flexibility i-deal from the organization adjust their goals and motivations similar to the supervisor who is in the process of granting the flexibility i-deal. Furthermore, when the employee receives flexibility i-deals from the organization, which is considered to be a unique one-off trade that is beneficial to both parties and could be conceptualized as an act of care on part of the organization, we expect the performance motivation of the subordinate to increase. Furthermore, when the subordinate observes their supervisor to be performance motivated, the subordinate in turn becomes more performance motivated in order to “give-back” to the organization by being motivated to contribute to the effectiveness of the organization. Indirectly providing support for our argument, the findings in Rofcanin *et al.* (2017) underline the importance of goal congruence between supervisors and subordinates, and demonstrate that when the recipients of i-deals share the benefits with their colleagues and perform well, their supervisors are more likely to grant i-deals to them.

*Hypothesis 2.* The positive association between flexibility i-deals and performance motivation of subordinates is moderated by supervisor’s performance motivation. This association is stronger for supervisors who are more performance motivated.

We furthermore argue that subordinates who obtain flexibility i-deals and thus improve their performance motivation will experience lower levels of work-family conflict and demonstrate lower turnover intentions. In a limited but growing body of research, studies have shown that flexibility i-deals are positively related to employees’ job satisfaction (Ho

## Performance motives and flexibility i-deals

and Tekleab, 2013; Rosen *et al.*, 2013), affective commitment (Ho and Tekleab, 2013; Liu *et al.*, 2013), motivation to continue working after retirement (Bal *et al.*, 2012), organizational citizenship behavior (Vidyarthi *et al.*, 2014) and voice behaviour (Marescaux *et al.*, 2019). Building on the tenets of flexibility i-deals, these arrangements provide employees with the opportunity and flexibility to decide where and when they can complete their tasks (Las Heras *et al.*, 2017; Hornung *et al.*, 2014; Rosen *et al.*, 2013). Thus, we argue that flexibility i-deals provide employees with the discretion to spend quality time and invest in activities in the family domain (Las Heras *et al.*, 2017). We propose that this discretion provided to the focal employee by the organization would then improve the performance motivation of the focal employee (see H1), which then will reduce work-family conflict (H3a) and turnover intentions (H3b). Following the social exchange principle of the norm of reciprocity, we argue that the recipients of these deals are likely to feel valued and as such will want to reciprocate by engaging in beneficial work outcomes (Blau, 1964). In the context of our model, this focus on beneficial work outcomes is likely to be observed in the form lowered turnover intention and work-family conflict of subordinates. Our third hypothesis is:

*Hypothesis 3.* Performance motivation is negatively associated with work-family conflict (H3a) and turnover intentions (H3b) of subordinates.

Combined, we argue that the subordinate's flexibility i-deals and performance motivation of the supervisor jointly increase subordinate's performance motivation which, in turn, lead to desirable work and non-work outcomes. We argue that subordinates who obtain flexibility i-deals from their organizations are more likely to display performance motivation (i.e., hypothesis 1). This association will be strengthened if the subordinate's supervisor is also performance motivated (i.e., hypothesis 2). In turn, increased performance motivation

## Performance motives and flexibility i-deals

will lower the subordinate's likelihood to experience conflict between the work and family domains and lower their intentions to leave the organization (i.e., hypothesis 3). While research to date has focused on the consequences of i-deals such as work performance (Vidyarthi et al., 2016; Rofcanin et al., 2018; Las Heras et al., 2017), co-worker reactions (Marescaux et al., 201) and satisfaction (Bal & Boehm, 2019), studies focusing on flexibility i-deals with a focus on the mechanisms explaining the impact of such i-deals is very few: Wang, Liu and Shalley (2018) investigated the mediating role of creative self-efficacy between i-deals and employee creativity, while Kelly, Rofcanin, Las Heras, Ogbonnaya and Marescaux (2020) conceptualized flexibility i-deals as a mediator between supervisor emotional support and employee work and home performance. In another study, Las Heras *et al.* (2018) demonstrated that subordinates' flexibility i-deals act as mechanisms between supervisors' elderly-care responsibilities and subordinates' work and non-work outcomes. The findings in Bayazit and Bayazit (2017) revealed that flexibility i-deals reduce work-family conflict but did not explore the underlying mechanism of how and why this association unfolds. Looking at i-deals from a general point of view, Villajos, Tordera and Peiro (2019) looked at the relationship between HR practices and eudemonic well-being and creative performance through the mediation of i-deals. Additionally, the findings in Rofcanin *et al.* (2018) demonstrated that subordinates' task i-deals act as mechanisms between supervisors' task i-deals and subordinates' work outcomes. Drawing on and extending these findings, our last hypothesis is:

*Hypothesis 4:* Subordinate's performance motivation will mediate the relationship between flexibility i-deals, turnover intentions, and work-family conflict

*Hypothesis 4a:* Supervisor's performance motivation will moderate the mediated relationship between flexibility i-deals, turnover intentions, and work-family conflict

## Method

### *Sample and procedure*

We investigated flexibility i-deals in the context of Colombia. Most studies on i-deals were conducted in Anglo-Saxon and other European settings (Bakker and Xanthopoulou, 2009) However, studying i-deals in a different context may shed light on their potential relevance under very different conditions and institutional settings (Las Heras, Trefalt, & Escribano, 2015). The socio-economical history of Colombia depicts a country where the security organization embodies a great extent of power and resources, mainly derived from high levels of macro-economic volatility due to the regional and economic dynamics. Although in Colombia informal workers represent a very high percentage of employment (Avirgan, Gammage, & Bivens, 2005), in this study all respondents were formally employed by the Colombian security organization. The operations of this organization are subsidized by government money. We gained access to this company in Colombia through academic partners in the country and as part of a project that is managed and run by a leading European business school.

Due to the hierarchical structure of the Colombian security organization<sup>1</sup>, we had to avoid accessing all employees since managers within the organization also act as subordinates to higher ranked officials. We also avoided using the same person in the Security organization responding as both subordinate and supervisor in order to eliminate noise by using two different questionnaires, one referring to their own perceptions and the other asking them to rate their subordinates. To do so, we conducted a power analysis<sup>2</sup> (Ellis, 2010) and achieved a reasonable target.

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<sup>1</sup> This organisation represents a very unique setting in the country: considered to be a huge organisation playing a vital role in the macro-economy of the organisation, employment in this organisation is government forced and based on a strict structure of training and development on matters of security and stability of the country.

<sup>2</sup> Further details can be obtained upon request.

## Performance motives and flexibility i-deals

The researcher working in the field visited five key sites in the country where she met with members of the Security organization to gather data. Those five sites represent the most relevant base camps for the organization in Colombia. In each of the cities, the field researcher spent between four and five days, meeting with groups that varied between 15 and 100 members.

Paper-and-pencil surveys were used since most of the training camps were in remote sites, some in the jungle, with no internet access. Confidentiality was a very relevant issue for the respondents of the survey, as they wanted guarantees that their answers were not going to be viewed by their supervisors or any member of the organization. To do so, no superior was present while they were filling the surveys, but only the researcher, who was a civilian with no formal relationship with the organization. In order to match the responses of supervisors and their subordinates, a field researcher would meet with groups of subordinates working for one specific supervisor. To secure the confidentiality of the surveys, the research team kept the material locked with a password.

Overall, we invited 3861 employees to participate in the study as subordinates and obtained 3624 fully usable responses (88%). We invited 189 employees to participate as supervisors and obtained 107 fully usable responses (57%). Due to missing data and with the aim of utilizing supervisor evaluations, we finally had matched data for 693 responses (568 subordinates; 107 supervisors).

The average age of subordinates was 35.64 years ( $SD = 7.30$  years). The majority of respondents were male (89%). This difference in gender can be explained by the male-dominated nature of security organization occupancies. Out of the 3624 subordinates in the sample, 3424 worked full-time. Half of the subordinates had one child or more, about a fifth of the subordinates had no children and the others left the question non-responded. The

## Performance motives and flexibility i-deals

average age of supervisors was 35.82 years ( $SD = 4.81$  years). Supervisors in our sample were mainly full-time working (98%) men (96%).

### *Measures*

The survey items were back translated in order to increase face validity (Brislin, 1986; Prieto, 1992). Unless otherwise stated, all items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale (from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree).

*Performance motivation (employee- and supervisor-rated).* Performance motivation was measured with the 4-item scale adapted from Menges *et al.* (2016). The four items in this scale measured whether and why people are motivated to do their jobs. An example item is “I do this job because I care about supporting the company”. ( $\alpha = .95$  for subordinates,  $\alpha = .72$  for supervisors). Full list of the items for the performance motivation scale can be found in the Appendix section of the manuscript.

*Flexibility i-deals (subordinate-rated).* We used a scale developed by Rosen *et al.* (2013) to measure flexibility i-deals. The three items of this scale measured the extent to which employees receive flexibility i-deals in their workplaces. An example item is “My supervisor considers my personal needs when making my work schedule.” ( $\alpha = .88$ ).

*Work-family conflict (subordinate-rated).* Work-family conflict was measured with three items of the nine-item scale developed by Matthews *et al.* (2010). An example item is “I have to miss family activities due to the amount of time I must spend on work responsibilities”. ( $\alpha = .62$ ).

*Turnover intention of the subordinate (subordinate-rated).* Subordinates measured their own intention of turnover with three items from the scale developed from Caldwell *et al.* (1991). A sample item is “I frequently think of quitting my job.” ( $\alpha = .79$ ).

*Analytical Strategy*

We tested all hypotheses simultaneously by conducting moderated mediation structural equation modelling using Mplus 8 (Muthén and Muthén, 1998–2017). All items described above were included as indicators for the corresponding latent variable. We examined a two-level structural equation model with employees nested within supervisors. The results from the intercept only model, namely low intra-class correlations ( $<.05$ ), indicated that a two-level analysis was appropriate. The factor loadings were all satisfactory above  $.70$  (i.e., ranging from  $.71$  to  $.99$ ; Fornell and Larcker, 1981). We used maximum likelihood estimation and report standardized beta coefficients.

To test the mediation hypotheses, we examined whether partial or full mediation fitted the data best. To that end, we compared the full mediated model with a partial mediation model for each outcome variable separately by conducting chi-square difference tests. We found significant differences between the full and partial mediated model for work-family conflict ( $\chi^2(1) = 6.61, p < .05$ ) and turnover intentions ( $\chi^2(1) = 125.15, p < .001$ ). Consequently, we relied on a model with partial mediation for the subordinate's work-family conflict and turnover intentions.

In order to assess the factorial validity of our study variables; we conducted a multi-level confirmatory factor analysis. The five-factor model (i.e., flexibility i-deals, performance motivation of subordinate, performance motivation of supervisor, turnover intentions, work-family conflict) fitted the data best. Moreover, each item loaded significantly and in the expected direction onto its respective factor and the five-factor model yielded the lowest BIC and best fit indices when compared with other factor models. The fit indices were all satisfactory (i.e.,  $\chi^2(218) = 408, RMSEA = .04, SRMR = .04, CFI = .95$  and  $TFI = .94$ ). The results for the multi-level CFA can be found in the appendix section of the manuscript.

## Results

Table 1 reports the means, standard deviations, Cronbach alpha scale reliabilities and correlations among the study variables.

[Insert Table 1 about here]

In support of hypothesis 1, we found that flexibility i-deals are positively associated with subordinate's performance motivation ( $\beta = .22$ , S.E. = .02,  $p < .001$ ). In line with hypothesis 2, supervisor's performance motivation strengthened this positive association between subordinate's performance motivation and the subordinate's flexibility i-deals ( $\beta = .03$ , S.E. = .02,  $p < .05$ , 95% CI [0.003 0.06]). We displayed the moderation effect in Figure 2. We conducted a simple slope test to gain more insight into the nature of this significant interaction effect for different values of the moderator (Preacher, Curran, & Bauer, 2006). For supervisors with higher performance motivation (i.e., one SD above the mean), the association is statistically significant and more positive ( $\beta = .244$ , S.E. = .032,  $p < .001$ ). This association is still statistically significant and strong for supervisors whose performance motivation is medium and low ( $\beta = .189$ , S.E. = .023,  $p < .001$ ;  $\beta = .134$ , S.E. = .025,  $p < .001$ , respectively).

In support of hypothesis 3a and 3b, performance motivation of the subordinate, in turn, were negatively associated with the subordinate's experience of work-family conflict ( $\beta = -.18$ , S.E. = .05,  $p < .001$ ) and intentions to leave the organization ( $\beta = -.46$ , S.E. = .05,  $p < .001$ ).

In partial support of hypothesis 4, our results showed a negative and significant indirect effect of flexibility-ideals on subordinate's turnover intention through subordinate's performance motivation ( $\beta = -.09$ , S.E. = .01, 99% CI [-.14 -.05] or 95% CI [-.13 -.05]). The same effect could not be captured for work-family conflict. In addition, the subordinate's flexibility i-deals also directly and negatively related to his/her experience of work-family



## Performance motives and flexibility i-deals

conflict ( $\beta = -.23$ , S.E. = .03,  $p < .001$ ) and turnover intention ( $\beta = -.23$ , S.E. = .03,  $p < .001$ ). Lastly, the subordinate's flexibility i-deals and supervisor's performance motivation together were negatively—but significantly—associated with the subordinate's work-family conflict through the subordinate's performance motivation ( $\beta = -0.10$ , S.E. = .02,  $p < .001$ ; 95% CI [.01, .02]), thereby partially confirming a moderated-mediation of hypothesis 4a. We present the results of our hypotheses in Figure 3.

[Insert Figure 2 about here]

[Insert Figure 3 about here]

## Discussion

### *Contributions to i-deals literature*

Our first contribution is to the recent debates that explore the consequences of flexibility i-deals (Vidyarthi *et al.*, 2014; Las Heras *et al.*, 2017; Rofcanin *et al.*, 2017; Hornung *et al.*, 2008; Bal *et al.*, 2012; Rousseau, 2016). A common thread of this research stream is that subordinates who are more performance motivated as a result of receiving flexibility i-deals obtain positive work and non-work outcomes. We integrate and explore the mediating mechanism of performance motivation of subordinates as a linchpin between flexibility i-deals and employee outcomes. Additionally, we show that subordinates performance motivation that emanate from the use of flexibility i-deals is dependent on the performance motivation of their supervisor in the sense that the relationship is stronger for subordinates whose supervisors are also performance motivated. These findings contribute to and address calls to understand the work as well as non-work-related outcomes of flexibility i-deals (e.g., Las Heras *et al.*, 2017) and expand the boundary conditions of these deals (Bal and Rousseau, 2015). Flexibility i-deals are considered as tools to retain or reward employees

## Performance motives and flexibility i-deals

aiming to contribute to their work performance or productivity (Hammer *et al.*, 2009). In this regard, conceptualizing flexibility i-deals as a tool to improve performance motivation and improve work and non-work outcomes within the organization is a contribution to the recent work and calls for further research on the consequences of flexibility i-deals.

Our second contribution to the i-deals literature is to expand prior research on the unique and specific impact of flexibility i-deals on work-family conflict and turnover intentions of employees. While this research confirms the previous work on the consequences of flexibility i-deals in the family domain (i.e. lowering work-family conflict), it also expands the research on i-deals to the work domain, by investigating the relationship of the construct with turnover intentions. With regards to the former, we answer the question of how and why flexibility i-deals reduce work-family conflict of subordinates (Bayazit & Bayazit, 2019). With regards to the latter, while most research on flexibility i-deals focuses on the family domain consequences and the family functioning of employees (e.g. Las Heras *et al.*, 2017), this research examines the relationship of flexibility i-deals to how people perform at work and provides empirical evidence for the operationalization of the construct in the work domain.

A third way through which we expand i-deals literature is via our focus on performance motivation as a key construct and a mechanism to explain how and why the beneficial impact of these deals occur. The theory on i-deals states that these work arrangements are supposed to be mutually beneficial for everyone including focal employees, co-workers, and employers (Rousseau *et al.*, 2005). Drawn on this tenet, few studies explored i-deals from a performance motivation angle, showing that recipients of i-deals help their co-workers (Rofcanin *et al.*, 2017) or improve their work performance if they are pro-socially driven (Kelly *et al.*, 2020). However, since i-deals are given on the basis of explicit and transparent conditions with the purpose of contributing to the effectiveness of the organization

## Performance motives and flexibility i-deals

and the employee, we decided to integrate a performance motivation angle, in which we investigate how i-deals influence the outcomes related to effectiveness and the motivation to perform better at work. While the motivation angle to the i-deals literature was recently integrated (Bal & Vossaert, 2019; Kelly et al., 2020), performance motivation in this context is important because in their nature, i-deals are specialized deals that are supposed to yield positive outcomes both for the employee and the organization. While a performance motivated employee is beneficial for the effectiveness of the organization, the employee who receives flexibility i-deals also benefits from a flexible work arrangement, which as a result creates the necessary win-win situation in the mechanism that investigates the consequences of i-deals.

### *Contributions to performance motivation literature*

Additionally, this research also contributes to the question of what drives performance motivation of recipients of flexibility i-deals in organisations. Establishing a positive association between flexibility i-deals and performance motivation enhances our current understanding in terms of exploring the consequences of flexibility i-deals from a motivational angle and paving the way for future research by showing a relationship between i-deals deals and performance. Additionally, this research empirically proves that granting flexibility i-deals from the organizational perspective or receiving flexibility i-deals from the subordinate's perspective, will improve the performance motivation of the subordinate. In terms of the contribution to the practice, managers can use flexibility i-deals as a tool in improving the performance motivation of their employees. This effect will be stronger if the supervisor who grants these i-deals is also performance motivated. In consequence, this research provides managers who are looking to improve the performance motivation of their subordinates with a proven tool to achieve their targets.

## Performance motives and flexibility i-deals

In relation to our focus on supervisor's performance motivation as a moderator, we contribute to and expand recent research which has stated focusing on the contextual conditions that trigger i-deals. The findings in Liao *et al.* (2017) showed that a supervisor's differentiated relationship with his or her subordinates impacts on the process of how i-deals unfold. Rofcanin *et al.* (2018) demonstrated that the extent to which a supervisor is servant oriented, exhibiting servant leadership characteristics is acts as a boundary condition between supervisors' and subordinates' task i-deals. Our findings contribute to these debates by not only highlighting the role of supervisors, but their performance motivation as a key contextual element that enables these arrangements. This is an important finding as it goes beyond the relational elements such as trust, loyalty or servant leadership and sheds lights on a concrete and objective oriented criterion that facilitates these deals in the shape of the performance motivation of the supervisor.

Our final strength relates to the context and characteristics of sample in which data is collected. Our data is collected from security organizations in Colombia, which differs itself from previous research done on the subject by providing a fresh approach to location and occupation. Additionally, this sample adds to the scope of the research on i-deals and performance motivation in the sense that it shows that such deals happen not only in well-established institutions, but in different types of institutions as well. The organization from which the sample is collected is a security organization where rules are rigid, strict and the scope of negotiation is very limited between subordinates and supervisors. Especially the mission and the responsibility of the organization and the different amounts of stress and other psychological outcomes projected onto the employees makes this sample distinct in the sense that it shows that ideals exist in these organizations, which in turn means that ideals also happen in non-institutional and non-traditional organizational settings as well.

### *Limitations*

All data were collected from one organization in Colombia. Although this data collection method has its advantages in terms of the reliability and matching, the limitations in generalizing this study should be considered as well.

Secondly, the study is cross-sectional in design, which in turn limits our ability to test the causality underlying our hypotheses. We have tested various alternative models in order to eliminate the causality concerns: None of the alternative models were significant, supporting the strength of our research (details can be provided upon request).

Thirdly, except for the performance motivation of supervisors rated by them, all the rest of the variables were collected from the same data source, raising concerns about common-method bias. To address these concerns, we followed the recommendations of Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, and Podsakoff (2003) and randomized the order of scale items, separated independent and dependent variables as well as used different response scales. Furthermore, we conducted marker variable analysis (Lindell and Whitney, 2001) and the results revealed that CMB was not a big concern.

### *Future Research Suggestions*

Furthermore, while Hornung, Rousseau and Glaser (2008) has shown that idiosyncratic deals are not limited to workers in competitive markets and non-bureaucratic firms, Tang & Hornung (2015) has shown that work-family enrichment through i-deals happen in a Chinese context. We believe this research expands these works by showing that flexibility i-deals are not limited to certain geographies and types of institutions.

In terms of methodology, future research on i-deals and performance motivation could use different methodological approaches in scrutinizing the construct. Moen et al., (2017), used panel data from a randomized field experiment to assess the effects of flexibility initiatives and their effects on turnover intentions. Additionally, for future research, the use of

## Performance motives and flexibility i-deals

longitudinal design with a time lag between each variable would extend researchers the ability to explore the processual nature of the model in sequence (Las Heras *et al.*, 2017).

Finally, this research has important implications for the post-COVID-19 era, where flexibility and hybrid working will be cornerstones of the new working life. First of all, although flexibility i-deals were already prominent in the literature and practice, we believe future researchers could delve in much more detailed into the emergence and popularity of granting such deals before and after covid. Furthermore, it is important to note that it is not just flexibility that will be an important future research avenue, but HR differentiation, in which organizations devise specific HR practices for different individuals or groups to meet their work demands, in our opinion will be an avenue worth researching (Rofcanin *et al.*, 2019 Schmidt *et al.*, 2018). Our study also informed HR differentiation literature by further emphasizing the important role of supervisor's performance motivation when supervisors implementing the differentiated HR practices.

### *Practical Implications*

Our findings offer important practical implications and suggestions for organizations that offer personalized deals to their employees. One key insight to be drawn is that flexibility i-deals can be utilized as HR tools in non-corporate and non-traditional settings like security organizations in Colombia. Further to this point, our findings revealed that when supervisors who grant i-deals to the subordinates are performance motivated, the subordinate who receives the said flexibility i-deal becomes more performance motivated as well. In this context, HR units can work with managers who seek to improve the performance motivation of their subordinates in providing more opportunities for granting flexibility i-deals to subordinates. Since performance motivation is proven to be a consequence of flexibility i-deals, the recruitment and promotion procedures could include flexibility i-deals as one of the pillars with which employees can be motivated to perform better and enhance work-family

## Performance motives and flexibility i-deals

enrichment when joining the organization. Given the less costly and personalised nature of i-deals such as giving timing schedules or locational opportunities; HR departments and managers could collaborate furthermore to enhance the impact of these deals considering the unique characteristics of the setting and of the employees seeking these deals.

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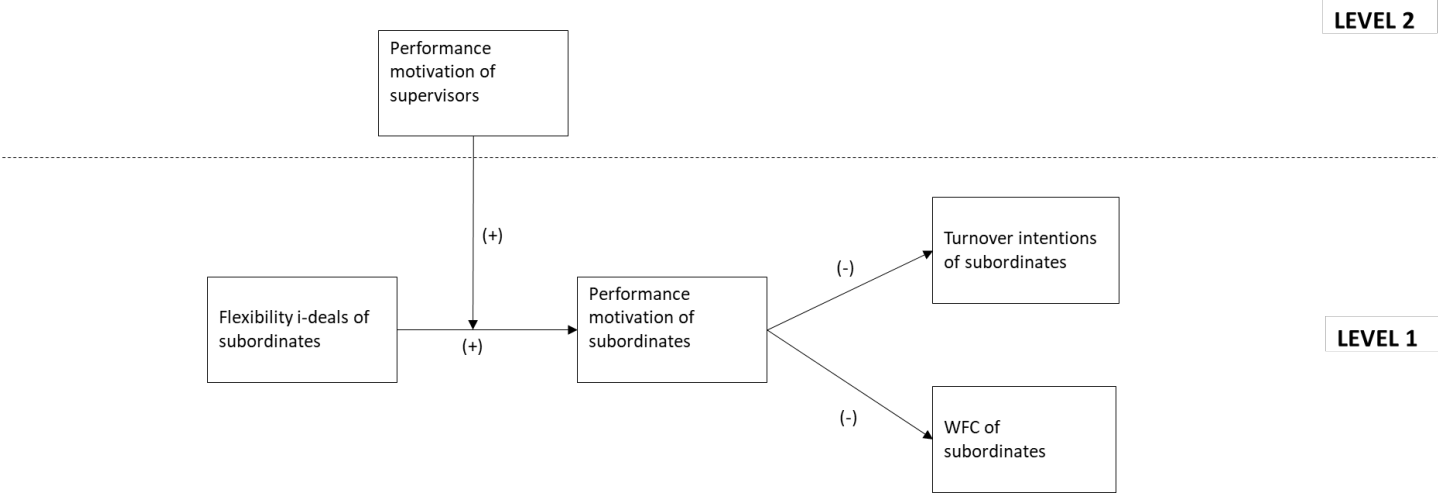


Figure 1. Conceptual model.

Performance motives and flexibility i-deals

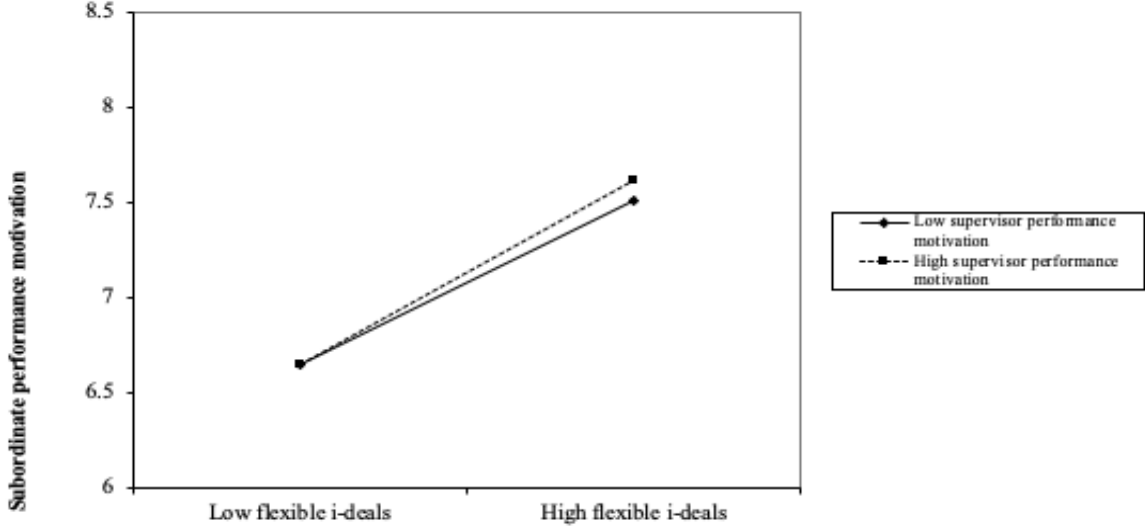


Figure 2. Interaction between the subordinate’s and supervisor’s performance motivation on the flexibility i-deals of the subordinate.



## Performance motives and flexibility i-deals

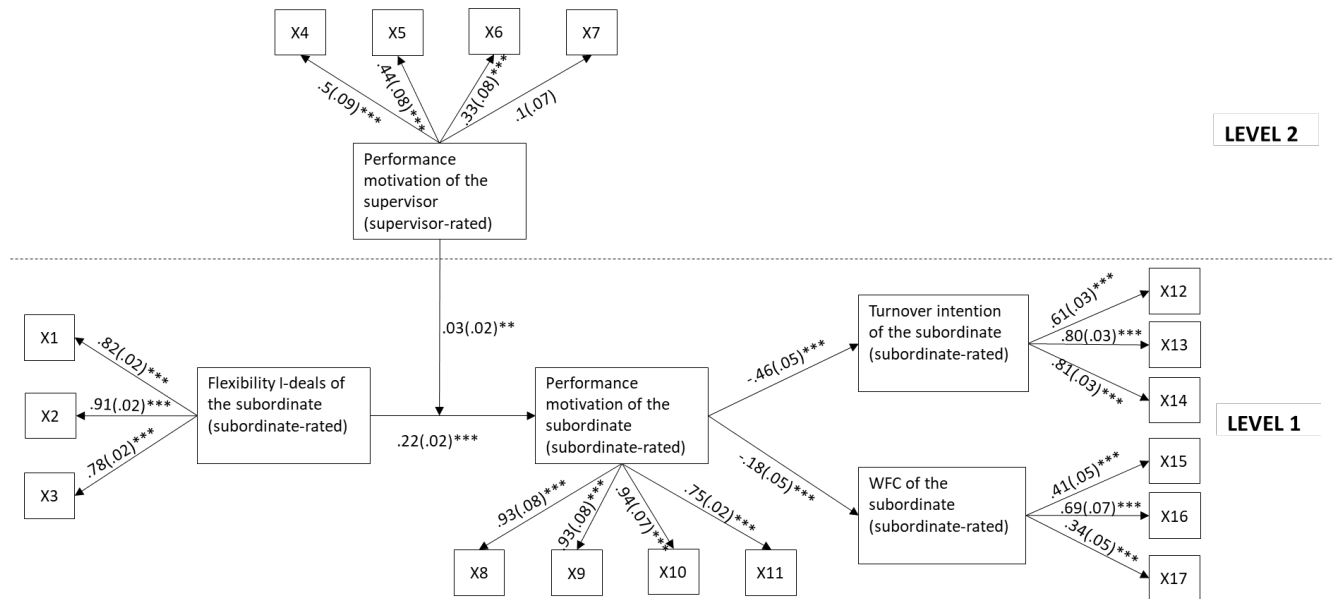


Figure 3. N= 586 subordinates matched with 107 supervisors  
Results of our Hypotheses

## Performance motives and flexibility i-deals

Table 1. Mean, standard deviation, scale reliabilities and correlations among study variables

<i>Variable</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>
1. Performance motivation (subordinate)	6.10	1.30	.95				
2. Performance motivation (supervisor)	6.02	1.28	-.02	.72			
3. Flexibility i-deals	4.39	1.95	.33**	.08	.88		
4. Work-family conflict	4.53	1.60	-.15**	.02	-.28**	.62	
5. Turnover intentions	3.84	1.87	-.34**	-.02	-.25**	.31**	.79

Notes.

N= 586 subordinates matched with 107 supervisors.

*M* = mean, *SD* = standard deviation. \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ . The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficients are presented on the diagonal. The correlations among the study variables are presented above the diagonal.

## Performance motives and flexibility i-deals

Table 2. Results of the Multi-Level Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Model	Model description	$\chi^2$ (df)	$\Delta \chi^2$ ( $\Delta$ df)	CFI	TFI	RMSEA	SRMR -within	SRMR- between
5-factor	Flexibility- ideals, performance motivation of the supervisor, performance motivation of the subordinate, WFC, and turnover intentions were treated as five factors	407.5 (218)		0.95	0.94	0.040	0.046	0.290
4-factor	Performance motivation of the supervisor and performance motivation of the subordinate were combined as one factor	471 (226)	63.5 (8)	0.93	0.92	0.046	0.055	0.311
4-factor	Flexibility-ideals and WFC were combined as one factor	978.7 (226)	507.7 (0)	0.80	0.76	0.080	0.075	0.429

N= 586 subordinates matched with 107 supervisors

Performance motives and flexibility i-deals

Table 3. Items for the Performance Motivation Questionnaire (Menges, J. I., Tussing, D. V., Wihler, A., & Grant, A. 2016)

Why are you motivated to work?
<i>I do this job because I care about supporting the company</i>
<i>I do this job because I want to help this organization</i>
<i>I do this job because it is important to me to do good for my organization</i>
<i>I do this job because my organization benefits from my job</i>