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## What Seals the I-Deal?

### Exploring the Role of Employees' Behaviors and Managers' Emotional Responses

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## What Seals the I-Deal?

### Exploring the Role of Employees' Behaviors and Managers' Emotions

#### Abstract

Idiosyncratic deals (I-deals) are work arrangements between an employee and a manager, aimed at meeting the employee's specific work-related needs (Rousseau, 2005). Studies to date have focused on the effects of successful I-deal negotiations, but have paid little attention to what determines whether negotiated I-deals are obtained. We propose that managers play a crucial role in this process and explore the role of managers' emotions in translating negotiation into obtainment. Given that I-deals are intended to be beneficial for the entire team (Rousseau, 2005) we expect that managers feel positive about the I-deal negotiation process of employees who engage in socially connecting behaviors following their most recent I-deal negotiation. In contrast, managers feel negative about the I-deal negotiation process of employees who engage in socially disconnecting behaviors following their most recent I-deal negotiation. How managers feel will determine the extent to which negotiated I-deals will be obtained. Results from a two-wave study of employees and their managers supported our hypotheses and highlighted the role of employees' behaviors following I-deal negotiations and managers' emotions in translating negotiated I-deals into obtained I-deals. Our findings contribute to research on I-deals by distinguishing between the negotiation and obtainment of I-deals and by including emotions into an I-deal making process.

**Key Words:** I-deals, socially connecting behaviors, socially disconnecting behaviors, emotions, managers.

## Introduction

Due to rising competition (Benko & Weisberg, 2007), dynamism in labor markets (Greenhaus, Callanan, & Godshalk, 2010), and changes in employees' work preferences (Glassner & Keune, 2012; Guest & Rodrigues, 2015), organizations can no longer rely on a one-size-fits all approach in their human resource management (HRM) practices. Along with a decline in collective agreements for employees (De Leede, Looise, & Van Riemsdijk, 2004), organizations increasingly stress the importance of employees taking charge of their own careers (Greenhaus et al., 2010). Negotiating idiosyncratic deals (I-deals) constitutes one way in which individuals can shape their careers (Anand, Vidyarthi, Liden, & Rousseau, 2010; Rousseau, Ho, & Greenberg, 2006).

I-deals are defined as individually negotiated agreements between a subordinate and a manager. These deals extend benefits such as skill and capability development (i.e., task and work responsibility I-deals), and flexible location, schedule, and financial package deals (i.e., flexibility I-deals) to their recipients (Rosen, Slater, Chang, & Johnson, 2013; Rousseau, Hornung, & Kim, 2009). Even though I-deals are negotiated between an employee and a manager, they are intended to be beneficial for the entire team (Bal & Rousseau, 2015). Organizations use I-deals as individualized HRM practices to increase employee performance and keep their employees motivated (Bal et al., 2012; Rousseau et al., 2009). In line with this notion, studies have begun to demonstrate that employees who have successfully negotiated an I-deal engage in positive behaviors such as helping their colleagues (Anand et al., 2010), and experience greater affective commitment (Ng & Feldman, 2012) and job satisfaction (Hornung, Rousseau, Glaser et al., 2010).

In the growing field of research on I-deals, studies to date have predominantly focused on the negotiation of I-deals (Hornung, Rousseau, Glaser, 2009; Ng & Feldman, 2012). This omits the possibility that negotiated I-deals may not always be obtained (Conway & Coyle-Shapiro, 2015). With the exception of a recent study by Rofcanin and colleagues (2014), I-deals research to date has paid little attention to whether what was negotiated has ultimately been obtained. The question arising is: “what seals the deal?” In other words, what factors shape the process of moving from successful I-deal negotiations to obtaining the negotiated I-deal?

Managers play a critical role in this process as they often hold the power to implement the negotiated deal (Rousseau et al., 2006). Beyond addressing employees’ work needs, the goal of managers in honoring I-deals is to drive team effectiveness by ensuring that focal employees share the benefits of their I-deals with their co-workers (Bal & Rousseau, 2015). In line with previous research on individualized HRM practices (e.g., Farndale & Kelliher, 2013) we argue that managers are likely to consider whether I-deals would contribute to the functionality and cohesion of the team when deciding whether or not to facilitate the obtainment of a negotiated I-deal. Drawing from the affective-consistency perspective of emotions (Yu, 2009), we argue that how managers feel about the most recent I-deal negotiation process of employees are likely to determine the extent to which successfully negotiated I-deals will be obtained. Furthermore, integrating goal congruence theory (Kristof-Brown & Stevens, 2001), we argue that managers’ emotions are shaped by the extent to which employees show socially connecting or disconnecting behaviors following their most recent successful I-deals negotiation. Socially connecting behaviors include helping co-workers and initiating interactions with them, while socially disconnecting behaviors involve

withdrawing from co-workers and avoiding interactions with others (Kiefer & Barclay, 2012).

By exploring the aftermath of successful I-deal negotiations, this research contributes to our understanding of when negotiated I-deals are obtained. We stress the importance of managers and outline that how managers feel about the process of employee's most recent I-deal negotiation determines the obtainment of successfully negotiated I-deals. This is in line with Rousseau's (2005) argument that a theoretical understanding of I-deals necessitates the inclusion of both the recipients and the granters. Our exploration of the role of employees' behaviors following their most recent I-deal negotiations and of managers' emotions also highlights whether employees, upon receipt of I-deals, are likely to share the benefits with co-workers (Ng & Feldman, 2012). Figure 1 depicts the proposed conceptual model. We develop our hypotheses next.

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Insert Figure 1 about here  
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### **Theory and Hypotheses**

#### **Linking negotiated to obtained I-deals: The role of managers' emotions**

Research to date have built on the implicit assumption that negotiated I-deals are automatically obtained (Liao et al., 2016), overlooking the distinction between negotiation and obtainment. However, the association between negotiation and obtainment is not likely to be straightforward, with many factors potentially influencing this association (Rofcanin et al., 2014). In this research, we focus on managers in delineating when negotiated I-deals are obtained.

Managers are principal agents of their organization, communicating the willingness of organizations to support the implementation of individualized work arrangements (Bal et al., 2015). Due to increasing decentralization in organizations, managers play a particularly crucial role in deciding upon, modifying, and implementing HR practices (e.g., Purcell & Hutchinson, 2007), such as I-deals (Farndale & Kelliher, 2013). Managers are important parties in I-deals because they are the primary targeted parties in this dyadic relationship, they are likely to know about the unique work needs of employees in their team (Farndale & Kelliher, 2013) and thus, can ensure that negotiated deals are ultimately obtained (Rousseau, 2005). In facilitating the obtainment of negotiated I-deals, managers' goal is to ensure that focal employees share the benefits of I-deals with co-workers (Rousseau, 2005), so that I-deals contribute to team efficiency and performance (Bal & Dorenbosch, 2015). When managers are convinced that their goals will be met upon the provision of I-deals to a focal employee who is likely to share the benefits of these agreements with co-workers, they are likely to support the focal employee in obtaining negotiated I-deals. Focusing on managers' emotions as indication of their supportiveness for the obtainment of I-deals, we contend that managers' emotions play a crucial role in determining to what extent successfully negotiated I-deals are obtained.

We argue that when managers feel positive about the process of employees' most recent negotiation for I-deals, the chances for successful negotiated I-deals to be obtained increases. Research on the affective-consistency perspective of emotions provide support for our argument (Yu, 2009). A key tenet of this perspective is that individuals are motivated to keep consistency among various attributes of the self (e.g., feelings, attitudes and behaviors). In this respect, the emotions of managers are likely to operate as cognitive filters, facilitating the development of affect-consistent behaviors and decisions (Seong & Choi, 2014; Yu,

2009). Adopting this logic in the context of I-deals, we expect that when managers feel positive about the process of an employee's most recent I-deal negotiation, they will facilitate the obtainment of negotiated I-deals. On other hand, when managers feel negative about the process of an employees' most recent I-deal negotiation, they will be less willing to support its obtainment. Our first hypothesis is:

*Hypothesis 1: Managers' emotions about the process of employees' most recent I-deal negotiation moderate the association between the extent of successful I-deal negotiation and the extent of obtainment of I-deals. This relationship is stronger when managers feel positive about the process of employees' most recent I-deal negotiation (H1a), and weaker when managers feel negative about the process of employees' most recent I-deal negotiation (H1b).*

### **Employees' socially connecting and disconnecting behaviors following most recent I-deal negotiations and managers' emotions**

As argued above, managers' emotions about the process of employees' I-deal negotiation are likely to determine the extent of the obtainment of negotiated I-deals. The next question arising then is: What influences how managers feel about the focal employee's most recent I-deal negotiation process? We argue that employees' socially connecting and disconnecting behaviors following their most recent I-deal negotiations are likely to influence how managers feel about the process of employees' I-deal negotiations.

A key tenet of goal congruence theory (Kristof-Brown & Stevens, 2001) is that the mutuality between the goals of the self and those of others influences one's subsequent attitudes, behaviors and emotional reactions positively (Seong & Choi, 2014). In the context of I-deals, managers' goal in facilitating the provision of I-deals to a focal employee is to ensure that these deals are beneficial for the entire team (Bal & Rousseau, 2015). For this



reason, managers will try to understand how employees, having negotiated I-deals, will make use of them: employees may use I-deals for their own benefits or share the benefits with co-workers, which will be in line with managers' ultimate goal (Mathieu et al., 2008).

A way for managers to understand employees' goals and see whether focal employees are likely to share the benefits of I-deals with co-workers is to observe employees' behaviors following their most recent I-deal negotiations. In support of this, the study by Hornung et al., (2009) revealed that managers' provision of I-deals is positively associated with managers' observation of employees' proactive behaviors (i.e., initiative taking). This is because, employees who take initiatives, are expected to share the benefits of I-deals with co-workers and contribute to team efficiency (Rousseau et al., 2006). Another study by Collins, Cartwright and Hislop (2013) demonstrated that managers provide I-deals (in the form of homeworking) to their subordinates as long as managers can observe employees' performance and ensure that they are contributing to team efficiency. Research from flexible work practices (FWPs) have shown similar results: Managers support and implement FWPs 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).

Building on these recent studies and turning to the role of managers, we argue that employees' socially connecting or disconnecting behaviors following their most recent I-deal negotiation are likely to send information to managers about the goals of employees requesting I-deals: Sharing the benefits of I-deals with team members or keeping the benefits to themselves, consequently influencing managers' goal achievement.

We argue that there is a positive association between employees' socially connecting behaviors following their most recent I-deal negotiation and managers' positive emotions about the process of employees' most recent negotiation for I-deals. Socially connecting

behaviors reflect concern for others and are characterized by employees' self-initiated interactions that involve helping co-workers, and caring for, and socializing with them (Kiefer & Barclay, 2012). These behaviors signal to managers that these employees are concerned about co-workers' interests, and that they are likely to share the benefits of I-deals with them, contributing to team effectiveness. For example, facilitating the obtainment of career-related I-deals for employees who are connected with, and concerned about their team members, may enhance team performance and contribute to team effectiveness (e.g., De Cremer et al., 2010). Observing socially connecting behaviors in employees, managers are likely to infer that employees will share the benefits of I-deals with co-workers, which fits well with their ultimate aim of providing I-deals to a focal employee. Our second hypothesis is:

*Hypothesis 2: There is a positive association between employees' socially connecting behaviors following their most recent I-deal negotiation and managers' positive emotions in relation to the most recent I-deal negotiation process of employees.*

Socially disconnecting behaviors reflect social alienation from coworkers and team (Kiefer & Barclay, 2012). Avoiding social interactions and withdrawing from co-workers are examples of socially disconnecting behaviors. We contend that managers are likely to react negatively to employees' socially disconnecting behaviors following their most recent I-deal negotiation. Observing employees' socially disconnecting behaviors following I-deal negotiation, they may infer that the focal employee is likely to keep the benefits of I-deals only for him- or herself which is likely to harm team effectiveness (e.g., Hu & Liden, 2015) and hence hamper managers' goal achievement in relation to the provision of I-deals to the focal employee. Managers are likely to anticipate that these employees, upon their receipt of

I-deals, will not share the benefits of I-deals with others in the team, and thus feel negative about the I-deal negotiation process of these employees. Our third hypothesis is:

*Hypothesis 3: There is a positive association between employees' socially disconnecting behaviors following their most recent I-deal negotiation and managers' negative emotions in relation to the most recent I-deal negotiation process of employees.*

## **Method**

### **Procedure and sample**

We collected data from full-time working executive MBA (EMBA) students and their managers in Istanbul, Turkey. Admission to this EMBA program is challenging in terms of prior academic success and years of professional experience. Moreover, following graduation, EMBA students are expected to receive a promotion. These executives are therefore likely to take steps to advance their careers and ask for I-deals.

As surveys were administered in Turkish, we first translated items into Turkish (Brislin, 1986). Following this, we discussed the wording of the items with four full professors from related fields. We then pre-tested our survey with twelve Turkish doctoral students in the field of organizational behavior. Following minor adjustments, we had our final survey back-translated by a professional translator, which is the recommended procedure to ensure face validity (Prieto, 1992).

We collected data at two time points, separated by six months. This time period is considered sufficient to investigate changes in one's work arrangements and employment conditions (Demerouti & Rispens, 2014). This time period is also in line with previous research on I-deals (Ng & Feldman, 2012). At Time 1, we sent personalized e-mails to 821 EMBA students, briefing them about the study procedure and providing them with a link to

the on-line survey. We obtained 208 responses, representing a response rate of 25%. At Time 2, 130 employees participated, reflecting a response rate of 64%. Employees who only participated at Time 1 did not differ from employees who participated at both times in terms of any of the study variables or demographic variables measured.

After employees completed their surveys on-line, they provided the contact details of their manager. Managers were then contacted by one of the authors via e-mail or telephone and completed a paper-based questionnaire in their own offices. At Time 1, 103 managers provided responses and at Time 2, 46 managers participated. Our final sample consisted of 130 employees and 46 managers. On average, one manager supervised 2.82 employees (S.D. = 1.35). The range of the number of employees supervised by one manager was 1- 8.

Among employees who participated at both time points, 61% were middle-level managers, and 39 % were front-line managers. 53% were male. The average age was 29.2 years (SD = 4.6). Participants' average tenure in the organization was 3.8 years (SD = 3.3), and average tenure in the current role was 2.5 years (SD = 2.7). Of managers who participated at both time points, 67% were male. Their average age was 34.2 (SD = 5.65). On average, managers had worked in the organization for 5.2 years (SD = 2.3), and in their current role for 4.3 years (SD = 2.2).

## **Measures**

Unless otherwise indicated, items were rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (5).

### ***Negotiation of I-Deals***

We first provided the definition of I-deals by Rousseau (2005, p. 93) to the employees: *I-deals are voluntary, personalized agreements of a nonstandard nature negotiated between individual employees and their employers regarding terms that benefit*

*each party*. Following this definition, using the six items from the I-deals scale of Rosen and colleagues (2013), we measured the extent to which employees had successfully negotiated for task and work responsibility I-deals with their managers within the past six months. An example item was “*I have successfully negotiated for tasks that better develop my skills*” ( $\alpha = .82$ ).

### ***Obtainment of I-Deals***

At Time 2, employees were asked to consider the time period since the last survey, which was six months. We measured the extent to which employees have obtained I-deals they had successfully negotiated for at Time 1 by adapting the scale of Rosen and colleagues (2013). Participants who answered “agree” or “strongly agree” for any of the task and work responsibility I-deal negotiation items at Time 1 were asked to indicate to which extent they had obtained these I-deals. An example item is “*I have obtained tasks that better develop my skills*” ( $\alpha = .82$ ).

### ***Socially Connecting and Disconnecting Behaviors following Most Recent I-Deal***

#### ***Negotiation***

We treated employees’ socially connecting and disconnecting behaviors as separate dimensions. At Time 1, we measured employees’ socially connecting behaviors following their most recent I-deal negotiation with four items adapted from Kiefer and Barclay (2012). The original items measured employees’ socially disconnecting behaviors and we therefore re-worded the items to capture employees’ socially connecting behaviors. Participants rated the extent to which they helped co-workers or initiated social interactions with them, following their most recently negotiated I-deals. An example item is “*I connected with my co-workers*” ( $\alpha = .88$ ).

Using four items by Kiefer and Barclay (2012), at Time 1 we measured the extent to which employees engaged in socially disconnecting behaviors following their most recently negotiated I-deals (e.g., withdrawing from others, ignoring others). An example is: “*I isolated myself*” ( $\alpha = .88$ ).

To ensure employees’ socially connecting and disconnecting behaviors following their most recent I-deal negotiation are distinct, we conducted confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs) using AMOS 19.0 with maximum likelihood estimation (Byrne, 2001). We used the suggested procedures and cut-off values (Hu & Bentler, 1999). A one-factor model displayed poor fit with the data ( $\chi^2 = 334.86$ ,  $df = 20$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 16.74$ ,  $p < .01$ ; CFI = .66; TLI = .53; RMSEA = .27). The two-factor model displayed good fit to the data ( $\chi^2 = 44.93$ ,  $df = 19$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 2.36$ ,  $p < .01$ ; CFI = .97; TLI = .96; RMSEA = .08). Supporting the distinctiveness of the measures for socially connecting and disconnecting behaviors, a chi-square difference test showed that the model fit improved significantly from the one-factor to two-factor model,  $\chi^2(1, N = 208) = 289.93$ ,  $p < .001$ .

### ***Managers’ Emotions about the Process of Employee’s Most Recent I-deal Negotiation***

At Time 2, managers were asked to think back to the most recent successful I-deal negotiation the focal employee had with him or her (*i.e., please think back to the most recent successful I-deal negotiation this employee had with you*). Then, managers were asked to state the frequency of their emotions they felt during this process (*i.e., How frequently did you feel the below during this process?*). We used ten items from Van Katwyk, Fox, Spector, and Kelloway’s Emotion at Work Index (2000) to capture managers’ emotions. We selected these items to represent the high, medium, and low arousal levels of the pleasure dimension of the index. Managers rated how frequently they experienced five positive emotions (happy, satisfied, optimistic, relieved, joyful,  $\alpha = .96$ ), and five negative emotions (angry, betrayed,

disappointed, guilty, unhappy;  $\alpha = .85$ ), on a scale ranging from “never” (1) to “always” (5). We treated managers’ positive and negative emotions as separate dimensions and aggregated responses to a positive emotions and a negative emotions score (e.g., Barsade & Gibson, 2007).

To ensure managers’ positive and negative emotions to the process of employee’s most recent I-deal negotiation are distinct, we carried out CFA’s using AMOS 19.0 with maximum likelihood estimation (Byrne, 2001). A one-factor model showed poor fit with the data ( $\chi^2 = 535.81$ ,  $df = 35$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 15.30$ ,  $p < .01$ ; CFI = .58; TLI = .47; RMSEA = .26). The two-factor model displayed good fit to the data ( $\chi^2 = 80.28$ ,  $df = 34$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 2.36$ ,  $p < .01$ ; CFI = .96; TLI = .95; RMSEA = .08). A chi-square difference test showed that the model fit improved significantly from the one-factor model to the two-factor model, supporting the distinctiveness of managers’ positive and negative emotions;  $\chi^2 (1, N = 130) = 455.53$ ,  $p < .001$ .

### ***Control Variables***

We initially controlled for age, gender, tenure in the organization, and tenure in the company for both subordinates and their managers. However, the direction and strength of our results did not change when these control variables were included in the analyses; they were thus excluded from the analyses.

We controlled for leader member exchange relationship quality (i.e., LMX) because prior research on I-deals revealed that LMX is a predictor of successful I-deal negotiations (Anand et al., 2010), and of positive emotional reactions towards employees (Martin, Guillaume, Thomas, Lee, & Epitropaki, 2015). To rule out potential confounding effects, we controlled for LMX measured at Time 1, using the seven items from the scale developed by

Liden and Maslyn (1998). An example item is: “*My supervisor is the kind of person one would like to have as a friend*” ( $\alpha = .91$ ).

When testing the moderating effect of managers’ emotions on the association between the extent of negotiation and obtainment of I-deals (H1), we controlled for employees’ socially connecting and socially disconnecting behaviors<sup>1</sup>. When testing the associations between employees’ socially connecting behaviors and managers’ positive emotions to the process of employees’ most recent I-deal negotiation (H2), we controlled for employees’ socially disconnecting behaviors and managers’ negative emotions<sup>2</sup>. Similarly, we controlled for employees’ socially connecting behaviors and managers’ positive emotions to the process of employees’ most recent I-deal negotiation when testing the associations between employees’ socially disconnecting behaviors and managers’ negative emotions (H3)<sup>3</sup>. Correlations between employees’ socially connecting behaviors and managers’ negative emotions to the process of employees’ most recent I-deal negotiation ( $r = -.26, p < .01$ ) and between employees’ socially disconnecting behaviors and managers’ positive emotions to the process of employees’ most recent I-deal negotiation ( $r = -.17, p < .05$ ), suggest that, in addition to employees’ socially connecting behaviors, employees’ socially disconnecting behaviors might influence managers’ positive emotions (vice versa for managers’ negative emotions). To provide a more accurate estimate for our hypotheses, we therefore adopted this control strategy (Becker, Atinc, Breugh et al., 2015). The strength and direction of the results of our hypotheses do not change when not controlling for these variables.

### ***Analytical Strategy***

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<sup>1</sup> H1(a) with controls  $\gamma = 0.16, p < .01$ ; H1(a) without controls  $\gamma = 0.16, p < .01$ ; H1(b) with controls  $\gamma = -0.13, p < .05$ ; H1(b) without controls  $\gamma = -0.14, p < .05$ .

<sup>2</sup> H2 with controls  $\gamma = 0.26, p < .01$ ; H2 without controls  $\gamma = 0.31, p < .001$ .

<sup>3</sup> H3 with controls  $\gamma = 0.17, p < .05$ ; H3 without controls  $\gamma = 0.22, p < .01$ .



Managers rated their emotions regarding the most recent successful I-deal negotiation they had with their subordinates. Due to the nested structure of data (Hox, 2002), we carried out multi-level analyses using MlwiN 2.20 (Rasbash, Browne, Healy, Cameron, & Charlton, 2000). We built two separate models for the dependent variables, using random intercept modeling. First, an intercept-only model was created, after which control variables and independent variables were entered. To control for within-group and between-group variances, we used grand-mean centered estimates for independent and control variables. We used person-mean centered estimates for the moderator variables (Hox, 2002; Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002).

To evaluate whether multi-level modeling was an appropriate approach, we followed two strategies. First, we compared the intercept-only model with a model with a fixed random part at Level 2 for managers' positive and negative emotions to employees' most recent I-deal negotiation (Klein et al., 2001). The deviance statistics for managers' positive emotions ( $\Delta-2*\log = 4.85$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and for managers' negative emotions ( $\Delta-2*\log = 31.43$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) indicated that a model at Level 2 fits the data significantly better than a model a model at Level 1.

Second, to estimate the percentage of variance that is attributable to managers' emotions to the process of employees' most recent I-deal negotiation, we calculated ICC (1) values using MlwiN 2.20 (Rasbash et al., 2000). For managers' positive emotions, the ICC (1) is  $= 0.23 / 1.11 = 21$  %. For managers' negative emotions, the ICC (1) is  $= 0.70 / 1.01 = 69$  %. For the obtainment of I-deals, the ICC (1) is  $= 0.04 / 0.38 = 11$  %. These results concerning our dependent variables suggest that the use of multi-level analyses was appropriate.

## Results

Table 1 displays the means, standard deviations, reliabilities, and correlations.

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Before testing our hypotheses, we conducted series of CFAs using AMOS 19.0 with maximum likelihood estimation (Byrne, 2001) to examine the factorial structures of our study constructs. We follow recommendations by Hu and Bentler (1999) to report our findings. The measurement model distinguishing among four factors, task and work responsibility I-deal negotiations, LMX, socially connecting, and socially disconnecting behaviors, all measured at Time 1, showed a satisfactory fit ( $\chi^2 = 433.031$ ,  $df = 183$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 2.36$ ,  $p < .01$ ; CFI = .88; TLI = .88; RMSEA = .07). This model fit the data significantly better than a model in which socially connecting and disconnecting behaviors were combined into one factor ( $\chi^2 = 724.695$ ,  $df = 186$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 3.89$ ,  $p < .01$ ; CFI = .74; TLI = .68; RMSEA = .12). The measurement model distinguishing between the three variables measured at Time 2 (obtained task and work responsibility I-deals, managers' positive and negative emotions) also showed satisfactory fit ( $\chi^2 = 175.090$ ,  $df = 101$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 1.73$ ,  $p < .01$ ; CFI = .94; TLI = .92; RMSEA = .07). This model fit the data significantly better than a competing model in which positive and negative emotions were loading onto a single factor ( $\chi^2 = 363.449$ ,  $df = 103$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 3.52$ ,  $p < .01$ ; CFI = .79; TLI = .73; RMSEA = .14).

Hypothesis 1(a) proposed that managers' positive emotions about the process of the focal employee's most recent I-deal negotiation would moderate the association between the extent of successful I-deal negotiation and the extent of I-deal obtainment. After all control variables were entered, the interaction term between managers' positive emotions and successful task and work responsibility I-deal negotiations was significant ( $\gamma = .16$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Following the suggestions of Preacher et al. (2006), we calculated simple slopes for one

standard deviation above and below the mean of the moderator, managers' positive emotions about the process of the focal employee's most recent I-deal negotiation. The slope for high manager positive emotions was positive and significant (gradient of simple slope = .71,  $t = 2.53$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The slope for low manager positive emotions was significant (gradient of simple slope = .54,  $t = 2.42$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Higher positive emotions about the process of the focal employees' most recent I-deal negotiation thus strengthened the association between successful I-deal negotiations and the extent to which I-deals were obtained. Accordingly, Hypothesis 1(a) was supported.

Hypothesis 1(b) proposed that the association between the extent of successful I-deal negotiation and the extent of I-deal obtainment would be moderated by managers' negative emotions about the process of the focal employees' most recent I-deal negotiation. After entering the control variables, the interaction term between managers' negative emotions about the process of the focal employee's most recent I-deal negotiation and successful task and work responsibility I-deal negotiations was significant and negative ( $\gamma = -.14$ ,  $p < .05$ ). As for H1 (a), we calculated simple slopes for one standard deviation above and below the mean of the moderator, manager's negative emotions about the focal employee's most recent I-deal negotiation. The slope for high manager negative emotions was negative and significant (gradient of simple slope =  $-.46$ ,  $t = 2.22$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The slope for low manager negative emotions was not significant (gradient of simple slope =  $-.06$ ,  $t = 0.51$ ,  $p = 0.61$ ). Thus, higher levels of I-deal negotiation were associated with lower levels of I-deal obtainment when managers felt more negatively about the process of the focal employees' most recent I-deal negotiation. Hypothesis 1(b) is supported (see Table 2).

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Insert Table 2 about here

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Hypothesis 2 proposed that employees' socially connecting behaviors following their most recent I-deal negotiation would be positively associated with managers' positive emotions about the process of these employees' most recent I-deal negotiation. Controlling for LMX, managers' negative emotions about the process of employees' most recent I-deal negotiation and employees' socially disconnecting behaviors, this association was positive and significant ( $\gamma = .26, p < .01$ ), providing support for our hypothesis (see Table 3).

Hypothesis 3 proposed a positive association between employees' socially disconnecting behaviors and managers' negative emotions about the process of the respective employees' most recent I-deal negotiation. The association between employees' socially disconnecting behaviors and managers' negative emotions about the process of the focal employee's most recent I-deal negotiation (after controlling for LMX, managers' positive emotions about the process of the focal employees' most recent I-deal negotiation and employees' socially connecting behaviors), was significant ( $\gamma = .17, p < .01$ ). This finding supports Hypothesis 2 (see Table 3).

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Insert Table 3 about here

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## **Discussion**

### **Theoretical Contributions**

Organizations have started to use individualized HR practices such as I-deals to meet the unique work-related needs of their employees and keep them committed to the organization (Bal & Dorenbosch, 2015). Indeed, research has shown that organizations tend to benefit from I-deals, for instance in the form of greater affective commitment and higher

levels of work performance (Anand et al., 2010). However, less is known regarding the aftermath of I-deal negotiations. This is surprising given that in theory the benefits of I-deals are supposed to arise from their obtainment, rather than the negotiation itself (Rousseau et al., 2006). This study has focused on the role of managers who are crucial for the obtainment of negotiated I-deals. This study contributes to I-deals in a number of ways.

The first contribution relates to our focus on the aftermath of I-deal negotiations. One core characteristic of I-deals is that they are negotiated between an employee and a manager that result in an actual “deal” (Liao, Wayne, & Rousseau, 2016). In essence, I-deals are the outcomes of a negotiation (Rousseau, 2005). Despite the acknowledgment that there is more beyond the negotiation aspect of I-deals (Bal & Rousseau, 2015), previous research has focused on I-deal negotiations (Ng & Feldman, 2012), overlooking whether negotiated I-deals are obtained or not (Conway & Coyle-Shapiro, 2015). In this study, we conceptualize the obtainment of I-deals as a second step following I-deal negotiations. Our focus on the extent to which I-deals are obtained is important given that the benefits of I-deals are likely to be realized upon their obtainment (Bal et al., 2012). We present one of the first studies to conceptualize I-deals composed of different phases.

The second contribution relates to the role of managers, specifically their emotions with respect to the process of negotiated I-deal, in implementing successfully negotiated deal. I-deals are examples of individualized HR practices and managers are likely to exert influence on the implementation of I-deals (Bos-Nehles, 2010; Hornung et al., 2009). Indeed, a growing body of research has started to show that managers have the power to modify existing HR practices (e.g., McDermott, Conway, Rousseau, & Flood, 2013; Stanton, Young, Bartram, & Leggat, 2010). While the range of formal policies defining HR practices might vary across organizations (Guest, 2011; Purcell & Hutchinson, 2007), 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 et al., 2013; Khilji & Wang, 2006; Nishii & Wright, 2008). 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 successful implementation of I-deals is also heavily influenced by whether managers evaluate the focal employee's behavior following the initial negotiation of the deal in line with his or her goal of honoring the I-deals.

Our focus on managers' emotions to the process of employee's most recent I-deal negotiation contributes to research on differentiated HR practices. Research has emphasized the "sensegiving" role of managers in implementing differentiated HR practices (Mcdermott et al., 2013; Maitlis, 2005). Managers provide clues to employees about the content of HR practices and policies, including when, to whom, and why these practices can be applied (Maitlis, 2005). To employees, managers' emotions can thus serve as powerful sources of sensegiving, reflecting managers' future intentions and decisions concerning employees' differentiated HR arrangements (Macdermott et al., 2013). Our focus on managers' emotions also complements previous research on the role of emotions in individual decision making processes (e.g., Little, Gooty, & Williams, 2016). For example, a study by Maitlis and Ozelik (2004) underlined the role of emotions in managers' decision making processes and revealed that employees' positive and negative emotions led to different decisions in the organizational settings.

We proposed that managers' emotions influence the extent to which negotiated deals are obtained, and thus explored factors that can influence managers' emotions. Managers' goal in providing I-deals is to ensure they will contribute to team cohesion and effectiveness;

hence they try to make sense of how employees will use their I-deals upon receipt (Kelley & Michela, 1980). In the context of I-deals, understanding how I-deals will be used by employees upon their obtainment is especially important because these deals deviate from what other team members receive. While there is no research on the specific behaviors of employees that facilitate the obtainment of I-deals, a meta-analysis (Liao et al., 2016) and a review study on the contextual nature of I-deals (Bal et al., 2012) highlight that employees may seek out, and hence utilize I-deals for different reasons. We contribute to research on I-deals by exploring how employees' socially connecting and disconnecting behaviors, following I-deal negotiations, influenced their managers' emotions to the process of employees' I-deal negotiation. Observing employees' socially connecting behaviors following I-deal negotiations, managers may have expected the recipients of I-deals to share the benefits of their I-deals with co-workers, which is consistent with managers' goal of ensuring I-deals contribute to the effective functioning of the team.

In addition to employees' socially connecting behaviors, we also explored the association between employees' socially disconnecting behaviors in the aftermath of negotiated I-deals and managers' negative emotions about the process of these employees' most recent I-deal negotiation. Our findings suggest that managers evaluated and reacted to the socially disconnecting behaviors of employees in the aftermath of I-deal negotiations negatively. Managers might have expected that the I-dealer, upon obtainment of I-deals, will use these deals only to their own benefit. Such behaviors are likely to lead to perceptions of favoritism among team members. In determining whether or not to support employees in obtaining I-deals, managers may thus also consider the perceptions of others in the organization. This highlights the importance of considering the wider social context when studying I-deals.

Further, it is noteworthy that the zero-order correlations indicated a significant negative association between managers' negative emotions and employees' socially connecting behaviors, as well as between managers' positive emotions and employees' socially disconnecting behaviors. Managers' negative and positive emotions were also negatively related. However, these effects disappear when managers' positive and negative emotions are analyzed simultaneously. Our results therefore complement research which argues that positive and negative emotions are independent of each other, with different antecedents (e.g. Moors, Ellsworth, Scherer & et al., 2013).

It is worth noting that, in line with the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960), employees' socially connecting and disconnecting behaviors following their most recent I-deal negotiation might enable them to obtain their negotiated I-deals, mediating the association between the extent of successful I-deal negotiation and the extent of obtainment of I-deals. We tested two alternative models and utilized Monte Carlo Method for Assessing mediation (MCMAM)<sup>4</sup>. We used an on-line tool developed by Selig and Preacher (2008) to calculate the confidence intervals. In model 1, we tested the mediation of employees' socially connecting behaviors between the extent of employees' successful I-deal negotiations and the extent of obtainment of I-deals. Findings did not support this argument as the confidence intervals included the value of zero ( $\gamma = .09 (.50)$ ,  $p = .18$ ; 95% CI = [-0.009 / 0.087]). In model 2, we tested the mediation of employees' socially disconnecting behaviors between the extent of employees' successful I-deal negotiations and the extent of obtainment of I-deals. This argument was not also supported, as confidence intervals included the value of zero ( $\gamma =$

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<sup>4</sup> 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 non-entitlement to flexitime and fairness perceptions, and b, the regression path between fairness perceptions and affective commitment (MacKinnon & Fairchild, 2009). We then used the distribution of the product method (MacKinnon & Fairchild, 2009) to calculate confidence intervals and validate our ab coefficients. When the confidence intervals do not contain zero, it means an indirect effect is established.



.05 (.25),  $p=.23$ ; 95% CI = [-0.046 / 0.013]). Drawing from these findings, it might be possible that employees reciprocate only for their obtained I-deals. Future research might explicitly integrate reciprocity into I-deals research (e.g., felt obligation) and explore the effects obtained I-deals might have on the focal employees' work behaviors.

### **Practical Implications**

I-deals are becoming strategic HRM tools to attract and retain talented employees (Bal et al., 2015; Ng & Feldman, 2012). Our results suggest that it is useful to distinguish between the extent to which I-deals are negotiated and obtained. Moreover, our results demonstrated that managers felt positive about the process of I-deal negotiation of employees who showed socially connecting behaviors. In contrast, when employees fail to connect with their co-workers, their managers may not support them in obtaining negotiated I-deals. If organizations and managers aim to use I-deals as a strategic tool to motivate and retain employees and increase their performance, they need to be transparent about how they expect these deals to be used. For employees negotiating I-deals, it has to be clear that these deals are intended to benefit the entire team, and that they are supposed to share their benefits. Accordingly, HR departments along with managers may encourage formal mechanisms such as mentoring (Nielsen, Carlson, & Lankau, 2001), coaching and communication interventions (Salas & Cannon-Bowers, 2001) to enhance connecting behaviors. Training and development to minimize socially disconnecting behaviors in teams will also be useful.

### **Limitations and future research directions**

The strengths of this study include the use of a two-wave research design and data from multiple sources. However, there are also some limitations. Even though we collected data at two measurement occasions and obtained ratings from supervisors, we cannot

establish causal relationships among our study variables. Longitudinal designs are needed to strengthen the causal claims in this research stream.

A second limitation relates to our assumption that managers evaluate employees' socially connecting (v.s. disconnecting) behaviors to see if these behaviors are congruent with managers' goals of honoring I-deals and as a result, feel positively (v.s. negatively) about the process of employees' most recent I-deal negotiation. However, we did not test explicitly whether the goal of the employee in requesting I-deals is same as that of managers. Future studies may investigate the congruence of managers' and employees' goals more directly in an I-deals process.

Our measurement of managers' emotions captures their emotional reactions to the process of employees' most recent I-deal negotiation. However, our theorization is built on the assumption that managers react positively (v.s. negatively) to the socially connecting and disconnecting behaviors of employees following their most recent I-deal negotiation. It might be that other factors, above and beyond focal employee's socially connecting and disconnecting behaviors, have influenced managers' emotions in the process of employee's most recent I-deal negotiation (e.g., budget constraints in the work team). Future research, by explicitly measuring managers' emotional reactions to employee behaviors following I-deal negotiations, might remedy this limitation.

While our focus in this study, as discussed above, has been on employees' socially connecting and disconnecting behaviors directed at their co-workers, it might be that managers prioritize their own interests in facilitating the obtainment of I-deals. Research on flexible work arrangements has shown that managers tend to act in favor of their own interests when agreeing on alternative work arrangements (Powell & Mainiero, 1999) and attribute employee's' use of flexible work practices to their self-interests (e.g., Leslie,

Manchester, Park & Mehng, 2012). Since I-deals are individually negotiated with managers, it will be interesting for future research to explore whether managers prioritize the interests of the team or their own interests and the conditions under which managers are likely to make unfavorable attributions of employees' use of I-deals.

The idea that managers observe employees' socially connecting and disconnecting behaviors might bring the possibility that some employees might engage in impression management behaviors to influence their managers. To rule out this possibility, as post-hoc analyses, we controlled for employees' impression management motives in testing the association between employee behaviors and managers' emotions (H2 and H3). Results revealed that managers' emotions about the process of employees' most recent I-deal negotiation process were not influenced by employees' impression management motives significantly<sup>5</sup>. It will be interesting for future research to evaluate whether co-workers' reactions to a focal employee's obtained I-deals are likely to be influenced by focal employee's impression management motives.

In our study, participants may have worked in different work teams but reported to the same manager, as would be the case in a matrix organizational structure. However, whether working in the same work team or not but reporting to the same manager is important because this structural work condition influences focal employee's task interdependence with other co-workers and hence imposes limitations to the manager regarding the provision of I-deals to the focal employee (Hornung et al., 2009). Future research needs to take into account these structural work conditions (i.e., task interdependence, working in the same work team or not) on the association between the extent of negotiation and obtainment of I-deals.

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<sup>5</sup> Impression management motives of employees were measured at Time 1, using the eleven-item scale developed by Rioux and Penner (2001). Detailed results may be obtained from the first author, upon request.

Our focus in this study was on the association between the extent of successful negotiation and obtainment of I-deals. However, it is possible that what is successfully negotiated may not be obtained, leading to perceptions of breach of I-deals. For future research, it will be interesting to integrate a psychological contract perspective and explore what factors hamper the obtainment of successfully negotiated I-deals and the effects breach of I-deals have on employees' work behaviors and attitudes.

The research participants in our study were managers. Due to their knowledge, experience, and expertise, they are likely to have better chances of negotiating for and obtaining I-deals compared to their non-managerial counterparts. It has been suggested that I-deals are only negotiated by star-performers (Rousseau, 2006). Given the general decrease in collective agreements (Glassner & Keune, 2012) and to enhance the generalizability of our findings, future studies should explore I-deals in non-managerial employees.

In this research, we focused on the aftermath of I-deal negotiations. Future research may explore the behaviors of employees following obtainment of I-deals: whether employees share the benefits of I-deals with team members or keep the benefits I-deals only to themselves following the obtainment of I-deals. In relation to this, future research might integrate the role of co-workers and explore whether and how, a focal employee's obtained I-deals benefit (or harm) coworkers in a work team. This will add clarity to one of the conceptualizations of I-deals, which is that, they are intended to be beneficial for teams (Rousseau et al., 2006).

In this study we focused specifically on task and work responsibility I-deals. Because the nature of flexibility I-deals is different from that of task and work responsibility I-deals (Rosen et al., 2013), our findings cannot be generalized to all types of I-deals. Future studies

need to explore different theoretical mechanisms to test and explain the unique effects of flexibility I-deals and differentiate them from task and work responsibility I-deals.

Finally, this study was conducted in a Turkish business context where paternalism is a dominant cultural value (Aycan, Shyns, Sun, Felfe, & Saher, 2013). Paternalism refers to hierarchical relationships in which managers are expected to care, protect and guide their subordinates in their work and non-work lives (Aycan et al., 2013). Hence, in such a work context employees are likely to feel comfortable in approaching their managers and negotiating for specific work arrangements like I-deals. Future research may explore the effects of different cultural values on the negotiation and obtainment of I-deals.

### **Conclusions**

This study contributed to our understanding of the extent to which successfully negotiated I-deals are obtained. By highlighting the relationship between employees' socially connecting and disconnecting behaviors following their most recent I-deal negotiation and managers' emotions about the process of employees' most recent I-deal negotiation, this study underscored the importance of how employees are likely to use their negotiated I-deals, and the key role of managers for the implementation of I-deals.

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**Table 1.** Means, standard deviations, reliabilities and correlations

	<b>Variables</b>	<i>Means</i>	<i>S.D.</i>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
1	LMX (T1)	3.64	0.59	(0.91)						
2	Employees' Socially Connecting Behaviours following Most Recent I-Deal Negotiation (T1)	3.48	0.76	0.02	(0.88)					
3	Employees' Socially Disconnecting Behaviours following Most Recent I-Deal Negotiation (T1)	2.01	0.92	-0.07	-0.53**	(0.88)				
4	The Extent of Successful Negotiation of I-Deals (T1)	3.75	0.92	0.28**	0.38**	-0.19*	(0.88)			
5	The Extent of Obtainment of I-Deals (T2)	4.08	0.61	0.02	0.21*	-0.14	0.21*	(0.87)		
6	Managers' Positive Emotions about the Process of Employee's Most Recent I-Deal Negotiation (T2)	3.88	0.88	0.19*	0.28**	-0.17*	0.44**	0.24**	(0.92)	
7	Managers' Negative Emotions about the Process of Employee's Most Recent I-Deal Negotiation (T2)	2.30	0.84	-0.21*	-0.26**	0.35**	-0.28**	-0.23**	-0.49**	(0.93)

Notes.

n= 130 subordinates; 46 supervisors.

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

Reliabilities are shown along the diagonal in parentheses.



**Table 2.** Multilevel estimates for the interaction between managers' emotions about the process of employee's most recent I-deal negotiation and the extent of successful negotiation of I-deals predicting the extent of obtainment of I-deals

Variables	The Extent of Obtainment of I-Deals (T2)								
	Estimate	S.E.	t	Estimate	S.E.	T	Estimate	S.E.	T
Intercept	4.07	0.06	67.08	4.08	0.05	83.45	4.04	0.05	77.76
LMX (T1)	0.23	0.11	2.09*	0.20	0.11	1.81	0.021	0.08	0.24
Employees' Socially Connecting Behaviours following Most Recent I-Deal Negotiation (T1)	0.15	0.08	1.88	0.08	0.07	1.14	0.09	0.07	0.19
Employees' Socially Disconnecting Behaviours following Most Recent I-Deal Negotiation (T1)	-0.03	0.06	0.05	-0.06	0.07	-0.93	-0.06	0.07	-0.93
The Extent of Successful Negotiation of I-Deals (T1)				0.06	0.07	0.93	0.11	0.08	1.41
Managers' Positive Emotions about the Process of Employee's Most Recent I-Deal Negotiation (T2)				0.07	0.07	1.01	0.02	0.07	0.3
Managers' Negative Emotions about the Process of Employee's Most Recent I-Deal Negotiation (T2)				-0.10	0.07	-1.42	-0.1	0.07	-1.46
The Extent of Successful Negotiation of I-Deals (T1) * Managers' Positive Emotions about the Process of Employee's Most Recent I-Deal Negotiation (T2)							0.16	0.05	3.20**
The Extent of Successful Negotiation of I-Deals (T1) * Managers' Negative Emotions about the Process of Employee's Most Recent I-Deal Negotiation (T2)							-0.14	0.06	-2.33*
-2LL	234.78			227.35			218.43		
$\Delta$ in -2LL	5.52 <sup>a</sup>			7.83*			24.18***		
D.F.	3			3			2		
Between-level Variance and Standard Error	0.03	(0.03)	0.02	(0.02)			0.02	(0.02)	
Within-level Variance and Standard Error	0.33	(0.05)	0.32	(0.04)			0.29	(0.04)	

Notes. <sup>a</sup>, Statistical comparison with an intercept-only model at level 1 (not shown in the table).

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

n = 130 subordinates; 46 supervisors.

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

**Table 3.** Multilevel regression analyses for socially connecting and disconnecting behaviours following most recent I-deal negotiation and managers' emotions about the process of employees' most recent I-deal negotiation

Variables	Managers' Positive Emotions about the Process of Employee's I-Deal Negotiation (T2)						Managers' Negative Emotions about the Process of Employee's I-Deal Negotiation (T2)					
	Estimate	S.E.	t	Estimate	S.E.	t	Estimate	S.E.	t	Estimate	S.E.	t
Intercept	3.88	0.06	64.66	3.88	0.06	64.66	2.02	0.07	28.85	2.03	0.06	33.83
LMX (T1)	0.14	0.11	1.27	0.17	0.11	1.54	-0.14	0.11	-1.55	-0.15	0.11	-1.50
Managers' Negative Emotions about the Process of Employee's Most Recent I-Deal Negotiation (T2)	-0.51	0.08	-6.25***	-0.47	0.08	-5.87***						
Managers' Positive Emotions about the Process of Employee's Most Recent I-Deal Negotiation (T2)							-0.34	0.06	-5.66***	-0.33	0.06	-5.55***
Employees' Socially Connecting Behaviours following Most Recent I-Deal Negotiation (T1)				0.26	0.09	2.88**	-0.15	0.08	-1.87	-0.05	0.09	-0.55
Employees' Socially Disconnecting Behaviours following Most Recent I-Deal Negotiation (T1)	-0.18	0.09	2.00*	-0.12	0.08	-1.50				0.17	0.06	2.83**
-2LL	297.06			291.12			255.26			246.17		
$\Delta$ in -2LL	35.75*** <i>a</i>			5.94**			36.81*** <i>b</i>			7.11**		
D.F.	3			1			3			1		
Between-level Variance and Standard Error	0.12	(0.07)		0.11	(0.06)		0.48	(0.13)		0.44	(0.13)	
Within-level Variance and Standard Error	0.49	(0.07)		0.47	(0.07)		0.24	(0.03)		0.23	(0.03)	

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

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

n = 130 subordinates; 46 supervisors.

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

**Figure 1. Conceptual Model**

