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**How Do Flexibility I-Deals Relate to Work Performance?
Exploring the Roles of Family Performance and Organizational Context**

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How do flexibility i-deals relate to work performance?

Exploring the roles of family performance and organizational context

Abstract

Drawing on a work–home resources (W-HR) model and a theory of the conservation of resources (COR), this study explores how flexibility i-deals relate to employees' work performance through their family performance. In line with the WH-R model, we introduce two contextual conditions to explain when our proposed associations may unfold. The first, perceived organizational support (POS), is a facilitator, and the other, perceived hindering work demands, is a stressor. The results of a matched sample of employees and their supervisors working in two companies in El Salvador support our hypotheses. The results show that the benefits of flexibility i-deals to the work domain (i.e., work performance) extend only through the family domain (i.e., family performance). Our findings also emphasize that flexibility i-deals do not unfold in a dyadic vacuum: POS strengthens the relationship between flexibility i-deals and family performance, while perceived high hindering work demands weaken the positive relationship between family performance and employee work performance. We contribute to i-deals research by a) exploring a relevant mechanism through which flexibility i-deals influence work performance; b) integrating the role of social context to emphasize the social aspects of i-deals; and c) enriching the i-deals literature by introducing a resource perspective.

Key words: I-deals, family performance, work performance, POS, hindering work demands.

Introduction

As a result of rising competition (Benko & Weisberg, 2007), dynamic 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 to human resource management (HRM) practices. In such contexts, one strategy is to provide employees with idiosyncratic deals (i-deals), which are personalized employment conditions of a non-standard nature negotiated between an employee and an employer (Rousseau, Ho, & Greenberg, 2006). I-deals are usually negotiated by employees to improve their work and non-work lives, while employers grant i-deals to employees in order to enhance their work performance (Rousseau, 2005). However, whether the outcomes of i-deals for employees and organizations conflict or are mutually beneficial is as yet unknown. It is important to investigate the outcomes of i-deals from the perspectives of both employees and organizations, as i-deals are costly (Bal & Rousseau, 2015), and employers may refrain from implementing i-deals if they perceive no advantages. While i-deals offer employees opportunities to experience a better fit with their jobs, it is important to understand the processes that lead to benefits to both employees and organizations as a result of i-deals.

Most studies of i-deals have focused on their work-related outcomes (Liao, Wayne, & Rousseau, 2016), overlooking the extent to which work outcomes (e.g., work performance) may result from the achievement of better non-work outcomes (e.g., family performance). Moreover, it is unclear which mechanisms underpin these relationships and produce salient effects on non-work and work domains. The main goal of this paper is to explore the mechanisms and contextual conditions under which i-deals produce positive outcomes for both employee and employer.

The study is grounded on Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker's (2012) work-home resources model (W-HR), which builds on Hobfoll's (1989) conservation of resources (COR)

theory. The W-HR model explains how work and family life may either conflict or enrich each other. Drawing on the W-HR model, which integrates resource enrichment and conflict concepts into the work–family interface (Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012), the first goal is to explain how and why flexibility i-deals – a particular form of i-deal aiming to address employees’ non-work demands (Bal & Rousseau, 2015) – contribute to employees’ work performance. In integrating the inter-role enrichment perspective, it is argued that flexibility i-deals generate further resources at home, such as spending more time with family or taking care of children during the day, thereby improving family performance. Enhanced family performance, in turn, is expected to enrich employees’ engagement at work, leading to improved work performance. Thus, the first contribution of this study relates to its focus on the relationship between flexibility i-deals and work performance, through their effects on family performance. The focus on family performance provides a better understanding of why previous research on the effects of flexibility i-deals has produced inconsistent results (e.g., Hornung, Rousseau, & Glaser, 2009) or, at best, weak effects (Bal, De Jong, Jansen, & Bakker, 2012) on employees’ work performance. In using the W-HR Model, we also bring a resource perspective to the i-deals literature, which to date has tended to adopt social exchange theory (Liao et al., 2016) while leaving other theoretical perspectives unexplored (Conway & Coyle-Shapiro, 2015).

The second goal is to investigate contextual conditions that explain how the relationship between flexibility i-deals and employees’ non-work and work outcomes may vary. A focus on contextual factors is important for the i-deals literature because, according to Rousseau (2005), contextual organizational factors affect the extent to which i-deals benefit focal employees and contribute to the functioning of organizations. Nevertheless, researchers have so far paid little attention to the role of employees’ work environment in exploring the effects of i-deals on performance (see Bal et al., 2012 for an exception). This may help

explain the weak and inconsistent findings of studies that have investigated i-deal outcomes (e.g., Hornung et al., 2009).

To start to address this gap, one resource, perceived organization support (POS), and one demand, perceived hindering work demands, are drawn from the W-HR model. It is argued that the relationship between flexibility i-deals and family performance may depend on the perceived supportiveness of the organization (Bal, Kleef, & Jansen, 2015; Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison & Sowa, 1986). Since i-deals are personalized working conditions given to a focal employee, other members of the organization may both witness and interpret these deals (Greenberg et al., 2004). Thus, we argue that POS is a meaningful characteristic of the overall work environment that may offset the potential ramifications of using flexibility i-deals. We further argue that lower levels of perceived hindering work demands (Peeters, de Jonge, Janssen, & Van der Linden, 2004) may enrich the relationship between home and work performance, fostering the transfer of benefits arising from the use of flexibility i-deals to enhance work performance.

Thus, this study explores two contextual organizational conditions that may strengthen and hinder the associations between i-deals and positive outcomes relevant to i-deal recipients and employers. Its main contribution lies in providing an overall model to guide exploration of how and when flexibility i-deals are associated with non-work and work domains. We use one mechanism (family performance) and two contextual conditions (POS and perceived hindering work demands) from the work environment to provide an overall picture of the consequences of flexibility i-deals. This is crucial, since i-deals are increasingly being used as strategic individualized HRM tools to enhance employees' performance in work and non-work domains (Bal et al., 2012; Ng & Feldman, 2012). First, we introduce the theoretical background and develop our hypotheses.

Insert Figure 1 Here

Theoretical overview

I-deals theory

I-deals are defined as “voluntary, personalized agreements of a non-standard nature negotiated between individual employees and their employers regarding terms that benefit each party” (Rousseau, 2005, p.23). Three defining features of i-deals are that they are negotiated individually, that they are intended to benefit both employee and employer, and that they vary in terms of scope (Liao et al., 2016). In terms of the content of i-deals, previous research has shown that the two most common types of i-deal are flexibility i-deals and development i-deals (Ng & Lucianetti, 2016; Rousseau, Hornung & Kim, 2009). In this study, we focus on flexibility i-deals to explore the extent to which the benefits of such deals may extend to family and work domains. Flexibility i-deals involve individualized flexibility regarding the timing and location of work (Hornung, Rousseau, Glaser, Angerer, & Weigl, 2010; Rosen, Slater, Chang, & Johnson, 2013). Working partly away from the office and having non-standard work shifts are examples of flexibility i-deals (Hornung et al., 2009; Vidyarthi, Chaudhry, Anand, & Liden, 2014). It should be noted that, while flexibility i-deals are similar to flexible work practices (FWPs), they differ in two important respects. The first difference is that FWPs are established and formal policies that organizations make available to all employees (Allen, Johnson, Kiburz, & Shockley, 2013; Leslie, Manchester, Park, & Mehng, 2012), whereas i-deals refer to the discretionary actions of decision makers, usually managers or HR departments, regarding individual employees (Rousseau et al., 2006). The second difference is that FWPs are defined by procedures or policies; hence, the content of FWPs is shaped by pre-existing formal procedures (Allen et al., 2013). In contrast, i-deals are

individually negotiated, and thus result from negotiations between specific employees and managers (Rousseau, 2005).

COR theory and the WH-R model in relation to i-deals

The basic tenet of COR theory is that people attempt to obtain, retain and protect resources, and that stress occurs when people risk losing or actually lose resources (Hobfoll, 1989). According to COR theory, resources may be objects (e.g., a house), personal characteristics (e.g., health), conditions (e.g., marital status), energies (e.g., time) or support (e.g., love) that a person values. This theory suggests that the possession of resources leads to the generation of other resources within or between domains, referred to as the *gain spiral* (or *enrichment*). Furthermore, individuals with more resources invest in obtaining more resources. Finally, people with more resources are better equipped to deal with stressful situations, and resource loss affects them less negatively. In a nutshell, COR theory is built on two basic assumptions: the gain spiral (or enrichment), in which resources accumulate within or between domains and lead to more resources, and the loss spiral (or conflict), in which resources are depleted and lost (Hobfoll, 1989, 2002).

Building on these assumptions of COR theory, the WH-R model integrates the enrichment and conflict concepts specifically into the work–home interface. This model elucidates the mechanisms through which resources gained in one domain (work or family) may relate to effective functioning in both the same and the other domain (Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). In explaining enrichment, the WH-R model distinguishes between types of resource in terms of their origin (contextual versus personal resources) and their transience (volatile versus structural resources). In addition, the W-HR model proposes that contextual threats, such as hindering work demands, may cause conflict between work and family domains. According to this model, demands in the work domain include work overload, task

ambiguity, and future work uncertainty (Cavanaugh, Boswell, Roehling, & Boudreau, 2000; Peeters, Montgomery, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2005).

Hypothesis development

Direct associations: Flexibility i-deals, family performance and work performance

We expect flexibility i-deals to be positively associated with employees' work performance. A basic tenet of COR theory is that, in order to retain and obtain more resources, people are likely to invest in relevant domains (Hobfoll, 1989). Applying this perspective to the context of our study, we expect that employees will be inclined to protect their resources, such as flexibility i-deals. In order to do so, they will invest more in the work domain, so that managers will be inclined to maintain (or renew) these deals for them in the future (e.g., Halbesleben, Neveu, Paustian-Underdahl, & Westman, 2014). The WH-R model also supports this argument, proposing that positive resources provide enrichment within domains (e.g., Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012).

Hypothesis 1: Flexibility i-deals are positively associated with employees' work performance.

One mechanism that may account for our proposed direct association is employees' performance in the family domain. Family performance refers to someone's engagement in a combination of family-related activities that include taking care of spouses and children (relational aspect), physical duties like fixing or repairing the home (task aspect), and making family-related decisions (cognitive aspect; Chen, Shaffer, Westman, Chen, Lazarova, & Reiche, 2014).

In line with the inter-role enrichment perspective (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006), which is a core element of the W-HR model, flexibility i-deals are likely to influence employees' performance in their family domain through two pathways. The first is instrumental: flexibility i-deals provide employees with discretion over where and how to work, and self-

growth-oriented resources gained from one role directly improve their functioning in another role. The second pathway is affective. By definition, flexibility i-deals are individualized to employees' unique work needs and are differentiated from what others already have; hence, recipients of flexibility i-deals are likely to feel valued and happy, which positively affects their functioning in the family domain (Bakker & Demerouti, 2012). This is supported, for example, by a study by Siu, Bakker, Brough, Lu, Wang, Kalliath, O'Driscoll, Lu, & Timms (2015) revealing enrichment between work and family domains, which demonstrates that work resources (e.g., supervisor support) relate positively to work-to-family enrichment. Similarly, Daniel and Sonnentag (2014) demonstrate that work resources (i.e., work engagement) relate to work-to-life enrichment, having an impact beyond the family, through instrumental and affective pathways, as suggested by the inter-role enrichment perspective. Our second hypothesis is:

Hypothesis 2: Flexibility i-deals are positively associated with family performance.

Consequently, it is likely that family performance is positively related to work performance. In line with the inter-role enrichment perspective inherent in COR theory and the W-HR model, family performance is expected to play an extrinsic motivational role by providing instrumental resources that help employees to achieve their work goals and perform better at work (Grzywacz & Marks, 2000). In addition, enhanced emotional and cognitive engagement with family produces more positive affect, which is an important resource for work performance (Siu et al., 2015). For example, enjoying a relaxing day with family members, which may be a valued resource, may generate other resources such as positive emotions and gratefulness (Ten Brummelhuis et al., 2014). The latter may in turn be reinvested and enhance work performance, which in turn will help ensure that further resources are generated in the future. This is important because, according to COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989) and the W-HR model (Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012), in order to gain

and develop more resources, people utilize and re-invest the resources they possess or call on resources present in their immediate environment. Based on this principle, employees equipped with family resources are likely to devote greater attention, time and energy to work, which may lead to improved work performance (Greenhouse & Powell, 2006; Ruderman, Ohlott, Panzer, & King, 2002). Better family performance is likely to create enrichment, thus positively relating to work performance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2013). Our third hypothesis is:

Hypothesis 3: Family performance is positively associated with work performance.

Indirect association between flexibility i-deals and work performance

In addition to their direct association with work performance, we argue that flexibility i-deals relate to work performance through family performance. Based on a core assumption of COR theory and the WH-R model that resource gains lead to more resources between domains (i.e., the enrichment cycle), we argue that focal employees who enjoy flexibility i-deals will seek to retain these resources (flexibility i-deals), enabling them to accrue other resources, such as positive emotions at home, gratefulness and meaning emanating from family performance, that can be re-invested in the work domain. Thus, focal employees are likely to react by devoting additional effort to home and then work in order to maintain this cycle of enrichment between domains.

For example, in the case of a flexibility i-deal enabling a parent to attend a sick child during work time, this individualized treatment and flexibility in the work domain is likely to make the focal employee more mentally relaxed and resilient in relation to work. Striving to retain the resource that allows such relaxation and resilience may make the person more willing to invest in performing better in the work domain. Indirect support for our argument is provided by Siu et al. (2015), who have found that enrichment in the family domain leads to greater job satisfaction and work performance. Similarly, Breevaart and Bakker (2012) have

shown that the strain of bringing up children relates to lower work performance. We thus hypothesize an indirect association between flexibility i-deals and work performance through family performance:

Hypothesis 4: Flexibility i-deals are positively associated with work performance via family performance.

The role of organizational context: POS and perceived hindering work demands as moderators

A key premise underlying i-deals theory is that i-deals do not occur in a vacuum: their meaning and effectiveness depend on the wider context in which they are provided (Bal & Rousseau, 2015; Rousseau et al., 2006). Based on the WH-R model and informed by i-deals theory, we investigate the effects of POS and perceived hindering work demands on our model. POS is relevant to understanding the consequences of flexibility i-deals for two main reasons. Flexibility i-deals involve providing a focal employee with discretion over when and where to work; however, it is not usually specified that they are intended to enhance family life (Rosen et al., 2013). Therefore, organizational support, measured broadly, aligns well with the content of flexibility i-deals, regardless of the reasons for which focal employees negotiate them. A second reason rendering POS a relevant resource relates to a defining feature of i-deals, that they are intended to benefit everyone, beyond the recipient and manager granting the deal (Rousseau, 2005). One way to make i-deals beneficial to everyone is to create and encourage an environment that supports sharing and helping. The WH-R model also proposes that POS may facilitate transferring the effects of flexibility i-deals to enhance family performance.

In supportive organizations, employees who have flexibility i-deals may feel more comfortable in making full use of their unique privileges if they perceive that the organization as a whole is concerned for the wellbeing of its employees and values their contributions

(Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Employees' perceptions of greater organizational support are crucial, since they may feel safer and be less likely to worry about the reactions of co-workers when taking advantage of their unique arrangements if they believe that the company cares for them and is willing to agree arrangements that advance their careers and drive their work performance (Anand, Vidyarthi, Liden, & Rousseau, 2010). This supportiveness is likely to be reflected in enhanced family performance (Chen et al., 2014). For example, discretion over when and how work is completed, when coupled with supportiveness from the organization, allows employees to manage their domestic activities more effectively. This effectiveness forms a basis for family performance, such as taking care of dependent children (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007).

In a similar vein, discretion over the time and place of work in a supportive organizational setting may reduce employee strain associated with work deadlines and pressure. Being able to work when it most suits other needs may lead to feelings of fulfillment or positive moods that are likely to enhance the cognitive element of family performance (Byron, 2005; Rothbard, 2001). Moreover, employees with flexibility i-deals are likely to plan and manage family responsibilities more proactively (Kossek, Lautsch, & Eaton, 2006), paying greater attention to dealing with family tasks that may require not only physical presence (e.g., attending an ill child or fixing furniture at home) but also cognitive involvement (e.g., planning for holidays). Our fifth hypothesis is:

Hypothesis 5: Perceived organizational support moderates the positive association between flexibility i-deals and family performance such that this positive association is stronger (versus weaker) for employees whose perceive organizational support to be high (versus low).

While POS is expected to strengthen enrichment between flexibility i-deals and family performance, contextual demands, namely perceived hindering demands, are expected

to prevent enrichment between family and work performance. Hindering work demands include role conflict, role ambiguity and job insecurity, which represent a loss of resources for the focal employee, thus preventing effective work performance (Cavanaugh et al., 2000; Rodell & Judge, 2009). Recent research on i-deals emphasizes that they may not always deliver the expected outcomes for recipients (Bal & Rousseau, 2015). While the role of co-workers (Lai, Rousseau, & Chang, 2009; Liu, Lee, Hui, Kwan, & Wu, 2013; Marescaux, De Winne, & Sels, 2013b) and supervisors (Anand et al., 2010; Gajendran, Harrison, & Delaney-Klinger, 2015) has been examined to understand when the effects of i-deals are not favorable for their recipients, no attention has been paid to the potentially detrimental role of contextual factors beyond the actors involved in i-deal making.

We argue that when hindering work demands are high, the relationship between family and work performance weakens, preventing the enrichment process. More specifically, the recipients of flexibility i-deals are expected to engage with their families more effectively, showing enhanced family performance (H2). In devoting their time and energy to the family domain, when hindering work demands are high, such employees are likely to lack the necessary resources (e.g., time, energy, attention) to devote to the work domain, leading to deteriorating work performance. This is likely because the recipients of flexibility i-deals, when working under hindering work conditions, face resource loss and are unable to transfer the resources they have gained effectively from the family to the work domain.

For instance, under conditions of role conflict and job insecurity which define hindering work demands, such employees will be less able to focus on performing better at work than in situations of low hindering demands where they can transfer resources gained in the family domain that enable them to perform well at work. Recent research on work–family conflict offers indirect support for our argument (Allen, Herst, Bruck & Sutton, 2000; Ford, Heinen & Langkamer, 2007; Rothbard, Phillips, & Dumas, 2005). The common thread of

these studies is that unfavorable work demands, such as cognitively-taxing work pressure, undesirable work schedules, and work-role overload, prevent employees from transferring positive gains from one domain to another, for example from family to work. Building on these arguments, we expect that when an employee faces high hindering work demands, the relationship between family and work performance will be weaker.

In contrast, when hindering work demands are low, enrichment between family and work domains is expected to be stronger. We expect that enhanced home performance will create a resource gain cycle, leading to better work performance (e.g., Demerouti, Bakker, & Voydanoff, 2010; Rodríguez-Muñoz, Sanz-Vergel, Demerouti & Bakker, 2014) because employees will not have to deal with dysfunctional work demands and will be more likely to use resources generated at home arising from the use of flexibility i-deals, such as positive emotions and enthusiasm, to excel at work. We therefore expect to see a more positive relationship between home and work performance when hindering work demands are low. Building on these arguments, our final hypothesis is:

Hypothesis 6: Perceived hindering work demands moderate the positive association between family performance and work performance such that this positive association is stronger (versus weaker) for employees whose perceived hindering work demands are low (versus high).

Method

Sample and procedure

We investigated i-deals in the under-studied context of El Salvador. Most studies of i-deals have been conducted in Anglo-Saxon (Anand et al., 2010) and other European contexts (Hornung et al., 2010; Ng & Feldman, 2012), but studying i-deals in other contexts is important in order to determine their potential relevance under different conditions (Las Heras, Trefalt, & Escribano, 2015). The participants in this study were full-time employees of

two large companies (one in the finance industry and the other in the hospitality industry) headquartered in El Salvador.¹

We accessed the companies in El Salvador through non-academic partners in the country,² and conducted power analysis to determine the final sample size (Ellis, 2010).³

The average age of subordinates was 37 years ($SD = 9.8$ years), and 38 percent were male. Most had undergraduate degrees (57 percent), while 24 per cent had postgraduate degrees, 12 percent had other types of degree and six per cent had high school qualifications. The average age of supervisors was 39 years ($SD = 8.1$ years), and 52 percent were male. Most supervisors had undergraduate degrees (58 percent), 40 percent had postgraduate degrees, and two percent had other types of degree. Before the study began, the company

¹ Company 1, ASE is a service company founded in El Salvador in the early 1960s, which was acquired by a bank headquartered in another Latin American country in the early 2000s. ASE is certified as an AAA company by Fitch y Equilibrium (an affiliate of Moody's Investor's Service). Most employees are clerical and skilled workers. When we started our project, it had 495 employees, 184 of whom were invited to participate (151 employees and 33 supervisors). Company 2, REC was founded in the mid-1970s. It operates in the hospitality industry and has a higher number of low-skilled employees than ASE. When we started our project, it had 1,663 employees, 458 of whom were invited to participate (398 employees and 60 supervisors).

² The non-academic partners in El Salvador are part of a Foundation whose mission is to help organizations in the country become better employers. The researchers offered survey tools and the Foundation secured access to companies. The Foundation representatives met with various organizations that might be interested in the project, with the target of recruiting at least two for the project. In El Salvador, informal workers represent 69.1 percent of total employment (Avirgan, Gammage, & Bivens, 2005), yet a key requirement was that all employees of participating companies should be formally employed. Companies participating in the project benefited from the research by receiving an in-depth company-specific executive report. The Foundation also offered to organize a public ceremony for participating companies, including El Salvador government representatives and representatives of the International Labor Organization in Central America, to recognize them as an innovative group of organizations doing research on work-family issues.

³ We had to avoid accessing all employees, because most managers were also subordinates to a higher-level manager. Since we sent supervisors two different questionnaires, one referring to their own perceptions and the other asking them to rate their subordinates, we did not ask anyone to respond in both roles, which would have created noise in the study. Moreover, the companies were unwilling to distribute surveys to all employees. Thus, as a first step, we needed to determine a confidence level, influenced by the population size, confidence interval and percentage of respondents falling into our predetermined sampling context. We conducted basic power analysis, taking into account the number of dyads, with the target of achieving a 70 percent response rate and a 95 percent confidence interval for each company. This high response rate may seem optimistic, yet the researchers had previously studied companies in this geographical area and were confident that these would be achieved. In the end, we achieved the minimum sample set by the power analysis.

managers and employees were briefed about the purpose, procedure and confidentiality of the study.

We used online surveys. We back-translated the survey items to increase face validity (Brislin, 1986; Prieto, 1992), and granted all participants strict confidentiality, such that only the researchers had access to their responses. We collected data at separate times from subordinates and their supervisors who evaluated their work performance. We used e-mails as IDs to match the data from the subordinates and their direct supervisors. We invited 423 employees to participate in the study as subordinates, and obtained 201 fully usable responses (48 percent). We invited 143 employees to participate as supervisors, and obtained 76 responses (53 percent). Due to missing data, we finally matched 186 responses from subordinates with 59 supervisors.

Measures

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

Flexibility i-deals

We used a scale developed by Rosen et al. (2013) to measure flexibility i-deals. The five items of this scale measured the degree to which focal employees received flexibilities in their schedule (3 items) and location (2 items) that were different from those of their co-workers. An example item was: “At my request, my supervisor has accommodated my off-the-job demands when assigning my work hours” ($\alpha = .76$).

Family performance

We used a scale developed by Chen et al. (2014) to evaluate subordinates’ family performance. Items on the scale measured the extent to which focal employees engaged in task- (2 items), cognitive- (1 items) and relationship-oriented tasks (2 items) at home. One

example was: “I complete household responsibilities” (relationship-oriented task; overall $\alpha = .96$).

Work performance

Supervisors evaluated the performance of each subordinate using four items from a scale by Williams and Anderson (1991). We selected these four items to measure the in-role work performance of focal employees. In particular, these items evaluated the extent to which subordinates met the expectations of their supervisors as well as the job (ranging from 1 = below average to 7 = above average). One example was: “He/she meets the formal performance requirements of the job” ($\alpha = .89$).

POS

We used four items from a shortened version of the scale developed by Eisenberger et al. (1986) to measure POS. We chose four items that were positively worded and had the highest factor loadings. The same items had been used in a previous study, providing evidence of reliability and validity (Las Heras, Bosch, & Raes, 2015; Snape & Redman, 2010). An example item was: “The organization is sincerely concerned about my well-being” ($\alpha = .92$).

Perceived hindering work demands

We used three items to measure how frequently employees experienced hindering work demands (Cavanaugh et al., 2000). We selected these items on the basis of an exploratory study in 2014 conducted prior to this study, using a similar group of participants in Mexico, funded by the Work-Family Centre at IESE Business School, directed by the first author of this research. In the previous study, we included and measured all items from the original challenge–hindrance framework (Cavanaugh et al., 2000), with six items for challenge stressors and five items for hindrance stressors). Using this sample ($N = 483$), we conducted exploratory factor analysis (EFA) with varimax rotation to select and include the highest loading items that exceeded the suggested cut-off value (0.40). This resulted in the selection

of three of the eleven items. We did this because of the resource constraints of this project, particularly in terms of the time allocated by managers and organizations in El Salvador. An example item was: “The amount of red tape I need to go through to get my job done” (ranging from 1 = never to 7 = always; $\alpha = .87$).

Control variables

To show the incremental explanatory power of flexibility i-deals above and beyond FWPs available to everyone (Leslie et al., 2012) and adopted as employee support policies in our selected companies, we controlled for *Availability of FWPs*. We used seven items to measure the extent to which general flexible work practices were available in employees’ organizations. An example item was: “In our organization, employees have access to compressed week hours” (seven items, ranging from 1 = never to 7 = always; $\alpha = .92$).⁴

We included the age, gender, and number of children of subordinates and their supervisors, the organization (dummy coded as 1 and 2), and the length of the dyadic relationship between subordinate and supervisor (measured as a continuous variable). Age and the number of children were measured as continuous variables. Gender took values of 1 = male and 2 = female.

⁴ We selected the seven items based on an extensive literature review (Allen et al., 2013) and two empirical studies that have used FWPs (Leslie et al., 2012; Bal et al., 2015). In the former, the authors identified the following categories of flexibility: flexible schedules (68%), occasional telecommuting (48%), routine telecommuting (8%), part-time work (4%), compressed work weeks (3%), and job shares (< 1%). In the latter, building on Hill et al. (2008), the authors measured the availability of FWPs, focusing on employees’ work times and schedules. A meta-analysis by Allen et al. (2013) also reveals that flexibility in timing and location of work are the most prevalent types of FWP used by organizations. Drawing on these studies, we used seven items pertaining to flexibility in the number of hours worked, flexible work schedules, flexible space and options for occasional time off. In terms of validity, our items loaded significantly onto one latent factor, and a separate CFA revealed good fit for our seven-item measure ($\chi^2 = 783.976$; $df = 413$, $\chi^2/df = 1.89$, $p < .01$; IFI = .91; CFI = .90; TLI = .90; RMSEA = .07).

Analytical strategy

Except for work performance, the variables in our model were self-rated, raising the potential for common-method bias (CMB). To address these concerns, we followed the recommendations of Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, and Podsakoff (2003) and incorporated procedural remedies into our study design, including randomizing the order of scale items, randomizing items within question blocks, separating predictors and criterion variables, using different response scales for different variables, and assuring participants that their responses would be treated confidentially.

In line with previous suggestions (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2012; Siemsen, Roth, & Oliveira, 2010) and recent research (e.g., Bal et al., 2012), we also conducted marker-variable analysis (Lindell & Whitney, 2001), by subtracting the lowest positive correlation between self-reported variables from each correlation value. Each of these values was then divided by one minus the lowest positive correlation between self-reported variables, and the resulting correlation values reflected CMB-adjusted correlations. Large differences between unadjusted and CMB-adjusted correlations suggest that CMB is a problem. In our findings, the absolute differences were minimal, ranging between 0.002 and 0.001. Correlations between the study variables reported by subordinates and the results of CFA also supported the convergent validity of our constructs. These results suggested that CMB was not a concern.

Work performance was rated by the supervisors (3.12 subordinates on average). To control for the nested structure of our data, we applied multi-level regression analyses using MLwiN software. To determine whether multi-level analysis was appropriate, we followed two steps. First, for our dependent variable, we evaluated the deviance statistics by building two separate models for our dependent variable using random intercept modelling (Klein et al., 2000). The model at Level 1 did not involve nesting of employees in their supervisors. We

then compared this with a model at Level 2 which involved nesting of employees within their supervisors. The deviance statistics demonstrated that a model at Level 2 fitted the data significantly better than models at Level 1 ($\Delta-2 * \log = 73.022, p < .001$).

Second, we calculated the ICC (1) for work performance to account for the proportion of the total variance attributable to differences between supervisors (Level 2): The ICC (1) for work performance was 78 percent, meaning that 78 percent of the overall variance in work performance was attributable to differences between supervisor evaluations. Our results therefore supported the use of multi-level regression analysis. To adequately control for both within-group and between-group variances, we used grand-mean centered estimates for all Level 1 predictors, and unit-level mean-centered estimates for all Level 2 predictors (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002).

We first tested our hypotheses with the control variables. The direction and strength of the relationships did not change after controlling for these variables; hence, for simplicity, they were excluded from further analysis (Becker et al., 2015). To test our mediation hypothesis, consistent with recent research on multi-level mediation analysis (e.g., MacKinnon & Fairchild, 2009; Preacher, 2015), we used the Monte Carlo method for assessing mediation (MCMAM).⁵ We used an online tool developed by Selig and Preacher (2008) to calculate confidence intervals. When confidence intervals do not contain zero, the indirect association is significant. We tested our moderation hypotheses, following Bauer et al.'s (2006) recommendations. To interpret the results, we plotted simple slopes at one standard deviation below and above the mean of the moderator (Aiken & West, 1991).

⁵ This approach relies on the parameter estimates and their associated asymptotic variances and co-variances. In particular, this method draws randomly from the joint distributions of the parameter estimates, calculates the product value of the two parameter estimates and repeats this a very large number of times. In the end, a confidence interval is estimated to test indirect associations (Bauer, Preacher & Gil, 2006).

Results

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

Insert Table 1 here

The correlation values were of moderate size. Some correlation patterns were not in the expected direction: flexibility i-deals did not correlate with supervisor-rated work performance ($r = .11$, *ns*) or with hindering work demands ($r = -.07$, *ns*).

In order to establish the uniqueness of our study variables, we conducted multilevel CFA using Mplus Version 7 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998; 2012). Specifically, at Level 1 we included flexibility i-deals, POS, perceived hindering work demands, family performance, and FWPs. At Level 2, we included supervisor-rated work performance. This model exhibited acceptable fit with the data ($\chi^2(244) = 554.44$, $p < .001$, CFI = .91, TLI = .90, SRMR within = .07, SRMR between = .02, RMSEA = .08).

We also assessed the model fit for three plausible alternative models based on inter-correlations of the study variables. Thus, in the first alternative model we combined flexibility i-deals and FWPs (Alternative Model 1: $\chi^2(248) = 751.37$, $p < .001$, CFI = .86, TLI = .84, SRMRwithin = .10, SRMRbetween = .02, RMSEA = .11), in the second model we combined POS and family performance items (Alternative Model 2: $\chi^2(248) = 1138.36$, $p < .001$, CFI = .75, TLI = .71, SRMRwithin = .14, SRMRbetween = .02, RMSEA = .14) and in a final model we combined POS and perceived hindering work demands items (Alternative Model 3: $\chi^2(248) = 772.66$, $p < .001$, CFI = .85, TLI = .83, SRMRwithin = .10, SRMRbetween = .02, RMSEA = .11). Overall, the model fit for all alternative models was found to be inferior, so the original study model was concluded to exhibit the best fit with the data.

Hypothesis 1 proposed that flexibility i-deals would be positively associated with work performance. The findings did not support this hypothesis ($\gamma = .05$, $p = 1.67$, *n.s.*; see Table 2, Model 3). Hypothesis 2 proposed that flexibility i-deals would be positively related to family performance. The results supported this hypothesis ($\gamma = .15$, $p < .05$; see Table 2, Model 2). Hypothesis 3 suggested that family performance would be positively related to work performance. When we controlled for flexibility i-deals in addition to the availability of FWPs, our results supported this hypothesis ($\gamma = .09$, $p < .01$; see Table 2, Model 4). Hypothesis 4 postulated that flexibility i-deals would be positively related to work performance via family performance: The confidence intervals did not include a value of zero ($\gamma = .11$ (.05); 95% CI = [0.002/0.029]), supporting an indirect association. See Table 2 for detailed results.

Insert Table 2 here

Hypothesis 5 postulated that a higher POS would strengthen the positive association between flexibility i-deals and family performance. When we controlled for the availability of FWPs and perceived hindering work demands, our interaction term between POS and flexibility i-deals was positive and significant, providing support for Hypothesis 5 ($\gamma = .09$, $p < .01$; see Table 3, Model 3). The positive association between flexibility i-deals and family performance strengthened for employees whose perceived general support was higher (gradient of simple slope = .71, t value of simple slope = 2.25, $p < .05$). The association between flexibility i-deals and family performance was also positive and significant in organizations where perceived organizational support was lower (gradient of simple slope = .48, t value of simple slope = 2.10, $p < .05$). Overall, Hypothesis 5 was supported (see Table 3).

Insert Table 3 here

Hypothesis 6 proposed that higher perceived hindering work demands would weaken the positive association between family and work performance. When we controlled for the availability of FWPs, flexibility i-deals and POS, the interaction term between family performance and perceived hindering work demands was negative and significant ($\gamma = -.06$, $p < .01$; see Table 4, Model 3), providing support for the hypothesis. When employees perceived hindering work demands to be higher, the positive association between family and work performance weakened (gradient of simple slope = $-.30$, t value of simple slope = -2.20 , $p < .05$). The positive association between family and work performance did not change for employees who perceived hindering work demands to be lower (gradient of simple slope = $-.11$, t value of simple slope = -1.16 , $p = .24$). Hypothesis 6 was supported (see Table 4).

Insert Table 4 here

Discussion

Contributions to research on i-deals

The first contribution made by the present study is to provide empirical evidence concerning the mechanism through which flexibility i-deals relate to work performance (H4). Our results show that flexibility i-deals are not directly related associated with work performance (H1) but relate to work performance only via family performance (H4). This finding contradicts an assumption of i-deals theory that, on receipt of such deals, employees will perform better at work. This is because, according to the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960), provision of i-deals creates a sense of indebtedness in the focal employee toward the employer, leading to

favorable behaviors of the recipient. However, a recent review study (Liao et al., 2016) and empirical papers (Bal & Dorenbosch, 2015; Bal et al., 2015) have observed that reciprocity is not the only mechanism through which to understand the effects of i-deals on work performance.

We take a first step in exploring the notion that this mechanism is likely to differ for each type of i-deal because the content of different types of i-deal is different and they are independent of each other (Rousseau & Bal, 2015). This adds to recent debates concerning how different types of i-deal are likely to influence different employee outcomes. For example, in their scale development study across four studies, Rosen et al. (2013) reveal that different types of i-deal relate to different outcomes. Hornung, Rousseau, and Glaser (2008) show that flexibility i-deals reduce work–family conflict, while task i-deals relate to affective commitment, increased performance expectations and paid overtime. Finally, Bal et al. (2012) demonstrate that flexibility i-deals are positively associated with motivation to continue working after retirement, while developmental i-deals are not. Accordingly, in exploring family performance as a mechanism affecting the relationship between flexibility i-deals and work performance, we respond to calls for research to focus exclusively on a relevant type of i-deal (Bal et al., 2012; Hornung et al., 2009). The current study shows that not only task and development i-deals (Hornung et al., 2009), but also flexibility i-deals may relate to higher performance, especially in the context of better work–life balance and performance in both domains as a result of i-deals.

Our second contribution relates to our focus on the influence of organizational context on the effectiveness of flexibility i-deals for work performance. Our study shows that POS is important in translating the effectiveness of flexibility i-deals to the family domain. As shown in Figure 2, the relationship between flexibility i-deals and family performance is stronger for employees who perceive the supportiveness of their organization to be higher.

Flexibility i-deals provide more observable and distinguishable resources than developmental i-deals, and thus co-workers may easily notice when focal employees have flexibility i-deals (Bal et al., 2012). From this perspective, it becomes clear that high perceived POS may mitigate co-workers' potentially negative reactions because, under similar conditions, co-workers may want similar i-deals to suit their own unique work needs and preferences (Anand et al., 2010). Similar lines of research have shown that employees whose perceived POS is higher are more likely to feel supported by co-workers (Eisenberger et al., 2002; Eisenberger, Shoss, Karagonlar, Gonzalez-Morales, Wickham, & Buffardi, 2014).

Interestingly, in previous research, Bal et al. (2012) found no support for a moderating role of perceived supportive unit climate between flexibility i-deals and motivation to continue working after retirement. One reason may relate to the age of the participants. Given that our sample consisted of relatively young employees (mean = 37.2) compared with Bal et al.'s (2012) sample (mean = 42.04), differences between the needs and preferences of younger and older employees may explain how and when flexibility i-deals related to focal employees' home performance in our study. Nevertheless, this appears to be the first study that has explored the role of perceived POS to understand how the benefits of flexibility i-deals are transferred to enhanced home performance.

Insert Figure 2 here

Considering the relationship between family and work performance, as depicted in Figure 3, our results demonstrate that for employees whose perceived hindering demands are higher, the association between family and work performance weakens (H6), indicating inter-role conflict. It becomes difficult for the focal employee to perform effectively in both domains, or to transfer gains arising from the use of flexibility i-deals from the home to the

work domain. Because hindering work demands lead to loss of resources, they may disrupt effective family–work enrichment processes (Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). Employees who receive flexibility i-deals are likely to devote more time and energy to their families and enact their family roles effectively. Indeed, effective family performance requires coordination and implementation of cognitive, affective and task duties (Chen et al., 2014) similar to the requirements of work performance (Gilboa, Shirom, Fried, & Cooper, 2008). Therefore, when perceived work demands hinder performance, the skills and opportunities gained in the family role may not be used to improve work performance, preventing an instrumental pathway in the expansion hypothesis of role theory (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). Therefore, beyond understanding whether i-deals relate to work outcomes, it is also important to consider the nature of work demands, which explain when family performance associated with the use of flexibility i-deals affects work performance.

Overall, our findings advance i-deals research by 1) focusing on a particular type of i-deal rather than combining different types of i-deal together; 2) testing an overall model exploring how and when the effects of flexibility i-deals are likely to be observed in non-work and work domains; and 3) introducing the WH-R model and COR theory as novel perspectives from which to explore our model.

Insert Figure 3 here

Contributions to individualized HRM

This research contributes to debates on the contingency approach of HRM (Kaufman & Miller, 2011; Marescaux, De Winne, & Sels, 2013a). These debates mainly concern the question of whether more HR practices are always associated with better employee work performance, or whether employees perform better when they are provided with

individualized HR practices. We expand these perspectives by showing that flexibility i-deals enhance work performance only when the organizational context is supportive and the positive influence of work performance declines when perceived hindering demands are higher, emphasizing the importance of a contingency approach in addition to offering individualized practices. From this perspective, the findings of this study expand recent research on individualized HRM that adopts a contingency angle. For example, Bal and Dorenbosch (2015) show that the effect of using individualized HR practices on performance and turnover depends on employees' age. Similarly, Clinton and Guest (2013) reveal that the effects of differentiated HR practices vary across different job groups. This is the first study to go beyond individual- and team-level contingencies to understand when differentiated and individualized HR practices may be effective and beneficial.

Moreover, consistent with research on HRM (Arthur & Boyles, 2007), it is important to distinguish between the availability of FWPs and the actual use of such practices by a select group of employees (Allen et al., 2013). In the former case, employees can access FWPs when necessary and they are defined by company policies, whereas the latter makes individualized arrangements for specific employees, indicating their effectiveness for work performance (Bal et al., 2015; Rousseau, 2005). The findings of this study show that providing flexibility i-deals to employees has greater effects on their home and work performance than FWPs. This contributes to research on individualized HRM practices, which has only recently begun to explore the added organizational value of i-deals, above and beyond policy-based and standardized HRM implementations (e.g., Bal et al., 2015).

Contributions to the enrichment literature

The current study also adds to the work-home enrichment literature, which observes that work and home domains are not necessarily competitive and may enrich each other (Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). Our findings expand the work-family enrichment model

(Greenhaus & Powell, 2006) by integrating perceived hindering work demands as a contextual condition that influences this enrichment process, hence going beyond previous studies which have tended to focus solely on positive reinforcement (Siu et al., 2015). This study also shows that an individualized approach toward workers may enhance this enrichment process by enabling employees to find their own unique ways of coping with both family and work demands. As diversity increases in the workplace (Bal & Rousseau, 2015), it is becoming more important for both organizations and employees to be able to take an individual approach to managing work and home. This study suggests that this may indeed have beneficial effects, especially under conditions of high support and low hindering demands at work.

Practical implications

The key implication of the findings is that actions should be taken to support the implementation of individualized HR practices, such as early leave and flexitime, to address employees' unique needs through senior management involvement and commitment and the establishment of related policies, practices and procedures. Flexibility i-deals may constitute an important component of HR policies; however, contextual conditions must be considered when designing and implementing them. Previous research (Behson, 2005) has found perceived organizational support to be effective in transferring the positive effects of flexibility i-deals into the family domain, while high hindering work demands prevent enrichment processes between the family and work domains, leading to a deterioration in work performance.

Companies should nurture supportive environments, for example by supporting employees when they need to leave work for non-work-related reasons (Thompson, Beauvais, & Lyness, 1999). By providing support, organizations might also avoid negative attributions from other employees, keeping employees motivated and committed to the organization

(Cook, 2009). Regarding the detrimental effect of hindering work demands (e.g., draining work schedules and uncertainty of tasks or roles), senior management should invest in facilitating and stimulating employees to focus on both personal and job-related resources, and their challenging job demands (Van Wingerden, Bakker, & Derks, 2015). In order to maximize the supportiveness of organizations and minimize hindering work demands to facilitate the implementation of flexibility i-deals, we therefore suggest that senior management and organizations should 1) invest in and carry out periodic interventions aimed at evaluating employees' resources and demands; 2) help employees fine-tune their job demands and resources, for example, by giving them more autonomy to combat hindering work demands; and 3) at the individual level, provide employees with individualized support, mentoring and coaching based on the outcomes of periodic surveys to help them optimize support and reduce hindering work demands in using flexibility i-deals. By coaching and showing understanding of employees' dual roles, supervisors might provide employees with personal resources, such as resilience and self-esteem, to combat hindering work demands (e.g., Li & Bagger, 2011).

Limitations and suggestions for further research

Despite its strengths, some limitations of this study must be noted. The first relates to the cross-sectional design of the study, which prevented rigorous testing of the causality underlying our hypotheses. We built on the WH-R model and COR theory in forming the directions of associations. Moreover, using the same analytical procedures as for Hypothesis 4, we tested two alternative models.⁶ It can thus be concluded that CMB is unlikely to have

⁶ In Alternative Model 1, we tested the effects of work performance on employees' flexibility i-deals that might lead to better family performance. This alternative model was based on the argument that high performers (e.g.,

affected our findings. Taking these points into account, we suggest the use of a longitudinal design for future research, with a pre-determined time lag between each variable (e.g., six months to a year, which would be consistent with research on i-deals; Ng & Feldman, 2014). This would enable researchers to explore the processual nature of the proposed model in sequence.

In relation to this limitation, researchers might consider a within-person design to explore the effects of flexibility i-deals. For example, future research might explore the effects of flexibility i-deals on family and work performance on a weekly basis. Perceived organizational support and hindering work demands might be conceptualized as trait moderators influencing our proposed indirect associations. Such a design would appear to be a novel approach, in that recent conceptual discussions on i-deals have emphasized that employees may strike micro i-deals that might show variation across time (Bal & Rousseau, 2015). This might be particularly interesting for flexibility i-deals that vary from week to week, such as leaving work earlier, having flexibility to work from home or changing locations.

A second limitation relates to our focus on perceived hindering work demands. Our results reveal that the association between family and work performance weakens when perceived hindering work demands are higher. However, this relationship might strengthen under conditions of high challenging work demands (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014). Future

star employees) are more likely to obtain i-deals (Rousseau et al, 2006), enabling them to perform better at home. The results did not support the indirect association between work performance and family performance through flexibility i-deals, as the confidence interval included a value of zero ($\gamma = .05 (.25)$, $p = .23$; 95% CI = [-0.030/0.053]). In a second alternative model, we tested the indirect association between flexibility i-deals and employees' family performance through employees' work performance. This model was developed from the claim that flexibility i-deals address employees' work needs and preferences (Hornung et al., 2009), leading to enhanced work performance. In turn, work performance is expected to lead to better family performance through enrichment. This indirect association was not significant, as the confidence interval included a value of zero ($\gamma = .09 (.50)$, $p = .18$; 95% CI = [-0.019/0.046]).

research might test the differential effects of hindering versus challenging work demands on the effects of flexibility i-deals on both non-work and work domains.

In addition, this study expands the WH-R model by incorporating enrichment and conflict hypotheses into the same framework and testing how contextual resources and demands at work act as boundary conditions for our proposed associations (Bakker & Demerouti, 2013). Future studies might integrate resources and demands from a different domain, such as emotional support or emotional demands at home (Bhave, Kramer & Glomb, 2010), and explore how the effects of a different type of i-deal (e.g., career i-deals) are shaped by these contextual conditions. For example, while our results reveal no direct association between flexibility i-deals and work performance, the content of task i-deals suggests that they might relate to work performance. Understanding the underlying mechanisms and contextual conditions for the effects of task i-deals remains unaddressed by research to date.

In exploring the effects of POS, we assumed that co-workers' reactions to focal employees' i-deals would be tempered in supportive organizations. It is important for future research to take account of co-workers and explore the effectiveness of focal employees' i-deals from a co-worker perspective (Ng & Lucianetti, 2016). In line with the predictions of fairness theories, employees who are excluded from i-deals may create a competitive and stressful work environment, offsetting the positive effects of a supportive organizational context. In order to understand when i-deals translate into effective implementation in the family and work domains, future research might investigate co-workers' cognitive responses (i.e., perceived fairness of i-deals) and emotional reactions (e.g., envy, anger).

In addition to contextual resources and demands at work, researchers might integrate dispositional contextual factors to understand when flexibility i-deals translate into better family and work performance. One interesting approach might be to integrate employees' work–family boundary management preferences, in terms of “integrators” and “segmenters”

(Kreiner, 2006). Recent research has shown that employees who prefer role integration are better able to deal with work expectations and technology use after work than those who prefer role segmentation between the two domains (Piszczek, 2016). Future studies might adopt a boundary management perspective to disentangle the effects of flexibility i-deals on employees' non-work domains (e.g., family, personal hobbies).

Future research might also integrate and explore the cross-over effects of flexibility i-deals. Their potential benefits may cross over to focal employees' spouses at home, enabling them to perform better at work. Such an approach might make a contribution to the conceptualization of i-deals by investigating whether and how the presumed benefits of i-deals go beyond the work domain to include recipients' spouses. This would also enable exploration of relevant social and psychological mechanisms, such as emotional, cognitive and physical partner support, which would enrich the i-deals literature and the WH-R model.

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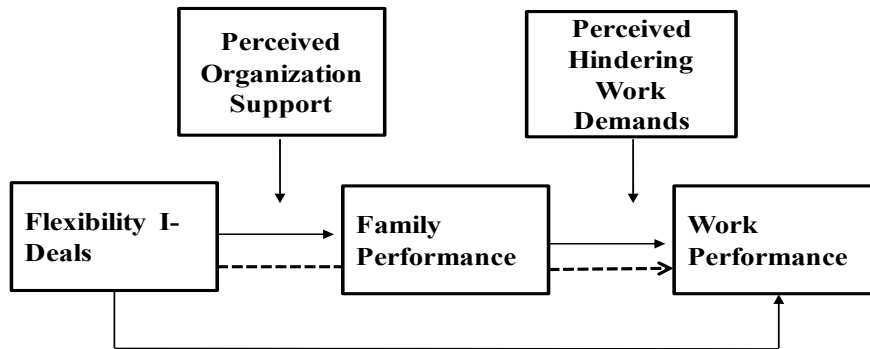
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Figure 1. Conceptual Model



Note. Dotted lines denote the mediation of family performance between flexibility i-deals and work performance.

Figure 2. Interaction of flexibility i-deals and perceived organization support on family performance

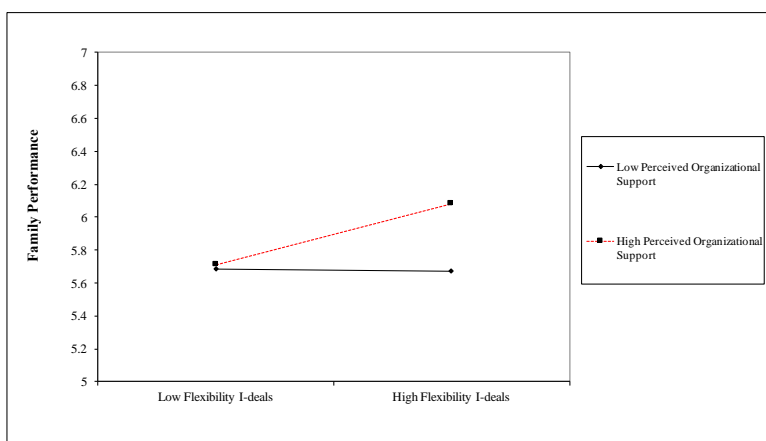


Figure 3. Interaction of family performance and hindering work demands on work performance

