

The Effect of Colleagues' I-Deals on Performance: Based on the Social Learning Theory

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Abstract

As a new method and proposition of core talent management in human resource management, idiosyncratic deals have attracted the attention of scholars. However, there are different views on the influence of idiosyncratic deals in academic circles. Based on the social learning theory, this paper takes self-efficacy and proactive personality into the analysis framework to explore how the idiosyncratic deals of colleagues affect performance by affecting the self-efficacy at work. Our research samples are from employees in south China. Employees independently filled out information such as idiosyncratic deals of colleagues, work self-efficacy, work performance, proactive personality and demographic information. We received 256 valid questionnaires. Through analyzing the questionnaire survey, We reached the following conclusions: 1) colleagues' idiosyncratic deals positively influences work self-efficacy; 2) Work self-efficacy plays a complete intermediary role between colleagues' idiosyncratic deals and work performance. 3) Proactive personality plays a moderator role between colleagues' idiosyncratic deals and Work self-efficacy.

Keywords

Idiosyncratic Deals, Work Self-Efficacy, Proactive Personality, Performance

1. Introduction

Idiosyncratic deals (i-deals) are non-standardized work arrangements negotiated by employees and employers, which are different from other employees and benefit both employees and employers (Rousseau, 2001) [1]. Rousseau believes that idiosyncratic deals (i-deals) can be used to attract and manage core talent. He also believes that i-deals are about three parties: employees who have idio-

syncratic deals (i-dealers), employers, and coworkers. The key to solving long-standing management dilemmas is three wins (Rousseau, 2001) [1]. In the existing studies, the positive effects of idiosyncratic deals are mostly discussed from employees and employers; for example, the relationship between idiosyncratic deals and organizational citizenship behavior (Anand, 2010) [2]; the curve relationship between flexible idiosyncratic deals and organizational support, turnover intention, and professional satisfaction (Chaudhry, 2011) [3]; the significant correlation between idiosyncratic deals and employee voice behavior (Ng & Feldman, 2015) [4].

However, there is some debate about the impact of idiosyncratic deals. Some studies have analyzed the negative effects of idiosyncratic deals, for example, coworkers may think idiosyncratic deals are unfair and have negative consequences (Greenberg & Colquitt, 2005) [5]. What some researchers have noticed is that the idiosyncratic deals of coworkers do not have a complete negative impact. Whether or not coworkers accept their coworkers' i-deals depends on their relationship with the employees (i-dealers) and employers who have idiosyncratic deals. The balance between the value of the i-dealer and the value of the i-deal is the factor that affects whether coworkers accept the i-deals (Martinko, Douglas, Ford & Gundlach, 2004) [6]. Although the role of fairness in interpreting the reactions of coworkers has been repeatedly confirmed (Greenberg, 2005) [5], it has not been clearly tested, nor has it been tested for the subsequent behavioral responses of coworkers.

Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to explore the positive impact of coworkers' i-deals on employee performance from the perspective of social learning theory. In other words, from the perspective of alternative experience, coworkers' successful experience can enhance their work self-efficacy. Among them, proactive personality's positive response to pressure can also enhance this positive impact. To this end, this paper constructs the effect of colleague i-deals on performance, with work self-efficacy as the intermediary and proactive personality as the moderator model.

2. Theory and Hypothesis

2.1. Idiosyncratic Deals and Performance

Performance is often the goal of individual and organizational development. Although no research has shown that colleague i-deals have a significant impact on performance, according to the social learning theory, individuals form alternative experiences through observing others to influence themselves, such as high performance (Resick, 2013) [7] received i-deals colleagues usually belong to the high-level personnel who can produce high performance. Under the colleague's exemplary role, employee also can produce high performance. Therefore, we put forward:

H1a: Colleague's developmental i-deals are positively related to employee's performance.

H1b: Colleague's flexible i-deals are positively related to employee's performance.

2.2. The Mediating Role of Work Self-Efficacy

In social learning theory, it is proposed that self-efficacy is an individual's judgment on whether he can successfully complete a certain behavior, and work self-efficacy is an individual's judgment on whether he can complete a certain work task (Rigotti *et al.*, 2008) [8]. There are four factors that influence self-efficacy: alternative experience, existing experience, verbal persuasion, and physical and mental status (such as stress). Self-efficacy is the key intermediate state in the process of social learning. There are several ways in which colleagues' i-deals can enhance self-efficacy. Firstly, colleagues obtain i-deals and produce high performance (Rousseau, 2013; Parker, 2009; Tims *et al.*, 2012) [9] [10] [11]. When employees see and observe the successful alternative experience, such vicarious experience will enhance their sense of self-efficacy. Secondly, for the employees who haven't got the i-deals at this stage, there will be some pressure of wanting but not getting. Moderate pressure will help to improve the sense of work self-efficacy, which is a kind of psychological arousal, which will increase work self-efficacy.

Social learning theory holds that people with a high sense of work self-efficacy tend to have a more positive attitude toward difficulties or tasks and exhibit superior behavioral efficiency, which often leads to better outcomes (Bandura, 1986) [12]. After observing colleagues receiving i-deals, employees improve their sense of work self-efficacy and work efficiency through substitution experience and physiological arousal, thus improving their work performance. A large number of studies have shown that work self-efficacy is a predictor of performance (Hannah, Schaubroeck, & Peng, 2016; Carter, 2016; Frayne & Geringer, 2000; Yuan, Weiser, & Fischer, 2016; Yuan & Weiser, 2016; Caprara *et al.* 2011; Weiser and Riggio 2010) [13]-[18].

In terms of empirical research, some scholars from the perspective of social learning have confirmed the mediating effect of self-efficacy between the influence of others, such as leadership style, and performance through the alternative experience of others (Mayer *et al.*, 2009; Mitchell & Palmer, 2010; Walumbwa *et al.*, 2011) [19] [20] [21]. Therefore, we put forward:

H2a: Work self-efficacy plays a mediating role in the relationship between colleague's developmental i-deals and work performance.

H2b: Work self-efficacy plays a mediating role in the relationship between colleague's flexible i-deals and work performance.

2.3. The Moderating Effect of Proactive Personality on Colleagues' I-Deals and Work Self-Efficacy

Proactive personality refers to the stable tendency of individuals to take the initiative to affect the surrounding environment (Bateman & Crant, 1993) [22].

Studies have shown that people with a high proactive personality respond positively to the environment and take action to achieve desired outcomes. Proactive personality has the potential to benefit individuals directly. More specifically, individuals with proactive personality may contribute to successful coping with career stress (Crant, 1993). When stressors have a clear source and are more cognitively inclined, a high level of proactive personality is beneficial (Harvey *et al.*, 2006) [23].

Colleagues are given special work arrangements, which can be stressful for employees. For people with high levels of proactive personality, they will take the initiative to deal with this situation. In addition, clear sources of stress tend to be cognitive, so it is beneficial for employees with high proactive personalities to cope well with this situation. Therefore, for i-deals of colleagues, employees will have more sense of work self-efficacy to do their own work well, so as to change the situation. Through alternative learning, they can improve their work self-efficacy after observing colleagues get i-deals. Therefore, we put forward:

H3a: Proactive personality plays a moderator role between colleagues' developmental i-deals and Work self-efficacy.

H3b: Proactive personality plays a moderator role between colleagues' flexible i-deals and Work self-efficacy.

3. Method

3.1. Sample and Procedure

This study collected data from employees in south China. With the help of the questionnaire star, employees independently filled in the status of colleagues' i-deals, work self-efficacy, work performance, proactive personality; finally obtained a total of 253 valid questionnaires. Among them, there were 108 males (42.69%) and 145 females (57.21%). Under age, 20 (1.98%), 20 to 25 (50.2%), 26 to 30 (15.02%), 35 (5.53%), 31 - 36 to 40 2.77%, 41 - 45 (7.51%), 46 - 50 (5.14%), 51 and 55 (10.28%), 56 (1.58%) education level above, for the most part for undergraduate (61.66%), secondly, respectively is a specialist (20.55%), a master's degree (11.07%), middle school and the following (5.53%), Dr. (1.19%). Average working life is 2.05 years (SD = 1.691) (Table 1).

3.2. Measures

Colleague's i-deals. I-deals scale developed by Hornung *et al.* (2008) [24]. There are 12 items. All items were measured using a 5-point Likert scale of agreement with response options ranging from 1 strongly disagree to 5 strongly agree.

Work self-efficacy. Work self-efficacy scale developed by Chen (2001) [25]. There are 8 items. All items were measured using a 7-point Likert scale of agreement with response options ranging from 1 strongly disagree to 7 strongly agree.

Proactive personality. Proactive personality scale revised by Shang (2009) [26]. There are 11 items. All items were measured using a 7-point Likert scale of agreement with response options ranging from 1 strongly disagree to 7 strongly agree.

Table 1. Distribution table of subjects' basic situation.

Descriptor	Option	Quantity	Percentage
Gender	man	108	42.7
	woman	145	57.3
Age	under 20	5	2.0
	20 - 25	127	50.2
	26 - 30	38	15.0
	31 - 35	14	5.5
	36 - 40	7	2.8
	41 - 45	19	7.5
	46 - 50	13	5.1
	51 - 55	26	10.3
	above 56	4	1.6
Education	Middle school and the following	14	5.5
	specialist	52	20.6
	undergraduate	156	61.7
	master	28	11.1
	Dr.	3	1.2
Work experience	1 - 5	150	59.3
	6 - 10	45	17.8
	11 - 15	15	5.9
	16 - 20	9	3.6
	21 - 25	15	5.9
	26 - 30	10	4.0
	above 30	9	3.6

Performance. Performance scale developed by Williams and Anderson (1991) [27]. There are 5 items. All items were measured using a 6-point Likert scale, from 1 (well below average) to 6 (well above average).

Control variables: gender, age, educational background and working years.

3.3. Method

SPSS21.0 and lisrel87 were used for statistical analysis of the collected data. Specific methods include descriptive statistical analysis, correlation analysis, reliability and validity analysis, confirmatory factor analysis, regression analysis, process macro for SPSS and so on.

4. Result

4.1. Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Confirmatory factor analysis was used to investigate the discriminant validity of

work performance of self-efficacy, proactive personality, colleagues' developmental i-deals, colleagues' flexible i-deals, and performance. As shown in **Table 2**, the fitting degree of the five-factor model was the best. RMSEA is 0.071, CFI and NNFI are both higher than 0.90. As shown in the table, the fitting effect of the 5-factor model is significantly better than that of the other 4 competing models, which indicates that the 5 variables have good discriminant validity and represent 5 different constructs.

4.2. Descriptive Statistical Results

In order to test whether the questionnaire structure obtained by exploratory factor analysis is ideal and to meet the needs of follow-up studies, this study continued to use questionnaire star and social software to distribute questionnaires to employees. In this study, a total of 250 online questionnaires were sent out, eliminated the questionnaire with wrong answers, consistent answers and obvious rules, and 222 valid questionnaires were received, with an effective recovery rate of 88.9%. The mean, standard deviation and correlation coefficient of each variable are shown in **Table 3**. Both the colleague developmental i-deals and the colleague flexible i-deals are associated with the work self-efficacy

Table 2. Results of confirmatory factor analysis.

Model	χ^2	<i>df</i>	χ^2/df	CFI	RMSEA	NNFI
1) Five-factor model: DI; FI; WSE; PP; JP	893.44	395	2.26	0.97	0.071	0.97
2) Four-factor model: DI + FI; WSE; PP; JP	938.48	399	2.35	0.97	0.072	0.97
3) Three-factor model: DI + FI; WSE + PP; JP	1316.57	402	3.28	0.95	0.095	0.95
4) Two-factor model: DI + FI; WSE + PP + JP	1685.08	404	4.17	0.94	0.112	0.94
5) One-factor model: DI + FI + WSE + PP + JP	2873.99	405	7.10	0.90	0.156	0.89

Note. DI = Developmental I-deals; FI = Flexible I-deals; WSE = work self-efficacy; PP = Proactive personality; JP = Job performance.

Table 3. Variable means and bivariate correlations.

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1) Gender	1.57	0.50	1								
2) Age	3.61	2.24	-0.06	1							
3) Education	2.82	0.74	0.03	-0.34**	1						
4) Work experience	2.05	1.69	-0.05	0.74**	-0.11	1					
5) C's DI-deals	3.38	1.11	-0.05	0.29**	-0.01	0.26**	(-0.88)				
6) C's FI-deals	3.17	1.11	-0.07	0.31**	0.01	0.28**	0.74**	(-0.83)			
7) Proactive personality	5.46	0.89	0.02	0.32**	-0.13*	0.22**	0.32**	0.33**	(-0.88)		
8) Work self-efficacy	3.91	0.63	-0.02	0.43**	-0.06	0.38**	0.33**	0.35**	0.69**	(-0.89)	
9) Job performance	4.38	0.85	0.07	0.29**	-0.01	0.26**	0.27**	0.21**	0.54**	0.66**	(-0.89)

Note. Gender: 1 = men, 2 = woman; Age: 1 = under 20, 2 = 20 - 25, 3 = 26 - 30, 4 = 31 - 35, 5 = 36 - 40, 6 = 41 - 45, 7 = 46 - 50, 8 = 51 - 55, 9 = above 56; Education: 1 = middle school and the following, 2 = specialist, 3 = undergraduate, 4 = master, 5 = Dr.; **p* < 0.05, ***p* < 0.01. Cronbach's alphas are provided in brackets.

($r = 0.33.291$, $p < 0.01$; $R = 0.35.291$, $p < 0.01$), work performance ($r = 0.27.291$, $p < 0.01$; $R = 0.21$, $p < 0.01$). Job self-efficacy was positively correlated with job performance ($r = 0.661$, $p < 0.01$).

4.3. Regression Analyses

In this study, hierarchical regression was used to test the results, as shown in model 6 and model 7 in **Table 4**, showing that there was significant positive correlation between the developmental and flexible i-deals of colleagues and job performance ($b = 0.15$, $p < 0.05$; $b = 0.10$, $p < 0.05$). Hypothesis 1a and 1b are supported.

Model 1 and model 2 showed that the regression coefficient between colleagues' developmental and flexible i-deals and work self-efficacy was significant ($b = 0.12$, $p < 0.05$; $b = 0.13$, $p < 0.05$). Model 8 and model 9 showed that under the two i-deals, work self-efficacy ($b = 0.97$, $p < 0.05$; $b = 0.901$, $p < 0.05$) had a significant regression coefficient with work performance. However, at this point, colleagues' developmental and flexible i-deals had a significant correlation with work performance ($b = 0.05$, $p > 0.05$; $b = -0.08$, $p > 0.05$). Hypothesis 2a and 2b get the support. Model 3 and 4, according to colleagues' developmental and flexible i-deals and proactive personality interaction ($b = 0.06$, $p < 0.05$) had a significant regression coefficient with work self-efficacy. Hypothesis 3a gets the support. The colleagues' flexible i-deals and proactive personality interaction ($b = 0.06$, $p > 0.05$) hadn't a significant regression coefficient with work self-efficacy. Hypothesis 3b did not get the support.

Simple slope analysis (**Figure 1**) found that when proactive personality was high, work self-efficacy increased with the increase of colleagues' developmental i-deals ($b = 0.07$, $p < 0.05$), and this positive relationship decreased when proactive personality was low ($b = -0.03$, $p > 0.05$).

According to bootstrapping analysis, as shown in **Table 5**, when proactive personality is higher than one standard deviation, the 95% confidence interval is [0.0059, 0.140], and 0 is not included in the confidence interval. The positive moderator of proactive personality is significant.

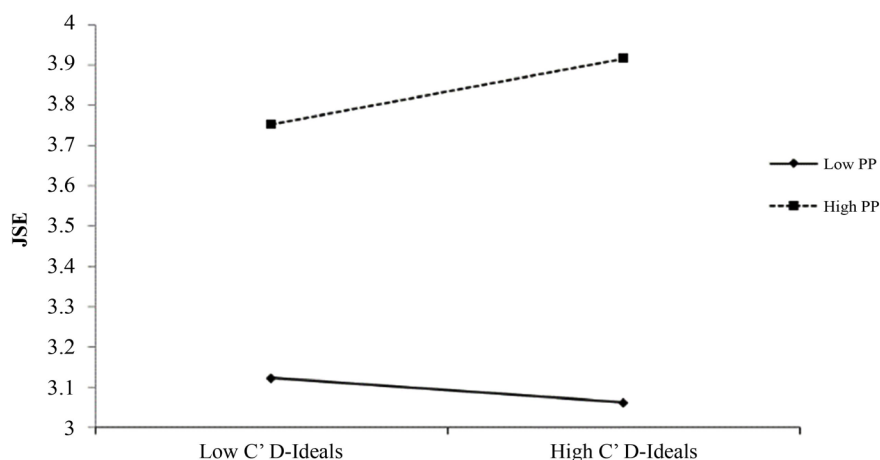


Figure 1. Moderator diagram of proactive personality. Note: JSE = Work self-efficacy; C' D-Ideals = colleagues' developmental i-deals; PP = proactive personality.

Table 4. Regression analyses.

Variable	Work self-efficacy						Job performance				
	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	M7	M8	M9	M10	M11
Gender	0.02	0.02	-0.02	-0.02	0.01	0.15	0.15	0.14	0.13	0.13	0.12
Age	0.09	0.09	0.04	0.04	0.06	0.08	0.09	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00
Education	0.05	0.05	0.08	0.07	0.05	0.08	0.08	0.03	0.04	0.05	0.06
Work experience	0.03	0.03	0.04	0.04	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.01
<i>independent variable</i>											
C's DI-deals	0.12*		-0.29			0.15*		0.05		0.12	
C's FI-deals		0.13*		-0.28			0.10*		-0.02		-0.15
<i>Moderator</i>											
Proactive personality			0.22*	0.24*						0.21	0.10
<i>interaction</i>											
C's DI-deals × Proactive personality			0.06*		0.04*					-0.02	
C's FI-deals × Proactive personality				0.06							0.02
<i>Mediating variable</i>											
Work self-efficacy								0.87*	0.90*	0.74*	0.74*
R ²	0.24	0.25	0.55	0.55	0.37	0.13	0.11	0.45	0.45	0.46	0.46
ΔR ²	0.23	0.23	0.54	0.54	0.35	0.12	0.10	0.43	0.43	0.44	0.44
F	15.63*	16.16*	42.79*	42.85*	28.46*	7.60*	6.34*	33.20*	32.87*	26.02*	26.07*

Note. *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01.

Table 5. Indirect effects and confidence intervals of bootstrapping at different levels.

Different levels of proactive personality	Effect	Standard error	Upper limit (95%)	Floor level (95%)
-0.89	-0.0247	0.0409	-0.0963	0.0653
0	0.0198	0.0270	-0.0317	0.0747
0.89	0.0643	0.0338	0.0059	0.140

5. Conclusions

I-deals are an emerging work arrangement that affects both the i-dealers and their colleagues. Based on the theory of social learning, this paper analyzes that employees have obtained favorable results through alternative learning. Such alternative experience increases their sense of work self-efficacy, which is conducive to the increase of work performance. Employees with a high proactive personality, with a positive attitude, will be more active in dealing with the implicit pressure brought by colleagues' i-deals, and have a sense of work self-efficacy. Based on this, this paper constructs a model mediated by work self-efficacy and moderated by proactive personality, so as to make some theoretical and practical contributions to colleagues' i-deals.

5.1. Theoretical and Practical Significance

Theoretically, firstly, previous researches on i-deals are mostly based on social exchange theory and social comparison theory. Based on the former, the positive correlation between i-deals and organizational commitment is studied (Christopher c. Rosen, 2013) [28]. Based on the latter, the relationship between i-deals and helping behavior is discussed (Guerrero, 2016) [29] and with the research from the perspective of colleagues on the fair theory, discusses the colleagues in the i-dealer changed the original input and output, will feel fair is broken (Rousseau, 2001) when employees feel colleagues' i-deals will increase their workload and reduce the may obtain ideal results, will influence the employee's job involvement (Greenberg *et al.* 2004). And based on social learning theory, this paper studied the employees by alternative experience increase self-efficacy, which further increases the performance, enriched the theoretical basis of research on i-deals again, this article embarks from the two kinds of i-deals, significant results only colleagues' developmental i-deals it may be that colleagues' developmental i-deals lease contract directly involved in promoting the development of individual resources and developmental i-deals compared with other types will produce greater productivity, because of its ability to directly improve employees (Ng, 2017) [30], so employees will pay more attention to developmental i-deals. Finally, in the past, researches on i-deals from the perspective of colleagues have always focused on the negative aspects (Rousseau, 2001), while this paper explores employees' responses to i-deals from a positive perspective, enriching the field. In practice, first of all, enterprises should see the importance of alternative experience. After negotiating i-deals with some employees, they can publicize them in the organization. As long as employees meet the same requirements, they can also get i-deals. Secondly, when selecting talents, the organization should pay attention to the selection of employees with proactive personality, which is conducive to better improve the sense of work self-efficacy, thus increasing work performance.

In practice, first of all, enterprises should see the importance of alternative experience. After negotiating i-deals with employees, they can publicize them in the organization. As long as employees meet the same requirements, they can also get i-deals to encourage employees to actively develop their abilities. Secondly, when selecting talents, the organization should pay attention to the selection of employees with proactive personality, which is conducive to better improve the sense of work self-efficacy, thus increasing work performance

5.2. Research Shortage and Envisage

Although there are some innovative studies in this paper, there are still the following deficiencies and prospects: this study adopts horizontal data, and employees' work self-efficacy and work performance have certain timeliness, while the longitudinal study can draw more accurate and comprehensive conclusions. Therefore, the future research direction can consider the longitudinal study. In

addition, this study only considered the regulating variable of proactive personality, and it is still unknown whether other aspects have an impact, as well as the direction and magnitude of the impact, which also needs to be studied.

5.3. Summary

This study focuses on the emerging construct of i-deals and explores its influencing mechanism. In order to better understand the impact of i-deals on colleagues of third parties, and put forward corresponding Suggestions. Through the questionnaire, the results showed that: 1) colleagues' idiosyncratic deals positively influences work self-efficacy; 2) Work self-efficacy plays a complete intermediary role between colleagues' idiosyncratic deals and work performance. 3) Proactive personality plays a moderator role between colleagues' developmental idiosyncratic deals and Work self-efficacy.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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