

Idiosyncratic Deals and Occupational Well-being in the Hospitality Industry: The Mediating Role of Organization-Based Self-Esteem

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Abstract

Purpose – We investigate how different types of idiosyncratic deals (i-deals) in the hospitality industry enhance occupational well-being (OWB) through organization-based self-esteem (OBSE).

Design/methodology/approach – In 2019, 679 questionnaires were distributed to middle- and high-level managerial staff who had worked in high-end hotels in China for at least 1 year, and 642 valid responses were collected. The survey data were analyzed using structural equation modeling. Follow-up interviews were conducted with 20 hotel managers to verify and lend additional support to the survey findings.

Findings – Both task i-deals and career and incentives i-deals positively affected OBSE and OWB, whereas flexibility i-deals negatively affected OBSE. OBSE positively affected OWB, thereby mediating the relationships between the three types of i-deals and OWB.

Originality/value – This study is groundbreaking in its exploration of how various i-deals contribute to OWB through OBSE among middle- and high-level managerial staff. The findings provide initial evidence of the links between i-deals, OBSE, and OWB

and demonstrate how i-deals can address the practical problem of the shortage and loss of competent operational and administrative talent in the hospitality industry.

Keywords – Idiosyncratic deals; Occupational well-being; Organization-based self-esteem; Mediating effect

Paper type – Research paper

1. Introduction

Idiosyncratic deals (i-deals) are personalized employment arrangements individually negotiated between an employee and employer that benefit both parties (Rousseau et al., 2006). Although i-deals have been studied for almost two decades, research on i-deals in hospitality settings remains scarce. Early i-deals research mainly examined career development (i.e., development i-deals) and scheduling (flexibility i-deals) in public service units and high-tech organizations, and a recent study developed a three-dimensional scale for measuring hospitality i-deals that involve career development opportunities and incentives (i.e., career and incentives i-deals), job tasks (i.e., task i-deals), and scheduling or the workplace (i.e., flexibility i-deals) (Sun et al., 2020). Research in other industries has demonstrated that i-deals can generate positive attitudes (e.g., satisfaction, personal initiative, and commitment) and behaviors (e.g., organizational citizenship behavior, proactive behavior, and job performance) in the workplace (Huo, 2014; Liu et al., 2013; Ng and Lucianetti, 2016; Rosen et al., 2008, 2013). However, research on the outcomes of i-deals in hospitality settings is still necessary. The limited research available has shown that i-deals help improve

commitment, motivation, work engagement, and organizational citizenship behavior among management and frontline hospitality employees (Dhiman et al., 2016). Nevertheless, few studies have considered how various i-deals influence recipients' occupational well-being (OWB), which is an important consideration.

As OWB is an important determinant of employee performance and turnover and absenteeism rates (Fisher, 2010; Gordon et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2020; Wright and Bonett, 2007), significant industrial and academic attention has been directed toward improving OWB to address the issues of motivating and retaining talent in the hospitality industry (Chand and Katou, 2007; Luo et al., 2017). In China, many hotels struggle with motivating and retaining competent operational and administrative talent (Gu et al., 2006; Kong et al., 2011). Traditional employers and organizations tend to offer standardized employment arrangements (e.g., fixed career development paths and compensation plans) to maintain a fair workplace (Greenberg et al., 2004; Kalleberg et al., 2000). Nevertheless, traditional long-term standardized employment arrangements do not satisfy hotel managers or address the shortage of qualified employees in the current knowledge economy because those arrangements do not meet the demand for flexible, personalized, and customized employment arrangements in areas such as career development, managerial education and training, and compensation and benefit packages (Kong and Baum, 2006; Kong et al., 2011; Qiu Zhang and Wu, 2004; Sun et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2002). According to hospitality research, hotel managers' autonomy, flexibility, creativity, and OWB are hindered by a system of centralized authority in most hotel chains (Galbraith, 2014). In such systems, hotel managers' work

arrangements and behaviors are strictly standardized and controlled by their company's headquarters (Burgess, 2013; Elbanna, 2016; Galbraith, 2014). In addition, many hotel managers experience stress related to requirements to frequently report financial and operational issues to headquarters and claim that this requirement hinders their job autonomy and flexibility (Haver et al., 2014, 2019). These problems hurt hotel managers' OWB (Haver et al., 2019).

Idiosyncratic deals (i-deals) are important supplements to traditional standardized employment arrangements (Rousseau, 2001), and their effectiveness in promoting OWB in the hospitality industry requires discussion. Nevertheless, the literature regarding the i-deals–OWB relation is limited. To address this gap in the literature, we use the job demands–resources (JD-R) model and self-enhancement theory to investigate how i-deals influence hotel managers' OWB by improving their organization-based self-esteem (OBSE). First, the content of i-deals involves job resources and demands that can influence OWB (Tadić et al., 2015; Van den Broeck et al., 2013; Xanthopoulou et al., 2013). Second, i-deals reflect an organization's confidence in employees' personal abilities and recognize their personal values, which can enhance personal OBSE (Liu et al., 2013). Third, an individual with higher OBSE usually displays higher OWB (Lee et al., 2016). Therefore, the JD-R model and self-enhancement theory help explain how i-deals enhance OBSE and thereby improve OWB.

We make two important contributions. First, we propose a new perspective for researchers and hotel employers to use in incorporating i-deals into human resource management practices to improve hotel employees' OBSE and OWB. Indeed, the effects of three types of i-deals (task, career and incentives, and flexibility) on OWB through OBSE are compared. Second, we highlight the significance of personalized employment arrangements in motivating and retaining managers in the hospitality industry. We highlight the specific role of i-deals in addressing the practical problem of the shortage and loss of competent operational and administrative talent in the hospitality industry.

2. Literature review

2.1 Theoretical background

Rousseau and Kim (2006) divided i-deals into ex-ante i-deals and ex-post i-deals. Ex-ante i-deals are negotiated and designed during the recruitment stage, whereas ex-post i-deals involve job redesign and are negotiated after the employee is hired. Given our focus on the issues of motivating and retaining qualified talent in the hospitality industry, we examine the ex-post i-deals–OBSE–OWB relation. The JD-R model and self-enhancement theory provide the theoretical basis for this study.

The JD-R model posits that all job characteristics are a combination of job demands and resources (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007). Job demands are the characteristics that require employees' continuous efforts, including challenge and hindrance job demands. Job resources are the various domains of a job that have

positive and supportive functions (e.g., social support, performance feedback, supervisor coaching, and development opportunities). A growing body of literature has verified that job resources and challenge job demands are positively related to OWB, whereas hindrance job demands have a negative relationship with OWB (Tadić et al., 2015; Van den Broeck et al., 2013; Xanthopoulou et al., 2013).

In dealing with job demands and resources, employees can play the roles of creators, changers, or problem solvers, not just passive recipients. An outstanding employee is more likely to take the initiative to create personal resources, which is considered job crafting (Tims et al., 2013), an initiative behavior in which an employee redesigns their job's demands and resources to meet their personal abilities, needs, or preferences (Berg et al., 2010; Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001). Research has verified the positive effect of job crafting on OWB (Bakker et al., 2010; Tims et al., 2013; Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001). Similarly, ex-post i-deals also emphasize employees' engagement in job redesign. Therefore, negotiating ex-post i-deals is essentially a job crafting behavior (Bakker et al., 2010; Tims et al., 2013). Nevertheless, i-deals differ from job crafting regarding the initiator and beneficiary. First, job crafting is independently initiated by employees (Tims et al., 2013), whereas i-deals are negotiated between an employer and employee and either party can initiate the negotiation (Rosen et al., 2013; Rousseau et al., 2006). Second, job crafting mainly benefits the employee by satisfying their personal needs and abilities (Berg et al., 2010), whereas i-deals consider both the employee's personal desires and the employer's interests (Rousseau

et al., 2006). Due to their negotiability and reciprocity, i-deals may be easier to apply in the hospitality industry than job crafting.

According to self-enhancement theory, personal opportunities and incentives offered by an organization can significantly improve employees' motivation to achieve personal growth and/or recognition from others (Korman, 2001). The authorization of development i-deals reflects an employer's confidence in an individual's ability to apply their own exceptional competence or skills to benefit the organization, whereas the authorization of flexibility i-deals reflects an employer's recognition of the individual's particular value to the organization (Liu et al., 2013). Liu et al. (2013) further suggested that an organization's confidence in an employee's abilities and recognition of their values can significantly enhance the employee's OBSE. Therefore, as shown in Figure 1, the JD-R model and self-enhancement theory provide the theoretical basis for one way in which i-deals influence OWB. By negotiating challenge job demands and job resources, i-deals may improve personal OWB via OBSE.

INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE

2.2 Idiosyncratic deals and organization-based self-esteem

Most studies have conceptualized OBSE according to the definition of self-esteem (Pierce and Gardner, 2004). Self-esteem refers to one's general belief about one's self-worth and self-competence (Bowling et al., 2010; Rosenberg, 1965). OBSE is an individual's belief about their personal worth, competence, and importance in an organization (Pierce and Gardner, 2004; Pierce et al., 1989). It is a subjective evaluation

in reaction to personal work and organizational experiences and significantly affects an individual's cognitions, attitudes, and behaviors in the organization (Pierce and Gardner, 2004; Wang et al., 2020). In other words, employees' OBSE depends on how they are viewed, treated, and supported by the organization (Wang et al., 2020; Waskul and Vannini, 2016).

When employees successfully negotiate i-deals, their OBSE significantly improves (Liu et al., 2013). This finding is supported by another study in which task i-deals positively affected OBSE (Ho and Kong, 2015). Theoretically, the JD-R model and self-enhancement theory together provide a robust foundation for the i-deals–OBSE relation. The authorization of i-deals suggests that an organization believes in, recognizes, and values an individual and wants to enhance their OBSE by meeting their personal needs related to job demands and resources, such as through additional compensation, successful task/work experiences, good job–self fit, and appropriate job complexity and autonomy (Aryee and Luk, 1996; Brockner, 1988; Gardner et al., 2000; Korman, 1970, 1976; Lee, 2003; McAllister and Bigley, 2002; Milkovich and Milkovich, 1992; Riordan et al., 2001; Tan and Peng, 1997; Tang and Ibrahim, 1998; Vecchio, 2000). Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed.

H1a. Task i-deals positively affect OBSE.

H1b. Career and incentives i-deals positively affect OBSE.

H1c. Flexibility i-deals positively affect OBSE.

2.3 Idiosyncratic deals and occupational well-being

OWB can be defined from three perspectives: subjective well-being, psychological well-being, and integrated well-being. The first perspective describes OWB as one's perception of pleasant experiences and one's affective state at work, which consists of affective balance and life satisfaction (Bretones and Gonzalez, 2011; Diener et al., 2003). The second perspective considers OWB as one's assessment of the realization of one's values and application of one's potential through factors such as autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relationships, purpose in life, and self-acceptance (Ryff, 1989). The third perspective argues that neither of the other two perspectives comprehensively interpret OWB, so it integrates those two perspectives to define OWB as one's evaluation of experience and self-efficacy at work, which consists of affective well-being, cognitive well-being, professional well-being, and social well-being (Huang, 2014). We adopt this definition of OWB for this study.

The JD-R model theoretically suggests that i-deals efficiently stimulate OWB by crafting job demands and resources. Although the i-deals–OWB relation has not yet been explored, studies have demonstrated that various i-deals significantly predict other OWB-related self-perceptions, such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and work engagement (Dhiman et al., 2016; Hornung et al., 2008, 2010; Liu et al., 2013; Ng and Lucianetti, 2016; Rosen et al., 2008, 2013; Sun and Kong, 2016; Vidyarthi et al., 2014). As these three concepts reflect an individual's positive work attitudes, psychological attachment, and physical, cognitive, and emotional state in an

organization, some researchers have regarded them as important elements of well-being (Fisher, 2010; Xanthopoulou et al., 2013). Furthermore, relevant studies have confirmed the contributions of flexible working conditions and job demands to OWB (Elovainio et al., 2014; Joyce et al., 2010). Therefore, we propose the following hypotheses.

H2a. Task i-deals positively affect OWB.

H2b. Career and incentives i-deals positively affect OWB.

H2c. Flexibility i-deals positively affect OWB.

2.4 Mediating effect of organization-based self-esteem

OBSE is a core psychological resource that deeply affects well-being (Fan et al., 2014; Mauno et al., 2006; Pierce et al., 2016). Several hospitality studies have found that both subjective and psychological well-being are strongly related to OBSE (Lee et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2020). In addition to these direct relationships, OBSE may also mediate the i-deals–OWB relation. As previously stated, granting i-deals shows an organization’s confidence in and recognition of an individual and thereby may enhance the individual’s OBSE (Ho and Kong, 2015; Liu et al., 2013). Given that OBSE also contributes to OWB, we identify i-deals as efficient human resource management practices that indirectly influence OWB through OBSE. Accordingly, the following hypotheses are proposed.

H3. OBSE positively affects OWB.

H4a. OBSE mediates the relationship between task i-deals and OWB.

H4b. OBSE mediates the relationship between career and incentives i-deals and OWB.

H4c. OBSE mediates the relationship between flexibility i-deals and OWB.

3. Methodology

We examined the direct and indirect effects in a mediation model of the i-deals–OBSE–OWB relation. Thus, we used a survey to test the proposed model and follow-up interviews to further support our findings.

3.1 Data collection

The target population was managers in the Chinese hospitality industry. The sample consisted of department managers, directors, and general managers who had worked in high-end hotels in China for at least 1 year. There were two reasons for this sample determination. First, as scarce organizational resources and advanced human resource management practices (Rousseau et al., 2006), i-deals are relatively easier to introduce and apply in high-end hotels as they have more organizational resources (Sun et al., 2020). Second, middle- and high-level managerial staff with an employment term of more than 1 year were more likely to understand human resource management practices and to negotiate and obtain i-deals (Sun et al., 2020). Before the main survey, we collected 81 valid samples as a pilot test, and based on the preliminary analysis, retained all of the measurement items. In 2019, a data collection company was hired

and collected 679 questionnaires. The participants were asked to evaluate their self-perceptions of i-deals, OBSE, and OWB. After eliminating 37 outliers, we ultimately obtained 642 valid samples.

The participants in the follow-up interviews were also recruited from high-end hotels in China. They included 10 department managers, 5 department directors, and 5 general managers. They were invited to answer several questions such as the following: “What kinds of personalized employment arrangements are used to motivate and retain senior and middle managers in your hotel?”, “Which kinds of personalized employment arrangements make you feel more valued and capable and enjoy working in this hotel? And why?”, and “What do you think of customized schedules and workplace arrangements? And why?”

3.2 Measures

All of the survey constructs were measured using scales localized for China that had been verified as reliable and valid in previous studies. I-deals were measured using a three-dimensional scale that consisted of task i-deals (e.g., job tasks that fit personal strengths and talents), career and incentives i-deals (e.g., personal career development opportunities), and flexibility i-deals (e.g., a work schedule suited to the employee) (Sun et al., 2020). OBSE was measured using the 10-item scale developed by Pierce et al. (1989). A sample item is, “I am taken seriously around here.” OWB was measured using a four-dimensional scale developed by Huang (2014). This scale integrates affective well-being (e.g., “My job makes me feel optimistic”), cognitive well-being

(e.g., “I have confidence in my ability to think about complex problems”), professional well-being (e.g., “My efforts at work have received the attention of this hotel”), and social well-being (e.g., “Most staff members in this hotel are friendly”). All of the items in these scales were assessed on a 7-point Likert-type scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) with no changes in the original scale items from the sources.

3.3 Data analysis

To establish, estimate, and test the causal model, structural equation modeling was adopted as the main statistical method. The data were analyzed using the SPSS and AMOS software packages. We used SPSS to analyze the descriptive statistics, correlations, and reliability. We used AMOS to test the measurement model, structural model, and hypotheses. To test the indirect effects, we followed Selig and Preacher (2008) and performed a Monte Carlo simulation with 2,000 replications and estimated the confidence interval for each effect.

4. Results

4.1 Respondent profile

The respondents were male (54.5%) and female (45.5%) managers employed at four- (44.5%) and five-star (55.5%) Chinese hotels in most of the first- and second-tier cities in mainland China. Most of the respondents were between 25 and 44 years of age (89.3%) and were married (89.7%) with children (85.2%). More than half of the respondents were department/associate managers (50.5%), and the remainder were

department/associate directors (25.1%) or GMs/deputy GMs (24.5%). The respondents' departments included housekeeping (25.2%), human resources (21.5%), sales and marketing (17.4%), administration (17.1%), food and beverage (9.5%), front office (3.6%), finance (3.0%), and engineering (2.6%). The hotels in which the respondents worked were mainly international (55.9%) and chain (82.7%) hotels.

4.2 Reliability and validity tests

Before testing the conceptual model and hypotheses, we conducted reliability and confirmatory factor analyses. Cronbach's α for the task i-deals, career and incentives i-deals, flexibility i-deals, OBSE scale, and OWB scale was 0.86, 0.95, 0.86, 0.91, and 0.95, respectively. Thus, the reliabilities of these constructs were satisfactory (Nunnally, 1978).

As shown in Table 1, the confirmatory factor analysis verified that the model fit indices of the theorized measurement model were acceptable: $\chi^2 = 3,868.77$, $df = 1,933$, CFI = 0.93, TLI = 0.92, IFI = 0.93, SRMR = 0.04, and RMSEA = 0.04. The model fit of the theorized five-factor model was better than that of the four-factor ($\Delta\chi^2 = 1,242.45$, $p < 0.01$), three-factor ($\Delta\chi^2 = 1,635.79$, $p < 0.01$), two-factor ($\Delta\chi^2 = 3,187.19$, $p < 0.01$), and single-factor ($\Delta\chi^2 = 3,359.32$, $p < 0.01$) models, indicating that the theorized five-factor model was superior to the competing models.

INSERT TABLE 1 HERE

Furthermore, the critical ratio values ranged from 13.41 to 21.50 (i.e., > 1.96), and the standardized loading estimates ranged from 0.55 to 0.99 (i.e., > 0.5), indicating statistical significance (Byrne, 2016). Both convergent and discriminant validity were established as all of the AVE values in Table 2 were higher than 0.50 and higher than the squared correlation coefficients for the corresponding constructs (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). The composite construct reliabilities of the six constructs were also acceptable because they exceeded 0.70 (Hair et al., 1998). Therefore, all of the original scale items from the sources were retained.

INSERT TABLE 2 HERE

4.3 Hypothesis testing

We used AMOS to evaluate the conceptual model and determined that its model fit indices were acceptable: $\chi^2 = 3,865.77$, $df = 1,933$, CFI = 0.93, TLI = 0.92, IFI = 0.93, SRMR = 0.04, and RMSEA = 0.04. Next, we tested our research hypotheses by checking the significances and coefficients of all of the paths (Table 3).

INSERT TABLE 3 HERE

4.3.1 Idiosyncratic deals and organization-based self-esteem

As shown in Table 3, the standardized path coefficient of the task i-deals–OBSE relation was positive (0.38) and statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), indicating that the influence of task i-deals on OBSE was significantly positive. Thus, H1a was supported. The effect of career and incentives i-deals on OBSE was also significantly positive

(standardized estimate = 0.58, $p < 0.001$), supporting H1b. Surprisingly, the effect of flexibility i-deals on OBSE was significantly negative (standardized estimate = -0.20 , $p < 0.01$), opposing the prediction of H1c.

4.3.2 Idiosyncratic deals and occupational well-being

Table 3 reveals that the direct effect of task i-deals on OWB was significantly positive (standardized estimate = 0.14, $p < 0.001$), supporting H2a. Similarly, the direct effect of career and incentives i-deals on OWB was also significantly positive (standardized estimate = 0.17, $p < 0.001$), supporting H2b. However, the direct effect of flexibility i-deals on OWB was statistically insignificant ($p > 0.05$), so H2c was not supported, possibly because OBSE completely mediated the flexibility i-deals–OWB relation in the research model (Shrout and Bolger, 2002).

4.3.3 Mediating effect of organization-based self-esteem

Table 3 shows that the effect of OBSE on OWB was significant and positive (standardized estimate = 0.73, $p < 0.001$), supporting H3. The mediating effects of OBSE on the relationships between OWB and task i-deals, career and incentives i-deals, and flexibility i-deals were 0.28 ($p < 0.01$), 0.43 ($p < 0.001$), and -0.15 ($p < 0.01$), respectively, with respective Monte Carlo CIs of [0.11, 0.45], [0.25, 0.62], and $[-0.27, -0.04]$. This indicates that the indirect effects were significant, supporting H4a, H4b, and H4c. Accordingly, the final structural model for the i-deals–OBSE–OWB relation is shown in Figure 2.

INSERT FIGURE 2 HERE

4.3.4 Results of the interviews

The findings of the follow-up interviews supported the results of the structural model. Most of the participants agreed that career and incentives i-deals were the most efficient ways to make them feel valued and capable and to help them enjoy their work because personalized career development opportunities, compensation, and benefits can best meet their self-actualization and esteem needs. The participants indicated that task i-deals were the second-best way to enhance their OBSE and OWB because personalized job tasks made them feel that their hotels highly valued them, believed in their personal competence and skills, and supported their work.

The results of the interviews also supported the negative influence of flexibility i-deals on hotel managers' OBSE and OWB. First, most of the participants suggested that in service businesses, such as hotels, flexibility i-deals were only applicable to senior managers or some sales and marketing managers because the recipients of flexibility i-deals were still expected to be on call and in touch with their hotels by phone, e-mail, or social media. Importantly, personal attendance and extra tasks outside the workplace are difficult to evaluate in an individual performance appraisal and are seldom financially rewarded. Several of the managers interviewed stated that they would rather work overtime in the hotel than work overtime without pay at home because unpaid home-based work made them feel stressed rather than valued and capable. Understandably, pay is an extremely important contributor to individuals'

OBSE (Aryee and Luk, 1996; Gardner et al., 2000; Milkovich and Milkovich, 1992; Tan and Peng, 1997). Therefore, flexibility i-deals may increase unpaid tasks and reduce personal OBSE and OWB.

Second, all of the participants stated that hotel managers must exhibit leadership by promptly responding to guests' needs and solving various problems, which requires being on duty. As such, the recipients of flexibility i-deals are more likely to be challenged by their co-workers for their absence, creating feelings of guilt. This "face time" work culture is quite common in the hospitality industry (O'Neill, 2009; Pan and Yeh, 2019). Especially for managers who seek to earn promotions through hard work, flexibility i-deals may mean that their attendance and work are difficult to recognize and value, thereby increasing the guilt they feel for spending less time in their hotels than their colleagues or superiors. Four of the general managers interviewed admitted that they were used to working long hours or even living in the hotel and regarded this way of working as an obligation or commitment to the hotel.

5. Conclusions and discussion

5.1 Conclusions

We explore the relationships between i-deals, OBSE, and OWB. As expected, task i-deals and career and incentives i-deals positively influence OBSE (H1a and H2a), consistent with the findings of previous studies (Ho and Kong, 2015; Liu et al., 2013). Furthermore, the OBSE–OWB relation is also positive (H3), again consistent with the

results of relevant studies (Fan et al., 2014; Lee et al., 2016; Mauno et al., 2006; Pierce et al., 2016).

Interestingly, flexibility i-deals negatively affect hotel managers' OBSE (H1c), which is inconsistent with research findings in other industry contexts (Liu et al., 2013). Through interviews with 20 hotel managers, we find that flexibility i-deals obscure the recipients' attendance and shadow work, making it difficult for their hotel employers to recognize, evaluate, or value them. First, flexibility i-deals may increase unpaid shadow work and reduce OBSE. Shadow work involves various unpaid, unseen, and extra jobs or tasks that fill an individual's day (Lambert, 2015). Therefore, although flexibility i-deals may satisfy some hotel executives' need for a flexible schedule and workplace, they may increase unpaid tasks and reduce OBSE.

Second, flexibility i-deals may make Chinese hotel managers' attendance and work difficult to recognize or value, and the resulting flexible schedule may elicit guilty feelings about breaking their commitment to working long hours and thereby reduce their OBSE. A recent study suggested that Eastern employees tend to regard the negotiation of flexible working hours as a sign of rebellion or cowardice because they view working long hours as an obligation or commitment (Chandra, 2012).

Finally, task i-deals and career and incentives i-deals not only directly contribute to OWB (H2a and H2b) but also indirectly enhance OWB via OBSE (H4a and H4b). Therefore, OBSE partially mediates these relationships. Although the effect of flexibility i-deals on OWB is insignificant in the constructed mediation model (H2a),

this type of i-deal has an indirect negative effect on OWB via OBSE (H4c). This means that OBSE completely mediates the relationship between flexibility i-deals and OWB.

5.2 Theoretical contributions

Theoretically, we develop a new conceptual model of the i-deals–OBSE–OWB relationship, supporting research findings about how hospitality organizations, superiors, and the workplace contribute to individuals' work-related cognitions and attitudes (Gordon et al., 2020; Hsu et al., 2019; Kong et al., 2018; Pan and Yeh, 2019; Wang et al., 2020; Xu and Cao, 2019). Our major contribution is the introduction of i-deals as an organizational factor that enhances individuals' OWB. The initial findings of direct and indirect effects of i-deals on OWB fills a gap in the research on the i-deals–OWB relation. The findings provide a new perspective from which psychology and organizational behavior researchers can study the outcomes of i-deals and the antecedents of OWB. We also verify the mediating role of OBSE in the i-deals–OWB relation using the JD-R model and self-enhancement theory, which may help researchers better understand and further explore the mediating mechanism between i-deals and OWB.

Furthermore, we compare the distinct contributions of various i-deals to employees' OBSE and OWB. The findings suggest that career and incentives i-deals have the greatest positive effect on OBSE and OWB. There are two major aspects of career and incentives i-deals. First, career i-deals give individuals access to suitable career development and promotion opportunities that fully utilize their talents. Second,

incentives i-deals provide monetary and non-monetary rewards that satisfy their personal needs. Therefore, this type of i-deal has a more profound impact on an individual's OBSE and OWB. The findings also confirm that task i-deals, the more cost-effective form of i-deals, are positively related to OBSE and OWB. An interesting contribution is that flexibility i-deals may increase hotel managers' feelings of weakness and guilt and their expectations of shadow work (Aryee and Luk, 1996; Cleveland et al., 2007; Gardner et al., 2000; Lambert, 2015; Milkovich and Milkovich, 1992; Tan and Peng, 1997), and thus flexibility i-deals can hurt their OBSE and OWB. This finding is an important supplement to research on the function of flexibility i-deals, and it may motivate researchers to further investigate the double-edged effects of flexibility i-deals on individuals and organizations in the hospitality industry.

5.3 Practical implications

According to the findings of this study, we offer several recommendations to hotel employers for motivating and retaining talent. First, hotel employers should value and satisfy employees' needs regarding i-deals. Our findings highlight how i-deals can help address the loss of competent operational and administrative talent in the hospitality industry by enhancing personal OBSE and OWB. As traditional, standardized employment arrangements cannot satisfy all employees (Bakker et al., 2010; Berg et al., 2010; Sun et al., 2020; Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001), hotel employers can use i-deals to supplement standard employment arrangements.

Second, hotel employers should prioritize the use of career and incentives i-deals because they have been shown to be the most effective in improving hotel managers' OBSE and OWB. Given that human resources strategies regarding career development and advancement are effective ways to retain qualified staff (Gu et al., 2005; Kong et al., 2011; Wong et al., 1999), hotel employers should actively work with their best managers to create personalized career development plans and reward their outstanding contributions in a timely manner. Specifically, hotel employers are encouraged to help their operational and administrative talent form long-term career development plans by providing them with more flexible and creative career management methods and incentives, such as personalized promotion paths, external learning, job rotation, career training, and continuing education. In addition, compensation and benefits packages should recognize their contributions.

Third, hotel employers should consider low-cost task i-deals if their positions and budgets are limited. Although the effect of career and incentives i-deals on OBSE and OWB is stronger than that of task i-deals, providing personalized career development plans and incentives cost more. Many hospitality organizations choose more cost-effective strategies to enhance OWB because of time constraints and financial and other resource limitations (Wang et al., 2020). Task i-deals are personalized arrangements that only involve job tasks, so they have the advantage of being low cost. However, task i-deals are beneficial to personal perceptions of being highly valued, believed in, and supported by an employer. Given task i-deals' positive contribution to OBSE and OWB, hotel employers could try to engage in person–post matching by assigning

personalized tasks according to individuals' interests and expertise, introducing some quantitative authorization, and empowering employees to determine and innovate the means and methods used in their work (Sun et al., 2020).

Fourth, hotel employers should exercise caution regarding flexibility i-deals in Chinese hotels. Although flexibility i-deals may satisfy some individuals' needs for a flexible schedule and workplace (Hornung et al., 2008, 2014; Rosen et al., 2013; Rousseau and Kim, 2006), this positive influence may be counteracted by negative consequences, such as individuals' perceptions of unpaid shadow work outside the workplace and feelings of guilt and weakness evoked by breaking their commitment to being on duty. Given that the face time work culture profoundly affects the work methods, schedules, and attendance of hotel staff in China (O'Neill, 2009; Pan and Yeh, 2019), flexibility i-deals may make recipients' attendance and shadow work difficult to evaluate, recognize, or value. Accordingly, we suggest that it is not yet the right time to implement schedule and workplace flexibility in Chinese hotels.

5.4 Limitations and future study

This study has several limitations. First, we used cross-sectional data to examine our conceptual model and hypotheses, which may involve common method bias. Future studies could address this issue by using time series data to study the causal relationship in this or an extended model. Second, we used a convenience sampling method that may also have caused some bias. Future studies could consider a quota sampling method for data collection. Third, the mediation model in this study only considered

the effects of negotiated challenge job demands and job resources on OWB, not those of negotiated hindrance job demands. Future studies could consider introducing work–family conflict, work–life balance, or other elaborate variables into the i-deals–OWB model as potential mediators or moderators. Fourth, we established a mediation model of the i-deals–OBSE–OWB relationship in the Chinese hospitality industry context; future studies could examine this model and its hypotheses in a Western hospitality context. Fifth, the negative effect of flexibility i-deals on Chinese hotel managers’ OBSE and OWB suggests that researchers could consider employees’ cultural values and expectations regarding shadow work as moderators in a future study. Finally, although high-end hotels may have more resources to introduce advanced human resource management methods such as i-deals (Sun et al., 2020), we suggest that future studies consider other types of hotels or the tourism and hospitality industry more generally.

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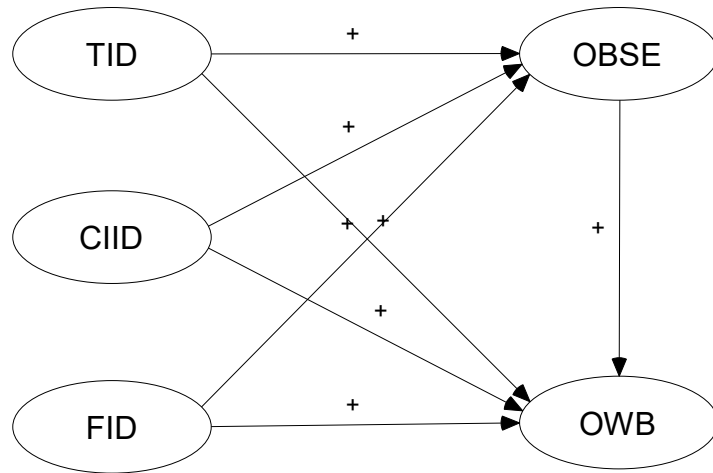


Figure 1. Conceptual model

Note: TID = task i-deals; CIID = career and incentives i-deals; FID = flexibility i-deals; OBSE = organization-based self-esteem; OWB = occupational well-being.

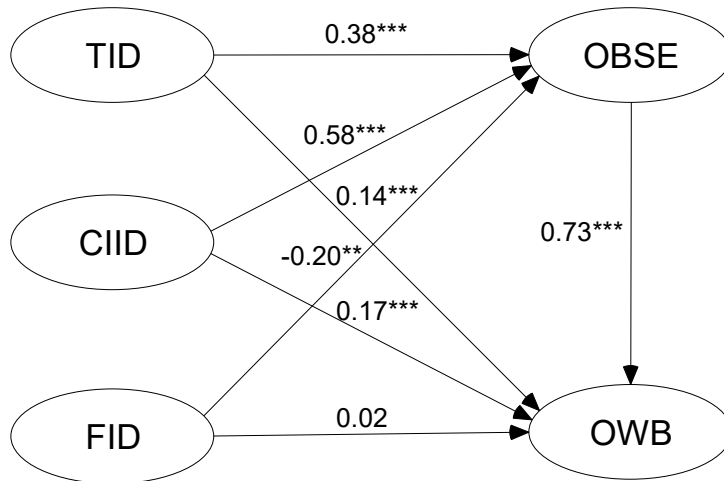


Figure 2. Final structural model

Notes: TID = task i-deals; CIID = career and incentives i-deals; FID = flexibility i-deals; OBSE = organization-based self-esteem; OWB = occupational well-being. *** indicates significance at the 0.001 level; ** indicates significance at the 0.01 level.

Idiosyncratic Deals and Occupational Well-Being in the Hospitality Industry: The Mediating Role of Organization-Based Self-Esteem

Table 1. Competing Models (N = 642)

Model	χ^2	df	$\Delta\chi^2$	CFI	TLI	IFI	SRMR	RMSEA
Model 0: TID, CIID, FID, OBSE, OWB	3,865.77	1,933		0.93	0.92	0.93	0.04	0.04
Model 1: TID + CIID, FID, OBSE, OWB	5,108.22	1,939	1,242.45**	0.88	0.88	0.88	0.12	0.05
Model 2: TID + CIID + FID, OBSE, OWB	5,501.56	1,942	1,635.79**	0.87	0.86	0.87	0.12	0.05
Model 3: TID + CIID + FID + OBSE, OWB	7,052.96	1,944	3,187.19**	0.81	0.80	0.81	0.12	0.06
Model 4: TID + CIID + FID + OBSE + OWB	7,225.09	1,945	3,359.32**	0.80	0.79	0.80	0.12	0.07

Notes: Only the best-fitting models are listed in this table. TID = task i-deals; CIID = careers and incentives i-deals; FID = flexibility i-deals; OBSE = organization-based self-esteem; OWB = occupational well-being. ** indicates significance at the 0.01 level.

Table 2. Correlations, reliability coefficients, AVE, and descriptive statistics (N = 642)

	TID	CIID	FID	OBSE	OWB
TID	1.00				
CIID	0.71** (0.50)	1.00			
FID	0.62** (0.38)	0.71** (0.50)	1.00		
OBSE	0.61** (0.37)	0.68** (0.46)	0.48** (0.22)	1.00	
OWB	0.68** (0.46)	0.74** (0.54)	0.56** (0.31)	0.71** (0.50)	1.00
Reliability	0.86	0.95	0.86	0.91	0.95
AVE	0.61	0.55	0.56	0.51	0.84
Mean	5.64	5.57	5.38	5.78	5.77
SD	0.94	0.86	0.99	0.77	0.70

Notes: TID = task i-deals; CIID = careers and incentives i-deals; FID = flexibility i-deals; OBSE = organization-based self-esteem; OWB = occupational well-being. ** indicates significance at the 0.01 level.

Table 3. Results of the structural model and hypotheses testing (N = 642)

Hypothesis/Path	Standardized Coefficient	C.R.	Result
H1a: TID → OBSE	0.38	5.86***	Supported
H1b: CIID → OBSE	0.58	7.62***	Supported
H1c: FID → OBSE	-0.20	-3.14**	Opposite
H2a: TID → OWB	0.14	3.77***	Supported
H2b: CIID → OWB	0.17	3.87***	Supported

H2c: FID → OWB	0.02	0.811	Not supported
H3: OBSE → OWB	0.73	12.37***	Supported
H4a: TID → OBSE → OWB	0.28	3.05**	Supported
H4b: CIID → OBSE → OWB	0.43	4.38***	Supported
H4c: FID → OBSE → OWB	-0.15	-2.59**	Supported

Notes: TID = task i-deals; CIID = careers and incentives i-deals; FID = flexibility i-deals; OBSE = organization-based self-esteem; OWB = occupational well-being. *** indicates significance at the 0.001 level; ** indicates significance at the 0.01 level.