

# The influence of subordinates' proactive personality, supervisors' I-deals on subordinates' affective commitment and occupational well-being: mediating role of subordinates' I-deals

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – This study intends to investigate how an employee's proactive personality and a supervisor's idiosyncratic deals (i-deals) relate to their subordinates' affective commitment (AC) and occupational well-being (OWB), in light of the mediating role of subordinates' i-deals, using proactive motivation theory and the job demand–resource (JD-R) model as theoretical foundations.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The study consisted of 342 employees working in the hospitality industry. To examine the proposed model, the researchers used the structural equation modelling approach and bootstrapping method in AMOS.

**Findings** – The results affirmed the influence of subordinates' proactiveness on AC and OWB, but no direct influence of supervisors' prior i-deals on subordinates' AC and OWB was established. When investigating the mediational role of subordinates' i-deals, a partial mediation effect was found between subordinates' proactive personality with AC and OWB, whereas full mediation was established between supervisors' i-deals and subordinates' AC and OWB.

**Practical implications** – These findings shed light on how i-deals improve AC and OWB for both groups of supervisors and subordinates. In an era of increasing competition amongst organizations operating within the hospitality industry, i-deals serve as a human resource strategy to recruit, develop and retain talented individuals.

**Originality/value** – The novelty of this research lies in its specific investigation of the combined influence of proactive personality as an individual factor and supervisors' i-deals as an organizational factor on subordinates' i-deals within the context of the hospitality industry. Furthermore, it aims to analyse the potential impact of these factors on AC and OWB.

**Keywords** Proactive personality, Supervisor i-deals, Subordinate i-deals, Affective commitment, Occupational well-being, Hospitality industry

**Paper type** Research paper



## Introduction

There has been a shift in the modern labour market towards the establishment of individualized agreements between an employer and employee (Rousseau *et al.*, 2006). Knowledge workers serve as an organization's competitive advantage and the source of talent rivalry in the knowledge economy. In order to attract, retain or inspire their most valuable employees, companies often agree to terms negotiated by the employees themselves, allowing them to get the benefits they desire while at work. An idiosyncratic deal (i-deal) is a kind of personalized upward negotiation with the employer for mutual benefits (Liao *et al.*, 2016). I-deals have evolved in organizations as a consequence of a variety of socioeconomic issues, most notably the rising significance of groups of individuals with indispensable skills. The benefits and drawbacks of offering i-deals to workers have been the subject of several studies (Anand *et al.*, 2022; Srikanth *et al.*, 2022). However, the academic literature has paid scant attention to both individual and organizational antecedents in the execution of such idiosyncratic arrangements to subordinates, highlighting a significant research gap (Liu *et al.*, 2013; Ng and Lucianetti, 2016).

Personal and organizational factors are two routes enabling subordinates to request and receive required i-deals, leading to positive work behaviours. The personal factors may involve their personality, self-efficacy attitude, exchange ideology, emotional intelligence (Anand *et al.*, 2022; Katou *et al.*, 2020), etc. A subordinate with proactiveness is expected to exhibit more positive work behaviours so that the management is more inclined to greenlight i-deals if they see workers taking initiatives in the workplace. Proactive workers are seen favourably by the management for being able to “front and overcome barriers” and make the most of learning opportunities when encountered (Li *et al.*, 2014; Yang and Chau, 2016). Individuals who take on challenging and undefined tasks are able to showcase the skills outside their normal scope of work, opening the door to post hoc, one-off packages that make them more committed. People who tend to be self-motivated are more likely to look for ways to negotiate their working circumstances via i-deals (Hornung *et al.*, 2009).

Additionally, the organizational level factors that may influence subordinates' chances of receiving i-deals involve supervisors' prior i-deals, leader–member exchange relationship and co-workers' exchange ideology (Katou *et al.*, 2020; Kong *et al.*, 2020). Supervisors are the immediate organizational agents to subordinates, where their attitudes or behaviour cascade down and may influence behaviour (Rofcanin *et al.*, 2017). Supervisors with such prior i-deals may inspire and encourage subordinates to be more dedicated at work (Laulié *et al.*, 2021). In the present study, we are concerned with consequences linked with work; hence, our focus is on evaluating affective commitment (AC) and occupational well-being (OWB) as outcome variables rather than any other behavioural attitude of subordinates. Thus, the current study postulates the following research questions:

*RQ1.* Do subordinates' proactive personality traits have any impact on their AC and OWB?

*RQ2.* Do supervisors' i-deals drift down to comparable subordinates' AC and OWB?

*RQ3.* What is the mediational role of comparable subordinates' i-deals when received?

We address the aforementioned research concerns by modelling a mediational method based on the proactive motivation model and the JD-R model paradigm. We believe it is critical to understand both party's role (individual and organizational antecedents) in i-deal decision-making processes and how this reciprocal connection affects the outcomes of i-deal negotiation and anticipated behaviour. In doing so, we aim to contribute to i-deal literature with a comprehensive picture highlighting personal and organizational aspects as antecedents and their implications. The study aims to contribute to hospitality industry, a service-oriented sector, positing that personalized employees' duties, work hours and work locations may all help them better respond to their clients' flexible demands.

### **Theory, literature review and hypothesis development**

The concept of i-deals can be grounded in proactive motivation theory (Bindl and Parker, 2010) and JD-R theory. The proactive motivation model promotes the idea of making things happen. The approach incorporates an individual's "can do", "reasons to do", and "energised to do" intentions. All three, taken together, result in the formation of constructive work behaviours. It encompasses self-motivated and self-initiated activities intended to bring about required adjustments in one's work environment and achieve success via goal development and goal-seeking behaviour (Wang and Long, 2018).

According to this paradigm, proactiveness in personality might operate as a distal antecedent to seizing opportunities. Many studies have shown that proactive behaviour is associated with positive outcomes in a variety of circumstances, including work performance and well-being (Thompson, 2005), professional achievement (Seibert *et al.*, 2001), organizational citizenship behaviour (Huo *et al.*, 2014) and charismatic leadership (Crant, 2000).

The JD-R theory (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007) can explain this behaviour and states that both job demands and resources are important predictors of work success and well-being. However, these connections may be tempered by contextual and individual elements, including i-deals (Bakker and Ererdi, 2022). We conceptualized i-deals under JD-R theory as a helpful resource for employees, managers and businesses to combat the job pressures that workers face in regular work contexts. I-deals can further improve work performance, well-being and the quality of the supervisor-subordinate relationship by encouraging customization, flexibility and trust (Singh and Vidyarathi, 2018).

### **Idiosyncratic deals (i-deals)**

Rousseau (2001) defines i-deals as "voluntary, personalized arrangements of a nonstandard form established between each employee and the employer over conditions that favour each side". I-deals were differentiated by Bal and Rousseau (2015) and colleagues from concepts like partiality and special treatment by the fact that they are individually arranged between an employer and an employee. Such negotiations can take place during the hiring process, known as "*ex ante* i-deals", or after the hiring process, identified as "*ex post* i-deals", and their subject matter pertains to the benefits presented to the receiver in relation to job design, location flexibility, career growth, flexible work schedules and financial benefits (Hornung *et al.*, 2014).

For the purpose of the current study, four distinct types of i-deals, as a means of increasing positive work behaviours, reflected our collective definition of i-deals for both supervisory and subordinate i-deals. Task deals allow for the negotiation of unique tasks for each employee (Hornung *et al.*, 2009, 2014). Developmental or career interventions assist professional growth for long-term personal goals. Thus, they provide unique chances to use competencies and grow professions. Flexibility deals offer customized work hours and schedules for employees (Rousseau *et al.*, 2006). Lastly, financial transactions include pay and compensation packages that are customized to meet the requirements that employees must fulfil in their jobs.

### **Subordinates' proactive personality, affective commitment and occupational well-being**

Proactive people at work constantly aim to enhance their surroundings rather than waiting for external factors to push them to do so, explaining goal-driven behaviour (Seibert *et al.*, 2001). Bindl and Parker (2010) define proactivity as a "future-focused, change-oriented mode of behaviour". According to Crant (2000), prosocial behaviour is characterized by planning

ahead for development or enhancement in the stated conditions; it entails questioning the status quo as opposed to passively submitting to prevailing scenarios. Individuals with high proactiveness tend to alter their surroundings to make their jobs and organizations more suitable (Wang and Long, 2018).

AC is a sort of organizational commitment that refers to a worker's emotional tie to their employer (Bal and Boehm, 2019). It is identified by a strong connection with the organization, a feeling of belonging and a readiness to spend quality time, effort and energy in the achievement of the organization's objectives (Stinglhamber and Vandenberghe, 2003). AC is a reflection of an employee's job happiness, greater levels of volunteerism, exceeding one's professional obligations and enthusiastic support for the organization with greater productivity (Ullah *et al.*, 2020).

In this research, we defined OWB as a person's assessment of positive experiences and thoughts linked to their work, which includes their affective balance and their level of life satisfaction. Proactive individuals are known for their proactive behaviours, initiative-taking and active pursuit of opportunities to influence their work environment (Mäkikangas *et al.*, 2013). It is logical to anticipate that individuals with a proactive personality would experience a greater abundance of positive emotions and higher levels of life satisfaction in their work (Bindl and Parker, 2010). Their proactive disposition empowers them to exert control over their work experiences, actively pursue meaningful challenges and contribute to both their personal growth and the success of their organization (Wei *et al.*, 2021).

A study by Plomp *et al.* (2016) indicated that those with more proactive personalities tend to be happier, although it has been found that the reverse is also true (Bolino *et al.*, 2010). People who take the initiative may find that their jobs require them to do more. This may force them to step out of their comfort zone to stay in control of their surroundings and unfazed by any problems they face on the job. Ullah *et al.* (2020) concluded the influence of proactive personality on employee's AC via prosocial motivation. Similarly, Yi-Feng Chen *et al.* (2021) emphasize the significance of personality by demonstrating, in a sample of frontline healthcare workers during the COVID-19 global epidemic, that proactive personality associates with perceived organizational support to influence well-being outcomes. Thus, based on the literature review, we hypothesize that

*H1.* Subordinates' proactive personality positively relates to their (a) AC and (b) OWB.

### **Influence of supervisors' idiosyncratic deals**

While i-deals are theorized as reciprocally beneficial arrangements for parties involved, their varied scope, content and blend advance the chances of differential consequences for both the employer and employee (Rousseau *et al.*, 2006). According to the i-deal theory (Liao *et al.*, 2016), given the fact that these agreements take place in a two-fold interaction between superiors and subordinates, they have beneficial impacts that extend beyond the target employee and the supervisor, adding to the overall group performance and organizational effectiveness (Bal and Rousseau, 2015). We anticipate that supervisors who have secured such deals exhibit positive relationships with their team members, a good leader-member exchange relationship, and may influence their work attitudes, work performance, potential for career advancement and social behaviours.

A supervisor's unique set of experiences, perspectives and i-deal resources may greatly enhance their team's motivation level and productivity (Ng and Feldman, 2015). This is because supervisors value the prospects for self-improvement and subordinate improvement that arise from their own developmental and task-related interactions. On the other hand, it gives employees an incentive to stay with a particular supervisor longer than usual because of the flexibility and personalization that a particular supervisor enjoys, leading to an increase in their subordinates' commitment to them (Laulié *et al.*, 2021). This is evident in the

fact that supervisors, as mentors and authority holders, influence the accessibility of job resources and the competitiveness of their subordinates' performances by providing greater flexibility to them.

Supervisors who have personalization at work may promote work–life balance by giving flexible schedules, time-off guidelines and other advantages that help workers reconcile their work and personal lives, reducing stress and improving well-being (e.g. Breevaart *et al.*, 2014). This is due to the fact that these agreements may be advantageous for both sides since they provide a special opportunity for both employers and workers (Ng and Lucianetti, 2016). According to Halbesleben *et al.* (2010), subordinates working with supervisors who have task-related and career growth–related i-deals are more likely to participate in organizational citizenship behaviours such as being considerate of one's well-being, mirroring the values of a dynamic work group and encouraging their co-workers.

*H2.* Supervisors' i-deals positively relate to subordinates' (a) AC and (b) OWB.

I-deals are contextual, and individual characteristics are vital in determining the impact, how they are acquired and how efficiently they are executed (Liao *et al.*, 2016). Personality factors and conditions existing in the immediate work environment impact employees' work perceptions and attitudes. Research by Ng and Lucianetti (2016) found a correlation between i-deals and proactive behaviour on the part of recipients. Liu *et al.* (2013) investigated the framework linking i-deals to employees' favourable behavioural patterns, and they concluded that both the self-enhancement attribute and being open to social exchange mediate the associations concerning flexibility and developmental deals of employees with AC and proactiveness behaviour. A recent study by Srikanth *et al.* (2022) has demonstrated that proactive individuals actively seek out and grab opportunities for professional development. Proactive employees consider i-deals as a means to drive themselves to outstanding levels of performance, displaying a strong propensity for customizing their working conditions (Hepper *et al.*, 2010).

*H3.* (a) Subordinates' proactive personality positively relates to subordinates' i-deals.

Supervisors who have experienced a better fit between themselves and their jobs through i-deals are more likely to encourage and guide their co-workers in the same direction. This can help them gain promotion and be more flexible. It is anticipated that greater alignment between managers' tasks, duties and talents would result in a sense of ownership, flexibility, improved well-being, minimal emotional turmoil and a healthy workplace (Liao *et al.*, 2016). To what extent an individual may secure an i-deal depends on the supervisor or employer, who typically has the authority to provide the employee with a wide range of resources (Rousseau *et al.*, 2006; Stinglhamber and Vandenberghe, 2003).

We postulate that managers' prior exposure to i-deals is an important factor in their authorization because it may prompt them to recall the settings under which they first sought out such deals. It triggers a recall of their predicament and the benefits they had after obtaining their i-deals. Therefore, managers who have obtained i-deals and seen first-hand how beneficial they can be for their teams are more inclined to view this practise meaningfully (Laulié *et al.*, 2021). These agreements encourage supervisors to engage their personnel more. Supervisors may help subordinates develop, retain and enhance productivity and motivation by offering customized i-deals.

Employee outcomes, including work performance, organizational citizenship behaviour and professional advancement, were found to be positively correlated with managers' task and developmental i-deals via subordinates' tasks and developmental interactions (Rofcanin *et al.*, 2017, 2018). Studies have shown that employers who have dealt with i-deals are more likely to be open to additional discussions and that employees who have excellent leader–member interactions are more likely to be given i-deals by their employers (Hornung *et al.*, 2009; Rosen *et al.*, 2008). Thus, based on this assertion, we posit that

- H3. (b) There's a positive relationship between supervisors' i-deals and granting i-deals to subordinates.

In terms of work performance, both flexibility and developmental i-deals tend to be positively associated with job satisfaction (Rosen *et al.*, 2013), emotional commitment (Ho and Tekleab, 2016) and intention to work beyond retirement (Bal *et al.*, 2012). Similarly, individuals with task-idiosyncratic behaviours expressed a positive work attitude and more emotive, continuous and normative commitment to the organization (Liao *et al.*, 2016). Anand *et al.* (2022) and Huo *et al.* (2014) verified that career development arrangements are positively associated with individuals' interpersonally helpful behaviours that assist their supervisor and colleagues, as well as behaviours that benefit their employing organization. According to Guerrero and Challiol-Jeanblanc (2016), employees' organization-based self-esteem mediates the influence of i-deals on their helpful behaviour. Such i-deal incentives may promote AC by making employees feel valued, respected and supported by their superiors, improving their motivation, job satisfaction and productivity.

Akin to the findings of studies by Hornung *et al.* (2018), Las Heras *et al.* (2017) and Ng and Feldman (2015), employees with developmental and task flexibility i-deals affirmed a direct relationship with work engagement and employee reporting increased performance. A study by Sun *et al.* (2021) concluded that task, career and financial interactions enhance a subordinates' OWB directly as well as indirectly through organization-based self-esteem. Additionally, research has validated how flexible working circumstances and job demands affect a subordinates' OWB (Amri *et al.*, 2022).

- H4. There is a positive relationship between subordinates' i-deals and their (a) AC (b) OWB.

### The mediating role of subordinates' idiosyncratic deals

Based on the theoretical implications of the JD-R theory, incentives are hypothesized to effectively promote positive work behaviours. Individuals who possess inherent motivation and determination in their endeavours may find themselves attracted to challenging opportunities presented in the form of i-deals as they perceive these opportunities as avenues for personal growth and improvement (Srikanth *et al.*, 2022). Studies have also suggested that when a subordinate's proactive personality traits are matched with the receipt of such an i-deal from its employer, this increases OWB significantly (Steinmann *et al.*, 2018), thus enabling better work performance by providing extra motivation, which ultimately results in a higher job satisfaction level among workers due to its psychological effects on them (Su *et al.*, 2017).

Supervisors are the primary beneficiaries of i-deals, so they may comprehend, acknowledge and embrace their subordinates' needs, recognizing their proactive behaviours. A leader who has confronted comparable requirements is better at encouraging and facilitating such deals for subordinates, which improves self-development, professional progress, emotional commitment and work-related well-being (Steinmann *et al.*, 2018). I-deals from the top trickle down to lower levels of the organization. Thus, we anticipate that subordinates will proactively dwell on such positive experiences, which will altogether promote organizational performance and social harmony, as i-dealers will be more ready to aid employees in enhancing their job performance and deliver a vision of long-term progress. Flexibility in workdays may allow workers to balance personal and professional demands. Hornung *et al.* (2008) stated that seeing others negotiate human resource (HR) incentives and personalized work settings may inspire others to do the same. Giving workers chances to learn and publicly recognizing their successes may enhance their motivation and help firms satisfy their professional growth commitments (Hornung *et al.*, 2009; Maurer and Lippstreu, 2008).

In return for supervisors' willingness to bend the work rules for them, subordinates are more likely to show dedication, commitment and enthusiasm for their work.

The current study suggests that subordinates' i-deals can mediate the influence of their proactive personality and supervisors' i-deals on OWB (Sun *et al.*, 2021). In other words, subordinates' i-deals serve as a pathway through which the effects of proactive personality and supervisors' i-deals are transmitted to impact OWB (Laulié *et al.*, 2021).

Furthermore, the study's rationale is grounded in the understanding that personalized work arrangements have the potential to shape employees' work experiences and well-being (Anand *et al.*, 2022). In addition, research by Dhiman *et al.* (2017) found that many hotel managers were disinclined to report operational and economic issues to superiors, claiming that this necessity restricted their professional flexibility and autonomy. Employees' organizational-based self-esteem and well-being were favourably influenced by task, career and incentive arrangements (Dhiman and Katou, 2019). Thus, based on our literature review, we posit that

- H5a.* The relationship between subordinates' proactive personality and AC is mediated by subordinates' i-deals.
- H5b.* The relationship between subordinates' proactive personality and OWB is mediated by subordinates' i-deals.
- H6a.* The relationship between supervisors' i-deals and subordinates' AC is mediated by subordinates' i-deals.
- H6b.* The relationship between supervisors' i-deals and subordinates' OWB is mediated by subordinates' i-deals.

### Research methodology

We employed standardized survey instruments to obtain data from primary sources to validate our hypotheses. This research surveyed 25 hotels, categorized as 4- and 5-star hotels in north India. Based on data published by the National Integrated Database of the Hospitality Industry and the Federation of Hotel and Restaurant Associations in India, the present research covered only classified hotels. We specifically targeted classified hotels due to their advanced human resource management practices, such as i-deals, typically implemented by organizations with sufficient resources and advanced management approaches. Respondents with at least one year of experience in the hospitality industry were included in the study. To ensure ethical compliance, this study adhered to institutional procedures and received approval by engaging with HR managers from the hotels under study. Following the approval process, explicit consent was obtained from all respondents, ensuring their confidentiality and anonymity. Data collection involved the use of two questionnaires administered through Google Forms and in-person interviews. The first questionnaire captured information regarding respondent personality, supervisors' i-deals and their impact on AC and well-being. The second questionnaire focused on respondent personality, their own i-deals, along with questions about AC, well-being and demographic information. A total of 365 survey responses were received, which corresponds to a response rate of 73%. Furthermore, data were cleaned and checked for any missing values or outliers, resulting in a final sample of 342 employees, 63% being male and 37% being female. Table 1 presents an overview of the demographic characteristics of the participants involved in the study.

Data normality was checked using the cut-off criteria provided by Kline (2015). There were no non-normality concerns as none of the variables approached skewness values  $> 3$  and kurtosis values  $> 10$ .

Variables	Items	Frequency (%)
Age	21 to 23	27
	24 to 26	30
	27 to 29	23
	30 and above	20
Gender	Male	63
	Female	36
	Prefer not to say	1
Education	Senior secondary	13
	Bachelor's	16
	Master's	62
	Diploma	9
Work experience (years)	1–2	3
	2–3	24
	3–4	32
	4–5	28
	More than 5	13
Employment type	Temporary	7
	Fixed term	93

Supervisors' and subordinates' I-deals

55

**Table 1.**  
Study demographics

Source(s): Authors' own work

### Measurement instrument

This research made use of a five-point Likert scale previously adopted in other studies.

*Proactive personality:* The proactive personality attribute of subordinates was evaluated using a scale that consisted of 10 questions and was developed by Seibert *et al.* (2001).

*Supervisor and subordinates' i-deals:* The i-deals construct was evaluated using the scale proposed by Rosen *et al.* (2008), which included task, financial, developmental and flexibility i-deals, each with five items. When put together, these four distinct forms of i-deals represent the whole concept of i-deals for our purpose.

*Affective commitment:* For the purpose of measuring subordinates' level of AC, an eight-item scale developed by Allen and Meyer (1990) was used.

*Occupational well-being:* A nine-item shorter version of Ryff (1989) scale was used to measure subordinates' OWB.

### Results

In order to determine whether our measurement model is suitable for use, we carried out confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) before testing any of our suggested hypotheses. After establishing that the measurement model was appropriate for use, we put our hypothesized model to the test using structural equation modelling (SEM) analysis in AMOS 23, which included testing the possible association between the research variables.

#### *Preliminary analysis*

Table 2 shows the mean, SD and correlation matrix of latent variables. On a Likert scale between 1 and 5, we classified mean values as low ( $\leq 2.4$ ), moderate (between 2.5 and 3.4) or high ( $\geq 3.5$ ). The parameters considered for the study showed an overall mean value ranging from 1.63 to 3.77. The study's main variables were the individual's proactive personality, the supervisors' and subordinates' i-deals, the subordinates' AC and OWB, which had respective mean values of 3.73, 2.75, 3.77, 3.66 and 3.53. This implies that respondents have a high level of proactiveness, that managers showed a good level of flexibility in granting deals, that

subordinates demonstrated an enhanced level of AC towards their organizations and that OWB is prevalent in the workplace.

**Measurement model**

Several CFAs were performed to assess the proposed measurement model, which consisted of a five-factor model incorporating subscales and indicators for proactive personality, supervisor’s i-deals, subordinate’s i-deals, AC and OWB. This model was compared with a four-factor model where AC and OWB were combined into one construct, a three-factor model where proactive personality, i-deals, AC and OWB were merged into a single construct and a one-factor model where all items re loaded onto a single construct, in Table 3.

The five-factor CFA model exhibited all fit indices being statistically significant as per the cut-off criterion provided by Hair *et al.* (2019). Our five-factor model consisted of an individual’s proactive personality, the supervisors’ i-deals, the subordinates’ i-deals, AC and OWB, with model fit values of chi-square fit statistics/degree of freedom (CMIN/df) = 1.252, comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.96, goodness of fit (GFI) = 0.86, tucker–Lewis index (TLI) = 0.96, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.27, root mean square residual (RMR) = 0.03 and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) = 0.045, all at  $p \leq 0.001$ . Thus, the study results provided support for our assertion that all five variables were empirically different.

Furthermore, to ensure data adequacy, we tested our data for reliability and validity concerns. The factor loadings of variable proactive personality ranged from 0.767 to 0.690. Supervisors’ recipient of i-deals ranged from 0.762 to 0.70, granting i-deals to employees ranged from 0.785 to 0.673, AC ranged from 0.847 to 0.610 (deleted item 3 & 10, having lower loadings = 0.177, 0.256) and OWB ranged from 0.71 to 0.61, all being significant at  $p \leq 0.01$ , matting the threshold of 0.6 as per Chin (2010). Convergent validity was ensured using the average variance extracted (AVE) values of constructs, all of which were higher than the threshold of 0.05, and construct reliability (CR) values were higher than the stated cut-off of 0.70 (Hair *et al.*, 2019). The construct reliability coefficients are in italics diagonally (refer

**Table 2.**  
Mean, SD and  
correlation matrix

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Age	2.42	1.21	1								
Gender	1.63	0.48	0.105	1							
Education	2.76	0.82	0.093	-0.115	1						
Work experience	2.31	1.09	0.697	0.126	0.121	1					
Proactive personality	3.73	0.71	0.120	0.133	0.002	0.115	1				
Subordinates’ i-deals	3.77	0.54	0.214	0.135	0.062	0.118	0.370	1			
Supervisors’ i-deals	2.75	0.83	0.162	0.075	0.012	0.085	0.312	0.443	1		
Affective commitment	3.66	0.57	0.211	0.178	0.009	0.129	0.496	0.648	0.447	1	
Occupational well-being	3.53	0.58	0.327	0.299	-0.021	0.202	0.523	0.637	0.491	0.630	1

**Source(s):** Authors’ own work

**Table 3.**  
CFA competing models

Model	Constructs	CMIN	df	CMIN/df	CFI	GFI	TLI	RMSEA
1	One factor	4563.612	1,224	3.728	0.585	0.546	0.567	0.089
2	Three factor	3694.155	1,221	3.026	0.693	0.617	0.679	0.077
3	Four factor	3135.871	1,218	2.575	0.762	0.661	0.750	0.068
4	Five factor	1497.219	1,196	1.252	0.963	0.859	0.960	0.027

**Source(s):** Authors’ own work

to Table 4). To assess discriminant validity, we used Fornell–Larcker criteria and cross loadings, which showed that there were no validity issues as (a) each construct's AVE had a square root greater than its correlation with another construct and (b) each item loaded most highly on its associated construct (refer to Table 4).

### Hypothesis testing

Given the evidence to support our five-factor model, we used a structural equation modelling approach to test our proposed hypotheses (refer to Figure 1). Our structural model demonstrated a good fit (CMIN/df = 1.340; CFI = 0.95; GFI = 0.86; TLI = 0.95; RMSEA = 0.032; RMR = 0.05) at  $p \leq 0.001$ . Hypotheses 1a and 1b propose that a subordinates' proactive personality positively relates to their AC and OWB. The study results affirmed the positive relationship between subordinates' proactive personality traits and their AC towards the organization ( $\beta = 0.21, p \leq 0.01$ ) and OWB ( $\beta = 0.24, p \leq 0.01$  at 95% confidence interval), thus supporting both H1a and H1b (see Table 5).

Hypotheses 2a and 2b conceptualized the positive relationship between supervisors' i-deals and a subordinates' AC and the subordinates' OWB. The study findings indicated that the supervisors' i-deals had no significant impact on the subordinates' AC ( $\beta = 0.025, p \leq 0.01$ ) and showed an insignificant relationship with subordinates' OWB ( $\beta = 0.10, p \leq 0.01$ ). As a result, hypotheses H2a and H2b were rejected. This leads to the conclusion that the presence of supervisor's i-deals alone does not generate favourable attitudes or outcomes from subordinates unless those i-deals are actively fulfilled. Subordinates must actually experience the tangible benefits of these i-deals for them to have a positive influence.

Furthermore, Hypotheses 3a and 3b proposed that subordinates' proactive personality and supervisors owned i-deals positively relates to subordinates' i-deals. Results from the study affirmed that there exists a positive relationship of subordinate i-deals with subordinates' proactive personality ( $\beta = 0.35, p \leq 0.01$ ) and supervisors' i-deals ( $\beta = 0.46, p \leq 0.01$ ), providing support to H3a and H3b.

Hypotheses 4a and 4b suggested that subordinates' i-deals positively relate to their AC and OWB in the workplace. As expected, subordinates' i-deals were found to be significantly and positively related to subordinates' AC with  $\beta$  value = 0.71,  $p \leq 0.01$  and to OWB with  $\beta$  value = 0.65 at  $p \leq 0.01$ , 95% confidence level.

In hypotheses 5a and 5b, we proposed an indirect effect of subordinates' proactive personality trait on (a) AC level and (b) OWB, through subordinates' own i-deals. Results indicated that the indirect impact of subordinates' proactive personality on their AC level ( $\beta = 0.25, p \leq 0.01$ ) and OWB ( $\beta = 0.23, p \leq 0.01$ ) through subordinates' own i-deals was positive, supporting the partial mediational role of variable subordinates' i-deals, i.e. H5a and 5b. Concluding, the overall impact of proactive personality on AC was found to be  $\beta = 0.47$ , at  $p \leq 0.01$ , while proactive personality on OWB was found to be  $\beta = 0.46$ , at  $p \leq 0.01$ .

Finally, we tested for hypotheses 6a and 6b, indicating the indirect effect of supervisors' i-deals on subordinates' AC level ( $\beta = 0.34, p \leq 0.01$ ) and OWB ( $\beta = 0.30, p \leq 0.01$ ) through

Construct	$\alpha$	CR	AVE	MSV	1	2	3	4	5
Subordinates' i-deals	0.882	0.848	0.530	0.321	0.728				
Proactive personality	0.898	0.899	0.526	0.323	0.478	0.725			
Affective commitment	0.896	0.896	0.520	0.487	0.532	0.560	0.721		
Occupational well-being	0.899	0.899	0.527	0.487	0.567	0.568	0.698	0.726	
Supervisors' i-deals	0.843	0.843	0.519	0.318	0.450	0.362	0.515	0.564	0.720

Source: Authors' own work

**Table 4.** Reliability and validity assessment

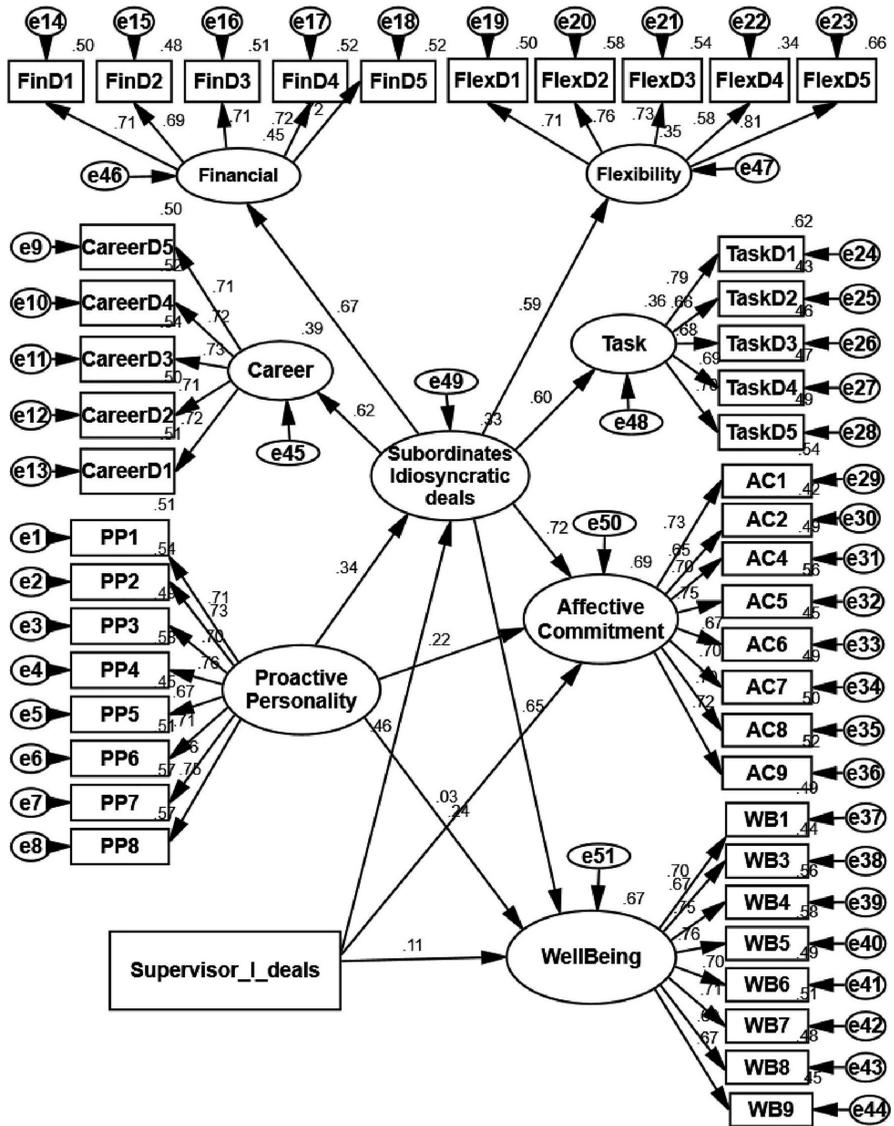


Figure 1.  
Hypothesized model

Source(s): Authors' own work

subordinates' own i-deals, providing evidence for a positive and significant relationship to prevail. Stating the overall impact of supervisors' i-deals on AC to be  $\beta = 0.38$ , at  $p \leq 0.01$ , while supervisors' i-deals on OWB was to be  $\beta = 0.41$ , at  $p \leq 0.01$ .

Thus, we can say that both proactive personality and the supervisors' i-deals fully mediate (as no direct effect was found but the presence of significant indirect effect) the relationship between the subordinates' AC and OWB when employees are granted such i-deals.

Path	Direct effects			Indirect effects	
	Subordinates' I-deals (mediator)	AC	OWB	Estimates	95% BC interval (LLCI, ULCI)
Proactive personality	0.345***	0.220***	0.238***	–	–
Supervisors' I-deals	0.462***	0.025	0.106	–	–
Subordinates' I-deals	–	0.717***	0.654***	–	–
<i>Indirect</i>					
PP → Sb_i-deals → AC	–	–	–	0.247***	(0.101, 0.349)
PP → Sb_i-deals → OWB	–	–	–	0.226***	(0.082, 0.320)
Sp_i-deals → Sb_i-deals → AC	–	–	–	0.332***	(0.229, 0.491)
Sp_i-deals → Sb_i-deals → OWB	–	–	–	0.302***	(0.194, 0.451)
<i>Total</i>					
PP → Sb_i-deals → AC	–	–	–	0.467***	(0.312, 0.535)
PP → Sb_i-deals → OWB	–	–	–	0.464***	(0.306, 0.521)
Sp_i-deals → Sb_i-deals → AC	–	–	–	0.357***	(0.256, 0.458)
Sp_i-deals → Sb_i-deals → OWB	–	–	–	0.408***	(0.312, 0.507)

**Note(s):** \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ ,  $N = 342$ , PP = proactive personality, AC = affective commitment, Sp\_i-deals = supervisors' idiosyncratic deals, Sb\_i-deals = subordinates' idiosyncratic deals, OWB = occupational well-being

**Source(s):** Authors' own work

**Table 5.** Direct and mediational effects

## Discussion

In the present study, two main themes were examined: the impact of subordinates' proactive behaviour and the influence of the supervisor's perspective with prior i-deals on the decision to approve subordinates' i-deals. Additionally, the study explored how this interaction affects employees' AC and OWB. The results of the study indicated that employees who exhibit proactive behaviour at work demonstrate enhanced AC and experience OWB.

These findings support the notion that proactive, performance-driven workers are more likely to succeed in today's dynamic job market. As jobs become increasingly fluid, workers must take charge of managing their careers (Guerrero and Challiol-Jeanblanc, 2016; Rofcanin *et al.*, 2018). Proactive workers not only are more likely to receive individualized challenges but also have the ability to address urgent organizational issues in real time by mobilizing organizational resources, thereby increasing their own value and well-being (Ullah *et al.*, 2020; Wei *et al.*, 2021).

The findings of this study align with the research by Anand *et al.* (2022), which suggests that workers who benefit from career customization work settings, where supervisors support career customization, report a greater degree of commitment and experience advancements in terms of bonuses and job promotability. The theory and research surrounding i-deals are grounded in the growing trend of individualization in the workplace and the recognition of how workers shape their own employment experiences.

Contrary to the initial assumptions, it was found that supervisors' i-deals had no direct influence on subordinates' AC and OWB. However, the study revealed a significant indirect effect when subordinates were granted i-deals themselves. This suggests that subordinates' positive behaviour and performance are more likely to emerge when they personally receive i-deals, rather than when their supervisors receive such deals. These findings highlight the importance of not just offering i-deals as symbolic gestures but ensuring that subordinates are genuinely granted the promised benefits and opportunities. When subordinates directly experience the positive outcomes of i-deals, such as increased autonomy, flexibility or developmental opportunities, they become more motivated, engaged and committed to their work.

Building on the research by [Rofcanin et al. \(2018\)](#), who found that workers report higher levels of dedication when managers promote career customization through task i-deals, it can be inferred that the granting of i-deals to employees can have significant benefits. However, strategic planning and careful implementation are essential to ensure that i-deals are granted in a way that fosters strong relationships, promotes work-related learning, enhances job satisfaction and ultimately increases overall productivity levels in the workplace. When employees feel treated well and supported by their supervisors through the granting of i-deals, they are more likely to adapt their attitudes and behaviours positively, contributing to a harmonious and productive work environment.

In conclusion, the present study sheds light on the importance of proactive behaviour, individualization and the genuine granting of i-deals in the workplace. The findings underscore the need for organizations to recognize and support proactive employees, provide meaningful opportunities for customization and ensure the fair and equitable distribution of i-deals. By doing so, companies can cultivate a workforce that is motivated, committed and driven to excel, ultimately fostering their well-being at work.

### **Theoretical implications**

The findings of this research have profound theoretical implications. This study underscores the importance and impact around how subordinates' proactive personality and supervisors' i-deals influence their commitment and well-being at work. By adopting a mediational approach using subordinates' i-deals rooted in the proactive motivation model and the JD-R model paradigm, this study provided a comprehensive understanding of the reciprocal relationship between individual and organizational factors in the i-deal decision-making process. The research expands the possibilities for global researchers by exploring the influence of work characteristics on employee attitudes. The concept of i-deals introduces a fresh approach to the relationship between employees and employers, focusing on reciprocal perspectives and aiming to achieve organizational equilibrium. It highlights i-deals as inputs of organizational offerings and employee attitudes as outputs within this framework.

This research contributes to the existing literature by emphasizing the significance of proactive motivation theory, which elucidates how proactive behaviour and i-deals impact employee outcomes, creating a sense of personalized learning. Proactive motivation theory suggests that individuals with proactive personalities display self-initiated behaviour and proactively initiate positive changes in their work environment. Building upon this theory, our study reveals that subordinates with proactive personalities seek out challenging tasks, initiatives and growth opportunities and engage in receiving i-deals. By embracing these opportunities, proactive individuals acquire i-deals from supervisors, which creates a supportive environment that enhances learning and growth opportunities contributing to their AC and OWB. This enhances our understanding of how proactive personality traits drive the impact of i-deals through experiential learning processes and their subsequent influence on employees' commitment and well-being.

Moreover, the JD-R theory underscores the importance of job resources in promoting employee well-being and commitment. In our study, supervisors' i-deals serve as crucial job resources, providing subordinates with personalized arrangements tailored to their specific needs and preferences. These i-deals act as facilitators of customized work arrangements and shed light on the significance of tailored job resources in facilitating work-based and experiential learning processes and their impact on employee outcomes.

### **Practical implications**

The practical implications of our study extend beyond surface-level considerations, delving into the profound understanding of work-based customizations known as i-deals.

Implementing i-deals can cultivate a culture that promotes self-directed learning as they encompass employees' aspirations for career advancement, financial gains, work-life balance and flexibility. By offering personalized tasks aligned with employees' interests and strengths, granting autonomy for experimentation and fostering a sense of ownership and accountability, i-deals facilitate experiential learning within the workforce.

Hence, the study holds managerial relevance for the hospitality industry, a service-oriented sector where personalized employee duties, flexible work hours and customized work locations are crucial for meeting clients' demands effectively. By identifying the factors that drive successful i-deal negotiations and their positive impact on employees' commitment and well-being, organizations in the hospitality industry can create a work environment that promotes employee satisfaction and organizational performance. To harness the benefits of i-deals and leverage them as a source of work-based learning, organizations should cultivate a culture that recognizes and rewards proactive behaviour. By aligning tasks and responsibilities with employees' strengths and interests, organizations can enhance positive work-related behaviours and personalized learning experiences for employees.

### Limitations and research directions

The findings of this study are specific to the hospitality industry and cannot be extrapolated to other industries. However, the concepts explored, such as proactive personality, supervisors' i-deals, AC and OWB, have broader relevance across industries and countries. It is important to recognize the transferability of these fundamental concepts to different contexts. While the study findings may not directly apply to every industry, managers in other countries can still benefit from the research by adapting and applying relevant insights to their own organizational settings.

Second, we propose using longitudinal research to strengthen the robustness of this investigation. In addition, the focus of the present research was on supervisors and their staff. However, i-deals include three key stakeholders – the targeted workers, the organization or supervisor and co-workers – and organizational culture and policy considerations may also impact i-deal outcomes. A future study might take into account all of these stakeholders and the influence of all of these contextual elements.

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