



Investigating the effect of idiosyncratic deals in Asian countries: A cross cultural analysis in Singapore, Thailand and Japan

Hattori, Yasuhiro

Hoang, Mai Huong

Bich, Hue Nguyen Thi

(Citation)

International Journal of Cross Cultural Management, 21(2):373-393

(Issue Date)

2021-08-01

(Resource Type)

journal article

(Version)

Accepted Manuscript

(Rights)

Hattori Y, Hoang MH, Bich HNT. Investigating the effect of idiosyncratic deals in Asian countries: A cross cultural analysis in Singapore, Thailand and Japan. International Journal of Cross Cultural Management. 2021;21(2):373-393. © 2021The Author(s) DOI:10.1177/14705958211024279

(URL)

<https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14094/90008639>



Investigating the effect of idiosyncratic deals in Asian countries: A Cross cultural analysis in Singapore, Thailand and Japan

Abstracts

The purpose of this study is to empirically compare and contrast the relationship between several dimensions of idiosyncratic deals (i-deals) and employee affective commitment among Asian countries. Data were collected from 909 employees in Singapore, Thailand and Japan. Results of the study show that there is a positive relationship between several i-deals and affective commitment. However, the effect size of i-deals on each dimension varies across the three countries. In particular, the effect size of task and work responsibilities i-deals on the affective commitment of Japanese employees is stronger than that of Thai employees. Simultaneously, the effect size of the i-deals on affective commitment of Singaporean employees is weaker than that of Thai employees. On the contrary, for the dimensions of schedule and location flexibility and financial incentives, the effect size of i-deals on affective commitment is weaker for Singaporean than for Japanese and Thai, and the effect sizes for Japanese and Thai are the same. The results of this study question the traditionally and universally naive conclusion that i-deals are effective. Although i-deals result in, to some extent, some positive consequences, the results of the study suggest that not in all cases do they increase employee affective commitment. Empirical evidence of the study also demonstrate that the effects i-deals had on employee affective commitment are inconsistent even across cultures with close cultural origin.

Keywords: idiosyncratic deals, comparative analysis, Singapore, Thailand, Japan

Introduction

Standardization in work arrangements, and human resource (HR) practices in general, has traditionally been assumed as the basis of workplace fairness (Greenberg et al. 2004). Standard employment arrangements refer to “work done on a fixed schedule - usually full-time- at the employer’s place of business, under the employer’s control, and with the mutual expectation of continued employment” (Kalleberg, Reskin, and Hudson, 2000, 258). However, labor market deregulation has motivated employees to actively bargain for their own interest and opportunities (Rousseau 2005). Nowadays, an

increasing number of employees seek to fulfill their own needs through non-standard and customized ways of employment (Rousseau 2005; Rousseau et al. 2006; Lai et al. 2009; Liao et al. 2014; Bal and Doci 2018; Bal and Hornung 2019).

Partly in consequence of this change as well as of other social changes in technologies and in firms' strategic demands to retain qualified human resources, organizations began to adopt non-standard employment arrangements. In an attempt to adjust to such changes, firms begun negotiating employment conditions to fit the needs of highly valued employees (Bal, Van Kleef and Jansen 2015). Rousseau referred to such arrangement as idiosyncratic deals (i-deals), which she defined as "voluntary, personalized agreements of a non-standard nature that individual employees negotiate with their employers regarding terms that benefit them both" (Rousseau 2005, 8). There is a number of features that define i-deals (Conway and Coyle-Shapiro, 2015; Rousseau 2005; Simosi, Rousseau, Weingart, 2021). First, i-deals are individually negotiated although they can be initiated by both employees and organizations. Second, i-deals are heterogeneous, which means that not every employee in the same position of an organization receives the same i-deal offer. This inequity among employees may create difficult challenges for managers to confirm organizational fairness (Greenberg et al. 2004). Third, i-deals should be beneficial for both focal employees and the organization. From the employee's side, i-deals fulfill their personal needs that may consequently result in higher work motivation and organizational commitment. Simultaneously, i-deals would be beneficial for employers because they can attract and retain qualified human resources. Finally, i-deals vary in scope. Some employees may negotiate for multiple idiosyncratic conditions (e.g., location, work schedule, and financial incentive), while others may have just a single deal (e.g., only location).

Like many other HR management practices, i-deals have been globalized and extensively adopted by business organizations in many countries (Rousseau, 2005; Liao, Wayne and Rousseau, 2014). In an attempt to summarize the current state of knowledge on i-deals, Liao, Wayne and Rousseau (2014) provided a critical and synthetic review of contemporary research encompassing the topic of i-deals. Their meta-analysis validated the robustness of correlations between i-deals and their outcome variables such as affective commitment, job satisfaction, and perceived organizational support in both Western and Eastern cultures. I-deals were thus proved to have significant impact on these variables, regardless of cultural differences.

Our concern is that, researchers have not yet reached an agreement on which and how many dimensions that i-deals should capture. Rousseau's definition of i-deals includes a wide range of dimensions, from a single idiosyncratic dimension to more multiple dimensions; she certainly recognized that i-deals include a wide variety of elements. However, although many researchers have paid ad hoc attention to different particular dimensions and operationalized i-deals, the trend considering i-deals to constitute a single construct that integrates various dimensions as in Liao et al. (2016) has been popular. Therefore, little is known about the differences in the impact of each of those i-deals' dimensions on intended outcome variables.

At the same time, there is a concern about the scarcity of research on how the relationship between the several dimensions of i-deals and outcomes differs across countries. I-deals have already been studied in several countries. However, each research targeted at specific dimensions of i-deals and was carried out in a specific cultural context (Liao et al., 2014; Conway and Coyle-Shapiro, 2015). There is barely one that focused on the effects of i-deals on organizational outcomes across cultures. The only exception is Liao et al.'s meta-analysis as mentioned above. However, their study assumed only one single dimension of i-deals and did not examine how socio-cultural factors affected outcomes.

As we will see later, the relationship between i-deals and outcomes may be influenced by the national culture in two ways. First, the meaning of idiosyncratic deal itself differs across countries. Liao et al. (2014) classified their samples quite roughly just by Eastern and Western, with China, India, and South Korea as Eastern cultures, and German, United States, and Netherland as Western cultures. There was not such a classification based on concrete cultural dimensions with any theoretical basis. This rough categorization of cultures totally ignored the cultural diversity that might be existing within countries of the same area (e.g., within Asian countries). As studies on national culture have shown, there are considerable cultural differences even among countries categorized as "Eastern" or "Western" (Hofstede, 2001). For a given cultural dimension, it is possible that there is more cultural disparity between two Asian countries rather than between an Asian and Western country. In other words, there is an urgent need to investigate the existence of cultural diversities within the same Eastern or Western countries. Second, the meaning of each dimension included in the ideals may differ across countries. For example, the effect of i-deals on financial incentives is likely to be larger

when the income gap among employees in a country is small than when it is large. In a country where income inequality is basically high, it is possible that idiosyncratic deals in the workplace are not understood as not so idiosyncratic.

In cross cultural human resource management (HRM) researches, there exist two schools of treating HRM practices. The first one is that multinational companies should globalize their practices across countries (Mobley and McCall, 2001). On the contrary, some researchers incline toward the view that practices of international companies should be modified to fit regional characteristics (Schuler, Budhwar, and Florkowski, 2002; Collings, Scullion and Morley, 2007). Following this debate, should intensive HRM for some selected employees be conducted globally or restricted in some specific regions? Since have not yet got a clear answer to this issue (Mobley and McCall, 2001), clearly there is an increasing need for studies that compare how the effects of a particular HRM practice vary between countries (Liao et al., 2016). Focusing on the practice of i-deals, we examine how their effects differ from one country to another. Given the findings of existing national culture studies which concluded that cultural diversity is high even among countries which share similar geographical locations (Hofstede 2001), it is crucial to take a closer look into how i-deals practice differs among geographically close countries instead of just making a simple comparison between East and West.

The purpose of this paper is to empirically investigate how the effect size of i-deals on its outcome varies across dimensions, and how these relationships are influenced by national culture. It examines this issue based on survey research of business employees in three Southeast and East Asian countries: Singapore, Thailand, and Japan. The theoretical contributions of this paper go beyond what was previously made by Liao et al. (2016) since its major aim was to clarify the influence of cultural differences on the effect of i-deals in a more detailed and culture-focused manner. Results of the study allowed us to gain further elaborate understanding on how the effect of each i-deal dimension varies within different parts of Southeast and East Asia.

In the following parts, we first briefly summarize the state of knowledge to date on i-deals and identify the gaps in current literature. Next, we present an empirical study which investigated the cross-cultural variation in the relationship between i-deals and their consequence with samples from Singapore, Thailand, and Japan. Lastly, in the third

section, we conclude with the research limitations, managerial implications and suggestions for future i-deals research.

Literature review

The effects of i-deals and their cultural aspects

The influences of social exchange theory are evident throughout the i-deals literature (Rosen, Slater and Johnson 2013). Social exchange refers to voluntary actions that are motivated by the returns people expect to receive from others (Homans 1961; Blau 1967; Foa and Foa 2012). These exchanges are mainly based on what each party has to offer the other party. In other words, social exchange theory posits that social relationships are often developed because the social actors are interdependent (Homans 1961; Blau 1967). For example, employees contribute their efforts and commitment to their employers, while employers provide them with salary, compensation, and development opportunities. In this case, the employers and employees are interdependent, with each side playing some role in contributing to the other's success (Cropanzano and Mitchell 2005). A number of researchers suggested that i-deals have the potential to influence employee's attitudes and behaviors because the employer is committed to maintain high quality of employment relationship with focal employees (Rousseau et al. 2006; Hornung et al. 2009; Liao et al. 2016; Rosen et al. 2013; Hornung and Rousseau 2017).

Most existing researches have focused on the antecedents or/and consequences of i-deals (Conway and Coyle-Shapiro, 2015; Liao et al. 2016). Researchers have shown that both employees and managers play important roles in the formation of i-deals. For example, employees high on initiatives and negotiation ability are more prone to receive i-deals (Hornung et al. 2008). Prior studies have also demonstrated that i-deals have an influence on a wide array of outcomes, such as affective commitment, job satisfaction, organization citizenship behavior, work family conflict, and stress (Conway and Coyle-Shapiro, 2015; Liao et al. 2016). Among these, the most frequently investigated outcomes has been affective commitment (Ng and Feldman, 2016). As envisioned by social exchange theory, i-deals offered by the employer strengthens the employee's perception of being valued by the organization, and in return, the employee becomes more committed to the organization (Ng and Feldman, 2012). Furthermore, employees' high

commitment leads to positive behaviors and attitudes such as organizational citizenship and job satisfaction (Mathieu, and Zajac, 1990).

In general, previous studies have reported a positive relationship between i-deals and several outcomes, especially affective commitment. For example, Ng and Feldman (2010) showed that overall i-deal, which integrates six elements (e.g., pay, advancement, training, and career development), has an impact on affective commitment. Rosen et al. (2013) found that among the four i-deals' dimensions (schedule flexibility, task and work responsibility, location flexibility, and financial incentives), task and work responsibilities positively affect employees' effective commitment. In addition, Liu, Lee, Hui, Kwan, and Wu (2013) found that both flexibility and developmental i-deals affect affective commitment via perceived organizational support and organization-based self-esteem.

More recently, Liao et al. (2014) meta-analytically investigated the relationship between i-deals and their consequences. Their meta-analysis aimed to present the meta-correlations between i-deals and other variables in both Eastern and Western cultures. In order to do so, they divided several study samples into two big cultural groups (i.e., Eastern or Western cultures) based on the countries represented. Eastern cultures included China, India, and South Korea while Western cultures included Germany, the U.S.A., and the Netherlands. The effect of i-deals was consistent across two cultural groups with regard to a number of outcomes, including perceived organization support (Western: $p = .16$, 95 percent CI: .15, .17; Eastern: $p = .21$, 95 percent CI: .13, .30), job satisfaction (Western: $p = .30$, 95 percent CI: .20, .40; Eastern: $p = .30$, 95 percent CI: .07, .52), affective commitment (Western: $p = .13$, 95 percent CI: .00, 0.27; Eastern: $p = .25$, 95 percent CI: .06, .43), and leader member exchange (Western: $p = .33$, 95 percent CI: .21, 0.45; Eastern: $p = .28$, 95 percent CI: .13, .45). As theoretically (Rousseau 2005; Bal and Lub 2016) and empirically proven (Hornung et al. 2008; Hornung et al., 2010; Ng and Feldman 2015; Liao et al. 2014), existing researchers have shown that i-deals have significant impact on employee's attitudes and behaviors, regardless of their cultural differences.

Problems of existing research

In this paper, we consider affective commitment as our main outcome variable of interest for two key reasons. First, i-deals capture employment relationships (Rousseau,

12005), whereas organizational commitment captures employees' reactions to those employment relationships (Allen and Meyer, 1990). Second, organizational commitment has been found to be an influential predictor of many job attitudes and behaviors (Allen and Meyer, 1990; Mathieu and Zajac, 1990) and thus has the potential to explain why and how i-deals relate to a wide range of workplace outcomes.

As discussed above, existing empirical research has successfully offered some support for the association between i-deals and affective commitment. However, it should be noted that the reported effect sizes were relatively small (Liao et al., 2014; Conway and Coyle-Shapiro, 2015)¹. For example, though Liao et al. (2014) generally support the association between overall i-deals and affective commitment, they also found that the effect size of i-deals is slightly stronger in Eastern than in Western countries. These confounding results may partially stem from the small number of previous studies that have addressed the relationship between i-deals and affective commitment (Conway and Coyle-Shapiro, 2015). More importantly, however, it may be due to the fact that prior studies are problematic in two respects.

The first problem is a lack of attention to the different impact of each dimension of i-deals on their outcomes. Researchers tend to treat i-deals as a construct with a number of dimensions (Hornung et al., 2008; Anand et al., 2010; Ng and Feldman, 2010; Bal et al., 2012; Rosen et al., 2013). However, the dimensions and number of dimensions studied vary among those studies. While Anand et al. (2010) focused on only one single dimension which is developmental i-deal, Hornung et al. (2008) selected three dimensions (developmental, flexibility, and workload reduction) and Rosen et al. (2013) captured four dimensions (schedule flexibility, task and work responsibilities, location flexibility, and financial incentives).

In an attempt to elucidate the composition of i-deals, a growing number of researchers have paid ad hoc attention to different dimensions and investigated the content captured by each of them. Nevertheless, there also exist research that treats i-deals as a synthetic concept with various integrated dimensions such as in Anand et al. (2010) and Liao et al. (2016). For this reason, little is known about the differences in the impact of each of the dimensions that make up the i-deals on their outcome variables. According to social exchange theory, the level of favorable behavior an individual engages in toward others depends not only on the absolute number of benefits provided by the other party, but also on the type of benefits provided (Blau, 1964). There are at

least two reasons. The first reason is that different types of benefits have different values for different people, such as some people value financial incentives while others value schedule flexibility. The second and more important reason is that the degree of scarcity differs depending on the type of benefits. The value of the benefits, in this case i-deals, that an employee receives from an organization is affected not only by the absolute number of benefits provided to him, but also by the degree to which they are provided to others around him, i.e., the relative amount (Adams, 1963; Blau, 1964). The employee will perceive a strong sense of being committed by the employer when he is given a benefit that many people in the same group cannot enjoy. With a few exceptions (e.g., Rosen et al., 2013), existing research has not focused on differences in effect size across various i-deals dimensions. The weak relationship between i-deals and affective commitment in existing researches may have been observed because the effects of each dimension with potentially different effect sizes were not properly categorized and investigated in such a detailed manner.

The second problem is a lack of consideration for the impact of national culture. The only study that empirically examined the relationship between i-deals and their outcomes is by Liao, et al. (2014). The reason for the need to focus on the influence of national culture is that it affects the rareness of idiosyncratic deals by employees. As discussed below, in a society that encourages disparities in treatment between individuals, employees tend to routinely observe differences in power and treatment between themselves and their surroundings. Conversely, in a society that encourages the minimization of power and treatment differences among individuals, such differences may rarely be observed. Such country-specific differences may make a difference in the effect of i-deals. The extent to which idiosyncratic deals related to each dimension of i-deals are implemented should vary considerably among countries. In this sense, it is necessary to conduct research to compare the effect size of i-deals for each dimension internationally.

In conclusion, most extant research either failed to investigate i-deals in compositional manner or neglected the effects of cultural factors on the i-deals' outcomes. In addition, given the findings of cross-cultural studies which proved that diversity is high even among countries which share similar geographical locations (Hofstede 2001), it is essential that the effects of cultural disparity on the relationship between i-deals and their outcomes should be attentively considered.

National culture

Extant research has theoretically proven that the relationships between i-deals and outcomes are influenced by national culture in several ways. Rousseau (2005) posited that cultural differences influences on how i-deals are granted and how they function. Although cross-cultural empirical studies on i-deals are still relatively limited, there are some important ones to note (Ng and Feldman 2015; Liao et al. 2014). Ng and Feldman (2015) found that while the total effect of i-deals on voice behavior was positive in both the United States and China, the total effect size of i-deals on voice is stronger in Chinese samples. Also, study by Liao et al. (2014) revealed that the associations between i-deals and some consequences such as affective commitment and perceived organizational support were slightly stronger in Eastern than in Western cultures.

Liao et al. (2014) suggested that the size of regression coefficients of i-deals and their outcomes is moderated by national culture. This means that the effects size may be strong or weak depending on their contextual factors. Researchers happened to find contrasting effects of i-deals, and these disparities occurred possibly due to the differences in cultural context in which i-deals were negotiated (Bal and Lub 2016).

Logically, i-deals could not be separated from their ideological origin rooted in the society (Bal and Lub 2016). Unless a clear and credible premise for the i-deals is conveyed to members, i-deals are not likely to be constructed as legitimated (Rousseau 2005). Criteria for judgment are more likely to be accepted by organizational members if some kind of shared set of values exists within its society regarding the way in which the employer related to several personnel decisions. In order for i-deals to function, a meta-contract such as “i-deals are needed” must be broadly shared within the society (Rousseau 2005). This meta-contract is agreed upon the conditions guiding employment-related decision in its society (Rousseau 2005).

Among several cultural dimensions, power distance and individualism are the aspects that this study focuses on. Power distance is defined as the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1998; Hofstede, 2001). One of the most salient aspects of inequality is the degree of power each person exerts or can exert over other persons. This dimension deals with the fact that all individuals in societies are not equal, and it expresses the attitude of the culture toward

these power inequalities amongst us (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1998; Hofstede, 2001). Individualism is the degree of interdependence a society maintains among its members (Hofstede, 2001). In individualist societies, people are only supposed to look after themselves and their direct family. On the contrary, people in collectivist societies belong to “in-groups” and take care of each other in exchange for unquestioning loyalty. It has to do with whether personal self-image is defined in terms of “I” or “We”. There is a certain degree of correlation between these two cultural dimensions (Hofstede, 2001). In general, the higher the score on individualism, the smaller the power distance between the people.

In this study, only power distance is selected to be the concept to focus in. The reason is that many extant studies have presented consistent results regarding this dimension score for each specific country, while those on individualism revealed mixed and confusing numbers. The individualism score, which was often used in previous deals research to describe the characteristics of a country (e.g., Liao et al., 2014; Bal and Lub 2016), shows considerable variance across studies. For example, according to Hofstede (2001), the magnitude of individualism scores in Singapore, Thailand, and Japan are in the order of Japan > Thailand > Singapore. However, for the same individualism score, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1998) resulted in the order of Thailand > Japan > Singapore. In addition, it has been pointed out that there is a strong correlation between individualism scores and the degree of economic development of a country (Hofstede, 2001; Gorodnichenko, and Roland, 2011). When conducting research in areas with rapid economic growth, such as Southeast Asia and East Asia, individualism scores at a certain point in time may not necessarily apply to the present (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1998). Clearly, it is difficult to acquire such an up-to-date and reliable individualism score to make comparisons among countries.

In contrast, the power-distance index for each country has been consistent among various empirical studies (e.g., Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1998; Hofstede, 2001). For instance, according to Hofstede (2001), the magnitude of power distance score in Singapore, Thailand, and Japan are in the order of Singapore > Thailand > Japan. In line with this, results of the study by Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1998) showed the same order. The correlation between the power-distance index and the degree of economic development of each country is also much lower than that of individualism (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1998)²⁾.

Targeted countries

This study focuses on power distance and compares the effect size of i-deals on effective commitment in Singapore, Thailand, and Japan. There are three reasons for choosing respondents from these countries. First, all of them are on top ten in terms of GDP in Asia. As the result, many multinational companies have chosen these countries as the place to build their subsidiaries and regional headquarters. With this selection of samples, the study aims to provide important implications for the management of cross-cultural HRM in multinational companies. Second, despite frequently assumed to belong to the same oriental cultural origin, these countries are quite different in several national cultural dimensions such as power distance and individualism. Third, existing research has already confirmed that companies in their countries are in general engaged in i-deals' practice (Rousseau and Schalk 2000).

Hypotheses

In this paper, we adopt the most comprehensive Rosen et al.'s (2013) four dimensions of ideals which include schedule flexibility, task and work responsibilities, location flexibility, financial incentive. As theoretically (Rousseau 2005; Bal and Lub 2016) and empirically proven (Hornung et al. 2008; Hornung et al., 2010; Ng and Feldman 2015; Liao et al. 2014), i-deals have significant impact on employee's attitudes and behaviors, regardless of their cultural differences. The finding fits well in most cultures' belief (Ng and Feldman 2015). Similar to Liao et al. (2014)'s results, other empirical research has also shown that i-deals are positively related to employees' affective commitment regardless of their national culture and the i-deals dimensions selected (Hornung et al. 2008; Hornung et al., 2010; Ng and Feldman 2010). If these findings made by previous scholars were universally true, then the relationship between i-deals and affective commitment should be similarly significant across Asian countries, given that there is some cultural diversity. Thus, we hypothesize the following:

H1a: Task and work responsibility i-deals are positively related to affective commitment in Japanese, Thai, and Singaporean employees.

H1b: Schedule flexibility i-deals are positively related to affective commitment in Japanese, Thai, and Singaporean employees.

H1c: Location flexibility i-deals are positively related to affective commitment in Japanese, Thai, and Singaporean employees.

H1d: Financial incentive i-deals are positively related to affective commitment in Japanese, Thai, and Singaporean employees.

The fact that some employees are offered idiosyncratic deals that others are not is nothing less than the fact that there is some relative deprivation in the organization (Rousseau, 2005). Such relative deprivation is frequently observed in collectivist and high-power distance societies where disparities in treatment among people are allowed. Conversely, the stronger the degree of individualism and the weaker the degree of power distance, the less likely people are to repeatedly observe such relative deprivation (Bal and Lub, 2016). A person in a society where inter-individual disparities are rarely observed should perceive a higher scarcity of idiosyncratic deals offered to him than those in a society where these disparities are commonly perceived, and vice versa. Therefore, in general, the effect size of i-deals is larger in countries with smaller power distance and higher degree of individualism.

Let us consider each of the four dimensions. In a country like Singapore, where there are large differences in power among employees in a hierarchical organization (Tronpenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1998), employees might witness differences in task and work responsibility among employees quite frequently. Thus, for them, the rareness of task and work responsibility i-deals might be low. On the contrary, in a country like Japan where the difference in power among employees is small, it is unlikely to observe individual differences in task and work responsibility among employees. Therefore, for them, the rareness of task and work responsibility is possibly high. The effect size of task and work responsibility i-deals in each country is expected to be as follows according to the order of power distance score.

H2a: The effect size of task and work responsibility i-deals on affective commitment of Japanese employees is stronger than that of Thai employees.

H2b: The effect size of i-deals on affective commitment of Thai employees is stronger than that of Singaporean employees.

Similarly, in a country with a large power distance like Singapore, individual

differences in scheduling and work location flexibility may also be large. According to a psychological contracts research, individuals who have strong bargaining power over the organization are more likely to win favorable work schedules and work locational conditions for themselves than those who have weak bargaining power (Ali, 2020). Therefore, in countries where the default value of power distance between individuals is high, the gap between individuals in terms of schedule and work location flexibility will be larger than in countries where the default value of power distance between individuals is low. This difference in the rareness of idiosyncratic deals can be expected to lead to differences in the effect size of i-deals among the three countries.

Thus, the effect size of schedule and location flexibility i-deals in each country are expected to be as follows according to the order of power distance score.

H3a: *The effect size of schedule flexibility i-deals on affective commitment of Japanese employees is stronger than that of Thai employees.*

H3b: *The effect size of schedule flexibility i-deals on affective commitment of Thai employees is stronger than that of Singaporean employees.*

H4a: *The effect size of location flexibility i-deals on affective commitment of Japanese employees is stronger than that of Thai employees.*

H4b: *The effect size of location flexibility i-deals on affective commitment of Thai employees is stronger than that of Singaporean employees.*

Differences in national culture define the frequency that idiosyncratic deals are observed in a given country. However, the extent to which idiosyncratic deals are made on specific dimensions should also be affected by factors other than national culture, such as economic and social conditions. The rareness of the financial incentive i-deal is likely to be higher in countries with small income inequality than in countries with large income inequality among individuals. Thus, the effect size of financial incentive i-deals on outcomes will be larger in such countries than in other countries.

The difference in income between individuals depends not only on the national culture but also on the economic status of each country (Forbes, 2000). Comparing the Gini coefficients of the three countries, the Gini coefficient of Singapore as of 2010 was 0.46%, which is much higher than the values of Japan (0.35%) and Thailand (0.39%) at

the same time³⁾. This means that there the income gap among people in Singapore is quite high compared to that in Japan and Thailand. These indices might lead to the possibility that Singaporean employees are offered with less financial incentive i-deals than their counterparts in Japan and Thai. In other words, the rareness in financial incentive i-deals observed among Singaporean employees is possibly higher than among the two other countries. The last hypotheses are then postulated as follows:

***H5a:** The effect of financial incentive i-deals on affective commitment of Japanese employees is not different from that of Thai employees.*

***H5b:** The effect of financial incentive i-deals on affective commitment of Thai and Japanese employees is stronger than that of Singaporean employees.*

Method

Data collection and samples

Data were collected from full-time employees in Singapore, Thailand, and Japan via an online survey service company. Research comparing traditional paper-based and online surveys revealed that no significant biases are existing between the two methodologies (Mehta and Sivadas 1995). Respondents were recruited through an organization that maintains a large database of employees working in business enterprises. In Japan, respondents were recruited through Macromil.Inc, an organization that maintains a large database of employees willing to participate in online surveys. In Singapore and Thailand, respondents were recruited through Beyond global.Inc, which is also an organization that holds a large database of employees. Through Macromil.Inc and Beyond global.Inc, the link to our survey (i.e. URL) was sent via e-mail to full-time white-collar employees. In all countries, the anonymity of respondents was guaranteed. Respondents were chosen from a wide array of organizations. Those who volunteered to participate were given access to a secure website where they completed the survey. A total number of 909 responses were recorded⁴⁾. Among those, 309 were Japanese, 300 were Thai, and the rest of 300 were Singaporean.

24.6% of participants were female whose ages ranged between 22 and 73 with a mean of 46.21. The mean organization tenure was 14.36 years. Participants were employed from a wide variety of industries, most of which were manufacturing (20.3%), banking/finance (11.2%), retail (16.0%), service (15.2%), consulting (8.3%). To ensure

that sampling bias did not influence our results, we compared participants who were Singaporean, Thai, and Japanese concerning demographic variables (i.e. age, tenure). Analysis of variance results showed no significant differences in demographic variables among employees from these three countries.

Measures

I-deals. I-deals were measured with sixteen items developed by Rosen et al. (2013). These authors asked respondents to what extent they had negotiated an i-deal within the past year on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree ⁴). Six items were asked to assess task and work responsibilities (e.g., “I have successfully asked for extra responsibilities that take advantage of the skills that I bring to the job”); five items were to assess financial incentives (e.g., “My supervisor has ensured that my compensation arrangement (e.g., hourly vs. salaried) meets my individual needs.”); three items were to assess schedule flexibility (e.g., “My supervisor considers my personal needs when making my work schedule”); and the last two items were to assess location flexibility (e.g., “Because of my individual needs, I have negotiated a unique arrangement with my supervisor that allows me to complete a portion of my work outside of the office”). Adopting this scale, this study intended to capture the number of received i-deals as a result of the negotiation between employees and their employer.

Those sixteen items were submitted to confirmatory factor analysis (CFAs) to assess their measurement properties since this scale was being used for the first time in Japanese, Thai and Singaporean setting (table 1). Unlike Rosen et al. (2016) which revealed a four-factor structure, in this study, CFAs results indicated that the three-factor structure fits the data well with comparative fit index (CFA) = .92, Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) = .91, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .06, and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) = .05. Three dimensions of i-deals demonstrated adequate internal consistency in each country (task and work responsibilities: Japan α = .88, Thai α = .85 and Singapore α = .87; schedule and location flexibilities: Japan α = .85, Thai α = .87 and Singapore α = .89; financial incentives: Japan α = .90, Thai α = .81 and Singapore α = .80). In our data, the discrimination between schedule flexibility and location flexibility was not confirmed. For this reason, in the following analysis, a composite variable of schedule flexibility and location flexibility will be used instead ⁵).

Table 1. Model comparison

Proposed and alternative factor structure	χ^2	$\Delta \chi^2$	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR
Three factor model						
Task/work, schedule + location, financial	197.12		.92	.91	.06	.05
Four-factor model						
Task/work, schedule, location, financial	540.33	342.21***	.75	.71	.11	.10
One-factor model						
Task/work + schedule + location + financial	1,020.44	480.11***	.50	.42	.17	.13

N = 909; $\Delta \chi^2$ were calculated based on comparing the model fit of the alternative model with the three-factor model. CFI = comparative fit index; TLI = Tucker-Lewis index; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation; SRMR = standardized root mean square residual.

N = 309, * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

Affective commitment. Affective commitment was measured using six items developed by Allen and Meyer (1990). Sample items are “I enjoy discussing about my organization with people outside it” and “I really feel as if this organization’s problems are my own” (Cronbach $\alpha = .80$).

Since the Japanese and Thai versions of i-deals’ and affective 's scale were not available, the authors conducted the translations from English into these two languages. Back translations into English were done by authorized translators to ensure that the meaning of the translated manuscripts were consistent with the original English version. Pilot studies were conducted with three employee samples from each country. These nine samples were excluded from the final database. The same procedure was conducted to attain the precise translation for the Thai version of affective commitment, since it was also unavailable at the time when the study was carried out.

We controlled for employee demographics, including age, tenure, gender, industries, position, nationality. They are selected as the results of the reference to existing empirical researchers (Hornung et al. 2008; Hornung et al. 2010; Ng and Feldman 2015; Liao et al. 2016).

Analytical model

This study used a multiple regression model with the interaction terms

presented below. The model was intended to compare the effect size of i-deals on the affective commitment of the Japanese, Singaporean, and Thai employees, with that of Thai employees was chosen as the comparison baseline.

$$\begin{aligned} \text{affective commitment} = & \beta 01 \times \text{intercept} + \beta 02 \sim 09 \times \text{control variables} + \beta 10 \times \text{Japanese dummy} \\ & + \beta 11 \times \text{Singaporean dummy} + \beta 12 \times \text{task and work responsibilities i-deals} \\ & + \beta 13 \times \text{schedule and location flexibilities i-deals} \\ & + \beta 14 \times \text{financial incentives I-deals} \\ & + \beta 15 \sim 17 \times \text{each i-deals} \times \text{Japanese dummy} \\ & + \beta 18 \sim 20 \times \text{each i-deals} \times \text{Singaporean dummy} \end{aligned}$$

In this model, the dependent variable y was affective commitment. $\beta 01$ was intercepted. $\beta 02 \sim 09$ were all control variables. $\beta 02$ was age, $\beta 03$ was tenure, $\beta 04$ was women dummy, $\beta 05$ to $\beta 08$ was several industries dummy and $\beta 09$ was manager dummy. $\beta 10$ indicated Japanese sample dummy, $\beta 11$ was Singaporean sample dummy, $\beta 12$ to $\beta 14$ were several i-deals, $\beta 15$ to $\beta 17$ was the interaction of each i-deals and Japanese dummy, and $\beta 18$ to $\beta 20$ was interaction of each i-deals and Singaporean dummy. If the estimated coefficient of $\beta 10$ or $\beta 11$ is statistically significant, it can be concluded that the level of affective commitment in Japanese or Singaporean samples is different from that of the Thai samples. If the estimated coefficient of $\beta 15$ to $\beta 17$ or $\beta 18$ to $\beta 20$ is statistically significant, the effect of each i-deals' dimension on affective commitment would be significantly high/low in Japanese or Singaporean samples. On the contrary, if the coefficients of $\beta 15$ to $\beta 20$ were not significant, it means that there are no differences among these three samples.

Results

The means, standard deviations, and correlations among the variables of the whole sample are shown in table 2. In addition, means, standard deviations, and correlations among the variables of Japanese, Thai, and Singapore samples are shown in Tables 3, 4, and 5. As predicted, three types of i-deals were positively and significantly correlated with affective commitment in these three countries. In general, the size of the correlation coefficient of the Japanese samples was the highest among these three countries, followed by those of Thai and Singaporean samples. According to Table 2,

tenure is negatively correlated to affective commitment. This result probably reflects the influence of the Singaporean sample. As shown in Table 5, for Singaporean employees, there is a statistically significant negative correlation between tenure and affective commitment. This happened probably due to the high mobility of the labor market in Singapore and the high propensity of employees to change jobs (Lee and Morris, 2016). This negative correlation is inconsistent with the findings of previous studies in the U.S. and Europe (Mathieu and Zajac, 1990), but it is consistent with those done in Singapore (Chay and Aryee, 1999). Chay and Aryee (1999) empirically showed that the coefficient between organizational tenure and commitment was much weaker, if not negative, in Singapore than in other countries.

Table 2. Means, standard deviations, and correlations: whole sample

N = 909, * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1 age	42.21	9.99	1				
2 tenure	14.36	11.13	.25***	1			
3 task and work responsibilities i-deals	3.24	.89	-.170***	-.068**	1		
4 schedule and location flexibilities i-deals	3.18	.90	-.145***	-.06*	.679***	1	
5 financial incentives i-deals	2.97	.90	-.160***	-.086**	.701***	.694***	1
6 affective commitment	3.09	.86	-.066**	-.04*	.517***	.466***	.502***

dummy variables are omitted.

Table 3. Means, standard deviations, and correlations: Japanese sample

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1 age	40.17	14.36	1				
2 tenure	16.36	7.131	.690***	1			
3 task and work responsibilities i-deals	2.917	.988	.026	.071	1		
4 schedule and location flexibilities i-deals	2.664	.983	-.006	.075	.701***	1	
5 financial incentives i-deals	2.668	1.058	.042	.020	.612***	.631***	1
6 affective commitment	2.76	.69	.129**	.097	.572***	.478***	.491***

N = 309, * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

dummy variables are omitted.

Table 4. Means, standard deviations, and correlations: Thai sample

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1 age	34.29	8.555	1				
2 tenure	4.897	5.61	.659**	1			
3 task and work responsibilities i-deals	3.034	.723	.099	.035	1		
4 schedule and location flexibilities i-deals	2.991	.833	.074	-.025	.643***	1	
5 financial incentives i-deals	2.684	.868	.061	.025	.587***	.646***	1
6 affective commitment	2.84	.82	.143**	.063	.459***	.452***	.410***

N = 300, * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

dummy variables are omitted.

Table 5 Means, standard deviations, and correlations: Singaporean sample

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1 age	39.91	9.99	1				
2 tenure	3.39	4.13	.389***	1			
3 task and work responsibilities i-deals	3.24	.89	-.134**	.009	1		
4 schedule and location flexibilities i-deals	3.18	.90	-.104	.06	.586***	1	
5 financial incentives i-deals	2.97	.90	-.065	.080	.678***	.664***	1
6 affective commitment	3.09	.86	-.017	-.021	.298***	.277***	.344**

N = 300, * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

dummy variables are omitted.

The results of regression analysis are reported in Table 6. A positive relationship between several dimensions of i-deals and affective commitment was confirmed. Thus, H1a, H1b, H1c, and H1d were supported.

Both Japanese \times task and work responsibilities i-deals interaction and Singaporean \times task and work responsibilities i-deals were statistically significant. Nevertheless, their signs were opposite. Japanese \times task and work responsibilities i-deals interaction had a positive effect on affective commitment ($\beta = .194$, $p < .001$). The results also indicated that the effect of task and work responsibilities i-deals on the affective commitment of Japanese is stronger than that of Thai employees. H2a was therefore supported. In contrast, the effect of Singaporean \times task and work responsibilities i-deals

Table 6. Results of regression analysis

	affective commitment					
	β		β		β	
intercept	1.545	***	1.486	***	1.574	***
age	.005	**	.006	**	.006	**
tenure	.000		.000		.001	
woman dummy	-.065		-.069		-.06	
manufacturing industry dummy	-.085		-.074		-.071	
finance industry dummy	-.173		-.167		-.179	
retail industry dummy	-.069		-.083		-.079	
IT industry dummy	.001		.006		.014	
manager dummy	.086		.096	*	.086	*
Japanese dummy	-.986	***	-.641	**	-.729	**
Singaporean dummy	.307		.264		.043	
task and work responsibilities i-deals	.259	***	.193	***	.213	***
schedule and location flexibilities i-deals	.08	**	.168	**	.105	**
financial incentives i-deals	.154	***	.149	***	.162	**
task and work responsibilities i-deals \times Japanese	.194	***				
task and work responsibilities i-deals \times Singaporean	-.208	***				
schedule and location flexibilities i-deals \times Japanese			.077			
schedule and location flexibilities i-deals \times Singaporean			-.195	***		
financial incentives i-deals \times Japanese					.117	
financial incentives i-deals \times Singaporean					-.137	*
adjusted R ²	.368		.355		.354	
F value	36.218	***	34.319	***	34.07	***

N = 909, * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

interaction was negative ($\beta = -.208$, $p < .001$), meaning that the effect of task and work responsibilities i-deals on the affective commitment of Singaporean employees was weaker than that of Thai employees. Thus, H2b was also supported.

Though Singaporean \times schedule and location flexibility i-deals was significant, Japanese \times schedule and location flexibility i-deals interaction was not. Singaporean \times schedule and location flexibility i-deals interaction had a negative effect on affective commitment ($\beta = -.195$, $p < .001$). This result indicated that the effect of schedule and location flexibility i-deals on the affective commitment of Singaporeans was weaker than that of Thai employees. Thus, H3b and H4b were supported. On the contrary, the effect of Japanese \times schedule and location flexibility i-deals interaction was insignificant, meaning that the effect of schedule and location flexibility i-deals on the affective commitment of Japanese employees was neither stronger nor weaker than that of Thai employees. Thus, H3a and H4a were not supported.

Similar results were confirmed for financial incentives. Singaporean \times financial incentives i-deals is significant, but Japanese \times financial incentives i-deals interaction is not significant. Singaporean \times financial incentives i-deals interaction had a negative effect on affective commitment ($\beta = -.137$, $p < .001$). This result indicated that the effect of financial incentives i-deals on the affective commitment of Singaporean is weaker than that of Thai employees. Thus, H5b was supported. On the contrary, the effect of Japanese \times financial incentives i-deals interaction was not significant, meaning that the effect of financial incentives i-deals on the affective commitment of Japanese employees was neither stronger nor weaker than that of Thai employees. Thus, H5a was not supported.

Discussion and conclusion

Discussion

This study investigated the effect of several i-deals' dimensions on affective commitment. In addition, it also examined how these relationships were moderated by national culture. By doing so, this study is the first one ever to compare the effect size of i-deals among countries of related geographical and cultural origin. The results suggested that all i-deals' dimensions were positively related to affective commitment in Japanese, Thai, and Singaporean samples. This finding is compatible with extant research which has shown that i-deals are positively related to employees' attitudes and behaviors regardless of their social and cultural background (Hornung et al. 2008; Hornung et al. 2010; Ng and Feldman 2010).

More importantly, the results of our study contribute to existing knowledge on i-deals by empirically proving that the size of regression coefficient of several i-deals' dimensions on affective commitment varies among the three selected countries. In particular, the effect size of task and work responsibility i-deals on affective commitment in Japanese samples was stronger than that of Thai and Singaporean samples. Furthermore, compared to Thai samples, the effect size of task and responsibility i-deals on affective commitment recorded in Singaporean samples was much weaker. This order is consistent with the order of power distance scores measured in previous studies on national cultures (Tronpenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1998; Hofstede, 2001). In Singapore, the country reported with the largest power distance, the possibility that employees are provided with task and work responsibility i-deals was supposed to be high.

Japan, on the other end of the spectrum, has been recognized with the lowest level of power distance, does not seem to allow inequality in task and responsibility among employees of the same level. Japanese employees were therefore not familiar with the practice of i-deals and this fact feasibly made i-deals more valuable to them. Consequently, they might develop greater affective commitment with their organizations. The disparities in the perception of this dimension of i-deals were possibly the reason for the differences in the effect sizes recorded in our results.

Results of the study also indicated that the effect of the combination of i-deals and national culture on effective commitment differs slightly depending on the dimension of i-deals. As predicted, the effect of financial incentive i-deals on the affective commitment of Japanese employees was not different from that of Thai employees, however, the effect of financial incentive i-deals on the affective commitment of Thai and Japanese employees was stronger than that of Singaporean employees. Income inequality is much higher in Singapore than in the other two countries, as evidenced by the relatively high Gini coefficient. Simultaneously, Singaporean employees observe the gap in financial incentive within the organization more commonly compared to their Japanese and Thai counterparts. Since the gap in incentive has been common sense and already a part of their HRM practice, Singaporean employees might not value the offer of this I-deals' type as compared to those in the other two countries.

Contrary to our prediction, there was no difference in the effect size of schedule and location flexibility i-deals between Japan and Thailand. The possible explanation is that the size of regression coefficient of schedule and location flexibility i-deals on affective commitment might largely be influenced by factors other than national culture. One possible factor is management style. Many companies in Thailand have introduced Japanese-style management including HRM (Kosiyanon and Yoshihara, 1985). Despite the differences in national culture, this similarity in HRM style might have led to the similarity in the rareness of schedule and location flexibility i-deals. In contrast, many companies in Singapore have introduced Western-style management (Jetro, 2019), and i-deals might be more common in this country than in the other two countries. This fact consequently led to the weaker relationship between i-deals and affective commitment of Singaporean, compared to that of Japanese and Thai employees.

Theoretical and managerial contributions and implications

Existing researchers paid ad hoc attention to different dimensions and operationalized i-deals for each of them, sometimes constituting a single dimension that integrates the various dimensions (Hornung et al., 2008; Anand et al., 2010; Ng and Feldman, 2010; Bal et al., 2012; Rosen et al., 2013). The weak relationship between i-deals and affective commitment in extant research was reported possibly because researchers treated i-deals as a construct mixed from various dimensions. This might have accidentally excluded the potentially strong correlations between some dimensions with the outcome variable. This paper showed that by analyzing the relationship between i-deals' dimensions and their outcome separately, the effects of those dimensions are different. Future research therefore should treat i-deals as a set of mutually heterogeneous dimensions instead of a mass and uncategorized construct. This method of analysis may help increase the chance of investigating the dynamic role that i-deal practice contributes to organizational outcomes.

Though cultural variables were not directly included in data analysis, the results of the study support the notion that i-deals could not be separated from their ideological origin rooted in the society (Rousseau 2005; Liao et al. 2014; Bal and Lub 2016). As theoretically (Rousseau 2005; Bal and Lub 2016) and empirically have proven (Hornung et al. 2008; Hornung et al., 2010; Ng and Feldman 2015; Liao et al. 2014), i-deals did have a significant impact on employee's attitudes and behaviors, regardless of their cultural differences. However, the effect size of i-deals may vary according to the national culture such as the power distance of each country.

In particular, the current findings provide evidence to prove that the effect size of i-deals is been larger in countries with smaller power distances. We believe that this is a very noteworthy contribution to extant literature since there has been virtually no existing research comparing the effect size of i-deals among cultures. What the study confirmed goes beyond that previously proven by Liao, et al. (2014) which demonstrated that the relationships between i-deals and their outcomes vary between Western and Eastern cultures. In this study, we have further specifically confirmed that the differences exist even among cultures of the same origin and countries of the same geographic area. This finding suggests that national culture should be considered a powerful factor to

investigate how i-deal practice works across cultures and how they should be applied in different cultural contexts to ensure their best function.

Results of the study led to several implications. First, our empirical evidence suggested a kind of paradox about i-deals. In this paper, we explained the difference in the effect size of i-deals among countries in terms of the scarcity of idiosyncratic deals currently provided in those countries. If this explanation is correct, there is a paradox in the effect of i-deals. The rarer i-deals are observed, the more they are valued. In other words, the more commonly i-deals are offered, the less employees would find them valuable and thus the less can i-deals contribute to organizational outcomes. This paradox raises managerial concerns about how ingeniously i-deal practice should be implemented and applied to help organizations achieve their intended goals.

Reported insignificance of correlations between some i-deal's dimensions and affective commitment indicates that i-deals do not always strengthen employees' commitment towards the organization as suggested in previous studies (Conway and Coyle-Shapiro, 2015). Management thus needs to put efforts into exploring which type of i-deals when operationalized would bring positive impact to the organization. Based on what was confirmed by our study, we suggest companies pay attention to the national culture as well as the current socioeconomic status of the country in which the company operates. As these factors affect the rareness of how present i-deal practice take place in a country, they are effective tools for an organization to search for which i-deals are favored by its labor workforce. Such meticulous scrutinization would increase the possibility of organizations to provide employees with their desired deals and consequently boost their chance of success in attracting and retaining talent.

Our findings also have significant contributions and implications to cross-cultural HRM. Though i-deals have been previously recognized to be a powerful tool to motivate and retain talented employees, the results of our study showed that the effects they had on employees' affective commitment were inconsistent across cultures. This finding strengthens the fact that HRM practices, in which i-deals are included, could not be applied without modifications to fit the culture of the country where they are implemented. As suggested by our research findings, i-deals were highly valued in some cultures while just moderately appreciated in other cultures. This result triggers the need

for managers, especially those in multinational companies to reconsider what and how the company should offer i-deals to its employees in different oversea branches. Thorough research on the local culture encompassing how employees perceive i-deals, how i-deals should be given, as well as what preferred conditions to include in the i-deal menu is imperative in building i-deal practices to be an organization's efficacious HRM and development instrument.

As stated above, the results of our study question the naive conclusion that i-deals are effective. Although resulted in, to some extent, some positive consequences, this practice does not always guarantee strong and continuous commitment of employees towards the organization. In cross - cultural HRM research, the traditional notion proposing that "multinational companies should globally unify their different practices" is still strong and influential (Collings et al., 2007). Nevertheless, along with the development of literature on cross-cultural management, it has been increasingly postulated and confirmed that practice which is quite effective for certain samples from a certain country (e.g. United States, Great Britain) may not be as effective for samples from another country (e.g Japan, China) (Schuler, Budhwar, and Florkowski, 2002; Collings, Scullion and Morley, 2007). Thus, rather than globalization, the localization of HRM practices is recently gaining support from researchers (Schuler, Budhwar, and Florkowski, 2002; Collings, Scullion and Morley, 2007). Results of our study contribute evidence to support this advanced strategy in managing people across cultures. I-deals, like many other HRM practices, should be arranged in accordance with the culture of the country in which the multinational company operates. The standardization of i-deals across all subsidiaries may not bring about the same effects since employees in each country appreciate each deal in different ways. We thus suggest a value-based approach when building i-deal practice for multinational companies. A robust and enriched i-deal menu is undoubtedly attractive, but the one created based on conscientious research on the needs of employees in each country will be the tool that brings global organizations closer to their intended goals.

Limitations and suggestions for future research

There are some limitations that the study could not avoid. First, the effects of corporate characteristics were not taken into account. In this study, instead of directly measuring the rareness of idiosyncratic deals, we focused on the differences in national

culture that could theoretically be assumed to affect the rareness. We assumed that the extent to which idiosyncratic deals are made for each dimension differ across countries. As social exchange theory argues, the rarer the idiosyncratic deals are, the higher they are valued by the receiving individuals (Blau, 1964). However, we have not directly measured the frequency of i-deals in each country. Instead, we focused on the power-distance score of each country and used it as a proxy variable to assume the frequency of i-deals. Nevertheless, power distance is just one among several aspects that allow us to predict the rareness of the offered i-deals in a certain culture. Future research therefore should attempt to seek other reliable proxies that help scrutinize the frequency of given i-deals. Obviously, we also encourage researchers to search for different approaches towards i-deals research instead of our proposed method which analyzed the issue through the rareness of i-deals.

Second, our study was unable to explore the influences of other organizational characteristics, such as company management style, company age, and level of diversity among employees. To understand the broader role of i-deals in shaping employment relationships, further studies in different contextual settings are needed. Future research should put efforts into building a robust research design concerning vigorous organizational features to strengthen the validity of the results.

The third and also the biggest limitation of this study lies on the research design. Because our survey design was cross-sectional, we measured both dependent variables and independent variables simultaneously using the same questionnaire. For this reason, we could not deny the possibility that common method bias might have happened (Podsakoff et al. 2003). Our data were not enough to determine which of these dependent variables are important. It is important to verify this by further studies with careful conditional control.

Finally, due to the difficulty in collecting several sets of data in different countries, our study only covered those in Japan, Thailand, and Singapore. The development of reliable data collecting systems in those countries allowed us to carry out online surveys within the time we were required to finish our project. Although the contributions of the study are considerable, we acknowledge that our selection of country samples was limited. Thus, further research with more extensive sample settings is needed

to gain more sophisticated understanding of how subtle cultural disparity impact the effects of i-deals on organizational outcomes. Furthermore, the extension of samples to Western countries could also be a challenging yet interesting trial that we recommend.

Note

- ¹⁾ In this paper, we clearly distinguish between (1) whether i-deals have a statistically significant impact on their outcomes (i.e., a significance level of regression coefficient), and (2) how is the size of the effect (i.e., the sizes of the regression coefficients).
- ²⁾ Unlike Liu et al. (2013) who studied cultural variables at the individual level, this paper focus on national-level culture. The reason is that this paper focuses on the degree to which people routinely observe differences in treatment between individuals, in other words, the degree of the rareness of i-deals.
- ³⁾ Gini coefficient was cited from (1) “Singapore in the Workplace” (Singapore Department of Statistics and Manpower Research Department), and (2) OECD Income Distribution Database (OECD).
- ⁴⁾ Since our data were collected by above mentioned research companies, we do not know how many people received the questionnaire in total.
- ⁵⁾ Therefore, in the following, H3a and H4a, and H3b and H3b will be discussed as identical.

References

- Adams, J. S. (1963). Towards an understanding of inequity. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 67(5): 422-436.
- Ali, H. (2020). Mutuality or mutual dependence in the psychological contract: A power perspective. *Employee Relations: The International Journal*, 42(1): 125–148.
- Allen, N. J. and Meyer, J. P. (1990). The Measurement and Antecedents of Affective, Continuance and Normative Commitment to the Organization. *Journal of Occupational Psychology*, 63: 1-18.
- Anand, S., Vidyarthi, P. R., Liden, R. C., and Rousseau, D. M. (2010). Good citizens in poor-quality relationships: Idiosyncratic deals as a substitute for relationship quality. *Academy of Management Journal*, 53(5): 970-988.
- Bal, P. M. (2019). Individualization of Work: Form Psychological contracts to Idiosyncratic Deals. *Handbook of Research on Psychological contracts*.
- Bal, P.M., and De Jong, S.B. (2017). From human resource management to human dignity development: a dignity perspective on HRM and the role of workplace democracy. In M. Kostera and M. Pirson (Ed.), *Dignity and Organizations*, (173-195). Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave MacMillan.

- Bal, P.M., and Dóci, E. (2018). Neoliberal ideology in work and organizational psychology. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 27(5): 536-548.
- Bal, P. M., and Hornung, S. (2019). Individualization of Work: From Psychological Contracts to Idiosyncratic Deals. In Greap, Y., and Cooper, C. (Ed.) *Handbook of Research on the Psychological Contract at Work*. Edward Elgar Pub.
- Bal, P.M., and Lub, X.D. (2015). Individualization of work arrangements: a contextualized perspective on the rise and use of i-deals. In P.M. Bal & D.M.Rousseau (Ed.), 26 *Idiosyncratic Deals between Employees and Organizations: Conceptual Issues, Applications, and the Role of Coworkers* (pp. 9-23). Hove, UK: Psychology Press.
- Bal, P. M., Van Kleef, M., and Jansen, P. G. (2015). The impact of career customization on work outcomes: Boundary conditions of manager support and employee age. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 36(3): 421-440.
- Blau, P. M. 1967. Exchange and power in social life. New York: Wiley.
- Chay, Y. W., and Aryee, S. (1999). Potential moderating influence of career growth opportunities on careerist orientation and work attitudes: Evidence of the protean career era in Singapore. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 20(5): 613-623.
- Collings, D. G., Scullion, H., and Morley, M. J. (2007). Changing patterns of global staffing in the multinational enterprise: Challenges to the conventional expatriate assignment and emerging alternatives. *Journal of World Business*, 42(2): 198-213.
- Conway, N., and Coyle-Shapiro, J. (2015). Not so i-deal: A critical review of idiosyncratic-deals theory and research. In P.M. Bal & D.M.Rousseau (Ed.), 26 *Idiosyncratic Deals between Employees and Organizations: Conceptual Issues, Applications, and the Role of Coworkers* (pp.201-245). Hove, UK: Psychology Press.
- Cropanzano, R., and Mitchell, M. S. (2005). Social exchange theory: An interdisciplinary review. *Journal of Management*, 31, 874-900.
- Bochner, S. (1994). Cross-cultural differences in the self-concept: A test of Hofstede's individualism/collectivism distinction. *Journal of Cross-cultural Psychology*, 25: 273-283.
- Dore, R. (1973). *British Factory Japanese Factory*, Routledge.
- Fang, Y., (2001). Turnover propensity and its causes among Singapore nurses: an empirical study. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 12(5): 859-871.
- Foa, E. B. and Foa, U. G. (2012). Resource theory of social exchange. In Tornblom, K., and Kazemi, A. (Ed.) *Handbook of Social Resource Theory: Theoretical Extensions, Empirical Insights, and Social Applications*. Springer Science Business Media, New York.
- Forbes, K. J. (2000). A reassessment of the relationship between inequality and growth. *American Economic Review*, 90: 869-887.
- Gorodnichenko, Y., and Roland, G. (2011). Which dimensions of culture matter for long-run growth?. *American Economic Review*, 101: 492-498.
- Greenberg, J., Roberge, Marie-Élène , Ho, V. T., Rousseau, D. M. (2004). Fairness in idiosyncratic work arrangements: Justice as an I-Deals. *Research in Personnel and Human Resources Management*, 23: 1-34, Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

- Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions, and Organizations Across Nations* 2nd ed. Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Homans, G.C. 1961. *Social behavior*. NY: Harcourt Brace.
- Hornung, S. and Rousseau, D. M. (2017). Psychological contracts and idiosyncratic deals: Mapping conceptual boundaries, common ground, and future research paths. *Riding the New Tides*.
- Bhatt, P. Jaiswal, B. Majumdar, and Verma, S. (2017). *Navigating the Future through Effective People Management*. New Delhi, India: Emerald.
- Gorodnichenko, Y., and Roland, G. (2011). Which dimensions of culture matter for long-run growth? *American Economic Review*, 101(3): 492-98.
- Hornung, S., Rousseau, D. M., and Glaser, J. (2008). Creating flexible work arrangements through idiosyncratic deals. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 93(3): 655-664.
- Hornung, S., Rousseau, D. M., and Glaser, J. (2009). Why supervisors make idiosyncratic deals: Antecedents and outcomes of I-deals from a managerial perspective. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 24: 738-764.
- Hornung, S., Rousseau, D. M., Glaser, J., Angerer, P., and Weigl, M. (2010). Beyond top-down and bottom-up work redesign: Customizing job content through idiosyncratic deals. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 31: 187-215.
- Kalleberg, A. L., Reskin, B., and Hudson, K. (2000). Bad jobs in America: Standard and nonstandard employment relations and job quality in the United States. *American Sociological Review*, 65: 256-278.
- Kosiyanon, L., and Yoshihara, K. (1985). Japanese management in Thailand. *Japanese Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 22: 374-390.
- Kreps, D. M. (1990). Corporate Culture and Economic Theory.” In James Alt and Kenneth Shepsle (eds), *Prespectives on Positive Political Economy*, Cambridge University Press: New York: 90-143.
- Kreps, D. M. (2004). *Microeconomics for Managers*, New York: W. W. Norton and Company.
- Lai, L., Rousseau, D. M., and Chang, K. T. T. (2009). Idiosyncratic deals: Coworkers as interested third parties. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 94(2): 547-556.
- Liao, C., Wayne, S. J., and Rousseau, D. M. (2014). Idiosyncratic deals in contemporary organizations: A qualitative and meta-analytical review. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 37: 9-29.
- Liu, J., Lee, C., Hui, C., Kwan, H. K., and Wu, L. Z. (2013). Idiosyncratic deals and employee outcomes: The mediating roles of social exchange and self-enhancement and the moderating role of individualism. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 98: 832-840.
- Markus, H. R., and Kitayama, S. (1991). Culture and the self: Implications for cognition, emotion, and motivation. *Psychological Review*, 98: 224-253.
- Mathieu, J. E., and Zajac, D. M. (1990). A review and meta-analysis of the antecedents, correlates, and consequences of organizational commitment. *Psychological bulletin*, 108: 171-194.
- Mehta, R., and Sivadas, E. (1995). Comparing response rates and response content in mail versus electronic surveys. *Journal of the Market Research Society*, 37: 429-440.
- Mobley, W., and McCall Jr, M. W. (2001). *Advances in global leadership*. Emerald Group Publishing.

- Morishima, M. (1996). Renegotiating psychological contracts: Japanese style. *Trends in Organizational Behavior*, 3: 139-158.
- Ng, T. W. H., and Feldman, D. C. (2010). Idiosyncratic deals and organizational commitment. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 76: 419-427.
- Ng, T. W., and Feldman, D. C. (2015). Idiosyncratic deals and voice behavior. *Journal of Management*, 41: 893-928.
- Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., Lee, J. Y., and Podsakoff, N. P. (2003). Common method biases in behavioral research: A critical review of the literature and recommended remedies. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88: 879-903.
- Rosen, C., Slater, D. J., and Johnson, R. E. (2013). Let's make a deal: Development and validation of the Ex Post I-Deals Scale. *Journal of Management*, 39: 709-742.
- Rousseau, D. M. (2001). Idiosyncratic deals: Flexibility versus fairness? *Organizational Dynamics*, 29: 260-273.
- Rousseau, D. M. (2005). *I-Deals: Idiosyncratic deals employees bargains for themselves*. M. E. Sharpe, Inc.
- Rousseau, D. M., Ho, V. T. and Greenberg, J. (2006). I-deals: idiosyncratic terms in employment relationships. *Academy of Management Review*, 31: 77-94.
- Rousseau, D., and Schalk, R. (2000). *Psychological contracts in employment: Cross-national perspectives*. Sage.
- Sako, M. (1992). *Prices, quality, and trust: inter-firm relations in Britain and Japan*. Cambridge University Press.
- Schuler, R. S., Budhwar, P. S., and Florkowski, G. W. (2002). International human resource management: review and critique. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 4(1): 41-70.
- Simosi, M., Rousseau, D. M., Weingart, L. R. (2021) Opening the black box of I-deals negotiation: Integrating I-deals and negotiation research. *Group & Organization Management*, 1059601121995379.
- Takahashi, K. (1997). Item characteristics of the organizational commitment scale and its application: Based on the Allen and Meyer three-dimensional commitment scale. *Japanese Journal of Administrative Science*, 11: 123-136.
- Trompenaars, F., and Hampden-Turner, C. (1998). *Riding the Waves of Culture: Understanding Diversity in Global Business 2nd*. Homewood, IL: Irwin.