

Peer Perspectives on Employee Idiosyncratic Deals*

JEONG-YEON LEE**

*Seoul National University
Seoul, Korea*

HYESOOK CHUNG***

*ILR School, Cornell University
Ithaca, U.S.A.*

ABSTRACT

In this paper, we attempt to describe the relationship between the observation of coworker idiosyncratic deals (i-deals; Rousseau et al., 2006; Rousseau, 2005) and employee turnover intention by incorporating two explanatory mechanisms: workplace flexibility and procedural justice. We hypothesize contrasting implications of coworker flexibility i-deals and developmental i-deals on these two mediating mechanisms. Based on a sample of 176 employees, we find differential implications for the two types of i-deals and mediators. We discuss these findings and the implications of our research.

Keywords: idiosyncratic deals, turnover intention, workplace flexibility, procedural justice

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** Professor, Graduate School of Business, Seoul National University, 1 Gwanak-ro, Gwanak-gu, Seoul, 08826, Korea. E-mail: jaytalks@snu.ac.kr, Tel: +82-2-880-8252.

*** Department of Human Resource Studies, ILR School, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853-3901, U.S.A. Email: hc329@cornell.edu.

INTRODUCTION

Idiosyncratic deals (or i-deals) are special terms of employment negotiated between individual workers and their employers that satisfy *both* parties' needs (Rousseau et al., 2006). In a modern employment situation, which is characterized by a competitive and global environment, maintaining skilled workers becomes a key issue. The flexibility offered by i-deals may be an essential ingredient for both employers and employees in retaining knowledge workers (Rousseau, 2001, 2004, 2005; Rousseau et al., 2006). In particular, i-deals can be an efficient employment contracting mode given the rapidly changing environment that has been represented by a "boundaryless career" (Arther & Rousseau, 1996).

Since i-deal research has begun, most studies conceptualized i-deal initiation and obtainment as a social exchange, leader-member exchange, and political process identifying the following major outcomes: work family conflict (Hornung et al., 2008), commitment (Liu et al., 2013; NG & Feldman, 2010, 2012; Hornung et al., 2008), organizational citizenship behavior (Anand et al., 2010), proactive behaviors (Liu et al., 2013), subordinate outcomes such as performance career promotability and socially connecting behaviors (Rofcanin et al., 2018). The dominant approach involves an employee perspective focusing on who earns successful i-deals and what employee outcomes are associated with i-deals. A couple studies also cover the supervisor perspective regarding when supervisors grant i-deals (Hornung et al., 2009) and whether supervisor i-deals are related with those of employees and also their work outcomes (Rofcanin, 2018).

Although the relevance of i-deals exists, particularly in the context of keeping and maintaining talent, empirical studies on the role of i-deals in reducing employee turnover or turnover intentions have just begun (Liao et al., 2014; Ho & Tekleab, A. G., 2013). Likewise, recent meta-analysis of turnover (Rubenstein et al., 2018) identifies seven big antecedent categories of turnover (i.e., individual attributes, aspects of jobs, job attributes, personal condition organizational context, person-context interface, and external job market). However, it does not list i-deals as antecedents of turnover. This is still a significant void in both i-deal and turnover literature because the utility of i-deals can be highlighted most effectively when they help organizations keep knowledge workers from

leaving. In fact, the original motivation of Rousseau et al.'s (2006) conceptualization of i-deals came from the belief that existence of i-deals may be equated with a situation where organizations are able to create "win-win scenarios for both employee and employer." One clear win-win scenario in i-deal literature is helping organizations attract and maintain knowledge workers and talents within the organizations.

Despite almost normative hope embedded in the very definition of i-deals, in reality, the aforementioned "win-win scenarios" associated with i-deals may be a relative concept depending on whose perspective (i.e., self, peer, or supervisor) is taken into consideration and the dominant criteria (justice vs. flexibility) that these stakeholders may use. For this reason, prior i-deal literature has emphasized the need to investigate stakeholder perspectives other than employees themselves including co-workers (Lai et al., 2009) and supervisors (Anand et al., 2011; Hornung et al., 2009). However, empirical research on other stakeholder perspectives is at its early stage. More importantly, a comprehensive framework that embraces the relative and competing meaning of i-deals has been lacking in the literature.

Given these voids, in this research we attempt to investigate the relationship between i-deals and turnover intention. In doing so, we first focus on the relationship between employee sense of their *coworker i-deals* and employee turnover intention. Second, we consider the possibility that two kinds of coworker i-deals, flexibility and developmental i-deals, may bear different implications for employee turnover intention. Third, we investigate two different potentially competing mediators between coworker i-deals and turnover intention: workplace flexibility and workplace justice, particularly procedural justice.

In the following pages, we review relevant literature to outline different types of i-deals and the role of two competing mediators on the relationship between i-deals and turnover intention. After the formulation of hypotheses, empirical tests of the hypotheses using a sample of corporate training center of a large medical device company in the United States are presented. Finally, we summarize the results and provide a discussion of the findings.

THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

A few studies have recently suggested that an individual's i-deals are negatively related to his/her turnover intentions (Ho & Tekleab, 2013; Liao et al., 2014). In testing the relationship between workplace i-deal use and employee turnover intention, we acknowledge that there may be fundamental differences between when employees themselves engage in i-deals and when employees observe their coworkers engaging in i-deals. When employees engage in i-deals by negotiating with and getting approval from their supervisor, both parties feel benefited in the i-deals. However, an employee's reactions to their coworker's i-deals may be more complex than employee perceptions of their own i-deals (Lai et al., 2009; Rousseau et al., 2006). A comparison between coworker and employee is necessary as the employment terms are different in i-deals. Furthermore, actor-observer differences (Jones & Nisett, 1972) and self-serving bias might exist in processing the meanings of coworkers' i-deals. Thus, in this paper, we examine workplace flexibility and justice perception of employees as well as subsequent turnover intentions relating to coworkers' i-deals.

Content of i-deals

Prior research has suggested that there are two kinds of i-deals: one regarding flexible scheduling of work hours and the other about opportunities for skill and career development (Rousseau et al., 2009; Hornung et al., 2008). Rosen et al. (2013) added other components for flexibility i-deals, such as flexibility in terms of financial incentives, location, and job content (task and work responsibility) in addition to flexibility in work hours. Previous research also suggests that flexibility i-deals and developmental i-deals create different outcomes for employees (Hornung et al., 2008).

The theoretical/conceptual differentiation of these different types (flexible vs. developmental i-deals) was made previously (Rousseau et al., 2009; Hornung et al., 2008). Studies point out the negative consequence for flexible i-deals in the workplace as they often create conflict with existing norms. For example, i-deal makers whose flexible i-deals (i.e., flexible hours) depart from widely held-norms (e.g., negotiating shorter work days where advancement requires

long work hours) may face a negative image. Those workers who ask for flexible work arrangements may face lower performance evaluations (Perlow, 1997). Workers who approach the work role differently from their peers (in terms of hours worked and availability to peers) may signal a lack of commitment to high performance. On the other hand, as opposed to flexible i-deals, these studies suggest that developmental i-deals carry a more positive effect on the employment relationship. This is because flexible i-deals often deal with economic conditions of employment that are more visible and monetarily tied. In contrast, developmental i-deals center on social exchange that involves socio emotional needs of personal growth and their social recognition (Rousseau et al., 2009). For this reason, developmental i-deals are advocated and viewed in a positive light by supervisors and peers (Rofcanin et al., 2018).

Empirical evidence suggests that those employees who negotiated developmental i-deals indeed faced positive performance expectations in the workplace while those with flexible i-deals did not (Hornung et al., 2008). Employee engagement in developmental i-deals, by strengthening a worker's involvement and consuming more personal resources, were *positively* associated with work-family conflict, amount of overtime, and performance expectation. On the other hand, flexibility i-deals were *negatively* associated with work-family conflict and amount of overtime.

Although direct comparisons have not been made, overall, prior research suggests that the benefits of i-deals in terms of reducing work-family conflict, workload (over time), and performance expectation are greater for flexibility i-deals than developmental i-deals. The implications for employee observations of coworkers engaging in these two types of i-deals, however, have not been theorized in the literature. We propose that employee turnover intention may depend on co-worker i-deals and that the relationship is fostered through two types of mediators: workplace flexibility and workplace justice.

Coworker i-deals as a source of workplace flexibility

Obviously the term workplace flexibility itself is elastic enough to mean two different concepts from an *organizational* and *worker* perspective (Hill et al., 2008). From an *organizational* perspective, the term workplace flexibility is often used to refer to “the degree

to which organizational features incorporate a level of flexibility that allows them [organizations] to adapt to changes in the environment” (Dastamalchian & Bylyton, 2001, p. 1). Examples of workplace flexibility include flexibility in manufacturing systems (e.g., FMS, TQM, and Job rotations) (Beyers & Lindhal, 1999) or dynamically adjusting workforce size (e.g., easier layoff, use of contract and contingent workers) (Huang & Collen, 2001). From the *worker* perspective, however, workplace flexibility refers to “the degree to which workers are able to make choices to arrange core aspects of their professional lives, particularly regarding where, when, and for how long work is performed” (Hill et al., 2008, pp 151). The underlying assumption behind the idea of workplace flexibility is that workers will be more motivated and engage in the workplace when they can exercise flexibility. The term “flexible work arrangements” is often used synonymously with workplace flexibility in the literature (Allen et al., 2013). The focus of our paper is on this workplace flexibility from a worker perspective.

Although the literature pays little attention, workplace flexibility perceived by employees may be subject to self-serving bias, where their own chance to gain flexible arrangements is the main criteria to evaluate workplace flexibility rather than the normative values and beliefs they see in such a construct. Along a similar vein, in previous i-deal studies (Lai et al., 2009; Rousseau et al., 2006), a coworker’s willingness to approve i-deal attempts from a specific employee depends on the likelihood of getting similar special arrangements. In addition to self-serving bias, based on this “me, too” framework, a completely opposing employee assessment of the likelihood of getting special arrangements are possible, when employees observe coworkers engaging in flexibility i-deals vs. developmental i-deals.

When these two types of coworker i-deals are considered together, we argue that the observation of coworker flexibility i-deals will negatively affect an employee’s sense of workplace flexibility because a co-worker’s successful negotiation of flexibility i-deals reduces the likelihood of their chance to get the same type of deal. This is because flexible i-deals involve economic exchange in nature (Rousseau et al., 2009). Many of the fruits of flexibility i-deals are personal rewards (i.e., pay/benefits, time, location, and content of the work) for which coworkers are often competing against one another. With a reduced chance of getting the rewards for themselves, self-serving bias may begin operating in a way that co-

worker i-deals may be interpreted as a weakened chance of getting flexible arrangements for themselves, thereby creating a reduced sense of workplace flexibility.

On the other hand, when two types of i-deals are considered together, the observation of a coworker engaging in developmental i-deals will be positively associated with an employee sense of workplace flexibility. While signaling fluidity of work arrangements, coworker developmental i-deals do not lessen the chance for employees to receive flexible work arrangements. In fact, many objects of developmental i-deals are viewed as requiring significant commitment, workload, and performance expectations rather than rewards (Lai et al., 2009). Co-workers committing to such i-deals will create greater room for employees to negotiate and receive flexible work arrangements, resulting in a positive relationship between developmental co-worker i-deals and workplace flexibility. Therefore, we hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 1: An employee's observation of coworker *flexibility i-deal* will be negatively associated with perceived workplace flexibility.

Hypothesis 2: An employee's observation of coworker *developmental i-deal* will be positively associated with perceived workplace flexibility.

I-deals as source of injustice

Although i-deals mostly occur between an employee and manager, due to the visible aspects of the special arrangement (e.g., changes in work assignment, reduced workload, flexible work schedules, working from home), the presence of i-deals will become known to other employees who monitor the treatment by managers. An employee's knowledge of his/her coworkers' different employment arrangements may cause the employee to feel that the coworkers are over-benefited, which in turn evokes feelings of underpayment within the employee regardless of whether or not the coworkers deserve i-deals (Greenberg et al., 2004). This is because i-deals represent an exception to the standardized employment practices that provide fair treatment across employees in the organization (Rousseau, 2005). According to Equity theory (Adams, 1965), individuals are concerned about the outcomes relative to their

inputs and compare their ratio against the ratio of coworkers. Employee inputs are often captured in their workloads or work hours. Thus, when the employees (without i-deals) work longer hours or with less flexibility than their coworkers, but receive the similar levels of outcome such as pay or promotion, they will likely feel a sense of injustice. This may be especially true in the current trend of rising workloads in the workplace (e.g., the 2013 Work and Well-being Survey by American Psychological Association). Moreover, the more frequently employees observe their coworkers engaging in i-deals, the more diminished perceptions of justice the employees may form. Therefore, we argue that coworker i-deals can be viewed as procedurally unfair to employees.

When the two types of coworker i-deals are considered simultaneously, contrasting implications associated with them may shadow over workplace procedural justice. Previous literature suggests that when it comes to viewing their own i-deals, employees regard flexibility i-deals in a positive light, while viewing developmental i-deals in a negative light. While employees regard their own flexibility i-deals as tools to reduce work-life conflict, workload, and performance expectations, they view developmental i-deals as requiring more commitment, more workload, and a higher level of performance expectations (Lai et al., 2009).

However, when it comes to looking at coworker i-deals over these two types of i-deals, the positive and negative views are likely to be reversed. First, self-serving bias may exist. When a flexibility i-deal, which is a more desirable outcome for employees, is negotiated and successfully taken by the co-workers, the level of employee relative deprivation is likely to be high, and the sense of justice, particularly in terms of the procedure the deal is made, is likely to be low. A co-worker initiation of a developmental i-deal, on the other hand, as it requires significant commitment and work, is not only unthreatening but could also be perceived as even beneficial because of the indirect benefits (i.e., more efficient cooperation and learning from each other), thereby creating the sense of justice. Rofcanin et al. (2018) propose that the positive image associated with developmental i-deals among peers is likely to be facilitated via managers. Their argument is that since managers are the direct recipients of developmental i-deals (i.e., participation in a new training program), managers are better positioned to understand the needs of their subordinates for developmental i-deals to have

subordinates view such deals as just ones, and to encourage them to initiate such type of i-deals. Rofcanin et al. (2018) further suggest that managers' signals of the negotiation for development i-deals are appropriate and in line with norms and expectations of the work context. Based on this 'trickle-down effect of development i-deals' from managers, they found that managers' *development i-deals* are positively associated with subordinates' development i-deals, work performance, career promotability, and socially connecting behaviors respectively. These associations can be also explained by work-adjustment theory (Baltes et al., 1999), which suggests that those employees who have the opportunity to adjust their tasks and work toward their individual skills become highly motivated and successful in their work and careers. Those peers who succeeded with developmental i-deals in their career are viewed in a relatively positive fashion among peers.

Given that many organizations still employ standardized work arrangements, flexibility i-deals initiated/negotiated by coworkers could easily go against company or group norms while developmental i-deals are perfectly in line with the norms (Rousseau et al., 2009; Hornung et al., 2008). A recent study suggests that employee cognition of internal labor market operations (characterized more as standardized employment arrangements) in the workplace reduces employee i-deal requests (Lee et al., 2015). This suggests that when standardized work arrangements are the norm, coworker flexibility i-deals may be viewed to be inappropriate and also *unjust* as they become an exception of the standardized arrangements. On the other hand, however rigid the standardized arrangements they may have, organizations typically allow flexibility in employee training opportunities and skill development since they are typically more long-term and team-oriented in nature. For this reason, observations of coworker developmental i-deals are likely to be perceived as procedurally just. Therefore, we hypothesized the following:

Hypothesis 3: An employee's observation of coworker *flexibility i-deals* will be *negatively* associated with employees' justice perception

Hypothesis 4: An employee's observation of coworker *developmental i-deals* will be *positively* associated with employee's justice perception.

Workplace flexibility and turnover intention

As implied by the main thrust of i-deals, the role of workplace flexibility plays key role in the modern employment relationship. Employee perceptions of workplace flexibility not only affect their physical and mental health (Grzywacz, Casey, & Jones, 2007) but also may negatively affect their turnover intention. For employees, their perception of workplace flexibility is closely linked with their sense of work-life balance (Hill, Hawkins, Ferris, & Weitzman, 2001). Several studies suggest that an employee's sense of work-life balance and related human resource practices, in fact, lower employee turnover intention through enhanced employee commitment (Huang, Lawler, & Lei, 2007), perceived organizational support (Casper & Harris, 2008), sense of control over managing work and family (Batt & Valcour, 2003), and reduced sense of work-family conflict (Batt et al., 2003). Thus, the following is hypothesized.

Hypothesis 5: Workplace flexibility will be negatively associated with employee turnover intention.

Procedural justice and turnover intention

According to the group value model (Lind & Tyler, 1988), unfair treatment by organizational agents (e.g., managers) signals to employees that they are not valued group members. As such, employee perceptions of unfair treatment indicate their marginal position within the group. This will lead to their decreased trust in and obligations to the group or organization to which they belong. Research on indirect reciprocity involving the third party (i.e., coworkers) suggests that individuals may direct their reciprocating behavior (positive or negative) toward the organization instead of the actual beneficiary of the returned favor (i.e., i-deals). That is, instead of blaming their coworkers for their special arrangements, employees may hold the organization (represented by the manager) accountable for the unfair decisions, and as a result decreasing their identification with and commitment to the organization. Additionally, they may try to restore balance by withdrawing their work effort and thinking about quitting. Research findings also suggest that an employee's sense of justice is negatively associated with their intent to quit (Alexander & Ruderman, 1987; Dailey

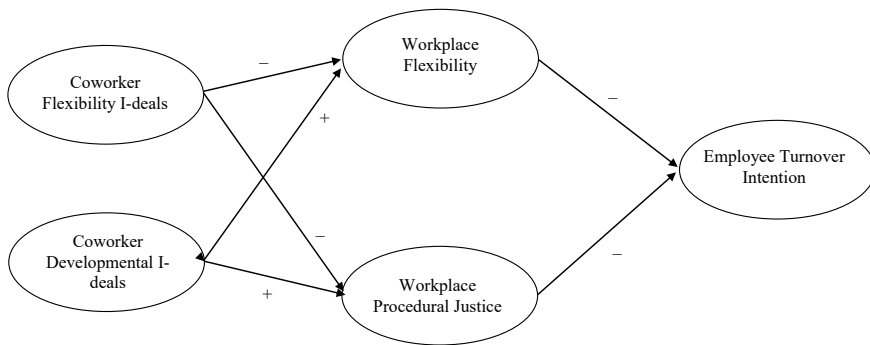


Figure 1: Compensatory process of effects of co-worker i-deal observation on employee turnover intention

& Kirk, 1992; Konovsky & Cropanzano, 1991; Masterson, Lewis, Goldman, & Taylor, 2000; Miceli, Jung, Near, & Greenberger, 1991; Sweeney & McFarlin, 1997). Accordingly, we propose:

Hypothesis 6: Workplace procedural justice will be negatively associated with employee turnover intention.

Given the relationships between an employee's observation of coworker i-deals and flexibility as proposed in Hypothesis 1 and 2, Hypothesis 5 allows us to propose differential mediating effects of flexibility based on the type of i-deals. While employee observations of coworker flexibility i-deals may increase turnover intention by a reduced perception of flexibility, employee observations of coworker developmental i-deals will decrease employee turnover intention by increasing perceived workplace flexibility. Likewise, the combination of Hypothesis 3 and 4 along with Hypothesis 6 suggests that differential mediating relationships may be possible for procedural justice. As per flexibility i-deals, the positive effects of coworkers' i-deals on employee turnover intentions will be realized through their reduced perception of workplace justice. In contrast, developmental i-deals will reduce employee turnover intention through enhanced procedural justice. Even though we do not officially hypothesize these mediation relationships, we test the mediating effects. A brief research model that sums up the hypotheses is presented as Figure 1.

METHODS

Participants and Procedure

The data was collected from corporate training center participants of a large medical device company located in California. 549 participants who were enrolled in one of six training programs that dealt with the four topics (Leadership, Human Resource Management, Teamwork, and Project Management) between 2005 and 2010 were identified with the help of the corporate training center. These participants were contacted through email to participate in the study. After three email invitations were made to participate in the online survey, a total of 205 individuals responded (response rate: 37.34%). Among the respondents, 29 individuals did not complete the survey. Thus, the final sample size was 176. By limiting the sample to roughly the same type of program participants and single institution, we could diminish the compounding effects of unobserved variables whose variability is at department or institution level, such as influence of discipline-specific education, departmental reputation, and pedagogical atmosphere on a participant's future career or job-related behaviors. In addition, all respondents were in the same generation (mean age = 35.46, s.d. = 0.46). This enabled us to lessen the concern that generation-specific norm or social-economic experience might bias the statistical conclusion. 30% of the participants were female, and the mean tenure was 3.06 years (s.d = 2.75).

Measurement

Coworker flexibility i-deals. Coworker flexibility i-deals was measured with five 7-point (1: never, 2: very rarely, 3: rarely, 4: occasionally, 5: frequently, 6: very frequently, and 7: always) Likert scale items adopted from Rosen et al., (2013). Sample items are "I have seen some coworkers in my organization: negotiating for and receive special pay and benefit deals; choosing suitable work schedules as a result of personal deal-making with our management; making deals with management regarding with whom they will work." Cronbach's α for the scale was .68.

Coworker developmental i-deals. Three items adapted from

Rousseau and Kim (2006) were used to measure coworker developmental i-deals. Items are “I have seen some coworkers in my organization: asking for and successfully negotiating for training opportunities; being assigned tasks that develop their skills at their request; successfully negotiating with management for additional resources.” The same 7-point Likert scale as flexibility i-deals was used. Cronbach’s α for the measure was .73.

Workplace flexibility. To measure workplace flexibility, participants responded to three items from Hill, Hawkins, Ferris, and Weitzman (2001). Items were “In your work place, how much flexibility do you see in: selecting the location of where you work; scheduling when you do your work; scheduling what work you do.” A 7-point Likert scale was used (1: none, 2: little, 3: a little, 4: somewhat, 5: much, 6: a great deal, and 7: complete flexibility). Cronbach’s α for this measure was .68.

Justice. Justice was measured with five items developed by Niehoff and Moorman (1993). A 5-point Likert scale was used (1: strongly disagree to 5: strongly agree). Sample items include “job decisions are made by the company in an unbiased manner; to make my formal job decisions, my company collects accurate and complete information; employees are allowed to challenge or appeal job decisions made by the company.” The reliability of the scale (Cronbach’s α) was .86.

Turnover intention. Three items of the turnover intention scale (Colarelli, 1984) were used to measure intention to leave the current organization. A 5-point Likert scale (1: strongly disagree to 5: strongly agree) was applied to the three items (if I have my own way, I will be working for this organization in one year from now [reverse coded]; I frequently think of quitting my job; I am planning to search for a new job during the next 2 months). Cronbach’s α for the items was .83.

Control variables. To address other factors that might affect turnover intention, controlled were external mobility opportunity, affective commitment to the organization, and gender of the respondents. Firstly, when an employee perceives opportunities in an external job market as favorable, turnover intention is likely to

increase *ceteris paribus*. Four items (Cronbach's $\alpha = .79$) with 5-point Likert scale (1: strongly disagree to 5: strongly agree) adopted from Price and Mueller (1986) were used to measure external mobility. Sample items are "it would be easy for me to find a job with another employer that is as good as the job as I now have; it would be easy for me to find a job with another employer that is better than the job I now have." Secondly, if an employee maintains strong emotional attachment towards the current organization, his or her intention to leave would be lower than others in the same situation. Thus, employees' affective organizational commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1997) was included to the model as a control variable. Cronbach's α for the four items (e.g., I do not feel emotionally attached to my company [reverse coded]; my company has a great deal of personal meaning for me) was .85. Finally, gender (1: female, 0: male) was controlled. While the literature showed mixed findings (Lee, 2012), past studies reported that there were significant differences between male and female in turnover behaviors, especially when specific reasons (i.e., personal or family related issues) for turnover was considered (Lee, Gerhart, Weller, & Trevor, 2008; Sicherman, 1996; Theodossiou, 2002).

Measurement model test. Before testing the hypotheses, the construct validity of the variables was examined. First, a principal component analysis with promax rotation was conducted for the two main variables, coworker developmental i-deals and coworker flexibility i-deals, to confirm their distinctiveness as well as the appropriateness of the item-construct link. Table 1 presents the results from the analysis. The number of factors with an eigenvalue 1 or greater was two, which jointly explained 54.16% of the total variance. Although every item showed greater correlation with the initially intended component, the statistical classification of item 4 of flexibility i-deals ("coworkers choose a project that they want to pursue through a negotiation with management") and item 1 of development i-deals ("coworkers successfully negotiate with management for additional resources") was not distinctively clear. However, we decided to keep those items based on theoretical reasons. First, discretion to select a task through the negotiation with managers fits well into the definition of flexibility i-deals. Second, if additional work-related resources can be attained depending on the results from negotiation with management, then

Table 1. Principal Component Analysis

Coworker i-deals	Items	Component Structure	
		1	2
	I have seen some co-workers in my organization:		
Flexibility i-deals 1	Negotiate for and receive special pay and benefit deals		0.711
Flexibility i-deals 2	Make deals with management regarding with whom they will work		0.660
Flexibility i-deals 3	Choose suitable work schedules as a result of personal deal-making with our management		0.625
Flexibility i-deals 4	Negotiate with management to choose a work location of their preference		0.624
Flexibility i-deals 5	Choose a project (or work focus) that they wanted to pursue through a negotiation with management		0.614
Development i-deals 1	Ask for and successfully negotiate for training opportunities	0.873	
Development i-deals 2	Be assigned tasks that develop their skills at their request	0.838	
Development i-deals 3	Successfully negotiate with management for additional resources (such as increased budgets, additional staff support, machines or equipment, and databases or software)	0.581	

Note. $n = 176$. Rotation method: promax with Kaiser normalization. Loadings higher than .50 are reported.

individual deals count in terms of career development, considering that such additional resources can boost the performance of the employees and, consequently, career development in the long run. Next, the measurement model of the variables was further examined with confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). With Mplus 7.0 (Muthen & Muthen, 2012), 1-factor model ($\chi^2 = 82.03$, $df = 20$, $p < .001$, CFI = .705, RMSEA = .152, SRMR = .167) in which both flexibility i-deals items and development i-deals items were loaded on a single factor, was compared to 2-factor model ($\chi^2 = 52.74$, $df = 19$, $p < .001$, CFI = .907, RMSEA = .059, SRMR = .066) where flexibility i-deals items were loaded on one factor and development i-deals items were

loaded on the other factor. The result of the difference test for the nested models supported the 2-factor model ($\Delta\chi^2 = 29.29$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$). This implies that flexibility i-deals are validly distinct from development i-deals. In addition to the one-to-one comparison, which only considered the two i-deals variables, CFA was performed for the full measurement model ($\chi^2 = 374.41$, $df = 232$, $p < .001$), which contained all the variables in the research model to verify the general validity of the entire measurement structure. Based on the rule of thumb (Klein, 2011), the goodness-of-fit indices indicated an acceptable fit with the data (CFI = .907, RMSEA = .059, SRMR = .066). Accordingly, we decided to proceed further to test our hypotheses.

RESULTS

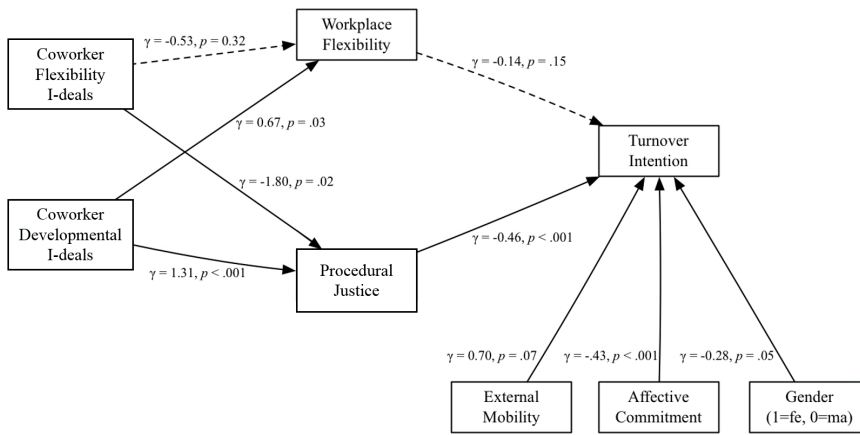
Table 2 presents descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, correlation, and reliabilities) for the variables used in the subsequent analyses. Unsurprisingly, flexibility i-deals were positively correlated with development i-deals ($r = .49$, $p < .001$). In addition, as expected, workplace flexibility was significantly correlated with flexibility i-deals ($r = .18$, $p = .02$). When it comes to development i-deals, they were positively correlated with justice ($r = .29$, $p < .001$) and affective organizational commitment ($r = .15$, $p = .05$), and negatively correlated with turnover intention ($r = -.21$, $p = .01$).

Structural equation modeling was used to test the hypotheses using Mplus 7.0 with maximum likelihood estimation (Muthen & Muthen, 2007). Figure 2 presents the structural model tested along with path coefficients and significance for the relationships between the variables. The model fit ($\chi^2 = 487.88$, $df = 310$, $p < .001$, CFI = .904, RMSEA = .057, SRMR = .071) was appropriate as in the measurement model. As expected, affective organizational commitment was negatively related with turnover intention of employees ($\gamma = -0.43$, $p < .001$). In addition, external mobility seemed to be positively related to intention to leave the current organization, at least, marginally ($\gamma = 0.70$, $p = .07$). Females turned out to have less turnover intention than males ($\gamma = -0.28$, $p = .05$). This might be because most participants of this study are in the early stage of their career. Mobility or job change pays off most at the early stage (Lam, Ng, & Feldman, 2012). If young male employees tend to exploit

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

	Variables	mean	s.d.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.	Gender	0.31	0.46							
2.	Coworker flexibility i-deals	3.28	0.90	-.08						
3.	Coworker developmental i-deals	4.13	1.16	.02	.49 **					
4.	Workplace flexibility	3.75	1.12	-.04	.18 *	.14				
5.	Procedural justice	3.22	0.81	.04	.11	.29 **	.32 **			
6.	Turnover intention	2.44	1.07	-.17 *	-.02	-.21 **	-.27 **	-.52 **		
7.	External mobility	2.89	0.72	-.11	.04	-.03	.01	-.15	.15 *	
8.	Affective commitment	3.35	0.94	.07	-.06	.15 *	.25 **	.48 **	-.61 **	.03

Note. n = 176. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$



Note. Solid lines indicate significant paths, and dashed lines denote non-significant paths.

Figure 2. Structural Equation Model Results

this opportunity in the labor market more aggressively than female counterparts, their intention to leave the current firm also might be higher than those of young female employees.

Hypothesis 1 predicted a negative relationship between flexibility i-deals and workplace flexibility. As can be seen in Figure 2, the relationship was not significant ($\gamma = -0.53, p = .32$). Thus, hypothesis 1 was not supported. In contrast, hypothesis 2, which expected a positive relationship between development i-deals and workplace flexibility was supported ($\gamma = 0.67, p = .03$). In hypothesis 3, a negative relationship was assumed for flexibility i-deals and justice. As expected, the path coefficient was significantly negative ($\gamma = -1.80, p = .02$). Therefore, hypothesis 3 was supported. Hypothesis 4 proposed that development i-deals, unlike flexibility i-deals, would be positively related with justice. Model results supported the prediction ($\gamma = 1.31, p < .001$). Thus, hypothesis 4 was also supported.

Hypothesis 5 predicted a negative relationship between workplace flexibility and turnover intention. The relationship was not significant, ($\gamma = -0.14, p = .15$). Therefore, Hypothesis 5 was not supported. Hypothesis 6 also predicted that procedural justice is negatively associated with turnover intention. The path coefficient was negative and significant ($\gamma = -0.46, p < .001$), supporting

Table 3. Indirect Effects of Coworker I-deals on Turnover Intention

Variables	Mediator	Indirect effect		Bootstrapping (bias corrected) 95% CI of indirect effect	
		Point estimate	sig. (two-tailed)	Lower	Upper
Coworker Flexibility i-deals	Workplace flexibility	0.08	.40	-0.086	1.084
	Procedural justice	0.83	.04	0.048	4.103
Coworker Developmental i-deals	Workplace flexibility	-0.10	.21	-0.495	0.030
	Procedural justice	-0.60	.01	-2.223	-0.185

Hypothesis 6.

We also assumed potential indirect effects of i-deals on employee turnover intention via workplace flexibility and justice perception. Table 3 shows estimates of the indirect effects with bias corrected confidence intervals retrieved from bootstrapping (iteration: 5000). As can be seen in the table, workplace flexibility did not mediate the effects from i-deals to turnover intention. However, development i-deals had a *negative* indirect influence (indirect effects: -0.60, $p = .01$) on turnover intention via justice perception, and flexibility i-deals had significant *positive* indirect effects (indirect effects: 0.83, $p = .04$) on turnover intention via justice perception in the expected direction.

DISCUSSION

The study is first to investigate the relationship between co-worker i-deals and employee turnover intention. In doing so, the study highlights two lenses that employees may adopt in viewing co-worker i-deals: justice and flexibility. These seemingly conflicting criteria (i.e., justice and flexibility) are likely to be the core bases of the focal employee response (i.e., employee turnover intention) to co-worker i-deals, and our study was designed to investigate the interplay between these two constructs by conceptualizing justice

and flexibility as key mediators *at the same time*. In doing so, two different types of coworker i-deals, developmental and flexibility i-deals were considered.

Our research reveals several interesting and meaningful findings. First, we find that between flexibility and justice, justice is the main mediating mechanism that governs the nature of the relationship between coworker i-deals and employee turnover intention. This is interesting because previous studies have emphasized the virtue of i-deals through the workplace flexibility that i-deals offer (Ng and Feldman, forthcoming; Hornung et al., 2010; Rosen et al., 2013; Rousseau et al., 2006). However, it is also consistent with previous theorizations of i-deals in that coworkers may be more sensitive to justice issues associated with i-deals (Lai et al., 2009; Rousseau, 2005). Second, our results suggest that, with justice as the main criterion, employees possess quite contrasting positions on the two types of coworker i-deals: developmental vs. flexibility i-deals. In particular, employees not only viewed coworker developmental i-deals procedurally just but also, through the perception of justice, reduced their turnover intention. On the other hand, employee observations of coworker flexibility i-deals were *inversely* associated with their sense of procedural justice in the workplace. In addition, observing such co-worker flexibility i-deals increased their intent to quit through the reduction of procedural justice. This suggests that developmental i-deals may be much more in agreement with group norms in many occupations and organizations while controversy may exist over flexibility i-deals.

Even though workplace flexibility has been highlighted more frequently in the literature, a simple switch of perspective from employee to coworker allowed us to discover that justice may be a stronger framework to explain coworker responses to i-deals. That is, the presence of coworker i-deals was a *weak* signal of workplace flexibility to employees when justice was taken into consideration at the same time. On the other hand, coworker i-deals were interpreted as a strong source of workplace justice for the employees.

Although flexibility was not the main mediating mechanism, it is worthwhile to note that employees perceived workplace flexibility by observing coworkers engaging in *developmental* i-deals. Coworker engagement in developmental i-deals may signal a fluid nature of employment terms and conditions without emphasizing the short-term, zero-sum nature of the negotiation game with management

in acquiring scarce rewards (more pay, autonomy, and control) and without reminding employees that coworkers are competitors in these games. Most importantly, co-worker developmental i-deals may make employees over-evaluate their chance of getting flexible work arrangements as developmental i-deals often require further commitments from coworkers (Lai et al., 2009).

Our study is not without limitations. First of all, our dependent variable was the intention to turnover. Respondents may act or not act upon such intention. A bit of caution is needed for readers in interpreting our results - not all intentions will likely lead to action. However, attitude theory generally supports that the intent is the best predictor of behavior (Price & Muller, 1981). Empirical studies found a strong correlation between the two constructs (e.g., Cho and Lewis, 2012; Lee & Whitford, 2007; Griffeth et al., 2000). Secondly, although self-reporting is necessary given the fact that our research deals with employee evaluations of coworker i-deals, relying on a single data source for our independent and dependent variables may lead to common method biases (Podsakoff et al. 2003). However, we believed that common method variance is less likely since our i-deal measures were tapping the frequency of coworker i-deals, which is more objective in nature. It is also worthwhile to mention that additional objective and subjective antecedents of turnover intention and justice are missing in our dataset. For example, employee pay differentials may affect an employee sense of justice and increase turnover intention (Park et al., 2013), serving as a confounding variable. These objective antecedents of turnover may distort or intertwine with proposed psychological variables in our study. Therefore, future studies may benefit to include pay variables in extending the current study. In addition, employee evaluations of outside options are missing in our dataset, but they may play a key role in creating a sense of justice and turnover intention. For example, employees with the lack of outside options might be sensitive to justice related issues in the organization. Therefore, the lack of outside options and resulting narrowed focus on justice issues may strengthen the negative effect of coworker flexibility i-deals on the sense of justice. Future studies may extend the theoretical model and include the employee's evaluation of outside options as a potential moderator. Future studies may also benefit by extending the theoretical relationships proposed in this study in the collectivistic culture. Previous studies suggest that

outcome favorability may affect the sense of procedural justice in a different magnitude depending on the national culture (Choi, 2003). There is a possibility that coworker developmental i-deals may be perceived as promoting group outcome favorability and coworker flexibility i-deals promoting individual outcome favorability. If this is the case, in a collectivistic culture, the effects we proposed may be pronounced.

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