
Analyzing the Effect of High - Involvement HR Practices on Flexibility and Task Idiosyncratic Deals

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to analyze the effect of high involvement HR practices on idiosyncratic deals namely; Flexibility and Task deals. The research relied on the analysis of previous literature studies to pose the research hypotheses. Questionnaires were developed using sound and reliable measures whereby a number of 384 questionnaires were distributed among the consulting organizations in Cairo, Giza, and Alexandria zones. A Statistical analysis was conducted whereby appropriate tests were run to analyze the gathered data. Common method bias was considered. Results revealed that high involvement HR practices have a positive effect on flexibility and task idiosyncratic alongside with differences in the effect among both types of idiosyncratic deals. This research contributes to the existing literature findings exploring a contemporary construct, idiosyncratic deals, as well as exploring a significant service-oriented domain, and consulting organizations.

Keywords – HR practices, Task I-deals, Flexibility I-deals, idiosyncratic deals

Introduction

The increasing number of organizations and jobs in the world has led to the need to offer competitive choices to a talented workforce. Idiosyncratic deals are becoming a popular work arrangement tool for the attraction and retention of a talented workforce (Atkinson et.al, 2015). The growing need to encourage qualified applicants to join organizations and to retain them in the competitive labour market has led to urged for the need to customize employment conditions (Belkin, 2007). In this view, Rousseau (2005) introduced the term “idiosyncratic deals” commonly known as “I-deals”. Standardized and regular employment arrangements refer to “work done on a fixed scheduler 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, Hudson, 2000, p.258). Employability is defined as “the continuous fulfilling, acquiring, or creating of work through the optimal use of competencies” (Van der Heijde et. al., 2006, p.453). Conversely, contemporary job are increasing calling for flexibility and new work related arrangements. The need to create individualized jobs is crucial to suit the changing nature of the growing workforce (Feldman & Pentland, 2003; Lawler & Finegold, 2001; Minner, 1987). Rousseau (2005) in her original conceptualization of I-deals stated that I-deals are alternative tools for employees to form the employment relationship in an individualized form. Personalization of work arrangements in the past was limited to top performers; nevertheless, I-deals have grown tremendously as cost- effective alternative tools of motivating employees. Moreover, flexibility and customization of work are competitive tools benefiting both the employer and the employees (Rousseau, 2005).

High involvement HR practices are the translation of the organizational strategic, functional and operational plans. These practices represent the primary mirror that reflects the organizational views of the current as well as the potential

employees. Employee's deal, react and interact through the framed set of procedures that are defined by the HR department. Such practices are considered the principal means through which the organization can maximize the contribution of employees towards competitive advantage (Huselid, 1995). Besides, the role that these practices serve as directional guide that in return influence employees' participation and motivation of extra role behaviour (Jiang et al, 2012). Furthermore, employees' perception of high - involvement HR practices, could be rewarding to the organization once they feel that these practices are Championing them towards a better working environment. Accordingly, the urge to reciprocate emerges. The organizational ability to innovate and gain a competitive advantage is a key pillar for the survival with the ongoing dynamic changes in the business world (Leong and Rasli, 2014; Shipton et al, 2006). In the quest for new paths towards creative organizational outcomes, the role of HR developmental practices became a pivotal mast (Shipton et al, 2006). This could be achieved through the creation of customized deals that will in return foster specific work-related attitudes and behaviours while, discouraging undesired ones (Van et al, 2005). High - involvement HR practices communicate messages that are decoded and understood idiosyncratically by employees. Besides, fostering the empowerment potentials of employees especially HR practices tend to enhance the creation of the balance between personal and organizational needs. Flexible, transparent and well framed HR practices lead to bundles of desired outcomes as they support employees through a set of offerings on the organizational side (Collins and Smith, 2006; Lepak et al, 2006). This in return influence influenced and affected the creation and development of I-deals utilized by organizations to retain talented workforce through customized sets of deals. These customized and personalized deals are difficult to develop and maintain successfully without the high involvement of HR departments through their HR framed practices. The premise of this research that rigid and inflexible HR practices would hinder the implementation of successful I-

deals which will accordingly affect the attraction and retention of qualified talents. Conversely, the prevalence of flexible, interactive, and dynamic practices would ease the process towards successful I-deals with fruitful organizational outcomes.

In a nutshell, this research bridges the literature gaps on two perspectives. Firstly, it links the high - involvement HR practices with I-deals, providing a close insight on how such practices could affect the creation and maintenance of appropriate I-deals. Secondly, up to the best knowledge of the researcher, that most of the previous studies focused mainly on manufacturing sectors (Lee et al, 2015), or mixed industries examples (Heras et al, 2017) with a minimized attention to service - oriented sectors (Luu et al, 2017). Thus the research will add a novel contribution to the literature on one side exploring the effect of HR practices on I-deals, while focusing on consulting organizations as one of the key service- oriented sectors. Moreover, the research addresses key questions of concern

- Do high - involvement HR practices affect flexibility idiosyncratic deals?
- Do high - involvement HR practices affect task idiosyncratic deals?
- Are there any differences in the effect of high - involvement HR practices among both flexibility and task idiosyncratic I-deals?

High - Involvement HR Practices

HR practices are the main tools that affect the composition of individual behaviour and skills at the workplace that in return support the achievement of organizational objectives (Collins et. al., 2006). Schuler et. al., (1987) defined HR practices as the organizational activities of the HR management to assure the commitment of the workforce towards organizational excellence. Accordingly, HR management should select the appropriate activities that would ensure excellence and success. Scholars have explored the importance of HR practices as a high-involvement means to maximize employees' productivity towards the organizational competitive advantage (Huselid, 1995; MacDuffie, 1995). Besides, HR practices represent the key responsibilities of the HR function of any organization thus, opening up the gates for employees through providing guidance for operational practices and enhancement for employees' skills, participation in decision - making, and empowerment (Becker et.al., 1998; Jiang et.al, 2012; Kang et. al., 2012).

The success of high - involvement HR practices begins with the management engagement and core values that magnify the employee's role as the main source of core competence and hence a competitive advantage. High - involvement HR practices serve as the chaperon to treat employees with respect and to develop their skills towards the achievement of the organizational objectives (Collins et.al., 2006; Huselid, 1995). Moreover, HR practices contribute directly to the increased employee engagement and involvement and hence shape up the supportive work environment towards collective work performance (Delery et.al, 1996; Bowen et.al., 2004; Collins et.al., 2006; Lepak et.al., 2006). Additionally, HR practices have a positive relationship with employee engagement (Boxal et.al, 2003) and passion for work (Zigarmi et.al, 2009).

High- involvement HR practices domain are conceptualized under three main themes namely; ability enhancing HR practices, motivation enhancing HR practices, and opportunity enhancing HR practices (Kase et.al., 2009; Jiang et. al., 2012; Guest, 1997).

Collin and Smith (2006), and Kase et. al., (2009), empirical findings showed that high – involvement and committed HR practices create social conditions that empower employees to act for the best welfare of the organization through maintaining interactive social connections and knowledge sharing. The conceptualization of the high-involvement HR practices matches with the HR functional practices for example; ability enhancing HR practices include (training and staffing); motivation enhancing HR practices encompass (performance appraisal and compensation), and opportunity enhancing HR practices composed of (participation and flexible job design) as mentioned by (MacDuffie, 1995; Youndt et al, 1996). This rationale is based on the idea of high -involvement HR practices comprised as complementary practices that contribute directly to the integration of HR functional areas.

High -involvement HR practices enhance the retention of talented employees (Dessler,1999), aiming at advancing employees' abilities, providing appropriate incentives, and effective employee participation (Batt, 2002). As such all the practices are adopted with a different perspective focusing on the workforce. This entails the creation of an organization structure that enhances employees' opinions and contribution with fidelity (Birdi et al., 2008). Besides, the need exists to adopt various practices that would foster employees' ability to learn from training programs offered by the organization to achieve improved results (Huber and Brown, 1991). Additionally, paving the way out for employees through appropriate incentives that are designed to direct their employees to utilize their knowledge and skills towards the maximization of organizational returns including process incentives (Banker et al., 1996), and goal – based (Locke et al., 1990). Furthermore, the existence of participative acts that enhance the creation of problem-solving teams, allowing for supportive feedback in a two-way path communication will foster fruitful organizational returns (Huselid, 1995; Batt, 2002).

HR practices are adopted on two levels; group and individual. High - involvement HR practices at the individual level demonstrate six common practices namely; recruitment, training and development, performance appraisal, teamwork, empowerment and involvement, and autonomy and challenge (Appelbaum et. al., 2000; Purcell et. al., 2003; Jian et.al, 2013). All the HR practices will contribute directly to the attraction, and retention of qualified workforce inside the organization.

Idiosyncratic Deals

Idiosyncratic deals are a special term of employment agreement negotiated by employees and approved by employers (Rousseau, 2005; 2004). Rosen et al, (2013) define I-deals as individualized agreement to arrange work with a level of flexibility to achieve mutual interest for both the organization and the employee. Moreover, (Rousseau et. al., 2006, p.978) mention that I-deals are “voluntary, personalized agreements of a non-standard nature negotiated between individual employees and their employers regarding terms that benefit each party”. In addition to, Rousseau et al., (2009) description of I-deals as negotiated agreement intended to benefit both employees and the organization. Thus, I-deals are assumed to be win-win deals in nature whereby employees are able to adapt work arrangements to suit their individual desires (Rousseau, 2005).

I-deals can be explained from two employment perspectives; labour market dynamics (Farber & Western, 2000; Rosen, 1981; Rousseau, 2006), and the changing nature of work and jobs (Feldman & Pentland, 2003; Steward, 2000). In this respect, employees tend to customize existing working terms and conditions. The customization of the employment content includes a variety of issues such as salary, career development path, career opportunities (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Rosen, 1981). The customization of individual tasks (Miner, 1987; Rousseau, 1995), flexible working hours and workload

adaptation (Lee et. al., 2000; Klien et. al., 2000) which acts as the common catalyst among employees that motivates them towards I-deals is balancing work and life, securing professional future and customization of working conditions to match personal needs and aspirations (Thorntwaite, 2004; Hochschid, 1997; Rousseau, 2006). There are two forms of I-deals; ex-ante and ex-post I-deals as discussed by (Rousseau, 2006). Ex-ante idiosyncratic deals are pointed out by (Rousseau et. al, 2006) as a key dimension utilized to negotiate work set-up (example: payments granted to the employee). Curhan et al. (2009) found that ex-ante negotiations of I-deals support the long-term employment relationship and hence reduces the intention to leave. Moreover, Rousseau (2009) claims that the negotiations of ex-ante idiosyncratic deals success is reluctant on the variety of employment terms negotiated such as; working hours, salary, compensation, fringe benefits ...etc. Livens (2007) suggests that allowing such negotiations of ex-ante idiosyncratic deals to take place helps to enhance the job offerings from the organization side thus; creating a positive organizational image. Ex-ante idiosyncratic deals are usually negotiated during the recruitment process (Rousseau et al., 2006). The success of ex-ante idiosyncratic deals relies on the potential employee's skills, knowledge, abilities, and other personality traits that reflect his/her negotiating skills as well as market value (Rousseau et al., 2006). On the other hand, some scholars dispute that ex-ante idiosyncratic deals do not allow employees to gain all the good benefits that they should access. They further claim that to the fact that employees are still unfamiliar and unidentified with the organization before they join to be able to realize appropriate benefits (Fuller et.al, 2006; Jian et.al, 2016; Lin et. al., 2014).

Conversely, ex-post idiosyncratic deals follow the actual employment and takes place during the employment relationship relying on the exchange bond between both the employee and the employer (Rousseau, 2006). In their argument, Rousseau et.al (2006) claim that ex-post idiosyncratic deals are more frequent

compared to ex-ante deals in the real life scenario. Nevertheless, ex-ante idiosyncratic deals will still ease the development of a committed long-term employment relationship especially with a talented workforce (Rousseau et. al., 2009).

The decision to grant I-deals agreements is usually approved by human resources and senior managers (Rousseau et. al., 2006; Rousseau, 2004). Rousseau (2004) illustrates the importance of supervisors in such deals; as they negotiate with the organizational agent the terms and the benefits grants. Besides, the presence of three main pillars concerning supervisors' decisions in granting I- deals as suggested by (Rousseau, 2005). These three pillars include: a) structural conditions like the group size that the employee belongs to job interdependence and chances of comparisons; b) evaluation of employee behaviour such as employees voices through actively expressing the need for special agreements; c) assessment of overall balance whereby I-deals are used as substitutes for formal rewards and unmet promises granted to employees (Rousseau, 2005).

Organizations can offer I-deals in various forms as flexibility, skills, development, workload, task and responsibilities, and financial incentives (Rosen et.al, 2013). Rousseau and Kim (2006) and (Hornung et. al., 2010) emphasized three commonly negotiated forms of I-deals namely; developmental I-deals, Flexibility I-deals, and reduced workload I-deals. Firstly, developmental I-deals are concerned with the customization that is performed with the objective of meeting personal aspirations towards professional career development (example: challenging tasks or recognition of employee performance). Furthermore, developmental I-deals are concerned with the resources that foster job involvement and organizational attachment (Shore & Barksdale, 1998; Rousseau, 1995). Rousseau et. al., (2006; 2009) discuss developmental I-deals in terms of a social rather than an economic exchange deal. Secondly, flexibility I-deals that focus on the customization of working hours to match individual preferences (example: flexible working hours). Besides, the

organizational interest for flexible HR practices relies on flexibility I-deals (Lawler and Finegold, 2001). Flexibility I-deals are granted on three different levels and are commonly used across organizations (Rosen et. al., 2013). Lower level flexibility I-deals involves employees who look forward to minor changes in the work arrangements and are satisfied with current working conditions. Employees are less likely to exert efforts to modify work environment (Wrzeniewski et. al., 2001). Moderate level flexibility I-deals grant employees the opportunity to create and manage the challenges that they face through flexible hours or early leaves (Rousseau,2005). Furthermore, high- level flexibility I-deals grant employees prospects for career development and training opportunities through high level of flexibility such as completely customized work schedule (Kossek et. al., 1998). Thirdly, reduced workload that is concerned with the adjustment of the quantity or the quality of workload (example: shorter work hours and easier tasks). Moreover, (Hornung et.al, 2010, p.188) introduced a fourth form namely task I-deals. Task I-deals represent “arrangements that individuals negotiate to create or alter their own job content” (Hornung et.al, 2010, p.188).

I-deals are arranged through two approaches as expressed by (Liao et. al., 2016; Rousseau, 2005). Formal Top – Down Interventions which is tied to the employer’s abilities to create optimized work settings (Liao et. al., 2016). In addition to, Proactive Bottom – Up Job crafting that is concerned with the employee’s breath to modify the current job through creativity and utilizing knowledge alongside with available resources to the best interest of the organization (Liao et al., 2016). Rousseau (2001) proposed a set of conditions that can promote I-deals at work such as; quality relationship between employees and managers, clear roles and defined responsibilities, stated performance evaluation criteria, and reciprocate affectionate relationships among co- workers, and supervisor trust.

There are four main features that shape I-deals as pointed out by (Rousseau 2005; Rousseau et; al., 2006): a) concerned employees

bargain individually for the deals: b) I-deals will create differences in employers' offerings among groups of employees (Klein et al., 1994) as some employees will be more successful in getting better deals compared to their colleagues, where these variations among the co-workers can threaten fairness among the group members (Greenberg et. al., 2004); c) I-deals are designed to benefit and satisfy both the employer through the retention of talented people and employees through achieving the satisfaction of personal needs; d) I-deals are likely to create a wide variety of individualized agreements among employees inside the organization.

Up to the best knowledge of the researcher a few antecedents were explored in relation to I-deals. Rosen et. al, (2013) proposed high political skills through special task assignments and flexible work location as significant antecedents of I-deals. High emotional intelligence was reported to allow for customized development opportunities (Huang et.al., 2009). Moreover, networking skills are positively related to development I-deals (Guerrero et al., 2016). On the other side, several studies analyzed the consequences of I-deals showing positive and negative consequences among the various types of I-deals. One of the main outcomes was job satisfaction that was found to be a positive consequence of flexibility I-deals (Ho et al., 2013; Rosen et. al., 2013) and developmental I-deals (Huang et. al., 2013; Liu et. al., 2013). Organization commitment was reported as a positive outcome of developmental I-deals (Hornung et. al., 2008; Huang et. al., 2009; Ho et. al., 2013), and the motivation to continue work after retirement was a main positive outcome of Flexibility I-deals (Bal et. al., 2012). Organization citizenship behaviour as well as voice behaviour were positive consequences of flexibility I-deals (Hu et. al., 2010; Anand et. al., 2010, and work-life conflict was reduced through the adoption of developmental I-deals (Hornung et. al., 2006). Task I-deals were found to have several positive consequences (job satisfaction, organization commitment, justice perception, employee performance, job

complexity, job control, and work engagement) as revealed by (Hong et. al., 2013; Ho el al., 2013; Hornung et. al., 2010; Rosen et. al., 2013; Hornung et. al., 2014). Conversely, intention to leave, job stress, and strain were found to be negatively related to developmental I-deals, and Task I-deals (Rosen et. al., 2013; Ho et. al., 2013; Lee et. al., 2010; Hornung et. al., 2010; Hornung, 2014).

Moderating constructs were reported to have a role in explaining the outcomes of I-deals. Social exchange theory explained the relationship between I-deals and employee outcomes (Anand et.al, 2010; Hornung et.al, 2010). The study findings of (Singh et. al., 2018) revealed that I-deals are positively related to job performance, organization citizenship behaviour, job satisfaction and negatively related to employee's turnover. Nevertheless, when perceived organization support was used as a moderating variable, I-deals showed no relationship with job performance and organization citizenship behaviour (Sing et. al., 2018). Moreover, developmental I-deals have a positive relation with employee creativity when self-efficacy was a moderator (Wang et. al., 2018). Gender moderates the relationship between the request and the receipt of I-deals, as men were successful at getting their financial I-deals that they have requested compared to women (Ho et. al., 2015).

Hypotheses Development

HR practices are the path towards the creation of customized I-deals. Previous research studies revealed that HR practices directly impact I-deals. In their argument, Feldman and Pentland (2003) discussed HR practices as the principle structure towards developing I-deals. Besides, Rosen et al. (2013) suggested that HR practices form the foundation bricks of the success of I-deals. High - involvement HR practices reflect on all the HR functions

starting at recruitment, selection, manpower planning, training and development, compensation, and performance appraisal. During the staffing process, the attraction of qualified and appropriate candidates is key (Kaya, 2006). High involvement training procedures demonstrate an improved ethical orientation ties towards the organization through the employees alongside with enhancing the learning and growth potentials of employees (Gutteridge et. al., 1993). In addition, performance appraisal and compensation that act as the primary catalysts for reinforcing organizational values and outcomes compensation fosters employees' cohesiveness and collective orientation (Lawler, 1981).

Furthermore, high - involvement HR practices cultivates the orientation towards collective or stakeholder assimilation, which is linked to the social exchange nature of I-deals (Rosen et.al, 2013). Moreover, Gonzalez and Tacorante (2004) found that employees with high values tend to enjoy a higher level of autonomy and flexibility in formulating their decisions. This could be further enhanced through the presence of efficient HR practices and thereby lead to increased successful negotiations of I-deals offerings within the organization. High involvement HR practices are considered to be significant in creating synergy among employees and thus influence the organizational idiosyncrasies structure. In return, this affects the shaping of I-deals structure and orientation inside the organization. Following the aforementioned rationale, high - involvement HR practices can be predicted to have a positive effect on I-deals. For the purpose of this study, staffing, training, compensation, performance appraisal, and participation are selected on the side of HR practices as these practices represent the common practices that are adopted by HR departments within the selected study sector. On the other hand, Flexibility I-deals and Task I- deals are chosen to represent the idiosyncratic types of I-deals. These specific types of I-deals are the common adopted types in the selected study sector of organizations. The research hypotheses

are developed and are illustrated in Figure (1) that shows the research model

H1: High - involvement HR practices (staffing, training, compensation, performance appraisal, and participation) are expected to have a positive effect on Flexibility I-deals

H2: High - involvement HR practices (staffing, training, compensation, performance appraisal, and participation) are expected to have a positive effect on Task I-deals

H3: It is expected that there will be significant difference of the effect of high involvement HR practices on between Flexibility I-deals and Task I-deals

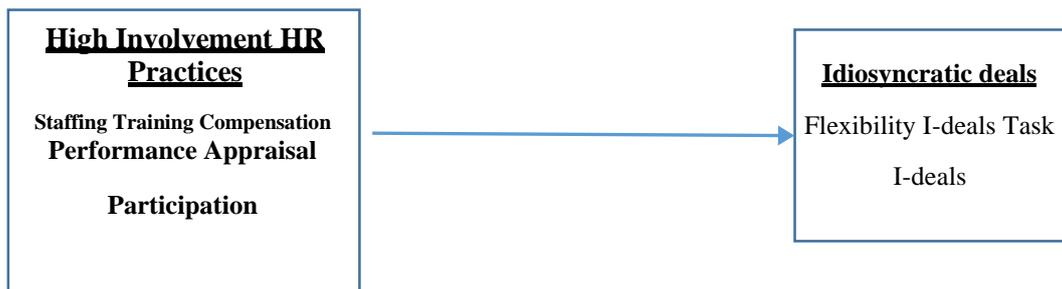


Figure (1) Proposed Research Model

Study Sector and Data Collection

The study sector for this research was the consulting organizations located in Cairo, Giza, and Alexandria governorates. The reason for choosing this specific sector is that organizations operating under the umbrella of consulting domain find it difficult to employ employees and specialized consultants

on full - time basis without customized and conditional deals due to the scarcity of qualified personnel. Therefore, such organizations utilize and deploy the usage of I-deals prior to employment and may adjust such customized deals at a later stage during the actual employment relationship. Furthermore, this sector considers the role of HR in the retention of employees. As such it is expected to have high - involvement adoption of HR practices among the workforce. The total number of employees who are offered I-deals in these organizations is 10,000 employees.

The research hypotheses were tested using questionnaire survey that was designed to suit the nature of the study. Prior to the actual distribution, the questionnaire was emailed to the HR managers of the selected organizations for the purpose of feedback for item improvement. The HR managers distributed it to selected senior managers to gain an initial feedback on the feasibility of distributing the questionnaires. This resulted in minor adjustments to clarify few vague statements, and to overcome any potential deficiencies. The questionnaire was then adjusted and sent for distribution by the HR department managers over an electronic link. The HR departments of the organizations were sent a full detailed explanation of what is meant by flexibility and task I-deals so as to ease the definition of the participants who will fill the survey. A total number of 384 employees were given the questionnaires randomly through the HR department over their email. The HR departments distributed the questionnaires whether Flexibility I-deals or Task I-deals based on the contract types that they have listed on their records. HR managers used the definitions provided to them for both the Task I-deals and Flexibility I-deals as guiding criteria for distributing the questionnaires among the employees.

Two sets of questionnaires were distributed. The first set was sent to the employees who were granted flexibility I-deals, while the second was sent to those who were granted task I-deals. The questionnaires included two sections; section one with the same

content for the high - involvement HR practices. Conversely, section two of the questionnaire was only including the set of scale items tied to flexibility and task I-deals independently. The duration of distribution and collection process was three months. The items on the questionnaire were all marked as “a required to answer question” to assure that all the gathered questionnaires will be complete. A total number of 219 complete and valid questionnaires for the Task I-deals and 164 questionnaires for the Flexibility I-deals were collected.

Scales and Measures

The questionnaire deployed previously published and valid scales for the measurement of the research constructs. The variables were assessed on the basis of multiple-items method, which enhances the accuracy and consistency of the gathered data. A five point Likert scale was used ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. High - involvement HR practices were measured by Bae and Lawler (2000), Hsu et al. (2007), Sun et al. (2007), and Jiang et al. (2012) scale that was developed in the form of a questionnaire where by all items were stated on a Likert scale. Sample items included; “Our company spends a great effort in selecting the right person for every position”, “Managers initiate and manage various kinds of training and development for their employees”, “Our company’s pay system reflect employee’s contribution to the company”, Employees performance appraisal is based on individual behaviours and attitudes at work”, “Employees in this organization have broadly designed jobs requiring a variety of skills”. Flexibility and Task I-deals were assessed using (Rosen et al, 2013) scale which comprised four items for flexibility I-deals and five items for task I-deals. Sample Items included; “My personal needs are considered when negotiating the tasks”, “I can always make unique contributions”, “I have flexibility in completing my tasks”.

Common Method Bias

Common method bias is a consequence that happens because of the sources of the measurement error (N.Podsakoff; P.Podsakoff; Machenzie; Lee, 2003). Procedural remedies were followed in an attempt to reduce errors encountered. In this respect, Ex-Ante remedies were adopted through stating the objective of the questionnaire clearly in the beginning whereby it was indicated that there is no right or wrong answer and that the choices are all based on personal opinions and experiences. In an attempt to reduce respondents' apprehension, all statements were positively stated. On the other side, confirmatory factor analysis was conducted for the high - involvement HR practices as part of the ex-post remedies for common method bias.

Statistical Analysis

Pilot Study Analysis

As an attempt to assure the validity and reliability of the research measures and scales a pilot study of 30 questionnaires for the flexibility I-deals and 25 questionnaires for the task I-deals were used. Inter-consistency tests utilizing simple Pearson correlation coefficient alongside with Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were conducted. Results showed high validity and reliability for the high - involvement HR practices with Cronbach's Alpha (staffing (0.911), Training (0.907), Compensation (0.924), Performance Appraisal (0.913), and Participation (0.922). On the other hand, confirmatory factor analysis as an attempt to reduce common method bias was run for the high - involvement HR practice on the sample of 55 questionnaires used for the pilot study.

The results are shown in the following figure (2) whereby:

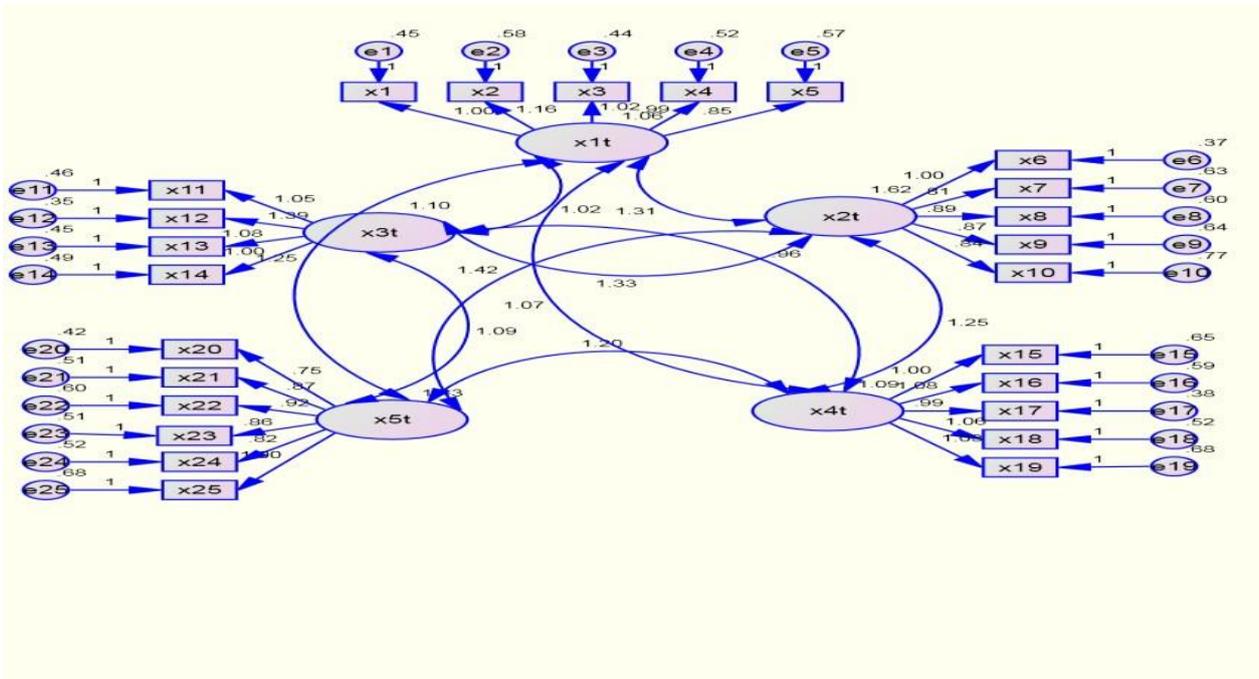


Figure (2): Confirmatory Factor Analysis for High involvement HR Practices for the pilot study (N=55)

X1t, X2t, X3t, X4t, X5t represents the five practices of HR (staffing, training, compensation, performance appraisal, and participation respectively). This is supported by Cmin/d.f. (1.853) which is less than 3 which shows that the scale is reliable to be adopted.

Statistical Analysis of the Study

On the other side, the results of the validity for the Task I-deals was (Cronbach's Alpha=0.889), for the Flexibility I-deals

(Cronbach's Alpha= 0.789). Accordingly, the research scales are valid and reliable to be used for the purpose of this research.

The demographic characteristics of the participants are shown in the following Table (1)

The demographics indicate that both females and males are more oriented towards Task I-deals when compared to the number of Flexibility I-deals. The highest age groups that are granted I-deals are those between (30-39) years old. The majority of the participants are professional degree holders like (CPA, CMA, CPA ...etc.) and post graduate holders which are a common trend to find with the consultants who should possess different educational perspective than other corporate job.

Table (1): Demographic Characteristics of the Research Study

Demographics	Task I-deals		Flexibility I-deals		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%

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Gender	Female	112	51.1	89	54.3	201	52.5
	Male	107	48.9	75	45.7	182	47.5
Age Group							
Age Group	22- 29	4	1.8	14	8.5	18	4.7
	30-39	114	52.1	75	45.7	489	49.3
	40-49	96	43.8	70	42.7	166	43.3
	Above 50	5	2.3	5	30	10	2.7
Education Level							
Education Level	University Graduate	59	26.9	53	32.3	112	29.2
	Professional Degree Holder	61	27.9	45	27.4	106	27.7
	Post Graduate Studies	99	45.2	66	40.2	165	43.1
Managerial Level							
Managerial Level	Entry Level	69	31.5	51	31.1	120	31.3
	Middle Management	83	37.9	72	43.9	155	40.5
	Senior Management	67	30.6	41	25	108	28.2

Test of Hypotheses

This section will present the statistical results of the research hypotheses. The symbols used for the statistical analysis and the tables are illustrated as follows:

X1t: staffing – X2t: training – X3t: compensation – X4t: performance appraisal – X5t: participation – Y1t: Task I-deals – Y2t: Flexibility I-deals – d.f: degrees of freedom

H1: High -involvement HR practices (staffing, training, compensation, performance appraisal, and participation) are expected to have a positive effect on Flexibility I-deals

Regression Analysis was used to test the effect of the independent variables and its sub- dimensions on the two dependent variables under study.

Table (2): Regression Analysis for high-involvement HR practices and Flexibility I-deals

Statistical Results	Simple Regression Analysis	F-ratio	d.f	Sig	S.E	R ²
Staffing	Y2t = 0.898 + 0.781 X1t	409.536	(1,162)	0.000**	0.508	71.70%
	(6.678)**(20.237)**					
Training	Y2t =1.070 + 0.781 X2t	284.708	(1,162)	0.000**	0.574	63.70%
	(7.090)** (16.873)**					
Compensation	Y2t =1.258 + 0.682 X3t	293.811	(1,162)	0.000**	0.569	64.50%
	(9.105)** (17.141)**					
Performance Appraisal	Y2t =0.670 + 0.814 X4t	430.753	(1,162)	0.000**	0.499	72.70%
	(4.722)** (20.755)**					
Participation	Y2t =0.762 + 0.806X5t	401.864	(1,162)	0.000**	0.512	71.30%
	(5.355)** (20.047)**					

The results of the statistical analysis as shown in Table (2) indicate that high -involvement HR practices including all its sub dimensions have a positive effect on Flexibility I-deals. Performance appraisal had the highest effect, followed by staffing, participation, compensation and training practices on flexibility I-deals. Accordingly, the first hypothesis is accepted.

H2: High - involvement HR practices (staffing, training, compensation, performance appraisal, and participation) are expected to have a positive effect on Task I-deals

Table (3): Regression Analysis for high – involvement HR practices and Task I-deals

Statistical Results	Simple Regression Analysis	F-ratio	d.f	Sig	S.E	R ²
Staffing	Y1t = 0.353 + 0.934X1t	2246.65	(1,217)	0.000**	0.334	91.20%
	(4.720)**(47.399)**					
Training	Y1t =0.210 + 0.936X2t	1762.15	(1,217)	0.000**	0.373	89.00%
	(2.404)**(41.978)**					
Compensation	Y1t =0.263 + 0.924X3t	2233.35	(1,217)	0.000**	0.335	91.10%
	(3.424)**(47.258)**					
Performance Appraisal	Y1t =0.212 + 0.940X4t	2083.71	(1,217)	0.000**	0.346	90.60%
	(2.634)**(45.648)**					
Participation	Y1t =0.133+0.960X5t	2303.1	(1,217)	0.000**	0.331	91.40%
	(1.701)**(47.991)**					

** : denote 0.01 level of significance

The results of the statistical analysis as shown in Table (3) show that high - involvement HR practices including all its sub dimensions have a positive effect on Task I-deals. Participation had the highest effect, followed by staffing, compensation, and performance appraisal while the lowest effect was that of

training practices on task I-deals. Based on the above results shown in Table (4), the second hypothesis is accepted.

H3: It is expected that there will be significant difference of the effect of high involvement

HR practices on between Flexibility I-deals and Task I-deals.

The following Table (4) illustrates the statistical results for the analysis of the third hypothesis using testing for the difference between two regression parameters (Task I-deals and Flexibility I-deals).

Table (4): - Z-Test for the two regression parameters (Task I-deals and Flexibility I-deals)

Models	Task I-deals		Flexibility I-deals		Z	Sig
	Estimating Parameter	S.E	Estimating Parameter	S.E		
Staffing	0.934	0.02	0.781	0.039	948.378	0.000
Training	0.936	0.022	0.733	0.043	165.313	0.000
Compensation	0.924	0.02	0.682	0.04	1037.28	0.000
Performance Appraisal	0.94	0.021	0.814	0.039	493.265	0.000
Participation	0.96	0.02	0.806	0.04	591.389	0.000

The results as shown in the above Table (4) reveal that that high - involvement HR practices have higher effect on Task I-deals compared to Flexibility I-deals.

Discussion

This research study aimed at exploring the effect of high - involvement HR practices and idiosyncratic deals namely; flexibility and task I-deals. Through the review and the analysis of the previous literature findings, the research hypotheses were developed. Self-reported questionnaires were conducted whereby sound and reliable measures were adopted. Consulting organizations were the selected study sector for data collection. Results revealed that high - involvement HR practices have a positive effect on both flexibility and task I-deals. Moreover, the effect of high - involvement HR practices was different among flexibility and task I-deals.

The findings of this research contribute to the existing literature through applying a novel construct, idiosyncratic deals, on the Egyptian domain. Up to the best knowledge of the researcher, this construct is still unexplored in Egypt. Besides, this research tackles a service-oriented sector whereby most of the previous studies focused on product-oriented organizations (Lee et.al, 2015; Luu et al., 2017). In addition, the current research bridges the gap between high - involvement HR practices and idiosyncratic deals.

Results of the first hypothesis showed a positive effect of high - involvement HR practices and flexibility I-deals. Performance appraisal had the highest effect on Flexibility I-deals. Performance appraisal practices are tied to collective and long-term based results alongside with the individualistic behavioural pattern at work when granted flexibility at work. Employees tend to look for the HR practices that would be fair enough to evaluate their performance under such exceptionally perceived terms of I-deals. Staffing and participation were reported to have the second highest effect on Flexibility I-deals ($R^2=71.70\%$ and $R^2=71.30\%$ respectively). This could be interpreted as staffing is one of the most significant HR functions especially with the practices tied to appointing the right employee and creating a person-organizational fit. If staffing practices are not fully enforced; constraints may arise with the execution of the flexible terms of

the I-deals itself. Furthermore, participation entails the freedom to suggest improvements at work with regard to various activities. This is a key requirement whereby participation in the customization and adjustments of work related activities would lead to maximization of returns acquired from Flexibility I-deals. Moreover, compensation and training were the factors that had the lowest effect on Flexibility I-deals. This is explained as Flexibility I-deals might be perceived as a form of compensation that is further customized in several forms. Compensation in this respect is perceived to be granted in the flexibility deals and exceptional agreements. On the other hand, training might not be the significant influencer on these calibers of employees. Most of the employees, working for consulting organizations tend to be psychologically empowered towards ongoing personal growth and development. This is apparent in the level of education shown in Table (1) whereby 66% of the employees are enrolled or have finalized post - graduate studies.

Such training practices are not the influencing practice on such caliber of employees. The results of the second hypothesis indicate a positive effect of high - involvement HR practices and Task I-deals. Participation had the highest effect as a practice which reflects the importance of employees' involvement in improvements and decision-making at work. This is an important practice with such kind of I-deals whereby the employee's opinion is fosters the gate for job development of job content. Furthermore, staffing and compensation reported a relatively close effect on task I-deals ($R^2=91.20\%$ and $R^2=91.10\%$) respectively. This suggest that the potential learning growth and opportunity explained to potential employees during the staffing process enhances the implementation of Task I-deals alongside with the person-organization fit. Moreover, compensation practices being a pivotal player in reflecting one's contribution to the job performed alongside with the need for appropriate monetary recognition linked with organizational performance associated with task I-deals. Additionally, performance appraisal

and training had the least effect on Task I-deals ($R^2=90.6\%$ and $R^2=89\%$) respectively. Performance appraisal practices in relation to Task I-deals are likely to be tied to the specific nature of Task I-deals whereby evaluation could be more tied to objective outcomes for every defined deliverable. As for training practices having the least effect which is closely similar as the lowest effect on Flexibility I-deals too as shown in hypothesis number one above, this is attributed to the nature of the consulting employee. The employees within the consulting business are more likely to be self-motivated towards discovering their own potentials and the path towards self-enrichment potentials. They tend to step towards growth opportunities as this is directly tied to their career path and career success without waiting the organization to pursue such strides.

In studying the differences in the effects of high - involvement HR practices on Flexibility and Task I-deals, results suggest that the practices had a higher effect on Task I-deals compared to Flexibility I-deals. This is generally tied to the specific nature of Task I-deals being more specific to the job contents, and responsibilities. The consulting organizations tend to work based on “organizing around deliverables and outcomes”. As such, HR practices tailored on performance indicators are expected to have a direct effect on such type of idiosyncratic deals. Beyond doubt, high involvement HR practices definitely affect Flexibility I-deals. Nevertheless, the nature of Flexibility I-deals allows for preset arrangements that form a boundary of customized work related arrangements. This in return affects the influencing role of HR practices on such types of I-deals.

Conclusion

This research study aimed at analyzing the effect of high - involvement HR practices on flexibility and task idiosyncratic deals. Research hypotheses were developed based on identifying the literature gap. Questionnaires were distributed among consulting organization in Egypt (Cairo, Giza, and Alexandria

zones). Research results revealed that the selected high - involvement HR practices has a positive effect on both Flexibility and Task I-deals. Moreover, it was indicated that high - involvement HR practices had a higher effect on Task I-deals compared to Flexibility I-deals. The results of this research highlight the importance of high-involvement HR practices to employees who are granted I-deals. Based on the research findings, the following recommendations are posed to HR professionals and managers who work with I-deals. HR managers and professionals act as the strategic player of success who can foster the attraction and retention of talented workforce. The adoption of well – framed and managed high involvement HR practices is the pathway to lean workforce. Consideration to the performance appraisal and performance development is a key pillar in managing employees working under the umbrella of I-deals. Performance appraisal should focus on fostering employees' development and not only on reporting performance results. Listening to employees' voice and encouraging participation through a collective culture atmosphere to enhance employees' empowerment potentials. Moreover, staffing practices should consider talent retention as a driver for employees working within the I-deals terms and conditions. Talent retention is a critical practice that is uneasy to deploy under conditional employment terms nevertheless, it enhances loyalty and engagement to the organization. Furthermore, Training should be transformed to developmental practices towards enhancing person-organization fit and job involvement in return to such acts. Collaborative and joint activities among the workforce as well as the usage of cross-functional teams where transparency of information prevails are significant aspects to the success of I-deals.

Research Limitations and Future Studies

This research objective was targeting the investigation of the effect of high-involvement HR practices and I-deals. Due to the time, and cost constraints only Cairo, Giza, and Alexandria

governorates were included in the study. It was difficult to reach other zones in Egypt especially with the prevailing COVID-19 conditions. It is recommended that future studies could focus on other zones in Egypt as well as other industrial and service-oriented sector. Moreover, other forms of I-deals could be of an interest to analyze such as developmental and workload I-deals.

List of Abbreviations

Idiosyncratic Deals: I-deals

Human Resources: HR

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