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Employee and Coworker Idiosyncratic Deals: Implications for Emotional Exhaustion and Deviant Behaviors

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Abstract

By integrating conservation of resources (COR) and social comparison perspectives, we seek to investigate how employees' own i-deals, independently from and jointly with their coworker's i-deals, determine their emotional exhaustion and subsequent deviant behaviors. We conducted a field study (131 coworker dyads) focusing on task i-deals, and used Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM) and polynomial regression to test the hypotheses. We found that emotional exhaustion not only mediated the negative relationship between employees' own task i-deals and deviant behaviors, but also mediated the positive relationship between upward social comparison of task i-deals (i.e., a coworker's versus own task i-deals) and deviant behaviors. These results demonstrated the intra- and interpersonal implications of task i-deals for emotional exhaustion and subsequent deviant behaviors. The current research not only shifts the attention from a predominantly positive view on i-deals to a more balanced and nuanced view on i-deals' implications, but also sheds light on the interpersonal nature of i-deals and the emotional exhaustion implication of upward social comparison.

Keywords

Idiosyncratic deals, emotional exhaustion, social comparison, coworker, deviant behaviors

As an effort toward attracting, motivating, and retaining talent, more organizations are creating idiosyncratic employment arrangements to fit their employees' skills, interests, and preferences (i-deals; Rousseau, 2005; Rousseau, Ho, & Greenberg, 2006). These non-standard employment arrangements, known as idiosyncratic deals (i-deals), are voluntarily and jointly negotiated between an employee and an employer, and are intended to benefit both parties. Prior research shows that i-deals enhance the recipient's or i-dealer's job satisfaction (Rosen, Slater, Chang, & Johnson, 2013), affective commitment (Hornung, Rousseau, & Glaser, 2008; Liu, Lee, Hui, Kwan, & Wu, 2013; Ng & Feldman, 2010; Rosen et al., 2013), proactive behaviors (Hornung, Rousseau, Glaser, Angerer, & Weigl, 2010; Liu et al., 2013), organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB) (Anand, Vidyarthi, Liden, & Rousseau, 2010; Ho & Kong, 2015; Liu et al., 2013), and voice (Ng & Feldman, 2015), while reducing work-family conflict (Hornung et al., 2008) and turnover intentions (Ho & Tekleab, 2016).

Although the past decade of research has shown that i-deals benefit both the i-dealer and the employer, what is less clear is how coworkers respond to the i-deal. Because i-deals operate within the larger social and organizational context, they have broader implications beyond just the i-dealer and organization, and Rousseau and colleagues (2006) proposed various conditions under which coworkers may perceive i-deals as fair. However, empirical investigation of such third-party implications of i-deals remains in its infancy, with only a few studies shedding light on this issue thus far.

In a study by Lai, Rousseau, and Chang (2009), they found that coworkers were more willing to accept an employee's i-deal if they were friends with the employee, and if they believed that they had a comparable future opportunity to receive i-deals. A study by Ng and Lucianetti (2016) found that coworkers' perception of others' i-deals was positively related to

their perception of their own i-deals, particularly when they had strong striving for status. More recently, Ng (2017) found that coworkers who witnessed an employee's i-deal and yet received a low level of i-deals themselves felt envious toward that employee and ultimately chose to quit, while Vidyarthi and colleagues (2016) found that employees who received more i-deals than their team members performed better in groups with low team orientation and task interdependence. Marescaux, De Winne, and Sels (in press), using a vignette approach, found that coworkers who perceived others' i-deals as distributively unjust would try to restore equity by complaining and requesting compensation. Taken together, these studies suggest that employees do engage in social comparison of i-deals with their coworkers, and such comparison evokes employees' psychological and behavioral reactions.

Nevertheless, two important questions remain unanswered. First, the implications of others' i-deals (as perceived by an employee) for the focal employee's *negative* psychological experiences and *negative* behaviors are under-investigated (for two exceptions, see Ng, 2017; Marescaux et al., in press), even though prior research has alluded to the possibility that i-deals can trigger negative reactions among the i-dealer's peers (Rousseau et al., 2006). Instead, research has focused primarily on examining positive outcomes, thereby potentially promoting an overly positive view on i-deals. Second, while some scholars have recognized the relevance of social comparison and justice perspectives in the context of i-deals among coworkers (e.g., Garg & Fulmer, 2017; Marescaux & De Winne; 2016), empirical investigation of such perspectives is still scarce, with preliminary evidence indicating that perceived distributive injustice (Marescaux et al., in press), feelings of envy and ostracism (Ng, 2017), and leader–member exchange social comparison (Vidyarthi et al., 2016) can serve as mediators linking others' i-deals to one's reactions to such i-deals. To further advance this understanding of the interpersonal

repercussions of i-deals, particularly the negative aspects, deeper investigation into other viable perspectives and mechanisms is warranted.

Together, these questions provide the motivation for the present study, in which we integrate conservation of resources (COR) theory with a social comparison perspective to investigate how employees' own i-deals and their upward comparison of i-deals (against their coworker's) shape their emotional exhaustion and subsequent deviant behaviors. In so doing, we make two contributions to research on i-deals. First, we advance the emerging inquiry regarding the *inter*personal implications of i-deals, which pushes beyond the predominant focus on the positive, *intra*personal implications of i-deals for the recipient's work attitudes and behaviors. Given that i-deals operate in a social space (Liao, Wayne, & Rousseau, 2016) and coworkers represent interested third parties of i-deals (Lai et al., 2009; Ng, 2017), there is a pressing need to investigate how and why employees respond to others' i-deals, add to the limited mediating mechanisms linking one's i-deals to coworkers' reactions, and accumulate evidence demonstrating that evaluations of i-deals are not made in a social vacuum but, instead, are made in the context of one's social space.

Our second contribution pertains to our investigation of a new, stress-based explanatory mechanism – emotional exhaustion – in the context of i-deals, which also allows us to examine deviant behaviors as a negative outcome of i-deals from a COR perspective. Thus far, despite some exceptions (e.g., Marescaux et al., in press; Ng, 2017), i-deals research is dominated by intermediary mechanisms pertaining to social exchange such as perceived organizational support (Liu et al., 2013) and organizational trust (Ng & Feldman, 2015), positive psychological states such as organization-based self-esteem (Liu et al., 2013) and competence need satisfaction (Ho & Kong, 2015), and job characteristics such as job autonomy (Hornung, Glaser, & Rousseau,

2010), all of which yield positive work outcomes. However, i-deals, as resources, are deemed "largely socioculturally framed rather than individualistic" (Hobfoll, 2002, p. 312), which suggests that i-deals can be subject to social comparison and in turn has strong implications for emotional exhaustion (Buunk & Schaufeli, 1993), a perspective that needs to be acknowledged given that negative states and experiences can have significantly larger effects on individuals' functioning and well-being than positive states and experiences (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer, & Vohs, 2001). While some studies have investigated the implications of social comparison, they have either focused on positive outcomes stemming from *downward* comparison (where one receives more than others) (Vidyarthi et al., 2016), or made certain assumptions in the methodology (e.g., that i-deals are explicitly communicated to all employees) that may not hold true in actual organizations (Marescaux et al., in press). Thus, adding to and extending beyond these studies, we adopt an alternative COR perspective to test whether *upward* comparison of i-deals can evokes emotional exhaustion as suggested by COR theory (Carmona, Buunk, Peiró, Rodríguez, & Bravo, 2006; Taris, Kalimo, & Schaufeli, 2002), and shed more light on the negative interpersonal implications of i-deals as called for by i-deals scholars (e.g., Bal & Boehm, in press).

Doing so also provides a more balanced view of i-deals that offsets the predominant emphasis on positive mediators and outcomes of i-deals. Although i-deals provide valued resources that can potentially alleviate the physiological and psychological costs that an i-dealer incurs when meeting job demands (Hornung et al., 2010), research has rarely examined whether i-deals do indeed decrease such costs (save some exceptions, e.g., Bal & Boehm, in press), or whether these costs are merely passed on to the i-dealer's coworkers, such that the net benefit of i-deals to the organization may be lower than previously shown. To redress this, it is imperative

to not only examine coworkers' reactions to an employee's i-deal, but also focus specifically on the negative reactions that can ensue.

COR Perspective on I-Deals

Reflecting non-standardized work arrangements that individual employees negotiate with their employer, i-deals possess several characteristics that distinguish them from other ostensibly related constructs such as favoritism, job crafting, and job autonomy. Different from favoritism, i-deals are intended to benefit both the i-dealer and the organization rather than just the i-dealer (Anand et al., 2010). Different from job crafting, which is not necessarily authorized by or known to the employer, i-deals are the outcomes of an explicit employment negotiation (Rousseau, 2005; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Finally, research by Hornung and colleagues (Hornung et al., 2010; Hornung, Rousseau, Weigl, Müller, & Glaser, 2014) has established that job autonomy, together with job complexity, are outcomes of i-deals rather than equivalent constructs, given that these job characteristics can be shaped by other factors beyond i-deals.

The content of i-deals can vary in scope in terms of the desired resources that employees negotiate for (Rousseau et al., 2006), and extant research reveals several common forms of resources that i-deals encompass (Rosen et al., 2013; Rousseau, Hornung, & Kim, 2009). According to Rosen et al. (2013), these include (a) flexibility i-deals relating to where and when the i-dealer performs work, (b) task i-deals relating to the specific job tasks and responsibilities the i-dealer undertakes (which overlap with developmental i-deals relating to the opportunities to develop the i-dealer's competencies and pursue career goals; Rousseau et al., 2009), and (c) financial i-deals relating to the i-dealer's financial rewards and compensation. While the *intra*personal implications of receiving these various forms of i-deals have been the primary

focus of extant research, the *inter*personal implications have received scarce attention and are poorly understood thus far.

The present study adds to and goes beyond extant studies on coworker implications of i-deals by proposing a COR explanation for why an employee's and a coworker's i-deals have implications for the employee's deviant behaviors. The notion of i-deals as representing desired job resources is elemental to i-deals theory (Rousseau, 2005; Rousseau et al., 2006), underscoring the relevance of a COR lens to investigate stress-related outcomes stemming from i-deals. Indeed, a couple of prior studies (Hornung, Rousseau, et al., 2010, 2014) found that i-deals served to reduce the i-dealer's work stressors and psychological strain. However, the broader implications of the employee's i-deals on his/her coworkers' psychological well-being and behaviors have yet to be well understood, and the following sections build on COR theory, integrated with a social comparison perspective on emotional exhaustion, to develop these ideas.

While there are multiple types of i-deals according to Rosen et al.'s (2013) classification[1], we focus on task i-deals as they are particularly likely to be the subject of social comparison for two reasons. First and foremost, compared to other forms of i-deals, task i-deals convey strong signals about the i-dealer's competence (Ho & Kong, 2015; Hornung et al., 2008), and because competence is one of the most prominent attributes for (upward) social comparison (Collins, 1996), such i-deals are particularly likely to be the basis of comparison among coworkers. Because task i-deals allow i-dealers to "capitalize on their skills, abilities, and

[1] We acknowledge that there are other ways to classify i-deals, including developmental i-deals (e.g., Hornung et al., 2010; Ng, 2017), and our discussion of i-deal types is not comprehensive and is not intended to be so. Nonetheless, because task i-deals have some overlap with developmental i-deals (which also include advancement, promotions, and training; see Hornung et al., 2010), the present research renders evidence consistent with Ng's (2017) findings regarding developmental i-deals.

knowledge at work (i.e., their work competence), and are thus likely to convey strong signals about the organization's recognition of the recipient's competence" (Ho & Kong, 2015, p. 151), these i-deals were found to serve a competence-signaling function, whereas financial i-deals did not. Additionally, certain other forms of i-deals, such as those relating to schedule/location flexibility and workload reduction, are typically intended to address work-family, health, and/or life quality issues (Marescaux et al., in press; Rousseau, 2005; Vidyarthi, Chaudhry, Anand, & Liden, 2014), and are aimed at "retaining the services of a worker at a standard level of performance" (Hornung et al., 2008, p. 657). Thus, to the extent that these other i-deals are need-based rather than equity-based (Marescaux & De Winne, 2016), are available to the average employee, and/or do not signal one's relative standing and status in the organization, they are less likely to be the basis of social comparison.

A second reason why task i-deals are particularly likely to be socially compared pertains to the observability or visibility of such i-deals, especially when compared to financial i-deals that are also equity-based, pertain to scarce resources, and can trigger a social comparison process (Marescaux et al., in press). However, because financial i-deals often are not observable by coworkers in view of the widespread practice of pay secrecy in organizations (Belogolovsky & Bamberger, 2014; Colella, Paetzold, Zardkoohi, & Wesson, 2007), it is difficult for other employees to obtain useful information on which to make social comparisons. In addition, financial i-deals pertain not only to the level of compensation but also to idiosyncratic arrangements about compensation structure that are often not outwardly observable (Rosen et al., 2013). Thus, even if coworkers are able to observe an i-dealer's level of compensation, they may not know how the i-dealer's compensation is structured idiosyncratically. In contrast, because (a) task i-deals involve changes in job content; and (b) task interdependence is prevalent in the

workplace, coworkers who rely on an i-dealer for work inputs and/or who pass on their work outputs to the i-dealer are likely to be aware when the i-dealer's work tasks and responsibilities deviate from the standard or norm. Thus, we expect that task i-deals, by virtue of their visibility as well as their competence-signaling function, will be subjected to social comparison and, therefore, constitute a particularly appropriate focus for our test of social comparison of i-deals.

Task I-deals and Emotional Exhaustion

Considering the positive attitudinal, perceptual, and behavioral implications of i-deals shown in previous research, we argue that i-deals function as job resources (Bal & Boehm, in press), which represent "those physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of the job that are functional in achieving work goals, reduce job demands and the associated physiological and psychological costs, or stimulate personal growth, learning, and development" (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007, p. 312). Task i-deals may prevent i-dealers' emotional exhaustion (Bal & Boehm, in press), defined as a chronic state of emotional and physical depletion (Cropanzano, Rupp, & Byrne, 2003; Maslach & Jackson, 1981), because such idiosyncratic task arrangements operate as job resources that better align the requirements of work tasks and i-dealers' individual interests, preferences, and abilities (Hornung et al., 2010). By having the opportunity to idiosyncratically arrange their work tasks, i-dealers are better able to meet their work requirements and more likely to experience positive emotions, which buffer them against negative experiences and decrease their emotional exhaustion from completing work tasks (Bal & Boehm, in press).

Our argument is consistent with one important corollary of COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989, 2002): those with greater resources (e.g., job resources) are less vulnerable to emotional or physical energy depletion and more capable of orchestrating energy gain. Our argument is also

consistent with meta-analytic evidence that job resources are negatively related to emotional exhaustion (Crawford, LePine, & Rich, 2010; Lee & Ashforth, 1996). Additionally, consistent with the notion that "resources co-travel in resource caravans" and "facilitate the development and use of other resources" (Hobfoll, 2002, p. 318), task i-deals, as job resources, are found to generate personal resources in the form of enhanced self-esteem and sense of competence (Ho & Kong, 2015), which can further stem emotional exhaustion (Schaufeli, Leiter, & Maslach, 2009). Taken together, the above arguments lead us to expect employees who receive higher levels of task i-deals to experience less emotional exhaustion.

Hypothesis 1: Employees' own task i-deals are negatively related to their emotional exhaustion.

Emotional Exhaustion and Deviant Behaviors

In turn, according to COR theory, emotional exhaustion leads to deviant behaviors because those who are emotionally exhausted lack the necessary self-regulatory resources to refrain from such behaviors (Hobfoll, 1989, 2002). The nature of deviant behaviors (e.g., theft, withholding effort at work) is such that they provide short-term benefits to the actor, even as they harm others at whom such behaviors are targeted. Thus, as much as individuals may be inclined to engage in these behaviors for their own short-term benefits, they have to exercise self-control to contain the undesired tendencies and avoid incurring longer-term personal and social costs associated with such behaviors. Accordingly, research has found a negative association between self-control and deviant behaviors (e.g., Bordia, Restubog, & Tang, 2008; Marcus & Schuler, 2004).

However, because individuals' personal resources for behavioral regulation are finite (Muraven & Baumeister, 2000), emotionally exhausted individuals not only have insufficient

self-regulatory resources to refrain from deviant behaviors, but also are likely to protect their remaining resources and avoid investing these resources in behavioral regulation (Hobfoll, 1989; Wright & Cropanzano, 1998). As a result, research has shown that emotional exhaustion is positively related to deviant behaviors (Bolton, Harvey, Grawitch, & Barber, 2011; Liang & Hsieh, 2007). Accordingly, we expect a similar relationship in the present study, and integrating this with the first hypothesis, we then predict that emotional exhaustion mediates the link between task i-deals and deviant behaviors, such that employees who receive higher levels of task i-deals have less emotional exhaustion and, in turn, engage less in deviant behaviors.

Hypothesis 2: Employees' emotional exhaustion mediates the negative relationship between their own task i-deals and deviant behaviors.

Social Comparison of Task I-Deals

The tendency to compare oneself against some referent other is innate, and such social comparison, defined as "the process of thinking about information about one or more other people in relation to the self" (Wood, 1996, p. 520), is ubiquitous and even spontaneous or subliminal (Mussweiler, Rüter, & Epstude, 2004). In particular, individuals have a "unidirectional drive upward" to engage in comparison against those who are slightly better off, particularly when evaluating one's competence (Festinger, 1954), when objective standards are lacking (Festinger, 1954), or in the presence of uncertainty (Brown, Ferris, Heller, & Keeping, 2007). Because individuals acquire more useful information by observing superior others than inferior ones, upward comparison is deemed more valuable than downward comparison (Brickman & Bulman, 1977; Wood, 1989), and such upward drive has been exhibited even by individuals who are under stress or feel threatened (Buunk & Gibbons, 2007).

In particular, there are two conditions under which individuals are especially likely to make upward comparison (Buunk & Gibbons, 2007), both of which are satisfied in the context of task i-deals. The first condition is that upward comparison can be made privately, such that individuals will not reveal their inferiority to the referent other and risk being looked down upon. Because employees can privately compare their own task i-deals against those that they believe a coworker has received, this satisfies that condition. The second condition is that individuals are motivated to improve themselves and/or their existing work condition. Because task i-deals are designed to improve i-dealers' work arrangements so as to yield benefits for themselves and their employer, employees are likely to be motivated to engage in upward comparison of task i-deals so as to improve the terms of their work arrangement.

Accordingly, we contend that individuals will use coworkers' task i-deals as a basis of comparison to evaluate their own, and continuing with our adoption of a COR perspective to investigate i-deals, we examine how such upward comparison can have implications for their emotional exhaustion and, in turn, deviant behaviors. We focus on employees' *perception* of their coworker's task i-deals, rather than a coworker's own assessment of his/her task i-deals, because social comparison is largely driven by employees' social perception (Ng, 2017). In other words, individuals' reactions to their surroundings are more strongly driven by their subjective experiences versus objective conditions (e.g., Harrison, Price, Gavin, & Florey, 2002; Maynard & Hakel, 1997), and thus, the information used for social comparison should come from individuals directly (Smith, Pettigrew, Pippin, & Bialosiewicz, 2012).

Emotional exhaustion develops in a social context (Halbesleben & Buckley, 2004). Prior empirical research has shown that upward comparison can serve as a form of social *contrast* and be threatening in nature, such that individuals who contrasted their (inferior) situation against

that of an upward referent experienced relative deprivation and reported more negative experiences including higher emotional exhaustion (e.g., Carmona et al., 2006). Employees' upward comparison of their own versus coworker's task i-deals may manifest as upward social contrast, such that employees perceive themselves as receiving less than the coworker (i.e., threat of potential deprivation/shortage of job resources) and feel worse off as a result, which then triggers various negative emotions, cognitions, and behaviors (Smith et al., 2012). Consistent with COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989, 2002), those who face threat of potential deprivation/shortage of job resources are more vulnerable to emotional or physical energy depletion and are less capable of orchestrating energy gain. In particular, prior studies have associated relative inequity or deprivation with higher emotional exhaustion (e.g., Carmona et al., 2006; van Dierendonck, Schaufeli, & Buunk, 2001). This negative response to social contrast can be fleshed out in the following ways.

First, to the extent that employees perceive such discrepancy as an unfair advantage that their coworker has over them, it will evoke a sense of injustice (Marescaux et al., in press) and feelings of resentment (Smith, 2000) and envy (Ng, 2017; Salovey, 1991; Tesser & Collins, 1988). In coping with and regulating these negative emotions, employees have to expend personal resources, thus depleting the finite resources available and leading to emotional exhaustion (Hobfoll, 1989). Second, because relative inequity or deprivation generates uncertainty as to why focal employees did not receive a comparable treatment and whether they will do so in the future, this decreases their sense of optimism about the future (Burleson, Leach, & Harrington, 2005) and their capability of dealing with the uncertainty. Third, just as receiving a greater level of task i-deals than coworkers can signal employees' value to, and relative social standing in, the organization (Ng & Lucianetti, 2016; Vidyarthi et al., 2016), receiving a lower

level of task i-deals than coworkers can have the opposite effect, such that employees feel less valued and suffer a decline in perceived status and self-worth. Insofar as optimism, status, and self-worth represent personal resources that can mitigate emotional exhaustion (Hobfoll, 2001), relative inequity or deprivation will lead to emotional exhaustion (Buunk, Peíró, Rodríguez, & Bravo, 2007). Together, these arguments suggest that when employees engage in more upward comparison to contrast their task i-deals against those that they believe a coworker received, they will experience greater emotional exhaustion.

Hypothesis 3: Employees' upward comparison of task i-deals (with their coworker) is positively related to their emotional exhaustion.

Finally, as previously discussed, we expect emotional exhaustion to predict deviant behaviors. Accordingly, this leads us to also predict that emotional exhaustion plays a mediating role in linking employees' upward comparison of task i-deals to their deviant behaviors.

Hypothesis 4: Employees' emotional exhaustion mediates the positive relationship between their upward comparison of task i-deals and deviant behaviors.

Figure 1 presents our conceptual model.

INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

Method

Participants and Procedure

We recruited coworker dyads in the U.S. via the StudyResponse Project, a non-profit organization that recruits participants for academic research (Stanton & Weiss, 2002), and numerous published studies have used data from this source (e.g., Cameron & Webster, 2011; Ho & Kong, 2015; Piccolo & Colquitt, 2006; Reynolds & Ceranic, 2007). StudyResponse was

responsible for verifying and tracking participants, and their identities were anonymous to us. Following Cohen, Panter, Turan, Morse, and Kim's (2013) approach and Sherony and Green's (2002) definition of coworkers, we also instructed participants (i-dealers) to invite a coworker who worked in the same organization and under the same supervisor to participate in the study. By having participants decide on the coworker to invite, we sought to increase the likelihood that they would select a referent other who was proximate, relevant, and salient to them (Goodman, 1974; Kulik & Ambrose, 1992), and whose i-deals they were likely to have some knowledge of and to compare against.[2] The invited coworker signed up for StudyResponse and was provided a Participant ID by StudyResponse. We also double-checked Participant IDs assigned by StudyResponse to ensure that all participants and their respective coworkers had different Participant IDs.

Upon consent, each participant and his or her coworker individually completed two surveys that were administered about 27 days apart to mitigate common method bias (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2012). Out of the 150 coworker dyads matched based on Participant IDs, we eliminated 19 dyads in which (1) one of the dyad members had changed the organization

[2] To verify whether i-dealers invited a coworker whom they knew well, we included three questions on their work, communication, and expressive ties (Umphress, Labianca, Brass, Kass, & Scholten, 2003): "To what extent are you required to interact with this coworker to get work done?" (1 = *not at all*; 5 = *a great deal*); "How often do you communicate with this coworker?" (1 = *never*; 5 = *always*); and "How do you generally feel about this coworker?" (1 = *dislike a lot*; 5 = *like a lot*). One-sample *t*-tests against the value of 3 (mid-point) on a five-point scale indicated that both dyad members reported strong work (*M*s > 3.95, *t*s(130) > 11.57, *p*s <.001), communication (*M*s > 4.20, *t*s(130) > 18.12, *p*s <.001), and expressive ties (*M*s > 4.24, *t*s(130) > 18.60, *p*s <.001) with each other. These results are consistent with those in Cohen et al.'s (2013) study where most of the invited coworkers also reported knowing the participants very well, with an average of 4.19 on a five-point scale from 1 (*not very well*) to 5 (*extremely well*). Additionally, one-sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests indicated that none of the work, communication, or expressive ties was normally distributed, with histograms showing that these ties had strong negative skewness.

or supervisor by the second survey, or (2) both dyad members were not working under the same supervisor; this left us a total of 131 dyads (262 participants) for analysis. Thirty-two percent of them were female, and the majority (82%) identified themselves as White/Caucasian. Their average age was 40.64 years (*SD* = 9.75). Their average organizational tenure was 78.28 months (*SD* = 52.86), and over 95% of them had at least some college education. About 8% of them had entry-level positions, 29.5% intermediate-level positions, 42.5% middle-management-level positions, and 20% upper-management- and executive-level positions.

Measures

At Time 1, we measured each participant's own task i-deals and perception of his/her coworker's task i-deals, in addition to their work, communication, and expressive ties with the coworker (see Footnote 2 for the items of the ties). At Time 2, we measured each participant's emotional exhaustion and also had his/her coworker rate the participant's deviant behaviors.

Own task i-deals and perceived coworker task i-deals. All participants reported their own task i-deals (α = .89) by responding to Rosen et al.'s (2013) six items of task i-deals (e.g., "I have negotiated with my supervisor for tasks that better fit my personality, skills, and abilities") on a seven-point scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). They also indicated their perception of their coworker's task i-deals (α = .90) by responding to the adapted items of Rosen et al.'s (2013) task i-deals (e.g., "This coworker has successfully asked for extra responsibilities that take advantage of the skills that (s)he brings to the job") on the same seven-point scale.

Emotional exhaustion. All participants responded to Maslach and Jackson's (1981) eight items of emotional exhaustion (α = .95) on a seven-point scale from 1 (*never*) to 7 (*always*). A sample item was "I feel emotionally drained from my work."

Deviant behaviors. Participants rated their coworker's deviant behaviors (α = .98) by responding to Bennett and Robinson's (2000) nineteen items on a five-point scale from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*daily*). Sample items included "made fun of someone at work" and "put little effort into your work."

Demographic variables. Participants reported their gender (1 = female, 0 = male), age, and organizational tenure. Including these demographic variables in the analyses did not significantly change the results patterns, and thus we excluded them from the final analyses.

Analytic Approach

We combined the techniques of Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM) (Cook & Kenny, 2005; Kenny, Kashy, & Cook, 2006) and polynomial regression (Edwards, 2002) in testing our hypotheses.

APIM. To empirically disentangle the hypothesized intra- and interpersonal processes, we employed the APIM approach, an analytical technique specifically designed to measure and test interdependence in dyadic relationships, which are inherently non-independent given that both actor and partner are exposed to a set of common external influences (Cook & Snyder, 2005). In the context of workplace relationships, this model has been applied to examine the interactions between employees (e.g., Bakker & Xanthopoulou, 2009; Ferrin, Bligh, & Kohles, 2008; Overbeck, Neale, & Govan, 2010; Yakovleva, Reilly, & Werko, 2010). We performed APIM using path analysis (maximum likelihood estimation) in SPSS Amos 22 (Arbuckle, 2013).

The APIM technique enabled us to examine dyadic data at the individual level without violating the independence assumption or losing precision that would occur if individual data were aggregated to the dyadic level. It also estimated any potential systematic difference between the two members within each dyad (i.e., role effect), that is, whether the dyad members

could be treated as indistinguishable for the sake of parsimony (Cook & Kenny, 2005; Kenny et al., 2006). According to Kenney and colleagues (Kenny et al., 2006; Olsen & Kenny, 2006), when the dyad members can be treated as indistinguishable (i.e., no role effect), model fit indices require adjustment. The most important components of the APIM are actor effects, generally defined as "the effects of a person's own characteristics on his or her own outcomes," and partner effects, generally defined as "the effects of a partner's characteristics on a person's outcome" (Cook & Kenny, 2005, p. 103). The APIM takes correlations between the independent variables and between residual variables into account; accordingly, actor effects are estimated with partner effects controlled for, and likewise, partner effects are estimated with actor effects controlled for (Cook & Kenny, 2005). We added the covariances and error covariances in the model such that the dyadic interdependence was statistically accounted for.

In addition, the APIM technique enabled us to account for the common source variance between participants' self-ratings of emotional exhaustion and their ratings of the coworker's deviant behaviors. Finally and importantly, the APIM technique allowed us to account for the emotional exhaustion contagion effect while testing our hypotheses. This contagion effect reflects the possibility that an actor may subconsciously mimic the partner's emotions and behaviors and "catch" the partner's symptoms of emotional exhaustion during their interactions (and vice versa; Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1994), a phenomenon previously exhibited in studies across different populations such as general practitioners (Bakker, Schaufeli, Sixma, & Bosveld, 2001), teachers (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2000), and intensive care nurses (Bakker, Le Blanc, & Schaufeli, 2005).

Polynomial regression. We used polynomial regression to test the hypotheses regarding social comparison of actor's and partner's task i-deals. Although we could use an algebraic

difference score approach by subtracting the dyad mean of task i-deals from participants' scores of task i-deals, the difference score approach has been criticized as suffering from numerous theoretical and conceptual problems (Edwards & Parry, 1993; Edwards, 1994). Therefore, we adopted a polynomial regression approach (e.g., Vidyarthi, Liden, Anand, Erdogan, & Ghosh, 2010) and treated the upward comparison of task i-deals as the divergence or incongruence between a participant's perception of his/her coworker's task i-deals and the participant's evaluation of his/her own task i-deals.[3] We followed Shanock, Baran, Gentry, Pattison, and Heggestad's (2010) approach to calculate the descriptive data on participants' own task i-deals and perceived coworker task i-deals. We found that nearly 30% of our participants reported values of their own task i-deals and perceived coworker task i-deals that were different from each other, indicating that discrepancies between participants' own task i-deals and perceived coworker task i-deals were worth investigating. The parameter estimate of the effect of dyadic upward comparison of task i-deals on emotional exhaustion was computed by subtracting the estimated parameter coefficient of a participant's own task i-deals from that of the participant's

[3] Like Vidyarthi et al. (2010), we did not hypothesize a nonlinear effect of participants' own task i-deals or perceived coworker task i-deals on emotional exhaustion, or envision significant effects for higher-order (quadratic and interactive) terms. Nonetheless, we tested the APIM model with the higher-order terms. However, Actor and Partner in the APIM model were distinguishable (instead of indistinguishable) due to the added higher-order terms, so we treated the first-recruited and later-invited participants (invited by the first-recruited participants) as distinguishable. All paths from the higher-order terms to emotional exhaustion were non-significant; thus, excluding these terms did not significantly change our result patterns. Second, we compared the model fit indices between our final model and the alternative model with the higher-order terms. There was no significant change in χ^2 ($\Delta\chi^2 = 25.86$, df = 24, $p = .36$). Third, due to the non-significant higher-order terms, the three-dimensional plot of the regression equation with higher-order terms, as expected, did not show noticeable curvilinear effects. For the above three reasons, we only included the linear terms in our final APIM model. This not only simplified our analyses and highlighted the hypothesized paths, but also enabled us to treat the i-dealers and their respective invited coworkers as indistinguishable, thus facilitating the interpretation of our results.

perception of his/her coworker's task i-deals (Edwards & Parry, 1993). In testing the mediating effects of emotional exhaustion, we used a Monte Carlo mediation test, which provided a 95% confidence interval ($CI_{95\%}$) for the indirect effect of interest (Preacher & Selig, 2012).

Results

Measurement Model

We performed confirmatory factor analysis (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988) with item parceling (Little, Cunningham, Shahar, & Widaman, 2002) in LISREL 8.80 (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 2006) to distinguish among the four key variables – own task i-deals, perceived coworker task i-deals, emotional exhaustion, and deviant behaviors. Specifically, we contrasted the four-factor measurement model with (more parsimonious) three-factor models. Given the insufficient ratio of number of items to the number of constructs, we followed previous research and used item parceling (Little et al., 2002; Little, Rhemtulla, Gibson, & Schoemann, 2013) in CFA (e.g., Cooper, Kong, & Crossley, 2018; Grant, Berg, & Cable, 2014; Shalley, Gilson, & Blum, 2009). We used an unplanned aggregation strategy for item parceling (Hall, Snell, & Foust, 1999) and created two parcels for participants' own task i-deals, two parcels for perceived coworker task i-deals, two parcels for emotional exhaustion, and five parcels for deviant behaviors. The four-factor model was the proposed measurement model in which the items loaded onto their respective higher-order latent factors. All the items loaded onto their respective latent factors as expected (see Table 1).

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

A measurement model typically considered as having an adequate fit to the data has a comparative fit index (CFI) value of .95 or above (Kline, 2005) and a root mean square error of

approximation (RMSEA) value of .10 or less (MacCallum, Browne, & Sugawara, 1996). The four-factor model (χ^2 = 123.19, df = 38, CFI = .98, RMSEA = .09) fit the data better than any of the three-factor models ($\Delta\chi^2$s ≥ 34.61, dfs = 3, *p*s < .001, ΔCFIs ≥ .01). We also conducted a more focused confirmatory factor analysis using the six items of participants' own task i-deals and six items of perceived coworker task i-deals to differentiate between the two factors, and found that the two-factor model (χ^2 = 106.30, df = 53, CFI = .99, RMSEA = .06) fit the data better than the single-factor model (χ^2 = 158.53, df = 54, CFI = .98, RMSEA = .09; $\Delta\chi^2$ = 52.23, df = 1, *p* < .001, ΔCFI = .01). Therefore, participants' own task i-deals, perceived coworker task i-deals, emotional exhaustion, and deviant behaviors were distinguishable from one another.

Hypothesis Testing

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics and correlations. We first performed a test of within-dyad distinguishability, which is part of the APIM technique, to check whether the dyad members could be treated as indistinguishable (Kenny et al., 2006). The test was used to check whether the path relationships for actor were statistically identical to those for partner, that is, whether there was no (actor vs. partner) role effect. If so, then we could draw the same conclusions regarding the path relationships for both roles. Otherwise, we had to draw separate conclusions regarding the path relationships for each role. The model in which we treated an i-dealer (actor) and his/her invited coworker (partner) as distinguishable did not differ significantly from the model (see Figure 2) in which both were treated as indistinguishable (by setting all the parameters to be equal between the dyad members; $\Delta\chi^2$ = 20.47, df = 15, *p* = .16). This result confirmed that the dyad members could be treated as indistinguishable for the sake of parsimony. Thus, Actor and Partner represented a participant randomly chosen within each dyad, and we adjusted the model fit indices accordingly (Cook & Kenny, 2005; Kenny et al., 2006). Following

Olsen and Kenny (2006, p. 130), we placed a specific set of restrictions on the model parameters; besides the equal actor and partner effects, the predictor variables had the same means and variances, the outcome variables had the same intercepts and residual variances, and the covariances were set to be equal across the coworker dyad.

INSERT TABLE 2 and FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE

An APIM model that has an adequate fit to the data has a CFI value of .95 or above and a RMSEA value of .10 or less (Kline, 2005; MacCallum et al., 1996; see Cook & Kenny, 2005; Kenny et al., 2006). The model (see Figure 1) fit the data well: $\chi^2 = 4.19$, df = 6, CFI = .997, RMSEA = .00. In terms of specific path relationships, we found that after controlling for the emotional exhaustion contagion effect ($b = .42$, $SE = .04$, $p < .001$), participants' own task i-deals were negatively related to their emotional exhaustion ($b = -.35$, $SE = .10$, $p < .001$), consistent with Hypothesis 1.[4] In turn, participants' emotional exhaustion was positively related to their coworker-rated deviant behaviors ($b = .26$, $SE = .03$, $p < .001$). At the same time, a direct path from participants' own task i-deals to their deviant behaviors was non-significant ($b = .05$, $SE = .04$, $p = .20$), and a Monte Carlo mediation test supported the full mediating role of emotional exhaustion on the relationship between participants' own task i-deals and deviant behaviors (indirect effect = -.10, $CI_{95\%}$ [-.15, -.04]). Therefore, Hypothesis 2 was supported.

[4] Given the strong correlation between participants' own task i-deals and perceived coworker task i-deals, we diagnosed multicollinearity. Specifically, we regressed participants' emotional exhaustion on their own task i-deals and perceived coworker task i-deals, separately for first-recruited and later-invited participants. The collinearity statistics were: tolerance indices = .34 and VIFs = 2.92 for the participants, and tolerance indices = .32 and VIFs = 3.11 for the invited coworkers. Therefore, there was no severe concern about multicollinearity.

To test the relationship between upward comparison of task i-deals and emotional exhaustion, we employed the polynomial regression technique (cf. Shanock et al., 2010) and, as noted earlier, subtracted the coefficient of the path from participants' own task i-deals to their emotional exhaustion (b = -.35) from that of the path from coworker task i-deals perceived by participants to participants' emotional exhaustion (b = .27, SE = .10, p < .01). This yielded the coefficient of the path from upward comparison of task i-deals to emotional exhaustion (b = .62, SE = .18, p < .001), and the positive and significant relationship supported Hypothesis 3.[5]

To test the mediation effect of emotional exhaustion, we added paths from participants' own task i-deals to their deviant behaviors and from coworker task i-deals perceived by participants to participants' deviant behaviors, both of which were non-significant. Thus, upward comparison of task i-deals had no significant direct relationship with deviant behaviors. A Monte Carlo mediation test indicated that emotional exhaustion fully mediated the relationship between participants' upward comparison of task i-deals and their deviant behaviors (indirect effect = .16, $CI_{95\%}$ [.07, .26]), thus supporting Hypothesis 4.

Supplementary Analyses

To rule out the alternative explanation that a participant's emotional exhaustion was driven by upward comparison against his/her coworker's *actual* task i-deals rather than against the participant's *perception* of the coworker's task i-deals, we conducted a supplementary analysis that used the former as a referent. We found that after controlling for the participant's own task i-deals and perception of his/her coworker's task i-deals, neither the coworker's task i-deals nor the coworker's perception of the participant's task i-deals had a significant relationship

[5] Adding job level (1=entry level, 2=intermediate level, 3=middle management level, 4=upper management level, 5=executive level), coworker tenure, and work, communication, and expressive ties as control variables did not change the result patterns significantly.

with the participant's emotional exhaustion. In other words, participants' emotional exhaustion was predicted by upward comparison based on their own task i-deals and their perception of the coworker's task i-deals.

In addition, we tested whether the magnitudes of the relationships between participants' own task i-deals and their emotional exhaustion and between their perception of their coworker's task i-deals and their emotional exhaustion were statistically equivalent, by setting these two paths to be equal. We found that the model fit did not change significantly ($\Delta\chi^2 = 1.14$, df = 1, $p = .29$). This result suggested that participants' own task i-deals and perceived coworker task i-deals were two countervailing forces of an equivalent magnitude predicting their emotional exhaustion, consistent with the traditional algebraic difference perspective.

Discussion

This study underlines the notion that i-deals operate in a social space and have coworker implications extending beyond the i-dealer and the employer. Drawing upon COR theory and integrating a social comparison perspective on emotional exhaustion, we demonstrated that employees' emotional exhaustion and, in turn, deviant behaviors were a function of both their own task i-deals and perceived coworker task i-deals. While their own task i-deals served as job resources that mitigated their emotional exhaustion and subsequent deviant behaviors, perceived coworker task i-deals were used as a basis for upward social contrast, increasing their emotional exhaustion and subsequent deviant behaviors.

Theoretical Implications

I-deals research. The present research offers a twofold contribution to the literature on i-deals. First, we add to the small but growing body of literature on the coworker implications of i-deals by showing how and why employees respond to their coworker's task i-deals. As

Greenberg, Roberge, Ho, and Rousseau (2004) noted, employees' receipt of i-deals is likely to trigger reactions among other workers, and while prior research has debated on the (positive or negative) valence of such reactions (Rousseau, 2005; Rousseau et al., 2006), empirical evidence is not only scarce but also divergent in portraying employees' reactions to others' i-deals. While Lai and colleagues (2009) advocated for a social assimilation perspective and found that employees can be accepting of coworker i-deals, other studies suggested a social contrast perspective (e.g., Marescaux et al., in press; Ng, 2017; Vidyarthi et al., 2016). The present study rendered support for the social contrast view, such that dyadic upward comparison of task i-deals led to detrimental consequences in terms of higher levels of emotional exhaustion and deviant behaviors.

In the social comparison literature, researchers have noted that self-enhancement motives dominate the social comparison process and trump individuals' desires for accurate self-knowledge and self-improvement (Gardner, Gabriel, & Hochschild, 2002; Sedikides & Strube, 1995), particularly when the content of comparison relates to something important and salient to the individual (Tesser, Millar, & Moore, 1988). Because task i-deals signal employees' competence and value to the firm (Ho & Kong, 2015) and shape their self-esteem (Liu et al., 2013), employees are likely to view such deals as important to their self-definitions. Accordingly, task i-deals are likely to be socially contrasted by employees. A second reason pertains to the scarce nature of task i-deals. Prior research has shown that the distribution of limited, contestable resources confers higher relative status and advantage on recipients (Frank, 1985), which then triggers a comparative mindset among others in the same social space and cues them to reflect on their relative standing (Ho, 2005; Marescaux et al., in press). Thus, referent information pertaining to limited and contestable resources tends to be used in a

comparative fashion, particularly when the conferment of such resources on others deprives the focal individual of receiving the same. While Lai et al.'s (2009) findings differ and suggest that social information on i-deals is used in an assimilative way, one possible explanation for this deviation is that their study merely called for employees to speculate on their willingness to accept coworkers' hypothetical i-deals, whereas the present study assessed employees' actual behaviors while accounting for their perceptions of coworkers' actual i-deals. Thus, we believe that our study arguably provides a more realistic and representative depiction of how social information on others' i-deals is used, namely as a comparative basis against which employees contrast their i-deals.

The second contribution to i-deals research relates to our inclusion of emotional exhaustion as a mediating mechanism linking i-deals to behavioral outcomes (similar to Bal & Boehm, in press). In highlighting the exhaustion-alleviating function of task i-deals, we respond to Liao et al.'s (2016) call to expand theoretical accounts of i-deals' implications, and portray task i-deals as a form of resources that can enhance i-dealers' well-being by reducing their physiological and psychological costs and, in turn, deviant behaviors. This then adds to the explanatory mechanisms associated with i-deals, which have thus far have revolved primarily around positive forms of social exchange and psychological states. Perhaps more significantly, we also show that coworkers bear some of the physiological and psychological costs associated with task i-deals, such that a coworker's emotional exhaustion and, in turn, deviant behaviors were a positive function of an i-dealer's task i-deals. As one of the few studies to highlight the negative coworker implications that ensue from i-deals, the present research not only provides a more comprehensive and balanced representation of i-deals' outcomes, but also indicates that the net benefit of i-deals to the organization may be lower than previously claimed. Accordingly,

these findings underscore the need for i-deals research to adopt a more expansive approach in examining both short- and long-term benefits as well as costs experienced by i-dealers and others in their social space.

Social comparison and emotional exhaustion. The present findings also contribute to COR theory and the social comparison perspective on emotional exhaustion. Even though COR theory acknowledges that "the encounter of the self with stress is primarily situated in social context" (Hobfoll, 2001, p. 338), it does not consider how other people's job resources may generate personal costs or benefits to the focal individual and trigger psychological and behavioral implications for that individual. We drew upon Buunk and Schaufeli's (1993) social comparison perspective on emotional exhaustion, as a complement to COR theory, in explicating how employees' upward comparison of task i-deals could lead to their emotional exhaustion and deviant behaviors.

In addition, even though the notion that social comparison and emotional exhaustion are interrelated has been proposed over two decades ago (e.g., Buunk & Schaufeli, 1993), research linking these two phenomena has primarily focused on the social comparison preferences of individuals experiencing emotional exhaustion and stress (e.g., Buunk, Schaufeli, & Ybema, 1994), or on how emotional exhaustion moderates the link between social comparison and outcomes (e.g., Buunk, Ybema, van der Zee, Schaufeli, & Gibbons, 2001). What is less known is how social comparison predicts emotional exhaustion (e.g., Carmona et al., 2006; Taris et al., 2002). The present study renders empirical support on this issue in the context of task i-deals.

Notably, we found that the positive effect of upward comparison of task i-deals on emotional exhaustion was larger in absolute magnitude than the negative effect of participants' own task i-deals, given that the effect of perceived coworker task i-deals on emotional

exhaustion (i.e., the contrast between the above two effects) was significant and positive. This finding suggests that when the different levels of task i-deals among employees are observable, the benefit (reducing emotional exhaustion) of having task i-deals may be smaller than the cost (increasing emotional exhaustion) of upwardly comparing task i-deals. One viable way to reduce such upward comparison and increase the net benefit of having task i-deals is enhancing employees' mindfulness, specifically increasing their detachment from the cognitive process of upward comparison and alleviating their negative feelings associated with this process (Brown, Ryan, & Creswell, 2007).

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Multiple limitations in the present study should be mentioned. First, the personal and perceptual nature of participants' own task i-deals, perceived coworker task i-deals, and emotional exhaustion necessitated that these variables were self-rated, but they also raise concerns about common method variance biasing the results. However, the fact that we adopted Podsakoff et al.'s (2012) recommendation and collected these self-reported data in two temporally separated questionnaires should alleviate such concerns. Additionally, our use of coworker-rated deviant behaviors as the focal outcome, together with the non-significant correlation between emotional exhaustion and perceived coworker task i-deals, further suggests that such concerns are not warranted.

Second, while we argued that participants' upward comparison of task i-deals predicted their emotional exhaustion, the causal relationship might be reversed, such that emotional exhaustion might drive upward comparison of task i-deals. However, we deem this reversed relationship less likely. According to mood repair hypothesis (Gross & John, 2003; Wood, Heimpel, Manwell, & Whittington, 2009), individuals are motivated to repair or reduce their

negative feelings. Since upward comparison tends to evoke negative emotions such as envy (Ng, 2017), we speculate that emotionally exhausted employees are not inclined to make such comparison to make themselves feel worse. Although we temporally separated upward comparison of task i-deals and emotional exhaustion to reduce common method bias, our study design did not allow us to rigorously test this alternative explanation. We encourage researchers to address this issue in future studies.

Third, we adopted a validated approach from prior research (e.g., Cohen et al., 2013; Sherony & Green, 2002) and had an i-dealer select a coworker (another i-dealer) to participate together in the study. This was based on the premise that i-dealers would invite coworkers with whom they interacted regularly and worked closely, so as to increase the likelihood that both parties had knowledge of each other's task i-deals and deviant behaviors. As our recruitment method constrained the variance of coworker relationship quality, we could not fairly test relational factors as boundary conditions. In other words, our study did not provide the best setting for testing relational factors (e.g., friendship) as a boundary condition. We did not ask participants about their anticipated future with their organization either, and thus would not know whether such anticipation would alter any of the relationships under investigation. We call for research to replicate and extend our findings by exploring various boundary conditions for the relationships investigated in the current research.

Fourth, although our sample was comparable to those in previous research in terms of organizational tenure and educational background, our findings were based on a largely White/Caucasian (U.S. ethnic majority) and educated sample, which raises concerns regarding result generalizability. Because most i-deals research did not report race/ethnicity-related information (e.g., Anand et al., 2010; Hornung et al., 2008, 2010; Rousseau et al., 2009), we

could not assess the comparability of this aspect of our sample with those in prior i-deals research. Thus, we urge researchers to investigate racial/ethnic differences related to i-deals' determinants and consequences so as to facilitate the integration of i-deals and diversity research.

The present study highlights two additional avenues that future research can explore. First, future research can investigate how social comparison of i-deals determines other types of work outcomes, particularly those with negative repercussions for coworkers and/or i-dealers, so as to provide a more balanced perspective of the psychological and behavioral benefits and costs ensuing from i-deals. For instance, while i-deals may promote a sense of obligation among i-dealers to reciprocate such favorable treatment, such obligation could translate into workaholism that, in turn, negatively affects their work-life balance.

Second, having established the foundational linkages among employees' i-deals, perceived coworker i-deals, and negative psychological states and behaviors, the present research sets the stage for subsequent work examining contextual factors that can moderate these linkages. For example, as an effort to integrate i-deals and cross-cultural research, researchers can explore whether cultural values moderate the relationship between i-deals and outcomes across cultures. Furthermore, to the extent that the strong ties between the participants and coworkers in the present study may have led to a greater degree of social comparison, we recommend that future research examine the tie strength as a boundary condition so as to provide a more nuanced understanding of the social nature and implications of i-deals.

Practical Implications

Granting i-deals to employees may trigger unintended negative consequences among coworkers that ultimately decrease the net benefit of i-deals to organizations. Insofar as i-deals may elicit coworkers' perceptions of distributive injustice (Marescaux et al., in press), managers

should pay particular attention to upholding justice in the process of i-deals granting. This includes ensuring transparency with regard to the criteria used to grant i-deals, and applying these criteria consistently. Additionally, because employees may be prone to self-serving biases that distort their perceptions of their own and coworkers' i-deals as well as upward social comparison of i-deals, supervisors should actively manage these cognitive processes, such as by providing the rationale for granting i-deals to a certain individual, and ensuring that the same opportunity is available to coworkers under similar circumstances, so as to balance idiosyncrasy with fairness (Rousseau, 2005). Finally, because i-deals engender various costs for coworkers (e.g., psychological costs in the form of emotional exhaustion), supervisors should recognize and alleviate at least some costs, such as by granting those i-deals that do not increase coworkers' workloads or disrupt their work schedules.

Conclusion

Drawing upon COR theory and integrating a social comparison perspective on emotional exhaustion, we proffer a novel perspective on the intra- and interpersonal implications of i-deals. Specifically, we found that emotional exhaustion not only explained the negative linkage between employees' own task i-deals and deviant behaviors, but also explained the positive linkage between their upward comparison of task i-deals (against their coworker's) and deviant behaviors. These findings not only advance i-deals theory, particularly regarding the interpersonal/coworker implications of i-deals and the downsides of i-deals, but also add to the burgeoning body of work on social comparison and emotional exhaustion.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

Disclosure of potential conflicts of interest

All authors declare that they have no conflict of interest. The study was not funded by any federal agency or private foundation.

Research involving human participants

The research was explicitly approved by the institutional review boards of the authors' (former) universities. All procedures performed in the studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

Informed consent

Participants were informed about the study's procedures, risks, benefits, and other aspects before their participation. Only those who explicitly gave their consent were allowed to participate in the research.

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Table 1

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (Four-Factor Model) Results

Item Parcel	Factor Loading Score	Error Variance	R^2
Own task i-deals Parcel 1	.91	.18	.82
Own task i-deals Parcel 2	.87	.25	.75
Perceived coworker task i-deals Parcel 1	.91	.18	.82
Perceived coworker task i-deals Parcel 2	.90	.19	.81
Emotional exhaustion Parcel 1	.94	.12	.88
Emotional exhaustion Parcel 2	.97	.05	.95
Deviant behaviors Parcel 1	.97	.06	.94
Deviant behaviors Parcel 2	.95	.10	.90
Deviant behaviors Parcel 3	.96	.08	.92
Deviant behaviors Parcel 4	.94	.11	.89
Deviant behaviors Parcel 5	.97	.05	.95

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Own task i-deals	5.31	1.02						
2. Perceived coworker task i-deals	5.28	1.04	.81***					
3. Emotional exhaustion	3.04	1.57	-.13*	-.01				
4. Deviant behaviors	1.63	.90	-.01	.04	.58***			
5. Gender (1= female, 0 = male)	.32	.47	-.09	-.10	-.06	-.08		
6. Age	40.64	9.75	-.003	.002	-.25***	-.20***	.16*	
7. Organizational tenure	78.28	52.86	-.05	-.03	-.14*	-.06	.05	.42***

Note. $N = 262$. * $p < .05$; *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed).

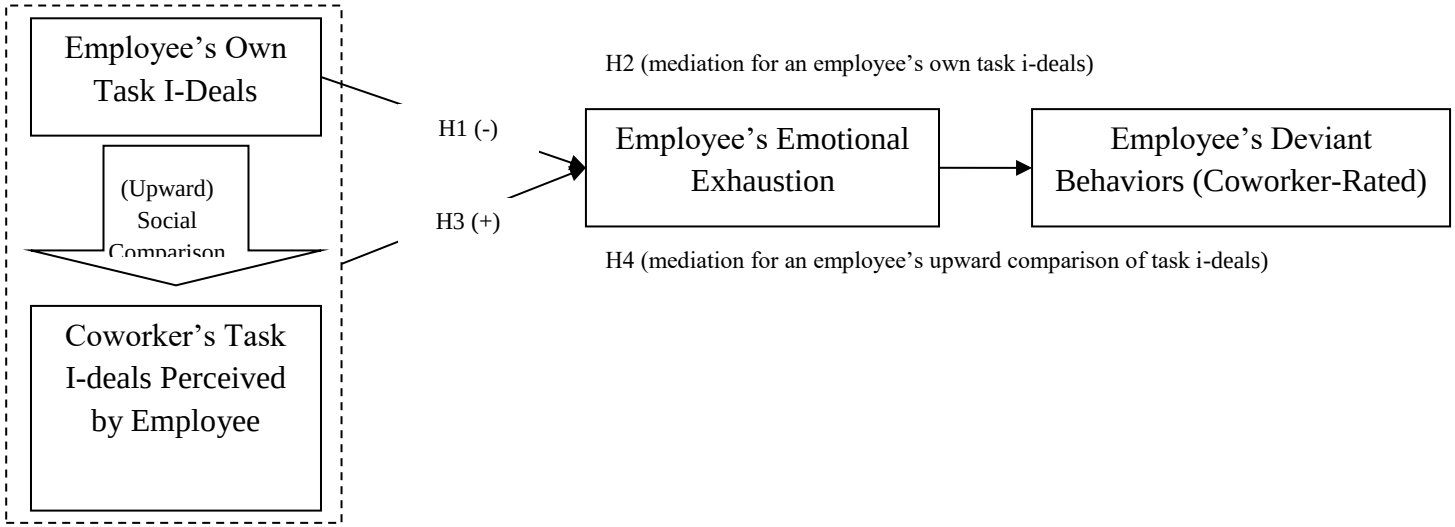

Figure 1. Conceptual model.

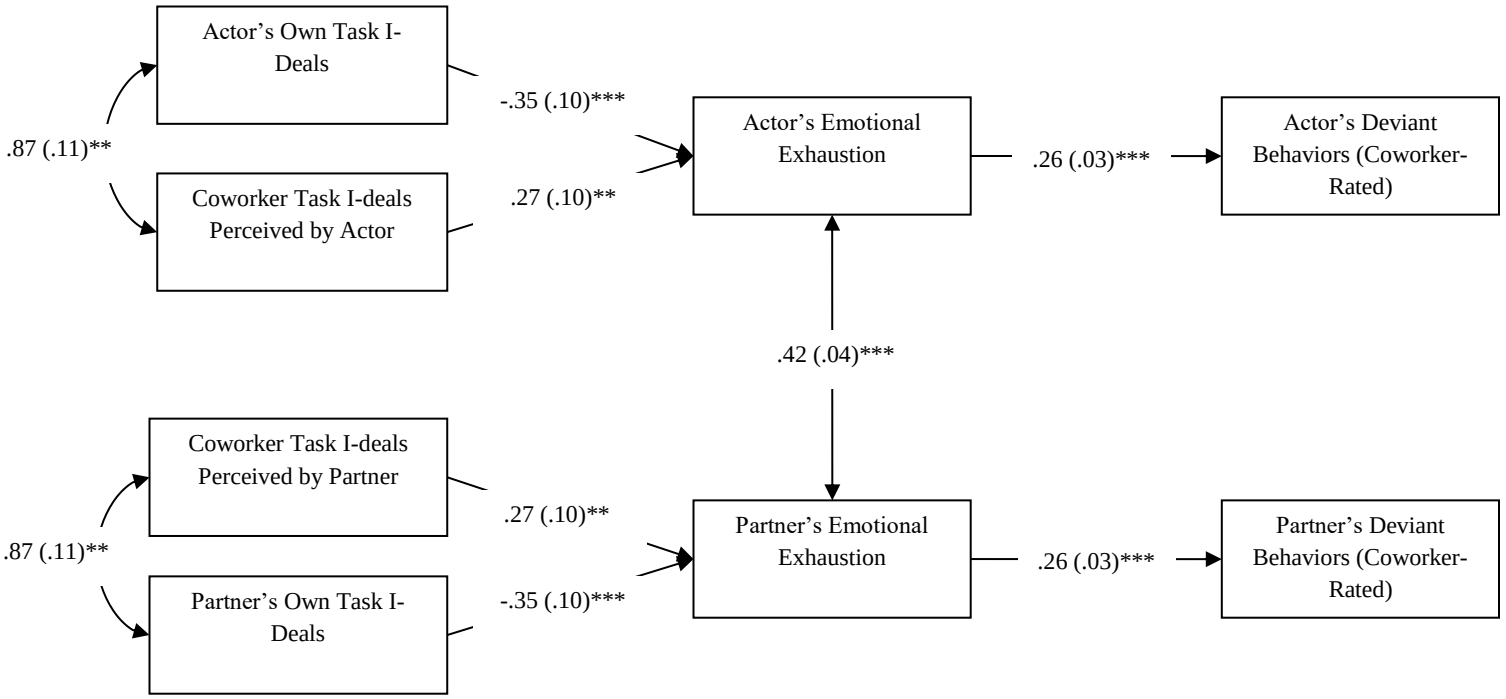

Figure 2. APIM model results. *Notes*. N_{dyad} = 131. Actor and partner are indistinguishable, representing either the focal employee or his/her coworker. The following were modeled but are not presented for the sake of presentation clarity: the covariances between actor's and partner's own task i-deals (cov = .97, *SE* = .13, $p < .001$), between actor's (partner's) own task i-deals and coworker task i-deals perceived by partner (actor) (cov = .81, *SE* = .11, $p < .001$), between coworker task i-deals perceived by actor and by partner (cov = .74, *SE* = .11, $p < .001$), between the disturbance terms of actor's and partner's deviant behaviors (cov = .36, *SE* = .05, $p < .001$), and between the disturbance terms of actor's (partner's) emotional exhaustion and partner's (actor's) deviant behaviors (cov = .35, *SE* = .05, $p < .001$). ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed).