

# **A Mediating Effect of Work-Family on the Relationship between Idiosyncratic Deals and Employees' Job Satisfaction of Knowledge-Based Employees New Generation in Jiangxi Province of China**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study investigates the intricate dynamics between idiosyncratic deals, work-family interface, and job satisfaction among knowledge-based employees of the new generation in Jiangxi Province, China. Idiosyncratic deals, characterized by personalized arrangements between employees and their organizations, have gained prominence as mechanisms for addressing individual needs and preferences. However, the extent to which these deals influence job satisfaction among knowledge-based employees remains underexplored, particularly within the unique cultural and organizational context of Jiangxi Province. Drawing upon social exchange theory and the conservation of resources theory, this research proposes a conceptual framework to examine the mediating role of the work-family interface in the relationship between idiosyncratic deals and job satisfaction. The work-family interface serves as a crucial mechanism through which idiosyncratic deals may impact employees' job satisfaction, as it reflects the balance and integration of work and family roles, responsibilities, and resources. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, data will be collected from a sample of knowledge-based employees from various industries in Jiangxi Province. Quantitative data will be obtained through structured surveys measuring idiosyncratic deals, work-family interface, and job satisfaction, while qualitative data will be gathered through in-depth interviews to provide nuanced insights into the experiences and perceptions of participants. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to both theoretical and practical domains. Theoretically, it will advance our understanding of the mechanisms underlying the relationship between idiosyncratic deals and job satisfaction, shedding light on the mediating role of the work-family interface. Practically, the findings will offer valuable implications for organizational leaders and policymakers in Jiangxi Province, providing guidance on how to optimize idiosyncratic deal structures and support mechanisms to enhance the job satisfaction and well-being of knowledge-based employees, thereby fostering sustainable organizational success in the region.

**Keywords:** idiosyncratic deals, work-family interface, job satisfaction, China.

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

### **A. Defining Knowledge-Based Employees New Generation**

In today's rapidly evolving work landscape, the emergence of the new generation of knowledge-based employees has become increasingly prominent. These individuals, often characterized by their advanced education, digital fluency, and collaborative mindset, play a pivotal role in driving innovation and productivity within organizations (Alfes et al., 2013). As noted by Arntz et al. (2016), knowledge-based employees of the new generation are adept at leveraging technology and data analytics to solve complex problems and make informed decisions, thereby contributing to the competitive advantage of their respective organizations. Moreover, they exhibit a strong preference for work-life integration, seeking opportunities for flexibility and autonomy in their professional pursuits (Schein, 2015). This cohort's unique characteristics underscore the need for organizations to adapt their practices and policies to effectively recruit, develop, and retain this valuable talent pool (Beechler & Woodward, 2009). By recognizing and harnessing the potential of knowledge-based employees of the new generation, organizations can foster a culture of innovation and resilience in the face of dynamic market conditions.

### **B. Research Gaps**

Despite the growing recognition of idiosyncratic deals as personalized arrangements between employees and their organizations, there remain notable research gaps regarding their impact on the job satisfaction of knowledge-based employees of the new generation. While existing literature acknowledges the potential influence of idiosyncratic deals on job satisfaction, particularly within the context of knowledge-intensive industries (De Cuyper et al., 2012), empirical studies specifically focusing on the new generation of knowledge-based employees are scarce. Furthermore, the mediating mechanisms through which idiosyncratic deals affect job satisfaction among this demographic group remain underexplored. For instance, while social exchange theory suggests that idiosyncratic deals may enhance employees' affective commitment and psychological contract fulfillment (Rousseau, 1995), the extent to which these mechanisms operate among knowledge-based employees of the new generation remains uncertain. Additionally, the role of contextual factors such as organizational culture, leadership styles, and generational differences in shaping the effectiveness of idiosyncratic deals warrants further investigation. By addressing these research gaps, future studies can provide valuable insights into the nuanced dynamics of idiosyncratic deals and their implications for enhancing the job satisfaction and well-being of knowledge-based employees of the new generation.

### **C. Problem Statement**

An increasingly pertinent issue within contemporary organizational contexts pertains to the efficacy of idiosyncratic deals in shaping the job satisfaction of knowledge-based employees of the new generation. While idiosyncratic deals offer personalized arrangements tailored to individual employee needs and preferences, the

extent to which these agreements contribute to job satisfaction among knowledge-based workers remains ambiguous. Existing research suggests a potential link between idiosyncratic deals and job satisfaction, yet empirical evidence specifically addressing this relationship within the context of the new generation of knowledge-based employees is scant. This gap in the literature hampers our understanding of how idiosyncratic deals, which often involve flexible work arrangements, skill development opportunities, or resource allocation tailored to individual preferences, impact the job satisfaction of knowledge-based employees who value autonomy, meaningful work, and work-life integration. Moreover, the role of mediating factors such as work-family interface, organizational support, and generational differences in shaping the relationship between idiosyncratic deals and job satisfaction remains underexplored. Addressing these gaps is imperative for organizations seeking to optimize their talent management strategies and foster a conducive work environment that promotes the well-being and satisfaction of knowledge-based employees of the new generation.

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **A. Social Exchange Theory on The Work-Family Relationship**

Social exchange theory (SET) provides a valuable framework for understanding the dynamics of the work-family relationship by emphasizing the reciprocal exchange of resources between individuals and their social environments. According to SET, individuals engage in social exchanges with their organizations and family members, expecting equitable returns for their contributions (Blau, 1964). In the context of the work-family interface, SET posits that employees invest their time, effort, and skills in their work roles, expecting various rewards such as financial compensation, career advancement, and social recognition. Simultaneously, employees also invest resources in their family roles, seeking emotional support, companionship, and fulfillment of familial responsibilities in return. The quality of these exchanges influences individuals' perceptions of balance and satisfaction in both domains (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). For instance, when employees perceive support and understanding from their organizations in managing work-family conflicts, they are more likely to experience reduced stress and greater job satisfaction. Conversely, conflicts and lack of support in either domain can lead to strain and dissatisfaction. By delineating the reciprocal exchanges that occur within the work-family interface, SET offers insights into how organizations can promote employees' well-being and satisfaction by fostering supportive work environments and implementing family-friendly policies.

### **B. Expectancy disconfirmation theory on the job satisfaction for new generation of knowledge-based employees.**

Expectancy disconfirmation theory (EDT) offers a valuable framework for understanding job satisfaction among the new generation of knowledge-based employees by focusing on the relationship between their expectations and their actual experiences in the workplace (Oliver, 1980). According to EDT, individuals form expectations regarding various aspects of their job, such as the work environment, career development

opportunities, and organizational culture. When these expectations are met or exceeded, individuals experience positive disconfirmation, leading to increased satisfaction. Conversely, when their expectations are not met, negative disconfirmation occurs, resulting in dissatisfaction. For knowledge-based employees of the new generation, who often have high expectations regarding autonomy, meaningful work, and opportunities for skill development (Twenge, 2010), EDT suggests that their job satisfaction is influenced by the extent to which their actual experiences align with these expectations. Organizations that effectively communicate and deliver on promises related to work flexibility, technological innovation, and career advancement are more likely to elicit positive disconfirmation and enhance the job satisfaction of this demographic group. Conversely, discrepancies between expectations and reality may lead to disillusionment and decreased satisfaction. By applying EDT to the context of knowledge-based employees of the new generation, organizations can gain insights into the factors driving satisfaction and take proactive measures to align their practices with employees' expectations, thereby fostering a positive work environment and promoting employee retention and engagement.

### **III. CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT**

#### **A. Idiosyncratic Deals**

Idiosyncratic deals (i-deals) are personalized arrangements negotiated between individual employees and their organizations, representing a departure from traditional one-size-fits-all employment contracts (Rousseau, 2005). These deals are tailored to meet the unique needs, preferences, and circumstances of employees, reflecting the recognition that employees have diverse motivations, skills, and commitments (Rousseau, 2005). Idiosyncratic deals can encompass various aspects of the employment relationship, including flexible work arrangements, customized job responsibilities, developmental opportunities, and compensation packages (Rousseau, 2005). The essence of i-deals lies in their mutual agreement and individualized nature, distinguishing them from standard organizational policies and practices. By providing employees with greater autonomy and control over their work experiences, i-deals are believed to enhance job satisfaction, commitment, and performance (Rousseau & Tijoriwala, 1998). Furthermore, i-deals foster a sense of psychological contract fulfillment, as they signal an organization's willingness to invest in and recognize the unique contributions of its employees (Rousseau, 2005). However, it is essential to note that i-deals may also pose challenges related to equity, transparency, and fairness, particularly if not managed effectively (Rousseau, 2005). Nevertheless, the concept of idiosyncratic deals highlights the evolving nature of the employment relationship and the need for organizations to adopt more flexible and individualized approaches to talent management.

#### **B. Employees' Job Satisfaction Of Knowledge-Based Employees**

Job satisfaction among knowledge-based employees reflects the degree to which individuals experience contentment, fulfillment, and positive affect in their work roles within knowledge-intensive industries (Harter et al., 2002). These employees typically engage in intellectually stimulating tasks, leverage specialized expertise, and

contribute to innovation and problem-solving within their organizations (Harter et al., 2002). Job satisfaction among knowledge-based employees is influenced by various factors, including the alignment between individual values and organizational goals, opportunities for skill development and autonomy, supportive leadership and organizational culture, and perceived fairness in reward systems (Chuang et al., 2016). Moreover, the extent to which knowledge-based employees perceive their work as meaningful, challenging, and conducive to personal growth significantly impacts their job satisfaction (Harter et al., 2002). Additionally, factors such as work-life balance, interpersonal relationships, and recognition for contributions play crucial roles in shaping the overall satisfaction levels of knowledge-based employees (Chuang et al., 2016). As organizations increasingly recognize the strategic importance of knowledge-based workers in driving innovation and competitive advantage, understanding and fostering job satisfaction among this demographic group have become imperative for talent management and organizational success.

#### **IV. DISCUSSIONS**

In Jiangxi Province of China, the relationship between idiosyncratic deals and job satisfaction among the new generation of knowledge-based employees is likely to be influenced by the mediating role of the work-family interface. Idiosyncratic deals, characterized by personalized agreements between employees and their organizations, may entail provisions such as flexible work arrangements, skill development opportunities, or tailored benefits, which can impact employees' perceptions of job satisfaction (Rousseau, 2005). However, the extent to which these idiosyncratic deals translate into job satisfaction may be contingent upon the quality of the work-family interface experienced by employees. The work-family interface reflects the balance and integration of work and family roles, responsibilities, and resources (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011). In the context of knowledge-based employees of the new generation in Jiangxi Province, a supportive work-family interface, characterized by policies promoting work-life balance, access to family-friendly benefits, and organizational support for family responsibilities, may enhance the positive effects of idiosyncratic deals on job satisfaction. Conversely, conflicts between work and family domains or inadequate support for family responsibilities may attenuate the impact of idiosyncratic deals on job satisfaction. Therefore, understanding the mediating effect of the work-family interface can provide valuable insights into the mechanisms through which idiosyncratic deals influence job satisfaction among knowledge-based employees of the new generation in Jiangxi Province, informing organizational policies and practices aimed at enhancing employee well-being and performance.

#### **V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The relationship between idiosyncratic deals and job satisfaction among knowledge-based employees of the new generation is a topic of growing interest in organizational research. Idiosyncratic deals, which involve customized agreements negotiated between individual employees and their organizations, have been increasingly recognized as mechanisms for enhancing employee motivation, commitment, and job satisfaction (Rousseau, 2005). These personalized arrangements may include flexible work arrangements, skill development

opportunities, or tailored benefits, catering to the unique preferences and needs of employees (Rousseau, 2005). For knowledge-based employees of the new generation, who often value autonomy, meaningful work, and opportunities for skill development (Twenge, 2010), idiosyncratic deals have the potential to play a significant role in shaping job satisfaction. By providing greater control over their work experiences and aligning organizational practices with individual preferences, idiosyncratic deals can contribute to enhanced job satisfaction among this demographic group. However, the effectiveness of idiosyncratic deals in promoting job satisfaction may vary depending on factors such as organizational culture, leadership support, and the perceived fairness of the deal-making process (Rousseau & Tijoriwala, 1998). Therefore, further research is needed to elucidate the mechanisms through which idiosyncratic deals influence job satisfaction among knowledge-based employees of the new generation, informing organizational strategies aimed at enhancing employee engagement and retention.

The mediating effect of work-family relationships on employees of the new generation has garnered considerable attention in organizational research. As contemporary work environments become increasingly demanding and complex, the interface between work and family domains plays a crucial role in shaping employees' well-being, job satisfaction, and overall performance (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011). For employees of the new generation, who often prioritize work-life balance, meaningful work, and flexibility in their professional pursuits, the quality of their work-family relationships is particularly salient (Twenge, 2010). Work-family relationships encompass the interactions, support, and resources exchanged between work and family domains, influencing individuals' ability to effectively manage their multiple roles and responsibilities (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011). Positive work-family relationships, characterized by supportive organizational policies, supervisor understanding, and access to family-friendly benefits, can mitigate work-family conflict and promote employee well-being and satisfaction (Allen et al., 2013). Moreover, research suggests that positive work-family relationships contribute to greater job engagement, commitment, and retention among employees of the new generation (Allen et al., 2013). Therefore, understanding the mediating effect of work-family relationships on the relationship between organizational practices and employee outcomes is essential for designing effective human resource strategies and fostering a conducive work environment that meets the needs of employees of the new generation.

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