

Teachers' Conceptions of Idiosyncratic Deals They Made with Their Principals

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ABSTRACT

Idiosyncratic deals (i-deals) are non-standardized agreements for mutual benefit between individual employees and their managers that respond to the needs of the employees. The aim of this study, the first study on how teachers worldwide understand these agreements, is to find out how many ways teachers understand the i-deals they make with school principals. As part of the qualitative methodology, a phenomenographic design was used. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with sixteen teachers, selected and diversified by sector (public/private), school level, subject, age, and gender in terms of maximum variation sampling. The results indicate that the participants understood these agreements in six ways. These understandings are (U1) "a practice that can be realized if the necessary conditions are met," (U2) "a practice that makes me feel good," (U3) "a practice that benefits the school," (U4) "a practice that benefits me," (U5) "a practice that other teachers can accept if they see reasonable grounds for it," and (U6) "a practice that the school administrators agree to when they have to." A hierarchical categorization was made between these understandings based on how one's understanding encompasses another, and it was found that the participants who had understanding U6 also had understanding U5. Moreover, it was revealed that participants who had understandings U5 and U6 also had other understandings. Based on the results of this study, it is suggested that training on i-deals should be provided for teachers and school principals and that principals should regularly review whether these agreements are achieving their objectives. In addition, researchers are recommended to investigate the i-deals from different cultures and geographies as well as the i-deals made between private school teachers and principals during the hiring process.

Öğretmenlerin Okul Müdürleri ile Gerçekleştirdikleri Kişiyi Özgü Anlaşmalara İlişkin Anlayışları

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ÖZET

Kişiyi özgü anlaşmalar, çalışanlar ve işverenleri arasında, çalışanın ihtiyaçları doğrultusunda karşılıklı yarar sağlamak amacıyla yapılan standart dışı anlaşmalardır. Dünya genelinde öğretmenlerin bu anlaşmaları nasıl anladıklarına ilişkin yapılmış ilk çalışma olan bu araştırmanın amacı, öğretmenlerin okul müdürleri ile gerçekleştirdikleri kişiyi özgü anlaşmaları kaç farklı şekilde anladıklarını ortaya koymaktır. Araştırmada nitel metodoloji kapsamında fenomenografi deseni kullanılmış ve veriler, maksimum çeşitlilik örnekleme yaklaşımı ile sektör (kamu/özel), okul düzeyi, branş, yaş ve cinsiyet fark alanlarına göre dengeli şekilde çeşitlendirilerek oluşturulan on altı öğretmen ile yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme yöntemi kullanılarak toplanmıştır. Araştırma sonucunda katılımcıların bu anlaşmaları altı farklı şekilde anladıkları ortaya konmuştur. Bu anlayışlar, (A1) "gerekli koşulların



varlığı ile gerçekleşebilen bir uygulama,” (A2) “bana kendimi iyi hissettiren bir uygulama,” (A3) “okula fayda sağlayan bir uygulama,” (A4) “bana faydaları dokunan bir uygulama,” (A5) “makul nedenler görebilirlerse diğer öğretmenlerin kabullendiği bir uygulama” ve (A6) “okul yöneticilerinin mecbur kalınca razı oldukları bir uygulama” şeklindedir. Bu anlayışlar arasında kapsam bakımından hiyerarşik bir sıralama yapılmış ve A6 anlayışına sahip katılımcıların A5 anlayışına da sahip oldukları ortaya çıkmıştır. Ayrıca, A5 ve A6 anlayışına sahip katılımcıların A1, A2, A3 ve A4 anlayışlarına sahip oldukları anlaşılmıştır. Bu çalışmanın bulgularına dayanarak, öğretmenlere ve okul müdürlerine kişiye özel anlaşmalar konusunda eğitim verilmesi ve müdürlerin bu anlaşmaların hedeflerine ulaşım ulaşımadığını düzenli olarak gözden geçirmesi önerilmektedir. Ayrıca, farklı kültür ve coğrafyadaki öğretmenlerle kişiye özgü anlaşmalar ve özel okul öğretmenleri ile işe alım sürecinde yapılan kişiye özgü anlaşmalar üzerine araştırmalar yapılması da araştırmacılara önerilir.

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This research article is based on the master's thesis entitled "A Phenomenographic Investigation into Teachers' Conceptions of Idiosyncratic Deals Made with School Principals" written by Görkem Boyacı under the supervision of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Gökhan Özaslan.

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INTRODUCTION

New methods and innovations are being used to increase efficiency in education. As a result, teachers' expectations of their working conditions and the working environment change over time. As part of these expectations, teachers may ask their principals to make their working lives more productive and easier and may wish to be involved in tasks that emphasize their own skills. They may ask that special arrangements be made for certain situations, problems, and changes in their personal lives that do not negatively impact their work efficiency at school. For these special requests, students may have to negotiate with and convince their school principals. Under the current working conditions in schools, a practice that enable teachers to do more for their students is to make special arrangements for them. These arrangements are called idiosyncratic deals in management research.

Social exchange theory is similar to i-deals and refers to a person's tendency to feel obligated to do more in return for the benefit or service provided (Blau, 1986). It has been observed that only formal decisions are ineffective. When managers respond to the needs of employees, give them authority in decision-making processes, and take responsibility, this has a positive effect on the organization's employees (Bursalioglu, 2021). In this way, managers' work is made easier.

Idiosyncratic deals (i-deals for short) are defined as "voluntary, personalized agreements of a nonstandard nature negotiated between individual employees and their employers regarding terms that benefit each party." (Rousseau et al., 2006, p. 978). This practice differs from the classic, standardized agreements between all employees and their employers, which are prepared by the HR department. In other words, it is possible to define these agreements as individual rights that employees receive differently from their colleagues in the same organization (Rousseau et al., 2006). I-deals aim to positively influence employees' motivation, performance and work-life balance (Hornung et al., 2009). Özaslan (2023) stated in his study that the mutual benefit that teachers and schools derive from i-deals is a facilitating factor in schools.

I-deals are distinguished from other agreements by their characteristic features. These four distinguishing features are listed below (Rousseau et al., 2006):

1. Idiosyncratic deals are won through individual negotiations and not collective bargaining. It is a right obtained through individual bargaining for employees to have different rights compared to their colleagues in the organization for which they work.
2. Heterogeneity exists in idiosyncratic deals. In an organization where i-deals are used, not everyone has the same rights. This is because everyone's needs, and abilities are different.
3. The aim of i-deals is to provide mutual benefit for both employees and employers. Companies want to attract, retain, and motivate employees that they value. In this sense, the i-deals are based on a win-win relationship.
4. The scope of i-deals varies significantly. An employee may want more flexible working hours for the same salary, whereas an older employee may want to take fewer business trips.

There are different types of i-deals. They differ in terms of timing, content and the party initiating the agreement. In terms of timing, Rousseau (2005) distinguished between ex-ante, which are made at the time of hiring, and ex-post, which are made after the employee and employer have worked together for some time and know each other better. In ex-ante agreements, topics that can be discussed are usually limited as neither party knows the other. Talented employees are expected to be more successful in this process (Rousseau et al., 2016). Özaslan (2023) suggested that principals of private schools should be given more authority, especially in ex ante agreements, so that teachers are more encouraged to make i-deals for the benefit of their schools. Ex-post agreements mean different things to employees and employers depending on the situation. Ex-post agreements are divided into two categories. Rousseau (2005) defined the first as performance-based agreements, which an employee receives based on their performance and contribution to the organization, and the second as agreements

that are made to prevent the employee from leaving the job and to retain them. Bal et al. (2012) found that ex-post agreements have a positive effect on employee motivation and that employees who are close to retirement retain their position in the organization and continue to work due to ex-post agreements.

In terms of content, i-deals are development-related, task-oriented, flexible, reduced workload and financial agreements. Developmental i-deals aim to give employees opportunities to pursue career development and enhance their competencies, and they aim to provide specific opportunities for all these (Rousseau et al., 2009). Anand et al. (2010) found that developmental i-deals are more related to an employee taking on the identity of the organization and seeing themselves as a member of an extended family in the organization. Rousseau (2005) defined task-oriented i-deals as the reorganization of employees' job descriptions and the reconstruction of the job scope. These agreements are negotiated to make the work content more interesting and satisfying. Employees want to take on tasks and responsibilities that match their needs and abilities. The opportunity given to employees to shape their work enables them to focus on work that they enjoy and that they find meaningful (Rousseau et al., 2016). Hornung et al. (2010) found that task-based agreements provide employees with a sense of control over their work. I-deals that provide flexibility are related to the adjustment of work schedule and work hours (Lee & Hui, 2011). Hornung et al. (2008) found that i-deals that provide flexibility reduce work-family conflict. Özaslan (2023) revealed that persuasive language and good communication are conducive elements for task flexibility i-deals between school principals and teachers. While i-deals that provide flexibility are associated with higher motivation to continue working, developmental i-deals aim to create more favorable conditions in relationships (Bal et al., 2012). Workload reduction agreements are also used to balance between family and work or to meet non-work-related demands, such as health problems (Rousseau et al., 2016). These agreements include specific arrangements to reduce workload and working hours (Lee & Hui, 2011). The last type of i-deal, in terms of content, is financial agreements. These agreements entitle employees to receive higher or preferential compensation than their colleagues and represent the economic dimension of i-deals. In this respect, the social-emotional dimension remains somewhat absent (Rousseau et al., 2016). These types of agreements improve employee performance through direct financial support and are primarily used with employees who intend to leave their jobs. However, there is no conclusive evidence that such agreements help deter employees who are determined to leave their jobs (Rosen et al., 2013).

Regarding the initiating party, i-deals are divided into two categories. One negotiation process is an employee-initiated negotiation process (proactive), and the other is an employer-initiated negotiation process (reactive), which is easier to maintain (Rousseau, 2005). Proactive agreements become possible when employees feel sufficiently valued in negotiations with their employer, and these agreements vary according to employee performance. Employees strive to fulfill their needs in accordance with opportunities offered to them by their superiors (Rousseau, 2005). For i-deals, it should be emphasized that being a proactive agreement maker, i.e., an employee who initiates an agreement, builds his/her own career, thinks ahead, and thinks about the future, is key to enabling the employee to get and endure more in the business world (Parker et al., 2010). Rousseau (2005) stated that reactive i-deals occur when managers ask their employees to negotiate and then respond. Sometimes these agreements are made because an employee makes a special contribution to the company or because they feel that their work and efforts are not appreciated. Özaslan (2023) pointed out that it is easier for principals to make an i-deal due to the high workload and seniority of teachers.

I-deals are closely related to job satisfaction (Rousseau et al., 2009; Rosen et al., 2013), organizational commitment (Hornung et al., 2008; Ng & Feldman, 2009), employee engagement (Hornung et al., 2008), the creation of an organizational culture (Anand et al., 2010), and the quality of social relationships (Rousseau et al., 2009). These are issues that company managers should be concerned about. Liu et al. (2013) found that employees feel valued in organizations where i-deals are implemented and that this promotes personal development. Furthermore, Bal and Boehm (2017) found

a negative correlation between i-deals and emotional exhaustion. Work-life balance is also an important benefit of i-deals (Hornung et al., 2008). Tomlinson and Mayer (2009) stated that in this way, it becomes clear that negative communication between employers employees is not intentional. In addition, employees in organizations that have made developmental i-deals are more satisfied and grateful toward their organizations and believe that their organizations use their opportunities and resources for them. Otherwise, employees believe that an organization is not willing to use its resources for its own benefit (Ng et al., 2021).

A lack of knowledge about i-deals leads to problems when implementing such a concept. This leads to misunderstandings among colleagues and mismanagement among managers. As a result, such arrangements are sometimes misunderstood as favoritism and unfairness (Rousseau, 2005). Anand et al. (2022) also mention this and argue that this can make i-deals appear to be unfair. However, i-deals benefit both the company and the employee, whereas nepotism only benefits the person hired. Therefore, these are two different situations, and it is important to understand i-deals properly.

Although developmental agreements enhance an individual's career path experience, they can create an environment of competition and rivalry with other employees in the organization. Agreements that provide flexibility can lead to problems and inadequacies in coordinating with other employees and customers in the organization because there will be flexibility and special arrangements in the employees' work hours and schedules. An employee who is granted flexibility may have to work harder and put in more effort to make their contribution visible. Similarly, agreements that reduce workload are similar. An employee is likely to spend less time at the company, and their commitment to the company may decrease. Employees who enter such agreements may have to perform less and climb the career ladder more slowly. Financial agreements, in turn, increase the perception of inequality and injustice among employees and thus reduce solidarity and cooperation within an organization (Rousseau et al., 2016). Negative responses to the demand for an agreement and lack of results can also negatively impact employees and the company. This is because while the individual has to deal with the disappointment and despair caused by such a situation, the organization is naturally negatively affected by it (Kroon et al., 2016).

Considering the advantages and disadvantages, it is important to manage I-deals skillfully to increase school effectiveness and efficiency. Therefore, this study will help develop ideas to create i-deals in schools. This study is important to determine whether teachers understand these agreements positively or negatively, and it is therefore also important to provide school principals with ideas on how to manage the process of creating these arrangements.

Although many studies (Hornung et al., 2009; Ng et al., 2021; Anand et al., 2022) have been conducted in various sectors, i-deals have not yet been adequately addressed in the field of educational administration. The first research on i-deals in the field of educational administration was conducted by Özaslan (2023), who revealed the factors that facilitate the creation of i-deals; no other research was found in school administration. The findings on how teachers understand this phenomenon will form the basis for further studies in the field of educational administration. In summary, the purpose of this phenomenographic study, which was conducted in response to a gap in the literature, was to highlight the different understandings of teachers in private and public schools about i-deals.

METHOD

Traditional phenomenographic research "aims to investigate the qualitatively different ways in which people understand a particular phenomenon or an aspect of the world around them." (Marton & Pong, 2005, p. 335). As Marton (1986) explained, this design uses a second-order perspective that focuses on "an aspect of the world as it appears to the individual" rather than a first-order perspective that focuses on that aspect of the world itself (p. 145). The phenomenographic design was used in this

study because the aim of this research was to determine how teachers understand these agreements (second-order perspective).

Furthermore, Marton (1986) defined phenomenographic design as a method that allows individuals to qualitatively express the differences in their perceptual and interpretive processes as they experience a phenomenon from their own perspective. This research design is primarily concerned with understanding and analyzing people’s experiences and in the process, making definitions based on these experiences. Marton (1986) also stated that in this way, information is obtained about people’s ways of understanding the world and their experiences of the world.

In phenomenographic design, the unit of description is conceptions (Marton & Pong, 2005), which are represented as categories of description (Barnard et al., 1999). There are debates about whether these two concepts are interchangeable; thus, it was deemed appropriate in this study to use the concept of understanding instead of conceptions or categories of description. Furthermore, each understanding expressed by the participants about the phenomenon under investigation has equal value and cannot be attributed to individuals (Barnard et al., 1999). In the results of this study, it was not included whether the participant expressed understanding or how many people shared an understanding. This is because in a phenomenographic design, it is not important how often perceptions are expressed, but rather the diversity of perceptions (Orgill, 2012).

Phenomenography and phenomenology designs may be confused. Phenomenography aims to determine how and in how many ways participants understand the phenomenon under investigation. In phenomenology, it is aimed at revealing shared meanings about a phenomenon by participants, that is, to identify the essence of the phenomenon.

Study Group

The study group of this study consisted of 16 teachers working in private and public schools in a central Anatolian city in Türkiye during the school year 2022-2023. The aim of this research was to reveal different understandings of i-deals. To this end, a maximum variation sampling approach was used to obtain the full range of understanding of the phenomenon, and areas of difference that might influence understandings were identified. The participant list is shown in Table 1:

Table 1.
Overview of the Study Group.

School level	Public	Private
Preschool	Under 30- female (T1)	Under 30 - female (T3)
	Between 35-40 - male (T2)	Over 40 - female (T4)
Primary School	Under 30 - female (T5)	Under 30 - male (T7)
	Over 40 - male (T6)	Over 40 - female (T8)
Secondary School	Under 30 – male (T9)	Under 30 - female (T11)
	Over 40 - female (T10)	Over 40 - male (T12)
High School	Under 30 - male (T13)	Under 30 - female (T15)
	Over 40 - female (T14)	Over 40 - male (T16)

Sixteen teachers who participated in this study diversified in terms of sector (eight public school, eight private school teachers), school level (four preschool, four primary school, four secondary school, four high school teachers), age (eight of them under 30, eight of them seven over 40, one between 35 and 40), gender (nine women, seven men), and subject area (four preschool teachers, two classroom teachers, one school counselor, one computer teacher, two Turkish teachers, one science teacher, two English teachers, one physical education teacher and two chemistry teachers).

Data Collection

After obtaining approval from the Ethics Committee and research authorization from the Provincial Directorate of National Education, interviews were conducted with 16 teachers in 2023 using audio recordings. To conduct interviews with teachers working in private schools, permission was obtained from the school administration. After obtaining consent and permission from the school administrators, a suitable location for the interviews was determined with the participants, the day and time of the interview were planned, and appointments were made. Informed consent forms were provided to the participants before the interviews. To ensure that participants properly understood the concept of i-deals, a short letter containing information about idiosyncratic deals was sent to each participant before the interviews. The interview questions were as follows:

1. Which of the arrangements that you made only for yourself with your superiors in the position of principal and vice principal do you remember, and would you like to talk about first?
2. What thoughts and feelings would you like to express in relation to this example?
3. Do you remember any other examples?
4. Considering these examples, how would you generally describe or envision an idiosyncratic deal with a principal?

The audio recordings collected from the participants were transcribed using the audio file transcription tool in the online version of Microsoft Word from Microsoft 365 application suite. The interviews transcribed by the program were listened to again, and the incorrect parts were corrected, and the missing parts were completed word for word.

Data Analysis

The analysis was based on the analytical approach for the phenomenographic design proposed by Larsson and Holmström (2007). Before starting the analysis, each transcription was read twice, from beginning to end. The analyses were conducted using MAXQDA software for qualitative data analysis. For this purpose, data obtained from the 16 participants were uploaded to the MAXQDA program. Prior to analysis, participants were coded as T1, T2, T3...etc. An analysis process was initiated to analyze what the participants talked about, and coding was done to reveal the expressions in the structural dimension. The next phase focused on how the participants understood the phenomenon that was the subject of the research, and coding was done to reveal the referential dimension. The understandings were then formed and named by examining the statements in the structural and referential dimensions together. In the next step, a comparative analysis of the description categories was performed, and their accuracy was checked. The description categories were clarified by examining the similarities and differences between the definitions. In this process, the participants' statements were repeatedly read, examined, and reviewed (iteration), and whether there is a hierarchical relationship between understandings in terms of comprise is also tried to be seen. Thus, the participants' understandings were observed more clearly and holistically. Finally, outcome spaces were created and a hierarchical ranking of understanding within this area was drawn.

The analysis was performed by the first author. To increase the internal validity of the research, the analyses were also reviewed by the second author. The participants were sent the results of the analyses carried out using the obtained data and were asked whether they agreed with the findings. As an external validity measure, participants were diversified as much as possible, and the limitations of the research and direct quotes from participants were included in the research. To increase internal reliability, the analysis results were subjected to expert review, and the analysis approach recommended by Larsson and Holmström (2007) for the phenomenographic design was employed. As an external reliability measure, participants were identified according to specific criteria, and the process of data collection and analysis were explained in detail.ETHICS

Necmettin Erbakan University, Social Sciences and Humanities Scientific Research Ethics Committee

has confirmed that there was no ethical problem in conducting this research (number: 2022/318).

FINDINGS

The result of the phenomenographic analysis showed that the participants understood i-deals in six different ways: "A practice that can be realized if the necessary conditions are met (U1)," "a practice that makes me feel good (U2)," "a practice that benefits the school (U3)," "a practice that benefits me (U4)," "a practice that other teachers can accept if they see reasonable grounds for it (U5)," and "a practice that the school administrators agree to when they have to (U6)." It was also found that the participants who had understanding U6 also had understanding U5. Moreover, it was revealed that participants who had understanding U5 and U6 also had understanding U1, U2, U3, and U4. This hierarchical structure for understanding is illustrated in Figure 1.

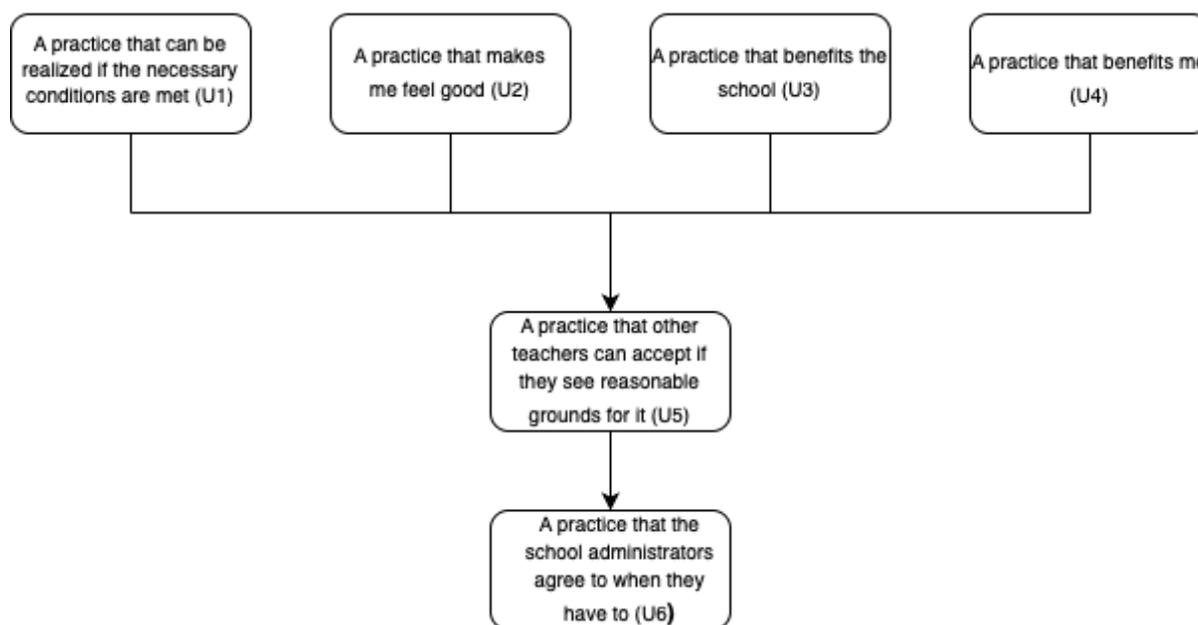


Figure 1.
Hierarchical ranking of participants' understandings of i-deals

(U1) A Practice That Can Be Realized If the Necessary Conditions Are Met

All participants stated that i-deals should be possible under certain conditions. All participants agreed that i-deals are only possible if the necessary conditions are met. The conditions that make such an agreement possible differ among participants. Some participants said that mutual trust and good will should be present when making i-deals. This is evident from the following statement made by the participant:

... a situation between the administration and me, not in writing but verbally, based on trust, absolutely on the basis of trust. Because if you don't trust the other person, the administration or the teacher can't do their jobs. (T6)

Participants also pointed out that working in a school for a long time leads to mutual trust and good will between teachers and school management, which increases the likelihood of idiosyncratic deals:

They always listen to me and always help me. But that in turn is linked to mutual trust. We get on very well now. [...] Yes, after 20 years of mutual good will and trust, they support you. (T8)

All participants who believed that there should be certain conditions for the implementation of i-deals stated that these agreements could be implemented with good management of the process by the school administration. This is evident from the following statement made by the participant:

Of course, the role of the administration is essential here. It can be implemented in the schools

under their leadership [...] Because this fine balance must be established. (T5)

It is clear from the statements of some participants that the understanding and supportive attitudes of school administrators encourage participants to make i-deals. A clear example of this understanding is the following quote:

The fact that my head teacher behaved with the attitude I expected, as I said, being a cooperative person and putting utilitarianism first was an important factor. That helped me at this point. Otherwise, I would not have made such a request. (T5)

It is clear from the participants' statements that i-deals require empathy. The following quote illustrates this point:

I would visualize something about empathy and trust because as I explain myself, I would want them to empathize, and if the principal explains himself, I would empathize with him. And when that's done, you would mutually agree on something. If there is empathy, then there will be an agreement. (T3)

Participants believed that a sense of fairness should be important in i-deals and that school principals should be fair so that it is not perceived as discrimination or favoritism when they or their colleagues make i-deals.

(U2) A Practice That Makes Me Feel Good

In this understanding, which was indicated by all participants in the study, the participants stated that they felt better thanks to the i-deals. Some participants felt that they were recognized by the school administration and felt valued. The following quote illustrates this point:

The fact that my ideas were taken into consideration, that my ideas were accepted, made me feel valuable [...] I felt really good, very valuable in this respect. (T5)

Some participants also mentioned that they were proud of themselves because of the i-deals. T9 said that "I feel proud. Therefore, it was a positive process." about this topic. Some participants stated that i-deals boosted their self-confidence:

With the arrangements made for me, I have time for many things, which boosts my confidence. (T7)

I mean, I think they have a connection to self-confidence [...] I can say that it has changed my confidence, even my attitude. (T5)

(U3) A Practice That Benefits the School

All participants agreed that i-deals also benefit the school. The participants stated that the increased motivation made them want to do more for school and get things done faster, which had a positive impact on everyone in the school. Some participants stated that the i-deals that the principal made with them had changed their views of the principal in a positive way and increased their motivation and desire to work harder to ensure that things went well in the school. The following statements from the participants clearly exemplify this situation:

This has had a very positive influence on my view of administrators. [...] Back then, if they asked me to do something, I did it immediately, even if it had nothing to do with my class or my work. Because it has a positive effect on me, when I miss a day at work, I make up that day all by myself. (T7)

... the fact that they have helped me not to be in difficult situations has definitely increased my motivation in this regard. In other words, I try to do my classes much more willingly, with more effort, and in a more productive way for the students. (T10)

From the participants' statements, it is clear that i-deals make it possible to complete the tasks and work to be done at school faster and more regularly. The statements of one participant on this topic are as follows:

In terms of using my time efficiently, I think it makes a super, super positive contribution. [...] It saves time. It is a complete time saver. I mean, using time efficiently is positive for both sides; I think it is positive for both sides. It makes your work easier. (T7)

Participants indicated that i-deals have an indirect positive impact on students, other teachers, and even parents. Because of the positive impact on relationships within the school, the parents are also satisfied. The following statements from the participants exemplify this situation:

It contributes positively to communication. [...] When similar situations occur with other fellow teachers, they have the same sincerity and communication. I think it creates a warmer atmosphere in the school. (T13)

The more I feel this way, the more flexible I am towards the students. And of course, they understand this time, they are big kids. Of course, the parents are also satisfied with this situation. That is a very important thing for private schools, you know. I mean, a good deed done by the institution reflects on the institution. That has an effect on everyone. (T15)

(U4) A Practice That Benefits Me

Participants indicated that i-deals brought benefits to them both at school and in their personal lives. This understanding, shared by all participants, includes the positive contributions of the i-deals. One participant who worked at a private school and received an extra hour's wage because of the i-deal stated that she was more willing to work because she was financially supported. The following statements from the participant exemplify this situation:

... the principal also saw the difference and made another personalized privilege. [...] But of course, since this was an additional financial gain for me, it was aimed at continuing the process in a more motivated way. (T3)

I-deals psychologically strengthened the participants, reduced their workload, and psychologically relieved them by allowing them working with a flexible program. This can be seen in the following statements from the participant:

... in this respect, I felt a little better psychologically comfortable, because the previous workload was reduced, so I felt psychologically relieved. That was reflected in my normal life, it became easier, you know, because my mind was calmed. [...] and I go to class with a clear head. (T7)

Some participants reported feeling more relaxed in their private lives. These participants could better balance their family and work life and spend more time with their loved ones. T14 commented on this topic as follows: "Of course it has helped me to balance my work and family life." Also, T5 said:

... I'm a mom, I have a child, and I do chores at home such as dinner and so on. I had a lot of work to do during the day, so it was better to be able to leave an hour earlier and start all of them an hour earlier. I can say that I have become a calmer person. (T5)

The findings of this study indicate that these agreements also relieve participants of their daily work duties and help them find balance in their lives. The following statements from the participants illustrate this point:

For example, as I said, I had appointments that I had to go to regularly, and the doctor I went to was unwilling to reschedule them for another day. [...] My school administration supported me without making the situation more difficult for me. So, there should definitely be i-deals on issues like this. (T11)

Another positive contribution of these agreements is the opportunity for professional development. One participant explained that having an i-deal that contributes to her development makes her more competent in her subject area:

I mean, I felt more competent [...] I can say that I felt more competent, more knowledgeable when I combined different resources and experiences. (T5)

Participants emphasized the benefits of i-deals as a motivating factor for them to work. One

participant felt that his sense of responsibility made him more competent in his field, and this motivated him. This can be seen in the following statements from the participant:

I had free time, and I really kept my promise to my principal in this process. So, I took the utmost care to do what I really wanted. As I said, I went to many schools, visited many exhibitions, and I got in touch with many of my fellow science teachers whom I had never met. I saw what kind of activities they were doing in such projects, and my motivation increased. (T10)

(U5) A Practice That Other Teachers Can Accept If They See Reasonable Grounds for It

Participants with this understanding expressed their feelings and thoughts about how the i-deals that the school administration made with them were perceived by other teachers. According to this understanding, some participants stated that i-deals could be accepted by other teachers and that their colleagues were not negative toward the agreements if there are legitimate reasons for agreements. Some participants indicated that i-deals could be accepted if the teacher needed help to fulfill that requirement. This can be seen in the following statements from one participant:

... by the way, I also got my master's degree, other friends also got their master's degree, and we had no such problems. I mean, we didn't have questions like "Why is he doing a degree, why is he taking time off?" (T12)

I-deals are seen positively by the participants in cases in which the teacher works hard for the school and puts extra effort in. This can be seen in the following statements from one participant:

... the principal needs to single out the teacher. [...] If a teacher who makes a difference is treated the same as other teachers, after a certain point, she may think, 'What's the point of me doing this?' So yes, I think different approaches should definitely be shown to such teachers. (T4)

(U6) A Practice That the School Administrators Agree to When They Have to

In this understanding, some participants stated that i-deals are made by school administrators at certain times and in certain situations to prevent difficulties in the functioning of the school. Reportedly, the school administrators did not initially accept the participants' requests but then had to accept them because it would make running the school more difficult. This can be seen from the following statements by the participants:

You know, since some things were not being done, since things are starting to get overwhelming, the institution was forced to do so and started to look at it positively. [...] As I said, when I pushed them, they accepted it in order not to be in a difficult situation. (T7)

Obviously, he had to. Because they would have been seriously burdened. The school's counseling services would have been disrupted, and problems with parents would have increased because of this. (T5)

If the participants' statements with this understanding are examined from a holistic perspective and not within a code-oriented analysis, it cannot be said that the participants do not support i-deals or that they are only negative toward this practice of school administration. This is because the same participants indicated that their attitude toward school administrators changed positively because they were satisfied with some other i-deals that they had made with the school administrators.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The research results demonstrate that the understanding "a practice that can be realized if the necessary conditions are met (U1)" is shared by all participants. It is also clear from the participants' statements that the concept of justice is always mentioned regarding i-deals. The participants stated that these arrangements can only be maintained through fair management and that it is the school principals who ensure this. Otherwise, i-deals cannot be implemented and their implementation, if realized, may

lack fairness. The fact that i-deals are detrimental to the perception of justice has a negative impact on both organizations and individuals and affects their sense of organizational justice (Greenberg et al., 2004; Singh & Vidyarathi, 2018). In the study, it was concluded from the participants' statements that school principals should have leadership skills and make the best use of their management skills in implementing these agreements, which increased the participants' commitment to the school. Özaslan (2023) also pointed out in his study that principals should handle these agreements with great skill to increase the effectiveness of the school and teacher motivation. The participants also stated that principals should use appropriate language and have strong communication skills in this process. Kroon et al. (2016) also found that good relationships between employees and managers positively influence persuasion during the negotiation process. Özaslan (2023) pointed out that communication is an important factor for successful outcomes in i-deals in terms of task flexibility. The participants also indicated that mutual trust is the basis for these agreements. Similarly, Rousseau et al. (2016) found that as a sense of mutual trust increases, so does the willingness of employees to negotiate. Another notable point about U1 understanding is that people prefer to negotiate with school principals who can empathize with their teachers. This finding on empathy supports Özaslan's (2023) finding that empathy is a factor that facilitates i-deals.

Considering the research findings, school principals should be encouraged to participate in leadership training that addresses these agreements and their implementation. In addition, principals should regularly review the outcomes of their i-deals. Given the importance of communication in i-deals, effective communication courses could be offered to teachers and school administrators.

According to the understanding "a practice that makes me feel good (U2)," the positive reaction of school management to the agreements gives the impression that the participant is valued. In parallel, Rousseau et al. (2016) found that i-deals made employees feel valued. In addition, the participants indicated that i-deals that made them proud included those initiated by the school administration. Rousseau (2005) stated that reactive agreements are likely to be initiated by managers when employees contribute to an organization. Consistent with this view, the participants in the study were proud because they believed that their contributions to the school were recognized by the school principals. Furthermore, when a participant negotiates an idiosyncratic deal with the principal, their self-confidence increases when they receive the desired outcome of the negotiation. Hornung et al. (2010) found that i-deals provide employees with a sense of control, and the findings of this study support this conclusion. When teachers feel supported, this can have important consequences. Anuk İşlek and Bakioğlu (2023) argued that preschool teachers in independent kindergartens have a higher organizational commitment than preschool teachers working in other school levels (there are kindergarten classes in elementary schools) because these teachers have more opportunities for collaboration and support in the schools where they work. In addition, Duran and Cemaloğlu (2020), in their qualitative study examining the views of teachers, assistant principals, students, and parents on the personal characteristics, professional competencies, and leadership behaviors of successful principals, found that teacher empowerment and a supportive attitude were the leadership behaviors of successful principals. This finding also points to the importance of school administrators having a positive attitude toward idiosyncratic deals made with teachers.

When school administrators offer i-deals to their teachers, a feeling of being valued is created. This feeling leads to positive emotions, which make teachers happier, feel appreciated, and be more willing to work. This also led to a positive change in teachers' views of school administration. Therefore, principals can use i-deals to demonstrate that they value their teachers.

When analyzing the data from all participants, it was found that understanding "a practice that benefits the school (U3)" is rated very positively. According to the research findings, motivated participants tend to put more effort into moving their schools forward. Hornung et al. (2009) also emphasized that i-deals, especially developmental ones, have a positive impact on employee engagement. The participants

expressed the need to be more committed to their school as a way of thanking the school administration for providing them with professional development opportunities. Consistent with the findings of this study, Hornung et al. (2011) indicated that the more agreements provide employees with work flexibility and development opportunities, the higher their level of employee commitment to their organizations. Similarly, Ng and Feldman (2009) found that i-deals increase organizational commitment.

Based on the findings of this study, principals should assign tasks to their teachers that match their skills and abilities. This will enable teachers to work more efficiently in areas in which they are competent. As a result, teachers will be able to contribute more effectively to the school and to their students, which can lead to greater commitment to the school.

Based on the participants' statements, i-deals positively affect the school atmosphere, teacher-teacher relationships, and parents as long as they are managed successfully and implemented correctly. Rosen et al. (2013) observed that such agreements strengthened interpersonal relationships, whereas Karataş and Doğan (2011) revealed that they improved productivity and customer satisfaction. The results of this study match those of earlier studies.

It has a positive effect on schools achieving success when everyone works collaboratively and there is positive communication among them. This is because the i-deals positively influenced teachers, students, and parents. School principals should be aware of this and prioritize the needs of teachers to ensure that the school runs smoothly and effectively.

Participants with the understanding "a practice that benefits me (U4)" feel that i-deals that offer development opportunities provided them with psychological support. Kroon et al. (2016) found that developmental i-deals increased employee performance, and Rousseau et al. (2006) reported that i-deals related to career, personal development, and administrative support in the work environment encouraged employees to make more agreements. The results of this study demonstrate that participants who initiated i-deals focusing on professional development and their careers increased their work engagement. Considering that openness to learning is one of the expectations that teachers should possess (Yaman et al., 2022), the value of providing such opportunities for teachers is clearer. In accordance with the present results, Parker et al. (2010) found that proactive agreements support employee development because they are initiated by employees. It has also been reported that developmental i-deals are more effective in terms of social interaction and positively affect work relationships (Anand et al., 2010; Hornung et al., 2009). It was stated by the participants that giving the participants the responsibility to ensure their professional development in their schools positively affected their professional and personal lives and contributed to their communication with their principals. It was also stated that these results prevented conflicts between work and family. Finally, Hornung et al. (2008) argued that i-deals are made to maintain a smooth relationship between work and family.

Based on the findings above, school administrators can support teachers through i-deals by assigning tasks that match their skills related to their profession while managing the process. It is also important to consider that each teacher has individual needs, and by fulfilling their requirements related to their personal lives, they can be relieved.

Idiosyncratic deals involving financial arrangements can be made to retain employees who are considering resignation (Rosen et al., 2013). However, the data collected in this study are not sufficient to support this assertion. Further research can be conducted to obtain detailed results on specific financial i-deals for schools.

The understanding "a practice that other teachers can accept if they see reasonable grounds for it (U5)" implies that there should be a valid and rational reason for making i-deals. According to Brown and Woodbury (1998), some i-deals, especially those related to salary, should have a valid reason because such deals can create a sense of unfairness among other employees.

School principals can conduct needs analysis based on their understanding of U5 in their schools. This

will help them to gather information about the specific needs of individual teachers. In addition, conducting more research into acceptable reasons teachers find to engage in i-deals in education can lead to clearer and more accurate results.

Some participants understood these arrangements as “a practice that the school administrators agree to when they have to (U6).” One participant who considered leaving the school because of her heavy workload stated that he continued working when his workload was reduced, and his schedule was made more flexible because of the i-deals. The findings of the present study are consistent with those of Rousseau et al. (2016), who also found that i-deals can reduce employee workload and discourage employees from leaving their jobs. Some participants stated that principals did not make these agreements voluntarily but were forced to do so to avoid encountering difficulties.

There is a lack of research on i-deals in educational institutions. To obtain detailed information on this topic, researchers can expand their studies by diversifying research methods, data collection instruments, and participants. In this way, they can make valuable contributions to the knowledge base of educational administration.

Ethical approval

Necmettin Erbakan University, Social Sciences and Humanities Scientific Research Ethics Committee has confirmed that there was no ethical problem in conducting this research (number: 2022/318).

Conflict of Interest

The authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Introduction: The introduction section serves as the entry point to the research, providing a comprehensive overview of the study's context, rationale, and objectives. It begins by contextualizing the research topic within existing literature and identifying gaps, controversies, or areas that require further exploration. By reviewing prior studies and establishing the significance of the research problem, the introduction sets the stage for the current investigation. Furthermore, it outlines the specific aims, objectives, or research questions addressed in the study, thereby guiding the reader's understanding of its scope and purpose. Through a well-crafted introduction, researchers can effectively engage readers, justify the need for their study, and lay the groundwork for subsequent sections.

Method: The method section provides a detailed account of the research design, methodology, and procedures employed to address the study's objectives. It elucidates key aspects such as the study's design (e.g., experimental, correlational, qualitative), sampling procedures, participant characteristics, data collection methods (including instrumentation and materials), and data analysis techniques. By transparently documenting these methodological details, researchers enable readers to evaluate the validity, reliability, and generalizability of their findings. Moreover, the method section ensures research replicability by furnishing sufficient information for other scholars to replicate or build upon the study. Clear and systematic reporting of the methodological framework enhances the credibility and rigor of the research endeavor.

Findings: In the findings section, researchers present the empirical data collected during the study and report the outcomes of their analyses. This section typically begins with a descriptive summary of the data, including relevant statistics, frequencies, or distributions. Subsequently, researchers present the results of inferential statistical analyses, hypothesis testing, or thematic analysis, depending on the study's design and objectives. Data may be organized into tables, figures, or textual descriptions to facilitate comprehension and interpretation. Through the systematic presentation of findings, researchers enable readers to discern patterns, trends, or associations within the data, thereby supporting the study's conclusions and implications. It is essential to maintain clarity, accuracy, and objectivity in reporting findings, avoiding unwarranted interpretations or exaggerations.

Discussion: The discussion section offers a critical analysis and interpretation of the study's findings within the broader context of existing knowledge and theoretical frameworks. Researchers engage in a reflective dialogue, examining the implications, significance, and limitations of their findings. They contextualize their results by comparing them with prior research, identifying consistencies, discrepancies, or novel insights. Additionally, researchers explore potential explanations for observed patterns or phenomena, considering alternative interpretations or confounding factors. It is crucial to acknowledge and address any limitations or constraints inherent in the study, such as methodological shortcomings, sample biases, or data constraints. Furthermore, researchers speculate on the practical implications of their findings, offering recommendations for future research directions or practical interventions. The discussion section serves as the intellectual culmination of the research endeavor, synthesizing empirical evidence with theoretical insights and advancing scholarly discourse within the field.

Conclusion: The conclusion section encapsulates the key findings, contributions, and implications of the study, providing a concise summary and synthesis of the research journey. Researchers reiterate the main findings and underscore their significance in addressing the research problem or fulfilling the study's objectives. They reflect on the broader implications of their work, highlighting its theoretical, practical, or societal relevance. Moreover, researchers articulate the study's contributions to knowledge, identifying novel insights, methodological advancements, or theoretical refinements. Concluding remarks may also address unresolved questions, lingering uncertainties, or avenues for future inquiry. By offering closure and perspective, the conclusion section affirms the study's significance, invites scholarly dialogue, and inspires further exploration of the research topic.

Recommendation: The recommendations section offers actionable suggestions or proposals based on the study's findings and insights. Drawing upon the implications identified in the discussion section, researchers provide guidance for practitioners, policymakers, or other stakeholders. These recommendations may pertain to practical interventions, policy changes, or future research initiatives aimed at addressing the identified issues or capitalizing on opportunities identified by the study.