

# Task and Responsibility Idiosyncratic deals on performance of Employees of Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) Firms in Uganda

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**Abstract:** Firms are particularly putting emphasis on employee performance as a source of strategic advantage. The focus has mainly been on the full utilization of their human resources to achieve this goal. The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of task and responsibility related idiosyncratic deals on employee performance. Employee performance was measured as task performance and contextual performance. The study was anchored on the Task-Contextual performance Model and Idiosyncratic deals theory. The hypotheses were tested on a sample of 325 employees of ICT firms in Uganda, using a cross-sectional survey. 302 responses were used for analysis after cleaning of data. The hypotheses were tested using correlation analysis and regression analysis. The results indicated that there exists a relationship between tasks and responsibility idiosyncratic deals and employee task performance ( $\beta=0.57$ ,  $p=0.000$ ) and also between task and responsibility idiosyncratic deals and contextual performance ( $\beta= 0.634$ ,  $p=0.000$ ). The study made contributions to the literature on idiosyncratic deals, employee performance, as well as the task-contextual performance Model. The study recommends the adoption of task specific negotiations for employees in order to enhance the performance of both primary task and contextual performance.

**Keywords:** Task and responsibility idiosyncratic deals, Employee performance, task performance and contextual performance.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In recent times the utilization of human resources to achieve the desired level of performance on the job comes with a given degree of negotiation. Specifically, these are in the form of idiosyncratic deals, which encompass customized workplace arrangements of employment are negotiated between individual workers and their employers to meet the needs of both parties (Rousseau et al. (2006). This means that employees are in position to negotiate for non-standardized terms on the job, including the tasks and responsibilities which are within their capacity. Hornung *et al.*, (2010) define tasks idiosyncratic deals as arrangements that individuals negotiate to create or alter their own job's content. In essence, the job content is what directly translates into employee performance. In other words, employees negotiate to customize their jobs to their individual preferences (Berg et al., 2013) rather than reactively executing the job that the organisation offers in totality. Tasks related idiosyncratic deals is a way of creating Person-Job-Fit (Bal and Dorenbosch, 2015), develop employees' skills, abilities and specialization on a particular aspect (s) on the job (Rosen et al., 2013).

Studies on idiosyncratic deals have largely been basing on the compounded elements of financial, flexibility, development and tasks idiosyncratic deals to predict employee outcomes (Arthur & Rousseau, 2001; Hornung et al., 2011; Hornung et al., 2014; Rousseau et al., 2009). The pivotal issue of concern remains employee performance. However, no study has blended the employee performance to negotiating the customization of elements of the job to improve the performance outcomes.

The specific contribution of this study is to address this gap by brining closer a job contentment specific idiosyncratic deal to predict employee performance. This study will examine the effect of task idiosyncratic deals on both task and conceptual performance aspects.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows: The next section reviews the theories on which the study is anchored. The section on literature review follows with a review from previous studies on task related idiosyncratic deals and employee performance, from which with a hypothesis development is drawn. This is followed by a methodology section, which discusses the methods and procedures used in this research. The next section discusses the findings from the study. Lastly, the conclusion, the limitations and suggestions for future research in this area are provided.

### **Task and Responsibilities Idiosyncratic Deals**

According to Hornung *et al.*, (2010) tasks and responsibilities, idiosyncratic deals are arrangements that individuals negotiate to create or alter their own job's content. This job content is what entails the tasks and responsibilities on the job. Individually customized task adjustments are accessible to employees who are unique in their knowledge and skills and perform better than their colleagues and make significant contributions through their competencies (Rousseau *et al.*, 2006). On the norm, employees are hired by the organization first and then the employees start to adjust the tasks and responsibilities in such a way that it better fits their abilities and preferences. In other words, employees negotiate to customize their jobs to their individual needs and inclinations (Berg, Dutton, & Wrzesniewski, 2013) rather than reactively executing the job that the organization created. This means that negotiating Tasks and Responsibilities idiosyncratic deals is a way of creating Person-Job-Fit. The composition of task idiosyncratic deals is intended to develop employees' skills, abilities and specialization on a particular aspect (s) on the job (Rosen *et al.*, 2013), empowering the recipients to achieve a better person-job fit overtime (Bal and Dorenbosch, 2015).

The capacity that tasks and responsibilities Idiosyncratic deals have to help employers attract, motivate, and retain high performers sets these arrangements apart from other person-specific arrangements, such as favoritism and cronyism, promoting their potential legitimacy in the judgments of coworkers and other third parties (Rousseau et al., 2006). Tasks and responsibilities Idiosyncratic deals have positive consequences for individuals, organizations, and workgroups, particularly when issues of fairness are addressed (Rousseau, 2005; Rousseau et al., 2009). However, it is important to note that idiosyncratic deals are not limited to highly regarded individuals and high performers alone (Rosen *et al.*, 2013).

Resources involved in workload re-organization Idiosyncratic negotiations are economic in nature and may include the amount of work one handles (Rousseau, 2005). In contrast, resources exchanged in task Idiosyncratic deals may resemble those characteristics of developmental idiosyncratic deals, being more socio-emotional, but the two are distinct based on the terms of the negotiations (Hornung *et al.*, 2008; Lee and Hui, 2011; Rousseau *et al.*, 2006). In the study by Hornung et al, (2008), the results revealed that part-timers as the greater beneficiaries of individualized job role arrangements demonstrated greater customization of their employment via Idiosyncratic deals than did full-timers concerning both flexible scheduling and developmental opportunities.

Extant research agrees that when jobs are modified through tasks and roles on the individual level, the benefit is likely to be positive for both the individual and the organisation (Grant and Parker, 2009). A customized job leads to increased employee well-being and may set the stage for thriving. That is, when individuals surpass challenges at work and personally grow from them. Employees also seek autonomy on the job when they negotiate for tasks and responsibilities idiosyncratic deals (Grant, 2007).

Although standardizing employment is a means of promoting cooperation and trust (Lazear, 1981), employers also face pressure to attract highly valued workers by offering special employment conditions. But the greater bargain is that Tasks and responsibilities idiosyncratic deals meet a particular individual's needs, they provide especially valued resources.

### Employee Performance

Employee performance is a key determinant of organizational success and competitive advantage (Ployhart, Weekley, and Baughman, 2006). Performance is a key to measure the success and outcome of the firm (Platts and Sobótka, 2010). According to Aguinis *et al.* (2011), the metrics through which a company measures its workforce are only secondary to the fact that its success relies on individual performance. Therefore, it is no doubt that the success and failure of an organisation depend on the performance of the employees.

Employee performance refers to the outcomes achieved and accomplishments achieved at work, including the efforts for keeping up plans while aiming for the results (Cardy, 2004). Additionally, Rivai (2004) defines employee performance as the outcome or success of an individual compared to the targets and goals determined in advance. The consensus among management scholars is that managing employee performance is one of the most important Human Resource Management functions of an organisation (Liu, Combs, Ketchen Jr, & Ireland, 2007; Platts & Sobótka, 2010) and therefore ought to be given sufficient attention by management. Audenaert, Decramer, Lange, and Vanderstraeten (2016) suggest that consistent employee performance can be acquired through a proper Performance management cycle and ensuring that job expectations are carefully translated to the required competencies and behavioral descriptions.

Different scholars have proposed different employee performance models. (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993) proposed a two-factor model of performance structure that divides job performance into task performance and contextual performance. While other scholars like (Amaratunga, Baldry, & Sarshar, 2001) have measured it by several factors, namely; Quality of work in regards to the employee's ability to complete the job compared to the set targets, Quantity of work as an assessment of the ability of employees to complete tasks accurately according to the quality of the work planned, Timeliness as an assessment of the ability of employees to complete tasks and work closely in the time according to the time been given and planned.

Also, Hunt (1996) in his Model of Generic work behavior suggests various dimensions through which Employee performance can be measured; Adherence to confrontational rules, Attention to work, Thoroughness, off-task behavior, Unruliness, Theft, and Drug abuse. This Model simply breaks down the initial models that categorized the various facets of employee performance into the task and behavioral elements. Similar to this is the Lexical approach by (Viswesvaran, 1993) who proposed elements such as overall job performance, specific Productivity, Effort, Job knowledge, interpersonal competence, administrative competence, quality feedback, Leadership, and Compliance with rules.

According to Motowidlo and Van Scotter (1994), Tasks and Contextual performance should be explicitly defined. They argue that Task performance includes two classes of behavior; One consists of activities that directly transform raw materials into the goods and services that the organisation produces for example; selling merchandise in a retail store, operating a production machine in a manufacturing plant, teaching in a school, performing surgery in a hospital, and cashing checks in a bank, The other class consists of activities that service and maintain the technical core by reloading its supply of raw materials; distributing its finished products; and providing important planning, coordination, administering, and staff functions that enable it to function effectively and efficiently. This makes task performance behaviors bear a direct relation to the organisation's technical core, either by executing its technical processes or by maintaining and servicing its technical requirements. On the other hand, contextual performance behaviors do not support the technical core directly but they support the broader organisational, social, and psychological environment in which the technical core functions. According to Borman and Motowidlo (1993), contextual activities are a critical catalyst for the accomplishment of task functions and they define this performance as a set of interpersonal and volitional behaviors that support the social and motivational context in which organisational tasks are accomplished

This study adopted the Task-Contextual Performance Model by (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993) because the model is comprehensive enough in measuring the various dimensions of Employee Performance based on the level of task achievement on the job and the contextual achievement. There are numerous factors both organisational and psychological that determine the employee performance of individuals in certain instances and settings for example; empowerment, leadership and management behavior, teamwork, motivation, and work environment (Saifullah, Alam, Zafar, & Humayon, 2015).

### Theoretical anchorage

The study was anchored on the Task-contextual Performance model by Borman and Motowidlo (1993) and idiosyncratic deals theory.

### **Task-contextual Performance Model**

According to the task-contextual performance model, employee performance can be measured using two broad categories of Task performance and Contextual Performance. Task performance encompasses job explicit behaviors which include fundamental job responsibilities assigned as a part of job description. Contextual performance on the other hand includes non-job components such as organizational citizenship behavior or voluntary actions of employees (Motowidlo, Borman, & Schmit, 1997), that benefit employers intangibly.

The Task-contextual performance model argues that both Task and contextual dimensions are critical in Employee job performance and subsequently contribute to overall organisational performance. They also state that these dimensions' complement each other in determining the overall employee performance. The task-conceptual performance model has been proposed to support this study in explaining the operationalization of the Dependent variable (Employee performance) and also to provide a basis for measurement of the same.

### **Idiosyncratic Deals Theory**

The Idiosyncratic deals theory explains the basis of non-standardized work arrangements instigated by the employee to the employer or representative of the employer (Supervisor, Heads of Department, Heads of units and other agents of the employer). The theory was proposed by Arthur and Rousseau (2001). The proponents of the theory state that idiosyncratic deals can be negotiated either before or after the commencement of the employment relationship. Rousseau (2006) named these "ex-ante" (idiosyncratic deals negotiated during recruitment) or "ex-post" (idiosyncratic deals negotiated in an ongoing employment relationship).

The theory further states that idiosyncratic deals have four distinguishing features from other employment arrangements; they are individually negotiated, they are heterogeneous and may vary from one employee to another, they are mutually beneficial, and vary in scope from Flexibility, Financial, Tasks and Responsibilities to Development Idiosyncratic deals. (Rousseau and Kim, 2006). The above features of idiosyncratic deals are the basis upon which this theory was chosen to support this study. The theory is relevant to this study because it provided a basis for the support of the dimensions of idiosyncratic deals which form the Independent variables of the study.

### **Hypothesis Development**

*Task and responsibility idiosyncratic deals and employee task performance;*

Extant research agrees that when jobs are modified through tasks and roles on the individual level, the benefit is likely to be positive for both the individual and the organisation (Grant & Parker, 2009). A customized job leads to increased employee well-being and may set the stage for thriving, that is when individuals surpass challenges at work and personally grow from them. Employees also seek autonomy on the job when they negotiate for tasks and responsibilities idiosyncratic deals (Grant, 2007).

Task Idiosyncratic deals have the capacity to help employers attract, motivate, and retain high performers. Tasks and responsibilities Idiosyncratic deals have positive consequences for individuals, organizations, and workgroups (Rousseau, 2005; Rousseau et al., 2009). However, it is important to note that idiosyncratic deals are not limited to highly regarded individuals and high performers alone (Rosen *et al.*, 2013), although, individually customized task enable employees who are unique in their knowledge and skills and perform better on the job and make significant contributions through their competencies (Rousseau et al., 2006).

We thus hypothesize that;

H<sub>1</sub>: Task idiosyncratic deals has a positive effect on employee task performance

*Task idiosyncratic deals and contextual performance;*

Tasks and job responsibilities when accustomed based on a mutual agreement between the employee and his/her supervisor result in positive employee attitudes (Hornung et al., 2010). This is because the employee the employee is likely to take charge

Employees with task I-deals tend to report higher satisfaction with their job, greater attachment to the organisation in terms of affective, continuance, and normative commitment, and higher overall justice perceptions (Rosen *et al.*, 2013). Task I-deals also increase job control and job complexity and decrease job stress, which in turn promote employees' resourcefulness and work engagement (Hornung, *et al.*, 2010). Undeniably, task I-deals have been revealed to relate to performance-relevant attitudes (e.g., affective commitment, job satisfaction, and work engagement) Previous research has supported that task I-deals are associated with higher employee performance and lower turnover intentions (Ho & Tekleab, 2013; Hornung *et al.*, 2014; Rosen *et al.*, 2013). We thus hypothesize that;

H<sub>2</sub>: Task idiosyncratic deals have a positive effect on contextual performance.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The study employed a cross-sectional survey design with a population of 680 employees from six ICT institutions in Kampala. A sample of 325 employees was chosen using simple random sampling technique. The sample comprised of employees from middle and operational levels; these answered questions on development idiosyncratic deals while the questions on employee performance were rated by their immediate supervisors. This was done to prevent common source bias of employees providing self-rating on their performance. A close-ended questionnaire to collect quantitative data on a drop and pick basis. The items were anchored on a five-point Likert-type scale. 302 usable questionnaires were returned. The instrument was tested for validity using content validity where CVI of 0.8 and above for items were retained. For reliability, the Chronbach alpha coefficients was used and only items with scores above the cutoff point of .70 were retained. The data were collected with the approval and consent of the individual institutions and respondents. The respondents were guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity.

The measurement of variables was based on literature. Task Idiosyncratic deals was measured using six items adopted from the scale by (Rosen *et al.*, 2013) with sample items that include; "Base on how I negotiate to complete tasks on my job, I am able to make distinctive contributions", "I have negotiated for tasks that better fit my personality and abilities". Task and contextual performance were measured using sixteen items adopted from a scale by (Williams & Anderson, 1991), sample items included; "This staff adequately completes assigned duties", "This staff fulfils responsibilities specified in his/her job description".

### Study findings

The descriptive statistics indicated that the majority of the respondents were aged between 25-35years and these comprised 55.5% of the sample. The results from the age demographics reflects the composition of the workforce in the ICT sector to be of mid-age, consistent with the structure of the population of the country. Additionally, 60.2% of the respondents were male, indicating the nature of the ICT to be one that is perceived to be more masculine given the nature of technical activities involved. Also, 60% of respondents had spent 1-5 years and only 6% had spent more than 10years with their current employer, an indication of the dynamic nature of the ICT industry.

Correlation analysis was done and it revealed a significant positive relationship between task related idiosyncratic deals and employee task performance. The relationship between task idiosyncratic deals and contextual performance was also found to be significant and positive. This was done as a precursor to regression analysis which tested the direct hypothesis of the study.

**Table 1: Correlation analysis results**

	1	2	3
<b>Task I-deals (1)</b>	1.000		
<b>Task performance (2)</b>	0.574**	1.000	
<b>Contextual performance (3)</b>	0.634**	0.394**	1.000

\*\* Correlations are significant at two tailed

### Regression analysis

Two separate regression analyses were run; The first was to test for the effect of task and responsibility idiosyncratic deals on employee task performance, and then another to test for the effect of task and responsibility idiosyncratic deals on contextual performance.

**Table 2: Regression analysis for the effect of task idiosyncratic deals and employee task performance**

	<i>Unstandardized Coefficients</i>		<i>Standardized Coefficients</i>	<b>t</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
	<b>B</b>	<b>Std. Error</b>	<b>Beta</b>		
<b>(Constant)</b>	2.245	.122		18.351	.000
<b>Task I-deals</b>	.396	.033	.574	12.130	.000
<b>Dependent Variable: Task Performance</b>					
<b>R</b>	.574				
<b>R Square</b>	.330				
<b>Std. Error of the Estimate</b>	.386				
<b>F Statistic</b>	147.140				
<b>Sig.</b>	.000				

The study revealed that task and responsibility idiosyncratic deals significantly and positively predict task performance with  $R^2 = 33\%$ . The negotiation for preferred job content and tasks that better suit individual responsibilities influence positively the task performance of employees. The initiative, proactive and innovative nature is likely to manifest more in effective and efficient execution of tasks. With improved intrinsic motivation, the potential for work tasks improves translating into distinct contributions on the job. Customized job content enables an employee to perform effectively the tasks assigned on a particular role, which indicates positive job performance.

**Table 3: Regression analysis for the relationship between task and responsibility idiosyncratic deals and contextual performance**

	<i>Unstandardized Coefficients</i>		<i>Standardized Coefficients</i>	<b>t</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
	<b>B</b>	<b>Std. Error</b>	<b>Beta</b>		
<b>(Constant)</b>	1.509	.157		9.600	.000
<b>Task I-deals</b>	.597	.042	.634	14.211	.000
<b>Dependent Variable: Contextual performance</b>					
<b>R</b>	.634				
<b>R Square</b>	.402				
<b>Std. Error of the Estimate</b>	.497				
<b>F Statistic</b>	201.943				
<b>Sig.</b>	.000				

The study revealed that task idiosyncratic deals significantly and positively predict contextual performance with  $R^2 = 40\%$ . Granting employees preferred individualized job content will yield better contextual performance in form of relationship with peers, work place attitude and behaviours. Employees develop a feeling of worthiness at the workplace, improving their confidence and how they relate with peers, subordinates and superiors. Improved wellbeing as a result of the job-fit that associated with tasks idiosyncratic deals will yield a positive work environment that is desirable in the ICT companies.

### 3. CONCLUSIONS

Tasks idiosyncratic deals when granted allow the employee to concentrate on tasks that are in line with their capabilities and interests. For ICT firms, this is an opportunity for increasing innovation in the workplace. In this case, both contextual and task performance will improve.

### 4. RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the changing nature of the workplace, contemporary practices such as idiosyncratic deals need to be put in place for highly volatile sectors such as ICT if they are to realize desired levels of employee performance. The results presented in this study provide sufficient evidence of granting customized work place conditions to meet individual unique needs

while driving the desired levels of job outcomes. Managers of organizations are encouraged to evaluate the benefits of addressing individual preferences in tasks in order to accrue the benefits of the same. These privileges however should be granted and communicated equitably.

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