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I-DEALS, EMERGING LEADERSHIP AND PROMOTABILITY

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I-DEALS, EMERGING LEADERSHIP AND PROMOTABILITY: A MODERATED MEDIATION MODEL

A Master's Thesis

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Ankara
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To my beloved wife, Alara



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A MODERATED MEDIATION MODEL

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July 2025

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MEDIATION MODEL

By Canberk Tunakan

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ABSTRACT

I-DEALS, EMERGING LEADERSHIP AND PROMOTABILITY: A MODERATED MEDIATION MODEL

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Companies attempt to identify future leaders within teams. In particular, how leaders emerge informally within these teams and what formal leaders think about these employees remain areas that still require further explanation. In this study, the focus is on how idiosyncratic deals (i-deals) are related to emerging leadership, and if emerging leadership mediates the relationship between i-deals and promotability. Additionally, since the relationship between employees and their managers may influence the emergence of leadership, leader-member exchange (LMX) is included in the model as a moderator. The study was conducted in a centrifugal technologies company operating in Türkiye and involved 145 white-collar employees. The data confirm all of our hypotheses. Both i-deals and emerging leadership predict employees' promotability, and emerging leadership partially mediates the relationship between i-deals and

promotability. Furthermore, high levels of LMX significantly strengthen the relationships between i-deals, emerging leadership, and promotability. The results with respect to i-deals, emergent leadership and promotability are discussed.

Keywords: Emerging Leadership, Idiosyncratic Deals, Task and Work Responsibilities
I-deals, Leader-Member Exchange, Promotability

ÖZET

KİŞİYE ÖZGÜ ANLAŞMALAR, ORTAYA ÇIKAN LİDERLİK VE TERFİ EDİLEBİLİRLİK: DÜZENLEYİCİ ARACILIK MODELİ

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Şirketler, ekipler içerisindeki geleceğin liderlerini belirlemeye çalışmaktadır. Özellikle, liderlerin bu ekiplerde gayriresmî biçimde nasıl ortaya çıktığı ve yöneticilerin bu çalışanlar hakkında ne düşündüğü hâlâ daha fazla açıklama gerektiren alanlar olarak dikkat çekmektedir. Bu çalışmanın amacı, kişiye özgü anlaşmaların (idiosyncratic-deals, i-deals) çalışanların lider olarak ortaya çıkmalarını nasıl etkilediğini ve lider olarak ortaya çıkmanın kişiye özgü anlaşmalar ile terfi edilebilirlik arasındaki ilişkiyi aracı değişken olarak etkileyip etkilemediğini sorgulamaktır. Buna ek olarak, çalışanlar ile yöneticileri arasındaki ilişkinin, lider olarak ortaya çıkmayı etkileyebileceği öngörüldüğünden, lider-üye etkileşimi, modelde bir düzenleyici değişken olarak ele alınmıştır. Çalışma, Türkiye’de faaliyet gösteren bir santrifüj teknolojileri şirketinde yürütülmüş ve 145 beyaz yakalı çalışan araştırmaya dâhil edilmiştir. Elde edilen veriler

alışmadaki tüm hipotezleri doęrulamaktadır. Hem kiřiye özgü anlaşmalar hem de lider olarak ortaya çıkma, çalışanların terfi edilebilirliğini yordamakta; ayrıca ortaya çıkan liderlik, kiřiye özgü anlaşmalar ile terfi edilebilirlik arasındaki ilişkiyi kısmen aracı olarak etkilemektedir. Bunun yanı sıra, yüksek düzeyde lider üye etkileşimi, kiřiye özgü anlaşmalar ile lider olarak ortaya çıkma ve terfi edilebilirlik arasındaki ilişkiyi anlamlı biçimde güçlendirmektedir. Kiřiye özgü anlaşmalar, lider olarak ortaya çıkma ve terfi edilebilirlik konusundaki bulgular literatür ışığında tartışılmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Lider Olarak Ortaya Çıkma, Kiřiye Özgü Anlaşmalar, Görev ve İş Sorumluluklarına Yönelik Anlaşmalar, Lider-Üye Deęişimi, Terfi Edilebilirlik

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

For decades, companies have understood the critical role of leadership, which is why they invest billions of dollars in leadership-related initiatives (Badura et al., 2022). Therefore, researching under which conditions a leader emerges and which contexts are related to this emergence can provide companies with an advantage (Clark & Waldron, 2016). Although organizational research has traditionally focused more on top-down, formal, and vertical leadership, in contemporary companies, there is a shift towards a more horizontal and informal leadership concept (Hanna et al., 2021). Emerging leadership, or informal leadership, is the process through which employees are recognized as leaders within a group through social interactions (Emery et al., 2013). In the contemporary fast-paced business environment, emerging leaders have become increasingly important because of their active roles in team coordination processes (Hanna et al., 2021). Therefore, employees who emerge as informal leaders and their future potential represent an important area of research from an organizational perspective (Axon & Topakas, 2017). This study examines the conditions under which emerging leadership occurs and whether employees considered informal leaders can be potential future leaders.

"Work design is not a homogeneous process" (Hornung et al., 2010, p.210).

Compared to the past, organizations are granting employees greater autonomy, enhancing their productivity within teams (Adeel & Pengcheng, 2016). Besides, earlier work design applications typically focused on performance enhancement through top-down, concrete structures (Hornung et al., 2010) while more recent applications highlight the rise of individualization in the workplace (Bal & Lub, 2015). According to Hanna and colleagues' established framework (2021), the antecedents of emergent leadership are categorized as personal traits, demographic factors, psychological states, and behaviors. Task characteristics are not defined as antecedents but rather are conceptualized as mediating mechanisms in their structure.

One application of the task factor is the idiosyncratic deals (i-deals). They enable the selected employees to negotiate their work arrangements outside of standard organizational policies to obtain personalized benefits (Anand et al., 2018). In the literature, i-deals are examined across multiple dimensions and have evolved through different theoretical perspectives (Rousseau et al., 2006; Hornung et al., 2014; Rosen et al., 2013). Various studies have examined how different i-deals lead to organizational and individual work outcomes (Bal et al., 2012). However, their potential contribution to employees' leadership development remains unaddressed. One of the dimensions that is developed by Rosen and colleagues (2013), task and work responsibilities i-deals, provides employees with opportunities to extend their current job responsibilities and

support long-term career development. For example, it may involve employees engaging in additional work-related activities that increase personal motivation and make the job more rewarding (Hornung et al., 2014).

One important individual-level outcome for such employees is promotability, which refers to "the favorability of an employee's advancement prospects" (Greenhaus et al., 1990). Promotability is considered one of the key indicators of actual promotion decisions and long-term success for the employee (De Pater et al., 2009). Given the significance of this criterion in managerial evaluations, it is both theoretically and practically relevant to ask: How are promotability ratings shaped for employees who emerge as informal leaders? Examining the promotability of informal leaders from the perspective of formal managers is an underexplored area in the existing literature. Hence, this study proposes that emerging leadership links the relationship between employees' tasks and work responsibilities shaped through i-deals and their perceived promotability. While prior research has linked i-deals to promotability (Srikanth et al., 2022; Rofcanin et al., 2018), the present model emphasizes how career-related i-deals may encourage employees to take on emergent leadership roles, which in turn enhance promotability evaluations.

Furthermore, as a moderator, Leader-Member Exchange (LMX), which reflects the relational quality of leadership dynamics between leaders and their followers (Omilion-Hodges & Ptacek, 2021), is integrated. LMX may serve as an enhancing

mechanism in the link between i-deals and emerging leadership, as high-quality LMX relationships, when established, are characterized by trust and long-term benefits for both parties involved (Morf et al., 2019). They are likely to increase the coverage of employees' responsibilities and opportunities (Xu et al., 2025), enhancing their proactive performance (Hornung et al., 2010). In addition to moderating the relationship between i-deals and leadership emergence, LMX may contribute to the broader pathway. For the task and work responsibilities i-deals receivers of emergent leaders, LMX may play a significant role in promotability ratings from their formal managers. Hence, the moderated mediation model is proposed to have a more detailed understanding of this dynamic.

Previous research examined the i-deals and their relationships with individual and organizational outcomes. However, no study has directly investigated the relationship between i-deals and emerging leadership. In particular, there is a lack of research that explores why certain individuals emerge as leaders and how contextual factors, such as LMX, might shape this process. In addition, outcomes for those who emerge as leaders have been largely overlooked (Badura et al., 2022). Promotability is especially relevant for this claim, as it is an important outcome for the employee (Wayne et al., 1999). Emerging leadership proposes a behavioral dynamic that connects i-deals to promotability, and the strength of this pathway is that it potentially depends on

relationships in the organization, especially the degree of relationship quality reflected in LMX.

Therefore, this study contributes to the literature in various forms. First, this research introduces task-related factors as an antecedent by addressing Hanna and colleagues' (2021) call to expand the nomological network of emergent leadership. Even though task-related factors were included in the framework of their review (Hanna et al., 2021), they were conceptualized as a mediator rather than a direct antecedent. This study employs self-enhancement theory (Korman, 2012) to explain how employees make use of the i-deals to emerge as leaders and increase their promotability ratings. Self-enhancement is the process of maintaining or increasing an individual's positive self-concept. Using the self-enhancement perspective, employees will learn new abilities through i-deals, and having these specialized opportunities allows them to go beyond their formally defined task responsibilities (Srikanth et al., 2022). As a result of receiving such personalized agreements, employees' confidence in their skills and roles is likely to increase (Hornung et al., 2009), and with greater autonomy and resources, they are expected to become more proactive (Rosen et al., 2013). Proactivity involves the initiated agentic behaviors from the individuals to change and improve the current situation (Grant & Ashford, 2008). These agentic behaviors that come from being proactive, such as assertiveness and competence, enhance the perceived leadership of the individual over other team members (Abele & Wojciszke, 2014).

Furthermore, this study positions LMX as a moderator, examining whether the extent of quality between an employee and their formal leader facilitates or hinders their emergence as a leader within their team by exploring the situations under which employees have more potential to emerge as informal leaders. Especially under high-LMX conditions, employees are likely to feel more supported (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995) and, as they gain greater access to organizational knowledge and the trust of the formal leader, they may be perceived as an agent of the leader (Zhang et al., 2012). Combined with these advantages related to high-level LMX relationships, it is proposed that employees who receive additional resources through i-deals may tend to emerge as leaders.

Moreover, this study extends the model into a moderated mediation framework, thereby offering a distinctive contribution to the literature of leadership and tailored career arrangements. Therefore, when an employee is perceived as a leader by their team members, especially when they have a high LMX with their formal leader, managers may view them as more promotable. Srikanth and colleagues (2022) stated that rather than a direct path between i-deals and promotability, alternative explanatory mechanisms may be involved in this relationship. By addressing the question of how emerging leadership affects employees' promotability, this study contributes to filling an important gap in the literature.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES

2.1 Idiosyncratic Deals

The individualization has introduced new methods to HR practices in modern workplaces (Rousseau et al., 2009). One of the concepts that can be considered within this framework is idiosyncratic deals, which were conceptualized by Rousseau in 2005. I-deals are agreements that vary from person to person, providing win-win benefits for both the organization and the employee, and come in different types (Rosen et al., 2013). Moreover, i-deals are personalized agreements that provide high-performing employees with unique benefits not available through standard HR practices (Rousseau, 2005). Generally, they can be seen as informal benefits granted by employers or managers to their employees. By taking charge of these individualized opportunities in today's dynamic job market, employees increase their own value and take charge of their careers (Sharma & Gautam, 2024). For example, these deals can be done by focusing more on work schedules to improve work-life balance, or employees and companies can decide on special development opportunities given to the selected employees when it comes to career development (Anand et al., 2018).

I-deals are considered to be a specific connection between two dominant approaches of divergent work design, which are top-down and bottom-up (Anand &

Vidyarthi, 2016). They bridge top-down job enrichment efforts from employers and bottom-up initiatives where employees proactively shape their roles (Anand, 2012). Therefore, i-deals result from negotiations where both sides agree on mutually beneficial work arrangements. As a middle ground, studying i-deals is an important topic in the management and organization literature (Anand & Vidyarthi, 2016).

What makes these deals, so-called i-deals? I-deals have three key characteristics (Rosen et al., 2013). The first descriptive feature of i-deals is that they must be negotiated individually. Secondly, i-deals should introduce some form of differentiation compared to those peers in similar positions, meaning they should be heterogeneous. Lastly, in an i-deal, both parties involved should benefit from the agreement. Under these criteria, for an i-deal to occur, an employee or a representative from the organization, usually the employee's direct manager, must initiate a negotiation, and the distinct advantage gained by the employee compared to their colleagues should provide mutual benefits to both parties. These characteristics distinguish i-deals from other agreements or personalized work adjustments, such as job crafting and psychological contracts.

To be eligible to have an i-deal, there must be room for negotiating employment terms between the sides of the agreement (Rosen et al., 2013). These i-deals are context-dependent, with individual-level factors influencing how i-deals are obtained, what form they take, and whether they are effectively implemented (Liao et al., 2016).

In the case of previous research on i-deals, Rousseau and colleagues (2006) conducted one of the earliest empirical studies. In their study, Rousseau and colleagues (2006) pointed out that individuals negotiate specific aspects of i-deals independently. Through their observations, they stated that workers do not discuss their opportunities during the same negotiation. Therefore, they treated each dimension of i-deals separately in their study, a method widely adopted in later research in the literature. They identified three dimensions: work hour flexibility, workload i-deals, and career development i-deals. Work hour flexibility i-deals benefit employees by organizing work schedules according to their needs. The second one is workload i-deals, which are related to reducing employees' workloads and providing them with fewer work demands and work hours through specific arrangements. Lastly, career development i-deals are stated as the opportunities for negotiated employees to strengthen their talents and knowledge (Rousseau et al., 2006)

When comparing work-hour flexibility and developmental i-deals, studies show that developmental i-deals are more closely aligned with a social exchange, making the resources gained more valuable for both employees and managers (Liao et al., 2016). Social exchanges are open-ended and long-term obligations (Shore et al., 2006). Therefore, these i-deals provide various growth opportunities, such as personalized tasks suited to employees' abilities or career-focused development (Rosen et al., 2013). These unique development opportunities include receiving additional training to develop

leadership skills and improve employees' skills and knowledge, while personalized tasks improve their self-perception of capabilities and collaborative performance (Rofcanin et al., 2018).

In later studies, different types of i-deals were also conceptualized, or i-deals overlapping with similar themes continued to be developed. Various studies have identified different kinds of unique or overlapping i-deals and examined these different types. Specifically, Hornung and colleagues (2010) introduced four types of i-deals observed in their sample: flexibility, developmental, workload reduction, and task i-deals. While flexibility, development, and workload i-deals conceptually overlap with the earlier scale of i-deals established from Rousseau and colleagues' work (2006), Hornung et al. (2010) expanded the framework by including task i-deals. Their addition, which focuses on task-related modifications, explains the employee-driven, motivational dimension.

Task i-deals represent a hybrid approach, combining top-down job enrichment strategies with bottom-up employee initiatives (Anand, 2012). Hornung and colleagues (2010) created this type since task i-deals, when successfully negotiated, are about fulfilling both authority and employee needs. The needs may be related to personal growth, and task i-deals may influence the attitude in fulfilling employee's needs (Ding & Chang, 2020). Therefore, these i-deals can signal the competence of the employees to their needs because they allow employees to capitalize on their work competence (Ho &

Kong, 2015). By granting this type of i-deal to employees, employers can indicate value and recognition to employees to make better use of their skills (Ho & Kong, 2015). Task i-deals involve customizing job tasks to tailor the job tasks to the employee receiving the i-deal (Hornung et al., 2010). Hornung and colleagues (2010) stated that giving task i-deals, such as working with a different team to get more experience, to the employees increased the person-job fit since they made the roles from the job more intrinsically motivated and self-regulated by the employees themselves.

2.1.1 Task and Work Responsibilities I-deals

In a later study, Rosen and associates (2013) also identified four types of i-deals and developed the I-deals Scale. These i-deals are financial, location and schedule flexibility, and task and work responsibilities i-deals. Their study stated that their scale of new types of i-deals originated from the modified version of Rousseau and Kim's scale (2006). These changes include the introduction of two i-deals that focus on the content, which are financial and location flexibility i-deals. Location flexibility refers to employee benefits regarding where they work, while financial i-deals cover financial incentives given to the negotiated employees. According to Rosen and colleagues (2013), task i-deals and career development i-deals alike. They combined previously established developmental i-deals from Rousseau and Kim (2006) and task i-deals originated from Hornung and colleagues (2010) scales as a single type which is named "task and work responsibilities" as a single dimension (Wang, 2022). Rosen and

colleagues (2013) justified this combination by explaining both i-deals related to the "negotiations of what an employee does on the job.". Therefore, in the new combination, Rosen and colleagues (2013) focused both on why these deals are negotiated in the context of job content, which answers the career advancement purposes from Rousseau and Kim's (2006) scale, and actual job content changes come from the Hornung and colleagues (2010) perspective. Both types are grounded in a negotiated, relational bond focused on the socio-emotional aspects of work, unlike flexible i-deals, which are more economically oriented (Rosen et al., 2013). Then, task i-deals focus more on the content of the job tasks, such as negotiation, different and challenging work tasks, or unique job activities, which can be used as an individualized tool to match employees' skills and preferences. These types of i-deals include activities such as taking on additional responsibilities, expanding the job's role definition, and negotiating to work in different areas or another department (Hornung et al., 2010).

Meanwhile, the developmental i-deals cover present and future-oriented advantages. They represent an opportunity for organizations that care about their employees' career growth and support their personal development (Rousseau, 2005). When granted, this type of i-deals makes employees more motivated about new opportunities and opens up new resources through future challenges (Xu et al., 2025). Also, this makes them more mindful of how they can contribute to the organization's tomorrow (Ng & Feldman, 2015). Furthermore, development i-deals are considered a

form of initiative related to the career and involve proactive behavior (Hornung et al., 2014). According to Guerrero and colleagues' study (2016), employees' career plans include their development needs in the context of the organization's interest. Being proactive enables employees to initiate and secure beneficial i-deals tailored to their career goals. By offering employees opportunities without limitations, they are encouraged to discover new career paths (Rousseau, 2006). Employees receiving these i-deals are generally motivated to advance their careers, and there are various applications of development i-deals. Examples include customized career-focused mentoring, promotion opportunities, or participation in a unique training program (Hornung et al., 2014). Thus, with these professional development opportunities unavailable to other colleagues, proactive career management by supervisors increases high-potential, promotable employees' career satisfaction by fostering a sense of career success and opportunities to build career paths (Guerrero et al., 2016).

Task and job responsibilities i-deals offer arrangements to employees by aligning with their specific job responsibilities and goals while also supporting career advancement (Hornung et al., 2014). They allow employers and employees to co-create work arrangements aligned with the employee's strengths and goals. (Hornung et al., 2014). Given the alignment of Rosen et al.'s (2013) conceptualization with both current and developmental work aspects, this framework is adopted to guide the present study.

Through task and work responsibilities i-deals, employees are able to obtain more enriched jobs. According to Korman (2012), working in enriched jobs that support development or enhance work performance plays a role in skill development and increases employees' self-enhancement. The self-enhancement view represents the employees' motivation to maintain and strengthen a positive self-image (Sedikides & Gregg, 2008). Therefore, proactive employees negotiate i-deals to participate in more challenging tasks and projects to fulfill their self-enhancing goals (Srikanth et al., 2022). The type of i-deal also creates a difference in explaining self-enhancement. In particular, the study by Liu and colleagues (2013) found that for highly individualistic employees, the effect of self-enhancement was greater for developmental i-deals compared to more material i-deals, which, in the case of the study, is flexibility i-deals. Then, using the self-enhancement perspective, it can be considered how employees improve themselves and take on challenges as outcomes aimed at demonstrating their value and gaining approval for promotional considerations (Srikanth et al., 2022). Managers perceive these proactive employees as sufficiently capable for developmental opportunities, which leads to more favorable evaluations (Srikanth et al., 2022). Since employees voluntarily choose to be proactive, such agentic behaviors are generally interpreted as expressions of their personal "idiosyncratic styles" (Grant & Ashford, 2008). Agentic content refers to behaviors oriented toward "goal achievement and task functioning" (Abele & Wojciszke, 2014, p.196). Characteristically, being more assertive, demonstrating greater competence, and showing higher decisiveness, especially when aligned with societal

expectations regarding gender, have been reported to enhance perceptions of leadership (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Therefore, in this study, it is argued that, from a self-enhancement perspective, i-deals provide a valuable opportunity to develop unique talents, realize leadership potential, and influence leadership potential.

Hypothesis 1: Task and work responsibilities i-deals are positively associated with leadership emergence.

2.2 Leadership Emergence

The leadership process is important for determining the success of an organization (Hogan et al., 1994). Leadership can broadly be considered as the authority over followers when individuals are assigned a leadership role (Müller et al., 2018). However, leadership is not just about having formal authority (Zhang et al., 2012). Yukl (1989) defines leadership as an influence process to maintain group cohesion and achieve organizational objectives by motivating group behavior within task contexts. It is more of a combination of complex behaviors and people interactions (Axon & Topakas, 2017). In addition, leadership can be considered a shared possession that belongs to the group, and even if individuals do not have a formal role, they can be involved in the leadership process (DeRue & Ashford, 2010). It is shaped by the interactions of the multiple independent actors in an organizational setting and is a dynamic in a group context (DeRue & Ashford, 2010).

The development of a leadership role is about developing and increasing the capacity of the employee engaged in the process of leadership (Day & Dragoni, 2015). During this development, which can occur at all three levels (individual, team, or organizational), employees can get support from their formal leaders or the organization for specific tasks that relate to leadership skills (Day & Halpin, 2004). In contrast to formally assigned leadership, emergent leadership develops more organically in a dynamic process, and the employees who emerge as leaders gain "legitimate influence" in the perceptions of their peers (Acton et al., 2019). Defined as "being perceived as leaderlike" (Kaiser et al., 2008, p. 97), leadership emergence occurs more commonly in self-managed teams with flatter organizational structures (Tabassum et al., 2024). Emergent leaders have more status, and they can influence their group significantly compared to the other group members (Taggar et al., 1999).

A core debate in the literature on leadership emergence centers around the distinction between formal and informal forms, which has important implications for understanding how influence develops in teams. Researchers wanted to differentiate formal and informal leadership emergence to study emerging leadership to understand the network and the process (Badura et al., 2022). For instance, Hollander (1974) categorizes leaders into appointed and emergent. Appointed leaders are authorized, formal leaders, and their authority comes from their official position; however, emergent leaders get their validation from the acceptance resulting from the informal process

(Bergman et al., 2014). Some researchers used formal and informal leadership emergence with the same meaning (Judge et al., 2004). Alternatively, research also differentiates the domain and sets a clear distinction (Luria et al., 2019; Hanna et al., 2021). Emergence of formal and informal leadership involves the dynamic interactive social process of claiming leadership and perceptions from outside to influence other team members (Galbin et al., 2024). Most of the research used "leadership emergence" to identify the studies of the informal leadership construct (Badura et al., 2022). Therefore, in the emergent leadership literature, it is considered the most common element, as without a formal role, team members perceive leaderlike influence from the emergent leadership (Hanna et al., 2021), which also will be used as the definition of this study. Unlike formal leadership, emergent leadership is based on peer perceptions, making its study more complex and socially grounded. It is considered an important research topic since organizations still struggle to find the factors that help emerging leaders (Badura et al., 2022). According to Badura and colleagues (2022), how an employee emerges as a leader is still a black box, and there are various approaches and theories about how the process happens when an employee gains influence from their peers. In a complete picture, leadership emergence involves the combination of leader behaviors and traits as perceived by followers. (Smith & Foti, 1998).

2.2.1 Dynamics of Leadership Emergence

In the workplace, informal leadership emergence occurs in different contexts (Axon & Topakas, 2017). It can happen in leaderless groups where every peer is at the same level or in more hierarchical settings where a formal manager is assigned to the team. One is considered an emergent leader if they exert significant influence (Schneier & Goktepe, 1989). Hence, the informal leadership role comes from the group's perception of this leader based on the acceptance and recognition of the group members without having an official authority (Emery, 2010). An emergent leader complements the formal, top-down leader authority, if there is one, and they influence and significantly impact work relation dynamics, group processes, and outcomes of the group (Taggar et al., 1999; Neubert, 1999; Badura et al., 2022).

Implicit leadership theory (Lord & Maher, 1991) explains that emergent leaders emerge to fit the shared leader prototype characteristics in the minds of observers (Lord & Maher, 1991). However, this theory is considered insufficient for explaining how perceptions of leadership evolve over time and the individual differences among perceivers (Kalish & Luria, 2016). Therefore, according to McClean and colleagues (2018), a theoretical concept is needed to define and explain leadership emergence.

These different conceptualizations and variations in definitions make it difficult to differentiate and replicate the outcomes of emergent leadership (Hanna et al., 2021). Hanna and colleagues (2021) identified three emergent leadership characteristics: lateral influence, unit of analysis, and temporal duration. "Lateral influence, or being perceived

as leaderlike by others, has been one of the foundational characteristics of emergent leadership" (Hanna et al., 2021, p. 4). Temporal duration refers to the temporary nature of leadership emergence within a group for a variable length of time (Hanna et al., 2021). Lastly, the unit of analysis is a critical feature for understanding leadership emergence and occurs at the individual level because lateral influence does not start from a group; it starts with an individual from the team (Kickul & Neuman, 2000).

The growing literature on leadership emergence involves explaining it as a "network relationship" (Carter et al., 2015). By employing network-based approaches, it is possible to represent the informal connections among group members and gain insights into the mechanisms (Kwok, 2020). Particularly, the social network approach is considered a well-suited approach for emerging leadership because it is possible to see how the group members distribute the leadership and the possibility of having multiple leaders emerge (Emery et al., 2013). Acknowledging social relations shows that social interactions are a critical element of leadership emergence (Lord & Dinh, 2014).

Previous research revealed that leadership networks are reinforced by popularity and interdependent with the psychological process (Emery, 2010). Therefore, Emery (2010) established that the leadership perceptions that form the leadership emergence are socially constructed. The reciprocal nature involves both granting the leader identity from the followers and claiming to be the emergent leader from the informal leader,

which is even considered more important than the leader identity that comes from a specific ordering (Badura et al., 2022).

In social network analysis, a standard one-item scale is used for a voting procedure to identify which leader receives the most votes from the team members (Tabassum et al., 2024). Some studies limited this voting to select only one employee as the emergent leader (Hawkings, 1995), even though it is established that a team can have multiple occurrences of leadership emergence in individuals (Tabassum et al., 2024). These multiple occurrences also mean the possibility of more than one emergent leader in the team, sharing the leadership (Carson et al., 2007).

Prior empirical research showed that leadership emergence positively affects team outcomes in the team process and project effectiveness (Lanaj & Hollenbeck, 2015). Gardner and colleagues (2024) also stated that informal leaders, through this supportive environment, also facilitate trust, which increases team morale about the challenges that the team comes across. In teams, compared to vertical leadership, the horizontal approach makes it more effective when there is a new challenge in the work environment (Yu et al., 2018). Specifically, the emerged leaders increased the strength of social support between the team members (Crozier et al., 2017). However, few studies have examined the outcomes associated with emerging leaders. Badura and colleagues (2022), in their integrative review of leadership emergence, particularly draw attention to the lack of research in this regard, stating that the studies in which

employees who are emergent leaders are seen as more effective performers or leaders in the company are limited. In particular, how these emerging leaders are evaluated by their direct managers in the literature is a gap in the field of emerging leadership.

2.3 I-deals, Leadership Emergence and Promotability

Promotion refers to the employee's place in the hierarchical structure, which results in advancement in rank or status (Tomprou & Lee, 2022). The promotability ratings that come from the employees' managers play an important role in the promotability judgements of employees (Gürbüz et al., 2016). Promotion judgment literature is considered limited in terms of the incomplete understanding of the antecedents and processes (Jawahar & Ferris, 2011). Promotability refers to an individual's perceived potential to advance to higher-level positions within an organization (Hoobler & Wayne, 2009). As an evaluative judgment made by managers, high promotability perceptions are related to enhanced outcomes regarding the employee's career, such as accelerated career progression (Ng et al., 2005). Currently, no studies have examined the relationship between informal leadership and promotability, which is an important gap in understanding how emerging as a leader affects the employee in the case of promotion decisions. Therefore, using the self-enhancement framework (Liu et al., 2013; Srikanth et al., 2022), it is argued that employees who have high levels of self-enhancement motives are driven to act confidently and seek opportunities to stand out as high-potential contributors by

engaging in emerging leadership behaviors, which in turn increases their promotability. Thus, it is hypothesized that:

Hypothesis 2: Leadership emergence is positively associated with employees' promotability.

2.4. The Mediating Role of Leadership Emergence

There is a limited number of studies related to the mediating role of emerging leadership within prior studies (Bandura, 2022). In the literature, research about the work outcomes of emergent leadership is criticized because it only focuses on the antecedents of this phenomenon and does not include the related organizational outcomes in these studies (Hanna et al., 2021). Also, Bandura and colleagues (2022) stated the need for research to understand the general picture using various mediators and moderators' roles to explain the why and when questions of leadership emergence. They also pointed out the gap in the existing literature about the consequences of leadership emergence, especially in the area where employees who emerged as considered effective or the emerged leaders who are satisfied with the aftermath of their decision are mostly ignored. Hence, from the self-enhancement perspective, this study aims to observe managers' reactions when employees use their i-deals to expand their boundaries of responsibility and emerge as leaders within their teams. Although previous studies have investigated i-deals and promotability, this research aims to link

these concepts through the emerging leadership. As an example of the research in this area, Srikanth and colleagues (2020) examined the relationship between developmental i-deals and promotability. They found that, through the self-enhancement provided by i-deals via developmental challenges, employees increased their promotability ratings from the perspective of their supervisors. Therefore, to propose an alternative mediating mechanism to explain the relationship between i-deals and promotability, this research will explore emerging leadership as another potential mediating factor. This would show the role of leadership emergence as the link between i-deals and promotability. With this purpose, it is hypothesized that,

Hypothesis 3: The relationship between task and work responsibilities i-deals, and promotability is mediated by leadership emergence.

2.5 Moderating Role of LMX

This research examines the effects of informal leadership and the influences of vertical and formal leadership through the moderating leader-member exchange. Considered one of the first relational methods for leadership (Omlion-Hodges & Ptacek, 2021), LMX covers the relationship between a leader and a follower (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). The core idea of the LMX theory is the difference in the formed relationship between a leader and the various followers, which impacts follower outcomes (Regt et al., 2018). Therefore, for the work groups, the differentiation of the

LMX is the norm (Liden & Graen, 1980). LMX is regarded as an important concept for explaining employee performance because of its focus on the qualitative relationship aspects instead of the extrinsic rewards (Mumtaz & Rowley, 2018).

LMX was first explained based on the social exchange theory by the dynamics of the social exchange between the manager and the subordinate (Ho & Tekleab, 2015). LMX relationships, when they are high quality, tend to have more mutual trust, loyalty, and reciprocal influence (Liden & Maslyn, 1998). In addition, both sides of this quality exchange generally get more support and loyalty from each other compared to the other team members (Ho & Tekleab, 2015). Ho and Tekleab (2015) explain that through the social exchange in these quality relationships, employees can get easier access to their manager and respond faster to their demands. The intensity of this relationship can facilitate various changes, positive and negative, for the employees over time (Liden et al., 2006) and can be a critical factor in determining the employee's well-being (Omilion-Hodges & Ptacek, 2021)

In the literature, i-deals and LMX are considered related because the i-deals negotiations occur mostly with the employee's direct manager (Hornung et al., 2009). Anand and colleagues (2018) point out that the LMX has a dyadic nature, which makes it a relevant theory for understanding i-deals. The distinction between the LMX and i-deals relies on the fact that i-deals are terms of work arrangements compared to the LMX, which reflects a relationship (Liao et al., 2016). LMX provides an explanation for

how and in which i-deals can be made (Rousseau, 2005). In the literature, LMX is used as a predictor, mediator, and moderator (Hornung et al., 2010; Rosen et al., 2013; Lee et al., 2022). In their empirical study about developmental i-deals where LMX is a moderator, Xu and colleagues (2019) found significant results to explain the position of LMX in individualized HR approaches. In summary of their results, they stated that high LMX relationships could boost employee engagement by developing i-deals that lead to expanding job responsibilities (Xu et al., 2019). Furthermore, Anand and colleagues' study (2010) analyzed LMX as the moderator of the relationship between the i-deals and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). In contrast to the conventional understanding, Anand and colleagues (2010) stated that in low-LMX relationships, when employees get i-deals, they are compensated for the absence of high LMX, and they are more motivated to reciprocate to have higher levels of OCB compared to the high LMX.

In a similar study, Hornung and colleagues (2010) suggested that i-deals be used as an alternative for LMX since it is not possible for managers to have the same LMX with each employee. Current research about leadership emergence prioritizes the personal traits of the emergent leaders, while neglecting the relationship-based aspects, such as the difference of LMX (Badura et al., 2022). In their empirical study that focuses on the relationship between the LMX and leadership emergence, Wang and colleagues (2025) found that high LMX quality significantly affected the emergence of

informal leadership. In the literature, there is a gap in field studies on the link between the top-down leadership approach using the LMX processes and informal leadership, since leadership emergence research has "mostly focused on the leaderless task groups in laboratory or school settings" (Zhang et al., 2012, p.50). The present study reconceptualizes LMX as a contextual moderator that influences the relationship between i-deals and emergent leadership.

As explained by Ilies and colleagues (2007), team members who have high LMX usually have the privilege of accessing the resources and also have more information about the team members, which can strengthen their leadership influence on the team. These resources could be mentoring, professional development, and more to positively affect employees' leadership potential (Omilion-Hodges & Ptacek, 2021). Furthermore, when the team members have high LMX relationships with their managers, it creates opportunities to take on additional tasks assigned by their leaders, which can result in being seen as agents of the manager, so the other team members can recognize these employees as informal leaders (Müller et al., 2018). The employees who have more frequent interactions with the leader are likely to get these opportunities, and through mutual respect and loyalty, these employees can even become advisors to the leader (Liden & Maslyn, 1998).

In contrast, when employees have poor LMX, it can mean low trust between the leader and the follower (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). In these low LMX situations, there is

a more formal agreement between the parties, and the exchange is primarily monetary rather than social. In addition, employees who have low LMX obtain less support and fewer resources from their managers (Gerstner & Day, 1997). These employees struggle to access both instrumental and psychosocial benefits in their organization (Xu et al., 2025). Low LMX settings may hinder employees from engaging in challenging tasks and assuming greater responsibility compared to employees in high-quality exchanges (Liden & Maslyn, 1998). Hence, the hypothesis is that:

Hypothesis 4: LMX moderates the relationship between i-deals and emergent leadership in such a way that the relationship gets stronger when LMX is higher than when its lower.

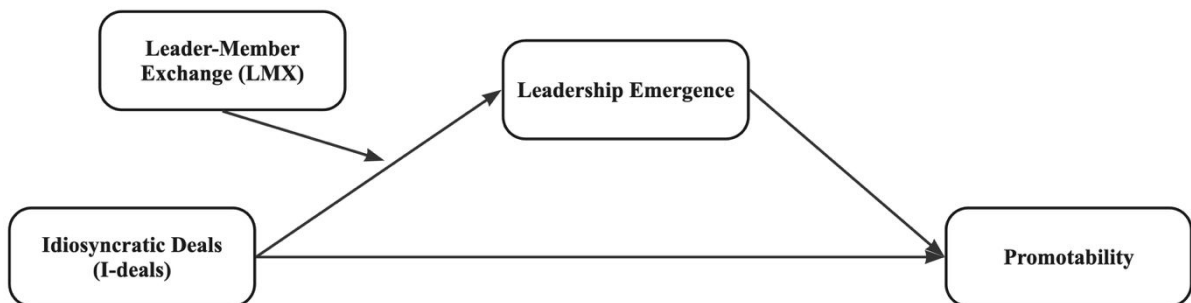
2.6 Moderated Mediation Model

The current study proposes that the level of LMX influences the indirect effect of i-deals on promotability through emergent leadership. Experiencing high-quality communication with their manager in the work environment increases the possibility that employees will leverage their i-deals into observable contributions (Hornung et al., 2010). Moreover, as a reflection of proactivity and initiative-taking (Taggar et al., 1999), emergent leadership may be reinforced when employees have high LMX. This study suggests that when employees have high LMX, the self-enhancement motives initiated by receiving i-deals (Srikanth et al., 2022) are more likely to translate into

emergent leadership behaviors because of factors such as reciprocal trust and respect with their managers (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995), which in turn may signal readiness for higher-level roles to their managers (Dragoni et al., 2009). Therefore, as modeled in Figure 1.1, it is hypothesized that:

Hypothesis 5: The positive indirect effect of i-deals on promotability via emergent leadership will be stronger when LMX is high rather than low.

Figure 1.1 Proposed Model Linking I-deals and Promotability, Moderated by LMX and Mediated by Leadership Emergence



CHAPTER III

METHODS

3.1 Participants

The participants of the present study were recruited from a single company, as the social network method was preferred for measuring emerging leadership. This company is a large manufacturing organization located in the southwest of Türkiye that produces centrifugal technology products. Because its products serve industries such as food, chemical, and pharmaceutical sectors. It also operates globally by exporting to more than 40 countries. It employs a total of 500 staff members, 206 of whom are white-collar employees working in office settings with managers and teams. Surveys were distributed to all 206 employees through the Human Resources Department. An 83% response rate was obtained from the 171 employees who returned the questionnaire. After excluding 26 cases due to missing data, the study sample comprised 145 white-collar employees. Cases with missing demographic information were retained, but missing values were coded accordingly. Among the employees, 101 were male (70%) and 43 were female (30%), with gender information missing for 1 participant. the average age of employees was 33.2 years. 7.8% had a high school degree and 92.2% held at least a bachelor's degree, indicating a highly educated professional group. The average team size was 7.23 (SD = 3.03), with a range of 3 to 12 members. Data collected from their managers included 30 unique individuals across the sample. Among

managers, 23 were male (77%) and 4 were female (13%), while gender information was not available for 3 managers. Average age of the managers was 39.35. Lastly, 7% held a high school diploma and 93% held at least a bachelor's degree (See Table 3.1 and Table 3.2).

Table 3.1 Demographic Characteristics of the Employees

Variables	N=145	%	Mean	SD
Gender	144			
Male	101	70.1 %		
Female	43	29.9 %		
Age (years)	136		33.16	7.33
Education	141			
High School	11	7.8 %		
Bachelor's	98	69.5 %		
Graduate	24	17.0 %		
Degree				
Doctorate	8	5.7 %		
Degree				
Team Size			7.02	2.99

Table 3.2 Demographic Characteristics of the Managers

Variables	N=30	%	Mean	SD
Gender	27			
Male	23	85.1 %		
Female	4	14.8 %		

Table 3.2 (continued).

Age (years)	26		39.35	4.66
Education	28			
High School	2	7.1 %		
Bachelor's	18	64.2 %		
Graduate Degree	8	28.6 %		

3.2 Measures

3.2.1 Task and Work Responsibilities I-deals

Task and work responsibilities i-deals were measured at T1 using a six-item scale developed by Rosen and colleagues (2013). Participants rated the extent of the negotiated arrangements regarding their work tasks and responsibilities on a seven-point scale (1= strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). An example item is “My manager has offered me opportunities to take on desired responsibilities outside of my formal job requirements.” and “Following my initial appointment, my manager assigned me to a desirable position that makes use of my unique abilities.” The Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was .78.

3.2.2 Leader-Member Exchange

LMX was evaluated using a seven-item scale developed by Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) at T1. Employees rated their responses on a 7-point Likert scale that ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). One of the sample items is “My manager recognizes my potential.” Cronbach’s alpha was .95.

3.2.3 Leadership Emergence

Leadership emergence was assessed at T2 through peer ratings. It was measured with a single item adapted from Kalish and Luria's study (2016): "Whom do you view as a leader in the group?" This single-question format is commonly used in network analysis (Wasserman & Faust, 1994), which is selected to determine "the team's most influential member(s)" (Tabassum et al., 2024). According to Kalish and Luria, the question does not provide a detailed definition of leadership because the authors aimed to capture employees' own perceptions of what constitutes leadership in their teams. Moreover, unlike some earlier studies (e.g., Hawkins, 1995; Taggar et al., 1999), there was no restriction on the number of nominations employees could give. Therefore, participants were free to choose as many colleagues as they considered appropriate. The number of nominations each employee received was divided by the maximum possible nominations within their team, resulting in a normalized score ranging from 0 (no nominations) to 1 (nominated by all team members).

3.2.4 Promotability

Promotability was measured with a three-item scale that was developed by Wayne and colleagues (1999) at T3. Managers of the employees rated each of them on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree). One of the items included was "If I had to select someone to be promoted to the next position up, it would be this subordinate." Higher scores indicate higher levels of perceived promotability. Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .89 in the current study.

3.2.5 Control Variables

For potential alternate explanations, we included a number of control variables. Age, gender, and education were collected because these demographic characteristics have been shown to influence perceptions of leadership and career potential (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Judge et al., 1995; Ng & Feldman, 2009). In addition, social network centrality (advice, information, friendship) was included as a control variable collected from the coworkers at T2 to control for the possibility of confounded ratings of leadership emergence and promotability (Balkundi & Kilduff, 2006; Mehra et al., 2006; Oc, 2018). Advice, information, and friendship network nominations were assessed using standard social network prompts adapted from prior studies (Morrison, 2002; Seibert et al., 2001; Mehra et al., 2001). These scores show the extent to which an employee was nominated by others as a source of social connection, advice, or information.

3.3 Procedure

The survey materials were sent to all employees in envelopes along with an information sheet outlining the study's goals and the steps that needed to be taken. Employees were guaranteed the confidentiality of their answers, and participation was entirely voluntary. Participants returned the surveys in closed envelopes to maintain confidentiality. Three waves of data collection were conducted. Employees filled out surveys on i-deals, LMX, and their demographic data at T1. Coworkers responded to a single-item measure assessing leadership emergence by nominating individuals they

perceived as leaders within their teams at Time 2. Lastly, managers assessed each employee's promotability at Time 3. Following the completion of data collection, 20 employees were chosen at random to receive a \$50 gift card as a reward.



CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

4.1 Data Screening and Cleaning

The dataset was controlled for data quality and normality before testing the hypothesis. First, from 206 distributed questionnaires, 171 responses were collected with a response rate of 83%. 26 of the cases were excluded from the analysis due to the missing responses of all key study variables, resulting in a sample of 145 participants. For the demographic variables, missing data points are kept in the analysis and labeled accordingly. The normality assumption was tested via kurtosis, and skewness values obtained from Mplus outputs. The results indicated that all variables were approximately normally distributed, with values within the acceptable range of ± 2 (see Table 4.1). After the normality assumption check, the data is controlled for the regression assumptions. Scatterplots were examined to assess linearity for each pair of variables; no indication of curvilinear patterns was found. Additionally, the Tolerance statistics and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) were utilized to evaluate multicollinearity. There were no multicollinearity matters with any predictors since their VIF values were less than two and their tolerance values were greater than 0.5. Furthermore, independence of residuals was tested using the Durbin-Watson statistic. With a value of 2.263 ($p = .116$), the assumption of residual independence was supported, and no significant autocorrelation was found. Lastly, a scatterplot of residuals against predicted values was examined to

determine homoscedasticity. It revealed no clear pattern or systematic variance, supporting the assumption of constant error variance.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

For the descriptive information of the variables in the study, scale ratings were computed in Table 4.1. The correlation matrix of study variables is presented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.1 Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

Variables	Min.	Max.	Skewness	Kurtosis	# of items
I-deals	1.00	7.00	-0.88	-0.80	6
LMX	1.00	7.00	-1.27	1.43	7
Leadership Emergence	0.00	0.86	0.87	-0.20	1
Promotability	1.00	7.00	-0.45	-0.81	3

For the demographic variables, age with leadership emergence showed a positive correlation ($r=.20, p<.05$). Moreover, i-deals was positively correlated with LMX ($r=.65, p<.001$). For the outcome of the study, promotability, all the other study variables (i.e., I-deals, LMX, and leadership emergence) had significant correlations. I-deals ($r=.30, p<.001$), LMX ($r=.21, p<.05$), and leadership emergence ($r=.20, p<.05$) were positively correlated with promotability.

Table 4.2 Means, Standard Deviations, Reliabilities, and Bivariate Correlations of the Study Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Gender	-							
2. Age	-.23**	-						
3. Education	-.04	-.09	-					
4. Team Size	.12	-.25**	-.16	-				
5. I-deals	-.01	-.08	.02	.00	-			
6. LMX	-.06	-.01	-.11	-.09	.65***	-		
7. Leadership Emergence	-.11	.20*	.01	-.14	.02	-.09	-	
8. Promotability	.02	.10	.03	-.10	.30***	.21*	.20*	-
Mean	-	-	-	-	5.20	5.38	0.23	4.59
Standard Deviation	-	-	-	-	1.12	1.38	0.24	1.70

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

4.3 Common Method Bias

The survey was administered at three points in time, and data were collected from multiple sources to minimize the effects of common method bias and social desirability response. Confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) were conducted to measure the study variables' distinctiveness. A three-factor measurement model was estimated, modeling i-deals, LMX, and promotability as distinct latent constructs. This model was compared against other alternatives, such as a one-factor model combining all items into a single factor. In the study, model estimation was performed using the “lavaan” package in R (Rosseel, 2012), employing maximum likelihood estimation. Following established guidelines (Hu & Bentler, 1999), model fit was evaluated using multiple indices that are the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), and the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR).

4.4 Results of the Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted using Mplus before testing the hypotheses. Model fit was assessed based on chi-square statistics (χ^2), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR). Table 4.3 presents the results of the CFA by comparing three alternative models: A three-factor model, a two-factor model, and a one-factor model. The hypothesized three-factor model demonstrated acceptable fit to the data ($\chi^2(101)=241.90$, $p<.001$, $CFI=.91$, $RMSEA=.10$, $SRMR=.06$). Since smaller χ^2/df values explain well-fitting of the model, the three-factor model ($\chi^2/df=2.40$) has the smallest value; therefore, it has a better fit compared to the two-factor ($\chi^2/df=3.09$) and one-factor models ($\chi^2/df=5.33$). In addition,

according to conventional cut-off criteria, CFI values greater than .90 and RMSEA values below .10 indicate acceptable model fit. Furthermore, chi-square difference tests were applied to compare the three-factor model against the other models. The results indicated that the three-factor model provided a significantly better fit than the other models, $\Delta\chi^2(2) = 76.71$, $p < .001$, and the one-factor model, $\Delta\chi^2(3) = 312.56$, $p < .001$. Therefore, the three-factor model was kept for further analyses.



Table 4.3 Results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Model	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR	$\Delta\chi^2$	p-value
Three-factor model	241.90	101	2.40	.91	.10	.06	-	-
*Two-factor model	318.61	103	3.09	.86	.12	.08	76.71	< .001
One-factor model	554.46	104	5.33	.72	.18	.13	312.56	< .001

*This model combines I-deals and LMX into one factor.

Note. $\Delta\chi^2$ represents the chi-square difference relative to the three-factor model.

4.5 Hypothesis Testing

4.5.1 Statistical Analyses

Statistical analyses were conducted using Mplus Version 8 (Muthén & Muthén, 2017). A path analysis framework was specified to test the hypothesized moderated mediation model. Maximum likelihood estimation (MLR) was applied. Because employees were nested within managers, all models applied cluster-robust standard errors to correct for the non-independence of variables within teams. The model included i-deals as the independent variable, leadership emergence as the mediator, and promotability as the dependent variable. LMX was examined to determine whether it moderates the link between i-deals and leadership emergence. All continuous predictors were mean-centered. Indirect and conditional indirect effects were estimated using model constraints.

4.5.2 Effects of I-deals and Leadership Emergence on Promotability

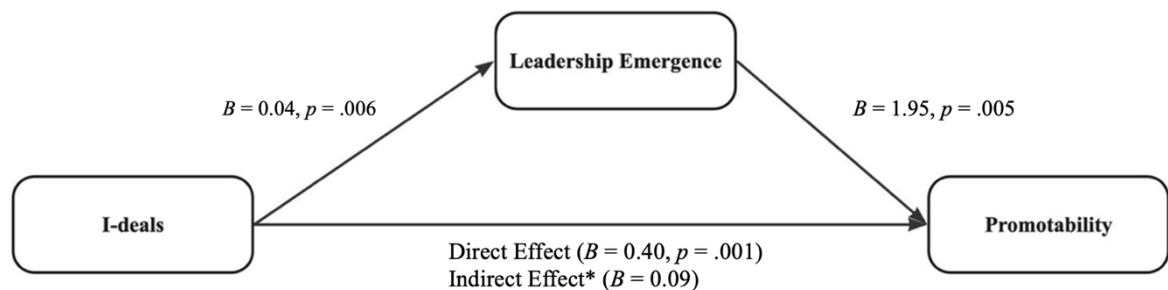
In the first hypothesis, it was suggested that i-deals are related to leadership emergence. Regression analysis showed that i-deals positively predicted leadership emergence ($B = .04, p = .006$). Hence, Hypothesis 1 was supported. The second hypothesis of the study stated that leadership emergence and promotability are positively associated. Results showed that leadership emergence positively predicted employees' promotability ($B = 1.95, p = .005$), and Hypothesis 2 was also supported.

To examine the mediating role of emergent leadership (Hypothesis 3), the indirect effect of i-deals on promotability via emergent leadership was tested. The

unstandardized regression coefficient is used for the indirect effect since the coefficient is calculated by the product of the two regression coefficients (Hayes, 2013). Although a specific p-value was not obtained for this indirect effect, according to the joint significance approach (MacKinnon et al., 2002), both i-deals to emerging leadership ($B = 0.04, p = .006$) and emerging leadership to promotability ($B = 1.95, p = .005$) paths were statistically significant. Therefore, these results provide evidence of a significant indirect effect. As shown in Figure 4.1, the unstandardized regression coefficient of this indirect effect is calculated as the product of the unstandardized regression coefficients of the two paths ($B = 0.09$).

The direct effect of i-deals on promotability is also significant ($B = 0.40, p = .001$), showing that emergent leadership partially mediates the relationship between i-deals and promotability. Thus, through the evidence of a significant indirect effect, Hypothesis 3 was partially supported. $B = 0.40, p = .001$

Figure 4.1 I-deals as a Predictor of Promotability Mediated by Leadership Emergence



* Indirect effect computed as the product of unstandardized path coefficients.

4.5.3 Moderating Effect of LMX on I-deals and Leadership Emergence

In Hypothesis 4, it was proposed that LMX moderates the relationship between the i-deals and emerging leadership. As shown in Table 3.4, LMX significantly and positively affects i-deals and emergent leadership relationships ($B=.01$, $p=.04$).

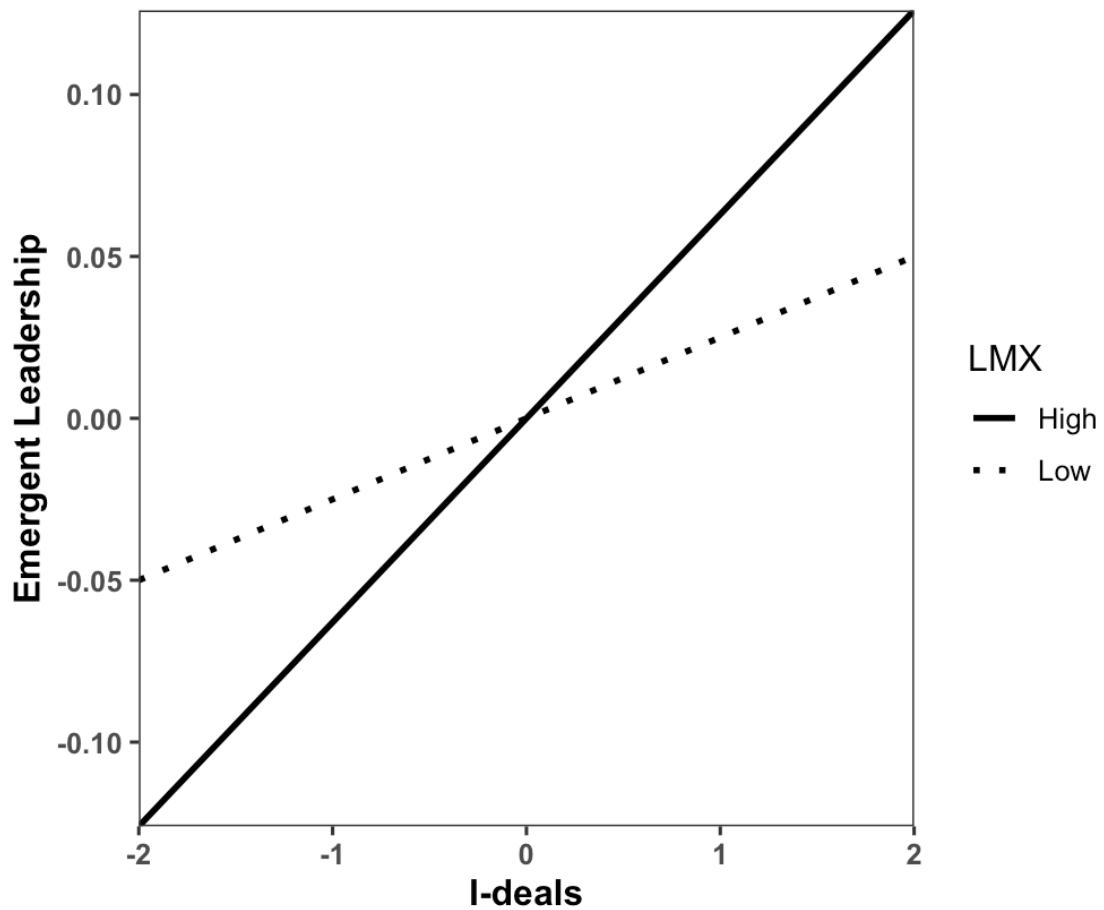
Table 4.4 Moderating Effect of LMX on I-deals and Emerging Leadership Relationship

Predictors	B	z	p
I-deals**	.044	2.73	.006
LMX	-.011	-0.88	.377
I-deals x LMX*	.013	2.06	.040

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

For the employees who have high LMX, the positive relationship between i-deals and emerging leadership was stronger ($B=.063$, $z=3.14$, $p=.002$), whereas when LMX was low, it did not significantly affect this relationship ($B=.025$, $z=1.48$, $p=.139$). The difference between the two conditions is also represented in the Figure 4.2. Thus, Hypothesis 4 was supported.

Figure 4.2 Moderating Effect of LMX on the Relationship between I-deals and Leadership Emergence (Slopes at High vs Low LMX Levels)



4.5.4 Moderated Mediation Model

The last hypothesis was regarding a moderated mediation. It was hypothesized that LMX would moderate the indirect relationship between i-deals and promotability, such that the relationship gets stronger when LMX is higher rather than lower. Therefore, this analysis involves the conditional indirect effect of i-deals on promotability through emerging leadership, and it was examined on one standard

deviation above and below the mean of LMX. The overall model accounted for 53.8% of the variance in leadership emergence ($R^2=.538$). Additionally, for promotability, the overall model explained 17.1% of the variance ($R^2=.171$). Furthermore, results revealed that the conditional indirect effect was statistically significant at high levels of LMX ($B=.122$, $SE=.050$, $p=.013$), but insignificant at low levels of LMX ($B=.049$, $SE=.030$, $p=.107$) as presented in Table 4.5. This means that the mediating role of emergent leadership in linking i-deals to promotability was stronger when employees reported high-quality leader–member exchange. Based on these findings, it can be said that the moderated mediation hypothesis (Hypothesis 5) was supported.

Table 4.5 Moderated Mediation Results

	Level	Conditional Indirect Effect	SE	p
Leader-Member	Low	0.05	0.03	.11
Exchange	High	0.12	0.05	.01*

Note. $p < .05$.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

In this chapter, first, the findings and theoretical contributions of this study will be discussed. Then, the similarities and differences of the findings with the existing literature as well as their practical and ethical implications for both top-down and bottom-up angles will be discussed. Finally, the limitations of the study and suggestions for future research will be provided.

5.1 Major Findings and Theoretical Implications

This study investigates how employees emerge as leaders and whether such emergence influences how promotable they are by their formal managers. Focusing on personalized work arrangements, it explores how these tailored opportunities help employees step into informal leadership roles. The study also investigates whether the quality of LMX amplifies this process, offering a comprehensive model that links individualized work design to career advancement. First, consistent with prior research indicating that individualized work arrangements can enhance employees' perceptions of control and competence (Hornung et al., 2010), the study's findings demonstrate that i-deals significantly predict emergent leadership behaviors. This extends the literature by showing how a task-related factor, in this case, i-deals, provides employees with opportunities to demonstrate initiative and proactive behaviors that contribute to their

emergence (DeRue & Ashford, 2010). Second, it was found that emergent leadership was positively associated with promotability. This finding represents a unique relationship considering the existing literature. In addition, the results highlight the role of LMX in shaping these dynamics. As a moderator, high LMX significantly strengthens the relationship between i-deals and emerging leadership. Lastly, the moderated mediation model revealed that high-quality LMX relationships strengthened the indirect effect of i-deals on promotability through emergent leadership, whereas this pathway was nonsignificant under low LMX conditions.

For the first proposed hypothesis, the results show a significant positive relationship between i-deals and leadership emergence. This finding implies that employees who have received more i-deals are more likely to be recognized as informal leaders by their peers. The finding that lower levels of i-deals are related to decreased likelihood of emergent leadership adds a new contribution to the existing line of research, as previous research has not specifically examined the absence of i-deals as a limiting factor for leadership emergence. Moreover, compared to the previous framework by Hanna and colleagues (2021), where task-oriented factors were established as a mediator between individual factors and leader emergence, this study integrated task and work responsibilities i-deals as a direct antecedent of leadership emergence and found significant results. Therefore, in line with the self-enhancement perspective that involves motivation to improve and keep a positive self-image (Dufner

et al., 2018), it is illustrated that employees may perceive the acquisition of i-deals as validation of their competence and importance to the organization (Liu et al., 2013). This may motivate them to demonstrate initiative and take on leadership responsibilities.

In Hypothesis 2, it was stated that the emergence of leadership among employees would be positively related to how promotable their formal managers rated them. This hypothesis was also confirmed by the results, which indicate that employees who were perceived as leaders by their colleagues in the team were found to have higher promotability ratings. Although previous studies have examined various positive outcomes of emerging leadership, this result shows the importance of emerging leadership's impact on promotability. This is an interesting finding because, as discussed in the review by Badura and colleagues (2022), the question of how emergent leaders are evaluated within organizations remains relevant. The current study shows that employees who informally emerge as leaders are viewed by their formal leaders as having greater potential for promotion. Although other studies have examined the relationship between i-deals and promotability (Srikanth et al., 2020; Tomprou et al., 2023), in the current research, emerging leadership partially enhances employees' promotability following the receipt of i-deals. Employees leverage the advantages they gain from these arrangements to satisfy their self-enhancement motives. As a result, their teammates begin to perceive these employees as leaders, and this increases their promotability levels. This finding is important to observe the supervisors' reactions to

employees who receive i-deals. Rather than perceiving these employees as a threat, supervisors view those who demonstrate leadership after receiving i-deals as potential future leaders, which is an expected yet understudied outcome in the literature.

In Hypothesis 3, the events occurring before and after the emergence of leadership as a mediating process were examined. The results indicated a partial mediation. This finding implies that emerging leadership served as a significant bridge between these two constructs, and no prior study has examined this relationship from this specific perspective. In previous research, Srikanth and colleagues (2022) revealed a positive relationship between developmental i-deals and promotability decisions from the managers. They argued that proactively negotiating such i-deals is perceived as more promotable through the development challenges the employees overcome. Consistent with this finding, the present study also revealed a significant direct relationship between task and work responsibilities i-deals, and promotability. Furthermore, the results extend the literature by showing that emerging leadership also plays a significant mediating role in this relationship. In other words, employees who obtain i-deals are more likely to emerge as informal leaders, and in turn, this enhances their promotability ratings. Therefore, the findings support both a direct and an indirect pathway linking i-deals to promotability.

In Hypothesis 4, it was examined whether LMX could moderate the relationship between i-deals and emerging leadership. According to the literature, employees with

high LMX are inclined to feel more confident in uncertain situations (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Therefore, with high LMX, it was expected that more employees would emerge as leaders after negotiating i-deals compared to conditions where employees experience low-quality interactions with their managers, described by a lack of trust and emotional support (Erdogan & Liden, 2002). The results supported previous literature and indicated that high LMX has a significant influence on this relationship. This finding implies that employees with higher LMX would have more potential to emerge as leaders through increased self-enhancement after obtaining i-deals.

Lastly, the research model emphasizes that high-quality relationships with managers create a positive context in which employees show more visible contributions after getting i-deals (Hornung et al., 2010). Therefore, rather than acting as a standalone resource, i-deals appear to function more effectively when they are combined with a supportive context. As expected in the hypotheses, under low LMX conditions, the moderating and mediated-moderation effects were weak and non-significant. This suggests that low-quality LMX does not enhance the positive impact of i-deals compared to high-quality LMX. Nevertheless, low LMX should not be seen as completely harmful, as it did not exert a negative moderating influence to act as a barrier. It essentially did not deliver the extra boost that is typically observed at high LMX levels. This suggests that employees who share strong mutual trust and respect with their managers are more likely to be seen as promotable, because they tend to

emerge more as leaders in their teams. From a self-enhancement perspective, high-quality LMX relationships may validate the employee's self-view and amplify their motivation to take on leadership behaviors that signal a forward-looking indicator, promotability.

This study thus contributes to the literature by demonstrating that the promotability-enhancing effect of emergent leadership gets stronger in the presence of high LMX. In this sense, LMX is not just a background variable but a central enabler of informal leadership development and its recognition within organizational hierarchies.

5.2 Practical Implications

This study offers practical insights for HR professionals, managers, and employees by revealing how i-deals and informal leadership can support development, management practices, and career growth. Especially considering the limited knowledge organizations currently have about who emerges as a leader (Badura et al., 2022), this research highlights the importance of emerging leadership for employees and organizations.

First, the findings show the role of task and work responsibilities i-deals in leadership emergence. This relationship can be viewed from the self-enhancement perspective, which represents the motivation of the employees to strengthen their positive self-image (Korman, 2012). In line with this view, task and work

responsibilities i-deals enable employees to take on more challenging assignments and demonstrate their capabilities. When employees actively negotiate these arrangements and have them granted, their behavior is often interpreted as reflecting personal initiative (Grant & Ashford, 2008). By negotiating such i-deals, the resulting self-enhancement and agentic behaviors can foster the development and emergence of informal leaders within teams. Thus, such personalized arrangements can be incorporated into HR policies. By emphasizing the significance of these i-deals to the organizations, their adoption in the workplace can be increased. Furthermore, it is important for managers to communicate the process of negotiating and granting i-deals in a transparent manner to avoid potential perceptions of inequality among employees and other team members (Rousseau et al., 2006; Anand et al., 2010). Managers should ensure that efforts to foster informal leadership do not unintentionally cause disruption in team dynamics or create perceptions of favoritism within the group.

Furthermore, considering the LMX, this study reinforces the importance of high LMX. In the moderated mediation results, high LMX benefited employees by enhancing their promotability and offered organizations practical value by supporting the emergence of informal leaders, which is increasingly critical in today's work environments (Hanna et al., 2021).

Finally, in the study, employees who were informally chosen as leaders by their teammates had significantly higher promotability ratings from their formal managers.

This finding can provide an important insight for employees who are seeking to understand what their formal leaders think about their emergence as a leader. It suggests that employees should not hesitate to step into leadership roles within their groups, as taking this responsibility may increase their likelihood of being promotable.

5.3 Societal and Ethical Implications

The i-deals that are granted and the relationship levels with employees are not limited to that individual alone; they can also play a role in determining other team members' perception of the team dynamics. Even though the study's findings have practical implications for organizations, they also have ethical implications regarding these concepts and how much they affect the people within the organization.

Unequal access to i-deals can raise concerns about justice and fairness in the workplace. Hence, previous studies examined the relationship between i-deals and perceptions of justice. For example, Ding and colleagues (2023) found that when a team member receives i-deals, other employees tend to increase their knowledge-hiding behaviors through the mediating role of perceived effort and reward imbalance. Another study revealed that when employees believe that their teammates deserve these i-deals, especially when such arrangements are granted in a transparent process, for the benefit of the team, and with the belief that they themselves might also receive similar opportunities in the future, they tend to perceive i-deals more positively (Gachayeva et

al., 2024). As can be seen in these examples, i-deals are more than an individual concern. In line with this, when certain employees receive task and work responsibilities i-deals, others in the same team may perceive the process as unclear or biased. Failing to support equal development opportunities may send the message that only a few people are seen as having leadership potential. Therefore, managers should take responsibility to ensure that when i-deals are offered, the process should be inclusive and transparent.

Moreover, the findings reveal the critical role of having high-quality relationships between managers and employees. Managers should be aware that high LMX must not result in exclusive “in-groups” that isolate other employees or limit their development opportunities (Henderson et al., 2009). Instead, managers should aim to extend high-quality exchanges more broadly to create an inclusive climate for all team members. To prevent the quality of the manager–employee relationship from overshadowing actual leadership potential in promotion decisions, managers need to treat all employees fairly and ensure consistency in recognition practices.

5.4 Strengths, Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

The methodological strength of this study lies in how the data were collected. Rather than using a cross-sectional method, the study collected data using multiple waves. The data were gathered at three time points: at T1, employees reported their idiosyncratic deals and LMX; at T2, coworkers provided ratings about the identified

emergent leaders and their social networks; and at T3, managers assessed the promotability of their employees. The multisource and multi-wave aspects of the study help to reduce common method variance (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Also, by examining both the antecedents and outcomes of emergent leadership, which has been described as a black box (Badura et al., 2022), the study proposes a new model aligned with prior research and contributes to the existing literature.

Regardless of these strengths, the study has various limitations that should be addressed. First, although the study utilized a time-lagged design to reduce common method bias, it was not longitudinal and therefore does not show definitive causal results. Considering that emerging leadership is a dynamic concept, a longitudinal study would be more helpful in observing these dynamics more accurately. Future research may adopt longitudinal designs to examine how employees who receive i-deals emerge as leaders over time and how their promotability rates change. Second, data were collected from employees, coworkers, and managers to reduce common method variance. However, since all measures involved self-reports, individual interpretation could still affect the results. Therefore, future studies should consider including objective measures, such as the career success of the employees who emerged as leaders, to develop new findings further. Third, leadership emergence was measured using a single-item peer nomination procedure without a standardized definition of leadership provided to respondents. While this approach aligns with common practice in

social network research (Kalish & Luria, 2016), it risks introducing variability in how raters interpret and attribute leadership behaviors (Hanna et al., 2021). Moreover, this study concentrated only on task and work responsibilities i-deals. Future research could use different varieties of i-deals with contrasting characteristics to compare how these various types of i-deals relate to emerging leadership. Additionally, instead of LMX, other moderators might be valuable to consider in explaining this model, such as LMX differentiation (Liden et al., 2006) or team climate (Anderson & West, 1998). In addition, data were collected from employees working in a single company with a limited sample size. The results obtained from one organization in Türkiye have a low level of generalizability. To improve generalizability, future studies should collect data across organizations with different lines of work and in different cultural contexts with more participants. Finally, this study focused only on individual-level outcomes. Given that emerging leadership is measured based on the responses of the coworkers, it would be valuable to examine employees who have received i-deals and have emerged as leaders, and examine their impact on their teams

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research explored how employees informally emerge as leaders within their teams in the workplace, and how, once they have emerged, they are evaluated by their formal managers regarding their future potential. All of the hypotheses were supported based on data collected from white-collar employees, their peers, and managers. The findings imply that employees who negotiate personalized agreements with their supervisors to enrich their tasks and develop their careers are more likely to emerge as leaders, and these i-deals increase employees' promotability. Furthermore, when the quality of the LMX is high, these relationships become even stronger, underscoring once again the importance of LMX for both employees and organizations. Future research should consider the importance of emerging leadership for both sides. From the employees' perspective, their managers perceive them taking on leadership roles not as a threat but rather as a signal that increases their promotability. For managers, granting individualized agreements and having high-quality relationships with employees makes these employees emerge as leaders, which is critical for encouraging future leaders.

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APPENDIX

A. QUESTIONNAIRE OF THE STUDY

TASK AND WORK RESPONSIBILITIES I-DEALS

I have successfully asked for extra responsibilities that take advantage of the skills that I bring to the job.

At my request, my manager has assigned me tasks that better develop my skills.

I have negotiated with my manager for tasks that better fit my personality, skills, and abilities.

My manager has offered me opportunities to take on desired responsibilities outside of my formal job requirements.

In response to my distinctive contributions, my manager has granted me more flexibility in how I complete my job.

Following my initial appointment, my manager assigned me to a desirable position that makes use of my unique abilities.

LEADERSHIP EMERGENCE

Select the names of your coworkers (same level as you) whom you view as a leader in the group?

LMX

I can count on my manager to bail me out even at his/her own expense when I really need it.

My manager understands my problems and needs.

My manager recognizes my potential.

My manager has enough confidence in me that he/she would defend and justify my decisions if I were not present to do so.

I usually know where I stand with my manager.

Regardless of how much power he/she has built into his/her position, my manager would be personally inclined to use his/her power to help me solve problems in my work.

My relationship with my manager is effective.

PROMOTABILITY

I believe that this employee will have a successful career.

If I had to select someone to be promoted to the next position up, it would be this subordinate.

I believe that this subordinate has high potential.