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The effect of the paradox mindset on individual unlearning and work engagement: A mixed study

（パラドックスマインドセットが個人のアンラーニングとワークエンゲージメントに及ぼす影響：混合研究）

As the increasing demands and competitions continue to pervade organizations, unlearning is not only a vital strategy for organization change and innovation in the turbulent work environment but also for individual survival. Notably, unlearning facilitates employees to improve their ability to adapt to changes and challenges in the workplace; moreover, it promotes personal growth and development. Although existing literature has examined various antecedents of individual unlearning at the organizational and team level, research on individual unlearning is still scarce. Furthermore, since engaged employees have a positive attitude towards changes and job demands at work and are willing to go the extra mile to achieve their work goals, employees who show higher levels of work engagement tend to cope with changes and challenging tasks successfully. This study aims to investigate the antecedents of individual unlearning and work engagement with respect to individuals' paradox mindset in a tension-setting organizational context.

To investigate the research questions, a mixed methodology was adopted. The quantitative study investigated the impact of paradox mindset, as well as two proactive behaviors: seeking challenges and individual unlearning, moreover, its relationship with work engagement. Additionally, following the sequential explanatory research design, the qualitative study adopted the qualitative research design. It used the grounded theory approach by Strauss and Corbin to explore the relationships among paradox mindset, seeking challenges, and individual unlearning based on the results of quantitative study, which may provide a more comprehensive understanding of the underlying process of how paradox mindset promotes seeking challenges and individual unlearning.

This research has three main theoretical implications. First, this study was the first to identify the antecedent of individual unlearning in terms of mindset rather than goal orientation and reflection. On the one hand, this study provided a more nuanced understanding of how individuals' cognitive qualities influence them to interact with tensions by crafting their jobs and promoting proactive behaviors. Moreover, findings revealed the

critical role of paradox mindset in reducing the anxiety and stress accompanied by unlearning and facilitating the process of it, which filled the research gap that previous studies have neglected. Secondly, paradox mindset was found to promote work engagement. Such result not only answers the call to explore the potential consequences of the paradox mindset but also confirms the previous insufficiently proven mindset-engagement relationship based on the Job Demands-Resources model. Furthermore, this research takes a step toward highlighting the importance of paradox mindset in managing workplace tensions as well as fostering individuals' well-being and organizational development. Lastly, paradox mindset promotes seeking challenges and unlearning through managing tensions and reflective thinking. Thus, this study identified that paradox mindset promotes affective and cognitive process for two types of proactive behaviors (seeking challenges and unlearning). Although previous studies indicate the importance of affective process in learning, this study shows how affective and cognitive factors are combined to promote proactive learning. Moreover, such findings have answered the call for investigating mindset of employees and have demonstrated how it promotes the unlearning process.

Regarding the practical implications, this study has several implications. First, human resources managers should assess and determine the employees' level of the individual unlearning and paradox mindset, which will then be a basis for training. Subsequently, they should organize unlearning and paradox mindset-related training programs such as seminars, case studies, and periodical surveys. Additionally, as individual unlearning was found to mediate paradox mindset and work engagement, human resources managers should help employees understand the importance of unlearning and facilitate them to go through the unlearning process. Lastly, managers of the executive level should cooperate with human resources managers to design work practices to ensure embracing paradox mindset and unlearning, from which employees will feel secure to experience the benefits of adopting paradox mindset in the process of unlearning, alongside the timely and sufficient supports from managers.

Overall, since there are increasing needs for employees to adapt to changes and challenges, individual unlearning is necessary for survival in the rapidly changing and increasingly demanding work environment. This study unlocked the critical role of paradox mindset in triggering individuals' unlearning through seeking challenges directly and indirectly, moreover, in promoting work engagement. That is, employees with paradox mindset tend to seek challenges and unlearn, then to enhance work engagement. Particularly, paradox mindset influences individuals' affective and cognitive changes in dealing with tensions. By constructing the model of paradox mindset in promoting individual unlearning, this research extends previous literature on paradox theory at the individual level, and sheds some light on the future research directions for paradox mindset studies relating to individual unlearning research.