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An Approach to Apply the Doctrines in the *Daodejing* 道德經 to the Treatment of Depression

A dissertation submitted to

the University of Wales Trinity Saint David

In fulfilment of the requirements for BA (Hons) in Sinology Degree

Name: Xiaocong Zhou 周孝聰

Student Number：1903293

Date： 3/2022

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Abstract

In recent thirty years, depression disorders, self-harm, and suicide, begin to appear in younger generations. it is urgent to pay attention to the prevention and treatment of depression disorders. However, the treatment of depression disorders is very difficult, because the factors develop depression are complex and can hardly be defined. More than two thousand years ago, Laozi had recognized the importance of human mental health, and that physical, family, and social factors are related to human mental health. The *Daodejing* 道德經 includes doctrines which can keep learners from negative emotions, such as anxiety, anger, and depression through rebuilding cognition and developing dialectical thinking. Combining the doctrines with modern psychology is a meaningful and constructive attempt. This text aims at applying the doctrines in the *Daodejing* to the treatment of depression through analysing the doctrines and applying them to break the psychological models of depression related to different factors.

Keywords: depression disorders, anxiety, psychological models of depression, the *Daodejing*

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An Approach to Apply the Doctrines in the *Daodejing* 道德經 to the Treatment of Depression

1 Introduction

In recent thirty years, depression disorders have become the fourth common disease in the world. However, the treatment of depression in many countries is still in the situation of low diagnosis rate because the factors develop depression are extremely complex and thus can hardly be defined. Nowadays, depression, self-harm, and suicide, begin to appear in younger generations. it is urgent to pay attention to the prevention and the treatment of depression disorders. More than three thousand years ago, ancient Chinese had recognized the importance of human mental health, and recognized that physical, family, and social factors are related to mental health. Therefore, many ancient Chinese classics emphasize the importance of self-cultivation to help learners achieve healthy and perfect mental state. The *Daodejing* is known as the lord of all classics. it provides the theories and the methods of self-cultivation, such as the virtue of infant (*chizi zhi de* 赤子之德), and the spirit of *wuwei* 無為 (action with no intention or selfishness). They can keep learners from negative emotions, such as anxiety, anger, and depression through rebuilding cognition, reducing desires, and developing dialectical thinking. Therefore, combining the doctrines in the *Daodejing* with modern psychology is a meaningful and constructive attempt. This text aims at applying the doctrines in the *Daodejing* to

the treatment of depression disorders through the steps below.

a) Introducing and analysing existing research in the *Daodejing* and depression disorders.
b) Setting up psychological models of depression caused by different factors.
c) Analysing and classifying the doctrines through Introducing the historical background of the *Daodejing*
d) Selecting doctrines related to depression and applying them to break the models of depression.

2 Existing research in the *Daodejing* and depression disorders

Few existing researchers combine the *Daodejing* with the treatment of depression disorders. For this reason, it is helpful to analysis and compare existing research on both topics.

2.1 Research in China

As the incidence of depression disorders rising rapidly in China, some Chinese researchers have begun to attempt to explain the *Daodejing* from the perspective of mental health. The public are aware of the value of the *Daodejing* in developing mental health for the first time. In the article ‘Apocalypse of *Tao Te Ching* to Students' Mental Health Advancement’, Fan Xiangyang analyses the Ma Jiajue event

through comparing the murder's mental state with the doctrines in the *Daodejing.*[12] Fan Xiangyang thinks that the *Daodejing* can help people correct wrong cognization of life. This function of the *Daodejing* can solve different mental illnesses. Therefore, the *Daodejing* should be explained from the perspective of mental health rather than being limited in religion, literature, and political studies. His article started a new discussion in applying the *Daodejing* to psychology.

Zhang Zeqiang discussed psychological value of the *Daodejing* based on historical background and the original text.[3] He thinks that the education in contemporary universities is incomplete because they solely focus on students' academic ability and working skills. It increases the risk of mental diseases. He believes Laozi's 老子 thought of learning from the nature and returning to the nature can help people return to healthy mental state by reducing desires and extreme thoughts. The doctrines in the *Daodejing* supplements with the mental education which is ignored in modern education.

Nie Wenjuan introduced Laozi's thought of harmony and discussed how the doctrines solve the conflicts between people.[4] She thinks that Laozi's thought of harmony can reduce suicide rate and crime rate in contemporary university.

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[1]In 2004, Ma Jiajue cruelly murdering four of his roommates due to serious mental disorder. The Ma Jiajue event shocked the entire China. Form this event Chinese government and many educational institutions started paying attention to student mental health.

[2]Fan Xiangyang 范向陽, 'Daodejign dui dangdai daxuesheng xinlijiankang xingcheng fanzhan de qishi' 《道德經》對當代大學生心理健康形成發展的啟示 [Apocalypse of *Tao Te Chine* to Students' Mental Health Advancement], *Guizhou shifandaxue xuebao* 貴州師範大學學報（社會科學版） *Journal of Guizhou Normal University (Social Science)*, 131(2004), pp.93-94.

[3]Zhang Zeqiang 張澤強, 'Laozi xinyu sixiang dui dangdai daxuesheng xinli jiangkangjiaoyu de qishi yanjiu' 老子心育思想對當代大學生心理健康教育的啟示研究 [A Research on Lao Tzu Thought of Mental Education to the Enlightenment of the Contemporary College Studetns' Psychological Health Education], Hunan keji daxue 湖南科技大學, master dissertation, (2016), p.1.

[4]Nie Wenjuan 聶文娟, 'Qianxi Laozi hexie xixiang dui dangdai daxuesheng xinling jiaoyu de qishi' 淺析老子和諧思想對當代大學生心靈教育的啟示 [Lao Tzu's thoughts of harmonious society with the spiritual education on contemporary college students], Hunan shifan daxue 湖南師範大學, master dissertation, (2015), pp.17-20.

Xu Rongzhen analysed the general sources of mental stress among young people and discussed the positive effect of the doctrines in the *Daodejing* on defusing mental stress.[5] She thinks that most mental stress and mental diseases are related to the mind of gain and loss (anxiety generated by failure) and excessive desires. The dialectical thought of Laozi can help young people correctly deal with failure in daily life by removing the mind of gain and loss. Simultaneously, the thought of no desire and natural inaction (*wuyu wuwei* 無欲無為) in the *Daodejing* can help young people release mental stress by reducing excessive desires.

In China, the research about this topic is still in the beginning stage. Chinese researchers' efforts are worthy of praise. They begin to focus on specific problems. However, at this moment, most research do not connect the specific doctrines in the *Daodejing* with depression disorders or the relative symptoms. Most of them are still discussions on the original text but not application research.

2.2 Research out of China

Many countries developed modern medicine and psychology earlier than China, but most of the relative researchers know less about the *Daodejing*. Therefore, they focus on psychological and clinical application rather than the doctrines of the *Daodejing*. Very few researchers like Shoma Morita and G.J.Johanson attempted to apply the doctrines of the *Daodejing* in the clinic treatment of depression disorders.[6]

[5]Xu Rongzhen 許珍榮, 'Laozi Daodejing dui daxuesheng xinliyali de tiaoshi' 老子《道德經》對大學生心理壓力的調適 [The Adjustment of *Tao Te Ching* to College Students' psychological pressure], *Shanxi qingnian zhiye xueyuan xuebao* 山西青年職業學院學報 *Journal of Shanxi Youth Vocational Collage*, 29(2016), pp.39-40.
[6]Zhang Zeqiang 張澤強, 'Laozi xinyu sixiang dui dangdai daxuesheng xinli jiangkangjiaoyu de qishi yanjiu' 老

A.H.Maslow is a psychologist who realized the value of the thoughts of Laozi in psychotherapy. In his book *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature* , he thinks that the humanistic psychology is very close to Laozi's spiritual cultivation. He advocated that psychology should follow scientific and Daoism objective observation of the world at the same time. Psychologist should treat each patient with love like Laozi treated nature with tranquillity and harmony.[7] His humanistic psychology is a good combination of psychology and thought of *wuwei*.

Ronald S.Kurtz and G.J.Johanson applied the concept of 'virtue of infant' in clinical practice. In the book *Grace Unfolding: Psychotherapy in the Spirit of the Tao-te Ching*, G.J.Johanson linked the *Daodejing* to modern psychotherapy. He helped the patients by analysing the patients' growing experience, in order to help the patients to go back to the 'inner child' stage and find the interconnectedness of everything.

Doctor Morita introduced Morita therapy, an ecological, response-oriented psychotherapy.[8] Morita applied the Daoism thought of conform nature (*sunying ziran* 順應自然) in psychotherapy. Morita therapy is recognized as the most effective treatment of anxiety disorder and obsessive-compulsive disorder (both disorders can trigger depression disorders).

The studies above are still psychological approaches. The researchers'

子心育思想對當代大學生心理健康教育的啟示研究 [A Research on Lao Tzu Thought of Mental Education to the Enlightenment of the Contemporary College Studetns' Psychological Health Education], Hunan keji daxue 湖南科技大學, master dissertation, (2016), p.5.

[7]Abraham Harold Maslow, *The farther reaches of human nature*, Tran. Ling Fang 林芳 (Yunnan: *Yunnan renmin chubanshe* 雲南人民出版社, 1987), p.23.

[8]Jia Huixuan 賈蕙萱 and Kang Chengjun 康成俊, *Sentian liaofa: yizhi xinli zhangai de liangfang* 森田療法：醫治心理障礙的良方 [Morita Therapy: a cure for mental disorders], (Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 2010), pp.1-5.

understanding in the thought of Laozi is limited by many factors, such as cultural difference and cognition difference. Therefore, they only apply small parts of the doctrines in the *Daodejing.* In my opinion, it is better to combine the psychological approaches with Chinese researchers' discussion on the original text, because better understanding of the original text can help us apply it more efficiently in the treatment of depression disorders. On the other hand, to solve the problems of the research in China, setting up psychological models of depression is also necessary.

3 Setting up psychological models of depression

The doctrines of the *Daodejing* cannot be effectively applied in practice because some research solely focuses the Daoism theories but ignored psychological analysis and observation on real patients. To solve this problem, I setup psychological models of depression for different factors based on existing psychological research and observation on real patients.

3.1 Observation on depression patients

Many factors may simultaneously contribute to the development of depression. The cause of depression is extremely complex. Therefore, observation on real patients is required. In past fifteen years, I observed six patients (three males, two females, and a transsexual) who were in different stages of depression. I observed their behaviours and investigated their background through communicating with their families, friends, and colleagues. According to the results of DSM-5 and Beck

Depression Inventory (BDI-II, 1996), the six patients are split into four levels (minimal depression, mild depression, moderate depression, and severe depression) and four types (melancholic depression, atypical depression, catatonic depression, and depression with anxious distress).[9][10]

Patient A (male, 1994) was observed from 2011 to 2016. He had six major symptoms, 1) He could not response to positive events; 2) He could hardly sleep; 3) excessive guilty feel; 4) lost weight quickly; 5) psychomotor agitation or retardation; 6) He could not stop imaging that people around were going to kill or hurt him (rumination). He had severe hallucinations and auditory hallucinations. According to DSM-5, his symptoms match the descriptions of melancholic depression, and reached severe level in BDI test. [11][12]

Patient B (transsexual, male to female, 1992) was observed from 2016 to 2017. According to DSM-5, his symptoms partial match the descriptions of melancholic depression and catatonic depression. He reached severe level in BDI test. He suffered from gender discrimination in the workplace. In 2018, he became a female through transsexual operation.

Patient C (male, 1990) was observed from 2010 to 2016. According to DSM-5, his symptoms match the descriptions of atypical depression, and reached mild level in BDI test. He suffered from obesity and kidney disease. He was cured by

[9]*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders - Text Revision*. (Arlington VA: American Psychiatric Publishing, 2008), pp.419–420.
[10]Beck, Aaron T., et al., 'An inventory for measuring depression', *Archives of general psychiatry* 4.6 (1961), pp. 561-571.
[11]*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders - Text Revision*. (Arlington VA: American Psychiatric Publishing, 2008), pp.419–420.
[12]Beck, Aaron T., et al., 'An inventory for measuring depression', *Archives of general psychiatry* 4.6 (1961), pp. 561-571.

rehabilitation training.

Patient D (male, 1990) was observed from 2016 to 2021. He could not stop imaging (rumination) that people around were going to kill or hurt him, and he had mild hallucinations. According to DSM-5, his symptoms match the descriptions of melancholic depression and depression with anxious distress. He reached moderate level in BDI test. High-pressure family made him a perfectionism and an avoidant personality disorder (AvPD). He had strong self-destructive tendencies and tried to suicide many times.

Patient E (female, 1988) was observed from 2002 to 2005. According to DSM-5, her symptoms match the description of melancholic depression, and reached severe level in BDI test. Doctors said that she inherited the disorder from her mother (her mother suffered from severe schizophrenia). Stress and bulling in the school triggered the inherited depression disorder. She committed suicide in 2005.

Patient F (female, 1970's) was observed from 2009 to 2011. According to DSM-5, her symptoms match the descriptions of melancholic depression, and reached severe level in BDI test. She committed suicide in 2011. Police officers announced that her death was caused by depression disorder which is related to extreme work stress. The breakdown of her family intensified her depression and motivated her suicide.

The statements above solely show the major factors and symptoms in each case. In fact, various minor factors were derived from one factor. These factors affect each other and intensify depression by ruminating negative mood and imagination.

Among these factors, the three major factors develop depression are psychological factors, family factors and social factors. To apply the doctrines in the *Daodejing* to stop the process of depression, we need to know how the three factors develop depression.

3.2 Psychological models of depression

A general method to analyse the process of depression is setting up a psychological model. I use graphic model because it shows the relationship between each factor clearly. The models are based on the observation and relative psychological research.

3.2.1 Psychological factors

a) Model of depression caused by cognitive distortions

This model is based on Beck's cognitive model.[13]It explains how the distorted cognition of the surrounding environment causes and intensifies depression. Patient A's experience matches this model. He showed strong negative view on everything. He believed that he broke his family because he was not good enough. Any information, no matter positive or negative, is misunderstood as blame on him. Beck named this state as cognitive distortions. In the long term, cognitive distortions generate core irrational beliefs which intensifies cognitive distortions and self-

[13]Beck, Aaron T., et al., 'Specificity of hopelessness about resolving life problems: Another test of the cognitive model of depression', *Cognitive Therapy and Research* 30, no. 6 (2006), pp.773-781.

negation. This process is called rumination. He was drag down by the negative views because he could not stop rumination. Finally, cognitive distortions turn into illusion. Beck named this state as cognitive triad. In this case, the depression model is a semi closed triangle (Figure 1).

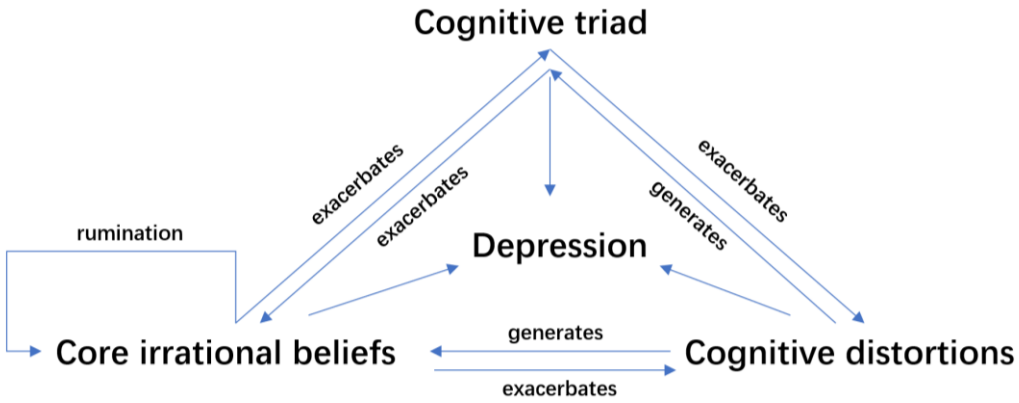


Figure 1, the model of depression caused by cognitive disorder

b) Model of depression caused by perfectionism

This model is based on Lin Jinchan and Wang Yuyin's analysis of the relationships between depression, self-compassion, and perfectionism.[14] Patient D's experience matches this model. Patient D suffered from high-pressure family. He was afraid of making mistakes, because he believed that making mistakes or being awkward in front of people is crime. This made him an extreme perfectionism. He did not allow himself to make any mistakes in daily life. Therefore, he kept blaming and punishing himself mental and physically. The more he cared about the mistakes and perfection, the deeper he lost in rumination of self-blame and self-compassion.

[14]Wang Yuyin 王雨吟, et al., 'Geti renzhi – yiyu moxing: ziwolianmmin, wanmeizhuyi, fanchusiwei he yiyu de guanxi' 個體認知−抑鬱模型：自我憐憫、完美主義、反芻思維和抑鬱的關係 [The Relationship among Self-compassion, Perfectionism, Rumination and Depression], *Chinese Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 23 No.1(2015), pp.120-122.

In this case, perfectionism causes self-compassion and self-blame simultaneously. Self-compassion intensifies and transforms into self-blame. The model is a closed triangle (Figure 2).

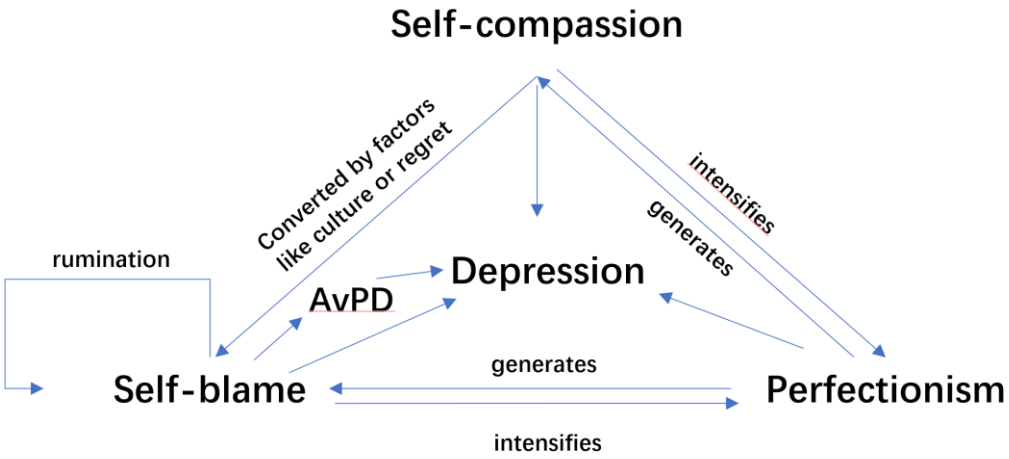


Figure 2, the model of depression caused by perfectionism

c) Model of depression caused by physical illness

Most of the patients in depression experienced this model, no matter what types of depression they have. The experience of Patient C' perfectly matches this model. Patient C suffered from obesity due to his bad living and eating habits. Obesity causes several complications such as cardiac arrhythmia, and diabetes. The complications physically affected his mind and made him depressive. The model is linear or a circle (Figure 3, 4). This model is usually regard as a module of other depression models.

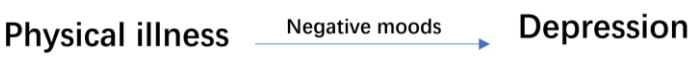


Figure 3: linear model of depression caused by physical illness

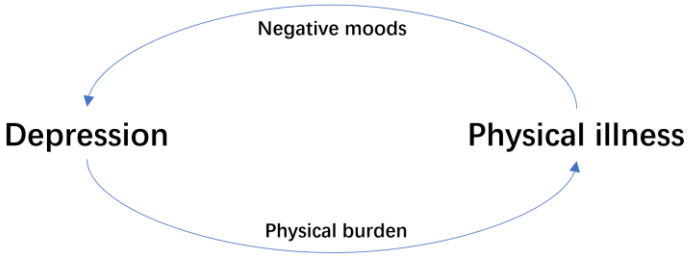


Figure 4, circle model of depression caused by physical illness

d) Model of depression caused by anxiety disorder

Anxiety disorder is an independent type of mental disorder, but it often occurs in conjunction with depression disorders.[15] Research shows that the cause of anxiety has close relationship with cognitive process. Cognitive process is thinking habits which can be distorted by childhood abuse, family heritage of mental illness, and poverty. [16] The patients are more willing to interpret ordinary, even positive events as disasters.[17] Therefore, anxiety can cause cognitive distortion, and cognitive distortion causes depression. The cases of patient D, E and G belong to this case. Patient D's childhood was affected by high-pressure family. He interpreted trivial, even positive events as his fault. This developed anxiety. His anxiety caused cognitive distortion, depression, and AvPD. Patient E was affected by heredity. Patient G is affected by work stress. In the long term, anxiety causes cognitive distortion. That is why all three patients interpreted things negatively, and two of them committed suicide in. Anxiety disorder and depression disorders happened simultaneously, and they

[15]*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental DisordersAmerican Psychiatric Associati. 5th*, (Arlington: American Psychiatric Publishing, 2013), pp.189-195.
[16]Michelle G Craske and Murray B Stein, 'Anxiety', *The Lancet*, 388 Issue 10063 (2016), pp.3048-3059.
[17]Michelle G Craske and Murray B Stein, 'Anxiety', *The Lancet*, 388 Issue 10063 (2016), pp.3048-3059.

interact with cognitive distortion as cause and effect. Therefore, in the model, they are connected by cognitive distortion (Figure 5).

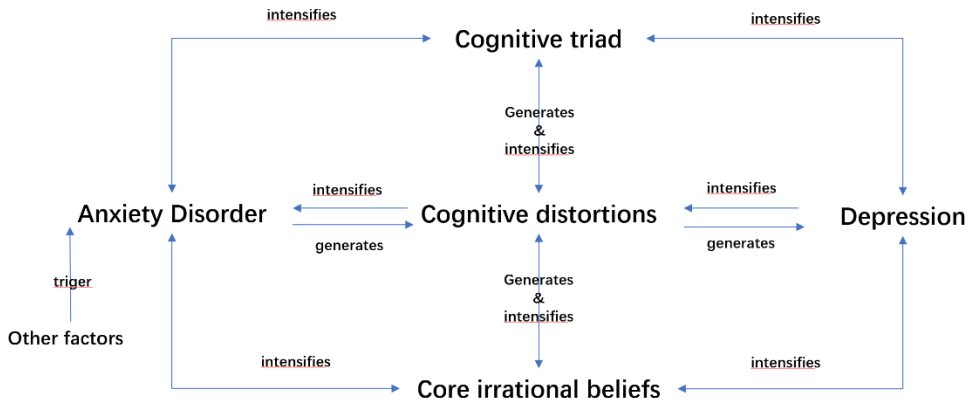


Figure 5, the model of depression caused by anxiety disorders

3.2.2 Family factors

a) Model of depression caused by lack of care in original family

Patient A is a typical example for this model. His parents abandoned him when he was five years old because of the bankrupt of family business. Therefore, patient A believed that the reason of why he could not earn his parents' love is that he is not good enough. He tried hard to perform as a 'good boy' because he wanted to be loved. He felt that he was loved when people paid attention to him. Slowly, his cognition of love is distorted. Therefore, when people stop paying attention to him, he misunderstood that those people hate him, and his life is meaningless. The more he performed, the more stress and self-negation were generated in his mind.

In this case, the patients usually find a substitute of love. It is the start of cognitive distortion. Therefore, when people stop showing the substitute to the

patients, they will have strong feeling of ‘I am not loved’ or ‘I am nothing.’ Finally, the negative thoughts cause depression (Figure 6).



Figure 6, the model of depression caused by lack of care in the original family

b) Model of depression caused by excessive parental interference

Beside the lack of love and care, excessive parental interference is another important factor which develops depression. Patient D was indiscriminately punished for all kinds of mistakes, even for something like knocking over a water glass. He thought that making mistakes is tabu and crime. This is the start of perfectionism, and perfectionism caused depression (Figure 7).

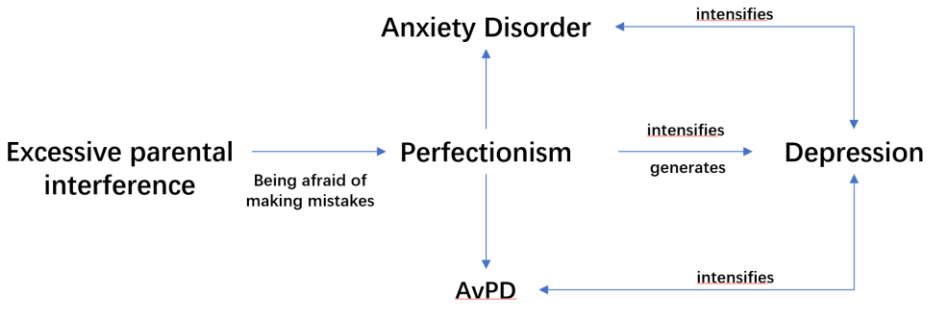


Figure 7, the model of depression caused by excessive parental interference

3.2.3 Social factors

a) Model of depression caused by work stress

Most work stress comes from intensive competition, and difficulties. The patients often feel anxious under work stress. Without timely adjusting, anxiety will transform into depression (Figure 8). Patient F is a typical example.



Figure 8, the model of depression caused by work stress

b) Model of depression caused by gender discrimination

Females have a higher prevalence of depression than males. Some people think that females are susceptible to depression because of hormonal changes caused by their biological characteristics, but that alone doesn't cause depression. An invisible factor is gender discrimination. Patient B is a special example. His psychological gender is female. He looks and behaviours like a female. In the workplace, he experienced discrimination from the leaders, exclusion amount colleagues, and other unequal treatments. These events generated huge amount of stress and developed anxiety disorder, insomnia, and finally caused depression (Figure 9).

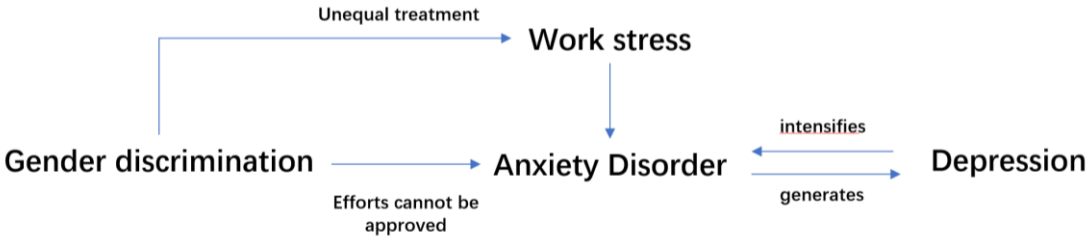


Figure 9, the model of depression caused by gender discrimination

The models above only show a small part of the factors in the development of depression. These models clearly show how each factor develops depression. We can

break these models and stop the depression process by removing one or two key factors from the models. The next chapter discussed how to apply the doctrines in the *Daodejing* to remove the key factors from the models.

4 Apply the doctrines in the *Daodejing* to the treatment of depression

In the models above, cognitive distortion, anxiety and rumination of negative thoughts are the three major factors appeared in depression. This shows an important property of depression. That is depression is distorted inner reflection on external environment. Therefore, depression can hardly be cured externally. In other words, most depression can only be cured by the patient themselves. That is why medical treatment is not effective to depression disorders. [18] Patient E and patient F had a professional medical treatment from the very beginning of their depression, but they finally committed suicide.

An efficient treatment of depression is to help the patients to treat themselves. What we can do in this process is to use our experiences, knowledge, and the wisdom of other people (books, arts, teachings of sages, etc.) to guide the patients to rebuild healthy cognition of the world and encourage them to communicate with the external environment. This is the key point to break those depression models. the *Daodejing* is a book includes Laozi's wisdom which can help people build a natural cognition of the world. Laozi told people how to return to nature by dealing with

[18]Fan Xiangyang 范向陽, 'Daodejign dui dangdai daxuesheng xinlijiankang xingcheng fanzhan de qishi' 《道德經》對當代大學生心理健康形成發展的啟示 [Apocalypse of *Tao Te Chine* to Students' Mental Health Advancement], *Guizhou shifandaxue xuebao* 貴州師範大學學報(社會科學版) *Journal of Guizhou Normal University (Social Science)*, 131(2004), pp.93-94.

desires, anger, anxiety, and difficulties in life. Therefore, the doctrines in his book can be applied to break the depression models above.

4.1 Analysing the doctrines in the *Daodejing*

To apply the doctrines in the *Daodejing*, firstly, we need to understand the original text. There are many existing annotations and explanations, but few focus on psychology or specific mental diseases. For example, Wang Bi's 王弼 annotation focuses on literature understanding. He Shang Gong's 河上公 annotation focuses on governing. Among these annotations, Shi Hanshan's 釋憨山 version is the closest to this topic, because it focuses on the truth of the universe and self-cultivation. However, even in Hanshan's version, there is no direct connection between his annotations and depression. Therefore, we need to select the appropriate doctrines. One of most efficient ways is analysing and classifying the images, analogies, and metaphors in the *Daodejing* rely on Master Hanshan's annotation, and then select the doctrines include the information which are related to depression.

4.1.1 The historical background of the *Daodejing*

Laozi used a lot of images, analogies, and metaphors, such as the images of water (*shui* 水), infant (*chizi* 赤子), cow (*pin* 牝), and valley (*gu* 谷). Sometimes, one word may symbolize several things in one section. Therefore, some sections cannot be understood easily. To correctly understand the images and the thought of Laozi,

knowing the historical background of Laozi and the *Daodejing* is necessary.

The *Daodejing* was written in the late Spring and Autumn period (BCE 571-BCE 471). Laozi experienced wars and saw the decline of the Zhou Dynasty. The national leaders lost their *Tao* (*dao* 道), virtue (*de* 德), considerate mind and forgiveness (*ren* 仁), righteousness (*yi* 義), and rites (*li* 禮).[19] The people followed their leaders, and they acted and thought contrary to the classics. Laozi thought that the fall of personality due to the excessive knowledges and desires. He hoped that the people can return to the *Dao*, but the *Dao* can hardly be described by human languages. Therefore, he had to use images and metaphors to hint people that the *Dao* is simple, soft, without any intention or desire, and that the *Dao* is full of vital force and can give birth to everything.[20] Each image and metaphor in the original text symbolizes one or more properties of the *Dao*. For instance, the image of water symbolizes the property of soft and modest;[21] the image of infant symbolizes the soft property of *Dao*, and vital force of spiritual world; the images of cow, mother, and valley symbolize vital force of spiritual world, considerate mind, forgiveness and the origin of the word (the *Dao*), etc.[22] From the images and key words above, we can find many useful information which can be applied in the treatment of depression. In addition, we also need to systematically understand the information in the original text. Therefore, in section 4.1.2, I discussed how to select relative doctrines from the *Daodejing*, and in section 4.2.1, I discussed how to use the information as a whole to

[19]Sima Qian 司馬遷 (145 BCE – 86 BCE), *Shiji* 史記 [Records of the Grand Historian],(Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2013), pp.2589-2594.
[20]Laozi (571 BCE – 471 BCE), *Tao Te Ching*, trans. D.C. Lau (London: Penguin Book Ltd, 1963), p.49.
[21]Laozi (571 BCE – 471 BCE), *Tao Te Ching*, trans. D.C. Lau (London: Penguin Book Ltd, 1963), p.12.
[22]Shi Hanshan 釋憨山 (1546 – 1623), *Laozi daodejing jie* 老子道德經解 [Interpretation of Lao Tzu *Daodejing*], (Wuhan: Chongwen shuju 崇文書局, 2015), p.22.

break depression models.

4.1.2 Select relative doctrines from the *Daodejing*

Selection of the doctrines should rely on the meaning of the image and metaphor they include. Depression is a kind of personality disorder. Therefore, the doctrines which include the images or key words about personality or mental state should be considered first. In addition, we are looking for the methods to break the models of depression and relief the symptoms. Therefore, we also need to focus on the doctrines which include information related to treatment, causes or symptoms of depression, such as self-cultivation, mindset, education, death and desire, etc. The images, the words and the phrases that match the descriptions above are listed below.

Section 01

1) *Mu* 母 (mother) symbolizes vital force of spiritual world.[23]

Section 02

1) *wuwei* 無為 (action with no intention or selfishness)

2) *Youwei* 有無 (exist and not exist), *changduan* 長短 (long and short), *gaoxia* 高下 (high and low), *yinsheng* 音聲 (song and melody), *qianhou* 前後 (before and after) symbolize opposites.

3) *Xiangsheng* 相生 (produce each other), *xiangxing* 相形 (complement each other), *xiangqing* 相傾 (incline towards each other), *xianghe* 相合 (harmonize with each other), *xiangsui* 相隨 (follow each other) implies dialectical thinking.

[23]Laozi (571 BCE – 471 BCE), *Tao Te Ching*, trans. D.C. Lau (London: Penguin Book Ltd, 1963), p.5.

4) *buyan zhi jiao* 不言之教 (teaching that uses no words) [24]

Section 03

1) competition (*zheng* 爭)
2) desire (*yu* 欲)
3) keep a tranquil mind (*shi xin bu luan* 使心不亂)
4) will (*zhi* 志)[25]

Section 05

1) forgiveness and to be considerate (*ren* 仁) [26]

Section 06

1) Valley (*gu* 谷) and cow (*pin* 牝) symbolize vital force of spiritual world. [27]

Section 07

1) longevities (*Chang* 長, *jiu* 久)
2) selfishness (*si* 私)[28]

Section 08

1) Water (*Shui* 水) symbolizes soft, modest and virtuous personality.
2) competition (*zheng* 爭)[29]

Section 09

1) Fill (*Ying* 盈) implies the sin of pride.

[24]Laozi (571 BCE – 471 BCE), *Tao Te Ching*, trans. D.C. Lau (London: Penguin Book Ltd, 1963), p.6.
[25]Laozi (571 BCE – 471 BCE), *Tao Te Ching*, trans. D.C. Lau (London: Penguin Book Ltd, 1963), p.7.
[26]Laozi (571 BCE – 471 BCE), *Tao Te Ching*, trans. D.C. Lau (London: Penguin Book Ltd, 1963), p.9.
[27]Laozi (571 BCE – 471 BCE), *Tao Te Ching*, trans. D.C. Lau (London: Penguin Book Ltd, 1963), p.10
[28]Laozi (571 BCE – 471 BCE), *Tao Te Ching*, trans. D.C. Lau (London: Penguin Book Ltd, 1963), p.11.
[29]Laozi (571 BCE – 471 BCE), *Tao Te Ching*, trans. D.C. Lau (London: Penguin Book Ltd, 1963), p.12.

2) Sharpness (*Rui* 銳) implies mean and unkind personality.

3) pride (*jiao* 驕)[30]

Section 10

1) soul (*hun* 魄)

2) soft (*rou* 柔)

3) Infant (*Yinger* 嬰兒) symbolizes soft and pure mind, and vital force of spiritual world.

4) virtue (*de* 德)[31]

Section 12

1) Colours (*Se* 色), music (*yin* 音), and tastes (*wei* 味) symbolize desire.

2) Blindness (*Mang* 盲), being deaf (*long* 聾), losing palate (*koushuang* 口爽), and mind goes wild with excitement (*fakuang* 發狂) imply physical and mental illnesses caused by desire.[32]

Section 13

1) Fame and honour (*Chong* 寵), dishonour (*ru* 辱), and high social position (*gui* 貴) symbolize desires.

2) trouble (*huan* 患)[33]

Section 16

[30]Laozi (571 BCE – 471 BCE), *Tao Te Ching*, trans. D.C. Lau (London: Penguin Book Ltd, 1963), p.13.
[31]Laozi (571 BCE – 471 BCE), *Tao Te Ching*, trans. D.C. Lau (London: Penguin Book Ltd, 1963), p.14.
[32]Laozi (571 BCE – 471 BCE), *Tao Te Ching*, trans. D.C. Lau (London: Penguin Book Ltd, 1963), p.16.
[33]Laozi (571 BCE – 471 BCE), *Tao Te Ching*, trans. D.C. Lau (London: Penguin Book Ltd, 1963), p.17.

1) Emptiness (*Xu* 虛) and tranquillity (*jing* 靜) imply the mental state without desire or disturbance.[34]

Section 20

1) worry and anxiety (*you* 憂)
2) Infant (*Yinger* 嬰兒) symbolize soft and pure mind.
3) Mother (*Mu* 母) symbolizes the *Dao*, vital force of spiritual world.

Section 22

1) enlighten (*ming* 明)
2) competition (*zheng* 爭)[35]

Section 24

1) self-centred, self-opinionated (*zijiang*, *zishi* 自見, 自是)
2) enlightened and wise (*ming* 明)[36]

Section 26

1) Sedate (Zhong 重) implies concentration.
2) tranquillity (*jing* 靜)
3) detached (*chaoran* 超然)[37]

Section 28

[34]Shi Hanshan 釋憨山 (1546 – 1623), *Laozi daodejing jie* 老子道德經解 [Interpretation of Laozi *Daodejing*], (Wuhan: Chongwen shuju 崇文書局, 2015), p.38.
[35]Shi Hanshan 釋憨山 (1546 – 1623), *Laozi daodejing jie* 老子道德經解 [Interpretation of Laozi *Daodejing*], (Wuhan: Chongwen shuju 崇文書局, 2015), p.51.
[36]Shi Hanshan 釋憨山 (1546 – 1623), *Laozi daodejing jie* 老子道德經解 [Interpretation of Laozi *Daodejing*], (Wuhan: Chongwen shuju 崇文書局, 2015), p.55.
[37]Shi Hanshan 釋憨山 (1546 – 1623), *Laozi daodejing jie* 老子道德經解 [Interpretation of Laozi *Daodejing*], (Wuhan: Chongwen shuju 崇文書局, 2015), p.58.

1) Infant (*Yinger* 嬰兒) implies soft personality.

2) White (*Bai* 白) implies to be enlightened.

3) Black (*Hei* 黑) implies modest and objective personality.

4) Valley (*Gu* 谷) symbolizes the *Dao*, and vital force of spiritual world.[38]

Section 30

1) Compel (*Qiang* 強) and strong (*zhuang* 壯) imply the uncompromising and extreme opinions and behaviours.

2) Old (*lao* 老) and stop (*yi* 已) mean the death or the end of something.

Section 33

1) wisdom (*zhi* 智)

2) enlightened (*ming* 明)

3) longevity (*jiu* 久 and *shou* 壽)[39]

Section 34

1) Possession (*You* 有) and ruler (*zhu* 主) imply the desire of being in possession.

2) desire (*yu* 欲)[40]

Section 36

1) Weak (*rouruo* 柔弱) implies soft and modest personality.[41]

[38]Shi Hanshan 釋憨山 (1546 – 1623), *Laozi daodejing jie* 老子道德經解 [Interpretation of Laozi *Daodejing*], (Wuhan: Chongwen shuju 崇文書局, 2015), pp.62-63.
[39]Shi Hanshan 釋憨山 (1546 – 1623), *Laozi daodejing jie* 老子道德經解 [Interpretation of Laozi *Daodejing*], (Wuhan: Chongwen shuju 崇文書局, 2015), p.73.
[40]Shi Hanshan 釋憨山 (1546 – 1623), *Laozi daodejing jie* 老子道德經解 [Interpretation of Laozi *Daodejing*], (Wuhan: Chongwen shuju 崇文書局, 2015), p.74.

Section 43

1) soft (*rou* 柔)
2) teaching that uses no words (*buyan zhi jiao* 不言之教)[42]

Section 44

1) Fame (*ming* 名), profits (*huo* 貨), gain (*de* 得), greed (*ai* 愛) and collecting (*cang* 藏) symbolize desires.[43]

Section 46

1) desire (*yu* 欲)
2) greedy (*buzhizu* 不知足)[44]

Section 49

1) Infant (*hai* 孩) symbolize pure mind and harmless behaviours.[45]

Section 50

1) life and death (*shengsi* 生死)[46]

Section 52

1) Mother (*mu* 母) symbolizes the *Dao* and the vital force of spiritual world.

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[41]Shi Hanshan 釋憨山 (1546 – 1623), *Laozi daodejing jie* 老子道德經解 [Interpretation of Laozi *Daodejing*], (Wuhan: Chongwen shuju 崇文書局, 2015), p.77.
[42]Shi Hanshan 釋憨山 (1546 – 1623), *Laozi daodejing jie* 老子道德經解 [Interpretation of Laozi *Daodejing*], (Wuhan: Chongwen shuju 崇文書局, 2015), p.88.
[43]Shi Hanshan 釋憨山 (1546 – 1623), *Laozi daodejing jie* 老子道德經解 [Interpretation of Laozi *Daodejing*], (Wuhan: Chongwen shuju 崇文書局, 2015), p.89.
[44]Shi Hanshan 釋憨山 (1546 – 1623), *Laozi daodejing jie* 老子道德經解 [Interpretation of Laozi *Daodejing*], (Wuhan: Chongwen shuju 崇文書局, 2015), p.92.
[45]Shi Hanshan 釋憨山 (1546 – 1623), *Laozi daodejing jie* 老子道德經解 [Interpretation of Laozi *Daodejing*], (Wuhan: Chongwen shuju 崇文書局, 2015), p.95.
[46]Shi Hanshan 釋憨山 (1546 – 1623), *Laozi daodejing jie* 老子道德經解 [Interpretation of Laozi *Daodejing*], (Wuhan: Chongwen shuju 崇文書局, 2015), p.97.

2) Soft (*rou* 柔)[47]

Section 55

1) viture (*de* 德)
2) Infant (*chizi* 赤子) symbolizes soft and pure mind and the vital force of spiritual world.
3) the end, death (*yi* 已)[48]

Section 63

1) do things with no intention or selfishness (*wuwei* 無為)
2) detach from merits (*wushi* 無事)
3) detach from fames (*wuwei* 無味)[49]

Section 64

1) do things with no intention or selfishness (*wuwei* 無為)
2) detach from desire (*wuzhi* 無執)
3) desire (*yu* 欲)
4) greed (*gui* 貴)[50]

Section 67

1) be kind and considerate (*ci* 慈)

[47]Shi Hanshan 釋憨山 (1546 – 1623), *Laozi daodejing jie* 老子道德經解 [Interpretation of Laozi *Daodejing*], (Wuhan: Chongwen shuju 崇文書局, 2015), p.101.
[48]Shi Hanshan 釋憨山 (1546 – 1623), *Laozi daodejing jie* 老子道德經解 [Interpretation of Laozi *Daodejing*], (Wuhan: Chongwen shuju 崇文書局, 2015), p.107.
[49]Shi Hanshan 釋憨山 (1546 – 1623), *Laozi daodejing jie* 老子道德經解 [Interpretation of Laozi *Daodejing*], (Wuhan: Chongwen shuju 崇文書局, 2015), pp.123-125.
[50]Shi Hanshan 釋憨山 (1546 – 1623), *Laozi daodejing jie* 老子道德經解 [Interpretation of Laozi *Daodejing*], (Wuhan: Chongwen shuju 崇文書局, 2015), pp.126-127.

2) be thrifty and simple (*jian* 儉)[51]

Section 76

1) Weak (*Rouduo* 柔弱) implies soft personality.

2) Stiffness (*Jianqiang* 堅強) implies harsh personality.

3) life and death (*shengsi* 生死)[52]

Section 78

1) soft and wea (*rouruo* 柔弱)

2) Water (*Shui* 水) symbolize soft and considerate personality.[53]

Section 79

1) blame and hatred (*yuan* 怨)[54]

34 sections are selected from the *Daodejing*. The next part explained how to apply the selected doctrines to break specific model of depression.

4.2 Apply doctrines in the *Daodejing* to break the models of depression

The analysis in section 4.1 shows that ancient Chinese had already noticed some of the mental issues, such as the anxiety caused by competition and the cognitive distortion caused by excessive desires. However, the *Daodejing* was not a

[51]Shi Hanshan 釋憨山 (1546 – 1623), *Laozi daodejing jie* 老子道德經解 [Interpretation of Laozi *Daodejing*], (Wuhan: Chongwen shuju 崇文書局, 2015), p.132.
[52]Shi Hanshan 釋憨山 (1546 – 1623), *Laozi daodejing jie* 老子道德經解 [Interpretation of Laozi *Daodejing*], (Wuhan: Chongwen shuju 崇文書局, 2015), p.151.
[53]Shi Hanshan 釋憨山 (1546 – 1623), *Laozi daodejing jie* 老子道德經解 [Interpretation of Laozi *Daodejing*], (Wuhan: Chongwen shuju 崇文書局, 2015), p.154.
[54]Shi Hanshan 釋憨山 (1546 – 1623), *Laozi daodejing jie* 老子道德經解 [Interpretation of Laozi *Daodejing*], (Wuhan: Chongwen shuju 崇文書局, 2015), p.155.

psychological book written for solve mental problems. Therefore, to effectively apply the selected doctrines, I set up nine models in chapter three and split them into three groups, named psychological factor, family factor, and social factor. According to this structure, this section is split into three groups as well, named self-treatment, family support, and social support.

4.2.1 Self-treatment

As what I mentioned in previous chapters, depression is distorted inner reflection on the external environment. It can hardly be cured externally. Therefore, this section focuses on applying the selected doctrines to improve the patients' cognition of the external environment, in order to break the models of depression. Of course, beside the models I provided, there are countless subtypes of depression model which are derived from basic models. The discussion in this section aims at providing general idea to break the models.

a) Break the model of depression caused by cognitive distortions

This model has a tree structure, we can kill the root of the tree (cognitive distortion) by breaking off the branches (irrational beliefs and cognitive triad). Three steps must be done. The first step is to help the patients know what distorted their cognition, in order to help them stop rumination. Many factors can distort human cognition. The most common factor is desire. Section 03 includes information about 'desire' and 'mind'. In section 03, Laozi said, '不見可欲，使心不亂。not display

what is desirable will keep them (the people) from unsettled of mind.' [55] He thought that the root cause of competition, crime and mental diseases is desire.[56] For example, patient A desired for love from his parents, but both of the parents and the child cannot go back time. The more he wanted to be loved, the more unsettled of his mind, and the more confused and irrational he became. Therefore, he misunderstood 'being paid attention to' as 'being loved'. Once he knows the source and the process of his cognitive distortion, he will slowly understand that 'not being paid attention to' does not mean that 'being hated.'

The second step is to help the patients stop the rumination of negative thoughts by rebuilding correct cognition. If patient A rebuilds the cognition that 'not being paid attention to' does not equal to 'being hated', he will be able to stop the rumination. The process is very difficult at the beginning, but step by step, he will notice that each time the rumination stops, he feels less depressive and more comfortable. This feeling is positive feedback which can encourage him to hold the correct cognition and motivate him to keep practising to stop the rumination. Soon, the core irrational beliefs will be removed from the model and cognitive triad will be weaken.

The last step is to help the patients remove the cognitive triad by proving the correct cognition. In the second half of section 03, Laozi provide a solution, '虛其心，實其腹，弱其志，強其骨。(sages) empties their minds but full their bellies,

[55]Laozi (571 BCE – 471 BCE), *Tao Te Ching*, trans. D.C. Lau (London: Penguin Book Ltd, 1963), p.7.
[56]Laozi (571 BCE – 471 BCE), *Tao Te Ching*, trans. D.C. Lau (London: Penguin Book Ltd, 1963), p.7.

weaken their wills but strengthen their bones.'[57] Laozi thought that the state of mind determines the state of physical health. Therefore, sages taught people to strengthen their bodies after settling their mind. A healthy and strong body makes people confident in communication.[58] When the patients bravely go out and talk with others, they will find that most people are friendly and rational. Slowly, the patients will believe that 'the world is not hostile as they imagined'. They will firmly believe that the cognition which is rebuilt in the second step is true, and then cognitive triad will stop automatically.

Patient A followed the steps above and treated himself in 2017. He communicated with his parents and forgave them. In 2018 he successfully found a job. His parents remarried and live with him now. His experience motivates me to research on this topic.

b) Break the model of depression caused by perfectionism

This model is a closed triangle. To break it, the three nodes in the model need to be removed simultaneously. In fact, the three nodes are one, the perfectionism. Perfectionism is representation of lack of dialectical thinking.[59] Most people think that they are following dialectical thinking, but when dealing with problems in real

[57]Laozi (571 BCE – 471 BCE), *Tao Te Ching*, trans. D.C. Lau (London: Penguin Book Ltd, 1963), p.7.
[58]Zhang Zhen 張珍 and Luo Erping 羅二平, 'Jianshen jianmeicao yundong yu nvdaxuesheng xinlizhangai de kefu' 健身健美操運動與女大學生心理障礙的克服 [Bodybuilding and Calisthenics and the overcoming of female College students' psychological obstacles], *Jiangxi shehuixue* 江西社會學, 12 (2002), pp.180-181.

[59]Fan Xiangyang 范向陽, 'Daodejign dui dangdai daxuesheng xinlijiankang xingcheng fanzhan de qishi' 《道德經》對當代大學生心理健康形成發展的啟示 [Apocalypse of *Tao Te Chine* to Students' Mental Health Advancement], *Guizhou shifandaxue xuebao* 貴州師範大學學報(社會科學版) *Journal of Guizhou Normal University (Social Science)*, 131(2004), p.95.

life, they are usually self-opinionated.[60] Some people have an extreme dichotomous thinking. It is the root cause of this model.

To break the model, the patients need to get rid of their self-opinionated dichotomous thinking and re-built dialectical thinking. Section 02, 22, 30, include information about 'dialectical thinking', 'extreme', 'dichotomous thinking', and 'self-opinioned'. Laozi thought that there are no opposites in the world (no good or bad, right or wrong, nor perfect or imperfect).[61] Opposites are factitious concepts. Therefore, when a person stubbornly considers one side to be the final truth, argument, competition, pain, and death will come. In section 30, Lao Tus said,

> 物壯則老，是謂不道，不道早已。
>
> The stronger a creature is, the faster it becomes older. (The more extreme one thing is, the faster it ends.) This is going against the *Dao*. Things go against the *Dao* will end quickly.[62]

Patient D is a typical example. He urgently sought for 'perfection' in everything, so he did not allow himself to make any mistakes. If he did, he started to blame and punish himself. He could not accept people who do not reach his standard of 'perfection', and he blamed them harshly. People dislike him including his family members. What was worse, he thought that no one loves him because he is not 'perfect' enough, and then he got lost in perfection seeking and the rumination of

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[60]Fan Xiangyang 范向陽, 'Daodejign dui dangdai daxuesheng xinlijiankang xingcheng fanzhan de qishi' 《道德經》對當代大學生心理健康形成發展的啟示 [Apocalypse of *Tao Te Chine* to Students' Mental Health Advancement], *Guizhou shifandaxue xuebao* 貴州師範大學學報（社會科學版） *Journal of Guizhou Normal University (Social Science)*, 131(2004), p.95.

[61]Laozi (571 BCE – 471 BCE), *Tao Te Ching*, trans. D.C. Lau (London: Penguin Book Ltd, 1963), p.6.

[62]Laozi (571 BCE – 471 BCE), *Tao Te Ching*, trans. D.C. Lau (London: Penguin Book Ltd, 1963), p.35.
Shi Hanshan 釋憨山 (1546 – 1623), *Laozi daodejing jie* 老子道德經解 [Interpretation of Laozi *Daodejing*], (Wuhan: Chongwen shuju 崇文書局, 2015), p.67.

self-blame again. This is a deadlock as what the model shows.

The key to open the deadlock is to help him to rebuild dialectical thinking. Laozi provided a solution in section 02. He said,

故有無相生，

難易相成，

長短相形，

高下相傾，

音聲相和，

前後相隨。

Thus Something and Nothing produce each other;

The difficult and the easy completement each other;

The long and the short offset each other;

The high and the low incline towards each other;

Note and sound (song and melody)[63] harmonize each other;

Before and after follow each other.[64]

Laozi thought that people should observe and consider everything logically and objectively from both sides, because their opinions is not as 'perfect and right' as what they think. Therefore, Laozi reminded people that, '(Section 22) 不自見故明，不自是故彰。People who do not show their own wisdom, nor consider themselves right are truly reveal wisdom.'[65] By developing dialectical thinking, the patients will

[63]I modified the original translation, because the sinograph 音 means 'the sound of instruments', in another word, 'melody'. The sinograph 聲 means 'human voice' or 'song'.

[64]Laozi (571 BCE – 471 BCE), *Tao Te Ching*, trans. D.C. Lau (London: Penguin Book Ltd, 1963), p.6.

[65]I modified Lau's translation. Laozi (571 BCE – 471 BCE), *Tao Te Ching*, trans. D.C. Lau (London: Penguin Book Ltd, 1963), p.27.

notice that there is no absolute perfection. Then, they will be relaxed and happy to accept things without worrying or getting anger. This feeling is positive feedback which can encourage them to stop seeking for perfection and focus on what they have now. Slowly, the patients will understand that mistakes and imperfection is a part of success and perfection. It is like that no one can go to the second floor without passing the first floor. Therefore, there is no absolute perfection at all. If there is no 'perfection', they will not struggle from seeking it. Finally, the depression model of perfectionism will be broken down. Then, the patients will be able to accept people around him, they will achieve the harmonious state Laozi achieved, '挫其銳，解其紛，和其光，同其塵。(Blunting) the sharpness; Untangle the knots; Soften the glare; Let your wheels move only along old ruts (Live in harmony with everything).' [66]

c) Break the model of depression caused by physical illness

This model is linear. The key to break it is recovering the patients' physical health. In this case, we only focus on physical illnesses related to living habits, such as smoking, stay up late, and gluttony, etc. Modern medicine can cure many physical illnesses, but without removing the bad living habits, the patients will have the same illnesses and depression again. Habits are related to inner desires. They are the early stage of addiction. To recover the patients' physical health, they need to learn how to control their desires first. Section 03, 12, 44 include information about physical health, illnesses, and desires. Laozi thought that excessive desires are the mean cause

[66]Laozi (571 BCE – 471 BCE), *Tao Te Ching*, trans. D.C. Lau (London: Penguin Book Ltd, 1963), p.8.

of misfortune, illness, and death. In section 12, he said,

五色，令人目盲，

五音，令人耳聾，

五味，令人口爽，

馳騁田獵，

令人心發狂。

The five colours make (people's) eyes blind;

The five notes make (their) ears deaf;

The five tastes injure (their) palate;

Riding and hunting

Make (their) mind go wild with excitement.[67]

Patient C is a typical example. He suffered from obesity due to his bad eating habits. Obesity causes several complications such as cardiac arrhythmia, and diabetes. In addition, he had strong internet addiction. His body also suffered from excessive sitting and lack of sleep for a long time. Therefore, his kidney was damaged seriously. Because of chronic cerebral circulation insufficiency and breathing difficulties, he could not control his emotion well.

Laozi thought that desires should be controlled in psychological way and physical way simultaneously. From the psychological point of view, Laozi remined people that before seeking for desires, ask yourself three questions, '名與身，孰親。身與貨，孰多。得與亡，孰病。Fames with life, which one is closer to you? Body

[67]Laozi (571 BCE – 471 BCE), *Tao Te Ching*, trans. D.C. Lau (London: Penguin Book Ltd, 1963), p16.

or goods, which one is more important? Gain fames or lose life, which one is serious?'[68] From the physical point of view, Laozi suggested, '(sages) empties their minds but full their bellies, weaken their wills but strengthen their bones.'[69] He thought that eating well and doing exercises are necessary to mental health.

Patient C noticed that physical health is more important than his desires. He went to rehabilitation centre and recovered in the second year. Later he became a pilot. He had to concentrate for a long time. Without internet and junk foods, he does not relapse into obesity and depression again.

d) Break the model of depression caused by anxiety

This model can be broken either by breaking the link (cognitive distortion) between them or removing anxiety. We have discussed how to stop cognitive distortion in precious sections. In this section, we only focus on how to stop anxiety. The exact cause of anxiety has not been defined yet, but the study shows that it has close relationship with cognitive process.[70] Anxiety can be understood as a kind of deeper cognitive distortion. Therefore, anxiety disorders often occur in conjunction with major depressive disorder, personality disorders or addictions.

The first step to break this model is to find the root cause of it. Laozi thought that the main factor develops anxiety is the 'heart of gain and loss' caused by the pursuit of fame and honour. He said,

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[68]Shi Hanshan 釋憨山 (1546 – 1623), *Laozi daodejing jie* 老子道德經解 [Interpretation of Laozi *Daodejing*], (Wuhan: Chongwen shuju 崇文書局, 2015), p.89.
[69]Laozi (571 BCE – 471 BCE), *Tao Te Ching*, trans. D.C. Lau (London: Penguin Book Ltd, 1963), p.7.
[70]Michelle G Craske and Murray B Stein, 'Anxiety', *The Lancet*, 388 Issue 10063 (2016), pp.3048-3059.

寵，辱，若驚。

貴，大患，若身。

何謂寵辱若驚，寵為下，得之若驚，失之若驚，是謂寵辱若驚。

Favour and disgrace are things that startle;

High rank is, like one's body, a source of great trouble.

What is meant by saying that favour and disgrace are things that startle?

Favour when it is bestowed on a subject serves to startle as much as when it is withdrawn.[71]

Patient D is a typical example. Due to family issues, he believed that 'making mistakes' or 'being awkward' in front of people is disgrace, even crime. Therefore, he did not allow himself to make any mistakes. If he did, he would blame and punish himself mental and physically. For seeking agreement and admiration from others, he forced himself to do things which he really hates to do. Therefore, he could not find the meaning of his life. Even if he got admiration from others, he could not feel any happiness or hope. In this stage, self-compassion in the model completely turned into self-blame, and self-blame became self-destruction. It developed serious anxiety, and the anxiety caused depression, and AvPD.

To stop anxiety, Laozi asked people to think about the question, '(Section 10) 載營魄，抱一能無離乎？Can the spirit and the body be one without being separated?'[72] When people are driven by desires, they usually force themselves to do things which against their will. When their behaviours and mind are separated, they

[71]Laozi (571 BCE – 471 BCE), *Tao Te Ching*, trans. D.C. Lau (London: Penguin Book Ltd, 1963), p.17.
[72]Shi Hanshan 釋憨山 (1546 – 1623), *Laozi daodejing jie* 老子道德經解 [Interpretation of Laozi *Daodejing*], (Wuhan: Chongwen shuju 崇文書局, 2015), p.27.

feel confused and anxious. People should follow their true beliefs, but not live under a mask. If people followed this doctrine, their confusion and anxiety will stop, and their mind will rest in pace. The model will be broken down naturally.

Patient D suffered from this model for more than 16 years. If he can stop seeking for agreement and admiration from others, bravely follow his heart, and merger his behaviours with thoughts again, he will get rid of anxiety and depression.

4.2.2 Family support and social support

Family and social factors can be found in most of the cases and the models. The effect of the original family and social environment is so powerful that it drags people down in panic and depression for life long. In addition, sometimes, the effect is irreversible. Therefore, families and society support are very important to prevent the development of depression and to save more people from self-harm and suicide.

From the family point of view, parenting styles, negative parent-child interaction, are commonly thought to contribute to depression.[73] In section 3.2.2, the two models related to lack of care and excessive parental interference are typical examples. Generally, there are two mistakes in the parenting styles. The first model is care and overprotection. The other one is apathy, indifference, and rejection. In interpersonal communication, lack of close relationships with family members may decrease children's ability to maintain close relationships with people in the society, and thus

[73]Yi Chunli 易春麗 and Qian Mingyi 錢銘怡, 'Jiating yinsu dui qingshaonian yiyu de yingxiang' 家庭因素對青少年抑鬱的影響 [Influence of family factors on adolescent depression], *Chinese Journal of Clinical Rehabilition*, 10 No.6 (2006), p.131.

increase the risk of depression. On the other hand, overprotection will deprive children of their interest of exploring the unknown, and thus increase the risk of depression. Parents shape their children's characters. Therefore, we should focus on improving parenting styles, but not focus on blaming children for their emotional behaviours and medication.

According to the thought of Laozi, both of the two mistakes above belong to *youwei* 有為 (doing things for personal intention expectation). *Youwei* is very harmful because it goes against the law of the nature. Laozi said,

> 生而不有，
>
> 為而不恃，
>
> 長而不宰，
>
> 是謂玄德。
>
> (The nature) gives birth to everything yet claim no possession;
>
> (The nature) supports everything yet exact no gratitude;
>
> (The nature) supports everything yet exercises no authority;
>
> This is the highest virtue (of the nature).[74]

Children are not properties of their parents. What we can do in family is

> To love, but not control,
>
> Children will naturally be a part of you;
>
> To cultivate, but not order,
>
> Children will naturally show gratitude to you.

[74] Laozi (571 BCE – 471 BCE), *Tao Te Ching*, trans. D.C. Lau (London: Penguin Book Ltd, 1963), p.14. Shi Hanshan 釋憨山 (1546 – 1623), *Laozi daodejing jie* 老子道德經解 [Interpretation of Laozi *Daodejing*], (Wuhan: Chongwen shuju 崇文書局, 2015), p.27.

This is the most natural parenting styles.

From the social point of view, adult depression is closely related to unfair treatments in social environment. In section 3.2.3, we discussed the depression model related to work stress and gender discrimination. There are always unfair treatments in the society. We cannot solve all those social issues, but we can treat the patients with respect. Blaming the patients when we do not know depression disorders may intensify the depression and cause more tragedies like patient E and G. Due to society's stigmatization of depression, many patients refuse to take any treatments. 10 years ago, most of the patients felt shame because the public regarded them as 'psycho' or 'idiot'. This kind of discrimination must be stopped. Laozi said, '上善若水。水善，利萬物而不爭。The highest virtue is like water, benefiting all creatures without any conflict. '[75] We should have the soft and kind characters of water, because helping the patients is also helping ourselves understand depression. This will keep us away from anxiety and depression as what Laozi said, '夫惟不爭，故無尤。No conflict, no hatred or anxiety.'[76]

5 Conclusion

In conclusion, combining the doctrines with psychology is constructive and meaningful to the treatment of depression disorders. In the process of setting up the depression models, we saw virous factors contribute to the development of

[75]Shi Hanshan 釋憨山 (1546 – 1623), *Laozi daodejing jie* 老子道德經解 [Interpretation of Laozi *Daodejing*], (Wuhan: Chongwen shuju 崇文書局, 2015), p.24.
[76]Shi Hanshan 釋憨山 (1546 – 1623), *Laozi daodejing jie* 老子道德經解 [Interpretation of Laozi *Daodejing*], (Wuhan: Chongwen shuju 崇文書局, 2015), p.24.

depression. It seems that depression disorders can hardly to be cured. However, we also saw that the doctrines in the *Daodejing* can solve these problems effectively through rebuilding dialectical thought, correcting cognition, being kind and soft, and detaching from desires. The *Daodejing* focuses on guiding people to find inner peace and tranquillity, which is of great benefit to maintaining psychological balance and strengthening mental health. Applying it to psychological treatments will save more people from depression disorders and other mental diseases.

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