

# The Path of Self-Cultivation Wisdom in the Tao Te Ching to Solve the Core Dilemma of Self-Leadership

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**Abstract:** As the core ability of individual self-regulation and goal achievement, self-leadership has become increasingly prominent in the current era of remote work and the acceleration of work pace - existing research focuses on strategy optimization, but ignores the internal contradictions faced by individuals in "continuous self-drive", such as the tension between self-restraint and burnout, the imbalance between goal persistence and flexible adjustment, and the separation of individual effectiveness and team coordination. The Tao Te Ching takes "self-defeating and strong" as the core of self-cultivation, and its ideas such as "weakness over strength", "opposition to the movement of the way", and "good like water" do not simply provide strategic tools, but provide philosophical guidance for solving the deep dilemma of self-leadership from the three-dimensional dimension of "cognitive reconstruction, behavior adjustment, and relationship remodeling". By deconstructing the essential contradiction of the self-leadership dilemma, this study systematically explores the adaptation logic of the self-cultivation wisdom of the Tao Te Ching: resolving the tension of "excessive self-control - resource depletion" with "weakness over strength", balancing the imbalance of "goal persistence - flexible adjustment" with "the movement of the opposite way", and bridging the separation of "individual effectiveness - team coordination" with "good like water". Combined with empirical research in the field of self-leadership (e.g., Müller & Niessen, 2018; Zhang et al., 2024), an integrated framework of "the essence of the dilemma-the core of wisdom-practice transformation" is constructed, providing a new perspective for individuals to break through the bottleneck of self-leadership and localize the support system for organizational design, and at the same time expand the oriental philosophical dimension of self-leadership theory.

**Keywords:** Tao Te Ching; Self-victory is strong; Self-leadership; Self-cultivation wisdom; Dilemma solving; Resource depletion; Team collaboration.

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## 1. Introduction

In the context of digital transformation driving profound changes in work models, individual autonomy has become key to coping with uncertainty - remote work reduces external oversight, and the gig economy demands more flexible target management, all of which highlight the importance of self-leadership. Since the introduction of self-leadership theory by Manz (1986), a strategic system with behavioral focus, constructive thinking, and natural reward as the core has been formed, and its effectiveness has been verified in many fields: Knotts et al. (2022) found that the overall effect size of self-leadership and individual performance and creativity reached  $\rho=0.38$  through meta-analysis (57 studies, 16,493 observations); van Dorssen-Boog et al. (2021) also confirmed that self-leadership training can significantly improve work engagement and stress resistance.

However, the practice of self-leadership hides deep dilemmas, which do not stem from the lack of strategy, but from the essential contradictions faced by individuals in "continuous self-drive". The first is the tension dilemma of self-restraint and burnout: individuals often strengthen self-monitoring and strictly implement plans to achieve their goals, but they are prone to fall into a cycle of "the more self-control, the more tired they are" - Müller and Niessen (2018) found that in the context of qualitative work overload (such as complex tasks and ambiguous information), over-reliance on self-restraint strategies will accelerate the exhaustion of self-control resources, leading to a decline in subsequent task performance. The second is the imbalance between goal persistence and flexible adjustment: an individual's firm

pursuit of goals can easily be transformed into "path solidification", and when the environment changes, it is difficult to adjust strategies. The third is the dilemma of individual effectiveness and team collaboration: Existing self-leadership research focuses on the individual level and ignores the symbiotic relationship between "self-regulation" and "other people's needs" in team situations.

Existing studies have mostly focused on the level of "strategy optimization", such as alleviating exhaustion through "resource replenishment" (Bakker et al., 2021) and reducing stress through "goal decomposition" (Cranmer et al., 2019), but did not touch on the cognitive roots behind the dilemma - "self-regulation" under the Western theoretical framework often implies "adversarial" logic (such as "overcoming weaknesses" and "overcoming inertia"), which is different from the cognitive habits of "conforming to the law" in Eastern culture. The Tao Te Ching takes "self-victory is strong" (Chapter 33) as the core of self-cultivation, and its ideas such as "weakness overcomes strength" (Chapter 36), "the movement of the opposite way" (Chapter 40), and "good like water" (Chapter 8) (Yao, 2022) provide a unique path for reconstructing self-leadership cognition and solving internal contradictions from the perspectives of "acceptance rather than confrontation", "roundabout rather than straightforward", and "tolerance rather than isolation".

From the perspective of theoretical significance, this study breaks through the research limitations of "strategic instrumentalization", combines the wisdom of self-cultivation in the Tao Te Ching with the essential contradiction of self-leadership dilemma, reveals the fundamental role of "cognitive reconstruction" in solving the dilemma, and

expands the philosophical depth of self-leadership theory. From a practical point of view, the cracking path based on the Tao Te Ching is more in line with the behavioral characteristics of "introverted self-driven" of Oriental individuals, such as "non-confrontational self-control" under the guidance of "weakness over strength", which can effectively reduce resource depletion and provide sustainable self-leadership solutions for employees in high-pressure positions (such as medical care and Internet industry). At the same time, the "adaptive collaboration" guided by "good like water" also provides new ideas for organizations to solve the contradiction between "individual effectiveness and team performance".

## **2. Deconstruction of the Essence of The Core Dilemma of Self-Leadership**

The dilemma of self-leadership is not simply "insufficient strategy", but three sets of essential contradictions faced by individuals in "continuous self-drive", which stem from the conflict between the internal attributes of "self-regulation" and environmental needs, which are manifested in the tension between self-restraint and burnout, the imbalance between goal persistence and flexible adjustment, and the separation between individual effectiveness and team coordination.

### **2.1. The Tension Between Self-Restraint and Burnout: The Resource Consumption of "Adversarial Self-Control"**

Self-restraint is the basis of self-leadership, and the "self-monitoring" and "self-punishment" in the behavioral focus strategy require individuals to actively suppress impulses and stick to the plan, but this "adversarial self-control" (such as forcibly suppressing fatigue and denying the need for rest) will continue to consume limited self-control resources, forming a tension of "the stronger the constraint - the faster the exhaustion". According to the finite resource model (Baumeister et al., 1998), an individual's self-control resources are like muscles, and overuse can lead to "fatigue", and the continuous practice of self-leadership requires repeated calls to this resource.

A field study by Müller and Niessen (2018) provides empirical support for this tension: the study used a sample of 142 university staff to measure the intensity of self-control through the "handgrip task" and found that when individuals faced qualitative work overload (e.g., writing complex reports, processing ambiguous information), the intensity of self-control decreased significantly in the afternoon when "strict self-monitoring" (e.g., hourly progress checks, critiques of outstanding items) was used, and this exhaustion effect continued the next day. van Dorssen-Boog et al.'s (2020) study of healthcare workers also found that employees who relied on "self-punishment" for a long time, such as working longer hours due to missing goals, scored significantly higher on the Burnout Scale than those who employed a "natural reward" strategy. The essence of this tension is "individual cognitive bias towards 'self-control'" - equating "self-restraint" with "fighting internal needs", ignoring the "law of conformity" emphasized in the Tao Te Ching, and eventually falling into a cycle of "the harder you work, the more tired you get".

### **2.2. The Imbalance Between Goal Persistence and Flexible Adjustment: The Path of "Linear Thinking" is Solidified**

Self-leadership is goal-oriented, and the constructive thinking strategies of "visualizing success" and "challenging negative beliefs" are aimed at strengthening the individuals' persistent pursuit of goals. However, when the environment changes (such as adjustment of task requirements and insufficient resources), this "persistence" can easily be transformed into "path solidification", forming an imbalance of "goal attachment - flexible adjustment" - individuals pay too much attention to "whether the initial goal is achieved" and ignore "how to achieve the essential goal through path adjustment", falling into the misunderstanding of "completing for the sake of completion".

This imbalance is confirmed by Junça Silva et al. (2024) in a study of remote workers: the study used a sample of 272 full-time remote employees and found that 73% of respondents chose to "increase work hours" rather than "adjust task priorities" when goal progress lags, and this "linear response" exacerbates emotional exhaustion and weakens the effectiveness of subsequent self-leadership. Sampl et al. (2017) also found that students who are overly obsessed with "test score goals" are more likely to deny their own strategies due to a mock test failure, resulting in a decrease in subsequent review efficiency. The essence of this imbalance is the "one-way nature of goal cognition" - binding "goal" to "realization path", failing to understand the logic of "reverse adjustment" revealed by the "movement of the opposite way" in the Tao Te Ching, such as "wanting to take the right approach" and "retreating to advance", and finally falling into passivity when the environment changes.

### **2.3. The Separation of Individual Effectiveness and Team Collaboration: The Relationship Barrier of "Self-Centeredness"**

Research on self-leadership mostly focuses on the individual level, emphasizing "how to improve individual effectiveness through self-regulation", but ignores the symbiotic relationship between "individual strategy" and "team needs" in team situations. This fragmentation manifests itself in two extremes: one is "excessive self-focus", which regards self-leadership as a tool for "individuals to achieve goals independently" and ignores the needs of team collaboration, such as Kalra et al. (2021) found in B2B sales scenarios that some salespeople refuse to cooperate with the team's unified customer maintenance plan because they adhere to a "self-set customer development rhythm"; For example, Zhang et al. (2024) found that 38% of respondents adjust their personal goals to "avoid conflict", leading to a decrease in self-efficacy.

The essence of this fragmentation is the "cognitive bias of the relationship between self and others" - treating "individual effectiveness" and "team coordination" as a zero-sum game, failing to practice the "good like water" advocated in the Tao Te Ching, "following the trend, altruizing and benefiting oneself", such as "water is good for all things without fighting", and eventually either falling into the inefficiency of "fighting alone" or becoming a "collaborative tool", making it difficult to achieve a win-win situation between individuals and teams.

### **3. The Adaptation Logic of The Tao Te Ching Between Self-Cultivation Wisdom and Self-Leadership Dilemma**

The self-cultivation wisdom of the Tao Te Ching does not simply correspond to the strategic level of self-leadership, but directly attacks the essential contradiction of the predicament from the three-dimensional "cognition-behavior-relationship". The core of its "self-defeat is strong", not to emphasize "confrontational victory over self", but to achieve "transcendent self-improvement" through "cognitive reconstruction", which is highly consistent with the ultimate goal of self-leadership to "break through bottlenecks and achieve self-transcendence".

#### **3.1. "Weakness over Strength" and "Self-Control-Exhaustion" Tension: The Logic of Non-Confrontational Self-Regulation**

Chapter 36 of the Tao Te Ching proposes that "weakness defeats strength", and its core is not to deny "strength", but to oppose the confrontational logic of "using strength to overcome strength" - just like "water droplets pierce stone", weakness is not weakness, but through "conforming to the law and continuous penetration", which is deeply adapted to the need to solve the dilemma of "excessive self-control - resource depletion".

From the essence of the dilemma, the tension of "excessive self-control-resource depletion" stems from "adversarial cognition", which regards "self-restraint" as "suppressing internal needs" (such as forcibly suppressing fatigue and denying the will to rest), while "weakness over strength" advocates "non-adversarial regulation", that is, accepting the rationality of internal needs and achieving self-restraint through "homeopathic guidance" rather than "forced suppression". For example, when an individual feels tired, Western strategies may suggest "setting a rest alarm clock and strictly controlling rest time", while the logic of "weakness over strength" guides individuals to "be aware of fatigue signals and briefly adjust task types (such as switching from high-intensity thinking to simple organization)" to avoid excessive resource consumption and maintain work continuity. This logic is also indirectly supported by the study by Müller and Niessen (2018): the study found that employees who used "flexible task switching" (non-adversarial regulation) depleted their self-control resources significantly more slowly than those who used "forced adherence" (adversarial regulation).

From the perspective of practical logic, "weakness over strength" can be transformed into a "flexible self-control" strategy: individuals do not need to formulate a rigid plan of "efficiency every minute", but adjust the intensity of the strategy according to their own state - when the state is good, the goal is strengthened, and when the state is bad, it shifts to the "low consumption-high meaning" task (such as organizing work notes and summarizing experience). van Dorssen-Boog et al. (2020) have confirmed that this kind of "flexible self-control" can significantly reduce work burnout and improve the effectiveness of long-term self-leadership, which is completely consistent with the self-cultivation logic of "weakness over strength" and "softness overcomes strength".

#### **3.2. The Imbalance Between "The Movement of The Opposite Way" And "Goal-Adjustment": The Goal Reconstruction Logic of Reverse Thinking**

Chapter 40 of the Tao Te Ching proposes the "movement of the opposite Tao", revealing the law that "things will transform in the opposite direction when they develop to the extreme", and its core is to "break the path dependence with reverse thinking", which is highly consistent with the need to solve the imbalance of "goal persistence - flexible adjustment" - the essence of this dilemma is "linear goal cognition", and the "movement of the opposite way" advocates the "dynamic goal view", that is, to achieve the flexible achievement of the goal by "taking a step back and changing the angle".

From the perspective of the essence of the dilemma, the imbalance of "goal persistence - flexible adjustment" stems from "binding goals to paths", such as "must achieve 'monthly performance goals' by 'visiting 3 customers every day'", while "the movement of the opposite path" guides individuals to "return to the essence of the goal and reconstruct the path to achieve". For example, when a customer visit is blocked, linear thinking will make individuals "redouble their efforts to visit more customers", while the logic of "anti-moral action" will guide individuals to "reflect on the essence of the goal (such as 'improving customer trust') and turn to alternative paths such as 'online in-depth communication' and 'customer needs research'". This logic is also supported by research by Junça Silva et al. (2024): the study found that remote workers who adopted "goal essentialization" performed significantly higher tasks and had lower levels of emotional exhaustion than those who "solidified paths."

From the perspective of practical logic, the "movement of the opposite way" can be transformed into a "reverse dismantling of goals" strategy: when setting goals, individuals not only need to clarify "what to achieve", but also need to think about "what reverse paths can be achieved if the conventional path is blocked" - such as "if the report cannot be completed on time, the core idea framework can be submitted first, and then supplement the details". This strategy is not "abandoning the goal", but "retreating to advance", just like the Tao Te Ching Chapter 63 "Difficult is easier than easy, greater than its details" emphasized "from the reverse cut and gradually advance", Sampl et al.'s (2017) study on college students also confirmed that this "reverse adjustment" can significantly reduce target anxiety and improve strategic flexibility.

#### **3.3. "Good Like Water" and the "Individual-Team" Division: The Logical Framework for Reshaping Relationships Through Altruistic Collaboration**

Chapter 8 of the Tao Te Ching proposes that "good is like water", and advocates the relationship principle of "conforming to the environment and benefiting oneself" with the characteristics of water "benefiting all things without fighting" and "being in the evil of all", which is deeply adapted to the problem of "individual effectiveness - team collaboration" - the essence of this dilemma is "zero-sum cognition between self and others", and "good like water" advocates the "concept of symbiotic relationship", that is, to achieve a win-win situation between individuals and teams

through "altruistic synergy".

From the essence of the dilemma, the separation of "individual-team" stems from "treating individual strategies and team needs as oppositions", such as "my goal rhythm conflicts with the team plan, and I can only choose one of the two", while "good like water" guides individuals to "integrate self-leadership into the team situation like a container adapting to water". For example, when setting self-goals, individuals not only consider "personal ability" but also need to think about "how to help the team through personal goals" - for example, salespeople combine "customer development goals" with the team's "customer resource sharing plan" to provide the team with customer demand information while achieving self-achievement. Zhang et al.'s (2024) study also supports this logic: the study found that employees who adopted "altruistic self-leadership" had significantly more knowledge-sharing behaviors than "self-centered" employees, and their individual performance did not decline, but rather increased due to "team support".

From the perspective of practical logic, "good like water" can be transformed into a "situational adaptation" strategy: individuals adjust their self-leadership style according to the team situation - in teamwork tasks, just like "water nourishes all things", actively share their strategic experience (such as "how to efficiently decompose team tasks"); In individual independent tasks, it's like "water flows deep", focusing on self-efficacy while ensuring that team progress is not hindered. Alves et al. (2006) have confirmed that this kind of "situational adaptation" self-leadership is particularly effective in high collectivist cultures, which can effectively bridge the gap between individuals and teams, and is highly consistent with the self-cultivation logic of "good is like water" and "good wins without fighting".

## **4. The Path to Solve the Self-Leadership Dilemma Based on The Self-Cultivation Wisdom of the Tao Te Ching**

Combined with the core logic of self-cultivation wisdom in the Tao Te Ching and empirical research in the field of self-leadership, it can construct a two-dimensional dilemma solving path for individuals and organizations from the three-dimensional perspective of "cognition-behavior-relationship", and realize the transformation of philosophical wisdom into practice.

### **4.1. Individual Level: Reconstruct The Logic of Self-Leadership with Self-Cultivation Wisdom**

#### **4.1.1. Resolve the Tension of "Self-Control-Exhaustion" With "Weakness Over Strength": The Practical Transformation of Elastic Self-Control**

In response to the tension of "excessive self-control - resource depletion", individuals can build a "flexible self-control" system based on the non-confrontational logic of "weakness over strength". First, at the cognitive level, abandoning the misconception of "self-control is confrontation" and accepting the "rationality of intrinsic needs" - such as "exhaustion" as "an adjustment signal sent by the body" rather than "inertia that needs to be suppressed", this cognitive restructuring can reduce the ineffective consumption of self-control resources, and the study of Müller and Niessen (2018) also found that employees who

accept intrinsic needs significantly improve the sustainability of self-regulation. Secondly, at the behavioral level, design a "state-strategy" matching scheme: dynamically adjust the self-leadership strategy according to daily energy fluctuations (such as high energy in the morning and decreased energy in the afternoon) - adopt "behavioral focus" in the morning (such as goal promotion, task tackling), and switch to "natural rewards" in the afternoon (such as handling interest-related tasks and summarizing experience), just like "water changes with the situation", which not only maintains the progress of the task but also avoids resource exhaustion. Finally, at the habit level, establish a "micro-rest" ritual: after completing every 1 hour of high-intensity tasks, take 5 minutes of "non-confrontational rest" (e.g., walking, meditation) instead of "forced persistence", van Dorssen-Boog et al. (2020) confirmed that this rest method can effectively supplement self-control resources and improve the efficiency of subsequent tasks.

#### **4.1.2. Balancing the "Goal-Adjustment" Imbalance with the "Movement of the Opposite Tao": Practical Transformation of Reverse Goal Management**

In view of the imbalance of "goal persistence - flexible adjustment", individuals can rely on the reverse logic of "the movement of the opposite way" to optimize the goal management method. First, in the goal setting stage, implement "reverse disassembly": after clarifying the core goals, list 3-5 "alternative paths" - such as "if you cannot visit customers offline, you can obtain demand through online seminars and industry report analysis", this disassembly is not "lowering target standards" but "broadening the implementation channel", Junça Silva et al. (2024) confirmed that individuals with alternative paths have significantly lower goal anxiety than individuals with "single path". Secondly, in the goal implementation stage, establish a "regular reflection" mechanism: spend 30 minutes a week reviewing the "goal progress and environmental changes", and if the conventional path is blocked, start the alternative path in time - for example, when the report is blocked, submit the "core viewpoint PPT" instead of waiting for the full report. Finally, in the goal evaluation stage, the "essentially-oriented" criterion is adopted: the effectiveness is not measured by "whether the initial path is completed", but by "whether it is close to the core goal" - for example, the evaluation criterion of "customer development goal" is "customer trust improvement" rather than "number of visits", which Sampl et al. (2017) also found can improve individual strategic flexibility and reduce path consolidation.

#### **4.1.3. Bridging the "Individual-Team" Separation with "Good Like Water": Practical Transformation of Altruistic Synergy**

In view of the separation of "individual effectiveness - team collaboration", individuals can practice the altruistic logic of "good is like water" and reshape the relationship with the team. First, in the goal alignment stage, achieve "individual-team" goal integration: when formulating self-goals, actively connect with team needs - for example, R&D personnel combine "technical optimization goals" with the team's "product iteration plan" to improve individual technical capabilities while helping the team upgrade products, Zhang et al. (2024) found that this integration can significantly improve the team's support for individuals, thereby promoting individual performance. Secondly, in the strategy implementation stage, carry out "situational adaptation" collaboration: in team tasks, actively share self-leadership

experience (such as "how to efficiently decompose complex tasks"); In individual tasks, ensure that the team's public resources are not occupied (such as avoiding handling private tasks during team collaboration periods), just like "water conservats all things without fighting", and achieve self-interest in altruism. Finally, in the feedback adjustment stage, establish a "two-way learning" mechanism: not only optimize self-strategies from team feedback (e.g., "how to make personal rhythm more suitable for the team"), but also transform self-experience into team resources (e.g., "organize personal goal management methods for team reference"), and the cross-cultural research of Alves et al. (2006) confirms that this two-way interaction can effectively bridge the gap between individuals and teams and achieve a win-win situation.

## **4.2. Organizational Level: Build A Support System with Self-Cultivation Wisdom**

### **4.2.1. Design Resource Support with "Weakness Over Strength": The Creation of a Non-Confrontational Working Environment**

In response to the dilemma of "self-control - exhaustion" of employees, organizations can optimize the design of the working environment based on the logic of "weakness over strength". First, reduce "adversarial management" measures: eliminate monitoring methods such as real-time clock-ins and frequent reports for remote employees, and instead trust employees' flexible self-control, as emphasized in the Tao Te Ching, "Governing a big country is like cooking a small fresh", Müller and Niessen (2019) have confirmed that a highly autonomous environment can significantly reduce the risk of employee resource depletion. Second, provide "state adaptation" resources: equip employees with task management tools and support "dynamic prioritization adjustment" (such as recommending task types based on energy status); Spaces such as "silent workspaces" and "meditation rooms" are set up to meet employees' needs for "non-confrontational breaks", and van Dorssen-Boog et al. (2021) found that such resources can improve the sustainability of employee self-leadership. Finally, carry out "flexible self-control" training: through "case teaching" (such as "how to adjust the work rhythm according to energy fluctuations"), help employees master non-adversarial regulation methods and reduce the exhaustion caused by excessive self-control.

### **4.2.2. Optimize the Target System with the "Movement of The Opposite Way": The Establishment of a Dynamic Adjustment Mechanism**

In view of the imbalance between "goal and adjustment" of employees, the organization can rely on the logic of "the opposite is the way of action" to improve the goal management mechanism. First, implement a "flexible goal" system, which allows employees to request adjustments to the goal path (e.g., extension of deadlines, change methods) when the environment changes, rather than enforcing the initial plan, which has been confirmed by Junça Silva et al. (2024) to significantly improve employees' strategic flexibility and reduce goal anxiety. Second, establish a "reverse feedback" channel: in goal evaluation, not only focus on "whether it is completed", but also encourage employees to share "alternative path experience" and incorporate it into the organization's knowledge base (such as "online alternatives when customer development is blocked") for other employees' reference, Sampl et al. (2017) found that this

knowledge sharing can improve the organization's overall goal adaptability. Finally, carry out "reverse thinking" training: through "case studies" (such as "how to distill alternative paths from failure") to help employees develop a cognition of "the opposite way" and reduce path consolidation.

### **4.2.3. Create a Collaborative Culture With "Good Like Water": Cultivate an Altruistic Team Atmosphere**

In response to the "individual-team" fragmentation of employees, organizations can practice the logic of "good is like water" to create a collaborative culture. First, design an "altruistic incentive" mechanism: In performance evaluation, add "team contribution dimensions" (such as "whether to share self-leadership experience" and "whether to contribute to team goals") instead of only assessing individual performance, which Zhang et al. (2024) has confirmed can significantly improve employees' willingness to collaborate. Secondly, carry out "situational adaptation" team activities: organize "strategy sharing meetings" to encourage employees to share "self-leadership methods in different team situations"; Alves et al. (2006) found that such activities can effectively bridge the gap between individuals and teams. Finally, set an example of "good like water": commend employees who "take into account the needs of the team in self-leadership" (such as "cases of helping the team break through personal goals"), and use the power of role models to guide employees to practice altruistic synergy and strengthen organizational culture identity.

## **5. Research Limitations and Future Prospects**

Although this study constructs the path of self-cultivation wisdom in the Tao Te Ching to solve the dilemma of self-leadership, there are still three limitations. First, the depth of the theoretical mechanism is insufficient: this study focuses on the adaptation logic of "wisdom-dilemma", but does not delve into the role of intermediate variables (such as psychological capital and cultural values), such as whether "weakness over strength" alleviates resource depletion by improving psychological resilience. Second, the empirical evidence lacks pertinence: most of the existing empirical evidence is independent research in the field of self-leadership, and there is a lack of data specifically testing the effectiveness of the wisdom cracking of the Tao Te Ching, which is difficult to directly confirm the effectiveness of "flexible self-control" and "reverse goal management". Third, the refinement of subcultural adaptation is insufficient: although it pays attention to the oriental cultural background, it does not explore the differences in the adaptation of the wisdom of the Tao Te Ching in different industries (such as the Internet and manufacturing) and different positions (such as R&D and sales), making it difficult to provide accurate guidance.

In view of the above limitations, future research can be promoted in three directions. First, deepen the research on theoretical mechanisms: test the mediating role of psychological capital (Kotzé, 2018) and self-efficacy (Prussia et al., 1998) in "self-cultivation wisdom - dilemma solving" through empirical design, such as verifying whether "good is like water" bridges the individual-team fragmentation by enhancing team trust; Second, carry out localized empirical research: design intervention experiments based on the wisdom of the Tao Te Ching, such as randomly dividing employees into "flexible self-control group" and "traditional

self-control group", and compare the degree of resource exhaustion between the two groups to provide direct evidence for the effectiveness of the path; Third, explore the differences in subcultural adaptation: compare the cracking effect of the wisdom of the Tao Te Ching in different industries and positions, such as analyzing the differences between R&D positions (changing demands) and administrative positions (fixed processes), and provide differentiated guidance for organizations.

In addition, in the future, the application of digital scenarios can be expanded, such as exploring the collaborative way of the idea of "good as water" in the metaverse team, or the adaptability of "the movement of the opposite" in AI-assisted goal management, providing a new perspective for solving the dilemma of self-leadership in the digital era.

## 6. Conclusion

By deconstructing the essential contradictions of the core dilemma of self-leadership, the tension of "self-control-exhaustion" stems from adversarial cognition, the imbalance of "goal-adjustment" stems from linear thinking, and the fragmentation of "individual-team" stems from the zero-sum relationship view, and systematically excavates the adaptation logic of the self-cultivation wisdom of the Tao Te Ching: reconstructing self-control cognition with "weakness over strength" to resolve resource exhaustion. optimize target thinking and improve adaptability with "the movement of the opposite way"; Reshape team relationships with "good like water" to achieve synergy and win-win results. Combined with empirical research in the field of self-leadership, this paper constructs a solution path of "wisdom core-practice transformation" from the dual levels of individual "cognition-behavior-habit" and organizational "environment-mechanism-culture".

This framework not only provides ideas that are in line with Eastern culture for individuals to break through the bottleneck of self-leadership, such as "flexible self-control" and "reverse goal management", but also provides a basis for the design of localized support systems for organizations, and at the same time expands the philosophical dimension of self-leadership theory - the essence of self-leadership is not "confrontational victory over self", but "conforming to the law and achieving transcendence" advocated by "self-victory is strong" in the Tao Te Ching.

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