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TAKAKO'S LONELINESS IN SATOSHI YAGISAWA'S *DAYS AT THE MORISAKI BOOKSHOP*: A STUDY OF PSYCHOANALYSIS

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Abstract. This study explores the loneliness experienced by Takako, the main character in Satoshi Yagisawa's novel *Days at the Morisaki Bookshop*, using Perlman and Peplau's theory of loneliness. Using a qualitative method, the study analyzes the narrator's words and Takako's utterances that show the causes of her loneliness and the ways she copes with it. The findings show that Takako's loneliness begins with the end of her relationship with her boyfriend, which makes her lose emotional closeness and struggle to continue her daily life. Her loneliness becomes stronger as she withdraws from her social environment and has difficulty building relationships with others. To deal with her loneliness, Takako uses several coping strategies, including adaptation and task choice, forming new relationships, making fuller use of existing relationships, surrogate relationships, and minimizing loneliness. These strategies help her accept her past, understand herself, rebuild relationships with people around her, and find new meaning in her life. The study concludes that Takako's loneliness is not permanent and can gradually be overcome through self-acceptance, social support, and changes in how she responds to her life experiences.

Abstrak. Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi kesepian yang dialami oleh Takako, tokoh utama dalam novel *Days at the Morisaki Bookshop* karya Satoshi Yagisawa, dengan menggunakan teori kesepian dari Perlman dan Peplau. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan menganalisis kata-kata narator dan tuturan Takako yang menunjukkan penyebab kesepiannya serta cara yang digunakannya untuk mengatasi kesepian tersebut. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kesepian Takako bermula dari berakhirnya hubungan dengan pacarnya, yang membuatnya kehilangan kedekatan emosional dan kesulitan menjalani kehidupan sehari-hari seperti sebelumnya. Kesepiannya semakin kuat ketika ia menarik diri dari lingkungan sosial dan mengalami kesulitan dalam membangun hubungan dengan orang lain. Untuk menghadapi kesepiannya, Takako menggunakan beberapa strategi coping, yaitu adaptasi dan pemilihan aktivitas, membentuk hubungan baru, memanfaatkan hubungan yang sudah ada dengan lebih baik, hubungan pengganti, dan meminimalkan kesepian. Strategi-strategi tersebut membantu Takako menerima masa lalunya, memahami dirinya sendiri, membangun kembali hubungan dengan orang-orang di sekitarnya, dan menemukan makna baru dalam hidupnya. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa kesepian Takako bukanlah kondisi yang berlangsung selamanya dan secara bertahap dapat diatasi melalui penerimaan diri, dukungan sosial, serta perubahan dalam cara seseorang merespons pengalaman hidupnya.

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INTRODUCTION

Loneliness is a feeling that can occur when the relationships a person has are different from the relationships they actually expect. Perlman and Peplau (1982, p. 125) explain that loneliness occurs because of a gap between the social relationships a person wants and the relationships they actually have. Therefore, loneliness is not always related to how many people are around someone, but also to how close and meaningful those relationships are. Seemann (2022) also explains that loneliness is related to a person's perception of a mismatch between the relationships they expect and their actual social experiences. Thus, a person can feel lonely even when surrounded by other people if they do not have the kind of relationships they need.

Literature often describes different experiences and feelings that people have in their daily lives. Through characters and stories, literary works can show how people deal with problems, build relationships with others, and experience changes in themselves. Wellek and Warren (1948) explain that literature is related to psychology because literary works describe human life and inner conditions through their characters. Therefore, the psychological experiences of characters in literary works can be used to understand how they deal with certain problems, including loneliness.

One novel that describes the experience of loneliness is *Days at the Morisaki Bookshop* by Satoshi Yagisawa, which was translated into English in 2023. The novel tells the story of Takako, a young woman whose life changes after she discovers that her boyfriend, Hideaki, has betrayed her. This event makes Takako lose a relationship that she considers important in her life. Not only does she lose her boyfriend, but she also leaves her job and becomes more withdrawn from the people around her. This situation makes Takako feel alone and makes it difficult for her to continue her life as before.

Takako's experience can be understood through the theory of loneliness proposed by Perlman and Peplau. According to Perlman and Peplau (1979, 1981), loneliness is related to a gap between the social relationships a person wants and the relationships they actually have. They explain that changes in social relationships can be one of the causes of loneliness. These causes include the end of a close relationship, physical separation, changes in social status, and reduced satisfaction in a relationship. In addition, personal characteristics such as low self-confidence, difficulty in socializing, and difficulty in building relationships can also increase the possibility of experiencing loneliness.

When dealing with loneliness, people may use different ways to reduce these feelings. Perlman and Peplau explain that one way is to adjust the social relationships a person expects to have to their actual situation. This can be done through adaptation and choosing activities that can help a person deal with or distract themselves from loneliness. In addition, a person can build new relationships, make better use of existing relationships, or find substitute relationships. These ways can help reduce the gap between the relationships a person wants and the relationships they actually have.

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These aspects can also be seen in Takako's life. At the beginning of the story, Takako tends to avoid other people after losing her boyfriend and her job. She spends much of her time alone and feels that she does not have anyone who is truly close to her. However, this situation gradually changes after she stays with and helps her uncle at the Morisaki Bookshop. Reading books, taking walks around the neighborhood, going to Saveur Café, and interacting with Tomo and Takano are some of the activities that help Takako move away from her lonely condition. Her relationship with her uncle also gives her support that she did not have when she was going through a difficult period.

Several previous studies have discussed *Days at the Morisaki Bookshop* from different perspectives. Fildania (2025) discusses the self-actualization of the main character in the novel and examines how Takako develops as a person. Meanwhile, Nuzrath and Ishwaryia (2025) discuss emotional healing and interpersonal relationships in the novel using Fritz Heider's psychological theory. These studies show an interest in Takako's psychological development, but they do not specifically discuss her loneliness based on Perlman and Peplau's theory.

Studies on loneliness using Perlman and Peplau's theory have also been conducted on other literary works. Arifia (2022) discusses the loneliness of a female character in the novel *Five Feet Apart*. Rahmi (2025) discusses the loneliness of the main character in *A Man Called Ove*, while Noy (2019) discusses the loneliness of characters in *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas*. These studies use Perlman and Peplau's theory to examine the causes of loneliness and how the characters deal with their situations. However, these studies do not discuss *Days at the Morisaki Bookshop*.

Based on these previous studies, no study has specifically discussed Takako's loneliness in *Days at the Morisaki Bookshop* using Perlman and Peplau's theory. This study attempts to fill this gap by looking at Takako's experience of loneliness through two main aspects: the causes of her loneliness and the ways she deals with or copes with it.

Therefore, this study explores the loneliness experienced by Takako in Satoshi Yagisawa's *Days at the Morisaki Bookshop* using Perlman and Peplau's theory. It focuses on the causes of Takako's loneliness and the ways she copes with it. Through Takako's experiences of loss, changes in her social life, and relationships with the people around her, this study shows how loneliness can affect a person's life and how new relationships and activities can help someone get through such a situation.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses qualitative analysis to explore the loneliness experienced by Takako in Satoshi Yagisawa's *Days at the Morisaki Bookshop*. According to Yin (2016), qualitative research is suitable for understanding human experiences through textual and non-numerical data. In this study, the qualitative approach is used to understand Takako's loneliness through her experiences, thoughts, utterances, actions, and relationships with other characters. The analysis is interpretive and focuses on how loneliness is represented in the novel rather than on clinical psychological assessment.

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The main source of data is the English version of *Days at the Morisaki Bookshop*, published in 2023. The data consist of narrator's words and character's utterances that show the causes of Takako's loneliness and the ways she copes with it. The researcher is the main instrument in this study by reading, selecting, recording, and interpreting the relevant data. Other sources include Perlman and Peplau's theory of loneliness, Yin's qualitative research framework, and previous studies related to loneliness and literary analysis.

The data were collected through careful and repeated reading of the novel. First, the researcher read the whole novel to understand the story and Takako's character development. Relevant passages were then identified, marked, and recorded, especially those showing Takako's social relationships, personal characteristics, experiences of loneliness, and ways of coping. The selected data were then divided into two main focuses: the causes of Takako's loneliness and the ways she copes with it. The data were further grouped based on the concepts in Perlman and Peplau's theory.

The data were analyzed using Yin's (2016) five phases of qualitative data analysis: compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding. In the compiling phase, relevant data were collected and organized. In the disassembling phase, the data were separated and coded based on their meaning and relevance to the theory. In the reassembling phase, similar data were grouped into categories related to the causes of loneliness and coping strategies. In the interpreting phase, each category was analyzed using Perlman and Peplau's theory to explain Takako's experience of loneliness and her ways of coping. Finally, in the concluding phase, the findings were connected to the research questions to draw the conclusion. Categories that did not have enough textual evidence were not included in the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The loneliness experienced by Takako in *Days at the Morisaki Bookshop* has an important role in her personal life and social relationships, which are described in the novel. Her loneliness begins after her relationship with Hideaki ends, leaving her without someone close to her. She also loses her job and has difficulty making friends in Tokyo. These situations make Takako feel lonely and isolated from the people around her.

Causes of Takako Loneliness

Takako's loneliness does not appear because of only one event. Her loneliness develops through several changes in her personal and social life. The end of her relationship with Hideaki becomes the main event that affects her emotional condition. At the same time, she also loses her job, which changes her daily routine and reduces her opportunities to interact with other people. In addition, Takako's passive and shy personality makes it difficult for her to establish new social relationships. These factors are related to Perlman and Peplau's view that loneliness can develop when a person's social relationships do not meet the level of connection they desire.

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1. The end of a relationship

The first cause of Takako's loneliness is the end of her relationship with Hideaki. At the beginning of the novel, Hideaki tells her that he is going to marry another woman. Takako also realizes that Hideaki has been in a relationship with someone else for quite some time. This situation becomes a major emotional shock for Takako because she realizes that the relationship she had believed in was not what she had thought it was.

"One day, Hideaki, the boyfriend I'd been going out with for a year, suddenly blurted out, "I'm getting married" (Yagisawa, 2023, p. 2)

Hideaki's statement immediately changes Takako's situation. She loses not only her boyfriend but also the emotional relationship that had become an important part of her daily life. The experience becomes even more painful when she realizes that she had never been Hideaki's first choice. As a result, Takako experiences grief, disappointment, and a strong sense of loss.

This condition is consistent with Perlman and Peplau's explanation that the ending of a close relationship can contribute to loneliness (1981, p. 38). In Takako's case, the loneliness does not simply come from being physically alone. It develops because an important relationship that previously gave her emotional connection has suddenly disappeared.

The emotional impact continues even after the relationship ends. Takako describes how she spends the night thinking about her past:

"Even in the middle of the night, I was still tossing and turning. I remained there on my futon for a long time, struggling. All of these thoughts were swirling together inside my head, filling it until I thought it might explode. They kept going around and around, these painful memories of the past, of my old my life. They commandeered my mind" (Yagisawa, 2023, p. 31)

This quotation shows that Takako remains emotionally attached to her previous relationship. She repeatedly remembers the life she had before the breakup, making it difficult for her to accept her present situation. Therefore, the end of the relationship becomes one of the strongest factors contributing to her loneliness because Takako has lost a relationship that previously occupied an important place in her life.

2. Status Change

Status change refers to a change in a person's social position or daily ciscumtances that can affect their relationship and patterns of interaction. In Takako case, this change occurs when she leaves her job shortly after her relationship with Hideaki ends.

"After two weeks of this, I'd reached my limit, particularly and psychologically. I finally went to my supervisor and handed in my resignation" (Yagisawa, 2023, p. 5)

Leaving her job changes Takako's daily routine and social environment. The workplace had previously provided opportunities for regular interaction with other people. After resigning, these interactions are reduced, and Takako spends more time alone. Changes in social status can affect a person's social relationship and may contribute to loneliness when meaningful social interaction in reduced (Perlman and Peplau, 1981, p. 38)

"I had lost my boyfriend and my job all at once. I felt almost like I'd been cast off suddenly into outer place" (Yagisawa, 2023, p. 5)

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This statement clearly shows how two major changes happen at nearly the same time. She loses both an important personal relationship and her role as an employee. Thus, Takako's status change is not only related to unemployment but also to the loss of a social environment that had previously been part of her everyday life.

3. Personal characteristics influence behavior and reinforce feelings of loneliness

Personal characteristics in this context refer to individual tendencies that can influence how a person interacts with other people and establishes social relationships. Takako is portrayed and shy, which makes it difficult for her to communicate openly and make friends.

"For someone as passive as I was then, finding a boyfriend like him was nothing short of miracle. I liked him so much that I could barely stand it. The downside was I never saw this shock coming, and I had no idea how to cope it" (Yagisawa, 2023, p. 5-6)

Takako tends to withdraw rather than actively seek support from others. When she experiences the breakup and loses her job, she does not immediately look for new social connections. Instead, she isolates herself and spends much of her time alone.

The Ways Takako Copes with Loneliness

After experiencing loneliness, Takako does not overcome it immediately. Her coping process develops gradually as she adjusts to her new life at the Morisaki Bookshop. She begins by occupying herself with activities, interacting with new people, developing her relationship with her uncle, finding indirect connections through secondhand books, and temporarily avoiding painful emotions through sleep. Later, she becomes more capable of confronting the feelings that she has kept inside.

1. Adaptation and Task Choice

After staying at the Morisaki Bookshop, Takako gradually finds an activity that helps her deal with her loneliness. Reading becomes one of the activities that she uses to spend her time and calm her mind. Instead of only thinking about the problems she experienced, she begins to focus on the books she reads.

"Little by little, I felt something wash over me, a feeling of peace that words can't express. If I had to explain it, I'd say it could only have come from the writer's fervent love for life. When I looked up, I realized the night was fading, and the day was beginning to dawn. I read on, turning one page after another" (Yagisawa, 2023, p. 32).

The quotation shows that reading gives Takako a feeling of peace. She becomes absorbed in the book and continues reading until morning. This activity helps her take her mind away from the loneliness and sadness she experiences. It also shows that Takako begins to adjust to her new situation by choosing an activity that makes her feel better. Therefore, reading can be seen as part of Takako's adaptation and task choice in coping with her loneliness.

2. Ways of Forming New Relationships

After spending time at the Morisaki Bookshop, Takako begins to meet new people. One of them is Tomo, a waitress at the Saveur coffee shop. At first, Takako only meets her through her uncle, but she soon feels comfortable with her.

"I had a feeling we might get along. My mood brightened" (Yagisawa, 2023, pp. 26)

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The quotation shows that Takako has a positive feeling when she meets Tomo. Although they have just met, Takako already feels that they might get along. This is different from her previous situation, when she had difficulty making friends and had no one close to her in Tokyo. Meeting Tomo gives Takako a chance to start a new relationship with someone.

Takako's relationship with Tomo becomes closer through their repeated meetings. Tomo visits the bookshop and spends time with Takako, and they often have tea together. Later, Tomo invites Takako to the used book festival, and Takako happily accepts the invitation:

"Yes. Let's go. Let's go," I said, jumping at her offer (Yagisawa, 2023, p. 40).

Takako's response shows that she enjoys spending time with Tomo and is willing to become closer to her. According to Peplau and Perlman (1979, p. 107), forming new relationships can help lonely individuals increase their social interaction and become more connected with others. In Takako's case, her friendship with Tomo gives her someone to spend time with and helps her become more involved with the people around her. Therefore, forming a new relationship with Tomo becomes one of the ways Takako copes with her loneliness.

3. Ways of More Fully Using Existing Relationships

Another way Takako copes with her loneliness is by making fuller use of her existing relationships, especially her relationship with her uncle. At first, Takako feels that she does not have much in common with him. However, their relationship becomes closer when they begin to share their interest in books.

"We talked about the book for a while. It was a joy to feel connected to someone I'd felt I had so little in common with" (Yagisawa, 2023, p. 33)

The quotation shows that Takako begins to feel closer to her uncle through their conversation about books. Although she previously thought that they had little in common, talking about books helps them understand each other better. This relationship gives Takako a sense of connection when she is experiencing loneliness. According to Peplau and Perlman (1979, pp. 107–108), loneliness can be managed by making fuller use of relationships that already exist. Takako does this by spending more time with her uncle and developing a closer relationship with him.

"I was protected. There was someone who worried about me" (Yagisawa, 2023, p. 58).

This moment makes Takako realize that she is not alone and that someone cares about her. Her uncle becomes an important source of emotional support during a difficult time. This reflects Peplau and Perlman's (1979, p. 108) explanation that existing relationships can provide additional social and emotional support when they become closer. Therefore, Takako's relationship with her uncle helps her cope with loneliness by giving her comfort, care, and a sense of belonging.

4. Surrogate Relationships

Takako also experiences a sense of connection through secondhand books. Although she does not directly meet the previous readers, the traces they leave in the books make her feel connected to them.

"It made me happy to think that because I had been moved by that same passage too, I was now connected to that stranger" (Yagisawa, 2023, p. 34)

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The quotation shows that Takako feels connected to a person she has never met because they were moved by the same passage. The underlined words in the book create an indirect connection between Takako and the previous reader. According to Peplau and Perlman (1979, p. 108), surrogate relationships allow lonely individuals to experience social connectedness without direct interaction with another person. This can be seen in Takako's experience because the book gives her a feeling of connection with an unknown reader.

"Who in the world was she? When did she live? What was she feeling?" (Yagisawa, 2023, p. 34).

The pressed flower makes Takako think about the life and feelings of the previous reader. Although she does not know this person, she becomes interested in their experience. This shows that secondhand books give Takako an indirect connection with other people. Therefore, the books become a source of emotional comfort and help reduce her feeling of being alone.

5. Minimizing Loneliness

The last way Takako copes with her loneliness is by minimizing its negative emotional effects. In the beginning, she uses sleep to escape from the painful reality after her relationship with Hideaki ends.

"The coping mechanism I ultimately went with was to devote my life to sleep" (Yagisawa, 2023, p. 6).

The quotation shows that Takako chooses sleep to avoid thinking about her problems. She spends much of her time sleeping because she is unable to face the reality of her breakup. According to Perlman and Peplau (1981, p. 53), people may cope with loneliness by using behaviors that reduce its negative emotional effects. In Takako's case, sleeping gives her temporary relief from the emotional pain caused by her loneliness.

However, Takako later begins to face her feelings instead of continuing to avoid them. She finally confronts Hideaki and expresses what she has kept inside:

"I really loved you. I am a person. I have feelings" (Yagisawa, 2023, p. 56)

This shows an important change in the way Takako deals with her loneliness. She is finally able to express her feelings and release the emotions that she has kept inside for a long time. According to Perlman and Peplau (1981, p. 53), coping with loneliness can involve behaviors that help reduce its negative emotional impact. By expressing her feelings directly, Takako gains emotional relief and begins to accept the end of her relationship. Therefore, minimizing loneliness is shown through both temporary avoidance and later emotional expression.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The loneliness experienced by Takako is mainly caused by the end of her relationship with Hideaki, changes in her life, and her personal characteristics. The breakup with Hideaki makes her lose someone important in her life and causes her to feel disappointed and alone. Losing her job also makes her feel lost and increases her loneliness. Her shy and passive characteristics make it difficult for her to build close relationships with other people.

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Meanwhile, Takako copes with her loneliness through adaptation and task choice, forming new relationships, making fuller use of existing relationships, surrogate relationships, and minimizing loneliness. Reading and working at the Morisaki Bookshop help her adapt to her new life and keep herself busy. Her relationships with Tomo and her uncle also give her support and make her feel less alone. Through these experiences, Takako gradually accepts her situation and is able to move forward with her life

For future researchers, this study can be used as a reference for studying loneliness in literary works. Future researchers can use different theories or approaches to discuss loneliness from another perspective. They can also focus on other characters in *Days at the Morisaki Bookshop* to find other experiences related to loneliness. By focusing on other characters, future research can provide a wider discussion of loneliness and relationships in the novel.

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