

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the writer discusses the background of the study, research questions, objectives the study, significance of the study, and scope and limitation of the study.

1.1 Background of The Study

Loneliness is an experience that almost everyone has experienced at some point in their lives. Perlman and Peplau (1982, p. 125) define loneliness as the discrepancy between desired relationships and actual relationships, stressing that it is the quality rather than the quantity of social contact that determines whether a person feels lonely. Similarly, Seemann (2022, p. 2) argues that loneliness arises from a perceived mismatch between the need for emotional closeness and the reality of one's social experience. From these perspectives, loneliness reflects a gap between what individuals expect from relationships and what they actually experience.

Loneliness in literature often reflects a person's inner feeling and personal experiences. Loneliness is viewed as a space for reflection and self-understanding (Tirkkonen, 2025, p. 1-4). According to Stoneman and Gessel (2014, p. 1-2) Loneliness has become a form of individualistic expression that appears in Japanese art and literature, reflecting the inner experiences of artists who create worlds that differ from mainstream culture. However, modern Japanese fiction often transforms loneliness into emotional alienation and social disconnection. Ryang (1998, p. 88) observes that female characters in postwar Japanese narratives tend to internalize alienation as a response to the pressures of modernity and patriarchal expectations. Therefore, loneliness in contemporary Japanese works is not seen merely as a personal feeling, but also as a reflection of ongoing social and cultural changes. This is especially evident in the case of women, whose identities are often closely tied to relational roles and to the recognition they receive from those around them.

In this context, Satoshi Yagisawa's novel *Days at the Morisaki Bookshop*, which was translated into English in 2023, places loneliness at the center of the

narrative, shaping both the plot and the emotional development of its protagonist, Takako. From the beginning of *Days at the Morisaki Bookshop*, readers are presented with Takako's psychological breakdown after discovering her boyfriend's betrayal. This event does not merely end a romantic relationship that had long been an important part of her life; it also disrupts the social position and personal identity she has built over the years. Her roles as a partner and as an independent, stable working woman suddenly collapse, causing her to lose her sense of direction and emotional stability. This condition leaves Takako feeling alienated, not only from others but also from herself. As a result, she chooses to resign from her job, avoid communication, and withdraw from her social environment. These actions suggest that the loneliness she experiences does not simply stem from being physically alone, but from the loss of meaningful relational structures that once supported her identity and sense of belonging in the social world.

This study draws on the loneliness theories of Perlman and Peplau specifically *Blueprint for a Social Psychological Theory of Loneliness* (1979) and his theory, *Toward A Social Psychology of Loneliness* (1981), they explain that loneliness emerges when there is a gap between the relationships a person hopes to have and the relationships they actually experience. In other words, loneliness is not about how many people are around us, but about whether we feel emotionally close, understood, and genuinely connected. This feeling is deeply subjective, shaped by personal expectations, emotional needs, and one's own standards of intimacy. When a sense of belonging and meaningful attachment disappears, the distance between expectation and reality becomes more visible, and that is when loneliness begins to feel more intense.

From this perspective, Takako's situation can be seen as the result of a relationship that no longer matched her expectations. Before the betrayal, her romantic relationship gave her a sense of security and functioned as an emotional anchor in her life. When it ended, she lost not only a partner but also the stability and recognition that relationship had provided. Her decision to quit her job and withdraw from others reflects her struggle with a deep sense of relational emptiness.

In *Days at the Morisaki Bookshop*, Takako's loneliness is portrayed not simply as being alone, but as an emotional wound caused by the loss of closeness and meaningful connection.

This study is a new one that uses the novel *Days at the Morisaki Bookshop* and applies the theory of loneliness. This can be demonstrated by reviewing previous studies conducted by other writers who used the same novel as their source of data but applied different theoretical approaches. The first thesis was completed by Vincilya Fildania (2025), entitled *Analysis of the Main Character's Self-Actualization in the Novel Days at the Morisaki Bookshop*, from Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. The second study is an article written by M. Benazir Nuzrath and S. Sri Ishwaryia (2025), entitled *The Interplay of Emotional Healing and Interpersonal Relationships in Days at the Morisaki Bookshop: A Synthesis with Fritz Heider's Psychological Theories*, published in the journal *Language in India*. In addition, the writer also reviews previous studies that applied the same theory of loneliness proposed by Perlman and Peplau, but analyzed different literary works. The first thesis was written by Della Muftafrida Arifia (2022), entitled *The Loneliness of a Female Character in Rachael Lippincott et al.'s Novel Five Feet Apart*. Another thesis was written by Mistahul Rahmi (2025), entitled *Loneliness of the Main Character in Fredrik Backman's A Man Called Ove*. Furthermore, Elysa Noy (2019) conducted a study entitled *Characters' Loneliness Depicted in The Boy in the Striped Pajamas*.

Although the previous studies provide valuable insights, they differ from the present research in both theoretical focus and object of analysis. The studies on *Days at the Morisaki Bookshop* examine self-actualization and emotional healing rather than loneliness, while the studies employing Perlman and Peplau's theory focus on different novels. Therefore, no previous research has specifically analyzed Takako's loneliness in *Days at the Morisaki Bookshop* using Perlman and Peplau's theory. This study fills that gap by examining both the causes of Takako's loneliness and her coping strategies through the framework of Perlman and Peplau's theory of loneliness. The novelty of this study lies in its application of Perlman and Peplau's theory to Satoshi Yagisawa's *Days at the Morisaki Bookshop*, providing a

comprehensive analysis of Takako's loneliness by exploring both its causes and coping strategies. Consequently, this study offers a new psychological perspective on the novel and enriches the existing body of literary studies on loneliness in contemporary fiction.

1.2 Research Question

Based on the background of the study described above, the writer proposes two research question:

1. What are the causes of Takako's loneliness in *Days at the Morisaki Bookshop*?
2. How does Takako cope with her loneliness in *Days at the Morisaki Bookshop*?

1.3 Objectives of The Study

Based on this research problem, the writer states that there are two research objectives:

1. To describe the causes of loneliness as depicted through Takako's characterization in Satoshi Yagisawa's *Days at the Morisaki Bookshop*.
2. To describe how Takako copes with her loneliness in *Days at the Morisaki Bookshop*.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is expected to provide both theoretical and practical contributions to the field of literary studies, particularly in psychological literary criticism that focuses on the theme of loneliness. Theoretically, this research strengthens the understanding of loneliness as a complex psychological condition that goes beyond simply being alone. By applying the theory of loneliness proposed by Perlman and Peplau, which defines loneliness as a discrepancy between desired relationships and actual relationships, this study emphasizes that loneliness is subjective and highly dependent on the quality of one's relationships. Within this framework, loneliness is understood as an emotional experience that arises when the need for closeness, attention, and connection is not fulfilled.

Practically, this research is relevant for readers and literary scholars who are interested in contemporary Japanese literature, especially works that portray the emotional experiences of female characters. This analysis shows how Takako's loneliness develops as a response to a relationship that fails to meet her expectations, and how she attempts to confront and reinterpret her experience. In addition, the findings of this study may serve as a reference for future research exploring themes such as loneliness, interpersonal relationships, or the emotional dynamics of literary characters using Perlman and Peplau's theory. Ultimately, this study affirms that loneliness is not merely a personal issue, but is closely connected to the quality of relationships and the shifting patterns of social life in modern society.

1.5 Scope and Limitation

The scope of this study focuses on the issue of loneliness as conceptualized in Perlman and Peplau's theory. It examines loneliness as a psychological condition arising from the discrepancy between desired and actual social relationships. The study specifically analyzes the causes of loneliness and the ways individuals cope with it within a literary context, using this theoretical framework to interpret the character's emotional experience.

This study is limited to the analysis of one novel, *Days at the Morisaki Bookshop* (2023) by Satoshi Yagisawa, with a focus on the main female character, Takako. The data are restricted to textual evidence, namely the words of narrator, the utterances of the characters presented in the novel. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to other literary works or broader social contexts. In addition, the study remains within the scope of literary analysis and does not involve empirical or clinical psychological investigation.