

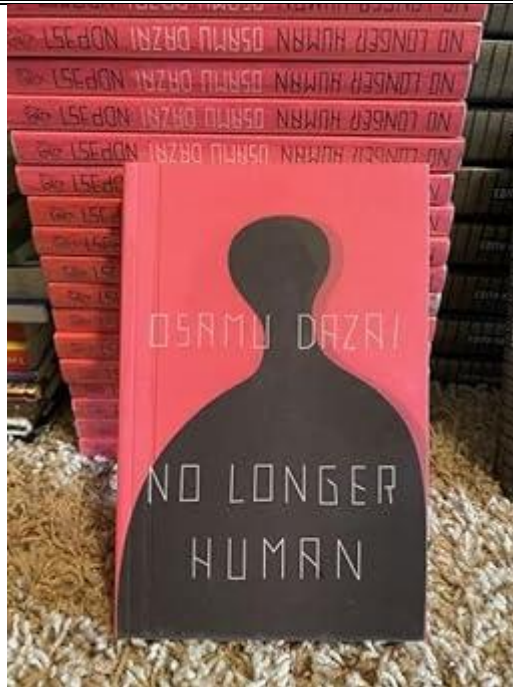
A Study on the Presence of Social Alienation and Depression in *No Longer Human*

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Abstract

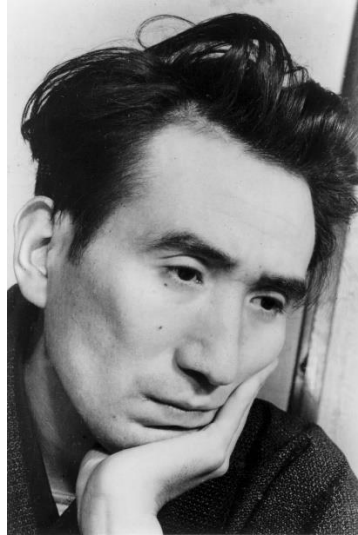
This article speaks about the story of the famous Japanese novel by Osamu Dazai *No Longer Human* and the protagonist Yozo's struggles with depression and social isolation. The story takes place in the 1930's, which is an important time in Japanese society. This article shows how a society can make a difference in the mental state of an individual and how

individualistic existence amongst the fellow citizens can go against the societal norms and can disturb mind, creating depression. The life of Yozo is shown in three phases, namely, one as a child, one when he was slightly older and one as an adult. These have been collectively used to complete the study. In the current scenario, the rate of depression is way higher, and the topic is highly worth researching. The novel presents Yozo's personal diaries in which he describes certain things about society and humanity.

Keywords: *No Longer Human*, Osamu Dazai, Yozo, Depression, Societal influence, social alienation, historical influence, struggles.

Introduction

The novel comes under Japanese Literature which is rich and diverse. Most of the writings are often related to the original life of the people in the society and their struggles to survive. Japan is a country with great cultural norms, its literature often speaks about its roots which reflect deep Japanese culture including elements such as Buddhist philosophy and Shinto, traditional customs and historical events, which makes its flavours rich. Classic Japanese Literature is all about poetic forms like Haiku and Waka. These short poems capture natural elements in Japan and showcase its **simplicity**. Historical epic like *Tale Of Genji* portrays the medieval era of Japan and its culture. These provide an insight of historical elements mixed with the mythology. In the 20th century the mix of magical realism and contemporary themes attracts readers from different countries.



Osamu Dazai (1909-1948)

Courtesy: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Osamu_Dazai

The famous Japanese author Shuji Tsushima known under the pen name Osamu Dazai was born in 1909. Dazai's father was a wealthy landowner in the Aomori Prefecture and later rose to prominence as a politician in the House of Peers in Japan. As a result, he was absent for the majority of Dazai's upbringing and passed away from lung cancer just before Dazai started high school in 1923. Afterwards, Dazai continued his education in literature at Hirosaki University, where he contributed to various student journals as an editor and writer. But after one of his favourite writers, Ryūnosuke Akutagawa, committed suicide in 1927, he quickly lost all interest in education. Soon after, he made an attempt of suicide. Dazai was saved by a passing boat, but his wife passed away. Over the next few years, Dazai experimented with his distinctively autobiographical approach, writing, and publishing several short pieces. In the 1930s, he attempted suicide once more but was saved. After an episode of appendicitis, he developed a painkiller addiction. In order to kick the habit, he was eventually admitted to a mental health facility. He talks about this experience in one of his best-known novels, *No Longer Human*. Dazai published numerous novels in the 1930s and 1940s, including what is arguably his most well-known work, *The Setting Sun* in 1947, despite his turbulent personal

life and agonizing battle with depression. In 1948, he committed double suicide by drowning with his mistress.

The Element of Social Alienation

No longer human explains what it is like to feel completely detached from the society. The novel explores the condition of totally detached and alienated from the society. The growth of a person certainly needs a hint of social relation in order to sustain a happy life. and interaction with others helps to improve the mental condition of a person. Yozo, the protagonist of the Novel, does not really have a connection with the people around him. He finds everything around him unnatural and impossible, because he thinks and feels at odds about human behaviour or society. He doesn't like how the only way of getting through is by imitating the social conduct. He is ready to imitate other people, which gradually made him even more lonely, and ultimately alienates himself. He thinks that if one hides the true nature. nobody will ever be able to genuinely connect with him. This is how the novel shows, how hard it can be for the people who feel alienated from the society. Since they feel alienated, it only exhilarates their sense of alienation.

The novel does not argue about social isolation, and it is not antisocial, but it simply follows Yozo's alienation. Yozo feels this way because he had a tragic misfortune in his past. He was sexually abused by his family's waiting staff as a child. This plays a vital role in his fear of humanity and his hesitancy towards humans. However, it is difficult to say that the traumatic experience is from a singular origin. The novel shows that some people are prone to feel excluded from the society.

Social Alienation rooted in sociological discourse describes the sense of separation and loneliness that people feel from the complex societal web. This term also refers to the objective

conditions, and the subjective feelings. Mainly the person feels like he/she is different and unlike the persons around him/her, he/she acts in a manner that causes physical or psychological harm to other people or their property, and this is considered antisocial behaviour.

Antisocial behaviour includes things like lying, stealing, assaulting others, being unkind to people, arguing with people, and engaging in sexual promiscuity. This misbehaviour is frequently accompanied by emotional or mental disorders and may also be considered a violation of the law. It can be separated from crime, which is an antisocial behaviour that is more serious and it involves breaking through the law. Some may include trying to take their own life. It should not be confused with antisocial personality disorder, which is characterized by persistently antisocial behaviour that manifests in a variety of ways throughout adulthood, including careless parenting, illegal behaviour, persistent aggression, repetitive lying, and reckless endangerment of others. According to research, social contexts, peer environments, family environments, and personality traits all have an impact on how antisocial behaviour develops and persists.

The Element of Depression

As a complicated mental health condition, depression has an impact on an individual's emotional, physical, and cognitive domains. Beyond the individual, it has a tremendous impact on interpersonal interactions and society dynamics. Fundamentally, depression transforms a person's emotional terrain by causing them to experience protracted melancholy, hopelessness, and a loss of interest in previously appreciated activities. People may have physical symptoms such as weariness, hunger changes, and sleep disturbances as a result of this emotional load, which exacerbates their problems. Depression can cause cognitive distortions, such as lowering one's sense of self-worth and encouraging pessimistic thought patterns. Making decisions and

focusing on details become difficult jobs that interfere with day-to-day living. Because depression is so sneaky, it frequently feeds a vicious cycle in which poor thinking amplifies unpleasant feelings, which in turn creates a vicious cycle. Depression knock-on effects, affect relationships as well, making it difficult to maintain bonds with loved ones and friends. Effective communication becomes difficult, and the withdrawal that is frequently linked to depression can cause feelings of loneliness in the afflicted person as well as in those close to them. Depression has a knock-on effect on relationships, making it difficult to maintain bonds with friends and family. It becomes difficult to communicate effectively, and the withdrawal that is frequently linked to depression can make the affected person and their loved ones feel alone. Depression has a significant financial cost to society due to increased absenteeism, lower productivity, and higher healthcare costs. The stigma associated with mental health disorders exacerbates the issue by deterring people from getting treatment and extending a cycle of suffering in silence.

No Longer Human explores how depression is viewed in society as well as the unfortunate stigma attached to mental health problems. There is hardly anyone in Yozo's life who truly understands his depression. In addition, even though he appears to have some friends in theory, they all seem to dislike him for his apparent inability to lead a normal life. When Tsuneko and Yozo decide to end their lives, Yozo survives and now has to deal with the intense stigma attached to suicide. He is taken straight from the hospital to jail after being accused of helping someone commit suicide. The way he is being treated specifically stigmatizes and penalizes him for having mental health problems. It doesn't help with his feelings of isolation and melancholy. Furthermore, by refusing to interact with him or see him, his father basically disowns him. Therefore, it is evident that Yozo's surroundings view his depression as deliberate antisocial behaviour that has to be disciplined rather than as something he needs assistance

with. Yozo's depression is clearly seen by those close to him as deliberate antisocial behaviour that has to be punished, rather than as something he needs support to deal with. It is understandable that Yozo finds it so challenging to fit in with the community given that he is shown such overt hostility during his most vulnerable and agonizing moments. Therefore, *No Longer Human* shows how the stigma was attached to mental health issues in the Japanese society of 1930s actually made it more likely that people like Yozo would have more trouble digesting and coping with their own unhappiness.

In our midst in India too, such a situation prevailed. Unfortunately, even today it can be easily observed in many places – villages, towns, and cities. The reading of *No Longer Human* would certainly help us reform our attitudes and treatments of those who are depressed. We should avoid making fun of the depressed and help them with our love and respect to overcome their depression, in addition to providing them with the most appropriate medicines and nursing.

Conclusion

Depression has a wide range of effects on a person, including their relationships, physical health, and ability to contribute to society in addition to their emotional state. The symptoms of depression can be lessened in both people and society at large by identifying the symptoms, advancing understanding, and creating an atmosphere that supports asking for help. Yozo's presentation lays the groundwork for the novel's examination of what it means to be human. The novel opens with the disconcerting implication that humans are not always entitled to a sense of identity or humanity, just because they are human. Instead, the subject of the photos appears to be distinct from the ordinary person in some way, as though Yozo's character has severed his ties to mankind and transformed him into something else entirely. The novel definitely presents a strong element of Depression and Social alienation as its content.

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