



Osamu Dazai's Perspective on Life and Death in *No Longer Human*: A Comparative Study of Attitudes Towards Death and Public Opinion

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Abstract. Study explored Osamu Dazai's perspectives on life and death as presented in his literary work *No Longer Human*, focusing on attitudes toward death and their comparison with contemporary public opinions in China. Using ChatGPT's sentiment analysis model, the research examines specific textual excerpts from *No Longer Human*, identifying a predominance of negative emotions associated with death, although positive and neutral sentiments also appear. In contrast, a public opinion survey conducted among 200 respondents in China shows a largely positive attitude toward death, particularly among younger age groups. The study highlights the stark differences between Dazai's literary exploration of death and the more optimistic societal views present in modern China, suggesting a complex interplay between cultural context and individual perceptions.

Keywords: Osamu Dazai; ChatGPT; Cross-cultural comparison; Chinese society; Japanese literature; Emotional analysis.

1 Introduction

The study of life and death perspectives has garnered significant scholarly attention worldwide, with several foundational works offering key insights. Kellehear suggests that such perspectives encompass individuals' views and beliefs regarding life, death, and the existence beyond.[9] These perspectives reflect one's understanding of the meaning and purpose of human existence, as well as beliefs about an afterlife. According to Kastenbaum, attitudes towards death form the core element of these perspectives.[7] His research highlights how these attitudes influence an individual's quality of life and mental health, suggesting that one's view of death plays a crucial role in shaping overall well-being. Similarly, Neimeyer explores how perspectives on life and death affect individuals' perceptions and responses to death, particularly influencing end-of-life decisions and the grieving process.[8]

Expanding on this, Wong and Griffin, A. investigates the cross-cultural variations in life and death perspectives and their social and psychological consequences.[3,13] This underscores the importance of regionally focused research, as cultural differences

significantly shape how death is perceived and experienced. For example, Clark highlighted that in Europe and North America, an individualistic approach is predominant, emphasizing self-determination and personal dignity in confronting death.[1] In contrast, Setel shows that in many African regions, research focuses on the communal impact of death, where community-centered approaches play a vital role in shaping perspectives on life and death.[12]

In Asia, research by Chow reveals that in China, life and death perspectives are deeply rooted in family and collectivist values, with a particular emphasis on familial relationships and ancestral ties.[2] This cultural framework fosters a collective approach to death, distinguishing it from the more individualistic views found in Western societies.

However, in Japan, like Riazanov, D. explored, the perspectives on life and death, particularly those articulated through literature, offer a unique lens for examination de facto.[6] Authors such as Osamu Dazai have developed distinct views on death, as seen in his seminal work *No Longer Human*. Despite the literary richness, studies that compare these perspectives with contemporary societal attitudes towards death in Japan are limited. Similarly, in China, while there is a noticeable gap between traditional and modern attitudes towards life and death, direct comparative studies remain scarce.

This study seeks to fill these gaps by focusing on the cultural context unique to Asia, with a particular emphasis on Japan and China. Drawing on discussions of *No Longer Human* by Aoyagi, Kobayashi and Odagiri, the research will analyze one of the core life and death perspectives in Dazai's work—attitudes towards death—using ChatGPT's sentiment analysis model.[4,5,11] In doing so, the study not only offers a novel methodological approach by applying advanced natural language processing (NLP) tools to literary analysis but also compares these findings with contemporary public attitudes towards death, as captured through opinion polls, which inspired by Kim.[10]

By integrating sentiment analysis with public survey data, this research presents a comprehensive and innovative methodology for understanding the complex interplay between cultural influences and individual attitudes towards death. This approach not only offers fresh insights into Dazai's work but also contributes to a deeper understanding of how life and death perspectives evolve within modern Asian societies.

2 Analysis of Attitudes Towards Death in *No Longer Human*

2.1 ChatGPT Sentiment Analysis Model

In this study, the sentiment analysis feature of ChatGPT-4o, a language model developed by OpenAI, was employed to assess the emotional tone within the text. ChatGPT's advanced natural language processing algorithms provided insights into the distribution of negative, positive, and neutral emotions throughout the textual data. This approach facilitates a more nuanced understanding of the underlying emotions expressed in the literature, contributing to a deeper analysis of the core sentiments conveyed in the narrative.

The trained ChatGPT model defines and determines the criteria for three categories of emotions in sentiment analysis: "negative," "positive," and "neutral." The definitions and criteria are as follows:

① Negative: This category includes words expressing emotions such as sadness, anger, fear, disappointment, and despair. In text analysis, words or phrases that suggest repression, distress, anxiety, or other negative impacts are classified as negative. Examples include "pain," "fear," and "despair."

② Positive: This category includes words that express emotions like happiness, satisfaction, excitement, and hope. In text analysis, words or phrases that suggest joy, contentment, self-esteem, or positive change are considered positive. Examples include "liberation," "happiness," and "hope."

③ Neutral: This category refers to words or phrases that do not clearly indicate positive or negative emotions. These types of emotions usually describe facts, observations, or expressions lacking strong emotional coloring. Examples include "accept," "reality," and "fact."

2.2 Analysis

The following sentences were selected by the author from No Longer Human as representative of attitudes towards death:

① "I know that death is inevitable, but every time I think about it, my heart feels heavy."

② "She despaired of life and frequently thought of suicide."

③ "Facing death, I feel a strange sense of calm, as if all pain is about to end."

④ "His death plunged the entire family into deep sorrow."

⑤ "Despite feeling fear, I accepted death as part of life."

⑥ "At that moment, I felt as if I was being liberated from this world of pain."

⑦ "Death was no longer a source of fear, but an anticipation for the future."

⑧ "Every time I see illness take a life, I reflect deeply on the fragility of life."

⑨ "His view of death was pessimistic and cold, affecting his relationships with others."

⑩ "In the final moments of his life, he showed remarkable courage and a resolve to accept death."

These sentences are the objects of analysis using ChatGPT's sentiment analysis model.

2.3 Results

Using ChatGPT's sentiment analysis model, as shown in Fig.1, the results indicate that 57.1% of the text reflects negative attitudes, 14.3% reflects positive attitudes, and 28.6% reflects neutral attitudes. From this, it can be inferred that the majority of Osamu Dazai's attitude towards death is characterized by negative emotions. However, it is important to note that when combining neutral and positive emotions, they account for 42.9%, which is not an insignificant proportion. Therefore, Dazai's attitude towards

death should not be summarized simply as negative; a more nuanced interpretation is required.

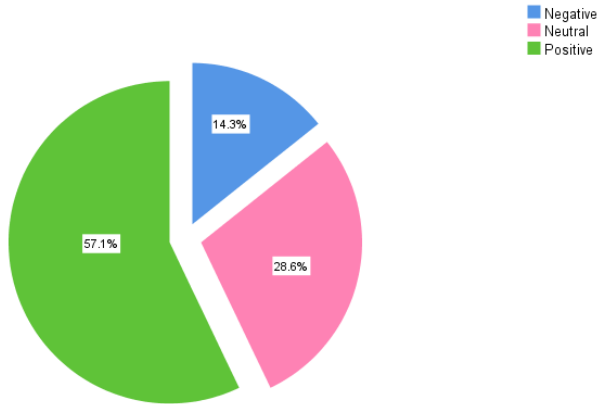


Fig. 1. Analysis of Dazai Osamu's Attitude Towards Death in *No Longer Human*

3 Public Opinion Survey in China

3.1 Concerning the Survey

In this study, a survey was conducted in China targeting 200 general respondents across four age groups. The question posed was: "Which of the following emotional tendencies most closely reflects your attitude or impression towards death?" The four age groups were as follows: under 20 years old, 20 to 40 years old, 40 to 60 years old, and over 60 years old. The responses were then analyzed to identify the unique characteristics of each age group.

3.2 Results and Analysis

Review and summarize all the data, shown in Fig 2.. The results from the public opinion survey conducted in China, which targeted 200 people, show that 63.0% (126 people) had a positive attitude, 9.0% (18 people) had a negative attitude, and 28.0% (56 people) had a neutral attitude towards death. Therefore, without considering age, it appears that the general population in China tends to have a relatively positive attitude towards death.

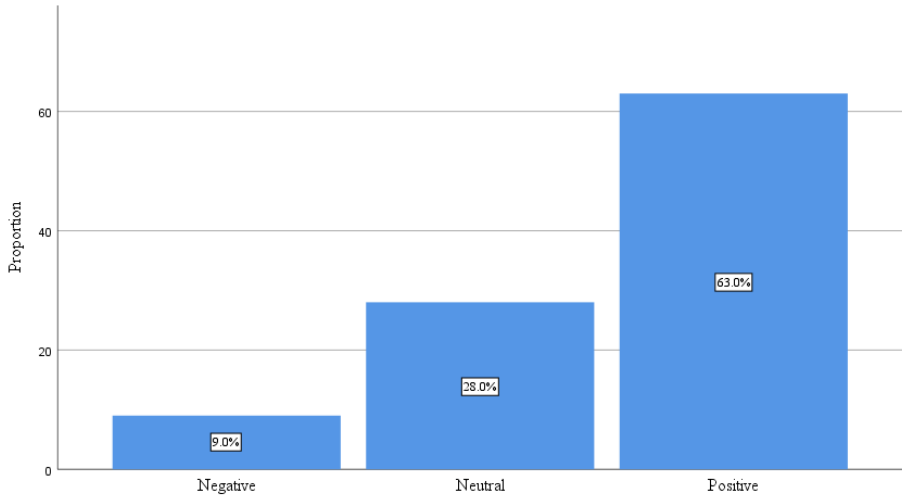


Fig. 2. Comprehensive Survey Public Opinion Towards Death

Next, we will analyze the results while distinguishing by age groups.

① Under 20 years old ($x < 20$, “x” means the age of respondents)

Table 1. Public Opinion Survey on Attitudes Towards Death under 20 years old

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Negative	3	7.5	7.5	7.5
	Positive	28	70.0	70.0	70.0
	Neutral	9	22.5	22.5	22.5
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	100.0

As shown in Table 1, the survey revealed that among the 40 respondents under 20 years old in China, the majority held a positive attitude towards death. Additionally, a notable number of individuals exhibited a neutral attitude.

② From 20 to 40 years old ($20 \leq x < 40$)

Table 2. Public Opinion Survey on Attitudes Towards Death from 20 to 40

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Negative	4	5.3	5.3	5.3
	Positive	49	65.3	65.3	65.3
	Neutral	22	29.3	29.3	29.3
	Total	75	100.0	100.0	100.0

As shown in Table 2, in the age group of 20 to 40 years old, valid data from 75 respondents revealed that 4 people had a negative attitude, 49 had a positive attitude, and 22 had a neutral attitude towards death. Among these, it is clear that the 49 people with a positive attitude represent the largest proportion.

③ From 40 to 60 years old($40 \leq x < 60$)

Table 3. Public Opinion Survey on Attitudes Towards Death from 40 to 60

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Negative	9	13.2	13.2	13.2
	Positive	40	58.8	58.8	58.8
	Neutral	19	27.9	27.9	27.9
	Total	68	100.0	100.0	100.0

According to Table 3, in the age group of 40 to 60 years old, the majority of respondents also held a positive attitude towards death. In addition, 27.9% had a neutral attitude, and 13.2% had a negative attitude (rounded to the nearest tenth). It can be said that a considerable number of people fall into each of these categories.

④ Over 60 years old ($x \geq 60$)

Table 4. Public Opinion Survey on Attitudes Towards Death Over 60 years old

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Negative	2	11.8	11.8	11.8
	Positive	9	52.9	52.9	52.9
	Neutral	6	35.3	35.3	35.3
	Total	17	100.0	100.0	100.0

According to Table 4, while the majority of people over 60 also have a positive attitude towards death, similar to the previous three age groups, the proportion of those with neutral or negative attitudes has noticeably increased.

4 Conclusion

This study analyzed the attitudes and emotions towards death expressed in Osamu Dazai's *No Longer Human* using a set number of examples, revealing that negative emotions were the most frequently depicted. In contrast, a public opinion survey conducted in China demonstrated that the general public's attitude towards death was significantly more straightforward and positive. This stark difference suggests that Dazai's perspective on death, as a core aspect of his broader life and death philosophy, contrasts sharply with contemporary attitudes in China.

However, there are several limitations to this study that may have impacted the accuracy of the findings. First, the analysis of *No Longer Human* involved a relatively small number of text samples analyzed through ChatGPT's sentiment analysis model.

Expanding the number of texts or examples would likely enhance the reliability and precision of the conclusions. Additionally, while ChatGPT's sentiment analysis model provides a valuable tool for understanding emotional tones, it is important to acknowledge that it remains an AI model with inherent limitations. Given that it is trained on vast amounts of data, there is a possibility of divergence from human interpretation. As the model evolves and its accuracy improves, future studies may benefit from increasingly precise sentiment analysis.

Moreover, the uneven distribution of participants across different age groups in the public opinion survey may have affected the generalizability of the results. Ensuring an equal number of participants—such as 50 respondents per age group—would help provide a more balanced representation of attitudes across demographics. This would enable a more robust comparison between literary perspectives and societal attitudes, deepening our understanding of how views on life and death differ across cultural and generational lines.

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