

Exploring Cultural Values through Expressions of Shame: An Appraisal Analysis of Japanese Novels

ABSTRACT

This research explores the Japanese cultural values reflected in the expression of shame. In this context, shame is viewed as an evaluative action, as the shame experienced by an individual can be predicted based on their appraisal of the propositions being discussed. The selected data sources are four novels by a young author, Rurika Suzuki. These novels represent the adolescent world in Japan, as they are constructed from a teenager's understanding of her reality, providing a suitable context for investigating the expressions of shame she experiences. By employing a qualitative method, this research aims to obtain a comprehensive understanding through the application of an analytical framework that elaborates on appraisal theory, affiliation theory, and *haji no bunka* 'shame culture'. Analyzing utterances expressing shame by Japanese teenagers reveals Japanese cultural values, including *amae* 'interdependence', *shudan ishiki* 'group awareness', *sekentei* 'reputation', and *honne-tatema* 'true feelings-public presentation'. These cultural values are interpreted through graduation, attitude, and ideational resources. This research concludes that the shame experienced by adolescent characters in the novels is not only negative but can also be positive. It is considered negative when shame arises from concerns about negative judgments from others, while it is viewed as positive when shame emerges as a reaction to praise or as a form of politeness. The contribution of this research to linguistic studies lies in offering an analytical framework that can be applied to conduct an in-depth analysis of the cultural values that are discursively negotiated within discourse through appraisal analysis.

Keywords: Affiliation; Appraisal; Cultural values; Shame; Japanese adolescents

INTRODUCTION

Shame is a common experience in an individual's life, occurring when one becomes aware of their perceived lack of worth, powerlessness, or incompetence in meeting social expectations. Although shame is viewed as an individual experience, it can also be understood as a cultural phenomenon (Diegoli & Öhman, 2024; Thomas et al., 2020; Yamawaki et al., 2015). For example, shame is regarded as an essential and inherent aspect of every individual in Japanese society. From an early age, each person in Japan is taught to recognize appropriate behaviors based on societal expectations to avoid experiencing shame. The term *haji no bunka* 恥の文化 'shame culture' indicates that Japanese society places a high value on the culture of shame (Benedict, 2005). A strong sensitivity to the judgments of others compels individuals to be cautious in their behavior to align with society's norms and moral values. The culture of shame in Japanese society is described as a form of cultural uniqueness. It is considered unique because shame in Japanese society manifests repeatedly and can be conceptualized (Wierzbicka, 1997).

The shame experienced by speakers or writers from a shame culture is particularly intriguing when examined from the perspective of adolescence. The adolescent period in Japan is known as *hageshii jidai* 激し時代 'an age full of challenges'. During this time, Japanese adolescents are confronted with challenges in every aspect of life, such as physical and psychological changes, and they are also expected to maintain social harmony within their school, family, and peer environments (Fukuzawa & LeTendre, 2001). Japanese adolescents

have characteristics similar to those of adolescents in general, demonstrating a dominance of individualism. However, this attitude is not supported by a society that firmly adheres to collectivist cultural values (Sugimura, 2021). This warrants further examination, as contemporary Japanese adolescents are believed to still implement many cultural values. These cultural values pertain to standards of human behavior that involve consensual criteria regarding what should be prioritized, deemed ethical, valued, and important within society (Giddens, 2006).

The shame experienced by adolescents and Japanese society has predominantly been examined from a psychological perspective (Boiger et al., 2022; Thomas et al., 2020; Yamawaki et al., 2015). In contrast, previous research investigating culture and shame from a linguistic perspective has employed semantic approaches developed alongside disciplines such as the cognitive semantics-structured model (Rusch, 2004), psychology's comparison of emotion component theory (Nishfullayli, 2012), natural semantic metalanguage (Hasada, 2000), and corpus-based contrastive analysis (Diegoli & Öhman, 2024). These four studies emphasize analyzing the meanings of words used to express shame in the Japanese language. Furthermore, these studies do not regard shame as an evaluative action that can be predicted based on the appraisal of the speaker or writer within discourse (Alba-Juez, 2018). Additionally, the studies have not investigated the shame expressed by Japanese adolescent speakers or writers.

This research is based on the perspectives of Bednarek (2009) and Thompson & Hunston (2003), who assert that *all emotive language is evaluative*. As an evaluative action, emotions not only express the attitudes experienced by individuals but also reflect the cultural values they uphold. Four studies have applied this perspective to analyze emotions (Bouko, 2020; Irshad et al., 2025; Márquez, 2017; Ngo & Spreadborough, 2022). However, these studies do not thoroughly investigate the relationship between emotional expressions and cultural values. Therefore, to complement previous research, this study explores the cultural values reflected through expressions of shame. To achieve this objective, it is necessary to delineate it into two research questions: (1) How are social bonds constructed from utterances containing expressions of shame in the Japanese-language novels of Rurika Suzuki, and (2) What Japanese cultural values are constructed by social bonds through the affiliation process.

This research employed the concept of *haji no bunka* 'shame culture' (Benedict, 2005; Lebra, 2007), appraisal theory (Martin & White, 2005), and affiliation theory (Knight, 2010; Martin, 2010) to develop an analytical framework. The framework explores the Japanese cultural values constructed through social bonds in utterances containing shame expressions. This study aims to contribute to linguistic research by providing an in-depth analysis of expressions of shame examined as evaluative actions, which are typically used to investigate attitudes, perspectives, and appraisals within discourse. Additionally, this research presents an analytical framework that can be utilized to explore cultural values through expressions of shame.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section explains the concepts used in the research, including the concept of *haji no bunka* 'shame culture', emotions as evaluation, appraisal theory, affiliation theory, and cultural values. These theoretical foundations create an analytical framework to address the research objectives.

HAJI NO BUNKA 'SHAME CULTURE'

Shame is a complex self-conscious emotion encompassing various interrelated aspects, including feelings of worthlessness, powerlessness, failure, and self-hatred (Boiger et al., 2022). This emotion often arises when the self is negatively evaluated by oneself or by the public (Yamawaki

et al., 2015). Personal understanding refers to when an individual evaluates themselves as incompetent or despicable, while public understanding pertains to observing embarrassing behavior or situations by others. Meanwhile, Zinck (2008) classifies shame as a self-referential emotion, in which individuals evaluate themselves in response to their interactions with the social environment. This classification assumes that each individual is part of a social group and interacts with others. The emotion of shame highlights the significance of social norms and expectations that exist within society.

In the context of Japan, Benedict (2005) employs the term shame culture. This term explains the differences between the characteristics of Japanese and American societies. Benedict argues that shame in Japanese society is a reaction to criticism or negative perceptions from others. However, Lebra (2007) criticized Benedict's viewpoint by stating that, for the Japanese, *haji* 恥 'shame' is not solely caused by judgments or criticisms from others but also arises from receiving special attention, regardless of whether that attention is critical or praiseworthy. When Japanese individuals receive special attention, they may feel shame (*hajiru* 恥じる). Benedict's concept of Japanese shame considers only one aspect: shame resulting from pressure or criticism from the public. It does not account for shame as a reaction to praise. Therefore, in this research, *haji no bunka* 恥の文化 'the culture of shame' is understood as a form of sensitivity among the Japanese to both negative and positive evaluations or perceptions about themselves from society, which can elicit shame. Additionally, the emotion of shame arises when Japanese individuals feel imperfect or perceive their abilities as inferior to those of others.

EMOTIONS AS EVALUATION

As explained in the previous section, this research is based on the perspective that emotional expressions contain evaluations. Evaluation refers to expressing the speaker's attitudes or stances regarding a viewpoint or feelings about a particular entity or proposition being discussed (Thompson & Hunston, 2003). Bednarek (2009) further adds that evaluation serves as a framework for analyzing judgments about entities or propositions, such as whether they are good news or bad news, important or unimportant, comprehensive or non-comprehensive, possible or impossible, and so forth.

The perspectives proposed by Bednarek (2009) and Thompson & Hunston (2003) are deemed suitable for this research because an individual's experience of shame can be anticipated based on their appraisal of the entity or proposition being discussed (Alba-Juez, 2018). Furthermore, shame involves the Japanese sensitivity to negative and positive evaluations and societal perceptions of themselves. The linguistic approach utilized to investigate evaluations within discourse is appraisal theory. Bednarek (2009) asserts that the appraisal theory advanced by Martin & White (2005) offers a comprehensive analytical framework concerning the experiencer of emotion (the emoter as appraiser), the phenomenon or event that elicits the emotional response (trigger as appraised), and the type of emotion expressed (appraising items).

APPRAISAL THEORY, AFFILIATION THEORY, AND CULTURAL VALUE

Appraisal theory was developed by Martin & White (2005), who systematically model the language of evaluation. Appraisal resides within the discourse semantic strata of interpersonal meaning in systemic functional linguistic studies. This theory pertains to how writers or speakers express their feelings and values, convey their status, and establish relations of alignment and rapport between themselves and actual or potential respondents (Martin & White, 2005). Appraisal encompasses three evaluative resources: attitude, engagement, and graduation. Attitude is related to the resources used to evaluate an individual's feelings,

including emotional reactions (affect), judgments of someone's behavior (judgment), and aesthetic responses to something (appreciation). In realizing attitude, appraisal distinguishes between explicitly stated (inscribed) and implicitly stated (invoked) attitudes. Engagement relates to the meaning-making resources the writer or speaker employs to negotiate their discourse's arguments and express their stance. The final resource is graduation, which determines the intensity of the evaluation. Among the various possibilities for exploring expressions of shame offered by appraisal theory, this research pays particular attention to graduation and attitude resources. These two resources emerge as the primary means through which Japanese adolescents express feelings of shame.

Regarding applying appraisal theory to explain how graduation and attitude contribute to Japanese cultural values, this research references previous studies that have employed similar approaches. For instance, Oteiza & Merino (2012) utilized appraisal to illustrate how graduation contributes to constructing ethnic identity among Mapuche adolescents. Etaywe & Zappavigna (2021) applied appraisal to analyze identity construction in terrorist discourse. Beyond individual identity, Knight (2010) and Martin (2010) argue that appraisal theory can also explain the construction of communal and cultural identities through the affiliation process. For example, Zeng & Zhu (2024) employed multimodal appraisal analysis to elucidate how cultural identities are represented in Chinese web-based ink and wash cartoons. The affiliation theory is paired with individuation, a relatively new aspect of systemic functional linguistics (Knight, 2010; Martin, 2010). To understand these two concepts, it is essential to cite the illustrations and explanations provided by Martin (2010:24).

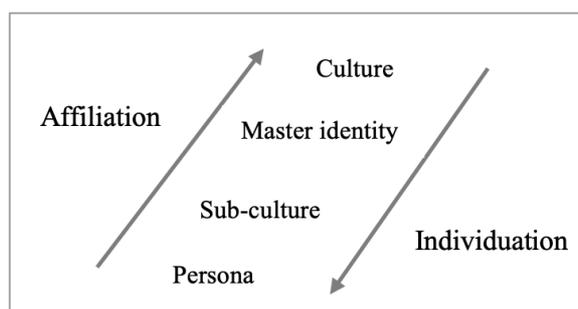


FIGURE 1. Affiliation and Individuation

Figure 1 illustrates the bidirectional lines of affiliation and individuation: bottom-up and top-down. The affiliation line, which moves from the bottom to the top, helps one understand personas that align within sub-culture, configuring master identities (generation, gender, class, ethnicity) and shaping culture. Conversely, moving from the top to the bottom, the individuation line allows one to observe a culture divided into smaller communities through master identities and sub-culture down to the personas that constitute individual members (Martin, 2010). This implies that the affiliation process can interpret how individuals connect with the culture of society (Knight, 2010). Therefore, the concept of affiliation from this perspective provides insights into the ongoing semiotic construction of communal identity. It is understood that investigating the affiliation process in texts can reveal the cultural values discursively negotiated within discourse.

The cultural values discussed in this research refer to the standards of human behavior that involve consensual criteria regarding what should be prioritized, ethical, valuable, and important (Giddens, 2006). These values encompass notions of good and evil in social life. Therefore, cultural values are understood as socially desired standards that serve as guidelines for individuals to behave within society, expressed through language. The cultural values in question for this study are *haji no bunka* 'shame culture'.

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative research was conducted to gain an understanding through a clear methodological framework aimed at uncovering social phenomena (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The social phenomena relate to cultural values, which are socially desired standards serving as guidelines for individuals' behavior in Japanese society. These values are expressed through language, particularly through expressions of shame. The focus of this research is not on the frequency with which a word is used to express shame but on the exploration of the cultural values of Japan reflected in expressions of shame.

DATA

The shame expressed by adolescent writers or speakers has received less attention from researchers, who tend to focus more on the general study of shame within society. However, writers or speakers aged between 12 and 19 have unique characteristics. In Japan, Japanese adolescents exhibit traits similar to those of adolescents worldwide, demonstrating individualism. Nevertheless, a society that adheres to tradition and cultural homogeneity does not support this attitude. The dynamics of Japanese adolescent life are vividly depicted in the Japanese-language novels of Rurika Suzuki, a young author who was 14 years old when she made her debut. As readers of her novels, the researchers appreciate Rurika Suzuki's honesty in portraying the lives of adolescents in Japan. Her works are considered representations of the adolescent world in Japan, constructed according to the image and understanding teenagers have of their world, thereby providing an appropriate context for investigating the expressions of shame they experience daily. The researchers used four novels published between 2018 and 2022 to obtain a contemporary context of Japanese adolescents' lives. These novels are (1) *Sayounara, Tanaka-san* さようなら、田中さん 'Goodbye, Tanaka-san', (2) *Juuyonsai, ashita no jikanwari* 14歳、明日の時間割 '14 Years old, Tomorrow's timetable', (3) *Taiyou wa hitori bocchi* 太陽は一人ぼっち 'Wish upon a star', and (4) *Rakka Ryuusui* 落花流水.

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

The analysis of cultural values in this research was conducted using an analytical framework that elaborates on affiliation theory (Knight, 2010; Martin, 2010), appraisal theory (Martin & White, 2005), and the concept of *haji no bunka* 'shame culture' (Benedict, 2005; Lebra, 2007). This analytical framework is a modified version of the one employed by Zeng and Zhu (2024).

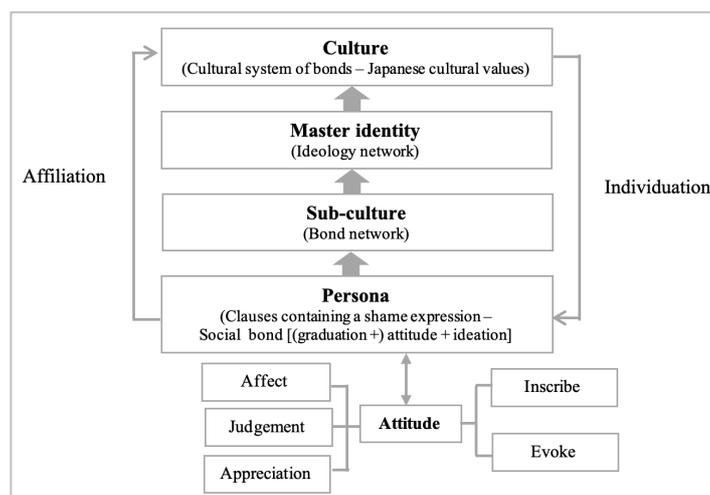


FIGURE 2. Analytical framework

First, the construction of cultural values begins with social bonds, which serve as the entry point or minimal unit within the framework. This is realized through couplings of clauses containing expressions of shame. Clauses with expressions of shame were identified by applying the concept of shame culture articulated by Benedict (2005) and Lebra (2007). Meanwhile, according to Knight (2010) and Martin (2010), couplings refer to a linguistic pattern of interpersonal meaning combined with ideational meaning. The combination of [(*graduation*) + *attitude* + *ideation*] can provide information regarding the shared values and how these values are aligned among participants. However, couplings focus on the analysis of attitudinal meaning. Second, the coupling of [(*graduation*) + *attitude* + *ideation*] was grouped into bond networks that share common values from persona to sub-culture. Third, this series of values was further generalized into an ideological network representing the master identity of a community. Finally, the master identities were aggregated to form a cultural system of bonds that reflects the shared values recognized by all community members. The cultural system of bonds in question refers to Japanese cultural values. The proposed framework illustrated in Figure 2 was used to analyze the cultural values communicated through expressions of shame in Japanese adolescent novels.

DATA ANALYSIS: EXPLORING JAPANESE CULTURAL VALUES THROUGH EXPRESSIONS OF SHAME

At the data analysis stage, this research identified 46 utterances expressing shame by Japanese teenagers in novels by Rurika Suzuki. The data were coded and analyzed according to the framework proposed in the previous section. The analysis explored the cultural values reflected in expressions of shame. Japanese cultural values were examined through the affiliation process established by social bonds and bond networks, as shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1. The Social Bonds and Bond Networks of Japanese Cultural Values

Cultural Values		Bond networks	Social Bonds
<i>Amae</i> 'Interdependence'	Concerns about judgment or negative perceptions from others	Shame due to self-perceived deficiencies; Shame due to the inability to meet social expectations; Shame due to being different from Japanese society in general.	[(graduation: force) + (-ve affect/judgment/appreciation) + (ideation: self-weakness)] [(graduation: force) + (-ve affect/judgment/appreciation) + (ideation: negative events)] [(graduation: force) + (-ve affect/judgment/appreciation) + (ideation: being different)]
<i>Shudan ishiki</i> 'Group awareness'	Collective shame	Shame due to attitudes or situations exhibited by <i>uchi no hito</i> 'psychically or socially internal domain'.	[(-ve affect/judgment) + (ideation: negative event/being different from society)]
<i>Sekentei</i> 'Reputation'	Social evaluation of behavior	Shame due to behaviors that violate moral values within Japanese society.	[(graduation: force) + (-ve affect/judgment) + (ideation: negative event that violate moral values)]
<i>Honne – Tatamae</i> 'True feelings- public presentation'	Politeness in communication	Shame as a form of politeness towards others; Shame due to receiving praise or attention from others.	[(graduation: force) + (+ve affect/appreciation) + (ideation: be kind to others)] [(graduation: force) + (+ve affect/appreciation) + (ideation: compliment/attention from others)]

Japanese cultural values are expressed through various social bonds and bond networks, which converge at the ideology network level to form a master identity. This master identity is associated with Japanese cultural values. The cultural values include *amae* ‘interdependent’, *shudan ishiki* ‘group awareness’, *sekentei* ‘reputation’, and *honne-tatemae* ‘true feelings-public presentation’.

Amae ‘Interdependence’

Amae 甘え refers to the trait of dependency or the tendency to rely on others or groups (Wierzbicka, 1997). This reliance engenders anxiety about being rejected or ostracized by the social environment. Consequently, this concern regarding distancing and exclusion makes individuals more sensitive to *haji* 恥 ‘shame’. The cultural value of *amae* ‘interdependence’ is interpreted through social bonds as shown in Table 1. The following is a context of expressions of shame that reflect *amae* ‘interdependence’.

Excerpt (1)

「えへへ。まあ」笑いで返しておいたが、級友たちの気の毒そうな目はしみた。しかしそれもこれも別に人に迷惑をかけていない個人競技だからいいのだ。多少恥ずかしい思いをするだけ。

‘The pitying gazes from my classmates felt piercing, even though I responded with a laugh, ‘hehe.’ However, it is okay because this individual competition does not disturb others too much. I feel that this is a little embarrassing.’

The shame experienced by Asuka-chan in excerpt (1) is constructed through social bonds [(*graduation: force*) + (*-ve affect*) + (*ideation: self-weakness*)]. This emotion arises when Asuka-chan participates in a marathon race at school. At the beginning of the race, she makes every effort to run, but midway through, she cannot continue and decides to walk to the finish line (*ideation: self-weakness*). Asuka-chan’s inability to run to the finish line elicits reactions from her classmates in pitying gazes, as if they mock her shortcomings. This creates psychological discomfort because others recognize Asuka-chan’s limitations, which makes her ashamed. The presence of the adverb *tashoo* 多少 ‘more or less’ (*graduation: force*) attached to *hazukashii* 恥ずかしい ‘embarrassing’ (*inscribed -ve affect*) indicates that the emotional intensity experienced by Asuka-chan is a mild level of shame. The shame experienced by Asuka-chan is assessed to have a negative polarity because she is aware that others are observing her, as her actions are perceived as not meeting the ideals of her peers at school.

Expressions of shame can also be observed through physiological symptoms evident in the emoter's body, such as changes in facial expression. The messages conveyed by a person's body rarely deceive and are more indicative of an individual's true feelings. Excerpt (2) illustrates a teenage character called Aimi-chan experiencing shame, which is reflected in her facial expression turning red.

Excerpt (2)

愛海ちゃんは「女・高田文夫」になりたいのだと言う。高田文夫先生が、ああ言った、こう言った、こんなことを書いていた、とよく話している。私は高田文夫という人を知らなかったが、愛海ちゃんが「このお方です」と頬を赤らめながら見せてくれたスマホ画面の写真是オッサンだった。

‘Aimi-chan said she wants to be ‘the female version of Fumio Takada.’ She often talks about how Takada-sensei said this, said that, and wrote things like this. I do not know who Fumio Takada is, but Aimi-chan showed me a photo on her phone and said, ‘This is him,’ with her cheeks flushed. The photo she showed me on the phone was of an elderly man.’

The shame experienced by Aimi-chan in excerpt (2) is constructed through social bonds [(*-ve affect*) + (*ideation: being different from society*)]. Shame is implicitly realized through

physiological changes in her face, particularly her cheeks, which transition from a normal color to flushed (*invoked –ve affect*). This change in Aimi-chan occurs when she says *kono okata desu* このお方です ‘This is him’ while showing a photo of her idol, Fumio Takada. The shame experienced by Aimi-chan embodies her sensitivity to others’ judgments regarding her idol. Instead of idolizing a young superstar, Aimi-chan admires an older man, which is uncommon among teenagers in general (*ideation: being different from society*). Such a situation triggers negative judgments from Aimi-chan’s peers upon hearing it.

It can be argued that the shame experienced by the aforementioned teenage characters is constructed through various social bonds, forming bond networks characterized by inadequacy, failing to meet social expectations, and shame for behaving differently than Japanese society. These three value chains at the bond network level converge to represent a master identity, specifically the shame that arises as a form of sensitivity among Japanese individuals towards the views or judgments of others. This sensitivity emerges from the concern of being distanced or abandoned by peers at school if they engage in embarrassing behavior. The fear of exclusion from the group arises because Japanese individuals depend significantly on others or groups.

Shudan Ishiki ‘Group awareness’

The role of groups in Japanese society is vital for individuals. When someone experiences shame, that emotion is not only borne by the individual concerned but also shared by their group, or vice versa (Lebra, 2007). This cultural value is known as *shudan ishiki* 集団意識 ‘group awareness’. *Shudan ishiki* is interpreted through social bonds as shown in Table 1. The following are some contexts of expressions of shame that reflect *shudan ishiki* ‘group awareness’.

Excerpt (3)

「そんなことないよ。実を言うとね、私もそう思ったことあるんだ。自分のお母さんのこと大みたいて。食べる時はいつも、尻尾振って夢中でエサを食べる大みたいに、一心不乱に美味しそうに食べるから。だから自分の心の中でひっそり思っていたことを、三上君に見透かされたような気がして、びっくりして恥ずかしかったの」

‘That is not true. I have thought like that too. My mother is like *Dai*. Every time she eats, she eats like a big fish, swishing her tail and devouring her food. That is why I feel that Mikami-kun has discovered what I have secretly been thinking. I was shocked and ashamed.’

Hana-chan realizes her shame through social bonds [(*–ve affect/judgment*) + (*ideation: being different from society*)]. Hana-chan expresses her shame by saying *hazukatta* 恥ずかしかった ‘ashamed’ (*inscribed –ve affect*). Hana-chan experiences this emotion when she becomes aware that her mother’s shortcomings are known to others (*invoked –ve judgment*). The deficiency is her mother eating without regard for etiquette, resembling a gluttonous fish devouring food (*ideation: being different from society*). This aligns with Hasada’s (2000) assertion that an individual’s unusual behavior in society can evoke feelings of shame, especially when such behavior is recognized by others, potentially leading to negative judgments. Although this embarrassing action is not her fault, Hana-chan still feels shame.

Hasada (2000) and Lebra (2007) argue that the source of shame is not solely caused by oneself but can also originate from others outside oneself. This includes *uchi no hito* 内の人 ‘psychically or socially internal domain’. This term arises alongside the term *soto no hito* 外の人 ‘psychically or socially external domain’, which is used by Japanese society to delineate the boundary between the individual and others in their vicinity (Ide, 2012). Therefore, the emotion of shame experienced by Hana-chan in excerpt (3) is understood to imply that the actions of an individual not only affect themselves but also have repercussions for all members within the same internal domain.

The culture of shame upheld by Japanese society continues to significantly impact individuals' behavior. However, the teenage character Asuka-*chan* exhibits a different perspective. She remains indifferent when her weaknesses are known to others. She believes that as long as her weaknesses do not harm others, she maintains this indifferent attitude.

Excerpt (4)

自分ひとりで醜態を晒し、恥をかいているだけならまだいいが、周囲に迷惑をかけていると思うといたたまれない

'It is not a problem if I only expose and **embarrass** myself. However, I cannot bear the thought that it could cause issues for the people around me.'

The shame experienced by Asuka-*chan* in excerpt (4) is rooted in her dislike for physical education at school. The shame felt by Asuka-*chan* is expressed through social bonds [(–ve affect) + (ideation: negative event)]. At the beginning of the story, Asuka-*chan* always feels intimidated when participating in sports because she believes she has tried her hardest, yet people still say she is slow and weak. For instance, her inability to catch a basketball pass from Nishijima-*san* caused her nostrils to bleed. This situation does not genuinely make her feel ashamed. However, the expression *shuui ni meiwaku o kakete iru* 周囲に迷惑をかけている 'causing problems for those around her' implies that the emotion of shame arises more from Asuka-*chan*'s inability to meet the expectations of her teammates (ideation: negative event). Her teammates hope she will score points in the basketball game. This deficiency creates feelings of shame for the other team members. In addition to shame, excerpt (4) demonstrates a teenager's indifference towards the embarrassing situation she has caused. The indifferent attitude exhibited by Asuka-*chan* reflects one of the characteristics of adolescence. Although Japanese teenagers have been taught about the culture of shame, the characteristics of adolescence do not simply disappear. Asuka-*chan* makes various efforts to be accepted by her school basketball team.

It can be stated that the shame experienced by Japanese teenagers in excerpts (3) and (4) is constructed through social bonds, which then form bond networks characterized by feelings of shame arising from the actions or situations created by members within the internal domain (*uchi no hito* 内の人). This bond network is affiliated with *shudan ishiki*, which posits that every action or event performed by an individual impacts themselves and all group members.

Sekentei 'Reputation'

Sekentei 世間体 relates to an individual's self-esteem concerning societal judgments about behaviors that should align with moral values in Japanese society. A person's reputation or good name must be preserved to avoid being looked down upon in the eyes of others. The social bonds and bond networks that construct the cultural value of *sekentei* are [(–ve affect/judgment) + (ideation: negative event that violates moral values)]. As illustrated in quotation (5), an older man receives negative judgment from his surroundings, as evidenced by several individuals directing their phones at him (invoked –ve judgment) because he attempts to deceive a junior high school student into obtaining a painting for free (ideation: negative event that violates moral values).

Excerpt (5)

取り押さえられるオッサン。あとから応援に駆けつけた警官。サイレンの音。何かと集まってくる人々。スマホを向けている人もいて、思わず顔を隠す。

An older man is arrested. Then, a police officer comes to assist in apprehending him. The sound of a siren. People gather to see what is happening. Some individuals direct their phones at him, and unbeknownst to him, he hides his face.

The older man in excerpt (5) feels that his reputation or good name will be tarnished if the wider community becomes aware of his actions. Therefore, he unconsciously hides his face (*invoked –ve affect*) when several individuals direct their phones at him to take photos. This behavior is rooted in the cultural value of *sekentei* ‘reputation’. The man's reputation must be well-maintained to avoid being looked down upon by society due to his actions. In this context, the shame experienced by the older man is associated with feelings of disgrace for violating moral values within Japanese society. While Christians and Muslims may rely more on threats or punishment from God, the Japanese utilize feelings of shame as a psychological sanction to keep themselves on the right path. This sentiment is echoed by Benedict (2005) and Hasada (2000), who assert that the morality of the Japanese is grounded in their sense of shame.

Honne-Tatemaie ‘True feelings-public presentation’

Honne-tatemaie 本音・建前 is a cultural value used to maintain social harmony (Miyama, 2023). *Honne* refers to the true desires and feelings of the speaker, which are generally not displayed publicly. In contrast, *tatemaie* represents the desires and feelings expressed for various reasons or purposes. These purposes typically align with prevailing social or cultural norms, such as avoiding offending others or causing them shame. The social bond and network bond that construct the cultural value of *honne-tatemaie* are [(*graduation: force*) + (+ve *affect/appreciation*) + (*ideation: compliment or attention from others/be kind to others*)]. The following are some contexts of expressions of shame that reflect the cultural value of *honne-tatemaie*.

Excerpt (6)

川沿いの道に差しかかると、野間君が足を止め、カバンからコバルトブルーのマフラーを取り出す。私も自分で編んだマフラーを手提げ袋から出す。しかし取り出してみたものの、改めて向き合くと、なんだか照れてしまう。 どうしようかと思って、手元のマフラーに視線を落とすとその瞬間、首元がふわりと暖かくなった。野間君が、マフラーをかけてくれたのだ。

‘As we approached the footpath by the river, Noma-kun stopped and took out a cobalt blue scarf from his bag. I also retrieved the scarf I had knitted myself from my tote bag. Although I had taken it out, I felt somewhat ashamed. Confused about what to do, I looked at the scarf in my hand and for a moment, my neck felt warm. Noma-kun put the scarf on me.’

The shame experienced by Itoo-san in quotation (6) is constructed through social bonds [(*graduation: force*) + (+ve *affect*) + (*ideation: compliment from others*)]. Itoo-san implicitly conveys his shame as he shyly takes out his knitted scarf while directing his gaze towards it. The presence of the adverb *nandaka* なんだか ‘somehow’ (*graduation: force*) attached to *tereru* 照れる ‘to feel shy’ (*inscribed +ve affect*) suggests that the shame experienced by Itoo-san arises suddenly. In this context, shame is regarded as a positive emotion because it indicates that Itoo-san is attempting to restrain herself from overly displaying her talent or uniqueness. However, her conversation partner, Noma-kun, recognizes this situation and places the scarf on Itoo-san (*ideation: compliment from others*). It can be concluded that the emotion of shame is not only negatively valued but can also be positively valued when related to politeness.

In addition to language, eye contact is one form of communication that helps to understand a person's emotions. The expression *me wa kokoro no kagami* 目は心の鏡 ‘the eyes are the windows to the soul’ reflects how eyes play a crucial role in conveying messages. Nevertheless, Hasada (2000) states that Japanese people often avoid eye contact during conversations because they feel uncomfortable when someone’s gaze is directed at them. In excerpt (7), Yuka-chan avoids eye contact (*invoked +ve affect*) when speaking with her uncle. Yuka-chan engages in this behavior as a form of politeness when conversing with someone

older than herself (*ideation: politeness towards elders*).

Excerpt (7)

優香ちゃんを見ると、おじさんとは目を合わせないように視線を落としていたけれど、口元はちょっと笑っていた。そんな感じてしばらく、私がワングッションになって三人で会話をしたが、二人が直接話をするとはほとんどなかった。

‘When I looked at Yuka-chan, **she looked down to avoid eye contact with her uncle**, but there was a slight smile on her lips. The three of us spoke this way for a while, with me sitting there as a mediator. However, the two of us rarely spoke directly to one another.’

It can be argued that the shame experienced by adolescents in excerpts (6) and (7) is constructed through social bonds, which then form a bond network characterized by shame as a form of politeness or respect towards those considered older or regarded as having a higher status in knowledge or experience. This bond network is affiliated with the cultural value of *honne-tatema* ‘true feelings-public presentation’, which posits that each individual in Japanese society must suppress personal feelings (*honne*) and emphasize the needs of others or the group (*tatema*).

DISCUSSION

The data analysis section indicates that Japanese cultural values are reflected through expressions of shame in discourse. These cultural values are interpreted by applying the analytical framework proposed in this study, elaborating on the concept of *haji no bunka* ‘shame culture’ (Benedict, 2005; Lebra, 2007), appraisal theory (Martin & White, 2005), and affiliation theory (Knight, 2010; Martin, 2010). This analytical framework is a modified version of the one used by Zeng & Zhu (2024). The framework developed by Zeng and Zhu focuses on attitude and ideational resources to construct Chinese cultural identities. In contrast, this study adds graduation as a linguistic resource that can be utilized to evaluate an individual's emotions. Graduation resources play a significant role in discourse, as demonstrated in research by Oteiza & Merino (2012), which employs them to construct ethnic identity among Mapuche adolescents. Therefore, the analytical framework in this study applies social bonds [(*graduation*) + *attitude* + *ideation*] to explore Japanese cultural values. These three resources emerge as tools for adolescent characters in the novel to express shame.

The analytical framework proposed in this study functions effectively, as evidenced by the data analysis conducted. Various constructions of social bonds from discourse containing expressions of shame were identified and subsequently grouped into bond networks that share similar value systems. These value systems within the bond networks were further generalized into an ideological network to represent the master identity of Japanese adolescents. This master identity is then affiliated with the cultural system of bonds to communicate Japanese cultural values. The cultural values in question include *amae* ‘interdependence’, *shudan ishiki* ‘group awareness’, *sekentei* ‘reputation’, and *honne-tatema* ‘true feelings-public presentation’. The cultural values interpreted through these social bonds align with the findings of Hasada (2000), Rusch (2004), Nishfullayli (2012), Diegoli & Öhman (2024), who employed different approaches from this study.

The adolescent characters' shame in the novel is likely influenced by the cultural values they uphold. The cultural value of *amae* ‘interdependence’ affects their concern about being abandoned or distanced by group members if they engage in embarrassing behavior. The cultural value of *shudan ishiki* ‘group awareness’ influences their understanding that embarrassing actions impact oneself and the entire group. The cultural value of *sekentei* ‘reputation’ affects their sensitivity to societal judgments regarding behaviors that should be performed to avoid violating moral values within Japanese society. The cultural value of *honne-tatema* ‘true feelings-public presentation’ influences shame as a form of politeness or

respect towards others. The depiction of the emotion of shame experienced by the adolescent characters in the novel is not solely negatively valued but also positively valued. This aligns with the concept of *haji no bunka* ‘shame culture’ proposed by Lebra (2007), which suggests that for Japanese individuals, shame is not only caused by judgments or criticisms from others but also arises from the special attention of others in the form of praise. These various explanations are consistent with the views of Diegoli & Öhman (2024), Thomas et al. (2020), and Yamawaki et al. (2015) regarding how culture shapes an individual's perspective on the emotion of shame.

Although the data sources utilized are limited to expressions of shame in four adolescent novels, this study provides a contemporary depiction of the lives of Japanese adolescents, as it employs data published between 2018 and 2022. Essentially, the shame experienced by the adolescent characters in Rurika Suzuki's novels mirrors that of Japanese individuals. However, a notable difference is observed in the indifference displayed by Japanese adolescents when confronted with ridicule regarding their shortcomings or inability to meet social expectations. This indifference is a defense mechanism against taunts or mockery from their surroundings. While these adolescents exhibit individualistic traits, they continue implementing Japanese cultural values.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the discourse reflecting expressions of shame in Rurika Suzuki's Japanese adolescent novels constructs social bonds characterized by [(*graduation*) + *attitude* + *ideation*]. This construction is categorized into bond networks with similar value systems, which include: (a) shame due to self-perceived deficiencies; (b) shame due to inability to meet social expectations; (c) shame due to being different from Japanese society in general; (d) shame due to attitude or situation exhibited by *uchi no hito* ‘psychically or socially internal domain’; (e) shame due to behaviors that violate moral values within Japanese society; (f) shame as a form of politeness towards others; and (g) shame due to receiving praise or attention from others. The value systems within these bond networks are further generalized into an ideological network that represents the master identity of Japanese adolescents, characterized by concerns about negative judgments from others, group awareness, social evaluation of behavior, and politeness in communication. This master identity is then associated with the cultural system of bonds that conveys Japanese cultural values, including *amae* ‘interdependence’, *shudan ishiki* ‘group awareness’, *sekentei* ‘reputation’, and *honne-tatema* ‘true feelings-public presentation’.

The role of the group in Japanese society is vital for each individual (*shudan ishiki*). About this cultural value, the shame experienced by Japanese adolescents is not only borne by the individual but is also shared by their group. The dependency (*amae*) on group members further enhances their sensitivity to feelings of shame due to concerns about being distanced or abandoned by the group. Therefore, to avoid experiencing shame or losing face, Japanese individuals must maintain their self-esteem or reputation (*sekentei*) by behaving according to the moral values present in society. Meanwhile, to preserve group relationships and avoid embarrassing others or causing them to lose face, individuals need to manage the appearance they present to the outside world (*tatema*) and conceal their true feelings (*honne*). This facilitates group relationships, as experiencing shame implies isolation from the environment.

This research contributes to linguistic studies by providing an in-depth analysis of expressions of shame as evaluative actions. This study also offers an analytical framework model that can be used to explore cultural values through expressions of shame. Furthermore, it is expected that this research will provide valuable information to foreign learners of the Japanese language, enriching their understanding of the use of expressions of shame and their various contexts within Japanese society. Although emotion dictionaries exist in the Japanese language,¹²

the researchers argue that further investigation is necessary, as these works do not comprehensively explain expressions of shame used within the realm of semantic discourse. Regarding future research, scholars may consider applying the analytical framework model from this study to explore cultural values reflected through various types of emotional expressions, such as happiness, sadness, anger, fear, surprise, and others.

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