

## Depiction of Keiko's Conformity in Sayaka Murata's *Convenience Store Woman*

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### Abstrak

Penelitian ini meneliti tema konformitas yang digambarkan dalam novel *Convenience Store Woman* karya Sayaka Murata yang dialami oleh tokoh utama, Keiko. Keiko menghadapi tekanan sosial yang kuat untuk menyesuaikan diri dengan norma-norma masyarakat, yang secara signifikan mempengaruhi tindakan dan keputusannya. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menggambarkan bagaimana konformitas Keiko digambarkan dalam novel tersebut. Dengan menggunakan teori eksistensialisme Jean-Paul Sartre, penelitian ini menganalisis data dari narasi dan dialog novel. Temuan penelitian ini menyoroti lima aspek konformitas Keiko: penyangkalan terhadap kebebasan, itikad buruk, kurangnya keaslian, penolakan terhadap tanggung jawab individu, dan konflik batin. Dengan menyesuaikan diri dengan ekspektasi masyarakat, Keiko menekan identitasnya yang sebenarnya, yang sangat mempengaruhi kesejahteraan eksistensialnya. Penelitian ini memberikan wawasan yang berharga tentang bagaimana konformitas dapat membentuk kehidupan dan identitas seseorang melalui lensa eksistensialisme Sartre.

**Kata Kunci:** Konformitas, Eksistensialisme, Tekanan masyarakat.

### Abstract

This study examines the theme of conformity depicted in Sayaka Murata's novel *Convenience Store Woman* that the protagonist, Keiko, experiences. Keiko faces intense societal pressures to conform to society's norms, which significantly influence her actions and decisions. The study aims to illustrate how Keiko's conformity is portrayed in the novel. Using Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialism theory, the research analyzes data from the novel's narrations and dialogues. The findings highlight there are five aspects of Keiko's conformity: denial of freedom, bad faith, lack of authenticity, rejection of individual responsibility, and inner conflict. By conforming to societal expectations, Keiko suppresses her true identity, which profoundly affects her existential well-being. The study provides valuable insights into how conformity can shape an individual's life and identity through the lens of Sartre's existentialism.

**Keywords:** Conformity, Existentialism, Societal pressures.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Conformity involves changing one's beliefs, attitudes, actions, or perceptions to gain acceptance in society or within a particular group. This behavior aligns with cultural and societal expectations. According to Moynihan, Igou, & Tilburg (2019), conformity tends to increase when individuals feel they lack free will, leading them to follow others to fit in. The consequences of conformity are often negative; losing personal freedom of choice can result in a loss of control over actions and a loss of sense of personal identity, potentially triggering an existential crisis as individuals question their life's meaning.

Literary works in various media often explore themes such as conformity, which is especially common in Japanese literature. Sayaka Murata's *Convenience Store Woman* is an examination of conformity in Japanese society and its impact on personal identity and freedom. Murata, born on August 14, 1979, has received numerous

awards, including the *Gunzo Prize* for New Writers, the *Mishima Yukio Prize*, and the *Special Prize of The Sense of Gender Award*. *Convenience Store Woman*, her tenth novel, won the *Akutagawa Prize* and has been translated into over 30 languages, selling more than 1.5 million copies in Japan. Murata's experience working as a part-timer at a convenience store for eighteen years heavily influenced the novel.

*Convenience Store Woman* is a story about Keiko, a thirty-six-year-old woman who never had a boyfriend or a permanent job, working instead as a part-timer at the same convenience store for eighteen years. Her lifestyle is deemed unusual by Japanese society standards, leading those around her to urge her to conform—her parents want her to find a stable job, and her friends question her unmarried status. Despite these pressures, Keiko maintains the happiness and sense of purpose that come from her job as a convenience store worker.

From a young age, Keiko has always been perceived as weird, making her parents worry about her. In order to

avoid disappointing her parents, Keiko decided to mimic others and follow instructions, suppressing her individuality to fit in. Bernheim (1994) stated that social groups penalize individuals who deviate from accepted norms, leading people to conform to gain acceptance. Keiko's desire to fit in eventually leads to an existential crisis. She questions her life, especially when pressured to leave her job and pursue a more "normal" lifestyle.

Existentialism is a philosophy that emphasizes the freedom of individuals to make their own choices and the importance of taking responsibility for those choices. The core idea of it is that personal freedom is the highest value, and anything that limits this freedom, such as conformity, is seen as self-deception. Conformity involves changing one's beliefs or behaviors to fit in with a group or society, often due to fear of judgment. While it can lead to social acceptance, it can also result in the loss of personal freedom, causing individuals to make choices based on others' expectations rather than true desires. Existentialism argues that life's meaning comes from personal decisions, and conformity undermines this freedom, and it goes against what it means to be truly human. Therefore, this philosophy encourages embracing individuality and resisting conformity to live a genuine and fulfilling life.

Sartre's existentialist philosophy encourages individuals to confront life's fundamental questions on a personal level, emphasizing each person's freedom and responsibility for their own existence. Central to his ideas is the concept that "*existence precedes essence*," which means that individuals first exist and then define themselves through their choices and actions. In this view, a person's character is shaped by the decisions they make and the actions they take. According to existentialism, humans are initially undefined and without inherent meaning; they become defined only through the choices they make and the paths they create for themselves in life.

This article analyzes the depiction of Keiko's conformity in Japanese society in Sayaka Murata's *Convenience Store Woman*. By applying Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialism theory to Keiko's character in *Convenience Store Woman*, the research highlights the conflict between conforming to societal expectations and personal authenticity. Sartre's existentialism theory emphasizes that true meaning in life comes from personal choices and authenticity, which Keiko struggles to maintain in the face of societal norms. This analysis underscores the existential belief that individuals must create their own meaning in life, showing how conformity can threaten this personal freedom.

Previous studies have been related to the themes of conformity and existentialism. The first study, "I Came Only to Use the Phone: Márquez's Existential Nightmare

of Conformity" by Shahin Keshavarz and Mohammad-Javad Haj'Jari (2020), focuses on how an individual loses their personal identity due to society's conforming rules, becoming an object against their initial desire for freedom. This paper examines Márquez's short story, where the protagonist, Maria, represents someone whose social situation, in existential terms, opposes her will for freedom, turning that freedom into a form of imprisonment. The study uses qualitative analysis to explore the theme of existential freedom and questions how to achieve it.

Similarly, a study by Mashhood Anjum, Raheel Rehman Khan, and Yasir Khan (2021), "Eccentricity and Conformity in Toni Morrison's *Sula*: The Struggle for Life in a Patriarchal Society", examines the struggles of Women in a Male-dominated society, focusing on their actions to either conform to or challenge societal norms to gain acceptance or assert their individuality. It specifically looks at how American society, marked by discrimination, particularly oppresses Black women. The study explores existential conflicts faced by Black women and their choices to either submit or assert themselves to survive as free individuals. This qualitative research critically analyzes Toni Morrison's *Sula* through a Feminist Conceptual Framework, addressing feminine existential issues within the scope of Feminist Existentialism. This study is significant as it highlights various situations where individuals can either take control of their destiny by actively participating as 'subjects' or passively submitting as 'objects'. This research also provides valuable insights into the existential challenges faced by women in a discriminatory society.

There have been other studies on Sayaka Murata's *Convenience Store Woman* that relate to similar topics. However, because the novel was published in 2019, it is still relatively new, and not many previous studies are available. A study by Dr. V. Vishnu Vardhan and Dr. Suresh Frederick (2019), titled "Being Normal is Outlandish in the Convenience Store Woman by Sayaka Murata" focuses on the theme that being ordinary is outlandish. The authors of this paper analyze various paragraphs where the main character is seen as unusual by society and make different statements for each paragraph. They conclude with a combination of additional themes and theories. However, the gap in this study is the lack of clarity on the theory used to analyze the novel. The researchers suggested further studies on more areas of the work, including the theories, as the novel is relevant to different themes and topics such as psychological realism, modernism, feminism, materialism, and eco-criticism.

## 2. METHOD

In this article, the author will use Jean-Paul Sartre's theory of existentialism, which emphasizes individual freedom and responsibility, to analyze the theme of conformity in *Convenience Store Woman*. The source of data for this analysis is Sayaka Murata's novel *Convenience Store Woman*. This novel was originally published in Japanese as "*Konbini Nigen*". The novel was translated into English by Ginny Tapley Takemori and published by Granta Books in London in 2019. The author collected the data from narrations and dialogues in the novel.

Sartre argued that while freedom carries responsibility, individuals are free to make their own decisions and define their own meaning in life. He stated that people are "condemned to be free" and viewed conformity as a failure to embrace this freedom and take responsibility for one's actions. Conforming to others' expectations often stems from rejecting the idea of free will (Moynihan, Igou & Tilburg, 2019). People may adopt beliefs that contradict their own due to societal pressure (Ellinas, Allan & Johanson, 2017). Sartre rejected external moral compass, including societal, religious, or ethical values, asserting that everything exists only as humans create it. A person living authentically, or in "good faith", accepts their freedom and responsibility, while those in "bad faith" deny their agency and attribute deny their own control and blame outside factors for their decisions.

Conformity is a process of changing one's beliefs or behaviors to align with group norms, driven by the desire to fit in, be liked, or seem informed. This often involves yielding to group pressures and can lead to a loss of self-awareness. Sartre saw conformity as a denial of one's freedom and responsibility, opting for comfort over expressing free will. Living in "good faith" contrasts with this, as it involves embracing one's freedom and responsibility instead of mindlessly following societal norms.

Therefore, conformity includes elements such as the denial of freedom, bad faith, rejection of individual responsibility, and conflict with one's true self. Conformity happens when individuals refuse to accept their freedom to make choices, leading them to blame their decisions on external pressures like societal norms and group expectations. This often results in internal conflict, as people suppress their true desires to fit in.

### 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section depicts Keiko's conformity in Sayaka Murata's *Convenience Store Woman*. It identifies five elements of conformity: denial of freedom, bad faith, lack of authenticity, rejection of individual's responsibility, and inner conflict. Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialist philosophy emphasizes personal freedom, responsibility, and the individual's ability to define their life's purpose,

highlighting conformity as a rejection to embrace this freedom.

*"My parents were at a loss what to do about me, but they were as affectionate to me as ever. I'd never meant to make them sad or have to keep apologizing for things I did, so I decided to keep my mouth shut as best as I could outside home. I would no longer do anything of my own accord, and would either just mimic what everyone else was doing, or simply follow instructions".* (Page 10)

Keiko began conforming from a young age to avoid standing out or being judged as strange or weird by people around her. The evidence above demonstrates Keiko's conformity is a lack of authenticity. By imitating those around her, Keiko suppresses her true self and neglects to act in accordance with her own beliefs. Instead of expressing her authentic self, she conforms to societal norms and the behaviors of those around her. The passage "*I decided to keep my mouth shut*" demonstrates her decision to avoid acting authentically in order to fit in. This illustrates Keiko's ongoing struggle to maintain her genuine self amidst societal pressures, leading to a lack of authenticity. This early experience sets the stage for Keiko's later life, where conformity becomes a survival strategy. This mirrors Jean-Paul Sartre's theory that individuals are responsible for defining their own lives and making sincere choices. Keiko's conformity shows she is rejecting this freedom; rather than making her own decisions, she conforms to fit in society, revealing an inner struggle between conforming and being true to herself, pressured by external expectations.

*"At that moment, for the first time ever, I felt I'd become a part in the machine of society, I've been reborn, I thought. That day, I actually became a normal cog in society".* (Page 19)

Even as she grew into adulthood, Keiko believed she needed to be cured because everyone else around her told her so, and she held this belief throughout her life. The passage "*I felt I'd become a part in the machine of society*" portrays Keiko's decision to work as a part-timer at the convenience store as a means of conforming to societal expectations and fitting in. Furthermore, the sentence "*I actually become a normal cog in society*" highlights how she found a sense of normalcy and acceptance in her role at the convenience store, viewing it as the only place where she is perceived as "normal" by others. Keiko's conformity suggests she is living in "bad faith", a concept from Sartre's theory where individuals deceive themselves into believing they have no choice but to conform to external pressures. Since then, Keiko has

chosen to make her job at the convenience store her sole way of conforming to societal norms.

*“Outside work Mrs. Izumi is rather flashy, but she dresses the way normal women in her thirties do, so I take cues from the brand of shoes she wears and the label of the coats in her locker... Mrs. Izumi’s clothes, accessories, and hairstyles always strike me as the model of what a woman in her thirties should be wearing”.* (Page 26)

Keiko’s conformity extends beyond her role at the convenience store; it serves as her standard even in other aspects of life. Her act of conformity on the evidence above reflects a lack of authenticity. Knowing that acting as her true self would make her seem weird, she instead mirrors how people around her dress, speak, and even use their facial expressions. The passage *“I take cues from the brand of shoes she wears and the label of coats in her locker”* illustrates she observes and imitates Mrs. Izumi. Moreover, the sentence *“a model of what a woman in her thirties should be wearing”* highlights Keiko’s refusal of her genuine identity in favor of conforming to societal norms believed as “normal”. The use of *“should”* emphasizes Keiko’s belief in imitating Mrs. Izumi, reflecting her reluctance to express her own authentic style but instead conforming to what she perceives as socially acceptable of her and Mrs. Izumi’s age and status. Keiko’s conformity to the evidence above illustrates a lack of authenticity.

*“I’d noticed soon after starting the job that whenever I got angry at the same things as everyone else, they all seemed happy. If I went along with the manager when he was annoyed or joined in the general irritation at someone skiving off the night shift, there were a strange sense of solidarity as everyone seemed pleased that I was angry too”.* (Page 29)

Whenever Keiko joins a conversation, she tries to match others’ emotions, even if she does not truly feel the same way. Keiko’s conformity exemplifies Sartre’s concept of “bad faith”, where an individual deceives themselves into thinking they have no choice but to conform to societal norms. In the passage, *“I’d noticed soon after starting the job that whenever I got angry at the same things as everyone else, they all seemed happy”*, Keiko discovers that mirroring the emotions of her co-workers, even when she does not genuinely share them, leads to social acceptance. She convinces herself that she must pretend to feel the same anger and irritation as others, believing this is the only way to be accepted. By acting in bad faith, Keiko prioritizes fitting into societal norms over being her true self. This highlights the lengths she goes to

suppress her authentic emotions to avoid judgment and be seen as ‘normal’. Keiko’s bad-faith conformity illustrates how she sacrifices her individuality for social acceptance.

*“Now, too, I felt reassured by the expression on Mrs. Izumi and Sugawara’s faces: Good, I pulled off being a ‘person’”.* (Page 29)

Additionally, the evidence above shows that Keiko is always aware of how others react when she speaks. She carefully observes their response to judge whether they approve or disapprove of her actions. The passage *“Good, I pulled off being a ‘person’”* illustrates her relief when she successfully gains acceptance and a sense of fitting in. This underscores her inner struggle and the lengths she goes to in order to be seen as ‘normal’ and accepted by her colleagues. Keiko’s behavior reveals her ongoing effort to conceal her true emotions and conform to societal expectations, even if they contradict her genuine feelings. This internal conflict portrays how Keiko constantly tries to balance being herself and fitting in with what society expects.

*“There are times when I feel like it’s too much bother, knowing I have to work the next day. But it’s the only connection I have to the world outside the convenience store and a precious opportunity to mingle with “normal” woman my age, so I usually accepts her invitations...”* (Page 31)

On her days off, Keiko sometimes spends time with friends from high school. The passage *“there are times when I feel like it’s too much to bother”* reveals her true reluctance to accept their invitations. This conformity shows Keiko is not being her authentic self; she does not act according to her true feelings. Instead, she attends the invitations out of a sense of obligation to fit in the society of what a “normal” woman her age would do. Keiko’s decision to join her friends is not driven by her genuine desire but rather by societal expectations, demonstrating a lack of authenticity in expressing her true thoughts and preferences about attending these gatherings.

Additionally, the evidence illustrates Keiko’s internal conflict. The use of *“but”* emphasizes her conflicting emotions about socializing outside work. While feeling burdened by the invitation, she also acknowledges it as her sole chance to engage with people her age outside the convenience store environment. Keiko’s internal struggle mirrors Sartre’s concept of internal conflict, where individuals are conflicted between their personal desires and conforming to societal struggle.

*"I thought a moment, I knew it was considered weird for someone of my age to not have either a proper job or be married because my sister had explained it to me. Even so, I balked at being evasive in front of Miho and the others, who knew the truth".* (Page 35)

After working at the same convenience store for eighteen years, Keiko realized that people once again saw her as strange. Everyone around her, including her friends, either had stable jobs or were married with plans to have children, making her the odd one out. This highlights the societal pressures Keiko faces to conform. The passage *"I knew it was considered weird"* indicates her awareness that her lifestyle is seen as not normal by society. However, the line *"I balked at being evasive"* shows Keiko's subtle resistance to pretending otherwise. She began to make small gestures of defiance against societal expectations. The evidence above underscores Keiko's awareness of societal norms and her struggle with authenticity, as she pushes back against the pressure to conform by resisting the urge to pretend.

*"I've made it known among old friends that I have certain health issues that make it more convenient for me to have a part-time job. At my workplace, I tell them it's because my parents are ill and I need to care for them. I have my sister to thank for thinking up these excuses for me".* (Page 35)

Keiko's actions demonstrate conformity as she avoids taking responsibility. The passage *"I've made it known among old friends"* shows that she has prepared excuses in advance to avoid any judgments or suspicions from those around her. By using these excuses that were made by her sister, Keiko shifts the attention away from her own decisions and places the blame on external factors. This strategy helps her avoid suspicion and potential questions about her reasons for working as a part-timer. Instead of owning up to her decision to work at the same convenience store for eighteen years, Keiko avoids the responsibility. Relying on these excuses allows her to avoid pressure to fully conform to societal norms without needing to confront or explain the true reasons behind her life decisions, aligning with Sartre's concept of avoiding responsibility.

*"I was startled. I had the feeling I was being told I was a fake and hastily rearranged my expression".* (Page 52)

One day, Keiko met Shiraha, a new employee at the convenience store. Unlike her co-workers, who do not like Shiraha for his poor work ethic and view him as a social burden, Keiko is indifferent to his behavior as long as she

can perform her job effectively. The passage *"hastily rearranged my expression"* indicates that Keiko is aware she is not meeting societal expectations and quickly adjusts her behavior to conform. This act of conformity reflects a lack of authenticity. Keiko is not being true to herself; instead, she alters her expression to align with what others expect of her, even if it does not reflect her true feelings. Rather than expressing her honest opinions about Shiraha, Keiko chooses to follow her co-workers' sentiments to avoid standing out or facing judgment. Keiko's behavior aligns with Sartre's concept of lack of authenticity, where an individual sacrifices their true self to conform to external expectations, thereby denying their personal freedom and responsibility. By changing her behavior to fit in with her co-workers, Keiko is not living authentically but rather suppressing her true self to conform to societal norms.

*"But once they get it into their heads that I'm not normal, since they all think they are normal they'll give me a hard time about it, won't they? That'd be a lot of bother, so it'd be handy to have an excuse to fend them off with".* (Page 56)

The evidence above illustrates Keiko's conformity as a means of avoiding responsibility. Despite her genuine love for working at the convenience store, she could not openly express this to others without being seen as weird. According to society's view, no "normal" woman her age would love working part-time at a convenience store. The passage *"they'll give me a hard time about it, won't they?"* portrays Keiko's anxiety about how other people might react if they knew the true reason behind her job decisions. To avoid this, she fabricates excuses to avoid judgments. Additionally, the passage *"that'd be a lot of bother, so it'd be handy to have an excuse to fend them off with"* highlights her strategy to dodge potential confrontations. Instead of being honest about her decision to stay at the same job for eighteen years, she chooses to create convenient excuses to align with societal expectations. Keiko is avoiding responsibility, where she deflects her true reasons and decisions to avoid the discomfort of society's judgments, thereby failing to embrace her existential freedom and authenticity.

*"I found society as annoying as he did, but there wasn't anything about myself that I particularly wanted to defend, so I couldn't understand why Shiraha was taking it out on me like this..."* (Page 88)

Keiko's statement reflects a significant lack of authenticity in how she conforms to societal norms. When she says, *"There wasn't anything about myself that I*

*particularly wanted to defend*", it reveals that she hasn't been true to herself or stood up for her own beliefs in society. Instead, she has consistently chosen to conform to societal expectations without expressing her true identity. Keiko has prioritized fitting in with society over being genuine. This also explains why she struggled to understand Shiraha; throughout her life, she has not felt the need to express her authentic self. Keiko opted for conformity to gain acceptance in society. By conforming to others' expectations, she avoids the discomfort of standing out or facing criticism for not following societal norms, a challenge she has faced since childhood.

*"... I suppose it is unreasonable to feel that way. If you can get them to stop complaining just by getting married, then that would be the simple and sensible thing to do, wouldn't it?"* (Page 88)

The evidence above reveals Keiko's tendency to conform to societal norms to avoid conflict or criticism, which signifies a denial of her personal freedom. The passage *"Then that would be the simple and sensible thing to do, wouldn't it?"* shows that her suggestion of marriage isn't driven by her own desires but rather as a practical solution to silence others' complaints. This decision underscores Keiko's reluctance to exercise her personal freedom to make decisions based on her genuine preferences. Instead of encouraging Shiraha to make independent choices, Keiko proposes that he relinquish his personal freedom to conform to societal expectations, thereby avoiding criticism from others. Her actions reflect a hesitation to challenge societal norms and a preference for conformity, even if it means sacrificing her own autonomy. This pattern resonates with Jean-Paul Sartre's existential theory, which emphasizes the individual's responsibility to assert their freedom and make authentic choices, unburdened by societal pressures.

*"Shiraha, if all you want is a marriage of convenience, then how about getting together with me?" I broached as I put my second cup of warm water on the table and took a seat*". (Page 91)

Keiko's proposal to marry Shiraha reveals her conformity that lacks authenticity in her actions. Unlike Shiraha, who resists societal pressures to conform by not marrying or settling into what is dictated by society as a 'normal' job, Keiko does not share his annoyance with society; instead, she actively seeks to conform to it. Describing her proposal as a *"marriage of convenience,"* Keiko's offer illustrates her readiness to conform to societal norms rather than following her own beliefs or true feelings for Shiraha. Rather than making a decision

based on personal decisions, she opts to conform to societal expectations regarding marriage. This conformity highlights Keiko's lack of authenticity as she pursues a relationship that does not genuinely reflect her emotions or values.

*"To stay in a convenience store, you have to become a store worker. That's simple enough, you just wear a uniform and do as the manual says... As long as you wear the skin of what's considered an ordinary person and follow the manual, you won't be driven out of the village or treated as a burden"*. (Page 92)

Keiko explains to Shiraha that fitting in at the convenience store, and thus within society, requires adhering strictly to the norms—wearing the uniform and following all the rules outlined in the manual. In the passage, *"as long as you wear the skin of what's considered an ordinary person and follow the manual, you won't be driven out of the village or treated as a burden"*, Keiko draws a comparison between their situation and the necessity of conforming to avoid rejection or being perceived as a burden. Her conformity here reflects a state of "bad faith," where she and Shiraha deceive themselves into believing that conforming to societal norms is the only way to avoid trouble. By conforming in this manner, Keiko conceals her true self, opting to follow societal expectations rather than expressing her genuine identity. This behavior aligns with Sartre's theory, which explores how individuals may deceive themselves into conformity to avoid the challenges of asserting their authentic selves.

*"... Unlike you, there are many things I don't care about either way. It's just that since I don't have any particular purpose of my own, if the village wants things to be a certain way then I don't mind going along with that... You eliminate the parts of your life that others find strange..."* (Page 93)

Keiko explains that throughout her life, she hasn't had a strong personal purpose because she's been accustomed to doing whatever it takes to conform to societal norms. Her conformity demonstrates a denial of freedom, as she doesn't make choices based on her genuine desires but instead follows the norms of the community. In the passage, *"you eliminate the parts of your life that others find strange"*, she highlights how she sacrifices personal freedom to fit into society. By conforming, Keiko suppresses her true self and opts for fitting in. Her denial of independent thinking and action suggests she prioritizes social acceptance over her own beliefs and authentic identity, aligning with Sartre's theory, which explores how individuals may sacrifice personal freedom to avoid the

discomfort of standing out or facing rejection for their true selves.

*"... You know, it might actually be convenient for me to have you here. I called my sister just now to see what her reaction would be, and she immediately jumped to her own conclusion and was really happy for me. It appears that if a man and woman are alone in an apartment together, people's imaginations run wild and they're satisfied regardless of the reality".* (Page 100)

Keiko's conformity illustrates "bad faith" as she willingly adheres to societal expectations. In the passage, *"it might actually be convenient for me to have you here"*, Keiko acknowledges the practical benefits of having Shiraha around, possibly hinting at a relationship, despite her true motivations. Additionally, Keiko's consideration of her sister's reaction reveals her desire for approval and acceptance according to societal norms. She deceives herself into believing she has no choice but to conform because it aligns with others' expectations of her. Instead of making decisions based on her own genuine motivations, Keiko prioritizes how others perceive her actions, exemplifying Sartre's concept of bad faith, where individuals deceive themselves into thinking they have no choice but to adopt roles and behaviors dictated by external pressures rather than their authentic selves.

*"These past two weeks I'd been asked fourteen times why I wasn't married. And twelve times why I was still working part-time. So for now I'd decide what to eliminate from my life according to what I was asked about most often I thought".* (Page 94)

Keiko's conformity reflects her lack of freedom as she continually faces societal pressures regarding marriage and employment. In the passage, *"these past two weeks I'd been asked fourteen times why I wasn't married. And twelve times why I was still working part-time"*, Keiko's interactions with friends and family highlight the ongoing pressures for her to conform. These exchanges emphasize the societal expectations that Keiko should conform to conventional life paths. Instead of making decisions based on her own choices or circumstances, Keiko considers altering her life trajectory based on the opinions of those around her. Furthermore, the passage *"so for now I'd decide what to eliminate from my life according to what I was asked about most often"* reveals her lack of freedom as she conforms to societal norms. This illustrates her prioritization of fitting in over making choices aligned with her own values and desires.

*"I was considering whether there was any benefit to me in having him here. My mother and sister, and even I myself, were beginning to tire of me never being cured. I was beginning to feel that any change, good or bad, would be better than my situation now".* (Page 108)

Keiko's conformity reflects her internal struggle. In the passage, *"I was beginning to feel that any change, good or bad, would be better than my situation now,"* she considers altering her life to meet societal expectations. Her conflict intensified as she felt worn down by the judgments of family and friends about her marital status and part-time job. Keiko wrestled with her own desires versus what others expected of her. Her conformity shows a conflict with her true self, torn between fitting into societal norms and pursuing her own happiness. This inner conflict exposes her battle between blending in with society and staying true to herself.

Later, Keiko proposes marriage to Shiraha—not out of love but to solve their societal problems. Initially unsure, Shiraha agrees, seeing it as a practical solution. Shiraha's arrival and their ensuing relationship illustrate how conformity plays out. Their decision to marry, driven more by practicality than affection, reflects Keiko's desire to conform and appear 'normal'.

*"So, will I be cured if I leave the convenience store? Or am I better staying working there? And should I kick Shiraha out? Or am I better with him here? Look, I'll do whatever you say. I don't mind either way, so please just instruct me in specific terms".* (Page 132)

Keiko's conformity shows she avoids taking responsibility when faced with her sister discovering her marriage arrangement with Shiraha and questioning her life choices. In the passage, *"Look, I'll do whatever you say. I don't mind either way, so please just instruct me in specific terms,"* Keiko is willing to let others decide for her instead of making her own choices. Despite trying to fit in with societal norms to avoid seeming odd, her sister's realization that she hasn't changed reveals Keiko's ongoing struggle with societal expectations. By seeking clear instructions on whether to quit her convenience store job or evict Shiraha, Keiko shows she prefers letting society decide for her. This behavior indicates she values conformity over making her own decisions, avoiding the responsibility of choosing her own path in life.

*"All too quickly, as if the eighteen years of my employment had been just an illusion, my last day at the convenience store arrived".* (Page 141)

Keiko's life has revolved around conforming to societal expectations and finding comfort and acceptance in her role as a convenience store worker, which she embraced wholeheartedly. Over the course of eighteen years, she thrived in this position, yet she now confronts the realization that this may not align with what society considers a "normal" life path. Despite her deep affection for the job, Keiko contemplates leaving in an effort to conform once again to societal norms. This decision illustrates Sartre's concept of "bad faith," where she deceives herself into thinking that conforming is her only viable option. Her inner conflict also embodies conformity as she weighs the consequences of abandoning a role that has defined her identity and sense of purpose for so long.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis, this section presents the conclusion of the study, focusing on Keiko's conformity in various aspects of her life. The elements of her conformity include the denial of freedom, bad faith, lack of authenticity, rejection of individual responsibility, and inner conflict. Keiko's conformity is evident throughout her life, with her job at the convenience store serving as a primary example. She spent eighteen years working at the same store, where she found a sense of acceptance and normalcy she could never find outside the store's environment. For Keiko, conforming meant sacrificing her true self to meet societal standards. During her time working at the convenience store, she avoided expressing her authentic self and instead adopted the habits and behaviors of those around her. Keiko's story highlights the ongoing struggle between conforming to societal expectations and remaining true to oneself.

## SUGGESTIONS

This study suggests that future research could explore deeper into the broader implications of conformity across different cultural and societal contexts. Given the relatively recent publication of this novel and the limited research on it, analyzing it through various theoretical frameworks could offer new insights and gain a deeper understanding of Keiko's experiences. Comparative studies could also be conducted, analyzing characters in similar roles across different novels to identify common themes and distinctive variations.

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