

\*Notice: This English version is  
provisional translation by FPCJ.

# **Factors Behind *Demon Slayer* Becoming a Blockbuster**

**From Psychological and  
Sociological Perspectives**

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# Briefer Introduction



- Yuka Ijima

- Assistant Professor at Daito Bunka University Department of Sociology

- Academic PhD

- Psychological and Career Counselor

- Focus: Career psychology, educational psychology, manga psychology

- Life-career research, manga research

- Holds workshops for businesses and local governments

# What is *Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba*?

- Ran in *Weekly Shonen Jump* for 205 chapters, now **ended**. February 15, 2016-May 18, 2020
  - Sword-action **manga** by Koyoharu Gotoge set in the Taisho period (1912-1926)
  - Dramatic battles against demons by using breathing styles, special moves, and katanas
  - TV anime aired on **20 channels** (such as Tokyo MX) starting in April 2019
  - “Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba the Movie: Mugen Train” opened in October 2020
  - A total of 23 collected volumes
- Total printing for volumes 1 to 22 have reached over **100 million** (including digital sales)



Credit:  
Koyoharu Gotoge



# Why Has *Demon Slayer* Become Popular with Both Children and Adults?

- Initial reasons for popularity and progress to blockbuster hit
- Opinions of children, opinions of adults

# Factors Behind Popularity

## 1. Anime Series

- ① Became available in multiple formats/mediums
- ② Detailed, beautiful, and dramatic animation by Ufotable understanding the intent of the manga
- ③ Characterization by the voice actors
- ④ “Gurenge,” the theme song by LiSA, had lyrics which matched the story and was used as the opening throughout the TV series
- ⑤ The sound track by Yuki Kajiura provides scenes with more impact
- ⑥ Collected comic volumes, merchandise, cosplay, corporate collaborations, social media, etc. ⇒ **Bandwagon effect**

## 2. Simple Setup, Appealing Background

- ① Goal: Defeat demons—Make the world a better place (Close to being good versus evil)
- ② Main Characters: Siblings (familial love, love for humanity), companions (friendship, trust), skilled role models (Hashira: ambition, goals), sympathy for reasons to become demons (Demons are former humans—There is a fine line between them)
- ③ A normal boy becomes stronger by training and practice ⇒ High self-efficacy is shown in many ways
- ④ Interesting protagonist: Compassionate, the existence of the Hashira
- ⑤ Breathing (five elements), Sun Steel, sword techniques (related to Breathing)—Super-powered battles
- ⑥ Difficult kanji and old-fashioned words  
⇒ **Appeal to all generations, not just children**

# Factors Behind *Demon Slayer* Becoming a Blockbuster

Due to violent scenes, aired late-night on local TV stations

## Factor 1: Anime Series

### ① Could be viewed on multiple platforms

- **TV:** Tokyo MX, Gunma TV, Tochigi TV, BS11, Yomiuri TV, Mee TV, Sapporo TV, Fukuoka Broadcasting, Miyagi TV, Fukushima Chuo TV, Niigata Broadcasting, Nagano Asahi Broadcasting, Shizuoka Broadcasting, Okayama Broadcasting, Hiroshima TV, Shikoku Broadcasting, TV Ehime, Kochi Sansan TV, Kumamoto Broadcasting, Nagasaki International TV

**20 Channels**

- **Streaming:** AbemaTV, dTV, d Anime Store, Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, d Anime Store for Prime Video, U-NEXT, Anime Hodai FOD, Bandai Channel, GYAO!, Niconico Live, Niconico Channel, Hikari TV, Hulu, Videopass, J:COM On Demand Megapack, Video Market, music.jp, DMM.com, Paravi, Tsutaya TV

Staying home during the pandemic made the platform strategy very succesful

**22 Services**

# Factors Behind *Demon Slayer* Becoming a Blockbuster

The animation is beautiful and intense

## Factor 1: Anime Series

② Detailed, beautiful, and dramatic animation by Ufotable understanding the intent of the manga (Part 3 Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=exYMfwuOP5c>)

Animation Company: Ufotable—Praised for quality of animation and direction

## ③ Characterization by the voice actors

- **Tanjiro Kamado, 13-15: Natsuki Hanae** (Tokyo Ghoul, Twin Star Exorcists)
- **Nezuko Kamado, 12-14: Akari Kito** (Record of Grancrest War)
- **Zenitsu Agatsuma, 16: Hiro Shimono** (Baka and Test, Attack on Titan)
- **Inosuke Hashibara, 15: Yoshitsugu Matsuoka** (Sword Art Online, Food Wars!: Shokugeki no Soma)
- **Sakonji Urokodaki, Old Man: Hochu Otsuka** (Jean-Claude van Damme dubs, Naruto)
- **Giyu Tomioka, 19-21: Takahiro Sakuri** (Genji Monogatari Sennenki, Osomatsu-san)
- **Kyojuro Rengoku, 20: Satoshi Hino** (Naruto, Haikyuu!!)
- **Muzan Kibutsuji, First Demon: Toshihiko Seki** (Nintama Rantaro, Saiyuki)

Etc.

# Factors Behind *Demon Slayer* Becoming a Blockbuster



配信ジャケット

Mere-exposure effect, replays in head

## Factor 1: Anime Series

④ “Gurenge,” the theme song by LiSA, had lyrics which matched the story and was used as the opening throughout the TV series

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CwkzK-F0Y00> (0'50)

Comment from anime staff:

“By having the same artist sing the opening and ending songs, I want to provide greater consistency and improve the product, making it into a special series.”

<https://times.abema.tv/posts/6054848>

- Number one in the daily charts on multiple streaming stores. 38 times.
- Gold Disc certification from Recording Industry Association of Japan
- In June 2020, certified as having one million digital sales
- Certified as “Platinum” (played over 100 million times) in May 2020 for streaming
- Appeared in NHK Kohaku Uta Gassen on December 31, 2019
- Total downloads on the Oricon Weekly Digital Singles Ranking: 1,001,773 downloads. (First time a single by a female artist was downloaded over a million times)



# Factors Behind *Demon Slayer* Becoming a Blockbuster

## Factor 1: Anime Series

- ⑤ The sound track by Yuki Kajiura and Go Shiina provides scenes with more impact

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NztgYDSpWRM&t=16s>

- Although the soundtrack is vital to scenes, a CD has not been released, so collections on YouTube are very popular

# Factors Behind *Demon Slayer* Becoming a Blockbuster

Everyone says its good!

## Factor 1: Anime Series

⑥ Collected comic volumes, merchandise, cosplay, corporate collaborations, social media, etc. ⇒ **Bandwagon effect**

• Merchandise, food, restaurant collaborations led by Aniplex

<https://news.yahoo.co.jp/articles/60c0d675a5b813c10e3f96c4cccfa0a6d4efdcb7> (ex. Kura Sushi)

• Cosplay by cosplayers and famous people ⇒ Popular on social media

Adults will buy it all at once

• Famous people commenting on social media after the TV anime ended

⇒ Interest spread from manga fans to anime fans to other people

⇒ **Watch the anime → Become fan → Buy manga to continue story**

**Children → Parents, Teachers      Parents → Children**

# Factors Behind *Demon Slayer* Becoming a Blockbuster

## Factor 2: Simple Setup, Appealing Background

① **Clear Goal: Defeat demons—Make the world a better place (Close to being good versus evil, but is not)**

Protagonist

Demon Slayer Corps

Ubuyashiki Clan

(Founders of  
Demon Slayer Corps)



Frequently had family killed by demons

Muzan Kibutsuji was a member of the Ubuyashiki clan  
(Heian period, 794-1185).

The Ubuyashiki clan's goal is to defeat Muzan

**“Defeating Demons”:** However, Tanjiro feels compassion for demons that show regret. The Demon Slayer Corps want to defeat demons at all costs.

# Factors Behind *Demon Slayer* Becoming a Blockbuster

## Factor 2: Simple Setup, Appealing Background

- ② Main Characters: Siblings (familial love, love for humanity), companions (friendship, trust), skilled role models (Hashira: ambition, goals), sympathy for reasons to become demons

**Tanjiro  
Nezuko**

Family

**Sakonji Urokodaki**

Master (Pseudo-family)

Companions

**Zenitsu Agatsuma  
Inosuke Hashibara**

Organization has basically a pyramid structure

**Giyu Tomioka** • **Shinobu Kocho**  
**Kyojuro Rengoku** • **Tengen Uzui**  
**Mitsuri Kanroji** • **Muichiro Tokito**  
**Gyomei Himejima** • **Obanai Iguro**  
**Sanemi Shinazugawa**

Strong people higher  
in the organization

Hashira (Mentors/Leaders)

**Women: Familial love, sibling love, gap moe**  
**Men: Animation, music, story**

# Factors Behind *Demon Slayer* Becoming a Blockbuster

## Factor 2: Simple Setup, Appealing Background

- ② Main Characters: Siblings (familial love, love for humanity), companions (friendship, trust), skilled role models (Hashira: ambition, goals), sympathy for reasons to become demons

**Bad guys and good guys both have stories**

Demons can be examples of what not to do, and also sympathetic

Former 12 Demon Moon: Kyogai- Failed former author

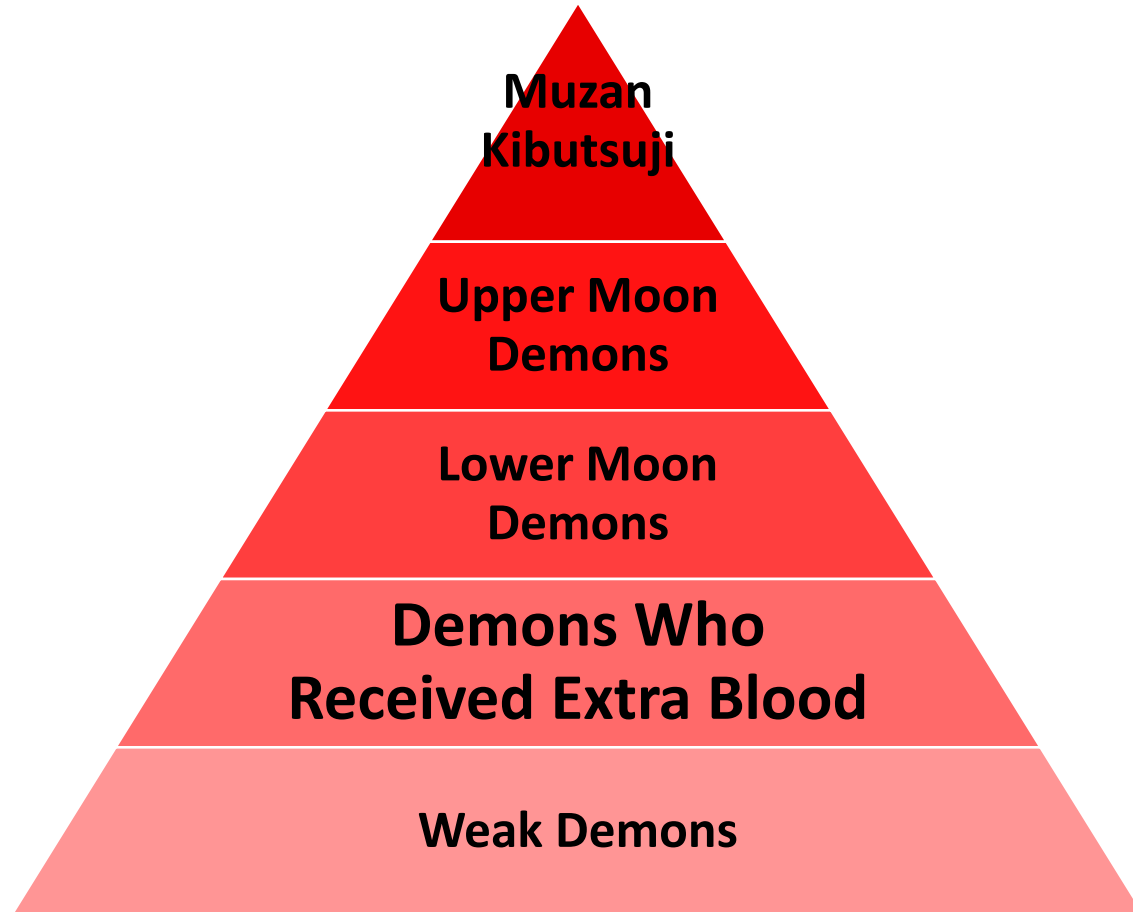
Lower Moon 5: Rui- Sickly, became demon and killed parents without realizing

Upper Moon 3: Akaza- Parents committed suicide because of him, mentor's family killed

Upper Moon 1: Kokushibo- Jealous after learning his little brother he was sorry for was actually strong (Cain complex)

**Muzan Kibutsuji, the main bad guy, is the ultimate self-centered, harassing boss**

# Demon Society and Human Society



## Demon Society in *Demon Slayer*

- Strong, controlling boss
- Class system
- Self-centered and controlling
- Certain their values are right
- Little concern for their fellows
- Try to solve everything through force

**Emphasizes the negative aspects of human society**

# Factors Behind *Demon Slayer* Becoming a Blockbuster

## Factor 2: Simple Setup, Appealing Background

③ A normal boy becomes stronger by training and practice

⇒ **High self-efficacy** is shown in many ways

⇒ Never gives up on anything

- Boy who sells coal
  - Family traditions: traditional dance, earrings
  - Extraordinary sense of smell
  - Kind and loves his family
- Trained for 2 years: Learns Water Breathing
- Passes final exam for Demon Slayer Corps
- Fights demons, facing gradually stronger opponents (never loses)

*Demon Slayer* Vol. 3  
Chapter 25 (Page 168)

I can do it!! I'll definitely do it!!

I get things done.

Even if my bones are broken,

I can do it!! I can fight!!

...

It's not working!!

Nothing has changed.

Guts alone won't do anything.

Use my head!!

# Factors Behind *Demon Slayer* Becoming a Blockbuster

## Factor 2: Simple Setup, Appealing Background

- ④ Interesting Protagonist: Compassionate
- Demons are former humans—Responds sincerely to demons that show regret, does not ignore them

**The Hashira:** All nine became strong after a difficult past

- |                            |   |                             |              |
|----------------------------|---|-----------------------------|--------------|
| Giyu Tomioka               | • | <del>Shinobu Kocho</del>    | • Loss       |
| <del>Kyojuro Rengoku</del> | • | Tengen Uzui <b>Disabled</b> | • Fear       |
| <del>Mitsuri Kanroji</del> | • | <del>Muichiro Tokito</del>  | • Anger      |
| <del>Gyomei Himejima</del> | • | <del>Obanai Iguro</del>     | • Duty       |
| Sanemi Shinazugawa         |   |                             | • Separation |
|                            |   |                             | • Emptiness  |
|                            |   |                             | • Betrayal   |
|                            |   |                             | Etc.         |

Role models  
(models for life)

Death



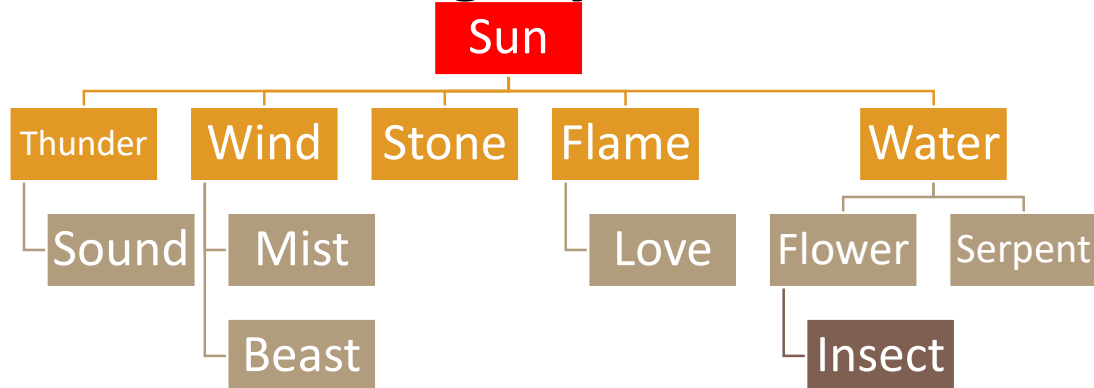
# Factors Behind *Demon Slayer* Becoming a Blockbuster

## Factor 2: Simple Setup, Appealing Background

- ⑤ Breathing (five elements), Sun Steel, sword techniques (related to Breathing), Blood Demon Arts—Super-powered battles

Children love them  
Can copy without knowing the meaning  
They love katanas  
The final Forms are cool

### Breathing Styles



Water Breathing, Second Form: Water Wheel  
Thunder Breathing, First Form: Thunderclap and Flash  
Flame Breathing, First Form: Unknowing Fire  
Etc.

**Total Concentration: Constant**

# Factors Behind *Demon Slayer* Becoming a Blockbuster

## Factor 2: Simple Setup, Appealing Background

### ⑥ Difficult kanji and old-fashioned words

Children love them  
Remember them wrong

生	水	干	水	全	笑	猪	生	悪
生	流	天	面	集	止	突	殺	鬼
流	飛	慈	斬	中	千	猛	与	滅
転	沫	雨	り	全	万	進	奪	殺

竈門炭治郎  
竈門禰豆子  
我妻善逸  
嘴平伊之助  
鱗滝左近次  
富岡義勇  
栗落花カナヲ

不死川玄弥  
煉獄杏寿郎  
甘露寺蜜璃  
産屋敷輝哉  
鬼舞辻無惨

ママサポチワワ@中受ラジオ&オンライン合同学校説明会主宰作成  
[https://twitter.com/c\\_mamasapo/status/1215582609708707840](https://twitter.com/c_mamasapo/status/1215582609708707840)

禰の本来の字はネに爾  
煉の本来の字は火に東



Learning Resilience from  
*Demon Slayer*

# What is Resilience?

- Masten, Best and Garmezy (1990)

Resilience refers to the **belief in having the strength to adapt** to difficulties in daily life, or the **process or outcome of successful adaptation** despite challenging circumstances.

⇒ Indicates the **ability to adapt without giving up** when encountering difficult situations

# Resilience as Seen in *Demon Slayer*

Emotional  
control

Dealing with  
shock

Capacity for  
empathy

Positivity

Analyzing  
causes

- **Overall Story:** Fighting to deal with the unreasonable situation that is “demons”
- **Characters:** Immediately think of what they can or cannot do in the moment
  - : Believe in their strength and that of their friends
- **Protagonist:** Acts to help people without turning to hate
  - Influences his companions
- **Companions/Hashira:** Control “anger”

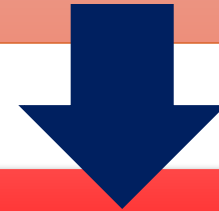
The strength to live through a chaotic world  
The strength to not give up, try hard, and not worry

Self-efficacy

Ability to reach out

# Learning Resilience from *Demon Slayer*

The ability to adapt, handle stress well,  
believe in yourself and move forward



Fosters the ability to  
“survive”