Japanese Students’ Moral Judgments Concerning Euthanasia*

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Euthanasia is one of the most urgent social issues of the day (Brigham & Pfeifer, 1996), and thus is a subject of hot debates in the court and the parliament in several countries (Leichtentritt & Retting, 1999). In Japan the social concern for euthanasia has been growing. Therefore, it is time to examine what Japanese people think of this issue. The purpose of the study is to clarify the Japanese adolescents’ attitude for euthanasia with an emphasis on the relationship between self-images and moral judgments concerning euthanasia. This study used a dilemma story based on a past case of euthanasia in Japan more than ten years ago. Because the dilemma story is a real one, it is expected that it can extract natural attitude from Japanese adolescences.

In this study, a focus is whether Gilligan’s view of gender difference (1977/1982) is supported in moral reasoning of the dilemma story. Several researchers have discussed a question of gender differences in moral judgment for a long time. Some studies found that there is no gender difference on Kohlberg’s moral stage theory concerning justice morality (Gibbs, 1984; Wark & Krebs, 1997 etc). In contrast, a meta-analysis, which was conducted to review the work on gender difference in moral orientation, revealed small gender differences between males and females (Jaffée & Hyde, 2000).

Besides Constructivistic models of moral reasoning, such as the one advanced by Gilligan, emphasize the determining power of individual differences in the type of internal, cognitive structures people possess (Wark & Krebs, 2000). In short, Gilligan insisted that two modes of justice-based and care-based moral judgments are linked to two distinct modes of self-definition in relation to others (Gilligan, 1977/1982; Lyons, 1983).

The author used a real-life euthanasia dilemma story in Japan, and investigated the following research questions.

➢ Are there gender differences in moral maturity/orientation about euthanasia dilemma?
➢ Are self-images in interpersonal perspectives related to moral orientations?

Method

Design

This study dealt with two models. The first related to moral maturity and the second to one aspect of moral orientation. And the independent variables were age, grade, two kinds of autonomous (instrumental and separated) self-report score, and two kinds of interpersonal (expressive and connected) self-report score in each model. The dependent variables were moral maturity score in the
The two key concepts

- Moral schemas on Neo-Kohlbergian approach (Rest et al., 1999a, b/2000)
  Moral maturity scores were rated based on the approach’s schemas.
  1. Personal interest schema
  2. Maintaining norms schema
  3. Postconventional schema

- Justice and care moral orientation on Gilligan’s view (Gilligan, 1977/1982; Lyons, 1983)
  Moral orientation scores were rated based on Gilligan’s view.

Participants

The participants were 114 university students (62 males and 52 females) in Tokyo. The average age of participants was 20.7 years (SD=1.97, ranging 18 to 34).

Instrument

Self-report Scales

The following two scales have two distinct modes of portraying self in relation to others – one mode portrays a separated-self, objective, instrumentality, and agency, and the other a connected-self, expressivity, and communion.

Table 1 shows these scales’ means, SD and Cronbach’s α. There were no significant gender differences in all self-report scales.

Personal Attitudes Questionnaire (PAQ)

PAQ is a self-report scale. The Japanese version of PAQ by Azuma (1992) was used in this study. The PAQ constructed with three sub-scales, M-scale (Instrumentality scale; PAQ-I), F-scale (Expressivity scale; PAQ-E), and MF-scale. The M-F scale, however, wasn’t used in this study, because it is said that M-F scale is ambiguous (Hill et al., 2000).

For a decade, the PAQ has tended to be used as “instrumentality/agency” scale rather than masculinity, and as “expressivity/communion” scale rather than femininity (Hill et al., 2000). Moreover, the PAQ often has also used as equivalent to Gilligan’s self-concept measure (Pratt et al., 1988; Pratt et al., 1990; Soechting, I. et al., 1994; Haviv, S. & Leman, P. J., 2002).

Separated-Self Scale (S-Scale) & Connected-Self Scale (C-Scale)

Yamamoto (1989) developed the S-Scale and the C-Scale in Japan. The scales were organized on the basis of theories of Gilligan (1977/1982) and Lyons (1983). S-scale consisted of 12 items (e.g. “I insist on my rights.” “I don’t mind what others think of me.”), and C-scale consisted of 19 items (e.g. “I’m pleasure of doing my best for others.” “I tend to be sensitive to others’ feeling.”).

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Table 1 Self-Report Scale's Mean, SD and Reliability Coefficient

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scales</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Ranges</th>
<th>Cronbach's α</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PAQ-I (Instrumentality Scale)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10-38</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>4.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAQ-E (Expressivity Scale)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12-30</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>3.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S-Scale (Separated-self Scale)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13-38</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>4.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-Scale (Connected-self Scale)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15-40</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>30.3</td>
<td>5.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dilemma Story

The story was based on article in newspaper concerning a historical case of euthanasia in Japan. This dilemma is similar to a Kohlberg’s hypothesis dilemma, Dilemma VI of Form A in the Measurement of Moral Judgment (Colby et al., 1987).

Differences with Kohlberg’s hypothesis dilemma are as follows.
- A term of “Euthanasia/ Mercy killing” was not used and also given an account of in this story.
- A patient was not informed of his illness.
- His family (his son) passionately hoped the patient’ euthanasia.
- His wife’s heavy burden caring for the patient was referred to in the story.
- The story didn’t refer that a way of passive euthanasia in the case was illegal.

The following is the story’s outline.

A cancer patient was at the terminal stage and he was not informed of the nature of his disease. His doctor killed him to ease the pain at his son’s request. The son also worried about his mother (her patient’s wife) fatigue because of nursing the patients day and night.

The participants were asked to choose (1. Yes, I do, 2. No, I don’t, 3.Other) for the questions whether she or he approves the doctor’s act. And then they were requested to write down the reason why they made the choice after reading the text, and they weren’t given background knowledge concerning euthanasia.

Procedure

Participants completed questionnaires in the class. No names were recorded, and the participants were promised that the information provided would be secret.

Scoring

Moral Maturity

A classification system of moral maturity was constructed with referring to moral schema of Rest et al. (1999b/2000) and moral stage of Colby et al. (1987). Distinctions used to score judgments of moral maturity were on the following three-point scale: “personal interest schema”=1, “Transitional between personal interest schema and maintaining norms schema”=1.5, “maintaining norms schema”=2, “postconventional schema”=3.
**Moral Orientation**

A classification system of moral maturity was constructed with referring to moral orientations’ definition of Lyons (1983) and moral issue categories of Wark & Krebs (2000). Distinctions used to score judgments of moral orientation were on the following three-point scale (Krebs et al., 2000): “care only”=3, “both care & justice”=2, “justice only”=1.

**Interrater reliability**

The author scored all open-end data blindly. Interrater reliability was based on 35 cases (30% of all cases) randomly selected. A research assistant classified those 35 cases. Interrater-rater reliabilities of scoring moral maturity was 85.7% agreement, and of scoring moral orientation was 80.0% agreement, \( r = .81 (p < .01) \).

**Results**

**Moral Maturity**

Moral maturity level didn’t differ between males and females in this study (see Table 2). Most of Japanese students used reasoning of personal interest schema (58.8%, 67 of 114, see Table 3). And then it was found that most of those students making personal interest justifications were rated as Stage 3 level in Kohlberg moral stage theory (43 of 67, 64.2%).

| Means of Moral Maturity Scores between Male & Female (n=114) |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Means / gender | Male | Female | Total |
| Mean | 1.42 | 1.55 | 1.48 |
| SD | (0.61) | (0.67) | (0.64) |

Note: There is no significant difference between genders (\( p > .10 \)).

| The frequency distribution of Moral Maturity |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Schemas | Male (% ) | Female (% ) | Total (% ) |
| 1.0 Personal Interest | 39 (62.9) | 28 (53.8) | 67 (58.8) |
| 1.5 Personal Interest/ Maintaining Norms | 2 (16.1) | 1 (25.0) | 3 (20.2) |
| 2.0 Maintaining Norms | 17 (27.4) | 18 (34.6) | 35 (30.7) |
| 3.0 Postconventional | 4 (6.5) | 5 (9.6) | 9 (7.9) |
| Total | 62 (100.0) | 52 (100.0) | 114 (100.0) |

Note: There is no significant association between moral orientation score and gender (chi-square =1.41, \( df = 3, p > .10 \)).

**Moral Orientation**

There was not significant difference between males and females in the degree of moral orientation
(see Table 4), however males used justice-based moral reasoning more than females (51.6% for females versus 36.5% for females, see Table 5) Self-image. There was not significant association between gender and score of all self-image scales in this study.

Table 4  Means of Moral Orientation Scores between Male & Female (n=114)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Means / gender</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>2.02</td>
<td>1.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>(0.90)</td>
<td>(0.87)</td>
<td>(0.89)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: There is no significant difference between genders (p>.10).

Table 5  The frequency distribution Moral Orientation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orientation</th>
<th>Male (%)</th>
<th>Female (%)</th>
<th>Total (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Justice Based</td>
<td>32 (51.6)</td>
<td>19 (36.5)</td>
<td>51 (44.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Justice and Care Based</td>
<td>10 (16.1)</td>
<td>13 (25.0)</td>
<td>23 (20.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Care Based</td>
<td>20 (32.3)</td>
<td>20 (38.5)</td>
<td>40 (35.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>62 (100.0)</td>
<td>52 (100.0)</td>
<td>114 (100.0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: There is no significant association between moral orientation score and gender (chi-square = 2.85, df=2, p>.10).

Path Analyses

Table 6 shows a matrix of correlation coefficient among grade, age, self-image scales’ scores, moral maturity score, and moral orientation score. The following models of path analyses were tested with Amos 4.0 (Arbuckle and Wothke, 1999).

Figure 1 shows that a model consisted of the dependent variable (Moral Maturity) and independent variables (grade, age, and self-images concerning interpersonal relationship). Age effect and PAQ-E (Expressivity) effect were significant. In the other word, age was positively related to, whereas Expressivity self-image was negatively related to justice-based moral maturity.

Figure 2 shows that a model consisted of the dependent variable (Moral Orientation) and independent variables (grade, age, and self-images concerning interpersonal relationship). There was no significant path coefficient.
Table 6  Correlations between dependent variables (moral maturity & moral orientation) and independent variable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Grade</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Age</td>
<td></td>
<td>.73**</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. PAQ-I</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. PAQ-E</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>-.10</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. S_SCALE</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.68**</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. C_SCALE</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>-.13</td>
<td>.23**</td>
<td>.71**</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Moral Maturity</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>-.22**</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Moral Orientation</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>-.13</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-.56**</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *p<.05. **p<.01.

Discussion

Gender was not associated with moral orientation as well as in moral maturity. Beside, there is not relationship between moral orientation and self-image, however there is partly relationship between moral maturity and self-image.

Although there was no association between gender and moral maturity score among Japanese students, justifications with were major, whereas justifications with sociocentric perspective and postconventional justification were minority among them. Beside, most of personal interest justifications were consider as empathic role taking justification of Stage3 in Kohlberg theory. This result could be explained by cultural factors or dilemma situations below.

Firstly, Gibbs et al. (1984) suggested that females were more responsibility-oriented through their study’s finding. On the other hand, a study in Japan, which was based on Kohlberg’s stage theory, showed that Japanese male and female children tended to make their decision from interpersonal and empathic orientations like Gilligan’s view (Yamagishi, 1990). So most of Japanese people might make interpersonal and empathic decisions, because interpersonal and empathic orientations are culturally expected character and attitude in Japan.

Next, the euthanasia dilemma used in this study was consisted of issues concerning the patient’s family rather than concerning personal decisions. Therefore most of students might make their decisions from interpersonal perspectives just like Stage 3, not from points of sociocentric perspective.

Moral orientations didn’t relate to self-image in this study, though moral maturity partly related to self-image score (PAQ-E). The result suggests that it is necessary to focus on other factors related to moral orientation. For example, students, who have seen the closed persons suffering terrible pain with cancer, could not help making empathic perspective justifications in this study. Therefore participants’ experience should be considered in such a study. A few participants, however, actually described their experience (e.g. “My grandfather also had taken life-prolong treatment, and he was dying. And my grand mother had seen him suffer from his sick, so she was sad very much. Therefore I approve of the
Moreover, other cognitive factors also should be regarded (e.g. after-life belief, General attitude to euthanasia, and traditional family values).

In general, the results didn’t support Gilligan’s views concerning gender differences, however it partly supported concerning relationships between self-images of a cognitive factor and justice-based moral maturity. The results could suggest that her views are not good at fitting for Japanese people. Therefore the views of gender difference should be discussed considering worldwide cultural differences as well as considering dilemma situational differences, and individual differences as experience or as cognitive factors.

![Path Analysis for Moral Maturity](image1)

![Path Analysis for Moral Orientation](image2)

**Reference**


The scientific researches, 41, 73-84, Japan.
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