

Toward an integration of law and psychology

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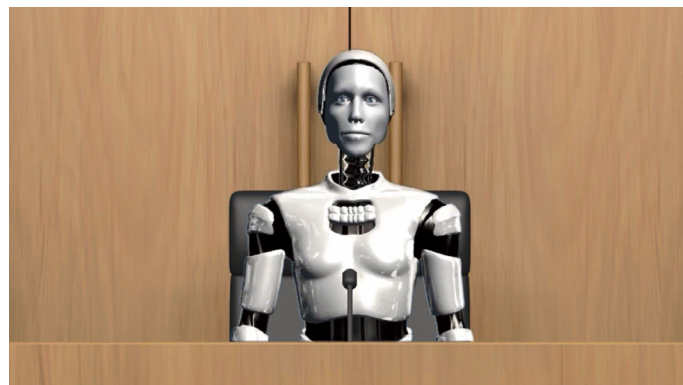
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<https://researchmap.jp/watamuraeiichiro?lang=en>



Abstract

Our project aims to bridge law and psychology by examining the intersection of human decision-making, social values, and trust in institutions. Recently, we have focused on three themes—AI-based judicial decision-making, responses to child maltreatment, and attitudes toward euthanasia—to understand how societies shape judgments and what forms of justice are collectively desired. In our study on AI judges, an experimental trial video demonstrated that even when the judge is an AI system, expressing empathetic behavior increases public trust and enhances acceptance of AI-assisted trials. This highlights the potential importance of perceived warmth in the future implementation of hybrid human–AI judicial models. Our research on child maltreatment used a nationwide survey and cluster analysis to reveal that public evaluations of Child Guidance Centers are generally more positive than media narratives suggest. To improve public engagement, we also created a comic that incorporates survey findings, offering an accessible way to deepen social understanding of child protection work. Finally, our study on euthanasia experimentally showed that presenting information about legalization can broaden people’s acceptance of euthanasia, suggesting that legal frameworks may shift psychological boundaries regarding end-of-life decisions. Together, these studies provide foundational insights into mechanisms of consensus building and diverse social values in Japan, informing discussions on the future of justice and institutional reform.



Video Clip of AI Trial Experiment

Background & Results

This research examines how public trust in the justice system, difficulties in social consensus building, and ethical challenges surrounding new technologies and welfare systems interact in contemporary Japan. In a society cautious about institutional change, understanding the interplay among intuition, ethics, and institutional trust is essential. Our recent studies address three domains: AI trials, child maltreatment, and euthanasia legislation. An experiment using trial videos showed that even AI judges gain higher perceived empathy, trust, and acceptance when displaying empathetic behavior, offering insight into the feasibility of hybrid human–AI courts (Figure 1). A nationwide survey on child maltreatment revealed four public attitude clusters, with strongly critical views representing only a small minority. To foster broader understanding, we produced an accessible comic based on the findings (Figure 2). Finally, an experiment on euthanasia demonstrated that information about legalization increases acceptance even in non-eligible cases, indicating that legal frameworks may shift psychological thresholds and require careful policy design.

Significance of the research and Future perspective

This research clarifies how human judgment and institutional trust shape justice, offering an empirical basis for social consensus building. Future work will deepen integration with AI and welfare policy to develop more inclusive and responsive judicial models.



Educational comic

Patent

Treatise

URL

Keyword

Watamura, Eiichiro; Ioku, Tomohiro; Mukai, Tomoya et al. Empathetic robot judge, we trust you. *International Journal of Human–Computer Interaction*. 2024, 40. doi: 10.1080/10447318.2023.2232982

Watamura, Eiichiro; Adam, J. Hunt; Ioku, Tomohiro. Beyond cultural beliefs: core attitudes toward euthanasia in an aging Japan. *Ethics & Behavior*. 2025. doi: 10.1080/10508422.2025.2517864

social psychology, law and psychology, decision-making, ethics, justice