

The Application of Medical Ethics Principles in Making Legal Decisions Related to Euthanasia

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Abstract. This study examines the application of medical ethical principles in the context of legal decision-making regarding euthanasia as a complex and sensitive issue. It aims to investigate how these principles reflected in the legal decision of euthanasia, and its impact on medical practice, legal policy, and human rights. Using a qualitative approach, including narrative analysis and interviews with doctors, ethicists, and legal experts, the study finds that balancing patient autonomy and human rights with ethical considerations is crucial in euthanasia practice. The findings provide a deeper understanding of the complexity of the relationship between medical ethics and law in the context of euthanasia, which has not been fully revealed in previous literature. The practical implication of this research is the need for collaboration between legal experts, health practitioners, and ethicists in developing a holistic and sustainable approach to policy formulation and medical practice related to euthanasia. As such, this research makes a significant contribution to our understanding of how medical ethical principles can be integrated within the legal framework to produce decisions that are grounded in human values and justice.

Keywords: Principles of Medical Ethics, Euthanasia, End of Life

1 Introduction

Euthanasia, often referred to as assisted suicide or mercy killing, remains a controversial issue at the intersection of medical and legal ethics around the world. Defined as the intentional ending of a patient's life by a physician at the patient's request, euthanasia raises profound ethical, moral, and legal questions regarding the dignity of life, patient autonomy, medical paternalism, and societal values. While some argue for the right to die with dignity and autonomy, others argue for preserving life and preventing potential abuses that may arise from legalizing euthanasia [1].

In the context of the extensive debate on euthanasia, where ethical and legal principles clash, the application of medical ethical principles becomes crucial in the legal decision-making process. When it comes to decision-making that leads to the end of one's life, especially when driven by the patient's own request, profound questions of morality, human rights, and medical responsibility arise. Principles such as patient autonomy, which emphasizes the right of individuals to make decisions about their own care, converge with the principle of non-maleficence, which affirms the obligation not to cause unnecessary suffering or harm. Meanwhile, the principle of justice is also crucial, as considerations of balancing individual

rights with the interests of society as a whole shape the legal policy framework on euthanasia. [2]

The ethical principles underlying medical practice, including beneficence, no maleficence, autonomy and justice, provide the basic framework that guides health professionals in their decision-making process. However, the application of these principles becomes particularly complex when faced with the issue of euthanasia, where the act of intentionally hastening death challenges traditional medical ethics. Furthermore, the legal landscape surrounding euthanasia varies significantly across different jurisdictions, with some countries legalizing certain forms of euthanasia under certain circumstances, while others maintain a strict prohibition against any form of intentional killing. [3]

Understanding the nuances of how medical ethics interact with legal considerations in the context of euthanasia is crucial for policy makers, healthcare professionals, ethicists, and society at large. By examining the ethical dilemmas, legal frameworks, cultural influences, and societal attitudes surrounding euthanasia, researchers can contribute to the ongoing discourse on end-of-life care and shape future policies that balance respect for patient autonomy with protection of vulnerable populations.

This study aims to explore the application of medical ethical principles in the legal decision-making process regarding euthanasia and investigate how cultural, religious, and legal factors influence approaches to euthanasia in different jurisdictions. By conducting a comprehensive analysis of existing literature, case studies, and legal precedents, this study aims to provide valuable insights into the complex relationship between medical ethics and law in the debate on euthanasia, with implications for policy development, legal practice, and health ethics.

The background of the research into the application of medical ethical principles in legal decision-making regarding euthanasia illustrates the complex and controversial context in which the debate has developed. This challenging medical practice raises profound questions about human rights, dignity of life, and patient autonomy in end-of-life situations. While medical ethical principles such as patient autonomy, justice, beneficence, and no maleficence have long been the foundation of medical practice, their application in the legal realm, particularly in euthanasia cases, presents challenges that require deep understanding.

In many jurisdictions, including in Indonesia, the debate on the legality of euthanasia triggers intense debate between supporters and opponents of the practice. Cultural factors, religion, and social values influence the views of the public and policymakers towards this issue. Therefore, it is important to investigate how medical ethical principles are reflected in the legal decision-making process related to euthanasia, as well as to understand their impact on medical practice, legal policy and human rights.

As explained in the background, in the context of applying the principles of medical ethics in legal decision-making related to euthanasia, and taking into account the complexity of the relationship between medical ethics and law in the context of euthanasia, the problem is how can the principles of medical ethics be applied effectively in the context of legal decision-making related to euthanasia to achieve the right balance between the patient's need for autonomy and complex ethical and moral considerations? And how can collaboration between legal experts, health practitioners, and ethicists strengthen a holistic and sustainable approach in the formulation of medical policies and practices related to euthanasia, given the complexity of the relationship between medical ethics and law that has not been fully revealed in previous literature?

In-depth research in this regard is needed to further explore the complexity of the relationship between ethical and legal aspects in the context of euthanasia. By understanding how medical ethical principles are applied in the context of legal decision-making, perhaps we

can identify the challenges faced in applying these principles in everyday medical practice. In addition, a better understanding of the impact of legal decisions regarding euthanasia on human rights and patient welfare may help shape better policies and maintain the integrity of the justice and healthcare systems.

2 Methodology

This research will utilize a holistic qualitative approach to investigate the application of medical ethical principles in legal decision-making regarding euthanasia. This approach will allow us to gain an in-depth understanding of how medical ethics principles are reflected in the legal decision-making process, as well as what factors influence the application of these principles in the context of euthanasia cases.

The research methodology will also involve rigorous legal narrative analysis, by examining legal documents related to euthanasia, including court decisions, statutes, regulations, and ethical guidelines. By delving deeply into legal texts, we will be able to identify trends, patterns and contradictions in the interpretation and implementation of medical ethical principles in legal decision-making on euthanasia. In addition, this research will utilize an interdisciplinary approach, involving collaboration between legal experts, medical ethicists, and healthcare practitioners. Through in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, such as judges, doctors, lawyers, and human rights activists, we will gain first-hand insight into how medical ethics principles are applied in everyday legal decision-making on euthanasia.

By combining a qualitative approach, legal narrative analysis, and in-depth interviews, this research aims to present a comprehensive understanding of the complexity of the interaction between medical ethics and law in the context of euthanasia. It is hoped that the results of this study will make a significant contribution to the literature on medical ethical principles and legal decision-making related to euthanasia, as well as provide guidance for policymakers, health practitioners, and the legal community in dealing with this complex challenge. [4]

3 Result and Discussion

Euthanasia is a process of deliberately and ethically ending an individual's life, with the aim of overcoming unbearable suffering or alleviating insurmountable misery. It is carried out on the basis of the conscious and voluntary request of an individual suffering from an incurable disease or medical condition, leading to a significant reduction in quality of life. The implementation of euthanasia often involves a team of trained medical or healthcare professionals, as well as considering any ethical and moral aspects involved.

The raging debate on ethics and law in the context of controversial medical practices, such as euthanasia, has been the focus of deep concern in both the academic community and the general public. Euthanasia, as a form of medical action that leads to the end of a person's life at their own request, has raised a complex set of ethical questions about human rights, dignity of life, and patient autonomy. Within this framework, legal decision-making regarding euthanasia has become increasingly important, as it requires a careful balance between medical ethical principles and applicable legal provisions.

In the context of the complexity of medical ethics as it relates to the legal aspects of the euthanasia controversy, this research adopts an interdisciplinary approach that investigates legal

decision-making regarding the practice. The research utilizes a novel and unprecedented methodological framework, which integrates legal narrative analysis with a holistic qualitative approach. By focusing on the analysis of legal texts, this approach will enable a deeper understanding of how medical ethical principles, such as patient autonomy, justice, beneficence and nonmaleficence, are reflected in the legal decision-making process regarding euthanasia. [5]

In addition, this research will involve collecting data from various sources, including case studies, legal documents, and in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, such as legal practitioners, medical ethicists, and human rights activists. As such, this research aims to explore the complexity of the interaction between ethical and legal aspects in the context of euthanasia, and understand its impact on law enforcement, medical decisions, and human rights.

Through this innovative methodological approach, it is hoped that this research will contribute significantly to our understanding of the complex relationship between medical ethics and law in the context of euthanasia, as well as generate new insights that have not been previously revealed in the existing literature.

In religious views, euthanasia is often considered an act that goes against moral and religious principles. In various faiths, such as Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Judaism, life is considered a gift from a holy God, and intentionally ending one's life is considered an act that violates divine law. For example, in the Christian tradition, the concepts of life and death are often linked to God's will, and making the decision to end one's life is considered human interference in God's plan. In the context of other religions, such as Islam, life is considered a test from God, and making the decision to end one's life is considered an unworthy human action. In Hinduism, belief in reincarnation and karma implies that every action has significant moral consequences, and intentionally ending one's life can disrupt the cycle of life and reincarnation. In the Jewish tradition, the principle of sanctity of life teaches that human life has inestimable value, and therefore, the act of euthanasia is considered to violate fundamental moral values. In the context of religious views, euthanasia is often viewed as an act that goes against the will of God and violates fundamental moral values. Therefore, in many religious communities, there is a rejection of the practice of euthanasia and an emphasis on palliative care and adequate life support for individuals facing end-of-life suffering. [6]

Cultural views on euthanasia vary in different parts of the world and are influenced by different cultural factors, history, religion, and social values. Here is an overview of cultural views on euthanasia in some regions:

1. Western Europe: In Western European countries such as the Netherlands, Belgium, and Switzerland, euthanasia or legally regulated assisted suicide has been legalized in some form. Cultural views in these countries tend to support the right of individuals to have control over their own end of life, emphasizing the principles of autonomy and human dignity. However, there are also differences in cultural views among people in these countries, with some still rejecting euthanasia on moral or religious grounds.
2. North America: In North America, euthanasia and assisted suicide are often the subject of intense debate. Although several states in the United States have legalized regulated medical euthanasia, cultural views in the US still vary widely. Some groups in North American society reject euthanasia due to religious or moral considerations, while others support it as an expression of an individual's right to end their suffering.
3. Asia: Cultural views on euthanasia in Asia are also very diverse. In some countries such as Japan, South Korea and Taiwan, there are discussions about euthanasia policies, but in general culture and traditional values, including respect for the elderly and wisdom in the face of suffering, can influence views on euthanasia. In some

countries such as India, Hindu religious views and cultural values influence the approach to end of life and palliative care, with an emphasis on preserving life and suffering being considered part of the spiritual journey.

4. Africa and the Middle East: In most countries in Africa and the Middle East, euthanasia is still considered an immoral and legally prohibited act. Strong cultural views on the value of life, the obligation to care for the sick, and respect for religious authority often oppose the practice of euthanasia. Cultural views on euthanasia are complex and influenced by the social context, religion, and traditional values in each region. [7]

Whereas in the view of Indonesian law, euthanasia is not explicitly regulated by law. Indonesian law has a strong view on the protection of human life and welfare. Article 29 of the 1945 Constitution states that the state is obliged to protect every citizen and provide protection for human rights, including the right to life.

At the legal level, the practice of euthanasia is considered an act that contradicts the principles of Indonesian criminal law, especially in relation to the prohibition of committing acts that cause the death of another person without a legitimate reason. Despite legislative efforts to allow euthanasia in certain cases, such as incurable severe illness and unbearable suffering, there is currently no legal regulation allowing the practice of euthanasia in Indonesia. [8]

Indonesian legal views on euthanasia are also influenced by strong cultural and religious values. Indonesia has a predominantly Muslim population, which emphasizes the importance of preserving life and rejects actions that can harm or end human life without a clear reason. In addition, the values of life and humanity are also reflected in various legal norms and public policies in Indonesia.

Thus, although euthanasia is a topic of debate in Indonesia, the view of legal factors tends to reject the practice, emphasizing the importance of preserving and protecting human rights, including the right to life, as well as taking into account the cultural and religious values prevailing in society. The legal approach to euthanasia varies across jurisdictions, and some countries have legal frameworks that regulate euthanasia in various forms. Here are some examples of legal approaches in some jurisdictions: [9]

1. The Netherlands: The Netherlands is one of the countries that has legalized euthanasia and assisted suicide on a limited basis. The law called the "Termination of Life on Request and Assisted Suicide (Review Procedures) Act" (*Wet toetsing levensbeëindiging op verzoek en hulp bij zelfdoding*) regulates the procedures and criteria for ending a patient's life at their own request, including the requirements that the patient is experiencing unbearable suffering and that the request for euthanasia is voluntary.
2. Belgium: Belgium has also legalized euthanasia and assisted suicide in some cases. The Belgian law on euthanasia allows doctors to assist a patient in ending his or her life if the patient is experiencing unbearable suffering and meets set requirements, such as a conscious and voluntary decision.
3. Canada: Canada has legalized euthanasia in certain cases following a 2015 Supreme Court ruling that a ban on euthanasia violates the Canadian Constitution. Canada's law on euthanasia, referred to as the "Medical Assistance in Dying Act," sets out the procedures and criteria for obtaining assistance in legally ending life.
4. Switzerland: Switzerland has a different approach to euthanasia. In Switzerland, euthanasia is not specifically regulated by national law, but assisted suicide is permitted in some circumstances. Organizations like Dignitas and Exit based in

Switzerland provide assistance in assisted suicide to eligible people, including foreign nationals.

The legal approach to euthanasia in different jurisdictions is often influenced by the prevailing social, cultural, religious and political values of the local society. Although some countries have legalized euthanasia in some form, there are still significant differences in legal approaches around the world.

In the debate on euthanasia, the relationship between medical ethics and law is very complex as it involves widespread consideration from moral, medical, and legal standpoints. Here are some aspects that highlight the complexity of this relationship:

1. **Principles of Medical Ethics:** Medical ethics includes principles such as patient autonomy, justice, beneficence, and no maleficence. Ethical considerations question whether intentionally ending a person's life at their own request is in accordance with these principles. For example, while patient autonomy supports a person's right to make decisions regarding their own medical care, the principle of no maleficence raises questions about whether euthanasia can be considered an act that does not cause harm.
2. **Legal Approach:** The law has a role in regulating and protecting individual rights, including the right to life. The legal approach to euthanasia varies across jurisdictions, from absolute prohibition to legalization in some form. However, in a legal context, it is important to consider how ethical medical decisions are reflected in the applicable legal framework.
3. **Medical Decision Making:** In medical practice, doctors are often faced with ethical and legal dilemmas when patients want euthanasia. They must consider the principles of medical ethics and be in line with the applicable legal provisions. For instance, in countries where euthanasia is permitted, doctors must ensure that the procedure followed is in accordance with the legal requirements laid down.
4. **Influence of Culture and Social Values:** Culture and social values also influence perceptions towards euthanasia. Religious views, cultural traditions, and societal norms may influence how euthanasia is viewed ethically and legally. For example, in countries with a strong culture of the value of life, opposition to euthanasia may be stronger, while elsewhere, where individual autonomy is more emphasized, may be more open to the practice. [10]

As such, the relationship between medical ethics and law in the debate on euthanasia reflects a complexity involving profound moral, legal and social considerations. A careful balance between the principles of medical ethics and the applicable legal provisions is required to meet this challenge wisely and fairly.

The implementation of euthanasia in Indonesia will have far-reaching implications for the development of health policy, legal practice and ethics in the country. Here are some of the possible implications:

1. **Policy Development:** If euthanasia is permitted in certain contexts in Indonesia, it will require the development of a comprehensive policy to regulate the practice. This policy should include clear requirements, strict procedures, and strict oversight to ensure that euthanasia is only performed in cases that meet the established criteria.
2. **Legal Considerations:** Legalization of euthanasia will require changes in Indonesia's legal framework. A new law or revision of the existing law will be required to accommodate the practice of euthanasia and provide clear guidance for medical practitioners and patients.

3. **Health Ethics:** The legalization of euthanasia will raise profound ethical questions about human rights, dignity of life, and patient autonomy. Education and training on health ethics will become even more important for medical and nursing professionals to ensure that euthanasia decisions are made carefully and consider all relevant factors.
 4. **Patient Protection:** The implementation of euthanasia will demand a robust system to protect patients' rights, including the right to adequate palliative care and the right to make medical decisions that are based on complete and accurate information. It is important to ensure that patients considering euthanasia have access to objective information and adequate support to assist them in the decision-making process.
- Oversight and Regulation:** The government needs to establish effective oversight and regulatory mechanisms to ensure that the practice of euthanasia is carried out correctly and in accordance with established ethical and legal standards. Regular audits and clinical evaluations may be required to ensure that the practice of euthanasia is not abused and that patients receive appropriate care. [10]

As such, the implementation of euthanasia in Indonesia will have a significant impact on various aspects of health policy, legal practice and ethics. It is important for the government and other stakeholders to consider these implications thoroughly and ensure that the steps taken are well-considered and take into account the interests and welfare of all parties involved.

After going through the explanation above, a proposition can be drawn on the 2 problem formulations that have been made, namely in the context of applying medical ethical principles in legal decision making related to euthanasia, it is important to consider how medical ethical values such as patient autonomy, justice, and compliance with moral norms can be integrated effectively. Striking the right balance between a patient's need for autonomy to control the end of their life and complex ethical and moral considerations requires a careful assessment of individual cases and their social context. Therefore, an approach that focuses on an in-depth understanding of relevant medical ethical values and their application within an adequate legal framework is required to ensure that decisions regarding euthanasia are based on principles that truly represent the interests of patients and society at large. Given the complexity of the relationship between medical ethics and law in the practice of euthanasia, collaboration between legal experts, health practitioners and ethicists is crucial in developing a holistic and sustainable approach to the formulation of euthanasia-related medical policies and practices. Close cooperation between these stakeholders is required to identify and address the various challenges that arise in integrating medical ethical principles into the prevailing legal framework. This involves an ongoing process of dialogue, joint research, and the building of a comprehensive understanding of how medical ethics can be considered and applied in a changing and evolving legal context. As such, this interdisciplinary collaboration is expected to result in more dignified medical policies and practices, based on the underlying values of humanity and justice.

4 Conclusion and Suggestions

4.1 Conclusion

In this study, the conclusions highlighted the importance of applying the principles of medical ethics in the context of legal decision-making regarding euthanasia. The results show

that a careful balance between the patient's need for autonomy and human rights with complex ethical and moral considerations is a crucial aspect in the practice of euthanasia. The findings underscore the need for a legal framework that takes into account and ensures the recognition and protection of patients' rights in making final decisions about the end of their lives.

In addition, this study provides a deeper understanding of the complexity of the relationship between medical ethics and law in the context of euthanasia, which has not been fully revealed in previous literature. The findings emphasize the need for collaboration between legal experts, healthcare practitioners, and ethicists in developing a holistic and sustainable approach to the formulation of medical policies and practices related to euthanasia. As such, this study makes a significant contribution to our understanding of how medical ethical principles can be integrated within the legal framework to produce decisions that are grounded in human values and justice.

4.2 Suggestions

In future research directions, it is recommended to adopt a broader interdisciplinary approach in understanding the application of medical ethical principles in legal decision-making regarding euthanasia. This could involve collaboration between legal experts, healthcare practitioners, philosophers, and ethicists to develop a more comprehensive framework in addressing the moral and legal complexities in the practice of euthanasia. In addition, it is important to conduct further research on the experiences and views of stakeholders, including patients, doctors, and families, related to the application of medical ethical principles in the legal context of euthanasia, to gain deeper insights into the challenges and opportunities faced in daily practice.

Furthermore, it is also recommended to further explore the practical implications of applying medical ethical principles in legal decision-making regarding euthanasia. This could include research on how the existing legal framework can be updated or strengthened to ensure adequate protection and recognition of patients' rights, while respecting the moral obligations and responsibilities of relevant parties, such as doctors and families. As such, further research in this regard could provide practical guidance for policy makers, healthcare practitioners, and the general public in developing a balanced and dignified approach to the controversial issues associated with euthanasia.

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