The "Spam Caller Dilemma" and Its Reflection Under the Theory of Morality-as-Cooperation (MAC)

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Abstract. A dilemma is characterized by a feeling of being torn between morally conflicting choices. Daily life has various moral dilemmas, often leading people to entangled situations. People are accustomed to the occurrence of moral dilemmas. However, opinions vary on how moral dilemmas arise. This paper proposes a moral dilemma called the "spam caller dilemma" under the premise of the morality-as-cooperation (MAC) theory and conducts small-scale online research to address this dilemma. This paper explores people's views on the conflict between the cooperative principles of kinship and reciprocal altruism through this study. It provides an example and theoretical basis for the cooperation theory of morality. The survey results show that around 70% of people believe that verbal abuse of spam phone calls in the event of one's father's death is morally acceptable. Based on the research results, this article discusses the possible reasons for this result and proposes reflections and inspirations on this moral dilemma in daily life. It is concluded that when there is a conflict between kinship and reciprocity, more people seem to choose kinship. At the same time, there are also many influencing factors, such as emotional empathy, frustration with spam calls and stereotypes in specific industries.

Keywords: Morality, Moral dilemma, Cooperation principles, Bereavement, Trauma.

1. Introduction

A dilemma is a situation in which a person faces a difficult choice between two or more choices, each with potential advantages and disadvantages. It is often characterized by being torn between morally conflicting choices. The individual may be unsure of the best course of action and may feel conflicted about the potential consequences of their choices. Every individual will encounter more or less moral dilemmas, so how do these dilemmas arise? The morality-as-cooperation (MAC) theory contends that morality is a set of biological and cultural responses to recurrent cooperative issues in human social life [1]. There are many types of cooperation, which include kinship, reciprocal altruism, exchange, hawk, dove, division and possession [2]. These cooperative rules are what philosophers and others have called 'morality'. The conflict between different cooperation principles is the reason why dilemmas arise.

People pursue many moral values, and they often come into conflict. Adapted from a real moral dilemma example in the AITA forum section of the Reddit platform, the "spam caller dilemma" is conceived: After the death of a man's father, the man has been receiving spam phone calls from plenty of real estate developers, asking about selling his father's house. At that time, he was in extreme sadness and fed up with the constant harassment of spam phone calls. When the developers call him, he verbally abuses them to make them feel bad. And the question is, is it morally acceptable for him to do this?

Although plentiful literature has studied the definition and examples of dilemmas, there is little evidence to prove why moral dilemmas arise based on the theory of morality-as-cooperation. There is still insufficient research on individual moral dilemma examples from the morality-as-cooperation (MAC) theory perspective, especially in perspectives where different cooperative principles come into conflict.

In short, the focus of this paper is to provide a comprehensive overview of the "spam caller dilemma" in moral dilemmas from the perspectives of morality as cooperation. This article will discuss the cooperative principles of conflicts in this moral dilemma. In response to this moral

dilemma, a small survey was conducted, and the results were presented in a pie chart to provide a more intuitive representation of the data. According to the results, some possible reasons were analysed to conclude.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Related Cooperation Principles

According to the morality-as-cooperation theory, every moral dilemma is caused by conflicting cooperative principles, and this moral dilemma is no exception. In this dilemma, principles of kinship and reciprocal altruism come into conflict. From the kinship perspective, people should be prepared to assist a family member. They should always be loyal to their family, constantly be devoted to them, and prioritize what is best for them. My father's passing is a highly sorrow-stricken event, and it is understandable to be immersed in sadness and ignore the feelings of others. Therefore, people may consider it to be morally acceptable.

One good turn deserves another from the perspective of reciprocal altruism; reciprocity, trust, patience, gratitude, guilt, apology, and forgiveness are widely recognized as essential components of morality [2]. People should help the people in need around them. The man and the real estate developer are individuals living in the same society and should help each other. Thus people may consider it to be morally unacceptable.

2.2. Investigation and Result

This moral dilemma was created into a questionnaire and uploaded on social media as a small survey. In response to this spam caller dilemma, the questionnaire has set two options: Yes and No. A total of 97 responses were received during the investigation. Most people participating in the survey are from the United States, accounting for nearly 80%, with 16% coming from China and a small portion from other countries such as India. The proportion of men and women participating in the survey is nearly balanced, with 51% and 49%, respectively. Depending on different ideas, societal norms, and ethical frameworks of different people, moral judgments may differ widely from person to person. Different people may place different values on elements like emotional anguish, harm from verbal abuse, or the context of the circumstance, resulting in diverse views on what is morally acceptable. The survey results show that over 70% of people think it is morally acceptable for a man to abuse real estate developers verbally. The result is displayed in the figure 1 and figure 2.

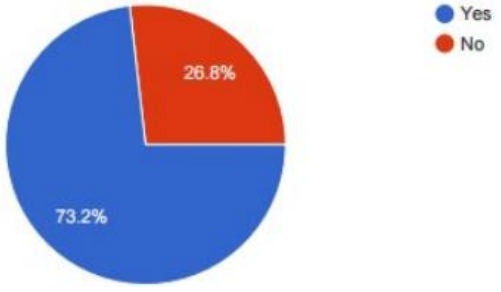


Figure 1. Result

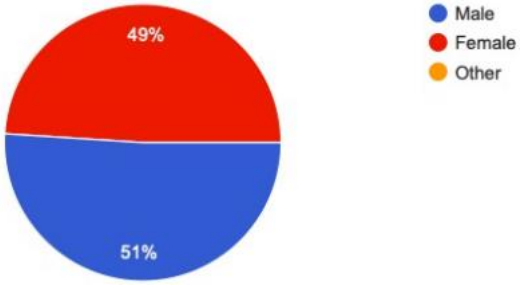


Figure 2. Sex ratio

2.3. Reasons for the Result

2.3.1 The Emotional Empathy of Bereavement

The survey results show that most people believe verbal abuse of spam phone calls is morally acceptable in this dilemma. In this situation, It seems that most people prioritize kinship over reciprocal altruism. However, there seem to be many other influencing factors that contribute to this result. It is difficult to conclude without identifying all the influencing factors in this spam caller dilemma.

The first factor is that most people have emotional empathy. Bereavement can take a significant psychological toll on people [3]. Adults who had experienced bereavement reported considerably higher levels of substance use, behavioural disengagement, and emotional eating than non-bereaved adults [4]. The attachment behaviour system is activated after the death of a loved one. In the initial stage after the death of a loved one, people cannot fully accept the departure of the loved one, and those who have lost their loved ones exhibit unique separation reactions, including apparent protests and pain [5]. People who experience bereavement may also experience stress reactions due to external stimuli and may engage in irrational behavior and actions. Therefore, many people will substitute themselves for the man's situation and empathize with the man's emotional state following his father's death, leading them to be more lenient and understanding of his response to the spam phone calls.

2.3.2 The Closeness Level of The Relationship

The second factor is the closeness level of the relationship. Typically speaking, when people socialize in our daily life, they should be friendly and speak politely in social interactions.

The possible reason for this investigation result is that people may feel that even if they offend the real estate developers, they are just strangers, and the emotional reaction of the real estate developers has just little impact on them, even if they provoke the real estate developers, they will not have any intersections in their future lives.

However, kinship is different from any other relationship. The relationship between people and their parents is the most profound link among all emotions, and it is also the emotion that has the most significant impact on a person. Therefore, when the emotional connection between parents conflicts with the emotional connection between strangers, most people may be more inclined towards kinship. If the man's father is changed to his ordinary friend or stepfather, the proportion of the survey results may also change.

2.3.3 The Frustration With Spam Calls

The third possible reason is the frustration with spam calls. In nowadays society with advanced communication technology, except for some people in a few countries and regions, the vast majority of the world population uses mobile phones and other communication devices for communication, such as making calls and sending text messages through wireless networks. Advanced communication technology dramatically facilitates people's lives while bringing some inconvenience and troubles. Investigations show that spam phone calls account for almost half of all mobile calls today [6]. The telemarketing industry insists that it is providing usage services to the public. However, some public members seem to disagree with this [7]. Public frustration with spam calls is widespread, with about 74 percent of U.S. cell phone users struggling with spam calls every month. The spam phone call is not just a public nuisance. It consumes small businesses' productivity and lowers consumers' quality of life [8].

Many people have experienced or can relate to receiving spam calls, which can be annoying. They believe that receiving spam phone calls is a waste of time and energy and often a frustrating thing. Imagine when people excitedly pick up their phones and expect it to be a call from family or friends, only to find out that it is a spam phone call to promote products they don't need. Most people will feel disappointed. This shared frustration might lead individuals to sympathize with the man's emotional outbursts.

2.3.4 Stereotypes

The Oxford English Dictionary defines a stereotype as a "widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing." Each individual has at least one social identity, which is the target of negative stereotypes in certain specific situations [9]. Thus, everyone is expected to have more or less stereotypes about certain people or things.

The real estate sector is the backbone of a country's housing scene. However, in the current situation, consumer sentiment in the real estate industry has become one of the reasons why the real estate industry is experiencing depression. Consumers' lack of trust in the real estate market is mainly because various factors have delayed numerous projects. In addition, due to widespread dereliction of duty, developers attempt to maintain a leading position in the competition and pay less attention to consumer satisfaction [10].

Therefore, stereotypes of the real estate developer industry may also be a reason. Negative experiences or stereotypes associated with this industry could influence people's opinions. If people have negative views of the industry, they might be more inclined to support the man's behavior as a form of confrontation against the whole industry.

2.3.5 Religion

However, nearly 30% of people in the results believe that verbal abuse of others is morally unacceptable even in such situations. The role of religion in determining the moral acceptability of a person's behavior may vary depending on individual beliefs and religious doctrines. Different religions and belief systems may have different views on how a person should cope with difficulties and treat others.

Generally speaking, many religious doctrines emphasize the importance of compassion, forgiveness, kindness, and respect for others. In most religions, verbal abuse is generally considered to be morally unacceptable. On the contrary, religious teachings often encourage individuals to respond to adversity with patience, understanding and peaceful solutions.

The views of most religious believers on life and death are vastly different from those of non-believers. For example, the concept of Samsâra in Buddhism is "evidence" of spirituality that necessitates a constant cycle of birth and rebirth, which may give a person hope for the hereafter. The teaching of Buddhist meditation emphasizes the prominent nature of life education research. That is, life education focuses on the exploration of death, which is inevitable and cherishes the realization of life. Buddhism teaches people how to overcome sadness, accept that a close relative has left this material world, and tell the world that the concept of immortality and transcendence of death is possible [11]. Therefore, people with religious beliefs may be more inclined to choose "no".

However, it is essential to note that the interpretation and application of religious doctrines may change. Some people may argue that considering his emotional state and the ongoing harassment he is experiencing, his behavior is understandable. Others may take a stricter stance, believing they should seek other ways to solve this problem while adhering to moral principles.

Ultimately, the role of religion in this situation will depend on individuals' personal beliefs, their interpretations of religious doctrines, and the specific religious traditions they adhere to.

3. Reflection on Life

Most people believe that this dilemma makes it difficult to make a choice. They know this is just a part of the job of a real estate developer, and the passing of a loved one does make people sad. However, when many different factors, or in other words, conflicting cooperation principles, are mixed, making choices often become less straightforward. This spam caller dilemma is based on the moral test of daily life and is a highly likely event to occur in daily life. So what should people do when they encounter this situation in their lives? Verbal abuse is usually morally unacceptable because it violates the principles of respect and kindness. It is important to treat others with dignity, even in challenging situations. Emotional distress can lead individuals to engage in behaviours they

consider morally unacceptable. The man's extreme sadness and frustration led him to insult the real estate developer.

It is worth considering that there may be more effective ways to solve this problem. People can try to find some alternative methods, such as blocking these numbers, consulting legal resources, or reporting spam calls to relevant authorities rather than relying solely on verbal abuse. In the Youmail survey results, most respondents (71%) prefer handling spam calls using a software application that can automatically recognize and block spam calls [8]. In short, seeking constructive solutions and assistance is more advisable than resorting to abusive behavior.

4. Conclusion

The survey results show that more people believe verbal abuse of spam phone calls during bereavement is morally acceptable. This paper analyzes the conflicting principles of cooperation in this spam caller dilemma: kinship and reciprocal altruism. The result indicates that when there is a conflict between kinship and reciprocal altruism, more people choose kinship. However, other influencing factors, such as stereotypes and frustration with spam calls, lead to this survey result. This paper helps to confirm that the arising of moral dilemmas is the conflicting cooperation principles, fills the research gap of specific moral dilemmas from the perspective of morality-as-cooperation theory, providing new examples and unique insights for the academic perspective of morality-as-cooperation theory.

In the end, the survey results regarding this spam caller dilemma are not sufficiently representative due to the limitations such as small sample size and single survey areas. Further research is needed to obtain more representative research results and conclusions, such as expanding the sample size and increasing the breadth of the survey area. In addition, although this paper analyzes the reasons for the survey results, some specific factors have not been taken into account. For example, further research may be needed to determine whether there are gender and age differences in this dilemma. In addition, it would be interesting to investigate whether those who got married have a higher proportion for selecting yes than those who didn't get married and whether people with children will prioritize family values and kinship more than people with no children.

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