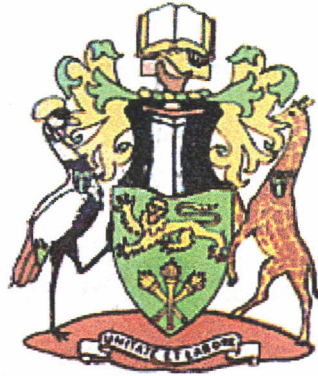


UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI



DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

RESEARCH PROJECT REPORT

**THE MORAL FOUNDATION OF GERM CELL
GENETIC ENGINEERING**

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ABSTRACT

This is a multidisciplinary study. It integrates medical ethics and the emerging biomedical technology of Recombinant DNA. The study sets out to investigate, and attempts at resolving, the controversy surrounding the ethical foundation of the biotechnology of germ cell genetic engineering. The contention in this study is that the persistence of the moral controversy is due to the lack of an appropriate ethical framework of analysis which is in tandem with the practice, and aims of the germ cell genetic engineering.

This study sets out to examine the ethically relevant grounds that can necessitate and justify the application of germ cell genetic engineering technology in the process of human reproduction.

The methodology adopted in this study is critical and analytical inquiry. Focusing on the secondary data obtained from the library research, a critical analysis and argumentation has been used in order to determine and evaluate the meaning, underlying assumptions, implications and justifications of the stand taken. The stand taken is that the ethical foundation of germ cell genetic engineering is that of quality-of-life ethic.

Setting the inquiry within the pragmatic consequentialist ethical approach, the argument advanced focuses on the goal of attaining happiness. This is possible when leading a quality life. In this respect germ cell genetic engineering with its immense benefits and assurance of quality life is viewed as morally necessary and justified. The findings of the study show that the moral value to be derived from the utility of genetic engineering outweighs the moral evils.

In paving the way for an ethical discussion, the study exposes the invalidity of the a priori and a posteriori objections leveled against germ cell genetic engineering. This is after analyzing them under a posteriori pragmatic ethical framework. The a priori objections are dismissed as morally insignificant as they are metaphysical and empirically indemonstrable. Whenever they are appealed to in ethics they kill the argument there and then. However, ethics is not absolutist. The a

posteriori objections are also dismissed as an informed public policy framework in a democratic and liberal society can adequately address them.

Principally the right to, and the obligation to ensure, a normal opportunity for health to every possible child is a utilitarian requirement of human obligation. This utilitarian obligation dictates to the current generation, as individuals who are morally responsible, to do that which is possible to ensure posterity's attainment of quality life. As such controversial issues like discarding the germ cells, aborting or refraining from procreation are morally praiseworthy.

The findings of this study exposes the opposition to the possibility of moral acceptance of germ cell genetic engineering in the human reproduction process is due to the unsuitability of the currently domineering ethical approach. This is attested to by the exposure of two dominant but radically opposed ethical frameworks that are usually called forth in the assessment of the morality of germ cell genetic engineering.

The sanctity of life is metaphysical, a priori, absolute and empirically indemonstrable in medical ethics. The quality of life concept is empirical, pragmatic, and based on differences of relativities of the person's quality of life. The quality of life supercedes the sanctity of life by its recognition of the varying worth of human life thus enabling the meritorious treatment of each clinical case. This is vital as it avoids the hypocrisy, contradictions, difficulties and absurdities that mark the sanctity of life ethical doctrine. The practice and the aims of germ cell genetic engineering are geared towards the attainment of quality of life. Therefore the quest for quality life emerges as a moral ground for defending germ cell genetic engineering.

The study recommends *inter alia* a change of ethical attitude to enable a wider acceptance of germ cell genetic engineering. It also recommends the enactment of guidelines and more societal participation to curb the misuse of germ cell genetic engineering technology.