



Faces of justice in the video game *Lost Judgment*

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ABSTRACT

Video games are significant subjects in cultural studies because they are considered cultural artifacts. Like literary works, video games often incorporate social concepts and elements, such as justice, that are derived from real life. While much research has been conducted on fairness in video games, most studies focus on the perspectives of players and game developers. This study aims to explore the types of justice exercised by the protagonist and main antagonist of *Lost Judgment* and to understand the reasons behind their choices. The data were gathered from the dialogues between the two characters, with the types of justice identified using Deutsch et al.'s (2011) framework. The analysis was conducted through Smith's (2017) textual analysis. The findings reveal that the protagonist, Takayuki Yagami, embodies distributive justice, while the antagonist, Jin Kuwana, represents retributive justice. Both characters share similar motivations for their perspectives on justice: traumatic experiences in their respective careers that left them with deep regret. Their views on justice are also influenced by their shared belief that the current legal system is flawed, prompting them to take justice into their own hands. This research concludes that the justice portrayed by the main characters of *Lost Judgment* reflects the game developer's commentary on justice, as their traits are tied to issues that are particularly relevant in Japan.

Keywords: justice; *Lost Judgment*; textual analysis; video games

How to cite (in APA 7th edition style):

Jelita, I. A. P. & Gandana, I. S. S. (2025). Faces of justice in the video game *Lost Judgment*. *Passage*, 13(1), 33-42.

INTRODUCTION

Advancements in technology have significantly transformed various aspects of human civilization, including social and cultural dynamics. These advancements have not only revolutionized human behavior and thought but also reshaped entertainment and academic fields, prompting disciplines to expand and adapt to address emerging societal phenomena. Among these changes, the field of cultural studies has evolved to include game studies, a discipline that examines digital games such as video games (Mäyrä, 2008). Scholars regard game studies as an extension of cultural studies, as video games, like cultural artifacts, reflect specific symbolic systems (Greenfield, 1994) and embody critical aspects of society (Muriel & Crawford, 2018).

Game studies delve into how video games mirror the creators' relationship with reality. Fast (2011) argues that understanding the depiction of subjects in creative works, such as literature or games, requires insight into the creators' connection to the real world. Similarly, video games with narratives often feature characters, settings, and periods modeled after or directly replicating real-life counterparts. This resemblance underscores the view of video games as cultural artifacts while highlighting the potential for their characters to possess human-like qualities, moral codes, and ideologies. Consequently, video game characters can be analyzed using theories applicable to real-life social contexts. As "chosen people," these characters are deliberately crafted by game developers to reflect their understanding of reality,

whether to enrich a narrative or address social issues.

Justice is a prominent theme in literature and video games, often addressing social issues like racism, gender inequality, and bullying. Originating from the Latin word *justus*, justice embodies the principle of fairness. Scholars like Rawls (2003) argue that fairness forms the foundation of justice, while Deutsch et al. (2011) define justice as a fair resolution of conflicts, shaped by individual or collective perceptions. Raphael (2001) highlights its complexity, describing justice as a social concept that intertwines fairness with societal harmony.

Deutsch et al.'s (2011) proposed four types of justice: distributive, procedural, restorative, and retributive justice. **Distributive justice** referred to the equitable distribution of rights and resources within society, applying principles of equality or equity as agreed upon by the societal context. **Procedural justice**, on the other hand, emphasized decision-making and implementation by a neutral third party through fair processes, ensuring that those affected could express their opinions. Meanwhile, **restorative justice** focused on repairing harm, particularly restoring the victim's mental state, rehabilitate the offender, and mend interpersonal relationships, while **retributive justice** centered on punishment, this type highlighted the notion of the offender gaining an unfair advantage over the victim, adhering to the principle of "an eye for an eye."

Although studies on justice in literature often focus on its portrayal in stories and characters, justice in video games is typically explored through its relationship with players and developers.

Existing research has largely examined how players engage with justice in games or how developers incorporate justice into their creations. For example, Newbery-Jones (2015) suggests that video games allow players to experiment with judgment and justice, influencing their perceptions in the real world. Meanwhile, Schmierbach and Limperos (2013) found that players' emotional responses to in-game decisions, such as committing crimes, do not necessarily affect their enjoyment. Other studies, such as Hawreliak and Lemieux (2020), have analyzed justice in video games through the lens of social identity and diversity. However, these studies predominantly focus on Western-developed

games, leaving a gap in the analysis of games created by non-Western developers.

This study aims to address these gaps by examining the types of justice exercised by the main protagonist and antagonist in *Lost Judgment*, an action-adventure video game developed by Japanese studio Ryu Ga Gotoku. Released on September 14, 2022, *Lost Judgment* is a spinoff of the *Like a Dragon* franchise, known for its nuanced depiction of the Japanese underworld and exploration of moral dilemmas, corruption, and social issues. Unlike its predecessor, which tells its story from the perspective of a yakuza, *Lost Judgment* presents these themes through the eyes of private investigator Takayuki Yagami.

The game follows Yagami as he investigates a bullying case in Seiryō High, Yokohama, which eventually ties into a homicide and sexual battery case in Tokyo. Along the way, Yagami encounters Jin Kuwana, a local handyman with conflicting ideals. Both characters pursue justice but embody different approaches, making the game an ideal subject for analyzing justice in video game characters.

This research seeks to answer the following questions: (1) What types of justice are exercised by *Lost Judgment's* main protagonist (Takayuki Yagami) and antagonist (Jin Kuwana)? (2) What motivates these characters to adopt their respective views on justice?

METHOD

The data for this qualitative study were obtained from the video game *Lost Judgment*, a spinoff of the *Like A Dragon* franchise developed by Ryu Ga Gotoku Studio. The data collection involved a method specific to video games known as close playing. Close playing, similar to close reading, required intensive and critical observation of the video game's content to understand its characters and their characterization, the intended and unintended ways the game could be played, and other narrative details (Chang, 2020).

Data were presented as texts, extracted from the subtitles of the game's cutscenes and in-game movies. These texts were captured using the game's conversation log, a built-in feature that recorded the characters' dialogue. The collected data were then analyzed using Smith's (2017) textual analysis approach to examine the characterization of the game's main

protagonist and antagonist. The findings from this analysis were subsequently used to classify each character's concept of justice based on Deutsch et al.'s (2011) classification of justice, namely distributive, procedural, restorative, and retributive justice.

This methodology facilitated a nuanced understanding of the protagonist's and antagonist's perspectives on justice, providing insights into the game developers' narrative choices and the broader cultural implications of these depictions.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the textual evidence obtained from the cutscenes in *Lost Judgment*, to explain the main protagonist Takayuki Yagami and main antagonist Jin Kuwana's character, which includes the backstories and how it influences their perspective and the kind of justice they exercised. This section discusses each character's characterization to understand the development of each character's justice.

Takayuki Yagami's Character and the Adoption of Distributive Justice

Yagami's backstory is taken from the first installment of the series, *Judgment*. Takayuki Yagami, commonly known as Yagami, was born approximately around 1983 to parents who were working long hours, especially his father who was a defense lawyer. When Yagami was in high school, his father had won a case in which he proved his client who was accused of raping and strangling a 15-year-old girl to be innocent. The victim's father broke into Yagami's household one day to murder both of his parents as revenge then proceeded to hang himself at the crime scene during the night Yagami had spent at a friend's place in an attempt to avoid his parents because he was angry at their long work hours. Now an orphan, Yagami dropped out of school and moved to Kamurocho, where he began working as a bartender at Tender by lying about his age.

During his teenage years, he often got into a fight with his future partner and then-member of the Matsugane Family, Masaharu Kaito. The patriarch Mitsuru Matsugane, picked up the news of Kaito and Yagami's fights and took an interest in Yagami as he reminds Matsugane of his younger self and began raising Yagami like a son. Matsugane introduced Yagami to the Genda Law Firm owner, Ryuzo Genda, who supported Yagami

through law school. Yagami then became an attorney at Genda Law Firm, and won the case of Shinpei Okubo, a man who was accused of murdering an elderly man in the hospital he worked at. Not long after Yagami won the case, Shinpei Okubo was accused of murdering his girlfriend Emi Terasawa by torching her house which led to the Terasawa berating Yagami for releasing a murderer. Driven by extreme guilt of Emi's death, Yagami quit being an attorney and opened Yagami Detective Agency to become a private investigator.

Yagami's backstory is the highlight of *Judgment* and has been briefly mentioned in Yagami's monologue at the beginning of *Lost Judgment*. This monologue from Chapter 1 hinted at Yagami's past:

Yagami : In Japan, 99.9% of criminal trials end in a guilty verdict. The odds are 10,000 to one. But when I was a lawyer, I beat those odds and scored a murder acquittal. It was a hell of an achievement. But what followed...
...Was the death of an innocent girl. The shadows of truth escape the courtroom...
And the law isn't always perfect or even as fair as it's supposed to be. My job is to give those without a voice a chance to be heard.

The monologue also hinted at Yagami's stance on justice, in which he acknowledges that law indeed has its own flaws, but instead of taking matters into his own hand, he chooses to help or protect those who cannot be treated fairly by law. This monologue also indicates how fairness is important to him as he highlights that law "isn't as perfect or even as fair as it's supposed to be."

Yagami appears to practice a form of justice that reflects Japanese civil law when dealing with suspects, which states that "the accused is innocent until proven otherwise" (Government of Canada, n.d.), which is evident in several conversations found in Chapter 1 as presented below, when Yagami and Kaito investigated an alleged conman named Kosuke as requested by his date, Keiko.

Conversation 1

Yagami : Slow down there, Kaito-san. We're still just investigating, remember?

Huh. And there's the man of the hour now.

Keiko : Kosuke-kun...

Yagami : Well, let's see what kind of guy he really is. I'm gonna follow him.

Conversation 2

Yagami : He's certainly getting shadier by the second.

Once we catch Kosuke-kun in the tatami room, we'll know for sure just how shady.

But until then, I'm not jumping to conclusions.

Further proving the claim, Yagami is hesitant to accuse someone when concrete evidence has yet to be found, but will attempt to find the evidence if the person he is dealing with appears to be suspicious. This is demonstrated in Yagami's monologue in Chapter 2, when he is dealing with a man who had been stuck on a window of an apartment, claiming that he had slipped and fell while bird watching from the rooftop, but was suspected to have been a pervert stealing women's undergarment from their laundry.

Yagami : (This guy's all kinds of fishy, but it's not like I have any real evidence.) (If I don't have evidence, I should just back down, but...)
(At times like these, it sometimes helps to just observe...)

Yagami is depicted as someone willing to take the initiative when it comes to bringing justice and resolving injustice. At the same time, he also shows understanding and compassion for those who are afraid to be the initiator of resolving injustice. This is shown in Chapter 1 when Yagami, Kaito, and Tsukumo discuss how to resolve the bullying experienced by Mami Koda.

Yagami : The bystanders need a voice. It's kindling waiting for a fire. We'll be the spark that lights it. It's the first voice that matters most, after all.

Yagami appears to feel responsible to prevent crime when he encounters someone who is in danger, or gets a hold of information that someone might be in danger, even when they are someone who committed misdeed or triggered the chains

of events first. This is shown in Chapter 2, during his conversation with Mystery Research Club President Kyoko Amasawa, when Amasawa told him that one of the female students in Seiryō High have been scamming people as a sugar baby outside of school grounds, and could get in danger considering that the last person the student had went out on a date with is a merciless thug.

Yagami : You're right. We can't just sit on this information. We have a responsibility to prevent harm here.

Yagami feels the strong need to bring justice for those who can no longer defend themselves (i.e., someone who is dead, someone who is judged unfairly) which is demonstrated from how he feels that he owes Sawa-sensei closure, and how he is willing to solve Mikoshiba's murder despite knowing well that he was a bully.

Yagami: Like I said before, I'm a detective. And I'm looking into Hiro Mikoshiba's murder. That's why I was talking to Sawa-sensei. It's highly likely that she got wrapped up in that case. So make no mistake. I'm going to find the truth about what happened to them both.

Yagami appears to be believing in fairness as the center of justice, which is shown in many of his statements throughout the game, such as when he argues with Ehara in Chapter 10 regarding Sawa's death, in which Ehara argues that her death was deserved because she provided false testimony in court.

Yagami: And if Sawa-sensei ended up paying for that instead... Then how can you call your revenge fair!?
Ehara: She gave false testimony! She lied in court to say Toshiro was never bullied!
Yagami: She couldn't name Mikoshiba, who was a minor at the time, without evidence. She was haunted by her testimony, always second-guessing if she did the right thing. But now she's been killed, and that's just fine?

In the final chapter, Chapter 13, during Ehara's appeal hearing, Yagami explicitly stated his stance of justice. This statement confirms that he is indeed exercising distributive justice as he emphasizes that no matter how justified, it is unfair to take justice into one's own hand.

Yagami: No matter how justified, we can't take vengeance into our own hands.

According to the classification made by Deutsch, Coleman, and Marcus (2011), there are three principles in discussions of distributive justice: equity, equality, and need. Out of these three principles, equality is a principle that is most commonly found in Yagami's statement throughout the game. He especially emphasizes throughout the story that Sawa did not deserve to die as she was not involved in the entire ordeal, thus her death was unfair. Another example includes he keeps on reminding Kuwana of Sawa's death, as according to Yagami, it is only fair that he spoke on her behalf, as she was no longer able to defend herself. Yagami also does not differentiate between Sawa and Mikoshihira, he swore to solve both cases despite knowing that Mikoshihira was indeed a bully. Based on these facts, Yagami's kind of justice can be classified as distributive justice as characterized by Deutsch et al. (2011).

Based on the textual evidence found, it can be concluded that Yagami's justice centers around fairness, in which he believes that everyone deserves the same amount of right in defending themselves and in the face of law, regardless of what they have done and especially if they are innocent. According to Deutch et al.'s (2011) theory, this kind of justice is classified as distributive justice. The next section highlights the antagonist's character, Jin Kuwana.

Jin Kuwana's Character and the Adoption of Retributive Justice

Jin Kuwana, real name Yu Kitakata, is a self-proclaimed handyman based in Ijincho who was formerly a homeroom teacher at Kurokawa Academy 13 years before the story of *Lost Judgment*. Kuwana was in charge of a class in Kurokawa Academy, which had Yoko Sawa, Mitsuru Kusumoto, Shinya Kawai, and Yui Mamiya in it, and considered himself loved and popular among his students. Upon hearing that Shinya Kawai was bullying Mitsuru Kusumoto

from Yoko Sawa, Kuwana brushed it off as regular banter between classmates and told the students to not do it too much with a grin considering the stark difference in physical prowess between the two boys. One day, Sawa reached out to him again regarding the bullying that Mitsuru had received; it was only then that Kuwana realized that this was no ordinary teasing after Sawa mentioned that half of the class had been bullying Mitsuru and that she occasionally had seen him on the station looking at the rails, contemplating to end his life. This led Kuwana to install a hidden camera in the classroom to see how severe the bullying was, but by the time Kuwana retrieved the hidden camera and saw the footage, it was too late as Mitsuru had already jumped from the rooftop of the school and went into comatose. After the incident, Kuwana was fired for negligence and Kawai was expelled as the other students pinned the bullying on him.

Kuwana then traveled to Yokohama and began working in the underworld with the help of his distant relative who was an ex-yakuza, with the determination to bring punishment to bullies across the country and to prevent "another Mitsuru." He reached out to parents who had lost their child due to suicide caused by bullying and ask if they wanted revenge. Aside from the parents, he also reached out to everyone involved in the bullying, which included Yui Mamiya, to assist him in punishing bullies.

Kuwana's kind of justice is apparent through the statements of other characters about him throughout the game, such as in Chapter 9, when Yagami takes Mamiya hostage and makes her confess about her connection with Ehara and Kuwana, in which she mentioned Kuwana stated the following regarding the bullies, and in Chapter 11, when Yagami asked Reiko Kusumoto to confess of her murder.

Conversation 1

Yagami: He's killing for revenge? Across the entire country?

Mamiya: He said that's the only way we can atone.

Anyone who drives someone to suicide must always face justice.

Until society comes to terms with this, he says we'll keep getting our hands dirty...

That way, we might be able to save the next few Mitsurus before it's too late for them.

Conversation 2

Reiko: I despised Kitaka-sensei. I thought he was an incompetent teacher. He turned a blind eye to Mitsuru's torture.

Then he came to me eight years later to show me that video...

And he told me that everyone in it deserved to be punished.

For Mitsuru's sake. That it had to be done.

Kuwana's strong belief in retributive justice is especially confirmed in various instances nearing the end of the game, such as in Chapter 10, when Yagami reunited with Kuwana after their encounter in Kamurocho, in which Yagami proceeds to questions about his findings of Kuwana's relation to Reiko Kusumoto, and Kuwana justifies Reiko's actions by saying that she was only "took out some trash that pushed her only son to suicide", referring to Kawai as "the trash."

Kuwana : Her revenge is justified. She should be allowed to walk free.

Yagami : What...?

Kuwana : She took out some trash that pushed her only son to attempt suicide.

She didn't cry about flawed laws, she took justice into her own two hands.

No one has any right to punish her for this. I won't let that happen!

Further showcasing his firm belief on retributive justice, Kuwana claimed that he is willing to sacrifice his life to assure that the victims are avenged, and also expresses his loyalty and his willingness to protect Reiko Kusumoto, whose actions he claimed to be justified.

Conversation 1

Yagami: So you couldn't forgive your students who got away with bullying.

Even going as far as sacrificing your own life to make sure they atoned somehow.

Kuwana: That's right. Mitsuru Kusumoto's still a vegetable. He's as good as dead.

Conversation 2

Kuwana : Say whatever you want, but if you cause Kusumoto-san any more pain, I will never forgive you.

Conversation 3

Kuwana : When you say "expose it all," you mean Kusumoto-san too, right? I won't lift a finger to betray her.

This conversation is pointless.

In Chapter 11, when Yagami confronted Kuwana after meeting with Reiko Kusumoto to convince her of turning herself in to the police for Kawai's murder, and Kuwana justifying his actions as long as bullies exist.

Kuwana : If it means I can prevent another Mitsuru Kusumoto, yes, I will keep killing.

These bastards who prey on the defenseless must be punished for all to see.

I wish the law would do its job, because really, I don't want to do any of this.

Yagami: I understand what you're saying. But you're taking it too far. Just stop, Kuwana.

Kuwana: If you really have to stop me, you're gonna have to kill me... in the name of justice.

In Chapter 12, as Yagami tries to convince him to turn himself in to the police, Kuwana argues that his actions are justified as the bullies deserve what was coming to them and that society is not doing anything to improve the situation.

Kuwana : Everyone I've killed... deserved what was coming to them.

Society won't admit those people are a problem, so I'll do the dirty work.

And I won't stop.

Kuwana's last statement in the final chapter during his showdown with Yagami, explicitly shows his kind of justice, killing bullies on behalf of the victims, which can be classified as retributive justice, and his desire to continue committing retributive justice for victims of bullying.

Kuwana : The law doesn't know how to be flexible, it's hollow and incomplete.

It can't judge those who need to be judged. Or save those who need to be saved.

And every action I take will continue to expose that.

As long as kids like Mitsuru are out there... I'll do it for them.

Deutsch et al. (2011) stated the following regarding retributive and restorative justice:

In a study comparing responses to injustice and to frustration (reported in Deutsch, 1985), it was found that an injustice that is experienced, whether to oneself or to another, involves one not only personally but also as a member of a moral community whose moral norms are being violated; it evokes an obligation to restore justice.

In addition to this statement, Deutsch et al. (2011) mentioned that various actions will be taken to re-establish the moral code that has been broken, these actions include confessions, apology, or compensation, which are categorized as restorative justice. The variety of actions taken, however, also include humiliation, physical punishment, incarceration, and reeducation, which are categorized as retributive justice and these actions may be taken not only against the violator but also others related to them. These facts are particularly applicable to Kuwana, as he often expresses the need to bring justice to Mitsuru and others who experienced the same predicament as him, even saying that he will keep continuing to bring justice for those like Mitsuru even after he goes into hiding at the end of *Lost Judgment*, with bringing justice in this context meaning to harm and even killing the bullies. In addition, Kuwana has been stated to have killed at least five other bullies as implied in the news report at the end of *Lost Judgment*.

Based on the textual evidence found, it can be concluded that Kuwana's justice centers on unfairness, it focuses on the fact that law has its flaws, how it fails to judge those who need to be judged and how it fails to protect those who are helpless, thus justifying him taking justice into his own hands. According to Deutch et al.'s (2011) theory, this kind of justice is classified as retributive justice. The next section will highlight the reason for both Yagami's and Kuwana's justice.

Reasons Behind Yagami's and Kuwana's Adoption of Justice

A conversation between Kuwana and Yagami in Chapter 9, when Kuwana revealed his past as a teacher who dismissed the bullying that happened in his class, indicates that the reasons behind Yagami's and Kuwana's justice are the same.

Kuwana : See, I've done my homework on you.

Back when you were still a lawyer, you won a murder acquittal, right?

But where did that lead? To the death of an innocent young woman.

We're the same, you and I.

Both wounded, in a way that won't heal till we're dead.

The textual evidence found indicates that the reason for Yagami's and Kuwana's justice are traumatic past professional experiences that left them feeling guilty. Yagami regretting Sawa's death deeply is influenced by his guilt of indirectly causing Emi Terasawa's death during his time as a lawyer, which has ever since driven him to get to the bottom of things no matter the circumstances to make sure that justice is served and no innocent people get harmed. Despite his efforts, Sawa, who is innocent and unrelated to the case, still gets killed. This became Yagami's reasons to make sure that justice is served for Sawa. Kuwana and his fixation on bringing judgment for bullies stems also from his guilt of dismissing Mitsuru's predicament despite being his teacher in the past, thus why he made punishing bullies as the sole reason he lives after the incident. He was not able to get rid of his guilt and also could not forgive his students, who pinned all the bullying on Kawai and moved on with their lives, while Mitsuru was left in comatose for 13 years. This became Kuwana's reason to bring all of the students who participated in Mitsuru's bullying to assist him in his journey of punishing bullies across the country.

Another similarity in their reason is how the two characters view law, which is indicated in several conversations throughout the game as presented below.

Conversation 1

Kuwana: Mitsuru and all those kids... for them to have justice, this is what I've had to become!

Yagami: I get how you feel... Matter of fact, I know so well that it scares me.

But if you leave your sense of justice unchecked, you lose control, and it always leads to the same place...

A convenient rationalization of the sacrifices that your justice took... Like Sawa-sensei, for example.

Conversation 2

Kuwana: You know if she turns herself in, she can't see Mitsuru again!

She'll be torn away from her son who finally awoke after thirteen long years, is that the justice you want?

Yagami: I do wish everyone could walk away happy.

But if I turn my back on this now, what becomes of Sawa-sensei's sacrifice?

She's not even here to speak for herself. If we turn a blind eye to that now, how is that justice!?

Conversation 3

Kuwana: The law doesn't know how to be flexible, it's hollow and incomplete. It can't judge those who need to be judged. Or save those who need to be saved.

And every action I take will continue to expose that.

As long as kids like Mitsuru are out there... I'll do it for them.

Yagami: You're right. The law is incomplete. As it is now, people do fall through the cracks.

But the law evolves. We try to make it better. But that's going to take time.

That's why, when the law can't save someone, I'll be there to protect them.

Except... My approach won't be anything like yours.

Both characters acknowledge that law is imperfect, and how law, at times, cannot protect those who need to be protected, or judge those who need to be judged. They are both depicted as a person who is fighting for the justice of those who are defenseless, albeit through different means.

What differentiates the two is their moral code, what lines they are willing to cross and where they put the limit. For example, Yagami is willing to use force only in situations where there is no other choice, as in it is his last resort, such as when Ehara kept on refusing to confess to Mikoshiba's murder and Yagami threatened to delete the recordings of Sawa confessing of Toshiro's bullying. Yagami is also commonly depicted to use verbal force rather than physical force, unless his enemies strike first, such as when Kurokawa Academy graduates or Yokohama Liumang ambushes him. Kuwana, on the other hand, appears to be willing to use force as long as he sees the entity as a formidable threat, which is shown in various occasions, such as by how he hired

Yokohama Liumang early on to make sure Yagami stays away from the case, sending the Kurokawa Academy graduates to break in into Yokohama 99 and ambush Sugiura and Tsukumo, or even getting into physical altercations directly with Yagami several times in the game.

Considering that Yagami has been depicted to demonstrate distributive justice in several instances throughout the game, it is possible that in Yagami's point of view, Mikoshiba's murder is unfair as Mikoshiba did not get the chance to redeem himself after expressing regret of his past actions, which is shown through stories told by Matsui. This clashes with Kuwana's sense of justice, in which he seems to disregard the possibility of the bully regretting their actions and might even want to redeem themselves in some way or form. It can be seen from most of his statements that he appears to see bullying issues only through the eyes of the victim, but never from the perpetrator. Kuwana emphasizes on the fact that bullies always uses the same reasoning, such as they did not expect that the victim will eventually kill themselves, he also emphasizes that the bullies do not have the right to forget their victims and be on with their lives, building careers and families, as their victim was robbed of the chance to live their future.

CONCLUSION

The findings and discussion reveal that, although justice is often considered a universal concept, its interpretation varies significantly based on individual perspectives. At its core, justice emphasizes fairness, yet the notion of fairness differs from person to person. For instance, to Yagami, fairness revolves around equal rights, whereas for Kuwana, fairness aligns with the principle of "an eye for an eye," where fairness demands that one experiences the pain they have inflicted on others.

It is important to acknowledge that, unlike real people, video game characters are deliberately crafted by developers. Yagami and Kuwana were intentionally designed to showcase contrasting approaches to justice, emphasizing that while the underlying reasons for pursuing justice might be similar, responses to injustice can vary greatly. This narrative choice offers insight into the game developers' own perspectives on justice.

Given that bullying is a pervasive and severe issue in Japan, Kuwana's intense hatred for bullies likely reflects the developers' condemnation of bullying. Through Kuwana's narrative, the developers appear to aim for increased awareness of bullying in Japanese society, encouraging players to reconsider their views on the issue and possibly to voice their concerns about similar problems, regardless of their cultural background.

Similarly, Yagami's relentless determination to thoroughly investigate cases to ensure that victims find peace and perpetrators face proper judgment may mirror the developers' advocacy for distributive justice. This perspective aligns with Japan's history of high-profile criminal cases that many perceive as ending unjustly. For example, the tragic case of Junko Furuta, who endured physical and sexual assault for nearly 40 days before her death, resulted in minimal punishment for the perpetrators due to their status as minors at the time (The Anime Man, 2021). Another instance is the Kobe child murder case, where the perpetrator, Shinichiro Azuma (known as Seito Sakakibara or Boy A), was released at the age of 21 despite having murdered two children and attempting to kill two more when he was 14. This release sparked widespread criticism, with many questioning his fitness to rejoin society given the gravity of his crimes (Akidearest, 2022).

In conclusion, *Lost Judgment* not only highlights that justice varies across individuals and communities but also reflects the developers' perspectives on justice, particularly in relation to significant social issues in Japan. Through the contrasting depictions of Yagami and Kuwana, the game underscores the complexities of justice while addressing pressing societal concerns, such as bullying and the handling of severe criminal cases.

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