

The Model of the Axiological Decisions

A Proposal of Integration between Personal Values and Personal Strategic Planning

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Abstract

The study of values is used to clarify understandings about people's attitudes and actions, the functioning of organizations and societies, as a predictor of human behavior, which is a characteristic that affects long-term planning in the life of an individual. The discussion about personal values for the development of a personal strategic planning should be outlined on a reliable value measuring instrument, which has been tested and validated and can suggest universal values. The Model of Axiological Decisions was designed to help career counselors (*coaches*) identify and prioritize targets for long-term planning in an orientation process.

Introduction

Values are enduring beliefs about what is useful and desirable. They are influenced by factors of heredity and environment. Values are steady and resistant to change (DHAR *et al.*, 2008). Values are beliefs that guide actions and judgments through specific goals and situations, in addition to those with immediate character, for deeper end states of existence (ROKEACH, 1968). On a personal level, the figures express the motivational goals and allow the interpretation of the actions of individuals (KNAFO *et al.*, 2011).

The study of the theme 'personal values' and its interrelation with the theme 'personal strategic planning (PSP)' has been the subject of research during the development of this work. The primary goal of interrelating personal values with PSP is to provide a self-knowledge exercise on personal values and motivational types of individuals and, at the same time, to facilitate the identification of their long-term planning targets for a sustainable life planning. That proposal might allow individuals plan their life generating behaviors and actions consistent with their criteria or major goals.

The thirteen PSP models outlined in the academic and scientific extent (CALVOSA, 2011) either do not refer to the need for an analysis on the personal values (six of them) or when they mention said values, investigative tools of personal values (seven of them) are not used to identify the motivational nature of individuals. They are generalists and do not allow for individualized planning, according to people's motivational goals and value system. A few PSP models that consider the size of personal values as decision making precursors will also do so without using values of the Brazilian culture or taking into account hidden values and unconscious values, or even without a list of potential universal values for an individual, and

such procedure is currently condemned by specialists in personal values (SCHWARTZ, 2009; TAMAYO, 2007b; SCHWARTZ, 2011; TAMAYO, 2007a). This practice does not allow a proper identification of personal values for individuals and therefore a sustainable and harmonious planning with the criteria established by the individual's motivational nature.

Before the information presented herein, this project's research question arises: - How is it possible to identify and use the personal values of a coachee (or pupil) in a PSP, which are fundamental to subsidize the choices, decision making and predict the behavior of an individual, upon the definition of sustainable planning goals?

Literature Review

Values and Value System

The research of the values theme exploits the study of three dimensions and distinct categories: personal values, work values and organizational values (TAMAYO, 2007b).

In order to achieve the purposes of this research, only the study of personal values dimension was relevant, because it will serve as construct for the basis of the suggested PSP model, helping individuals understand the hierarchy assigned to their values and the priority established in the composition of human behavior. *Personal values* consist of goals or criteria that are organized by individuals as per the importance degree, which, regardless of the situation, serve as guiding principles to one's life. This type of value has been used to explain the behavior of people, their actions, changes in society, and to differentiate groups (TAMAYO, 2007b; LEE *et al.*, 2011). Having values is to be able to provide reasons that induce objective-oriented behavior in terms of costs and benefits. What is at stake is not a matter of preferences, but of meaning (IBRAHIM; REID, 2010). Schwartz defines values as guidelines for the selection and evaluation of actions, situations and people. Based on the values, standards or rules of conduct are created. Therefore, throughout the life of an individual, the values of one's environment are embedded so as to delimit his own behavior (SCHWARTZ, 2011).

Tamayo (2007a) reports that a person's value system represents a hierarchy of priorities and consists of the degree of importance that each value has for the individual. The concept of hierarchy allows the comparison of individuals, social and cultural groups, not only with respect to values, but also to axiological priorities.

A system of values indicates preferences, differentiating the priority of which is secondary. This hierarchy is related to the historical and temporal development, with the individual's desire and effort to act (TAMAYO, 2007a). In a system of values, the values are prioritized in a person based on the intensity with which they occur and the desire of the individual. Each person has a characteristic system of values, originating from particular experiences with the agents that affect their lives, such as cultural background, family, and others (TAMAYO, 2007a; KNAFO *et al.*, 2011).

Identification of Personal Values through Measurement Instruments

Rokeach (1968) suggests that, with time and the development of maturity, an individual will enhance his learning process on personal values, even by competition, but also by the influence of social expectation (KOOPMANN-HOLM; MATSUMOTO, 2011). Some individuals are able to consciously identify their values or principles (strongest values), however, some values present in people may not manifest in ordinary and everyday situations, appearing only in a one-off situation or due to a given critical incident. We all have hidden values and,

often, we don't even understand the importance degree we give them until the occurrence of a given triggering situation.

Stated values (as explicit in a list) may correspond to the reality of the actions of the one who reports them, but need to be enforced in action so that those who realize them can really confirm them. However, this is the point that could lead the entire PSP process to a misguided approach, should the coach ask the coachee himself to mention his values. So, starting a PSP by asking a coachee to quote or choose important personal values (such as occurs in some PSP models) may drive the entire process to failure, producing frustration and wasted energy and resources. Therefore, the discussion about personal values cannot be based on a list of values, but rather, on a system of values identified and hierarchized by the individual, with basis on a tested and validated measuring instrument, which may present universal values (SCHWARTZ, 1994; 2011).

For Tamayo (2007a), the values inventory of Schwartz shows that the author addresses, in a fairly complete manner, cultural and universal values, and the structured system under which these values are interrelated. The SVS generates a set of quantifiable data about the values that represent the behavior of a particular social group and can be considered an informative tool for the predictive analysis of individual and collective actions (SCHWARTZ, 2011). Thus, the assumptions for managing structured securities are acquired, because value measurement (indicators) triggers cause (origin) analyses and action plans.

The Theory of Human Values

Schwartz's Personal values added 57 values, divided into instrumental and terminal values. In the case of the Brazilian culture, after the analysis and validation of the instrument (TAMAYO, 2007a), four specific values were incorporated: *smart, dreamy, vanity and work*, summing up to 61 values when the instrument is used in Brazil. All 61 personal values are arranged and then entered in 10 macro values called motivational types (SCHWARTZ, 2009). The ten motivational types are groupings of values and represent guidance goals of the life of individuals.

Schwartz's theory also focuses on four factors of higher order (or second-order values), formed in two bipolar and antagonistic dimensions. On one centerline, there is the dimension *Self transcendence vs. Self-promotion*, based on the individual's motivation to promote the well being of others and of nature, as opposed to the motivation of one's own well being. In the other centerline, there is the dimension *Openness to changes vs. Conservation*. Therefore, *Conservation* emphasizes tradition and protection of stability favoring the preservation of the *status quo*, which opposes to the *Openness to change*, which means the search for independence of thought and action (SCHWARTZ, 1994; 2011; TAMAYO, 2007a). This dimension is based on the individual's motivation to follow his own intellectual and emotional interests, through uncertain ways, vs. motivation to preserve his *status quo* and the traditional practices (SCHWARTZ, 2011; REIS *et al.*, 2010).

The structure proposed by Schwartz shows the interaction between motivational types and that the closer they are, more similar are their motivations. Likewise, the more distant they are, more antagonistic are their underlying motivations. The model proposed by Schwartz has been empirically verified through trans cultural surveys, whose results showed the quasi universality of bipolar dimensions. That is, individuals from different cultures have values that can be expressed in these four major groups, differing only by their systems, in other words, in the priority assigned to each one of them (KNAFO *et al.*, 2011).

Personal Strategic Planning

According to the guidance of Galvan and Kinder (2005), who advise that life planning is a relationship based on greater self-knowledge, this study suggests the development of a model of decisions that can help a coach, regardless of the PSP model applied, discover, map and hierarchize the personal values of the coachee. Once you know your personal values, it is possible to predict your worldview, attitudes and actions (SCHWARTZ, 2009).

Understanding personal values is essential to understand the stability of individuals (BARDI; GOODWIN, 2011). By discovering, prioritizing and highlighting the personal values of the coachee, the coach may help predict expected and desirable behaviors, according to the pupil's stereotype. With this, it shall be possible to promote a PSP that represent something for the individual and is sustainable in the long term. Furthermore, individuals whose priorities are similar to their personal values will tend to reproduce the same behavior. Thus, a coach can generalize results and reproduce the same successful policies for individuals that have the same value systems, because they will tend to prioritize or reject the same motivational goals and value or neglect the same life planning fields.

Methodology

The chosen population consisted of people with maturity to understand the exclusionary alternatives of a career, social relationships, the choices about benefits, remuneration and professional incentives. Therefore, we selected people who were active in the labor market and already had a consolidated career path. The following criteria were taken into account: middle-aged, with college or university degree, having high employability, being employed, having a lifelong learning program, among other factors.

The sample was incidental, selected through specific mailing lists (e-mails) aimed at reaching university professors, researchers, managers, executives, business consultants and analysts, for it is believed that among these individuals the desired profile is evident. The questionnaire was transformed into a software solution and sent over the Internet to nearly 9,000 members of the population, however, the final sample included 355 respondents who have already developed and currently promote the management of their careers. The goal was to generate metric data to create a match between the personal values and the PSP elements of the respondents in order to produce the model proposed herein.

Aiming at allowing comparisons and generating a study on reality levels, we decided the project would have a quantitative approach for the identification and presentation of data, indicators and observable trends (Hair Jr. et al., 2005).

The research tool consisted of four sections: (I) Identifying personal values through the SVS value measurement tool, (ii) Analysis of 64 variables of the PSP elements (such variables emerged after the analysis of the 13 PSP models found in the literature, which together had 115 different variables, but they were grouped by content analysis of similar expressions or synonyms and can be reduced to 64 variables); (iii) determining the degree of importance of the life planning fields, in which the respondents, among the six following fields: material, physical, emotional, intellectual, social and spiritual, had to assign scores divided in the ratio scale, with one decimal place, not repeated for each of the fields. The ratio scale classified as comparative was deemed appropriate because "we do not intend to evaluate or judge the responding individuals, but rather promote relative judgments, arranging the responses of a limited group, indicating only their responded positions within the group under study" (SELLTIZ *et al.*, 1987,

p.54), (iv) Research on socio-demographic profile.

Analysis and Considerations

Socio-demographic Profile of the Sample

From the total of respondents, 192 or 54% were men and 163 or 46% women. The average age among men was 39.9 years and women 35.8 years. The average age of the sample was 38.0 years old, with a standard deviation of 10.1 years. 59% of the sample consisted of married people, while 41% were 'unmarried' and 'others'. The mean age of the sample was close to 40 years. Regarding education among the constituents of the sample, 85% have acquired at least a graduate diploma at some level in their career.

Differentiation of individuals according to their Behavioral guidelines

Based on the value system of individuals, it is possible to group the 61 personal values into ten motivational types and to identify the priority hierarchy for each respondent. The Theory of Human Values (SCHWARTZ, 1994) describes that these motivational types can be grouped into four second-order values, containing bipolar antagonistic values, differentiating individuals according to their pre-disposition to guide priorities in relation to other individuals or their predisposition to take risks (SCHWARTZ, 2011).

Through the Theory of Human Values, one can assume the existence of four Behavioral guidelines (or stereotypes) as a function of personal values and their groupings in motivational types. These four behavioral-style stereotypes are suggested based on the arrangement in pairs of the second-order values, as seen in Figure 1.

	Self transcendence	Self promotion
Openness to change	Guideline 1	Guideline 3
Conservation	Guideline 2	Guideline 4

Figure 1. The Four Individual Orientation Guidelines, based on Schwartz Source: Author

There is no hierarchy among the stereotypes, nor however, value judgments about the position of a stereotype about the other. The existence of four behavior stereotypes suggests that there are four different macro orientations for the life planning of individuals who have different personal values and, thus, present behaviors, needs and motivational goals that differ from one another.

By analyzing the survey data by fashion (higher frequency), the arrangement order of the guide is the same for both men and women: Guide 2, Guide 1, Guide 3 and Guide 4. There is no gender difference for the formation of stereotypes because, proportionally, men and women are distributed similarly in relation to behavioral guidelines. The results can be generalized for both genders in this sample.

Analysis of Variables

All techniques described in section 3 have been implemented to the life planning fields and, subsequently, to the PSP elements. All requirements for the application of said techniques have been met, as well as the indexes and indicators of validation and internal consistency (HAIR JR. *et al.*, 2005).

According to the main results, the six life planning variables could be reduced to two factors and the 64 variables of the PSP elements could be reduced to 12 factors, whereas, respectively, these factors explain 87% and 65% of the total variance explained. Pearson's correlation analyses allowed us to verify the lack of correlations, enabling an improved explanation for the phenomena under study. While the variance analyses - ANOVAs of the new variables (factors) indicated different averages. Average testing showed the average variation and factor average arrangement for each of the four stereotypes presented in this study. Ultimately, the metric multidimensional scaling used has showed error adjustment results under 0.7% for all stereotypes and may be classified as a perfect fit (GOODMAN; KRUSKAL, 1954).

Renaming of New Variables

The new variables (factors) created from the AF could be named according to the set of characteristics they have, to the career goal they convey and the variables in them. Each factor was assigned a noun and a professional goal to express a metaphysical sense, thus aiding the understanding of the aspiration represented by the professional goal. These new variables, which were later classified according to the axiological nature of each behavioral guideline, are registered in Table 1.

Table 1. Designation of factors according to the literature review

Factor	Planning Goal	Designation
Factor 1	Establishing goals and strategies for the medium and long term	Caution
Factor 2	Striving for prestige and wealth	Fascination
Factor 3	Seek personal and family satisfaction	Zeal
Factor 4	Identifying my needs and skills	Apprehension
Factor 5	Prioritizing my spare time before my work	Freedom
Factor 6	Finding out who I want to be	Determination
Factor 7	Serving my organization	Condescension
Factor 8	Analyzing and strengthening my <i>stakeholders</i>	Research
Factor 9	Managing my time and my relationships	Initiative
Factor 10	Being assertive and discovering my strengths and weaknesses	Dexterity
Factor 11	Creating roots and being accepted	Acceptance
Factor 12	Resetting principles and challenges	Utopia

Source: Author

The twelve factors of the PSP represent the motivational goals of the four stereotypes suggested in this project. Everybody has such motivational goals applicable to a PSP, what will vary is the priority order given to these goals by each individual, according to their motivational nature.

In these stages, the behavioral guidelines are differentiated by the key factors selected from the quantitative study. In the first one, the self-knowledge phase, the SVS value measurement instrument is applied, as the personal values of the individual and their consequent

behavior stereotype description have been identified. In the second stage, a coach can guide the individual from the review on their long-term planning goals and, in addition, use a PSP model that best suits the development of the coachee's guidance process, according to the coach' discretion or the identification of the best model, due to demographic or cultural characteristics of pupil, which consists of the third stage.

Model of Axiological Decisions – Suggested Model

The schematic description of the proposed model involves three distinct phases.

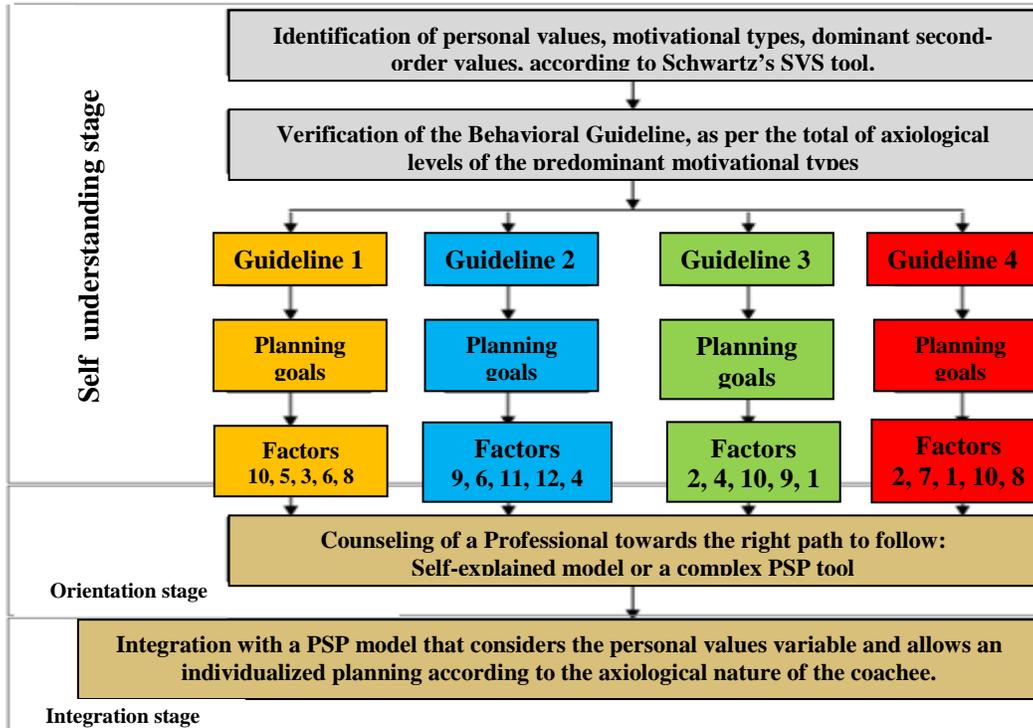


Figure 2. Schematic description of the MDA Model Source: Author

The twelve planning goals are part of every individual, as well as all universal values, the difference occurs by the degree of importance given by each stereotype to the planning goals. In Figure 2, it is possible to note a graphic designation of the model, integrating the primary planning goals of each stereotype, with the life planning aspects and designative nouns of each behavioral guideline.

The Model of Axiological Decisions received this designation because the individuals using this model might identify personal values, behavioral guidelines as well as long-term planning goals. This exercise will allow people understand their hierarchy of personal values, knowing what is a priority and what is secondary within their motivational goals. The MDA is able to differentiate the planning goals (old generic variables of PSP elements) for each group of individuals according to their motivational goals and their prioritization of personal values. The MDA can be used before any PSP or coaching model in a non-exclusionary manner, nevertheless, as long as in a supplementary and integral way.

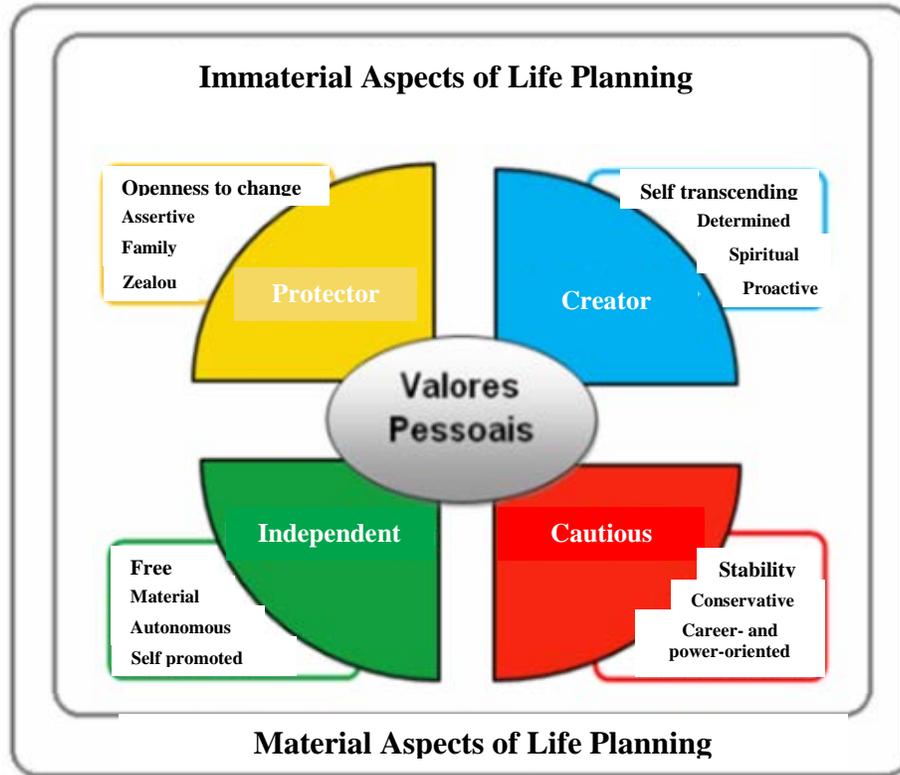


Figure 3. Model of the Axiological Decisions Source: Author

Conclusions

The answer to the question raised at the beginning of the research work is that by means of an instrument capable of measuring personal values, such sustainable planning would be possible and the answers in this inventory could be used as the beginning of a personal planning process. Among the major value inventories used in the world, discovered by a bibliometric research held in Web of Science's database, over the past 60 years, Schwartz's SVS tool was mentioned the most and considered the most relevant and appropriate, according to its properties and validation, to be embedded into the proposed planning goals research model, based on the personal values of individuals.

As a response to the question raised by the overall objective, the Model of Axiological Decisions took into consideration Schwartz's Theory of Human Values and used the SVS value measurement inventory. This instrument has a universal structure of personal values, was adapted to the Brazilian culture and validated in Brazil and in over 70 countries. The correspondence between the individuals' personal values and the PSP elements and the life planning fields produced twelve specific planning goals for four different types of individuals that have value systems that are inwardly homogeneous, but heterogeneous with respect to the other three groups.

To address the specific purpose, after the questionnaires have been applied in the quantitative research, it was noted that four distinct stereotypes could be formed, as suggested in the theory. These four stereotypes differentiated the individuals according to their motivational

goals and the nature of their values. For each stereotype, specific planning goals were identified based on their personal values.

For individuals belonging to Stereotype 1, the planning goals prioritized for a personal planning are as follows: being assertive and discovering my strengths and weaknesses, prioritizing my free time before my work, seeking personal and family satisfaction and finding out who I want to be. The strongest dimension among Schwartz's second-order values is openness to change. These individuals may be labeled as protectors due to extreme caution and determination employed to protect their interpersonal relationships, image and families.

For individuals belonging to Stereotype 2, the planning goals prioritized for a personal planning are as follows: managing my time and my relationships, figuring out who I want to be, taking root and being accepted, resetting principles and challenges. Its strongest dimension among Schwartz's second-order values is self transcendence. These individuals may be labeled creators, due to high levels of pro-activity, tendency to volunteer service, spirituality, need to reconsider their challenges and goals and the low competitiveness profile found in this group. It is the group that values more intensely the intangible aspects in a life planning.

For individuals belonging to Stereotype 3, the planning goals prioritized for a personal planning are as follows: striving for prestige and wealth, prioritizing my free time before my work, being assertive and finding my strengths and weaknesses, managing my time and relationships. Its strongest dimension among Schwartz's second-order values is self promotion. These individuals may be labeled Independent due to their constant search for freedom and to the fact that they see material prosperity and extreme technical competence as a way to achieve their dreams. They give little importance to formal bonds, especially work-related.

For individuals belonging to Stereotype 4, the planning goals prioritized for a personal planning are as follows: striving for prestige and wealth, serving my organization, establishing goals and strategies for the medium and long term, being assertive, finding my strengths and weaknesses and analyzing and strengthening my *stakeholders*. Its strongest dimension among Schwartz's second-order values is self conservation. These individuals may be labeled Wary, due to the great disgust they have against taking risks, being oriented to stability.

In all groups, the immaterial aspect of life planning was superior to the material aspect when it comes to ranking the priorities of planning; however, there was a difference in intensity between groups. That is, even with motivational differences, in the long run, all individuals will always tend to prioritize the intangible aspects of their life planning, but in the short term, individuals with strong self promoted orientation seek high material return.

The Model of Axiological Decisions can be used as a supplement to the existing PSP models. Thus, the MDA does not concur nor invalidates any previously published, academically suggested or commercially used model. The MDA was created to help people make more assertive and sustainable decisions in the long term. It can be used by coaches or career counselors to help in the development of a PSP.

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