

The axiological orientation of students' personalities

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Background. Our empirical research and analysis revealed characteristics of the axiological orientation of students' personalities.

Objective. We identified the principal types of orientation, dominant values, and attitudes of the personality in the motivational-needs sphere through a variety of validated and reliable techniques and methods.

Design We understand the axiological orientation of the personality as a relatively stable set of values, motivations, needs, and moral structures produced through the lens of actions, in and through various spheres of social life, which describes complex system of a person's perception of him-/herself, his or her perceptions of others, and his or her attitude towards work and other activities.

Results. The results of the empirical research demonstrate that a set of axiological, motivational, and need characteristics form *pragmatic-professional*, *social-communicative*, or *individual-egoistic* types of axiological orientation of the personality, which in turn describe the subject's attitude to the surrounding external reality and to him/herself. The pragmatic-professional type of person is dominated by values such as work, results, money, and process. The least attractive value to this type appears to be power. Respondents with a social-communicative type of axiological orientation have altruism, result and money as their main personal values. Values such as egocentrism, power, money, and freedom are a distinguishing mark of those with the individual-egoistic axiological orientation.

Conclusion. This study also addresses how and through what patterns and mechanisms the axiological orientation of students' personalities is expressed, which could enable professionals to develop educational programs aimed at harmonizing and aligning societal values and the individual's attitudes.

Keywords: values, axiological orientation, students, personality, attitudes

Introduction

There are two major approaches in contemporary psychology, each with its own view of the relation between meaning and personal values.

In the first approach, personal values are the awareness and perception by a person of the general reasons for his existence (Kudinov, Kudinov, & Aybazova, 2015). Particular attention is paid to the need for both understanding of meaning — what is intended to be, or actually is, expressed or indicated — and decisions that determine a preference to accept or reject it. With the same view, Budinayte and Kornilova (1993) say that at the heart of personal values lie meanings — ends, purpose, significance — that were considered, realized, and finally internalized by a subject. Thus, the initial realization by an individual of his/her personal values and their further positioning and ranking on a “recognition and acceptance” scale is a prerequisite and an indispensable condition for value formation.

The second approach is based on the idea of the primacy of individual value orientations which form a structure of personal meanings. In examining the human search for the meaning of life, Frankl (1990) considers a person’s inner motivational orientation to be a driving force of behavior and the development of personality. In foreign psychology, the problem of value orientations is also considered from the perspective of cognitive dissonance, the resolution of which, according to Festinger (1957), is the restructuring of the value system. The humanistic and existential trends in psychology accepted the thesis of social determinism of value orientations. Thus Rogers (1997) and Maslow (1999) included both social values experienced directly by the person, and borrowed ones conducive to preserving and improving the condition of the person in the self-structure. Allport (2002) sees the source of most values in society’s dominant moral norms. This orientation serves as a condition and means of formation of internal values and goals.

The present authors hold a similar view to that of D.A. Leontiev (2000), considering personal values to be both sources and conveyors of significant personal meanings in human ontogenesis. The dynamic development of systems of personal meanings and value orientations, as well as their functioning, are interconnected and interdependent.

Sample and Research Methods

The study was carried out in Moscow, with final-year university students as subjects. The total sample consisted of 210 respondents, aged 23–27; there were 120 men and 90 women.

The study made use of the “Meaning of Life Orientations Test” (D.A. Leontiev), which allows researchers to identify the “meaning of life”, as determined by a subject for the future (a target), the present (a process), or the past (a result) or in all these components of life; the “Orientation Inventory” (B. Bass), which identifies three types of personal orientation: a focus on one’s own interests, on communication, or on activity; and the “Questionnaire on the Social-Psychological Attitudes of the Individual in the Motivational-Needs Sphere” (O.F. Potyomkina), which determines a person’s orientation in decision-making and activity with respect to certain socially and psychologically meaningful values: altruism–selfishness, process–result, work–money, freedom–power.

A quantitative analysis was performed using the methods of mathematical statistics: descriptive statistics, which allowed us to form groups of respondents based

on dominance of orientation (A, B, C, etc.); and cluster analysis, which allowed us to identify the axiological orientation of the students' personalities (using the SPSS 11.5 program). A qualitative analysis of the results was based on comparison, hierarchy of variables (by highest degree), and their domination in the structural organization.

Results

The empirical results from the three above-mentioned methods were analyzed to identify the axiological orientation of the personality. The data obtained from Bass's "Orientation Inventory" was subjected to a quantitative analysis, the provisions of which were summarized, so that several groups of respondents were identified through the dominance of their orientation and were designated as groups A, B, C, etc. (Table 1).

Table 1. Average values of the students' personality orientation indices (n=210)

Orientation indices	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Self-oriented	42	24	25	32	16	36	28
Communication-oriented	23	38	22	41	34	21	33
Task (work)-oriented	25	28	43	17	40	33	29
Number of respondents	46	39	42	25	30	13	15

Group A — self-centered or self-oriented personalities — comprised 46 people, who are oriented towards their own feelings, perceptions, senses, and psychological well-being. In the process of interaction and communication with others, as well as in their activities, they are focused exclusively on emotional and material rewards. They care little about corporate issues; they are focused on their own well-being. They see their work, their relationships with colleagues and managers as an opportunity to enjoy benefits — for example job promotion, higher salary, higher social status or better working conditions. These respondents' work, communications, and behavior are all driven by purely egocentric motivation. Favorable prospects or good forecasts may lead them to become more active and proactive, self-motivated or ambitious, boosting their high organizational skills and self-efficacy. In the absence of material, financial or psychological rewards, these respondents are not inclined to "put themselves out".

Group B — personalities oriented towards others — comprised 39 respondents with a clear personal focus on communication and interaction with other people. For these respondents, relationships are vital. They seek to establish and maintain a lot of contacts with different people, to build positive relationships with colleagues, neighbors, relatives, and strangers. The majority of the group's respondents are likely to be extroverts. For them the relationships with colleagues appear to be more valuable than the work done.

Group C, with 42 respondents, was composed of respondents with a distinct orientation to work and results. They are fully immersed in their work. Their own interests, including career progress, relations with their colleagues and superiors,

seem less valuable for them, while the work performed is their main value. These respondents are satisfied with, appreciate, and set a high value on their work, so they do not look for easier work. It can be assumed that such employees would become highly skilled professionals.

Group D — personalities oriented toward themselves and toward communication — included 25 respondents, characterized by a strong desire for self-expression through communication and interaction with others. They are more likely eager to satisfy their aspirations through interactions with colleagues than just to realize their ambitions. The work itself is of very little interest to them.

Group E — communication- and work-oriented personalities — consisted of 30 respondents who are interested in their work, but constant communication with others also brings them pleasure. Such an employee is most likely to be a team player. He/she will neither strive to receive a career promotion nor seek to run a team.

Group F — self- and work-oriented personalities — comprised 13 respondents. Employees of this type consider their work as a means for achieving personal well-being in its material, financial, social, and professional aspects. When working they are driven by selfish motivations: They are constantly in search of a better position; they are careerists.

Group G — Finally, the 15 respondents from this group have no specific focus. They not only seek to achieve personal well-being, but also want to maintain, preserve, and expand good relations with their colleagues and other people; their aim is to achieve positive, tangible results in their work.

Thus the group of 210 respondents was divided into seven sub-groups, each with a specific personal orientation, once the pilot stage of the study had been completed. For a thorough study of the axiological orientation of the personality, the 15-person group with an undifferentiated orientation was excluded from the further research.

At the next stage, the individual's social-psychological attitudes in the motivational-needs sphere were analyzed within the three contrasting groups. In our opinion, social-psychological attitudes play a key role in the axiological orientation of the personality, while stimulating the individual's proactive behavior in order to meet his/her pressing needs. Attitudes define the subject's orientation not only in the business environment and work, communication, and behavior, but also for certain socially and psychologically important values such as sociocentrism–egoism, process–result, freedom–power, and work–money (Table 2).

Table 2. Average values of indicators for individuals' attitudes (n=127)

Indicators of attitudes	Process	Result	Altruism	Egoism	Work	Freedom	Power	Money
Self-oriented	2	6	3	10	5	9	10	10
Communication-oriented		8	9	4	3	4	5	8
Task (work)-oriented	7	10	5	7	10	8	4	9

“Self-centered/-oriented” respondents have the following dominant social-psychological attitudes: egoism, power, money, and freedom, while process and altruism are less expressed. The intensity of these attitudes indicates that in their everyday life, these respondents are guided by an egocentric motivation to benefit from everything they do. To a greater or lesser degree, it is possible to speak about their desire for maximum freedom, to break free from others’ control and to manage their work environment and workflow themselves. They have a great desire to be independent and autonomous. Hence the respondents need to satisfy their inner desires for freedom and set their hearts upon money and power, as from their perspective only money and power could make them feel free. The respondents from this group show low expression of the following attitudes: process and work. On the one hand, this may indicate a low motivation to carry out professional activities, and on the other, it may be an indicator of a difficult and complex external socio-economic environment which is most likely to be the limiting factor for young people in satisfying their fundamental material requirements and needs.

“Communication-oriented” subjects have the following dominant attitudes: altruism, result, money, process. These attitudes indicate that in the process of communication these respondents tend to be useful to other people, their team, their senior management, etc. The process of specific work, the activity itself, and the result these respondents achieve, are equally significant for them. The power of money, as one of the dominant attitudes for these respondents, could be explained by the economic weakness of the health care system. Since money for these respondents is primarily linked to and closely associated with the satisfaction of their basic requirements, its attraction is considerable and strong, while work, egoism, and freedom are less often expressed by these respondents. But there is a certain contradiction here. On the one hand, process and result are top-ranked, but on the other, work has low priority. This contradiction becomes understandable if we consider that communication is also a kind of activity. Therefore, these respondents are more likely to consider the process and the result as belonging to the category of communication: The work it is interpreted by them as performance of professional or other intellectual and physical activities.

In the hierarchy of the dominant social-psychological attitudes of the respondents with an orientation toward work, results, work, and money are in the top ranking, while freedom and process are a little less pronounced. The strength of these attitudes within this group becomes clear, judging from respondents’ personal orientations. Apparently, these students seem to make their career choices quite consciously, and this gives them full satisfaction. Work, process, and results mean a lot to them too. It is important to mention that not only the process itself is important to them, but also the result, as they constantly tend to improve things, excel in their activities and work, etc. They also appreciate freedom. It may be assumed that achieving and maintaining quality performance with high productivity at work requires a certain freedom. A high level of professional activity correlates with creativity, and the creative process is only possible in an atmosphere of freedom. Another interesting fact is their attitude towards money. Since this attitude can be seen in the three groups, it can be assumed that in the current socio-economic situation this is a key attitude, given the small material rewards to public-sector employees.

Based on the methodology of D.A. Leontiev, let us consider the initial results of the meaning of life orientations survey (Table 3).

Table 3. Average values of purpose-of-life personality orientation indices (n=127)

Indicators of attitudes	Goals	Process	Result	“Me, myself, and I” locus of control	Locus of control of one’s life
Self-oriented	32	20	17	20	27
Communication- oriented	27	31	25	22	24
Task (work)-oriented	34	35	27	26	35

Our data show that the “self-centered/-oriented” respondents are primarily focused on their purpose in life. The level of this indicator is slightly above average, which means that they have very specific, meaningful plans for their lives and are eager to put them into action. Based upon the personal orientation of an individual, this goal is interconnected to a great extent with satisfaction of the individual’s egoistical ambitions to achieve personal well-being. The individual’s internal locus of control ranks second regarding orientation to the purpose of life, with results slightly above average in the test standardization scores. In other words, respondents from this group have a very clear conception of themselves, an understanding of their capabilities and opportunities. The other axiological orientations of these respondents are below average, which means that they are dissatisfied with life as a whole, both past and present. These respondents are not capable of being open, enjoying communication, activities, and self-improvement. They feel constrained by their dependence on their social environment: colleagues, friends, relatives, and the external circumstances at work and in society at large.

The hierarchy of expressiveness and evidence of the purpose-of-life orientations of “communication-oriented” respondents show a somewhat different but also consistent picture. The dominant orientations of these respondents are the process, the result, the “me, myself, and I” locus of control; their level of expression is slightly above average. In fact, this data is manifest likewise in these respondents’ satisfaction with a life that is rich in emotions, activities, and events. Their lives seem to be quite meaningful, purposeful, and fruitful. These respondents are satisfied with their past and get pleasure from their present lives. Most likely, their self-realization comes through the process of communication, their relationships with others; thus the satisfaction with the process itself is an indicator of their quality of life. They are able to make their own decisions and choices. The low expression of such orientations as goals in life and the locus of control of one’s life, suggests that these students do not have clearly established goals for the future, but just a short-term outlook. It is possible that this is because they are not able to strictly control their own lives, without taking into account the views of other people and situational variables.

Finally, the group of “work-oriented” respondents demonstrates a medium-high level of all purpose-of-life orientations. This indicates that these respondents

have vividly expressed goals in life, conscious ideas of what they want to achieve. At the same time, they are quite satisfied with their present and past; they consider their self-realization and self-evaluations to be quite successful. They are distinguished by steady self-control; they believe they create and manage their own lives and all successes and failures depend only on them, and that life can only follow the scenario they wrote, and no external factors could change the vector of their lives or significantly affect their quality.

At the next stage, the study used cluster analysis of the data, which found three groups of similar respondents, with big differences between the groups' average ratings. These three groups, or clusters, are found in the variables of contrasting axiological orientations. When applying the cluster method of «k-averages,» it was shown that the three clusters differ significantly on their all average values, except those of freedom and money, and the process when comparing the first and the second cluster. The clusters are divided into three categories: high, medium, and low expression of the axiological components of the personality (Figure 1).

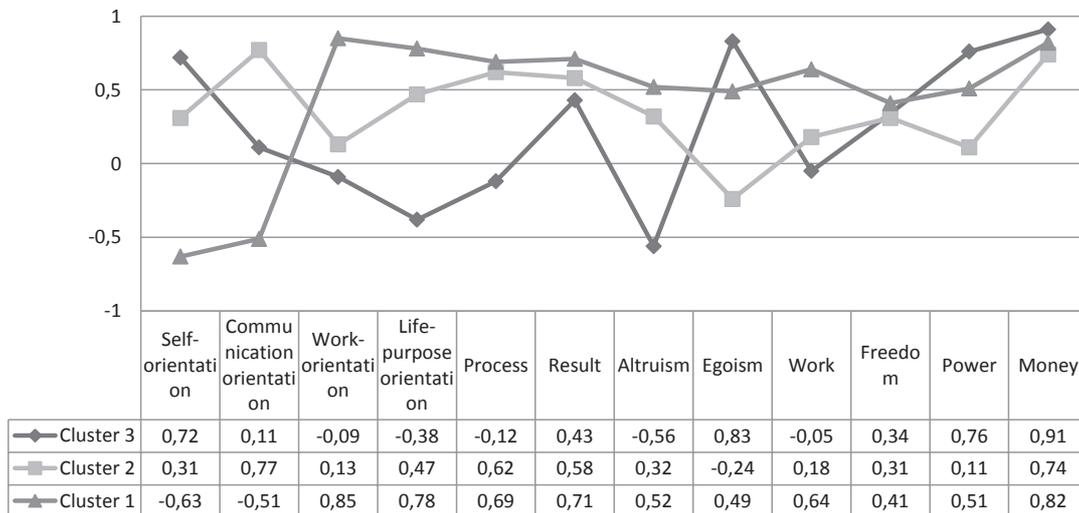


Figure 1. Indices of axiological orientation of the personality (n=195)

The first cluster is comprised of 78 respondents who have a low “self-orientation” parameter (N=-0.63) and a low “communication-orientation” parameter (N=-0.51). These low rates suggest that the respondents don't see much value in promoting themselves, satisfying their ambitions and their own egoistic needs. They do not value communication; for them, communication is just a useful instrument to establish interaction with others. All the remaining parameters have vivid positive expression. The orientation to work has the highest rate (N=0.85); it shows that for these respondents, work is a primary personal orientation. The general parameter of purpose-of-life orientation is (N=0.78), which means that respondents who were assigned to this group set and pursue their own goals in life, are satisfied with the quality of their lives, and practice good self-control. Other parameters have the following values: process (N=0.69), results (N=0.71), altruism (N=0.52), egocentrism (n=0.49), work (N=0.64), freedom (N=0.41), power (N=0.51), money (N=0.82).

The respondents from this cluster have a quite conscious axiological career orientation. They are looking to their job for the meaning of life; they have a meaning and purpose in their lives, and both are centered in their professional sphere, orbiting around their career. They set themselves specific objectives; the process itself gives them full satisfaction; they enjoy what they do; they are quite satisfied with their lives, and they are positive about their past and make pragmatic plans for the near future. They know what they want in life, so making decisions is natural for them. They are eager to be independent from other people and external circumstances; they are the masters of their own lives. In their professional environment and at work, although the process itself gives them satisfaction, they are results-oriented, which influences their business success. Work is an important value for them, and it is critical to their present and future success. At work they are equally driven by self-enhancement, socio-centric and ego-centric motives; they look for freedom of action and try to avoid being controlled by senior staff or colleagues. This shows the adequacy, pragmatism, and empathy of these respondents. At the same time, they also place a high value on money and power; what the findings actually emphasize, therefore, is their pragmatism and desire for self-fulfillment. This type of axiological orientation can be called “*pragmatic-professional*.”

The second cluster is comprised of 52 respondents. This cluster lies between the first and the third clusters, according to the expression of the axiological orientation's components. The majority of parameters demonstrate an average expression. The values are: self-orientation (N=0.31), communication orientation (N=0.77), work orientation (N=0.13). This data makes clear that the dominant orientation of these respondents is communication, while “self-orientation” occupies second place, and work orientation is insignificant. Communication is the priority in their way of life. Communications are meant to be used to solve problems and satisfy their personal needs. Activities, including professional ones, do not appear to be among the necessary values for them. The other values are as follows: overall purpose-of-life orientation (N=0.47), as the respondents have a set of values for the purpose of life; process (N=0.62), results (N=0.58), altruism (N=0.32), egocentrism (N=-0.24), work (N=0.18), freedom (N=0.31), power (N=0.11), money (N=0.74).

The respondents included in this cluster can be characterized as trying to satisfy their needs through communication. The communication process takes most of their time; they are ready to socialize with the most diverse people for a long time and on any topics, even when resolving professional and personal issues. Despite their focus on communication, they have a goal; they clearly understand what they want in their lives and at work; they are quite optimistic about their prospects in the different spheres of life; they are satisfied with the present and the past; they are quite satisfied with their self-realization. They experience satisfaction in what they are doing, but at the same time they want their activities or work to result in positive outcomes. In the course of communication and work performance, they are often motivated by altruistic motives, i.e., they try to be helpful to their friends, colleagues or neighbors, to other people, and society as a whole. Selfishness is not manifest in the actions of these individuals. They don't make work and power a priority. In other words, work itself is not attractive for them. Work appeals to them only for its communicative aspect. The same is true for power. They do not aspire

to career progress or promotion; they do not feel any need to manage their careers, to be promoted and get high leadership positions, feeling comfortable in the workplace interacting with their colleagues. They prefer to feel at home among rank-and-file employees. At the same time, they have a need for freedom and money. They have the same attitude towards money as the previous group. Money itself is not valuable for them, but it is considered to be an important tool to satisfy their basic needs. Freedom as a value is influenced by the desire for self-fulfillment, as they believe that self-fulfillment could be achieved by only a truly free person through work, activities, communication, and interaction with others.

Thus the respondents included in this cluster could be referred to as having a “*social-communicative*” type of axiological orientation.

And finally, the third cluster was made up of 65 respondents. They show unequal values of the parameters: “self-orientation” (N=0.72), communication (N=0.11), work (N=-0.09). These respondents’ main personal orientations translate into a focus on themselves and their personalities. Other parameters have the following values: overall purpose-of-life orientation (N=-0.38), which suggests a vagueness and narrowness of their life goals, a weak internal locus of control, dissatisfaction with their present and past, as well as pessimistic predictions for their future; process (N=-0.12), results (N=0.43), altruism (N=-0.56), egocentrism (N=0.83), work (N=-0.05), freedom (N=0.34), power (N=0.76), and money (N=0.91). These respondents have a strong focus on themselves, their career, their inner world, their self-fulfillment, satisfaction of their ambitions and specific personal needs. Communication with others is not a priority for them, so it is only initiated, engaged in, or promoted on the basis of necessity. Work is not highly valued, but is rather unattractive to them. Apparently, this is due to the weak expression of goals in life, the fact that they live in the present. It can also be assumed that they do not plan for the future. They are not satisfied with the process of their self-realization and the quality of their lives. They do not derive great satisfaction from their lives and work. They work or engage in communications only as an immediate, practical necessity and seek to benefit from them, since they are always result-oriented. Their work, communication, and behavior are self-centered. The fact that concern with the self outweighs concern for others is behind their actions and efforts; they want these to be useful only to themselves. These respondents possess very few altruistic motives. Work is not of significant value to them, but the same can be said about the previous group; however, freedom, power, and money are top priorities for them. In other words, these respondents aspire to freedom, power, and the acquisition of material well-being.

This group can be referred to an “*individual-egoistic*” type of axiological orientation of the personality.

Discussion

These empirical data allowed us to identify and characterize the specific axiological orientation of the final-year students. In distinction from previous studies, we used a comprehensive approach, which takes into account not only individual values, motives, and meanings, but a number of characteristics to highlight a typology of axiological orientation of students’ personalities. The empirical data can be devel-

oped in further investigations of the particular features of self-actualization and professionalization of specialists with different axiological orientations. This data is also helpful for the practice of psycho-pedagogical employees of educational institutions who are interested in the formation and correction of this phenomenon among students.

In addition, the findings allowed us to specify a definition of «axiological orientation of the personality» in theoretical terms and to relate it to the existing approaches to this problem and that of value orientation. The axiological orientation of personality is understood as a relatively stable set of values, motivations, needs, and moral structures of a subject produced through the lens of actions, in and through various spheres of social life, which describes the complex system of a person's perception of him-/herself, his or her perceptions of others, and his or her attitude towards work and other activities (Kudinov, Kudinov, & Kudinov, 2015).

Conclusions

Thus the study identifies and specifies the types of axiological orientation of students' personalities, underlining and characterizing such types of value-semantic orientation of the person as *pragmatic-professional*, *social-communicative*, and *individual-egoistic*. Respondents with a pragmatic-professional orientation are characterized by the dominance of values such as work, results, money, and process; the value of power seems to be the least attractive to them. Respondents with a social-communicative orientation have the following basic values: altruism, results, money. Respondents of the individual-egoistical type have the following core values: egoism, power, money, and freedom.

The typology of axiological orientation of personality that we have identified defines the subject's self-fulfillment in different spheres of life through activities and work, communication, attitude, and behavior.

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