

THE POSSIBILITIES OF SELF-REALIZATION EXPRESSED IN ADOLESCENT'S LIFE PROJECTS

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ABSTRACT

This research evaluates the life project of adolescents and its relationship with the perception and tendency to self-realization. A Purpose Questionnaire and a Profile Questionnaire were used, with 507 female and male subjects between 12 and 17 years old, educated, in the city of Santos/SP. As a hypothesis, it is pointed out that the achievements of personal maturation contribute to a positive self-concept, making self-realization an important part of personality formation. The theoretical line focuses on Moral Psychology, articulated with philosophical and sociological discussions on ethics, moral values and human development. The results show an appreciation for subjectivity, the feeling of insecurity and self-assertion. The hypothesis was partially confirmed, as the subjects demonstrated that they establish purposes and plans for their lives, which they perceive as potentially transforming, but that they are still very much focused on the private context, material needs and family attachment.

Keywords: self-realization; adolescence; life project; personality

Las posibilidades de autorrealización expresas en los proyectos de vida de adolescentes

RESUMEN

En esta investigación se evalúa el proyecto de vida de adolescentes y su relación con la percepción y tendencia a la autorrealización. Se utilizó un Cuestionario de Propósito y otro de Perfil, con 507 sujetos maculinos y femeninos, entre 12 y 17 años, escolarizados, de la ciudad de Santos/SP. Como hipótesis, se apunta que las conquistas de la madurez personal contribuyen para un autoconcepto positivo, volviendo la autorrealización una parte importante de la formación de la personalidad. La línea teórica se centra en la Psicología Moral, articulada a las discusiones filosóficas y sociológicas sobre ética, valores morales y desarrollo humano. Los resultados apuntan un aprecio a la subjetividad, al sentimiento de inseguridad y de autoafirmación. La hipótesis fue confirmada parcialmente, pues los sujetos demostraron que establecen propósitos y planes para sus vidas, que se perciben potencialmente transformadores, pero que aún están muy volcados al contexto privado, a las necesidades materiales y al vínculo familiar.

Palabras clave: autorrealización; adolescencia; proyecto de vida; personalidad

As possibilidades de autorrealização expresas nos projetos de vida de adolescentes

RESUMO

Esta pesquisa avalia o projeto de vida de adolescentes e sua relação com a percepção e tendência à autorrealização. Utilizou-se um Questionário de Propósito e outro de Perfil, com 507 sujeitos dos sexos feminino e masculino, entre 12 e 17 anos, escolarizados, da cidade de Santos/SP. Como hipótese, aponta-se que as conquistas do amadurecimento pessoal contribuem para um autoconceito positivo, tornando a autorrealização uma parte importante da formação da personalidade. A linha teórica centra-se na Psicologia Moral, articulada às discussões filosóficas e sociológicas sobre ética, valores morais e desenvolvimento humano. Os resultados apontam um apreço à subjetividade, ao sentimento de insegurança e de autoafirmação. A hipótese foi confirmada parcialmente, pois os sujeitos demonstraram que estabelecem propósitos e planos para suas vidas, que se percebem potencialmente transformadores, mas que ainda estão muito voltados ao contexto privado, às necessidades materiais e ao apego familiar.

Palavras-chave: autorrealização; adolescência; projeto de vida; personalidade

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THEME IDENTIFICATION

It is not a simple task to conceptualize the process of self-realization. Psychological theories have taken decades to explain the development of personality and consider four important dimensions (Bacchini & Magliulo, 2003; Fontaine, 1991; Shavelson & Bolus, 1982): the affective-emotional self-concept, the ethical-moral self-concept, the self-concept of autonomy and the self-concept for self-realization – the perception of how a person sees himself/herself in relation to the achievements of his/her life goals.

We know that self-concept is one of the most relevant personality variables and includes references to how the person perceives himself/herself, not only in physical aspects, but also in academic and social aspects. For some time, the self-concept was considered a one-dimensional and global construct. However, for some decades now, a hierarchical and multidimensional conception has been acceptable (Shavelson, Hubner, & Stanton, 1976) according to which the general self-concept would be structured under the academic, personal, social and physical domains, each subdividing into dimensions of greater specificity.

According to Fuentes, García, Gracia and Lila (2011), self-concept is considered a deep and powerful human need, basic for a healthy psychic life and fundamental for *self-realization*. It is related to the feeling of well-being and its importance lies in the relevant implication for personality formation. Thus, in this study, personality is conceived as a space for interaction between psychological processes and structures constituted by regulatory subsystems of individualized configurations.

The different dimensions or areas of self-concept and its importance in the elaboration of one's personal sense and personality are part of a single confluence and are strongly related to the age of the subjects, which includes the life project. In the case of adolescence, the basic difference from other periods comes down to the internal questioning that manifests itself in the young person about who he/she is and what he/she will do with his/her life; how he/she is programmed to develop new roles, identification of occupational preferences and, especially, how he/she is motivated to achieve his/her independence, in relation to the family or other responsible adults. The teenager's first task, therefore, is the development of their own identity and the meaning they attribute to it (Rodríguez, 2008).

Let us now move on to the main concept of the survey. The notion of self-actualization as maturation has changed over the decades. Each culture, historically constituted, has formulated and suggested some kind of ideal of maturation, of personal fulfillment. Objectively, the concept of self-realization appears in dictionaries¹

as the effect of executing, carrying out, carrying out an idea, converting dreams, plans or illusions into reality. Therefore, the term self-fulfillment means the action and effect of transforming ideas, plans and objectives into reality, by itself.

Maslow (1993) is recognized as the main introducer of the concept of self-actualization, although in the English language the term *self-actualization* is mainly used to denote the real or current character that comes from the human potential, coined by Goldstein in 1939, to represent the idea of psychological health. However, Maslow (1993), capturing the influences of 1960s humanistic psychology, redefined the concept, dedicating to Goldstein his first edition of *Toward's Psychology of Being*.²

According to these ideas, self-realization is for Maslow (1991) the intrinsic growth of what is already in the organism, biologically rooted and instinctive in nature, a definition that is completely debatable today. Furthermore, the person in the process of self-actualization has their basic needs met and uses their capabilities fully. Maslow (1991) defined people motivated by tendencies consistent with self-realization. Finally, he concluded that self-realization persists throughout the subject's life history and that this process probably begins in childhood, continuing through adolescence, which is the critical moment for the consolidation of life projects.

Life projects can be conceptualized as structures of individual meaning idealized in the temporal dimension, in the historicity of individual and social events that explain each person's life history. According to Piaget and Inhelder (1976), "a life plan is an affirmation of autonomy, and the moral autonomy finally fully conquered by the adolescent who considers himself equal to adults, is another essential affective aspect of the nascent personality that prepares to face the life" (p. 260).

Therefore, the personality is closely associated with the perception of oneself and its "self-realization" (Damon, 2008). In this sense, we can infer the construction of the life project, because having a project means having a purpose, which will bring a feeling of well-being for the achieved goal.

Thus, the main objective of this research is the understanding of young personalities with regard to the perception of self-realization and the need for inclusion in society, built from knowledge and understanding of the current reality, in an essentially humanistic dimension.

Although many authors in the psychology field make no distinction between adolescence and youth (Aberastury & Knobel, 1989; Calligaris, 2000; Delval,

¹ Available in <http://michaelis.uol.com.br/>; <http://www.dicionarioaurelio.com/>; <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/>.

² Maslow, A. H. (1968). *Toward a Psychology of Being*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold.

1998; Erikson, 1968, 1998; Piaget & Inhelder, 1976), those who do (Freitas, 2005; Novaes & Vannuchi, 2004; Ozella, 2002; Savage, 2009; Sposito, 1997) attribute to adolescence the experiences that occur after childhood, giving youth the experiences that precede the entry into adulthood³.

The term adolescent – coming from the Latin *adolescere*, to grow⁴ – etymologically means one who moves towards perfection, who matures and carries a more psychological meaning, including the biological one. The term youth, on the other hand, is more sociological and is linked to the transformation of the subject as a social and political agent, who experiences the transition from school to the world of work, active life, social integration. In this study, we will adopt both terms, as we understand adolescence and youth as periods of life in which there are many radical changes about which psychology presents a series of questions.

However, we believe that adolescence is a transition period full of experiences and potential that bring questions about how adolescents understand themselves and how they are understood by others. They face pressures about adult life, the search for identity and the emergence of career choice. Based on the identity orientation, they will outline their perspective of self-fulfillment, which can become a life project including professional expectations, values⁵, interpersonal relationships and the possibility of insertion and social intervention, or not, which may lead to stagnation (Erikson, 1992).

The construction or elaboration of a life project is part of the affective and intellectual maturation process, as adolescents become aware of this purpose when they begin to be able to reflectively recognize that their goals are not necessarily those of their parents, and they strive to give a sense of personal identity that includes goals, beliefs and values to which it can be committed (Damon, 2008). Building a life project involves challenging family issues in a process of individualization.

Thus, the problematization of this research revolves around the possibility of evaluating the adolescent's life project aimed at building the moral personality and its relationship with the perception and tendency to self-

fulfillment in establishing purposes for their future life.

In this case, the “state of the art” does not provide us with empirical data on interpersonal differences, as there are no appropriate research instruments that include this measure of self-perception. Nevertheless, we assume as a hypothesis that if *the achievements of personal maturation contribute to the configuration of a positive self-concept - expressed in the life project - we can accept that there is an awareness of self-realization* that is an important part of self-concept and where the knowledge of one's own is integrated. talents, capabilities, creative activities, productivity, possibilities and interests.

IDENTIFICATION OF THE RESEARCH METHOD

This is an exploratory study of a quantitative-qualitative nature. A total of 507 female and male subjects participated in the study - 248 boys and 259 girls - aged 12 to 17 years old from Elementary School II and High School, educated, from large, private and public schools in Baixada Santista - SP⁶. All students from 9th grades of ES II and 2nd and 3rd years of High School, who were present on the day scheduled for the application, were asked to answer the questionnaires.

As instruments to assess self-realization in the adolescents' life projects, two semi-open questionnaires were used, specially designed for this study, entitled by us as: a Profile Questionnaire and a Purpose Questionnaire.

The Profile Questionnaire presented 25 situations described in the first person, seeking an identification with the respondent, who marks one of four possibilities of frequency of the statement, in the *Likert* scale patterns (*rarely, often, sometimes or almost always*), creating a degree hierarchy of occurrence in the lives of adolescents. This instrument concerns the perception that adolescents have of themselves, how they think about the significant aspects of their lives and how they understand the feelings, emotions and values that organize their way of being and acting. The Profile Questionnaire refers to the self-concept itself, so it is not a socio-economic profile, but the idea is to collect information about how subjects perceive themselves in relation to moral and evaluative aspects.

The other instrument, the Purpose Questionnaire, is prepared in the form of questions and answers, with six open questions about objectives, significant facts, opinions about what they think about life and people. This questionnaire was based on the Purpose-Driven Study of Youth Questionnaire by William Damon (2008).

With these two instruments, we seek to establish categories of responses to think about the various possibilities of projections and conceptions that the

³ The chronological limits of adolescence are defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) between 10 and 19 years (adolescents) and by the United Nations (UN) between 15 and 24 years (youth), a criterion used for statistical and political purposes. In Brazil, the IBGE (2005) and the Child and Adolescent Statute (Law No. 8.069, 1990) consider adolescence as the age group from 12 to 18 years old, and, in exceptional cases, the statute is applicable up to 21 years old.

⁴ Aurélio online dictionary. Available <http://www.dicionarioaurelio.com/>

⁵ Marking the conception, we adopted in this project, according to Piaget (1994), a value is an affective investment that makes us act; that moves us in one direction.

⁶ All participants delivered the Informed Consent and the Assent Term signed by the parents and/or guardians.

adolescent elaborates in relation to the temporal/well-being axis, and how this relates to the most central tendency towards self-realization in the process of constructing their personality. Despite being considered, no significant differences were found related to the “gender” and “age” variables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Results from the Profile Questionnaire

With the data compiled from the Profile Questionnaire, we were able to draw a panel about the interviewed adolescents, relating attitudes, behaviors and aspirations that are a trend in modern culture. In addition, the statements in the questionnaire are grouped into five categories, which were organized by us and which facilitate the analysis: a) *Autonomy* - situations that involve responsibility and decision-making; b) *Challenges and conflicts* - refer to the acceptance of challenges; c) *Care* - related to the intentions of protection and self-care; d) *Learning* - motivations for acquiring knowledge; e) *Interpersonal relationships* - mention the other and the possibilities of expressing feelings. The themes highlighted and concluded here are intended to be more suggestive than analytical.

A) *Appreciation for the values of subjectivity* - thinking about current society, the postmodern culture that encourages collectivity and diversity, but concretely, privileges individuals over the group and community, it was found that the young people interviewed showed little attracted by the values or interests of others and/or small groups, alien to the close circle of friendships and kinship.

Social movements that relate to humanitarian, collective and environmental feelings did not seem very interesting to them, so much so that the category “*Care*” – one of the categories listed in the questionnaire, mentioned above, is the one most scored by adolescents. The playful, affective and cultural dimension predominated over the community and solidarity influence, and the institutions that most inspire them trust are those based on consanguineous interpersonal relationships, such as the family.

B) *Attitudes of tolerance or relativism* – they more easily accept ideological and social pluralism. It is possible to find expressions of intolerance, but people’s acceptance capacity for who they are and inclusion in their trajectories surpass individual manifestations. They can perceive cultural and behavioral differences more naturally and friendship relationships are above differences of opinion or convictions.

C) *Feeling of insecurity and self-assertion* –

assertion as a social individual cannot be strong enough to overcome anonymity in the midst of cultural pluralism, which causes a feeling of doubt and uncertainty. The personal identity *deficit* is extremely serious in the young world. Hence the search for an identity borrowed from groups, urban tribes, violent groups of extremist ideologies, sects that welcome young people without a firm identity, giving them collective support that fills the psychological void. Personal insecurity can lead to low self-esteem, which calls for an affectionate welcome. We reconfirm what once again sustains the result of the “*Care*” category as the first most scored, relevant in these calculations.

D) *Insertion in the provisional* – post-modernity brings a new spatial concept, but it also substantially changes the human insertion in the domain of time. The speed of movement, the rapid bombardment of messages and the alternation of images, the progress of science and technology, the growth in productivity and the exacerbated consumption of everything, contribute to speeding up life and generating a deep feeling that everything is temporary, is fleeting. In this context, building life plans becomes almost impossible.

The category “*Challenges and Conflicts*”, which is associated with the elaboration of projects and the possibility of thinking about the future, appears in *last* position in the indexes. The feeling of “provisionally”⁷ encompasses all their relationships, sometimes in a contradictory way: adolescents, because they easily fall into uncertainty, look for more lasting references. However, their opinions and feelings change very quickly, generating a certain pragmatism that leads to the construction of their own ethical universes. All of this can result in personalities without solid convictions, without vitally assimilated certainties, not feeling capable of definitive options to which they commit themselves in a lasting way.

Results from the Purpose Questionnaire

Now let’s move on to the Purpose Questionnaire. According to Damon (2008), the purpose is a stable and generalized intention to achieve something that is at the same time significant for oneself, but also for the people in the surrounding context. “Purpose is a key part of our own personal search for meaning, but it also has an external quality, a desire to make a difference in the world, to contribute to matters beyond our own interest” (Damon, 2003, p. 11).

Pursuit of purpose can organize a lifetime and

⁷ Characteristic of what is provisional.

last long enough for a person to be able to express commitment and motivation to the learning they must do. Finally, the purpose enables young people to be responsible in the world, as people capable of learning to do things, understanding that their production is valuable for others and for themselves.

The adolescents' answers to each question were categorized and grouped to analyze the many concepts and conceptions that emerged. Each category involved objectively grouped responses. These categories were means organized by us to give a more concrete meaning to the subjects' responses. The categorization, however, exposes care with the fine selection line, as the subjects, when responding in the form of a cursive text, end up mixing the expressions all the time, and the distinction was often due to small subtleties in the speech. We recognize that categorization can reduce relevant aspects of the analysis, but that, on the other hand, it allowed us to highlight what we consider most significant to discuss in this work. We did not intend to exhaust all the possibilities of analysis, but we selected the aspects that seemed relevant to the considerations we sought. The indexes placed in the tables are not percentages (no specific statistical treatment was given), but the simple sum of the answers. In fact, these scores are pretexts for the qualitative analysis of the categories, identifying a decreasing scale. It is observed that each subject interviewed, in general, presented more than one aspect (concept) or answer to each question established in the questionnaire, therefore, the calculation is by answer and not by subject. The following data summarizes the calculation.

Question A: *Tell us a little about yourself. What kind of person are you?* – This question can be associated with the assessment of the Profile

Questionnaire because it refers to the perception that the subject has of himself/herself, the way he/she built significant values about himself/herself and how he/she imagines that others see him/her. In the instrument built by Damon (2008), the self-concept is fundamental for thinking about the purpose. Thus, even though the adolescent's profile had already been determined by the previous questionnaire, this question seemed fundamental to us to start the inquiry about the Purpose and confirm some concepts, not configuring, therefore, a repetition in the collection. The answers related to self-concept suggest aspects of personality formation and were grouped for analysis into five categories:

The characteristics identified as temperament traits surpassed the indices of the other categories found in this question: character, attitudinal, emotional and physical, as shown in Table 1. In this study, temperament is considered as the elaboration of stimuli and the regulation of behavior. In short, it can be defined as a basic feature of the organism's self-regulation (Strelan, 1987).

Temperament is a concept related to regulatory aspects of emotion, which do not adjust internal psychophysiological processes, but only social processes. Temperament is closely related to personality, as it is a phenomenon that arises in childhood and represents a kind of foundation for the future personality. However, there is an invariability in its development: the temperament characteristics are relatively stable, and, in relation to the other personality characteristics, they manifest a certain continuity.

Characteristics identified as "moral" – the "Character" category, the second most scored – also have significant

Table 1. Question A.

Categories related to self-perception	Definition	Indexes
Temperament	Characteristic associated with the person's particularities linked to the form of behavior. It is a disposition ¹ trend	367
Character	Characteristic related to the moral traits of the personality.	181
Attitudinal	Characteristic associated with the way of acting, of expressing attitudes	132
Emotional	Characteristic that expresses the person's manifestations of feelings and emotions.	30
Physical	It represents the physical and organic aspects of the person. Expresses the physical type.	4
THEY DID NOT ANSWER		25

¹Disposition designates the tendency, relatively stable over time, that a person has to behave in a certain way in certain situations (Allport, 1961).

Source: Prepared by the authors.

indicators. They also refer to personality constructs associated with moral virtues and which include values considered universally desirable.

Character implies “wanting to be”. This ethical/moral aspect became universal, always denoting the “distinct of a person”. The psychological concept of character serves both “how it should be” and “as it is”, and it has a cognitive basis, according to some theories. Therefore, character is the peculiarity that is related to motives and dispositions that give stability to the individual’s social conduct.

The five dimensions emphasize that this category was placed second in the list of categories for this question, as moral aspects are fundamental for thinking about the purposes and perception of self-fulfillment, according to the hypotheses that we intend to prove in the research. The attitudinal, emotional and physical categories did not obtain significant indices.

Question B: *What is the most important thing in your life right now?* – This question makes it possible to verify the projections that teenagers make in relation to the conception of life they have until then, and involves the values that are important to them and that configure a meaning for the established goals. The answers to this question were grouped into two categories, based on Klein (2011): it makes sense, it makes no sense. The quantification was made from the subcategories, that is, from the concepts that appeared and not from the subjects, as most adolescents wrote more than one concept in the same answer, and it was understood that these

subcategories are too significant to be grouped in one single category.

The score for the Family subcategory in the “Makes sense” category is quite significant. Although teenagers in puberty prefer to spend more time with the peer group, which will provide the fundamental socialization context, as this group becomes an emotional confidant, counselor and behavioral model to imitate, the great importance of the family cannot be denied for the construction of identity. The high rate of indications for the “Family” concept in the questionnaire shows that adolescents project this importance.

As “Work” and “Training” appear well scored in the subcategories and are also important characteristics of the Family, we explain a little more about the theme. Work is something more than a simple means of achieving material well-being, as it represents an important source of personal satisfaction that organizes psychosocial identity, reorients the sense of existential time and occupies an important space in the hierarchy of sociocultural values.

During the transition from youth to adulthood, young people want to build their identity, committing themselves to a profession, a family, their own values and ideals. However, the economic crisis and the degradation of public institutions generate precarious employment; the consequence is that work as a conscious choice and self-realization has been less and less a reality in Western countries, since most adolescents are not in a position to choose and project themselves into a working world to welcome them. This situation has led young people to a process of

Table 2. Question B.

Categories related to the meaning of life	Definition	Subcategories	Indexes
Makes sense	They recognize what makes sense for their lives. Values they consider significant.	Family	211
		Study/Training	185
		Affective/social relationships	66
		Spirituality	33
		Future choices/decisions	28
		Well-being/care	13
		Happiness	13
		Leisure	11
		Work/Goods	7
		Song	2
Makes no sense	They did not answer the question and/or claimed not to have values that give meaning to life.	Pet	1
			14

Source: Prepared by the authors.

social individualization, a private action of identity construction.

The unfolding of Question B – *Why is this important?* – makes it possible to assess and confirm what adolescents present in the aforementioned categories and who seek to find meaning in life. It indicates whether they are able to reflect on the values that are meaningful to them to guide their lives. The answers were grouped into five categories: by retribution, to guarantee the future, by personal satisfaction, by generosity, by personal interests, equally with the objective sum of the concepts.

The highest-scoring category speaks of gratitude. According to Comte-Sponville (1995), gratitude is a virtue that is close to charity, but with a characteristic of joy for the satisfaction of receiving, for the exchange without loss.

Question C: *Do you have goals for the future?*
 – It refers to the goals that the teenager has in life. It has a character of the future, related to the life project, albeit in a more punctual way. The verification of life projects presupposes the verification of several elements, therefore, their (written) analysis goes beyond the simple identification of goals, which are, in fact, an essential aspect, as they direct the life projects and provide a perspective of future for the youth development process.

The answers to this question were categorized based on the analysis of researchers at the *Stanford Center on Adolescence* (Klein, 2011), who propose the grouping of answers based on their specific indicators, such as economic, family, religious, hedonistic pro-social values. According to this categorization in the calculation, as follows:

The scoring of economic goals is significant. Some

considerations are imperative, as the concept of need is polysemic, resulting from different disciplinary approaches and theoretical schools. It is essential to unveil it and clarify certain aspects to adequately address the topic. The two main models that the needs present are: economy and sustainability.

The economic model - related here to the economic goals of the questionnaire - tries not to differentiate between needs, satisfactions and goods, and whose focus of attention is outside the person, awakening needs that are in some cases even self-destructive, incompatible with survival of the species, as the cultural context to which they belong and the period of life in which the researched subjects are found, instill a strong inclination to acquire material goods, easy wealth without effort and fashionable objects.

The sustainable model, on the other hand, invites people to know their own needs and how to satisfy them. This is considered important for personal and professional growth and development. The first model – economic – involves existential needs: being, having and doing. The second is established from axiological categories, such as existence, protection, affection, understanding, participation, creation, identity and freedom. It opens the notion of existential need to non-material dimensions – it does not reduce it to consumption –, thus distancing itself from the utilitarian and reductive vision of the economic model (Elizalde, Martí, & Martínez, 2006).

The unfolding of Question C – *What do you do to reach the goals?* – speaks of the goals presented by the adolescents in Table 4, which produced a split in order to verify the actions determined or not so that these goals are achieved (Klein, 2011).

The assessment of the category “Have and act” is positive and the most scored, as according to the life cycle theory of self-direction (Nurmi, 1991), the personal

Table 3. Question B a.

Categories	Definition	Indexes
In return	It refers to the possibility of returning affection, support, help and care to those who have been dedicated to him/her. Gratitude	149
To secure the future	It refers to trying to prepare well to face the future and achieve good prospects in life.	132
For personal satisfaction	It refers to self-realization in the sense of being able to feel good about oneself.	79
Generously	It refers to the possibility of helping those in need without demanding retribution.	2
For personal interests	It refers to the feeling of enjoying situations, of knowing that you are admired, of satisfying your own interests and even fear of being lonely. Hedonism.	24
THEY DID NOT ANSWER		71

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Table 4. Question C.

Categories related to goals	Definition	Indexes
Have no goals	This category expresses the denial of the existence of future goals in the subject's life, without expressing intention or concern to identify something that guides their own existence	65
Economic and social prestige ¹	This category is related to social power, financial stability, valuing success and success, self-capacity, ambition and social recognition. It can also express the search for a position of social prestige, control or domination over people and resources.	223
Relatives	This category relates to love and friendship. It can be defined by the pursuit of conquest and preservation of the well-being of people close to you, those with whom you have personal contact. It is related to the search for an affective bond, to connect with people	48
Hedonists	It is defined by the pleasure or gratification for the person, it is also related to the search for a varied life and the need for excitement.	14
Religious	It is expressed through acceptance of life and respect for the spiritual life. It can be understood as respect, commitment and acceptance of customs and ideas that religion imposes on a person.	6
Prosocial	It refers to the commitment to a more just and egalitarian world. It is based on mutual respect and the environment.	2
THEY DID NOT ANSWER		68

¹ This category grouped what refers to financial issues themselves and social recognition, as the subjects' answers are mixed in these two aspects.

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Table 5. Question C a.

Categories related to achieving goals	Definition	Indexes
Have and act	They have goals and act to achieve them. The statements refer to the carrying out of activities that are significant to the life project, satisfaction with goals and self-knowledge in relation to the meaning they seek in life	219
Have and do not act	They have goals, but cannot relate their activities to their goals, letting chance intervene. They even mention a life project, but without expressiveness, because the activities have little significance.	157
They do not have	They deny the existence of goals, without expressing the intention or concern to identify something that guides their own existence.	48

Source: Prepared by the authors.

goals of young adults reflect the developmental tasks and transitions typical of their age. Expectations are the future goals that persist in the adolescent's personality development process until the end of the second and the beginning of the third decade of life and what is seen is that adolescents reflect the cultural prototype: first finish their education, then achieve a job and, thirdly, getting married and finally establishing the material basis of his future life (Thiébaud, 1998).

Question D: *What does it mean to you to have a good life?* – The concept of a *good life* allowed

young people to project ideals that are associated with "having" and "being". The "having", not necessarily involving purely material issues, but referring, in general, to achievements, to achieving goals or to being socially inserted in some way - which we associate directly with Question C. As for the aspects related to "being" relate to the construction and definition of personality – which we relate to Question A.

The most scored category, "Social insertion", is very significant, as it records a life project with more

Table 6. Question D.

Categories related to the meaning of good life	Definition	Indexes
Social insertion (To have)	This category indicates life projects with attainment of stable socio-affective aspects, relationships and psychological conditions. They report more sophisticated needs, related to more stabilized psychosocial conditions.	325
Achievements (To have)	This category is also related to achieving goals, such as jobs, functions, etc., and not necessarily material goods.	191
Material aspects (To have)	This category deals with subjects who point to a life project with tendencies towards the need to acquire material goods.	126
Being "something"	This category identifies the manifestations of the subjects referring to the definitions of personality that they project on the idea of a good life.	77

Source: Prepared by the authors.

sophisticated needs, seeking stabilized living conditions. The state of well-being refers to those who do not experience any painful sensations other than pleasure, tranquility and joy (Marina & Lopez, 1999). But what does it mean to be well psychologically? Psychological theories of well-being have traditionally insisted about unhappiness and suffering (Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Keyes, 1995) and, as a consequence, have linked psychological well-being with the absence of negative affect and psychopathologies.

Subjective well-being, life satisfaction or happiness, is also moderately related to positive and negative affect (Emmons, 1986), as well as to a subjective definition of quality of life based on cognitive and affective assessment, it therefore counts the patterns of the researched subjects to determine what the good life is (Diener, 1984, 2000).

Magen (1998) recalls that happiness is not general well-being or satisfaction in life, or that it consists, still, of the list of common positive emotions; happiness is when the individual is above the usual needs and interests. It refers to moments of joy and revelation, supposes a powerful emotional activation that projects the individual to a higher plane, making him/her feel

that life is wonderful, that the world is extraordinary and that there is a good feeling about oneself and to others.

In short, quality of life, the *good life*, is a very common concept, but it is usually poorly defined. It is no longer considered a sensitizing notion, but has become a social construct that guides professional and social practices, the evaluation of results and the continuous improvement of quality.

Question E: *What does it mean to you to be a good person?* – We established a categorization of responses to this question as well, in order to be able to confirm the projections in relation to Question A, which refers to the profile to which they themselves attribute. In other words, for them, a good person is, in general, fundamentally related to ethical and moral aspects, as the score for this category was significantly higher.

The ethical/moral character stood out among the other categories in this issue, revealing a very positive trait. It is interesting to note that young people, when they assess themselves, or are involved in the projections, present other manifestations; when they infer values from "others", the ethical/moral category

Table 7. Question E.

Categories related to what it means to be a good person	Definition	Indexes
Ethical/moral character	Characteristics related to the moral traits of the personality.	531
Temperament characteristic	Characteristic associated with the person's particularities, linked to the form of behavior. It's a disposition trend.	25
Emotional characteristic	Characteristic that expresses the person's manifestations of feelings and emotions.	22
Attitudinal characteristic	Characteristic associated with the way of acting, of expressing attitudes.	18
THEY DID NOT ANSWER		16

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Table 8. Question F.

Categories that indicate how they would like to be remembered	Definition	Indexes
Don't want to be remembered		3
Attitudinal	Characteristic associated with the way of acting, of expressing attitudes.	150
Character	Characteristic related to the moral traits of the personality.	133
Emotional	Characteristic that expresses the person's manifestations of feelings and emotions.	124
Temperament	Characteristic associated with the person's particularities, linked to the form of behavior. It's a disposition trend.	73
THEY DID NOT ANSWER		53

Source: Prepared by the authors

becomes expressive.

A moral system is formed by the set of ethical principles, moral rules and values that integrate the individual as a whole or society in general. Moral issues constantly surround us and, systematically, decisions are made and actions are taken involving consequences or ethical implications.

There must be a volitional preference in acting morally, remembering that character represents the set of permanent traits that constitute a person's psychological peculiarities, their way of being. It is formed by the most general and specific traits that express themselves in an obligatory way in different types of activity and imprint on it the performance of a concrete individual. It is the most characteristic expression of the individual.

Question F: *In the future, if you looked at your life, how would you like to be remembered?* – This issue is also related to the profile projection that the adolescent makes, but with a view to the future. The subjects who responded to the questionnaire provided answers that fulfilled the four types of profiles categorized in Question A, except for one – which refers to physical characteristics. However, unlike Question A, the indices determined other values. Interestingly, the ethical and moral aspects were well scored in the two tables, indicating that young people attribute value to issues related to dignity and respect, albeit intuitively.

CONCLUSIONS OF THIS STUDY

Maslow (1993) recognizes the interconnectedness between the concept of identity and self-realization when describing vital identity experiences. The theoretical concept of identity was developed by Erikson (1992), from a psychodynamic perspective of individuals and cultures, as the subjective experience that refers to personal uniqueness, to the unique subject, and allows to see the person as a whole. Therefore, to answer the

research question, *how the sense of self-realization can help or not in the establishment of purposes for the future life*, the perception of positive self-concept was considered in the relationship of this concept with the awareness of self-realization.

As the main objective of the research referred to an investigation into the possibilities of self-fulfillment manifested in the life projects of adolescents, our interest in substantiating the identity, the psychological instance, the system or structure that progresses in the development process, allowed us to explain the basic compositions as a gradual process in which, at each stage, there is a different perspective about reality, and which results, as a consequence, in a sense of identity, of morality, of a different set of needs. What we found with the findings of the two questionnaires were results implied in motives, moral judgment, some aspects of cognitive complexity, interpersonal integration and ways of perceiving oneself and others. We could assume that, overcoming the period of adolescence and looking for a life project, the search for self-realization, hedonistic and egocentric impulses can decrease and lose attractiveness, because the issues that actually express a meaning for life tend to emerge.

Despite the limitations of the entire research, this study can collect a lot of data that have been condensed here, but that can be analyzed from some thematic perspectives, such as the construction of the identity of adolescents and the manifestations of life projects, or about the last question of the Purpose Questionnaire that configures the self-perception that could be discussed in itself or correlated with the Profile Questionnaire, and also the detailed analysis of each question. However, in this article we focus on self-realization.

With self-realization, the intentionality of the integrated person would occur, who can be fully responsible for their existence in the world, and can

choose themselves, which was not consistently verified in the subjects' responses as an accentuated intention. Intentionality directs the subject's interest towards an internal tendency of self-realization that gives meaning in living, as well as actively directing himself towards the desired goal.

Proposing to do something is equivalent to applying to it, and this gives answers to the human being's need for ideas and general convictions, which brings meaning to his/her life and allows him/her to find a place in the universe, since behind the absence of motivation or dynamism there is an absence of meaning in life.

The search for self-realization, finally, is consistent with social interaction through empathy, with a structure of democratic character, self-expression, solid values and above all, with deep affective bonds for independence and freedom. In summary, the life project, if it is based on an adequate self-concept and reveals personal authenticity and intentionality, can be an effectively self-realization project, which is based on solid personal determination.

The need for self-realization is fundamentally different from others, as it represents a need for evolution, for maturation, in the sense that there is no reduction in the previous equilibrium state, but on the contrary, there is always a significant increase in self-motivation, which works as a positive feedback, helping to develop skills more and more.

The need for self-realization can, therefore, be considered as the driving system of psychic dynamism, the intrinsic tendency to develop all possibilities and its function to conserve and promote the growth and expansion of the organism (Giordani, 1998).

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