



Degree Program in Business

Administration

Course of Organizational Behaviour

The Impact of Personal Values on Organizational Behaviour

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Academic Year 2024/2025

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Abstract

In an increasingly complex and evolving work environment, characterized by rapid technological transformations, globalization and a growing attention to ethics and sustainability issues, personal values emerge as a fundamental lever in shaping organizational behavior. This thesis, entitled *The Impact of Personal Values on Organizational Behavior*, explores in depth the role of individual values in defining decisions, interactions and internal dynamics in organizations, with the aim of offering a theoretical and practical perspective useful for promoting more ethical, inclusive and performing work environments.

Through an extensive review of the literature, the main theoretical models that link personal values to organizational behavior were analyzed, including Schwartz's Theory of Basic Human Values, the Rokeach Value Survey, the Person-Organization Fit Theory, Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory and Meyer and Allen's model of organizational commitment. These theories provide a robust conceptual framework to understand how individual values such as: benevolence, autonomy, security and power. These elements can influence key aspects of corporate life, from leadership to conflict management, from organizational culture to motivation and job satisfaction.

The analysis then focuses on how personal values can act as a driver of organizational change, guiding initiatives related to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI), supporting innovation and promoting a culture oriented towards well-being and sustainability.

The complex dynamic between individual values and organizational values is also explored, highlighting how the alignment between these systems favors cohesion,

retention and performance, while a misalignment can generate conflict, disengagement and turnover.

The methodology adopted combines qualitative and quantitative approaches: semi-structured interviews, focus groups and surveys based on the Schwartz Value Survey, to collect empirical data on how values influence choices and work behaviors. This integrated approach allows us to overcome the limits of purely theoretical analyses and to offer concrete insights for managerial practice.

The thesis concludes with a reflection on future challenges related to the management of values in hybrid, multicultural and technologically advanced contexts, and proposes strategies to foster value alignment as a lever for resilience and competitive advantage. Ultimately, this work highlights the strategic importance of personal values to build more ethical, sustainable and thriving organizations in a constantly changing world.

Chapter 1. The impact of personal values on organizational behaviour

1.1 Background and Significance

Organisational Behaviour (OB) represents a fundamental field of study for understanding the internal dynamics of organisations and how individuals, groups and structures influence performance, well-being and corporate culture (Robbins & Judge, 2018). OB takes the form of an interdisciplinary discipline that integrates contributions from psychology, sociology, anthropology, economics and management science, to analyse and improve the effectiveness of organisations (Hitt, Miller & Colella, 2018). The study of organisational behaviour focuses on several key areas, including motivation, leadership, communication, decision-making, and, increasingly, the role of personal values in shaping choices and interactions within companies.

Personal values can be defined as deep and lasting beliefs about what is desirable and important in life and represent guiding principles for individual decisions and behaviour (Schwartz, 1992). Rokeach, one of the pioneers in the study of values, describes them as “internal standards” that influence preferences, choices and priorities, acting as a stable reference system over time (Rokeach, 1973). According to Schwartz’s theory of values, values are organised in a hierarchical system. They are distributed along ten universal categories, such as self-direction, stimulation, benevolence, power and security, which guide individual choices and reflect cultural and personal priorities. These values not only guide decisions in private life, but also have a direct impact on choices and behaviour at work, influencing interactions between colleagues, conflict management

and the way complex problems and ethical dilemmas are dealt with (Meglino & Ravlin, 1998).

The link between personal values and organisational behaviour has received increasing attention from academic research. The concept of Person-Organisation Fit (PO fit), introduced by Chatman and further developed by Kristof, emphasises the importance of alignment between individual values and those promoted by the organisation (Kristof, 1996; Chatman, 1989). When there is consistency between the employee's values and the corporate culture, there are positive effects on various performance indicators: higher job satisfaction, higher level of involvement, reduced turnover and improved interpersonal relationships (Edwards & Cable, 2009). Conversely, a values misalignment can lead to internal conflicts, reduced motivation and even counterproductive behaviour, such as absenteeism or disengagement (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). These effects are particularly evident in contexts of strong ethical pressure, such as the management of corporate social responsibility or the definition of sustainable strategies (Schwartz & Bardi, 2001).

Personal values do not only influence the choices of individual employees, but also the strategic decisions of companies. According to Verplanken and Holland, the values activated and perceived as central in one's belief system become decisive in everyday choices, also in the corporate sphere, influencing, for example, the propensity to innovate, risk tolerance, or sensitivity to environmental and social issues (Verplanken, B., & Holland, R. W., 2002). A leader with values oriented towards openness to change, for example, will be more inclined to promote innovative strategies and encourage experimentation. In contrast, a leader focused on values related to security will tend to favour stability and preservation. These choices are not neutral, but help shape the corporate culture and determine the company's reputation in the eyes of stakeholders.

The growing complexity of the global business environment and the increased focus on ethical and social issues make it increasingly urgent to reflect on the role of personal values in organisations. As Rockstuhl point out, in multicultural and international contexts, awareness of value differences between individuals becomes essential to effectively manage heterogeneous teams, promote inclusion and prevent conflicts (Rockstuhl, T., Seiler, S., Ang, S., Van Dyne, L., & Annen, H., 2011). In addition, companies that manage to integrate their employees' personal values into organisational and strategic processes tend to develop a more resilient culture that is better able to adapt to the challenges of a changing environment (Schein, 2010).

In light of these considerations, this thesis aims to analyse in depth the role of personal values in organisational behaviour, with a focus on how they influence business decisions, leadership, organisational culture and human resource management practices. Through a theoretical approach and the analysis of case studies, this study aims to understand whether and how the individual values of employees and leaders can contribute to more ethical, inclusive, and performance-oriented work environments. The aim is to offer a perspective that combines theoretical reflections with practical implications for companies seeking to promote conscious people management and enhance their competitive advantage in an increasingly values-driven market.

1.2 Research Questions and Objectives

The main objective of this thesis is to investigate how personal values influence organisational behaviour and, consequently, culture, leadership and internal company

dynamics. The research aims to answer several specific questions that allow us to explore the complexity of the topic under investigation:

- How do personal values influence individual decision-making processes within organisations?
- What is the role of personal values in defining leadership styles and building organisational culture?
- How do personal values shape group dynamics and conflict management in work teams?
- How can organisations foster alignment between individual and corporate values to improve performance and employee satisfaction?

Through the analysis of these research questions, the thesis aims to offer an in-depth and multifaceted understanding of the intersection between personal values and organisational behaviour. The study aims to contribute to the theoretical and practical debate in the field of management by highlighting how individual value systems influence attitudes, decision-making processes, interpersonal interactions and, ultimately, performance within corporate contexts (Kristof, 1996).

The influence of personal values on individual choices and behaviour has been widely recognised in the literature. Values act as a moral and practical compass that guides everyday decisions and professional relationships (Rokeach, 1973). In particular, they are reflected in the leadership styles adopted: leaders who possess a value system oriented towards ethics, justice and social responsibility tend to promote an organisational culture marked by inclusiveness, transparency and respect (Brown & Treviño, 2006). This type of leadership, termed authentic leadership, is based on values of integrity,

empathy and self-awareness, elements that foster the construction of cohesive teams oriented towards continuous improvement (Avolio & Gardner, 2005).

Furthermore, the relationship between personal values and organisational culture is closely linked to the concept of Person-Organisation Fit (PO fit), which highlights how a greater congruence between individual and corporate values leads to higher job satisfaction, a greater sense of belonging and a reduction in turnover (Edwards & Cable, 2009). The literature emphasises how organisations that invest in understanding and aligning values, through human resource management practices such as recruiting, training and performance management, succeed in building a more inclusive and motivating environment, capable of attracting and retaining talent (Cable & Judge, 1997).

This reflection leads to a crucial question for both employees and companies: “*Am I really making a difference in my work?*” and, in parallel, “*Is the company valuing my contribution beyond the tasks described?*”. In an increasingly competitive and complex world, employees often wonder whether their role has a significant impact or whether they are simply “a number” in an organisational system that tends to standardise and compress the uniqueness of people. On the other hand, companies should ask themselves how to foster an environment in which employees can fully express their values and principles, contributing not only through technical skills but also through their character and vision (Schein, 2010).

Therefore, a key aim of this thesis is to explore how organisations can integrate personal values into corporate strategies, promoting authentic leadership and more ethical and inclusive decision-making processes. This approach not only fosters employees’ psychological well-being and engagement, but also allows them to build a more resilient

and adaptive organisational culture, capable of facing the challenges of an increasingly dynamic and values-driven market (Schwartz & Bardi, 2001).

Finally, through the analysis of the concept of value alignment, the thesis aims to provide practical insights to improve job satisfaction, talent retention and organisational performance. The adoption of a values-oriented approach not only contributes to the personal growth of employees, stimulating self-awareness and individual responsibility, but also represents a strategic lever for the long-term success of companies (Barney, 1991).

In an increasingly complex and diversified organisational context, understanding and enhancing individual value systems becomes an essential priority for building ethical, sustainable and future-oriented organisations.

1.3 Research Methodology

This thesis aims to explore in depth the relationship between personal values and organisational behaviour, investigating how individual value systems influence decisions, work performance, interpersonal dynamics and corporate culture. To achieve this objective, the research adopts a qualitative approach as the basis for the analysis, supplemented with quantitative elements to strengthen the validity and generalisability of the results. The combination of these two approaches captures the complexity of the phenomenon studied, offering both deep and broad insights into the interactions between individual values and organisational dynamics (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

The research design consists of several stages and is based on a mixed-methods strategy, combining theoretical study, business case analysis, and empirical data collection through both deductive and inductive methodologies. The deductive

component is based on the critical analysis of academic studies, peer-reviewed research and reference literature, using established theories such as Person-Organisation Fit Theory and Schwartz's Value Theory (Schwartz, 1992; Kristof, 1996). These theoretical frameworks will guide the interpretation of the results and allow for the development of consistent hypotheses regarding the influence of value dimensions such as power, autonomy, benevolence and conformity on organisational variables such as productivity, collaboration and job satisfaction (Schwartz & Bardi, 2001).

In parallel, the research adopts an inductive approach, inspired by Grounded Theory, to analyse data collected in the field and identify emerging patterns without rigid preconceptions. Information will be gathered through semi-structured interviews and focus groups conducted on a selected sample of employees and managers, representative of different roles, departments and demographic backgrounds (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). These techniques will allow us to explore the subjective perceptions of how personal values influence work behaviour, decision-making choices, conflict management and interpersonal relationship building. As Patton suggests, the qualitative approach allows for rich, contextualised data that is crucial for understanding the deep motivations that drive human behaviour in organisations (Patton, M. Q., 2015).

The quantitative component will strengthen the research through the administration of standardised questionnaires, including the Schwartz Value Survey (SVS), to map individual value preferences, and the collection of job performance data through supervisor ratings and key indicators of productivity, creativity and team collaboration (Schwartz, 1992). Statistical analysis will be conducted using tools such as correlation, multiple regression and, where appropriate, structural modelling (SEM), to identify significant relationships between variables and test the hypotheses formulated

(Edwards & Cable, 2009). This quantitative approach will enable the validation of qualitative evidence and the generalisation of results to broader contexts, thereby ensuring methodological robustness.

To guarantee a balanced representation across various company activities, hierarchical levels, age, gender, and cultural background, stratified sampling will be used for sample selection (Etikan & Bala, 2017). The decision to incorporate several organizational contexts, such as public sector organizations, small and medium-sized businesses, and multinational corporations, will also enable comparative assessments and capture subtleties about sector and cultural specificities.

According to the Ethical Guidelines for Academic Research, the study will be carried out in complete adherence to the ethical principles of confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation. Every participant will be given the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any time, as well as informed consent and privacy rights (European Commission, 2018).

The chosen methodological approach thus makes it possible to explore the relationship between personal values and organisational behaviour with a twofold level of analysis: on the one hand, through the collection of qualitative data that allow us to understand individual experiences and subjective motivations; on the other, through quantitative analyses that allow us to test hypotheses and identify generalisable trends. This integrated strategy ensures not only depth of analysis but also empirical robustness, offering a significant contribution to both management theory and practice.

Ultimately, this methodology aims to bridge the gap between the theory of values and the reality of organisations, providing practical evidence on how companies can align individual values with organisational values to foster a more inclusive, ethical and high-

performing work environment. As emphasised by Barney, the ability to value intangible resources, such as personal values, is a strategic source of sustainable competitive advantage for companies (Barney, 1991).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 The Concept of Organizational Behaviour

Organizational Behaviour (OB) is the study of individual and group dynamics within an organizational setting. It encompasses a wide range of topics, including motivation, leadership, team dynamics, communication, and organizational culture. The primary goal of OB is to understand and improve organizational effectiveness and employee well-being (Robbins & Judge, 2019).

OB draws from various disciplines such as psychology, sociology, and anthropology to analyze how individuals behave in organizations. It considers both internal factors (e.g. personality, values, emotions) and external factors (e.g. organizational structure, culture, leadership) that influence behaviour (McShane & Von Glinow, 2018).

In today's rapidly changing business environment, OB has become increasingly important. Factors such as globalization, technological advancements, and workforce diversity have made it essential for organizations to understand and manage human behaviour effectively. For instance, the rise of remote and hybrid work models has introduced new challenges in team collaboration and employee engagement, areas where OB provides valuable insights (Kinicki & Fugate, 2018).

Moreover, OB plays a critical role in change management by helping organizations understand how to navigate transitions smoothly. It offers frameworks for understanding resistance to change, fostering adaptability, and aligning organizational changes with employee needs and values (Cummings & Worley, 2014).

2.2 The Role of Personal Values in Organizational Behaviour

Personal values are enduring beliefs that guide individuals' actions and judgments across various situations. They are shaped by cultural, social, and personal experiences and influence how individuals perceive and interact with the world around them (Schwartz, 1992).

In the organizational context, personal values significantly impact employee behaviour, decision-making, and interactions with colleagues. When there is alignment between an individual's personal values and the organization's values, it often leads to increased job satisfaction, commitment, and performance (Edwards & Cable, 2009).

Conversely, a mismatch between personal and organizational values can result in decreased motivation, job dissatisfaction, and higher turnover rates. For example, an employee who values innovation may feel constrained in a highly bureaucratic organization, leading to disengagement (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005).

Understanding personal values is also crucial in leadership. Leaders' values influence their leadership style and decision-making processes. Leaders who prioritize ethical values, for instance, are more likely to foster a culture of integrity and trust within their teams (Brown & Treviño, 2006).

2.3 Key Theories on Values and Organizational Behaviour

2.3.1 Schwartz's Theory of Basic Human Values

Shalom H. Schwartz developed a theory identifying ten basic personal values recognized across cultures. These values are: self-direction, stimulation, hedonism, achievement, power, security, conformity, tradition, benevolence, and universalism. They are grouped into four higher-order categories: openness to change, self-enhancement, conservation, and self-transcendence. The theory posits that these values influence behaviour by serving as guiding principles in individuals' lives. The values are structured in a circular model, where adjacent values are compatible, and opposing values may conflict. This structure reflects the dynamic relationships among values and their motivational continuities and conflicts (Schwartz, 1992).

In organizational settings, Schwartz's theory helps explain how employees' value priorities affect their work behaviour and interactions. For instance, individuals who prioritize self-transcendence values, such as benevolence and universalism, may be more inclined toward collaborative and altruistic behaviours at work, fostering a cooperative organizational culture (Schwartz, 1994).

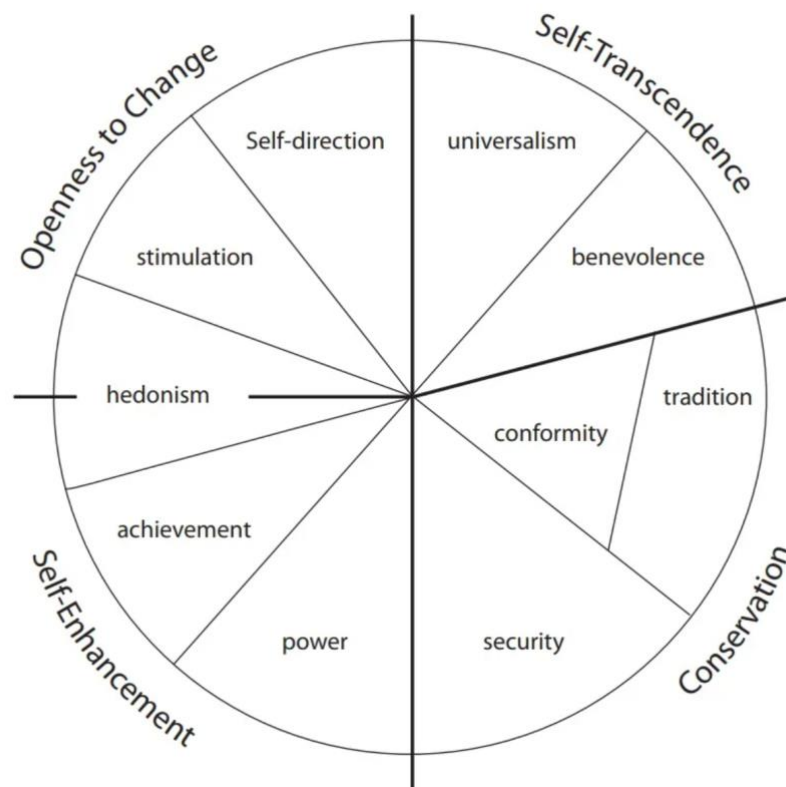


Figure 1: Dynamic relations among the ten basic human values (Schwartz, 2012)

2.3.2 Rokeach Value Survey

Milton Rokeach's Value Survey categorizes values into two distinct types: terminal values, which represent desired end-states of existence (e.g. a comfortable life, inner harmony), and instrumental values, which are the means or modes of behavior to achieve these end-states (e.g. honesty, responsibility).

This framework aids in understanding how individuals prioritize different values and how these priorities influence behavior. By assessing the hierarchy of these values, one can gain insights into personal motivations and decision-making processes.

In organizational contexts, the Rokeach Value Survey can be used to assess value congruence between employees and the organization. Such congruence is critical for

predicting job satisfaction and organizational commitment. When employees' personal values align with organizational values, it often leads to increased engagement and reduced turnover (Rokeach, 1973).

2.3.3 Person-Organization Fit Theory

Person-Organization Fit (P-O Fit) theory focuses on the compatibility between individuals and organizations based on shared values, beliefs and goals. When there is a high degree of congruence between an employee's personal values and those of the organization, positive outcomes such as increased job satisfaction, organizational commitment and reduced turnover are frequently observed (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). P-O Fit has been defined as "the compatibility between people and organizations that occurs when at least one of the entities meets the needs of the other, shares similar core characteristics, or both" (Kristof, 1996). This compatibility can manifest itself in a variety of ways, including value congruence, matching between the individual's needs and the organization's offerings, and alignment between the individual's abilities and the organization's demands (Muchinsky & Monahan, 1987).

Research has shown that high P-O Fit is associated with several positive employee outcomes, including higher job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and organizational citizenship behaviors. In addition, P-O Fit has been linked to reduced turnover intention and improved job performance (Vveinhardt & Gulbovaitė, 2017). Organizations can improve P-O Fit by clearly communicating their values during the recruitment process and ensuring that their organizational culture aligns with these values (Chatman, 1989). For example, the use of tools such as the Organizational Culture Profile

can help assess congruence between candidates' values and those of the organization (Cable & Judge, 1997).

2.3.4 Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory

Geert Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory identifies six key dimensions of national culture that significantly impact how people behave in organizations. These dimensions are (Hofstede, 2001).

The first dimension is Power Distance, which refers to the extent to which less powerful members expect and accept unequal power distribution. Another dimension is Individualism Versus Collectivism, which reflects the degree of interdependence a society maintains among its members. A third dimension is Masculinity Versus Femininity, which concerns the distribution of roles between genders. Furthermore is Uncertainty Avoidance, which indicates a society's tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty. Additionally, there is Long-Term Orientation, which highlights the focus on future rewards as opposed to short-term results. Finally, the dimension of Indulgence Versus Restraint measures the degree to which societies allow the gratification of desires. These cultural dimensions influence organizational behaviour by shaping employees' values, communication styles, leadership expectations, and approaches to teamwork and decision-making (Hofstede et al., 2010).

Understanding these cultural dimensions is crucial for multinational organizations seeking to manage cross-cultural teams effectively. It enables companies to design policies that respect cultural differences and foster inclusivity, thereby improving

collaboration, employee satisfaction, and overall organizational performance (Minkov & Hofstede, 2011).

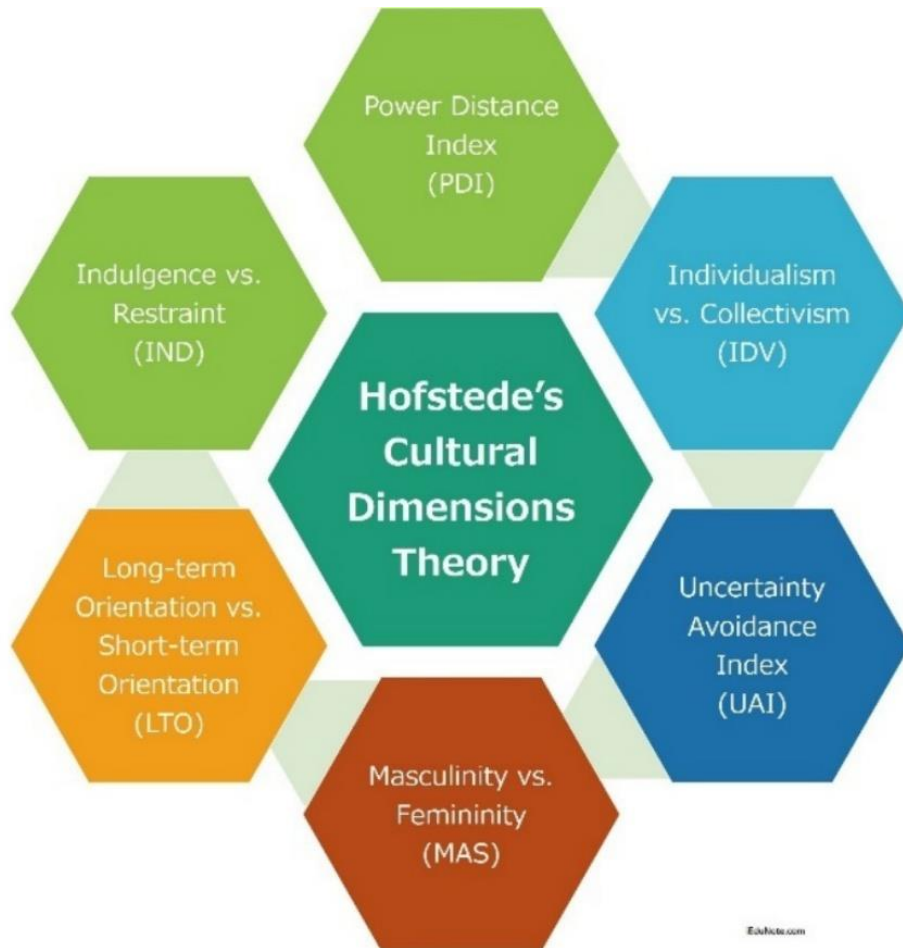


Figure 2: Hofstede's framework (iEduNote, 2019)

2.3.5 Meyer and Allen's Three-Component Model of Commitment

Meyer and Allen's Three-Component Model of Commitment identifies three distinct forms of organizational commitment: Affective Commitment, which reflects an employee's emotional attachment to the organization; Continuance Commitment, based

on the perceived costs of leaving; Normative Commitment, the sense of moral obligation to stay (Meyer, J. P., & Allen, N. J., 1991).

Personal values play a key role in shaping the type and strength of commitment an employee develops. For example, individuals who highly value loyalty and duty are more likely to demonstrate strong normative commitment, feeling a moral responsibility to remain with the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1997).

On the other hand, employees who prioritize personal growth and career development may exhibit higher affective commitment, especially if the organization supports their aspirations.

Understanding these dynamics is essential for organizations aiming to foster a committed and engaged workforce by aligning individual values with organizational goals.

2.3.6 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs outlines five fundamental levels of human needs arranged in a specific order.

The first level is physiological needs, which include basic survival necessities such as food and water. The second level is safety needs, involving security and stability. The third level is love and belonging needs, which encompass relationships and social connections. The fourth level is esteem needs, referring to recognition and self-respect. Finally, the fifth level is self-actualization, representing personal growth and the realization of one's potential.

In the workplace, this framework can help organizations understand and address employees' needs, influencing motivation, engagement, and satisfaction (Maslow, 1943).

For instance, providing opportunities for learning, personal growth and recognition can help fulfill employees' esteem and self-actualization needs, boosting both performance and well-being (McLeod, 2023).

By applying Maslow's theory, companies can create supportive environments that foster a sense of value and empowerment, enabling employees to reach their full potential.



Figure 3: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Indeed Editorial Team, 2023)

2.4 Previous Research on Values and Organizational Behaviour

Research has consistently shown that personal values play a critical role in shaping organizational behaviour and influencing outcomes such as job satisfaction, commitment, and performance. When employees' values align with the values and culture of their organization known as value congruence they tend to experience higher levels of engagement, motivation, and loyalty. Conversely, a mismatch between personal and organizational values often leads to dissatisfaction, disengagement, and higher turnover rates (Edwards & Cable, 2009).

For example, Cable and DeRue found that employees who perceive a strong fit between their personal values and the organization's values report greater job satisfaction and commitment. This alignment fosters a sense of belonging and shared purpose, contributing to a more positive organizational climate and enhanced performance (Cable, D. M., & DeRue, D. S., 2002).

Cross-cultural research has also highlighted how cultural values influence organizational behaviour. Hofstede demonstrated that national cultures shape expectations around leadership, teamwork, and communication, which in turn affect how employees interact within organizations. This is particularly important for multinational companies managing diverse teams, where understanding and respecting cultural differences can enhance collaboration and productivity (Hofstede, G., Hofstede, G. J., & Minkov, M., 2010).

Overall, while the existing literature provides strong evidence that personal values are a key driver of organizational behaviour, scholars call for further research into how values interact with leadership styles, organizational structures, and evolving workplace

dynamics. Future studies could also explore strategies for fostering value alignment in increasingly diverse and global work environments.

Chapter 3: Personal Values and the Future of Organizational Behaviour

3.1 Personal Values as a Driver of Organizational Change

In an era characterized by continuous change and transformation in the world of work, personal values are gaining increasing relevance as key determinants in shaping organizational behaviour and driving the dynamics of change within companies. Personal values, understood as the fundamental principles and beliefs that guide individual choices and actions, form the basis on which the day-to-day decisions and behaviours of members of an organization are based. They represent, in other words, an inner compass that helps interpret reality and make sense of one's work experiences, thus influencing not only one's perception of events, but also one's willingness to participate in and contribute to organizational transformation processes actively.

According to Schwartz's theory of values, personal values are articulated in a set of universal categories, including self-direction, stimulation, universalism, benevolence, tradition, conformity, security, power, success and hedonism (Schwartz, 1992). These orientations have a profound impact on how people perceive work situations, their expectations of the organisation, and their level of involvement in change processes. For example, those who value self-direction and openness to change will be more likely to see innovation as an opportunity and actively engage in transformative projects, while those who value stability and security may perceive change as a threat and oppose, even

unconsciously, new things introduced by the organization (Arieli, Sagiv and Roccas, 2020).

The impact of personal values on change processes manifests itself in several ways. First, values guide employees' emotional and cognitive reactions to new challenges: an organizational change proposed by top management, such as the adoption of new technologies or the restructuring of internal processes, is not evaluated neutrally, but filtered through each individual's value system. This filter can generate enthusiasm, curiosity and participation, or anxiety, resistance and rejection, depending on how consistent or conflicting the change is perceived to be with one's values. In addition, personal values influence motivation and willingness to invest energy in the change process. When the organisation's values are perceived as aligned with one's own, employees are more likely to feel engaged and committed to the success of transformation initiatives.

A crucial aspect therefore concerns the ability of organizations to understand and integrate their members' personal values into change processes. The literature emphasizes how leadership that is sensitive to individual values and able to communicate them clearly can foster alignment between personal expectations and organizational goals. Schein highlights the importance of organizational culture as a system of shared assumptions that guides the behaviour of organizational members: an inclusive culture, oriented toward innovation and continuous learning, can create the conditions for greater openness to change, while a rigid, hierarchical culture tends to inhibit participation and reinforce resistance (Schein, E. H., 2010).

In addition, the role of human resource management practices in influencing perceptions of values and guiding organizational behaviour cannot be ignored. Targeted

training programs, transparent and consistent communication, reward systems that value behaviour in line with organizational values, and spaces for listening and discussion are key tools for strengthening a sense of belonging and fostering a climate of trust, which are indispensable elements for effectively managing change. Kreitner and Kinicki argue that organizations that manage to build a coherent system of shared values and communicate it effectively to their members are more likely to succeed in transformation processes, as they reduce ambiguity and promote a sense of shared direction (Kreitner, R., & Kinicki, A., 2013).

Importantly, personal values are not static, but can evolve over time in response to lived experiences and reference contexts. The organization, therefore, should not just “exploit” existing values, but can also help shape and reinforce certain value orientations through its own policies, practices and narratives. This bidirectional process, in which the organization influences individuals, values and, at the same time, individuals’ values influence organizational choices, is at the heart of sustainable, participatory change.

In conclusion, personal values are not simply isolated individual factors, but represent a powerful engine of change within organizations. By understanding, valuing, and integrating these values into decision-making processes and human resource management strategies, it is possible to foster a climate of collaboration, reduce resistance, and build a more resilient organization capable of successfully adapting to the challenges of a changing environment. The future of organizational behaviour increasingly depends on the ability of organizations to recognize the importance of personal values and use them as strategic levers to promote effective and sustainable change.

3.2 Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI): A Values-Based Perspective

In today's context of increasing global complexity and interconnectedness, organizations face increasingly multifaceted challenges related to managing diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI). These concepts, although often treated separately, are intrinsically linked and represent fundamental pillars for building equitable, inclusive, and collectively well-being-oriented workplaces. Adopting a personal values-based perspective enables a deeper understanding of the dynamics underlying DEI initiatives and the promotion of authentic and sustainable organizational change.

Personal values, understood as guiding principles that guide individual choices and behaviours, significantly influence how people perceive and react to DEI policies. According to Schwartz's theory of values, individual values fall into ten basic categories, including universalism, benevolence, stimulation and self-direction. Those who value universalism and benevolence tend to show more openness to cultural differences, promote social justice, and support policies of equity and inclusion (Schwartz, 1992). This connection between values and inclusive attitudes is also confirmed by Arieli, Sagiv and Roccas, who point out that alignment between personal and organizational values is a key factor in fostering active employee engagement in DEI initiatives (Arieli, S., Sagiv, L., & Roccas, S., 2020).

Adopting a values-based perspective also implies a change in leadership and organizational culture. Leaders play a crucial role in shaping and promoting collective values. Authentic leadership, consistent with the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion, can serve as a model for the entire organization, influencing behaviours and attitudes. Schein points out that organizational culture is the product of shared values and

assumptions that are transmitted over time, becoming an integral part of the way people work and interact. Therefore, a corporate culture that integrates DEI principles as core values and not as mere “labels” creates the conditions for more authentic participation and for building a truly inclusive work environment (Schein, 2010).

However, it is not enough for inclusive values to be formally stated; they need to be translated into concrete and consistent actions. As Kreitner and Kinicki note, organizations that manage to build a shared value system and communicate it clearly achieve greater internal cohesion and reduced resistance to change. This means, for example, implementing specific training programs on diversity and inclusion, promoting spaces for listening and dialogue, and recognizing and rewarding behaviours that reflect DEI values (Kreitner, R., & Kinicki, A., 2013).

The integration of personal and collective values requires ongoing work on reflection and adaptation, as individuals’ values can also evolve in response to lived experiences and interactions within the organizational context (Rokeach, 1973).

Another relevant issue concerns the risk that DEI initiatives may be perceived as superficial or instrumental if not accompanied by a genuine ethical commitment. According to Culture Amp many companies fall into the trap of “diversity washing,” promoting statements of intent that are not supported by concrete actions. To avoid this distortion, it is critical for organizations to explore and understand the personal values of their employees, building a shared journey that connects strategic choices with the core principles in which members believe. Only through a deep and authentic connection between individual and collective values can a robust inclusive culture be created that can withstand challenges and changes in the context (Culture Amp., 2024).

In this sense, the active involvement of employees in DEI policy-making and review processes is a key step. Facilitating reflection on values, such as through workshops, group activities and listening moments, enables employees to recognize their own value orientations and compare them with those promoted by the organization. This process not only strengthens the sense of belonging, but also stimulates individual and collective growth, helping to build a more open, respectful and collaborative environment (Arieli, Sagiv & Roccas, 2020).

Finally, it is essential to continuously monitor and evaluate the impact of DEI initiatives through concrete tools and shared metrics to ensure that inclusive values do not remain mere statements, but are translated into measurable behaviours and results. The personal values approach requires ongoing commitment, ethical leadership, and an organizational culture geared toward continuous improvement, which are essential elements for fostering sustainable change and building organizations capable of adapting and thriving in complex and ever-changing contexts.

3.3 Balancing Individual and Organizational Values

In the contemporary organizational context, balancing employees' personal values and organizational values is a fundamental challenge for the success and sustainability of companies. Individual values constitute the system of principles, beliefs and convictions that guide people's behavior and influence their decisions, while organizational values reflect the ideals, priorities and norms that regulate corporate culture and guide collective strategies. The alignment between these two sets of values is not a static process, but rather a complex dynamic that requires awareness, adaptation and

constant communication. The ability to balance personal and organizational values is essential not only for individual well-being, but also for the overall performance and resilience of the organization.

Value alignment, often referred to as person–organization fit, has been the subject of much debate in academic literature (Kristof, 1996). Research has shown that when employees perceive a strong fit between their values and those of the organization, positive effects are recorded on multiple dimensions of organizational behavior: job satisfaction increases, commitment to the organization is strengthened, and the likelihood of turnover is reduced (Edwards & Cable, 2009).

Furthermore, value alignment fosters internal cohesion, stimulates collaboration among team members, and helps create a sense of shared identity, key elements for addressing challenges in complex and rapidly changing contexts.

However, balancing individual and organizational values is not always easy. Often, organizations define their values in an abstract and generic way, while employees live concrete experiences that can generate misalignment or ambiguity. In these cases, tensions emerge that can lead to dissatisfaction, latent conflicts, or dysfunctional behaviors. For example, an employee who places great importance on ethics and transparency may find himself in difficulty in a corporate environment oriented exclusively to profit, where aggressive competition and lack of clarity prevail. These discrepancies can generate a sense of alienation and reduce motivation, increasing the risk of turnover and compromising organizational performance (Roccas & Sagiv, 2010).

To mitigate these risks, organizations must adopt proactive strategies that foster value alignment. First, it is essential to integrate organizational values into selection and recruitment processes, evaluating not only the technical skills but also the cultural

compatibility of candidates. Values-based selection allows for the construction of homogeneous and coherent teams, reducing the risk of conflict and promoting effective collaboration. Second, it is necessary to invest in training and development programs that help employees understand the organization's values, reflect on their personal values and identify areas of possible integration. These training courses must not be understood as simple information moments, but as spaces for dialogue, discussion and shared construction of meaning. Another crucial aspect concerns internal communication: organizational values must not be relegated to formal declarations, but must be communicated in a clear, coherent and authentic way.

Organizations must make their values visible through daily practices, concrete decisions, and leaders' behaviors. In this sense, leadership plays a crucial role: leaders, in fact, act as role models and profoundly influence organizational culture. Authentic leadership, capable of embodying the declared values, fosters a climate of trust and strengthens employees' sense of belonging. As highlighted by CultureWorksHR the alignment between personal and corporate values not only improves internal motivation, but represents a strategic lever for long-term organizational success (CultureWorksHR, 2024).

On the contrary, discrepancies between declared values and actual leadership behaviors can generate cynicism and distrust, compromising cultural coherence and internal motivation (Hultman, 2001).

Another key lever for balancing individual and organizational values is active listening. Organizations must be willing to gather feedback from employees, explore their perceptions and, when possible, adapt their practices to integrate emerging values and new sensibilities. This participatory approach does not imply forced alignment, but rather

the construction of a space in which value diversity can be recognized and valued. Alignment, in fact, does not mean homologation, but rather the search for a balance between individual needs and collective objectives. In an increasingly fluid and rapidly changing world of work, the ability to adapt and find creative solutions to integrate different points of view represents a strategic skill for organizational success (INSEAD Knowledge, 2021).

All parties involved must be committed to the dynamic, multi-level process of reconciling personal and organizational ideals. It is a journey that begins with personal awareness, develops into logical organizational procedures, and is supported by open communication and ongoing discussion. In addition to enhancing employee well-being and internal motivation, companies that are able to establish a genuine alignment between their values and those of their workforce also develop a resilient culture that will enable them to meet future challenges with increased creativity, adaptability, and unity. In the end, striking a balance between personal and organizational principles is not just a desirable objective but also a necessary capacity for long-term organizational viability and success.

3.4 Personal Values as an Asset for Organizational Culture

In the current organizational context, marked by rapid changes and a growing attention to people's well-being, personal values play a central role in defining and strengthening corporate culture. Understood as deep and lasting beliefs that guide individual behavior, personal values significantly influence the internal dynamics of

organizations, contributing to the construction of cohesive, collaborative and collectively successful work environments.

3.4.1. Personal Values

Personal values are the fundamental and stable beliefs that guide the choices, decisions and behaviors of individuals, influencing the way they interpret situations, interact with others and relate to the organizational context. As Schwartz argues, personal values are not simple individual preferences, but deeply rooted guiding principles, which reflect what people consider important for themselves and their well-being. In his theory of universal values, Schwartz identifies ten fundamental categories of values that are manifested in all cultures, including self-direction, benevolence, conformity, security, success, universalism, tradition, hedonism, stimulation and power. These values, although shared at a universal level, take on different nuances depending on the social and cultural contexts, and influence the way individuals interpret their role within the organization and interact with colleagues, superiors and external stakeholders (Schwartz, 1992).

The influence of personal values on organizational dynamics is profound and pervasive: they guide individual priorities, shape interpersonal relationships, and help define what employees consider appropriate or unacceptable in the work context. As Meglino and Ravlin point out, personal values act as an “inner compass” that guides professional choices and the way people respond to complex or ambiguous situations. In this sense, organizational culture becomes the space in which individual values intertwine

with collective ones, generating alignments or dissonances that profoundly influence organizational behavior (Meglino, B. M., & Ravlin, E. C., 1998).

Congruence between personal values and those promoted by the organization is a determining factor for employee well-being and overall company performance. Empirical studies show that a high degree of value alignment is associated with greater job satisfaction, a higher level of engagement and a reduction in the intention to leave the organization. When employees perceive that corporate values reflect their personal principles, they develop a stronger sense of belonging, feel motivated to contribute to collective success and tend to experience less internal conflict. On the contrary, a discrepancy between individual and organizational values can generate psychological distress, disengagement, decreased productivity and increased turnover (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005).

As Cable and Edwards also observe, value misalignment can fuel relational tensions and reduce employees' ability to identify with the organization's mission and vision, undermining group cohesion and the long-term stability of the company (Cable, D. M., & Edwards, J. R., 2004).

In the end, personal values not only guide individual choices, but play a crucial role in building a positive and productive work environment. Understanding, recognizing and valuing personal values within the organization is not only an act of human sensitivity, but an effective strategy to promote employee well-being, encourage their involvement and build a solid and resilient corporate culture.

3.4.2. The Influence of Personal Values on Organizational Culture

Organizational culture can be defined as the set of shared values, beliefs, norms and behaviors that shape the identity of an organization and guide the behavior of its members (Schein, 2010). It represents the “invisible fabric” that unites people within the company and is a determining factor for its internal coherence and ability to adapt to external changes. Organizational culture is not a static entity: it evolves over time in response to internal and external stimuli, and largely reflects the values, visions and choices of the people who make up the organization, especially leaders (Schein, E. H., 2010).

The personal values of organizational members, and especially leaders, play a fundamental role in the formation, development and strengthening of organizational culture. As Cameron points out, organizational culture is not an abstract entity, but a living phenomenon that manifests itself in strategic decisions, daily practices, rituals, internal communication and relationships between members. Leaders, in particular, act as role models: their personal values, beliefs and leadership style directly influence the behavioral norms and ethical principles that become an integral part of corporate culture. For example, a leader who attaches great importance to values such as integrity, transparency and responsibility tends to promote a culture oriented towards ethics and mutual trust, encouraging collaborative behavior and stimulating innovation through a climate of openness and respect (Cameron, K. S., 2008).

Recent studies confirm the importance of the role of leaders' personal values in creating an effective organizational culture. As Groysberg, Lee, Price, and Cheng point out, leaders not only help define the formal values and codes of conduct of the

organization, but they transmit them through their own example, generating a direct impact on the corporate climate and the sense of belonging of employees. When leaders embody positive values, such as honesty, justice, and respect for people, they create an environment in which people feel safe to express their ideas, favoring learning, collaboration, and resilience in the face of challenges. On the contrary, in contexts in which leaders act inconsistently with the declared values, or in which negative values such as cynicism, opportunism, or exasperated competition prevail, the organizational culture risks deteriorating, leading to a dysfunctional climate, internal conflicts, and loss of motivation among employees. A practical example of healthy organizational culture is represented by companies that place values such as ethics, transparency and social responsibility at the center, as happens in successful companies such as Patagonia or Ben & Jerry's. In these cases, the coherence between the personal values of leaders and those promoted by the organization translates into sustainable business practices, a strong social commitment and a positive reputation externally. On the contrary, in organizations where shared values are weak or inconsistent, or where opportunistic behaviors and unethical practices prevail, organizational culture can become a source of tension and instability, hindering growth and the ability to innovate in the long term (Groysberg, B., Lee, J., Price, J., & Cheng, J. Y.-J, 2018).

In conclusion, personal values not only influence individual behaviors, but play a crucial role in shaping organizational culture as a whole. The ability of leaders to promote and embody positive values is a strategic lever for creating healthy, collaborative and future-oriented work environments, while the lack of value coherence represents a risk for internal cohesion and organizational sustainability.

3.4.3. Values Alignment: A Competitive Advantage

The alignment between employees' personal values and those of the organization represents a strategic factor of great importance and a source of sustainable competitive advantage for companies. In an increasingly complex and dynamic context, companies that manage to create an authentic connection between individual and collective values obtain significant benefits in terms of performance, organizational well-being and resilience. When employees perceive a coherence between what they consider important on a personal level and the values promoted by the organization, they experience a sense of identification and belonging that strengthens intrinsic motivation, engagement and the desire to actively contribute to the achievement of company objectives (Edwards & Cable, 2009).

This alignment, also known as “value congruence” or “person-organization fit”, not only promotes greater job satisfaction and a climate of mutual trust, but also reduces the risk of internal value conflicts that can compromise team cohesion and increase turnover.

Research confirms that the coherence between personal and organizational values is closely related to a range of positive outcomes at the individual and collective level. According to Chatman and Cha, when the values of the organization reflect those of people, employees tend to feel an integral part of the system, show greater proactivity, collaborate more effectively and are willing to commit themselves even in difficult or uncertain situations. This sense of belonging becomes a fundamental protective factor in organizational contexts characterized by rapid and complex changes, since a culture based

on shared values strengthens collective resilience and the ability to adapt to challenges (Chatman, J. A., & Cha, S. E., 2003).

In fact, an organizational culture based on common values provides a “compass” for the orientation of strategic decisions and operational actions, facilitating coherence between short-term choices and long-term objectives. Companies that invest systematically in the definition, communication and promotion of shared values not only improve the quality of internal relationships, but are also able to attract and retain talent, as more and more professionals seek work environments that reflect their principles and ideals. This value alignment therefore becomes an intangible asset capable of increasing corporate reputation, strengthening competitive positioning on the market and ensuring sustainable growth over time (Edmans, 2012).

In the end, the alignment between employees’ personal values and those of the organization is not only an indicator of internal well-being, but a real driver of strategic development. Companies that put values at the center and make them the beating heart of their organizational culture can count on more motivated, resilient and result-oriented teams, thus creating a lasting competitive advantage in a constantly evolving world.

3.4.4. Strategies to Promote Personal Values in Organizational Culture

To effectively integrate employees' personal values into organizational culture, it is essential to adopt a strategic and conscious approach that is not limited to formal declarations, but translates into concrete and coherent practices. Managing personal values in a company requires a combination of tools and initiatives that foster individual awareness, collective sharing, and alignment between personal and organizational goals.

The literature highlights how integrating personal values into corporate culture not only improves employee well-being and motivation, but also contributes to building more resilient, innovative, and sustainable organizations (Groysberg et al., 2018).

One of the first and most important strategies is to base the selection and recruitment processes on values, an approach known as “values-based recruitment”. This means not limiting oneself to evaluating the technical skills of candidates, but investigating in depth their personal values and their compatibility with the company culture and mission. As Chatman highlights, values-based selection increases the probability of creating a “cultural fit” between new hires and the organization, reducing the risk of value conflicts and favoring a faster integration into the team (Chatman, J. A., 1989).

Another key lever is training and development of people. Offering training programs that help employees recognize, explore, and apply their personal values in the work context promotes awareness and alignment. These training paths can include workshops on values, guided reflection activities, coaching, and mentoring aimed at personal and professional growth. Schein emphasizes that training on values should not be an isolated activity, but an integral part of organizational development practices, capable of generating a long-term impact on the company culture (Schein, 2010).

Leadership plays a key role in this process. In fact, leaders are not only responsible for strategic decisions, but they act as role models: their actions and communication style reflect the values that the organization intends to promote. As Groysberg, Lee, Price, and Cheng highlight, leaders who embody organizational values strengthen the corporate culture and foster coherence between declared principles and daily practices. Being an exemplary leader means acting consistently, making ethical decisions, valuing diversity,

and demonstrating care for people's well-being (Groysberg, B., Lee, J., Price, J., & Cheng, J. Y.-J., 2018).

Another crucial element is transparent communication. Creating spaces for open dialogue on values, encouraging discussion and active participation of employees helps build a sense of community and belonging. Clear and honest communication enables you to convey values authentically, address any misunderstandings, and strengthen mutual trust.

Finally, it is essential to monitor the alignment between personal and organizational values over time through specific assessment tools, such as company climate surveys, interviews, focus groups or individual feedback. Providing constructive and regular feedback allows you to identify any critical areas, strengthen strengths and promote continuous improvement. Therefore, integrating personal values into organizational culture requires constant commitment and a systemic approach: from selection to leadership, from training to communication, every aspect of the organization must reflect and support value alignment. Only in this way is it possible to build an authentic, cohesive corporate culture capable of generating value in the long term.

Personal values are a fundamental resource for building and strengthening organizational culture. The alignment between individual and organizational values fosters a positive work environment characterized by trust, collaboration and a focus on results. Investing in the promotion of personal values within the organization not only improves employee well-being, but also contributes to the success and sustainability of the organization in the long term.

3.5 The Road Ahead: Challenges and Opportunities

In today's environment of rapid technological change, social transformation, and a growing focus on individual well-being, personal values are becoming increasingly central to shaping organizational behavior. This evolution presents both challenges and opportunities for organizations that want to effectively integrate individual values into their corporate culture.

3.5.1 Challenges in Integrating Personal Values

One of the most significant challenges for modern organizations is the management of generational diversity, which significantly affects the coherence and alignment of values within companies. In a context characterized by rapid changes and an increasingly heterogeneous workforce, the new generations, especially Millennials and Generation Z. They are characterized by a value system that often differs from that of previous generations. These workers attach great importance to principles such as authenticity, sustainability, inclusion and transparency, elements that they consider fundamental for their well-being and for personal fulfillment in the professional field (Twenge, 2010).

The search for a sense of purpose at work is no longer a marginal aspect: according to a Gartner report, a growing percentage of employees, especially among the younger ones, consider their job not only as a source of income, but as an experience capable of reflecting their values and generating a positive impact on society. When these values do not align with those promoted by the organization, there is a loss of engagement,

a reduction in motivation and a significant increase in turnover, with negative effects on overall performance and corporate reputation (Gartner, 2022).

Another crucial challenge is represented by the so-called “value-action gap”, that is, the gap that often appears between the values declared by organizations and the actions actually implemented in daily practice. This discrepancy can generate disillusionment and mistrust among employees, undermining the credibility of the organization and its ability to build a cohesive and authentic culture. As Chatman and Cha point out, to create a solid and sustainable corporate culture, it is not enough to proclaim inspiring values: these principles must be translated into concrete, visible and coherent behaviors at all levels of the organization. Leadership plays a crucial role in this process, since leaders, through their decisions and their communication style, act as reference models for employees, who observe and internalize the behaviors considered acceptable or not within the corporate context (Chatman, J. A., & Cha, S. E., 2003).

The emergence of new work arrangements, such as remote work and hybrid models, has also introduced additional complexities in managing organisational values. The reduction of face-to-face interactions and the increase of digital communications can hinder the informal and spontaneous transmission of values, which traditionally occurs through daily relationships, mentoring and direct observation of the behaviors of leaders and colleagues. As Schein observes, organizational culture is built and strengthened over time through shared learning and constant interaction between group members; therefore, in an environment characterized by physical distances and technology-mediated connections, organizations must develop new strategies to ensure that corporate values are not lost or perceived as abstract and disconnected from operational reality (Schein, 2010).

To address these challenges, companies must invest in more effective communication practices that go beyond the mere transmission of information and foster authentic dialogue about shared values, expectations and experiences. It is also essential that onboarding, training and development processes are designed to strengthen the sense of belonging and to promote a deep understanding of corporate values, even in a virtual context. Only through conscious commitment and careful management will it be possible to overcome generational barriers, bridge the “value-action gap” and preserve organizational culture as a strategic asset in an era of transformation.

3.5.2 Opportunities for Organizations

Despite the significant challenges associated with integrating personal values into the organizational context, this practice offers companies numerous strategic opportunities to improve employee well-being and strengthen overall performance. Integrating personal values into organizational culture is not only an ethical aspiration, but a concrete lever to create more resilient, inclusive and innovation-generating work environments. When employees perceive that their personal values are recognized and respected by the organization, they experience a deeper sense of belonging, which translates into greater job satisfaction, more authentic commitment and higher productivity. Edwards and Cable, in an extensive review of empirical evidence, demonstrate that the congruence between individual and organizational values is positively and significantly related to employees’ psychological well-being, their motivation and the organization's ability to achieve better results in terms of both internal performance and competitive success (Edwards, J. R., & Cable, D. M., 2009).

The opportunities offered by an effective integration of personal values extend to multiple areas of organizational management. One of the most effective strategies is represented by the adoption of management practices based on values. First, the selection and recruitment processes must extend beyond the mere assessment of technical skills to include a careful analysis of the alignment between the personal values of the candidates and those of the organisation. This approach, known as “values-based recruitment”, not only increases the probability of creating a positive cultural fit, but also reduces the risk of turnover and helps to build more cohesive and motivated teams (Chatman, 1989).

Furthermore, training is another key tool to promote awareness of values and promote their alignment. Offering specific training programs on personal values and how to integrate them into the work context helps employees reflect on their contribution and the meaning of their role within the organization. These paths, in addition to strengthening individual motivation, create a common language that facilitates communication and collaboration between colleagues. Another crucial aspect concerns the role of leadership. In fact, leaders have the responsibility to act as role models, actively promoting corporate values through their decisions and daily actions. Groysberg et al. highlight how leaders who embody organizational values create an effect of coherence and inspiration that strengthens the corporate culture and favors the diffusion of values among team members. Values-based leadership does not limit itself to proclaiming principles. However, it translates into concrete choices, such as adopting ethical management practices, supporting people’s growth and creating a safe and inclusive work environment (Groysberg, B., Lee, J., Price, J., & Cheng, J. Y.-J., 2018).

Moreover, promoting an inclusive and value-oriented organizational culture offers significant benefits not only within the company, but also in terms of external

image and the ability to attract and retain talent. Organizations that value diversity, authenticity and respect for differences become more attractive to professionals, especially the new generations, who place a strong emphasis on these aspects when choosing their career path. An environment that supports the authentic expression of personal values not only promotes psychological well-being, but also stimulates innovation and creativity, as people feel free to propose ideas, to openly discuss and to contribute significantly to collective progress (Twenge, 2010).

Furthermore, integrating personal values strategically allows organizations to build a solid reputation, based on consistency, integrity and social responsibility. In an era where corporate reputation is closely tied to perceptions of authenticity and transparency, aligning employees' personal values with organisational values becomes a distinctive element and a long-term competitive advantage.

To conclude, organizations that choose to invest in integrating personal values not only respond to a growing demand for meaning and authenticity from employees, but equip themselves with powerful tools to strengthen their culture, improve performance and build a sustainable and responsible future.

3.5.3 Strategies for the Future

To effectively address the challenges and seize the opportunities arising from the integration of personal values into organizational behavior, companies must adopt a strategic and proactive approach, capable of translating values into concrete practices and fostering an environment in which individual differences are considered a valuable resource and not an obstacle. The management of personal values in the company cannot

be left to chance: it requires a conscious commitment from the leadership and the implementation of targeted tools, processes and initiatives that allow the declared principles to be transformed into observable and shared behaviors. As Groysberg, Lee, Price and Cheng underline, the long-term success of organizations depends significantly on the ability to create a culture based on authentic values, in which employees feel involved, respected and valued (Groysberg, B., Lee, J., Price, J., & Cheng, J. Y.-J., 2018). Among the main strategies to integrate personal values into organizational culture, five fundamental actions can be identified.

The first is the evaluation and alignment of values. Organizations should implement systematic tools to map employees' personal values and compare them with the values declared by the company. Through surveys, interviews, and workshops, it is possible to identify areas of congruence, which strengthen internal cohesion, and areas of dissonance, which can generate tensions or conflicts. Kristof defines this process as "person-organization fit" and highlights its importance in promoting a satisfying and productive work environment. Investing in an accurate diagnosis of values helps companies develop targeted action plans and prevent potential critical issues related to the disconnection between individuals and the organizational context (Kristof, A. L., 1996).

The second action is training and development. Offering training programs that stimulate reflection on personal values and ways to integrate them into daily work is essential to building a culture of continuous learning. These programs can include workshops on values, storytelling activities, group exercises, and individual coaching. Schein emphasizes that organizational culture is consolidated through shared learning processes, and that training represents a privileged channel for transmitting and

internalizing corporate values, especially in complex and rapidly changing contexts (Schein, 2010).

The third action is values-based leadership. Leaders play a crucial role as carriers and living models of organizational values. They must embody the declared principles, demonstrating coherence between words and actions, and promote an ethical, inclusive, and well-being-oriented work environment. Values-based leadership is not limited to communication but manifests itself in daily decisions, in the management of resources, and in the ability to inspire and motivate teams. As Groysberg highlight, companies that promote authentic, values-centered leadership tend to build stronger and more resilient cultures, capable of adapting to change and attracting quality talent (Groysberg, B., Lee, J., Price, J., & Cheng, J. Y.-J., 2018).

The fourth action is transparent communication. Transparency in communication is an essential condition for building trust and for promoting value alignment. Organizations should create spaces and opportunities where employees can openly discuss corporate values, express their points of view, and actively contribute to the definition of ethical and strategic priorities. This approach not only strengthens participation but also stimulates innovation and a sense of ownership, key elements for a healthy and dynamic organizational culture.

Finally, the fifth action is monitoring and feedback. It is essential to establish continuous monitoring systems to verify the degree of alignment between personal and corporate values. Through periodic surveys, structured feedback, and moments of discussion, organizations can identify areas for improvement and intervene promptly to realign practices and behaviors. Feedback must be constructive, oriented towards dialogue, and aimed at growth, both individual and collective.

In the end, integrating personal values into organizational behavior is a complex challenge, but it also represents a unique opportunity to build more authentic, inclusive, and future-oriented organizations. As Edwards and Cable point out, companies that are able to enhance the individual values of employees, supporting them through targeted strategies and conscious leadership, are better positioned to face the uncertainties and transformations of the global market. These companies not only improve the well-being of their employees, but also create the conditions for sustainable growth and a lasting competitive advantage (Edwards, J. R., & Cable, D. M., 2009).

Chapter 4: The Future of Personal Values in Organizational Behaviour

4.1 New Challenges for Organizations in a Changing World

The world of work is undergoing a profound transformation, fueled by rapid digitalization, the increasingly pervasive introduction of artificial intelligence and the spread of hybrid work. These changes not only modify organizational processes and structures, but also significantly influence the personal values of individuals and the way in which these values are experienced and perceived within organizations. In a context dominated by emerging technologies and automation, the very concept of work takes on new forms, leading employees to confront ethical dilemmas and challenges related to the sense of identity and belonging (Meliusform, 2022).

Digitalization has made work more flexible and accessible, but has also redefined the boundaries between professional and personal life. The continuous connection, favored by digital tools, can generate pressures that challenge the values of balance and well-being, pushing people to reconsider priorities and personal choices.

In parallel, artificial intelligence is revolutionizing human resources management, from staff selection to performance evaluation, raising questions about the ethics of automated decisions and the risk of involuntary discrimination (AI4Business, 2022).

Personal values, such as fairness, justice and social responsibility, therefore become fundamental to guide the conscious use of technologies and to prevent efficiency from becoming the only criterion of judgment. Hybrid work, in turn, has introduced new ways

of relating and collaborating, changing the sense of belonging and organizational culture. While the possibility of working remotely offers greater autonomy and flexibility, on the other hand it can weaken social bonds and make it more difficult to transmit shared values (Worksection, 2025).

Organizations must therefore develop strategies to maintain connections between team members and ensure that corporate values are lived on a daily basis, even in a virtual context. Intentional communication, the creation of spaces for discussion and the promotion of authentic and value-based leadership become key elements to preserve cultural integrity. Furthermore, the rapidly changing context requires workers to reconsider their values and develop new skills, such as resilience, flexibility and open-mindedness. These skills become essential to adapt to uncertain scenarios and to contribute positively to organizational transformations. Companies, for their part, must take responsibility for accompanying employees on this journey, creating work environments that support psychological well-being, enhance diversity and promote a sense of shared purpose. The relationship between personal values and organizational context, therefore, is not static, but evolves according to social, technological and economic dynamics. Digital transformation and the adoption of AI are not simply tools for progress, but factors that redefine the expectations, priorities and responsibilities of individuals within organizations (TeamSystem, 2023).

Values such as transparency, ethics, respect and sustainability are becoming increasingly central, not only as declarations of principle, but as concrete guidelines for daily decisions. Hybrid work, finally, requires a reflection on the very concept of working community and on the need to preserve meaningful human relationships in a world where interactions increasingly take place through screens and digital platforms. The challenge

for organizations is therefore twofold: on the one hand, adapting to technological changes and new work models, on the other, keeping alive and authentic those values that form the basis of a healthy and inclusive organizational culture. Ultimately, the future of organizational behavior will depend on the ability of companies to integrate these new scenarios with an ethical and human vision, where personal values are not sacrificed on the altar of efficiency, but become the foundation on which to build success and collective resilience (Worksection, 2025).

4.2 Emerging Trends in Organizational Behaviour

Organizational behavior is evolving rapidly, influenced by a series of emerging trends that reflect the evolution of personal and collective values, as well as growing ethical and social expectations towards companies. Among these trends, the emphasis on organizational well-being, sustainability as a cultural value, empathetic and inclusive leadership, as well as the promotion of inclusion and diversity as strategic values, are redefining the way organizations operate and interact with their stakeholders.

One of the most significant trends concerns the growing attention to organizational well-being, understood not only as the absence of discomfort, but as the active promotion of mental health, work-life balance and quality of working life. Recent studies show how employee well-being is closely related to higher levels of engagement, productivity and retention (Ministero dell'Istruzione e del Merito, 2021).

Organizational well-being is now recognized as a strategic element that directly impacts business results, and no longer as a simple accessory “benefit”. According to Mercer’s Global Talent Trends Report, 81% of employees indicate that mental health is

a key factor in their decision to choose an employer. In response to these needs, organizations are implementing psychological support policies, work-life balance programs and stress management initiatives, redefining internal values in terms of care, empathy and the centrality of the person (Mercer, 2022).

Alongside the theme of well-being, the value of sustainability as a cultural and organizational driver is strongly asserting itself. Sustainability is no longer considered a simple question of regulatory compliance or a social responsibility issue, but is increasingly being integrated as an integral part of corporate culture and business strategy. Organizations are progressively orienting their decisions based on environmental, social and governance (ESG) sustainability principles, recognizing the impact that corporate activities have on the environment and society. According to a report by Digital4.biz, companies that integrate sustainability as a cultural value report tangible benefits in terms of reputation, talent attraction and long-term economic performance (Digital4.biz, 2016).

This approach implies a profound transformation in organizational values: the pursuit of profit is no longer the only objective, but must be balanced with respect for the environment, the reduction of the ecological footprint and the positive contribution to the community. Organizational choices are therefore also evaluated in terms of ethical impact, strengthening the alignment between employees' personal values, increasingly oriented towards green issues, and corporate missions.

Another emerging trend concerns empathetic and inclusive leadership. Today's leaders must be able to interpret the needs of their people, understand emotional challenges and build relationships based on trust and mutual respect. As highlighted in the "World of Work Trends 2024" report by the Top Employers Institute, successful companies invest in empathetic leadership development programs, as they recognize that

the ability to listen, show compassion and value differences represents a competitive advantage in increasingly complex and diverse organizational contexts (Top Employers Institute, 2024).

Inclusive leadership does not limit itself to promoting respect for diversity, but translates into concrete practices that guarantee equal opportunities, recognition of individual contributions and creation of a sense of belonging. According to the Diversity & Inclusion guidelines of the Global Compact Network Italy, organizations that invest in inclusive leadership record higher rates of innovation, a greater ability to respond to market changes and a significant reduction in turnover (Global Compact Network Italia, 2021).

The theme of inclusion and diversity (Diversity & Inclusion, D&I) has consolidated as a strategic value and no longer just an ethical one. Diversity, understood as a multiplicity of experiences, cultural backgrounds, orientations, genders and ages, enriches collective thinking and stimulates innovation (PeopleChange360, 2024).

However, to transform diversity into a real competitive advantage, it is necessary to promote an inclusive culture, in which each individual feels welcomed, respected and valued for their peculiarities. Cutting-edge organizations adopt active policies to promote inclusion, such as reviewing selection processes to eliminate unconscious bias, promoting female careers, supporting LGBTQ+ communities and supporting people with disabilities. These practices not only help create fairer and more welcoming work environments, but also respond to the growing expectations of employees and customers, who increasingly evaluate companies based on their values and social impact (ESG360, 2021).

These trends reflect a profound shift in how personal values are experienced and perceived within organisations. In a context characterized by global challenges such as

climate change, social inequalities and health crises, employees are looking for companies that are not just places of work, but communities in which they can express their values and contribute to a common good. The coherence between the values declared by the organization and its concrete actions therefore becomes a key factor in attracting and retaining talent. According to the Mercer report, 72% of global employees say they want to work for companies that demonstrate a concrete commitment to sustainability, inclusion and people's well-being. Ultimately, emerging trends in organizational behavior require an integrated approach, in which technology and innovation are at the service of people, and in which sustainability, well-being and inclusion are not just slogans, but guiding principles rooted in the corporate culture (Mercer, 2022).

Organizations that can interpret these changes and translate them into coherent practices will be the ones best positioned to face future challenges, creating more resilient, motivating and shared value-oriented work environments.

4.3 Personal Values in the Age of Purpose-Driven Organizations

The world of work is undergoing a profound transformation, in which organizations no longer limit themselves to generating profit, but are positioning themselves as responsible actors towards society and the environment. In this scenario, purpose-oriented companies, i.e. those that base their identity on a mission that goes beyond the mere economic objective, are redefining the way in which employees' personal values intertwine with corporate strategies and practices. The centrality of purpose becomes the engine that guides organizational choices, creating spaces in which

individual values can express themselves, contributing to a more authentic and engaging corporate culture.

Organizations that place a clear and shared purpose at the center of their identity tend to achieve better performance, not only in economic terms, but also in terms of engagement and innovation. According to Harvard Business Review, companies capable of translating their purpose into concrete actions generate a sense of belonging that strengthens internal cohesion and motivates employees to actively contribute to collective success (Harvard Business Review, 2023). This process of integrating personal values and organizational goals is not a given: it requires leadership capable of listening, mediating and building bridges between individual and collective identity. In fact, a leader's ability is not only measured in the ability to achieve economic results, but also in the ability to create a context in which people can identify with the corporate mission and see their values recognized and valued (Traliant, 2023).

The connection between corporate purpose and personal values is closely linked to the growing attention to worker well-being and the quality of human relationships in the company. When organizational values promote respect, integrity and positive impact on the community, employees experience a sense of meaning in their work, which translates into greater involvement and a reduction in turnover rates.

Gallup's research highlights that companies cultivating a purpose-oriented culture exhibit significantly higher levels of retention and greater resilience in times of crisis. A sense of purpose then becomes a powerful motivating factor, enabling people to overcome difficulties, adapt to changes and contribute proactively to organizational development (Gallup, 2021).

A distinctive element of purpose-driven organizations is the attention to the issues of inclusion, diversity and sustainability as strategic values. These organizations recognize that the diversity of perspectives, experiences and backgrounds is not only an ethical issue, but represents a lever for innovation and competitiveness (Forbes, 2023). Valuing differences, promoting equity and ensuring equal opportunities becomes an integral part of corporate culture, while purpose is configured as a glue that unites diversity in a common project.

Furthermore, the commitment to sustainability, understood as environmental and social responsibility, translates into concrete actions: from reducing the ecological footprint to adopting ethical and transparent business practices. This approach allows organizations to attract talents that are increasingly attentive to environmental and social issues, generating a virtuous circle between personal values, job satisfaction and business success.

However, purpose-driven organizations cannot limit themselves to declaring their values: they must translate them into daily practices, transparent policies and coherent decision-making processes. It is essential that companies clearly communicate their purpose and that leaders, at all levels, act as ambassadors of organizational values, fostering a climate of trust, dialogue and co-responsibility (Traliant, 2023). When purpose becomes a guiding principle in strategic and operational choices, employees perceive an authentic connection between what they do and the positive impact they generate, and this strengthens intrinsic motivation and a sense of belonging.

In this scenario, purpose is not simply a declaration of intent, but a compass that orients the entire organization, transforming personal values into a shared heritage and a driving force for innovation and sustainable growth. Organizations that succeed in

making this vision a concrete reality distinguish themselves as responsible actors, capable of creating economic and social value, of generating trust among customers, employees and the community, and of building a future in which people can recognize themselves not only as workers, but as individuals committed to a greater mission.

This new paradigm represents both a challenge and an opportunity: companies that can integrate personal values into their corporate purpose, promoting an inclusive and sustainable culture, will be those that will prosper in an increasingly complex and interconnected world.

4.4 From Theory to Action: Future Directions for Research and Practice

The growing interest in the role of personal values in organizational behavior has stimulated significant scientific production, but there remain underexplored areas that require more in-depth research. One of the main limitations found in the literature concerns the lack of attention to the cultural dimension: most studies have been conducted in Western contexts, neglecting global cultural dynamics and differences in individual and collective value systems (Arieli, Sagiv, & Roccas, 2020).

In an increasingly interconnected and multicultural world of work, understanding how personal values manifest themselves and influence behavior in heterogeneous contexts becomes essential to develop more inclusive and applicable theoretical models. At the same time, there is a lack of longitudinal studies that explore the evolution of personal values over time, in relation to career changes, organizational contexts and technological transformations. Understanding how values adapt or strengthen in the face

of crises, such as health or environmental ones, represents a promising and urgent research direction.

Another little explored aspect concerns the impact of personal values on decision-making processes and ethical responsibility within organizations. While it is true that corporate mission statements and value propositions often emphasize values such as integrity, sustainability, and inclusion, it remains unclear to what extent these values are actually translated into concrete behaviors at the individual and collective levels. As highlighted by Prasad, the gap between declared values and actual practices can generate misalignment, demotivation, and even ethical conflicts between employees and the organization. To overcome these critical issues, future research should investigate how organizations can create effective mechanisms to monitor and strengthen the coherence between personal values and corporate values (Prasad, R. K., 2025).

On a practical level, integrating personal values into the organizational fabric requires a systemic and intentional approach. Corporate policies should evolve to incorporate the value dimension not only as a statement of principle, but as a guiding criterion in strategic decisions, HR processes and daily dynamics. Tools such as the VIA Character Strengths Inventory or the “shared values” methodology proposed by MGMA can support companies in mapping employee values and in promoting alignment between individual priorities and organizational goals. However, it is essential that these tools are not reduced to mere formalities, but are integrated into real practices such as personnel selection, career path definition, performance evaluation and leadership development programs (MAGMA, 2023).

Leadership, in particular, plays a crucial role in translating values into action. According to Harvard Business Review, successful leaders do not simply communicate

the values of the organization, but embody them in their daily choices, acting as a model for the rest of the team (Harvard Business Review, 2023)⁶⁴. This requires a high level of self-awareness and emotional intelligence: leaders must be able to recognize their own values, understand those of team members and facilitate an open dialogue that favors the sharing and co-creation of meanings.

A values-oriented leadership approach can strengthen corporate culture, stimulate innovation and reduce turnover, as demonstrated by research conducted by David, which highlights a positive correlation between the connection of personal values with organizational culture and the overall success of companies (David, S., 2024).

To promote the integration of personal values in an evolving organizational context, it is necessary to implement targeted and measurable strategies. Creating structured spaces for listening and discussion, such as workshops on values or communities of practice, can stimulate shared reflection and help employees recognize their contribution to the company mission. Furthermore, building continuous feedback systems, where conversations about values are not confined to isolated moments (such as annual evaluations), but become an integral part of the work routine, is a recommended practice to keep the focus on the core principles alive. Organizations should also monitor the impact of their actions on the declared values through specific metrics, such as measuring the cultural climate and perceptions of value alignment among employees (Terryberry, 2024).

Creating an organizational culture based on values is not a linear process nor is it without challenges. It requires a critical review of internal processes, the willingness to listen to different points of view and the ability to adapt to new needs and emerging sensitivities. Organizations must be ready to recognize and address misalignments

between operational practices and proclaimed values, adopting a continuous learning approach. This means not only promoting values such as inclusion, sustainability and well-being, but translating them into tangible actions, such as parenting support policies, Diversity & Inclusion programs, investments in environmental sustainability and mental health initiatives.

A promising direction for practice is to consider personal values as a lever for organizational change. Rather than seeing values as fixed elements, organizations can foster a culture in which personal values are a resource for innovation and strategic adaptation. This requires shifting the focus from just mission statements to building practices that incentivize active participation and ownership by employees. As David points out, connecting personal values to organizational culture not only increases motivation but also creates a sense of meaning and purpose that strengthens organizational resilience (David, S., 2024).

Ultimately, integrating personal values into organizational behavior requires a conscious, multidimensional, and participatory approach. It is not a one-time goal, but a dynamic process that must be continually reviewed and adapted in response to internal and external changes. Only through a shared commitment between leadership, employees and stakeholders, supported by more inclusive research and consistent organizational practices, will it be possible to build organizations that not only declare ambitious values, but embody them in their culture and daily actions.

Conclusions

This study attempted to answer the question: *How do personal values influence organizational behavior and, consequently, culture, leadership and internal dynamics of organizations?* Starting from this research question, the thesis aimed to explore how deeply rooted beliefs and principles in individuals “personal values” can influence decision-making choices, interactions between colleagues, conflict management methods and leadership strategies within companies. The analysis conducted has shown that personal values do not represent a marginal or merely theoretical element, but constitute a key factor in defining organizational dynamics and business performance. In particular, the work has highlighted that Person-Organization Fit, or the alignment between individual values and those of the organization, not only affects the level of satisfaction and motivation of employees, but is configured as a real strategic lever to promote the well-being of people, strengthen internal cohesion and support the long-term competitiveness of companies (Kristof, 1996; Edwards & Cable, 2009; Barney, 1991).

Through the theoretical and methodological analysis developed in the various chapters, it emerged that personal values profoundly influence individual and collective behavior. They act as a moral compass, orienting decisions, priorities and attitudes, and become the ground on which the sense of belonging to the organization is built or disintegrated (Schwartz, 1992; Rokeach, 1973).

The question “*How can companies integrate the personal values of their employees into organizational strategies and processes to build a more ethical, inclusive and performance-oriented work environment?*” has found a complex response which, as shown in the previous chapters, highlights the importance of authentic leadership, values-

oriented HR practices, transparent communication and a corporate culture capable of valorising diversity and the unique contribution of each individual (Chatman, 1989; Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Kreitner & Kinicki, 2013; Groysberg, Lee, Price & Cheng, 2018).

In summary, the work has shown that personal values not only influence the behavioral sphere of individuals, but are reflected on a large scale in organizational structures, leadership models, decision-making processes and the ability of the company to face the challenges of a complex and constantly evolving world (Schein, 2010).

As illustrated in Chapter 1, the definition of personal values as stable and lasting beliefs has allowed us to understand their role as a motivational factor and regulator of individual choices, both in private life and in the work context (Schwartz, 1992; Rokeach, 1973). The review of the main theories, including the Person-Organization Fit Theory, the Schwartz Value Theory and the Rokeach Value Survey, has confirmed how the alignment between the values of people and those of the organization is crucial for individual well-being and collective success (Kristof, 1996; Edwards & Cable, 2009; Cable & Judge, 1997).

Chapter 2 explored the link between personal values and organizational behavior, showing how they influence fundamental aspects such as motivation, conflict management, communication, and group dynamics (Meglino & Ravlin, 1998). In particular, it was highlighted how personal values are reflected in the leadership style adopted: leaders oriented towards ethical values and social responsibility promote an inclusive and respectful culture, while leadership oriented exclusively towards profit risks generating alienation and disengagement among collaborators (Brown & Treviño, 2006; Hultman, 2001).

In Chapter 3, the focus shifted to the role of personal values as drivers of organizational change, highlighting how they can become a lever to promote positive transformations in the company (Arieli, Sagiv & Roccas, 2020). The link between values and Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) initiatives was discussed, showing how respect for diversity and commitment to equity are often rooted in personal values such as benevolence, universalism and social justice (Schwartz, 1992). The section dedicated to the enhancement of personal values as assets for organizational culture highlighted how the integration of these elements can help build a more resilient, cohesive and adaptable corporate culture to changes in the context (Groysberg, Lee, Price & Cheng, 2018).

Chapter 4 looked to the future, identifying emerging challenges and opportunities. In a world of work increasingly characterized by complexity, digitalization and hybrid models, personal values are configured as an essential reference to guide responsible behaviors and choices (AI4Business, 2022; Worksection, 2025). The thesis highlighted how phenomena such as digital transformation, the adoption of Artificial Intelligence and the spread of hybrid work are redefining the very concept of organizational community, creating new challenges in terms of transmitting values and maintaining a sense of belonging. However, precisely in this uncertain and changing scenario, organizations that know how to invest in the coherence between individual and collective values - through authentic leadership, targeted training, listening spaces and continuous feedback; place themselves in a position of competitive advantage (Harvard Business Review, 2023).

A transversal aspect that emerged in all the chapters is the need to fill the value-action gap, that is, the gap between the values declared in the corporate mission and vision and the practices actually implemented (Chatman & Cha, 2003). As discussed, values cannot be relegated to slogans or formal declarations, but must translate into observable

behaviors and concrete choices: only in this way will it be possible to build a credible organizational culture, capable of generating trust and involvement (Schein, 2010).

The practical implications of this research are significant. Organizations should consider personal values as a strategic lever to be integrated into all phases of the employee life cycle: from values-based recruitment to continuous training, from leadership development programs to the construction of transparent and bidirectional communication, up to the creation of structured and periodic feedback systems to monitor the alignment between declared and lived values (Chatman, 1989; Schein, 2010; Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Kreitner & Kinicki, 2013; Terryberry, 2024).

Another crucial point concerns the role of leaders as bearers and custodians of values: authentic leadership, as emerged in several studies, is that capable of embodying the ethical and value principles of the organization, promoting consistent behaviors, responsible decisions and an inclusive and respectful climate (Groysberg, Lee, Price & Cheng, 2018). In this sense, leaders must not only be “process managers”, but also “meaning facilitators”, able to listen, dialogue and build a sense of community and shared purpose with people (Traliant, 2023).

Ultimately, this thesis has highlighted how personal values are an essential factor for building healthy, sustainable and future-oriented organizations. They represent the glue that holds people together in an increasingly fluid and complex world of work, and constitute a strategic resource for promoting well-being, engagement, innovation and resilience.

The future of organizations will depend on their ability to recognize and enhance the personal values of their members, transforming them into a lever for collective growth and a sustainable competitive advantage. Companies that are able to integrate individual

values into their strategies will not only improve their performance, but will help build fairer, more inclusive work communities capable of generating not only economic, but also social and cultural value.

In this sense, the research path undertaken in this thesis does not end here, but opens the way to future explorations and reflections on the topic: it will be necessary to deepen, with empirical and longitudinal studies, how personal values evolve over time, how they manifest themselves in different cultural contexts and how they can be effectively integrated into daily organizational practices. Only through continuous reflection, authentic listening and conscious leadership will it be possible to build organizations in which people are not just cogs in a system, but individuals who are bearers of values, ideas and meanings, active protagonists of a positive and sustainable change.

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