

THE INTERNAL CAREER OF THE TYPE A PERSONALITY

G. ROSSLEE
F. CROUS
J.M. SCHEPERS

*Programme in Industrial Psychology
Department of Human Resource Management
Rand Afrikaans University*

ABSTRACT

The principal aim of the study was to examine the relationship between the Type A personality, optimal experience (Flow) and career success orientation. Three questionnaires measuring the above-mentioned constructs were administered to 200 managers from a variety of South African organisations representing all organisational functions, genders and cultural groups. Using Flow and Type A as input variables, the sample was divided into four homogeneous clusters with the aid of a clustering technique. By means of a factor analysis, four career success orientations were identified and four scales were constructed accordingly. The four clusters were compared with one another in terms of career success orientation. From the analysis it transpired that Type As did not experience their work in an optimal way. However, in terms of career success orientation, type As obtained the highest mean scores.

OPSOMMING

Die hoofdoel van die studie was om die verband te bepaal tussen Tipe A persoonlikheid, optimale belewenis van werk (Vloei) en loopbaansuksesoriëntasie. Die drie vraelyste wat die bovermelde konstrunkte meet, is afgeneem op 200 bestuurders uit 'n verskeidenheid Suid Afrikaanse organisasies verteenwoordigend van alle organisatoriese funksies, geslagte en kultuurgroepe. Met Vloei en Tipe A persoonlikheid as insetveranderlikes is die steekproef in vier homogene bondels verdeel aan die hand van 'n bondelingstegniek. Met behulp van 'n faktoranalise is vier loopbaansuksesoriëntasies geïdentifiseer en is vier skale dienoreenkomstig gekonstrueer. Die vier bondels is met mekaar vergelyk in terme van loopbaansuksesoriëntasies. Daar is met behulp van die analise bevind dat Tipe As hulle werk nie optimaal beleef nie, maar wat loopbaansuksesoriëntasie betref, het hulle die hoogste gemiddelde tellings behaal.

The world of work provides people with the opportunity for discovering meaning in life (Frankl, 1998). For many people in industrialised countries, however, work has become joyless (Fox, 1994), to the extent that the modern-day workplace may create a context for self-destructive behaviour. One kind of person that is portrayed as displaying self-destructive behaviour in the working environment, is the Type A individual. The Type A behavioural pattern (TABP) was identified by Friedman and Rosenman (1959), as a complex clinical syndrome associated with coronary heart disease (CHD). TABP is characterised by a chronic struggle against time, events and other people (Bracke & Bugental, 1995), and manifests in achievement-striving, competitiveness, impatience, hostility and vigorous speech (Contrada, 1995).

According to Travers (1995) persons with the TABP within the work environment are those who will be found working long, arduous hours often under deadline conditions; invariably take work home, work extra hours over weekends, and who will seemingly be unable to refrain from constantly trying to outdo themselves and others. They tend to set exceedingly high standards for themselves and others, will quickly become frustrated with a slow pace of events and are prone to getting irritated by the endeavours of others, while also seeking additional undertakings in the work environment. These persons often engage in outbursts of anger, are usually in a rush, and give the impression of being constantly in a struggle to achieve a number of goals in their environment within the shortest possible time. Their converse, Type Bs, tend to show the opposite of such behaviours. Indications are also that Type A behaviour is encouraged amongst managers (Silbiger, 1993).

It seems that CHD is promoted via the connection with heightened physiological reactivity to psychological stress. The mechanics include increased sympathetic-adrenomedullary activity which may assist in the onset and/or development

of atherosclerosis and ischaemic disease (Bracke & Bugental, 1995; Contrada, 1995).

Spangenberg, Shuda and Robbertze (1997) indicated that the TABP has not only been associated with CHD, but with a range of other physical and psychological health problems such as sleeping disorders, respiratory ailments, migraine and tension headaches, duodenal ulcers, occupational stress, alcohol abuse – exceeding the speed limit more frequently, and less frequent breakfasts are also characteristics. The TABP is nowadays used to indicate a personality type which is enduring and which results in individuals who are more or less susceptible to stress and the effects thereof (Travers, 1995).

Emerging research findings, however, have suggested that the TABP may not always have a negative effect. For example, the TABP has been shown to possess a positive correlation with academic and vocational performance (Day & Bedeian, 1991). These authors were of the opinion that Type As should report high levels of job satisfaction, especially in work environments which are challenging, fast-paced, performance-orientated and which permit latitude for individual control, as would be the case in managerial positions. Furthermore, research by Bluen, Barling and Burns (1990) suggested that Type As may relate more to intrinsic than extrinsic job satisfaction.

A contradiction therefore seems to exist in the literature on Type A experiences in the work situation. On the one hand it was stated that Type A personalities experience daily life as being less joyous than do their Type B counterparts (Burke, 1983; Friedman & Rosenman, 1974). On the other hand, it was stated by Day and Bedeian (1991) that climates perceived as more challenging, autonomous and competitive would provide Type As with the opportunity for high intrinsic job satisfaction.

The first aim in this study is to ascertain to what extent Type As would experience their work in an optimal way. Optimal experience can be expressed in terms of psychological flow

(Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Flow has as its base the autotelic experience, an experience which is rewarding in and of itself: people partake in an activity for the sheer sake of the activity, with no external rewards being offered; in other words, their participation is solely the result of intrinsic motivation.

Eight characteristic dimensions are evident in individuals when flow is experienced (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Csikszentmihalyi, 1993). These include the following:

- A clear set of goals is established and provides immediate and appropriate responses.
- Personal skills are fully involved in overcoming the challenge at hand.
- Action and awareness merge to ensure focus.
- Concentrated attention is achieved.
- Anticipated and possible control of situations occurs.
- A state of self-forgetfulness or egoless existence manifests (the person becomes so absorbed in the task at hand that he/she loses almost all self-consciousness).
- Time seems to pass faster.
- The sheer pleasure of the act motivates; it is performed for its own sake.

Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi (1988) reported studies which indicated flow to be more evident at work than during free or leisure time. This is not surprising since work provides more opportunities for clear and unambiguous feedback; work usually includes set objectives and goals, and encourages concentration, and occupations also tend to match skills and difficulties. There seems to be a clear relationship between flow and well-being on and off the job, and it was also found that flow correlates statistically significantly with degrees of job satisfaction (including job satisfaction) (Carli, Della Fave & Massimini, 1988; Han, 1988).

The optimal experience of work is related to what can be called the internal or subjective career. The internal career is a person's own subjective idea about work life, his or her role within it (Schein & Van Maanen, 1977), and the specific experiences a person has in the workplace (Weick & Berlinger, 1989). In terms of the internal career, a person would have a specific career self-concept (Schein, 1978), and according to Derr (1986) this can take the form of five different kinds of career success orientations, namely:

- Getting ahead – making it to the top of the hierarchy and status system;
- Getting secure – achieving recognition, job security, respect and insider status;
- Getting free – obtaining maximum control over work processes;
- Getting high – getting excitement, challenge, adventure and “cutting edge” opportunities; and
- Getting balanced – achieving a meaningful balance among work, relationships and self-development, so that work does not become either too engrossing or too uninteresting.

The second aim in the study would therefore be to ascertain the career success orientation of Type As. In terms of the traditional achievement/competitive perspective of how Type As would experience work, their career success orientations should assume a “getting ahead” orientation. In terms of the emerging viewpoint that Type As may experience work in an optimal way, a “getting high” orientation seems to be more appropriate.

For the purposes of this study, the following two postulates were formulated:

1. That a heterogeneous sample can be divided into a small number of homogeneous clusters using flow and Type A as input variables.
2. That the resulting clusters will differ statistically significantly from one another in terms of Derr's Career Success Orientation measures.

METHOD

Sample

Since Type A persons are more likely to be found in managerial than non-managerial jobs (Burke, 1983), the sample was drawn from managers in a number of organisations, all of whom had been sent on a specific training programme. All organisations were either private or public (listed) firms. The sample therefore excluded the public service or quasi-governmental organisations. Industries covered included motor-retailing, insurance, financial management, electrical wholesaling, vehicle rental, pharmaceutical manufacturers, plastics conversion, hairdressing, computer-systems, automation, personnel consulting, lecturing and law. A sample of 200 managers, representing all functions and cultural groups, was drawn from four metropolitan areas, namely: Johannesburg, Pretoria, Durban and Cape Town. All respondents were full-time employees. Complete records were obtained in respect of 195 respondents. The two genders were more or less equally represented in the sample.

Measuring Instruments

The A-Type Behavioural Questionnaire of O'Donnel, Jaffe and Zindler-Wernet

This 20-item questionnaire examines the degree of Type A behaviour, and involvement and engagement in Type A behaviours. The item test correlations vary between 0,34 and 0,63 with an internal consistency coefficient of 0,792 (Roodt, 1991).

Flow Experience Survey (FES)

Based on the work completed by Csikszentmihalyi (1975, 1990, 1993) as well as Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi (1988), a questionnaire known as the Flow Experience Survey (FES) (1993) was adapted and developed by Anderson, Crous and Schepers (1996). All items included, are work-related. This seven-point questionnaire has 56 items and consists of two scales. The first (Enjoyment) has a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0,946, whereas the second scale (Control of consciousness) has a coefficient of 0,829 (Anderson, Crous and Schepers, 1996).

Derr's Career Success Map Questionnaire (CSM)

The Career Success Map of Derr (1986) was used to identify an individual's particular career orientation. As no information is available on the psychometric properties of the instrument, it was subjected to a factor and item analysis.

Procedure

The three questionnaires listed above, were administered to middle and senior managers during a management training programme. All questionnaires were in English, and were administered personally by one of the researchers.

RESULTS

Statistical analysis

As no information is available on the metric properties of Derr's (1986) CSM, a factor analysis of this scale was undertaken. The reliability coefficients of the four scales of Derr's (1986) CSM were computed using Cronbach's coefficient alpha. Furthermore, the vectors of mean scores of Derr's career success orientation questionnaire were computed for each of the four clusters obtained. A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was also conducted to determine whether the vectors of means of the four clusters differed statistically significantly from one another.

The MANOVA was statistically significant, i.e., the vectors of mean scores of the four clusters differed statistically significantly from one another. The factor analysis was followed by a series of one-way analyses of variance (ANOVA) to determine whether the group means of the four clusters in respect of each of the variables differed statistically significantly from one another. Multiple comparisons were done in respect of each of the variables that were statistically significant in terms of the ANOVA. The multiple comparisons were done using the Scheffe's post hoc multiple comparisons technique to determine where the group differences lie.

The Flow Experience Survey (FES) and Type A Behavioural Questionnaire

The 195 useable questionnaires were analysed statistically. The first step undertaken was to determine whether a heterogeneous sample could be divided into a small number of homogeneous clusters using flow and Type A as input variables. In order to achieve this, a cluster analysis was done using the two scales of the FES and the Type A questionnaire. The resultant clusters were given codes, as are indicated in Table 1.

The codes followed the format of A indicating an average score, L a low score and H a high score on Flow 1 (Control of consciousness), Flow 2 (Enjoyment) and Type A, respectively.

Table 1
Means and Standard Deviations of the four clusters

	M			SD		
	Flow 1	Flow 2	Type A	Flow 1	Flow 2	Type A
Cluster 1 ALL	54,53	42,53	41,38	6,78	7,58	6,57
Cluster 2 LAL	37,83	47,39	44,04	6,67	6,04	8,26
Cluster 3 AHA	54,57	58,33	55,17	6,85	5,27	6,17
Cluster 4 ALH	49,72	36,61	63,28	10,03	7,86	6,72
Total	50,00	50,00	50,00	10,00	10,00	10,00

Flow 1: Control of Consciousness

Flow 2: Enjoyment

Type A

The results indicate that the managers can be divided into four categories in respect of Flow and Type A personality, viz: those who have an average Control of consciousness (Flow 1), low Enjoyment (Flow 2) and low Type A disposition (ALL); those who possess a low Control of consciousness (Flow 1), average Enjoyment (Flow 2) and low Type A disposition (LAL); those who have an average Control of consciousness (Flow 1), high Enjoyment (Flow 2) and average Type A (AHA) disposition; and those with an average Control of consciousness (Flow 1), low Enjoyment (Flow 2) and high Type A personality (ALH).

Table 4
Analysis of re-named scales including reliability coefficients of the four scales according to Cronbach's coefficient alpha

Scale	Term	Items	Reliability Coefficient
Scale I	Freedom Seekers	Re-named from : 5 Getting Free 2 Getting Ahead 1 Getting High	0,70
Scale II	Comfort Seekers	Re-named from : 11 Getting Secure 7 Getting Balanced	0,82
Scale III	Equilibrium Seekers	Re-named from : 3 Getting High 3 Getting Ahead 3 Getting Free 3 Getting Balanced 2 Getting Secure	0,83
Scale IV	Discarded	: Only two items	
Scale V	Competition Seekers	Re-named from : 8 Getting High 5 Getting Ahead	0,80

Table 2
Multivariate analysis of variance in respect of subscores of the four clusters.

Effect	Wilks' Coefficient Lambda	F	df1	df2	Significance
Intercept	0,02	2067,91 b	4,00	188,00	≤ 0,001
Group	0,61	8,41	12,00	497,69	≤ 0,001

a. Computed using alpha = 0,05

b. Exact statistic

c. The statistic is an upperbound on F that yields a lower bound on the significance level

The Career Success Map Questionnaire (CSM)

As no data are available on the reliability and validity of the CSM in South Africa, the CSM was subjected to a first and a second-order factor analysis. Five factors were extracted while one was rejected by virtue of the fact that only two items loaded on it. The four scales that emerged were identified of (cf Table 4). The Cronbach alpha coefficients of the four scales are reflected in the last column of Table 4 and are of an acceptable magnitude.

Table 3
Frequencies and percentages in respect of the four clusters

Group	Code	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	ALL	45	23,1	23,1
	LAL	48	24,6	47,7
	AHA	84	43,1	90,8
	ALH	18	9,2	100,0
Total		195	100,0	

The results of the MANOVA are given in Table 2. From an inspection of Table 2 it is clear that the analysis yielded a Wilks' Coefficient Lambda of 0,022 with an associated $F(4, 188) = 2067,908$, $p \leq 0,001$. The results of the one-way analysis of variance are given in Table 5, and from an inspection of this table it is clear that there are statistically significant differences between the four clusters in respect of each of the measures of Derr (1986).

Table 5
Analysis of variance

Scale	Source of variance	Sum of squares	df	Mean Square	F	Significance $p(F)$
Scale I Freedom Seekers	Between Groups	2142,714	3	714,238	7.91	≤ 0,001
	Within Groups	17257,286	191	90,352		
	Total	19400,00	194			
Scale II Comfort Seekers	Between Groups	1993,502	3	664,501	7.29	≤ 0,001
	Within Groups	17406,498	191	91,133		
	Total	19400,000	194			
Scale III Equilibrium Seekers	Between Groups	5744,461	3	1914,820	26,78	≤ 0,001
	Within Groups	13655,539	191	71,495		
	Total	19400,000	194			
Scale V Competition Seekers	Between Groups	3263,907	3	1087,969	12,88	≤ 0,001
	Within Groups	16136,093	191	84,482		
	Total	19400,00	194			

Table 6
Scheffé's post hoc multiple comparisons technique: Comparisons of the means of the four clusters

Variables	Means				Groups					
	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Cluster 3	Cluster 4	1-2	1-3	1-4	2-3	2-4	3-4
	ALL	LAL	AHA	ALA						
Scale I	49,00	45,88	51,61	58,07			*	*	*	
Scale II	53,72	45,24	49,88	53,94	*			*		*
Scale III	51,42	40,79	53,09	56,59	*			*		*
Scale V	50,11	43,17	53,12	53,37	*			*	*	

The results of Scheffé's post hoc multiple comparisons technique are given in Table 6. From an inspection of this table it can be seen that the means of Cluster 4 (ALH) are consistently the highest across the four scales and the means of Cluster 2 (LAL) the lowest. The means of Clusters 1 (ALL) and 3 (AHA) are intermediate. More specifically, Cluster 4 (ALH) differs statistically significantly from Cluster 1 (ALL) in respect of Scale I (freedom seekers); from Cluster 2 (LAL) in respect of Scale I (freedom seekers), Scale II (comfort seekers) and Scale V (competition seekers); and from Cluster 3 (AHA) in respect of Scale III (equilibrium seekers).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The primary aim of this study was to examine the relationships between Type A personality, optimal experience of work and career success orientation. The first postulate was confirmed since it was shown to be possible to divide the sample into a small number of homogeneous clusters using Flow and Type A as input variables. Only one cluster (Cluster 4) indicated a high Type A score. This cluster was also found to be relatively small in size as only 18 of the 195 respondents (or 9,2%) obtained a high Type A score, showing that respondents with a high Type A score are likely to have average scores on Control of consciousness (Flow 1) and low scores on Enjoyment (Flow 2).

This suggests that those managers who are classified as Type A do not experience high or even average levels of optimal experience in the work situation. The study therefore supports the viewpoint that Type As experience the work situation as less joyous than those who do not fit the Type A personality profile.

The second postulate was confirmed by means of a MANOVA, followed by ANOVAs and multiple comparisons. Four career-success orientations were identified, and the four clusters differed statistically significantly from one another in terms of these orientations.

The results show that individuals with high Type A scores tended to score highest on all four scales, which implies a stronger career-success orientation. This suggests that career success is important for Type A managers, irrespective of whether they are classified as freedom-, comfort-, equilibrium- or competition-seekers. Although the differences are relatively small as far as the four scales are concerned (cf Table 7), there appears to be a preponderance of freedom- and equilibrium-seekers among high Type A individuals. This refutes the common logic which assumes that competition seekers would be highest scores, given the nature of the Type A character. Competition seekers in fact scored lowest among the high Type As.

The study therefore confirms the traditional view of the Type A personality as somebody who does not enjoy his or her work, does not experience it optimally, and who derives little satisfaction from it. The research indicates, however, that career success is very important to the typical Type A manager, but that competitiveness is not necessarily the dominant orientation. On the contrary, the research indicates that the Type A person is one who seeks freedom and equilibrium in his or her daily existence.

Table 7
Mean scores in respect of the four clusters

Cluster Code	Scale	Mean	Standard Deviation
ALL	Scale I	49,00	8,12
	Scale II	53,72	9,23
	Scale III	51,42	8,56
	Scale V	50,11	8,13
	Flow 1	54,59	6,79
	Flow 2	42,59	7,56
	Type A	41,41	6,52
LAL	Scale I	45,88	8,73
	Scale II	45,24	9,78
	Scale III	40,79	8,70
	Scale V	43,17	10,71
	Flow 1	37,85	6,63
	Flow 2	47,41	6,01
	Type A	44,04	8,23
AHA	Scale I	51,16	10,34
	Scale II	49,88	9,66
	Scale III	53,09	8,12
	Scale V	53,12	8,50
	Flow 1	54,56	6,82
	Flow 2	58,31	5,29
	ALH	Type A	55,16
Scale I		58,07	10,54
Scale II		53,94	9,15
Scale III		56,59	9,09
Scale V		53,37	10,42
Flow 1		49,63	9,92
Flow 2		36,61	7,84
Type A	63,28	6,71	

Mean = 50

Standard Deviation = 10

The present study was conducted on a joint sample of men and women by virtue of the fact that the group was relatively small. It is recommended that the study be replicated on a much larger sample and that separate analyses be done for men and women, as there is a strong probability that the personality profiles of men and women might differ.

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