

Type A Behavior in Workers at a Mexican Health Center

Comportamiento de Tipo A en Trabajadores de un Centro de Salud Mexicano

Tirso Javier Hernández Gracia^a, Danae Duana Avila^b, Roberto Estrada Bárcenas^c**Abstract:**

Type A behaviour is an action-emotion behaviour pattern observed in workers who strive to accomplish more tasks related to their work in less time, even under adverse circumstances. The study presented aims to understand the behavioural patterns of Type A workers in the health field in relation to the number of patients they serve daily, with the purpose of verifying whether there is a relationship between this attitude and their workload. The main results show a positive correlation between the dimensions of Ambition and Activity when the workload is high. Therefore, it is necessary to implement preventive programs that favor the reduction of stress risk and promote a better quality of life for this group of professionals.

Keywords:

Type A behaviour, workers, stressful situations, time, motivation.

Resumen:

La conducta Tipo A es un patrón de comportamiento acción-emoción observado en trabajadores que se esfuerzan por realizar más tareas relacionadas con su trabajo en menos tiempo, incluso en circunstancias adversas. El estudio presentado tiene como objetivo comprender los patrones de comportamiento de los trabajadores Tipo A en el área de la salud en relación con el número de pacientes que atienden diariamente, con el propósito de verificar si existe una relación entre esta actitud y su carga de trabajo. Los principales resultados muestran una correlación positiva entre las dimensiones de Ambición y Actividad cuando la carga de trabajo es alta. Por lo tanto, es necesario implementar programas preventivos que favorezcan la reducción del riesgo de estrés y promuevan una mejor calidad de vida para este grupo de profesionales.

Palabras Clave:

Conducta de tipo A, trabajadores, situaciones estresantes, tiempo, motivación.

Introduction

The concept of Type A behaviour was first addressed in the 1950s by scientists Friedman and Rosenman, who associated it with individuals' personality traits, their ways of behaving, and the changes influenced by a series of biological and environmental factors [1].

Modern organizations increasingly face complex challenges caused by the dynamic environment in which they operate. These challenges include factors such as

inflation, pollution, financial policies, consumer behaviour, pandemics, among others, which generate more demanding and unpredictable work environments. In such contexts, managers and workers encounter difficult situations associated with the need to produce more and deliver higher quality to remain competitive in the business or organizational sector. This situation creates excessive energy demands on employees, resulting in stress and other risks associated with occupational health.

Initially, Type A behaviour was characterized primarily by traits linked to high levels of competitiveness and

^aProfesor Investigador Del Área Académica De Administración, Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Hidalgo. <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0425-0800>, Email: thernan@uaeh.edu.mx

^bAutor de Correspondencia, Profesor investigador del área académica de administración, Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Hidalgo. <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2286-2843>, Email: duana@uaeh.edu.mx

^cProfesor Investigador Del Área Académica De Administración, Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Hidalgo. <https://orcid.org/0009-0000-6783-2483>, Email: roberto_estrada3019@uaeh.edu.mx

significant motivational drives focused on achievement. These characteristics also make workers more vulnerable to stressors and the consequences of rigid time management. This, in turn, triggers reactions such as lower tolerance, impatience, and frustration when expected results are not achieved within the set timeframe. Employees identified with Type A behaviour typically exhibit three essential components: 1) High levels of ambition; 2) A strong need to achieve; and 3) A pronounced desire to be competitive [2].

Background

Theories related to the personality or behaviour of individuals were identified more than seventy years ago, mainly by Friedman and Rosenman, who attributed to them the name of Type A and Type B Behaviours, since it was thought that a person could develop either of these two behaviours. Essentially, the main ingredient associated with people who develop Type A behaviour is stress, as an increase in stress for long and constant periods causes cardiovascular diseases. Despite not being psychologists but cardiologists, Friedman and Rosenman published works on this type of personality that supported the connection between physical and psychological aspects, providing solid knowledge to disciplines related to psychology [3].

Individuals whose personality is attributed as Type A behaviour are people who take on any challenge and demand from their environment. It is common for them to carry an excess workload. They are highly competitive, develop a great feeling of achievement and seek recognition. However, as a consequence, there is a tendency toward aggressiveness, impatience, and urgency related to time, which increases the activity of the nervous system and may trigger cardiac events [4].

Other authors state that individuals classified with personality or Type A behaviour are distinguished by a character marked by high doses of aggressiveness, irritability, impatience, and, sometimes, unfriendliness. They are determined and very focused on their goals, but they also have a strong addiction to work and an ambition to achieve [5].

Individuals associated with Type B behaviour are the opposite: they are more relaxed, calm, patient, and stable, maintaining a low level of stress. In the workplace, they strive to get along with colleagues and maintain a peaceful atmosphere, being fair in their decisions and adaptive to changes. However, workers classified as having Type B behaviour may struggle to achieve established objectives, as their relaxed approach can lead to procrastination. Motivation becomes a key aspect for these individuals to

reach their goals. They tend to be cheerful, fun, and even entertaining. In contrast to employees with Type A behaviour, Type B individuals are generally less competitive [6].

Individuals associated with Type A behaviour usually work under pressure, with excessive stress levels. They demand much from themselves and others, often exceeding regular work hours to achieve results. This behaviour creates extreme pressures that can result in hostile work environments and moments of aggression, triggered by anxiety and hyperactivity, which manifest depending on the circumstances. Such pressures maintain high adrenaline levels, leading to irritable verbal expressions when delays or problems arise in processes [7].

Friedman and Rosenman noted that most of their patients were individuals in key positions within companies, such as middle and strategic management. Their responsibilities kept them perpetually busy, taking authority and decision-making to its peak expression. Over 40 years ago in the United States, debates among medical, biomedical, psychological, and behavioural specialists culminated in accepting Type A behaviour as a risk factor for individuals under nervous strain, particularly for cardiovascular events. Subsequent studies reinforced these assertions, linking Type A personality traits to coronary artery disease, with additional contributing factors such as age, blood pressure, and lipid profile indicators (triglycerides, cholesterol, fats, etc.). People within a Type A behavioural pattern are perfectionists, omnipotent, and believe others should meet their needs, making them cognitively distorted, ambitious, and active [8].

Based on their clinical observations, Friedman and Rosenman originally stated that individuals with a Type A personality face a higher risk of coronary heart disease through specific behavioural characteristics. They observed that some cases of coronary heart disease could not be explained by dietary factors, such as fat or cholesterol, but rather by socioeconomic factors, such as occupational pressure or workplace stress. Their Western collaborative group study followed individuals for 22 years. Initial findings showed that Type A men had more than double the risk of coronary heart disease compared to Type B men. Subsequent longer follow-ups yielded similar, though less consistent, results [9].

Comparatively, individuals associated with Type A and Type B behavioural patterns display opposite personalities: Type A individuals are competitive, ambitious, restless, and aggressive, while Type B

individuals are calm, relaxed, and prone to procrastination. Three key elements define Type A behaviour: 1) higher levels of competitiveness, 2) relentless value placed on time, and 3) hostile, unfriendly behaviours with aggressive tendencies. For Type A individuals, job satisfaction becomes crucial, as it strongly influences their workplace well-being [10].

Friedman and Rosenman conceptualized the PCTA (Type A Behaviour Pattern) as a mechanism to exert control over behavioural manifestations of a physiological, cognitive, and emotional nature. These prevail in various scenarios and can sometimes be complex to understand, given the high levels of commitment and determination these individuals show in achieving their goals, often struggling with time constraints, limited resources, and resistance from colleagues. Conceptually, the PCTA encompasses several dimensions, including:

- Elements related to expression: high vocal levels, emphatic gestures.
- Manifestation of unfriendly and impatient behaviours.
- Great capacity for motivation and ambitious attitudes to achieve goals.
- Cognitive aspects: need to exercise control, ambiguous evaluation criteria)

The studies by Friedman and Rosenman were instrumental in conceptualizing Type A behaviour as a complex strategy for addressing workplace challenges. This framework incorporates not only competitiveness and productivity but also hostility, aggressiveness, impatience, tension, irritability, and anger, often accompanied by complex verbal and behavioural expressions.

It is worth noting that, depending on an individual's maturity and how they channel the effects of Type A behaviours, the outcomes can vary. Positive impacts may include satisfaction, high motivation, and the pursuit of challenges and achievements. On the negative side, traits like hostility, nervousness, irritability, and impatience can affect their biopsychosocial, psychophysiological, and cultural well-being [11].

Methodology

The study is quantitative, correlational, cross-sectional, and non-experimental. The population consisted of 50 workers employed at an Urban Health Center in Mexico, with a census applied to 46 of them. Only four workers did not participate in the study as they were on vacation. The objective of this research focused on identifying Type A behavioral patterns in health field workers concerning the

number of patients they attend daily. The ultimate purpose was to determine if there is a relationship between this behavior and their workload.

The instrument utilized was the CPA (Type A Behavior Pattern Questionnaire), translated and validated by Romero and León (1983). It consists of 29 items measured on a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 and includes four dimensions: Tension, Activity, Ambition, and Absence of Repression. Workload was categorized into three levels: High, Normal, and Low.

The main results are summarized in Table 1, where correlations were analyzed using a difference in means. In the Ambition dimension, a significant difference was observed with the High workload (mean = 3.2874; $p = 0.011$). This finding suggests that the behavior identified in relation to the excess number of patients attended may be partially explained by expectations of goal achievement associated with the pursuit of power and recognition.

Similarly, the Activity dimension showed a strong correlation with the High workload (mean = 3.8598; $p = 0.004$). This result indicates that the majority of workers (63%) exhibit Type A behavior characterized by proactive, diligent efforts aimed at achieving specific objectives.

Table 1.
Difference in means of the workload dimensions

CPA Dimensions/Workload	Average	n	F	p
Tension			3.420	0.061
High	3.6727	24		
Normal	3.4722	15		
Low	3.3665	7		
Ambition			4.670	0.011
High	3.2874	32		
Normal	3.1225	10		
Low	3.0889	4		
Activity			3.323	0.004
High	3.8598	29		
Normal	3.5216	11		
Low	3.4141	6		
Absence of repression			4.357	0.254
High	3.4351	25		
Normal	3.3712	9		
Low	3.2889	12		

Note: Prepared by the authors based on the results of the research.

Conclusions

There are various theories or models that attempt to explain the Type A/B behavior pattern, which has also been studied as a potential predictor of various behavioral outcomes. Early experiments demonstrated that when provoked or frustrated,

Type A individuals generally experienced greater feelings of anger or irritation and a stronger desire to harm those they perceived as provoking or frustrating them, compared to Type B individuals [12] [13] [14] [15].

In the health sector, workers, despite being more resilient in tolerating pressures such as shortages of materials, supplies, personnel, economic resources, or infrastructure, may experience mental strain when the service capacity exceeds their ability to provide care. Theoretically, it is suggested that increasing task difficulty raises its demands, potentially leading to decreased performance. Moreover, when these workers perceive their roles as sources of suffering, dissatisfaction, and frustration, they may intensify their efforts, dedicating more time and energy to meet these demands. However, as they become more deeply involved in their work, they risk experiencing frustration and suffering. This phenomenon is identified as CPA, an action-emotion complex characterized by a continuous drive to achieve self-selected but often poorly defined goals, a strong inclination to compete, persistent desires for recognition, involvement in diverse tasks subject to constant deadlines, a tendency to accelerate task execution, and extraordinary physical and mental alertness [16] [17].

Research on this topic continues, as it is known that workers exhibiting a Type A behavior pattern tend to act more aggressively than Type B individuals under highly provocative or frustrating conditions, but not under neutral or non-provocative circumstances. Understanding these findings is critical to recognizing the significance of workers' personalities within organizations. As noted in many texts, "human resources are the most valuable asset of a company." Therefore, implementing preventive programs aimed at reducing stress risk and promoting better quality of life for this group of professionals is essential.

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