

Transactional Analysis: Measuring “Ego States”

* Prof. Nidhi Maheshwari

** Swati Bijawat

*** Neha Tandon

INTRODUCTION

“I’m OK - You’re OK” is probably the best-known expression used to define Transactional Analysis (TA). The purpose of transactional analysis is to establish and reinforce the position that recognizes the value and worth of every person. Transactional analysts regard people as basically “OK” and thus capable of change, growth, and healthy interactions⁶. The concept was introduced by Berne (1964), an eminent Psychologist⁵. According to Eric Berne, “The unit of social intercourse is called a transaction. If two or more people encounter each other, sooner or later one of them will speak, or give some other indication of acknowledging the presence of the others. This is called “*transactional stimulus*”. Another person will then say or do something which is in some way related to the stimulus, and that is called the “*transactional response*.” At its simplest level, *Transactional Analysis is the method for studying interactions between individuals*.¹

BERNE’S EGO STATES

Berne defined an ego state as “*a consistent pattern of feeling and experience directly related to a corresponding consistent pattern of behavior*.”² Berne made complex interpersonal transactions understandable when he recognized that the human personality is made up of three ego states-. The Parent, The Adult and The Child.⁶

Each ego state is an entire system of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors from which we interact with one another. The Parent, Adult and Child ego states and the interaction between them form the foundation of transactional analysis theory.⁶ The parent is again classified into Nurturing Parent and Critical Parent and the Child is classified into Natural Child, Little Professor and Adapted Child.⁵ These concepts have spread into many areas of therapy, education, and consulting as practiced today.⁶ The major characteristics of different Ego States are presented in Table: 1.

TABLE: 1 : Major Characteristics of Ego States

Parent Ego	Adult Ego	Child Ego
Behaves like his/her parents or someone similar.	Key to healthy personality.	Think, feel, see, hear and react as a three or five or eight- year old child.
Judgmental, value- laden, moralizing, dogmatic or over protective.	Logical, rational, never takes decisions emotionally to solve problems.	The ego state is fully an experienced state and not just roles.
The ego is expressed by giving advice, showing displeasure, admonitions and saying things like “do” and “don’t”.	Fact- based criticism of effectiveness of behavior.	
Critical parent Like a judge stipulated by norms, rules and regulations. Attacks people’s personalities, scolds and punishes.		Natural child Hateful or loving, impulsive, spontaneous or playful.
Nurturing parent The major characteristics are supportive, sympathetic, protective and nurturing.		Little Professor Thoughtful, creative and imaginative.
Provides self-recognition and enables the process of giving recognition and affection to others.		Adapted child Modifies their behavior under the powerful influence. Person adapts to the rule of social environment to get the recognition. Behave compliantly or precariously.

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* Professor, Adam Smith Institute of Management-ICFAI (Jaipur), Jaipur-302018, Rajasthan

Email Address: nidhimaheshwari1999@yahoo.com

** Research Associate, ICFAI National College , Ajmer, Rajasthan

*** Final Year MBA student, Adam Smith Institute of Management-ICFAI (Jaipur), Jaipur-302018, Rajasthan

Researchers used different tools to measure the ego states of people. Pareek (1984)³ extensively used a tool to predict the Ego states of various companies. Kathryn and Williams (1980)⁴ assessed the strength of ego states from the response of persons. Finally, an “ego gram” tool developed by Dusay in 1977 was a pioneer attempt in this regard. Ego gram is a tool which is used for conceptualizing a typical offender personality. The Ego gram is a chart that divides a person’s total energy into six ego states: (1) Critical Parent (2) Nurturing Parent (3) Adult (4) Adaptive Child (5) Natural Child and (6) Little Professor. It helps the TA practitioners to improve their ability to illustrate and diagnose an individual according to ego states functioning (Stevens, 1983).⁵The study has been conducted with the validated questionnaire developed by Institute of Counseling and Transactional Analysis (ICTA), Kerala.

OBJECTIVES

The objective of this paper is to analyze the Ego States of retail professionals in Jaipur city and to find out their dominant ego states. Another objective is to help retail professionals to understand and adapt their behavior and develop more effective ways of communicating.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted among 30 Retail professionals of Jaipur city. Ego states of the professionals were identified through a validated questionnaire (with 35 items) developed by Institute of Counseling and Transactional Analysis (ICTA). The questionnaire consisted of different questions related to 6 different ego states such as: Critical parent (CP),Nurturing parent (NP),Adult (A), Natural Child (NC),Little Professor (LP),Adapted Child (AC). Each question is rated on 6 points Likert scale. The respondents were asked to mark their opinion on this. The scores of these rating scales range from 1 to 6 (See Table: 2).

Table: 2 : Scale Used To Measure The Different Ego States

Rating scale	Score
Very frequently	5
Frequently	4
Sometimes	3
Rarely	2
Never	1
Almost Never	0

First, the opinion of the respondents on each question needs to be converted into scores. Then the scores are to be written in the proper boxes in the ego states score chart. The numbers in each column are to be added and total to be added and the totals to be put in the spaces provided. The total for the first column is the score for CP; second for NP, and so on. If someone answered the question “1” with frequently, then a “4” should be put in the box indicated for the question. After that, the score of 35 questions of each column will be added to know the ego states of that person. The highest score represents the dominant ego state. The dominant ego state of the group as a whole (retail professionals) can be found out by counting the dominant ego states of each individual.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 3 shows the profile of the respondents. Majority (83 percent) of the respondents are from age group 20-30 years.Among the total respondents, 83 percent are males and 17 percent are females.

Table 3: Profile of Respondents

Age in Years	No. of respondents	Percentage of Total Respondents
25-30	25	83
31-40	4	13
41-50	1	4
Gender		
Male	25	83
Female	5	17

Table 4: Scores Representing the Ego States of Respondents.

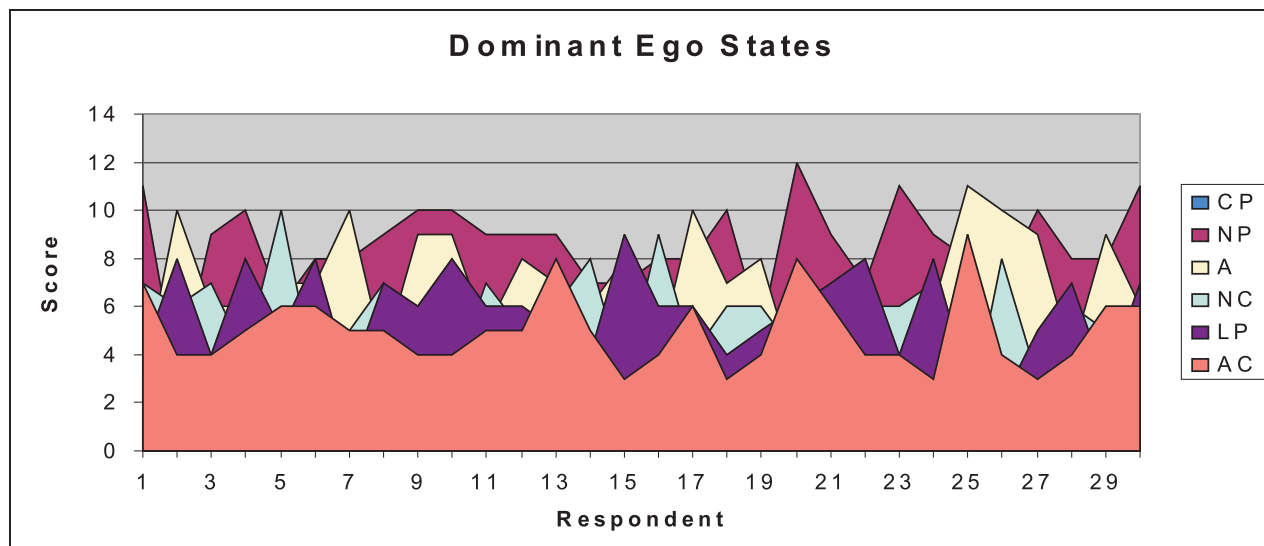
No. of Respondents/Ego States *	CP	NP	A	NC	LP	AC
1	3	11	3	7	4	7
2	4	3	10	6	8	4
3	5	9	6	7	4	4
4	2	10	6	4	8	5
5	1	6	7	10	5	6
6	4	8	7	3	8	6
7	4	8	10	5	3	5
8	3	9	4	7	7	5
9	2	10	9	4	6	4
10	1	10	9	3	8	4
11	4	9	5	7	6	5
12	2	9	8	5	6	5
13	2	9	7	6	5	8
14	4	7	6	8	4	5
15	4	7	8	3	9	3
16	2	8	4	9	6	4
17	1	8	10	4	6	6
18	5	10	7	6	4	3
19	6	5	8	6	5	4
20	2	12	3	4	6	8
21	3	9	3	6	7	6
22	3	7	6	6	8	4
23	5	11	5	6	4	4
24	2	9	6	7	8	3
25	3	8	11	1	3	9
26	4	7	10	8	2	4
27	5	10	9	3	5	3
28	7	8	4	6	7	4
29	4	8	9	5	3	6
30	2	11	6	3	7	6

Note

- * Critical Parent (CP), Nurturing Parent (NP), Adult (A), Natural Child (NC), Little Professor (LP), Adapted Child (AC).
- Bold numbers represent the dominant ego states of the respondents.

Different ego states of the respondent such as Critical Parent (CP), Nurturing Parent (NP), Adult (A), Natural Child (NC), Little Professor (LP), and Adapted Child (AC) are given separately in Table-4. The highest number that highlights in the table represents the ego states of individuals separately. An employee poses all six ego states with variations of its intensity.

Figure 1: Dominant Ego States



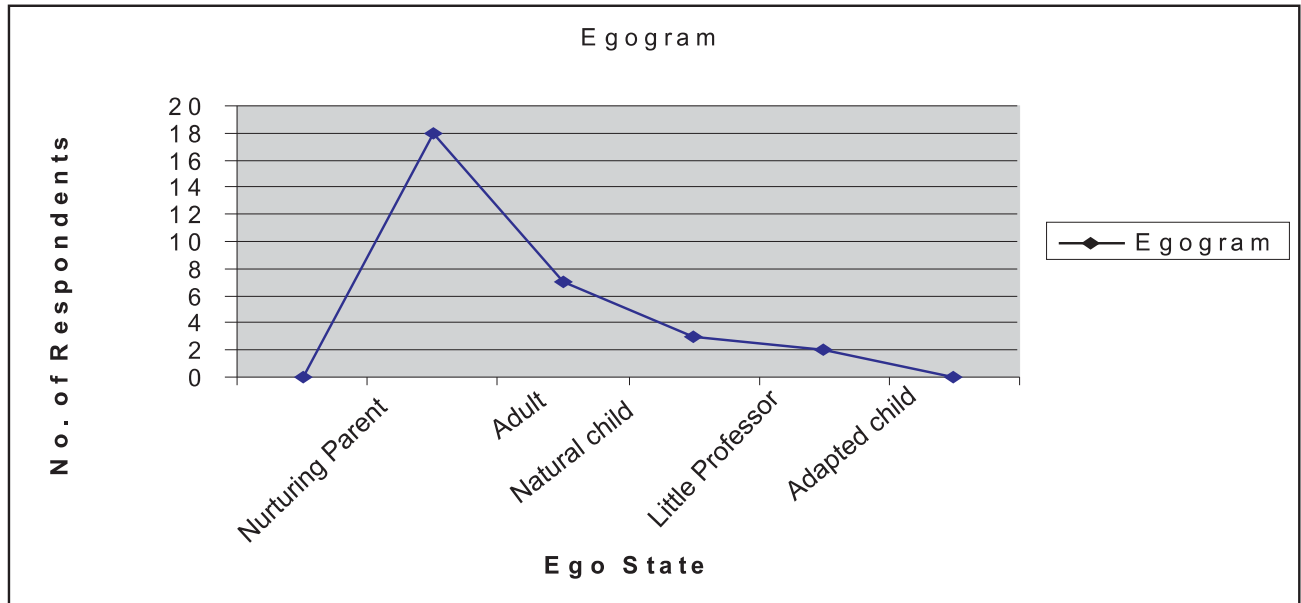
The above given graph summarizes the dominant ego states of the group. The graph shows the intensity of each ego state among the respondents. It shows that the character of Nurturing Parent (NP) dominates.

Table-5: Overall Summary of Dominant Ego States

Dominant Ego States	No. of Respondents	% of the total Respondents
Critical parent	0	0
Nurturing parent	18	60
Adult	7	23.33
Natural child	3	10
Little professor	2	6.66
Adapted child	0	0
Total	30	100

The Overall position of each ego state can be understood by counting the dominant ego state of the respondents. The categorization is given in Table 5. It is clear that 60 percent of the total respondents have their dominant ego state as Nurturing parent. This shows that these respondents are supportive, loving and nurturing. The dominant ego state of 23.33 percent respondents is the adult who is all the more rationale and analyzes information objectively. This was followed by respondents with the dominant ego state of a natural child (10 percent) who possess the characters of being impulsive, spontaneous or playful etc. Only 6.66 percent of the total respondents have their dominant ego state as Little Professor. They are characterized by thoughtfulness, creativity, manipulative and intuitive behavior. Finally, none of the respondents is with dominant ego states as Critical Parent and Adapted Child. The above given table is also represented with an “Egogram” which is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Egogram



CONCLUSION

The study concludes that the dominant ego state among the retail professionals is the nurturing parent (NP) who are sympathetic, supportive, protective and nurturing. They are the people who provide self- recognition and affection to others. The Nurturing Parent naturally talks to the Natural Child and conflict occurs when the communication transaction is *Crossed* transactions, where the other person is at a different level (not having the nurturing parent ego). It is advisable to the professionals to first go to the state that the other person is in to talk at that wavelength so as to avoid conflict. Whenever the mismatch in states persisted, their conversation broke down completely. When this happened, we observed that speakers found it virtually impossible to continue their conversation because it had been overshadowed by an emotional rift that needed mending before any interaction could be resumed. As the dominant ego state among the retail professionals is the nurturing parent, it shows that they are quite successful in their profession as with this nurturing parent ego state, they are empathetic and supportive towards the customers. Further, this fact recommends that in the behavioral training program for retail professionals, characteristics of the Nurturing Parent should be emphasized.

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