

# Transactional Style Inventory- A Tool to Enhance Interpersonal Effectiveness

Archana Shrivastava\*, Manujata Midha\*\*

## Abstract

When two people interact, each exchange is a transaction, and a person's habitual way of interacting with others becomes his/her interpersonal style. Ego states and the existential positions play significant role for the success or failure of each and every transaction. Many of our problems come from transactions which are unsuccessful. Transactional Analysis Theory involves identification of the ego states that directs the transaction stimulus and executes the transaction response. The case uses Transactional Analysis Theory and Transactional Style Inventory as tools to help the respondents (130 management students) examine their transactional styles and develop strategies to enhance their interpersonal effectiveness. 'Interpersonal communication competence is essential in the realization of effective leadership' (Macik-Frey, 2007) and effective management. The exercise will help students understand themselves and others better. With the help of this inventory they can learn to adapt their communication styles with those of the others, in turn becoming more proficient communicators and better managers.

**Keyword:** Transactions, Ego States, Interpersonal Communication, Life Positions, Interpersonal Styles, Transactional Style Inventory

## Case

Seeing conflicts among the members in the initial stage of team formation has been very common for Prof. Nag who has been teaching management students for the last

15 years. She always believed that conflict is a natural and necessary element of a healthy team experience. For her, the team that never experiences conflict is less likely to be as productive as a team that experiences conflict, as conflict is a natural phenomena of team environment that makes decision-making effective (Amason et al., 1995). So when Neha, a first year management student approached her with various issues related with the team members, with whom she was working, Prof. Nag was not disturbed. She advised her to give some time to herself as well as to the team members. But in few days, when the conflict degenerated into verbal assault in public, she knew that her intervention was required. She sensed that this conflict was not the normal conflict that would lead to a strong team. Rather it was an interpersonal conflict which should be managed and resolved before an irreparable damage happens to the team.

While talking to the team, she realised that there were serious differences among team members on various issues. Most of them were personal rather than task orientated. The team was highly lacking in communication; they were either not on speaking terms or were using disrespectful communication. There was a lack of trust as the members were trying to protect themselves by putting the blame on one another. They appeared like enemies who were competing against one another rather than allies that build and help one another to achieve a common goal. There were subgroups / factions within a team and there was no unified vision within the groups. Almost all the team members perceived that they were the ones who were working harder than others. Pointing fingers, using loud pitch, interrupting, raising eyebrows, etc, were some of the common behaviour patterns of the group members.

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\* Associate Professor and Head, Business Communication Area, Birla Institute of Management Technology, Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh, India. Email: [archanabulbul@gmail.com](mailto:archanabulbul@gmail.com)

\*\* Assistant Professor, Birla Institute of Management Technology, Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh, India. Email: [manujata@bimtech.ac.in](mailto:manujata@bimtech.ac.in)

They had serious issues related to the interactional styles of one another.

It was hard for Prof. Nagto identify the exact issue or incident that led to the conflict. She felt that there were fundamental incompatibilities in their personalities, their approaches to things, and their styles of interacting with each other, which were creating problems. Overall this was the case of interpersonal conflict on personality clashes. She knew that her approach to handle this group had to be different. Her delivery / teaching pattern would not be similar to her previous pedagogies. She planned to prepare the style pattern of the group and identify the elements which were leading to conflicts resulting in low operating efficiency of the group. This would not only help Prof. Nagto design her curriculum delivery but would also help students explore what styles they held and what styles they would like to develop and how. She was aware of multiple instruments or models available to measure personality. She decided to use Transactional Style Inventory (TSI) for measuring individual's personality, collating them to get style pattern of the group, and then by training team members to increase efficiency and decrease conflict using personality type results.

## About Transactional Style Theory

Transactional Analysis is a model developed during 1960s by Dr. Eric Berne. 'Transactional analysis (TA) is both a theory of personality and an organized system of interactional therapy' (Corey G., 2009). It is based on two notions, first that we have three parts or 'ego-states' to our personality, and secondly that these converse with one another in 'transactions'. The theory takes two basic concepts i.e. Ego States and Life Positions that influence styles of individuals. According to this theory, each individual involved in transaction with others has the following three ego states: *the parent*, *the adult* and *the child*. Each ego state leads to distinct behaviours, and their functional and dysfunctional roles depend upon the Existential or Life positions. The combinations of the two lead to the concept of OK and Not OK positions. There are four primary Existential or Life positions (Harris, 1969): I am OK- You are OK; I am Not OK- You are Not OK; I am OK- You are Not OK; and I am Not OK- You are OK. According to (Avery, 1980), parent and child ego states can further be sub-divided. Parent Ego State has two dimensions, i.e., Critical and Regulating, while Child Ego State is divided into Adaptive, Reactive and

Creative child ego states. The analysis of transactions between two people puts theory in practice. Once the concept of ego states is understood, what follows on is the understanding of transactions. There are three types of transactions; Complementary transactions: Where the ego state responding is complimentary to the ego state offering the stimulus. Crossed Transactions: When the ego state addressed is different for the one responding. In this case the communication ceases. Ulterior Transactions: There are social level and ulterior level transactions. The social level is the socially acceptable stimulus. It is an unconscious process. Transactional Analysis Theory has been successfully used for years as a group therapy. It involves many structured or unstructured activities that facilitate the participants' awareness of themselves and others. Such awareness, then, offers the participants a chance to change maladaptive behaviours and helps them to achieve spontaneity and intimacy (Corey, 1985). With a view to develop activities that will facilitate participants to change their maladaptive behaviours, it was important to generate the existing transactional style pattern. So, the facilitator decided to use Transactional Style Inventory for this purpose.

## About the Instrument

Transactional Style inventory (TSI) was developed by Udai Pareek to help the respondents examine their interactional or transactional style and develop strategies to enhance their interpersonal effectiveness. The instrument was developed on the basis of Transactional Analysis Theory originated in the psychotherapeutic practice and theoretical works of the Canadian psychiatrist, Eric Bernstein (Berne, Transactional Analysis in Psychotherapy, 1961) (Berne, 1963) (Berne, 1966) (Berne, Principles of Group Treatment, 1966) (Berne, 1972).

The instrument helps respondents in examining the Operating Effectiveness Quotient scores for each of their ego states. 'OEQ indicates the percentage of the potential that is being used effectively in a particular style' (Pareek & Purohit, 2010). If he feels concerned about the low scores he can look for the behavioural changes based on the related items. He can identify the items and can work upon those items to reduce Not OK scores and increase OK Scores. In the same manner, the facilitator can follow the same methodology and examine the operating effectiveness scores of the group as a whole. Once the OEQs are identified, the facilitator can develop and

decide activities that will facilitate participants change their maladaptive behaviours towards one another.

## Method to Use the Instrument

Students can fill the questionnaire provided with the instrument (See Annexure 3) and can personally use it to identify their style inventory. Consult OEQ table (See Annexure 1) for the - Operating Efficiency Quotient values of each odd rows (1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11) and write them in the last space given against each row. OEQ indicates the percentage of the potential that is being used effectively in a particular style. The odd rows represent OK Styles and the even rows represent Not-OK styles. There are pairs of OK and Not OK Styles (1-8, 3-10, 5-12, 11-6, 9-4, 7-2). Locate the OK score in the first row and not OK in the first column in Annexure 2. See where the located column and row interact and write down the score against the OK row. Same method can be followed to get the scores of other styles. After getting all the scores, test your OEQ based on the OEQ Norm (see Annexure 2).

## Instrument's Reliability and Validity

The retest reliability coefficients of the instrument with the several groups have been found to range between 0.51 and 0.74. The validity of the instrument was tested by correlating TSI-M with egogram scores. Four correlations out of five ego state scores were in the predicted direction. However, the Nurturing Parent Ego State was found correlating with the Rescuing style rather than Supportive style (Pareek, 1986).

## General Interaction Styles in Different Life Positions

There is interplay of six ego states (2 Parent, 1 Adult and 3 Child ego states) and two life positions (OK and Not-OK) in the interactions of people which reflect different behaviours. With the combination of six ego states and two life positions, twelve influence styles emerge:

(a) **Supportive Style:** This is a style which emerges out of interplay of Nurturing parent ego state and OK Life position. In this style, a manager would show support to his team members whenever needed. These kinds of people tend to empathise with and motivate their subordinates, and provide continuous support.

**Table 1**

<i>Ego State</i>	<i>OK Life Position</i>	<i>Not-OK Life Position</i>
Nurturing Parent	Supportive	Rescuing
Regulating Parent	Normative	Prescriptive
Adult	Problem-Solving	Task-Obsessive
Creative Child	Innovative	Bohemian
Reactive Child	Assertive	Aggressive
Adaptive Child	Resilient	Sulking

- (b) **Rescuing Style:** This style is a nurturing parent style in Not-OK state, in which a manager would always try to rescue his subordinates or fellow workers who seem to be weak to him. Whenever a problem arises, support is provided to the person for his rescue from the crisis, which makes it a Not-OK state due to too much dependence of a person on the other.
- (c) **Normative Style:** This is a regulating parent style in OK life position which signifies that the manager having this style would create norms for others and would want others to follow them. Such a manager would help others in understanding the importance of a norm and would help others to solve certain problems in specific ways.
- (d) **Prescriptive Style:** Managers having this style like prescribing norms and rules to others. It's a regulating parent ego state in Not-OK life position, which signifies that a manager would act like a regulating parent by imposing rules on others. Such a manager would not help others in finding out solutions themselves but instead he would prescribe his advice to others.
- (e) **Problem-solving Style:** It's a positive adult ego state in which a manager would try to find solutions to the problems. He would also involve his team members in a collective task of finding solutions to the problems.
- (f) **Task-Obsessive Style:** This is an adult style in Not-Ok life position. A manager in this style would be obsessed with the task so much so that he becomes insensitive to the feelings of others. This kind of manager would not be an empathetic manager. For him, the focus would always be on the task at hand.
- (g) **Innovative Style:** This is a creative child state in which managers like innovating new things. They like to bring in new ideas and processes and in-

volve others also in implementing those ideas in the system.

- (h) **Bohemian Style:** This is also a creative child state but in Not-OK life position which signifies that the managers in this style would also be very creative and would innovate ideas but they don't conform to the existing practices and would like to implement their ideas without taking others into consideration.
- (i) **Assertive Style:** This is a positive reactive child state. Managers in this state are very persuasive in their approach. They are also straightforward and open in expressing their views. They are empathetic towards their co-workers or team members and can be ready to challenge the organisation also if they feel that their approach is right.
- (j) **Aggressive Style:** Managers having this style are very aggressive in their approach. This is a reactive

child state in Not-OK life position. They react to confrontation aggressively and fight for any idea or any colleague if they feel they are right.

- (k) **Resilient Style:** This is a positive adaptive child state which signifies the managers having this style are very adaptive to situations and circumstances. They are open to change, learning and adaptive to others' ideas.
- (l) **Sulking Style:** Managers in this style would not like to face crisis and they keep their negative feelings inside them. They would not share their feelings or problems with others and avoid contact with others in a problem situation.

## Results

### Mean Value of the different styles and their OEQ

**Table 2**

	Females	Mean	Males	Mean	Total	Mean	OEQ
Nurturing Parent OK	698	12.03	864	12	1562	12.015	53 - Average
Nurturing Parent Not OK	662	11.41	827	11.49	1489	11.454	
Normative Parent OK	660	11.38	805	11.18	1465	11.269	53- Average
Normative Parent Not OK	545	9.397	727	10.1	1272	9.7846	
Adult OK	629	10.84	853	11.85	1482	11.4	53- Average
Adult NotOK	518	8.931	720	10	1238	9.5231	
Creative Child OK	638	11	850	11.81	1488	11.446	57- Low
Creative Child Not OK	475	8.19	663	9.208	1138	8.7538	
Reactive Child OK	537	9.259	661	9.181	1198	9.2154	54-Low
Reactive Child Not OK	453	7.81	601	8.347	1054	8.1077	
Adaptive OK	709	12.22	904	12.56	1613	12.408	60- Low
Adaptive Not OK	558	9.621	676	9.389	1234	9.4923	

First of all, the facilitator tried finding out whether there existed a significant difference in the transactional style of female participants and male participants in the group on the six mentioned parameters. Independent Sample T-Test with the help of SPSS was conducted to find out the same.

## Interpretation

The TSM-M was administered on a group of 130 students. Out of total respondents, 58 were female students and

82 male students. Style comparison was done on all six styles (12 OK and Not OK Styles) between the gender to see the OK and Not OK styles of males and females and also to take out the general style pattern of the group as a whole. The Sig. (2-Tailed) value in our example is 0.00 on only one style i.e. creative. This value is less than .05 which indicates that there is a significant difference in the said style of females with males. On all other styles both male and female participants were found to be more or less same (Table 3).



**Table 3**

Independent Samples Test										
F		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
								Lower	Upper	
NUR-TURING	Equal variances assumed	.258	.612	-0.090	128	.928	-.052	.580	-1.199	1.095
	Equal variances not assumed			-.090	120.922	.929	-.052	.583	-1.206	1.101
REGU-LATING	Equal variances assumed	.574	.450	.207	128	.836	.098	.473	-.839	1.035
	Equal variances not assumed			.205	116.564	.838	.098	.479	-.851	1.047
TASK	Equal variances assumed	.521	.472	-3.370	128	.001	-1.969	.584	-3.126	-.813
	Equal variances not assumed			-3.304	110.748	.001	-1.969	.596	-3.150	-.788
CRE-ATIVE	Equal variances assumed	.000	.987	-3.683	128	.000	-1.763	.479	-2.710	-.816
	Equal variances not assumed			-3.667	121.324	.000	-1.763	.481	-2.714	-.811
REAC-TIVE	Equal variances assumed	.388	.534	-.707	128	.481	-.405	.573	-1.540	.729
	Equal variances not assumed			-.712	126.450	.478	-.405	.569	-1.532	.721
ADAP-TIVE	Equal variances assumed	.694	.406	-.314	128	.754	-.158	.504	-1.155	.839
	Equal variances not assumed			-.312	119.460	.756	-.158	.508	-1.163	.847

To find out the percentage of potential that is being used effectively in a particular style, Operating Effectiveness Quotient was calculated separately for each style. The mean value of both OK and Not OK scores was taken out, and OEQ was found corresponding to OK score and not OK Score (OEQ Norm table attached in Annexure 1 & 2). The results showed that the group as a whole scored average Operating Effectiveness Quotient on Nurturing (53), Regulating (53), and Task (53) ego states. The scores were low on Creative (57), Reactive (54) and Adaptive (60) ego states. There was no high OEQ found on any of the ego states. This tool helped students as well as Prof. Sengupta to have deeper insight into the behaviour patterns of students and their different ego styles. With

this awareness, facilitator then decided to design activities based on the scores that might help students develop their ego states on which they have scored average to low.

## Conclusion

The exercise helped the instructor understand an overall pattern of the group / class she was handling. The results depicted average operating quotient on Nurturing, Regulating and task oriented styles which helped the facilitators understand that before assigning the tasks in teams, she will have to do some exercises in developing Emotional Quotient among the team members. Emotional intelligence is about recognizing, understanding, and

choosing how we think, feel and act. According to Oxford Dictionary of Psychology, emotional intelligence is the ability to monitor one's own and other people's emotions, to discriminate between different emotions and label them appropriately and to use emotional information to guide thinking and behaviour. As a team, they should learn to support each other, help the poor performers in the team and with the major focus upon the task completion, should also have a caring attitude towards each other. Low operating quotient on creative, reactive and adaptive style made facilitator take certain steps. To encourage out of box thinking, she declared extra scores for the team who will bring new ways / ideas to complete the task. To make the students realise that their behaviour was aggressive, she thought of capturing their activities on videos and asked them to do their own analysis afterwards. Even if they failed, she made it a point to add a pinch of encouragement during the feedback sessions. Another strategy that she adopted was a self reflection exercise where students in a group wrote a short paper about how they will work towards team harmony.

Team work holds a significant position in organisations these days. Companies rely on their employees' abilities to collaborate with their co-workers for smooth functioning. Effective interpersonal communication is essential for establishing and sustaining a relationship with their colleagues.

Considering interpersonal communication as an essential ingredient in managers for enhancing employee organisation relationship, Transactional analysis can prove to be a strong tool. This tool of Transactional Style Inventory, if used effectively, can help management students explore which style of behaviour they possess and which they would like to develop. They can identify their ego styles. By identifying their OK and Not-OK states' scores through the questionnaire, they can learn about their positive and negative qualities and can enhance their positive traits and work to reduce their negative (Not-OK) states. They can consult OEQ table to know about the operating efficiency quotient for each OK style, which signifies their potential, in percentage. By knowing about their OEQs, they can further enhance their potential and change their maladaptive behaviours. Overall, the study conducted can be helpful in enhancing interpersonal communication and in increasing team effectiveness of the budding managers.

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