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# UNIT-10 INTERPERSONAL BEHAVIOUR

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## 10.0 OBJECTIVES

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After reading this Unit, you will be able to:

- understand the meaning and significance of interpersonal behaviour,
- know about the ego states and life positions,
- sensitize yourself with the ways to deal with conflicts, and
- make an assessment of your own interpersonal styles and of others working with you.

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## 10.1 INTRODUCTION

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Individual behaviour is a complicated and complex concept. It is affected by psychological factors such as perception, learning, personality and motivation. It can further be apprehended in terms of interpersonal relationship, or in terms of a group comprising more than two persons. Individual **behaviour** unquestionably affects and in turn is affected by the behaviour of others. One of the dilemmas in organisational behaviour is to analyse and improve interpersonal and group behaviour in organisations. Transactional analysis and group dynamics are the two basic approaches to study interpersonal and group behaviour in an organisational system. The former deals with understanding, predicting and controlling interpersonal relationships and the latter studies group behaviour.

When people interact in organisations, there is a social transaction in which one person responds to another. If two or more people encounter each other in a social aggregation, sooner or later one of them will speak or give some other indication of acknowledging the presence of the others. This is called the transactional stimulus. Another person will then say or do something, which is in some way related to this stimulus, and that is called the transactional response. From the standpoint of TA (Transactional Analysis) approach, a transaction is a stimulus plus a response. For example, if you say to one of your colleagues, "you have really done a fine job on that project", that is stimulus, if he says, "thanks", that is a response. Thus, transactions take place between people. They can also take place between the "people" in our heads. If we have a sudden impulse to say something to someone, we may mentally hear a voice telling us not to say it and then a second voice agreeing. These people in our heads are called ego states. Thus, transactional analysis is a technique of analysing and understanding interpersonal behaviour. This Unit will explain to you interpersonal styles and different ego states, like positions and ways to improve the operational effectiveness of your styles.

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## 10.2 ANALYSIS OF SELF AWARENESS

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The interpersonal relationships are composed of inner-self. Self is the hub of personality patterns which provides integration. The interpersonal relationship can be studied properly if one can perceive (self perception) one's own behavioural style and at the same time how it is perceived by others. The Johari Window can be used to identify the self-perception and the other's perception about one's own personality. A model of Johari Window was pioneered by Joseph Luft and Harrington Ingham to look at one's personality including behaviours



disclosure. This is the extent to which the persons are willing to share with others the data that exists in their **organisational** milieu. In the process of feedback and disclosures in the system, organisationally relevant data which the others are willing to share with the person or persons about the way they think or behave, the open self of persons begins to broaden its horizon. There is also a high probability that something of which was previously unknown to the self and others will begin to surface into the unknown self.

Leader Effectiveness and Adaptability Description self (LEAD-self) and Leader Effectiveness and Adaptability Description other (LEAD-other) were developed by **Hersey** and **Blanchard** to determine the discrepancy between self-perception and the perception of others. If there is a great discrepancy between self-perception and other's perception, the open self of an administrator's or manager's Johari Window would tend to be very small. But if there is no significant difference between the self-perception and the perception of others, the open self in manager's or administrator's Johari Window would be large. LEAD data can actually measure the shape of the quadrants in a person's leadership Johari Window in each of the organisational settings in which the person operates. The National Training Laboratory suggests the following guidelines for providing feedback for effective interpersonal relations:

- Be descriptive rather than judgemental.
- a Be specific rather than general.
- Deal with things that can be changed.
- Give feedback when it is desired.
- a Consider the motives for giving and receiving feedback.
- a Give feedback at the time the behaviour takes **place**.
- Give feedback when its accuracy can be checked with others.

**Check Your Progress-1**

1) , Explain Transactional Analysis.

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2) What is the Blind Self?

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3) What is the Unknown Self!

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**10.3 EGO STATES**

The ego plays an important role in human behaviour. Sigmund Freud was the first to believe that there are three sources within the human personality that stimulate, monitor and control behaviour. Transactional analysis uses Freudian psychoanalytic theory as the background for **identifying** three important ego states: child, adult and parent. These three ego states art

roughly equivalent to Freudian concepts of id (child), ego (adult) and **supergo** (parent). These three ego states have nothing to do with the chronological age of the persons and they are related only with the psychological age. A person of any age may have these ego states in varying degrees. According to Berne, "although we cannot directly observe these ego states, we can observe behaviour and from this infer which of the three ego states are operating at that moment". People interact with one another in terms of these three ego states. A balance between three ego states gives way for a healthy person who can easily move from one ego to another.

### Parent (P) Ego State

For better or for worse, parents serve as models and are imprinted on the brains of their children. The parent ego state is a huge collection of recordings in the brain of unquestioned or imposed external events perceived by a person before his social birth or before he leaves home in response to the demands of society and enters school. The father and mother, elder sisters and brothers and school teachers become internalised in the parent ego state as recordings of what the child saw them say and do. We often observe the parents or parent substitutes telling children, smoking or drinking is injurious to health. From where did they learn this advice? They probably learned it from their parents, who, in turn learnt it from their own parents and so on. This means that the values and behaviour of parents become an integral part of a person's personality.

Persons with the parent ego state, act like **domineering** parents. They can be overly protective, loving, distant, dogmatic, indispensable, upright, stem and critical. Physical and verbal clues that someone is acting with the parent ego state, include the wagging finger to show displeasure, give standards and rules for others, and reliance on the ways that were successful in the past. They tend to talk down to people and to treat others like children.

There are two types of parent ego states:

- Nurturing parent, and
- Prejudicial Parent or Critical Parent.

Nurturing parent ego state reflects sympathetic, protective and nurturing behaviour not only towards children but also to other people in interaction. Children who have nurturing parents develop Parent ego states that contain nurturing behaviour. Unless deliberately deciding against it when grown, they may repeat to their own children the same sympathetic, nurturing remarks and gestures that they learned from their parents.

The Critical Parent ego state tends to be filled with opinions about religion, politics, traditions, sexual role expectations, life styles, child rearing, proper dress, speech, and all the facets of cultural family scripts. These opinions, often irrational, may not have been evaluated by the Adult ego state and may be prejudiced. When operating prejudicially with children, parents attempt to set standards of behaviour on the basis of these erroneous opinions rather than on the basis of facts. Critical **parent** ego state shows critical and evaluative behaviour in interaction with others. It makes people feel that they, not just their behaviour, are not O.K. Thus, Critical Parent behaviour attacks people's personalities as well as their behaviour. They are always ready to respond with a should or ought to almost anything people tell them. All parents tend to use Nurturing ego state on some occasion and the Critical ego state on others.

### Adult (A) Ego State

Everyone has an Adult ego state, and unless the brain is severely **damaged, everyone** is capable of using adult data-processing ability. The Adult is a data-processing computer, which grinds out decisions after computing the information from the parent, the child, and the data which the Adult has gathered and is gathering. One of the important functions of the Adult is to examine the data in the Parent and the Childbank to ensure whether it is true or false. After having examined the data, the Adult will accept or reject it. The goal is not to do away with the Parent and Child but to be free to examine these bodies of data. In the Adult ego state people attack problems in a "cool-headed" rational manner. People interacting with Adult ego do not act impulsively or in a domineering style. They assume human beings as equal, worthy and responsible. The Adult has an independent set of feelings, attitudes and behaviour patterns that are adapted to the current reality and are not affected by Parental prejudices or archaic attitudes left over from childhood. Thus, people, with Adult ego state gather relevant information, carefully analyse it, generate alternatives and make logical choices. **This** ego state can be identified by verbal and physical signs which include **thoughtful** concentration and factual discussion.

Everyone carries within one's brain and nervous system, permanent recordings of internal events (feelings) in response to external events (mostly father and mother) between the birth and age five. The Child ego state is the inner world of feelings, experiences and adaptations. It is associated with behaviours like conformity, anxiety, depression, dependence, fear, creativity, emotional, sentimental, submissive, joyful, insubordinate and rebellious. In each case, the child ego is characterised by very immature behaviour. For example, a worker tells a co-worker, "my boss makes me so mad sometimes, I could scream," and then proceeds to break into tears. It is childlike behaviour. Physical and verbal clues that the person is acting in the child ego are silent compliance, attention seeking, temper tantrums, giggling and coyness. Like an actual child, the child ego desires approval from others and prefers immediate rewards. It can be identified by its emotional tone, as when an employee comments to the supervisor, "You're always picking on me". There are several forms of the Child ego state. Muriel and Jogeward in their book, *Born to Win*, have said that the most popular child ego states are : Natural Child, Adaptive Child and Little Professor.

1) The Natural Child

The Natural Child is affectionate, impulsive, sensuous, uncensored and curious. For example, the Natural child responds impulsively to his bodily feelings, crying when hungry or wet and cooing when full or comfortable. Nevertheless, he is also fearful, self-indulgent, self-centred, rebellious and aggressive. When frustrated, for instance, the Natural child responds rebelliously. Children may assert this will by throwing a bottle, refusing to eat or screaming with anger, etc.

2) The Little Professor

The Little Professor is intuitive, creative and manipulative. When a child acts like the Little Professor, he figures things out and often believes in magic. He responds to non-verbal messages and plays hunches. For example, a person can intuitively guess the meaning of the boss's tense jaw or the twinkle in a friend's eye. However, the little professor is sometimes wrong. The boss may have a toothache and the friend may be enjoying a fantasy. People who **express** their creativity purposefully use their little professor in conjunction with their Adult ego state.

3) The Adaptive Child

The adaptive child is the trained one and he is likely to do what parents insist on, rational or irrational, and may learn to feel non-OK. A child's first adaptations to the world begin in the mother's womb, as her emotions, chemical make-up, nutrition and health leave their effect on her unborn child. Immediately after his physical birth, an infant begins to adapt to the demands of the outside world. The Adapted Child is a socialised one. Children may be adapted to be courteous and to conform to rituals and to standards of dress. Briefly stated, an Adapted child is characterised by experiences and parental training that influence the child.

Each individual has three unique ego states and also behaves from these states at different times. However, according to Wagner "a healthy person has a personality that maintains a **balance** among all three". Practically speaking it would be difficult if not impossible to maintain a balance among all the three ego states. At times, some people tend to be dominated by one or two ego states. Empirical evidence shows that the human behaviour is a product of constant interaction between the situation and an individual which may lead to good or bad consequences. Thus, an ego state from which a person behaves would depend to a large extent, on a situation in which an individual operates at that particular moment.

Check Your Progress-2

1) Explain the importance of ego states in analysing interpersonal behaviour.

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2) What are the characteristics of persons with parent ego state?

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## 10.4 LIFE POSITIONS

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Very early in life, a person develops certain specific perceptions based on his or her experiences about the self and other's behaviour. These perceptions tend to remain with the person for life, unless major experiences occur to change them. Such perceptions are the most deterministic decisions of one's life and permanently influence everything one does. In transactional analysis approach, such perceptions are called life positions or psychological positions. This approach constructs the following classification of the four possible life positions held with respect to one-self and others:

- (1) I am not - OK - You are OK.
- (2) I am not - OK - You are not - OK.
- (3) I am OK - You are not - OK.
- (4) I am OK - You are OK.

**I'm Not - OK - You're OK**

This is a common position of persons who feel powerless when they compare themselves to others. This position leads them to withdraw, experience depression, and in severe cases, become suicidal. Persons with this life position always feel themselves at the mercy of others and grumble for one thing or the other. Managers behaving from this position tend to give and receive bad feelings. In this position, there is a need to give positive strokes to motivate the workers to produce more. Those who have this position operate from child ego state.

**I'm Not OK - You're Not OK**

This is a position of those who lose interest in living. They feel that life is full of frustrations and exhibit schizoid behaviour. In extreme cases, persons with this life position commit suicide or homicide. Those persons who were ignored by their parents in their early life and brought up by their servants usually take this position. At times, persons with this life position begin to use intoxicated drugs. Managers behaving from this position are not competent, energetic, efficient and effective. They are indecisive, confused and make uncalled for mistakes. They provoke others to give them negative strokes in order to relieve themselves from stresses, and strains.

**I'm OK - You're not OK**

Those persons who have this position feel victimised or persecuted, or they victimise and persecute others. They blame others for their miseries. This is a distrustful psychological position. It is an outcome of a situation in which the child was seriously neglected by his parents. Delinquents and criminals **often** have this position and take on paranoid behaviour which in extreme cases may lead to homicide. In this position, persons operate from the parent ego. Managers behaving from this position believe in negative strokes. They feel that workers are lazy, irresponsible and untrustful, therefore, they need to be closely controlled and often coerced to achieve organisational objectives.

**I'm OK - You're OK**

This is potentially a mentally **healthy** position. People with this position **express confidence** in themselves as well as trust and confidence in others. Their expectations are likely to be valid. They accept the significance of people and feel that life is worthliving. **Those** who have this position behave from Adult, Nurturing parent, and Happy child ego states. When managers behave from this position, they have complete confidence and trust in subordinates. **They disperse** decision-making authority throughout the organisation. They believe in giving and taking positive strokes. They encourage communication flow not only **up and** down the hierarchy but among peers.

Every person has the above four positions and takes one in life, about one self and about

others. The last is the winner's position (I'm OK - you're OK). But even winners may occasionally have feelings that resemble the other three. The best position is one that provides an adult-adult transaction, i.e., I'm OK - You're OK. It is the most desirable position because it shows acceptance of self and others. Psychological understanding and conscious choice can help people to move to OK - OK position. Education, understanding, positive and mature psychological experiences help individuals to learn this.

Transactions take place between people and consist of **stimulus** (verbal and non-verbal) plus response. People interact with each other from ego states. Transactional analysis can help us to determine which ego state is most heavily influencing our behaviour and the behaviour of other people with whom we interact. On the basis of ego states, transactions can be classified as complimentary, crossed and ulterior.

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## 10.5 WAYS TO DEAL WITH CONFLICTS

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The main or primary unit of any organisation, large or small, is the individual. If a manager knows what factors influence an individual's behaviour, including his own he would be able to manage more effectively. To understand behaviour it is necessary to consider attitudes, perceptions and personality. There is no magic formula to gain an insight into human behaviour but, these factors do give us some knowledge and information on human interactions.

Criticism, anger, sarcasm, aggression, fear, tears, low performance etc. are largely connected to feelings and emotions of individuals. The causes of all these have more to do with factors such as needs, interests, roles, pressures, personality, resources, lack of awareness and skill. Ultimately these factors lead to conflicts among individuals or groups. Conflict is not necessarily bad, but at times some very useful or productive outcome may be expected out of a conflict. Conflict management is necessary to remove unpleasant feelings, anger, criticism and aggression, etc., that affect good interpersonal relationships. The following ways could be helpful in dealing with conflicts:

1) Try to channel the drives that produces rivalry into constructive effort

Most of the people in an organisation want to do better. They want to excel in whatever they are doing. It is because of these feelings, motives drives and desires that people get into conflicting situations or because of which the frictions arise. (In case with the help of superiors and associates these drives are channeled in the right direction the organisation as a whole would benefit and this will also be an asset for the organisation)

2) Watch for the points where conflicts may become destructive

There is no formula that tells us when rivalry and controversy have gone too far and when they haven't. One has to play this question by the ear and observation and make individual **judgements** in each case. One important aspect to be remembered is that the gains of conflicts such as new information, new understanding and education etc., must be weighed against the cost in terms of hurt feelings and sleepless nights that the conflict produces.

3) Keep focusing on the benefits of having men with ability, irrespective of their personal weaknesses

While appraising performances of an employee his character or the personal side is rarely isolated, This may lead a manager to overlook the positive traits of a **doer/achiever**, and this may result in frictions or conflicts which may be resolved by pointing out the plus points of an employee and also by giving a **particular** job responsibility.

4) See that your very ambitious subordinates work for you and the company

In case your subordinates have a lot of time to spend on backstage manoeuvres it means that they don't have enough work. It is always a good idea to see if the long term **plans/developments** of the organisation are being effectively managed by your subordinates. It is also important to take stock of whether the employees care for developing the abilities of subordinates and assignments or not. The jobs of the employees should be enriched as well as enlarged. This will keep them occupied.

5) See that the friction happens for the right reasons

Whenever you get concerned about any **rivalry/conflict** or argument that is going on, ask yourself a question. "Is this happening because of the groups forward progress or because I haven't been providing the right quality of leadership"?

Try to put people's efforts in such a way that conflicts come from bonafide attempts to move the organisation ahead and not for selfish or short term gains.

If you are an autocratic leader, your subordinates will come for guidance each time they face a problem as they are highly dependent on you and at the same time they will not show but hide their feelings. They may hide problems also. In this case there will be a negative result.

On the other hand if you believe in building self reliance, encouraging initiative and make your people work for achieving certain organisational goals, then also there may be conflicts but of the kind that comes naturally from forward progress.

Check Your Progress3

- 1) What are the different life positions used in Transactional Analysis approach?

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- 2) List out any three ways of conflict management.

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10.6 LET US SUM UP

In the preceding sections we have explained the meaning of self-awareness as this goes a long way in improving interpersonal relationships. Every individual has an ego and the behaviour of a person is guided by the dominance or absence of specific ego states. In order to have cordial relationships in the organisation and among the individuals, it is necessary to have complimentary rather than crossed or ulterior transactions. Further the four life positions and the reasons for adopting a particular life position at a given point of time have been explained with a view to ensure positive interpersonal behaviour. Conflicts stand in the way of called for interpersonal behaviour. Thus some ways for effectively dealing with the conflicts have been mentioned in the Unit.

10.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress-1

- 1) TA is a conceptual framework to understand interpersonal styles. See Sec.10.1
- 2) See Sec.10.2
- 3) See Sec.10.2

Check Your Progress-2

- 1) Ego is an important controlling factor of individual behaviour. Understanding of different ego states helps in analysing human behaviour. See Sec.10.3
- 2) See Sec.10.3

Check Your Progress - 3

- 1) See Sec.10.4
- 2) See Sec.10.5