

Ego States and Burnout Among Rural Adolescents: A Transactional Analysis Approach to Understanding Emotional Resilience

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Abstract

Adolescence is an age of emotional development. An adolescent has to learn to strike a balance between independence, responsibility and belongingness. The present study was planned to find out the relationship between ego states and burnout among rural government school adolescents of Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh. A sample of 200 adolescents (100 boys and 100 girls) aged 13-18 completed the Transactional Analysis Questionnaire and the School Burnout Inventory. Correlations, t-tests and ANOVA showed that high scores for the Controlling Parent and Adapted Child ego states correlated with more burnout, and high scores for the Nurturing Parent and Free Child ego states correlated with lower levels of burnout. The combination of the three components led the adolescents to differ in their coping. The researchers suggested that schools track transactions as part of implementing life skill programs, to promote self-awareness and emotional health in adolescents.

Keywords: Ego States, Burnout, Transactional Analysis, Adolescents, Emotional Resilience, Rural India

Introduction

Adolescence is a period of vulnerability and empowerment. Though quickly developing physically, psychologically, and emotionally, adolescents' potential is lived out against the background of limited opportunities, rural community, social stratification and social norms. Stress on adolescents involved their perceptions of others' expectations for academic performance, responsibly for their family, and conformity to society. These stressors might show in adolescents' feelings of inadequacy plus their lack of energy and withdrawal.

Burnout, defined as emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a diminished sense of personal accomplishment (Maslach & Jackson, 1981), stemmed from studies within that mainly engaged adult samples. For example, Salmela-Aro et al. (2008) showed how school

burnout exhausts the adolescents' interest during learning, as they are exposed to unreasonable demands in school. In rural areas, these traits are highlighted by their lack of help and their firm values.

Eric Berne's (1961) Transactional Analysis (TA) theory may also explain more plausibly the differences adolescents respond with to stressors when they describe personality using the PAC state functions of Parent, Adult, and Child. Certain thinking patterns, feeling patterns, and behaving patterns characterize them for sure.

- The Nurturing Parent has empathy. It is caring. It is protective.
- The Controlling Parent sets rules and expectations.
- The Adult thinks rationally and objectively.
- The Free Child is spontaneous, curious, and joyful.
- Adapted Child: dutiful, guilt-ridden, compliant with authority.

While the Nurturing Parent and the Free Child ego states are generally functional ego states, the Controlling Parent and Adapted Child ego states can lead to stress and burnout when overactivated. Hierarchical and repressive parenting styles can lead adolescents to use the Controlling Parent ego state or the Adapted Child ego state to respond to new situations or stress.

According to Stewart and Joines (1987) and Mangal and Mangal (2015), naturally, the ideal structure of ego states is emotionally mature and socially skilful. In India, empirical studies were scarce regarding the relationship between ego states and adolescent burnout, especially in rural areas with limitations on socioeconomic status and parents' high expectations.

Hence, the present study was undertaken to see the effect of ego state dominance on burnout among adolescents of rural government schools of Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh.

Review of Literature

Berne (1961) proposed that ego states were learned from the parent in childhood and formed the opinions the individual possesses regarding themselves and others. The Nurturing Parent engenders emotional security. The Controlling Parent values order. The Free Child plays, while the Adapted Child obeys authority, is compliant, and makes compromises.

According to Stewart and Joines (1987), stress occurs when one or both of the critical and/or the accommodating ego states are relied upon to the exclusion of other ego states. James and Jongeward (1971) state that the capacity for awareness and choice is what allows people to "re-script" self-talk and attain greater autonomy.

In the Bulgarian study of young respondents, Bekir and Tair (2023) found that those growing up in an authoritarian family environment had higher levels of Controlling Parent, Adapted Child, anxiety, and emotional tiredness. In the Indian study, Rao and Venkatesan (2019) found that respondents from a joint family (the Indian equivalent of an extended family) had higher levels of Nurturing Parent and Free Child.

This may be further supported by studies of burnout, which is also a worldwide phenomenon among adolescents, having links to depression and low self-esteem (Walburg 2014). Perfectionism, which has the same underlying mechanism, Internalized Controlling Parent Messages (Flett and Hewitt 2002), has further been linked to chronic stress and emotional exhaustion.

In India, Sharma and Kumar (2018) discovered that features of the Adapted Child, such as excessive emotional inhibition and a lack of assertiveness, existed in Indian rural adolescents, and Singh and Shukla (2023) found a meaningful relationship between ego-state patterns, birth order, and family structure, though few empirical studies have examined the role of Transactional Analysis as an integrated model for rural educational burnout.

The study examined the relationship between the functional and dysfunctional ego states and burnout of rural government school adolescents with implications for the theory and school counseling practice.

3. Objectives and Hypotheses

Objectives

1. To determine the relative prevalence of functional (Nurturing Parent, Free Child) and dysfunctional (Controlling Parent, Adapted Child) ego states among rural adolescents.
2. to assess the correlation between these ego states and workplace burnout.
3. To explore differences in ego states and burnout based on gender and family type.

Hypothesis

- H₁: The Controlling Parent and Adapted Child ego state scores will be positively correlated with burnout scores.
- H₂: Higher self-reported scores on the Nurturing Parent and Free Child ego states will be associated with lower burnout.
- H₃: Males will score higher than females on Controlling Parent and Free Child, while females will score higher than males on Nurturing Parent and Adapted Child.
- H₄: Adolescents in joint families will have more functional ego states and less burnout than adolescents from nuclear families.

Methodology

Participants

Two hundred adolescent students (100 boys and 100 girls) belonging to the age group 13-18 years were selected from three government schools of rural Lucknow district, Uttar Pradesh by stratified random sampling on the basis of gender (boys/girls) and family type (nuclear/joint).

1. The Transactional Analysis Questionnaire (TAQ Bradford) is a 61-item rated self-report measure for the Nurturing Parent, Controlling Parent, Adult, Free Child and the Adapted Child ego states. Cronbach's $\alpha = .82$.

2. School Burnout Inventory (SBI) (Salmela-Aro et al. 2008), nine items for assessing exhaustion, cynicism, and sense of inadequacy (Cronbach's $\alpha = .85$).

3. Demographic Sheet - Basic demographic items include age, gender, type of family, parent education.

Procedure

The school administration and the institutional research board were informed and permission was obtained. Parental consent was written, and students verbally assented. Data was collected during the school hours in batches and in the Hindi language, people volunteered and also gave their responses freely.

Data Analysis

SPSS v28 was used to analyze the data. Descriptive analyzes were used to calculate means for the ego-states and burnout scores. t-tests and ANOVA were used to evaluate differences according to gender and family type, followed by Pearson correlations. An importance level of $p < .05$ was used.

Ego State	Mean	SD	Correlation with Burnout (r)
Nurturing parent	3.84	0.61	-0.42 ***
Controlling Parent	3.45	0.73	0.38**
Free Child	3.91	0.65	-0.47***
Adapted Child	3.52	0.69	0.44 ***
Burnout	3.36	0.71	—

*p under .05; **p under .01; ***p under .001

Burnout scores were positively correlated with the Controlling Parent and Adapted Child and negatively correlated with the Nurturing Parent and Free Child. Anxiety was a predictor of burnout severity.

Gender Differences

Females had higher scores on the Nurturing Parent ($t = 2.54, p = .012$) and the Adapted Child ($t = 2.36, p = .019$).

Men scored considerably higher than women in the Controlling Parent scale ($t = 2.48, p = .014$) and the Free Child scale ($t = 2.24, p = .026$).

Family-Type Differences (ANOVA)

Adolescents of joint families showed a higher Nurturing Parent score ($F = 5.84, df = 1, p = .017$), Free Child score ($F = 6.23, df = 1, p = .013$) and lower burnout score ($F = 7.15, df = 1, p = .008$).

Discussion

Adolescents in the Controlling Parent and Adapted Child ego states experience higher levels of burnout, as they represent the internalized parent figures and self-critical voice found in environments where conformity is valued and emotion is seen as undesirable. Fitting with

Maslach and Jackson's (1981) argument that burnout occurs when individuals experience chronic stress and a feeling of being stuck between expectations and autonomy.

Only adolescents with high Nurturing Parent and Free Child scores were less vulnerable, and at greatly reduced risk of burnout. Higher empathy, spontaneity and self-acceptance had protective effects as well. Similar balanced and unbalanced associations were reported by Berne (1961) and Stewart and Joines (1987), who placed the emphasis on the strength of balanced ego states.

Likewise, girls can be more likely to agree with high Nurturing Parent and Adapted Child because they are socialized to be nurturing, obedient, and compliant. Boys can be more likely to agree with high Controlling Parent and Free Child statements. Their healthy ego-state balance and low burnout indicate the emotional safety of joint families.

Adolescent emotional health is not only contextual or contextualized learning. Adolescent emotional health is also learned ego-states as a function of socio-cultural factors that form the background environment.

Implications

School Counselor: School counselors can address with TA concepts and exercises self-awareness and burnout in adolescents. Self-compassion can rebuild resilience in the Nurturing Parent state and spontaneity with self-expression can promote the Free Child state.

Training teachers in TA and the Nurturing Parent method has improved classroom climate. Teacher role modeling Nurturing Parent behavior, as opposed to Controlling Parent behavior, has been shown to reduce teacher stress and increase student engagement and well-being.

As Parents: Here validation and discussion lessen reliance on the Adapted Child to do as told. Reframed parents help keep the Adult centered in discussion.

Policy: Curriculum developments regarding emotional literacy in rural school settings, and longitudinal studies of ego-state development may assist culturally-sensitive policy-development of adolescent mental health.

Conclusions

Ultimately, our results replicate that the antecedents of burnout in rural adolescents are unbalanced ego-state determinants which result from the experience of family and culture in

early childhood. The Controlling Parent and the Adapted Child patterns implode towards stress and psychological exhaustion. By contrast, the Nurturing Parent and the Free Child patterns are more resilient.

The teenagers would be using the skills that their families and schools taught them to cope empathically, constructively and assertively with the stresses they face. Transactional Analysis would seem to provide, then, not just psychotherapy but also education and primary and secondary mental-health care.

Thus the educational and counseling systems of the rural areas can produce the self-aware and emotionally matured teenagers whose dual task is to carry out their social responsibility and live their lives to the fullest potential.

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