

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.12426502

# EGO-STATE PATTERNS AMONG TRANSGENDER YOUTH IN MANIPUR: AN EXPLORATORY TRANSACTIONAL

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Received: 16/08/2025  
Accepted: 22/02/2026

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## ABSTRACT

Transactional Analysis (TA) offers extensive applications in psychotherapy and interpersonal analysis in understanding ego states (Parent, Adult, Child) among transgender youth, yet research is limited in non-Western contexts like Manipur, India, where cultural acceptance coexists with stigma. This exploratory cross-sectional study examined ego-state patterns and socio-demographic predictors among 200 transgender youth using Transactional Analysis Questionnaire (TAQ) and multinomial logistic regression, with participants recruited through purposive and snowball sampling. Findings revealed that 8% showed dominant Adult ego state, 1% Parent, and 2% Child, while 89% exhibited switching patterns, primarily between the Adult-Child (23%) and Adult-Parent (22%) configurations. The analysis revealed that educational attainment and age of gender realisation were significant predictors of ego state configurations. Participants with higher education levels were more likely to exhibit an Adult ego state rather than switching patterns (Adult-Child, Child-Adult and Parent-Child with  $p=.004$ ,  $.006$  and  $.047$ , respectively). Those who realised their gender identity at a later age were more likely to demonstrate switching over configuration between Parent and Adult ego state. These findings highlight dynamic ego-state fluidity amid psychosocial challenges for transgender youth in Manipur, underscoring TA's utility for identity integration. Psychosocial interventions promoting Adult ego strength via education and affirming environments are recommended.

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**KEYWORDS:** Manipur, India; Mental Health; Ego States; Identity Development; Transactional Analysis; Transgender Youth

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

According to The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, the Government of India defines a transgender person as a person whose gender identity does not match with the gender assigned at birth, and includes trans-men and trans-women (regardless of whether they have undergone gender-affirming procedures), persons with intersex variations, genderqueer, and persons having such socio-cultural identities as *kinner*, *hijra*, *aravani* and *jogta*.

Transgender individuals in Manipur, locally referred to as *Nupi Maanbi* (trans women) and *Nupa Maanbi* (trans men), occupy a unique cultural space rooted in indigenous traditions. These identities reflect a longstanding gender plurality within Manipuri society (Khurai, 2017). Despite this cultural recognition, the daily lives of transgender youth frequently face social stigma, discrimination, harassment, exclusion from education, healthcare, and employment sectors. This paradox of cultural recognition amid social rejection creates a challenging psychosocial landscape for transgender youth navigating their identities (Ya All, 2021).

Ego states, a foundational concept within Transactional Analysis (TA) developed by Eric Berne (1961), provides a useful framework to understand human personality through three core states: Parent, Adult, and Child. Each ego state reflects a distinct set of thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. Among the transgender youth in Manipur, these ego states may play a critical role in mediating responses to external oppression and internalised conflicts related to gender identity, family dynamics, societal roles, and self-concept.

- The Parent ego state, shaped by cultural and familial messages, may internalise normative gender roles and moral judgments that cause inner conflict.
- The Child ego state, associated with emotion, spontaneity, and early experiences, may reflect trauma, fear, or resilience depending on personal histories.
- The Adult ego state, ideally the most rational and autonomous, is crucial for identity integration, social adaptation, and decision-making in the face of marginalisation.

Globally, the literature highlights the elevated mental health challenges faced by transgender individuals when compared to cisgender cohorts. With enhanced rates of depression, anxiety and suicidal ideation (Budge, Adelson, and Howard, 2013; James et al., 2016). Testa et al (2017) explained these disparities as outcomes of chronic discrimination and internal conflicts of transphobia. In addition, empirical literature indicates that

transgender youth often experience a disproportionate burden of psychosocial stress due to stigma, discrimination, and limited access to affirming environments (Klein & Golub, 2016; Budge et al., 2013)

Moreover, researchers suggest that access to gender-affirming care and social support has reduced distress and improved their psychological well-being (Singh & Lopez, 2025; Hughto, Reisner and Pachankis, 2015). In line with this, Winter et al (2016) have emphasised the gap in research focusing on non-Western contexts and suggested a crucial need for South Asian studies to address socio-cultural influences on transgender mental health.

The life challenges, internal conflicts and other stressors can deeply impact emotional development and self-perception, potentially influencing ego state dynamics. For instance, a heightened Parent ego state may emerge from internalised societal judgment, while a fragmented Child ego state might reflect early trauma or abandonment. On the other hand, a resilient Adult ego state may indicate adaptive coping mechanisms developed in response to adversity.

According to Singh et al. (2017), the studies have emphasised the importance of using non-pathologising psychological models like TA to explore the lived realities of gender-diverse individuals. Their work suggests that ego state analysis provides a practical and accessible way to interpret behavioural complexities without reinforcing medicalised views of gender nonconformity. Similarly, Sharma and Saini (2019) highlighted that ego state configurations often reflect broader sociocultural influences, making TA a suitable framework for exploring identity development in diverse cultural contexts.

This study explores ego-state patterns among transgender youth in Manipur and examines how socio-demographic factors, such as age, gender, education, age of gender realization, occupation, family support, and area of residence, influence these configurations. By adopting a non-pathologising, culturally sensitive framework, this study seeks to contribute to understanding the psychological development of transgender youth in India.

### 1.1. Research questions:

1. What are the prevalent ego state patterns - including dominant states and switching configurations - among Transgender youth in Manipur?
2. How do socio-demographic factors (age, gender, education, age of gender realisation, occupation, family support and area of residence) influence these ego state patterns?

### 1.2. Objectives:

1. To identify and describe prevalent ego-state patterns (dominant and switching configurations) among transgender youth aged 18-24 in Manipur.
2. To examine associations between socio-demographic factors (age, gender, education, age of gender realization, occupation, family support, area of residence) and ego-state configurations.

Despite growing recognition of transgender mental health challenges globally and in India, no prior studies have applied Transactional Analysis to examine ego-state patterns among transgender youth, particularly in culturally distinct regions like Manipur, where traditional gender pluralism coexists with modern stigma. This exploratory study fills that gap by providing the first culture-specific analysis of dominant and switching ego states in this population, using a non-pathologizing TA framework to illuminate identity development amid socio-cultural pressures.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The research design adopted was a quantitative, cross-sectional, exploratory and correlational design: Quantitative - as it used numerical scores from TAQ and multinomial logistic regression to analyse ego states and their socio-demographic determinants. Cross-sectional - as the data were collected at a single point in time from transgender youth aged 18-24; Correlational - as it examines association between socio-demographic variables and ego state patterns without establishing causation; and Exploratory - as the study attempt to explore new territory and generates insights for future research given the limited literature on ego states among transgender youth in Manipur.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling as the primary technique and were recruited through a local non-governmental organisation working for transgender welfare in Manipur. Snowball sampling was used as a secondary technique, as the participants were also encouraged to refer others within the community. Overall, the sample consisted of 200 transgender individuals (95 trans men and 105 trans women aged 18-24 years). The inclusion criteria included self-identification as transgender and willingness to participate in the study.

Informed consent was obtained, and ethical protocols were followed. Ethical approval was granted by the Institutional Human Ethics Committee of the affiliating institution.

Two tools were used: 1) A self-formulated tool to capture socio-demographic information. 2)

Transactional Analysis Questionnaire (TAQ), a standardised self-report instrument designed to measure the three primary ego states - Parent, Adult and Child. The instrument is grounded with the principles of Eric Berne's Transactional Analysis theory, comprising 61 items to capture the participants' patterns of thinking, feeling and behaviour. Participants responded to each item on a two-point Likert-type scale, '+' (agree) or a '-' (disagree) for each item. A response marked '+' was scored as 1, while '-' as 0. The scores are then totalled for each ego state.

To interpret TAQ results: A participant was classified as having a *dominant ego state* if that state's score exceeded the next highest by  $\geq 20$  percentage points. If the two highest scores differed by  $< 20$  percentage points, the participant was classified as *switching* between those two ego states (Bradford Vocational Practice Training Scheme, 2014).

Example: For Parent=45, Adult=42, Child=13 (total=100), Adult-Parent switching is assigned (42-45 difference = 3%  $< 20\%$ ). For Parent=50, Adult=25, Child=25, dominant Parent is assigned (50-25 = 25%  $\geq 20\%$ ).

The TAQ has been widely used in psychological and behavioural research and has demonstrated acceptable reliability and validity across diverse populations. For the current study, the tool was reviewed for cultural relevance and linguistic clarity in the context of the local community. The TAQ demonstrated acceptable internal consistency among the selected sample (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.819$ ). Manipuri translation was verified through forward-back translation by bilingual facilitators to ensure comprehension and accuracy.

After scoring and classifying the sample according to the questionnaire's rules, data were analysed using percentiles and Multinomial logistic regression. Multinomial logistic regression was used because the outcome variable comprised nine mutually exclusive ego-state configurations, allowing us to model how multiple socio-demographic predictors differentially relate to each category using the dominant Adult ego state as the reference group. The model reported Nagelkerke  $R^2$  to estimate explained variance.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the objectives, the results are discussed under two main categories to provide a structured interpretation of the data.

### 3.1. To identify and describe prevalent ego-state patterns (dominant and switching configurations) among transgender youth aged 18-24 in Manipur.

Table 1 illustrates the dominant ego states and the switching patterns among transgender youth.

**Table 1: Dominant and switching ego state configurations of the Transgender youth**

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Parent	2	1.0
Adult	16	8.0
Child	4	2
Switch between Parent and Adult	19	9.5
Switch between Parent and Child	13	6.5
Switch between Adult and Child	46	23
Switch between Adult and Parent	44	22
Switch between Child and Adult	28	14
Switch between Child and Parent	28	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>

**Dominant ego states:** As shown in Table 1, only a small proportion of the Transgender youth in the study demonstrated a dominant ego state. Specifically, only two respondents (1%) exhibited a dominant Parent ego state, suggesting that their behaviour and personality are significantly shaped by internalised parental or authoritative influences.

A total of 16 respondents (8%) were identified with a dominant Adult ego state. This state reflects rational thinking, logical decision-making, and balanced responses to the present environment. These individuals are likely to analyse situations objectively, relying on facts rather than emotions or past conditioning.

Meanwhile, 4 respondents (2%) were found to predominantly operate from the Child ego state, indicating a tendency to preserve behaviours, emotions, and attitudes rooted in early life experiences. These individuals often express spontaneous feelings and act on impulses reflective of a childlike mindset.

**Switching ego state patterns:** A vast majority of the respondents (89%) demonstrated switching patterns between ego states, rather than having a single dominant state. The most frequent switching pattern observed was between the Adult-Child ego states, with 46 respondents (23%) falling into this category. This was followed closely by switching between Adult-Parent ego states, observed in 44 respondents (22%).

Interestingly, 28 respondents (14%) showed switching patterns between Child-Adult, and another 28 (14%) between Child-Parent, indicating frequent internal shifts depending on context or emotional triggers. Switching between Parent-Adult (9.5%) and Parent-Child (6.5%) ego states was relatively less common.

These findings suggest that most transgender youth in the sample do not consistently rely on a single ego state but instead fluctuate between states in response to interpersonal or intrapersonal demands. While some individuals may consciously

navigate between these states, for many, these transitions occur without awareness.

According to Berne (1961, cited in Owlgen, 2020), explained that ego states are not directly observable but can be inferred from behaviour. A psychologically healthy individual is expected to maintain a dynamic balance among all three ego states, Parent, Adult, and Child, and transition fluidly based on situational needs. Empirical studies support that psychological health involves dynamic balance rather than rigid dominance, with higher Adult scores linked to better outcomes though flexible switching also characterises adaptation (Aksöz & Ural, 2020; Sharma & Saini, 2019; Kracsla, 2020). However, individuals often gravitate towards one or two preferred states due to past experiences, social conditioning, or emotional needs.

For transgender youth, whose identities may be shaped by complex psychosocial and emotional challenges, including societal stigma, familial rejection, and internal conflict, their ego state patterns may reflect both coping mechanisms and adaptive strategies. The high occurrence of switching behaviour in this study may indicate flexibility and resilience, or in some cases, a lack of stability in self-perception and emotional regulation. However, the cross-sectional design cannot distinguish whether frequent switching primarily reflects adaptive flexibility in response to contextual demands or underlying distress; both interpretations remain possible pending longitudinal and qualitative investigation. Levin (2015) and Sreenivasan & Suriyaprakash (2019) had also suggested that the frequency of shifting between ego states reflects the psychological resilience and emotional volatility even among normal youth.

Hence, understanding these patterns provides valuable insight into the psychological dynamics of transgender individuals and may inform supportive interventions that encourage ego state awareness and healthy integration.

**3.2. To examine associations between socio-demographic factors (age, gender, education, age of gender realization, occupation, family support, area of residence) and ego-state configurations:**

Multinomial logistic regression was conducted to analyse the influence of socio-demographic variables, namely age, gender, education, occupation, age of gender realisation, family support, and area of

residence, on the ego state configurations among the transgender youth. The dominant Adult ego state was used as the reference group against the remaining eight ego state configurations. All determinant variables were standardised (*mean*=0 and *SD*=1) before the analysis.

**Model fit and Variance:** Table 2 provides the model fitting statistics.

**Table 2: Model Fitting Information and Goodness of Fit**

Model	-2 Log Likelihood	$\chi^2$	df	Sig.
Intercept Only	742.639			
Final	676.431	66.208	49	.051
Goodness-of fit Tests				
Tests	$\chi^2$	df	Sig.	Nagelkerke R
Pearson	1181.600	1246	.903	.291
Deviance	662.332	1246	1.000	

Note. Higher Nagelkerke R<sup>2</sup> indicates better model fit.

The model demonstrated adequate fit, as indicated by non-significance Pearson ( $\chi^2$  (1246) = 1181.60; *p*=.903) and Deviance ( $\chi^2$  (1246) = 662.33, *p*=1.000) statistics. The Nagelkerke R<sup>2</sup> of .291 implies that 29.1% of the variance in ego state configuration was explained.

**Significant determinants:** Table 3 summarises the unique contribution of each predictor, using the conventional alpha level of .05 to determine statistical significance.

**Table 3: Likelihood Ratio Tests for Predictors (Adult as Reference)**

Effect	Model Fitting Criteria		Likelihood Ratio Tests		
	-2 Log Likelihood of Reduced Model		Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Intercept		678.59	2.16	7	.951
Age		678.13	1.70	7	.975
Occupation		680.91	4.48	7	.723
Area of residence		684.62	8.19	7	.316
Gender		685.14	8.71	7	.274
<b>Education</b>		<b>692.83</b>	<b>16.40</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>.022</b>
<b>Age of gender realisation</b>		<b>691.62</b>	<b>15.18</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>.034</b>
Family support		685.03	8.60	7	.282

Note.  $\chi^2$  reflects difference in -2 log-likelihood between full and reduced models (omitting each predictor). Bold = significant at  $\alpha$  = .05. Null hypothesis: Predictor parameters = 0.

Two socio-demographic variables emerged as significant predictors: education with  $\chi^2$  = 16.40 (7), *p* = .022 and age of gender realisation with  $\chi^2$  = 15.18 (7), *p* = .034. Other determinants (age, occupation, area of residence, gender and family support) did not significantly contribute to the model.

**Parameter Estimates:** Based on the significant predictors stated in Table 3, the parameter estimates contrasting the Adult vs. other ego state configurations were detailed in Table 4.

**Table 4: Parameter Estimates for Education and Age of gender Realisation (Adult as Reference)**

Ego state configurations	B	SD	Wald	Df	OR Exp (B)	Sig.	95% CI for Exp(B)	
							Lower Bound	Upper Bound
<i>Education</i>								
<b>Adult and Child vs. Adult</b>	<b>-1.160</b>	<b>.404</b>	<b>8.25</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>.313</b>	<b>.004</b>	<b>.14</b>	<b>.69</b>
Adult and Parent vs. Adult	-.745	.393	3.59	1	.475	.058	.22	1.03
Child vs. Adult	-.569	.842	.46	1	.566	.499	.11	2.95
<b>Child and Adult vs. Adult</b>	<b>-1.179</b>	<b>.427</b>	<b>7.62</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>.308</b>	<b>.006</b>	<b>.13</b>	<b>.71</b>
Child and Parent vs. Adult	-.587	.426	1.90	1	.556	.168	.24	1.28
Parent and Adult vs. Adult	-.213	.478	.20	1	.808	.656	.32	2.06
<b>Parent and Child vs. Adult</b>	<b>-.999</b>	<b>.504</b>	<b>3.93</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>.368</b>	<b>.047</b>	<b>.14</b>	<b>.99</b>
<i>Age of gender Realisation</i>								
Adult and Child vs. Adult	-.180	.155	1.35	1	.835	.245	.62	1.13
Adult and Parent vs. Adult	-.053	.151	.12	1	.949	.728	.71	1.26
Child vs. Adult	-.582	.338	2.97	1	.559	.085	.29	1.08
Child and Adult vs. Adult	-.137	.167	.67	1	.872	.412	.63	1.21
Child and Parent vs. Adult	-.244	.167	2.14	1	.783	.144	.56	1.09
<b>Parent and Adult vs. Adult</b>	<b>-.569</b>	<b>.198</b>	<b>8.26</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>.566</b>	<b>.004</b>	<b>.38</b>	<b>.83</b>
Parent and Child vs. Adult	-.223	.212	1.20	1	.800	.295	.53	1.21

OR (Exp B)- Odds Ratio associated with the effect of a one SD increase in the determinant.

**Education:** Compared to the dominant Adult ego state, transgender youth with higher educational attainment had significantly lower odds of being classified in three of the switching ego state configurations

- Adult-Child: ( $B = -1.160$ ,  $SE = 0.404$ ,  $p = .004$ ,  $OR = 0.313$ , 95%  $CI [0.14, 0.69]$ ) - A one-SD increase in education (~2 years schooling) reduced odds by 69%
- Child-Adult: ( $B = -1.179$ ,  $SE = 0.427$ ,  $p = .006$ ,  $OR = 0.308$ , 95%  $CI [0.13, 0.71]$ ) - One-SD increase reduced odds by 69%
- Parent-Child: ( $B = -0.999$ ,  $SE = 0.504$ ,  $p = .047$ ,  $OR = 0.368$ , 95%  $CI [0.14, 0.99]$ ) - One-SD increase reduced odds by 63%

In other words, higher education was associated with a reduced odds of switching configurations that may indicate less consolidated ego integration. While higher education was associated with dominant Adult states (could suggest enhanced self-regulation capacity), the cross-sectional design precludes causal inference about ego development.

**Age of gender realisation:**

Later age of gender realization (one SD above mean) was associated with higher odds of Parent-Adult switching versus dominant Adult ( $OR = 0.566$ ,  $p = .004$ , 95%  $CI [.38, .83]$ ). One-SD later realization reduced odds vs. dominant Adult by 43%. This pattern may reflect tension between internalized socio-cultural norms (Parent ego state) and rational identity reconstruction (Adult ego state). However, the cross-sectional design and lack of direct measures of identity conflict limit causal interpretation.

Overall, the findings highlight education and age of gender realisation as crucial factors in the psychological configuration of ego states among transgender youth. Specifically, higher levels of education were associated with a decreased likelihood of switching between ego states and a greater tendency to operate from the dominant Adult ego state.

Hence, education was suggested to promote ego maturity, enhance emotional self-regulation, and support adaptive ego-state functioning. Higher education attainment being associated with lower odds of exhibiting switching patterns from Adult to Child, Child to Adult, and Parent to Child implies that higher education was associated with fewer switching patterns (potentially buffering less integrated ego configurations), though direct measures of regulation were unavailable. This implication was also consistent with literature about transgender youth significantly benefiting from inclusive, affirming school environments that reflect

access to developmental resources, affirming peer environments cognitive framework for self-understanding (Day, Perez-Brunner and Russell, 2018; Human Early Learning Partnership, 2024; Horton, 2022; Toomey et al, 2025).

Meanwhile, the impact of age of gender realisation appears more nuanced, with higher odds of occupying the switch-over configuration of Parent-Adult ego states. Gender realisation at a later age might have brought internal tensions between social conformity and personal logic, corresponding to a switch between Parent-Adult ego states.

However, the inconsistent effects across other ego state configurations suggest interactions of other unmeasured variables such as trauma, social acceptance or personal coping strategies.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The present study investigates ego state patterns among transgender youth in Manipur, with particular attention to the influence of socio-demographic variables. The findings revealed highly dynamic ego-state patterns, with 89% of participants exhibiting switching configurations rather than dominant states. This pattern may reflect either adaptive flexibility in navigating complex psychosocial contexts or challenges in consolidating identity amid marginalization; the cross-sectional design precludes distinguishing these interpretations. Notably, education level and age of gender realisation emerged as significant predictors of ego-state profiles. Higher education was associated with dominant Adult states (possibly reflecting enhanced cognitive resources), while later gender realization was linked to Parent-Adult switching (potentially indicating tension between internalized norms and emerging identity).

These findings highlight the critical psychosocial dimensions affecting transgender youth in Manipur, particularly the role of socio-demographic factors in ego development. The fluidity and instability of ego states underscore the need for comprehensive interventions supporting emotional well-being, identity integration, and social functioning. On the other hand, these findings align with and expand upon a growing body of international research that underscores the pervasive mental health challenges of transgender individuals.

These findings also resonate strongly with global literature, highlighting the widespread mental disparities faced by transgender individuals (Winter et al., 2016; Budge et al., 2013). In addition, the present finding contributes to the global discourse advocating for intersectional approaches that

consider how socio-demographic factors affect trans mental health. Other general implications are as follows:

- Integrate structured psychological support focused on emotional awareness and ego-state integration within youth services.
- Promote the use of Transactional Analysis (TA)-based therapeutic models to enhance self-awareness, communication, and interpersonal functioning.
- Develop and implement gender-affirmative educational programs that foster healthy identity development and emotional maturity.
- Interventions based on key socio-demographic factors such as educational attainment and age of gender realisation for greater efficacy.
- demographic variables and ego state patterns. A longitudinal design would help us to understand the developmental trajectories of ego states.
- NGO-recruited sample may underrepresent isolated transgender youth who lack community connections, potentially limiting generalizability to more hidden or marginalized subgroups.
- Self-report nature of TAQ: Response biases in terms of social desirability and introspective accuracy may have occurred. Additionally, the potential impact of linguistic translational, though carried out whenever necessary, cannot be completely ruled out.
- Absence of direct mental health, trauma, or identity distress measures limits interpretation of whether ego-state switching reflects adaptation or underlying psychological challenges.

### 5.LIMITATIONS:

While this study provides valuable insights into the ego state patterns of Transgender youth in Manipur. Several limitations need to be acknowledged.

- Cross-sectional design adopted: Restricts the ability to infer causality between socio-

Future research should employ longitudinal designs with mixed methods—combining TAQ with qualitative interviews exploring lived ego-state experiences—and comparative studies with cisgender youth or other Indian regions to enhance generalisability and contextual understanding.

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