**CPA - Communication Pattern Analysis**  
Based on the research of Dr. Eric Berne & Douglas McGregor

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**Abstract:** Communication is influenced by the environment around us. Effective communication is essential in managing the emotional quotient of people, to strike the right notes and achieve results from a win-win stand-point. It is important in building our relationship with people in our surroundings.

Communication pattern analysis is a scientific psychometric tool based on the transactional analysis developed by Eric Berne. It is used to improve communication by understanding how one has developed communication skills. It gives insight into how we relate and communicate with others and acknowledge how each one of us differ in our ways of communication.

This article talks in details about the CPA (Communication pattern analysis), a psychometric tool, how it helps in analyzing the communication pattern of others, to flex our style accordingly and avoid communication gaps. Thus, using this assessment one can benefit to understand varied communication patterns of others, to develop interpersonal skills which is impacted by upbringing and environmental factors. It helps to utilize our communication, teamwork and build rapport.

**Keywords:** (Communication, Communication Pattern Analysis, Interpersonal Relation, Communication, Transactional Analysis, communication gaps, communication challenges)

1. Introduction

**Communication Pattern Analysis (CPA)**

Communication is a central activity in most human and organizational transactions. It is a process of transferring information from one entity to another. Ivancevich and Matteson state that “communication among people does not depend on technology but rather is a process that occurs within people.”

Communication also has behavioral component. Our communication behavior can be based on our personal, social, and human identities. One of the statements emphasizing role of behavior is, “the only means by which one person can influence another is by the behaviors he performs—that is, the communicative exchanges between people provide the sole method by which influence or effects can be achieved.” In other words, daily happenings influence an individual’s communication and vice versa.

Research has shown consistently that a deficiency in communication skills can ruin relationships. The foundation of solid interpersonal skills is not just making oneself heard but also involves an understanding of where other people are coming from.

Communication Patterns are predictable, which are in turn guided by the environment. Individuals have various preferences in regards initiating and responding in interactions. For example: aggressive, passive, and assertive.

**Communication Pattern Analysis** identifies an individual’s communication habit throwing light on the various styles and means he/she uses while interacting. This self-awareness of one’s communication style/pattern creates good and lasting impressions on others and make another person more comfortable by selecting and emphasizing certain behaviors that fit within one’s personality and resonate with another.

2. Theoretical background of the CPA Assessment

(i) The renowned Psychologist Carl Rogers has listed five main categories of feedback. They are listed in the order in which they occur most frequently in daily conversations. Notice that we make judgments more often than we try to understand:
• **Evaluative:** Making a judgment about the worth, goodness, or appropriateness of the other person's statement.

• **Interpretive:** Paraphrasing - attempting to explain what the other person's statement means.

• **Supportive:** Attempting to assist or bolster the other communicator.

• **Probing:** Attempting to gain additional information, continue the discussion, or clarify a point.

• **Understanding:** Attempting to discover completely what the other communicator means by her statements.

Eric Berne’s Transactional Analysis and Douglas McGregor’s X and Y theory emphasize on the communication patterns of an individual both on and off work. CPA is based on the Ego states of Transactional Analysis and X and Y’s positive and negative communication pattern in Management.

(ii) **Transactional Analysis** is a social psychology theory and a methodology to improve communication. It outlines how we have developed and treat ourselves, how we relate and communicate with others. Berne devised the concept of ego states to help explain how we are made up, and how we relate to others and categorized the ways we think, feel and behave as Parent, Adult, and Child Ego. According to Berne’s Transactional Analysis, the **Parent ego** is a state in which people behave, feel, and think in response to an unconscious mimicking of how their parents (or other parental figures) acted, or how they interpreted their parent's actions. For example, if a parent is authoritarian in nature and typically embodied by phrases and attitudes starting with 'how to', 'under no circumstances', 'always' and 'never forget' etc., the child also tends to use such phrases and develops the attitude of advising and criticizing in the later stage of life because parent is formed by external events and influences upon us as we grow through early childhood.

**Adult ego** is a state which is most like computer processing information and making predictions absent of major emotions that cloud its operation. ‘Adult’ is our ability to think and determine action for ourselves, based on received data. The adult in us begins to form at around ten months old, and is the means by which we keep our Parent and Child under control. An individual with adult ego is empathizing and searching in nature where in looking/probing for information, continue the discussion, or clarify a point.

**Child ego** the internal reaction and feelings to external events form the 'Child'. This is the seeing, hearing, feeling, and emotional body of data within each of us. When anger or despair dominates reason, the Child is in control. For example, a person who receives a poor evaluation at work may respond by looking at the floor, and crying or pouting, as they used to when scolded as a child. Conversely, a person who receives a good evaluation may respond with a broad smile and a joyful gesture of thanks. The Child is the source of emotions, creation, recreation, spontaneity and intimacy.

According to Transaction Analysis the communication pattern for Parent, Child and Adult ego are:

**Parent ego -Physical** - angry or impatient body-language and expressions, finger-pointing, patronising gestures, **Verbal** - always, never, for once and for all, judgmental words, critical words, patronising language, posturing language. In the day to day conversations the unconscious feeling of an individual with Parent ego is “I’m OK, You’re NOT OK”. In CPA Assessment, Advising and Criticising is characterised as coming from Parent ego.

**Child ego - Physical** - emotionally sad expressions, despair, temper tantrums, whining voice, rolling eyes, shrugging shoulders, teasing, delight, laughter, speaking behind hand, raising hand to speak, squirming and giggling, **Verbal** - baby talk, I wish, I don’t know, I want, I’m going to, I don’t care, oh no, not again, things never go right for me, worst day of my life, bigger, biggest, best, many superlatives, words to impress. The unconscious feeling of the Child ego is “I’m Not OK, You’re OK”.

**Adult ego - Physical** - attentive, interested, straightforward, tilted head, non-threatening and non-threatening. **Verbal** - why, what, how, who, where and when, how much, in what way, comparative expressions, reasoned statements, true, false, probably, possibly, I think, I realise, I see, I believe, in my opinion. “I’m OK, You’re OK is the unconscious feeling of adult ego. In CPA Assessment, Empathising and Searching is characterised as coming from Adult ego.

Transactional Analysis in Communication Pattern Analysis emphasises on the impact of environment/surrounding on child’s own communication approach during his/her socialization process. For instance – If the child has highly protective parents, he/she is likely to develop communication pattern commensurate with Child ego state even in the adulthood.

(iii) Douglas McGregor’s X and Y theory is a theory of employee motivation that have been used in human resource management, organizational
behavior, organizational communication and organizational development. According to him under Theory X management relies on coercion, implicit threats, close supervision, and tight controls which results in hostility, purposely low output, and hardline union demands. The other approach is to be permissive and seek harmony with employees’ cooperation that results in ever-increasing requests for more rewards in exchange for ever-decreasing work output. So the optimal management approach under theory X would be between the two extremes.

Under Theory Y the Management harnesses the motivational approach of employees. This is due to the assumption that people are self-directed to achieve work objectives if rewards are commensurate with them, it also believes in the concept of participative management when applied to work situation. Empathising and Searching response styles are characteristics communication approach of theory Y.

In CPA Assessment, Advising and Criticising are characterised as coming from Theory X and Empathising and Searching are characterised as coming from Theory Y.

3. Current Status of Transactional Analysis

Transactional analysis is a social psychology developed by Eric Berne. Over the past four decades Eric Berne’s theory has evolved to include applications to psychotherapy, counseling, education, and organizational development.

In psychotherapy, transactional analysis utilizes a contract for specific changes desired by the client and involves the "Adult" in both the client and the clinician to sort out behaviors, emotions and thoughts that prevent the development of full human potential. Transactional analysts intervene as they work with clients in a safe, protective, mutually respectful - OK/OK--- environment to eliminate dysfunctional behaviors and establish and reinforce positive relationship styles and healthy functioning. Transactional analysts can use the many tools of psychotherapy, ranging from psychodynamic to cognitive behavioral methods in effective and potent ways.

Counselors who utilize transactional analysis work contractually on solving "here and now" problems. Counseling work focuses on creating productive problem solving behaviors. Using transactional analysis, counselors establish an egalitarian, safe and mutually respectful working relationship with their clients. This working relationship provides tools clients can utilize in their day-to-day functions to improve the quality of their lives.

Transactional Analysis is a practical educational psychology that offers a way of transforming educational philosophy and principles into everyday practice. Its concepts provide a flexible and creative approach to understanding how people function and to the connections between human behaviour, learning and education. Teaching them to both teachers and students is a process of empowerment, enhancing effective methods of interaction and mutual recognition.

Transactional Analysis is a powerful tool in the hands of organizational development specialists. Through presenting the basic concepts of transactional analysis and using it as the basic theory to under gird the objectives of their clients, organizational development specialists build a common strategy with which to address the needs of organizations and to build a functional relationship, as well as eliminate dysfunctional organizational behaviors.

4. The CPA Assessment:

Characteristics patterns of the four Communication types

Advising: The advising response is a recommendation that tells the other person what to do or not do. When one is busy thinking of solutions while another person is talking, one cannot listen to what they are saying. While advising, the other person is deprived of the chance to talk through the problem or opportunity. This advising style tends to builds dependency relationship. For example: In an organization if the Manager always advises his employees then the employees perform better in the presence of the Manager but fail to perform in the absence of the Manager due to the employees’ dependency on the Manager. Advisor usually believes that "Everyone should be like me" “I am never wrong” "I've got rights, but you don’t”, has difficulty seeing the other person’s point of view. Extremes of advising communication style reflects a negative attitude which makes communication pattern a one-way process.

Criticising: The critical response expresses judgement or evaluation that the other person often perceives as a put-down. This style often challenges what people say and why they feel the way they do. While being critical, one is most likely to “get hooked” into negative feelings that will cloud the objectivity and causes false or premature conclusions. Factors that lead to being critical are...
pressure of time; Difference in the values and ideas between the individuals thus being biased.

**Empathising:** It is a non-judgmental reply that captures the essential theme and / or feelings expressed. This style reflects a positive attitude, sorts out elements of personal value and goes all the way in making the communication a two-way process. One keeps an open mind by staying out of a judgmental framework, and will focus on what would be useful to do rather than on what is wrong; concentrate on fostering respect, rapport, trust and understanding. Empathy is Encouraging in the sense that the other individual is being attentive, alert and interested to elaborate on their ideas and feelings. Attempting to assist or bolster the other communicator.

**Searching:** It is attempting to discover completely what the other communicator means by her statements, continue the discussion, or clarify a point. The searching response asks for additional information and gets to the root of the problem. One may want the other person to “ventilate” and thereby express their emotions. Takes the time to question and find out information. Comes up with very informed decisions, equipped with a great deal of facts and information. When it comes to interpersonal relationships, such probing not only helps the other person to ventilate his/ her feelings out, but also helps him to understand the other person’s problem more clearly.

4. Research Methodology

**Purpose of the Test**

The aim of the assessment is to create self-awareness, to assess the impact of upbringing and understand the influence of environmental factors that give rise to communication habits of the individual.

**Test Audience**

The CPA assessment is applicable for Adults working or non-working from extensive backgrounds consultation, organizational climate survey and for research purposes.

### Table 1 – The various sectors in which the CPA Assessment is administered

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SECTOR</th>
<th>INDUSTRY MANPOWER</th>
<th>MALE:FEMALE RATIO</th>
<th>LEVEL OF TEST USERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IT</td>
<td>9,796</td>
<td>6:4</td>
<td>Entry/Management/Senior Level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>3,576</td>
<td>5:1</td>
<td>Entry/ Senior Level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>2,971</td>
<td>5:3</td>
<td>Management/ Senior Level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharmaceuticals</td>
<td>1,290</td>
<td>3:2</td>
<td>Senior Level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Automobiles &amp; Trucks</td>
<td>1,109</td>
<td>6:2</td>
<td>Entry/ Senior Level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Processing &amp; Chemicals</td>
<td>2,009</td>
<td>6:2</td>
<td>Management/ Senior Level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering, Research &amp; Development</td>
<td>2,164</td>
<td>4:1</td>
<td>Entry/Mangement/Senior Level</td>
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<tr>
<td>Travel &amp; Tourism</td>
<td>1,993</td>
<td>6:5</td>
<td>Senior Level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apparel, Textile &amp; Fashion</td>
<td>2,901</td>
<td>7:5</td>
<td>Management/ Senior Level</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Nature of the items**

All the items in the questionnaire belong to the content domain (interpersonal relations) which facilitate in assessing an individual’s communication pattern. There 15 statements, with 4 response choices each, which are characteristic of the communication of an individual. These items present situations in which an individual is most likely to respond in a way that his/her communication style is expressed. The items are standardized as they are the same for every respondent with respect to the content, form and order.

**Certified User qualifications**

The user needs to an average of 2 years work experience in managing people, or a PG in Psychology/Sociology or an MBA.

**Differences with other tests**

Communication skills test assesses the interpersonal communication of an individual but it does not have a theoretical base whereas Communication Pattern analysis (CPA) is based on Transactional Analysis theory by Eric Berne.

**Instructions for the test administrator** (for paper pencil format):
• Make sure the subject is seated comfortably in a well-lit and ventilated room.
• Build rapport with the subject, make him feel at ease.
• Educate the subject on the confidentiality element of the test.
• Give instructions of the test (as specified below)
• Clear doubts if any.
• After test completion give instructions on the scoring methodology.
• Interpret the scores and clear doubts that may arise.

Instructions for test takers (for paper pencil format):

• There are 15 statements/episodes, with 4 response choices each.
• You have three points to invest in each of them and you have three different ways of investing them, as shown in the example below:

Example statement: Someone says to you
I’ve noticed that very few people are good listeners. They interrupt me, or ask questions later about something I just told them.

Response: How you might reply

a. Maybe your message or manner of delivery doesn’t interest them.
b. Why do you think that listening is such a difficult skill for so many people?c. Perhaps you could ask them what they think from time to time to keep them involved.
d. That can be very frustrating when people don’t even give you a fair listening.

Invest your 3 points:

• You are given three points for every set of FOUR response statements (A, B, C & D) and all that you need to do is to distribute the three points.
• In the episodes below, you have A, B, D or D responses and you need to allot your points to the ones that most appeal to you.
• You can give 0, 1, 1 & 1 or give 2, 0, 1 & 0 or give 3, 0, 0 & 0.

Scoring of the test: (for paper - pencil formats only, as the online scoring is auto generated)

Step 1: Add up total points of each of the shapes, separately and enter the total in the space provided below their respective shapes. The Total should add up to 45.

Step 2: Add scores- A + C = ____ and E + S = ____

The scoring system of the test is objective as any qualified person involved in scoring the test items will give same scores for same answers (depending on the responses marked by the individual)

Sample Report (to help the test user with the interpretation of the test scores)

Communication Pattern Analysis identifies an individual’s communication habit throwing light on the various styles and means he/she uses while interacting. The individual is assessed on 4 communication patterns namely, Critical, Advising, Empathising and Searching. Such an insight builds self-awareness regarding the multiple facets and dynamics of communication.
Primary Pattern (Searching):

Being high on searching the person never make premature conclusions, taking the time to question and find out more information. He/she thus come up with very informed decisions, equipped with a great deal of facts and information. When it comes to interpersonal relationships, such probing not only helps the other person to ventilate his/her feelings out, but also helps the person to understand the problem more clearly. However, he/she need to be cautious as too many searching questions can be perceived as interrogation or even unwarranted intrusion.

Recessive style

His/her scores on advising are moderate. He/she may, at times, recommend or suggest a course of action to others. All the same, the person may be careful to maintain their ownership over decisions and actions they undertake. Not being condemnatory in general, he/she do not put people down. However, on occasions the person may have judgmental connotations in your response to people. So, the critical response should be minimized to least possible extent.

Having the least score on Empathizing signifies that he/she does not convey a feeling of understanding the other person’s point of view or perceptions. This may dissuade the other person and prevent him from further opening up. This may lead to communication gaps and misunderstandings

FAQ’s

- Why do you think I have to put efforts to reduce my score when people perceive advising as good?
- Why do you say the best score should be zero when a person needs to be critical to some extent?
- Is there any best pattern of communication with respect to different professions/occupations?
- In which situation the searching style approach can be used?
- In nature I’m a feeler, how is it that I have a low score on empathizing?
- Can emotions and moods affect the scores of the assessment?
- Is it possible to develop on the right style of communication the assessment has shown?
- This assessment clearly identifies the right style of communication unlike the other psychometric assessments. Why and how?
- What does it mean if all four scores are balanced on the assessment?
- What is the role of heredity on my communication pattern?

Norms

Norms are standard models or patterns regarded as being typical. A norm of one type or the other is a basic requirement of all tests. According to Transactional Analysis theory, Adult to Adult transaction is characterised as being most ideal transaction because empathizing and searching is a transaction where in looking/probing for more information helps develop a holistic view instead of reacting immediately across situation.

Reliability

Reliability refers to the consistency of a test, or the degree to which the test produces approximately the same results over time under similar conditions. Ultimately, reliability is a measure of a test’s precision. Number of different methods for estimating reliability can be used, depending on the types of items on the test, the characteristics a test is intended to measure, and the test user’s needs. The most commonly used methods to assess reliability are the Test-retest and Split half methods.

Test- Retest Reliability – This method looks at the stability of the test scores over time by administering the same test to the same people after a reasonable time interval. The CPA assessment is purely based on environmental factors that influence a person. Therefore, if an individual takes a test after a period of time there is bound to be a minimal amount of change in the scores based on the environments the individual is exposed to and also the inputs gained by the environment.

In a controlled environment where there is no environmental input, a 93% accuracy ratio was recorded when a comparison of the test scores on both the tests was drawn.

Internal Consistency Reliability - It indicates the homogeneity of the test. If all the items of the test measure the same function or trait, the test is said to
be homogenous. The most common method of estimating internal consistency reliability is by the 
**Split half method.** In this method, a test is divided into two forms and scores on the two forms are 
correlated with each other to assess the degree to 
which all the items are assessing the same 
characteristic. The CPA assessment which consists 
of 15 items was split into two forms and 
administered to verify if the pair contributes in 
assessing an individual’s communication pattern. It 
was observed that CPA is high on split half 
reliability as both the forms are symbolic of an 
individual’s communication pattern.

**Validity**

Validity refers to the degree to which a test measures 
what it claims to measure. A test is valid to the 
extent that inferences made from it are appropriate, meaningful and useful. The different ways of 
obtaining validity are grouped into three categories 
namely **Content, Criterion-related and Construct validity**

**Content Validity:** It refers to how well a test covers 
the characteristics it is intended to measure. Thus, 
items are assessed to see if they are: tapping into the 
characteristic being measured, comprehensive in covering all relevant aspects and balanced in their coverage of the characteristics being measured. Content validity is usually assessed by careful examination of individual test items and their relation to the whole test. The CPA assessment is high on content validity as all the 15 items in the questionnaire display an individual’s response in various interpersonal situations through which his/her communication pattern is displayed.

**Criterion – Related Validity:** deals with the extent 
to which test scores can predict a certain behaviour 
referred to as the criterion. Criterion is defined as an 
external and independent measure of essentially the same variable that the test claims to measure. Concurrent and Predictive validity are two types of criterion related validity.

a) Predictive validity refers to how well the scores on a test predict certain behaviours. In predictive validity, a test is correlated against the criterion to be made available sometime in the future.

b) Concurrent Validity is very similar to predictive validity except that there is no time gap in obtaining test scores. The correlation between test scores and the criterion variable indicate the degree of criterion-related validity.

CPA is an interpersonal relations assessment that 
categorizes communication into four functional 
types, which are Advising, Criticising, Empathising 
and Searching. The scores on the four types helps 
predicts a wide range of communication patterns 
which include communication styles, interpersonal relations, etc. ( concurrent validity). CPA helps 
identify communication patterns which can be used to develop interpersonal relations of the individual.

**Construct Validity:** is defined as the extent to which the test measures a construct. A construct is a non-observable trait such as personality, intelligence etc. which explains our behaviour. Construct validity deals with how well a test assesses the characteristics it is intended to assess (in this case personal effectiveness). There is no single method for assessing a test’s construct validity. Drawing close parallels with content validity, CPA is also high on construct validity as it classifies interpersonal relations into the four types namely Advising, Criticising, Empathising and Searching which explicitly explain communication styles, interpersonal relations, etc. of the four communication types.

**Face Validity:** A test has face validity if it looks valid to the users, examiners and examinees. It is a matter of social acceptability and not a technical form of validity. Though not a technical form it is needed in all types of tests. The CPA is high on face validity as the 15 items in the questionnaire are symbolic of the various communication patterns and the environmental stimuli an individual is encountered with, that help serve as a valid base for a personality assessment.

5. Conclusion

- CPA Creates self-awareness of the communication patterns of an individual.
- It is applicable for both personal and professional communication.
- Helps recognize ambiguities, gaps in the communication system
- Scope for effective communication skills.
- An understanding of varied communication patterns helps ensure smoother flow of information between and within departments
- Identifying individuals with a flair for coaching and people development skills

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