



A Level

Psychology

7182/1 Introductory Topics in Psychology

Report on the examination

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General

Overall, it appeared that most students were well prepared for this paper and attempted most questions. The standard deviation was similar to last year although the mean mark was rather higher. This can partly be explained by students' growing familiarity with the wording of exam questions and a greater understanding of research methodology. This paper also saw a significant rise in the number of two-mark questions which might have enabled students to gain more marks.

Performance across the paper was reasonably consistent although many students performed better in the psychopathology and the memory topics. In contrast to the two previous series, students performed less well in the social influence section. This could be partially attributed to minor issues with both question 2 and question 3 (see below). In addition, students generally performed well in research methodology, for example, question 9 and question 17.

Students performed less well on some of the more evaluative questions. Providing needless lengthy descriptions for questions asking about limitations or evaluation should be avoided. A common error across the paper was to provide generic criticism of research that was often not linked back to the question. This could easily be corrected to gain more marks by focusing more exclusively on the wording of the question.

Social Influence

Question 1

This was typically answered well by students. The fact that flexibility and minority influence has appeared in the last three exam papers meant many students were well prepared and over 50% of students were able to access full marks. Most responses cited how the minority may need to adapt their view to help convince the majority. Apart from minor issues of tautology, no problems emerged with this question.

Question 2

This question was answered well with over 53% of students gaining level 2 marks. However, a common mistake that could easily be corrected was that many responses did not focus on exclusively on authoritarian personality and obedience, instead drifting on to detailed explanations of prejudice and/or a bland description of this personality type.

Question 3

Although this was a straightforward question many students did not score marks. The most common issue was students citing methodological limitations that were not clearly linked to the authoritarian personality. These comments tended to revolve around problems with the F-Scale and Adorno's original sample of participants. More effective responses often cited

political bias or problems with this dispositional account in explaining the obedience of entire societies.

Question 4

The average mark for this question was higher than question 21, with nearly 50% of students gaining level 3 marks or above. Effective responses provided significant details of both normative and informational social influence e.g. whether they lead to a permanent or temporary change, if they are driven by emotional or cognitive reasoning, situations where they are likely to occur; how they link to types of conformity. This detail often demonstrated knowledge at level 4. However, a common error was just lifting quotes from the stem to gain application marks without offering further elaboration. For discussion marks, effective use was made of several research studies linked back to the explanations (e.g. Asch's research, Asch's variation studies and Lucas' research). Alternative dispositional accounts of conformity to dispute normative and informational social influence e.g. external locus of control or Affiliators were also used to good effect. Common errors including citing methodological issues with studies that were not made relevant to the discussion of the explanations or simply citing research studies with no link to explanations of conformity. Finally, a minority of students wrongfully cited types of conformity without any connection to explanations, significantly reducing their marks for the question.

Memory

Question 5

Students performed well in this multiple-choice question on types of long-term memory. Over 50% of students scored full marks, with an overall average of 1.47 for this question.

Question 6

Several students encountered difficulty with this question. Although many made effective use of Baddeley's research, answers often lacked sufficient details and/or included reference to the aims and conclusions of the study. Students would be advised to examine and acknowledge the differences between findings and conclusions. Other creditworthy studies included Conrad's research and a small minority referred to the case of KF. Some students wrongfully cited research into capacity of memory e.g. Jacob's research, or duration of memories e.g. Peterson and Petersons research into short term memory

Question 7

Students gave various worthy suggestions of revision strategies based on retrieval failure and offered sensible justification relating to the encoding specificity principle. The average mark was 1.33 but nearly 60% of students scored full marks. Common errors included responses that focused on general revision strategies that did not relate to retrieval failure e.g. rehearsal of notes.

Question 8

This question was challenging for many students, with only 15% of responses gaining level 3 marks. Strong responses often included research support e.g. Baddeley and Hitch's research with rugby players, contradictory findings, e.g. Tulving and Psotka, more effective alternative explanations of forgetting e.g. retrieval failure due to absence of cues, and real-life applications. The question discriminated well between higher and lower attaining students. Common errors were offering irrelevant description or giving generic criticism of research without any link to interference theory.

Question 9

The ability to justify the choice of an inferential test is seemingly getting stronger in this paper, with over 40% of students gaining 5 or 6 marks. Many students (more than 64%) were able to give at least one contextualised reason for using the chi square test. The average mark for this question was 3.78, with fewer than 9% of students scoring no marks.

Question 10

Most students were able to identify leading questions as the factor to explain the findings. Effective responses often used a research study e.g. Loftus and Zanni, to help illustrate the role of leading questions and then linked this effectively to both conditions of the investigation. A common problem was inadequate application whereby students would cite leading questions and/or describe a research study but make no explicit link to the scenario.

Attachment

Question 11

Most students answered this question well with over 55% gaining full marks. Perhaps because reciprocity appeared in last year's paper, students appeared well prepared for this question.

Question 12

Many students had difficulty with this question despite credit being available for various examples. Most common responses included the caregiver smiling and the infant smiling back, and the caregiver waving and the infant waving back. The common error was for students to only suggest one side of the interaction and not include explicit reference to both the infant and caregiver. This resulted in over 50% of students not scoring marks in this question.

Question 13

This question focused on how reciprocal behaviours could be sampled so students needed to outline either time sampling or event sampling. Although 25% were able to complete this effectively and include explicit reference to reciprocal caregiver-infant behaviours, a fair

number of unsuccessful answers were based on sample selection methods e.g. random sampling. Time sampling seemed to be less well understood than event sampling.

Question 14

This was typically answered well by students who were largely able to deduce that a correlational coefficient of +0.26 indicated low inter-observer reliability. Effective reference to a more desirable correlational coefficient of +0.8 was frequently made.

Question 15

This question discriminated well between lower and higher attaining students. Although over 20% of students gained full marks, over 50% did not score any marks. Despite a similar question appearing in the 2023 series, many students struggled to outline a way in which reliability could be improved. Effective answers revolved around clearer operationalisation of behavioural categories, raising the objectivity of the behavioural categories and how observers could undergo further training in the use of the behavioural categories.

Question 16

Most students were able to score marks on this question, and many provided an abundance of findings with reference to both Lorenz's and Harlow's research studies. Occasionally answers described procedural information and/or conclusions, neither of which were creditworthy. An effective strategy was to briefly outline several findings from the chosen study, which resulted in over 60% of students gaining two or more marks for this question.

Question 17

Students typically performed well in this question with an average mark of 2.17, and over 37% of students gaining full marks. Students made effective use of inadequate generalisability and were able to elaborate on this with specific differences across species e.g. in terms of cognition. In addition, students sometimes cited other methodological issues e.g. poor control over extraneous variables.

Question 18

Students generally appeared well prepared for this question and could cite an array of research findings. Effective use was made of Schaffer and Emerson, Grossman, Field and Geiger. Less effective commentary included lengthy descriptions of studies as opposed to just the findings. A useful approach from students was to cite contradictory research findings enabling useful discussion e.g. of the role of the father as a primary or secondary carer. Further effective discussion included reference to economic implications of the role of the father, how this type of research might challenge the gender pay gap and the sensitivities with this area of research.

Psychopathology

Question 19

Many students were able to identify the relevant definitions of abnormality with ease, with over 75% of students gaining full marks. A very small minority of students gained no marks, possibly due to misunderstanding the question and thus offering specific features of the definition as opposed to the definition itself, or perhaps simply due to lack of knowledge.

Question 20

Most students were able to gain marks in this question with slightly less than 50% of students gaining level 2 marks. Many students could describe the ABC model effectively and emphasise the role of irrational beliefs as the causal factor in depression. Some students used worthy examples of irrational beliefs to elaborate their responses e.g. utopianism or catastrophising. One common error was for students to overemphasise negative thinking and specific negative life events as activating events, which is not necessarily the case for the ABC model. Finally, students would be well advised to focus their responses on depression and/or depressive symptoms, as opposed to just negative events.

Question 21

This inclusive question discriminated well. As the question requested discussion of both neural factors and drug therapies, students had an abundance of material to draw upon. Most common responses included reference to both serotonin and dopamine levels, as well as structural deficits e.g. an impaired caudate nucleus. Generally, reference to structural deficits lent themselves to detailed descriptions, yet students should be advised to focus more exclusively on describing the structural deficits as opposed to general functioning of these areas. Most common drug therapies included SSRIs, as well as other types of anti-depressants (e.g. tricyclics), and anxiolytics. An effective strategy for many students was to cite brief information about multiple drugs, including references to dosages. Useful discussion often revolved around the use of evidence to illustrate points, alternative explanations e.g. the role of trauma and consideration of cause and effect. With drug therapies students often cited side effects and the economic benefits. Better discussions of side effects were specific to key medications rather than more generic commentary.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.