



MARKSCHEME

May 2014

PSYCHOLOGY

Higher Level

Paper 3

6 pages

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Paper 3 markbands

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The answer does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1 to 3	There is an attempt to answer the question, but knowledge and understanding is limited, often inaccurate, or of marginal relevance to the question. The response makes no direct reference to the stimulus material or relies too heavily on quotations from the text.
4 to 7	The question is partially answered. Knowledge and understanding is accurate but limited. Either the command term is not effectively addressed or the response is not sufficiently explicit in answering the question. The response makes limited use of the stimulus material.
8 to 10	The question is answered in a focused and effective manner and meets the demands of the command term. The answer is supported by appropriate and accurate knowledge and understanding of qualitative research methodology. The response demonstrates a critical understanding of qualitative research methodology applied to the stimulus material.

1. Evaluate the sampling technique used in this study.

[10 marks]

Refer to the paper 3 markbands when awarding marks.

The command term “evaluate” requires candidates to make an appraisal by weighing up the strengths and limitations of the sampling technique used in the study. Although a discussion of both strengths and limitations is required, it does not have to be evenly balanced to gain high marks.

Responses that use the term “experiment” as a generic term for “study” should not be penalized.

The stimulus material explicitly states that the researcher used a purposive sampling technique so candidates should use this information and evaluate this particular sampling method.

A purposive sample is often used in qualitative research when small samples are studied using in-depth interview techniques. The purposive sample is constructed to serve a specific need or purpose. In this study, the target population was heterosexual women who had experience of being in a romantic love relationship. The researcher chose the individuals in her sample because they met certain characteristics (selection criteria). The sample of eight women was selected through the researcher’s own social network so it was relatively easy and quick, but there is a risk of bias.

Strengths of the purposive sampling method could include, but are not limited to:

- the participants can accurately represent the topic under investigation because they are selected based on salient characteristics relevant to the research so they could provide rich data
- it is relatively easy to select a sample and it can be supplemented with more participants during the research if necessary
- it is useful when a researcher needs to select a sample quickly and if sampling for proportionality is not the main concern.

Limitations of the purposive sampling method could include, but are not limited to:

- sampling may be biased but if the sampling process is based on objective selection, documented and explained, bias can be reduced
- the sample is not representative so it is difficult to generalize to a larger population (but this is not that important in a qualitative study such as this because the researcher is more interested in why these particular participants feel the way they do).

Candidates may refer to other sampling methods but this should only be credited if it is done as part of their evaluation of purposive sampling.

Responses that refer to only strengths or only limitations of the purposive sampling method used in this study should be awarded up to a maximum of **[5 marks]**.

2. Explain why reflexivity is relevant to this study.

[10 marks]

Refer to the paper 3 markbands when awarding marks.

The command term “explain” requires candidates to give a detailed account of why reflexivity is relevant in this study and give reasons or causes by referring to details of the study.

Responses that use the term “experiment” as a generic term for “study” should not be penalized.

There is reference to reflexivity in the stimulus material (lines 20–21) and candidates need to rely on their knowledge of reflexivity and provide reasons for *why* reflexivity could be relevant to this particular study.

Reflexivity is a strategy used by qualitative researchers to reveal how a researcher’s subjectivity contributes to the findings. For example, a researcher may be biased towards the findings of a study because she perceives and interprets data through her own individual lens. Reflexivity is thus one way to establish credibility/trustworthiness in qualitative research.

Candidates’ explanations as to why reflexivity is relevant to this study could be but are not limited to:

- epistemological reflexivity: for example, the eight participants were all psychologists or psychology students from the researcher’s own social network, so candidates may refer to epistemological reflexivity such as considering if the purposive sampling method used in the study is appropriate
- personal reflexivity: for example, the researcher herself states that “ever since she was a young woman she had tried to understand her own emotional responses when she was in love”. This statement indicates a subjective interest in the topic under investigation that could potentially bias the results and this alone could justify the application of personal reflexivity in order to avoid this bias.

The terms personal or epistemological reflexivity are not required to access the higher markbands.

Candidates could (but are not required to), as part of the explanation as to why reflexivity is relevant in this study, write how the researcher could apply personal reflexivity to avoid bias, for example, providing necessary information about her own experiences in love relationships and as a couples therapist, or including a critical self-reflection on her own interests in undertaking the study (for example, that the researcher had a desire to understand her own emotional responses). Bias could also be prevented by asking participants to verify the transcripts that are used as the basis for analysis as the researcher did in this study. Statements such as these could be part of an explanation of why reflexivity is relevant and this is perfectly acceptable.

3. Evaluate the use of semi-structured interviews in this study.

[10 marks]

Refer to the paper 3 markbands when awarding marks.

The command term “evaluate” requires candidates to make an appraisal by weighing up the strengths and limitations of the use of semi-structured interviews in this study. Although a discussion of both strengths and limitations is required, it does not have to be evenly balanced to gain high marks.

Responses that use the term “experiment” as a generic term for “study” should not be penalized.

Candidates could argue that the researcher has probably chosen to use semi-structured interviews in the study because the rather sensitive topic under investigation (that is, participants’ perception of a meaningful relationship as more than just romantic fulfilment) could be more fully explored using this approach. For example, if the researcher had used a structured interview with closed questions she would perhaps not be able to get an in-depth insight into the participants’ various experiences with their partners.

Relevant strengths of using semi-structured interviews in the study in the stimulus material could include, but are not limited to:

- an interview guide with a combination of closed and open-ended questions allows the researcher to ask specific questions while giving participants the opportunity to talk more freely and in their own terms about their views on romantic love relationships
- the flexibility of open-ended questions allows the researcher to obtain richer data because she can ask participants to elaborate on their answers. This could very well be the case in this study, as the researchers cannot know in advance what kind of experiences the participants have
- the face-to-face situation and nature of semi-structured interviews could give rise to establishing a positive rapport between the interviewer and the interviewees, which could be useful in a sensitive issue such as romantic love relationships.

Relevant limitations of using semi-structured interviews in the study in the stimulus material could include, but are not limited to:

- there may be limited time and space to explore themes that have not been planned in advance
- data analysis of the transcripts of semi-structured interviews is often very time-consuming compared to structured interviews
- a lot of extra or irrelevant information may appear during the interview, which could make it difficult to analyse the data.

Responses that briefly refer to other research methods as part of the evaluation of why semi-structured interviews were used in this study should be fully credited as long as the main focus is on evaluation of the use of semi-structured interviews.

Responses that refer to only strengths or only limitations of the semi-structured interview should be awarded up to a maximum of **[5 marks]**.