



MARKSCHEME

November 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 use of covert participant observation in this qualitative research 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 covert participant observation 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.

The major focus of the response should be on an evaluation of the use of covert participant observation in this study. Responses may briefly refer to other research methods as part of the evaluation of why covert participant observation was used in this study. Candidates are not required to explicitly define covert participant observation in order to gain full marks.

Relevant strengths of covert participant observation could include, but are not limited to:

- With reference to the study, candidates could say that covert participant observation was chosen because it gave the researcher the possibility to blend in with the poor and thus have a genuine feeling of “walking in their shoes” when they come to a health clinic.
- Covert observation is useful in exploring a socially sensitive issue (in this case, how poverty is experienced, especially in relation to seeking help in a health clinic) because it gives the researcher detailed information that may not be obtained using other methods.
- A covert approach is more likely to avoid demand characteristics, for example, the Hawthorne effect or social desirability effect. If the healthcare workers in the clinics believed they were being observed, they could have behaved differently than they usually would.

Relevant limitations of covert participant observation could include, but are not limited to:

- Covert participant observation is an invasive research method. It has serious ethical implications because the researcher does not obtain informed consent and deceives the other participants, in this study both the healthcare workers and the poor people seeking health care. Candidates may assert that in this study the covert approach was justified because more research is needed on this important topic.
- The researcher could lose objectivity as it may be difficult to keep a balance between involvement and detachment, especially with regard to a socially sensitive issue such as the one described in this research. This concern related to researcher bias is heightened by the fact that the researcher herself worked in a similar environment and she was emotionally affected by her experiences during her research (*lines 18–19*). Researcher reflexivity could be used to increase credibility.

If a candidate evaluates only the covert or only the participant aspect of the observation, the response should be awarded up to a maximum of **[5 marks]**.

If a candidate refers only to strengths or only to limitations of covert participant observation, the response should be awarded up to a maximum of **[5 marks]**.

If a candidate refers only to strengths or only to limitations of only covert observation, the response should be awarded up to a maximum of **[3 marks]**.

If a candidate refers only to strengths or only to limitations of only participant observation, the response should be awarded up to a maximum of **[3 marks]**.

2. Explain how triangulation could contribute to the credibility/trustworthiness of this qualitative research study. [10 marks]

Refer to the paper 3 markbands when awarding marks.

The command term “explain” requires candidates to give a detailed account of how triangulation could contribute to credibility/trustworthiness and give reasons for why they are relevant, by referring to details of the study.

Candidates are not required to explicitly define triangulation in order to gain full marks. Triangulation is a method of cross-checking the data and conclusions in a study by introducing various procedures, sources or researchers so there can be increased confidence in the researchers’ interpretations.

This study was based on a single research method (covert participant observation) and could therefore be affected by limitations associated with that method or from the application of that method in this particular study. Triangulation is believed to be a way to control for such limitations.

Candidates may refer to one or more forms of triangulation explaining their relevance, for example:

- **Researcher triangulation:** the researcher could ask one or more other researchers to check data collection, analysis and interpretation. This would help to prevent researcher bias. In this study there was only one researcher collecting data. This could result in bias so asking another researcher to check her field notes and interpretations (*line 16*) could be a way to limit bias and increase credibility.
- **Method triangulation:** the researcher could have combined the observations with follow-up interviews with the “participants” of the study (for example, the poor people and healthcare staff in the healthcare clinics) or similar participants. If the conclusions from alternative methods are the same, credibility/trustworthiness is increased.
- **Data triangulation:** the researcher collected data at different times and different social situations (various clinics) as well as on a variety of people. This is believed to increase credibility.

Candidates may address how triangulation was applied to the study as well as suggesting other approaches to triangulation that could have been applied. Both approaches are acceptable.

3. To what extent can findings from this qualitative research study be generalized? [10 marks]

Refer to the paper 3 markbands when awarding marks.

The command term “to what extent” requires candidates to consider the degree to which findings from this qualitative study can be generalized.

Candidates may say that generalization could be important in qualitative research because it means that the results are relevant outside the context of the study itself. They could also argue that generalization may be difficult with a study such as this one because there is little previous research in the same area to compare it with.

Candidates could refer to ways of generalizing findings in qualitative research, for example, as outlined by Lewis and Richie (2003):

- **Representational generalization:** findings from qualitative research studies can be applied to populations outside the population of the study. With reference to the study in the stimulus material, candidates may say that even though the results may primarily apply to the seven clinics in the study, there is a similar pattern that could indicate a more general trend. If the sample is small the results cannot be statistically representative but if similar studies confirm the findings of this study, it could be argued that generalization is possible. The problem is that not many studies have been performed so far.
- **Theoretical generalization:** this refers to how far results could contribute to formulation of theory, for example, with reference to the study in the stimulus material that a shabby appearance negatively affects the treatment clients receive in most clinics for the poor. Such a theory could be put to test in other similar settings to test its generalizability and this could be used to develop further theory. For example, the findings from this study could lead to inferences about how to select and provide effective training of staff in healthcare clinics for the poor.
- **Inferential generalization:** the findings of the study can be applied to settings outside the study, *ie* transferability. Since the study is on poor, marginalized and homeless individuals, candidates may argue that the findings could be transferred to other similar settings (for example, shelters) but this will depend on the richness of the data.

Candidates may, in their discussion of generalization of findings from this qualitative research, briefly refer to statistical generalization (quantitative research) as part of their argument. This should be given credit as long as the main focus is on generalization from qualitative research.

Candidates may refer to the possibility of comparing findings from one qualitative study to other qualitative studies without using specific terminology relating to generalization, such as “representational”, “inferential” and “theoretical”.