

Markscheme

November 2020

Psychology

Higher level

Paper 3

7 pages

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Paper 3 markbands

Marks	Level descriptor
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The answer does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1–3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The question is misunderstood and the central issue is not identified correctly, resulting in a mostly irrelevant argument. • The response contains mostly inaccurate references to the approaches to research or these are irrelevant to the question. • The reference to the stimulus material relies heavily on direct quotations from the text.
4–6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The question is understood, but only partially answered resulting in an argument of limited scope. • The response contains mostly accurate references to approaches to research which are linked explicitly to the question. • The response makes appropriate but limited use of the stimulus material.
7–9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The question is understood and answered in a focused and effective manner with an accurate argument that addresses the requirements of the question. • The response contains accurate references to approaches to research with regard to the question, describing their strengths and limitations. • The response makes effective use of the stimulus material.

Note: the underlining of terms is for emphasis only.

1. (a) Identify the research method used and outline **two** characteristics of the method. **[3]**

Award [1] for identification of correct research method.

Experiment (*accept also: lab experiment; true experiment*)

Answers related to an outline of characteristics of the method may include two of the following characteristics: [1] per relevant point. Maximum of [2].

- The experimental method involves at least two conditions. In this study, there were two conditions: social exclusion and social inclusion.
- The experiment is based on a hypothesis that predicts a causal relationship between the IV and the DV.
- The experiment (true experiment) involves random allocation of participants to the experimental group (*also accept: to the exposure of the IV*).
- The experiment can establish a cause-effect relationship between manipulation of the IV and levels of the DV.
- The experimental method involves control for confounding variables, for example, for participant variables to avoid bias

- (b) Describe the sampling method used in the study. **[3]**

Award [1] for naming the correct sampling method.

Convenience sampling (*accept also: opportunity sample; volunteer sample; self-selected sample*) **[1]**.

Description of the sampling method may include two of the following characteristics: Award [1] per relevant point, up to a maximum of [2].

Descriptions of the sampling method used in the study could include but are not limited to:

- A convenience sample is a non-probability sample where members of the population who meet certain practical criteria (such as geographical proximity, similarity or willingness to participate) are selected.
- It is an easy way to get a sample for the researcher. This was also the case in this study where the sample consisted of psychology university students who were available and participated for course credits.
- A convenience sample is cost-effective and saves time compared to gathering a random sample.
- A convenience sample suffers from self-selection bias. The sample is not considered representative of a target population and the findings cannot easily be generalized if at all.

- (c) Suggest **one** alternative **or one** additional research method that could be used to investigate the aim of the original study, giving **one** reason for your choice. **[3]**

Award [1] for naming an alternative or additional research method, and up to [2] for reason with rationale.

The candidate may choose to write about an alternative or additional method. Either approach to answering the question is acceptable. The rationale may differ depending on which is chosen.

Suitable alternative or additional research methods could be but are not limited to:

Focus group interviews

Focus group interviews with the participants could be used either as a follow-up (additional method) or as an alternative method. Reasons (with rationale) for using a focus-group interview could include but are not limited to:

- This is a different way to explore how people’s perceptions of social exclusion influence prosocial behaviour. The facilitator would encourage the participants to share their experiences, including emotions, in situations in which they had felt socially excluded.
- This qualitative approach could give a more subjective view on what the threat of exclusion feels like and how this could potentially affect human behaviour.

A semi-structured interview

Reasons (with rationale) for using a semi-structured interview as an alternative/additional method could be but are not limited to:

- The semi-structured interview is based on an interview guide with a list of potential questions and topics that need to be covered during the interview. The focus of this research was a possible relationship between social exclusion and lack of prosocial behaviour and it can be considered a very sensitive topic. Therefore, a semi-structured one-to-one interview could be more appropriate if the researcher wants to explore how individuals experienced social exclusion and how that affected them.
- The semi-structured interview is flexible. There are both closed and open-ended questions and the interviewer can ask respondents to elaborate on answers, which could potentially lead to a better understanding of participants' own subjective understanding of this very sensitive issue.
- The one-to-one setting in a semi-structured interview is likely to establish a good rapport between the interviewer and the respondent. This could be extremely important in a research study on a sensitive issue.

2. Describe the ethical considerations that were applied in the study and explain if further ethical considerations could be applied. [6]

Describe the ethical considerations that were applied in the study: Award [1] per relevant point made, up to a maximum of [3].

- **Consent:** The participants signed a consent form before the start of the study. In principle, participants should be fully informed about the aim and procedures of a study before it starts. However, in this experiment deception was used because it would be impossible to conduct this experiment if the hypothesis was revealed to participants before the study. Informed consent is a requirement in all research and in line with ethical guidelines in psychological research.
- **Debriefing:** The participants were debriefed after completing the study. The researchers would have informed participants about the true purpose of the study and the results they expected to find, in this case about a possible relationship between social exclusion and decrease in prosocial behaviour. They should also explain the risk of possible psychological harm in the social exclusion group and offer help to participants who wanted it.
- **Anonymity:** Participants in a study must be sure that nobody can identify them in research reports. This is particularly important in socially sensitive studies such as this, because of the risk of self-stigmatization. The stimulus material specifically mentions that participants were not named in the research report.

Explain if further ethical considerations could be applied. Award [1] per relevant point made, up to a maximum of [3].

- **Protection from harm:** (1) In a study like this on a quite sensitive issue that could potentially cause some psychological harm to participants, the researchers should inform them after the study that they could contact the researchers if they have any questions. (2) The researchers should make sure that participants in the social exclusion condition did not risk any long-term psychological harm after the unpleasant experience, for example by offering a follow-up session after the experiment to those who asked for it. A thorough debriefing session could also serve as a way to fully inform participants about the aim of the study and at the same time touch upon the ethical issues involved in the social exclusion group.
- **Deception:** Deception was used in this experiment.. Candidates should explain and justify the use of deception in the study, for example, explaining that a research ethics application form to an ethics committee could ensure that deception is acceptable in this particular study.
- **Right to withdraw:** A further ethical consideration to apply could be to inform students during debriefing that they could still withdraw their data. However, participants in this study are students who receive course credit for their participation so they might not feel they can withdraw their data because they have given consent. However, students should be informed that they are not obliged to participate if they would rather not.
- **Confidentiality:** The researchers could ensure that participants knew that the data would be kept in secure storage and destroyed afterwards to ensure confidentiality.
- Any other relevant point.

3. Discuss the possibility of generalizing the findings of the study.

[9]

Refer to the paper 3 markbands when awarding marks.

Marks should be awarded according to the descriptors in the markbands. Each level of the markband corresponds to a range of marks to differentiate candidates' performance. A best-fit approach is used to ascertain which particular mark to use from the possible range for each level descriptor.

The study in the stimulus material is a quantitative study so it is expected that candidates use terminology related to generalization in quantitative research. Use of concepts related to qualitative research such as "theoretical generalisation" and "inferential generalisation" should not be awarded credit.

The command term "discuss" requires candidates to offer a review of the possibility of generalizing the findings of the study in the stimulus material.

Discussion related to the possibility of generalizing the findings of the study in the stimulus material could include but are not limited to:

- Generalization means drawing inferences from findings in this experiment to something outside the study (external validity). The study in the stimulus is quantitative and therefore a model of generalization could be statistical generalization (*also accept: nomothetic generalization*). Although the participants in this study are randomly allocated to the two conditions, the sample is not randomized (as it was a convenience sample). Therefore, generalization would be problematic.
- In this study, the target population is psychology students who as part of their education are expected to sign up for a certain number of research studies. The study used convenience sampling, which is a non-probability sample, but it is also an easy and quick way to select a sample. However, this sampling method has received a lot of criticism, as psychology students at universities cannot be expected to represent a wider population. Therefore, it can be argued that it might at best be possible to generalize these results to psychology students at universities. Some would argue that a convenience sample only represents itself.
- The sampling method (based on convenience) is not considered statistically representative of a target population as it suffers from self-selection bias. One way to ensure generalization in a study is to choose a random sample (probability sampling).
- The fact that students received credit for participation could result in selection bias. When there is requirement to participate, students may be more likely to sign up for one study and not another on the basis of a convenient appointment time, rather than because they are making an informed choice about the kind of study they want to participate in.
- The sample was relatively small with only 26 participants. However, the researchers had ensured that the sample included both males and females as well as different ethnic groups. If the researchers added more participants to the sample it would enhance the possibility of generalization, as well as adding to statistical power. The more participants, the greater the chance that differences between participants will be levelled out and therefore generalization is more likely to be possible.
- If replications of this study arrived at the same conclusion, the potential for generalization is enhanced. If the same theory of cause-effect relationship between social exclusion and decrease in prosocial behaviour found support in additional studies it would be more likely to confirm the validity of the original findings.