Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2023

Pearson Edexcel International Advanced Level
In Psychology (WPS01/01)
PAPER 01: Social and Cognitive Psychology

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General Comments

This paper allowed candidates many opportunities to demonstrate their psychological knowledge and skills. There were some individual gaps in knowledge demonstrated by a few blank responses; however, they were not limited to a specific question or part of the paper indicating that candidates approached this paper confidently and were able to complete it in the time available.

The mathematical assessment questions were generally answered well with candidates completing the calculations accurately. It is helpful to show the workings of the calculation when completing a statistical test. Candidates were less assured with the reasons for using a specific statistical test.

Frequently responses to questions involving strengths, weaknesses or improvements are generic and do not relate to specific details about the study or theory required. In many responses it is not evident why the identified feature is considered as a strength.

Some candidates demonstrated a lack of detail in their answers. Candidates are reminded that they should be aware of specific details of studies mentioned in the specification and that they should be able to distinguish between Asch's study and Moscovici's.

In the working memory model, candidates must be able to describe the function of the component parts clearly and apply them to a scenario when appropriate.

Overall, there was an improvement in candidates' responses to a scenario. It is, nonetheless, still worth emphasising that when a scenario is given in a question, the response must be contextualised and apply psychological knowledge to explain that scenario.

Candidates' knowledge and understanding appeared equal across both the Social and Cognitive topics. As in previous series, candidates would find it helpful to be aware of the different command terms and analyse how they should be used in a response to a certain type of question.

Paper Summary

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates are offered the following advice:

Candidates should take careful note of the mark allocation to judge how much to elaborate answers.

Candidates should ensure that they know the meaning of each command term.

Candidates should show their workings in a calculation.

Candidates should identify the reasons for using each statistical test.

Candidates must learn content thoroughly so that they can incorporate accurate details into their answers.

Candidates must avoid generic responses and provide specific responses when answering strength and weakness questions.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A

Q1a

Question Introduction

This was an AO1 knowledge and understanding question with four marks for a correct identification of the procedure of Milgram's experiment 7. Candidates clearly had a good awareness of Milgram's work although only a few achieved full marks here. No credit was given for aims or results and some limited their response by simply stating the procedure was the same as the original.

Q1b

Question Introduction

This was an AO1 identification for a conclusion of Milgram's variation experiment 7 and also an AO3 justification/exemplification. Many responses included a reference to proximity although this was often not precise with candidates suggesting that proximity led to less obedience. Some candidates offered results rather than a conclusion. Candidates who provided a clear conclusion and used correct figures as exemplification accessed both marks.

Q2a

Question Introduction

There is an AO1 identification mark for stating a reason why minority influence may lead to conformity and an AO3 exemplification mark for the reason. Most candidates were able to offer a reason; consistency was the most popular although some responses did not develop or clarify this sufficiently to gain credit. Exemplification if given, usually quoted Moscovici's work. The statistics must be correct to attain marks.

Q2b

Question Introduction

There was an AO1 and an AO3 mark for a reason and exemplification of why minority influence may cause conformity. Most popular answers included inconsistency or inflexibility. A few candidates gave successful exemplification linked to research such as Nemeth. Other candidates attempted to use examples such as suffragettes or LGBTQ groups to illustrate their responses although they rarely developed this explicitly for the second mark.

Q3a

Question Introduction

This question has an AO1 mark for the identification of each strength and an AO3 for the exemplification of that strength. The most popular responses used the reliability of laboratory experiments to illustrate the strength; unfortunately, many of these responses were generic gaining no credit. Candidates who identified standardisation of the line length and the same experience for all participants or other specific details about Asch's experiment did achieve credit. Very few candidates were able to find a second appropriate strength.

Q3b

Question Introduction

Similarly, this question has an AO1 mark for the identification of an improvement and an AO3 mark for its exemplification. Many candidates were aware of some of the weaknesses of a laboratory experiment but did not suggest an improvement. The most common bias identified in Asch's experiment was the sole use of male participants and stronger responses suggested the inclusion of women as a viable improvement. Not all of these candidates followed this statement with an exemplification of the improvement. Range of genders or ethnic groups were too ambiguous to gain credit. A few candidates suggested a more realistic task would be useful but did not devise a suitable task.

Examiner Tip

Candidates should take careful note of the mark allocation to judge how much to elaborate answers.

Q4

Question Introduction

This is a levels-based question testing AO1 knowledge and understanding and AO2 application with equal emphasis. Candidates engaged well with the scenario and referenced Kwame's situation in their answers confidently. Most responses included some mention of social power theory. Legitimate and reward were the popular types of power identified which could easily be applied to Kwame. Coercive was used correctly and some candidates commented on expert power as well. A few candidates were able to recite all the types of social power correctly. Even though social power theory was largely understood application was often underdeveloped and did not achieve the higher marking levels. Some candidates failed to achieve marks as they focused their responses solely around agency theory which was not relevant to this question.

Examiner Tip

Candidates should ensure that they know the meaning of each command term.

Section B: Cognitive Psychology

Q5a

Question Introduction

This question has an AO1 mark for identifying a strength of the multi store model and an AO3 mark for justification/exemplification of that strength. Candidates struggled to find creditworthy strengths here. Successful responses tended to focus on the idea of separate stores for STM and LTM. Justification usually came from case studies such as KF and HM although the evidence was not always well expressed.

Q5b

Question Introduction

There is an AO1 identification mark and an AO3 exemplification mark for a weakness of the multi-store model. Candidates were more confident with weaknesses than strengths for this model. Many responses focused on the multi-store model being oversimplified with unitary stores and provided appropriate evidence from the working memory model or Tulving's work to support this. Some

candidates recognised that it was reductionist/oversimplified but were unable to provide any convincing evidence. There was some confusion between the multi-store model and the working memory model with some candidates basing their response on the latter.

Q6a

Question Introduction

One mark was available for the calculation of the mean. This question was answered confidently and correctly.

Q6b

Question Introduction

One mark was available for the calculation of the median. Many candidates achieved the correct answer but there were a few errors.

Q6c

Question Introduction

This question involved the calculation of a Wilcoxon Signed Ranks test. The difference column was completed without error in many responses although occasionally the negative sign was ignored. Fewer candidates achieved the mark for the ranked difference column. The instructions for the questions emphasise showing workings but many responses did not contain any calculations or results for the sum of the positive ranks which limited credit to 3 marks.

Examiner Tip

Candidates should show their workings in a calculation.

Q6d

Question Introduction

Candidates offered a variety of answers such as ' to see if data is significant' suggesting that they were not confident with the reasons for selecting a specific statistical test. Many candidates identified repeated measures design as an appropriate reason, some mentioned a difference in the two conditions and a few linked ordinal data as a reason.

Examiner Tip

Candidates should identify the reasons for using each statistical test.

Q7a

Question Introduction

There are two AO2 application marks for applying the workings of the phonological loop to Jaya's lack of recall. Most candidates showed good understanding of the role of the phonological loop in memory, but some responses were generic with no reference to Jaya or the situation. Candidates either focused on overload of the phonological loop or the inability to use articulatory rehearsal. Neither response was developed sufficiently to attain both marks.

Q7b

Question Introduction

There was an AO2 mark for identifying a strength weakness and an AO3 mark for justification of the strength/weakness. This had to relate to the scenario and Jaya's situation. Candidates often find this type of question particularly challenging and tend to make generic statements with no reference to the scenario. Some candidates merely repeated their response to 7a. Very few responses achieved marks on this question.

Examiner Tip

Candidates must avoid generic responses and provide specific responses when answering strength and weakness questions.

Q8

Question Introduction

This essay has 4AO1 and 4AO3 marks requiring equal emphasis on knowledge/understanding and evaluative/conclusion points. Largely, candidates failed to meet the demands of this question. They exhibited considerable confusion over the meaning of experimental methods. Only a few responses considered laboratory and field experiments; these were usually superficial and generic with little or no reference to memory experiments. Studies such as Bartlett and Saachi were inexpertly used to illustrate some points. A wide range of essays covered topics such as sampling methods, case studies, questionnaires and other methods were submitted. Most commonly candidates wrote at length about experimental designs limiting their marks to Level 1.

Q9

Question Introduction

This final essay had 4AO1 (knowledge), 4AO2 (Application) and 4 AO3 (Evaluative) marks with equal emphasis. Candidates engaged well with the scenario and used their knowledge of schema to explain Arthur and Benny's behaviour quite imaginatively. Most candidates showed some understanding of reconstructive memory although in some cases it was superficial and limited to schema. Other candidates did not explain reconstructive memory but discussed Bartlett's 'War of the Ghosts' study instead. These responses also evaluated the study at length which did not answer the question. A few candidates developed their AO3 to include relevant evidence from Loftus & Palmer and Allport & Postman as well as some general points about reconstructive memory being difficult to test.