Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel International Advanced Level in Psychology (WPS03) Paper 01

Applications of Psychology

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General Comments

Knowledge and understanding was demonstrated by the majority of the candidates.

Option A continues to be the preferred choice by the majority of candidates. The responses in respect of the application of social learning from the media in respect of criminal and anti-social behaviour were particularly well developed. Candidates who had chosen Option B, demonstrated good knowledge and understanding of the role of social support as a coping strategy for stress and how far Type A personalities may be associated with stress.

It was pleasing to see the level of knowledge and understanding in respect of Vygotsky's zone of proximal development. This was then developed and many candidates were able to assess the theory in some detail. Candidates also demonstrated a growing ability to identify improvements that could be made to investigations presented in the scenarios.

Paper Summary

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

- Candidates need to review the application of context in both the small and large tariff questions. Some accurate understanding is demonstrated in terms of concepts, theories and studies but when these are not linked to the scenario, marks cannot be achieved as generic responses score 0 marks.

- Candidates need to review the taxonomy of the question, if a comparison is asked for, a two-sided argument needs to be made to achieve the full range of marks available for the question.

- Candidates would benefit from revisiting decision making and interpretation of inferential statistics, as these are important elements of methods in psychology which can be applied throughout the qualification.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Q01a

Question Introduction

Many candidates gave the correct age range for the stage and then gave one or more features with a brief explanation for 2 marks. Some candidates named the features, rather than describing them, limiting the marks they were able to achieve.

Q01b

Question Introduction

Some candidates were able to access the full 4 marks for the question, citing application in schools, parenting or research for the strength. The answer in respect of the weakness was often stronger, making comparisons with Eriksen, Vygotsky and Chomsky. There were a number of candidates who simply described Piaget's stages of development, without identifying the strength or a justification which were not creditworthy.

Q02a

Question Introduction

This question required candidates to explain why qualitative data may have been better than quantitative data in relation to the scenario. The most common reason which achieved 2 marks was providing rich, in-depth information, relating this to children's language development and making the comparison with quantitative data. Many candidates did give a reason why qualitative data was better but failed to make a comparison which limited the marks they could achieve.

Examiner Tip

To achieve 2 marks, where a question asks for a comparison, both elements need to be addressed. Generic responses are not creditworthy, so reference must be made to the scenario.

Q02b

Question Introduction

This question required candidates to explain one weakness of the range in relation to the scenario. However, many candidates demonstrated an understanding of the range as a measure of dispersion but did not explain why this was a weakness or use elements from the scenario or data table to justify this point.

Q2c

Question Introduction

Many candidates were successfully able to identify an improvement in relation to the scenario, for example increasing the diversity of his sample by going to day care centres in different towns. To get the justification mark, some explanation as to what this would achieve in terms of an improvement is required, for example improving representativeness of the sample in terms of generalisability or target population.

Q03a

Question Introduction

Few candidates were able to describe how a stratified sample could have been gathered with reference to the scenario. Many candidates confused stratified sampling with systematic sampling. There were also many descriptions of the procedure of stratified sampling without reference to the context, which were therefore generic and not creditworthy.

Q03b

Question Introduction

This question was answered well by many candidates. There was a good understanding of the potential ethical issues that should have been considered and these were applied well in terms of references to the scenario.

Q04

Question Introduction

Many candidates were able to demonstrate accurate knowledge and understanding of the ZPD and gave coherent summaries of the key concepts helping them to achieve the higher levels in the mark band.

Many candidates went on successfully to assess these points using a range of factors. Popular choices were application to schools and parenting and to a lesser extent support from studies. Competing arguments including comparisons with key findings from Piaget and Chomsky allowed candidates to access the higher mark bands for the AO3 element of the question.

Q05

Question Introduction

There was a wide range of responses by candidates in their understanding and application of the UNCRC (1989) in relation to the scenario. Some candidates had a detailed knowledge of the articles, numbering and describing them, and then applying them to the scenario. Many candidates demonstrated how the articles related to BPS guidelines and again made an attempt at relating these to elements from the scenario.

Some candidates appeared not to understand the requirements of the question and only evaluated the Strange Situation Procedure without reference to either the UNCRC or ethics in general.

Q06

Question Introduction

Candidates were required to describe how pre-trial publicity may have influenced jury decision making. Some candidates were able to focus on how jury decision making was influenced, gaining 2 marks. However, many candidates only described pre-trial publicity which did not address the question.

Q07a

Question Introduction
Candidates had to complete the table and calculate Spearman's rank correlation coefficient. Many candidates gave the correct calculation to 2 decimal places. Many candidates correctly calculated only the sum of the d^2 column.

Examiner Tip

It is important that candidates show their workings. In a number of cases, the candidates had forgotten to do the final step of subtracting from 1 and in this situation, they were still able to achieve 3 of the 4 marks available as the correct steps were creditworthy.

Q07b

Question Introduction
Some candidates demonstrated an understanding of the reason for using a Spearman's rho on the data in relation to the scenario. Many did not appear to understand the relevance of a statistical test in terms of its design, use of data or test.

Q07c

Question Introduction

Many candidates successfully explained one improvement that could be made to the study, using relevant information from the context to support the identification point. Some candidates achieved 1 of the two marks as the justification was not accurately related to the scenario, simply suggesting that it would improve generalisability to the whole population rather than the target population of prisoners.

Q08c

Question Introduction
This question was answered well by the majority of candidates. Details from the context were successfully applied to elements of weapon focus that could make eye-witness testimony unreliable. Some candidates provided generic responses, simply quoting weapon focus or witness rather than specific elements from the scenario.

Q09

Question Introduction
Candidates were required to explain one strength of the cognitive interview technique in relation to the scenario. Whilst many candidates described one or more features of the cognitive interview and why this could potentially be a weakness, they did not relate it to the context and therefore the responses were generic.

Q10

Question Introduction

Some candidates were able to address the question and evaluated research into jury decision making, including Penrod and Cutler (1989). They were able to demonstrate accurate knowledge and understanding of a number of research studies including Penrod and Cutler as required by the question. The candidates were then able to argue whether these studies could be considered both reliable and valid in terms of jury decision-making.

Many students, did not appear to know the study of Penrod and Cutler well, often giving elements of correct knowledge or describing a different study. A number of students only evaluated the study of Penrod and Cutler and whilst they demonstrated accurate knowledge and a logical evaluation of that particular study, they did not fully address the question by including other research, which was a limitation in being able to achieve the highest mark band.

Q11

Question Introduction

Many candidates demonstrated accurate and at times thorough knowledge and understanding of social learning theory (SLT) from the media. The responses outlined the principles and processes of SLT whilst linking to examples in relation to social media and its potential link with criminal and anti-social behaviour. There was a good use of supporting evidence including some high profile cases recently reported in the media.

Some candidates however, whilst it was clear that they had a detailed knowledge of SLT did not link this to the media and its account of criminal and anti-social behaviour, just meeting the AO1 requirement of the question, restricting them to the lower mark bands.