Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Pearson Edexcel

GCE Psychology 9PS0/03

Paper 3: Psychological Skill

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Section A: Methods

Q1a

This question required students to identify a strength and a weakness of the sampling technique used in the Facebook and Twitter study and provide justification for each. Many candidates were able to identify a strength and a weakness of a volunteer sample but did not fully justify this appropriately. There were some generic answers which could not be awarded credit.

Q1b

Students were required to explain two conclusions that the researchers in the Twitter and Facebook study could make from the results given. The majority of students were able to identify an appropriate conclusion from the data and provide justification using the data. A minority provided a conclusion with no justification and some simply described the results.

Q1c

For this question students needed to explain a strength of using primary data for the Twitter and Facebook study. The best responses gave a contextualised response with a strength identified and then fully justified. A number of students gave generic answers which could not be awarded credit.

Q1d

Students needed to explain a weakness of using the mean score to analyse the data in the Twitter and Facebook study for this question. The best responses gave a weakness in context with appropriate justification. A number of students gave generic answers which could not be awarded credit.

Q2a

For this question students were required to explain two strengths of using a covert, naturalistic, non-participant observation for the open plan office study. Students performed well on this question, often focusing on the naturalistic and covert elements of the observation. The majority were able to identify and justify at least one strength in context, scoring at least two marks.

Q2b

This question required students to explain a strength and a weakness of using quantitative data in the open plan office study. The best responses gave a contextualised response with identification of a strength and weakness and then fully justified these. Some students gave generic answers which could not be awarded credit.

Q2c

For this question students needed to explain a weakness of the open plan office study in terms of generalisability. Students performed well on this question with the vast majority able to identify a weakness in context and the best responses went on to justify the weakness given.

Q2d

Students were required to identify and then justify one conclusion they could make using the data given. The vast majority scored at least one mark for identifying an appropriate conclusion and the best responses justified this using the data.

Section B: Review of Studies

Q3a

This question required students to interpret the data given using the critical values tables and then put this into the context of the study. There was a mixed performance with some excellent responses making accurate judgements and fully justifying their ideas in context whereas other responses only did one or the other element and there were some students who did not attempt the question.

Q3b

Students needed to apply their ideas from biological psychology to the findings of the study (AO2) and also provide research evidence for or against to gain the AO3 marks. Students tended to find the AO2 easier to produce with a varied performance in this area but research evidence was very limited.

Q4

For this question students needed to show knowledge and understanding of both studies and then consider them in terms of their scientific status, giving more focus to the AO3 overall. The best responses considered both studies equally with accurate knowledge and understanding and gave accurate judgements regarding their scientific status, offering more weight to their AO3 analysis and evaluation. Weaker responses tended to give an imbalanced response, focussing on one study and offering greater AO1 than AO3.

Section C: Issues and Debates

Q5

Students were required to show knowledge and understanding of social impact theory and then apply this to the context as appropriate. They then needed to offer analysis and evaluation leading to judgements and conclusions about how

useful the theory was to explain human behaviour, such as that in the scenario. The majority of candidates engaged well with the novel scenario with the weaker responses focussing on application only whereas stronger responses showed a breadth of understanding of the theory and evaluated it in addition to the application.

Q6

This question required students to consider how far psychology could be considered a reductionist explanation of human behaviour. The majority of responses showed reasonable knowledge of a variety different explanations of behaviour in psychology and many were able to comment on the extent to which they can be seen as reductionist. However, many responses showed a very limited understanding of reductionism, which hindered their performance. Only the very best responses were able to assess the use of reductionist arguments, such as their usefulness.