

Markscheme

May 2025

Psychology

Higher level

Paper 3

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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.

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

Award [1] for identification of correct research method: Focus group interview (also accept focus group, group interview).

Award [0] for interview, structured interview, unstructured interview or semi-structured interview.

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 characteristic marks are specific to the research method (Focus group interview) rather than the described study.

- A focus group interview is carried out with a small group of participants who all take part in the interview at the same time/together.
- The interviewer acts as a facilitator and encourages the participants to talk openly about topics that are relevant to the research being carried out. The facilitator keeps the conversation focused and brings the group back to the topic if need be.
- Participants usually have something in common and this helps to create a more open and relevant discussion. They can develop their own ideas based on what they hear others sharing.
- The group participants are encouraged to talk amongst themselves rather than to the facilitator.
- A focus group interview provides a natural setting for interactions between participants because participants can use their own language, and it is less artificial than other forms of interview.
- Because of aspects such as the development of ideas and the expression of multiple perspectives, a focus group interview is likely to generate rich data.
- A focus group interview can experience issues related to group dynamics. These include conformity/social desirability bias, some participants sharing less and an unwillingness to share personal information in front of other participants.

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

Award [1] for naming the correct sampling method: Purposive sampling (also accept quota sampling, judgmental sampling or selective sampling).

*Description of the sampling method used in the study may include **two** of the following characteristics: [1] per relevant point. Maximum of [2].*

Award [0] for description of the sample rather than the sampling method.

- Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method, which means that participants are not chosen randomly from a target population.
- A purposive sample is based on specific selection criteria / salient characteristics.
- This is used when researchers have a clear idea of the characteristics they want to study.
- Using the participants who are most relevant to the research question can increase the validity and reliability of the results. It also allows for a more efficient use of resources and time.
- Purposive sampling gives researchers the ability to focus on using the participants who are most likely to provide relevant data, potentially leading to faster data saturation.
- Because the participants are chosen based on characteristics that the researcher judges to be salient, there is a higher likelihood of the sample being affected by bias. This will decrease the likelihood of the sample being representative of the population.
- However, researchers can also use purposive sampling to make sure that their sample includes a range of participants that reflect the diversity present within the population of interest.

1. (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 an additional method. Either approach to answering the question is acceptable. The rationale may differ depending on which is chosen.

If more than one method is suggested, only the first method can be considered for credit.

Suitable alternative or additional research methods and reasons (with rationale) could be, but are not limited to:

Semi-structured interviews

- The aim of this research was to understand the participants experiences of mental healthcare. To get valid information, participants need to be allowed enough freedom to share their subjective experience.
- Although a semi-structured interview is based on an interview guide, it is flexible, and the interviewer can ask participants to elaborate on their answers in follow up questions which could potentially lead to a better understanding of each individual participant’s subjective understanding of this topic.
- The semi-structured interview as an additional research method would allow triangulation and could compensate for the limitations of the focus group – such as issues around group dynamics.

Unstructured interviews

- Unstructured interviews do not have a set pattern and questions are not planned in advance. Instead, the questions are based on the participant’s previous answers. This allows them to be very informal and flexible.
- Similar to the focus group, an unstructured interview is much like an everyday conversation, creating a relaxed environment where new topics and ideas can flow. It would therefore act as a suitable alternative.
- Unlike the focus group, an unstructured interview is carried out one to one which may avoid issues around group dynamics, for example quieter participants not being given a chance to share.

Surveys

- A survey with closed questions could collect quantitative data on participants’ experiences of mental healthcare. This could function as an additional method and provide method triangulation.
- Data from a large-scale survey could add data to the investigation. This would allow for statistical comparisons (between countries or across time).
- Surveys generally allow researchers to collect a large amount of data in a relatively short period and they are less expensive than qualitative methods.
- With a survey it is easy to analyse the data statistically. If the sample is randomized, then the findings can be generalized to a target population.

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].

The command term “describe” requires candidates to give a detailed account.

If a candidate names relevant ethical considerations without also accurately describing them, a maximum of [1] should be awarded.

- **Informed consent:** The participants were informed about the aims of the study. They signed a consent form and gave their permission for the interviews to be audio-recorded.
- **Deception:** The participants were NOT deceived, and the researchers had no reasons to use deception. The participants were given information about the aims of the study and were also made aware of the recording of the interviews.
- **Anonymity:** Participants in a study must be sure that nobody can identify them in research reports. The stimulus material mentions that the interviewer identified each participant with a unique code. This would mean that participants were not named in the report. However, the other participants and the interviewer in each focus group know who participated in their interview.
- **Protection from harm:** The topic of this study sensitive and it is possible that the questions may cause some discomfort. However, there were a number of steps taken to prevent / limit harm to the participants. They were interviewed by someone they already knew. The interviewer was a mental healthcare worker and likely to spot if any distress was being caused. Interviews were carried out in the native language of the participants and efforts were made to create a safe and friendly environment. Everyone was given time to feel comfortable sharing, before the questions focused on more personal experiences.
- Other relevant considerations.

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

The command term “explain” requires candidates to give a detailed account including reasons or causes.

If a candidate names relevant ethical considerations without also accurately explaining them, a maximum of [1] should be awarded.

- **Debriefing:** The participants should be debriefed after they have completed the interview, and the interviewer should explain how the results will be used and what will happen to the recordings and their personal information. The interviewer can address or comment upon anything that came up during the interview but was not appropriate to address at the time and/or with all of the participants present. Contact information could be provided so that participants could contact the researcher/interviewer if they have any questions/concerns.
- **Right to withdraw:** The participants should be informed about their right to leave the interview and/or withdraw their data at any time. The participants could be given access to the transcripts and the researcher's conclusions before the final report is published to ensure that they are clear about what is being said and that they still agree to their results being used.
- **Confidentiality:** The researcher should ensure that participants know that all of their personal information, the recordings, written transcripts and the interviewer and researchers' analysis will be kept in secure storage (such as in a password-protected document) and destroyed afterwards within a set and reasonable timeframe.
- Other relevant considerations.

3. Discuss the possibility of transferring 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.

The command term “discuss” requires candidates to offer a considered and balanced review of the possibility of transferring the findings of the study.

Transferability refers to the extent to which research findings may be relevant to settings/contexts and individuals/groups/populations outside of the study. It is a judgement made by the reader and is most relevant to qualitative research methods. It is also referred to as ‘case-to-case generalization’.

Generalization refers to the extent to which the findings from a sample can be applied to an entire population. This is considered by the researchers, their colleagues and the wider scientific community and is most relevant to quantitative research methods.

Discussion could include, but is not limited to:

- Transferability requires congruence between the 'sending' and the 'receiving' contexts. Therefore, sufficient information about both contexts is needed. It is the researcher’s responsibility to provide a detailed description of the relevant aspects of their research (for example, when the data was collected, information about sampling, characteristics of the participants and details about cultural and social context) in order to make it possible for readers to be able to make decisions about applying the findings to other contexts.
 - The researchers in this study have gathered a lot of information about the participants that they could use to provide a detailed description. The participants provided information about their age, gender and ethnicity. They also gave details about their mental health conditions and the treatment they had received.
 - The ability to transfer findings to other groups is affected by the participants having different mental health conditions and different experiences of treatment.
 - The ability to transfer findings to other contexts is affected by the participants having experienced mental healthcare in different countries and from different healthcare providers.
 - Where a theme is found consistently across different conditions, treatments, countries etc., this will increase the possibility of transferring the findings of the study.
 - Because the findings are based on participants taking part in group interviews, readers are likely to find it very difficult to know which of the identified themes are relevant to which participants/contexts.
 - It is important for the researchers to provide details about the cultural and social contexts that surrounded the data collection. This is difficult as there were multiple countries, cultures and languages involved.
 - Making an audio recording of each interview may aid with giving detailed description. However, these were transcribed and translated before the researchers received them and thus words that were not able to be translated exactly may have lost some of the richness of their meaning in the process.
 - Because the research topic is sensitive, some information may need to be hidden from readers in order to protect the participants. This would limit the detail in the descriptions and affect the possibility of transferring the findings.
 - The possibility of transferability is increased if there are other similar studies which have reached the same conclusions, meaning that the findings are corroborated.
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