

Markscheme

November 2015

Psychology

Higher level

Paper 3

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Paper 3 markbands

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The answer does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1 to 3	There is an attempt to answer the question, but knowledge and understanding is limited, often inaccurate, or of marginal relevance to the question. The response makes no direct reference to the stimulus material or relies too heavily on quotations from the text.
4 to 7	The question is partially answered. Knowledge and understanding is accurate but limited. Either the command term is not effectively addressed or the response is not sufficiently explicit in answering the question. The response makes limited use of the stimulus material.
8 to 10	The question is answered in a focused and effective manner and meets the demands of the command term. The answer is supported by appropriate and accurate knowledge and understanding of qualitative research methodology. The response demonstrates a critical understanding of qualitative research methodology applied to the stimulus material.

1. Explain the use of semi-structured interviews and a focus group interview in this case study.

[10]

Refer to the paper 3 markbands when awarding marks.

The command term “explain” requires candidates to give a detailed account of the use of semi-structured interviews as well as the focus group interview in the case study, giving reasons for their use. Although explanation of the use of both semi-structured interviews and a focus group interview is required, it does not have to be evenly balanced to gain high marks.

Responses that use the term “experiment” as a generic term for “study” should not be penalized.

Semi-structured interviews (SSIs) use a combination of closed and open-ended questions. This gives the respondents the opportunity to give a subjective account of their own personal experiences as they see it. This could be particularly important in a case study that investigates refugees' resettlement and the challenges faced by the adolescent Afghan females in this study.

One reason for the choice of SSIs to collect data at the start of this case study could be that the researcher aimed to explore how each adolescent girl experienced her situation. By starting with individual semi-structured interviews in the Afghan language, the researcher could establish rapport with the respondents. The combination of a few closed questions and open-ended questions gives flexibility and ensures that participants have the opportunity to talk freely about their feelings in relation to sensitive issues.

In this case study, the researchers combined the SSI with a focus group interview. The reason for doing that could be to give the adolescents an opportunity to discuss the sensitive issues between them but also to provide the researcher with more data.

Candidates may argue that the method of triangulation is often used in case studies in order to explore a problem in more depth. The focus group involves a facilitator and participants interact with each other as they would in real life. An advantage is that they can use their own language and they can discuss and respond to each other's statements. This gives a special dynamic to the interview and generates rich data. Normally, a focus group interview is considered to be naturalistic because of its conversational nature. In the context of this study, the focus group also gave the researchers an opportunity to explore if participants could discuss the very sensitive issues with each other or if they chose not to disclose private information in front of the others. This information could be important in relation to establishment of peer groups.

If a candidate discusses only semi-structured interviews or only focus group interview(s), award up to a maximum of **[5 marks]**.

Candidates may evaluate the semi-structured and focus group interviews as part of their explanation. This is acceptable as long as the evaluation is used as part of the explanation.

2. Discuss **one or more** ethical considerations relevant to this case study.

[10]

Refer to the paper 3 markbands when awarding marks.

The command term “discuss” requires candidates to offer a considered and balanced review of ethical considerations in the case study. Conclusions should be supported by appropriate knowledge of ethical considerations in relation to this qualitative study.

Responses that use the term “experiment” as a generic term for “study” should not be penalized.

Relevant ethical considerations in this study include but are not limited to:

- Informed consent is important in all research but a particularly relevant factor in this study could be the age of the participants. Some of them are quite young and parental consent should be gained for minors – even though this is not mentioned in the stimulus material, it could be a relevant comment to make.
- The researcher took care not to violate ethics by giving the participants the questions in advance so that they would not be asked anything that they did not feel comfortable answering. This could be seen as part of the briefing process but also that the researcher respected the participants and accepted that they should not be harmed in any way by talking about things they found too sensitive.
- Anonymity/confidentiality are particularly important in a case study exploring personal and sensitive issues, especially because the girls have a cultural background where girls and women are not expected to have much education and should obey their parents. Candidates could discuss various reasons for confidentiality, for example that the girls’ experience of being caught between two cultures could perhaps result in more conflict with their parents if they knew how the girls felt. It would be relevant to say that anonymity could be ensured in the report by anonymizing the names of the participants as all the girls knew each other and probably came from a very small community. This would protect the girls so that their parents and other people from the Afghan community could not identify them.

Candidates may use anonymity and confidentiality interchangeably. This is acceptable.

Candidates may discuss one ethical consideration in order to demonstrate depth of knowledge, or may discuss a larger number of ethical considerations in order to demonstrate breadth of knowledge. Both approaches are equally acceptable.

Candidates may discuss ethical considerations that were taken in the study or ethical considerations that could have been taken. Both approaches are equally acceptable.

3. Explain the use of reflexivity in this case study.

[10]

Refer to the paper 3 markbands when awarding marks.

The command term “explain” requires candidates to give a detailed account of why reflexivity was used in this case study and give reasons or causes for the use of reflexivity by referring to details of the study.

Responses that use the term “experiment” as a generic term for “study” should not be penalized.

Candidates could argue that in qualitative research, it is believed that the research process affects the researcher as well as the people being studied and it is argued that in qualitative research researcher bias could add to the richness of knowledge of a complex problem. Therefore the researcher could use reflexivity as a strategy to examine how the researcher's own subjectivity contributes to the findings in this particular study. Such an approach acknowledges that the researcher may be biased towards the findings because she perceives and interprets data through her own lens (subjectivity) but this is taken as an extra perspective of the topic under investigation as is also the case in this study. There is no specific reference to “reflexivity” in the stimulus material but the question indicates that it was applied.

Reasons for applying reflexivity in this case study and how to apply reflexivity could include but are not limited to:

- To handle researcher bias: the lead researcher had the exact same experience as the participants and she now works as a social worker with Afghan refugee girls. Furthermore, she recruited the participants from her personal contacts (line 6). This could potentially bias the results unless reflexivity is applied. **Personal reflexivity** could therefore be relevant in this case study. A reflective journal could give an inside view of the researcher's approach and thoughts during the research process. This would enable the researcher to examine her own values, experiences and beliefs, and how these could affect the research process, eg in terms of specific decisions such as the selection and wording of questions in the interviews. It could also involve thinking about how this particular research has affected the researcher personally and professionally. Reflecting on the research could also involve examining her relationship to the respondents, who share her own experiences and how this could affect responses to questions.
- To increase credibility/trustworthiness of the data: the researcher could ask participants or other researchers to check whether the way the study was conducted or the interpretation of the data is credible. Asking other researchers to check the research process (choice of participants, data collection, analysis and interpretation of data etc.) **Epistemological reflexivity** involves examining the way in which knowledge has been generated in the study, eg she could examine whether the focus of the study has limited what could possibly be found on the challenges faced by these Afghan adolescents; or if the design of the study and the analysis of data has biased the results. Reflections such as these encourage any qualitative researcher to think critically about the credibility of the findings.

Candidates may refer to personal reflexivity and epistemological reflexivity without using specific terminology and still be awarded marks across the full range.

Candidates may explain why reflexivity is relevant to the study by referring to details of the study and they may explain how reflexivity could be applied to the study. Both approaches are acceptable.