

EXAMINERS' REPORT

IM PSYCHOLOGY

FIRST SESSION 2018



**L-Università
ta' Malta**

**MATSEC
Examinations Board**

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Part 1: Statistical Information

GRADE	A	B	C	D	E	F	ABS	TOTAL
NUMBER	55	87	165	132	138	146	88	811
% OF TOTAL	6.8	10.7	20.3	16.3	17.0	18.0	10.9	100

Overall, the number of students sitting for the exam has now stabilised. This year there was a 1% increase in the number of absent students. The grades are also at par with last year's results. This year, 18.2% failed the exam as compared to the 17.6% of 2017. One must note there was a 1% rise in the number of students placed in the A to C range and a 3% decrease in the number of students that got a D or an E. this effectively means that the students fared better overall.

It is noted that students are well prepared for the exam and are answering in a more coherent manner. The markers observed a significant improvement in the overall structure of each given answer. There was a consistency in giving fairly detailed answers in both Section A and Section B. Nevertheless, although the answers were quite good for this level of preparation, students are still struggling when it comes to applying theory to practice. In addition, the poor command of the English language at times diminished the overall quality of the answer.

Part 2: Comments regarding candidates' performance

Question 1

A good number of students answered **Q1(i)** correctly, indicating that they are now well prepared for such research questions. At the same time, quite a number of students erroneously described quantitative methodology as being superior to qualitative methodology rather than a qualitatively different type of methodology and this showed that these examinees' understanding of the two methodologies is not accurate. Again erroneously, quantitative methodology was described as being a methodology which gives a cause and effect relationship which is also a mistake since such a methodology can give primarily a relationship between data gathered, and only the experimental design can give such a relationship when all variables are controlled.

In answering **Q1(ii)**, stratified and quota sampling were given by examinees as if they were one in the same method of sampling with no mention of the difference between the two types of sampling. While another common mistake in **Q1(ii)** was with examinees choosing purposive sampling as their choice of sampling because they showed a confusion about the identity of the research population: among these examinees, students of St. Mark's school were not identified as the research population but erroneously identified as the purposive sample being taken from the larger population of students.

The most common mistake on **Q1(iii)** were examinees using the words 'questionnaires' and 'interviews' interchangeably showing that many examinees lacked the knowledge that these were two different data collecting tools of two different methodologies.

In **Q1b**, a common mistake was incorrectly naming 'focus groups' as 'group interviews'. Finally, another common mistake was giving 'open ended questionnaire' as a qualitative data collection tool for carrying out qualitative research. This showed confusion among examinees in their understanding of when questionnaires are used and about the type of qualitative data collection tools available.

Question 2

In Section A, students were more inclined to answer **Q2** rather than **Q3**.

In **Q2a**, most students provided a correct or partially correct answer to this question. The majority of the students showed a general understanding of the history of psychology and compared the different schools of thought fairly well. They understood that psychology is the scientific study of mental processes and human behaviour, some even being more specific and mentioning human emotions as well as thinking and reflective abilities. There were a few students who only mentioned mental processes or human behaviour, but not both.

Many students also manifested awareness of the main psychological schools that mark the major developments in psychology's history, especially psychoanalysis, behaviourism and humanism. Not all students mentioned the major schools/developments of psychology's history in chronological order, and a considerable number of students only mentioned the schools/development by name (using a single word or term) without saying anything about them. Some students answered this part of the question by using the terms of the major perspectives/approaches in psychology that are specified in unit 2 of the syllabus.

In **Q2b**, most of the students who answered this question did mention names of psychologists from various schools of thought. The most commonly mentioned names were those of Sigmund Freud, John Watson, Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers and Ivan Pavlov. Other names were mentioned too occasionally, such as Jean Piaget, Lawrence Kohlberg and Albert Bandura. However, there were quite a few students who did not match correctly the mentioned name/s with the schools of thought they came from or founded. Moreover, when it came to the contribution most students gave extensive description of one or two theories brought forward and developed by particular psychologists. For example, the large majority of those who mentioned Freud, gave detailed descriptions of his psychosexual stage theory of development and/or his personality theory (id, ego and superego), without providing a broad description of his contribution to the field of psychology through his theories, perspective of human behaviour, ideas and therapeutic techniques.

Question 3

Most students gave correct answers to **Q3a** giving a fairly good, coherent and to-the-point answer. In fact most students who opted for this question did quite well. They showed they could distinguish between conformity as the yielding to group or societal pressures and therefore no direct requests or orders, and obedience as the yielding to people in authority and the willingness to obey orders or requests, even when one personally disagrees with them. There were some students who used practical examples from everyday life, either to strengthen their definitions, or as a way to answer the question, i.e. as a replacement to a precise definition.

Most students gave partially correct answers to **Q3b** as in answering they did not provide very detailed descriptions of Asch's or Milgram's experiment. Some even confused details from both experiments, confusing the two with each other in certain aspects. Some even mixed up which experiment of the two addresses and researches conformity and which tries to understand obedience. Only a few were detailed in description, including the implications and contributions of each experiment to further understand human behaviour.

Finally, in **Q3c**, the large majority of students provided correct and concise answers to this question. Most of the examples given were correct.

Question 4

When answering **Q4a** most of the students showed they have a basic or average knowledge of Erickson's psychosocial theory. Some of them mentioned all the stages of the theory, and some others mentioned only a few. Not all students mentioned the stages in chronological order, and there were quite a few who only mentioned some stages without any other explanatory comments. Others even have a wrong understanding of some stages. Few students did not show any understanding of the theory.

As regards the application of the theory to the case study in **Q4a&b**, students seemed to find difficulty in applying the theory to Andrea's struggles and the depth of the answers was very poor and superficial. Very few students showed a good understanding of how the dynamics of Andrea's case could indeed affect many stages of Erickson's theory, how the case could be related to the theory, and how the case manifests the interrelatedness of the stages to each other. Students in most cases circumvented the question without specifically answering it.

Most of the partially correct answers only mentioned and made use of one stage in their application of the theory to the case. And some of these specified the adolescent (identity versus confusion) stage as the one that Andrea was in at 22 years of age (instead of the early adulthood stage – intimacy versus isolation).

In **Q4c** most students only described a personal experience that was psychologically challenging for them, without linking it to a theory.

Question 5

A number of students answered both **Q5a** and **Q5b** correctly. The most common mistake was where examinees did not read the question correctly and failed to realize that the question was asking for the identification of a type of personality disorder. So the majority of students who did not do well on this question were those who gave psychiatric conditions that were not personality disorders since this showed that students did not distinguish between categories of mental disorders.

However many students failed to answer **Q5c** correctly. A majority of students failed this question since they did not seem to understand what this part of the question was asking of them. Many students did not choose any of the wide variety of perspectives that they could have accurately chosen from, such as the psychoanalytic, biopsychosocial, biological, cognitive-behavioural, behaviorist perspectives among others. Instead they erroneously described the DSM-IV or the ICD misidentifying them as perspectives instead of the two diagnostic systems that they in fact are which are used to diagnose and assess such disorders.

Question 6

Overall, Examinees performed quite satisfactorily in answering this question.

However, when answering **Q6a**, many examinees were not able to identify the many possible core characteristics of groups such as roles, norms, goals, leadership and roles, communication, process etc. Those who fared quite well identified at least three of them.

This was a straightforward question and most of the students got this answer right. A common mistake in **Q6b** was erroneously identifying a friendship group as an example of a secondary group.

In **Q6c**, most of the students did not mention enough psychological roles. They usually just mentioned being a leader and a follower, or else they did not give enough of a description of what the role entailed.

Chairperson
Examiners' Panel 2018