

Markscheme

May 2023

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: Semi-structured interviews (identifying the research method as 'interview' without specification is acceptable).

Award [0] for structured interview, unstructured interview or focus group interview.

Answers related to an outline of characteristics of the research method may include two of the following characteristics: Award [1] per relevant point. Maximum of [2].

- Interviews are self-report techniques.
- Interviews allow insight into the subjective experience of participant to be gained.
- Interview data is analysed in order to identify patterns and themes.
- Semi-structured interviews are conducted based on an interview guide with a list of questions and topics that need to be covered during the interview, usually in a specific order.
- Semi-structured interviews are flexible. The interviewer follows the interview guide but is able to ask the respondent to elaborate on answers.
- Semi-structured interviews use a combination of closed and open-ended questions, which allows for a detailed exploration of topics related to the study.
- Semi-structured interviews are informal and conversational in nature. This is important for establishing rapport between the interviewer and the respondent.
- Semi-structured interviews are most effective when carried out by an interviewer who is trained and experienced.
- Semi-structured interviews are useful when researching socially sensitive issues, or when focusing on each participant's unique experience.
- Semi-structured interviews are more time consuming to analyse than structured interviews.
- Because each semi-structured interview includes questions specific to that participant, there is less comparability between answers.

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

Award [1] for naming the correct sampling method: Purposive sampling [1].

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

- 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.
- A purposive sample is relatively easy to select.
- A purposive sample is flexible because it can be supplemented with more participants during the research process if needed.
- 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.
- When purposive sampling means that the results are very specific to a small number of people, transferability is affected

- (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.

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

Focus group interview:

- This is a different way to explore the smokers' own perception of their difficulties giving up smoking. The facilitator would encourage the participants to share their views and experiences of their attempts to quit smoking. The focus group as an additional research method (triangulation) could compensate for the limitations of the semi-structured interview, and vice versa.
- The focus-group approach could provide the researcher information she may not have thought of herself when preparing the questions for the interview.
- The focus group is a quick way to collect data from all participants at the same time.
- The focus group provides a natural setting for interactions between participants because they can use their own language, and it is less artificial than the one-to-one approach of the semi-structured interview.
- A reason for choosing a focus group interview could be that this method gives a special dynamic to the interview because participants continue the conversation among themselves. This is likely to generate rich data, although there may be problems of conformity within a focus group.

Survey:

- This method could function as a follow up on certain findings from the semi-structured interview and the themes related to dissonance reduction strategies (triangulation). A survey with closed questions could collect quantitative data on participants' smoking habits as well as their opinion on the difficulties of giving up smoking.
- Data from a large-scale survey could add data to the investigation of the complex problem of why people smoke and the psychological factors that prevent them from quitting. This would allow for statistical comparisons (between groups or across time).
- A survey can be used as an alternative method and then be supplemented with a qualitative method such as the semi-structured interview to investigate certain findings in more depth.
- 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.

If a candidate suggests more than **one** alternative **or one** additional research method, credit should be given only to the first one.

2. Describe the ethical considerations that were applied in the study and explain if further ethical considerations could be applied. [6]

Award [1] per relevant point made, up to a maximum of [3].

Describe the ethical considerations that were applied in the study.

- **Informed consent:** When the participants signed up for the study they were informed (consent form) that the study was about smoking and problems in quitting. This was in order for them to decide whether or not they wanted to participate.
- **Right to withdraw:** The participants were also informed about their right to withdraw at any time. This means that they can stop at any time or withdraw their data once the study is finished. The participants had access to the transcript and the researcher's conclusion before the final report was published and they could decide that they wanted to withdraw their data even at that point.
- **Deception:** Participants were NOT deceived and there were no reasons to use deception. They were made aware that the study was about smoking and problems in quitting. The participants were given the opportunity to check the transcripts, researcher conclusions and final report to ensure that it accurately represented what they had said in the interview. These measures allowed there to be full transparency.
- Any other relevant points (such as protection from harm was being applied when the participants were given a chance to check the conclusions).

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

Award [1] per relevant point made, up to a maximum of [3].

Explain if further ethical considerations could be applied.

- **Anonymity:** It may be difficult to ensure because participants in this study belong to the researcher's social network and may even know each other. A way to cope with this could be to guarantee that participants would be given another name or a number in the final report order to ensure anonymity. Since there were only six participants in this study it could be easy to identify them as the researcher had written in the report that she had recruited the participants through her social network.
- **Confidentiality:** The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. The researcher needs to ensure that this data is stored in a safe manner and cannot be connected to the participants. The researcher also needs to provide clarity for participants regarding how and when their data will be destroyed.
- **Debriefing:** The participants should be debriefed after they have completed the study. The researchers should explain the purpose of the study and what results they expected to find. The purpose of debriefing is to treat participants in an ethical manner so that they are fully informed about the study, at least after the study is completed, and how the data is going to be used.
- **Protection from harm:**
 - Participants should be informed that they could contact the researcher if they had any questions regarding the study. Once they have been debriefed, they may have questions or worries concerning their own difficulties in quitting.
 - Participants who show signs of distress after the interview should be offered psychological support by a different psychologist.
- Any other relevant points (such as withdrawal of results).

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

3. Discuss how a researcher could ensure that the results of the study are credible.

[9]

Refer to the paper 3 markbands when awarding marks.

The command term “discuss” requires candidates to offer a considered review of credibility in this study. Conclusions should be presented clearly and supported by appropriate knowledge of credibility in relation to the stimulus material.

Credibility is a criterion used to judge the quality of qualitative research and how it corresponds to internal validity in quantitative research. The conclusions of the study must give a true picture of the phenomenon under investigation and accurately represent the perspective of the participants, that is, represent reality as the participants see it. Credibility is considered the most important aspect in establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research. Credibility can be linked to researcher bias and participant expectations (demand characteristics).

The discussion of how the researcher in this study could ensure that the results of the study are credible could include but is not limited to:

- Having reflexivity, for example:
 - Personal reflexivity – the researcher should use critical self-awareness as to how her personal beliefs and expectations could influence the research process and conclusions. The researcher was a former smoker and the participants belong to the researcher's social network. She needs to be aware that these factors could result in bias.
 - Epistemological reflexivity – the researcher needs to consider factors such as the strengths and limitations of semi-structured interviews and the possibility of sampling bias from using purposive sampling / participants belong to the researcher's social network.
- Leaving a “decision trail” (or audit trail), documenting every decision made in the collection, analysis and interpretation of the data. For example, a reflective journal/diary.
- Having credibility checks: This refers to checking the accuracy of data, for example, by asking participants to read the transcripts of the interview and confirm that they accurately represent their statements.
- Using researcher triangulation: the researcher in this study asked another researcher to check her findings and this could contribute to credibility. If another researcher agrees on the findings, this increases credibility of the findings.
- Controlling for participant expectations (participant bias), for example:
 - by ensuring that each participant is given the opportunity to refuse to participate in the study. The researcher needs to take into consideration the fact that the participants all belong to her social network and that they may only be saying they will take part just to please her.
 - by encouraging participants to be frank from the start of the interview. Being aware of any potential effects of the participants already knowing the researcher. This will mean rapport is already established, but may mean the participants do not feel as able to be honest if they are embarrassed about an answer. Letting participants know that there are no right or wrong answers to the questions that will be asked.
 - by using iterative questioning, that is, being attentive to ambiguous answers and later rephrasing the same question in order to get a deeper insight into this sensitive topic. If participants in this study try to impress the researcher (that is, social desirability effect) instead of answering truthfully, the researcher will revise the question.
- Examination of previous research findings on the same topic: Assessing the degree to which the findings of this qualitative research are congruent with previous studies.

Candidates can refer to measures to ensure credibility that were applied in the study and/or measures that could be taken. Both approaches are equally acceptable.
