8.5 Biological, Environmental and Psychic Determinism and the Scientific Approach: 30-minute Pack

AQA 7182 · about 30 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions.

1 Outline psychic determinism as presented in the psychodynamic approach, naming one unconscious influence Freud described that could determine behaviour.

(Total for Question 1 is 2 marks)

2 Explain how behaviourist experimental methods use operationalisation and control to establish cause and effect when testing an environmental determinist hypothesis about learned phobias.

(Total for Question 2 is 6 marks)

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3 Explain how Freud's concept of unconscious motives could be used to argue for psychic determinism in an explanation of someone's repeated self-sabotaging behaviour, and give one reason why a court or scientist might be sceptical of this claim.

(Total for Question 3 is 6 marks)

4 Outline what is meant by falsifiability and explain briefly why falsifiability is important when evaluating determinist claims in psychology, giving one concrete example.

(Total for Question 4 is 4 marks)

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Mark scheme · 8.5 Biological, Environmental and Psychic Determinism and the Scientific Approach: 30-minute Pack

Question 1

defines psychic determinism as behaviour determined by unconscious drives and early childhood experiences oe	**M1**
names one unconscious influence, e.g. repressed conflicts, defence mechanisms, or unresolved psychosexual stage issues oe	**A1**

Answer: Psychic determinism holds that unconscious drives and early experiences determine behaviour; for example, repressed conflicts from early childhood may influence adult relationships.

Question 2

states that operationalisation makes variables measurable, e.g. defining a phobic response as heart rate increase or avoidance time oe	**M1**
explains how operationalisation allows precise manipulation and measurement of IV and DV, reducing ambiguity oe	**A1**
states that control of extraneous variables and random allocation reduce alternative explanations oe	**M1**
explains how this strengthens causal inference, since other possible causes are held constant oe	**A1**
gives a procedural example, e.g. lab study pairing a neutral stimulus with an aversive stimulus to create a conditioned fear response with a control group that does not receive pairing oe	**M1**
explains why the example supports environmental determinism, e.g. because it shows learning history can produce phobic responses under controlled conditions oe	**A1**

Answer: Behaviourist methods operationalise variables such as a phobic response (heart rate, avoidance time) so IVs like stimulus pairing can be precisely manipulated and DVs measured. Random allocation and control of extraneous variables reduce alternative explanations. For example, a lab conditioning procedure that pairs a neutral stimulus with an aversive event, compared with an unpaired control group, shows that learning history can produce fear, supporting an environmental determinist causal claim.

Question 3

explains that Freud would attribute repeated self-sabotage to unconscious conflicts or defence mechanisms originating in early childhood oe	**M1**
applies this to behaviour, e.g. unresolved early experiences leading to repetition compulsion or unconscious guilt causing self-defeating choices oe	**A1**
identifies a reason for scepticism, e.g. lack of falsifiability or reliance on retrospective interpretation oe	**M1**
explains why this matters for courts or scientists, e.g. because unfalsifiable or subjective claims are hard to test and may not satisfy legal standards for causal evidence oe	**A1**
offers an alternative or limitation, e.g. other explanations such as learning history or current cognition could account for the behaviour oe	**M1**
explains the implication, e.g. multi factorial explanations weaken an exclusively psychic determinist defence oe	**A1**

Answer: Freud would explain repeated self-sabotage as the product of unconscious conflicts or defence mechanisms rooted in early experience, such as an unresolved compulsion to repeat or unconscious guilt. Courts and scientists may be sceptical because such psychoanalytic claims can be difficult to falsify and often rely on retrospective interpretation, making them hard to test and present as reliable causal evidence; alternative accounts like learning history or current cognitive biases can also explain the same behaviour.

Question 4

defines falsifiability as the requirement that a theory makes testable predictions that could, in principle, be shown to be false oe	**M1**
explains that deterministic claims are scientific only if they can be tested and potentially falsified, not stated as unfalsifiable post hoc explanations oe	**A1**
gives a concrete example, e.g. a claim that a specific neurotransmitter imbalance increases aggression can be tested by manipulating or measuring that neurotransmitter and observing outcomes oe	**M1**
explains why example matters, e.g. because testability allows the claim to gain support or be rejected, improving scientific credibility oe	**A1**

Answer: Falsifiability means a theory makes testable predictions that could be proven false; deterministic claims are scientific only if they can be tested in this way. For example, the idea that a particular neurotransmitter level increases aggression can be tested by measuring or manipulating that neurotransmitter and checking aggression, so the claim is falsifiable and scientifically useful.

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