8.7 Holism and Reductionism in Psychological Explanation: Test Pack

AQA 7182 · about 15 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions.

1 Define holism and give one approach that illustrates it.

(Total for Question 1 is 2 marks)

2 Define reductionism and name two forms.

(Total for Question 2 is 2 marks)

3 Classify the serotonin imbalance explanation as holistic or reductionist and state its level.

(Total for Question 3 is 1 mark)

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4 Explain one limitation of reductionism: oversimplification and validity.

(Total for Question 4 is 3 marks)

5 Classify the cognitive therapist's explanation and state its level.

(Total for Question 5 is 4 marks)

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Mark scheme · 8.7 Holism and Reductionism in Psychological Explanation: Test Pack

Question 1

definition: explaining behaviour by reference to the whole person or whole system rather than breaking it into parts, e.g. focusing on interactions between factors oe — **B1**

identifies a suitable approach, e.g. the humanistic approach oe — **B1**

Answer: Holism: explaining behaviour by looking at the whole person or whole system rather than isolated parts. Example: the humanistic approach.

Question 2

definition: explaining behaviour by breaking it down into simpler constituent parts or levels oe — **B1**

names two forms, e.g. biological reductionism and environmental (stimulus-response) reductionism oe — **B1**

Answer: Reductionism: explaining behaviour by breaking it into simpler parts. Two forms: biological reductionism and environmental (stimulus-response) reductionism.

Question 3

biological reductionism; level = biological (genes, neurotransmitters, hormones) cao — **B1**

Answer: Biological reductionism; level = biological.

Question 4

identifies oversimplification as a limitation, e.g. ignoring context, interactions or subjective meaning within complex human behaviour oe — **M1**

explains how this reduces ecological or external validity, e.g. a laboratory finding about hormone level may not map onto real-world behaviour because situational and cultural factors are ignored oe — **A1**

links to consequence: such explanations may mislead interventions if they neglect important higher-level causes oe — **A1**

Answer: Reductionist explanations can oversimplify by ignoring context and interactions, reducing ecological validity. For example, finding a hormone-behaviour link in the lab may not predict behaviour in complex social situations, so interventions based only on the narrow finding may fail.

Question 5

identifies the explanation as more holistic than simple reductionist accounts, because it integrates cognitive processes and the person's subjective experience oe — **M1**

explains it operates at the psychological level (cognitive level), not purely biological or purely social oe — **A1**

notes that it is multi-factorial within the psychological level, so credits holistic orientation within that level oe — **M1**

final statement: holistic (psychological level) cao — **A1**

Answer: Holistic in orientation within the psychological level: it integrates multiple cognitive factors and subjective experience, so it is not a narrow reductionist biological or stimulus-response account.

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