8.8 Idiographic and Nomothetic Approaches to Psychological Investigation: 10-minute Pack

AQA 7182 · about 10 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions.

1 Define the nomothetic approach to psychological investigation, and give one advantage of producing nomothetic knowledge for psychology as a science, in the context of studies of memory or behaviour.

(Total for Question 1 is 2 marks)

2 Behaviourist research that establishes stimulus-response laws from many laboratory trials is best described as idiographic or nomothetic? State the classification and one implication for generalisability.

(Total for Question 2 is 2 marks)

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3 Identify one way researchers can combine idiographic and nomothetic methods within the same research programme and give a brief benefit of doing so, in the context of developing psychological theory.

(Total for Question 3 is 2 marks)

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4 A psychologist publishes a large-scale experiment measuring reaction times from 500 participants and reports mean scores, standard deviations and a correlational analysis. Classify the approach used as idiographic or nomothetic, and justify your classification briefly with reference to the research features.

(Total for Question 4 is 3 marks)

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Mark scheme · 8.8 Idiographic and Nomothetic Approaches to Psychological Investigation: 10-minute Pack

Question 1

defines nomothetic approach as seeking general laws or generalisable findings across many people oe	**B1**
gives advantage such as enabling prediction and control, or statistical testing and replication oe	**B1**

Answer: Nomothetic: seeks general laws that apply across people. Advantage: allows prediction and control of behaviour because findings from large samples can be generalised and tested statistically.

Question 2

nomothetic cao	**B1**
implication: findings aim to be generalisable and predictive across individuals, though they may lose information about individual differences oe	**B1**

Answer: Nomothetic. Behaviourist studies aim to establish general stimulus-response laws that are generalisable across people, but this may sacrifice information about individual differences.

Question 3

identifies combination method such as using case studies to generate hypotheses then testing them in large samples, or embedding qualitative interviews within a quantitative study oe	**B1**
gives benefit, e.g. increases both depth and generalisability, improving theory development and ecological validity oe	**B1**

Answer: One way is to use case studies to generate hypotheses and then test those hypotheses with large-scale quantitative samples. The benefit is that theory gains both detailed, grounded insight and empirical generalisability.

Question 4

identifies nomothetic approach cao	**M1**
justifies by referring to large sample size and focus on summaries and statistics rather than individual detail oe	**A1**
may mention aim to establish general laws or predict behaviour across people oe	**A1**

Answer: Nomothetic. The study uses a large sample and statistical summaries and correlations to draw generalisable conclusions rather than in-depth accounts of individuals.

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