9.4 Social Exchange Theory and Equity Theory of Romantic Relationships: Test Pack

AQA 7182 · about 20 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions.

1 In the context of Social Exchange Theory (Thibaut and Kelley) as applied to romantic relationships, define the term 'rewards' and give one example of a reward in a romantic relationship context.

(Total for Question 1 is 2 marks)

2 Explain one methodological problem with operationalising and measuring 'equity' in relationship research, and outline one research method that could address this problem. Give a short justification.

(Total for Question 2 is 6 marks)

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3 Outline the comparison level for alternatives (CLalt) in Social Exchange Theory, and explain its role in decisions to stay in or leave a romantic relationship.

(Total for Question 3 is 3 marks)

4 Outline Equity Theory (Walster et al.) as an explanation for relationship maintenance, including what is meant by perceived fairness and the predicted consequences of under-benefiting or over-benefiting in romantic relationships.

(Total for Question 4 is 4 marks)

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Mark scheme · 9.4 Social Exchange Theory and Equity Theory of Romantic Relationships: Test Pack

Question 1

defines rewards as positive outcomes or benefits that a person gains from a relationship, oe	**B1**
gives one appropriate example, e.g. companionship, emotional support, sex, practical help, financial support oe	**B1**

Answer: Rewards are the positive outcomes or benefits gained from a relationship, for example emotional support or companionship.

Question 2

identifies a methodological problem, e.g. equity is subjective, depends on perceptions, and simple measures may miss context oe	**M1**
explains why this is a problem, e.g. partners may differ in what they see as fair, and standard questionnaires may not capture negotiated or time varying fairness oe	**A1**
outlines a research method to address it, e.g. mixed methods combining diaries, in depth interviews and partner comparison of perceived ratios oe	**M1**
explains how this helps, e.g. diaries capture change over time and interviews reveal subjective meaning, triangulating to a richer measure oe	**A1**
justifies why mixed methods improve validity, e.g. reduces reliance on single self report measures and captures the negotiation process oe	**A1**
notes a practical limitation and trade off, e.g. resource intensive and may have smaller samples, limiting generalisability oe	**A1**

Answer: Problem: equity is subjective and context dependent, so single questionnaires may miss partners' differing views and time variation. Method: use mixed methods, combining daily diaries and in depth interviews with both partners to triangulate perceived rewards to costs. This improves validity by capturing change and subjective meaning, though it is resource intensive and may limit sample size.

Question 3

defines CLalt as the perceived rewards minus costs available from the best available alternative to the current relationship oe	**M1**
explains that if CLalt offers better outcomes than the current relationship, a person is more likely to leave oe	**A1**
notes that CLalt depends on perceived availability of alternatives such as other partners or being single oe	**A1**

Answer: CLalt is the perceived rewards minus costs from the best alternative to the current relationship; if an alternative seems better than the current relationship a person is more likely to leave.

Question 4

states Equity Theory says relationships are maintained when partners perceive fairness in the ratio of rewards to costs for each person oe	**M1**
defines perceived fairness as similar rewards-to-costs ratios for both partners, rather than identical rewards and costs oe	**M1**
states consequence of under-benefiting: the disadvantaged partner will feel distressed, resentful and may try to restore equity or leave oe	**A1**
states consequence of over-benefiting: the advantaged partner may feel guilt or discomfort and may also change behaviour to restore balance oe	**A1**

Answer: Equity Theory proposes partners remain when they perceive fairness in each partner's rewards to costs ratio. Under-benefiting leads to distress and attempts to restore equity or end the relationship, while over-benefiting leads to guilt or attempts to rebalance.

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