9.5 Rusbult's Investment Model of Commitment in Relationships: 30-minute Pack

AQA 7182 · about 30 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions.

1 Outline one way researchers have measured 'investment size' in empirical tests of Rusbult's model. Context: measurement techniques in relationship research.

(Total for Question 1 is 3 marks)

2 Compare briefly Rusbult's investment model with social exchange theory and equity theory, in the context of explaining commitment in relationships. Focus on a single clear difference.

(Total for Question 2 is 4 marks)

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3 Explain two strengths and one limitation of using a meta-analysis such as Le and Agnew's to evaluate the investment model of commitment, in the context of psychological research synthesis.

(Total for Question 3 is 6 marks)

4 Evaluate Rusbult's investment model as an explanation of relationship commitment and maintenance. In your answer, consider supporting evidence such as Le and Agnew's meta-analysis, methodological issues, how the model explains staying in dissatisfying relationships, and brief comparisons with social exchange theory and equity theory.

(Total for Question 4 is 16 marks)

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Mark scheme · 9.5 Rusbult's Investment Model of Commitment in Relationships: 30-minute Pack

Question 1

identifies a measurement method, e.g. using self-report investment scales such as items asking about shared possessions, time spent, emotional investment oe	**M1**
explains that scales quantify tangible and intangible investments and produce a composite investment score oe	**A1**
may note that some studies also use behavioural indicators like length of cohabitation or shared finances as proxies oe	**A1**

Answer: Researchers often use self-report investment scales with items about shared possessions, time and emotional investment to create a composite investment score; some studies also use behavioural proxies such as length of cohabitation or joint finances.

Question 2

identifies a valid difference, e.g. Rusbult includes investment size as a separate factor while social exchange focuses on rewards minus costs oe	**M1**
explains that investment model can explain staying despite low satisfaction because investments and poor alternatives maintain commitment, whereas simple cost benefit accounts predict leaving if costs outweigh rewards oe	**A1**
identifies equity theory contrast, e.g. equity focuses on fairness and balance rather than investments oe	**M1**
explains that equity theory predicts dissatisfaction when relationships are unequal, whereas Rusbult emphasises investments even when satisfaction is low oe	**A1**

Answer: Rusbult adds investment size and comparison with alternatives to the reward minus cost idea of social exchange, allowing commitment to remain high even when satisfaction is low because leaving would forfeit investments; social exchange alone would predict leaving when costs exceed rewards. Equity theory instead emphasises fairness and balance rather than investments, predicting dissatisfaction when partners' contributions are unequal.

Question 3

strength 1: meta-analysis increases statistical power by combining results from many studies oe	**M1**
explains why this matters, e.g. it can detect consistent effects that small individual studies might miss, improving confidence in findings oe	**A1**
strength 2: meta-analysis assesses consistency across different samples and contexts, improving external validity assessment oe	**M1**
explains why this matters, e.g. Le and Agnew could show that associations hold across cultures, sexes and sexual orientations, supporting generalisability oe	**A1**
limitation: meta-analyses depend on the quality and comparability of included studies oe	**M1**
explains the limitation, e.g. heterogeneity, publication bias or varying measures can bias results and limit causal conclusions oe	**A1**

Answer: Strengths: meta-analysis increases power by pooling many studies so small effects become detectable and it assesses whether findings are consistent across different samples and contexts, improving external validity. Limitation: results depend on the quality and comparability of the included studies, so heterogeneity, publication bias or inconsistent measures can bias conclusions and limit what can be inferred about causality.

Question 4

Level 4 Knowledge of the investment model and supporting evidence is accurate and well detailed. Evaluation is thorough and balanced, addressing methodological strengths and limitations, applicability and theoretical comparisons. There is effective use of evidence such as Le and Agnew's meta-analysis and clear discussion of causality, generalisability and real world implications. The answer is coherent and well structured with appropriate specialist terminology.	**13-16**
Level 3 Knowledge of the model and evidence is clear with some development. Evaluation is evident and mostly effective, covering relevant methodological points and some theoretical contrasts. Some application or use of evidence is present but may be less comprehensive. The answer is generally organised and uses specialist terms appropriately.	**9-12**
Level 2 Knowledge is present but limited or partial. Evaluation is superficial or one sided, with limited reference to evidence. Comparisons with other theories are brief and not well developed. The answer may lack depth or organisation and use specialist terminology inconsistently.	**5-8**
Level 1 Knowledge is very limited and responses are simplistic. Evaluation is minimal or missing. The answer lacks structure and specialist terminology is missing or misused.	**1-4**
Level 0 No creditable content.	**0**

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Indicative content:

- AO1 points: clear statement of the three core components of the model: satisfaction level, comparison with alternatives and investment size, and that these jointly predict commitment which then predicts relationship maintenance and persistence.
- AO1 points: description of tangible and intangible investments and how they raise the cost of leaving, and reference to Le and Agnew's meta-analysis finding consistent associations across cultures, sexes and sexual orientations.
- AO3 methodological strengths: meta-analysis increases power and tests cross-sample consistency; longitudinal designs in some studies show that investments and satisfaction predict later commitment, supporting temporal order.
- AO3 methodological limitations: much evidence is correlational so causation is uncertain, potential for reverse causality and third variables such as attachment style or personality; reliance on self-report measures and heterogeneity among primary studies may bias meta-analytic results.
- AO3 explanatory power: the model explains why people stay in unsatisfying relationships by emphasising investments and poor alternatives, a real-world advantage over simpler reward minus cost accounts.
- AO3 limitations in scope: the model may underplay factors such as equity or cultural norms; equity theory focuses on perceived fairness which can influence satisfaction and commitment independently, and social exchange theory emphasises immediate rewards and costs rather than long term investments.
- AO3 application and ethics: the model has useful applications for counselling to strengthen investments and reduce perceived alternatives but also risks being used to justify staying in harmful relationships, requiring ethical sensitivity and attention to safety and support services.
- AO3 balance and conclusion: weigh strengths of empirical support and practical usefulness against methodological caveats and limits of generalisability, concluding that the investment model provides a valuable, empirically supported framework for understanding commitment but must be integrated with other perspectives and interpreted cautiously where causality or cultural variation is relevant.

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