PSY.OPT5 Rusbult's Investment Model of Commitment in Relationships

AQA 7182 · Calculators not allowed · about 90 minutes

Total Marks

Name: ______________________________ Date: ____ / ____ / ______

Answer ALL questions. Show all your working.

1 Outline what is meant by 'satisfaction level' in Rusbult's investment model of commitment, in the context of romantic relationships.

(Total for Question 1 is 2 marks)

2 Outline what Rusbult means by 'comparison with alternatives' as a factor in commitment to a relationship.

(Total for Question 2 is 2 marks)

3 Outline what is meant by 'investment size' in Rusbult's model, and give one example of a tangible and one example of an intangible investment in a long-term relationship.

(Total for Question 3 is 3 marks)

4 Describe the key finding from Le and Agnew's meta-analysis that supports Rusbult's investment model, naming the type of evidence used.

(Total for Question 4 is 3 marks)

5 Apply Rusbult's investment model to the following scenario. Context: Callum and Erin have been together five years. Callum feels their relationship is often unrewarding but they share a mortgage, many mutual friends and two young children. Explain, using the three factors of the model, whether Callum is likely to remain committed to the relationship.

(Total for Question 5 is 4 marks)

6 Explain how Rusbult's investment model accounts for people staying in unsatisfying or abusive relationships, in the context of relationship maintenance.

(Total for Question 6 is 4 marks)

7 Identify two methodological limitations of the evidence supporting the investment model, referring to the correlational nature of much of the research including Le and Agnew's meta-analysis.

(Total for Question 7 is 3 marks)

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

(Total for Question 8 is 3 marks)

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9 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 9 is 4 marks)

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10 A cross-cultural study tests the investment model in two countries. Suggest one reason why the model might show different strength of association with commitment in collectivist versus individualist cultures, and explain the implication for generalisability.

(Total for Question 10 is 4 marks)

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11 Outline one real world application of Rusbult's investment model for relationship counselling or interventions aimed at reducing breakups.

(Total for Question 11 is 3 marks)

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12 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 12 is 6 marks)

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13 Write an essay evaluating Rusbult's investment model and its evidence, applied to relationship commitment and maintenance.

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 13 is 16 marks)

Mark scheme · PSY.OPT5 Rusbult's Investment Model of Commitment in Relationships

Question 1

- **B1** states that satisfaction level refers to the degree to which a partner's needs and expectations are met in the relationship oe
- **B1** may refer to comparison of rewards versus costs experienced within the relationship oe
- **Answer: Satisfaction level is how well the relationship meets a partner's needs and expectations, often judged by comparing perceived rewards with costs.**

Question 2

- **B1** states that comparison with alternatives refers to considering other potential partners or being better off alone oe
- **B1** indicates that commitment falls when attractive alternatives are perceived to exist oe
- **Answer: Comparison with alternatives is evaluating whether one could be happier with other partners or alone; commitment is lower when attractive alternatives are perceived.**

Question 3

- **M1** defines investment size as resources that would be lost or reduced if the relationship ended, increasing commitment oe
- **A1** gives a correct tangible example, e.g. shared house, joint finances, child oe
- **A1** gives a correct intangible example, e.g. shared memories, mutual friends, emotional support invested over time oe
- **Answer: Investment size are resources put into the relationship that would be lost if it ended, increasing commitment. Tangible example: shared home or joint savings. Intangible example: many shared memories or emotional support built up over years.**

Question 4

- **M1** identifies that Le and Agnew conducted a meta-analysis of many studies across cultures, sexes and sexual orientations oe
- **A1** states the meta-analysis found satisfaction, alternatives and investment were reliably associated with commitment across samples oe
- **A1** may note that the effect was robust, supporting the model's generalisability oe
- **Answer: Le and Agnew performed a meta-analysis of many studies across cultures, sexes and sexual orientations and found that satisfaction, comparison with alternatives and investment size were all reliably associated with commitment, supporting the model's cross-sample validity.**

Question 5

- **M1** applies satisfaction: Callum finds the relationship unrewarding, so satisfaction is low oe
- **M1** applies comparison with alternatives: presence of children and shared social ties may make alternatives less attractive, or Callum may see few viable alternatives oe
- **M1** applies investment size: mortgage, mutual friends and children are large tangible and intangible investments that raise the cost of leaving oe
- **A1** concludes that despite low satisfaction, high investment and limited alternatives make continued commitment likely, and explains why oe
- **Answer: Satisfaction is low because Callum finds the relationship unrewarding, which would reduce commitment. However, comparison with alternatives may be unfavourable given two young children and shared social ties, and investment size is high because of the mortgage, mutual friends and parental responsibilities. Therefore, despite low satisfaction, Callum is likely to remain committed due to large investments and limited attractive alternatives.**

Question 6

- **M1** states that large investments and poor alternatives can keep people in relationships even when satisfaction is low oe
- **M1** explains that tangible investments like shared property or children, and intangible investments like shared history, increase perceived cost of leaving oe
- **A1** links this to maintenance: individuals may tolerate costs or justify staying to avoid losing investments, so commitment persists despite dissatisfaction oe
- **A1** may note this helps explain why some stay in abusive relationships, as commitment is driven by investment and lack of better alternatives oe
- **Answer: The model suggests that even if satisfaction is low, high investments and poor perceived alternatives increase the cost of leaving, so people remain committed and maintain the relationship. Tangible investments like shared home or children and intangible investments like shared life history raise barriers to exit; thus individuals may tolerate or rationalise staying, which can include remaining in abusive relationships when alternatives seem worse.**

Question 7

- **M1** identifies correlational design as a limitation, so causation cannot be inferred oe
- **A1** explains that correlations between investment and commitment could reflect reverse causality or a third variable such as personality oe
- **A1** identifies another limitation such as reliance on self-report measures which may be biased, or sample issues in primary studies included in the meta-analysis oe
- **Answer: One limitation is that much evidence is correlational, so we cannot infer that investments cause commitment; reverse causality or third variables like personality could explain the associations. Another limitation is frequent reliance on self-report measures and varied samples in the studies included in the meta-analysis, which can introduce bias or limit comparability.**

Question 8

- **M1** identifies a measurement method, e.g. using self-report investment scales such as items asking about shared possessions, time spent, emotional investment oe
- **A1** 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
- **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 9

- **M1** identifies a valid difference, e.g. Rusbult includes investment size as a separate factor while social exchange focuses on rewards minus costs oe
- **A1** 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
- **M1** identifies equity theory contrast, e.g. equity focuses on fairness and balance rather than investments oe
- **A1** explains that equity theory predicts dissatisfaction when relationships are unequal, whereas Rusbult emphasises investments even when satisfaction is low oe
- **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 10

- **M1** suggests a plausible cultural difference, e.g. collectivist cultures value family and social ties more, so investments in shared social networks may be more influential oe
- **A1** explains that in individualist cultures personal satisfaction and alternatives may weigh more heavily, reducing the relative influence of investments oe
- **M1** states the implication for generalisability, e.g. the model may vary in predictive power across cultures and should not be assumed universal without cross-cultural validation oe
- **A1** explains that Le and Agnew's meta-analysis helps assess this by pooling diverse samples but primary-study variation still matters for conclusions oe
- **Answer: In collectivist cultures, investments in shared social networks and family obligations may weigh more heavily, strengthening the model's association with commitment. In individualist cultures, personal satisfaction and available alternatives may be more influential. This suggests the model's predictive power may vary with culture and so generalisability requires careful cross-cultural validation; Le and Agnew's meta-analysis helps test this but variation between primary studies still affects conclusions.**

Question 11

- **M1** identifies an application, e.g. counsellors can help partners increase perceived investments, build shared projects or social ties, or reduce focus on alternatives oe
- **A1** explains how this could reduce breakups by increasing perceived cost of leaving or enhancing commitment oe
- **A1** may give a brief example such as planning joint goals, strengthening social support networks, or reframing memories to enhance feeling of investment oe
- **Answer: Counsellors could use the model to strengthen commitment by encouraging couples to build shared projects, deepen social ties and remind each partner of the investments they have made, or by addressing perceptions of attractive alternatives. This increases perceived cost of leaving and can reduce breakups, for example by helping couples create joint plans or reinforce shared memories.**

Question 12

- **M1** strength 1: meta-analysis increases statistical power by combining results from many studies oe
- **A1** explains why this matters, e.g. it can detect consistent effects that small individual studies might miss, improving confidence in findings oe
- **M1** strength 2: meta-analysis assesses consistency across different samples and contexts, improving external validity assessment oe
- **A1** explains why this matters, e.g. Le and Agnew could show that associations hold across cultures, sexes and sexual orientations, supporting generalisability oe
- **M1** limitation: meta-analyses depend on the quality and comparability of included studies oe
- **A1** explains the limitation, e.g. heterogeneity, publication bias or varying measures can bias results and limit causal conclusions oe
- **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 13

- **Level 4** (13-16): 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.
- **Level 3** (9-12): 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.
- **Level 2** (5-8): 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.
- **Level 1** (1-4): Knowledge is very limited and responses are simplistic. Evaluation is minimal or missing. The answer lacks structure and specialist terminology is missing or misused.
- **Level 0** (0): No creditable content.
- **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.