9.7 Virtual Relationships in Social Media: Test Pack

AQA 7182 · about 15 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer all questions. At least four of the longer questions require full sentence answers. Time guidance: 15 minutes for the whole pack.

1 Define the term 'computer mediated communication' as used when discussing virtual relationships on social media platforms such as messaging apps or dating sites.

(Total for Question 1 is 2 marks)

2 McKenna and Bargh (1999) studied online communication and social anxiety. Outline one key finding from their research that is relevant to the absence of gating explanation in virtual relationships on social media.

(Total for Question 2 is 4 marks)

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3 At a university forum for new students, a student called Erin posts a long message explaining personal struggles and receives detailed, supportive replies from several other students over the following days. Identify two reasons, using psychological concepts from the topic of virtual relationships on social media, that could explain why Erin's message attracted rapid intimate responses. Use the scenario in your answer.

(Total for Question 3 is 6 marks)

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Mark scheme · 9.7 Virtual Relationships in Social Media: Test Pack

Question 1

states that computer mediated communication is interaction between people using digital devices or online platforms rather than face to face oe	**B1**
gives an example such as social media, messaging apps or online dating sites oe	**B1**

Answer: Interaction between people using digital devices or online platforms rather than face to face, for example via social media, messaging apps or online dating sites.

Question 2

identifies a key finding: socially anxious or shy individuals formed more intimate online relationships and were more likely to disclose online than expected from their offline behaviour oe	**M1**
states that McKenna and Bargh found some online relationships developed into supportive, lasting ties, not just brief contacts oe	**A1**
links this to absence of gating by noting that reduced emphasis on physical cues allowed these individuals to interact without their inhibiting characteristics being salient oe	**M1**
explains why this supports the absence of gating idea, e.g. online anonymity and text communication let socially anxious people reveal more and build relationships oe	**A1**

Answer: McKenna and Bargh found that socially anxious or shy people were more likely to form intimate relationships online and disclose more than in face to face contexts; this supports absence of gating because online interactions reduce the salience of inhibiting physical cues, allowing these individuals to reveal themselves and form supportive ties.

Question 3

identifies selective self presentation as a reason, e.g. Erin can craft a message that reveals personal information in a controlled way oe	**B1**
explains how selective self presentation operates in the scenario, e.g. Erin's carefully written post emphasises key disclosures while managing impression, making it easier for others to respond supportively oe	**M1**
links selective self presentation to hyperpersonal processes, e.g. edited, clear disclosures invite reciprocal intimate replies that intensify perceived closeness oe	**A1**
identifies absence of gating as a second reason, e.g. online context reduces salience of appearance or social status that might inhibit disclosure oe	**M1**
explains how absence of gating helps Erin, e.g. participants may focus on the content of Erin's message rather than on nonverbal cues, feeling freer to show support and disclose empathically oe	**A1**
provides an application point linking the scenario to McKenna and Bargh or hyperpersonal ideas, e.g. such supportive ties align with McKenna and Bargh's findings that online disclosure can lead socially anxious or distant individuals to form close ties oe	**B1**

Answer: Possible reasons: Erin could use selective self presentation to craft a clear, controlled disclosure that invites reciprocal intimate replies; this fits the hyperpersonal idea that edited, asynchronous messages encourage intense responses. Also, absence of gating means responders focus on message content rather than appearance or status, so they may feel freer to reply supportively. This pattern is consistent with McKenna and Bargh's finding that online disclosure can produce close supportive ties.

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