



PSY.RES5 Self-Report Techniques: Questionnaire and Interview Design

AQA 7182 · Calculators not allowed · about 70 minutes

Total Marks

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Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / ____

Answer ALL questions. Show all your working.

- 1** Define a closed question and give one advantage of closed questions when constructing a questionnaire for measuring revision habits among students.

(Total for Question 1 is 2 marks)

- 2** Explain the difference between an open question and a closed question when designing a questionnaire to investigate students' preferred revision methods.

(Total for Question 2 is 2 marks)

- 3** A questionnaire item reads: "Do you often waste time on your phone instead of studying?" as part of a student study habits survey. Identify the problem with this wording and suggest an improved version, explaining why your version is better.

(Total for Question 3 is 3 marks)

- 4** Critique this questionnaire item for measuring anxiety before exams: "Rate how anxious you feel on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is not anxious at all and 5 is extremely anxious." Identify one strength and one limitation, and explain each.

(Total for Question 4 is 4 marks)

- 5** Give two ways questionnaire designers use filler questions in a survey about alcohol use among university students, and explain briefly why each way is useful in reducing bias or improving data quality.

(Total for Question 5 is 3 marks)

- 6** Explain briefly what is meant by a leading question and give an example of a leading question about exercise habits that should be avoided in a questionnaire.

(Total for Question 6 is 2 marks)

- 7 Classify the following interview extract by type and justify your classification: "Interviewer: Tell me about a time you found a group project difficult. Participant: Well, there was one module where people did not do their part and I had to do extra work. Interviewer: How did that make you feel, and what did you do about it?"

(Total for Question 7 is 3 marks)

- 8 Outline two strengths of structured interviews compared with unstructured interviews when collecting data on job satisfaction from a workplace sample.

(Total for Question 8 is 4 marks)

- 9 An interviewer is worried that their own opinions are biasing answers in a series of semi-structured interviews about attitudes to recycling. Suggest two practical steps they could take to reduce interviewer bias, and explain briefly how each step helps.

(Total for Question 9 is 3 marks)

- 10 Explain one advantage and one limitation of using open questions in a questionnaire about mental wellbeing for young adults.

(Total for Question 10 is 4 marks)

- 11 A psychology team plans to survey 200 first-year university students about study stress using a mixture of closed Likert items and a final open question. They are worried about social desirability bias affecting responses about coping strategies. Identify two design features they could include in their questionnaire to reduce social desirability bias, and explain how each feature would help.

(Total for Question 11 is 6 marks)

- 12 Suggest an improvement to this closed questionnaire item used to measure sleep hygiene: "Do you avoid using screens before bed? Yes/No". Explain why your improvement is better for measuring sleep-related behaviour.

(Total for Question 12 is 8 marks)

- 13 Discuss the strengths and limitations of questionnaires and interviews as self-report methods for a study aiming to understand university students' experiences of online learning during a pandemic. In your answer compare how each method handles data richness, reliability, interviewer bias, social desirability and practical issues such as cost and sampling. Refer to the research aim throughout. Use material from the specification where relevant.

(Total for Question 13 is 12 marks)

Mark scheme · PSY.RES5 Self-Report Techniques: Questionnaire and Interview Design

Question 1

- **B1** defines a closed question: a question giving respondents a limited set of response options to choose from, e.g. yes/no, multiple choice or a Likert scale
- **B1** states an advantage: produces easily quantifiable data suitable for comparison and statistical analysis
- **Answer: A closed question gives respondents a limited set of response options (for example yes/no or a Likert scale). Advantage: it produces data that are easy to quantify and compare statistically.**

Question 2

- **B1** open question: allows respondents to answer in their own words, producing qualitative, detailed data about preferences and reasons
- **B1** closed question: gives fixed response options, producing quantitative data that are easier to compare and summarise
- **Answer: An open question asks for answers in the respondent's own words and yields rich qualitative detail. A closed question gives fixed response options and yields quantitative data that are easier to compare.**

Question 3

- **M1** identifies the problem: the question is leading/loaded, it presupposes that the respondent wastes time and encourages agreement
- **A1** suggests an improved neutral wording, e.g. "How often do you use your phone during planned study time?" with response options Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Always
- **A1** explains why the new wording is better: it removes bias and provides neutral response options that can be quantified
- **Answer: Problem: the item is leading and loaded by assuming respondents 'waste time'. Improved version: "How often do you use your phone during planned study time?" with options Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Always. This is neutral and allows quantification.**

Question 4

- **M1** identifies a strength: the single 1 to 5 Likert-type item is quick to complete and produces ordinal data suitable for summary statistics
- **A1** explains why this is a strength: it increases response rate and ease of analysis, facilitating comparisons across participants
- **M1** identifies a limitation: a single-item scale may lack construct validity and depth, failing to capture different components of anxiety
- **A1** explains why this is a limitation: it cannot assess reliability across items and may miss cognitive versus somatic symptoms, reducing the measure's validity
- **Answer: Strength: the 1 to 5 scale is quick and yields ordinal data that are easy to compare. Limitation: a single-item measure lacks depth and may not validly capture different aspects of exam anxiety, so it reduces construct validity.**

Question 5

- **M1** gives one use of filler questions, e.g. placing neutral questions about general leisure activities among sensitive alcohol questions to mask the survey's focus
- **A1** explains why: it reduces demand characteristics and social desirability bias by making the purpose less obvious, so responses to sensitive items are more honest
- **B1** gives a second use, e.g. including simple demographic or easy behavioural questions to break up long sections and maintain engagement
- **Answer: One use: insert neutral questions about general leisure activities among alcohol items to mask the study aim, reducing social desirability and demand characteristics. Second use: include simple demographic or easy behavioural items to maintain engagement and reduce dropout, improving data completeness.**

Question 6

- **B1** defines leading question: wording that suggests a particular answer or contains the desired conclusion, biasing respondents towards that answer
- **B1** gives an example leading question about exercise, e.g. "You exercise regularly to stay healthy, don't you?"
- **Answer: A leading question suggests a preferred answer and biases responses. Example: "You exercise regularly to stay healthy, don't you?"**

Question 7

- **M1** identifies the interview type: semi-structured interview oe
- **A1** justifies by noting the interviewer uses open prompts but also specific follow-up questions, indicating some guidance but flexibility oe
- **B1** may refer to presence of topics to cover but freedom to probe for depth as characteristic of semi-structured interviews
- **Answer: Semi-structured: the interviewer follows a topic but uses flexible, open prompts and targeted follow-up questions to probe the participant's responses.**

Question 8

- **M1** first strength: structured interviews give standardised questions, improving reliability and comparability across respondents oe
- **A1** explains why this matters: responses can be compared and analysed statistically, reducing interviewer variability oe
- **M1** second strength: structured interviews are quicker and easier to administer and code than unstructured interviews oe
- **A1** explains why this matters: larger samples can be collected and data entry is simpler, increasing practicality and reducing cost oe
- **Answer: Structured interviews provide standardised questions improving reliability and comparability, and they are quicker and easier to administer and code, making larger samples more practical.**

Question 9

- **M1** suggests one step, e.g. using a standard interview guide with neutral prompts and wording
- **A1** explains how it helps: reduces variation in question wording and tone that might cue respondents to a desired answer oe
- **B1** suggests a second step, e.g. training in neutral probing and using reflective listening rather than leading follow-ups
- **Answer: Use a standard interview guide with neutral wording to avoid cueing responses, and receive training in neutral probing so follow-up questions do not lead participants towards the interviewer's views.**

Question 10

- **M1** advantage: open questions provide rich, detailed qualitative data that can capture respondents' own experiences and meanings oe
- **A1** explains why this matters: this depth can reveal aspects of wellbeing not anticipated by the researcher, improving content validity and generating hypotheses oe
- **M1** limitation: open responses are time-consuming to code and may be inconsistent across respondents, reducing reliability and increasing resource use oe
- **A1** explains why this matters: smaller samples may be practicable and researcher interpretation can introduce subjectivity, complicating analysis oe
- **Answer: Advantage: open questions yield rich qualitative detail that can capture unexpected aspects of wellbeing, improving validity. Limitation: they are time-consuming and subjective to analyse, reducing reliability and increasing researcher workload.**

Question 11

- **M1** identifies one design feature, e.g. assuring anonymity/confidentiality and explaining it clearly on the questionnaire
- **A1** explains how it helps: reduces motivation to present oneself favourably because answers cannot be linked to identity, improving honesty oe
- **M1** identifies a second design feature, e.g. using indirect questioning or third-person wording for sensitive items, e.g. 'How often do students like you...' rather than 'How often do you...'
- **A1** explains how it helps: reduces perceived personal threat and allows respondents to project behaviour onto a group, increasing candour oe
- **M1** identifies an additional feature, e.g. including validated social desirability scales or embedding filler items to mask the sensitive focus
- **A1** explains how it helps: allows researchers to detect and correct for desirability bias or to make the survey purpose less obvious, improving data quality oe
- **Answer: Assure and explain anonymity to reduce pressure to answer in a socially desirable way. Use indirect or third-person wording for sensitive items to make responses less personal. Optionally include a brief social desirability scale or filler items to detect or mask biased responding, allowing adjustment in analysis.**

Question 12

- **M1** identifies an improvement: change to a frequency Likert-style item, e.g. 'How often do you use screens in the hour before bedtime?' with options Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Always
- **A1** explains that frequency gives more nuanced ordinal data that distinguishes occasional from habitual behaviour oe
- **M1** identifies a second improvement: define 'screens' and 'before bed' or specify a time window to avoid ambiguity, e.g. 'smartphone, tablet or laptop in the 60 minutes before getting into bed'
- **A1** explains that clear operationalisation reduces respondent interpretation variance and increases reliability oe
- **M1** identifies a third improvement: include a follow-up open item asking what activities are done on screens, e.g. social media, studying, watching videos
- **A1** explains that this captures qualitative context which may moderate sleep effects and improves content validity oe
- **M1** identifies a final improvement: include a neutral lead-in and place the item among filler questions to reduce demand characteristics
- **A1** explains that masking the survey purpose reduces biased over- or under-reporting and improves honesty oe
- **Answer: Improvements: use a frequency scale such as 'How often do you use screens in the 60 minutes before bed? Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Always' to get nuanced ordinal data; define what counts as 'screens' and specify the time window to avoid ambiguity; add a short open follow-up asking what activities are done on screens to capture context; and place the item among filler questions or use a neutral lead-in to reduce demand characteristics. These changes increase reliability, validity and reduce biased responding.**

Question 13

- **Level 4** (10-12): Knowledge of questionnaires and interviews as self-report methods is accurate and detailed. Discussion evaluates strengths and limitations of both methods in relation to the research aim, addressing data richness, reliability, interviewer bias, social desirability and practical considerations. Comparisons are balanced and well developed, and application to the online learning context is consistent and insightful. Clear structure and appropriate terminology are used.
- **Level 3** (7-9): Knowledge is generally accurate with some detail. Discussion includes evaluation of both methods and makes comparisons relevant to the research aim, but some points may be underdeveloped. Application to the online learning context is present but not always consistently integrated. The answer is mostly organised and uses relevant terminology.
- **Level 2** (4-6): Knowledge is limited or partly inaccurate. Discussion is simplistic or one-sided, with few comparisons between methods. Application to the research aim is brief or superficial. Organisation may be weak and terminology used inconsistently.
- **Level 1** (1-3): Very limited knowledge, largely descriptive and lacking evaluation. Little or no comparison between methods. Application to the online learning aim is missing or irrelevant. The answer is poorly organised.
- **Level 0** (0): No creditworthy content.
- **Indicative content:**
 - AO1: Questionnaires can use closed items to gather large-scale quantitative data on frequency of behaviours, satisfaction ratings and demographic variables relevant to online learning; they are cost-effective and allow wider sampling across universities.
 - AO1: Interviews (structured, semi-structured, unstructured) allow collection of qualitative, in-depth accounts of experiences such as challenges with technology, isolation, and coping strategies; semi-structured interviews balance comparability and depth.
 - AO3: Data richness: interviews provide richer, contextualised data that can capture nuance about emotional reactions and specific incidents, important for understanding lived experience during a pandemic; questionnaires, especially closed-item ones, may miss this richness but can include open items to add some qualitative depth.
 - AO3: Reliability: structured questionnaires and structured interviews offer higher reliability through standardisation, enabling comparison across respondents; unstructured interviews are less reliable due to variable questioning.
 - AO3: Interviewer bias and social desirability: interviewer effects can bias interview responses, particularly about sensitive topics like mental health; however, skilled interviewers can probe and build rapport to elicit honest, detailed accounts. Questionnaires, especially anonymous ones, can reduce social desirability but still suffer from self-presentation biases.
 - AO3: Practical issues: questionnaires are cheaper, quicker to administer to large samples and easier to code quantitatively, facilitating statistical analysis of patterns across student subgroups. Interviews are time-consuming and costly, limiting sample size and generalisability, but are valuable for theory generation and exploring mechanisms.
 - AO3: Sampling and representativeness: large questionnaire samples can improve external validity if sampling is well designed, while interview samples are often smaller and purposive, useful for depth but not for prevalence estimates.
 - AO3: Mixed-methods considerations: combining questionnaires for breadth with interviews for depth can address the research aim comprehensively, using questionnaires to identify general patterns and interviews to explain why those patterns occur.
 - AO3: Ethical and practical constraints during a pandemic: remote online questionnaires are easy to deploy; interviews may need video calls which raise issues of privacy and digital access, potentially biasing the sample towards students with better connectivity.