1.1 Milgram's Baseline Study Into Obedience: Procedure and Findings

AQA 7182 · about 50 minutes · Write-in edition

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions.

1 Describe the role of the confederate known as the 'learner' in Milgram's baseline study procedure, including what the learner did and how the participant was involved.

(Total for Question 1 is 1 mark)

2 Milgram used four verbal prods to encourage participants to continue giving shocks when they hesitated. Outline two of these standard prods used by the experimenter in the baseline study.

(Total for Question 2 is 2 marks)

3 Outline the critique made by Orne and Holland regarding the ecological validity of Milgram's baseline study, and state why this critique matters for interpreting how the findings apply to real world obedience.

(Total for Question 3 is 2 marks)

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4 A commanding officer in a military training exercise orders a new recruit to administer a painful but non harmful discomfort task to a fellow trainee as part of a discipline drill. The recruit follows the order despite feeling distressed. Explain, using your knowledge of Milgram's baseline research, why the recruit might obey in this workplace military scenario. Refer to the baseline study procedure or findings in your answer.

(Total for Question 4 is 6 marks)

5 Explain why Milgram used deception in his baseline procedure and evaluate briefly how the use of deception affects the validity and ethics of his findings. Give two linked points.

(Total for Question 5 is 4 marks)

6 Discuss Milgram's research into obedience. In your answer you should outline the baseline study's procedure and findings and evaluate the research, including ethical and methodological issues. Use evidence where appropriate.

(Total for Question 6 is 16 marks)

7 Give two quantitative findings from Milgram's 1963 baseline study about obedience, including the proportion who reached the maximum shock and any other numerical pattern reported.

(Total for Question 7 is 2 marks)

8 Milgram also recorded qualitative signs of stress in participants while they administered shocks. Identify two such qualitative signs Milgram reported and explain briefly why these observations matter for interpreting the study's findings.

(Total for Question 8 is 3 marks)

9 Identify two ethical criticisms commonly raised about Milgram's baseline study, and for each criticism briefly explain why it is a concern for participant welfare or research ethics.

(Total for Question 9 is 3 marks)

Mark scheme · 1.1 Milgram's Baseline Study Into Obedience: Procedure and Findings

Question 1

the learner was a confederate who pretended to receive electric shocks and gave pre scripted incorrect answers when tested by the participant, who acted as the 'teacher' oe	**B1**

Answer: The learner was a confederate who feigned being shocked and produced scripted wrong answers while the real participant, as teacher, administered the shocks.

Question 2

"Please continue" or "Please go on" as a standard prod oe	**B1**
"The experiment requires that you continue" or "You must go on" as a standard prod oe	**B1**

Answer: Examples of prods: "Please continue" and "The experiment requires that you continue."

Question 3

states that Orne and Holland argued participants may have suspected the shocks were fake, challenging the realism of the situation oe	**M1**
explains that if participants guessed the true nature of the study, their behaviour may not reflect genuine obedience in real life, reducing ecological validity oe	**A1**

Answer: Orne and Holland argued participants might have guessed the shocks were fake, so their behaviour may not reflect genuine real world obedience, reducing ecological validity.

Question 4

applies Milgram's finding that a majority of participants obeyed an authoritative figure and continued to the maximum shock (65%) oe	**M1**
links the military officer to the experimenter's authoritative role in Milgram's procedure, showing the recruit may feel duty bound to obey oe	**A1**
applies the idea that experimenter prods in Milgram's study encouraged continuation, analogous to orders and pressure in a military setting oe	**M1**
explains that the recruit may feel the order comes from a legitimate authority and that refusal could have social or career consequences, so they comply oe	**A1**
applies Milgram's observation of participants showing distress while obeying, to explain why the recruit may feel distressed yet still follow orders oe	**M1**
explains that obedience under distress was characteristic of Milgram's participants, so similar situational pressures in the military can produce obedience despite personal discomfort oe	**A1**

Answer: Milgram found 65% obeyed an authoritative experimenter to the maximum, and his scripted prods encouraged continuation. In a military setting the officer plays a similar authoritative role and may give pressure or orders that seem legitimate, so the recruit may obey despite distress, paralleling Milgram's participants who showed tension yet continued.

Question 5

explains that deception was used to create a believable situation so participants would believe they were administering real shocks and reveal genuine obedience behaviour oe	**M1**
evaluates that this increases internal validity because behaviour is more likely to be natural, but it raises ethical concerns because participants could not give fully informed consent oe	**A1**
explains that without deception the study would not replicate the conflict between authority and personal conscience that Milgram wished to observe oe	**M1**
evaluates that ethical costs include potential lasting distress and damage to trust in research, which may limit the acceptability and replication of such studies oe	**A1**

Answer: Deception made the shock situation believable so obedience could be observed, boosting internal validity. However, it prevented informed consent and risked causing serious distress, so it is ethically problematic and complicates replication.

Question 6

Level 4 Knowledge of Milgram's baseline study is detailed and accurate. The discussion evaluates strengths and limitations coherently, using relevant evidence and reasoning. Ethical and methodological issues are explored in depth and linked to how they affect interpretation and generalisation. The answer is well structured and uses specialist terminology appropriately.	**13-16**
Level 3 Knowledge of the baseline study is mostly accurate with some detail. There is a balanced evaluation with some development, and ethical and methodological points are considered. The answer applies evidence and is generally well organised.	**9-12**
Level 2 Basic knowledge of Milgram's study is present but incomplete. Evaluation is limited or superficial, with some relevant points about ethics or methodology but little development. The answer may lack depth or full application of evidence.	**5-8**
Level 1 Little relevant knowledge or evaluation. The answer is largely descriptive or fragmentary, with minimal understanding of ethical or methodological implications.	**1-4**
Level 0 No creditable content.	**0**

Indicative content:

- AO1: Procedure: volunteers recruited by advert; rigged draw making participant the 'teacher' and confederate the 'learner'; learner strapped to chair; shock generator labelled 15 V to 450 V in 15 V increments with warnings at the top; participant instructed to test memory and give shocks for wrong answers; experimenter used a set of four prods when participant hesitated; shocks were fake but the participant believed them to be real.
- AO1: Findings: 65% of participants administered the highest 450 V; many participants showed signs of extreme tension such as sweating, trembling, nervous laughter and seizures; a significant minority refused to continue.
- AO3: Ethical evaluation: deception was used to create the situation but prevented informed consent; participants experienced significant stress and were not fully protected from harm; the right to withdraw was undermined by experimenter prods; debriefing and follow up were carried out but ethical standards today would not permit the baseline procedure without major changes.
- AO3: Methodological evaluation: high experimental control and a clear quantitative measure (percentage reaching 450 V) strengthen internal validity and replicability; however Orne and Holland's critique that participants may have been sceptical undermines ecological validity and questions whether behaviour reflected genuine real world obedience; sample was volunteer and all male, limiting generalisability.
- AO3: Application and implications: Milgram's findings show the power of situational pressures and perceived authority to produce obedience in ordinary people, with implications for understanding historical events and authority structures, but ethical and validity limitations constrain how directly the laboratory results can be applied to real world atrocities.
- AO3: Counterarguments and balance: supportive evidence from similar laboratory studies shows obedience can be high under authority pressure, but replication variations and cultural or temporal differences indicate obedience is not uniform; methodological strengths such as standardisation should be weighed against ethical costs and questions about realism.

Question 7

65 percent of participants continued to the maximum 450 volts oe	**B1**
approximately one third of participants stopped before reaching the highest levels, showing a range of obedience levels oe	**B1**

Answer: About 65% of participants went to 450 V; roughly one third stopped before the maximum, showing variation in obedience.

Question 8

identifies a qualitative sign, e.g. sweating, trembling, stuttering, nervous laughter or seizures oe	**M1**
identifies a second qualitative sign oe	**A1**
explains that these signs indicate high tension and possible psychological harm, which matters for ethical evaluation and suggests obedience occurred under distress oe	**A1**

Answer: Examples: sweating and nervous laughter, or trembling and a seizure. These signs show participants experienced high tension and possible harm, so obedience occurred under stress which matters for ethics and interpretation of the behaviour.

Question 9

identifies deception as an ethical issue, because participants were misled about the true nature of the shocks and the role of the learner oe	**M1**
explains why deception is a concern, e.g. it prevents informed consent and may damage trust or cause distress when the truth is revealed oe	**A1**
identifies lack of protection from harm, e.g. participants showed extreme stress and one or more had seizures, meaning they were not adequately protected during the procedure oe	**A1**

Answer: Two criticisms: deception, because participants were misled about shocks and the learner, preventing true informed consent; and lack of protection from harm, because many showed extreme stress or seizures, indicating they were not adequately protected.