1.2 Explanations for Obedience: Agentic State and Legitimacy of Authority: Test Pack

AQA 7182 · about 15 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions.

1 Define the term 'agentic state' as it is used in psychological explanations of obedience to authority. Include the idea of perceived responsibility in your definition.

(Total for Question 1 is 2 marks)

2 In a field study by Bickman (1974), a researcher on a street in New York City gave passers-by orders, such as to pick up a paper bag. The researcher was dressed in a security guard's uniform, as a milkman or in ordinary civilian clothes. Outline the main finding of the study and explain how it supports the legitimacy of authority explanation.

(Total for Question 2 is 3 marks)

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3 Outline the concept of an 'agentic shift' and explain how it relates to obedience to authority in everyday situations.

(Total for Question 3 is 2 marks)

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4 A school caretaker, Kwame, is asked by the new headteacher to lock children in a storeroom for a short time as a 'punishment' when they are noisy. Kwame privately thinks this is wrong but does it because the headteacher told him to, and later feels guilty. Using the scenario, explain two features of the agentic state or legitimacy of authority that account for Kwame's behaviour. Use evidence from the stem in each point.

(Total for Question 4 is 6 marks)

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Mark scheme · 1.2 Explanations for Obedience: Agentic State and Legitimacy of Authority: Test Pack

Question 1

states that the agentic state is when a person sees themselves as an agent carrying out another person's wishes, not acting on their own behalf oe	**B1**
states that responsibility is perceived as shifted to the authority figure, reducing the agent's sense of personal accountability oe	**B1**

Answer: An agentic state is when a person views themselves as an agent executing the wishes of an authority figure and perceives responsibility as lying with that authority rather than with themselves.

Question 2

states the main finding: passers-by were most likely to obey when the researcher wore the guard's uniform (more than when in civilian clothes) oe	**M1**
links the uniform to legitimacy: a uniform signals a position of legitimate authority in a social hierarchy, so the order seemed to have a right to be obeyed oe	**A1**
develops the link, e.g. the same order from the same person was obeyed more when authority appeared legitimate, so obedience depends on perceived legitimacy rather than on the person or the order alone oe	**A1**

Answer: Passers-by obeyed the researcher most when he wore the security guard's uniform and least in civilian clothes. A uniform signals a legitimate position in a social hierarchy, so the same order was obeyed more when it seemed to come from someone with a right to give it, which supports the legitimacy of authority explanation.

Question 3

states that an agentic shift is a change from the autonomous state to the agentic state oe	**B1**
indicates this shift explains why people obey orders they might otherwise refuse because they see themselves as following an authority oe	**B1**

Answer: An agentic shift is the change from acting autonomously to seeing oneself as an agent of an authority, which helps explain why people obey orders they might otherwise resist in everyday hierarchical settings.

Question 4

identifies a relevant feature, e.g. perceived shift of responsibility consistent with the agentic state oe	**M1**
applies it to the stem, e.g. Kwame does the act because the headteacher gave the order, suggesting he sees responsibility as with the headteacher oe	**A1**
identifies a second relevant feature, e.g. legitimacy of authority or moral strain oe	**M1**
applies it to the stem, e.g. the headteacher is a legitimate figure in the school hierarchy so Kwame obeys despite thinking it wrong oe	**A1**
provides supporting explanation or consequence, e.g. Kwame's later guilt illustrates moral strain experienced even while in the agentic state oe	**M1**
explains why this matters, e.g. shows obedience can involve internal conflict and that legitimacy can lead people to carry out orders they privately reject oe	**A1**

Answer: Possible answers: (1) Agentic state, responsibility shifted: Kwame obeys because the headteacher ordered it, which suggests he sees the headteacher as responsible, not himself. (2) Legitimacy of authority and moral strain: the headteacher occupies a legitimate role in the school hierarchy so Kwame accepts the order; his later guilt shows moral strain, indicating obedience despite private disagreement.

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