



PSY.SI4 Situational Variables in Obedience: Proximity, Location and Uniform

AQA 7182 · Calculators not allowed · about 90 minutes

Total Marks

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Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / ____

Answer ALL questions. Show all your working.

- 1** Outline the proximity variable in Milgram's obedience variations and give the specific obedience percentage found when the 'teacher' had to force the learner's hand onto the shock plate (the touch-proximity condition). Name the variable, describe the touch-proximity manipulation, and quote the reported obedience rate.

(Total for Question 1 is 3 marks)

- 2** Outline the remote-instruction version of Milgram's proximity variation and state the obedience percentage when the experimenter gave instructions over the telephone and was not physically present. Name the variation, describe the manipulation, and give the obedience rate.

(Total for Question 2 is 3 marks)

- 3** Outline the location variable in Milgram's obedience variations and state the obedience percentage found when the study was moved from the Yale laboratory to a run-down Bridgeport office building. Name the variable, describe the change of setting, and quote the reported obedience rate.

(Total for Question 3 is 3 marks)

- 4** Outline the uniform variable in Milgram's variations and state the obedience percentage when the experimenter was replaced by a casually dressed assistant in plain clothes. Name the variable, describe how uniform was changed, and give the obedience rate.

(Total for Question 4 is 3 marks)

- 5** State Milgram's original baseline obedience percentage in the Yale laboratory condition that the variation conditions are compared with. Give the percentage and explain its role briefly.

(Total for Question 5 is 2 marks)

- 6** Bickman (1974) conducted a field experiment on uniform in a real urban setting. Outline one key finding from Bickman's study that supports Milgram's uniform variable, including the behaviour compared and the effect of uniform on compliance.

(Total for Question 6 is 3 marks)

- 7** Outline one strength of using Bickman's field experiment as supporting evidence for Milgram's uniform variation. Explain why this strengthens the external validity or ecological validity of Milgram's finding.

(Total for Question 7 is 3 marks)

- 8** Application question: A regional manager asks staff by email to complete a new, time-consuming compliance report that is not in their usual duties. No one questions the manager, and staff submit the reports. Using the situational variables from Milgram's research, identify which variable best fits this scenario and explain in detail why this example maps onto that variable rather than the other two (proximity, location, uniform). Your answer should refer to features of the scenario and to the relevant obedience finding from Milgram's variations.

(Total for Question 8 is 6 marks)

- 9** Identify one limitation of Milgram's situational-variables research with respect to sample generalisability. Explain briefly why this limits the conclusions that can be drawn about obedience in the wider population.

(Total for Question 9 is 3 marks)

- 10** Calculate the percentage decrease in obedience when Milgram moved from his Yale laboratory baseline (about 65% obedience) to the run-down Bridgeport office building condition (about 47.5% obedience). Give your answer to 1 decimal place and show the calculation.

(Total for Question 10 is 2 marks)

- 11** Which variation produced the largest absolute drop in obedience compared with Milgram's baseline of 65%: the touch-proximity condition (about 30%), the remote-instruction condition (about 20%), the run-down office location (about 47.5%), or the plain-clothes experimenter (about 20%)? Give the variation(s) and show how you determined the largest drop in percentage points.

(Total for Question 11 is 2 marks)

- 12** Extended answer question: evaluate research into situational variables affecting obedience, focusing on Milgram's proximity, location and uniform variations and Bickman's field evidence on uniform. Consider methodological strengths and weaknesses, issues of ecological, external and internal validity, generalisability, and theoretical implications. Use evidence and explain why each evaluation point matters.

Evaluate research into situational variables affecting obedience. In your answer you should refer to Milgram's variation studies on proximity, location and uniform, and to Bickman's field experiment on uniform. You must consider strengths and limitations of the research and discuss validity and generalisability.

(Total for Question 12 is 16 marks)

Mark scheme · PSY.SI4 Situational Variables in Obedience: Proximity, Location and Uniform

Question 1

- **M1** identifies proximity as the variable concerned with how physically or psychologically close the learner and experimenter were to the teacher oe
- **M1** describes the touch-proximity manipulation as the teacher having to place the learner's hand on the shock plate oe
- **B1** gives the obedience rate for the touch-proximity variation, about 30% cao
- **Answer: Proximity refers to how physically or psychologically close the learner and experimenter were to the teacher. In the touch-proximity condition, where the teacher had to force the learner's hand onto the shock plate, obedience fell to about 30%.**

Question 2

- **M1** identifies the remote-instruction condition as the experimenter giving orders by telephone rather than being physically present oe
- **M1** explains that this reduced the immediacy and authority of the experimenter, weakening pressure on the teacher oe
- **B1** gives the obedience rate for the remote-instruction condition, about 20% cao
- **Answer: In the remote-instruction condition the experimenter gave orders by telephone rather than being present; this reduced obedience to about 20%.**

Question 3

- **M1** identifies location as the variable concerned with the setting of the study, which can affect perceived legitimacy of the authority oe
- **M1** states the variation moved the study from Yale to a run-down Bridgeport office building to test the effect of location oe
- **B1** gives the obedience rate for the run-down office location, about 47.5% cao
- **Answer: Location refers to the setting of the study. When Milgram moved the procedure from Yale to a run-down Bridgeport office building, obedience fell to about 47.5%.**

Question 4

- **M1** identifies uniform as whether the authority figure wore a lab coat versus everyday clothing oe
- **M1** explains that a lab coat conveys institutional legitimacy, whereas plain clothes reduce perceived authority oe
- **B1** gives the obedience rate for the plain-clothes variation, about 20% cao
- **Answer: Uniform refers to whether the authority wore a lab coat or plain clothes. When the experimenter was replaced by a casually dressed assistant, obedience fell to about 20%.**

Question 5

- **B1** states the baseline obedience rate in Milgram's original studies as about 65% cao
- **B1** states that this baseline is used as the comparison point for the variations oe
- **Answer: Milgram's baseline obedience rate in the Yale lab was about 65%; this serves as the comparison point for the variation conditions.**

Question 6

- **M1** identifies Bickman's manipulation of uniform (e.g. security guard, milkman, or civilian clothing) oe
- **M1** states a key finding, e.g. people were more likely to follow a request from someone in a uniform indicative of authority than from someone in civilian clothes oe
- **B1** links this to support for Milgram's uniform variable, showing uniform increases perceived authority and compliance oe
- **Answer: Bickman manipulated the outfit of confederates (for example, security-guard uniform versus civilian clothes) and found people were more likely to comply with requests from someone in authority-type uniform. This supports Milgram's finding that a lab coat increases perceived authority and obedience.**

Question 7

- **M1** identifies a strength such as higher ecological validity or real-world setting oe
- **M1** explains how the field setting reduces laboratory artificiality compared with Milgram's lab variations oe
- **A1** explains why this matters, e.g. it increases confidence that uniform effects on compliance generalise beyond Milgram's laboratory participants to everyday contexts oe
- **Answer: A strength is that Bickman's field experiment was conducted in natural settings, increasing ecological validity compared with laboratory variations. This matters because it suggests the effect of uniform on compliance is not just an artefact of lab conditions but can occur in everyday interactions, strengthening generalisability of Milgram's uniform finding.**

Question 8

- **M1** identifies the variable as uniform/authoritative status shown in dress or organisational role, or alternatively location or proximity, but must choose one correctly oe
- **M1** applies evidence: links manager's organisational authority shown by role and the impersonal email to Milgram's plain-clothes or remote-instruction findings oe
- **A1** explains why not proximity: absence of physical presence means it is not the touch-proximity manipulation oe
- **A1** explains why not location: usual workplace setting is not the dramatic change of prestige seen in the Bridgeport office variation oe
- **M1** uses Milgram's relevant obedience rate to support the judgement, e.g. remote instruction and plain-clothes variations produced much lower obedience than baseline, showing reduced immediacy/authority oe
- **A1** concludes how these features explain the staff compliance in the scenario compared with Milgram's patterns, acknowledging any limits of the analogy oe
- **Answer: This scenario best fits the uniform/authority-status and remote instruction aspects: the manager's authority is expressed via organisational role and impersonal email rather than physical presence or formal uniform. It is not a proximity case because the manager is not physically present to exert direct pressure, and it is not primarily a location change. Milgram found that when authority was less immediate or clearly signalled (remote instruction, plain clothes), obedience fell compared with baseline; here staff still complied despite reduced immediacy, which could be explained by organisational hierarchy and routine expectations rather than the heightened immediacy in Milgram's lab. The analogy is imperfect because workplace norms and contractual duties may increase compliance beyond Milgram's student participants, but the scenario maps best to reduced immediacy and weaker visual authority cues.**

Question 9

- **M1** identifies the limitation: Milgram's samples were mainly white male volunteers from the USA in the 1960s oe
- **M1** explains how this leads to limited generalisability to women, other cultures, ages or eras oe
- **A1** explains why this matters for interpreting the situational-variable effects, e.g. cultural or temporal differences may change how proximity, location or uniform affect obedience oe
- **Answer: Milgram's samples were mainly white male volunteers from the USA in the 1960s. This limits generalisability because the effects of proximity, location and uniform may differ by gender, culture or historical period, so the size and nature of obedience changes might not apply to other populations.**

Question 10

- **M1** shows the calculation: $(65 - 47.5) / 65 \times 100$ oe
- **A1** gives the correct answer to 1 dp: 26.9% cao
- **Answer: Percentage decrease = $(65 - 47.5) / 65 \times 100 = 17.5 / 65 \times 100 = 26.923...\% = 26.9\%$ (1 dp).**

Question 11

- **M1** calculates the absolute drops: touch-proximity $65 - 30 = 35$; remote $65 - 20 = 45$; location $65 - 47.5 = 17.5$; plain clothes $65 - 20 = 45$ oe
- **A1** identifies remote-instruction and plain-clothes variations as tied for the largest absolute drop of 45 percentage points cao
- **Answer: Calculate drops: touch-proximity $65 - 30 = 35$ percentage points; remote-instruction $65 - 20 = 45$ percentage points; run-down office $65 - 47.5 = 17.5$ percentage points; plain clothes $65 - 20 = 45$ percentage points. The remote-instruction and plain-clothes variations produced the largest absolute drop, 45 percentage points.**

Question 12

- **Level 4** (13-16): Knowledge of situational-variable research is accurate and detailed. Evaluation is thorough and well developed, showing a range of relevant evidence used interactively, including methodological critique, consideration of validity, and appropriate use of supporting and challenging studies such as Bickman. Argument is well structured, applied to the specified variables and reaches a balanced, justified conclusion. Specialist terminology is used accurately.
- **Level 3** (9-12): Knowledge is generally accurate with some detail. Evaluation is clear and includes relevant strengths and limitations, with some integration of evidence and consideration of validity and generalisability. The answer applies material to the variables named, and reaches a reasoned conclusion, though may be less wide ranging or detailed than level 4.
- **Level 2** (5-8): Knowledge is present but limited in development. Evaluation is present but may be superficial or one-sided, with limited use of supporting evidence. Application to the named variables may be attempted but underdeveloped. Conclusions may be weak or under-supported.
- **Level 1** (1-4): Knowledge is minimal and answers may be fragmentary. Evaluation is simple, limited or absent. There is little or no use of evidence, and the answer lacks structure and specialist terminology.
- **Level 0** (0): No creditable content.
- **Indicative content:**
 - AO1: Summary of key findings: proximity variations reduced obedience when experimenter was remote (about 20%) and when teacher had to forcibly place learner's hand on shock plate (about 30%); location change from Yale to run-down Bridgeport office reduced obedience to about 47.5%; uniform manipulation with casually dressed experimenter reduced obedience to about 20%, compared with baseline about 65%.
 - AO3: Methodological strengths: systematic experimental variation allowed Milgram to isolate the effect of single situational features while keeping many procedures constant, giving controlled comparisons between conditions and clear cause-effect inferences within laboratory constraints.
 - AO3: Internal validity concerns: demand characteristics and artificiality may affect responses; participants may have guessed aims or seen testing situation as contrived, which could either inflate or reduce obedience depending on interpretation, so causality claims should be cautious.
 - AO3: Ecological validity and real-world generalisability: Milgram's lab variations are artificial scenarios, but Bickman's field experiment provides converging evidence that uniform increases compliance in everyday settings, supporting external validity for the uniform variable in particular.
 - AO3: Sample and population validity: Milgram used mainly male American volunteers in the 1960s; this limits generalisability to women, other cultures and modern contexts. Replications (for example Perrin and Spencer style replications) show cultural and temporal variability in obedience effects.
 - AO3: Ethical issues affecting validity: deception and potential harm in Milgram's studies raise both ethical criticisms and questions about participants' emotional states influencing behaviour, and ethical constraints now prevent exact replications, limiting cumulative evidence.
 - AO3: Realism versus control trade-off: laboratory variations gave precise percentage comparisons but reduced realism; Bickman's field study increases realism but sacrifices experimental control, for example over participants' prior expectations, meaning convergent evidence is needed to build a robust conclusion.
 - AO3: Alternative explanations and moderating variables: individual differences, situational norms, perceived legitimacy of authority, and the organisational context can moderate the effect of proximity, location and uniform; these factors mean situational variables are important but not sole determinants of obedience.
 - AO3: Practical implications and theoretical contribution: demonstrating that simple situational changes can substantially alter obedience has implications for organisational practice, training and policy to reduce harmful obedience, and supports a situational influence perspective while acknowledging interactions with dispositional factors.
 - AO3: Conclusion: a balanced judgement that Milgram's variation studies provide clear, influential evidence that proximity, location and uniform affect obedience in controlled settings, and that field evidence such as Bickman strengthens claims about uniform; however limits in sample, ethics and ecological realism mean findings should be generalised cautiously and understood as part of a wider set of interacting influences.