

Psychological, Social, and Biological Foundations of Behavior Sample Paper

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Passage I (Questions 1–5)

A team of social psychologists conducts a field experiment on bystander intervention. Participants are randomly assigned to one of three conditions while waiting in a public waiting room: alone, with one other naïve participant, or with two confederates who have been instructed to remain passive. A staged emergency (a person collapsing and appearing to need medical help) occurs after five minutes. Observers record whether and how quickly each participant offers assistance.

Follow-up questionnaires assess participants' attributions for their own behavior and their estimates of how long it took them to notice the emergency.

Question 1

The experimental design is intended primarily to test the effect of:

- a) Social facilitation
- b) Diffusion of responsibility
- c) Cognitive dissonance
- d) Stereotype threat

Correct Answer: b) Diffusion of responsibility

Explanation:

By varying the number of people present, the study examines whether responsibility for helping is diluted as group size increases—the classic diffusion-of-responsibility effect.

Question 2

Participants who fail to help are most likely to attribute their inaction to:

- a) Dispositional factors about themselves
- b) Situational factors
- c) The personality of the victim
- d) Genetic predisposition

Correct Answer: b) Situational factors

Explanation:

People typically explain their own failures to act by citing external, situational causes (self-serving or actor–observer bias).

Question 3

If the confederates had instead modeled helping behavior, the most probable result would be an increase in helping due to:

- a) Informational social influence
- b) Normative social influence alone
- c) Group polarization
- d) Deindividuation

Correct Answer: a) Informational social influence

Explanation:

Observing others help provides information that the situation is a genuine emergency and that helping is appropriate, an instance of informational influence.

Question 4

The time taken to notice the emergency is expected to be longest in which condition?

- a) Alone
- b) One other naïve participant
- c) Two passive confederates

d) Notice time should be identical across conditions

Correct Answer: c) Two passive confederates

Explanation:

Pluralistic ignorance is strongest when others appear unconcerned; participants look to the passive confederates and therefore take longer to define the event as an emergency.

Question 5

This study is best classified as:

- a) A correlational design
- b) A true experiment
- c) A quasi-experiment
- d) A case study

Correct Answer: b) A true experiment

Explanation:

Random assignment to conditions and manipulation of the independent variable (number and behavior of others present) satisfy the criteria of a true experiment.

Independent Questions (Questions 6–9)

Question 6

According to Piaget, a child who understands that the quantity of liquid remains the same after it is poured into a differently shaped container has achieved:

- a) Object permanence
- b) Conservation
- c) Egocentrism
- d) Abstract reasoning

Correct Answer: b) Conservation

Explanation:

Conservation of quantity is the hallmark of the concrete-operational stage.

Question 7

The tendency to overestimate the extent to which others share one's own attitudes and behaviors is known as:

- a) The fundamental attribution error
- b) The false-consensus effect
- c) Self-serving bias
- d) Confirmation bias

Correct Answer: b) The false-consensus effect

Explanation:

False consensus is the overestimation of how common one's own opinions and actions are.

Question 8

Which of the following best illustrates operant conditioning?

- a) A dog salivates at the sound of a metronome previously paired with food
- b) A child receives praise each time she shares a toy and subsequently shares more often
- c) A person feels anxious whenever she hears a song that played during a traumatic event
- d) An infant orients toward a novel visual pattern

Correct Answer: b) A child receives praise each time she shares a toy and subsequently shares more often

Explanation:

Praise is a positive reinforcer that increases the frequency of the sharing behavior—classic operant conditioning.

Question 9

Social capital refers primarily to:

- a) An individual's accumulated financial assets
- b) The resources available through social networks and relationships
- c) Genetic predispositions toward prosocial behavior
- d) Formal educational credentials

Correct Answer: b) The resources available through social networks and relationships

Explanation:

Social capital consists of the benefits derived from social connections, trust, and reciprocity.