

4.5 Social-Cognitive and Trait Theories of Personality

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____ **Total: 19 marks**

KEY WORDS trait 特质 • self-efficacy 自我效能 • locus of control 控制点
• conscientiousness 尽责性 • extraversion 外向性

Objective

Build the skills to answer exam questions on **trait** 特质 and **social-cognitive** 社会认知 theories.

You must be able to:

- name the dimensions of the **five-factor** 五因素 model
- explain **reciprocal determinism** 交互决定论
- describe **self-efficacy** 自我效能 and **locus of control** 控制点
- state how personality is assessed and one limitation of each method

1 Worked examples

Study these first. Each one shows the method for a task used later.

■ Five factors

Openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism. These emerged from analysing how trait words cluster, and they predict outcomes modestly but reliably across cultures.

■ Reciprocal determinism

Person, behaviour and environment each influence the other two. A sociable person seeks social settings, which reinforce sociability. Personality is not only inside the person.

■ Self-efficacy and locus of control

Self-efficacy is belief in one's capability at a specific task; it predicts persistence. **Locus of control** is the general belief that outcomes follow from one's own actions (internal) or from luck and powerful others (external).

■ Assessment and its limits

Self-report inventories are efficient but vulnerable to social desirability. **Projective tests** are open-ended but score inconsistently. **Behavioural observation** avoids self-report bias but is costly and samples limited situations.

2 Practice

2.1 Name three of the five factors. [3]

2.2 Explain reciprocal determinism with one example. [2]

2.3 A student believes exam results depend mainly on luck.

(a) Name the construct. [1]

(b) State one likely behavioural consequence. [1]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 Belief in one's capability at a specific task is [1]

- **A** locus of control
- **B** self-efficacy
- **C** neuroticism
- **D** reciprocal determinism

3.2 The main limitation of self-report inventories is

[1]

- **A** they take too long
- **B** social desirability responding
- **C** they cannot be scored
- **D** they require observation

3.3 An employer uses a personality inventory for selection.

(a) State one reason candidates' answers may not be accurate.

[1]

(b) Explain one way to reduce the problem.

[2]

3.4 Applied research task. Two psychologists study the same person. Psychologist **X** gives a questionnaire that scores her on five dimensions and reports that she is high in conscientiousness and low in extraversion. Psychologist **Y** observes that she works hard in her own subject but not in others, and argues that her behaviour is best explained by her expectations of success in each and by the situations she chooses to enter.

(a) Name the approach used by each psychologist, and name the five dimensions Psychologist X measured. [3]

(b) Explain what reciprocal determinism means, and how it applies to Psychologist Y's account. [2]

(c) Explain what self-efficacy is and how it differs from self-esteem. [1]

(d) State **one** limitation of the trait approach that Psychologist Y's observation illustrates. [1]

Solutions

2.1 any three of: openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, neuroticism.

2.2 person, behaviour and environment each influence the other two; e.g. a sociable person chooses social settings, which further reinforce sociability.

2.3 (a) an external locus of control. (b) reduced effort, since effort is not believed to affect the outcome.

3.1 B. self-efficacy is task-specific capability belief.

3.2 B. respondents may answer as they wish to be seen.

3.3 (a) candidates want the job, so they answer to appear desirable. (b) include validity or consistency scales and combine the inventory with structured behavioural evidence, so a distorted response pattern can be detected and does not stand alone.

3.4 (a) **X** uses the **trait** approach (1); **Y** uses the **social-cognitive** approach (1). The five dimensions are openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism (1).

(b) Reciprocal determinism is Bandura's idea that the person, their behaviour and the environment each influence the other two (1); here her expectations shape which situations she enters, those situations shape her behaviour, and the results feed back into her expectations (1).

(c) **Self-efficacy** is the belief that one can succeed at a **specific** task, so it varies from one domain to another; self-esteem is a global feeling of one's own worth (1).

(d) Traits are meant to be consistent across situations, but her conscientiousness appears in one subject and not in others — behaviour is far more situation-specific than a single trait score suggests (1).