Concepts and contexts

IB DP Psychology SL the six concepts and four contexts, Paper 1 Sections B and C

Concepts and contexts

- ask the six concepts as questions of any study or claim;
- explain stress, **depression** and its treatment in the health and well-being context;
- explain **theory of mind** and **attachment** in the human development context;

Concepts and contexts (2)

- explain the **bystander effect**, obedience and prejudice in the human relationships context;
- explain conditioning, the **testing effect** and the Google effect in the learning and cognition context;
- answer Paper 1 Sections B and C.

The six concepts

- Each concept is a question to ask.
- In an essay, you use them to evaluate, not just to describe.
- *The six concepts as six questions to ask of a study or a claim*
- Two related words appear in many questions. **Validity** means a study measures what it claims to measure. **Reliability** means it gives the same result when repeated.

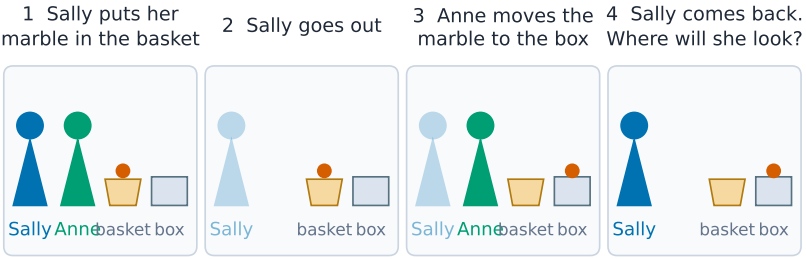
Context 1: health and well-being

- Stress is not only a feeling; it changes the body.
- Kiecolt-Glaser et al. (1995) made a small wound on the arms of 13 women who cared for a relative with dementia and 13 similar women who did not.
- The carers' wounds took 48.7 days on average to heal, against 39.3 days.
- Long-term stress, through hormones such as cortisol, weakens the **immune system** .

Context 2: human development

- **Theory of mind** is understanding that other people have beliefs, wishes and knowledge that can differ from your own.
- Most children show it by about age 4 or 5.
- Baron-Cohen, Leslie and Frith (1985) used the Sally–Anne task.
- Children watched two dolls act out the story below, then were asked where Sally would look for her marble. 85% of typical children (mean age about 4½) and 86% of children with Down syndrome said "the basket".

Figure: Context 2: human development



A child with theory of mind answers "the basket": Sally did not see the move, so she believes something false.

- Four panels: Sally puts a marble in the basket, Sally leaves, Anne moves it to the box, Sally returns and the child is asked where she will look
- Match each part of the diagram to the text.

Context 3: human relationships

- Darley and Latané (1968) let students talk over an intercom and heard another student have a seizure.
- When students believed they were the only listener, 85% went for help before the seizure ended; when they believed four others could hear, only 31% did.
- This is the **bystander effect** : the more people present, the less each person feels responsible (**diffusion of responsibility**).
- In Milgram's study (1963), 40 men were told to give a "learner" electric shocks for wrong answers.

Figure: Context 3: human relationships

CONFORMITY — matching a group

rises with group size, up to a point
rises when the group is unanimous
falls sharply with one ally who dissents
rises when the answer is ambiguous

OBEDIENCE — following an authority

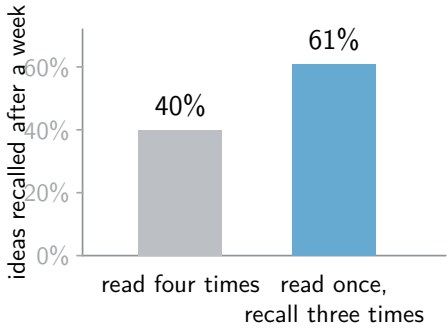
rises with the authority's legitimacy
rises with distance from the consequence
falls when someone else refuses first
falls when responsibility is made personal

- Two columns comparing conformity (matching a group) and obedience (following an authority), with the conditions that raise or lower each
- Match each part of the diagram to the text.

Context 4: learning and cognition

- In **classical conditioning** , a neutral signal is paired with something that already causes a response, until the signal alone causes it (Pavlov's dogs learned to salivate at a sound).
- In **operant conditioning** , behaviour that is followed by a reward becomes more frequent (Skinner).
- **Social learning** theory (Topic 1) adds that we also learn by watching others.
- Roediger and Karpicke (2006) had students learn short texts.

Figure: Context 4: learning and cognition



- The **testing effect**: recall practice beats re-reading.
- Read the axes and units first.

Answering Paper 1 Sections B and C

- **Section B (6 marks).** You get a short new situation.
- Pick the right content, explain it, and use details from the situation.
- Do not just describe a study; show how it applies.
- **Section C (15 marks): plan.** *"One claim in health and well-being psychology is that one **perspective** is not enough to explain mental health.

Sources for this lesson

- International Baccalaureate, *Psychology guide* (first assessment 2027).
- World Health Organization, *Depressive disorder (**depression**)* fact sheet (2023).
- J. K. Kiecolt-Glaser and others, "Slowing of wound healing by psychological stress", *The Lancet* (1995).

Sources for this lesson (2)

- A. Beck, *__Depression__: Causes and Treatment* (1967); G. Brown and T. Harris, *Social Origins of Depression* (1978).
- J. Darley and B. Latané, "Bystander intervention in emergencies", *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* (1968); S. Milgram, "Behavioral study of obedience" (1963).
- H. Roediger and J. Karpicke, "Test-enhanced learning", *Psychological Science* (2006).

Common errors

- Answering Section B in general terms instead of applying the theory to the people in the situation.
- Writing a Section C essay that lists studies without using the concept to build an argument.
- Treating **depression** as having one cause; the **diathesis–stress model** joins biological, cognitive and social factors.

Common errors (2)

- Calling the **Strange Situation** culture-free; the share of each **attachment** type differs between countries.
- Saying Milgram showed that people are cruel; he showed how far ordinary people obey an authority in a particular situation.
- Mixing up **classical conditioning** (learning by association) and operant conditioning (learning by consequences).

Key terms

- **Validity**: how far a study measures what it claims to measure.
- **Reliability**: how far a study or measure gives the same result when repeated.
- **Diathesis–stress model**: the idea that a disorder develops when a vulnerability meets stressful life events.

Key terms (2)

- **Theory of mind**: the ability to understand that other people have beliefs and knowledge different from one's own.
- **Bystander effect**: people are less likely to help when others are present.
- **Obedience**: following the orders of an authority figure.
- **Testing effect**: remembering more after practising recall than after re-reading.

Check yourself

- 1.
- What is the difference between **validity** and **reliability**? 2.
- Give one biological, one cognitive and one social explanation of **depression**. 3.
- What did Kiecolt-Glaser et al. (1995) find when they compared the wounds of dementia carers and other women? 4.