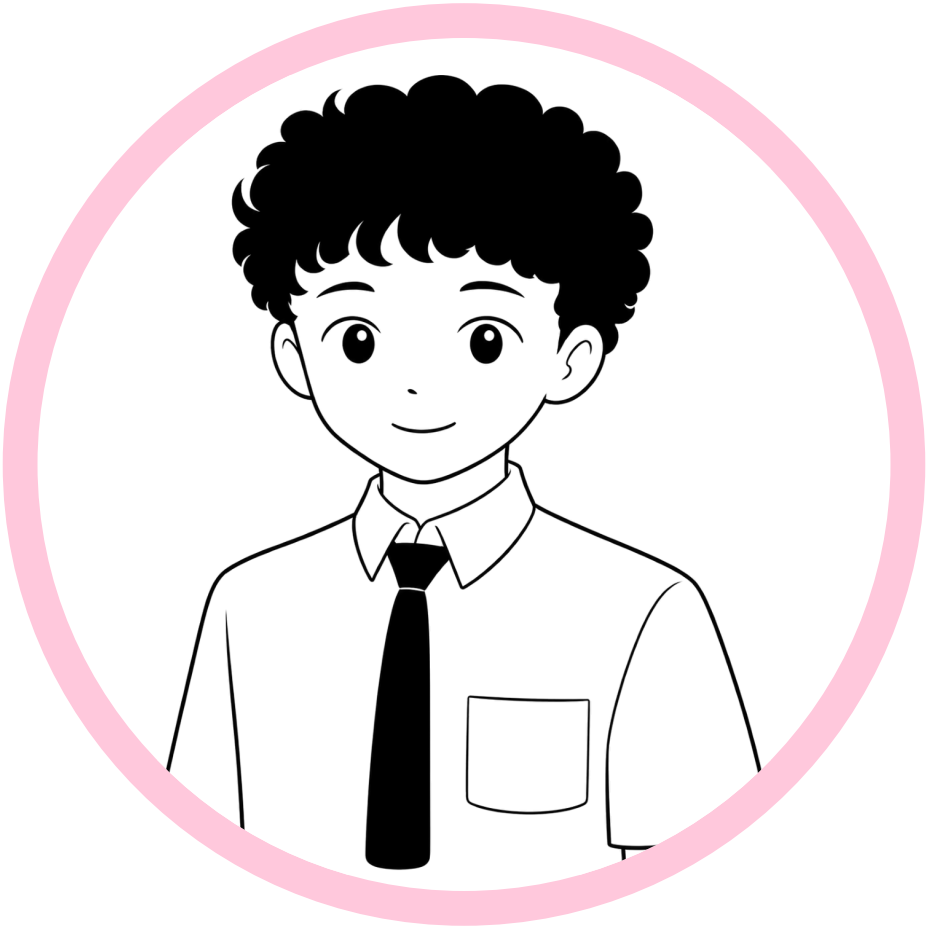
AQA A-LEVEL PSYCHOLOGY · 7182

# PSYCHOLOGY



## MARK SCHEME

### 3.3.2 VIRTUAL RELATIONSHIPS

| SCORE | PERCENTAGE |
| --- | --- |
| /20 | % |

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## Q1.

**[AO1 = 6 AO3 = 10]**

| Level | Marks | Description |
|---|---|---|
| 4 | 13 – 16 | Knowledge of what psychological research has told us about virtual relationships in social media is accurate and generally well detailed. Discussion is thorough and effective. Minor detail and/or expansion of argument is sometimes lacking. The answer is clear, coherent and focused. Specialist terminology is used effectively. |
| 3 | 9 – 12 | Knowledge of what psychological research has told us about virtual relationships in social media is evident but there are occasional inaccuracies/omissions. Discussion is mostly effective. The answer is mostly clear and organised but occasionally lacks focus. Specialist terminology is used appropriately. |
| 2 | 5 – 8 | Limited knowledge of what psychological research has told us about virtual relationships in social media is present. Focus is mainly on description. Any discussion is of limited effectiveness. The answer lacks clarity, accuracy and organisation in places. Specialist terminology is used inappropriately on occasions. |
| 1 | 1 – 4 | Knowledge of what psychological research has told us about virtual relationships in social media is very limited. Discussion is limited, poorly focused or absent. The answer as a whole lacks clarity, has many inaccuracies and is poorly organised. Specialist terminology is either absent or inappropriately used. |
| | 0 | No relevant content. |

**Possible content:**

- self-disclosure in virtual relationships – effects of anonymity: feelings of closeness and intimacy; less emphasis on physical characteristics; lowered inhibition, increased self-disclosure
- hyperpersonal model (Walther 1996) on-line persona can be heavily manipulated and controlled (selective self-presentation can be hyper-honest or hyper-dishonest)
- absence of gating: removes factors that normally act as a barrier to interaction (eg level of physical attractiveness, physical anomalies, speech defects, being in a different age group, from a different social background etc) (McKenna 2002), (Rosemann and Safir 2006)
- reduced cues theory – negative effects of deindividuation and disinhibition
- virtual relationships develop quicker because intimacy occurs sooner than in real-life



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relationships (Bargh 2002)

- widens range of potential social relationships.

**Possible discussion:**

- historical development of various types of social media interaction eg early virtual relationships lacked visual face-to-face interaction – less rich NV communication; advanced technology allows for real life 'live' interaction
- cultural differences mediate effects of social media on relationships (Yum and Hara 2005)
- effects of more open self-disclosure, eg long-term effects – relationships that begin on-line are more durable than other relationships (McKenna and Bargh 2000)
- mediating effect of personality – introverts/extroverts (Peters 2005)
- NVC is not absent from virtual relationships – cues are just different, eg acrostics/emoticons substitute for facial expression and intonation; importance of timing of responses (Walther and Tidwell 1995)
- variable effects of different on-line contexts eg people disclose more on gaming sites than on dating websites because the latter is likely to lead to face-to-face encounter
- social benefits, eg effects on loneliness - easier access to social interaction/forums – easier to seek out company than in real life
- negative social consequences eg poorer/reduced face-to-face communication skills, eg reading familiar NVC cues.

Only credit methodological issues if used to discuss findings.

Credit other relevant material.

Only credit information on parasocial relationships if explicitly related to virtual relationships in social media.

## Q2.

**[AO2 = 4]**

| Level | Marks | Description |
|---|---|---|
| 2 | 3 – 4 | Knowledge of the effect on self-disclosure when using social media is clear and mostly accurate. The material is applied appropriately. The answer is generally coherent with effective use of terminology. |
| 1 | 1 – 2 | Some knowledge of the effect on self-disclosure when using social media is evident. Application is not always effective. The answer lacks accuracy and detail. Use of terminology is either absent or inappropriate. |
| | 0 | No relevant content. |



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**Possible applications:**

- Maria's self-disclosure will be less inhibited than in face-to-face interaction – she may disclose more personal information to people who are strangers eg where she lives – she may disclose information sooner in the relationship than she would normally

- She will not apply the usual gating mechanisms that apply to face-to-face encounters

- She will not employ the normal distancing with which face-to-face interactions are regulated

Credit other relevant application.

## Q1.

Answers focused mainly on the reduced cues theory, the hyperpersonal model and absence of gating, and the implications of some or all of these for levels of self-disclosure. Weaker responses tended to simply describe these ‘theories’ and were often repetitive. Better answers included the use of evidence to support arguments and analysis in relation to more general psychological concepts, such as deindividuation and anonymity. Analysis of the differences between face-to-face relationships and relationships in social media provided a useful route to discussion for many. Information on parasocial relationships was awarded credit if it was explained in the context of social media, which was rarely the case. More than most other topic areas, this is one where appropriate use of psychological terminology and specific reference to evidence can help to elevate an answer which might otherwise seem like a common-sense response.