ETS Major Field Test Psychology Practice Test (Sample)

Study Guide

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Questions

1. **What type of variance is often caused by random factors in within-group designs?**
   - **A. Systematic variance**
   - **B. Measurement variance**
   - **C. Random variance**
   - **D. Error variance**

2. **Which theory suggests that frustration can lead to aggression?**
   - **A. Fundamental attribution error**
   - **B. Frustration-aggression theory**
   - **C. Just-world phenomenon**
   - **D. Mere-exposure effect**

3. **What is the term for the belief that outgroup members are perceived as more similar to one another than in-group members?**
   - **A. In-group bias**
   - **B. Outgroup homogeneity effect**
   - **C. Social comparison**
   - **D. Self-fulfilling prophecy**

4. **Statistical significance does not imply which of the following?**
   - **A. Validity of results**
   - **B. Practical significance**
   - **C. Reliability of measurements**
   - **D. Sample size adequacy**

5. **What does the p-value indicate in statistical analysis?**
   - **A. The likelihood that results are due to chance**
   - **B. The strength of the hypothesis**
   - **C. The overall quality of the data collected**
   - **D. The degree of confidence in the results**

6. Which of the following best describes culture?

- **A. Language and communication styles**
- **B. Common history, values, and skills of a group**
- **C. Only traditional customs and practices**
- **D. Religious beliefs and ideologies**

7. What characterizes anorexia nervosa?

- **A. Compulsive exercising**
- **B. Pursuit of extreme thinness**
- **C. Frequent binging**
- **D. Severe mood swings**

8. Which phase of sleep is often characterized by the greatest level of brain activity?

- **A. Non-REM sleep**
- **B. Light sleep**
- **C. REM sleep**
- **D. Stage 2 sleep**

9. What does the Hawthorne Effect suggest about workers' behavior?

- **A. Workers are less motivated when being observed**
- **B. Observation can lead to an increase in productivity**
- **C. Work efficiency is independent of observation**
- **D. Only external rewards influence worker motivation**

10. When are inferential statistics typically used?

- **A. With a large sample size**
- **B. When you have varied sources for the data**
- **C. In case study research**
- **D. In experimental research only**

Answers

1. D
2. B
3. B
4. B
5. A
6. B
7. B
8. C
9. B
10. B

Explanations

1. What type of variance is often caused by random factors in within-group designs?

A. Systematic variance

B. Measurement variance

C. Random variance

D. Error variance

The correct answer, error variance, refers to the variability in a set of data that cannot be attributed to any systematic or predictable factors. In within-group designs, participants are exposed to the same conditions or treatments, which controls for a number of variables that could introduce systematic variance. Despite this control, there are still random fluctuations and individual differences that can influence the results, contributing to error variance. This can arise from random factors such as participant behavior, measurement inaccuracies, environmental changes, or other unforeseen influences that affect outcomes. Understanding error variance is crucial as it highlights the limitations of experimental designs and underscores the importance of controlling for these random factors to obtain more reliable results.

2. Which theory suggests that frustration can lead to aggression?

A. Fundamental attribution error

B. Frustration-aggression theory

C. Just-world phenomenon

D. Mere-exposure effect

Frustration-aggression theory posits that when individuals experience frustration—defined as the blocking of goal-directed behavior—they may become aggressive as a means of coping with the resulting emotional distress. This theory emerged from the observation that aggression often follows frustrating situations, suggesting that the two are linked in a cause-and-effect relationship. The underlying premise is that frustration creates an emotional state that, if not resolved or channeled constructively, can lead to aggressive behavior against not only the source of frustration but also other targets. This idea helps explain various phenomena in social psychology, such as how people may react with anger or aggression in stressful situations or when their desires are thwarted. Understanding this relationship is crucial for developing strategies to manage aggression and improve conflict resolution in both personal and societal contexts.

3. What is the term for the belief that outgroup members are perceived as more similar to one another than in-group members?

A. In-group bias

B. Outgroup homogeneity effect

C. Social comparison

D. Self-fulfilling prophecy

The belief that outgroup members are perceived as more similar to one another than in-group members is known as the outgroup homogeneity effect. This phenomenon occurs when individuals view members of their own group as diverse and varied, while simultaneously seeing members of an outgroup as more uniform or homogeneous. This perception can lead to stereotypes and generalized beliefs about outgroup members, which can have significant social implications, such as prejudice or discrimination. In contrast, people tend to recognize the unique characteristics and differences among those who belong to their own group, showcasing an inherent bias that arises from social categorization processes. Understanding the outgroup homogeneity effect is vital as it informs how we perceive others in social contexts and contributes to intergroup dynamics, helping to explain why prejudice may become entrenched in societal interactions. The other options, while related to social psychology and group dynamics, do not specifically address the perception of similarity among outgroup members in the same way.

4. Statistical significance does not imply which of the following?

A. Validity of results

B. Practical significance

C. Reliability of measurements

D. Sample size adequacy

The correct answer highlights that statistical significance does not inherently imply practical significance. Statistical significance is determined through tests that assess whether an observed effect or difference is likely due to chance, usually indicated by a p-value less than a predetermined threshold (such as 0.05). However, a finding can be statistically significant yet trivial in real-world terms; it's possible for an effect to be real and yet so small that it has negligible practical implications. This distinction emphasizes the importance of considering the effect size and the context of the findings, as larger sample sizes can sometimes yield statistically significant results even for small and potentially inconsequential effects. In contrast, other aspects, such as validity of results, reliability of measurements, and the adequacy of sample size, are more tied to the methodology and design of a study. Validity concerns whether the study measures what it intends to measure, while reliability refers to the consistency of the measurements. Sample size adequacy impacts the power of a study to detect an effect, ensuring that results are not merely artifacts of a too-small sample. Therefore, while statistical significance is an important indicator in research, it does not confirm practical relevance or real-world applicability.

5. What does the p-value indicate in statistical analysis?

A. The likelihood that results are due to chance

B. The strength of the hypothesis

C. The overall quality of the data collected

D. The degree of confidence in the results

The p-value is a fundamental concept in statistical analysis, specifically in hypothesis testing. It represents the probability of obtaining results at least as extreme as the observed results, assuming that the null hypothesis is true. In other words, the p-value helps researchers determine the likelihood that any observed differences or relationships in the data are due to random chance rather than a true effect or relationship. When the p-value is low (commonly below a threshold such as 0.05), it suggests that the observed data would be highly unlikely under the null hypothesis. This prompts researchers to consider rejecting the null hypothesis, indicating that the results are statistically significant. Thus, the p-value directly informs the conclusion about whether the observed differences are likely attributable to chance. This understanding distinguishes the p-value from other aspects of statistical analysis. For instance, it does not directly measure the strength of a hypothesis, evaluate the overall quality of data, or represent the degree of confidence in the results, which are concepts addressed by other statistical metrics or measures. Therefore, option A accurately encapsulates the role of the p-value in evaluating the significance of statistical findings.

6. Which of the following best describes culture?

A. Language and communication styles

B. Common history, values, and skills of a group

C. Only traditional customs and practices

D. Religious beliefs and ideologies

The best description of culture is rooted in the common history, values, and skills of a group. This perspective encompasses a broad and inclusive understanding of culture, which goes beyond mere surface-level characteristics. Culture is often formed through shared experiences, social interactions, and collective memory, which shape the identity and practices of a group. Values play a crucial role in guiding behavior and social norms, while the skills refer to the ways in which members of a culture can adapt to their environment, including techniques in arts, craftsmanship, and communication. This comprehensive definition captures the essence of culture, as it includes not just visible practices, but also the underlying principles that hold a community together. While language and communication styles, traditional customs and practices, and religious beliefs are all elements of culture, they do not alone provide a full picture. Language is a crucial vehicle for expressing culture, but it does not encompass all aspects of a culture's values and shared history, which are integral to understanding the holistic concept of culture. Thus, framing culture in terms of its collective history, values, and skills allows for a more nuanced interpretation that reflects the dynamic and multifaceted nature of cultural identities.

7. What characterizes anorexia nervosa?

A. Compulsive exercising

B. Pursuit of extreme thinness

C. Frequent binging

D. Severe mood swings

Anorexia nervosa is primarily characterized by an intense fear of gaining weight and a distorted body image that drives individuals to pursue extreme thinness. This pursuit often leads to severe restrictions in food intake and excessive weight loss. The motivation behind this behavior is often linked to societal pressures surrounding body image, an overwhelming desire for control, or underlying psychological issues. While other behaviors such as compulsive exercising may accompany anorexia in some cases, the hallmark feature defining the disorder is the obsession with weight and body shape, which is encapsulated in the extreme thinness that individuals with anorexia strive for. Thus, the focus on achieving this extreme level of leanness is fundamentally what categorizes anorexia nervosa as a distinct eating disorder.

8. Which phase of sleep is often characterized by the greatest level of brain activity?

A. Non-REM sleep

B. Light sleep

C. REM sleep

D. Stage 2 sleep

REM (Rapid Eye Movement) sleep is characterized by heightened brain activity, making it similar to wakefulness. During this phase, the brain exhibits patterns of activity that are comparable to those seen when a person is awake, which is essential for various cognitive functions, including memory consolidation and learning. This is also when most vivid dreaming occurs, indicating that the brain is highly engaged during this phase despite the body being in a state of temporary paralysis. The combination of increased brain activity and temporary muscle atonia, along with the unique eye movements, makes REM sleep pivotal in sleep studies and in understanding the overall sleep cycle. Light sleep and the deeper stages of non-REM sleep do not exhibit the same level of brain activity as REM sleep, as they are necessary for physical restoration and recuperation rather than the cognitive functions that occur during REM. Stage 2 sleep, while still a phase of non-REM, is marked by sleep spindles and K-complexes but lacks the intense brain activity seen during REM sleep. Thus, it is clear that REM sleep stands out as the phase with the greatest level of brain activity.

9. What does the Hawthorne Effect suggest about workers' behavior?

A. Workers are less motivated when being observed

B. Observation can lead to an increase in productivity

C. Work efficiency is independent of observation

D. Only external rewards influence worker motivation

The Hawthorne Effect refers to the phenomenon where individuals modify an aspect of their behavior in response to their awareness of being observed. This suggests that when workers know they are being watched or studied, they may increase their productivity as a reaction to the attention they receive. Consequently, the awareness of observation can lead to heightened work output and efficiency. In the context of workplace studies, this effect highlights the importance of psychological factors in worker motivation. Observations made in the Hawthorne studies, which were conducted in the early 20th century at the Western Electric Hawthorne Works, indicated that simply being the subject of observation led to improved performance, regardless of any changes in physical working conditions. This underscores the significant relationship between observation and productivity, distinguishing it from notions that productivity remains unchanged or is solely driven by external incentives.

10. When are inferential statistics typically used?

A. With a large sample size

B. When you have varied sources for the data

C. In case study research

D. In experimental research only

Inferential statistics are utilized when researchers want to make generalizations or predictions about a population based on a sample of data. This is especially relevant when there are varied sources for the data because using diverse data sets allows statisticians to draw broader conclusions and assess relationships between variables. The goal of inferential statistics is to make inferences that extend beyond the data collected, providing insights that can apply to larger groups. In the context of varied sources for data, inferential statistics can incorporate different sets of data, leading to more robust conclusions and a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomena being examined. This approach is relevant, particularly when researchers want to establish the significance of their findings in a broader context or determine correlations that may exist across different datasets. While large sample sizes can enhance the power of inferential statistics, the mere presence of a large sample does not inherently necessitate their use. Similarly, case study research and experimental research can both utilize different types of statistics depending on the nature of the study and the variables involved, but they are not exclusive to inferential statistics. Thus, utilizing varied sources aligns closely with the essential function of inferential statistics in extending insights accurately to a greater population based on sample analysis.