Discuss the free will/determinism debate in psychology. Use examples from relevant core studies to support your answer. [15]

This requires 4 x Point - Explanation - Example - Conclusion - Challenge.

**Introduction**

* Free will: The idea that individuals are in control of their destiny and make conscious decisions that affect their behaviour.
* Determinism: The idea that behaviour is determined by forces beyond the individual’s control which can be both internal and external.

**Paragraph 1: strength of free will**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Point | Recognises freedom of choice |
| Explanation | …gives people responsibility for their actions... |
| Example | Milgram (1963) showed that not all participants obeyed the authority figure by shocking the learner to 450 volts. 14 participants dropped out at some stage between 300 and 450 volts demonstrating their free will not to harm another person. |
| Conclusion | Generally we like people to be blamed / praised for their choices |
| Challenge | However, just because free will suggests you can be blamed does not mean that it is right to do so, there may be mitigating circumstances. |

**Paragraph 2: weakness of free will**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Point | …Difficult to test and measure… |
| Explanation | …if someone exercises free will then are they just responded to a command to do so (determinism)… |
| Example | Bocchiaro et al. (2012) showed that people often obey in ways that they would not predict when faced with certain situations… |
| Conclusion | Difficulty being measured means it is not possible to predict / change behaviour |
| Challenge | However, just because free will is difficult to define and measure does not mean that it does not exist. |

**Paragraph 3: strength of determinism**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Point | ….Able to establish cause and effect…. |
| Explanation | …by isolating variables which will determine the behaviour … |
| Example | Grant et al. (1998) demonstrated that level of recall is determined by context, so we can advise people not to revise in noise |
| Conclusion | …Allows people to predict / change behaviour … |
| Challenge | However, this is reductionist and does not acknowledge individual differences. |

**Paragraph 4: weakness of determinism**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Point | … Treats people like ‘machines’ that are programmed … |
| Explanation | Suggesting that they cannot exercise free will … |
| Example | Bandura et al. (1961) demonstrated that not all behaviours are automatically imitated suggesting children make choices about who they model and what they mode … |
| Conclusion | We want to believe that we are in charge of our behaviour |
| Challenge | However, just because we believe that we are in charge does not mean to say that we are. It can be argued that a cause has not yet been discovered. |

**Conclusion – this is NOT necessary**

Psychology is most often on the determinism side, showing soft determinism (behaviour is predictable but not inevitable).