

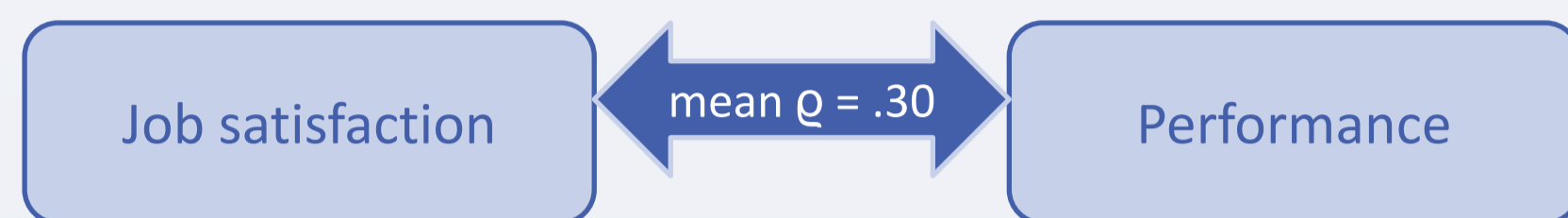
Work satisfaction and work performance: An experimental examination of a causal model

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INTRODUCTION

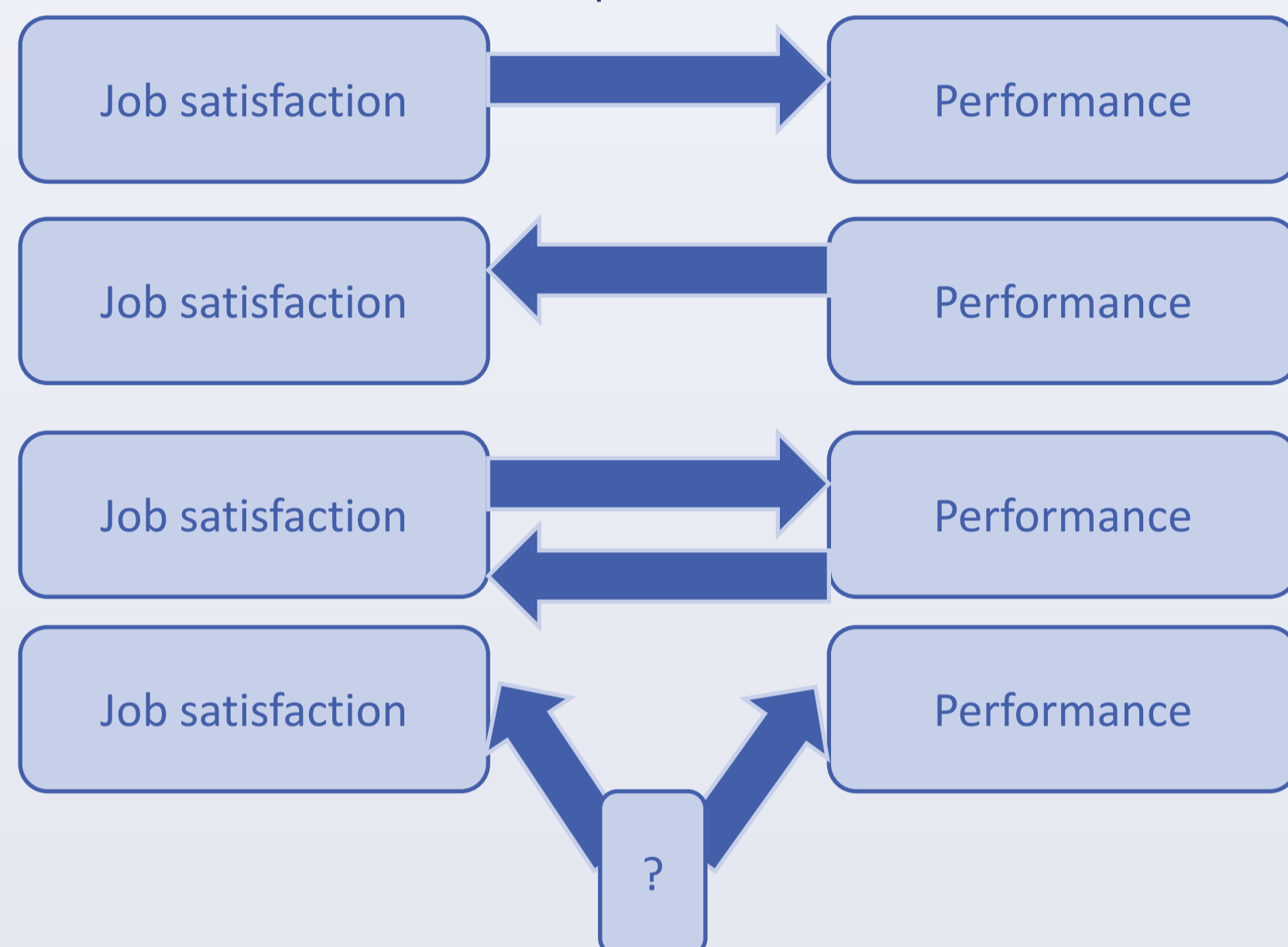
Job satisfaction: An emotional state resulting from the evaluation or appraisal of one's job experiences (Locke, 1976).

Judge et al. (2001), the meta-analysis:

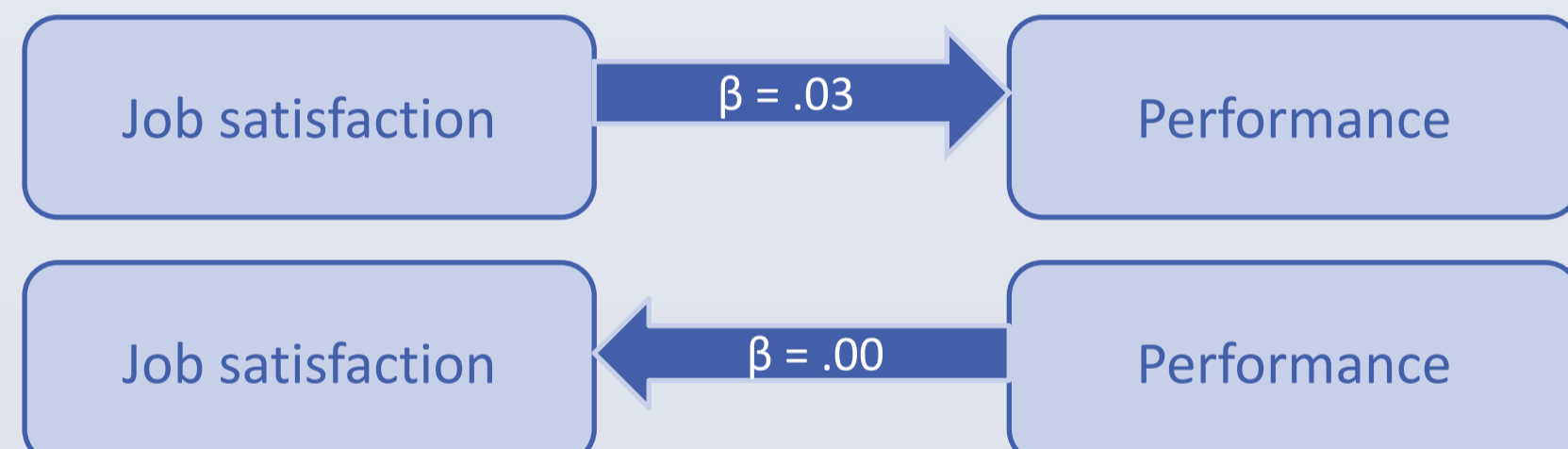


What is the antecedent and what is the consequence?

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Ricketta (2008), the meta-analysis of 16 panel studies:



"Although the ... analysis accomplished a more rigorous test for causality than did previous meta-analyses in this domain, it still suffers from the usual weakness of correlational design" (Ricketta, 2008, p. 478). "As the same employees with the same dispositional characteristics, led by the same supervisors, doing the same work and evaluated with the same reward system were followed, the measurement of job satisfaction during the first measurement wave could be considered to be the estimation of job satisfaction during the second measurement wave. That is, even though the studies measured job satisfaction prior to measuring work performance, the found relationship might not have been the result of the influence of the past job satisfaction on the future work performance but merely the reflection of the relationship between job satisfaction and work performance measured during the second measurement wave.

An experimental design is able to answer the question of causality between satisfaction and performance without alternative explanations. We want to conduct a laboratory experiment in which we will influence and measure job satisfaction of respondents before they will have information about their work performance and which will also allow us to monitor the change in their satisfaction based on their knowledge of their work performance. Influencing respondents' job satisfaction can be achieved by manipulating job characteristics - e.g. autonomy and significance, which are among the strongest predictors of job satisfaction (Baker, 2004).

RESEARCH QUESTION

What causal relationship exists between job satisfaction and work performance?

DESCRIPTION OF EXPERIMENTAL TASK

The experiment will be conducted on computers in a university laboratory. For 30 minutes, the respondents will be solving a set of tasks inspired by the Stroop test. The respondents will be shown the text containing the names of colors written in different colors.

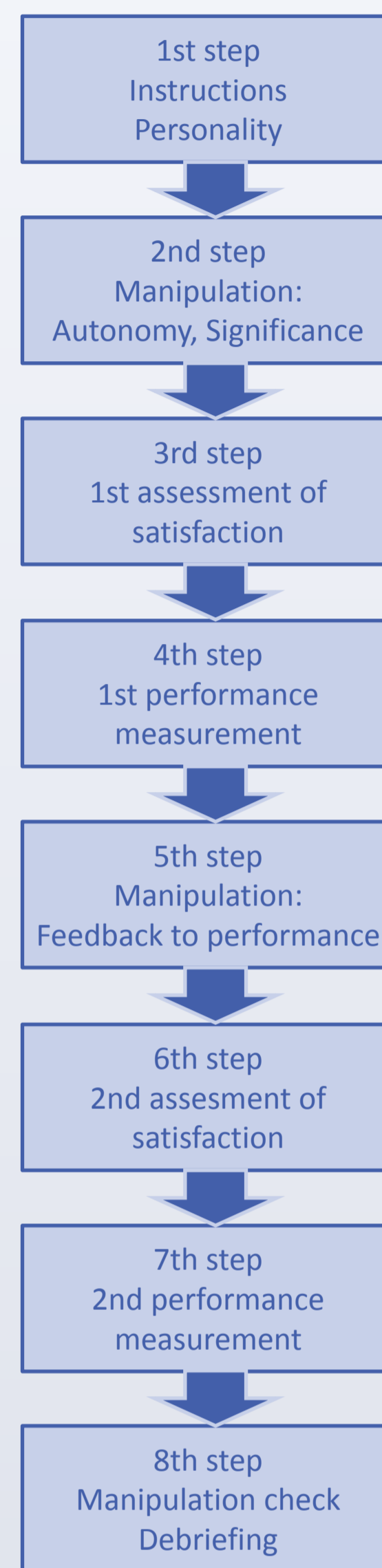
BLUE

RED

GREEN

The aim of the respondents will be to identify the color in which a particular word is written in the shortest time possible. This task allows for manipulation with job characteristics and perception of one's own performance and, at the same time, for measurement of performance. Respondents' performance will be determined by the speed of their answers and the number of mistakes made.

RESEARCH DESIGN



In the experiment, job satisfaction will be operationalized as task satisfaction and job performance as task performance since respondents will be solving only one given task.

The first step of experiment consists of giving instruction and measuring personal characteristics that can influence relationships between variables (self-efficacy, need for autonomy). Afterwards, task characteristics will be manipulated (2nd step). In the condition of high autonomy, respondents will be allowed to choose the order of tasks and decide when the experiment begins. We will point out the possibilities for independent decisions that they have during the tasks and we will not use phrases such as "you have to" or "you are obliged". In the condition of low autonomy, we will highlight the pre-established course of the experiment and the rules to follow. The respondents will not be allowed to decide on the order of tasks. Additionally, we will use phrases such as "you have to", "you must not" and "you are obliged". We will ensure a higher level of job significance by talking about the importance of the experiment, contribution to science, planned outcomes and the importance that the results of every single respondent have on the outcome of the experiment. After manipulation satisfaction with the task will be measured (3rd step). In the fourth step, respondents will be solving the Stroop test for the first time. After finishing the Stroop test, respondents will receive a randomized feedback on their performance (i.e. above- or below- average performance or no feedback) (5th step). Following that, respondents will be asked again to fill in questionnaires measuring satisfaction (6th step). Subsequently, respondents will be solving the Stroop test for the second time (7th step). In the last step, we will check whether the intended manipulations were successful and debrief the respondents in regards to the aim of the experiment (8th step).

LIMITS

The laboratory experiment has lower external validity than studies in real organizations. Respondents will not do their real jobs. Thus, the observed relationships while engaging with experimental tasks might be different from the ones in a full-time job. In the real job, employee's attitudes are influenced by the fact that employees are often existentially dependent on the job and also by long-term influence of job-characteristics. The performance motivation may be influenced by different factors in real and in experimental conditions.

The experiment will last at most tens of minutes. We are not able to observe the long term relations.

BENEFITS

Experimental design allow us to observe the causality of constructs that influence each other.

The design allow us to test alternative hypotheses about the causality of the relationship between satisfaction and performance.

Laboratory setting will allow us to measure a comparable performance of a large group of respondents and to control the influence of possible external variables.

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We welcome your comments to the design and an international cooperation.