

**LEADERSHIP STYLES, JOB PERFORMANCE
AND SUBJECTIVE OCCUPATIONAL SUCCESS
OF ENGINEERS: THE MODERATING IMPACT
OF MENTORING**

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by

KUAN SIAW VUI

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GAYA KEPIMPINAN, PRESTASI KERJA DAN KEJAYAAN

PEKERJAAN SUBJEKTIF JURUTERA: KESAN

PEMBOLEHUBAH PEMENTORAN

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan menilai hubungan antara gaya kepemimpinan penyelia dan prestasi kerja jurutera dan kejayaan pekerjaan subjektif. Ia juga menilai kesan pembolehubah pementoran terhadap hubungan antara gaya kepemimpinan dan prestasi kerja serta kesan pembolehubah pementoran terhadap hubungan antara gaya kepemimpinan dan kejayaan pekerjaan subjektif. Kajian ini menggunakan tinjauan sampel rentas bahagian, yang mana sejumlah 340 borang soal selidik telah dikumpul daripada jurutera-jurutera yang bekerja di syarikat pembuatan elektrik dan elektronik yang besar di sekitar Selangor, Pulau Pinang, Johor and Sarawak. Semua data dianalisis menggunakan teknik *Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling* (PLS-SEM) untuk menguji pembentukan hipotesis. Dua dapatan utama telah diperoleh: Pertama, gaya kepemimpinan transformasional didapati merupakan peramal yang lebih baik kepada kedua-dua prestasi kerja jurutera dan kejayaan pekerjaan subjektif jika dibandingkan dengan gaya kepemimpinan transaksional. Kedua, hubungan positif antara gaya kepemimpinan transformasional dan kejayaan pekerjaan subjektif adalah lebih kuat apabila pementoran yang baik diberikan oleh penyelia. Dapatan ini memberikan satu pemahaman yang lebih baik tentang kesan interaksi gaya kepemimpinan penyeliaan dan pementoran yang diberikan dalam pencapaian prestasi kerja optimum jurutera dan kejayaan pekerjaan subjektif. Justeru,

ia boleh dijadikan sebagai satu panduan praktikal untuk pengurusan sumber manusia organisasi mengambil inisiatif ke arah membangunkan satu kumpulan jurutera berprestasi tinggi dengan perasaan kejayaan pekerjaan subjektif yang tinggi yang dapat memainkan peranan penting dalam mengekalkan industri elektrik dan elektronik Malaysia demi kemakmuran ekonomi negara.

**LEADERSHIP STYLES, JOB PERFORMANCE AND
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THE MODERATING IMPACT OF MENTORING**

ABSTRACT

This study intends to examine the relationships between supervisors' leadership styles and engineers' job performance and subjective occupational success. It also examines the moderating impact of mentoring on the relationship between leadership styles and job performance as well as the moderating impact of mentoring on the relationship between leadership styles and subjective occupational success. A cross-sectional sample survey field study was employed and a total of 340 usable questionnaires were collected from the engineers presently serving in the large scale electrical and electronics manufacturing companies located in Selangor, Penang, Johor and Sarawak. Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) technique to test the hypotheses developed. Two major findings were obtained: First, transformational leadership style was found a better predictor to both the engineers' job performance as well as subjective occupational success compared to that of transactional leadership style. Second, the positive relationship between transformational leadership style and subjective occupational success was stronger when the mentoring received from supervisors is high. These findings provide a better understanding of the interacting effect of supervisory leadership style and mentoring provided in the attainment of engineers' optimal job performance and subjective occupational success. Thus, it

serves as a practical guide for organization HRM initiatives towards developing a pool of high performing engineers with great sense of subjective occupational success who eventually serve as the cutting edge to sustain the Malaysian electrical and electronics industry which plays a key role in lifting the nation's economy.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

This research seeks to answer a general question: What are the inter-relationships between supervisors' leadership styles and mentoring provided and engineers' job performance and subjective occupational success in the large scale electrical and electronics (E&E) manufacturing companies in Malaysia?

High performers are very much sought after by all organizations to meet their goals, deliver the specialized products and services and eventually to gain competitive edge to be the leading organization in the industry. Furthermore, being able to perform at work will lead to satisfaction with job and ultimately perceived career advancement and success. This is in line with Sonnentag, Volmer, and Spychala (2008) who postulate that high performing behavior results in satisfaction, feeling of self-efficacy and mastery which ultimately lead to promotion and receiving of awards and honor. Generally, high performers have better opportunities in terms of career development and advancement although it is not without exception at all (Bozionelos, Kostopoulos, Van der Heijden, Rousseau, Bozionelos, Hoyland, & Mikkelsen, 2015). This is proven empirically that employees with such quality get promoted more easily and have more career opportunities within an organization as compared to low performers (Van Scotter, Motowidlo, & Cross, 2000; Bozionelos et al., 2015). This implies that from the practical point of view, individual performance is something that all organizations seek after and wish to optimize as this is further exemplified in Campbell's statement that "Performance is what the organization hires one to do, and do well" (Campbell, McCloy, Oppler, & Sager, 1993, p.40).

Subjective occupational success is the positive and meaningful job-related events related to one's work goals and vital for individual employee in terms of subjective goal attainment or reasonable goal progress (Grebner, Elfering, & Semmer, 2010). It is regarded a catalyst that possibly drives individual up the career ladder as Grebner et al. (2010) claim that it is an individual's intrinsic need and therefore, a resource. This is further explicated through empirical studies which show that subjective occupational success is a powerful intrinsic drive within an individual that is able to further promote and generate positive outcomes such as personal and organizational performance (Abele, Spurk, & Volmer, 2011; Grebner, 2009), well-being such as job satisfaction, work engagement and affective commitments and health including recovery from work demand (Piryaei, 2014; Grebner et al., 2010). Furthermore, the evaluation of subjective occupational success undertaken by career aspirants is regarded as equivalent to personal goals and values (Grebner et al., 2010). This is supported by Semmer, Grebner and Elfering's (2010) reasoning that subjective success is closely tied to one's efforts, competence and skills and thus, it renders an important value as a resource to an individual. Hence, employees with positive perception of subjective occupational success is definitely valuable human resources or assets that any organization will want to keep as they are the resources, the drivers towards gaining competitive edge in today's dynamic business environment.

In light of the above discussions, job performance and subjective occupational success are two important concepts that help promote human vitality, which eventually enables organizational vitality. This is evident as the extant literatures recognize individual work performance as the core concept within the work and organizational psychology (Campbell, 1990; Murphy, 1989b). Furthermore, the

frequency and rigorous studies on this topic have generated substantial meta-analyses with which Sonnentag and Frese (2002) have unveiled its relevance and importance with a concluding remark that individual's job performance is a measurable behavior which is highly relevant to positive organizational outcomes and success. Likewise, subjective occupational success perceived by employees plays a vital role in not only keeping and maintaining the positive momentum towards individual's performance satisfaction and fulfillment, but also helps to further generate positive outcomes such as personal as well as organizational success (Abele et al., 2011; Grebner, 2009). Hence, having such perception is a valuable resource that can further generate other positive resources towards the provision of the organization's competitive advantage. In sum, employees who are able to perform at work and have positive perception of their own subjective occupational success are valuable resources for organization success.

However, merely having high performing and motivated employees will not guarantee attainment of organizational goals if there is an absence of effective leadership in the organization. Decades of studies on the topic of leadership suggest that leadership can never be left out of the context of any organization as all organizations have individuals who are in a leadership role at various levels such as those at the top, middle or lower management levels. The interaction between leaders and subordinates where a leader attempts to influence the behavior of the subordinates towards attaining organizational goals is the essence of leadership (Yukl, 2010). As Mintzberg (1987) defines organization as a collective action in the pursuit of a common mission, it suggests the importance of the combined contributions of all human resources that make possible the survival and profitability of an organization. Hence, the presence and the relationship between leaders and

followers can never be overlooked as they are the key human resources that form the major portion of and enable the existence of an organization. Avolio, Reichard, Hannah, Walumbwa and Chan (2009b) in their meta-analytic review of leadership impact research have revealed the impact and value of leadership interventions in the development and growth of today's employees and organizations. The exhaustive studies carried out by Avolio and colleagues (Avolio, Mhatre, Norman, & Lester, 2009a; Avolio et al., 2009b; Reichard & Avolio, 2005) have brought forth an affirmation that leadership intervention does matter as the positive impacts are experienced across all leadership theories. This ends on the same note as what Kaiser, Hogan and Craig (2008) have postulated that leadership determines the failure or success of organizations and it echoes the real world importance of leadership.

Additionally, leadership seems to coexist with mentorship as mentoring involves a long-term role model relationship which is developmental-oriented (Scandura & Pellegrini, 2007; Ragins & Kram, 2007; Burke, Mckenna, & Mckeen, 1991) whereas leadership involves in performance-oriented influence process (Yukl, 2010; Godshalk & Sosik, 2007). Studies show that leadership behaviors exhibited by a mentor influence protégés perceptions of the mentoring functions received (Lo, Thurasamy, & Liew, 2014; Sosik & Godshalk, 2000; Godshalk & Sosik, 2007).

Among the leadership styles in the full range leadership model, transformational leadership outshines transactional and laissez-faire leadership styles in relations to mentoring relationship between leaders and subordinates. This can be credited to the conceptual similarity between transformational leadership and supervisory mentoring as they share some common elements (Scandura & Williams, 2004). For instance, one of the distinctive characteristics of transformational leadership, namely individualized consideration exhibited through frequent

interactions between leaders and subordinates is typical characteristic of mentoring relationship. This is further exemplified in Bass' (1985) description of mentoring as an extension of individualized influence in view of the substantial amount of personalized attentions given in mentoring relationship.

Moreover, subordinates who are in mentoring relationship exhibit various forms of job performance (task and contextual) and also have impacts on the different aspects of their occupational success: objective occupational success (measured through earnings, promotions) and subjective occupational success (measured through job satisfaction as well as career satisfactions). This is well-supported by the finding of a recent meta-analysis examining the mentoring functions and expected mentoring outcomes relationship conducted by Dickson, Kirkpatrick-Husk, Kendall, Longabough, Patel and Scielzo (2013). The findings show that all the mentoring functions are related to outcomes with role modeling emerging as the strongest predictor. Empirical studies show that career support received by protégés such as learning technical know-how from mentors (Lankau & Scandura, 2002) prepare protégés to high level of task performance, whereas subordinates in high quality or high level of mentoring relationship perform higher level of citizen behaviors (Donaldson, Ensher & Grant-Vallone, 2000; Jandeska & Kraimer, 2005; Kwan, Liu & Yim, 2011). Furthermore, the quality of the mentoring relationship is found having a moderating effect on the relationship between mentoring functions and job performance in the forms of organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) (Kwan et al., 2011).

Likewise, mentoring enhances protégés' job success (Fagenson, 1989; Hunt & Michael, 1983; Bozionelos et al., 2015) and promotion decisions (Hunt & Michael, 1983; Stumpf & London, 1981; Ramaswami & Dreher, 2007). This is evident as

social and relational variables are found positively related to subjective success as they affect one's ability to achieve personal goals (Breland, Treadway, Duke, & Adams, 2007). Moreover, Ng, Eby, Sorensen and Feldman (2005) in their meta-analytic review have also concluded that career sponsorship, which refers to the degree to which employees receive sponsorship from employees of senior level such as supervisory support, is a proximal determinant of subjective success.

It is worth mentioning here that the relative importance of career-related aspect of mentoring over and above that of psychosocial mentoring as a means to one's career advancement projected in the majority of the definitions does not seem to find sufficient empirical support. This is shown in several studies (e.g., Kao, 2012; Kennedy, 2013; Allen, Eby, Poteet, Lentz, & Lima, 2004) which have reported that both career and psychosocial mentoring have a comparable effect on the protégés job and career satisfaction. In other words, psychosocial aspect of mentoring should be recognized as equally important in generating positive attitudes towards protégés job and career satisfaction. Thus, both mentoring functions should be regarded as equally important in generating positive attitudes and behavioral outcomes of protégés.

Based on the resource based view of the firm (Barney, 1991), an internal analysis of the resources which are regarded sources of competitive advantage controlled by the firm is imperative in view of today's extremely competitive business environment. This is particular true for the large scale E&E manufacturing firms where adoption of the latest hard-to-imitate technology is a key determinant for organization success in the industry. Hence, having and keeping a pool of valuable human resources, particularly the engineers who have positive perceptions of job performance and subjective occupational success together with the supervisors who

potentially exert great influence through effective leadership styles and mentoring, is a critical issue.

Engineers, the targeted respondents for this study, are the key enablers and core competence needed to sustain the E&E industry, the largest contributor to manufacturing sector which plays a crucial role in lifting Malaysian economy as outlined in the Tenth Malaysia Plan (10th MP, 2012-2015). The manufacturing companies in the E&E industry which offer a wide variety of products involve in manufacture, design and development, assembly and servicing of electronic equipment and components which are highly dependent on electronic technology to operate. Engineers therefore, play a vital role in this industry to pioneer the research and development of the latest, improved products and newest technology to this fastest evolving and most innovative industry (Electronics Manufacturing, n.d.).

The importance of this category of professionals is self-explanatory merely from the statement made by George Buckbee, a chapter writer of “Instrument Engineers Handbook” that “Engineers are responsible for millions of dollars of revenues” (Buckbee, 2010). Furthermore, Intel Corporation, one of the key players in Malaysian E&E industry, has attributed the success of its launching of the first system-on-a-chip for personal computers, the latest fourth generation Intel core processor, to Malaysian engineers. The General Manager of Intel Architecture Group, Mr. Christopher Kelly said 50 percent of their engineers worldwide who brought forth such achievement are Malaysians (Bernama, 2013). The President of the Institution of Engineers Malaysia (IEM), Datuk Keizrul Abdullah also stated that engineers are the nation builders and their roles are critical in the development of the nation (The Star, 2008). Hence, engineers are highly regarded the backbone and implementers of the nation’s infrastructure and economic development. As

engineering concepts, skills and knowledge acquired from the education curriculum does not sufficiently equip the engineers, particularly the young engineers to operate in such environment (Chikumba, 2011), leadership and mentoring from the immediate supervisors play an indispensable part in equipping and developing them to cope in this competitive industry.

With reference to the above discussion, the present study proposes mentoring as a potential moderator in relations to leadership styles, engineers' job performance and subjective occupational success. Generally, the present study intends to answer the following questions: What is the relationship between the leadership styles of the engineers' immediate supervisors and the engineers' job performance as well as subjective occupational success as perceived by the engineers in the large scale E&E manufacturing companies in Malaysia? Does mentoring provided by the immediate supervisors moderate the relationship between leadership styles and engineers' self-perceived job performance as well as subjective occupational success? With this, the goal of this study is three-fold: (a) to examine the relationship between the leadership styles and mentoring provided by immediate supervisors of engineers and the engineers' self-perceptions of job performance as well as subjective occupational success in Malaysian E&E manufacturing companies; (b) to gain a better understanding of the relationships among the constructs of interest within E&E manufacturing setting in order to recommend the effective application of leadership styles and provision of mentoring to bring out the best in engineers' job performance and sense of occupational success; and (c) to draw conclusions on the possible implications of the relationships established through this research specifically for the core human capitals in the large scale E&E manufacturing companies in Malaysia.

1.1.1 The Malaysian Scenario

Manufacturing sector is one of the main sectors contributing to the growth of Malaysian economy. Among all the industries, the E&E industry is the largest single contributor to the manufacturing sector and this industry accounts for 26.1% of the manufacturing output while representing more than 40% of the total manufacturing labour and hence, is crowned as the largest employer (10th MP, 2011-2015). The Economic Planning Unit has affirmed that one of the keys to drive the economic growth of this nation is the increase in productivity in the 10th MP. Adoption of new technology and higher level of input from human capital are the main catalysts towards increased productivity as global competitiveness has challenged this sector to stay competitive in this technologically rapid changing environment. On the journey to this end, developing key enablers such as up-skilling existing talents and increasing supply of relevant talents are some of the initiatives supported by the Government (10th MP, 2011-2015) and this governmental support continues in the latest Eleventh Malaysia Plan (11th MP, 2016-2020). This signifies the importance of ensuring a sufficient pool of high performing and motivated human resources to help achieve optimum productivity in this industry. Given this background, it is vital to find out whether the key human resources, namely the leaders (immediate supervisors) and subordinates (engineers) possess the necessary and essential characteristics or qualities, are available in the Malaysian large scale E&E manufacturing companies to sustain the growth of this industry that is anticipated to flourish with the support from the Malaysian government.

The reviews of previous studies and published literatures on Malaysian leadership show that the unique multiracial, multiethnic and multicultural aspects of this society have provided a unique platform for researchers to produce some

findings that are not reflected in the Western thoughts and theories on leadership although Western leadership models are mainly used in the leadership studies (Ansari, Ahmad, & Aafaqi, 2004). This can be seen in the earlier research works through the efforts of several researchers particularly Abdullah (1992; 1994; 1996) as well as Mansor and Kennedy (2000) who have identified that the underlying work values (e.g., goal clarity, cooperation, meeting of deadlines, performance merit etc.) and preferences (e.g., preference for relationships and preference for hierarchy) held by Malaysian workforce have shown the significant impact on how Malaysians conceptualize effective leadership. For instance, Saufi, Wafa and Hamzah (2002) have reported a positive relationship between power distance and “telling” leadership style which also supports Gill’s (1998) finding that Southeast Asian managers are more directive, transactional, less delegating in terms of leadership styles. The more recent studies conducted by Selvarajah and Meyer (2008) who study 512 managers from the three major races, namely Malay, Chinese and Indian have concluded that Malaysian managers maintain a unique leadership style along the ethnic lines. In accord with this, Jogulu and Ferkins (2012) who have examined the linkage between transactional and transformational leadership and Malaysian cultural environment disclose the importance of cultural forces in determining leadership styles in Malaysian context.

In addition to the above, it is observed that the more recent published literatures on Malaysian leadership have employed the new leadership paradigm or the integrative leadership paradigm, particularly the full range of transactional and transformational leadership styles to examine their effects on outcome variables. The majority of the studies focus on the relationships between these leadership styles and two dominant outcome variables, namely job satisfaction (e.g., Ahmad, Abdul

Rahman, & Soon, 2015; Omar & Hussin, 2013; Gharibvand, Mazumder, Mohiuddin, & Su, 2013) and organizational commitment (e.g., Aghashahi, Davarpanah, Omar, & Sarli, 2013; Lo, Ramayah, & De Run, 2010; Lo, Ramayah, Min, & Songan, 2010).

Other studies for instance, Abdul Manaf and Abdul Latif (2014) highlight the importance of transformational leadership and organizational culture in influencing job performance in SMEs. Aziz, Abdullah, Tajudin and Mahmood (2013) have found that both transactional and transformational leadership styles are the dominant forms of leadership exhibited by managers of SMEs in Malaysia while Jogulu's (2010) research has revealed that transactional leadership is strongly related to the ratings of Malaysian managers. Moreover, Jogulu and Ferkins (2012) have discovered that regardless of gender, Malaysian managers indicate their preference for leading within transformational leadership framework. In view of the inconsistent findings obtained in the previous works, the researcher of this study would agree with what Selvarajah and Meyer (2008) have concluded that Malaysian leadership identity is still in its infancy stage. Hence, more rigorous and systematic studies are necessary.

Undeniably, researching on mentoring has received increasing popularity in the West, particularly in the US and Europe. This however, is lacking in the developing countries and emerging economy like Malaysia as highlighted by Salami (2008). Hence, the findings obtained from previous studies based on the Western populations may not be generalized and applied to the populations in the non-developed countries in view of the different social and cultural considerations between these countries. Furthermore, Haggard, Dougherty, Turban and Wilbanks (2011) suggest the importance to explicitly examine how contextual factor such as occupation and setting might influence findings in mentoring research.

To the knowledge of the researcher of this present study, the impact of mentoring experienced through the lenses of the engineers in the E&E manufacturing setting is lacking in the literature thus far. Several studies on mentoring from the Malaysian perspectives found in the extant literatures are conducted among accounting graduates (Nor & Kasim, 2015), novice head teachers (Tahir, Said, Daud, Vazhathodi, & Khan, 2015), executives in SMEs (Lo & Ramayah, 2011), hotel workers (Chew & Wong, 2008) and academics in private higher education institutions (Ismail & Arokiasamy, 2007). Not many literatures can be found on the Malaysian perspective of mentoring in manufacturing organizations despite the popularity in the West.

Generally, the majority of the previous studies on mentoring from the Malaysian perspectives are conducted within educational settings. For example, Ligadu and Anthony (2015) study the support of e-mentoring for mentor-mentee during practicum; Ismail, Abdullah, Zaiedy, Ghani and Omar (2015) examine the correlation between mentoring program and mentee self-efficacy at a research university; Cheah, Ommar, Joanne, Ismail, Tengku Mohd Sharifudin and Wong (2013) examine the perceptions of medical students on mentor-mentee program in a faculty; Ismail, Amir and Khian Jui (2013) study the relationship between mentoring program and psychosocial development in teaching based higher learning institutions; Ismail, Jui and Shah (2011) examine the relationship between gender type in mentorship and mentee advancement among employees in a public university; and Ismail and Arokiasamy (2007) explore mentoring as a tool for advancement of academics in private higher education institutions.

Basically, exploring the topic of mentoring in the business organization settings is rather lacking except for Lo, Thurasamy and Liew (2014) who have

studied the direct effect of bases of power on job stress with mentoring as moderator in Malaysian large scale banks. Additionally, Lo and Ramayah (2011) have examined the impact of mentoring on employees' satisfaction in promotion, job itself, supervisor and co-workers in Malaysian SMEs companies while Leow and Khong (2009) have studied the predictor-criterion relationship between mentoring and LMX on organizational commitment among auditors in Malaysia. In addition, Chew and Wong (2008) have explored the effects of career mentoring experience on employee commitment and leaving intention among hotel workers. Given the manifold benefits revealed through the past studies as well as its popularity in the West (Bridgeford, 2007), studies on the topic of mentoring within Malaysian context to include a broad range of professional groups and organization settings should warrant attentions from researchers to advance the existing body of knowledge.

Being recognized as one of the core concepts in work and organization psychology, individual job performance is well-studied across cultures and countries. However, as compared to the studies conducted in the West, Malaysian samples seem to be under representative in this vast literature. Moreover, the empirical studies conducted within Malaysian context are found primarily focus on a single aspect of job performance such as extra-role citizenship behaviors (e.g., Hemdi, Nasurdin, & Hamid, 2007; Ibrahim, Ghani, & Embat, 2013; Nasurdin, Nejati, & Mei, 2013; Nasurdin & Ramayah, 2003) task performance or overall performance (e.g., Azmi, Shahid, & Alwi, 2016; June, Kheng, & Mahmood, 2013; Awais Bhatti, Mohamed Battour, & Rageh Ismail, 2013). It is found that very little attention is given to explore the more comprehensive two-dimensional approach to measure job performance construct, namely task performance and contextual performance. The few studies using the multidimensional construct that the researcher has come across

are: Nasurdin and Khuan (2007) who survey customer-contact employees in telecommunication industry; Othman (2012) whose study sample is public hospital nurses and Ali, Chua and Lim (2015) study the employees in Malaysian public universities. Hence, a multidimensional job performance construct should be examined in order to grasp a better understanding and provide more insights into job performance of employees across occupations within Malaysian context.

Despite the fact that career research has received substantial attention over the past decades, studies on the topic of individual's subjective occupational success using Asian samples, particularly in the emerging economy like Malaysia remain scarce. Basically, studies on individual career success within Malaysian context identified from the published literatures have favored the conceptualization of bi-dimensional of career success, namely objective career success and subjective career success. Furthermore, most studies tend to examine the respondents' perception of person-related, organizational-related variables as predictors to career success. For instance, Garavan, Carbery, Mohd Rasdi and Ismail (2012) investigate the linkages between networking behaviors and career success among managers in the context of a public sector organization. Besides, Mohd Rasdi, Garavan and Ismail (2011) explore the relationship between proactive career behavior and both objective and subjective career success among the managers from the Malaysian public sector. Moreover, Poon (2004) examines the relationship between career commitment and career success among white-collar employees from a diverse set of occupations and organizations in Malaysia. Other than that, Tan (2010) examines the career planning, individual's personality traits and HRM practices as determinants to individual career success. The survey samples are insurance agents from the northern states of Peninsular Malaysia. In addition to the above, Wahat (2011) towards developing a

theoretical framework has suggested four predictive potential, namely core self-evaluation, person-job-fit, needs-supplies fit perceptions of the objective and subjective career success among people with disability.

In view of the above mentioned prior studies on career success within the Malaysian setting, research on this topic should move beyond this rather more traditional two-dimensional conceptualization of career success. Above all, social and relational variables which are found positively related to individual subjective career success (Breland et al., 2007) should be examined to increase the breadth of the predictor-criterion relationships to be explored in this context.

In sum, the importance of E&E manufacturing industry contributing to the attainment of the nation's aspiration as stipulated in the Malaysia plans (10th MP, 2011-2015; 11th MP, 2016-2020) and the limited empirical contributions to the existing body of knowledge with regard to the inter-relationships among the key constructs under study require not only attention but also action to examine the relationships that are possibly established within this emerging economy. Additionally, studying the under-representative sample, the engineers from the large scale E&E manufacturing companies is also timely.

1.2 Problem Statement

Recognized as the largest contributor to manufacturing sector, E&E manufacturing companies in the E&E industry play the major role not only to drive Malaysia's economic growth through its manufacturing output, it is also the largest sector that provides employment opportunities to this nation (10th MP, 2011-2015; 11th MP, 2016-2020). The role of engineers as the key enablers in the Malaysian large scale E&E manufacturing companies is also acknowledged (Bernama, 2013; Buckbee, 2010; The Star, 2008).

However, the Work Happiness Survey 2013 conducted by Jobs Central Malaysia revealed that engineers are among the unhappiest employees in Malaysia (Boo Su Lyn, 2014). The survey also reported that there is a slight decrease in their job satisfaction compared to the previous survey conducted in 2012. According to the Work Happiness Survey 2013, the major cause of the Malaysian engineers' work unhappiness is due to the scarcity of the advancement opportunities. This finding certainly concerns the employers of their engineers' job performance as performance is employers' bottom line index (Campbell et al., 1993; Bozionelos et al., 2015) as well as their engineers' subjective occupational success. Subjective occupational success is generally measured through job or career satisfaction (Heslin, 2005; Grebner et al., 2010; Pan & Zhou, 2015; Shockley, Ureksoy, Rodopman, Poteat, & Dullaghan, 2015) and is important as the absence of subjective success can cause motivational deficits (Abele et al., 2011).

In light of the above, it warrants the current research to examine the Malaysian engineers' job performance and subjective occupational success since there is a high possibility that unhappiness and decreased job satisfaction may affect their job performance and subjective occupational success. Low performing workforce will certainly affect the productivity and eventually the organization's profitability. Furthermore, lower sense of occupational success as engineers may possibly cause intention to leave this profession knowing that the nature of this profession has very limited career advancement as revealed in the Work Happiness Survey 2013. Therefore, certain measures need to be taken to ensure these two important concepts in the work domain, namely job performance and subjective occupational success of engineers are as required or expected from the E&E manufacturing organizations.

In addition to the above, meta-analysis studies conducted over the years have emphasized the influence of leadership on individual performance across professions (DeGroot, Kiker, & Cross, 2000; Wang, Oh, Courtright, & Colbert, 2011) as well as the impact of mentoring on employee job performance (Dickson et al., 2013; Kwan et al., 2011; Lankau & Scandura, 2002) and occupational success (Kammeyer-Mueller & Judge, 2008; Allen et al., 2004). Yet, little attention is given in the existing literatures examining the role of mentoring in relation to supervisors' leadership styles and engineers' job performance as well as subjective occupational success particularly in the Malaysian large scale E&E manufacturing setting although the nature of engineers' job requires not only leadership to impact on their performance (Muenjohn, Chhetri, Suzumura, & Ishikawa, 2015; Yusof & Othman, 2016) but also effective mentoring (Chikumba, 2011).

Hence, findings on the impact of supervisor's leadership styles and mentoring provided on the engineers' job performance and subjective occupational success from the standpoint of engineers have important implications for supervisory or managerial development efforts so that supervisors will be aware of the leadership styles and mentoring needed for the attainment of the desired optimum engineers' job performance and subjective occupational success. Moreover, engineers' optimal sense of subjective occupational success serves as an important measure to achievement of career aspirants' personal goals and values (Grebner et al., 2010; Semmer et al., 2010) that can eventually be the reason for them to stay in their profession and with the present company despite the known fact of limited career advancement opportunities beyond supervisory positions in this profession (Boo Su Lyn, 2014; Bernama, 2012).

In conclusion, this study sheds light on the inter-relationships among the five constructs under study (transformational and transactional leadership styles, mentoring, job performance and subjective occupational success) from the perspectives of the pool of engineers. Subsequently, this study can provide HR personnel an actionable framework to plan for HR initiatives in developing the key human resources that suit their HR and organizational strategies. The unpredictable and dynamic businesses and labor market environment have undoubtedly coerced the HR personnel to toe the top management line in keeping the valuable pool of key manpower to sustain the organization's growth and profitability.

1.3 Research Objectives

The objectives to be achieved in this research are as follows:

- (i) to examine the relationship between leadership styles (transformational and transactional) and job performance;
- (ii) to examine the relationship between leadership styles (transformational and transactional) and subjective occupational success;
- (iii) to examine the moderating impact of mentoring on the relationship between leadership styles (transformational and transactional) and job performance;
- (iv) to examine the moderating impact of mentoring on the relationship between leadership styles (transformational and transactional) and subjective occupational success.

This study aims to establish empirical relationships among the five main constructs, namely transformational leadership style, transactional leadership style, mentoring, job performance and subjective occupational success through integration

of the literatures on these domains. In other words, this study attempts to seek empirical evidence on the relationships between leadership styles and mentoring provided as perceived by the engineers and their self-perceptions of job performance and subjective occupational success in a single framework. The researcher of the present study believes that mentoring is an important intervention which complements effective leadership style exhibited by supervisors to enhance self-perceived job performance and subjective occupational success of engineers who eventually can serve as a source to competitive advantage of the organization performance. Therefore, supervisors who intend to successfully influence and motivate their engineers in the work team can work on their leadership styles and mentoring skills to bring out the best in both leader-subordinate and mentor-protégé relationships towards a win-win sustainable working atmosphere.

1.4 Research Questions

The primary purpose of the present study is to find out the influence of leadership styles exhibited and mentoring provided by supervisors on engineers' self-perceived job performance and subjective occupational success. Thus, this study investigates leadership styles and mentoring as rated by engineers and it aims to answer the following questions:

- (i) Do supervisors' leadership styles (transformational and transactional) have a relationship with engineers' job performance?
- (ii) Do supervisors' leadership styles (transformational and transactional) have a relationship with engineers' subjective occupational success?
- (iii) Does mentoring moderate the relationships between leadership styles (transformational and transactional) and job performance?

- (iv) Does mentoring moderate the relationships between leadership styles (transformational and transactional) and subjective occupational success?

1.5 Definition of Key Terms

The keywords extensively used throughout this study are defined to ensure precision of the meanings in the context of the present study as follows:

Job performance is defined as behaviors or actions that are relevant to the organizational goals (Campbell, 1990). In this study job performance consists of task performance and contextual performance as adopted from Borman and Motowidlo (1993). **Task Performance** refers to the proficiency with which one performs work related activities that can contribute towards organization's "technical core" (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993) while **contextual performance** refers to the behaviors or activities that provide organizational, social as well as psychological environments in which the technical core functions (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993). In this study, contextual performance comprises two components adopted from Williams and Anderson (1991): organizational citizenship behavior towards individual (OCBI) and organizational citizenship behavior towards organization (OCBO). **OCBI** means the helping behaviors towards individuals at workplace such as colleagues and supervisors whereas **OCBO**, the helping behaviors towards organization (Williams & Anderson, 1991).

Subjective Occupational Success refers to the positive and meaningful job-related events related to one's work goals and is salient for the individual employee in terms of subjective goal attainment or reasonable goal progress as adopted from Grebner, Elfering, and Semmer (2010). This construct comprises four dimensions: goal attainment, pro-social success, positive feedback and career success. **Goal**

attainment means reaching or exceeding predefined goals in terms of task performance or achievement of personal goals (Grebner, Elfering, & Semmer, 2010); **Pro-social success** means the desired result of behaviors that aim at improving the situation of others at work (Grebner, Elfering, & Semmer, 2010); **Positive feedback** refers to the acknowledgement of good performance by others at work (Grebner, Elfering, & Semmer, 2010); and **Career success** means attaining milestones in one's career (Grebner, Elfering, & Semmer, 2010).

Leadership style refers to the actions or behaviors of an individual who is usually in a more senior position that influence the actions or behaviors of other individuals to achieve organizational goals (Bass, 1990).

Transactional leadership style comprises three components adopted from Bass (1985) as well as Bass and Avolio (1994): **contingent reward** refers to clarifying what needs to be accomplished for a reward; **active management-by-exception** focuses on monitoring mistakes and quickly taking corrective actions when appropriate; and **passive management-by-exception** describes a leader who intervenes only after errors are detected.

Transformational leadership style consists of five components of leader behaviors adopted from Bass (1985) as well as Bass and Avolio (1994): idealized influence attributes; idealized influence behaviors; inspirational motivation; intellectual stimulation; and individual consideration. **Idealized influence attributes** is an emotional component which helps instil power and pride in followers and look beyond personal interest due to the leader's charismatic appeal. (Bass, 1985; Bass & Avolio, 1994); **Idealized influence behaviors** refer to specific behaviors displayed which project leader's integrity through ethical and moral centred decision making that followers can observe directly (Bass, 1985; Bass & Avolio, 1994); **Inspirational**

motivation is a non-intellectual, emotional component which inspires and motivates followers through articulation of shared vision and confidence that ambitious goals are attainable (Bass, 1985; Bass & Avolio, 1994); **Intellectual stimulation** is a rational and non-emotional component which appeals to followers' intellect by creating problem awareness and problem solving, challenging followers' assumptions and stereotypes towards seeking ways to improve present state of performance (Bass, 1985; Bass & Avolio, 1994); and **Individual consideration** provides social-emotional support and is concerned with empowering and developing followers to reach highest potentials through coaching, counselling and frequent interactions (Bass, 1985; Bass & Avolio, 1994).

Mentoring refers to mentoring relationship between protégé and direct supervisor which is also known as supervisory career mentoring (Scandura & Schriesheim, 1994). Three aspects of mentoring are under study namely, career development function, psychosocial function and role modeling function adopted from Scandura (1992) as well as Scandura and Viator (1994), which are later labeled as career support, social support and role modeling in this study. **Career support** refers to career-related support that gears protégés towards career development and advancement through mentor's provision of needed information, challenging assignments, exposure, visibility and protection (Kram, 1985); **Social support** helps develop protégés' personal growth through mentor's efforts to offer emotional support, counselling and provides acceptance and guidance (Kram, 1985); and **Role modeling** involves behaviors which protégés identify with and imitate mentors who are respected and trusted as well as having referent and expert power and holding high standards (Thibodeaux & Lowe, 1996).

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study is significant in several ways which enable advancements made particularly in terms of theoretical development as well as managerial practices.

1.6.1 Theoretical Significance

The cross-sectional surveys conducted in the Malaysian large scale E&E manufacturing companies enable empirical data to be collected from the engineers and further tested to obtain findings to the hypothesized research model developed. Specifically, the moderating effects of the potential mentoring variable in relations to leadership styles, job performance and subjective occupational success are empirically examined and established.

The theoretical significance is achieved in this study through the integration of full range leadership theory (FRLT) and social exchange theory (SET) in establishing the research framework which later leads to empirical testing of the inter-relationships among the main constructs under investigation. It sheds light in gaining better understanding of how the relational or social variables impact on the criterion variables under investigation among supervisors-engineers in the large scale E&E manufacturing setting. As such, this research will contribute to the existing literatures of each main construct of interest especially from the Malaysian engineers' perspective which is scarcely found in the literatures.

1.6.2 Practical Significance

The findings which provide insights to the employers or management with regard to the interacting effect of mentoring with the leadership styles exhibited by supervisors on engineers' job performance and subjective occupational success can add more

values to general theories of work behavior. Specifically, the present study will serve as a guide to supervisors whereby mentoring creates a three-way reciprocal context in which the mentor gives, the protégé gets and the organization benefits (Scandura, Tejeda, Werther, & Lankau, 1996). Hence, when mentoring provided by supervisors takes place, it enhances the contributions from protégés through job performance as well as subjective occupational success and ultimately, benefits the organizations in terms of goals attainment. In other words, the organization will be greatly benefited as a whole if the importance of mentoring relationship towards organizational attainments is recognized and this concept is mindfully put into practice. Thus, bringing together the attribution of effective leadership and mentoring may consciously move from a spontaneous mentoring to a top-management supported mentoring which brings forth greater benefits throughout the organization. As a result, the findings obtained can be very useful for top management to enhance organization's HRM initiatives for organizational growth and also to shed light on the problem stated on the phenomenon of the engineers being one of the unhappiest professionals in Malaysia due to the little career advancement beyond that of supervisory positions in the industry.

In sum, the present study examines the inter-relationships between leadership styles and mentoring provided by supervisors and their impact on engineers' self-perceptions of job performance and subjective occupational success in the Malaysian large scale E&E manufacturing context. It is believed that this research effort would add value to the existing body of knowledge with regard to the constructs under study and above all, the research findings will eventually have practical values for the management, particularly the HR personnel in the large scale E&E manufacturing organizations.