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MOTIVATION TO WORK: A CASE STUDY OF PROBLEMS FACED BY FACTORY WORKERS

oleh

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Tan Chung Kim December 1982.

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SYNOPSIS

This graduation exercise will touch on a number of topics in the field of industrial sociology. Specifically, it is about the factory workers - the people who make the industrial machinery work.

A summary of the area to be studied is as follows: Chapter one will discuss about the criteria in choosing a factory and the use of the various data collecting methods.

Chapter two will look into the various aspects of the factory (such as location, size, history and capital), the production process and the actual working conditions. A comparison of the minimum legal conditions and conditions in the factory will also be made. The general wage structure will be found in this chapter also.

The socio-economic characteristics of the sample will be central topic in chapter three. The method of choosing the sample will be shown. Besides that, the workers' attitudes, wages and socio-economic characteristics are other main topics of discussion in this chapter. Lastly, a typical factory worker's monthly budget will also be described.

Chapter four is totally devoted to the trade unions, the workers' sabotage tactics and the management's control strategies.

Finally, the conclusion touches on the scope, the major findings and the weaknesses of the study. Recommendations are also put forward by the author.

SINOPSIS

Latihan ilmiah ini akan menyentuh beberapa perkara dalam bidang sosiologi industri. Secara khususnya, latihan ilmiah ini adalah tentang pekerja-pekerja kilang - orang-orang yang membolehkan mesin industri bergerak.

Isi kandungan latihan ilmiah ini adalah seperti berikut: Bab satu akan membincang tentang kriteria-kriteria dalam memilih kilang yang sesuai dan penggunaan berbagai-bagai pengumpulan data.

Bab dua adalah mengenai berbagai-bagai aspek kilang yang dikaji itu (seperti lokasi, saiz, sejarah dan modal), proses pengeluaran dan keadaan kerja yang sebenar. Suatu perbandingan antara keadaan kerja sebenar dan keadaan kerja yang minima mengikut undang-undang akan dibuat. Struktur gaji am boleh didapati dalam bab ini juga.

Ciri-ciri sosio-ekonomi sampel menjadi topik perbincangan dalam bab tiga. Cara memilih sampel, gaji, ciri-ciri sosio-ekonomi dan pendapat pekerja-pekerja kilang akan dibincang dengan panjang lebar. Suatu deskripsi belanjawan bulanan seseorang pekerja kilang akan diberikan juga.

Kesatuan sekerja, cara-cara penguasaan (controls) pengurusan dan cara-cara merosakkan (sabotage) pekerja adalah topik-topik utama bab empat. Kelemahan kesatuan sekerja, jenis-jenis dan sebab-sebab diadakan 'controls' dan 'sabotage' dibincang dengan mendalam. Akhir sekali, kesimpulan mengandungi bidang kajian, penemuan-penemuan yang utama, kelemahan-kelemahan kajian dan syor-syor untuk memperbaiki keadaan kerja, khususnya dan taraf kehidupan pekerja kilang, amnya.

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situation will defended them a telling being of preserve a

Chapter 1

Pengenalan/Introduction And Area Of Study

With the emphasis given by the present government for higher productivity in the manufacturing industries, the author has decided to do a study regarding the worker - management relationship. Malaysia is now undergoing a change in her industrial structure. The Fourth Malaysia Plan which covers the period of 1981 - 1985, has programmes for this change. Among the programmes planned are those involving workers' working conditions, the development of industrial infrastructure in certain rural areas and a host of other steps.

In the early eighties, it is expected that the world will continue to experience economic recession. In other words, all the major industrial countries will continue to have low growth rates, inflation, increase unemployment, a drop in international trade and an increasing deficit in the balance of payment¹. However, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) predicts that the economic activities of the major industrial countries will grow again at a gradual pace after 1983². The world economic situation will definitely have a telling influence on productivity and the workers' lot in Malaysia. The manufacturing sector in Malaysia, however, is expected to grow at 10.9% annually. The growth is expected to come from increasing exports and import substitution³. This is important because it will increase employment opportunities in this country. The government will also encourage the development of industries which use local raw material. The achievement of this target (10.9% annually) will depend upon the local and foreign demand. In 1980, manufactured goods made up 27.5% of the exports. Towards 1990, however, this is expected to increase to 41%, causing the percentage of primary goods export to drop⁴. This presents new challenges and therefore needs increase the competitiveness of existing and new exports and enlarge existing and new markets⁵.

The labour force is expected to grow at a rate of 3.1% annually, that is from 5.4 million in 1980 to about 6.3 million in 1985. This is due to the increase in the working age group of the population⁶. Labour force in the 25 - 39 years age group, i.e. from 37.6\% in 1980 to 41.1\% in 1985, will bring about an older, more experienced and more educated labour force⁷. The manufacturing sector will also be employing more female workers to counter the labour shortage. Labour shortage is a usual occurence in a developing and dynamic economy⁸.

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About 860,600 jobs are to be created in the period of 1981 -85 and therefore the total employment will increase from 5,093,500 to 5,954,100. About 879, 600 new job seekers will enter the labour market in this 5 year period⁹. In addition to that, there are 286,500 now unemployed workers in the market¹⁰. Thus, unemployment will drop from 5.3% in 1980 to 4.9% in 1985. However, in terms of numbers, about 19,000 more workers will be out of job, causing the total number of unemployed workers to increase to 305,500 in 1985¹¹.

The government is also planning to disperse manufacturing industries (factories) in less developed rural areas. Infrastructural facilities (such as roads and electric supply) in these areas will be upgraded. A total of twenty eight industrial areas covering an area of 2,442 hectres was developed in Kedah, Kelantan, Pahang, Sabah, Sarawak and Trengganu towards the end of 1980. Among the industries approved were processed food, electrical, electronic, textile, chemical and chemical based goods 12. Free economic zones were also developed for the export-oriented industries. Eight free trade zones covering an area of 434 hectres were formed in 1980. The zones can be found in Melaka (Batu Berendam and Tanjung Kling), Penang (Bayan Lepas, Prai and Dermaga Prai) and Selangor (Sungai Way/Subang, Ampang/Ulu Klang and Teluk Panglima Garang). Six other areas have also been designated as free trade zones, that is, in Kedah (Kulim), Kelantan (Pengkalan Chepa), Johore (Senai and Pasir Gudang), Pahang (Gebeng) and Penang (Pulau Jerejak)¹³. In other

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words, the government intends to solve the rural-urban migration problem by developing the less developed rural areas. Hence the unemployed rural folks will not have to go to the urban areas to look for jobs. New townships are to be built, which will be connected to a main town. The main town will act as a service and development centre for the area. The townships will lighten the burden of the main towns to take in more people¹⁴.

The 'Look East' policy will have a profound effect on the productivity and working conditions of the workers. According to the Prime Minister, Dr. Mahathir Moahmmed, the three basic ingredients in this policy are changing the Malaysian work ethics, the management system (incorporating a belief in group achievement) and upgrading its existing technology¹⁵. Malaysian work ethics are closer to those of the West, which is, a tendency to work as little as possible for as much pay as possible and with little sense of belonging to the company. The Japanese, on the other hand, are very willing to work very, very hard, are very loyal to their company and immerse themselves fully in their work. Each member of a company considers the company's interests before his own. Group achievement rather than personal achievement is emphasised. A willingness to work very hard, dedication to their work and other positive virtues definitely will increase productivity. The company management, in considering each worker as a member of the company, will take care of the welfare of the workers¹⁶. Among the main features of the Jápanese system of

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industrial relations are enterprise unionism, lifetime employment, seniority system of wages and other conditions. These conditions will reassure the workers¹⁷.

A summary of the area to be studied is as follows: In chapter one, the criteria of the choice of the factory will be laid down. The various data collecting methods will also be discussed. This will include the advantages and disadvantages of each of the methods used.

The second chapter of this thesis will look into the actual working conditions, wages, allowances, leaves and other conditions, of the factory in question in comparison with the minimum conditions lain down by the Employment Ordinance of Malaysia. The author will also give some information regarding the company's investment, capital, technology, size, history and location. The general wage structure will also be discussed.

Chapter three is about the socio-economic characteristics of the sample studied. The method of choosing the sample will be shown. The workers' wages will then be compared with their characteristics such as sex, age and education. This chapter will also touch on the psychological make-up of the different categories of the workers. The monthly budget of a worker will also be given.

Trade unions will be the topic of discussion in the fourth chapter. Emphasis will be given on its attempts and successes in

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securing better working conditions for the workers. Ways to handle disputes and its weaknesses will also be covered. Besides that, the management's techniques of control and the workers' sabotage tactics will be discussed.

The conclusion will again give the area of study in brief, the major findings of the study, the weaknesses of the study and the recommendations by the author for a better working conditions for the workers.

Research Methodology

- (a) Choice of factory
- (i) Criteria in choosing a suitable factory

The author wanted to do a joint study with another researcher comparing male and female workers in a factory. He had a couple of criteria to fulfil before he could accept a job at any factory. Among the criteria for choosing a suitable factory were:-

- (a) The factory had to have a population large enough for a comparative study to be done. In this case, the author would study the male workers while his fieldwork partner would study the female workers. The ideal population was about six hundred workers;
- (b) The factory ought to have a relatively balanced male to female ratio of workers (proportional);

- (c) The factory must be able to provide jobs for the author and his fieldwork partner. This would mean paid jobs and not just some on-the-job training programme. They also needed jobs which would allow them to mix freely with the workers. As far as possible, the jobs ought to be in the production line;
- (d) The author also did not want any factory where the management staff might know him or his fieldwork partner.

The author had to look for jobs in Ipoh and Petaling Jaya. He also inquired about job vacancies at over seven factories before he finally found a suitable job and factory.

(ii) Why some factories were not suitable.

The author was up in Ipoh for a week. During his stay in Ipoh, he went to two factories which were situated in the Tasek Industrial Area. These two factories failed to fulfil some of the criterias.

The first factory was a lamp shade factory. However, its population or size was rather too small, that is about 120 workers, for a comparative study to be done. The second factory was larger in size, that is it employed over 700 workers. This factory manufactured cement. Unfortunately, the personnel manager could only give an on-the-job training programme to the author's fieldwork partner. The author even had to persuade the personnel manager to give him a job which would have allowed free access and close interaction with the workers. However, he was only given a job in the packing section but what in fact he wanted was a job in the production section. In addition to these flows, the factory also had a higher proportion of male workers. Thus, this factory was also deemed unsuitable.

The author later went back to Petaling Jaya. He went to enquire at over five factories in Section 13, 14 and 22 areas.

One of the factories in question was a blanket factory. The factory, however, needed only male machine operators. Hence, it was unsuitable as the criteria was jobs for both the author and his fieldwork partner. Some factories had only jobs in the packing section which again was unsuitable to the author's aims and objectives. Another factory, that is an enamel factory in Section 13, looked promising. It needed male as well as female production workers. It appeared large enough for a comparative study to be done. Unfortunately, on more inquiries it was discovered that the factory had **a** population of only about three hundred to four hundred workers. As mentioned earlier, one of the criteria was a factory with a population of about six hundred workers.

The factory studied, i.e. a plastic manufacturing factory, was suitable as it fulfilled most of the criteria, which were:-

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- (a) The factory had a population of about six hundred workers. Thus, a comparative study could be done;
- (b) Both the author and his fieldwork partner were able to get jobs in the factory. Both of them worked as quality checkers;
- (c) The author did not know any of the management staff;
- (d) The ratio of female workers to male workers was in favour of the female workers. However, the difference was not very great. In certain sections, such as Blow moulding section, there was more female workers and in some sections, such as Blown Film section, there was more male workers.

Due to these factors, this factory was deemed suitable.

(b) Choice of Data Collection Method

The participant observation method was used through out the course of the study, i.e. about one and a half months. About a month after working in the factory, i.e. after the author revealed his identity, the questionnair was used. Finally, literature research was carried out by the author. He went to the Registrar of Companies to obtain brief information about the history of the company and the

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capital standing of the company. The author also had to go to the library to find references regarding the Employment Ordinance, trade unions and other relevant topics.

(i) Participant Observation

"The participant observer gathers data by participating in the daily life of the group or organization he studies. He watches the people he is studying to see what situations they ordinarily meet and how they behave in them. He enters into conversation with some or all of the participants in these situations and discovers their interpretations of the events he has observed".¹⁸

This method was suitable for collecting data regarding nonverbal behaviour, behaviour in the natural environment and longitudinal analysis. A participant observer on the scene could discern ongoing behaviour as it occured. The observer could make field notes that record the salient features of the behaviour¹⁹, for instance, the author noticed that the workers kept quiet whenever the supervisor or manager came around. The quality controller job also gave the author the flexibility in moving around. In this way he was able to observe, could also look for information by looking at objects around. The bags of plastic raw material, for instance, could tell us the origin of these items. In this case, most of the items appeared to have been imported from Japan and West Germany, packages of packed polythene bags had their place of destination printed on them, for example, Borneo, Australia and United States. The observation method allowed in-depth study of the whole individual. Investigators used the observational method in preliminary studies²⁰. For the first two weeks of the field study the author roamed around the factory as often as possible to acquiant himself to the factory set-up. The observational method, being unstructured also, was a very flexible technique that allowed the observer to concentrate on any variance that proved to be important. The author, for example, wanted to see the effects of monotony on the worker's ability to work. Thus, the author had to observe the worker's ability to work, for instance trimming excesses on bottles. Whenever they had trimmed a few hundred bottles, they usually tended to take more rest breaks in between the trimming of the bottles.

Since the participant observer often took part in the daily activities of the subjects for an extended period of time, the relationship between them was often much more informal²¹. The primary nature of the relationship provided an opportunity to find out in much more detail what the subject was really like. The author, for example, worked in the factory for about two months. During this period he was able to build up a rapport with the workers. He could ascertain those workers who might be reliable subjects. Familiarity also broke any barrier between the researcher and the workers as compared with a researcher who intended to hand out questionnaires and collect them back after a week.

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Many times a researcher would have difficulty receiving approval for the study. Such study could be conducted by a clandestine participant-observer without the knowledge of anyone in the organisation²². The author had to lie about his background and academic qualifications when he was interviewed by the manager for the quality controller job. In this way nobody would know his true identity and thus helped him do his field study with more ease.

If an important event had occurred during the course of the study that might cause changes in the respondent's answers, the researcher had a chance to compare answers before and after the event. A change of the supervisors might have a negative or positive effect on the workers. A helpful supervisor who was friendly to the workers would make the workers feel comfortable and thus worked harder. An aloof supervisor who time and again gave bad reports about the workers to the management would cause resentment among the workers who wouls then work less hard.

Furthermore, the behaviour took place in its natural environment. Thus the behaviour was acted out in a certain context which could only be understood by observing the behaviour in its natural environment²³. The workers, for instance, were accused of being lazy by the management. However, after working in the factory for two months the author found that the working conditions of the workers led to this kind of accusation. It was rather hot and noisy in the factory and this had to be endured for eight hours everyday.

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The observer was able to study his respondent's every activities over a much longer time period as the observer was himself participating in his respondent's activities²⁴. The observer was studying events as they occured. He was often able to study long enough to observe trends, and to be able to tell the difference between chance occurences and the customary happenings. The authors also experienced the joys and sorrows of the workers. Whenever they got scolded for not completing a certain amount of work, the author could see the heartache they felt written all over their faces. Whenever they got their wages, the author could see their happiness. As he was also a participant in the activities, he also could feel how tough the work was and how satisfying it was to receive the wage. The observer also could determine whether the workers were always late or early for their work as compared to any researcher who just visited a factory to pass out his questionnaire and later collected them the following week.

As with other methods of data collection, participant observation also had its disadvantages and problems. There was always a danger that the friendship between the participant-observer and his subjects might damage the participant-observer's objectivity. The author found that he tended to adopt the workers' prejudices and biases after working in the factory for some time. He, for instance, began to feel resentment towards the manager which should not happen if he intended to maintain his objectivity. In a natural environment the researcher often had little control over extraneous variables that might affect the data²⁵. For instance, the low wage earned by the workers might be due to the weakness of the trade union. However, a third variable might be causing the association between the first two variables, wage and effectiveness of the trade union. The third variable is a more basic variable, which in this case might be the workers' academic qualifications and other variables.

Measurement in observational studies generally took the form of the observer's subjective perceptions rather than the quantitative measures often used in survey research and experimentation²⁶. The observer was more likely simply to observe and record events as they occured rather than specifying in advance a characteristic (for example, prejudice) and preparing a scale to measure it. Thus, at the termination of the study he would have records showing, for example, how a manager interacted with the workers, rather than a score for the person on a prejudice scale. Quantification of observational data was usually limited to frequencies and percentages.

Observation tended to yield massive amounts of data which were often difficult to code or categories in any systematic fashion²⁷. A researcher might be faced perhaps by hundreds of transcript pages telling in minute detail what happened day after day, but no easy way to synthesize the data sufficiently to reach conclu-

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sions pertinent to the hypotheses. The author also experienced this problem whereby he recorded any significant events for the day and had difficulty categorizing the data later. This was because he had to record any significant event. almost immediately and quickly so that the workers would not see him taking down his field study notes.

Observational researchers tended to be monquantitative types who were seeking a more emotional and humanistic sort of data and a more humanistic relationship with the subjects²⁸. This would call for gaining acceptance by the workers on a more personal level. As in the case of the author, he managed to achieve this aim by helping the workers and talking with them whenever possible. He also used various titles of respect when addressing the older workers such as "Kak". In this way he was able to relate with the workers on a more emotional and humanistic level and not just on a researcher - subject kind of relationship. Many times observers were more interested in subjective analyses of emotion, for instance, "the worker was terribly angry with the manager". Many researchers felt that instead of reducing human emotions to numbers that could be fed into a computers, it was preferable to observe the person's emotions, to make a subjective appraisal of them from the standpoint of an interested and concerned human being and to record such data in writing. Thus the final data would be in quotes and recollections. Thus, the author had lots of quotes such as "mengapa lambat sangat ni!" and "Hutang lebih dari gaji" and recollections such as "a worker did not want to help to sweep the floor as it was his rest hour".

Another problem with the participant observation method was that observational studies were generally conducted in depth, with data that were often subjective and difficult to quantify and hence the sample size were generally small²⁹. This kind of studies require that they be conducted over a much longer period of time. Building up a rapport with the workers usually took about two weeks. This again could be limited to only a couple of workers. In this way, the relationship would be more closer rather than superficial. This also happened to the author who managed to build a close rapport with only a couple of the workers. He knew the other workers only superficially.

Observations done by different observers, which were often very subjective were not readily comparable and further complicated the problems of reliability³⁰. Man as data or information processing beings perceived different behaviours or events as important enough to be recorded. This problem was also faced by the author and his fieldwork partner, who working in the same factory during the same period of time, recorded events and behaviours which were significant them to. Hence, camparison of field study notes were almost impossible.

The observer also must not be seen taking notes during the course of daily activities, as to do so would arouse suspicion. Thus he must either trust his memory and write his field notes at night or write his field notes in the toilets when nobody was around. This problem was also faced by the author. Time and again he had to go to the toilets to write his field notes.

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The observer was often regarded with suspicion by lowerechelon workers who suspected that he was a spy of the management. On the other hand, if the management somehow got to know the observer's true identity, he might be suspected of being a government spy³¹. Thus as far as possible, the author tried not to arouse suspicion by acting in a conspicuous manner. He had to merge with the natural surrounding, that is, talking their lingo and behaving like them.

The observational method was less reliable in studying sensitive issues, for instance prejudice against other races, especially if the researcher was of the other race³². In these cases, studying secondary accounts about the issue would be more reliable. This is because the workers would refuse to state their true views and opinions if questioned by a researcher who was of the other race.

The author did not reveal his true identity because:-

(a) He did not want any reactivity influence to jeopardize his field study, that is the workers might act according to what the researcher wanted to see rather than acting naturally. He wanted to see the workers' natural behaviour so that he would be able to compare his observations with the answers from the questionnaire. (i.e. when his identity would have been revealed). Furthermore, certain information are more readily obtained in an informal conversation than from a rigidly constructed questionnaire. In addition to this, it appeared that the questionnaire gave the workers an examination - like phobia.

- (b) So that the management would not terminate his employment as the management might misconstrue his field study as being detrimental to their interest.
- (c) He was able to get his job as any other workers, that is going through interviews. In this way, he was readily accepted by the workers (rather than if he had got the job with the help of one of the management staff).

(ii) Questionnaires and interviews/survey interview and informal interviews

A survey interview could be defined as a conversation between interviewer and respondent with the purpose of eliciting certain information from the respondent. This might appear a straightforward matter, with the respondent just giving straight answers to the questions asked of him. The attainment of a successful interview, however, requires three minimum conditions. First, there is the accessibility of the required information to the respondent. The second condition is that of cognition or understanding by the respondent of what is required of him. The third requirement is motivation on the part of the respondent to answer the questions accurately³³.

The difficulty of finding the respondents depends on the sampling method. In the case of the author, he used the quota sampling method. This sampling method gave the interviewer the freedom to select his respondents, though his choice was limited by the quota. The author was asked to interview about fifty However, after encountering problems, he could only respondents. interview a small number of respondents. The author's interview sample were mostly from the author's department (that is the Blow Moulding Department). After revealing his identity to the workers the author then asked whether they were interested in being interviewed. He firstly thought he would be able to interview them during the lunch break but this was found to be not possible due to long time taken to conduct an interview. Thus, he resorted to taking down their addresses so that he could go and find them after working hours or on weekends.

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The author used two types of interviews. These were the formal interview and the informal interview. The formal interview was used when the author had to question the workers according to the questions in the questionnaire. However, during the course of the work in the factory, the author interacted with the workers. In this case, whenever he wanted to probe and obtain information about some topics, he used the informal interview. The conversational or casual interview was frequently used in all the encounters. In this way, the author was able to have casual talks with the workers on an absolutely equal footing and in friendly intercourse. He was able to elicit more spontaneous and in-depth answers in this way.

Interviewers could probe for more specific answers and could repeat a question when the response indicated that the respondent misunderstood³⁴. The interview situation made it possible for the interviewer to decide what questions were appropriate. The author in one instance questioned a trade union factory representative about the trade union. In the beginning she was not interested in talking about the trade union. However, after rephrasing the questions, the authors was able to obtain more information about the trade union. Furthermore, persons who were unable to read and write could still answer questions in an interview, and others who were unwilling to expend their energy to write out their answers might be glad to talk.

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The interviewer was present to observe nonverbal behaviour and to assess the validity of the respondents' answers. For instance, when the author asked a worker whether he liked his job, he answered "yes" but with a bored look on his face. Nonverbal behaviour could also indicate the degree of feelings for or against a certain topic or object. When questioned whether they could get along with their supervisors, most workers answered "no". However, some showed more resentment than others. This could be detected from the tone of their voices. This would confirm or reject the sincerity of their answers.

The interviewer could record spontaneous answers³⁵. Spontaneous answers might be more informative and less normative than answers which the respondent had time to think. The author, for example, discovered that some workers liked the managers for showing his concern at times. However, if they had been able to talk to their fellow workers or thought about it, their answers might have been negative.

The respondent was unable to "cheat" by receiving prompting or answers from others³⁶. The interviewer could ensure that all of the questions were answered. For instance, just because every other worker said the work was boring, the respondent answered that the work was boring. The interviewer could record the exact time, date and place of the interview.

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The interviewer could also question a respondent appropriately with a questionnaire which was full of instructions³⁶. In this way the respondent would not feel inadequate as compared to the situation when the respondent was asked to answer the questionnaire full of instructions on his own. This was especially so if the respondents were not highly educated such as the general factory workers.

However, the intervier studies also had disadvantages and r problems.

Interviews were often lengthy and might require the interviewer to travel miles³⁷. This kind of study was extremely costly as the researcher had to travel miles to find the respondents. Furthermore, the respondents lived far apart and in squatter areas which had no systematic address arrangement. The author had respondents living in small kampungs in the Klang area. He also had a couple of respondents from the squatter areas around Petaling Jaya. It was very expensive to go to these places especially if one did not know the area very well and had to use the taxi. According to some workers, the people of the squatter area also might be hostile especially if the interviewer was of another race.

The interviewer also must arrange the interview for times when the respondent was home; sometimes an interviewer could complete only one or a few interviews each day. This was especially so if the questionnaire was long and the interviewer had to motivate the respondents to answer. The author also experienced this problem when he interviewed the workers who seemed disinterested. Through experience, the author found that he took an average of one hour to complete an interview.

It was also not uncommon for an interviewer to return to an address three or more times before he could find the respondent at home³⁸. As the author found out that the respondent might have gone to work, gone out for some other matters or any other reasons. It must be emphasised that the interviewer was actually intruding into the respondent's privacy. Thus at times the author found his respondents sleeping when he went to their homes as they were working the night shift that day.

The interviewer could also cause error. He might misunderstand the respondent's answer, might understand it but made a clerical error in recording it or might simply record an answer even when the respondent failed to answer³⁹. This might be due to the interviewer's biases. It has been shown repeatedly that a person's reasoning ability was adversely affected by such factors as fatigue, stress, illness, heat and density⁴⁰. The respondents in these cases would give half-hearted answers. Thus, during lunch breaks when most of the workers were feeling tired and needed a break, it was not advisable to ask for an interview. The author also felt tired during the break as he also worked. Thus, it would have been difficult to motivate the workers to answer. Furthermore, their answers would have been half-hearted or with the intention of completing the interview as fast as possible.

In addition, the respondents answers could be affected by his reaction to the interviewer's race, social class, sex, dress and physical appearance or accent⁴¹. In the author's case, most of his respondents were Malays. Thus, as the author was not a Malay, he had trouble asking about racial relationship. They always tried to give the ideal answers and not their true feelings.

The interviewer also posed a potential threat to the respondent, particularly if their information was incriminating, embarassing, or otherwise sensitive about a certain party and this party somehow got hold of the information. Thus, the author found some of the respondents were apprehensive about giving an interview because of this reason. The author had to reassure them about the confidentiality of their information. Moreover, building up a rapport with them beforehand helped the author in securing interviews.

On the whole, the participant observation and conversational interview yielded the bulk of the data. These two data collection methods were flexible and adaptable to the situation and different respondents.

Notes (Chapter 1)

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CHAPTER TWO

EMPLOYMENT AND WORKING CONDITIONS

This chapter will discuss the various aspects of the factory. The author will just give the rough location of the factory. He will also describe the plan of the compound of the factory and the factory building itself to give a picture and idea of the factory. The background of the factory he shall touch on will be the history and capital, the technology, production process and working conditions. The history and capitalization will give a picture of the profitability of the factory while the technology and production process will show the different stages in the production of the various products, i.e. from the raw material stage to the making of the final product and then to the packing stage. In the working conditions subsection, the various benefits of the workers and the physical working conditions will be described. Lastly, the author will attempt to compare the minimum legal conditions of employees and working conditions in the factory.

(a) The Company And The Factory

(i) Location

This factory was located in Jalan 223, Petaling Jaya, Selangor. This was an industrial area where various kinds of industries could be found, for instance sweet-making, electrical appliances and the assembling of trucks. It was about sixteen miles from the Kuala Lumpur city centre.


The Location of the factory (not to scale)





Gate

Plan of the production building

Gate



(ii) Size

There were three buildings and a canteen in the compound of the factory. To the extreme left was the administrative block where all the directors' offices and the personnel department were situated. The building in the centre was the store where all the plastic raw materials and some finished products, such as pails, racks and basins were kept. The building to the extreme right was the place where all the production and packing of products were done. The canteen was just in front of this building. The total area covered by this factory was about 6,000 square metres.

This company had sister companies which dealt in tobacco and toothbrush manufacture. The total worker population of this company was about six hundred and fifty. Most of the general production workers were Malays while the Indians made up only a small percentage. The Chinese, on the other hand, were usually employed as drivers, supervisors and clerks, though there were some Chinese general production workers. Most of the workers appeared to be quite young while the supervisors were usually much older.

(iii) History and Capital

The company was established about sixteen years ago by the present General Manager. This company had three previous locations before moving to the present site. The company was a wholly owned family business concern and all its managerial posts were held by family members. Only the technical manager was not a family member. He had, however, been with the firm for the last fifteeen years.

The latest balance sheet of the company lodged with the Registrar of companies was dated 31st December 1977. This documented the capital standing and profitability of the enterprise.

Table 2.1

The Balance Sheet Of The Company Studied

	Ş	ş	\$	1976 \$
Employment of capital				
FIXED ASSETS			5,758,256	4,828,944
Freehold land and building	-			
Leasehold land				
Factory building and godown	15			
Electrical installations				
Air conditioners				
Furniture, fixture and fitt	tings			
Plant machinery and equipme	ent	- 4 -		
Office equipment				
Motor vehicle				
Unquoted investment-at cost	t		50,000	50,000
CURRENT ASSETS				
Stocks and work in progress	s 1,478964			2,599,124
Goods in transit	-			166,178
Trade debtors	2,061,631			1,649,537
Other debtors, deposits) and prepayments)	175,524			557,166
Cash at banks	5,188			3,976
Cash in hand) (including post-dated)	8,528		**	51,860
cneques)	-			
		3,729,835		5,027,841

	Ş	Ş	ş	1976 Ş
LESS: CURRENT LIABILITIES				
Trade creditors and bills payable) 1,561,061)		·	2,266,331
Other creditors and accrued charges) 338,998			216,137
Loans - secured (banks and MIDF) 242,524			164,138
- unsecured	100,000			100,000
Interest payable	-			1,921
Provision for taxation	80,000			160,000
Bank overdraft	1,094,256			1,507,264
6		3,416,839		4,415,791
NET CURRENT ASSETS			312,996	612,050
			6,121,252	5,490,994

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	Ş	Ş
CAPITAL EMPLOYED		
SHARE CAPITAL		
Authorised: 5,000,000 ordinary shares of \$1/- each	5,000,000	5,000,000
<pre>Issued: 2,880,600 ordinary shares of \$1/- each) fully paid)</pre>	2,880,600	2,880,600
CAPITAL RESERVE	229,001	229,001
UNAPPROPRIATED PROFIT	818,179	746,016
	3,927,780	3,855,617
LONG TERM LIABILITY		
Loan	376,854	170,378
AMOUNT OWING TO HOLDING COMPANY	1,418,931	1,111,499
AMOUNT OWING TO FELLOW SUBSIDIARY	397,687	353,500
	6,121,252	5,490,994

31-12-1977	Ş	1976
PROFIT BEFORE TAXATION	288,533	232,629
PROFIT AFTER TAXATION	158,533	122,629
PROFIT AVAILABLE FOR APPROPRIATION	904,597	832,434
UNAPPROPRIATED PROFIT CARRIED FORWARD	818,179	746,016
		A -

Source: Malaysia, Registrar of Companies, Balance Sheet (December 1977)

As of 14th December 1979, the nominal capital share had been increased from 5,000,000 to 10,000,000. By 28th August 1981, 7,000,000 of these shares had been taken up by eight parties, the majority of them being the directors of the company. No shares were allocated to the workers. Thus, this might explain the indifferent attitude of the workers toward the company.

The company, on the whole, was making a profit. Profit before taxation in 1977 was \$288,533 while profit before taxation in 1976 was \$232,629. Thus, there was a net profit of \$55,904 for the years 1976 to 1977.

(iv) Technology and Production Process

Most of the machines in the factory were of Japanese origin. Besides Japanese machines, there were also machines of European and Taiwanese origin. All the machines were in a coordinated arrangement and were neatly fitted into an intricate process of production with each firmly anchored, within the building. These machines were powered by electrical energy. On the whole, the company was keeping pace with the technological advances.

The different sections of the factory had a couple of machines each.

Table 2.2

The Number Of Machines In Each Section Are Shown Below

Se	ctions (type)	Number of Machines
(1)	Injection mounding	30
(2)	Blown film	6
(3)	Silk screen	4
(4)	Bag printing	2
(5)	Bag cutting	3
(6)	Blow moulding	7

In the Blow moulding section, where the author worked, most of the machines were also of Japanese origin. There was one Taiwanese designed machine which was also the latest addition to this section. Among the machines found in this section were:

(a)	Bekum	A)
(b)	Fisher	A)
(c)	Fisher	В))
(d)	Fisher	С) Japanese origin
(e)	Fisher	D)
(f)	Fisher	E)
(g)	Teng Chin	-	Taiwanese origin

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Though there were at least two machine maintenance crews at hand on each shift, the machines, especially Fischer D, often broke down and needed time consuming repairs. These machine maintenance crews took more than two weeks to repair this particular machine. In the meantime, production of a certain type of bottle was held up.

In the production process, a number of stages were encountered before the desired product could be finally packed and shipped out. Each section in the factory was a self-contained production unit. For instance, the products manufactured in the injection moulding section would be checked and packed in its own section. There was no central checking or packing section. This may be due to the lack of space and hence specialisation was limited. Briefly, the stages of production in the different sections are as follows:

(a) Injection Moulding

The plastic raw material was obtained from the store. The raw material was then put into the machines.

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Figure 2.4

Injection Moulding Machine

Injection Moulding





Mould closes and molten plastic material is injected into the shape of the mould. The water cools down the molten plastic material.

Stage 2:

Mould opens and the product is taken out from the mould. Undesired excesses (plastic material) are cut away.

Once the product was manufactured, a worker took the product out from the machine. He then sprayed a certain substance on to the mould. Another worker would clean the product of any excesses and then make a fast inspection of the product. Those products deemed acceptable were stacked into a push cart. The worker also sticked a labels on the acceptable product. Those rejected products were put into another pust cart. Another worker would then come round collecting all the acceptable products. These products were then sent to a place where all the products were checked thoroughly before they were packed and stored in the store house. The lorries or vans would later come to deliver the products to their respective destinations. Those rejected products were carted away to the crunching machine where the products were put into the machine to be broken down into fine pieces. The fine pieces were later used as second grade raw material.

(b) Blown Film

The raw materials were put into a centrifugal kind of machine. After a certain amount of time, the raw materials were put into the machines. The machine crews would continuously checked the thickness of the plastic sheets. The plastic sheets would slowly roll into a bundle. Once the desired length of plastic sheet had been obtained, the bundles of plastic sheet were weighed and then sent for packing.

(c) Silk Screen

All those products that needed to be silk screened were carted from their respective sections (for example, cups from the injection moulding section or solution containers from the blow moulding section) to this section. The products were firstly checked to see whether the products could be silk screened without causing

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damage to the products or smearing the paint all over the products. Then the products would be heated by putting the products into a machine which had a flame to heat the products. In the meantime, the silk screens were being applied paint and tested on a couple of products. Once the desired amount of paint and silk screen print appeared, the silk screening would commenced. There was always a worker at hand to add paint whenever the silk screen dried up and checked the printed products. The products were then packed and sent out for shipment.

On the whole, the work were rather tedious in all the sections. The worker had to keep up with the machines. For instance, when heating the containers in the silk screen section, the worker had to work as fast as the machine in putting the products into the machine and taking the products out when they had been heated. One worker told the author "penat betul kerja diri. Cepat pula mesin". All the machine crews in the injection moulding and blown film sections had to stand while doing their jobs. Besides these workers, all those who had to pack the bags in the bag making section, and those who had to heat the containers in the silk screen section also had to stand. However, most of the workers knew when to sit to relax themselves. This usually happened when the products were being moulded in the machines or the plastic sheets were of a desired thickness (i.e. immediately after checking the thickness, the

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workers would sit for some time before doing another check). Most of the workers who had to do the packing in the injection moulding section and those who had to man the silk screen machines sat as this was more practical for their kind of job. The factory was extremely noisy and stuffy especially during the afternoons. This made the workers sleepy and lethargic.

In the Blow moulding section, the stages of the production process were as follows:



Chart 2.1 The Stages of the Blow Moulding Production Process The mechanics and the quality checkers would only be involved in the production process when the machines broke down and when the quality of the products were checked randomly (i.e. to maintain the quality of the products.)

The Blow moulding production process would be dealt in more detail as the author was working in this section and had the chance to observe the details of the production process. The details of process were as follows:

(1) The mixing of the raw materials

The raw materials were in a powdery form. The different types of raw materials were sent from the main store by a forklift. The workers in charge of raw materials would then cart the sacks of raw materials into a small store adjoining the Blow moulding section. The different types of raw materials were then weighed for the desired weights before they were mixed in the correct proportions by two workers in the small store.Materials which had been mixed in the correct proportions were inserted into the machines.

Most of the tasks in this stage were carried out manually, except for the use of the forklift to carry the sacks of raw materials to the blow moulding section and the utilization of a machine to mix the raw materials thoroughly. The workers had to endure a hot, dusty and noisy environment for the duration of their work. They also had to move around a lot, i.e. to cart the sacks of raw materials, to weigh the raw materials and to bring the mixture of raw materials to the machines. These workers often took short rests after inserting the raw materials into the machines. They did not seem to like or dislike the job. They just did their jobs as a matter of routine.

(2) The production of containers (products)

The machine operators had to cut and tear away the excesses on the products manufactured. This must be done when the products

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Figure 2.5

Blow Moulding Machine





Stage I: Molten plastic material is allowed to flow down until the desired amount -

Stage 2:

Mould closes and presses the molten plastic material into the mould's shape. Air is then blown in until the desired thickness of the bottle is acquired.

Stage 3:

Air tube is pulled up and mould opens. The product (bottle) drops into a basket. The machine operator then cuts away the excesses and puts the bottles into boxes. were still hot, hence most machine operators wore gloves (which were supplied by the company) and each of them had a sharp penknife. The excesses and rejected products were thrown into a box. These unwanted items were later recycled into second grade raw material. The products were given a quick check by the machine operators and then packed into boxes. Another worker would come to check the number of of containers (products) produced. Once the required number of containers (products) had been produced, the production of that particular container (product) would be stopped and a new mould would be fitted into the machine.

Most of the tasks in this stage were shared by man and machine. The machine operators sat throughout the duration of their work and had to continuously keep up with the machines, which produced a container (product) once every two minutes. The machine operators had to endure a hot and noisy atmosphere as they were sitting beside the machines.

(3) Stacking boxes of products and checking of products

After the products had been packed into the boxes by the machine operators, the general store workers would stack the boxes up to a height of about twelve feet. The boxes were arranged in such a way that a workers could stand on top of the boxes without the boxes toppling over. Another worker would be down below to throw up the boxes to the worker standing on the stacks of boxes. Passing boxes to the worker above required a certain amount of physical strength while standing on top of the boxes required a sense of balance and courage. This stacking of boxes was only done though occassionally. This kind of job was definitely dangerous there had been no accidents so far.

The checking and trimming of bottles were done by a couple of female general workers. The checking done this time was done thoroughly. The workers checked for foreign matter contamination and other undesirable conditions. Those rejected products were then sent to the crunching machine to be recycled. The checking, though done thoroughly, were done fast. After the check had been done, other workers would trim away all the rough edges on the bottles. This was finely done using a sharp penknife. All trimmed products or bottles were packed into boxes.

This kind of job was extremely tedious and monotonous. A worker had to check and trim about three hundred to four hundred bottles in about two hours. After about half an hour, a worker usually got tired. They usually took short breaks. To overcome boredom, the workers talked with their friends. However, the management did not approved such behaviour. As one worker aptly answered, "Tentu saja bosan" when the author asked her whether her type of job was boring. However, a sizeable number of workers also said their type of work was not boring as they had many friends. During the afternoons, the heat made most workers lethargic. A couple of workers also fell asleep during this time of day. In addition to the heat, there was a constant droning noise of the machines. Besides talking, workers also resorted to running to the canteen to buy peanuts, fruits and other foodstuff. Most of the workers would then take a quick break to relax, i.e. to eat and talk.

(4) Silk screen printing and labelling

The trimmed bottles and containers were then either sent for silk screen printing or labelling.

There was only one labelling machine that was turned manually. Glue was applied to the labels by this machine. These labels were then glued on to the bottles manually by two workers. The bottles would then be passed on to another two workers who would then wipe the label of any excess glue with pieces of cloth soaked in kerosene. These bottles were then put into a big box.

The workers in this labelling section had a certain quota to complete each day and were paid accordingly. The task became tedious after some time. However, this was overcome by talking with their friends. Previously, the workers had to stand while working but this was impractical. Thus, the workers complained to the factory manager about this. The manager then allowed them to sit while working. The complaints made could be attributed to the fact that one of the workers in this section was better qualified academically. She had an MCE qualification. Workers here also had to endure the hot and noisy conditions during the duration of their work, i.e. eight hours daily.

(5) Packing of the products

The printed cardboard sheets to be made into boxes were sent from the respective customers. The cardboard sheets were then glued together into boxes. This task was done manually. After the boxes had been made, they were stacked up near the packing section.

A required number of bottles or containers were then put into the right boxes. For instance, 120ml Colgate shampoo bottles with the labels P300 printed on them and of the Singapore type were packed into boxes printed with P300 and Singapore. The bottles were put into the boxes manually and were not in any neat arrangement. These tasks could be done by any general worker. The general workers were unskilled and thus there was no specialised workers who only trimmed or who only packed bottles.

The workers usually sat when doing this packing task. It also got monotonous after some time. However, this job could be done quickly. As with the trimming, the packing of bottles was also labour-intensive. As with the other tasks in the factory, the workers here also had to endure a hot and noisy environment.

The machine fitters (mechanics) and the quality checkers intervened in the production process whenever a machine broke down or when the quality of the products had to be checked. Their tasks are as follows:

(i) The machine fitters or mechanics

The job of these mechanics were to check the dials on the machines, to fit a new mould whenever it was required and to make minor repairs on the machines. The mechanics controlled some knobs and buttons on the machines whenever the correct amount of air was not blown in (as in the Blow moulding machines) or when the products manufactured were too heavy or too light or had foreign matters (i.e. black specks or trapped air bubbles). The mechanics also had to grease and change the moulds.

Usually it took quite some time for a desired kind of bottle or product to be produced when a new mould had been fixed. The temperature, the air blown in, the amount of molten plastic that came out from the funnel and other essentials conditions had to be properly regulated and monitored.

Whenever the machines were left idle for a day, the molten plastic material in the machines would hardened and cause foreign matters to be present in the bottles produced. Thus, every Monday it took about three to four hours to clean the machines before the machines could start operations again.

All these had effects on the efficiency of the factory. During the period when machines were being cleaned, the machine operators were idle. They either glued boxes, helped other workers trimmed bottles or just idled their time away. The mechanics, as a whole, had a more interesting job. They had deal with the intricacies of the machines. They had to plan and think out of ways to repair the machines when these machines broke down. Their on-the-job training were longer. They were also better paid. As with other workers, they had to endure the heat and noise in the factory. Their job was more messy as they had to grease the moulds with their hands or repaired machines and so had oil all over their clothes. Due to the nature of their job, they were always on the move.

(ii) The quality checker

The quality chekcer would check the products manufactured every alternate hour. He would take products from the boxes and those which had just been produced by machines. He would check the appearance of the bottles to see whether there were any foreign matter or trapped air bottles. The surface of the bottles also ought to be smooth.

The bottles were weighed using a weighing balance. If the bottles were too heavy or too light, the quality control supervisor or the mechanics would be told. The volume of the bottles was also measured with a measuring cylinder. Later the drop test was carried out. This was to test the strength of the bottles. Water was first poured into the bottles and then the bottles were dropped from a height of about five feet. If the bottles cracked, the mechanics or the quality control supervisor would be informed. All these checks were done at random. Thus, if most of the bottles in the test sample had a flaw, for instance, too heavy, then all the bottles produced during that period of time would be checked.

As with other workers, the quality checker also had to endure the heat and the noise. However, the quality checker had more freedom of movement.

On the whole, technological advance or mechanization in the factory had certain general effects on the workers. These effects were:

- (a) The reduction of the importance of the human element in production as the workers had to keep up with the pact set by the machines. The products were made by the machines and the workers were on hand only to collect, check and pack the products into the boxes.
- (b) The routinization of the workers' roles. The workers had to check and trim bottle after bottle throughout the day. After a while, the job became a matter of routine to most workers. This was also true for the other tasks in the production process.

(c) The creation of certain physical conditions of the environment such as spatial separation, noise and heat. The machine operators, for example, had to remain at his place of work throughout the course of his work. This did not allow him to mix with other workers. The droning noise of the machines was present throughout the day. However, after working in the factory for about two weeks, the author found that the noise did not bother him as he was getting immune to the noise. The heat was another matter altogether. It was unbearable during the afternoons. The stacks of boxes also did not help in the circulation of air in the factory building. They acted as barriers to the air currents and in the process caused the air not to circulate but remained stagnant.

(v) The working conditions (benefits)

Generally, there are two approaches to industrial relations. The first approach was when workers worked in factory buildings which had piped music and was air-conditioned. The comfortable situation, it was hoped, would increase productivity. The second approach was when the factory buildings was not air-conditioned and was stuffy. For instance, air-conditioners were installed only in the offices (i.e. in the factory building and administrative block) and not in the factory building where work was done. Thus the workers had to endure a hot and noisy atmosphere for eights hours a day.

In a capitalist society, the aim of an industrial organization was production and profit making at all times. Due to the drive for profits, the company tried to find ways and means to increase efficiency. In this company this drive for greater efficiency led to a more rigid system of authority, greater specialisation and control by rule. Most of means for greater efficiency were in the disincentive form whereby workers adhered to rules to avoid punishment, for instance deduction from wages for late comers. Hence workers were not motivated but rather threatened to do their work.

The so-called "incentive allowance" was in actual fact a disincentive. This allowance scheme was to discourage workers from coming to work late. This factory had a punch card system whereby each time a worker entered or left the compound of the factory, the worker's card was punched showing the time of arrival or departure. According to this allowance scheme, if a worker was late for a certain period, for example:-

(a) Less than 5 minutes, \$1.00 would be deducted from the worker's pay;

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- (b) More than 5 minutes, \$5.00 would be deducted from the worker's pay;
- (c) If the worker did not come to work at all, \$10.00 would be deducted from the worker's pay.

The \$10.00 deduction was illegal as this amount was more than the daily wage of a worker, i.e. about \$6.00 to \$7.00 a day.

This allowance scheme, however, did manage to overcome the problem of absenteeism and unpunctuality among the workers. Most of them were at their place of work five minutes before work started. Due to the fact that this scheme was actually a disincentive and productivity was controlled by the machines, the scheme did not motivate workers to work harder. Workers did not like this allowance scheme but obeyed this rule so as to minimise deductions from their meagre wages.

Among the incentives and benefits accorded to the workers by this company were:

(a) Shift allowance

If a worker took a greater number of shifts, the worker would get more shift allowance and transport allowance.

The shift hours were: (i) 7.00 a.m. - 3.00 p.m. (ii) 3.00 p.m. - 11.00 p.m. (iii) 11.00 p.m. - 7.00 a.m. Non-shift workers worked from 8.00 a.m. - 5.00 p.m. The shift hours for workers who took more than one shift changed alternately every week. Thus if a worker took the 7.00 a.m. - 3.00 p.m. and the 3.00 p.m. - 11.00 p.m., his shift hours in week x would be 7.00 a.m. to 3.00 p.m. and week y would be 3.00 p.m. to 11.00 p.m. and so on.

Table showing the amount of shift allowance and transport allowance workers get in relation to the number of shifts they take:-

Table 2.3

Shift allowance, transport allowance and shifts taken

Total number of taken up	Shift allowance (monthly)	Transport allowance (monthly)	
l shift	\$1.00	\$35.00	
2 shift	\$1.50	\$40.00	
3 shift	\$2.00	\$45.00	

Non-shift workers were placed in the one shift allowance category.

Most workers who opted for shift work usually took more than one shift. Newly employed workers were usually encouraged to do shift work. However workers in certain sections could not do shift work, for instance, workers in the silk screen section as this work required constant supervision by the experienced supervisor in this section. Supervisors worked from 8.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. only.

Some workers were glad to do shift work, especially the 3.00 p.m. to 11.00 p.m. and the 11.00 p.m. to 7.00 a.m. shifts as after 5.00 p.m. all the supervisors and managers go home. Thus, the workers could idle their time away talking or sleeping. However, once in a while the supervisors would come to make surprise checks on the workers. One worker told the author that it was "Best buat kerja shift, boleh tidur". The machine operators usually slept on the boxes while the machines continually produced the bottles. After an hour or so, they would wake up to cut away the excesses from the accumulated bottles and then continue his sleep. If, for instance, they worked the 11.00 p.m. to 7.00 a.m. shift, they would work until about 2.00 a.m. and then slept until about 6.00 a.m. Thus, workers did shift work because shift work allowed workers greater freedom and relaxation. Hence, in a way, most shift workers liked shift work and the benefits that came together with it. Productivity was determined by the machines and not the workers.

(b) Paid vacation

Eighty-eight good workers were given a paid vocation to Singapore at the end of the previous year. "Good workers" were considered to be workers who did not absent themselves from work throughout the year and performed their work satisfactorily. This would be judged by the supervisors. They went to Singapore for four days and each of them were given \$10.00 pocket money for the duration of the vacation.

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However, the fact that only eighty-eighty workers out of a population of about 650 workers were given this reward did not help to motivate other workers to work harder. Most workers also did not seem to know that this reward existed. thus, this benefit did not in any way helped to increase productivity.

(c) Overtime

None of the workers were forced to do overtime. They did it on their own free will to supplement their meagre basic salary. One worker told the author that it was "terpaksa buat overtime sebab tidak cukup (gaji)". However, none of the workers knew how the overtime was calculated. The impression the author got was that the workers just took whatever overtime allowance given to them. Through experience they knew only a rough amount of overtime allowance to be obtained for a certain number of hours of overtime work done.

Overtime workers took a shorter lunch break, i.e. about forty five minutes (12.15 p.m. to 1.00 p.m.) as compared to the usual one hour lunch break (12.15 p.m. to 1.15 p.m.). Usually they worked until about 7.00 p.m. in the evening. However, only checkers (i.e. general workers who checked the finished products), the packers and the trimmers could do overtime. Whenever there was extra work to be done (i.e. a lot of work to be done in a short time), the workers were asked to do overtime. Due to the continuous nature of their work, the machine operators did not have overtime. Machine operators were changed after every shift.

(d) Public holidays and rest days

All workers, whether temporary or permanent, were entitled to 10 gazetted public holidays with pay in a calendar year, that is public holidays gazetted by the Federal Government and the State Government concerned.¹ Sunday was designated as the rest day in each week. During the rest days, workers were not paid. Thus workers in this factory were daily rated and were paid their wages fortnightly.

Most workers did not work on paid public holidays unless compelled to work. However, all work on paid public holidays or rest days were planned first, i.e. the supervisors concerned had to inform the managers concerned. Workers were paid public holidays or rest days (i.e. Sundays). However, most of them preferred these days off. In addition to this, not much work was needed to be done on these holidays and the company preferred to pay workers for work done on a normal working day rather than to pay them twice that amount for work done on these holidays. The author came across a manager questioning a supervisor thoroughly about the work he had done on a Sunday. The manager counter checked the supervisor's and his workers' punch cards a couple of time 5.

Workers who did shift work, worked their usual shift hours on Saturdays and had the Sundays free. Thus, those who worked on the 11.00 p.m. to 7.00 a.m. shift on Saturday, would stop work at 7.00 a.m. on Sunday. No work was then done until 7.00 a.m. on Monday. It must be added also that shift workers had a 45 minute break which they could take at any time during the duration of their work.

The workers were given a week's holidays for the Chinese New Year and Hari Raya Puasa festivals. Most workers seemed to like the rest days (i.e. Sundays) as on these days they could relax and break the boredom and monotory of factory work. They seemed eager to have the rest day. This was also apparent from the fact that the union was trying to have Saturday declared as a half working day. In a way the rest day made the workers come back on Mondays fresh and more alert.

(e) Annual leave

Only confirmed workers (i.e. about 50% of the workforce) were entitled to paid annual leave. "Confirmed workers" were workers who had been employed with the company for at least 12 continuous months. The annual leave entitlement were as follows:²

- On completion of 1 to 3 years service 10 working days for every period of 12 months;
- (2) On completion of 3 5 years service 12 working days for every period of 12 months;
- (3) On completion of 5 or more years service 16 working days for every period of 12 months.

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During the election day which was not a public holiday, the workers, whether temporary or permanent, were only granted unpaid leave. (i.e. those who wanted to go outstation to vote). Those workers who were registered as voters in constituencies in Federal Territoy and Selangor areas were given a substantial number of hours off to vote. Some workers, however, did not bother to vote as one of them commented, "Kalau undi pun gaji tidak akan lebih".

As most workers were temporary workers, they did not appear bothered about the annual leave. Even amongst the permanent workers, not many of them took leave. In his section, the author did not know of any permanent worker who took leave during the duration of his field work. It seemed rather difficult for workers to get leave as the manager would question them on the reasons for taking of leave. This was because the factory had a shortage of workers and every worker was necessary.

(f) Medical benefits

The workers made full use of the free medical benefits and facilities given by the Company. Those workers who were sick on working days would have to report to work first and then got permission from the manager to see the Company doctor. Transport to the clinics was not provided by the Company and workers had to find their own means of transport. After being checked by the doctor, the worker would then return to the factory to see the manager. If the worker was given medical leave, the days off would be duly recorded and the worker could go home. However, if no medical leave was granted, the worker would have to work. However, the author had observed a worker getting day off with no pay although no medical leave was granted by the Company doctor.

Confirmed or permanent workers were entitled to paid leave but this depended on the seriousness of their illness. Even hospital fees (though not exceeding \$500.00) were given if the worker had to be hospitalised.³

The author saw two cases whereby the workers had injuries sustained during the course of their work. One of them had a deep cut on his finger while working with a machine and in another case a measuring weight fell on a worker's toe. The former was asked to go to a government general hospital for treatment so that he could get his SOCSO benefits. The latter got the day off on the day of the accident and came back a week later with a bandaged swollen toe. However, most workers went to seek treatment from the Company doctor for minor ailments such as cold and cough.

The free medical benefits and facilities helped workers financially. No workers had any complaints about this benefit. In fact some workers took advantage of this free medical treatment to get a day off. This was true of: the younger and unmarried workers. As for the older, married and permanent workers, they were more diligent in their work. Hence, as for productivity, the medical benefits did not motivate ...or increase productivity especially among the younger (usually teenaged) unmarried and temporary workers. In fact, the medical benefits was used to get leave so that they could have a day off to enjoy.

(g) Maternity leave

Whenever a female workers was taken in as a worker, the clerk would ask her whether she was pregnant and this was duly recorded. Only female workers who had been confirmed were entitled to two months paid maternity leave. Pregnant female workers on probation were only granted unpaid leave.

At the time the author was working in the factory, a woman was granted maternity leave with no pay as she was already in her seventh month of pregnancy and had a tough time keeping awake during working hours. She was able to obtain the leave with the help from a supervisor .

Most workers felt happy when the pregnant worker (mentioned above) was granted the leave. They were, however, still not very happy with the management because the leave was granted only after the supervisors pressured the manager to allow the leave to be granted. (i.e. the leave was granted only about three days after the request was made). The behaviour of the management did not in any way help to motivate the workers to work harder.

(h) Bonus

The workers did not know how the bonus was calculated. Most of them knew that they usually got bonus of about one to one and a half months last drawn basic salary at the end of each year. (Exclusive of overtime & allowance of any description). Only permanent workers (i.e. confirmed workers) were granted bonus. The temporary workers did not get any bonus.

(i) Retirement benefits

Male workers retired on or after attaining 55 years of age while female workers retired on or after attaining 50 years of age. Retirement benefits were only given to permanent workers, i.e. workers who had completed at least 5 years' service with the Company.⁴ This benefit was given in a lump sum.

The fact that most workers were teenagers made it difficult to assess whether the retirement benefit had a motivating force for them. Most of them were thinking about looking for better paying jobs rather than to work until their retirement with this Company. Thus, the retirement benefit had little effect on motivation or pruductivity because it was not an immediate benefit.

There was a worker who wanted to continue though he was already of retirement age. In view of the shortage of his type of skill, i.e. silk screening, he was reemployed by the Company on a permanent basis.

(j) Emergency and compassionate leave

This type of paid leave was only granted to permanent workers (in this case, the worker must have been working with the Company for at least 12 continuous months). This type of leave was given in cases of critical illness in immediate family, birth of employee's own child, to attend the funeral of a deceased member in immediate family or for employee's own marriage.⁵

Most workers were for this type of leave as it took their welfare into consideration.

(k) Staff purchase

All workers could buy the Company's products at preferential prices.⁶ These products were such as basins, pails and plate racks. These products could be bought at the administrative building.

As the prices of these household items were much cheaper from the prices of these products sold outside, this helped the workers financially. The workers who usually bought these products were the married ones. This staff purchases were well received by the workers.

All new workers were also given a large plastic water container each on employment. They were charged a dollar each for this container which was essential and Convenient. Anyway the new workers had a choice of whether they wanted this water container or

not.

(1) Bus service (transport)

All shift workers from Klang were taken to and from work by factory buses. The workers had to pay a monthly fare.

This service was well liked by the workers as this solved their transport problems. Furthermore, they would not be late for work. Hence, this helped to motivate the workers as they felt their welfare had been taken care of.

This transport facility was also provided by the management and to combat absenteeism tardiness among the workers.

(m) Sports

There was a sports club for the workers. Most sports equipment were provided by this club such as sepak takraw and badminton. Sepak takraw and badminton courts were also built in the factory compound. This recreational facility helped workers to relax after work and fostered better ties between the supervisors and the workers.

(n) Uniform

Three sets of T-shirts were provided to the workers on confirmation. Most of the workers wore these T-shirts as it was convenient for work. The T-shirts had an advertisement on them.
(b) Comparison Of The Minimum Legal Working Conditions And Conditions In The Factory

The law emphasised the intention that the provisions in the Ordinance (i.e. the Employment Ordinance, 1955, of Malaysia incorporating all amendments up to 1st March 1981) were to be the minimum standards and benefits, and that employers and employees might by agreement improve on these.

(1) Employment of women

The factory employed many female workers. They were from various races and most of them had rural backgrounds. In the author's section alone, almost 80% were female workers. They were engaged in the trimming of bottles, the operating of machines and the labelling of bottles.

The female employees worked in all the three shifts (i.e. 7.00 a.m. to 3.00 p.m., 3.00 p.m. to 11.00 p.m. and 11.00 p.m. to 7.00 a.m.) and the 8.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. one also.

The Minister of Labour has made the following regulations prescribing the conditions under which female employees may work at night, i.e. a female employees employed in 'shift work'⁷ in an 'industrial undertaking'⁸ which operates at least 2 shifts per day.

> A female employee shall not commence work without having had a period of 11 consecutive hours free from work;

ii) May work between 10.00 p.m. and 5.00 a.m.

(Employment (employment of women) (shift workers) Regulations, 1970 P.U. (A) 319/70).

(2) Deduction from wages and payment of wages

The workers in the factory were paid every nineteen days. They were not paid for the nineteen days of work but for two weeks (i.e. 14 days) of work. In this way, the canteen keeper was able to collect any debts from workers who had quitted their jobs. It seemed previously some workers quitted their jobs after pay day without paying their debts to the canteen keeper. Anyway paying workers their wages every nineteen days was well within the boundaries of the law which stated that all wages earned by an employee should be paid at the end of one month's work.

The deductions made in respect of the 'incentive allowance' was not shown on the pay slip. Instead the deductions were made from the transport allowance. For instance, ten dollars were deducted from the author's transport allowance (i.e. \$17.50 a fortnight) as he did not turn up for work the day after the General Election Day. Besides that, other lawful deductions were made such as the deductions for E.P.F. and SOCSO. Whatever deductions made were legal as the total amount of deductions that could be made from the wages of an employee in a month, according to the Employment Ordinance, should not exceed 50% of the wages earned by the workers during that month.⁹

Hence, the deduction made for absenteeism was legal as it was not shown on the pay slip as a deduction but as a cut in the transport allowance.

(3) Hours of work

As regards the hours of work, two types of working hours were in practice in the factory. They were:

(a) The 8.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. working hours.

- (i) 8.00 a.m. to 12.15 p.m. was the prelunch break working hours which totaled 4 1/4 continuous working hours;
- (ii) 12.15 p.m. to 1.15 p.m. was the lunch break. This totaled an hour;
- (iii) 1.15 p.m. to 5.00 p.m. was the post lunch break working hours which totaled 3 3/4 continuous working hours.
- (b) The shift working hours (i.e. 7.00 a.m. to 3.00 p.m., 3.00 p.m. to 11.00 p.m. and 11.00 p.m. to 7.00 a.m.). The shift working hours totaled eight consecutive, that is inclusive of a period or periods of 45 minutes break.

Thus, in terms of working hours the factory studied followed rigidly to the Employment Ordinance.

(c) The General Wage Structure

Wages is all remuneration payable to an employee for work done in respect of his or her contract of service.

The principle of awarding annual increment was based on the satisfactoriness on the employees' work. It was also subjected to the provision that the employee had not reached the maximum of his salary scale with respect to his or her job grade.

In the factory studied, the general wage structure was as the following:

Table 2.4

The General Wage Structure

Grade	Type of Jobs	Salary Scale
A	 Female general worker Office girl 	\$160.00
В	 Office boy Female machine operator Apprentice Silk screen printers Checker 	+ \$14.00 on confimation + \$14.00 annual increment
С	 Male machine operator Material colour mixer Printers III 	\$170.00 + \$15.00 on confirmation
D	 Blown film machine operator Printers II Bag packing captain 	+ \$15.00 annual increment
Е	 Printers I Block makers Pigment mixer Artist II Drivers (all types) 	\$180.00 (exclusive of increment on confirmation or annual increment)
F	 Section leaders Mechanis fitters II Artist I Electrician II 	\$190.00 (exclusive of increment on confirmation and annual increment)
G	 Senior artist Electrician I Mechanic fitter I Chargeman 	\$200.00 (exclusive of increment on confirmation and annual increment)
	Supervisors	\$450.00 - \$500.00 (inclusive of allowances and annual increment)

The salary scale was inclusive of the cost of living allowance (COLA) which was \$25.00.

The drivers earned a lot of overtime. The author knew a driver who has been with the company for about 5 years. He earned about \$800.00 a month, i.e. \$466.00 (basic salary) plus \$300.00 (allowances, overtime and other benefits). This was because drivers had to transport products to faraway places in other states like Klang, Melaka and other places and came back to the factory rather late.

The academic qualification of a worker also determined her job grade. The correlation between job grades and academic qualifications was as follows:-

Table 2.5

Job Grades And Academic Qualifications

Job Grades	Academic Qualifications
A	Lower Certificate of Education and below
В	
С	
D	
Е	3
F	Lower Certificate of
G	Education and above

At times, a worker was promoted to a better job grade if the worker's work performance was found to be satisfactory and the workers had previous work experience. These recommendations were made by the worker's supervisors to the management. A mechanic fitter (job grade F) for example, was promoted to job grade G as a mechanic fitter II because during the two years working in the Company he had a good report on his work performance. Moreover, he had worked in an electronics firm previously. He was only an L.C.E. (Lower Certificate of Education) drop out.

Notes (Chapter 2)

- The National Union of Petroleum and Chemical Industry Workers and Lam Seng Industries Sdn. Bhd., <u>Terms and Conditions of</u> <u>Service</u>, 1974, p.6
- 2. Ibid., p.7
- 3. Ibid., p.11
- 4. Ibid., p.12
- 5. Ibid., p.8
- 6. Ibid., p.16
- 7. Perumal, Shanmugam, <u>A Guide to the Employment Ordinance, 1955,</u> of Malaysia, 1st ed., Petaling Jaya, International Book Service, 1981, p. 42. "Shift work is work which by reasons of its nature requires to be carried on continuously or continually, as the case may be, by two or more shifts".
- 8. Ibid., p. 42. "Industrial undertaking is industries in which articles are manufactured, altered, cleaned, repaired, ornamented, finished, adapted for sale, packed or otherwise prepared for delivery, broken up, or demolished, or in which materials are transformed or minerals treated.....".
- 9. Ibid, p.32

CHAPTER THREE

The Socio-Economic Characteristics Of The Sample

The socio-economic position of the Malaysian factory worker has recently been much emphasized. This is due to the fact that the industrial sector in the Malaysian economy is becoming more important. In this chapter, the attitudes of the worker toward work and the characteristics of the low wage earners would be discussed under the different characteristics such as age, education level, sex and skill level. The budget of a typical factory worker would also be given to show the plight of these factory workers. Data from this chapter was collected from a sample of twenty-five workers. The observations found in this chapter were gathered daily by the author during the fieldwork.

(a) Choice of sample

The choice of the sample studied was not truly representative of the factory workers. Due to the nature of the study, the choice of the sample was dictated by force of circumstances. Among the circumstances were:

(i) The willingness of the workers to be interviewed

Some workers were wary of the author when he asked for the interview. Some thought he was the management spy while others thought he was from the government. Moreover, when they knew he was from the university, they felt inferior to him and refused to be interviewed by him.

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(ii) Accessibility of the workers

The author got to know most of the workers from his section but not those from other sections. This was because he did not work with them closely and also had no time to talk to them. Thus most of the workers in this sample were from the section in which he worked. In this way the author was able to work and mix daily with them.

However, the author tried his best to control all the variables when choosing workers for his sample. As the general labour force had a higher percentage of female workers, a low level of education, a large percentage of unskilled workers, a great number of workers from a particular race and a significant number with rural background, the autor tried to have these characteristics present in this sample. It must be said though that the effort to take these factors into account would not make the sample truly representative.

In an effort to understand the behaviour and attitudes of the workers in the factory, the background or characteristics of the workers ought to be given due consideration. Age, education level, sex, race and rural or urban background would mould a worker to have certain values and attitudes toward different aspects in life.

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(b) C. Stewart in his book, <u>Low Wage Workers In An Affluent</u> <u>Society</u>, listed seven characteristics of low wage workers. Among the personal characteristics correlated with low wages were:

(i) Agel

A. high proportion of teenagers were among the low wage workers. This was also true for the factory studied. Most of the workers were fresh from school. Their average age, i.e. of the sample, was about nineteen years old.

(ii) Sex²

females usually were among the low wage workers. Most of the female workers at the factory studied earned much less than their male counterparts. All of the fourteen female workers interviewed earned between \$160.00 to \$180.00 a month. This, on the other hand, was not true for the male workers.

(iii) Race³

Most of the workers were of a particular race while the managers were of another race. Due to their inexperience in the labour market and their relative low economic positions have made these workers easy targets for exploitation. Accusations such as being lazy, which has always been labelled on this particular race, has not helped these workers.

The personal attributes are unalterable but the market consequences characteristics are modifiable. The market consequences characteristics are:

(iv) Low skill⁴

Most of the jobs at the factory were unskilled jobs, i.e. jobs that hardly needed any training such as carrying boxes. The needed skills were reduced to elementary movements of hands, feeble processes of the brain like how to carry as many boxes as possible without dropping them, simple childlike coordination of arms and legs. Hence, what was needed in these low skilled jobs were manual dexterity, manipulative ability, physical strength and stamina. Intelligence was hardly needed in most of the jobs in the factory.

Thus, the unskilled or low skilled workers could easily be replaced like replacing a cog wheel in a machine. Therefore the workers were easily exploited.

(v) Low educational attainment⁵

The bulk of the workers who attained the M.C.E. level were male workers. Most of the female workers were L.C.E. holders. Therefore most of the workers did not have enough bargaining power to ask for higher wages as their positions were precarious. They could be easily sacked and replaced by an ever growing labour force.

(vi) Attitudes and behaviour characteristics of a lowerclass subculture, or "culture of "poverty"6

Most of the workers were from the rural areas. The rural folk have a kind of "culture of poverty" whereby they accept their fate as low wage workers quite readily. (vii) Status as a secondary family member⁷

Most of the workers were young and unmarried. Their contribution to the family's finances were negligible.

(c) Characteristics of low wage earners and reasons for low wages

In this section, the different characteristics of the workers shall be compared to their wages.

(1) Characteristics of low wage earners

(i) Skill level

Table 3.1

Skill Level and Wages of Factory Workers (Sample)

Skill Level Wage (\$)	Unskilled	Semi-Skilled	Total	
160 - 180	21		21	
180 - 200	1	-	1	
over 200	1	2	3	
		A-	25	

A majority of the unskilled workers were in the \$160 - \$180 wage category. The two unskilled workers who earned more than \$180.00 were workers who had been in employment with the Company for a number of years. Thus, the difference could be accounted by their annual wage increments.

The skilled workers, on the whole, earned more than the unskilled workers. They were mechanics and other skilled job holders. One of the skilled workers interviewed earned more than \$500.00 a month while the other one earned \$420.00 a month. The two unskilled workers who earned more than \$180.00 a month were older workers and the differences in wages was due to their annual increments.

(ii) Sex

Table 3.2

Sex and Wages of Factory Workers (Sample)

lage (\$)	Female	Male	Total
160 - 180	14	7	21
180 - 200		1	1
)ver 200	-	3	3
			25

The male workers, on the whole, earned better wages than female workers. Although seven out of the eleven male workers interviewed were in the \$160.00 - \$180.00 wage category, their wages were still higher (i.e. they got a basic salary of \$170.00 a month) than the female workers in this category (i.e. they earned \$160.00 basic salary a month). The reason was because male workers had to do tougher and stremuous jobs like carrying heavy sacks of plastic raw material and stacking up boxes. There were three male workers who earned more than \$200.00 a month. One of them earned more than \$400.00 while the other one got more than \$500.00 a month. However, all the female workers earned about \$160.00 to \$180.00 a month.

On the whole, most workers had monthly wages of about \$160.00 to \$180.00 only. Thus, it was not suprising that most of them complained about not having enough money to survive.

(iii) Education

Table 3.3

Education Mage (\$)	Standard 1 - 6	Form 1 - 3	Form 4 - 5	No comments	Total
160 - 180	3	6	6	6	21
180 - 200	-	-	1	-	1
over 200	-	4	2	-	3
	II				25

Education and Wages of Factory Workers (Sample)

Although all those who earned more than \$180.00 a month had at least a form 3 level of eduction, education on the whole was not an important determinant of wages in this factory. This could be clearly seen by the fact that six workers with form five education in the \$160.00 to \$180.00 wage category. However all those who had only primary school education level were in the lowest wage category.

(iv) Age

Table 3.4

Age (years) Wage (\$)	16 - 17	18 - 19	20 - 21	22 - 23	24 - 25	26 - 27	No comments	Total
160 - 180	2	9	4	3	-	-	3	21
180 - 200	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	1
over 200		1	-	1	-	1	-	3

25

Ages and Wages of Factory Workers (Sample)

On the whole, it was the older workers who earned more than the younger workers. The worker who earned more than \$500.00 a month was 26 years of age while the one who earned more than \$400.00 a month was 23 years of age. Those young workers with comparatively higher wages were workers who had been employed by the Company for a couple of years. The majority of the workers interviewed were 21 years old and below. They usually were in the lowest wage category, i.e. \$160.00 to \$180.00.

Thus, from the data gathered a picture of the workers' characteristics in the factory studied could be formed. They were usually female, young, unskilled and had low educational attainment.

(d) Attitudes to work

(i) Sex

Table 3.5

Aspect of the	Satisf	actory	Not Satisfactor		
job	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Salary	2	0	9	14	
Job guarantee	2	5	9	9	
Promotion	3	1	8	13	
Working conditions	4	1	7	13	
Interaction with other workers	8	8	3	6	
Freedom	3	5	8	9	
Job status Chance to develop	6	4	5	10	
(intellectual, etc.)	1	3	10	11	
Chance/time for daily matters	4	2	7	12	
Work that is done/performed	9	7	2	7	
Supervisor	4	5	7	9	
Safety during work	5	4	6	10	

Aspects of the job and sex

and equal 25 respondents.

The female workers worked harder than the male workers. The male workers tended to waste their time by smoking in the toilets during working hours, especially about 10.00 a.m. The female workers, on the other hand, often talked during their work but did their work at the same time.

The male workers dared to question the manager's or supervisors' commands. There was a worker who questioned a manager's command, i.e. he was asked to help some other workers trim bottles while he was carrying some boxes to the lorries for delivery, and later he just continued with the carrying of the boxes after the manager left. The female workers were usually afraid to question any command given by the manager or supervisors. They would meekly follow any orders given. This is most probably due to differences in the socialization of the sexes.

A majority of the workers were not satisfied with the salary. All the female workers, i.e. who earned less than the male workers as a whole, were not satisfied with salary. Only two out of the eleven male workers interviewed were satisfied with the salary. A higher percentage of male workers, i.e. about 87%, were not satisfied with the job guarantee. 64% of the female workers were also not satisfied with this aspect of the job. Most of the workers did not find the chances for promotion to be satisfactory. As for working conditions, more male workers than female workers found this aspect to be satisfactory. More than 50% for the male and female workers said that interaction with other workers during work and breaks was satisfactory. More female workers than male workers were satisfied with the freedom aspect of the job. The male workers, as a whole, found the status of the job to be satisfactory as compared to the female workers. Most of the male workers did not find the intellectual development and job performance aspects of the job to be satisfactory. Most of the female workers were not satisfied with the chance to develop intellectually. 64% of male and female workers were not happy about the supervisory aspect of the job. Most of the female workers did not feel safe at work as compared to the male workers.

(ii) Education

Table 3.6

Aspects of the job and academic qualification

Aspect of the	Sa	tisfac	tory		Not	Satis	factor	у
job	Standard 1 - 6	Form 1-3	Form 4-5	No Comments	Standard 1 - 6	Form 1-3	Form 4-5	No Comments
Salary	0	0	2	0	3	7	7	6
Job guarantee	0	3	2	2	3	4	7	4
Promotion	1	0	3	0	2	7	6	6
Working conditions	0	1	4	0	3	6	5	6
Interaction with other workers	2	6	6	2	1	1	3	4
Freedom	1	4	3	0	2	3	6	6
Job status	0	5	4	1	3	2	5	5
Chance to develop (intellectual, ect.)	0	3	0	1	3	4	9	5
Chance/time for daily matters	0	1	4	1	3	6	5	5
Work that is done/ performed	1	5	8	2	2	2	1	4
Supervisor	1	4	3		2	3	6	6
Safety during work	0	4	5	0	* 3	3	4	6

Most of the workers with higher academic qualifications dared to voice their dissatisfaction to the supervisors or managers. For instance, when the workers in the labelling section were asked to stand while working by the manager, a worker with an MCE qualification represented the other workers in that section to complain to the factory manager. On the other hand, those workers with low academic qualification (such as primary school education level) were afraid to voice their dissatisfaction to the managers. This might be because the workers with the higher academic qualification knew that they had certain rights as workers and also they had a higher marker value in the labour market (i.e. they could get other jobs easily). They worked equally as hard as the other workers.

All the workers who had an MCE qualification did not find the jobs to be intellectually stimulating, Gurprisingly, two out of the nine workers with an MCE qualification interviewed, i.e. 22% were contented with their pay (salary) as compared to the workers with a primary school education or LCE level of education, i.e. all of them were not happy about the salary. Again, the interactional aspect of the job was given high marks by most of the workers, i.e. 64% of all the workers. In other aspects of the job, the different categories of the workers (i.e. according to their academic attaiment) seemed equally satisfied or dissatified about the different aspects. - 85-

(iii) Age

Table 3.7

Aspects of the job and age

		Satisfact	tory	Not	Satisfac	ctory
Aspect of the job	Below 20 years	Above 20 years	No comments	Below 20 years	Above 20 years	No comments
Salary	1	1	0	12	8	3
Job guarantee	5	1	1	8	8	2
Promotion	1	3	0	12	6	3
Working conditions	3	2	0	10	7	3
Interaction with other Workers	. 10	6	0	3	3	3
Feedom	5	3	0	8	6	3
Job status	6	4	0	7	5	3
Chance to develop (intellectual, etc.)	4	0	0	9	9	3
Chance/time for daily matters	4	2	0	9	7	3
Work that is performed	10	5	1	3	4	2
Supervisor	4	5 -	0	9	4	3
Safety during work	5	4	0	-8-	5	3

The average age of the workers in the factory was about nineteen. There were only a handful of older workers. Most of the supervisors were much older than the ordinary worker.

The older workers were more diligent in their work. A mechanic in the author's section, who was one of the older workers in his section, worked harder than the younger ones. He was also more day responsible and was willing to help the author during his first at work. He was also one of the few workers who was married. He would be totally involved in his work, for instance when repairing the machines. He has been with the company for about three years. On the other hand, the younger and unmarried workers usually smoked in the toilets during working hours.

However, the older workers also tended to complain more about the working conditions. One of the older workers once complained to the author about the inadequate wages. He even gave an example of a typical worker's budget for the day. This worker has been with the Company for ten years. The younger and unmarried workers did complaine about their meagre wage but they also tended to spend their wages rather irresponsibly. A worker was said to have got a dollar and twenty cents on pay day after all his debts were paid. They (the younger and unmarried workers) bought expensive cigarettes and always took credit from the canteen. They also quitted from their jobs more readily. Sometimes they gave up their jobs for about two months; only to appear at the factory to seek employment again at the end of the two months.

Most of the older workers, i.e. above twenty years of age. were not happy about the job guarantee. This may be due to the fact that the older workers were more mature in their thinking and wanted a more permanent job. The younger workers, on the other hand, were more interested in enjoying and did not give much thought to their future. The older workers were satisfied with the promotion aspect of the job because most of them had been working with the Company longer than the younger workers and their chances for promotions and wage increments were better. As most of the older workers also had an MCE qualification, they did not find the jobs to be intellectually stimulating as compared to the younger workers. The older workers were also less satisfied with the work that they had to perform. A number of the older workers were semi skilled workers and were more thoroughly involved and interested with the quality of their work. On the other hand, over 80% of the younger workers, who were usually unskilled workers, seemed satisfied with their jobs. This may be because they had a lower academic qualification, i.e. LCE qualification and seemed contented with the type of job they had to perform. The older workers also got along better with the supervisors as compared to the younger workers.

(iv) Skill level

Most of the workers were in the unskilled workers category. The unskilled workers were not very outspoken, i.e. in going against the orders of the manager or supervisors. They usually had low academic qualifications. Hence they knew they had a low market value in the labour market. They knew they could be easily replaced by new workers as their type of work did not need much training. Hence, they had to do most of the menial work.

The more skill a worker possessed, the more outspoken he was. These workers knew that the management would try to keep them in their employment because their type of skill was difficult to come by. New workers would have to be trained. Furthermore, most of them possessed skills which could only be acquired through experience. For instance, a mechanic or machine fitter would need years to learn the basic procedures in cleaning a machine and to understand the technical aspects of a machine. On the other hand, a new worker would need only about 2 days to learn to trim excesses from the bottles.

As the skillful workers' job involved more concentration and were more interesting as compared to the tedious type of work of unskilled workers, they were usually more involved in their work and appeared more hardworking. Their type of work did not allow or give them a chance to waste time. The mechanics always had some tasks to perform during their working hours, for instance they had to change the mould, to clean the machines or to repair the machines. These tasks required concentration and took a long time to accomplish.

The unskilled workers' work, however, was more tedious and monotonous in nature. The workers usually got bored and tired after a while. Thus they resorted to talking or smoking. In that sense, they appeared not as hard working as the skilled workers.

(vi) Behaviour characteristics of a lower - class subculture, or "culture of poverty"

Most of the workers were from the rural areas. In the urban areas they made up the lower or working class. Their relative weakness in terms of economic power had made most of the workers resigned to their fate. Moreover, the rural areas have a "culture of poverty" whereby they have accepted their fate of being low wage earners quite readily. They were not ambitious in trying to better themselves academically. For intance, a worker who had only standard six education told the author that it was impossible for him to take his LCE as he had left school a long time ago. (e) Budget of a typical factory worker

The monthly budget of a typical factory worker was as follows:

Table 3.8

The monthly budget of a typical factory worker

No.	Items	Amount (\$)
1.	Bus fare	\$ 26.50
2.	Meals:)	0
	a) Breakfast)) b) Lunch)	\$103.00
	c) Dinner)	
3.	Rental (room)	\$ 35.00
4.	Miscellaneous (cigarettes, clothes, entertaiment)	\$ 50.00
	Total	\$215.00

A male worker in the factory studied would earn between \$205.00 a month (inclusive of transport allowance of \$35.00 i.e. for the 8.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. workers) to \$215.00 a month (inclusive of transport allowance of \$45.00 i.e. for workers who took 3 shifts). As for the female workers, they earned between \$195.00 to \$205.00 a month (inclusive of transport allowance of between \$35.00 to \$45.00). Breakfast usually comprised of fried mee with some vegetables and a cup of coffee. There were two dishes of vegetables, a dish of fried egg or fried fish and a plate of rice for lunch. As for dinner, the workers usually had two dishes of vegetables, a dish of meat or fried fish and a plate of rice also. Workers usually shared to rent a house. Usually about five or six of them would share to rent a single storey brick house with three bedrooms in areas such as Section 51A, Petaling Jaya. However, there were other workers who rented rooms or houses in squatter areas along Jalan Kelang Lama and Jalan Pantai Dalam. A sizeable proportion of the workers also lived with their families in the Klang area such as Kampung Delek, Kampung Sungai Sireh and Teluk Gadong.

Hence, it was quite obvious the workers could barely survive if they did not do overtime or shift work. The relative low wages in the factory studied force many workers to quit their jobs to look for other jobs in other factories. This would explain the constant labour shortage and high turn over at the factory. During the one and a half months working in the factory, the author saw about five workers leaving their jobs for better paying jobs in other factories.

Notes (Chapter 3)

- Stewart, C., Low Wage Workers in An Affluent Society, 1st ed., Chicago, Nelson Hall, 1974, p. 13
- 2. Ibid., p. 13
- 3. Ibid., p. 14
- 4. Ibid., p. 14
- 5. Ibid., p. 14
- 6. Ibid., p. 15
- 7. Ibid., p. 15

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CHAPTER FOUR

TRADE UNIONS, SABOTAGE TACTICS AND CONTROL STRATEGIES

In the factory concerned, the management tried to manimize profits by paying the minimum wages to the workers. On the other hand, the workers attempted to earn the maximum amount of wages at the expense of the productivity, i.e. they tried to do the least amount of work for maximum wages. Thus, these contradictory goals contributed to the employment of controls by the management and the use of sabotage tactics by the workers. The sabotage tactics used were such as sleeping and frequent visits to the toilets. These sabotage tactics were actually the workers' response to their relative weakness. The management's controls, such as direct supervisory controls and formal procedures, were threats to the workers and showed the management's differing needs as compared to the workers.

(I) Trade unions and sabotage tactics

Workers had reacted to the disadvantages of their roles by forming producers' or consumers' cooperatives designed to eliminate management control, by political action aimed either at the overthrow of the wage system or at drastic changes of the system, or by forming organisations designed to bring pressures to bear on employers. These organisations mentioned were trade unions. In most developing nations, the workers were mostly illiterate, ignorant and backward. They were a heterogeneous mass, having come to the factory from different parts of the country. Usually, a wide social gulf between the workers and the employers and managers was apparent. They were often afraid of their employers, of the police and of the government.

Trade unions in developing nations

Trade unions in developing nations were often not united due to political, economic and social factors. The social factors included religious and communal factors.

Trade unions in these new nations were pressured by their governments to fall into line, i.e. they were expected to follow the governments' programmes very closely. In these nations, a desire for rapid economic development had made the concept of any separation between unions and government seemed impossible to the political leaders. A couple of methods of controlling unions were thus employed.

As the government of most new nations were often the largest employer, it was not surprising that the unions must be "in politics to obtain economic decisions favourable to their members".¹ The unions in these nations also ran up against the planner's (government) model of all-out sacrifice of immediate consumption in favour of capital accumulation for development, in their quest for the

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economic advancement of its (unions) members.². Another recurring theme among leaders of these new nations was that urban wage earners, particularly unionized groups, must not be allowed to extend their already advantageous economic position relative to the poor rural population. Most governments of developing nations also set a general minimum wage scheme to protect the workers. Wage setting decisions were usually undertaken by a government - sponsored board or commission. Due to widespread illiteracy among workers, this limited the bargaining power of the unions. Union pluralism³ also weakened the unions' bargaining power. Most union members in these new nations looked upon unions quite differently from the way union members in the west did. To some it was a kind of intermediary, "that the unions' main activity was to encourage the men to work hard or that it was an organisation to discipline the workers".⁴

Trade unions in Malaysia

As in other developing countries, Malaysia also employed a number of methods to control unions. Detailed union registration laws⁵ constituted the most general method of the government's control over unionism. These laws gave authorities wide powers of intervention in union life.

Trade unions in Malaysia were also prohibited from having foreign links with internationally based trade unions. In this way, most unions had been rendered sterile by the cut in financial aid from these internationally based unions. This move was initiated after the MAS strike.⁶

Specific legal prohibitions of union 'political' activity had also limited the political strength of unions. For instance, recently the Minister of Labour and Manpower told union leaders to stick to their roles and they should not dwell on triavilities such as who should dominate in society.⁷ Therefore Malaysian trade unions have a very limited role in influencing any policies of national significance because of the controls used by the government.

In a number boards, which have a great significance upon the workers, workers were nominated to sit on the board, for example the Employees Provident Fund. They were appointed by the national centre concerned or by the government itself. However, due to the composition of such boards, i.e. comprising mainly government appointees, labour views did not have much weight.

The trade union in the industry and in the factory

The factory studied was a plastic product, i.e. a petrochemical product, manufacturing factory. Thus, this factory came under the petro-chemical industry and the workers were represented by the National Union of Petroleum and Chemical Industry Workers.

(a) Industrial level

The National union of petroleum and chemical industry workers was established in 1962. It has a membership of about 11,000 workers who were employed in the various fields of the petroleum and chemical industry. This included the exploration, product refining, manufacturing, processing, distributing and marketing of petroleum, chemical and their by-product (petro-chemical products). The other conditions in obtaining membership with this union were that the person must be above the age of sixteen and worked in Peninsular Malaysia. This union had as its objectives : the promotion of industrial, economic, social and intellectual interests of its members; to obtain and maitain for its members just and proper rates of remuneration, security of employment, and reasonable hours and conditions of work and to provide advice and assistance accordingly.⁸

The highest governing body of this union was the Executive Council.⁹ This body was vested with the function of conducting the union's business such as resolving trade disputes. There were ten members in this Executive Council.

The union worksite committee¹⁰ was affiliated with the Bangsar branch of this union. This branch committee had eight committee members.

(b) Factory level

The trade union for this factory was formed about eight years ago (i.e. in 1974). The first agreement between the firm and the union was only made in 1974 and took effect from the first of June, 1974. This agreement remained in force for three years and expired on the 31st of May 1977.¹¹ However, the strike that was brought about by a rival union caused disunity among the rank - and file of the union which concluded the agreement. This weakened the union considerably. During the period between 1977 to 1982, no new agreement was concluded between the parties concerned. The management also introduced new controls and eliminated certain practices during this period without much protest from the union. The second agreement was only signed in early 1982 and took effect after the author left his job at the factory.

The union successfully secured a couple of basic benefits for the workers, for instance, sick leave, overtime rates, shift allowance, annual leave and other benefits as stated by the Employment Ordinance, 1955. The latest demands made by the union for consideration by the management were:

- (i) Pay increases for all grades of workers;
- (ii) The abolition of the incentive allowance scheme;
- (iii) The introduction of the coffee and tea breaks at 10.00 a.m. and 4.00 p.m. respectively;

(iv) Working half a day on Saturdays.

The last annual meeting which took place in April 1982, put forward these demands. At the same time the union also intended to maintain all the benefits and concessions won in 1974. The trade union concerned did not appear to be actively recruiting new members. In fact no concrete information programme was undertaken by the union to tell the workers about the functions of the union. Most of the union worksite committee members seemed very indifferent about this recruitment drive.

A large female worker population also accounted for the passiveness. Most of them were first generation urban factory workers. Thus, they did not have any knowledge about the benefits of being a union member as compared to the American or European industrial workers. Furthermore, girls in Eastern cultures were socialized to be obedient and passive. Competitiveness and aggressiveness were not accepted as feminine values. Hence, when the author tried to interview some of the female workers, they declined because they were afraid to give their opinions. To them, girls were supposed to accept orders and not questioned them.

The fluidity of the labour movement, that is its high turnover rate, contributed to the passive response of the workers to the union. Most of the workers usually worked for about two to three months before they started looking for another job. Hence, most of them were in the temporary or probationary workers category which did not qualify them to be union members.

The low educational level of a majority of the workers also put the union at a disadvantage. Most of them could hardly spell

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their own names in the union membership forms (according to the union worksite chairman). Thus, the value of giving them pamphlets regarding the benefits of being a union member would be useless.

The union worksite committee of this factory was formed on the recommendation of the Bangsar Branch union committee. The union worksite committee in this factory consisted of less than eleven committee members. They included the chairman, the secretary, the treasurer and the committee members.¹²

The union worksite chairman was usually a non-Malay. This was because this helped to overcome the language barrier between the management and the union. The supervisors who were usually more educated and more experienced in negotiating with the management were usually of Chinese origin. The present chairman was a Chinese and he was also the president of the Bangsar Branch union committee.

The union worksite committee was elected by the members of the union from the factory. The election was held annually. The last election was held during the annual meeting. The incumbent secretary was not re-elected as he was said to be corrupted, in that he made use of union funds for his personal needs. He was also said to have scolded workers harshly for not joining the union. According to the workers in the author's section (i.e. the Blow moulding section) he scolded one of them because she refused to join the union when he asked her to do so.

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(v) The weaknesses of the trade, union

The trade union was relatively weak as compared to the management. A number of factors contributed to this relative weak-ness.

Firstly, its members were made up of workers from various races. It was a widely accepted practice for the workers to mix with workers of their own race. Although they might work together in the same section, they would not mix during lunch breaks. The management, on its part tried to reinforce this disunity by, for instance, offering better wages to workers of the same race as the managers with reasons such as the workers of this particular race worked harder. Furthermore, almost all the supervisors were of the same race as the managers. The supervisors' task was to control the workers, who usually were from another race, at the instructions of the management. Thus, although the supervisors were members of the same union as the ordinary workers and usually were the leaders of the union, they were still viewed with suspicion and distrust by the ordinary workers.

Secondly, rivalry had also contributed to the union's weakness. (i.e. union pluralism which is a situation whereby a single industry is represented by two or more unions). In the case of this industry concerned, it was represented by two trade unions, i.e. the National Union of petroleum and Chemical Industry workers and the

Chemical Workers Union. The Chemical Workers Union was much weaker and had a smaller membership as it encompassed a smaller scope of the industry (i.e. only chemical industry workers). On the other hand, the National Union of petroleum and Chemical Industry workers covered workers in the petroleum, petro-chemical and chemical industries. The main reason for the weakness of the union at the factory concerned was because of the strike initiated by the rival union (i.e. the Chemical Workers Union) at the factory in 1977. This strike, i.e. a jurisdictional strike, was aimed at ousting the rival union (i.e. the National union of petroleum and Chemical Industry Workers) from that factory and also to shift the allegiance of the rank-and-file. This rival union did not succeed in ousting the existing union but it made the management bold enough to ignore the renegotiation of a new agreement and also to place more controls on the ordinary workers. The management also eliminated certain existing practices such as coffee and tea breaks. The new controls it implemented were such as the so-called incentive allowance scheme.

Thirdly, the economic position of the management was much stronger than the union. The management maintained a biased attitude towards the union. Most of the union worksite committee members were blacklisted by the management. The management did not hesitate to fire a union committee member when he did not turn up for work for a couple of days. The workers were not given any the terms and conditions of service booklet by the management. Hence most of the workers did not know their rights and benefits. The author found that a majority of the workers did not know how the overtime was calculated. They just took whatever (i.e. the overtime allowance) was given to them by the management without question. The management also blacklisted any worker who quarrelled with any managers, who usually were family members. Hence, they readily accepted all orders, though probably not too enthusiastically about it. In fact, the management did not make any effort to inform the new workers about the existence of the union. This information was obtained by word of mouth between workers. The ordinary workers were afraid to go against the management as they knew they would be the ones who would lose the most in a strike. Moreover, their low wages could barely cover their daily expenditure. Therefore, the wages were very important to them.

Fourthly, the workers were mostly illiterate, ignorant and backward. The majority of the female workers who made up the highest percentage of the workers population usually held only a primary school level education. They did not know the benefits of being a union member. For instance, a female worker told the author that she was not willing to pay two dollars a month for the union membership fee. She added that the take home wage was not even enough. Most of the workers were first generation urban industrial workers who originated from the rural areas where day-to-day living was the order of the day. They did not see any benefit in being union members in their daily activities or in the near future. Moreover, the union had not been able to produce any visible benefits for the workers for the last couple of years. The union ought to take the initiative to educate the workers about the benefits of being union members and the functions of the union. So far, the author did not see any effort being done in this direction during his two months at the factory.

Workers' sabotage tactics

The workers tried to sabotage the management by using various kinds of methods for a host of reasons. They were:

(a) Discontent with the management

Most workers expressed dissatisfaction about their low wages. They were also discontented with the amount of deductions made each time. Their low wages was barely enough to pay for their daily expenditures.

Besides the low wages, some workers, especially the young male workers, were frustrated with their own achievement. One worker told the author about his regret at not being able to better himself academically and being stuck with a labourer's job. He said that his "masa depan saya gelap saja".

The manager struck terror and hatred in most workers. The workers were very unhappy at the way the manager treated them. Her constant naggings made most workers despi**g**ed her. For example, she ordered the workers in the labelling section not to sit during their work throughout the day. The workers complained to another manager who later allowed them to sit during their work. She also scolded workers for being slow in trimming the bottles. She even chased out two workers who had come to say goodbye to their fellow workers as they were leaving to continue their studies.

(b) Fatigue and boredom

After two or three hours of doing the same activity, for instance trimming bottles, the workers usually got bored and tired physically and mentally. Thus, they would talk to liven up the boring and dull work situation while at the same time they did their work. The author discovered that this usually happened in the afternoons when it was very hot and stuffy. The heat and stuffiness also made most workers sleepy, especially those who had to perform the tedious and monotonous tasks.

Due to the relative weakness of the union, the workers used various sabotage tactics to show their frustration and discontentment. This was because the workers did not have a proper channel to tell their problems.

The usual sabotage tactics utilized in the factory were:

(a) Sleeping

This usually happened during the night shift (11.00 p.m. to

from 8.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. The workers usually climbed up the stacked boxes to find comfortable places to sleep. Furthermore, they could hide among the boxes in case the supervisor turned up to make a surprise check. In the meantime, the machine would continue producing the bottles. After an hour or so, they would wake up to cut away the excesses from the bottles and put them into the boxes.

(b) 'Bersembang' and smoking

'Bersembang' was the word used for making small talk. The workers usually talked and joked about other workers' girlfriends or boyfriends, for example, during the course their work. Whenever the managers caught the workers talking during their work, the workers would be scolded. The workers did this to overcome boredom and fatigue. This small talk enlivened the dull work situation considerably.

The author also found that most workers smoked and idled away their time in the toilets. They would enter the toilet and locked the doors while they smoked. Usually, at least two of them would do this at any one time. They would spend about fifteen to twenty minutes each time. (Smoking was not allowed in the factory).

(c) Visits to the toilets

The frequency of toilet visits increased especially towards the end of a day's work. The workers would take their time talking and changing their clothes. This often happened about ten minutes before the end of a day's work). According to the factory rules, the workers were only allowed to start changing their clothes five minutes before the end of a day's work.

(II) The Management's Controls

The activity of control refers to the ability of the management to regulate and motivate the employees' behaviour.¹³ Its success required compliance on the part of the employees. This responsibility, i.e. to make the workers comply to the rules and productivity targets, was held by the supervisors. (i.e. supervisors were on the second level in the authority structure and they received their orders from the managers. They had to regulate the behaviour of workers in his section. Hence, frequently he ckecked on the workers in his section to see that they were working satisfactorily).

Figure 4.1

Authority Structure

Managers

Clerks

Supervisors | Group leaders/ section leaders | Workers

There were various types of controls in use in the factory.

In the factory concerned, the management employed a variety of controls. These controls were used to ensure that the workers were not wasting their time but working. Among the controls employed

(1) Direct supervisory controls

The supervisors were at the place of work (in the factory) to watch over the workers. They would check and approve certain production activities. They also issued direct commands to the workers. For instance, in the silk screen section, the supervisor would approve or disapprove the silk screen print on the plastic products. Any unclear print, wrong shades of colour and the smearing of the print on the products would be deemed unacceptable. In the Blown Film section, the supervisor checked for the presence of foreign matter in the plastic material or the thickness of the plastic products manufactured. If the thickness of the plastic products (such as plastic bottles) was too thin, they would tear or crack easily. If they were too thick, the extra amount of plastic material used would be a wastage. This incurred extra expenditure on the company. Whenever the work done was unsatisfactory, the supervisors issued a direct command to the workers to adjust the machines in order to produce acceptable and satisfactory products.

Besides the supervisors being at the worksite, the managers also made occassional checks on the workers. The General Manager checked on the conditions of the factory once in a while. He usually checked on the cleanliness of the bathrooms and the worksite (place of work). Any untidiness often made him angry. He would then order the supervisors to tell the workers to clean up the untidy places. He never scolded the workers directly. The General Manager also made surprise checks on the workers to ensure that they were working.

However, there was another manager who constantly checked on the workers. She made hourly checks. According to the workers and supervisors, she did not any other managerial duties except to check on the workers. She would ask the workers the number of bottles they had trimmed. If the amount was way below the quota for the hour, she would scold them harshly.

(2) Formal procedures which were written up and displayed

The management controlled the high incidence of workers coming to work late by introducing the so-called 'incentive allowance'. It was more of a disincentive because late-comers had their wages deducted. This procedure was made formal and displayed on the notice board for everyone to read. The so-called 'incentive allowance' stipulated that if a worker was late for:

- (a) Less than five minutes, \$1.00 would be deducted from his pay;
- (b) More than five minutes, \$5.00 would be deducted from his pay;
- (c) If the worker did not come to work at all, \$10.00 would be deducted from his pay (regardless whether he or she had a valid reason).

The deductions were made by looking at each of the worker's punch card (i.e. where the time of arrival and the time of departure was recorded).

(3) Specific records of the individual worker's performance

In this type of control, the individual worker's work performance and the number of days of leave taken were recorded. All those workers with good reports (i.e. those with a good work performance and minimum days of leave taken) were accorded a free trip to Singapore at the end of the year. Their board and lodging were paid for by the management and each of them were given some pocket money (i.e. \$10.00 each person). This incentive it seemed was to motivate other workers to work harder. However, the fact that only 88 workers out of a population of about 600 workers in the factory were able to enjoy this privilege, did not make this incentive very effective.

These three controls mentioned above were organization controls, i.e. the controls that involved direction from elements of the organisation other than the target population. In other words, tha managers or supervisors (i.e. the elements of the organisation) received or made the relevant decisions and initiated adjustments on the workers (i.e. the target population). The workers were told or ordered to do whatever was needed by the management, for instance work faster.

(4) Group control¹⁴

The author also noticed this type of control at work sometimes. A worker once commented that the author was slow in trimming the bottles. (or in her own words, "Aku dah buat dua botol, kau baru satu"). In trimming of bottles, sometimes about two or three workers would be assigned to trim a couple of big boxes full of bottles. A big box could usually hold about two hundred bottles. Thus, a slow worker would cause the other workers in that small group to work harder (i.e. they would have to trim more bottles). Howevers, group controls (i.e. controls that were derived from a crew or team) were effective in certain situations as it could result in positive behaviour and attitude changes in the employees. A slow workers. The slow workers would feel embarass if his or her fellow workers had to do his or her share of work.

In this factory specifically, the management put forward a couple of reasons for having these controls. They were:

(a) Most of the workers were of a particular race, which according to the management, were basically lazy. Hence, they had to be checked constantly so that they would not waste their time talking or idling; (b) Production targets had to be met. Each day they (the company) had to meet a certain target. Usually, the buyer of the products would tell the company concerned the number of the products needed. Thus, the company concerned had to produce the required number of products by a target date. If not, the company stood to lose money and business. The buyer would definitely look for another company to produce its bottles if the delivery was late.

(III) Reasons For Workers' Compliance

In view of the relative weakness of the workers, they had not choice but to give in to the management's demands. Specifically, the reasons for the workers' compliance were:

- (a) The workers perceived their relative weakness as compared to the management economically. The workers stood to lose more if the workers refused to comply to the controls. The workers might be also fired from their jobs;
- (b) His or her sense of obligation to his or her co-workers;

- (c) His personal interest and involvement in the job. For instance, the mechanic had a personal interest in maintaining the involved machines. He was thoroughly in his work (i.e. repairing the machines) whenever the machines broke down;
- (d) A desire to obtain some good or privilege from the management, for example a favoured position among other workers. There was a worker (who was also a section leader) in the injection moulding section who always reported to the manager about other workers' misbehaviour. She was well liked by the manager.

Notes (Chapter 4)

- Kassalow, E.M., <u>Trade Unions and Industrial Relations: An</u> <u>International Comparison</u>, 1st ed., New York, Random House, 1969, p. 370.
- 2. Ibid., p. 371
- 3. Ibid., p. 372
- 4. Ibid., p. 371
- International Labour Organization, <u>Industrial Democracy in</u> <u>Asia</u>, Federal Republic of Germany, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 1980, p. 173.
- 6. Ibid., pp. 174 176
- 7. Yorks, Lye, <u>A Radical Approach to job enrichment</u>, 1st ed., New York, Amacon, 1976, p. 56.
- 8. The National Union of Petroleum and Chemical Industry Workers, Rules and Constitution, 1962, p. I
- 9 Ibid., p. 11
- 10 Ibid., p. 32
- 11. The National Union of Petroleum and Chemical Industry Workers and Lam Seng Industries Sdn. Bhd., Terms and Conditions of Services, 1974, p. 1.
- 12. op cit. p. 32

CONCLUSION

(a) Area of Study

This study touched on a number of issues regarding the ordinary factory workers based on a case study of one factory in an urban area. The issues dealt were the working conditions of factory workers, their feelings and opinions regarding the various aspects of the working conditions, various types of control strategies and sabotage tactics in use at the factory and the socio-economic characteristics of the workers.

(b) Major Findings

This study revealed a number of interesting findings about the workers in the factory studied. There appeared to be a correlation between a weak trade union and bad working conditions of the workers. This left the workers at the mercy of the management. The bad working conditions, such as low wages and inadequate benefits, contributed to the hardships faced by the workers. The hardships included inadequate money for savings and even for daily expenditure. The characteristics of workers found in this study confirmed what was found by other researchers such as C. Stewart regarding the low wage worker . This study found that certain socio-economic characteristics were prevalent in most of the low wage workers, for instance, most of them were young, unskilled, female and other factors. The low wages in turn dictated their daily lifestyle for instance they had to work longer hours, i.e. overtime, to earn more money to make

Without a strong trade union to voice their dissatisfaction, the workers turned to sabotage tactics to have their 'revenge' on the management. Hence, various sabotage tactics were practised, such as sleeping on the job and smoking in the toilets. The sabotages, on the other hand, also caused the management to employ stricter controls, like constant supervisory checks. The bad working conditions also led to a lack of motivation to work among the workers.

Due to the prevailing ignorance and illiteracy among the workers, the management was able to take some controls which were illegal according to the law, for instance a deduction of \$10.00 from the workers' wages if they did not come for work at all although they earned only about \$7.00 a day. The author was also surprised to find the ignorance among the workers about politics and economics. In fact, one female worker told him that women should not vote because they did not go to war. Such attitudes could be attributed to their low educational attainment.

(c) Weaknesses of the study

The weaknesses of the study are mainly methodological. Among the weaknesses were:

> The duration of the study (time period) was too short

The author found that one and a half months was simply too short a period for the study.

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Two or three weeks was taken up in building a rapport with the workers. After that observations have to be made daily. By the time the author revealed his true identity, he did not have much time to interview them (the workers). Most of his respondents lived in Klang and squatter areas, thus he had access to only a small sample.

(2) Limitation of the participant observation method

> The author managed to build up rapport with only some workers in his blow moulding section. The spatial separation (physically) did not allow the author to mix with other workers in other sections. The author was also not able to get to know the management staff. In this way, he did not get certain information about the company such as their current profits and losses and management's point of view regarding the workers.

(3) This was a case study and therefore the findings could not be generalised to other factories.

(d) Recommendations

The Labour Ministry enforcement officers should conduct more checks on factories. Labour laws should be enforced strictly. Employers should be handed heavy fines if they break any labour laws. The government should also take the initiative to educate the workers about their rights through the mass media, such as the newspapers, radio or television. The employers' contribution to E.P.F. for the workers' welfare should be increased to a reasonable percentage, (i.e. reasonable to the workers as well as the employers) that is from 11% to 20%.

The trade unions should help the workers by minimising the rivalry at all cost. Only the employers will benefit from this kind of conflict. Workers' interests rather than personal interests should be the trade unions' most important priority. The trade union should publish more pamphlets about workers' rights and the trade union worksite representatives ought to take the initiative to tell and explain to their fellow workers about their rights.

The employers must realise that company-oriented workers can only come about if the security of the workers is ensured (i.e. especially financial security). The workers will go on looking for other jobs if they perceive that their security is not ensured. All benefits agreed upon in the 1974 agreement should be maintained. Controls in the form of disincentives ought to be discontinued as

these usually placed a further burden on the workers. In fact, more incentives should be initiated. The management must also realise that although the workers are working for them, it does not mean they do not have self pride and dignity. They ought to be treated as humans with basic needs and feelings and not just some productive resources that can be manipulated as some machinery part. According to a study done by Herzberg, workers were motivated to work if the following elements were present: a sense of achievement, recognition, work itself, responsibility and advancement. However, in the case of the factory studied, salary is also pre-resquisite for this motivation to work. As far as possible, the salary should be adequate for their daily needs. On the other hand, tight supervision, inadequate salary, bad working conditions and management-oriented company policies (i.e. as opposed to worker-oriented company policies) did not motivate workers to work. The working conditions in the factory studied should be improved, such as better ventilation and adequate rest for the workers. A fatigued, tired and bored worker is not an efficient worker.

The workers, on their part, should put away ethnic, economic and any other differences and unite.

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