

CHAPTER 3
PROFILES OF RESPONDENTS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Students' academic performance varies significantly according to a number of inter-related socio-demographic and behavioral variables. Preliminary analyses indicate considerable variations in examination results across the various categories of the independent variables. However, as the sample size for the sub-groups is not evenly distributed, an examination of the distribution of data according to these variables is essential in guiding the bivariate and multivariate analyses in subsequent chapters.

3.2 BACKGROUND AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STUDENTS

In this survey, information pertaining to background and demographic variables were elicited from the respondents. Table 3.1 shows the sample distribution according to age, gender, ethnicity and place of origin.

As many as three quarters of the students enrolled in the college were below 19 years of age. The young structure of the students may be explained by the fact that around 80% of them had come directly upon completing Form V. The youngest, aged 16, made up about 5% of the sample while those aged 20 and above made up just about 6% of the sample. The mean age is 18.05 years with a standard deviation of 0.94 year.

In terms of gender distribution, Table 3.1 shows that girls slightly outnumbered boys in the college. The Chinese were the majority (83.1%), followed by Indians (11.1%). The Malays and others (international students and local students of other races) made up some 2.3% and 3.5% of the sample respectively. There were many reasons for the predominance of Chinese students in the private colleges. The limited places offered in local public universities could not cater for their needs. In addition, some might not be given the opportunity to pursue courses of their own choice in the local public universities.

Almost two-third of the students were from the Central region (Klang Valley and other parts of Selangor), while 14.3% were from the South region (Johor, Melaka, Negeri Sembilan), 7.3% were from the North region (Perlis, Penang, Perak, Kedah), 2.0% were from the East Coast (Kelantan, Terengganu, Pahang), and about 8.1% were from the East Malaysia (Sabah and Sarawak). International students from Indonesia, Singapore, Brunei, Africa and Australia made up about 2.6% of the students. The students came mainly from urban areas.

Table 3.1: Demographic characteristics of students in this survey

	n	%
<u>Age</u>		
16	27	4.7
17	106	18.6
18	289	50.8
19	112	19.7
20	29	5.1
21	5	0.9
22	1	0.2
Total	569	100.0
<u>Gender</u>		
Male	269	47.3
Female	300	52.7
Total	569	100.0
<u>Ethnic group</u>		
Malay	13	2.3
Chinese	473	83.1
Indian	63	11.1
Others	20	3.5
Total	569	100.0
<u>Place of origin</u>		
North	40	7.3
Central	359	65.7
South	78	14.3
East Coast	11	2.0
East Malaysia	44	8.1
Other Countries	14	2.6
Total	546	100.0
<u>Stratum</u>		
Town	556	97.7
Village	13	2.3
Total	569	100.0

3.3 TYPES OF PROGRAMME ACCORDING TO STUDENT'S AGE, GENDER, RACE AND PLACE OF ORIGIN

In this survey, 96.3% of the youngest students (16 year-old) were enrolled in the 'A' Level programme (see Table 3.2). These students were either from the international schools or private secondary schools, where they were allowed to complete secondary schooling at a faster pace based on academic performance. Most of those aged 17 and 18 were enrolled in 'A' Level or SAM programmes, whereas the older students (19 and above) were enrolled in the degree programmes like ADP and UTS.

Table 3.2 shows significant variations in the choice of courses between male and female students. Girls were more likely than boys to choose SAM programme, while boys were more likely than girls to join the ADP and CPU programmes. In terms of ethnicity, Chinese students were more likely than those of other ethnic groups to join the SAM programme. On the other hand, Indian students were relatively more likely to be enrolled in 'A' Level programme as compared to their counterparts from other ethnic groups. 'A' Level programme was relatively more popular among those from East Coast (63.6%) and East Malaysia (56.8%).

Table 3.2: Percentage distribution of students by programme according to age, gender, race and place of origin

	'A' Level	SAM	CPU	ADP	UTS	TUBF	Total %	n
Age								
16	96.3	-	-	3.7	-	-	100.0	27
17	62.3	31.1	-	5.7	-	0.9	100.0	106
18	48.2	38.2	0.7	5.6	5.2	2.1	100.0	288
19	25.9	17.9	6.2	25.9	19.6	4.5	100.0	112
≥20	14.3	14.3	11.4	40.0	14.3	5.7	100.0	35
Gender								
Male	44.6	25.6	3.7	17.1	7.1	1.9	100.0	269
Female	48.5	33.1	1.0	6.7	7.7	3.0	100.0	299
Ethnicity								
Malay	53.8	15.4	-	7.7	23.1	-	100.0	13
Chinese	42.0	32.8	2.7	12.1	7.4	3.0	100.0	472
Indian	74.6	17.5	-	6.3	1.6	-	100.0	63
Other	60.0	15.0	-	10.0	15.0	-	100.0	20
Place of origin								
North	35.0	37.5	7.5	5.0	10.0	5.0	100.0	40
Central	48.6	30.2	2.0	8.9	8.1	2.2	100.0	358
South	37.2	30.8	2.6	17.9	6.4	5.1	100.0	78
East coast	63.6	18.2	-	18.2	-	-	100.0	11
East Malaysia	56.8	34.1	-	6.8	2.3	-	100.0	44
Other Countries	28.6	-	-	57.1	14.3	-	100.0	14

3.4 MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION AND STREAM (ARTS OR SCIENCE) AT FORMER SCHOOL

Table 3.3 shows that close to two-third of the students were from the national type secondary schools, where Malay language is used as the medium of instruction. A total of 130 students (23.3%) were from the English medium schools, such as the international schools and other private secondary schools. Students from the Chinese independent schools made up the remaining 11.5%. In this survey, 80.6% of the students were from the Science stream, while the rest were from the Arts stream.

Table 3.3: Percentage distribution of students by medium of instruction and stream at former school

	n	%
<u>Medium of instruction at former school</u>		
Malay	364	65.2
English	130	23.3
Chinese	64	11.5
Total	558	100.0
<u>Stream at former school</u>		
Arts	109	19.4
Science	454	80.6
Total	563	100.0

3.5 PREVIOUS ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT (SPM AGGREGATE)

The survey results show that 32.0% of the students had an aggregate score of 6 to 10 points, 30.8% between 11 and 16 points, 21.3% between 17 and 22 points and 15.9% with more than 22 points in SPM examination (see Table 3.4). The SPM aggregate ranged from 6 to 34 points, with mean of 15.02 and standard deviation of 6.49. These results indicate that students enrolled in the college had generally done well in the SPM examination.

Table 3.4: Percentage distribution of students by SPM aggregate

SPM Aggregate	n	%
6-10	181	32.0
11-16	174	30.8
17-22	120	21.3
>22	90	15.9
Total	565	100.0

3.6 PARENT'S EDUCATIONAL LEVEL

Table 3.5 shows that more than 90% of the student's parents had at least secondary school education, and only a small proportion (9.7% of the mothers and 5.5% of the fathers) had primary education. Generally, the educational level of the fathers tended to be higher than that of the mothers. More than half (56.4%) of the fathers as compared to 38.3% of the mothers had tertiary education.

Table 3.5: Percentage distribution of students by parent's educational level

	n	%
<u>Father's educational level</u>		
Primary	31	5.5
Secondary	216	38.1
Tertiary	319	56.4
Total	566	100.0
<u>Mother's educational level</u>		
Primary	55	9.7
Secondary	295	52.0
Tertiary	217	38.3
Total	567	100.0

3.7 DIFFERENTIALS IN STUDY BEHAVIOR AND SOCIAL BEHAVIOR

3.7.1 Time spent on self-study

Students spent on average 13.5 hours per week on self-study, with standard deviation of 7.7 hours. Table 3.6 shows that a quarter of the students spent less than 5 hours per week on self-study. Thus, it may be inferred that many students did not put in adequate time for self-study. Amount of time spent on self-study varied rather widely according to the types of programme, gender and past academic achievement. Students from the Business Foundation programme (TUBF) spent the least time on self-study with 42.9% of them spending less than 5 hours per week for self-study. Table 3.6 also shows that students from the SAM programme spent more time on self-study as compared to those from 'A' Level programme. However, the sample size for other programmes is too small for comparative analyses.

It is interesting to note that girls tended to spend more time on self-study as compared to boys. Students with the poorer SPM aggregate (those with SPM aggregate >22) tended to spend less time on self-study. This may be attributed in part to the study habit carried over since schooling days. The lack of efforts on their part probably resulted their poor performance at SPM examination. In subsequent analyses, we will examine if the amount of time spent on self-study has a significant effect on academic performance at the college.

Table 3.6: Percentage distribution of students according to amount of time spent per week on self-study by selected variables

	Number of hours spent on self-study per week							Total %	n
	0-4.9	5-9.9	10-14.9	15-19.9	20-24.9	25-29.9	30+		
Overall	25.3	26.2	18.8	9.9	7.9	5.7	6.2	100.0	548
Programme									
'A' Level	30.6	25.4	15.9	6.8	8.3	6.7	6.3	100.0	252
SAM	15.7	25.3	21.7	15.7	9.0	7.2	5.4	100.0	166
CPU	16.7	8.3	8.3	33.3	8.3	16.7	8.4	100.0	12
ADP	30.8	30.8	21.5	1.5	7.7	-	7.7	100.0	65
UTS	15.4	35.9	23.1	15.4	5.1	2.6	2.5	100.0	39
TUBF	42.9	21.4	14.3	7.1	-	-	14.3	100.0	14
Gender									
Male	29.0	29.7	14.7	10.0	6.6	5.0	5.0	100.0	259
Female	21.4	23.2	22.2	10.0	9.3	6.6	7.3	100.0	289
SPM									
Aggregate									
6-10	24.0	27.4	18.3	9.2	7.4	8.0	5.7	100.0	175
11-16	21.3	31.4	17.8	10.6	7.1	5.3	6.5	100.0	169
17-22	23.0	22.1	23.9	11.5	10.6	3.6	5.3	100.0	113
> 22	36.4	20.4	14.8	9.1	8.0	4.5	6.8	100.0	88

3.7.2 Private tuition

In recent years, tuition classes are mushrooming at all levels of schooling, especially in big towns. Private tuition can be arranged one-on-one or for small groups. In this survey, close to one quarter of the college students were attending private tuition classes. Table 3.7 shows that the proportion of students attending private tuition varied considerably according to programme, age and place of origin. The 'A' Level and SAM programmes are more examination oriented, and hence students from these two programmes were more likely to attend tuition classes as compared to those from other programmes.

Table 3.7 also shows that the younger students were more likely than older students to attend private tuition classes. Students from other countries were least likely to attend private tuition (7.1%), while students from the North region were most likely to do so (27.5%).

Table 3.7: Percentage of students who had attended private tuition by selected variables

	%	n
Overall	23.5	563
<u>Programme</u>		
'A' Level	31.8	264
SAM	26.2	168
CPU	8.3	12
ADP	3.1	65
UTS	-	40
TUBF	-	14
<u>Age</u>		
16	37.0	27
17	30.2	106
18	26.3	285
19	9.0	111
≥20	11.8	34
<u>Place of origin</u>		
North	27.5	40
Central	25.4	354
South	14.3	77
East coast	18.2	11
East Malaysia	25.0	44
Other Countries	7.1	14

3.7.3 Participation in study group

One of the ways for students to improve their academic performance is for them to join study group. In this arrangement, they could discuss and learn from one another. However, the survey shows that only about one in five students had joined study groups. Table 3.8 shows that students from those programmes such as CPU and UTS that place greater emphasis on course work were more likely to join study groups as compared to those that are examination oriented.

Table 3.8: Percentage of students who had joined study group by selected variable

	%	n
Overall	19.1	566
<u>Programme</u>		
'A' Level	17.1	264
SAM	19.1	168
CPU	46.2	13
ADP	13.8	65
UTS	30.9	42
TUBF	21.4	14

3.7.4 Perception of workload

In this survey, more than two-third of the students reported that the workload was unmanageable or heavy (see Table 3.9). Among the five programmes, the proportion of students who reported unmanageable workload was highest among the CPU students (30.8%), followed by SAM students (14.3%). While 73.8% of the students from ADP felt that their workload was just nice or easy, only 13.1% of the SAM students felt so.

Table 3.9 shows that the youngest students (16 year-old) seemed to manage their study very well as none of them felt that their workload was unmanageable and only half of them felt that their workload was heavy, as compared to around 70% for those aged 17 and 18.

Table 3.9 also shows that a higher proportion (11.2%) of boys reported to have unmanageable workload compared to girls (3.7%). On the other hand, the proportion of girls who reported having heavy workload was 20.4% higher than their male counterparts (70.8% as against of 50.4%).

Table 3.9: Percentage distribution of students according to the perceived workload by selected variables

	Unmanageable	Heavy	Just nice	Easy	Too easy	Total %	n
Overall Programme	7.1	60.9	30.0	1.5	0.5	100.0	566
<u>'A' Level</u>	3.4	62.6	32.1	1.5	0.4	100.0	265
SAM	14.3	72.6	11.9	0.6	0.6	100.0	168
CPU	30.8	30.8	23.0	7.7	7.7	100.0	13
ADP	1.6	24.6	72.3	1.5	-	100.0	65
UTS	4.9	73.2	21.9	-	-	100.0	41
TUBF	7.1	57.2	35.7	-	-	100.0	14
<u>Age</u>							
16	-	51.9	44.4	3.7	-	100.0	27
17	4.7	70.8	21.7	1.9	0.9	100.0	106
18	9.0	64.2	25.7	0.7	0.4	100.0	288
19	6.4	52.7	38.2	1.8	0.9	100.0	110
≥20	8.6	40.0	51.4	-	-	100.0	35
<u>Gender</u>							
Male	11.2	50.4	35.8	1.5	1.1	100.0	268
Female	3.7	70.8	24.5	1.0	-	100.0	298

3.7.5 Perception of the usefulness of the courses

Differences in perception of the usefulness of the courses can be observed across the programmes. Table 3.10 shows that the proportion of students who felt that the course they were pursuing was very useful was highest among those from 'A' Level programme (36.7%), followed by ADP (26.2%) and UTS (19.0%). More than half of the students from SAM programme were not sure if the programme they were pursuing was useful.

The perceived usefulness of the courses pursued is positively related to parent's educational level. The proportion of the students who evaluated positively the courses they were pursuing is significantly higher among those whose parents had higher education as compared to those whose parents had primary education (see Table 3.10).

Table 3.10: Percentage distribution of students according to the perceived usefulness of the courses by selected variables

	Very useful	Useful	Not sure	Not useful	No useful at all	Total %	n
Overall Programme	24.1	46.2	28.5	0.9	0.3	100.0	566
'A' Level	36.7	46.6	15.5	0.8	0.4	100.0	264
SAM	8.3	38.1	51.2	1.8	0.6	100.0	168
CPU	7.7	61.5	30.8	-	-	100.0	13
ADP	26.2	49.2	24.6	-	-	100.0	65
UTS	19.0	52.4	28.6	-	-	100.0	42
TUBF	7.2	71.4	21.4	-	-	100.0	14
Father's educational level							
Primary	16.1	54.9	25.8	3.2	-	100.0	31
Secondary	18.7	45.8	34.1	1.4	-	100.0	214
Tertiary	28.5	45.2	25.4	0.3	0.6	100.0	319
Mother's educational level							
Primary	12.9	55.6	31.5	-	-	100.0	54
Secondary	20.4	45.9	32.0	1.7	-	100.0	294
Tertiary	32.3	43.3	23.5	-	0.9	100.0	217

3.7.6 Outing with friends

Figure 3.1 shows that the number of times of outing per week was significantly different between male and female students, with the former more likely to go outing as compared to the latter. A higher proportion of female students (31.4%) went out less than once per week compared to male students (17.3%). Academic performance of students who are socially active may be jeopardized to the extent that they do not spend adequate time in their study. In this survey, around three-quarters of the students went out with friends at least once per week. However, very few of them went out every day.

Students who are sociable may do well in examinations if they are able to manage their time. In subsequent analyses, it would be interesting to find out if academic performance is adversely affected by social activities.

Figure 3.1: Percentage distribution of students by number of times of outing per week

