

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Launched in 1975 by the United Nations, the 'International Year For Women' and the "United Nations Decade for Women" signify the first official, global determination to eliminate entrenched discrimination against women and their impaired ability to enjoy human rights on an equal footing with men. Since then, the role of women in socio-economic development has gained prominence.

In response to the inspiration of the international community, the Malaysian government has taken various measures to tap the potential and to enhance the role of Malaysian women in national development. The National Advisory Council on the Integration of Women In Development (NACIWID) was formed in 1976. NACIWID functions as the main advisory and consultative body for the government, and as liaison between the government and the non-government organisations on women-related matters in both the planning and implementation of development. In 1983, the Women's Affairs Division (HAWA, *Hal Ehwal Wanita*) was established. Since 1987 it has served as the NACIWID secretariat. The main duties and responsibilities of HAWA include the coordination and implementation of policies and projects for women, together with the monitoring of the progress made by non-government women's organisations.

Throughout the 1980s, women related issues and studies received increasing recognition and attention. In 1989, the “National Policy for Women” was formulated. In 1991, for the first time, a whole chapter was devoted to ‘Women and Development’ in Malaysia’s Five-Year Development Plans. ‘As women constitute a vital economic resource, the Government’s goal is, therefore, to integrate women as equal partners in nation building’ (Malaysia, 1991: 427). This statement indicates the government’s recognition and acknowledgment of women’s contribution to national development as well as its commitment towards optimising the potential of women, particularly in social and economic development.

To have a better picture of how much progress women have made, a look at their past achievements is pertinent. Section 1.2 provides a brief description of Malaysia’s economic growth and structural change. Section 1.3 begins with a brief examination of the progress made in the area of education. This helps explain some of the changes that have taken place in terms of employment of women. Section 1.4 highlights changes in female labour force participation and sectoral employment. Section 1.5 looks at employment of women by occupational attainment, and section 1.6 the employment and earnings of women, followed by some concluding remarks.

1.2 Economic Development and Structural Change

In the last three decades, Malaysia has achieved rapid economic growth; accompanied by substantial structural changes in production and employment. The major structural shift has been from the primary to the secondary sector, a shift from agriculture to manufacturing activities. Table 1.1 provides a detailed breakdown of GDP by industrial origin for selected years over the 1970-1995 period. It is clear that a great deal of structural transformation had taken place.

Table 1.1 Gross Domestic Product by Industry of Origin, 1970-1995
(percentage share of total)

Sector	1970	1980	1990	1995*
Agriculture, forestry & fishing	29.0	22.9	18.7	13.6
Mining and quarrying	13.7	10.1	9.7	7.4
Manufacturing	13.9	19.6	27.0	33.1
Construction	3.8	4.6	3.5	4.4
Electricity, gas & water	1.1	1.4	1.9	2.3
Transport, storage & communication	3.6	5.7	6.9	7.3
Wholesale and retail trade, hotels & restaurants	11.5	12.1	11.0	12.1
Finance, insurance, real estate and business services	8.6	8.3	9.7	10.7
Government services	9.3	10.3	10.7	9.7
Other services	2.1	2.3	2.1	2.0
(-) Imputed bank service charges	1.0	1.9	5.1	7.0
(+) Imported duties	4.4	4.6	3.8	4.2
Gross Domestic Product at Purchasers' Value (RM million in 1978 prices)	21,548	44,511	79,103	120,316

Note: * = preliminary.

Source: Sixth Malaysia Plan (1991) for 1970, 1980, and 1990; and *Economic Report 1995* (1996a:1, Table 1.1) for 1995.

It can be seen from Table 1.1 that the importance of agriculture to the economy started to decline at a fairly steady rate while the contribution of the manufacturing sector was increasing steadily. The growth of output of the manufacturing sector was very rapid. Its share of GDP increased from 13.9 per cent in 1970 to 33.1 per cent in 1995. On the contrary, the contribution of agriculture, forestry, and fishing sector declined from 29.0 per cent to 13.6 per cent over the same period. In fact, Malaysia's efforts of industrialisation started with import substitution in the late 1950s. However, with the limited domestic market and skewed income distribution, import substitution inevitably slowed down in the mid-1960s. In the late 1960s, as the problems and limitations of import substitution became quite apparent, the nation embarked on export-orientated industrialisation. The emphasis then was on the development of resource-based and labour intensive industries. The former included the traditional agro-based industries such as the processing of timber, gas, petroleum, rubber, palm oil and coconut oil. The latter involved mainly textiles, garments, electronics, electrical products and food processing industries. As the Malaysian government believed the manufacturing sector to be the engine of economic growth, several incentives such as tax-free holidays for industrial enterprises located in 'free-trade zones' were provided. It also embarked on an aggressive 'industry promotion-drive' overseas to attract foreign investment and to invite industrial firms to relocate the 'off-shore sourcing' factories in Malaysia. The implementation of the industrialisation strategies led directly to the rapid growth of the manufacturing sector.

In line with the structural transformation of the economy, the pattern of employment also underwent changes. Table 1.2 gives a broad picture of the employment trend over the period 1970-1995. As can be seen from Table 1.2, there was a shift in the demand for labour away from agriculture to the secondary and tertiary sectors of the economy. As a result, the share of employment in agriculture to total employment declined. On the other hand, the contribution of the manufacturing and construction sectors to employment increased substantially. The contribution of the services sector as a whole also increased. However, the growth of employment in government services slowed down. This is consistent with the government's objective of reducing the size and role of the public sector (Chew, Lee and Quek, 1995: 8).

Table 1.2 Employment by Sector, 1970-1995
(Percentage Share of Total)

Sector	1970	1980	1990	1995
Agriculture, forestry & fishing	50.5	39.7	26.0	18.0
Mining and quarrying	2.6	1.7	0.6	0.5
Manufacturing	11.4	15.7	19.9	25.9
Construction	4.0	5.6	6.3	8.3
Electricity, gas & water	0.8	0.6	0.7	0.9
Transport, storage & communication	3.4	4.3	4.5	5.0
Wholesale and retail trade, hotels & restaurants	10.9	14.0	18.2	16.8
Finance, insurance, real estate and business services	0.9	1.6	3.9	4.8
Government services	11.7	13.7	12.7	11.0
Other services	3.8	3.1	7.2	8.7
Total ('000)	3,328.0	4,816.9	6,686.0	7,915.4
Labour Force	3,597.0	5,109.9	7,042.0	8,140.0
Unemployment ('000)	269.0	292.0	356.0	224.6
Unemployment rate (%)	7.5	5.7	5.1	2.8

Sources: Chew, S.B., K.H. Lee, and A.H. Quek (eds.) (1995: 8, Table 1.4) for 1970, 1980 and 1990, *Seventh Malaysia Plan* (1996b: 8, Table 1.4) for 1995.

1.3 Women's Participation in Education

For the last three decades, women in Malaysia have made great strides forward. One of the keys to this success is education. Women have benefited from equal access to educational opportunities. At the advent of independence in 1957, girls accounted for only 38 per cent of total primary school enrolment, and only 31 per cent of total secondary enrolment. However, in 1970, they accounted for 47 per cent and 41 per cent of total enrolment in government and government-assisted primary and secondary schools respectively (Lee and Sivaranthiran, 1992: 1 - 2). This trend is understandable as formal education was accessible to all individuals following independence. In addition, the traditional belief that girls should stay at home began to lose ground (Jamilah, 1994: 82). This has encouraged women's participation in education. The importance of formal education as a means to better employment opportunities is unquestionable. Therefore, it is not surprising that the percentage of girls attending both primary and secondary schools increased greatly.

As shown in Table 1.3, female enrolment in schools continued to increase. In 1970, girls comprised 46.8 per cent of total enrolment at the primary level and 40.6 per cent of the total secondary school population. However, in 1993, they formed 48.6 per cent of primary school enrolment and surged to 50.4 per cent in the secondary schools in 1993. At the post secondary level, girls' share of the total enrolment increased dramatically. In 1970, girls comprised 42.6 per cent of the total student enrolment. In 1993, they outnumbered boys, constituting 52.7 per cent of the total enrolment.

Table 1.3 Percentage Enrolment of Female Students by Level and Stream (1970 - 1993)

Level of Education	1970	1980	1993
Primary	46.8	48.6	48.6
Secondary	40.6	47.6	50.4
Post Secondary	42.6	45.5	52.7
University	29.1	35.5	49.8
<i>Stream (Upper Secondary Level)</i>			
Arts	47.4	61.0	64.8 ^a
Science	24.5	36.3	44.7 ^a
Vocational	24.2	30.4	25.1
Technical	4.3	27.1	40.2

Note: ^a : Figures are for 1990.

Source: *Sixth Malaysia Plan* (1996: 421, Table 16.5) for 1970 and 1980, and Nagaraj (1995: 50, Table 4) for 1993.

At the tertiary level, Malaysian women benefited from the opportunities provided by the policy of equal access to education. In 1970, female students in local universities accounted for 29.1 per cent of total enrolment. In 1993, females accounted for about 50 per cent of total enrolment in local university enrolment.

Admittedly, women, have made considerable in-roads into education. However, gender differences persisted, and women remained predominantly in non-technical and non-vocational disciplines. Table 1.3 shows a significant increase in the entry of female

students to the technical stream. However, they were still under-represented in the vocational and technical streams where they comprised 25.1 per cent of the total vocational school enrolment and 40 per cent of the total technical school enrolment. At the tertiary level, new female students constituted 44 per cent of the total university intake during the period of the 5th Malaysian Plan (1985 - 1990). Their enrolment increased particularly in courses such as Medicine, Dentistry, Engineering, Architecture and Accountancy. However, despite the overall increase of female students enrolled in science and technical courses, the majority continued to enroll in the Arts and Social Science courses (see Jamilah, 1994: 90).

1.4 Trends in Labour Force Participation Patterns With Reference to Gender

In line with the rapid economic growth which created more and new opportunities for women and the increase in women's participation in education, there had been a substantial increase in the female labour force participation rate. For instance, Jones (1965) found that in 1947, the activity rate for females aged 10 years and above was about 25 per cent. For women 15 - 64 years of age, the participation rate was 36.3. In 1993, female labour force participation rate stood at 46.3 per cent. Males traditionally showed higher participation rates for all age groups (see Table 1.4). However, the change in female labour force participation pattern after 1970 must be noted. Female participation rates increased rapidly from 36.3 per cent in 1970 to 46.3 per cent in 1993. The increase in female employment was across all age-groups in the working ages, but

the increase was highest in the 20 - 24 age-group where labour force participation increased from 31.2 per cent in 1957 to 63.9 per cent in 1993.

Table 1.4 Labour Force Participation Rate by Gender and Age Group, Malaysian, 1970 - 1993

Age Group	Participation Rate (%)									
	1957		1970		1980		1985		1993	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
15 - 19	60.0	27.9	52.3	33.0	47.9	33.5	43.7	28.2	42.1	31.4
20 - 24	92.7	31.2	87.1	41.9	91.1	54.0	90.7	58.3	88.8	63.9
25 - 29	97.5	27.7	93.5	38.4	92.4	44.6	98.1	49.0	97.7	55.9
30 - 34	97.9	30.5	94.4	39.0	98.0	40.5	98.8	47.3	98.8	51.7
35 - 39	97.7	34.2	94.0	40.0	98.2	42.7	98.9	48.5	98.9	49.6
40 - 44	97.2	35.3	93.2	40.0	97.7	43.8	98.4	50.4	98.7	48.6
45 - 49	96.2	36.3	91.5	40.7	96.6	41.4	97.9	48.7	97.7	43.4
50 - 54	97.3	33.7	86.7	36.6	92.7	36.5	93.5	40.0	94.3	39.4
55 - 59	88.4	29.4	75.6	29.2	77.4	30.8	76.6	32.6	76.3	24.4
60 - 64	87.6	22.3	65.2	23.7	68.6	25.0	67.1	23.9	59.0	15.8
15 - 65	90.9	30.8	83.4	36.3	86.6	39.3	84.6	44.6	85.1	46.3

Note : M = Male F = Female

Source : Siti Rohani Yahya (1993) Table 8: 37 for 1957, 1970, 1980 and 1985, and *Labour Force Survey Report 1992 - 1993* for 1993.

The general increase in the participation rate is attributed to several factors. First is the rapid expansion of educational facilities and the ready and equal access of females to every level of education. As a result of the increase in literacy, society as a whole

changed its perceptions about the role of women. In addition, women have also changed their attitude towards paid employment and have improved their skills, both of which increased their employability and also their earning capability. Secondly, the rapid pace of industrialisation and urbanisation since the 1970s has also created many new job opportunities especially in labour-intensive industries for women in the urban areas. Thirdly, delayed age of marriage and reduction in fertility reduced the burdens of homemaking and child care responsibilities and this had also encouraged women to seek paid employment (Siti Rohani, 1993).

1.4.1 Structures of Employment by Sector and Sex

Consistent with the changes that have been taken place in the economy, particularly in terms of the shifts in production away from the primary sector to the secondary and tertiary sectors, there have been significant changes in employment patterns. As can be seen from Table 1.5, over the 1970-1980 period, 1.7 million 'new' jobs¹ were created, and about 35 per cent went to women. Of these, slightly over 43.3 per cent were in the manufacturing sector, 25 per cent in the wholesale, retail trade, hotels and restaurants sector, 15 per cent in the services sector and 13 per cent in the agricultural and forestry sector. As for the men, job created was more evenly distributed across the major sector of the economy. Twenty-five per cent were in the manufacturing sector, 24

¹This is calculated on the basis of total employment in 1980 less total employment in 1970.

per cent in services, and 17 per cent in the wholesale, retail trade, hotels and restaurants sector, and another 17 per cent in the construction sector.

During the 1980-1990 period, over 1.8 million new jobs were created. Of these, 42 per cent went to women workers. Among the women workers, the manufacturing sector again emerged as the main sector of growth in new jobs accounting for 39 per cent of the new jobs. This is followed by the wholesale, retail trade, hotels and restaurants sector which accounted for 37 per cent of the new jobs. Services sector (excluding finance, insurance, real estate and business services) was also an important sector. This sector accounted for 30 per cent of new jobs. Among the men, new jobs were again more evenly distributed across sectors. The wholesale, retail trade, hotels and restaurant sector accounted for 27 per cent of the new jobs, followed by the manufacturing sector 23 per cent, services sector (excluding finance, insurance, real estate and business services) with 18 per cent and the construction sector with 15 per cent.

The trend in the distribution of new jobs among men and women workers over the last two decades continues in the 1990s. Over the 1990-1995 period, about 1.2 million new jobs were created. Of these, an even larger 46 per cent went to women workers. Among the women workers, it is interesting to note that the wholesale, retail trade, hotels and restaurants sector has emerged as the principal sector of growth in new jobs, accounting for 61 per cent (see Table 1.5). The manufacturing sector continues to be an important source of new jobs for women workers accounting for 45 per cent of the new jobs. This is followed by the services sector (other than finance, insurance, real estate and

business services) with 18.2 per cent. Among the men, the new jobs created were concentrated mainly in the manufacturing sector which accounted for 71 per cent of the new jobs. The construction sector surged to second spot with 29 per cent and the transport, storage and communications sector with 26.4 per cent. From Table 1.5, one important change should be noted. That is, the substantial loss of jobs among women in the agricultural and forestry sector. In line with the relative decline of the agricultural sector, jobs for women workers in this sector fell by 32 per cent.

Table 1.5 **Distribution of New Jobs by Sex and Sector**

Industry	1970-1980		1980-1990		1990-1995	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Agriculture & Forestry	5.9	12.9	3.7	-14.8	-18.7	-32.0
Mining & Quarrying	-0.4	-0.6	-3.6	-.04	0.6	0.0
Manufacturing	25.3	43.3	23.0	38.8	71.1	45.2
Construction	17.2	2.5	15.1	-0.1	29.1	8.7
Utilities	1.1	0.2	1.3	0.1	3.0	0.6
Wholesale, Retail Trade	17.3	25.1	27.1	36.7	-40.5	60.5
Hotels & Restaurants						
Transport, Storage & Communication	7.1	1.4	5.6	2.4	26.4	-12.0
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate, Business Services	-	-	9.3	7.3	8.9	10.7
Other Services ^a	24.3	15.2	18.4	29.8	20.0	18.2

Note: ^a For 1970-1980 includes finance, insurance, real estate and business services, otherwise covers government, community, social and personal services.

Source: Calculated from *Third Malaysia Plan* (1976: 68, Table 4.10) *Fifth Malaysia Plan* (1986: 102-103, Table 3.5), *Sixth Malaysia Plan* (1991: 36, Table 1.11 and Table 16.1: 415), and *Seventh Malaysia Plan* (1996b: 110, Table 4.2 and Table 20.1: 623).

Table 1.6

Percentage Distribution of Employment by Sector and Sex 1970-1995

Industry	1970		1980		1990		1995	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Agriculture & Forestry	49.6	67.9	37.5	49.3	28.9	28.2	20.3	15.9
Mining & Quarrying	2.3	0.7	1.4	0.3	0.7	0.2	0.5	0.1
Manufacturing	9.3	8.1	11.8	16.3	15.2	24.3	20.1	30.1
Construction	3.1	0.5	6.4	1.0	8.7	0.7	0.8	0.2
Utilities	1.0	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.9	0.1	10.7	1.8
Wholesale, Retail Trade	11.6	5.8	13.1	11.2	16.9	19.7	16.3	19.3
Hotels & Restaurants	5.0	0.5	5.0	0.7	5.9	1.5	7.2	1.8
Transport, Storage & Communication	-	-	1.9	1.6	4.0	3.9	4.3	5.6
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate, Business Services	18.1	16.4	22.7	19.5	18.8	21.4	19.9	25.2
Other Services								

Source: *Sixth Malaysia Plan* (1991: 417, Table 16.3) for 1970, 1980 and 1990, and *Seventh Malaysia Plan* (1996b: 623, Table 20.1) for 1995.

The distribution of new jobs across sectors among men and women resulted in significant changes in employment patterns. Even though the proportion of women in total employment increased from 31 per cent in 1970 to 33.7 per cent in 1995, their concentration in the agricultural sector decreased drastically over the period, from 68 per cent in 1970 to 15.9 per cent in 1995 (see Table 1.6). However, there were significant increases in four sectors, viz. the manufacturing sector, the wholesale and retail trade and hotel and restaurant sector, the finance and business services sector, and the services (community, social and personal service) sector. In particular, women's share of total employment in the manufacturing sector rose from 8 per cent in 1970 to over 30 per cent in 1995. Their share in the wholesale and retail trade and hotels and restaurant sector increased from 5.8 per cent to 19.3 per cent over the same period. On the whole, it can be seen that women have made great strides into the manufacturing, wholesale and retail

trade and hotels and restaurant and, to a lesser extent, finance, storage and communication sectors. Consistent with this change, their share of total employment in the manufacturing sector increased from 28 per cent in 1970 to 43.4 per cent in 1995. In the wholesale and retail trade and hotels and restaurant sectors, their share of total employment surged from 18.2 per cent to 37.6 per cent over the same period (see Table 1.7).

Table 1.7 **Percentage Distribution of Employment by Sector and Sex, 1970 - 1995**

Industry	1970		1980		1990		1995	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Agriculture & Forestry	62.0	38.0	61.0	39.0	65.6	34.4	71.6	28.4
Mining & Quarrying	87.4	12.6	89.7	10.3	87.1	12.9	88.1	11.9
Manufacturing	71.9	28.1	59.9	40.1	53.6	46.4	56.6	43.4
Utilities	94.7	5.3	92.5	7.5	93.1	6.9	87.6	12.4
Construction	93.3	6.7	92.9	7.1	95.7	4.3	92.2	7.8
Wholesale & Retail Trade, Hotel & Restaurants	81.1	18.2	70.7	29.3	61.4	38.6	62.4	37.6
Transport, Storage and Communications	95.7	4.3	93.7	6.3	88.9	11.1	88.8	11.2
Finance, Insurance, Real Estates & Business Services	-	-	70.5	29.5	65.8	34.2	59.7	40.3
Other Service	71.1	28.9	70.6	29.4	62.1	37.9	60.8	39.2

Source: *Sixth Malaysia Plan* (1991: 415, Table 16.1) for 1970, 1980 and 1990, and *Seventh Malaysia Plan* (1996b: 623, Table 20.2) for 1995.

1.5 Women's Employment by Occupation

Concurrent with the rapid changes that have taken place in the education and in the economy, there has been a rapid increase in female participation in the workforce and significant changes in the employment of women across occupations. However, the rapid increase in female participation in the workforce has been rather unevenly distributed across the occupational hierarchy. From 1970-1980, a total of about 1.7 million jobs were created. Of these, 1.2 million new jobs went to men. From the 1.2 million new jobs, 41.2 per cent were in production and related occupations, 1.6 per cent in the agricultural occupations, followed by 11.2 per cent and 10.5 per cent in the sales and related occupations and service occupations respectively. As for the women workers, out of over 0.5 million new jobs created, about a third were in the production and related occupations, followed by 25.3 per cent in clerical and related occupations, 15 per cent in the professional, technical and related occupations, 11.7 per cent in sales and related occupations and 10.1 per cent in service occupations (see Table 1.8).

Similar changes occurred over 1980-1990 period. Out of the 1 million new jobs that went to men, 42.4 per cent were in production and related occupations. This was followed by sales and related occupations as well as service occupations which accounted for 14.8 per cent and 12.8 per cent respectively. Among the women workers, the production and related occupations continued to account for about a third of the new jobs created. However, there was a big surge in service occupations (from 10.1 per cent in

1970-1980 to 24.5 per cent in 1980-1990 period). As for the agricultural and related occupations, there was a substantial decline over the same period.

Table 1.8 Distribution of New Jobs by Sex and Occupation

Occupational Group	1970-1980		1980-1990		1990-1995	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Professional, Technical & Related Workers	9.3	15.0	6.4	11.2	22.3	28.7
Administrative & Managerial Workers	2.1	0.8	7.2	1.2	15.5	6.7
Clerical & Related Workers	9.1	25.3	7.7	20.2	9.4	30.5
Sales and Related Workers	11.2	11.7	14.8	19.9	7.4	10.9
Service Workers	10.5	10.1	12.8	24.5	9.9	10.8
Agricultural Workers	16.1	5.1	9.0	-8.9	-38.1	-29.7
Production & Related Workers	41.2	32.0	42.2	31.9	73.6	42.0

Source: Calculated from *Third Malaysia Plan* (1976, Table 4.10: 68), *Fifth Malaysia Plan* (1986, Table 3.5: 102-103), *Sixth Malaysia Plan* (1991, Table 1.11: 36, Table 16.2: 416), *Seventh Malaysia Plan* (1996b, Table 4.2: 110, Table 20.3: 624)

Over the 1990-1995 period, 1.2 million new jobs were created. Out of the 661 thousand new jobs that went to men, 73.6 per cent were in production and related occupations, followed by 22.3 per cent in the professional, technical and related occupations, 15.5 per cent in administrative and managerial occupations, 9.9 per cent in service occupations and 9.4 per cent in clerical and related occupations. Among women workers, they continued to move into the production and related occupations (42.0 per cent), clerical and related occupations (30.5 per cent), professional technical and related

occupations (28.7 per cent). In the agricultural and related occupations, there was a drastic drop for both men and women.

Despite these strides in the number working, the expansion of women across occupational categories has not been even. From Table 1.9, it can be seen that women still tend to be bunched in menial jobs in a narrow range of occupations. For instance, the percentage of women in the production and related occupations surge from 10.4 per cent in 1970 to 26.5 per cent in 1995. In the clerical and related occupations, the percentage of women increased from 4.1 per cent in 1970 to 17.6 per cent in 1995.

Some interesting changes took place between males and females within the major occupational groups were revealed by the figures shown in Table 1.9. During the 1970-1995 period, a more drastic shift in the distribution occurred among female workers whereby the percentage employed in the agricultural and related occupations dropped from 60.8 per cent in 1970 to 15.8 per cent in 1995. As a result, there was a corresponding increase in the proportion engaged in non-agricultural occupations, particularly in the share of production and related workers category which increased by some 16 percentage points over the same period.

Table 1.9 Employment Distribution by Occupation and Sex, 1970 - 1995

Occupational Category	1970		1980		1985		1990		1995	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Professional Technical & Related Workers	4.6	5.3	6.4	8.5	6.8	9.1	6.4	9.4	8.4	13.5
Administrative & Managerial	1.0	0.1	1.4	0.3	3.2	0.6	2.8	0.6	4.4	1.9
Clerical & Related Workers	5.4	4.1	6.8	11.1	7.4	14.2	7.0	14.1	7.3	17.6
Sales & Related Workers	9.8	4.9	10.3	7.2	11.1	11.0	11.4	11.4	10.9	11.3
Service Workers	8.1	8.4	9.0	9.0	10.1	13.7	9.9	14.1	9.9	13.4
Agricultural Workers	47.6	60.8	35.9	46.3	28.7	33.7	29.4	28.1	20.9	15.8
Production & Related Workers	23.5	10.4	30.2	17.6	32.7	17.7	33.1	22.3	38.2	26.5

Note : M = Male F = Female

Source: *Sixth Malaysia Plan* (1991: 416, Table 16.2) for 1970, 1980, 1985 and 1990; and *Seventh Malaysia Plan* (1996b: 624, Table 20.3) for 1995.

Even though 13.5 per cent of women were in professional and technical occupations, the majority of them were in teaching and nursing professions (Nagaraj, 1995: 27). For instance, teaching and nursing alone accounted for over 80 per cent of females in the professional, scientific, technical and related occupational group (Chia, 1987: 184). The participation of women in the higher professions like doctors, engineers and lawyers remained low, albeit increasing. This trend can also be seen in the administrative and managerial category where women's participation constituted only 1.9 per cent of total employment in 1995.

1.6 Female-Male Earnings Differentials

As can be seen from the discussion in previous sections, it is evident that Malaysian women have achieved great progress. They have made considerable in-roads into education. Their penetration into the labour force becomes more obvious in the manufacturing and services sectors, as well as in the managerial and professional occupations. However, it must be noted that women were largely found in low skilled, labour-intensive jobs in the agricultural sector, and low-paying, semi-skilled, assembly-type production operations in the industrial sector. Women workers were not only concentrated in low-paying jobs, they often, for one reason or another, received lower earnings than their men counterparts. Table 1.10 shows the ratios of earnings of males and females in selected occupations for 1974, 1980 and 1990. From the data it is obvious that female workers received lower earnings than their male counterparts in most of the occupations. Although the male-female wage differentials have narrowed, and in some instances females earned more than males, female workers continued, on the whole, to earn less than their male counterparts.

**Table 1.10 Average Female Monthly Earnings As a Percentage of Males
Earnings in Selected Occupations in the Manufacturing
Subsector, 1974 - 1990**

	1974	1980	1990
<u>Rubber Products</u>			
Production Supervisor & Foreman	57.9	52.5	86.2
Rubber Moulding Press Operator	45.1	53.1	72.4
<u>Printing and Publishing</u>			
Production Supervisor & Foreman	-	70.4	75.1
Hand Compositor	61.3	59.9	111.1
Book Binder	60.1	47.2	-
<u>Plywood And Particle Board</u>			
Production Supervisor & Foreman	30.8	56.6	67.0
Veneer Cutter	-	75.5	-
<u>Textiles</u>			
Production Supervisor and Foreman	66.2	69.7	75.2
Thread and Yam Spinner	85.6	101.7	93.8
Fibre Rover	88.5	87.0	103.0
Machine Cloth Weaver	126.9	74.7	111.0
<u>Electronic</u>			
Supervisor & Foreman	55.5	62.1	82.8
Production Operator	-	97.4	82.7
<u>Rubber Latex Processing</u>			
Rubber Processing Worker	72.3	72.3	73.1
Sheet Rubber Maker	-	77.3	102.3
Rubber Sheet Clipper	75.3	-	-

Source : *Sixth Malaysia Plan* (1991: 419, Table 16.4).

1.7 Conclusion

Malaysian women have achieved great advancement in many aspects. As a result of the government's consistent promotion of women's participation in education, women have made considerable in-roads into education which expedited their participation in the labour force. Rapid economic development, in particular the development of certain key industries, has also contributed to significant changes in female labour force participation and employment. In spite of all these achievements, women still lag behind their male counterparts in terms of pay. Since the beginning of the 1980s, there has been a gradual narrowing of the female-male earnings gap, and this could have enhanced female participation rate. However, in some sectors the gaps remain wide. This may be the result of gender-based prejudices and the status of women in the labour market.