

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **Preliminary Findings**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

Having described the objectives and methodology of this study, the data set that will be used for the purpose of this study is described in this chapter. Section 3.2 provides a brief description of the Alor Gajah industrial area. Subsequent sections deal with various aspects of the respondents. Section 3.3 provides a description of spouse's occupation; section 3.4 describes the characteristics of respondent's children; section 3.5 presents the distribution of respondents by place of origin; section 3.6 highlights age distribution by sex; section 3.7 briefly discusses the educational background; section 3.8, 3.9, 3.10 and 3.11 provide some insights into the job characteristics; section 3.12 highlights workers' skill composition; section 3.13 discusses indicators of labour force attachment; section 3.14 and 3.15 describe respondents mode of transport to work and establishment characteristics respectively; and section 3.16 summarises the key points.

#### **3.2 The District of Alor Gajah**

To begin with, some brief characteristics of Alor Gajah District are useful as a backdrop. Alor Gajah District is the second largest district among the three districts in the State of Malacca. The study focuses on Alor Gajah Town because it is the sub-district

where most factories, and therefore production workers in the manufacturing sector can be found. Alor Gajah Town had a population of 9,836<sup>1</sup> in 1991, which is the highest among all the sub-districts. A striking difference between Alor Gajah sub-district and other sub-districts is that, the Kelemak Industrial Zone (which is about 5 kilometers away from Alor Gajah Town) has the highest number of registered manufacturing firms. In Alor Gajah District, there are 82 companies, of these 59 are located within Alor Gajah Town. The manufacturing activities carried out in this area can be divided into seven main industries. The seven industries are:

- a) food and beverages industry (ISIC 31),
- b) chemical products industry (ISIC 356),
- c) rubber products industry (ISIC 355),
- d) fabricated metal products industry (ISIC 381),
- e) wood and wood products industry (ISIC 33),
- f) textile, garments and leather industry (ISIC 32), and
- g) electrical machinery, apparatus, appliances and supplies industry (ISIC 383)

The survey, conducted in Alor Gajah Kelemak Industrial Zone in April 1995, yielded a total of 200 respondents of whom fifty per cent are male workers. In terms of ethnicity, 55 per cent are Malays, 16 per cent Chinese and 29 per cent Indians (see Table 3.1).

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<sup>1</sup>This figure is based on the 1991 census.

**Table 3.1      Distribution of Respondents by Ethnicity and Sex**

<b>Ethnic</b>	<b>Male Respondents</b>	<b>Female Respondents</b>
Malay	45	65
Chinese	17	15
Indian	38	20
Total	100	100

### **3.3      Spouse Characteristics**

Table 3.2 shows the distribution of employed spouses by occupations. Ninety-three per cent of the spouses of female respondents are employed compared to 88 per cent of that of the male respondents. From the table, it can be observed that spouses of male respondents tend to be crowded into semi-skilled (26 per cent) and unskilled occupations (30 per cent). On the other hand, spouses of female respondents are more evenly spread out across occupations. 21 per cent are semi-skilled production workers, 16 per cent are in clerical and related occupations, 15 per cent in service and related occupations, 12 per cent are skilled production workers, 7 per cent in professional, scientific and technical occupations and 6 per cent are semi-skilled production workers.

**Table 3.2 Percentage Distribution of Employed Spouses by Occupation**

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Spouses of Male Respondents</b>	<b>Spouses of Female Respondents</b>
Prof. &. Technical	1	7
Managerial & Executive	1	1
Clerical & Related Workers	3	16
Sales And Related Workers	4	5
Service Workers	6	15
Skilled Production Workers	8	12
Semi-skilled Production Workers	26	21
Unskilled Production Workers	30	6
Retired	9	10
Not employed	12	7
Number of Cases	100	100

### **3.4 Number of Children**

Table 3.3 presents the characteristics of the respondents' children. Among the male respondents, about 60 per cent of the children have yet to enter school; 28 per cent were in primary school; 7.7 per cent in secondary; and 2 per cent in pre-university or college level. The corresponding figures for female respondents are 32 per cent, 33 per cent, 26 per cent, 1 per cent, respectively.

**Table 3.3      Distribution of Respondents' Children  
by School Level**

	Male Respondents	Female Respondents
No Schooling	93	89
Primary	43	93
Secondary	12	73
Pre-University	3	3
Working	5	22

### 3.5      Percentage Distribution of Respondents by Place of Origin

Table 3.4 reports the percentage distribution of respondents by place of origin. From the table, it can be seen that more of the female workers (70 per cent) are from Alor Gajah than male workers (58 per cent). Of the female workers, 10 per cent were from Gadek, 7 per cent from Rumbia and 6 percent from Masjid Tanah. On the other hand, of the male workers, 14 per cent from Gadek, 11 per cent from Tampin, and 5 per cent from Simpang Empat.

**Table 3.4      Percentage Distribution of Respondents by Place of Origin**

Place of Origin	Male Respondents	Female Respondents
Alor Gajah	58	70
Gadek	14	10
Tampin	11	3
Rumbia	7	7
Simpang Empat	5	3
Masjid Tanah	3	6
Lendu	2	1
Number of cases	100	100

### 3.6 Age Distribution by Sex

Table 3.5 reports the distribution of respondents by age cohorts and sex. As can be seen from Table 3.5, male workers in the sample tend to be younger than their female counterparts. Sixty-three per cent of the male workers are less than 30 years old as compared to 32 per cent of the females. On the other hand, the percentage of males age 45 and above is smaller (4 per cent) than the females (11 per cent). In terms of mean age, female workers (34.8 years old) were also found to be older than their male counterparts (30.3 years old). The overall age distribution is, however, slightly bias in favour of younger male workers. This bias, may be due to the fact that younger males have been oversampled.

**Table 3.5      Distribution of Respondents by Age Groups and Sex**

<b>Age Group</b>	<b>Male Respondents</b>	<b>Female Respondents</b>
20 - 24	21	8
25 - 29	42	24
30 - 34	13	17
35 - 39	10	20
40 - 44	10	20
45 - 49	1	8
50 - 54	2	2
55 and above	1	1
Number of Cases	100	100

### 3.7 Educational Distribution by Sex

Education was measured in two ways. First, as a continuous variable reflecting the total number of years of schooling (S), and second, by the highest level of educational attainment. If an individual repeated a grade, it is not taken into account to determine the number of years of schooling. The mean of 8.35 years of schooling implies that an average worker has had no more than lower secondary education.

Two per cent of the respondents had no education, 36 per cent had primary education, 41 per cent had lower secondary education, 20 per cent had upper secondary education, and 1.5 per cent had higher education. The breakdown of the respondents by educational attainment and sex is depicted in Table 3.6. For educational level at primary and below, there is a greater proportion of females (49%) than males (26%). On the other hand, at the upper secondary level, females outnumbered the males. In terms of mean years of schooling, males (8.9 years) reported a higher average than the females (7.8 years). It should be noted that the male respondents are generally younger than the female respondents.

**Table 3.6 Percentage Distribution of Respondents by Education and Sex**

Level of Education	Male Respondents	Female Respondents
No schooling	0	4
Some primary	11	18
Primary	15	27
Lower secondary	55	27
Upper secondary	17	23
HSC	2	1
Number of Cases	100	100

### **3.8 Work History**

In this study, an individual's work history since leaving school is split into segments: years of work experience prior to working for one's current employer, and tenure with the current employer. From Table 3.7, it can be seen that men and women differ considerably both in the amount of time they worked and in the continuity of their work experience. Compared with men, women had, on average, 2 years less labour force experience before the current employer. In terms of tenure on current job, men again registered longer experience than their female counterparts. It is obvious that even though women tend to be older (see section 3.6), they have less work experience. This implies that they either started work later or have weaker labour market attachment.

**Table 3.7 Distribution of Respondent's Experience (Mean)**

	Male Respondents	Female Respondents
Years of work experience before present employer	6.40	4.28
Tenure on current post	6.15	4.15

### 3.9 Employment Turnover

The extent of job mobility as measured by the number of employer changes is shown in Table 3.8. It can be seen that only 21 men and 27 women have continued in the same job (employer) through out their employment. Among the workers who have changed job, 55 per cent of the female workers as against 24 per cent of the male workers are still with their second employer. Among mobile female workers, 26 per cent changed employers twice while the percentage among male workers is 44 per cent. For those who have changed employers three or more times, male workers again outnumbered female workers. These data point to the fact that male workers are more mobile than their female counterparts. In other words, there is a higher degree of association between a female worker's job turnover and experience than there is between a male worker's job turnover and experience (see Table 3.9). As a summary, the average number of employer change is 1.92 among male workers and 1.87 among female workers.

Table 3.8 Distribution of Workers by Number of Times Changed Employers

No. of times changed Employers	Male Respondents	Female Respondents
No change	21	27
Once	19	40
Twice	35	19
Three or more times	25	14
Number of Cases	100	100
Average number of employers changes	1.92	1.87

**Table 3.9      Percentage Distribution of Workers Who Changed Employers by Experience**

Job Turnover	Years of Experience					
	<u>Male Respondents</u>			<u>Female Respondents</u>		
	1-5	6-10	>10	1-5	6-10	>10
0	35.7	33.3	8.0	41.0	15.4	20.0
1-2	57.1	47.2	58.0	51.3	76.9	54.3
>3	7.1	19.4	34.0	7.7	7.7	25.7

### 3.10    Job Training

Training<sup>2</sup> is an important mechanism available to workers to achieve upward mobility in employment. In our survey, workers were asked whether they have had attended any training with the past and current employer. From Table 3.10, it is apparent that the number of workers who have had access to training programmes is rather small. Only 27 per cent of male workers have received training at least once. On the other hand, only 14 per cent for female workers have had at least one instance of training. Most of the training were in-service training, i.e. provided within the establishments. Training duration varies from a few days to over 3 months. Among male workers who had had training, 7 per cent received training lasting less than 7 days. Thirty per cent received training of between 7 to 30 days. Thirty-three per cent received training between 30 days

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<sup>2</sup> In this study, training refers to on-the-job training which includes general and specific training provided by the past and current employer.

and 3 months, and 30 per cent with more than 3 months training. Of the female workers who received formal training, about 21 per cent received training lasting less than 7 days. 43 per cent have received training of between 7 to 30 days. Thirty-six per cent received training between 30 days and 3 months. From Table 3.10, it can be seen that more males than females have received outside training and also longer periods of training.

**Table 3.10      Distribution of Workers by Incidence of Training Received**

<b>Incidence of Training</b>	<b>Male Respondents</b>	<b>Female Respondents</b>
Percentage of workers with training at current or past employer	27	14
<b><u>Location of Training</u></b>		
Within the establishment	19	12
Outside the establishment	8	2
<b><u>Length of training (Both within and outside the establishment)</u></b>		
Less than a week	2	3
One week to a month	8	6
One month to three month	9	5
Three month or more	8	0

### **3.11      Promotion Prospects**

Once employed, do women have equal chances of getting promoted? Table 3.11 shows more of the males (29 per cent) than females (14 per cent) have been promoted<sup>3</sup> at least once in their current employment. Of the male workers, 21 per cent had been promoted once, and 8 per cent more than once. The corresponding figures for female

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<sup>3</sup> By promotion, we mean movement from one job designation to another.

workers are 13 per cent and 1 per cent respectively. It seems there is a sex differential with regard to promotion. This is supported by the Chi-Square value of 3.48 which is significant at 10 per cent level.

**Table 3.11     Distribution of Workers Having Career Mobility During Current Employment**

Career Mobility	Male Respondents	Female Respondents
Workers who received promotion once during current employment	21	13
Workers who received promotion more than once during current employment	8	1

### **3.12     Skill Composition**

Table 3.12 shows the distribution of workers by skill levels. However, in this study, it should be noted that the classification of workers into skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled jobs is based on the following definition. A skilled production worker is defined as someone who has received formal training for at least three months in a specific job or who has more than 5 years of experience in the given craft. A semi-skilled worker is defined as one who received training for a period of two weeks to three months or who has had more than one year but less than 5 years of experience in that particular craft. Unskilled production workers are those who have received less than two weeks of training in the job they are performing (Lee and Sivanathiran, 1992). From this

classification<sup>4</sup>, it is interesting to note that the skilled production workers comprised 23 per cent of the male workers and 10 per cent of the female workers in the sample. In the semi-skilled level, the number of male workers is almost double that of female workers. On the unskilled category, women workers are over-represented, i.e., nearly, four out of five of the women workers surveyed are unskilled production workers.

**Table 3.12 Percentage Distribution of Workers by Skill Categories**

Skill Categories	Male Respondents	Female Respondents	All
Skilled workers	23	10	16.5
Semi-skilled workers	20	11	15.5
Unskilled workers	57	79	68.0

### 3.13 Measures of Work Commitment

Table 3.13 provides background information on respondents' labour force attachment. As these figures show, relative to married men, married women on the average, missed more work due to the illness of others in 1994. As shown in Table 3.13, women also missed more days of work due to their own illness. Menstruation could be a contributing factor to women's higher absenteeism. In terms of restrictions placed on job location and hours, it can be seen that, a larger proportion of women than men limited job

<sup>4</sup> This classification follows the ILO/ARTEP definition (Lee and Sivananthiran, 1992: 40).

hours and locations. As for those who plan to stop work, it is interesting to note that 25 per cent of the female workers plan to stop work in future as compared to only 2 per cent of the male workers.

**Table 3.13 Mean Values of Indicators of Labour Force Attachment**

Indicators of labour force attachment	Male Respondents	Female Respondents
Days of work missed due to illness of others in 1994	1.03	3.09
Days of work missed due to own illness 1994	1.82	3.14
Placed limits on job location	0.06	0.82
Placed limits on job hours	0.10	0.96
Plans to stop work	0.02	0.25

### **3.14 Commuting to Work**

As discussed earlier, the Kelemak Industrial Zone is situated about 5 kilometers away from Alor Gajah Town, we therefore sought information on workers' mode of transportation to work. Table 3.14 shows that the majority (83 per cent) of the male workers commuting to work have their own mode of transport (this includes, bicycle, motorcycle and car). For the female respondents, as many as 60 per cent use company transport compared to only 14 per cent of the male respondents.

**Table 3.14      Workers Who Daily Commute to Work**

Mode of Transport	Male Respondents	Female Respondents
Own transport	83	32
Company transport	14	60
Public transport	3	8
Total	100	100

### **3.15      Characteristics of the Establishments**

Table 3.15 shows the structure of employment by type of industry. It is obvious that the distributions are very different between the sexes. Among the male workers, 22 per cent are in the food manufacturing industry, 20 per cent in fabricated metal products industry, 12 per cent in chemical products industry, 3 per cent in wood and wood products industry, 10 per cent each electrical and electronic products industry, 9 per cent in rubber and 8 per cent in plastic products industry, 3 per cent in footwears and wearing apparel industry, and 8 per cent in paper products industry. As for the females, the table shows they are mostly employed in food manufacturing, and electrical and electronic products industries (24 per cent and 17 per cent respectively), followed by rubber products industry, footwears and wearing apparel industry and rubber products industry (15 per cent each).

**Table 3.15     Percentage Distribution of Respondents by Industry and Sex**

<b>Industry</b>	<b>Male Respondents</b>	<b>Female Respondents</b>	<b>All</b>
Food Manufacturing	22	24	23
Footwears and wearing apparel	8	15	11.5
Wood and Wood Products	3	3	3
Paper Products	8	10	9
Rubber Products	9	15	12
Plastic Products	8	4	6
Chemical Products	12	8	10
Fabricated Metal Products	20	4	12
Electrical & Electronic Product	10	17	13.5
Number of Cases	100	100	100

### **3.16     Concluding Remarks**

The above discussion on the profile of the respondents provides some important insights into the characteristics of married production workers in Alor Gajah. First, female respondents tend to be older and less educated than the male respondents. In spite of the fact that the female respondents are relatively older, they registered a shorter work experience than the males. About 50 per cent of the female respondents possessed primary-level or less education compared to about one quarter of the males. Second, as far as the skill level of the respondents is concerned, it is found that a larger proportion of the female respondents were found to be concentrated in the lowest level of the

Production category. In terms of job turnover rates, we found that the male respondents are more mobile than the female respondents. Turning to training, besides receiving higher incidence of training, male workers also registered a higher probability of receiving outside training and longer training period. Third, there is a sex differential with regard to promotion. The number of male respondents who had promotion at least once is double that of the female respondents. This seems to suggest that women's prospects of improving their position appears to be minimal, as training programmes are largely limited to short, on-the-job sessions and less than 15 per cent of the women have received promotions.

One other important finding here is that a very large proportion of the female respondents tend to place restrictions on job location and job hours. Last but not least, this study also found that female respondents missed more days of work than the male respondents due to own illness as well as illness of others.