

## OCCUPATIONAL MOBILITY AND ACEHNESE IMMIGRANTS: CASE IN MALAYSIA

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### Abstrak

Mobilitas kerja dikalangan pekerja imigran Aceh di Malaysia merupakan objek kajian yang menarik mengingat jumlah imigran, sejarah dan dinamika kebijakan pemerintah Malaysia juga masyarakat dalam merespon keberadaan imigran asal Aceh. Tulisan ini bertujuan untuk menelaah mobilitas kerja atau okupasi pekerja imigran dengan menggunakan empat perspektif yaitu perspektif asimilasi, pluralisme budaya, human capital, social capital dan perspektif struktural. Metode penelitian yang digunakan kuantitatif dengan teknik pengumpulan datanya melalui kuisioner. Penelitian ini menemukan bahwa status pekerjaan dan mobilitas vertikal secara sangat mendasar ditentukan oleh human capital seperti etos kerja, pengalaman atau profesionalisme. Secara mendasar mobilitas pekerjaan dipengaruhi oleh penerimaan pasar terhadap tenaga kerja asing dan kemampuan untuk berinteraksi dengan nilai-nilai masyarakat lokal. Peran penting kolaraborasi dan kerjasama dengan saling memberikan informasi sesama pekerja migran terlihat dalam mobilitas horizontal dan mobilitas spatial mereka dalam memperbaiki status pekerjaan.

**Kata kunci: Mobilitas kerja, mobilitas vertikal, mobilitas horizontal, pekerja migran,**

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The flow of Indonesian immigrants to Malaysia has been noticed since as early as 1960's and 1970's due to the open policy adopted by Malaysia to meet its acute shortage of labor force in its multi-sectoral developmental activities (Zehadul, 1999). However, in the mid 1980's, it changes from a steady stream to a flood (Graeme, 2004). The major cause for the change was the New Economic Policy (NEP) adopted by the Malaysian Parliament and rapid industrialization process.

The policy laid much emphasis on export-oriented industrialization, public sector expansion and agricultural development. As the result, it creates numerous new jobs especially in industrial and public sectors and thus drew rural dwellers to the cities.

It created major shortage in certain sectors, especially plantation agriculture (palm oil, rubber and cocoa), construction, service, particularly domestic work, and lately in manufacturing sectors (James, 1992; Sidney, 2000). These sectors became the major attraction for Indonesian immigrant workers as local labors decline to take up these jobs (Sidney, 2000). This state persists and Indonesian workers continue to dominate these sectors till now.

According to Department of immigration of Malaysia, for example, in the late 1990s alone the documented foreign workers in Malaysia consisted of 36 per cent Indonesians. In domestic service sector, out of the total 111,750 domestic worker, 79,169 were Indonesians. Plantations employed a total workforce of 137,956 and 108,778 were Indonesians. The construction sector employed 133,414 workers and 94,561 were Indonesians. The service sector employed 12,485 workers and 3,062 were Indonesians. And finally, the manufacturing sector employed about 107,148 and 30,568 were Indonesians (Graeme, 2004). Almost all of them engage in unskilled and semiskilled jobs in all mentioned sectors (Graeme, 2004; Sidney, 2000)

Furthermore, the recent steady stream of immigrant to the country legally and illegally, creates tough competition in finding jobs. Their absorptions within a larger economic and societal context and their abilities to incorporate have then been a major issue following the shift of recruitment policies and systems for Indonesian immigrants. The government has declared "to prefer Indonesian immigrants as the last to be hired and the first to be fired" (Sidney, 2000).

The immigrants face tighter control from governmental bodies and, at the same time, have to compete not only with the locals but also with other immigrants. It drags them into hostile atmosphere where they face unemployment or underemployment, and have to change their jobs frequently. Due to this critical situation, as Jones observes, they drift to cities and engage themselves in different occupations other than those of their interests (Sidney, 2000). They get involve in petty trading, self-employment and other soft jobs which are not within ethnic enclave business (Kaur, 2005).

The considerable numbers of Indonesian immigrants are now involved in business such as retailing and grocery in Kula Lumpur. It marks immigrant occupational mobility out of these major sectors (Kaur, 2005). Hence, the Indonesian workers represent as the vanguard of low occupations which require little or no skill at all (Ramasamy, 2004).

Researchers in this area reveal that this low occupational status is widely observed due to segmentation of the labor market in the country. The present of wide and endemic segment of informal economic sectors which are left by natives remain the threshold for immigrants (Edwards, 1999). Further, social exclusion reinforces the marginalization process in the labor market to gain its momentum to force the immigrant worker to remain in marginal occupations.

Besides, the research in international setting indicates that the very act of migration itself gives social and economic disadvantages to immigrants in entering new

society. Thus, crossing international boarder reduces the immigrants' economic status and well-being (Chiswick, 1986; Kabbaro et al., 2014; Masrizal. et all, 2019). The new immigrants encounter many difficulties in the process of integration into the new labor market (Borjas, 1985; Lakey, 2003). These studies also show that the new arrivals face difficulty in finding employment suitable to their professional qualifications and attaining adequate economic returns. These disadvantages are greatly due to lack of information of the host country, by information here is meant all kind of information including skill, recruitment of worker and the facilities provided by the government (Chiswick, 1986). Lack of social network or limited acquaintance with the host society is another factor that contributes to the low occupational status of new arrivals. This obviously includes language proficiency, as well as lack of personal contact (Granovetter, 1973; Prem et al., 2020)

The tendency of employer from the country of origin to provide biased information to their counterpart in the host country pertaining immigrant's true productivity further reduce the possibility of immigrants to attain high occupation. It is highlighted in other studies (Katz, Eliakim, Stark, 1987). It, in fact, affects upward and downward occupational mobility in different ways. As time in the new country elapses and the shortcoming of immigration is anticipated to diminish and the trend of occupational mobility exhibits a U-shape curve (Chiswick, 1986)

Various groups of international migrants experience different kind of disadvantages (Cabezudo et al., 2012) The disadvantages are greatly contributed to the diversity of the background of the immigrants themselves such as countries they come from. The country of origin imbeds specific socio-cultural, and specifically structural and ecological determinants of immigrant's ability to adapt with the new country. It, in return, affects socioeconomic achievement in the receiving society as well as immigrants themselves (Ryan & Deci, n.d.)

Economic integration, then, is found in the form of entrepreneurial activities or self-employment and ethnic niches (Evans, 1989; Wati, 2019). The other important factor is the treatment and sympathy that is showed by the host society (Boyd, 1984; Dufour et al., 2019). Other research show that the result of the migration processes, economic dislocation and career disruption depends upon timing of entry to the host country and age at time of migration. Thus, in fact, it influences labor market incorporation more than ethnicity per se (Deborah, Cobb-Clark., Kossoudji, 1996; Khairulyadi et al., 2021; Kossoudji, 1989). Moreover, the area of settlement that exposes the immigrants to different labor market condition and, of course, opportunity greatly affects occupational and earning pattern of immigrants (Waxman, 2001)

These disadvantages shape occupational status and mobility of immigrants in the host country. However, occupational mobility involves more factors associated with migration processes that are inter alia, the culture of origin and destination, motivations for migration, legal status of immigrants, immigration policy adopted in the host country, availability of ethnic and peers, and the immigrant's family composition. The

present study proposes to examine the determinants of occupational mobility among Indonesian immigrants in Malaysia with special reference to Acehnese.

Indonesian immigrants constitute the bulk of foreign workers in Malaysia. They are considered the traditional supplier of foreign worker to the country. Their inflow to the country has been the landmark of demographic phenomena in the region. Despite all that, their economic achievement in the larger economy of Malaysia is still depicted as undesirable and involving in the most marginal occupation (Ramasamy, 2004).

Occupation is one of the reflections of one's socio-economic achievement. It influences a wide range of outcomes from health to wealth. Kind of occupation that one holds mirrors his or her position in the hierarchy of labour market. Therefore, our understanding of these phenomena is integral as success in the labor market may correlate with other outcome of interest, such as the probability of assimilation. It may also be associated with subsequent probabilities of self or employment in ethnic enclave business.

It is the fact that some immigrants possess high motivation and are self-determined to dissolve economic disadvantages. There are also evidences that immigrants are trapped in the feeling of alienation and loneliness due to socio-economic degradations. Migration entails set of engulfing life events (losses, change, conflict, and demand), (Braga & Scervini, 2017). It is true in the case of Indonesian immigrants in Malaysia. Previous researches about occupational status of Indonesian immigrant demonstrate that they face desperate occupational conditions. They are located in very low paying sectors, subject to long hours of work, and harassment by employer and officials. Their income is not comparable to income received by locals. They work and live under undesirable conditions (Ramasamy, 2004). The vast majority is left to take jobs that require little skill or no skill at all: jobs that are not preferred by locals. In short, the involvement of migrant labours in Malaysian economy could be described as primitive production, production organized not so much based on skill but rather of the basis of control. The present Indonesian immigrants have been viewed by local labours as a threat because they take job opportunity from them. Locals also point finger to immigrants due to their low wage.

In the light of the above discussion, it is evident that immigrants experience very low socio-economic status. However, few studies have been conducted on the nature of occupational mobility among Indonesian immigrants in Malaysia. Indonesian Immigrants face the daunting task of competing with the native-born for jobs within Malaysian labour market where the native-born persons' skills are likely to be more valued than those of the immigrants, and labour market institutions are likely to be designed to benefit the native-born more than the immigrants. Finding and keeping a job is an integral part of the labour market adjustment process and an immigrant's ability to do so will have direct implications for their current and future economic well being. Thus, this research is devoted to understand the determinants of occupational mobility among them with special reference to Acehnese.

The study of occupational mobility among Acehnese immigrants raises certain questions:

1. What is important determinants that, according to respondents, significantly lead to the horizontal and vertical mobility among Indonesian immigrants.
2. How often do they change their occupation?
3. What forces them to shift from one occupation to the other?

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

The existing literature of occupational mobility of immigrants shows that there is no single theoretical perspective that enables to explain the complexity of subject matter and aspects related to it. Each theory provides, at best, a partial explanation.

The study of occupational mobility has been a profound interest for sociologists and economists. Experts from both disciplines link the phenomenon of occupational mobility as the result of the interplay of various variables. Some are related to economic calculations, while others are related to broader sociological factors. Though the present study is related to sociological variables, yet it cannot afford to overlook economic factors. Thus, in this section, various theoretical perspectives are examined.

### **Assimilation Perspective**

Assimilation perspectives have been one of the most influential explanations for immigrants' ethnic integration and upward mobility. This perspective explains that labor market is basically a single hierarchy which most immigrants enter at the bottom and slowly move up as they become acculturated. Assimilation perspective presumes that the occupational mobility takes place in linear way with duration of stay and the level of market integration of immigrants into the mainstream.

Milton Gordon articulates that immigrants become acculturated and discard their original language, tradition and values if they integrate into the host society. The theory demonstrates that upon the arrival, new immigrants face disadvantages due to their lack of language of host society, lack of an education (or education that can be used in the host society), and relatively little knowledge of the host society. Immigrants, in their early stay, engage in marginal sector or low status in the ethnic economy, low wage jobs in the larger economy. Immigrants then move into higher status jobs as they become more acculturated and integrated resulted from experiences they gain in the host society.

Immigrants' spatial mobility resulted from the sifting of job place drives the immigrants out of the immigrants' enclave community into more integrated neighborhoods with the locals. This movement essentially facilitates immigrant to engage in new jobs other than traditional immigrants jobs. This straight line occupational mobility, however, is modified by Gans. Gans in his modification of the assimilations observes that the acculturation of immigrants into the mainstream, which take place in the long run, does not follow a predictable straight line. He notes that the occupational mobility, which is resulted from integration and adaptation processes of

immigrants, is a variable which follows a “bumpy Line,” in the process of adjusting to different circumstances. This bumpy line moves toward assimilation and upward mobility, but at no predictable pace as proposed by earlier theorists.

The view that immigrants inevitably have to acquire new culture in order to move upward as proposed by Gordon is challenged by Glazer and Moynihan. They identify the phenomena of “unmeltable ethnics” that shows the existence of cultural pluralism and complete assimilation is not possible. They then emphasize cultural pluralism as a more likely explanation. They observe cultural differences among various ethnic and racial groups and find that these differences will not be entirely eradicated as the groups become integrated.

### **Cultural Pluralism Perspective**

Cultural Pluralism explains that immigrants do not simply move from the bottom of occupational structure to the higher one in the host society unilaterally. They do not merely shift their culture of origin to mainstream culture of the host society. Gans proposes several distinct trajectories that new immigrants can follow. These paths include downward as well as upward mobility. Diversity of the outcome of immigrant occupational mobility is the result of stratified and unequal society coupled with human capital factors. The theory asserts that immigrants choose which segment of market they have to assimilate. They, further, delineate that immigrant can go through straight path to move upwardly as predicted by classical assimilation, but they can also assimilate into urban underclass leading to poverty and downward mobility.

### **Human Capital Perspective**

The assimilationists focus on the relation between the level of acculturation and upward mobility. In contrast to that, human capital theory lays stress on individual human capital characteristics. The theory asserts that personal ability and quality is accounted for upward and downward occupational mobility and occupational attainment.

Human capital theory stresses on the centrality of formal education and on-job-skill as crucial factors offering the occupational mobility. It demonstrates that immigrant faces disadvantages in the labor market due to the absence of formal education, or education which suit the host society. This further suggests that immigrants move to higher paid occupation if they improve their human capital. In other word, immigrants’ reluctance to invest in education and on-job-skill hamper their upward mobility.

The other factor that the theorists of human capital emphasize is the level of transferability of the education and on-job skill acquired in the home country. Chiswick observes that the level of transferability of education and skills of immigrants help them a great deal to overcome their disadvantages upon the arrival in the host labor market. It is pertinent in relation with immigrants’ first occupation in the host labor market. He

asserts that immigrants with higher transferable human capital will enjoy higher occupational status and low mobility rate, where as immigrants with low transferable human capital will get lower occupational status and higher occupational mobility. Chiswick, in this context, takes into account the origin of immigrants, and their destination and the educational background. He observes that immigrants whose education and skills are resemble with those of the host country experience upward occupational mobility as time passes.

### **Structural Perspective**

The structural perspective considers structural factor both as barrier and channel for upward mobility. It concentrates on structural determinants and conditions which also affect immigrant's ability to become integrated into existing labor markets and into the broader society. Structural theory argues that the propensity of immigrant's occupational mobility lies in structural endowment in labor market. It is a dual labor market perspective and asserts that labor market is segmented rather than as a single system. According to it the labor market is segmented into core sector and periphery in accordance with different sets of economic system, required technology and working conditions. The core sector offers occupation with relatively high wages and good working conditions and a promise of movement within the sector, the periphery covers those occupations which are low wage, unstable, labor intensive and with little room for mobility.

However, dual labor market perspective is challenged by perspective of "middlemen" of minority. Their studies show that the involvement in periphery sectors does not always associate with a lack of mobility. Immigrants overcome their disadvantages sometime by creating economic opportunities by the immigrant community itself. Ethnic enclave is the obvious evidence to this argument as asserted by Portes and his colleagues. According to them the ethnic enclave gives immigrant many positive features which may promote upward mobility through self-employment in the ethnic community. It is said that employment within ethnic community is simply a kind of separate economy and, therefore, some immigrants may move into the larger economy as they gain the knowledge of the operation of larger economy.

### **Social Capital Perspective**

This perspective discusses occupational mobility as the result of the present social capital which appears in the form of social networks. Lin asserts that the presence of social capital among the other wider resources, which can be used to assist the employer to assess information of occupational opportunity, determines greatly the likelihood of moving upwardly.

Social capital has been defined differently according to its purpose. However, Lin defines social capital as the resources that are accessible through one's direct and indirect ties and stresses the role of information and influence. According to Lin, the

role of influence outstrips the individual character of job seekers. This crucial role of influence, as Lin further says, appears in the form of the ability of job seekers in reaching up the status hierarchy and therefore obtains help from well-placed contacts. Lin suggests that the pattern of mobility is depended on being connected with “who are better able to exert influence on positions whose actions may benefit ego's interest”. These views imply that job seekers are expected to benefit from possessing social capital. It appears in the form of personal acquaintances and civic associates whose information, influence, and relational obligations can connect them with resources including employment opportunities.

To explain the structure and function of social capital, theorists formulate it in social network theory. The theorists convince that social network is the web of interpersonal and inter-corporate connections that can be analyzed according to characteristics including size, composition, intimacy, density, reciprocity, and the content of the resources exchanged. By virtue of contains and substances, social networks help immigrant to overcome disadvantages in the host society. Granovetter explicitly formulates the theory by explaining that network that are large in size and contain a variety of close and weak (distant) acquaintances are hypothesized as providing access to the greatest number of resources (including job contacts), while networks that are limited in size and diversity can constrain resource mobilization and opportunity mobility. Network analysts assert that close friends are most likely to share similar social worlds, while more distant acquaintances often have connections to somewhat different social environments and opportunities.

### **3. METHOD**

#### **Study Population**

Population, according to Babbie (Babbie, 1989), is the specified aggregation of study elements which is defined in line with the purpose of the study such as specification according to age, citizenship, residences whereas a study population is that aggregation of elements from which the sample is actually selected. In the light of the above statement, the researcher selected sub-district Chow Kit where the bulk of Indonesian immigrant workers pursue different occupations.

The selection was restricted to those who have legal permit and other authorization issued by the immigration department. Since there is a lack of data pertaining to their actual number and the places of residence, the research adopted snowball technique to select the assumed number of respondents.

#### **Sampling Technique**

The sample of respondents was limited to 100 male Immigrants due to time and money constraints. Lacking of information of their actual number, the selection of the sample was undertaken by the help of initial respondents whose name and whereabouts have been obtained prior to research. In the other words, the researcher used snowball



technique to select the sample. This selection was started by selecting some initial respondents whom the researcher has known and established rapport with them. The initial respondents were asked to select other immigrants to be included as the sample and this procedure will continued until the number of 100 is reached (Ranjit, 1999).

However, this sampling technique led to the selection of the respondents who concentrated only around the circle of the initial respondent's network and area. To solve this problem, the researcher asked them to list out the prospective respondents who were close to them as well as lived in remote access. From the list, respondents were asked to nominate the consecutive prospective respondents to be included in the sample. In this way the initial respondents are expected to revive their memory and recall their possible wider knowledge of immigrant's whereabouts and other related information.

### **Method of Data Collection**

In this study structured questionnaire was employed as the tool for data collection. The questionnaire was administrated to the participants to gauge four interrelated aspects of their occupational mobility. They are the structure of occupational mobility, the degree of occupational mobility, the nature of occupational mobility and the determinants of occupational mobility.

The questionnaire was constructed in an open-ended and closed-ended format. However, later in the research process when data had been collected, the data converted into categories for the purpose of coding and analysis. Questionnaires was distributed and handed directly to all respondents in the sample after obtaining approval from them or, if any, from the authority whose admission is needed. In so doing, the researcher paid a visit to the respondents one by one in their work places and houses. Prior to the administration of the questionnaire the researcher established rapport with respondents and explain them the purpose of the study, and convince them that their identity and the information which they will furnish will be kept strictly confidential.

The researcher participated actively in assisting the respondents to answer all questions and guide them to understand the questions in case they have any difficulty. In addition, the researcher explained the meaning of certain concepts. For example, the researcher elaborated the meaning of determinant of occupational mobility to help them to give as precise as possible answer or to evoke their memory of occupational mobility. In some cases where respondents reported their difficulties to make sense out of questions or simply did not want to write, the researcher would read the questionnaire to them and filled up the answers on the questionnaire. The questionnaire was translated into Bahasa Melayu since the respondents were unable to answer in English.

#### 4. FINDING

##### Determinants of Occupational Mobility

In this section, the researcher explores the factors which, according to the respondents, are responsible for occupational mobility. Data relating to occupational mobility are presented in cross-tabulation form

According to the data in Table 4.17, 84% of the respondents consider that experience affects the occupational mobility. Those who have experience in job can easily move toward higher professions. Such persons pursue different kinds of occupations. Highest percentage of them (25%) is engaged in service and market sales works. The next highest of them (23%) are doing craft and related trade works. Only 3% of them are plant and machine operator.

In comparison to that, only 16% respondents express negative opinion. According to them experience does not offer occupational mobility. Among them, the highest numbers (5%) are service workers, and the same percentage of them is involved in elementary occupations. The lowest numbers of them (1%) is plant and machine operator.

Table 4.17 Last occupations by Experience (%)

		Last Occupations							Total
		II	III	IV	V	VII	VIII	IX	
Experience	No	0	0	1	5	3	2	5	16
	Yes	16	4	13	25	23	3	0	84
Total		16	4	14	30	26	5	5	100

The possession of on-job-skills, according to respondents, produces mobility of occupation to a better one. Table 4.18 reveals that 73% of the respondents find the acquisition of on-job-skill play an important factor leading to upward occupational mobility. Among such person, the highest percentage of them (22%) is engaged in service works. The second highest (19%) is involved in craft and related work. The lowest of them are plant machine operator and assemblers respectively.

However, 27% of the respondents do not find the possession of on-job-skill. It, according to them, does not affect occupational mobility. Out of these respondents, the highest percentage of them (18%) is service works and the lowest is plant-machine operator and assemblers.

Table 4.18 Last Occupations by On-job-skill (%)

		Last Occupations							Total
		II	III	IV	V	VII	VIII	IX	
On-job-skill	No	3	0	3	8	7	1	5	27
	Yes	13	4	11	22	19	4	0	73
Total		16	4	14	30	26	5	5	100

According to the data presented in Table 4.19, 66% of the respondents feel that ethnic acquaintances and friends play an important role in gaining access to their occupations. Out of this figure, the highest percentage of them (20%) is involved in service and shop and sales work. Slightly less to it (19%) is craft workers. The lowest among them (1%) is technician and the same percentage of them is plant-machine operators and assemblers.

In comparison to that, 34% of the respondents display negative view. They fail to notice the relation of the occupational mobility with the support from the same ethnic group. The highest among this group of respondents (10%) are service workers and shop and market sales workers. The lowest among them (1%) is professional.

Table 4.19 Last Occupations by Help of Acehese Friends (%)

		Last Occupations							Total
		II	III	IV	V	VII	VIII	IX	
Help of friends of Acehese	No	1	3	7	10	7	4	2	34
	Yes	15	1	7	20	19	1	3	66
Total		16	4	14	30	26	5	5	100

Table 4.20 deals with the adaptability to local people and culture. According to it, 64% of the respondents subscribe to the idea that their occupational mobility is shaped by their ability to get along with local people and their culture. Out of this figure, 18% the highest of them are service and shop and market sales workers while 16% are professional and the same percentage are craft and related workers. The lowest (3%) of them is technicians and associate professional.

In comparison to that, 36% of the respondents indicate the opposite view. They find that the adaptation ability to the local people and their culture do not bear any positive result to respondents' occupational mobility. The highest among them (12%) are service and shop and market sales workers. The lowest among them (3%) are plant-machine operator and assemblers.

Table 4.20 Last Occupation by Adaptability to Local People and Culture (%)

		Last Occupations							Total
		II	III	IV	V	VII	VIII	IX	
adaptability to local people	No	0	1	5	12	10	3	5	36
	Yes	16	3	9	18	16	2	0	64
Total		16	4	14	30	26	5	5	100

Besides, Table 4.21 shows that 90% of the respondent's attribute upward occupational mobility to the character of workers themselves that is hard working. Out of this figure, the highest percentage of them (28%) are service and shop and market sales workers and 22% are craft and trade associated workers. The lowest among them (3%) are elementary workers.

However, 10% of them respondents express opposite view to that. They did not find any relation between occupational mobility hard works. The highest among them (4%) are craft and trade related workers and the lowest (1%) is technician and associated profession as well as clerical workers.

Table 4.21 Last Occupations by Hard work (%)

		Last Occupations							Total
		II	III	IV	V	VII	VIII	IX	
Hard work	No	0	1	1	2	4	0	2	10
	Yes	16	3	13	28	22	5	3	90
Total		16	4	14	30	26	5	5	100

Table 4.22 deals with the role of honesty in moving toward upward occupational mobility. According to it, 51% of the respondents feel that honesty helps immigrants to move toward higher occupation. Among them, the highest percentage (17%) is of service and shop and marker sales workers. The lowest (1%) among them is plant-machine operator and assemblers.

In contrast, 49% of the respondents do not find honesty as an important factor to lead towards upward mobility. Among them, 19% are craft and trade related workers which is the highest figure. The lowest among them 2% are elementary workers. It leads us to conclude that honesty is not an important determinant of occupational mobility because the different between positive and negative responses is only 2% which is negligible. It is possible because in the present of socio-economic scenario people seldom bother about honesty.

Table 4.22 Last Occupations by Honest (%)

		Last Occupations							Total
		II	III	IV	V	VII	VIII	IX	
Honest	No	4	4	3	13	19	4	2	49
	Yes	12	0	11	17	7	1	3	51
Total		16	4	14	30	26	5	5	100

Table 4.23 shows that only 21% of the respondents consider possession of capital as an important factor in determining the occupational mobility particularly upward. Among them, 14% are professional workers and 1% is technician and related

professions. These are the highest and lowest frequencies of the responses in this context.

In contrast, 79% of the respondents have negative view. They do not consider the possession of capital as a driving force to upward mobility. Out of this figure, 28% are service and shop and market workers which are the highest. Next to it is craft and trade related workers who constitute 22% of this group of respondents. The lowest among them (2%) are professional workers. It leads to conclusion that the possession of capital for the respondents under study is not at all important for occupational mobility.

Table 4.23 Last Occupations by Capital Possession (%)

		Last Occupations							Total
		II	III	IV	V	VII	VIII	IX	
Capital possession	No	2	3	14	28	22	5	5	79
	Yes	14	1	0	2	4	0	0	21
Total		16	4	14	30	26	5	5	100

Table 4.24 shows the role of sympathy of local people in moving toward upward occupational mobility. According to it, 37% of the respondents consider that the sympathy shown by local people plays significant role in determining occupational mobility. This view is found more common among professional workers that lower level workers. Out of this figure, the highest percentage (13%) of them is professional workers and the lowest (1%) is technician and related professions. The same percentage of them is plant-machine operator and assemblers.

Apart from the above opinion, the majority of the respondents (63%) feel that the sympathy shown by locals has no bearing on their occupational mobility. Among such respondents, 25% are engaged in service worker and related works. This is the highest percentage of this group of respondents. The next highest percentage (18%) of them is craft and trade related workers. The lowest among them (2%) is involved in elementary occupations. However, the study indicates that the sympathy shown by local people is not important in determining occupational mobility.

Table 4.24 Last Occupations by Sympathy of Local People and Culture (%)

		Last Occupations							Total
		II	III	IV	V	VII	VIII	IX	
Sympathy of local people	No	3	3	8	25	18	4	2	63
	Yes	13	1	6	5	8	1	3	37
Total		16	4	14	30	26	5	5	100

Table 4.25 deals with the openness of opportunity in employment and business as the essential factor aiding them to move toward higher occupation. According to it, 65% of the respondents find equal opportunity for employment in the host country. Among the highest percentage (18%) is of service, shop and market related sales workers and the lowest (3%) is of technician and associate professional workers.

Furthermore, 35% respondents do not share this view. They do not find any relation between occupational mobility and the openness of opportunity. Out of this figure, the highest among them (13%) are craft and related workers and the lowest (2%) are plant-machine operator and assemblers.

Table 4.25 Last Occupations by Openness of Opportunity (%)

		Last Occupations							Total
		II	III	IV	V	VII	VIII	IX	
Openness of opportunity	No	0	0	3	12	13	2	5	35
	Yes	16	4	11	18	13	3	0	65
Total		16	4	14	30	26	5	5	100

Table 4.26 deals with the relation between knowledge of market and occupational mobility. It shows that 60% of the respondents find that the knowledge of market plays an important role in moving toward upward mobility. They feel that their career, in fact, depends upon the knowledge of market. Out of these figures, 17% are service workers, and 1% is plant and the lowest figure in this group.

In comparison to this view, 40% of the respondents find that possession of knowledge of market has nothing to do with occupational mobility. Out of this figure, 16% are craft and related trade workers and 1% is clerical workers as well as technician and associate professional.

Table 4.26 Last Occupations by Knowledge of Market (%)

		Last Occupations							Total
		II	III	IV	V	VII	VIII	IX	
Knowledge of market	No	0	1	1	13	16	4	5	40
	Yes	16	3	13	17	10	1	0	60
Total		16	4	14	30	26	5	5	100

Table 4.27 indicates that small percentage of respondents (14%) gives emphasis upon the importance of formal education in determining upward occupational mobility. Among 14% respondents who gave positive opinion to formal education, 6% is service

workers and 3% is clerical workers. The same percentage of respondents (1%) is craft and plant-machine operators and assemblers and technician and associate professional.

Furthermore, the vast majority (86%) of the respondents do not share the same view. Out of this figure, 25% are craft and related trade workers and 24% are service and shop and market related sale workers. Only 4%, the lowest among them, are plant-machine operator and assemblers.

Table 4.27 Last Occupations by Formal Education (%)

		Last Occupations							Total
		II	III	IV	V	VII	VIII	IX	
Formal education	No	14	3	11	24	25	4	5	86
	Yes	2	1	3	6	1	1	0	14
Total		16	4	14	30	26	5	5	100

The respondents, according to the data presented in Table 4.28, acknowledge that strong determination for success is a crucial factor for achieving occupational mobility. It motivates them to work hard and move toward higher occupation in the host country. The table shows that 81% of the respondents subscribe to this view. Out of this figure, 23% service and shop and market related workers and 4% are plant-machine operators and assemblers. Similar percentage of the respondents is also technician and associate professional as well as elementary workers.

In comparison to that 19% of the respondents express their disagreements to this view. Among them the highest 8% are craft and trade related workers and the lowest 1% is plant-machine operators as well as assemblers and workers in elementary occupations.

Table 4.28 Last Occupations by Strong Determined for Success (%)

		Last Occupations							Total
		II	III	IV	V	VII	VIII	IX	
Strong determined for success	No	2	0	0	7	8	1	1	19
	Yes	14	4	14	23	18	4	4	81
Total		16	4	14	30	26	5	5	100

Table 4.29, in addition, deals with the role of luck in determining occupational mobility. By luck, it simply means that the possibility of working in descent job depends on chance, respondents' fate or luck. According to the table, 24% the respondent find that luck plays as important role in getting good job and moving toward upward occupational mobility. Among them, 8% are professional workers and 2% are technicians and associated professionals.

Moreover, 76% of the respondents do not find any relation between occupational mobility and luck. Out of this figure, the highest percentage (23%) of them is service and shop and market sales workers and lowest (5%) is plant-machine operator and assemblers as well as elementary workers.

Table 4.29 Last Occupations by Luck (%)

		Last Occupations							Total
		II	III	IV	V	VII	VIII	IX	
luck	No	8	2	11	23	22	5	5	76
	Yes	8	2	3	7	4	0	0	24
Total		16	4	14	30	26	5	5	100

Table 4.30 shows that the respondents under study consider the help from local friends as one of the factors that affect their occupational mobility. The data reveal that 46% of the respondents find that the help from local friends help them to get higher occupations. Among them, 13% are craft and trade related workers and 2% are plant-machine operator and assemblers as well as elementary workers.

However, most of them (54%) believe that the help from local friends do not result in higher occupation. Out of this figure, 22% service workers and shop and market sales workers and 1% technician and associated professional.

Table 4.30 Last Occupations by Help from Local Acquaintances (%)

		Last Occupations							Total
		II	III	IV	V	VII	VIII	IX	
Help from Local acquaintances	No	4	1	8	22	13	3	3	54
	Yes	12	3	6	8	13	2	2	46
Total		16	4	14	30	26	5	5	100

The data relating to the role of the access to the authority of the market is presented in Table 4.31. According to it, only 22% of respondents believe the access to the authority provides them with a chance to move to higher occupations. Among them the highest percentage (14%) is of professional workers and the lowest (1%) is of clerical workers. The same percentage percent of them is service workers and shop and market sales as well as percent plant-machine operator and assemblers workers.

Apart form this group of respondents, most of the respondents (78%) do not subscribe to this view. They find that occupational mobility have nothing to do with the access to the authority. The highest among them (29%) are service and shop and market sales workers and the lowest (2%) are professional workers.



Table 4.31 Last Occupations by Access to the Authorities (%)

		Last Occupations							Total
		II	III	IV	V	VII	VIII	IX	
Access to the authoritie	No	2	4	13	29	21	4	5	78
	Yes	14	0	1	1	5	1	0	22
Total		16	4	14	30	26	5	5	100

Lastly 9% the 'help from their relatives' is at all considered important in moving toward upward occupational mobility. Table 4.32 deals with it. According to it, only 9% of the respondents feel that it helps in getting good job. Among such respondent 3% are service workers and shop and market related sales workers and 2% are professional workers. The same percentage of them is clerical worker and craft workers and trade related workers. Most of the respondents (91%) do not consider the 'help from relatives' to play important role in occupational mobility. The highest percentage of them (27%) is of service and shop and market related sales workers and the lowest of them (4%) is of technician and associated professionals.

Table 4.32 Last Occupations by Help from Relatives (%)

		Last Occupations							Total
		II	III	IV	V	VII	VIII	IX	
Help from relatives	No	14	4	12	27	24	5	5	91
	Yes	2	0	2	3	2	0	0	9
Total		16	4	14	30	26	5	5	100

The immigrants employ different ways to locate the information of availability of job. This helps them to get access to the job of their choices. Table 4.33 below provides numbers of the channels which the respondents employ to acquire information relating to jobs. The table indicates that respondents have relied upon several sources of information including advertisement, agents, local friends or acquaintances, friends of the same ethnic group and relatives. It is reported that 78% of the respondents have relied upon the same ethnic group for job information. They consider 'the same ethnic group' as the most important source of information. It is followed by 'local friends' as 40% of the respondents place it as one the sources of information. Furthermore, 27% of respondents have gone through advertisements when searching for any information of their desired jobs while turning to relatives is the last option for them (10%). They consider agents to be better than relatives (24%).

Table 4.33 Frequency Distribution of the Way Used by Respondent  
 in Searching Job Information

Finding information of job	Frequency	Percentage
Same ethnic friends	78*	78.0*
Local friends	40*	40.0*
Advertisement	27*	27.0*
Agent	24*	24.0*
Relatives	10*	10.0*

Note: (\*) each of the frequency and percentage scores is out of 100.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

This research is conducted to understand the nature and determinants of occupational mobility among the Acehnese immigrant workers in Malaysia. It, thus, explore four interrelated aspects of the problem. They are the structure of occupation among the immigrants, the degree of occupational mobility, the nature of occupational mobility and determinants of occupational mobility. The major outcomes of the research are presented here.

The analysis of immigrants' last occupations reveals that the immigrants pursue different varieties of occupations. Though some of them have succeeded to move to higher occupation such as clerical occupation or even professional workers, the bulk of the immigrants are still engaged in service and craft occupations.

Most of the immigrants, before settling in the current occupation, have undergone several occupational changes while working in the host country. These occupational changes are found not only to those who have been in the country for longer period of time like 7-8 years, but also among those who immigrated 1-2 year ago. However, the immigrants, on average, have changed their occupations less than once a year.

Most of the respondents have succeeded to obtain higher occupations. The movement toward higher occupations does not follow any specific pattern. The striking feature is that the occupiers of lowest occupations have also moved to the professional works, technicians, and clerical jobs.

The study concludes that the immigrants have adequate opportunity to improve their economic positions regardless of their first occupations. However, there are immigrants who move to lower occupation. Though such cases are few, but they show that the possibilities of downward mobility also exist. Some immigrants remain in the same occupational group in the entire length of work in the host country. Most of them are involved in service, shop and related market sales works.

The upward mobility depends upon the interplay of various factors. It is, thus, difficult to single out the cause of this upward mobility. However, the immigrants consider that some factors are more important than others in determining their

occupational mobility. On one hand, the immigrants find that their occupational mobility is the result of the possession of human capital such as on-job-skill or work-related skill, experience and knowledge of the market. On the other, they also consider structural factor important particularly the openness of opportunity, the access to the authority and sympathy of the locals.

Besides, personal characters like hard working, strong determination to success and honesty are also considered important to move higher occupations. Furthermore, social capital as manifested in social network is also found necessary to quench immigrants' quest for upward mobility. This aspect includes the presence of the help from the same ethnic group, help from local friends and the help from relatives. Cultural factor that includes the ability to adapt to local people and culture also play some role in shaping their occupational mobility.

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