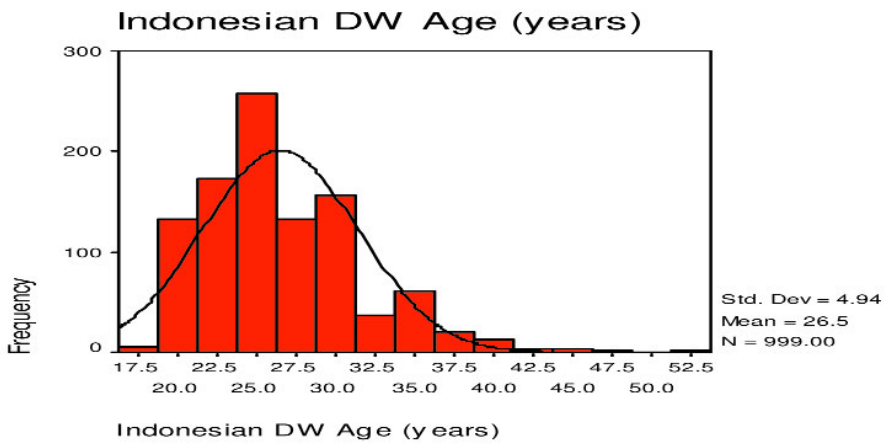
Chapter 3
Profile of Indonesian Migrant Workers in Hong Kong

3.1 Demographic Profile of Survey Respondents

All of the respondents surveyed were female; respondents were aged between 18 and 52, with the average age of 26. Around 60% of Indonesian Domestic Workers (DWs) in Hong Kong come from East Java. The second largest group (25%) came from Central Java, while almost 9% came from West Java and 3% from Sumatra. The majority (58%) of the respondents were single, while 34% were married and 5% widowed. 54% had no children. Of those who had children, the largest group reported they had only one child. Respondents reported they had between one and nine persons depending on their income. 40% had only one dependent, and 30% had two. A small percentage of respondents (0.9%) had as many as eight or nine dependants.

The largest group (47%) of respondents reported they had completed only junior high school levels of education, while around 34% had completed high school. Only one of the 1,017 respondents had graduated from university. The majority (62%) come from families who work in agriculture or as farmers, while around 10% came from families working as vendors. 31% of respondents had worked as a domestic worker prior to coming to Hong Kong, while 11% reported they had worked in factories/other labor. Only 4.6% of respondents said they had been housewives before working in Hong Kong. 44.9% of the respondents had worked abroad before, with the largest group of these formerly working in Malaysia (around 40%), 22.8% in Singapore, 18.6% in Taiwan,

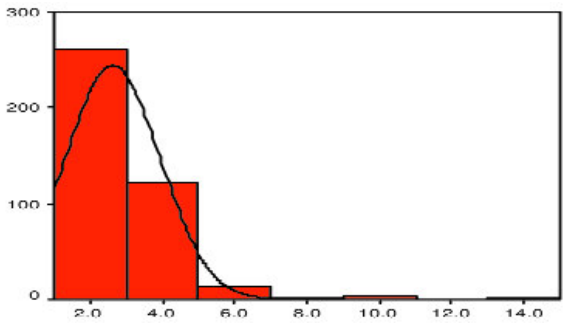


Source: HKDW Baseline Survey

and 15.8% in the Middle East.

According to the HKDW Survey, the average length of stay of Indonesians working as DWs in HK was 30 months, with the longest reported stay of 13 years, while 2.5% had been working in Hong Kong for only one month. The majority (68%) had worked for only one employer, although one respondent reported working for as many as six employers.

Length Of Time Working in Hong Kong (yrs)



Source: HKDW Survey

3.2 Driving Forces Behind Indonesian Migrant Workers Migration to Hong Kong

Respondents in the HK-I Research stated their reasons for migration including several aspects, namely: economic, social, cultural and domestic necessity. Where economic reasons are concerned, the means to gain financial security or independence, supporting relatives, and saving capital to start a business are among the specific reasons given for migration. Respondents who migrated for social reasons cited the desire the gain new experiences to either enrich their lives or to play a useful role in society after the completion of formal education. Some claimed to the want to experience new things before settling down into marriage. Respondents also showed a desire to be culturally synchronous with friends and relatives who have also worked abroad. Finally, some respondents also revealed that certain domestic situations, such as family conflicts and tedious everyday demands, have encouraged them to migrate

Most of the Indonesian ex-migrant workers interviewed for the HK-I Research in East Java (62%) indicated that their preference for Hong Kong as a destination was a direct result of seeing the symbols of success, such as cars, houses, and businesses, obtained by neighbors or relatives who had worked in Hong Kong. Another 34% of those who migrated to Hong Kong did so because of the influence of friends or brokers. The remaining 4% had no clear motivation to go to Hong Kong, saying they just wanted to try it out. Most of them considered that the standard salary was higher in Hong Kong, compared to Saudi Arabia, Malaysia and Singapore. Moreover, they thought that in Hong Kong, the work would be unproblematic, there were nice employers, it was a free country (democratic), and laborers are protected by the government. Another reason for choosing Hong Kong cited by respondents was because Taiwan had once banned Indonesian migrant workers.

Table 1.9
Driving Factors for Migration to Hong Kong

Factor	Frequency	Percentage
Economic Rationale	82	84%
Domestic Problems	9	9%
Enriching Experiences	4	4%
Other	3	3%
Total	**98**	**100%**

Source: HK-I Research survey, 2004

The choice of Hong Kong as a destination is logical in that it would provide higher salaries needed for business capital, schooling, house construction and daily necessities. Furthermore, with Hong Kong's relatively progressive labor laws, migrants might expect more protection

The HKDW Survey produced similar results, with a majority of more than 95.6% of the Indonesian respondents reporting they chose to work in Hong Kong because it was thought that it would improve the family's income. Respondents believed the salary is higher and meets needs such as building houses, financing school fees, or setting up business capital. 0.8% of respondents reported that they went to Hong Kong because of a broken heart, broken home, or frustration with their husband. One respondent revealed that she went to Hong Kong because of the ban on Indonesian migrant workers in Taiwan. 3.5% of respondents went to Hong Kong because they wanted to gain more knowledge and experience.

Erni, One of KOTKIHO's shelter resident was being hot iron by her employer during her employment in Hong Kong, 2004

Table 1.9
Comparisons of Migrant Workers' Wage Levels in Six Destinations

Country	Local monthly Salary	Exchange Rate in IDR	Average monthly Salary
Hong Kong	HKD 3,270	1,100	3,996,396
Taiwan	NTD 15,840	285	4,815,772
Saudi Arabia	SAR 600	2,300	1,524,800
Singapore	SGD 260	4,800	1,505,346
Malaysia	MYR 380	2,400	953,125
Brunei	BND 200	5,789	1,157,958

Source: Analysed from Depnakertrans RI