

# READINGS IN SOCIAL AND ISLAMIC ISSUES

JAMIL FAROOQUI



IIUM Press  
International Islamic University Malaysia

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*Edited by*  
**Jamil Farooqui**



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# **PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION METHOD IN A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF FACTORY WORKERS**

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**Fatimah Hasnah Daud\***

## **INTRODUCTION**

In the early 1970s, the government introduced a Free Trade Zone to encourage multinationals, particularly from the electronics industry, to invest in Malaysia. As a result, many young girls from rural areas migrated to urban areas to work in this industry. During the 70s, women's work in industry was "accepted" negatively by society especially among men. Newspaper and television reports were filled with rape, sexual harassment and immoral behaviour of the girls working in the electronics industry. The media reports were not so much wrong as misleading. They were more effective for public persuasion than for giving findings from an empirical study of the true picture. Thus, I decided to carry out a sociological study on women electronics workers in Malaysia with objective of discovering the true picture of stigmatization faced by them. However, to study rape, cohabitation and immoral behaviour of female workers is not easy. I had to use anthropological methods to study this group. The following section explains the details of the method used to collect data on these female factory workers.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

I started my fieldwork as a participant observer by becoming a factory worker for five months. During the first five months I worked in the

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