

The Influence of Density and Crowding on Human Behaviour

Hemy Heryati Anward
Universitas Achmad Yani, Banjarmasin

Many factors as a result of people's actions in environment bounce back to influence themselves; two of them are density and crowding. Then the world is increasingly crowded. Most people have experienced the frustration of crowded roads, living space, working space, or leisure space that produce crowding stress. Physical density and crowding-related phenomena have implications in the development of a variety of societal ills such as deteriorating quality of life in cities, crime, and the breakdown of families. Therefore, in this paper, the writer would like to discuss the stress of crowding and density on human beings, which in turn can have a harmful effect on human behaviour. The emphasis will be on how people come to experience a situation as crowded, and high density and human behaviour; sometimes high density can be quite pleasant, but according to Calhoun (Baum & Paulus, 1987), density can result in a behavioural sink.

Crowding and Density

Density is a measure of the number of people per unit area (Gifford, 1987). It may be calculated for any area, from the whole earth, by country, by city, by neighbourhood, by building and home, or even by room. Density is an objective measure, but it's not unvarying. It may vary in two ways; it is social density when crowding is studied

by varying the number of people in a fixed space, and it is spatial density when crowding is studied by varying the amount of space to a fixed number of people. When crowding is analyzed in the room or building level, it is indoor density that means the ratio of people to space inside building. One may also focus on crowding at the block, neighbourhood, community, or even national scale, considering outdoor density which is the ratio of people to the space outside the building. Densities inside and outside a single building can vary dramatically. According to Holahan (1982), density from indoors to outdoors may relate to quite different experiences and outcomes.

Crowding, on the other hand, refers to someone's experience of the number of other people around (Gifford, 1987). Instead of a physical ratio, it is a personally defined, subjective feeling of too many others around. Crowding is a function of many factors. It may refer to personal or to situational (the setting) variables. Analysis of these descriptions show that one kind of crowding refers to a person's negative feelings (internal focus) and the other refers to a person's estimate of how crowded setting is (external focus). In general, personal and situational factors interact to produce the crowding experience.

Crowding may correspond to high density, but it does not necessarily corres-

* Dra. Hemy Heryati Anward, M.Sc. adalah alumnus Fakultas Psikologi UGM 1983, University of Surrey, Guildford, UK 1995, dan sekarang kandidat doktor pada Program Pascasarjana UGM.