
UNIT 3 SOCIAL IDENTITY, CROWDING AND CROWD BEHAVIOUR

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3.0 INTRODUCTION

Individuals are not self-contained units of psychological analysis. Social identity theory states that people think, feel and act as members of groups, institutions and cultures. The social identity approach reinforces the idea of the individuals' social cognitions which are socially constructed depending on their group or collective frames of reference. Social identity is mainly composed of four elements, viz., categorisation, identification, comparison and psychological distinctiveness. Actually social identity refers to the membership or associations of an individual with a primary group ranging from nuclear to extended based on factors as the individual's capacities, experiences, mobility and location. Ethnicity is a powerful social identity with many components, viz., common biological origins, customs, habits, norms etc. Personal identification with a specific group and the development of an in-group mentality is involved in social identity theory.

3.1 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you, will be able to:

- 1 define social identity;
- 1 describe crowd;
- 1 elucidate the crowd behaviour theory;
- 1 describe audience, mob, public, mass society, fashion; and
- 1 explain collective behaviour.

3.2 SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY

We, the human being spend a lot of time thinking about ourselves. We can also say that self is the centre of each person's social universe. Our self-concept is mainly acquired through the interaction with the immediate family and also with the other people with whom we meet throughout our life. Actually self-concept is one's self-identity which consists of an organised collection of beliefs and feelings about oneself. We can further say that we develop our social identity which includes how we conceptualise ourselves, including how we evaluate ourselves.

Self- concept also includes all of the information and feelings relevant to our past, present and future selves. We use the term self-concept which influences how we process information about the social world around us along with information about ourselves – such as our motives, emotional status, abilities, self-evaluation etc. All these important things influence how we process social and personal information that is relevant to our own identities. People want to know about others' beliefs, affiliations and intentions in order to interpret their words and actions and to predict their future behaviour.

Social identity theory explains how people develop a sense of membership and belonging in particular group. There are many interconnected mechanisms in this theory. People generally seek out group membership as an affirmation of self-esteem, but that membership as an affirmation of self-esteem, but that membership in a group alone is not enough to build an affirm self-esteem. To feel more self-esteem, people have to believe that they are in the right group, which creates the need for a positive distinction from other groups.

People want to know about others' beliefs, affiliations and intentions in order to interpret their future behaviour. These qualities we are unable to observe directly. We do not build up our impression of another trait by trait. Interpretation of identity is subjective. Social identity Theory was developed by Tajfel and Turner in 1979. In this theory, it was highlighted that a person has not one "personal Self" but rather several selves that corresponds to widening circles of group membership. An individual has multiple "social identities". It is the individual's self-concept derived from perceived membership of social groups (Hogg and Vaughan, 2002). Tajfel and Turner (1979) identified three variables which has contribution to the in-group favourtism is particularly important.

- 1 the extent to which individuals identify with an in-group to internalise that group membership as an aspect of their self-concept;

- 1 the extent to which the prevailing context provides ground for comparison between groups;
- 1 the perceived relevance of the comparison group, which itself will be shaped by the relative and absolute status of the in-group.

Social identity theory has a considerable impact on social psychology. It is tested in a wide range of fields and settings and includes prejudice, stereotyping, negotiation and language use. The social identity theory has implication on the way people deal with social and organisational change.

Besides this, we can also say that social identity is mainly composed of

- i) categorisation,
- ii) identification,
- iii) comparison, and
- iv) psychological distinctiveness.

Generally social identities are associated with normative rights, obligations and sanctions which within specific collectivities form roles. Social identity refers to the membership or association of an individual with “primary” and other human beings. The significant factors which we can mention here are mainly individual’s capacity, experiences mobility and location.

3.3 DEFINITION OF CROWD

Crowd is a physically compact organisation of human beings brought into direct, temporary and unorganised contact with one another. If some people stand together for a short time at any place, then it may be called crowd. The crowd is the most transitory and unstable of all the social groups. Actually crowd exhibits no patterns, no characteristic expressions. The collection of human beings in the market or in the open space is also designated as crowd.

MacIver defines crowd as “A physically compact aggregation of human beings brought into direct, temporary and unorganised contact with one another”. According to Kimball Young, “A crowd is a gathering of a considerable number of persons around a centre or point of common attraction”. According to Majumder, “A crowd is an aggregation of individuals drawn together by an interest without premeditation on the part of any of them and without even tentative provision of what to expect”.

Crowd behaviour involves three aspects:

- i) psychological continuity
- ii) polarisation of interest and attention and
- iii) transition and temporary character.

A crowd collects because of some curiosity, interest and other temporary causes and dissolves as many as its cause vanishes. If two people start fighting on the road, a crowd will collect and when they stop their struggle, it will break up.

3.3.1 Active Crowd

Crowd can be divided into two classes: (a) Active and (b) Inactive.

Active crowd can be further classified into four classes:

- a) **Aggressive crowd:** It is a crowd of people in an aggressive and destructive frame of mind, capable of any and every act of destruction and irrationality, brutality and inhumanity. This kind of crowd exhibits a tremendous excitement.
- b) **Panicky crowd:** Panicky crowd is the panicky or fear-stricken crowd whose constituent members are almost crazed with fear to a point where they can no longer think and find reason. They are almost frightened out of their wits, so that thinking is for the time being a task beyond their power. They are concerned with the prime quest of saving their lives.
- c) **Acquisitive crowd:** The aim and objective of each of its members is to obtain or acquire something. Acquisitive crowd is composed almost entirely of individuals whose objectives is to gain or obtain something, be it a cinema ticket, kerosene oil etc.
- d) **Expressive crowd:** In this kind of crowd some people gathered to give expression or to manifest their demands or sentiments. Desire of violence is relatively less pronounced and dominant in the members of an expressive crowd.

3.3.2 Inactive Crowd

No crowd is completely inactive. The difference between an active and inactive crowd is only relative. The inactive crowd even resembles an audience.

You may join in a crowd, where you can find some special characteristics:

- 1 Crowd has no predetermined aim.
- 1 There is no definite time and place for crowd.
- 1 It is a congregate group of individuals who have temporarily identified themselves with common interest.
- 1 It seems that members are motivated by emotions and soon become uncontrollable.
- 1 The behaviour of crowd is not certain.
- 1 People within the crowd stimulate each other.
- 1 Members of the crowd are generally uncontrolled, unorganised and disordered.
- 1 Members are motivated by emotions and soon become uncontrollable.
- 1 The curiosity, values and emotions are temporarily identical and which arises because of common interest.
- 1 Immersed in the crowd, the individual loses self-control and may engage in different types of activities. Crowd behaviour arises as a result of the three mechanisms of anonymity, contagion and suggestibility (Le Bon, 1895).

- 1 Dollard (1939) used the frustration-aggression hypothesis to explain the violent behaviour of crowds.
- 1 Turner (1964) explained crowd behaviour in terms of “emergent norms”. The contagion, the spread of the feelings and actions is facilitated by the process of mixing, the close proximity, the jostling like the sheep in the herd.
- 1 Generally in crowd people of varying interests and abilities convergence because they share some common quality like hostility, aggressiveness etc.

Self Assessment Questions

1) Self-concept also includes all of the and relevant to our past, present and future.

2) What does social identity explain?

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3) Social identity composed of four elements i.e i).....
ii).....iii).....iv).....

4) Define what is crowd?

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5) What are the two classes of crowd?

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3.4 CROWD PSYCHOLOGY

Crowd psychology mainly refers to the studies and theories regarding the behaviour of the crowd and also the psychological causes and effects of crowd participation. In a study entitled, “The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind (1895)”, Le Bon suggested that when people become part of a crowd they lose almost all of their individuality, autonomy and personal judgment and morality. According to Carl Jung, it is called “collective unconscious”. Convergence theory emerged during the twentieth century, thinking that acts of the crowd is in unified way, not because of the collective ‘mind’ of the crowd but because they tend to be composed of like-minded people who are attracted into the crowd situation because of a shared interest or objective.

3.5 CROWD BEHAVIOUR

Neither the socio-psychological processes that take place within the crowd nor the techniques employed by the crowd, lead to understanding of crowd behaviour. However the leader provides an adequate understanding of the peculiarities of crowd behaviour. Some of them are as given below:

- 1 In the crowd, with the loss of individuality, a form of group consciousness develops a fusion of mind with mind, a sympathetic participation on emotional level which is common to all the participants. Appeals, slogans are the common features.
- 1 Crowd behaviour is the release of repressed drives. The suggestibility, the exaltation, the lack of self-consciousness, the egoistic expansion and spontaneity, exhibited by the members of the crowd are phenomena susceptible to this kind of explanation.
- 1 We may think of the crowd as a temporary collectivity within which thwarted impulses are afforded an outlet. The close connection between the underlying characteristics of the cultural conditions and the types of crowd those are apt to mark the community life.
- 1 The manifestations of crowd feeling deserve study not only because they reveal the significance of this transitory form of aggregation, but also because they throw light on other social phenomena.

3.6 THEORIES OF CROWD BEHAVIOUR

3.6.1 Classical Theory

The minds of the group would merge to form a way of thinking. Le Bon's idea is that crowd foster anonymity and sometimes generate emotion. Different individuals in a group do not think individually but they think experience and act through the group mind. When individuals collect in a crowd, their individual mind becomes a part of the collective mind. The collective mind thinks in its own way and formulates its own ideas and thoughts, which the individual minds do not formulate in their individual capacities. Emphasis was given on unconscious motives. According to him, in a crowd these unconscious motives get more active. The individual is influenced by these unconscious motives and his own conscious motivation sinks into the background. The person become uninhibited and shows even the lowliest behaviour in the crowd.

3.6.2 Convergence Theory

Crowd behaviour is not a product of the crowd itself, but is carried into the crowd by particular individuals. According to the convergence theory people who wish to act in a certain way come together to form crowds. There is no homogenous activity within a repetitive practice. This theory states that crowd itself does not generate racial hatred or violence. Actually, crowd arises from convergence of people who oppose the presence of particular group of neighbours. Generally people in crowd express existing beliefs and values so that mob reaction is the rational product of widespread popular feeling.

3.6.3 Group Mind Theory

The Group mind theory has been advocated by Lebon, Espinas, Trotter, Durkheim, Mc. Dougall and Allport. According to this theory, the individual in the crowd loses his individuality and becomes a part of the crowd which comes to develop its own crowd consciousness. The mentality of the individual member becomes de-individualised and the person begins to act on an emotional level which is common to all the participants.

Its working is based on emotions, slogans, appeals and suggestions. Its actions are less rational and more emotional. It becomes easily excited and acts in a hypnotic way. Lebon was the first writer to put forward the theory of group mind in 1892. According to him, the sentiments and ideas of all the persons in the gathering take one and the same direction and their conscious personality vanishes.

Different individuals in a group do not think individually but think, experience and act through the group mind. When individuals collect in a crowd, their individual minds become a part of the collective mind. Lebon has laid great emphasis on the unconscious motives. The individual is influenced by the unconscious motives and his own conscious motivation sinks into the background.

Espinias calls group mind as social consciousness. According to him, there is a sort of self-consciousness in every group. Collective consciousness is formed out of the collection of many individuals consciousness taken together.

According to Trotter, everyman is possessed of the instinct of gregariousness. Man's gregariousness activates his mental system as a result of which he accepts the command of the group without any argument and acts according to the command given.

Durkheim has sought to explain group behaviour in terms of collective consciousness. According to him, when people collect in a group, a collective consciousness is created by the mutual exchange of ideas and notions. Actually mind is another name for the flow of consciousness. Social consciousness is a compound of several individual consciousness but its qualities are different from the qualities of the consciousness of the individual.

According to Mc.Dougall, every group has a mind of its own. The group mind is not a mere collection of the minds of all the individual members of group. The group-mind has the power of influencing the mind of the individuals. It is because of this power of the group mind that the thinking of the individual changes when he becomes a member of the group.

According to Allport, the behaviour of the individual in the crowd is influenced by two processes of social facilitation and inter-stimulation. Members of the group motivate each other. Social facilitation and inter-stimulation curb the reasoning capacity of the individuals and increase their suggestibility.

Sometimes crowd behaviour may be the expression of impulses repressed or thwarted by the conditions and social controls of everyday life, but it may not be true of all the crowds. In a crowd all the differences of high and low, rich and poor are submerged and all act as one man. We can say that crowd behaviour is learned. In a crowd the individual responsibility is blotted out. De-individualisation of the individuals in the group leads to reduction of inner restraint and to move expressive behaviour.

Public and Crowd: The public and the crowd while have some factors common, they differ a great deal. While both crowd and public are collectivities of people and are generally organised, one of the important differences is that there is physical contact among the members of a crowd, whereas public is scattered at several places. Secondly, public is much bigger group than the crowd and thirdly, the stimulus in the crowd is simultaneous whereas stimulus in the public is diffused. The crowd is more suggestible than the public. Thus, we can say that the crowd and public differ in many ways.

Self Assessment Questions

- 1) Explain crowd behaviour.

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- 2) What is classical theory?

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- 3) Explain convergence theory.

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- 4) The group-mind theory has been advocated by.....

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- 5) Differentiate between public and crowd in your own words.

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3.7 COLLECTIVE BEHAVIOUR

All social interactions fall under the category of collective behaviour. When two or more persons behave in the same way, it may be termed as ‘collective behaviour’. Any religious congregation may be called collective behaviour. Collective behaviour brings people into contact with others in situations where conventional

guidelines and formal authority fail to afford direction and supply channels for action. Social unrest may be both the cause and effect of collective behaviour. It may sometimes lead to the emergence of new norms and generally accepted policies. The agitated crowds can develop into disciplined association. Collective behaviour may act as an agent of flexibility and as a forerunner of social change. Some special features of collective behaviour are the following

- 1 It takes place in occasional episodes rather than regularly or routinely.
- 1 It is not regulated by any particular set of rules or procedures.
- 1 It is generally guided by unreasoning beliefs, hopes, fears or hatreds.
- 1 It is unpredictable.

Generally we can say that social life is a system of well-structured and stable relationships. It is characterised by change rather than stability, uncertainty rather than predictability, disorganisation rather than equilibrium.

Collective behaviour entails a crisis or a break in regular routines. Collective behaviour may be an agent of flexibility and social movements and revolutions fall under the category of collective behaviour. A crowd may be said to be more stable than a mob. Under conditions of stress or danger, a crowd may quickly turn into a mob. Crowd may include mob behaviour as well as audience behaviour.

Casual crowd is short in time, loosely organised collectivity that may be motivated by the attraction of the movement. A group of people may collect together when there is an accident on the road. On the other hand, there is conventional crowd which are directed by conventional rules like collection of people in religious festivals.

3.7.1 Mass Society

Mass society is characterised by rationality, impersonal relations, extreme specialisation of roles and loneliness for the individual in spite of concentration of sheer numbers and loss of sense of intimacy and security. In such society's suggestion, persuasion, propaganda and other aspects of crowd behaviour are common (Young, 1948). The modern cities are changing rapidly. It consists of millions of human beings. Personal contacts among the people are reducing day by day. The loss of personal relationship creates a sense of insecurity, loneliness and incompleteness. To overcome these problems, they engage in voluntary organisation, associations and clubs etc. and also affiliate themselves with one or the other of the ashrams. Another significant feature of mass society, with its desire for crowd contacts, is irrationality, susceptibility to propaganda and advertisement. Technological progress and impersonality are based on rational grounds. The sense of insecurity and sense of loneliness makes the individual irrational. In the mass society there is a mixture of rational and irrational thing.

3.7.2 Audience

Audience is a polarised crowd which assembles in one place. It is an index of mental unity. There may be two types of audience

- i) casual audience and

- ii) scheduled audience. A number of people may congregate and become polarised by seeing a street quarrel and it is called casual audience. On the other hand, the crowd which assembles in a lecture hall or cinema hall may be called scheduled audience.

In the audience situation several psychological processes are involved in the interaction of people. This interaction may be of two types, viz.,

- i) between audience and speaker or actor and
- ii) among the member of the audience themselves. The aim of audience is of many types. One is to get facts and interpretations. We can also observe some emotional appeals among audience. Sometimes it may be conversational. As for example we can say that the dramatic troupe or the musician will have to build up rapport with the audience so that the audience appreciates and enjoys the music or the program. If it is unfavourable, then it becomes aggressive one. Group singing breaks down the individual isolation, removes differences in social status and helps to build up common emotions and feelings.

3.7.3 Mob

Generally, the members of a mob tend to show a similarity in feelings, thoughts and actions irrespective of the variation in education, occupation and intelligence. The members of the mob are attending to and reacting to some common object in a common way. Sometimes heightened emotionality is a characteristic feature of mob behaviour. The significant features are anger, fear, joy etc. Sometimes they become unreasonable, intolerant and fickle-minded. Most common characteristic of mob behaviour is the diminished sense of responsibility. They are generally irresponsible. An aggressive mob may indulge in some unfortunate behaviour like destroying music, property attacking the. Not only their sense of autonomy may also be reduced and may become part of mob behaviour. Suggestion, imitation and sympathy – are the three mechanisms of interaction which we can observe in the mob behaviour. It can further be said that mob behaviour is due to the operation of a number of factors, some of which depend upon the predisposition of the individuals and some upon the characteristics of the situation in which the collectivity finds itself. Mob behaviour is conditioned by so many factors – past as well as present, social as well as individual.

3.7.4 Fashion

Fashion is an important example of collective action and it is common with crowd behaviour. Fashion is a variation that is permissible within limits of custom. Fashion as well as fads and crazes are based on the desire for change, the desire for something new. There is a psychological reaction and it is outgrowth of emotional and irrational tendencies. It can further be said that fashion sometimes furnishes the desire of conformity, security and social solidarity. Social movements are collective efforts to change the society. Some movements are local, some are national and others are international. The term ‘collective behaviour’ is now used as ‘audience behaviour’, ‘mob behaviour’, ‘social movement’ etc.

Self Assessment Questions

- 1) All called under the category of collected behaviour.

- 2) Write features of collective behaviour.

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- 3) Two types of audience are (i)(ii).....
- 4) Mob behaviour is conditioned by three factors i).....
 ii).....iii).....

3.8 LET US SUM UP

Generally people want to know about others' beliefs, affiliations and intentions in order to interpret their words and actions and to predict their future behaviour. The premise of the social identity concept is that individuals partially derive their self-concepts from membership in social groups. Social identity concept provides a robust framework for psychologists to understand issues of labeling, self-esteem, discrimination, conformity and in-group or out-group perspectives. Individuals are not self-contained units of psychological analysis. Social identity theory states that people think, feel and act as members of collective groups, institutions and cultures. This approach reinforces the idea that individual's social cognitions are socially construed depending on their group or collective frames of reference. This theory incorporates three main points:

- i) people are motivated to maintain a positive self-concept;
- ii) the self-concept derives largely from group identification ;and
- iii) people establish positive social identities by favorably comparing their in-group against an out- group.

It is true that group often exerts powerful effects upon their members. In this context three important aspects are role, status and norms. Different persons perform different tasks and they expected to accomplish different things for the group. They fulfill different roles. Generally roles are assigned in a formal manner. Groups may choose a person as leader and others as follower. Roles are acquired and people internalise them. They link their roles to key aspects to their self-concept and self-perception. A role may exert profound effects on a person's behaviour. Besides role, another important factor in functioning of group is status. It is social standing or rank within a group. Different roles or position in a group is linked with wide range of desirable outcomes. Groups often confer or withhold status, as a means of influencing the behaviour of their members. Another powerful factor which has significant impact on group is the 'norm'. The rules may be implicit or explicit, established by groups to regulate the behaviour of their members. In many situations, norms tell group members how to behave or how not to behave. Generally group insists upon adherence to their norms as a basic requirement for membership. Groups influence their members through roles, i.e., members' assigned functions in the group; status, i.e., their relative standing in the group and norms, i.e., rules concerning appropriate behaviour for members, and lastly, cohesiveness, i.e., all the factors that cause members to remain in the group.

In this context another important term we can use, i.e., “crowd”. A crowd is a gathering of a considerable number of persons around a centre or point of common attraction. Crowd is a temporary, direct and unorganised group of individuals whose curiosity, values and emotions are temporarily identical and which arise because of common interest or common stimuli. According to the “group-mind theory”, the individual in the crowd loses his individuality and becomes a part of the crowd which comes to develop its own crowd consciousness. Like-minded people, who are attracted into the crowd situation, have a shared interest or object, which is based on convergence theory. The other type of groups we can mention here are mob, audience, mass society etc.

3.9 UNIT END QUESTIONS

- 1) What is identity?
 - 2) What do you mean by the term “social identity”?
 - 3) Write in brief about “social identity theory”.
 - 4) What is crowd? Briefly discuss about the crowd behavior.
 - 5) What do you mean by the term mob, audience and mass society?
 - 6) Describe mass society and audience.
 - 7) Describe mob and fashion
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3.10 GLOSSARY

Communication : The exchange of meaning and mutual influence.

Cohesiveness : With respect to conformity, the degree of attraction felt by an individual toward an influencing group.

Crowd : Aggregation of people in close proximity who share some common interest

Crowd psychology : Crowd psychology mainly refers to the studies and theories regarding the behaviour of the crowd and also the psychological causes and effects of crowd participation.

Group : A collection of individuals who are in interdependent relationship with one another sharing common norm of behaviour and attitude.

Group structure : The difference of roles and status relations within a group.

Group decision process : A procedure in which a group is presented with a problem and communication giving the various alternatives, followed by a discussion and decision regarding the solution of the problem.

Roles : The sets of behaviour that individuals occupying specific position within a group are expected to perform.

Role expectations : Anticipations that is associated with a role category.

Role strain : Difficulties in attempting to enact a role.

Social norm : An expectation shared by group members which specifies behaviour considered appropriate for a given situation.

3.11 SUGGESTED READINGS

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