

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
URBAN HIGH-DENSITY
RESIDENTIAL AND MENTAL
DISORDER IN KUALA LUMPUR**

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ABSTRACT

The increasing trends of urbanisation and the increasing prevalence of people having depression, anxiety, and stress worldwide are alarming. Urbanisation has exerted pressure on housing provision for urban dwellers, and more high-density housing is built to accommodate the migration of people to urban areas. This study aims to explore the relationship between urban high-density residential and mental disorders to create a better environment and improve urban well-being. To understand the relationship between the urban high-density living and mental disorders, a questionnaire survey was distributed to the dwellers of urban high-density residents in the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur based on the characteristics of density, open spaces, and facilities provision. An in-depth interview with experts from mental health non-governmental organisations (NGOs), an urban planning expert, and a medical expert is also done. Responses are analysed using Spearman's Correlation for the questionnaire and thematic content analysis. The questionnaire surveys show relatively high symptomatology of depression, anxiety, and stress and a strong correlation value with high-density living. These results suggest that most people living in urban high-density living may risk developing mental disorders or are likely to worsen the levels for those with mental disorders. Thus, high-density living may not directly affect the cause of mental disorders. However, it has an indirect effect that can become a factor that contributes to the mental disorders of the urban high-density dweller, especially in low-cost housing. On this basis, mental health requisites should be considered when designing high-density housing. This research is the first step towards a more profound understanding of high-density residential and mental disorders, especially in Malaysia.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

According to Town and Country Planning Act 1976 (2016), density means the intensity of use of land reckoned or expressed in terms of the number of persons, dwelling units, or habitable rooms or a combination of those factors per unit area of land. Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) in Kuala Lumpur City Plan 2020 (KLCP 2020) defined density as the number of people on land to assist population distribution and planning facilities, utilities, infrastructure, and services. The Second National Urbanisation Policy of Malaysia (2016) defined high-density cities as those that rely on various land uses, optimising public transport and supporting walking and cycling. Population density is usually expressed as the number of persons per hectare or residence units per hectare in each area. Density is not constant in a city, and the average density may differ in a district or area (UN-Habitat, 2014). In particular, density is essential for spatial planning policies, such as how much land is allocated to non-residential or open areas, the size of plots, types of buildings, and household numbers. In making decisions, especially in urban areas, density plays an important role in developing the city's look, image, feelings, and experiences (Boyko & Cooper, 2014).

Urban planning is an important tool for managing the spatial and growth of land use and development intensity managed by the local authority or government to ensure proper land use allocation. The definition of urban planning is a technical and political process concerned with controlling land use and the design of the urban environment. According to Barton et al. (2009), urban planning is the institutionalised process of deciding on future land use and the character of land and building in a city. According to Ngah (1998), urban planning is designing urban settlements, promoting urban growth, or regulating urban development. In this sense, urban planning is an essential tool to control development in urban areas. Urban planning is not merely about developing drawings and images of the city for future development; it uses space as a critical resource to transform a city vision into reality for development and engaging stakeholders along the way (UN-Habitat, 2014). Thus, urban planning is essential for spatial planning in urban areas to create a sustainable environment for living, work, and