

Theories and Approaches to Study Social Disaster

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Abstract

In this paper the author attempts to analyze the social disaster which have their foundation in the social structure. The study analyses the sociological studies of disaster from a classical perspective along with the emergent sociological perspectives which have implications for the theory and practice of emergency disaster management. In the process of descriptive analysis of the issues at hand, the paper also deliberates upon vulnerability and resilience both of which are seen as the cornerstone of disaster studies in the social science discourse. It has been argued that the classical sociological literature has pointed to the issue of disaster and disaster-induced landscape though in a different tone. The same has been picked up by the contemporary social scientists and has been poised against the emerging contexts.

Keywords: Disasters, Social Problem, Emergent Sociological Perspectives, Sociological Studies

Introduction

Disaster research is interdisciplinary, with a reach across the natural and social sciences. A major contribution of sociologists has been the study of the effects of disasters on social groups and communities. But the irony is that only recently disasters are considered as social events. Earlier disasters were considered to be the result of “extremes in geophysical processes” (Hewitt 1983: 5). A disaster is not merely a physical calamity; it is as much of a social calamity (Husain 2006). As any physical disruption that occurs in a situation where no human habitation is involved does not really constitute a disaster, no matter how great is its scale.

A disaster is a disaster in what it does to the people, their material and social worlds, their bonds and values and gives a severe blow to the normal rhythm of the social life. It connotes a crisis in the lives and world of the people, a crisis of the magnitude that calls for immediate remedial measures to restore order not only in the material but also the social/psychological lives of the people. Thus, disaster is as much of a disequilibrating social event as it is physical. To illustrate it, a natural disaster like earthquake shakes the social life as much as they shake

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