



Differences in relationships with authority figures across cultural groups

Different cultural groups were also seen to have different relationships with authority figures. In some cases, these relationships are good and in other cases these relationships are not good, which may impede communication in emergency and disaster situations: “I can think of what happened with the Costa Concordia accident. Most of the victims were German who are more used than we are to respect orders. The problem there was who was giving the orders, as those who followed orders died” (G2; R - see full reference in source document), “I once rescued from a car crash with a coach full of Japanese people, and they strictly followed my orders to go out and sit on the guardrail... You need to be careful, Chinese people are like that, too. They are helpful, Italians are not so much” (G2; R). “In my personal experience, different ethnic groups react differently, in terms of actions. Chinese communities have a different approach from Senegalese groups. You rarely see groups of Chinese running around and fleeing in panic. Young Senegalese groups have this kind of response. Chinese people wait for their instructions, for instance, other groups don’t. I believe that some cultural backgrounds are easier to manage during emergencies. Some types of people obey orders, some other don’t” (G2; R4). Some practitioners’ judgements regarding cultural groups’ communication interactions with authority figures are stereotyping, and such cultural stereotypes do not necessarily reflect the actual behaviour of people depending on their nationality. In this context, it is interesting to note that a perceived stereotypical behaviour of ‘following orders’, which may not necessarily reflect a ‘good’ relationship with authorities, may have both life-saving or life-threatening effects, in which case having a ‘bad’ relationship with authorities, resulting in more self-reliance and initiative, may, in some cases, be the more desirable behaviour.

Applicable to:

Stakeholders: [Communication](#), [Attitudes toward authorities](#), [Ethnicity](#)

Disaster Phases: [Response](#), [Recovery](#)

Types of Actors Concerned: [National civil protection body](#), [Local authorities](#), [Red Cross](#), [NGOs](#), [Military](#), [Law enforcement agencies](#), [Healthcare and emergency services](#)

Hazards: [Natural hazards](#), [Man-made non-intentional hazards or emergency situations](#), [Man-made intentional hazards](#)

Recommendations:

- [Inform citizens about the risk they may face and about possible actions and measures they can take to reduce vulnerability and better prepare themselves](#)
- [Use cultural factors to improve the effectiveness of disaster communication](#)

Source

[Deliverable D5.11 "Report on Stakeholder Assembly 2 \(Italy\)" \(page 12\)](#)

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