

STAKEHOLDER COASTAL HAZARD COMMUNICATION AND DECISION MAKING IN MOBILE, AL

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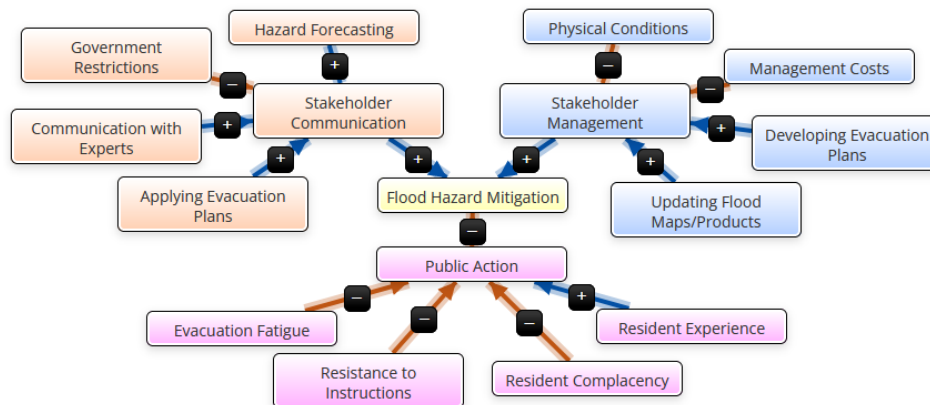


Figure 1 - Mental model for emergency stakeholder interviews in Mobile, Alabama.

BACKGROUND

The Gulf Coast of the United States has been identified as a region with high vulnerability to coastal hazards such as hurricanes and floods (Cass et al., 2023; Dey et al., 2023; Emrich and Cutter, 2011; Shao et al., 2020). It is vital that these hazards are adequately mitigated to limit damage. Laypeople are limited in the resiliency and mitigation measures they can adopt, so organizations are responsible for large-scale projects. Individual stakeholders in various organizations differ in experiences and responsibilities, which can influence their perceptions of coastal hazards and their preferred actions (Samuel and Siebeneck, 2019). Understanding different approaches to mitigation adopted by stakeholders in an at-risk community can inform mitigation in coastal communities elsewhere (Tyler et al, 2019).

METHODS

Two focus groups were conducted with stakeholders associated with coastal hazard planning, mitigation, and recovery in Mobile, AL, U.S. in the spring of 2023. These focus groups covered actions taken to address hazards by emergency managers, government officials, members of news media, and non-governmental organizations. In addition, individual stakeholder perceptions of flood and hurricane risks were considered. Transcripts of the focus groups were used for qualitative content and sentiment analysis to identify the flow of information and subsequent actions taken in the hazard mitigation process. These results were condensed into a mental model for visualization of the major themes and influences on the flood hazard communication and mitigation process reported by stakeholders, as shown in Figure 1.

FINDINGS

Mobile stakeholders identified stakeholder communication, stakeholder management, and public actions as the most salient factors contributing to municipal flood hazard mitigation actions. First, stakeholder communication emphasized effective flow of information between stakeholders and the public. This was accomplished by implementing plans within government purview. Second, stakeholder management involved assessment and development of local projects and plans in preparation for future flood hazards. These actions differed based on the role of individual stakeholders and organizations. Finally, stakeholders believed that public decisions and actions often hinder the effectiveness of preparation and mitigation of flood hazards because laypeople often make decisions regardless of recommendations made by government and experts. These findings provide a framework for government and private stakeholder actions and plans for an at-risk Gulf Coast community that can be referenced and expanded on for effective flood hazard mitigation elsewhere.

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