

## **COMPARISON OF PLAY STYLES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN MALAYSIA AND JAPAN: ITS' EFFECT ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL INTERACTION**

The purposes of this study were to report the similarities and differences of play between Japan and Malaysia. It also covered the benefits play has on social interaction.

Two surveys conducted through correspondence were carried out in both Penang, Malaysia and in Tokyo, Japan. The first "A Study on Play Styles for Toy Libraries" had 12 questions with at least three respondents from both countries.

The second "A Study on Play Styles for Parents" had 13 questions with 20 respondents from Penang. All but one of 18 Japanese respondents was living in Tokyo. All 38 respondents had a disabled child and were currently attending either a toy library service and/or a service where toys were loaned to them (e.g. Early Intervention Service).

### **Summary of Key Findings:**

- Japanese toy libraries favored open policy, whereas, Malaysia adhered to stricter policies regarding toy libraries.
- Japanese toy library borrowers showed more freedom and frequency of use than Malaysian toy library borrowers. Japanese parents gave more freedom of choice for 'what to play with' while Malaysian parents gave more freedom of choice as to 'who to play with'.
- The *only* purpose of toys for Japanese toy libraries was 'to have fun'. This was *one* of the purposes Malaysia noted along with 'therapy' and 'education'. This pattern was similar for the respondents in the second survey also. To the Japanese parent of a disabled child leisure was the predominant choice and to the Malaysian parent 'education' was the major purpose.
- Overall the majority of Japanese respondents and all Malaysian respondents reported that playing with toys had a positive effect on their child's social behavior. Both countries stated that 'improved relationships with others' was the

most improved area. Increased ability to initiate with others and respond to others initiations was also rated high. Japanese and Malaysian parents agreed that there was an increase in socially acceptable behaviors for their disabled child as a result of play. However, all Malaysian parents (N=20) noted positively some form of social improvement while 14 Japanese parents were sure of this improvement yet four were uncertain regarding social improvement for their disabled child.

- Child's most frequent playmate(s) according to the surveys were: Japan's toy libraries chose first parents and volunteers equally. Malaysia's toy libraries chose that first the child with disabilities plays alone. Japanese parents rated both parents as number one playmate(s) and Malaysian parents rated mothers and siblings.
- Japanese parents have more access to toy libraries and borrow more frequently in comparison to Malaysian parents. This could explain less expenditure on toys and fewer types of toys in Japanese homes.

### **Recommendations and Outcomes**

- Establish more toy libraries throughout Malaysia.
- Toy libraries should include all persons young or old, disabled or 'able-bodied'.
- Toy libraries should build self-esteem, self-confidence and promote enjoyment.
- Choices should be given of playmates, playtime and playthings.
- Society must take time for leisure.
- Educate public on the importance of play through:
  1. pamphlet entitled "[Come, let's play!](#)"; and
  2. poster of disabled & able-bodied people entitled "[Let's Play](#)".