



# COMPARISON OF PLAY STYLES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN MALAYSIA AND JAPAN :

Its' Effect On The Development  
Of Social Interaction

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## **I.0 INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY**

Playing for the sake of play has often been overlooked in favor of the more immediate objectives of educational play as defined by educators. Could the obligation to learn, memorize, recognize and name exact, predetermined concepts take away the pleasure of spontaneously acquiring these same skills?

At the 10<sup>th</sup> International Toy Library Conference in Pretoria, South Africa, well-known 'play' advocate, Professor Roy McConkey said this. *"Play is for all cultures, all ages, anywhere, anytime!" "Play is like a language that's universal... "Our contribution will only be as great as long as it keeps the 'spirit of play'!"*<sup>1</sup>

By the 'spirit of play' McConkey meant, people having fun together, taking turns (not adult directive) emphasizing what he or she can do (not what he or she cannot do). He further elaborated, *"There are threats to play, mostly in affluent cultures." These threats are:*

- 1) *'Busy-ness' (both of the parent and the child)*
- 2) *Affluence (parents feeling the need to buy expensive toys to help their child play)*
- 3) *Urban life (busy roads, people taking advantage of children)*
- 4) *'Specialisms' (looking to professionals, albeit, the speech therapist, physiotherapist, special educationist, and psychologist to 'fix' the child).*

So how do we focus on the pleasure of play and avoid trying to solve children's problems through play? *"Let the 'spirit of play' animate us,"*says McConkey<sup>2</sup>.

## **2.0 IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY**

### **2.1 Purpose of Play**

In a child's world, play should be a primary source that enables him to explore and understand his world around him. Play should enable the child to express his feelings and communicate with others; it should naturally contribute to his development by fostering creativity, social and language skills, cognition and a sense of responsibility towards himself and others.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Spirit of Play in a World of Professionalism and Specialties*. Prof Roy McConkey. September 20<sup>th</sup> 2005 Key Note Address.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

## **2.2 Purpose of Toy Libraries**

Furthermore, a toy library should first and foremost promote the importance of play. It should stimulate and promote the pleasures of play (with or without toys). It should encourage spontaneous exploration, leisure and fun through the enjoyment of toys, games and play materials. When children were allowed choices in play they unsurprisingly progressed towards learning about their world without the burden of directives from adults who decided what they will learn, how they will learn it and when they will learn it.

## **2.3 Context of the Problem**

However, very little information exists about the effects toys, toy libraries and play in general, have on children with disabilities in Malaysia. To date, this was the first known research on the importance Malaysians place on toys and play with comparison to the Japanese concept of play and toys.

## **2.4 Statement of the Problem**

Moreover, play and the 'spirit of play' were relatively new concepts in Malaysia and their importance had yet to be realized. This perhaps had been further influenced by Malaysian's highly valued academic performance and examination oriented educational system. Furthermore, few toys were locally made and the durable imported ones were often very expensive, affordable by the middle-upper echelons of society.

Therefore, two surveys were undertaken both in Japan and Malaysia: One pertaining to toy libraries and the other, the opinions of parents of disabled children. It was to discover toy libraries' primary purpose for toys, and to determine whether there are any differences between toy libraries in Japan and Malaysia. Furthermore, it was investigated what parents thought the most important function of toys was and any differences between the opinions of parents of children with disabilities in Japan versus parents in Malaysia. Did play have a positive effect on the child with special needs' social development? If yes, in what ways did play help?

These surveys revealed whether children with disabilities were given choices, such as, who they wanted to play with, what they wanted to play with, how they wanted

to play (with the toy) and when to start or stop play. In addition, what types of play sessions were carried out (adult-directed or free-style)?

Was Malaysia moving forward and towards the 'spirit of play', valuing 'child-centered play'? What further obstacles should be overcome in order to value the pleasure of 'child's play'?

The answers to these and more questions determine whether we have moved towards the '*spirit of play*' or farther away from it, towards enhancing our children's play style or controlling them.

### **3.0 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

In order to understand these issues it was necessary to understand brief histories of toy libraries in both Japan and in Malaysia.

#### **3.1 Brief History of Toy Libraries in Japan**

Japan's toy library history is remarkable and that was why Japan was chosen due to its' Asian context and valuable contribution to toy libraries around the world. Toy libraries in Japan have had more years of experience than toy libraries in Malaysia.

In 1981, the first toy library was opened in Tokyo to celebrate the United Nation's "International Year of Disabled Persons". After 24 years, there existed more than 650 toy libraries all over Japan<sup>3</sup>. These toy libraries were found in civic halls and community centres; in hospitals, in nursery schools; and in both the Institutions for Disabled Children and for the Aged. In addition there were specialized toy libraries like standing toy libraries, mobile toy libraries and leisure toy libraries (the latter catered for adults with disabilities). Even a Toy Caravan had been set up to support children in the disaster-stricken area after the big earthquake and flood of 2004<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> 500 were part of the Japanese National Council of Toy Libraries located in seven locations throughout Japan.

<sup>4</sup> *The Progress and the Various Activities of the Toy Libraries in Japan*. Seminar presentation at 10<sup>th</sup> ITLA conference on September 2005, Pretoria, South Africa. by Dr Noriko Minejima of The Japanese National Council of Toy Libraries

### **3.2 Brief History of Toy Libraries in Malaysia**

In comparison, Malaysia's first public toy library, established in Kuala Lumpur by Malaysian Care has been in existence since 1987. Yet to date, there are only 11 public toy libraries in Malaysia<sup>5</sup>. However, there were over 60 early intervention centres<sup>6</sup> that also may lend out toys to children with special needs through their service (either the parents or teachers choose the toys for the child to improve particular skills). The Malaysian National Council of Toy Libraries has existed since 1996 but its' function has been very minimal with little impact on changing society's attitudes towards play<sup>7</sup>.

### **4.0 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY**

The purposes of this study were to record Japanese and Malaysians views on play and toys and to recommend ways that play could further enrich children's lives<sup>8</sup>, give them confidence, enjoyment and self-control, thus motivate service providers and parents towards the 'spirit of play'.

Specifically, the research objectives were as follows:

- To document play styles from toy libraries in Penang, Malaysia and make comparisons with play styles from toy libraries in Tokyo, Japan
- To document views on toys and play from parents of children who have disabilities in both Penang and Tokyo and make comparisons (e.g. child initiated versus adult directed) and;
- To document benefits of play on social interaction.

Two surveys were conducted in both Penang, Malaysia which has a population of 1,468,800<sup>9</sup> (2005 estimation) and in Tokyo, Japan with an 8,340,000 population<sup>10</sup> (2005 estimation). The surveys were conducted through visitation and correspondence. The first survey "A Study on Play Styles for Toy Libraries" had at least three respondents from both countries that offered toy libraries. In Japan the

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<sup>5</sup> The author knows only 3 new toy libraries apart from list compiled in "Survey of Toy Library Activities in Asian Countries (2002)" where 8 Malaysian Toy Libraries were listed by Khor Ai-Na.

<sup>6</sup> Paper presentation "Early Intervention Services in Malaysia" Wong Poh Wan at Early Childhood Intervention Symposium, Kuala Lumpur, 13 August 2005.

<sup>7</sup> Interview with Khor Ai-Na December 2005.

<sup>8</sup> Emphasis was placed on disabled children, aged three to 12.

<sup>9</sup> Source from Department of Statistics Penang

<sup>10</sup> Wikipidea Encyclopedia, Internet

three toy libraries were in or around Tokyo (i.e. Shinjuku-Aiji Prefecture; Saitama Prefecture and Tokyo City). In Malaysia, there were four organizations<sup>11</sup> all from the state of Penang that took part in this research. Only three were toy libraries located in very different places (i.e., one in a hospital, one in a public library and one being a mobile toy library). There were no other known toy libraries in Penang at the time of the survey.

The second survey “A Study on Play Styles for Parents” had 20 respondents from Penang, Malaysia all of whom were parents of disabled children aged 12 years and below. All but one Japanese respondent were living in Tokyo, with a total of 18 respondents<sup>12</sup> being parents of children with disabilities. All 38 respondents were currently receiving either toy library service and/or some other service where toys were loaned to them (e.g. Early Intervention Service).

Questionnaires were composed in English, Malay Language and Japanese. The respondents represented either toy library service providers or parents of a handicapped child. Respondents’ names were not required.

These surveys were made possible through a grant from The Sumitomo Foundation, Japan without which this research would not have been possible.

## **5.0 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

It was not within the scope of this research to focus nation-wide. Neither is it within the scope to obtain a large sampling. This decision was largely due to Japan’s much larger representation of toy libraries compared to Malaysia’s fewer representations of toy libraries. Furthermore, there were shortages of manpower and staff limitations. Yet focusing on nation-wide samples would be a viable project for future research.

It was also not within the scope of this research to ask parents of typically developing children their opinions of play and toys; however, this would be a

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<sup>11</sup> A fourth organization was included from Penang even though they were not a toy lending library children came to the centre to play with toys as part of intervention. The fourth respondent from Japan was from the same toy library as another respondent.

<sup>12</sup> One Japanese parent currently was living in Malaysia at the time when this survey was filled out.

worthwhile project for another study in order to make any comparisons with this study's population.

Finally, it was not possible to obtain exact numbers of respondents for both surveys but as far as was possible within one or two numbers difference was maintained.

## **6.0 COMPARISONS OF THE RESULTS OF THE STUDY**

Part A discussed the results from the first study on Play Styles for Toy Libraries and Part B discussed the second study's results on Play Styles for Parents.

Comparisons were made between countries for each of the questions in the surveys. After each of the comparison of results for Parts A and B, there were comments on the significance of each survey's findings. Thereafter, recommendations and final remarks have been combined for both surveys due to the similarity of the questions.

## 6.1 PART A

### “PLAY STYLES FOR TOY LIBRARIES IN MALAYSIA AND JAPAN”

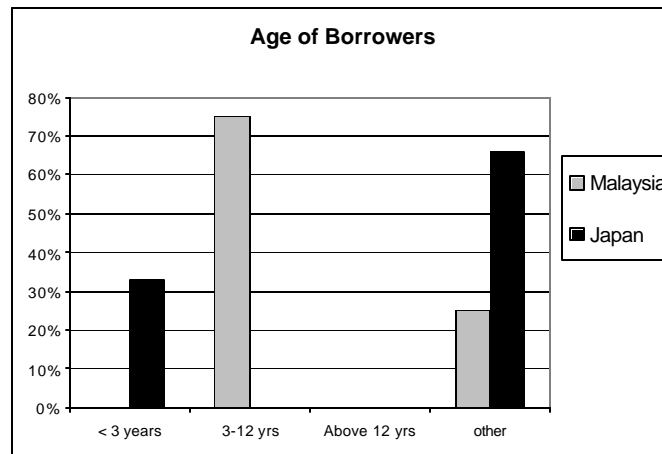
There were 12 questions in this survey. Several questions have more than one part and sometimes questions have more than one answer. These answers were discussed and given special notation under the discussion section.

#### 6.1.1 *The Age Range of Toy Library Borrowers (Q1)*

**Chart A6.1.1 Age range**

	Malaysia	Japan
< 3 yrs	0%	33%
3-12 yrs	75%	0%
12 yrs +	0%	0
Other	25%	66%

**Graph A6.1.1 Age range**



#### **Discussion: Age Range of Toy Library Borrowers (Q1)**

The ‘other’ category included more than one of the age categories; for Malaysia it included one organization who catered for persons who were three years to 12 years old and above; whereas, for Japan two organizations provided service to children from below three years until 12 years old and above (in other words, no age limits).

#### 6.1.2 *Toy Library Membership Policies and Population (Q2)*

##### 6.1.2a *Toy Library Membership Policies (Q2a)*

#### **Discussion: Toy Library Membership Policies (Q2a)**

In Malaysia, three toy libraries followed a membership policy in order to borrow toys whereas the one that did not, was a play intervention centre and not a centre for borrowing toys. In Japan, only one toy library provided membership while the other two did not have a membership policy. Membership was not an issue in Japan, as their libraries do not charge for services. It is common knowledge that most Malaysian library facilities charge at least a minimum fee.

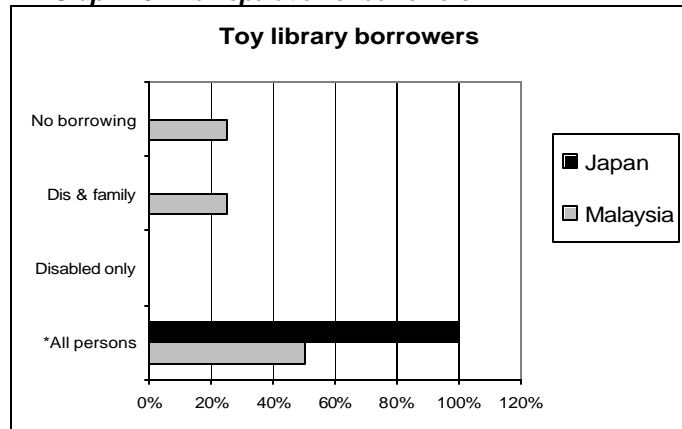


### 6.1.2b Toy Library Membership Population (Q2b)

Chart A6.1.2b Population of borrowers

	Malaysia	Japan
All persons	50%	100%
Disabled only	0%	0
Disabled & family	25%	0
Not allowed to borrow	25%	0

Graph A6.1.2b Population of borrowers



### Discussion: Toy Library Membership Population (Q2b)

In Japan, all children (disabled or not) were allowed to borrow toys<sup>13</sup> but in Malaysia only two organizations have membership for all persons; one organization has membership for only the disabled and their families<sup>14</sup>.

### 6.1.3 Particulars about Borrowing Toys Home (Q3)

#### 6.1.3a Borrowing Toys Home (Q3a)

### Discussion: Borrowing Toys Home (Q3a)

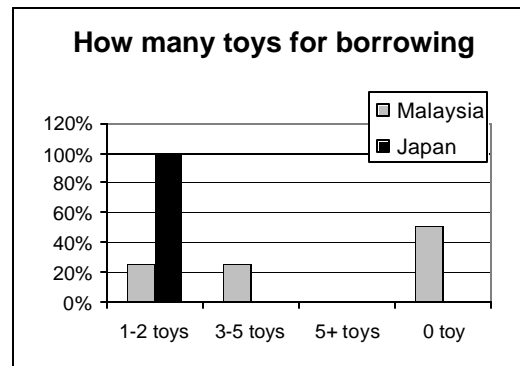
In Japan all three toy libraries permitted the users to borrow toys home; whereas, in Malaysia only two toy libraries permitted toys to be borrowed home; two other organizations allowed the children to play with the toys on the premise.

### 6.1.3b How Many Toys May be Borrowed (Q3b)

Chart A6.1.3b Number of toys borrowed

	Malaysia	Japan
1 - 2 toys	25%	100%
3 - 5 toys	25%	0%
5+ toys	0%	0%
No toys to borrow	50%	0%

Graph A6.1.3b Number of toys borrowed



<sup>13</sup> One Japanese toy library clarified that their users are limited to children without disabilities aged 3 years and below.

<sup>14</sup> The fourth Malaysian organization was set up to help only the disabled and since it was not a loaning library this was reflected under the 'not allowed to borrow' toys category.

### Discussion: How Many Toys May be Borrowed (Q3b)

One of the Malaysian organizations that allowed playing with toys only at their premise also permitted more than five toys to be played with during the child's visit. But play time was limited to ½ hour per toy. Japan permitted only one or two toys to be borrowed at home. Of the two Malaysian toy libraries that loaned toys out, one limited borrowing to either one or two toys, the other allowed three - five toys to be borrowed at one time.

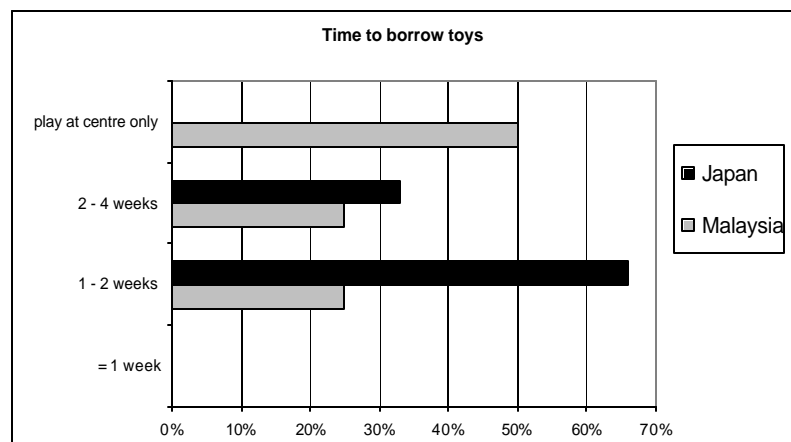
### 6.1.3c Time Allocation for Borrowing Toys Home (Q3c)

Chart A6.1.3c

Time allowed for borrowing

	Malaysia	Japan
= 1 week	0%	0%
1 - 2 weeks	25%	66%
2 - 4 weeks	25%	33%
Play at centre	50%	0%

Graph A6.1.3c Time allowed for borrowing



### Discussion: Time Allocation for Borrowing Toys Home (Q3c)

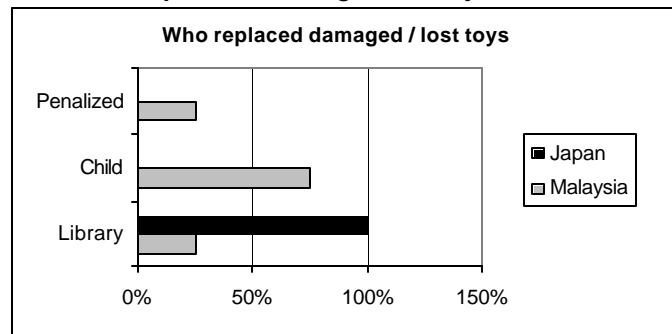
In Malaysia, one toy library allowed the toy to be borrowed for one month but the other toy library only allowed one – two weeks borrowing time. In Japan, two toy libraries allowed toys to be borrowed for one – two weeks and only one for up to one month.

### 6.1.4 Replacement of Damaged or Lost Toys (Q4)

Chart A6.1.4 Damaged / lost toys

	Malaysia	Japan
Library	25%	100%
Child	75%	0%
Penalized	25%	0%

Graph A6.1.4 Damaged / lost toys



### Discussion: Replacement of Damaged or Lost Toys (Q4)

In Malaysia, three out of four organizations asked the child / family to be responsible for damaged or missing toys (one toy library also incurred a penalty to the borrower). Only one toy library took full responsibility for damaged or lost toys. On the contrary, in Japan all three toy libraries assumed full responsibility for replacement of toys. In addition one toy library commented that their toys were sent to the toy doctor for repair.

### 6.1.5 Choices Made by Borrowers (Q5)

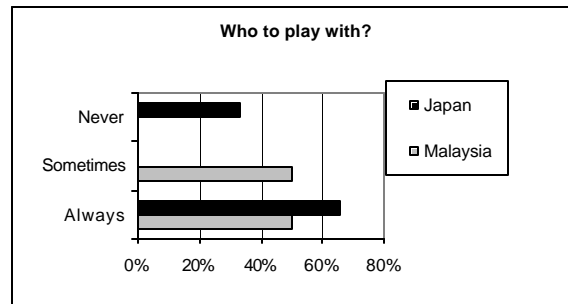
This four-part question tackled whether choices were given during play, that is, did the children have the choice: who to play with (5a); what to play with (5b); how to play it (5c) and when to start or stop the play (5d). These questions were answered either 'always,' 'sometimes' or 'never'. All four questions have been discussed on page 12 after the charts and graphs presentations for questions 5a-d. The toy libraries in Japan answered all four parts. One respondent (not the same one) did not answer questions 5c and 5d for Malaysia's sample (scored as 'no response').

### Choices Made by Borrowers (Q5)

**Chart A6.1.5a Who to play with?**

	Malaysia	Japan
Always	50%	66%
Sometimes	50%	0%
Never	0%	33%

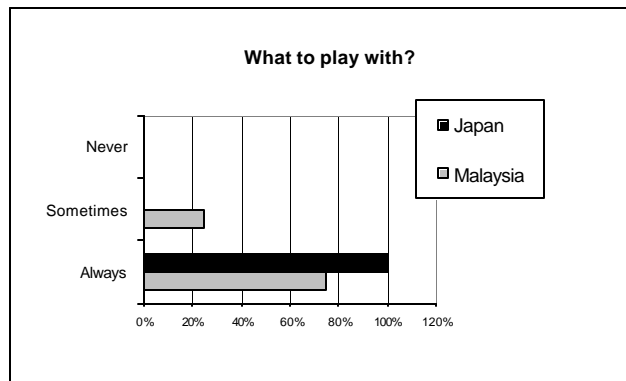
**Graph A6.1.5a Who to play with?**



**Chart A6.1.5b What to play with?**

	Malaysia	Japan
Always	75%	100%
Sometimes	25%	0%
Never	0	0

**Graph A6.1.5b What to play with?**

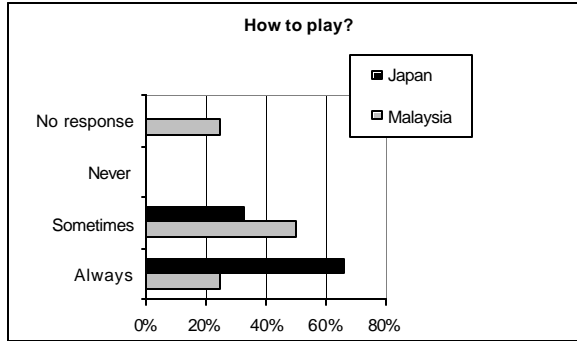


## Choices Made by Borrowers (Q5)

**Chart A6.1.5c How to play it?**

	Malaysia	Japan
Always	25%	66%
Sometimes	50%	33%
Never	0%	0%
No response	25%	0%

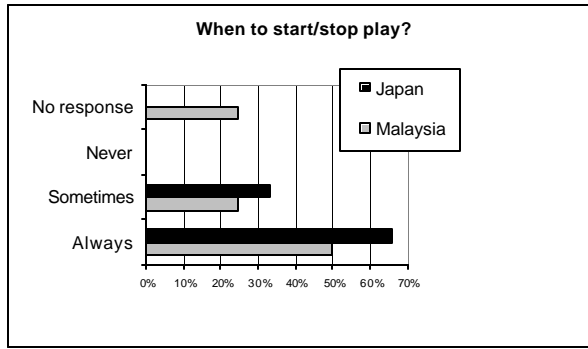
**Graph A6.1.5c How to play it?**



**Chart A6.1.5d When to play?**

	Malaysia	Japan
Always	50%	66%
Sometimes	25%	33%
Never	0%	0%
No response	25%	0%

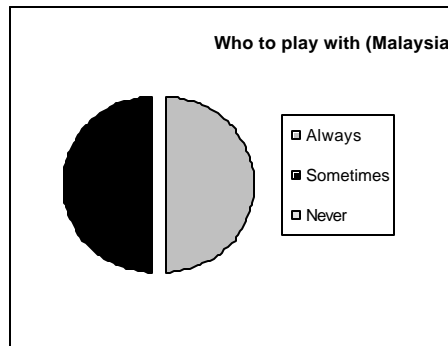
**Graph A6.1.5d When to play?**



**Pie Chart A6.1.5a.i Who to play with? (Japan)**



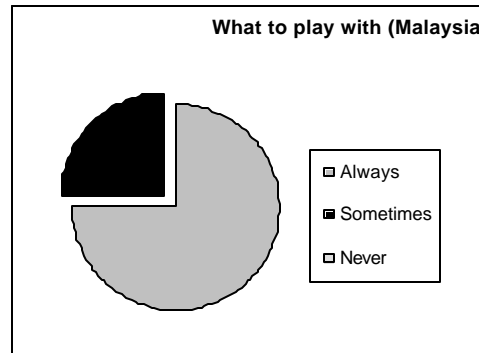
**Pie Chart A6.1.5a.ii Who to play with? (Malaysia)**



**Pie Chart A6.1.5b.i What to play with? (Japan)**



**Pie Chart A6.1.5b.ii What to play with? (Malaysia)**

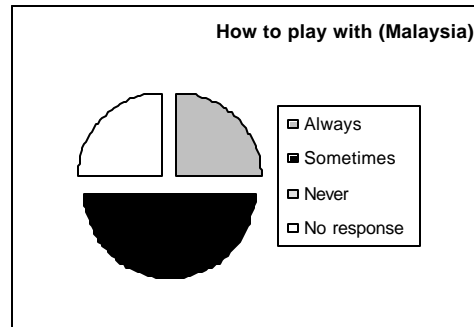


## Choices Made by Borrowers (Q5)

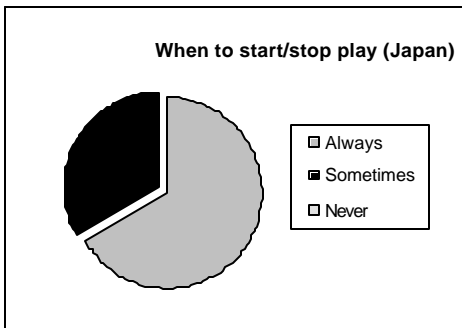
*Pie Chart A6.1.5c.i*  
*How to play? (Japan)*



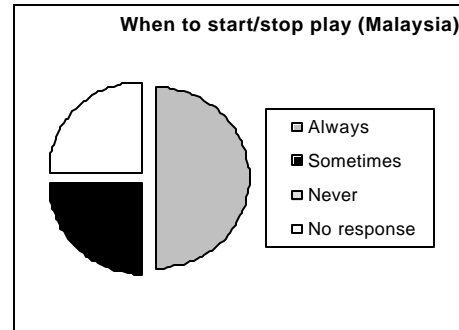
*Pie Chart A6.1.5c.ii*  
*How to play? (Malaysia)*



*Pie Chart A6.1.5d.i*  
*When to play? (Japan)*



*Pie Chart A6.1.5d.ii*  
*When to play? (Malaysia)*



### Discussion: Choices Made by Borrowers (Q5a-d)

Answers for scores of 'always' were the following: For Malaysian toy libraries the 'always' score ranked highest for, what to play with (q. 5.b) at 75%; followed by 50% for both who to play with (5.a) and when to play (5.d); and lastly 25% score for how to play (5.c). Japan's toy libraries yielded a 100% score of 'always' for what to play with (q. 5.b) and 66% for all the other three (5.a, 5.c & 5.d) or who to play with; how to play and when to play respectively.

Overall, Japan's toy libraries gave choices to the child more frequently than Malaysia. However, at one point Japan's response was a 'never' response (33%) for who to play with (perhaps this was due to that toy library catered for children under the age of three years old). Malaysia, on the other hand, did not have any 'never' responses for the four questions above. Their most usual response was 'sometimes'.

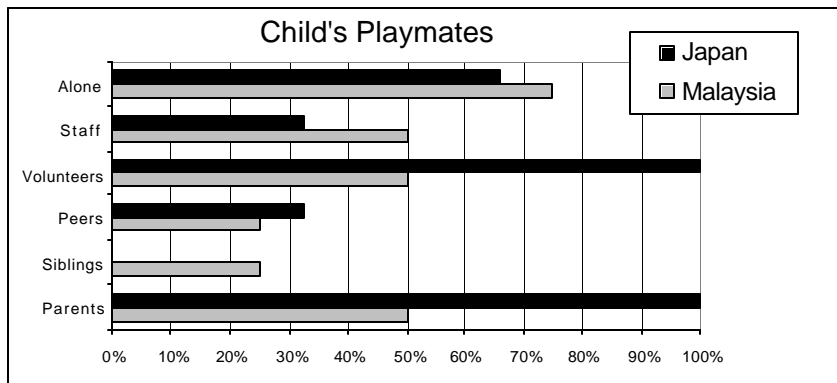
### 6.1.6 Children's Most Frequent Playmate(s) (Q6)

The respondents were allowed to choose three choices from the following list:

**Chart A6.1.6 Frequent playmate(s)**

	Parents	Siblings	Peers	Volunteers	Staff	Alone
<b>Malaysia</b>	50%	25%	25%	50%	50%	75%
<b>Japan</b>	100%	0%	33%	100%	33%	66%

**Graph A6.1.6 Frequent playmates**



### Discussion: Children's Most Frequent Playmate(s) (Q6)

Malaysia's toy libraries chose that the child played the most by himself, whereas, it was a tie between volunteers and parents as the first choice for Japan's toy libraries. Malaysia's second place went equally to staff, volunteers and parents while Japan's second place was the child played alone. Playing with staff and peers were the third choice for Japan. Malaysia's third choice was peers and siblings.

### 6.1.7 Toys: Availability and Popularity (Q7)

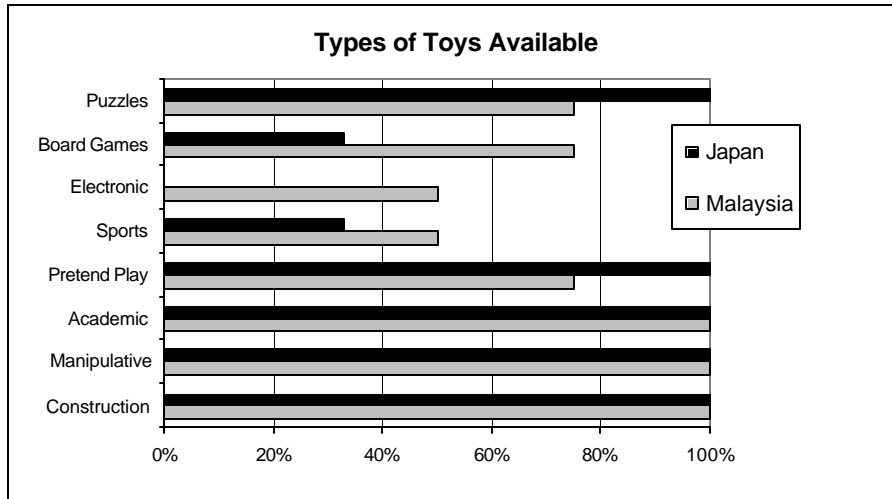
This question has two parts; one question asked what types of toys were available in the toy library (7a) and the second question rated the toys popularity (7b) on a scale from one – five (one being most popular and five being the least popular). This question was allowed to have as many answers as were appropriate.

#### 6.1.7a Types of Toys Available in Toy Libraries (Q7a)

**Chart A6.1.7a Types of toys available in toy libraries**

	Construction	Manipulative	Academic	Pretend Play	Sports	Electronic	Board Game	Puzzles
<b>Malaysia</b>	100%	100%	100%	75%	50%	50%	75%	75%
<b>Japan</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	33%	0%	33%	100%

**Graph A6.1.7a Types of toys available in toy libraries**



**Discussion: Types of Toys Available in Toy Libraries (Q7a)**

The most common toys available in both countries (obtaining the same score) were: academic, manipulative and construction toys. In addition to these, Japan rated pretend play and puzzles on equal par with the above but Malaysia did not follow suit. Puzzles, board games and pretend play came in second for Malaysia in terms of availability.

Second for Japan was board games and sports whereas, these were third place in Malaysia (however, they received a higher score than Japan).

**6.1.7b Popularity of Toys in Toy Libraries (Q7b)**

**Chart A6.1.7b.i Toys popularity ratings in Malaysia's toy libraries**

	1	2	3	4	5	Total # of marks
Construction Play			vv	vv		4
Manipulative Play		vv	v	v		4
Academic	v		v	v	v	4
Pretend Play	v		vv			3
Sports		v	v			2
Electronic Games		v		v		2
Board Games		v	v	v		3
Puzzles	v		v		v	3

**Chart A6.1.7b.ii Toys popularity ratings in Japan's toy libraries**

	1	2	3	4	5	Total # of marks
Construction Play			v		vv	3
Manipulative Play	vv	v				3
Academic			v	v	v	3
Pretend Play	vv	v				3
Sports					v	1
Electronic Games						0
Board Games					v	1
Puzzles			v	v	v	3

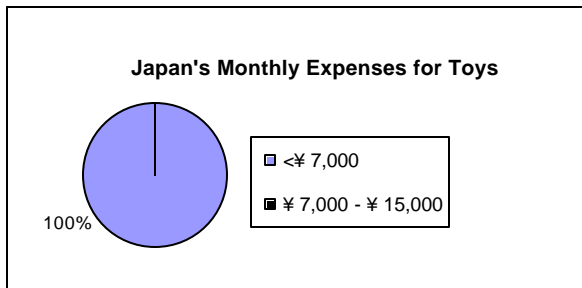
**Discussion: Popularity of Toys in Toy Libraries (Q7b)**

Manipulative toys (e.g. cause and effect, battery operated and play dough) and pretend play toys were rated the highest in popularity for Japan's toy libraries, the least popular being construction toys. Interestingly, in Japan scores for academics and puzzles were rated on the lower end (a score of 3, 4 or 5) even though those were two of the four top toys found in Japan's toy libraries.

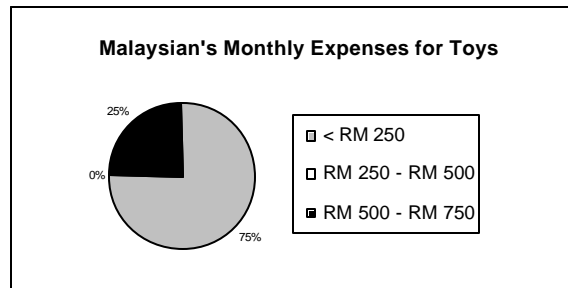
It was more difficult to state Malaysia's most popular toys but two out of four toy libraries/organizations gave a fairly high rating (2) for manipulative toys (this was similar to Japan). Only one respondent gave a score of one for academic, pretend play and puzzles. Most scores were in the three or four range.

**6.1.8 Monthly Expenditure for Toys (Q8)**

*Monthly expenditure for toys for Japanese and Malaysian toy libraries*



*Pie Chart A6.1.8.i*



*Pie Chart A6.1.8.ii*

**Discussion: Monthly Expenditure for Toys (Q8)**

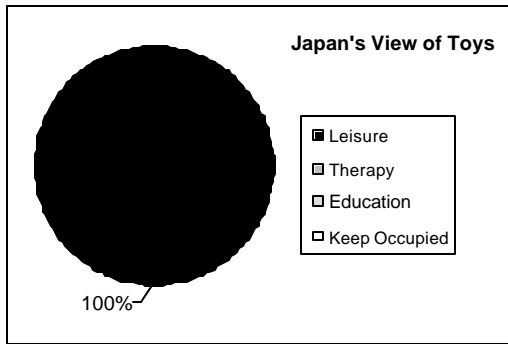
It was possible that the author gauged the starting amount too high in Yen hence all the respondents in Japan spent less than the lowest amount possible in the survey. This compared to Malaysian toy libraries was similar as three out of four



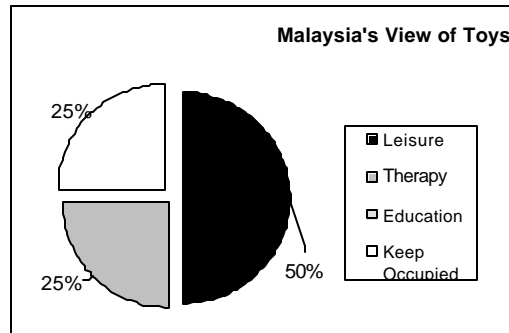
organizations spent less than RM 250 per month on toys (also the lowest amount). One toy library's budget was between RM 500 – 750 per month on toys in Malaysia (this toy library charges the highest fee for membership).

### 6.1.9 Major Purpose of Toys (Q9)

*Purpose(s) of toys from Japanese and Malaysian viewpoints*



*Pie Chart A6.1.9.i Japan's view of toys*



*Pie Chart A6.1.9.ii Malaysia's view of toys*

### Discussion: Major Purpose of Toys (Q9)

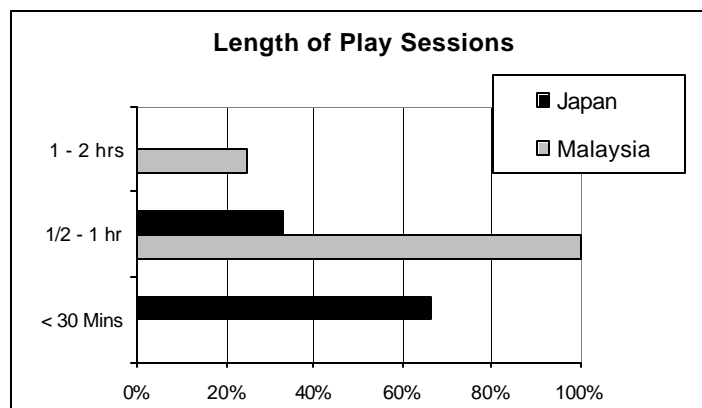
It was obvious from the above graphs that the predominant purpose of toys was to have fun for Japanese toy libraries but in Malaysia, two out of the four respondents agreed with Japan but two others said that toys were either for therapy or education.

### 6.1.10 Length of Play Time / Sessions (Q10)

*Graph A6.1.10 Length of play time*

*Chart A6.1.10 Length of play time*

	Malaysia	Japan
< 30 mins	0%	66%
½ - 1 hr	100%	33%
1 - 2 hrs	25%	0%



**Discussion: Length of Play Time / Sessions (Q10)**

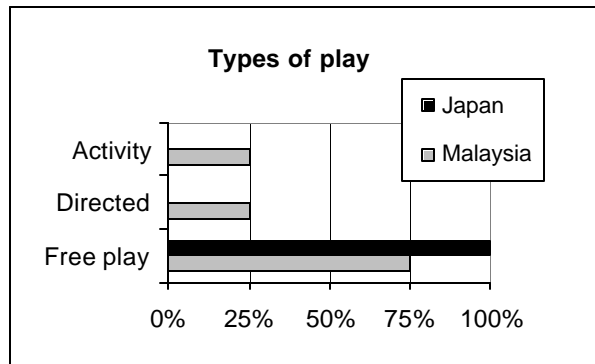
As a whole, Malaysian toy library users played longer and in fact group sessions were recorded for one Malaysian toy library lasting between one – two hours. In Japan, users in two out of three toy libraries spent less than 30 minutes. However, it was significant that users borrowed the toys for shorter periods of time so that they were coming more frequently to the library but staying for shorter time periods in Japan. In essence since some Malaysian toy libraries allowed toys to be borrowed for two – four weeks, perhaps they stayed at the play longer when they did visit as they tended to visit or be visited (Mobile toy library) less frequently than in Japan. Also perhaps it should be speculated since the purposes for half of the Malaysian toy libraries were for education or therapy, this may have accounted for a longer duration of play time.

**6.1.11 Types of Play Sessions (Q11)**

*Graph A6.1.11 Types of play sessions*

*Chart A6.1.11 Types of play sessions*

	Malaysia	Japan
<b>Free play</b>	75%	100%
<b>Staff directed</b>	25%	0
<b>Activity</b>	25%	0



**Discussion: Types of Play Sessions (Q11)**

All three toy libraries from Japan provided uninterrupted free play whereas three out of the four Malaysian organizations provided free play. The other Malaysian toy library engaged in staff directed play. It was noted that in addition to the free play, occasionally, one Malaysian toy library offered activity centered play according to themes such as water, music or art.

**6.1.12 Social Improvements through Play (Q12)**

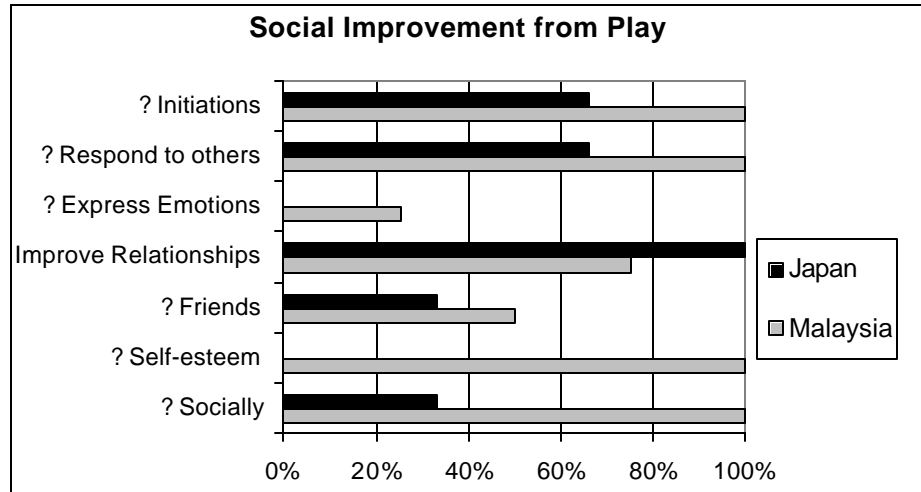
All respondents stated that children with disabilities had improved socially and in the following ways as a result of play. Multiple answers were acceptable. For full listing of these characteristics of social improvement see the key for interpretation below the graph.

**Chart A6.1.12 Child's improvements socially through play**

	? Socially	? Self-esteem	? Friends	Improve Relationships	? Express Emotions	? Respond to others	? Initiations
Malaysia	100%	100%	50%	75%	25%	100%	100%
Japan	33%	0%	33%	100%	0%	66%	66%

**Note:** ? means increased.

**Graph A6.1.12 Child's improvements socially through play**



**Note:** ? means increased.

**Key for interpretation: Social improvements through play**

*Increased socially acceptable behaviors (i.e.: sharing, taking turns, greetings)*

*Increased self esteem and confidence*

*Increased number of friends*

*Improved relationships with others (i.e.: parent-child, staff-child, child-child)*

*Increased ability to express emotions appropriately*

*Increased ability to respond in interaction with others*

*Increased ability to initiate interaction with others*

**Discussion: Social Improvements through Play (Q12)**

For Japan's toy libraries, the most improvement was seen in improved relationships with others. On the other hand, more areas were significantly improved for toy libraries in Malaysia. These were: increased ability to initiate with others; increased ability to respond to the initiations of others; increased self esteem and confidence; and finally, increased socially acceptable behaviors.

In second place, Japanese toy libraries noted improvement in increased ability to initiate with others and respond to others initiations. Thirdly, they listed increased

number of friends and increased socially acceptable behaviors. For Malaysian respondents secondly they noted improved relationships with others; thirdly increased number of friends and finally increased ability to express emotions appropriately (the latter was not noted at all by Japanese respondents).

## **6.2 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FINDINGS**

Although this was a random sampling from Tokyo, Japan (since Japan has many more toy libraries to choose from) this was the only possible sampling from Penang, Malaysia (even this one, had only three toy libraries with the fourth one being a play room for play intervention). The latter was included as initially the study had four respondents from Tokyo. However, it was learned that two different persons filled out the survey for the same toy library in Tokyo. Therefore, Japan's representation had only three different toy libraries<sup>15</sup>. This would be one of the surveys' limitations as it was not possible to obtain another respondent from Japan.

Japan's toy libraries sampled were located in urban settings. However, Penang's toy libraries sampled serviced the rural area, the urban area and a mixture of both localities.

It should be noted that although there were four organizations included in Malaysia's report, only two of these actually allowed children to borrow toys home (the other two only allowed children to play with their toys at the premise). In Japan however, for the most part, there was far less restrictions, such as, any child regardless of age or disability was permitted to come, play at the library and take toys home. In Malaysia, of the four respondents, one toy library and one organization (play centre) were solely for children with disabilities and sometimes for their family members too.

Furthermore, membership was not an issue for two of the three toy libraries in Japan but membership was important for all the three toy libraries sampled in Malaysia. Damaged or lost toys were completely the toy library's responsibility in Japan, yet this was not the condition for three of the four organizations in Malaysia where the borrower took responsibility and / or penalties for broken or lost toys.

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<sup>15</sup> However, when the two respondents' answers differed, both were then noted in this report.

It further appeared that cost was not a factor in the toy libraries in Japan, as they did not spend more than the lowest value of money reported to maintain their toys. Likewise in Malaysia, three respondents also spent monthly the lowest value reported in the survey; one however did spend the second highest value reported on toys<sup>16</sup>. It was beyond the scope of this survey to investigate how funds were obtained to manage and equip the toy library (one toy library had the service of toy doctors in Japan). It was also possible that toy libraries in Japan were voluntarily managed with less expense spent on salaries while the government subsidized their efforts<sup>17</sup>. Each of the organizations in Malaysia needed to pay salaries to one or more staff to manage the service.

Overall, the important issue relating to purposes of toys was clearly Japan's toy libraries were set up for leisure; whereas, only two of the four participating respondents from Malaysia were set up primarily for having fun.

Another significant response worth noting was the choices provided. Both countries had high responses of 'always' for the child to choose what to play with (Japan had 100% whereas, Malaysia 75% for this question). But clearly Japan had more 'always' responses for how to play and when to continue playing or stop playing than Malaysian respondents in these same categories. This reflected a child-initiated play style in Japanese toy libraries. Although free style was the intended purpose of play in three out of four Malaysian organizations, there were also times when staff directed the play. This free style play was reflected more in the responses from Japan than in the responses from Malaysia (cf. answers to the 'who, what, how and when' question 5a-d on pp 10-12).

Finally both countries reported that playing with toys did have a positive effect on children's social behavior. As was noted earlier, Malaysia reported more areas of improvement than Japan. Perhaps the reason for Japan's reluctance to report as much social improvement in children with special needs as Malaysia was because this area was not their focus or intended purpose in setting up toy libraries. However, in Malaysia the toy libraries were justifiable not just because of leisure but mostly for improvement in skills development.

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<sup>16</sup> This same toy library did not require the borrower to replace missing or damaged toys.

<sup>17</sup> Seminar presentation by Dr Noriko Minejima at the 10<sup>th</sup> ITLA conference, Sept 2005.

## 6.3 PART B

### “PLAY STYLES FOR PARENTS IN MALAYSIA AND JAPAN”

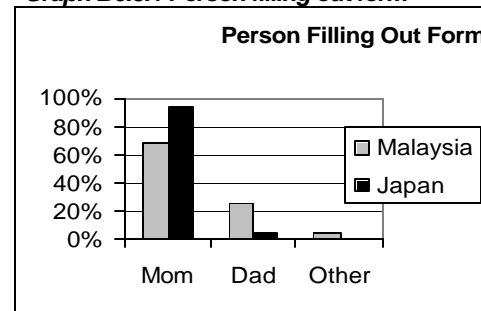
There were 13 questions in this survey for parents of disabled children. Several questions have more than one part and sometimes questions have more than one answer. These answers were discussed and given special notation under the discussion section.

#### 6.3.1 Person Filling out Form (Q1)

*Chart B6.3.1 Person filling out form*

	<i>f</i>	Malaysia	<i>f</i>	Japan
<b>Mom</b>	14	70%	17	94.44%
<b>Dad</b>	5	25%	1	5.56%
<b>Other</b>	1	5%	0	0

*Graph B6.3.1 Person filling out form*



#### Discussion: Person Filling out Form (Q1)

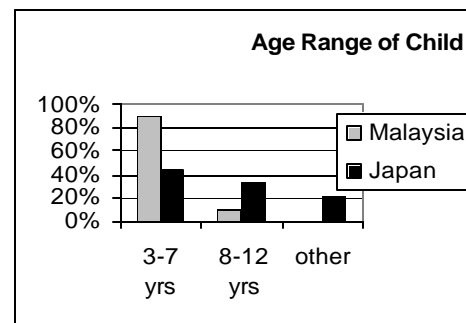
More mothers filled out the form for Japan than for Malaysia but overall fathers filled out the form the least. One relative who was the primary care-giver of the child with disability (an aunt) filled out the form for Malaysia (scored as 'other').

#### 6.3.2 Age Range of Child with Disability (Q2)

*Chart B6.3.2 Age range of child*

	<i>f</i>	Malaysia	<i>f</i>	Japan
<b>3-7 yrs</b>	18	90%	8	44%
<b>8-12 yrs</b>	2	10%	6	33%
<b>Other</b>	0	0	4	22%

*Graph B6.3.2 Age range of child*



#### Discussion: Age Range of Child with Disability (Q2)

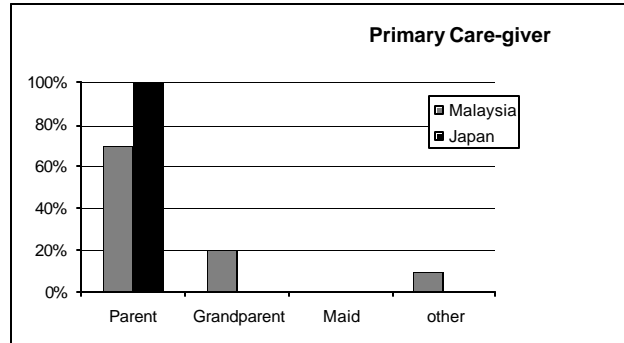
Most of the parents filling out the form from Malaysia had children who were aged three – seven years old whereas, for Japan the children’s ages were more evenly distributed between the two categories. There was one more category that had children aged below three years old (noted as 'other').

### 6.3.3 Primary Care-giver (Q3)

Chart B6.3.3 Primary care-giver

	f	Malaysia	f	Japan
Parent	14	70%	18	100%
Grandparent	4	20%	0	0
Maid	0	0%	0	0
Other	2	10%	0	0

Graph B6.3.3 Primary care-giver



#### Discussion: Primary Care-giver (Q3)

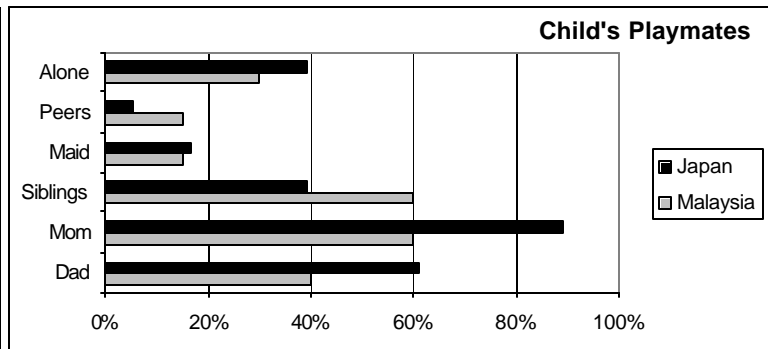
Parents were the sole care-givers of their child with disability in Japan, but not so in Malaysia, grandparents also played an essential role in caring for the child. Another person was an aunt who also was noted in Question 1.

### 6.3.4 Child's Most Frequent Playmate(s) (Q4)

Chart B6.3.4 Child's playmate(s)

	f Malaysia	f Japan
Dad	8	11
Mom	12	16
Siblings	12	7
Maid	3	3
Peers	3	1
Plays alone	6	7
Total # Parents	20	18

Graph B6.3.4 Child's playmate(s)



#### Discussion: Child's Most Frequent Playmate(s)

It appeared that moms and dads were the primary playmate for the children with disability in Japan whereas; moms and siblings were Malaysia's disabled children's primary playmate. Japan's second groupings of most frequent playmate were played alone and siblings. Malaysia's second grouping was dad followed by played alone in third place. Japan's third ranking playmate was the maid and then last was peers. Malaysia's last grouping of playmate was the maid and peers.

Perhaps the significance of these playmates were that predominantly parents played most with their child who had a disability and particularly Japanese fathers

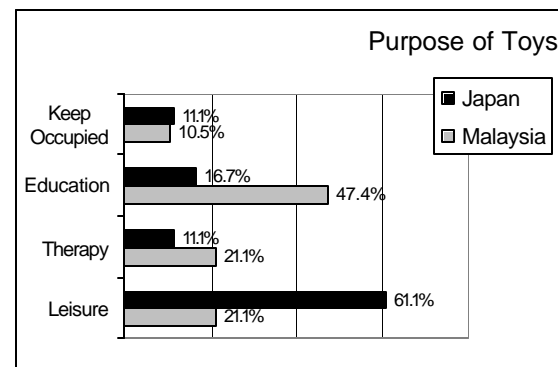
were the child's playmate more frequently than for the Malaysian fathers. It was note-worthy that Malaysian siblings played more than Japanese siblings however it was not known whether the child with a disability was an only child.

### 6.3.5 Major Purpose of Toys (Q5)

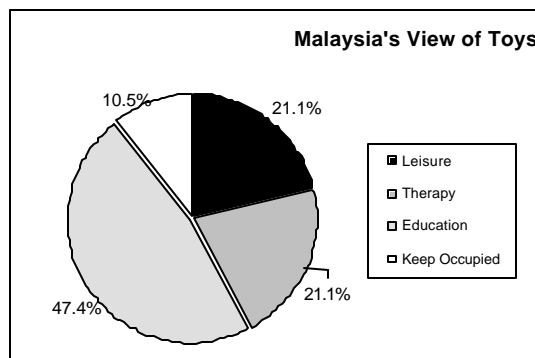
Chart B6.3.5 Purpose(s) of toys

	f <sup>18</sup>	Malaysia	f	Japan
Leisure	4	21.10%	11	61.10%
Therapy	4	21.10%	2	11.10%
Education	9	47.40%	3	16.70%
Keep Occupied	2	10.50%	2	11.10%
<b>Total no</b>	19		18	

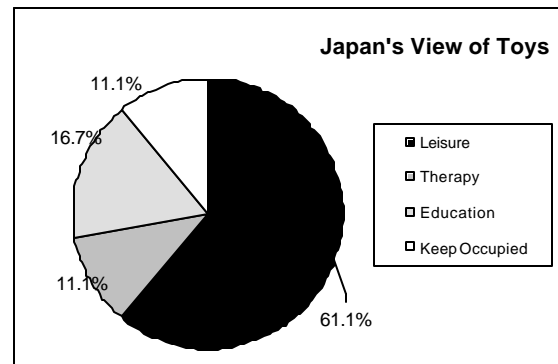
Graph B6.3.5 Purpose(s) of Toys



Pie Chart B6.3.5.i Malaysia's view of toys



Pie Chart B6.3.5.ii Japan's view of toys



### Discussion: Major Purpose of Toys (Q5)

From the charts and graphs above it was clear that Japanese parents views on toys were different from Malaysian parents views. For Japanese, leisure was the predominant focus of toys for parents of disabled children surveyed in this study. On the other hand, education was the first choice for Malaysian parents of disabled children. A tie followed this for leisure and therapy. Lastly they thought toys were to keep the child occupied. Japanese parents' second choice was education followed by a tie for third being both therapy and keeping the child occupied.

<sup>18</sup> One respondent from Malaysia gave all four answers so it was not possible to include that respondents' answer in the findings.

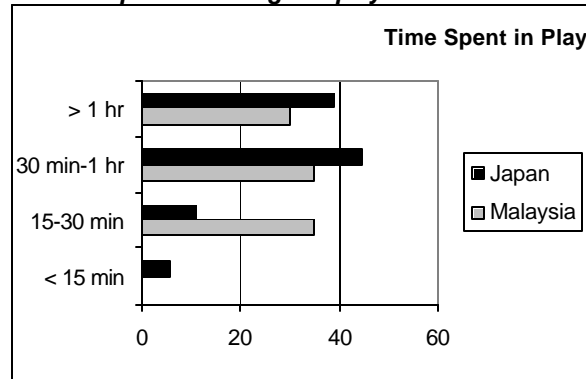


### 6.3.6 Length of Play Time (Q6)

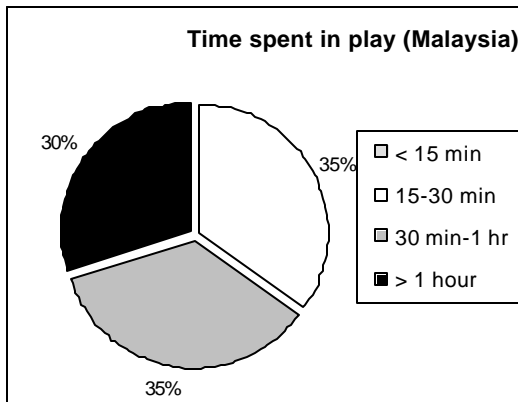
Chart B6.3.6 Length of play time

	f	Malaysia	f	Japan
< 15 min	0	0	1	5.6
15-30 min	7	35%	2	11.1
30 min-1 hr	7	35%	8	44.4
> 1 hr	6	30%	7	38.9
<b>Total #</b>	20		18	

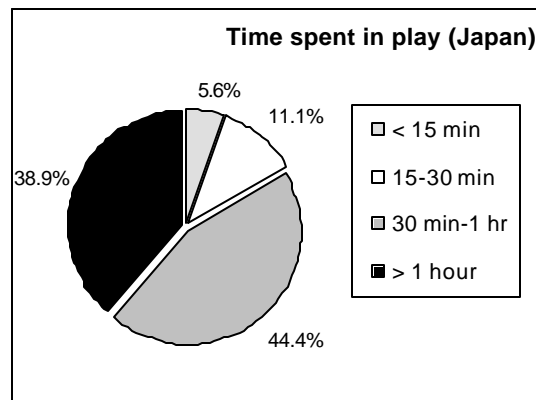
Graph B6.3.6 Length of play time



Pie Chart B6.3.6.i Length of play time (Malaysia)



Pie Chart B6.3.6.ii Length of play time (Japan)



### Discussion: Length of Play Time (Q6)

Generally speaking the majority of both groups of parents spent 30 minutes or more per day playing with their disabled child. However, it appeared from the survey taken, on an average Japanese parents spent more time in play than Malaysian parents did. This was only a slight difference of 15 Japanese parents to 13 Malaysian parents spending between 30 minutes to more than one hour with their children playing (there were two more Malaysians in the survey than Japanese).

Towards the lower range of 30 minutes or less, there were more Malaysian parents than Japanese but these were all in the 15 – 30 minute range. One Japanese parent played less than 15 minutes with their child. There were no Malaysian parents reported in that category. There were three Japanese parents in the lower two sections as opposed to seven Malaysian parents.

### 6.3.7 Choices Children Made during Play (Q7)

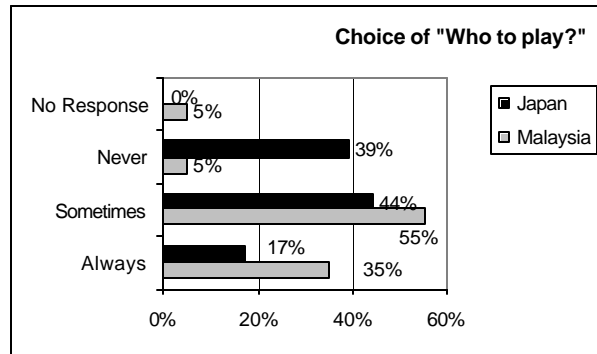
This four-part question tackled whether choices were given during play, that is, did children have choices of: who to play with (7a); what to play with (7b); how to play it (7c) and when to start or stop the play (7d). These questions were answered either 'always', 'sometimes' or 'never'. All four questions have been discussed at the end of the charts and graphs for questions 7a-d on page 27. Parents in Japan answered all four questions. One parent did not answer questions 7a, b & c and another parent did not answer 7d for Malaysia's sample (scored as 'no response').

#### Choices Children Made during Play (Q7)

**Chart B6.3.7a Who to play with?**

	Malaysia	Japan
<b>Always</b>	35%	17%
<b>Sometimes</b>	55%	44%
<b>Never</b>	5%	39%
<b>No Response</b>	5%	0%

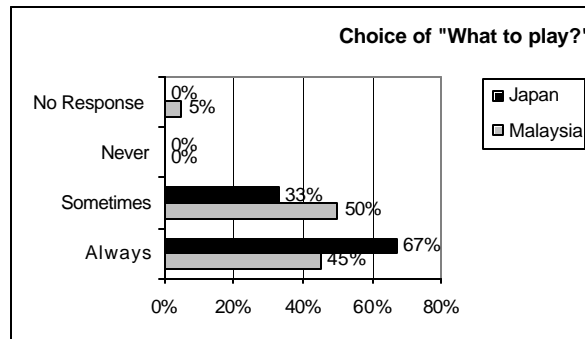
**Graph B6.3.7a Who to play with?**



**Chart B6.3.7b What to play with?**

	Malaysia	Japan
<b>Always</b>	45%	67%
<b>Sometimes</b>	50%	33%
<b>Never</b>	0%	0%
<b>No Response</b>	5%	0%

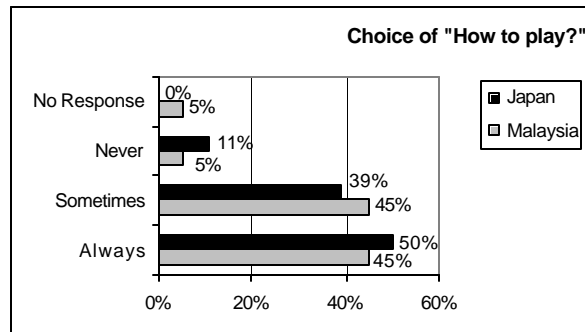
**Graph B6.3.7b What to play with?**



**Chart B6.3.7c How to play?**

	Malaysia	Japan
<b>Always</b>	45%	50%
<b>Sometimes</b>	45%	39%
<b>Never</b>	5%	11%
<b>No Response</b>	5%	0%

**Graph B6.3.7c How to play?**

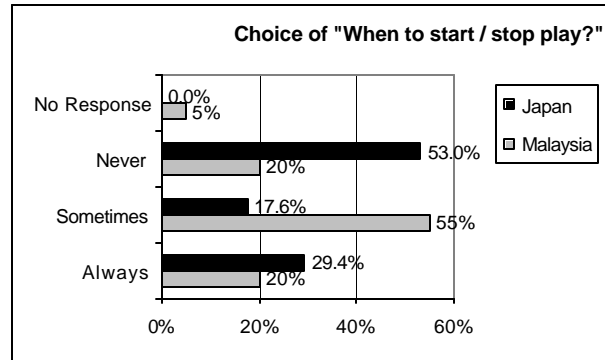


## Choices Children Made during Play (Q7)

**Chart B6.3.7d When to play?**

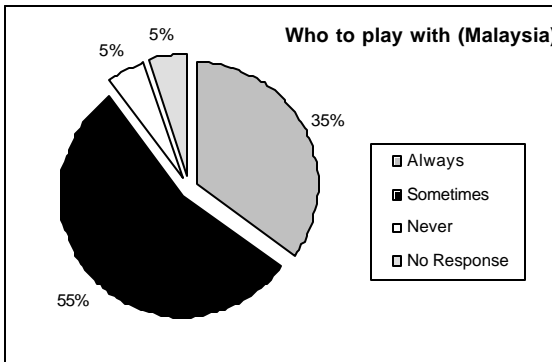
	Malaysia	Japan
<b>Always</b>	20%	29.4%
<b>Sometimes</b>	55%	17.6%
<b>Never</b>	20%	53%
<b>No Response</b>	5%	0%

**Graph B6.3.7d When to play?**



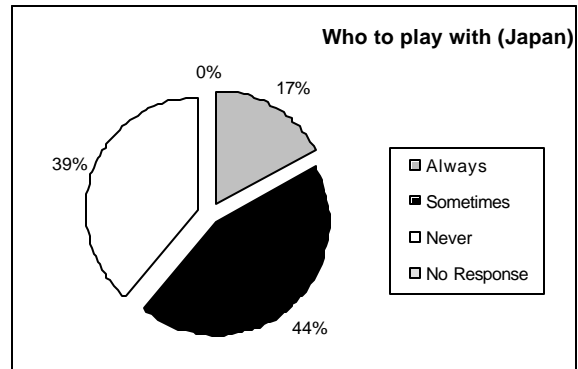
**Pie Chart B6.3.7a.i**

**Who to play with? (Malaysia)**



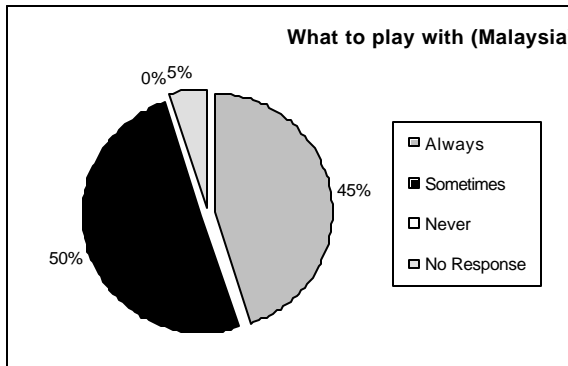
**Pie Chart B6.3.7a.ii**

**Who to play with? (Japan)**



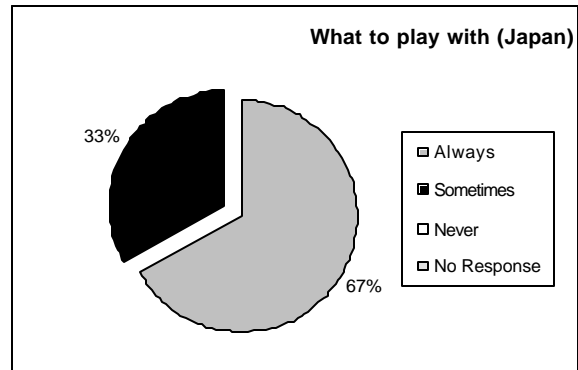
**Pie Chart B6.3.7b.i**

**What to play with? (Malaysia)**



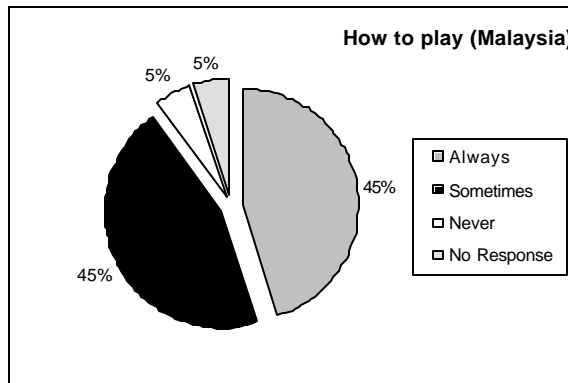
**Pie Chart B6.3.7b.ii**

**What to play with? (Japan)**

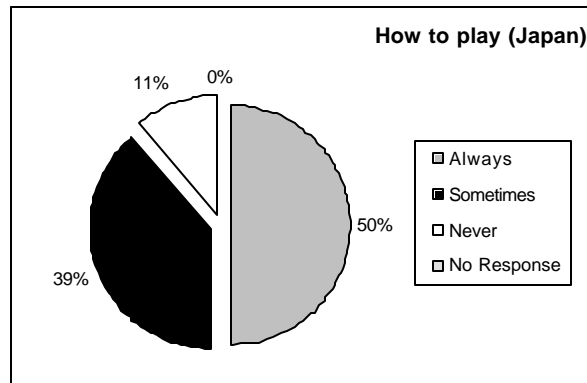


## Choices Children Made during Play (Q7)

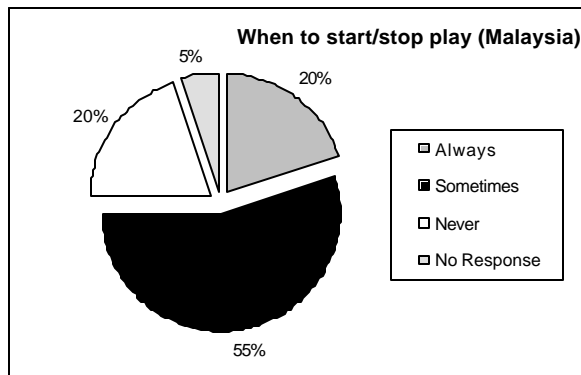
*Pie Chart B6.3.7c.i How to play? (Malaysia)*



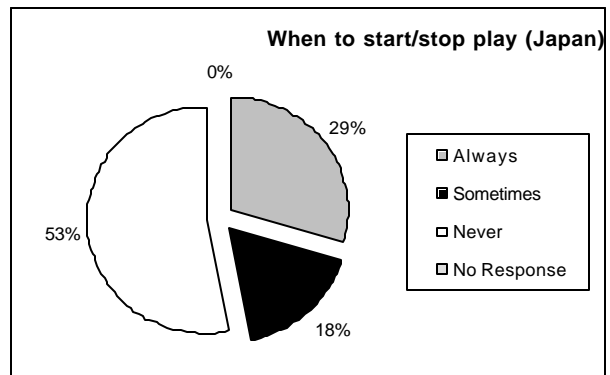
*Pie Chart B6.3.7c.ii How to play? (Japan)*



*Pie Chart B6.3.7d.i When to play? (Malaysia)*



*Pie Chart B6.3.7d.ii When to play? (Japan)*



### Discussion: Choices Children Made during Play (Q7a-d)

The 'always' response would be the most favored response. Malaysian parents 'always' or 'sometimes' gave choices to their children who had disabilities more often for 'who to play with?' than Japanese parents. However, Japanese parents gave 'always' choice slightly more often for 'what to play with?' than Malaysian parents. The choice of 'how to play?' was quite similar for both groups of parents with slight advantage to the Japanese parents for 'always' response than for the Malaysian parents 'always' response. When comparing the final question, 'when to start/stop play', Japanese parents yielded a higher percentage for the choice 'always' but less percentage for the choice 'sometimes' than Malaysian parents' responses. When combining both 'always' and 'sometimes' responses for that question (7d) the combined responses were lower for Japanese respondents than

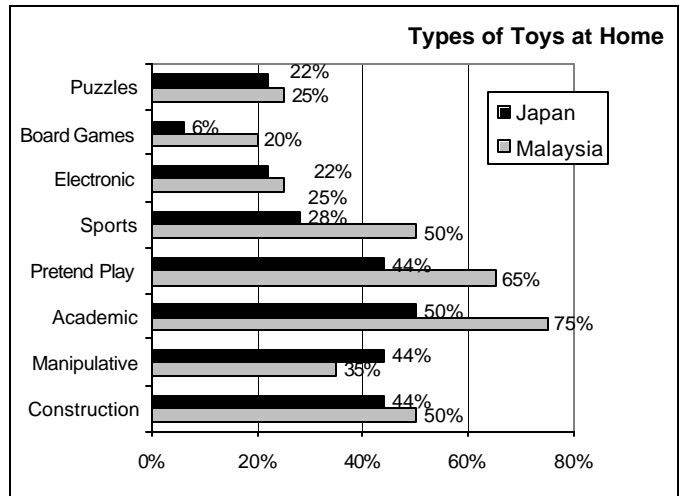
Malaysian respondents combined scores for the same question (47% cf. 75% respectively). This was significant because Japanese parents gave the choice 'never' 53% of the time compared with only 20% from Malaysian parents for question 7d (when to start / stop play).

### 6.3.8 Toys Available in the Home (Q8)

Chart B6.3.8a Types of toys at home

	Japan	Malaysia
Construction	8	10
Manipulative	8	7
Academic	9	15
Pretend Play	8	13
Sports	5	10
Electronic	4	5
Board Game	1	4
Puzzles	4	5
Total # of Responses	18	20

Graph B6.3.8a Types of toys at home



### Discussion: Toys Available in the Home (Q8)

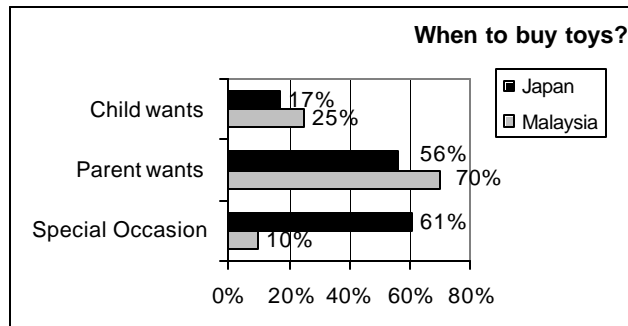
The most frequent type of toys available in Japanese homes was academic. This was also the case for Malaysia. There was a three-way tie for second place according to Japanese parents of disabled children; these were: construction, manipulative (e.g. cause and effect or battery operated toys and play dough) and pretend play. Malaysia's second place was pretend play, with a tie for third place with toys that were for construction and sports. Japanese parents placed sports third. Electronic games and puzzles came in fourth. Malaysian parents placed manipulative toys as fourth; electronic games and puzzles were fifth. Both groups of parents had board games under the least types of toys available at home.

### 6.3.9 When to Buy Toys? (Q9)

Graph B6.3.9 When to buy toys?

Chart B6.3.9 When to buy toys?

When to buy toys	Japan f	Malaysia f
Special Occasions	11	2
When parent wants	10	14
When child wants	3	5



## Discussion: When to Buy Toys? (Q9)

Japanese parents bought toys first for special occasions (e.g. birthday), then a close second was when the parent wanted to buy them and finally the least was at the child's wishes. Malaysian parents bought toys mostly when the parent wished to do so; then sometimes when the child wanted toys and lastly for special occasions.

### 6.3.10 Monthly Expenditure for Toys (Q10)

Chart B6.3.10.i Malaysians monthly toy costs

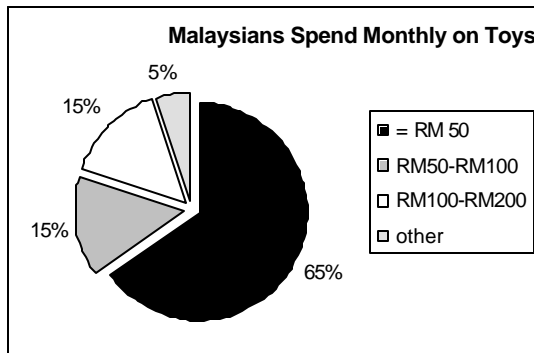


Chart B6.3.10.ii Japanese monthly toy costs

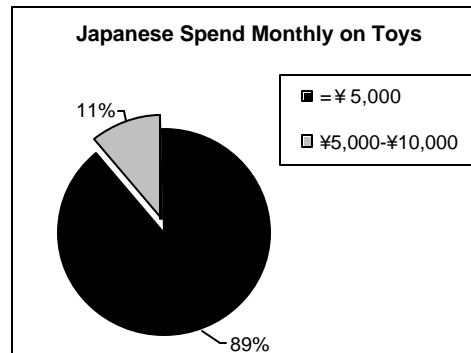


Chart B6.3.10 Monthly costs for toys for Malaysia & Japan

Cost in RM	f	Malaysia	Cost in ¥	f	Japan
= RM 50	13	65%	= ¥ 5,000	16	89%
RM 50-100	3	15%	¥ 5,000 - ¥ 10,000	2	11%
RM 100-200	3	15%	¥ 10,000 - ¥ 20,000	0	0
> RM 200	0	0	> ¥ 20,000	0	0
Other <sup>19</sup>	1	5%	Other	0	0

## Discussion: Monthly Expenditure for Toys (Q10)

The majority of parents from both groups chose the category for the least amount of money spent on toys per month. However, the percentages were higher for Japanese parents (16 / 18) than for Malaysian parents (13/20) or 89% cf. 68% respectively. The second place category was 11% (¥5,000 - ¥10,000) for Japanese respondents and a tie at 15% for two categories (RM 50 – RM 100 & RM 100 – RM 200) for Malaysian respondents expenditure for toys monthly. No one group spent the highest amount in the survey thus it was not listed in the findings (neither was the second highest amount listed for Japanese parents).

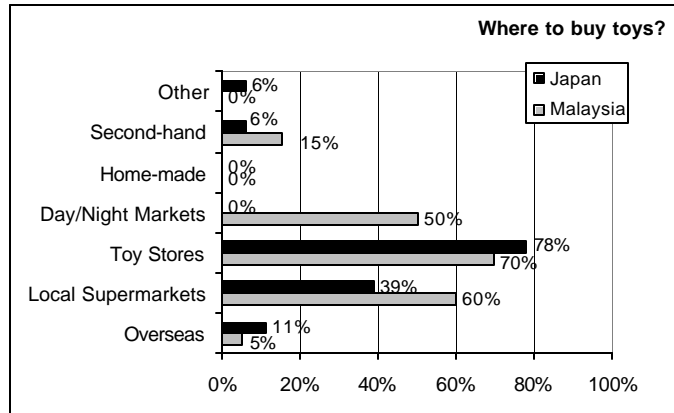
<sup>19</sup> One Malaysian parent actually described the answer as “on a needs basis within limits” so was listed under ‘other’ category.

### 6.3.11 Where to Buy Toys? (Q11)

Chart B6.3.11 Where to buy toys?

	Malaysia f	Japan f
Overseas	1	2
Local supermarket	12	7
Toy stores	14	14
Markets	10	0
Home-made	0	0
Second-hand	3	1
Other	0	1
<b>Total # Sampled</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>18</b>

Graph B6.3.11 Where to buy toys?



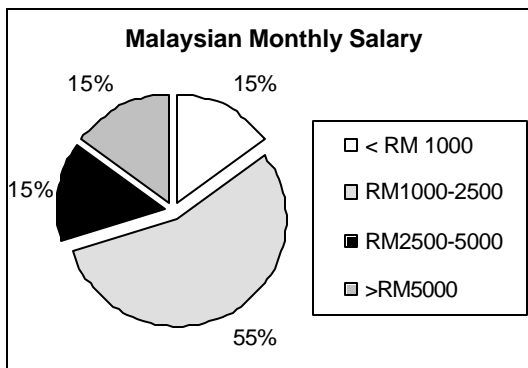
### Discussion: Where to Buy Toys? (Q11)

The first choice for both groups of respondents was buying toys from toy stores while their second choice was from local supermarkets. Then Malaysian parents reported day / night markets as their next choice whereas, overseas was Japanese parents third choice. Other choices also included second-hand toys and other or 'internet'.

### 6.3.12 Monthly Income (Q12)

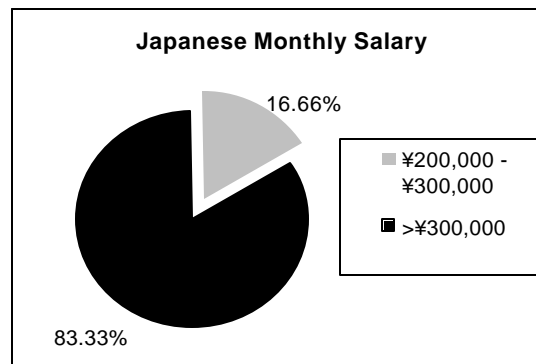
Pie Chart B6.3.12.i

Monthly income (Malaysia)



Pie Chart B6.3.12.ii

Monthly income (Japan)



**Chart B6.3.12.i/ii Monthly incomes for Japanese & Malaysian parents**

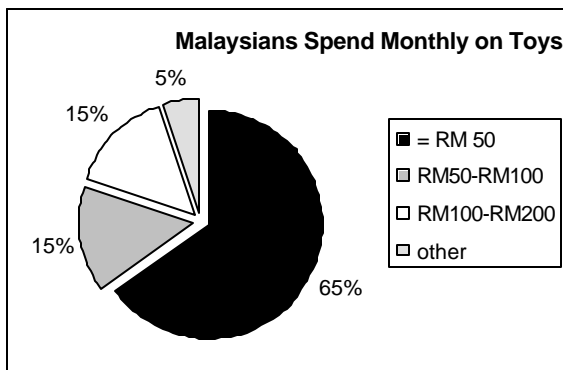
Japanese monthly income	f	Malaysian monthly income	f
< ¥ 100,000	0	< RM 1,000	3
¥ 100,000 - ¥200,000	0	RM 1,000 – RM 2,500	11
¥ 200,000 - ¥300,000	3	RM 2,500 – RM 5,000	3
> ¥ 300,000	15	> RM 5,000	3
<b>Total number sampled</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>Total number sampled</b>	<b>20</b>

**Discussion: Monthly Income (Q12)**

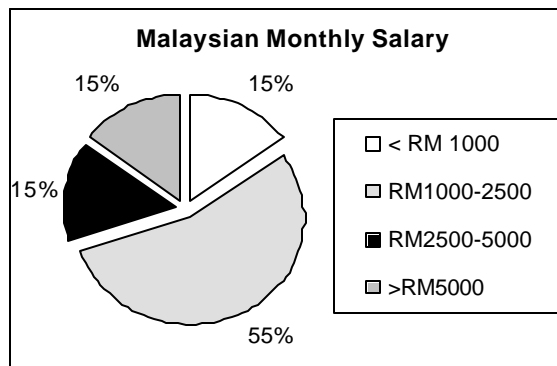
Just over half of the sampled Malaysian families had monthly incomes of RM 1,000 – RM 2,500. The other parents had incomes that were evenly distributed to all three categories. On the other hand all the Japanese families’ monthly income came from the two highest ranges of ¥ 200,000 or more. This meant that only three out of the 18 Japanese respondents had monthly incomes lower than ¥ 300,000 and all these were in the ¥ 200,000 range<sup>20</sup>.

The significance of this question was in relationship to how much money per month was spent on toys in relation to monthly salary of the respondents (refer to Discussion of Questions 10 & 12 on page 33). It was not the intended purpose of this survey to compare monthly incomes across countries.

**Pie Chart B6.3.10.i**  
**Malaysian monthly cost for toys**



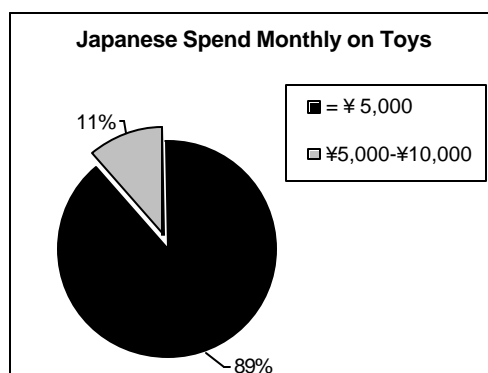
**Pie Chart B6.3.12.i**  
**Malaysian monthly income**



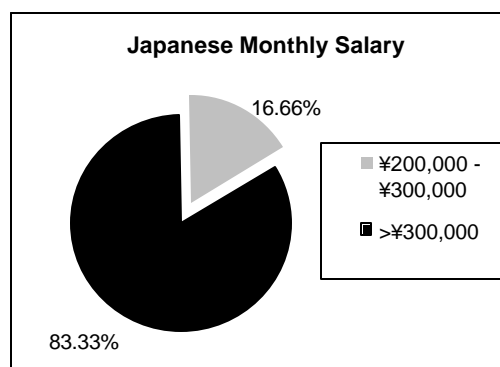
<sup>20</sup> For the sake of comparison the one Japanese parent (married to a Malaysian) but living in Malaysia; combined salary was estimated and figured in Japanese yen according to what they would receive in Japan.



**Pie Chart B6.3.10.ii**  
**Japanese monthly cost for toys**



**Pie Chart B6.3.12.ii**  
**Japanese monthly income**



**Chart B6.3.10 Comparison of Malaysian & Japanese parents monthly expenditure on toys**

Malaysian expenditure on toys in RM	<i>f</i>	%	Japanese expenditure on toys in ¥	<i>f</i>	%
= RM 50	13	65%	= ¥ 5,000	16	89%
RM 50 – RM 100	3	15%	¥ 5,000 - ¥ 10,000	2	11%
RM 100 – RM 200	3	15%	¥ 10,000 - ¥ 20,000	0	0
> RM 200	0	0	>¥ 20,000	0	0
Other <sup>21</sup>	1	5%	Other	0	0

**Chart B6.3.12 Comparison of monthly incomes for Japanese and Malaysian parents**

Japanese monthly income	<i>f</i>	Malaysian monthly income	<i>f</i>
< ¥ 100,000	0	< RM 1,000	3
¥ 100,000 - ¥ 200,000	0	RM 1,000 – RM 2,500	11
¥ 200,000 - ¥ 300,000	3	RM 2,500 – RM 5,000	3
> ¥ 300,000	15	> RM 5,000	3
Total number sampled	18	Total number sampled	20

**Chart B6.3.10.i/12.i Monthly expenditures vs. monthly incomes for Malaysian parents**

Malaysian monthly expenditure on toys	<i>f</i>	Malaysian monthly income	<i>f</i>
= RM 50	13	< RM 1,000	3
RM 50 – RM 100	3	RM 1,000 – RM 2,500	11
RM100 – RM 200	3	RM 2,500 – RM 5,000	3
> RM 200	0	> RM 5,000	3
Other	1	Other	0
Total number sampled	20	Total number sampled	20

<sup>21</sup> One Malaysian parent actually described the answer as “on a needs basis within limits” so was listed under ‘other’ category.

**Chart B6.3.10.ii/12.ii Monthly expenditures vs. monthly incomes for Japanese parents**

Japanese monthly expenditure on toys	<i>f</i>	Japanese monthly income	<i>f</i>
= ¥ 5,000	16	< ¥ 100,000	0
¥ 5,000 – ¥ 10,000	2	¥ 100,000 - ¥ 200,000	0
¥ 10,000 – ¥ 20,000	0	¥ 200,000 - ¥ 300,000	3
> ¥ 20,000	0	> ¥ 300,000	15
Other	0	Total number sampled	18

**Discussion: Comparison of Expenditure with Income (Q10 & Q12)**

The facts showed that even with higher salaries Japanese parents spent very small amounts on toys when comparing percentages. One reason this may be the case perhaps was that Japanese parents used the toy libraries more frequently and thus did not need to invest in purchasing toys. Furthermore, Japanese parents did play with their children with disabilities as was shown in the above report.

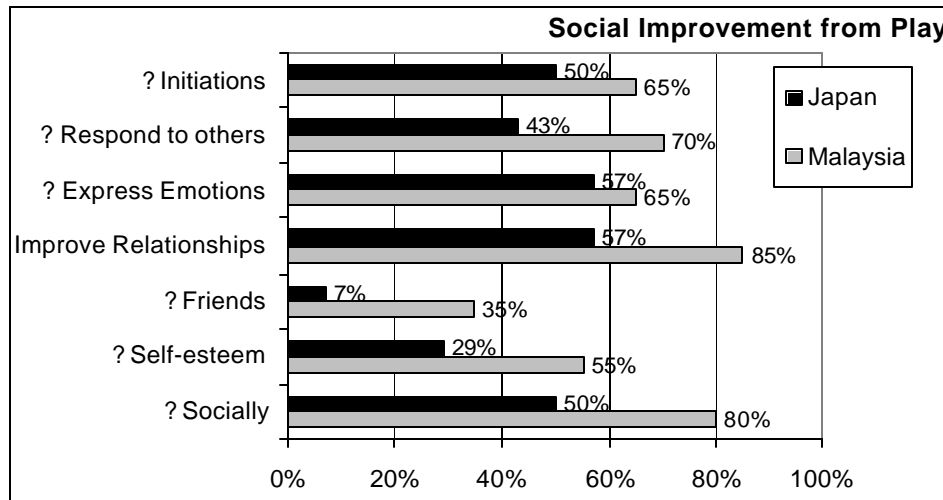
Almost two-thirds (65%) of the Malaysian respondents spent the lowest amount of money to buy toys yet there were 30% still spending more money to perhaps give their handicapped child help through play. This coupled with the fact that there were a limited number of toy libraries available to borrow toys for Malaysians.

**6.3.13 Social Improvements through Play (Q13)**

All Malaysian parents responded that their child had made some social improvement; however, only 14 Japanese parents responded likewise. Four other parents were ‘not sure’ whether there were social improvements made through play. Therefore, this yielded a 100% response by Malaysian parents in respect to social improvements from play but only 77.77% improvement by Japanese parents.

The following were areas noted from the 20 Malaysian parents and 14 Japanese parents how their child with disability improved socially from play. Multiple answers were acceptable. For full listing of these characteristics of social improvement see the key for interpretation on page 34.

**Graph B6.3.13 Social improvements through play**



**Note:** ? means increased.

**Key for interpretation: Social Improvements through Play**

*Increased socially acceptable behaviours (i.e.: sharing, taking turns, greetings)*

*Increased self esteem and confidence*

*Increased number of friends*

*Improved relationships with others (i.e.: parent-child, staff-child, child-child)*

*Increased ability to express emotions appropriately*

*Increased ability to respond in interaction with others*

*Increased ability to initiate interaction with others*

**Discussion: Social Improvements through Play (Q13)**

Both groups of parents indicated that their highest response was improved relationships as a result of play. In addition Japanese parents noted that along with improved relationships there was also increased ability to express emotions appropriately through play. Second choice for both groups was increased socially acceptable behaviors. Also Japanese parents added increased ability to initiate with others as their second choice whereas, that was Malaysian parents' fourth choice. Both Malaysian and Japanese parents' third choice was increased ability to respond to others initiations.

Another fourth place choice for Malaysian parents was increased ability to express emotions appropriately. Japanese parents chose as their fourth choice increased self-esteem and confidence whereas that was Malaysian parents' fifth choice. Both groups indicated that the least area of improvement was found in the increase in

number of friends although seven Malaysian parents noted this only one Japanese parent did so.

It was significant that the percentages were much higher for Malaysian parents' choices as there were also 20 respondents filling out this question as opposed to only 14 Japanese parents. For further details refer to Chart B6.3.13 Social Improvements through Play below.

**Chart B6.3.13 Social improvements through play**

	<b>Japan f</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Malaysia f</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>? Socially</b>	7	50	16	80
<b>?Self-esteem</b>	4	29	11	55
<b>? Friends</b>	1	7	7	35
<b>Improve Relationships</b>	8	57	17	85
<b>? Express Emotions</b>	8	57	13	65
<b>? Respond to others</b>	6	43	14	70
<b>? Initiations</b>	7	50	13	65
<b>Total no. sampled</b>	14/18		20/20	

**Note:** ? means increased.

## **6.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FINDINGS**

Although this was a random sampling from parents in Tokyo, Japan and Penang, Malaysia with relatively small numbers of respondents from both countries, the findings proved very enlightening. Where the key questions were concerned, these were, the purposes of toys and choices during play (questions 5 and 7 respectively), Japanese parents of disabled children favored more the 'spirit of play' by viewing play and toys as part of leisure and giving more choices to their children regarding what to play and how to play with the toy.

This was significant as Malaysian parents perhaps viewed these choices as dependent upon their agenda to teach or give therapy as they predominantly viewed toys and play for educational and rehabilitative purposes. However, Malaysian parents did rate higher for choice regarding 'who to play with' than

Japanese parents. It would only be speculation therefore, that Malaysian parents tended more to direct the play thus controlling their child's play.

Furthermore, even though there appeared to be less money spent on toys from Japanese parents still they played longer with their child on average than Malaysian parents (even fathers were rated higher in length of play from Japan than from Malaysia respondents). And as was noted, Japanese parents have more access to toy libraries and borrow more frequently than Malaysian parents. This was perhaps reflected also in the fewer types of toys Japanese parents have at home in comparison with the Malaysian homes sampled.

Finally, it is speculation only that perhaps the reason why social improvement from play was noted more from Malaysian parents than from Japanese parents was because they were looking for these improvements and Japanese parents were not focused on them as a result of play. There was agreement in the type of improvements noted e.g. improved relationships and improvement in socially acceptable behaviors.

## **7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS AND FINAL REMARKS OF THE STUDY**

The purposes of this study were to make comparisons between two country's play styles by reporting the similarities and differences and any benefits play has on social interaction. Furthermore, it was hoped to learn from each other so as to recommend any changes that would enhance the development of play styles of toy libraries and parents with disabled children in Malaysia and in Japan.

As was listed in both surveys, play did result in improved social relationships and socially acceptable behaviors like sharing, taking turns, greetings. Furthermore, play helped children with disabilities increase the number of initiations and appropriate responses to others initiation.

Therefore, with the knowledge gained from these two surveys and in keeping with the 'spirit of play' it would behoove, be right and necessary, to firstly, establish more toy libraries in Penang as well as throughout Malaysia. These toy libraries should, wherever possible, include all persons young or old, disabled or 'able-bodied'. They

should allow choices; encourage self-esteem, self-confidence and promote enjoyment.

Secondly, many of the respondents indicated that so often the person with disabilities played alone. If that was due to his or her environment and not because of choice then steps should be taken to create an atmosphere that encourages play, toys or leisure as a shared activity from the family level on up to the national level.

Practical ways to put 'play' back into our society would be to slow down and play more making recreation and leisure part of our life styles. If parents and toy library staff or volunteers would take time to observe the focus of children with special needs, perhaps by waiting they would be given the opportunities by the children to join them in their playtime.

In addition to time, give them more choices of playthings and playmates. The responsive adult-partner would help boost motivation, self-esteem and ultimately the development of social and communication skills. The person with special needs thus becomes an active learner and willing participator in his or her world.

To prevent affluence, specialization, urbanization and just plain, busy-ness from robbing the enjoyment of play, keep the fun in play. Do something comical or silly to get his or her reaction. Smile, laugh and both parties will enjoy.

Promote WORLD PLAY DAY designated on May 28 by the International Toy Library Association (ITLA). Information about this and other projects should be accessed from their website [www.itla-toylibraries.org](http://www.itla-toylibraries.org) .

Let us value the 'spirit of play' and work towards a balanced, respectful and an equal society that values play because *Play is for all Ages, Anywhere at Anytime!*

“““We don't stop playing because we grow old;  
We grow old because we stopped playing.”””

Dr Freda Kim, Past President of ITLA

## **8.0 OUTCOMES OF THE STUDY – GRAPHICS**

As a result of the surveys conducted above, two practical projects emerged. First, in order to promote play with fun graphics, one poster was created entitled “Come, Let’s Play”. Then three pamphlets (one each in Malay, Chinese and English) also entitled “Come, Let’s Play” summarized the importance and significance of play in our world. Appendices G and H have been reproduced as samples of first the “Come, Let’s Play” poster and the “Come, Let’s Play” pamphlets respectively.

These materials will be distributed throughout the country in an effort to create more awareness on the importance of play. It was hoped that these practical and creative measures combined would act as a catalyst to promote play and toy libraries in Malaysia.