



# Occupational Comparison of Children with Disabilities in Ecuador, Germany and the United States



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## Introduction

Culture has been stated to greatly impact routines, roles, beliefs, and parenting behaviors (Bornstein, 2012). Research has shown that culture influences not only occupations, but also what evaluations/assessments should be employed, and how treatment services are rendered (Paul, 1995) (Getty, 2015). There is no current research on the cultural impact of daily occupations and services rendered for the respective age ranges of 4-9 years. The current research only speaks to early intervention; meaning ages from birth – 3 years of age. This study examined and compared routines, play activities, and parent perceptions about their children. It also identified how their daily occupations may impact the goals and directions of occupational therapy services across three cultures: Ecuador, Germany, and the United States.

## Methods

The study was a mixed methods study using qualitative data for understanding specific occupations and quantitative data to describe perceptions and participant information. Participants were a convenience-based sampling of caregivers to children 4- 9 years old from three community based outpatient occupational therapy clinics. A survey with both closed and open questions was completed by the caregivers in their primary language. Caregivers described week-day and weekend routines and answered Likert scale questions to report their perceptions regarding play activities and family and society roles. The survey was developed in English and translated into Spanish and German. A systematic process was utilized by the research team to analyze the data provided from the surveys. Themes were derived for each country independently and then compared.

## Settings

Ecuador: Community based free clinic

Germany: Community based outpatient private clinic (private and government funded insurance)

United States: Community based outpatient private clinic (private and government funded insurance)

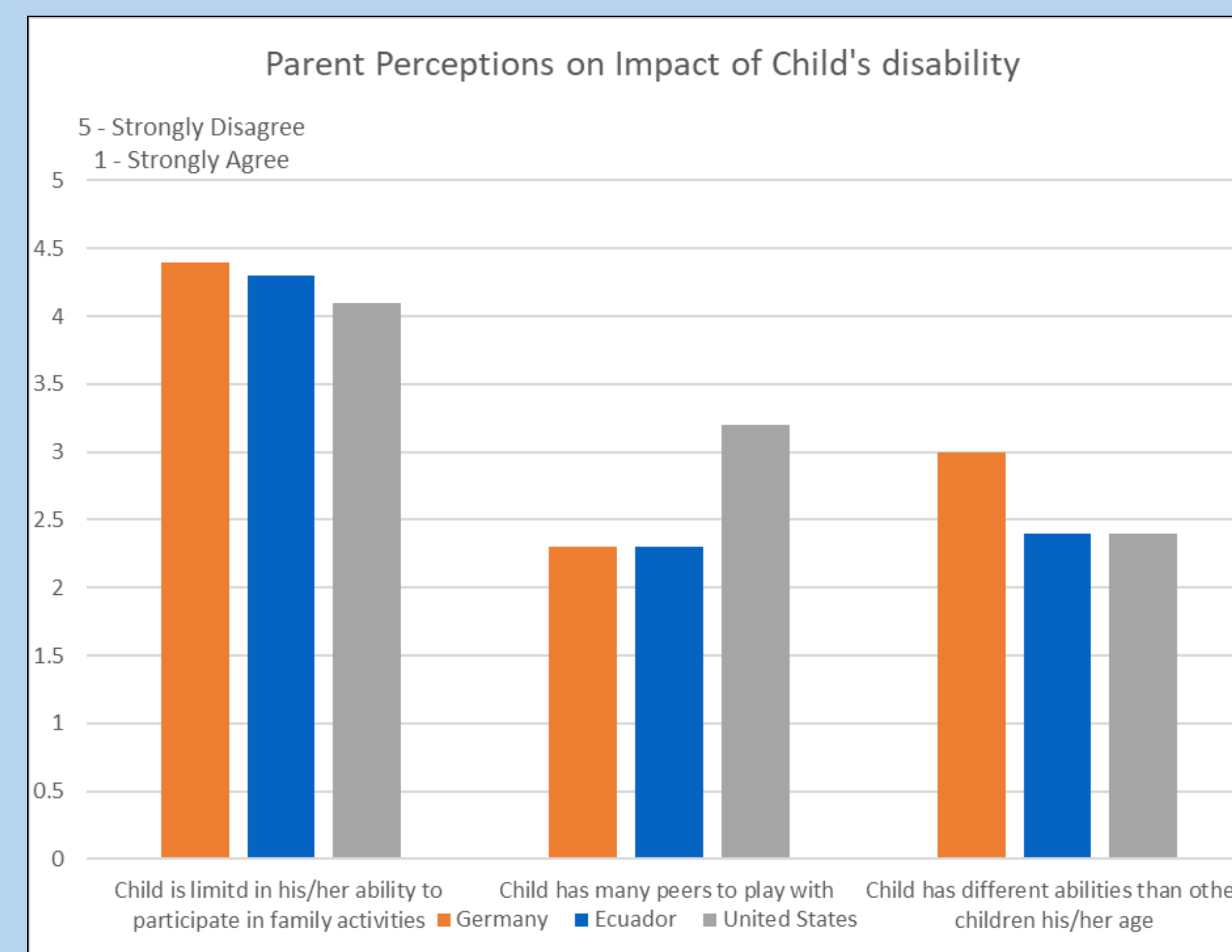
24 participants:

Germany 7

United States 9

Ecuador 8

Average Ages	
Germany	6
Ecuador	7
US	5



## Discussion

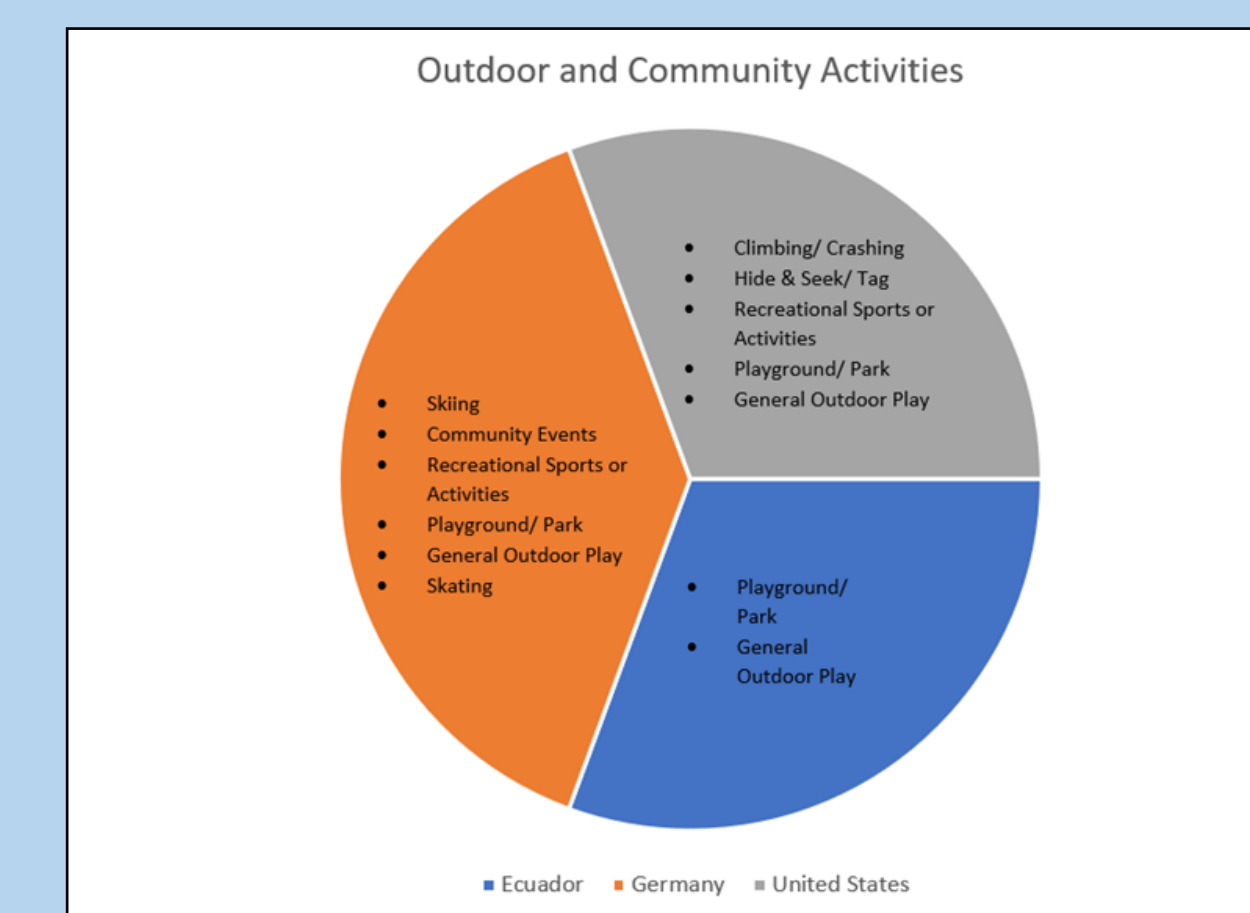
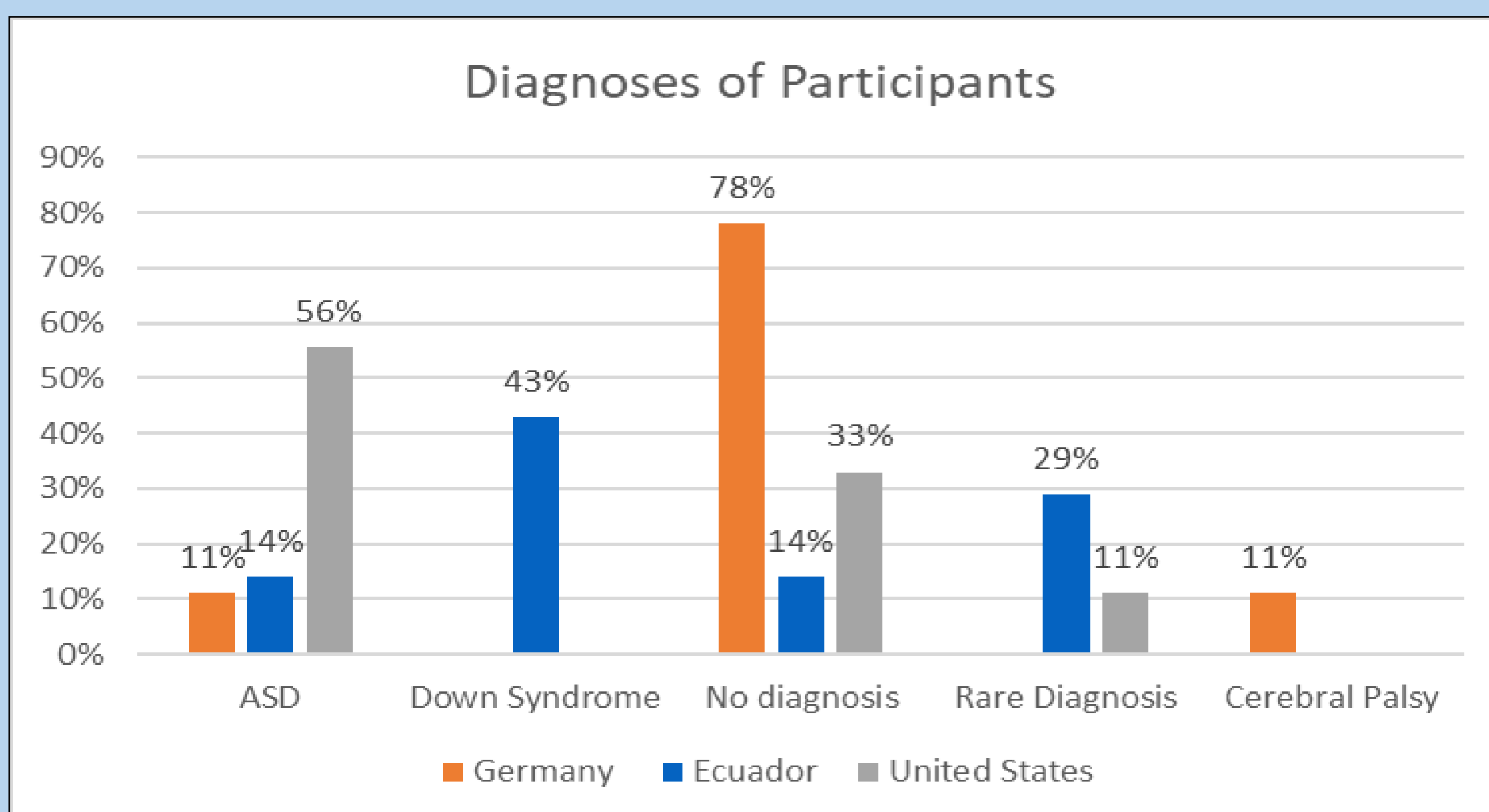
The caregiver questionnaire provided an overview of the daily routines and occupations for children receiving occupational therapy services in Germany, Ecuador, and the United States. A variety of toys and activities were listed by the caregivers in which children engaged. Participants in the United States reported the greatest number of toys, specifically more goal directed use of toys, compared to both Germany and Ecuador. The Ecuadorian participants listed the least variety of toys and activities. The German participants reported the greatest variety in outdoor activities. The caregivers in Germany placed more emphasis on overall play with their children. Play was the primary activity that families completed with their children. The Ecuadorians reported increased family meals and increased visits with their extended families on the weekends. Ecuadorians emphasized meal time descriptions. The primary person listed by the Ecuadorians that the child spent time with was their mother and they mainly completed activities of daily living together. The children in the US spent time with the mother or both parents, with walking being the most common activity reported.

## Conclusions

Cultural differences may affect how occupational therapy services are provided. The occupations clients engage in regularly indicate what is motivating to them and how they will respond to selected treatment methods. The specific activities and toys with which children occupy their time represent skills they have or skills that may need to be addressed. Finally, cultural differences will affect overall planning of the goals and whether they may focus on activities of daily living or play.

## Limitations

The investigators did not attempt to match sample for income, disability, or age; relying completely on a sample of convenience. An attempt to account for cultural differences was made during the translation of the documents, which may have introduced some differences in the way the questions were interpreted by the caregivers. The analysis was completed entirely by therapists from the US who may bring their own biases to the study.



## General Findings:

All participants wake up between 5:30am-9am

All the participants from Ecuadorians wake up prior to 7am

Bed times ranged from 7pm-10pm

Mode of 8-9pm across all 3 cultures

All participants from Germany, 12% from Ecuador, and 44% from the US reported reading or having a bedtime story

Both Germany and the United States both report at least 6 different type of organized activities such as dance, karate, guitar lessons and sports teams

Germany was noted to have a greater variety in modes of transportation including walking, use of a scooter, and use of a bike compared to both the US and Ecuador whose modes of transportation were limited to the bus or a family vehicle

## Recommendations for future research

Increase overall sample size

Match economic status, diagnosis and functional status of participants

Investigate the cultural impact when developing goals relating to occupational therapy

## References:

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