

Raising a Child with Developmental Differences: Exploring Cultural Attitudes toward Developmental Disability and Roles for Occupational Therapy in Kyrgyzstan

Allison Burns, Parul Bakhshi

Washington University in St Louis, St Louis, Missouri, USA

Introduction: Stigma surrounding disability in the Soviet Union has led to cultural norms of isolation and exclusion of people with disabilities in post-Soviet Republics. Past literature has revealed occupational therapy (OT) initiatives that support people with disabilities in some post-Soviet Republics, yet there is currently limited research regarding OT in Central Asia.

Objective: The purpose of this study is to explore cultural attitudes toward disability and clarify an evidence-based, client centered role for OT in supporting participation and quality of life in children with disabilities (CWD) and their mothers in Kyrgyzstan. Experiences of mothers and service providers for CWD will be explored to potentially shape future OT initiatives.

Method: This qualitative, phenomenological study will investigate the supports and occupational needs of CWD through semi-structured interviews and focus groups conducted with mothers of CWD in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan in July 2017. Responses will be triangulated with interviews with professionals and staff who work with this population. Interview questions are structured around Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Model.

Results: Qualitative analysis of interviews will yield themes which will inform if and how occupational therapists might meet some of the occupational needs, goals, or concerns identified by caregivers and services providers of CWD. OT initiatives could potentially vary from short-term trainings to long-term advocacy in policy. Interview data will also provide insight into socio-cultural perceptions of disability and the strengths and weaknesses of current support systems.

Conclusion: Prepared with information from Kyrgyz mothers and service providers, occupational therapists will be positioned for maximum impact in Bishkek.