



## Hikikomori: A Mental Disorder to Isolate Oneself from the World

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### INTRODUCTION

A severe form of social withdrawal, called Hikikomori, is frequently reported in Japan, involving adolescents and young adults who live withdrawn from their parent's homes and are unable to go to work or school for months or years. This study aimed to review the evidence for Hikikomori as a new psychiatric disorder. We collected information on social withdrawal and Hikikomori using electronic and manual literature searches. This includes studies examining case definition, epidemiology, and diagnosis.

### DESCRIPTION

Several recent empirical studies have emerged from Japan. The majority of these Hikikomori cases can be classified as various pre-existing psychiatric disorders according to the DSM-IV-TR (or ICD-10). It's pretty normal to sometimes feel like you want to hide away from the stresses and pressures of the outside world. Short-lived periods of withdrawal can reduce acute stress responses and can help us overcome illness and exhaustion. The stages of comfort and isolation also help with important stages of development, such as discovering identity in adolescence. But some people never resurface from their natural periods of isolation. Instead, they display decades of extreme and persistent withdrawal, which inflicts suffering on themselves and those who care and support them. Due to its popularity, it is now known as "Hikikomori". The problem of extreme withdrawal among Japanese youth first came to attention in the 1990s.

Many reacted in hiding to hide their shame. For some, they never appeared again. The term Hikikomori was coined in 1998 by Professor Tamaki Saito, a Japanese psychiatrist. Saito chose the term to describe the many young people who do not meet mental health diagnostic criteria but are still in a state of extreme distress and deprivation. Hikikomori is now viewed as a

sociocultural mental health phenomenon rather than a mental illness per se. Hikikomori, which affects at least 1.2% of the population (approximately 1 million people), is a significant social and health problem. Hikikomori is increasingly identified in other countries as well. The term is now used worldwide to describe someone who meets the criteria. Hikikomori has several core features. This involves the affected person being physically isolated at home for at least six months, cut off from meaningful social relationships, with significant distress and impairment is needed. Places where active social interaction is expected such as school or work become impossible for the person.

### CONCLUSION

While some Hikikomori people, called Soto-Komori, can manage some activities outside, they will rarely interact with people. Some may use the internet as a window into the world, but they often won't interact with others. Not only does a Hikikomori person lose many years of their life in isolation, but the condition also affects their family. Typically, Japanese parents of Hikikomori people dedicate years to ensuring their child's basic living needs are met. This leaves families feeling stuck and isolated. The prevalence of this condition is likely to increase as global awareness of Hikikomori increases. In turn, it highlights the need for better treatment options. Currently, treatment focuses on physical activity, rebuilding social interaction skills, and a step-by-step approach to returning to work and studies. Treatments for the whole family are also being tested.

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### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author's declared that they have no conflict of interest.

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