A COMPLEX INTERPLAY: AN EXPLORATORY NETNOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS OF HIKIKOMORI SOCIALIZATION STRATEGIES

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Abstract

The article provides an in-depth analysis of a netnography that was conducted over six months in a Hikikomori community on the messaging app, Telegram. The research amassed an impressive 91,000 messages and 411,000 words to explore the impact of digital technologies on the Hikikomori phenomenon. This phenomenon, first studied in Japan in the late 1990s, has been attracting increasing attention in recent years, with research efforts focusing on various aspects such as their relationship with family, school and the world of work. The article begins by reviewing relevant literature and outlining the netnographic method employed before presenting a thorough qualitative analysis of the collected messages.

Keyword: Hikikomori; netnography; Hikikomori family; digital methods; qualitative methods

Introduction

The Japanese term "Hikikomori" coined by psychiatrist Tamaki Saito in 1998 in his work "Endless Adolescence," refers to a form of social isolation that cannot be conflated with already known psychiatric syndromes, such as schizophrenia (Saito, 1998). The syndrome is characterized by a voluntary social withdrawal lasting at least six months, driven by the desire to escape social pressures (Saito, 1998; Suwa & Suzuki, 2013). Initially, Hikikomori was confused with depression and schizophrenia and treated with psychoactive medications, but without significant results (Kato *et al.*, 2016; Tajan, 2017). Only later were specific therapies developed to address this new form of distress (Tajan, 2017).

Family relationships play a crucial role in the Hikikomori phenomenon. Studies have shown that isolation is more common in families with fewer socio-economic

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disadvantages, where parents with a higher level of education can afford to let their children stay home without working or studying (Umeda *et al.*, 2012; Sekimizu, 2021). This creates an increasing dependency on parents, especially the mother, with whom a symbiotic relationship develops (Crepaldi, 2020).

Regarding peer relationships, Hikikomori tend to isolate themselves due to introversion and a lack of social inclination. They are often victims of bullying, which can influence their choice to withdraw (Muris & Ollendick, 2023; Matthews *et al.*, 2022). An analysis conducted by Guo (2023) highlighted that most Hikikomori in Japan have a history of bullying, which significantly contributes to their isolation.

From an educational and occupational perspective, school often represents the last connection to society for Hikikomori. The decision to drop out of school is one of the main indicators of the syndrome, with research underscoring a link between being Hikikomori and being NEET (young people not in education, employment, or training) (Uchida & Norasakkunkit, 2015; Liew *et al.*, 2021). Although not all NEETs become Hikikomori, all Hikikomori drop out of school; this highlights continuity between the two phenomena (Muris & Ollendick, 2023). In Japan, the adoption of economic measures to support Hikikomori has led to a decrease in the necessity to work, further fostering their isolation (Watanabe *et al.*, 2022; Cai *et al.*, 2023).

Methodology

Objective and research questions

This work aims to explore the experiences of Italian Hikikomori with the figures (parents, relatives, friends, classmates) and institutions (school, university, world of work) that they have decided to leave behind through their isolation.

To meet the set research objective, it was therefore decided to answer four research questions:
1. RQ: What is the relationship with the family of Hikikomori?
2. RQ: What is the relationship with their peers?
3. RQ: How is the school/university institution perceived by Hikikomori?

Netnography

Netnography, developed by US researcher Kozinets in 2010, is the digital version of traditional ethnographic observation. Originally designed for tribal marketing and consumer culture theory, Netnography has become a crucial qualitative-quantitative research method for the examination of online consumer culture. It has proven to be a versatile technique that can collect data for both market and non-market research purposes. The first study using this method focused on a

community of coffee consumers, showcasing its potential for gathering valuable insights in a variety of fields.

The development of netnography research follows a systematic process consisting of several phases: research planning, community entry, data collection, interpretation, ethical considerations, and presenting findings. These phases share similarities with the classic ethnographic approach identified by Geertz (1988). Like traditional ethnography, netnographic analysis employs "naturalistic observation techniques" that allow for non-intrusive, direct observation to uncover the contexts in which users create and replicate their experiences (Gambetti & Kozinets, 2022).

After a formal introduction to the group, the researcher collected approximately 90,000 messages over a six-month observation period, which began in May 2023 and concluded in November 2023. This corpus of data amounted to a total of 1,525,178 characters and 310,168 words, with the number of unique words recorded totaling 21,112. During the observation period, a decrease in the number of participants was noted, dropping from 121 at the beginning of the observation to 89 by mid-November 2023. This decrease is attributed to the expulsion of several members deemed non-compliant with the criteria for identifying Hikikomori . This work is part of a larger ongoing research project for a doctoral thesis. The study's timeline was designed to cover the second year of the doctoral program, within which netnography represents the second phase of the research.

Participants

In the context of the Telegram group dedicated to hikikomori, composed of about 90 participants, we intend to present the characteristics of the 20 individuals from whom excerpts have been collected.

Table 1: Participants

Subject	Gender	Age	Maritas Status	Level of study
User 1	Male	19	Single	Diploma holder
User 2	Male	21	Single	Diploma holder
User 3	Female	19	Single	Diploma holder
User 4	Female	21	Single	Diploma holder
User 5	Male	18	Single	Middle school diploma
User 6	Female	20	Single	Diploma holder
User 7	Male	25	Single	Graduate
User 8	Male	20	Single	Diploma holder
User 9	Male	19	Single	Middle school diploma
User 10	Male	23	Single	Diploma Holder
User 11	Male	19	Single	Diploma Holder

User 12	Male	26	Single	Diploma Holder
User 13	Male	20	Single	Diploma Holder
User 14	Male	24	Single	Diploma Holder
User 15	Male	27	Single	Graduate
User 16	Female	23	Single	Middle School Diploma
User 17	Male	25	Single	Graduate
User 18	Female	19	Single	Middle School Diploma
User 19	Female	20	Single	Diploma Holder
User 20	Female	20	Single	Diploma Holder

Results

The analysis will be divided into 4 sections, 1 for each research question. The collected interaction excerpts will be divided by superscripts (") at the beginning and end of the excerpt. In the case of interaction between several users in the group, the users will be numbered according to the message sent. When the excerpt is present in the text without being highlighted it will be highlighted with italics.

RQ 1: What is the relationship with the family?

The relationship with the family and experiences within the home are always a complicated topic for Hikikomori to deal with. Previous work carried out in the Italian context (Crepaldi, 2020; Esposito *et al.*, 2023) draws a different picture compared to the Japanese one. In Italy, parent-child cohabitation appears to be very difficult:

> User 1; *"unfortunately at home with the family it always ends up in the face"*[2] *(Male, 19, Diploma Holder)*.
> User 2: *"There is a family unfortunately. They break the cock" (Male, 21, Diploma Holder).*

Parents are considered to be an obstacle and unable to fully understand their children, with which a split is created. Even living in the same house, many Hikikomori resent their presence and experience cohabitation as oppressive. In some cases, there is no dialogue between children and parents, and the former accuse the latter of ruining their lives or being absent during their formative years:

> User 3: *"But I say to myself, you've already ruined my life but at least don't shit on me that I don't even talk to you (I'm not talking about you). For me they are animals. You don't forgive family just because it's family" (Female, 19, Diploma Holder).*

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[2] in Italian this expression is an idiomatic expression to mean that one often quarrels.

User 4: "What a shitty life awaits me. I want to see how the fuck I'm going to lift myself out of this poverty created by my family's fucking choices" (Female, 21, Diploma Holder).

User 5: "The settled ones have a family behind them" (Male, 18, Middle School Diploma).

The family is viewed as an obstacle to be overcome and from which one must try to escape and emancipate oneself. This desire very often stems from personal and traumatic experiences in which the family has played a primary role. In some delicate and problematic cases, children have suffered psychological and physical violence that has affected them in their everyday lives:

User 6: "I lived in a violent family from the time I was born until I was 23" (Female, 20, Diploma Holder).

User 7: "What kind of violence, if I may ask of course?" (Male, 25, Diploma Holder).

User 6: "Physical and psychological violence. With all that goes with it. However with my family mess when I was 15 I started more not leaving the house because I was bullied at school and I didn't trust anyone anymore" (Female, 20, Diploma Holder).

In most cases, however, family misunderstandings lead to an irremediable division in which parents perceive their child as a failure and a problem as explained very well in the following exchange:

User 8: "The family as it sees you" (Male, 20, Diploma Holder).
User 9: "A parasite"(Male, 19, Middle School Diploma).

The family also represents an escape route and a way of self-absolution when it comes to problems and hardships. The common thought is that having a problematic family leads to problems and one is marked for life:

User 10: "But you definitely have a crazy family, that's enough, don't be hard on yourself. I've actually been in here for years, but in general anyone with hardships has a crazy family. Just have a slightly imperfect family and you're scarred" (Male, 23, Diploma Holder).

The comments towards mothers are much more calm and serene, but there is no shortage of people who are inclined to criticise, often what is objected to is overprotective behaviour towards their children:

User 11: "Indeed my mother grew up badly with some latent trauma" (Male, 19, Diploma Holder).

User 12: "She must have lacked maternal affection and her mother's presence in general. That is why she is so apprehensive and protective of you now" (Male, 26, Diploma Holder).

User 13: "My father was a very handsome man and also tall, while my mother is a superficial and bigoted woman, and aesthetically not on her level" (Male, 20, Diploma Holder).

The family as an institution is opposed by the Hikikomori. In this case, many in the group agree that the traditional family is now a relic of the past and today the 'white mill family' no longer exists:

User 14: "Because the white mill family no longer exists" (Male, 24, Diploma Holder).

User 15: "They are dead. All dead" (Male, 27, Graduate).

The traditional family is opposed and is seen as a concept that no longer exists at this precise moment in history and is a relic of the past. In addition to being ancient, it is seen as an institution to be fought against. According to the Hikikomori, society today imposes the need to create a family:

User 10: "That the traditional family has always existed whereas all these lgbtq unions are just inventions that have arisen in America in recent years" (Male, 23, Diploma Holder).

User 6: "No, the traditional family does not exist. The 'family' is, moreover, a concept that can vary over time" (Female, 20, Diploma Holder).

User 10: "It doesn't last, it becomes a broken family after a few years" (Male, 23, Diploma Holder).

User 6: "Yeah. But there are few of us who think so, but then the concept of settling down society has. You are settled if you are married with children" (Female, 20, Diploma Holder).

User 10: "Yeah, they force us to follow the same pattern" (Male, 23, Diploma Holder).

RQ2: What is the relationship of the Hikikomori with peers?

The relationship with peers for the Hikikomori is always very problematic. All the boys in the group have had problems relating to other people, but they are all convinced that friendship and friends are something to be won and to which one is not entitled:

User 1: "It is not a right but a need of the human being, a person without friends can easily get psychological problems due to depression, without pussy one lives, being completely alone one does not" (Male, 19, Diploma Holder).

User 13: "Friendship is not a right, you have to win it. Like the girlfriend/boyfriend.

It's not because if you leave the house you are entitled to friendship just because you exist" (Male, 20, Diploma Holder).
User 16: "Female friendships are all based on envy, female friendships are all shit" (Female, 23, Middle School Diploma).

Loneliness, understood as the absence of people to talk to or go out with, leads people to have psychological problems. Friends are seen as essential, as opposed to a possible girlfriend or love interest. The Internet has changed a lot in the Hikikomori's understanding of friendship and why a group of like-minded people has been created. Many decide to stay online and join groups like this one, i.e. formed by Hikikomori s, to try to make friends online:

User 11: "No but online you can be yourself or pretend to be anyone" (Male, 19, Diploma Holder).
User 6: "You can still find friends. Social deficits are alleviated" (Female, 20, Diploma Holder).
User 11: "Exactly, this also applies to normies, but for people like us who have problems of various kinds we will necessarily find problematic people like us. Friends big word, people to talk to if anything" (Male, 19, Diploma Holder).

However, the Internet is seen as a double-edged sword in all cases. On the one hand, it is seen as *dangerous* because if you become friends you risk talking about people you know and thus risk ruining friendships:

User 2: "On the internet it doesn't do anything, but when it comes to people you know it's a problem, because after you've tried it any further encounters that come afterwards are completely filled with an atmosphere of shame (I don't know how else to describe it), if you try it you have to put up with the fact that maybe you won't see that chick for a long time or she'll disappear" (Male, 21, Diploma Holder).
User 12: "What a thing" (Male, 26, Diploma Holder).
User 14: "For us, who have no friends of any kind, such an issue will never come up" (Male, 24, Diploma Holder).

The group itself is for sharing one's experiences and moods, not for making friends:

User 17: "He already imagined himself there, full of friends made in this group... The harsh reality is that he will be alone as a dog" (Male, 25, Graduate).

The absence of friendships and relationships with peers is almost always traced back to one's own social deficiency, but also to personal states of mind. Many wonder whether there is any point in wanting to be friends with someone if one always feels lonely around people in the end. The general condition of the Hikikomori leads them to think that they will be alone for the rest of their lives:

> *User 12: "However I have no friends. It's a drag living like this" (Male, 26, Diploma Holder).*
> *User 1; "Then they talk about finding me friends and girlfriend, but what are friends and girlfriends for if you are always alone inside at the end?" (Male, 19, Diploma Holder).*
> *User 2: "Getting mistreated for life is for living like shit and losing money and getting hurt, that's what it's for" (Male, 21, Diploma Holder).*
> *User 18: "What a shitty life. Being without friends or girlfriends and knowing that you are condemned to a whole life where you are left alone to yourself is not a nice thought " (Female, 19, Middle School Diploma).*
> *User 7: "You have to learn to feel good about yourself... while we who say the usual phrase are out having fun" (Male, 25, Diploma Holder).*

Several who find themselves in the group today find themselves without friends because because of their work, always done remotely from home without going to the office, they cannot keep up with their social life. In this case, the lack of friends is replaced by the presence of salary money:

> *User 6: Unfortunately yes, I used to have a lot of friends but if you stay from morning to night here, then go to sleep at night, at the weekend I'm cooked, I can't keep up anymore" (Female, 20, Diploma Holder).*
> *User 11: "At least you have money" (Male, 19, Diploma Holder).*

RQ3: How is the school/university institution perceived by Hikikomori?

The school institution is the first to be abandoned by teenage Hikikomori and is never actually completed:

> *User 11: "School for me was just a trauma and will continue to be until I finish it. I hate being around all those people. And especially at my old school I was also bullied" (Male, 19, Diploma Holder).*

School is perceived as an unfair and unforgiving institution that abandons children during their studies:

> *User 19: "Having concentration problems is terrible. Especially if you have to pursue a school career" (Female, 20, Diploma Holder).*
> *User 2: "Unfortunately there are no really good options for those in this condition. you always have to compromise" (Male, 21, Diploma Holder).*
> *User 19: "Then the school is totally unfair. There must be a lot of students who have similar difficulties but are not helped. On the contrary, maybe they are even treated badly because no one understands their situation" (Female, 20, Diploma Holder).*

An integral part of the school experience is the relationship with others. Hikikomori s never had an idyllic relationship with their classmates. In most cases, the confrontation led the Hikikomori to develop feelings of anxiety and phobia:

> *User 16: "I too only talked to 1-2 people when I went to my old school" (Female, 23, Middle School Diploma).*
> *User 12: "One day I hope to instill anxiety in others" (Male, 26, Diploma Holder).*
> *User 16: "I remember that the one with the highest marks was a galactic asshole. If he had to tease someone he did it covertly, made sure he was never accusable and smiled mockingly" (Female, 23, Middle School Diploma).*

Hikikomori are bullied because, in their opinion, they are more introverted and shy than the rest of the boys. Bullying situations are the order of the day for them and have happened since the early days. This bullying led to the boys isolating themselves within the class before isolating themselves at home without going out:

> *User 20: "but at school introverted boys are picked on" (Female, 21, Diploma Holder).*
> *User 2: "I understand, as I was saying I was like that too (sometimes I do it again) " (Male, 21, Diploma Holder).*
> *User 20: "Trying to please people who are light years apart... it's unseemly" (Female, 21, Diploma Holder).*
> *User 19: "First day of school everyone sitting next to each other left me alone, people in the playground laughed at my appearance and asked me to take a picture with them to make fun of me" (Female, 20, Diploma Holder).*
> *User 2: "You have to think of yourself with positive adjectives otherwise you don't solve this thing (Male, 21, Diploma Holder)*
> *User 13: "It happened to me too" (Male, 20, Diploma Holder).*
> *User 6: "Jesus, what shitty human beings" (Female, 20, Diploma Holder).*
> *User 13: "But I didn't care" (Male, 20, Diploma Holder).*
> *User 2: "Just be a bit shy and they treat you like a freak" (Male, 21, Diploma Holder).*

Bullies are a fixed presence in the experiences of the Hikikomori . In most cases, they are male classmates who manage through their bullying to make the Hikikomori doubt their intelligence and preparation. There are several testimonies about the group that indicate how isolated boys now doubt their ability due to bullying and school:

> *User 20: "From there when I went back to school a few days later they ignored me the whole day, I sat at the last desk by myself and they acted like I wasn't there and it was better that way maybe and I went home, I was ashamed of what happened and I thought they were assholes but it's also true that I'm below average in intelligence and I don't know and I didn't know shit" (Female, 21, Diploma Holder).*

>   *User 2: "I dropped out of school after they flunked me three times in a row in the second grade" (Male, 21, Diploma Holder).*
>   *User 20: "Aren't you more likely to have convinced yourself because of low self-esteem?" (Female, 21, Diploma Holder).*
>   *User 20: "School does not measure intelligence" (Female, 21, Diploma Holder).*

Professor is not regarded as an ally, his presence at school is considered irrelevant to school life. Hikikomori's agree that the figure of the teacher does not help curb the problem of school bullying that they experience every day:

>   *User 1: "Do you expect the professor or your mother to solve your problem?" (Male, 19, Diploma Holder).*
>   *User 6: "Usual caveman reasoning about having to grow a pair because you are a man" (Female, 20, Diploma Holder).*
>   *User 13: "Bullying is not solved by talking to parents or teachers. Personal experience. Either find a way to defend yourself or change class/school" (Male, 20, Diploma Holder).*

School, however, is perceived critically by all members of the group, even by those who finished it and subsequently isolated themselves. However, the desire to learn and study is not ostracised by the Hikikomori, it is considered a worthwhile thing to be able to study as a self-taught student for personal culture:

>   *User 9: "I am procrastinating chemistry because I wanted to study mathematics first" (Male, 19, Middle School Diploma).*
>   *User 15: "But are you at university?" (Male, 27, Graduate).*
>   *User 15: "Ah so for your own education" (Male, 27, Graduate).*
>   *User 9: Yes (Male, 19, Middle School Diploma)"*
>   *User 19: "But you study for university" (Female, 20, Diploma Holder).*
>   *User 2: "But you are crazy, I will never set foot in the university. To qualify me as an ass-washer. For some reason you also need to know these notions" (Male, 21, Diploma Holder).*

However, unlike school, university is framed differently by the Hikikomori. Firstly, it seems to be experienced with less anxiety than school for several reasons. Firstly, it is also possible to attend from home without having to go out:

>   *User 11: "Now that you have graduated what do you do besides drinking Monster from morning till night? Maybe I'd say you've already written it 20 times but I haven't written for a long time or even read" (Male, 19, Diploma Holder).*
>   *User 20: "An online university" (Female, 21, Diploma Holder)*

The university is seen as a place where one can try to escape from problems:

User 19: "I started university to try to get away from problems but me..." (Female, 20, Diploma Holder).
User 2: "They always are, aren't they?" (Male, 21, Diploma Holder).
User 15: "With university comes three times as many problems" (Male, 27, Graduate).

A minority of the Hikikomori in the group tend to think, however, that it is not worth studying and going to university because it somehow reinforces their position as failures and slackers in the eyes of society. Those who embrace this opinion have already passed on from university or are no longer in their teens:

"User 10: However studying sucks, if you do it in the south you are seen as lazy. It's not worth it. If I went back I wouldn't go to university but I would go to work" (Male, 23, Diploma Holder).
"User 13: No, they assume you're a loser and a beggar. Even if you are stuck in university at 30 you are judged a failure" (Male, 20, Diploma Holder).

Discussion

The observation conducted on the phenomenology of Hikikomori in Italy has revealed that young Italian Hikikomori exhibit a different type of relationship with their parents compared to what was reported in studies conducted in Japan in the late 1990s. This disparity can be attributed to the structural and cultural differences between the two social contexts. In Japan, the family is characterized by a rigid hierarchy that fosters significant emotional dependence on the mother and economic reliance on the father among Hikikomori. Conversely, in Italy, familial dynamics are marked by a different parenting style, which is reflected in the conflictual relationship that Italian Hikikomori maintain with their parents. Moreover, the families involved in the Hikikomori phenomenon in Italy do not necessarily present affluent economic conditions, unlike those observed in Japan, leading to intrafamilial tensions and a desire for emancipation.

Regarding peer relationships, Italian Hikikomori often lament the lack of friendships and consider themselves solitary. The search for social interactions and friendships among Italian Hikikomori primarily occurs through the use of technology; however, they perceive themselves as socially and interactively inadequate, hindering the formation of meaningful connections with others.

In this context, participation in groups represents an initiative aimed at mitigating the sense of loneliness and social disconnection typical of Hikikomori. Establishing online relationships with individuals who share similar issues and sensitivities could provide an alternative means of fulfilling the need for sociality

and belonging. This manifestation of the desire for interaction and the search for friendships within specific virtual contexts emerges as a new paradigm within the Hikikomori landscape, demonstrating a potential pathway out of the extreme isolation that characterizes them.

The importance of sociality and relationships with others in human experience is also highlighted in the context of Hikikomori. Active participation in online groups represents a significant step toward greater openness to communication and emotional sharing, offering Hikikomori a supportive and alternative space for socialization compared to traditional relational dynamics.

The perception of Japanese Hikikomori as brilliant and distinguished individuals in academic settings is well documented (Crepaldi, 2020; Watabe et al., 2023); however, this premise is not always confirmed in Italy. On the contrary, cases of isolated young individuals with academic difficulties or those who repeatedly fail exams are observed. Conflict with teachers exacerbates the sense of disdain toward the educational institution, as these figures are often perceived as oppressive toward the more timid and reserved individuals.

Interestingly, the antipathy toward school does not necessarily extend to university, which is viewed as a more conducive environment for establishing social relationships and participating in cultural and educational activities in a more independent manner. For Hikikomori, the valorization of individual and self-directed learning, without the presence of teachers, emerges as a primary objective. Despite the tendency toward isolation, it has been observed that Italian Hikikomori show a growing interest in interacting through online groups, where they can share their experiences and establish connections with individuals similar to themselves. This form of sociality mediated by technology appears to represent a new mode of interaction for contemporary Hikikomori, diverging from the traditional model of total isolation described in previous literature on this phenomenon.

In conclusion, despite the differences between Italian and Japanese Hikikomori, the impact of technological evolution seems to have altered the way they relate to the outside world and to other individuals. The advancement of technology and digital platforms has had a significant impact on the Hikikomori phenomenon, changing the way isolation is experienced. While traditional Hikikomori spent their time in isolation engaged in offline activities such as reading, watching anime, or playing video games, the contemporary Hikikomori tends to spend much of their time online, participating in various activities. This new generation of Hikikomori in Italy often finds employment that helps them sustain themselves financially and live more autonomously, thus reducing their dependence on others.

Conclusion

The Hikikomori phenomenon in Italy presents distinct characteristics compared to the traditional model observed in Japan during the late 1990s. Italian Hikikomori frequently report strained relationships with their parents, who often perceive them as burdens, contrasting with the hierarchical family dynamics prevalent in Japan, where emotional and economic dependencies are common. This divergence may stem from differing social structures, as Italian families, irrespective of their socioeconomic status, may lack the supportive environment found in Japanese households. Consequently, Italian Hikikomori often experience internal family conflicts, motivating them to seek employment to achieve independence.

The social dynamics among peers for Italian Hikikomori are complex, marked by fleeting friendships and a sense of isolation. While they yearn for connection, many struggle to form meaningful relationships, even in online environments. This shift towards seeking companionship via technology represents a departure from the traditional Hikikomori 's inclination toward social withdrawal. Despite the challenges associated with school, which many view as negative due to experiences of bullying, there is a more positive outlook towards university life, perceived as an opportunity to foster friendships and engage in self-directed learning.

Notably, unlike their Japanese counterparts, Italian Hikikomori often face academic struggles and express dissatisfaction with educators, whom they sometimes perceive as unhelpful. Despite a general aversion to traditional schooling, the pursuit of knowledge remains a priority, leading some to engage in remote work as a means of achieving personal growth and financial stability.

This research has employed strategic lurking to gather insights from a diverse demographic of Hikikomori across Italy, highlighting the ongoing challenges of mistrust and lack of motivation that contribute to their isolation. The study acknowledges that the Italian Hikikomori experience may differ significantly from that of their Japanese counterparts, particularly in terms of socioeconomic factors and familial interactions.

However, the study has limitations, as its findings are specific to the Italian context and focus on a single group of Hikikomori, excluding other potential communities. Future research should aim to incorporate perspectives from various Hikikomori groups and explore their interactions with family, peers, and educational or work environments to enhance the understanding of this phenomenon and its broader societal implications.

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