

# The Effects of Hikikomori in Society in Japan – A Source of Inspiration to Change the “Hikikomori Optimism” Community in the World

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**Abstract:** Hikikomori is a social phenomenon that appeared in Japan, when some young people refuse to leave their families, isolate themselves, distance themselves from the social community, and accept a "reclusive" way of life. Recent studies show that this phenomenon is increasing, not only in Japan but also in many countries around the world. There are two conflicting points of view. Most people with positive reactions are those who call themselves 'hikikomori', while negative sentiments, together with great opposition, often come from experts or people outside the hikikomori community, who are concerned about the harmful effects of this way of life. Based on data collected from Twitter (now it is rebranded as X) and using digital methods, this article goes into deep research and analyzes the effects of hikikomori, thereby exploring how Twitter users react to hikikomori. Despite mixed reactions, most users still agree with the widespread influence of this cultural phenomenon. From the desire to be more socially accepted to proving that hikikomori can play an important role and deserves more recognition for the contributions it makes, while also using it as inspiration to transform into an “optimistic hikikomori community” not only in Japan but around the world.

**Keywords:** Hikikomori, optimistic hikikomori community, Twitter, Twitter users, social phenomena.

**Subject classification:** Sociology.

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## 1. Introduction

Hikikomori is a Japanese word derived from the verb '*hiki*', which means to move back, and '*komoru*', which means to come into (Furuhashi, T. et al., 2013). The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare of Japan defines hikikomori as a condition in which the affected individuals refuse to leave their parents' house, do not work, or go to school, and who isolate themselves from society and family, staying in a single room for a period exceeding six months (Itou, J. et al., 2003). Additionally, the government estimates that 1.55 million people are on the verge of becoming hikikomori and half a million young Japanese have become social recluses (Hoffman, M. et al., 2011).

Recent research has found that while hikikomori is mostly a Japanese phenomenon, cases have also been found in many other countries (Kato, T.A. et al., 2018). The aim of this research is track hikikomori on an international level by analyzing data collected from Twitter and using digital methods and content analysis to form a general idea about how Twitter users react to and discuss this growing cultural phenomenon.

## 2. Literature review

Considering Japanese history, hikikomori can be understood as a culture-bound syndrome (Kato, T.A. & Kanba, S., 2016), where the root of collectivism in the country's society allows an individual who has withdrawn from the formation of groups - such as school or the workplace - and isolated themselves at home for days, weeks, or months, to be described as hikikomori (Kato, T.A., Kanba, S. & Teo, A.R., 2019). Specifically, *taijin kyofusho*, which is defined as a syndrome with a strong fear of others and interpersonal relations (especially face-to-face interaction) (Kato, T.A., Kanba, S. & Teo, A.R., 2019) along with the influence of particular culturally-accepted values within Japanese society such as *haji* [shame] (Kitayama, O., 1998), overdependent behavior [*amae*], and overprotection of children [*kahogo*] (Kato TA, Kanba S, Teo AR., 2019; Katsuki, R., Inoue, A., Indias, S. et al., 2019; Kato, T.A., Kanba, S., Teo, A.R., 2018) has made Japanese people emphasize indirect communication and create social anxiety disorder among

themselves, have been suggested to precipitate hikikomori in Japan (Kitayama, O., 1998). Moreover, since the 1990s, it has been found that hikikomori traits correspond with a novel psychiatric syndrome called ‘modern-type depression’ (MTD). MTD is described as self-centeredness, with socially evasive and narcissistic tendencies, where a person is easily traumatized, having low resilience, and this has become a growing cause of concern among adolescents in Japan (Kato, T.A., Shinfuku, N. et al., 2011; Kato, T.A., Hashimoto, R., Hayakawa, K. et al., 2016; Kato, T.A., Katsuki, R. & Kubo, H. et al., 2019). Additionally, with the emergence of the internet, which changed ‘direct’ communication to ‘indirect’ when social media and texting replaced other activities, people nowadays spend less time socializing with friends in person, which is perhaps why they may be experiencing unprecedented levels of anxiety, depression, and loneliness (Twenge, J.M., 2017). Therefore, it has created a negative impact on an individual’s mental health, and in the wider context such as education, workforce stability, the administration of health, welfare, and labor (Kato, T.A., Kanba, S., Teo, A.R., 2018; Harding, C. 2018). Nowadays, the condition of hikikomori has a far more global reach and can be better understood as a ‘contemporary society-bound syndrome’ (Kato, T.A. & Kanba, S., 2016) since scholars have found the issue of social withdrawal in many countries (Kato, T., Tateno, M. et al., 2012) such as South Korea (Lee, Y.S., Lee, J.Y. et al., 2013), Hong Kong (Wong, P., Li, T. et al., 2015), on mainland China (Wong, P.W.C., Liu, L.L. & Li, T.M.H. et al., 2017), Spain (Malagón-Amor, Ángeles, David Córcoles-Martínez, et al., 2014; García-Campayo J., Alda, M. et al., 2007; Ovejero, S., Caro-Cañizares, I., et al., 2014), Italy (De Michele, F., Caredda, M., et al., 2013), France (Chauliac, N., Couillet, A., et al., 2017; Furuhashi, T., Figueiredo, C., et al., 2012), United States (Teo, A., Feters, M., et al., 2015), Brazil (Gondim, F.A., Aragão, A.P. et al., 2017), Oman (Sakamoto, N., Martin, R. et al., 2005).

However, despite the global observation of the negative impacts of hikikomori, an alternative viewpoint has arisen since the Japanese have long considered the idea of ‘making oneself disappear’ to be a kind of virtue (Kato, T.A., Kanba, S. and Teo, A.R., 2019). This stems from the mythical goddess Izanami, who shut herself away in the land of Yomi (Kitayama, O., 2010). Moreover, it should be considered a nonproblematic self-imposed lifestyle of isolation (Norasakkunkit, V., Uchida, Y. & Takemura, K., 2017), or a natural reaction

against the pressures of a globalized and post-industrialized Japanese society by those who refuse to adopt mainstream cultural values (Norasakkunkit, V., Uchida, Y. & Takemura, K., 2017; Toivonen, T., Norasakkunkit, V., Uchida, Y., 2011). So people choose hikikomori to avoid pain or stressful situations in life, such as bullying and/or failure at school and/or in the workplace (Kato, T.A., Shinfuku, N. & Tateno, M., 2020).

Interestingly, the internet is also considered a self-help tool to alleviate loneliness during the process of hikikomori. When people are connected by the internet they are satisfied with its performance from information collection, shopping, watching videos, and gaming, to daily communicating with others (Kato, T.A., Shinfuku, N. & Tateno, M., 2020). Therefore, without ‘face-to-face’ communication, people easily succumb to physical isolation and lose the will/desire to go outside can become themselves socially withdrawn (Kato, T.A., Shinfuku, N. & Tateno, M., 2020). This aspect of hikikomori makes people adopt a lifestyle where they are neither in employment, education or training (NEET) which is now being normalized in Japanese society (Uchida, Y. & Norasakkunkit, V., 2015).

In order to investigate how people articulate around this phenomenon in the digital context, the digital method is used followed by the methodological idea called “online groundedness”, in which the internet becomes a useful method to diagnose cultural change and societal conditions, and follows the medium (Rogers, R., 2009) - in this case Twitter - to capture its dynamics, and make grounded claims about cultural, and societal change in reality. Specifically, using Twitter as a medium has several benefits. Firstly, on the global scale, Twitter is one of the world’s most popular social media platforms allowing the user to share and discuss via short posts called tweets (Alvarez-Mon, M.A., Asunsolo Del Barco, A. et al., 2018). Secondly, Twitter is considered a diverse online community, in which there is a common sharing between Twitter users of psychiatric disorders (Alvarez-Mon, M.A., Asunsolo Del Barco, A. et al., 2018) reaching out to individuals who are hard to find in the physical context (Prieto, V., Matos, S. et al., 2014; Young, S., Rivers, C., Lewis, B., 2014). Therefore, by following the digital methods paradigm, the procedure of data analysis begins with sentiment analysis (SA) to ascertain users’ attitudes about hikikomori. After that, network analysis is provided with hashtag rankings of common themes related to hikikomori, followed by Co-hashtag analysis and retweet network analysis. For more in-depth text scrutiny, topic analysis (TA) is

performed, and finally narration analysis (NA) in order to interpret self-presentation strategies that map the ‘cultural imaginary’ structure commonly shared through symbols among users (Rogers, R., 2009).

### 3. Research methods

#### 3.1. Data sampling

This paper uses Netlytic to extract all the tweets from Twitter containing the keyword #hikikomori in the English language and then obtains a dataset of 697 tweets ranging from 20 to 28 February 2022. However, the number of tweets is too large to develop an in-depth manual and qualitative content analysis, so the database must be sampled by considering two metadata: mentions and retweets.

In this process, only messages containing the symbol @ (or the mention symbol) are selected in order to construct a sample composed of messages containing direct conversations between Twitter users. The process continues by extracting all tweets containing the symbol RT to sample a database with relevant discussion about Hikikomori. Finally, this study obtained a subset of 695 from an initial dataset of 697 tweets - a small sample to perform a qualitative in-depth analysis.

#### 3.2. Data analysis

##### 3.2.1. Sentiment analysis (SA)

With the aim of carrying out a sentiment analysis on a collected database of tweets containing the hashtag #hikikomori, the smaller sample of 291 tweets is selected and divided into three main categories: positive, negative, and neutral attitudes.

**Positive:** *contains the related word "hikikomori" and has a positive tone of voice*

**Negative:** *does not contain the related word "hikikomori" and has a negative tone of voice*

***Neutral:** does not contain the related keyword "hikikomori" or unrelated information*

After reading these messages in detail, the current study discovered that messages approving and disapproving of the hikikomori lifestyle are pretty much equal. It can be said that the hashtag *#hikikomori* attracts a community that includes users who are mutually sharing information but divided into two communities both praising and criticizing hikikomori as described in Table 1.

Table 1: Sentiment Analysis – Hikikomori

Tweet	Attitude
@xaichai I was agoraphobic even before that. Now <b>I just wish I could become a hikikomori</b> and live my whole life inside my room, alone with my cat.	Positive
RT @SAH16928046: The #Japanese #Hikikomori problem is getting worse. People are turning into hermits and introverted recluses. The model of country, company, and family has failed for now. What has made the most successful postwar economy go downhill?	Negative

There are two opinions regarding *#hikikomori*. On the one hand, a positive mood is presented mostly by users who are coping with mental illness, phobias, or who are working remotely. On the other hand, negative tweets seem to be produced by attitudes directed on the effects this phenomenon has on society in general.

In addition, a large percentage of neutral tweets (see Figure 1) were mainly aimed at disseminating mass media content about the hikikomori culture (such as documentaries, films, etc.), providing information about events (game livestream completion) or sharing music, artworks, game designs which are presented by users who follow the hikikomori lifestyle. Interestingly, they all have a positive function since they aspire to spreading the effect of being hikikomori in diverse perspectives.

Furthermore, this sentiment analysis consists of weighting the sentiment according to the ‘value’ of the users receiving the different position of these actors within the minimal network. For more diverse perspectives, the author of the

current study decided to weight differently the sentiment conveyed by *@Matt\_Alt* – a writer with 15,107 followers and *@DrAlanTeo* – a psychiatrist who shared relevant articles about mental health with 393 followers (see Table 2).

Figure 1: Sentiment Weighted by Tweets

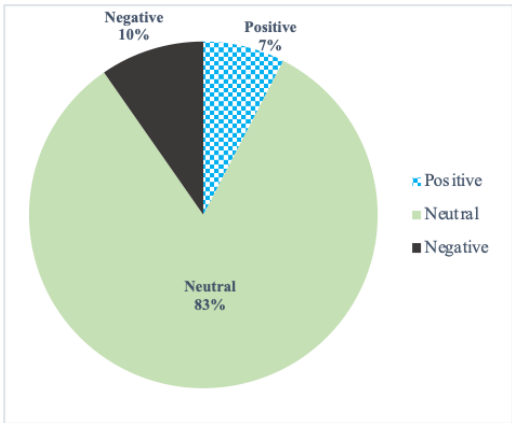


Table 2: Sentiment Weight by Specific Users

Username	Followers	Tweets	Attitude
Dr. Alan Teo	393	Many fear the changes brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic will worsen #Hikikomori among young adults. This study found increased internet use was, however, associated with reduced hikikomori risk. @endsocisolation @lonelinesscentr, <a href="https://t.co/Yx9NccJi7m">https://t.co/Yx9NccJi7m</a> , <a href="https://t.co/KdVM9U8i1z">https://t.co/KdVM9U8i1z</a>	Positive
Matt Alt	15,107	The West often views Japanese trends as weird outliers. But they inevitably hit the West too, just as so many Japanese social trends did after the Lehman shock: sexless “herbivores,” hikikomori, “parasite singles,” etc., Japan is the canary in the coal mine of late capitalism. Japan is us.	Negative

In summary, two users both shared the same messages about #hikikomori: it has increasingly become a modern-day social phenomenon, which affects not only Japan but also many other countries.

### 3.2.2. Network analysis

#### Hashtags ranking

First, all the hashtags contained in the collected database of tweets were extracted by Python script. The software extracted a list of 149 unique hashtags ranked in decreasing order with the top 20 listed in Table 3.

Table 3: Hashtag Ranking – Hikikomori

Hashtag	Occurrence	Hashtag	Occurrence
#Hikikomori	38	#worldmusic	12
#hikikomori	27	#remotelearning	11
#indieartist	23	#sccc alumni	11
#musicvideo	19	#tefl	11
#ambient	17	#goielts	10
#newage	17	#toefl	10
#contemporarymusic	17	#guitar	10
#neet	17	#lofi	10
#japan	13	#electronicmusic	9
#stonybrookalum	13	#indiemusic	9

According to Table 3, some key themes of hikikomori can be seen, such as #neet (*"Not in Education, Employment, or Training"*), relevant inspiration such as #indieartist or #indiemusic, the original country of this phenomenon #japan and #remotelearning or #goielts which is that staying home to study is seen as a form of #hikikomori behavior (see also Figure 2).

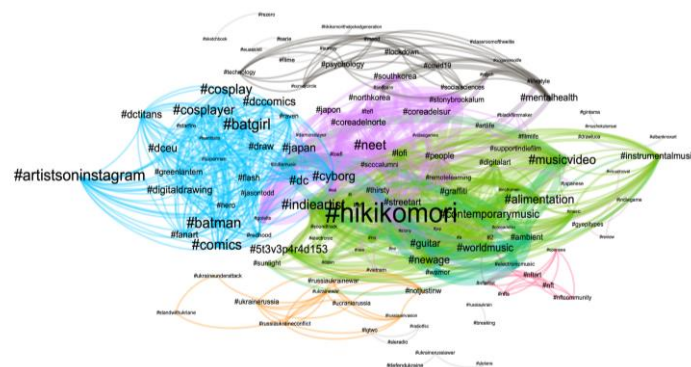




## Hashtag analysis

### 1. Co-hashtag analysis: semi-automated analysis of hashtag clusters using Gephi

The database is applied by a Python script programmed to detect the associations of hashtags across tweets and to reconstruct the related network. Once the network of hashtags is obtained (in .csv format), it is imported into Gephi to identify sub-groups of nodes that are internally denser and externally less dense. Therefore, it automatically converts the full network of hashtags into a small set of clusters, each one composed of closely associated hashtags (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Network of Hashtags Related to *#hikikomori*

Moreover, the current study discovered that the hashtag network articulated by users around the issue *#hikikomori* was composed of 149 clusters, among which six had a significant percentage of hashtags (see Table 4).

Table 4: Semi-automated Analysis of Hashtag Clusters

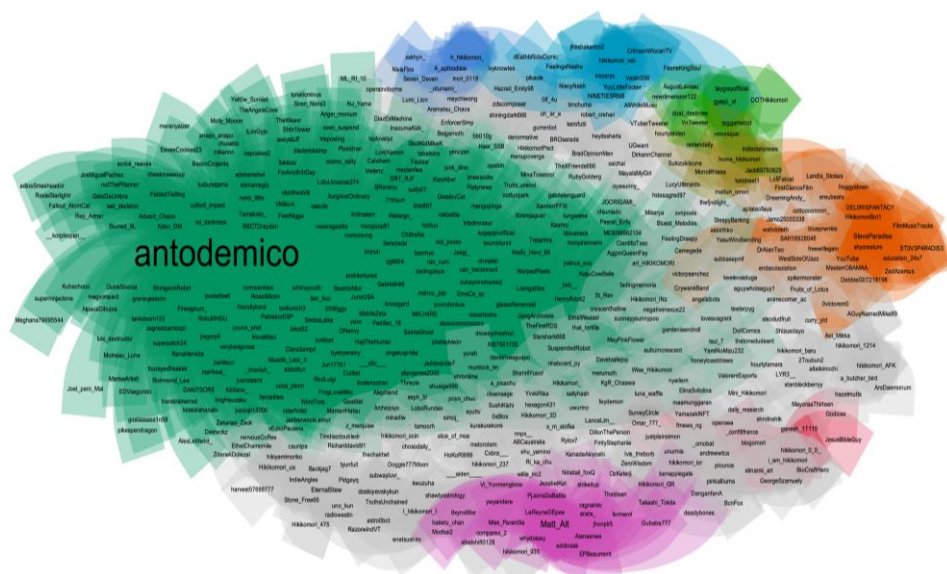
Clusters	Percentages	Color	Contents
1	20.45%	Neon Pink	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- This cluster is made up of some definitions that are closely related to the hikikomori phenomenon, from the Neet lifestyle - which refers to the unmarried, uneducated, and unemployed (<i>#neet</i>, <i>#videogames</i>, <i>#selfcare</i>) - to the country from where hikikomori originated (from <i>#japon</i>, <i>#japan</i> to <i>#northkorea</i> <i>#southkorea</i>).</li> <li>- Interestingly, users even described locking themselves down for learning and exam preparation as a form of hikikomori (<i>#remotelearning</i>, <i>#toelf</i>, <i>#goielts</i>).</li> </ul>
2	21.97%	Green and Green Mint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- This cluster is made up of hashtags referring to hikikomori inspirations (<i>#indieartist</i>, <i>#artlife</i>, <i>#gamelife</i>) and in-door hobbies, mostly involving music (<i>#comtemporarmusic</i>, <i>#instrumentalmusic</i>, <i>#ambient</i>, <i>#guitar</i>), art (<i>#streetart</i>, <i>#digitalart</i>), films (<i>#supportindiefim</i>, <i>#soundtrack</i>), and gaming (<i>#indiegame</i>).</li> </ul>
3	18.18%	Blue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The cluster includes hashtags related to media content that the hikikomori community likes to discuss, from as different types of comics (<i>#dctitans</i>), genres (<i>#cybor</i>), games and superheroes (<i>#greenlatern</i>, <i>#batman</i>) to art (<i>#digitalart</i>, <i>#artsistoninstagram</i>, <i>#fanart</i>) or even Japanese <i>#cosplay</i>.</li> <li>- The presence of hashtags in this cluster marks the effect of hikikomori <i>#lifestyle</i> in various aspects from</li> </ul>

4	9.09%	Gray	#psychology to #mentalhealth issues provided by #survey #film #series and articles by researchers of #socialscience. During #covid19 and #lockdown, the effect seriously needs to be investigated.
5	6.82%	Orange	- The conflict between Russia and Ukraine can also be highlighted as an important discussion topic within the hikikomori community (#standwithukraine).
6	5.3%	Deep Pink	- This cluster is made up of hashtags linked to #nftcommunity which #nftartist when working from home used to sell their #nftart that can be authenticated and valued, and they even mentioned one of the online non-fungible token marketplaces #opensea.

## 2. Retweet network analysis

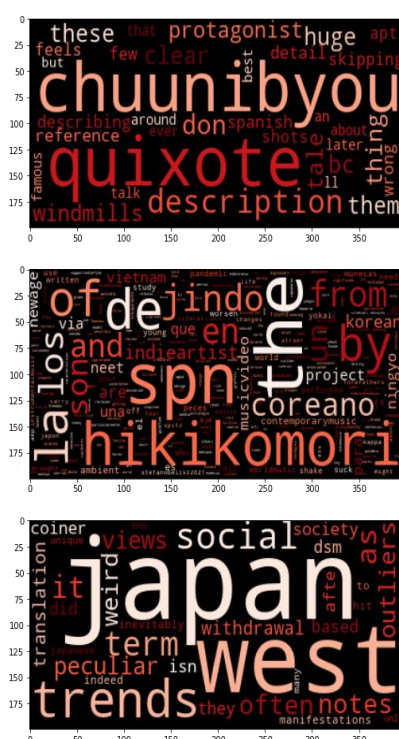
Besides hashtags network analysis, the retweet network analysis was also applied using Gephi and the result is highlighted in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Network of Retweets Related to #hikikomori



There are three important nodes that occurred in the majority of this network. (i) the retweets from an art director @antodemico which had its own biggest cluster, followed by (ii) @HikikomoriBot who called himself a hikikomori, and finally (iii) a writer @Matt\_Alt. After downloading the Network file on Gephi, the automatic community analysis was processed to see inside these clusters and visualize the TFIDF counting by Word Cloud (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Community Analysis



#### 1. @antodemico – green cluster

This biggest cluster is a conversation between gamers about the upcoming Pokémon game. This user tried to claim that the theme took inspiration from *Spain* evidenced by windmills featured in the game that reminded him of the famous *Spanish* tale *Don Quixote* who claimed he was a knight and fought with windmills as a giant. He had typical hikikomori traits - living an isolated life from society with delusions to convince themselves they have hidden knowledge or secret powers, also known as *chuunibyou* (a slang word from Japan).

2. @HikikomoriBot – orange cluster

This cluster includes some of the inspirations and habits that a hikikomori or neet may have; for example, indie artists, new age or contemporary music, lo-fi music... here are also some Spanish words derived from some tweets posted by the user studying for an exam.

3. @Matt\_Alt – pink cluster

This cluster is a discussion on a controversial product named after a western beer brand called “Karoshi”, which in Japanese means “work till death”. It was a big issue in Japan and this user thinks the word cannot be translated as a joke or a trending name because of its sensitive meaning. In addition, the author also mentions another social trend in Japan that hit the West, one being hikikomori.

3.2.3. Topic analysis (TA)

An in-depth analysis of the content of the tweets was carried out since hashtag analysis was too general and uncertain. Text analysis can be a perceptive way to investigate the meanings of the messages posted by the users and the purposes of the hashtags. Thus, all the tweets in the sample of 219 tweets are identified by a list of the main themes and communicative strategies hidden behind the content of the tweets (see Table 5).

Table 5: Main Topics Assortment Process

Keywords	Main topics
Game (playing, streaming, Pokémon, ...)	Entertainment
Music (album, new age, ambient, ...)	
Art (sketch, perform, design, cosplay, ...)	
Film (anime, ...)	
....	
Mental health	Media
Shut-in phenomenon	
Locked generation	
Depressing documentary	
....	

At the end of this process, four main topics are grouped in Table 6.

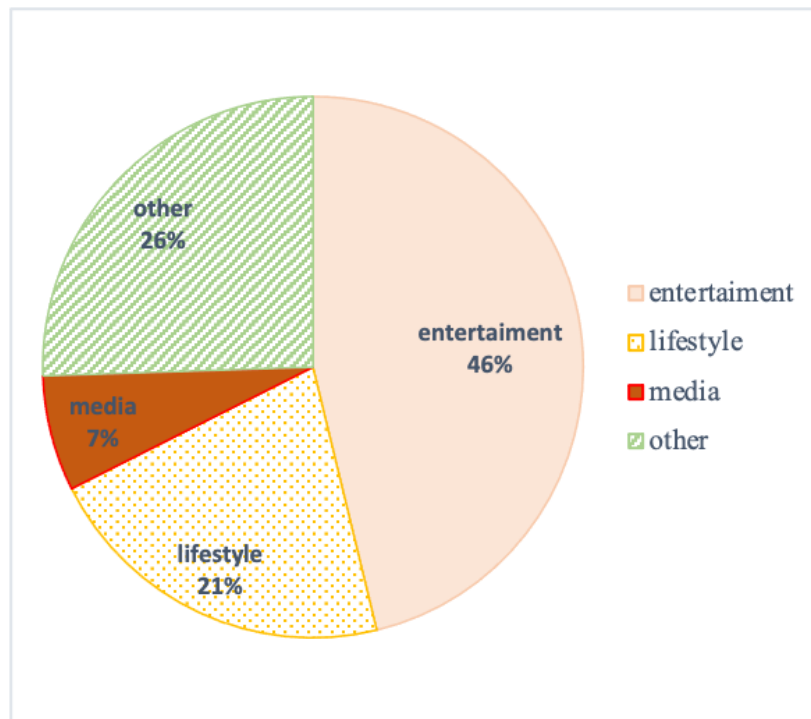
Table 6: Four Main Topics After the Assortment Process

Main topics	Content	Tweets/Retweets
Entertainment	Tweets that describe hikikomori as an inspiration for artists in paintings, music, films, game designs and so on. Besides, it also provides information about new released anime, game streaming competition and discussion which hikikomori people entertain and are interested in.	<i>#Hikikomori project. Written&amp;performed By StefanoBellvz©2021 #ambient #indieartist #instrumentalmusic #electronic #downbeat #soundtrack #digitalart #music</i>
Lifestyle	Tweets that share information about hikikomori identification, characteristics, and habits to underline the nature and living standards of the hikikomori.	<i>@_omobat That's another reason. I think I wouldn't mind going out physically as much if people weren't so stupid.</i>
Media	Tweets that include media content such as documentaries, information, and articles about the hikikomori lifestyle, or to instruct as to what is 'true' hikikomori culture and the related issues.	<i>@heyitssharla Foreign Correspondent in Australia had an entire show on hikikomori and changing social expectation in Japan for their first show back for 2022. Gramps was very blunt on his granddaughter's attitudes <a href="https://t.co/7SovtpyS4p">https://t.co/7SovtpyS4p</a></i>
Other	Tweets in this cluster are difficult to categorize according to any given categories, or hard to specify their meanings and/or purposes.	<i>@tsul_7 this hikikomori can work out ㊗(ò_ó~)㊿</i>

From the results of topic analysis, the database can detect more accurately and distinctly the content and the communicative strategies of the tweets which contain the hashtag *#hikikomori*. Also, the current study can measure more precisely the centrality of certain topics over others within the Twitter macro-

discourse (as shown in Figure 6, entertainment can be the aim of being hikikomori as it occurred mainly in the graph with 46%, while the media which provided the effect of the related issue was only 7%).

Figure 6: Topic Distribution



#### 3.2.4. Narration analysis (NA)

The narration analysis is progressed by dipping into the sample of 219 tweets and original posts (tweets without RT and/or @ symbols) aimed at investigating different types of identity and cultural representations of hikikomori that users conveyed while tweeting with the hashtag #hikikomori.

This data is divided into two groups: *'informative tweets'* that share links pointing to blogs or magazine articles on hikikomori culture, and *'narrative tweets'* where users make micro-narrations (via text, links, or photos) about their personal experience of hikikomori culture. By carefully analyzing all the narrative tweets, some recurring themes are detected in the users' self-presentation strategies through which they try to share their hikikomori lifestyle in front of an invisible audience.

### Hikikomori self-presentation in standard of living

A very common way users present themselves as authentic hikikomori is by publicly showing contradicting attitudes toward social isolation. They defined hikikomori characteristics by using common traits such as (i) “spending most of the time at home” (*Inside is much safer than outside. I know this place better than out there. I’ll keep the ones I hold close in easy contact*), (ii) usually have few or no friends (*The few friends I have, I cherish. I don’t want to lose that, but they know where to find me. I’ll be okay*), (iii) they may appear unhappy (*just because I like to hide my feelings doesn’t mean I don’t have any*), and (iv) become insecure (*That’s another reason. I think I wouldn’t mind going out physically as much if people weren’t so stupid*).

On the one hand, they mentioned the word “hikikomori” when expressing the benefit of being alone, from remote learning (*todos los peces dorados son peces de agua dulce de la familia cyprinidae[spn] all the goldfish are freshwater fish from the cyprinidae family #hikikomori #neet #stonybrookalum #scccalumni #remotelearning #tefl #toefl #goielts #esl*) to staying focused on achieving their goals (*Finally my hikikomori lifestyle has paid off. Enjoy getting drafted losers; Reading fanfic makes me so happy. Yesterday I was a hikikomori. Today I'm a linguistics prof. <https://t.co/6MXUptDbUn>*).

On the other hand, they also expressed concern and disapproval of this lifestyle: (*two years of borderline hikikomori-level isolation has driven me crazy enough to consider hololive a legitimate entertainment venue; oh god i need to go outside. im turning into a hikikomori; Let's talk again about Hikikomori Before I come here in Japan, I do admire this nation culture. About how discipline they are and something like that. Never thought that they also have some big problem such as Hikikomori. Thank God I always be able to socialize anywhere*). (sic).

Besides, these tweets represent how users described themselves as "modern-day hermits" (Teo, A., 2012). They use social media as an alternative to face-to-face communication, and they often actively discuss issues they care about within their own communities. One of the main topics shared is their virtual hobbies such as online games or streaming (*The day the nerve gear comes out irl will be the day I become a hikikomori. I wanna be sucked into a death video game so bad man idc*) also comics (*i want a hikikomori who vore's back and watches dragon ball z*), digital



music (*The Tower of Mirrors* #musicvideo from #Hikikomori #guitar #worldmusic #indieartist #lofi #contemporarymusic #newage #Instrumentalmusic #digitalart #ambient #soundtrack #Music written & performed by Stefano Bellvz©2022 Please subscribe everyone), and arts (*On behalf of my tablemates from Hikikomori Arts @DirkannChannel @geichii\_ @\_kaisl, our heartfelt thank you to ate Meling, the organizers, fellow artists and vendors, and of course our guests and customers for the support! Til we meet again next year!*).

A recurring theme featured in tweets relates to users posting a documentary, or article about hikikomori lifestyle. On one hand such content aims to give audiences a closer look at this phenomenon through interviews and vlogs (*A Day in the Life of a Japanese Hikikomori (Shut In)* <https://youtu.be/pu9Ty9fxTHE> via @YouTube). Also, some articles and documentaries report the global spread and the side-effects of this way of living (*Depressing documentary on Hikikomori. What is happening in Japan could happen anywhere in the world, in a COVID-impacted society.* <https://youtu.be/SORthIsoLP0>; *In Japan, a million people have shut themselves in their rooms. One mother is helping them come out.* (via @ForeignOfficial)).

#### Hikikomori self-presentation in creativity

A typical hikikomori trait is when a person has time to discover himself/herself and find the way to turn their interests into something realistic, and even make money from it. Along with developed technology and social media platforms, Twitter is the place where hikikomori artists can proudly share, discuss, and even sell their work to audiences (Pull Stay #Kickstarter is launched NOW! \(\geq \forall \leq\)/ This game reflects my last 10 years as a shut-in aka Hikikomori! Back the game and make the world weirder! <https://kickstarter.com/projects/1363912222/pull-stay...> All of your love, Likes, Retweets are super appreciated! #indiegame #gamedev #UE4)

#### Hikikomori self-presentation in social influence

The hikikomori phenomenon quickly evolved into the arena as an unlimited inspiration for indie film makers (Want to use 20 minutes to #supportindiefilm? Check out our award winning short film!Vimeo:<https://vimeo.com/ondemand/americanhikikomori>AmazonPrime:<https://amzn.to/3tfbZxc> #ArtLife #FilmLife #Japan #BlackFilmmaker #Hikikomori; *Hikikomori: The Locked*

*Generation* <https://euassisti.com.br/filme/hikikomori-the-locked-generation-2> #filme #serie #euassisti # #hikikomorithelockedgeneration) or indie musicians (#Hikikomori project. Written performed By StefanoBellvz©2021 #ambient #indieartist #instrumentalmusic #electronic #downbeat #soundtrack #digitalart #music. Please subscribe everyone your support is really appreciated).

Furthermore, it turned out to be an unlimited resource for researchers and journalists, who investigate and point out the impact of the hikikomori lifestyle not only in Japan but also around the world, proposing some alternatives to modify this type of lifestyle. (*Doctors in Japan look for new ways to treat hikikomori patients* <https://t.co/LnSO1ElzRA>; *Many fear the changes brought by the COVID-19 pandemic will worsen #Hikikomori among young adults. This study found increased internet use was instead associated with reduced hikikomori risk.* @endsocisolation @lonelinesscentr <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/35021891/>).

Finally, hikikomori also attracted communities of people with experience of changing their hikikomori relatives, integrating them back into normal society (*It's pretty wild that my sister was a hikikomori for over three years, but my mom couldn't take it anymore and forced her to get treatment for her depression and now my sister isn't too bad anymore; My now-wife was attracted to me, not because I was a guy with a beer belly, but because I could understand her suicidal-depression-induced-hikikomori-ness. Because I'd been in the same position. I still don't understand love, but I've now got a wife and a child so, err, yay?*).

#### 4. Conclusion

When it comes to hikikomori, internet users have two different reactions from various perspectives. Through this research, it can be seen that most of the positive attitudes come from users who call themselves 'hikikomori', indicating they are individuals who find direct communication unnecessary and who are satisfied being alone at home with just a computer, the internet, and a television. A hikikomori can fulfil all his/her most basic needs and desires, from ordering food, clothes, and household items online to spending time doing whatever they want or by “filling in the tedious hours” through TV and video games for entertainment (Jones, M., 2006).

Meanwhile, negative reactions often come from experts or users outside the hikikomori community, who express concern about the effects of this lifestyle expressing with great disapproval, even constantly looking for treatments or solutions to change this way of life. Despite these contradictions, there is a majority of users who agree with the widespread influence of this cultural phenomenon. The heated discussion on Twitter about comparing Spanish Don Quixote to the modern hikikomori lifestyle is one of the examples.

The hikikomori is also known as “modern-day hermits” using ‘synchronal communication’ as a common way to communicate with the outside world. This form of communication does not require connecting through emotional relationships, but rather by sharing similar tastes or interests to feel a sense of belonging because they no longer concentrate their attention and have no interest in any organization (Suwa, M. & Suzuki, K., 2013). This leads to the creation of a social media platform that contains a group of hikikomori people who discuss the same interests, activities, or hobbies, and proudly share and produce self-published works.

Japan is one of the most developed countries in the world, but with this comes a strong expectation of corporate success, a fixed educational system that creates a high-pressure society; many introverts with high-individualism and low self-esteem who view themselves as disempowered victims of the reaction to globalization in a conformist society choose hikikomori as a form of anti-social behavior (Suwa, M. & Suzuki, K., 2013) and the only way to escape (Allison et al., 2006).

However, today’s research also shows the opposite when responsible hikikomori seem to want to change society's misconception about hikikomori as they gradually realize that when they cannot change society they have to change themselves and not become a burden on their family like the “80-50 problem”. (This refers to the period when a hikikomori enters their 50s and their parents as their supplier, enter their 80s. The '8050 problem' - 'hikikomori' people entering 50s as their parents on whom they rely enter their 80s) and being alone does not mean being useless to society.

As Japan is one of the top countries for technology development, the hikikomori are increasingly learning to apply this to “find a virtual job to change the

physical life” such as the digital arts or online game design and sell it under the non-fungible token or self fund-raising using Kickstarter , or to improve their communication skills or increase their confidence in public by virtual meetings with psychologists, talking to an AI robot to avoid human contact, and so on (Jake, S., Deborah, R. & Yumi, A., 2022). They want to become more accepted by society and show that hikikomori can play a vital role and deserve greater recognition for their contributions to society, and use it as inspiration to change into an “optimistic hikikomori community”, not only within Japan itself but all around the world.

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