

## Extreme Social Withdrawal in Early Adolescence: Epidemiological Data On Italian Hikikomori

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### Introduction

The Japanese Saito coined the term "hikikomori" to define an extreme form of social withdrawal, particularly present in Japan (1998). In the West there is an increasing frequency of adolescents hikikomori.

### Objectives and Aims

The UFSMIA Arezzo has received a number of requests to take care of adolescents bearing strong similarities to hikikomori teenagers or "on the way of the social withdrawal". These admissions have led to an epidemiological study in order to quantify these behaviors among very young teenagers in a Italian town.

### Methods

The research used a questionnaire addressed to the coordinator teachers of the middle schools of Arezzo (2694 students). The questionnaire collected information on the single student absent from school for more than 40 days asking reasons for the absence.

### Results

Absents from school for more than 40 days not for an illness were 27. The average age was 14,5 years, 59,3% males, 40,7% females. The 66,6% of the students repeated one or more times a year of school. The teachers do not know the reasons for the absences for 29,6% of students but for 51,9% they indicate psychological problems as the main reason of the absences. The 40,7% of students showed difficulty waking up, leaving home, coming to school, difficulty in relating to others and low self-esteem. These signs could bring to identify hikikomori subjects.

### Conclusions

The research shows that the school is not able to recognize a student hikikomori, but it can provide valuable informations to identify a teenager with social withdrawal.