

Social withdrawal of young people

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Abstract

The aim of this PhD Project is to investigate the phenomenon of social withdrawal among young people. Social withdrawal is an umbrella term, describing one type of social isolation: the active and voluntary self-isolation. In recent years there have been an increasing number of studies looking at social withdrawal of teenagers and emerging adults. Often times those studies refer to the phenomenon of Hikikomori, which describes a form of social withdrawal in Japanese culture, when people retreat into their rooms and don't leave the house for several months or years, cutting physical contact. Due to mediatization and digitalization these forms of physical social withdrawal still allow those withdrawn people to foster social interaction through digital media and online platforms. In this PhD I aim to map out the state of research on this topic, reviewing relevant studies of the last fifteen years and mapping different forms of social withdrawal and affected groups. The following exploratory qualitative study will shed light on the phenomenon of social withdrawal of emerging adults (18 to 29 years) focusing on the process: where does social withdrawal begin and which causes can be identified? How do socially withdrawn emerging adults live and experience the time of social withdrawal? What are consequences and ways out of social withdrawal? What are benign forms of social withdrawal that allow those people to be withdrawn and still live in society? Using grounded theory methodology the aim is to reach people who are withdrawn or have lived like this for a certain time. The results will hopefully contribute to theoretical knowledge on social withdrawal of emerging adults and how to best contact and support those people from a social work perspective, using already known or innovative interventions.