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THE RETREATISM PROCESS OF *HIKIKOMORI* PEOPLE ON THE EXAMPLE
OF 24 JAPANESE *HIKIKOMORI* CLIENTS

PROCES WYCOFANIA *HIKIKOMORICH* NA PRZYKŁADZIE
24 JAPONSKICH *HIKIKOMORICH*

社会的ひきこもりの逃避主義プロセス24人の日本人ひきこもりクライアント事例について

Abstract

In this publication I present a fragment of the results of my doctoral thesis, in which assuming in the sociological perspective that I am dealing with an example or a form of one of five types of adaptation to the situation of anomie named by the American sociologist Robert K. Merton: “retreatism”, on the example of 24 Japanese *Hikikomori* clients, described a problem being at the center of my scientific interests - the *Shakaiteki Hikikomori* (Eng. Social Withdrawal) in Japan (i.a. the profile of *Hikikomori* person, the retreatism process of *Hikikomori* people, the socio-cultural factors favoring the retreatism option in the form of *Hikikomori* etc.) More specifically, in this publication I present the retreatism process of *Hikikomori* people.

Keywords: Sociology of social problems, Sociology of deviation, Anomie, Retreatism, *Shakaiteki Hikikomori*, Japan

Abstrakt

Publikacja niniejsza prezentuje fragment wyników badań mojej rozprawy doktorskiej, na łamach której to, przyjąwszy w perspektywie socjologicznej, że mam do czynienia z przykładem czy formą jednego z pięciu typów adaptacji do sytuacji anomii, nazwanym przez socjologa amerykańskiego Roberta K. Mertona: „wycofaniem”, na przykładzie 24 *Hikikomorich* japońskich, opisałam problem będący w centrum moich zainteresowań naukowych – *Shakaiteki Hikikomori* (ang. *Social Withdrawal*) w Japonii (i.a. profil *Hikikomoriego*, proces wycofania *Hikikomorich*,

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czynniki społeczno-kulturowe sprzyjające wyborowi formy wycofania, jaką jest *Hikikomori* etc.) A dokładnie, publikacja niniejsza prezentuje proces wycofania *Hikikomorich*.

Słowa kluczowe: socjologia problemów społecznych, socjologia dewiacji, anomia, wycofanie, *Shakaiteki Hikikomori*, Japonia

要旨

本論文で筆者は自身の博士論文の調査結果の一部を提示している。当該博士論文において筆者は社会学的観点で引きこもり問題を、アメリカ人社会学者ロバート・K・マートンが名付けた、アノミーの適応様式の5類型中の1つである逃避主義と想定し、24人の日本人引きこもりクライアントの事例を用い、筆者の学術的関心の中心である日本における社会的引きこもり(英語: *SocialWithdrawal*)問題(引きこもりの人のプロフィール、引きこもりの逃避主義プロセス、逃避主義の発現形態として引きこもりを生じさせる社会文化的要因等)について述べた。より正確には、本論文は引きこもりの人々の逃避主義プロセスについて提示している。

キーワード: 社会問題の社会学、逸脱社会学、アノミー、逃避主義、社会的ひきこもり、日本

1. THE SHAKAITEKI HIKIKOMORI DEFINITION

The Japanese psychologist Hideaki Nishimura wrote in his book entitled: *Hikikomori Sono Shinri to Enjo* (The Psyche and Support of the *Hikikomori* People) that tendency to the ad hoc let's call it, "being outside the area of social interactions" always have been located in a canon of the most basic human behaviors (Nishimura 2006, 3). In order to show this, he has pointed out many examples, for instance: the mythical goddess *Amaterasu Ō Mikami* hid in a grotto because her brother behaved aggressively, the *Sengoku* Period military leaders barricaded themselves in the castles because they tried to protect themselves, the Imperial Army soldiers hid on the Guam and Rubang Islands in a jungle because they tried to protect themselves, the Buddhist monks decided to live in a long-term seclusion because they wanted to achieve the enlightenment etc. (Nishimura 2006, 4). Next, he explains that the people decide to "be outside the area of social interactions" despite a fact that they are not affected by any illness, but rather just because they want to hide themselves with their pain, just because they have many, sometimes really painful experiences, just because it seems to them that, for some reason, they cannot show themselves to others etc. (Nishimura 2006, 15-16). Finally, he concludes that it is only a pattern of behavior appropriate to the situation creating a possibility of surviving (Nishimura 2006, 5).

At the turn of the 1970s and 1980s, the Japanese (and above all the psychiatrists) began to be interested in one of the forms of "being outside the area of social interactions" characteristic for the modern times (Shirai 2004, 112). In the early 1980s, the Japanese psychiatrist Hiroshi Inamura, in this context, began to use a term: *Shishunki Zasetu Shōkōgun* (Adolescent Setback Symptoms), to refer to the school phobia, student apathy and work phobia. At the end of the

1980s, another Japanese psychiatrist Yomishi Kasahara, in this context, began to use a term: *Taikyaku Shinkeishō* (Retreat Neurosis), to refer to the situation that for a long time, one skips school and does not take paid work (Fogel and Kawai 2006, 1-2; Hirashima 2001, 261; Saitō 2006, 69-70). Finally, in the 1980s, currently recognized in Japan as a leading specialist in this field, the psychiatrist Tamaki Saitō began to be interested in this and, in this context, began to use a term: *Shakaiteki Hikikomori* (Social Withdrawal) (Saitō 2006; Saitō 2013).

Tamaki Saitō defined in his book written in the psychiatric perspective, and entitled: *Shakaiteki Hikikomori. Owaranai Shishunki* (The *Shakaiteki Hikikomori*. Never-ending Adolescence) a problem being at the center of my scientific interests - the *Shakaiteki Hikikomori* as follows:

“It is a state that by the end of 20th century, became a [social - ed. K.K.] problem that comes down to that, that for the most of time, one stays at home, and for more than 6 months, it functions outside the area of social interactions. It is difficult to diagnose other psychological problems that could be its main source” (Saitō cited in *Kōseirōdōshō* (The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare), 4; Saitō 2006, 25; Saitō 2013, 24).

More precisely, one to whom it concerns resigns from the participation in the social life and in all the social activities - it does not study (in any institution), it does not work, and it limits its activity primarily to the home (Furlong 2008, 309; Kuramoto and Ōtake 2005, 31; Miyake 2005, 26; Shiokura cited in Kaneko 2006, 233; Shwalb et al. 2010, 370; Suwa and Hara 2007, 94; Suwa and Suzuki 2013, 191; Tateno et al. 2012, 1; Teo and Graw cited in Krieg 2014, 18; Uchida 2010, 95). This is not a mental illness or disorder. Nevertheless, among those whom it concerns are the cases that are difficult to find any mental problems, as well as the cases suffering from the variety of mental illness and / or disorders that usually are secondary (Miyake 2005, 26; Ogino 2004, 121; Suwa and Hara 2007, 94-100; Suwa and Suzuki 2013, 191, 193-194; Tanaka 2001, 37; Uchida 2010, 95).

Considering that the *Shakaiteki Hikikomori* is not a mental illness or disorder, in my opinion, it can be dressed in other scientific categories, including the sociological categories. Hence, it can be defined, for instance: as an example or a form of one of five types of adaptation to the situation of anomie named by the American sociologist Robert K. Merton: “retreatism” (Kalita and Uesugi 2009, 57-59; Kalita, “*Shakaiteki Hikikomori*”, Kosewski 1985, 60; Merton 1938; Merton 1968; Merton 2002; Murphy and Robinson 2008, 7; Pospiszyl 2009, 31; Siemaszko 1993, 42-44).

Robert K. Merton defined retreatism as follows:

“These are those who run their existence eating a little, sleeping a lot, and not trying to create everyday patterns of their live that they would be able to accept. Basically being passive, they run it in a corner and being alienated from the broadest social values” (Merton cited in Kosewski 1985, 60).

2. THE THEORETICAL BASIS

For the needs of my research, I assumed that the *Shakaiteki Hikikomori* is an example or a form of the retreatism because it fulfills its criteria:

1. The *Hikikomori* people reject culturally defined goals;
2. The *Hikikomori* people reject culturally sanctioned means;
3. The *Hikikomori* people for a long time, live outside the area of social interactions;
4. The *Hikikomori* people lead from the perspective of society a nonproductive life;
5. The *Hikikomori* people burden society;
6. Many of the *Hikikomori* people think about death, and some of them try to commit suicide.

Next, I briefly described the Japanese society and culture. Describing its social structure, I referred to the Japanese sociologist Kenji Hashimoto's concept of social diversity (Hashimoto 2000). While describing its cultural structure, I pointed out that the two cultural orders are overlapping each other in Japan: a tradition [In this context, I discussed problems such as: Collectivism, *Wa* (Harmony), *Uchi & Soto*, *Honne* (Public Expression) & *Tatamae* (Private Thoughts / Feelings), *Jōge* (Hierarchy), *On* (Social Debt) & *Giri* (Obligation), *Chū* (Loyalty) and *Menboku* (Face) that allowed me to create an idea of the cultural ideal of a Japanese person, and its desirable attributes and patterns of social behavior] and the new cultural trends [In this context, I discussed the statistical surveys of the *Tōkeisūrikenkyūsho* (The Institute of Statistical Mathematics) entitled: *Nihonjin no Kokuminsei Chōsa* (The Research on the National Character), *Kojinteki Taido* (Individual Attitudes) (*Tōkeisūrikenkyūsho*, n.d.)].

Finally, I divided, and described the three main areas of socialization and social activity in Japan that have an impact on the psycho-social development and human life activity:

1. The Family Environment [Problems such as: the Traditional Family, its Structure and Functions, the Contemporary Family, its Structure, Functions and Crisis, and Domestic Violence];
2. The School Environment [Problems such as: the Education System and the Phenomena Specific to It such as: Credentialism, *Esukare-ta- Shiki* (Escalator Formula), *Juken Jigoku* (Examination Hell) or *Ijime* (Bullying), and the Dark Side of Socialization Process in it and the Phenomena Specific to It such as: *Futōkō* (School Nonattendance) or Suicides];
3. The Labor Market and Work Environment [Problems such as: the Labor Market and Employment Practices in the Post-war Socio-economic Transformation Period, the Labor Market Structure, the Meaning of

Work, the Rules of Selection on the Labor Market, Women in the Labor Market, Work Culture, the *Sarari-man's* (Salaryman's) Rhythm of Day and Life Style, the Social Costs of Work, *Pawa-Hara* (Mobbing)].

3. THE METHODOLOGICAL BASIS

While constructing my research, in order to collect the research material, I decided to choose: a qualitative methodological approach, a fieldwork research method, and a nondirective interview research technique with the dispositions that were limited to the three areas of exploration: The Family Life, The Experiences from the School, and The Experiences from the Labor Market and Workplace.

Regarding my choice of a research sample, I decided to choose a purposive sampling. Its criteria were as follows:

1. The people who ever have been / currently are *Hikikomori* people;
2. The people about whom the people and / or institutions providing help and support to the *Hikikomori* people can certify that they really have been / are *Hikikomori* people;
3. The people who are able to take part in my research - to give me an interview, and to conduct the conversations about their personal experiences. In other words, the people who already went through / are in a resocialization process who significantly improved.

In order to collect the research material, I planned to conduct the interviews with 20 *Hikikomori* people. Nevertheless, I managed to conduct more of them:

1. 24 interviews with the *Hikikomori* people - 4 women and 20 men (3 women and 19 men), between 22-45 years old (26-45 years old) (Due to the amount of research material insufficient for the analysis, I was forced to reject 2 of them);
2. In addition, 3 interviews with the mothers of *Hikikomori* people;
3. In addition, 4 interviews with the *Hikikomori* experts.

I collected the research material in 2012-2014 (I conducted the vast majority of interviews between July and September 2013), in Japan, in Tōkyō, in:

1. Two institutions providing help and support to the *Hikikomori* people;
2. In addition, in the virtual space. (Exchanging the e-mails, "Skype" conversations and chat room conversations).

4. THE RESEARCH RESULTS

The quintessence of the retreatism process comes down in the examined group of *Hikikomori* people to the certain number of accidents overlapping each other that became the stimulus activating and deactivating the control mechanisms (external and internal) and the retreatism mechanisms controlling the actions of a human-unit. There was a kind of decision-making process in it. In other words, its bond with the society and out-

side world did not break off suddenly, but gradually, step by step (Kalita, "Shakaiteki Hikikomori", 262).

The retreatism process was divided in the examined group of *Hikikomori* people into five stages:

1. The Transitional Stage;
2. The Ascending Stage;
3. The Real Retreatism Stage;
4. The Climax Stage;
5. The Descending Stage (Kalita, "Shakaiteki Hikikomori", 262-359).

4.1. The Transitional Stage

In the Transitional Stage, the society, and hence the parents, the teachers and the closest surroundings seemed to know what is best for a human-unit. It put on it a strong pressure to achieve the culturally defined goals using the culturally sanctioned means and to respond to its expectations.

The human-unit still was a conformist. It listened to the signals coming to it from the society and outside world. Its sensitivity let it *Kūki wo Yomu* (read the atmosphere from the air). In other words, the pressure without words reached it. At the same time, it suppressed in itself its own feelings and needs. Even if it could independently make the decisions about itself and its life, it perfectly well knew what other expected from it. It owed to them the *On* and the *Giri*, and usually it chose not what it in the depths of its heart wished, but what others expected from it.

In order to deal with the social pressure, the examined Hikikomori people used different strategies.

Finally, some signals began to appear, and indicate that as a result of pressure on achieving the culturally defined goals, while there was lack of resources necessary to achieve them, the retreatism mechanisms built into it in a case of failure began to start up. It began to lose the bond with society and outside world, it began to become a retreated human-unit, it began to become a *Hikikomori* person.

The first symptoms of retreatism of the examined Hikikomori people were:

- Difficulties in carrying out even the most basic duties;
- The growing sense of being abandoned with their problems and struggles, and the growing sense of loneliness (Kalita, "Shakaiteki Hikikomori", 263-286).

4.2. The Ascending Stage

In the Ascending Stage, the protection of human-unit against destruction became a priority. The internal control mechanisms began to weaken in it in the favor of retreatism mechanisms. In turn, these turned it in the social machine into the deactivation state. It completely gave up achieving the culturally defined goals.

The examined Hikikomori people completely gave up studying at school, working, and even such prosaic activities as going to the library or to the shop.

It completely broke the bond with society and outside world and became a “man away from the society”.

The examined Hikikomori people completely broke the bond even with people who for the longest time were interested in them, and their fate (Kalita, "Shakaiteki Hikikomori", 286-289).

4.3. The Real Retreatism Stage

In the Real Retreatism Stage, the human-unit had a sense of failure. The internal control mechanisms were completely deactivated in it. What is more, it itself was kept completely deactivated, and it did not achieve any culturally defined goals.

The examined Hikikomori people did not study (in any institution), and did not work. It remained completely cut off from the society and outside world.

The examined Hikikomori people since they were afraid to meet anyone (If they did not have the good relationship with the household members - even them), as far as it is possible, usually did not leave the home. As a consequence, many of them were isolated, not only from the society and outside world, but even at home from the family.

Time stopped for it, and its psycho-social development stopped. Thus, it obtained a chance to take a rest from the pressure (external and internal).

The examined Hikikomori people:

- Were completely cut off from their previous life;
- Were subdued, sluggish, paralyzed, as if they were depressed. They lacked the energy to do anything, and even to live. It looked like a laziness, but it was not.

Nevertheless, in a sleep mode, as much as possible it tried to lead a “normal life”.

The examined Hikikomori people:

- Woke up, got up, got dressed, cooked, ate, slept, filled time with something, let's call it: “pleasant”, something that could be done alone, in the comfort of home, in the room, usually something like: watching television, listening to music, playing games, reading books or independent learning etc. Some of them left the home, surfed the internet, dealt with gambling, consumed stimulants (especially alcohol), dreamed etc. Nevertheless, they did not enjoy filling time this way. Rather it was just a form of escaping from the awareness of failure - they could not think about it. As one examined expert taking care of and supporting the Hikikomori people has told me: “For them, the days are very long, while the years flow quickly.”;

- Many of them had a tendency to reverse day and night;
- If they already have encountered the people who tried to interact with them, sometimes they were a threat to them;
- Over the time, some of them began to have the symptoms of mental illnesses and / or disorders.

Since for a long time, it was kept in the deactivation state, in order to bring it to the order, the external control mechanisms began to be activated.

The external control mechanisms:

1. The Parents

(They went through three stages: 1. The Anger Stage, 2. The Worrying Stage, 3. The Helplessness and Hopelessness Stage);

2. *The Siblings;*

3. *The Relatives and Neighbors.*

In response to the external control mechanisms, the retreatism mechanisms intensified in it their activity. Over time, due to the lack of effectiveness, the external control mechanisms became deactivated (Kalita, "Shakaiteki Hikikomori", 289-314).

4.4. The Climax Stage

In the Climax Stage, for a long time, the retreatism mechanisms kept the control mechanisms (external and internal) and the human-unit itself deactivated. The retreatism reached an apogee.

The examined Hikikomori people:

- *Could not concentrate on anything, and could not do anything;*
- *Could not communicate with other people. (The most drastic cases lost their speaking skills);*
- *Some of them were not able to step out of the home or even the room. (In the most drastic cases, in some moments, even not able to go to the bathroom or to the toilet);*
- *Some of them were not able to eat;*
- *Some of them seemed to have been mentally ill;*
- *It was so hard for them that often they felt that it would be better for them to die, that it would be better for them to disappear from this world;*
- *Some of them wanted to hurt themselves (i.a. to cut their veins etc.), and some of them really did it;*
- *Some of them tried to commit suicide.*

It is said that, "It is necessary to fall completely to the bottom, in order to bounce off it..."

The human-unit already has somewhat rested from the pressure (external and internal) exerted on it, thus the internal control mechanisms again began to be activated in it.

The examined Hikikomori people:

- *Began to have the compulsive thoughts - they wondered what was happening to them, what happened in their lives, what led them to this. They criticized themselves for "not being able to manage in the society and outside world" Because of this, they felt shame and anger. They could not accept who they became. How they lived did not seem normal to them;*
- *Their emotions began to explode. (Usually it meant that their condition had begun to improve, that it was a turning point);*
- *They realized that it can no longer be like this;*
- *In order to somehow get out of this, they began to make the effort.*

The external control mechanisms began to start up.

In order to somehow get out them of this, the parents of examined Hikikomori people again began to make the effort (Kalita, "Shakaiteki Hikikomori", 315-326).

4.5. The Descending Stage

In the Descending Stage, the internal control mechanisms increasingly stimulated the human-unit to re-establish the bond with society and outside world, and to return to achieving the culturally defined goals. At the same time, the retreatism mechanisms that until now protected it from the operations of control mechanisms (external and internal), as well as from the awareness of failure, weakened, and finally, became deactivated. Time again began to flow for it.

The examined Hikikomori people looked for some help. Nevertheless, their contact with the people and the institutions providing help and support to the Hikikomori people took place on the basis of trial and errors.

It re-established the bond with society and outside world, and began to desire to achieve the culturally defined goals.

The return to the society and outside world, and to achieving these goals required time - lasted / lasts years, and took / takes place step by step, in stages, in order reversed to the retreatism process.

The examined Hikikomori people:

- Had to learn to leave their home again;
- Had to learn communication again;
- Had to re-establish relationships with other people again;
- Had to learn to build, and maintain relationships with other people again;
- Finally, they began to have a need to re-establish the bond with "real society", a need to become independent, and a need to achieve the culturally defined goals.

Nevertheless, society is constructed in such a way that if one once completely gives up achieving the culturally defined goals, and completely breaks its bond with it, its re-establishment, and the return to achieving these goals becomes very difficult. Its social competences have been reduced or even lost. Until now it functioned without it. Finally, it has nowhere to come back to.

The examined Hikikomori people:

- Tried to get benefits, however since they were not sick, it was very difficult;
- Faced problems with insurance;
- Faced problems with renting a flat;
- Faced problems with finding, and doing work.

Due to the created distance, it never may join it again...

The examined Hikikomori people wished themselves a full return to the "real society" and outside world, as well as to achieving the culturally defined goals, but often ended at the stage of dreams (Kalita, "Shakaiteki Hikikomori", 326-359).

4.6. The Returns to the Retreatism

The human-unit completely or at least largely went through a resocialization process. It established the bond, if not with the "real society", at least with the "Hikikomori society". It, if not fully, at least partially is achieving the culturally defined goals using the culturally sanctioned means. Nevertheless, it does not feel completely happy with all of this...

- Only one examined Hikikomori person declared that it excludes a possibility of returning to the retreatism;
- Most of them declared that they do not wish it, but they cannot exclude it;
- Many of them admitted that it had already happened to them;
- 4-5 years have passed since our interviews, but in the lives of many of them nothing has changed... (Kalita, "Shakaiteki Hikikomori", 359-365).

5. THE LIVE STORY OF YASUMICHI AS THE EXAMPLE OF A HIKIKOMORI-RETREATISM PROCESS SCENARIO

The Profile of Yasumichi

Soon Yasumichi will become 40 years old. Nevertheless, for his age, he looks, and behaves surprisingly young, like a student. He comes from a new middle class urban family. He is a son of *Sarariman* and *Shufu* (professional housewife), and a *Chōnan* (the eldest son in family) - he has a younger sister. He describes himself as a *Donkusai* (a klutz), and slightly unconventional, making bloopers, shy and obedient person who despite always being slightly outstanding, rather falls within the limits of social norms.

The Life of Yasumichi before the Retreatism

Until the end of lower secondary school, Yasumichi was a type of a *Gariben* (a nerdy student). Never being admonished by his parents and others, he always invested a lot of time for studying, and he did not allow himself to do something else. He always received good grades. What is more, he always did, what his parents and others asked him for, he never protested, and he also never had any doubts that he should be a person they wished. As he says, he was a good child, i.e. since he met their expectations with the surplus, he was a good child for his parents and others.

When he graduated from the lower secondary school, since he studied well, his parents decided to send him to a very good upper secondary school. He passed the entrance exams, and he felt that he achieved something.

The Transitional Stage

Being convinced that he is someone special, Yasumichi began studying in the upper secondary school. Nevertheless, at this level, he became just an average student. Since he did not receive the grades he wished, he felt frustrated. He began to get an impression that studying no longer makes sense to him, that he is trying to do something above his capabilities, and that he stops being a kind of person his parents expect from him. Finally, for the first time in his life, he has felt that there is in him a different man, than the one he knows.

Around the 2nd grade, he became unable to make friends. Around the 3rd grade, he became unable to talk to anyone. What is more, he began to go through the Rebellion Period. He thought a lot, and at the same time, he tried to get rid of all

his ideas and dreams. His parents constantly encouraging him to study, effectively “supported” him in this. He managed to graduate the upper secondary school, and he passed the entrance exams to the university.

Nevertheless, over time, he began to face difficulties with waking up and getting up. Since he was not able to attend the morning classes, and during the other classes, he was not able to acquire knowledge, he began to face difficulties to obtain credits. Finally, he had to repeat the year. He felt guilty that he had betrayed the expectations of his parents, and his parents, since they allocated a large part of their incomes to his tuition, were angry at him. They believed that he should do nothing, but just concentrate on studying. *Jigou Jitoku* (He reached conclusion that he owes himself). Around the middle of university, he completely began to avoid contact with others.

The Ascending Stage

Since in the middle of 3rd grade, Yasumichi was not able to finish a report, he could not continue studying, and he became a *Futōkō*. He left the house, and he pretended to go to the classes, but in fact, he rode trains around the city without any aim. Finally, he completely stopped attending these classes. Since no one was interested in this, he began to feel that everyone had forgotten about him. He again had to repeat the year. When his parents found out it, he asked them to let him quit the university. Nevertheless, they pressed him to graduate it. As a part of a compromise, for 2 years, he took a dean’s leaver.

When his time was over, his parents realized that even if he will return to the university, nothing can help him. After the failures, he could not redefine himself, he completely lost his confidence, and he stopped leaving the house.

The Real Retreatism Stage

Since Yasumichi quitted studying until he joined therapy, as he says, his life was completely devastated. He was almost unable to leave the house (even if sometime he left it, it was late in the evening or at night), he was almost unable to do anything, he reversed day and night, and sometime, for few days, he did not take a bath or shower etc. What is more, he was constantly arguing with his parents who thought he has bad habits, and that he is lazy. They could not accept that he in the middle of the way gave up the university. They believed that since others somehow can manage with the problems of everyday life, he also should, and they threatened him that they will kick out him of the house. Nevertheless, as time passed, they stopped exerting the pressure on him.

The Climax Stage

For 2 years, Yasumichi, as he says, lived like a hermit. Finally, he reached conclusion that the only thing he can do is to die. At the same time, in order to find some help for him, his parents began to browse books and newspapers.

The Descending Stage

After trial and errors, Yasumichi began to attend therapy. After around 2 years, he began to establish communication and relationships with employees and other *Hikikomori* people, and then take part in various activities. Despite the guilt that his parents pay for everything, he began to feel relaxed, he began to regain confidence, and he began to feel that he is seeking improvement. After another 2 years, he reached conclusion that it is time for him to pay for his pleasures by himself. 2-3 days for a week, he began to do minor odd jobs in the places where no one asks about a biography, where are no high demands, in places where teenagers and students work.

The Returns to the Retreatism

Despite the fact that Yasumichi already is in his years, he does not have experience that other people in his age have, that other people expect from him to have. What is more, he is slowly learning to work. Sometimes, he cannot manage with work and soon quits it. It is difficult to live for him in the society where, due to the gaps in the life, he is unable to do what everyone else is doing. Thus, he is not convinced that without any breakdowns, he can manage life. Nevertheless, as he says, even if the wind will blow in the opposite direction, he would like to somehow maintain (Kalita, "Shakaiteki Hikikomori", 262-454).

CONCLUSION

In this publication I presented a fragment of the results of my doctoral thesis, in which I described a problem being at the center of my scientific interests - the *Shakaiteki Hikikomori* in Japan. More specifically, in this publication I presented the retreatism process of *Hikikomori* people.

On the following pages, I presented its definition - a proposal of the Japanese psychiatrist Tamaki Saitō who, broadly speaking, assumes that it is a kind of state that comes down to that, that for the most of time, one stays at home, and for more than 6 months, it functions outside the area of social interactions, and it is difficult to diagnose other psychological problems that could be its main source, as well as its own proposal that, broadly speaking, assumes that it is an example or a form of one of five types of adaptation to the situation of anomie named by the American sociologist Robert K. Merton - "retreatism".

Next, I presented the theoretical basis of my research.

Next, I presented the methodological basis of my research.

Next, I presented the results of my research - after explaining, that the quintessence of the retreatism process comes down in the examined group of *Hikikomori* people to the certain number of accidents overlapping each other that became the stimulus activating and deactivating their control mechanisms (external and internal) and their retreatism mechanisms controlling their actions that there was a kind of decision-making process in them, that their bond with

society and outside world did not break off suddenly, but gradually, step by step, I briefly discussed its five stages:

1. The Transitional Stage;
2. The Ascending Stage;
3. The Real Retreatism Stage;
4. The Climax Stage;
5. The Descending Stage.

Finally, in order to illustrate it, I presented The Life Story of Yasumichi.

Considering that I conducted my research on a relatively small research sample, its results require verification on a larger research sample. Nevertheless, since some regularities emerge from my description, in the future, it may become the basis for the development of The *Hikikomori*-retreatism Theoretical Model that may become useful in practice:

1. To take preventive actions;
2. To diagnose cases;
3. And to undertake the resocialization activities, according to the retreatism stage.

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