

Graduate School of Science and Technology Master's Thesis Abstract

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Thesis title	Therapeutic Applications of Video Games on Hikikomori Resocialization		
Abstract			
<p>Extreme social isolation (hikikomori) is a growing concern worldwide. Though researchers have suggested that some video games may aid in hikikomori socialization, no research has actively investigated which game elements might be useful towards this goal. Given this gap, this thesis investigated possible relationships between the hikikomori condition and gaming preferences of hikikomori players through quantitative and qualitative approaches, to propose gaming elements that might be used in game-based interventions. In a quantitative study, 587 Japanese participants answered surveys that employed the HEXAD and Game Traits Scales, measuring gaming preferences and motivations. Results found that hikikomori risk was negatively associated with socialization and challenge preferences in video games, even after controlling for age, gender, and extraversion. A qualitative study divided 529 Japanese participants into High Hikikomori Risk (H-NHR) and Low Hikikomori Risk (L-NHR) groups. Open-ended questions explored favorite games and attitudes toward single-player, multiplayer, and online games. Thematic analysis revealed that H-NHR players reported more negative player interactions in non-single player games, preferred cooperative over competitive gameplay, and mentioned action, adventure, and strategic elements frequently. Based on these results, key game design features that could be useful in game-based interventions to support hikikomori players in overcoming social withdrawal were summarized. A proof-of-concept Location-Based RPG game was developed to encourage hikikomori players to venture outside and engage with their surroundings, thus gradually re-entering social lifestyles.</p>			