Exploring Hikikomori's information needs in Japanese context

: applying a narrative inquiry approach with their dialogues

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Starting/Introduction

- Interested in finding the reason why Japanese **hikikomori youths are not able to go out from home** from the perspective of IB studies

- There is **disconnection between information need and information behavior** among Japanese hikikomori youths.

- Focusing **on identifying negative factors of disconnection between their information needs and** its consequences **information behavior.**
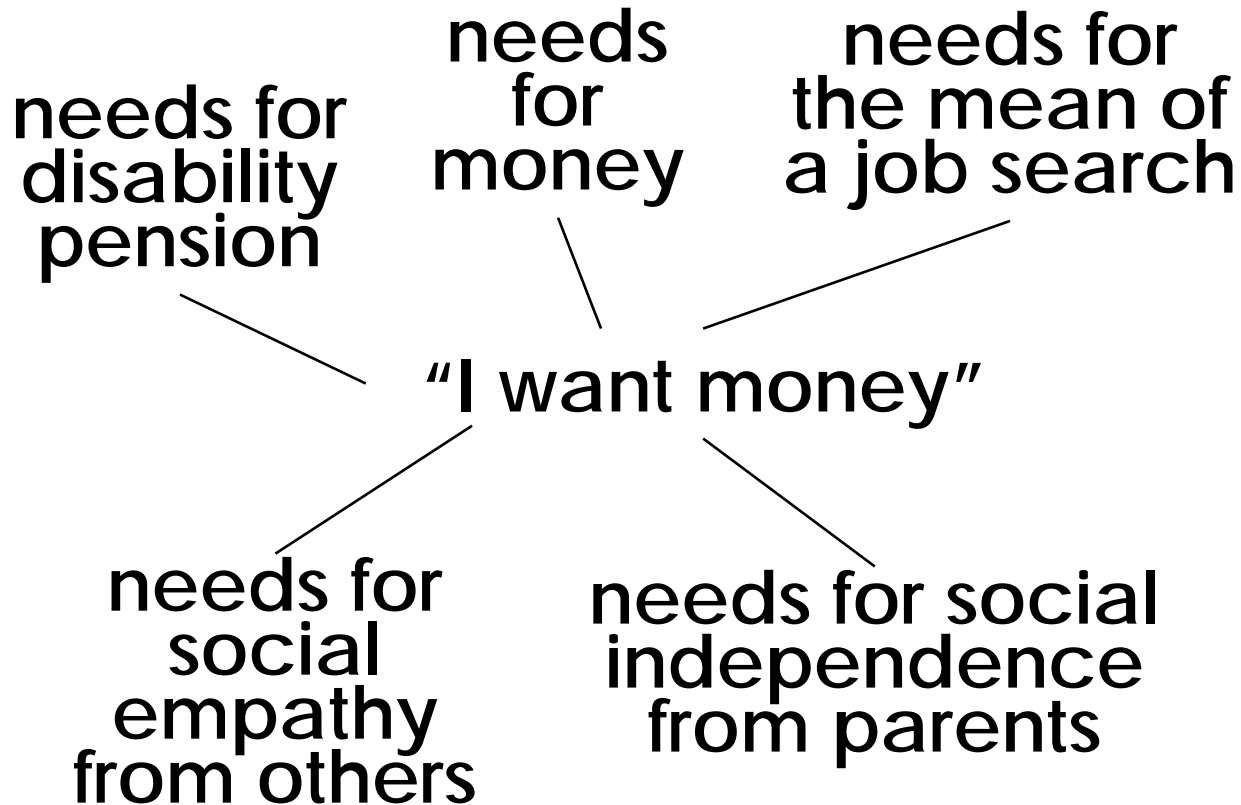
Background/Problem

- **Analyzed messages** posted by hikikomori users **in an online message board** in both countries by using **content analysis method.**

- Came across **the difficulty in pinpointing an exact information need from their dialogues in non-question format**.

- Frequently used an indirect and euphemistic expression with a non-question format when they asked someone and expressed the needs.

Desire vs. Need

Different situations/contexts of information seekers

Prefer to use an indirect and euphemistic expression

needs for disability pension

needs for money

needs for the mean of a job search

"I want money"

needs for social empathy from others

needs for social independence from parents

Assumption:

"Desire" is information needs in Japanese context

Purpose

The Purpose is two folds:

① to **identify "desire-based" information need of hikikomori youths** from their dialogues and comments

② to **describe how and why such "desire-based" information needs negatively impact on motivation for keeping staying in home** and disconnect from social participations.

Methods

- Based on the empirical data set consisting of 200 discussion threads containing 200, 000 messages posted to the "Hikkyin2ch" (https://matsuri.2ch.net/hikky)

- **selected 10 cases of dialogue in text format** previously categorized as "economic problem" and "social relationship"

- Data-set was analyzed by utilizing **narrative inquiry approach** (Riessman, 2008)

- Each dialogue was analyzed by taking both **thematic and structural analysis** approaches.

Findings

① There are **several subjects of information needs** in dialogue, these **information needs developed and even changed** as dialogue goes.

② Their **information needs has moved from at an implicit/indirect level to specific/direct level** or vice versa.

③ their **information need could not facilitate information behaviors** for gaining useful information in hikikomori context. even though information needs developed in dialogue.

CASE#1 FAMILY RELATIONSHIP:

- **Q:** _How do you explain about your hikikmori condition to your parents? (1)_ _I cannot tell my parents that I an unable to go out from house because I am so social phobia, so scared of communicating with people. Hikikomori condition is kind of same situation as a bully in school, which he/she is too embarrassed to say that_

- **(Continued):** _If my parents understand my hikikomori condition and the reason why I am so attached with a home, I can ask my parents if I can go to an alternative school(2)._

- **A:** _You should tell hikikomori condition to your parents honestly, or your parents possibly misunderstand what you want your parents to know about your hikikomori condition._

Needs:
- To receive parents' understanding of hikikomori situation---(1) direct needs
- To go to an alternative school---(2) direct needs
- To build good relationship with parents---(2') indirect needs
- To receive economic/financial support to go to an alternative school---(2') indirect needs
- To become social independence by learning something in an alternative school---(2')indirect needs
- To give some advices for social phobia and for building a relationship with other people ---(2''')more indirect needs

Possible information needs in context:
- The information about how to build good relationship with parents
- The information need for solution to social phobia and communication skill

CASE#1 FAMILY RELATIONSHIP:

Q: How do you explain about

Need for approval/understandings

parents that I an unable to go out

Need for family relationship

communicating with people

Need for financial support

same situation as a bully in school, which he/she just

Need for becoming social independence

(Continued): If my parents
understand

Need for solution to social phobia

condition *am so attached with a home. I can*
ask my parent

Need for social relationship with other people

alternatives

A: You should tell hikikomori

Need for educating himself

possibly misunderstand what you
want your parents to know
about your hikikomori condition.

Needs:

To receive parents' understanding of hikikomori situation---(1) direct needs

- To go to an alternative school---(2) direct needs
- To build good relationship with parents---(2') indirect needs
- To receive economic/financial support to go to an alternative school---(2') indirect needs
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Possible information needs in context:
The information about how to build good relationship with parents
- The information need for solution to social phobia and communication skill

Case#2 Economic problem:

Q: I want to work (1) and I asked my parents to give me a spending money (2) before getting a job. But they said that they did not want to give me a money because I did not have any jobs. My parents do not understand what I am saying(3) that I need money first because I do not have job now(2).

A: If you need money, you have to find a job first.

Reply to an answer above: You really do not understand my situation. (3) I need money first because I do not have a job to earn money(2).

Needs:

- Working/ getting a job ---(1) direct needs
- Spending money as a fund (or working capital) for a job searching ---(2) direct needs
- Understanding of his/her economic/financial situation and problem that a person who are in Hikikomori-situation are facing. ---(3) indirect needs
- To become social independence from parents ---(3′) more indirect needs

Possible information needs in context:

- General knowledge about an economic problem that a child in hikikomori-situation is facing or/and will face in near future (for parents who have a child in hikikomori situation)
- Information about how to find a job and where to get it in order to achieve social independence (for the hikikomori)

Case#2 Economic problem:

Need for working

...me a spending money (2)
...before getting a job. But...

Need for understanding from parents

...because I did not have any
job. My parents do not
understand what I am
saying (3) that I need
money fir...
...not have...

Need for social independence

A: If you need money, you
have to find a job first.

Reply to an answer above:
You really do not...

Need for financial support before getting work

job to earn money(2).

Needs:

- Working/ getting a job ---(1) direct needs
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Discussion

- there are **indirect information needs that are actually hiding** behind the text.

- these information needs do not simply hind but these **indirect information needs develop and shape** the strategy, what we may call it **project for information.**

- their **information need could not facilitate information behaviors** for gaining useful information in hikikomori context.

- it is possibility that **a narrative analysis have an potential to become a analytical tool** to understand such desire-based, indirect information need

Thank you very much for your listening!

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If you have any questions please feel free to contact me through my email address!

Q & A