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Mobile-phone addiction in teenagers may cause severe psychological disorders

Medical Studies/Trials

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Such a harmless and common object in our society represents a real problem for four in ten young adults in Spain, for whom their mobile phone has turned into an addiction that can lead them to consequences as dangerous as those caused by alcohol or drugs.

That is the conclusion reached by Francisca Lopez Torrecillas, lecturer at the department of Personality and Psychological Assessment and Treatment of the [University of Granada \(UGR\)](#) and an expert in psychological addictions, who carried out a fieldwork among several hundreds of 18 to 25-year-old young adults from the city of Granada.

UGR professor warns of the danger that 40 % of young adults admit using their mobile phones during more than four hours a day. Most of them state that they spend "several hours a day", using their phones, be it talking, sending text messages or giving the so-called missed or drop calls. Many of these people take a real offence at not getting a missed call or a message answered, which makes them feel "deeply upset and sad".

Lopez Torrecillas highlights that this addiction is the result of social changes occurred in the last decade. The main

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difference between this kind of addiction and alcoholism or drug-addiction is that mobile phones do not apparently cause physical effects, but psychological ones.

"Mobile-addicts can be seriously affected at the psychological level but, as they don't show any physical symptoms, their disorder goes unnoticed to others", says the UGR professor.

Mobile-addicts tend to neglect obligations of important activities (e.g. job or studies), drift apart from friends and close family, deny the problem and think about the mobile phone constantly when they do not have it with them. "Most mobile-addicts are people with low self-esteem and problems to develop social relations, who feel the urge to be constantly connected and in contact with others."

Francisca Lopez Torrecillas says that these people "can become totally upset when deprived from their mobile phones for some time, regardless of the reason". "Switching off their phones causes them anxiety, irritability, sleep disorders or sleeplessness, and even shivering and digestive problems", points out the UGR professor.

Finding out whether your child is a mobile-addict is far from easy. "Someone can spend eight hours a day at their computer, or permanently hooked to their phones, and not being an addict. In the case of young people, many parents see this use as something normal, but they should control misuse", warns the professor.

Lopez Torrecillas states that making "a reasonable use" of mobile phones can be even positive for teenagers, "since it enables them to keep their friends near and feel backed by their peers", but misusing this device "can have irreversible effects on the development of teenagers' personality".

In fact, addiction to mobile phones should be included into a greater group - that of addiction to new technologies. "This is the result of the dramatic change in values taking place in our times. Likewise the hippy movement, a new generation of teenagers is arising and they have grown up surrounded by mobile phones and the Internet", says the author of this work, who highlights that part of the blame is to be put on "many parents who buy a mobile phone to their children and force them to have it constantly connected so as to always know where they are".

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