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Lifestyle

Our need for social contact could be the real reason so many of us are glued to our devices.



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(Photo by ROMAN ODINTSOV via Pexels)

It is not mobile phones we are addicted to but the social interaction they allow, a new study reveals.

Our need for social contact could be the real reason so many of us are glued to our devices according to researchers from the University of Granada (UGR).

Their study, published in the journal *Psicothema*, is the first evidence of this theory.

UGR scientists worked with 86 people who were divided into two groups to compare how people's psychological responses differed depending on how they interacted with their phones.

In the first group, called 'the social expectation group', each participant was told to send a message via WhatsApp to their most active contacts, explaining that they were going to participate in an exciting study in a virtual reality universe.

The second group, 'the control group', was not instructed to send a message to their contacts.

Next, all participants were asked to switch off their notifications and leave their mobile phones face down while they engaged in an activity in a virtual reality environment.



(Photo by cottonbro studio via Pexels)

Once the activity was over, the participants were still prevented from using their phones for a short while before being allowed to return to WhatsApp.

Throughout the experiment, the scientists measured the electrodermal activity of each participant's skin. This indicates anxiety.

Discussing the results, the lead author of the study Professor Jorge López Puga said: "We observed that the social expectation group was more tense throughout the experiment.

"We also found that this group became more anxious when they were asked to stop using their mobile phones.

"Moreover, when they were allowed to use their phones again, this group experienced a much higher level of emotional arousal."

Professor López Puga said that from these findings, the team determined that our affiliation with mobile phones is linked to the way they enable us to interact with others, rather than with the phones themselves.

"The results show that mobile phones are not the cause of psychological problems," he said.

"Instead, how and why the devices are used can better explain certain psychological problems."

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