

Women More Prone to Smartphone Addiction, 1 in 4 Teenagers Addicted to Smartphones

Women are twice as likely as men to become addicted to their smartphones, a study suggests.

According to the survey by Kim Dae-jin at St. Mary's Hospital in Seoul, the rate of smartphone addiction among women was 17.9 percent as against just 9.4 percent for men. Kim and his team surveyed 4,854 people between 19 and 49 in December 2014.

Researchers asked survey takers over a dozen questions, such as whether they experienced declining grades in school or work performance due to excessive smartphone use.

Women tended to be more prone to smartphone addiction because they were keener to communicate and build social relationships using their handsets.

"Women appear to display a stronger tendency to maintain relationships with others through social media," Kim said.

The study showed a smartphone addiction rate of 16 percent among women in their 20s, compared to 13.9 percent and 8.7 percent among women in their 30s and 40s. Younger women tended to be more adept at using their smart devices and more of them were unemployed, giving them more time to use their smartphones.

People who were more prone to depression and anxiety tended to grow addicted to their smartphones in order to escape from reality.

A researcher in Kim's team said, "Once addicted to smartphones, a vicious cycle develops where a person lives in a virtual world leading to decreased person-to-person contacts and worsened depression."

One in four juveniles and one in three middle schoolchildren in Korea could be at risk of addiction to their smartphone, experiencing withdrawal symptoms when they do not have the gadget to hand.

A survey for the Ministry of Science, ICT and Future Planning categorized some 25.5 percent of youngsters between 10 and 19 as at risk. That is 7.1 percentage points more than last year and more than double the 11.4 percent in 2011.

The survey was conducted among 15,564 people aged 10-54 across the country. It showed that altogether 11.8 percent of all smartphone users are at risk of addiction.

Middle schoolchildren topped the list at 29.3 percent, followed by high schoolers (23.6 percent) and elementary schoolchildren (22.6 percent).

Some 2.4 percent of juveniles are categorized as high risk, using their phones for 5.4 hours a day on average, as against 4.1 hours for all smartphone users.

The juveniles mainly use services like messenger app KakaoTalk (27.2 percent), Facebook (15.5 percent), and mobile games (14.8 percent).