

## **One in 10 teens addicted to internet, survey finds (SCMP, 28/05/2011)**

By Thomas Chan

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More than one in 10 teenagers qualify as being addicted to the internet, a survey by a youth welfare group has found.

Symptoms include staying online night after night and avoiding face-to-face contact with people other than via internet messaging.

Wan Lap-man of the Hong Kong Playground Association, which conducted the survey, said the major reasons for internet addiction were the attractiveness of the internet to young people and their lack of self-discipline.

The study sampled 1,297 teenagers and young adults in Hong Kong and Macau and found 12 per cent of those under the age of 24, or about 220,000, had developed addictions.

In Hong Kong alone, 11 per cent of the young people interviewed, or about 200,000, were addicted to the internet. The survey shows that 60 per cent of the teenage addicts think that the internet is helpful to their lives in all aspects including family relationships, social networking and study. Sixteen per cent of the youngsters aged 11 or below were addicted, the largest category when compared with other age groups in the survey.

Among activities carried out online by the surveyed teenagers, more than 82 per cent, or about 1,000, use the internet to interact with people or check on them through social network websites, chat rooms and message boards. The organisation says the internet has become the most important tool used by teenagers for communicating with one another.

Computer games are another temptation that keeps the teenagers wedded to a computer screen.

I once spent three sleepless nights playing online games at a cyber cafe. I slept when I

felt fully exhausted, said one 19-year-old former addict.

The best way for adults to deal with internet addiction among teenagers was to spend more time understanding their mentality and needs, said Wong Yin-wing, a social worker with the association.

Teenagers should be given positive reinforcement so they would know that it was not a problem for them to have face-to-face communication with people, Wong added.