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# Mobile Phone Ban and Students' Personal–Social Development in an Islamic Boarding School in Takalar

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**Abstract**. This study explores the implementation of a mobile phone ban and students' perceptions of its implications for personal and social development at MA Pesantren Tarbiyah Takalar, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, the study involved 12 informants selected through purposive sampling: eight students, two pesantren supervisors, and two teachers. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation, and analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that the policy is implemented through rule socialization, supervision, and persuasive guidance. Students described perceived benefits in daily discipline, time management, and self-control, including ways of managing boredom and emotions without relying on mobile phones. They also reported more opportunities for face-to-face interaction and shared activities with peers. Nevertheless, some students acknowledged that mobile phones remain useful for accessing information and meeting needs beyond the pesantren environment. These findings suggest that, in this particular setting, restricting mobile phone use may support aspects of students' personal and social development, although the contribution of the ban cannot be separated entirely from the pesantren's broader routines and guidance. The study highlights the importance of balancing disciplinary policies with structured digital literacy opportunities in Islamic boarding school education.

**Abstrak.** Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi pelaksanaan larangan penggunaan handphone dan persepsi santri mengenai implikasinya terhadap perkembangan pribadi dan sosial di MA Pesantren Tarbiyah Takalar, Sulawesi Selatan. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan melibatkan 12 informan yang dipilih secara purposive, terdiri atas delapan santri, dua pembina pesantren, dan dua guru. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi, dan dokumentasi, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan model Miles dan Huberman yang meliputi reduksi data, penyajian data, serta penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kebijakan diterapkan melalui sosialisasi aturan, pengawasan, dan pembinaan persuasif. Santri mengungkapkan manfaat yang dirasakan dalam kedisiplinan sehari-hari, pengelolaan waktu, dan pengendalian diri, termasuk dalam mengelola kebosanan dan emosi

tanpa bergantung pada handphone. Santri juga melaporkan adanya lebih banyak kesempatan untuk berinteraksi secara langsung dan melakukan kegiatan bersama teman sebaya. Meskipun demikian, beberapa santri mengakui bahwa handphone tetap bermanfaat untuk mengakses informasi dan memenuhi kebutuhan di luar lingkungan pesantren. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa pembatasan handphone dalam konteks pesantren yang diteliti berpotensi mendukung aspek perkembangan pribadi dan sosial santri, tetapi kontribusinya tidak dapat dipisahkan sepenuhnya dari rutinitas dan pembinaan pesantren secara keseluruhan. Penelitian ini menekankan pentingnya menyeimbangkan kebijakan disiplin dengan kesempatan literasi digital yang terarah.

## A. INTRODUCTION

The increasing integration of digital technology into everyday life has created new opportunities and challenges for educational institutions. Mobile phones provide access to information, communication, and learning resources; however, their uncontrolled use may also compete with students' attention, daily routines, and face-to-face interactions (Böttger & Zierer, 2024; Campbell, Lister, & Gillett-swan, 2024). In educational settings, therefore, the issue is not simply whether students should use mobile phones, but how access to technology can be regulated in ways that support learning, personal development, and social relationships (Munawwarah, Iskandar, & Rafiyah, 2022; Mundir & Nawiro, 2019). Debates on school phone policies have intensified internationally, with evidence remaining mixed regarding their effects on well-being and academic engagement (Böttger & Zierer, 2024; Campbell et al., 2024; Kessel, Hardardottir, & Tyrefors, 2020). These considerations are particularly relevant to Islamic boarding schools, where students' daily lives are organized around academic activities, religious practices, communal responsibilities, and interpersonal relationships (Ashoumi, Fauqa, Firdaus, & Shofiyani, 2026).

Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) have an educational tradition that emphasizes the development of knowledge, character, religious commitment, and communal life (Maryono, 2022; Salabi, 2025). Within this setting, personal and social development can be understood through students' ability to regulate their behavior, manage time and emotions, take responsibility for daily activities, and establish constructive relationships with others (Farihin & Khasani, 2023). Educational practices such as habituation, guidance, role modeling, and adherence to shared rules may contribute to these developmental processes(Maryono, 2022; Salabi, 2025). In the pesantren context, such practices are embedded in a cultural ecosystem where restrictions on digital communication media are understood not merely as prohibitions but as part of a broader domestication of technology (Senianto, 2026).

In Islamic education, these practices can be discussed in relation to *tarbiyah*, which emphasizes educational growth and guidance; *ta'dib*, which concerns the cultivation of proper conduct; and *tazkiyah*, which emphasizes moral and spiritual refinement. These concepts provide a contextual framework for examining how a mobile phone policy operates within the wider educational practices of a pesantren, rather than treating the policy as an isolated disciplinary measure (Abdalla, 2025; H. S. Anwar, Zarkasyi, Muslih, & Laila, 2025).

Previous studies have examined mobile phone restrictions and technology use from several perspectives. Research on restrictions in Islamic boarding schools has discussed the implementation of rules governing students' access to mobile phones and the relationship between such rules, social change, and student behavior (Arif, Haditia, Asroriah, & Fandiasy,

2024; Maskur & Yoafi, 2022). Other research has considered restrictions on mobile phone use in relation to students' learning focus (Purwanto, Jabbaar, Rifai, & Masyriqi, 2025), while studies of pesantren culture have emphasized the role of institutional routines and collective practices in supporting discipline and cooperation (Maryono, 2022; Salabi, 2025). Taken together, these studies indicate that mobile phone policies should be examined within the educational and social environments in which they are implemented. Nevertheless, findings concerning learning focus, discipline, or general technology use do not automatically explain how students themselves experience the implications of such policies for both personal and social development (Bar et al., 2025; Goodyear et al., 2026). International evidence on school phone bans remains inconclusive: some studies report modest academic gains (Kessel et al., 2020), while others find no significant differences in problematic phone use, academic engagement, or school belonging (King et al., 2024)

The relationship between mobile phone restrictions and student development also requires a balanced interpretation. Limiting access to personal devices may create more opportunities for participation in scheduled activities and direct interaction with peers (Böttger & Zierer, 2024; Campbell et al., 2024). However, the outcomes cannot necessarily be attributed to the restriction alone. In a pesantren, students' daily routines, religious practices, supervision, and shared responsibilities may also contribute to discipline and social cohesion (Sinthia, Nurulhaq, Rahman, & Masripah, 2020). Moreover, restricting personal access to mobile phones may reduce opportunities for students to independently access digital information and develop digital literacy if no structured alternatives are provided (Campbell et al., 2024). Critical perspectives have argued that blanket bans may overlook adolescents' need for autonomy, safety, and structured guidance in digital environments (Livingstone, 2026). Consequently, the educational significance of a mobile phone ban needs to be considered alongside the broader system of guidance and the opportunities available for students to learn responsible technology use (Gath, Monk, Scott, & Gillon, 2024).

Although previous research has addressed mobile phone restrictions, student discipline, and the educational role of pesantren, further context-specific analysis is needed to understand how students perceive the policy in relation to their personal and social lives (Campbell et al., 2024; Maskur & Yoafi, 2022). Qualitative studies of adolescents' perspectives on school phone restrictions highlight the need for autonomy, safety, and structure, suggesting that policy effects are mediated by how students interpret and experience the rules (Bisom-Rapp et al., 2026; Vereecke et al., 2026). In particular, the experiences of students should be considered alongside the perspectives of pesantren supervisors and teachers. This approach can help distinguish the perceived contribution of the mobile phone ban from the influence of the pesantren's wider routines and educational practices (Mupinga, 2017). It can also make visible students' differing experiences, including the perceived benefits of face-to-face interaction and the continuing usefulness of mobile phones for accessing information (R. K. Anwar, Komariah, & Rahman, 2017).

Against this background, this study examines the implementation of the mobile phone ban at MA Pesantren Tarbiyah Takalar, South Sulawesi, Indonesia, and explores students' perceived experiences of the policy in relation to personal and social development. Specifically, it addresses two research questions: (1) How is the mobile phone ban implemented at MA Pesantren Tarbiyah Takalar? and (2) How do students perceive the implications of the policy for their personal and social development? By examining students' accounts alongside information from pesantren supervisors and teachers, this study seeks to contribute a context-specific understanding of mobile phone restrictions in Islamic boarding school education. The findings are expected to inform discussions on student

guidance, character development, social relationships, and the need to balance disciplinary practices with opportunities for digital literacy.

## B. RESEARCH METHOD

This study used a qualitative descriptive approach to examine the implementation of the mobile phone ban and its perceived implications for students' personal and social development at MA Pesantren Tarbiyah Takalar, Takalar Regency, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. The design aligns with comparative qualitative case study approaches used in school phone policy research, which emphasize context-specific interpretation of policy implementation and student experience (Goodyear et al., 2026; Le Roux & Feldman, 2026).

The research was conducted from March to April 2026. This approach was used to describe the experiences and perspectives of students, dormitory supervisors, and homeroom teachers regarding the policy, as well as students' daily activities and interactions in the pesantren environment (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). The study focused on the implementation of the mobile phone ban within a specific educational setting. The findings were interpreted in relation to the context of the pesantren and the information obtained from participants, observations, and the school's rules and regulations (Ahmad & Khasawneh, 2024; Greenwood, 1993).

The study involved 12 informants selected through purposive sampling, consisting of eight students, two dormitory supervisors, and two homeroom teachers. The student informants were selected because they had lived in the pesantren without violating the rule prohibiting students from bringing mobile phones. The dormitory supervisors and homeroom teachers were selected because they were responsible for supervising or teaching the students concerned and were considered familiar with their daily activities, interactions, and reported rule violations. The inclusion of these three groups of informants enabled the study to consider students' experiences alongside the perspectives of school personnel. However, because the student participants were selected from those who had not violated the rule, their experiences should not be considered representative of students who had violated the policy.

Data were collected through interviews, observation, and documentation. Interviews lasted approximately 15 minutes and were conducted in Indonesian or the local language, depending on the language used by each informant. The interviews were recorded and transcribed for analysis. Observations focused on students' daily activities and interactions with other students in the pesantren environment. The documentary data consisted of the pesantren's rules and regulations (*tata tertib*), which provided information about the formal rules relevant to student conduct and the mobile phone ban.

The interview transcripts were read and summarized to identify information relevant to the research questions. The relevant information was organized according to the two main research focuses: the implementation of the mobile phone ban and its perceived implications for students' personal and social development. Information from observations and the pesantren's rules and regulations was considered alongside the interview summaries when relevant. Data reduction involved selecting and summarizing information relevant to the research questions, while data display involved organizing the summaries and available supporting evidence. Conclusion drawing or verification involved interpreting the information in relation to the research questions. Any The findings were interpreted in relation to the research questions and the available interview transcripts, observation records, and documentary evidence.

The original manuscript identifies source triangulation and method triangulation as strategies for examining the data. Source triangulation involves comparing information from student informants, dormitory supervisors, and homeroom teachers. Method triangulation

involves examining the relationship between interview information, observations of students' daily activities and interactions, and the pesantren's rules and regulations. These forms of triangulation should be reported as having been applied only to the extent that the relevant sources were actually compared during the research. Member checking was not conducted and, therefore, was not used as a validation procedure in this study.

Permission was obtained from the school to interview students and several teachers. The informants' agreement to participate was also obtained directly. The student participants were in Grade 12. Further details about how their agreement was documented, how their identities and interview recordings were protected, and whether additional consent or institutional ethical procedures applied should be reported only if supported by the actual research process.

## C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Implementation of the Mobile Phone Ban in the Pesantren

The mobile phone ban at MA Pesantren Tarbiyah Takalar is implemented as part of the pesantren's efforts to maintain discipline and structure students' daily activities. Based on interviews with dormitory supervisors, the policy is communicated through guidance, explanations of the rules, and supervision of students' compliance. Nevertheless, the implementation does not eliminate all violations. One dormitory supervisor estimated that approximately 85% of students complied with the policy. This figure represents the supervisor's perception rather than a result obtained from systematic compliance measurements.

The interviews also indicated that some students had occasionally brought or used mobile phones secretly. A dormitory supervisor explained that phone use could interfere with students' routines, particularly when it continued late at night and affected their ability to wake up for morning activities. These accounts suggest that the implementation of the ban involves not only the establishment of rules but also ongoing supervision and guidance. However, the available data do not establish a comprehensive record of violations, their frequency, or the consistency of sanctions; therefore, the policy's enforcement cannot be evaluated solely through the estimated compliance rate.

Students' accounts provide a complementary perspective on the policy. Rather than describing the ban exclusively in terms of compliance, students discussed how they adjusted to a daily environment in which mobile phones were unavailable. Some described a more structured routine, while others reported boredom and the need to find alternative activities. These experiences indicate that the policy is encountered differently by students and should be understood through both the perspectives of pesantren staff and students.

### 2. Personal Development: Routine, Self-Regulation, and Managing Boredom

The interview findings indicate that the absence of mobile phones was associated, in students' accounts, with greater attention to scheduled activities and alternative ways of spending free time. One student described how activities at home could be postponed because of phone use, whereas daily life in the pesantren followed a more structured schedule (S1). Another student reported managing boredom through activities such as reading, reciting and memorizing religious texts, drawing, and completing personal tasks (S2). These accounts illustrate how students described adapting their routines within the pesantren environment.

However, these experiences should not be interpreted as evidence that the ban automatically produces self-discipline or independent learning. Students' accounts also suggest that adapting to a phone-free environment may involve boredom and emotional discomfort. Some students had to identify alternative activities or develop ways to manage

their feelings when they could not use their phones. The findings therefore point to both adaptive experiences and challenges in adjusting to the policy.

These results can be discussed in relation to King, Radunz, Galanis, Quinney, & Wade (2024), who examined the social, well-being, and academic effects of school phone bans. Their findings did not show significant differences between the ban and no-ban groups in problematic phone use, academic engagement, or school belonging during the study's follow-up period. These findings are consistent with Kessel et al. (2020), who reported only modest effects of phone bans on student outcomes, and with Todorovic, Bogaerts, and Larsen (2026), who found that adolescents' self-regulation of digital media use depends on internal motivation and structured support rather than restriction alone. This comparison highlights the importance of avoiding broad claims that phone restrictions necessarily improve students' personal development. In the present study, the evidence is based on participants' accounts in one pesantren setting and describes their reported experiences rather than demonstrating a causal effect of the policy.

Within Islamic boarding school education, the findings can also be interpreted in relation to the educational aims of habituation and character development. Structured daily activities and guidance may provide opportunities for students to practise responsibility and self-regulation (Maryono, 2022; Salabi, 2025). However, self-regulation is a developmental capacity that develops through autonomy-supportive environments, not merely through external restriction (Todorovic et al., 2026). Nevertheless, such outcomes should not be assumed merely from the existence of a prohibition. They depend on how the policy is implemented, how students understand its purpose, and what support is available to help them adjust.

### 3. Social Development: Face-to-Face Communication and Interpersonal Challenges

The findings also indicate that students described opportunities for direct interaction with peers in the absence of mobile phones. One student explained that, without relying on social media, students could express their feelings directly to one another (S3). Another described face-to-face interaction and group discussion as parts of everyday social life in the pesantren (S4). These accounts suggest that the phone-free environment may create opportunities for direct communication, although they do not establish that all students experience improved relationships.

Students' experiences were not uniformly positive. Some described difficulty accepting differences between peers, while others reported choosing silence when angry to avoid saying hurtful things. These accounts resonate with Bisom-Rapp et al. (2026), who reported that adolescents experience school phone restrictions as tensions between autonomy, safety, and structure. Although remaining silent may prevent an immediate verbal confrontation, it does not necessarily resolve the underlying disagreement. One student's account also indicated that feelings of insecurity could arise when other people had access to mobile phones. Such experiences show that interpersonal adjustment remains complex even when phone use is restricted.

The role of pesantren staff is relevant to understanding these experiences. A dormitory supervisor described addressing conflict by bringing the students involved together and attempting to identify the underlying problem. This account suggests that direct communication and adult guidance are part of the approach to managing interpersonal difficulties. However, the available evidence does not demonstrate that the phone ban itself resolves conflicts or consistently improves peer relationships.

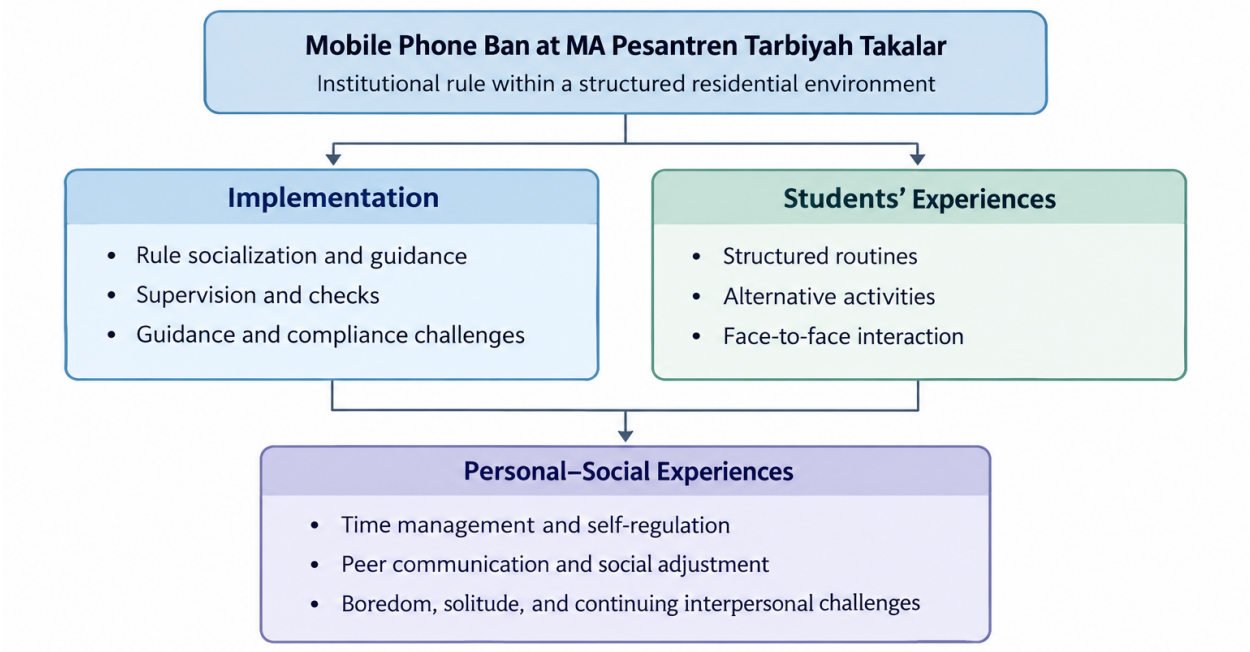
The study by Ridhoi (2025), which examined digital literacy among Islamic senior high school students in pesantren environments, provides a related perspective. At the national level, Indonesian university students' digital literacy profiles also suggest that

formal education has a role in developing responsible technology use (Simanjuntak, Mulya, Engry, & Alfian, 2025). The study considered digital literacy in areas including digital skills, information processing, safety and ethics, communication and collaboration, and religious engagement. Its focus on digital literacy indicates that students' relationship with technology involves more than the presence or absence of devices. In the context of the present study, this comparison suggests that phone restrictions may be considered alongside guidance that helps students develop responsible technology use and interpersonal skills. The two studies differ in their research focus, however, and Ridhoi's findings should not be treated as direct evidence of the effects of the phone ban examined here.

## 4. Summary of the Findings

Figure 1 presents a synthesis of the implementation of the mobile phone ban and the personal–social experiences reported by students. The figure distinguishes between policy implementation, students' experiences, and the themes identified in the interviews. It is intended as an interpretive summary of the qualitative findings, not as evidence of a direct causal relationship between the ban and students' development.

Figure 1. Summary of the Implementation of the Mobile Phone Ban and Students' Reported Personal–Social Experiences




The figure summarizes three related dimensions. First, implementation involves communication of the rules, supervision, and challenges in maintaining compliance. Second, students described experiences such as following structured routines, engaging in alternative activities, and interacting directly with peers. Third, their accounts reflected personal and social themes, including time management, self-regulation, peer communication, social adjustment, boredom, solitude, and continuing interpersonal challenges. These dimensions should be understood as themes emerging from participants' accounts rather than measured outcomes of the policy.

Taken together, the findings suggest that the mobile phone ban forms part of the wider educational environment at MA Pesantren Tarbiyah Takalar. Students' accounts indicate that the policy may shape how they organize daily activities and interact with peers, but they also reveal difficulties and individual differences in adaptation. The study therefore

does not conclude that the ban alone improves personal–social development. Instead, the findings highlight the importance of considering implementation practices, students' experiences, and the guidance provided by pesantren staff when interpreting the role of phone restrictions in a residential educational setting.

### 5. Limitations and Implications

This study is limited to one pesantren and a purposively selected group of 12 informants: eight students, two dormitory supervisors, and two homeroom teachers. The findings represent the experiences and perspectives captured in the interviews and observations; they should not be generalized to all pesantren students. Furthermore, the available evidence does not provide a systematic quantitative record of violations or establish a causal relationship between the phone ban and students' personal–social development.

The findings suggest that pesantren staff should communicate the purpose of the policy clearly and combine supervision with guidance that helps students manage boredom, regulate their behavior, and resolve interpersonal conflicts. Where appropriate, digital literacy education could complement the restrictions by helping students understand responsible technology use. Future research could include a longer observation period, more detailed documentation of policy implementation and violations, and perspectives from a wider range of students and educational staff. Such work would help clarify how institutional rules, guidance practices, and students' individual experiences interact in shaping personal–social development.

## D. CONCLUSION

The mobile phone ban at MA Pesantren Tarbiyah Takalar functions as a form of institutional regulation intended to maintain discipline within the pesantren environment. However, its implementation remains challenged by occasional violations, indicating that the effectiveness of the policy cannot be determined solely by the existence of rules or staff perceptions of compliance.

The findings suggest that students' experiences of the phone-free environment involve both opportunities and challenges for personal–social development. Structured daily activities and direct peer interactions may provide opportunities to practise self-regulation and interpersonal communication. Nevertheless, boredom, solitude, difficulty accepting differences, and interpersonal conflicts indicate that restricting phone access alone does not address all aspects of students' personal–social development. The findings therefore highlight the importance of combining institutional rules with supportive guidance, constructive activities, and assistance in managing interpersonal relationships.

In practice, pesantren administrators and guidance personnel should strengthen consistent rule socialization, provide meaningful alternatives to phone use, and facilitate communication and conflict resolution among students. Future research should examine multiple pesantren, use longer observation periods, and document policy implementation more systematically. Comparative studies could further explore how different phone policies and guidance practices relate to students' personal–social experiences. Because this study involved 12 informants at one pesantren, its findings should be interpreted within that context and do not establish a causal relationship between the phone ban and students' development.

## DECLARATION OF AI USE

During the preparation of this manuscript, the author used ChatGPT (OpenAI) to assist with academic writing, improve language clarity and readability, organize ideas, and

refine the structure of the manuscript. After using this tool, the author reviewed, verified, and edited the content as necessary and assume full responsibility for the accuracy, integrity, and final published version of the article.

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