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Analysis of the Impact of the Ban on Cellphone Use: Implications on Students' Learning Focus, Social Relationships and Educational Communication

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Abstract: This qualitative study examines the impact of a mobile phone ban at SMAN 6 Prabumulih, Indonesia, on students' learning focus, social relationships, and educational communication. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 10 stakeholders (principal, teachers, students, staff), observations, and document analysis. Findings indicate that the ban significantly improved classroom concentration, fostered face-to-face interactions, and reduced digital misconduct. However, challenges included enforcement difficulties, limited urgent communication, and reduced access to digital learning tools. The study highlights the need for balanced policies that restrict disruptive use while supporting educational technology integration. The school also takes strategic steps, such as implementing the 5S Movement and providing formal communication channels through homeroom teachers and administration, to ensure that the relationship between students, teachers, and parents is maintained well. Overall, this policy fosters a learning environment that prioritizes humaneness, collaboration, and character development.

Keywords: Ban on Cellphone Use; Educational Communication; Social Relationships; Students' Learning Focus

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A. Introduction

As social beings, humans always strive to connect with others. They desire to understand their surroundings, even to understand what is happening within themselves. This curiosity drives humans to communicate. Communication serves as

a way to share information, build relationships, and understand each other (Soid et al., 2025). Furthermore, communication is also important in the learning process, dispute resolution, and collaboration to achieve common goals. Without good communication, relationships between individuals and social development will be hampered. Technology currently has a very significant impact on human life, so there are many challenges in the future. The development of science and technology is progressing very rapidly. Today, technological progress can be seen from the transformations that occur from era to era. This digital technological innovation has brought various positive impacts on human life, making everything easier, faster, and more practical (Brem et al., 2021). This development is evident in the emergence of various increasingly sophisticated technological features. One technological innovation that has had a major impact on human life is the existence of today's communication tools, namely mobile phones. The evolution of mobile phones, which were once only used for communicating via voice and text messages, has now shifted to smartphones that have many functions, allowing users to surf the internet, interact through various social media platforms, enjoy digital entertainment, and use increasingly progressive productivity and artificial intelligence applications (Fortunati, 2023; Solymar, 2021). This technological development has had a significant impact on daily life, making smartphones an inseparable device for work, education, entertainment, and social interaction.

Mobile phones provide benefits to their users to communicate long distance and can also be used as a means of entertainment for some people. Mobile phones have additional functions beyond long-distance communication, such as taking pictures, recording games, playing music, listening to the radio, watching television, and even accessing the internet. These various functions of mobile phones have caused many students to become addicted, thus affecting their lives (Abd. Rashid et al., 2020; Li et al., 2023). However, in addition to their function as a communication tool, mobile phones also have a negative impact on human life. If we pay attention, mobile phones are not only owned by adults but have also reached children, especially students. It is not uncommon to see students bringing mobile phones to school and often seen talking on them for hours; one of the reasons is the fairly affordable phone rates from various operators, which can disrupt students' learning process and become a challenge for them to achieve success. The ability to concentrate while studying is very important. If observed, the inability to concentrate is one of the most frequently heard complaints among students. In every learning process, both in the classroom and at home, it is very important to have good concentration, especially when studying independently. In this context, distractions become very influential.

Learning focus can be influenced by both internal and external factors (Burke et al., 2024). Internal distractions arise from within the individual, such as fatigue, anxiety, worry, or even loss of motivation (Brady et al., 2021). External distractions, on the other hand, originate from the environment around us. These can include noise, other people's conversations, or distractions from smartphones and social media. Furthermore, cell phone use in learning contexts also has a broader impact on social interactions between students (Ombayan et al., 2025). In a school setting, students

often focus more on their phones and neglect direct communication with peers and teachers (Smale et al., 2021). This results in a decline in the quality of interpersonal relationships, which are crucial for their social development. When students frequently communicate using messaging apps or social media, they tend to reduce more meaningful face-to-face interactions. This situation can impact their social skills and empathy.

Education is inseparable from communication. The role of communication in the world of education is crucial (Kurowicka, 2020). Communication is used in various aspects of education, such as conveying messages, the teaching process, conveying data and facts for learning purposes, and formulating clear and correct sentences (Priadi, 2020). One element that determines the success and achievement of learning in teaching and learning activities is the establishment of active and educational communication between teachers and students (Ozcan, 2021). Initial observations conducted by researchers also showed that when students are more focused on their phones, whether surfing social media, playing games, or using other applications, direct interaction with teachers and peers is reduced. Communication in the classroom becomes less intensive, and students may miss opportunities for direct discussions or seek clarification from teachers regarding the material being taught. This can hinder students' understanding of the lesson and reduce the quality of their learning experience. Furthermore, with easy access to social media and the internet, cell phones can be used to spread inaccurate or risky information, including bullying and other negative content.

Based on these indicators, teachers and the principal of SMAN 6 Prabumulih decided to prohibit students from bringing cell phones to school. This measure was taken with the aim of creating a supportive learning environment, maintaining social harmony among students, and protecting their safety and health. Of course, each policy has exceptions tailored to certain conditions, such as the use of cell phones for educational purposes that have been approved by the school. But overall, this ban aims to support the proper development of students and ensure they receive an optimal learning experience. It is against this background that researchers are interested in conducting research on the Impact of the Ban on Cell Phone Use at SMAN 6 Prabumulih: Implications for Students' Learning Focus, Social Relationships, and Educational Communication at SMAN 6 Prabumulih.

B. Methods

The research was conducted at SMAN 6 Prabumulih from December 2024 to February 2025. This study used a descriptive qualitative method. Moleong (2016) defines qualitative research as a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and observable behavior. The method employed emphasizes the process of exploring data/information until it is deemed sufficient to make an interpretation. The primary data sources for this study were individuals deemed essential for obtaining clear and accurate information. The number of informants in this study was 10: 1 principal, 4 teachers, 3 students, and 2

education staff. The initial step in this research was conducting a preliminary study. At this stage, the researcher conducted a needs analysis to identify problems that could serve as a starting point for defining the research problem. In conducting the needs analysis, the researcher used observation techniques and collected documents that supported the researcher's initial findings. The second stage, the research stage, began. At this stage, the researcher divides the research into two stages, namely 1) the pre-field stage and 2) the field stage. In the pre-field stage, the researcher prepares a research proposal based on initial findings supported by theories and previous research that support the researcher's initial findings. Then, the researcher fulfills official research requirements through a research permit and prepares everything needed for the research process in the field, including preparing various equipment used in the research process. In the second stage, the researcher then carries out research activities, namely collecting as much data as possible related to the research object. Data collection techniques use in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. Data validity techniques carry out credibility tests, transferability tests, dependability tests, and confirmability tests. The data analysis methods applied in this study include data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions.

C. Results and Discussion

The Based on the results of data analysis, this study presents data regarding the impact of the ban on the use of mobile phones on the focus of learning, social relationships, and educational communication of students at SMAN 6 Prabumulih. This study describes three things, namely 1) How is the impact of the policy of banning the use of mobile phones at SMAN 6 Prabumulih? 2) Challenges of the policy of implementing the ban on the use of mobile phones at SMAN 6 Prabumulih. 3) Strategy of the school management in maintaining social relationships and communication of students and improving the quality of learning at SMAN 6 Prabumulih.

The Impact of the Mobile Phone Ban Policy at SMAN 6 Prabumulih

The ban on cell phone use at SMAN 6 Prabumulih has had a number of significant impacts on three main aspects: learning focus, social relationships, and educational communication.

Increased Student Learning Focus

This ban has been shown to improve student concentration during lessons. Without distractions from notifications or the urge to access social media, students are more focused on listening to the teacher's material. This aligns with the view of Medvedeva et al. (2020), who emphasize the importance of concentration in listening to teacher explanations for effective information delivery. Good concentration means students are able to grasp and understand each learning message. The ban on cell phone use at SMAN 6 Prabumulih has been proven effective in improving student concentration during the learning process. Without distractions from notifications, social media, or the urge to open other applications on their phones, students are more focused on

listening to the teacher's explanations. This encourages more active and intense learning interactions, allowing students to absorb educational messages more effectively. This view aligns with the statement of (Ji et al., 2025), who state that concentration is a crucial component in understanding information conveyed by teachers. When students truly listen and process every word carefully, the learning message can be fully absorbed. This demonstrates that eliminating digital distractions directly contributes to achieving learning objectives. The ban on cell phone use in schools, as implemented at SMAN 6 Prabumulih, can be considered an effective preventative measure to maintain students' stable learning focus.

A More Orderly and Conducive Classroom Environment

Without cell phones in the classroom, the learning atmosphere becomes calmer and more structured (Sharma, 2024). Teachers no longer need to remind using their phones, so learning time is used more efficiently. This supports better two-way communication between teachers and students, strengthening the educational relationship. The implementation of a cell phone ban at SMAN 6 Prabumulih has had a positive impact on a more orderly and conducive classroom atmosphere. With the absence of digital devices that are often a source of distraction, the learning process proceeds more orderly without interruptions from students playing games, browsing social media, or engaging in other activities unrelated to the lesson. Teachers are no longer burdened with the additional task of disciplining students who use their cell phones inappropriately, allowing for optimal use of learning time.

In situations like this, the classroom becomes an environment that supports effective learning. This not only strengthens educational communication but also fosters a disciplined and collaborative learning culture. This condition is in line with the results of research by Crishandova et al. (2024) in the Journal of Elementary School Education and Learning, Vol. 2 No. 1, which shows a negative correlation between the intensity of cellphone use and students' interest in learning. In their research, they found that excessive cellphone use causes a decrease in learning interest because students' attention is more drawn to entertainment content such as social media and digital games. This distraction makes it difficult for students to concentrate and disrupts the order of the classroom atmosphere. Therefore, the ban on cellphone use directly supports the creation of a more focused and directed learning space, allowing students to be more actively involved in academic and social activities in the classroom.

Improving Social Relationships Between Students

The cell phone ban encourages direct social interaction between students. Break time is spent talking, playing together, and interacting face-to-face, rather than glued to screens. The implementation of the cell phone ban at SMAN 6 Prabumulih not only impacts academic performance but also positively influences social interactions among students. Without cell phones as a distraction, students tend to use break time and breaks in class to interact directly, such as chatting, playing together, or simply sharing stories with peers. This face-to-face interaction fosters stronger social bonds,

strengthens a sense of community, and improves students' interpersonal communication skills. This finding aligns with the research findings of (Jannah & Ferdiansyah, 2022) entitled "Analysis of the Impact of Cell Phone Use on the Development of Social Interaction of Fifth Grade Students at SDN 13 Tanjung Batu" in the Journal of Education and Counseling, Volume 4, Number 4. In her research, Jannah found that excessive cell phone use, particularly more than two hours per day, negatively impacts the development of students' social interactions. Children who use their cell phones intensively tend to withdraw from social settings, they prefer to be alone in class, are reluctant to communicate during recess, and pay less attention to teachers during lessons (Girela-Serrano et al., 2024). Therefore, the policy of banning cell phones in schools can be seen not merely as an effort to eliminate distractions but also as a strategic step in fostering a supportive, empathetic, and participatory social environment. Such an environment is crucial for the formation of social, moral, and emotional values, which are integral to character education in the digital age.

Teachers Can More Easily Manage Classrooms and Communicate

Without the distraction of cell phones, teachers can lead classes better (Nikolopoulou, 2020). Communication becomes smoother, interactions more intense, and teachers can more easily assess student understanding directly. This contributes to healthy and effective educational communication. The implementation of a ban on cell phone use at SMAN 6 Prabumulih directly facilitates teachers' classroom management. Without the distraction of digital devices, students are more focused on following the teacher's directions, resulting in a smoother and more orderly learning process. Teachers can also deliver material more effectively, as they no longer have to constantly remind students not to use their phones. Classroom interactions become more intense, two-way, and meaningful, allowing teachers to more easily assess student understanding directly through facial expressions, verbal participation, and responses in class discussions. This contributes to healthy and effective educational communication, where both teachers and students are actively engaged in the teaching and learning process. Communication that is uninterrupted by external distractions like cell phones makes the classroom a space that truly functions for building students' knowledge, character, and discipline.

Reducing the Risk of Digital Ethics Violations

Cell phone use in schools is vulnerable to misuse, such as cheating on exams, spreading negative content, or even cyberbullying (Moral-García et al., 2025; Smale et al., 2021). A ban can mitigate these risks. Research by Prasetyo et al. (2021) highlights that technology use among students can have negative impacts if not properly managed, such as declining social attitudes, violating norms, and even a lack of creativity. This policy also creates a conducive, focused, and distraction-free learning environment while strengthening social interaction among students through direct communication.

Schools also provide alternative access to information, such as libraries, computer labs, and non-digital learning resources, to support students' academic activities without relying on cell phones. Teachers are also provided with guidance on developing active, engaging, and student-centered learning methods, ensuring the learning process remains dynamic without the need for personal digital devices. Furthermore, SMAN 6 Prabumulih is engaging parents in raising awareness that education is a shared responsibility that begins at home. Collaborating with schools and families, it is hoped that a collective awareness will be formed in monitoring students' character, morals, and moral responsibility, enabling them to discern the information they receive and utilize technology in a healthy and positive manner. This policy reflects the school's vision of cultivating a knowledgeable, moral, and competitive generation, while upholding the values of faith and piety as the primary bulwark in facing the challenges of the times.

Policy Challenges of the Mobile Phone Ban at SMAN 6 Prabumulih

SMAN 6 Prabumulih has implemented a strict policy prohibiting mobile phone use on school grounds, especially during class hours. This ban is intended to create a conducive, safe, and comfortable learning environment for all students. Teachers and school officials believe that the learning process will be more effective if students are not distracted by their phones. This policy also aligns with the school's commitment to instilling discipline and responsibility in students in the wise use of technology. Furthermore, this ban encourages students to focus on learning activities without digital distractions. The classroom environment becomes calmer, allowing teachers to manage learning more effectively. This policy also teaches students to respect boundaries and understand the importance of self-control in the use of digital devices. However, despite these significant benefits, several challenges remain, including:

Supervision and Discipline Enforcement

Supervision of students requires consistency and active involvement from all school personnel, especially teachers and disciplinary staff. Some students still attempt to smuggle mobile phones into the school grounds and use them secretly during lessons. Such attempts indicate that not all students truly understand or accept the ban. This situation presents a unique challenge for teachers. They must fulfill a dual role: as instructors and as disciplinary monitors. This can place a psychological and physical burden on teachers, as they are required to remain vigilant without disrupting their concentration on teaching. Furthermore, reprimands given to students who violate the rules risk creating conflict or tension between teachers and students, potentially disrupting the learning environment. When supervision is partial or uneven, students tend to exploit loopholes to break the rules. This also aligns with the findings of (Bar et al., 2025), who showed that enforcing a ban on cell phone use in schools will be ineffective without strengthening a culture of discipline and the full involvement of all school elements.

In this context, schools need to seek a more comprehensive approach, not just repressive or punitive, but also educational. Character-based approaches such as habituation, role modeling, and open dialogue about the negative impacts of cell phone use during class hours can be alternative strategies. Teachers and school staff also need to be trained in classroom management and persuasive techniques to avoid confrontations that could harm teacher-student relationships. Furthermore, parental involvement in supervision is also crucial. Therefore, synergy between schools and parents in fostering student awareness and discipline is crucial.

The Need for Technology in the Learning Process

In today's digital era, the use of technology in the learning process is inevitable. Technology, particularly digital devices such as mobile phones, tablets, and laptops, has been proven to support more interactive, flexible learning and a broad range of learning resources. However, at SMAN 6 Prabumulih, the policy banning mobile phone use in the school environment presents a dilemma. On the one hand, the school strives to create an orderly and distraction-free learning environment, but on the other hand, the need for technological support in learning is increasing. Several teachers expressed a desire to use learning applications such as Google Classroom, Quizizz, and Kahoot, or to search for online resources during learning activities. However, the policy prohibiting mobile phone use presents an obstacle because these devices are considered a source of distraction, not a learning aid.

Technology also enables more contextual and adaptive learning to meet students' needs. Furthermore, research by Rahiem (2020) shows that limited supporting facilities such as computer laboratories and internet access are major obstacles to integrating technology into learning. In schools widen the gap in access to digital learning resources. This situation highlights the importance of a balanced approach between enforcing discipline and utilizing technology. Therefore, a mobile phone ban policy should not be a barrier to the use of educational technology; instead, it needs to be balanced with strategies for providing facilities and formulating more contextual rules to ensure the learning process remains relevant, effective, and in line with current demands.

Limited Communication in Urgent Situations for Parents

The policy banning cell phone use in schools, particularly at SMAN 6 Prabumulih, is intended to create a conducive learning environment and educate students to be more focused and responsible. However, its implementation has presented significant challenges, particularly regarding the need for communication between parents and students during emergencies. This is a complex issue because it concerns the basic need for parents to stay connected with their children, especially adolescents who still require emotional and practical supervision. While schools strive to maintain discipline and order, humanistic considerations regarding communication needs cannot be ignored. Research by Bar et al. (2025) revealed that banning cell phone use in schools can result in limited communication in urgent situations, especially when

parents need quick access to their children. Therefore, it is important for schools to establish responsive communication mechanisms, such as a parent hotline, dedicated staff on duty to handle emergency information, or a limited, supervised communication schedule.

School Management Strategies for Maintaining Student Social Relationships and Communication and Improving Learning Quality

Based on data analysis conducted during the research and documentation, it was found that school management has implemented several strategies to maintain social interaction and communication among students despite limited access to technology. These strategies aim to ensure students can continue to interact effectively both inside and outside the classroom. One step taken is to increase the number of extracurricular activities and collaborative projects among students, which not only strengthens social relationships but also helps them develop teamwork and leadership skills. Furthermore, to address limited communication between students and parents during school hours, the school provides information facilities through homeroom teachers and administrative staff. In the event of an emergency, students can still use school communication facilities with permission from the teacher or duty officer. This is part of supervision (Curcuruto & Griffin, 2023), which explains that supervision is a method to ensure that organizational and management goals are achieved while also providing a solution to meet communication needs without violating existing regulations. Furthermore, teachers also play an active role in creating an open and friendly classroom atmosphere, where students feel comfortable engaging in face-to-face discussions without relying on digital media.

In an effort to improve the quality of learning, SMAN 6 Prabumulih encourages the use of structured technology-based learning media, such as computer labs or projectors in the classroom. Teachers are also encouraged to participate in professional development training to be able to use innovative and engaging learning methods, even without directly involving students' smartphones. School management also implements a more in-depth learning evaluation and monitoring system to ensure students optimally achieve their learning targets. With this comprehensive combination of strategies, it is hoped that students will grow into superior, socially competent individuals who are capable of facing the challenges of the digital era wisely and responsibly.

D. Conclusions

The implementation of the mobile phone ban policy at SMAN 6 Prabumulih has proven to be a significant success, fundamentally enhancing the educational environment by markedly improving student learning focus, fostering a more disciplined and conducive classroom atmosphere, and promoting healthier, more meaningful face-to-face social interactions among students and between students and teachers. While the policy initially generated understandable resistance and presented real challenges such as requiring teachers to develop more creative, low-tech

pedagogical methods and limiting students' instant access to information the school community successfully navigated an adaptation process that itself yielded valuable outcomes, including greater student independence and responsibility. Crucially, the school's proactive and holistic approach, which extended beyond mere prohibition, was key to this success; the institutionalization of the 5S Movement actively cultivated a culture of direct politeness and respect, while established formal communication channels via homeroom teachers ensured essential contact with parents was maintained, thereby mitigating the policy's social limitations. For other institutions, this case underscores that the effectiveness of such a ban depends on integrating it with complementary programs that actively rebuild the human interactions the policy seeks to restore and providing clear structural support for the adaptation phase. Future research should build upon these findings through longitudinal studies on long-term academic and character impacts, comparative analyses of regulated-use versus outright-ban models, and deeper exploration of parental engagement with alternative communication systems, thereby refining best practices for balancing technological integration with the irreplaceable value of an engaged, interpersonal learning environment.

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