**BUSYRO** Journal of Islamic Da'wah and Communication) P-ISSN : 2715-209X E-ISSN : 2829-8020
Avalaible online at: https://ejournal.insud.ac.id/index.php/kpi
**Volume 7, Issue 2, May 2026 | DOI: -**

# Domestication of Technology: Policies Restricting the Use of Digital Communication Media (Mobile Phones) within the Cultural Ecosystem of Islamic Boarding Schools

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Received: 13-05-2026 Revised: 22-05-2026 Accepted: 26-05-2026

**Info Artikel**

**Keywords:** pesantren, digital communication media, mobile phone, Islamic education, library research

***Kata kunci:***
*pesantren, media komunikasi digital, handphone, pendidikan Islam, library research*

**Abstract**

The development of digital communication media has significantly transformed the learning patterns and social interactions of students in Islamic boarding schools (pesantren). In many pesantren, the use of mobile phones is restricted because it is considered to affect students' discipline, learning concentration, and moral development. This study aims to examine the restriction of digital communication media within the pesantren education system and to analyze its underlying reasons, impacts, and relevance in preserving the values of Islamic education. This study employed a qualitative library research approach. Data were collected through document analysis of relevant academic sources, including books, journal articles, research reports, and other scholarly publications related to pesantren, digital communication, and Islamic education. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive-analytical techniques through data reduction, categorization, interpretation, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that restricting digital communication media in pesantren is not merely a form of prohibition but rather an effort to maintain students' learning focus, ethical conduct, and control over the flow of information entering the boarding school environment. However, excessively strict restrictions should also be carefully considered, as they may limit students' ability to adapt to technological developments. Therefore, the restriction of digital communication media in the pesantren education system can be understood as a balanced approach to preserving the traditions of Islamic boarding schools while responding to the demands of the digital era.

***Abstrak***

*Perkembangan media komunikasi digital membawa perubahan besar dalam pola belajar dan interaksi santri di pesantren. Di banyak pesantren, penggunaan handphone dibatasi karena dianggap dapat memengaruhi kedisiplinan, konsentrasi belajar, dan pembentukan akhlak santri. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji pembatasan media komunikasi digital dalam sistem pendidikan pesantren serta menganalisis alasan, dampak, dan relevansinya dalam menjaga nilai-nilai pendidikan Islam. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode library research dengan pendekatan kualitatif. Data dikumpulkan melalui studi dokumentasi (dokumentasi kepustakaan) terhadap berbagai sumber ilmiah, meliputi buku, artikel jurnal, hasil penelitian, dan dokumen lain yang relevan dengan tema pesantren, komunikasi digital, dan pendidikan Islam. Data yang telah terkumpul kemudian dianalisis secara deskriptif-analitis melalui proses reduksi, pengelompokan, interpretasi, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa pembatasan media komunikasi digital di pesantren bukan semata-mata bentuk larangan, melainkan bagian dari upaya menjaga fokus belajar, adab, dan kontrol terhadap arus informasi yang masuk ke lingkungan santri. Pembatasan yang terlalu ketat juga perlu dipertimbangkan agar tidak menghambat kemampuan santri dalam beradaptasi dengan perkembangan zaman. Dengan demikian, pembatasan media komunikasi digital dalam sistem pendidikan pesantren dapat dipahami sebagai bentuk keseimbangan antara menjaga tradisi pesantren dan menyesuaikan diri dengan era digital.*

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## INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of digital communication technologies, particularly mobile phones, the Internet, and social media, has profoundly transformed the landscape of Islamic education (Ramlan, 2025). For younger generations, digital media are no longer merely universal communication tools but have become the primary instruments for accessing information and facilitating learning activities. In Indonesia, young people's dependence on cyberspace continues to increase, producing paradoxical consequences. On the one hand, digital technology provides unlimited access to Islamic knowledge and educational resources. On the other hand, it contributes to severe digital distraction, reduced learning concentration, and the erosion of *adab* (Islamic moral conduct) due to exposure to content that undermines moral values (Zaer & Misra, 2025). This critical issue has increasingly permeated even the most traditional Islamic educational institutions, namely *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools), thereby necessitating strategic responses to the governance and regulation of digital information flows.

*Pesantren* serve as a cornerstone of Islamic education, distinguished by their emphasis on moral character formation, discipline, simplicity, and the transmission of spiritual values through direct *talaqqi* (face-to-face learning between teacher and student) (Hardiyatullah, 2025). These characteristics are embodied in the continuous and direct interactions among *kiai*, *ustaz*, and *santri* within the boarding school environment. However, the unrestricted presence of digital communication media has the potential to weaken these communal relationships and the tradition of learning through direct role modeling. *Santri* increasingly devote more attention to mobile phone screens than to internalizing *adab* and educational values from their immediate surroundings (Saini, 2024). Consequently, policies restricting the use of mobile phones in *pesantren* should not be regarded merely as disciplinary regulations but rather as cultural instruments designed to safeguard the educational ecosystem from the disruptive influences of the digital environment.

This phenomenon has generated academic debate regarding the position of *pesantren* in the modern era. Previous studies have extensively examined the relationship between *pesantren* and digital technology. Most of these studies focus on technological adaptation, the modernization of digital-based learning systems, and the use of social media for the digitalization of Islamic preaching (*da'wah*). Meanwhile, sociological research has also explored the negative consequences of excessive smartphone use, particularly its effects on learning culture and the behavioral development of adolescents. Although these studies provide a solid theoretical foundation for understanding the urgency of technological adaptation, they tend to conceptualize digital

technology within a rigid dichotomy either fully embracing it in the name of modernization or rejecting it to preserve traditional values.

Several previous studies have investigated the relationship between *pesantren* and the development of digital technology from various perspectives. Ramlan (2025) argues that advances in digital communication technologies have transformed Islamic education by enabling the use of digital media as a platform for learning and the dissemination of Islamic knowledge. Meanwhile, Zaer and Misra (2025) demonstrate that uncontrolled use of digital media can reduce students' learning concentration, increase digital distractions, and negatively affect character formation. Hardiyatullah (2025) emphasizes that the educational philosophy of *pesantren* is fundamentally rooted in moral development, discipline, and direct interaction between *kiai* and *santri* as the core of the learning process. Likewise, Saini (2024) finds that intensive smartphone use may diminish the quality of social interaction and hinder the internalization of educational values within the *pesantren* environment.

These previous studies share a common concern with the present research in examining the relationship between digital technology and Islamic education, particularly within the context of *pesantren*. Nevertheless, they primarily concentrate on the integration of digital technology into learning activities or on the behavioral impacts of smartphone use among *santri*. Limited attention has been given to the policy of restricting digital communication media as an educational communication strategy for preserving the value system, culture, and traditions of *pesantren*. Accordingly, this study offers a different perspective by interpreting restrictions on digital communication media not as a rejection of technological progress but as an educational communication strategy intended to maintain a balance between preserving the Islamic scholarly tradition, fostering students' character development, and promoting adaptive engagement with the digital era.

The central argument advanced in this article is that restricting digital communication media in *pesantren* represents a form of adaptive educational communication control. Rather than practicing technological isolation or rejecting modernity, *pesantren* implement this policy as a means of domesticating technology, ensuring that it remains subordinate to the values, *adab*, and educational objectives of Islamic education. Employing a library research approach, this study argues that restricting the use of mobile phones constitutes a fundamental prerequisite for preserving the quality of contemplative learning and sustaining the educational authority shared between *kiai* and *santri* amid the rapid expansion of digitalization.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative library research design with a descriptive-analytical approach. This method was selected because the research object the policy of restricting digital communication media, particularly mobile phones, within the *pesantren* educational system is conceptual and theoretical in nature, requiring an in-depth examination of scholarly texts and academic literature. The research was conducted over a two-month period, from March to April 2026, focusing exclusively on the collection and comprehensive analysis of documentary data without undertaking direct field observations. In this study, the researcher served as the primary research instrument, responsible for selecting, interpreting, and contextualizing the data within the framework of Islamic educational communication.

The data analyzed in this study were entirely qualitative and derived from scholarly literature. Primary data consisted of authoritative textbooks and peer-reviewed academic journal articles that specifically address the dynamics of *pesantren*, digital communication theory, the disciplinary traditions of *santri*, and the concept of moral character (*akhlak*) formation in Islam. Secondary data were obtained from supporting journal articles, master's theses, doctoral dissertations, and relevant policy documents that strengthened the analytical framework. These sources were selected purposively, with priority given to recent academic publications to ensure the relevance and currency of the research data.

Data were collected systematically using the documentation method. The process began with a comprehensive literature search in digital academic databases, followed by critical reading, selection, and extraction of information relevant to the research objectives. After data collection, the materials underwent a data reduction process in which the researcher classified and organized the information into four major thematic categories: (1) the functions of mobile phones among adolescents, (2) the cultural characteristics of the *pesantren* boarding environment, (3) the role of media restriction as a mechanism of educational control, and (4) its implications for the educational interactions of *santri*. This process enabled the exclusion of irrelevant information, ensuring that the analysis remained focused on addressing the central research questions.

The categorized data were subsequently analyzed using an interpretative content analysis approach. The researcher critically interpreted the concepts, arguments, and findings presented in the selected literature and examined them in relation to theories of Islamic educational communication. The credibility and trustworthiness of the findings were ensured through source triangulation by comparing, cross-checking, and validating evidence concerning media restriction policies from diverse scholarly perspectives. In addition, the rigor of the study was strengthened

through systematic theoretical analysis to produce objective, valid, and accountable conceptual conclusions regarding the strategic role of mobile phone restrictions within *pesantren*. Through this approach, the resulting synthesis extends beyond theoretical discussion by proposing an adaptive model of digital media regulation. Accordingly, the reconstructed conceptual framework is expected to serve as both a philosophical foundation and a practical guideline for administrators of Islamic educational institutions in formulating digitalization policies that promote the public good (*maslahah*).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### RESULTS

Based on the reduction and thematic classification of scholarly literature relevant to the *pesantren* educational system and the dynamics of digital communication, this study identified three major findings concerning the policy of restricting mobile phone use among *santri*. The first finding concerns the fundamental rationale for restricting digital communication media. The reviewed literature indicates that the policy is primarily intended to protect the contemplative learning environment that characterizes *pesantren*. Mobile phones are recognized as gateways to an unlimited flow of information, exposing students to a high risk of digital distraction (Amsiyah & Ulia, 2026). The widespread availability of social media platforms, instant messaging applications, and digital entertainment has been empirically shown to shorten students' attention spans, reduce learning concentration, and diminish their engagement in both classroom instruction and daily boarding school activities.

The second finding relates to the function of media restriction in the transmission of educational values. Within *pesantren*, restrictions on mobile phone use serve as an instrument for preserving the traditional model of instructional communication. The *pesantren* boarding system relies fundamentally on face-to-face *talaqqi* and direct role modeling through *uswah hasanah* demonstrated by *kiai* and *ustaz* (Rahman & Shohib, 2026). The documentary evidence confirms that direct interpersonal interaction, free from the mediation of digital devices, constitutes an essential prerequisite for the internalization of *adab*, respectful conduct, and the moral character formation of *santri*. Consequently, this policy ensures that communication within the *pesantren* remains interpersonal, contextual, and value-oriented.

The third finding concerns the cultural implications of the restriction policy. The literature demonstrates that limiting the use of digital communication media should not be interpreted as a complete rejection of technological modernity but rather as a form of cultural regulation. This policy establishes a clear boundary between the profane sphere of the external digital world and

the sacred educational environment of the *pesantren*. Through this regulatory approach, *pesantren* are able to preserve the values of *zuhud* (simplicity and detachment from material excess), reinforce respect for the scholarly authority of *kiai* and teachers, and regulate the pace of technological modernization so that it does not undermine the cultural identity of the institution.

## DISCUSSION

The policy of restricting digital communication media within *pesantren* should not be viewed merely as a rigid disciplinary measure or as evidence of resistance to modernity. From a theoretical perspective, this policy represents a strategic response to the phenomenon of digital distraction, which has fundamentally reshaped the psychology of learning among younger generations (Dariyono & Rizky, 2026). The uninterrupted flow of information delivered through mobile phones including social media, online games, and instant messaging applications is characterized by information overload, which continuously demands users' attention. Within the framework of educational communication psychology, such an excessive flow of information has been shown to substantially reduce learners' attention spans (Balqis et al., 2026). *Santri* who become accustomed to the rapid and highly stimulating visual environment of cyberspace are likely to encounter considerable difficulties when engaging in contemplative learning activities, such as memorizing the Qur'an, studying *nadhom* (didactic Islamic poems), or examining the classical Islamic texts (*kitab kuning*), all of which require sustained concentration, patience, and inner tranquility.

From the perspective of media effects theory, mobile phones foster dependency through dopaminergic reward mechanisms triggered by continuous notifications and constantly updated digital content. These characteristics of digital media, which prioritize immediacy and instant gratification, stand in sharp contrast to the Islamic concept of *thalab al-'ilm* (the pursuit of knowledge), which emphasizes gradual learning, patience, perseverance, and long-term intellectual discipline (Nurbaiti et al., 2025). Accordingly, *pesantren* implement mobile phone restriction policies as a form of educational communication control. This mechanism functions by establishing a cyber boundary that filters digital noise originating from outside the boarding school environment. By limiting access to mobile phones, *pesantren* intentionally disrupt patterns of digital dependency, thereby enabling *santri* to redirect their psychological energy and cognitive attention toward learning activities and spiritual formation within the physical educational environment.

From the perspective of Communication Privacy Management (CPM) theory, restrictions on mobile phone use may also be understood as a strategy for regulating institutional space in order to preserve the sacred character of Islamic educational institutions (Aji et al., 2022). In this context, sacredness does not refer to the institution's physical sanctity but rather to the

preservation of the core values that constitute the foundation of *pesantren* education. These values include respect for *kiai* and teachers, *adab* in the pursuit of knowledge, discipline, *zuhud* (simplicity and detachment from material excess), sincerity (*ikhlas*), and the tradition of *talaqqi*, which is sustained through direct interaction between teachers and *santri*. Collectively, these values form the essential basis of students' moral and personal development and therefore require a learning environment that is conducive, focused, and relatively free from distractions that may hinder the internalization of educational values.

*Pesantren* are designed as integrated educational ecosystems in which learning, moral development, religious worship, and everyday life are harmoniously embedded within a structured environment. Consequently, preserving the sacred character of the institution is essential to ensure that the educational process not only fosters intellectual competence but also cultivates the moral character, spirituality, and ethical conduct of *santri* in accordance with the objectives of Islamic education. When mobile phone use is left unrestricted, the unrestricted, instantaneous, and often value-neutral flow of digital information may diminish the intensity of educational interactions between *kiai* and *santri*, alter the traditional learning culture, and weaken the internalization of *adab*. In this regard, policies restricting digital communication media represent a strategy for managing the learning environment so that technology functions as a supportive educational tool rather than a dominant force that displaces the fundamental values of *pesantren*.

A second, equally significant dimension of restricting digital communication media within *pesantren* is the preservation and restoration of the *talaqqi* model of communication and the internalization of *adab*. The restoration of the *talaqqi* communication model refers to efforts to reinforce the long-standing educational tradition that places direct interaction between teachers and students at the center of the transmission of knowledge and Islamic values. Within the Islamic educational tradition, *talaqqi* serves not merely as a means of delivering instructional content but also as a mechanism for transmitting ethical values, spirituality, and scholarly authority through direct engagement between educators and learners. Likewise, the internalization of *adab* refers to the continuous process through which Islamic moral and ethical values are cultivated until they become integral to students' character and everyday behavior.

For centuries, the *pesantren* educational system has been built upon a foundation of direct face-to-face interpersonal communication characterized by continuity and communal interaction (Utami, 2018). Within the Islamic scholarly tradition, the transmission of knowledge (*ta'lim*) has never been regarded as an isolated process but has always been accompanied by spiritual purification (*tazkiyat al-nafs*) and character formation (*ta'dib*) (Ihsanudin, 2022). Consequently,

restoring the *talaqqi* communication model and strengthening the internalization of *adab* are fundamental priorities in Islamic education, as its ultimate objective extends beyond the acquisition of knowledge to encompass the development of moral integrity, spirituality, and an Islamic personality. Through direct and uninterrupted interaction, *santri* acquire not only the knowledge contained in the classical Islamic texts they study but also observe, emulate, and internalize the *uswah hasanah* (exemplary conduct) demonstrated by *kiai* and *ustaz* in their speech, behavior, social interactions, and religious practices. Accordingly, restricting digital communication media is regarded as a strategic measure to preserve the continuity of *talaqqi* and the internalization of *adab*, preventing these educational processes from being displaced by forms of digital communication that tend to be impersonal and lacking in direct moral exemplification.

When mobile phones and unrestricted access to digital media are introduced without adequate regulation, the deeply rooted pattern of interpersonal communication within *pesantren* is likely to shift toward mediated communication (Arvito et al., 2025). Mobile phone screens create virtual environments that compete for users' attention, thereby reducing the intensity of face-to-face social interactions within the *pesantren* community. This phenomenon is closely associated with **phubbing**, namely the tendency to ignore people in one's immediate surroundings because of excessive attention to mobile devices (Jenny & Clara, 2026). Should this behavior become prevalent within *pesantren*, it could seriously undermine the transmission of religious values and cultural traditions. Over time, the continuous erosion of direct interpersonal interaction between *kiai* and *santri* may weaken the transmission of values, exemplary conduct, and the academic culture that has traditionally been sustained through face-to-face engagement.

Nevertheless, this study does not regard digital communication as something that should be categorically rejected. Within the context of Islamic education in the digital era, digital communication media continue to serve important functions by providing access to scholarly references, broadening intellectual horizons, facilitating access to Islamic literature, and supporting educational activities as well as *da'wah*. Accordingly, the ideal position for *santri* is not to distance themselves from technology but to develop strong digital literacy that enables them to use digital media wisely, critically, selectively, and responsibly in accordance with Islamic values. From this perspective, the policy of restricting digital communication media in *pesantren* is intended not to eliminate students' access to technology but to regulate the time, space, and intensity of its use so that it does not interfere with the processes of *talaqqi*, the internalization of *adab*, and communal life within the *pesantren*. Thus, digital communication functions as a complementary educational

resource, while direct interaction between *kiai* and *santri* remains the primary foundation for the cultivation of knowledge, moral character, and spirituality.

Accordingly, restricting the use of mobile phones in *pesantren* functions as a mechanism for safeguarding this traditional model of interaction. The policy enables the communication ecosystem within the boarding school to continue operating organically and meaningfully. In the absence of mobile phones, *santri* are encouraged to fully engage their senses and cognitive awareness in observing and learning from the exemplary conduct demonstrated by those around them. The internalization of *adab* requires social sensitivity and *rasa rumangsa* a Javanese concept referring to reflective self-awareness and empathetic sensitivity which can only be cultivated through sustained communal living and intensive interpersonal interaction (Yunianto et al., 2025). Consequently, restricting digital communication media becomes a fundamental prerequisite for preserving the legitimacy of religious authority within the *pesantren* tradition, where the blessing (*barakah*) of knowledge is believed to be transmitted through the teacher's approval and the profound spiritual bond between teacher and student something that cannot be replicated by algorithms or digital video tutorials.

From a broader perspective, the policy of restricting mobile phone use in *pesantren* can be interpreted, through the lens of the sociology of communication, as a manifestation of the dialectic of technology domestication (Matondang & Desky, 2023). Media domestication theory explains how communities or households adopt, appropriate, and reorganize new technologies so that they become compatible with the existing values, norms, and social structures of their domestic environments (Siswati, 2014). Within this framework, the decision of *pesantren* to regulate mobile phone use should not be interpreted as an expression of cultural resistance, moral panic, or opposition to modernity. Rather, it reflects the institution's cultural intelligence in negotiating and selectively managing the penetration of technological modernity. *Pesantren* do not reject technology outright; instead, they redefine the boundaries within which technology may operate so that it supports, rather than undermines, the fundamental values and social order that have long characterized the *pesantren* educational tradition.

Through this regulatory framework, *pesantren* establish a clear demarcation between the sacred space and the profane space. The internal environment of the *pesantren* is deliberately preserved as a sacred educational space dedicated to intellectual discipline (*riyadhah*), spiritual cultivation, and the habituation of a simple way of life characterized by *zuhud* (ascetic simplicity) (Najib et al., 2025). In contrast, the external digital sphere is perceived as a profane space marked by value distortion, a culture of instant gratification, and the individualistic tendencies of digital

capitalism. By restricting access to mobile phones, *pesantren* foster the growth of communal solidarity (*ukhuwah Islamiyah*) through direct social interaction. *Santri* are encouraged to engage in face-to-face communication, collaborative learning, and shared communal life within the boarding school environment, thereby reducing the individualistic tendencies often reinforced by social media algorithms. Consequently, restrictions on digital communication media function as a cultural anchor that safeguards the identity of *santri* from being absorbed into the homogenizing forces of global digital culture.

Accordingly, the cultural sustainability of *pesantren* in the digital era largely depends on their ability to maintain authority over communication governance (Saini, 2024). In this regard, *pesantren* function as institutional gatekeepers that determine when and how communication technologies should be adopted in ways that remain consistent with their educational objectives and cultural values. This pattern demonstrates that traditional Islamic educational institutions possess a remarkable capacity for resilience in responding to the disruptive challenges of contemporary technological change. Technology domestication within *pesantren* ensures that digital communication devices remain positioned solely as supporting instruments (*khadim al-'ilm*, or servants of knowledge) when needed, rather than becoming dominant forces that shape the cognitive awareness and spiritual consciousness of the *pesantren* community (Tabroni et al., 2025). By subordinating technology to the normative values of *pesantren*, these institutions preserve their essential identity as centers of moral and spiritual formation in an era increasingly characterized by value disorientation resulting from the uncontrolled circulation of information.

As the concluding dimension of this dialectical discussion, it is essential to formulate a critical synthesis that offers a balanced approach to technological adaptation within *pesantren*. Although restrictions on mobile phone use have proven effective in preserving a contemplative learning environment and sustaining the internalization of *adab* through direct interpersonal interaction, excessively rigid and absolute restrictions implemented without adequate digital literacy education may also generate unintended consequences. In an era in which virtually every aspect of social life has undergone digital transformation, excessive technological isolation may leave *santri* inadequately prepared to navigate digital environments after completing their education and entering broader society. Therefore, *pesantren* should not merely restrict technology but should also cultivate digital resilience among *santri*. This perspective is consistent with the well-established Islamic legal maxim widely embraced within *pesantren*: *al-muhafazah 'ala al-qadim al-salih wa al-akhdh bi al-jadid al-aslah* preserving valuable traditions while embracing beneficial innovations that contribute to the greater public good. This principle provides a philosophical foundation for

developing educational policies that balance the preservation of Islamic educational traditions with responsible engagement in the opportunities and challenges of the digital age.

As a practical implementation of this balanced approach, *pesantren* need not regard restrictions on mobile phone use as an absolute prohibition that completely denies *santri* access to digital technology. Instead, such restrictions may be designed as an educational, systematic, and context-sensitive mechanism for regulating the use of digital communication media. Within this framework, digital technology is not freely or individually accessible around the clock in students' dormitories but is made available through supervised public facilities, such as shared computer laboratories or *pesantren* multimedia centers. This model ensures that the use of the Internet and digital devices remains integrated into the educational rhythm of *pesantren*, without disrupting learning activities, spiritual formation, or interpersonal interactions among *santri*.

Through this structured regulatory approach, the function of mobile phones within *pesantren* shifts from a source of individual entertainment to a medium for academic development and digital *da'wah*. *Santri* are encouraged to utilize digital technologies as tools for academic research, expanding their understanding of Islamic scholarship, accessing educational resources, and producing creative and constructive *da'wah* content. Accordingly, restricting mobile phone use is not intended to isolate *santri* from technological advancement but rather to cultivate patterns of digital engagement that remain aligned with the educational values and cultural traditions of *pesantren*.

Furthermore, context-sensitive restrictions on mobile phone use indirectly foster a healthier and more communal communication culture within *pesantren* (Rustantono & Fatimatuzzahro, 2022). When unrestricted access to digital devices is not permitted within the private spaces of student dormitories, *santri* are naturally encouraged to engage more frequently in direct interpersonal interactions with *kiai*, *ustaz*, and their fellow students. This environment is particularly significant because education in *pesantren* extends beyond the transmission of knowledge to encompass the internalization of *adab*, the cultivation of exemplary conduct, and character formation through shared daily life. Consequently, restricting mobile phone use helps preserve the vitality of the *pesantren* social environment, preventing it from being replaced by forms of virtual communication that are often individualistic and socially detached.

At the same time, this functional and context-sensitive model of mobile phone regulation serves as a practical means of cultivating self-regulation among *santri* in navigating the digital media environment. Rather than merely prohibiting the use of technology, *pesantren* provide structured learning experiences that enable students to develop critical awareness regarding the responsible

use of digital communication media. Through limited yet guided access, *santri* learn that technology should remain subject to ethical principles and moral values rather than determining them. Such educational habituation is essential for fostering digital resilience, enabling graduates to participate responsibly in contemporary digital society without becoming vulnerable to digital distraction or the culture of instant gratification that characterizes cyberspace.

From a broader perspective, the policy of restricting mobile phone use in *pesantren* should not be interpreted as a rejection of modernity but rather as a cultural strategy for maintaining a dynamic balance between tradition and social change (Achlami, 2024). In this sense, the policy constitutes a form of social engineering that enables *pesantren* to preserve their moral and spiritual identity while simultaneously preparing *santri* to engage wisely with the realities of the digital age. Thus, *pesantren* should be understood not as anti-technology institutions but as Islamic educational institutions committed to ensuring that the development and use of digital communication technologies remain guided by the principles of *adab*, spirituality, and *maslahah* (the public good).

As a concluding reflection on the discussion, the policy of restricting mobile phone use within *pesantren* should be understood as an integral component of an educational communication strategy designed to maintain a balance between the advancement of digital technology and the preservation of *pesantren* values. Such a policy should not be narrowly interpreted as a repressive prohibition or as evidence of the institution's inability to respond to modernization. Rather, it is grounded in the recognition that digital communication media exert a profound influence on the ways young people think, behave, and develop their moral character. Accordingly, *pesantren* seek to establish mechanisms of educational control that safeguard learning concentration, psychological well-being, and the quality of social and spiritual relationships within the boarding school environment.

Within the *pesantren* tradition, education extends far beyond formal classroom instruction. It is continuously cultivated through everyday social interaction, disciplined communal living, simplicity, and the exemplary conduct of teachers. The unrestricted use of mobile phones has the potential to disrupt this continuous process of character formation. As *santri* become increasingly immersed in the digital world, the interpersonal communication that has long constituted the educational strength of *pesantren* may gradually weaken. Consequently, the emotional bond between *kiai* and *santri*, the culture of deliberation (*musyawarah*), communal solidarity, and the internalization of *adab* may shift toward more individualistic and socially distant forms of interaction. In this context, restricting mobile phone use serves as an essential instrument for preserving an educational ecosystem founded upon close social relationships and spiritual engagement.

Nevertheless, *pesantren* cannot ignore the reality that digital technology has become an inseparable part of contemporary society. As future members of society, *santri* require adequate digital literacy to engage effectively with ongoing technological developments. Therefore, the most appropriate approach is not one of absolute technological isolation but rather the wise, measured, and value-oriented regulation of digital media use. Through educationally grounded restriction policies, *pesantren* can guide *santri* to recognize technology as a means of advancing knowledge, supporting *da'wah*, and disseminating moderate and constructive Islamic values.

Furthermore, restrictions on mobile phone use, when complemented by comprehensive digital literacy education, have the potential to cultivate a generation of *santri* possessing stronger moral resilience and more mature communication competencies than those typically associated with the digital generation. Students are taught not only how to use technology but also how to exercise self-control when navigating the limitless flow of digital information. They are encouraged to evaluate information critically, uphold ethical standards in communication, and engage with digital media responsibly. Such an educational approach is particularly relevant in addressing contemporary challenges, including the misuse of social media, the spread of misinformation, consumerist culture, and the erosion of ethical communication in cyberspace.

Ultimately, the policy of restricting mobile phone use in *pesantren* represents a deliberate effort to preserve the integrity and dignity of Islamic education amid the accelerating forces of global digital disruption. *Pesantren* continue to uphold their primary mission as institutions dedicated to nurturing moral character, spirituality, and human development while remaining open to the constructive benefits of technological progress. This dynamic interaction between tradition and modernity demonstrates the remarkable adaptive capacity of *pesantren* in responding to contemporary social change. As long as digital technology remains guided by Islamic values and the objectives of education, it can serve as a valuable instrument for cultivating a generation of *santri* who are knowledgeable, possess strong *adab*, are digitally literate, and are capable of serving as agents of *da'wah* and positive social transformation in the digital age.

## CONCLUSION

The policy of restricting mobile phone use in *pesantren* represents an adaptive educational communication control strategy designed to preserve a contemplative learning environment, restore the *talaqqi* model of communication, and domesticate digital technology in accordance with Islamic values. Rather than reflecting resistance to modernity, this policy constitutes a form of cultural regulation aimed at safeguarding the sacred character of the *pesantren* boarding environment. The primary limitation of this study lies in its exclusive reliance on a library research

approach, which does not capture the empirical dynamics of mobile phone restriction policies as implemented in practice. Therefore, future research is recommended to employ qualitative and/or quantitative field studies to examine the effectiveness of this context-sensitive regulatory model across different types of *pesantren*.

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