 ISSN 2776-5229

Nomophobia Among Students: An Indigenous Psychology Study in Islamic Boarding Schools

Shofiatur Rohmah[1], Bambang Subahri[2]
[1,2]Universitas Islam Syarifuddin, Lumajang
rohmahafidzhoh91@gmail.com,bambang.subahri@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFO

Article history
Received August 22, 2026
Revised September 25, 2026
Accepted October 30, 2026

Keywords: Nomophobia; santri; indigenous psychology; smartphone; pondok pesantren.

ABSTRACT

The restriction on smartphone use in Islamic boarding schools takes place within a life regulated by schedules of worship, Quran recitation, studying, memorization, and communal activities. This research aims to understand the meaning of smartphones for students, the discomfort experienced when access is limited, and the role of pesantren cultural values in the adjustment process through the perspective of Indigenous Psychology. The research uses a descriptive qualitative approach involving 15 students, consisting of 8 male students and 7 female students, selected through purposive sampling technique. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, observations, and documentation, then analyzed through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion verification. The research results show that smartphones are perceived as a means to communicate with family, support learning, obtain information, and access entertainment. Discomfort when access is restricted is related to previous usage habits, concerns for family, the need for social connectivity, and the adaptation process to pesantren routines. The perspective of Indigenous Psychology helps to place these experiences within the context of values such as discipline, patience, independence, responsibility, and togetherness. Practically, managing smartphone use needs to combine clear rules with family communication channels and guidance that considers the emotional needs of the students.

1. INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has brought significant changes to human life, including in communication, learning processes, and social relationships (Thahir et al., 2025). One form of this development is the presence of smartphones that provide various functions in one device. In daily life, smartphones are not only used as communication tools but also serve as a means to obtain information, build interactions, and meet various personal and social needs. Behind the various conveniences offered, smartphone use can also present psychological challenges (Ashilah et al., 2025). Increasingly intense usage can be accompanied by excessive attachment to the device. This attachment can be seen when individuals find it difficult to carry out activities without a smartphone or experience anxiety when the device or communication network is unavailable. That experience may be related to a phenomenon known as nomophobia or no mobile phone phobia. Nomophobia describes the fear, anxiety, or discomfort when individuals cannot use or access their smartphones. This phenomenon is not only related to the frequency of use but also to the emotional bond formed between the individual and the digital device. Smartphones, which were initially used to support activities, can take on greater emotional significance when individuals rely on them to obtain a sense of security, comfort, and social connection. Thus, understanding nomophobia needs to consider the significance of the smartphone's presence in an individual's life. The tendency for nomophobia can be seen through behaviors such as repeatedly checking the smartphone, feeling anxious when the battery is almost dead, worrying about losing information, and experiencing difficulty concentrating when away from the device. These behaviors indicate that smartphone use may be related to psychological needs, in addition to practical needs. Therefore, anxiety, self-regulation, the need for social acceptance, and the ability to control behavior become aspects that

need to be considered in understanding the individual's relationship with smartphones (Ashilah et al., 2025). The phenomenon of nomophobia is relevant to study in the group of adolescents and young adults because at this stage, the need to build social relationships and form self-identity becomes increasingly prominent. Smartphones have become one of the means to build relationships, obtain emotional support, and express oneself in social environments. If not accompanied by the ability to control usage, the need to stay connected through smartphones can develop into excessive attachment that disrupts an individual's psychological balance.

Various previous studies have shown that nomophobia is related to several psychological aspects, such as anxiety, self-control, loneliness, and patterns of social interaction (Orchiviani, 2025). Individuals with low self-regulation abilities tend to have difficulty limiting smartphone use. Conversely, the ability to regulate emotions and behavior can help individuals use the device more purposefully according to their needs. These findings highlight the importance of understanding individuals' ability to manage their relationship with digital technology. Thus, the gap in this research lies in the need to understand nomophobia not merely as an individual issue, but as an experience shaped by the intersection of personal needs, family relationships, institutional rules, and the values embodied by the students. This comparison needs to be re-verified by reading the referenced primary sources to ensure that the novelty claims do not exceed the findings of previous research. Cultural context needs to be considered because individual behavior is formed within a social environment that has certain values, norms, and habits. These elements can influence how individuals interpret technology and determine its usage limits. One of the social environments that has unique values and customs is the pesantren. Pesantren not only functions as a place for learning religious knowledge but also as an environment for character formation through the habituation of discipline, simplicity, responsibility, adherence to rules, togetherness, and self-control. The presence of smartphones in the pesantren environment brings its own dynamics. For students, the device can support learning, communication with family, and access to information. However, its use can also pose challenges when students have difficulty managing their time or feel an emotional attachment to the device (Subahri & Said, 2025). In pesantren that implement smartphone usage rules, students need to adjust their communication and information needs to the institution's regulations. This situation becomes a relevant context for understanding the experiences of students when using smartphones or facing limitations in access to them.

That experience needs to be understood by considering the value learning process that takes place in the life of the pesantren. The values of discipline, responsibility, and self-control, which are instilled through daily activities, have the potential to serve as a reference for students in managing smartphone usage. To understand the experiences of santri in that context, this research uses the perspective of Indigenous Psychology. This approach places local experiences, knowledge, and cultural values as the foundation for understanding human thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. This perspective is relevant because the lives of students take place in an environment with specific rules, customs, and values. By considering the perspective of the santri, their relationship with smartphones can be understood through the connection between

 ISSN 2776-5229

personal experiences and the cultural environment that shapes them (Kim et al., 2006). The novelty offered lies in the effort to interpret the experiences of students from the cultural context they live in including discipline, patience, independence, responsibility, togetherness, and relationships with caregivers rather than merely categorizing them based on individual psychological factors. This contribution still needs to be demonstrated empirically through interview quotes and observation notes that genuinely originate from research data (Kim et al., 2006).

2. METHODS

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach to understand the experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of students regarding smartphone usage and its access limitations in the pesantren environment. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore the experiences of students and understand the meaning of smartphone use based on their daily life context. In this study, Indigenous Psychology is used as a perspective to understand the experiences of students based on the values, habits, and social relationships that develop in the pesantren environment. The perspective is not positioned as an independent variable, and nomophobia is not treated as a dependent variable that is statistically tested. The focus of the research is to understand the relationship between students' experiences in using smartphones and the cultural context of Islamic boarding schools, including discipline, responsibility, self-control, emotional management, adherence to rules, and self-adjustment (Kim et al., 2006). Nomophobia is understood as the fear, anxiety, worry, or discomfort when someone cannot use or access a smartphone. In this study, the experience was examined through the stories of students regarding communication limitations, concerns about missing information, the need to stay connected with others, and the feelings when being away from their smartphones. The research informants consisted of 15 students, comprising 8 male students (53.3%) and 7 female students (46.7%). The informants were selected using purposive sampling, which is the selection based on the informants' experiences aligning with the research objectives. The informants consist of active students who have experience using smartphones and can explain their experiences related to their use in the pesantren environment. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews to explore the functions of smartphones for students, their feelings when access is restricted, how they cope with discomfort, their relationships with family and friends, and their interpretations of the rules and values of the pesantren. Besides interviews, data was collected through observation and documentation. Observation is used to obtain an overview of the daily life of students, social interactions, and the implementation of rules related to smartphone use. Documentation is used as supporting data relevant to the research focus. Data is analyzed through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing or verification. Information from interviews, observations, and documentation is examined in relation to each other to gain an understanding of the students' experiences in the context of pesantren life. The research process is summarized as follows.



Figure 1. Research flowchart

The final stage is conducted by drawing conclusions based on the results of interviews, observations, and documentation that have been examined for their interconnections. Through this approach, the research is expected to provide a deep understanding of how students experience and interpret nomophobia, as well as how the values of Indigenous Psychology that grow within the pesantren culture play a role in shaping discipline, self-control, and the students' ability to face the development of digital technology without neglecting their obligations to study, worship, and maintain social relationships in the pesantren environment (Kim et al., 2006).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Nomophobia is a condition when someone feels anxious or uncomfortable when they cannot use their smartphone. In the life of students at Islamic boarding schools, this phenomenon is not only related to the habit of using phones but also to the need for communication, longing for family, and the process of adjusting to the boarding school environment. Before staying at the pesantren, some students were accustomed to using their phones to contact their parents, communicate with friends, access social media, and seek entertainment. After entering the pesantren, these habits must be adjusted to the prevailing rules. This change can cause feelings of restlessness, especially for students who are not yet accustomed to living far from their families and following a regular schedule. Therefore, nomophobia among students needs to be understood by considering their personal experiences and the environment that influences their behavior. The life in a pesantren has rules and customs that differ from the life of students at home. Students are required to participate in worship activities, recitation, studying, memorization, and carry out group activities according to the schedule. On the other hand, smartphone usage is usually restricted so that students can focus more on education and pesantren activities. For students who were previously accustomed to using their phones freely, this situation requires adjustment. They must learn to manage their desire to use the phone and get used to carrying out activities without always relying on digital devices. This process does not always go smoothly because each student has different habits, experiences, and adaptability skills. These difficulties can be more pronounced for new students who are still in the early stages of adjustment. Entering a pesantren means facing changes in the environment, activity patterns, social relationships, and daily habits. Students who previously lived with their families must start leading a more independent life and building relationships with new friends. In this situation, some students may feel homesick, lonely, or uncomfortable with the pesantren environment. The desire to use a smartphone may arise because they want to hear news from their family or feel the closeness they usually experience when at home.

Thus, anxiety regarding the limitations on phone usage is not always related to dependence on the device, but can also be linked to the ongoing adjustment process. Smartphones for some students have a broader meaning than just a communication tool. The device can serve as a means to maintain relationships with family, obtain information, and fill free time. When access to phones is restricted, students may feel they are missing the opportunity to know about their parents' condition or to share their experiences at the pesantren. However, the reasons each student wants to use the phone are not always the same. Some want to contact their families, some want to access social media, and some just want to alleviate boredom. This difference shows that the experience of nomophobia needs to be understood based on the reasons behind the desire to use the phone, not just from how often the students want to hold the device. In the perspective of Indigenous Psychology, the experience of nomophobia needs to be viewed based on the social context, cultural values, and habits that develop in the lives of santri. Pesantren is an educational environment that not only teaches religious knowledge but also instills discipline, patience, independence, responsibility, and

togetherness. These values become part of daily life and can help students face changes in smartphone usage habits. Discipline helps students follow the activity schedule, while patience can support their ability to face unfulfilled desires. Independence encourages students to engage in activities without always relying on their phones, while responsibility teaches them to prioritize their obligations to study and worship. Through this perspective, nomophobia is not only viewed as an individual issue but also as an experience related to the environment and values where the students live their lives (Kim et al., 2006). As time goes by, students can start to get used to the life in the pesantren. They begin to understand the rules, recognize the activity schedule, form friendships, and find activities that make them feel comfortable. Activities such as reciting the Quran, memorizing, studying together, worshiping, and participating in group activities can help students fill their time and divert their attention from the desire to use their phones. When the students start to feel accepted and comfortable in their social environment, their attention to smartphones can decrease. Students who have been living in the pesantren for a long time may also be more accustomed to facing limitations on phone usage because these rules have become part of their routine. However, not all students go through the same process. Some adapt quickly, while others still need time and support to feel comfortable. The difference in experiences between new students and those who have been in the pesantren for a long time shows that adaptation is an important process in understanding nomophobia. New students might still compare life in the pesantren with habits at home, whereas those who are accustomed can start to accept the rules as part of their daily life. However, the length of stay in the pesantren does not automatically determine the success of adaptation. The ability to adapt can also be influenced by relationships with friends, caregiver support, phone usage habits before boarding, and family conditions. Therefore, attention to the needs of each student is still necessary so that they can undergo the adjustment process more effectively.

In addition to the ability to adapt, social support also plays an important role in helping students cope with anxiety. The presence of friends to talk to, study with, or participate in activities with can help reduce feelings of loneliness. When students have good social relationships, they can find comfort in togetherness and not always rely on their phones as a source of entertainment or a place to seek tranquility. On the other hand, students who do not yet have close friends may still feel lonely even when they are in a crowded environment. Therefore, caregivers and administrators of the pesantren need to pay attention to students who are having difficulty adapting. Open communication and good mentoring can help students express their feelings without fear of being blamed. The implementation of phone usage rules also needs to be accompanied by an explanation that is easy to understand. Limiting phone use can help students maintain concentration, participate in activities orderly, and build disciplined life habits. However, if the rules are only conveyed as prohibitions without explanations, some students may feel misunderstood, especially when they have a need to communicate with their families. On the other hand, rules accompanied by explanations regarding the purpose, usage schedule, and communication procedures in emergency situations can help students feel safer. Thus, the pesantren needs to balance discipline with attention to the emotional needs of the students. The firmness of the rules remains important, but their implementation should be accompanied by open communication and appropriate guidance. Students also need to be helped to distinguish between needs and wants when using a smartphone. The desire to open social media out of boredom is different from the need to contact family to obtain important information. The ability to distinguish between the two can help students manage their device usage more wisely. When the desire to use the phone arises, students can try to divert their attention through pesantren activities, talking with friends, completing tasks, or performing worship. However, if the anxiety is related to an urgent communication need, the students need to know how to convey that need to the management. Thus, self-control does not mean neglecting personal needs, but rather

learning to determine the appropriate actions according to the situation at hand. In general, smartphones have several meanings for students, including as a means of communication with family, a learning support tool, a source of information, and entertainment. The discomfort when smartphone access is restricted needs to be understood by considering the reasons for use, emotional conditions, and the context of the students' lives in the pesantren. Therefore, that experience cannot be directly equated with nomophobia without considering how that feeling arises and to what extent it affects daily activities.

From the perspective of Indigenous Psychology, the experience of students using smartphones can be understood through the relationship between personal needs and the cultural context of the pesantren. The values of discipline, patience, independence, responsibility, and togetherness can serve as a framework for understanding how students adapt to the rules and routines of the pesantren. This interpretation needs to remain grounded in the experiences conveyed by the informants and the data obtained during the research (Kim et al., 2006). Practically, the management of smartphone use in Islamic boarding schools needs to consider the clarity of rules as well as the communication needs and emotional conditions of the students. Communication schedules with families, procedures for conveying urgent needs, and support for students who have difficulty adapting can be considered according to the policies of each pesantren. This research involves 15 informants, so its findings provide a contextual picture and are not intended to represent all students or all Islamic boarding schools. In the end, the life in a pesantren can become an environment for students to learn to build a more balanced relationship with digital technology. Through the habituation of regular activities, peer support, clear communication with caregivers, and the reinforcement of pesantren values, students can learn to use their phones according to their needs and responsibilities. This approach is expected not only to help students cope with anxiety when away from smartphones but also to support the development of independence and self-management skills. Thus, the study of nomophobia through the perspective of Indigenous Psychology provides an understanding that the experiences of students need to be viewed holistically, considering the relationship between individuals, technology, life values, and the social environment of the pesantren (Kim et al., 2006).

4. CONCLUSION

This research concludes that the meaning of smartphones for students is related to the need to maintain communication with family, support learning, obtain information, and access entertainment. The uncomfortable experience when smartphone access is limited needs to be understood by considering previous usage habits, longing for family, concern over information not yet obtained, and the adjustment process to life in the pesantren. Therefore, this discomfort cannot be directly equated with nomophobia without examining the context and its influence on the daily activities of the students. Through the perspective of Indigenous Psychology, the experience of students using smartphones is understood in relation to the values and social relationships that develop in the pesantren. Discipline, patience, independence, responsibility, and togetherness can serve as guidelines for students in managing their desire to use smartphones while fulfilling their obligations to study and worship. Religious routines, peer support, and caregiver guidance also contribute to the adaptation process. However, this process can vary for each student, so the length of stay in the pesantren cannot be the sole measure of their ability to adapt (Kim et al., 2006). The implication is that the management of smartphone use in pesantren needs to combine clear rules with attention to the communication needs and emotional conditions of the students. A clear communication schedule, procedures for contacting family in emergencies, and opportunities to convey difficulties to the management can be relevant forms of support. Thus, the training in

 ISSN 2776-5229

technology use can be directed toward strengthening self-control and social relationships that support the lives of students in the pesantren.

5. REFERENCES

Ashilah, A. A., Dewi, G. A. P., & Syam, R. R. (2025). Regulasi emosi dan nomofobia pada mahasiswa: Tinjauan literatur. Jurnal EMPATI, 14(6), 581–594. https://doi.org/10.14710/empati.2025.53853

Kim, U., Yang, K.-S., & Hwang, K.-K. (Eds.). (2006). Indigenous and cultural psychology: Understanding people in context. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/0-387-28662-4

Orchiviani, S. (2025). Hubungan antara kesepian dan harga diri dengan kecenderungan nomophobia pada siswa di SMA Negeri 10 Semarang [Skripsi sarjana, Universitas Islam Sultan Agung Semarang]. Repositori Universitas Islam Sultan Agung. https://repository.unissula.ac.id/40714/

Subahri, B., & Said, I. G. (2025). Resiliensi santri: Studi internet addiction pada Generasi Alpha. Jurnal Psikologi Integratif, 13(1), 108–129. https://doi.org/10.14421/jpsi.v13i1.3236

Thahir, A., Hani, N. D., & Masri, M. J. (2025). Dampak perkembangan teknologi terhadap pola interaksi sosial peserta didik di sekolah dan keluarga. Al-Irsyad: Journal of Education Science, 4(1), 13–26. https://doi.org/10.58917/aijes.v4i1.140

Bragazzi, N. L., & Del Puente, G. (2014). A proposal for including nomophobia in the new DSM-V. Psychology Research and Behavior Management, 7, 155–160. https://doi.org/10.2147/PRBM.S41386

Daraj, L. R., AlGhareeb, M., Almutawa, Y. M., Trabelsi, K., & Jahrami, H. (2023). Systematic review and meta-analysis of the correlation coefficients between nomophobia and anxiety, smartphone addiction, and insomnia symptoms. Healthcare, 11(14), 2066. https://doi.org/10.3390/healthcare11142066

Ge, M.-W., Hu, F.-H., Jia, Y.-J., Tang, W., Zhang, W.-Q., Zhao, D.-Y., Shen, W.-Q., & Chen, H.-L. (2025). The relationship between loneliness and internet or smartphone addiction among adolescents: A systematic review and meta-analysis. Psychological Reports, 128(3), 1429–1451. https://doi.org/10.1177/00332941231180119

Jahrami, H., Trabelsi, K., Boukhris, O., Hussain, J. H., Alenezi, A. F., Humood, A., Saif, Z., Pandi-Perumal, S. R., & Seeman, M. V. (2023). The prevalence of mild, moderate, and severe nomophobia symptoms: A systematic review, meta-analysis, and meta-regression. Behavioral Sciences, 13(1), 35. https://doi.org/10.3390/bs13010035

Karabey, S. C., Palanci, A., & Turan, Z. (2024). How does smartphone addiction affect the lives of adolescents socially and academically? A systematic review study. Psychology, Health & Medicine, 29(3), 631–654. https://doi.org/10.1080/13548506.2023.2229241

Kaviani, F., Robards, B., Young, K. L., & Koppel, S. (2020). Nomophobia: Is the fear of being without a smartphone associated with problematic use? International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 17(17), 6024. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17176024

Kim, U., Yang, K.-S., & Hwang, K.-K. (Eds.). (2006). Indigenous and cultural psychology: Understanding people in context. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/0-387-28662-4

Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.

Muthmainnah, M., Ruckwongpatr, K., Nurmala, I., Salim, L. A., Nadia, A., Devi, Y. P., Salsabila, A. C., Aljaberi, M. A., Griffiths, M. D., & Lin, C.-Y. (2025). Psychometric evaluation of the Indonesian Nomophobia Questionnaire among college students: Measurement invariance across gender and levels of problematic smartphone use. Acta Psychologica, 258, 105120. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2025.105120

Orchiviani, S. (2025). Hubungan antara kesepian dan harga diri dengan kecenderungan nomophobia pada siswa di SMA Negeri 10 Semarang [Skripsi sarjana, Universitas Islam Sultan Agung Semarang]. Repositori Universitas Islam Sultan Agung. https://repository.unissula.ac.id/40714/

Rodríguez-García, A.-M., Moreno-Guerrero, A.-J., & López Belmonte, J. (2020). Nomophobia: An individual's growing fear of being without a smartphone—A systematic literature review. International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 17(2), 580. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17020580

Saridudin, S., Haq, D. N., Baihaqi, W., Rakasiwi, A., & Kustiah, K. (2026). Integration of digital literacy in pesantren education: A phenomenological study of experiences and practices at Pesantren Al-Muttaqin Tasikmalaya. EDUKASI: Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Agama dan Keagamaan, 24(2), 207–228. https://jurnaledukasi.kemenag.go.id/edukasi/article/view/2498

Subahri, B., & Said, I. G. (2025). Resiliensi santri: Studi internet addiction pada Generasi Alpha. Jurnal Psikologi Integratif, 13(1), 108–129. https://doi.org/10.14421/jpsi.v13i1.3236

Thahir, A., Hani, N. D., & Masri, M. J. (2025). Dampak perkembangan teknologi terhadap pola interaksi sosial peserta didik di sekolah dan keluarga. Al-Irsyad: Journal of Education Science, 4(1), 13–26. https://doi.org/10.58917/aijes.v4i1.140

Tuco, K. G., Castro-Diaz, S. D., Soriano-Moreno, D. R., & Benites-Zapata, V. A. (2023). Prevalence of nomophobia in university students: A systematic review and meta-analysis. Healthcare Informatics Research, 29(1), 40–53. https://doi.org/10.4258/hir.2023.29.1.40

Warsah, I., Maba, A. P., Prastuti, E., Morganna, R., Alkiromah Warsah, B. A., & Carles, E. (2023). Adaptation and validation of nomophobia instrument (NMP-Q) in the Indonesian version. JP3I (Jurnal Pengukuran Psikologi dan Pendidikan Indonesia), 12(2), 127–144. https://doi.org/10.15408/jp3i.v12i2.30852

Yildirim, C., & Correia, A.-P. (2015). Exploring the dimensions of nomophobia: Development and validation of a self-reported questionnaire. Computers in Human Behavior, 49, 130–137. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2015.02.059

Yildirim, C., Sumuer, E., Adnan, M., & Yildirim, S. (2016). A growing fear: Prevalence of nomophobia among Turkish college students. Information Development, 32(5), 1322–1331. https://doi.org/10.1177/0266666915599025

Zhang, Y., Qi, Y., & Ma, Y. (2025). The associations between social support and problematic mobile phone use among children and adolescents: A three-level meta-analysis. Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 54(1), 158–175. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-024-02055-x