

Self-Regulation and Mobile Phone Involvement Among Islamic University Students

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Abstract

As Generation Z, born digital natives, students these days seem inseparable from their phones, even in the classroom. To some extent, this is certainly distracting. This study investigates the relationship between self-regulation and mobile phone involvement among Islamic university students. The rapid proliferation of mobile phone and mobile phone involvement among students has raised concerns about its psychosocial, academic, and spiritual consequences, particularly regarding the effectiveness of religious values as an internal control mechanism. Therefore, this research focuses on whether self-regulation influences mobile phone involvement in this population. Employing a quantitative correlational design, the study involved 446 Islamic University Students as participants. Data were analyzed using simple linear regression. Results indicate that the relationship between self-regulation and mobile phone involvement is not statistically significant. These findings suggest that self-regulation does not significantly affect the level of mobile phone involvement among Islamic University Students. This study contributes to the literature on Islamic psychology and education and recommends interventions rooted in contextual religious values to enhance Islamic University Students' self-control capacities in the digital age.

Keywords: Islamic university students, mobile phone involvement, self-regulation

Abstrak

Sebagai Generasi Z, yang lahir di era digital, mahasiswa saat ini tampaknya tak terpisahkan dari ponsel mereka, bahkan di dalam kelas. Sampai batas tertentu, hal ini tentu saja mengganggu. Studi ini menyelidiki hubungan antara pengaturan diri dan keterlibatan ponsel di kalangan mahasiswa universitas Islam. Pesatnya penyebaran ponsel dan keterlibatan ponsel di kalangan mahasiswa telah menimbulkan kekhawatiran tentang konsekuensi psikososial, akademik, dan spiritualnya, khususnya mengenai efektivitas nilai-nilai agama sebagai mekanisme pengendalian internal. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini berfokus pada apakah pengaturan diri memengaruhi keterlibatan ponsel pada populasi ini. Dengan menggunakan desain korelasional kuantitatif, studi ini melibatkan 446 mahasiswa universitas Islam sebagai partisipan. Data dianalisis menggunakan regresi linier sederhana. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa hubungan antara pengaturan diri dan keterlibatan ponsel tidak signifikan secara statistik. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa pengaturan diri tidak secara signifikan memengaruhi tingkat keterlibatan ponsel di kalangan mahasiswa universitas Islam. Studi ini berkontribusi pada literatur tentang psikologi dan pendidikan Islam dan merekomendasikan intervensi yang berakar pada nilai-nilai agama kontekstual untuk meningkatkan kapasitas pengendalian diri mahasiswa universitas Islam di era digital.

Kata kunci: keterlibatan telepon seluler, Mahasiswa Universitas Islam, self-regulation

Introduction

In the digital age, especially Generation Z, known as digital natives, who are currently pursuing higher education, the pressure of digital content and addictive algorithms often blurs our focus and obscures our concentration. However, because not only do they use learning media and almost all learning materials are available on various digital platforms, but their social lifestyle is also all about social media, this creates a very high level of mobile phone involvement and social media platforms routinely and constantly, where excessive use can lead to addiction (Alhasan et al., 2025; Shabani, 2025). This addiction behaviour is characterized by an urge to continue engaging, difficulty in stopping use, and widespread negative impacts on an individual's psychological such as sad, anxious, restless, also academic, and social well-being (Agustina & Zainuddin, 2024; Berry et al., 2018; Smith et al., 2021). However, in the context of among Islamic university students, the challenge of self-regulation becomes more complex and multifaceted. Students not only serve as learners in a modern academic environment saturated with technological advancements, but they also face strong cultural and religious pressures to demonstrate a higher degree of self-control. These expectations are not merely general social norms but are rooted in Islamic values that regard self-control as a crucial manifestation of faith and moral maturity.

Consequently, among Islamic university student's settings are explicitly and implicitly expected to manage their behavior with discipline, particularly when facing various temptations and challenges arising from digital technological advancements. This mandated foundation of self-regulation is rooted in core Islamic principles, such as *taqwa* (a deep awareness of God's presence and oversight), *muḥasabah* (ongoing self-evaluation and accountability), and *jihad al-nafs* (the struggle against one's desires and negative impulses). These principles are traditionally regarded as strong and effective internal mechanisms for controlling excessive behavior, including in the use of digital technology. These values function as an internal control system that guides individuals to remain within ethical and spiritual boundaries, while also helping to curb impulsive urges that have the potential to harm oneself or the environment. Consequently, conceptually, these values should strengthen students' capacity to manage mobile phone involvement (Sujadi & Sulistiyo, 2025; Nawaz, 2025).

However, in practice, the constant pressure from digital content and algorithms designed to foster dependency often obscures and weakens individuals' ability to exercise self-control. Modern digital systems are designed with content personalization features, repetitive notifications, and instant feedback mechanisms that are intentionally engineered to sustain users' attention continuously. This situation creates a sharp tension between internalized values and a highly stimulating and tempting external reality, thereby hindering individuals' efforts to maintain optimal self-regulation when mobile phone involvement (Berry et al., 2018; Lyngs et al., 2019; Smith et al., 2021).

Research conducted by Adityaputra and Salma (2022) indicates that the higher a student's level of self-regulation, the lower their engagement with social media on their phones. This aligns with the findings of Miftahurrahmah and Harahap (2020), who found that self-regulation has a significant relationship in reducing social media addiction among university students. Although an extensive body of empirical research has consistently demonstrated a significant inverse relationship between self-regulation and mobile phone involvement across various populations (Bibi, 2025; Wang, 2025; Zhao et al., 2025), the vast majority of these studies have been conducted within general or secular cultural contexts. This leaves a critical gap in understanding the unique dynamics among Islamic university students, whose religious framework rooted in principles of *taqwā* (God-consciousness) and *muḥasabah* (self-accountability) is expected to foster heightened self-regulatory capacities in the face of digital temptations (Sujadi & Sulistiyo, 2025).

Islam profoundly emphasizes the cultivation of *muḥasabah* (self-reflection), *taqwā* (God-consciousness), and disciplined self-control as core virtues that equip individuals with robust internal

mechanisms for behavioral regulation. Nevertheless, the pervasive dominance of instantaneous digital content, algorithmically driven addictive mechanisms, and unrelenting digital social pressures in the contemporary era can significantly attenuate these protective capacities, thereby weakening students' self-regulatory faculties amid the hyper-stimulating digital environment (Sujadi & Sulistiyo, 2025; Silalahi & Suryani, 2025).

Research by Adityaputra and Salma (2022) indicates that students with high levels of self-regulation tend to be better able to control their mobile phone involvement, thereby avoiding addictive patterns of use. Based on these findings, the researchers are interested in continuing the study with a specific focus on students at Islamic universities. This research is considered important because it not only fills a gap in the literature regarding Islamic students but also re-examines theoretical assumptions regarding the role of self-regulation in controlling digital behavior within a religious context.

It is hoped that this study will provide more contextually relevant empirical contributions by simultaneously integrating psychological and spiritual dimensions. Additionally, the study's results are expected to serve as a foundation for designing more adaptive and needs-based intervention strategies. This study posits the hypothesis that self-regulation influences the level of mobile phone involvement among students at Islamic universities, given that they hold religious values that may influence such behavior. Therefore, the primary objective of this study is to examine the extent of the relationship between self-regulation and mobile phone involvement among Islamic university students.

Methods

This study employs a quantitative approach with a correlational design to examine the relationship between self-regulation and mobile phone involvement among students at Islamic universities. The study sample consisted of 446 undergraduate students from an Islamic university in Indonesia, specifically the State Islamic University of Palembang, South Sumatra, who were selected using a non-probability sampling technique with a convenience sampling approach based on ease of access and the respondents' willingness to participate. Data collection was conducted via an online questionnaire distributed in early April 2025. The instruments used included an adapted version of the Self-Regulation Scale developed by Diehl et al. (2006) and Mobile Phone Involvement Scale developed by Walsh et al. (2010). Data analysis was performed using simple linear regression with the aid of IBM SPSS Statistics version 24 to test the effect of self-regulation on mobile phone involvement. Prior to the analysis, assumption tests were conducted, including tests for normality, linearity, homoscedasticity, and outlier detection, which indicated that the data met the requirements for parametric analysis, thereby confirming the suitability of the regression model for use.

Results and Discussion

Results

To obtain an initial profile of the study variables, descriptive statistical analyses were conducted to examine the central tendencies and variability of self-regulation and mobile phone involvement scores in a sample of 446 Islamic university students. The following table shows the minimum, maximum, average (mean) and standard deviation values of each variable.

Table 1. Descriptive data

Variable	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Self-regulation	446	31	87	50	8.8
Mobile phone involvement	446	29	75	50	9.0

Based on **Table 1.** above, the average value (mean) for the variable self-regulation is 50 with a standard deviation of 8.8, and a score range between 31 to 87. Meanwhile, the average value for mobile phone involvement is also at 50, with a standard deviation of 9.0 and a score range between 29 and 75. In general, similar average values for the two variables provide an initial indication that there is a potential functional relationship between the two, which will be studied further through path regression analysis. The relatively symmetrical distribution of the data also supports the suitability of the data for parametric analysis.

Table 2. Variable Categorization Analysis

Variable	Frequency		
	Low	Medium	High
Self-regulation	72 (16,1%)	320 (71,7%)	54 (12,1%)
mobile phone involvement	69 (15,5%)	305 (68,4%)	72 (16,1%)

Most of the students are in the medium mobile phone involvement category (68,4%), indicating that the majority of students are at the middle academic level. Only 16.1% of students are at the mobile phone involvement, and 15.5% are at the low level. This pattern shows a distribution that tends to focus on the medium category. The majority of respondents were also in the medium self-regulation category (71.7%), indicating a fairly stable but not optimal level of self-regulation. Only 12.1% had high self-regulation, and 16.1% were still in the low category (**Table 2.**). Because both have data distribution that is close to normal and centered on medium values, the relationship between variables tends to be weak this is in accordance with previous regression results which showed that the effect of self-regulation on mobile phone involvement was not significant.

Table 3. Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.063	.004	.002	8.997

In the **Table 3.** above, $R = .063$ shows that the relationship between self-regulation and mobile phone involvement is very weak. $R \text{ Square} = .004$ means only about .4% within variability mobile phone involvement which can be explained by self-regulation. This indicates that self-regulation hardly makes a significant contribution in explaining mobile Phone Involvement variations. $\text{Adjusted R Square} = .002$, the value adjusted after considering the number of predictors and samples, still shows a very mobile phone involvement contribution.

Tabel 4. ANOVA (Analysis of Variance)

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	142.547	1	142.547	1.761	.185

We can see $F = 1.761$ with $p = .185$ (Sig.) $> .05$, meaning that the overall regression model is not significant (**Table 4.**). This means variable self-regulation does not significantly affect the level of mobile phone involvement on students in this research.

Table 5. Coefficients (Regression Coefficients)

Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
(Constant)	53.211	2.457	—	21.658	.000
SR	-.064	.048	-.063	-1.327	.185

In this study, the p value = $.185 > .05$ was found, indicating that this effect was not statistically significant (**Tabel 5.**). Beta coefficient = $-.063$ indicates a negative relationship direction, but with a very mobile phone involvement effect. Based on the results of the regression analysis, self-regulation did not have a significant influence on mobile phone involvement among students in this study ($p > .05$). The relationship between the two variables is classified as very weak, both in terms of correlation ($R = .063$) and the contribution of variance explained ($R^2 = .004$). Thus, the hypothesis that self-regulation has a significant effect on mobile phone involvement is not proven in this study.

In theoretical and empirical studies, it was found that self-regulation abilities were negatively correlated with the level of mobile phone involvement. Individuals who are able to manage impulses, emotions, and when they use them tend to have lower levels of addiction. However, this research actually found that the relationship between self-regulation and mobile phone involvement among Islamic students was very weak and not statistically significant. This means that self-regulation is only able to explain about .4% of the variation in mobile phone involvement. These results imply that other factors outside of self-regulation may play a more dominant role in explaining addictive tendencies towards social media.

These findings underscore the importance of deeper, nuanced academic reflection to understand the complexities of digital addiction behavior, particularly within the context of specific cultural and religious values. Digital addiction behavior cannot be viewed solely as the result of individual factors; rather, it must be understood as a phenomenon arising from the complex interaction between the individual, the social environment, and the underlying value systems. Therefore, an approach that sensitively considers cultural and religious contexts is crucial to ensure a more comprehensive and holistic understanding of these dynamics. In this regard, the comprehensive values of Islam hold great potential as a foundation for building robust self-control mechanisms. When these values are deeply internalized and lived out, individuals are expected to develop a profound moral and spiritual awareness that serves as a guide in directing behavior, including in managing the use of digital technology. Values such as *taqwa*, *muḥasabah*, and self-control do not merely function as norms or rules but also serve as a source of inner strength that helps individuals navigate various behavioral challenges in the modern era.

Furthermore, the role of these religious values becomes increasingly evident and measurable when operationalized through validated instruments, such as the Kaffah of Islamic Scale developed by [Amalia et al. \(2023\)](#) and the Religiosity Scale in Indonesia by [Suryadi and Hayat \(2021\)](#). These instruments

enable systematic measurement of the level of internalization of religious values, thereby providing a strong empirical basis for understanding how these values can empower the younger generation, particularly students at Islamic universities, in facing the widespread negative impacts of the digital age. However, the practice of religious values alone is insufficient without the support of a robust educational system and a contextual and adaptive approach to the evolving times. Higher education institutions play a strategic role not only in transferring knowledge but also in shaping students' character and personality. In this context, guidance and counseling services become crucial as a means to help students develop self-awareness, self-regulation skills, and the ability to navigate digital challenges in a more prudent manner (Kholifah, 2022; Yahya, 2023).

Strengthening digital literacy is another aspect that must not be overlooked. Digital literacy is not only about the technical ability to use technology, but also encompasses the critical ability to filter information, mobile phone involvement, and maintain a balance between digital life and one's moral values. Therefore, mastering digital literacy is crucial so that students can maintain their moral integrity amidst the various evolving challenges in an increasingly complex digital era (Yahya, 2023; Putri & Supriansyah, 2021)

The results showed that the majority of respondents had a medium level of self-regulation and mobile phone involvement. This reflects that students are not yet fully optimal in their ability to regulate digital behavior (Zelfina & Nurmina, 2023; Prambayu & Dewi, 2019). The weakness of the relationship between self-regulation and mobile phone involvement explains that students' internal control mechanisms are not effective enough in dealing with the attraction of a hyper-stimulating digital environment. Research indicates that students who are exposed to the internet have a greater tendency to experience addiction, which can disrupt study focus and self-development (Zelfina & Nurmina, 2023; Prambayu & Dewi, 2019). Therefore, there needs to be a greater focus from educational institutions to integrate religious values education with digital literacy that is adaptive to students' position in this digital era (Mukhlas, 2020; Juhana et al., 2022).

In the context of digital developments and the increasingly dominant use of social media, the phenomenon of digital addiction has become a major concern. In the Islamic perspective, every individual is endowed with reason and qalb, which function as tools for recognizing truth and maintaining morality (Astra et al., 2024). Unfortunately, social media algorithms are often designed to trigger excessive engagement, thus diverting individuals from the reflective process that is essential in contemplating and understanding reality. This leads to a decrease in students' ability to apply the principles of tafakkur (contemplation) and tadabbur (understanding deeply) which are very important in Islamic education and everyday life (Budiyanto & Ridho, 2024).

Shifting information consumption patterns, which tend to be reactive rather than reflective, pose greater challenges than just psychological skills. It also creates an epistemic and spiritual crisis, where individuals become more easily influenced by viral content presented by social media (Allcott et al., 2022; Cemiloglu et al., 2022). Research shows that the use of social media has two sides: on the one hand, it can increase interaction and critical thinking (Budiyanto & Ridho, 2024), but on the other hand, it can strengthen addictive behavior that contributes to mental health problems (Solem et al., 2020). Thus, it is important to develop an approach that balances mobile phone involvement with moral principles that are in line with Islamic values. Thus, this research makes an important contribution in enriching the literature which is still dominated by secular approaches in understanding mobile phone involvement.

Although the present study found no statistically significant relationship between self-regulation and mobile phone involvement, these results in no way diminish the critical importance of advancing a more nuanced understanding of student digital behavior in the contemporary era. Theoretically, this research enriches the scholarly discourse on digital addiction within Islamic university student populations a domain long dominated by secular and Western-centric paradigms. The findings highlight the necessity for predictive models of mobile phone involvement to integrate salient contextual variables, including religiosity, digital social pressure, self-efficacy, and individual value systems. Rather than functioning as

an isolated predictor, self-regulation must be conceptualized as an embedded component within a broader matrix of personality traits and spiritual dimensions. Accordingly, future investigations are strongly encouraged to incorporate Islamic psychological constructs in order to examine the interplay between self-regulation and mobile phone involvement among Islamic university students with greater theoretical depth and cultural relevance.

Discussion

The present study revealed no statistically significant relationship between self-regulation and mobile phone involvement among Islamic university students ($R = .063$, $R^2 = .004$, $p = .185$). This finding diverges markedly from the predominant empirical literature, which has consistently documented a robust negative association between self-regulatory capacities and various forms of digital addiction. In most general and secular student populations, higher self-regulation has been shown to function as a protective factor, significantly reducing the likelihood of problematic mobile phone or smartphone use. For instance, Bibi (2025) reported that self-regulation has a fairly strong negative influence on mobile phone involvement among college students ($\beta = -1.36$). This finding confirms that self-regulation is crucial in controlling a person's tendency to mobile phone involvement too frequently or excessively. Individuals with high levels of self-regulation tend to be better able to manage their internal urges, control impulses, and direct their behavior in line with their long-term goals, so they are less likely to get caught up in compulsive mobile phone involvement. In this context, self-regulation functions as an effective internal control mechanism to limit how long and how intensely an individual uses digital devices. Thus, the better a person's self-regulation ability, the lower the likelihood that the individual will engage excessively to the point of potentially developing addictive behavior toward mobile phones.

In line with these findings, Wang (2025) demonstrates that self-regulation not only plays a direct role but also acts as a mediating variable that helps mitigate the negative impact of excessive mobile phone involvement on academic performance. This indicates that self-regulation serves as a crucial link between cell phone usage behavior and students' academic outcomes. With good self-regulation skills, students are able to manage their phone usage time in a balanced manner, maintain focus while studying, and minimize distractions arising from notifications or attention-diverting digital content. Additionally, the study found that the protective effect of self-regulation is stronger among older students. This suggests that self-regulation skills develop alongside psychological maturity, where experience and maturity help improve the ability to manage digital behavior more wisely.

These findings are also supported by previous research by Mascia et al. (2020), Gökçearsan et al. (2016), and Çevik et al. (2020), which consistently found that self-regulation is a major negative predictor of mobile phone use engagement. These various studies indicate that self-regulation is not only significantly associated with, but also capable of explaining a large portion of the variation in addictive behavior observed in individuals. This reinforces the understanding that self-regulation plays a crucial role in explaining why some people can maintain healthy control over their mobile phone involvement, while others struggle to limit their own behavior. The consistency of results across these studies further solidifies the position of self-regulation as a key construct in the theoretical framework used to understand the phenomenon of excessive mobile phone involvement, particularly in the context of digital addiction among college students.

Such congruence across diverse secular contexts underscores a well-established theoretical proposition rooted in self-regulation theory; individuals with superior impulse control, goal monitoring, and emotional regulation are better equipped to resist the pull of algorithmically engineered digital stimuli. The present study's non-significant result therefore represents a notable point of divergence, highlighting the boundary conditions of self-regulation as a universal buffer against mobile phone involvement. This discrepancy is not anomalous; a growing body of research conducted within religiously embedded populations has similarly reported attenuated or non-significant associations. Atiri and Ipietegha (2024) found no statistically significant correlation between religiosity and mobile phone involvement among Muslim undergraduates ($r = .118$, $p = .062$), suggesting that religious commitment alone does not reliably

translate into behavioral self-control in digital environments. In the Indonesian Muslim context, [Sujadi and Sulistiyo \(2025\)](#) observed that while religiosity exerts indirect effects on academic procrastination through self-regulated learning, the direct pathway from religiosity to mobile phone involvement was not sufficiently strong to override environmental pressures. These parallels indicate that in populations where religious values are culturally salient such as Islamic university students the protective mechanism of self-regulation may be moderated or diluted by contextual factors unique to faith-based educational settings.

Several plausible explanations account for the observed differences. First, the hyper-stimulating digital ecosystem, characterized by instant gratification, addictive algorithms, and pervasive social pressure, may overwhelm even well-developed internal controls rooted in Islamic teachings such as *muḥasabah* (self-reflection) and *taqwā* (God-consciousness). Second, the measurement instruments employed adapted versions of the Self-Regulation Scale by [Diehl et al. \(2006\)](#) and Mobile Phone Involvement Scale by [Walsh et al. \(2010\)](#) may capture general dispositional self-regulation rather than domain-specific digital self-regulation, which recent studies suggest is a more proximal predictor ([Kokoç et al., 2025](#)). Third, the relatively homogeneous sample of Islamic university students, who already operate within a religiosity-saturated environment, may exhibit restricted variance in both self-regulation and mobile phone involvement scores (means of 50 for both variables), thereby attenuating detectable relationships. In contrast, studies in secular contexts typically draw from more heterogeneous populations where baseline self-regulation levels vary widely, yielding stronger statistical associations.

From a theoretical standpoint, these findings enrich Islamic psychology by challenging the assumption that religious values automatically confer superior self-regulatory resources in the digital age. While Islamic principles undoubtedly provide a moral framework for behavioral regulation, their translation into effective resistance against mobile phone involvement appears contingent upon additional contextual variables such as digital literacy, peer norms, and explicit integration of faith-based self-regulation strategies. This study thus contributes to a more nuanced understanding of digital addiction within religiously contextualized populations, moving beyond secular-Western paradigms that have long dominated the discourse. Practically, the results underscore the urgency of developing culturally tailored interventions that combine Islamic psychological constructs, e.g., operationalized through instruments such as the *Kāffah of Islamic Scale*; [Amalia et al., \(2023\)](#) and Indonesian religious scale by [Suryadi et al. \(2023\)](#) with targeted digital self-regulation training. Such programs could strengthen the bridge between doctrinal ideals and everyday behavioral control, fostering resilience among Islamic university students.

In summary, while the present findings diverge from the majority of secular studies that affirm self-regulation as a potent protective factor, they converge with emerging evidence from faith-based contexts in revealing the complex interplay between religiosity, self-regulation, and digital behavior. This complexity invites future research to employ longitudinal designs, domain-specific measures, and multi-level modeling to further elucidate the mechanisms through which Islamic values may or may not buffer against mobile phone involvement in the digital era.

Conclusion

The results of this study revealed empirical data showing $F = 1.761$ with $p = .185$ (Sig.) $> .05$, meaning that the regression model as a whole is not significant. Thus, the hypothesis that self-regulation significantly influences the tendency toward mobile phone involvement was not supported in the context of Islamic university students in this study. Descriptively, the majority of students were at a medium level in both self-regulation (71.7%) and Mobile phone involvement tendencies (68.4%). This condition reflects a functional ambiguity in students' self-regulation; they are not at a critical point of addiction, but they are also not strong enough to manage mobile phone involvement adaptively. These findings indicate that Islamic university students are in a digital vulnerability zone a medium group with the potential to escalate into addictive behaviour if they are not equipped with contextual character-building strategies.

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