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Home > *Archives* > *Vol 7, No 3 (2018)*

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Table of Contents

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Culture
Education
History Literary
Love Malaysia
National Security
Nigeria Panama
Poverty Violence
advertising art art
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education love
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CONTENT

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All

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Browse
By Issue
By Author
By Title

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All ▼

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CONTENT

Search

Search Scope
All

Search

Browse
By Issue
By Author
By Title

The Smartphone Use in Indonesian Schools: The High School Students' Perspectives

Karmila Machmud[1]

ABSTRACT

The goal of this research is to investigate schools' policy of using a mobile phone at schools from the perspective of secondary school students in Indonesia. It happens to be a long debate involving educators in Indonesia on whether or not the use of smartphone can be allowed in schools. So far, all we hear is the perspectives of teachers and schools' administrators regarding the ban but never from the students, even though the students are the subject of these debates. This research is conducted in order to investigate, as well as to give the opportunity for students' to voice their opinion, point of views, and perspectives toward the issue of banning smartphone use at schools. The data of this research was collected through online survey aimed at secondary schools' students in Gorontalo, Indonesia. There are 250 students from 5 high schools have responded to the online surveys. The result shows that even though students mostly believe that the use of smartphone should be integrated into teaching and learning process, an appropriate policy of using it at school should be designed in order to get rid of the negative impact cause by it, and to maximize the use of it as a sophisticated resource to help students learn better at school.

Keywords: Smartphone ban, students' perspectives, MALL, EFL.
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1.   Introduction

Since the beginning of its existence, smartphone has brought many advantages in human's life. The use of it has penetrated all aspects of life including education. The report from the statistic portal shows that the total number of mobile phone users worldwide from 2013 to 2019 shows a significant increase of the mobile phone users from only 4.05 billion in 2013 to 4.77 billion in 2017, and it is predicted that the number will climb to 5.07 billion users in 2019 (Statista, 2017 as cited in Machmud & Abdulah, 2017).

Studies have suggested that the use of mobile phone in teaching and learning process have brought significant benefit to teachers and students, especially in teaching English as a foreign language skill (Machmud & Abdulah, 2017; Baliu & Machmud, 2017; Alzu'bi & Sabha, 2013; Huang & Sun, 2010; and

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Baleghizadeh & Oladrostam, 2010). A previous study study shows that students have positive perceptions towards the use of smartphone, especially the use of mobile phones' applications to learn English (Weng & Chen, 2015). However, with the growing number of smartphone users, problems also begin to arise as the negative impact of using smartphone among children and teenager. Cyber bullying, pornography content access, and distractions from lessons are some problems that occurs to be the main concerns that lead to the ban of smartphone use at schools.

The arguments of the potential ban of smartphone at schools are mostly coming from teachers, parents, and schools' administrations who concern about the risk faced by the students because of the use of smartphone. There is small number of, if not nonexistent, research investigating students' voices or perspectives regarding the ban. Therefore, this research focuses on understanding the students' voices and perspectives toward the smartphone ban at schools.

One of the results of this research shows that more than 90% students, in this case, high schools students, own a smartphone. This indicates that most high school students are familiar with the use of smartphone in their daily life. Smartphone became an integral part of their daily life. This previous knowledge and skills can actually be used in teaching and learning process if there is an appropriate design in integrating the use of it. Taken it away by banning the use of it at school would directly affect these children's life. Thus, it is equally significant to hear their opinion, point of views, perspectives toward the ban of smartphone at schools.

This research is conducted to investigate students' perspectives of the mobile phone ban at secondary schools in Indonesia. An online survey has been spread targeting high school students to gain data about their perspectives toward the school policy regarding the use of smartphone at secondary schools in Gorontalo, Indonesia.

2.   Literature review

Teachers nowadays are encouraged to integrate the use of technology in teaching learning process because they are teaching digital natives who have their own preference for learning (Prensky, 2001). The integration of technology in the teaching and learning process is essential to support the digital natives. The classroom needs to provide an environment and atmosphere that allow students to create and construct their knowledge, share and collaborate with their peers who are not only from in-class groups but also from around the world (Warschauer, 2003).

One of the technology tools that have gained attention from students nowadays is a smartphone. The number of smartphone use in Indonesia continues to increase significantly since 2011, and the number is predicted to continue growing until 2022. The following table from statista.com shows the number of smartphone users in Indonesia from 2011 to 2017 and its prediction to 2022.

The figure shows that the number of smartphone user Indonesia has increased from only 11.7 million in 2011 to 62.69 million in 2017. The number is predicted to hit 89.86 million in 2022. This number shows that the penetration of smartphone use is continue to increase especially in Indonesia; therefore, it should be considered to use in enhancing the quality of education.

There are some types of learning through Smartphones: learning through sound, learning through short text messages, learning through a graphical display, learning through information obtained from data, learning through the internet search and learning through camera and video clips (Sevari, 2012).
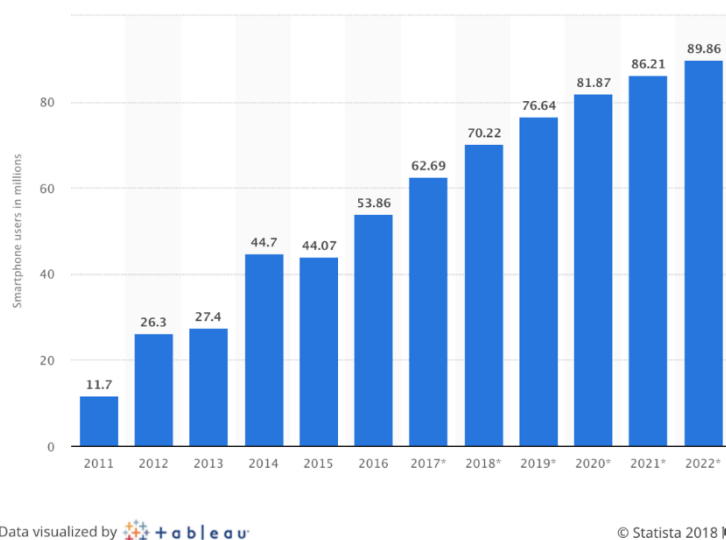

Figure 1: The number of smartphone users in Indonesia.
Source: www.statista.com/statistics/266729/smartphone-users-in-indonesia/

2.1   Impacts of smartphone

Sarwar & Soomro (2013, p.218) argues that "almost all walk of human life has impacted by Smartphone including in educational area". It has drastically changed the cultural norms and behavior of individuals. The impacts are both on the positive side and also on the negative side.

2.1.1   Positive impact

Students, nowadays, have access to the internet in daily basis. "The use of the Internet has become a part of life of every student and a mean to search for the information anytime and anywhere they need it" (Sarwar & Soomro, 2013, p.218). With the use of the Internet, students can easily find information, fact, content, and research. The use of smartphone makes it even easier for them. Thus, if teachers are only teaching their students fact, information, content, and research, then the teacher is obsolete.

The use of smartphone can also be used for accelerating students' comprehension. In teaching EFL reading, for instance, students are often faced problem of comprehension due to their lack of vocabulary. The use of smartphone application such as dictionary can help them find the meaning of vocabularies in no time compared to using printed dictionary.

The use of smartphone can also promote collaborative learning. "Smartphone within and without the classroom makes it easier for students and teachers to collaborate" (Sarwar & Soomro, 2013, p.218). Students can also keep up with the class progress even though they are on sick leave for instance. Teacher can use an Internet-based application as a platform to create an online classroom that can be accessed by students through their smartphone.

2.1.1   Negative impact

It cannot be denied that the use of smartphone can distract students from the lesson. When they have a chance to use it, students are often tempted to check on their social media, to listen to music using headphone, and even to chat with other students. "It is not only distracting for the student, but it can also become distracting for other students around them and even sometimes for the whole class" (Sarwar & Soomro, 2013, p.218).

The easy access to the Internet gives students a freedom to browse all kind information they need, including porn and violent contents that are forbidden for their age. On the other hand, smartphone can be the tool for test cheating, because they can exchange information related to the answers of the test.

2.2   Smartphone ban at schools

The emergence of negative impacts of using mobile phone at schools has sparked debates among teachers, parents, and school administrators on whether or not the use of smartphone should be banned at school. It also has drawn attention to the government in some countries.

For example, France, through the Federal Education Minister, has called on schools to forbid the use of smartphone at schools in France. Although he addresses the importance of using technology in learning, he argues that phones can distract students from lessons and can be a "platform for bullying". (Bita, 2018, para. 3). The school ban on smartphone in French primary and secondary schools will be imposed on September 2018, even though teachers and parents are still divided over the regulation (Samuel, 2017).

The Irish National Teachers' Organization mentioned that most schools in Irish have policies to stop the use of mobile phone at school. On the other hand, some schools have a leaner policy on banning smartphone at schools considering that digital strategy has gained importance result in students' achievement at schools as an important resource (O'Brien, 2018).

In Indonesia, the causes of the ban are mainly because of the children access to pornography content and distraction from school lesson as the main concern. However, the government have not officially released the rule regarding the banning of smartphone use at schools in Indonesia. The ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection of Indonesia admitted that the government will regulate the banning of hand phone (mobile phone) at schools. The ban will be imposed to all school levels, started from primary to secondary schools (Tempo co, 2016). However, I think it requires an extensive investigation on the damage of smartphone at schools before the ban regulation is implemented.

3.   Methodology

This research is using an online questionnaire that has been spread targeting secondary school students in Gorontalo. It turns out that 250 students from 5 high schools in Gorontalo have participated as respondents of this research. The data are then analyzed by using Likert Scale and are presented in the result section in bar charts and tables.

4.   Results

The result from the questionnaire shows that from 250 respondents only 17 who do not own a smartphone. The respondents are high school students from 5 popular high schools in Gorontalo, Indonesia. This data is fantastic considering that smartphone had not widely introduced in Indonesia until the 1990s, where the owners were mostly rich people due to its expensive price. However, with the growing strict competition between the smartphone providers made the price decrease and most people nowadays can afford it even to buy it for their children.

With lots of features offered by a smartphone leads to more time and things to do with it. The use mobile phone is not only limited to making a call or sending a text message but also to do lots of things such as browsing information, sending emails, do business, chatting, watching movies, and playing online and offline games.

Respondents in this research mostly spend 1 to 5 hours a day using their smartphone. The following figure shows the complete results on the time spent by the students as the respondents of this research in using their smartphone.

The figures show the results of the respondent answer on the question 'how many hours per day have you spend for using smartphone?''. There 5 respondents skipped this questions, and from 245 respondents who answer this question, there are 42.45% students spend 1-5 hours per day using a smartphone; and 33.06% spends 6 hours per day. This data indicates that the largest percentage is in the category of 1-5 hours per day. This is still included in the safe category according to research

Figure 2: The time spent for using smartphone

conducted by Przybylski (2014). This study shows that the amount of time that should be used by children aged 10-16 years is 1-3 hours. Children will tend to be unhappy if they spend more time using the gadget to play the game for more than 3 hours. Although this study tends to focus on gaming electronics, we can assume that 1-5 hours for high school kids are still in the safe category. But it what comes to my concern is this data also shows that there are about 24.49% students who spend more than 10 hours per day, and there is 6, 53% students who spend more than 20 hours per day, which is too much. According to this study, if the time spent more than 4 hours 17 minutes per day, then the level of youth welfare will tend to decrease and will affect the performance of the brain (Przybylski 2014).

4.1   The policy of using smartphone at schools

Most schools in Indonesia in general, and Gorontalo in particular, prohibit the use of smartphones in the school environment. Of the 5 schools we visited there was only one school that allows the use of smartphones in its school environment, while four other schools were restricted to use smartphones in school environments, some were only allowed with teachers' permission to use in instructional process. We confirm this information by providing questions to the respondents in this study about whether their school permits the use of smartphones in their schools. Here is their answer.

The data in the figure below shows that most of the students / respondents (75.34%) have never, rarely, and if ever been only occasionally allowed to use smartphones in the school environment. Only 24.66% of the respondents answer often and always allowed to use smartphone in schools; these respondents come from a school that allows students to use smartphones in school environments, and

the rest are students who come from schools that restrict and even prohibit the use of smartphones in the school environment.

Through this research we need data on whether their teachers ever let them use smartphones in the classroom to help with the learning process, even though smartphone utilization is not allowed in the school environment. The following bar chart shows the answer of the students/respondent to the question.

Figure 4 shows that only 15 respondents (about 6%) of a total of 249 respondents answered the question of whether teachers allowed them to use smartphones in the class stated that they were always and often allowed to use them in the classroom, but most respondents said they never (32.13%), rarely (22.49%), and sometimes (39.36%) which is the response with the highest percentage in this question.

It seems from the data above can be concluded that teachers rarely even almost never use a smartphone in the learning process. Our assumption is that if smartphones are allowed for use in the classroom it will keep students from focusing on the lessons being taught because they will be tempted to use them for anything else that has nothing to do with the lessons teachers are teaching. For that we ask students whether they are often tempted to check their social media accounts or for anything else that will interfere with their learning concentration. The following figures and tables are their answer data.

The data in figure 5 and 6 above shows that the 'sometimes' answer reaches the highest percentage (26.51%), this means that they are only occasionally tempted to access social media accounts or other content that have nothing
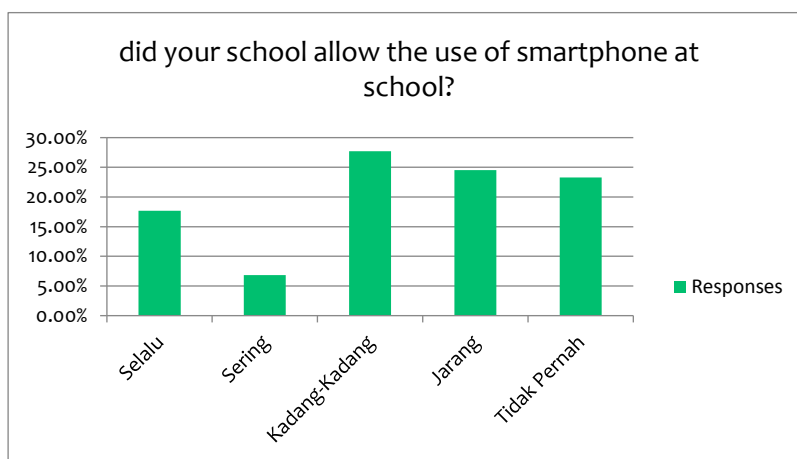

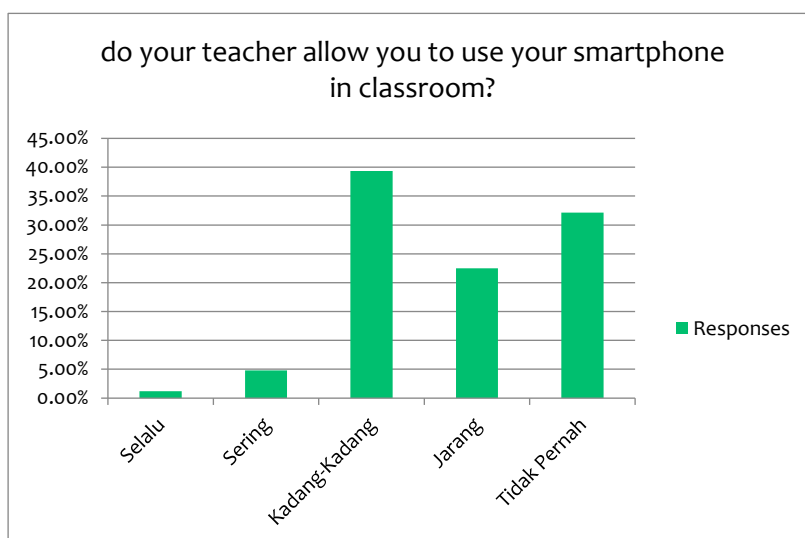
Figure 3: The school policy on using smartphone at schools

Figure 4: The school policy on using smartphone in classroom

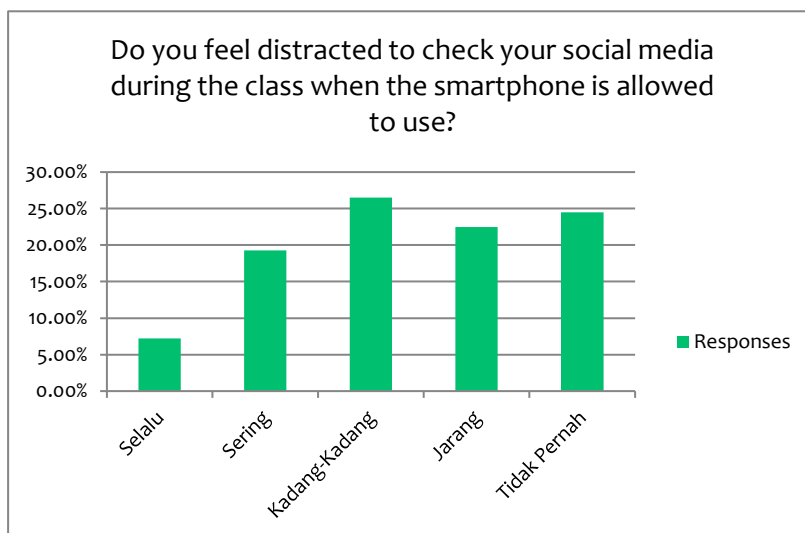Figure 5: The data on whether or not the use of smartphone is a distraction

to do with the current peer taught at the time. The most interesting of the data above is 24.50% of respondents stated that they have never tempted to access social media accounts or other content if in case the smartphone is allowed to be used in the classroom. Nevertheless, more than half of the respondents (52.42%) agreed (36.29%) even strongly agreed (16.13%) that smartphone use in the

classroom could interfere with their learning concentration in the classroom. Figure 11 shows the complete data about this.

The data in the figure above also shows that only 10.48% of respondents disagree and only 3.23% of respondents strongly disagree that the use of smartphones in the classroom can disrupt their learning concentration.

4.2 The availability of internet access at schools

The availability of Internet access for smartphone users is one factor that determines the high frequency of smartphone utilization per day.

Data of the purpose of smartphone utilization discussed earlier shows that most respondents use smartphones for personal satisfaction such as for social media or for gaming. However, we would like to ask specifically to the respondents whether they have used a smartphone to help them study either at home or at school. Their answers are as follows:

The above figure, performs that the highest percentage (36.55%) is on the answer that respondents often use smartphones to help them study at home and only 1.20% of respondents say they have never use smartphones to help them study at home.

The data above shows that out of a total of 249 respondents who responded to this question there were about 92.37% of respondents had used a smartphone to help them study at
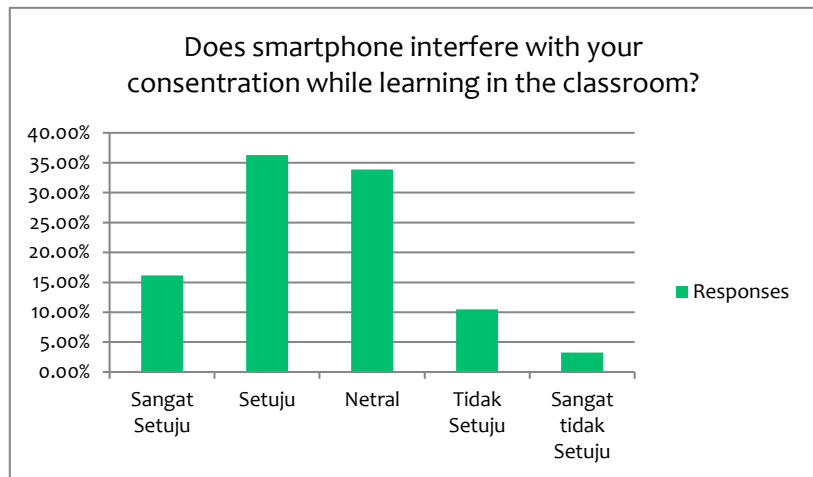

Figure 6: The data whether or not the use of smartphone interfere with students' concentration

Figure 7: Data of smartphone utilization for studying at home

Figure 8: Data of smartphone utilization for studying at school

home, even 24.90% stated that they always use the smartphone while studying at home.

If most of the respondents stated that they often use smartphones while studying at home, then do they also use smartphones to help them study at school? The following figure shows the percentage of their answers.

From the figure above, it is clear that the highest percentage of answer is that students sometimes use smartphones to help them learn in school (30.12%), and there are 10.84% of the total number of respondents saying they never use a smartphone to help them study at school. But there are 22.89% of respondents who answered that they often use smartphones to help them study at school, and 14.86% of respondents said they always use smartphones to help them study at school.

5. Conclusion

Data obtained from the questionnaires in the research shows very interesting results to be concluded as follows. Almost all students have Smartphones, out of 250 respondents only 17 who do not have smartphones. Students have internet access via Wi-Fi available both at home and at their school each day. On the other hand, they can access the internet via school Wi-Fi, but not all schools allow the use of smartphones in the school environment. From five schools where research is conducted, only one school allows the use of smartphones in the school environment. The use of smartphones is permitted only if requested by the teacher to support the learning process.

In some schools, no smartphones use is allowed in the classroom, even during the learning process, smartphones are collected by the teacher. There are two reasons behind this prohibition: the first that students are worried about accessing pornographic content and other content that can undermine morality and student personality. The other reason is that students tend to not focus and distracted.

Despites the ban of using smartphone at their schools, students, as the participants of this research, show positive perspectives toward the use of smartphone at school. They argue that it can help them studying both at home and at school. The use of smartphone can also motivate them to learn independently. For its use in English learning, the students believe that the use of smartphone can facilitate them to learn English skills at school and independently at home. Thus, there should be an encouragement for teachers to use it in the instructional process.

On the other hand, the students also did not deny the flaws of using smartphone at schools. They agree that the use of smartphone in classroom often distract them from the lesson being taught by the teacher; and they also admit that sometimes they feel tempted to check on their social media during the teaching and learning process.

6. Implications

The result of this research shows that students have positive perspectives toward the use of smartphone at schools; thus, the policy of banning its use in schools should be considered. However, the students in this research also address the problem caused by the use of smartphone in class, such as the distraction from the learning process, and the temptation to check on their social media during the learning process. Therefore, the smartphone integration policy in schools should be designed to accommodate both the students' need, as well as to avoid the problems that might be occurred during the instructional process.

This final result is expected to get the attention of the government; thus, further research regarding this matter is highly recommended in order to be implemented in high school and vocational schools in Indonesia.

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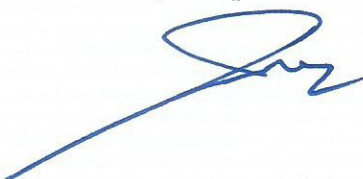
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