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# Digital Voices: Exploring High School Students' Reactions to U.S. School Phone Bans

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**ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study was to examine how U.S. high school students discuss school phone policies on Instagram, TikTok, and Reddit. Focusing on academic performance, their mental health, and peer relationships. Prior research showed that students' voices remain underrepresented, although they are the ones being affected by these phone policies. Another gap was that most research focused on surveys instead of looking at digital discussions, where research has proven people tend to answer more honestly. Data was collected through non-experimental mixed methods. Analysis of 75 posts, comments, and videos, with 25 from each app, to ensure consistency. It consisted of student-generated data from January 2025 to February 2026. Initial results showed that the majority of students have a negative sentiment towards phone bans. Policy ineffectiveness and student safety were the most prominent topics being discussed. Students reported that phone bans did not reduce distractions but instead described how students often bypassed it. These responses show that many students perceive phone bans as ineffective in addressing the concerns many policies aim to fix. Furthermore, most stated peer interactions did not increase and remained the same with or without phones. Lastly, mental health seems to be a problem among students who tend to be more shy and don't have friends in classes. So they feel more socially isolated. In conclusion, Student discussions among these three apps show that the phone ban does not fully address students' concerns. Future research should expand the sample size by using more apps and compare student digital discussions with teachers and administrators to better understand the overall impact of the phone ban.

*Keywords:* social media, student voices, phone ban, U.S. schools, academic performance, peer relationships, stress, qualitative research, mixed method, quantitative research

## INTRODUCTION

### Background

Schools are increasingly restricting cell phone use in response to concerns about classroom distraction. This has directly contributed to the growing tension surrounding students' use of cell phones. Although schools and researchers argue that cell phones are a disadvantage for students' academic performance, they can also affect students who rely on their phones for safety. Pew Research Center (2024) reported that "72% of U.S. high school teachers say cellphone distraction is a major problem in the classroom." The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2025) states that 77% of U.S. public schools restrict the use of phones in classrooms. To support this, S. John Obringer and Kent Coffey (2007) conducted a survey among 200 high school students in all 50 states and found that 84% said that their schools had some sort of phone policy. When discussing school phone policy, it's the official rules the school sets about phone use. Even though cell phone policies are widely debated, the perspectives of the students who are most affected remain understudied. This study examines how U.S. high school students discuss phone policies on social media and how the policies affect their peer relationships, mental health, and academic experience.

### Academic Performance

Although phone policies vary across states, they are driven by similar concerns regarding classroom distraction. A study conducted by Attia, Baig, Marzouk, and Khan (2017) surveyed 265 college students so they could identify what distracts them the most in classes. Results showed that one of the main distractions that students faced during classes was when cell phone rang. 68% of students reported that it would distract them (Attia et al., 2017). Building on this finding, phone interruptions reduce students' concentration. Similarly, Böttger, T., & Zierer, K (2024) stated that the increase in cell phone usage in schools leads to interference with students' academic performance and cognition. This suggests that the problem can impact how students process and retain information. Students who used their phones more tended to have lower GPAs, and students who depended on their phones less had higher GPAs (Lepp et al., 2015). This implies that students who use their phones more pay less attention to their coursework. Various laws state the main reason for phone bans are due to phones being a major source of distraction and negatively affect academic performance (California Legislature, 2024; Kentucky Legislature, 2025; Texas Education Agency, 2025; Ohio Legislature, 2024). Overall, these findings indicate that cellphone use creates immediate distractions (Attia et al., 2017), as well as longer-term cognitive and academic declines (Böttger & Zierer, 2024; Lepp et al., 2015). While these studies emphasize the importance of academic performance, fewer studies examine how phone policies affect students' peer relationships and mental health.

**Peer Relationships & Mental Health**

Beyond academic performance, cellphone use also plays a significant role in students' peer relationships and mental health. Social media is another tool where students interact with one another. Students who are less interactive with peers rely heavily on phones. This can contribute to mobile addiction. Implementing phone bans may either reduce dependence for less social students, or it can negatively affect them and lead them into depression or anxiety. Ay et al. (2024) found that students who struggle with peer interaction tend to turn to their phones, which is linked to higher levels of depressive symptoms. This suggests that relying excessively on mobile devices may negatively impact emotional well-being. This aligns with Böttger and Zierer's (2024) claim that "young people who spend a lot of time on their smartphones often have fewer direct social interactions, which can affect their sense of connection and social well-being" (p. 2). However, research shows that positive peer engagement can counter these effects. Working together increases dopamine levels in the brain for students, which supports that working together can be more beneficial than working alone (Clark & Dumas, 2015). Students who are more dependent on their phones are more likely to have weaker peer relationships (Guo et al., 2025). Therefore, encouraging positive peer interactions in school environments through teamwork can help students rely on their phones less. This can enhance students' social well-being and sense of connectedness among peers. Due to the rising concern about phone use affecting students' academic, mental, and peer relationships, schools have responded by creating stricter phone bans. These policies were created to directly reduce distractions, improve face-to-face conversations, and improve academic performance. Together, these studies suggest that cellphone use and peer interactions can have both positive and negative effects on students' mental health and social well-being.

**Teacher Perspectives vs Student Perspectives**

Missing from much of the research and discussion around cell phone bans are student perspectives. Although many studies examine teachers' perspectives and academic outcomes (Pew Research Center, 2024; Aloteibi, 2022), researchers have found that there is a lack of student-centered perspectives (Pluff, 2025). For example, 72% of U.S. high school teachers view cell phones as distracting (Pew Research Center, 2024). Beyond distraction, studies suggest that teachers associate phone restrictions with improved student behavior and engagement (Pluff, 2025; Manfra, 2025). Additionally, teachers view cellphones as a way to prevent bullying (Alakurt & Yılmaz, 2021). These concerns likely play a significant role in influencing policy decisions. Teachers who had negative beliefs about phones created stricter phone policies (Aloteibi, 2022). In his study on zero-tolerance phone policies,Pluff (2025) found a limitation in the absence of student perspectives. This indicates that although many studies look into teachers' perspectives, students who experience these policies remain understudied.

Most research on cell phone policies focuses primarily on academic results, but not on peer relationships

and mental health. This study aims to fill in this knowledge gap by examining how students discuss academic, peer relationships, and mental health in digital discussions.

Mainly focusing on how these factors influence one another through the students' own voices. For example, looking into how peer relationships that are changed due to phone policies might affect the student's mental health or their academic grade.

**Role of Social Media**

Corresponding with phone use, social media further shapes how students interact and express their perspectives. Social media is an internet-based tool that promotes collaboration and sharing of information among people (Junco, Helbergert, & Loken, 2011). Social media can be used in a positive way to promote students' engagement and benefit them academically. Research has shown that social media can be used as an educational tool and can increase students' engagement (Annetta, Minogue, Holmes, & Cheng, 2009; Chen, Lambert, & Guidry, 2010; Junco, 2012a; Junco et al., 2011; Patera, Draper, & Naef, 2008). In social media, students can build peer connections if used effectively. On the other hand, Raut and Patil (2016) argue that although social media can be beneficial, if a student gets addicted, it can negatively affect their focus on academics, real-life communications, and taking part in sports. Furthermore, they explain that cyberbullying is a huge risk and can affect students' mental health (Raut & Patil, 2016). Knowing positives and negatives, along with how to effectively use social media, can benefit social media use and users.

Many studies focus on research-generated surveys rather than students' online digital discussions. For example, Bar and colleagues (2025) relied on survey responses that were shaped by research-generated questions rather than natural student discussions. Research suggests students give answers that are seen as socially desirable instead of being honest about their opinions in surveys (Lavidas et al., 2022; Parry et al., 2021). Social media plays a huge role because students report that they tend to reveal true emotions or sensitive experiences online because of perceived anonymity. Despite this, few studies analyze students' natural digital discussions and instead focus on research-generated content regarding students' viewpoints on phone bans. This leaves a gap in understanding how students express their opinions in real-world digital contexts. As a result, this study will be examining U.S. high school students' true and honest voices through social media apps like TikTok, Reddit, and Instagram, instead of collecting students' responses from surveys like previous research.

## GAP IN LITERATURE

As found in existing literature, research on school phone bans primarily focuses on academic outcomes and teacher perspectives. Research emphasizes the negative impacts of cellphone use. This has contributed to the implementation of phone bans. However, prior research does not examine how students experience these policies, especially in relation to mental and peer relationships online. Although some studies include student perspectives, these perspectives are typically collected through surveys. Surveys

may introduce social desirability bias. Social desirability bias can limit the authenticity of students' voices. Additionally, previous studies fail to explore students' digital experiences. As a result, there is limited understanding of how students discuss and interpret school phone policies outside of structured research settings. Understanding students' experiences is critical because school phone policies that fail to address students' needs may create unintended negative effects. Additionally, analyzing natural digital discussions provides more authentic insights than surveys (Lavidas et al., 2022; Parry et al., 2021). This limitation is significant because policies that overlook students' experiences may not effectively improve academic performance and peer relationships. While this research was originally intended to focus on Kentucky high school students' perspectives regarding phone bans online, the scope was too narrow, and there wasn't enough data regarding Kentucky high school students. This led to the formulation of the research question: To what extent do U.S. high school students' self-reported experiences with school phone bans align with or challenge the assumptions and intended outcomes behind these policies?

## METHODS

This study examines how U.S. high school students discuss these phone policies on social media. To achieve this, the study uses a mixed-method approach by combining qualitative and quantitative data. A mixed-method approach is used because qualitative data captures how students feel about phone policies, and quantitative data shows how frequently the themes might occur across platforms. Molina-Azorín (2016) supports this by explaining that mixed methods provide a more comprehensive understanding of research problems by combining both qualitative and quantitative data. This method works well for this study because it allows the analysis of patterns in students' discussions and helps provide a deeper understanding of the meaning behind their opinions regarding phone bans online. Qualitative thematic analysis was used to identify patterns in student discussions, while quantitative frequency counts were used to measure the prevalence of themes across platforms.

## DATA

### *Sources*

Digital discussions from students are examined in three social media apps: Instagram, TikTok, and Reddit. These platforms were chosen due to their widespread use among U.S. high school students. These platforms serve as a space where students express their experiences and opinions related to school phone policies. Only public posts, comments, captions, and videos posted from January 2025 to February 2026 were included (see Figures 1–3 in Appendix A–C). All content was identified as likely originating from U.S. high school students based on contextual indicators of student identity. This time frame was selected to capture recent discussions following the implementation of stricter phone policies. Content posted by teachers, parents, or administrators was excluded from the data set to ensure the focus of the study was only on U.S. high school students. Only publicly accessible posts were used to ensure ethical transparency

in data collection. Including student perspectives is essential because prior research primarily focused on teachers' perspectives, although students are the primary individuals affected (Pluff, 2025). Additionally, social media platforms provide a valuable data source because they capture students' natural digital discussions, which reduces the effects of social desirability bias (Lavidas et al., 2022; Parry et al., 2021).

### *Collection*

Data was collected manually from comments, public posts, captions, and videos from TikTok, Instagram, and Reddit. The detailed qualitative data collection process for each platform is documented in Appendix A (TikTok), Appendix B (Instagram), and Appendix C (Reddit). Each includes examples of selected posts and how they were identified. Posts were selected using a purposive sampling strategy to ensure consistency in sampling across the three apps. Content was selected based on whether it explicitly mentioned school phone policies and included student perspectives. Posts that did not reference school phone policies or reflect student perspectives were excluded from the dataset. Furthermore, duplicated posts and reposted content were excluded to ensure data points represented unique student responses. A total of 75 videos, posts, and comments (25 from each platform) were selected. This ensured a balanced representation of students throughout the three social media platforms. Figure 1 in each appendix (Appendix A–C) displays the total number of posts, videos, and comments selected from each platform. This ensures transparency in how the 75 posts were distributed across the platforms. In order to collect relevant data, hashtags such as #cellphonesinclass, #U.S.schoolphones, and #highschoolphonepolicies were used to find discussions specifically related to students' experiences with phone policies. Searches were conducted using these hashtags and relevant keywords within each platform's search function. Posts were selected sequentially in chronological order from search results until 25 relevant data points per platform were reached. Collected data was organized in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet (see Appendix A–C). The spreadsheet was organized based on the social media platform, date posted, type of content, topic area, initial code, student sentiment, key idea, and supporting quote (see Figures 1–3 in Appendix A–C).

### *Analysis*

Data collected in this study followed the six-step thematic analysis model developed by Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke (2006). An inductive coding approach was used. This meant that codes were developed directly from the data rather than based on predetermined categories. This involved open coding, where codes were developed without predefined categories. This allowed patterns to emerge directly from the data. This coding procedure included familiarization with the data, generating initial codes for important ideas, grouping similar codes into themes, reviewing, refining, and producing a report of findings. Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis model, data analysis began with familiarization, where all posts were reviewed multiple times and key ideas and quotes were recorded in the spreadsheet (see Figures 2–3 in Appendix A–C). The data was then revisited to generate initial codes based on these observations. Codes were then applied to each post by assigning labels based on the main idea expressed in the post, reflecting recurring ideas related to academic performance, peer relationships

and mental health (see Figure 1 for Appendix A-C). Examples of codes included 'limited academic impact,' 'heightened anxiety,' and sStudent safety concern' (see Figure 1 for Appendix A-C). These codes were consistently applied across all data points to maintain reliability in the coding process. Codes were then grouped into broader themes which were reviewed and refined to ensure consistency and avoid overlap. A second review of the dataset was conducted to improve consistency by maintaining a codebook containing definitions for each theme throughout analysis.

After all of the themes were established, the frequency of each theme was measured. Each post was categorized based on themes it reflected. The total number of occurrences of the theme was measured. These frequencies were then converted to percentages to determine the proportion of each theme across the three social media platforms. Student sentiment (positive, negative, or mixed) was also categorized using frequency counts and converted into percentages to identify overall trends. Furthermore, this strengthened the analysis by supporting qualitative patterns with quantitative data.

### Ethical Considerations

Only public posts, comments, and videos were included in order to ensure ethical considerations were met. Private content or restricted accounts were excluded. All identifying information, such as username and school names, was removed to protect anonymity. This approach ensured students' perspectives were represented while protecting their digital privacy.

## RESULTS

### Qualitative

Thematic analysis was used to identify recurring themes and patterns to understand students' perspectives regarding phone bans. A total of 75 posts were collected, 25 each from TikTok, Instagram, and Reddit. Data was collected and analyzed in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet.

#### *Initial codes*

During the initial stage of analysis, posts, videos, and comments were reviewed. Key phrases and recurring ideas were highlighted for each post. Based on these observations, initial codes were generated to capture each idea expressed by students. Figure 1 displays the most prominent initial codes identified across the dataset (see Figure 1 in Appendix A–C for full initial code list). These codes were later analyzed to form themes as mentioned in Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis model.

**Figure 1**

Initial Codes Identified in First Cycle of Thematic Analysis

| Inital Code | Inital Code |
|---|---|
| 1. Productivity | 8.Increased peer connection |
| 2. Student safety concern | 10.Heightened anxiety |
| 3. Social isolation | 11.Phone ban with exception |
| 4. Using alternative ways | 12.Need for communication |
| 5.Ban interfering with academic tasks | 13.Teachers not caring |
| 6.Limited academic impact | 14.Phones needed for emergencies |
| 7.Inconsistent enforcement | 15. Policy scope |

*Note.* The table above shows 15 lists of codes that emerged from the first cycle of coding. This was used to generate the main 5 key themes.

***Student Safety Concerns***

Many students reported that phone bans could negatively affect their safety (n = 22, 29% of the dataset), particularly in relation to school shootings and emergency situations (see Appendix A3, B3, C3 for examples). Especially in the U.S., school shootings are a reason students argue for the importance of having phones with them for direct access to dangerous situations. This theme emerged from initial codes in Figure 1, such as “Student Safety Concern”,“Teachers Not Caring”,“Need For Communication”, and “Policy Scope”. A high school student who posted a video on Instagram expresses the concern of school shootings, “Your school is getting shot up, but you can't call for help because your state wants to ban phones”(Appendix B3). Furthermore, another high school student who posted a comment on Reddit explains the importance of phones by stating, “Nope, with the school shootings a cell phone could save lives” (Appendix C3). These findings indicate that safety concerns are a major factor influencing students' negative sentiments towards phone bans. This raises questions about whether strict bans suitably account for student safety in high-risk situations.

***Peer Relationship***

Another recurring issue most students presented was feeling socially isolated in relation to peer relationships (n = 8, 11% of the dataset). Several students reported that they would feel isolated when they weren't able to use phones during lunch or free periods. Students reported that they would use their phones during classes to appear less lonely, especially if they didn't have any friends in those classes. This theme was gathered and made by initial codes such as “ Social Isolation,” “Increased Peer Connection”, and “Heightened Anxiety.” A total of 5 videos, comments, and posts supported the idea of feeling that phone bans harmed peer connections, while 2 stated that it improved face-to-face communication among students. For example, a high school student commented on a TikTok post stating, “ Yes bc it's so fun for me to sit at lunch alone with nothing to do with no communication whatsoever” (Appendix A3).

Following this, another student posted a video on TikTok explaining, “If you don't know any kids and you're not in a class that's really talkative, it's hard to talk to other people.” On the other hand, some students mentioned the opposite effect. A student posted a comment on Reddit establishing that, “More people are talking to each other at lunch instead of being on their phones” (Appendix C3). This pattern highlights that phone bans may have mixed effects on peer relationships. This variation suggests that the impact of phone policies depends heavily on individual social circumstances.

***Perceived Policy Ineffectiveness***

Analysis of quotes regarding school phone policies demonstrated that students believed bans were ineffective in addressing the issues they intended to fix (n = 27, 36% of the dataset). Students frequently described workarounds, inconsistent enforcement, and continued classroom distractions despite restrictions. Several posts suggest that not only are academics being affected, students are finding different ways to bypass the ban. Some students are bringing iPads, some students reported hiding their phones in calculators or backpacks, while others just use it openly because some teachers disregard the ban. Although phone bans are being implemented to reduce distractions and improve academic focus, students frequently reported that they did not believe phone bans improved academic performance or reduced distractions.. For example, a student posted a comment on Instagram saying, “If a student doesn’t wanna do work, they won't know whether they have a phone or not”(Appendix B3). Another student who posted a comment on TikTok stated “it hasn't helped at my school; kids are very sneaky. they always find a way” (Appendix A3). These responses suggest that students do not view phone access as the primary cause of disengagement. Instead it highlights that motivation and classroom environment may play a larger role. Students also explain that instead of improving academic focus it takes away from it since the classroom is very digital nowadays, but not all schools have enough money to give students chromebooks. This theme emerged from initial codes such as, “ Limited Academic Impact,” “Teachers Not Caring,” “Productivity,” "Using alternative ways,” “Ban interfering with academic tasks,” and “Inconsistent reinforcement.” These responses suggest that many students question the assumption that restricting phone access alone is sufficient to improve academic engagement. Although the data can't determine whether phone bans actually improve academic performances, it reveals that students often perceive other factors like motivation and classroom environment as equally or more important.

***Emotional Support***

Students reported that they tend to use their phones for emotional support during the day (n = 5, 7% of the dataset).Several posts, comments, and videos described how phones help students manage stress and anxiety especially if they're less social. Some benefits of phones for emotional support were listed as listening to music, communicating with friends, and distraction during difficult times. This suggests that phones may function as emotional coping mechanisms for some students during the school day. This theme emerged from the initial codes of, “Heightened Anxiety,” “ Social Isolation,” and “Need for Communication.” For instance, a comment on TikTok supports phones can be used for coping mechanisms by explaining, “I have agoraphobia and my phone is my primary coping mechanism”

(Appendix A3). This implies that phone restrictions may unintentionally limit students' ability to manage stress during the school day. Limiting access may therefore have unintended consequences for students' well-being, particularly for those who rely on their devices for support.

***Inconsistent enforcement***

Lastly, this last theme showcased how students view phone policies as inconsistent across classrooms and schools (n = 13, 17% of the dataset). Several students noted that some teachers have strict phone bans while some are more lenient or just completely ignore the rule. This inconsistency led many students to believe that the ban is unfair and ineffective. This theme emerged from initial codes "Teachers not caring," "Phone ban with exception,"and "Inconsistent enforcement." For example, one student posted a comment on Reddit noting, "Some teachers enforce the bans better than others, and some schools are more lenient" (Appendix C3).

Similarly, another student comments on Reddit that rules are inconsistent by stating, "Everyone in my school talks about the ban sucking. But really I haven't noticed a difference. Most people still use their phones in class" (Appendix C3). This suggests that inconsistent reinforcement may reduce overall effectiveness and undermines credibility of phone policies weakening student compliance. As a result, students may be less likely to take the policy seriously. Students perceived that inconsistent enforcement weakened the overall impact of phone policies. Overall, these themes show the concerns about effectiveness, safety, and enforcement regarding phone bans. This indicates that students evaluate phone bans not just based on academic outcomes but also how the policy affects their daily experiences and sense of security.

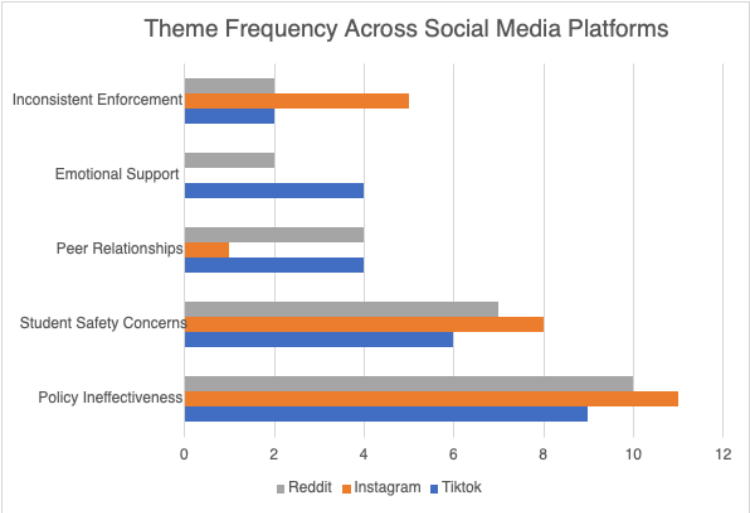
**Quantitative**

***Theme Frequency***

To further examine the patterns across the dataset, the frequency of each theme across social media platforms was analyzed. As shown in Figure 2, Perceived Policy Ineffectiveness is the most frequent type of theme discussed across all three platforms, with the highest frequency on Instagram (n = 11). Student safety concern was the second most discussed topic. Student safety was also discussed on Instagram the most by 8 posts, while TikTok was the least by 6 posts. Peer relationships and inconsistent enforcement appeared moderately across the data set, with Instagram having a higher frequency of inconsistent enforcement compared to Reddit and TikTok. Emotional support was mentioned less frequently overall in posts. TikTok posts show a higher frequency of emotional support themes compared to other platforms, with 4 posts compared to 2 from Reddit and 0 from Instagram.

**Figure 2**

*Theme Frequency Across Reddit, Instagram, and TikTok*




*Note.* The bar graph displays the frequency of each theme across Reddit, Instagram, and TikTok. Frequencies represent the number of posts in which each theme was identified.

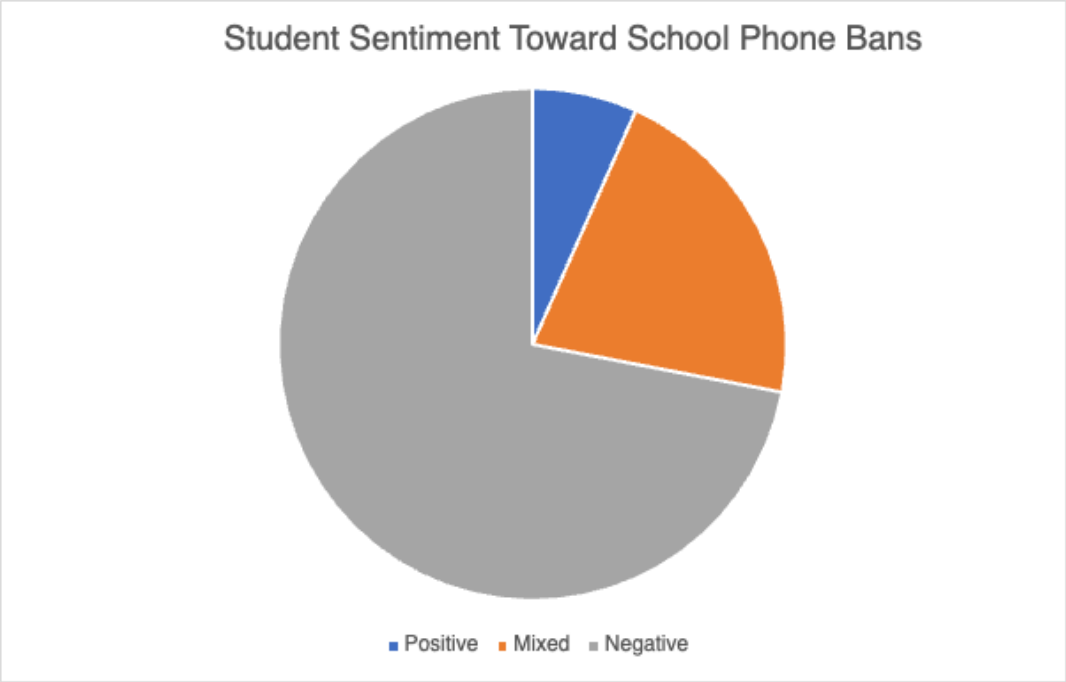
***Student Sentiment***

In addition to analyzing theme frequency, overall student sentiment towards phone bans was evaluated to see if students supported or opposed them. The majority of comments, videos, and posts expressed negative attitudes towards the phone bans. 72% of responses criticized the phone ban. In contrast, only 7% view phone bans as positive. Students who supported the phone bans stated that it improved communication during lunch because students were engaging in conversations more. But students who viewed it as negative contradicted this and stated that not having phones at lunch is pointless because students don't have anything to discuss anymore.

The remaining 21% of respondents presented mixed perspectives. They acknowledged both the positives and the drawbacks of the phone policies.

**Figure 3**

*Student Sentiment Toward School Phone Bans*




*Note.* The pie chart displays the distribution of student sentiment toward school phone bans, categorized as positive, negative, or mixed, based on 75 analyzed posts.

***Theme Distribution***

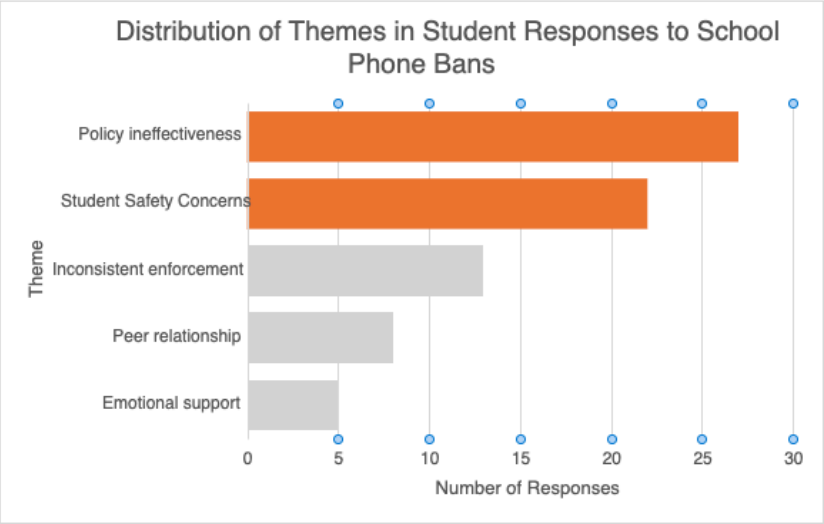
The distribution of themes across student responses was examined because it helps understand which concerns appear more frequently within the dataset. Figure 4 shows that policy effectiveness and student safety concerns are the top 2 themes with the most amount of student responses. Perceived Policy Ineffectiveness appeared in 27 posts across TikTok, Instagram, and Reddit. While Student Safety Concerns has 22. Policy Ineffectiveness and Student Safety Concerns combined have a total of 49 posts out of 75 that were analyzed, which is about 65%.

Percentages may not total 100% because individual posts could be coded under multiple themes. The prominence of this theme suggests that many students questioned whether phone bans achieved their intended outcomes. Student Safety Concerns, having 22 responses, showcases the concern of school shootings and not having phones in case of any sort of emergency. On the other hand, inconsistent enforcement appeared moderately in the data set, having 13 instances of posts. This suggests that some

students perceive phone policies as being unevenly applied across schools and teachers. Peer relationships came out less frequently, but still have 8 posts. Although it wasn't discussed as much, it still highlighted the social impacts of phone restrictions during lunch and free periods. Emotional support was the least frequent theme, with a total of 5 posts. Although several students stated phones were used as coping mechanisms to cope with stress, anxiety, etc., during the school day.

**Figure 4**

*Distribution of Themes in Student Responses to School Phone Bans*




*Note.* The bar graph displays the frequency of the themes identified across 75 student posts collected from TikTok, Instagram, and Reddit. Frequencies represent the number of posts in which each theme was present.

## CONCLUSION

### Interpretation of Findings

The results of this study show that many U.S. high school students hold negative attitudes toward school phone bans. While prior studies emphasized phones as being academic distractions, the results show that students frequently described phone bans as ineffective in improving academic performance (Lepp et al., 2015; Böttger & Zierer, 2024). Many students in this study reported that they did not believe phone bans improved academic performance or reduced distractions. Instead, students focus on highlighting phone policy effectiveness and their safety. More importantly, students explain that phone use goes beyond just

entertainment. Many students explained that phones help them stay connected with others when they feel socially isolated. Although some students stated phone bans increased face-to-face interactions, a larger proportion of students reported feeling more alone without their devices. In addition, several students mentioned that they use their phones for emotional support. This can go from listening to music to texting friends to managing stress throughout the school day. These student discussions suggest that many students view phones as multifunctional which support social connection and emotional regulation (Ay et al., 2024; Guo et al., 2025).

Students frequently discussed student safety and policy effectiveness throughout TikTok, Instagram, and Reddit. Many students stated their concern about not having access to their phones during emergencies. Students mentioned school shootings as a huge problem and the need for them to be able to contact their parents during an emergency. This shows students prioritize immediate communication during emergencies rather than academic benefits (Pew Research Center, 2024). This reveals a tension between safety needs and policies designed primarily around classroom control. Furthermore, students frequently described phone restrictions as purposeless. To support this, they stated it was because many other students still find alternative ways to go against the rules. Along with some teachers not having as strict an enforcement. Overall, these findings suggest that phone bans go beyond just academic policies. Phone bans also affect students' school experiences, emotional well-being, and sense of safety. This study provides a more honest look at how students actually feel about phone policies by looking at their natural digital discussion rather than surveys (Lavidas et al., 2022; Parry et al., 2021). It also shows that policies that are solely focused on reducing distractions may miss other important factors that shape students' experiences in school. Overall, these findings do not determine whether phone bans improve or harm academic outcomes. Instead, they reveal how students discuss and interpret these in a digital space. Student posts frequently raised concerns related to safety, social connection, emotional well-being, and policy enforcement. This highlights that students frequently discuss factors that extend beyond the primary goals of many phone policies. As a result, social media discussions can provide valuable insight into how students experience these policies and what unintended effects students believe they produce.

## LIMITATIONS

One limitation of this study is that the data relies heavily on social media, but it cannot be fully confirmed that every single individual's content was only created by the U.S. High school students. Although posts were selected using indicators of student identity, there is still a possibility that some content may not accurately represent the target population. This matters because it affects how generalizable the findings are to all U.S. high school students. In addition, the study only included data from TikTok, Instagram, and Reddit. Although these platforms are widely used, they don't represent all students' voices. Students who post on social media may have stronger or extreme opinions. This can lead to overrepresentation of negative perspectives compared to more neutral student perspectives in the dataset. This is important because the findings may reflect the most vocal students rather than the average student experience. Another limitation is that the coding process was conducted by a single researcher. Because thematic

analysis involves interpretation, this may introduce research bias in how posts were categorized and analyzed. Intercode reliability was not established. This means that another researcher may have interpreted the data differently. However, to reduce this, the data was reviewed multiple times, and codes were applied consistently throughout all posts. Finally, this study focuses on students' perspectives rather than measurable outcomes. This means that while students may state phone bans are ineffective, there is no way to cross-check the information with their grades.

Furthermore, the study cannot determine whether they actually impact peer relationships and mental health. This is important because it highlights a gap between what students perceive and what may be happening in reality.

## IMPLICATIONS

These results highlight the importance of considering student perspectives when evaluating school phone policies. Although many current policies are designed to reduce academic distractions, this study shows that students view phones as a tool that supports social connection, well-being, and safety. These discussions indicate that students perceive phone policies affecting multiple aspects of their daily lives beyond academics. In addition, student discussions frequently raised concerns about safety and emergency communication. These concerns may provide useful insight into how students experience phone restrictions. Student discussions suggest that students rely on their phones for reasons beyond entertainment, including communication, social connection, and emotional support. This study suggests that student perspectives may provide policymakers with additional insight into social, emotional, and safety-related concerns associated with phone policies. These findings broaden the understanding of school phone policies by showing that students discuss them in relation to safety, social connection, and emotional well-being.

## FUTURE RESEARCH

Future Research should expand on these findings by including a larger and more diverse sample of students across additional platforms. This would help improve the generalizability of the results. Additionally, comparing students' perspectives with those of teachers and administrators could provide a more complete understanding of how phone policies are viewed and implemented. Future studies should also examine the actual effects of phone bans on academic performance, peer relationships, and mental health. This can help determine whether student perceptions align with measurable outcomes. Finally, combining social media analysis with methods such as interviews or surveys could provide both depth and reliability. This allows the researchers to better understand why students feel the way they do.

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## Appendix A

*Qualitative Data Collection Process for TikTok*

| 1 | Platform | Date Posted | Type of content | Topic Area | Inital code |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2 | Tiktok | 10/4/2025 | Video | Mental health | Heightented anxiety |
| 3 | Tiktok | 9/7/2024 | Video | Mental health/Peer | Student safety concern |
| 4 | Tiktok | 9/11/2025 | Video | Mental health | Inconsistent enforcement |
| 5 | Tiktok | 8/12/2025 | Video | Mental health | Social isolation |
| 6 | Tiktok | 8/11/2025 | Video | Mental health/peer | Student safety concern |
| 7 | Tiktok | 10/3/2025 | Video | Academics | Limited academic impact |
| 8 | Tiktok | 8/20/2025 | Video | Mental health | Student safety concern |
| 9 | Tiktok | 8/22/2025 | Video | Academic | Productivity |
| 10 | Tiktok | 8/6/2025 | Video | Peer relationship | Policy scope |
| 11 | Tiktok | 1/2/2025 | Video | Mental health | Phone ban with exception |
| 12 | Tiktok | 8/25/2025 | Video | Policy effectiveness | Using alternative ways |
| 13 | Tiktok | 11/7/2025 | Video | Academics | Limited academic impact |
| 14 | Tiktok | 8/8/2025 | Video | Peer relationship | Social isolation |
| 15 | Tiktok | 8/12/2025 | Video | Mental health | Productivity |
| 16 | Tiktok | 9/4/2025 | Video | Academics | Limited academic impact |
| 17 | Tiktok | 8/29/2025 | Comment | Policy effectiveness | Productivity |
| 18 | Tiktok | 9/18/2025 | Comment | Mental health | Student safety concern |
| 19 | Tiktok | 10/4/2025 | Comment | Mental health/Peer | Social isolation |
| 20 | Tiktok | 8/26/2025 | Comment | Peer relationship | Social isolation |
| 21 | Tiktok | 2/4/2026 | Video | Mental Health | Social isolation |
| 22 | Tiktok | 2/27/2026 | Video | Policy effectiveness | Productivity |
| 23 | Tiktok | 9/20/2025 | Video | Policy effectiveness | Productivity |
| 24 | Tiktok | 8/16/2025 | Video | Student safety | Student safety concern |
| 25 | Tiktok | 8/11/2025 | Video | Policy effectiveness | Productivity |
| 26 | Tiktok | 8/15/2025 | Video | Policy effectiveness | Productivity |

**Figure A1.** *Coding table (Part 1 of 3)*

| 1 | Student Sentiment | Key idea |
|---|---|---|
| 2 | Negative | Student reports increased anxiety due to strict phone policy beyong school setting when seeing a teacher. |
| 3 | Negative | Students argues phone bans may reduce ability to document or report abuse, leading to concerns that incidents will be ignored. |
| 4 | Mixed | A student with 504 accommodation explains that phone restrictions create stress because teachers constantly forget about her approved access and have to remind subs |
| 5 | Negative | Students describe feeling less safe and more socially isolated after the phone ban. The student used their phone previously to make them feel less lonely at school. |
| 6 | Negative | Student states phone policy prioritizes socialization but high schools already have it. Then raises safety concerns when leaving school. |
| 7 | Negative | Student states that banning phones doesn't eliminate distractions and how a distracted child will stay distracted. Shows students playing games on a computer instead. |
| 8 | Negative | Student describes anxiety about school safety and how its frustrating not being able to communicate with parents in case of an emergency. |
| 9 | Positive | Student states that banning phones has made them more productive in school, and how they get their work done |
| 10 | Negative | Students question why a phone ban extends beyond instructional time to include lunch and passing periods |
| 11 | Mixed | A student with a 504 plan explains that phone restrictions create confusion when approved phone alerts are misunderstood due to strict enforcement of the policy. |
| 12 | Negative | Student argues that although phones are distracting, removing it just during school wont stop students because students will find a way to use it anyways |
| 13 | Negtaive | Student failure to understand terms and study due to phone bans |
| 14 | Negative | Student felt isolation socially in school when phones weren't accessible |
| 15 | Negative | Student getting detention just for trying to buy lunch |
| 16 | Negative | Student explaining that taking phones away is a stretch and that there is other possible options to help fix problem with students focus |
| 17 | Mixed | Student states that bans might have perks but also has flaws. Students always find a way around the ban |
| 18 | Negative | A student struggles with an anxiety disorder and the phone helps them cope |
| 19 | Negative | A student with no social skills feels left out in lunch due to no phone |
| 20 | Negative | Student responds to a video which says how their greatful for the phone ban and it's helped people talk more and the student states that it's only like that if you're popular |
| 21 | Negative | Student states that shcools say they ban phones for mental health but student states improatnce of listening to music while they were going throguh a lot |
| 22 | Mixed | Student showcases them using ipad and disregarding phone ban and just doing everything on ipad now |
| 23 | Negative | Student using calculator to cover phone and still use it during classes |
| 24 | Negative | Student stating that school shooting still remains a huge topic regarding phone bans and isnt safe for student to not have it with them |
| 25 | Negtaive | Student stating that people will do worse stuff and that phone bans arent going to stop them |
| 26 | Negative | Student statign that having phones banned during lunch seems useless since they dont learn |

**Figure A2.** *Coding table (Part 2 of 3)*

| | Quote |
|---|---|
| 2 | "I was at the school game and as soon as I spotted a teacher I put my phone up so fast " |
| 3 | " When there is abuse happening inside the school system, until victims of abuse collect and record evidence of abuse, they'll sweep it under the rug. |
| 4 | "When theres a sub that doesnt understand that I have a 504 plan that lets me keep my phone in class" |
| 5 | "I dont feel safe" "I go on my phone just to look around so no one thinks im lonley " |
| 6 | "schools are NOT safe enough to be banning phones" |
| 7 | "Phones are not the problems in schools, do your job" |
| 8 | Do you know how scary it is for parents who have kids going through a shooting, and you can't do anything about it? Their phones are either locked in their locker, cars, yonder pouches, etc. |
| 9 | Guys why do I lowkey love the phone ban I've never been so productive in school |
| 10 | "Me tryna figure out why the phone ban includes lunch and passing period" |
| 11 | "Guys i have a 504 plan, no they cannot take it away. if we have classes together i apologize, no it's not the fire alarm" |
| 12 | "I just dont understamd how confiscating them for 7 hours a day is going to help with that. Because I'm telling you, kids will find a way around." |
| 13 | I'm not on my phone to get on clash or anything I'm actually trying to study |
| 14 | If you don't know any kids and you're not in a class that's really talkative, it's hard to talk to other people |
| 15 | I understand not having phones out during classes due to distraction, but lunch and passing periods no |
| 16 | I feel like theres other things you can do rather than take cellphones away, like make class sizes smaller |
| 17 | it hasn't helped at my school; kids are very sneaky. they always find a way |
| 18 | I have agoraphobia and my phone is my primary coping mechanism. By week two I decided I had to leave for my own mental health |
| 19 | yes bc it's so fun for me to sit at lunch alone with nothing to do with no communication whatsoever! great for my social skills!! |
| 20 | "lemme guess your popular? if so tho that sums it up." |
| 21 | "when they ban phones in school and say it's for mental health when in reality being able to listen to music w/ my phone saved me in my lowest when I had nobody and still froced myself to go to school" |
| 22 | "Taking my Ipad to school bc the phone banned never stopped me" |
| 23 | "when they think the phone bans gonna stop us" |
| 24 | "America is not safe enough to have a phone ban in schools" |
| 25 | "how they felt making this phone ban not realizing its only going to provoke the bad kids into acting up EVEN more" |
| 26 | "if your gonna take my phone during lunch atleast give me a A+" |

**Figure A3.** *Coding table (Part 3 of 3)*

**Appendix B**

*Qualitative Data Collection Process for Instagram*

| | Platform | Date Posted | Type of content | Topic Area | Inital code |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2 | Instagram | 7/2/2025 | Comment | Student safety | Need for communication |
| 3 | Instagram | 7/16/2025 | Comment | Peer relationship | Using alternative devices to communicate |
| 4 | Instagram | 12/31/2025 | Video | Policy effectiveness | Teachers not caring |
| 5 | Instagram | 5/14/2025 | Comment | Policy effectiveness | Student safety concern |
| 6 | Instagram | 11/12/2025 | Comment | Policy effectiveness | Productivity |
| 7 | Instagram | 2/10/2025 | Video | Policy effectiveness | Using alternative ways |
| 8 | Instagram | 9/1/2025 | Video | Student safety | Student safety concern |
| 9 | Instagram | 6/11/2026 | Comment | Student safety | Student safety concern |
| 10 | Instagram | 9/30/2025 | Video | Policy effectiveness | Productivity |
| 11 | Instagram | 2/24/2026 | Comment | Student safety | Student safety concern |
| 12 | Instagram | 7/1/2026 | Comment | Policy effectiveness | Productivity |
| 13 | Instagram | 7/31/2026 | Video | Policy effectiveness | Productivity |
| 14 | Instagram | 11/23/2025 | Video | Policy effectiveness | Using alternative ways |
| 15 | Instagram | 8/17/2025 | Comment | Policy effectiveness | Productivity |
| 16 | Instagram | 8/24/2025 | Comment | Policy effectiveness | Productivity |
| 17 | Instagram | 8/3/2025 | Comment | Student safety | Student safety concern |
| 18 | Instagram | 8/12/2025 | Comment | Policy effectiveness | Productivity |
| 19 | Instagram | 8/26/2025 | Video | Policy effectiveness | Using alternative ways |
| 20 | Instagram | 12/17/2025 | Post | Student safety | Student safety concern |
| 21 | Instagram | 8/13/2025 | Video | Peer relationships | Social isolation |
| 22 | Instagram | 8/13/2025 | Comment | Policy effectiveness | Productivity |
| 23 | Instagram | 8/19/2025 | Comment | Policy effectiveness | Productivity |
| 24 | Instagram | 8/19/2025 | Comment | Policy effectiveness | Using alternative ways |
| 25 | Instagram | 9/2/2025 | Video | Student safety | Student safety concern |
| 26 | Instagram | 2/11/2026 | Comment | Student safety | Student safety concern |

**Figure B1.** *Coding table (Part 1 of 3)*

| | Student Sentiment | Key idea |
|---|---|---|
| 2 | Negative | Students need access to devices at school to communicate with parents for safety and after-school coordination |
| 3 | Mixed | Students rely on personal devices like macbook to communicate when phones are restricted |
| 4 | Mixed | Teachers stopped implementing the phone bann |
| 5 | Negative | Phone ban doesn't have any effect on improving bullying or school shootings |
| 6 | Mixed | Students manage to get around certain phone bans like pouches and still use their phones |
| 7 | Mixed | Student stating yonder pouches are ineffective and other peers just use a burner phone in the pouches and keep their real phone on them |
| 8 | Negative | Student stating concern for school shootings when their phones are banned |
| 9 | Negative | Student stating that instead of banning phones schools need to fcous on guns and school shootings |
| 10 | Negative | Students using phones and recording dances because they state school doesnt pay for their phone bill and cant take it away |
| 11 | Negative | Student stating that schoosl are ignoring bigger issues and focusing on smaller ones like phones |
| 12 | Negative | Student statign that phone bans wont have any effect |
| 13 | Negative | Student explains that the use of yonder pouches being implemented can easily be disregarded because it can be easily unlcoked |
| 14 | Negative | Studnet showing that various of stduenrts still use phones in school hiding it and not paying attention to phone bans |
| 15 | Negative | Student showing concern that schools arent doing anything towards preventing studnets from vaping but rather focusing on banning phones when their not even learning |
| 16 | Negative | Student stated that banning phones during lunch seems useless, although while learning is okay |
| 17 | Negative | Student stating schools should focus on making guns harder to buy and how banning phones makes it easier for shooters |
| 18 | Negative | Student states that phone bans are ineffective and that it all comes down to the student desires |
| 19 | Negative | Student using ipad in school to communciate since phones arent allowed |
| 20 | Negative | Student stating that schools need to focus on bigger problems and need to allow phones incase of an emergency |
| 21 | Negative | Students stating that many problems school is trying to fix remain the same, especially with bullying. |
| 22 | Negative | Student stating how the issue for low income schools remain a problem since everything is so digital |
| 23 | Negative | Students explaining that phones arent always the concern, and that people will always find ways around the phone ban. |
| 24 | Negative | Students explaining that they're okay with the phone ban as long as it doesn't involve yonder pouches because it prevents students from using it when needed. |
| 25 | Negative | Student is concerned about safety, such as bullying or shooting, and how the school focuses on phone usage instead of bigger problems. |
| 26 | Mixed | The student states phone ban is useful but also the concern for students safety needs to be examined more |
| 27 | Negative | Student states that the heavy workload leads to less sleep, and that being allowed to use phones during lunch could help reduce their assignments |
| 28 | Negative | School phone bans make it harder to complete online schoolwork, communicate with family, and manage responsibilities, while not actually reducing phone misuse |
| 29 | Negative | Student states that phones are needed to submit work, contact parents, and various other factors, and although there are ways around it, they're less convenient. |

**Figure B2.** *Coding table (Part 2 of 3)*

| | Quote |
|---|---|
| 2 | Students, LIKE ME, that are busy with practices, unexpected sport meetings, and other after school activities need to have devices in school to notify parents whether there is or not something going on" |
| 3 | It's ok that's why I have my MacBook |
| 4 | Four months after they passed the phone law, and guess what happened no one cares |
| 5 | Does this prevent school shootings or bullying? |
| 6 | They gave us pouches and kids still manage to open them |
| 7 | "Many other students just use burner phones and keep their real phone in their backpack" |
| 8 | "Your school is getting shot up, but you can't call for help because your state wanted to ban phones" |
| 9 | "Get the guns out of schools not phones" |
| 10 | "We can't have phones in school no more (Us cause the school dont pay this phone bill)" |
| 11 | "anything but focusing on things that actually matter" |
| 12 | "Man this aint going to stop nothing lol" |
| 13 | "Yonder pouches are redundant and ineffective because they can allegedly be unlocked very simple with just a magnet" |
| 14 | "Everybody at school because this phone rule dont mean nth" |
| 15 | "Vapes in bathroom? That's ok! phones in lunch and passing periods? absolutely not" |
| 16 | "I'm just annoyed they banned it during lunch and passing periods, like I get we can't use pour phones while we're learning but banning it during our free time? " |
| 17 | "banning phones is just gonna make it easier for shootings to happen" |
| 18 | "If a student doesn't wanna do work, they won't whether they have a phone or not" |
| 19 | "pov: your school has a phone ban but they didnt ban ipads" |
| 20 | "We need to address the actual issues. Not cell phones. Students need to be able to make phone calls and send texts in the event of an emergency." |
| 21 | "all the drama and bullying will just move to after school" |
| 22 | "my school literally ran out of chromebooks bruh" |
| 23 | "The kids who don't want to learn and don't want to pay attention aren't going to, regardless of phone, they will find other ways." |
| 24 | "its such a bad idea for kids to not be able to access their phone when NEEDED" |
| 25 | "why does the school care more about our phones and how we dress instead of our lives being at risk?" |
| 26 | "No, phones shouldnt be in classes, but also you need to make the achools safe before taking away communications" |

**Figure B3.** *Coding table (Part 3 of 3)*

**Appendix C**

*Qualitative Data Collection Process for Reddit*

| | Platform | Date Posted | Type of content | Topic Area | Inital code |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2 | Reddit | 1/1/2026 | Comment | Academic/mental health | ban interfering with academic tasks |
| 3 | Reddit | 1/1/2026 | Post | Academics | ban interfering with academic tasks |
| 4 | Reddit | 10/1/2026 | Comment | Academics | ban interfering with academic tasks |
| 5 | Reddit | 10/1/2026 | Post | Communicating | Social isolation |
| 6 | Reddit | 10/1/2026 | Comment | Academics | ban interfering with academic tasks |
| 7 | Reddit | 10/1/2026 | Comment | Communicating | Student safety concern |
| 8 | Reddit | 10/1/2026 | Comment | Peer relationships | Social isolation |
| 9 | Reddit | 10/1/2026 | Comment | Peer relationships | Increased peer connection |
| 10 | Reddit | 10/1/2026 | Comment | Peer relationships | Limited impact |
| 11 | Reddit | 10/1/2026 | Post | Communicating | Alternative contact |
| 12 | Reddit | 9/1/2026 | Comment | Policy effectiveness | Inconsistent enforcement |
| 13 | Reddit | 9/1/2026 | Comment | Academics/safety | Phones needed for emergencies |
| 14 | Reddit | 9/1/2026 | Comment | Student safety | Student safety concern |
| 15 | Reddit | 9/1/2026 | Comment | Policy effectiveness | Productivity |
| 16 | Reddit | 9/1/2026 | Comment | Policy effectiveness | Productivity |
| 17 | Reddit | 9/1/2026 | Comment | Policy effectiveness | Productivity |
| 18 | Reddit | 9/1/2026 | Comment | Student safety | Student safety concern |
| 19 | Reddit | 9/1/2026 | Comment | Student safety | Student safety concern |
| 20 | Reddit | 8/1/2026 | Comment | Policy effectiveness | Productivity |
| 21 | Reddit | 10/1/2026 | Comment | Policy effectiveness | Limited impact |
| 22 | Reddit | 10/1/2026 | Comment | Policy effectiveness | Productivity |
| 23 | Reddit | 10/1/2026 | Comment | Peer relationships | Social isolation |
| 24 | Reddit | 10/1/2026 | Comment | Mental health | Awkwardness of going to the office |
| 25 | Reddit | 10/1/2026 | Comment | Student safety | Student safety concern |
| 26 | Reddit | 10/1/2026 | Comment | Peer relationships | Increased peer connection |

**Figure C1.** *Coding table (Part 1 of 3)*

| | Student Sentiment | Key idea |
|---|---|---|
| 2 | Negative | Student states that the heavy workload leads to less sleep, and that being allowed to use phones during lunch could help reduce their assignments |
| 3 | Negative | School phone bans make it harder to complete online schoolwork, communicate with family, and manage responsibilities, while not actually reducing phone misuse |
| 4 | Negative | Student states that phones are needed to submit work, contact parents, and various other factors, and although there are ways around it, they're less convenient. |
| 5 | Negative | Student argues that phone ban prevents them from contatcing their parensts during the school day incase something happened |
| 6 | Mixed | Student argues that although phone bans can help improve foucs, they shpuld be allowed to use it during lunch |
| 7 | Negative | Student states that even though phone vans are implemented, students will still find other ways to distract themselves. Phone vans are needed in case of an emergency. |
| 8 | Negative | Student argues that the phone ban hurts peer interactions during lunch because students now run out of things to talk about and conversations become repetitive |
| 9 | Positive | Student states peer engagement has increased, with more students talking to each other at lunch instead of using their phones |
| 10 | Negative | Students state phone restrictions do not increase engagement and instead lead to complaints and fewer conversation topics. |
| 11 | Positive | Student argues that texting parnets isnt a issue because they can contatc them through teachers |
| 12 | Mixed | Student argues that their is inconsistent phone rules between teacher and schools that create a problem |
| 13 | Negative | Student argues that phones are needed for emergenciws, communciation with parnets, and school activites like assignments and field trips |
| 14 | Negative | Student argues that phone bans arent good and are needed espically in school shootings |
| 15 | Negative | Studnet states that phone bans dont play a role and studenrts are still ignoring ban and finding ways around phone ban |
| 16 | Mixed | The student argues that phone bans are good for in class but it doesnt benefit anything in lunch |
| 17 | Negative | Student argues that schools should not regulate phone use outside of class and that phones are wrongly blamed for broader issues. |
| 18 | Mixed | Student argues that phones shouldn't be used during school activities, but students should still be allowed to have them in case of emergencies. |
| 19 | Mixed | Student supports phone ban during class but state safety issues outside during passing periods or lunch where they need to contact incase of issue |
| 20 | Negative | Student states that phone bans dont work well and can make things worse. They connect it to prohibition in the United States. Policy should be more effective |
| 21 | Negative | Student says their grades stay good with or without phone bans and believes teachers should decide phone rules since some classes require phones |
| 22 | Mixed | Student argues that instead of banning phones, using phone pouches is more effective because teachers can tell if a student is lying about having their phone |
| 23 | Negative | Studnet states that phone usage isnt changed and students just use it more after school. States phones help studnt socialize |
| 24 | Negative | Student says that although they can go to the office to contact their parents, it takes longer and they feel shy or awkward doing it. |
| 25 | Negative | Student states the problem of shootings remain and they would want to keep their phones with them |
| 26 | Positive | Student says online bullying has decreased because students cannot take pictures of others during school and use them to bully or post online |

**Figure C2.** *Coding table (Part 2 of 3)*

| | Quote |
|---|---|
| 1 | Quote |
| 2 | "My guy, I'm getting 4 hours of sleep because there's so much work. If I could just use 30 minutes of lunch time to get some assignments done, it would be very useful." |
| 3 | "What you might not fully realize unless you go to school is that EVERYTHING is online. Homework. Grades. Projects. Information." |
| 4 | "There are other solutions to some of those, but they're less convenient" |
| 5 | "its totally not problematic to cut off students access to their parents as well as the rest of the world." |
| 6 | "It's absolutely reasonable during class, but we should be allowed to use them at lunch and in passing periods. " |
| 7 | "People are gonna find other distractions anyway, and that phone can absolutely save your fucking a** in an emergency." |
| 8 | "There is only so many things to talk about at lunch before it just starts repeating" |
| 9 | "More people talking to each other at lunch instead of being on their phones." |
| 10 | "We still talked while being on our phones." |
| 11 | "Go to your teacher or the office and say, 'Hey, I need to contact my parents… could I please call them?'" |
| 12 | "Some teachers enforce the bans better than others, and some schools are more lenient." |
| 13 | "The teacher called emergency services and the one student who broke the rules was able to call the school." |
| 14 | "Nope with the school shootings a cell phone could save lives" |
| 15 | "Everyone in my school talks about the ban sucking. But really I haven't noticed a difference. Most people still use their phones in class" |
| 16 | "Kids aren't going to magically get smarter because they can't use TikTok at launch" |
| 17 | "People in charge seem to enjoy pretending issues come from phone usage, ignoring the fact that those same issues would still happen with or without phones." |
| 18 | "It's ok to not have them out in school, but not possessing them completely in school is not okay. What if we have to contact someone in case of an emergency!?" |
| 19 | "I don't trust teachers or other adults who work in schools enough to allow them access to kids who have no means to contact anyone outside the school." |
| 20 | "One huge thing is that I don't think people realize that many people are literally addicted to their phones. You try to get an addict off their addiction by banning it, it really won't work." |
| 21 | "I go on my phone in class during free time and my grades are fine." |
| 22 | "I honestly think having them in a pouch on the wall is the best way to do it." |
| 23 | "After school hours, i feel like im on my phone way more than before the phone ban to make up for the time ive missed on it throughout the day. if we were allowed on our phones, itd be so much better." |
| 24 | "It's so awkward to go down to the office just to ask them to call home because I don't feel good." |
| 25 | "I would if there weren't so many goddamn shootings." |
| 26 | "99% of all bad bullying online have stopped cuz no one can take photos of other kids in school and that is like the most common way to bully online" |

**Figure C3.** *Coding table (Part 3 of 3)*