

Should Social Media Be Banned For Children In India?

—By Wing Commander Dinesh Mathur, VSM (Retd.)

In the current, extremely competitive and ever-changing professional world, corporate houses and educational institutions seek to identify aspirants who are not only professionally qualified but also possess the soft skills necessary to ensure success in a collaborative work environment. In this regard, Group Discussions have emerged as an effective tool to assess the multidimensional attributes of individuals. Group Discussion (GD) provides a platform where participants exchange their opinions, analyse problems and situations collectively on a given topic within a given time frame. During this interactive and lively process, the assessors get an adequate opportunity to evaluate a candidate's team spirit, capacity for critical thinking, power of expression, leadership attributes, and problem-solving ability, etc. The importance of GD lies in its ability to simulate a real-world scenario where participants have to work with others to amicably arrive at a consensus and resolve issues. Unlike commonly used tools like written tests and personal interviews, Group Discussions provide insights into how individuals conduct themselves in a group setting, how differences of opinion are handled, and how effectively they contribute to achieving collective goals. This broadly is the significance of conducting a GD in the selection process of candidates for a number of purposes.

A group of candidates, who were called to participate in a GD, chose the above topic for discussion during the process of selection of Probationary Officers in a Public Sector Bank recently. Since aspirants were aware of this requirement, they arrived dressed in formal clothes and were asked to prove their identity. They were allotted Identity Numbers to address each other, and were briefed by the assessors on the conduct of this Group Discussion. The candidates were given the liberty to speak as much as they wanted, but were asked to ensure that all participants got a chance to contribute. They were asked to conclude the GD within 25-30 minutes.



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After this, the GD commenced as follows:

Candidate No. 3 : Good morning, friends. You must be looking forward to participating in this discussion on this currently hot and interesting topic. Public Internet arrived in India in 1995 after the launch of Gateway Internet Access Service (GIAS) by VSNL. Thereafter, India's Internet revolution, driven by affordable smartphones and data plans, has brought millions of young users online. Recent studies show that a huge number of Indian children aged 10 to 17 now have access to at least one social media account, often without parental supervision. Children now use various platforms, such as YouTube and Instagram, not only for entertainment but also for peer connection and self-expression. While this access is beneficial, it also exposes our children to numerous dangers of cyberbullying, pornography, misinformation, and toxic beauty standards, etc. Given this situation and the damage it is causing, the question is not whether children can handle social media, but whether they should be allowed to use it without restrictions or whether it should be banned for them altogether. We are required to discuss this issue in detail and suggest the best

possible approach to address it, adopting a balanced perspective.

You may now express your views on this topic. Thanks.

Candidate No. 2 : Friends, No. 3 has aptly introduced this topic, and we must now decide the format of this discussion so that we can cover all aspects of this subject within the prescribed time. Presently, for young people, smartphones and social media are an intrinsic part of life. The fact remains that while this can provide a plethora of opportunities, exposure to new perspectives, people and useful information, it may also lead to terrible distraction from studies and even mental health issues.

Candidate No. 9 : Yes, you are right. I suggest we divide this discussion into three parts. In the first part, we talk about the arguments in favour of banning social media for children. In the second part, we examine the arguments against banning social media for children, and in the third part, we discuss a balanced approach that could be adopted to address this issue. This approach would allow us to deal with this topic comprehensively. Do you agree with this approach?

Candidate No. 6 : That would be the right approach. Let me start by talking about arguments in favour of banning social media for children. Friends, it's now well-established that the social media ban for children has broad public support globally. Public sentiment is shifting toward controls on children's access to social media platforms. As reported, the global average support for this ban for children under 14 stands at 71% in 2025 with a significant increase in support in most regions compared to 2024.

Candidate No. 3 : Let me take it further by mentioning some specific cases. Australia has been the first country to totally ban social media for children under 16, in November 2024. However, as early as 2018, Italy passed a law that states those under 14 must seek parental consent before they sign up for social media accounts. In June 2025, France announced plans to implement a social

media ban for users under 15 years of age. In June 2024, the Spanish Government approved the draft law that raised the age of data protection consent for children to own social media accounts from 14 to 16. Following the footsteps of Spain, Norway was reported to be in the midst of getting the age of parental consent for children to create social media accounts raised from 13 to 15. These are some cases I recall.

Candidate No. 1 : Good. That's very relevant information for our discussion.

Candidate No. 6 : Friends, one of the strongest arguments for banning social media among children is its adverse impact on mental health. Several global studies have shown a strong correlation between excessive media use and issues like depression, anxiety, loneliness, and low self-esteem, etc. Children and even teenagers, whose brains are still developing, are especially vulnerable to the unrealistic lifestyle, constant comparison, and validation-seeking behaviour that usually dominate social media. In the Indian context, where discussions on mental health issues are still emerging, children barely go for counselling or digital literacy education. Therefore, a ban would act as a preventive measure until stronger support systems are put in place.

Candidate No. 4 : Yes, I think No. 6 has highlighted a very relevant aspect of this issue.

Candidate No. 3 : I want to present another argument in favour of banning social media for children. Banning social media will help in preventing cybercrimes and online exploitation. Social media platforms make children easy targets for cybercriminals, predators, and scammers. In recent times, cases of online grooming and sexual exploitation have risen exponentially in India, as confirmed by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB). The fact remains that many children are not aware of online safety protocols, privacy settings, or the consequences of sharing personal information with unknown entities. Banning or restricting their access until they reach a mature age would protect them from this harm.

Candidate No. 6 : I want to point out another benefit of a ban on social media. Social media can become highly addictive, leading to distraction, procrastination, and poor focus, which, in turn, can result in poor academic performance. A 2023 survey by the Indian Council of Child Development found that students who spent more than three hours daily on social media reported significantly lower grades

compared to those who limited their social media use. Watching videos frequently and scrolling endlessly leads to lower attention spans, making it harder for children to engage in deep learning. Thus, social media hampers children's education, which a developing country like India can ill-afford.

Candidate No. 2 : Ironically, while social media connects people who are located all over the world, it disconnects people who are located in their immediate surroundings, even within the family and the same household. Children start preferring connecting with friends online rather than in real life. This behavioural pattern eventually leads to social isolation. This trend got widely accelerated during the Covid-19 pandemic in the recent past and continued to spread. A ban on social media would prevent such social isolation of children from the community and encourage face-to-face interactions and relationships.

Candidate No. 5 : Yes, I agree. That's a valid argument.

Candidate No. 3 : I want to talk about yet another reason which justifies the banning of social media for children, especially in India. Social media often exposes children to content that is contrary to or alien to Indian culture and traditions. Explicit material or false propaganda, often for political motives, leads them to undesirable behaviour and may even mislead them. A ban would act as a moral safeguard, allowing parents and teachers to teach children the right values of life. Children's exposure to unfiltered digital information may lead them to chaotic and undesirable behaviour.

Candidate No. 9 : Friends, I think we have adequately covered most of the arguments in favour of banning social media in India. As per the format we have agreed on, let us now present arguments against banning social media. Do you all agree?

Candidate No. 7 : Yes, you are right. I agree. Please go ahead with these arguments.

Candidate No. 2 : First and foremost, social media is not only a source of entertainment but also a powerful tool for imparting education. A large number of students in India learn various subjects like Mathematics, Science, Language, and even Coding, etc. on YouTube and other such platforms. A number of Indian and foreign educational institutions are conducting online courses for the benefit of Indian students at a much lower cost and as per their convenience. Further, Instagram and LinkedIn encourage

entrepreneurs and artists to showcase their talents, build portfolios and earn money, and give a boost to their careers.

Candidate No. 9 : Yes, friends, in the present world, where digital skills are defining employability and career progression, banning children from using social media would be a great disadvantage for them, and might widen the digital divide, especially between the privileged urban children and those coming from rural and backward backgrounds.

Candidate No. 6 : It is strongly argued that banning social media for children infringes upon their fundamental right to freedom of expression, which is guaranteed under Article 19 of the Indian Constitution. All said and done, children are also citizens of our country, though they may need protection. Total ban may be described as the State's high-handedness. Perhaps the usage of social media by children under the supervision and guidance of parents/teachers would be a better proposition.

Candidate No. 3 : I want to highlight the fact that enforcing a social media ban on children in India would be quite difficult in practice. Presently, in India, millions of children are using smartphones, and almost all platforms rely on self-declared age verification. Children can easily bypass these verifications by posing as adults, as presently, there is no further verification other than self-declarations in vogue in India. In the absence of a robust digital ID system, identifying age between a 12-year-old and an 18-year-old online is not quite possible. Moreover, privacy violations or surveillance issues are also involved with such enforcement.

Candidate No. 6 : Friends, I want to caution that such a ban on social media may lead children to resort to accessing social media secretly or by opening fake accounts. A ban would increase their curiosity and usage of shared devices. This situation will make monitoring even more tedious. If children use riskier or unregulated platforms, it would defeat the very purpose of enforcing such a ban. So, we must think twice before imposing such a ban on social media. Therefore, many experts suggest that a ban may not be the appropriate solution. The ideal approach would be that parents at home, teachers in schools, and policy makers all work together to teach children about responsible online behaviour, digital ethics, and mental health. Children must be taught to navigate the digital world more responsibly.

Candidate No. 2 : Friends, we have covered almost all significant arguments in favour and against imposing a ban on social media for children in India. We may now talk about some other aspects of this topic.

Candidate No. 3 : Yes, you are right. I want to make a mention of the legal aspects and Government policy on this issue. As of now, there is no law in India that stops children from using social media platforms, and the Supreme Court of India has refused to entertain pleas for a statutory ban on social media for children below 13, stating it is a policy matter and should be decided by Parliament. In this context, the most significant legislation is the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act 2023, which is being implemented in phased manner with the latest notification of the DPDP Rules, 2025 issued on November 13, 2025. The Act governs how children's data is handled. This Act mandates that data fiduciaries must obtain verifiable parental consent before processing personal data of a person under 18.

Candidate No. 6 : However, in India, the Information Technology Rules, 2021, which include Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code, require platforms to take additional care in protecting children's privacy. Discussions were also held about introducing age-appropriate design codes, similar to those in the U.K. and E.U., to ensure safer digital environments for young users. India, with its unique demographic and cultural diversity, must learn from these models while making policies in line with its own socio-economic realities.

Candidate No. 9 : Friends, I think we should now discuss what could be the best way to deal with this issue, as our discussion thus far has shown that imposing a ban or allowing children to use social media freely are both somewhat undesirable propositions. Please express your views on this aspect now. Do you all agree?

Candidate No. 8 : Yes, you are right.

Candidate No. 3 : I think, in this regard, instead of imposing a total ban on social media, we should adopt a more balanced approach to deal with this situation. This may include initiating several steps. Firstly, there is a need to put in place mandatory age verification systems using Government-backed IDs. Secondly, we should introduce parental monitoring tools and awareness programmes. Thirdly, curricula in our schools must integrate digital literacy education, and child-friendly versions of major social media platforms must be

introduced. Then, along with limiting screen time, parents must ensure that their children are engaged in various outdoor activities and other aspects of life to distract their attention from social media. Finally, there is certainly a need for stricter regulations on algorithmic content to prevent children's exposure to harmful content.

Candidate No. 6 : Yes, you are absolutely right. These measures could protect children without totally isolating them from a world which is now being shaped by digital participation. Teachers and parents need to focus more on content and context : Is the phone being used for creativity and learning, or is it increasing stress and isolation? That needs our attention. Moreover, shifting the conversation from 'how long' to 'what for' would encourage more mindful use of social media, instead of stress-driven monitoring.

Candidate No. 3 : Friends, as we have discussed, in India, while social media exposes our children to mental issues and moral risks, it also empowers them with huge opportunities for learning and global connection. It may appear easy to impose a ban and resolve the issue, but it is neither feasible nor desirable. Experts opine that India must opt for a regulated, educational, and collaborative approach, which involves teachers, parents and policy makers, and technology companies coming together and develop a digital ecosystem for our children. Be that as it may, our goal should not be to keep our children away from social media, but to make them wisely use it to extract maximum advantage.

Candidate No. 8 : Yes, you are right. That should be our approach.

Candidate No. 1 : Friends, the time given to us for this GD is over, and we must conclude now.

Candidate No. 6 : If you all agree, I could conclude.

Candidate No. 5 : Yes, No. 6, please go ahead.

Candidate No. 6 : You all would agree that we had a lively and informative discussion on this very important topic of our times. After introducing the topic, we discussed the format of our discussion and decided to divide the discussion into three parts : First, we talked about arguments in favour of a social media ban; second, we brought out arguments against a ban on social media, and finally, we discussed a balanced approach to deal with this situation. The arguments in favour included the global support for social media ban for children, and adverse

impact on their health and an increase in cybercrimes and online exploitation vis-a-vis kids, etc. Thereafter, arguments against a ban included : keeping children away from the benefits of online education and improving skills at a much lower cost. It was opined that a ban will be against children's fundamental right whereas there were also practical difficulties in imposing such a ban, etc. Towards the end, we briefly made a mention of the present legal position of a ban in India. Finally, we talked about the balanced approach that we should take, by not banning social media but adopting a collaborative vision on the issue for the benefit of our children.

That's all, friends. Have a nice day.

Critical Assessment of Candidates' Performance:

Good : 3 and 6

It is quite visible that these candidates took an active part in the overall proceedings of this Group Discussion. While one of them came forward to initiate this discussion, the other one offered to conclude. The way these candidates presented their ideas, it is apparent that they had prepared this topic well and had a good number of facts and data with them. They allowed other candidates to speak, and other participants appreciated their efforts. They spoke with confidence, but, at the same time, did not dominate the proceedings. Owing to all these facts, their contribution has been evaluated as 'Good'.

Average : 2 and 9

These candidates played an important part in this competitive discussion. They came forward to provide the much-needed help to decide the format of this GD, and also kept guiding its progression throughout. However, it was noticed that they did not individually contribute adequately to register a winning effort. It appeared that they had not prepared the topic as needed. Had they put in the requisite effort to prepare, they could have performed much better. Due to these facts, their effort has been rated as 'Average'.

Below the Average : 1, 4, 5, 7 and 8

It was easily noticed that these candidates had come to participate in this competitive group discussion without having much information about this significant current topic concerning our country. As a result, they could not make any contribution during the entire discussion. To merely mark their presence, they kept agreeing or appreciating other active participants. It has been repeatedly emphasised that candidates must prepare important national and international current topics before coming for participating in competitive Group Discussions. Given this, the effort of these candidates has been assessed as 'Below the Average'.

CSR