

UPSC & STATE PCS CURRENT AFFAIRS · [UJIYARI.COM](https://ujiyari.com)**EDITORIAL ANALYSIS**

Ban the Design, Not the Child: Regulating Addictive Platforms

 **THE HINDU**

11 July 2026

POLITY**GS2****GS3**

CURATED & WRITTEN BY

**Bharat Choudhary**

UPSC Educator & Content Creator

 linkedin.com/in/epicbharat**ALSO FROM THE CREATOR****BharatNotes**Free UPSC notes, MCQs, PYQ analysis. **100% Free.**bharatnotes.com → **ADVERTISE****Advertise with Ujiyari**

Reach thousands of UPSC aspirants daily.

 epicbharat@gmail.com



Ban the Design, Not the Child: Regulating Addictive Platforms

 **The Hindu**

11 July 2026

GS2
GS3

Source: ujjyari.com — researched, fact-checked & UPSC-mapped

 **Every fact web-verified against primary sources** (<https://ujjyari.com/how-we-verify/>)

THE LIFT LINE

A child does not become safe when you throw them out of the room; they become safe when you redesign the room so it stops working against them.

WHY THIS EDITORIAL MATTERS FOR YOUR EXAM

Several countries, led by Australia, have moved to bar under-16s from social media, and the idea is now debated in India. The instinct is protective, but the design is flawed. An age bar treats the symptom, the presence of children, while leaving untouched the cause, the deliberately addictive architecture of the platforms. For your exam this is a governance-and-rights problem: how the state protects the vulnerable online without violating the free-speech and autonomy rights of citizens, and whether accountability should sit with users or with the platforms that profit from engagement.

GS Paper 2: government policies and interventions for the vulnerable; the rights framework, including Article 19(1)(a) and reasonable restrictions; regulation and the mechanisms of accountability.

GS Paper 3: the effects of technology on society; the role and responsibility of intermediaries in the digital economy.

For **Prelims**, hold the specifics: Article 19(1)(a) and the reasonable restrictions of Article 19(2); the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, and the due-diligence and safe-harbour conditions under Section 79 of the IT Act; the [Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023](https://ujjyari.com/legislation/dpdp-act-2023/) (<https://ujjyari.com/legislation/dpdp-act-2023/>), with its provisions on children's data, verifiable parental consent, and a bar on tracking and targeted advertising to children. For **Mains**, argue that regulating design and enforcing intermediary duties is both more effective and more rights-respecting than banning users by age.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Ujiyari Current Affairs - ujiyari.com · Free Daily Current Affairs for UPSC & State PCS

Australia's law, and proposals modelled on it, ask platforms to keep out users below a **threshold** (<https://ujiyari.com/vocab/threshold/>) age. The appeal is obvious: it looks decisive and it reassures anxious parents. The problems appear on contact with reality. Age verification is either weak, and therefore easily bypassed by a determined teenager, or strong, and therefore requires collecting identity documents from every user, which manufactures a fresh privacy hazard for the whole population. A ban also pushes children toward unregulated corners of the internet rather than teaching safe use, and it collides with a child's own developing right to information, expression and association.

India already possesses a more intelligent toolkit. The IT Rules of 2021 impose due-diligence duties on intermediaries and condition their safe-harbour protection on compliance. The DPDP Act of 2023 specifically addresses children by requiring verifiable parental consent for processing their data and prohibiting behavioural tracking and targeted advertising directed at them. The gap is not the absence of law; it is the failure to aim that law at the addictive design choices, the infinite scroll, the autoplay, the engagement-maximising algorithm, that make platforms harmful in the first place.

THE CORE ARGUMENT / ISSUE

The harm lives in the design, not the age

Social media is not dangerous because children can reach it; it is dangerous because it is engineered to capture and hold attention regardless of the user's wellbeing. Recommendation algorithms optimise for engagement, which rewards outrage, comparison and compulsion. An age ban leaves every one of these mechanisms intact for the users who remain, and merely postpones a child's exposure to them. Regulating the design, by contrast, benefits every user at once.

Bans are unenforceable and rights-restrictive

A ban that can be defeated by a false birth date is theatre; a ban enforced by universal identity checks is a surveillance **mandate** (<https://ujiyari.com/vocab/mandate/>). Either way it burdens a fundamental freedom. Access to social media is today a channel for expression and information under Article 19(1)(a), and a blanket age bar is a heavy restriction that struggles to meet the proportionality test that Article 19(2) demands.

APPROACH	WHAT IT TARGETS	EFFECT ON RIGHTS	REAL-WORLD (HTT)
Age-based ban	The user's presence	Restricts Article 19 access; risks mass ID collection	Low: easily bypassed or over-broad
Intermediary due diligence (IT Rules 2021)	Platform conduct	Conditions safe harbour on responsibility	Higher: shifts duty to the profit-maker
Children's data safeguards (DPDP Act 2023)	Data and targeting	Protects the child, not by exclusion	Higher: curbs manipulation at source
Design regulation	The addictive architecture	Neutral to expression; targets the harm	Highest: helps all users at once

Accountability belongs with the platform

The party that designs the addictive feature, deploys the algorithm and earns the advertising revenue is the party best placed to prevent harm. Placing the burden on children and parents to police an environment built to defeat them inverts responsibility. Intermediary accountability, safe harbour tied to genuine due diligence and enforceable design standards, puts the duty where the power and the profit already sit.

HOW TO THINK ABOUT THIS (ANALYTICAL FRAME)

Frame the choice as a contest between regulating the person and regulating the product. The transferable rule: when harm flows from how a system is engineered, effective and rights-respecting regulation targets the engineering, not the people exposed to it. A child's digital safety is best secured not by exclusion from the digital public square but by making that square less **predatory** (<https://ujiyari.com/vocab/predatory/>). Measure success by falling addictive-design metrics and enforced platform duties, not by how many children are locked out on paper.

THE DIAGRAM IN WORDS

Engagement-maximising design (infinite scroll, autoplay, algorithm) -> compulsive use and manipulation -> harm to children -> option A: age ban -> unenforceable or surveillance-heavy, rights restricted, harm to remaining users intact -> option B: regulate design + enforce IT Rules 2021 due diligence + DPDP Act 2023 children's safeguards -> platform accountable, all users safer, Article 19 preserved

WAY FORWARD

Ujjayi Current Affairs - ujjayi.com · Free Daily Current Affairs for UPSC & State PCS

- 1 **Regulate the addictive architecture.** Set enforceable standards on engagement-maximising features for accounts used by minors, so the design itself carries the safety duty rather than the child.
- 2 **Enforce intermediary due diligence.** Make safe harbour under Section 79 genuinely conditional on compliance with the IT Rules, 2021, with meaningful penalties for platforms that fail.
- 3 **Operationalise the DPDP children's provisions.** Implement verifiable parental consent and the bar on tracking and targeted advertising to children through privacy-preserving age assurance, not mass document collection.
- 4 **Build digital literacy, not walls.** Invest in age-appropriate design guidance, school-level digital literacy and grievance redress (<https://ujjayi.com/vocab/redress/>) so children learn safe use rather than being pushed to unregulated spaces.

PYQ LINKAGE AND PRACTICE

UPSC has repeatedly asked about the regulation of social media, the responsibilities of intermediaries, and the balance between free speech and reasonable restrictions. This editorial connects those themes to the 2026 debate over age-based bans and addictive design.

Practice question: “Age-based social media bans treat the symptom while regulating platform design treats the cause.” Critically examine, with reference to India’s IT Rules, 2021, and the [Digital Personal Data Protection Act](https://ujjayi.com/terms/digital-personal-data-protection-act/) (<https://ujjayi.com/terms/digital-personal-data-protection-act/>), 2023. (250 words, 15 marks)

Sources: The Hindu (<https://www.thehindu.com/>)

Source: Ban the Design, Not the Child: Regulating Addictive Platforms — Ujjayi.com | Free UPSC & State PCS Editorial Analysis

RELATED DAILY ARTICLES

11 Jul **Supreme Court May Refer 'Written Grounds of Arrest' to...**

10 Jul **EPFO Rolls Out CITES 2.01 Unified Member Platform**

9 Jul **Four States Sign Narmada NWDT Payment Pact**

8 Jul **The Ministry of Cooperation at Five: Cooperation 2.0**

Ujiyari Current Affairs · ujiyari.com · ~~Free Daily~~ Current Affairs for UPSC & State PCS

CURATED & WRITTEN BY

Bharat Choudhary

UPSC Educator & Content Creator

 linkedin.com/in/epicbharat [Read Full Article on Ujiyari](#) →<https://ujiyari.com/editorials/2026/07/th-social-media-platform-regulation-2026/>

ALSO FROM THE CREATOR

BharatNotes

Free UPSC study platform — subject-wise notes across all 4 GS papers, Prelims MCQs, Mains answer frameworks, PYQ analysis & progress tracking. **100% Free • No Login Required.**

[Start Preparing](#) → bharatnotes.com

OPPORTUNITY

Advertise with Ujiyari

Reach **thousands of serious UPSC & State PCS aspirants** daily through our PDFs, website, and social channels.

Ideal for: Coaching institutes • EdTech platforms • Book publishers • Exam prep apps

 epicbharat@gmail.com

Write to us for rates & media kit

Free UPSC & State PCS Current Affairs · ujiyari.com · bharatnotes.com