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Social media ban for children: What Greek young adults believe and why

Aglaia Katsiroumpa
National and Kapodistrian University of Athens
Ioannis Moisoglou
University of Thessaly
Olga Galani
University of West Attica
Maria Tsiachri
National and Kapodistrian University of Athens
Angeliki Triantafillaki
National and Kapodistrian University of Athens
Panagiota Peleka
National and Kapodistrian University of Athens
Petros Galanis
pegalan@nurs.uoa.gr

National and Kapodistrian University of Athens https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1308-5782

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Abstract

Background: Following Australia's nationwide ban introduced in December 2025, which restricts social media access for individuals under the age of 16, several countries have adopted legislative initiatives requiring age verification on social media platforms as a means of addressing online harms. However, research exploring young adults' attitudes toward social media bans for children remains scarce.

Objective: To investigate young adults' perceptions regarding the introduction of a social media ban for children and to identify factors associated with these attitudes.

Method: A cross-sectional study was conducted in Greece in April 2026. Potential predictors of participants' views on a social media ban included: (a) sociodemographic characteristics (such as gender, age, educational level, and financial status), (b) patterns of social media use (number of accounts, daily time spent online, and posting frequency), and (c) level of political engagement (frequency of following political news and discussing political issues). Outcome variables included participants' level of agreement with the ban, awareness of its implementation, perceived need for additional measures, confidence in its effectiveness, and perceived impact on children's lives.

Results: Overall, 50.8% of participants supported the implementation of a social media ban for children under 15. A large majority (91.0%) reported the need for more detailed information from the government regarding the policy. Additionally, 84.4% indicated that supplementary measures beyond the ban are necessary. Most participants agreed that children will be able to find ways to create accounts on platforms to which the social media ban will be applied (93.4%), and they will create accounts on platforms that will be free and, therefore, less regulated (86.9%). Also, only 9.8% believed that social media platforms will fully comply with the legislation regarding the social media ban. Older participants expressed greater confidence in the effectiveness of the ban. Furthermore, age, financial status, number of social media accounts, and time spent online were positively associated with perceptions of the ban's impact.

Conclusions: The findings highlight the need for comprehensive, evidence-based policy approaches that integrate regulation, education, and shared responsibility among stakeholders. Policymakers should build on existing public support for child protection by investing in digital literacy initiatives, strengthening parental empowerment, and enhancing regulatory oversight of social media platforms to ensure sustainable and equitable outcomes.

Introduction

International bodies and policymakers have increasingly started to reassess existing frameworks for digital governance, placing greater focus on measures such as age-based restrictions, enhanced platform responsibility, and, in some cases, the introduction of social media bans for minors. For example, the European Union has developed a comprehensive set of policy and legislative measures aimed at safeguarding children in online environments while supporting their active and meaningful

digital participation. These efforts encompass regulations related to digital services, audiovisual media, and data protection, as well as practical support mechanisms such as helplines and systems for reporting harmful or unlawful content. In addition, the European Union has introduced a digital identity framework intended to enable secure and reliable age verification, thereby reducing children's exposure to age-inappropriate material.

In addition, governments at both national and regional levels have increasingly introduced measures to enhance the protection of children in digital spaces, with many countries adopting age restrictions and verification mechanisms. While certain jurisdictions have implemented bans on smartphone use in schools, others have focused on preventive strategies, such as awareness campaigns and educational programs aimed at improving digital literacy among children and adults. Concurrently, civil society organizations and international institutions contribute significantly to online child safety by conducting research, raising public awareness, and providing specialized support services. On a global scale, school smartphone bans have become more widespread, with approximately 58% of countries now enforcing such policies. Findings from a recent meta-analysis indicate that these bans have a statistically significant, albeit modest, overall effect. Their impact appears to be stronger in promoting social well-being than in improving academic outcomes, with notable reductions in problems such as bullying (Böttger & Zierer, 2024).

Australia has become the first country to introduce a nationwide restriction on social media use for individuals under 16 years of age. This legislation came into force on 10 December 2025 and does not permit parental consent as an exemption to the minimum age requirement. Consequently, from that date forward, individuals below the age of 16 are not allowed to create or maintain accounts on major social media platforms, including Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat, and X, among others. Although the policy has been presented as a precautionary measure addressing the perceived limitations of platform self-regulation and parental oversight, it has also sparked considerable public and academic debate, particularly in relation to its practicality, potential for circumvention, and its broader implications for children's rights and participation in digital society (Campbell, 2025; Champion et al., 2025; Christensen & Mackinnon, 2025; Fardouly, 2025; Fieldhouse & Basu, 2025).

Within this rapidly evolving context, Greece's planned introduction of a social media ban for children under 15, scheduled to be implemented on January 1, 2027, reflects a wider international trend in policy development. This shift underscores the importance of investigating public attitudes and the factors influencing them in order to assess both the social acceptability and practical viability of such interventions. Given existing evidence from studies conducted in Greece demonstrating a negative relationship between problematic social media use and mental health, there is a pressing need to further examine related issues, including public opinions on restricting children's access to social media (Bilali et al., 2025; Galanis et al., 2025; Katsiroumpa et al., 2026; Katsiroumpa, Katsiroumpa, et al., 2025; Katsiroumpa, Moisoglou, Gallos, et al., 2025; Katsiroumpa, Moisoglou, Mitropoulos, et al., 2025; Mangoulia et al., 2025). Therefore, the present study aimed to explore attitudes in Greece toward a potential social media ban for children and to identify the key determinants shaping these perspectives.

More specifically, the study examined the influence of sociodemographic factors, social media usage patterns, and levels of political engagement as potential predictors of attitudes toward this policy. By investigating participants' views on restricting children's access to social media, the study aims to contribute to the formulation of informed public health strategies and evidence-based policy interventions designed to strengthen child protection in digital environments. In a previous study, we assessed public opinion in the general population regarding a social media ban for children and its associated determinants (Galanis et al., 2026). Building on this work, the present study extends the analysis by focusing specifically on young adults aged 18–30 years, exploring their beliefs about a potential social media ban. Additionally, we further examined the role of sociodemographic characteristics, social media use, and political interest as predictors of participants' attitudes toward this measure.

Methods

Study design

On April 8, 2026, the Greek government announced that, starting January 1, 2027, children under the age of 15 will be prohibited from using social media. This restriction applies to platforms that allow users to create personal profiles, interact with others, and share publicly available content, such as posts, stories, videos, comments, likes, and follower engagement. Platforms including Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat fall within this scope. Consequently, social media providers operating in Greece will be required to implement age-verification mechanisms for all users by January 1, 2027. These mechanisms may include verification through official identification documents (e.g., ID cards or passports) or the use of biometric technologies (such as facial recognition or age estimation). However, the specific procedures for age verification have yet to be finalized, as coordinated regulatory efforts are ongoing at the European Union level. Enforcement responsibility will rest with the platforms themselves. Nevertheless, the ban on social media use by individuals under 15 is set to take effect in Greece on January 1, 2027.

Within this context, a cross-sectional study was conducted in Greece two weeks after the government's announcement concerning the restriction of social media use among children under the age of 15. Data were collected in April 2026 through an online survey. The questionnaire, developed using Google Forms, was distributed through social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and LinkedIn, resulting in a convenience sample. Eligibility criteria required participants to: (a) be between 18 and 30 years old, (b) provide informed consent, (c) possess proficiency in the Greek language, as the study was carried out in Greece, (d) have internet access, and (e) hold an active account on at least one social media platform. The study adhered to the Strengthening the Reporting of Observational Studies in Epidemiology (STROBE) guidelines (Von Elm et al., 2008).

Measurements

Sociodemographic characteristics

We examined a range of sociodemographic characteristics as potential predictors of participants' attitudes toward banning social media use among children. These variables included: (1) gender (male or female), (2) age, treated as a continuous variable, (3) educational attainment (categorized as up to some high school, high school completion, or a university degree), and (4) financial status, assessed through a self-reported scale ranging from 0 (very poor) to 10 (very good).

Social media use

Social media use was evaluated using three indicators: (1) the total number of social media accounts participants maintained, including platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, X (formerly Twitter), LinkedIn, and Snapchat; (2) the average daily time spent on social media, treated as a continuous variable; and (3) the frequency of posting, categorized as never, about once a month, once every two weeks, once weekly, two to four times per week, or five to seven times per week.

Political engagement

Political engagement was measured using two items. The first assessed how closely participants follow political news, with responses rated on a five-point Likert scale from 1 ("not at all closely") to 5 ("very closely"). The second item examined how frequently participants engage in discussions about politics with others, also using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("not at all") to 5 ("very often"). The scores from these two items were combined to form a composite index ranging from 2 to 10. This index represented the "political engagement" variable, with higher scores indicating greater levels of engagement.

Opinion on social media ban for children

Participants' opinions regarding a social media ban for children were assessed using several items, including questions such as: "At what age do you believe it is appropriate for a child to have a personal social media account?", "Who do you think should be responsible for setting limits on children's social media use?", and "To what extent do you agree that problematic social media use among children represents a significant public health issue?".

To evaluate participants' confidence in the effectiveness of the proposed ban, three items were employed: "Children will find ways to create accounts on platforms affected by the ban", "Children will open accounts on platforms that are unregulated or less regulated", and "Social media platforms will fully comply with the relevant legislation". Responses were recorded on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree"). The first two items were reverse-coded to ensure that higher scores consistently reflected greater confidence in the effectiveness of the ban. The item scores

were subsequently summed to produce a total score ranging from 3 to 15, representing the variable “confidence in the effectiveness of the social media ban”, with higher values indicating greater confidence.

Participants’ perceptions of the impact of the ban on children’s lives were measured using three items: (1) the ban will improve children’s mental health, (2) the ban will enhance children’s sleep quality, and (3) the ban will improve children’s academic performance. Responses were also collected using a five-point Likert scale (1 = “strongly disagree” to 5 = “strongly agree”). The scores were summed to yield a total ranging from 3 to 15, representing the variable “perceived impact of the social media ban on children’s lives”, where higher scores indicated a more positive perceived effect.

Additionally, participants were asked to compare the effectiveness of the social media ban with alternative interventions, including restricting addictive features of social media platforms, prohibiting the display of inappropriate content, and incorporating digital literacy education into school curricula.

Ethical issues

Ethical approval

for the study protocol was granted by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Nursing at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (Approval No. 71; April 21, 2026). The study was carried out in accordance with the principles outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki (World Medical Association, 2013). Prior to participation, individuals were provided with comprehensive information about the study’s aims and procedures, and informed consent was obtained from all participants. Data collection was conducted anonymously, and participation was entirely voluntary.

Statistical analysis

Categorical variables are presented as frequencies (n) and percentages (%), whereas continuous variables are described using summary statistics, including the mean, standard deviation (SD), median, minimum, and maximum values. The distribution of continuous variables was assessed through the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test and visual inspection of Q–Q plots, both indicating normality. Sociodemographic factors, social media usage patterns, and levels of political engagement were treated as independent variables, while the dependent variables included the scores for “confidence in the effectiveness of the social media ban” and “perceived impact of the social media ban on children’s lives”. To examine the independent relationships between predictors and outcome variables, multivariable linear regression models were applied. Results are reported as adjusted beta coefficients, along with 95% confidence intervals (CIs), p-values, and adjusted R^2 statistics. Statistical significance was defined as $p < 0.05$. All statistical analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows, version 28.0 (IBM Corp., Armonk, NY, USA).

Results

Sociodemographic characteristics

Study sample included 244 participants. In our sample, 57.8% were females. Mean age was 22.8 years, with a median value of 22, a minimum age of 18, and a maximum age of 30. Mean financial status score was 6.0, with a median score of 6, a minimum score of 0, and a maximum score of 10. Table 1 shows the sociodemographic characteristics of the participants.

Table 1
Sociodemographic characteristics of the participants.

Characteristics	**N**	**%**
Sex		
Males	103	42.2
Females	141	57.8
Age, mean, standard deviation	22.8	3.4
Educational level		
High school	132	54.1
College degree	112	45.9
Financial status, mean, standard deviation	6.0	1.6

Social media use

Most participants had accounts on three platforms (36.9%), while 32.0% had accounts on two platforms, 17.2% had accounts on four platforms, 9.0% had accounts on one platform, and 4.9% had accounts on 5 platforms. Mean daily time spent on social media was 3.9 hours, with a median time of 4 hours, a minimum value of one hour, and a maximum value of 12 hours. In our sample, 15.6% did not post ever, 42.6% posted once a month on social media, 25.4% posted once in two weeks, 5.7% posted once a week, and 10.7% posted two-four days a week. Table 2 shows the social media use of the participants.

Table 2
Social media use of the participants.

Social media use	N	%
Total number of accounts on social media		
1	22	9.0
2	78	32.0
3	90	36.9
4	42	17.2
5	12	4.9
Daily time spent on social media, mean, standard deviation	3.9	1.9
Frequency of posting on social media		
Never	38	15.6
About once a month	104	42.6
About once in two weeks	62	25.4
About once a week	14	5.7
Two-four days a week	26	10.7
Five-seven days a week	0	0

Political engagement

Among our participants, 36.9% reported that they follow somewhat/very closely news about politics, while 17.2% reported that they follow not closely at all/not very closely news about politics. Moreover, 49.2% reported that they talk sometimes to people about politics, 24.6% talk often/very often, and 26.2% talk rarely or not at all. Table 3 shows the political engagement of the participants.

Table 3
Political engagement of the participants.

Political engagement	N	%
How closely do you follow news about politics?		
Not closely at all	2	0.8
Not very closely	40	16.4
Somewhat closely	112	45.9
Closely	64	26.2
Very closely	36	10.7
How often do you talk to people about politics?		
Not at all	10	4.1
Rarely	54	22.1
Sometimes	120	49.2
Often	50	20.5
Very often	10	4.1

Opinion on social media ban for children

Table 4 shows participants' opinion on social media ban for children. In the sample study, 38.5% of respondents reported that the appropriate age for a child to have a personal social media account is 16 years, followed by 25.4% who reported 17 years, 19.7% who reported 15 years, 9.8% who reported 14 years, 4.1% who reported 13 years, and 2.5% who reported 12 years. Most participants (83.6%) stated that parents should be responsible for setting limits on children's use of social media, whereas 16.4% reported that this responsibility should rest with governments. Most participants stated that the problematic social media use among children constitutes an important public health concern (92.6%). In our sample, 50.8% agreed with the implementation of a social media ban for all children under age of 15. Also, most of our sample (91.0%) reported that they need more information from the government regarding the implementation of the ban. Additionally, 84.4% believed that additional measures, beyond a social media ban, should be implemented to address the problem.

Most participants agreed that children will be able to find ways to create accounts on platforms to which the social media ban will be applied (93.4%), and they will create accounts on platforms that will be free and, therefore, less regulated (86.9%). Also, only 9.8% believed that social media platforms will fully comply with the legislation regarding the social media ban.

In our sample, 42.7% reported that social media ban will improve children's mental health and 40.9% reported that social media ban will improve children's school performance (47.5%). Moreover, 63.9%

reported that social media ban will improve children’s sleep quality.

Table 4
Participants' opinion on social media ban for children.

Opinion on social media ban for children	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Opinion in general					
To what extent do you agree with the fact that the problematic social media use among children constitutes an important public health concern?	0	1.6	5.7	42.6	50.0
To what extent do you agree with the implementation of a social media ban for all children under age of 15?	4.1	22.1	22.1	27.0	23.8
Do you need more information from the government regarding the implementation of the ban?	0	0	9.0	60.7	30.3
Do you believe that a social media ban may lead participants to a false sense of security regarding their children's safety, resulting in reduced engagement with their children's digital education?	12.3	36.9	18.0	26.2	6.6
Do you believe that additional measures, beyond a social media ban, should be implemented to address the problem?	0	3.3	12.3	43.4	41.0
Do you believe that a social media ban violates children's rights?	21.3	39.3	25.4	12.3	1.6
Confidence in the effectiveness of the social media ban					
Children will be able to find ways to create accounts on platforms to which the social media ban will be applied	0.8	2.5	3.3	42.6	50.8
Children will create accounts on platforms that will be free and, therefore, less regulated	1.6	3.3	8.2	44.3	42.6
Social media platforms will fully comply with the legislation regarding the social media ban	7.4	45.9	36.9	8.2	1.6
Impact of the social media ban on children's lives					
Social media ban will improve children's mental health	4.9	21.3	31.1	32.0	10.7
Social media ban will improve children's sleep quality	4.1	10.7	21.3	45.9	18.0

Opinion on social media ban for children	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Opinion in general					
Social media ban will improve children's school performance	3.3	16.4	39.3	31.1	9.8

Values are expressed as percentages.

Dependent variable: Confidence in the effectiveness of the social media ban

Table 5 presents the findings of the multivariable linear regression analysis, where the dependent variable was the score for "confidence in the effectiveness of the social media ban." The results indicate that age was positively associated with confidence in the ban's effectiveness (adjusted coefficient beta = 0.052, 95% CI = 0.033 to 0.116, p = 0.013). This suggests that older participants tended to report greater confidence in the effectiveness of the social media restriction.

Table 5
Multivariable linear regression model with score on the variable "confidence in the effectiveness of the social media ban" as the dependent variable.

Independent variables	Adjusted coefficient beta	95% CI for beta	P-value
Females vs. males	-0.006	-0.429 to 0.417	0.978
Age	0.052	0.033 to 0.116	0.013
College degree vs. high school	0.487	-0.118 to 1.093	0.114
Financial status	0.023	-0.054 to 0.115	0.282
Total number of accounts on social media	-0.001	-0.222 to 0.220	0.990
Daily time spent on social media	0.082	-0.033 to 0.197	0.162
Frequency of posting on social media	0.052	-0.128 to 0.233	0.990
Political engagement	-0.112	-0.125 to 0.067	0.148
Adjusted R^2 for the final multivariable model = 5.5%; p-value for ANOVA = 0.033			
CI: confidence interval			

Dependent variable: Impact of the social media ban on children's lives

Table 6 reports the results of the multivariable linear regression model with score on the variable "impact of the social media ban on children's lives" as the dependent variable. We found that females (adjusted

coefficient beta = 0.113, 95% CI = 0.086 to 0.231, p = 0.032) and participants with a college degree (adjusted coefficient beta = 0.454, 95% CI = 0.215 to 1.087, p = 0.029) have higher score on the variable “impact of the social media ban on children’s lives”. Moreover, our results showed a positive association between age (adjusted coefficient beta = 0.048, 95% CI = 0.032 to 0.087, p = 0.001), financial status (adjusted coefficient beta = 0.165, 95% CI = 0.076 to 0.323, p = 0.032), total number of accounts on social media (adjusted coefficient beta = 0.101, 95% CI = 0.013 to 0.154, p = 0.043), daily time spent on social media (adjusted coefficient beta = 0.246, 95% CI = 0.055 to 0.438, p = 0.012), and impact of the social media ban on children’s lives.

Table 6
Multivariable linear regression model with score on the variable “impact of the social media ban on children’s lives” as the dependent variable.

Independent variables	Adjusted coefficient beta	95% CI for beta	P-value
Females vs. males	0.113	0.086 to 0.231	0.032
Age	0.048	0.032 to 0.087	0.001
College degree vs. high school	0.454	0.215 to 1.087	0.029
Financial status	0.165	0.076 to 0.323	0.032
Total number of accounts on social media	0.101	0.013 to 0.154	0.043
Daily time spent on social media	0.246	0.055 to 0.438	0.012
Frequency of posting on social media	0.085	-0.217 to 0.386	0.581
Political engagement	-0.027	-0.261 to 0.208	0.823
Adjusted R^2 for the final multivariable model = 5.8%; p-value for ANOVA < 0.001			
CI: confidence interval			

Discussion

Following Australia’s introduction of a nationwide restriction in December 2025 prohibiting social media access for individuals under 16, several countries have enacted legislation requiring age verification on social media platforms as a means of addressing online risks. For instance, a number of European countries are currently considering similar policies, while the European Commission has expressed its intention to support a coordinated regional approach, illustrated by the recent development of a standardized age verification system. Within this shifting regulatory environment, examining public attitudes toward restricting children’s access to social media is essential, as societal views play a critical role in shaping the acceptability, legitimacy, and effectiveness of such policy measures. To the best of our knowledge this is the first study that examines young adults’ opinion toward social media ban for children and its influencing factors.

A key finding of the present study is that an overwhelming majority of participants (92.6%) perceived problematic social media use among children as a major public health concern. This strong level of agreement suggests that concerns about children's engagement with social media are no longer confined to individual families but are increasingly recognized as a wider societal issue requiring population-level interventions. Framing problematic social media use as a public health issue is critical for building support and ensuring the effectiveness of both regulatory and preventive measures. Consistent with this viewpoint, our findings align with an expanding body of evidence highlighting the negative consequences of excessive or problematic social media use on children's mental health, overall well-being, and developmental trajectories (Agyapong-Opoku et al., 2025; Bottaro & Faraci, 2022; Piteo & Ward, 2020; Twenge, 2020; Wadsley & Ihssen, 2023).

Furthermore, a notable majority of participants (91.0%) expressed the need for clearer and more detailed information from governmental authorities regarding the implementation of a social media ban. Similar findings have been reported in Australia, where 47% of respondents indicated that they lack understanding of how the government's social media restriction policy operates. These findings highlight a considerable gap between general support for regulatory interventions and comprehension of their practical application. The pronounced demand for official guidance underscores that public acceptance of such measures is strongly dependent on transparent communication concerning their scope, enforcement mechanisms, age verification procedures, and the roles of individuals, educational institutions, and platform providers. Insufficient communication may result in confusion, mistrust, or unrealistic expectations regarding the protective effects of these policies. From a public health perspective, clear and proactive dissemination of information is essential not only to encourage compliance but also to prevent the development of a false sense of security that could reduce parental engagement in children's digital literacy and supervision (Mirza, 2025; Redlich et al., 2025; Wiederhold, 2025).

The findings of this study reveal a positive association between age and confidence in the effectiveness of a social media ban, as well as between age and perceptions of its positive impact on children's lives. These results provide important insight into generational differences in attitudes toward regulatory interventions. Older participants may be more inclined to view legislative measures as effective tools for risk management, possibly reflecting greater trust in institutional authorities or increased familiarity with public health policies grounded in regulation. Indeed, older populations often demonstrate higher levels of trust in public institutions compared to younger, more skeptical cohorts, which may translate into stronger support for government-led initiatives. In contrast, younger participants—who are generally more embedded in digital environments—may perceive such restrictions as less feasible or effective in practice (Schroeder et al., 2023; Stockemer et al., 2025). Additionally, advancing age is frequently associated with greater awareness of long-term health and societal consequences, which may strengthen beliefs in the preventive value of regulatory measures (Gozgor, 2022). Variations in risk perception may also play a role, as older individuals are more likely to prioritize long-term developmental and societal outcomes, whereas younger individuals may place greater emphasis on immediate personal experiences (Slovic, 2016).

Another important finding of this study is that individuals with higher socioeconomic status -indicated by both educational level and financial resources- were more likely to perceive a social media ban as beneficial for children. Higher socioeconomic status is commonly associated with greater exposure to scientific information, higher levels of health literacy, and an enhanced capacity to evaluate complex risk–benefit trade-offs, particularly in public health contexts (Cutler & Lleras-Muney, 2010; Soetekouw & Angelopoulos, 2024). Consequently, these individuals may be more aware of evidence demonstrating the potential harms associated with excessive or problematic social media use among children and, therefore, more supportive of preventive, population-level policies. Moreover, higher educational attainment is often linked to stronger support for evidence-based policymaking and greater trust in regulatory institutions, especially when such policies aim to safeguard collective well-being, including child health and development. In contrast, individuals with lower levels of education may be more inclined to question regulatory interventions, often due to concerns regarding their practicality, unintended consequences, or perceived interference with personal and family autonomy (Ardelia & Jaroah, 2023).

An additional finding of this study is that participants who reported higher levels of social media engagement—such as spending more time on these platforms each day—were more likely to perceive a social media ban as beneficial for children. This pattern suggests that personal experience may play a significant role in shaping risk perceptions and attitudes toward regulatory interventions. Individuals who frequently use social media are more likely to encounter its negative aspects, including compulsive usage behaviors, the displacement of time from other activities, emotional strain, and exposure to potentially harmful or distressing content (Andreassen et al., 2017; Kuss & Griffiths, 2017). Such direct experiences may foster a more critical and reflective perspective on social media environments, particularly regarding their suitability for children, whose self-regulatory capacities are still developing. Moreover, frequent users may be more aware of persuasive platform design features -such as infinite scrolling, algorithm-driven content curation, and constant notifications- aimed at maximizing user engagement (Montag et al., 2019). This awareness may, in turn, increase support for external regulatory measures, including social media bans, as protective mechanisms for younger users who may be more vulnerable to these influences. In contrast, individuals with lower levels of social media use may have less direct exposure to these risks and challenges, and therefore may be less likely to perceive restrictive measures as necessary or beneficial.

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings of this study. First, the cross-sectional design precludes the establishment of causal relationships between participants' characteristics and their attitudes toward a social media ban. Second, the use of self-reported data may introduce potential biases, including social desirability and recall bias. Third, despite attempts to capture a broad range of sociodemographic characteristics, the sample may not be fully representative of the general population. Fourth, attitudes toward the social media ban were assessed within a hypothetical or prospective policy context; these perceptions may change following actual implementation, particularly as individuals become familiar with enforcement mechanisms, age verification processes, and any unintended consequences. Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable insights into public

perceptions of social media restrictions for children and highlights important considerations for policymakers. Future research employing longitudinal designs, more representative samples, and qualitative approaches could offer a more comprehensive understanding of how public attitudes develop over time and how they interact with policy implementation.

In conclusion, this study explored participants' attitudes toward a potential social media ban for children and identified key factors shaping their views on this policy measure. The results reveal a high level of societal concern about children's engagement with social media, with most participants recognizing problematic use as a major public health issue. This broad acknowledgment positions children's digital wellbeing firmly within the public health domain and supports the case for proactive governmental action.

Importantly, although a considerable proportion of respondents expressed support for implementing a social media ban, this support was not unconditional. Participants consistently highlighted that restrictive policies should not function in isolation but rather be incorporated into a wider, integrated policy framework. The strong endorsement of complementary measures reflects a preference for a comprehensive, preventive approach rather than one that relies solely on prohibition.

From a policy standpoint, these findings carry several implications. First, social media restrictions for children are more likely to gain social acceptance and encourage compliance when they are presented as part of a multi-faceted strategy that combines protection with empowerment. Policymakers should therefore avoid framing bans as standalone interventions and instead clarify how such measures will operate alongside educational initiatives, family-level responsibilities, and platform-based regulations. Second, the observed variations in attitudes across sociodemographic groups and levels of social media use highlight the importance of targeted communication strategies. Clear, accessible, and tailored messaging will be essential to address skepticism, manage expectations, and promote inclusive engagement across different population groups.

In summary, this study examined participants' attitudes toward a potential ban on social media use among children and identified key determinants influencing these perspectives. The findings indicate a strong level of public concern regarding children's engagement with social media, with the majority of participants recognizing problematic use as a significant public health issue. This widespread acknowledgment situates children's digital well-being within the domain of public health and reinforces the rationale for proactive policy intervention.

Importantly, although a substantial proportion of participants supported the implementation of a social media ban, this support was not unconditional. Respondents consistently emphasized that restrictive measures should not operate in isolation but should instead be integrated into a broader, coordinated policy framework. The strong endorsement of complementary interventions reflects a clear preference for a comprehensive and preventive approach, rather than one based solely on prohibition.

From a policy perspective, these findings have several important implications. First, restrictions on children's social media use are more likely to be socially accepted and effectively implemented when framed as part of a multifaceted strategy that balances protection with empowerment. Policymakers should therefore avoid presenting bans as standalone solutions and instead clearly articulate how such measures will complement educational initiatives, parental responsibilities, and platform-level regulations. Second, the observed differences in attitudes across sociodemographic groups and varying levels of social media engagement highlight the need for targeted communication strategies. Providing clear, accessible, and tailored information will be crucial for addressing skepticism, managing expectations, and fostering inclusive engagement across diverse population groups

Declarations

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none

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none

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