



Digital Bulletin – Momo

You may have heard of sensationalised headlines about a 'Suicide Game' in the UK. Momo has been heavily linked with apps such as Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, and most recently (and most worryingly) YouTube Kids. The scary doll-like figure reportedly sends graphic violent images and asks users to partake in dangerous challenges like waking up at random hours and has even been associated with self-harm. It has been reported that the Momo figure was originally created as a sculpture and featured in an art gallery in Tokyo and unrelated to the 'Momo' challenge we are hearing about in the media.

Children's Videos Being Hacked

There have been recent reports that some seemingly innocent videos on YouTube and YouTube Kids (such as 'surprise eggs', unboxing videos and Minecraft videos) have been edited by unknown sources to include violence provoking and/or other inappropriate content. Even though YouTube monitor and remove videos that include inappropriate content, clips can be uploaded and viewed thousands of times before they get reported and removed. As a parent, it is difficult to spot these videos as the harmful content doesn't appear until partway through the video.

Suggested Videos on YouTube

Video apps such as YouTube include an 'up next' feature which automatically starts playing another video based on the video just watched. Due to YouTube's algorithm, users are shown 'suggested videos' that they may be interested in. The thumbnails used on suggested videos are purposefully created in a way to encourage viewers to click them. Research has found that when watching one Momo related video, users were then shown countless other Momo themed videos and other scary content which would be age-inappropriate for children under 18.

Data

Police in Northern Ireland said that while headlines like "suicide game hits UK" might get thousands of clicks online, they "miss the bigger issue". "Great for a short-term shock effect, but not great long-term as it somewhat misses the bigger issue," said the PSNI in Craigavon in a Facebook post. The content is shocking; however, it is likely that the purpose for hacking the videos is actually to gain access to personal information.

Advice for Parents

Parents have been advised to:

- Ensure they know what their children can access online and communicate about online usage
- Ensure children understand the importance of not giving personal information to anyone they do not know
- Tell their children no-one has the right to make them do anything they do not want to do
- Use parental controls to keep children safe
- Be present when children use the internet
- Look at device settings and parental controls to filter and monitor usage

If there are any topics that you would like more information about, or if you have any concerns regarding online safety, please feel free to contact me.

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