

Why children's social media safety is in the spotlight after the wake of the #Momochallenge hoax

 By Leigh Andrews

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Described by *Paper* magazine as a "...saucer-eyed, lipless bird lady with trendy bangs and Voldemort nostrils," it's easy to see why Momo is the latest social media scare, as it's reportedly being hacked into child-friendly apps such as *Peppa Pig*, *Fornite* and *YouTube Kids*. But read this before you ban your young ones from using the internet.



This is Momo, or Mother Bird.

More parents have been watching *Peppa Pig* with their children than ever before, after a concerned mom reported: "For the first couple of minutes, the fake cartoon appears completely legit. But then around three minutes in, Peppa and other characters begin to be attacked, mutilated and tortured."

But it's not just Peppa under attack – her underage viewers have also fallen prey to something sinister, as [Metro](#) reports that a five-year-old girl cut off her hair while watching *Peppa Pig* because she told her mom 'Momo told me to'.

But who is Momo and why is everyone terrified of her?

Images emerged of the ghost-themed 'Mother Bird' sculpture, created by Japanese artists for special effects company Link Factory for a gallery back in 2016 after visitors posted gallery snaps to Instagram. Then they appeared [Reddit's r/creepypasta](#) forum, before morphing into the Momo Challenge.

What is the Momo Challenge?

Those images were linked to a children's game that was said to be started on Facebook, where members were "challenged" to communicate with an unknown number over WhatsApp and then said to perform often dangerous tasks, resulting in self-harm and even suicide.

But where is the proof? According to Vox:

“ Experts say there is no indication that children are being driven to suicide since the story went viral. YouTube said previously it had no evidence of videos promoting the challenge, and it's since [demonetised content](#) featuring the

signature Momo image that has cropped up since the hysteria bubbled into the mainstream. ”

While there's been renewed effort in keeping children safe online as a result, [Engadget](#) reports, "Your kids are fine, literally nobody on the entire internet has fallen for this -- except, well, countless adults, law enforcement agencies, news outlets and school districts. You know, the responsible folks."

[NAG](#) adds:

“ This week's social media moral panic is the same sort of dreary hysteria prompted by the Blue Whale hoax in 2016, with claims that children's videos on YouTube are being spliced with messages to commit suicide (or, gasp, get a haircut). There's zero verified evidence of this, but that hasn't stopped every Karen from sharing tabloid links about it on Facebook, anyway. Omg, Karen. Do you even Snopes. ”

Snarkiness aside, it certainly is a creepy image, and [Vox](#) says the urban legend is likely little more than a hoax fueled by media reports and parents' fears about their kids' online activity.

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Luckily, [EWN](#) confirms that the doll has since been destroyed, with the artists adding:

“ It was meant to scare people, yes, but it wasn't meant to harm anyone. ”

The doll may be a thing of the past but the fear lives on, with [The Sun](#) reporting that a Momo effigy was burned by authorities in the Philippines to "reverse children's spirit of fear".



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If you're not convinced, you can minimise some of the risk by making sure your children do their online browsing through [Kiddle.co](https://kiddle.co), the Google-powered search engine that aims to keep children safer online by blocking explicit images, videos and websites from search results.

And if you still need proof that technology is also a wonderfully scary thing, you can learn more in Momo's exclusive PG-13 interview, using advanced deepfake technology, with [Paper](#) magazine...

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

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