

Keep Away from the Blue Whale Challenge

Cheng Guo - 5/18/2017



Picture source:

<http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/government-directs-google-facebook-whatsapp-to-delete-blue-whale-challenge-links/1/1026753.html>

In March 2015, Veronika Volkova, a 16-year-old teenager jumped off the roof of a tall building in Russia. Before committing suicide, she uploaded some pictures to social media of her cutting a blue whale on her arm. The same thing happened to her friend. The Blue Whale Challenge is a social game invented in Russia in 2013. However, according to Instagram, this game “can cause harm and even lead to death”. Recently, Tencent, the largest Internet service portal in China, has blocked the search of any keywords related to the Blue Whale Challenge. This game has finally been noticed by the global media. So is it true that the Blue Whale Challenge is responsible for those suicides? The answer is although there is no direct proof the Blue Whale Challenge is responsible for the suicides, the pictures Veronica uploaded indicate that the game harms its players.

So, what exactly is the Blue Whale Challenge? The game was inspired by the stranding of blue whales in Russia. The players imagine themselves as

stranded whales. When each player enters the game, they receive orders from an administrator, who will give the players orders. Then the players will have to finish all the orders even if the order is harmful, such as “Wake up at 4:20 am every day, and watch some scary videos.” or “Cut a blue whale on your arm.” The players could not exit the game before receiving the final order, which is always “jump off a building”. If a player quits or tries to contact the police, the administrator will track him or her down and delete his or her identity from the National System, so the player will no longer be protected by the law. When you enter the game, you are already dead. Waking up at 4:20 a.m. for a long time and harming themselves a lot can devastate the players’ mental health.

How could the Blue Whale Challenge spread so fast? Curiosity is the first reason. Teenagers like fantasy. Some teenagers imagine they are superheroes, and others imagine themselves living in a wonderland. The Blue Whale Challenge encourages the players to imagine themselves as stranded blue whales. The second reason is there is no way back after you enter the game. Some players maybe just want to try the game, but once they step in, they never get out, because the rule of the game would not let them.

In May 2017, the inventor of the Blue Whale Challenge, 21-year-old Philip Budeikin, was arrested by the Russian Police. He will face the charge of indirectly causing the death of at least 16 teenagers in Russia. Before the trial, Budeikin claimed he believes the players of his game, especially those who committed suicide, are “biological waste” and he is trying to clean up the society. Budeikin is only the “administrator” of eight-game groups. There are hundreds of groups around the world. Even after Budeikin was arrested, the game continues in other groups.

In China, there existed some WeChat groups called “Share Cutting Pictures” or “Wake Me Up At 4:20 am”. Recently, the Chinese Communist Youth League declared that they started “Whaling Action”. This action aims to stop the influence of the Blue Whale Challenge in China by helping the players get away from the game and teaching them how to face their life with a positive attitude. Tencent, the development company for WeChat, has cooperated with the Chinese Communist Youth League to block those WeChat groups. The Blue Whale challenge has drawn the attention of the Chinese Government. Although we could not be sure the game is fatal, the danger of

the Blue Whale Challenge should be noticed by all governments around the world. We should do our best to keep the game from spreading.