Blue Whale Game Is Scary But Parents Should Worry More About Depression In Teens

Blue whale game is rather an eye-opener. It's not the only demon lurking in cyber space, waiting to prey on the weak-willed, especially teenagers. But when psychiatrists attest to the spurt in number of adolescents in the state hit by depression and are prone to suicide, it signals the need for a scientific approach towards improving the psychological health of teenagers.

Academicians and experts in information technology say there is a need to create an ecosystem that would empower youngsters to overcome the challenges they face, both in real and virtual world. Rather than focusing on the evils of one or two computer games that harm the ‘vulnerable’, parents, authorities and the society as a whole should come up with mechanisms that would enhance the confidence of youngsters, they feel.

"Blue whale is said to have led to the suicide of several teenagers world over. But it is just one game. Teenagers are faced with several challenges in their daily lives," said psychiatrist Dr C J John.

According to him, the number of adolescent children who face depression and are drawn to suicide is showing an unprecedented increase in Kerala. “We don't have a system that focuses on identifying the mental trauma and challenge the adolescents face. Sometimes parents themselves contribute to the vulnerability of their children. If there exists an atmosphere wherein a youth can freely seek counselling of an expert psychologist, the situation would improve a lot," he added.

Kerala Technological University vicechancellor K P Issac said children should be taught to resist addictions early. “Be it a couch potato or a mouse potato, indulgence leads to addiction. Nuclear family contributes a great deal to such situations. Today, youngsters loiter in their islands all alone. Their only companions are gadgets and the internet. More personal attention by parents and teachers are the only option to safeguard them,” he said.

K Anvar Sadath, vice-chairman, Kerala Infrastructure and Technology for Education, shares the view that Blue Whale game is being hyped. “I don't think the game is widely used by people in our state. It's better if we don't create panic," he said.

Anoop P Ambika, former secretary, Group of Technology Companies (GTech) was of the view that a ban on the game would achieve little. “Umpteen number of such games are available on internet. To address the core issue, I think we should deliberately enhance avenues for social activities," he said.
A GAME THAT'S NOT A GAME

➢ Blue Whale is not a downloadable game, application or software
➢ It's a social media phenomenon which enters social media networks from secretive groups
➢ Examples of social media phenomenon include the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge and the Harlem Shake

BLUE WHALE SUICIDE CHALLENGE

➢ The challenge allegedly started in secret groups on Russian social media networks
➢ It is said to involve 50 challenges which are monitored by a curator. They include watching horror movies and inflicting self-harm
➢ They are expected to take photos of them undertaking the challenge and upload them as proofs for the curator's approval. The last challenge is to commit suicide.

IS BLUE WHALE REAL?

➢ There are unverifiable claims that over 100 teenagers killed themselves because of the challenge, but there is no evidence to suggest that the number is real
➢ Several fact-checking websites and media watchdogs have dismissed data on deaths due to lack of evidence
➢ In 2016, Filipp Budeykin, a 'curator' of the challenge, was arrested for aiding suicides. The 22-year-old who later pleaded guilty said the victims were “biological waste” and that he was “cleansing society”

ALS ICE BUCKET CHALLENGE:
Participants were asked to dump a bucket of ice and water over their head to promote awareness on the disease amyotrophic lateral sclerosis via social media. Over hundred million dollars was raised for treatment and research.

HARLEM SHAKE:
An Internet meme in the form of a video in which a group of people who unexpectedly start dancing to a short excerpt from the song 'Harlem Shake'