

AI-generated 'Xiaohai' avatars allegedly used to cheat elderly viewers in China

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AI boy avatars go viral in China, using sob stories to trick elderly out of money

With commissions up to 55%, creators using public AI prompts to make these 'Xiaohai' videos can pocket 2,000 to 3,000 yuan (US\$300–US\$450) a day

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AI-generated "sob-story boys" have recently taken Chinese short-video platforms by storm, allegedly using emotional manipulation to cheat elderly viewers out of their savings. Known collectively as "Xiaohai", these digital avatars typically appear as teenage boys in school uniforms or plain white shirts, tearfully describing their poverty-stricken lives on camera. In one video, a Xiaohai avatar holds a steamed bun and laments to viewers, whom he addresses as "aunties and mothers": "All my classmates went to lunch. I'm hiding in the classroom to eat this."

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AI-generated voice