

# Evolving Challenges to the Development and Assessment of Information Literacy Education for Online Safety in Japan

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*Seeking a safer Internet environment for minors, the Japanese government enacted a new law in 2008 to promote both protective measures and empowerment activities. Under the act, many entities, including newly established non-profit organizations (NPOs), are working to bring a safer Internet environment to Japan. The Japan Internet Safety Promotion Association (JISPA), one such NPO established in February 2007, has worked to promote a safer Internet environment for minors by providing non-formal learning opportunities through educational materials and events. Efforts to improve children's online safety have evolved from offering e-learning content and guidelines to holding workshops in the real world. JISPA's activities are characterized by its evolving process, in which changes are made based on feedback and assessments of their activities, such as e-learning content from "Mobami" and discussion workshops for high school students. Furthermore, JISPA has become a hub among the concerned parties including telecom carriers, information technology (IT) companies, and individuals; it has 186 members as of November 2013.*

*Keywords: Information Technology (IT), Japan Internet Safety Promotion Association (JISPA), Non-Profit Organizations (NPOs), Online Safety, Safer Internet Environment*

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## INTRODUCTION

### The 3G Service Usage of Minors in Japan

The penetration rate of third generation (3G) mobile data service in Japan has reached more than 90%, ahead of other countries. Japan also ranked first in the rate of growth of its mobile service market in the early 2000s and is known

for the variety of its available services, such as mobile games, social services, and payment services. The institution of an affordable mobile data service with a fixed monthly fee boosted the usage of mobile services by both adults and minors at the early stage of 3G usage in Japan (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, 2010, pp.8-10.).

Minors in Japan regard their mobile phones as indispensable for their daily lives. According

to a study by the Cabinet Office conducted in 2012, the average penetration rates for cellular phones among minors in elementary, junior high, and high schools were 27.5%, 51.6%, and 98.1% respectively (Cabinet Office, 2012, p. 11).

### **Challenges to the Minor's Usage of Mobile Service in Japan**

Mobile Internet use by teenagers can also become a hotbed for interpersonal online communication problems such as defamation and "net bullying." Due to a lack of understanding of the public nature of the Internet, some children slander their teachers and friends on forum sites, especially in so-called "underground school" forum sites (Shimoda, 2008, pp.11-19.).

Additionally, some minors have had online contact with criminals and have even been victimized as a result of such contact. The National Police Agency reported that the number of victims that had arisen via Internet services such as social networking services (SNSs) and profile-sharing services increased by 43.4% in 2013 compared to the previous year (National Police Agency, 2013, p. 4). Thus, the rapid growth of mobile service and the inadequate social rules for usage have caused trouble for users, and the number of crimes in which minors were involved and victimized increased in the mid-2000s (Akiyoshi, M., Koyabu, A., Tanaka E. & Yamaguchi H. 2008).

### **INTRODUCTION OF MOBILE ONLINE SAFETY MEASURES IN JAPAN**

Japan's mobile filtering service started in 2005. NTT, a mobile phone operator, introduced the service free of charge to their mobile customers to protect minors from inappropriate mobile Internet content. In some cases, however, parents have accepted their children's wishes not to use the filtering services, thinking they are ineffective. Many children prefer unfiltered mobile services because filtering services often limit many popular sites, including blogs and forums.

Then, after an intense societal discussion, a new bill, Act on Development of an Environment that Provides Safe and Secure Internet Use for Young People (Act No. 79), was passed in the Diet of Japan in 2008 to improve Internet safety for minors. The act also introduced a new regulation that aimed to make mobile filtering services mandatory unless explicit preferences are expressed by parents with written documentation (Nakamura, 2008, pp.263-275 and Nakatani, 2008, pp.29-39.). The news coverage of the problem and the discussion of the obligatory mobile filtering raised awareness of the need for digital media literacy, especially mobile literacy. As a result, a growing recognition of the need to promote a safer Internet environment involving parent participation and the enhancement of information literacy surfaced when the act was drafted (Akiyoshi, Koyabu, Koyama, Otuka, Saito, Tanaka, & Yonehama, 2009). In response, the act set up a framework that gives non-profit organizations (NPOs) a role in promoting a safe Internet environment with the idea that the private sector should take initiatives to ensure a safer Internet (Saito, 2009, pp. 50-53; Yoshioka 2009, pp.25-29.) .

### **CASE STUDY OF AN E-LEARNING CONTENT PROGRAM AND WORKSHOPS FOR MOBILE LITERACY LEARNING**

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