

Chapter 12

Comprehensive Internet Youth Protection Policies by Private Organizations and Effectiveness Verification: Efforts by Japan Internet Safety Promotion Association

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ABSTRACT

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 law, 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 been promoting 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. This chapter presents various measures taken by JISPA for the protection of children using the internet and verifies the effectiveness of these measures based on evidence. Measures to be verified are e-learning contents, workshop programs, and internet literacies among young people and parents.

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BACKGROUND

In recent years, mobile devices that can connect to the Internet, such as mobile phones and smartphones, are spreading among young people. The use of these devices brings not only advantages but also disadvantages in the form of youth problems. In particular, for young people who are less experienced than adults and lacking in good judgment regarding Internet risks, it will be necessary to establish protection as a social system.

Internet problems among young people in Japan include net dependency and cyberbullying, both of which are worsening, so correspondence is important. According to a survey by Higuchi (2013), approximately 6.0% of junior high students and 9.4% of high school students “use the Internet morbidly,” so that approximately 520,000 young people are Internet-dependent. On the other hand, according to the survey regarding problem behaviors of students conducted by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (2016), the number of cyberbullying incidents reported to schools in 2015 was 8,787—the highest number ever since last year. Furthermore, the National Police Agency (2017) reported that the number of crime victims per community Internet site was 1,736, which is about 2.2 times more than the 792 cases reported in 2008 when the Act on Regulation on Soliciting Children by Using Opposite Sex Introducing Service on Internet (the so-called dating site regulation) was revised. Community sites are crime routes, generally used in society and frequently used by elementary, junior high, and high school students. Going forward, self-defense instruction for youth and involvement/management by parents are important issues and include mastering knowledge of various risks resulting from the use of Web services and setting rules for use of the Internet at home.

In view of this situation, in 2009, the Act on Establishment of Enhanced Environment for Youth’s Safe and Secure Internet Use (Act No. 79 [2008], hereinafter referred to as the “Youth Internet Environment Improvement Act”) became effective in Japan. Article 3 provides as basic objectives: that “young people should acquire skills for independently utilizing information and communication equipment, properly sorting out information available on the Internet and appropriately transmitting information via the Internet” (para. 1), “reducing the chances of young people viewing content harmful ... via the Internet as much as possible, by way of improving the performance and disseminating the use of software for filtering content harmful to young people” (para. 2), and “safe and secure Internet use for young people shall be promoted based on the principle that voluntary and independent efforts in the private sector should play a substantial role” (para. 3).

In line with the gist of the Youth Internet Environment Improvement Act, this paper reports on the efforts for improving Internet use by young people in Japan and verifies its impact under the theme of awareness education activities by JISPA and voluntary measures established by the private sector.

NECESSITY OF INTERNET AWARENESS EDUCATION FOR THE DEVELOPMENTAL ENVIRONMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE

The various risks raised from Internet use are problems faced by all Internet users. However, protective measures are needed for young people in the developmental stage. This section addresses the necessity of protecting youth using *The Ecology of Human Development* (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) as a clue.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) classifies the ecological environments in which humans live into four areas. The microsystem is the area in which one’s experiences influence him/her and direct subsequent actions.

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