

CHINA

Concerns raised over kids' addiction to card collecting

By LI MENGHAN
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Seven-year-old Miaomiao is already an experienced card collector with three years of experience.

"I always felt very excited when I drew an SR (super rare) card or better," Miaomiao said, mentioning her grandmother's routine of buying her card packs on Tuesdays and Sundays from a neighborhood shop in Beijing's Shunyi district after dance lessons.

Her card collecting came to a stop when her mother stumbled upon a drawer filled with cards, many of them duplicates. Those cards, which were bought for over 1,000 yuan (\$138.90), ended up being sold for just a few tens of yuan on the secondhand goods trading platform Xianyu for a quick sale.

The girl gracefully accepted her mother's decision, shifting her interest to other toys. Reflecting on her former favorite card series, Yeluoli — a Chinese animated figure — she now considers her past actions somewhat "stupid" because the figure was hyped by street vendors despite its simple appearance.

Miaomiao, among the minors embracing the heated card collecting trend, exemplifies a healthy passion amid growing concerns over some youths' potential shift from affection to addiction, prompting a call for concerted efforts from families, schools and regulatory oversight.

Collectible cards are generally themed and categorized into five grades — ultra rare, superior super rare, super rare, rare and normal, and they operate similarly to blind boxes.

Typically, a pack containing five undisclosed cards is priced at 10 yuan, although the cost can vary depending on the possibility of getting a "limited edition". The likelihood of acquiring an ultra rare card can be as low as 0.1 percent.

China's collectible card market surged from 2.8 billion yuan in 2019 to 26.3 billion yuan last year, overtaking the United States and Japan to claim the title of the world's largest collectible card market. It is projected to hit 44.6 billion yuan by 2029, according to a report released by GF Securities.

Pan Lan, a psychologist and head of the Yutong social work service center in Wuhan, Hubei province, labeled the popularity of collectible cards as "a successful marketing case", noting that it leverages the random reward mechanism of ripping card packaging open, triggering the release of dopamine to create a feeling of pleasure and potentially leading to physiological dependence. Additionally, it can foster a gambling mentality, with individuals believing in illusions such as the increased likelihood of "getting their desired card" because of previous unsuccessful trials.

"Actually, the seemingly trivial cards to us symbolize a 'circle culture' for children, facilitating their rapid integration into particular communities and acquisition of conversational capital through their rare cards. This process effectively satisfies their profound cravings for recognition and a sense of belonging," Pan said.

She pointed out that, unlike

studying, card collecting provides a clear objective and can deliver instant gratification to children. This is especially significant for adolescents who are frustrated by schoolwork and seeking a sense of control.

She presented a clinical case involving a 12-year-old boy diagnosed with bipolar disorder. The boy spent tens of thousands of yuan on Star Wars-themed cards. As his condition progressed, he began experiencing symptoms such as insomnia when unable to obtain desired cards, as well as outbursts if his parents wouldn't give him money to buy more. Due to emotional difficulties, his school attendance was limited to once a week during that period.

While his parents attributed the cause of the illness to collectible cards, Pan considered it the result of multiple factors, underscoring a lack of family companionship in the boy's upbringing, which made him place more emphasis on peer relationships. With the family and school's neglect of the pressure brought about by increasing academic difficulty, the boy sought affirmation from his classmates through an easier way of showcasing rare cards and gradually lost control.

Luo Xueming, a senior expert at the Guangdong Modern Urban Industrial Technology Research Institute, said that collecting cards itself is not problematic.

He hailed the cultural symbols carried by high-quality cards, which feature classic literary characters, historical figures and traditional sports, as they facilitate cultural inheritance in a light-hearted manner.

However, some business owners exploit the vulnerability of young people's discernment by designing addictive mechanisms that prioritize short-term profits over the consumer's well-being. When collecting cards becomes the focus of their mentality and everyday life, opportunities for diverse development such as learning exploration and social interaction in reality will be deprived, Luo said.

He highlighted a convention introduced in late 2021 by Zhejiang Kayou Animation, China's largest collectible card market shareholder. It has set specific regulations concerning purchase limits for minors and the duration of their shopping visits to its outlets, demonstrating a sustainable trading approach.

Considering the similar operational mode of collectible cards and blind boxes, Zhu Wei, deputy head of the Communication Law Research Center at the China University of Political Science and Law, proposed that the oversight of collectible cards could align with the guidelines for business practices of blind box operations issued by the State Administration for Market Regulation in 2023.

These guidelines mandate the disclosure of prices and drawing probabilities, prohibit false advertising and consumer inducement, and encourage the establishment of a guaranteed mechanism.

Zhu emphasized the prohibition of card purchases for children under age 8, particularly highlighting the need to enhance purchasing verification procedures in online livestreaming rooms.



Senior students at Tongzhou Jinsha High School in Nantong, Jiangsu province, launch paper airplanes carrying their dreams into the sky on Wednesday. With the college entrance exams approaching, schools across the country are organizing various stress-relief activities to help students relax and prepare. ZHAI HUIYONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Major reforms rolled out ahead of gaokao

Universities expand enrollment, add AI, tech programs to align with shifts

By LI SHANGYI
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China's national college entrance exam, known as the *gaokao*, will take place from Saturday to Tuesday and feature several new developments, including the rollout of exam reforms in eight additional provinces, expanded university enrollment and the launch of new academic majors.

This year, eight more provincial-level regions will implement the *gaokao* reform: Sichuan, Henan, Shanxi, Yunnan, Shaanxi, Qinghai and the Ningxia Hui and Inner Mongolia autonomous regions. So far, 29 provinces have adopted the new *gaokao* mechanism.

Under the reform, candidates must take three nationally standardized subjects — Chinese, mathematics and a foreign language — along with one primary elective subject, either physics or history, and two additional electives selected from chemistry, geography, political science and biology.

Xiong Bingqi, director of the 21st Century Education Research Institute, said the reform, launched in 2014, has provided students with greater flexibility in subject selection and aims to place more emphasis on students' individuality and personal interests while establishing a more comprehensive and multi-dimensional evaluation system.

"However, the issue of solely relying on test scores persists. It is necessary to strengthen the reform of comprehensive quality evaluation," Xiong said.

Many universities have expanded enrollment plans this year,

“It is hoped that universities will expand enrollment based on their unique conditions and strengths, focusing not only on increasing numbers but also on improving quality.”

Xiong Bingqi, director of the 21st Century Education Research Institute

including Tsinghua University, Peking University and Shanghai Jiao Tong University. The additional spots, ranging from dozens to several hundred, are primarily concentrated in fundamental disciplines such as mathematics, physics and chemistry, as well as in strategic and cutting-edge fields.

Xi'an Jiaotong University in Shaanxi province has been expanding its enrollment over the past decade and plans to add 200 more spots this year, according to Cao Liangzhi, director of the university's admissions office.

"The focus is primarily on emerging technology industries and fields geared toward the future," Cao said. "In response to technological and industrial transformation and upgrading, we aim to cultivate more high-quality talent."

This year, China's college admis-

sions introduced 29 new undergraduate majors across fields such as artificial intelligence, carbon neutrality and digital governance.

According to the Ministry of Education, these new programs are designed to align with national strategic priorities, market demands and technological advancements.

Beijing Jiaotong University has added five undergraduate majors in fields of national strategic demand, including data science and big data technology, robotics engineering, intelligent manufacturing engineering, intelligent vehicle engineering, and international journalism and communication.

The Beijing Institute of Technology has introduced a low-altitude technology and engineering major, focusing on cultivating top-tier talent to meet the strategic needs of low-altitude economic development.

Universities are adjusting their programs to align with social development and meet societal needs, according to Xiong.

Around 13.35 million students have registered for this year's *gaokao*, a decrease of 70,000 compared to last year and marking the first decline in a decade, according to data released by the ministry.

The decline in exam candidates is primarily due to a decrease in vocational college entrance exam participants, who are no longer required to take the *gaokao*, Xiong explained. However, the number of candidates for the regular *gaokao* has increased, he said.

"It is hoped that universities will expand enrollment based on their unique conditions and strengths, focusing not only on increasing numbers but also on improving quality," Xiong said.

Mainland rips DPP for threatening summit attendees

By ZHANG YI
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A spokeswoman on the Chinese mainland on Wednesday criticized Taiwan's Democratic Progressive Party authorities for threatening to investigate Taiwan entrepreneurs who expressed their Chinese identity at a recent cross-strait event, calling their move a betrayal of one's ancestors.

The comments followed an announcement by Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council on Sunday, accusing remarks made by Want Want China Times Media Group of damaging the island's "sovereignty". The council said it would investigate whether the group had collaborated with the mainland and violated regulations.

At the second Cross-Strait Chinese Culture Summit, held on May 28 in Beijing and attended by more than 800 cultural representatives from both sides, Want Want Holdings General Manager Tsai Wangting said, "We, as Chinese, should never forget our roots, history and culture."

Tsai noted that Want Want originated in Taiwan but has expanded its operations on the mainland.

Best known for its snacks, Want Want China is the mainland's largest producer of rice cakes. It acquired Taiwan's China Times Media Group in 2008.

Zhu Fenglian, spokeswoman for the State Council Taiwan Affairs Office, said it was the right and freedom of Taiwan participants to express that both sides of the Taiwan Strait are one family and that they are all Chinese. She said this view reflects public opinion on the island, which favors peace, development, communication and cooperation.

Zhu condemned the DPP authorities, accusing them of pursuing political gain at the expense of mainstream opinion, stirring up "anti-China" sentiment and intimidating individuals and groups that support peaceful cross-strait ties.

"The DPP authorities are engaging in nothing short of 'terror politics' and 'authoritarianism,'" Zhu said.

She warned that those who forget their roots "never have a good ending", adding that actions against public sentiment are "doomed to fail".

Want Want China Times Media Group released a statement on Monday, saying that according to laws and regulations, Taiwan and the mainland belong to one China, and Taiwan people are Chinese — an enduring stance for the group. It also called for more efforts to promote cross-strait peace and Taiwan's future.

The Cross-Strait Peace Development Forum, a platform of individuals and social groups from Taiwan, said in a statement on Sunday that the remarks from Want Want represent "a rational voice from the media amidst the current social turmoil", deserving of support and recognition rather than suppression.

Chinese, German scientists discover super-Earth

KUNMING — For centuries, the question of whether life exists beyond Earth has intrigued humanity, and now a joint discovery by Chinese and German scientists may offer a significant clue.

Using the Transit Timing Variation technique for the first time, the scientists found a super-Earth — Kepler-725c, with 10 times the mass of the Earth — within the habitable zone of the Sun-like star Kepler-725, which is a promising candidate for potential habitability.

"This newly discovered non-transiting planet and its host star are located at a place about 2,472 light-years from the solar system," said Gu Shenghong, team leader from the Chinese Academy of Sciences' Yunnan Observatories.

“This planet resides within the habitable zone of its host star, the region around a star where the temperature is suitable for liquid water to exist.”

Gu Shenghong, team leader from the Chinese Academy of Sciences' Yunnan Observatories

"More crucially, this planet resides within the habitable zone of its host star, the region around a star

where the temperature is suitable for liquid water to exist. It orbits around its host star with a period of 207.5 days, comparable to Earth's one-year period," Gu added.

"By analyzing the TTV signals of Kepler-725b, a gas giant planet with a 39.64-day period in the same system, the team has successfully inferred the mass and orbital parameters of the hidden planet Kepler-725c," said Sun Leilei, the first and co-corresponding author of the study, who also works with the Yunnan Observatories.

Unlike the transit method and radial velocity method, the TTV technique is not subject to specific observational challenges. Instead, it can indirectly detect the presence of a planet by simply measuring the TTVs of another known

planet in orbital resonance with it, Sun said.

"It demonstrates the potential of the TTV technique to detect low-mass planets in habitable zones of Sun-like stars," Sun added.

Gu also noted that further investigation is needed to assess whether the discovered habitable planet truly possesses conditions suitable for Earth-like life.

The research is jointly conducted by the Yunnan Observatories, the Hamburg Observatory, Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University, and the Nanjing Institute of Astronomical Optics and Technology of the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

The research was published in the journal *Nature Astronomy* on Tuesday.

XINHUA

Warrior turns 100



Fang Keji, a World War II veteran who trained at Huangpu (Whampoa) Military Academy and fought alongside the Flying Tigers in the Battle of Western Hunan, salutes family and guests at his 100th birthday in Changsha, Hunan province, on Wednesday. YANG HUAIFENG / CHINA NEWS SERVICE