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NEWSLETTER

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## **Urban-Rural Differences in Student Decision-Making Regarding Shadow Education: An Analysis Based on the Theory of Planned Behavior**

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ORIGINALLY, extracurricular tutoring was meant to help students to improve their academic performance and prospects for further education. Yet, shadow education has now become an off-campus arena for the competition for additional educational resources, as it takes place outside formal schools and is a paid service.

Based on the theory of planned behavior, this study analyzed the decision process in after-school tutoring consumption from the standpoint of demand and explored the main factors in decision-making about students' participation in shadow education, in an effort to provide urban and rural families with implications for making rational decisions regarding private supplementary tutoring to reduce the burdens it brings on to children and parents.

The study recruited 32 secondary school students between the ages of 14 and 16 from Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou Cities and Jiangsu Province. They were either senior students of middle schools or junior students of high schools. Among the subjects, there were 17 female and 15 male students, with 22 of them from urban schools and 10 from rural ones. Data were collected through interviews.

Research findings showed that the theory of planned behavior is applicable to the decision-making of all students choosing to participate in after-school tutoring. Students would deliberate and make decisions based on the following three aspects: attitudes (views on after-school tutoring), subjective norms (social pressure from parents, friends, and peer groups), and perceived behavior control (objective conditions such as traffic distance between home and the off-campus training institution, tutoring fees, tutoring quality, etc.).

There were significant differences in decision-making about shadow education between urban and rural students. Rural students could not access private tutoring, especially high-quality private tutoring due to economic constraints and/or traffic difficulties, while their urban peers can enjoy the dual educational advantages: better school education and high-quality extracurricular tutoring. Rural students played a more passive role in extracurricu-

lar tutoring participation and their decision-making were often the result of influences from their parents' social connections, while urban students are more likely to make autonomous decisions based on their own needs.

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