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OMANI STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE IMPACT OF PRIVATE TUTORING ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

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ABSTRACT

Private tutoring is becoming increasingly common worldwide as a way to supplement formal education, especially in developing countries. This growing trend has attracted significant attention from researchers who are using various methods to understand the reasons behind the demand for private tutoring and its Impact on students, focusing on key variables such as gender, grade level, and the relationship between tutoring participation and test scores. However, few research studies examine how Omani students perceive the Impact of private tutoring on their academic performance. Therefore, this study aims to investigate Omani students' perceptions of private tutoring and its Impact on their academic performance. The study employed a quantitative research method and collected data from 1,111 Omani students studying in grades 9 to 12 (high and higher secondary schools) by distributing a self-prepared questionnaire. The data were analyzed in SPSS using descriptive and regression analysis to determine the factors influencing the test scores. The multiple regression analyses indicate a positive correlation between private tutoring and Omani students' academic achievement ($F = 5.210$, $p = 0.006$). However, receiving private tutoring ($p = 0.543$) is not statistically significant, whereas the number of days attended is statistically significant ($p = 0.001$). Overall, the study's findings reveal that mere participation in private tutoring does not have a positive effect on test scores, but regularly attending private tutoring is positively associated with test scores. The study recommends consistent engagement with private tutoring to improve students' academic performance. The study also provides significant implications for teachers, parents, and policymakers.

INTRODUCTION

Education systems have evolved over the years, and assessments and exams have become essential for measuring students' achievement. Our current educational systems are deeply rooted in colonial origins. So, many education systems rely heavily on exams to ensure fairness, mainly when many students compete for limited higher education seats and scholarships. Thus, students and their families have been looking for ways to help learners maximize their scores on school exams. Therefore, many parents hire private tutors to help their children in various subjects to ensure their academic success.

At first, private tutoring was a sole practice for wealthy families. However, this idea became a global issue (Bray & Kwo, 2014), and the demand for private tutors increased. In many countries, private tutoring has become a parallel education system alongside school systems, and many families perceive it as an obligation (Zhang, 2021).

Research also suggests that private tutoring has become an inevitable feature of formal educational systems, as students use it to improve their academic performance. A study conducted by Guerrero (2020) demonstrated that private tutoring could help students become high achievers. Likewise, Zheng, Wang, Shen, and Fang (2020) found that private tutoring had a positive influence on students' test scores. A recent study by Zhang and Liu (2022) also showed a positive correlation between private tutoring and academic performance. Earlier studies by Buchmann, Condron, and Roscigno (2010) and Marshall and Fukao (2019) also found a positive relationship between private tutoring and academic performance. These results reinforce the global view that private tutoring is essential for academic achievement. Hence, parents and students opt for private tutoring. This rise in demand reflects broader global trends in which private tutoring is added to formal education systems.

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In Oman, private tutoring is no longer a luxury but a standard part of educational support. This is due to educational pressure, perceived necessity, and parental investment. Private tutoring in Oman has gained popularity over the last two decades and is available in various forms, including personalized, group, and online sessions. Tutors are generally selected based on their qualifications, experience, recommendations, reputation, and location. Therefore, studying this phenomenon has become necessary to uncover its various aspects and its Impact on Omani students and the school system in general. The lack of self-motivated reading habits also plays a role in the decision to choose private tutoring. In this context, many questions related to private tutoring, such as the percentage of prevalence of private lessons among Omani school students, the most common forms of private lessons, the subjects for which students take private tutoring, the criteria used for selecting a private teacher, the place for private tutoring, time allotted for tuition, money spent on tuition, remain unanswered.

Omani students and parents invest significant time and money in private tutoring, yet few studies have been conducted in this regard. As a consequence, details on the prevalence and practices of private tutoring, academic outcomes, equity, and accessibility are unavailable. So, the stakeholders are still determining whether private tutoring positively impacts Omani students' self-confidence, study skills, and academic performance. Therefore, this empirical study primarily focuses on Omani students' perceptions of private tutoring, examines the demographic variables gender and grade level, and investigates the relationship between private tutoring and its Impact on academic success, gender, and grade level.

The lack of detailed, context-specific knowledge about private tutoring and its potential Impact on academic performance is the primary problem in the Omani educational context. Detailed and contextualized knowledge is vital for informing educational practices and policies. Therefore, this empirical study aims to investigate (a) whether there are differences in the perceptions of male and female students regarding private tutoring, (b) whether students in grades 9, 10, 11, and 12 hold varying opinions on private tutoring, and (c) whether there is a relationship between students' test scores and their participation in private tutoring.

Overall, this study aims to investigate Omani students' perceptions of private tutoring and its Impact on their academic performance. To achieve the aim of this study, a quantitative method is adopted. Data were collected from 1,111 Omani students in Grades 9-12. To collect data, a self-prepared questionnaire was used. The data were analyzed in SPSS using descriptive analysis and multiple regression analysis. By addressing these gaps, this study attempts to provide valuable insights for students, parents, teachers, and policymakers. The study is unique because it not only fills a research gap but also enables students, parents, teachers, and policymakers to make informed decisions about private tutoring in Oman's educational landscape. The remaining paper structure includes section 2, which reviews the literature on the study variable, private tutoring, and its Impact on academic performance, and students' perceptions of private tutoring. Section 3 elaborates on the study's methodology. Results and discussion are presented in section 4, and the study's conclusion is presented in section 5.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The growing popularity of private tutoring among students has become a significant topic in education. Many students feel that private tutoring improves their academic performance. They mention factors such as increased motivation, parental expectations, perceived inadequacies in school teaching quality, and the personalized attention provided through tutoring. These elements suggest that private tutoring is an effective way to address specific learning needs and complement formal education. Empirical research across many countries has shed light on the potential benefits of private tutoring. In Japan, private lessons are more inclusive and better organized, as in 2017 they accounted for $969 billion in the market (Zhang, 2021). In China, private lessons expanded during the 1990s and developed the world's most extensive system of private tutoring (Zhang & Bray, 2017). In 2020, official statistics estimated that over half a million companies with more than 11 million employees were engaged in private tutoring in China. The situation is no better in South Korea, as national statistics show that 74.5% of Korean students in K-12 received private tutoring in 2019. Davies and Aurini (2006) have found that 24% of parents in Canada hire private teachers to provide academic support to their children. The percentage appears to be higher in the Arab world. For example, a 2009 study by the Information Centre of the Egyptian Cabinet found that 61%-77% of students receive private tutoring across all school levels. On the other hand, official Egyptian statistics show that private lessons prohibited by Egyptian laws cost families around 15 billion Egyptian Pounds.

However, in the Arab Gulf countries, official statistics are unavailable on this issue, creating an ambiguous picture of its extent. Neither teachers nor students publicly discuss private tutoring, as all Gulf states consider it illegal for teachers to provide it. However, studies show that the phenomenon is spreading in the Gulf countries. For example, a study in Kuwait found that 67.8% of secondary students go for private tutoring. Also, found that 19.3% of respondents took private lessons. In Saudi Arabia, 45.9% of male and 56.6% of secondary students receive private lessons. A Ministry of Education in Oman study found that 47.7% of students use private tutoring. Students go for private lessons for socio-economic reasons (Bray, 2014). Also, the school environment can contribute to the spread of private tutoring; crowded classrooms, low-quality teaching, and complex curricula may lead students to seek extra lessons (Bray & Lykins, 2012). The main reason for the spread of private lessons is the challenging math topics students encounter in schools that do not align with their abilities. Such activities reduce teacher-student classroom interaction and students' interest in these topics. Isawi (2018) argues that students' absences and lack of autonomy force parents to opt for private tutoring to secure high grades. Students' views indicate they seek private tutoring to achieve the high grades required for university enrolment in specific programs, especially for complex topics in some school subjects.

However, Bray and Kwo (2014) see that private tutoring spreads among students who need remedial work and extra support when dealing with their peers or school learning procedures. This becomes obvious with other challenges,

such as crowded classrooms, and there are several reasons; students' weakness in some school subjects comes at the top of this list. He also says that schools need to make greater efforts to raise students' awareness of the dangers these private lessons may pose to learners and the school system, as they encourage students to neglect classes and promote carelessness. Others believe that teachers who promote private tutoring do so for financial gain. These benefits encourage teachers facing economic constraints, especially in developing countries, to seek private tutoring outside school hours (Isawi, 2018). Teachers' low income is one of the main reasons for the spread of private teaching, through which they seek to lift their living standards. Teachers' lack of incentives contributes to their working extra hours as private tutors.

There are also reasons related to family, such as the over-pampering of children that parents practice when providing education, which leads learners to become overly dependent on studying. In addition, many families tend to imitate other families in providing extra support to children without considering their needs. This practice might be due to helping learners score high grades. Zhang (2014) notes that high-achieving students are more willing to take private lessons than challenged students, and that families consider this part of their investment in children's education. Private lessons differ in nature as community orientation and policies around them vary. The first type is official. Educational institutions offer private lessons, and governments offer additional incentives to encourage teachers to provide extra student support. So, they can score high in national and international exams (Bray & Kwo, 2014). The second type is unofficial, as it does not come through an educational organization. It is usually understood as an unofficial individual agreement between parents and individual teachers. This type is spreading more as lessons are provided outside school premises in various houses, public places, and libraries. The third type is organized by private institutions registered to provide extra complementary support for learners. These organizations offer multiple services, and parents have to choose what they think is better for their child and their budgets. Lessons can be provided for groups or individual students, face-to-face or online. Such organizations have official licenses in Turkey and Japan (Bray & Kwo, 2014).

To optimize private tutoring, it is essential to understand students' perceptions. However, differences in male and female students' perceptions may vary and can significantly contribute to optimizing private tutoring. This view is supported by theoretical frameworks, such as social role theory and achievement motivation theory, which suggest that gender can influence attitudes towards private tutoring. According to social role theory, boys and girls have differing attitudes towards life and academic support because they are socialized differently (Eagly & Wood, 1999). Similarly, achievement motivation theory points out that an individual's drive to achieve is shaped by their self-concept and perceived abilities. Gender differences in achievement motivation can influence how students view and engage with academic support (McClelland, 1965). Based on these theoretical frameworks, it can be assumed that male and female students perceive private tutoring differently. It is essential to determine whether male and female students differ in their perceptions of private tutoring. Such findings have important implications for educational practice, suggesting that interventions should be designed with an understanding of individual needs rather than gender-based assumptions. Hence, the variable gender (G) is tested.

Understanding how students in different grades (9, 10, 11, and 12) perceive private tutoring is essential. This could reveal the distinct developmental and academic challenges they may face. Theoretical frameworks such as Developmental theory and cognitive development theory suggest that (a) individuals go through distinct stages of psychosocial development throughout their lives (Erikson, 1968) and (b) differences in grade levels may reflect variations in cognitive maturity and the ability to handle complex concepts and strategies (Piaget & Inhelder, 2008). Based on these theoretical frameworks, it can be inferred that students across grades perceive private tutoring differently. These differences may even affect their perceived value of private tutoring. Since students' perceptions may vary by grade level, it is essential to include the grade-level variable (GL). By addressing this variable, the study can help improve tutoring practices. This will ensure academic growth and development for students across different grades. When it comes to the Impact of private tutoring on academic performance, Guerrero (2020) found that private education investment tends to have a positive effect on students' chances of becoming high achievers. However, there are substantial differences by social origins. Similarly, the study by Zheng, Wang, Shen, and Fang (2020) shows that private tutoring is significantly and positively associated with student test scores, especially in English and mathematics. Furthermore, tutored students tend to report higher levels of self-confidence and parent-child relationships. Zhang and Liu (2022) highlight that most research supports a positive correlation between private tutoring and test scores, a view echoed by several studies (Buchmann, Condron, & Roscigno, 2010; Candia, Mukoki, Ashaba, Jehopio, & Kyasiimire, 2018; Marshall & Fukao, 2019).

However, there are few studies on how attitudes towards private tutoring differ by gender and grade level. Since this study involves students in grades 9-12, it is essential to determine whether they have varied perceptions of private tutoring. Furthermore, demographic factors such as gender and grade have not been investigated thoroughly in relation to private tutoring and academic achievement. By focusing on these demographic factors, the study will examine the differences and their implications to address the existing research gap. Based on theoretical frameworks and empirical studies, this study seeks answers to the following questions: (a) Are there differences in the perceptions of private tutoring between male and female students? (b) Do students in grades 9, 10, 11, and 12 have varying opinions on private tutoring? Moreover, (c) Is there a link between students' test scores and their participation in private tutoring? To answer these research questions, three null hypotheses were formulated. The following are the hypotheses of the study:

H_1: There is no significant difference between male and female students' perceptions of private tutoring.
H_2: There is no significant difference in opinions among grades 9, 10, 11, and 12.
H_3: There is no relationship between test scores and private tutoring.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

About 1111 students studying in grades nine, ten, eleven, and twelve participated in the survey. These students represented various high and higher secondary schools in different regions of Oman. This diverse sample size ensured a comprehensive representation of students who actively engage in private tutoring to improve their academic performance. Demographic details, including gender, grade, and frequency of private tutoring, were collected from them to conduct an in-depth analysis.

A self-developed questionnaire was administered to participants to collect data on students' perceptions of private tutoring and its Impact on academic achievement. The questionnaire included the following questions: Students' attitude towards private tutoring, perceived effectiveness of private tutoring, frequency of attending private tutoring, Impact of private tutoring on academic achievement, and self-reported test scores. The study employed five Likert scales in the questionnaire to measure responses, with 5 indicating "strongly agree" and 1 indicating "strongly disagree," to provide precise measurement. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences).

The data were collected from students currently attending private tutoring, from various regions, electronically via Email questionnaires. Participants were informed about the study's purpose and provided consent to participate. Parents were also informed about the study. Additionally, to contextualize the study and develop a research framework, secondary data were collected from journals indexed in Scopus, Web of Science, and other reputable databases.

The study employed a quantitative research method. Descriptive analysis was carried out to determine the frequencies of gender, grade, and governorate, as well as the overall percentages. Next, an Independent Samples t-test was conducted to compare the means of two independent groups and determine whether there is a statistically significant difference between male and female students. After that, a One-Way ANOVA was performed to compare the means of the four groups (grades 9, 10, 11, and 12) and assess whether there were significant differences among them. Finally, Multiple Linear Regression Analysis was carried out to examine how well several independent variables predict the dependent variable and provides information on the strength and nature of these relationships.

While the theoretical frameworks are informed by Social Role Theory (Eagly & Wood, 1999), Achievement Motivation Theory (McClelland, 1965), Developmental Theory (Erikson, 1968), Cognitive Development Theory (Piaget & Inhelder, 2008), the empirical frameworks are derived from Guerrero (2020), Zheng, Wang, Shen, and Fang (2020), Zhang and Liu (2022). Based on these theoretical and empirical frameworks, this study contributes to understanding whether gender, grade level, and private tutoring influence academic performance.

RESULTS

Descriptive Analysis

Table 1. Frequency Table for Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	550	49.5
Female	561	50.5
Total	1111	100.0

The gender frequency table indicates that of 1,111 respondents, 550 (49.5%) are male and 561 (50.5%) are female. This shows that the gender distribution among participants is nearly balanced, with only a slight difference of 0.5% between the two groups. Such an even distribution suggests that both male and female perspectives are almost equally represented in the study, reducing the risk of gender bias in the findings. Therefore, the sample can be considered gender-balanced, enhancing the credibility and generalizability of the research results.

Table 2. Frequency Table for Grade Level

Grade Level	Frequency	Percent
9	180	16.2
10	247	22.2
11	306	27.5
12	378	34.0
Total	1111	100.0

From the above table, the highest number of students who utilize private tutoring is 12^{th}-grade students (34%), and 11^{th}-grade students (27.5%), followed by 10^{th}-grade students (22.2%), and the least is 9th-grade students (16.2%). This shows that the higher the grade, the higher the percentage of students taking private tutoring. So, students who want to score higher marks prefer private tutoring. The higher the marks, the more students have a chance to choose and enroll in an institution of their liking.

Table 3. Frequency Table for the Governorate of Students who Attended Private Tutoring

Governorate	Frequency	Percent
Sharqiya north	131	11.8
Sharqiya south	159	14.3
Batinah north	285	25.7

Batinah south	146	13.1
Dakhliya	54	4.9
Wosta	3	.3
Musandam	17	1.5
Buraimi	3	.3
Dahira	71	6.4
Dofar	38	3.4
Muscat	204	18.4
Total	1111	100.0

The table above shows that the North Batinah (285%), Muscat (204%), and South Batinah (146%) governorates have higher rates of students taking private tutoring than other governorates. This indicates that students from these regions show more interest in private tutoring. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, these students would have pursued private tutoring to get a good score in the higher secondary school exam. Also, these regions are developed, so there may be intense competition among students to get admitted to the college, university, or institution they prefer or need to attend.

Table 4. Frequency Table for the Overall Percentage of Students who attended private tutoring

Percentage	Frequency	Percent
More than 90%	311	28.0
80% - 90%	415	37.4
70% - 79%	247	22.2
Less than 70%	138	12.4
Total	1111	100.0

The table shows the final exam percentage for students who took private tutoring the previous year. The result shows that 65.4% of students scored above 80%. 22.2% scored between 70% and 79%. 12.4% of students scored less than 70%. Looking at the data, the majority of students performed well in the exam. This shows that attending private tutoring helped students to secure a decent score to pursue their higher studies.

Hypothesis: There is no significant difference between male and female students' perceptions of private tutoring.

Table 5. Perceptions of male and female students on private tutoring

Perception of Students	Gender				t value	P value
	Male		Female			
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Students' opinions on private tutoring	19.873	3.80	20.08	3.90	-1.532	0.126
Students' Opinion on the Effectiveness of Private Tutoring	16.71	2.78	16.76	2.86	-285	0.786

Contrary to the theoretical frameworks informed by Social Role Theory (Eagly & Wood, 1999) and Achievement Motivation Theory (McClelland, 1965), Table 5 shows no significant differences in perceptions between male and female students. They share a similar opinion. This is confirmed statistically. The p-value is greater than 0.05%, so it is statistically insignificant. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted.

Hypothesis: There is no significant difference in opinions among grades 9, 10, 11, and 12

Table 6. Significant difference in opinions among grades 9, 10, 11, and 12

Perception of Students	Grade				F Value	P Value
	9	10	11	12		
Students' opinions on private tutoring	19.40 (4.12)	19.90 (3.63)	19.80 (3.93)	20.24 (3.79)	2.048	0.105
Students' opinions on the effectiveness of private tutoring	16.85 (2.68)	16.92 (2.61)	16.52 (3.00)	16.74 (2.86)	1.029	0.379

Contrary to the theoretical frameworks informed by Developmental Theory (Erikson, 1968) and Cognitive Development Theory (Piaget & Inhelder, 2008), Table 6 (the One-Way ANOVA results) shows no significant difference among the different grades. The p-value is above 0.05%, so the difference is statistically insignificant. According to the data, students in grades 9, 10, 11, and 12 have similar perceptions of the Impact of private tutoring on their academic performance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted.

Hypothesis: There is no relationship between test scores and private tutoring

Dependent variable: Test Score
Independent variables**:** 1. Receiving private tutoring
2. Number of days students attended private tutoring

Table 7. Model Summary

R Square	Adjusted R Square	F Value	P- Value
.009	.008	5.210	.006

Empirical evidence from the studies of Guerrero (2020), Zheng, Wang, Shen, and Fang (2020), and Zhang and Liu (2022) demonstrates that private tutoring has a positive impact on academic performance. These study findings also confirm the positive correlation between test scores and private tutoring, as shown in Table 7. The linear regression analysis shows that the overall model is statistically significant ($F(1, 9) = 5.210$, $p = 0.006$).

Table 8. Variables in the Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Variables	Unstandardized co-efficient (B)	SE of B	Standardized co-efficient (Beta)	t value	P value
Constant	1.956	0.136	-	14.43	<0.001**
1	0.029	0.047	0.018	0.609	0.543
2	0.086	0.027	0.096	3.193	<0.001**

Note: ** Denotes significant at 1% level

According to Table 8, the individual predictor "receiving private tutoring" is not statistically significant (p-value = 0.543). The value exceeds the conventional significance level of 0.005. This suggests that this predictor does not significantly influence the test scores. However, the individual predictor "number of days students attended private tutoring" is statistically significant (p-value = 0.001). This indicates that this predictor has a significant effect on the test scores. It implies that the more days a student attends private tutoring, the higher their test scores. To conclude, receiving private tutoring, regardless of the number of days attended, does not affect test scores, but the number of days a student attends private tutoring shows a substantial, positive impact on test scores. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

DISCUSSIONS

This study examined Omani students' perceptions of the Impact of private tutoring on academic performance. Three null hypotheses were proposed in this study, and the discussion is organized around these hypotheses; H_1: There is no significant difference between male and female students' perceptions of private tutoring,.H_2: There is no significant difference of opinions among grade 9, 10, 11, and 12, and H_3: There is no relationship between test scores and private tutoring.

The findings did not support H_1 and H_2, indicating no significant differences in perceptions between male and female students or across grade levels. This suggests that various demographic groups have a similar or unvarying influence of private tutoring. Since demographic characteristics do not influence students' attitudes toward private tutoring, these findings are inconsistent with Social Role Theory (Eagly & Wood, 1999), Achievement Motivation Theory (McClelland, 1965), Developmental Theory (Erikson, 1968), and Cognitive Development Theory (Piaget & Inhelder, 2008). There is a discrepancy between theoretical expectations and empirical findings.

In contrast, H_3 was supported. The linear regression analysis results reveal the possible link between academic achievement and private coaching. This implies a significant correlation between exam scores and private tutoring. Nevertheless, it is not that all students who take tuition show such correlations, but rather that students who regularly attend private tutoring do. Hence, the predictor, the number of days attended private tutoring, reveals such correlations. This research proves that regular attendance has a positive impact on test scores. These findings support the assumption that the success of private tutoring is determined not just by whether a student participates but also by how consistently they engage in these sessions. Hence, it is evident that without continuous attendance in private tutoring, students will not be able to improve their academic performance. This validates the study findings of Zheng et al. (2020), Guerrero (2020), and Zhang and Liu (2022) that private tutoring has a significant effect on students' test scores. The current study findings also confirm that the more the students regularly attend private tutoring, the higher their test scores are.

To summarize, while gender and grade level did not affect students' impressions of private tutoring, attendance frequency is critical for improving academic achievement. This suggests that for private tutoring to be effective, students must attend sessions regularly. These insights can help educators and politicians structure private tutoring programs to maximize their benefits by encouraging consistent attendance and focusing on quality.

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of the study was to examine Omani students' perceptions of the Impact of private tutoring on their academic performance. The study's findings indicate that Omani students hold similar views on private tutoring, regardless of gender or grade level, suggesting no significant differences in their perceptions. The study findings indicate that the mere presence of private tutoring does not have a substantial impact on academic performance. However, regular attendance at tutoring sessions has a notably positive effect on test scores. This implies that while having access to private tutoring may not

automatically improve academic performance, regular attendance is critical to achieve that. To maximize the effectiveness of private tutoring, it is essential to promote consistent participation and active engagement. The findings have implications for educators and policymakers seeking to optimize tutoring programs and support students' academic achievement.

The current study's nuanced examination of private tutoring offers unique contributions. First, the study showed no influence of gender or grade level on students' perceptions of private tutoring, which indeed challenges the theoretical expectations of Social Role Theory and Achievement Motivation Theory that demographic factors will influence students' perceptions of private tutoring. Hence, private tutoring should be examined independently of gender and grade level. Another important contribution of this study is that regular attendance has a positive impact on academic performance, rather than mere participation. This finding not only validates prior empirical findings but also offers a new perspective on them. It also has implications for educators and policymakers, who must make informed decisions about strategies to encourage students to participate regularly in private tutoring.

This study has its limitations despite valuable findings. The study used only a quantitative research method; qualitative or mixed-methods approaches might be adopted in future research. Also, the study examined only the tutees' perspectives and did not include those of parents or tutors. Similarly, instructional quality, the tutor's educational background, and the tuition context should have been explored. Since these factors can significantly affect the study's results, further research in these areas can inform a valid decision regarding private tuition.

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