

# Assessing Student Satisfaction towards Food Quality and Price Fairness in UiTM Puncak Alam On-Campus Cafeteria

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## Abstract

In the present day, individuals, encompassing both students and employees, have become increasingly mindful of the quality of their food choices as a means to maintain their well-being. With the cafeteria being the primary food source for on-campus students, it is imperative that it undergoes regular maintenance to ensure that the food offered is of superior quality, nutritionally sound, and maintained to high hygiene standards. The assessment of food quality can occur at the point of purchase, with consumers relying on various indicators such as color, price, and product claims. Consequently, food quality has become a paramount concern in today's food industry. This study specifically focuses on aspects of food quality such as "taste, aroma, ambiance, and presentation," as well as the fairness of pricing, to examine how these factors impact student satisfaction across four cafeteria halls in UiTM Puncak Alam. The findings of this study are expected to make a substantial contribution to both academic theory and practical understanding. This research looks at how satisfied UiTM Puncak Alam students are with the fairness of the prices and the quality of the food served at the on-campus cafeteria. The objective is to pinpoint opportunities for enhancement and elevate the entire dining experiences for students. A survey will be conducted as a main approach in data collection, by doing an online survey to gather data from representatives' number of students. The purpose of the poll was to gauge respondents' opinions on food quality in terms of flavour, presentation, atmosphere, scent, fairness of price, and general satisfaction. Statistical research showed that a sizable percentage of students were satisfied with the fairness of the prices as well as the quality of the meals. Freshness of materials, consistency of flavor, dining environment, plus perceived value for price were among the common issues. Furthermore, it was discovered that views of pricing fairness were influenced by socioeconomic variables. It is suggested that the menu be made more varied, that higher-quality products be sourced, that pricing strategies be revised, and that pricing procedures be made more transparent. It is imperative that these issues are resolved in order to improve the eating experience and advance the wellbeing of UiTM Puncak Alam students.

**Keywords:**

Food Quality, Presentation, Taste, Ambience, Aroma, Price, Cafeteria, Students' Satisfaction.

**1 Introduction**

Numerous studies have underscored that the concept of quality lacks a singular, fixed definition; instead, it varies depending on the various viewpoints from which it is assessed. A definition framed in technical, or manufacturing terms may not align with how it is perceived by customers (Sadílek, 2019). Universities not only impart instruction but also offer a range of facilities for the convenience of their students, such as libraries, fast-food outlets, and cafeterias (Cha, & Seo, 2019). Among these, the college cafeteria serves as a place where quick, cost-effective meals with a selection of nutritious options are available, and it is a hub where both students and staff congregate during lunchtime. As the primary food service provider for on-campus residents, it is imperative to regularly maintain the cafeteria to ensure that the food served is of high quality, nutritionally sound, and hygienic (Misiran et al., 2022).

Moreover, cafeterias may not perceive the need to enhance competition since their customer base is predominantly composed of students, and the experiences within college cafeterias often fall short of those provided by external cafes. Nevertheless, the college cafeteria landscape has evolved over time, primarily influenced by advancements in the restaurant industry. Today's college students enjoy a significantly improved dining environment, thanks to an increase in national prosperity (Cha, & Seo, 2019). In the contemporary context, individuals, including students and employees, are increasingly concerned about the quality of the food they consume as it directly impacts their well-being.

Consequently, there has been a significant and swift increase in the demand for high-quality food over the past decade, primarily driven by concerns related to food quality, including health and environmental considerations (Mascarello, Pinto, Parise, Crovato, & Ravarotto, 2015). As a result, food quality has become a prominent focal point in contemporary food economics. The recent decades have unequivocally highlighted that customers' desires for improved lifestyles and heightened environmental consciousness are pivotal factors influencing their choices in food purchases and shaping their perceptions of food quality (Grunert, 2005). It is worth noting that the notion that customer assessments of food quality play a pivotal role in defining the very concept of food quality itself.

The present contribution is predicated on the belief that comprehending the cues emanating from customers in this process is indispensable for a thorough grasp of how food quality is judged (Petrescu, Vermeir, & Petrescu-Mag, 2019). Thus, the understanding of how customers perceive food quality is of paramount significance, as it profoundly impacts their decisions when making food purchases (Rijswijk, & Frewer, 2008). Furthermore, the assessment of food quality can occur at the point of purchase,

with consumers relying on explicit indicators such as color, price, and product claims (Petrescu et al., 2019).

In addition, it is crucial to consider that twenty-first-century consumers are discerning, placing great emphasis on the quality and health benefits of the items they purchase (Sajdakowska, Gedski, Gutkowska, & Zakowska-Biemans, 2018). Moreover, the evaluation of food quality can occur at the point of purchase, with consumers taking into account evident indicators like color, price, and product claims (Petrescu et al., 2019). While companies diligently strive to maximize their corporate profits, often contingent on the pricing of their products or services, customers tend to seek out the best-value products and services that offer the most bang for their buck. Hence, this study is centered on examining food quality concerning elements like "taste, aroma, ambiance, presentation," and the fairness of pricing, with a focus on how these factors influence student satisfaction in four cafeteria halls at UiTM Puncak Alam.

Ideally, a cafeteria, particularly within a university setting, should be capable of catering to a diverse, dynamic, and multifaceted group of individuals. This demographic encompasses people of varying age groups, educational backgrounds, and cultural origins. Consequently, the food courts on the university campus aim to offer a dining experience that is not only satisfying but also accommodating of the diverse budgetary, nutritional, and social needs and preferences of both students and staff. Students' opinions on the food quality at UiTM Puncak Alam's on-campus cafeteria are characterized by complaints about inconsistent service and poor-quality standards. Lavelle et al., (2019) stated that students voice concerns regarding the freshness of the materials used in meal preparation, and freshness emerges as the main problem. Students report experiencing instances of dissatisfaction with flavour profiles and culinary execution, indicating that these problems extend to the whole tasting experience (Norazha et al., 2022). This unhappiness eventually results in a lower degree of general pleasure with the meals provided. These worries are made worse by the inconsistency in fulfilling quality standards, as students may experience differing degrees of food quality when dining. As a result, the cafeteria's capacity to regularly provide meals that fulfil students' expectations is compromised by this apparent inconsistent food quality, which eventually affects the entire eating experience on campus as posited by Cha & Seo, (2019). However, as an alternative, students have increasingly gravitated towards off-campus dining or patronizing external food outlets to meet their culinary requirements. This shift can adversely impact the revenue of the college cafeteria (Misirin et al., 2022). Dissatisfied students may gradually seek alternative dining options outside the university, potentially impeding food services within the institution. A separate empirical study underscores the significance of food quality in determining students' satisfaction with the university cafeteria, with personnel and ambiance ranking second and third in importance, respectively (Dimitrios & Katerina, 2014).

In addition, Students that visit the UiTM Puncak Alam cafeteria express significant concerns about price fairness due to the apparent gap between the food's perceived quality and its pricing (Ibrahim et al., 2018). Students generally feel that the costs

imposed are too high compared to the value they receive from the meals as a result of this dissonance. The students' sense of injustice is based on a perceived discrepancy between the quality of the meal options and the amount of money needed, which leads to their discontent. Students may become frustrated and reluctant to frequent the cafeteria if they believe they are not getting value for the costs they pay as posited by Smith, McNeil, & Ali, (2020). As stated by Mireille & Carole (2019), Students may be discouraged from using on-campus eating alternatives entirely if they believe that prices are unreasonable, since this can affect both individual dining experiences and the cafeteria's pricing policies. In order to ensure that students believe their eating expenses can be justified by the level of quality of their food options and to promote a more favourable view of price justice, it is imperative to address these concerns.

Furthermore, it's essential for campus administrators to recognize that students' negative expectations and perceptions regarding food quality and service can fluctuate among individuals and even from one semester to another, creating a dynamic and challenging environment for evaluating food quality and its determinants (Andaleeb & Caskey, 2007). Students are not limited to on-campus dining options, as they are keenly aware of the quality of food available nearby (Osman, Hossain, & Sarkar, 2018). Therefore, to prevent students from seeking alternative dining options, it becomes imperative to enhance the quality of food services provided on campus.

However, it is noteworthy that there is a paucity of prior research focusing on food quality and price fairness in UiTM Puncak Alam and how these factors impact student satisfaction. This gap in research leaves a void in our understanding of student opinions and behaviours concerning on-campus cafeteria food services in Puncak Alam, Selangor.

## **2 Literature Review**

Students could be expecting a wide variety of meal selections, from regional specialties to global fare. The availability of halal, vegan, and vegetarian options may have a big influence on how satisfied students are with food quality at cafeteria. Furthermore, in situations which concerning food products' freshness and flavour comprise those in which food seems to be overdone, stale, or flavourless. Meals that are tasty and freshly prepared are essential to keeping students satisfied. This due to students always searching for food that is fresh and tasty, thus food quality always has a big impact towards student satisfaction especially food that been provided in cafeteria.

In addition, there may be situations where students feel that the cost of meals is excessive or out of line with their means. Cost-effectiveness is essential, particularly for students with tight budgets. This student might end up starving or eating junk food which were bad for their health. Therefore, this scenario been highlighted in this study.

## 2.1 Introduction

Following a review of the theories utilized as references in developing the framework of the study, this chapter explores related literature that is based on the variables in the study outlined in the previous chapter. The framework's proposed constructs for food quality, pricing fairness, and student satisfaction are all analyzed further to find any potential gaps and study-relevant features. The next section of the chapter takes a deeper look at the underlying models and ideas that went into creating the study's framework and assumptions.

Furthermore, it is widely acknowledged that the quality of food holds great significance in the success of any restaurant, as evidenced by the work of Liu and Jang (2009). Previous studies have indicated a direct positive relationship between the quality of a meal and customer satisfaction, as supported by Canny (2014) and Namkung & Jang (2007). Susskind and Chan (2000) have also noted that a restaurant's food quality is a pivotal factor in shaping consumers' perceptions of it. Recognized food quality is not only essential to meet a variety of customer expectations and desires, as highlighted by Peri (2006), but it also plays a substantial role in influencing consumer happiness and their intention to return, as demonstrated by Gagic et al. (2013). Based on the aforementioned discussions, the following are proposed research framework for this study.

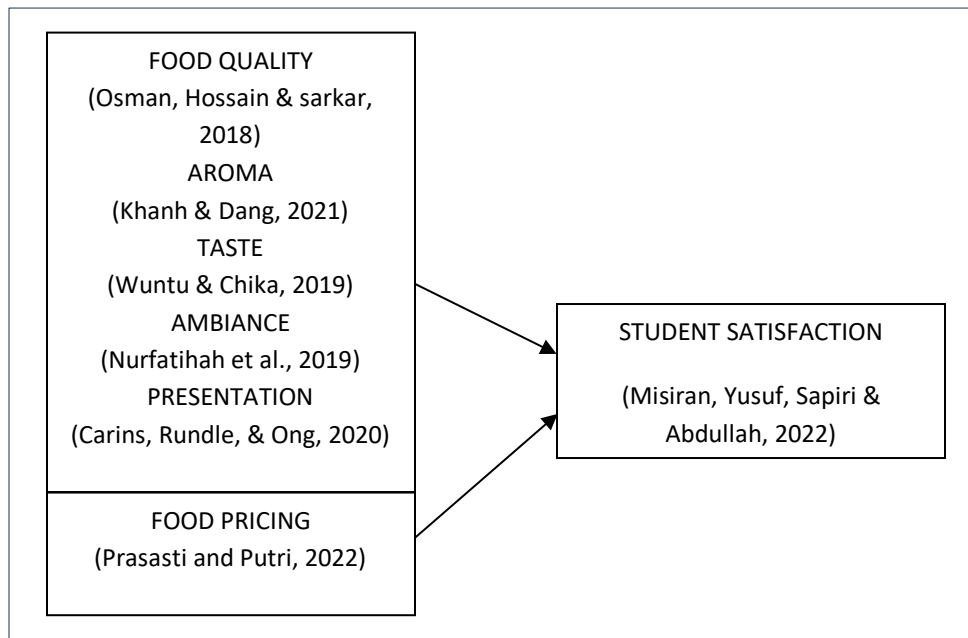


Figure 1: A research framework

Source: Osman, Hossain and Sarkar (2018)

The importance of food quality in the success of a restaurant is a widely acknowledged fact, as highlighted by Liu and Jang (2009). Subsequent research has consistently pointed to the direct positive impact of meal quality on consumer happiness, as evident in the studies of Canny (2014) and Namkung & Jang (2007).

Furthermore, Susskind and Chan (2000) have emphasized that one of the central determinants of consumers' perceptions of a restaurant is the quality of its food. It is also noteworthy that recognized food quality is a prerequisite for meeting a diverse range of customer expectations and desires, as underscored by Peri (2006). Additionally, the role of food quality in significantly influencing both consumer happiness and behavioural intention has been demonstrated in the research conducted by Gagic et al. (2013). Based on the synthesis of these discussions, we propose the following hypothesis:

H1: Food quality has an impact on students' satisfaction.

## **2.2 Taste**

Moreover, the aroma, flavor, and level of ripeness in a food item collectively contribute to its overall taste, as indicated by the research of Hariyanto et al. (2022). This factor plays a vital role in shaping the likelihood of customers accepting these food products and, in turn, enhancing their satisfaction, as suggested by the work of Wuntu and Chika (2019). Supported by the findings from a study conducted by Astuti et al. (2019), it is evident that taste exerts a positive and substantial influence on customer satisfaction.

H2: Taste has an impact on students' satisfaction.

## **2.3 Presentation**

It is important to take notice of the menus' appealing food displays. Presenting decorated organic food on attractive tableware, for instance, might improve the meals' overall aesthetic appeal (Faruk, Anil, & Konuk, 2019). Moreover, if the product is provided with appealing packaging or educational labeling regarding the product, consumers may view it as being of high quality on a visual level. On the other hand, internally, if the contents have a comprehensive blend of required raw elements, food may be related to quality (Shaharudin et al., 2011). The way food is presented improves diners' satisfaction (Carins, Rundle, & Ong, 2020).

H3: Presentation has an influence on students' satisfaction.

## **2.4 Ambiance**

The environmental conditions within a service setting are customary and engage the human senses, as noted in research by Seo, Kim, and Choi (2015). These sensory elements have an impact on individuals' emotional well-being, perceptions, and perspectives, even when they are not consciously aware of it. Furthermore, it's worth acknowledging that a restaurant's pleasing ambiance can sway customers, even in cases where the food may be less than satisfactory, as emphasized by Magnini and Parker (2009). While individual customers may interpret a business's atmosphere differently based on their feelings, objectives, and expectations, there tends to be a general consensus among customers regarding these perceptions, as a general rule, as discussed by Kim and Moon (2009). To ensure that customers are satisfied, restaurants must

emphasize maintaining a clean environment. The goal of restaurant ambiance is to immediately meet the expectations of customers by creating a comfortable dining atmosphere. According to Nurfatihah, Afiqah, Shafiqah, Syakirah, Farzana, Assyirah, Sivam, Muthutamilselvan, & Amutan (2020), their research revealed that the ambiance of the facilities had the greatest influence on customer satisfaction.

H4: The ambience influences students' satisfaction..

## **2.5 Aroma**

It is imperative to account for factors such as scent and other environmental cues like music when assessing the influence of the physical environment on customer behaviour and satisfaction, as highlighted by Khanh and Dang (2021). Moreover, it's essential to recognize that a comprehensive perception of the physical environment cannot be formed solely from a single environmental stimulus; instead, it's the amalgamation of all these individual components that creates the complete picture. People gather sensory information from a range of contextual cues to construct a mental image, which subsequently triggers an emotional response, as observed in the research by Lin (2004). The degree of satisfaction among consumers is positively and significantly impacted by the scent selection (Khanh & Dang, 2021).

H5: The aroma affects students' satisfaction..

## **2.6 Price Fairness**

Several academics have conducted several research on pricing fairness or cost and worth. Price fairness is the assessment of the reasonableness and acceptability of the procedure used to arrive at a certain result (Radic & Price, 2023). Furthermore, the quality level that should be required is determined by the cost of the service.

It is a widely accepted practice to use customers' perceptions of a product's pricing as an indicator of their satisfaction with the benefits of purchasing products or services, as observed in the study by Paris et al. (2020). Price consideration is a predominant factor in consumers' decision-making processes when choosing products or services to purchase, as emphasized by Supranto and Nandan (2011). Moreover, in university cafeteria environments, price fairness has a substantial impact on student happiness and behavioural intentions as posited by Chang & Suki, (2019). Most of student's who think the cafeteria pricings are reasonable are more inclined to say they had an enjoyable meal and to be devoted to the cafeteria (Cha & Seo, 2019). On the other hand, unethical pricing techniques like markups or hidden fees might cause students to feel negatively, get dissatisfied, and stop coming. Notably, some researchers who explored the impact of pricing fairness on consumer satisfaction reported a strong support for their findings, as evidenced by Prasasti and Putri (2022) and Kaura (2012). In light of the aforementioned discussion, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H6: Fair pricing has a positive impact on students' satisfaction.

## 2.7 Customer Satisfaction

The product and its attributes, functionalities, reliability, and customer support are of paramount importance when aiming to meet or surpass customer satisfaction levels. Consequently, when customers are content with their initial transactions, they exhibit a greater willingness to return and make additional purchases, as highlighted in the study by Khanh and Dang (2021). This underscores the inverse relationship between customer satisfaction and customer churn in the hospitality and hotel industry. Additionally, Rai (2008) provided a formula for customer satisfaction, which enhances our understanding of the significance of customer happiness:

$$\text{Customer Satisfaction} = (\text{Customer Awareness of Service Obtained} - \text{Customer Expectation of Service Received})$$

Given that customers are the lifeblood of any business, it becomes imperative for a business to go the extra mile to ensure their satisfaction, as emphasized by Khanh and Dang (2021). Astuti et al. (2019) further reveals that pricing exerts a strong and substantial influence on customer satisfaction, while Prasasti and Putri (2022) echo this sentiment by asserting the significant and positive effect of price on consumer happiness.

## 3 Research Methodology

Therefore, a quantitative research technique based on the distribution of questionnaires and online surveys was taken in this study to empirically examine the offered hypotheses. A questionnaire is typically thought of as a logical and simple tool to gather information from individuals, but due to how frequently they are used in contexts in the modern world, they are more challenging to design. Moreover, this study setting will be non-contrived due to no IV being manipulated or changed, so this study will be a normal or natural setting and will be based on field studies. Therefore, the research interference of this study was very minimal due to non-contrived & field study in which we will just ask students to participate in the questionnaire. Next, the time horizon for this study is cross sectional because the survey was distributed only once and there is no second season or second questionnaire. Moreover, 377 students from all 6 residential colleges will form the sample size for the study. The residential college students were chosen at random to make up the regular study sample. Using random sampling procedures was difficult because of the huge numbers of students and the lack of accurate data. Hence, researchers use convenience sampling in this study.

### 3.1 Data Collection

Shortly after the questionnaires were developed, the research team distributed these forms to all students enrolled at UiTM Puncak Alam. Within UiTM Puncak Alam, there are six residential colleges: Rafflesia, Angsana, Casuarina, Dahlia, Zamrud, and Baiduri. Permission for data collection was sought and granted by the head of each residential college, allowing a one-week data collection period with the goal of obtaining responses from all 6 residential colleges. Moreover, the study will be carried out at UiTM



Puncak Alam in the cafeterias of Café Angsana, Café Raflessia, Café Dahlia, and Cafe Budisiswa, which were located at the colleges of Baiduri and Zamrud. The above locations were picked in order to represent pricing justice and variation in food quality in relation to factors that might affect students' overall satisfaction and eating experiences.

The process of selecting a small sample from a larger population in order to provide the groundwork for a preliminary assessment of the larger population is known as sampling. Every one of the students at Uitm Puncak Alam are included in the study's target demographic. The number of students overall, comprising both locals and non-residents, is around 18,721 according to information from the UiTM Selangor website. The anticipated number of observations may be up to five times more than the number of objects, with a typical sample size ranging from 100 to 400. The study's findings showed that a higher sample size led to more accurate results (Asiamah, Mensah & Oteng-Abayie, 2017): (Andrade, 2020). Therefore, the minimum responses required is 377 based on sample size calculation figure below, but the overall target for data collection and analysis was to gather approximately 420 responses. There are several reasons of having higher data than minimum which is better data quality is correlated with higher responder rates; this includes lower rates of data errors, more consistent replies, and a decreased chance of response mistakes. This enhances the data's authenticity and dependability. The data has been collected within 2 months of period. This is due to the slow respond rate from the respondents that extend the data collection period to 2 months.

The image shows a screenshot of a sample size calculation tool. At the top, a green header reads "Result". Below it, the text "Sample size: 377" is displayed in green. A smaller line of text explains: "This means 377 or more measurements/surveys are needed to have a confidence level of 95% that the real value is within ±5% of the measured/surveyed value." Below this, there are four input fields with dropdown arrows: "Confidence Level" set to 95%, "Margin of Error" set to 5%, "Population Proportion" set to 50% with the note "Use 50% if not sure", and "Population Size" set to 20000 with the note "Leave blank if unlimited population size." At the bottom, there are two buttons: a green "Calculate" button with a play icon and a grey "Clear" button.

Figure 2: Sample size calculation

The questionnaire used in this research study is divided into seven sections. Sections A comprise five questions concerning demographic information. Section B to F each consists of five questions focused on food quality and Section G focus on overall satisfaction. The data collection method made available to university students was in the form of online surveys. All of the questionnaires will be shared though online via email, WhatsApp's, and Telegram.

### **3.2 Instrumentation**

A structured questionnaire, characterized by closed-ended questions and a variety of response options, was employed for the comprehensive collection of primary data (Bryman & Bell, 2011). This research primarily relies on quantitative data, as it lends itself to effective communication through statistical analysis and numerical representation. As indicated by Minichiello et al. (1990), quantitative methodologies are underpinned by the assumption of a constant and measurable reality.

To ensure consistency and questionnaire accuracy, two languages, English and Bahasa Malaysia, were incorporated. The questionnaire used a five-point Likert-type scale, ranging from (1) "strongly agree" to (5) "strongly disagree," to assess student's satisfaction and the quality of various meal aspects, including presentation, taste, ambiance, and aroma. The scale includes a neutral value of 0 to facilitate participant responses. The questionnaire comprises six sections, each with four to five items pertaining to the dimensions of the constructs, which respondents are requested to answer in the form of questions.

### **3.3 Data Analysis**

The data collected for the study were subjected to analysis using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). This software was employed to facilitate the examination of all survey data gathered through Google Forms. Utilizing this software offers the advantage of simplifying and expediting the assessment of large datasets. The analysis encompassed descriptive techniques, which are utilized to summarize and depict dataset characteristics, including measures such as mean, median, mode, range, and standard deviation. In addition to descriptive analysis, regression analysis was employed as a method for examining quantitative data in the context of food studies. Regression analysis proves valuable in exploring relationships between food consumption and various other variables of interest, which could include demographics or study hypotheses. It allows for a deeper investigation of these relationships and their potential impact on the study's outcomes.

## **4 Results**

### **4.1 Descriptive Analysis**

The survey was initiated on October 1, 2022, and successfully concluded on January 1, 2023, taking a total of three months to amass the required number of respondents for this research. It's worth emphasizing that all findings derived from this study will be treated with confidentiality and solely used for educational purposes. This research aimed to secure a minimum of 385 participants from UiTM, encompassing both residential college students and non-residential students. In practice, the study garnered responses from 386 students. In terms of gender distribution among the 386 respondents, there were 85 males, constituting 22.0% of the total, while the majority of respondents, 301, were females, representing 78.0% of the total.

Turning to the age demographics of the 386 respondents, 43 respondents fell within the 18-19 years age bracket, comprising 11.1% of the total. The second smallest age group was those aged 24 and above, with 46 students, constituting 11.9%. A significant portion, 132 respondents, were aged 20-21 years, making up 34.2% of the total, while the highest number of respondents, 165, were in the 22-23 years age range, accounting for 42.7% of the total. Regarding the distribution of respondents living in residential colleges versus non-residential areas, College Angsana and Baiduri/Zamrud collectively contributed 23 respondents, making up 6.0% of the total. College Rafflesia had 47 respondents, constituting 12.2%, while College Casuarina contributed 72 respondents, comprising 18.7%. A total of 74 students, or 19.2%, resided in non-residential areas outside the college vicinity. Notably, the largest group of respondents came from College Dahlia, with 147 students accounting for 38.1% of the total.

In terms of the average age of the student participants in this research, it was calculated at 2.55 years, indicating that the typical student in the study was in the 20-21-year-old age bracket. The majority of students were in the 22-23-year-old age group. The data distribution indicates that 50% of the students were aged below 3.00 (22-23 years old), and the other 50% were aged above 3.00 (22-23 years old).

#### 4.2 Hypothesis Results

Food Quality: Hypothesis H1 is supported by the results, as all related hypotheses examining food quality reveal at least a weak positive relationship with standard coefficient Beta values equal to or greater than 0.318. This confirms the hypothesis asserting a positive linear relationship between food quality and student satisfaction at UiTM Puncak Alam, aligning with prior research findings (Osman, Hossain, & Sarkar, 2018). The key takeaway here is that cafeteria management should maintain a consistent focus on food quality to enhance student satisfaction, particularly within the UiTM Puncak Alam context.

Table 1: Hypothesis Results

Hypothesis	Hypothesis	Remarks	Std. coefficient
H1	Food Quality has an influence on students' satisfaction	Accepted	-
H2	Taste has an influence on students' satisfaction	Accepted	0.482
H3	Appearances/presentation has an influence on students' satisfaction	Accepted	0.436
H4	Ambiance/surrounding has an influence on students' satisfaction	Accepted	0.318
H5	Aroma has an influence on students' satisfaction	Accepted	0.330
H6	Price fairness has a positive influence on student's satisfaction	Accepted	0.569

Taste: Hypothesis H2 finds support in the results, as the taste's standard coefficient value ( $B = 0.482$ ,  $t\text{-value} = 10.786$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) underscores the connection between a student's satisfaction and the taste of the food.

Appearance: Hypothesis H3 is validated by the results, as appearances demonstrate a Std. Coefficient value ( $B = 0.436$ ,  $t\text{-value} = 9.504$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) that indicates a positive influence on student satisfaction. It is essential for cafeteria management to uphold and preserve the visual appeal of the food to enhance and maintain student satisfaction.

Ambiance: Hypothesis H4 receives support from the results, with ambiance showing a Std. Coefficient value ( $B = 0.318$ ,  $t\text{-value} = 6.569$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) signifying a positive impact on student satisfaction. Cafeteria management should prioritize the upkeep and enhancement of the surrounding operational environment to elevate and sustain student satisfaction.

Aroma: Hypothesis H5 garners acceptance based on the results, as aroma is characterized by a Std. Coefficient value ( $B = 0.330$ ,  $t\text{-value} = 6.841$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) that reflects a positive influence on student satisfaction. This finding aligns with previous research (Khanh & Dang, 2021), emphasizing the need for cafeteria management to preserve both the food's aroma and the ambiance of the dining area to bolster and maintain student satisfaction.

Price: Hypothesis H6 is substantiated by the results, as price exhibits a Std. Coefficient value ( $B = 0.569$ ,  $t\text{-value} = 13.544$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), highlighting a positive effect on student satisfaction. This observation aligns with the research of Hanaysha (2016), which underscores the significance of price fairness in assessing customer satisfaction in the foodservice industry. Thus, cafeteria management should ensure that pricing remains fair and that the overall dining experience is conducive to increasing and sustaining student satisfaction.

## **5 Discussion and Recommendation**

The research inquiry is characterized by its specificity and focused nature, centering on a particular environment - the residence hall cafeteria at UiTM Puncak Alam. It exhibits a clear identification of the variables under scrutiny, namely, the attributes of food quality and student satisfaction. Furthermore, the research holds substantial relevance and significance as it addresses a prevalent concern shared by university students, particularly regarding the food quality in university cafeterias. It offers practical implications, with the potential to guide enhancements in food quality within the residence hall cafeteria and other university dining facilities.

Within this distinct cafeteria context, the research aims to explore the relationship between pricing fairness and student satisfaction. The research topic is distinctly precise and narrowly directed, concentrating on the unique setting of the cafeteria within UiTM Puncak Alam's residential hall. The variables of interest, price fairness and student satisfaction, are thoughtfully and aptly delineated. Consequently, the research topic holds a dual distinction - it is both highly relevant and indispensable—

addressing a widely shared concern among college students pertaining to pricing fairness within cafeterias. Moreover, the research has practical applications, with the potential to contribute to the enhancement of pricing fairness in university cafeterias, including those in residential halls.

Moreover, the study also delves into the specific attributes within food quality that wield a significant influence on students' satisfaction. The research focus remains precise and tightly tailored, on the unique context of the cafeteria within UiTM Puncak Alam's residential hall. It underscores the essential need to comprehend the ideal standards of food quality that directly impact students' satisfaction. This research issue carries notable relevance and importance, given its addressal of a prevalent concern shared among college students regarding the specific quality attributes of food served in university cafeterias. The findings of this study have the potential to contribute to the enhancement of food quality in the dining hall and other university cafeterias, offering practical applications.

For future researchers, there are several areas where improvements can be made. Firstly, attention should be given to refining the data collection method and sample size. Future researchers may consider incorporating interviews as a complementary data collection method, offering greater precision and prompt responses. Additionally, refining the sample by targeting specific population groups, such as the faculty of education, could streamline the data collection process. In the present study, the large sample size led to longer response times from participants. Furthermore, future researchers might explore the extension of this study to include restaurants within and outside of UiTM Puncak Alam, as it may yield distinct results. Lastly, researchers could introduce additional factors for analysis when examining the same population, presenting alternative viewpoints.

## **6 Conclusion**

The principal objective of this study was to investigate the influence of food quality and pricing fairness on customer satisfaction within the university cafeteria. The findings revealed a positive impact of food quality on consumer satisfaction, encompassing aspects like taste, aesthetics, ambiance, and aroma. These findings align with the research of Misiran et al. (2022), which underscores the pivotal role of food quality in students' satisfaction. Consequently, it is advisable for both the cafeteria and the university to focus on enhancing the key attributes that can stimulate students' satisfaction. Food quality is widely recognized as the cornerstone of cafeteria operations, as emphasized by Canny (2014). Therefore, cafeteria management should prioritize food quality to cater to the preferences of their student customers.

In addition, the results of this study underscore the significance of price fairness in shaping students' satisfaction, revealing a positive influence. This observation is corroborated by previous research by Siregar et al. (2022), which posits that price fairness has a positive impact on customer satisfaction. Consequently, this study underscores the notion that one of the critical criteria for assessing customer happiness

in the cafeteria industry is the perceived fairness of pricing. Moreover, students tend to compare the price of products with other cafeterias, alongside assessing the quality and quantity of products available at similar or slightly lower and higher price points.

## 7 About the author

Author 1, Nur Samirah Binti Marahsin @ Hashim, conducted this research during her undergraduate studies, in collaboration with Author 2. Presently, she is actively engaged in exploring the intricacies of the Food and Beverage industry, aiming to enhance her understanding of its systems with the intent of making valuable contributions to the research community in the future. Her academic journey culminated in early 2023.

Author 2, Putera Afiq Zulfiqar Bin Othman, embarked on this research during his undergraduate program from 2022 to 2023. At present, he has pursued further education at the Master's level at UiTM Puncak Alam, with the objective of broadening his knowledge in the field of education. He aspires to make significant contributions to future generations through his academic pursuits.

Corresponding author, Dr Lovelyna Benedict Jipiu is a dedicated Senior Lecturer at the Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management. Her extensive background includes food safety, food science and nutrition, and foodservice management. With over two decades of experience in the field, she is passionate about fostering an environment of active learning, critical thinking, and practical application of knowledge. Her teaching philosophy is centered on providing students with a strong theoretical foundation while encouraging them to explore real-world scenarios and develop problem solving skills.

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