

ABSTRACT

The aim of the thesis is to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of school meals and propose improvements to enhance the quality of catering and satisfaction among students. A secondary objective was to compare whether there are differences between primary schools in Prague and those outside Prague. The theoretical part defines school catering, its legislation and history, the consumption basket, the role of dietitians in school catering, and dietary recommendations for school-age children and adolescents.

A questionnaire survey was conducted between October 20, 2023, and January 31, 2024, involving 465 primary school (PS) students, 35 teachers, and 31 school canteen staff. The results indicate that the most significant challenges in implementing dietary meals in school canteens include technical facilities (66.7%) and low staffing levels (33.3%). 71% of canteen staff perceive heavy lifting as the biggest challenge in their job, 55% cite inadequate salary, with no statistically significant difference observed between Prague and non-Prague schools. 84% of employees express dissatisfaction with their salary. The relatively high average age of staff is also a concern, with 67.7% being over 45 years old.

At a significance level of $\alpha=0.01$, it was confirmed that there is a correlation between students' age and their satisfaction with school meals, with 1st-grade students giving, on average, a 0.375 higher rating than 2nd-grade students. Overall, primary school students primarily consider the taste of the food and its preparation when assessing their satisfaction, with higher satisfaction reported regarding the palatability of the food. They are least satisfied with the canteen environment. Statistically significantly higher overall satisfaction with school meals is reported by students who choose their own meals ($p=0.029$). The difference in students' overall satisfaction with the school canteen depending on the school is statistically significant, with students at Zdiměřice PS being the most satisfied ($p<0.001$ compared to both other primary schools), followed by students at Písnická PS ($p=0.013$ compared to PS Jílové u Prahy). The most common reason (49.5%) cited for dissatisfaction is a dislike of the food, followed by time constraints (23.7%). Teachers' satisfaction with the taste of the food is statistically significantly higher than that of students ($p=0.0011$), and teachers' overall satisfaction is also higher ($p<0.001$). For teachers, the most important aspect for their overall satisfaction with the canteen is the attitude of the staff, while for students, this factor does not play a significant role.

To improve the quality of school meals, increasing the attractiveness of work in the school cafeteria can help, especially through better financial rewards, positive media coverage, and modernizing the technical infrastructure to reduce physical demands. Increasing the number of staff will also facilitate a wider range of meals for diners. Adapting the student schedule, especially for lunch breaks, is a suitable solution for long queues.

Keywords: school meals, dietary meals, consumption basket, school canteen