

Development of Middle/Junior High School Student Surveys to Measure Factors that Impact Participation In and Satisfaction With the National School Lunch Program

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study was to develop and validate two customer service surveys for middle/junior high school students to measure factors that impact their participation in and satisfaction with the National School Lunch Program.

METHOD

- Qualitative data from the previous National Food Service Management Institute, Applied Research Division (NFSMI, ARD) focus group study and the validated NFSMI, ARD participation and non-participation surveys for high school students were used as the foundation for drafting two middle/junior high school student surveys.
- A two-stage pilot test was conducted to refine and validate the instruments. Surveys were administered to 1,401 middle/junior high school students from 22 middle/junior high schools (12 school districts) across five USDA regions.
- Statistical analyses included descriptive statistics, Cronbach's alpha, and one-way ANOVA with Tukey's post hoc test.



Factors that Affect Participating Middle/Junior High School Students

FOOD PREFERENCE

Examples:

- The food tastes good.
- The food looks appealing.
- The menu has food I like.

STAFF ATTENTIVENESS

Examples:

- The staff is friendly.
- The staff looks like they enjoy their work.
- The staff listens to my suggestions.

Factors that Affect Non-Participating Middle/Junior High School Students

FOOD QUALITY

Examples:

- The food does not look fresh.
- I do not recognize the food being served.
- The food is not properly cooked.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Examples:

- The staff does not speak to me.
- The cafeteria does not look clean.
- The service is poor.

RESULTS

- Results from the participation survey and factor analyses showed that middle/junior high school student satisfaction with their school lunch experience can be attributed to two main factors, food preference and staff attentiveness.
- Top reasons for eating school lunch among participating students were "I am hungry," "I get to sit with my friends," and "I didn't bring anything to eat".
- Results from the non-participation survey and factor analyses showed that low participation among middle/junior high school students can be attributed to two main factors, food quality and customer service.
- Top reasons that would encourage students to eat school lunch more often were "better tasting food," "shorter wait in line," and "better quality food".

APPLICATIONS

- Results from this study will guide the development of a participation and non-participation middle/junior high school student survey guide for school nutrition (SN) professionals. This survey guide will assist SN professionals with planning, administering, collecting, and analyzing middle/junior high school student survey data, and developing and implementing action plans to improve their SN programs.



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