Sri Lanka Institute of Information Technology

English for Academic Purposes – IT1080
SLIIT students' attitudes and preferences regarding fast food

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Terms of reference

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1. Abstract

This report on 'SLIIT students' attitudes and preferences regarding fast food' was done by 1.1 batch students as a requirement for module "English for academic purposes" where the fast-food consumption of the students is observed to find the ongoing situation within the premises and how the consumption of fast food has affected the lives of the university students.

The data is collected through the questionnaire distributed among the students of SLIIT randomly and 50 of the responses were analyzed to get the final outcome. The collected data was analyzed through Microsoft Excel using pie charts, Bar charts, and other data.

2. Introduction

Fast food is prepared and easily available food that is rich in calories, sugars, and other unhealthy ingredients while being poor in nutrition. Fast food has become popular due to its pleasure and affordability; it also serves as a delight for one's taste senses. Fast food is a type of commercially generated, mass-made cuisine that prioritizes speed of serving. Burgers, noodles, pizza, hot dogs, and other fast-food options are some examples.

People of all age groups prefer to consume fast food. Mainly teenagers spend a lot of money because they like to eat out and it's tasty. Nowadays, consuming fast food is increasing day by day, especially to enjoy special times with family, friends, and relatives like birthday parties, cultural occasions, etc. The students who stay in hostels also wanted to consume these fast foods. In their busy schedules, they don't have more time to prepare healthy meals. While preparing fast food, they can cook quickly, eat quickly, and be the cheapest. Further, travelers also like to eat fast food because it is very easy to carry and serve.

Fast food is often prepared with ingredients such as high-fat meat, fats, added sugar, and refined grains. They have no or very minor nutritional value and are very unhealthy. They are high in calories, salt, sugar, saturated fats, trans fats, and processed preservatives and ingredients. Preservatives are used to make the food tastier. But it is high in sodium. It can induce water.

There are some common health issues associated with eating too much fast food. Such as raising blood pressure, contributing to digestive problems that drain our body's energy, obesity, allergies, headaches, and shortness of breath. Eating too much fast food affects not only physical health but also mental health, making them more depressed and increasing anxiety.

Nowadays, most university students and individuals on the go consume fast food on a regular basis. Most fast food contains chemicals and food colors that are harmful to one's health. It offers a variety of diseases. Therefore, we should consume homemade meals and live a healthy lifestyle.

"Health is Wealth"

3. Methodology

This report is based on the data collected by a survey conducted randomly. 10 Main factors were considered for the research to be conducted and a questionnaire was developed accordingly to distribute among the students. Therefore, the population was the entire students of SLIIT University, and the sample was the selected random 50 students. The questionnaire was distributed as a weblink with the selected students and asked to submit answers.

The main factors considered:

- Faculty
- Age
- Gender
- Preference for fast food
- Reasons for preferring fast food
- Frequency of fast-food consumption
- Favorite fast-food restaurant
- Amount of money spent on fast food weekly
- Health conditions
- Alternatives for fast food

Link for the survey:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfuGbUScgCmWGKydpcRT0oDOEETV2cAPT
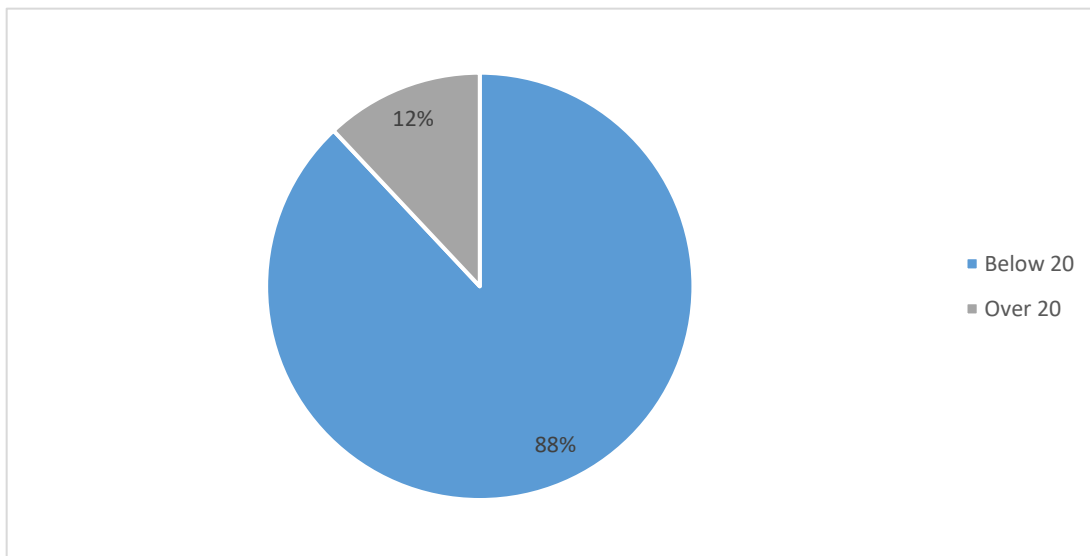NVh-7Jt3sa-ArVMA/viewform?usp=sf_link

4. Data analysis and discussion
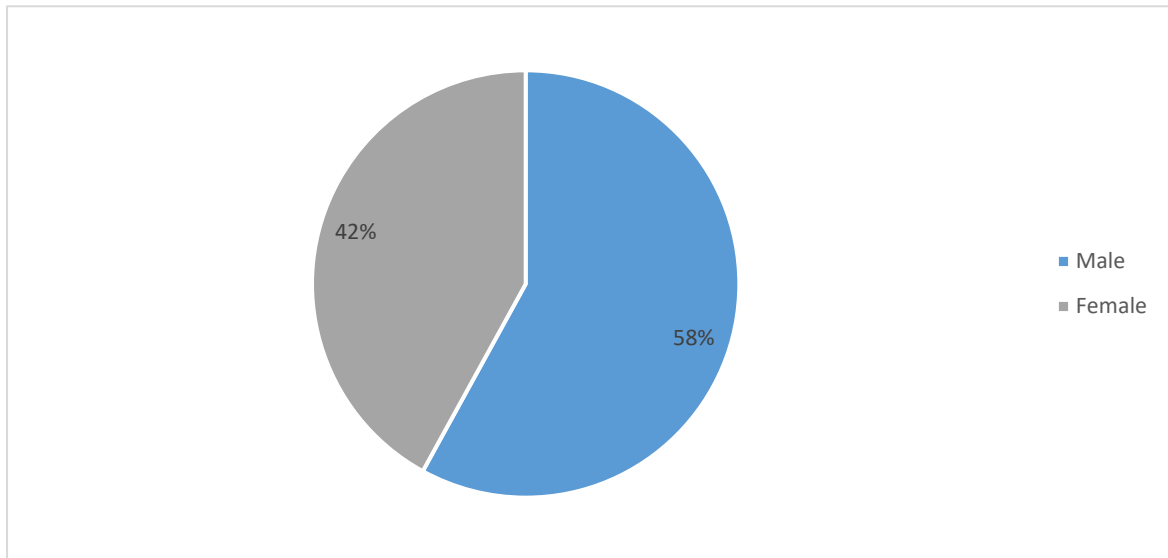
4.1. Faculty
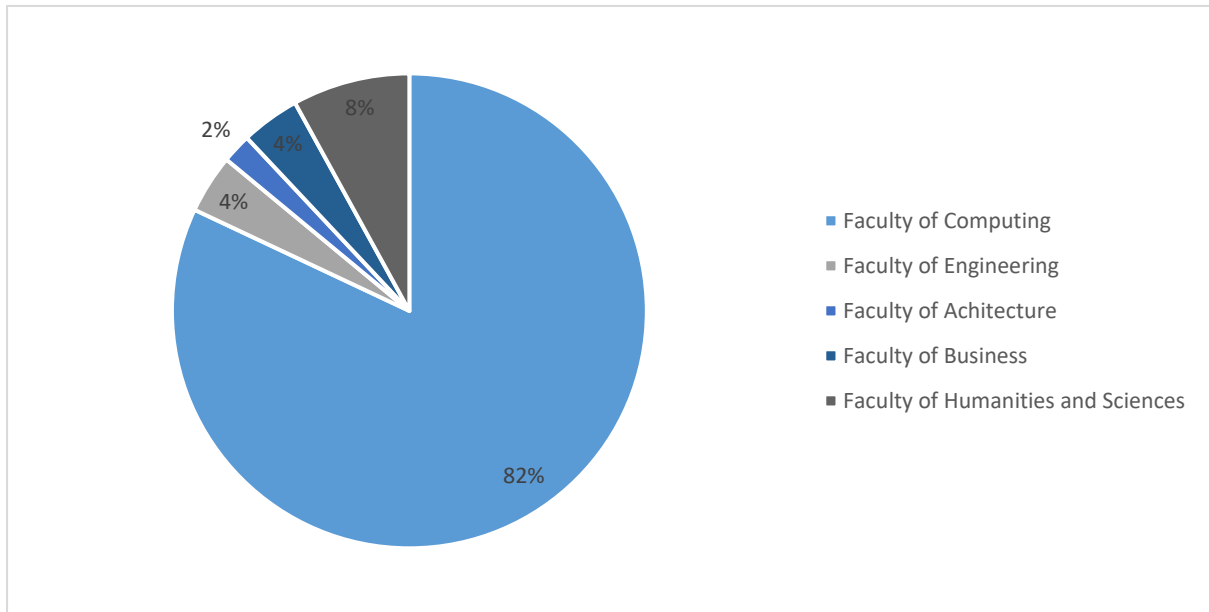
This pie chart depicts the faculties of the 50 students who participated in this survey.
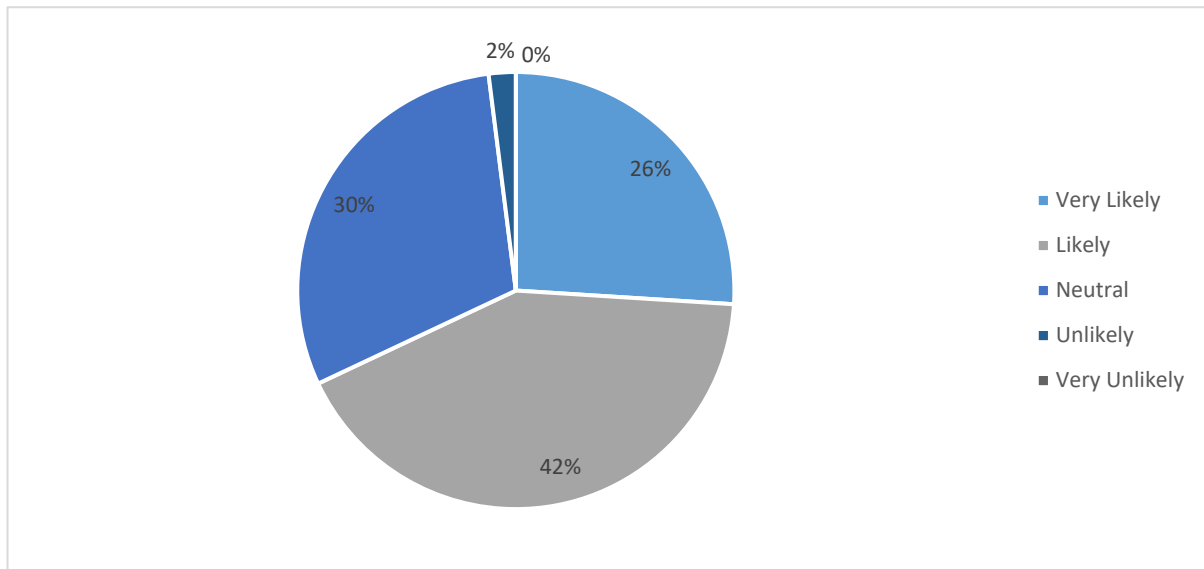
4.2. Age

This pie chart depicts the age range of the students who participated in the survey.

4.3. Gender

This pie chart represents the gender distribution of respondents to the fast-food survey. According to the poll results, 42% of respondents identified as female, while 58% of the participants were men.

4.4. Preference for fast food

The graph offers insightful information on how strongly each student prefers fast food.

Neutral (30%): Individuals in this sector are those who have no particular preference for any particular food. They have no special category that they particularly favor or detest. These people may have a rather flexible and open attitude about their culinary preferences, being willing to try various foods.

Very Likely (26%): The "Very Likely" section represents a sizeable percentage of people who have a strong affinity for particular food kinds. These people favor some food groups over others with a high degree of probability. They could have a strong preference for specific foods or components and have a propensity to frequently choose such choices.

Likely (42%): Individuals who have a modest affinity for particular food kinds make up the majority of the group and are represented by the "Likely" sector. They nevertheless show a stronger propensity to select some food items over others, but not quite as strong as the "Very Likely" category. Compared to the "Very Likely" group, they can have a wider range of preferences than specific cuisines or meals.

4.5. Reasons for preferring fast food
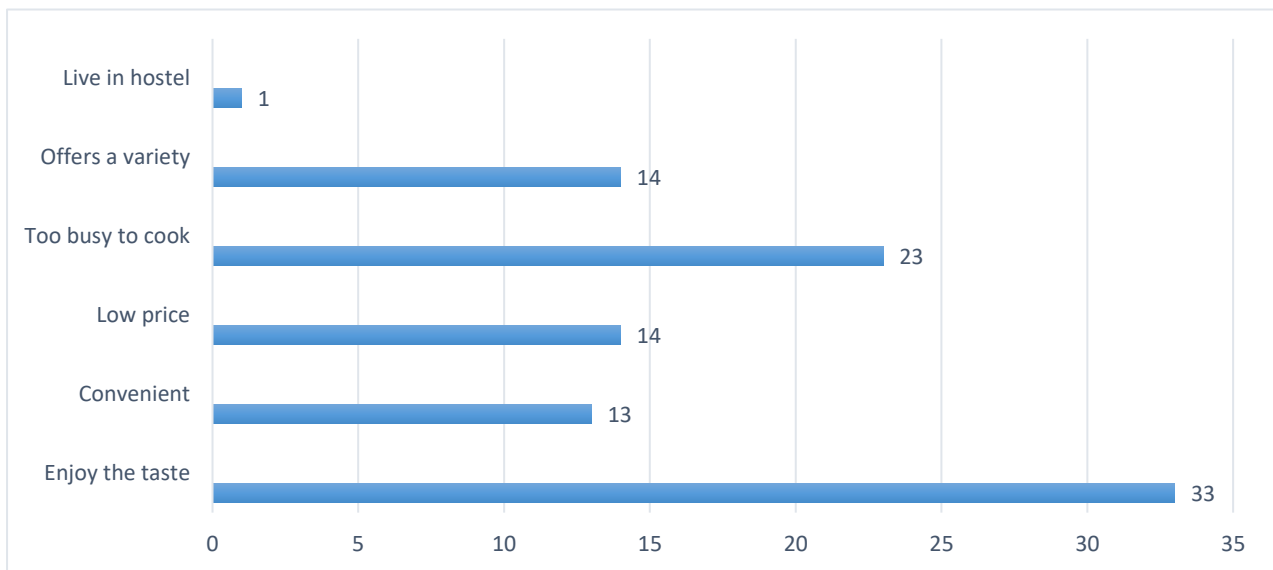
This chart shows each student's reasons for liking fast food.

66% of the students enjoy the taste and distinctive flavor profiles that fast food offers. For individuals who appreciate particular flavors and combinations, it may be a source of pleasure and happiness.

26% prefer fast food because it is convenient while 46% are too busy to cook. Busy schedules prevent many people from finding the time or energy to prepare meals from scratch. Students with hectic schedules or little time for cooking may find it tempting to be able to quickly grab a meal on the move or have it delivered. Fast food offers them a convenient and hassle-free option. Especially for those who reside in hostels, where access to kitchens may be restricted or nonexistent, fast food becomes a convenient and easily accessible choice for meals.

Fast food's low cost is a major consideration for 28% of students. Particularly for those on a tight budget, the comparatively low cost compared to eating at full-service restaurants or cooking at home might make it an appealing choice.

28% prefer fast food since a variety is offered. Fast food restaurants frequently provide a wide selection of choices to accommodate a variety of preferences and tastes. For those who like having a wide range of options and the freedom to personalize their meals, this variety may be intriguing.

4.6. Reasons for disliking fast food
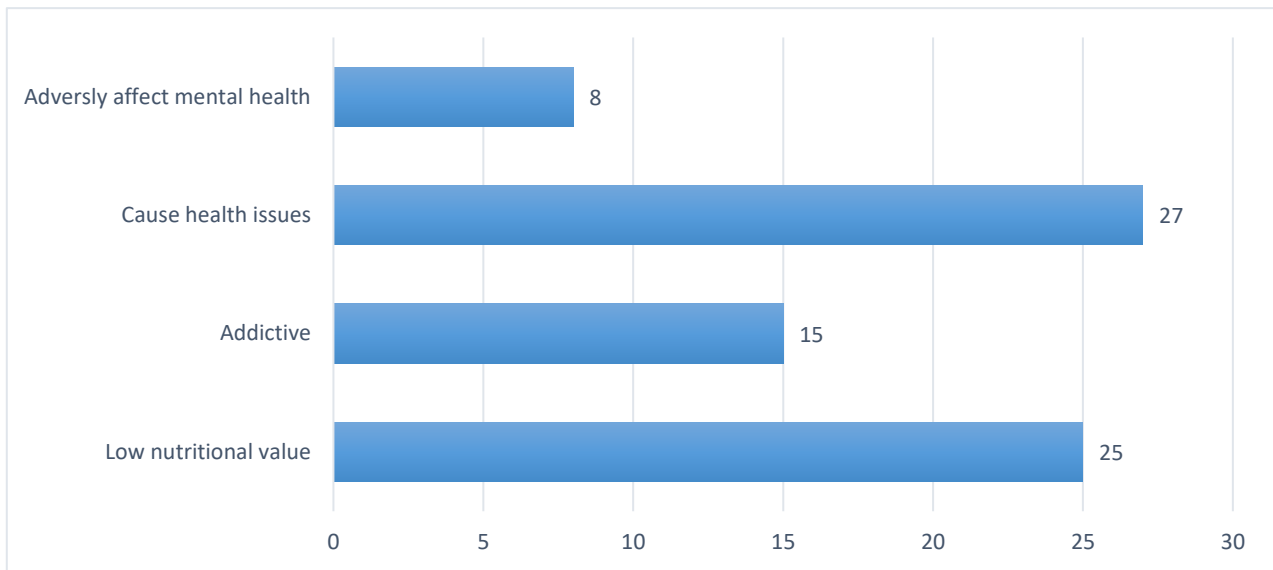
The bar chart displays SLIIT student's reasons for disliking fast food.

Fast food is disliked by 55.6% of respondents because of its poor nutritious quality. Fast food frequently lacks essential nutrients including vitamins, minerals, and fiber while being heavy in calories, damaging fats, and sugar.

33.3% of respondents disapprove of fast food due to its addictive nature. Fast food restaurants frequently employ ingredients and cooking techniques that make their food incredibly tasty and attractive, which can cause cravings and overeating.

60% of respondents dislike fast food because of its harmful impacts on health, which include obesity, heart disease, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, and certain types of cancer.

17.8% of respondents dislike fast food because it has a negative impact on mental health. Research shows that people who consume a lot of fast food are more likely to become depressed than those who avoid it. In addition to depression, eating too much fast food can also worsen symptoms of anxiety.

4.7. Frequency of fast food consumption
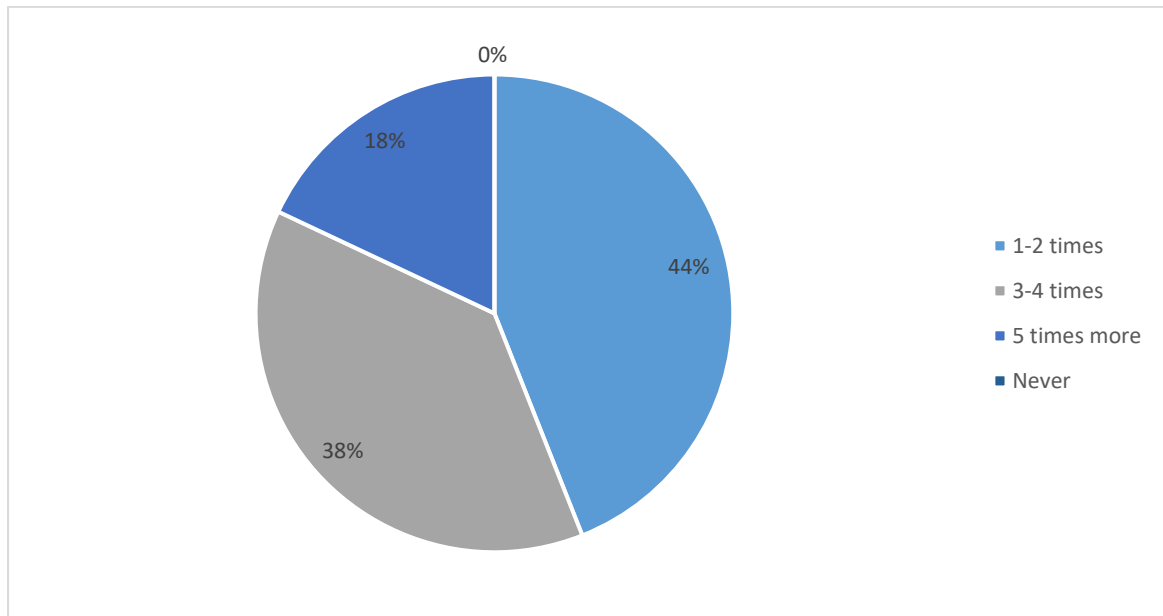
The pie chart shows how often students consume fast food in a week. It shows a sizeable part eats fast food three to four times each week, followed by those who eat it once or twice weekly. Fast food intake was greater within a smaller group who said they had it five or more times per week.

38% eat fast food 3-4 times a week. This suggests that a sizable fraction of those polled admitted to eating fast food three to four times each week on average. This frequency shows that this group consumes fast food at a moderate rate.

"1-2 times" make up 44% of the total. This category shows that nearly half of the respondents said they ate fast food one to two times each week. This group has a slightly lower frequency of fast food consumption when compared to the first category.

18% consume fast food 5 times or more per week. Compared to the other categories, this group shows a greater amount of fast food intake.

4.8. Favorite canteen at SLIIT
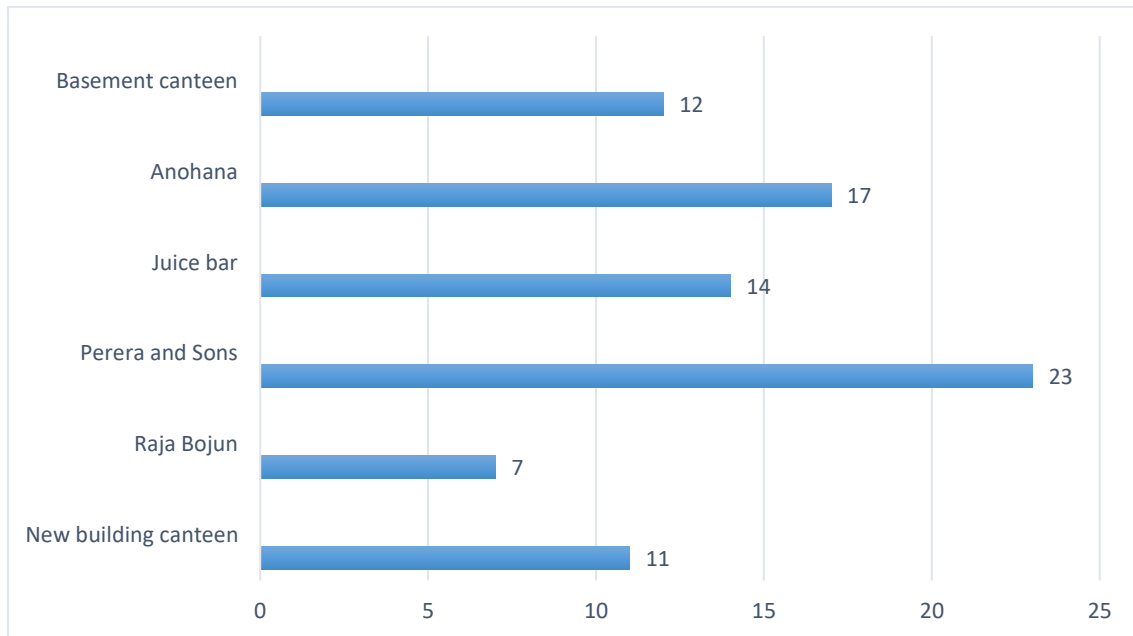
The popularity of different canteens at SLIIT is shown in the bar chart. The following canteens are described on the chart:

Anohana (34%): Based on SLIIT students, this is the canteen they enjoy the second most. It features a large selection of meals with a reputation for good food and an enjoyable environment.

Basement Canteen (24%): This canteen, which is located in the basement, ranks fourth in terms of popularity. Students can easily access it, and a variety of meals, snacks, drinks, and lunches are available.

New Building Canteen (22%): This canteen, which is located in SLIIT's new building, maintains an acceptable ranking for popularity.

Raja Bojun (14%): Raja Bojun features a broad variety of traditional foods and a unique dining experience.

Perera and Sons (46%): Perera and Sons is the most popular canteen according to the survey. Students like its freshly baked products, sandwiches, and other savory snacks, earning it a lot of popularity.

Juice Bar (28%): Juice Bar offers a variety of freshly squeezed juices, smoothies, and light snacks to appeal to health-conscious students. It might have fewer customers than the others.

4.9. Favorite fast food restaurant
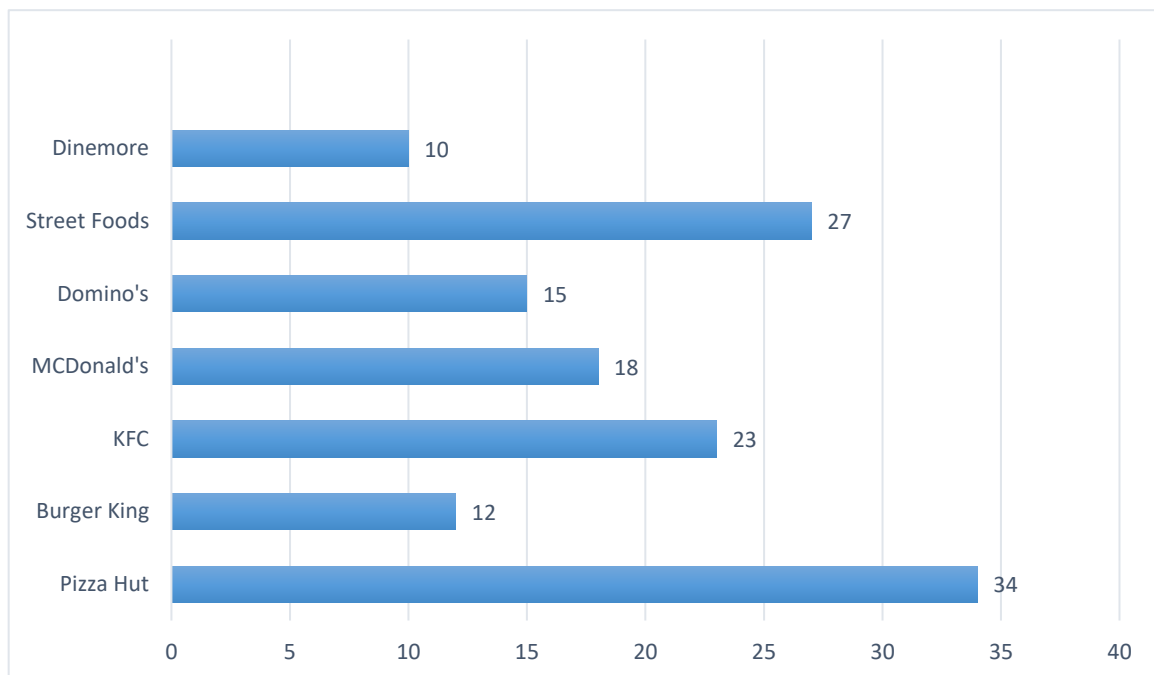
This chart depicts the preferred fast food restaurants of university students outside of SLIIT, chosen from a variety of the most popular fast food chains in Sri Lanka.

Pizza Hut has been indicated as the most preferred fast food restaurant among the students with 68% choosing the option. The reason for this could be Pizza Hut being the largest in the restaurant industry in Sri Lanka, with a span of 97 outlets across the country.

Street foods are the second most favored option with 54% of students choosing it. There are many street food stalls near SLIIT that offer low-priced food that also tastes good.

46% choose KFC. It is one of the most loved and fastest-growing retail restaurant chains in the world and has expanded to over 40 restaurants around the country.

36% of the students chose McDonald's and 30% chose Domino's. 24% choose Burger King. The least favorite restaurant according to the survey is Dinemore.

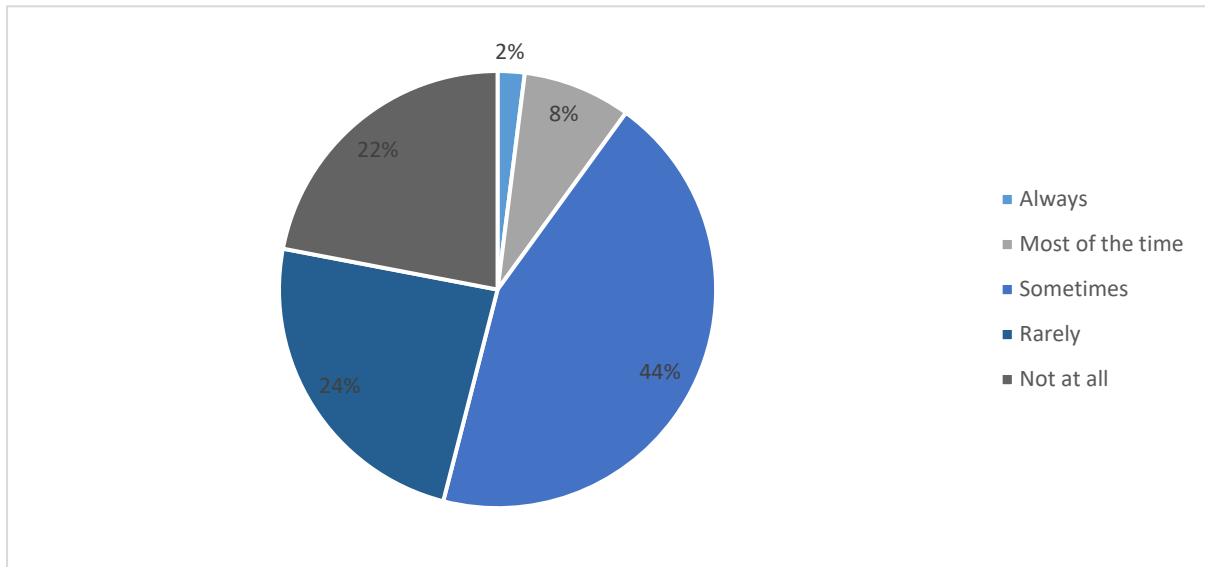## 4.10. When is fast food typically consumed?
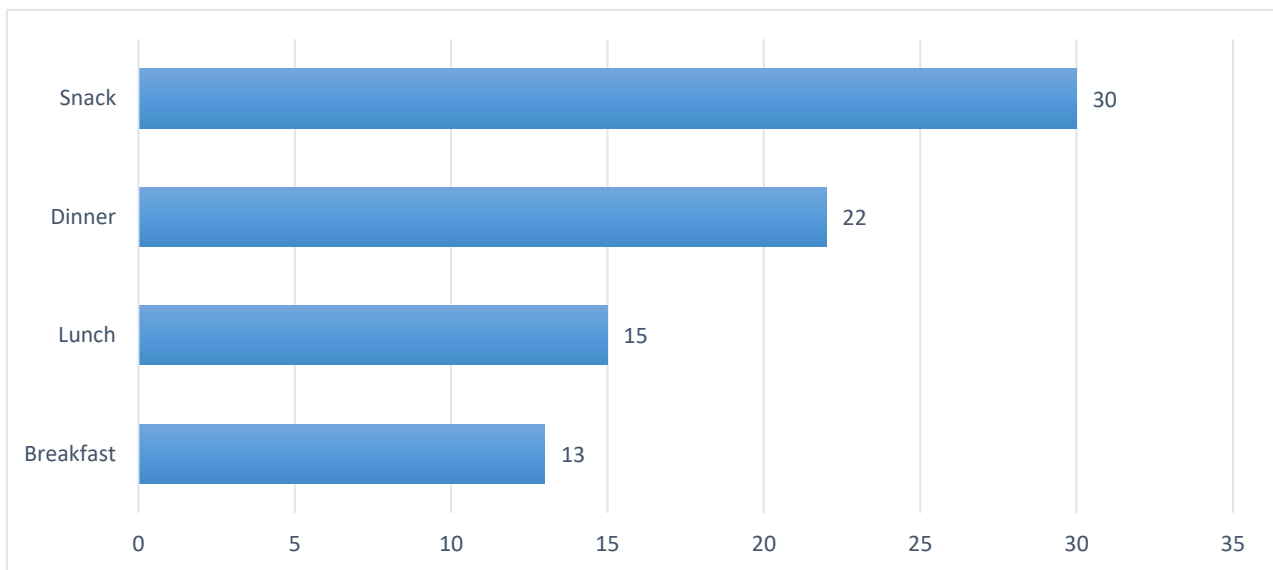
This bar chart shows when fast food is typically consumed by SLIIT students.

It can be seen that 60% of the students consume fast food as a snack. While a majority of students consume fast food as a snack, there is a considerable number that consume fast food as their main meal with 44% consuming them at dinner. 30% eat fast food as their lunch while 26% eat it for breakfast.

It is evident that fast food has become part of many university students' daily diets. A main reason for this could be that many students live in boardings where they do not have the facilities needed nor the time required to prepare their own meals.

4.11. Influence of nutritional value in choosing fast food

This chart depicts whether the nutritional value of food influences the students when choosing to consume fast food. Typically, fast food is not very nutrient-dense. However, not all fast food is unhealthy, and by researching the nutritional value of certain fast food items, a person can make an informed decision. Most major restaurants have websites where people may get this information.

Only 2% of the students always consider nutritional value before consuming fast food while 22% do not consider it at all. The majority, 44%, sometimes consider nutrition. 8% consider nutritional value most of the time and 24% of the students consider it rarely.

4.12. I feel fast food is cheaper than regular food items.
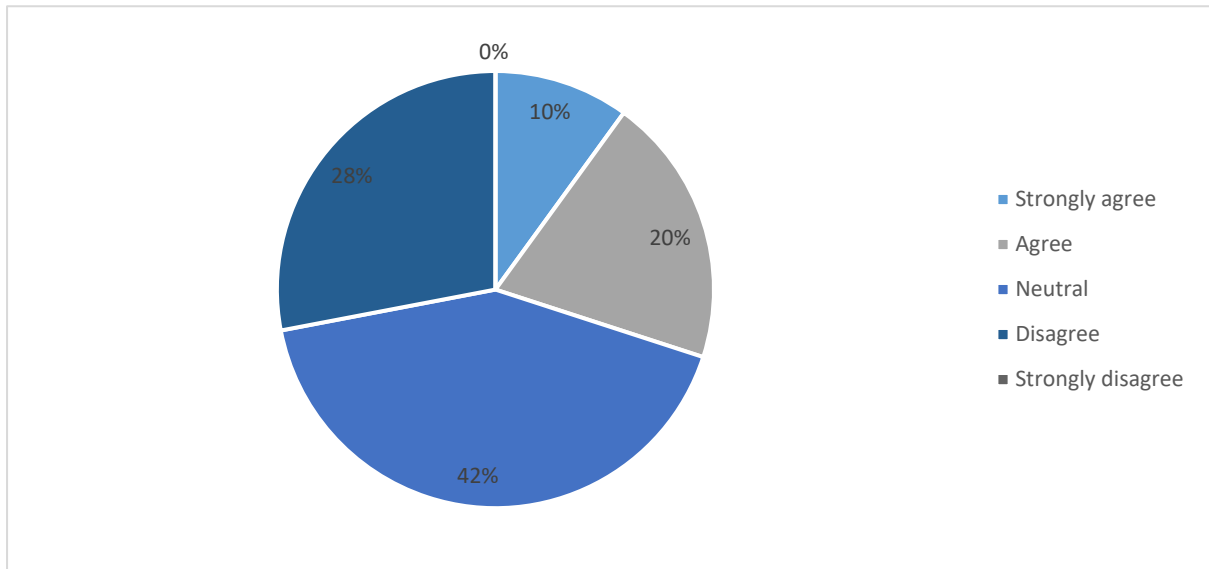
The pie chart depicts the university student's response to the statement "I feel fast food is cheaper than regular food items."

10% of the students strongly agreed with the statement while no one strongly disagreed with it. The majority of students which is 42% stayed neutral. 28% of the students disagreed and 20% agreed with the above statement.

4.13. Amount of money spent on fast food weekly
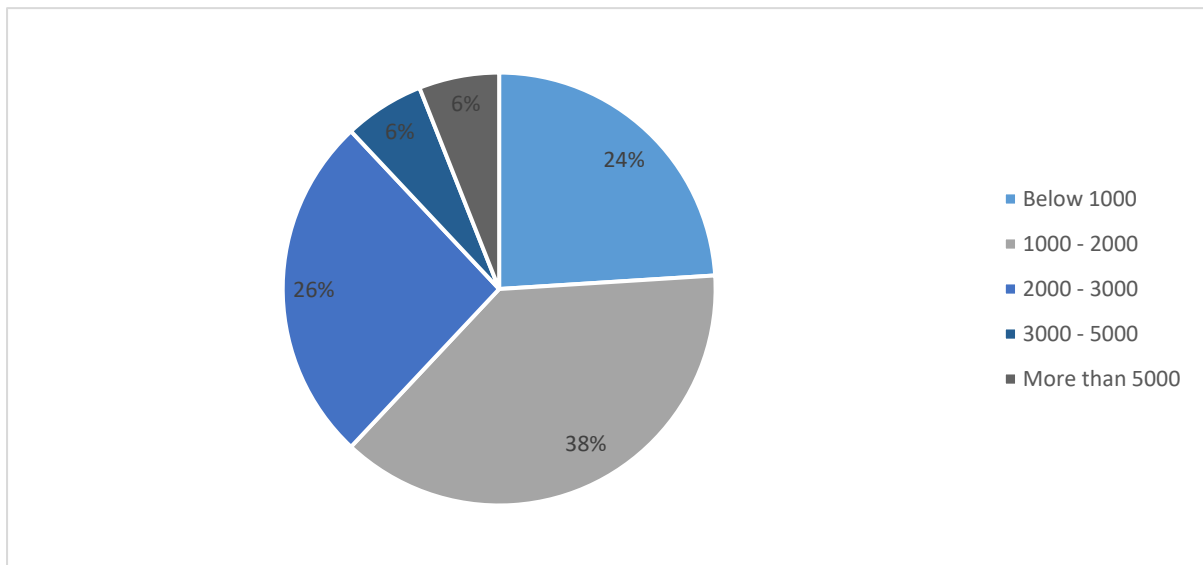
This pie chart represents how much money university students spend on fast food weekly.

The majority which is 38% spend Rs. 1000 – 2000 on fast food weekly. According to the survey, 26% of the students spend Rs. 2000 – 3000 on fast food while 24% spend below Rs. 1000 weekly. Only 6% spend more than Rs. 5000 on fast food every week.

4.14. Would students be willing to spend more money if fast food was healthy?
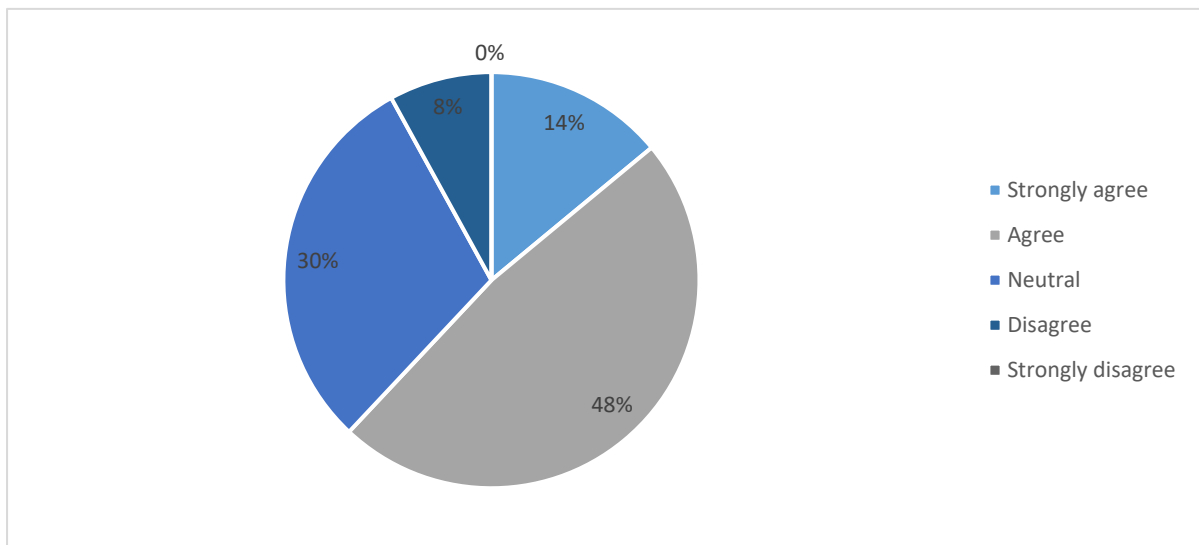

This pie chart depicts the response to whether students would be willing to spend more money on fast food if fast food was healthy.

48% of the students agree that they would be willing to spend more money if fast food was healthy while 14% of them strongly agree with it. Only 8% of the students disagreed with that statement. 30% stayed neutral. No one strongly disagreed with the prompt.

According to the above data, it is apparent that most of the students do care about the nutritional value of fast food and the impact it can have on their health.

4.15. Health conditions
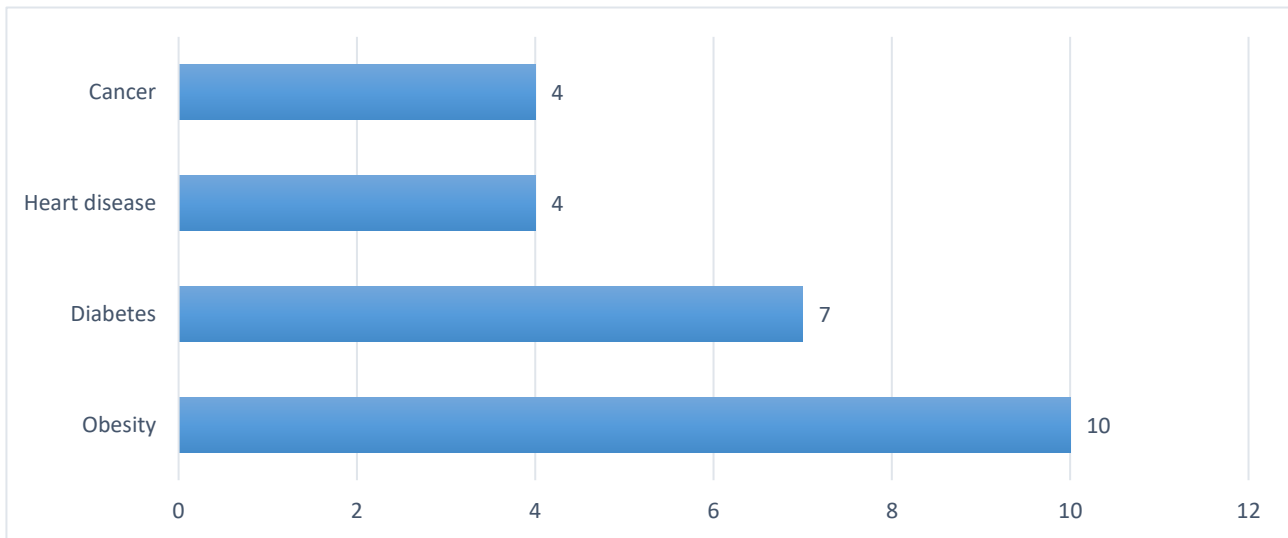
This chart shows how many students suffer from health conditions obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and cancer. Most fast food is high in sugar, salt, calories, saturated fat, trans fats, and processed ingredients. This can impact our health in both short-term and long-term. Researchers have identified the oftentimes irreparable effects of consuming fast food. Such risks include obesity, type 2 diabetes, insulin resistance, and various cardiovascular conditions.

According to the survey, 10 students have obesity, and 7 students have diabetes. 4 students each have cancer and heart disease.

4.16. Alternatives for fast food

These are the alternative foods suggested by the students.

- Traditional food items
- Salads
- Homemade food
- Vegetable soup
- Snacks that are Nutritious and Low in Calories
- Whole grain bread
- Law fat cheese and eggs
- Homemade sweets
- Fresh fruit
- Fruit juice
- Peanut butter between two crackers

5. Conclusion

The findings' main points take into account SLIT students' opinions on fast food, consumption patterns, rates, negative health impacts, and other drawbacks of excessive fast food intake. Also, our investigation revealed the types of student addictions and the causes of those addictions. According to that, it seems like students purchase these fast foods for the convenience of their studies and give more consideration to the food's appearance and taste than its nutritional value. We observed a little surge of interest in healthy meals here. By developing these habits, students can reduce their reliance on these fast foods and transition to a healthy eating plan, which supports a healthy community at the university. Finally, this report details SLIT students' trends in fast food consumption as well as their eating. On this basis, establishing nutrient-dense and high-quality food establishments in the university area can help reduce the consumption of these fast foods.

6. References

[1] T. Huzar, "Is fast food bad for you? All you need to know about its nutrition and impacts," 09 02 2023. [Online]. Available: https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/324847.

[2] H. Nirmani, "Fast Food Consumption Behaviour of Sri Lankans: With Special," Department of Marketing Management, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka, 2017.