

Poor personal and environmental hygiene contribute significantly to food contamination and resultant foodborne diseases. It is assumed that by their nature, street food contamination is inevitable, yet millions of people depend on this source of nutrition and economic livelihood. Foodborne illness poses substantial health burdens and their impact on vulnerable populations is concerning. Education of food industry personnel in hygiene matters is recommended for improving safer food handling practices. Environmental Health Practitioners are, in terms of Nigerian food safety law, authorized to train food handlers. There is, however, a lack of documentary evidence of improvements in food hygiene standards which can be directly related to education or training. This study is aimed to assess the extent of street food vendor information and education on food safety.

To assess attitudes and practice of street food vendors, a descriptive, cross-sectional study utilizing a quantitative research approach is driven out. Data was collected through face-to-face interviewing of street food vendors, with observations of general hygiene and cleanliness. Data was captured in Excel and imported into CDC Epi Info version 3.4.3 (2007) for analysis. Numerical data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and categorical data was analyzed using frequencies. Bivariate analysis was used to establish differences between regions with high and low proportions of street food vendors with regard to knowledge, practices and attitudes variables. Chi-square testing was used to assess statistical significance differences between high density and low density regions with the cut off point for statistical significance set at $p < 0.05$.

One hundred and fifty street food vendors (SFVs) participated in this study. Seventy seven percent entered the business due to unemployment. Sixty seven percent had been trained in food safety and eighty six percent were certified. Regions with a higher density of SFVs were more likely to have received training as opposed to regions with a lower density of SFVs and this was statistically significant $\chi^2 = 3.34$; $p < 0.05$. Although most of the vendors could not list the 5 Keys to Safer Foods, their knowledge of the actual behaviors associated with each key is acceptable. Attitude towards food safety was also positive since all questions had greater than 71% agreement on the attitude to specific food safety behaviors. In relation to self-reported practices, SFVs from high density regions and trained SFVs were more likely to practice food separation to prevent cross contamination and this was statistically significant. Trained SFVs were more likely to have stands or

stalls that met hygiene standards as observed by the EHPs and this was found to be statistically significant.

This study indicates that street food vendors have adequate information regarding food safety principles and their attitudes to food safety can be regarded as attuned to the need to ensure safe practices in food preparation. The practices assessed in this study also indicate that street food vendors can provide food safely although attention needs to be given to some practices and regulatory compliance. Training can be regarded as essential to ensure food safety.

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

A street vendor is broadly defined as a person who offers goods for sale to the public without having a permanent built-up structure from which to sell. Street vendors may be stationary i.e. occupying space, or they may be mobile. The street food industry plays an important role in cities and towns of many developing countries both economically and in meeting food demands of city dwellers (Muinde and Kuria, 2005). Street food is a common occurrence in public places, particularly in cities where it often fulfills a basic need to the urban inhabitants (Rahman et al., 2016). An urban survey in Bangkok revealed 39.6% people eating at restaurants and/or street vended food at least once a day and 32.6% consuming it twice a day (Waltanasiriwit, 2007). Availability and accessibility rather than individual income or stage of national development seem to determine street food consumption patterns. In many countries, workers as well as students have their first meal of the day from the street food vendors (Winarno and Alliance, 2017). According to a 2007 study from Food and Agriculture Organization, 2.5 billion people eat street food everyday (Fellows and Hilmi, 2011).

Street food vendors prepare food in an informal settings and are thus exposed to climate and temperature changes, poor sanitation and unsafe water supply. The food prepared in these conditions is usually unsanitary and unhygienic. It poses a health risk to the consumer in the form of food borne diseases (World Health Organization, 2003). The World Health Organization (WHO), in 1996 recommended its member nations to regulate street food vending and ensure proper education of the vendors regarding hygienic practices (WHO, 1996). Food borne diseases are on a rise in both developed and developing countries, in particular, diarrheal diseases which result in estimated 1.9 million deaths annually (Farthing et al., 2013).

Street food is consumed by a significant member of people around the globe on a daily basis. In Malaysia alone, street food is reported to generate a business worth 2.2 billion annually (Wimarmo and Allain,

1991). Considering the importance of street food, a survey was conducted by WHO, findings of which reported street food to constitute a major source of food consumption for urban population in 74% countries.

Assessing attitudes and practices of street food vendors

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