

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 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.

## **1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

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 which poses a health risk to consumer in terms of food borne diseases (World Health Organization, 2003).

## **1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The major objective of the study was to assess attitudes and practices of food vendors in preparation of food, its storage and dispensing.

## **1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

- (1) who are the street vendors?
- (2) What is the educational level of street vendors in Nigeria?
- (3) Is there any form of seminar for food vendors regarding hygienic practices of food?

## **1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The research gives a clear insight to the attitudes and practices of street food vendors in preparation of food, its storage and dispensing. By highlighting the problem, this paper tends to initiate the process of policy making and intervention by relevant quarter, in order to decrease chances of food borne diseases.

## **1.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Limitations of this study were a relatively less sample size and the fact that this study was carried out in an urban setting, the facilities which could vary significantly from a rural area.

## **1.7 SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

The research focus on assessing attitudes and practices of street food vendors in preparation of food, its storage and dispensing.

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## **1.9 DEFINITION OF TERMS**

**Certified:** Informal traders who are regulated, i.e. they comply with Food Safety Regulations relating to food premises and have been issued a Certificate of Acceptability.

**Certificate of Acceptability:** Certification issued to owners of premises on which food is to be handled as per the regulatory requirements of the Health Act of 1977, Act 63 of 1977. CoAs are issued to owners of premises on which food will be handled once an Environmental Health Practitioner has inspected the premises and found them to be compliant and suitable for the preparation of food in terms of the Regulations published under the Health Act of 1977, viz Regulations Governing General Hygiene Requirements for Food Premises and the Transport of Food, Regulations 918 of 1999.

**Environmental Health Practitioners (EHPs):** Trained professionals competent to enforce, amongst others, Food Safety legislation in South Africa. For law enforcement, they are authorized as Inspectors. In other countries the terms Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) or Health Inspectors may also be used.

**Five (5) Keys to Safer Foods:** Essential food safety messages or principles linked to behaviours that, if adopted and practiced, will reduce the probability of foodborne illness.

**Food Safety:** The assurance that food will not cause harm to the consumer when it is prepared and/or eaten according to its intended use.

**Food Hygiene:** All conditions and measures necessary to ensure the safety and suitability of food at all stages of the food chain.

**Formal food vendor:** Person involved in food preparation, distribution or selling thereof in the mainstream sector e.g. restaurants, hospitals, catering establishments, food factories etc.

**HACCP approach:** Food Safety Management plan that utilizes an assessment of Hazards, analysis thereof and identification and implementation of Critical Control Points.

**Informal food vendor:** Person involved in food preparation, distribution or selling thereof in the "non-mainstream" sector such as street food vendors or hawkers. Matriculation: Highest certificate attained after spending a minimum of 12 years at school.

**Potable water:** Water that is considered suitable for human consumption (drinkable) as per the WHO Drinking water Guidelines, 2006.

**Registered:** Informal traders who are legally operating by complying to business/trade regulations.

**StreetFoods:** Ready-to-eat foods prepared and/or sold by vendors and hawkers in streets and other similar public places.

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