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Food Safety Knowledge and Personal Hygiene Practices amongst Mobile Food Handlers in Shah Alam, Selangor

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Abstract

This study seeks to examine the awareness of food handler personal hygiene on food hygiene practices. Using quantitative approach, self-administered questionnaire was distributed to 400 mobile handlers in Shah Alam Selangor, Malaysia and only 320 questionnaires were collated. Although food handlers may be aware of the need for personal hygiene, they do not understand critical aspects of personal hygiene such cleaning work surface and control food temperature value while cooking. In order to prevent food borne illnesses, mobile food owners need to access and improve operator’s knowledge, personal hygiene and the hygiene practices on food safety to consumer.

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Keywords: Food safety knowledge; personal hygiene; hygiene practices; mobile food handler

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1. Introduction

Food essentially functions as a core to fulfill hunger. It is served to fulfilling biological needs as incorporated in the very popular hierarchy pyramid developed by Abraham Maslow (1954). It is supported by Moon (2010) who noted that food consumption is reflected as a simple act of fulfilling biological needs. Conner & Armitage (2002) generally overviewed food at its lowest level of abstraction is necessary to sustain life. Indeed, foods serve beyond the boundary of gastrointestinal tract and more than just a nutritional fact and value. Furthermore food now can be enjoyed either at home or outside. With the mushrooming of restaurants, street hawkers and other food establishments, people most probably seek the place not only to satisfy hunger but a place to socialize (Lucca, Elizabeth and Torres, 2006). Food consumption activities have changed due to the influence of people's life-style (Muinde and Kuria, 2005; Omemu and Aderoju, 2008; Choudhury, Mahanta, Goswami, Mazumder and Pegoo, 2010; Abdalla, Suliman and Bakhiet, 2009). For instance, less food preparation at home and escalation in number of meals eaten out of home (Osaili, Obediat, Abu Jamous and Bawadi, 2011). However, the increased numbers of people eating out have caused the emergence of food borne illness due to unhygienic preparation and lack of knowledge of personal hygiene (Ghazali, Othman, Nashuki and Roslan, 2012).

Whereby food is prepared or sold at public places and can be taken-away or eaten near the mobile place (Abdalla, Sulaiman and Bakhiet, 2009). Mobile food handlers' are responsible in providing safe food for the intake of their customers (Martins, Hogg, and Otero, 2012). As a product that is rich in nutrients required by microorganisms, the growth of bacteria in food may be showing to contamination through the major sources like water, air, dust, equipment, sewage, insects, rodents and food handler (Nee and Sani, 2011). As a result of changes in food preparation techniques as well eating habits, these will increase the chances of food contamination due to improper food handling.

A studies conducted by Food Agriculture Organization (1995) recorded that poor knowledge lead to poor practices in food handling base on the assessment of microbial contamination of food sold by the mobile food handlers. Improper food preparation practices can cause food borne illness as contended by Park, Kwak and Chang (2010). According to Omemu, and Bankole (2005), when food handlers do not practice proper food safety, personal hygiene during food preparation, they may become vehicles for microorganism's for example through their hand, mouth and skin.

In developing country a large amount of ready-to-eat food is sold on the street due to its convenience rather than its safety, quality and hygiene aspects (Abdalla, Suliman & Bakiet 2009). The World Health Organization (WHO, 2006) identified several factors associated with food borne illness such as poor food safety knowledge, poor personal hygiene, cross-contamination as well time and temperature abuse during storage and preparation of food by mobile food handlers (Osaili et al. 2011).

2. Literature review

There are many sites that mobile food vendors and temporary stalls operate (Muyanja, Nayiga, Brenda and Nasinyama, 2011). Commonly there are available at busy street-sides and corners as well as bus stands (Muyanja et al., 2011). As in most emerging countries, poor food hygiene and food handling practices were among the most alarming problems faced by the food control authority (Selamat and Hassan, 2003). The safety of mobile food handler is affected by several influence starting from the quality of the raw material, to food handling and storage practices. In most cases, the process of preparing street food is exposed to unpleasant environmental condition compared to food that prepared in premises. It shows that a mobile food handler has been associated of causing food borne illnesses. These practices had been seen among mobile food handlers and hawkers as well as the numerous small-scale food processors or cottage industries throughout the country (Muyanja et al., 2011).

Therefore, this study was seek to examine the influence of food safety knowledge amongst mobile food handlers with hygiene practices and to investigate to what extent does mobile food handlers' personal hygiene influence their hygiene practices. (Saidatul AfazanAbdulAziz & Hayati Mohd Dahan 2013)

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