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### An exploratory study on selected household food purchasing practices of women in Punjab

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#### **Abstract**

The present study was conducted to know and compare selected household food safety purchasing practices of rural and urban women. A sample of 240 women (120 rural + 120 urban) who were performing major household activities was selected from three socio-cultural regions of Punjab. Data were collected with the help of specially prepared interview schedule. Eleven household purchasing practices were identified with the help of relevant literature, experts from different departments of PAU, Ludhiana and members of advisory committee. The study findings revealed that all respondents were checking the conditions of tin and containers. Majority of rural and urban respondents didn't check the AGMARK on cereals, pulses and spices. Twenty three per cent of urban respondents did not have habits of checking marks on cereals. Urban respondents were practicing healthier household practices as compare to rural area and significant difference was also observed. So consumer awareness programme for general public should be strengthened. Awareness should be created to rural women regarding different household safe purchasing practices through different strategies of education.

**Keywords:** Household food purchasing practices

#### **Introduction**

Purchasing is an extensive practice. So women should pay attention while purchasing food items. It has direct impact on health. Right to be informed is a very important right laid down by Consumer Right Act, 1986. But it is up to us whether we read the information provided on food items. Checking of condition of containers, expiry date, list of ingredients /contents and standard marks like AGMARK, FPO, ISI etc and not buying roadside foods are the types of food safety practices related to purchasing. Keeping in view these points, the present study was conducted to know the household purchasing practices of women with following objectives.

#### **Objectives**

- To explore existing household food purchasing practices of rural and urban women.
- To compare existing household food purchasing practices of rural and urban women.
- To study the reasons for not practicing household food purchasing practices by women.

#### **Methodology**

The study was conducted in three socio-cultural regions i.e. Malwa, Majha and Doaba of Punjab state. Three districts i.e. one from each region were selected randomly. Further from each selected district one village and urban locality was selected by random sampling techniques. Women who were performing major household activities were purposively selected for study. Forty women were selected from each selected village and urban locality respectively. Thus total sample of study was comprised of 240 respondents (120 rural+ 120 urban). Eleven household food purchasing practices were identified with the help of relevant literature, experts from different departments of PAU, Ludhiana and members of advisory committee. The collected data were analyzed by using frequency, percentage, mean score and Z- test.

## Results and Discussion

The finding of the study has been discussed under following major and sub- headings:

- Purchasing practices of packed food items
- Practices of checking standard marks
- Purchasing practices of tea and pulses

- Practices of buying roadside food items
- Comparison of purchasing practices of rural and urban respondents

### a) Purchasing Practices of Packed Food Items

**Table 1:** Distribution of respondents according to purchasing practices of packed food items (n=240)

| Purchasing practices  | Rural f (%)             | Urban f (%)            |
|---|-------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Checking the conditions of tin and containers of packed food items.        |                         |                        |
| Yes   | 120(100)                | 120(100)               |
| No  | -                       | -                      |
| 2. Checking the Expiry date on packed food items                              |                         |                        |
| Yes   | 34(28)                  | 77(64)                 |
| No  | 86(72)                  | 43(36)                 |
| Reasons for not checking the expiry date                                      | n <sub>1</sub> =86(72)  | n <sub>2</sub> =43(36) |
| Don't have this habit   | 35(41)                  | 16(37)                 |
| Faith in shop keeper  | 51(59)                  | 27(63)                 |
| 3. Checking the list of ingredients on bottle/container of packed food items. |                         |                        |
| Yes   | 18(15)                  | 37(31)                 |
| No  | 102(85)                 | 83(69)                 |
| Reasons for not checking the list of Ingredients:                             | n <sub>1</sub> =102(85) | n <sub>2</sub> =83(69) |
| Lack of knowledge   | 47(39)                  | 27(22)                 |
| Don't have this habit   | 12(10)                  | 22(18)                 |
| Hurriedly bought the food items   | 43(42)                  | 34(41)                 |

Packed food items should clearly illustrate date of manufacturing and expiry and list of ingredients and standard marks etc. Data in Table revealed that all rural and urban respondents checked the conditions of tin and containers of packed food items at the time of purchasing. Seventy two per cent rural and 36 per cent of urban respondents did not check the expiry date and majority of respondents expressed reasons for not checking expiry date and they reported that they have faith in shopkeepers whereas 41 per cent rural and 37 per cent of urban were not habitual to check the expiry date.

Large majority (85%) of rural respondents and 69 per cent urban respondents were not aware of checking the list of ingredients on bottle /container of packed food items. Almost equal percentage of rural and urban respondents were hurriedly bought the food items, whereas 39 and 22 per cent of rural and urban respondents had lack of knowledge of this safe practice and rest of 18 per cent urban and 10 per cent of rural respondents didn't have habit to check the list of ingredients on packed food items.

### b) Practices of Checking of Standard Marks

A standard mark proves the authentication of food items. It is a mark or symbol given to product which meets certain standard with respect to the quality in terms of material used methods of manufacturing, labeling, packaging and performance. AGMARK, FPO, ISI are some of the standardized marks which are used on food items. Data in this regard were presented in Table.




### 1. Checking of AGMARK on Cereals, Pulses and Spices

AGMARK is certification mark employed on agricultural products in India, assuring that they conform to a set of standards mark approved by the Directorate of Marketing and Inspection. Data in Table 2 revealed that highest percentage of rural respondents 91 per cent and 66 per cent of urban respondents didn't check the AGMARK on cereals, pulses and spices. Out of 91 per cent rural respondents who were not checking marks on cereals, because 34 per cent of rural respondents they grew their own cereals, whereas 66 and 13 per cent of urban and rural respondents had brought the cereals from local flour mills respectively. Twenty three per cent urban respondents didn't have habit of checking marks on cereals.

Further Data in Table 2 shows that 91 per cent rural and 66 per cent urban respondents didn't check the AGMARK on pulses. Study findings are contradicted by Kishtwaria *et al* (2006). She revealed that majority of male and female respondents of Kangra district were aware of term AGMARK and ISI mark. Out of 91 per cent, 34 per cent rural respondents gave reasons that they had grown their own pulses in the field, almost equal percentage of rural and urban respondents had bought unpacked pulses and 34 per cent urban and 13 per cent of rural respondents didn't have habit of checking marks. No knowledge about AGMARK was given by 23 and 11 per cent of urban and rural respondents respectively.

Fifty seven per cent of rural respondents had felt that they have no need to check AGMARK because they used homemade spices, whereas 43 per cent urban and 16 per cent of rural respondents were ignorant about AGMARK on spices.

**Table 2:** Distribution of respondents according to their practices of checking standard marks on food items (n=240)

| Practices  | Rural f (%)              | Urban f (%)            |
|--|--------------------------|------------------------|
| i)  Checking of AGMARK on Cereals |                          |                        |
| Yes  | 11(9)                    | 41(34)                 |
| No   | 109(91)                  | 79(66)                 |
| Reasons for not checking the standard marks  | n <sub>1</sub> =109(91)  | n <sub>2</sub> =79(66) |
| - Consume own grown cereals  | 78(72)                   | -                      |
| - Buy from local flour mill  | 14(13)                   | 52(66)                 |
| - Don't have this habit  | -                        | 18(23)                 |
| - Lack of knowledge about AGMARK   | 17(15)                   | 9(11)                  |
| ii) Checking of AGMARK on Pulses:  |                          |                        |
| Yes  | 11(9)                    | 41(34)                 |
| No   | 109(91)                  | 79(66)                 |
| Reasons for not checking the standard marks:   | n <sub>1</sub> =109(91)  | n <sub>2</sub> =79(66) |
| - Consume own grown pulses   | 37(34)                   | -                      |
| - Buy unpacked pulses  | 46(42)                   | 34(43)                 |
| - Don't have this habit  | 14(13)                   | 27(34)                 |
| - No knowledge about AGMARK  | 12(11)                   | 18(23)                 |
| iii) Checking of AGMARK on spices:   |                          |                        |
| Yes  | 11(9)                    | 41(34)                 |
| No   | 109(91)                  | 79(66)                 |
| Reasons for not checking the standard marks:   | n <sub>1</sub> =109(91)  | n <sub>2</sub> =79(66) |
| - Use homemade spices  | 62(57)                   | -                      |
| - Don't have this habit  | 16(14)                   | 27(34)                 |
| - No knowledge about AGMARK  | 17(16)                   | 52(43)                 |
| iv) Checking of FPO mark on Pickles:   |                          |                        |
|  Yes                              | -                        | 23(19)                 |
| No   |                          |                        |
|  | 120(100)                 | 97(81)                 |
| Reasons for not checking the standard marks:   | n <sub>1</sub> =120(100) | n <sub>2</sub> =97(81) |
| - Don't use readymade pickles  | 120(100)                 | 97(100)                |
| v) Checking of ISI mark on Food products   |                          |                        |
|  Yes                            | 22(18)                   | 77(65)                 |
| No   | 98(82)                   | 43(35)                 |
| Reasons for not checking the standard marks:   | n <sub>1</sub> =98(82)   | n <sub>2</sub> =43(35) |
| - Don't have this habit  | 17(18)                   | 9(21)                  |
| - Ignorant about ISI mark  | 65(66)                   | 34(79)                 |
| - Don't know the importance of ISI mark  | 16(16)                   | -                      |

**2. Checking of FPO mark**

In India, all processed food products are mandated to be certified with FPO mark. This mark is issued by the Ministry of Food Processing Industry. It ensures that the food under consideration is reliable to purchase being fit for consumption and guarantee that it has been manufactured in hygienic environment. Table shows that all rural and 81 per cent of urban respondents were not checking the FPO mark on pickles because they were not using readymade pickles.

**2. Checking of ISI mark**

ISI mark is standardization mark issued by Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) to certify that the products conform to the minimum quality standards. Data in Table 2 reveals that 82 per cent rural and 35 per cent of urban respondents did not check the ISI mark on food products because twenty one per cent urban and 18 per cent of rural respondents didn't have habit to check it whereas 79 per cent urban and 66 per cent of rural respondents were ignorant about ISI mark.

**c) Purchasing Practices of Tea and Pulses**

**i) Purchasing Practices of Tea**

The data shown in Table 4.4 revealed that 27 per cent rural and 18 per cent of urban respondents purchased unpacked tea. Eighty two rural and 41 per cent of urban respondents

purchased unpacked tea because it is cheap and remaining per cent of rural respondents (18%) and urban (59%) respondents expressed that unpacked tea taste is good and gives good colour.

**Table 3:** Distribution of respondents according to their practices of purchasing tea and pulses (n=240)

| Practices                                     | Rural f (%)            | Urban f (%)            |
|---|------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Tea  |                        |                        |
| i) Packed                                     | 87(73)                 | 98(82)                 |
| ii) Unpacked                                  | 33(27)                 | 22(18)                 |
| Reasons for buying unpacked tea               | n <sub>1</sub> =33(27) | n <sub>2</sub> =22(18) |
| - Cheap as compared to packed tea             | 27(82)                 | 9(41)                  |
| - Unpacked tea is tasty and gives good colour | 6(18)                  | 13(59)                 |
| 2. Pulses                                     |                        |                        |
| i) Packed                                     | 37(31)                 | 86(72)                 |
| ii) Unpacked                                  | 83(69)                 | 34(28)                 |
| Reasons for buying unpacked pulses            | n <sub>1</sub> =83(69) | n <sub>2</sub> =34(28) |
| - Cheap as compared to packed pulses          | 38(46)                 | 30(88)                 |
| - To check the quality of pulses              | 8(10)                  | 4(12)                  |
| - Consume own grown pulses                    | 37(44)                 | -                      |

## 2. Purchasing Practices of Pulses

Data in Table 3 depicted that 69 per cent rural and 28 per cent urban respondents purchased unpacked pulses, out of these, 46 per cent rural and 88 per cent of urban respondents purchased unpacked pulses because it is cheap, ten per cent rural and

twelve per cent urban respondents preferred unpacked pulses as they can check the quality of pulses.

## d. Practices of Buying Roadside Food Items

**Table 4:** Distribution of respondents according to their practices of buying roadside food items (n=240)

| Practices                               | Rural f (%)            | Urban f (%)            |
|---|------------------------|------------------------|
| i) Buying roadside foods items:         |                        |                        |
| Yes                                     | 16(13)                 | 49(41)                 |
| No                                      | 104(87)                | 71(59)                 |
| Reasons for buying roadside foods items | n <sub>1</sub> =16(13) | n <sub>2</sub> =49(41) |
| - Just for taste                        | 11 (69)                | 13(27)                 |
| -Easily available                       | -                      | 19(38)                 |
| - Cheap and tasty                       | 5(31)                  | 17(35)                 |

A number of road side vendors i.e. chat, juice and junk food vendors, other roadside eateries in rural and urban areas are increasing the chances of sale of substandard food and risk to our health. Data in Table 4 revealed that forty one per cent urban and thirteen per cent of rural respondents bought roadside food items. Out of this, 69 per cent rural and 27 per cent of urban respondents eat roadside food just for taste, whereas 38 per cent of urban respondents preferred because it is easily available from nearby market and remaining 35 and

31 per cent of urban and rural respondents purchased due to its less cost and good taste. Study findings contradicted that Rao *et al* (2007) who studied knowledge, attitudes and practices of woman in South India. He revealed that respondents considered that home cooked foods are safer than prepared foods brought from outside.

## e. Comparison of Purchasing Practices of Rural and Urban Respondents

**Table 5:** Comparison between rural and urban respondents in relation to their purchasing practices (n=240)

| Food Safety Purchasing Practices                                      | Rural (n <sub>1</sub> =120)<br>Mean score | Urban (n <sub>2</sub> =120)<br>Mean Score | Z value |
|---|---|---|---------|
| 1. Purchasing practices of packed food items                          |   |   |         |
| i) Checking the conditions of tin and containers of packed food items | 1   | 1   | -       |
| ii) Checking the expiry date on packed food items                     | 0.28                                      | 0.64                                      | 10.1**  |
| iii) Checking the list of ingredients on bottles/container            | 0.15                                      | 0.30                                      | 4.21**  |
| 2. Practices of checking standard marks                               |   |   |         |
| i) AGMARK on Cereals  | 0.09                                      | 0.34                                      | 7.02**  |
| ii) AGMARK on Pulses  | 0.09                                      | 0.34                                      | 7.02**  |
| iii) AGMARK on Spices   | 0.09                                      | 0.34                                      | 7.02**  |
| iv) FPO mark on Pickles   | -   | 0.19                                      | 8.33**  |
| v) ISI mark on Food products  | 0.18                                      | 0.64                                      | 13.34** |
| 3. Purchasing practices of tea and pulses                             |   |   |         |
| i) Tea  | 0.72                                      | 0.81                                      | 2.52*   |
| ii) Pulses  | 0.30                                      | 0.71                                      | 11.5**  |
| 4. Buying roadside foods items  | 0.13                                      | 0.40                                      | 7.58**  |
| Average mean score  | 0.28                                      | 0.51                                      | 8.18**  |

Data presented in Table revealed that all rural and urban respondents checked the conditions of tin and containers before purchasing packed food. This practice also got highest mean score. Practices of checking of AGMARK on cereals, pulses and spices were obtained lowest mean scores in rural and urban areas. Purchasing practices of packed tea and pulses got more mean score in urban area as compare to rural. In urban area respondents were buying roadside food items more so these items obtained higher mean score than rural. Significant difference was observed between rural and urban respondents in regard to all buying practices.

It is clear from the Table 5 concluded that higher average mean score of urban respondents in food purchasing practices depicted that in urban area respondents were practicing healthier food purchasing practices as compare to rural area. The significant difference was also observed.

## Conclusion

All rural and urban respondents were checking the conditions of tin and containers. Large majority of rural respondents and sixty nine per cent urban respondents were not aware of

checking the list of ingredients on bottle /container of packed food items. Highest percentage of rural respondents and urban sixty nine per cent respondents didn't check the AGMARK on cereals, pulses and spices. Higher mean scores in urban area in food purchasing practices depicted that urban respondents were practicing healthier household practices as compare to rural area and significant difference was also observed. So there is need to educate the rural women regarding different household safety food purchasing practices through different strategies of education.

## References

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