A study of awareness and behaviour of housewives regarding food safety

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Abstract
The objective of the study was to assess the awareness and behaviour of housewives regarding food safety. The sample consisted of 240 housewives by purposive sampling method. Self-developed food safety awareness and behaviour questionnaire were used. Findings reveal that food safety awareness and behaviour of housewives about food preparation & cooking comparatively higher than personal hygiene, purchasing & storage and other. Housewives had better knowledge, but less showed good behaviour. So, there was a gap between knowledge and behaviour.

Keywords: A study of awareness, behaviour of housewives, food safety

Introduction
We reside in the period of the 21st century. We focus on our progress of our country’s flourishing female workforce by mentioning their survival pride fully, with one which includes highly educated and skilled professionals. So far we cannot deny to the fact that a large number/majority of women in India still stay at home and do not go out to work. Instead they work at home. They work as housewives in their houses and not as entrepreneurs or freelancers from home.

A woman whose work is to run or manage her family, home, care her children; buying, cooking and store food for the family; buying things for family’s day to day need; housekeeping, cleaning and to maintain the home and to make, buy or mend clothes for the family and who is not employed or working outside the home or is a career woman is called a housewife.

Household food safety is that part of food safety which can be monitored and controlled by individuals within the home. Women hold the primary responsibilities of purchasing, storage and preparation of food in the home and should be well informed about the possible food-borne diseases and awareness regarding knowledge and practices related to household food safety should be improved among them. In present times food handling practices are of public concern, and action is required to reduce the probability of home derived food borne diseases. Food safety is a scientific discipline that describes handling, preparation, and storage of food in order to prevent foodborne illness. It consists of a number of routines that should be followed in order to avoid conceivable health risks. The safety between industry and the market and then between the market and the consumer are the basic tracks/path within this line of thought. When in considering industry to market practices, food safety considerations include the origins of food which includes the practices relating to food labeling, food hygiene, food additives and pesticide residues, as well as policies on biotechnology and food and guidelines for the management of governmental import and export inspection and certification systems for foods and considering market to consumer practices, the usual thought is that food should be safe in the market safe delivery and preparation of the food for the consumer is the basic concern.

Definition of food under FSSAI ACT, 2006
Food means any substance, whether processed, partially processed or unprocessed, which is intended for human consumption and includes primary food to the extent defined in clause, genetically modified or engineered food or food containing such ingredients, infant food,
packaged drinking water, alcoholic drink, chewing gum, and any substance, including water used in to the food during its manufacture, preparation or treatment but does not include any animal feed, live animals unless they are prepared or processed for placing on the market for human consumption, plants prior to harvesting, drugs and medicinal products, cosmetics, narcotic or psycho tropic substances.

Fattom
FATTOM is an acronym for the factor microorganisms need in order to grow. This will help you remember what biological hazards to watch out for.

F: Food
Food rich in protein and carbohydrates have a higher probability of being affected by microorganisms unless they are handled correctly. There are rules to follow in order to stop microorganisms from growing in such types of food.

A: Acid
Food having low-acid or slightly acidic like poultry, fish, dairy, eggs and meats are potentially hazardous. You can avoid this danger with proper handling.

T: Temperature
Microorganisms grow in a “Temperature Danger Zone” (TDZ) of 5° to 56.7°C. Unfortunately, this is also the general room temperature range. Practise proper storage and avoid leaving unattended food in the open.

O: Oxygen
Oxygen helps many microorganisms to grow. Keep food covered and minimise exposure to stall bacterial growth.

M: Moisture
The more moisture there is, the easier it is for microorganisms to grow, especially with poultry, meat and raw eggs. Limit moisture and keep working surfaces clean and dry.

WHO (2011) \(^7\) reported that food borne illness outbreaks are reported frequently at national as well as international levels, underscoring the importance of food safety. It is also reported that consumption of contaminated food products is affecting the health of people in many countries. Unusan (2007) \(^6\) reported that people of all ages seem to think they know how to handle food safely, but their self-reported food-handling behaviors do not support this confidence. A review of the consumer food safety literature indicates many gaps that have an impact on food borne diseases at home.

Result and discussion
Objective 1: Assess the food safety awareness among housewives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Food Safety Awareness (Parameter)</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Personal Hygiene</td>
<td></td>
<td>178</td>
<td>74.17</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>23.75</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Food Preparation and Cooking</td>
<td></td>
<td>183</td>
<td>76.25</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>17.92</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Purchasing and Storage</td>
<td></td>
<td>156</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>28.33</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td></td>
<td>137</td>
<td>57.08</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>27.08</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>15.83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table No. 1 shows mean and percentage of responses for food safety awareness. Out of 240 respondents, 178 (74.17%) were agree, 57 (23.75%) were uncertain and 5 (2.08%) were disagree on food safety awareness statements about personal hygiene. 183 (76.25%) were agree, 43 (17.92%) were uncertain and 14 (5.83%) were disagree on food safety awareness statements about food preparation and cooking. 156 (65%) were agree, 68 (28.33%) were uncertain and 16 (6.67%) were disagree on food safety awareness statements about purchasing and storage whereas on other statements related to food safety awareness 137 (57.08%) were agree, 65 (27.08%) were uncertain and 38 (15.83%) were disagree. Findings reveal that food safety awareness of housewives about food preparation & cooking comparatively higher than personal hygiene, purchasing & storage and other.

Objective 2: Assess the food safety behaviour among housewives.

Table 2: Food Safety Behaviour

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Food safety awareness (parameter)</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mean %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Personal Hygiene</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Food Preparation and Cooking</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Purchasing and Storage</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table No. 2 shows mean and percentage of responses for food safety behaviour. 118 (47.17%) housewives were respond ‘always’ and 55 (22.92%) were respond ‘most of time’ on personal hygiene. 175 (72.92%) housewives were respond ‘always’ and 34 (14.17%) were respond ‘sometime’ on food preparation and cooking. 154 (64.17%) housewives were respond ‘always’ and 43 (17.92%) were respond ‘most of time’ on purchasing and storage. 142 (59.17%) housewives were respond ‘always’ and 55 (22.92%) were respond ‘most of time’ on other statements of food safety awareness.

As per the study conducted by Byrd-Bredbenner, Maurer et al. (2007) [1]; Subba Rao, Sudershan et al. (2009) [3], role of women in food safety is very much important because they are the food makers and preparers in the family. As per the study conducted in Slovenia (2008) [4] by jevsnik, et al. (2008) [3], reported that 57.1% of respondents use warm water and soap to wash their hands, though it is also reported that 1.6% do not wash their hands and 33.9% only use water to wash hands. If talk about the awareness of washing hands then most of the respondents agreed that washing hand before handling food is must, checking the freshness of food before consuming and do not use the rotten food. This also because of the awareness created by the various programs in community by primary health care level and they have explained the importance of washing hands.

Gap between knowledge and behaviour of housewives is high, as per the study knowledge in them is high but very few shows good behaviour. Explanation as an example, 94.2% are aware that before handling food hands should be washed but only 42.6% out of them follows the same, 35% only separate raw and cooked food and 18% of them reheat the food before consuming, similarly 46.2% of only wash veggies and fruits before consuming. There are many factors responsible for the above stated goof ups some of them are- low socio economic status, lack of available resources like refrigerators or utensils, lack of awareness regarding importance of food safety, no proper food storage, lack of safe water supply, somewhere traditional culture practices followed while cooking and many more reasons.

Comparatively knowledge of food safety behaviour in food preparation and cooking were lesser than the mean score percentage as per the result. This shows that in spite of reduced knowledge some of the housewives used to do the right behaviour. The brief is that women may be taught the right cooking and food preparation habits from their elders, mothers or other relations without having the correct knowledge.

Conclusions

1. Food safety awareness of housewives about food preparation & cooking comparatively higher than personal hygiene, purchasing & storage and other.
2. Food safety behaviour of housewives about food preparation & cooking comparatively higher than personal hygiene, purchasing & storage and other.
3. Housewives had better knowledge, but less showed good behaviour. So, there was gap between knowledge and behaviour.

References