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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 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,

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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.

T: Time

Don't keep food at the TDZ for more than 4 hours. That's enough time for toxins from microbes on the food to multiply and contaminate the food.

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.

Gurudasani, (2009) [2], commented that greater number of consumers even had a positive attitude toward food safety and also believed that the intervention of government would also help in improving the quality of the street foods. Such data helps in forming the basis for seeking the attention of government in order to undertake appropriate measures to improve the quality of foods being served at various food outlets. It was also found that very lesser number of consumers received information on food safety through different sources like magazines, TV/radio, posters, newspapers, health workers, NGO's etc. This only brings into a need for attention of food safety educators to use different types of audio-visual aids just to spread the messages on food safety. This kind of particular data on knowledge of consumers regarding food safety can help in developing educational programs on food safety.

Objective

- To assess the food safety awareness among housewives.
- To assess the food safety behaviour among housewives.

Methods and procedure

The geographical area of the study was the urban area of Udaipur district from Rajasthan (India). The sample of the study consisted of 240 housewives by purposive sampling was used as the sampling method in this study. Subjects who met the inclusion criteria were selected for the study.

Two tests were used to collect data in this study. Self Developed food safety awareness and behaviour questionnaire were used. Questions or statements in each section of the food safety awareness and behaviour were included under four main parameters; personal hygiene, Food preparation & cooking and food purchasing and storage.

25 statements comprised to make a scale which can measure all important parameters of food safety. All statements are of positive manner. These statements had 3 responses and scored by giving 2 for agree, 1 for uncertain and 0 for disagree.

28 statements related to food safety behaviour included a set of positive and negative sentences. The scale consists of 26 positive statements and 2 negative statements. For positive statements scores given are 5 marks to always, 4 marks to most of times, 3 marks to sometimes, 2 marks to rarely and 1 mark to never and vice versa for negative statements.

Two tests were administered both in individual and in group situation. Brief instructions were given to them. Scoring was done according to the Responses. The scores obtained were analyzed statistically. The scores obtained on different tests of the study were analyzed statistically with help of computer (SPSS). Mean responses and percentages of responses in each category were calculated and presented in a tabular form.

Table 1: Food Safety Awareness

S. No.	Food Safety Awareness (Parameter)	Responses					
		Agree		Uncertain		Disagree	
		Mean	%	Mean	%	Mean	%
1.	Personal Hygiene	178	74.17	57	23.75	5	2.08
2.	Food Preparation and Cooking	183	76.25	43	17.92	14	5.83
3.	Purchasing and Storage	156	65	68	28.33	16	6.67
4.	Others	137	57.08	65	27.08	38	15.83

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

S. No.	Food safety awareness (parameter)	Responses									
		Always		Most of time		Sometime		Rarely		Never	
		Mean	%	Mean	%	Mean	%	Mean	%	Mean	%
1.	Personal Hygiene	118	49.17	55	22.92	22	9.17	29	12.08	16	6.67
2.	Food Preparation and Cooking	175	72.92	14	5.83	34	14.17	12	5	5	2.08
3.	Purchasing and Storage	154	64.17	43	17.92	26	10.83	7	2.92	10	4.17
4.	Others	142	59.17	55	22.92	17	7.08	5	2.08	21	8.75

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) [5], 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 relatives 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.

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