

EFFECTIVENESS OF FOOD SAFETY EDUCATION (FSE) TO CANTEEN STAFF IN UNIVERSITY BOY'S HOSTEL

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ABSTRACT

The study was undertaken to assess the impact of Food Safety Education (FSE) imparted to the canteen staff on their food safety knowledge and practices. A quasi-experimental design was used wherein all the canteen staff from 4 boy's hostel were selected and were randomly assigned to experimental and control group. The experimental group received FSE in two sessions through Video film, Posters and Leaflets. The results of the survey of the canteen staff before FSE showed that 73 per cent had poor knowledge on safe food preparation, 60 per cent had good food handling practices, while a majority (83%) had good personal hygiene and health care practices. After FSE a significant improvement in their knowledge regarding "what are microorganisms", "prevention of food spoilage", "importance of wearing protective clothing while handling food", etc., was seen. Improvement was also noticed in personal hygiene and health care practices with regards to refraining from wearing accessories such as rings, bangles and bracelets while handling food. A fair improvement was seen in the overall appearance of the canteen staff after intervention. Thus, FSE can serve as an effective tool for improving the hygiene and sanitation of food service establishments.

Key words : Food safety, Food safety education, Food handlers, Food service establishments.

Food is the most complex part of the environment through which human population is exposed to variety of contaminants. Further, the FAO / WHO conference on Nutrition has declared that, "Access to safe and nutritionally adequate food is the right of every individual". Hundreds and millions of people worldwide suffer from diseases of food borne origin. The Centre for Disease Control and prevention (CDC, 2000) estimates the wear and tear in diseases caused due to food borne pathogens as 76 million human illnesses each year, 3, 25,000 hospitalizations, 5,200 deaths and an unknown number of chronic conditions. Infections due to enterohaemorrhagic *E. coli*, (causing intestinal bleeding) and Listeriosis caused by *Listeria monocytogenes* have emerged over the last decade. Food Safety in Residential hostels is important as these cater to large group of students where, bulk cooking is involved. The hygienic quality of the food is often questionable due to the fact that it is prepared largely by the untrained staff who are illiterate and come from low socio-economic background. It has been documented that poorly trained food handlers are often the source of food contamination (Bhatt and Rao, 1992). To bring home the messages to the target population, there is imperative need to take up various educational programs, on Food

Safety. Food Safety Education (FSE) is now recognized as one of the ways to decrease the food contamination and thereby reduce the occurrence of food borne diseases (FBD) (WHO, 2002). The effectiveness of the Food Safety Education Intervention (FSEI) depends on the mode of communication used as well as support from the host institute. Few studies have been conducted in India to study the efficacy of imparting FSE to the food handlers. Further, studies have shown that food handlers engaged in food preparation activities, have been found to be receptive to FSE (Woodburn and Van DeRiet, 1985). The FSEI to mothers of low socio economic groups was found to be successful in reducing the prevalence of diarrhoea in children below 2 years by about 34 per cent when the food safety messages were imparted through the change agents, (Sheth *et al.*, 2004). Hence, the present study was undertaken to impart FSEI to hostel mess staff and study its impact on their knowledge and practices.

METHODOLOGY

Survey:

Out of the twelve boy's hostels of The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda campus, four hostels were selected randomly. Four wardens and thirty canteen staff, that included all the cooks (n=13) servers (n=9), and cleaners (n=8) were surveyed for their knowledge, practices and personal hygiene and health caring practices