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Investigating Food Safety Practices And Challenges In The Street Food Industry: A Comprehensive Study

S. T. Vinod Kumar[1], Dr. V. Anu Rangjani[2]*

[1*]Research Scholar, Department of Tourism and Hospitality Management, Bharath Institute of Higher Education and Research (BIHER), Chennai, e-mail: stvkr99@yahoo.co.in / stvkr99@gmail.com
[2]Associate Professor, Department of Tourism and Hospitality Management, Bharath Institute of Higher Education and Research (BIHER), Chennai, e-mail: anurangjani@gmail.com

***Corresponding Author:** S. T. VINOD KUMAR
*Email: stvkr99@yahoo.co.in / stvkr99@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Street food is a convenient and delicious option for those on the go. These delectable meals and refreshing drinks are willingly available from street vendors and hawkers, making them easily accessible to millions of urban customers. Particularly catering to individuals with limited incomes, street meals serve as a vital source of sustenance for their daily nutritional requirements. In many places of the world, there is still a danger of major food intoxication outbursts linked with street meals. One significant risk element is street food sellers' ignorance of the origins of food-borne illnesses. When choosing a street food seller, many customers place a high value on cleanliness, yet they frequently aren't aware of the health risks connected to the food they purchase. The four primary tenets of food safety management are to adequately clean, chill, store, and cook food. For the sake of the general public's health, regulatory compliance, customer pleasure, cost savings, and environmental protection, food and kitchen safety is crucial. The spread of food borne infections and the health concerns posed by tainted food are prevented using safe food handling procedures. The research study was approved out on the road nutrition vending sites in Coimbatore Tamil Nadu, where there are approximately 300 street food vendors. A comprehensive community-driven cross-sectional investigation was undertaken to assess the comprehension, mindset, and conduct of street food vendors.

Keywords: Street food, Food safety, Customer, Compliances, Coimbatore

INTRODUCTION

Street cuisines are tastes and convenience, and they play a major socioeconomic part in providing city dwellers with the food and nutrients they need at costs that are reasonable to lower- and middle-class consumers, Ackah et al. (2011) and Muzaffar et al. (2009).

"Eating out" refers to any meal products that result in a transaction at a commercial restaurant, according to Soula et al (2020). Restaurant food safety is complying with laws, maintaining

reputation, ensuring customer pleasure, achieving cost savings, and protecting staff health and safety. Safe food handling techniques help to prevent the spread of food borne diseases followed, and avoid legal penalties and reputation harm. Providing safe food increases customer happiness. Cost savings can be realized by minimizing waste and avoiding legal fines. Implementing basic food safety measures protects employee health and safety.

As more street food options become accessible for consumers to pick from, it is critical to comprehend how this has inclined dietary habits on the street. When choosing a street food seller, many customers place a high value on cleanliness, yet they frequently aren't aware of the health risks connected to the food they purchase. As a developing nation, the highway nourishment subdivision in Coimbatore has been growing steadily, leading to an upsurge in the number of people working in this industry. However, it is essential to address the hygiene and sanitation issues associated with street foods to prevent the spread of communicable diseases. This calls for further interventions in environmental health to ensure the well-being of both vendors and consumers.

To ensure food safety, various entities such as government agencies, local authorities, food businesses, and consumers enforce strict standards. The Food Standards Agency is one of the government agencies responsible for overseeing and enforcing food safety laws, working closely with local authorities. These local authorities conduct regular inspections and audits to ensure that all vendors comply with the safety regulations. Food businesses also have a critical role to production in meeting these standards and educating their employees. Additionally, consumers have a significant role in this process by reporting any concerns they may have and making informed decisions about the food they consume. They are considered as one of the food regulation authorities in the study area.

A comprehensive community-driven cross-sectional investigation was undertaken in the city of Coimbatore to investigate the food safety practices followed, to assess the mindset, the conduct of street food vendors and the challenges.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Ababio and Adi (2012) article define "street foods" as meals and drinks that mobile or fixed vendors, frequently found on public streets and various other locations (FAO, 2009). Street food encompasses a vast array of culinary pleasures that often reflect the true essence of local cultures. These vendors' stalls are usually located outdoors or under a roof, easily accessible from the street. While most street food businesses are independently operated, they play a crucial role in boosting the local economy. In order to promote food security and enhance nutrition, it is crucial for developing countries to offer support to street food vendors by providing them with necessary infrastructure, regulations, and training.

The inspiration for novel infections, dietary changes, and modern lifestyles was examined by Khairuzzaman et al. (2014) behavior may be influenced by consumer knowledge and attitude. Understanding the epidemiology of food borne illnesses it aids in efforts to control the disease, allocates resources to control it effectively, monitors and assesses food safety measures, develops new food safety standards, and determines whether interventions are cost-effective. The social and demographic characteristics, typical risks, and occupational risks of street food salespersons were all covered in information on food safety interventions, control measures, regulatory aspects and legal requirements, financial constraints, and attitudes.

Habib (2016) this research discovered that facial expressions are significant obstacles in ensuring food safety while operating businesses due to a lack of infrastructure assistance, knowledge, training, and expertise. The highway nutrition salespersons who were interviewed discussed the

following strategies to address the difficulties they encounter in maintaining the cleanliness of the food they sell: providing adequate training about safe food handling; providing adequate financial and infrastructural support, such as loans for starting a business; and setting up vendor sites throughout the city with a variety of resources available, such as a purified water supply, adequate restroom facilities, and proper garbage disposal.

The results show the risks that these activities pose to the health and safety of practitioners along the value chain. Risks associated with eating street food would be greatly decreased by adopting care events that are combined across the street food supply chain, Alimi (2016) from sound farming practices to hazard analysis crucial control points plan to appropriate hygiene practices by farmers, vendors, and customers. Above all, it is advised that all parties actively work together to enhance and appropriately implement public health laws to guarantee safe practices and create a society that is safer and healthier.

Workneh & Alimi (2016) have studied the majority of emerging states, where street food vendors operate largely outside of official regulations and protection. Because the business is informal and there are no official statistics available about the amount of commerce engaged, the economic significance of the activity is not fully recognized.

The Calopez (2017) study was handy in selecting street food sellers to assess the degree of nourishment safety information and procedures. The consequences presented that, throughout the process, there is a greater degree of awareness compared to the street food sellers' degree of practice. It is advised that the resident administration concentrate on the food safety procedures used by road food sellers in Iloilo City and enforce regulations by closely policing the neighbourhood and keeping an eye on these vendors' operations.

Guna Sundari and Sekar (2018) described that for city inhabitants, eating street food is inevitable, but little is known about Indian customers' perceptions of this informal or casual food sector from a safety perspective. Street food vendors in India are part of the unorganized food processing industry. The majority of street food comes from the disorganized food processing industry, where improper hygiene and sanitation practices, can have serious health effects. Street food is extremely popular in society of all ages due to its flavor, accessibility, and low cost. Food items can get contaminated due to improper hygiene and sanitation practices, which can have serious health effects.

Manickavasagam (2018) according to his studies, the bulk of street food originates from the chaotic food processing sector, where poor sanitation and hygiene standards can have detrimental impacts on the public health sector due to their lack of instruction and assistance. The elements that contribute to safety concerns and the hole between philosophy and rehearsal are examined by Okumus and Sonmez (2019). Several possible gaps and safety issues are identified by the research, including unregistered vehicles, unrecorded diseases, temperature violations, truck movement, inspection difficulties, and food rules. The county health department's accessible data on its web pages still shows inadequate and substandard outcomes even after strict inspection processes were put in place.

Renowned for its delectable and budget-friendly street food, as highlighted by Hakimuzzaman et al (2021). The city dwellers of Dhaka have developed a strong inclination towards street food, relying on it more and more with each passing day. These culinary delights are not only pocket-friendly but also easily accessible, making them a preferred choice over homemade meals or restaurant fare. Despite all the worries about hygiene and health hazards, clientele keeps approaching back for this culinary pleasure. Most of the street merchants in the city don’t have the knowledge and skills to handle food safely. But because of the need to feed their families, many of them resort to street vending to earn a living. There is a clear need for street food safety precautions for public health

reasons. According to the research, there are a few factors that contribute to street food enthusiasts' attractiveness, including affordability, ease of access, ready-made food, diversity of tastes, availability close to one's home or place of employment, appealing presentation, etc.

Renegade et al (2022) in a research study revealed that the majority of urban jobless people in developing nations like India work in the unorganized sector, which includes street selling. This industry is expanding and offers a variety of job possibilities. For urban impoverished and marginalized groups, expressly rural regions, street hawking is a means of subsistence. Even though street vending is becoming more and more important to the budget as an entire especially it still lacks the institutional support programs, rules, regulations, services, and infrastructure that are needed. The negative atmosphere hurts street vendors' ability to do business. Planners, decision-makers, and legislators have also neglected to give street vending enough consideration. Currently, the local authorities and formal business owners have a generally unfavourable opinion on street selling. In addition, street sellers have several difficulties in operating their businesses.

Desye et al (2023) stated that access to exquisite cuisine is considered an essential privilege for every individual, as it is a fundamental human right. However, the presence of food-borne diseases poses an important hazard to communal health on a global scale. This predicament is particularly exacerbated in nations with lower economic standings. Werkneh et al (2023) found that road nutrition merchants exhibited a strong understanding of food safety and hygiene, as evidenced by their high levels of information, arrogances, and practices. The study also exposed important relations among these performers and influences such as sex, monthly income, educational status, food vending experience, and food safety training. It is advised that all street food sellers in the research region get thorough and ongoing training on food safety procedures in light of these findings. In addition, further studies using both measurable and qualitative methods have to be carried out to confirm the present findings and produce more thorough results.

STUDY DESIGN, PERIOD, POPULATION AND ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

During the period spanning from August 2023 to December 2023, the research was approved out on the road nutrition vending sites in Coimbatore, where there are approximately 300 street food vendors and an investigation was undertaken. This study was to unveil the fundamental influences that shape their adherence to food safety protocols, while simultaneously identifying the obstacles faced within the realm of street food industry.

The esteemed populace encompasses the entirety of the street food purveyors discovered within the enchanting city of Coimbatore. The study population consisted of industrious individuals who diligently concocted and sold delectable culinary creations upon the bustling streets, either from their humble abodes or through the utilization of temporary makeshift establishments. Furthermore, it is worth observing that a popular of these enterprising street food vendors gracefully traversed from one location to another with remarkable frequency.

SAMPLE SIZE DETERMINATION, SAMPLING INSTRUMENT, AND PROCEDURES

To ascertain the appropriate sample size (n), a sophisticated formula for a single population proportion was employed, a captivating explanation the subsequent refined assumptions: $n = (Za / 2) * p (1-p)) / (d2)$. With a sureness level of 95% and a boundary of error of 5%, the esteemed value of $z = 1.96$ was utilized. It is worth noting that the city boasts a total of 300 street food vendors, yet a mere 185 individuals were selected to partake in the study. The selection process for these vendors was conducted with utmost precision, as they were chosen by alternating between two vendors at a time until the desired sample size was achieved. To gather comprehensive data, an

observation checklist, an interview schedule was meticulously employed to document the current practices of the highway food sellers and the vending site. This meticulous process was supported on the same day that the inspection was diligently completed.

STUDY VARIABLES

In this research, the focus was on examining the impact of various factors on food safety practices and the vendor challenges in practising. Food safety practices were the dependent component, while socio demographic characteristics including sex, age, education level, marital status, employment history, and monthly income were the independent variables. Furthermore, issues about regulations, hygiene, and the expertise of street food sellers were also taken into account as independent variables.

ANALYSIS

PERCENTAGE ANALYSIS

Table 1: Sex

Sex	Frequency and Percent	
Male	126	68.1
Female	59	31.9

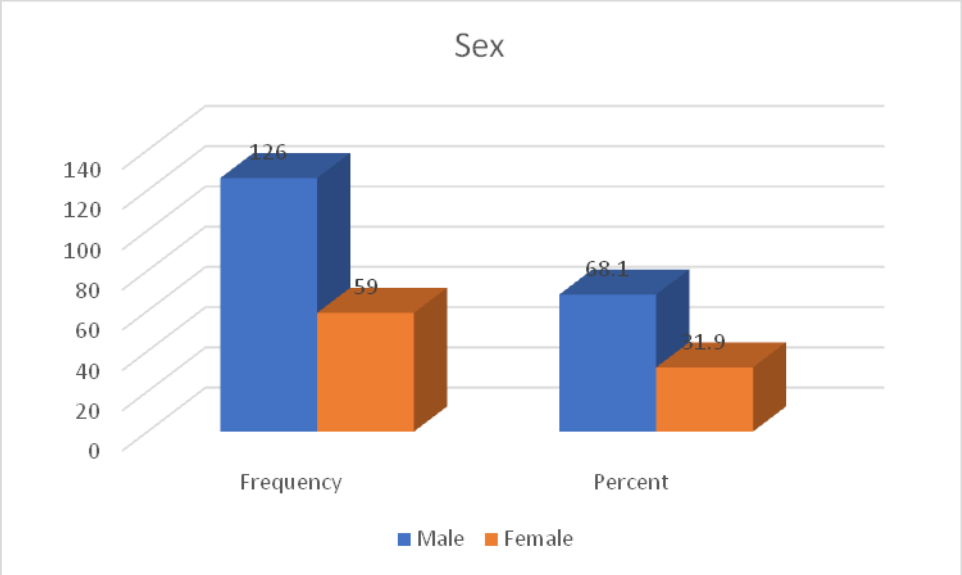

Figure 1: Sex

Table 2: Age

Age	Frequency and Percent	
15-20 Years	46	24.9
21-30 Years	36	19.5
31-40 Years	65	35.1
> 40 Years	38	20.5

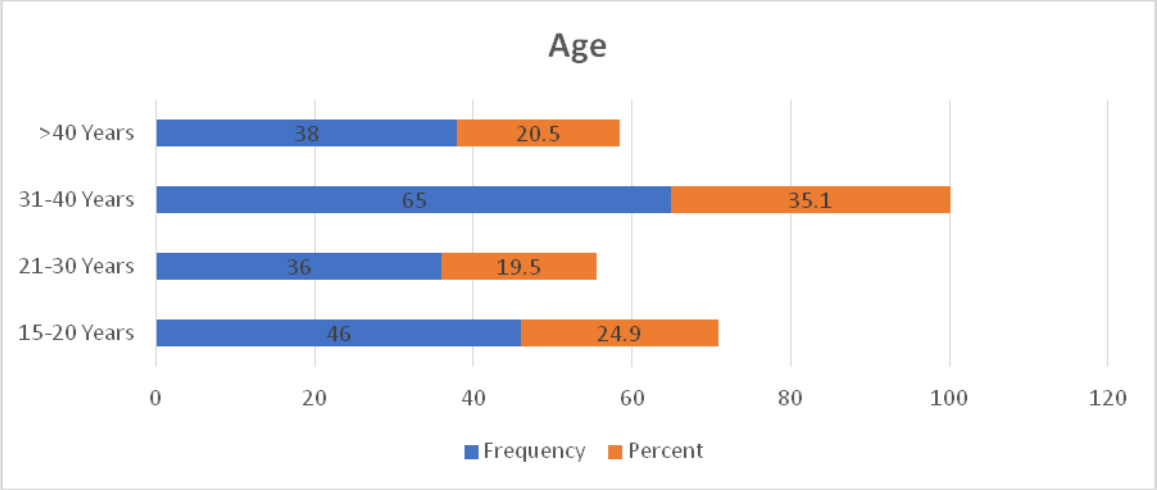

Figure 2: Age

Table 3: Educational Status

Educational status	Frequency and Percent	
School level	72	38.9
Diploma	44	23.8
Undergraduate	45	24.3
Postgraduate	24	13.0

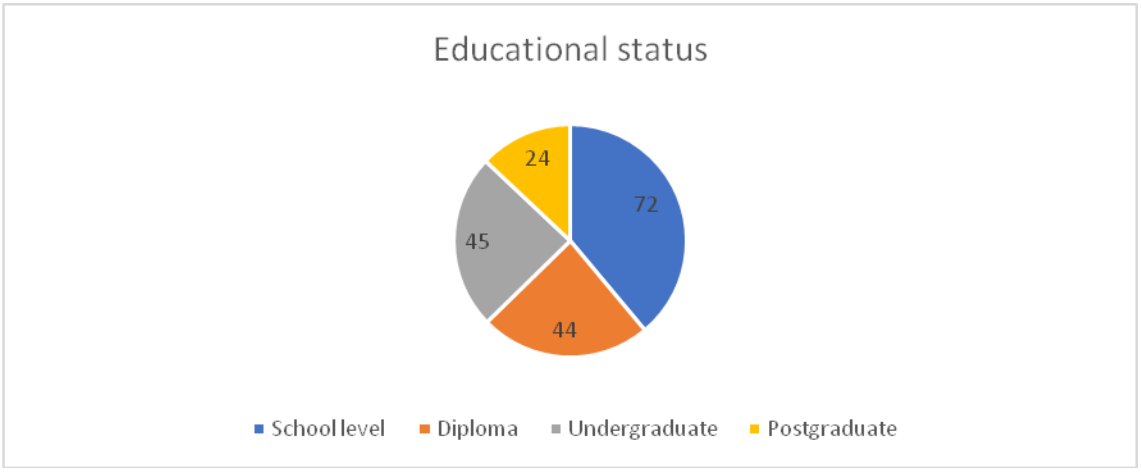

Figure 3: Educational status

Table 4: Marital Status

Marital Status	Frequency and Percent	
Single	76	41.1
Married	49	26.5
Divorced	42	22.7
Widowed	18	9.7

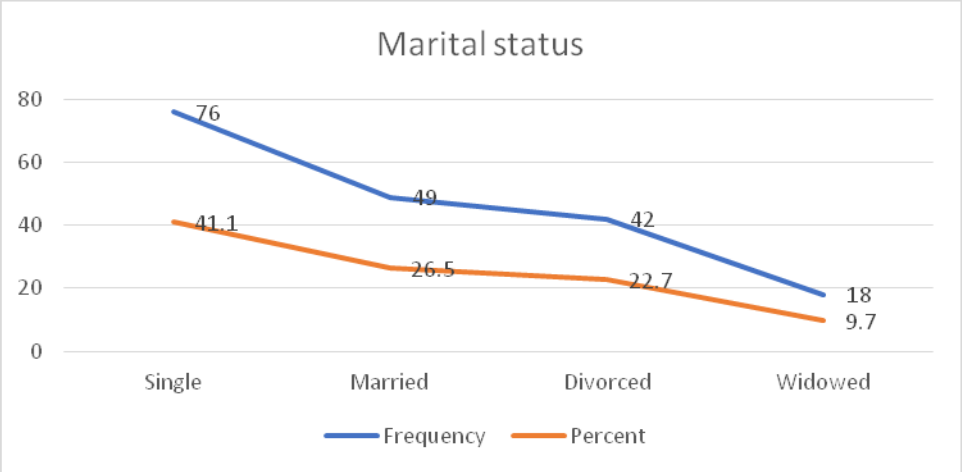

Figure 4: Marital status

Table 5: Monthly Income

Monthly Income	Frequency and Percent	
Less than Rs.15000	67	36.2
Rs.15001 – Rs.25000	6	3.2
Rs.25001 – Rs.35000	48	25.9
Rs.35001 – Rs.45000	33	17.8
Above Rs.45000	31	16.8

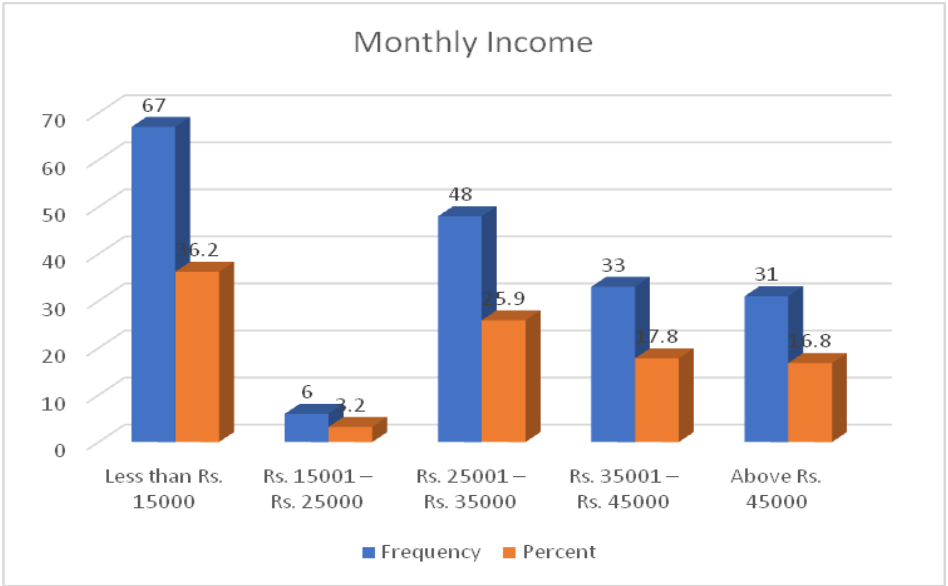

Figure 5: Monthly Income

Table 6: Work Experience

Work Experience	Frequency and Percent	
Less than 1 Year	74	40.0
2 -4 Years	56	30.3
Above 5 years	55	29.7

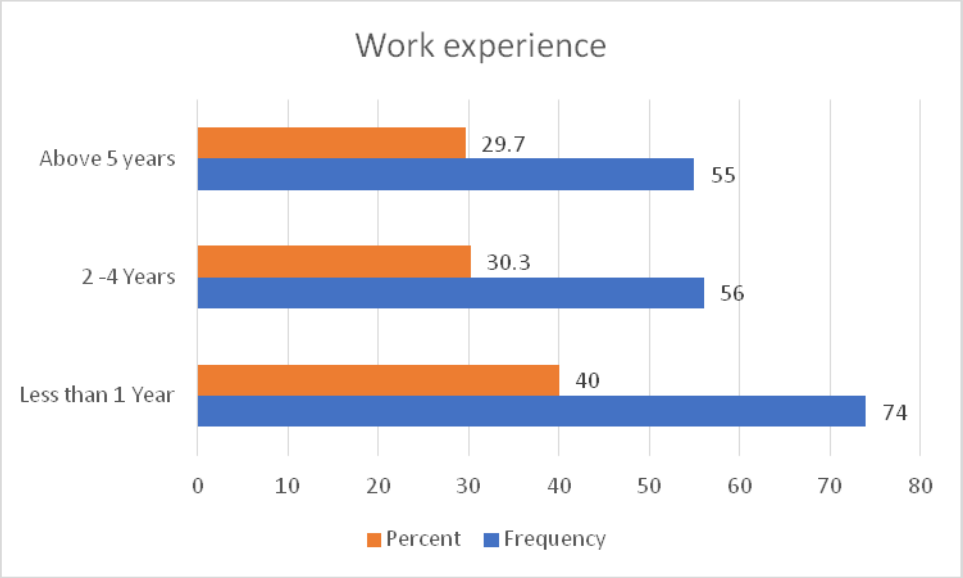

Figure 6: Work experience

Table 7: Type of Street Food

Which Type of Street Food	Frequency and Percent	
South Indian food	150	81.1
North Indian food	35	18.9

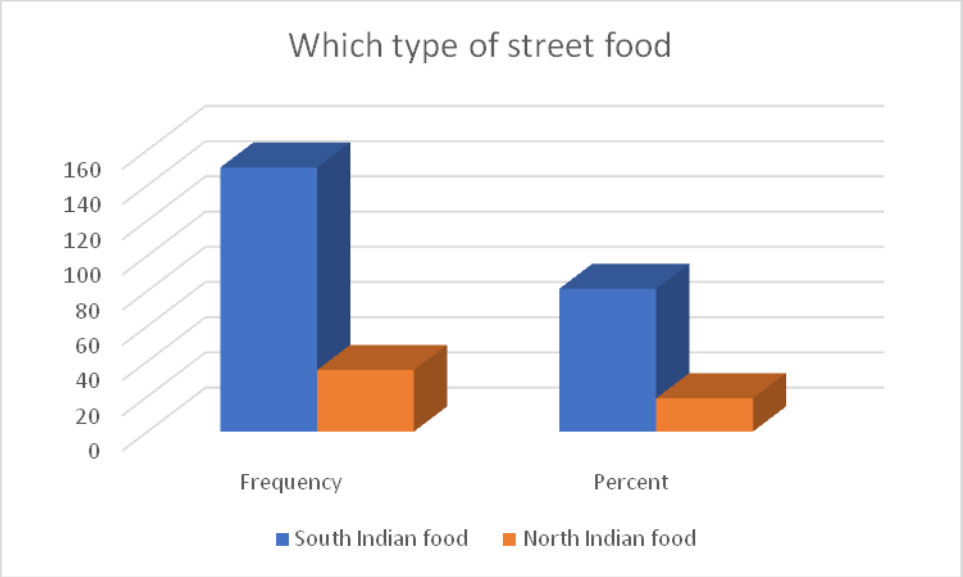

Figure 7: Type of street food

Table 8: Preference for Choosing Street Food

Preference for Choosing Street Food	Frequency and Percent	
Weekly	123	66.5
Monthly	45	24.3
Occasionally	17	9.2

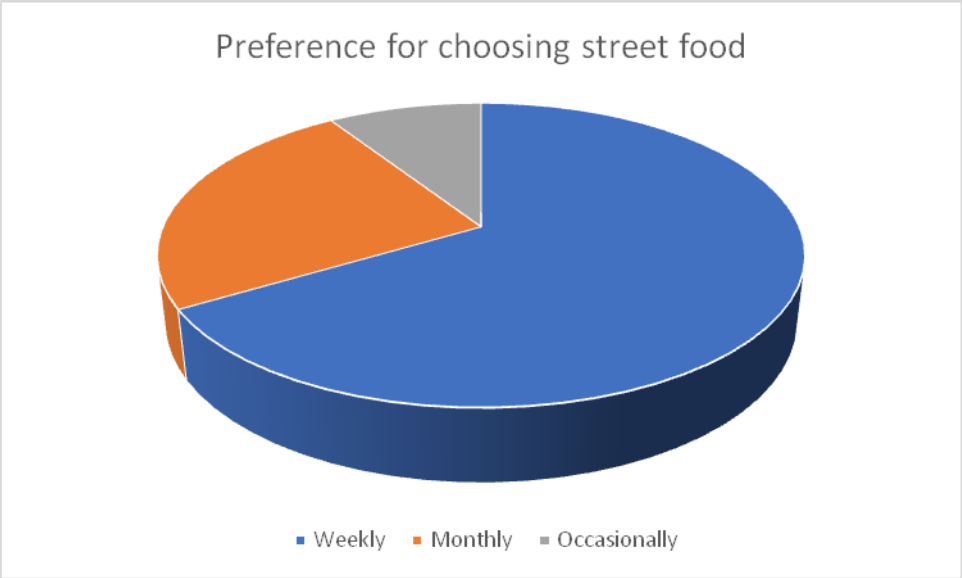

Figure 8: Preference for choosing street food

Table 9: Street Food Quality

Do you Check the Street Food Quality?	Frequency and Percent	
Yes	163	88.1
No	22	11.9

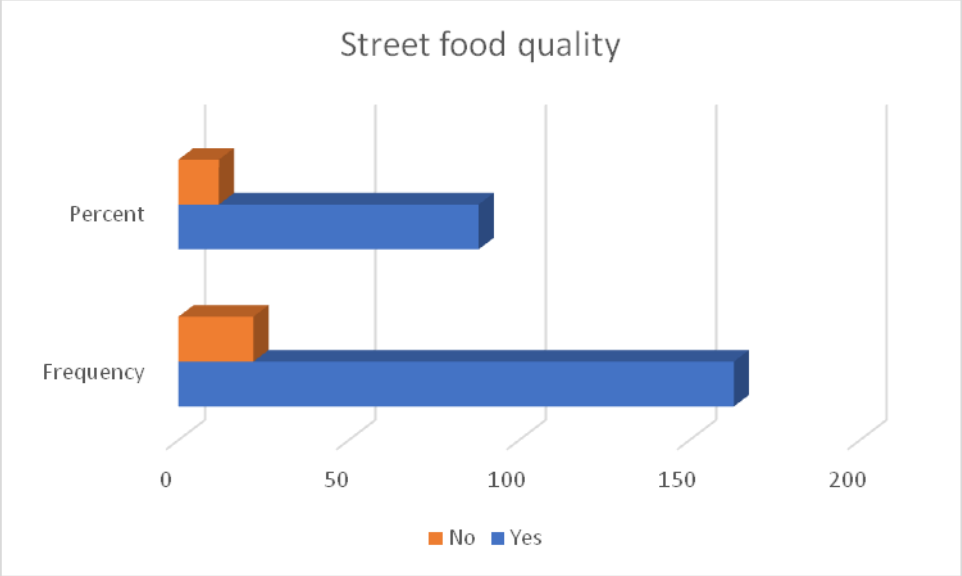

Figure 9: Street food quality

Table 10: Waiting Time for Food Preparation

Waiting Time for Food Preparation	Frequency and Percent	
Less than 5 Minute	74	40.0
5-10 Minute	89	48.1
10-15 Minute	22	11.9

Figure 10: Waiting time for food preparation

Table 11: Preferable Time for Street Food

Preferable Time for Street Food	Frequency and Percent	
Morning	55	29.7
After Noon	33	17.8
Evening / Night	97	52.4

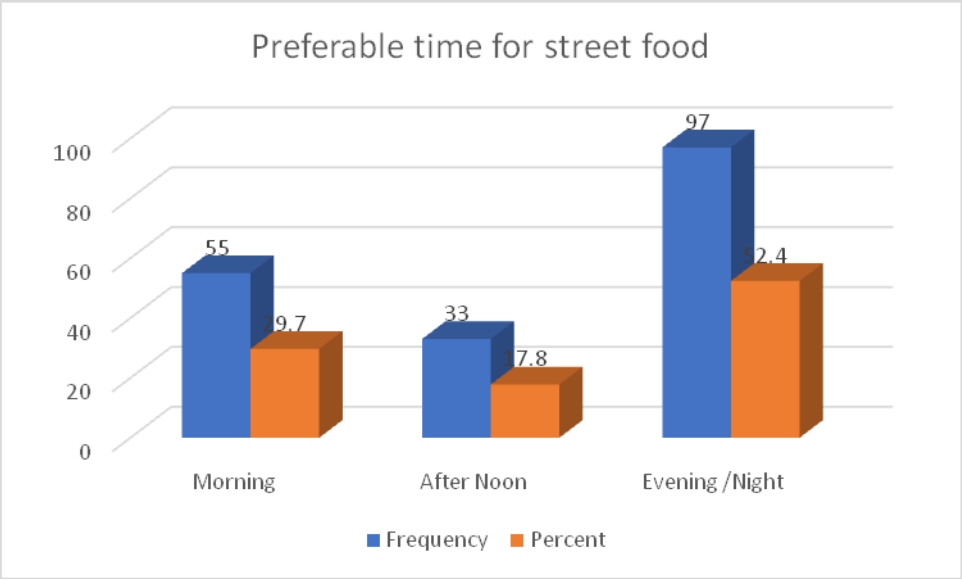

Figure 11: Preferable time for street food

The table 1-11 denote the socio-economic profile, the gender of the respondents, Male respondents 68%, Female 32%, Age of the respondents, 15-20 Years 24.9%, 21-30 Years 19.5%, 31-40 Years 35.1, >40 Years 20.5%, education qualification School level 38.9, Diploma 23.8%, Undergraduate 24.3%, Postgraduate 13%. Marital status, Single 41.1%, Married 26.5%, Divorced 22.7%, Widowed 9.7%. Monthly Income, less than Rs.15000 is 36.2%, Work experience, Less than 1 Year 40%. Type of street food, South Indian foodhas81.1%, North Indian food only 18.9%. Preference for choosing street food weekly is high at 66.5%. Preferable time for street food is Evening/Night is high at 52.4%.

Table 12: Cross tabulation on Preference for choosing street food and Preferable time for street food

Preference for choosing street food * Preferable time for street food					
Count					
		Preferable time for street food			Total
		Morning	After Noon	Evening /Night	
Preference for choosing street food	Weekly	30	18	75	123
	Monthly	22	7	16	45
	Occasionally	3	8	6	17
Total		55	33	97	185

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	DF	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	21.656[a]	4	.000
Likelihood Ratio	18.819	4	.001
Linear-by-Linear Association	5.241	1	.022
No Valid Cases	185		

The test statistic has a value of 21.656. The expected cell count assumption (i.e., all anticipated cell counts are larger than 5) is covered in the footnote for this statistic. Since no cell had an expected count lower than 5, this assumption was satisfied. Preferred time for street food and preference for selecting it did not correlate (Value = 21.656a, p = 0.000).

Table 13: Cross tabulation on type of street food and Preferable time for street food

Which type of street food * Preferable time for street food					
		Preferable time for street food			Total
		Morning	After Noon	Evening / Night	
Which type of street food	South Indian food	39	24	87	150
	North Indian food	16	9	10	35
Total		55	33	97	185

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	DF	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	9.899[a]	2	.007
Likelihood Ratio	10.094	2	.006
Linear-by-Linear Association	8.852	1	.003

The test statistic has a value of 9.899. The footnote accompanying this statistic relates to the assumption of expected cell counts, stating that all expected cell counts are greater than 5. It is mentioned that no cells had an expected count of less than 5, thus confirming that this assumption was satisfied. The analysis revealed no significant association between Preference for choosing street food and Preferred time for street food (Value = 9.899, p = 0.007).

Table 14: One-Sample Statistics

One-Sample Statistics				
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Hand washing	185	4.47	.643	.047
Cleaning	185	4.27	.701	.052
Cooking foods thoroughly	185	4.27	.701	.052
Storing foods correctly	185	4.74	.615	.045
Keep food at the correct temperature	185	4.30	.923	.068
Wash meat	185	4.58	.734	.054

One-Sample Test						
	t	DF	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Hand washing	94.553	184	.000	4.470	4.38	4.56
Cleaning	82.824	184	.000	4.270	4.17	4.37
Cooking foods thoroughly	82.824	184	.000	4.270	4.17	4.37
Storing foods correctly	104.879	184	.000	4.741	4.65	4.83
Keep food at the correct temperature	63.347	184	.000	4.297	4.16	4.43
Wash meat	84.848	184	.000	4.578	4.47	4.68

Hand washing, cleaning, cooking foods thoroughly, storing foods correctly, keeping food at the correct temperature, and Washing meat, Since the p-value of the test (.000) is less than 0.05, reject the null proposition. We have sufficient evidence to say that the true mean of the variance is 184.

Table 15: Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Meagre wages	185	4.31	.800	1	5
Payment of weekly bribes	185	4.29	.841	1	5
Confiscation of goods	185	4.48	.700	2	5
Lack of awareness about their rights	185	4.49	.738	2	5
Inability to access government schemes or facilities	185	4.32	.803	1	5
Lack of basic facilities/ poor working conditions	185	4.49	.760	1	5
Lack of social security	185	4.41	.856	1	5
Low level of unionization	185	4.41	.816	1	5
Lack of workspace	185	4.39	.787	1	5
Lack of storage	185	4.40	.753	1	5
Uncertainty and insecurity	185	4.46	.766	1	5

One Sample Kolmogorov - Smirnov Test

	Absolute	Positive	Negative	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	Asymp. Sig (2-tailed)
Meagre wages	0.267	0.266	-0.267	3.626	.000
Payment of weekly bribes	0.262	0.262	-0.26	3.563	.000
Confiscation of goods	0.294	0.294	-0.291	3.997	.000
Lack of awareness about their rights	0.295	0.295	-0.253	4.009	.000

Inability to access government schemes or facilities	0.267	0.267	-0.265	3.637	.000
Lack of basic facilities / poor working conditions	0.296	0.296	-0.252	4.022	.000
Lack of social security	0.282	0.282	-0.249	3.834	.000
Low level of unionization	0.281	0.281	-0.245	3.822	.000
Lack of workspace	0.278	0.278	-0.269	3.785	.000
Lack of storage	0.28	0.28	-0.268	3.81	.000
Uncertainty and insecurity	0.291	0.291	-0.262	3.959	.000

First off, note that the Kolmogorov- Smirnov Z for our first variable is 3.626 just like we saw in our cumulative relative frequencies chart a bit earlier on. The diagram grips the same data we just ran our test on so these results nicely converge. So, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test outcomes recommend that entirely the Asymp. Sig (2- 2-tailed) value is less than 0.05.

SUGGESTIONS & CONCLUSION

Street food is predominantly located in urban areas and is frequently linked to the most economically disadvantaged communities in different countries. It offers inexpensive meals with varying degrees of cleanliness and nutrition, while also serving as a means of livelihood for vendors. Therefore, to ensure food safety, hygienic conditions, proper nutrition, and cleanliness, it is crucial to enhance current practices. The key to achieving this goal lies in increasing the knowledge and awareness of both suppliers and consumers. It is essential to educate vendors and customers alike.

Customers should prioritize purchasing reasonably priced and sanitary meals instead of seeking lower-cost options. This shift in behaviour will incentivize sellers to abandon sub-par ingredients and improve their service to customers. The municipal corporation should establish numerous training facilities to optimize the productivity of this industry. Regular training sessions for vendors on safe food handling can contribute to enhancing the current situation.

It is essential to establish regulations at the levels of dietary practices, product packaging, and vendor operations to ensure safety and quality. It is advisable to provide basic sanitation facilities, admittance to clean water, and effective waste management systems to bridge the gap between knowledge and the actual practice of safe street food vending.

All street food purveyors must be mandated to obtain a prestigious sanitary permit from the esteemed health authorities of the city government. This regulation shall compel these culinary artisans to adhere to the highest standards of sanitation and fulfil the rigorous requirements about hygienic practices imposition is to pre-emptively avert any potential outbreak of food borne or waterborne from the contamination or poisoning of consumables.

The city's esteemed health employees must diligently monitor and enforce strict compliance with the acquisition of sanitary permits by these enterprising street food vendors. In light of this, these vendors must undergo regular sanitary inspections to ascertain that the premises from which they operate are devoid of any contaminants, thereby guaranteeing the safety of the delectable fare they offer.

In line with this proposition, it is highly recommended that designated areas or spaces be allocated along the city's bustling streets, affording the city health authorities the convenience and efficacy of conducting thorough inspections and monitoring the operations of these esteemed culinary artisans.

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