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A study on sanitation among street food vendors of district Bandipora

Yasmeen Majid Khan**

**M.Sc, PhD in Foods& Nutrition, senior associate

professor Govt. Degree College for women nawakadal Srinagar Kashmir

Abstract

Street foods have become an important part of changing dietary pattern. Large proportion of population prefers food offered by street food vendors. This signifies the volume of street food vending business as well as volume of public health at risk due to the unhygienic practices adopted by them. Vendors of street food constitute a major source of health risk, especially through Oro-feacal transmission of pathogens, and vendor related risk is particularly high in poor resource community.

The present study is undertaken to ascertain the hygienic practices adopted by street food vendors who are regularly offering their service from dawn to dusk in district bandipora of the Kashmir valley. Convenience sampling has been used to collect the data from 100 respondents. Pretested semi structured questionnaires were used to interview food handlers. Food vendors were randomly selected. Various parameters of sanitation were assessed including personal hygiene, handling of food; food contamination knowledge, utensils used, care of equipment and other practices were recorded through an observation.

Our study revealed that most of the respondents enter into street vending from poor illiterate families and were working seven to ten hours daily. Analysis reveals that majority of street food vendors do not practice hygienic food preparation habits Data obtained from the street Food vendors showed that many wrong practices (intentional or unintentional) followed by them which can pose a serious health risk to the consumers. The study concluded that street food vendors in bandipora Kashmir did not had correct knowledge of handling the food necessitating the importance of organizing training workshops for them.

Key words: Workplace. Hygienic Food Practices, Public Health Issue, Food safety risks

INTRODUCTION

The word 'street', as its etymology suggests, denotes a delimited surface or part of an urban texture, characterized an extended arealined with houses or building on either side There are two social functions of streets: the instrumental function which enables movement of goods, people, etc., and the expressive function which includes their use of casual communication, recreation, conversation, entertainment, as a

site for processions, ritual observances, etc. (Artemis p. 1991).

Streets thus have many functions of which connectivity is one. Streets are the institutions for sociability, sources of entertainment and also an extension of living spaces which in this sense is more applicable to streets of India. (Anderson, 1991).

Street foods are ready-to-eat foods prepared and/or sold by vendors and hawkers, especially in streets and other similar public places (codex 1996). Street foods or ready to eat foods are an important component of the food supply chain (Rhienlander.T.et al 2010).

Recently a bill has been drafted by the central government for regulating and securing livelihood of vendors in the whole country. The bill has been named as: Street vendors (protection of livelihood and Regulation of street vending) bill, 2012.This bill defines "street vendor" as a person who is engaged in vending of articles, goods, wares, food items or merchandise of everyday use or offering services to the general public, in a street, lane, side walk, footpath, pavement, public park or any other public place or private area or from a temporary built up structure or by moving from place to place and includes hawker, peddler, squatter

and all other synonymous terms. (Advani, R., 1998).

In the cities of North America, hawkers are commonly known as street vendors, who sell snack items, such as popcorn, cotton candy, peanuts, beverages, and ice cream, along with non-edible items, such as jewellery, clothes, books, and paintings. Hawkers are alsofound selling various items to fans at a sports venue; more commonly, this person is simply referred to as a stadium vendor. In the Caribbean hawkers are commonly referred to as 'higglers'. They sell items in small roadside stands, public transit hubs, or other places where consumers would want items such as snacks, cigarettes, phone cards, or other less expensive items. Higglers often break larger items into small individual consumable portions for re-sale and use. (Higman B.W)

The national policy for urban street vendors in India defines street vendor as a person who offers goods or services for sale to the public without having a permanent built up structure but with a temporary static structure or mobile stall (or head load). Street vendors may be stationary by occupying space on the pavements or other public/private areas, or may be mobile in the sense that they move from place to place carrying their wares on push carts or in cycles or baskets on their heads, or may sell their wares in moving bus etc.

Street food is ready to eat food or drink sold in a street or other public place, such as a market or fair by a hawker or vendor often from a portable food, while some street foods are regional many are not having spread beyond their region of origin.

Most street foods are also classed as both finger food and fast food, and are cheaper on average then restaurant meals. Today, many people purchase street food for a number of reasons such as to obtain reasonable priced and flavorful in a sociable setting, to experience ethnic cuisines, and also for nostalgia the local street food tradition of plate lunch (rice salad and a portion of meat). Street – vended foods provide a source of an inexpensive, convenient and often nutritious food for urban and rural peoples. It is also recognized that street food vendors are often poor and uneducated and lack appreciation for safe food handling .street foods are perceived to be a major public risk.

Unsafe food is linked to the deaths of an estimated 2 millionpeople annually including many children. Food containingharmful

bacteria, viruses, parasites or chemical substances is responsiblefor more than 200 diseases, ranging from diarrhoea to cancers.

Food safety is an area of public health action to protect consumersfrom the risks of food poisoning and food borne diseases,acute or chronic. Unsafe food can lead to a range of health

Problems: diarrhoeal disease, viral disease, reproductive anddevelopmental problems, cancers. Keeping the relevance of foodsafety in mind WHO has made "FOOD SAFETY" as theme of world health day 2015, a theme of high relevance to all peopleon the planet, and multiple stakeholders, including government,civil society, the private sector, and intergovernmental agencies(WHO; 2015). Street food vending has become an important public health issue and a great concern to everybody this is due to widespreadfood borne diseases, due to mushrooming of wayside food vendorswho lack an adequate understanding of the basic food safetyissues(Sharmila,R,2011) Street vended food types greatly differ between countries and cultures (Muinde,A.&M kuria.E;2005).A total of 2.5 billion peopleall over the world eat street foods every day(FAO,2010).

Safe food hygiene can be difficult to practice at street level where resources are scarce and surroundings are of low environmental and sanitary standards and there is disregard of GMPS and GHPS. Food handlers have a prime role to play in food businesses, and that is no guarantee that meals served are hygienicfor consumption. Conscious or inadvertent contamination of such food places consumers at risk of suffering from food borne illnesses. (G.Amponsah et al 2011).

The State of Jammu & Kashmir is known for its traditional and street foods. Each region, Jammu, Kashmir & Ladakh, has its own special and traditional foods influenced by the climatic conditions & customs There is a noticeable increaseof food vendors in rural andUrban areas of Kashmir also. Kashmir is famous for its non-vegcuisines and most of these preparations are also sold in the market as vended foods. (Y.Hafeez).and other vegetarian street foods are also relished very popularly.

People of the district Bandipora especially (men) make e their living selling street foods with products ranging from fruit cakes,nuts, tea ,biscuits and other sweets . Kashmir is famous for its non-vegetarian cuisines and most of these preparations are also sold in the market as vended foods. Common non-vegetarian street foods of Kashmir include Ristas, Kababs, Kantis Rogan josh, Fried fish and Mutton tikka, the latter being most common and widely accepted street vended food of Kashmir. Very little is known about the health and hygiene practices of street food vendors in Kashmir. Keeping in view the above statement, the present study was undertaken to highlight and throw discussions on the hygiene practices and food safety knowledge among street food vendorsIn district bandipora of Kashmir.

OBJECTIVES OF the study

1. To find the street foods available in markets of district bandipora
2. To determine the health risks associated with street food vending .
3. To study the socio-economic characteristics of street vendors .
4. To analyses the causes responsible for street vending .

METHODOLOGY

The district bandipora is 14th largest district in the J&K by population and 15th largest district in J&K by area . The literate people in district bandipora are 254781 among total population. In district bandipora the number of street vendors increased. Many workers who lost their jobs took to street vending as a source of

livelihood. For the local population the food stalls are an integral part of life in Bandipora . Hundreds of people relay on them for a good meal at low costs. The main problems faced by the street vendors are that there are no demarcated areas for them to operate. They are also blamed for causing traffic problems.

The study involved a field survey to extract answers to questionnaire concerning the current status of food hygiene and sanitation practiced by street food vendors in district bandipora of Kashmir. 100 food vendors were randomly selected in operating near bus yards, offices, hospitals and shrines. the popular road side eateriesselected include places like main chowk famous for tujji (barbecue), kaloosa famous for chola thool(chickpeas with boiled eggs), plan bandipora famous for lawas masala(Chickpea wrap), main market famous forharisa(mutton stew)and nowpora famous forMunjigad(Fried fish in batter), are some of the places that are famous among the masses about street foods.

Various parameters were assessed including personal hygiene, acquisition of cooking skills, handling of food, food contamination knowledge, utensils used, care of equipment and other practices were recorded through an observation. Proper care has been taking to include different types of street food vendors who are selling different variety of street foods. Data has been collected with the help of well-structured interview schedule, which was pre-tested before actually administering it. Descriptive statistics was used to analyse and interpret results.

Results and discussion

Table1 common street foods available in market

Street foods	Main ingredient	Method for preparing
nadir monj	lotus stems(nadru)	lotus stems cut into pieces and dipped in rice flour batter and fried in oil.
tyil karre	peas(karre)	peas dipped in besan/ rice flour batter and fried in oil. -
tobruk halwe porath	semolinaand ghee	frying sooji with ghee and lots of dry fruits
tzhot & kruhun masale	black gram, black lentil, (wari muth) lavas (unleavened bread)	the bean is boiled and eaten wholewrapped in lavasa
tujje barbeques	mutton	Barbequed Mutton or beef
shangram	corn flour and sugar	corn flour balls dipped in sugar sauce and sun dried
Khandde Gazir	Wheat flour and sugar	Crunchy bites of sugared sweet treats
monje gaad	Rice flour and fish	Fish pieces dipped in rice flour batter and fried in oil.
lassi and tzchocwoar	small round breads topped with poppy and sesame seeds, curd	small round breads topped with poppy and sesame seeds, which are crisp and flaky
roath bakerkaani	baqerkhani (puff pastry) crisp and layered, and sprinkled with sesame seeds	Kashmiri rough puff pastry
wazwan	mostly meat-based dishes	simmering
Kulfi with sewaiyyan	Milk and cereal	Simmering and then freezing mixture

Kashmir offers a rich and diverse street food menu and some of the hot favorites are Monje Guil, (Nader Monje Monje Gaade, Telle Karre), Busrakh, Lala Shangram, Paratha, , Masale, , Seekh Tujji and Kulfi.

Nader Monje is fried lotus stem served with spicy onion chutney. Vendors sell nader monje in their carts. The dish is prepared by coating lotus stems with rice or gram flour and then deep frying them in oil. Nadir Monji is a mouth watering snack. Long before French fries kashmir hadits own crispier and colorful fries.

Gaad Monje, Fried fish in batter,is crispy served with the radish-and-curd chutney.

Tillae Karrae (Fried peas) Light and salty, the fried peas The side variant for people who do not prefer potatoes or naduru (nelumbo) to the fries is the same thing but with peas at the core 'Tyil karre'

Seekh Tujj (Barbequed Mutton or beef is cooked over hot red embers using skewers. It is served with a variety of chutneys and the traditional Kashmiri bread called Lavasa. barbeques popularly known as 'TUJJI ---Our own Barbeque in and around, is an authentic street food for gourmands who love to have adequately seasoned and marinated boneless meat morsels from a live Charcoal Segre.

Muji Chatin or Radish chutney or mooli ki chutney is made with radish and yoghurt . This chutney goes best with piping hot Kashmiri food. Radishes are very good for health and have a cooling effect on stomach.

Gande chetin or Onion chutney is made with sliced onions which are soaked in vinegar and flavoured with dried mint leaves and red chilli powder. This chutney is very spicy .

Masaal (Chickpea wrap) hawkers carrying masaal in a Kashmiri wicker basket The hot and gooey chickpea filling is spread over fresh lavasa and served wrap-style. Lavas or Lavash is a popular type of cream-colored unleavened bread.

tzhot & kruhun masale(boiled black lentils are wrapped in kashmiri baked crepe called lavasa), (The poor man's Shwarma) , Stand aside Tacos, Falafels and invader Shwarma.

TOBRUK HALWE PORATH. Paratha (Deep-fried poori) Almost seven times the size of a North Indian poori, the paratha is a huge flat bread, with no stuffing inside. It is sold with halwa, usually yellow in color, prepared by mixing and frying sooji,(semolina) with ghee and lots of dry fruits.

Kulfi with sewaiyyan the street food in the valley also offers gastronomical delights for those with a sweet tooth the kulfi here is served with sewaiyyan.

SHANGRAM look alike is actually sweet and gooey.It kinda melts in your mouth if complemented with kehwa or tea.

Baqerkhani is a Kashmiri rough puff pastry. It forms an integral part of Kashmiri cuisine. The Kashmiri Baqerkhani is usually soft as compared to the Middle East variety. It is usually a round naan, which is crisp and sprinkled with sesame seeds.and a round loaf of bread topped with poppy and sesame seeds(tsot)was common street food.

Wazwan is a multi-course meal in Kashmiri cuisine, the preparation of which is considered an art and a point of pride in Kashmiri culture and identity. Almost all the dishes are meat-based using lamb or chicken. Rista is a popular Kashmiri Cuisine which takes a lot of efforts to prepare but it's all worth it. You may have had meat balls or kebabs, Rista is just like that, but softer and tastier. Gushtaba is a traditional Kashmiri curry. Spicy meatballs cooked in a yogurt gravy. The mutton is hand-pounded, using a wooden hammer on a stone or wooden block. -

Tabakh Maaz is a glossy meat made of lamb ribs that are cooked twice and then simmered in yogurt with spices till tender. It's then fried thoroughly and served in dry form. Rogan, means “oil or fat” and Josh means “intense heat”. Thus, Rogan Josh means made in oil at intense heat. This is a meat dish in which tender lamb is cooked with kashmiri spices. There are no tomatoes added to this traditional dish; not even to enhance color. The colour comes from mawal or cockscomb.selling of wazwan on streets was a very common.

Street foods are perceived to be a major public health risk due to lack of basic infrastructure and services, difficulty in controlling the large numbers of street food vending operations because of their diversity, mobility and temporary nature.

The people selling these food items mostly hail from the adjoining areas of in and around bandipora area. 19%said they were not regulars they just sold their food items on Fridays and otherwise were casual laborers. It was not the only source of income for them, they explained..

Table-2 distribution of vendors on the basis of vending type

Vending type	No. of vendors	Percentage
Stationary	55	55%
Mobile (cart)	45	45%
Nature of work		
Part time	19	19%
Full time	81	81%

Table3: Educational Status of Respondents

Education	No. of vendors	Percentage
Illiterate	14	14%
Primary	42	42%
Secondary	35	35%
College	9	9%
Total	100	100%

Table 4-Personal hygiene

Personal hygiene	No. of vendors	Percentage (%)
Use of apron	0	0%
Handles food with bare hands	99	99%
Long finger nails	45	45%
Hair covering	0	0%
Handling money while serving food	85	85%
Wears jewelry	36	36%
Blows air into polythene bag	82	82%
Total	347	100%

Table-5 Food handling practices.

Food handling practice	No. of vendors	Percentage
Wash food before cooking	97	97%
Prepared on same surface more than twice	85	85%
Food heating before serving	60	60%
Repeated reuse of oil for frying	52	52%
Serving food		
Steel plates	9	9%
Plastic plate	23	23%
Old news papers	35	35%
Plastic bags	33	33%
Food storage		
Open	74	74%
Covered	26	26%

45% surveyed vendors had long nails and zero percent covered their head (women only as customary practice).it was observed that 85%of vendors surveyed handled money while servingFood, 36% of them also wore jewellery while serving foodUnsanitary handling of street foods by the some of the vendor has been commonly found to be the source of contamination (Akinyele IO). Many street food vendors handle money and food with ungloved, unwashed hands, and their customers often don't wash their hands, either. Poor hygiene contributes to outbreaks of diarrhea, cholera and other diseases and health issues. Unhygienic practices among street food sellers, combined with poor cleanliness on the part of many people who buy the food, contribute to health problems Food prepared at the roadside, paired with a lack of hand washing in general, creates an environment that can result in typhoid, cholera and diarrhea.

Majority (97%) street vendors admitted that they washed food before cooking .(60%)used to heat food before serving while some foods like Masala,pani puri ,doel aanchari,bhelpuri & kulfi needed no heat treatment before serving. (52%) of vendors admitted that they repeatedly reused the oil for frying. It was marked that 85% of the vendors used same surface for cooking the food more than twice. none of the vendor used aprons and 99 percent served food with bare hands. Holding foods at high ambient temperatures for long periods of time have been reported to be a major contributor to the occurrence of food poisoning outbreaks [Adesiyun AA, Balbirsingh V.]. Foods are often held for several hours after cooking and this includes overnight holding at ambient temperatures, until sold, and thus can harbor high microbial population sit is also reported that during the preparation of food, the raw material is cut and chopped using the same knife without in between cleaning and such knives are often invaded by flies.

Time– temperature exposures during reheating need to be sufficiently high or long to inactivate large quantities of infectious microorganisms that could develop during the lengthy holding process. Some food vendors often partially or

fully cook some products ahead of time, store them and then reheat them when requested by customers [Omemu AM, Aderoju ST.]. However, this reheating is often inadequate to destroy bacteria that may be present as this would allow the foodborne pathogens that germinate from spores which survived cooking or that contaminate the food after cooking, to survive and proliferate.

9%used steel plates to serve the food,(35%) of vendors served food on leaves of old newspapers ormagazines. Plastic bags though banned (33%) used to pack foodsin polythene bags. The serving utensils used at the vending site are often contaminated with Micrococcus spp. and Staphylococcus spp. which may have originated from the vendors hands when they touched the food preparation areas, dishcloths, or the water during dish washing or hand washing which indicates cross contamination between dishwater, food preparation surfaces, and the food itself [Mensah P, Manu DY,].

Use of proper utensils for cooking and storage of prepared food is often critical to the safety of street vended foods. Poor quality of material coupled with improper practices may lead to toxin formation, pathogen growth or recontamination. The design, construction and maintenance of equipments and utensils is very important to food safety, as their poor maintenance may lead to the inability to effectively clean and sanitize surfaces. This may then result in the build up of residues of food, facilitating microbial growth, leading to an increased likelihood of contamination. The appropriate use of equipment is also important to prevent the cross contamination from raw materials.

74% vendors stored food in open , while as only (26%) covered food with net cloth, glass jars and lids. An important issue influencing food contamination and contributing to further increase in contamination is food storage temperature. The preparation of food long

TABLE-6 SANITATION OF EQUIPMENTS

Cleaning utensils	No. of vendors	Percentage
Wash with warm soapy water	25	25%
Wash with cold soapy water	30	30%
Plain water	45	45%
By dunking in bucket of water	42	42%
Water put on plate	35	35%
Basin	23	23%

Table 7 disposal and water supply

Waste disposal	No. of vendors	Percentage
Bush/nearby heap	35	35%
Waste bin	65	65%
surroundings		
Clean	25	25%
Dirty	75	75%
Water supply		
From homes	20	20%
Nearby supply	80	80%

before its consumption, storage at ambient temperature, inadequate cooling and reheating, contaminated processed food, and undercooking are identified as the key factors that contribute to food poisoning outbreaks [WHO (1989)].

25%vendors use soap with clean water to wash their cooking utensils and plates. 45% food vendors cleaned their crockery with dirty water, while some of them reused water to wash crockery.Most of the vendors(45%) cleaned the equipment and plates with plain water only. Warm soapy water was used by (25%) while as (30%) used cold soapy water for washing the utensils. (42%) of the vendors only dunked plates in the water. While as (35%) put water on plate only.

75% vendors prepare their food in an unclean environment with the presence of flies all over the place. The conditions under which some street vendors operate are reported to be unsuitable for the preparation and selling of food [Barro N, Bello AR,]. The food is prepared either at home or at stalls, which are located on the street side and are made up of wood, polythene bags, tin, etc. The place of preparation is not always clean, well lit and not far from source of contamination. Preparation surfaces used by some vendors have remains of foods prepared earlier that can promote cross contamination. Most of these foods are not covered and are exposed to flies and dust, which may harbor food borne pathogens.

majority (65%) of the vendors disposed waste in the bin and only35% dumped the waste near any bush or heap.

In 70–90% of the cases, presence of animals, insects and liquid wastes in food preparation areas have been reported [FAO (1988)]. The two major sources from where the contaminants can enter the preparation area are: Improper food handling and waste disposal.Few vendors congregate in overcrowded areas where there are high numbers of potential customers, which usually provide limited access to basic sanitary facilities. Hence, the contamination of street foods is often linked to the waste generated by food processing, that is usually dumped near the vending site. The lack of facilities for liquid drainage and wastewater and garbage disposal

encourages wastes to be thrown into nearby streets and gutters. Such areas act as habitats for rodents, breeding points for flies and media for growth of microorganisms(80%) vendors used nearby water supply.Foods to be prepared should be protected from flies, insects & other or contamination by un-necessary handling, sneezing & coughing.containers that are used for preparing foods should be cleaned thoroughly.water that is used for preparation of foods should be portable.

Water is a critical raw material in many street-vended operations. Contaminated water can create a public health risk when it is used for drinking, washing of foods, incorporated in the food as an ingredient and used in the processing of food or used for washing equipment, utensils and hands.Due to the shortage of clean potable water, many vendors tend to re-use the water, especially for cleaning utensils and used dishes

Conclusion :

Over the years a number of street foods have become famous in valley. Vendors are poorly educated and untrained in food safety. They often work under unsanitary conditions with little or no infrastructure support.

While the street food is still a lot cheaper in Kashmir but the standard and quality gap most importantly hygiene is an important drawback that puts a shade on the industry. Comparing prices might not be an accurate measure to differentiate the indigenous street food industry and fast food giants because of the sheer scale of production and marketing strategies, but since its affordable and accessible the street food industry will always have an edge over the fast food sharks .

Recommendations :

A logical step towards reducing the risks of food borne illness from street foods would be controlling the steps in food preparation and sale that may contribute to the contamination, growth and survival of the microbes responsible for food borne illness. The efforts made should focus on

1. Educating the food handlers
2. Improving the environmental conditions under which the trade is carried out
3. Providing essential services to the vendors to ensure safety of their commodities.
4. To enable official recognition and control of the street food industry as an integral part of the food supply, appropriate regulations should be prepared, and incorporated into existing food regulations.

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Reviewers comments:

The article is good but needs some type of corrections- spacing and alignment of sentences. Otherwise the article is good for publication. Please make the corrections and resend the paper within three days.