

## **Food Safety Practice and Associated Factors of Food Handlers Working in Food Industries in Bahir Dar City, Amhara Regional State, Northwest Ethiopia, 2021**

Authors: Alemu, Mekuriaw, Motbianor, Achenef, Birhanu, Dereje, and Birara, Amsalu

Source: Environmental Health Insights, 17(1)

Published By: SAGE Publishing

URL: <https://doi.org/10.1177/11786302231167742>

---

BioOne Complete ([complete.BioOne.org](https://complete.BioOne.org)) is a full-text database of 200 subscribed and open-access titles in the biological, ecological, and environmental sciences published by nonprofit societies, associations, museums, institutions, and presses.

Your use of this PDF, the BioOne Complete website, and all posted and associated content indicates your acceptance of BioOne's Terms of Use, available at [www.bioone.org/terms-of-use](https://www.bioone.org/terms-of-use).

Usage of BioOne Complete content is strictly limited to personal, educational, and non - commercial use. Commercial inquiries or rights and permissions requests should be directed to the individual publisher as copyright holder.

---

BioOne sees sustainable scholarly publishing as an inherently collaborative enterprise connecting authors, nonprofit publishers, academic institutions, research libraries, and research funders in the common goal of maximizing access to critical research.

# Food Safety Practice and Associated Factors of Food Handlers Working in Food Industries in Bahir Dar City, Amhara Regional State, Northwest Ethiopia, 2021

Environmental Health Insights  
Volume 17: 1–9  
© The Author(s) 2023  
Article reuse guidelines:  
sagepub.com/journals-permissions  
DOI: 10.1177/11786302231167742



Mekuriaw Alemu<sup>1</sup>, Achenef Motbianor<sup>2</sup>, Dereje Birhanu<sup>3</sup>  
and Amsalu Birara<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Bahir Dar City Administration Health Department, Shinbit Health Henter, Bahir Dar, Ethiopia.

<sup>2</sup>Department of Environmental Health, Bahir Dar University, College of Medicine and Health Sciences, School of Public Health, Bahir Dar, Amhara, Ethiopia. <sup>3</sup>Department of Public Health Nutrition, Bahir Dar University, College of Medicine and Health Sciences, School of Public Health, Bahir Dar, Ethiopia.

## ABSTRACT

**BACKGROUND:** Food safety has emerged as one of the 10 threats to global health. Ethiopia is among the developing countries with many food industries in recent times. Poor food handling procedures, a lack of basic infrastructure, lack of potable water, lack of financial resources to invest in safer equipment, and lack of training for food handlers have all been reported.

**OBJECTIVES:** To assess food safety practices and associated factors among food handlers working in food industries in Bahir Dar city administrations.

**METHODS:** A cross-sectional study was conducted from January to February 2021 among 422 food handlers working in food industries in Bahir Dar city, Ethiopia. A random sampling technique was used to select food industries and study participants. The sample size was proportionately allocated to the selected food industries. Data were collected through face-to-face interviews and observation methods using interviewer-administered questionnaires and an observational checklist respectively. Data was entered into Epi-data v 3.1 and exported to SPSS v 23 for analysis. Bi-variable binary logistic regression was carried out to identify candidate variables at  $p$ -value  $< .2$  and was entered into the final multivariable binary logistic regression model to control the effect of confounding. Variables with  $p$ -values of less than .05 were declared as statistically significant and an odds ratio of 95% CI was used to measure the strength of the association.

**RESULT:** Food safety practice among food handlers working in food industries was 47.6% (95% CI: 42.8, 52.5). Sex [AOR: 2.92 (CI: 1.77, 4.82)], monthly salary [AOR: 2.02 (CI: 1.18, 3.44)], health supervision [AOR: 3.43 (CI: 1.97, 5.97)], working unit [AOR: 2.44, (CI: 1.45, 4.13)], food safety training [AOR: 6.16 (2.97, 12.77)], attitude [AOR: 3.55 (CI: 1.14, 11.05)] were factors significantly associated with food safety practice.

**CONCLUSION:** Food safety practice among food handlers was low. Sex, working unit, monthly income, regulatory supervision, food safety training, and attitude toward food safety were factors associated with poor food safety practices. In-service training on good hygiene practices, good manufacturing practices, hazard analysis, critical control point, food safety management systems, and supportive supervision should be strengthened.

**KEYWORDS:** Food safety practice, food industries, food handlers, food safety management system

**RECEIVED:** October 11, 2022. **ACCEPTED:** March 18, 2023.

**TYPE:** Special Collection on Insights into Diversity in the Environmental Health Science Workforce - Original Research

**FUNDING:** The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: Bahir Dar University's College of Medicine and Health Sciences provided funding for this research project solely for data collection. The study's design, data collection, analysis, the decision to publish, and manuscript preparation are all independent of the funder.

**DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS:** The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

**CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:** Amsalu Birara, Department of Environmental Health, Bahir Dar University, College of Medicine and Health Sciences, School of Public Health, P.O.Box 79, Bahir Dar, Amara 1000, Ethiopia. Email: amsalubirara@yahoo.com

## Introduction

Food safety is the process of defending the food supply against microbiological, chemical, allergic, and physical hazards that could arise throughout all stages of food production and handling.<sup>1-3</sup> Food safety management systems comprise the implementation of good manufacturing practices, good hygienic practices, hazard analysis, and critical control points in the food industries.<sup>3</sup>

The provision of numerous activities including food supply, production, harvesting, processing, packaging, transportation,

distribution, consumption, and disposal makes the food business a fundamental and significant organization in any country. In contrast, the food business faces serious problems with product quality, consumer health, and sanitation.<sup>4</sup> As a matter of public health, all nations must prioritize food safety<sup>5</sup> and in recent years, there have been several extremely serious outbreaks of foodborne illnesses, the outbreaks frequently affect multiple countries and even continents.<sup>5-7</sup> The contributing factors for the outbreak include poor food handling and sanitation practices,<sup>8</sup> lack of basic infrastructure such as kitchen



Creative Commons Non Commercial CC BY-NC: This article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>) which permits non-commercial use, reproduction and distribution of the work without

sanitation and hygiene<sup>9</sup> the lack of clean water for washing food and utensils,<sup>8</sup> lack of regulatory systems, lack of financial resources to invest in safer equipment, and lack of training for food handlers make this situation even worse in developing countries.<sup>10-13</sup> Additionally, due to several circumstances, such as an aging population, unplanned urbanization and migration, mass food production due to population growth, and altered eating habits, concerns over food safety are growing.<sup>4,14</sup>

One of the top 10 health hazards facing the world today is food safety, which has grown into a global problem with ramifications for both public health and international trade,<sup>14-16</sup> and WHO advisory board has recently declared that the biggest health challenges for the next decade increase into 13 including Climate crisis, Health care delivery in areas of conflict and crisis, Health care equity, Access to treatments, Infectious disease prevention, Epidemic preparedness, Unsafe products, Underinvestment in health workers, Adolescent safety, Improving public trust of health care workers, Capitalizing on technological advancements, Threat of anti-microbial resistance and other medicines, and Health care sanitation.<sup>17</sup>

An estimated 600 million—almost 1 in 10 people in the world—fall ill after eating contaminated food and 420 000 die every year, resulting in the loss of 33 million healthy life years (DALYs). US\$ 110 billion is lost each year in productivity and medical expenses resulting from unsafe food in low- and middle-income countries.<sup>18-20</sup> Poor food safety practices in the food processing industries have also resulted in food contamination and approximately 49% of foodborne diseases in consumers as a result of improper food handling practices and a lack of safety management practices, which account for nearly 75% of foodborne illness outbreaks.<sup>6,20-22</sup>

Due to widespread poor food handling and sanitation practices, insufficient food safety laws, weak regulatory systems, a lack of financial resources to invest in safer equipment, and a lack of education for food handlers<sup>23</sup> (#54), foodborne diseases pose a serious threat to public health in Africa, resulting in 700 000 deaths and 91 million illnesses annually.<sup>24,25</sup>

Moreover, in the food industry, food handlers' poor hand-washing practices, personal hygiene, cleanliness of the working unit, and use of personal protective equipment during food preparation, preservation, production processes, packaging, and labeling have been responsible for the majority of outbreaks of foodborne diseases.<sup>21,26</sup> As a result, proper personal hygiene and sanitary handling habits are critical to food safety prevention efforts.

Ethiopia's food industry is rapidly expanding including in the administrative city of Bahir Dar.<sup>27</sup> However, ensuring food safety practices among those involved in the food industry has been one of the main issues that producers, consumers, public health officials, and regulatory agencies have been concerned about.<sup>23,28</sup> Ethiopian Food, Medicine, & Health Care Control Administration Authority (EFMHCA) post-marketing

surveillance report in the Amhara region showed that the total Aflatoxin in domestically processed selected food items was found to be 312.97 g/kg, and the total coliform count was  $2.4 \times 10^4$  cfu/g,<sup>29</sup> indicating how serious the problem is. Little is known about the food safety practices used by food handlers employed in the food industries in the study area as well as nationally. As a result, the goal of this study was to identify food safety practices and associated factors among food handlers employed in food businesses in the city of Bahir Dar, Ethiopia.

## Methods

### *Study setting*

The study was conducted in Bahir Dar administrative city. The Bahir Dar city is located 560 km away from Addis Ababa, (Ethiopia's capital city). The district has a longitude of 37°23'26.77"E and a latitude of 11°35'37.10"N with an elevation of 1800 m above sea level. The city administration is divided into 6 sub-cities (Tana, Dagmawi Minilik, Belay Zeleke, Gisheabaye, Fasilo, and Atse-Tewodrose). The Amhara Regional Bureau of Finance and Economic Development's (BoFED) 2021 report states, the total population of the city was 328 071.<sup>30</sup> In the city, there were a total of 39 food industries (24 flour industries, 2 biscuits, macaroni, and spaghetti industries, 6 edible oil industries, 3 water, and soft drink industries, 1 honey processing industry, 2 iodized salt processing industries, 1 sweet food processing industry), 923 food handlers in total are employed in the aforementioned food industries.<sup>31</sup>

### *Study design*

An institution-based cross-sectional study was employed among food handlers working in the food industries of Bahir Dar city administration from January to February 2021 to assess food safety practices.

### *Sample size and sampling technique*

To determine the required number of study participants, the sample size was calculated using a single population proportion formula.<sup>32</sup>

$$n = \frac{(Z\alpha/2)^2 \times p(1-P)}{d^2}$$

We considered good food safety practices at 50% (no previous study),  $Z\alpha/2$  at = 95% confidence level (CL),  $d$  = margin of error of 5% and 10% non-response rate, the final sample size calculated was 422. A simple random sampling method was used to select 20% from 39 food industries. The sample sizes were proportionately allocated to the selected food industries and study participants were selected using a simple random sampling technique by obtaining the list of employees from their payroll.

### Population

The source population consisted of all food handlers employed in the food industries in the administrative city of Bahir Dar. While the study population was food handlers employed in the food industries and who were directly involved in food handling activities.

### Eligibility criteria

All Food handlers working in the food industries, and directly involved in food handling activities are eligible for enrollment in the study. However, food handlers working in the food industries, who were on annual leave throughout data collection and not regularly involved in the food handling process were not eligible for the study.

### Variables measured

Food safety practice (Good vs Poor) was our outcome variable, a binary outcome denoted as “{1}” for participants having poor food safety practice and “{0}” for participants having good food safety practice. On the other side, socio-demographic variables (sex, age, religion, educational level, marital status, monthly salaries, work experience of food handlers), working environment variables (latrine, water source, solid and liquid waste disposal, hand washing facility, detergent availability, food storage, working hour per week, guideline availability of food safety/hygiene, available enforcement of rules), behavioral variable (knowledge, attitude, alcoholic drink, khat chewing), and institutional factors (availability of FSMS, availability of quality control team, availability of required professionals, availability of PPE, availability of training) have been the study's independent variables.

### Data management and quality assurance

After receiving verbal informed consent, data were collected utilizing face-to-face interviews and on-the-spot observation methods using an interviewer-administered questionnaire and observational checklist. We adapted the questionnaire and checklist from reputable journal articles and survey reports.<sup>10,18,33</sup> The questionnaire includes socio-demographic, workplace, and institutional characteristics, and variables relating to behavior, knowledge, and attitude. To maintain internal consistency, the questionnaire was first written in English, then translated into Amharic (the local tongue), and then back into English. Four diploma holders with prior data collection expertise collected the data.

Before the actual data collection began, the data collection tools were prepared, and the supervisors and data collectors received 2 days of training to assure the quality of the data. The training concentrated on how to complete the questionnaire, immediate observation, how to contact study participants, and

ethical concerns during data collection. Following training, a pre-test was carried out at the adjacent Dangla town administration on 21 questionnaires (5% of the total sample size), to evaluate the consistency and clarity of the questions, the application of the data collection techniques, and the tools. Throughout the data collection period, the principal investigators and supervisors constantly monitored the data collectors. Each day after data collection, the acquired data was examined for consistency, accuracy, completeness, and clarity.

### Methods of data processing and analysis

To prepare the data for analysis, data were cleaned, coded, put into Epi-data version 3.1, and exported to SPSS version 23. The frequency results were used to check for missing data. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and binary logistic regression, and the results were presented in text, figures, and tables. To reduce the impact of confounding, a multivariable binary logistic regression model was created after bi-variable binary logistic regression was used to identify candidate variables at  $p$ -values  $< .2$ . Finally, statistical significance was determined for independent variables with  $p$ -values less than  $.05$ . The strength of associations was assessed using an adjusted odds ratio with 95% confidence intervals. The Hosmer-Lemeshow test was used to determine the model's goodness of fit, and a  $p$ -value of more than  $.05$  was seen as indicative of a good model fit.

### Ethical consideration

Ethical clearance and approval were obtained from Bahir Dar University and the College of Medicine and Health Sciences, with protocol number 00329/2020 and the date of December 10/2020. Before beginning data collecting, the letter of ethical clearance was submitted to the Bahir Dar city administration. A permission letter was also obtained from the Bahir Dar city administrator and the northwest branch office of the Ethiopian Food and Medicine Administrative Authority (EFDA). Verbal, informed consent was obtained from each study participant after the purpose of the study was explained to them and the information was available on the front page of the questionnaire. At all stages of the study, the information received from the respondents was maintained confidentially by removing their names and other forms of personal identification. Participants were advised to decide without any restrictions if they did not want to participate and wanted to leave the study at any point throughout the interview phase.

### Operational/term definition

**Food safety practice.** The respondents were classified as having “poor practice” if they answered less than 70% of the 18 questions measuring their practices in food safety; otherwise, they were classified as having “good practice.”<sup>6</sup>

*Food safety knowledge.* The respondents were deemed to have “poor knowledge” if they scored the 17 food safety knowledge questions with less than 70% accuracy, but otherwise had “good knowledge.”<sup>6</sup>

*Food safety attitude.* The respondents were considered to have “unfavorable attitudes” if they scored less than 70% on 5 questions about attitude. And those who received a minimum score of 70% were deemed to have a “favorable attitude.”<sup>6</sup>

*Food safety.* Assurance that when food is prepared and/or consumed in line with its intended use, it won't have an adverse health effect on the consumer's health.<sup>1</sup>

*Food handler.* Those who directly handle food that is packaged or unpackaged, as well as the utensils and tools used to prepare or serve food, or surfaces that come into contact with food.<sup>34</sup>

*Regulatory inspection.* If a company was audited 3 or more times a year by regulatory agencies, it was considered that was audited frequently.

## Results

### *Socio-demographic characteristics*

Four hundred twenty-two individuals in this study were surveyed, and 100% completed the interview. The majority (82.9%) were between the age of 19 and 29 years, and nearly half (47.4%) were female by gender. Regarding educational status, 166 (39.3%) were certificate holders and above, and 238 (54.6%) of the respondents were married. About two-thirds (61.4%) of respondents worked in the food production area (Table 1).

### *Institutional and environmental-related characteristics*

Of the 18 food industries assessed, 66.6% had separate food storage rooms, and 72.2% had easily cleanable walls, floors, and ceilings. During the survey, all the food industries had a latrine, shower facilities, and piped water supply sources. However, 3 (16.6%) food industries' handwashing facilities were inside/near the food processing area. Additionally, solid waste storage and liquid waste disposal facilities were present in 77.7% and 88.8%, respectively, of the food industry. Regarding standard operating procedures (SOP), only 8 (44% of the food businesses) had the necessary professionals, even though 72% of the food industries had established SOPs for food safety. Additionally, only 5 (28%) of the food companies provided personal protective equipment for their food handlers, and 78% of those who handled food were not trained in food safety (Table 2).

**Table 1.** Socio-demographic characteristics of food handlers working in food industries in Bahir Dar city administration, Amhara region, Ethiopia, 2021 (n=422).

VARIABLE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Sex		
Female	200	47.4
Male	222	52.6
Age of respondents in years		
19-29	350	82.9
≥30-45	72	16.8
Marital status		
Married	184	43.6
Single	238	56.4
Educational status		
Non-formal education	26	6.2
Primary (1-8)	120	28.4
Secondary (9-12)	110	26.1
Certificate and above	166	39.3
Forms of employment		
Permanent	395	93.6
Temporary	27	6.4
Work experience in years		
≤5	381	90.3
>5	41	9.7
Monthly salary in ETB*		
≤2000	183	43.4
>2000	239	56.6
Working area		
Production	267	63.3
Packaging	155	36.7
Regular health and safety supervision		
Yes	165	39.1
No	257	60.9
Food safety training		
Yes	93	22.0
No	329	78.0

\*Ethiopian Birr, 1\$=52 ETB.



**Table 2.** Institutional and working environment of food handlers working in the food industries, Bahir Dar city administration, Ethiopia, 2021 (n=422).

VARIABLES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Availability of separate food storage room		
Yes	12	66.6
No	6	33.3
Wall, floor, and ceiling are easy to clean		
Yes	14	77.7
No	4	22.2
Availability of palate in the storage room		
Yes	12	66.6
No	6	33
The functionality of the latrine		
Yes	17	94.4
No	1	5.5
Availability of solid waste storage facilities		
Yes	14	77.7
No	4	22.2
Type of waste storage facilities		
Sack	14	77.7
Pit	4	22.2
Availability of liquid waste disposal facility		
Yes	16	88.8
No	2	11.1
Availability of a handwashing facility present near the food processing		
Yes	3	16.6
No	15	83.3

*Food handlers' attitudes, knowledge, and practice regarding food safety*

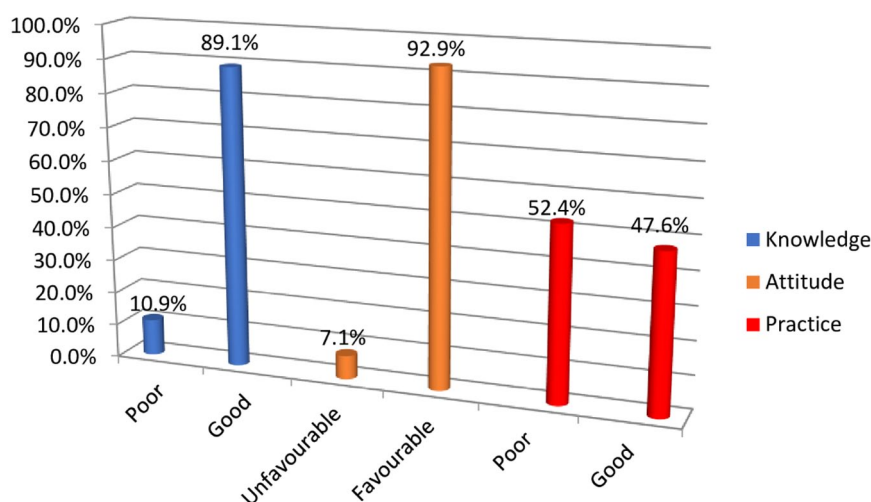
Of the total number of food handlers employed in the food industry, 376 (89.1%) were knowledgeable about food safety. The majority of food handlers 392 (92.2%) have favorable attitude toward the concept that food safety must be upheld during production and packaging. However, less than half (47.6%, 95% CI: 42.8, 52.5) of the respondents have good food safety practices (Figure 1).

*Factors associated with food safety practice*

Sex, age, educational status, employment types, work experience, working environment, monthly salary, working hours, regular supervision, knowledge, training, and attitude were factors associated with poor food safety practices in the bi-variable binary logistic regression analysis, with a *p*-value of less than .25. While sex, working unit, monthly salary, regular supervision, food safety training, and attitude were significantly associated with poor food safety practices at a *p*-value <.05 in the multivariable logistic regression analysis. Gender has had a role in food safety practices, as male food handlers were about 3 times more likely than female food handlers to have poor food safety practices [AOR: 2.92 (CI: 1.77, 4.82)]. The study also found that food handlers with monthly wages of 2000 Birr or less (about \$39) were twice as likely to practice poor food safety as those with higher monthly salaries [AOR: 2.02 (CI: 1.18, 3.44)]. Similarly to this, food handlers who did not receive regular health supervision were 3.4 times more likely to have subpar food safety practices [AOR: 3.43 (CI: 1.97, 5.97)] than those who did. When compared to food handlers working in the packaging unit, those working in the production unit were 2.44 times [AOR: 2.44 (CI: 1.45, 4.13)] more likely to have poor food safety practices (Table 3).

**Discussion**

The results of this cross-sectional study showed that there were poor food safety practices, and that sex, working unit, monthly



**Figure 1.** Attitude, knowledge, and practice of food handlers on food safety, Bahir Dar City Administration, Ethiopia, 2021.

**Table 3.** Factors significantly associated with food safety practice among food handling workers in Bahir Dar City, Northwest, Ethiopia, 2021.

VARIABLES	PRACTICE		COR WITH 95% CI	AOR WITH 95% CI
	POOR	GOOD		
<b>Sex</b>				
Female	77	123	1.00	1.00
Male	144	78	2.95 (1.98, 4.38)	2.92 (1.77, 4.82)*
<b>Age (y)</b>				
19-29	175	175	1.00	1.00
>29	46	26	1.77 (1.05, 2.99)	1.24 (0.62, 2.48)
<b>Educational status</b>				
Non-formal	17	9	1.78 (0.77, 4.00)	1.65 (0.62, 4.20)
Formal	204	192	1.00	1.00
<b>Employment pattern</b>				
Permanent	202	193	1.00	1.00
Temporary	19	8	2.27 (0.97, 5.26)	1.45 (0.52, 4.01)
<b>Working unit</b>				
Production	158	109	2.12 (1.42, 3.17)	2.44 (1.45, 4.13)*
Packaging	63	92	1.00	1.00
<b>Work experience (y)</b>				
≤5	194	187	1.00	1.00
>5	27	14	1.86 (0.95, 3.66)	2.18 (0.94, 5.06)
<b>Monthly salaries</b>				
≤2000	116	67	2.21 (1.49, 3.28)	2.02 (1.18, 3.44)*
>2000	105	134	1.00	1.00
<b>Hours worked/day (h)</b>				
≤8	205	190	0.31 (0.06, 1.50)	0.51 (0.97, 2.73)
>8	7	2	1.00	1.00
<b>Regular health safety supervision</b>				
Yes	44	121	1.00	1.00
No	177	80	6.08 (3.94, 9.40)	3.43 (1.97, 5.97)*
<b>Food safety training</b>				
Yes	16	77	1.00	1.00
No	205	124	7.96 (4.44, 14.25)	6.16 (2.97, 12.77)*
<b>Knowledge</b>				
Good	180	189	1.00	1.00
Poor	41	12	3.59 (1.83, 7.05)	1.29 (0.58, 2.87)
<b>Attitude</b>				
Favorable	197	195	1.00	1.00
Unfavorable	24	6	3.96 (1.56, 9.90)	3.55 (1.14, 11.05)*

1 = reference group.

\* $p < .05$ .

wage, routine health supervision, training, and attitude were connected with poor food safety practices. Nearly half (47.6%, 95% CI: 42.8, 52.5) of the food handlers in the current study who work in the food industry follow good food safety practices. The results were lower than those of studies conducted in Tehran (73%),<sup>35</sup> and Jessore, Bangladesh (83.5%) of food handlers had good safety practices<sup>18</sup> which might be due to the different socioeconomic status, educational backgrounds as well as the availability of food safety training. However, the results of this study were better than those of previous studies conducted in Fars, Iran, with only 8% of food handlers practicing good safety practices.<sup>21</sup>

Food handlers need to have a fundamental awareness of the importance of food safety, the spread of foodborne illnesses, and the methods of food contamination to address poor food safety practices.<sup>36</sup> The majority of the participants in the current study had a strong awareness of food safety (87.4%, 95% CI: 83.9-90.4). Compared to research conducted in Jessore, Bangladesh (91.6%), this study's findings were less favorable.<sup>18</sup> According to our findings, 59.2% of respondents who reported they always washed their hands before beginning work is still less than the research conducted in southern Iran where 91.7% reported wash hands before beginning their work.<sup>21</sup> In the current studies, a majority (91.3%) of food handlers claimed to wash their hands after using the restroom, although only 47.6% of them used detergent. About 63.5% of food handlers said that they handled food despite having diarrheal disease. The discrepancy may be brought about by differences in respondents' sociodemographic characteristics and level of food safety training, as well as the regulatory system in place.

Regarding food handlers' personal protective equipment utilization (PPE), the finding of current studies revealed that 36.5% of the food handlers reported that they used a mask, 43.8% used an apron, 46.9% used cap, and only 10.7% used gloves for their day-to-day activities. The findings were lower than studies conducted in Jessore, Bangladesh 91.6% of food handlers reported they washed their hands after visiting the restroom, 83.6% used a mask, 95.5% used an apron, 93.6% used a cape, 84.6% used gloves.<sup>18</sup> The study in Iran also reported that the majority (91.7%) of food handlers washed their hand after visiting the restroom, 56.5% used masks, 95.9% used aprons, 92.8% used a cape, and 69.1% used gloves.<sup>21</sup> The study's setting and better application of food safety laws and regulations may be the causes of this discrepancy.

The study also indicated that all food handlers reported that they abstained from smoking and drinking alcohol while in the workplace. This finding is consistent with research conducted in Bangladesh, where smoking was obtained at 100% and alcohol consumption at 96.4%,<sup>18</sup> and also in Fars, Iran, abstinence from smoking/alcohol consumption was 96.8%.<sup>21</sup>

Food handlers who engage in food handling activities should cut their fingernails to prevent the spread of foodborne infections because unless fingernails are kept clean, it is most

conducive to the growth of bacteria.<sup>37</sup> The majority (72.7%) of food handlers in the current study had found that they had trimmed their fingernails and removed all jewellery before starting work. However, the inadequacy of well-planned facilities, lack of management and training, as well as the poor utilization of governmental regulations and laws in the food industries, may cause not to practice food safety as planned.<sup>11</sup>

The majority (90.8%) of food handlers reported that they clean their workspace before getting to work. This result was lower than that of a study conducted in Jessore, Bangladesh, where 99% of food handlers cleaned their workspace before starting work.<sup>18</sup> Regarding medical examinations of food handlers, just 13.5% of food handlers reported they had regular checkups. This result is less than that of research conducted in Bangladesh where regular checkups were found 78.2%.<sup>18</sup> Three hundred twenty-nine food handlers (78%) wore no jewellery while working on food preparation tasks. This finding is in line with studies done in western Romania, where it was shown that 82.14%.<sup>38</sup>

Even though the Ethiopian Food and Drug Authority, the Ministries of Health and Agriculture, and other non-governmental organizations have been reported as providing training on good hygiene practices (GHP), good manufacturing practices (GMP), and hazard analysis and critical control points (HACCP).<sup>39,40</sup> the current study's findings show that, while food handlers' attitudes and knowledge of food safety were positive, their level of practice was poor. People with good knowledge are thought to have a more favorable attitude and behavior toward food safety, as well as to interact positively with one another. Despite having good knowledge and favorable attitude, the food handlers in the current study exhibit insufficient food safety practices. This could be due to long hours worked, low monthly pay,<sup>41</sup> a lack of facilities to support food safety practices or insufficient inspection by the relevant body.<sup>42</sup>

According to the results of the current study; Sex, working unit, monthly wage, regular supervision, training, and attitude were significantly associated with poor food safety practices associated with poor food safety practice, sex, working unit, monthly salary, regular supervision, training, and attitude were significantly associated with food safety practice. Gender plays a key role in ensuring the food's safety. Our research found that male food handlers were more likely than female food handlers to have poor safety practices. This might have been because women are more sensitive to food-handling practices than men.<sup>43</sup>

Working unit has also been proven to have a substantial impact on food safety practices where individuals working on the packing unit were more likely than those working in the production unit to have poor food safety practices. This may be because food handlers who work in the production area tend to be more educated (as it requires better education and knowledge on how much each component to be while preparing the packed food) and may believe that the production area requires greater attention than the packaging area. The results of our



study also showed that training was strongly related to the practice of food safety. Food handlers who haven't received food safety training are more likely to perform unsafe food handling than those who have the training. It is agreed that providing adequate food safety training to everyone who handles food in the food business is essential to protect customers from foodborne diseases and other health risks that could occur from eating contaminated food. Furthermore, training is crucial for the long-term commercial viability of food industries as well as for public health. Training also helps food industries to become more efficient, competitive, and lucrative by raising performance standards, promoting the brand, enhancing employee morale, and decreasing waste.<sup>44</sup> Therefore, Workers in the food industry need to receive efficient and consistent food safety training to ensure food safety practices.

Regular regulatory supervision was significantly associated with food safety practices. Food handlers who didn't receive regular supervision had a higher likelihood of poor food safety practices than those who did. This is because inspections are typically undertaken within a regulatory framework, and compliance motivators including the public revelation of inspection results or reports, closures, monetary penalties, and other enforcement actions might aid to guarantee that standard operating procedures are being followed.<sup>45</sup> So supportive supervision provides practical support to food handlers on how to handle food and protect it from contamination.<sup>46</sup>

Food safety practices were strongly associated with food handler attitudes. Food handlers with an unfavorable attitude toward food safety were more likely to have poor food safety practices than those with a favorable attitude. People who are more worried about the causes of food-borne disease, the frequency of severe episodes, and the consequences for their health made them engage in more protective behaviors.<sup>47</sup> Because one of the main drivers of behavior adoption is the development of attitudes, and acting in a particular manner toward a group of things.<sup>48</sup>

## Conclusion

According to the findings of this study, food safety practice among food handlers employed in the food industry was poor. Sex, working unit, regulatory supervision, monthly salary, and attitude toward the food safety practice were the main factors associated with poor food safety practices. Regular regulatory inspections, in-service training, good hygiene practices (GHP), good manufacturing practices (GMP), hazards analysis and critical control points (HACCP), and the food safety management system (ISO:22000:2018) should all be strengthened to improve food handlers' food safety practices and bring them into compliance with the standard.

## Acknowledgements

We thank all respondents for their cooperation, time, and sincere responses as well as the data collectors and supervisors for

their commitment to the overall success of this study. We also thank the Bahir Dar city government and selected food industry managers for their gracious cooperation in providing essential information and providing assistance throughout the data collection.

## Author Contributions

MA was in charge of conception, study design, data collection, analysis, and interpretation, as well as the development and revision of the manuscript. AM, AB, and DB assisted with the conception and design of the study, creation of the data collection tools, interpretation of the findings, and preparation and editing of the paper. The final manuscript was examined and approved by all authors.

## Data and Material Availability

The corresponding author can provide the datasets used and/or analyzed during the current work upon request.

## REFERENCES

1. ISO. Food Safety Management system 22000. 2018.
2. Crush J, Nickanor N, Kazembe L. Urban Food System Governance and Food Security in Namibia. *HCP discussion paper*. 2020.
3. Ansari MA, Kumar V, Singh C, Shukla V, Kumar R. Studies on Food Safety Management and its significance in maximizing the profit for Food Industry. *Internet J Food Saf*. 2013;15:20-28.
4. Sadiku MNO, Musa SM, Ashaolu TJ. Food industry: an introduction. *Int J Trend Sci Res Dev*. 2019;3:128-130.
5. WHO. Safe food handling: a training guide for managers in food service establishments. WHO; 1989.
6. Ayalew H, Birhanu A, Asrade B. Review on food safety system: Ethiopian perspective. *Afr J Food Sci*. 2013;7:431-440.
7. Mead PS, Slutsker L, Dietz V, et al. Food-related illness and death in the United States. *Emerg Infect Dis* 1999;5:607-625.
8. Zuraw L. Low- and middle-income countries suffer most from foodborne illness. *Food Safety News*. 2015. <https://www.foodsafetynews.com/2015/09/report-low-and-middle-income-countries-suffer-most-from-foodborne-illness/>
9. Uçar A, Yılmaz MV, Cakiroglu F. Food safety—problems and solutions. In: Makun HA, ed. *Significance, Prevention and Control of Food Related Diseases*. Intech; 2016:2-25.
10. Azanaw J, Gebrehiwot M, Dagne H. Factors associated with food safety practices among food handlers: facility-based cross-sectional study. *BMC Res Notes*. 2019;12:683-686.
11. Fasanmi OG, Makinde GEO, Popoola MA, et al. Potential risk factors associated with carcass contamination in slaughterhouse operations and hygiene in Oyo state, Nigeria. *Int J Livest Prod*. 2018;9:211-220.
12. Malangu N. Risk factors and outcomes of food poisoning in Africa. In: Makun HA, ed. *Significance, Prevention and Control of Food Related Diseases*. Intech; 2016:59-97.
13. Abdullahi A, Hassan A, Kadarman N, Saleh A, Baraya YS, Lua PL. Food safety knowledge, attitude, and practice toward compliance with abattoir laws among the abattoir workers in Malaysia. *Int J Gen Med*. 2016;9:79-87.
14. Hopper M, Boutrif E. Strengthening national food control systems: Guidelines to assess capacity building needs. Food & Agriculture Organization; 2006.
15. Odipe OE, Raimi M, Deinkuro NS, et al. Assessment of Environmental Sanitation, food safety knowledge, handling practice among food handlers of Bukateria Complexes in Iju Town, Akure north of Ondo-State, Nigeria. *Acta Scientifica Nutritional Health*. 2019;3:186-200.
16. McAnelly JK, ed. HACCP: A total quality system for assuring food safety and quality. In: *Proceedings of Annual Reliability and Maintainability Symposium (RAMS)*, Anaheim, CA, USA, 24-27 January, 1994. IEEE; 1994:31-36.
17. WHO. The 13 biggest threats to global health, according to World Health Organization Advisory Board. 2020:1-5. <https://www.advisory.com/daily-briefing/2020/01/15/who-health-challenges>
18. Shuvo SD. Assessing food safety and associated food hygiene and sanitary practices in food industries: A cross-sectional study on biscuit industry of Jessore, Bangladesh. *Nutr Food Sci*. 2018;48:111-124.

19. Jubayer MF, Kayshar MS, Hossain MS, Uddin MN, Al-Emran M, Akter SS. Evaluation of food safety knowledge, attitude, and self-reported practices of trained and newly recruited untrained workers of two baking industries in Dhaka, Bangladesh. *Helijon*. 2020;6:e05021.
20. WHO. Food Safety: Fact sheet. World Health Organization. 2022. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/food-safety>
21. Ansari-Lari M, Soodbakhsh S, Lakzadeh L. Knowledge, attitudes and practices of workers on food hygienic practices in meat processing plants in fars, Iran. *Food Control*. 2010;21:260-263.
22. Aarnisalo K, Tallavaara K, Wirtanen G, Maijala R, Raaska L. The hygienic working practices of maintenance personnel and equipment hygiene in the Finnish food industry. *Food Control*. 2006;17:1001-1011.
23. Borchers A, Teuber SS, Keen CL, Gershwin ME. Food safety. *Clin Rev Allergy Immunol*. 2010;39:95-141.
24. Mama M, Alemu G. Prevalence, antimicrobial susceptibility patterns and associated risk factors of Shigella and Salmonella among food handlers in Arba Minch University, South Ethiopia. *BMC Infect Dis*. 2016;16:686-687.
25. Zhong Y, Wu L, Chen X, Huang Z, Hu W. Effects of food-additive-information on consumers' willingness to accept food with additives. *Int J Environ Res Public Health*. 2018;15:2394.
26. Purwantiningrum I, Widyastuty W, Christian J, Sari N. Assessment of good manufacturing practices for small-scale food industry in Malang region, East Java, Indonesia. *IOP Conf Ser: Earth Environ Sci*. 2018;131:012028.
27. Minten B, Assefa T, Abebe G, Engida E, Tamru S. Food processing, transformation, and job creation: the case of Ethiopia's Enjera markets. *Gates Open Res*. 2019;3:1354.
28. Grace D. Food safety in developing countries: an overview. Evidence on Demand; 2015.
29. EFMHCA. Ethiopian food, medicine, and Health care control and administration authority. Post-marketing surveillance report. 2017.
30. BoFED. Amhara Regional Bureau of Finance and Economic Development's Annual Report 2021.
31. BoFTD. Amhara Regional State Bureau of Trade and Development Annual Report 2021.
32. Dagne H, Raju RP, Andualem Z, Hagos T, Addis K. Food safety practice and its associated factors among mothers in Debarq town, Northwest Ethiopia: Community-based cross-sectional study. *Biomed Res Int*. 2019;2019:1549131.
33. EPHI. Ethiopian Public Health Institute (EPHI) [Ethiopia] and ICF. 2021. Ethiopia Mini Demographic and Health Survey 2019: Final Report. EPHI and ICF; 2021.
34. Joint FAO/WHO Codex Alimentarius Commission, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme. Codex Alimentarius: Food hygiene, basic texts. Food & Agriculture Organization; 2003.
35. Fariba R, Gholamreza JK, Saharnaz N, Ehsan H, Masoud Y. Knowledge, attitude, and practice among food handlers of semi-industrial catering: a cross sectional study at one of the governmental organization in Tehran. *J Environ Health Sci Eng*. 2018;16:249-256.
36. Grassi M, Osella E, Civera T. Analysis of food safety and hygiene in mass catering establishments. *J Ind Aliment*. 2008;47:471-478.
37. Angela M. Safe food handlers manual. 2009.
38. Jianu C, Goleț I. Knowledge of food safety and hygiene and personal hygiene practices among meat handlers operating in western Romania. *Food Control*. 2014;42:214-219.
39. GAIN. Consumer and Vendor Perspectives on and Practices Related to Food Safety in Ethiopia: A Review. A USAID EatSafe Project Report. 2022.
40. MOH. Water and Food Hygiene and Safety. 2022. Available at: [https://www.moh.gov.et/site/initiatives-4-col/Water\\_and\\_Food\\_Hygiene\\_and\\_Safety](https://www.moh.gov.et/site/initiatives-4-col/Water_and_Food_Hygiene_and_Safety)
41. Tuglo LS, Agordoh PD, Tekpor D, Pan Z, Agbanyo G, Chu M. Food safety knowledge, attitude, and hygiene practices of street-cooked food handlers in North Dayi District, Ghana. *Environ Health Prev Med*. 2021;26:54-13.
42. Reta MA, Lemma MT, Gemedo AA, Lemlem GA. Food handling practices and associated factors among food handlers working in public food and drink service establishments in Woldia town, Northeast Ethiopia. *Pan Afr Med J*. 2021;40:1-19.
43. Dolun UM. Gender and food safety from a TCB perspective, UNIDO. 2014. Available at: [https://www.unido.org/sites/default/files/2014-07/UNIDO\\_Gender\\_Newsletter\\_NO.9\\_final\\_01\\_0.pdf](https://www.unido.org/sites/default/files/2014-07/UNIDO_Gender_Newsletter_NO.9_final_01_0.pdf)
44. Soares K, García-Díez J, Esteves A, Oliveira I, Saraiva C. Evaluation of food safety training on hygienic conditions in food establishments. *Food Control*. 2013;34:613-618.
45. Fielding JE, Aguirre A, Palaiologos E. Effectiveness of altered incentives in a food safety inspection program. *Prev Med*. 2001;32:239-244.
46. Barnes J, Whitley H, Ross K, Smith J. Defining food safety inspection. *Int J Environ Res Public Health*. 2022;19:789.
47. Rimal RN. Perceived risk and efficacy beliefs as motivators of change: use of the risk perception attitude (RPA) framework to understand health behaviors. *Hum Commun Res*. 2003;29:370-399.
48. Kwol VS, Eluwole KK, Avci T, Lasisi TT. Another look into the knowledge attitude practice (KAP) model for food control: an investigation of the mediating role of food handlers' attitudes. *Food Control*. 2020;110:107025.