Food Safety Practices of Fast Food Chains in Sorsogon City

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Abstract:
This study determined the food safety practices and the extent of its practices of Fast Food Chains in Sorsogon City along with personnel, workplace, procedure, and the product. The descriptive type of research was used in the study. The main instrument that was used in the study is a questionnaire checklist. The respondents of this study are the foodservice crews and customers. Appropriate statistical tools were used to analyze and interpret the data. The level of perceptions of the service crews on food safety practices of the fast-food chains along personnel, workplace, processes, and products are described as strongly agree and agree for the customers. The level of perceptions of the service crews and customers on the extent of practice on food safety practices of the fast-food chains along personnel, workplace, processes, and products are described as always practice. There are significant differences in the perceptions of the two groups of respondents on food safety practices of the fast-food chains along with personnel, workplace, processes, and products. There are identified problems encountered by both service crews and the customers. An action plan is proposed to improve the food safety practices of the food chain.

Keywords: food safety practices, fast food chains, customers, service crews

INTRODUCTION
In the food industry, quality of food and services, advertisements, customer satisfaction are some of the key factors to take into account for successful operations. Although there is one thing that is utmost of all of these which is the health of the customers, foods to be served in any food establishments must be free from any food contaminations and to evade from any food borne illnesses. This is where the Food Safety Practices comes in. Food Safety refers to handling, preparing, and storing food in a way to best reduce the risk of individuals becoming sick from food borne illnesses.

The Food Service Industry has been one of the fastest-growing industries in the country. From high-end restaurants, cafés, franchised stalls and other food establishments the most popular in the country are the fast-food chains. There are hundreds of branches of varieties of Fast Food Chains all over the country, besides the fact that they are more convenient, products are more affordable and also accessible because of the food deliveries which is a must nowadays. Due to its high demand for most of the public thus, fast food chains must consistently abide by the regulations of food safety practices to guarantee the food that is served to the consumer is safe and free from any food contamination. In the Philippines, the food industry have grown rapidly - canteen/ eatery or also known as the “turo-turo”, high-end restaurants, catering services and many more. This enlarges industry demands for the implementation of rules and regulations with regards to food safety standards. This is to ensure the health and welfare of the consumers.

The Department of Health (DOH) through Food and Drugs Administration (FDA) has been ensuring food safety by enforcing the following activities: 1) inspection and licensing of food establishments, 2) product registration, and 3) continuous post marketing surveillance which includes monitoring of trade outlets and product advertisements and product sampling at manufacturers’ level. These activities are carried out by trained food inspectors called Food and Drug Regulation Officers (FDROs).

In the City of Sorsogon, the food industry has been drastically improving from only several food establishments nowadays there are already numerous varieties; high-end restaurants, canteens, food stalls, and food carts, and even franchises. The most popular amongst the said establishments are the fast-food chains not only they offer more affordable options to the consumers but also because of its convenience especially now any fast-food chains already have food deliveries transaction. This system has been highly in demand for consumers of Sorsogon City. With this, the Local Government of the Sorsogon City shall abide by the abovementioned state by providing permits, monitoring, and inspecting the food establishment.

Several studies related to the present study were reviewed. These gave the researcher useful insights in the organization of ideas in this research. Abar (2012), food safety is defined by WHO as the assurance that when foods are consumed in the usual manner does not harm human health and wellbeing. It is the utmost concern of the twenty-first century. Foodservice establishments are sources of foodborne illnesses and food handlers contribute to foodborne illness outbreaks applying the principle of Food Safety Practices.

As stated in the Republic Act 10611, “An Act To Strengthen The Food Safety Regulatory System In The Country To Protect Consumer Health And Facilitate Market Access Of Local Foods And Food Products, And For Other Purposes” otherwise known as the “Food Safety Act of 2013”. Section 15, Article II of the 1987 Philippine Constitution declares that the State shall protect and promote the right to health of the people and in still health consciousness among them. Furthermore, Section 9, Article XVI provides that the State shall protect consumers from trade malpractices and substandard or hazardous products. Toward these ends, the State shall maintain a farm to fork food safety regulatory system that ensures a high
level of food safety promotes fair trade, and advances the global competitiveness of Philippine foods and food products.

OBJECTIVES

This study aimed to determine the Food Safety Practices of Fast-Food Chains in Sorsogon City. Specifically, it would seek answers to the following:

1. What are the Food Safety practices of the Fast-Food Chains in Sorsogon City as perceived by service crews and customers along:
   a. Personnel
   b. Workplace
   c. Processes
   d. Products
2. What is the extent of the practice of the Fast-Food Chain along the identified variables?
3. Is there a significant difference in safety practices of fast-food chains as perceived by the two groups of respondents along the identified variables?
4. What are the problems encountered by the Fast-Food Chains in the conduct of the Safety Practices?
5. What could be proposed to improve the Food Safety Practices of Fast-Food Chains of Sorsogon City?

METHODOLOGY

This study aimed to determine the Food Safety of Fast-Food Chains in Sorsogon along with personnel, workplace, procedure, and the product. The researcher employed the descriptive correlation design in the conduct of the study. The descriptive approach was considered in the study, which is to determine the food safety practices of fast-food chains along with the identified variables. The study also identifies the problems encountered by the Fast-Food Chains in executing Food Safety practices. The respondents of this study were the owners, managers, and food service crews of the Fast-Food chains in Sorsogon City.

The correlation approach was employed to determine significant difference between the perspectives of the food safety practice along personnel, workplace, process and products of the two groups of respondents; the service crews and the customers. This study utilized a random sampling technique.

The survey-questionnaire provided to the respondents and served as an instrument for data-gathering. The statistical tools that this study was utilized are the Frequency Count, percentage and chi-square. Unstructured interview was also employed during the survey to validate data provided by the respondents.

The instrument used were a survey-questionnaire. Part I of the questionnaire comprises on the assessment on the Food Safety Practices of the Fast-Food Chain of Sorsogon City along with a) personnel b) workplace c) procedures and d) products. Part II comprises with the same indicators as the Part I but assessing the extent of practice along with the identified variables. Part III was composed of the problems encountered problems met by the Fast-Food Chain in the implementation of the practice of Food Safety practices of the Fast-Food chains along with the identified variables.

To ensure the reliability and validity of the questionnaire a dry run conducted in one of the small restaurants in the city.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based from the data gathered, the following findings are revealed:

1. The overall computed weighted mean on food safety practices of the fast-food chains in Sorsogon City as perceived by the service crews along personnel, workplace, processes and products are: 3.87, 3.86, 3.88 and 3.89 respectively. While the overall computed weighted means for customers are: 3.40, 3.40, 3.46 and 3.46 accordingly.
2. The overall computed weighted means on the extent of food safety practices of the fast-food chains in Sorsogon City as perceived by the service crews along personnel, workplace, processes and products are: 3.84, 3.87, 3.91 and 3.85 respectively. While the overall computed weighted means for customers are: 3.54, 3.55, 3.55 and 3.64 accordingly.
3. The computed chi square values on the difference in safety practices of fast-food chains along personnel, workplace, processes and products as perceived by the two groups of respondents are: 13.25, 15.22, 11.8 and 11.8 in order.
4. The computed overall weighted means on the problems encountered by the service crews and customers are 1.32 and 1.62 respectively.

Conclusions

1. The level of perceptions of the service crews on food safety practices of the fast-food chains along personnel, workplace, processes and products are described as strongly agree and agree for the customers.
2. The level of perceptions of the service crews and customers on the extent of practice on food safety practices of the fast-food chains along personnel, workplace, processes and products are described as always practice.
3. There are significant differences in the perceptions of the two groups of respondents on food safety practices of the fast-food chains along personnel, workplace, processes and products.
4. There are identified problems encountered by both service crews and the customers.
5. An intervention plan is hereby proposed to improve the food safety practices of the food chain.

Recommendations

1. Service crews of food chains may maintain the presence of safety practices along personnel, workplace, processes, products.
2. Food safety practices may be sustaining the extent of practice and monitor by manager/ supervisor by following the establishment standard.
3. In depth analysis may be conducted on food safety practice into further study the significant difference through constant monitoring and evaluation of managers/supervisors.
4. Owners of food chains may seek feedbacks from their customers as basis to solve some problems that may be encountered by both parties.
5. The action plan was proposed to improve the food safety practices of the food chain along with personnel, workplace, process and product.
6. Future researchers may be further reviewed and evaluated by the authorities prior to the implementation.

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