

# **STREET FOOD VENDING: VENDOR FOOD SAFETY PRACTICES AND CONSUMERS' BEHAVIOURS, ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS**

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2013

**Background:** In developing countries, the need for street foods is growing. Alongside this, is the risk of contracting a food borne illness. This is a factor that the stakeholders must be aware of especially the vendors. The consumers' perception can be influenced by the practices of the vendor.

**Objective:** This research sought to investigate (1) street food vending practices in Tobago (2) vendor food safety practices and consumers' behaviours, attitudes and perceptions.

**Design:** The vendors and consumers were selected systematically. The data was collected by observation from vendors and by questionnaires from consumers. It was analyzed using SPSS and presented in tables and graphs which showed frequencies, percentages and significances.

**Results:** From the observation of vendors, 72.7% had no gloves, 68.2% had no visible food badge, 72.7% handled the money themselves without sanitation after, 90.9% did not wash hands / change gloves. The consumers, 56.9% were 'very concerned' about illnesses, 64.1% said they were 'somewhat safe' to eat. <18 age group had the highest mean perception score  $M = 17.16$ . Regularity of purchase, 'regularly' had the highest  $M = 17.45$ . Concern about illnesses 'very concerned' had the lowest  $M = 13.55$ .

**Conclusion:** 66.7% of consumers had an overall low/negative perception of street foods. There were significant associations for age, gender, regularity of purchase, concern about illnesses and safety of street foods against perception scores. Those with the lower scores had a more low/negative perception. Vendors need to improve their handling practices so that an improvement of a more positive perception from the consumers may be seen.

