

**FOOD SAFETY KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES AMONG
POST GRADUATE STUDENTS ON THE HALL OF RESIDENCE AT THE
ST. AUGUSTINE CAMPUS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES**

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Background: Food safety is an increasingly important public health issue and has also emerged as an important global issue with international trade according to the World Health Organization (WHO)¹. They also stated that, Governments all over the world are intensifying their efforts to improve food safety. These efforts are in response to an increasing number of food safety problems and rising consumer concerns. The trend in food borne illnesses has been indicated with sudden increases in reported cases and outbreaks.

Objective: Few studies have been conducted on food safety among Postgraduate students. The objective of this study is to assess the food safety knowledge, attitudes and practices and determine the barriers to safe food handling practices of Postgraduate students on the Halls of Residence at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine.

Method: The target population consisted of sixty Postgraduate students living at the two main Halls at the University campus. The students were given a self administered questionnaire incorporating questions of demographics, food safety knowledge and practices, food spoilage, sanitation, storage and thawing of meats, hand washing practices, food safety attitudes and food safety barriers on Hall.

Results: It was found that the students have relatively little knowledge on temperatures but had known much more on food spoilage. The majority of respondents displayed proper sanitation practices and thawed their meat, poultry and fish products in the refrigerator using the correct procedures (90%). Most respondents did not display good hand washing practices, (53.3%) sometimes washed their hands with warm water and soap for twenty seconds before preparing food and eating. It was also found that (53.3%) sometimes purchase food from a vendor who

does not display their food badge even though (53.3%) had known that the majority of food borne illness is a result of improper handling of foods in food service establishments. The majority (55%) viewed food safety as being extremely important at the Halls and (65%) would take the responsibility to obtain information on food safety.

Conclusion: Even though the sample size was limited, it emphasized the need for consumer and food safety education as it was highlighted in this study that there are gaps in food safety knowledge, attitudes and practices. Imperative food safety education is recommended to reduce the occurrences of food-borne illnesses.