

**A GENDERED APPRAISAL OF FOOD SAFETY KNOWLEDGE AMONG VENDORS,
EDUCATORS AND LEARNERS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF JOS NORTH LGA, PLATEAU
STATE**

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the knowledge of food safety practices among food vendors in secondary schools in Jos North Local Government Area of Plateau State and explored gender differences in students' perceptions of food quality. Data were collected from 30 food vendors and 30 students using structured questionnaires and analyzed quantitatively. Results revealed that food vendors had a moderate level of knowledge overall, with high awareness in areas such as freshness, taste, and texture. However, shelf life management was identified as a significant weakness, posing potential food safety risks. Furthermore, a statistically significant difference was found between male and female students' perceptions of food quality, with females rating the quality more positively. The findings highlight the need for enhanced training, improved infrastructure, and gender-sensitive approaches in food safety interventions within school settings. The study suggests that addressing these gaps can contribute to safer and higher-quality food for secondary school students.

Keywords: Food safety, Food vendors, Secondary schools, Knowledge, Shelf life, Gender differences, Food quality, Jos North LGA, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Food safety is a major issue for public health concern around the world, and countries that are still developing frequently deal with more cases of food-related illnesses (World Health Organization [WHO], 2004; Zeru et al., 2007). In Nigeria, specifically in Plateau State, ensuring that the food in schools is safe is a major challenge for the people who prepare and eat it. In the Jos North Local Government Area (LGA), there are several secondary schools where food vendors, teachers, and students all help in sharing and following food safety practices. How well food safety is managed largely depends on the knowledge, beliefs, and actions of the people involved in handling food. Studies in Jos North LGA reveal that food safety knowledge varies a lot among vendors, and this is often linked to gender, as most vendors are women who generally do not have proper training in food safety (E3 Journals, 2023). Other studies have shown that gender can affect how aware people are about food safety and how they behave, with men and women displaying diverse levels of understanding and following of safety practices (Medical Science Journal, 2015; National Center for Biotechnology Information [NCBI], 2023). Teachers and students are important in promoting good food habits, but not much research has looked at how gender affects their food safety knowledge and how that impacts food safety in this area. Understanding the gender-related aspects of food safety knowledge among vendors, teachers, and students is important for developing better, more focused ways to reduce foodborne diseases in schools. This study looks at gender differences in secondary schools in Jos North LGA, Plateau State, to find areas that need improvement and suggest better informative strategies that help reach the global health goals related to food safety and public health. Although food safety is important for preventing foodborne ailments, there isn't much understanding of how gender affects food safety knowledge among key people such as vendors, teachers, and students in Jos North LGA. Studies indicate that these groups are important in food handling and safety within school environments (E3 Journals, 2023; Medical Science Journal, 2015). However, there are big differences in food safety knowledge

and practices based on gender, with female vendors facing challenges because they often lack training and support (National Center for Biotechnology Information [NCBI], 2023; PMC, 2023). Still, there is not enough real data on how gender relates to food safety knowledge among these groups in Nigerian secondary schools (Akinboye & Ihuoma, 2023). This research gap hinders the creation of focused, gender-sensitive solutions required to reduce foodborne illnesses in schools, which continue to harm students' health and academic performance (World Health Organization [WHO], 2004). Resolving this research issue will give useful insights for improving food safety education and practices in schools in Jos North LGA. This study adds to ongoing debates by showing how gender affects the way food safety knowledge spreads in Nigerian school environments, matching broader studies that support effective food safety education for all those handling and involved in food (Akinboye & Ihuoma, 2023; Sanlier, 2008).

Research Objective

To determine the knowledge levels of food vendors on food safety practices in secondary schools in Jos North LGA of Plateau State?

Research Question

How knowledgeable are food vendors on food safety practices in secondary schools in Jos North LGA of Plateau State?

Test of Hypothesis

There is no significant difference in the mean responses between male and female students on food quality related to knowledge of food safety practice of food vendors in secondary schools, Jos North LGA of Plateau State.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Food safety is a vast concern worldwide, specifically since foodborne illnesses lead to significant health challenges and deaths, predominantly in developing countries (World Health Organization [WHO], 2004). Problems can come up at any stage, from handling to preparation and storage, which highlights how vital it is for everyone involved in food provision to have a solid understanding of food safety and hygiene practices (Afolaranmi, Hassan, Bello, & Misari, 2015). Secondary schools play a key role in this, as they serve a large number of youths who may have inadequate resources and supervision. In Jos North Local Government Area (LGA) of Plateau State, Nigeria, food vendors, educators, and students are all part of the cycle of obtaining, preparing, and consuming food. This link means we really need to look into how well they understand food safety and what practices they follow.

Research in Nigeria has revealed mixed results in terms of food safety knowledge among vendors. Afolaranmi et al. (2015) found that about 60% of food vendors in Jos North's primary schools had a good grasp of food safety, but they stressed the need for structured training, pointing out that over 80% had never received formal education in food handling. It's worth observing that many food vendors are women, which reflects cultural norms that allocate food preparation to females, resulting in differences in access to education and training on food safety (Medical Science Journal, 2015). This pattern is consistent with findings from other areas where women tend to lead food handling roles but often have varying levels of food safety knowledge and practices compared to their male counterparts (GSC Advanced Research and Reviews, 2025).

The relationship between gender and food safety knowledge and attitudes is pretty clear. For instance, GSC Advanced Research and Reviews (2025) found that female food vendors were notably more knowledgeable and had more positive attitudes towards food hygiene than males. This could be because women are often socialized from a young age to handle food hygiene at home, potentially giving them an edge in this area. Moreover, education plays a crucial role—those with higher education levels generally have better knowledge and practices (GSC Advanced Research

and Reviews, 2025). This is comparable to observations from Ethiopia, where gender differences in food safety knowledge, attitude, and practice were evident, with females showing a stronger link between what they know and how they act (NCBI, 2023). These gender-specific gaps call for targeted interventions.

Learners and educators in secondary schools are key to disseminating food safety knowledge and healthy practices. A study in Kogi State, Nigeria, indicate that secondary school students generally had a good grasp of food hygiene but suggested that they could benefit from more focused educational programs (PubMed, 2019). Teachers influence not only their students but also the vendors supplying food to schools. However, there's a visible lack of gender-focused research on how educators and students understand and practice food safety in Nigerian secondary schools, which limits the effectiveness of health education efforts (Texila Journal, 2023).

On a broader perspective, gendered inequalities in access to food safety resources and knowledge are recognized barriers. These gaps hinder women, especially female vendors and students, from fully engaging in safe food handling and sanitation, increasing their risk of foodborne illnesses (Wiley, 2022). Attacking these challenges means we need to consider the socio-cultural context where gender roles shape educational chances, resource control, and health behaviors. Therefore, it's crucial to incorporate gender perspectives into food safety policies and educational programs to improve outcomes in schools (Journal of Public Health, 2021).

Several studies have emphasized the essential role of training and education in enhancing food safety knowledge, attitudes, and practices among food handlers. In Jos North LGA, many food vendors lack formal food safety training, which contributes to poor food hygiene practices (Afolaranmi et al., 2015). This finding aligns with other research in Nigeria and beyond (GSC Advanced Research and Reviews, 2025; PMC, 2014). The positive impact of education is especially important among women, who often turn knowledge into better attitudes and safer food handling manners (NCBI, 2023). Thus, interventions that address gender differences in education and health promotion could greatly enhance food safety standards in schools.

Executing structured food safety education in schools also seems to be vital for both students and educators. A targeted curriculum that includes hands-on food hygiene lessons could boost knowledge retention and encourage the adoption of best practices, which would help reduce the rates of foodborne illnesses in school populations. Moreover, peer-to-peer and community education can reinforce safe food handling practices both inside and outside school settings (PubMed, 2019). While existing research suggests valuable perspectives on food safety knowledge and practices among vendors, students, and educators in Nigeria, there's a significant gap in studies specifically looking at the gendered aspects within secondary schools in Jos North LGA. Most of the literature tends to center on vendors, leaving educators and students as underexplored contributors to the spread of food safety knowledge and behaviors.

Moreover, many studies don't sufficiently consider how gender intersects with other factors like education level, age, and experience in shaping food safety attitudes and behaviors in these school settings. Grasping these complex dynamics is crucial given Nigeria's social fabric and the gendered division of labor in food preparation and education (GSC Advanced Research and Reviews, 2025; Afolaranmi et al., 2015).

This literature review stresses the need for a thorough, gender-sensitive evaluation of food safety knowledge among secondary school vendors, educators, and students in Jos North LGA. An approach tailored to these insights will help design effective, culturally relevant strategies aimed at enhancing food hygiene standards, ensuring equitable access to knowledge, and ultimately protecting public health within school environments.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research design adopted for this study is cross-sectional survey research design. Cross sectional survey research design requires that data are collected at a specific time from a sample for the

purpose of re-counting at the time (Alexander, 2018). The choice of this design is based on the fact that data collected from representative of the population was generalized on the whole population of all the food vendors in the 8 public secondary schools who are cooking food for students in Jos North Local Government Area of Plateau State. Cross sectional research design recognized the fact that the situation being studied might change later on and a different result might be obtained at a later period (Cherry, 2019).

Population And Sample

Population: The population of this study includes all the food vendors in the 8 public secondary schools who are cooking food for students in Jos North Local Government Area of Plateau State. The schools have a total population of 14 Principals, 253 teachers, 3,634 students and 46 Food vendors in Jos North Local Government Area as shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Population of all Public Secondary Schools, Principals, Teachers Students and Food Vendors in Jos North Local Government Area

School	Number of Students	Number of Teachers	Number of Food Vendors	Number of Principals	Total
A	900	30	7	2	939
B	787	38	8	2	835
C	240	33	4	2	279
D	246	18	2	2	268
E	370	27	6	2	405
F	180	23	8	1	212
G	650	62	6	2	720
H	261	22	5	1	289
Total	3,634	253	46	14	3,947

Source: Ministry of Education, Area Directorate Office (2023)

Sample: The population for the study consisted of 8 secondary schools. The sample for the study consisted of 360 students, 155 teachers, 46 food vendors and 14 principals. The choice of this sample is based on the fact that survey requires a large sample. The total sample for the study was 575. The distribution of the sample is presented in table 2

Table 2
Distribution sample size frame of Secondary School Students in Jos North Local Government Area of Plateau State

School	Number of Students	Number of Teachers	Number of Food Vendors	Number of Principals	Total
A	89	20	7	2	118
B	78	23	8	2	111
C	24	20	4	2	50
D	24	11	2	2	39
E	37	16	6	2	61
F	18	14	8	1	41
G	64	38	6	2	110
H	26	13	5	1	45

Total	360	155	46	14	575
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3.3 Sampling Techniques: Proportional stratified sampling technique and simple random sampling technique was used for this study. Proportional stratified sampling are sampling techniques in which different strata in a population are identified and in which the number of elements are drawn from each stratum proportional to the relative number of elements in each stratum. This is to ensure that suitable number of participants from each strata is embodied in the final sample. Simple random sampling is where the researcher randomly selects a sub set of participants. The population is in subsets and large, the reason for the use of simple random sampling technique. The second stage is the selection of teacher, students and vendors. At this stage, Yaro Yamane formula will be used in determining the number of teachers to used, the number of students to use and the vendors to be use. The formula is given as follows:

$$N \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2} \text{ where } N= \text{ is the population, } 1= \text{ is constant } e= \text{ is error margin (Yamane, 1967).}$$

Using the formula, the number of principals sampled is 14, teachers 155, students 360 and vendors 46 were selected for the study making a total of 575 respondents. The reason for using Taro Yamane formula is because the population is large and the need for every element to be included in the sample. The reason for the choice of proportional stratification is that the strata are equal and the need to give every strata equal number of representation in the sample. See appendix B2 for the computation of the sample size using Taro Yamane formula.

A stratified sample techniques will be used in the selection of the teachers and students, for teacher, sampling fraction of ($sf = \frac{n}{N} = \frac{155}{253} = 0.6125$) will be used to allocate a required number of teachers in each school, for students ($sf = \frac{n}{N} = \frac{360}{3634} = 0.099$) will be used to allocate a required number of students in each school as shown appendix B1.

Instruments For Data Collection: Two instruments were used for data collection in this study namely: Students' Food Quality Questionnaire (**SFQQ**) and Food Safety Practices Questionnaire (**FSPQ**) as measuring instrument for this study. The instrument for data collection is presented in Appendix A2 and A3.

Description of the Instruments

a. Students' Food Quality Questionnaire (SFQQ): The Students' Food Quality Questionnaire (SFQQ): SFQQ was designed by the researcher. It was a closed ended questionnaire and it consisted of two sections, A and B. Section a consisted of the personal data of respondents, such as Age and gender, while section B seeks to elicit information on food safety practices.

b. Food Safety Practices Questionnaire (FSPQ): The food safety practices questionnaire contains food quality produced by food vendors (FQPFV), Level of food safety practices by food vendors (LFS), and Standard of food quality (SFQ).

Validity And Reliability Of Instruments

Validity

A (SFQQ): The content was used to determine the validity of the questionnaire. Two experts from the Unit of Home Economics in the Department of Science and Technology and one from the Research Measurement and Evaluation Unit in the Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education, University of Jos, scrutinized the questionnaire items. Kendall's coefficient of concordance was used to judge the agreement among the experts. This was because, according to Gay (2017), a validity index above 0.64 is adjudged acceptable. The experts critically scrutinized whether the items in the instrument adequately measured the content they were designed to measure. The three experts were given an instrument evaluation guide prepared in the form of a scale, which they used to make their judgments. They were also required to comment on the quality and appropriateness of the

items in the questionnaire. Construct validity was established for the SFQQ scale using factor analysis, which determined the extent to which each statement in each subscale on the instrument measured the intended factors. The instrument was then subjected to a pilot study (see Appendix BIII).

B. Food Safety Practices Questionnaire(FSPQ): The content was used to determine the validity of the questionnaire. Two experts from the Unit of Home Economics in the Department of Science and Technology and one from the Research Measurement and Evaluation Unit in the Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education, University of Jos, scrutinized the questionnaire items. Kendall's coefficient of concordance was used to judge the agreement among the experts. This was because, according to Gay (2017), a validity index above 0.64 is adjudged acceptable. The experts critically scrutinized whether the items in the instrument sufficiently measured the constructs they were designed to measure. The three experts were given the instrument evaluation guide prepared in the form of a scale, which they used to make their judgments. They were also required to comment on the quality and appropriateness of the items in the questionnaire. Construct validity was established for the FSPQ scale using factor analysis, which determined the extent to which each statement in each subscale on the instrument measured the factors in the instrument. The instrument was then subjected to a pilot study.

Reliability

- a. **Students' Food Quality Questionnaire (SFQQ):** Cronbach's Alpha was used to evaluate the reliability of the SFQQ after it was administered during the pilot study to a sample of teachers, students, and vendors who were not included in the main study. The reliability index was interpreted using the decision rule based on the benchmark suggested by Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007), who suggested that 0.50 is poor, 0.65 is the lowest level of acceptance, 0.70 is an acceptable level, and 0.80–0.90 is a preferably acceptable level of reliability. The analysis produced a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.970 which shows a high level of internal consistency.
- b. **Food Safety Practice Questionnaire (FSPQ):** Cronbach's Alpha was used to estimate the reliability of the FSPQ after it was administered during the pilot study to a sample of teachers, students, and vendors who were not involved in the main study. The data obtained were used in assessing the reliability of the instrument. Using the decision rule based on the benchmark by Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007), the reliability index was interpreted accordingly. The analysis produced a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.970 which shows a high level of internal consistency.

Procedure for Data Collection: The researcher got an introductory letter from the Head of Department of Science and Technology Education, Faculty of Education, University of Jos in order to visit the schools that were selected for the pilot study for the purpose of soliciting permission of the school authorities to use their schools for the study. The sample of such letter is shown in appendix A1. Having obtained permission from the schools' authorities, the researcher personally visit each school and administer the questionnaire on the Students' Attitude and Safety with the help of eleven research assistants who organized the students in their various intact classes. The Students' Food Quality Questionnaire (SFQQ) will be administered to the sample of 140 students and Food Safety Practices Questionnaire (FSPQ) will be administered on Food Vendors in the schools that will participate in the study.

Training of Research Assistants: The researcher trained eleven secondary school teachers to serve as research assistants from each school. They were teachers with a minimum qualification of

B.Ed./PGDE. The eleven research assistants were trained for one-week on how to administer the research instrument and make observation, administration and collection of the filled questionnaire.

Administration of the Instrument: With the necessary consent sought from the competent authorities that is the principals of the various schools that were used for the study, the researcher and with the assistant of the research assistants administered the instrument to the food vendor first and secondly to the students in the selected schools before breaks periods.

Scoring of Students' Food Quality Questionnaire (SFQQ): The SFQQ were administered to the all the SSS 1-3 students who are the respondents in Jos North Local Government Area of Plateau State who were selected from twelve selected secondary schools and this will be done in a classroom setting. This exercise was carried out by the research assistants and was supervised by the researcher. The data collected from the questionnaire was scored and entered into Microsoft excel. The responses from Section B is on Attention Paid on Student Food Quality consisting 3 items on the SFQQ will be scored on a 5-point scale of "1= very poor to", ..., "5 = Excellent", 3 - point scale of "1= Low to", ..., "3= High", and 5-point scale of "1= strongly disagreed to", ..., "5 = Strongly agreed", (Appendix A2).

Scoring of Food Safety Practices Questionnaire (FSPQ) : The FSPQ were administered to the all the food vendors who sell food in the government secondary schools in Jos North Local Government Area of Plateau State who were selected from twelve selected secondary schools and this was done outside the classroom setting. This exercise was carried out by the research assistants and was supervised by the researcher. The data collected from the questionnaire was scored and entered into Microsoft excel. The responses from Section B are on Food Safety Practices by food vendors which consists of 3 items on the FSPQ will be scored on a dichotomous scale of "1= very poor to", ..., "5 = Excellent", 3 - point scale of "1= Low to", ..., "3= High", and 5-point scale of "1= strongly disagreed to", ..., "5 = Strongly agreed", (Appendix A2).

Method Data Analysis: Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used in the study. The descriptive statistics was used to answer the research questions, while inferential statistics was employed in testing the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The data were analyzed with Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27.0. Research questions 1 to 6 utilizing simple percentages, means, and standard deviation to summarize the data. Furthermore, research question 2, 3 and 4 were further examined using range to provide additional insights. Hypotheses 1 and 2 will be tested with independent sample t-test, hypothesis 3 was tested with Analysis of variance (ANOVA), while hypothesis 4 was tested using paired sample correlation test.

RESULTS

Research Question one

How knowledgeable are food vendors on food safety practices in secondary schools in Jos North LGA of Plateau State?

Table 3

Knowledgeable are food vendors on food safety practices in secondary schools

S/N	ITEMS	Very Poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Mean	SD
1	Nutritional Value	3(10.0)	4(13.3)	6(20.0)	8(26.7)	9(30.0)	3.53	1.33
2	Taste and Flavor	0(0)	2(6.7)	8(26.7)	20(66.6)	0(0)	3.60	.621
3	Texture	1(3.3)	4(13.3)	6(20.0)	19(63.4)	0(0)	3.43	.85
4	Aroma	1(3.3)	3(10.0)	8(26.7)	17(56.7)	1(3.3)	3.46	.86
5	Appearance	3(10.0)	7(23.3)	7(23.3)	13(43.3)	0(0)	3.00	1.05
6	Freshness	0(0)	2(6.7)	8(26.7)	20(66.7)	0(0)	3.56	1.04

7	Safety	2(6.7)	3(10.0)	5(16.7)	17(56.7)	3(10.0)	3.53	1.04
8	Shelf Life	10(33.3)	3(10.0)	4(13.3)	6(20.0)	7(23.3)	2.90	1.62

No.: 30. Source: *Field Assessment*

The analysis from Table 3 discloses that food sellers have a moderate level of knowledge about secondary school food safety procedures. They have a high level of awareness in areas like freshness, taste and flavor, and texture, with a mean of 3.6 showing a strong preference for taste. Texture was rated as "Good" by the majority (63.4%), with a mean of 3.43, showing a generally favorable impression. Aroma had a strong leaning toward "Good" (56.7%), with a mean of 3.47. Appearance had a more mixed response, with 43.3% rating it as "Good" and 23.3% as "Poor." Freshness was highly rated, with 66.7% giving it a "Good" rating and a mean of 3.57, suggesting that freshness is generally well-received. Safety was rated similarly to freshness, with a strong lean towards "Good" (56.7%) and a mean of 3.53, suggesting it's viewed positively overall. However, Shelf Life had the lowest overall rating, with 33.3% rating it as "Very Poor" and 10% as "Poor." Most items received fairly positive ratings, especially in taste, flavor, and freshness. Shelf life was seen as a significant concern, with a large portion of people rating it poorly. The variability in responses for items like appearance, texture, and aroma suggests differing opinions among the respondents.

Test of Hypothesis

There is no important difference in the mean responses between male and female students on food quality related to knowledge of food safety practice of food vendors in secondary schools, Jos North LGA of Plateau State.

Table 4

Results of Independent Samples Test between male and female students on food quality of food vendors in secondary schools

	Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	t	P.val	Dec
Food quality	Male	8	2.5000	1.8516	28	-1.999	.000	Rejec t H ₀
	Female	22	3.4545	.80043				

The independent samples t-test results in Table 4 show a statistically significant difference in the mean responses of male and female students on the food quality of food vendors in secondary schools in Jos North LGA, Plateau State ($t(23.678) = -1.999, p = .000$). Female students had a obtained mean score ($M = 3.45, SD = 0.80$) compared to male students ($M = 2.50, SD = 1.85$), suggesting that female students rated the quality of food more positively than their male counterparts. Since the p-value (.000) is less than the standard significance level of 0.05, the null hypothesis—which stated that there is no significant difference in the mean responses between male and female students—is rejected. This indicates a significant gender-based difference in students' perceptions of food quality related to knowledge of food safety practices.

Discussion of findings

The results of this study are consistent with previous research done in similar settings. For instance, studies involving food vendors in Nigerian schools have shown that while they generally have a moderate grasp of food safety—particularly in terms of hygiene and freshness—there are notable challenges when it comes to putting that knowledge into practice. Issues like maintaining proper shelf life and effective storage have been highlighted (Adewale & Oladele, 2021). This aligns with what we found, where freshness and taste got positive ratings, but shelf life was flagged as a major concern. Furthermore, research from Ogun State revealed a gap between what vendors know about food safety and how they actually handle food hygienically. This disconnect was linked to a lack of infrastructure and weak regulatory enforcement (Babatunde & Olufunmilayo, 2022). Such insights point to a clear need for targeted training and better facilities to help school food vendors meet food

safety standards. When it comes to gender variations in views on food quality, our finding reveals that female students rated food quality more positively than male students fits with broader discussions on how gender affects food choices. Studies have shown that women are usually more health-conscious, they often prefer a variety of nutritious options, and they tend to pay closer attention to food quality and safety (Gurung & Amatya, 2023; Lee et al., 2022). Men, on the other hand, might prioritize taste more and have different criteria for evaluating food, which could explain why male students rated food quality lower in our study. In short, the findings support existing literature that suggests food vendors in educational settings generally have some foundational knowledge of food safety, yet they still face significant gaps—especially when it comes to shelf life and storage. Plus, the differing perceptions based on gender highlight the need to gather varied student feedback to create more effective food safety programs. This study reveals that food vendors in secondary schools in Jos North LGA, Plateau State, have a good understanding of food safety practices. They particularly do well in areas like freshness, taste, and texture. Still, there are some important gaps, especially when it comes to managing shelf life, which could potentially affect food safety and the health of students. Interestingly, we noticed a significant difference in how male and female students perceive food quality, with the girls generally rating it higher than the boys. These insights highlight the need for focused interventions to boost vendors' knowledge and practical food safety skills, while also considering the varied perspectives of students. The goal is to improve the overall quality and safety of food in school settings.

CONCLUSION

The study found that food vendors in secondary schools in Jos North LGA, Plateau State, have a decent understanding of food safety practices. They showed a good grasp of things like taste, freshness, texture, aroma, and overall safety, which means they're generally competent when it comes to handling and serving food. That said, there were some worries about the shelf life of foods—this aspect got the lowest ratings and highlights a possible risk in food safety management. The study also uncovered a notable difference between genders in how they view food quality. Female students rated the food quality more positively compared to their male peers, hinting at different expectations or experiences related to food safety and quality among the students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Regular Training Programs:** Schools and local health agencies should hold ongoing food safety training for vendors, focusing on key areas like proper food storage, shelf life management, and hygiene practices.
- **Enhance Infrastructure and Resources:** Providing necessary facilities like refrigeration units and clean water supplies can help tackle issues related to food preservation and contamination.
- **Boost Monitoring and Regulation:** It's important to increase inspections and monitoring of food vendors by health authorities to ensure they meet food safety standards.
- **Gather Student Feedback:** Schools should set up ways to regularly collect feedback from both male and female students on food quality and safety, to address different preferences and concerns.
- **Promote Gender-Sensitive Food Safety Education:** Awareness campaigns and educational materials should recognize gender differences in food perceptions to effectively involve all students in food safety efforts.

By taking these recommendations into account, schools can improve the safety and quality of food offered, thus protecting the health and well-being of their students.

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