

# Food Handling Practices of Food Vendors in the Vicinity of Davao Del Norte State College

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**Abstract:** Food handling practices among food vendors are a crucial aspect of public health and consumer safety. However, the way food is handled, prepared, and presented by the vendors can affect the health and safety of the consumers. The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the food handling practices of food vendors as observed by the consumers. 10 (ten) participants were chosen who were students, teachers, and faculty staff at Davao del Norte State College (DNSC). In-depth interviews (IDI) were conducted one-on-one with the selected participants and used thematic analysis. The findings revealed that the observation of consumers in the food handling practices by the food vendors shows that they have concerns regarding sanitation and hygiene problems, inconsistent use of proper equipment, food handling and cross-contamination issues, and inconsistencies in cleanliness and presentation. Assuring health and safety, maintaining hygiene and cleanliness standards, maintaining customer well-being, and keeping trust and support for the vendors were the things they wanted to see from the vendors. Through conducting seminars, educational programs, training initiatives, or policy recommendations by the local government, and especially the BTLED students, which can contribute to improved food-handling practices among vendors. Further, the future researcher may expand their exploration by conducting a research study on students' perspectives on the food handling practices by the food vendors.

**Keywords:** *Food Handling Practices, Food Vendors, Phenomenology, Philippines.*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Street-vended foods are defined as food and beverages made and sold in and around public locations in non-permanent structures. Such food is typically less expensive than items sold in restaurants (Hill et al., 2019). It is one of the most common business practices globally as it generates income in many low-income households (Khomotso & Paul, 2020). However, it is a common observation that in large institutions such as school settings, food consumption is large-scale, and food handling is passed on to man-food personnel, eventually increasing the chances of food contamination due to improper handling (Candido et al., 2020)

Nowadays, the lack of food safety measures is a major public health problem in many parts of the world (Admasu, 2018). Learning from the case of India, the major problem of food vendors in food handling is the lack of proper knowledge of hygienic preparation and serving practices adopted by most food vendors (Rana & Ahirrao, 2016). Moreover, in developing nations such as Nigeria, traditional methods of handling food include improper storage, improper temperature, and inadequate personal hygiene of food

handlers, all of which are frequently seen during food marketing and sales (Oghenekohwo, 2015).

Eating away from home is common for students. Indeed, this leads to a foodborne illness in Queens College, Yaba, Lagos, where 50 students were admitted to the school clinic after eating spaghetti and drinking water from the refectory. It was also recorded that specimens collected from 40 kitchen workers revealed that the cyst of *Entamoeba Histolytica* was isolated in the stool of 23 food handlers; *Salmonella paratyphi*, the causative agent of Typhoid Fever, was also isolated from 3 handlers (The Puch Newspaper, 2017). Unfortunately, many school children in Rivers State often fall sick during after-school hours after consuming contaminated food sold by food vendors on the school premises.

Further, food handling practices have received increasing attention in the Philippines due to several factors such as a respectable proportion of the food establishments are all small and medium scale, where there is strict implementation of food safety as well as consumers wider choices but usually not so knowledgeable on the production, storage handling processes of the available commodities (Pajarillo & Ruedas, 2021). In the Philippines, street food

vendors, also referred to as ambulant vendors, are frequently seen in both urban and rural settings. Favorites include siomai, siopan, fishballs, and kwek-kwek, among their many delectable dishes. Even though they are well-known, these vendors frequently work in unofficial, unregulated environments, which raises concerns regarding the caliber and security of the food they provide (Santos et al; Ali et al., 2019).

Moreover, Metro Cebu, Philippines, represents the province's thriving urban centers and is the leading commercial and financial hub in the Visayas and northern Mindanao areas with a population of 1,693,377 (PSA, 2018). It is mainly dependent on the economic opportunities prevailing in the area and the community. The difficulties ambulant vendors experience in maintaining food safety regulations have been clarified by local research. According to Santos et al. (2019), many street food sellers lacked access to adequate waste management systems, handwashing stations, and clean water. According to research by Menes, Japita, Chua, Dico, Parcon, and Makilan (2019), most vendors lacked the licenses and permits that local health authorities requested.

Thus, information on food safety knowledge, attitudes, and practices of institutional food service has been identified as an important gap in food safety research (Ababio & Lovatt, 2015). The study of Boutrus et al. (2021) states that future researchers may use a qualitative approach to understand the role of habit in motivating food safety behaviors of food handlers. Thus, this study will bridge the knowledge gap and highlight areas that need critical attention for handling practices of food vendors. Observing the food handling practices of food handlers in the vicinity of Davao Del Norte State College (DNSC) and providing the food handlers and food operators with a self-checklist to serve as a guide before starting their day-to-day operations.

Further, it is in this strong belief that any institution catering to different consumers such as students, administrators, faculty, and support personnel must ensure that the food served daily in the school setting is healthy, clean, and safe for consumption by being free from contaminants such as physical, chemical, and biological contaminants (Candido, Caronan, & Alinas, 2020).

## II. METHOD

### ➤ *Research Participants*

The target population of this study comprises consumers such as students, teachers, and staff in Davao Del Norte State College on their observation of food vendors operating in the designated area, individuals engaged in various food vending activities, such as street food stalls, mobile vendors, and small-scale food establishments within the college vicinity. Common attributes of interest encompass diverse culinary backgrounds, years of experience in the food industry, years of experience in the food industry, and levels of formal food safety training. Drawing insights from recent studies on qualitative research design (Smith et al., 2023), the sample size was determined through purposive sampling.

During the data gathering, we would conduct around 10 in-depth interviews (IDIs) with individual IP students to explore personal perspectives. According to Creswell (2013), depending on what you are studying and the variety you want to include, having a sample size of 3 to 10 participants in a phenomenological study is often enough to discover and understand the main issues in studying people's observations.

A purposive sampling technique would be employed; this approach allows for the deliberate selection of participants based on the specific criteria relevant to the research objectives (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The selection procedure involves identifying food vendors from diverse locations, including street corners and mobile setups, ensuring a representative sample that captures the variety of food establishments in the study area. The justification for purposive sampling lies in its ability to provide in-depth insights into the practices of interest, aligning with the qualitative nature of the study (Palinkas et al., 2015). This sampling strategy is targeted and insightful in exploring the observation of consumers of food handling practices among vendors near Davao del Norte State College.

The inclusion criteria are for only the students, teachers, and staff in Davao del Norte State College who purchase food frequently in the vicinity of the school. For exclusion criteria, students, teachers, and staff who purchase infrequently and those individuals who are not enrolled/ working in Davao Del Norte State College are not part of this study.

## III. DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is "collecting, modeling, and analyzing data to extract insights that support decision-making."

Analyzing the data gathered in qualitative research is called a thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a method of analyzing qualitative data. Thematic analysis has been a common thread, allowing researchers to identify, analyze, and report patterns within the qualitative data collection from interviews and observations. It is usually applied to texts, such as interviews or transcripts. The researcher closely examines the data to identify common themes, topics, ideas, and patterns of meaning that come up repeatedly.

There are various approaches to conducting thematic analysis. However, the most common form follows a six-step process: familiarization, coding, generating themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing up. Following this process can also help you avoid confirmation bias when formulating your analysis. (Caulfield, 2023). Trustworthiness

Qualitative research explores the intricate details of human behavior, attitudes, and experiences, emphasizing the exploration of nuances and context. Researchers ensure that they establish the credibility and reliability of qualitative findings. This includes elements such as credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability. The key criteria for ensuring the quality of qualitative research include credibility, achieved through extended involvement,

persistent observation, and triangulation; transferability, achieved through comprehensive and detailed explanations; dependability, achieved through rigorous documentation and the creation of an audit trail; and conformability, achieved through peer debriefing, member checking, and reflexive journaling. Reliability in qualitative research is crucial for influencing future research paths and advancing cumulative knowledge. Trustworthy qualitative research findings are also vital for informing.

For instance, Creswell and Poth (2018) highlight the importance of researcher reflexivity, acknowledging that the researcher's biases, values, and experiences inevitably influence the research process and the interpretation of findings. This involves researchers actively reflecting on their perspectives and how they may impact data collection, analysis, and constructing meaning. Furthermore, building trust with participants is crucial for credible research. Engaging with participants collaboratively and ethically, such as through member checking where participants review and validate the researcher's interpretations, enhances the study's trustworthiness by ensuring that the findings accurately reflect the participants' perspectives and experiences.

Additionally, researchers are increasingly incorporating ethical considerations into their trustworthiness assessments. Ensuring participant autonomy, minimizing potential harm, and obtaining informed consent is crucial for building trust and ensuring ethical research practices (Cohen et al., 2018). By incorporating these contemporary perspectives, researchers can strengthen the rigor and trustworthiness of their qualitative research, ensuring that the findings are authentic and meaningful and contributing to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

#### ➤ *Research Design*

This qualitative study employed a phenomenological design to explore and understand the food handling practices of food vendors situated in the vicinity of Davao del Norte State College. The phenomenological approach aligns with the study's objective of examining how consumers perceive and interpret vendors' food handling behaviors. Grounded in Husserl's philosophical framework, this design focuses on uncovering the essence of lived experiences, making it well-suited for investigating food vendors' day-to-day practices and motivations. As Creswell (2013) noted, phenomenology enables researchers to delve into individuals' subjective experiences and uncover deeper meanings that may not be immediately visible.

The researchers conducted in-depth interviews and engaged in participant observation to gather rich and detailed data. These methods allowed for a comprehensive understanding of observable behaviors and their personal reasons. The study is classified as applied research, aiming to address practical concerns about food safety and hygiene. Furthermore, it adopts a descriptive dimension by thoroughly accounting for the food handling practices observed. Ultimately, this research seeks to offer meaningful insights into the behaviors and experiences of local food vendors, contributing to the development of improved food safety strategies within the community.

## IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter encompasses the data gathered by the researchers and discusses the findings from the data gathered, with relevant literature reviewed. It presents the responses of the participants, which have been coded and categorized into emerging themes alongside corresponding supporting responses.

The information was collected through in-depth interviews aimed at exploring the food handling practices of food vendors as observed by consumers. .

#### ➤ *Food Handling Practices of Food Vendors in the Vicinity of Davao Del Norte State College (DNSC)*

After collecting and carefully listening to the opinions of the participants about their observations on the food handling practices of food vendors, the researchers found that four (4) major themes appeared clearly in the data. These important themes helped the researchers create a good and detailed discussion that showed the participants' thoughtful and meaningful ideas. The four main themes that came out were: Sanitation and Hygiene Problems, Inconsistencies in Cleanliness and Preparation, Lack of PPE Awareness, and Food Handling and Cross Contamination Issues.

Each of these themes explains important points about the food vendors' practices based on what the participants observed and shared. All of these themes, along with the main ideas behind them, were carefully organized and shown in Table 2. This table helps to present the core ideas that support each theme, making it easier to understand the participants' views and the key issues in food handling.

Table 1 Food Handling Practices of Food Vendors As Observed By the Consumers In The Vicinity Of Davao Del Norte State College (DNSC)

Essential Themes	Core Ideas
<i>Sanitation and Hygiene Problems</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vendors often do not display sufficient cleanliness by neglecting to wear hairnets and gloves and failing to keep their work area clean.</li> <li>• Dirty food handling environments can lead to health issues such as food poisoning and stomach aches.</li> <li>• Food is not always stored in containers, leading to potential contamination, especially in dusty environments.</li> <li>• Vendors do not consistently wear appropriate protective gear like gloves, hairnets, and masks, and fail to practice regular hand washing.</li> <li>• Food is sometimes not properly packaged, increasing the risk of contamination and compromising food safety</li> </ul>
<i>Inconsistencies of Cleanliness and Preparation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food stalls are often not clean or well-organized, which distracts from hygiene and customer appeal</li> <li>• Vendors do not implement effective measures to keep flies and other pests away from food</li> <li>• Food is sometimes disorganized and slow, compromising hygiene standards.</li> <li>• Food and utensils are not always properly covered, exposing them to environmental contaminants and pests.</li> <li>• PPE is not always visible or properly used, failing to assure consumers of food safety.</li> </ul>
<i>Lack of PPE Awareness</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vendors do not often use gloves and hairnets properly, leading to contamination and risk</li> <li>• Vendors sometimes do not wear additional protective gear like aprons and face masks, especially when they are unwell</li> <li>• PPE is not always visible or properly used, failing to assure consumers of food safety</li> <li>• Vendors do not always meet the high standards of hygiene expected by consumers, including the use of PPE and clean practices</li> <li>• Vendors who do not adhere to hygiene practices miss out on positive feedback and repeat customers</li> </ul>
<i>Food Handling and Cross-Contamination Issues</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vendors do not always use separate utensils for different dishes, increasing the risk of cross-contamination.</li> <li>• Vendors do not consistently wash their hands between handling different tasks or foods.</li> <li>• Vendors often reuse cooking oil, which can affect food quality and safety, leading to consumer dissatisfaction.</li> <li>• Shared sauces are sometimes contaminated due to practices like double-dipping.</li> <li>• Vendors handle money and food without adequate hygiene practices, risking contamination</li> </ul>

Food vendors who handle and prepare food can directly impact the health and safety of their consumers, and many of them are concerned about the cleanliness and hygiene of the food they buy from street vendors and small food stalls. These consumers unfolded a transformative narrative encompassing several observations of food handling by the food vendors. The primary themes: Sanitation and Hygiene Problems, Inconsistent Use of Protective Equipment, Food Handling and Cross-Contamination Issues, Inconsistencies in Cleanliness and Presentation

➤ *Sanitation and Hygiene Problems.*

Consumers noted that food vendors often fail to maintain proper cleanliness and sanitation. A common issue is the neglect of wearing hairnets and gloves, which increases the risk of hair and hand contamination in the food. Also, they observe that the work areas of these vendors are frequently unclean, and their products are prone to dust, flies, and other microbes, which could affect the health of the consumers.

*“Ang ma noticed nako the way na mag handle sila sa ilang mga baligya is dli sila nagagamit og proper sanitation kana pud di mapakita na manghugas sila” IDIPART02*

What I noticed about how they handled the food they sold was that they did not use proper sanitation or show that they washed their hands.)

*““One thing I consider is the way kuhaon nila ang food ibutang nila sa sudlanan kung ilaha pabang tayhupan ang cellophane ana ba and also ang hair basically ang abog sa dalan ang ilaha bang genabutangan ug pagkaon kay close ba siya nga dli mabutngan ug contamination sa air.” IDIPART07*

(“One thing I consider is the placement of the food. How do they put the food into their container? Will they still blow the plastic cellophane when opening it, and also their hair? The dust is on the street. Is their food container securely closed so that no contaminated air can enter?”

*"I think in terms sa food safety ang mahimo sa food vendors noh kanang i-equip lang nila ilang self in terms sa ilang hygiene, kay mostly sa food vendor nga akoang makita sa gawas kay naka ano lang nakasanina na normal walay gloves nya ilang buhok wala nakahipos wala naka hairnet possibly gyud nay something nga madungag sa food." IDIPART05*

("I think in terms of food safety, what food vendors can do is equip themselves properly in terms of hygiene. Most of the food vendors I see outside are just wearing normal clothes without gloves, and their hair is not tied up or covered with a hairnet. This could easily lead to contamination of the food.")

The results reveal significant concerns about the hygiene and food handling practices of food vendors, which can directly impact the safety of the food they sell. One participant observed that vendors often neglect proper sanitation, particularly by not washing their hands before handling food. This is a serious issue because unwashed hands can transfer bacteria, viruses, or other harmful pathogens to food, which can lead to foodborne illnesses. Proper handwashing is one of the simplest yet most effective ways to prevent contamination, and vendors should be more diligent in ensuring that they wash their hands thoroughly before preparing or serving food. This is especially important in food handling to ensure that the food we eat is safe and free from harmful bacteria. (Riyana, 2019).

Another participant raised concerns about how food is stored and handled during preparation. They pointed out that vendors should be more cautious when placing food into containers, ensuring that the containers are properly sealed to avoid contamination. If food is exposed to the air or dust, it could become contaminated by bacteria, dirt, or other environmental factors. Food containers must be tightly closed to protect the food from airborne contaminants and ensure it remains safe for consumption. Additionally, vendors need to be mindful of the environment in which they work, such as the street, which can introduce dirt, dust, and other hazards into the food.

Also, the participant emphasized the lack of proper hygiene practices among food vendors, especially when it comes to wearing protective gear like gloves and hairnets. Many vendors wear regular clothing and do not cover their hair, which increases the chance of contamination from hair, sweat, or clothing fibers. Hairnets or head coverings, along with gloves, are essential in maintaining food safety because they prevent direct contact between the vendor and the food, reducing the risk of contamination. By wearing appropriate clothing and protective gear, vendors can help ensure that their food handling practices meet hygiene standards. As well as

#### ➤ *Inconsistencies in Cleanliness and Presentation.*

According to Poknat and Olivia (not their real names), the food stalls are often unclean, poorly organized, and poorly handled, compromising hygiene and customer appeal. Poor service and interaction can discourage them from doing business with you again.

*"So, they should follow nga mag wear ug gloves and at the same time i-ensure nila na kana ilang puwesto gud kay hinlo ang palibot and ang mga basurahan is layo sa ilahang food. Like naa diria ang food stall tapos duol ra gud ang basurahan kaayo, unya lain baya kaayo na tan-awon. Ilang butanganan og baligya is hinlo pud jud siya, wala jud siya nasudlan og langaw. Diba naa ta'y mga sudlanan, sudlan-sudlanan kanang murag byeldo ing'ana. Unya, naa baya'y tendency jud nga masudlan siya'g langaw so, kana dapat pud na nila nga i-maintain nga dili na siya masudlan og langaw. So that nga ilang baligya is safety, naka follow sila sa food safety protocols." IDIPART09*

(They should also wear gloves and make sure that their place is clean and the trash bins are far from their food. It is very unpleasant to see if the trash bin is near the food. They should also make sure that their food products for sale are clean and free from flies. All the containers should be covered well because there is a tendency for them to be dropped by flies. These simple things they do will ensure that their products are safe and that they follow food safety protocols.)

*"Katong ge ingon nako ganina, akoang gipang mention and at the same time naa pa juy isa kanang ilaha najud. Siguro sa nature najud siguro ni sa vendor noh nga kanang maldita sila kung naay mo palit. Syempre as a customer mo palit ka then lain pud kaayo sila mo baligya kay hatag-hatag lang, dili gud maka abi-abi ba, dili ( mo balik ta didto kay but-an ang tindera ing-ana ba isa pud baya na siya sa atoang gin look forward mao nang naa tay gina tawag nga suki, suki-suki kay tungod ang tindera nga ga handle ana nga mga baligya is buotan siya., oh ma abi-abihon and at the same time kabalo jud siya mo handle og pagkaon og kabalo jud siya kung unsaon niya pag market ang iyahang baligya." IDIPART09*

(As I have mentioned earlier, maybe it is just their nature as vendors. Sometimes they can be rude if someone buys something they should consider. Because of the character of the vendor, as a customer, we did not like to come back to their store. That is why we have regular customers because the seller who handles them is kind-hearted and easy to approach, and at the same time, she knows how to handle customers and how to market her products.)

Inconsistencies in cleanliness and presentation in food vending are crucial issues impacting both food safety and customer satisfaction. Participants observed that vendors often fail to maintain clean stalls, keep food properly covered, and ensure trash bins are distanced from food. Such practices not only compromise hygiene but also detract from the appeal of the food stall. It can have a big impact on consumer health, perspectives, and business reputation. The failure of the vendors to employ adequate pest control methods can create serious health hazards and decrease the quality of the food. Several studies have shown that having proper pest control makes it hard to maintain food safety and reduce foodborne illnesses. Pests like flies not only cause health problems but also have an impact on the overall quality of the food and the reputation of the food vendors. Consumers will avoid food stalls with visible pests. The presence of pests at food stalls

can result in a significant decline in customers and sales and negatively impact their trust (Chen et al., 2020).

➤ *Lack of PPE Awareness,*

Poknat, Olivia, Jeg, and Jolo (not their real names) narrated that most vendors do not frequently use Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) when handling and preparing the food.

*“Ang one thing jud nako nag nakita is dili jud sila ga use og gloves. Like for example, to be specific diraa sa may marayaan, yes dili jud sila gagamit. Though, ang maruya gina tusok lang siya sa tirungan, pero if you are a food vendor dapat jud i-ensure nimu nga ga gloves ka kay food imong gina baligya and at the same time, dapat pud nga ang katong imohang ge baligya is safe” IDIPART09*

(One thing that I have noticed is that they do not use gloves. For example, at the banana-que stall, they do not use gloves. If you are a food vendor, you should really make sure to wear gloves because you are selling food. Moreover, at the same time, the food you are selling should be safe to eat. So, it is important to make sure both the food and the handling are safe.

*“I think one of the things nga ilang i-consider kay ilang PPE dli lang tungod nag gloves sila kay okay na, magsuot said dapat sila ug mouth mask kay basin gipang ubo sila, sa hair they should wear hairnet and then sailahang hand basically dili lang ppe nga makita sailahang kalawasan but also mag perform sila nga maghugas ug kamot.” IDIPART07*

(One of the things they consider is their protective equipment (PPE), which is not just because they wear gloves; that is already enough. They should also cover their mouths or wear face masks in case they have a cough, as well as cover their hair. It is not just the PPE that should be visible on their body; they should also perform hand washing.)

*“Sa akong na observe na mga mistakes nila is dli sila kaayo naga focus sa ilang PPE's sa pagtinda og sa pag luto usahay man gud kay matagak ang mga buhok nila sa pagkaon so as ikaw na consumer dli ka ganahan mupalit no syempre, og naay instance sa may street food sa gawas kay gina balik-balik ang mantika and visible kaayo tan-awon sa mga costumer no mapansin jud og ang mga sauce kay naay sometimes na mga butang na dili dapat naa sa sawsawan, og naa pa diay koy na notice naa pay uban sad na wala naga mask tapos ang ilahang droplets sa laway kay maabot sa pagkaon.” IDIPART05*

(What I have observed about their mistakes is that they do not focus much on their PPE (personal protective equipment) when selling and cooking. Sometimes, their hair falls into the food, which, as a consumer, you would not want to buy, right? Also, there is an instance with street food vendors who repeatedly use the same oil, and it is very visible to the customers. You can notice it, and the sauces sometimes contain things that should not be there. Additionally, I have noticed that some of them do not wear masks, and their saliva droplets can get onto the food.)

The Lack of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) by food vendors is a significant concern in maintaining food safety. PPE, including gloves, hairnets, aprons, and masks, is essential for preventing contamination and ensuring hygienic food handling. When food vendors fail to use PPE correctly or consistently, they increase the risk of foodborne illnesses and compromise consumer health. According to a study by Smith et al. (2018), the improper use of gloves and other protective gear can lead to the transfer of bacteria from the hands to the food, causing contamination. Additionally, a report by Brown (2020) pointed out that vendors often overlook wearing masks, which can lead to saliva droplets contaminating the food, this was also narrated by one of the participants “dli sila kaayo naga focus sa ilang PPE's sa pagtinda og sa pag luto usahay man gud kay matagak ang mga buhok nila sa pagkaon so as ikaw na consumer dli ka ganahan mupalit, naa pay uban sad na wala naga mask tapos ang ilahang droplets sa laway kay maabot sa pagkaon” .

The study emphasized that even when gloves are used, they must be changed frequently, and hands must be washed to maintain hygiene. Jones and Williams (2019) found that many food vendors do not wear hairnets, resulting in hair and other particles falling into the food. Their research highlighted that proper PPE usage not only protects the food but also gives consumers confidence in the cleanliness and safety of the food being served. This is particularly crucial in preventing the spread of respiratory illnesses, especially outside the schools.

➤ *Food Handling and Cross Contamination.*

As narrated by Inday, Jolo, and Pat, not their real name, they observed some issues that the food vendors do when preparing the food.

*“Kanang mag puli puli, kapareha anang tusloanan sa sauce dli jud siya proper kay bisan kinsa raman dli biya na nila matan awan no kung nakuanan na ba sa customer kay tungod sa ka busy pud or samot na ug daghan sila ug customer kanang ilang sawsaw pareha sad anang mga stick wa ta kabalo ug nalangawan ba na or kanang mga straw.” IDIPART08*

(It is not proper when customers dip their food in the container sauce. They do not pay attention to whether someone has already dipped into it or not. Maybe because they are too busy or there are too many customers, they dip without checking if it has already been used. The same goes for the sticks and straws; we do not know if they have been touched or not.)

*“Sa akong na observe na mga mistakes nila is dli sila kaayo naga focus sa ilang PPE's sa pagtinda og sa pag luto usahay man gud kay matagak ang mga buhok nila sa pagkaon so as ikaw na consumer dli ka ganahan mupalit no syempre, og naay instance sa may street food sa gawas kay gina balik-balik ang mantika and visible kaayo tan-awon sa mga costumer no mapansin jud og ang mga sauce kay naay sometimes na mga butang na dili dapat naa sa sawsawan, og naa pa diay koy na notice naa pay uban sad na wala naga*

**mask tapos ang ilahang droplets sa laway kay maabot sa pagkaon." IDIPART05**

(What I have observed about their mistakes is that they do not focus much on their PPE (personal protective equipment) when selling and cooking. Sometimes, their hair falls into the food, which, as a consumer, you would not want to buy, right? Also, there is an instance with street food vendors who repeatedly use the same oil, and it is very visible to the customers. You can notice it, and the sauces sometimes contain things that should not be there. Additionally, I have noticed that some of them do not wear masks, and their saliva droplets can get onto the food.)

"Akong ma observed lang noh is **kanang diba magdawat sila og kwarta, ginabutang lang nila tapad sa ilang baligya and then if magdawat silag kwarta dili na sila manghunaw, dili na sila mag alcohol mao na akong ma observe like very wrong.**" IDIPART02

(As I observe, what I usually see is that when they accept money, they just put it beside the food, and they do not wash or use alcohol on their hands, which is very wrong for a food vendor to do.

It is reflected in the theme of food handling and cross-contamination issues that the hands of the food handlers can serve as vectors in the spread of foodborne diseases due to

poor hygiene. Participants have frequently mentioned the non-availability of hand gloves, sanitizers, and utensils. The availability of these supplies and tools is a determinant in ensuring compliance with the standard of safe food preparation practices. A participant observed that some food stalls are practicing double-dipping in their sauces. Scientific research has shown that double dipping significantly increases the microbial load in shared sauces. A study conducted by Dawson et al. (2017) demonstrated that double-dipping can introduce considerable amounts of bacteria into sauces. This raises concerns about the spread of illnesses, as pathogens like the influenza virus, norovirus, and other common bacteria can be transferred via saliva.

In food handling practices by vendors, consumers are the individuals who buy and consume food products, influencing industry standards and food safety protocols through their insights, behaviors, and preferences. After obtaining the participants' experience of frequently purchasing food from various food vendors, there were four (4) primary themes emerged that led the researcher to come up with a good discussion displaying their insightful thoughts: Highlighting the Importance of Health and Safety, The Need in Maintaining Hygiene and Cleanliness Standards, High Regards to Customer Well-being and Satisfaction Keeping Trust and Support to the Vendors, Ensuring transparent practices. These were presented in Table 2 with core ideas.

Table 2 Coping Mechanisms of the Challenges Encountered in Making the Job Shift.

Essential Themes	Core Ideas
<i>Highlighting the Importance of Health and Safety</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customers highly prioritize food safety to avoid illnesses like food poisoning.</li> <li>• Customers pay close attention to vendors' food handling practices, such as wearing gloves and using clean utensils.</li> <li>• Ensuring food is handled properly builds trust and confidence in the vendor's products. Proper food handling minimizes the risk of contamination, ensuring the safety of customers.</li> </ul>
<i>High Regard for Customer Well-being and Satisfaction</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cleanliness of the store and surroundings is crucial for customers when deciding where to buy food</li> <li>• Customers expect vendors to maintain proper attire and personal hygiene to prevent contamination.</li> <li>• Customers prefer vendors who maintain clean and organized display areas for food, indicating proper hygiene practices.</li> <li>• Customers prioritize vendors who take measures to prevent food contamination from dust, flies, and other pollutants.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Value clear and readily available waste disposal options, maintaining a clean environment.</li> <li>• Value clear and readily available waste disposal options, maintaining a clean environment.</li> <li>• Food vendors who offer eco-friendly packaging options to sustain and cater to the environment.</li> <li>• Utilizing proper food covers ensures the freshness and safety of displayed food, leading to satisfaction and a sense of well-being.</li> </ul>
<i>Ensuring transparent practices</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prompt service and friendly interactions with vendors contribute to positive customer experiences.</li> <li>• Food vendors' compliance with the food safety regulations enhances overall customer satisfaction.</li> <li>• Customers increasingly value knowing where their food comes from and how it is prepared.</li> </ul>

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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food Vendors may apply safe and transparent methods to build credibility and ensure that customers know they can rely on the vendor for quality and safety.</li> <li>• Practicing and displaying proper hygiene, such as regular handwashing and clean workspaces, reassures customers about food safety.</li> </ul> |
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➤ *Assuring Health and Safety*

As narrated by JC, Pat, and Poknat, the importance of health and Food safety practices is in preventing illness. Clear hygiene measures build customer trust, while customers can also influence vendor behavior by being observant of the way the vendor handles the food and how they do not use proper sanitation. Proper food handling is crucial to ensure the food you consume is safe and does not cause foodborne illness.

***“For the safety of the health of the people, and also to prevent food poisoning. To ensure na healthy ug safe ang atoang ginakaon.” IDIPART10***

(To ensure the health and safety of the people and to prevent food poisoning. Moreover, to ensure that the food we eat is safe and clean.)

***“Based on my observation, they handle the food with care, they use appropriate gloves and necessities.” IDIPART10***

*“Personally, when I buy food, I first observe the cleanliness of the store and how they handle their food because we all know that sanitation is important for food safety. As a customer, we must be mindful of how the vendors serve the food we eat.” IDIPART01*

*“Dapat properly handled nila ang ilahang business, na dili maka prone sa food poisoning.” IDIPART10*

(“To avoid food poisoning, they should properly handle their food business.”)

The importance of proper food handling is reflected in the theme, Assuring health and safety means taking steps to prevent accidents, injuries, and illnesses. This involves using protective equipment and maintaining a clean and hazard-free environment. Assuring food safety is defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as the conditions and measures required during the production, processing, and preparation of food to ensure that it is safe for human consumption (Getachew F, 2010). All roles are vital and invaluable in the process. Whether you are a business owner or a customer, your role cannot be replaced. Food safety is everyone’s responsibility. (Violetta Njunina, 2021). Ensuring safe food handling is something that everyone should be able to practice, both at home and in the workplace. Food safety is essential to prevent foodborne illnesses and improve human well-being. (Kambhampati LLA, 2013). Good knowledge, a positive attitude among the food handlers, and proper food handling practices can help control the occurrence of foodborne diseases in some circumstances (Sharif & Al-Malki, 2010). Thus, a generally used tool to ensure hygienic-sanitary quality is the application of the model Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices (KAP) (Da Cunha, Stedefeldt & De Rosso, 2014a).

➤ *The Need in Maintaining Hygiene and Cleanliness Standards,*

As narrated by Poknat, Olivia, Jeg, and Pat (not their real name). It is essential for vendors not just to sell good food or products but also to ensure the safety and health of their customers. With that, proper food handling practices, wearing personal protective equipment, and cleanliness of their food stall surroundings should be maintained visibly so that the customer feels assured that the food they purchase or eat is clean, safe, and not contaminated.

***“Importante jud na siya kay, first and foremost it’s food so, akoy mo kaon ana dapat conscious ta sa atoang ginapangkaon kay what if kana atoang geipalit hugaw diay na siya wala ta kabalo diba? So, mao nang dapat jud importante siya nga a proper food handling ang mga vendor para apud mga customer ma assure ta nga ay diri ta nga baligya kay hinlo gud, makita nato nga hinlo. So, ma assure nato sa atoang self nga safe atoang gina kaon dili hugaw” IDIPART09***

(It is important because, first and foremost, it is food, so when we eat, we should be conscious of what we are consuming, because what if what we bought is dirty and we do not know? That is why it is important for vendors to have proper food handling practices so that we, as customers, can be assured that what we are buying is clean and visibly clean. So, we can assure ourselves that what we are eating is safe and not contaminated.)

***“Isip usa ka costumer, siyempre usa sa mga hinungdan nga makadani nako sa pagpalit mao ang paagi sa pag-andam sa mga tindera sa pagkaon, kung magsul-ob siya og PPE, tungod kay ang kalimpyo naghatag usa ka dako nga epekto sa tibuuk nga tindahan” IDIPART01***

(As a customer myself, of course, one of the factors that might entice me to buy is how the vendors prepare the food, if they wear PPE, as cleanliness has a big impact on the entire store.)

***“Kailangan ilang I observe na sa palibot nila hinlo kay maka cause man gud siya anang hugaw sa pagkaon. And then sa mga tindera, sa ginasuot nila naka proper attire gud dili na murag naa lang sa balay or unsa to akong naingon na warag naka apron, tapos naka gloves then naka hairnet” IDIPART02***

(They need to observe cleanliness around them because it can cause the food to get dirty. And then for the vendors, what they wear should be proper attire. It should not look like they are just at home. As I mentioned, they should wear an apron, gloves, and a hairnet.)

*"I think one of the practices that they should follow kato siya the way they serve food the way they prepare food diraa man gud sila nagaluto mismo sa kalsada ba niya dapat habang dinha sila ga luto the way sila magluto pud dili pud kaayu siya more expose sa abog nga butang the way sila mag serve." IDIPART07*

(I think one of the practices they should follow is how they serve and prepare food, especially since they cook right there on the street. While they are cooking, they should also be mindful of how they prepare the food, so they are not overly exposed to smoke and other pollutants. They should also be careful about how they serve the food, ensuring proper hygiene and cleanliness.)

The participants observed that some vendors often neglect to maintain cleanliness in their food stall area, display their food without any cover, and improperly prepare and serve the food, which customers find unpleasant and unhygienic to look at. However, there are some food vendors, who put an effort in maintaining the surroundings of their food stall area clean, display their food with covers and observed proper food handling at all times which customers find it good and hygienic this posited that food safety can however, be enhanced by creating awareness through training and implementation of stringent hygiene measures along the value chain (production, processing, storage, distribution, and consumption) (Korada et al., 2018). In the participants' perception, the unsanitary environment, the lack of awareness of food safety regulations, poor knowledge of hygiene, and improper food handling practices are the most common reasons for food vendors failing to maintain hygiene and cleanliness standards in their food stalls and the food they sell.

Maintaining Hygiene and Cleanliness standards is difficult for street food vendors, who possess low educational training and often lack adequate food safety knowledge and skills (Samapundo et al., 2015). They are likely not to execute food safety procedures during the handling and preparation of food (Noor, 2016), and this could lead to the contamination of food. Maintaining Hygiene and cleanliness standards became one of the emerging concerns of the participants' responses, wherein, according to them. However, food vendors practice proper food handling from preparing and serving their product and follow food safety standards, they still fail to maintain the hygiene and cleanliness of their food, especially when they have many customers, as they often forget to wash their hands when touching the food. They also often forget to maintain wearing their PPE, which may put the customer's health at risk. This could be attributed to the fact that many of the street food vendors often have not been trained in food hygiene practices, and most street food vending sites often lack a portable water supply (Al Mamun et al., 2013; Singh et al., 2016)

#### ➤ *High Regards To Customer Well-Being and Satisfaction,*

As narrated by Olivia, Jeg, Rib, and Inday. A clean display area with properly segregated garbage bins ensures food safety and visual comfort to the customer. Adopting a school policy by using eco-friendly packaging demonstrates

a responsible practice and ensures the food is safe. Customers appreciate stalls with covers that shield the food from dust and other contaminants. A friendly and approachable seller creates a positive customer experience that makes them return.

*Tapos angbutanganan nila, display diba na diraa? Dapat hinlo pud na siya diraa. Tapos naa pud silay kanang segregation of mga basura kung asa dapat. Asa dapat ang basurahan ana! Para hinlo ang ilahang gina baligya, para mas appealing siya tan-awon. IDIPART09*

(Their display area should also be clean. Additionally, they should have proper segregation of garbage bins. Where should the trash go? This is to keep their food product clean and more appealing to customers.)

*"So basically, isa sa mga signs and indicators sa isa ka vendors nga akoang preference kay ilahang lugar sa kilid kilid ba nila walay basura nga nagtapun og or dli kayo siya basurahan nga open ba, ilabay lang dinha ang basura nga pwede ra kuanan ug langaw padulong sailing baligya. IDIPART07*

(So basically, one of the signs and indicators determining my preference for a vendor is how clean their area is. If their surroundings are free of garbage piled up or do not have an open trash bin where people throw their trash, it could attract flies toward their merchandise.)

*"Packaging nila. Especially sa atoang school, we are implementing no plastic policy, and they are I guess observe that one so ilahang jud nang na initiative to do food packaging and ma secure sad ang pagkaon na atoang genadala." IDIPART06*

(Their packaging, particularly in our school, we are enforcing a no-plastic policy, and it seems they are adhering to it by taking the initiative to use alternative packaging for food. This ensures that the food we bring is safely secure.)

*.pero ganahan ko anang uban dinha kay nay cover mga stante nga matabunan jud ang mga pagkaon and its very nice." IDIPART06*

*(I like some of the stalls there, where they have a cover for their stall that covers their food, and it is very nice.)*

The interviews revealed that cleanliness, organization, and hygienic food display significantly influence consumers' preference for food vendors. Participants highlighted the importance of maintaining a tidy and garbage-free environment around stalls, emphasizing that trash should be properly segregated and disposed of to avoid attracting pests that could contaminate the food. Customers are particularly observant of whether vendors use closed trash bins and follow sanitation practices that prevent unsanitary conditions. Furthermore, participants acknowledged the vendors' efforts to comply with institutional policies, such as the no-plastic rule in schools, by using alternative and secure food packaging, which contributes to the overall cleanliness and

safety of the product. These practices not only preserve food quality but also establish a sense of trust between consumers and vendors. Clean surroundings, organized waste disposal, and safe packaging collectively shape customer satisfaction and influence buying decisions, as they reinforce the perception that the food is well-handled and safe to eat.

*...Sailahang butanganan ug foods kabalo man ta na bawal diri ang plastic so bisan dapat paper naa jud siya tama nga butanganan pud niya sailing pagluto sa kilid kanang limpyo kaayu sila kay habang ginasala nila kay ginatabunan nila ug something aron dili maabogan."* IDIPART08

(As for their food containers, they should use appropriate containers since we know plastic is prohibited here. Also, it must be placed appropriately, even if it is only a paper container, and they should put a cover or something so that it will not get dusty.)

*kani gani diria ganahan jud ko saiya dinha kay makita jud nimo gikan sa iyahang lutuanan limpyo jud siya hamis tanan naka separate jud iyang mga cellophane unya iyahang pong mga sawsawan kay ay taklob unya iyang mga baligya naa sa stante kana lang jud..."* IDIPART08

(I would like to go to her store because you can see from her cooking area that it is clean, everything is neatly separated in cellophane, and her condiments have covers. Her products are on a stand.

Moreover, High regard for Customer Well-being and Satisfaction is important for food safety and ensuring customer well-being and satisfaction. When vendors uphold rigorous hygiene practices, they significantly reduce the risk of foodborne illnesses, safeguarding the health of their customers. Therefore, customers prefer those food vendors who prioritize their health and safety over those food vendors who only think of their profit. Moreover, customers became dissatisfied with the product if it did not meet their expectations, while satisfied customers were loyal to a product or service if the product met the customers' expectations (Kursunluoglu, 2011). Customers are more likely to trust vendors who prioritize cleanliness, leading to increased confidence in the quality and safety of the food being served.

Thus, maintaining hygiene and cleanliness standards is a fundamental aspect of food safety and a key driver of customer well-being and satisfaction. A participant observed that some food stalls always observed personal hygiene while others did not. Studies in the United States (US) found that the personal hygiene of food handlers was a significant factor contributing to customer satisfaction and their intention to revisit despite some areas requiring improvements, such as table hygiene, food temperature, and handwashing lavatory (Liu P, Lee YM, 2018). Moreover, a food vendor with good customer service will likely retain customers. Therefore, service quality and customer satisfaction are essential to a food vendor since a business's growth largely depends on how well it maintains its customers through service and keeps its

customers satisfied (Edward & Sahadev, 2011). In addition, customer satisfaction results from good service efficiency, which will improve customer engagement and interrelationships (Chang et al., 2017).

➤ *Ensuring Transparent Practices.*

As narrated by Nanny, Jc, Princess, Pat, and Rib, the Customer wants to know exactly what is in their food, but the water sources are unclear and unknown. They value cleanliness and healthy options, especially for students. They believe vendors can improve by attending training and collaborating with health officials, highlighting the need for education on specific practices for safe food preparation and hygienic ways of using utensils.

*"Naay uban na organize kay tungod naay label makita sa costumer, kanang ma aware ko kung unsa ang ginabutang sa akong food ana, naa lang sometimes mo question ka kung asa gikan ang water, asa gikan ang ice, hinlo ba or dili. So, for example, palit kog milk tea kuan pas pas siya naay uban na dugay naa puy uban na paspas, so far sa akoang ginapalitan nagabalik-balik ko it's because paspas siya and hinlo ang way sa pag prepare."* IDIPART03

(“Some are organized because they have labelled that the customer can see, which makes me aware of what is being put in my food. However, sometimes, you might wonder where the water and ice come from and if they are clean or not. Sometimes when I buy milk tea, some stores serve the drink quickly, while others take a while to serve the drink...”)

*"Kani man gud pag mo consume man gud ta og food we need to consider man gud. We need to consider kung asa ta mag palit, kung hugaw atoang ginapalitan ganahan ba ta mo kaon unya ma dare ba nimo nga ipakaon pud na sa imohang family ingana gud unya syempre naa poy uban kung mupalit ka unya kung aso kaau didto sa gawas ganahan ka mo duol sa ilaha syempre importante jud nga i-choose pud nato kung unsa atong ginapalit sa gawas like maka tabang bani sa health? Oily ra ba kaayo ni? So mao pud na ang i-consider sa namaligya nga dapat healthy kay students' man gud ang ilang consumer."* IDIPART03

(“When we consume food, we indeed need to be careful about where we buy it. If the place is dirty, would we dare to eat there? And would we feel safe giving that food to our family? Some places are very dirty, and we would not want to go near them. It is important to choose carefully what we buy from outside. Is it healthy? Is it too oily? Vendors should consider these things because their customers are often students, and it is important to provide healthy food.”)

*("They should follow food guidelines, attend a seminar on how to handle the food when cooking and preparing properly.")* IDIPART10

*"Para sa akoo noh para ma improve ang ilahang food handling practices, kailangan nila mag attend of mga seminar regarding ana, dapat sad makipag coordinate sila sa City Health, para maka balo sila if unsaon pag handle sa food in a clean and hygienic way."* IDIPART04

(For me, to improve their food handling practices, they need to attend seminars about it, and they should also coordinate with the City Health Department to learn how to handle food cleanly and hygienically.)

***“So dira na part ang akoang signs or indicators na gina tan-aw na ma sure nga hinlo og hygienic ilang baligya is the way they handle their utensils, food.” IDIPART06***

(My signs or indicators that I look for to make sure their food is placed hygienically are the way they handle their utensils and food.)

Proper food handling relies on ensuring transparent practices. By implementing clear procedures for receiving, storing, preparing, and serving food, businesses can ensure consumer confidence. This transparency can be achieved through detailed labeling, clear communication with suppliers, and readily available information about food handling practices. Consumers find it important that food manufacturers be transparent about how food is made (Label Insight, 2016). To trace food throughout the supply chain, information should be available from “farm to fork” and beyond, as well as information pertaining to shipping, packaging, and storage conditions until consumer purchase. Additionally, importance should be placed on continuing to provide consumers with information after food is purchased, which aids consumers in knowing the expiration status of food products (Mustafa & Andreescu, 2018). Also, adequate food safety training of all employees can positively impact food safety in the retail food industry, while others have agreed that employee training and implementation of safe food practices are essential in preventing foodborne illnesses (Roberts et al., 2008; York et al., 2009).

## V. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The study's results give us valuable insights into how consumers observe and evaluate food vendors' food-handling practices. These observations align with the Impression Management Theory, which explains that people, whether they realize it or not, try to control how others see them. They do this to shape opinions about themselves, events, or even things they own. People use different strategies to present themselves in a way that helps them achieve their goals (Goffman, 1959). This theory is reflected in the behavior of food vendors at Davao del Norte State College.

Vendors adopt visible hygiene practices—such as wearing gloves, using hairnets, keeping food covered, and maintaining clean stalls—not merely out of routine but as strategic efforts to project an image of cleanliness and professionalism. These actions serve as deliberate performance cues intended to manage how customers perceive the safety and quality of their food. In this way, food-handling becomes a tool for shaping customer impressions, just as Goffman suggested people tailor their actions to influence others' perceptions in everyday interactions.

Customers, in turn, interpret these visible practices as indicators of food safety and vendor reliability. The vendors' performance, therefore, directly affects consumer trust and purchasing behavior. When vendors appear hygienic and careful, customers are more likely to feel confident and loyal, showing that impression management is not just a theoretical concept but a real and practical influence on consumer choices. Thus, the link between the theory and the study's results is clear: food vendors use impression management techniques through food-handling practices to influence customer perception, build trust, and increase sales.

Health Belief Model (HBM) by Janz & Becker (1984) and Jeong & Ham (2018) also supports this, suggesting that understanding food-handling behavior involves assessing the perceived health risks related to food safety. Consumers' perceptions of these risks influence their behavior and intentions regarding food handling. In this study, consumers' observations of food vendors' practices highlight behaviors that indicate how food is handled and prepared.

Consumers have noted several key issues in food vendors' practices, particularly regarding sanitation and hygiene. Many vendors do not maintain proper cleanliness in their hygiene and environment, which can lead to health issues. Additionally, The Lack of PPE Awareness is a major factor in food contamination, affecting food safety. For example, vendors often fail to use separate utensils for different dishes, increasing the risk of cross-contamination. Practices like double-dipping sauces further exacerbate these risks. Furthermore, inconsistencies in cleanliness and presentation are evident. Food vendors frequently do not take effective measures to keep flies and other pests away from food, compromising hygiene standards. This lack of adherence to proper food handling practices leads to consumer dissatisfaction, as vendors do not meet the expected standards of cleanliness and customer service.

To assure health and safety, consumers need to trust that food handlers are practicing proper handling techniques. The Need to maintain hygiene and high standards is crucial for the cleanliness of the store and its surroundings, influencing where customers choose to buy food. Ensuring transparent practices, keeping customer well-being and satisfaction in mind, and building trust are essential for managing food handling in a way that makes consumers confident that the food is safe to eat.

## VI. IMPLICATION AND CONCLUDING REMARK

### ➤ *Implication For Practice*

In accordance with the significant results of this study, there are several implications for practice in promoting health awareness and education. These implications are based on the observation of consumers of the food handling practices by the food vendors.

The research findings suggest that BTLED Students can be given opportunities to take part in organizing and participating in health awareness programs with food

vendors. These programs can include symposiums, group activities, and investigatory projects focused on food safety and proper food handling practices. For example, learning how to keep food clean and using PPE correctly can be part of these activities.

Additionally, BTLED Educators play an important role in teaching students about food safety and encouraging better food handling practices. Educators can share information about the correct ways to handle food to ensure it is safe to eat. They can also use hands-on activities in the kitchen to show students how to handle food properly. This approach helps students understand that handling food correctly is crucial for safety.

Moreover, local governments can implement programs to assess how food handlers manage food for consumers, especially for students, teachers, and school staff. They can create a checklist for daily operations to ensure that food handlers follow proper practices.

Food handlers can improve their methods based on consumer observations. They can enhance their food handling practices, maintain a clean environment and stall, and ensure personal hygiene. By doing so, they can offer healthier food to consumers and attract more customers to buy their products.

#### ➤ *Implication For Future Research*

Many insightful ideas are imparted in the phenomenological study: “Food Handling Practices of Food Vendors in the vicinity of Davao Del Norte State College (DNSC). In light of this, there are several areas in which future research could broaden this study and enhance the grasp of knowledge on the subject matter of this underlying phenomenon. One area for future research is to explore more about food handlers’ perspectives on how they prepare food.

Also, the future researcher may dig deeper into the food handling practices, which both the vendor and the consumer will observe.

Lastly, they may expand their exploration by conducting a research study on students’ perspectives on the food handling practices by the food vendors.

#### ➤ *Concluding Remark*

In this study, many individuals are great at observing the practices that the food vendors do, and it shows that they are aware of those practices that can greatly affect their health in a negative and positive way. Those individuals have been given the chance to narrate their experiences and observations on the food vendors' food handling practices. As we complete this research, we discover different observations of the different consumers—students, staff, and teachers—in the food stalls in the vicinity of Davao del Norte State College.

This study showed that the proper food handling practices of food vendors will greatly contribute to the views and perceptions of consumers. For them as consumers, being

knowledgeable about proper hygiene, sanitation, presentation of food, and having a presentable attitude are the factors that they want to see in those food vendors. They are ensuring that the food vendors comply with the standards of hygiene, proper use of personal protective equipment, regular hand washing, and maintaining the cleanliness of their stalls. It shows in the observations that vendors lack in these areas, which leads to dissatisfaction and health concerns of the consumers. In addition to building the trust of consumers, they need to ensure their safety, prioritize proper handling practices, and accept the feedback of their customers.

Furthermore, some issues that they observed or discovered are that they are not committed to personal grooming, the potential risk that the environment poses, and a lack of knowledge about personal hygiene. Most of the consumers wanted the food vendors to attend seminars or sessions about proper handling of the food, not just the food, but themselves and their food stalls.

During this investigation, we concluded that it was indeed not an easy path, especially in merging two or more ideas from diverse sources to make sensible ones. The desire to use a qualitative design equates to the idea of gathering insights from those involved in the study, as well as researchers from various literature sources. Furthermore, how we perceived something was vital in completing this research project.

Committing to this study has similarities to pursuing personal growth and improvement. This includes demonstrating good growth and improvement. However, it is important to highlight that the words and thoughts presented in this research are not the end goal. Implementing what was written in our research into real-life activities, such as programs and initiatives, examines how successfully our research can have a positive impact in the academic world

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