

## Food safety knowledge, attitude, and practice of consumers in Malaysia: a review

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### Abstract

Food safety is a crucial issue in every country. Without a good food safety system, a country will suffer economically and socially. This paper aims to revisit the literature on food safety knowledge, attitude, and practice in Malaysia and globally. Foodborne illnesses are caused by food that has been contaminated at any stage of the food production, delivery, and consumption chain. Non-compliance with food handling guidelines linked to a lack of food safety awareness was the leading cause of foodborne illnesses. This paper highlighted consumers' role in preventing foodborne diseases by following food safety recommendations when preparing food at home. Hence, studies on consumers' food safety knowledge, attitude, and practice are very important for future development programs on food safety guidelines, and to ensure successful implementations.

## 1. Introduction

Food safety has always been a crucial issue in every country, whether it is a developed country or a developing country, and more so when it is a poor country. Without a good food safety system, the country will suffer not only socially, but also economically. For instance, the economic impact of foodborne diseases in the United States alone is approximately as high as \$80 billion, including treatment costs, expenses connected to lost productivity, and decreased life quality of affected persons (Okour *et al.*, 2020). In Malaysia, every year, there are cases related to foodborne diseases and at times, it causes death. In the past five years, from 2016 to 2021, the cases of foodborne diseases were in the hundreds range, even with the 2020 lockdown. According to data from Malaysia Annual Report Food Safety and Quality 2021, food poisoning cases grew consistently between 2017 and 2019. 2017 had 401 cases which increased to 496 cases in 2018 and reached its

peak at 516 cases in 2019. The cases dropped down to 288 cases in 2020 and 123 cases as of September 2021 (Zainal, 2021). Although it has dropped significantly, it is still an alarming number.

According to World Health Organization (WHO) (2022), foodborne illnesses are caused by food that has been contaminated at any stage of the food production, delivery, and consumption chain. The effect of foodborne illness varies depending on the microorganism involved and the common symptoms are such as diarrhoea, stomachache, headache and feeling lethargic. In Malaysia, the Prevention and Control of Infectious Diseases Act 1988 (Act 342) has listed cholera, dysentery, food poisoning, Hepatitis A, and typhoid/paratyphoid fever as diseases that can emerge from a bad source of food and water.

Many foodborne infections are caused by the negligence of food sellers, and most occurrences occur in

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