

LINKAGES BETWEEN HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND FOOD SAFETY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM: A CASE OF FAST FOOD COURTS IN NAIROBI CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT**Jane Muthoni Weru**Office of the Deputy President
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ABSTRACT

This paper examines human resource management (HRM) practices and food safety management system focused on continuous improvement and the linkages between them in food courts in Nairobi Central business District. This research used a multiple-methods approach, qualitative and quantitative; to assure the research validity. The target population of the study was limited to 200 food courts with 5-10 employees in Nairobi city. The sample obtained from the target population was through simple random sampling whereby 30% of the 200 food courts in Nairobi Central Business District was randomly picked. Findings show that efforts by these continuous quality improvement activities are largely informal. The research found out that aspects of food safety management practices and quality improvement were obtained through informal suggestions from customers, empowerment through supervisors, and close control of costs by the owners. Feedback from customers was controlled and limited to long serving employees and regular customers. Prominent HRM practices identified for this study include recruitment and selection, Training and development, performance management and remuneration. Under recruitment and selection employees were sourced through referrals from employees and during interviews the employee quality most sought was the willingness to work. Under training and development, the training methods included training by supervisors, work methods, and on the job - training. The personal/social skills were the most important contents of any training as opposed to technical skills required to do the job. Typical primary compensations provided were wages and salaries, while a variety of different benefits were provided. Most of the firms did not have systematic

appraisal and the appraisers were mostly the owner and supervisors. The analysis of the relationships between HRM practices and Food safety management practices showed several positive correlations. The practice of suggestions had a high correlation with the use of interviews by supervisors for employee selection, the use of supervisors as appraisers and the use of appraisal results for training. The owners who were well informed of food safety standards tended to have employees trained about safety skills. The use customer feedback was found as having a high correlation with the use of appraisal results for training.

***Key words:** Food Safety, Food safety management system (FSMS), Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP), Human Resource Management, Recruitment and Selection, Training and Development, Performance Management, Remuneration*

Introduction

Human resource management has long been referred to as the most important part of quality management models. Human resource management is an important aspect of any organization including employees of fast food courts. A well managed fast food court will consider employees as a priority as opposed to the financial benefit (Marato, 2008). Satisfaction of human resources is closely linked to highly motivated employees and thus good performance and low turnover.

Food safety is a concept that food will not cause harm to the consumer when it is prepared and/ or eaten according to its intended use (ISO 22000:2005(E)). Effective management of the food safety is only possible if everyone involved understands their role and standards / procedures that should be applied. The food safety team and other personnel carrying out activities having impact on food safety are required to be competent and have appropriate education, training, skills and experience. Whereas the assistance of external experts is required for the development, implementation, operation or assessment of food safety, it is also important for management and employees to be conversant with those HR practices that are necessary for Quality, effectiveness and efficiency as far as foods safety is concerned.

Quality improvement practices in food safety and Human resource practices

This study described the food safety quality improvement practices as provided in the ISO 22000 standards that specify requirements for a food safety management system where an organization in the food chain needs to demonstrate its ability to control food safety hazards in order to ensure that food is safe at the time of human consumption. It is applicable to all organizations, regardless of size, which are involved in any aspect of the food chain and want to implement systems that consistently provide safe products. One of the means of meeting these food safety standards is

through proper utilization of human resources as one of the resources. Therefore important aspects of FSMS include use of internal and/or external resources; planning, implementing, operating, maintaining and updating a food safety management system aimed at providing products that, according to their intended use, are safe for the consumer, ensuring compliance with statutory and regulatory food safety requirements; evaluating and assessing customer requirements and demonstrate conformity with those mutually agreed customer requirements that relate to food safety, in order to enhance customer satisfaction and to effectively communicate food safety issues to their suppliers, customers and relevant interested parties in the food chain.

Results from International Food Information Council Foundation (2009) on food and health survey indicate that more than half of Americans food borne illness from bacteria as the most important issue today. However most Americans hardly take food safety precautions when cooking, preparing and consuming food products (<http://www.foodinsight.org/foodandhealthsafety/2009>).

In developing world mostly in Africa the situation is more serious where food kiosks are the main providers of fast foods but with scanty or no food safety precautions. The food providers are hardly trained on food safety and most of them have no skills and competencies in handling food. In Kenya food borne diseases are still a major problem because of the enormous informal sector in the food industry accounting for at least 80% of the supply to the domestic markets where hygiene controls are rudimentary (JEO Oloo, 2013). The only available checks on food safety used in Kenya are the ISO international standards which coincide with integrated principals of Hazard analyses and critical control points (HACCP) system and application steps developed by Codex Alimentarius commission. By means of auditable requirements, it combines the HACCP plan with prerequisites programmes (PRPs). Hazard analysis is the key to an effective food safety management system. These standards are found to be scarcely used by large hotels and other large food establishments but not by the fast food courts conducting a hazard analysis assist in organizing the knowledge required to establish an effective combination of control measures. Top management therefore requires ensuring responsibility and authority are defined and communicated with the organization to ensure the effective operation and maintenance of food safety management system. The role of human resource management therefore comes in through the functions of recruitment, development, remuneration, and performance management. The first function, recruitment, included decisions of employee sources, selection procedures, and qualifications sought. The second function, training, included the decisions about the training needs identification, content, frequency, trainers, and size of investment into human resources. The

third function was remuneration which comprised of decisions on salary, employee welfare and benefits, motivation and other measures for the retention of employees. The fourth function is on performance management which includes monitoring and evaluating the staff performance through staff appraisal system.

The following figure indicates all levels on flow of food where at each level there is a requirement of human resource functions mentioned above to be employed to complete the flow and ensure maintenance of food safety.

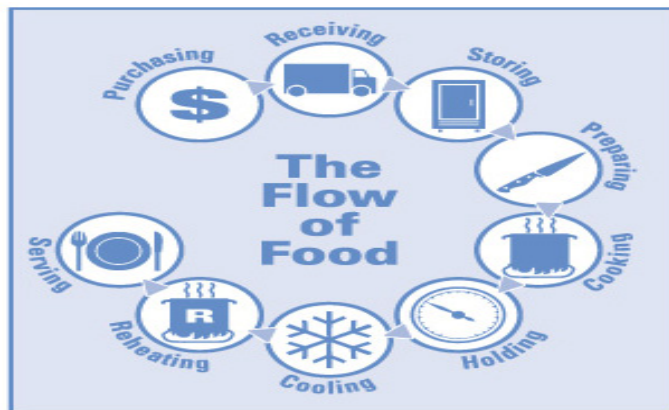


Figure 1: The flow of food: *Serve Safe (2009)*

The four aspects HRM which were considered for this study that had strong correlation with FSMS were recruitment; Training and development; performance management; and remuneration

Recruitment and selection

The caliber of employees brought in a food handling institute is paramount in ensuring that food safety is maintained. It therefore the responsibility of the management to ensure that employees are competitively sourced and that they have the prerequisite competences to handle food. At every stage in the food chain therefore certain skills and competences are required to be applied to ensure food safety and smooth transition from one step to the next.

Training and development

Under the FSMS as described by ISO 22000 standards training and development is recommended under Competence, awareness and training which encompasses among others the following aspects:

1. Identify the necessary competencies for personnel whose activities have impact in food safety.
2. Provide training or take other action to ensure personnel have necessary competencies.

3. Ensure that personnel responsible for monitoring, corrections and corrective action of the FSMS are trained.
4. Ensure that personnel are aware of relevance and importance of their individual activities in contributing to food safety.
5. Ensure effective communication is understood by the whole team.
6. Maintain appropriate records of training and actions taken to ensure necessary competences in the organization.

ISO 22000:2005(E)

Sheridan et al., (1997) states that it is the amount of training that is provided to fast food employees that enhance their performance rather than the quality and quantity of education achieved prior the employment. Orientation and refresher training after employment to the fast food outlets is therefore very crucial in ensuring improved quality of food and food safety.

Performance management

The performance of staff is determined through carrying out staff performance appraisal which is periodically done in order to keep the management abreast on the performance needs of the staff. In matters of food safety it is necessary to keep appraising the staff in order to ensure maintenance of the standards on food safety and also identify areas of improvement. Poor employee performance has a significant effect on profitability (Spector, 2003).

Remuneration

Staff working in food courts needs to be highly motivated. The long and busy working hours require a commensurate remuneration package for the employees. This will ensure that employees do not lax in their duties and that they are strict in entire process of food handling. The remuneration packages also determine the quality of staff to be engaged. Poor remuneration will attract low quality employees who consequently will produce low quality services and hence compromise of food safety. Deeprose (1994) states that effective reward management system can assist a management of a fast food court to achieve their business objectives by attracting and retaining competent workers.

Statement of the problem

The linkage between food safety and human resource practices has been researched and a conclusion made that effective human resource practices have a positive influence on food safety management(JEO Oloo, 2013)). Some researchers have gone further to identify aspects of food safety that are correlated with certain good practices of human resource management. Some argue

that the success of some organizations that handle food is dependent on how human resource is managed. Aspect of remuneration of staff working in restaurants and hotels is considered important in motivating them for better performance and for retention. A study by Reischman (2003) found out that hotels that engage their staff through competitive selection and further endeavor to improve their skills and competences are assured of food safety and better business results. Reischman further argues that continuous staff assessment and appraisals have a positive effect on ways of food handling by employees, in that the appraisal results help the management to improve on individual employees in order to handle food safely. Other studies carried out established that most of the small hotels do not value the role played by human resource practices and hence tend to just look at the returns on the business and not the quality of services offered by staff and what effect they have on the food safety. Food poisoning is rampant in these hotels affecting the health of consumers. This study therefore sought to establish the linkages between Human resource practices and food safety management in the fast food courts in Nairobi city and give recommendations on how to improve on these practices for food safety.

Research objectives

Based on the above background and the problem statement above, the specific research objectives were:

1. To find out how recruitment and selection influences food safety management system in Nairobi fast food courts
2. To determine how training and development influences food safety management system in Nairobi fast food courts
3. To establish the linkage between performance management and food safety management system in Nairobi fast food courts
4. To establish the linkage between remuneration and food safety management system in Nairobi fast food courts

Methodology

This research used a multiple-methods approach, qualitative and quantitative, to assure the research validity. The first stage of this research was by qualitative methods, using in-depth interviews with the owners/managers of selected food courts around the capital city of Nairobi. Data on HRM practices, food safety initiatives, business results, and general demographic characteristics of the hotels were collected using in-depth interviews with ten (10) owners/managers of the selected food courts. The results of the eight interviews conducted were

analyzed for a pattern of relationship between four elements of HRM practices namely recruitment and selection, training and development, remuneration and performance management against three elements of food safety management namely general knowledge on food safety, HACCP plans, management control and responsibility . The findings from the interviews were also used to construct a questionnaire which was distributed to the food courts in Nairobi.

The target population of the study was limited to 200 food courts with 5-10 employees in Nairobi city. The sample obtained from the target population was through simple random whereby 30% of the 200 food courts in Nairobi Central Business District was randomly picked. In addition to 10 managers who were initially interviewed as part of the sample 50 others were identified to make a total of 60 as units of observation. The initial interviews with the managers covered four areas of data characteristics of the firms, business results, human resource management practices, and continuous food safety improvement practices. The questions that were used in the interviews were adapted from the existing literature on human resource management and food safety management in food handling institutions (Codex Alimentarius and ISO 22005 FSMS). The larger proportion of the respondents responded to questionnaires which were either electronically mailed directly to them or hand delivered for the purpose of increasing the response rate. The response rate was 77% percent comprising 10 interview forms and 36 fully completed questionnaires. The use of questionnaires was preferred because the point of interest will be the respondents' behaviours, views, opinions, perceptions and/or feelings (Sekaran, 2003). The data collected was analyzed using Excel package and the results presented using tables. The questionnaire was also pretested by distributing three (3) of them. The aim was to validate the constructs in the questionnaire. Cronbach coefficient alpha was used to check the internal consistency and evaluate the reliability of the measures used. An alpha of 0.694 was obtained and therefore the questionnaire accepted for data collection (Cronbach, 1951).

Findings and Discussions

Response rate

Out of 50 questionnaires distributed to the respondents 36 questionnaires were returned while 10 interview forms were fully responded to. This translated to 77% response rate and this was in tandem with the rate of 75% suggested by Bailey (2003). Out of the respondents 45% were female while 55% were male suggesting a gender representation. All age ranges suggested in the study were represented: 46-55 years had the highest presentation of 41 % while age range between 35 and 45 was second highest with 29%. Below 35 years was third highest with 21% while above 55

years was the lowest with 9%. The respondents' educational background ranged from certificate to a master's degree. The highest representation was a diploma with 36% followed by a degree with 25%. Those with a professional qualification in food production and safety only covered 28%.

Quality improvement practices in food safety

The information obtained indicated that only 27% of the respondents had a food management policy well developed and displayed for their staff. Out of the ones that had the food policy only 5% that had managed to sensitize all the staff on the policy. It was also found out that in most of the hotels the quality improvement practices that were used prominently were informal and they had not documented any standards on the same. Findings on the knowledge on HACCP were found to be minimal among the staff of the food courts. 80% of the managers who responded indicated that they had no knowledge on HACCP and therefore had also not sensitized their employees on the same. The 20% who indicated to have knowledge on HACCP had not sensitized their employees on the importance of HACCP. The other staff had therefore no knowledge whatsoever on HACCP. Food chain improvement was based on the competence of the owner's judgment and also conformance to standards and regulations on food was based on the feedback from a few customers who volunteered to comment on the quality of the food. The government authorities (Nairobi city council and Kenya Bureau of Standards (KEBs)) occasionally assessed on the food safety. On employee participation as one way to improve food quality, this was informal and employees had to go through their supervisors to give any suggestions. The employees were not empowered save for their supervisors who controlled other supervisors. On productivity optimization, the owners relied on control of costs rather than improving on the quality of the food.

HRM practices

Recruitment and selection

Several HRM practices on recruitment and selection were found to be used frequently. The most common sourcing of employees was the referrals from existing employees and interviews were the main selection method. The values most sought were honesty and willingness to work. Most of the employees were from same family like sons and daughters, granddaughters, brothers and sisters could all be found working in the same food courts. The issues of skills and competencies were therefore not given preference in most cases.

The trainings were not planning and therefore there were no training projections for the employees. There was little or no training needs assessment carried out for the employees in order to determine their training requirements. Competence criteria were noted to be absent which threatened food safety practices. No or very small budget allocations were provided for training and a very small number of employees were externally trained. Work methods were the main content of training activities. Most of the firms used the supervisors as their main trainers for the employees thus training was with informal and/or on-the-job training. It was further observed that there was no food safety related training and hence no training on food safety management system. None of the food court managers interviewed had an intention of adoption of the food safety management system as a means of quality improvement in their businesses.

Performance management

Most of the food establishments had no formal appraisal system others did not appraise the performance of their employees at all. Appraisals used were informally made by the owners using personal conduct and work performance as the main criteria. The employees did not set targets that could be used after a period of time to evaluate their performance. Most of the firms did not have systematic appraisal and the appraisers were mostly the owners and supervisors. The results were mostly used as criteria for wages increases and bonuses. Appraisal results were used for wages rate increase and were never used to identify the competency gaps.

Remuneration

Wages paid were based on skills and experience with overtime pay as the most desirable additional income for employees. A wide variety of non-monetary benefits were provided while incentives were used mainly for urgent work. The 'Same Family' management style was vital for employee-employer relations and motivation. The hotels did not have any policy on remuneration and also there were no remuneration structures. The salaries were therefore arbitrarily determined through informal negotiations.

Table 1: Summary of major findings

Food quality improvement practices	Finding
Employee participation	
Suggestion scheme	Suggestions by employees informally to supervisors and the owner
Empowerment	Empowerment to supervisors
Process improvement	
Productivity optimization	Control of costs
Conformance to standards	Requested by customers and governmental agencies
Policy on food safety	Not documented
3. Customer oriented feedback	
Customer voice	Feedback from customers is through salespersons/waiters and strictly to the owners
	Social alignment
HR Practices	Finding
Recruitment and Selection	
1. Sources of employees	Referrals from existing employees
Types of employees	Family members and other relatives
2. Selection methods	Interviews by the owners and by supervisors
3. Qualities sought	Willingness to work Honesty
Training	
Planning	No formal planning
Training needs used	Some information sources used as training
Training activities	Few training activities
Training	Supervisors and owners
Training Content	Work methods
Investment on Training	Very small budget
Food safety training	No training on food safety

Performance management	
Appraisers	The owners and Supervisors
Target setting	No target set for employees to be evaluated
Criteria	Personal conduct
Administration of appraisals	Few group appraisal
	Little use of results for training
	Not documented
	No appraisal at all in most firms
Remuneration	
Remuneration policy	Most firms did not have remuneration policies
Primary compensation	Wages determined by experience and skills
Monetary benefits	Overtime pay
Non-monetary benefits	Several benefits except recognition and travelling services
	Incentive for urgent work
Employee-employer relationships	Parental or 'Family member' relationships
Remuneration structures	There were no formal remuneration structures

Links between HRM practices and food safety management system

The relationship between HRM practices and FSMS were analyzed using multiple regression. The role of supervisors relating to employee selection interviews appraisals were found as having strong correlations with CQIPs. The suggestion had a strong correlation with the use of interviews by supervisors for employee selection, the use of supervisors as appraisers and the use appraisals results for training. The owners who were well informed of food safety standard tended to have employees trained in food safety skills. The use of questionnaire for customer feedback was found having a strong correlation with external training and the use of appraisal results for training.

By comparing food courts assessed by the researcher as 'successful' with those assessed as relatively 'unsuccessful', a number of relationships between HRM practices and food safety activities were found. The observable impacts of HRM practices toward food safety were the referral recruitment and the 'same family' style of management that encouraged suggestions and empowerment as highly used by supervisors. Optimization of efficiency through cost control and feedback from customers were gained through long service employees who were retained by the

family style management and the satisfaction on employment benefits. The ratio of supervisors to employees seemed to have positive relationship with the firms' success

Conclusions

This provides an interesting insight into food safety management system (FSMS) and HRM practices in fast food courts and also possible linkages between these. Whilst the linkages are relatively limited there is clear evidence that human resource practices play a role in facilitating adoption of food safety management system. It is concluded that small food handling businesses like the fast food courts in Nairobi central business district did not value the importance of food quality improvement practices as they considered this as a requirement of big hotels and other well established food handling business. Important Human resource practices liker recruitment, performance management, training and remuneration were not well linked with the food safety standards in these food courts. The owners and managers interest was the returns from these food courts but not the food safety standards which were supposed to be given priority for both employees and customers.

Recommendations

The owners and managers of the fast food courts are advised to embrace the effective role played by human resource practices in improvement of food quality.

The management should consider initiating the process of training of food safety management system and at the same time develop a food safety policy and ensure that all employees are sensitized on the same.

The informal sector dealing with food must keenly be monitored by the food safety agencies to uphold the application of HACCP. The small fast food courts should promote hygiene based products as opposed to price-based foods.

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