

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**ASSESSING THE FOOD SAFETY
AND HYGIENE OF CAFETERIAS AT
UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA
(UiTM), CAWANGAN SELANGOR.**

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ABSTRACT

The compliance and cleanliness of cafeterias play a crucial role in ensuring food safety and preventing foodborne illnesses. However, cafeterias within educational institutions, including Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Cawangan Selangor, continue to face challenges in adhering to hygiene standards as stipulated under the Food Act 1983 and the Food Hygiene Regulations 2009. Although hygiene inspections are conducted by university health authorities, limited published data provides a comprehensive evaluation of compliance levels, particularly in the areas of food handling practices, personal hygiene, and facility cleanliness based on standardised evaluation criteria. This study aims to assess the food safety and hygiene status of cafeterias in UiTM Cawangan Selangor by evaluating four key areas: food handling practices, personal hygiene of food handlers, facility compliance with hygiene regulations, and the hygiene grading of each cafeteria according to the Food Premises Grading Programme. A cross-sectional descriptive study was conducted in April and May 2024 using structured on-site inspections and interviews. Thirty-one cafeterias were assessed using the Cafeteria Evaluation Inspection Form developed by the UiTM Health Unit.

The results revealed that while some practices showed high compliance, such as food labelling (90.3%) and proper waste disposal (96.8%), several critical areas remained problematic. Only 45.2% of cafeterias stored cooked food in closed containers, 32.3% lacked soap at handwashing stations, and 61.3% failed to implement adequate pest control measures. Furthermore, only 38.7% of cafeterias were rated as clean and well-organised, and just 67.7% of food handlers possessed valid typhoid vaccination and health check-up records.

Based on overall hygiene scores, 12.9% of cafeterias received Grade A, 58.1% Grade B, while 12.9% and 16.1% were categorised under Grades C and D, respectively, indicating unsatisfactory to poor hygiene conditions. These findings underscore the need for strengthened hygiene enforcement, enhanced training, and consistent monitoring to ensure compliance with legal food safety standards. It is recommended that UiTM take a more proactive role in conducting regular inspections, promoting hygiene education, and ensuring food handler certification. Improving hygiene practices within campus food environments is vital to preventing foodborne illnesses and safeguarding the health of students, staff, and visitors.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION	i
ACKNOWLEDGMENT	i
ABSTRACT	ii
LIST OF TABLES	vi
LIST OF FIGURES	vii
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background of Study	1
1.2 Problem Statement	3
1.3 Research Justification	3
1.4 Research Questions	4
1.5 Research Objectives	4
1.6 Hypothesis	4
1.7 Significance of Study	5
1.8 Conceptual Framework	6
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW	8
2.1 Food Safety and Hygiene	8
2.2 The Impact of Contamination on Food Safety and Hygiene	9
2.2.1 Food-to-Food Contamination	10
2.2.2 Equipment-to-Food Contamination	12
2.2.3 People-to-Food Contamination	13
2.3 The Role of a Food Handler	14
2.3.1 Food Safety Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP) among Food Handlers	15
2.4 Hygienic Design and Compliance of Cafeteria Facilities	17

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

Food hygiene refers to the conditions and measures necessary to ensure food safety throughout the entire food production and consumption process. Food can become contaminated at any stage during slaughtering, agricultural activities, processing, storage, distribution, transportation, and preparation (S. Kamboj et al., 2020). The primary concern in any food processing operation is ensuring the food is safe for human consumption. While food safety is a fundamental requirement, it may receive inadequate attention when developing new processes (Pakdel et al., 2023). Food safety refers to managing all kinds of hazards associated with the food being handled and processed, thus making it safe for human health and posing no harm to human beings (Pakdel et al., 2023). Although governments worldwide have implemented measures to enhance the safety of the food supply, the occurrence of foodborne illnesses remains a significant health issue in both developed and developing countries. These illnesses cover many diseases and continue to be a growing public health concern, leading to morbidity and mortality worldwide (Dora-Liyana et al., 2018).

Foodborne illnesses are mainly caused by cross-contamination, which can occur at any stage of food production (World Health Organization, 2024). The Ministry of Health reported that the major national risk factors that contribute to foodborne illnesses in Malaysia are ineffective food handling training of the food handlers themselves, untreated water that is used for non-beverage consumption, and poor sanitation and hygiene practices (Ministry of Health Malaysia, 2012). The cross-contamination may happen through multiple pathways, including primary and secondary food production involving food processing and manufacturing. Other stages where contamination can take place include food transportation, storage, distribution, grocery stores, farmer's markets, food preparation and serving at home, restaurants, and other food service operations (Shaltout, 2024). Even small factors can also contribute to foodborne illness. For example, storage and cooking temperatures, insufficient hand washing, and animal waste (Kamala & Kumar, 2018).