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To Study Awareness about Prevention of Food Adulteration Act-1954 (PFA-1954) among Working Women of Washim and their Attitude towards Seeking Legal Remedy in Case of Adulteration

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Abstract:

Present investigation is an attempt to check the status of PFA-1954 and create awareness among working women of Washim city. From results of present investigation, it can be concluded that there is very low awareness among working women of Washim city regarding PFA-1954. They were not interested in seeking legal remedy as they were not enough aware of the aforesaid act and its provision. To create awareness regarding PFA-1954 among society is the need of hour.

Keywords: Awareness- PFA-1954- Education level- Attitude- seeking legal remedy

1. Introduction

Food is the basic need of the human being. Origin of most of the diseases lies in food, person eats. It is of prime importance that every individual must get healthy and hygienic food for maintaining his body in good condition and for sustaining pressures of life. One of the major blockages in deriving proper and safe food is Food Adulteration.

Food adulteration has become rampant in India. Fruits, vegetables might be contaminated, soft drinks and dairy products too and all this so that producers can save a few rupees. In a recent report, the Public Health Foundation of India attributed 80 percent of all premature deaths to contaminated food and water. According to Dr. Keya Ghosh, who is the head of CUTS, Kolkata, an NGO that fights for consumer rights. "Food adulteration in India starts from the field itself where fertilizers and pesticides are overused. Therefore one kind of contaminant that is present across all range of food is very high level of pesticide residues." But pesticide residues are not the only problem. Many products used in everyday cooking, such as cottage cheese and clarified butter, are adulterated. Coloring agents in spices are also posing problems. The use of carbide to make fruit ripen faster has created a number of health hazards.

Although there exist laws to control and monitor the food industry, until recently there were no uniform food regulations preventing the adulteration of food. Dr. Ghosh hopes that the new food safety and standards act will bring some positive change: "With the coming of this act a whole structure will be revamped, more awareness has been generated and people are realizing how important food safety is. But for the average mass there is a question because the systems that have been put in place, the kind of certification are all very expensive. A small scale street vendor will not be able to afford it."

Unfortunately, experts say, there is very little awareness among the Indian public. People are tempted to buy cheaper food and they are likely then to purchase adulterated food. Dr Samir Dasgupta from the Kolkata medical college says that processed food is unsafe in India. Because the monitoring mechanism in our country is not that strong. Health practitioners are urging the government to do more to raise awareness about adulterated food among the Indian public.

According to Anvita Sinha, N N Mehrotra, the main objective of food laws is to ensure that the food articles which the public buys should be prepared, packed and stored under sanitary conditions and with such ingredients and such processes so as not to be injurious to the health of people who consume it. In India, during the pre- independence period the Indian Penal code 1860 was expected to take care of noxious food. Along with this, various states had their own laws to overcome the problem of adulteration of food stuffs. This became a problematic job for implementing authorities since different territories in the country were subject to different laws on the same subject. With a view to removing these diversities and loopholes, a central legislation came into force in the form of Prevention of Food Adulteration Act 1954 (PFA Act). Its rules were framed in 1955 and are known as Prevention of Food Adulteration Rules 1955 (PFA Rules). The main objectives of the PFA Act and Rules are to protect the consumer against ill-health caused by adulteration; to restrict and control the use of food additives and to confirm the nutritional standards of the food. These laws are applicable for both kinds of foods whether manufactured indigenously or imported.

There are various acts which are enacted for the welfare and protection of public, but actual status of implementation differs from which was expected at the time of enactment. In today's fast life, it is very essential to check the actual situation of various acts, whether they are really benefiting public or not and search the measures to control the same. Present investigation is a humble attempt to check the status of PFA-1954 and create awareness among working women of Washim city.

2. Aims and Objectives

- To check awareness regarding food adulteration among working women of Washim City.
- To check awareness regarding Prevention of Food Adulteration Act 1954 among working women of Washim City.
- To check the attitude of working women towards seeking legal remedy in case of food adulteration.
- To create awareness among working women of Washim city regarding Prevention of Food Adulteration Act 1954 and its provisions.

3. Hypothesis of the Study

Working Women of Washim city are aware regarding Food Adulteration Act 1954 and its provisions.

4. Review of Literature

4.1. Department of Prevention of Food Adulteration: A Historical Background

Food is one of the essential of life. So it should be pure, nutritious and free from any type of adulteration for proper maintenance of human health. It is the duty of every Government to make pure food available to the countrymen in sufficient quantities. In order to make available unadulterated food in the country, the Government makes various food laws. Similarly, Government of India also made the laws to prevent adulteration in food articles in 1954 called "Prevention of Food Adulteration Act, 1954". To give effect to the provisions of the Act, Rules were made in 1955 and called "Prevention of Food Adulteration Rules, 1955". Though PFA Act and Rules are Central Legislature but the responsibility of implementation has been entrusted to the State Governments and Union Territories. Each State Government and Union Territory has created its own organization for implementation of the Act and Rules framed there under. Till 1976 in Delhi, the Prevention of Food Adulteration Act and Rules were implemented by Municipal Corporation of Delhi, NDMC and Delhi Cantt. Board in their respective areas through Sanitary Inspectors notified as Food Inspectors. In 1976 major amendments were made in PFA Act and Rules, the implementation work of the Act and Rules made there under were taken over by the Govt. of Delhi by the Directorate of Health Services. Later on separate Directorate of Prevention of Food Adulteration were created and entrusted the responsibility of implementation of the provisions of PFA Act and Rules. The Directorate is headed by the Director, an IAS officer and notified to function as Food Health Authority under the Act. He / She is assisted by joint Director and other technical staff under guidance of Secretary, Health and Family Welfare of Govt. of Delhi.

4.2. Prevention of Food Adulteration Act, 1954

The Act was promulgated by Parliament in 1954 to make provision for the prevention of adulteration of food, along with the Prevention of Food Adulteration Rules, 1955 which was incorporated in 1955 as an extension to the Act. Broadly, the PFA Act covers food standards, general procedures for sampling, analysis of food, powers of authorized officers, nature of penalties and other parameters related to food. It deals with parameters relating to food additives, preservative, colouring matters, packing & labeling of foods, prohibition & regulations of sales etc. Like FPO, amendment in PFA rules are incorporated with the recommendation made by the Central Committee of Food Standards (CCFS) which has been setup by Central Government under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare comprising members from different regions of the country. The provisions of PFA Act and Rules are implemented by State Government and local bodies as provided in the rules.

5. Methodology

Empirical and deductive method, questionnaire (Annexure-I) as the subjects are educated enough.

Simple percentage is considered for interpretation of data.

- Selection of Sample: Stratified Random sample is selected for the study.
- Sample size: Sample of 50 working women is taken.
- Sources of Data: Both Primary and secondary sources are used.
- Data collection: Questionnaire is used to collect primary data from respondents, however, interview technique is used to collect secondary data i.e. from Food Safety Officers.

6. Analysis and Interpretation of Data

6.1. Qualification

Of all the respondents (Subjects) 31.43% were post graduate, 65.71% were graduate and 2.86 were below graduation level. However, no significant difference was observed according to level of qualification among subjects regarding awareness about PFA-1954.

6.2. Awareness about enactment of PFA-1954 and provisions therein

The question whether respondents are aware of PFA-1954 was answered positively by 45.71%, negatively by 48.57% and 5.71% did not comment of all subjects. However, only 11.43 % subjects were knowing provisions of PFA-1954 and that too may be credited to their legal knowledge as all of them were either graduate or post graduate in Law.

6.3. Occurrence of Adulterated food stuffs

To the question that, in their view what Food Stuffs are sold in adulterated form? Respondents have enlisted following food stuffs as adulterated.

Food Stuffs	Respondents (%)
1.Edible oils and ghee	71.43
2.Spices	60.00
3.Cereal grains	34.28
4.Ground nuts	17.14
5.Sago and Bhagar	05.71
6.Readymade flours	17.14
7.Pulses and Besan	17.14
8.Sugar	05.71
9.Tea	02.86
10.Honey	02.86
11.Milk and milk products	48.57
12.Other sweets	02.86
13.Fresh fruits and vegetables	05.71
14.Papad	02.86

Table 1: The percentage of respondents who enlisted the food stuff as adulterated.

6.4. Confirmation of adulteration in food stuffs

To answer the question how respondents use to confirm that food stuff is adulterated, three options were given. The result is given in following table.

Options	Respondents (%)
Chemical testing by self.	11.43
Chemical testing in laboratory	08.57
No chemical testing.	62.86
Not filled.	17.14

Table 2: Confirmation of adulteration in food stuffs

6.5. Action taken after confirmation of food adulteration

To answer the question what action respondents take when they confirmed that food stuff is adulterated, four options were given. The result is given in following table.

Options	Respondents (%)
Return Food stuffs to retailer	74.28
Complain to food inspector	00.00
Complain to police station.	00.00
Discard food stuffs without action	11.43
Not filled.	14.29

Table 3: Action taken after confirmation of food adulteration

6.6. Attitude towards taking bill while purchase of food

To answer the question whether respondents use to take bill while purchase of food stuffs, two options were given. The response of respondents is enumerated in following table.

Options	Respondents (%)
Bill is taken	74.28
Bill is not taken	22.86
Not filled	02.86

Table 4: Percentage of respondents taking bill

6.7. Opinion about seeking legal remedy under PFA-1954

Of all the respondents 28.57% did not fill any option. Out of remaining 8.57% of respondents gave reason that due to lack of time they can't think of seeking legal remedy under the act. 42.86% of respondents recommended that the provisions of the act are not known to them and to public in general, hence awareness shall be created by the state. 14.29% of respondents gave the opinion that culprit shall be punished by the state. 2.86% of respondents gave opinion that only products with ISI/Agmark shall be purchased. However, only 2.86 % of all respondents showed readiness to complain in case of food adulteration problem.

When Food Safety Officer of the Akola / Washim region and Amravati region were interviewed, the complete picture about implementation of PFA-1954 and FSA and awareness among public became very clear. According to them, hardly one complaint in a whole month is received by them, however they su-motu do inquiries where they suspect of the commission of crime. In the festive seasons like Diwali, Christmas they make surprise visits to food production centres / factories. They regularly check the

edible oils supplied in market and get the samples of same tested in authorized laboratories. But response of public to them is very low.

7. Conclusion

From results of present investigation, it can be concluded that there is very low awareness among working women of Washim city regarding PFA-1954. They were not interested in seeking legal remedy as they were not enough aware of the aforesaid act and its provision. Hence, the hypothesis of the study could not be proved.

8. Recommendations

The results of the present investigation permits to put forth following recommendations.

Awareness regarding PFA-1954 and FSA shall be created by government using various audio visual aids which are easily accessible to public.

Legal awareness camps are conducted in rural area, but they are also essential for urban areas and for qualified mob.

Food testing laboratories shall be established at every district place and charges for such testing shall be low and within the purview of common person.

9. References

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