

**A PROJECT WORK REPORT ON
A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF FOOD SAFETY PRACTICES
IN HOTELS OF POKHARA**

BY

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the project work report entitled "**A Qualitative Study of Food Safety Practices in Hotels of Pokhara**" submitted for the BHM is my original work and the Project Work Report has not formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, or other similar titles.

Muskan Sharma

July, 2026

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the Project Work titled " **A Qualitative Study of Food Safety Practices in Hotels of Pokhara** " submitted by Muskan Sharma (23150235) for the partial fulfilment of the requirements of BHM embodies the Bonafide work done by her under my supervision.

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Mr. Suresh Raj Adhikari
Supervisor, Project Work
July, 2026

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Thank you.

Muskan Sharma
BHM VI Semester
NTHMC

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The hospitality industry is one of the fastest-growing service sectors in the world and plays a significant role in tourism development, employment generation, and economic growth. Hotels, restaurants, resorts, and other hospitality establishments provide accommodation, food, beverages, and various services to domestic and international tourists. Among these services, food and beverage operations are considered one of the most important components because they directly influence customer satisfaction, service quality, and the overall reputation of hospitality organizations. With the continuous growth of tourism, customers have become more aware of the quality, hygiene, and safety of the food they consume. Therefore, maintaining food safety has become an essential responsibility of hospitality establishments to ensure that food is prepared, handled, stored, and served under hygienic and safe conditions. According to the (WHO,2022) approximately 600 million people suffer from foodborne illnesses every year, resulting in around 420,000 deaths worldwide. These statistics highlight that unsafe food remains a major public health concern and emphasize the importance of effective food safety practices throughout the food production process. Walker (2017) stated that maintaining food safety is one of the fundamental responsibilities of hospitality organizations because it protects consumer health, improves customer confidence, and enhances the reputation of the organization.

Food safety practices include the procedures, standards, and activities followed to ensure that food remains safe for human consumption throughout the entire food production and service process. These practices involve maintaining personal hygiene, preventing cross-contamination, cleaning and sanitizing equipment, controlling food temperatures, proper storage of food, waste management, and following standard operating procedures during food preparation and service. Effective food safety practices help minimize contamination risks, reduce foodborne diseases, and improve the overall quality of hospitality services. In commercial kitchens, employees play a crucial role in maintaining food safety because their knowledge, attitudes, and food handling behaviour directly affect food quality and safety. Clayton and Griffith (2008) explained that employees' food handling

behaviour is an important factor influencing the effectiveness of food safety management systems. Similarly, Green and Selman (2005) identified poor personal hygiene, improper temperature control, inadequate cleaning and sanitation, and cross-contamination as major causes of foodborne disease outbreaks in food service establishments. Bas et al. (2006) further found that regular food safety education and training improve employees' knowledge, attitudes, and hygiene practices, resulting in better compliance with food safety standards. These findings indicate that food safety management requires continuous training, employee commitment, proper monitoring, and strong support from organizational management.

Food safety has gained increasing importance in the hospitality industry because hotels serve a large number of guests every day, and any negligence in food handling can lead to serious health consequences. To reduce food safety risks, many hospitality organizations have adopted internationally recognized food safety management systems such as Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) and ISO 22000. These systems focus on identifying potential hazards during food production, establishing preventive measures, monitoring critical control points, and applying corrective actions when necessary. According to the Codex Alimentarius Commission (2022), HACCP is a preventive approach that helps food businesses identify and control biological, chemical, and physical hazards before they affect consumers. Similarly, ISO 22000 provides a framework for establishing and improving food safety management systems within food-related organizations. The implementation of these systems has encouraged hotels to strengthen hygiene practices, increase employee awareness, and maintain consistent food safety standards throughout their operations.

The hospitality industry in Nepal has experienced significant growth over the past few decades due to the expansion of tourism activities and the increasing number of hospitality establishments. Tourism is one of the major contributors to Nepal's economy, creating employment opportunities and supporting the development of hotels, restaurants, resorts, and other tourism-related businesses. As the hospitality sector continues to expand, maintaining food safety has become an important responsibility for hotels because visitors expect safe, hygienic, and high-quality food during their stay. Nepal (2016) emphasized that the development of Nepal's hospitality industry requires continuous improvement in service quality and the adoption of internationally accepted standards. Similarly, Kunwar and Sharma (2004)

explained that Nepal's hospitality industry has been recognized for its warm hospitality and quality service; however, maintaining food hygiene and safety has become increasingly important due to the growth of international tourism and changing customer expectations.

The Government of Nepal has introduced various policies and regulations to promote food hygiene and protect public health. The Department of Food Technology and Quality Control (DFTQC) is responsible for monitoring food quality, implementing food safety regulations, and creating awareness regarding safe food handling practices. Hospitality organizations are encouraged to follow food safety standards, provide employee training, and regularly monitor food preparation processes to reduce potential risks. However, despite these efforts, maintaining consistent food safety practices remains challenging in many food service establishments. Acharya and Timilsina (2020) reported that inadequate food safety knowledge, limited employee training, poor sanitation practices, and insufficient monitoring are some of the major challenges affecting food safety implementation in Nepalese hospitality establishments. Similarly, Adhikari (2021) highlighted that successful food safety practices depend not only on government regulations but also on management commitment, employee participation, regular supervision, and continuous improvement within hospitality organizations.

Pokhara, officially recognized as the Tourism Capital of Nepal, is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the country and receives thousands of domestic and international visitors every year. The city is well known for its natural beauty, adventure tourism, cultural attractions, and rapidly developing hospitality sector. With the increasing number of hotels, restaurants, and tourism-related businesses, maintaining food safety has become essential for protecting public health and enhancing the reputation of Pokhara as a quality tourism destination. Hotels in Pokhara serve guests from diverse cultural and national backgrounds, making it necessary to maintain high standards of hygiene and food safety throughout food preparation and service. Practices such as proper food storage, personal hygiene, cleaning and sanitation, prevention of cross-contamination, and temperature control are essential for ensuring safe food production and maintaining customer satisfaction.

Although previous studies have provided valuable information regarding food safety knowledge, hygiene practices, employee training, and compliance with food safety standards, most studies have mainly focused on measuring food safety

awareness and practices through quantitative approaches. Comparatively fewer studies have explored food safety practices from the experiences and perspectives of hotel employees and managers involved in daily food operations. Food safety practices are influenced by employees' workplace experiences, organizational culture, management support, available resources, and daily operational challenges. Therefore, understanding these aspects through a qualitative approach is important to gain deeper insights into how food safety practices are implemented and maintained within hotel operations.

Therefore, this study aims to explore Food Safety Practices in Hotels of Pokhara through a qualitative approach. The study seeks to understand how food safety practices are implemented within hotel operations, explore the experiences and challenges faced by hotel employees, and identify possible measures for improving food safety management. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to existing knowledge on food safety in the hospitality industry and provide useful insights for hotel managers, policymakers, hospitality professionals, researchers, and students. Furthermore, the study may support hotels in strengthening food safety practices, enhancing customer satisfaction, protecting public health, and promoting the sustainable development of the hospitality industry in Pokhara.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The hospitality industry in Nepal has experienced rapid growth with the expansion of tourism, leading to an increasing number of hotels and food service establishments, particularly in major tourist destinations such as Pokhara. As hotels provide food services to a large number of domestic and international tourists every day, maintaining food safety has become an essential responsibility. Proper food safety practices, including personal hygiene, sanitation, temperature control, safe food handling, and prevention of cross-contamination, are necessary to protect customers from foodborne illnesses and maintain the reputation of hotels. Although hotels are expected to follow national food safety regulations and international hygiene standards, the implementation of these practices often varies depending on employee awareness, organizational commitment, available resources, and workplace conditions.

Previous studies have mainly examined food safety knowledge, hygiene practices, and compliance with food safety standards using quantitative approaches.

However, limited studies have explored food safety practices from the experiences and perspectives of hotel employees and managers, especially in the context of Pokhara. Since employees are directly involved in receiving, preparing, cooking, storing, and serving food, understanding their experiences can provide valuable insights into the practical challenges of maintaining food safety. Therefore, this study aims to explore food safety practices in hotels of Pokhara through a qualitative approach to understand existing practices, identify major challenges, and explore possible measures for improving food safety management within hotels.

1.3 Research Questions

The study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. How are food safety practices implemented in hotels of Pokhara, particularly in relation to personal hygiene, food handling, cleaning and sanitation, food storage, and temperature control?
2. What are the experiences and challenges faced by hotel employees and kitchen staff while maintaining food safety practices in their daily work?
3. How do hotel employees and managers perceive the importance of food safety practices, and what measures do they suggest for improving food safety in hotels of Pokhara?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is to explore food safety practices in hotels of Pokhara through a qualitative approach.

The specific objectives of the study are:

- To explore the food safety practices followed in hotels of Pokhara with particular focus on personal hygiene, food handling, food storage, cleaning and sanitation, and temperature control.
- To examine the experiences and challenges faced by hotel employees and kitchen staff in implementing food safety practices during their daily operations.
- To understand the perceptions of hotel employees and managers regarding food safety practices and identify possible measures for improving food safety management in hotels of Pokhara.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it provides a deeper understanding of food safety practices in hotels of Pokhara through a qualitative approach. The findings of the study will help identify the existing food safety practices followed by hotel employees and explore the challenges they experience while maintaining food hygiene and sanitation. The study may assist hotel managers in improving food safety policies, employee training programmes, and hygiene management systems to ensure the preparation and service of safe food. Furthermore, the findings may be useful for government agencies, hospitality professionals, researchers, and students by providing valuable information for developing effective food safety strategies and promoting high standards of hygiene within the hotel industry. Since Pokhara is one of Nepal's major tourist destinations, improving food safety practices can also contribute to enhancing tourist satisfaction, protecting public health, and strengthening the overall image of the hospitality industry.

1.6 Literature Review

Food safety has become an important area of study within the hospitality industry because hotels and food service establishments are responsible for providing safe and hygienic food to customers. The quality of food safety practices influences customer satisfaction, public health, and the reputation of hospitality organizations. Food safety practices include personal hygiene, proper food handling, prevention of cross-contamination, cleaning and sanitation, food storage, and temperature control. According to the World Health Organization (2022), unsafe food remains a major global health concern due to the occurrence of foodborne diseases worldwide. Walker (2017) emphasized that maintaining food safety is one of the fundamental responsibilities of hospitality organizations because it protects customers and improves the overall quality of hospitality services. Food handlers play a significant role in maintaining food safety because their knowledge, attitudes, and daily practices directly affect food quality and safety. Employees involved in food preparation, cooking, storage, and service must follow proper hygiene procedures to minimize contamination risks. Clayton and Griffith (2008) explained that food handlers' behaviour is an important factor influencing the effectiveness of food safety practices in food service establishments. Similarly, Green and Selman (2005) identified poor personal hygiene, improper food handling, inadequate cleaning practices, and unsafe

preparation methods as major factors contributing to food safety problems. These studies indicate that effective food safety management requires not only proper procedures but also responsible employee behaviour and organizational support.

Previous studies have also highlighted the importance of food safety training and organizational culture in improving food safety performance. Bas et al. (2006) found that food safety education and training programs improve employees' knowledge, attitudes, and hygiene practices. However, the study also suggested that training alone is not sufficient unless organizations provide proper supervision, resources, and supportive working conditions. Griffith et al. (2010) introduced the concept of food safety culture and explained that food safety performance depends on shared values, attitudes, and commitment among employees and management. A positive food safety culture encourages employees to follow safety procedures and actively participate in maintaining hygienic food operations. Food safety management systems such as Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) and ISO 22000 have been widely adopted by hospitality organizations to control food safety risks. These systems provide guidelines for identifying hazards, monitoring critical points, and applying corrective actions during food production. The Codex Alimentarius Commission (2022) explained that HACCP is a preventive approach that helps organizations control biological, chemical, and physical hazards before they affect consumers. However, the successful implementation of such systems depends on employee involvement, management commitment, regular monitoring, and availability of necessary resources.

In Nepal, the growth of tourism and hospitality businesses has increased the importance of maintaining proper food safety standards. Hotels and restaurants serving domestic and international tourists are expected to provide safe and hygienic food services. However, maintaining consistent food safety practices remains challenging due to limited training opportunities, inadequate monitoring, and differences in organizational commitment. Acharya and Timilsina (2020) found that inadequate food safety knowledge, poor sanitation practices, and weak monitoring systems are major challenges affecting food hygiene practices in Nepalese hospitality establishments. Similarly, Adhikari (2021) emphasized that effective food safety implementation requires management support, employee participation, and continuous improvement within hospitality organizations. Pokhara, being one of Nepal's major tourism destinations, has a rapidly developing hospitality sector

consisting of hotels, restaurants, and other food service establishments. Since hotels in Pokhara serve visitors from different backgrounds, maintaining food safety practices is essential for protecting public health and enhancing the image of the destination. Although previous studies have examined food safety knowledge and hygiene practices, limited research has focused on understanding the experiences and challenges faced by hotel employees and managers while implementing food safety practices in their daily operations.

Existing literature provides valuable information about food safety awareness, food handler behaviour, training, and management systems. However, most previous studies have mainly used quantitative approaches, focusing on measuring knowledge levels and compliance with food safety standards. Limited attention has been given to exploring the practical experiences, workplace challenges, and perceptions of employees involved in hotel food operations. Therefore, this study aims to explore Food Safety Practices in Hotels of Pokhara through a qualitative approach to understand how food safety practices are implemented, what challenges employees experience, and how food safety management can be improved.

1.6.2 Review of Key Empirical Themes

Previous empirical studies have identified several important factors influencing food safety practices in hospitality establishments. These studies suggest that food safety is not only dependent on technical procedures and regulations but also influenced by employee knowledge, workplace culture, management support, and operational challenges. The following themes summarize the major findings from previous research related to food safety practices in hotels and food service establishments.

1.6.2.1 Food Safety Knowledge, Hygiene Practices, and Food Handler Behaviour

Food handlers are considered one of the most important factors affecting food safety outcomes because they are directly involved in food preparation, handling, storage, and service activities. Their knowledge and behaviour determine how effectively food safety procedures are followed in daily operations. Green and Selman (2005) found that improper handwashing, poor personal hygiene, unsafe food handling, and inadequate cleaning practices were major factors contributing to food contamination risks. The study emphasized that employees' food safety behaviour is

influenced by their understanding of hygiene practices and the expectations of their workplace.

Similarly, Bas et al. (2006) examined food safety knowledge, attitudes, and practices among food handlers and found that training programs improved employees' awareness and encouraged better hygiene practices. However, the study highlighted that knowledge alone does not guarantee safe practices, as employee behaviour is also affected by supervision, availability of equipment, workload, and organizational support. Therefore, continuous training and supportive workplace conditions are necessary to ensure effective food safety implementation.

1.6.2.2 Organizational Support, Food Safety Culture, and Management Commitment

Management commitment plays an important role in developing and maintaining effective food safety practices within hospitality organizations. Although employees are responsible for following hygiene procedures, management support is necessary to provide proper training, resources, monitoring, and clear food safety policies. Griffith et al. (2010) explained that food safety culture reflects the shared values and commitment of an organization toward maintaining safe food practices. Organizations with a strong food safety culture encourage employees to take responsibility and actively participate in preventing food safety risks.

The implementation of food safety systems such as HACCP also requires strong organizational involvement. According to the Codex Alimentarius Commission (2022), HACCP provides a systematic approach for identifying and controlling food safety hazards. However, successful implementation depends on employee participation, regular monitoring, and management commitment. Without proper organizational support, employees may face difficulties in applying food safety procedures effectively despite having adequate knowledge.

1.6.2.3 Challenges in Maintaining Food Safety Practices in Hospitality Establishments

Despite increasing awareness of food safety, many hospitality establishments continue to experience challenges in maintaining consistent food safety standards. These challenges include inadequate employee training, limited resources, poor monitoring, and differences between written policies and actual workplace practices.

In developing countries like Nepal, these challenges may become more significant due to operational limitations and variations in management practices.

Acharya and Timilsina (2020) identified lack of food safety knowledge, insufficient training, and weak monitoring systems as major barriers to effective food hygiene practices in Nepalese hospitality establishments. Similarly, Adhikari (2021) highlighted that food safety performance depends on leadership support, employee involvement, availability of facilities, and continuous improvement practices. Although Pokhara has a growing hospitality sector, limited studies have explored the practical experiences of hotel employees regarding food safety implementation. Understanding these challenges through employees' perspectives is important for developing effective strategies to improve food safety practices in hotels.

1.6.3 Literature Gap

Previous studies have contributed significantly to understanding food safety knowledge, hygiene practices, food handler behaviour, and food safety management systems in hospitality establishments. However, most studies have focused on quantitative measurement of awareness levels and compliance with food safety standards. Limited research has explored the lived experiences, challenges, and perceptions of hotel employees and managers involved in daily food operations, particularly in the context of Pokhara. Food safety practices are influenced by workplace culture, management support, available resources, and operational realities; therefore, a qualitative approach is necessary to gain deeper understanding. This study attempts to address this gap by exploring food safety practices in hotels of Pokhara and examining the experiences and challenges associated with maintaining safe food production and service.

1.7 Research Methodology

This section presents the methodological framework adopted for exploring food safety practices in hotels of Pokhara. The study focuses on understanding how food safety procedures are implemented, how hotel employees and managers experience food safety practices in their daily operations, and what challenges influence effective food safety management. Since food safety practices are closely connected with employee behaviour, organizational culture, workplace conditions, and management support, a qualitative approach has been selected to gain deeper insights into the practical realities of food safety implementation. This section

explains the research design, population and participants, sampling technique, data collection method, data analysis procedure, ethical considerations, and limitations of the study.

1.7.1 Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive research design to explore food safety practices in hotels of Pokhara. A qualitative design is appropriate because the study aims to understand the experiences, perceptions, and challenges of individuals directly involved in food production and service operations. Rather than focusing only on measuring food safety compliance through numerical data, this approach allows the researcher to explore how employees and managers understand, apply, and experience food safety practices within their workplace environment.

The study focuses on the phenomenon of daily food safety implementation within hotel operations, including personal hygiene practices, food handling procedures, sanitation practices, food storage, temperature control, employee training, and management support. Through participants' experiences and perspectives, the research seeks to identify the practical factors that influence effective food safety management in hotels.

1.7.2 Population and Participants

The target population of this study consists of hotel employees and managers working in hotels of Pokhara who are directly involved in food production and service activities. The participants include chefs, kitchen staff, food handlers, supervisors, and hotel managers who have practical experience with food preparation, storage, hygiene practices, sanitation procedures, and food safety management.

To ensure that participants provide meaningful information related to the research objectives, the following criteria will be considered:

- Participants must be directly involved in food production, handling, or supervision activities within hotels.
- Participants should have sufficient work experience to understand food safety practices and workplace procedures.
- Participants should be willing to share their experiences, opinions, and challenges regarding food safety implementation.

1.7.3 Sampling Technique

This study uses purposive sampling to select participants. Purposive sampling is commonly used in qualitative research because it allows the researcher to intentionally select individuals who possess relevant knowledge and experience related to the research topic.

The participants will be selected based on their involvement in hotel food operations and their ability to provide detailed information regarding food safety practices. Since the objective of qualitative research is to gain depth and understanding rather than statistical representation, a small and focused sample size is considered appropriate. Approximately 6–10 participants will be selected from different hotels of Pokhara to obtain diverse perspectives regarding food safety practices and challenges.

1.7.4 Data Collection Method

The primary data for this study will be collected through semi-structured interviews and open-ended questionnaires with hotel employees and managers. Semi-structured interviews are suitable for qualitative research because they provide flexibility for participants to describe their experiences freely while allowing the researcher to collect information related to the research objectives.

The interview questions will focus on the following areas:

- **Food Safety Practices:** Personal hygiene, food handling procedures, storage practices, temperature control, cleaning, sanitation, and prevention of cross-contamination.
- **Employee Experiences:** Daily responsibilities, difficulties faced while maintaining food safety standards, and workplace practices related to hygiene and safety.
- **Training and Management Support:** Availability of food safety training, supervision, organizational policies, and management involvement.
- **Challenges in Implementation:** Issues related to resources, workload, employee awareness, monitoring systems, and operational difficulties.
- **Suggestions for Improvement:** Participants' views regarding possible measures to strengthen food safety practices in hotels.

1.7.5 Data Analysis Procedure

The collected qualitative data will be analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a systematic method used to identify, organize, and interpret patterns within qualitative data. The analysis process will involve the following steps:

1. **Data Preparation:** Interview responses and questionnaire data will be organized and prepared for analysis.
2. **Familiarization:** The researcher will carefully read and review the collected information multiple times to understand participants' experiences and identify important ideas.
3. **Coding:** Important statements and repeated concepts related to food safety practices, challenges, and experiences will be identified and assigned codes.
4. **Theme Development:** Similar codes will be grouped together to develop major themes and sub-themes related to food safety implementation.
5. **Interpretation:** The identified themes will be interpreted in relation to the research objectives and existing literature to understand the realities of food safety practices in hotels of Pokhara.

1.7.6 Ethical Considerations

This study will follow ethical principles throughout the research process. Before collecting data, participants will be informed about the purpose of the study and their participation will be completely voluntary. Informed consent will be obtained before conducting interviews.

The privacy and confidentiality of participants will be maintained by protecting their personal information and avoiding the disclosure of identities without permission. Participants will be identified through codes or pseudonyms when presenting findings. The collected information will be used only for academic purposes and stored securely to maintain confidentiality.

1.7.7 Delimitations and Limitations

This study is limited to selected hotels in Pokhara and focuses on employees and managers directly involved in food production and service operations. The study mainly examines food safety practices related to hygiene, food handling, storage, sanitation, and workplace experiences. It does not include customers' perceptions, restaurants outside hotel operations, or food safety practices in other geographical areas of Nepal.

The major limitation of this study is that qualitative findings are based on participants' personal experiences and perceptions; therefore, the results may not represent all hotels in Nepal. Additionally, participants may hesitate to share negative experiences due to workplace concerns, which may influence the depth of information collected. However, efforts will be made to maintain confidentiality and encourage honest response.

CHAPTER II

FINDINGS

This chapter presents the empirical findings generated from a qualitative field investigation examining food safety protocols and structural management challenges within the hospitality sector of Pokhara. The primary data were gathered via face-to-face, semi-structured interviews and open-ended qualitative questionnaires administered directly to eleven frontline culinary production and food service employees operating across diverse hotel properties in the Pokhara valley. The focus of this analysis centers on the subjective operational realities, institutional pressures, and systemic friction experienced by these frontline food handlers during their daily kitchen shifts. Through a systematic thematic analysis of the verbatim interview transcripts and observational field records, three primary core themes emerged: **Daily Kitchen Adjustments and Infrastructure Limitations, Seasonal Volume Surges and the Pressure of Surface Cleanliness, and Peer Interdependence amidst Training Deficits and Staff Turnover**. To adhere to strict research ethics, protect the employment status of the respondents, and guarantee absolute anonymity, pseudonyms are utilized for all individual participants, and institutional hotel names have been completely anonymized throughout this report.

2.1 Daily Kitchen Adjustments and Infrastructure Limitations

The primary dimension identified during the field research concerns the acute impact of physical infrastructure deficits and material constraints on daily food safety compliance. The empirical evidence demonstrates that execution of sanitary protocols is highly volatile, governed not by staff willingness, but by compromised facilities, insufficient tools, and institutional delays in mechanical maintenance by hotel ownership.

2.1.1 Vulnerability of Deficient Tools and Delayed Equipment Maintenance

The field narratives consistently indicate that frontline culinary workers are systematically forced to adapt to malfunctioning or obsolete kitchen machinery due to administrative delays in capital expenditure. The analysis reveals that hotel management routinely categorizes food safety instruments as secondary financial expenses rather than operational imperatives, thereby depriving culinary handlers of objective metrics to verify critical storage temperatures or isolate raw ingredients.

Bimal, a Line Cook at Waterfront Resort, stated, "We do not have enough separate refrigeration units or functioning digital thermometers in this kitchen. Most of the time, we have to rely on visual estimation or the head chef's personal judgment to determine if storage temperatures are correct. When the municipal plumbing infrastructure failed last spring and hard water clogged our main filtration system, the purification unit broke down entirely. Management delayed the structural repair for days, which left us without a reliable clean water line for rapid handwashing or rinsing raw salad vegetables. Frontline staff end up absorbing all the operational risks."

The empirical data in this section highlight a severe disconnect between baseline food safety expectations and the physical realities of the kitchen floor. When management treats essential food safety tools—such as digital thermometers and water purification units—as avoidable capital costs rather than immediate operational necessities, frontline workers are forced to rely on subjective visual estimations. This structural neglect directly increases the hazard profile of the establishment, transferring the risk of utility failures and foodborne contamination entirely onto the back-of-house staff.

2.1.2 Top-Down Directives and the Absence of Communication Channels

Data regarding institutional workplace culture reveal a rigid, unidirectional hierarchy where food safety directives are issued as punitive mandates rather than cooperative workflows. Respondents reported a comprehensive exclusion of frontline handlers from safety planning frameworks, accompanied by an absolute absence of transparent communication channels to report contamination vectors or mechanical defects without professional hazard.

Prerna, a Server at Fishtail Lodge, remarked, "Communication only moves in one direction—from management down to the staff as an absolute order to pass external inspections. If the primary dishwashing machinery malfunctions or a sewage pipe leaks right outside the pastry section, there is no internal desk or framework to report it. If you voice a concern or question the cross-contamination risks during a heavy service shift, supervisors take it as a challenge to their authority, and you face the immediate risk of having your scheduled hours cut."

The narratives reveal a punitive communication framework that actively prevents the reporting of food safety hazards. By structuring the workplace culture

around unidirectional commands, hotel management creates an environment where addressing public health concerns, such as sewage leaks or mechanical failures, is misinterpreted as insubordination. Consequently, the fear of professional retaliation ensures that critical cross-contamination indicators remain unaddressed, severely undermining the integrity of internal safety protocols.

2.1.3 Workload Disparities and the Isolation of Entry-Level Staff

The research indicates a profound operational imbalance regarding the division of labor, wherein entry-level assistants and migrant workers from rural regions are disproportionately allocated high-risk, labor-intensive utility tasks. These individuals face intense pressure to execute parallel processing duties, balancing the manipulation of raw proteins with rapid workstation decontamination under severe time deficits.

Sanjiv, a Kitchen Helper at Temple Tree Resort, observed, "As an entry-level worker who moved here from a rural village, I am always given the heaviest labor in the utility kitchen. I am expected to defrost bulk seafood units, portion raw meat, and maintain the cleanliness of the multi-purpose prep counters simultaneously. During the lunch rush, the pressure to prepare items quickly makes it impossible to switch between color-coded cutting boards or wash hands between every single task. Management does not consider our physical limits; their only focus is ensuring that plates leave the kitchen without delay."

This subsection identifies a clear demographic vulnerability within hotel kitchens, where institutional labor allocation shifts the heaviest sanitation burdens onto entry-level and migrant workers. The excessive operational pressure to maximize output speed forces these isolated individuals to engage in unsafe structural shortcuts, such as skipping handwashing intervals and ignoring color-coded cross-contamination barriers. This systemic strain proves that individual compliance is often rendered impossible by the unreasonable physical speeds demanded by management.

2.2 Seasonal Volume Surges and the Pressure of Surface Cleanliness

The second thematic cluster identifies the profound conflict between macroeconomic tourism fluctuations and the preservation of biological food safety protocols. The transcript data indicate that during high-occupancy cycles, employees are subjected to intense physical exhaustion while simultaneously operating under

administrative mandates to prioritize visible, aesthetic cleanliness over structural, backend hazard control.

2.2.1 Peak-Season Customer Influx and Thermal Management Failures

During high-intensity tourism windows within the Pokhara market, corporate mandates prioritize maximum service speed and high-volume output. The qualitative data show that this operational acceleration causes a widespread suspension of critical thermal controls, with staff pressured to implement hazardous thawing shortcuts that bypass standard cold-chain retention time and actively compromise biological safety thresholds.

Maya, a Server at Hotel Barahi, highlighted, "During the high paragliding and holiday seasons, the entire dining area becomes completely overwhelmed with domestic and international tour groups. We work grueling twelve-hour split shifts and face extreme exhaustion. There is no time to perform core temperature checks or allow items to defrost safely in the refrigerator overnight. We pull frozen meat out and submerge it in hot water to speed up the process because management demands fast table service, regardless of the thermal safety risks and the severe contamination it causes when the outer layers get warm while the inside is still frozen."

Based on field observations and participant narrative analysis, the empirical data demonstrate how the economic incentives of high-volume tourist seasons directly compromise biological food safety protocols. The severe physical exhaustion resulting from extended twelve-hour shifts, combined with relentless pressure for rapid table turnover, forces kitchen workers to abandon critical thermal controls. By substituting hot-water thawing shortcuts for proper cold-chain management, the outer layers of food are rapidly pulled into dangerous temperature ranges where bacterial pathogens multiply exponentially while the core remains frozen, systematically exposing consumers to severe foodborne contamination and elevated health risks.

2.2.2 Mandated Cosmetic Presentation and Digital Review Pressures

The data collected from customer-facing service personnel reveal that hotel administrations leverage heavy psychological pressure to enforce superficial cleanliness, explicitly aimed at mitigating negative feedback on travel review platforms. This commercial anxiety results in a strategic misallocation of labor, prioritizing front-of-house appearance while backend sanitary infrastructure remains dangerously neglected.

Deepak, a Front-of-House Server at Lake Side Retreat, pointed out, "It does not matter if our underlying kitchen drainage system is leaking wastewater onto the floorboards. The hotel owner makes it clear that a single guest complaint regarding a smudged plate or a fingerprint on a wine glass on TripAdvisor or Google can damage the business reputation. As a result, I have to spend my shift polishing front-of-house surfaces, while the hidden deep-storage areas are left unwashed and prone to pests. It is a transactional display for public relation purposes, which is highly stressful for the staff."

These testimonies indicate that commercial anxiety surrounding online public feedback heavily distorts the execution of sanitation practices. Management routinely channels labor resources into maintaining cosmetic front-of-house aesthetics to protect their digital brand equity, while deliberately ignoring severe backend structural hazards such as pest vectors and wastewater leaks. This focus on superficial appearance over real hygiene turns food safety into an external performance rather than a true operational standard.

2.2.3 Operational Detachment and the Practice of Symbolic Compliance

A critical behavioral finding involves the gradual evolution of psychological detachment among culinary handlers. Because institutional metrics consistently reward processing speed over regulatory compliance, workers systematically normalize deviations from standard sanitary procedures, rendering food safety a symbolic performance rather than an internalized operational habit.

Sita, a Server at Hotel Pokhara Grande, emphasized, "When you spend twelve hours a day masking real kitchen problem and managing guest complaints with a forced smile, you lose your sense of professional pride. Food safety here is not an authentic daily habit; it is a temporary performance we put on solely when an official inspector arrives to check the premises. By the end of the shift, the physical fatigue makes it difficult to care whether the protocols were perfectly executed or not."

The findings illustrate that systemic infrastructure gaps and continuous overwork eventually lead to psychological detachment among hospitality professionals. When workers spend their entire shifts masking back-of-house vulnerabilities, their internal commitment to hygiene protocols degrades into symbolic compliance. Food safety practices are ultimately transformed into a

superficial performance staged exclusively for external inspectors, leaving daily operational compliance severely compromised.

2.3 Peer Interdependence amidst Training Deficits and Staff Turnover

The final analytical dimension addresses the informal mitigation strategies deployed by frontline personnel to survive operational strain, alongside the long-term institutional consequences of systemic training deficits and rapid human capital flight.

2.3.1 Peer Reliance and Operational Strain on Student-Workers

The research reveals that frontline hospitality staff heavily rely on informal mutual-aid structures and peer networks to compensate for chronic institutional labor shortages and exhausting clean-up schedules. However, for the significant segment of student-workers attempting to balance late-night sanitization duties with early-morning university requirements, this arrangement generates chronic exhaustion and introduces high margins of human error.

Ramesh, a Server and College Student at Hotel Mount Kailash, explained, "We manage to get through the shifts because the workers look out for each other. If I am too exhausted to complete the deep-cleaning checklists or have an academic exam the next morning, a colleague will cover my tasks. However, finishing kitchen sanitization at 1:00 AM and then attending college at 6:30 AM is an unsustainable routine. My academic performance is dropping, I feel constantly burned out, and it causes careless errors like mislabeling storage items or dropping clean utensils."

The empirical accounts illustrate that while informal peer support networks provide an immediate coping mechanism for overextended staff, they are fundamentally inadequate for ensuring long-term operational safety. For student-workers, the exhausting schedule of late-night sanitation duties and early-morning classes causes severe fatigue. This chronic exhaustion leads directly to critical, human-error-driven safety lapses, such as improper chemical labeling and cross-contamination errors.

2.3.2 Institutional Training Gaps and Workforce Turnover Dynamics

The final structural barrier identified during the field investigation is the comprehensive deficit of formal, subsidized food hygiene education and institutionalized career development tracks within the independent hotel sector. Disillusioned by suppressed local wages and a lack of professional investment from

ownership, qualified, safety-conscious culinary handlers increasingly frame the local market as a temporary layout prior to international migration.

Arjun, a Line Cook at Hotel Landmark Pokhara, noted, "There is no clear professional future or support for food safety certification here in Pokhara. Hotel owners treat culinary staff as temporary, easily replaceable expenses and refuse to invest in formal safety training workshops. Because of this, almost every experienced cook I work with is actively processing their documents to move to the Gulf countries or Europe. We are forced to leave our home province simply to find an employment environment where we are paid fairly and respected as professionals."

The qualitative data highlight a critical systemic vulnerability: the total absence of formal capacity-building initiatives and professional promotion tracks within independent hotels. Because properties treat culinary professionals as short-term, disposable labor, they choose not to invest in certified food safety training. This lack of institutional support destroys workplace trust and drives a continuous outward migration of local culinary talent from the Gandaki Province to overseas markets.

2.4 Summary

In conclusion, the empirical findings across these three themes reveal a significant structural crisis regarding food safety execution within Pokhara's hotel sector. The daily experiences of frontline food handlers are shaped by a cycle of vulnerability caused by deficient kitchen infrastructure, delayed equipment repairs, and rigid, top-down management practices that exclude employee input.

This operational strain is heavily intensified by seasonal tourism cycles that subject workers to extreme physical overwork, forcing them to prioritize speed and cosmetic, front-of-house cleanliness over genuine hazard prevention. Because informal coping mechanisms—such as peer support networks—are structurally insufficient to resolve long-term fatigue, a lack of professional safety education, and high staff turnover, organizational trust is severely compromised. Consequently, the local hotel industry often serves as a temporary waiting room, driving the outward migration of trained culinary and service professionals toward international employment networks in search of dignified livelihoods.

CHAPTER III

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 Conclusion

This study explored the food safety practices and internal management challenges within the hotel sector of Pokhara, focusing on the infrastructure limitations, seasonal tourism surges, and workplace conditions of frontline kitchen and service professionals. The empirical findings reveal that the internal operational environment of Pokhara's hotel kitchens is heavily defined by structural and asset precarity. This issue stems directly from a widespread management reliance on informal sanitation tracking and rigid, top-down communication dynamics that exclude frontline handlers from safety planning and leave them without formal channels to report broken tools, leaking pipes, or supply failures. Furthermore, a clear operational divide exists, disproportionately positioning internal migrants and younger kitchen helpers into physically demanding, high-speed food preparation and deep-cleaning roles under intense time pressure.

The study also demonstrates that macroeconomic seasonality heavily dictates the operational compliance and hygiene execution of these establishments. Workers are caught in an exhausting cycle, balancing peak-season customer surges, which lead to accelerated food preparation methods and the bypassing of core temperature controls, against structural maintenance deficits during off-season periods. To preserve establishment reputations on digital travel platforms and pass local health checks, employees face intense pressure to perform cosmetic presentation and surface-level cleanliness. This focus on front-of-house appearance creates a professional detachment, where food handlers feel disconnected from authentic risk prevention. While workers utilize micro-level coping mechanisms, such as informal peer support networks to share cleaning workloads, these avenues prove structurally unsustainable. Ultimately, the systematic deficit of formalized food safety training, unmapped professional development trajectories, and high staff turnover act as the primary catalysts driving a breakdown of workplace compliance, accelerating the outward migration of seasoned local culinary talent out of the Gandaki Province.

3.2 Recommendations

Based on the lived experiences and systemic vulnerabilities highlighted by the participants, the following recommendations are suggested for future implementations and policy improvements within Pokhara's hospitality sector:

1. **Formalization of Food Safety Standards:** Local municipality authorities, in alignment with regional health and tourism stakeholders, should mandate the transition from informal kitchen checks to legally binding, documented Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) systems for all hotels. These frameworks must clearly outline mandatory storage parameters, proper cold-chain preservation rules, and standardized logging sheets to protect food quality from seasonal utility failures.
2. **Establishing Internal Hazard Reporting Channels:** Hotel operators should dismantle rigid, top-down management structures by implementing formal, safe, and anonymous internal reporting mechanisms for kitchen hazards. Creating clear avenues for reporting equipment failures, plumbing breakdowns, or cross-contamination risks will improve internal communication and build sustainable institutional trust.
3. **Regulating Kitchen Shift Hours and Workflows:** Industry associations should introduce strict operational oversight to monitor worker scheduling during peak tourist and trekking seasons. Establishments utilizing extended split shifts must provide structured kitchen rest periods and additional utility support to directly combat physical burnout and minimize careless handling mistakes.
4. **Comprehensive Food Hygiene and Safety Training:** Rather than enforcing cosmetic display rules that rely solely on surface cleanliness, venue management should introduce supportive food handling educational programs. Providing regular training on thermal management, allergen control, and cross-contamination prevention can help service and kitchen staff maintain high safety standards during high-volume service rushes.
5. **Formalizing Professional Kitchen Pathways:** To address the regional brain drain and retain trained culinary talent, venue owners must invest in professional development. Establishing transparent, merit-based internal promotion tracks and collaborating with regional hospitality institutions like

the Nepal Tourism and Hotel Management College (NTHMC), Pokhara to offer certified skill-upgrading programs..."

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APPENDIX

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Section A: Demographic and Role Background

1. Could you describe your current position, your age, and your gender within this hotel kitchen?
2. For how many years have you been handling food or serving guests in the Pokhara hospitality market?
3. What inspired you to pursue a culinary or service career in a major tourist hub like Pokhara?
4. How many kitchen staff members share a shift with you, and are you currently balancing your employment with university studies?

Section B: Institutional Systems and Kitchen Asset Challenges

5. Can you walk me through your daily kitchen routine and the specific food safety steps you follow?
6. What kind of hygiene orientation or food safety training did you receive when you first started working here?
7. How do regional issues, like water supply drops or delivery delays, affect your ability to keep food storage systems safe?
8. How does management handle reports about kitchen issues? Is there an open way to talk about hygiene, or do you just follow orders?
9. If you encounter a broken freezer, a clogged water filter, or spoiled raw ingredients, what exact steps do you take to report it?
10. Have you observed whether entry-level helpers or staff from rural villages are mostly given the heavy cleaning and raw meat preparation tasks?

Section C: Tourism Demands and Cross-Contamination Hazards

11. How much do your daily food preparation tasks and kitchen workloads expand during peak trekking and holiday seasons?
12. When the hotel is busy, does working double or split shifts cause physical fatigue that makes you skip temperature checks or sanitization steps?
13. What physical layout or spacing issues in your kitchen make it difficult to keep raw and cooked foods separated?
14. Does pressure from management to cut down on food waste or save on ingredient costs ever force staff to reuse items or change storage labels?

15. What specific rules or regular inspections from health officials would help kitchen staff maintain better hygiene standards?

Section D: Online Reputations and Cosmetic vs. Real Safety

16. Does the hotel administration push the staff to maintain high ratings on platforms like Google Reviews or TripAdvisor? How does this speed pressure affect your food handling?
17. What are the challenges of keeping an open-kitchen station looking perfectly clean for guests while handling heavy orders at the same time?
18. When you spend a shift focusing heavily on making plates look beautiful for reviews, do you feel that deep-cleaning the back storage areas gets neglected?

Section E: Teamwork, Training Gaps, and Career Trajectories

19. When the kitchen line gets backed up with food orders during rush hour, how do you ensure that food safety is not compromised?
20. In what ways do kitchen team members support each other, such as sharing clean-up tasks when shifts get overwhelming?
21. For student-employees: How do late-night kitchen cleaning schedules affect your physical energy, morning classes, and academic focus?
22. Has your current employer provided you with formal food hygiene certifications or a clear pathway to become a senior chef?
23. Looking forward, do you plan to build a long-term hospitality career within Pokhara, or are you preparing to seek culinary employment abroad?

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. General Background

- What is your age and gender?
- How many years of experience do you have in Pokhara's hotel kitchens?
- Are you currently balancing work with university enrollment?

2. Daily Operations and Asset Realities

- How do top-down management styles affect how you perform daily food hygiene duties?
- What specific challenges do you face when operating with outdated refrigeration units or delayed equipment repairs?
- In what ways do you feel a worker's background or job level influences the kitchen duties they are given?

3. Seasonal Overwork and Hygiene Risks

- How do you maintain strict separation between raw meats and ready-to-eat foods during high-speed service rushes?
- What operational issues arise for you when municipal water lines or kitchen filtration systems fail during high-occupancy months?
- How do you ensure thorough workstation sanitization when working extended split shifts under extreme physical fatigue?

4. Workplace Perceptions and Stress Factors

- What does maintaining high food safety standards for tourists visiting Pokhara mean to you personally?
- What is the most challenging part of your job: equipment limitations, heavy seasonal rushes, or keeping up with service speed for online reviews?
- How does the pressure to present a spotless front-of-house area affect your focus on hidden back-of-house food safety risks?

5. Skill Development and Migration Choices

- What cooperative strategies do you and your fellow kitchen workers use to manage work pressure and avoid cross-contamination?
- How does managing late-night kitchen sanitization impact your health, morning class attendance, and college grades?
- Does the lack of formal food safety certifications and clear internal promotions make you more likely to look for a culinary job overseas?