Food Safety and Sanitation Strategies in Filipino Restaurants: A Study in Mandaluyong City, Philippines

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ABSTRACT

Food safety and sanitation are essential for protecting public health and maintaining consumer confidence in the restaurant industry. In Filipino restaurants, maintaining consistent hygiene and safe food handling practices can be challenging due to high customer demand, varied operational procedures, and staff workload. Examining these practices from both managerial and employee perspectives is critical to identify gaps and improve compliance.

This study investigated food safety and sanitation strategies in selected Filipino restaurants in Mandaluyong City, Philippines, using a mixed-methods design. One hundred purposively selected respondents (25 managers and 75 employees) participated. Quantitative data were collected through structured questionnaires using a five-point Likert scale and analyzed using percentages, weighted means, and t-tests to identify significant differences between employee and manager assessments. Qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews to explore perceptions, challenges, and experiences related to food safety and sanitation.

Findings reveal that overall food safety and sanitation practices were moderately implemented, with a composite weighted mean of 2.53, indicating partial but inconsistent adherence. Measures such as waste management, temperature control, and prevention of cross-contamination were most consistently applied, while hygiene compliance, food presentation, and time–temperature monitoring were less consistently observed. Sanitation strategies emphasized personal hygiene, but structured cleaning schedules and clearly documented procedures were weaker areas. The t-test confirmed a significant difference between employee and manager assessments, reflecting varying perceptions of compliance. Although problems encountered were generally minimal, inconsistent adherence to hygiene protocols was the most frequently noted concern.

The study concludes that while key food safety and sanitation practices exist, their application is inconsistent across establishments. Strengthening standardized procedures, monitoring, training, and communication is recommended to improve compliance, operational efficiency, and overall food safety in Filipino restaurants.

Keywords: Food safety, Sanitation strategies, Filipino restaurants, Mixed-methods research, Employee and manager perspectives, Hygiene compliance, Mandaluyong City

INTRODUCTION

Food safety and sanitation are essential to public health and consumer confidence in the restaurant industry. As urban centers expand and demand for dining services grows, ensuring clean, safe, and high-quality food has become both a health necessity and an industry standard. In the Philippines, where food services significantly shape both the economy and cultural identity, strengthening sanitation practices is critical to protecting communities from foodborne risks.

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While the Food Safety Act of 2013 (Republic Act No. 10611) and related local ordinances provide a comprehensive framework for food safety, implementation at the restaurant level remains uneven. Limited resources, gaps in staff training, and the pressures of profitability often hinder compliance with established protocols. Previous studies in the country have primarily examined institutional food services, leaving a gap in research that specifically explores how local Filipino restaurants, particularly in highly urbanized areas such as Mandaluyong City, adopt and sustain food safety and sanitation strategies.

This study addresses that gap by examining the food safety and sanitation strategies of Filipino restaurants in Mandaluyong. As a key dining and commercial hub in Metro Manila, the city offers a relevant context for evaluating how restaurants navigate regulatory requirements, operational challenges, and consumer expectations. The findings aim to contribute to food safety scholarship while offering insights that can inform both policy implementation and industry practice.

The study is grounded in the Health Belief Model (HBM), developed by Rosenstock (1966) and later expanded by Becker and Maiman (1975), which explains health-related behavior through perceptions of risk, severity, benefits, barriers, cues to action, and self-efficacy. This framework helps clarify how restaurant managers and food handlers interpret and apply sanitation strategies in their daily operations. By linking legal frameworks with the human factors that influence compliance, the HBM provides a comprehensive lens for understanding food safety behaviors in restaurant settings.

METHODOLOGY

This study used a mixed-methods research design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine food safety and sanitation practices in Filipino restaurants. The quantitative component measured compliance with established standards, while the qualitative component explored the perspectives and experiences of restaurant staff. Combining these approaches provided a more complete understanding of how food safety practices are implemented and helped validate the findings through multiple sources of data.

A total of 100 participants were purposively selected, including 25 managers and 75 employees from Filipino restaurants in Mandaluyong City. Purposive sampling was chosen because participants are directly involved in food handling and restaurant management, making them the most knowledgeable sources of relevant information.

For the quantitative portion, data were collected using a structured questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale, focusing on participants' reported practices and perceptions related to food safety and sanitation. The responses were analyzed using percentages, weighted means, and t-tests to compare managers' and employees' ratings. Simple visual aids such as tables and bar charts were used to summarize findings and highlight differences across groups, making the results easier to interpret.

For the qualitative portion, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a smaller subset of participants to gain insights into challenges, motivations, and contextual factors affecting sanitation practices. Interviews were audio-recorded and summarized in notes, with key points grouped into simple themes reflecting common practices, difficulties, and suggestions for improvement. This approach provided practical insights that complemented the quantitative data without requiring complex or resource-intensive analysis.

By combining structured questionnaires with focused interviews, the study produced a practical and achievable approach to understanding food safety and sanitation practices in Filipino restaurants. The mixed-methods design ensured that both measurable compliance and staff experiences were captured, providing a clear and actionable picture of restaurant practices

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RESULTS

Tables

Sub-problem No. 1. How do the managers and employees assess the strategies of Filipino restaurants in Mandaluyong City Philippines in terms of:

Food Safety

Table 1. Assessment of Food Safety Strategies

Indicators	Employees		Managers		Composite		Rank
	WM	VI	WM	VI	WM	VI	
1. Cold and hot storage temperatures are consistently monitored and maintained within safe limits.	3.80	E	3.70	E	3.75	E	2
2. Established procedures are strictly observed to prevent cross-contamination between raw, semi-processed, and cooked food.	3.58	E	3.50	E	3.54	E	3
3.Food handlers adhere to hygiene protocols, including regular handwashing and the use of gloves, hairnets, and uniforms.	3.18	E	2.60	ME	2.89	ME	5.5
4. Standardized practices for cooking, cooling, and reheating food are consistently applied to safeguard consumer health.	3.24	E	3.25	E	3.24	ME	4
5. Food is served and maintained under proper time–temperature conditions during display and service.	2.91	ME	2.85	E	2.88	ME	7
6. Food presentation safeguards, such as protective coverings and measures to avoid direct exposure, are consistently implemented.	2.94	ME	2.85	ME	2.89	ME	5.5
7. Systems are in place to minimize food waste and ensure the safe handling of leftovers to reduce contamination risks.	3.94	E	3.85	E	3.89	E	1
Overall weighted mean	**3.37**	**ME**	**3.22**	**ME**	**3.29**	**ME**	

Legend: WM=Weighted Mean; VI= Verbal Interpretation

5	Highly Evident	4.20-5.00
4	Evident	3.40-4.19
3	Moderately Evident	2.60-3.39
2	Least Evident	1.80-2.59
1	Very Least Evident	1.00-1.79

Table 1 presented the assessment of managers and employees regarding food safety strategies practiced by Filipino restaurants in Mandaluyong City, Philippines. The overall composite weighted mean was 3.29, interpreted as Moderately Evident.

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Three indicators were rated as Evident. The highest-ranked indicator, "Systems are in place to minimize food waste and ensure the safe handling of leftovers to reduce contamination risks," received a composite weighted mean of 3.89. The second-ranked indicator, "Cold and hot storage temperatures are consistently monitored and maintained within safe limits," obtained a mean of 3.75. The third-ranked indicator, "Established procedures are strictly observed to prevent cross-contamination between raw, semi-processed, and cooked food," had a mean of 3.54. These results suggest that these critical practices are generally well-implemented across the restaurants assessed.

In contrast, four indicators were rated as Moderately Evident. "Standardized practices for cooking, cooling, and reheating food are consistently applied to safeguard consumer health" ranked fourth with a mean of 3.24. Two indicators were tied for fifth place: "Food handlers adhere to hygiene protocols, including regular handwashing and the use of gloves, hairnets, and uniforms" and "Food presentation safeguards, such as protective coverings and measures to avoid direct exposure, are consistently implemented," each with a mean of 2.89. Finally, "Food is served and maintained under proper time–temperature conditions during display and service" ranked seventh with a mean of 2.88. These findings indicate that while these practices are present, their consistent application is less uniform compared to the top three indicators.

Sanitation Strategies

Table 2. Assessment of Sanitation Strategies

Indicators	**Employees**		**Managers**		**Composite**		**Rank**
	WM	**VI**	**WM**	**VI**	**WM**	**VI**	
1. The restaurant consistently implements structured cleaning and sanitation schedules for all kitchen and dining areas.	2.03	LE	1.60	VLE	1.82	LE	6
2. Standard operating procedures for sanitation are clearly documented, communicated, and strictly followed by employees.	2.09	LE	2.30	LE	2.20	LE	5
3. Food contact surfaces, utensils, and equipment are regularly sanitized using approved cleaning agents.	4.41	HE	2.30	LE	3.36	ME	2
4. The establishment maintains proper waste segregation, disposal, and handling practices to prevent contamination.	4.41	HE	1.80	LE	3.11	ME	3
5. Employees strictly observe personal hygiene practices, such as proper handwashing and the use of protective gear, as part of the sanitation strategy.	4.41	HE	2.60	ME	3.51	E	1
6. Management regularly monitors and evaluates sanitation practices to ensure compliance with food safety standards and regulations.	3.13	ME	2.85	ME	2.99	ME	4
Overall weighted mean	**3.41**	**E**	**2.24**	**LE**	**2.83**	**ME**	

Table 2 revealed the assessment of sanitation strategies in Filipino restaurants in Mandaluyong City, as perceived by employees and managers. The overall composite mean was 2.83, interpreted as Moderately Evident.

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The highest-ranked indicator, "Employees' strict observance of personal hygiene practices," received a composite mean of 3.51 and was rated as Evident, showing that this practice was the most consistently applied among the indicators. Three indicators were rated as Moderately Evident: "Food contact surfaces, utensils, and equipment are regularly sanitized using approved cleaning agents" ranked second with a mean of 3.36; "The establishment maintains proper waste segregation, disposal, and handling practices to prevent contamination" ranked third with a mean of 3.11; and "Management regularly monitors and evaluates sanitation practices to ensure compliance with food safety standards and regulations" ranked fourth with a mean of 2.99, indicating moderate adherence across these practices.

The lowest-ranked indicators were rated as Least Evident. "Standard operating procedures for sanitation are clearly documented, communicated, and strictly followed by employees" ranked fifth with a mean of 2.20, while "The restaurant consistently implements structured cleaning and sanitation schedules for all kitchen and dining areas" ranked sixth with a mean of 1.82. These results show a clear distinction between the highest-rated practice personal hygiene and the lower-rated indicators, reflecting varying levels of implementation across different sanitation strategies.

Table 3 Summary of Assessments as to Food Safety and Sanitation Strategies

Indicators	**Employees**		**Managers**		**Composite**		**Rank**
	WM	**VI**	**WM**	**VI**	**WM**	**VI**	
Food Safety Strategies	2.23	LE	2.23	LE	2.23	LE	2
Sanitation Strategies	3.41	E	2.24	LE	2.83	ME	1
Overall weighted mean	**2.82**	**ME**	**2.24**	**LE**	**2.53**	**LE**	

As shown in Table 3, the assessment of food safety and sanitation strategies in selected Filipino restaurants in Mandaluyong City revealed varying levels of implementation. Food safety strategies were rated as Moderately Evident, with a composite weighted mean of 2.83, ranking first. Sanitation strategies were rated as Least Evident, with a composite weighted mean of 2.23, ranking second. Overall, the combined assessment of food safety and sanitation strategies was rated as Least Evident, with an overall composite weighted mean of 2.53.

Sub-problem No. 2. Is there a significant difference in the assessments of the two groups of respondents as to the food safety and sanitation strategies of selected Filipino Restaurants?

Table 4 Result of Significant Difference

Respondents	**Mean**	**Sd**	**t-test**		
			Computed t-value	**Decision**	**VI**
Employees	2.82	0.8344	3.0953	Reject Ho	Significant
Managers	2.24	0.0071			

Degrees of freedom = 58

Critical value of t.05 at .05 = 2.004

As indicated in Table 4, the computed t-value of 3.0953 is greater than the critical value of 2.004 with 58 degrees of freedom at a 0.05 level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected and interpreted as significant.

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Since we failed to accept the null the hypothesis, Therefore, there is a significant difference between the assessment of employees and managers on food safety and sanitation strategies of selected Filipino Restaurants.

Sub-problem No. 3. What are the problems encountered by the respondents?

Table 5 Assessment of the Problems Encountered

Indicators	**Employees**		**Managers**		**Composite**		**Rank**
	WM	**VI**	**WM**	**VI**	**WM**	**VI**	
1. Food temperatures are not always checked or maintained properly.	1.63	VLE	1.70	VLE	1.67	VLE	10
2. Cross-contamination sometimes occurs due to improper food handling.	1.61	VLE	1.83	LE	1.72	VLE	9
3. Some food handlers do not consistently follow hygiene practices.	2.61	ME	2.73	ME	2.67	ME	1
4. Cooking, cooling, and reheating procedures are not always applied correctly.	2.42	LE	2.73	ME	2.58	LE	2
5. Proper temperature control is not always maintained during food display and service.	2.42	LE	2.54	LE	2.48	LE	4
6. Cleaning and sanitation schedules are not consistently followed in all areas of the restaurant.	2.06	LE	1.98	LE	2.02	LE	5.5
7. Sanitation procedures are not clearly communicated or properly understood by employees.	2.06	LE	1.98	LE	2.02	LE	5.5
8. Some equipment, utensils, and food contact surfaces are not regularly or properly sanitized.	2.06	LE	1.88	LE	1.97	LE	8
9. Waste is not always properly segregated and disposed of, leading to possible contamination.	2.48	LE	2.58	LE	2.52	LE	3
10. Monitoring and supervision of sanitation practices are sometimes inconsistent or insufficient.	2.06	LE	1.89	LE	1.98	LE	7
Overall weighted mean	**2.14**	**LE**	**2.18**	**LE**	**2.16**	**LE**	

Legend: WM=Weighted Mean; VI= Verbal Interpretation

5	Highly Encountered	4.20-5.00
4	Encountered	3.40-4.19
3	Moderately Encountered	2.60-3.39

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2	Least Encountered	1.80-2.59
1	Very Least Encountered	1.00-1.79

Table 5 presented the assessment of problems encountered in relation to food safety and sanitation strategies, as perceived by employees and managers. The overall composite mean was 2.16, interpreted as Least Encountered, indicating that the identified problems are generally experienced at a low level across the establishments.

Among the indicators, Indicator 3, "Some food handlers do not consistently follow hygiene practices," ranked first with a composite mean of 2.67, interpreted as Moderately Encountered. Seven indicators were rated as Least Encountered. Indicator 4, "Cooking, cooling, and reheating procedures are not always applied correctly," ranked second with a composite mean of 2.58, while Indicator 9, "Waste is not always properly segregated and disposed of, leading to possible contamination," ranked third with a mean of 2.52. Indicator 5, "Proper temperature control is not always maintained during food display and service," followed in fourth place with a mean of 2.48.

Indicator 6, "Cleaning and sanitation schedules are not consistently followed in all areas of the restaurant," and Indicator 7, "Sanitation procedures are not clearly communicated or properly understood by employees," shared the fifth rank (5.5) with identical composite means of 2.02. Indicator 10, "Monitoring and supervision of sanitation practices are sometimes inconsistent or insufficient," ranked seventh with a mean of 1.98, followed by Indicator 8, "Some equipment, utensils, and food contact surfaces are not regularly or properly sanitized," which ranked eighth with a mean of 1.97.

At the lower end, two indicators were rated as Very Least Encountered. Indicator 2, "Cross-contamination sometimes occurs due to improper food handling," ranked ninth with a composite mean of 1.72, and Indicator 1, "Food temperatures are not always checked or maintained properly," ranked tenth with a mean of 1.67.

Qualitative results based on the interviews with managers and employees revealed that food safety and sanitation practices are generally observed in the restaurants. Employees are familiar with basic practices such as proper handwashing, wearing uniforms, and using protective equipment. However, many respondents noted that consistency is a challenge, especially during peak hours. Tasks such as monitoring food temperatures and strictly following sanitation procedures are sometimes overlooked due to time constraints and heavy workload.

In terms of sanitation strategies, cleaning is regularly performed but not always based on a clear or structured schedule. Some employees rely on routine or immediate needs rather than standardized procedures. Respondents also highlighted the need for improved training and communication, as continuous reinforcement of food safety practices is limited. Additionally, monitoring and supervision are sometimes inconsistent, as managers are not always able to closely oversee all sanitation activities.

DISCUSSIONS

The study found that food safety and sanitation practices in Filipino restaurants in Mandaluyong City are generally moderate, showing partial but inconsistent implementation. Food safety strategies such as waste management, temperature control, and cross-contamination prevention were applied consistently, while hygiene compliance, food presentation, and time–temperature monitoring were less consistently followed. For sanitation, personal hygiene practices were the most evident, but structured cleaning schedules and clearly documented procedures were weak, suggesting a need for better systematization. Overall, combined practices were rated as Least Evident, highlighting room for improvement.

Differences between employee and manager assessments indicate varying perceptions, with employees generally rating practices higher. While operational problems were minimal, inconsistent adherence to hygiene protocols was the most commonly reported issue. Qualitative data confirmed that practices are often compromised during busy periods due to limited procedures, time constraints, and inconsistent monitoring.

These findings align with previous Philippine studies, which also report moderate compliance and inconsistencies in food safety and sanitation practices. Research in casual dining restaurants in Makati City found

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that while standard procedures were generally followed, certain areas still required improvement to ensure consistent food safety (Sarmiento & Apritado, 2022). Similarly, studies of local restaurants and street food vendors indicate that knowledge alone does not guarantee consistent practice, with workload, limited resources, and inconsistent monitoring affecting compliance (Batosalem et al., 2025; Mendoza et al., 2023; Cuison et al., 2025; Ermeje et al., 2025). These parallels suggest that the challenges observed in Mandaluyong City are consistent with broader patterns in the Philippine restaurant sector.

Applying the Health Belief Model (HBM) (Rosenstock, 1966; Becker & Maiman, 1975) provides further insight. Staff appear aware of the benefits of proper practices and the risks of non-compliance (perceived benefits and severity), but barriers such as high customer volume, time pressure, and lack of structured procedures hinder consistent adherence. Cues to action such as checklists, supervision, and reminders were inconsistently applied, while self-efficacy, or confidence in correctly performing procedures, varied among staff. These factors help explain why compliance is inconsistent despite awareness of best practices.

Overall, the results indicate the need to strengthen standardized procedures, staff training, monitoring systems, and practical cues. Such interventions could enhance adherence, operational efficiency, and food safety in Filipino restaurants, consistent with both the HBM framework and prior Philippine research findings.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings, the study concludes that food safety and sanitation strategies in selected Filipino restaurants in Mandaluyong City are present but not consistently implemented, as reflected in their overall moderate level of practice. While key food safety measures such as temperature control, prevention of cross-contamination, and proper handling of leftovers are evident, other critical practices particularly those related to hygiene compliance, food presentation, and time–temperature control during service are only moderately observed.

Similarly, sanitation strategies reveal a stronger emphasis on personal hygiene, yet show notable deficiencies in structured systems, including clearly defined cleaning schedules and well-communicated sanitation procedures.

The study further concludes that there is a significant difference in the perceptions of employees and managers, indicating a lack of alignment in how food safety and sanitation practices are evaluated within the establishments. Although the problems encountered are generally minimal, the persistence of issues such as inconsistent adherence to hygiene protocols highlights underlying gaps in implementation. The qualitative findings reinforce these conclusions, pointing to challenges in consistency, monitoring, training, and systematization. Overall, the study underscores the need for more coherent, standardized, and consistently enforced food safety and sanitation practices to ensure higher levels of compliance and operational effectiveness.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the implementation and consistency of food safety and sanitation strategies in Filipino restaurants.

1. Restaurant management should establish and strictly implement structured and documented cleaning and sanitation schedules to ensure consistency across all operational areas.

2. Clear and standardized sanitation and food safety procedures should be developed, properly communicated, and made easily accessible to all employees.

3. Regular and continuous training programs should be conducted to reinforce proper food handling, hygiene practices, and sanitation protocols among staff.

4. Management should strengthen monitoring and supervision mechanisms, such as routine inspections and compliance checks, to ensure that procedures are consistently followed.

5. Restaurants should implement a more systematic approach to time–temperature control, especially during food preparation, storage, and service.

6. There should be increased emphasis on employee accountability, encouraging staff to consistently observe hygiene practices even during peak hours.

7. Establishments should adopt visual reminders and signage (e.g., handwashing steps, sanitation procedures) in strategic areas to reinforce proper practices.

8. Management should foster open communication and feedback systems where employees can report challenges and suggest improvements related to food safety and sanitation.

9. Periodic evaluation and updating of food safety and sanitation strategies should be conducted to align with current standards and operational needs.

10. Restaurants may consider conducting internal audits or partnering with external experts to assess compliance and identify areas for improvement.

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