



THE CENTER FOR FOOD SAFETY IN
CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAMS

Introduction

- Employee food safety knowledge and attitudes are important to protect children from foodborne outbreaks (Henroid & Sneed, 2004).
- Research has shown that increasing employee knowledge is not enough to change on-the-job behavior (Roberts et al., 2008).
- Interventions to change employee behavior should focus on behavioral, normative, and control beliefs; which precede behavior and behavioral intention (Mitchell, Fraser, & Bearon, 2007).

Purpose

Determined school nutrition employees' beliefs about three food safety practices:

1. Proper cleaning/sanitizing of food contact surfaces,
2. Proper handwashing, and
3. Proper use of a food thermometer



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Behavioral Intention of School Nutrition Employees to Perform Food Safety Practices

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Methods

Sample

- School nutrition employees from 163 randomly selected school districts in 7 states.

Questionnaire Development

- 31 questions (Direct measures, indirect measures, and demographics)

Data Collection

- 3,850 surveys mailed to school nutrition directors, who distributed it to employees

Data Analysis

- Descriptive statistics
 - Mean score range -21 to 21
- Linear regressions

Results

- A total of 408 usable questionnaires were received, for an usable response rate of 10.6%.
- **Behavioral Beliefs:** Employees generally favor performing the three food safety practices. For example to decrease the likelihood of students getting sick (cleaning and sanitizing $M=20.1\pm4.1$; handwashing $M=20.4\pm2.5$; thermometer use $M=20.6\pm2.1$).

Results, continued

- **Normative Beliefs:** Strong social pressures are felt to perform the three food safety practices. For example the health inspector was consider an important influence (cleaning and sanitizing $M=20.1\pm4.1$; handwashing $M=20.4\pm2.5$; thermometer use $M=20.6\pm2.1$).
- **Control Beliefs:** Main barriers identified were:
 - Lack of equipment to properly clean and sanitize of food contact surfaces ($M=-4.9\pm7.1$)
 - Lack of supplies for proper handwashing ($M=-5.3\pm7.4$) and thermometer use (-3.8 ± 8.0).
- Subjective norms ($p\leq0.000$) and perceived behavioral controls ($p\leq0.000$) contributed significantly to predicting the three behaviors however, attitude did not (cleaning and sanitizing: $p=0.063$; handwashing: $p=0.721$; thermometer use: $p=0.463$).

Applications to Child Nutrition

- Training and educational interventions should use emotional and motivational strategies to motivate behavior change.
 - Perspectives of health inspectors, supervisors, and school nutrition directors should be considered.
- School nutrition directors, managers and/or supervisors should emphasize the importance of food safety and ensuring employees have the necessary resources.