



RISK MANAGEMENT PRACTICES OF CASUAL DINING RESTAURANTS IN THE NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION (NCR): BASIS FOR COMPLIANCE TRAINING PROGRAM TOWARDS DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM (DOT) ACCREDITATION

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Abstract

This study assessed the risk management practices of casual dining restaurants in the National Capital Region (NCR), with the goal of developing a compliance training program for Department of Tourism (DOT) accreditation. Statistical methods including frequency, percentage distribution and weighted mean. Most respondents were food handlers with 1-5 years of experience, and had limited or no formal education in food safety and risk management. The majority of restaurants were located in Manila, operated for less than a year, and had fewer than 10 employees. None were DOT accredited. While food safety practices were generally compliant in areas like setup, customers, and suppliers, other aspects such as food service, employee hygiene, and safety measures were often compliant. In terms of risk management, restaurants were compliant in integration, design, implementation, evaluation, and improvement. Problems related to food safety and risk management were moderately encountered. The study recommends that all staff receive training on risk management, food safety practices, and compliance to ensure quality service and adherence to guidelines, with the management adopting the proposed training program.

Keywords: Risk Management; Practices; Food Safety; Casual Dining Restaurant

1. Introduction

Casual dining restaurants, often referred to as sit-down establishments, offer reasonably priced meals in a relaxed atmosphere, typically providing table service where waitstaff serve meals directly to patrons. Positioned between fast-food outlets and fine-dining restaurants, casual dining restaurants occupy a unique market segment. These establishments play a crucial role in maintaining food safety and quality standards, as they are directly responsible for ensuring that their products are safe for consumption. Effective risk mitigation is essential for achieving these standards, as it involves identifying, evaluating, and controlling potential hazards that could harm consumers and the business's reputation.

Risk management and food safety are deeply interconnected in the food service industry, particularly in countries like the Philippines. The food service industry in the Philippines faces unique challenges, including stakeholder ignorance, regulatory complexity, and fluctuating market conditions, all of which impact food safety

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practices. Adhering to food safety and risk management guidelines is essential for preventing contamination and foodborne illnesses, which can severely damage a restaurant's reputation and lead to legal consequences. For casual dining restaurants, complying with these guidelines is a proactive measure to protect consumer health while ensuring business sustainability.

In the National Capital Region (NCR), only 155 establishments are accredited by the Department of Tourism (DOT), highlighting a significant gap in compliance among the thousands of food service businesses operating in the area. This gap underscores the need for a comprehensive approach to help casual dining restaurants navigate the process of acquiring DOT accreditation. By integrating risk management practices and ensuring food safety compliance, casual dining restaurants can not only improve service quality and customer satisfaction but also strengthen their resilience to market challenges. This study aims to address these issues and provide practical solutions for enhancing the overall safety and regulatory compliance of casual dining establishments in the NCR.

2. Literature Review

The thematic analysis presented in this review of related literature focuses on the intersection of food safety, risk management, and compliance in casual dining restaurants, with a particular emphasis on the challenges faced by establishments in the Philippines. It explores key themes such as the role of food safety practices in risk mitigation, the regulatory frameworks guiding the food service industry, and the gap between expert and consumer perceptions of food safety risks. Drawing on relevant literature, the analysis seeks to highlight the importance of adopting effective risk management strategies to ensure compliance with national and international food safety standards. Additionally, it aims to provide insights into the necessary steps for casual dining restaurants to enhance their food safety practices and achieve accreditation from regulatory bodies like the Department of Tourism (DOT).

2.1. Risk Management in Food Safety Practices: Identifying Gaps and Challenges

Grace (2017) and Vipham, Chaves, and Trinetta (2018) emphasize the insufficient understanding of specific health risks that could potentially cause foodborne illnesses but are often not addressed in food safety studies. These overlooked hazards, such as emerging pathogens and contamination risks, need to be carefully studied for effective risk management. Donaghy et al. (2021) underline the discrepancy between the food safety risks identified by experts and those perceived by consumers and policymakers, citing issues like data accessibility and risk communication. Research is crucial to bridging the gap between scientific assessments and practical applications in the foodservice sector. Furthermore, Batz, Hoffmann, and Lando (2012) stress the need for comprehensive risk management frameworks to address both emerging risks and existing hazards in the food industry. Jaykus et al. (2019) emphasize a multi-disciplinary approach to food safety, suggesting that broader perspectives lead to a more comprehensive understanding of food safety risks. Khan et al. (2021) also discuss the challenges of managing food safety in developing countries, underlining the need for proper training and risk assessment mechanisms to mitigate risks effectively.

2.2. ISO 31000 and DOT Guidelines for Effective Risk Management

ISO 31000 provides a comprehensive framework for risk identification, assessment, and mitigation (ISO, 2023), which emphasizes proactive risk management, including hazard identification and management strategies in food operations. Meanwhile, the DOT (2020) guidelines offer an essential regulatory framework tailored to the local foodservice industry. These guidelines cover foodservice operation configurations, employee hygiene, sanitation, and other critical factors to ensure safety. Implementing both frameworks in casual dining restaurants

will help align practices with international and national standards. Kline and Ho (2018) argue that risk management standards such as ISO 31000 should be widely adopted across the foodservice industry to reduce foodborne illnesses. Similarly, Jorgensen et al. (2017) discuss how ISO frameworks can be effectively used to identify potential hazards in food handling and mitigate risks. Mena et al. (2019) outline how the integration of ISO guidelines into food service practices can enhance both operational efficiency and safety.

2.3. Food Safety Practices and Compliance in the Philippines: Current State and Regulatory Frameworks

Nyarugwe et al. (2018) suggest that food safety practices in the Philippines need substantial improvement, particularly in the casual dining sector. The implementation of the Food Safety Act of 2013 is critical, yet it is often inconsistently followed, leading to foodborne illnesses and consumer health risks. Similarly, Bichler, Pikkemaat, and Peters (2021) emphasize the importance of service quality dimensions like reliability, responsiveness, and food quality as part of compliance with food safety regulations. These compliance challenges are also reflected in government reports, which highlight the gap between regulatory expectations and actual practices in food establishments. Jansen et al. (2019) argue that implementing national food safety frameworks like the Food Safety Act of 2013 is crucial for improving food safety standards. Meanwhile, Salazar et al. (2020) discuss how food safety regulations in the Philippines, while improving, are still challenged by inconsistent enforcement and a lack of training among food handlers.

2.4. Enhancing Risk Management and Compliance Through Training and Education

Research by Harper and Olsen (2020) shows that proper training and knowledge-sharing programs for food handlers significantly improve adherence to food safety regulations. Regular training on foodborne pathogens and hygiene practices can substantially reduce risks. Furthermore, training programs are essential for creating a culture of safety within foodservice establishments. This aligns with the findings of Nyarugwe et al. (2018), which highlight the need for a robust training infrastructure to improve food safety compliance. ISO 22000 (2018) stresses the importance of continuous staff education to ensure that risk management practices are consistently applied. Nara et al. (2021) discuss the importance of implementing structured food safety education to improve foodservice quality and minimize risks.

3. Methodology

This research used a quantitative approach with descriptive and correlational designs to analyze and summarize numerical data. Descriptive research aims to understand conditions, relationships, and trends by gathering and interpreting data, while correlational research examines statistical relationships between variables without manipulation. The researcher used the Taro Yamane formula and Purposive Sampling Technique to determine the sample size. Respondents were selected based on business and professional profile variables like location, years of operation, and food order frequency. The primary research instrument was a survey adapted from ISO 31000 Risk Management Guidelines (ISO, 2023) and the Department of Tourism's (DOT, 2020) health and safety guidelines.

The survey instrument consisted of five parts: respondents' professional and business profiles, their level of compliance with food safety practices, risk management practices, and the challenges encountered in implementing these practices. To ensure validity and reliability, content validation was conducted with seven subject matter experts, and a reliability test using Cronbach's Alpha was performed. After validation, a referral letter was sent to the management of selected restaurants to seek permission to distribute the survey. Data collection took place through Google Forms for customers and printed forms for other respondents. The collected data will be analyzed using statistical methods like frequency counts, percentages, and weighted means.

To analyze the data, the researcher employed descriptive statistics, including frequency distribution and ranking, to assess the compliance levels with food safety and risk management practices. A 5-point Likert scale was used to interpret the responses, ranging from "Fully Compliant" to "Never Compliant" for compliance levels and "Highly Encountered" to "Not Encountered" for problems faced during implementation. These statistical techniques will provide a clear understanding of the level of compliance and the challenges faced by casual dining restaurants in the National Capital Region (NCR) in adhering to food safety and risk management practices.

4. Findings

4.1. Professional Profile of the Respondents

Table 4.1.1.1: Professional Profile of the Respondents in terms of Current Role

Current Role	f	%
Food Handler	340	83.33
Food Safety Compliance Officer	68	16.67
Total	408	100.00

The professional profile of the respondents is presented in Table 4.1.1.1, showing their current role. Among the 408 respondents, the majority (83.33%) identified as Food Handlers, while 16.67% were Food Safety Compliance Officers. This suggests that the sample is predominantly comprised of personnel directly involved in food handling, which reflects the operational reality of casual dining establishments in the National Capital Region (NCR).

Table 4.1.1.2: Professional Profile of the Respondents in terms of Years of Experience in Current Role

Years of Experience in Current Role	f	%
Less than 1 year	115	28.19
1-5 years	172	42.16
6-10 years	95	23.28
11 or more years	26	6.37
Total	408	100.00

In Table 4.1.1.2, we present the years of experience of respondents in their current roles. The majority (42.16%) had 1 to 5 years of experience, followed by 28.19% with less than 1 year, and 23.28% with 6 to 10 years. A smaller proportion (6.37%) had more than 10 years of experience. This distribution reflects the relatively young workforce in the food safety domain, with the highest concentration of respondents being in the early stages of their career.

Table 4.1.1.3: Professional Profile of the Respondents in terms of Background in Food Safety

Background in Food Safety	f	%
Limited or no formal education	198	48.53

Informally educated	139	34.07
Received formal training	62	15.20
Certified food safety professional	9	2.21
Total	408	100.00

In terms of background in food safety, as depicted in Table 4.1.1.3, nearly half (48.53%) of respondents reported having limited or no formal education on food safety, while 34.07% had informal education on the subject. Only 15.20% had received formal training, and 2.21% were certified food safety professionals. This data highlights the need for greater emphasis on formal education and certification in food safety practices across the food service industry.

Table 4.1.1.4: Professional Profile of the Respondents in terms of Background in Risk Management

Background in Risk Management	f	%
Limited or no formal education	184	45.10
Informally educated	149	36.52
Received formal training	68	16.67
Certified risk management professional	7	1.72
Total	408	100.00

Similarly, Table 4.1.1.4 presents data on respondents' backgrounds in risk management. The majority (45.10%) reported limited or no formal education in risk management, while 36.52% were informally educated, and 16.67% had received formal training. Only 1.72% were certified risk management professionals. These findings indicate a critical gap in formal education and training in risk management within the food service industry, which could impact the implementation of effective food safety measures.

4.2. Business Profile of Casual Dining Restaurants

Table 4.1.2.1: Business Profile of Casual Dining Restaurants in terms of Location

Location	f	%	Rank
Manila	41	10.05	1
Quezon City	29	7.11	4.5
Caloocan	17	4.17	13.5
Las Piñas	15	3.68	16
Makati	25	6.13	7.5
Malabon	16	3.92	15
Mandaluyong	21	5.15	9.5
Marikina	29	7.11	4.5
Muntinlupa	17	4.17	13.5
Navotas	19	4.66	11
Parañaque	27	6.62	6
Pasay	34	8.33	3
Pasig	21	5.15	9.5
San Juan	25	6.13	7.5
Taguig	37	9.07	2
Valenzuela	17	4.17	13.5
Pateros	18	4.41	12
Total	408	100.00	

The business profile of the casual dining restaurants is detailed in Table 4.1.2.1. The majority of restaurants (10.05%) were located in Manila, followed by Taguig (9.07%) and Pasay (8.33%). This geographic distribution is consistent with the concentration of food service businesses in Metro Manila's commercial and residential hubs.

Table 4.1.2.2: Business Profile of Casual Dining Restaurants in terms of Years of Operation

Years of Operation	f	%
Less than 1 year	188	46.08
1-5 years	151	37.01
6-10 years	45	11.03
11 or more years	24	5.88
Total	408	100.00

In terms of years of operation, Table 4.1.2.2 shows that 46.08% of casual dining restaurants had been in operation for less than a year, while 37.01% had been operational for 1 to 5 years. This suggests that the casual dining sector is relatively new and continuously growing, with a focus on startups and businesses in their early stages.

Table 4. 1.2.3: Business Profile of Casual Dining Restaurants in terms of Number of Employees

Number of Employees	f	%
Less than 10 employees	214	52.45
11-15 employees	165	40.44
16 or more employees	29	7.11
Total	408	100.00

In terms of employee count, Table 4.1.2.3 reveals that more than half (52.45%) of the restaurants employed fewer than 10 staff members, while 40.44% employed between 11 and 15 staff. A smaller percentage (7.11%) had 16 or more employees. These findings suggest that the majority of casual dining establishments operate with a lean workforce, which may impact their ability to fully implement comprehensive food safety measures.

Table 4.1.2.4: Business Profile of Casual Dining Restaurants in terms of Organization Type

Organization Type	f	%
Sole proprietorship	217	53.19
Corporation	38	9.31
Partnership	153	37.50
Total	408	100.00

Regarding organization type, Table 4.1.2.4 shows that the majority of casual dining restaurants were sole proprietorships (53.19%), followed by partnerships (37.50%) and corporations (9.31%). This indicates that a significant portion of the businesses are small, independently owned establishments, which may face challenges in implementing and enforcing uniform food safety protocols.

Table 4.1.2.5: DOT Accreditation Status of Casual Dining Restaurants in the National Capital Region

DOT Accreditation Status	f	%
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Accredited	0	0.00
Not Accredited	408	100.00
Total	408	100.00

In terms of the Department of Tourism (DOT) accreditation status, Table 4.1.2.5 highlights that none of the casual dining restaurants were DOT accredited. This suggests a heavy reliance on Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) registration, which may limit their ability to access certain resources and recognition.

4.2. Food Safety Practices

Table 4.2.1: Food Safety Practices in terms of Restaurant Configuration and Set-Up

Attributes	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Equivalent	Ranking
I oversee the installation of sanitizing mats and drying pads	3.39	Compliant (C)	3
I ensure that seating capacity allows 1-meter spacing and dividers	3.57	Often Compliant (OC)	1
I ensure menus are displayed or provide touchless options	3.46	Often Compliant (OC)	2
I oversee signage for handwashing or sanitizer usage	3.11	Compliant (C)	4
Average Weighted Mean	3.38	Compliant (C)	

Table 4.2.1 provides a summary of food safety practices related to restaurant configuration and set-up. The data reveals that the respondents were "often compliant" in ensuring that seating arrangements maintained a 1-meter distance between customers and that transparent dividers were installed where necessary, with a weighted mean of 3.57, the highest among all practices. Ensuring proper menu display and implementing sanitizing measures were also ranked highly, but still remained within the "compliant" category.

Table 4.2.2: Food Safety Practices in terms of Customers and Suppliers

Attributes	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Equivalent	Ranking
I ensure suppliers know delivery protocols	3.54	Often Compliant (OC)	1
I oversee customer screening through temperature checks and forms	3.28	Compliant (C)	2
I encourage cashless payment methods	3.13	Compliant (C)	3
Average Weighted Mean	3.32	Compliant (C)	

As shown in Table 4.2.2, food safety practices concerning customers and suppliers were "often compliant" in ensuring that suppliers were informed of delivery protocols (3.54 weighted mean), but less consistent when it came to screening customers and encouraging cashless payments, both falling into the "compliant" category.

Table 4.2.3: Food Safety Practices in terms of Food Service and Delivery

Attributes	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Equivalent	Ranking
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I ensure proper sanitation for delivery personnel	3.38	Compliant (C)	3
I oversee the designation of pick-up areas	3.40	Often Compliant (OC)	2
I ensure food is covered before serving	3.42	Often Compliant (OC)	1
Average Weighted Mean	3.40	Often Compliant (OC)	

In Table 4.2.3, food safety practices in food service and delivery show a consistent emphasis on maintaining sanitation, especially for delivery personnel (3.38 weighted mean), and ensuring the proper handling of food. The highest-rated practices involved enhancements to the exhaust system and providing essential sanitation products, both of which were categorized as "often compliant."

Table 4.2.4: Food Safety Practices in Terms of Employee Health and Hygiene

Attributes	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Equivalent	Ranking
I ensure that employees observe personal hygiene and grooming while on duty, including wearing clean clothes and closed shoes.	3.37	Compliant (C)	6.5
I oversee that employees practice proper respiratory etiquette, such as covering their nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing.	3.46	Often Compliant (OC)	2.5
I ensure that employees avoid touching ready-to-eat food with their bare hands and use appropriate utensils.	3.44	Often Compliant (OC)	4
I oversee that employees wash their hands before donning gloves and after removing gloves when direct contact with ready-to-eat food is required.	3.48	Often Compliant (OC)	1
I make sure that employees follow the "Clean As You Go" policy by keeping the work area clean and tidy throughout the working day.	3.40	Often Compliant (OC)	5
I oversee that staff break and mealtimes are done on shifting schedules and employees dine at designated discreet areas with physical distancing.	3.46	Often Compliant (OC)	2.5
I ensure that customers and suppliers not wearing masks are not allowed to enter the restaurant and that face masks are worn properly at all times except when eating and drinking.	3.37	Compliant (C)	6.5
Average Weighted Mean	3.42	Often Compliant (OC)	

In terms of Employee Health and Hygiene, the respondents reported an "often compliant" level in most areas, with the highest compliance observed in the practice of ensuring employees wash their hands before donning gloves and after removing gloves, which had the highest weighted mean of 3.48, ranking it first. Similarly, the enforcement of respiratory etiquette and staggered staff mealtimes, both ranked second, also received a high rating with weighted means of 3.46. Other practices, such as avoiding bare hand contact with ready-to-eat food (3.44) and maintaining a clean workspace (3.40), were also consistently rated as "often compliant."

Although most practices were rated positively, two aspects, including personal hygiene and mask-wearing enforcement, were rated as "compliant" (3.37) and ranked last. These findings suggest that while the restaurant performs reasonably well in maintaining health and hygiene protocols, there remains room for improvement in ensuring consistent enforcement, particularly in employee grooming and mask compliance.

Table 4.2.5: Food Safety Practices in Terms of Food Safety Measures

Attributes	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Equivalent	Ranking
I ensure that all employees of the restaurant fill out a Health Declaration Form (HDF) upon entering the premises.	3.47	Often Compliant (OC)	4
I oversee the implementation of denying entry to employees who meet any of the conditions specified in the HDF (e.g., experiencing fever, cough, colds, etc.), directing them to consult a doctor or stay at home.	3.53	Often Compliant (OC)	1
I ensure that the restaurant proprietor monitors the body temperature of all employees every time they report to work, directing those with body temperature exceeding 37.5°C or flu-like symptoms to see a doctor and stay at home.	3.48	Often Compliant (OC)	3
I oversee the provision of employees' required PPE, such as facemasks and face shields, to be worn when necessary while on duty.	3.46	Often Compliant (OC)	5
I ensure that the restaurant provides alcohol or alcohol-based hand sanitizer for employees to use regularly while on duty.	3.51	Often Compliant (OC)	2
I oversee the restaurant proprietor in ensuring cleanliness within all restaurant premises, including the kitchen, storage areas, and parking.	3.44	Often Compliant (OC)	6
I ensure that all employees undergo an annual health check-up as required.	3.39	Compliant (C)	8
I make sure that the restaurant's employees undergo RT-PCR tests as required by applicable government issuances (DOH, DOLE, DTI).	3.42	Often Compliant (OC)	7
I ensure that notices or reminders about health protocols are clearly posted at the restaurant entrance and other conspicuous areas.	3.36	Compliant (C)	9
Average Weighted Mean	3.45	Often Compliant (OC)	

In the area of Food Safety Measures, the respondents also rated the practices as "often compliant," with the highest-ranking practice being the denial of entry for employees with health issues, which received a weighted mean of 3.53. Closely following were the provision of alcohol-based hand sanitizers and temperature monitoring (3.51 and 3.48, respectively). Other practices such as completing Health Declaration Forms and ensuring PPE availability received similarly positive responses.

However, the practices of ensuring annual health check-ups and posting health protocol reminders received lower scores (3.39 and 3.36), indicating areas where the restaurant may need to enhance efforts for full compliance.

4.3. Risk Management Practices

Table 4.3.1: Risk Management Practices in Terms of Integration

Attributes	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Equivalent	Ranking
I have asked key stakeholders to support the establishment of a compliant risk management framework.	3.22	Compliant (C)	3
I have requested top management to support the establishment of the risk management framework.	3.18	Compliant (C)	5
I regularly evaluate our existing risk management practices and processes.	3.28	Compliant (C)	1
I identify gaps in our current risk management practices and processes.	3.20	Compliant (C)	4
I have established a framework that meets our organization's unique needs.	3.26	Compliant (C)	2
Average Weighted Mean	3.23	Compliant (C)	

Risk management practices in terms of integration were rated as "compliant" overall, with the highest rating for regularly evaluating existing practices (3.28). Establishing a risk management framework that meets the organization's needs ranked second. The establishment of a risk management framework with support from key stakeholders and top management, as well as identifying gaps in current practices, received lower compliance ratings.

Table 4.3.2: Risk Management Practices in Terms of Design

Attributes	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Equivalent	Ranking
I have created a framework that addresses the gaps in our existing practices and processes.	3.22	Compliant (C)	1
I have a clear plan for developing our risk management framework.	3.17	Compliant (C)	2
Average Weighted Mean	3.20	Compliant (C)	

In risk management design, the practices were also rated as "compliant," with the highest score given for addressing gaps in current practices (3.22). The creation of a clear development plan for the risk management framework was rated slightly lower, indicating a need for clearer communication and action plans.

Table 4.3.3: Risk Management Practices in Terms of Implementation

Attributes	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Equivalent	Ranking
I ensure that risk management is integrated into the organization's culture and operations.	3.49	Often Compliant (OC)	1
I make sure the gap in risk management practices is addressed within the organization.	3.47	Often Compliant (OC)	2
I align the risk management framework with our organizational objectives.	3.35	Compliant (C)	3
I integrate risk management practices into every part of the organization.	3.17	Compliant (C)	4
I ensure that risk management practices are considered in every decision-making process.	3.23	Compliant (C)	5
Average Weighted Mean	3.34	Often Compliant (OC)	

Risk management implementation received an "often compliant" rating overall. Integration into the organization's culture and operations received the highest score (3.49), while integration across all decision-making processes and functions was rated as "compliant," suggesting room for further improvement in consistently applying risk management practices.

Table 4.3.4: Risk Management Practices in Terms of Evaluation and Improvement

Attributes	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Equivalent	Ranking
I actively look for ways to improve our risk management framework.	3.41	Often Compliant (OC)	1
I regularly evaluate the effectiveness of our risk management framework.	3.29	Compliant (C)	2
Average Weighted Mean	3.35	Often Compliant (OC)	

The evaluation and improvement practices for risk management showed a generally positive response, with an "often compliant" rating of 3.35. The active pursuit of improvements scored the highest (3.41), while regular evaluations of the framework's effectiveness were slightly lower (3.29), indicating areas for further improvement in systematic evaluations.

4.4. Problems Encountered in Food Safety Practices

Table 4.4: Problems Encountered in Food Safety Practices

Problem Areas	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Equivalent	Ranking
Inadequate monitoring of employee health.	3.47	Encountered (E)	1
Insufficient provision of personal protective equipment (PPE).	3.43	Encountered (E)	2
Lack of access to hand sanitizers.	3.45	Encountered (E)	3
Average Weighted Mean	3.45	Encountered (E)	

Table 4.4 highlights the main challenges in food safety practices, with the most significant issue being inadequate monitoring of employee health (3.47). Other major concerns include a lack of access to hand sanitizers (3.45) and insufficient provision of personal protective equipment (PPE) (3.43). These issues indicate that the

restaurant faces difficulties in ensuring consistent health monitoring and providing essential tools to maintain food safety, which could increase the risk of contamination and foodborne illnesses.

4.5. *Problems Encountered in Risk Management Practices*

Table 4.5: Problems Encountered in Risk Management Practices

Problem Areas	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Equivalent	Ranking
Inadequate availability of protective equipment for food handlers and deliverers.	3.61	Encountered (E)	1
Insufficient training in food safety for employees.	3.29	Moderately Encountered (ME)	2
Inadequate monitoring of food storage temperatures.	3.37	Moderately Encountered (ME)	3
Average Weighted Mean	3.43	Encountered (E)	

Table 4.5 reveals key problems in risk management practices, with the most pressing issue being inadequate availability of protective equipment for food handlers and delivery staff (3.61). Another concern is insufficient training in food safety for employees (3.29), which points to gaps in employee education regarding safety protocols. These problems suggest that the restaurant needs to improve its protective measures and employee training to better manage potential risks and enhance operational safety.

5. **Conclusions**

The findings from the professional and business profiles of the respondents and the food safety and risk management practices shed light on both the strengths and challenges faced by casual dining restaurants. The majority of respondents were food handlers with relatively short tenures in their current roles, indicating a younger workforce with limited formal training in both food safety and risk management. Additionally, most restaurants were newly established and operated with small teams, which may contribute to the challenges in implementing comprehensive safety measures. These factors highlight the need for improved training programs and a more structured approach to food safety and risk management, particularly for the majority of restaurants that lack formal accreditation and those operating without sufficient protective equipment or adequate employee health monitoring.

Despite these challenges, the respondents generally reported "often compliant" or "compliant" ratings in their food safety and risk management practices. However, significant problems were identified, particularly in the areas of employee health monitoring, the availability of personal protective equipment, and the consistency of food safety training. While practices related to food handling and employee hygiene were generally followed, improvements are needed in risk management integration and evaluation, as well as in addressing gaps in protective equipment for food handlers and delivery personnel. These findings underscore the critical need for enhanced safety protocols and formal training to address the gaps in food safety and risk management practices, ensuring a safer and more compliant food service environment.

Acknowledgments

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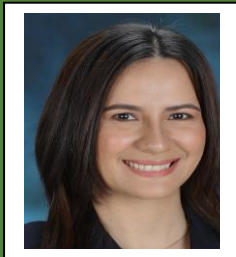
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