Cabin Crew Food Safety Training: An Exploratory Study

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Abstract
The production and service of airlines meals is a "high-risk mass catering operation" with food safety implications, including temperature control during receiving/loading, storing and regeneration of meals, personal hygiene, cross-contamination, food allergy and poisoning. Food service is a crucial part of cabin crew on-board duties, therefore and according to the regulations, cabin crew should be educated/trained on food safety and hygiene. However, while a plethora of studies have been conducted on food handlers' food safety training in different sectors of the catering industry, to date; there is no in-depth study on cabin crew food safety training. Thus this study aimed to investigate cabin crew food safety training through the development of a conceptual framework to inform the study.

Based on a mixed methods design and pragmatic worldview, this study employed a partially mixed methods sequential exploratory equal status typology. It involved two separate, but integrated strands. The first strand was qualitative based on a snowballing technique, in which a sample of ٢٦ cabin crew training managers/supervisors participated in in-depth, semi-structured interviews from ٢٠ airlines worldwide. In addition, content analysis of documents, e.g., airlines' websites was conducted. The qualitative findings revealed that majority of airlines train cabin crew on food safety. However, training was not based on training needs analysis (TNA) and was not aligned with cabin crew roles and duties. Additionally, few airlines evaluated independently the reaction, knowledge, behaviours and results of their cabin crew food safety training. These findings informed the need for quantifying and generalising of cabin crew food safety issues, therefore an intermediate model was developed.

The second strand was quantitative based on a random purposive sample of ٣٠٧ cabin crew from the ٢٠ airlines participated in the first strand. Structural equation modelling (SEM) was used for measuring the relationships between six constructs of the intermediate model; (training, knowledge, attitudes, self-reported practices, barriers and training needs). The SEM findings revealed that food safety training affects positively and significantly the knowledge, attitudes and self-reported practices. Food training affects negatively and significantly the perceived training needs. However, there were significant differences between trained and untrained cabin crew. The findings also exposed the influence of barriers to food safety training and behaviours of both models; trained and untrained.

This is the first study on cabin crew food safety training. It contributed to knowledge by providing two revised models which improve understanding of cabin crew food safety training which could inform the development of future cabin crew food safety training. Finally, this study developed a range of recommendations, limitations and future research opportunities.