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## **Hygiene Awareness Among Fuchka Vendors and Consumers in Bangladesh: A Study on Social Determinants of Health**

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**Abstract.** The article, "Hygiene Awareness Among Fuchka Vendors and Consumers in Bangladesh: A Study on Social Determinants of Health," delves into the intricate relationships between social determinants of health (SDH) and hygiene practices in the context of street food culture in Bangladesh, with a particular emphasis on the popular snack, Fuchka. Drawing from extensive fieldwork, including focus group discussions with consumers and in-depth interviews with Fuchka vendors, the study seeks to understand the health implications of Fuchka consumption, the reasons behind its widespread appeal, and the lived experiences of both vendors and consumers. Results reveal a substantial impact of factors like income, education, occupation, and gender norms on hygiene awareness and practices. This is particularly evident when assessing the quality and safety of street foods, with issues like lack of sanitation, use of contaminated water, and exposure to environmental contaminants coming to the fore. The study also highlights the varied experiences of consuming Fuchka across socio-economic strata, emphasizing the disparities in hygiene standards between upscale restaurants and street vendors. Moreover, the paper underscores the critical role of city corporations in regulating street food vending and the urgent need for comprehensive policies that address these SDH to improve public health. Through this lens, the article provides a holistic understanding of the interplay between social determinants, hygiene practices, and health outcomes in the vibrant street food scene of Bangladesh.

**Keywords.** Hygiene, Social Determinants of Health, Fuchka, Street Food, Food Policy

### **Introduction**

Street food is an integral part of urban life in many countries, offering a wide variety of affordable and easily accessible meals to millions of people. However, concerns about the safety and hygiene of street food have been raised, particularly in low and middle-income countries. This study attempts to look into the health risks related to consuming the popular street food Fuchka in Dhaka city, Bangladesh.

Fuchka, known as Pani Puri in India and Golgappa in Pakistan, is a type of hollow, crispy bread filled with mashed potatoes and chickpeas, often served with flavored water. It is a favorite snack enjoyed by many, from school children to adults. However, the hygienic conditions under which it is prepared and served have been the subject of ongoing debate and

concern. While street food is a primary source of sustenance for many urban dwellers, it is crucial to ensure that these food items are safe for consumption and do not pose a risk to public health.

Some studies revealed the potential dangers of consuming contaminated street food, including the risk of contracting enteric diseases such as diarrhea, cholera, and typhoid. A study conducted by icddr'b found that over 40% of street food in Dhaka city was contaminated with diarrhea-causing *E.coli* bacteria (Icddr'b, 2015). Moreover, a study by the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC) identified hazardous bacteria coliform and *E. coli* in a range of street foods, including Fuchka (Ali, 2020).

Despite these alarming findings, the popularity of Fuchka and other street foods remains high, particularly among school-going children and their parents. To further understand the health risks associated with Fuchka consumption and the reasons behind its continued popularity, this research embarked on a meticulous field investigation employing Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with consumers of both genders and executing in-depth interviews with Fuchka vendors, to gather multiple understandings associated with consumption patterns and behaviors.

The purpose of this study is to furnish a holistic understanding of the health repercussions stemming from the consumption of Fuchka, the rationale behind its sustained popularity, and to elucidate the viewpoints of both the consumers and the vendors. Through the illumination of these facets, this research aspires to augment the development of efficacious strategies aimed at enhancing the safety and hygienic standards of street food in Dhaka city and analogous locales.

This paper is divided into several sections, starting with a review of the existing literature on street food safety and the risks associated with Fuchka consumption. We then present the findings of our field investigation, including the perspectives of Fuchka consumers and vendors. Finally, we will discuss and make recommendations on the implications of our findings regarding public health and social determinants of health.

### **Why study the Social Determinants of Health?**

Social determinants of health (SDH) like income, education, and occupation play a crucial role in the awareness and practices of hygiene, particularly evident when we look at the culture of street food in India and Bangladesh (Marmot, 2005). These factors act as barriers or enablers, shaping the health outcomes among consumers and vendors alike.

In India and Bangladesh, street food is a significant part of urban culture, providing affordable meals to millions (Bhowmik, 2005). However, the practices around this are mired in a complex web of social determinants that can negatively impact hygiene and, subsequently, public health. For example, vendors who lack access to clean water or sanitation facilities may compromise on hygiene, increasing the risk of foodborne diseases (Montgomery & Elimelech, 2007). The consumers, who are often from lower-income brackets, may lack the education to recognize the risks associated with consuming such food.

The issue also extends to gender norms. In India, women and children are particularly vulnerable to indoor air pollution due to traditional cooking practices that involve burning wood or coal (K. R. Smith, 2000). Social norms that restrict women to domestic spaces also limit their exposure to hygiene education and awareness, further influencing their health behaviors and those of their families (Sen & Östlin, 2008). Likewise, Bangladesh faces gender inequality

issues that manifest in sectors like health and education, directly affecting hygiene awareness and practices among women.

In Bangladesh, the environmental determinants such as climate change and arsenic contamination pose another set of challenges (A. H. Smith et al., 2000). Natural calamities exacerbate the conditions under which both vendors and consumers operate, making basic hygiene practices even more difficult to maintain.

The diversity in how street food like Fuchka is consumed across socio-economic classes is another illustration. In wealthier neighborhoods, Fuchka is sold in upscale restaurants with presumably better hygiene standards, accessible only to those who can afford it. In contrast, in areas with middle- or lower-income populations, street vendors are common. Here, issues like lack of sanitation and the use of contaminated water come to the forefront. Studies have shown high levels of E.coli bacteria in street food in Dhaka, indicating a severe public health risk (Ali, 2020). The prevalence of contaminated food in residential areas, where vendors primarily operate, illustrates how social determinants like housing and neighborhood can directly affect hygiene and health.

Access to healthcare services, or the lack thereof, plays a role too. In India, despite progress, many regions still have unimproved sanitation facilities, particularly in rural areas (Montgomery & Elimelech, 2007). In Bangladesh, the shortage of healthcare professionals makes it difficult to address these issues on a large scale.

While the culture of street food brings flavor and character to the cities of India and Bangladesh, it also exposes the critical role of social determinants in influencing hygiene practices and awareness. The inequities rooted in economic stability, gender roles, and education contribute to a complex public health landscape (Marmot, 2005). These multi-layered social determinants require an equally multi-faceted approach to improve hygiene and, ultimately, public health in these nations.

### **Literature Review**

Street foods have become part of the lifestyle of many walks of consumers, though this business has been occupied by low-income people in urban centers worldwide, and its consumers range from the middle class to the upper class. The convenience, affordability, and diversity of street food have made it a popular choice for millions of consumers. However, concerns regarding the safety and hygiene of street food have emerged as critical public health issues.

Street food is a significant part of the urban culinary culture worldwide. Street vendors offer a variety of affordable, accessible, and diverse food items, which often reflect the local traditions and flavors of the region. As highlighted by Winarno & Allain (1991), street food contributes to the socio-economic and nutritional needs of urban populations, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. Street vendors play a crucial role in the informal economy and provide livelihoods for millions of individuals. Furthermore, street food is an essential source of nourishment for many urban residents, particularly those from lower socio-economic backgrounds (Bhowmik, 2005).

Street food safety and hygiene have become significant public health issues. The consumption of contaminated street food can lead to various health problems, including gastrointestinal illnesses. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), foodborne diseases pose a considerable health burden, affecting millions of individuals globally (WHO, 2015). Street food has been identified as a potential source of foodborne diseases due to factors such as inadequate sanitation, poor personal hygiene of vendors, and unsafe food handling

practices (Ok & Kuria, 2005). A study conducted by icddr'b in Dhaka city discovered that over 40% of street food samples were contaminated with diarrhea-causing E.coli bacteria (Icddr'b, 2015). This highlights the need for improved street food safety standards to protect public health.

Multiple factors influence street food safety, including vendors' knowledge, infrastructural constraints, and environmental conditions. The icddr'b study pointed out the role of vendors' lack of understanding about food safety and infrastructural limitations such as limited access to safe water in contributing to food contamination (Icddr'b, 2015). The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) emphasizes that vendor education and training, proper infrastructure, and adequate regulatory mechanisms are essential components for ensuring street food safety (FAO, 1988).

Fuchka is the most tantalizingly tasty street food, and has gained attention due to its association with health risks. Fuchka comprises hollow, crispy bread filled with mashed potatoes and chickpeas. Despite its popularity, research by the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC) in 2020 found hazardous bacteria such as coliform and E. coli in street food items, including Fuchka (Ali, 2020). These pathogens can cause illnesses such as recurring fever, diarrhea, and hepatitis. The Institute of Public Health revealed that street food items, including Fuchka, sold outside schools in Dhaka were contaminated with E. coli and faecal bacteria (Alam, 2021). Such findings underscore the need for proper food safety measures to ensure the health of consumers, particularly children.

Health equity has been a concern for policymakers, particularly in South Asian countries and communities. Socioeconomic and cultural factors influence health, with disparities in wealth, political systems, and access to healthcare facilities contributing to health inequities (Braveman, 2003). The impact of street food on health equity is multifaceted. While street food can provide affordable nourishment to urban residents, unsafe street food can exacerbate health inequities by disproportionately affecting individuals from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Addressing street food safety is crucial for achieving health equity and promoting public health.

Street food safety and hygiene are essential public health concerns. The consumption of contaminated street food can lead to various health problems, particularly among vulnerable populations. Addressing factors such as vendors' knowledge, infrastructural limitations, and regulatory mechanisms is crucial for ensuring street food safety. This study aims to address several research gaps in the area of street food safety, particularly concerning the popular street food item, Fuchka, in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Earlier studies have touched upon the role of vendors' knowledge and the need for regulatory mechanisms, but there is a lack of in-depth research on effective methods to educate and train street vendors on food safety and hygiene. There is also a limited focus on specific street food items and their unique risk factors. Furthermore, while the impact of street food on health equity has been recognized, more research is needed on how socio-economic factors influence street food consumption and health outcomes. The current study will explore vendors' knowledge, assess the safety of Fuchka, examine the effectiveness of existing regulatory mechanisms, and investigate consumers' perceptions of street food safety.

### **Methodology**

In this study, we employed a qualitative approach to assess the safety of street food, specifically focusing on Fuchka, a popular street food item in Dhaka, Bangladesh. We conducted a field investigation involving both male and female focus group discussions (FGDs) and in-depth interviews with Fuchka vendors.

The four FGDs involved consumers of Fuchka, separated into two male and two female groups. Participants for the FGDs were selected from the parents of schoolchildren, who frequently consume Fuchka from street vendors. Each FGD consisted of a series of questions related to the consumers' experiences with Fuchka, their health after consuming the food, and their awareness of potential risks associated with street food.

The 10 in-depth interviews with Fuchka vendors focused on their practices in sourcing ingredients, preparing the food, serving customers, and their knowledge of food safety and hygiene standards. Questions were designed to uncover the vendors' understanding of hygiene practices, as well as their perception of the impact of Fuchka on consumer health.

Data collected from the FGDs and vendor interviews were then analyzed to assess the safety and hygiene practices of street food vendors and to explore the perceptions and experiences of consumers. Themes and patterns were identified, and key findings were presented to inform recommendations for policy and practice. The article is completely based on primary data. However, to ensure linguistic clarity and grammatical accuracy, we have utilized the ChatGPT AI tool.

This methodology provided a comprehensive assessment of Fuchka's safety in Dhaka, considering both the vendors' practices and the consumers' perceptions. It aimed to uncover specific areas for intervention and inform policies to improve street food safety.

### **Findings**

In the last two decades, India has seen a considerable increase in health concerns related to air pollution (indoor and outdoor), child undernutrition, unimproved sanitation, employment conditions, and gender inequality. Household surveys have revealed significant exposure to indoor air pollution, with women and young children being most vulnerable. Furthermore, child undernutrition is a prevalent issue, and unimproved sanitation is common, particularly in rural areas. Employment conditions remain problematic, and gender inequality is persistent in various sectors.

In Bangladesh, the most significant health concerns include gender inequality, insufficient health professionals, the effects of climate change, and arsenic contamination in drinking water. Street food has become a crucial part of urban culture in the country, with a significant number of low and middle-income consumers relying on it. Fuchka, Achar, Chotpoti, and Jhalmuri are among the popular street foods in Dhaka. The definitions and characteristics of street food in both countries align with the FAO's description.

Notably, Fuchka consumption varies across socioeconomic classes. Although the delicacy is popular among the urban middle class, it is not as readily available in elite areas of Dhaka, such as Gulshan. In these areas, upscale restaurants sell Fuchka at higher prices, and it is perceived as more hygienic than Fuchka sold on the streets. The Fuchka sold in areas inhabited by middle and lower-middle classes raises concerns about cleanliness.

Our research revealed significant health risks associated with street food in Dhaka, especially Fuchka. More than 40% of street food was found to be contaminated with E.coli, which can cause severe health complications. Long-term consumption of contaminated Fuchka may lead to damage to red blood cells, heart disorders, and kidney-related issues.

Interestingly, diverse opinions on Fuchka consumption behavior patterns have been found. Male focus group participants, primarily fathers of schoolboys, mentioned that they consume Fuchka mainly due to their children's preferences. A significant number of these participants have experienced health issues after eating Fuchka, especially during the summer.



**Table 1: Key Findings from Male FGDs**

<b>Key Finding</b>	<b>Details</b>
Consumption Preference	Most consume Fuchka due to their children's preferences
Health Effects	A significant number have experienced health issues post-consumption, especially during the summer
Risk Awareness	Limited awareness of health risks associated with Fuchka
Consumption Motivation	Taste acknowledged as a compelling reason for continued consumption

Female focus group participants, primarily mothers of schoolgirls, also consume Fuchka with their daughters. Half of them reported health issues post-consumption, particularly during the summer and monsoon seasons. Both male and female participants have limited awareness of the potential health risks associated with Fuchka consumption. Still, they acknowledge its taste as a compelling reason for continued consumption.

**Table 2: Key Findings from Female FGDs**

<b>Key Finding</b>	<b>Details</b>
Consumption Preference	Most consume Fuchka with their daughters
Health Effects	Half reported health issues post-consumption, particularly during the summer and monsoon seasons
Risk Awareness	Limited awareness of health risks associated with Fuchka
Consumption Motivation	Taste acknowledged as a compelling reason for continued consumption

Vendor insights provided valuable information about the Fuchka supply chain. Fuchka vendors primarily source their ingredients from dealers and lack in-depth knowledge about the quality of their products. Most vendors perceive their serving methods as hygienic, even though they handle both food and money with the same hands. They are aware of some consumers falling ill after consuming their Fuchka but do not attribute it directly to their products or practices.

**Table 3: Key Findings from Street Food Vendor Interviews**

<b>Key Finding</b>	<b>Details</b>
Ingredient Sourcing	Source ingredients primarily from dealers
Product Quality Knowledge	Lack in-depth knowledge about the quality of their products
Hygiene Perception	Most perceive their serving methods as hygienic, despite handling both food and money with the same hands
Consumer Health Impacts	Aware of some consumers falling ill after consuming their Fuchka, but do not attribute it directly to their products or practices

Street foods like Fuchka are an integral part of Dhaka's urban culture and are beloved by many. However, there are clear health risks associated with their consumption, especially from street vendors. The disparities in how Fuchka is presented and consumed across different socioeconomic classes further highlight the challenges in ensuring food safety and quality for all.

### **Results and Discussion**

The study aimed to explore the hygiene awareness levels among Fuchka vendors and customers, and the factors that influence their hygiene practices and perceptions in Dhaka city. The qualitative data from focus group discussions with parents and interviews with street food vendors was analyzed to uncover insights into the current state of hygiene awareness and practices in the street food sector, particularly focusing on Fuchka.

#### **Hygiene Awareness Levels Among Fuchka Vendors and Customers**

The results from the field investigation revealed differing levels of hygiene awareness among Fuchka vendors and customers. While both groups showed some level of concern about hygiene standards, there was a gap in their understanding of the specific risks associated with consuming contaminated food. The majority of the consumers, including both male and female focus groups, continued to consume Fuchka despite experiencing health issues believed to be caused by the food. This finding supports the notion that taste preferences often override health concerns when it comes to street food consumption (Cohen & Avieli, 2004).

The vendors' understanding of hygiene standards was also found to be inadequate. They believed their handling practices were hygienic, despite handling both food and money with the same hands, highlighting the need for proper training and awareness initiatives tailored to street food vendors (Nizame et al., 2019).

### Social Determinants Affecting Hygiene Awareness and Practices

While it is clear that factors such as gender inequality, scarcity of healthcare professionals, climate change, and arsenic contamination serve as key social determinants of health in, it's essential to examine how these larger structural issues impact everyday aspects of life. One such aspect is the consumption of street food like 'Fuchka,' a prominent dietary staple for urban, middle, and lower-middle-class populations.

The hygiene practices related to 'Fuchka' are intrinsically tied to the broader social determinants of health in Bangladesh. According to a report by the International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh (icddr,b), over 40% of street food in Dhaka was found to be contaminated with E. coli bacteria(Icddr'b, 2015). While this raises alarms about public health, it also highlights the gap in hygiene awareness and education among street food vendors and consumers.

Our primary data reveals that 'Fuchka' vendors in lower-middle-class neighborhoods rarely have access to clean water or proper sanitation facilities for food preparation, thereby increasing the risk of food contamination. Furthermore, more than 90% of food vendors in a study conducted by the Institute of Public Health in Dhaka did not wash their hands before handling and serving food(Alam, 2021). Such lapses can be attributed to a lack of awareness, inadequate infrastructure, and broader systemic issues like poverty and lack of education, underscoring how health determinants are intertwined with everyday practices.

Socioeconomic factors play a significant role in determining who eats 'Fuchka' and where it's consumed. In affluent areas like Gulshan in Dhaka, 'Fuchka' is sold in elite restaurants at substantially higher prices than in the streets (Saad Fuchka Gulshan 2, pricing menu).

**Table 4: Comparative Pricing Menu**

Saad Fuchka, Gulshan 2		Salam Fuchka, Mirpur 10	
Fuchka	BDT 120	Fuchka	BDT 40
Chotpoti	BDT 120	Chotpoti	BDT 40
Panipuri	BDT 120	Panipuri	BDT 40
Doi Fuchka	BDT 180	Doi Fuchka	BDT 80

This speaks volumes about the unequal distribution of health risks tied to 'Fuchka' consumption; while the elite can afford "tidy and testy" 'Fuchka,' lower-middle-class individuals face higher risks due to questionable hygiene standards of street vendors.

The study found that social determinants significantly influenced hygiene awareness and practices among Fuchka vendors and consumers. Most consumers in the study were parents who purchased Fuchka mainly for their school-going children. Their preference for Fuchka was largely driven by their children's taste preferences, a finding consistent with previous studies on street food consumption ((Steinkraus, 1995).

The Fuchka vendors, primarily individuals from low socio-economic backgrounds, sourced their ingredients from dealers without considering quality, further highlighting the need for regulatory oversight and quality control in the street food sector. The current lack of oversight, as vendors are typically viewed as informal businesses, contributes to their limited awareness of proper hygiene practices.(Mensah et al., 2002).

### **Intersection of Hygiene Practices with Broader Socio-economic and Health-related Issues**

The results also showed that hygiene practices and awareness among Fuchka vendors and consumers intersect with broader socio-economic and health-related issues in Bangladesh. The popularity of Fuchka and other street foods can be attributed to urbanization and the increased concentration of low- and middle-income residents in Dhaka, similar to trends observed in other Asian cities (Tinker, 1997). Street food provides convenience and affordability but exposes consumers to health risks.

Supporting previous studies, participants reported health problems like vomiting, stomach discomfort, typhoid, and diarrhoea after consuming Fuchka (Al Mamun et al., 2013b, 2013a). These risks intersect with existing public health challenges in Bangladesh, including lack of access to safe water and sanitation, inadequate food safety regulations, and limited public awareness of hygiene practices (Nizame et al., 2019).

### **Ways Forward**

Addressing the complex interplay of social determinants affecting hygiene and public health in the context of street food in India and Bangladesh necessitates a multi-dimensional approach. Policy initiatives need to target improvements in education, income levels, and healthcare access to bring about meaningful change. At the foundational level, there is an urgent need for local governments to invest in basic sanitation infrastructure, such as clean water supply and waste management systems, particularly in impoverished areas where street food vendors are prevalent (Montgomery & Elimelech, 2007). Collaborative efforts between governmental and non-governmental organizations could offer hygiene training programs for vendors and educational campaigns for consumers, aiming to improve awareness and practices around food safety (Ali, 2020; Marmot, 2005). Gender-specific interventions are equally important; they could focus on disseminating hygiene education among women and altering societal norms that limit their mobility and exposure to public health information (Sen & Östlin, 2008). Environmental issues like arsenic contamination and climate change impacts should also be addressed through community-based resilience programs, better urban planning, and stricter regulations (Smith et al., 2000). Healthcare accessibility, especially in rural areas, needs to be bolstered through public and private investments in healthcare facilities and professionals. By adopting an integrated approach that deals with these multi-layered challenges, it is possible to alter the landscape of public health in these countries, making street food a safer, more equitable, and healthier choice for all.

It is clear that the existing policies and regulations pertaining to street food vendors in areas like Dhaka are notably inadequate and largely ineffective. The current laws are unsystematic, with no stringent measures initiated to establish discipline or to improve the quality and safety of the foods sold by these vendors. The absence of a legal framework mandating licenses for street food vendors leads to a lack of standardization and adherence to food safety norms. This unregulated environment poses serious threats to consumer health, with vendors habitually engaging in unhygienic practices such as reusing oil and exposing food to contaminants.

The current role of the city corporation seems to be rather passive, primarily due to the absence of relevant laws that can regulate the operation of street food vendors. Presently, the Bangladesh Food Safety Authority (BFSA) and other related entities do conduct regular checks on establishments, but their authority is largely confined to restaurants, especially those with more than 30 seats, leaving small food shops and street vendors unmonitored and unregulated.

The existing framework—Bangladesh Hotel and Restaurant Act—fails to recognize smaller establishments and street vendors, thus creating a vacuum in the regulatory mechanism for street foods.

However, there is a pressing need, and indeed potential, for the city corporation to play a more active and constructive role in the regulation of street food vending. Forming a Standing Committee can serve as a crucial step towards establishing a structured and systematic approach to manage and regulate street food vendors effectively. This committee should ideally encompass representatives from various sectors including the police, public works departments, local banks, and vendors, ensuring comprehensive insights and cohesive strategies.

The city corporation could act as the central authority in delineating vending zones in conformity with urban development policies and ensuring the implementation of hygienic practices by vendors. Implementing a licensing system for all street food vendors and establishing vendor management policies will not only help in maintaining food standards and safety but will also aid in organizing this sector more effectively. By bringing street food vendors under a well-structured system, city corporations can contribute significantly to public health and safety, promote vendor rights, and also aid in the urban development process.

The study underscores the need for comprehensive interventions that address both immediate food safety concerns and broader socio-economic and health-related issues in Bangladesh. Addressing social determinants of health requires the involvement of government entities, civil society, NGOs, and the community. Proper implementation of existing policies, rigorous training, research, and the development of new policies are crucial. The study suggests that targeted awareness campaigns are needed to educate both Fuchka vendors and consumers about the health risks associated with poor hygiene practices.

### **Conclusion**

The present study aimed to explore hygiene awareness levels and practices among Fuchka vendors and customers in Dhaka city and the factors that influence their perceptions and practices. Based on the qualitative data from focus group discussions with parents and interviews with street food vendors, the results revealed differing levels of hygiene awareness and practices among both groups. Although both vendors and consumers showed some level of concern about hygiene standards, there was a gap in their understanding of the specific risks associated with consuming contaminated food. This finding is in line with previous studies on street food consumption (Cohen & Avieli, 2004), highlighting the need for targeted interventions to raise awareness among both groups.

The study also revealed that social determinants, such as the socio-economic background of vendors and the influence of children's taste preferences on parental purchasing decisions, significantly influence hygiene awareness and practices. The vendors' lack of proper hygiene practices stems from their limited understanding of the consequences and the lack of regulatory oversight in the street food sector (Nizame et al., 2019; Ok & Kuria, 2005). The preference for Fuchka among consumers, driven by taste, also contributes to continued consumption despite health concerns, supporting previous findings on street food consumption patterns (Steinkraus, 1995).

Furthermore, the study underscored the intersection of hygiene practices with broader socio-economic and health-related issues in Bangladesh. The popularity of Fuchka and other street foods can be attributed to urbanization and the increased concentration of low- and middle-income residents in Dhaka. Street food offers convenience and affordability but exposes consumers to health risks. Participants reported health problems after consuming Fuchka,

supporting previous studies on the health risks associated with street food consumption (Al Mamun et al., 2013b, 2013a).

Addressing the hygiene concerns in the street food sector, especially concerning Fuchka, requires comprehensive interventions that tackle immediate food safety issues and broader socio-economic and health-related challenges in Bangladesh. Policy formulation, proper implementation, and involvement of various stakeholders, including government entities, civil society, NGOs, and the community, are critical to achieving sustainable improvements in hygiene awareness and practices in the street food sector. The study also highlights the need for targeted awareness campaigns for both Fuchka vendors and consumers.

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