

# From Victimless Crime to Habitual Victim: An Empirical Study on Food Victimization

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## ABSTRACT

Food is the fundamental and most indispensable need for growth and survival of living beings. In the present days, one of the biggest challenges of human beings as consumers remains isolated from food victimization. Food victimization is rampantly pushing human beings into serious health hazards and economic losses. In Bangladesh, there is limited published data on the extent and trends of food adulteration, as well as consumers' knowledge, attitudes, and practices related to this issue. The main objective of this study is to measure the perceptions and attitude of people about food adulteration including the extent of fear among people about food victimization, the extent of awareness and their roles and positions as consumers in food adulteration. This study is conducted based on quantitative approach where survey method is administered here to extract data. Sample are selected from Tangail Sadar Upazilla following purposive sampling strategy based on non-probability sampling mechanism. Finding of this study shows that, 65% respondents have victimized by food adulteration. Besides, 72% of the respondents have confessed that there have been prevailing less awareness among the mass people about food adulteration in compare to any other crime. 35% respondents feel fear in purchasing certain foods in keeping fear in mind. Again, 51.70% of the respondents have witnessed to food adulteration in their life time but that most of the respondents (74%) did not take any action. However, 83% of the respondents believe that performing the roles as consumer like defensive possible counter action is necessary if we want to execute the elimination project of food adulteration fruitfully. While the findings provide valuable insights into consumer perceptions and attitudes in this area, they may not be fully representative of the entire population of Bangladesh. Further research with larger and more diverse samples from different regions of the country is needed to generalize the findings to a broader context.

**Keywords:** Food, victimization, Perception, Attitude, Awareness.

## INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh has a vast population of 145 million people, and it is experiencing rapid urbanization and economic growth. However, it also faces significant challenges such as hunger, poverty, low wages, and unemployment. These challenges have led to societal disorganization, with traditional norms breaking down and a rise in deviant behavior. Food adulteration is a common problem in Bangladesh, driven by the pursuit

of quick wealth due to economic disparities and limited opportunities for legitimate success (Huda, Muzaffar and Ahmed, 2009).

Food adulteration in Bangladesh has reached alarming levels, but there is a surprising lack of concern and action to address this life-threatening issue. Government agencies and consumers alike appear apathetic, and food victimization has received inadequate attention compared to other crimes. As a result, food adulteration has become a silent killer affecting many innocent consumers. Consumers play a crucial role in marketing activities, and informed consumers are essential to upholding their rights and seeking legal protection when their rights are violated. While knowledge is important, attitudes also influence behavior (Howes et al. 1996). The Knowledge, Attitude, and Practice (KAP) model suggests that behavior depends on knowledge and attitude, with information potentially leading to a change in behavior. However, the model has been criticized for assuming that knowledge is the sole driver of behavioral change (Rennie, 1995).

Effective consumer decision-making in purchasing food products requires specialized knowledge about product contents, sources, and usage. However, consumers face challenges due to misleading advertisements and improper media emphasis (Kotler, 1990). To overcome these challenges, consumers must be knowledgeable about their rights and the available remedies for addressing these problems (Gupta and Panchal, 2009). Awareness and knowledge about food adulteration are crucial in a society where technology provides opportunities for fraud, deception, and misrepresentation by adulterators (Garman and Jonest, 1992). Despite regulatory mechanisms, consumers' lack of awareness, seriousness, and liability make them vulnerable to food fraud. This absence of individual control measures highlights the need for better consumer education and protection (Ruth, Huisman and Luning, 2017).

Several economic factors, including supply and pricing, value-added product attributes, economic health, competition levels, unethical business practices, past offenses, national corruption levels, and ongoing victimization of consumers, serve as motivations for food adulteration. Surveys conducted in the capital city of Dhaka have revealed that 37 percent consumers often feel compelled to purchase chemically treated foods. Food producers seeking higher profits may use defective ingredients, leading to the use of cheaper and often hazardous industrial chemicals in food products. 15.5 percent consumers may buy adulterated foods because they are cheaper and more readily available or because they find chemically treated foods visually appealing (Hossain, Heinonen and Islam, 2008).

Urban consumers tend to rely on food labels with confidence, regardless of their accuracy, when purchasing processed foods. In contrast, rural consumers, lacking access to electricity and media coverage, face greater challenges in ensuring food safety. While some newspapers report on food adulteration, a significant portion of the population remains unaware of these reports or unconcerned about adulteration, despite their knowledge (Huda, Muzaffar and Ahmed, 2008).

Illiterate individuals are more susceptible to food crimes as they struggle to distinguish between safe and unsafe food products. They are often drawn to brightly packaged or visually appealing food items. Furthermore, consumers may not consider long-term risk factors such as nutritional imbalances, food additives, or pesticide residues in their food choices (Solaiman and Ali, 2013). Education and awareness are crucial to addressing these challenges, as consumers may rely on external risk indicators, such as brand, product information, price, packaging, and store characteristics, which may not always be reliable or comprehensible due to limited education (Mitchell, 1992). It is worth noting that the responsibility and liability of consumers in terms of food fraud issue relies much on the fruitful response from the legal ground. As effective legal ground shapes human behavior and provides safeguard while violating. Similarly violation of the right to safe food is recognized as a part of the rights to life and right to food.

In Bangladesh, the constitution includes the rights to life and food (RLRF) in articles like Article 31 and Article 32, emphasizing the right to life, which encompasses the right to safe food. Article 18(1) further underlines the state's duty to ensure the right to food, collectively demonstrating the existence of RLR

(Solaiman and Ali, 2013).

Despite serious penalties for food adulteration in the Penal Code of 1860 (sections 272 to 276), these measures have not effectively controlled adulterated food production and sale. The Pure Food Ordinance, established in 1959 and later replaced by the Food Safety Act of 2013, aimed to protect consumers by regulating food-related activities through the Bangladesh Food Safety Authority (“The legal regime,” 2019). Studies have revealed various legal issues and drawbacks, such as multiple laws, regulatory coordination problems, transparency issues, and ineffective penalties enforcement, contributing to the spread of food adulteration (Ali, 2013).

Moreover, the current legal and regulatory framework falls short of international standards and norms, as Bangladesh lacks appropriate food standards that align with Codex Alimentarius recommendations, an international food standard-setting authority (Henson and Jaffee, 2008). Compensation for victims of unsafe food is rare within the legal system. While the Consumer Rights Protection Act of 2009 includes civil remedies, other laws rely solely on criminal liability, denying consumers compensation. Surprisingly, consumers cannot initiate criminal proceedings against wrongdoers and can only file complaints with specific authorities like the Directorate General of National Consumer Rights Protection or the District Magistrate (Solaiman and Ali, 2013).

### **Research Questions of the Study:**

The present study intends to address the following research questions:

1. Is there any fear of victimization among people in consuming food?
2. How the extent of awareness and knowledge of the people about food adulteration?
3. What are the roles and positions of consumers in food adulteration problem?

### **Objectives of the Study:**

The main objective of this study is to measure the perceptions and attitudes of people about food adulteration in Tangail, Bangladesh. To fulfill this, the specific objectives of this study are the following:

1. To identify whether there remains any fear among the people about food victimization.
2. To investigate the extent of awareness of the people about food adulteration.
3. To assess the existing legal protection to combat food adulteration.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

In Bangladesh, with its large population and growing middle class, there is a significant shift from rural to urban areas due to challenges such as hunger, poverty, low wages, and unemployment (Huda, Muzaffar, and Ahmed, 2009). This migration has led to various societal issues, including a breakdown of social norms and values and a rise in deviant behavior. Food adulteration has become a common problem, where individuals resort to illegal means to achieve financial success quickly. Despite the alarming levels of food adulteration, there is a lack of concern from government agencies and consumers, making it a silent killer affecting many innocent people.

Consumer awareness and knowledge play a vital role in addressing food adulteration. While knowledge is essential, attitudes also influence behavior. Training alone may not always lead to a positive change in food handling behavior (Howes et al., 1996). The Knowledge, Attitude, and Practice (KAP) model suggests that knowledge, attitude, and practice are interconnected, but it has limitations (Rennie, 1995). Various organizations, including government bodies and non-profits like ‘Fresh Food for All’ (FFA) and the Consumer Association of Bangladesh (CAB), are working to raise awareness and protect consumer rights

(Shuchi, 2017).

Consumers need specialized knowledge about product contents and resources to make informed choices (Kotler, 1990). Misleading advertising and media emphasis make it difficult for consumers to select pure food items. To address these challenges, consumers need to be aware of their rights and the available remedies (Gupta and Panchal, 2009). Lack of consumer awareness and education makes consumers vulnerable to food fraud, as perpetrators take advantage of their ignorance. Economic drivers, supply and pricing, unethical business practices, and corruption contribute to the motivation of adulterators (Ruth, Huisman, and Luning, 2017).

A survey conducted in Dhaka revealed that consumers are compelled to consume chemically treated foods due to their lower cost and attractive appearance (Hossain, Heinonen, and Islam, 2008). Urban dwellers tend to rely on processed foods and food labels, while rural consumers, with limited access to media, are more vulnerable to food safety issues (Huda, Muzaffar, and Ahmed, 2008). Illiterate individuals are particularly susceptible to food crimes, as they struggle to distinguish between safe and unsafe foods and are drawn to attractive packaging (Solaiman and Ali, 2013). Even educated consumers may rely on external indicators of food safety, but these indicators are often unreliable or unreadable due to lack of education (Mitchell, 1992).

The legal framework in Bangladesh plays a crucial role in addressing food fraud. Constitutional rights to life and food safety are embedded in various articles of the constitution (Solaiman and Ali, 2013). The legal framework has evolved over time, with the Food Safety Act of 2013 establishing the Bangladesh Food Safety Authority. However, there are issues with the legal system, including multiplicity of laws, lack of coordination among regulatory bodies, transparency problems, and inadequate penalties (Ali, 2013). Additionally, the legal framework falls short of international standards, and victims of unsafe food rarely receive compensation (Henson and Jaffee, 2008).

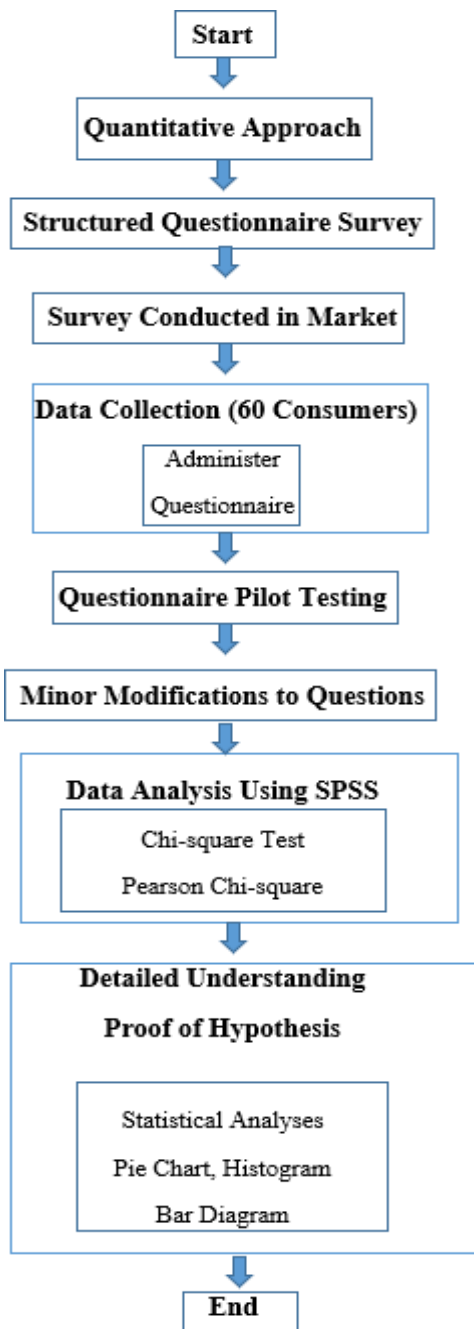
Food adulteration is not a victimless crime; it has severe health consequences, including diarrheal diseases, cancer, and reproductive issues (Kamruzzaman, 2016; Ali, 2016; Radmoski, 1974; Babu and Shenolikar, 1995). Children are particularly vulnerable, with a high child mortality rate due to consuming unsafe food (Ali, 2016).

In conclusion, food adulteration in Bangladesh is a serious issue with far-reaching consequences, affecting both public health and the national economy. Addressing this problem requires increased consumer awareness, stronger legal frameworks, and a commitment to enforcing food safety regulations (Hossain, Heinonen, and Islam, 2008).

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This study was based on quantitative approach. Using a structured questionnaire, the survey method was conducted where all respondents were asked exactly the same questions in the same circumstance. Each questionnaire took 30 min to administer. Data were collected on everyday morning when people normally come to market places (Santosh bazar, Park bazar, Pachani bazar) of Tangail Sadar for purchasing their daily commodities. During the span of one month, in this study, a total of 60 consumers were willing to be interviewed and responded to the questions. Before finalizing the questionnaire, the questionnaire was pilot tested on 10 participants and then minor modifications were made to the questions. The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS), which is one of the most commonly used packages for quantitative research methods for data analysis was used to conduct the various analyses of the study. To have a detailed understanding and proof of the hypothesis Pearson chi-square was applied. The data were then analyzed by chi-square test, pie-chart, histogram, bar-diagram.

## Methodology Flowchart



## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Socio Demographic Background of the Respondents:

In this study, most of the respondents are (46.7%) belonging to the age group of 20-30 years out of the total 60 respondents. Moreover, a number of respondents (38.3%) are belonging from 30-40 years where 70% are male and in contrast, only 30% are female. Besides, maximum respondents (42%) have completed their educational level with Masters and above degree. Besides, a large portion of respondents (41%) have been studying in undergraduate level. An addition to, number of respondents (12%) have completed their secondary level and the rest of the respondents (5%) have completed primary level. The majority of the respondents (30%) are engaged in different kinds of business, followed by 23.3% are engaged in different kinds of employment. Similarly, 23.3% respondents are students. Besides, 11% respondents are unemployed and 3% of the respondents are self-employed. As a Muslim majority country, most the respondents of this study is Muslim (73.3%), whereas Hindu 21.7%.



**Victims of Food Adulteration:**

Table 1: Victims of Food Adulteration

Victim of Food Adulteration		Number	Percent (%)
Prior timeframe of food victimization	Within 1 month	18	30%
	Within 2-3 months	12	20%
	Within 3-4 months	1	1.70%
	Above 5 month	8	13.30%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>65%</b>
Places of food victimization	Market	14	36%
	Retailers	18	46%
	Super Shops	4	10%
	Others	3	8%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>100%</b>
Mode of reaction to food victimization	Return the food	9	23.3%
	Took other food in exchange	11	28.3%
	Give the warning	2	6.7%
	Took legal action	1	1.7%
	No reaction	16	40%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>100%</b>

From this study, it is understood that 65% respondents are victimized by food adulteration whereas 30% respondents are victimized within 1 months, 20% respondents are victimized within 2-3 months, 13.3% respondents are victimized within above 5 months and the rest of the respondents (1.70%) are victimized by food adulteration within 3-4 months. Again, it is observed that among the total number food victims, about 46% respondents have experienced with adulterated food from retailers, 36% of the respondents have victimized by adulterated food from markets, only 10% of the respondents have victimized by adulterated food from super shops and rest of the respondents (8%) have victimized from other places. Besides, this study also depicts the mode of respondent’s reaction while encountering adulterated food. It is noticed that maximum respondents (28.3%) took another food in exchange of adulterated food, while 23.3% of the respondents returned the adulterated food. Only 1.7% of the respondents gave warning to the seller to avoid possessing of such kinds of adulterated food.

Table 2: Repeated Victimization

Repetition	Number	Percent
Once	11	18.3
1-2 times	8	13.3
3-4 times	1	1.7
More than 5 times	3	5.0
Not remembering	16	26.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>65.0</b>

Table 2 indicates that altogether 65% respondents are experienced repeat victimization of food adulteration. Repeat victimization refers to the repeated criminal victimization of a person, household, place, business, vehicle or other target however defined. Near repeat victimization or near repeats refer to targets with similar characteristics or situations (also virtual repeats). Repeats can be the same or different crime types. From this definition, the below table shows that 26.7% of the respondents are experienced repeated

victimization but they have forgotten how many times they got victimized. In contrast, 18.3% respondents have victimized for one times, 13.3% respondents have victimized for 1-2 times and 5% of the respondents have victimized for more than 5 times. So it could be concluded that people who are victimized by food adulteration, are suffered from repeated victimization and a large portion of them could not remember how many times they experienced repeated victimization of food adulteration.

Table 3: Adulterated Food Items

Food Categories		Number	Percent
	Edible oil	9	15.0
	Vegetable	1	1.7
	Fish	1	1.7
	Packaged food	10	16.7
	Liquid food	4	6.7
	Fruits and fruits product	11	18.3
	Others	3	5.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>65.0</b>

Table 3 reveals the adulterated food categories by which altogether 65% of the respondents have victimized by adulteration. It is identified that 18.3% of the respondents have victimized by adulterated fruits and fruits products, whereas 16.7% of the respondents have victimized by adulterated package food items and 15% of the respondent have experienced adulterated edible oil items.

Table 4: Victim of Adulteration and their Residence

		Residential area						Total	
		Urban		Semi-urban		Rural			
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
<b>Victimized by food adulteration</b>	<b>Yes</b>	23	38.3%	5	8.3%	11	18.3%	39	65%
	<b>No</b>	10	16.7%	3	5.0%	8	13.3%	21	35%

Table 4 represents the respondents who are victimized by food adulteration and their residence. It shows that 38.3% participants are victimized by food adulteration who live in urban area. Again, 18.3% participants are also victimized by food adulteration but they live in rural area. In contrast, 16.7% participants living in urban area did not experience food victimization while 13.3% participants living in rural area did not also experience food adulteration.

Table 5: Fear of Food Victimization

		Whether people ever avoid from purchasing					
		Yes		No		Total	
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
<b>Whether people feel fear in purchasing foods</b>	<b>Yes</b>	21	35.0%	15	25.0%	36	60.0%
	<b>No</b>	7	11.7%	17	28.3%	24	40.0%

Table 5 represents the respondents attitude on feel fear to purchase foods in keeping confusion and whether respondents ever avoid from purchasing certain foods in keeping fear in mind about adulteration. It is noted that 35% participants feel fear in purchasing food and avoid from purchasing certain foods. 25% participants also feel fear in purchasing foods but do not avoid from purchasing. On the other hand, 11.7% participants

do not feel fear in purchasing foods but they avoid from purchasing certain foods. 28.3% participants do not feel fear in purchasing foods as well do not ever avoid from purchasing.

**Measuring Awareness towards Food Adulteration:**

**Whether People are Less Aware:**

Figure 1 represents the perception of respondents whether people are less aware about food adulteration compare to any other crime or not. It is noted that most of the respondents (72%) think that people really less aware about food adulteration in contrast to the any other crime. On the other hand, only 28% of the respondents think that people are not less aware about food adulteration.

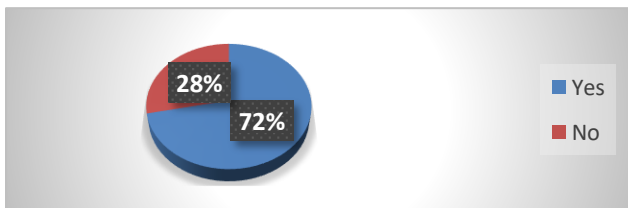


Fig. 1: Whether people are less awareness

Table 6: Measuring Awareness

Measuring Awareness towards Food Adulteration		Number	Percent (%)
Reason behind less awareness	Consumer’s disinterest	15	25%
	Indifference of responsible authority	10	16.70%
	Lack of public awareness programs	6	10%
	Imposing less priority	12	20%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>72%</b>
Whether vital problems lie in unawareness	Strongly agree	19	31.70%
	Agree	37	61.70%
	Disagree	3	5%
	Strongly Disagree	1	1.70%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100%</b>

This study shows that most of the respondents (25%) who believe that people are really less aware about food adulteration because of consumer’s disinterest on this issue in contrast to the other crime. Besides, 20% of the respondents think that imposing less awareness is significant causation behind the expansion of food adulteration problem in our society while 16.70% of the respondents think that indifference of responsible authority is another vital causation. However 10% of the respondents think that lack of public causation programs is necessary to be considered to prevent food adulteration. It also presents the perception of respondent on whether vital problems in the way of executing consumer protection law lies in the unawareness of consumers of such rights or not. It is noticed that most of the respondents (61.70%) have agreed on this matter while 31.70% of the respondents have strongly agreed that vital problems really lie in the unawareness of consumers about their rights.



Table 7: Aware of Consumer Rights and Pertinent Laws

Measuring Awareness towards Food Adulteration		Whether people know about the existing laws					
		Yes		No		Total	
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Whether people are aware of their rights	Yes	15	25.0%	10	16.7%	25	41.7%
	No	1	1.7%	34	56.7%	35	58.3%

Table 7 shows the number of respondents and their awareness about the rights as consumers as well whether they know about the existing consumer oriented laws. It depicts that 25% respondents are aware of their rights and also know the existing law. 16.7% respondents are aware of their rights but do not know the existing law. 1.7% participants do not aware about their rights but know the existing law. On the other hand, 56.7% respondents do not aware about their rights, even don't know the existing laws.

Table 8: Reasons that Poses Problem for Bangladeshi Consumer

Reasons	Agree		No Comment		Disagree		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Lack of awareness	50	83%	7	12%	3	5%	60	100%
Illiteracy	31	51%	7	12%	22	37%	60	100%
Compromising attitude	37	62%	6	10%	17	28%	60	100%
Economic condition	22	37%	5	8%	33	55%	60	100%

Table 8 indicates the perception of respondents toward the reasons that pose problems for Bangladeshi consumers in ensuring their rights. It is noted that in the response to the question of lack of awareness, most of the respondents (83%) have agreed, while only 12% of the respondents have disagreed on this matter. Besides, in response to the question on whether comprising attitude of consumers discourage to ensure consumers rights or not. Here maximum respondents (62%) have agreed on this factor while 28% of the respondents have disagreed. Besides, in response to the question on whether illiteracy of mass people keep vital role for not ensuring consumer's rights. Here 51% of the respondents have agreed while 37% of the respondents have disagreed. Furthermore, in response to the question on whether economic condition from individual level and state level is keeping contribution for hindering consumer rights to be ensured. Here, 55% of the respondents have disagreed. In contrast, only 37% of the respondents have agreed that economic conditions are the vital reason that pose problems for Bangladeshi consumers in ensuring their rights.

**Roles of Consumers in Preventive Activities:**

Table 9: Consumer's Preventive Activities

Roles of Consumers in Preventive Activities		Number	Percent (%)
Whether consumer participation is important	Yes	50	83%
	No	10	17%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100%</b>
Whether respondents have ever witnessed	Yes	31	51.70%
	No	29	48.30%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100%</b>
Whether respondents took any action	Yes	16	26%
	No	44	74%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 9 depicts the respondents thinking on whether consumer participation is important to accelerate the process of bringing the food criminal into criminal justice system. From this response, most of the respondents (83%) believe on ensuring consumer’s participation is enormously essential in order to combat food adulteration problem while only 17% of the respondents do not think so. Besides, it is seen that 51.70% respondents have witnessed to food adulteration in their life time while 48.30% of the respondent have not witnessed to food adulteration in their own eye. From this, it can be concluded that although food adulteration is a hidden crime, but many people are becoming witnessed of it. The above table also represents whether respondents (51.70%) who had witnessed to food adulteration, took any action or not. The below pie chart shows that most of the respondents (74%) did not take any action while encountering food adulteration. On the other hand, only 26% among the witnessed respondents (51.70%) took action against the food adulterator while witnessing it.

**Nature of Actions Taken:**

The below figure represents the nature of action taken by the witnessed respondents (51.70%) who only took action (26%) against the food adulterator. It is noted that 50% of the respondents among the 26%, took individual counter action against the perpetrators to prevent further engagement with food adulteration, while 50% among them, apprehended the food adulterators to the police.

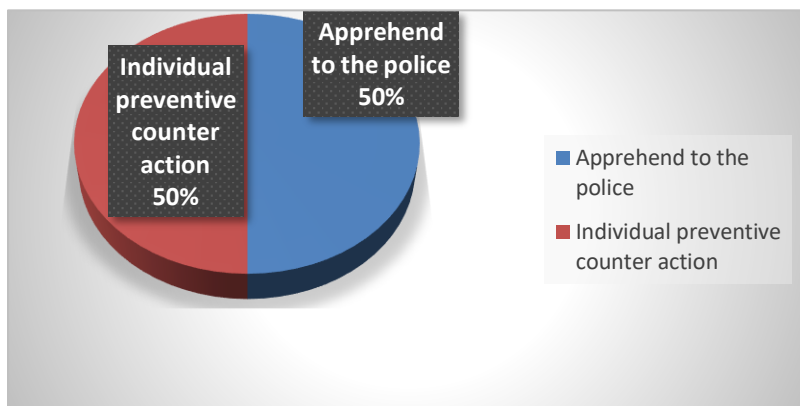


Fig. 2: Nature of Actions Taken

**Compatible Action for Combating Food Adulteration:**

Through the survey questionnaire, respondents were asked what they considered about the compatible actions could be the best to suit as the logical intervention to prevent food adulteration. Several option were given to choose based on the priority in terms of rating scale methods. The following figures are displayed to figure out their perception.

Table 10: Compatible Action for Combating Food Adulteration

Compatible Action	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
<b>Strengthen Community Policing</b>	22	36.7%	26	43.3%	9	15%	3	5%
<b>Establishing Separate Consumer’s court</b>	22	36.7%	25	41.7%	11	18.3%	2	3.3%
<b>Formulating Separate Police Unit</b>	22	36.7%	20	33.3%	15	25%	3	5%

<b>Ensuring Severe Punishment to make deterrence</b>	37	61.7%	19	31.7%	4	6.7%	0	0%
<b>Increase the availability of testing laboratory</b>	37	61.7%	21	35%	1	1.7%	1	1.7%
<b>Establishing Safe Food Vigilant Committee</b>	33	55%	20	33.3%	5	8.3%	2	3.3%

Table 10 depicts what respondents think about the preventive intervention against food adulteration. It is shown that 43.30% respondents have agreed on this action while 36.70% of the respondents have strongly agreed and 15% of the respondents have disagreed on this action as the logical intervention against the adulterators. It is shown that 41.70% of the respondents have agreed that establishing separate consumer court is essential in order to ensuring justice swiftly which can make deterrence effect for the potential perpetrators. Besides 36.70% of the respondents have strongly agreed with this proposal while 18.30% of the respondents have completely disagreed. Besides, 36.70% respondents have strongly agreed that it is high time to formulate separate police unit who work only in food safety sector. Besides, 33.30 % of the respondents have agreed with this proposal while 25% of the respondents have opposed against it. The above table is also represented that most of the respondents (61.7%) have strongly agreed with this issue that ensuring severe punishment is first and foremost necessary. Besides, 31.7% of the respondents have agreed while 6.7% have disagreed on this issue. Besides, most of the respondents (61.70%) have strongly agreed that availability of testing laboratory is prerequisite for combating food adulteration while only 1.70% have disagreed on this matter.

## HYPOTHESIS TESTING

### Hypothesis 1:

**Null Hypothesis:** There is no significant relation between food victimization and the area of residence.

**Alternative Hypothesis:** There is a significant relation between food victimization and the area of residence.

From chi-square table no 11, at 5% significance level and 2 degrees of freedom the tabulated value of chi-square is 5.991. But the calculated value is .764. Calculated value is less than the table value with 5% level of significance in 2 degrees of freedom. According to the condition of hypothesis test, the null hypothesis is accepted and the alternative hypothesis is rejected. That means that residential area and food victimization are two independent categorical variable, have no significant relationship. People can be victim of adulterated food from any kinds of area whether it is urban or rural.

Table 11: Hypothesis Testing

$\chi^2$ test	Calculated Value	df	Significance Level	Table Value
Pearson Chi-Square	.764	2	0.05	5.991

### Hypothesis 2:

**Null Hypothesis:** Fear of victimization by adulterated food have no effect on avoid from purchasing certain foods.

**Alternative Hypothesis:** Fear of victimization by adulterated food have an effect on avoid from purchasing certain foods.

Hypothesis test table 12 shows that at 5% significance level and under 1 degrees of freedom the tabulated value of Chi-square is 3.841. But the calculated value is 4.922. Here, calculated value is higher than the table value. So according to the condition of hypothesis test, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative value is accepted. In this situation it means that fear of victimization by adulterated food have an effect on avoid from purchasing certain foods.

Table 12: Hypothesis Testing

$\chi^2$ test	Calculated Value	df	Significance Level	Table Value
Pearson Chi-Square	4.922	1	0.05	3.841

## SUMMARY AND LIMITATIONS

This study is conducted with the assumption that active participation of people in society is crucial for addressing the issue of food adulteration. It draws upon the concept of community crime prevention, viewing consumers within communities as active defenders against food adulteration. The study aims to assess people's perceptions, awareness, and their roles in combating this issue using a quantitative approach in Tangail Sadar Upazila.

The study found that 65% of respondents recognized themselves as victims of food adulteration, with 38.3% living in urban areas and 18.3% in rural areas. However, there was no significant relationship between residential locations and victimization. Furthermore, 30% of those who recognized being victims experienced it within 1 month, and 20% within 2-3 months. Additionally, 65% experienced repeated victimization, with adulterated fruits (18.3%), edible oil (15%), and packaged food items (16.7%) being the most common adulterated products.

Regarding responses to adulterated food, only 1.7% intended to take legal action, while 28.3% accepted another food item in exchange, and 23.3% returned the food, indicating consumer negligence. The study also identified retailers (46%), markets (36%), and super shops (10%) as common places of victimization.

The research showed that 72% of respondents believed there was less awareness about food adulteration compared to other crimes. Reasons included consumer disinterest, indifference of authorities, and a lack of public awareness programs. Additionally, 56.7% were unaware of existing laws and did not consider their consumer rights. Lack of awareness (83%), compromising attitude (62%), illiteracy (51%), and economic conditions (37%) were cited as factors hindering consumers from upholding their rights. Furthermore, 35% of respondents avoided purchasing certain foods due to fear of adulteration. Hypothesis testing confirmed a relationship between fear of victimization and avoidance of certain foods.

Surprisingly, none of the respondents had ever lodged a complaint with the Directorate of National Consumer Rights Protection. While 51.7% had witnessed food adulteration, most (74%) had not taken any action. Nevertheless, 83% believed that taking on the role of consumers and engaging in counteractions was necessary to combat food adulteration effectively. Proposed counteractions included strengthening community policing, establishing a separate consumer's court, forming a separate police unit, ensuring severe punishment, increasing testing laboratory availability, establishing safe food vigilant committees at the community level, and enhancing mass awareness through media.

However, consumer experiences and perceptions of victimization can vary significantly across different regions and cultures within Bangladesh. This study may not capture these variations adequately. Moreover, the research may have a limited scope in terms of the types of consumer victimization considered. It may not comprehensively cover all forms of victimization, potentially missing out on significant issues

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## CONCLUSION

Food adulteration is a terrible problem in our country. Bangladesh has grappled with the issue of adulterated food for several decades. Though this deeply rooted practice has still not been solved in the country. Nevertheless, mass people are not so concerned in terms of involving themselves within their community to make free from food adulteration. Besides, the activities of responsible authority are not sufficient to control over it in compare to its extent. Consequently, we are getting habituated to become victim of food adulteration in our daily life. The impact of food adulteration is not only a headache of ours, but also it will be grave for the next generation. Adulterated food and the use of chemicals on foodstuffs are destroying our future generation. The children will be less intelligent and will lack good memory. People will frequently have to go to hospital. Their medical expenses will increase day by day which will cast a serious impact on the socio-economic conditions. So the entire nation is in a terrible risk due to food adulteration. In conclusion, it is undisputable matter that demand a social revolution urgently, where every person will be aware about consuming safe food and will take part to formulate strong defense against the adulterators.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Various institutions, including the state-run Directorate of National Consumer Rights Protection and non-profit organizations like 'Fresh Food for All' (FFA) and the Consumer Association of Bangladesh (CAB), are actively working to raise awareness about food adulteration and protect consumers' rights (Shuchi, 2017).

Based on the findings of the study several insightful recommendations can be made to address the issue of food victimization effectively. These recommendations aim to empower consumers, enhance awareness, and improve regulatory mechanisms to combat food adulteration:

### 1. Consumer Education and Awareness

- Launch nationwide awareness campaigns to educate consumers about the risks of food adulteration and their rights as consumers.
- Promote educational programs in schools and communities to raise awareness among the younger generation about food safety and the consequences of adulteration.

### 2. Strengthening Regulatory Framework

- Revise and update existing food safety regulations and standards to align them with international best practices, such as Codex Alimentarius.
- Streamline regulatory bodies and eliminate overlapping authorities to improve the enforcement of food safety laws.

### 3. Accessible Information

- Mandate clear and accurate labeling on food products, including comprehensive ingredient lists, manufacturing dates, and expiration dates.
- Encourage the use of technology, such as QR codes or mobile apps, to provide consumers with instant access to information about the authenticity of food products.

### 4. Enhanced Monitoring and Testing

- Increase the number of food testing laboratories across the country and ensure their accessibility to the public.

### 5. Community Engagement

- Establish community-based watchdog committees focused on food safety. These committees can play a vital role in reporting suspicious activities and advocating for safe food practices.

### 6. Legal Remedies

- Review and amend consumer protection laws to empower consumers to seek legal remedies in case of victimization.

### 7. Severe Penalties



- Enforce stricter penalties for individuals and businesses found guilty of food adulteration, including substantial fines and imprisonment.

### 8. International Collaboration

- Collaborate with international organizations, neighboring countries, and global food safety agencies to share knowledge, best practices, and technologies for combating food adulteration.

### 9. Media Engagement

- Engage the media in raising awareness about food adulteration issues and the importance of safe food consumption.

By implementing these recommendations, Bangladesh can transition from a situation where consumers are habitual victims of food adulteration to one where consumers are empowered, informed, and protected against this serious public health threat. These measures aim to create a safer and more vigilant food environment for all citizens.

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## APPENDIX

### Questionnaire

Department of Criminology and Police Science

Mawlana Bhashani Science and Technology University

Santosh, Tangail-1902

(Interview schedule)

**Title: Public Perceptions toward Food Adulteration: An exploratory study based on Victimological perspectives.**

(The information will be used only on the purpose of an academic research and must be kept confidential)

#### **Demographic Characteristics of Respondents:**

1. Gender

- Male
- Female
- Others
- Prefer not to say

2. Age (years)?

- Below 20
- 20-30
- 30-40
- Above 40

3. Educational qualification:

- Primary or below
- Secondary
- Undergraduate
- Masters and above

4. Occupation:

- Employment
- Business
- Self employed
- Unemployed
- Student

5. Religion

- Muslim
- Hindu
- Christian
- Buddhist
- Other

5. Residential area

- Urban
- Semi-urban
- Rural
- Semi-rural

**Victim as consumer in food adulteration**

6. Have you ever victimized by food adulteration?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

7. If yes: about how long ago did you victim of food adulteration?

- Within 1 month
- 2-3 month
- 3-4 month
- Above 5 month

8. About how many times have you victimized by food adulteration?

- Once
- 1-2 times
- 3-4 times
- More than 5 times
- Not remembering

9. Which types of adulterated food did you experience?

- Edible oil
- Vegetable
- Fish
- Packaged food
- Liquid food
- Fruits and fruits product
- Others.....

10. What types of reaction did you show while encountering food adulteration?

- Return the food
- Took other food in exchange
- Give the warning
- Took legal action
- Others.....

11. Places of food victimization are

- Market
- Retailers
- Super shops
- Others.....

**Awareness:**

12. Do you examine the expiry date of the purchasing food items?

- Occasionally
- Always
- Never
- Prefer not to say

13. Do you check the M. R. P. (Maximum Retail Prices) before buying products?

- Occasionally
- Always
- Never
- Prefer not to say

14. Do you believe in quality information printed on product package?

- Yes
- No
- Not interested
- Prefer not to say

15. Do you check BSTI approval before purchasing packaged food?

- Yes
- No
- Not interested
- Prefer not to say

16. Are you aware of promotional activities of preventing food adulteration?

- Yes
- No
- Not interested
- Prefer not to say

17. If yes, which of the promotional activities helping you to know about adulteration?

- TV advertisements
- Newspapers
- Social media
- Pamphlets
- Banners
- Public Awareness Program
- Others.....

18. Are the promotional activities helping you to know about adulterated food?

- Yes
- No
- Not interested
- Prefer not to say

19. Do you think that people are less aware about food adulteration compare to any other crime?

- Yes
- No
- Not interested
- Prefer not to say

20. If yes, which of the following reasons can be the best to suit as the logical interpretation?

- Consumer's disinterest
- Indifference of responsible authority
- Lack of public awareness programs
- Imposing less priority
- Others.....

21. Do you think that meeting, discussions, seminars, symposia and talk shows are fruitful strategies for ensuring the consumer's awareness?

- Yes
- No
- Not interested
- Prefer not to say

22. Are you aware of your rights as consumers?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know
- Not interested

23. Do you know about the existing laws of consumer rights protection?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know
- Not interested

24. Do you think that vital problems in the way of executing consumer protection law lies in the unawareness of consumers of such rights?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Undecided

25. What are the reasons that pose problems for Bangladeshi consumers in ensuring their rights?

	Agree	No comments	Disagree
Lack of awareness	–	–	–
Illiteracy	–	–	–
Economic condition	–	–	–
Compromising Attitude	–	–	–

26. Which of the following problems in different areas and sides that should be taken into consideration for proper implementation of the consumers rights in Bangladesh?

	Agree	No comments	Disagree
No separate court for consumer's right	–	–	–
Lack proper authority to go to the court to bring action	–	–	–
Lack of corruption free healthy economy	–	–	–
Lack of availability proper testing laboratories	–	–	–
Lack of efficiency and integrity of the responsible authority	–	–	–
Lack of availability of dispute resolution and redress mechanism	–	–	–
Enormous bureaucratic barrier	–	–	–
Inadequate penalties	–	–	–

27. Have you heard about organic food?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know
- No answer

28. If no: select the appropriate reason

- I never heard about it
- I know the name but not the details
- Nobody told me
- Not interested in these things

29. How did you first hear about organic foods?

- Advertisement
- Magazines

- Newspaper
- Social media
- Friends
- Through this questionnaire

30. What do you perceive/think about organic food? (You can tick more than one)

- Pesticides/chemical free
- No adulteration
- Eco-friendly
- More nutritious
- Costly
- Any other please specify.....

31. Do you think that expanding the idea of organic food can promote to consume safe food and instigate the producers to avoid adulteration?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know
- Not interested

### **Fear while Purchasing Foods**

32. Do you ever feel fear to purchase food in keeping confusion on whether it is adulterated or not?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know
- Not interested

33. Do you ever avoid from purchasing certain foods in keeping fear in mind about adulteration?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know
- Not interested

34. Availability of adulterated food in the market have made simple and susceptible to the consumers to accept it without any say or fear. Do you agree with this statement?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

### **Role of Consumers in Preventive Activities**

35. Do you ever complained to the Directorate of National Consumer Rights Protection?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know



- Not interested
36. If yes: About how many times have you filed complaint?
- Once
  - 1-2 times
  - 3-4 times
  - More than 5 times
37. Which medium, you chose to make complaint?
- Fax
  - E-mail
  - Website
  - Other electronic means of communication
38. Do you think that ensuring consumer's participation in preventing food adulteration can accelerate the process of bringing the food criminal into criminal justice system?
- Yes
  - No
  - Don't know
  - Not interested
39. Have you ever witnessed to food adulteration?
- Yes
  - No
  - Don't know
  - No answer
40. If yes: which types of food adulteration did you witness?  
.....
41. Did you take any action against those perpetrators?
- Yes
  - No
  - Don't know
  - No answer
42. If yes: which of the following actions you had taken while encountering with food criminals?
- Call to the police
  - Apprehend to the police
  - Filling complaint
  - Individual preventive counter action
  - None of them
43. The nature of food adulteration, as a heinous crime delegate the consumers to be active in playing role to reduce this problem:

- Very positive
- Positive
- Neutral
- Negative
- Very Negative

44. Which of the following action will be the compatible for combating food adulteration?

(Beside each of the statements presented below, please indicate whether you Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD).

	(SA)	(A)	(D)	(SD)
Strengthen community policing	–	–	–	–
Establishing separate consumer’s court	–	–	–	–
Formulating separate police unit	–	–	–	–
Ensuring severe punishment to make deterrence	–	–	–	–
Increase the availability of testing laboratory	–	–	–	–
Establishing safe food vigilant committee in community level	–	–	–	–
Enhancing mass awareness through media	–	–	–	–