FOOD HANDLERS' AWARENESS AND COMPLIANCE WITH COVID 19 PROTOCOLS: APPRAISALFROM HOTELS IN ABEOKUTA, OGUN STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The hospitality and tourism industry was caught unawares with the emergence of coronavirus disease tagged COVID-19 pandemic. In compliance, food handlers in the hotels are expected to strictly observe and comply with COVID-19 protocols. The study thus appraised the level of food handlers' awareness and compliance with COVID-19 protocols and hypothesized that the level of food handlers' awareness does not significantly influence compliance with COVID-19 protocols in the hotels in Abeokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria. The study adopted a cross sectional survey research using quantitative approach with a population made up of kitchen staff in the selected hotels. A structured questionnaire was used with a sample size of 400 respondents in which 385 questionnaires were valid. The data was analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation and linear regression analysis. The Pearson correlation result (r=0.845, p=0.000) indicated that food handlers' level of awareness had a strong positive relationship and significantly correlate to compliance with COVID-19 protocols in the hotels. The regression analysis coefficient R=0.842 and adjusted squared coefficient R^2 =0.706 were confirmed. The null hypothesis was rejected as the level of food handlers' awareness significantly influenced compliance with COVID-19 protocols in the hotels. The study concluded that an improvement in the food handlers' level of awareness will cause positive significant changes in compliance with COVID-19 protocols in the hotels. Therefore, the study recommends that the management should steadfastly keep the food handlers more aware on COVID-19 protocols in the hotels in Abeokuta, Nigeria.

Keywords: Food handler, COVID-19 protocols, Awareness, Compliance, Hotel

INTRODUCTION

The hospitality and tourism industry sector was caught unawares with the emergence of the strange strains of corona virus pandemic. Coronavirus disease 2019 tagged COVID-19 meaning "Coronavirus Disease" and 19 for the year of discoveryis an illness caused by a novel coronavirus called severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus (Fragomen, 2020). This was first discovered in the course of an outbreak of respiratory illness cases in Wuhan City, China (WHO, 2020). This was initially reported to the World Health Organization (WHO) on December 31, 2019. On March 11, 2020, the WHO declared COVID-19 a global pandemic (WHO, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic is an unprecedented global catastrophe of

potentially epic proportions more so for the hospitality industry. Ever since the emergence of COVID-19 pandemic, government at various levels have issued safety measures and COVID-19 protocols to ensure awareness and compliance by all hospitality businesses including hotels.

The effect of COVID-19 has taken a great toll on the hotel sector with the perceptions of uncertainty and negative consequences on the patronage. In curtaining the spread of the pandemic, specific COVID-19 guidelines or protocols were rolled out at international, regional, national, state and local levels. The hospitality industry specific guidelines were not left out. In compliance with these new guidelines, it is expected that any food prepared and intended to be offered for sale in the hotels should be wholesome and fit for human consumption (Pragle, Harding & Mack, 2007).Hotels are places where there is a high degree of interaction among guests and workers. Consequentially, all employees including food handlersin the hotels are expected tobe aware as well as observed and comply with basic protective measures against COVID-19.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The main objective of this study is to appraise the level of food handlers' awareness and compliance to COVID-19 protocols in the hotels in Abeokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria.
The specific objectives include to;

1. Ascertain the socio demographic characteristics of food handlers in hotels in Abeokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria.

2. Evaluate the relationship between food handlers' level of awareness and compliance with COVID-19 protocols in the hotels in Abeokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria

3.` Determine the influence of food handlers' level of awareness and compliance with COVID-19 protocols in the hotels in Abeokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria.

HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

1. The level of food handlers' awareness does not significantly influence compliance with COVID-19 protocols in the hotels in Abeokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Food handlers' awareness
Food hygiene awareness involves the process of acquiring knowledge and sensitizing for the prevention and control of food-borne disease (McLauchlin, Grank& Little, 2007). According toWHO (2007) food handlers' awareness is considered as one of the most crucial interventions in the prevention of food-borne diseases.Food hygiene is viewed as a sanitary sciencedesigned at producing food that has good keeping quality, safe to consumer and free from micro-organisms (Hobbs, Fearne & Springs, 2002). Food hygiene entails the provision of food for consumption with minimal risk of contracting food poisoning. This is to be achieved by exercising good hygiene

practices during production, preparation, storage, and service. It also includes sanitary washing of dishes, work surfaces, proper waste disposal methods and maintaining an environment that is free from pest infestation. According to McSwane (2000) food hygiene is also concerned with personal cleanliness of food handlers and the premises where food preparation takes place.

Food Handlers' Compliance with COVID-19 Protocols

In view of the serious health risks associated with COVID-19 and in order to mitigate the spread of the disease, the World Health Organization introduced some COVID-19 protocols for individuals and organizations' compliance (WHO, 2020). The hotel employees as well as food handlers are not exempted, as they are expected to be well informed, aware, and comply with COVID-19 protocols during food preparation in the kitchen. Some of the COVID-19 protocols include the use of hand sanitizer or hand washing with soap and water regularly before, during and after food preparation,the use of face mask andrespiratory hygiene practices during food preparation and social distancing with other personnel in the kitchen (WHO, 2020).

Hand hygiene means regularly and thoroughly cleaning hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or washing them with soap and water. Hand washing is critical aspect of personal hygiene. In order to enhance hand hygiene, food handlers are required to sanitize their hands upon arrival at the kitchen. Food handlers are obliged to wash or sanitize their hands before, during and after food preparation. Food handlers are expected to wash all parts of their hands up to at least 20 seconds if using an alcohol-based hand rub, and at least 40 seconds with soap and water (Green, 2006).The use of face mask and respiratory hygiene practices will help minimize the spread of the contagious disease (WHO, 2020).Respiratoryhygiene means covering the mouth and nose with a bent elbow or tissue when coughing or sneezing. The used tissue should be disposed of immediately in a bin with a lid.

Social distancing (also referred to as physical distancing) is a measure taken to avert the spread of the pandemic by maintaining a physical distance between people (WHO, 2020).This will help in reducing the number of times people/food handlers come into close contact with each other. The current requirement is for food handlers to maintain a distance of at least 1.5 meters from each other. Other personal hygiene practices, according to Richard et al., (2006) included wearing a hat (covering of head) or other hair restraints during food preparation. As a measure of compliance with COVID-19, the food handlers are supposed to ensure strict adherence to all the safety protocols during food preparation and food delivery. Therefore, the variables of food handlers' level awareness and compliance with COVID-19 protocols were measured in the study.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Food Handlers' Awareness and Compliance

Previous studies have generally alluded to some impact of diseases such as epidemics and pandemics (McLaughlin, 2020; Tavitiyaman & Qu, 2013; Rittichainuwat & Chakraborty, 2009) on the larger society. As Knowles (2002) explained that a sensitized food handler should have a higher level of understanding at the end of the sensitization. The study by Akonor and Akonor (2013) indicated food safety was a public health dilemma associated with indecent food handling practices.

Richardson and Steven, (2007) asserted that it was imperative for the staff to understand and follow basic food hygiene principles to avoid unintentional contamination of foods, water supplies and/or equipment used during the processing of food. Bertin (2009) observed that certain employee-related characteristics such as poor educational level, low socio-economic level, rapid staff turnover, literacy barriers and poor motivation due to low pay also contributed to poor professional performance at work. Also, the study viewed that food handlers had a very important role in preventing contamination during food preparation. According to Green (2006) food worker hand washing practice is essential because pathogens from the hands to food were a major contributing factor to food-borne illnesses. Many food handlers failed to wash their hands as required especially where hand washbasins were not provided. Though hand washing took only twenty seconds, staff rarely practiced it.

Another study by Richardson and Stevens (2003) indicated that members of staff who practiced poor personal hygiene could contaminate food items with infected excreta, pus, respiratory drippings or other infectious discharges. This claim implied that food handlers were the major sources of contamination either as carriers of pathogens or through poor hygienic practices. The study further suggested that food handlers could carry microbial pathogens on their skin, hair, hands, digestive systems or respiratory tracts. Also, the study by Rodríguez and Gregory (2005) revealed that an effective sensitization programme assessed whether participants acquired new skills during the sensitizing, and whether the newly acquired skills were transferred to the job setting.

More also, the study conducted by Coleman and Roberts (2005) observed that for food safety delivery systems to be effective, the prevailing food safety beliefs, knowledge and practices of food handlers had to be assessed, to determine what was needed to change their attitude. Notably, Howells, Roberts, Shanklin, Pilling, Brannon, and Barrett (2008) claimed that there was a correlation between positive behaviours and continued education of food handlers towards sustenance of safe food handling practices. Howells et al., (2008) indicated that most food borne outbreaks were as a result of improper food handling practices in food service outlets. Furthermore, Sagoo, Little and Mitchell (2003)

identified a direct relationship between food hygiene sensitizing and practice of food safety procedures.

Seaman and Eves (2009) study stated that management had to support food safety sensitizing and reinforce the adoption of safe food handing behaviours.Moreover, food handler sensitizing was considered as one of the critical barriers identified in the study of Pragle, Harding, and Mack(2007). The study stressed that awareness was only valuable if its importance was translated into performance.In addition, Richard et al., (2006) identified policies regarding sneezing, coughing, using a tissue or touching anything that could contaminate hands such as un-sanitized equipment or work surfaces must be observed.The study reaffirmed that good personal hygiene was a critical protective measure against contamination and food-borne illnesses.

Theoretical Framework

The study adopted the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) which is a theory used to understand and predict behaviours. The theory which was developed by Ajzen (1985) posits that behaviours are immediately determined by behavioural intentions and under certain circumstances, perceived behavioural control. This theory explains that behavioural intentions are determined by a mixture of factors such as attitudes toward the behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control (Barbara, Mullan, Emily & Kothe, 2013).A key assumption in the TPB is that behaviours are under one's volitional control. However, this assumption is likely to be unrealistic in some contexts, as one can imagine that the volitional control of behaviours may vary across different situations. Nevertheless, the study used the theory of planned behaviourto examine the study variables to appraise food handlers' level of compliance with COVID-19 protocols in the hotels in Abeokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria.

Conceptual Framework

The Conceptual framework for this study was developed to illustrate (as indicated in Figure 1) the variables of the food handlers' level of awareness on COVID-19 protocols in relation tocompliance in the hotels. Two levels of variables (independent and dependent) were involved in the conceptual framework. The independent variable which is awareness on COVID-19 protocols consist of the following latent variables;the use of face mask during food preparation, respiratory hygiene practices in the kitchen, the use of hand sanitizer before and after food preparation, hand washing with soap and water regularly before, during and after food preparation, covering of head during food preparation, food hygiene practices and social distancing with other personnel in the kitchen. On the other hand, the dependent variable focused on the level of food handlers' compliance withCOVID-19 protocols in the hotels in Abeokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria.
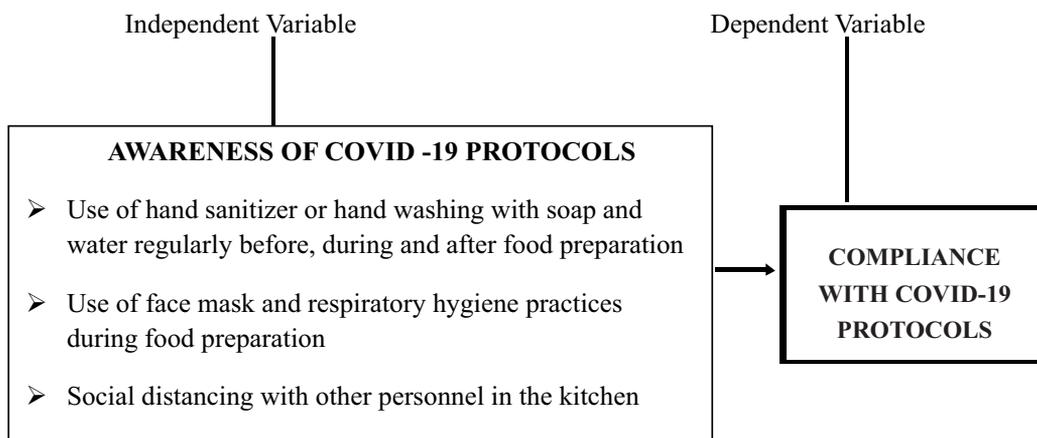
Independent Variable   Dependent Variable

AWARENESS OF COVID -19 PROTOCOLS

➤ Use of hand sanitizer or hand washing with soap and
water regularly before, during and after food preparation

➤ Use of face mask and respiratory hygiene practices
during food preparation

➤ Social distancing with other personnel in the kitchen

**COMPLIANCE
WITH COVID-19
PROTOCOLS**

**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework on Food Handlers'
Awareness and Compliance with COVID-19 Protocols in the Hotels.**

METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of this study, a crosssectional descriptive survey was used to collect data from the respondents and the research design facilitates effective collection of quantitative data from the population under study.The study was conducted in Abeokuta, Ogun State being the state capital and a metropolitan city with high concentration of hotelsin Southwestern, Nigeria.A structured close ended questionnaire was used, and respondents were provided with the questionnaire to fill in the hotels.The population of the study comprised of the kitchen employees in the hotels in Abeokuta, Ogun State. In determining the sample size of the study, the estimatedsample size was determined by using Cochran's formula (Cochran, 1977). The data collected were analyzed using appropriate software and descriptive statistics was used to determine variable characteristics of the study while Pearson correlation was used to establish the pattern of relationship and association of the study variables. Also, linear regression analysis was involved to determine the level of significance and the coefficient to test the hypothesis of the study.

Data Analysis and Findings

On the response rate of the respondents, out of the four hundred (400) questionnaire that was administered, only three hundred and

eighty five (385) questionnaire was properly filled. Therefore, the response rate of 96.3% was considered useful for the analysis. The result of the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents in Table 1 shows that majority of the respondents 59.1% were male while 48.9% were female. The result also indicates that majority of the respondents 30.9% were age between 31-40 while 29.1% were age between 41-50, 20.8% were below age 30 and 19.2% of the respondents were above age 50 while only 0.3% was below the age of 20 years. More so, majority of the respondents 51.1% were single and 48.9% were married. The result revealed that 53.8% of the respondents were Christians while 46.2% practice Islam. Furthermore, 39.7% of the respondents attained national diploma or college of education but 30.1% and 28.3% of the respondents attained higher national diploma or first degree and secondarylevels respectively. However,only 1% and 0.8% of the respondents attained primary and postgraduate levels of education respectively.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Demographic Characteristics	Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	200	51.9
	Female	185	48.1
	Total	385	100
Age	Below 20 years	1	0.3
	21= 30years	79	20.5
	31-40years	119	30.9
	41-50years	112	29.1
	Above 50years	74	19.2
	Total	385	100
Marital Status	Single	221	57.4
	Married	164	42.6
	Widow/Widower	0	0
	Total	385	100
Religion	Christianity	207	53.8
	Islam	178	46.2
	Total	385	100
Educational Level	Primary level	4	1.0
	Secondary level	109	28.3
	ND/NCE	153	39.7
	HND/B.Sc.	116	30.1
	Postgraduate	3	.8
	Total	385	100

Source: Field Survey, 2021

The result in Table 2 indicates the food handlers' level of awareness and compliance with COVID-19 protocols in the hotels in Abeokuta,Ogun State, Nigeria. The result represents food handlers' levels of awareness average mean score of 1.52 and standard deviation of .567. The variables, awareness on COVID-19 protocols on maintaining social distancing with other personnel in the kitchenrecorded the highest mean score of 1.58 followed by awareness on COVID-19 protocols on the use of face mask and respiratory hygiene practices during preparation and delivery of food 1.57, awareness on COVID-19 protocols on the use of hand sanitizer or hand washing with soap and water regularly before, during and after food preparation 1.48 and awareness on COVID-19 protocols on food hygiene practices in the kitchen 1.44. On the other hand, food handlers' levels of compliance average mean score of 2.91 and standard deviation of .762 were recorded. The variable compliance with COVID-19 protocols during food preparation in the kitchen, awareness on COVID-19 protocols had a mean score of 2.93 while compliance with COVID-19 protocols in the delivery of food after preparation recorded 2.88. The higher mean score of compliance with COVID-19protocols may be as a resultof the food handlers' level of awareness and other factors.

Table 2: Food Handlers' level of Awareness and Compliance with Covid-19 Protocols in Hotels in Abeokuta

S/N	STATEMENTS	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	Awareness on COVID-19 protocols on the use of hand sanitizer or hand washing with soap and water regularly before, during and after food preparation	1.48	.554
2	Awareness o nCOVID-19 protocols on the use of face mask and respiratory hygiene practices during preparation and delivery of food	1.57	.569
3	Awareness o nCOVID-19 protocols on maintaining social distancing with other personnel in the kitchen	1.58	.585
4	Awareness o nCOVID-19 protocols on food hygiene practices in the kitchen	1.44	.561
	Average Mean Score and standard deviation of Food Handlers' level of Awareness of COVID-19 protocols	1.52	.567
5	Compliance with COVID-19 protocols during food preparation in the kitchen	2.93	.746
6	Compliance with COVID-19 protocols in the delivery of food after preparation	2.88	.777
	Average mean Score and standard deviation of Food Handlers' level of Compliance with COVID-19 protocols	2.91	.762

Source: SPSS Output, 2021

The Pearson Correlation Coefficient result in Table 3on food handlers' level of awareness and compliance with COVID-19 protocols in hotels indicates a positive and strong significant association between the two variables [r=.845, p=0.000]. As food handlers' level of awareness on COVID-19 protocols increases so does the compliance with COVID-19 protocols in hotels in Abeokuta. This shows that food handlers' level of awareness significantly correlate to compliance with COVID-19 protocols in hotels in Abeokuta. The coefficient of determination r=.845 when squared means 0.7140 shared variance of food handlers' level of awareness on compliance with COVID-19 protocols in hotels. This reveals that food handlers' level of awareness explains 71.40% of the variance in scores on compliance with COVID-19 protocols in hotels in Abeokuta.

Table 3: Pearson Correlation on   Food Handlers' level of Awareness and Compliance with COVID-19 Protocols in Hotels in Abeokuta

		Awareness on COVID-19 Protocols	Compliance with COVID-19 Protocols
Awareness on COVID-19 Protocols	Pearson Correlation	1	.845[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	385	385
Compliance with COVID-19 Protocols	Pearson Correlation	.845[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	385	385
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

Source: SPSS Output 2021

Table 4 shows the results of the regression model summary which indicates R coefficient of .842, R^2 coefficient of .709 and adjusted R^2 coefficient of .706. This means that the study variables explained 70.6% of the variations in the dependent variable that iscompliance with COVID-19 protocols in the hotels. The results reveals that awareness on COVID-19 protocols on food hygiene practices in the kitchen, awareness on COVID-19 protocol on the use of hand sanitizer or hand washing with soap regularly before, during and after food preparation in the kitchen, awareness on COVID-19 protocol on maintaining social distancing with

other personnel in the kitchen, awareness on COVID-19 on the use of face mast and respiratory hygiene practices during food preparation in the kitchen were contributory variables in compliance with COVID-19 protocols in the hotels. The results further infer that there was a satisfactory link in relationship between the study variables.

Table 4: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	.842[a]	.709	.706	.63183	.709	231.501				

a. Predictors: (Constant), awareness on COVID-19 protocols on food hygiene practices in the kitchen, the use of hand sanitizer or hand washing with soap regularly before, during and after food preparation in the kitchen, maintaining social distancing with other personnel in the kitchen, the use of face mast and respi ratory hygiene practices during food preparation in the kitchen

b. Dependent Variable: level of Compliance with COVID-19 protocols in the hotels

Source: SPSS Output, 2021

Table 5 shows the results of the analysis of variance (ANOVA) indicates an F- statistics of 231.501 and p value of 0.000 which is less than the conventional significance level p=<0.05. This means that the regression model was statistically significant. Also, the result reveals that the study variables of awareness on COVID-19 protocols on food hygiene practices in the kitchen, the use of hand sanitizer or hand washing with soap regularly before, during and after food preparation in the kitchen, maintaining social distancing with other personnel in the kitchen, the use of face mast and respiratory hygiene practices during food preparation in the kitchen are relevant predictors of the level of Compliance with COVID-19 protocols in the hotels in Abeokuta.

Table 5: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	369.664	4	92.416	231.501	**.000**[a]
1	Residual	151.697	380	.399		
	Total	521.361	384			

a. Dependent Variable: Level of Compliance with COVID-19 protocols in the hotels
b. Predictors: (Constant), awareness on COVID-19 protocols on food hygiene practices in the kitchen, the use of hand sanitizer or hand washing with soap regularly before, during and after food preparation in the kitchen, maintaining social distancing with other personnel in the kitchen, the use of face mast and respiratory hygiene practices during food preparation in the kitchen

Source: SPSS Output, 2021

Table 6 shows the results of the linear regression analysis. The four predictors were included in the model and the standardized *b*-value on the level of importance of the predictors reveals food handlers' awareness on COVID-19 on the use of face mast and respiratory hygiene practices recorded 0.382, maintaining social distancing with other personnel0.340, the use of hand sanitizer or hand washing with soap and water regularly 0.136 and food hygiene practices0.095. Furthermore, the standard error indicates the extent to which the coefficient differed significantly from zero using an alpha of 0.05. The coefficients of the four predictors for food handlers' awareness on COVID-19 were significantly different from zero because all the p-valueswere less than 0.05.Therefore, four variables of the study model of handlers' awareness on COVID-19 were significant predictors of compliance with COVID-19 protocols in the hotels in Abeokuta, Ogun State.

Table 6: Linear Regression Analysis

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	*T*	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	*B*		
(Constant)	1.624	.107		15.132	.000
The use of hand sanitizer or hand washing with soap regularly	.285	.086	.136	3.320	.001
The use of face mast and respiratory hygiene practices	.783	.098	.382	8.001	.000
Maintaining social distancing with other personnel	.677	.091	.340	7.421	.000
Food hygiene practices	.198	.072	.095	2.763	.006

a. Dependent Variable: Compliance with COVID-19 protocols in the hotels

Source: SPSS OUTPUT -

Test of Hypothesis of the Study

The result in Table 7 shows the summary of test of hypothesis of the study using test statistics results of the regression analysis. The null hypothesis (H_{O1}): $\mathcal{B}_1 = 0$ stated that the level of food handlers' awareness does not significantly influence compliance withCOVID-19 protocols in the hotels in Abeokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria. The alternate hypothesis (H_{a1}): $\mathcal{B}_1 \neq 0$ stated that the level of food handlers' awareness does significantly influence compliance withCOVID-19 protocols in the hotels in Abeokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria.Therefore, the t-statistics and p-value of level of food handlers' awareness indicated $t = 30.988$ p-value = 0.000. Since the p-value =0.000 $\leq$ 0.05, the study rejected null hypothesis and accepted alternate hypothesis. Thus, "the level of food handlers' awareness does significantly influence compliance withCOVID-19 protocols in the hotels in Abeokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria.

Table 7: Summary of Test of Hypothesis

S/No	Hypothesis	Beta	T	P-value	Decision
1	(Constant)		9.658	.000	
2	Level of awareness on COVID-19 protocols in the hotels	.845	30.988	.000	Reject H_{O1}

Discussion of Findings

The study independent variable of food handlers' awareness on COVID-19 protocolscomprises ofthe use of hand sanitizer or hand washing with soap and water regularly before, during and after food preparation, the use of face mask and respiratory hygiene practices in the kitchen, social distancing with other personnel in the kitchen and food hygiene practices. On the other hand, the dependent variable focused on the level of food handlers' compliance with COVID-19 protocols in the hotels in Abeokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria.

The socio-demographic characteristics of the study reveal that majority of the respondents attained diploma and first degree levels of education. This is in line withKnowles (2002) study that a sensitized food

handler should have a higher level of understanding at the end of the sensitization. This finding negates Bertin (2009) study which observed that certain employee-related characteristics such as low educational level, low socio-economic level and literacy barriers contributed to poor professional performance at work. The descriptive investigations on food handlers' awareness on COVID-19 protocols considered all the variables as important elements of compliance with COVID-19 protocols in the hotels in Abeokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria.The findings concurred withstudy of Richard et al., (2006) which revealed that good personal hygiene was an important protective measure against contamination and food-borne illnesses. Also, Pragl et al. (2007) affirmed that awareness was only valuable if its importance was translated into performance.

The findings on correlation analysis indicated that food handlers' awareness on COVID-19 recordeda strong positive correlation and association with food handlers' compliance with COVID-19

protocols in the hotels in Abeokuta, Ogun State. The finding is in tandem with Howells, et al., (2008) study which confirmed that there was a correlation between positive behaviours and continued education of food handlers towards sustenance of safe food handling practices. Also, this concurred with Sagoo, et al., (2003) study which revealed a direct relationship between food hygiene sensitizing and practice of food safety procedures.

The findings on regression analysis revealed that the adjusted R^2 coefficient of the study variables explained 70.6% of the variations in the dependent variable. This implied that the independent variables of food handlers' awareness on COVID-19 protocols explained 76% of the variations in the dependent variable of food handlers' compliance with COVID-19 protocols. The resultindicated thatfood handlers' awareness on COVID-19 was a major significant predictor and contributory variable of compliance with COVID-19 protocols in the hotels in Abeokuta, Ogun State. The results also inferred that there was a satisfactory link in

relationship between the food handlers' levelof awareness and compliance with COVID-19 protocols in the hotels.This is in line with Knowles (2002) study that a sensitized food handler should have a higher level of understanding at the end of the sensitization. This also,affirmed WHO (2007) report that food handlers' awareness is considered as one of the most crucial interventions in the prevention of food-borne diseases.The linear regression indicated a positive significant relationship between food handlers' awareness and compliance with COVID-19 protocols in the hotels. This meant that, the more the level of awareness the higher the level of compliance with COVID-19 protocols in the hotels. This finding isin line with Sagoo, Little and Mitchell (2003) study which identified a direct relationship between food hygiene sensitizing and practice of food safety procedures. The test of hypothesis finding indicated that the study rejected null hypothesis. This meant that thelevel of food handlers' awareness does significantly influence compliance to

COVID-19 protocols in the hotels in Abeokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria.

Conclusion
This study concluded thatfood handlers' level of awareness significantly correlate to compliance with COVID-19 protocols in hotels in Abeokuta. Therefore,an improvement in food handlers' level of awareness on COVID-19 protocols on the use of hand sanitizer or hand washing with soap and water regularly before, during and after food preparation, use of face mask and respiratory hygiene practices during food preparation, social distancing with other personnel in the kitchen and food hygiene practices in the kitchenwill cause positive significant changes in compliance with COVID-19 protocols in hotels in Abeokuta, Ogun State.

Recommendation
Thestudy recommends that the managementshould steadfastly keep the food handlers' more informed on COVID-19 protocols and guidelines in the hotels in Abeokuta, Nigeria.

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