**Growth Performance of *Clarias gariepinus* fed withcooked and uncooked *Moringa oleifera* Seed Diets**

**ABSTRACT**

This research was carried out to evaluate the effects of complete and partial replacements of fishmeal with *M. oleifera* seed meal (MSM) on the growth performance of *Clarias gariepinus* fingerlings. One hundred and forty (140) *C. gariepinus* fingerlings were used for this study. The fingerlings reared were randomly assigned to seven dietary treatments namely: control or T1(0% MSM); T2 (20% cooked MSM), T3 (20% uncooked MSM); T4 (40% cooked MSM); T5 (40% uncooked MSM), T6 (100% cooked MSM), and T7 (100% uncooked MSM) respectively. Each treatment was replicated thrice, in a completely randomized design. The experiment lasted for 10 weeks during which the parameters monitored included proximate composition, weight gain, length increase, specific growth rate, and protein efficiency ratio. The data collected were subjected to analysis of variance at 5% significant level. The result showed that diet T7, T1, T~~U~~5, T~~U~~3 had the highest dry matter (94.64%), crude protein (49.63%), ash (11.35). The highest fibre (3.73) and lipid was recorded in diet T4 and nitrogen free extract (43.43%). There was a significant difference between the dry matter, crude protein, fibre, lipid, ash and nitrogen extract of the experimental diets (p=0.00). The results revealed that the highest weight gain was recorded by the fingerlings fed diet T1 (128.40±0.66) followed by diet T2 (120.70± 0.17) while least in those of diet T4 (56.87± 0.71). There was significant difference (P<0.05) in the weight gain. The highest length increase was recorded by the fingerlings fed diet T2 (18.90±4.72) followed by diet T1 (17.57± 2.62) while least in those of diet T7 (10.73± 0.61). There was significant differences (P<0.05) in the length increase. The fingerlings fed with diet T1 had the highest specific growth rate (6.94**±**0.01) followed by those fed with diet T2 (6.85**±**0.00) while least in those fed with T4 (5.77**±**0.02). There was significant difference (P<0.05) in the specific growth rate. The best value for protein efficiency ratio was recorded in the *C. gariepinus* fingerlings fed with diet T2 (2.98) while poorest in those fed diet T~~C~~4 (1.23). There was significant difference (P<0.05) in the protein efficiency ratio (p=0.00) of *C. gariepinus* fingerlings fed varying percentage inclusions of MSM (P=0.54). It was concluded that fish farmers could replace fishmeal up to 20% cooked *M. oleifera ~~oleifera~~* seed meal in formulating *Clarias gariepinus* diets.

**Keywords:** Growth performance, Replacement, Fishmeal, *M. oleifera* seed meal, *C. gariepinus*

**INTRODUCTION**

Growth performance in fish generally depends on many circumstances which include environmental factor, quality feeds, water quality and stocking density. For feasible fish production, all necessary factors required to obtain high growth in cultured fish such as *Clarias gariepinus* should be provided to ensure profit maximization (Abdel – Warith *et al.,* 2002)*.* Since factors such as water quality can be maintained at a reasonable cost except feed, urgent provision must be made to provide optimum amount for the optimal production of fish quality (Abdel – Warith *et al.,* 2002).

Commercial aquaculture production of African catfish (*Clarias gariepinus*) in Nigeria has increased rapidly in recent years. However, it is clear that fish meal supplies are strictly limited and if aquaculture continues to expand globally, the requirements for fish meal will soon exceed its supplies (FAO, 2006). Because fish meal is a limited primary source of animal protein, the use of plant protein sources that are widely available and reasonably priced should be considered in aqua feeds (Lovell, 1989; Storebakken *et al*., 2000). There has been an increase in the attempt to replace high-priced fish meal with plant source that possesses good quality essential amino acids (EAA) such as soybean meal and pigeon pea among others. Soybean meal is utilized with the hope of helping to decrease the cost of feed production, however over-dependence has caused hike in the price of soybean meal as soya bean also have high demand for human consumption (Storebakken *et al*., 2000). Therefore, utilization of other inexpensive plant protein sources that are not in high demand for human consumption would be beneficial in reducing feed cost (Fuglie, 2001).

Interestingly, certain plant materials offer promising alternatives and among them is the *M. oleifera* seed meal. Moringa is a fast-growing plant widely available in the tropics and subtropics with several economical, industrial and medicinal usage (Ozumba *et al.,* 2009). It is native to Sub-Himalayan parts of northern India with different major Nigerian vernacular names: Okwe Oyibo (Igbo), Ewe ile (Yoruba), Zogalle (Hausa), Gawara (Fulani) (Ozumba, 2008; Igwilo *et al.,* 2011). *M*. *oleifera* represents a traditionally important food commodity as the leaves, flowers, fruits/seeds and roots of this tree are locally used as vegetables and herbs (Siddhuraju and Becker, 2003). The seed has been extensively investigated as a source of oil for that are reported higher that of legumes and soybean.

Previous studies reported that *M. oleifera* seeds had 332.50 to 383.00g/kg of crude protein Abdulkarim *et al.,* 2005). *M. oleifera* seed contains an appreciable amount of nutrients that include: crude protein of 25.0%, crude lipid of 10% and crude fibre of 8.4%, beyond some common fruits, milk and carrot. It contains 25 times the Iron of spinach, 17 times the Calcium of milk, 15 times the Potassium of bananas, 10 times the vitamin A of carrots, 9 times the protein of yogurt, 0.5 times the vitamin C of oranges. The Essential Amino Acid (EAA) composition in *M. oleifera* seed cake have high essential amino acid, especially the sulfur amino acids as methionine, cysteine, tryptophan (Makkar and Becker, 1996) except for lysine (15.3 g/kg-1 protein), threonine (30.8g/kg-1) and valine (43.5g/kg-1) (Oliveira and Silveira, 1999). In general, there are low concentrations of antinutritional factors such as in the plant, although the seeds possess glucosinolates (65.5μ mol g-1) and phytates (41g kg-1) (Ferreira *et al.,* 2008).

Since farming aquatic animals in Nigeria was broadly adopted and improved, it has caused a problem of high-priced feed as well as insufficient nutrient. A significant proportion of fish meal possess a broad range of amino acids profiles, hence there has been attempts to replace high-priced fish meal with alternative sources which possess good quality and affordable essential amino acids (EAA). In Nigeria, there is little information regarding the utilization of cooked and uncooked *M. oleifera* seed meal in catfish diet~~,~~ hence this study evaluated the replacement of fishmeal with cooked and uncooked *M. oleifera* seed meal on growth response of *C. gariepinus* fingerlings.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

**Experimental Location**

This experiment was conducted at Okpuno, Awka, Anambra State, South-East of Nigeria for a period of 12 weeks. Awka lies below 300metres above sea in a valley on the plains of the Mamu river with a geographical coordinate of 60 10’ 0’’ North, 70 4’ 0” East. It is in the tropical zone of Nigeria and experiences two distinct seasons brought about by the two predominant winds that rule the area: the South western monsoon winds from the Atlantic Oceans and the north eastern dry winds from across the Sahara desert. The monsoon winds from the Atlantic creates seven months of heavy tropical rains which occur between April and October which are then followed by five months of dryness (November – March) (Okezie and Igbokwe, 2015). The temperature in Awka is generally a comfortable 27 – 30 degrees Celsius between June and December but rises to 32 – 34 degrees Celsius between January and April.

**Procurement of Experimental Fish and other Materials**

One hundred and forty (140) *C. gariepinus* fingerlings (22.66±2.39g and 13.25±0.23cm) were procured from Jupet Fish Farms, Awka in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State. The fish were transported in 50 litre plastic gallon (cut open at the top and then covered with a mesh net held in place by a rubber band) to the experimental site at St. Gabriel’s Catholic Church, Okpuno, Awka in Anambra State early in the morning. The fish were acclimatized in 160 litre volume plastic for two weeks where they were fed starter vital feed. The fish were distributed into fourteen (14) plastic aquaria of 60 litres after acclimatization period.

Feed components including fish meal, soya meal, groundnut cake, corn meal, bone meal, cassava flour, wheat offal, lysine, methionine, fish premix, fish biotics, vegetable oil, kivestovite and salt were purchased from Palmac Business Ventures “Afor – Nnobi” market, while the plastic aquaria and water storage containers were bought from “Ogbo efere” market in Onitsha. The *M. oleifera* seeds were bought from Wuse 2 market, Abuja, Nigeria. The cassava flour obtained locally from the (name) market and used as feed binder.

**Experimental Diet Formulation**

Seven diets were formulated using Least Cost Ration formulation which took into consideration the nutritive content of the major ingredients. All the feed ingredients were integrated into computing the required quantities to make up 100 units of the feed (Table 1). The first diet (control diet) was formulated with 0% inclusion of *M. oleifera* seed meal.

**Table 1: Composition of experimental diets (cooked and uncooked *M. oleifera* seed meal)**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Ingredients** | **T1** | **T2** | **T3** | **T4** | **T5**  | **T6** | **T7** |
| Maize  | 25.0 | 25.00 | 25.00 | 25.00 | 25.00 | 25.00 | 25.00 |
| Soya bean  | 17.00 | 17.00 | 17.00 | 17.00 | 17.00 | 17.00 | 17.00 |
| Wheat offal  | 4.00 | 4.00 | 4.00 | 4.00 | 4.00 | 4.00 | 4.00 |
| Fishmeal  | 40.00 | 32.00 | 32.00 | 8.00 | 8.00 | 00.00 | 00.00 |
| *M. oleifera* seed meal  | 0 | 16.00 | 16.00 | 32.00 | 32.00 | 40.00 | 40.00 |
| Cassava | 2.00 | 2.00 | 2.00 | 2.00 | 2.00 | 2.00 | 2.00 |
| Palm oil | 4.00 | 4.00 | 4.00 | 4.00 | 4.00 | 4.00 | 4.00 |
| Bone meal  | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 |
| Salt | 0.30 | 0.30 | 0.30 | 0.30 | 0.30 | 0.30 | 0.30 |
| Pre-mix  | 0.20 | 0.20 | 0.20 | 0.20 | 0.20 | 0.20 | 0.20 |
| Methionine  | 2.00 | 2.00 | 2.00 | 2.00 | 2.00 | 2.00 | 2.00 |
| Lysine  | 4.5 | 4.5 | 4.5 | 4.5 | 4.5 | 4.5 | 4.5 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

KEY: Control or T1(0% MSM); T2 (20% cooked MSM); T3 (20% uncooked MSM); T4 (40% cooked MSM); T5 (40% uncooked MSM), T6 (100% cooked MSM), and T7 (100% uncooked MSM).

**Processing of *M. oleifera* Seed and Feed Ingredients**

*Moringa oleifera* seeds (MOS) were divided into two (cooked and uncooked). The cooked part was boiled at (what degree) for 30–35mins to remove the anti–nutrient inhibitors. Both cooked and uncooked MOS were dried for two weeks at room temperature and separately blend to fine particles using hammer mill. The *M. oleifera* seed meals (MSM) were used for the production of seven experimental diets at varied inclusion levels of 0% as control diet (T1), 20% cooked MSM (T2), 20% uncooked MSM (T3), 40% cooked MSM (T4), 40% uncooked MSM (T5), 100% cooked MSM (T6), 100% uncooked MSM (T7) to replace fishmeal (FM).

Other feed ingredients were blend to fine particles separately, carefully measured and mixed homogeneously with the cooked and uncooked MSM separately using warm water to form a dough for *C. gariepinus*. The final dough was made into pellets using a 3mm diameter pelletizer. The pelletized feeds were sun-dried for two days to remove moisture (Eyo, 1996) at room temperature for five days to moisture content of less than ten percent, packed in waterproof cellophanes, labeled appropriately and kept dry until usage time.

**Feeding**

The fish were fed with starter vital feed twice daily at 8.00am and 6.00pm during the period of acclimatization and their experimental diets of varying inclusion level of cooked and uncooked *M. oleifera* seed meal twice daily as well at 0%, 20%, 40%, and 100% represented as T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, T6, and T7 respectively after acclimatization for 10 weeks.

**Data Collection**

The fishes were fedtwice daily. The water in the fourteen (14) plastic aquariawasemptied completely and re-filledonce a week to prevent diseases and subsequent fish death due to low dissolved oxygen. The length and weight of the fish were measured using a transparent meter rule and an electronic weighing balance of Model BL 20001 respectively and then the readings were recorded on paper on weekly basis. Length of fish was obtained by stretching a fish on the meter rule to take the reading.

**Determination of Proximate Composition of Processed *M. oleifera* Seeds**

The proximate composition (moisture, crude protein, crude lipid crude fibre, and ash and nitrogen free extracts) of both the uncooked and cooked *M. oleifera* seed meals and that of the experimental diets were determined using the methods of the Association of Analytic Chemists (A.O.A.C., 1995). All chemical analyses were replicated twice.

**Monitoring of Water Quality Parameters**

Water quality parameters such as dissolved oxygen (DO), hydrogen ion concentration (pH) and temperature were measured using American Public Health Association (APHA) (1995) methods. The calibrated mercury thermometer was used for measuring water temperature; the pH and dissolved oxygen concentration were measured using the Jenway meters (model 3050 for DO and 9070 for the pH).

**Growth Performance**

The data obtained on the growth performance of *C. gariepinus* fed with the formulated diets were analysed as follows:

**1. Weight Gain**

The weight gain was expressed as the weight gain of individual in the organism’s life time (T2 – T1) and was expressed as weekly final mean weight minus initial weight divided by duration of the study.

Weight gain $WG= \frac{W\_{2}-W\_{1}}{T\_{2}-T\_{1}}$

Where:

$W\_{2}$ = final mean weight (g)

$W\_{1}$ = initial mean weight (g)

$T\_{2}$ = final time (weeks or days)

$T\_{1}$ = initial time

**2. Percentage weight gain (PWG)**

This was determined using the formula below:

$$PWG=\frac{Mean final weight – Mean initial weight }{Mean initial weight} x 100$$

**3. Specific Growth Rate (SGR)**

This determines the actual weight gain for the time interval of the study and expressed as:

$$SGR= \frac{Log\_{e}W\_{2}-Log\_{e}W\_{1}}{T\_{2-T\_{1}}}×\frac{100}{1}$$

Where:

W2 = Final weight of fish at time T2

W1 = Initial weight of fish at time T1

e = Base of natural logarithm

**4. Length increase**

Length increase (cm) is calculated as the difference between the initial and final mean lengths values of the fish in the aquarium.

 Length increase = L2 –L1

Where L1 = Initial Length

 L2 = Final Length

**5. Percentage Length Increase (%LI):-** This is expressed by the equation:

$$\% LI= \frac{L\_{2}-L\_{1}}{L\_{1}}×\frac{100}{1}$$

Where: L1 = Initial length and Lt = Length at time t.

**Nutrient utilization**

The index of feed utilization calculated was protein efficiency ratio which assesses an individual protein ability to sustain growth. It is also used to evaluate the quality of protein in the diet (Osborne *et al.* 1919). It is expressed as:

$$PER= \frac{Mean weight gain of fish }{Protein intake \left(PI\right)}$$

$$PI= \frac{Total feed consumed ×\% Crude protein in feed }{100}$$

**Statistical Analysis**

Data collected from the growth parameters were statistically analyzed with ANOVA using SPSS Computer Software Package (version 20) at 0.05 significant levels. The sample means were separated using Duncan’s Multiple Range Test of significance.

**RESULTS**

**Water Quality Parameters**

The water quality parameters were presented in Table 2. Temperature was maintained within the range of 25 – 290C, pH 5.40 – 6.10, dissolved oxygen 8.59 – 8.63ppm, total alkalinity 19.90 – 20.00ppm and biological oxygen demand between 0.76 – 0.90ppm. The result shows that pH and dissolved oxygen values are within the acceptable range for fish culture in the tropics as reported by Boyd (1979).

**Table 2: Water Quality Parameters Monitored During the Experimental Period**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Water Quality Parameters** | **Range** | **Mean ± SD** | **Range (Boyd *et al.,* 1979)** |
| Temperature (0C) | 25 – 29 | 27.50±0.57 | 25.0 – 32.0 |
| pH  | 5.40 – 6.10 | 5.90±0.14 | 6.50 - 9.0 |
| Dissolved oxygen (ppm)/MgL-1 | 8.59 – 8.63 | 8.61±0.03 | 3.0 – 5.0 |
| Total alkalinity (ppm)/ MgL-1 | 19.90 – 20.0 | 19.95±0.07 | 20.0 - 30.0 |
| Biological oxygen demand (ppm) | 0.76 – 0.90 | 0.83±0.10 | 1 – 2 |

**Figure 1: Proximate Composition of uncooked and cooked *M. oleifera* seed meal**

The result of proximate composition of cooked and uncooked *M. oleifera* seed as presented in Figure 1 shows that uncooked *M. oleifera* seed had higher protein content (35.21%) than the cooked seeds (30.37%). However, the cooked had higher fat (43.56%) than the uncooked (40.74%). Also the table reported that uncooked *M. oleifera* seeds had higher moisture content of 9.14% than the cooked seeds. The cooked *M. oleifera* seeds had higher values of Nitrogen free extract (9.17%), Ash content (4.98%) and fibre content (4.70%) than the uncooked. There were significant differences between the ash (p=0.01), fat (p=0.02), crude protein (0.047), Nitrogen free extract (p=0.01) except moisture (p=0.35) and fibre (p=0.33).

Figure 2 showed that diet T7 had the highest (94.64) dry matter followed by diet T5 (94.50) while T3 had the least (90.60). Diet T1 had the highest (49.63) crude protein followed by diet T7 while diet T2 had the least (40.56). The highest fibre (3.73) was recorded in diet T4 followed by diet T1 (2.75) while least in T5 (1.61). The highest lipid (6.43) was recorded in diet T4 followed by diet T7 (5.12) while least in T5 (3.52). The highest ash (11.35) was recorded in diet T5 followed by diet T3 (10.47) while least in T4 (7.33). The highest nitrogen free extract (43.43) was recorded in diet T3 followed by diet T2 (42.93) while least in T6 (33.66). There was a significant difference between the dry matter, crude protein, fibre, lipid, ash and nitrogen extract of the experimental diets (p=0.00).

**Figure 2: Proximate Composition of Experimental Diets**

**Growth Performance**

**Weight Gain**

The result in Figure 3 shows that the highest weight gain was recorded from ~~by~~ the fingerlings fed diet T1 (128.40±0.66) followed by diet T2 (120.70± 0.17) while least in those fed diet T4 (56.87± 0.71). There were a significant difference between the weight gain of *C. gariepinus* fingerlings fed varying percentage inclusions of MSM (P=0.00) at 5% level of significance.

**Figure 3: Mean Weight gain of *C. gariepinus* fed different Inclusion level of *M. oleifera***

**seed Meal for 10 Weeks**

**Percentage weight gain**

The result in figure 4 revealed that the fingerlings fed with diet T2 had the highest percentage weight gain (505.76%) followed by those fed with the control diet (489.74%) while least in those fed with T4 (296.55%). There was a significant difference between the percentage weight gain of *C. gariepinus* fingerlings fed varying percentage inclusions of *M. oleifera* seed meal (P=0.00) at 5% level of significance.

**Figure 4: Percentage Weight Gain of *Clarias gariepinus* Fed different inclusion level of *M.***

 ***oleifera* seed Meal for 10 Weeks**

**Length Increase**

The data presented in figure 5 shows that the highest length increase was recorded by the fingerlings fed diet T2 (18.90±4.72) followed by diet T1 (17.57± 2.62) while least in those of diet T7 (10.73± 0.61). There was a significant difference between the length increase of *C. gariepinus* fingerlings fed varying percentage inclusions of MSM (P=0.00).

**Figure 5: Mean length increase (cm) of *C. gariepinus* Fed with different inclusion level of**

 ***M. oleifera* seed Meal for 10 Weeks**

**Percentage length increase**

The result in figure 6 revealed that the fingerlings fed with diet T2 had the highest percentage length increase (146.42±48.71%) followed by those fed with the control diet (128.84±24.12%) while least in those fed with T7 (80.80±10.58%). There was no significant difference between the percentage length increase of *C. gariepinus* fingerlings fed varying percentage inclusions of *M. oleifera* seed meal (P=0.54) at 5% level of significance.

Figure 6: Percentage length increase of *C. gariepinus* fingerlings fed varying percentage inclusions of *M. oleifera* seed meal

**Specific Growth Rate**

The result in figure 7 revealed that the fingerlings fed with diet T1 had the highest specific growth rate (6.94**±**0.01) followed by those fed with diet T2 (6.85**±**0.00) while least in those fed with T4 (5.77**±**0.02). There was a significant difference between the specific growth rate of *C. gariepinus* fingerlings fed varying percentage inclusions of *M. oleifera* seed meal (P=0.00) at 5% level of significance.

**Figure 7: Specific Growth Rate of *Clarias gariepinus* Fed with different percentage Inclusion of *M. oleifera* seed Meal for 10 Weeks**

**Protein Efficiency Ratio**

The data on protein efficiency ratio presented in table 3 showed that the best value for protein efficiency ratio was recorded in the *C. gariepinus* fingerlings fed with diet T2 (2.98) while poorest in those fed diet T4 (1.23). There was significant difference in the protein efficiency ratio of *C. gariepinus* fingerlings fed varying percentage inclusions of *M. oleifera* seed meal (P=0.00) at 5% level of significance.

**Figure 3: Protein efficiency ratio of *Clarias gariepinus* fed with different percentage Inclusion of *M. oleifera* seed Meal for 10 Weeks**

**DISCUSSION**

The result of the physico-chemical parameters of the culture water used for raising the fish revealed that the temperature range obtained was 250C – 290C. This temperature range fall within the acceptable range and did not affect the fish feeding negatively. Auta (1993) also reported a similar temperature range of 250C – 30.00C in a research carried out in static tanks in Zaria. The pH range of 5.40 – 6.10 and Dissolved Oxygen (D.O) range of 8.59 – 8.63ppm recorded during this study suggest that they are within acceptable range for growth and maintenance of *C. gariepinus*. The pH range of 6 – 8.5 and D.O. of 4 – 8.0ppm have been reported by Balogun *et al*. (2004). In view of the fact that all the physico-chemical parameters of the culture water were within acceptable ranges, the fish growth and feed utilization may be affected by other intrinsic and extrinsic factors.

The weight gain was recorded in fingerlings fed with diet T1 (128.40±0.66) followed by diet T2 (120.70± 0.17) while least in those of diet T4 (56.87± 0.71). This could be as a result of better utilization of the nutrients in the feed to produce good weight gain. This observation is in line with the report by some authors (Solomon *et al.,* 1996) who stated that diet containing 100% fishmeal gave the best growth performance of fish. Fishmeal has a high crude protein content ranging from 62% to more than 70% (Sauvant *et al.,* 2004) and a high amino acid quality (Medale and Kauslik,2009). In treatments with the same *M. oleifera* seed meal inclusion, treatments with cooked *M. oleifera* seed meal had a higher weight gain compared to the uncooked treatments. The works of Eyo and Olatunde (1999) and Omafuvbe *et al.* (2004) indicated that boiling of soybean and locust bean seeds promoted growth in *C. gariepinus*. Hydrothermally processed *Proscopis justiflora* seeds also produced improved growth in *Labeo rohutal* fingerlings (Bhatt *et al.,* 2011). The result of the percentage weight gain of *C. gariepinus* fingerlings showed that those fed with diet T2 was not significantly higher than other treatments. This indicates that diet T2 can compare favourably with diet T1 in terms of percentage weight gain. Specific Growth Rate (SGR) of the fingerlings fed with diet T1 had significantly higher specific growth rate (6.94**±**0.01) than those fed with diet T2 (6.85**±**0.00). This indicates that the diet T2 does not compare favourably with fishmeal in terms of specific growth rate.

The percentage protein values obtained for the seven various experimental treatments (T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, T6 and T7) in this study were 49.63%, 40.56%, 46.31%, 46.42%, 43.80%, 44.49% and 46.85% respectively. The lower value of the crude protein content in cooked as against uncooked *M. oleifera* seed meal with the same percentage inclusion may be associated with denaturation of protein. Liener (1994) stated that denaturation of protein could occur due to excessive heat treatment which could further cause functional and nutritional changes in the protein source. It could also be due to leaching and solubilization of some protein content in the boiling water. Obasi and Wogu (2008), Udensi *et al.* (2010) and Jimoh *et al.* (2011) stated similar effects on different seeds experimented on. Also, the control diet had the highest protein content and this is because fishmeal has little or no fibre but high protein content in contrast to plant – based ingredients with higher fibre content (Afuang *et al.,* 2003).

The fibre content of the experimental feed was higher in the feed with cooked as against the uncooked *M. oleifera* seed meal. The low crude fibre of the control (2.75) could be accounted for by the fact that fishmeal is derived from fish which are animals and they do not efficiently digest fibre but eliminate it as solid wastes (Afuang *et al*., 2003). The reduction in the lipid contents of the cooked as against the uncooked *M. oleifera* seed meal could be accounted for by release of the lipid molecules into the boiling water or evaporated into the air from the cells. Udensi *et al.* (2010) obtained a similar result with *Mucuna flagellipes*. The low lipid content in the feed with the cooked *M. oleifera* seed as against the one with uncooked *M. oleifera* seed would make the meal acceptable for fish ration formulation since high lipid content in fish rations would affect the feed quality in terms of low floatation in water and possibility of high rancidity during storage (Lall, 1991). The values of the ash content of the different feeds did not follow a specific pattern as well as the free nitrogen extract. This study suggests that a higher PER value indicates a better utilization of the crude protein consumed. The best value for protein efficiency ratio was recorded in *C. gariepinus* fingerlings fed with diet T2 (2.98) while poorest in those fed diet T4 (1.23). Kperegbeyi and Ikprite (2009) obtained a similar result using processed *Cajanus cajan* seed meal in the broiler starter chicks feed.

**Conclusion**

This study showed that the best growth in terms of Mean Weight Gain (MWG) and S. G. R., was obtained from the control treatment. The feed utilization in terms of mean Protein Efficiency Ratio was also highest in the control treatment (T1). However, among the formulated diets, fish fed diet T2 (20% cooked *M. oleifera* seed meal) performed better than other treatments. In view of the fact that the dried sea clupeids are often not readily available, due to the high demand by humans who consume them and animal feed millers who use them for making animal feeds, the *M. oleifera* seed meal – based diet at low amount inclusion would be of great value.

**Recommendations:**

From the findings of this research, it could be recommended that:

1. The replacement of fishmeal up to 20% with cooked *M. oleifera* seed meal in formulating fish feeds is recommended.
2. The establishment of large *M. oleifera* plantations should be encouraged in Nigeria.
3. Further research works are suggested using other processing methods such as soaking and fermentation, and incorporating the processed seed meals in the feeds for other species of fish.

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