

Does Processing Influence the Nutrient and Antinutrient Compositions of Pearl Millet Grains?

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ABSTRACT

The rising and unpredictable costs of conventional livestock feed ingredients, despite the vast untapped potential of most non-conventional alternatives such as pearl millet, remain a serious concern. This study evaluated the effects of two processing methods on the nutrient and anti-nutrient compositions of pearl millet grains, using maize as the standard energy source. Two different processing methods -boiling and fermentation- were employed out. All raw and processed pearl millet grains were milled and taken to the laboratory for proximate, mineral, and antinutrient analyses. All the nutrient parameters measured showed significant differences ($P < 0.05$). Maize had significantly ($P < 0.05$) higher values of dry matter, ether extract, crude fibre, ash, nitrogen-free extract, metabolizable energy, and total carbohydrates compared to both raw and processed pearl millet grains. The percentage of organic matter (98.11–98.68%) and crude protein (8.84–10.58%) was significantly higher ($P < 0.05$) in the processed pearl millet grains. The ash content (1.32–1.89%) was significantly lower ($P < 0.05$) in both raw and processed pearl millet compared to maize. Crude fibre content (4.74%) was highest in the raw pearl millet relative to the other grains. All minerals analyzed-except magnesium (Mg)—were significantly higher ($P < 0.05$) in maize grains than in both raw and processed pearl millet grains. Furthermore, all the antinutritional factors measured were significantly higher ($P < 0.05$) in raw pearl millet grains compared to the processed millet and maize. Fermentation resulted in a significantly greater reduction ($P < 0.05$) in saponin (37.65%) and tannin (19.32%) compared to boiling, which achieved reductions of 35.56% and 15.04%, respectively. In contrast, boiling was more effective ($P < 0.05$) in reducing oxalate and phytate contents, with reductions of 32.14% and 20.11%, respectively, compared to 25.00% and 16.96% in the fermented samples. It was concluded that pearl millet should be processed before inclusion in feed formulations. Further studies are recommended to evaluate its effects on animal growth, health, and productivity.

Keywords: Antinutritional factors, boiling, fermentation, maize, pearl millet

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INTRODUCTION

Pearl millet (*Pennisetum glaucum*) is a versatile cereal cultivated for both human consumption and livestock feed (Arora et al., 2003), particularly in African and Asian countries (Nambiar et al., 2011). Pearl millet has the ability to thrive under drought and high temperature conditions, making it a viable crop in regions where wheat, maize and other cereal crops struggle to survive. Among all millet varieties, Pearl millet occupies more than 29 million hectares globally. However, its cultivation is largely concentrated in Africa (15 million hectares) and Asia (11 million hectares), which are the leading producers (Rathore et al., 2016). More than 95 per cent of pearl millet production comes from developing countries, with India being the largest producer (Basavaraj et al., 2010). India cultivate the crop on approximately 9.8million hectares of land (Rathore et al., 2016). Beyond its agronomic adaptability, pearl millet also offers distinct nutritional advantages. It contains higher levels

of protein (14.0%), fat (5.7%), fiber (2.0%), and ash (2.1%) compared to major cultivated cereal crops such as wheat (Kavitha and Parimalavalli, 2014), rice (Ahmed et al., 2014), and sorghum (Awadelkareem et al., 2015) (Sade, 2009). Its superior protein quality—particularly in terms of tryptophan and threonine content (Singh et al., 2024)—along with higher levels of calcium, iron, and zinc (Yadav et al., 2012; Singhal et al., 2022; Kumar et al., 2022), makes it highly beneficial for human nutrition. Additionally, the energy content of pearl millet is greater than that of sorghum and comparable to that of brown rice, owing to its rich composition of unsaturated fatty acids (75%) and linoleic acid (46.3%). (Jaybhaye et al. 2014). Despite its nutritional benefits, pearl millet also contains certain anti-nutritional factors such as phytates, tannins, and polyphenols (Meena et al., 2024). These compounds can chelate dietary minerals in the gastrointestinal tract, thereby

Table 1: Nutrient Compositions of maize, raw and processed millet grains.

Items (%)	Maize (white) ¹	RPMM	BPMM	FPMM	SEM	P-val.
Dry Matter	95.28 ^a	93.67 ^b	92.88 ^c	94.67 ^a	0.14	0.0076
Organic matter	98.11 ^c	98.39 ^b	98.74 ^a	98.68 ^a	0.03	0.0023
Crude Protein	8.84 ^c	9.68 ^b	10.22 ^a	10.58 ^a	0.09	0.0003
Ether Extract	3.89 ^a	3.35 ^b	3.26 ^b	2.99 ^c	0.03	0.0023
Crude Fibre	3.39 ^c	4.74 ^a	3.77 ^b	3.62 ^b	0.08	0.0010
Ash	1.89 ^a	1.61 ^b	1.26 ^c	1.32 ^c	0.02	0.0023
NFE ²	77.27 ^a	70.30 ^d	74.37 ^c	76.16 ^b	0.13	0.0002
ME(Kcal/kg) ³	3388.77 ^a	3238.62 ^d	3284.76 ^c	3339.73 ^b	2.35	<.0001
Total Carbohydrates	83.88 ^a	78.24 ^c	82.75 ^b	82.81 ^b	0.17	0.0004

Maize¹ = used a standard grain to compare the nutrient in raw and processed pearl millet grains. NFE²: Nitrogen Free Extract =100-(%CP+%CF+%EE+%Ash). ME³ = Metabolizable Energy, RPMM= Raw pearl millet meal. BPMM= Boiled pearl millet meal. FPMM= Fermented pearl millet meal.

reducing their bioaccessibility and bioavailability (Nour et al., 2014). Additionally, the presence of polyphenolic pigments in the pericarp, aleurone, and endosperm regions may impart an undesirable gray color and taste to finished products (Rathi et al., 2004). The development of off-odors and flavors in pearl millet flour and its products is primarily attributed to lipase activity in the pericarp, aleurone layer, and germ of the grains (Yadav et al., 2012; Singh et al., 2024). Reducing these anti-nutritional factors is crucial for enhancing both the shelf life and nutritional quality of pearl millet and its processed products. Various processing techniques such as dehulling, milling, malting, parboiling, and acid or heat treatments have been reported to effectively reduce these compounds. (Legesse, 2013; Makinde et al. 2019; Ajibade et al. 2021).

To evaluate the nutritional modifications induced by processing, maize—a commonly used cereal grain—was employed as a nutritional reference. Maize is rich in carbohydrates and minerals, including potassium and magnesium. However, it contains trace amounts of lysine and tryptophan, contributing to its relatively low content of protein, as well as trace amounts of B-vitamins (Singh et al. 2024). Therefore, maize grain was used here as a standard to compare the nutrients in raw and processed pearl millet grains. This study aimed to determine the effect of two processing methods on the nutrient and antinutrient compositions of pearl millet grains in comparison with the chemical composition of maize.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Location

This study was conducted at the Teaching and Research Farms of the Department of Animal Science, Federal University, Gashua, Yobe State, Nigeria. Gashua is located at latitude 12°, 52.547/12.8758°N and 11.0120°/11°00.719E; and it is situated in the Sahel savanna zone of Nigeria (Ovimaps, 2024).

Sample collection and preparation

The maize and pearl millet grains used in this study were purchased from the local market in Gashua, Yobe State. The grains were divided into 3 batches as follows:

Raw

One kilogram of pearl millet grain was air-dried at 25 °C for 3

days, milled using a hammer mill with a 2 mm sieve, and labeled as Raw Pearl Millet Meal (RPMM).

Fermentation

One kilogram of pearl millet grain was fermented in water for 48 h at a ratio of 1 kg of grain to 5 litres of water, as described by Makinde et al.(2019). The grains were poured into a jute bag, immersed in water, and covered for 48 h. After fermentation, the jute bag was removed, and the fermented grains were air-dried at 25 °C for three days. The dried grains were then milled using a hammer mill with a 2mm sieve and labeled as Fermented Pearl Millet Meal (FPMM).

Boiling

One kilogram of pearl millet grain was boiled at 100 °C for 15 minutes at a ratio of 1 kg of grain to 5 litres of water, as described by Makinde et al.(2019; 2023). After boiling, the water was drained using 2 mm sieve and the grains were air-dried at 25 °C for three days. The dried grains were milled using a 2 mm hammer mill and labeled as Boiled Pearl Millet Meal (BPMM).

The samples were subjected to laboratory analysis to determine their nutrient compositions using the procedures of AOAC (2006), while the anti-nutrient contents were analysed using the indirect colorimetric method of Azim et al. (2007), as earlier reported by George et al. (2023). Gross energy was determined using a Gallenkamp Ballistic Bomb Calorimeter (Model 1266, Parr Instrument Co., Moline, IL.) with benzoic acid as the internal standard. Metabolizable energy was estimated using the method outlined by Panzenga (1985). Metabolizable Energy ME (Kcal/kg) = 37 x % CP + 81.8 x % EE + 35.5 x %NFE.

CP = Crude protein, EE = Ether extract, NFE = Nitrogen free extract

Data Analysis

Data were subjected to one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) using the General Linear Model (GLM) procedure of SAS software (version 9.3, SAS Institute Inc., Cary, NC, USA). Means were compared and considered significantly different at $P < 0.05$.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the proximate compositions of maize, raw, and processed millet grains are presented in Table 1. All the parameters determined were significantly ($P < 0.05$) different.

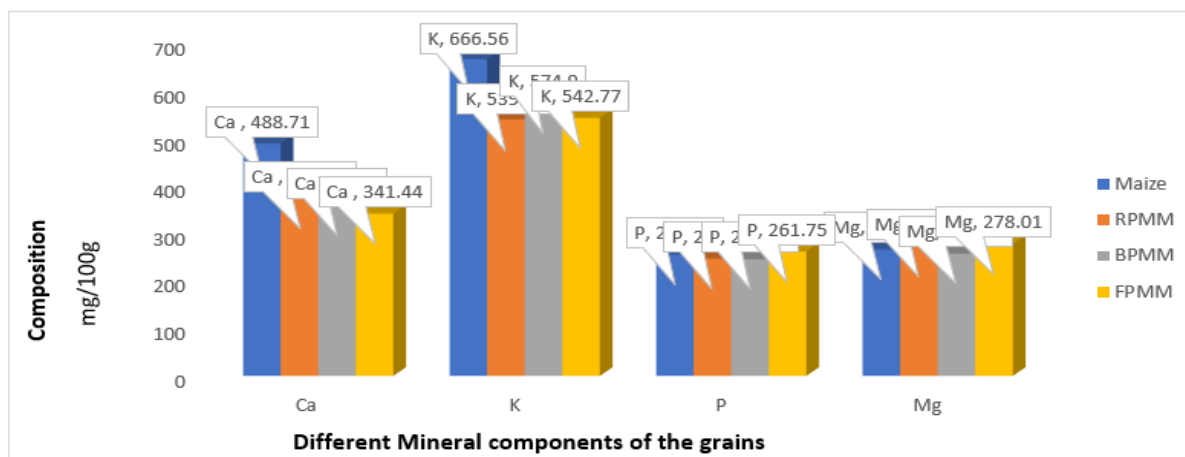


Figure 1: Mineral Compositions of maize, raw and processed millet grains.

RPMM= Raw pearl millet meal. **BPMM**= Boiled pearl millet meal. **FPMM**= Fermented pearl millet meal. *Maize was used a standard grain to compare the nutrient in raw and processed pearl millet grains.

Maize had significantly ($P < 0.05$) higher values of dry matter, ether extract, crude fiber, ash, NFE, ME and total carbohydrate compared to both the raw and processed pearl millet grains. However, the percent organic matter and crude protein were significantly higher ($P < 0.05$) in the processed millets. The percent ash was lower in the raw and processed pearl millet compared to maize. Crude fiber was higher in the raw pearl millet compared to other grains.

Maize is rich in carbohydrates and minerals, including potassium and magnesium. It contains trace amounts of lysine and tryptophan, contributing to its relatively low content of protein, as well as trace amounts of B vitamins (Singh et al. 2024). There, maize grain was used as a standard to compare the nutrients in raw and processed pearl millet grains in this study. All the values observed for maize grains in this study were similar to those of previous reports (Bulus et al., 2014; Ohini et al., 2019). The crude protein contents of both raw and processed pearl millet grains (9.68 – 10.58%) observed in this study were lower than the values of 12.02% (Bulus et al., 2014) and 12.99% (Laminu et al., 2014) for raw pearl millet grains. The increase observed in the crude protein content during the fermentation of pearl millet may be attributed to the activities of microorganisms during the fermentation processes (Kumari et al. 2022). All the samples had above 90% dry matter, which is a good indicator of their potential to have a longer shelf life (Valverde-Miranda et al. 2021). The higher dry matter content of grains inhibits the biochemical activities of invading microorganisms, preventing food spoilage during storage (Srivastava and Mishra, 2021; Alegbeleye et al., 2022). The reduction in ether extract (fat) content observed in the processed pearl millet grains may be due to the enhanced activity of lipolytic enzymes during processing. These enzymes hydrolyze fats into free fatty acids and glycerol, thereby lowering the fat content. This finding aligns with the results of Inyang and Zakari (2008), who reported similar trends in pearl millet following processing. Specifically, fermentation reduced the ether extract from 3.35% in raw millet to 2.99% in the fermented samples, likely due to the solubilization and leaching of fats during water-based treatments, as also noted by Nabayi et al. (2021). In contrast, the ether extract content in the boiled millet remained relatively unchanged.

Regarding crude fiber, the processed millet samples had lower fiber content compared to the raw samples. This is likely due

to the partial loss of seed coats during processing, which are a major source of fiber. The raw pearl millet had a crude fiber content of 4.74%, which is notably higher than the 2.83% reported by Laminu et al. (2014) for raw millet in a separate study.

An increase in nitrogen-free extract (NFE), total carbohydrate, and metabolizable energy contents was observed in the processed pearl millet compared to the raw form; however, none of the values were comparable to those of maize. This indicates that the processing methods effectively enhanced the energy content of the grains. Bulus et al. (2014) reported NFE and metabolizable energy values of 72.20% and 3280.94 kcal/kg, respectively, for raw pearl millet, while George et al. (2023) reported a carbohydrate range of 79.73–86.05% for different varieties of raw finger millet grains.

Figure 1 shows the results of the mineral composition in maize, raw and processed pearl millet grains. All the minerals analysed in this study, except Mg were higher ($P < 0.05$) in maize grains than in the raw and processed pearl millet grains. This suggests that maize is very rich in minerals compared to pearl millet. The reduction observed in the content of Ca among the processed pearl millet grains could be attributed to the loss in the ash content during boiling and fermentation. Previous studies (Okpalanma et al. 2021; Zubair et al. 2023) have reported that more than 50% of the ash in sorghum was leached into the steeping and washing water.

In this study, the most abundant minerals in the maize grain were potassium (666.56 mg/100 g) and calcium (488.71 mg/100 g), while the least concentrated mineral was manganese (255.11 mg/100 g). Both the raw and processed millet grains were also rich in the following valuable minerals:

K (539.38 – 574.90 mg/100 g), Ca (373.28 - 359.30 mg/100 g), P (245.69 - 261.75 mg/100 g), and Mg (257.33 – 278.01 mg/100 g). These minerals are suitable for bone formation in livestock. The value observed for phosphorus in the raw pearl millet grains (246.85 mg/100 g) is lower than the value of 399.23 mg/100 g reported by Laminu et al. (2014) for raw pearl millet. The value observed for potassium in the raw pearl millet grains (539.38 mg/100 g) falls within the range of 279.0 - 688.52 mg/100 g reported by George et al. (2023) for different varieties of raw finger millet.

The results of the anti-nutritional factors in maize, raw and processed pearl millet grains are shown in Figure 2. All the

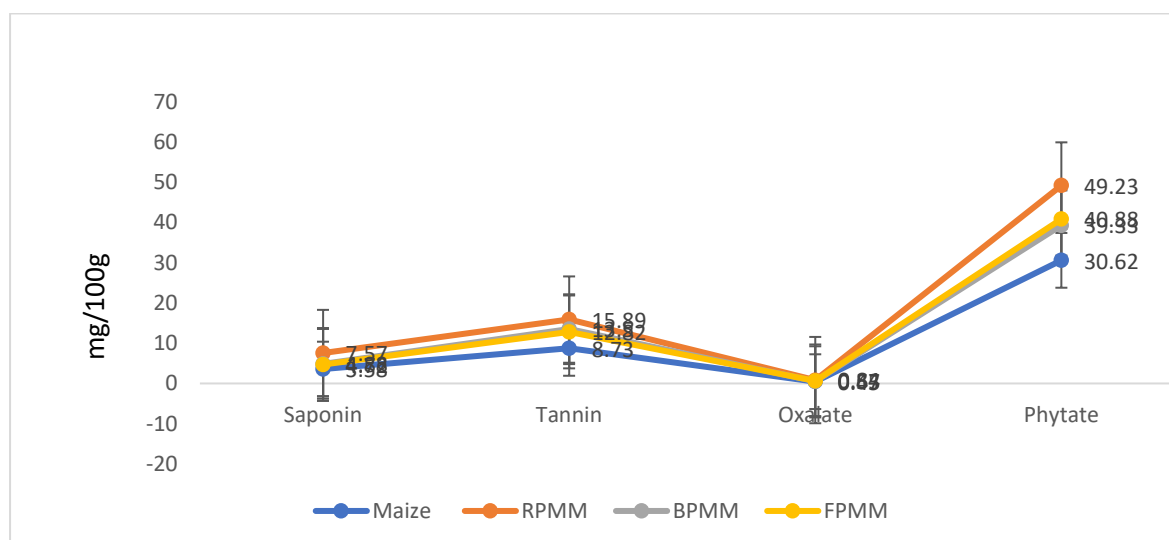


Figure 2: Anti-nutritional factors in maize, raw and processed finger millet grains.

RPMM= Raw pearl millet meal. BPMM= Boiled pearl millet meal. FPMM= Fermented pearl millet meal. Maize was used a standard grain to compare the nutrient in raw and processed pearl millet grains.

Table 2: Percentage reduction of Anti-nutritional factors in raw and processed pearl millet grains.

Items (mg/100g)	RPMM	BPMM	FPMM	SEM	P-val.
Saponin	7.57 ^a	4.88 ^b	4.72 ^b	0.08	0.0002
% reduction		35.56	37.65		
Tannin	15.89 ^a	13.50 ^b	12.82 ^b	0.03	<.0001
% reduction		15.04	19.32		
Oxalate	0.84	0.57	0.63	0.08	0.2597
% reduction		32.14	25.00		
Phytate	49.23 ^a	39.33 ^c	40.88 ^b	0.20	<.0001
% reduction		20.11	16.96		

RPMM= Raw pearl millet meal. BPMM= Boiled pearl millet meal. FPMM= Fermented pearl millet meal.

antinutritional factors determined were significantly higher ($P < 0.05$) in raw pearl millet grains compared to the fermented and boiled pearl millet, as well as maize. The tannin (15.89 mg/100g) and phytate (49.23 mg/100g) contents of raw pearl millet grains observed in this study were slightly higher than the values reported for finger millet grains-12.77 mg/100g and 48.15 mg/100g, respectively (George et al., 2023). This variation could be attributed to factors highlighted by Mohamed et al. (2011), who noted that different species may vary not only in their nutrient composition but also in the type and quantity of antinutritional factors. Therefore, results obtained from one species may not necessarily apply to another. Even the length of storage time can also affect certain characteristics. In India, Pandarinathan and Geethanjali (2023) reported tannin levels ranging from 0.15 to 1.30 mg/100g and phytate levels between 23 and 45 mg/100g for selected millet varieties. Similarly, Sharma et al. (2021) documented phytic acid contents ranging from 5.54 to 5.58 mg/g and tannin levels of 3.5 mg/g in finger millet. In comparison, the same study reported that pearl millet contains 9.2 mg/g of phytic acid and 2.2 mg/g of tannins.

Table 2 presents the percentage reduction in anti-nutritional factors observed across the processing methods. Fermentation led to a significantly higher reduction in saponin

(37.65%) and tannin (19.32%) contents compared to boiling, which achieved reductions of 35.56% and 15.04%, respectively. In contrast, boiling was more effective in reducing oxalate and phytate levels, achieving reductions of 32.14% and 20.11%, respectively, as opposed to 25.00% and 16.96% observed in the fermented samples. The apparent decrease in the content of phytates during boiling may be due to leaching into the boiling medium, thermal degradation, or the formation of insoluble complexes between phytates and other components such as phytate-proteins and phytate-protein-mineral complexes (Sarkhel and Roy, 2022). Reduction of phytate is expected to enhance the bioavailability of proteins and dietary minerals of the boiled grains. The reduction in the tannin content of fermented pearl millet may be due to microbial activity, which hydrolyzed the condensed tannins to lower molecular weight phenols (Srivastava et al., 2024). The reduction of tannins in the fermented pearl millet could also be attributed to soaking. Tannins are polyphenolic compounds that are water-soluble in nature (Basak et al., 2021). Therefore, a reduction in tannin content may be attributed to the leaching of phenols into the medium, which can be eliminated with the discarded water. Since polyphenolic compounds are present on the outer periphery of the grain, they can leach out into the

soaking medium during processing (Adhikari, 2024).

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrated that processing significantly ($P < 0.05$) altered the nutrient and antinutrient composition of pearl millet grains. Both boiling and fermentation improved crude protein content and reduced anti-nutritional factors such as saponins, tannins, phytates, and oxalates. Processed pearl millet grains exhibited higher protein levels compared to maize and unprocessed millet. They also offered improved nitrogen-free extract and total carbohydrate contents, although their metabolizable energy remained lower compared to that of maize. These findings suggest that properly processed pearl millet may serve as a promising alternative ingredient in animal diets due to its balanced nutritional profile. However, *in vivo* animal feeding trials are essential to validate these chemical composition findings and assess actual animal performance. Therefore, it is recommended that pearl millet be processed before being included in feed formulations. Further studies should evaluate its effects on animal growth, health, and productivity.

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