

1 Original Research Article

2 Evaluation of functional properties of spontaneous and starter culture fermented
3 sweet potato flour.

4 **ABSTRACT**

5 Sweet potato tubers obtained from a local market were sorted, washed processed
6 into fermented and unfermented sweet potato flour. The samples obtained were
7 analysed for their functional properties (swelling power, solubility index, water
8 absorption capacity, dispersibility and bulk density) using standard laboratory
9 procedures. A significant difference ($p < 0.05$) was observed in the loose and packed
10 bulk density with values ranging from 0.488 to 0.607 g/mL and 0.701 to 0.801
11 g/mL respectively but there was no significant difference ($p > 0.05$) in the water
12 absorption capacity, oil absorption capacity and dispersibility. There was no
13 significant difference ($p > 0.05$) in the swelling power but numerically the swelling
14 power increased with increase in temperature. A significant difference was
15 observed in the solubility index above 75°C and increase in solubility with increase
16 in temperature was observed. The result of this study showed that fermentation had
17 no significant effect on the functional properties of the sweet potato flour except its
18 effect on the porosity of the granules as shown in the result of the bulk density. The
19 functional properties of these flours showed their uniqueness in each parameter
20 measured and can be useful for food application processes.

21 **Keywords:** Sweet potato flour, starter culture, fermentation, functional properties.

22 **INTRODUCTION**

23 Functional properties are properties that are used to predict the application of a
24 food material as well as the end use for various food products and the behavior of
25 the functional properties depend on the source of raw material, presence of various
26 ingredients, and processing conditions (Akinwale *et al.*, 2017). They interact with

27 other food components directly or indirectly affecting processing applications,
28 food quality and ultimate acceptance.

29 Sweet potato [*Ipomoea batatas* (L.) Lam.] is one of the major staple crops and
30 the most important food security promoting root crops in the world,
31 especially in sub Saharan Africa (Low et al., 2009). Well adapted to the
32 tropical and subtropical regions, sweet potato has nutritional advantage for the
33 rural and urban dwellers (Ingabire and Hilda, 2011). Sweet potato (*Ipomoea*
34 *batatas* [L.] Lam.) is a dicotyledonous plant from the family *Convolvulaceae*
35 that grows in tropical and subtropical areas and even in some temperate
36 zones of the developing world (Ahn, 1993). In developing countries, sweet
37 potato ranks fifth economically after rice, wheat, maize, and cassava, sixth in
38 dry matter production, seventh in digestible energy production, and ninth in
39 protein production (Starters et al., 2005; Thottappilly and Loebenstein,
40 1986). World production is about 131 million tonnes per year, on
41 approximately 9 million ha with mean estimated yields of 13.7 tonnes ha⁻¹
42 (FAO, 2009). China is the world's leading producer of sweet potato, accounting
43 for about 80% of the total production worldwide. Nigeria is the most abundant
44 sweet potato producer in Africa and second to China in world production (FAO,
45 2014).

46 Sweet potato is an excellent source of energy (438 kJ/100 g edible portion)
47 and can produce more edible energy per hectare per day than cereals, such
48 as wheat and rice (Abu et al., 2000) and has other advantages, such as
49 versatility, high yield, hardiness, and wide ecological adaptability (Laurie et
50 al., 2012). Sweet potato roots are rich in starch, sugar, vitamin C, β -carotene,
51 iron, and several other minerals (Laurie et al., 2012; Oloo et al., 2014).
52 Despite its high carbohydrate content, sweet potato has a low glycemic index
53 due to low digestibility of the starch making it suitable for diabetic or

54 overweighed people (Ellong et al., 2014; Fetuga et al., 2014; ILSI, 2008;
55 Ooi and Loke, 2013). In addition, some varieties of sweet potatoes contain
56 colored pigments, such as β -carotene, anthocyanin, and phenolic compounds.
57 These pigments form the basis for classifying the foods as nutraceuticals (Oloo
58 et al., 2014). Nowadays, several research programmes are focusing on orange-
59 fleshed or vitamin A sweet potato with great potential to prevent and
60 combat vitamin A deficiency for the crops value chain upgrading within the
61 West African sub-region (Inaghe and Hilda, 2011). In addition, cassava is also
62 largely consumed after processing into garri, traditional flour, lafun, and
63 improved flour. However, the potential benefits of crop such as sweet potato are
64 marginalized and are underutilized despite their technological potential which
65 is well recognized and exploited elsewhere.

66 Fermentation is the conversion of carbohydrates to alcohol and carbon
67 dioxide or organic acids using yeasts, bacteria or a combination under
68 anaerobic conditions. The primary benefit of fermentation is the conversion
69 of sugars and other carbohydrates to usable end products. According to
70 Steinkraus (1995), the fermentation of foods improve flavour, aroma, and texture
71 in food substrates, preservation and shelf-life extension through lactic acid,
72 alcohol, acetic acid and alkaline fermentation, enhancement of food quality
73 with protein, essential amino acids, essential fatty acids and vitamins,
74 improving digestibility and nutrient availability, detoxification of anti-nutrient
75 through food fermentation processes. Starter cultures are living microorganisms
76 of defined combination used for fermentation purposes. They help to elicit
77 specific changes in the chemical composition, nutritional value and sensorial
78 properties of the substrate (Opere et al., 2012) and they are generally
79 recognised as safe (Augirre and Collins, 1993). Moreover, their properties are

80 as follows: They are harmless, initiate and control the fermentation process,
81 typical for product, help in rapid acid formation, and help protect against
82 spoilage organisms.

83 Starter cultures are cheaply reproducible in large amount, they also help
84 provide desirable sensory properties and also assists in reducing fermentation
85 period. Lactic acid bacteria (LAB) are Gram positive acid tolerant, generally
86 non-sporulating, either rod or cocci shaped bacteria that produce lactic acid
87 as the major metabolic end product of carbohydrate fermentation. Lactic acid
88 bacteria have been reported to be predominant microorganisms in most of
89 the African indigenous fermented foods (Nout, 1991; Halm et al., 1993;
90 Hounhouigan et al., 1993; Sanni, 1993; Steinkraus, 1996; Olasupo et al.,
91 1997; Nago et al., 1998, Kunene et al., 2000; Duhan et al., 2013).
92 Yeasts are eukaryotic, single-celled microorganisms classified as members of the
93 fungus kingdom. The first yeast originated hundreds of millions of years ago, and
94 1,500 species are currently identified (Kurtzman and Fell, 2006; Hoffman et al.,
95 2015). By fermentation, the yeast species *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* converts
96 carbohydrates to carbon dioxide and alcohols. For thousands of years the carbon
97 dioxide has been used in baking and the alcohol in alcoholic beverages (Legras *et*
98 *al.*, 2007). The objectives of this study was to determine the application and use of
99 fermented sweet potato flour for various food products.

100 **MATERIALS & METHODS**

101 **Sample Collection**

102 Fresh raw sweet potato samples used for this work were purchased from Arena
103 market, Bolade, Oshodi, Lagos state Nigeria. The samples were brought to

104 Biotechnology Department of Federal Institute of Industrial Research, Oshodi,
105 (FIIRO) Lagos State.

106 **Preparation of Samples**

107 The sweet potato tubers were thoroughly sorted to remove bad ones from the lot.
108 The sorted tubers were washed to remove adhering soil particles, weighed
109 accordingly into four different portions. The tubers after weighing were thereafter
110 peeled and sliced into small pieces, transferred into sterile fermentation bowls,
111 appropriate volume of clean water was added to the sweet potato samples.

112 **Preparation of Inoculum**

113 Starter cultures (*Lactobacillus brevis* and *Debaromyces polymorphous*) used for
114 this study were isolated from fermenting sweet potato broth, after isolation the
115 organisms were subcultured by streaking on MRS agar (Oxoid) for Lactic acid
116 bacteria and incubated anaerobically at 37° C for 24 hours. Pure culture of yeast
117 isolates was cultivated by streaking on potato dextrose agar PDA (Oxoid) and
118 incubated at 25°C for 3 days. A colony was picked from each pure culture plates of
119 MRS and PDA plates and inoculated aseptically into MRS broth and YEPD (
120 Yeast Extract Potato Dextrose) respectively then incubated. After incubation, the
121 organisms were harvested from the broth media by centrifuging at 5000 rpm for 15
122 minutes. The supernatants were decanted and the cell biomass dislodged using
123 sterile distilled water

124 **Preparation of starter culture fermented sweet potato flour**

125 The sweet potatoes were washed to remove adhering soil particles and peeled. The
126 peeled tubers were chipped into slices (4 to 5 mm) and soaked in potable water and
127 inoculated with the starter cultures (Appropriate volume of sterile distilled water
128 was used to wash the organisms into the various fermentation bowls containing the

129 sweet potato samples). (Ajayi et al., 2016) for a period of 48 h and 72 h. After this
130 period has elapsed, the fermented chips were drained and dried in a cabinet drier
131 (Mitchel, Model SM220H) at 55°C for 9 h and milled into flour ($\leq 250 \mu\text{m}$) (Ajayi
132 et al., 2016).

133 **Preparation of spontaneous fermented sweet potato flour**

134 The sweet potatoes were washed to remove adhering soil particle, the sweet potato
135 was peeled and the peeled tubers were chipped into slices (4 to 5 mm) and soaked
136 in potable water for a period of two days (48 h). After this period has elapsed, the
137 fermented chips were drained and dried in a cabinet drier (Mitchel, Model
138 SM220H) at 55°C for 9 h and milled into flour ($\leq 250 \mu\text{m}$) (Oluwole et al., 2012).

139 **Preparation of unfermented sweet potato flour**

140 The sweet potatoes were washed to remove adhering soil particles. Sweet potato
141 was peeled the peeled tubers were chipped into slices (4 to 5 mm). After this period
142 has elapsed, the fermented chips were drained and dried in a cabinet drier (Mitchel,
143 Model SM220H) at 55°C for 9 h and milled into flour ($\leq 250 \mu\text{m}$) (Oluwole et al.,
144 2012).

145 **Functional properties determination**

146 **Bulk density determination**

147 Bulk density was determined using standard methods (Ashraf *et al.*, 2012). Sample
148 of 10g was measured into a 50 ml graduated measuring cylinder and gently tapped
149 on the bench 10 times to attain a constant height. The volume of sample was
150 recorded and expressed as grams per millilitre. Hausner ratio was determined as a
151 ratio of the packed bulk density to the loose bulk density of the flour (Dossou *et*
152 *al.*, 2014).

153 **Water absorption capacity determination**

178 centrifuge tube appropriately labeled. Then, 10 ml of distilled water was added to
 179 the weighed sample in the centrifuge tube and the solution was stirred and placed
 180 in a water bath heated at different temperature range (55, 65, 75, 85, 95 °C) for 1 h
 181 while shaking the sample gently to ensure that the starch granules remained in
 182 suspension until gelatinization occurred. The samples were cooled to room
 183 temperature under running water and centrifuged for 15 min at 3000 rpm. After
 184 centrifuging, the supernatant was decanted from the sediment into a pre-weighed
 185 petri-dish; the supernatant in the petri-dish was weighed and dried at 105 °C for 1
 186 h. The sediment in the tube was weighed and the reading recorded. The starch
 187 swelling power and solubility was determined according to the equations below;

188 Swelling power = $\frac{\text{weight of swollen sediment}}{\text{Weight of dry starch}} \times 100$

189
$$\text{Solubility} = \frac{\text{weight of dry supernatant}}{\text{weight of starch sample}} \times 100$$

192 **Statistical Analysis**

193 All experimental data obtained were subjected to analysis of variance (ANOVA)
 194 procedure of SPSS version 15.0 (SPSS Inc., 2006) at 5% significant level.

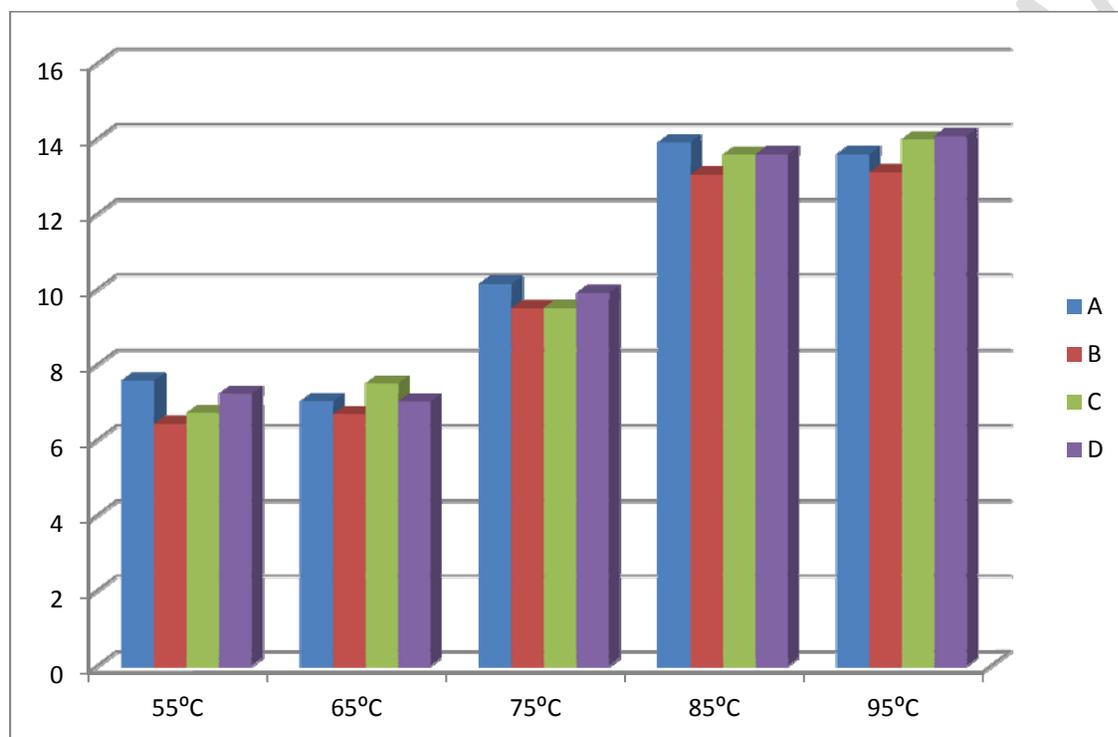
195 **RESULTS**

196 Table 1: Functional properties of various sweet potato flour.

Sample	LBD (g/ml)	PBD (g/ml)	Hausner ratio	WAC (g/g)	(OAC) (g/ml)	Dispersibility (%)
A	0.500 ^b	0.660 ^b	1.32	1.515 ^a	9.100 ^a	0.355 ^a
B	0.607 ^a	0.801 ^a	1.32	1.480 ^a	9.050 ^a	0.385 ^a

C	0.488 ^b	0.702 ^b	1.44	1.540 ^a	9.100 ^a	0.410 ^a
D	0.519 ^b	0.701 ^b	1.35	1.610 ^a	8.550 ^a	0.355 ^a

197 Values are mean. Mean values (n = 2) having different superscript alphabets in the same column are significantly
 198 different (p < 0.05) A: Spontaneously fermented sweet potato flour; B: Unfermented sweet potato flour; C: 48 hours
 199 starter culture fermented sweet potato flour; D: 72 hours starter culture fermented sweet potato flour; LBD: Loose
 200 bulk density; PBD: Packed bulk density; WAC: water absorption capacity; OAC: Oil absorption capacity
 201



202
 203 Figure 1: Swelling power of different sweet potato flour samples at different temperatures. Sample A: Spontaneously
 204 fermented sweet potato flour, Sample B: Unfermented sweet potato flour; Sample C: 48 hours starter culture
 205 fermented sweet potato flour; Sample D: 72 hours starter culture fermented sweet potato flour.

206 Table 2 : Solubility index of various sweet potato flour.

s/n	Solubility Index (%) 55 °C	Solubility Index (%) 65 °C	Solubility Index (%) 75 °C	Solubility Index (%) 85 °C	Solubility Index (%) 95 °C
A.	349.50 ^a	335.00 ^b	2.50 ^b	6.50 ^b	5.00 ^a
B.	441.00 ^a	212.00 ^b	3.00 ^{ab}	4.50 ^{ab}	6.50 ^a
C.	333.50 ^a	259.50 ^a	4.00 ^{ab}	4.50 ^{ab}	7.00 ^a
D.	347.00 ^a	338.00 ^a	6.50 ^a	2.00 ^a	4.50 ^a

207 Sample A: Spontaneously fermented sweet potato flour, Sample B: Unfermented sweet potato flour; Sample C: 48
 208 hours starter culture fermented sweet potato flour; Sample D: 72 hours starter culture fermented sweet potato flour.

209 Values Are Average Of Two Determinations. Values in the same column not followed by the Same Superscript are
210 significantly different ($P < 0.05$).

211 **DISCUSSION**

212 The functional property of sweet potato flour at different fermentation time is
213 depicted in Table 1. A significant difference ($p < 0.05$) was observed in the loose
214 bulk density (LBD), packed bulk density (PBD) but there was no significant
215 difference ($p > 0.05$) in the water absorption capacity (WAC), dispersibility and oil
216 absorption capacity (OAC).

217 Loose bulk density of the flour samples ranged between 0.488 and 0.607 g/ml with
218 sample C having the lowest value while sample B had the highest value. Loose
219 bulk density reveals the ability of a flour sample to occupy larger storage space per
220 weight (Dossou *et al.*, 2014). This implies that sample C will occupy larger storage
221 space while sample B will occupy less storage space.

222 Packed bulk density of the samples ranged between 0.701 and 0.801 g/ml, sample
223 D had the least value while B had the highest value. Packed bulk density is a
224 functional property that predicts the ease of transportation and packaging of
225 powdery products (Akinwale *et al.*, 2017). Increase in fermentation time caused a
226 decrease in the packed bulk density although there was no significant difference in
227 the 48 and 72 hours fermentation period, this is in agreement with the findings of
228 Oloyede *et al.* (2016) who also reported a decrease in bulk density of the sample as
229 fermentation increased. This could be due to the effect of fermenting organisms on
230 the porosity of the flours and this probably implies that fermented flours up to 48
231 hours will occupy less space during packaging and more flour can be transported.

232 Hausner ratio of the flour samples ranged between 1.32 and 1.44. Hausner ratio is
233 the ratio of packed bulk density to loose bulk density and this predicts the flow
234 properties of food flour or powders and it has been reported that hausner ratio less

235 than 1.4 will facilitate conveying, blending and packaging of the flour/powder
236 which encourages its use in industrial food manufacture (Barbosa-Canovas *et al.*,
237 2005; Ogunsina *et al.*, 2010). Thus, due to the low hausner ratio of sample B and
238 D, this suggests that these samples may be the best applicable flour with the best
239 conveying and blending ability suitable for industrial use. There was no significant
240 difference ($p>0.05$) in the water absorption capacity of the fermented flours. Water
241 absorption capacity is a measure of the amount of water held by the protein matrix
242 at room temperature. The values ranged from 1.48 to 1.61 g/ml, B had the least
243 while D had the highest value. This finding deviates from the findings of Oloyede
244 *et al.* (2016) who reported significant increase in water absorption capacity of
245 defatted *Moringa oleifera* seed flour as fermentation increased. This probably
246 implies that there was almost equal modification of the macromolecules during
247 fermentation exposing the hydrophilic bond of the sweet potato flours causing each
248 sample to have almost the same water affinity rate. There was no significant
249 difference ($p>0.05$) in the oil absorption capacity of the fermented sweet potato
250 flour. The oil absorption capacity ranged from 8.55 to 9.10 g/ml. All the samples
251 absorbed oil almost equally. This corroborates with the work of Fagbemi, (1999)
252 which reported that good absorption of oil suggest its usefulness in preparation of
253 food products such as baked foods.

254 Significant difference was not observed ($p>0.05$) in the dispersibility of the
255 samples. Dispersibility is a property that indicates the rate of reconstitution of flour
256 sample in water. (Oluwole *et al.*, 2016). This probably indicates that the samples
257 will disperse similarly in water.

258 The swelling power is depicted in Table 2. There was no significant difference
259 ($p>0.05$) between the samples but numerically, slight increase in swelling power
260 was observed with increased period of fermentation. This is in support with the

261 findings of Oloyede *et al.*, (2016) who reported increase in swelling power of
262 moringa seed flour with increase in fermentation time. Yuliana *et al.*, (2018) also
263 reported increase in swelling power of sweet potato flour with increase in
264 fermentation time. The increase in swelling power as the length of fermentation
265 increased could be due to the modification of the sample's starch granules which
266 disengaged the bonds allowing more water uptake and swelling effect to occur but
267 this effect was not significant enough to indicate this modification.

268 The solubility index of fermented sweet potato flour is as shown in Table 3. There
269 was no significant difference in the fermented sweet potato flour at 55 and 65 °C
270 but significant difference was observed above 65 °C. All the samples at
271 temperature range of 55 and 65°C had very high solubility values; this could be
272 due to the gelatinization temperature of sweet potato that has not been attained.
273 The gelatinization temperature of sweet potato has been reported to be between
274 64.6 to 84.6°C (Hoover, 2001).

275 The solubility above 65 °C increased with increase in fermentation time and it also
276 increased as the temperature increased. The increase in the solubility observed
277 above 65 °C may be due to the impact of fermentation period on the granular
278 structure of the sweet potato as reported by Sobowale *et al.*, (2007) that when
279 starch is heated in excess water above its gelatinization temperature, disruption of
280 granular structure occurs causing molecules to disperse in solution.

281 Relating the swelling power and solubility values above 65 °C, the swelling power
282 were high while the solubility index were low and it has been reported that high
283 swelling power and low solubility are required for formation of highly viscous and
284 elastic gels or dough (Baah *et al.*, 2005). This probably suggest that the fermented

285 sweet potato flours will be beneficiary for viscous and elastic food products such
286 as dough in bread baking.

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