

Chief Editor

Dr. A. Singaraj, M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.

Editor

Mrs.M.Josephin Immaculate Ruba

EDITORIAL ADVISORS

1. Prof. Dr.Said I.Shalaby, MD,Ph.D.
Professor & Vice President
Tropical Medicine,
Hepatology & Gastroenterology, NRC,
Academy of Scientific Research and Technology,
Cairo, Egypt.
2. Dr. Mussie T. Tessema,
Associate Professor,
Department of Business Administration,
Winona State University, MN,
United States of America,
3. Dr. Mengsteab Tesfayohannes,
Associate Professor,
Department of Management,
Sigmund Weis School of Business,
Susquehanna University,
Selinsgrove, PENN,
United States of America,
4. Dr. Ahmed Sebihi
Associate Professor
Islamic Culture and Social Sciences (ICSS),
Department of General Education (DGE),
Gulf Medical University (GMU),
UAE.
5. Dr. Anne Maduka,
Assistant Professor,
Department of Economics,
Anambra State University,
Igbariam Campus,
Nigeria.
6. Dr. D.K. Awasthi, M.Sc., Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Department of Chemistry,
Sri J.N.P.G. College,
Charbagh, Lucknow,
Uttar Pradesh. India
7. Dr. Tirtharaj Bhoi, M.A, Ph.D,
Assistant Professor,
School of Social Science,
University of Jammu,
Jammu, Jammu & Kashmir, India.
8. Dr. Pradeep Kumar Choudhury,
Assistant Professor,
Institute for Studies in Industrial Development,
An ICSSR Research Institute,
New Delhi- 110070, India.
9. Dr. Gyanendra Awasthi, M.Sc., Ph.D., NET
Associate Professor & HOD
Department of Biochemistry,
Dolphin (PG) Institute of Biomedical & Natural
Sciences,
Dehradun, Uttarakhand, India.
10. Dr. C. Satapathy,
Director,
Amity Humanity Foundation,
Amity Business School, Bhubaneswar,
Orissa, India.



ISSN (Online): 2455-7838

SJIF Impact Factor (2016): 4.144

EPRA International Journal of

Research & Development (IJRD)

Monthly Peer Reviewed & Indexed
International Online Journal

Volume:2, Issue:3, March 2017



Published By :
EPRA Journals

CC License





OKANA: A YAKURR DELICACY, ITS NUTRITIONAL VALUE AND SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Iyam, Mary A¹

¹Home Economics Unit, Department of Vocational Education, University of Calabar, Calabar, Nigeria.

Okoi Nta Obono²

²Department of Family Medicine, University of Calabar Teaching Hospital, Calabar, Nigeria.

Arikpo, Ikpi Abam³

³Department of Geography, School of Environmental Science, Modibbo Adama University of Technology, Yola, Nigeria.

ABSTRACT

The study examined Okana: A Yakurr delicacy, its nutritional value and social implications. Descriptive research design was adopted for the study. The study covers seven communities. A total of 303 respondents were sampled for the study. The instruments used for data collection was a well-structured questionnaire. The findings revealed that Okana is a highly accepted meal in Yakurr nation. It was also revealed that 56.1% eat Okana on daily basis; 55.4% eat Okana in public. It was also revealed that consumption Okana amidst friends makes one feel at home. The result also revealed that Okana is a nutritional and therapeutic vegetable that act as an antioxidant to human system. It was further revealed that it enables interaction between the youths and the elders in the society; create a melting point for traditional folklores; current developmental information and news amidst informal learning among citizens. It ease youth's restiveness as most youths and young men patronizes Okana joints regularly putting them away from social vices. It spark-up conviviality particularly when it is consumed among friends who haven't seen each other for a while. Based on the findings of this study, it is pertinent that traditional food systems contribute to the communal relationship and improvement of nutrition security. Therefore, there need for traditional food to be encouraged and more researches as regards traditional food be conducted.

KEYWORDS: Okana, Yakurr delicacy, nutritional value, social implication.

INTRODUCTION

Traditional food delicacies are essential for historical, cultural and nutritional purposes. Because it provides a balance between the indigenous foods practice as regards to diverse cultural or local foods relating to the community in the social contexts. It gives the locals a sense of belonging and maintaining their identity in terms of cultural heritage as regards to lifestyle and nature.

Delicacy is a Delicious and Highly Accepted Traditional Meal (DHATM) of a given society. This DHATM is sometimes served either cooked or uncooked with/without sauce. It often influence and affect the eating lifestyle and development of the people of such societies. It is common for individuals of a particular community to indulge in this daily desire of this valued traditional meal to gain a specified nutritional satisfaction and conviviality that

is often given by the DHATM. It is also common to witness surprises on the faces of individuals who do not reside/are not from the community where this delicacy is consumed. This could be due to their strange surprise knowledge of seeing other people eating the delicacy for the very first time or better more, due to the fact that the delicacy is not identified as an edible food item in the individual's community. Specific delicacies are a way of life to identify a culture of a particular community. Gifford (2007), opined that, a community's behaviour, conceptions and their ideas forms a mental image of such people taking their environmental location into consideration.

Okana-Gnetum Africanum (GA) is a climbing green vegetable leaf often found in the West and Central rainforest of Africa, it belongs to the kingdom *Plantae* and of family *Gnetaceae*. Eyo and Abel (2002) asserted that, it is one of the most popular green leafy vegetables in Nigeria and is gaining equal popularity as a delicious food-leaf in other African countries such as Cameroon, Gabon, Congo, Angola, etc. In the Northern Cross River State, *GA* is known as Eruru, while the majority of Central part calls it Okana and the Southern Cross River up to Akwa Ibom State calls it Afang. The leaf is used in the Southern part of Cross River State and Akwa Ibom State for the preparation of a special delicacy called Afang soup (Joe, 2013). Recently, other communities have come to adopt the preparation of Afang soup as a precious meal due to its acceptability as one of the African dishes in the society. Little wonder this consumption is without geographical bounds since Africans travel far into Europe and other continents and so they go with this delicacy in modified form to gain further attraction to other race not necessarily Africans into it consumption.

Okana leaves apart from being used in preparing delicacy known as Afang soup can be eaten raw with palm oil as it is in the case with the Ekoi tribe in Cross River State (Joe, 2013). *Okana* is a popular raw edible delicacy within the people of Yakurr Nation. It is often eaten raw with traditionally prepared sauce; palm oil, fresh pepper, onions, roasted bush mango (*Vinger gbonesis*) and salt for taste. To compliment this delicacy, a combination of dry stock fish, hind and skin (canda or animal skin) locally known as pomo – in Yoruba dialect, dry meat, dry fish, kola-nut, bitter-kola, garden-egg, palm wine and illicit gin known in local parlance as *ogogoro* are usually used. The fascinating thing about this delicacy is how it is wrapped in order to scoop the oil while consuming it. A combination of *Okana* and all the above mentioned spices is termed *Yedem'blong*.

Yedem'blong is a compound word and the first dichotomy of the word - *Yedem* in Yakurr dialect implies **that which is of men** and 'blong refer **to things**. This is not to say that, its consumption is an exclusive reserve of the male folks as both the female and male can jointly eat the delicacy or in the reverse. Today, *Yedem'blong* is found in every part of the country where the Yakurr people converge for meeting sake and its presence spark-up Yakurr identity and invoke to an appreciable degree the Yakurr culture. *Yedem'blong* is usually sold and also served in Yakurr ceremonies like; traditional marriages, white wedding receptions, graduation parties, child dedications, birthday parties, funerals, etc.

Nutritionally, much research had been carried out in this area to ascertain the nutritional benefits of *Okana*. Okerulu and Onyema (2015), in their study, found out that the leaves of *GA* contain some beneficial nutrients, mineral elements and secondary metabolites justifying the medicinal status and possible potency of the plant part. Fadi, Mafu, & Carole (2011), posited that, the *GA* is much in demand for their nutritional and therapeutic properties. Okerulu *et al*, (2015), revealed in their study that, the leaves contain food classes like proteins, carbohydrates, crude fibre with Fe, Ca, Mg and Na in that order with Cr and Pb totally absent. The absent of Cr and Pb which are toxic metals shows that the leaves do not pose any health risks to man. Chemical composition of the leaves of this plant gives it significant nutritional properties, and its high fiber, protein, and calorie content (Fadi *et al*, 2011). They also postulate that in the latter application, various fractions of *GA* are used medicinally to treat many different illnesses. *GA* is used in the treatment of an enlarged spleen, sore throats and as a cathartic (Burkill, 2000). In Congo-Brazzaville, the leaves are used as a dressing for warts and boils and a tisane of the cut-up stem is taken to reduce the pain of childbirth (Bouguet, 1969). In Ubangi (DR Congo), it is used to treat nausea and is considered to be an antidote to some forms of poison (Burkill, 2000). Both the seeds and the leaves are efficient for treating enlarged spleen, measles, controlling excessive urination. They also function as fungicide for dressing of wounds (Okpala, 2015). The leaves prevent constipation thereby forming soft and bulky stool due to high level of insoluble fiber contained in it. As far as *GA* vegetables are concerned, some of them are rich in medicinal sources while others contain traces of the nutrients. They provide the body with a source of fuel and energy for daily activities (Yisa, Egila and Darlington, 2010).

Social Implications of Okana Consumption

1. Fosters community relationship by enabling interaction between the youths and the elders in the society
2. Creating a melting point for traditional folklores, current developmental information and news amidst informal learning among citizens.
3. It helps to ease youth's restiveness as most youths and young men patronizes *Okana* joints regularly putting them away from social vices.
4. It spark-up conviviality particularly when it is consumed among friends who haven't seen each other for a while.
5. To some it is more durable in their stomach to consuming normal food.

STUDY AREA

Yakurr Local Government Area (L.G.A.) is one of the 18 L.G.As. in Cross River State, Nigeria. The L.G.A. lies between latitude 6°0'12" N. and longitude 8°30'-35 E, and covers a landmass of 670 km², which lies in the Central Senatorial District of Cross River State. However, Abi L.G.A. bound Yakurr to the West; Biase L.G.A. to the South; Akamkpa L.G.A. to the East; Obubra L.G.A. to the North, (Figure 1). The Yakurr L.G.A. comprises of 13 council wards which are inhabited by the following communities; Agoi-Ibami, Assiga, Gekpeti, Mkpani, Ekom-Agoi, Inyima, Ekor, Nko, Ugep and Idomi. The dominant language is Lokaa

with Leyiga and other minority languages spoken within the L.G.A. The people are predominantly farmers and celebrate many festivals. The most pronounced festival in Yakurr is the "Leboku New Yam Festival" (LNYF) which is celebrated annually across the entire L.G.A. in thanksgiving to Obase'woden (God Almighty) for the gift of the most valued food crop - yam. Yakurr L.G.A. has a projected population of about 196, 271 citizens.

POPULATION OF THE STUDY

The population of this study consists of both male, female youths and elders. The study is limited to seven selected communities in Yakurr L.G.A. of Cross River State, Nigeria. Descriptive statistical tool and percentages are adopted and used in selecting the sample of this study to assess the state of Okana as a nutritional delicacy and its social implication in Yakurr L.G.A. A total of 308 respondents were drawn as sample for the study. 44 respondents were selected from each community of Agoi Mbami, Asiga, Idomi, Nko, Nkpani, Nyima, and Ugep.

Sources of Data

The data were collected through a well-structured questionnaire, household survey. These communities were selected using the tie and draw method. The names of all the communities were written on a piece of paper, rolled into balls in a basket, and the communities were blindly drawn without replacement. Seven people were asked by the researcher to pick the rolled papers from the basket to make random selection the communities. Data generated from the field were analyzed using simple percentage.



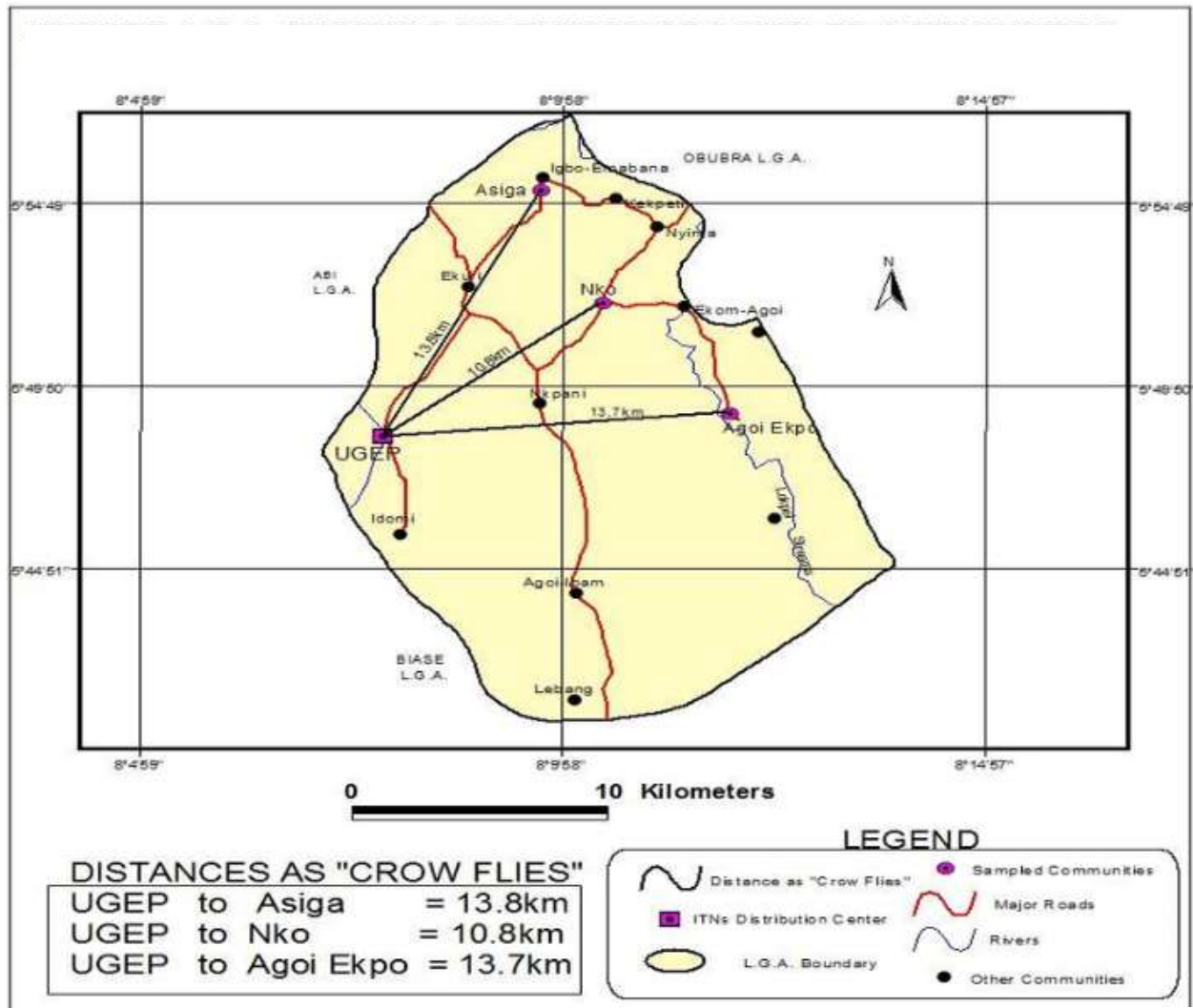


FIGURE 2: MAP OF YAKURR LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA STATE

INSTRUMENT AND INSTRUMENT ADMINISTRATION

The instruments used for the collection of data is a structured interview questionnaire, divided into two sections, section A is the respondent's socio-demographic characteristics, while section B is the main questionnaire items with binary response options (agree and disagree) for eliciting responses from the respondents to measure participation in the *Okana* consumption and benefits derived and contribution of benefits to rural development. Household survey, and transect walk were also used for the study. The use of transect walk and occasional household survey was to gauge the veracity or authenticity of the information provided during the

questionnaire response. Using the samples that were selected for the study from the study population, the researcher and five trained field assistants personally administered all the instruments to the 303 respondents selected and collected same.

The questionnaire was used to collect data on *Okana* consumption, value and social implication. To assess the extent to which the instrument designed for the study can measure exactly what it is designed to measure (collecting data required for the study), Test-retest reliability was used to assess the extent of reliability of the research instruments designed for this study. A non-sampled population of 30 respondents were administered the instrument. These respondents used for the trial of the instrument were

not part of the study sample; this sample was done in Calabar Municipality Local Government Area of Cross River State. This local government area and the research population used for the test –retest reliability test were not part of the sampled population for the actual study. The result of the analysis of the reliability test shows a 91% reliability coefficient index, this shows that the instruments were valid and reliable for the measurement of the data needed for the study. The implication of this reliability index figure implies that the instrument as designed can measure about 91% accurate data for the study if administered a hundred times.

To check the validity of the instrument, both content and construct validity was ascertained using face validity test, the instrument' validity coefficient was calculated; the calculated validity coefficient is 87.8%, which shows a very high validity of the

instrument for data collection for the study. Based on the level of validity and reliability of the instrument, the instrument was judged to be reliable and valid for data collection for the study, thus data generated from the instrument were therefore valid for descriptive statistics.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

In sex distribution: it is observed that 181 (59.7%) of the respondents are male, while 122 (40.3%) are female. This implies that a large percentage of the respondents are male. Age distribution shows that 62 (20.4%) of the respondents fall under 18-30 age category, 79 (26.1%) of the respondents fall under 31-45years, 85 (28.1%) of the respondents fall under 46-60, while 61 and above scored 77 (25.4%). Thus, this implies that there are relatively active young men and women who use Okana as a delicacy.

Table 1 Socio-Economic Characteristics

S/N	Variables	N	Percentage (%)
1	Sex Distribution		
	Male	181	59.7
	Female	122	40.3
2	Age Distribution:		
	18-30	62	20.4
	31-45	79	26.1
	46-60	85	28.1
	61 and above	77	25.4
3	Educational Qualification:		
	No Formal Education	69	22.8
	Primary	76	25.1
	Secondary	80	26.4
	Tertiary	78	25.7
4	Occupation		
	Student	57	18.8
	Unemployed	60	19.8
	Civil/Public Servant	75	24.8
	Farmer	52	17.2
	Business/Trader	59	19.4
5	Marital Status		
	Single	83	27.1
	Married	142	46.9
	Divorce	25	8.2
	Widow/widower	53	17.5

Source: Field survey (2017)

Educational qualification: in the area shows that about 69 (22.8%) of the respondents had no formal education, about 76 (25.1%) have primary school, 80 (26.4%) attained secondary/vocational school, and about 78 (25.7%) attained tertiary education. However, this indicates that majority of the respondents in the area have secondary school education. This implies also that majority of the youths in the area are involved in vocational/skills acquisition training and farming activities.

Occupation: Findings of this study shows that about 57 (18.8%) of the respondents are students, 60 (19.8%) are civil/public servants, while 75 (24.8%) are unemployed, 52 (17.2%) respondents are

farmers, 59 (19.4%) of the respondents are business/traders. This shows that large numbers of the respondents in the study area are unemployed. Also going by the percentage of the civil/public servants, 19.8% and 24.8% of the unemployed ones can also assume that they are involved in one form of social activity.

83 (27.1%) of the respondents are single, 142 (46.9%) are married, 25 (8.2%) are divorced, and 53 (17.5%) of the respondents are widows/widowers. This result indicates that majority of the respondents are married which is one of the evidence of population explosion that causes forest depletion.

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics Extent of Okana Consumption

S/N	Items	Number of Respondents	Yes	%	No	%	Total
1	Do you eat <i>Okana</i> on daily basis?	303	170	56.1	133	43.9	100
2	Does spending time eating <i>Okana</i> in public make you forget your sorrows?	303	168	55.4	135	44.6	100
3	Does eating it the midst of friends makes one feel at home?	303	234	77.2	69	22.8	100
4	Does eating <i>Okana</i> make you remember you traditional values?	303	207	68.3	96	31.7	100
5	Do you feel bored eating <i>Okana</i> ones a week?	303	200	66	103	34	100

Source: Field survey (2017)

Table 2 shows that about 56.1% (170) of the respondents agreed that they eat *Okana* on daily basis, while 43.9% (133) decline from the statement. This shows that majority of the respondents eat *Okana* on daily basis. 55.4% (168) of the respondents agreed that eating *Okana* in public they forget their sorrows, while 44.6% (135) disagreed with the statement. 77.2% (234) of the respondents agreed and 22.8% (69) of the respondents disagreed with the statement that states; “does eating *Okana* in the midst of friends makes one feel at home?” 68.3% (207) said yes and 31.7% (96) said no to the statement that, “does eating *Okana* make you remember your

traditional values?” About 66% (200) of the respondents accepted that “they feel bored eating *Okana* ones a week”, while 34% (103) of the respondents disagreed. This result confirms the findings of Gifford (2007), who reported that, a community’s behaviour, conceptions and their ideas forms a mental image of such people taking their environmental location into consideration. This result is in consonance with Joe (2013), who opined that, *Afang* leaves apart from being used in preparing delicacies known as *Afang* soup can be eaten raw with palm oil as it is in the case with the Ekoi tribe of Cross River State.

Table 3
Descriptive Statistics Value of *Okana* Consumption

S/N	Items	Number of Respondents	Yes	%	No	%	Total %
1.	Do you value <i>Okana</i> to other delicacies because it's medicinal?	303	180	59.4	123	40.6	100
2.	You prefer eating <i>Okana</i> to drinking because it contains insoluble fiber	303	199	65.7	104	34.3	100
3.	Do you value eating <i>Okana</i> because it act as a purgative therapy?	303	205	67.7	98	32.3	100
4.	Do you hate eating <i>Okana</i> because it cleanses your bowel?	303	154	50.8	149	49.2	100
5.	Do you eat <i>Okana</i> because of its nutritional properties?	303	197	65.1	106	34.9	100

Source: Field survey (2017)

Table 3 shows that about 59.4% (180) of the respondents agreed that they value *Okana* to other delicacies because it's medicinal, while 40.6% (123) of the respondents disagreed. 65.7% (199) of the respondents agreed that they prefer eating *Okana* to drinking because it contains insoluble fiber, while 34.3% (104) of the respondents disagreed with the statement. 67.7% (205) of the respondents agreed that they value eating *Okana* because its act as a purgative therapy, while 32.3% (98) of the respondents disagreed with the statement. And about 50.8% (154) of the respondents agreed that they hate eating *Okana* because it cleanses their bowel, while 49.2% (149) of the respondents disagreed. About 65.1% (197) of the

respondents agreed that they eat *Okana* because of its nutritional properties, while 34.9% (106) of the respondents disagreed. This result is in consonance with Okerulu & Onyema (2015), who reported in their study that, the leaves of *GA* (*Okana*) contain some beneficial nutrients, mineral elements and secondary metabolites justifying the medicinal status and possible potency of the plant part. Fadi, Mafu, & Carole (2011), states that, the *GA* is much in demand for their nutritional and therapeutic properties. And Okerulu *et al*, (2015), postulate in his study that, the leaves contain food classes like proteins, carbohydrates, crude fibre with Fe, Ca, Mg and Na in that order with Cr and Pb totally absent.

Table 4
Descriptive Statistic of Social Implication of *Okana*

S/N	Items	Number of Respondents	Yes	%	No	%	Total %
1.	Do you eat <i>Okana</i> only in social gatherings?	303	153	50.5	150	49.5	100
2.	Do you think <i>Okana</i> is a social delicacy of Yakurr Nation?	303	190	62.7	113	37.3	100
3.	Do you enjoy eating <i>Okana</i> in public?	303	194	64.1	109	35.9	100
4.	Do you think eating <i>Okana</i> in social gathering strengthen friendship?	303	180	59.4	123	40.6	100
5.	Do your people eat <i>Okana</i> in all Yakurr social gatherings?	303	201	66.3	102	33.7	100

Source: Field survey (2017)

Table 4 show that about 50.5% (153) agreed and 49.5% (150) disagreed that eat *Okana* only in social gathering. This result shows that a lot of people eats *Okana* only in social gathering. 62.7% (190) of the respondents agreed that *Okana* is a social delicacy in Yakurr Nation, while about 37.3% (113) disagreed with the statement. 64.1% (194) of the respondents agreed and 35.9% (109) of the respondents disagreed with the statement that states, “do you enjoy eating *Okana* in public?” 59.4% (180) says yes and 40.6% (123) say no to the statement that, “do you think eating *Okana* in social gathering strengthen friendship?” About 66.3% (201) of the respondents accepted that they eat *Okana* in all Yakurr social gatherings, while 33.7% (102) of the respondents disagreed. This result is in agreement with Kuhnlein, & Burlingame (2013), who observed that, people play close to their culture, natural environment, knowledge and use of traditional food systems to improve health, builds community support and engagement for holistic health and well-being. They viewed it as a communal syndrome that affects the individual’s physical, emotional, mental and spiritual health – for adults, children and elders, and in community and cultural collectives that enhances continuity from the past, into the present and towards the future.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This study was on *Okana*: A Yakurr delicacy, its nutritional value and social implications. The purpose of the study was to investigate the extent of *Okana*: consumption in Yakurr Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria.

Literatures were reviewed on the variables directing the study. Descriptive statistical techniques were adopted for the study. The essence of this design was to make generalization of the study. A total sample of three hundred and three (303) respondents were selected out of seven (7) villages for the study. The findings of the study revealed that *Okana* is a highly respected delicacy in Yakurr nation that is virtually eaten in every social gathering.

REFERENCES

1. Bouguet, A. 1969. *Féticheurs et médecines traditionnelles du Congo (Brazzaville)*, Paris: ORSTOM.
2. Burkill, H. M. (2000). *The Use fid Plants of West Tropical Africa. Volunze 2: Families E-I*. Kew. Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.
3. Eyo, E, and Abel, U. (2002). *Chemical Composition and Amino Acid content of G. africanum leaves*. *Nigeria Journal of Nutrition Science*. 13(3): 52-57.
4. Fadi, A., Mafu, A. A. and Robert, C. (2011), *Gnetum Africanum: A Wild Food Plant from the African Forest with many Nutritional and Medicinal Purposes*, *Journal of Medicinal Food* 14, no.11, pp. 1290-1291.
5. Gifford, R. (2007) *Environmental Psychology. Principles and Practice*. Colville, W.A: Optimal Books.
6. Joe, C. (2013). *Tapping the Benefits of Afang Leaf*. Published on June 30, 2013. <http://www.nigerianbestforum.com/index.php>.
7. Kuhnlein, H. V. and Burlingame, B. (2013) *Why do Indigenous Peoples' food and nutrition interventions for health promotion and policy need special consideration?* In H. V.
8. Kuhnlein, B. Erasmus, D. Spigeliski, and B. Burlingame, eds. *Indigenous peoples' foodsystems and well-being interventions and policies for healthy communities*, pp 3-8 Rome, FAO.
9. Okerulu, I. O. and Onyema, C. T. (2015), *Comparative Assessment of Phytochemicals, Proximate and Elemental Composition of Gnetum Africanum (Okazi) Leaves*. *American Journal of Analytical Chemistry*, 6, 604-609.
10. www.scirp.org/journal/ajac <http://dx.doi.org/10.4236/ajac.2015.67058>
11. Okpala, B. (2015) *Interesting fact about Gnetum Africanum (Eru|Okazi Leaf)*. Published on May 5, 2015 in Blog, *Gnetum Africanum*. <http://www.Globalfoodbook.Com/Interesting-Facts-About-Gnetum-Africanum-Okazi-Leaf/>
12. Yisa, J., Egila, J. N. and Darlinton, A. O. (2010), *Chemical Composition of Annona senegalensis from Nupe Land, Nigeria*. *African Journal of Biotechnology*, 9, 4106-4109.

APPENDIX



Fig. 3: *Okana (Gnetum Africanum)*



Fig. 4: A combination of Okana, garden egg, hind skin, stock fish, dry fish, bitter kola and kola, palm wine, illicit gin and a plate of palm oil sauce (*Yedem'blong*)



Fig.5



Fig. 6: Group of people eating Okana.