EFFECT OF CAREER COUNSELING ON STUDENTS ' INTEREST, ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AND RETENTION RATE IN AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION PROGRAMME IN UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTH EAST NIGERIA

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Abstract: There is mass exodus of students from agricultural education programme to other departments due low self esteem. Many students admitted in the programme have low interest poor academic achievement and decide to change course after first year thereby leaving a wide gap in the students-teacher ratio which is a worry to the department of agricultural education in universities in Nigeria. This study as therefore carried out to determine the effects of career counseling on students' interest, academic performance and retention rate in agricultural education programme in universities in South East Nigeria. Three research questions and a hypothesis guided the study. The quasi-experimental study adopted Solomon four-group research design with a population-sample of 165 year one students of Agricultural Education from Universities in South East Nigeria. Sequence allocation software was used to allocate these students into two control and two experimental groups. The instrument for data collection was a 20 item structured interest inventory questionnaire and 30 test items. Each item in the inventory was assigned a four response options of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree with values of 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively while the test item had four options with one correct answer and other three as distracters. Three experts validated the items which its internal consistency 0.85 determined using Cronbach alpha method Data was collected by the researchers and a guidance counselor. Data collected were analyzed using percentage to answer research questions and ANOVA for testing the null hypothesis. The study found out that career counseling intervention increased students' interests, academic performance and retention rates. It was recommended that career counseling should be part of orientation programme and a follow up service organized after each academic session to enhance their interest, performance and retention rates.

Keywords: agricultural-education; retention, career-counseling; academic-performance; interest

Introduction

Nigeria is country with about 200 million people. These people must be fed from production of plants and animals carried through soil and water management. To ensure continuous production of food and other resources, the government introduced agriculture as subject in secondary schools and as a course of study in Universities. The aspect of the course that ensures it is taught as a subject in schools is agricultural education. Agricultural Education is an instruction employed in training learners in the basic art of farming combined with the methodology of teaching (Tibi, 1991). Agricultural Education is a process of imparting knowledge, skills and attitudes in agriculture to learners in Universities. It gives learners sound academic knowledge, skills and ample opportunity to apply acquired competencies in the world of work. The major objectives of agricultural education in Nigeria as outlined by Hauma (2014) are to: provide youth with sound knowledge of the basic principles and techniques of agriculture and motivation with which they can translate into real improvement in agricultural productivity; preserve those aspects of culture which are in line with modern farming methods while changing those which are obsolete with regards to taking into consideration, the importance of tradition and customs within the rural community; provide farmers with knowledge upon which to base the rural community; help rural farmers develop understanding of inter-relationships of urban and rural life; provide training to specialist in agricultural occupations such as livestock, horticulture, food storage and processing as well as insurance and financing; provide counseling on agricultural occupations and means of preparing for them and produce adequate trained personnel involved in extension services for farmers, translating research findings into field trials and then into commercial applications. It is necessary that any students enrolling in the course must have interest

Interest refers to activities, subjects, or topics that attract and engage an individual. It can also mean those things that someone enjoy doing or learning, hence it is defined as the desire to engage in activities or tasks (Renninger & Hidi,2016).. Academically, interests revolve around a particular subject or field of study which may be dynamic and change over time. To determine the interest of students in agricultural education, they were given interest inventory before and after the intervention and further assess with test items to determine their academic performance..

Academic performance is the measurement of student achievement in a learned material or across various academic subjects. Academic performance refers to a students' level of achievement in an educational activities. This means scores obtained by a group of students of agricultural education after exposing them to career counseling intervention to enhance their interest and retention rate. Student's academic performance is typically assessed by the use of teacher ratings, tests, and examinations. In fact, academic performance is more likely to be experienced and evidenced when students feel personally validated and believe that their efforts can influence or control the prospects of their academic success inspiring them to develop a sense of purpose (Eric & Benedict 2015). Sense of purpose on the premise of high interest in a course, enhances academic performance and sometimes results from the image of the course in the society thereby improving retention rate of enrollees.

Retention is a process, by which resources are motivated and encouraged to stay in an organization for a longer period for sustainability of organization (Sangita, 2019). Retention rate refers to the percentage of students who remained in agricultural education programme over a specific period of time. Retention rate is commonly used as a measure to assess the ability of agricultural education to retain students enrolled in its programme after admission process. Retention rate is calculated by dividing the number of students who continue their enrollment

by the total number of students at the beginning of a specified period, like an academic year which could low or high. High retention rates generally indicate students' satisfaction in the programme as a result of enhanced interest and public image of the course.

Many first year students of Agricultural Education require career counseling. Career counseling is a service provided to individuals who seek guidance and support in making informed decisions about their career paths. Career counseling is a global approach to individuals under all aspects of their personal, professional and social life as it entails providing information, counseling and guidance services with a view to supporting each and every one of them at early stage of their academic life in the development of their own career through decision-making as regards education, work, and community life (Mihai, 2007) Career counseling is an act of exploring students' interests and guiding them to choose their professional vocation while taking into account their skills, shortcomings, resources, and possibilities. (Tahir, 2018) Career counselors can also assist people in getting a better grasp of what means most to them individually, how to plan their careers independently, and how to make difficult decisions and get through times of crisis (Savickas, 2019). Career counseling require specific application of counseling psychology which is about supporting people to improve assessment of themselves, their environment, and current challenges as well as optimizing their experiences and behaviour (Hirschi & Froidevaux, 2020). Career counseling is about helping clients to construct a subjectively meaningful identity, to increase their self-reflection to create their career according to their personal identity and life story (Savickas, 2013, Nota & Rossier, 2015). Career counseling involves working with a trained professional called guidance counselor to help them (year one students of agricultural education) to explore their interests, skills, values, and aspirations that make them become interested to study and graduate in the Agricultural education programme in the universities. Adopting a system of counseling is essential for a prosperous and peaceful life of an individual. (Post et al. (2002) in Nasrin, Muhammad, Muhammad , Rukhsana (2021). Identified four main parts to career counseling: as (1) assisting individuals in developing more self-awareness in areas such as interests, values, abilities, and personality type; (2) linking students to resources to obtain a better understanding of jobs and occupations (3) assisting them to be active managers of their career paths by involving them in decision-making process so that they can choose a career path that is well suited to their interests, values, abilities, and personality style, and (4) assisting students in the decision-making process so that they can choose a career path that is well suited to their interests, values, abilities, and personality style Career counseling assists students make career decisions by developing effective strategies that could help them achieve their goals. Career counseling requires the counselee to carry out seven activities which are (1) self-exploration (2) career exploration; (3) decision making (4) goals setting (5) skill development (6) job Search and (7) career transitions. Self exploration activities begins with self-assessment to enable the students reflect on their interests, values, personality traits, strengths, and skills. Exploration helps clients discover ways to implement aspects of their vision while concomitantly attending to issues of meaning and personal context (Magnusson, 1995). It is expected that the counselor through discussions, assessments, and exercises, helps the students gain a better understanding of themselves and how their traits relate to agricultural education as their career options. Once individuals have a clearer sense of their own strengths and preferences, career counselors help them explore different career paths at decision making.

In decision-Making stage, the career counselors facilitate the decision-making process by helping individuals weigh the pros and cons of different career options such as job satisfaction, work-life balance, income potential,

and growth opportunities thereby setting meaningful goals. During goal setting, the Career counselor helps each student to define short-term and long-term goals that align with their interests, values, and aspirations for effective skill development for better job search and career transition. Career counseling sessions can be conducted in one-on-one settings, group sessions, or through online platforms. Career counselors use a variety of tools and techniques, including interviews, assessments, and exercises, to facilitate the career exploration and decision-making process. The ultimate goal of career counseling is to empower individuals to make informed decisions about their careers, maximize their potential, and find fulfillment in their professional lives. The study is anchored ration emotive theory by John and Ellis (1995)

John Holland's Theory of Career Choice (RIASEC); as applied by Laura, Kyungin & Mark (2020) states that Careers are determined by an interaction between our personality and the environment. Therefore, choosing a career, people prefer courses and jobs where they can be around others who are like them. They search for environments that will let them use their skills and abilities, and express their attitudes and values, while taking on enjoyable problems and roles. In the counseling sections, the students were made to understand that by providence, they are brought together in the programme. Furthermore, rational emotive theory propounded by Ellis (1955) states that balanced and unreasonable beliefs are major predictors of psychological outcomes. This theory is based on the fact that, man has a tendency to live realistically as well as unreasonably (Magaretha & Hastuti, 2017).

Career counseling also called rational-emotive behavior therapy (REBT) is, therefore, centered on identifying and altering unreasonable thought patterns which influence cognitive and behavioural interpretations of man (Froggatt 2005; Magaretha & Hastuti 2017). Career counseling has had a wide range of application over the years in reducing unreasonable thoughts and feelings that have unhelpful effects on various aspects of an individual's career. Unreasonable or illogical career beliefs have adverse effects on individual's behaviour towards a career (Ogbuanya et al 2018). Therefore, career counselors need to use their professional cognitive and behavioural skills in helping students decrease negative thoughts which are detrimental to successful career decision and progress (Ogbuanya et al 2018). Unreasonable or illogical career beliefs could be tackled through cognitive disputation-by providing facts which indicates that such beliefs cannot satisfactory be based on any known proof, which implies giving thoughtful and wholesome views about events and pragmatic disputing (Ellis, David & Lynn, 2010). Considerable empirical studies have shown that career counseling (REBT) is quite effective in individuals and groups (Elis, David & Lynn, 2010; Ogbuanya et al 2017; Ogbuanya, et al., 2018) including those in agricultural education in Universities in South East

In Universities in South East Nigeria, career choices is expected to be consciously and deliberately be made by students; however as a result of inability to secure admission, many students after waiting for years without admission, seek for any available course just to be admitted into a university. Many universities are unable to admit all the students seeking admission into their first choice courses due to population increase and limited facilities in these institutions. Low supply of facilities to universities has lead the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) to embark on strikes severally hoping to push government towards revitalization of these institutions but their yearnings seems to yield no positive result. The union appears to be fickle-minded and often self-centred calling off each strike when the government dangles a few arrears of the Earned Academic Allowances; its last fray ended in February 2019 with government's promise to release N25 billion for this purpose, whereas at issue is the N200 billion annual payment for universities' revitalization project (Blueprint (19, August, 2019).

Recently, ASSU embarked on another strike action to mount sufficient pressure on the government to implement its 2009 agreement on revitalization of universities among other demands but government is adamant to meeting requests of ASSU. The Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) declared a total and indefinite strike in protest against the government's failure to release revitalization funds for universities (Grace & Deborah, 2022)**.** Following scanty facilities, only few individuals are admitted into their first choice courses while others are offered admission into other programmes, That is, admission seekers are given the opportunity to opt for other courses when the preferred course is unavailable. Therefore, the seemingly more prestigious and popular career choices' became replaced with other available unpopular career choices. This scenario has led many youths into career courses they never planned to study. Failure of admission seekers to have their preferred career choices became the bedrock for career dissatisfaction and some remarkable and identifiable negative attitudes such as inferiority complex associated with low self esteem leading to unreasonable or illogical career belief (Lawal, 2017). Interaction of the researchers and some students of Agricultural Education in Universities in the country revealed that some of them did not choose the course as their programme of study but were forced based on the need to enter university or as compensation from admission office. Some of these students express their feeling in words like; 'I don't like this course am studying; I will not be respected in the society because of my career', "my opportunities in economic stability are few and unreliable with this career', 'I deserve a more prestigious career' I won't be as successful as I should if I remain in this course', I feel inappropriate to be publicly called an agricultural education student'. Furthermore, some parents may ask questions like; what is the difference between what you are learning and my farming; why not learn from me than spending much money as school fees on job which I can teach you better. Some of the students that face these kinds of illogical belief develop low interest in agricultural education, affecting their academic performance and such students after year one change course. This situation makes the department of Agricultural education to loose their students each year to other courses. Career counseling as a procedure for dealing with unreasonable or illogical beliefs was found effective in reducing the irrational career belief of students in Industrial technical education (Ogbuanya et al 2018). Therefore, it is necessary to adopted career counseling service for students of Agricultural Education to enhance their interest, academic performance and reduce their exodus from the programme in Universities in South East Nigeria. The general purpose of the study was to determine the effects of career counseling on students' interest, academic performance and retention rate in agricultural education programme in universities in South East Nigeria. Specifically, this study determined:

1. percentage of year one students interested in Agricultural Education Programme before and after exposure to career counseling in agricultural Education in Universities in South-East Nigeria
2. academic performance of students before and after under intervention and control groups during career counseling in agricultural education in Universities in South East Nigeria
3. Retention rate of students exposed to career counseling in agricultural education in Universities in South East Nigeria.

Three research questions developed in line of study guided the study while one null hypothesis on academic performance was also developed and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Methodology

The quasi-experimental study adopted Solomon four-group research design and was carried out in South East Nigeria. Quasi-experimental research is a scientific approach where one or more independent variables are

manipulated and applied to one or more dependent variables in an already existing environment without any interference (Formplus, 2020). This means that in this study, career counseling services was carried out to find the effect on interest and academic performance of year one students in their respective classes in Universities with Agricultural Education programme in South East Nigeria. Solomon four-group research design is adopted when there is a concern that the treatment group might be sensitized by the pre-test (Allen, 2017). It is also referred to as two treatments and two controls. In this design, four groups A, B, C, D had different experiences which were:

	Pre-test,	treatment	post-test
Group A	√	√	√
Group B	√	0	√
Group C	0	√	√
Group D	0	0	√

The effectiveness of the treatment was evaluated by comparing the academic performance of all the students in groups A, B, C &D. while all the groups were given interest inventory before and after intervention and the entire students' interest determine with no reference to treatment or control.

The quasi-experimental study adopted Solomon four-group research design and was carried out in South East Nigeria The population for the study was 165 (64 males and 101 females) year one students of Agricultural Education from Universities in South East Nigeria. These Universities were Abia State University 29, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umudike 33, Ebonyi State University Abakaliki 18, Ndufu-Alike University 37, Enugu State University of Science and Technology 26 & University of Nigeria, Nsukka 22. The sample for the study was165 with students' spread as Abia, 29,Umudike 33, Ebonyi 18,, Ndufu-Alike 37, ESUT, 26 & UNN 22 respectively. Sequence allocation software was used to allocate these students into control and experimental groups for the purpose of determining their academic performance only. Out of 165 year one students of Agricultural Education, 63 of them were in treatment while 62 were in control groups.

The instrument for data collection was a 20 item structured interest inventory questionnaire and 30 test items. Each item in the inventory was assigned a four response options of Strongly Agree (AS), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) with values of 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively while the test item had four options with one correct answer and other three as distracters. The test items were developed from the irrigation technology curriculum. The inventory and test items were validated by three experts one from Guidance and Counseling Unit of Educational Foundation and two experts were from the Department of Agricultural Education Department all from University of Nigeria. The experts were requested to study the items and determine their relevance in collecting expected data. The corrections were effected to produce the final items. In order to determine the internal consistency of the items, 11 copies of the test items were administered on year one students from Coal City University Enugu State. The collected data were analyzed using Cronbach alpha method which yielded a coefficient of 0.85; indicating that the items were reliable. Data was collected by the researchers and a guidance counselor as follows:

1. The researchers schedule a visit to each university in South East through the Heads of Department requesting the Head to assemble year one students in their classes.
2. In each university, the year one students were pre-tested through the use of interest inventory and questions in irrigation technology. The interest inventory helped the researchers to identify students that participated either

as control or treatment groups. Out of 201 students invited to participate, 165 were met on the ground during the pre-test while 125 took part in the study based on presence of unreasonable or illogical career beliefs, consent and availability throughout the period of the study. The remaining 36 students did not meet the criteria and therefore discontinued with the career counseling..

3. The 125 eligible participants were randomly assigned to either of the two groups which were treatment (63 participants) and control group (62 participants) through simple randomization by picking a wrapped piece of paper having either TG or CG meaning treatment group or control group. The Inscription on the paper was made based on a computer-generated random list using sequence allocation software to assign 63 students into experimental or treatment group and 62 into control group. Each participant's phone numbers was collected. This means that the TG, was divided into two and the CG also divided into two resulting to four groups of two each for control and treatment

4. Each students (125) was provided with 12GB data at the rate of three thousand five hundred ($\neq$3500) only to enable him/her participate in the study effectively.

5. A guidance counselors was then hired to carry out the intervention session for the participants based on the design through WhatsApp scheduled to ensure full participation and commitment at student's convenience

6. Introductory aspects of the intervention were carried out online which lasted for 6weeks. The consent of the participants for convenience as sought before scheduling the visit to avoid clashing with varying activities of the participants.

7. The 125 participants (63 in experimental of two sets) and (62 in control also two sets) were all subjected to the post-test after the intervention with the treatment group. The post test scripts were administered on each student at their various universities immediately after the persistent strike was called off. During the post test, the researchers supervised and helped to retrieve the copies of the questionnaire (interest inventory and test)

8. Follow- up activity was carried out to find out those that requested for change of course during the following academic session.

9. Data collected were analyzed using percentage to answer research questions

Result of the Study: The result of the study were generated from the research questions and null hypothesis and presented in Tables 1-5

Research Question1

What is the percentage of year one students interested in Agricultural Education Programme before and after exposure to career counseling?

Data for answering research question one were presented in Table 1

Table 1

Percentage of year one students interested in Agricultural Education Programme before and after exposure to career counseling N = 165 (63 treatment & 62 control)

S/N	Item Statement on Interest in Agricultural Education Programme	Pre-test %	Post-test %	Diff. %	Remark
1	I have zeal for Agricultural Education as course of study y	12	56	44	+
2	I purposely chose Agricultural Education as course of study	10	10	0	+
3	I am in this course as I have spent many years without admission	78	78	0	+
4	I love teachers of Agricultural Education and	35	48	13	+

5	I like the way teachers of Agricultural Education teach perform	24	45	21	+
6	I like the way of dressing when going to farm	21	56	35	+
7	It makes me happy to see my crops growing in the farm	43	66	23	+
8	I like rearing poultry in agricultural education Poultry Farm	41	76	35	+
9	I like farming especially in commercial bases using machine	40	80	40	+
10	I like to drive tractor to carry out farm operations like clearing	41	70	29	+
11	I am ashamed to carry farm tools	92	50	-42	+
12	I will lack respect in the society because of the course I studied	72	31	-41	+
13	My opportunities in this career for economic stability are few	75	67	-08	+
14	I deserve a more prestigious career than Agricultural Education	97	73	-24	+
15	I feel inappropriate to be publicly called an agricultural student	80	50	-30	+
16	I will not be as successful if I remain in agricultural education	85	43	- 42	+
17	1 will be very proud harvesting and marketing farm products	50	70	20	+
18	I will never advise anyone to read Agricultural Education	60	32	-28	+
19	I will change my course immediately I finish year one	80	10	- 70	+
20	Even if I finish this course, I will still enter into another prestigious programme of study	92	12	-7-0	+

Data in Table 1 revealed that all the positively warded items had positive difference indicating that the students who were formerly not interested in Agricultural education as course of study developed positive interest after the career counseling. Furthermore, all the items that were negatively worded obtained negative values after career counseling. At the end of the intervention, high value of the items drastically reduced indicating that the students developed positive interest as a result of their exposure to the benefits of agricultural education as a course of study.

Research question 2

What is the academic performance of students under intervention as compared to control groups in career counseling in agricultural education in Universities in South East Nigeria

Data answering this research question were presented in Table 2

Table 2

Effects of career counseling on students' academic performance in Agricultural Education in Universities in South East Nigeria N = 125 (62 & 63)

Groups	Pre-test	Treatment	Post- Test	%gain	A &B	A & C	B &D
A	42.26	√	81.53	39.27			
B	36.02	-	37.92	1.90	44.41		
C	-	√	73.13			8.40	
D	-	-	28.63				9.29

Data in Table 2 revealed that group A exposed to pretest, career counseling and posttest had a mean gain score of 39.27 (81.53 –42.26); Group B exposed to pretest and post test without any intervention had a mean gain of 1.90 (37.92-36.02), indicating a treatment influence of 43.61 (81.53- 33.9242); group C exposed to treatment and post

test but was not pretested had a mean score of 73.13; indicating a pre-test influence of 8.40 (81..53 - 73.13) when compared with group A. Group D exposed to only post test had a mean score of 28.63 and when compared with group B that were exposed to pre-test had a negative mean score of -9.29 (36-42-37.69); indicating that pretest had no influence on the achievement of students.

There is no significant difference in the mean performance of treatment groups and control groups in agricultural education in Universities

Data to testing the hypothesis were presented in Table 3

Table 3

ANOVA statistic on effects of career counseling on students academic performance in Agricultural Education in Universities in South East Nigeria

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: Test Results

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	12928.013[a]	2	6464.006	40.091	.000
Intercept	54441.603	1	54441.603	337.661	.000
Type	5148.000	1	5148.000	31.929	.000
Test	11851.090	1	11851.090	73.504	.000
Error	24668.423	153	161.232		
Total	371938.000	156			
Corrected Total	37596.436	155			

Data in Table 3 revealed a significant difference of 0.00 which was less than the benchmark (0.05); indicating that there was significance difference in the academic performance of students exposed to career counseling and those not exposed. In order to determine the source of difference, the data were further subjected to Scheffe's test and presented in Table 4

Table 4: Scheffe's test result

Groups	N	Subsets		Sig.
		1	2	
BO_1	31	34.1538	34.1538	
BO_2	31	36.4231	36.4231	
DO_2	32	37.6923	37.6923	
AT_1	32	38.4615	38.4615	
CT_2	31			63.6923
AT_2	32			67.3462
Sig.			.603	.680

Data in Table 4 revealed that group BO_1, BO_2, DO_2 and AO_1were in the same subset and with a significant level of 0.603; meaning that there was no significance difference in the academic performance of students in these groups. Furthermore, Table 3 showed that group CT_2 and AT_2 had a significant level of 0.780; indicating that there was no significant difference in academic performance between the two groups that were exposed to career counseling. Therefore, the source of significance difference was coming from 'C' and 'A' who were exposed to career counseling.

Research Question 3: What is the retention rate of students exposed to career counseling in agricultural education in Universities in South East Nigeria?

Data for answering research question three were presented in Table 5

Table 5

Retention rate of students exposed to career counseling in agricultural education in Universities in South East Nigeria.

S/N	Name of University	No of Agric Student	No moved to year two	Retention Rate
1	Abia State University	29	29	100%
2	Michael Okpara Univer of Agric Umudike	33	33	100%
3	Ebonyi State University Abakaliki	18	18	100%
4	Ndufu-Alike University	37	37	100%
5	Enugu State University of Sci. & Tech	26	26	100%
6	University of Nigeria, Nsukka	22	22	100%

Data in Table 5 revealed that the total number of students in year one were the same with the number that moved to next class in 2021/2022 academic season. The value indicated that there are 100% retention rate which showed that the career counseling intervention had a positive effect.

Discussion of Result

It was found out from the study that students developed positive interest as a result of their exposure to counseling intervention. The findings of this study on increase of interest in agriculture as a result of counseling intervention were in conformity with the findings of Ifeanyieze, Ede --& Nyakuwa (2023) in a study on psychological intervention for career self-esteem among students of agricultural education programme where it was found out that counseling intervention raise pupils self-esteem. The findings of this study were further in agreement with the findings of Bassy & Okpech (2018) who carried out a study on self-esteem and academic success of secondary school students in Calabar and found out that students increased their self-esteem in mathematics and English language.. The findings of the study were in consonance with the findings of Ogbuanya, Eseadi, Orji, Anyanwu, Ede, and Bakare (2018) in a study on effect of rational emotive behavior therapy on negative career thoughts of students in technical colleges in Nigeria and indicated that REBT is effective in reducing negative career thoughts. The findings of the study were also in agreement with the findings of Lim and Ko (2010) that cognitive behavioral therapy is efficient in the improvement of positive and more functional career attitudes in nursing students in Korea

On the academic performance of students, the study found out that students' academic performance increased after the counseling intervention. The findings of this study were in agreement with the findings of Bassy &

Okpech (2018) who carried out a study on self-esteem and academic success of secondary school students in Calabar and found out that counseling intervention increased students' academic achievement in mathematics and English language.

The finding of this study were in conformity with the findings of Talib, Salleh, Amat, Ghavifekr, and Ariff (2015) in a study on effect of career education module on career development of community college students and found out that career counseling significantly enhanced career development ability, self-efficacy, and maturity among college students in Malaysia. The findings of this study were further in line with the findings of, Peng and Herr (1999) in a study on the impact of career education courses on career beliefs and career   decision   making among Business College students and found that career counseling is effective in changing career beliefs by improving the career decision-making of business college students in Taiwan. The study of Peng and Herr (1999) showed that a relationship exists between career beliefs and performance as found in this study.

On the retention rate, this study found out that in year two, of the 2021/22 academic session, non of the students exposed to counseling intervention changed course or dropped. Hence there was 100% retention rate, indicating a high retention rate. A high retention rate generally indicates students' satisfaction in the programme as a result of career counseling intervention. The findings showed that the rational career intervention has a long-term impact on career self-esteem among students as Roghanchi, Mohamad, Mey, Momeni, and Golmohamadian (2013) found in their study that integrating rational emotive behaviour therapy and art therapy is helpful in improving resilience. The findings of these uthors cited gave credence the findings of this study.

Conclusion

It is the wish of departments to retain their students admitted in their programmes but was discovered that department of agricultural education in universities loose their students to other departments. Some of the students are not interested in the programme and such affects their academic performance. It them became a worry to the lecturers that most of their student indicate low interest, perform low and change to other programmes after their first year. The department even made it a policy that they would not grant students release thus compounding the problem of low interest and poor performance. hence the research on career counseling to determine its effects on students interest, academic performance and retention rate in the programme

Recommendation

Based on the findings, it was recommended that career counseling should be part of orientation programme to enhance students' interest, boost their academic performance and reduce exodus of students to other areas after first year. There should also be a follow up programme by the department to ensure that illogical career beliefs do not re-occur.

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