

PERCEIVED VALUE OF CERTIFICATION OF GRADUATE STUDENTS

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Background and Significance: Healthcare culture continues to insist upon superior quality care by its payers and consumers. Achieving and maintaining a high level of competence is essential in providing high quality nursing care. Literature reveals that certified nurses bring a mark of excellence to healthcare systems. Certified nurses are deemed to be abreast of current changes within a specialty, competent in their fields, consistent with national standards, and dedicated to their profession. Although current literature has examined the value of certification within different nursing specialties, nurses who are pursuing a master's degree have not been studied.

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to describe graduate nursing students' perceived value of certification.

Theoretical Framework: Donabedian's conceptualization of quality health care.

Sample Description/Population: A convenience sample of 41 Marquette University licensed nurses pursuing a masters degree in nursing voluntarily participated (88% response rate).

Methods: At the beginning of four graduate nursing classes, students were given information about the study and asked to fill out two questionnaires. The first questionnaire, The Demographic Sheet, consisted of questions asking the participants' number of years of nursing experience, age, certification status, and masters program. The second questionnaire, The Perceived Value of Certification Tool (PVCT), was developed by the Certification Board of Perioperative Nursing research committee. Eighteen value statements representing competency, recognition, financial benefits, evidence for consumers, intrinsic rewards, and marketability were listed on the survey. Participants rated the value statements by a 5-point Likert-type scale (strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree, no opinion). In a previous study, psychometric analysis of the PVCT tool showed an internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's α) of 0.94.

Results: Over 95% of the respondents indicated agreement about the value of certification related to professional credibility, professional challenge,

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professional growth, validating specialized knowledge, enhancing feelings of personal accomplishment, personal satisfaction, and professional commitment.

Implications: These findings are consistent with previous published literature on nursing certification.