

Perceptions of Certification Value by Nurses in an Orthopedic Hospital

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Introduction: Certification validates knowledge and enhances clinical judgement. Certification is associated with structural empowerment and autonomy which equip nurses to contribute new knowledge and improve outcomes. Orthopedic conditions are the most common chronic disability in America thus necessitating evidence-based care by qualified nurses. Minimal research on the value of certification and empowerment in orthopedic nursing populations was found.

Purpose: Examine the perceived values of specialty certification and empowerment held among registered nurses at a major orthopedic teaching institution.

Methodology: This cross-sectional study utilized a convenience sampling of 406 nurses with 107 responses received (26.3%). The Perceived Values of Certification Tool -12 (PVCT-12) and the Conditions of Work Effectiveness II Questionnaire (CWEQ II) were utilized. Responses were analyzed based on nurses' certification status and other demographic characteristics. Fisher's Exact Test, linear regression, and one-way ANOVA were used. Alpha-level 0.05 was determined statistical significance.

Results: Nurses were predominantly female (89%), 52 years of age or older (45%), with a bachelor's degree in nursing (64%). Seventy-two percent worked 11 or more years as a RN. PVCT-12 results: higher educational degree ($p=0.035$), current certification ($p=0.001$), working in a certified role ($p=0.001$) or self-identified as leadership ($p=0.02$) were found to be statistically significant of intrinsic scores. CWEQ-II results: higher educational degree ($p=0.01$), current certification ($p<0.001$), working in a certified role ($p=0.006$) or self-identified as leadership ($p=0.001$) showed statistically significant of informal power scores.

Discussion: Certification demonstrates professional commitment and benefits institutions. This study identified characteristics of nurses and their perception of the value of certification. Nurses with higher educational degrees, current certification, and worked in the role of certification or identified as leadership were more internally motivated and perceived themselves to hold informal power. This aligns with previous research on structural empowerment and motivation factors of nurses.

Conclusion: This study found nurses with higher experience and longer employment held higher intrinsic values and also exhibited higher informal power related to structural empowerment.

Implications: As the higher experienced and empowered cohort of certified RNs leave for retirement, these findings may assist institutions in focusing resources on identified groups of nurses. Tailoring certification incentives to groups with identified barriers may increase certification rates.