

A qualitative look at the perceived value, barriers and supports to certification

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Background

- ▶ Many are familiar with the Perceived Value of Certification Tool (PVCT), created by Berlin Sechrist Associates in 2003.
- ▶ The Competency and Credentialing Institute is the copyright holder and in 2020-2021 went through a revision of the instrument
- ▶ The current PVCT is a 12-item survey designed to assess intrinsic and extrinsic value to certification (Van Wicklin, et al., 2022)

Limitations

- ▶ Survey research commonly uses instruments (such as the PVCT) that consist of forced choice items that can direct and limit the replies of respondents
- ▶ This research approach is about measuring a phenomenon
- ▶ However, a key limitation of survey research pertains to the parameters that bind the respondent's possible replies

The Why guiding this research

- ▶ The possibility of fresh insights from the respondent is slim to none because of constraints of the forced choice method of the instrument
- ▶ To augment the limitations of positivistic research, qualitative research allows for a blank canvas, so to speak, freeing participants to express their beliefs without the predetermined directives created by the researcher

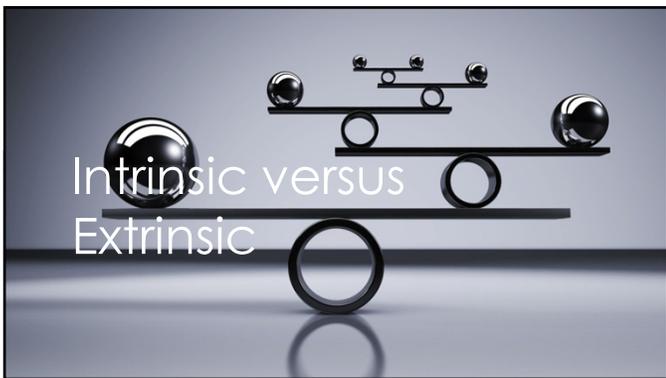
Barriers

- ▶ While the PVCT does assess the value of certification, it fails to inquire on the barriers and supports nurses encounter when deciding or not to participate in the certification process

Conceptual framework

Value

- ▶ Value is the utility, or a balance between the benefits and costs of a product or service (Payne & Holt, 2001; Zeithaml, 1988)
- ▶ Consumers (nurses) evaluate the benefits of a product or service (certification) against its costs (time, resources, and financial considerations)



Intrinsic

- ▶ The value of something for its own sake
- ▶ Intrinsic value is aligned with concepts such as health, pleasure, satisfaction, knowledge, wisdom, achievement, and several others

Extrinsic

- ▶ Ryan and Deci (2000) equated extrinsic value as **tangible** rewards and outcomes, such as workplace advancement, recognition, status, and income

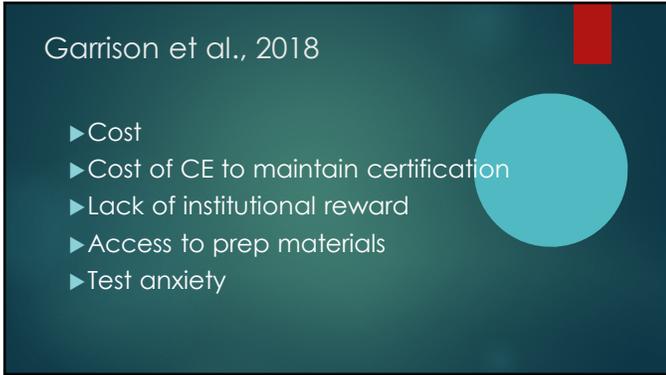
Barriers

The 2014 Lactation Summit

- ▶ Confusion over the application process
- ▶ Difficulty in attaining education hours
- ▶ Difficulty in attaining clinical hours
- ▶ Lack of qualified mentors
- ▶ Finances

Garrison et al., 2018

- ▶ Cost
- ▶ Cost of CE to maintain certification
- ▶ Lack of institutional reward
- ▶ Access to prep materials
- ▶ Test anxiety



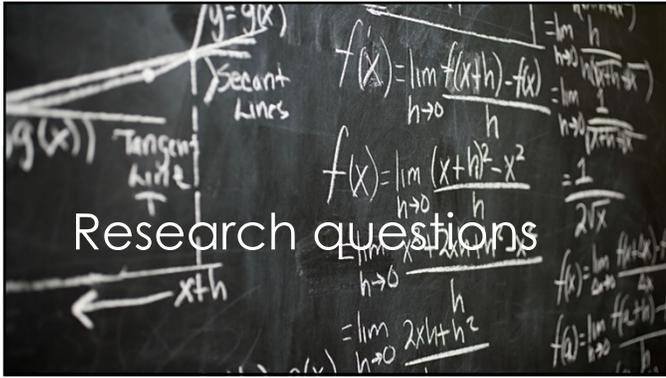
Supports



Stucky, et al., 2020

- ▶ Reimbursement
- ▶ Salary incentives
- ▶ Embracing a culture of certification
 - ▶ Consider certification for promotion and leadership positions
- ▶ Rewarding success
- ▶ Coaching and mentoring





What have specialty nurses come to value about participating or not in the certification process?

What barriers and supports exist to obtaining specialty certification?

Qualitative research

- ▶ At its most basic level qualitative research explores complex descriptions of how people experience a particular issue of interest

Data collection

- ▶ Semi-structured interviews
- ▶ The interview helps in revealing an interpretive perspective, seeing "connections and relationships a person sees between particular events, phenomenon and beliefs" (Mack, et al., 2005, p. 30)



Sample

21 licensed nurses

- ▶ 11 certified
- ▶ 10 noncertified
- ▶ Specialties included perioperative (3), emergency (8), school (1), neonatal (2), critical care (2), lactation (1), trauma (2), intensive care (1), and forensic (1)

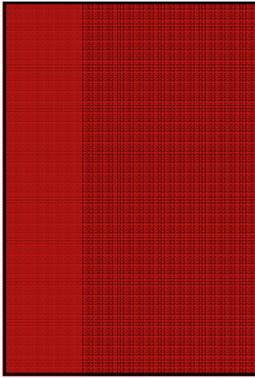
Sample cont.

- ▶ Seven male and 14 female nurses ranging in professional experience from two to 44 years, with a mean nursing experience of 17.3 years
- ▶ Eliminate the low and high mean becomes 17.1



A Priori coding structure

- ▶ We began the analysis process with a predetermined coding structure (Miles, et al., 2013) aligned with our conceptual framework of intrinsic and extrinsic value
- ▶ This approach helped us focus the analysis on those areas that were already known to be important; intrinsic value such as satisfaction, confidence in clinical abilities, and professionalism; and extrinsic value such as financial rewards, recognition, and professional advancement



Results



Main themes



- ▶ After careful analysis of the data we determined two main overarching themes
- ▶ **Commitment to care**
- ▶ **Return on investment**



Subthemes



- ▶ We found subthemes within our intrinsic and extrinsic value propositions
 - ▶ Examples:
 - ▶ Lifelong learning & high performers (intrinsic)
 - ▶ Availability of resources, finances and time (extrinsic)



Barriers and support

- ▶ We also determined that **barriers** and supports are connected to our value propositions
- ▶ We will see how finances play a role in the decision on whether certification has value but also end up being a barrier

Delineation between certified and noncertified

- ▶ Certified nurses tended towards narratives of feeling intrinsic value in their certification journey
- ▶ Noncertified nurses tended towards the extrinsic



Commitment to care

“There is a moral obligation to be the best nurse I can be”

Certified nurse Mitchell (CEN)

Certified nurses

- ▶ Placed a higher meaning on the intrinsic value of the increased knowledge, confidence in clinical abilities, and goal achievement that going through the *certification process* brought them

Lifelong learning (sub theme)

- ▶ Becoming certified was as function of being a lifelong learner; updating the knowledge, skills, and abilities that the profession demands

Khalil (CNOR)

- ▶ "...it was the ability to learn about certain cases I hadn't experienced yet, but I might...LVADS, or the intricacies of lung transplant... really gave me a lot of knowledge and what to look out for so I was prepared when I had some of those events"

Recert

- ▶ Angel (RNC-CIC)
- ▶ "renewing the certification certainly keeps me up to date, it does keep me current on what is going on in the profession"

Impact on specialization

- ▶ Karen (SANE-A)
- ▶ "...a rape case would come into the ED, we were all like 'Oh my gosh, we got to do this rape kit, what is this about?' And I think when I got that specialized help for that group of patients, we did such a better service for them because we knew what we were doing"

Certified nurses acknowledge finances, but it was not labeled as important

- ▶ Shamece (CEN)
- ▶ "...it's nice to be rewarded for going that extra mile or going above and beyond...they just started recognizing people who have their certification and giving them a little bonus...to me it was about honor and pride, knowing that I carry this specialty in my heart and mind...it's not about the money"

Return on investment



Noncertified nurses tended to talk about extrinsic value

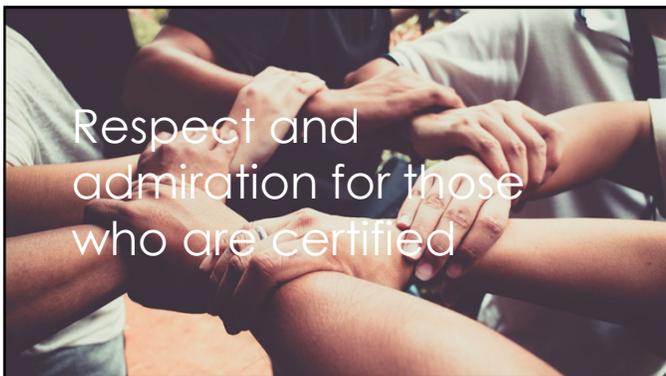
- ▶ Evelyn (noncertified perioperative)
- ▶ "Okay the exam itself is \$400, and if I don't buy any study material, if I don't pass the first time and I take it again that's another \$400...when you pass the test it's only a grand...it's a little nerve wracking to think like gosh you have to pass it the first time. If you're not equipped with the study material, then I would say that's a reason a lot of people don't take it"

Time

- ▶ Sana (noncertified critical care nurse)
- ▶ "I have a family, I have kids, trying to find the time to get the studying in is the most difficult part"

Net benefit

- ▶ Brenda (noncertified school nurse)
- ▶ "...there was no benefit in it, plus I was raising kids...there's not anything for me to gain from it, I don't get a higher position, nothing is going to change for me other than the satisfaction of doing it"



Respect and admiration for those who are certified

Evelyn, who discussed the costs also stated

- ▶ "...I would love to be CNOR certified. I think it would help me be a better nurse for my patients, protect them safety wise and give better quality of care"

High performers

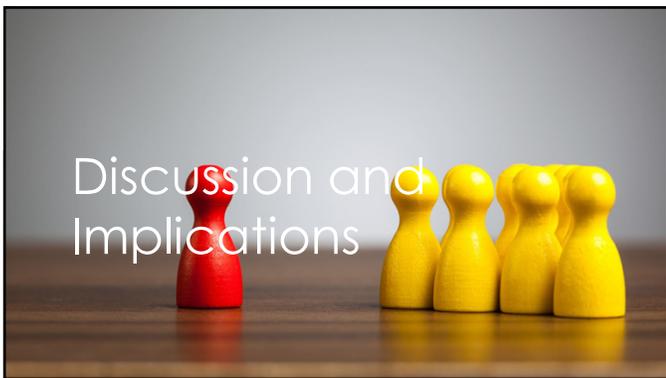
- ▶ Summer (noncertified perioperative nurse)
- ▶ "I think some of our best nurses in the operating room are CNOR certified...they are fantastic and happen to be certified, I don't think that's a coincidence"



Supports and Barriers

Connected to extrinsic value

- ▶ We saw how finances played a role in many narratives
- ▶ Finances are an extrinsic value
- ▶ The lack of financial help in the form of prep and test fees as well little to no increase in salary/bonuses kept nurses from engaging in certification
- ▶ These nurses need the financial ROI in order to be convinced to become certified



Delineation

- ▶ The delineation between certified and non-certified nurses appears to fall across intrinsic and extrinsic value propositions. Among our participants certified nurses placed a high value on the intrinsic; the knowledge gained, the confidence in clinical abilities, and the improved performance that all lead to a commitment to patient care

Noncertified

- ▶ Most saw a value in certification and expressed an interest in becoming certified, but finances and time away from family responsibilities hindered any certification efforts
- ▶ Hospitals paying for exam prep materials and the exam varied widely; nurses stated that they did not want to pay these costs themselves especially when the financial rewards for certification were either nonexistent or so small it simply did not yield a return on investment

So, what can be done?

- ▶ Our data suggest that nurses need to see a return on their investment (ROI)
- ▶ Hospitals that wish to see some of the outcomes of specialty certification must support their nurses with financial and non-financial incentives/support (Briggs et al., 2006; Brown, et al. 2010)
- ▶ How do you get extrinsically motivated RNs to become certified? Our data suggest financial incentives may be one way

Don't become complacent

- ▶ Organizations must not take a complacent attitude towards the high functioning certified nurses of our study
- ▶ While financial considerations such as bonuses and pay increases did not get them to become certified, it may help ensure that the organization retains these valuable employees



Finances

- ▶ What level of financial support is needed?
- ▶ We simply don't know what financial supports exist industry wide and what levels of support lead to increased certification
- ▶ We need to see the 'tipping point'

Coaching and mentoring

- ▶ One nurse mentioned the lack of coaching and mentoring
- ▶ What kinds of coaching and mentoring would help nurses with test anxiety and passing rates?
