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REASONS WHY EMERGENCY NURSES  
TAKE OR DO NOT TAKE  
THE CERTIFICATION EXAMINATION  
IN EMERGENCY NURSING

AN ABSTRACT OF  
A THESIS  
PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY  
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MASTER OF SCIENCE IN NURSING

## ABSTRACT

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The nursing profession as a whole is changing rapidly. The practice of emergency nursing has become a nursing specialty and is an integral component of emergency care. Although emergency nurses are specialists, they are also expected to be generalists, using a combination of knowledge, experience, and skills to rapidly assess and intervene in the emergent phase of trauma or illness. As the necessary knowledge and skills are not directly addressed in basic nursing education, they must be obtained through continuing education. Certification in emergency nursing remains the only way to verify that this has been accomplished.

The purpose of this descriptive, exploratory study was to identify reasons which motivate the emergency nurse to take or not take the Certification Exam for Emergency Nursing (CEN exam); reasons certified emergency nurses (CEN) give concerning their plans to recertify or not recertify; and a comparison of demographic characteristics in relation to these reasons.

A random sample of 500 registered nurses who are currently members of the Emergency Nurses Association (ENA) and who are working in the emergency department was obtained from the Emergency Nurses Association after submitting to the ENA Research Committee the required proposal and forms. These nurses received a questionnaire packet containing a cover letter explaining the purpose of the study, a combined Educational Participation Scale (EPS) and Deterrents to Participation Scale (DPS), a personal data questionnaire, and a return envelope.

The EPS is a self-report instrument consisting of 38 statements of possible reasons nurses take the Certification Examination in Emergency Nursing (CEN). The DPS is a self-report instrument consisting of 39 statements of possible reasons nurses do not take the CEN. Both instruments utilize a 9-point Likert scale with options ranging from "very much influence" to "very little influence." Respondents rated the extent to which each statement influenced their decision to either take (or plan to take) or to not take the CEN. A total of 296 usable questionnaires was returned.

It is anticipated that information obtained in this study will be helpful in guiding planning and activities related to specialty certification.

Scoring of EPS and DPS responses utilized scales established in previous research. Results indicated that the major reasons for taking or planning to take the CEN exam were related to professional knowledge, professional advancement, and acquisition of credentials. These same nurses indicated reasons for not taking the CEN exam related to costliness, nonutility, and incompatibility. Nurses who were CEN's in the past did not renew their certification for reasons related to nonutility, cost, and incompatibility. Those nurses who were not CEN's gave reasons related to marginality, subordinancy, costliness, and nonutility, for non-certification. Nurses in direct care roles were more likely to pursue certification for reasons related to improvement in social welfare skills and acquisition of credentials, and were more likely not to certify for reasons related to marginality and nonutility. Nurses who worked full-time were more likely to pursue certification for reasons related to compliance with authority. Nurses who worked part-time indicated reasons related to marginality, inadequacy, subordinancy, costliness, nonutility, and incompatibility as reasons for non-certification.