

A Study on the Optometrist' Images between Major Students and Non-major Students

Ki-Hun Ye¹, Jung-Eun Ha²

¹Professor, Department of Optometry, ²Professor, Department of Dental Hygiene, Baekseok University, South Korea

Abstract

Background/Objectives: This study was designed to assess the actual state of optometrist' image, to determine their identity, and to provide fundamental feedback to improve their image.

Method/Statistical Analysis: The study involved 303 students, 179 of whom were majoring in optometry, while 124 were not. The subjects were asked to answer an online questionnaire survey in order to analyze optometrist' images. The collected data were compared and analyzed at a significance level of 0.05 using SPSS 18.0.

Findings: In terms of optometrist' general image, optometry major students rated it 3.75, while non-major students gave it 4.02 points ($p < 0.05$). The traditional image scored 4.15 and 4.0, respectively; the social image scored 3.70 and 3.54; the professional image scored 4.18 and 4.02; the social participation image scored 3.66 and 3.48; and the interpersonal relationship image scored 3.92 and 3.70. The scores for all images were statistically significantly different ($p < 0.05$).

Improvements/Applications: The results suggested that optometrist, both as a group and individually, need to make efforts in social voluntary service and social contribution to improve their social participation image, as well as efforts toward social status image improvement to enhance their social image.

Keywords: department of optometry, optometrist' images, traditional image, social image, professional image, social participation image, interpersonal relationship image

Introduction

Health care occupations are meant to serve the disadvantaged. Therefore, persons in these occupations need to serve others, and it is very important that they have aligned personal beliefs and attitudes. Thanks to digital information, consumers today have more medical knowledge, are more interested in health care, and have a higher perception of medical service. As a result, there is a demand for more and better medical

services.^[1-2] Optometrist have been required to not only provide such services as eyesight measurement, making and processing glasses, and selling glasses and lenses, but also to offer a variety of different services to meet customers' needs. In other words, as experts in eye health, they are socially requested to deliver comprehensive information and knowledge about glasses and lenses, eye operations, and ophthalmology (eye diseases).^[3] Fast technological development and innovation have been helping humans to improve their living standards. With the greater acquisition of information, people have been increasingly realizing the importance of the eyes and have become more interested in eye health. In this context, optometrist' social roles have become more significant.

In a situation in which half of the national population wears glasses or lenses, optometrist play a critical role in

Corresponding Author:

Ki-Hun Ye

Professor, Department of Optometry, Baekseok University, South Korea
e-mail: eyelovebaekseok@bu.ac.kr

eye health and have a responsibility toward the public's quality of life based on functioning eyes. Optometrist not only measure customers' eyesight to make and process proper optical glasses and provide some medical services for the eyes, but they also sell glasses and lenses. Therefore, their image is very important^[4]

An image is a sense of one's feeling received from a person or an object. It represents the belief, sense, or impression of an object exiting one's mind. The occupational image reflects something general and typical of a particular occupation. The external image of an occupation is formed in consideration of the characters and characteristics of the people with that occupation, their types of jobs, life, pay, work conditions, and welfare, and the impression of the occupation.^[5] The internal image of an occupation is created by the efforts made by the occupational group and each individual. It takes a lot of time and effort to create a positive image, whereas it is very easy for an individual's incorrect behavior and attitude to give a negative image of the occupation. For this reason, an occupational image is very hard to manage. People of many different occupations make efforts to improve their occupational image. These efforts go in the direction of finding one's occupational identity and developing it further. It is important to assess the image of optometrist, who take care of the public's eye health, to enable them to improve it in the future.^[6]

This study analyzed a variety of images of optometrist held by students majoring in optometry (major students) and students not majoring in optometry (non-major students). The study results can be used as fundamental feedback to help establish the true image of optometrist.

Method

In order to compare and analyze optometrist' images, an online questionnaire survey was conducted on 179 students who were majoring in optometry and 124 who were not (a total of 303 students) from May to June 2019.

The questionnaire consisted of 20 questions (four questions for each of five images). All the questions in the questionnaire were answered on a 5-point Likert scale (5: strongly agree, 4: agree, 3: somewhat agree, 2: somewhat disagree, 1: disagree, 0: strongly disagree). The full score for each image was 20 points, and the mean was based on the four questions. Cronbach's α ,

which represented the reliability of the questionnaire on optometrist' images, was 0.95, reflecting very high reliability. The collected data were applied to SPSS 18.0 at a significance level of 0.05 in order to compare and analyze optometrist' images.

The questionnaire used in this study was created by modifying and supplementing a questionnaire about images of medical occupations to make it applicable to optometrist. For a comparative analysis of optometrist' images, their images were categorized into five types: their traditional image, which is related to their qualifications (cleanliness and neatness, reliability, frankness and honesty, immediate reaction and response to customers' requests); their social image, which is related to optometrist' social roles (high intelligence, high social status, management of eye health, provision of abundant information about the eyes); their professional image as experts in eye health (skillfulness and professionalism, accurate measurement of eyesight and making of glasses, occupational pride, abundance of ophthalmological knowledge); their social participation image, which is related to their social contribution and voluntary service (social recognizability, efforts for the public's eye health, level of social contribution [voluntary activity], valuableness and effectiveness of job); and their interpersonal relationship image, which is related to their communication with patients and kindness (kindness, cooperativeness and good relationship, non-authoritative communication, comfort and reliability).

Result and Discussion

The general characteristics of the study subjects are presented in Table 1. Regarding the age and name given, major students and non-major students had significantly different images of optometrist ($p < 0.05$). Students in their 20s had somewhat better images of optometrist than those in their teens, and students who called optometrist "Sir" and "Ma'am" or "optician" had better images of optometrist.

Table 1. The general characteristics of the study subjects

Variable	Division	Major Students	Non-Major Students
sex	Male	81	44
	Female	98	80
Age	18-19	78	63
	20-27	101	61

Variable	Division	Major Students	Non-Major Students
Habit of visiting	Existing optical shop	124	86
	New optical shop	55	38
Title	Teacher	94	49
	Optician	32	17
	Sister and uncle	7	13
	Anything else	46	45
Right expression of optical shop	Wrong answers	38	67
	Correct answers	141	57

The correlations in the optometrist' images are presented in Table 2. All the image types (traditional image, social image, professional image, social participation image, and interpersonal relationship image) had statistically significant correlations ($p < 0.05$). Table 3 presents a comparison of optometrist' traditional image and social image between major students and non-major students. Yoo's research on the traditional image of nurses revealed a score of 3.42, which was somewhat lower than the score of 4.09 points for optometrist' traditional image in this study.^[7] In the present study, major students rated optometrist' traditional image 4.15 and non-major students rated it 4.00, whereas in Yoo's study, there was a large difference between major students (3.99) and nonmajorstudents (3.20).^[8] In the question about whether "optometrist are clean and neat, and immediately react and respond to customers' requests",

both student groups gave high marks. In the question about whether "optometrist are frank and honest", major students and non-major students respectively gave 3.89 and 3.78 points, which was relatively low. The image that optometrist, who also manage sales, are not frank and honest can seriously harm customer reliability. Therefore, it is necessary to improve the image of optometrist. In Park et al.'s research on the images of emergency medical technicians, major students and non-major students gave 4.11 and 3.84 points, respectively, to the social image of emergency medical technicians.^[9] In the question about whether "optometrist are highly intelligent", major students gave 4.02 points (the highest score).

In the question about whether "optometrist offer a lot of information on the eyes", non-major students gave 3.86 points (the highest score). In the question about whether "optometrist have a high social status", both major and non-major students gave the lowest scores: 2.86 and 2.84 points, respectively. In Park et al.'s study, in the question about whether "emergency medical technicians have a high social status", both major and non-major students gave the lowest scores: 2.48 and 2.53 points, respectively.^[9] The social status is the position in society and the organizational influence on society. To develop optometrist' social image, it is necessary to improve their image in order to increase their social status.

Table 2. The correlations in the optometrist' images

Variable	Traditional image	Social image	Professional image	Social participation image	Interpersonal relationship image
Traditional image	1				
Social image	.671*	1			
Professional image	.667*	.738*	1		
Social participation image	.608*	.755*	.681*	1	
Interpersonal relationship image	.600*	.598*	.624*	.610*	1

* $p < 0.001$

Table 3. A comparison of optometrist' traditional image and social image between major students and non-major students

Traditional image and Social image	Major students		Non- Major students	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Cleanliness and neatness	4.30	.608	4.24	.589
Reliability, frankness and honesty	4.13	.706	3.96	.820
Immediate reaction	3.89	.820	3.78	.851
Response to customers' requests	4.26	.720	4.01	.770
Total	4.15	.595	4.00	.604
p	.03			
High intelligence	4.02	.771	3.79	.802
High social status	2.86	1.116	2.84	1.039
Management of eye health	4.01	.824	3.64	1.099
Provision of abundant information about the eyes	3.93	.874	3.86	1.014
Total	3.70	.692	3.54	.801
p	.05			

Table 4. A comparison of optometrist' professional image and social participation image between major students and non-major students

Professional image and Social participation image	Major students		Non- Major students	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Skillfulness and professionalism	4.18	.619	4.02	.702
Accurate measurement of eyesight and making of glasses	4.28	.689	4.12	.771
Occupational pride	3.98	.811	3.88	.812
Abundance of ophthalmological knowledge	4.18	.760	3.99	.864
Total	4.18	.619	4.02	.702
p	.02			
Social recognizability	3.18	1.134	3.27	1.062
Efforts for the public's eye health	3.97	.824	3.68	.967
Level of social contribution [voluntary activity]	3.56	1.101	3.14	1.157
Valuableness and effectiveness of job	3.92	.806	3.81	.843
Total	3.66	.792	3.48	.833
p	.05			

Table 5. A comparison of optometrist' interpersonal relationship image between major students and non-major students

Interpersonal relationship image	Major students		Non- Major students	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Kindness, cooperativeness	4.22	.729	4.10	.658
Good relationship	4.08	.778	3.86	.810
Non-authoritative communication	3.63	1.121	3.43	1.091
Comfort and reliability	3.74	1.067	3.39	1.124
Total	3.92	.708	3.70	.654
p	.00			

Table 6. A comparison of optometrist’ images between major students and non-major students

Variable	Total image		Traditional image		Social image		Professional image		Social participation image		Interpersonal relationship image	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Major students	4.02	.617	4.15	.595	3.70	.692	4.18	.619	3.66	.792	3.92	.708
Non-major students	3.75	.686	4.00	.604	3.54	.801	4.02	.702	3.48	.833	3.70	.654
Total	3.91	.659	4.09	.603	3.64	.742	4.12	.658	3.58	.813	3.83	.694
p	.00		.03		.05		.02		.05		.00	

Conclusion

Overall, major students had a more positive image of optometrist than non-major students, and particularly of their professional image, which scored the highest at 4.12 points. Their social participation image scored the lowest, at 3.58. Both major students and non-major students gave the highest scores (4.30 and 4.24, respectively) in answer to the question related to optometrist’ traditional image about whether “optometrist are clean and neat“. Since optometrist are experts in eye medical service, their hygiene was perceived as the highest. Although optometrist have an occupational mission to serve the public’s eye health, their social participation image scored the lowest. In light of this, optometrist need to make efforts toward social contributions and voluntary service in order to improve their social image. Both major students and non-major students gave the lowest scores (2.86 and 2.84) in answer to the question related to optometrist’ social image about whether “optometrist have a high social status“. Therefore, optometrist, both collectively and individually, need to make efforts to improve their social status.

Ethical Clearance: Not required

Source of Funding: This study was supported by the Research Program funded by the Baekseok University.

Conflict of Interest: Nil

References

1. Moon SJ, Ku IY, Choi HY, Ka KH. A Study on Enrollment Satisfaction, Career Directions, and Image of Dental Hygienists for Dental Hygiene Students in Some Regions. *Journal of the Korea Academia-Industrial cooperation Society*. 2015 Jan; 16(1):564-575. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5762/KAIS.2015.16.1.564>
2. Ye KH, Lee WS. A Study on the Quality of Life in the Cataract Patients (By The EQ-5D(Euro Quality of Life-5Dimension Standard)). *J Korean Ophthalmic Opt Soc*. 2017 Mar;22(1):89-96. <http://dx.doi.org/10.14479/jkoos.2017.22.1.89>
3. Ye KH. A Study on Optometrist’ Image. *J Korean Ophthalmic Opt Soc*. 2019 Jun; 24(2):89-98. <http://dx.doi.org/10.14479/jkoos.2019.24.2.89>
4. Cho YK, Jeon IC. A Study on Social Awareness of Optometrists in Korea. *Korean Journal of Vision Science*. 2019 Mar;21(1): 57~69. <https://doi.org/10.17337/JMBI.2019.21.1.57>
5. Kim YM, Jang DK, Jung YR, Lee JH, Ha BH, Kim KH. Study on Optician’s Job Value Perception according to Satisfaction of Ophthalmic Optics Student’s Major Subject. *J Korean Ophthalmic Opt Soc*. 2018 Aug;23(4):277-281. <http://dx.doi.org/10.14479/jkoos.2018.23.4.277>
6. Sim JG, Kim SJ, Kwon OH, Ye KH. A Study on the Korea Optician’s Understanding for Eye Disease and its Effects on their Job Performance. *J Korean Ophthalmic Opt Soc*. 2018 Sep;23(3):213-220. <http://dx.doi.org/10.14479/jkoos.2018.23.3.213>
7. Yoon HK. A Study of Nurses’ Internal, External, and Social Images as Perceived by College Students in South Korea. *Global Journal of Health Science*. 2018 Jan; 10(1):156-165. DOI:10.5539/gjhs.v10n1p156
8. Yu SY. What is Perceived the Image of Nurses?: Comparison Major and Non-Major Students. *Journal of Digital Convergence*. 2014 Oct;12(10):353-361. <http://dx.doi.org/10.14400/JDC.2014.12.10.353>
9. Park JM, Kim SM. Comparison of paramedic image and its determinants between paramedic and

non-paramedic students. *Korean J Emerg Med Ser.* 2015 Aug;19(2):39-49. <http://dx.doi.org/10.14408/KJEMS.2015.19.2.039>

10. Seong JA, Yeom EY, Do YS. Image of Nurses and

Nursing Professional Values Perceived by Nursing Students. *The Journal of the Korea Contents Association.* 2014 Nov;14(11):798-809. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5392/JKCA.2014.14.11.79>