

Professional Ethics Understanding and Professionalism Attitude of Prospective *Make-Up Artist* Students

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Keywords

Professional Ethics; *Make-Up Artist*; Professionalism Attitude; Vocational Education; Cosmetology

ABSTRACT

Rising demand for make-up artist (MUA) services has pushed clients to expect more than technical skill ethical, professional conduct now matters just as much. Yet a preliminary survey found that prospective MUAs often struggle with punctuality, client communication, and tool hygiene, prompting this inquiry into whether their grasp of professional ethics shapes how professionally they behave. Using a quantitative descriptive design, this study surveyed 124 Cosmetology and Beauty students (2022-2023 cohorts) at Universitas Negeri Padang, selected via the Slovin formula and proportionate stratified random sampling. A validated, reliable Likert questionnaire supplied the data, which were tested for normality and linearity before running simple linear regression, a t-test, and the coefficient of determination. Both variables scored in the good category (ethics understanding: $M = 91.49$, $SD = 18.85$; professionalism attitude: $M = 62.38$, $SD = 12.90$). Regression yielded $Y = 15.845 + 0.509X$ ($t = 12.266$, $p < .001$), with ethics understanding explaining 55.2% of the variance in professionalism attitude ($R^2 = .552$) a significant, positive relationship that underscores the need for sustained ethics instruction in beauty vocational curricula.

INTRODUCTION

The era of globalization has driven major changes in the structure of the world of work, including in the fast-growing beauty sector as the penetration of digital technology, social media, and personal care product consumption trends in various countries increase. Shifts in consumer behavior and the rise of digital marketing have also reshaped the beauty and skincare product market in Indonesia, opening up new opportunities and challenges for the professional workforce in the field of aesthetics. This growth in turn expands career space for graduates of cosmetology and beauty education, one of which is through the profession of *Make-Up Artist* (MUA) which is now one of the favorite career choices of the younger generation (Salsabila et al., 2024).

In line with the increasing demand for MUA's services, clients' expectations for service quality have also increased. Clients no longer only assess the final result of the makeup, but also pay attention to the way the MUA communicates, reliability, responsiveness, and professional attitude during the service (Putri & Yupelmi, 2025). This condition requires a MUA to master technical skills while demonstrating overall professionalism starting from maintaining the cleanliness of work tools, respecting time, to upholding professional ethics in every interaction with clients (Safira et al., 2021). In a similar vein, Rahmiati (2018) explains that Cosmetology and Beauty students need to possess adequate knowledge and skills and to apply hygiene, sanitation, and professional ethics when providing services to clients, underscoring that mastery of product use and cleanliness standards is an essential part of preparing students to deliver professional beauty services. The competence of a MUA is thus not solely determined by technical expertise, but also by attitude and the ability to interact with clients, since client

satisfaction ultimately depends on a combination of skill, professional conduct, and responsiveness to client needs (Putri & Yupelmi, 2025).

Professionalism itself is commonly understood as the ability of a person to carry out tasks according to applicable competencies, responsibilities, and work standards, which grows through a process of planning, coaching, and targeted performance assessment (Siagian, 2023). In other words, professionalism does not stop at mastering technical skills alone, but also relies on work attitude, discipline, and commitment to carry out tasks optimally. In this context, understanding professional ethics plays a central role because it shapes an individual's awareness of appropriate behavioral boundaries, moral responsibility, and adherence to work standards. Nengsih et al. (2022) found that ethical dilemmas are significantly related to professionalism, so that instilling an understanding of ethics from the lecture period is an important provision before students enter the world of work.

The Indonesian National Work Competency Standard (SKKNI) in the beauty sector, which was stipulated through the Decree of the Minister of Manpower of the Republic of Indonesia Number 180 of 2021, explicitly places aspects of work attitudes on par with technical knowledge and skills. Beauty workers, including MUAs, are required to implement occupational safety and health, maintain personal and environmental hygiene, be able to communicate and serve customers professionally, and be able to consult and handle complaints. This provision emphasizes that professionalism based on professional ethics is an inseparable part of the competence of a MUA, and therefore needs to be understood and trained from the time of education.

However, the conditions on the ground are not fully aligned with these demands. There are still cosmetology and beauty students who display behaviors that do not reflect professionalism, such as weaknesses in managing time, communication with clients that are not optimal, and low awareness of maintaining the cleanliness of tools and service quality. It is this gap between expected competency standards and real practice in the field that underlies the urgency of this research.

This phenomenon was strengthened by the results of initial observations of 15 students of the Makeup and Beauty Study Program, Padang State University. The survey showed that 93.3% of respondents had work experience in the field of beauty outside of college, and all respondents (100%) stated that understanding professional ethics has an effect on the formation of their professional attitude in the world of work. The most dominant factors encouraging students to behave professionally during practice were the encouragement to maintain their self-image as prospective professionals (80%), followed by awareness of the importance of professional ethics (73.3%), responsibility to clients (66.7%), and compliance with practice SOPs (66.7%); Meanwhile, the role of learning and lecturer direction was recorded to have a smaller contribution (13.3%). On the other hand, the obstacles that most students feel in applying a professional attitude are pressure and fatigue during practice (60%), limited field experience (33.3%), the influence of the work environment (26.7%), as well as limited understanding of professional ethics and low self-motivation (20% each). Although the proportion of students who explicitly attribute their obstacles to a weak understanding of ethics is relatively small, these findings are still relevant because work pressure, fatigue, and environmental influences will be easier to manage if students have a solid foundation of professional ethics as a guideline for attitude.

A number of previous studies have raised the issue of professional ethics and professionalism of MUA separately. Putri and Yupelmi (2025) examined consumer perceptions of male MUA service quality in Padang and found that clients weigh interpersonal conduct as heavily as technical skill, but their study is descriptive-qualitative and does not measure how ethics understanding is internalized by the MUA themselves. Alifiana (2019) reviewed MUA practice through the lens of Sonny Keraf's business-ethics principles, offering a normative-philosophical account rather than an empirically testable model. Widiyantari et al. (2025) mapped the professionalism of male MUAs in Surabaya and reported that professionalism was

largely shaped by work experience and peer mentoring, yet their study did not incorporate a formal measure of ethics understanding as a predictor. Taken together, these studies confirm that professional ethics and professionalism are recognized as related constructs in the beauty and service sectors, but none of them statistically tests the direct influence of ethics understanding on professionalism attitude among prospective MUA students in a vocational higher-education setting. This research *gap* is what this research seeks to fill, by placing students as units of analysis and connecting two constructs that have been discussed more descriptively or qualitatively. The novelty of this research lies in empirical testing of the influence of understanding of professional ethics on professionalism attitudes specifically in the context of education of MUA candidates in vocational colleges, the results of which are expected to be a reference for the development of data-based professional ethics learning.

Based on the description above, this study aims to (1) determine the level of professional ethics understanding of students of the Makeup and Beauty Study Program class of 2022 and 2023, (2) determine the same level of professionalism of students, and (3) test the influence of understanding of professional ethics on students' professionalism attitudes as prospective *Make-Up Artists* (MUA).

Theoretically, this study contributes to the literature on vocational professionalism by providing empirical evidence for the pathway through which understanding of professional ethics translates into professionalism attitude, a linkage that earlier MUA-related studies had only discussed descriptively. Practically, the findings offer study-program managers an empirical basis for strengthening ethics-related content in the curriculum, particularly in courses and practicums that shape students' readiness to serve clients professionally, and provide MUA students themselves with an evidence-based reference for developing professional attitudes prior to entering the workforce.

METHOD

This study uses a descriptive method with a quantitative approach, which aims to produce a systematic, factual, and accurate picture of the level of understanding of professional ethics and the attitude of students' professionalism, as well as testing the hypothesis regarding the causal relationship between the two (Sugiyono, 2021; Lestari & Hadi, 2020). The research was carried out at the D4 Study Program in Cosmetology and Beauty Education, Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality, Padang State University.

The research population is 179 students consisting of the class of 2022 (85 people) and the class of 2023 (94 people). The sample was determined using the Slovin formula with an error level of 5%, so that a total sample of 124 respondents was obtained. The sampling technique uses *purposive sampling* with the following criteria: (1) registered as a student of the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality UNP class of 2022 and 2023, (2) has taken courses related to professional ethics, and (3) is a final stage student who has experience receiving makeup work so that he has interacted directly with clients.

The independent variable (X) in this study is the Understanding of Professional Ethics, operationalized as the ability of students to classify the values and principles of professional ethics, choose work procedures according to the code of ethics, and apply the concept of ethics in service practice. Its indicators were adapted from the comprehension-level indicators of Jihad and Haris (2013) covering the ability to translate, interpret, and extrapolate a concept which were then contextualized to the professional-ethics domain of MUA practice to yield three indicators: classifying the values and principles of professional ethics, selecting work procedures in accordance with the code of ethics, and applying ethical concepts in client service. The dependent variable (Y) is the Attitude of Student Professionalism, operationalized through indicators of competence, work effectiveness, work efficiency, responsibility, intellectual-emotional intelligence, forward-oriented attitude, and independent attitude. These indicators were derived by combining the professionalism dimensions proposed by Sedarmayanti (2017) competence, effectiveness, efficiency, and responsibility with those proposed by Handayani et al. (2018)

advanced skill, knowledge and experience, intellectual-emotional intelligence, forward-oriented attitude, and independent attitude—so that the two frameworks jointly cover both the technical-competence and the attitudinal-behavioral aspects of professionalism relevant to prospective MUAs. Both instrument blueprints were arranged into indicator-by-sub-indicator grids before being translated into questionnaire items.

Primary data was collected through a Likert 1–5 scale questionnaire which was disseminated online via *Google Forms*. Before use, the instrument was examined through an expert validation test and piloted (*pilot test*) to 30 respondents to test the clarity of the statement. Prior to data collection, all respondents were informed of the purpose, procedures, and voluntary nature of the study through an information page attached to the Google Forms link, and they proceeded to the questionnaire only after providing electronic informed consent. Respondents' identities and individual responses were kept confidential, reported only in aggregate form, and used exclusively for academic purposes, in line with standard research-ethics procedures for survey-based studies. Secondary data were obtained from scientific journals, books, and the results of previous research as a reinforcement of the theoretical framework.

The validity test of the instrument was carried out by comparing the *value of r calculated* (Corrected Item-Total Correlation) to *r table of* 0.361 ($n = 30$; $\alpha = 0.05$). The test results showed that of the 30 items of the Professional Ethics Understanding instrument, 28 items were declared valid and 2 items (numbers 19 and 22) were declared invalid so they were dropped. In the Professionalism Attitude instrument, of the 25 items tested, 20 items were declared valid and 5 items (numbers 16, 18, 21, 23, and 24) were declared invalid. Valid items are then used in the collection of research data. The reliability test using *Cronbach's Alpha technique* produced a value of 0.951 for the variable of Professional Ethical Understanding and 0.903 for the variable of Professionalism Attitude, both of which are in the very reliable category (Sugiyono, 2017). Data analysis techniques include descriptive statistics to describe the minimum, maximum, average, and standard deviation values of each variable; normality test using *the Kolmogorov–Smirnov* method; linearity test via *ANOVA Table* in the *Deviation from Linearity* column; simple linear regression analysis to test the influence of X on Y; t-test to test the significance of the influence partially; and determination coefficient test (R^2) to determine the magnitude of the contribution of variable X to the variation of variable Y. The entire data processing process was carried out using IBM SPSS software Statistics version 25.0.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Analysis

This study involved 124 students of the Makeup and Beauty Study Program class of 2022 and 2023 at Padang State University as respondents. The descriptive statistical results of the two research variables are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistical Results

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Red	Std. Deviation
Understanding Professional Ethics (X)	124	41,00	140,00	91,4919	18,85093
Professionalism Attitude (Y)	124	29,00	95,00	62,3790	12,90213

Source: SPSS output version 25, primary data processed, 2026.

The Understanding of Professional Ethics variable obtained an average score of 91.49 with a standard deviation of 18.85, while the Professionalism Attitude variable obtained an average score of 62.38 with a standard deviation of 12.90. The two average scores are in the range of good categories, indicating that in general students have an adequate understanding of professional ethics and professionalism attitudes as a provision to enter the world of work.

Instrument Test Results

The validity test on 30 items of the Professional Ethics Understanding instrument (r table = 0.361) resulted in 28 valid items and 2 invalid items, while the validity test on 25 items of the

Professionalism Attitude instrument resulted in 20 valid items and 5 invalid items. Invalid items are not used on the primary data collection. The results of the reliability test with *Cronbach's Alpha* are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Reliability Test Results

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Remarks
Understanding Professional Ethics (X)	0,951	Highly Reliable
Professionalism Attitude (Y)	0,903	Highly Reliable

Source: SPSS output version 25, 2026.

Both *Cronbach's Alpha* values are far above the minimum threshold of 0.60, even in the range of 0.81–1.00 which is categorized as very reliable, so the research instrument is suitable for use as a measuring tool.

Analysis Prerequisites Test

The normality test using *the Kolmogorov–Smirnov* method yielded an Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.191 (> 0.05), which indicates that the residual data is normally distributed. The linearity test through *the ANOVA Table* produced a significance value of *Deviation from Linearity* of 0.158 (> 0.05), which shows that the relationship between Professional Ethical Understanding and Professionalism Attitude is linear. With the fulfillment of these two assumptions, simple linear regression analysis is worth continuing.

Simple Linear Regression Analysis and Hypothesis Test

The results of data processing produced a regression equation model as presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Results of Simple Linear Regression Analysis and t-Test

Models	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	15,845	3,873		4,091	0,000
Understanding Professional Ethics (X)	0,509	0,041	0,743	12,266	0,000

Dependent variable: Attitude of Professionalism (Y). Source: SPSS output version 25, 2026.

Based on Table 3, the regression equation is obtained:

$$Y = 15.845 + 0.509X$$

A constant value of 15.845 indicates that if the Understanding of Professional Ethics is zero, the Professionalism Attitude of students is estimated at 15.845. The regression coefficient of 0.509 with a positive value shows that every increase in one unit of Professional Ethics Understanding will be followed by an increase in Professionalism Attitude of 0.509 units. The t-value of 12.266 with a significance of 0.000 (< 0.05) indicates that the influence is statistically significant, so that an alternative hypothesis (H_a) that states that there is a positive and significant influence between the Understanding of Professional Ethics on the Professionalism Attitude of Cosmetology and Beauty students as MUA candidates is declared accepted.

Coefficient of Determination

Table 4 presents the results of the determination coefficient test.

Table 4. Determination Coefficient Test Results (Model Summary)

Models	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0,743	0,552	0,549	8,669

Predictor: (Constant), Understanding of Professional Ethics. Source: SPSS output version 25, 2026.

An R value of 0.743 indicates a strong positive relationship between the two variables. The R Square value of 0.552 shows that the Understanding of Professional Ethics is able to explain 55.2% of the variation in students' Professionalism Attitudes, while the remaining 44.8% is influenced by other factors outside of this study, such as practical experience, learning environment, learning motivation, and student personality characteristics. A contribution of 55.2% is theoretically reasonable rather than a weakness of the model: professionalism attitude, as conceptualized by Sedarmayanti (2017) and Handayani et al. (2018), is a multidimensional construct built from competence, effectiveness, responsibility, and forward-oriented behavior, so no single cognitive predictor such as ethics understanding would be expected to account for the whole of it. Understanding professional ethics primarily supplies the normative knowledge base knowing what is right and expected while translating that knowledge into consistent on-the-job attitude also depends on experiential and dispositional factors that operate outside the cognitive domain. Of the unexplained 44.8%, practical experience and organizational or field exposure are plausibly the largest contributors, since Handayani et al. (2018) identify skill built through direct experience as a distinct driver of professionalism separate from ethical knowledge, and this is consistent with the present study's preliminary survey, in which practice-related pressure and fatigue rather than a lack of ethics understanding were the obstacles most students reported. Learning environment and lecturer direction likely add a smaller share, since the preliminary survey recorded relatively low direct attribution of professional behavior to lecturer direction (13.3%), suggesting that classroom instruction shapes ethics understanding more directly than it shapes attitude formation, which is instead reinforced through repeated practice. Personality characteristics such as self-motivation and emotional regulation may account for the remaining variation, as these traits condition how consistently a student applies known ethical standards under time pressure or client conflict. Taken together, this pattern suggests that professionalism attitude is jointly produced by what students know (ethics understanding) and what they repeatedly do and experience, so the moderate-to-strong 55.2% contribution should be read as evidence that ethics understanding is a necessary but not sufficient condition for professionalism.

Understanding professional ethics is one of the aspects that plays an important role in shaping the professionalism of prospective Make-Up Artist (MUA) candidates. This study shows that the level of professional ethics understanding of students of the Cosmetology and Beauty Study Program, Padang State University class of 2022 and 2023 is in the good category, with an average score of 91.49. These results show that most students have understood the professional code of ethics, professional responsibility, integrity, honesty, and the importance of maintaining the comfort and confidentiality of clients in the practice of cosmetology services. This condition indicates that students not only understand the technical aspects of makeup, but also have knowledge about professional behavior standards that must be applied when entering the world of work. These findings are in line with the opinion of Pane et al. (2024) who stated that professional ethics are closely related to responsibility, integrity, and compliance with professional rules, and that this understanding plays an important role in shaping professional behavior through the application of codes of ethics and service responsibilities. Thus, understanding professional ethics is the foundation for students to provide quality service while maintaining client trust.

The results of the study also showed that the professionalism attitude of students was in the good category, with an average score of 62.38. These results illustrate that students have shown a professional attitude which is reflected in the ability to maintain service quality, be responsible for work, respect time, work together, maintain appearance, and be able to communicate well with clients and colleagues. This attitude is an important provision for students in facing the demands of an increasingly competitive world of work, especially in the field of beauty services that prioritize service quality and customer satisfaction. The results of this study are in line with the theory of Sedarmayanti (2017) which states that professionalism is a person's ability to carry out work based on competence, responsibility, commitment, and

compliance with professional standards. In addition, the research of Handayani et al. (2018) also explains that professionalism is not only influenced by technical ability, but also by work attitudes, discipline, ethics, and responsibility in carrying out the profession. Therefore, the professionalism of prospective MUA candidates is not enough only to be built through the mastery of makeup skills, but also through the formation of professional character during the educational process.

The significant positive influence confirmed by the regression analysis is scientifically meaningful beyond the statistic itself: it indicates that ethics understanding functions as a cognitive antecedent that students draw on when translating professional standards into everyday conduct, rather than remaining inert classroom knowledge. This is consistent with the reasoning that ethics understanding equips students with a normative frame—an internalized sense of what responsible, honest, and client-respecting conduct looks like—that they can then apply when facing concrete service situations such as time pressure, client complaints, or ambiguous work instructions. Students who have a good understanding of professional ethics tend to be more responsible, maintain integrity, respect client rights, and carry out services in accordance with professional standards, whereas low understanding of professional ethics has the potential to affect the quality of service and reduce the level of professionalism of MUA candidates. The results of this study are consistent with the research of Nengsih et al. (2022) which shows a significant relationship between ethical aspects and professionalism, although their study framed the relationship as a dilemma-coping mechanism among practicing health workers rather than as a direct predictive pathway; the present finding extends that logic to the vocational education context by showing the relationship holds even before students formally enter the workforce. Research by Pane et al. (2024) also explains that understanding professional ethics contributes to the formation of professional behavior through increased responsibility, integrity, and compliance with professional codes of ethics, and the present study adds statistical specificity to that claim by quantifying the contribution at 55.2%. The convergence of the present results with these prior studies, despite differing in professional field and research design, strengthens the argument that professional ethics functions as a cross-sector determinant of professionalism, while the vocational, pre-service setting examined here specifically demonstrates that this determinant is already active before students formally enter the beauty industry workforce.

Based on the results of the study, professional ethics learning needs to receive greater attention in beauty vocational education. Strengthening ethical material is not only provided in the form of theory in class, but also needs to be integrated into practicum activities, service simulations, and industrial practices so that students are able to apply ethical values in real terms in service to clients. Thus, graduates of the Cosmetology and Beauty Study Program are expected not only to have good technical competence, but also to have integrity, responsibility, and a professional attitude in accordance with the demands of the beauty industry. However, the results of the determination coefficient show that there are still 44.8% of other factors that affect students' professionalism attitudes. These factors can be in the form of practical work experience, learning environment, learning motivation, organizational experience, lecturer support, and experience interacting with clients. Therefore, the development of student professionalism needs to be carried out comprehensively through synergy between professional ethics learning, strengthening technical competencies, and continuous practical experience.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of data analysis and discussion, three things can be concluded. First, the understanding of Professional Ethics of students of the Cosmetology and Beauty Study Program batch 2022 and 2023 of Padang State University is in the good category, reflected in their understanding of the professional code of ethics, professional responsibility, integrity, honesty, and the application of ethics in cosmetology practice. Second, students' Professionalism Attitude is also in the good category, shown through work responsibility, discipline, communication skills, professional appearance, and orientation to client satisfaction. Third, the

understanding of Professional Ethics has a positive and significant effect on the professionalism attitude of students as prospective *Make-Up Artists* (MUA), with a significance value of 0.000 (< 0.05), t count 12.266, and contribution (R^2) of 55.2%, so that the research hypothesis is accepted. The better the student's understanding of professional ethics, the higher the professionalism attitude they have as prospective professionals in the field of makeup and beauty. Scientifically, these findings extend prior descriptive and qualitative accounts of ethics and professionalism in the beauty sector by providing the first quantitative, vocational-education-based evidence that ethics understanding functions as a significant antecedent—rather than merely a correlate of professionalism attitude among prospective MUAs, while also showing that this cognitive factor explains only part of the construct, so that professionalism formation in cosmetology education should be understood as jointly produced by ethics instruction and accumulated practical experience. This contribution offers cosmetology and beauty study programs an empirical rationale for embedding professional-ethics content across theory and practicum courses, rather than treating it as a stand-alone subject, as a deliberate strategy for cultivating professionalism in future MUAs.

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