

Instagram Astrology: A Guide of Predicting Life During the Pandemic Times in Indonesia

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Abstrak

Artikel ini membahas pembacaan horoskop melalui media sosial, yang sangat populer di kalangan anak muda di Indonesia, dan mengintegrasikan beberapa perspektif praktis dan teoretis dalam analisisnya. Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi ramalan zodiak di Instagram dalam menghadapi kondisi lingkungan yang tidak seimbang akibat COVID-19. Menggunakan penelitian kualitatif, pengumpulan data melibatkan observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Observasi dan wawancara dilakukan pada bulan Desember 2021 dan Januari 2022 dengan lima orang. Hasilnya menunjukkan bahwa minat pembaca terhadap ramalan astrologi meningkat selama pandemi dengan menggunakan Instagram. Ada berbagai alasan di balik minat pembaca untuk melihat dan mengikuti prediksi ini, seperti dorongan, cara belajar dan berperilaku dalam membuat pilihan, sebagai panduan hidup, dan materi motivasi untuk prediksi yang optimis, terutama dalam menghadapi kondisi pandemi COVID-19 yang kacau dan tidak pasti. Tidak hanya itu, astrologi dalam perannya tidak sepenuhnya "dipercaya" seperti agama. Ini digunakan sebagai alat penyembuhan spiritual dan panduan untuk memprediksi kehidupan masa depan orang-orang di tengah kondisi lingkungan yang tidak stabil akibat pandemi. Menggunakan platform Instagram memainkan peran penting sebagai panduan bagi generasi muda, membantu mereka merasa lebih terarah dalam hidup mereka di tengah kondisi pandemi yang tidak pasti.

Kata Kunci: Astrologi; Instagram; Masa Pandemi, Zodiak

Abstract

This article discusses reading horoscopes through social media, which is very popular among young people in Indonesia, and integrates several practical and theoretical perspectives in its analysis. This research explores the zodiac forecast on Instagram in dealing with unbalanced environmental conditions due to the COVID-19. Using qualitative research, data collection involved observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations and interviews were conducted in December 2021 and January 2022 with five people. The results showed that readers' interest in astrological predictions increased during the pandemic by using Instagram. There are various reasons behind the readers' interest in seeing and following these predictions, such as encouragement, a way to learn and behave in making choices, as a guide to life, and motivational material for optimistic predictions, especially in facing chaotic and uncertain COVID-19 pandemic conditions. Not only that, astrology in its role is not entirely "believed in" like religion. It is used as a spiritual healing tool and a guide to predict people's future lives amid unstable environmental conditions due to the pandemic. Using the Instagram platform plays a significant role as a guide for the younger generation, helping them feel more directed in their lives amidst the uncertain conditions of the pandemic.

Keywords: Astrology; Instagram; Pandemic Times, Zodiac

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INTRODUCTION

As the COVID-19 pandemic that began to hit the world, unstable conditions were born in human life. Various activities began to be stopped one by one to maintain security and safety. In early March 2020, two Indonesian citizens were confirmed positive and had to undergo quarantine at one of the referral hospitals for handling COVID-19. Then in May 2020, the number of confirmed cases nationwide had reached 9,800 million people, including 800 deaths (Weydmann et al., 2020). As a result, activities in various social, economic, educational fields began to come to a complete halt. Large-Scale Restrictions (in Indonesia: Pembatasan Sosial Berskala Besar-PSBB) is one of the government's policies amid a widespread epidemic. This effort also became a standard procedure applied in many other countries worldwide.

Pandemic, in Javanese terms, is called '*Pageblug*'. According to the Javanese community, *pageblug* refers to all kinds of disasters, such as natural disasters, disease outbreaks, and wars that result in large-scale casualties (Suhadjati & Fanani, 2020). He further explained that *Pageblug* has broad dimensions, including physical, political, and social conditions, natural signs and relationships with 'God'. Therefore, Suhadjati & Fanani stated that efforts to overcome the pandemic (mitigation approach) not only deals with humans as physical and social subjects, but also as spiritual subjects. The approach seen so far is still at the physical level, such as through traditional medicine (*jamu* or herbal medicine) and modern medicine through certain drugs (Weydmann et al., 2020). Meanwhile, the "spiritual" approach is rarely seen or touched. This spiritual endeavor is emerging and can be seen through reading horoscopes or astrology during the pandemic COVID-19.

This situation is further exacerbated by confusing information (hoax news)

spreading through social media. This not only has an impact on the physical condition that becomes vulnerable to the spread of the COVID-19 virus, but also the mental condition, which is also affected in this situation. Steven Taylor, professor of psychiatry at the University of British Columbia and author of *The Psychology of Pandemics*, contends that for a significant minority—estimated at 10 to 15 percent—the psychological effects of the pandemic may result in long-term disruptions to their daily functioning, preventing a full return to pre-pandemic normalcy. Similarly, public health experts in the United Kingdom, writing in the *British Medical Journal*, cautioned that the mental health consequences of the pandemic are likely to persist well beyond the resolution of its physical health impacts (Savage, 2020).

Mental health problems began to emerge during the pandemic. According to GBD 2020 data on the prevalence of mental health problems, evidence suggests that the pandemic has led to an increase in mental health problems worldwide, including widespread depression and anxiety (WHO, 2022). In addition, research conducted by Xiong et al. (2020) showed that during the COVID-19 pandemic in China, Spain, Italy, Iran, the US, Turkey, Nepal, and Denmark, the levels of anxiety symptoms were relatively high from 6.33% to 50.9%, depression from 14.6% to 48.3%, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) from 7% to 53.8%, psychological distress between 34.43% and 38%, and stress levels spanning from 8.1% to as high as 81.9%. Young people are the dominant group in mental health problems.

During the pandemic, many young people experienced a significant decline in mental health. A global meta-analysis found that approximately 1 in 4 adolescents experienced clinical depression and 1 in 5 experienced clinical anxiety, a twofold increase compared to the pre-pandemic era (Deng et al., 2023). Furthermore, a review article stated that the prevalence of anxiety

and depressive symptoms reached approximately 31% each, while sleep disturbances were reported to reach 42% among children and adolescents during the pandemic. A longitudinal study in Norway noted a significant increase in emotional problems over time, even among adolescents previously considered resilient (Lehmann et al., 2022). Numerous contributing factors, such as social isolation, school closures, family economic uncertainty, marital conflict, and disruptions to daily routines, add to the psychological stress of young people (Huang & Ougrin, 2021; McColl & Nescott, 2024; Winter & Lavis, 2022).

During the pandemic, Indonesian adolescents experienced a significant increase in levels of psychological stress, anxiety, and depression. A DASS-42-based study in Bandung (14–18 years) reported that 58.7% of adolescents experienced anxiety, 32.2% depression, and 34.7% stress during the pandemic in early 2020 (Pertiwi et al., 2021). A survey of Indonesian students also recorded a high prevalence: between 69.7% experienced anxiety, 43.9% depression, and 43.2% stress, and 92.3% reported poor sleep quality, which exacerbated their psychological condition (Rosita, 2025). Despite the high prevalence, access to professional services remains limited. Only about 2.6% of adolescents with mental health issues have accessed support services in the past 12 months. Many parents prefer to manage their problems themselves, seek support from family and close friends, or use horoscopes and astrology predictions through social media (Lopez et al., 2021; Sujarwoto et al., 2021; UGM, 2022).

Horoscope or astrology is one thing that is currently rife and is a topic that gets a lot of attention. Although it has not been scientifically proven, astrology remains one of the things in demand. Almost every newspaper or magazine published writes daily, weekly, or even monthly forecasts.

Especially in this increasingly sophisticated era, astrology presented in the form of magazine or newspaper writing, and through various media, including social media. Social media is an online medium where users can easily access or participate (Utari, 2011). Different types of social media that provide astrological predictions or forecasts are like Instagram, TikTok, WhatsApp, and Twitter. Everyone can access various astrological content on social media as a reference in daily life activities, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Based on the problems described above, this article attempts to explain, study, and learn more about the use of Instagram astrology as a parameter to predict life conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic based on star or zodiac predictions. Therefore, this study explores with a general question, 'How do people navigate their lives during the pandemic using Instagram astrology?'. This paper will look at the socio-cultural and environmental conditions of society in Indonesia –especially among the youth– through a series of observations and interviews.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach to explore participants' perspectives on the phenomenon, aiming to capture and describe their experiences through narrative and linguistic expression (Creswell, 2016; Moleong, 2017). The data collection process involves narrowing the research focus, gathering information through both structured and unstructured observations and interviews, documenting relevant findings, and formulating protocols or guidelines for recording data related to the use of astrology on Instagram as a social media platform (Creswell, 2016). This study adopts an ethnographic approach to explore, identify, and interpret individuals' behaviors, beliefs, and perspectives

concerning their knowledge of and motivations for using social media as a platform for horoscope and astrology-related practices (Spradley, 2006). As a support, it is also necessary to search for literature such as articles or journals related to handling COVID-19, daily case data, and various articles related to astrology, horoscopes, and their use among young people.

To answer the problem questions in this article, the author conducted a series of data collection techniques. First, observations are made by looking at social media that provide services or posts about horoscopes and zodiac predictions. This stage was carried out in October and November 2021. Then, several questions related to the research topic will be arranged. In the next stage, interviews will be conducted with people who follow Instagram astrology accounts. The selection of informants in the form of followers on Instagram astrology was carefully considered so that the data obtained followed the research objectives and could describe the answers to the research problems (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007).

The five informants (consist of young people) were willing to be interviewed. The selection of informants used purposive sampling, taking into account the category of active Instagram astrology users as a reference for life during the pandemic. The informants comprised five people from several parts of Indonesia, with various occupations, aged around 21-30 years. The interviews were conducted online via messages on WhatsApp and direct messages (DM) on Instagram, during December 2021 and January 2022. The interview questions were semi-structured with varying interview durations for each informant. Data analysis using Miles and Huberman's qualitative analysis includes data collection, reduction, verification, analysis, interpretation, and conclusions

(Huberman & Miles, 1992). As a support, literature searches such as articles or journals related to astrology are also needed, especially regarding beliefs, influences, and uses during the pandemic. At the academic level, this research can add to the repertoire of scientific studies on human-environment-spiritual/religious relations during a pandemic.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Theoretical Dimensions: Astrology and Adorno

In Indonesian online dictionary (KBBI), "astrologi (as.tro.lo.gi) astrology is used to predict and find out the fate of people; fortune teller. Astrology is founded on the belief in a causal connection between celestial events and occurrences on Earth, asserting that the positions and movements of stars and planets exert influence over human life and behavior. Astrology is an interesting phenomenon and can be used as a form of escape, looking for "*tujuan hidup*" (living clues) to keep living life, especially during this pandemic.

One of the figures closely related to astrology is Theodor W. Adorno. Adorno is a well-known German philosopher who has published an essay entitled "*The Stars Down To Earth*" (2002). This essay presents a content analysis of an astrology column examined by Theodor Adorno during his return visit to the United States from Germany between 1952 and 1953, which was later published in translation in *Telos* in 1974 (Adorno, 2002). He tries to see how mass culture shapes humans socially through horoscopes in his writing. The wider community treats Astrology as commonplace, conventional, and accepted. Adorno examines multiple aspects of the implicit reader's daily life as reflected in the column, including family dynamics, marital relationships, reliance on technology, notions of freedom, the segmentation of the day into labor and leisure, personal hygiene, and other compulsive behaviors. He interprets these elements as indicative

of the pathological conditions of modern consumer society and the self-alienated individuals shaped by it (Kumar, 2012).

According to Adorno, the function of astrology is to foster a conformist and dependent way of thinking through various rhetorical strategies that fulfill and manipulate the reader's psychology (Adorno, 2002). It is provided an optimal opportunity to embrace spiritual practice to feel whole and healthy. Astrology is used as an alternative place for people to look for clues (Steyn, 2011).



Picture 1. Astrological Signs
(Source: google/astrological_signs)

An earlier strand of astrological research traces the historical classification of the twelve zodiac signs into two distinct categories based on polarity: the so-called "positive" or odd-numbered signs (Aries, Gemini, Leo, Libra, Sagittarius, Aquarius) and the "negative" or even-numbered signs (Taurus, Cancer, Virgo, Scorpio, Capricorn, Pisces). Within the framework of traditional astrological theory, this polarity is believed to reflect inherent personality orientations. Specifically, individuals born under "positive" signs are thought to exhibit extraverted characteristics, whereas those associated with "negative" signs are generally considered more

introverted in disposition (Hamilton, 2001). This typology underscores astrology's attempt to systematically map personality traits onto celestial configurations, reinforcing its enduring appeal as a tool for self-understanding.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, reading Christmas charts using a sky map is very interesting and popular, especially concerning the client's personality, motivation, goals, and life direction (George-Parkin, 2021). Zodiac consists of the Greek term "Zodiacos Cyclos", which means Animal Circle. Although from Greece, the zodiac order is by date of birth and character (Gauquelin, 1982). Astrology is a tool for people to deal with the pandemic – which includes alternative healing, guidance, and self-reflection. Many experiences loss of ambition, loss of zest for life, loss of purpose, loss of loved ones, loss of jobs, and various other types. Astrology is an interesting choice, and as a form of escape, looking for "living clues" to continue living in the future. One social media platform that is very aggressive in sharing posts about horoscopes or astrology is Instagram. This article will focus on the Instagram platform and its role for young people during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Instagram Astrology

Instagram is a social media channel that provides services for reading zodiac tarot and tarot cards. On Instagram, the accounts that contain posts about tarot readings and zodiac predictions are owned individually. Generally, they are those who have a background in astrology or psychology. The account owner provides services to read the horoscope for free and post content regularly, such as daily posts, weekly posts, and monthly predictions. Instagram astrology accounts also periodically provide free services through streaming Instagram videos to their loyal followers. One stream usually lasts 1 hour, and people randomly get the chance to ask

the astrologers anything they want to know about the astrologers in person.

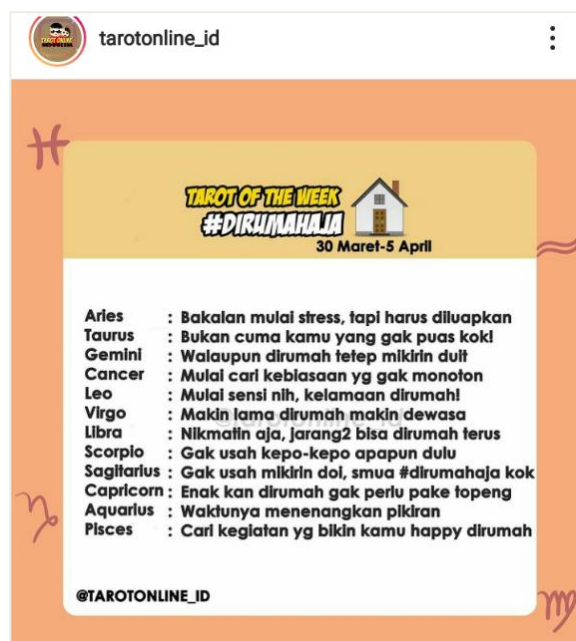
In Indonesia, various Instagram zodiac accounts are available and provide services. Here are some Instagram accounts followed by astrology lovers, such as @zonautopia, @tarotonline_id, @amazing, @tarotina.id, @tarottwinstar, @awzodiak, @zodiacgen, @sifat_zodiac, and @taroto_online. Some zodiac accounts are an option to view predictions by using signs, months, and dates of birth. On Instagram, we can see various responses from followers through the comments in the column.

Services in reading the zodiac are very varied, ranging from reading about love and zodiac signs to relationships between zodiac signs, finances, weaknesses, strengths, partners, and so on. From observations and interviews with several users, it is known that most prediction enthusiasts are about love, work, type of friends, finances, and zodiac weaknesses. Some also added that they are looking for predictions about compatibility with partners, compatibility with other zodiac signs, characters, and habits of each zodiac.

"I follow astrology or zodiac accounts like @zonautopia and @tarottwinstar on Instagram. Usually, the forecasts I'm interested in are romance, compatibility with a partner, work, type of friends, and finances." (interview with Angella, 25 years old)

Uniquely, during this pandemic, the Instagram zodiac provides predictions as the author mentioned above, and is related to the pandemic period, PPKM, and #dirumahaja. As in one of his posts, it gives an overview of what the Chinese zodiac must do while #stayathome according to the policies set by the government. As in one of the following

Instagram astrology accounts @tarotonline_id (see Picture 2).



Picture 2. Tarot of The Week on Pandemic Predictions

(Source: Instagram/tarotonline_id)

The following interpretations represent the results of a weekly tarot reading titled "Tarot of the Week: Pandemic Predictions" conducted for the period of March 30 to April 5, 2021. Each zodiac sign was associated with a brief thematic message reflecting emotional and psychological states during the pandemic: Aries was advised to endure stress as a necessary challenge; Taurus was reminded of shared dissatisfaction; Gemini was portrayed as financially preoccupied despite being at home; Cancer was encouraged to break monotonous routines; Leo was described as increasingly emotionally vulnerable due to prolonged isolation; Virgo was noted for developing mental maturity through extended time at home; Libra was urged to embrace rare moments of relaxation; Scorpio was warned against excessive curiosity; Sagittarius was advised to refrain from romantic concerns and remain indoors; Capricorn was reassured about safety in the domestic sphere; Aquarius was encouraged

to seek inner calm; and Pisces was directed to pursue joyful activities within the home environment. These messages reflect how esoteric digital practices like tarot readings were employed to frame and respond to the psychosocial conditions of pandemic life, particularly through personalized yet broadly relatable narratives.

Forecasts such as those given by astrological account owners (astrologers), such as the example above, give the impression and reinforcement as well as directions that can be used as a benchmark in living the life of the zodiac owner during a pandemic. For instance, the predictive phrase for Pisces, "*find an activity that makes you happy at home*", provides direction on what to do during quarantine or restrictions. This means that future environmental conditions will still be in a bad condition due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, so with this restriction, Pisces will be able to think of various ideas for activities that can be done. At home to reduce or eliminate stress and bad feelings. Likewise, this prediction also applies and adjusts for other zodiac types.

The Reason People Choose Instagram Astrology

Instagram is one of the most popular media among young people. During the pandemic, Instagram usage increased by 40% compared to before. This is due to restrictions on a small or large scale in various regions, so people use their free time to access multiple content on Instagram. The astrological content on Instagram is packaged concisely and attractively to make it easier for readers to see their zodiac predictions. An admin on his Instagram makes an estimate based on his experience as a fortune teller (astrologer) or psychologist.

The informants interviewed gave various answers. Informants started following Instagram astrology before and

after the pandemic. From several informants, more said that they had begun following Instagram astrology in 2021. This shows that the need for astrology during the pandemic period is visible among teenagers in Indonesia.

"I just followed Instagram about zodiac in 2021. Usually, I search for zodiac predictions by writing the hashtag #libra in my Instagram search, because my zodiac sign is Libra. Later, various prediction posts about Libra will appear." (interview with Niken, 23 years old)

When the author asks the reason for choosing Instagram astrology as part of an effort to find references during the pandemic, the author finds answers to various reasons based on the needs and background profiles of users. The enthusiasm in choosing Instagram astrology, apart from being considered attractive, one of the informants said, could not be separated from efforts to adapt to current trends among young people.

"In my opinion, now many young people are using Instagram, right. So, I think Instagram astrology is also fascinating because it displays and packages it with a unique post design." (interview with Hajar, 22 years old)

Another reason is that Instagram was considered easiest and widely used compared to other applications such as Facebook, TikTok, Twitter, and so on. In addition, they chose Instagram astrology because it was to fill their spare time during the pandemic. Instagram is considered a social media platform that is more updated, informative, and engaging than other media. The services provided by Instagram astrology are not only limited to seeing the zodiac forecast, but also offer free tarot

reading services. Another advantage that may not be obtained when using other social media besides Instagram is that users can share their complaints and situations.

"I don't feel alone. I feel there are many people with the same condition as me. For instance, my zodiac sign is Pisces. The latest prediction, Pisces, is predicted to fall into the category of angry conditions, and they are always angry "*ngegas*". I think that's true. And how to prevent anger, I can ask fellow Pisces or zodiac outside Pisces." (interview with Fidia, 27 years old)

Astrological rhetoric on Instagram, referring to Adorno, can be seen in the concept of false needs. This concept asserts that Instagram astrology can provide instant solutions to existential or emotional problems, as conveyed by the informant above. Furthermore, it instills that individuals "must know their zodiac sign" to understand their lives. A practical way to do this is by checking Instagram regularly. This makes it easier for users, and they will follow Instagram accounts based on their zodiac signs. Young people associate happiness or success with astrological elements and pre-made predictions. As a result, a dependence on astrological content as a "life compass" emerges, reinforcing false needs—such as the illusory need for certainty, direction, or personal validation that is actually shaped by the logic of consumption and social media algorithms.

Believe, Spiritual Healing, and as A Parameter

Although most people in Indonesia adhere to their respective religions, they do not deny that they also use astrology as a way of life. It also does not eliminate all beliefs in life, but becomes the basis and

reference in daily activities. When the researcher tries to explore "how much to believe and believe in astrology?", the informants express themselves in quantitative language (percentages) that can only be measured and interpreted (understood) from their side. They describe numbers in spoken and written language. Some of these opinions, among others, state that they fully believe in astrology. This is based on the suitability of some aspects of their personality that they perceive to be the same as what they experience.

"I believe the zodiac in the character section, where I feel the character written on Instagram, is the same as my current condition. For example, it is '*plin-plan*' (quick character change)." (interview with Niken, 23 years old)

On the other hand, skepticism toward astrological predictions is also evident, as many individuals perceive zodiac readings primarily as a form of entertainment, personal encouragement, or a reflective tool for decision-making. In addition, some give reasons that astrology can be used as a parameter and motivational material for optimistic predictions, and create negative ones as material for introspection.

"I don't believe it 100%, it's enough for entertainment and encouragement during this pandemic." (interview with Putra, 21 years old)

Based on these two perspectives, this could be an example illustrating the increasing reliance on astrology during the COVID-19 pandemic can be interpreted as a symbolic response to the broader ecological and existential imbalances experienced during times of crisis. The disruption caused by the pandemic prompted individuals to seek not only physical remedies—such as herbal

treatments and traditional healing practices—but also psychological and spiritual forms of relief. In this context, astrology functions as a tool of spiritual coping, offering predictive narratives that help individuals make sense of uncertainty. These astrological readings provide a semblance of control and reassurance, fulfilling a psychological need for orientation, hope, and meaning amid collective instability.

Discussions

Based on the theory, the author has conveyed in the previous discussion, astrology through zodiac readings presented through Instagram social media is in great demand by young people. One of the things that attracted them to using astrology was the preferences, social needs, and changing conditions due to the pandemic, changed their environment and perception of life in the future. "When will this pandemic end? How will we all deal with this pandemic?". It can't just stop with physical treatment through traditional or modern medicine. Spiritual healing efforts were also carried out to stay afloat amid of the COVID-19 pandemic that hit the situation. Astrology here provides its charm for some people. Thus, they are slowly able to deal with pandemic conditions that not only damage the environmental order, but also their mental and emotional well-being. This research indirectly agrees with Adorno's (1947) opinion that the existence of Instagram astrology is also closely related to curiosity to be used as a tool of introspection and a way to express their feelings and struggles as part of something they consider bigger than themselves. It is also believed to provide an optimal opportunity to embrace spiritual practice to feel more whole and even healthier, in this case, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

CONCLUSION

Reflecting on the results of the

research above, Instagram astrology has played a significant role in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. This research is to open insight and understanding of the community's condition in an effort to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. An environment full of change and instability creates conditions that cause them to seek faith and purpose in life to survive. Through zodiac reading, Instagram astrology is a spiritual healing and "guidance" to maintain self or psychological stability. Various reasons and forms of belief also appear accompanying astrological Instagram users or followers, such as encouragement, a way to learn, and a way to behave when making choices. In addition, some give reasons that astrology can be used as encouragement, a way of learning and acting in determining choices, guidance, and motivational material for optimistic predictions, especially when facing chaotic and uncertain pandemic conditions. People believe their lives are more certain and navigated during the pandemic COVID-19 by using Instagram astrology. However, this study has many limitations, especially regarding the sustainability of using Instagram astrology in navigating post-pandemic or new everyday life.

This research provides critical scientific contributions and new insights into mental health and digital media studies. By examining how astrological practices on Instagram serve as a coping mechanism during the pandemic, this study fills a gap in the literature on digital astrology in Indonesia—a topic rarely discussed academically, especially in the context of a global crisis like the pandemic. Furthermore, it demonstrates how the Instagram platform can serve as a spiritual space and a life guide for addressing mental health issues during the pandemic. In addition, it contributes new insights to digital anthropology, particularly in examining the relationship between life's uncertainties and the search for meaning

through zodiac symbols. Finally, it can be a starting point for digital culture-based mental health research in Indonesia. Further research could examine the use and reliance on Instagram astrology among young people in the post-pandemic era.

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