

Article

When Magic Makes Sense: Public Perceptions of Modern Esoteric Practices in Urban Indonesia

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Abstract: Esoteric practices in Indonesia have been embodied by traditional shamanistic figures called *dukuns*. *Dukuns* who are often viewed in a negative light, perform various services such as healing, divination, or harming one's enemy through supernatural powers. Today, as social media becomes more influential in personal branding, more esoteric practitioners try to rebrand themselves as far as possible from the *dukun* image, including those who perform *dukun* practices. Tarot reading's rise in popularity on social media means that there is an opportunity for new esoteric practitioners to lean towards a more accessible approach to self-branding through the adoption of new-age spiritualism in their practices. This study aims to inductively explain how the general public in Indonesian urban settings shifts their perceptions toward modern esoteric practices through in-depth interviews with ten informants from the Jabodetabek (Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, and Bekasi) area of Indonesia. The emic perspectives of the ten informants purposively sampled from members of the public were thematically analysed through a coding process based on specific themes and subthemes. The results show that the general public has become more accepting of new-age practices such as tarot reading despite having the same negative perceptions toward traditional *dukun* practices. This caused the public to remain reluctant to hire the services of new-age practitioners as esotericism in Indonesia is generally still affected by the negative stigma of *dukuns*. Further research should be conducted not only in the context of the Indonesian culture but also in other settings or other cultures.

Keywords: Esoteric practice; shamanism; *dukun*; public perception; new-age spiritualism; Indonesia.

Introduction

Esoteric practices in urban Indonesia have seen a rise in popularity, mainly due to the birth of esoteric practitioner groups who perform tarot reading and tarot workshops in Java (Fawaid, 2016). These esoteric practices have been used in different contexts in urban settings such as reiki which is used in treating hypertension (Septiawan et al., 2024), and tarot reading which is used in mental health counselling (Sukandi et al., 2022). It is worth noting that the esoteric practices that are gaining popularity are the ones affected by new-age spiritualism with other examples including but not limited to astrology and crystal manipulation (Possamai, 2001).

Traditionally, esoteric practices in Indonesia have been embodied by the existence of *dukuns*, shamanistic figures synonymous with supernatural powers and magic. Geertz (1960) divided *dukuns* into twelve categories based on their special abilities such as herbal making, divination, and healing. *Dukuns* still exist and hold an important role in society today as the public still trusts them with their problems (Ardani, 2013). Fitriani and Eriyanti (2020) found that in Dusun Lebak Tenam, Jambi Province, *dukuns* bear more credibility than conventionally trained medical professionals. In Java, until this very day, *dukuns* hold a sacred position in the public eye (Arini et al., 2016). According to Liliweri (2014 as cited in Togobu, 2018), traditional medicine and

treatments still prevail in Indonesia amidst globalisation and the development of modern medicine both in urban and rural areas. In some areas of Indonesia, as demonstrated by Jannah and Zurinani (2017) in their research on the Sidodadi Village of East Java, *dukuns* are still the main healers of the people who live there.

Social media have played a significant role in the transition of esotericism in Indonesia from traditional *dukun* practices into ones that lean more towards new-age spiritualism. Sara Wijayanto, a paranormal expert, pioneered the evolution of esoteric practitioners' personal branding through the use of her YouTube channel *Diary Misteri Sara*. Instead of using her channel to promote her practices, Sara Wijayanto uses it to showcase her ability to communicate with spirits that roam haunted places (Suprobo & Utomo, 2021). Despite her *dukun*-like abilities, Sara Wijayanto does not brand herself as a *dukun*. Similar cases can also be seen with other paranormal practitioners who became popular on YouTube: Citra Prima calls herself an empath (a person who can absorb spiritual energies) while Om Hao is a retro cognitive expert (a person who can read into the past of places or objects). Besides the aforementioned supernatural practitioners, *dukuns* have also transitioned to using social media such as blog sites to promote themselves (Kasmana, 2019).

Om Hao (which translates to Uncle Hao in Bahasa Indonesia) had gained 2.25 million subscribers on YouTube by 2022 through his YouTube account called *Kisah Tanah Jawa* (Faiz, 2022). Om Hao gained such a significant following after demonstrating his retrocognitive abilities by exploring abandoned places believed to be haunted and supernaturally reading through their dark past. During the COVID-19 pandemic, such YouTube content gained even more traction as demonstrated by the rise in popularity of Ujang Busthomi's YouTube channel (Arafat et al., 2022). Ujang Busthomi is a fellow YouTube spiritual content creator who has a more traditional *dukun* knowledge background.

With the evolution of esoteric practitioner branding and social media use in the promotion of esoteric practices, it has now become a necessity to understand how the general public reacts to such a phenomenon, especially in urban settings amidst the improved ease of access to information on esotericism. Information and communication technology has become the main source of information since the beginning of the Industry 4.0 era and those who do not utilize it will find obsolescence in their communication methods (Saja et al., 2021) as the internet has enabled information to be more accessible since the 1990s (Taib et al., 2021). Indonesia is no exception as social media have become the public's main source of information (Luthfi et al., 2024). Sara Wijayanto is the YouTube supernatural content creator with the most subscribers on the platform (8.52 subscribers in 2021) and she has demonstrated that the responses to the content that she makes can be positive as some regard her content as educative in regards to informing the public about mysticism (Malik & Silvana, 2021). This exploratory qualitative study aims to analyse the change in public perceptions toward modern esoteric practitioners and practices in Indonesia amidst the paradigm shift in the self-branding of esoteric practitioners. Through in-depth interviews with members of the public carefully selected through purposive sampling, a conclusive analysis is drawn based on the informants' emic perspectives towards the topic. Not only does this study help in understanding modern audiences' evaluation of modern esotericism but also esotericism's persisting or changing nature in its role within societies.

Literature Review

1. Esotericism and Shamanism

Esotericism is understood as "discourses of 'higher knowledge' and 'ways of accessing higher knowledge', including mediation by higher beings and personal experiences of the divine" (Von Stuckrad, 2005, p. 51). Aspren (2016) also echoed the explanation above and stated that esotericism involves the effort to acquire higher knowledge or gnosis (p. 5). Although the concept itself originated from research conducted on Western spiritualism, esotericism and discussions on the subject should also apply to other cultures (Hanegraaff, 2015). Shamanism, of course, is a monumental part of esotericism in different cultures as shamans have long existed with their many forms and subspecialties (Lenski, 2013).

The concept of shamanism is ever-present in most cultures. Practitioners of shamanism are understood as healers or diviners, possessing supernatural powers, able to go into trance when performing rituals, and allowed to become a shaman through an initiation process (Singh, 2018, p. 2). For example, in the Kelantan culture of Malaysia, a shaman is considered a medium that speaks for an external genie (Winstedt, 2024). Furthermore, shamanism and its practices evolve along with the evolution of a culture: a shaman, however, will always be a

person who convinces people that they can control unpredictable events through interacting with “invisible forces” (Singh, 2018, p. 4). The operational definitions of the concept explained in this section would comprise two terms: esotericism and shaman. The definitions are as follows:

- i. Esotericism: An effort to achieve gnosis/higher knowledge by means of imagination (Asprem, 2016); and
- ii. Shaman: A diviner or a healer who possesses special powers (Singh, 2018).

2. Esoteric Practices in Indonesia

In the context of Indonesia, *dukuns* have long become the embodiment of anything shamanistic. A *dukun* is often reductively understood as a person who performs healing, helps those who are sick, and recites mantras (Siregar & Junaidi, 2024). The many cultures of Indonesia have different types of *dukuns* according to their skill sets and specialities. Some *dukuns* perform healing and divination, some others protect properties, lands, animals, and produce (Crowder, 1996; Candraningrum, 2019). Clifford Geertz (1960) originally proposed the classical categorisation of *dukuns* with twelve categories and their specialities as specified in the table below.

Table 1. Geertz’s typology of *Dukuns* (1960)

Type of <i>Dukun</i>	Specialities
<i>Dukun Bayi</i>	Helping with childbirth
<i>Dukut Pijet</i>	Massage
<i>Dukun Perewangan</i>	Acting as a spiritual medium
<i>Dukun Calak</i>	Circumcision
<i>Dukun Wiwit</i>	Harvest ceremonies
<i>Dukun Penganten</i>	Wedding rituals
<i>Dukun Petungan</i>	Numerical divinations
<i>Dukun Sihir/Tenung/Santet</i>	Sorcery
<i>Dukun Susuk</i>	Making clients more attractive through magic
<i>Dukun Jampi</i>	Herbs and medicine
<i>Dukun Japa</i>	Spells
<i>Dukun Siwer</i>	Natural disaster prevention

Esoteric practices in Indonesia, both old and new, have been influenced significantly by *dukun* practices. Spiritualism based on traditional esoteric practices then plays an important role even in modern esotericism and shamanism in Indonesia. The classical work by Clifford Geertz on the classification of Javanese people based on their spiritualism and social classes (the *abangan*, *santri*, and *priyayi* concept) demonstrates the syncretism between religion and traditional esoteric spiritualism in a particular Indonesian culture (Mujab, 2018; Rildo, 2021). The incorporation of esoteric perspectives such as explained by Geertz shapes the Indonesian mindset and such a mindset is brought to modern, urban Indonesian settings.

The term ‘*dukun*’ itself has a Persian root and bears negative connotations synonymous with indigenous practices (Nourse, 2013). Therefore, despite rebranding themselves as far away from the *dukun* persona as possible, there is still a risk that the *dukun* stigma emanates from modern esoteric practitioners. Stigma is described as discrediting attributes of an object or an individual (Goffman, 2009). Usually, stigma is attributed to the front-stage persona in the dramaturgical dichotomy of front-stage and back-stage personas (Goffman, 2022). In the context of modern Indonesian esoteric practitioners, even when a practitioner presents themselves in a more accessible way both visually and characteristically in their front-stage persona, the *dukun* stigma may remain. The operational definitions of this section of the literature review would then comprise four terms: *dukun*, *abangan*, *santri*, and *priyayi*. The definitions are as follows:

- i. *Dukun*: A sorcerer, diviner, or healer of the traditional kind;
- ii. *Abangan*: A social class unique to the Javanese culture often associated with syncretic beliefs and farming;

- iii. *Santri*: A social class unique to the Javanese culture associated with trading and a pious faith in Muslim practices; and
- iv. *Priyayi*: A social class unique to the Javanese culture associated with elite bureaucrats and an abundance of access to knowledge on religious beliefs and practices.

3. New-Age Spiritualism

Many esoteric practitioners in Indonesia have heavily adopted practices that are based on new-age spiritualism. New-age spiritualism dates back to the 1960s and 1970s hippie culture which emphasised “spiritual themes and occultist influences that represented a spiritual holism dating back to a philosophy of self that is both transformative and healing” (Peters, 2023, p. 1612). New-age spiritualism’s original concerns include ethnic freedom, vegetarianism, nature worship, and civil rights (Lahood, 2010). Possamai (2001) stated that some examples of practices in new-age spiritualism are reiki, palmistry, crystal manipulation, urban shamanism, and of course, tarot reading. All of the aforementioned practices have been adopted as the main practices of many esoteric practitioners in urban Indonesia yet it is still necessary to study whether the practitioners who perform them still possess a strong *dukun* stigma.

The operational definitions of this section comprise two terms: spiritualism and new-age spiritualism. The definitions are as follows:

- i. Spiritualism: An enterprise to communicate with spirits often involving channeling and mediumship (Aureliano, 2015); and
- ii. New-age spiritualism: A spiritual movement with modern practices and rituals that gained popularity in the 1960s.

Methodology

This study was conducted through inductive, qualitative in-depth interviews with ten informants from members of the public. The informants were selected through non-probability, purposive sampling with all demographic characteristics of the informants being considered thoroughly. The informants came from different age groups, occupations, religious backgrounds, and various personal experiences with esoteric practitioners. Ten in-depth qualitative interviews were deemed sufficient as subjective and nuanced data were gathered to make it possible for the study to analyse subjective experiences and perspectives of the informants toward the issue. The results of the interviews were emic perspectives of the informants regarding their understanding of modern esoteric practices and practitioners in urban Indonesia. All of the participants represented their specific demographic groups to make sure that the results would not be biased toward one specific demographic category.

The setting of this study is the Jabodetabek area of Indonesia. Jabodetabek consists of the greater Jakarta area and its satellite cities, which are Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, and Bekasi, hence the name Jabodetabek. Jabodetabek is Indonesia’s largest metropolitan area with 11.34 million inhabitants in Jakarta alone (Katadata, 2023). The selection of this setting helped the researcher understand the perspectives of people whose main activities were in the urban areas of Jabodetabek.

Through the interviews, an interpretive qualitative approach was used to understand how informants assigned meanings to all phenomena related to esoteric practices and practitioners (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Personal lived experiences were a significant factor in shaping the informants’ perceptions of the social phenomena being studied, thus it was necessary to employ a naturalistic point of view to understand the emic and subjective realities of the informants. By relying on conducting this qualitative study emically, the study managed to conclude the informants’ patterns of mental activities descriptively (Pike, 1954 as cited in Mostowlansky & Rota, 2020, p. 3). Table 2 below shows the list of informants and their demographic details.

Table 2. Demographic details of the informants

Informant	Occupation	Sex	Religion	City of Residence	Age Range
Informant 1	Marketing and Communications	Female	Muslim	Jakarta	20-29
Informant 2	Audio Engineer	Male	Christian	Jakarta	30-39
Informant 3	Logistics	Male	Muslim	Bogor	50-59

Informant 4	University Lecturer	Female	Christian	Jakarta	30-39
Informant 5	Tech Company Employee	Female	Christian	Bekasi	20-29
Informant 6	Insurance Agent	Male	Catholic	Bogor	30-39
Informant 7	English Teacher	Female	Catholic	Bogor	30-39
Informant 8	Public Relations	Female	Muslim	Jakarta	20-29
Informant 9	University Student	Male	Christian	Jakarta	15-19
Informant 10	University Student	Female	Muslim	Jakarta	15-19

The data analysis of this study was conducted through a thematic analysis using the raw interview transcripts. This method of analysis is most suitable for analysing emic perspectives as it is a “method for analysing qualitative data that involves searching for recurring ideas (referred to as themes) in a data set” (Riger & Sigurvinsdottir, 2016, p. 33). The study then utilised different themes that were broken down into codes used in the qualitative data analysis. The coding process was conducted manually and excerpts that were coded were used as proof of recurring themes. Summaries of the thematic analysis are shown in the next chapter in the form of tables as well as some examples of interview verbatims.

The validity of the research rests upon the notion of this study being a phenomenological one. The study's emic data were analysed for tangible patterns in perspectives, enabling the study to create a comprehensive analysis of lived experiences and the informants' construct of reality. However, the researchers have collaborated with Anama Consulting, a qualitative research firm based in Jakarta, to validate the research instruments used in this study.

The Findings

All of the ten informants stated that they believed in the supernatural regardless of whether they would trust in esoteric practices or not. There were varying degrees to how much the informants had been exposed to esoteric practices and practitioners. Informant 1, in particular, had gone to esoteric practitioners and paid for tarot reading and fortune-telling sessions. The other informants would either be exposed to esoteric practices through their family members and friends or had never been exposed to esotericism whatsoever apart from what they saw on social media. Table 3 below shows the varying degrees of how much the informants had been exposed to esoteric practices and practitioners.

Table 3. How much the informants had been exposed to esoteric practices and practitioners

Informant	Exposure to Esoteric Practices/Practitioners
Informant 1	Actively looked for tarot readers and fortune tellers online.
Informant 2	Became exposed to knowledge of meditation and spiritualism through a friend who was a meditation and spiritual consultant.
Informant 3	Became exposed to traditional esoteric rituals and knowledge through workplace and family members.
Informant 4	Became exposed to knowledge of esotericism through her family members and social media.
Informant 5	Became exposed to traditional esoteric rituals and knowledge through family members and social media.
Informant 6	Became exposed to knowledge of esoteric practices through social media.
Informant 7	Became interested in tarot reading through social media and was directly exposed to real-life tarot readings through her tarot-reader friends.
Informant 8	Became directly exposed to traditional <i>dukun</i> practices through neighbours.
Informant 9	Had received offers for esoteric practices from a colleague and promotional text messages.
Informant 10	Inherited indigo abilities and was exposed directly to traditional esoteric practices, knowledge, and spiritual abilities.

As shown in Table 2 above, most informants became exposed to esoteric practices and practitioners through social media content. Most of the content that they saw was on esoteric practitioners who had been influenced by new-age spiritualism and performed energy readings, tarot readings, and astrology consultations. However, Informants 3, 5, 8, and 10 were exposed to traditional esoteric practices as their interview transcripts showed that traditional esotericism would play a part in someone's life not through social media but through exposure to physical social influences. It is worth noting that Informant 10 was exposed to traditional esotericism and spiritualism through inheriting indigo abilities from her family lineage.

Informant 1 was the only anomaly as she intentionally looked for esoteric practices since her university days. Once she moved back to Jakarta after graduating, she continued seeing esoteric practitioners for consultations. Below is an excerpt from the interview with Informant 11 which shows how ubiquitous esoteric practices were on online marketplaces:

"After I started working, I usually go for online fortune-telling with different fortune-tellers. I went for a website-based one at the beginning of the pandemic in 2020. I then went to an online shop, Shopee." (Informant 11)

All informants had been aware of the existence of new-age spiritualism, especially tarot reading. Six informants stated that tarot reading, despite its accessible nature, would still involve a higher power to guide the readers conducting the sessions. Informants 1 and 10 asserted that a supernatural being or a spirit would be behind tarot reading sessions despite the practitioners' insistence that tarot reading could be mastered through intuition and theories. The other informants who did not perceive tarot reading as supernatural believed that tarot practitioners obtained their abilities through learning. Table 4 below shows the divide in informants' perceptions of tarot reading.

Table 4. Informants' perceptions of tarot reading

Informant	Perception towards Tarot Reading
Informant 1	It involves supernatural/higher power.
Informant 2	It could be conducted by implementing theories/intuition
Informant 3	It could be conducted by implementing theories/intuition
Informant 4	It could be conducted by implementing theories/intuition
Informant 5	It could be conducted by implementing theories/intuition
Informant 6	It could be conducted by implementing theories/intuition
Informant 7	It could be conducted by implementing theories/intuition
Informant 8	It involves supernatural/higher power.
Informant 9	It involves supernatural/higher power.
Informant 10	It involves supernatural/higher power.

The dichotomy between magic and logic in explaining tarot reading as shown above was also reflected in the way the informants perceived traditional *dukun* practices. All informants had negative perceptions of *dukun* practices as they could not be explained through logic or sound validation. Informant 4 offered a different explanation of why *dukun* practices should be tolerated as she stated that they were not in line with her religious beliefs. Table 5 below shows the perception of each informant toward *dukun* practices.

Table 5. Informants' perceptions of *Dukun* practices

Informant	Perception towards <i>Dukun</i> Practices
Informant 1	Involving magic and offerings, and is scary.
Informant 2	There is no way of validating the competence of the <i>dukuns</i> .

Informant 3	Involving immediate magic like healing or aura cleansing.
Informant 4	Not allowed by religion.
Informant 5	Involving magic, weird, and scary.
Informant 6	Involving communication with the supernatural.
Informant 7	Involving magic like healing or <i>susuk</i> .
Informant 8	Involving magic, should not be seen as a solution.
Informant 9	Involving magic, posing harm to other people.
Informant 10	Involving magic through magical objects.

Despite tolerating tarot reading, Informant 4 stated that it had no use in her life. As a devout Christian, she was adamant that her religious stance was not in line with the use of tarot cards or other media of esoteric practices. Below is an excerpt from the interview with Informant 4:

“Be it tarot reading, crystals, or future something whatever the name is, I always think: what use do they have? In religion, we are taught to not believe in such things” (Informant 4)

Informant 9 summed up the differences between traditional *dukun* practices and tarot reading in a straightforward manner. For example, Informant 9 stated that the *dukun* magic of *pesugihan* (a type of magic used to help clients get wealthier), could also affect or even harm other people’s lives. On the other hand, tarot cards can only affect the client. Below is an excerpt from the interview with Informant 9.

“I think dukun practices affect other people’s lives. For instance, tarot cards only read our lives. but dukun practices like pesugihan can affect other people” (Informant 9)

Tables 4 and 5 show that there was a stark contrast between perceptions toward tarot reading and traditional *dukun* practices. Six out of ten informants had neutral to negative perceptions toward tarot reading as it was deemed logical and did not involve supernatural factors. On the other hand, ten out of ten informants stated that traditional *dukun* practices involved supernatural factors and could not be logically explained and validated. Furthermore, there was also a view that traditional *dukun* practices were not aligned with established religious beliefs.

Discussion

As esoteric practices aim to provide practitioners and clients access to higher power and knowledge through communication with supernatural forces (Stuckrad, 2005; Asprem, 2016), access to practices and practitioners is naturally limited to certain groups of people who have already been exposed to esotericism. Based on the data presented in the previous chapter, Informant 1 was the only interviewee who actively looked for esoteric practitioners who specialised in tarot reading and fortune telling. Despite having been exposed to knowledge of the esoteric through social media or social circles, the other nine informants stated that they would not actively seek help from esoteric practitioners. This finding demonstrated that there was a factor that causes esotericism to remain an alternative solution to problems even in an urban setting where social media information on some esoteric practices is ubiquitous.

In urban Indonesian settings, both traditional and new-age-inspired esoteric practices may coexist both through physical social environments and social media. However, as seen in the data above, only one practice was able to rise in popularity and public awareness, and this practice was the new-age practice known as tarot reading. Six out of ten informants even believed that tarot reading could be logically explained as to how it should work. This finding is in line with the understanding of new-age shamanism as championing accessibility to its practices and relatability to its discussions or concerns (Peters 2023; Possamai, 2001).

Conversely, traditional *dukun* practices were still perceived in a negative light. Ten out of ten informants spoke against engaging in *dukun* practices, mostly due to these practices still utilising magic and not logically constructed methods. *Dukuns* still possessed a shamanistic stigma which made them perceived as supernaturally gifted healers and diviners (Singh, 2018) appears to persist in urban Indonesia, and *dukuns*' scary and mysterious visual and personality attributes diminish their efforts to rebrand themselves amidst demands from the current social media-dominated era. As explained by Goffman (2009), certain objects pertaining to a group of people may be discrediting and such a phenomenon could be seen in *dukuns* and *dukun* practices.

Despite the evolving views on esoteric practices courtesy of new-age influences and practices, esoteric practices in Indonesia were still unable to gain higher traction business-wise. Having more people exposed to tarot reading did not translate into more tarot-reading clients, hence the persisting alternative status to esoteric practices. *Dukuns* still possessed shaman characteristics that resulted in their shamanistic stigma (Singh, 2018), and tarot readers performed a new-age practice that also would fall under urban shamanism (Possamai, 2001). Urban shamanism, in this case, did not manage to completely rid itself of the stigma attributed to traditional shamanism despite it being more popular and easier to comprehend.

One of the reasons why *dukuns* are considered scary and elusive is the fact that some of their rituals are aimed at affecting other people's lives. Geertz (1960) acknowledged this fact by adding the *Dukun Sihir/Tenung/Santet* category as one of the twelve categories of *dukuns* in his typology. Another stigmatized *dukun* magic, *susuk*, was also acknowledged in Geertz's typology under the *dukun* category of *Dukun Susuk*. Both *santet* (a *dukun* magic used for harming others) and *susuk* (a *dukun* magic used for making clients look more attractive by means of magical objects) have long been notorious for their use in manipulating the natural order of human activities. Based on the interviews, rituals such as *santet* and *pelet* make it impossible for the public to view traditional *dukun* rituals as in line with religion or performed out of good intentions. On the other hand, according to the findings, new-age practices such as tarot reading or crystal manipulation could be performed out of personal curiosity or entertainment as they would not affect other people's lives.

To continue from this study, further research should touch upon the transformation of public perceptions toward modern esoteric in other settings or other cultures. It is necessary to understand the evolution of esoteric practices and how the public reacts to said evolution in settings with cultural values that are unlike Indonesia. Furthermore, further studies should also include non-participatory observations of esoteric practitioners conducting their rituals on clients. These observations could then be followed up by interviewing the clients regarding their perceptions of the rituals conducted: it is also important to understand public perceptions of esoteric rituals.

Conclusion

Urban Indonesia has seen a change in public perceptions toward esoteric practices due to the adoption of new-age spiritualism and its practices in the modern esotericism of Indonesia. However, due to the continued existence of negatively perceived *dukun* practices and the stigma that *dukun*-like attributes bring to all esoteric practices in Indonesia, the public is still reluctant to engage with even the most recent trend in new-age practices. As a result, new-age practices that in turn become part of urban shamanism will also suffer from its association with traditional shamanism. In Indonesia, traditional shamanism will always be perceived as *dukun* practices and other *dukun*-related approaches.

The findings of this study suggest that the general understanding of shamanism needs to be studied further as its forms may vary according to how each culture evolves. New-age spiritualism champions relevant discourses and accessible types of esoteric practices, thus it is important to acknowledge the fact that a lot of today's esoteric practices can fall under shamanism that is inspired by new-age perspectives. Therefore, policymakers in the healthcare sector should look into cases where practices may only be labelled as alternative methods due to their accessibility but in actuality strongly shamanistic in nature.

This study could have benefited from a comparison between informants who lived in urban and rural areas. Such a comparison could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the evolution of public perceptions in Indonesia toward modern esotericism. The Jabodetabek area is populated by people coming from different islands and provinces, however, the Jabodetabek area has established its own unique culture based on the combination of values from the people who reside there. It would be an advantage for a future study to also

include rural communities in its data collection as not only it would create less bias but also provide knowledge on the persisting traditional esoteric practices specific to said rural communities.

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