

Narrative Reframing in Influencer PR: A Study of Multi-Faced Branding in Rachel Vennya's Post-Controversy Return

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Abstract

In the wake of public scandals, influencers face unique challenges in reclaiming their reputations. This study looks closely at the Indonesian influencer Rachel Vennya, particularly her return to the digital spotlight after a widely publicized quarantine breach in 2021. By tracking her activity on Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube from 2023 to 2025, the research explores how she gradually rebuilt her public image. Drawing on qualitative netnography, I examined not only her most prominent posts but also the responses and conversations they sparked among followers. Rather than following a traditional crisis communication playbook, Vennya's recovery unfolded through a blend of storytelling, emotional openness, and deliberate shifts in how she presented herself on each platform. On Instagram, she leaned into a calm, visually cohesive persona; on TikTok, she embraced humor and relatability; and on YouTube, she offered more personal, reflective narratives. Over time, these strategies helped reframe her earlier controversy, allowing themes like motherhood and personal growth to take center stage. Audience responses, as seen through sentiment analysis, moved from criticism to empathy, emphasizing the collaborative nature of online redemption. This work introduces the idea of "platformed dramaturgy" to describe how influencers juggle different facets of their identities depending on the medium, and it situates these strategies within the fast-changing, emotionally charged landscape of Indonesian social media. Ultimately, the study suggests that an influencer's path to reputation repair is shaped less by formal statements and more by ongoing, emotionally resonant storytelling—with the audience playing a crucial part in the process.

Keywords: influencer public relations; narrative reframing; multi-faced branding; platformed dramaturgy; digital identity; affective publics; netnography

INTRODUCTION

Influencers have become central figures in the contemporary digital landscape, where visibility, emotional connection, and perceived authenticity are valued alongside traditional credentials (Abidin, 2016; Marwick, 2015).

Unlike traditional celebrities, who maintain a clear separation between their public and private lives, influencers frequently blur these boundaries by regularly posting, sharing personal experiences, and directly engaging with their audiences. This sustained interaction fosters a sense of intimacy, often leading followers to feel a genuine personal connection with the influencer (Labrecque, 2014). When controversies arise, the resulting fallout is experienced by followers as a personal affront rather than a distant public misstep. Consequently, influencer crises occupy a unique position at the intersection of public relations crises and perceived personal betrayals, drawing upon both corporate crisis management strategies and the emotional labor required to repair interpersonal relationships.

In contrast to corporations, which can address crisis through official statements or by distancing themselves from the issue, influencers lack such organizational buffers. Their personal identity is directly implicated, rendering any crisis a test of character rather than a mere policy violation. Scholars have observed that this dynamic renders influencer scandals particularly intimate, as followers respond with personal disappointment rather than detached consumer criticism. In the aftermath, audiences often seek demonstrations of vulnerability, narratives of personal growth, or authentic accountability rather than formal press releases (Audrezet et al., 2020). To restore trust, influencers must not only adjust their communication strategies but also reconstruct their overarching narrative, update their visual and affective presentation, and tailor their recovery efforts to the affordances of each digital platform.

These dynamics are particularly pronounced in Indonesia, where the online community exhibits what Lim (2013) terms “affective turbulence”—rapid shifts between outrage, humor, empathy, and indifference. Public debates surrounding scandals are often intense, yet attention quickly pivots to subsequent viral events. As a result, influencers may experience severe criticism followed by a rapid softening of public opinion, especially when they engage with locally resonant emotional themes. Indonesian netizens are quick to judge but equally swift to forgive, especially when influencers display humility, emphasize motherhood, invoke religious values, or share personal growth stories. This cyclical pattern of outrage, spectacle, and collective amnesia imparts a distinctive rhythm to influencer crises in Indonesia, shaping both the risks and opportunities inherent in digital reputation management.

Within this cultural and technological context, Rachel Vennya’s experience serves as a salient example of influencer image repair. Following her widely publicized 2021 quarantine violation, which provoked swift and intense backlash from both mainstream media and social media users, Vennya’s reputation ultimately recovered. By 2023, her understated return to Instagram—signaled by a single, quietly posted Reel—had garnered over 128 million views (Ilham & Sajarwa, 2023). Rather than issuing a dramatic statement, Vennya relied on her actions and presence to convey calmness and maturity. The public response shifted from outrage to curiosity and a

willingness to offer forgiveness, marking the initial phase of her narrative reconstruction.

This process of narrative reframing is not unique to Indonesia; it parallels findings from Western contexts, where the maintenance of online identity is conceptualized as an ongoing narrative endeavor (Holstein et al., 2012; Somers, 1994). Influencers continually adapt their self-presentation in response to audience expectations, platform incentives, and prevailing cultural narratives. During periods of crisis, this process intensifies, requiring influencers to reframe their transgressions as components of a broader journey of growth or healing (Gill & Kanai, 2018). In the Indonesian context, such redemptive arcs align with cultural narratives that emphasize self-improvement, maternal roles, humility, and emotional recovery—motifs prevalent in local entertainment and public discourse. These redemptive themes manifest differently across digital platforms. Drawing on Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical framework and Hogan's (2010) digital adaptation, Instagram serves as the primary stage for curated visuals and signals of stability. In contrast, TikTok serves as a venue for brief, relatable, and often humorous content, whereas YouTube offers a more private and reflective space for extended storytelling and emotional expression. This approach is conceptualized in this study as “platformed dramaturgy,” wherein each social media platform operates as a distinct stage, collectively contributing to the construction of a cohesive digital identity.

In the Indonesian context, audience engagement further amplifies these performances. Followers do not passively observe but actively participate in shaping the influencer's narrative through comments, duets, shares, and algorithm-driven content dissemination (Abidin & Ots, 2016; Baym, 2015). Rachel Vennya's comeback exemplifies this dynamic: as she gradually adjusted her public image, audiences responded to cues such as motherhood, gentle aesthetics, humor, and honesty, and began to characterize her as evolving and maturing. Thus, the process of narrative reconstruction is co-authored by both the influencer and the audience.

The rapid and unpredictable nature of Indonesian social media is repeatedly illustrated in Rachel Vennya's trajectory. For instance, the 2024 incident involving comparisons to TikTok creator Azizah Salsa began as minor online gossip but quickly dominated entertainment news and social media feeds. However, this attention dissipated just as rapidly, supplanted by subsequent viral events. (Team, 2024) Such swift shifts in public focus are characteristic of Indonesia's digital environment, affording influencers opportunities to reconstruct their image as previous controversies recede from collective memory.

When you combine all these elements—the quirks of each platform, the power of storytelling, the expectations of local culture, and the energy of an engaged audience—you begin to see just how complicated it is for influencers to recover from scandal in Indonesia. Rachel Vennya's experience shows that this process is about much more than issuing a statement. It's a comprehensive

effort to rebuild a sense of self, both emotionally and narratively, across various digital platforms. Audiences aren't just listening for the right words; they're watching for genuine signs of change, openness, and growth.

This context raises the central research question: how can an influencer reconstruct their public image to the extent that a major scandal is ultimately eclipsed by new narratives and content? This question guides the subsequent analysis of narrative strategies, audience sentiment, and the performance and transformation of identity within Indonesia's dynamic social media landscape.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Influencer crisis recovery requires a multi-dimensional theoretical grounding because influencer identity exists at the intersection of self-branding, emotional labor, narrative construction, and algorithm-driven visibility. To analyze how Rachel Vennya reconstructed her public identity after the 2021 scandal, this study integrates four major bodies of theory: (1) Narrative Identity Theory, (2) Influencer Authenticity and Self-Branding Theory, (3) Platformed Dramaturgy Theory, and (4) Affective Publics and Digital Moralism in Indonesia. Together, these frameworks explain the mechanisms through which digital narratives, platform affordances, and audience emotions collectively reshape influencer reputations.

1. Narrative Identity Theory

Narrative identity theory posits that individuals construct meaning about themselves through the stories they tell, continuously reshaping their identity in response to contextual shifts (Holstein et al., 2012; Somers, 1994). Crisis events constitute a rupture in this narrative, demanding a reconfiguration of the self-story to maintain coherence and moral legitimacy.

On social media, influencers often lean into what you might call a redemption arc: they turn past mistakes into part of a bigger story about learning and growth. Gill & Kanai (2018) note that platforms like Instagram and YouTube encourage individuals to portray themselves as continually improving and becoming better versions of themselves, and audiences respond to these narratives.

In the case of Rachel Vennya, themes such as healing, learning, and maturity function as narrative devices that integrate the scandal into a broader story of transformation. This aligns with Somers' (1994) concept of "narrative realignment," where past wrongdoing becomes reinterpreted as a turning point rather than a fixed moral identity.

2. Influencer Authenticity and Self-Branding Theory

Influencers live and die by how real they seem. If followers believe someone is genuine and can relate emotionally, that's what makes them trustworthy and keeps them in the spotlight (Abidin, 2016; Marwick, 2015). Research on self-branding reveals that influencers invest considerable effort

in crafting the ideal persona—utilizing visuals, sharing personal stories, and conveying emotions in a carefully planned manner (Hearn & Schoenhoff, 2015; Khamis et al., 2017). When things go wrong, seeming authentic becomes even more important. Audrezet et al., (2020) demonstrate that it's not enough for influencers to merely polish their image on the surface—they must allow themselves to be vulnerable and honest, demonstrating genuine accountability, if they wish to regain their audience's trust. This is where emotional branding comes in: it's about using feelings to demonstrate good character.

For women in the influencer world, motherhood can be a particularly strong way to rebuild a reputation. Duffy & Hund (2019) note that society tends to view mothers as responsible and caring, so when female influencers highlight their roles as mothers, it often earns them extra moral credibility. In Indonesia, this effect is even stronger.

Rachel Vennya used this to her advantage, sharing content that showcased her life as a mother and emphasized emotional honesty. Her identity as a mom became a kind of moral anchor, helping audiences to forgive her and see her as nurturing and mature.

3. Platformed Dramaturgy Theory

This study also borrows from Goffman's classic ideas about social life as a kind of performance (Goffman, 1959), updated for the social media age Hogan (2010). Here, the author views influencer identity as a form of "platformed dramaturgy"—in other words, influencers behave differently depending on the digital stage (Instagram, TikTok, YouTube) they're on and what their audiences expect.

Each platform works like its own stage:

a) Instagram → Front-Stage Aesthetic Identity

Highly curated images and Reels function as exhibitions of moral stability, calmness, and visual coherence. (Marwick, 2015) notes that these polished aesthetics signal status and emotional control.

b) TikTok → Micro-Front Stage for Relatability and Humor

TikTok's algorithm rewards spontaneous, humorous, and "calibrated amateurism" (Abidin, 2021), enabling influencers to appear relatable and human. Humor acts as an affective buffer, lowering moral scrutiny.

c) YouTube → Backstage Reflective Space

Long-form vlogs enable influencers to express vulnerability and accountability, serving as digital confessional spaces. These backstage performances facilitate a deeper moral engagement with audiences.

This multi-platform architecture allows influencers to deploy different identity facets—visual calm, humorous relatability, reflective sincerity—

which collectively produce a coherent process of reputational repair. (Influencer, 2025)

4. Affective Publics and Indonesian Digital Moralism

The social media environment in Indonesia can be understood through the lens of *affective publics*, where collective engagement is driven less by stable ideological alignment than by the circulation of emotions, such as outrage, humor, empathy, and fleeting solidarity. Papacharissi (2014) conceptualizes affective publics as networked formations mobilized through shared emotional intensities, where sentiment—rather than deliberation or institutional affiliation—organizes public participation. Within the Indonesian context, this dynamic is particularly pronounced. Lim (2013) demonstrates that social media engagement in Indonesia often arises from emotionally charged reactions to specific events, resulting in rapid cycles of amplification and decline rather than sustained political or moral commitment. These patterns generate what can be described as *affective turbulence*, characterized by swift transitions from moral condemnation to humor, indifference, or emotional reconciliation. Such volatility shapes how controversies are debated, forgotten, and reinterpreted online, creating conditions in which public judgment is intense but often short-lived.

Merlyna Lim's (2013) influential study on social media activism in Indonesia highlights the accelerated production and circulation of information in the Indonesian digital environment, where online attention shifts quickly and participation is often aligned with popular, simplified narratives rather than sustained collective action. Lim notes that social media in Indonesia exemplifies "the most extreme example of an overall acceleration of production and circulation of information," where users move rapidly between topics and engage in emotionally driven responses that can intensify and dissipate quickly.

The public's co-authorship of influencer identity is central to this process (Abidin & Ots, 2016; Baym, 2015). Comments, duets, stitches, and algorithmic interactions allow audiences to collaboratively rewrite narratives. When users describe Vennya as "more mature," "healing," or "a better mother," they are actively participating in the reconstruction of her digital identity.

Bringing these four ideas together, the author see influencer crisis repair as a process that's shaped by stories, emotions, and the unique rhythm of different social media platforms. Specifically, it involves:

1. Narrative identity reconstruction through redemption arcs
2. Authenticity and emotional labor as strategic identity repair
3. Platformed dramaturgy that distributes identity performances across Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube

4. Affective publics whose emotional volatility and participatory practices enable rapid moral realignment

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative netnographic approach to examine how Rachel Vennya's digital identity was reconstructed between 2023 and 2025. Netnography enables a close analysis of naturally occurring online interactions and audience-produced discourse, making it particularly well-suited for examining influencer crises in which public sentiment is embedded in comment sections, captions, and platform-specific engagement behaviors (Kozinets, 2015). The dataset consists of publicly available Instagram Reels, TikTok videos, and YouTube vlogs that marked key phases of Vennya's post-controversy return. These include high-engagement posts, such as the 128 million-view Instagram Reel (2023), multiple TikTok videos achieving 23–33 million views (2023–2024), and 5 million-view YouTube vlogs (2025). Data were collected using a combination of automated scraping—capturing comments, timestamps, likes, replies, and engagement metrics—and purposive sampling, which identified content aligning with narrative transitions such as silent re-entry, emotional stabilization, and reflective confession.

All data were coded using NVivo 15 through an inductive thematic process. Codes emerged around six thematic clusters: motherhood, healing, aesthetic persona, casual-relatable persona, reflective persona, and sentiment (positive, neutral, negative). NVivo queries such as word frequency, coding matrices, and node co-occurrence were used to analyze how narrative strategies and audience sentiment evolved over time and differed across platforms. Ethical guidelines were followed by anonymizing usernames and analyzing only publicly accessible content. The combination of longitudinal sampling, cross-platform comparison, and systematic NVivo coding provides a robust foundation for understanding the mechanisms through which narrative reframing and multi-faced branding produce identity repair within influencer public relations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The reputational journey of Indonesian macro-influencer Rachel Vennya cannot be understood without examining the broader media environment in which her controversies unfolded. Indonesian social media culture is characterized by cyclical waves of outrage and rapid forgetting, where viral scandals often flare with intensity before dissipating into the background noise of continuous online spectacle (Lim, 2013). Within this volatile landscape, influencers become recurring subjects of collective scrutiny, with

each controversy shaping—but not necessarily determining—the trajectory of their public identity.

The first major rupture in Vennya's digital persona occurred in October 2021, when widespread reports alleged that she had violated Indonesia's mandatory quarantine protocol following international travel. Mainstream media amplified the incident, government officials issued statements, and online publics engaged in moral condemnation, portraying the case as emblematic of celebrity privilege. (Muthiariny, 2021) The scandal quickly escalated into a national conversation about fairness, public health, and accountability. Yet, consistent with patterns observed in Indonesia's digital culture, the intensity of the outrage peaked within days and gradually diminished as new controversies emerged in the public sphere.

By early 2022, Vennya had largely withdrawn from regular content production, entering a period of online silence that functioned as an informal crisis buffer. During this hiatus, discussions about her misconduct persisted sporadically within online forums, yet no sustained boycott materialized—a trend aligned with Indonesia's "episodic moralism," where public reproach rarely extends into long-term punitive action (Abidin, 2021). As new viral narratives captivated national attention, the emotional charge surrounding the quarantine scandal weakened, setting the stage for a future re-entry.

The second turning point occurred in 2023, when Vennya silently resurfaced on Instagram with a minimalist, aesthetically soft Reel that later garnered over 128 million views in a branded post. Despite the absence of a statement or apology, the post's reception was overwhelmingly neutral to positive, signaling that the public's emotional memory of the scandal had faded. This moment marked the beginning of a gradual identity reconstruction, as audiences responded not with anger but with curiosity and tentative acceptance.

As Vennya's re-emergence gained momentum, another wave of virality surfaced in 2024, not as a scandal but as a social media "drama" involving TikTok creator Azizah Salsa. Although the issue itself was trivial—centered on comparisons, perceived rivalry, and speculative commentary—it circulated widely across entertainment portals and gossip accounts (Insertlive, 2024). The incident demonstrated two critical phenomena: first, the persistent visibility of Vennya within Indonesia's attention economy; and second, the extent to which her persona remained a cultural touchpoint vulnerable to renewed scrutiny. Yet despite its viral traction, the Azizah Salsa issue dissolved as quickly as it emerged, reinforcing the view that Indonesian digital publics are predisposed toward rapid emotional turnover.

This broader pattern culminated in 2024–2025, when Vennya's narrative reframing intensified across platforms. TikTok videos have reached 33 million views, showcasing a casual and relatable persona through humor and everyday candidness. Meanwhile, reflective YouTube vlogs—such as the

5 million-view video, closer to 2025—served as emotional confessionals. These multimodal performances signaled not only a return to content creation but a deliberate crafting of new emotional scripts centered on motherhood, healing, and personal growth.

By late 2025, audience sentiment had shifted almost entirely, with NVivo-coded data indicating that positive sentiment had increased to approximately 80% and negative sentiment had declined to around 5%. Crisis references became rare, and users increasingly framed Vennya not as a figure of scandal but as an emotionally mature mother and relatable digital persona. The timeline of crisis evolution is explained below:

Table 1. Timeline of Crisis Evolution

Year	Crisis Phase	Key Dynamics	Reputational Implications
2021	Controversy Ignition	• Quarantine violation allegations trigger national backlash • High moralism, intense scrutiny, and mainstream media amplification • The scandal dominates public discourse but fades within months	Rapid reputational collapse; public identity framed as a symbol of celebrity privilege
2022	Strategic Silence	• Influencer withdraws from regular content production • Public outrage dissipates through “viral turnover” • No long-term boycott emerges	Moral pressure weakens; conditions for future reputational recovery emerge
2023	Silent Re-entry	• Return via an aesthetically soft Instagram Reel (>128 million views) • Neutral-to-positive audience reception indicates reputational softening • Beginning of narrative reframing	Identity repositioning begins; audiences demonstrate conditional acceptance
2024	Emotional Repositioning & Viral Side-Issues	• Growth narratives, motherhood, and aesthetic maturity intensify • TikTok humor persona strengthens parasocial reconnection • Minor “Rachel vs. Azizah Salsa” drama reflects ongoing media magnetism	Reputation stabilizes further; prior controversies are displaced by new emotional narratives

2025	Identity Overwriting & Reputation Consolidation	• Reflective YouTube persona deepens moral legitimacy • Positive sentiment peaks; crisis references nearly disappear • Multi-faced branding becomes fully integrated	New identity overwrites crisis memory; reputation is consolidated and re-legitimized
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Source: Research documentation, 2025

Motherhood Narrative as Moral Repositioning

The motherhood narrative emerged as one of the strongest identity-repair mechanisms, evidenced by the substantial engagement generated by maternal-themed Instagram Reels. The 2025 post from Figure 1 received 17.1 million views, 555,000 likes, and 1,596 comments, establishing it as a high-impact touchpoint in the reframing process.



Figure 1. Non-branded post from Rachel Vennya’s Instagram

User comments prominently featured codes such as “*semakin dewasa*,” “*bangga melihat perubahan*,” and “*cara Kak Rachel sama anaknya bikin haru*,” indicating that motherhood functioned as a moral anchor that helped reframe the influencer’s identity in more nurturing, responsible terms.

Existing scholarship affirms that gendered expectations often make motherhood a powerful symbolic resource for repairing moral credibility (Duffy & Hund, 2019). In this dataset, motherhood triggered sentiment shifts away from punitive recall toward empathy and respectability. Audiences reconstructed Vennya’s persona as a “responsible mother” rather than a “public offender,” demonstrating how maternal imagery facilitates moral reinstatement. Across platforms, the motherhood node co-occurred strongly with positive sentiment, affirming its central role in the identity-overwriting mechanism observed in the 2023–2025 trajectory.

Healing & Growth: Emotional Reframing Through Narrative Depth

The theme of healing and personal growth appeared consistently across platforms but was especially pronounced in Instagram captions and YouTube vlog narratives. A 2024 Instagram Reel on Figure 2 illustrates this shift: with 30 million views and overwhelmingly supportive comments, users explicitly invoked healing lexicon—*“semua orang bisa belajar,”* *“kamu sudah berkembang,”* *“semoga terus jadi lebih baik.”*; and *“si paling effort”*



Figure 2. Instagram-branded post from Rachel’s Account

Source: Instagram.com/rachelvennya

This reframing aligns with narrative identity theory, which posits that individuals reconstruct their past by embedding transgression within a larger arc of growth (Holstein et al., 2012). Social media audiences similarly adopt redemptive frameworks, reinterpreting earlier wrongdoing as a turning point rather than a permanent moral marker. In Vennya’s case, healing rhetoric gradually displaced controversy recall, creating a discursive environment where the crisis became narratively “absorbed” (Somers, 1994)

This is further supported by the reflective tone in the 2025 YouTube vlog, as pictured in Figure 3, which amassed 5 million views and 5,500 comments. Many users framed their forgiveness within her healing journey, writing comments such as *“aku dulu kecewa, tapi sekarang paham kamu berubah”*, demonstrating how audiences co-construct redemption narratives (Abidin & Ots, 2016).

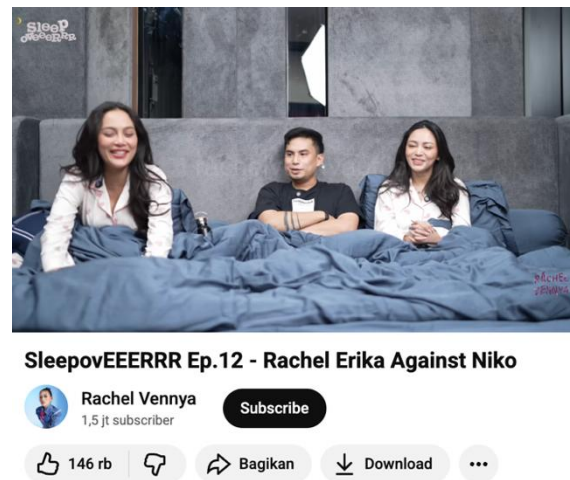


Figure 3. Video blog (Vlog) from Rachel's Youtube Channel

Figure 3 illustrates a representative YouTube vlog that functions as a reflective backstage space in Rachel Vennya's post-crisis identity reconstruction. The vlog format—characterized by extended duration, conversational tone, and interpersonal interaction—enables the articulation of vulnerability, humor, and emotional reflexivity in ways that are not possible in short-form platforms. In this episode, relational intimacy is produced not through explicit crisis explanations but through situated normalcy: casual dialogue, shared laughter, and relaxed bodily postures that signal comfort and emotional stability. Such visual and narrative cues invite audiences to reassess Rachel's moral character through affective proximity rather than rational justification. YouTube thus operates as a moral negotiation arena, where audiences are encouraged to reinterpret past controversies within a broader narrative of growth, relational maturity, and emotional transparency.

While Figure 3 captures this process at the level of situated performance, Figure 4 extends the analysis by revealing the underlying narrative structure that organizes such performances across platforms. The Narrative Node Cluster Dendrogram visualizes how recurrent narrative themes co-occur and cluster within audience discourse and content coding, transforming individual moments of interaction into patterned identity work.

The dendrogram visualizes the hierarchical clustering of narrative nodes derived from the NVivo coding process, based on their co-occurrence patterns across platforms and time. The vertical axis ("Distance") represents the degree of dissimilarity between narrative nodes:

- 1) Lower distance indicates stronger semantic and contextual proximity (frequent co-appearance in the same posts or comment threads).
- 2) Higher distance indicates weaker association and greater narrative differentiation.

1. Primary Cluster Formation: Two Narrative Poles

The dendrogram reveals two dominant narrative clusters, which reflect two distinct modes of identity reconstruction:

Cluster A:

Motherhood – Humor

1. Motherhood and Humor merge at a very low distance (≈ 0.3), indicating a strong associative relationship.
2. This suggests that maternal content was frequently accompanied by lightness, warmth, and casual humor, particularly in short-form platforms (notably TikTok and Instagram Reels).
3. From an interpretive standpoint, this cluster represents affective softening narratives—identity performances that reduce moral tension and invite emotional closeness rather than judgment.

Motherhood does not function as a solemn moral discourse alone; instead, it is often framed through everyday, humorous moments that normalize the influencer's persona. This combination helps audiences shift from punitive moral evaluation to empathetic identification.

Cluster B:

Healing – Reflective

1. Healing and Reflective also cluster at a similarly low distance, indicating deep narrative alignment.
2. This pairing reflects content centered on emotional growth, self-awareness, and moral introspection, most prominently found in long-form YouTube vlogs and reflective Instagram captions.

Healing narratives are rarely performative in isolation; they are embedded in reflective storytelling that enables audiences to reassess earlier moral judgments. This cluster corresponds to moral re-legitimation, where audiences engage in forgiveness through understanding rather than amusement.

2. The Mediating Role of Aesthetic

The Aesthetic node occupies a central but later-joining position, clustering with the two main narrative poles at a higher distance (≈ 1.0 – 1.1). This indicates that: (1) Aesthetic presentation (soft visuals, calm tone, visual coherence) is less narratively specific but structurally integrative; and (2) Aesthetics function as a stabilizing infrastructure, rather than a narrative driver.

Aesthetic identity acts as a front-stage moral stabilizer—it does not produce redemption by itself, but it creates a visual and emotional environment in which both light affect (motherhood–humor) and deep affect

(healing–reflection) can be interpreted as sincere and coherent. In dramaturgical terms, aesthetics provide the consistent “set design” across platforms, allowing multiple identity performances to feel unified rather than fragmented.

Hierarchical Narrative Logic of Identity Repair

Reading the dendrogram from bottom to top reveals a layered logic of reputational recovery:

1. Immediate affective bonding: Motherhood + Humor (reduces hostility, restores likability)
2. Moral realignment: Healing + Reflective (enables forgiveness and ethical reassessment)
3. Identity coherence: Aesthetic integration (prevents narrative dissonance across platforms)

This structure empirically supports the argument that influencer crisis recovery is not linear, but modular and multi-layered, combining different emotional registers at different narrative depths.

Overall, the dendrogram indicates that Rachel Vennya’s post-crisis identity repair was facilitated through clustered narrative logics rather than isolated strategies. Redemption emerged not from a single dominant theme, but from the orchestration of complementary narrative clusters, stabilized by aesthetic coherence and activated through platform-specific performances. This visualization thus substantiates the study’s central claim that influencer reputation recovery is a narrative–affective–platformed process rather than a conventional public relations response.

Aesthetic Persona as Stabilizing Front-Stage Identity

Throughout 2023–2025, Instagram served as the primary platform for curating a visually coherent and morally reassuring persona. The 2023 Reel with 128 million views provided a powerful silent re-entry strategy, relying on aesthetic softness, warm tones, and non-verbal cues rather than explicit statements.

Research suggests that aesthetic curation can signal emotional stability and moral coherence, thereby reducing cognitive dissonance in audiences following a scandal (Marwick, 2015). NVivo coding of comments indicated descriptors such as “*calm*,” “*cantik banget*,” “*vibesnya lembut*,” which were associated with the aesthetic persona node.

Even without verbal messaging, audiences interpreted these visuals as indicative of inner transformation. The aesthetic persona thus became a stabilizing front-stage identity (Goffman, 1959), allowing Vennya to reappear

gradually without reactivating the moral emotions surrounding the 2021 incident.

Casual-Relatable Persona: TikTok as Rapid Sentiment Softening

TikTok played a crucial role in reducing negative sentiment. Videos such as the 2024 viral clip garnered 33 million views, 2.2 million likes, and 7,676 comments, with humor and spontaneity dominating user reactions. Audience comments often read: *“ini baru Rachel yang relate banget,”*; *“ketawanya bikin lupa masalah kemarin,”*; or *“humornya natural banget.”*

This pattern supports research highlighting TikTok’s capacity to humanize influencers through informal, playful self-presentation (Abidin, 2016). Humor acted as an affective buffer, reframing the influencer as approachable, imperfect, and emotionally accessible—a persona that audiences were willing to forgive quickly. TikTok thus functioned as a micro-front stage (Hogan, 2010) where identity repair occurred through the performance of everyday flaws rather than polished professionalism.

Reflective Persona: YouTube as Backstage Moral Negotiation

The reflective persona emerged most strongly on YouTube, where Vennya employed long-form storytelling to convey vulnerability and emotional growth. The 2024 video, which has garnered 2.1 million views, incorporates thematic cues centered on accountability, self-reflection, and healing.

User comments such as *“aku dulu marah tapi video ini membuka hati,”* and *“sikapmu sekarang lebih humble”* reflect audience engagement in moral re-evaluation. Scholars note that long-form digital confession spaces allow influencers to negotiate moral status with audiences in ways that short-form platforms cannot. Here, YouTube becomes the dramaturgical backstage (Goffman, 1959), offering depth, nuance, and emotional transparency—qualities that facilitate forgiveness and identity re-stabilization.

Audience Sentiment Dynamics Across Platforms

Sentiment coding across 2023–2025 revealed a dramatic shift: 2023: Negative sentiment still present (~25%), especially on YouTube, 2024: Positive sentiment rises significantly (~60%), and 2025: Positive sentiment peaks (~80%), negative sentiment drops to ~5%

These shifts correlate with narrative transitions across platforms. Node co-occurrence shows:

- 1) Motherhood ↔ Positive Sentiment (strongest correlation)
- 2) Healing ↔ Forgiveness

- 3) Humor ↔ TikTok Engagement
- 4) Reflection ↔ Moral Reconsideration

The decline of negative sentiment is particularly notable: by late 2025, comments referencing the 2021 scandal had all but disappeared, demonstrating what scholars describe as *identity overwriting*—the process by which new narratives saturate discourse and render older moral frames irrelevant. This finding aligns with digital sociology research, which asserts that publics often forgive influencers not through rational evaluation, but through affective alignment with new narrative scripts (Cotter, 2018)

The findings of this study reveal the complexity of reputational recovery in the influencer ecosystem and highlight how digital platforms operate as differentiated moral stages that facilitate specific modes of narrative repair. Such complexity affirms arguments within digital sociology that public identity is increasingly co-produced through networked interactions, affective investments, and platform logics (Baym, 2015; Bucher & Helmond, 2018). The trajectory of Rachel Vennya’s comeback demonstrates that reputational crises in influencer culture cannot be understood through traditional crisis communication frameworks. Instead, these crises unfold as emotionally charged narrative disruptions that require identity reconstruction across varying temporal and platform-specific rhythms.

One of the most significant implications of these findings is how multifaceted branding becomes a strategic necessity in recovering from a scandal. Prior studies highlight that influencers rely on carefully curated identity assemblages to maintain perceived authenticity (Hearn & Schoenhoff, 2015). Yet, this research extends such insights by showing that these assemblages must become even more dynamic and emotionally responsive during crisis recovery. For instance, the use of motherhood as a redemptive anchor aligns with the gendered moral expectations placed on female influencers, whom audiences often judge according to norms of relational care, emotional maturity, and moral responsibility. The prominence of the motherhood node in audience responses suggests that maternal identity not only softened the scandal’s moral impact but actively generated affective solidarity, functioning as an “empathy bridge” through which followers reframed earlier wrongdoing.

Similarly, the narrative of healing and personal growth reflects broader cultural tropes of self-improvement that dominate influencer culture and digital self-presentation. Scholars argue that contemporary social media environments encourage individuals to position themselves as evolving protagonists within their own autobiographical narratives (Gill & Kanai, 2018). The repeated audience comments that framed Vennya as “learning,” “growing,” or “becoming better” demonstrate how followers participated in constructing a redemptive arc that aligns with the neoliberal logic of self-transformation. This suggests that public forgiveness in influencer culture is

contingent not merely on emotional displays but on the influencer's ability to insert themselves into culturally legible moral frameworks. Such narratives enable audiences to view the scandal as a temporary deviation rather than a defining characteristic, thereby facilitating the process Somers (1994) describes as "narrative realignment," where past actions are integrated into a larger story of future promise.

The role of TikTok as a sentiment softening mechanism is another critical finding. TikTok's algorithmic architecture favors humor, spontaneity, and virality, producing a content environment that encourages audiences to prioritize entertainment value over moral judgment. This helps explain why Vennya's negative sentiment drastically decreased in TikTok comment sections earlier than on other platforms. Humor—in the form of facial expressions, playful gestures, and candid moments—acted as a form of "affective dissonance reduction," making it psychologically easier for audiences to reconcile their prior disapproval with their present enjoyment. This illustrates how platform affordances shape moral responses: humor renders the influencer more human, more flawed, and therefore more forgivable. As Abidin (2021) notes, influencers often deploy "calibrated amateurism" to appear accessible and imperfect, a tactic that Vennya leveraged effectively to re-enter her audience's good graces.

In contrast, YouTube served as the reflective backstage, in line with Goffman's dramaturgical metaphors (1959). Long-form vlogs enabled slower-paced, emotionally layered expressions of accountability and vulnerability. Audiences engaged with these videos as confessional texts—spaces where they could reassess their emotional stance toward the influencer. This resonates with Lewis's (2020) findings that YouTube confessionals serve as digital rituals of sincerity, enabling followers to perceive influencers as morally earnest. The audience responses to Vennya's YouTube videos—"aku dulu marah tapi sekarang mengerti," "penjelasanmu menyentuh"—indicate that long-form reflective storytelling allowed for deeper moral re-evaluation. While Instagram stabilized visual identity and TikTok softened affect, YouTube legitimized emotional growth.

Taken together, these dynamics point toward the emergence of platformed dramaturgy, a conceptual innovation this study contributes to influencer PR research. While scholars have argued that social media expands dramaturgical performances across front stage and backstage contexts (Hogan, 2010), this study demonstrates how *each platform imposes distinct dramaturgical expectations* that influencers must strategically navigate during crisis recovery. Instagram demands aesthetic moral coherence; TikTok rewards spontaneity and emotional levity; YouTube requires reflective depth. The successful integration of these performances demonstrates that influencer reputational repair is not a singular message strategy but an orchestrated, multi-staged identity choreography.

Another significant implication concerns the ethical and structural dimensions of influencer forgiveness. The ease with which audiences forgave Vennya reveals that digital publics often rely on affective impression rather than factual accountability when assessing influencer morality. This finding supports Cotter (2018) argument that emotional cues often exert more influence on audience perception than rational communication. Yet it also raises ethical concerns: influencers with high aesthetic capital, emotional literacy, or maternal symbolism may be disproportionately advantaged in securing forgiveness. Conversely, influencers lacking these forms of symbolic capital may struggle to repair their reputations, even when their transgressions are comparable or less severe. This asymmetry underscores the moral economy of influencer culture—an economy governed by affect, visibility, and emotional labor rather than fairness or consistency.

Finally, the transformation of crisis into a profitable narrative resource warrants critical attention. By 2025, Vennya's commercial endorsements and branded partnerships reappeared seamlessly, demonstrating that her rehabilitated persona successfully re-entered influencer markets. Scholars caution that the commodification of vulnerability—where emotional confession is transformed into content—is increasingly normalized in influencer culture (Bishop, 2021). Vennya's case illustrates how the emotional work of healing and redemption can ultimately translate into renewed commercial engagement, revealing how platform capitalism absorbs personal crises and converts them into opportunities for renewed visibility.

Altogether, the discussions illuminate that influencer crisis recovery is a deeply narrative, affective, and platform-dependent process. It is shaped by audience co-production, emotional labor, and socio-cultural expectations, and is ultimately governed by the evolving moral logics of digital publics.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that influencer reputation repair is fundamentally a process of narrative reframing, emotional recalibration, and platform-specific identity choreography rather than a traditional crisis communication effort. Rachel Vennya's re-emergence from the 2021 scandal illustrates how influencers rebuild legitimacy not through formal statements but through the cumulative performance of motherhood, healing, aesthetic stability, humor, and reflective sincerity. These identity performances are distributed across platforms that function as distinct dramaturgical stages, shaping how audiences interpret, negotiate, and eventually forgive transgressions.

The findings show that audiences play an active role in co-constructing redemption, using culturally familiar scripts of growth, vulnerability, and transformation to reinterpret past wrongdoing. The decline of negative sentiment and the rise of empathetic discourse across Instagram, TikTok, and

YouTube reveal how digital publics collaboratively participate in the overwriting of moral memory, ultimately constructing a new identity that supersedes earlier controversy.

This research offers two major theoretical contributions. First, it introduces *platformed dramaturgy* as a framework for understanding how influencers mobilize different facets of their identity across distinct digital stages to manage reputation. Second, it expands existing models of narrative identity by demonstrating how audience sentiment serves as a mechanism of narrative realignment, facilitating the integration of past violations into redemptive storylines.

Nevertheless, the study also highlights ethical challenges. The uneven distribution of forgiveness, the commodification of vulnerability, and the structural biases that favor influencers with maternal or aesthetic capital necessitate critical interrogation. These findings highlight the need for future research to explore the cultural, algorithmic, and economic factors that determine who receives redemption in the influencer ecosystem—and who does not. Ultimately, this study underscores that influencer crisis recovery is not merely a communication strategy but a cultural phenomenon shaped by storytelling, affect, and collective meaning-making within platformed publics.

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