

# Vlogs As New Domains Of Life Writing: A Study On The Expression And Recording Of Memory In The Digital Platform With Special Focus On Postpartum Vlogs

Josiya P Shaju<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Soni Joseph<sup>2</sup>, Dr. Jyotsna Sinha<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar Department of Humanities and Social Sciences MNNIT, Allahabad Email: [josiyareshaju@gmail.com](mailto:josiyareshaju@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor Department of Humanities and Social Sciences MNNIT, Allahabad Email: [sonij@mnnit.ac.in](mailto:sonij@mnnit.ac.in)

<sup>3</sup>Associate Professor Department of Humanities and Social Sciences MNNIT, Allahabad Email: [jyotsna@mnnit.ac.in](mailto:jyotsna@mnnit.ac.in)

## Abstract

Life writing has become a powerful tool for the marginalized and subordinated communities to re-invent themselves through the narratives of their memories, experiences, and identity. The theories on subjectivity point out that the expression of self and narration of life does not only adhere to the genre of autobiography but it can be expressed through other literary forms such as poetry, novels, letters, diaries, documentaries, photographs etc. These works of life narration offer solidarity with the fragmented and emotional experiences of people. This theoretical framework enables one to extend the area of inquiry to the domains of digital content creation. It can be seen that social media platforms like YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, etc. become the most engaging and popular platforms of self-expression. This paper selects postpartum video blogs as the primary text for enquiry to study how the video blogs become a new and popular domain of life writing.

**Keywords:** Vlogs, Postpartum, Life writing, Subjectivity, Autobiographical subjectivity,

## Introduction

Life writing is a genre of self-expression which promotes the expression of the self. It is a literary expression that exercises self-reflection. Life writing is a complex phenomenon in which the author becomes the subject and object of writing (Smith and Watson 1). Autobiography is the most acceptable term for life writings (Smith and Watson 2). The writers of the autobiography explore and identify their selfhood and self-identity (Agnihotri 49). Writers talk about their individual lives and experiences through this literary form. The term autobiography comes from the Greek terms 'Autos', 'Bios,' and 'Graphe,' which means 'self,' 'life,' and 'writing' (Das 321).

Many postmodern critics criticize the universalization and canonization of autobiography as the representation of life writings. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson say, "While autobiography is the most widely used and most generally understood term for life narrative, it is also a term that has been vigorously challenged in the wake of postmodern and postcolonial critiques of the Enlightenment subject" (Smith and Watson 3). Udayakumar, in his work *Writing the First Person*, on studying the self-articulations from Kerala, says,

Nor do autobiographies hold a monopoly on self-articulation: they share the space of first-person enunciation with novels

and poetry, and, more importantly, with non-literary writings. Social, governmental, and historical prose played an important role in forging the language of self-writing in Kerala; so did translation, travel, and discursive bricolage. So, although I began this book as an inquiry into autobiography, I found it soon turning into a wider study of the emergence of new idioms of self-articulation in Malayalam from around the 1880s to the middle of the twentieth century (Kumar 3).

Traditionally, autobiography is considered an expression of the self. Memory, experiences, identity, embodiment, and agency are the major constituents of autobiographical subjectivity. However, recent theories on subjectivity point out that the expression of self and narration of life does not only adhere to the genre of autobiography, but it can be expressed through other literary forms such as poetry, novels, letters, diaries, documentaries, and even photographs, etc., within the larger domain of life writing. Life writing is a way of literary expression that projects self-reflection and subjectivity. The life narratives explore and identify the selfhood and identity of the subject. Recently, life writing has become a powerful tool for marginalized and subordinated communities to re-invent themselves through the narratives of their memories, experiences, and identity. These works of life narration offer solidarity with people's fragmented and emotional experiences. This theoretical framework enables one to extend the area of inquiry to the domains of digital content creation. As a result, it can be seen that social media platforms like YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, etc., have become one of the most engaging and popular self-expression platforms. This paper selects postpartum video blogs from the most popular social media platform, YouTube, as the primary text for inquiry to study how video blogs, which are popularly known as

'Vlogs,' become a new and popular domain of life narrative. The project also analyses how autobiographical subjectivity is expressed in this new domain of life narrative. Introducing a new domain into life writing studies makes the study relevant in today's scenario. This paper analyses "My Postpartum Days: Delivery Story" by Nimmy Arungopan, "My Postpartum Depression- Part 2" by Yours Truly Silpa Bala, "My postpartum Depression" by Ann Nikhil, "My Postpartum Story" by Dimple Rose, "My Postpartum Story" by Life Unedited- Ashwathy Sreekanth and "Njanum aa stage aanu ipol!!: Postpartum Depression" by Parvathy R Krishna.

### **Video Blogs as a New Domain of Life Narratives**

Life writing is a vast area covering different forms of life and self-expression. The writers of life consider their life as the subject and incorporate the elements such as experience, memory, identity, agency, and embodiment to express their self and subjectivity. The authors of life will talk about their memories and will identify those memories in the present. The authors never relive the experience but recollect the memories in different forms and recreate it through their writings. Life writing will have different domains, such as diaries, letters, autobiographies, portraits, photographs, etc. Louise M Smith says, "Life writing comes with many labels – portrayals, portraits, profiles, memoirs, life stories, life histories, case studies, autobiographies, journals, diaries, and on and on – each suggesting a slightly different perspective under consideration" (Smith and Watson 3). Autobiography is canonized as a representative of life writings, often criticized by postmodern and postcolonial critiques.

As per Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, life narratives have fifty-two different genres or domains. The narrators of life express their self and subjectivity using the genres they like to be read by the audience. The narrators will choose

the apt domain to help them express themselves. Many domains have been studied and discussed, and some of the domains, like an autobiography, are canonized. The established genres or domains might lose their popularity, and new genres might emerge as per the convenience of the life narrators (Smith and Watson 183). The fifty-two genres established by Smith and Watson are apologies, autobiographics, autobiography, autobiography in the second person, autobiography in the third person, autoethnography, autofiction, autography, autobiography, autopathography, autothanatology, autotopography, bildungsroman, biomythography, captivity narrative, case study, chronicle, collaborative life narrative, confession, conversion narrative, diary, autobiography, ethnic life narrative, ethnocriticism, geneology, heterobiography, journal, journaling, letters, life writing, life narrative, meditation, memoir, oral history, autobiography, oughtabiography, periautography, personal essays, poetic autobiography, prison narratives, relational autobiography, scriptotherapy, self-help narrative, self-portrait, serial autobiography, slave narrative, spiritual life narrative, survivor narrative, testimonio, trauma narrative, travel narrative and witnessing (Smith and Watson 183-207). Video blogs, commonly known as vlogs, can be considered a new genre of life narrative. It can be observed that the social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, etc., have become the most popular and engaging areas for self-expression (Statista).

Video blogs or vlogs are becoming popular. People from different backgrounds, societies, and institutions prepare and publish blogs on popular social media websites like Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, etc. As per the studies, YouTube is the most popular social media website used by individuals to post vlogs on different subjects, events, and opinions; it is observed that YouTube has over one billion

users, and over five hundred hours of videos are uploaded every minute (Deshpande). The slogan of YouTube is 'Broadcast Yourself,' and this phrase shows how the platform helps people to express their own life in different forms ("Are YouTube Videos"). YouTube vlogs discuss different events, opinions, or subjects ("Working Together"). Jawed Karim uploaded the first YouTube vlog, and the video's title was 'Me at the Zoo' uploaded in 2005 (Asmelash). Vloggers consider vlogs as a platform to express their self and subjectivity. People, irrespective of caste, class, race, gender, and religion, publish vlogs of their interest. Women consider YouTube vlogs a platform to express their opinion and experience and support other women who go through similar experiences. Commentary, product review, informational, narratives, etc., are some of the most trending videos on YouTube (Sukhraj). There are different kinds of vlogs available on YouTube. Blogging and online videos are currently attractive to scholars, but vlogging has not yet been studied or discussed in academic spaces (Griffith & Papacharissi). As Maggie Griffith says,

Other studies have examined self-presentation and identity in everyday or electronic communication contexts. Jones (1990) noted that individuals use several self-presentation strategies to create the desired impression, including ingratiation, competence, intimidation, exemplification, and supplication. Integration is used when the desired goal is to be liked. Competence, or self-promotion, is used when an individual wants to be perceived as talented or capable. Intimidation is used when a person desires power or control of a situation. Exemplification is used when an individual wish to be seen as morally superior or virtuous. Supplication is used when someone wants to be nurtured or helped due to self-perceived

weaknesses. Ingratiation is the most commonly used strategy and has a "halo effect" when used in conjunction with other strategies (Griffith & Papacharissi). The vlogs talk about different subjects, events, and opinions. Based on the contents of the vlogs, there are nine different categories of vlogs, including daily vlogs, which talk about the things happening in daily life like the day in my life vlogs, clean with me vlogs, day or night routine vlogs, etc., travel vlogs which narrate about a trip, informational and educational vlogs which are created for informative purposes, tech vlogs which introduce to the nuances of technologies, music vlogs, opinion vlogs in which the narrator brings out the opinion and reviews in which movies or books will be reviewed. Women share their experiences of pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum through vlogs. Many women publish postpartum vlogs to share their experiences and support women who go through similar experiences.

Postpartum is a stage after childbirth. The hormone changes and hormone imbalances in the body of women who give birth to the child will affect them emotionally. There are different stages of postpartum. Most women experience baby blues soon after childbirth. Baby blues will peak on the fourth day after the delivery and reduce after two weeks (Postpartum Depression, 2018). This condition is common in almost all women who give birth to a child. There are three different phases of postpartum. The first phase is the initial one, starting from the first six to twelve hours of childbirth. The second phase is the subacute postpartum period which lasts from six to twelve weeks. The third phase is the delayed postpartum period which will last up to six months of childbirth (Romano et al., 2010).

Some women in the postpartum stage will experience a condition called postpartum depression. The postpartum stage is a complex stage mixed with social, emotional, and physiological changes which come with

childbirth. 50 to 75 percent of women experience the normal state of baby blues. In contrast, up to 15 percent of women experience postpartum depression, and one among thousands of women experience a more severe case of postpartum psychosis. The women experiencing postpartum blues will be experiencing anxiety, sadness, and depression, lasting from several hours to several days. Care from the partner and family members will help those women to overcome this stage. Postpartum depression is more severe than baby blues. The symptoms are the inability to take care of the child, depression, crying for no reason, etc. Not being treated carefully will result in severe mental and physical issues. Postpartum psychosis is the most severe stage of postpartum depression. This case is scarce, but the women affected by postpartum psychosis might tend to harm themselves and their children. They will experience hallucinations, paranoia, hyperactivity, and mania. This condition requires immediate medical attention (Romano). Studies say that around 10 percent of men experience postpartum depression. This is due to the neurochemical changes occurring in the brain due to sleep deprivation after a child's birth (Postpartum Depression, 2018).

Women who went through the postpartum stage and suffered from postpartum depression have posted video blogs on platforms like YouTube. This study analyses five postpartum vlogs published on YouTube. In all these vlogs, women support other women who undergo similar situations. These vlogs mirror other women, just like the autobiographical writings of women, "Women reading other women's autobiographical writings have experienced them as mirrors of their unvoiced aspirations" (Smith and Watson 5).

These vlogs also help men and other family members to realize the importance of care required for women after childbirth. The men, the women who plan to give birth to a child, the newly married couple, the family members, etc.,

receive awareness about the postpartum stage and can give excellent care and support to the new mothers physically, mentally, and emotionally.

The components of autobiographical acts include coaxers, storytelling sites, producer of autobiographical 'I,' relationality of the subject, the addressee, structuring modes of self-inquiry, employment patterns, the medium, and the consumer. All these components of autobiographical acts are visible in video blogs, thus making it a new domain of self-expression. Coaxers are the elements that provoke the speaker or author to tell their life story. It can be a person or any institution. Vlogs are of different types, and there will be an element that provokes the speaker to talk about it. In postpartum vlogs, women's trauma, pain, and suffering during the postpartum stage act as the coaxers that motivate them to talk about their experiences. The traumatic and depressive situation experienced by the narrator acts as the coaxer in the Postpartum video blog of Parvathy R Krishna. She relishes speaking to the camera during emotional breakdowns (Krishna). The sudden response and inquiries about the postpartum experience from the public after the announcement of the second delivery is the coaxer for Aswathy Sreekanth (Sreekanth). The coaxer in Shilpa Bala's vlogs is the inquiries and texts she received regarding her postpartum experience. She says she realized that many women are unaware of the postpartum stage and postpartum depression and wants to motivate them (Bala). Dimple Rose thinks other people should know about her experiences to be enlightened about the postpartum stage (Rose). This motivation acts as the coaxer in her vlogs. The site of telling a story is yet another component of an autobiographical act. The site is the place or occasion at which someone tells their life story. The site can be both occasional and locational. In postpartum video blogs, the comfort of the house and the acceptance and popularity of social media helps the authors to

talk about themselves, and these become the site of storytelling.

In an autobiographical act, the production of the autobiographical 'I' is very relevant. There are different types of autobiographical 'I' in a self-narrative. The 'I' that is present now will not be present then. The author of the autobiography will not be reliving the experience but will be recollecting it. The 'I' who wrote the autobiography differs from the 'I' who experienced the particular memory the author is speaking about. So 'I' now and 'I' then are different. There will be a real or a historical 'I.' Historical 'I' is the person who lived the experience. That 'I' is inaccessible and unknown to the reader. In an autobiographical act, there is a narrating 'I.' The narrating 'I' can talk in different voices.

In a lively narrative, there is a narrated 'I,' which will be the subject of the narrative, and the particular historical 'I' chosen by the author to talk about. The narrated 'I' who already lived in the past is not experiencing the past now. So, the action of writing or narrating can be considered as writing a story. On analyzing postpartum video blogs, it can be seen that, like every other autobiographical act, the narrating 'I,' the woman who explains her traumatic experiences, will not be experiencing the same while narrating. She will recollect all the experiences and be ready to speak about them once she is out of the difficulties. Therefore, in video blogs, the presence of historical 'I' and narrating 'I' can be observed. In the postpartum video blogs of Aswathy Sreekanth, Nimmy Arungopan, Shilpa Bala, and Dimple Rose, a clear-cut distinction between autobiographical 'I' and narrative 'I' are visible. They say that the narrative 'I' is stronger and more powerful as they have overcome the experience and are recollecting them (Arungopan; Bala; Rose; Sreekanth). In some cases, both autobiographical 'I' and narrative 'I' can be similar, like in the postpartum vlog of Parvathy R

Krishna. She is undergoing the situation while she talks about her experience (Krishna).

The autobiographical 'I' will find a relationship with other people. The readers establish the connection. The relationality is more in women's narratives rather than male narratives. This is evident in the postpartum video blogs. The women are ready to narrate their experiences because they want to support and help other women who go through a similar experience. Parvathy R Krishna connects herself with other mothers who have overcome all these struggles and have raised children (Krishna). Aswathy Sreekanth talks about baby blues and lack of bonding with the child. She also expresses her willingness to help other women who undergo similar experiences by stating that anybody can share their queries and experiences as her social media inbox is open to the public (Sreekanth). Nimmy Arungopan tries to understand the conditions of other women suffering from postpartum depression. She also finds a relationality with the lady undergoing complete bed rest during the pregnancy, and she consoles herself by saying that she could at least travel around during her pregnancy (Arungopan). Shilpa Bala advises women to continue breastfeeding even in case of nipple cracks as she faced awful conditions by stopping breastfeeding when she had nipple cracks. She also connects with other women who undergo baby blues and postpartum depression (Bala). Dimple Rose advises other women to stay positive and avoid negative thoughts as she has done. Thus, women connect through vlogs (Rose).

In every autobiographical act, there is an addressee. Sometimes the addressee will be the other version of the narrator. This is common in life writing forms such as diaries. Every narrator narrates something by imagining a reader. The reader can be an implied reader whom the author implies in mind, or it can be an imaginary character or being. In the autobiographical act, the narrator and the addressee will always

communicate continuously. The postpartum vlogs address other women undergoing or undergoing similar experiences. Parvathy R Krishna addresses the entire society, family members, and other women who are going through the stage of postpartum depression (Krishna). Aswathy Sreekanth also addresses the entire society, new mothers, pregnant women, and their partners (Sreekanth). Nimmy Arungopan addresses pregnant ladies, their partners, and woman who stay alone during pregnancy without the support and presence of their partners (Arungopan). Shilpa Bala also addresses pregnant ladies, breastfeeding mothers, partners, family members other than parents and husbands, and new parents (Bala). Dimple Rose mainly addresses new mothers (Rose).

Every autobiographical act is a process of self-reflection and self-inquiry. The author or the narrator will decide the structure of the inquiry. The author chooses the structure of the autobiographical act. The plot is structured at the convenience of the narrator. Sometimes the plot is arranged in chronological order, whereas sometimes, the plot is fragmented. This aspect makes autobiographies different from histories. In history, the facts are explained chronologically, whereas, in autobiographies, the experiences and memories are employed at the author's convenience. The narrators of the vlogs will decide the structure of the narration. Some vlogs are narrated chronologically, whereas some are not. All these vlogs act as a way of self-inquiry and self-reflection. Dimple Rose, through her chronological narration, brings out a self-inquiry. She identifies herself as a strong person now and recollects how sensitive and short-tempered she was during her postpartum stage (Rose). Shilpa Bala realized that she had undergone a breakdown as she kept judging herself and considered herself a terrible mother (Bala). Nimmy Arungopan considers herself a brave person who is not ready to fail during a harrowing and traumatic situation (Arungopan).

Aswathy Sreekanth recalls how she overcame her depression by doing YouTube videos, doing workouts, and dancing (Sreekanth). Parvathy R Krishna realizes that she is a powerful woman (Krishna). The medium of an autobiographical act is flexible. It can use any medium. It can either be oral, written, or technical documents. The memories and experiences are stored in the form of photographs, videos, or other documentaries. All these mediums serve the purpose of narrating life. Smith and Watson list out different mediums of autobiographical acts,

The kinds of media that can be used to tell an autobiographical story include short feature and documentary films; theater pieces; installations; performance art in music, dance, and monologue; the painted or sculpted self-portrait; quilts, collages, and mosaics; body art; murals; comics; and cyber art (Smith and Watson 74).

Video blogs use videos as a medium of communication.

The consumer of an autobiographical act is equally important as the narrator. The readers are present in a different history and different time frame. The narrator has an implied reader while writing or narrating, but the original reader differs from the implied reader. A life narrative is not explained in front of a live audience. Therefore, the audience will not be able to influence the narrative directly. Smith and Watson explain,

When someone tells his life story before a 'live' audience, that audience is palpably there, soliciting, assessing, and even judging the story being told. Thus, the audience directly influences the presentation of identity. It influences the inclusion of specific identity contents and the exclusion of others; the incorporation of specific narrative itineraries or intentionalities and the silencing of others; the adoption of

certain autobiographical voices and the muting of others. In a sense, the performativity of such an autobiographical act minimizes the distance between the narrator and narratee, the implied audience, and the consumer. The story is being addressed to a live audience that, to a greater or lesser extent, immediately and audibly responds (Smith and Watson 77).

The vlogs are also not presented in front of a live audience. Therefore the implied audience and the original consumers of the video blogs are different. Video blogs or vlogs contain all these components of autobiographical acts, making vlogs a new form of autobiographical narration. Vlogs can be included as a new domain of life narrative as it has many characteristics of a life narrative. The subjects of vlogs are lives which is the crucial feature of life narratives. The vlogs express the subjectivity of an individual. In some vlogs, especially in the vlogs by women, a sense of solidarity and relationality can be seen as similar to the other domains of women's life narratives. The vlogs use memories and experiences as the source of content, and the authority of experience can be attributed to the narrators of the vlogs. Like every autobiographical act, vlogs will have all the components of autobiographical acts. The coauthors will be present in each vlog which will provoke the speaker to tell the story. It can be a situation, person, or event. The sites of storytelling can also be witnessed in vlogs. The vlogs, like every autobiographical act, produce autobiographical 'I.' There is a real or historical 'I,' a narrated 'I,' and a narrated 'I.' The addressee is always present in vlogs. The vlogs will be addressed to a particular audience or a shared public. The narrator will have an implied audience in mind. As autobiographical acts can use any medium for narrating life, vlogs use the medium of videos to express life. The consumers or viewers of the vlogs are also equally important.

The viewers will be expressing their opinions, thoughts, and reflections in comment boxes which can be viewed and read by the narrator.

In the case of postpartum vlogs, the postpartum trauma provokes the women to express their experience and offer support to other women. The vlogs also have a site of storytelling or an occasion or location which affect the narrative. There is a narrated 'I' narrating 'I' and a real 'I' (historical 'I') in every vlog. The narratives can also show the relationship between the audience and the narrator. The addressee or audience is very important as far as vlogs are concerned. The narrators have an implied audience in their minds while they narrate their memories and experience. The structuring and patterns of employment will also vary from narrator to narrator in vlogs, just like other genres of self-narratives. As video blogs satisfy all the features of autobiographical narratives, vlogs can be considered a new domain of life narratives.

### **Autobiographical Subjectivity and Solidarity in Women's Life Narratives**

Every autobiographical act or life narrative expresses the author's or the narrator's subjectivity and self. Life narratives are considered a means to express the subjectivity of an individual. Reading life narratives provides an experience of subjectivity expressed by the narrator in the text. As Max Saunders observes, "This shades off into an area with which impressionist and modernist auto/ biography and autobiografiction has particularly engaged: the way reading gives you the experience of the subjectivity of others, a major part of which is the experience of the memories of others" (Saunders 57).

According to Smith and Watson, there are different constitutive processes of autobiographical subjectivity. They are memory, experience, identity, embodiment, and agency. Memories are the primary sources of

autobiographical writings. The writers of life narratives will interpret the events that happened in the past. Those events are only recollected and interpreted but cannot be relieved by the writer. The memories will always remain fragments, and these fragmented memories will produce stories of life in which the narrator is a character. The memories will be contextual, depending on when the work is written. It is observed,

We remember the history of a relationship in the context of sexual intimacy or as we celebrate anniversaries. We remember our history as national citizens in the context of parades and national holidays. Similarly, the memory invoked in the autobiographical narrative is specific to the time of writing and the contexts of telling (Smith and Watson 18).

The present condition of the author also influences the remembering process. The act of remembering is political. Smith and Watson explain it with an instance,

Germans in the 1930s were schooled (literally and figuratively) to remember the nation's past as an Aryan past. After World War II, the two Germanys were taught to remember different and competing versions of the war and the Holocaust and highly selective versions of the national past, depending on whether they lived in the socialist East or the liberal-democratic West. German autobiographical writing is still negotiating these different versions of national memory, as the formerly East German writer, Christa Wolf, suggests in *Patterns of Childhood* (Smith and Watson 19).

There is a connection between memories and materiality. The memories are evoked by a sight, a smell, or other material objects. In such situations, memories are materialized by the author while inscribing their story. There is a term called scriptotherapy. It is said that the individual who has undergone a traumatic experience will



be cured of the trauma after writing it in the form of a narrative. Suzette A Henke coined the term in her work *Shattered Subjects* (Raj, 2016). Thus, memories in different ways constitute the processing of autobiographical subjects. In considering video blogs as a new domain of life writing, memories serve as the primary content source in vlogs. In analyzing postpartum vlogs, women share their traumatic memories through the vlogs. The vlogs by Aswathy Sreekanth, Dimple Rose, Nimmy Arungopan, and Shilpa Bala recollect their memories and use the vlogs as a medium of scriptotherapy to cure their bad memories and trauma (Arungopan; Bala; Rose; Sreekanth). Parvathy R Krishna advises the audiences to record vlogs or videos or even talk to a camera as it can cure them of bad memories (Krishna).

Experience is another primary source of the content of autobiographies. The author of an autobiography has the authority of experience. The narrators will recollect their experiences and interpret them in the present times. The authority of experience makes an autobiographical narrative valid. In postpartum vlogs, women share their experiences of postpartum depression and how they have overcome the depression stage. Shilpa Bala talks about the experience of her running out of the house and the experience of herself becoming happy for feeding the child once the wounds were healed (Bala). Dimple Rose shares her experiences with another woman so that they can learn from her bad experiences (Rose). Identity is another process of autobiographical subjectivity.

The identities of the narrators can also be interrelated. The authors identify themselves with the readers. The readers who read the autobiographical narrative will feel a connection with the author and the experiences and memories explained in the narrative. This is evident from the vlogs of Aswathy Sreekanth and Shilpa Bala. She says that women contacted them, saying their vlogs were helpful. The

comment sections of all the vlogs analyzed here evidently suggest that these vlogs are helping the audience to identify themselves with the narrators (Bala; Sreekanth). The narrators of the autobiographical texts are embodied. Therefore, the subjects and the memories are embodied, and autobiographical acts are also embodied.

Agency is another constituent of autobiographical subjectivity. According to Althusser's theory of ideology and ideological apparatus, an individual is already subjected to ideologies. These ideologies make individuals subjects. The institutions and practices create an ideology for the individuals (Ryder, n.d.). The individuals consider this their original subjectivity and express it through their writings. Thus, a false consciousness in the narrative is formed. The constituent processes of autobiographical subjects will formulate autobiographical subjectivity (Smith and Watson 123). Society and other institutions have portrayed motherhood as a divine feeling and expect all women to suffer without complaining. Aswathy Sreekanth, in her vlog, talks against this false consciousness created by society. She says motherhood is not easy and that women should express their feelings to their partners and family instead of silently suffering (Sreekanth).

The expression of autobiographical subjectivity and solidarity can be observed in women's life narratives. The major problem faced by women's narratives is sticking to masculine ideals. The masculine ideals have set a standard notion of writing autobiographies, and the women were compelled to stick on to those notions and standards set by masculinity. At this point, Helene Cixous encourages women to talk in their language and urges women to develop a language of their own (Cixous, 2010). It is observed that,

In 1987 Sidonie Smith's *A Poetics of Women's Autobiography* argued that in an androcentric tradition, autobiographical authorization was

unavailable to most women. Historically absent from both the public sphere and modes of written narrative, women were compelled to tell their stories differently and had done so, at least since medieval autobiographer Margery Kempe. Smith asserted that any theory of female textuality must recognize how patriarchal culture has fictionalized women and how in response, women autobiographers challenged the gender ideologies surrounding them to script their life narratives (Smith and Watson 12).

Women started writing autobiographies to make an entrance into history. As Smith and Watson say, "Many women writers have employed Autobiography to write themselves into history" (Smith and Watson 5). The patriarchy and masculinity othered women, and the masculinity talked about women in their words, but the expression of self by women was different from the patriarchal expressions. A sense of collectivity and relationality was more in women's writings and narratives than men's (Smith and Watson 9). The readers of life narratives written by women found a connection and considered those works as a mirror of their own. The experiences and memories shared by women had many things in common, and they gave voice to the voiceless women who were restricted from speaking by the patriarchy. Women offered a hand of support to other women through their writings (Smith and Watson 9). As Smith and Watson state, "In a literary canon and a Western tradition that had 'othered' women, whether as goddesses or demons, on pedestals or in back rooms, this effort to reclaim women's lives and discover how women would speak 'in their own words' was an essential initiatory gesture" (Smith and Watson 7).

A discontinuity can be observed in the life narratives of women. These fragmented narratives can be observed in women's life narratives due to the conditioning they face from

the patriarchal society. There are several differences between the life narratives of men and women. While men wrote about their success stories, heroic events, and professional life, women wrote about the domestic life they lived. While writing autobiographies, men provide a heroic image of themselves while women express their self-consciousness and ensure that the readers understand their subjectivity (Smith and Watson 9). In her work, *The Reproduction of Mothering*, Nancy Chodorow, a psychologist specializing in ego psychology, pointed out the reason behind the relationality and solidarity in the works of women. According to Chodorow, "feminine personality defines itself in relation and connection to other people more than masculine personality does. In psychoanalytic terms, women are less individuated than men and have more flexible ego boundaries" (Chodorow 44).

As per the theory of Chodorow, after the Oedipal stage of development, a male child will find a disconnection from the mother and, as a result, will try to discard all the feminine aspects of their personality. In contrast, a female child will identify with the mother and, as a result, will find a connection with the mother and other women and embrace all the feminine aspects in them. Therefore, instead of creating a boundary, the female child will find a relationship with self and other women. This connectivity and solidarity will be expressed in the works of women. The postpartum video blogs of Parvathy R Krishna, Aswathy Sreekanth, Dimple Rose, Shilpa Bala, and Nimmy Arungopan express the connectivity and solidarity expressed in the postpartum vlogs by women just like any other life narrative. The women in postpartum vlogs share their traumatic experiences recollected from their memories. They express their own experience, and they have the authority of experience. The narrators identify themselves with other women in the audience who go through similar experiences. The experiences and

memories are materialized and embodied in the narratives as they share the experiences and trauma of their bodies. The constituents of autobiographical subjectivity, including memories, experiences, identity, and embodiment, are reflected in the postpartum vlogs by women, and thus, they express autobiographical subjectivity. As the narrators offer concern and support to other women going through similar phases in their life, they offer connectivity and solidarity to other women.

Video blogs or vlogs, especially by women, express a relationality and connection like the autobiographical acts of women. The women audience who watch the vlogs consider the memories and experiences shared in them as their own experiences and will consider it a mirror of what they have experienced. This study focused on postpartum video blogs by women. The women express their subjectivity through these vlogs and offer connectivity and solidarity with other women who go through similar experiences. Women express how they lost bonding with their children (Nikhil; Sreekanth). They expressed their lack of interest in caring for or even feeding the child. The anxiety about the child's health is yet another concern of the new mothers. Some even fear something will happen to the child and husband (Nikhil). Women suffering from postpartum depression experience a sense of loneliness and will find it very difficult to face anyone. The main point shared in these vlogs is the importance of support and care from husband and family members. Some of these vlogs are narrated by husbands who share their experiences (Ann Nikhil; Arungopan; Bala; Sreekanth). They also express how they lack the emotions of motherhood (Sreekanth). Each of the narrators of these vlogs expresses their concern for other women who undergo a similar experience. They express solidarity and relationality with other mothers who undergo similar traumatic experiences (Nikhil, Rose, Sreekanth, Arungopan, Bala).

These vlogs not only address the women who undergo these experiences but also offer a helping hand and concern for other women who are planning for motherhood and also give awareness to the men about the physiological, psychological, and emotional. Behavioral changes women undergo after pregnancy will help the partners and family members be concerned and care for the new mother. Thus, the vlogs express the autobiographical subjectivity of the narrator. Therefore, it can be concluded that women express solidarity and autobiographical subjectivity through their works, and the experiences and memories of women narrators will act as a mirror to the female audience. In the postpartum vlogs, women express the traumatic situation they underwent and how they survived the situation.

### **Conclusion**

Life writing is an ever-developing field. The advancement of technology and recent developments have introduced new domains and genres of self-expression and self-representation. Many individuals express their self and subjectivity through different methods. Apart from the canonical genre, autobiography, people started exhibiting their selves through other genres of life narratives such as documentaries, photographs, diaries, letters, etc. With the increased popularity of social media websites like Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram, individuals received a platform to express themselves freely. According to the theories of life writing, the process of expressing self cannot be canonized to a single genre. Using this theory, it can be concluded that Video blogs, popularly known as vlogs, can be considered a new domain of life narrative. The narrators of the vlogs express their self and subjectivity through their works. The analysis and study on vlogs prove that they represent autobiographical subjectivity and solidarity through the vlogs, just like other genres of life narratives. In conclusion, video blogs or

vlogs can be considered a new genre or domain of life narratives. Women express their solidarity and autobiographical subjectivity through vlogs, especially postpartum video blogs.

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