

Understanding The Concept Of Lesbianism: From Lifestyle To Social Phenomenon

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Abstract

The current research contributes to a deeper understanding of lesbianism as it moves from unseen to the visible and from the private to the public realm. The lesbian lifestyle has grown into a new social phenomenon in recent years than as a single woman's sexual preference. However, in all nations, the concept of lesbianism is a dynamic, special, sensitive, and always it has been viewed as a contentious subject. This article discusses a social feature of lesbianism that contradicts the heterosexual norm, which is deeply ingrained in societal grounds.

Keywords: Lesbianism, Women, Homosexuality, Identity and Society.

Introduction

Sexuality is an essential part of everyone's life. Each person is found to be associated or attracted to another person based on their sexual desires, regardless of their race or gender. From ancient to modern times, human society demands an individual to direct his or her passionate attraction towards their opposite sex or gender alone, that refers to heterosexuality. So, the dominant heterosexuality ignores homosexuality, which refers to an intensely close relationship between same-sex individuals and other related streams associated with LGBTQ, such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer. Therefore, society has been found strongly interwoven with heterosexuality and also recognized couplehood between man and woman alone. So, these notions pushed homosexuality aside to the corners as deviance and unnatural. Moreover, many research studies emerged on homosexuality to resolve various debates and controversies of same-sex attraction. Among that male homosexuality is always preferred widely for research and so, there is always a

scarcity of research work and studies on female homosexuality (Dawood, 2009).

Lesbianism and sapphism are synonymous words for a woman's homosexuality. The word 'lesbian' is originally derived from 'lesbos', the name of a Greek island where the poetess Sappho lived. Her poems typically reflected desires between women. So, lesbianism comes from the word lesbian and sapphism from Sappho, also both words are associated with female homosexuality. But the term 'lesbianism' came into usage around 1890s and later it was widely used by the people. Lesbianism can be described as an emotionally or romantically close and interpersonal relationship between women. Women who possess this type of sexual orientation are referred to as lesbians, tribade, gay women, sapphic and dyke. Besides this, in ancient times lesbianism was regarded as a silent sin by church authorities and also as a mental disorder by psychology. However, the field of psychology has contributed to several studies on lesbians in recent years. Therefore, for many years the conceptions of lesbianism are

continuously changing in the society. To begin with, this article significantly outlines,

- Different factors leading to lesbianism
- 'Coming out' of lesbians
- The effects of homophobia
- Formation of lesbian identity
- The relationship between feminism and lesbianism, and the
- Causes and motives behind the emergence of lesbian feminism.

Factors of Lesbianism

Lesbianism is literally the sexual orientation between two women. According to The University of Idaho Counselling & Testing Center (n.d.) homosexual orientation primarily gets initiated during the adolescent stage of a girl's life and around that stage, a teenage girl experiences a great change physically as well as with her sexual interests. From that stage homosexual girls begin to realise that; their own feelings and attentions differ from their peers. According to Peplau (1999), the development of sexual orientation in men and women differs. Many studies on lesbians have been done over the years to ascertain the origin of their lesbianism. People of the society are often perplexed as to the exact causal factor influencing a woman to become a lesbian. However, studies on female homosexual research suggest that there may be a wide range of circumstances and factors responsible for every lesbian life.

To begin significantly, there must be any reasonable factor behind a woman that provokes her senses to become a lesbian. Lesbianism may affect an individual woman consciously or unconsciously through various factors such as, Biological factors, Familial factors and Environmental factors. Any of the factor may largely influence a woman and transforms her into a lesbian. At all times till date, though many theorists proposed theories ranging from genetic descriptions to family mobility, the strong factor behind lesbianism is still doubtful regarding its origin and also undetectable.

- Biological factors- Maciel (2017) remarked firmly that, Scientific evidences recently advocated those biological characteristics are the fundamental cause for homosexuality and according to biological studies, an individual cannot choose their sexual orientation. So, it is believed that homosexuality is an innate nature of human beings. For example, during early school age, an adolescent girl feels her sexual interests towards another girl (same gender) instead of a boy. This kind of feelings tends a girl to compare herself with other peers regarding her different sexual tendencies and suspects her own sexuality for not getting attracted to a boy (opposite gender). Secondly, homosexuality might be resolved before the birth (prenatal) of a child. For instance, at childhood if a boy or girl fails to perform their respective gender roles and instead, they notably perform their opposite gender roles referred to as gender non-conformity, these such type of behaviours result in an individual becoming a homosexual in their adulthood. Furthermore, hormonal imbalance and genetical conditions of an individual are categorised as biological factors. But there is no proof that lesbianism develops or passes on from parental hormones to children (Brunold 1999).
- Familial factors- It is not just the biological aspects that lead to female homosexuality. It is essential to recognise that some familial situations also play a crucial role in the development of lesbian feelings. Familial factors include a girl's bitter childhood experience such as sexual abuse or

rejection. For example, projecting importance to boy child alone as superior and the girl child as inferior and makes her feel as a burden to the family (gender bias). Such kinds of prejudiced actions within the family lead a girl to isolate herself from family permanently and seek a female companion for the rest of her life. Edobor, J (2015) through his research on women students discovered that inadequate parental care and lack of moral, spiritual guidance from the family are the significant factors that lead girls to lesbianism.

- Environmental factors – This part comprises of social surroundings that often favours a woman to choose lesbianism. Accordingly, the strong patriarchal structure causes problems for women on most occasions. Some of the bad experiences from early school age, workplace, and married life with a man motivate a woman to adopt lesbianism. Further, the real-life lesbians appearing on media inspire and become role-models for some young women (Brunold 1999). On the whole, a combination of the above factors or only one factor may lead the way for a woman to turn into a lesbian and embrace a lesbianism lifestyle.

‘Coming out’ for Lesbians

The development of lesbian identity includes the term ‘coming out’. Rust (2003) states that: “it is the process by which individuals come to recognize that they have romantic or sexual feelings toward members of their own gender, adopt lesbian or gay (or bisexual) identities, and then share these identities with others”. ‘Coming out’ (CO) has been regarded as a basic foundation and a crucial process in the life of every lesbian. It can be described as a long

process which includes an individual’s self-discovery about their sexual orientation primarily and followed by sharing with others about their sexual identity as a homosexual. Moreover, coming out is a personal effort and the choice of a lesbian to disclose her sexual identity publicly as lesbian to her family, relatives, friends, colleagues and finally to society. As per, Chirrey (2003), coming out can be categorised into two types, such as; ‘Coming out’ to oneself, this type involves an individual’s own sexual realisation and it is associated to accept their same sex interests by themselves. During the CO process, lesbians are subject to multitude of negative sensations, for example fear, disgrace, distress, anger, dilemma, discomfort and sadness felt internally. It revolves around a homosexual individual alone. So, coming out to oneself is an entirely internal psychological process that is experienced by every lesbian and also a self-recognition of herself as a lesbian. ‘Coming out’ to others, female homosexuals are bound to come out frequently admitting themselves as lesbian to others. So, it is a continual process to expose their sexual orientation with different people at different situations. Some lesbians prefer to come out only with their friends, but hiding their sexual orientation from family members.

Some lesbians prefer to come out symbolically and let other people to predict their sexual orientation, so they possess different hairstyle, badges, tattoos and changed clothing patterns. Most of the lesbians decide to reveal their sexual interests to other gay/ lesbian peers and not to heterosexual colleagues. Some individuals prefer to disclose their orientation only with supportive friends but hiding with their family members or vice versa. Therefore, the type of coming out varies among lesbians at various occasions. Throughout their lifespan, lesbian people are committed to come out frequently whenever they meet new people and to admit themselves as a lesbian to others. Thus, for lesbians, the process of coming out is a complex task and a great challenge in particular, because sharing their peculiar sexual

orientation may affect the mental health of the individual's parents. Besides, lesbians are abruptly rejected by their families for coming out as homosexual and so, the firm relationship among lesbian couple further solaces, supports each other. Contrastingly, some lesbian individuals prefer to conceal their sexual orientation throughout their life. This in turn causes severe mental issues to the individuals for not coming out as homosexual. Hence CO becomes necessary for every lesbian.

Apart from family, a lesbian has to 'come out' to others regarding their sexual orientation. Pistella, J., et.al, (2016) identified one significant factor namely Internalized Sexual Stigma (ISS), which refers to the society's negative ideology that stigmatises homosexual behaviours and represents homosexuals as sexual minority people. ISS is one of the important aspects that every homosexual meets up during their coming out process and further higher level of it also affects the option of CO for a homosexual to others. Moreover, ISS tends to various psychological difficulties for lesbians too in revealing their sexual orientation and lesbians are unable to settle down along with their sexual identity due to high ISS. Thus, the phenomenon of coming out as lesbian amidst heterosexuals and societal conditions is not a simple activity. Moreover, every coming out of lesbian does not end up with entire success and acceptance from others and it may also cause bad consequences. So, it is important to choose perfect time and place to disclose their homosexual preference. According to Pistella, J., et.al (2016) many of the literature reviews identified that CO resulted with both advantages and disadvantages to lesbians personally, such as increased self-confidence, decreased mental stress and provided emotional comfort after coming out. After sharing their own sexual orientation with positivity, lesbians gradually feel comfortable and it further reduces the sense of shame within them. On the other hand, some of the negative reactions also arise due to coming out such as, refusing to be accepted within their family, prejudices and alienation,

verbal harassments from society. So, for every non heterosexual, the journey of CO becomes a memorable story with unique experience and also a significant event regarding their sexual orientation. Therefore, 'coming out' can be considered as a multi-dimensional process and a complicated challenge for every lesbian woman and it may occur at any age in different situations (Morris, J. F. 1997) Recently, many books, resources, centres, organizations are available and developed, which helps to understand and accept these non-heterosexual peoples.

Homophobia's Origin and its Effects

Society has its strong gender binary (either masculine or feminine) and also possess one form of sexual condition, that expects everyone must be a heterosexual alone, which refers to heterosexism. Furthermore, the standards of society believe, authorizes and qualifies heterosexual behaviour specifically as a fixed characteristic of sexuality and the other individuals who fail to fall under these heterosexual categories are homosexuals, such as lesbian (female homosexual) and gay (male homosexual). Generally, homosexuals are subjected to various punishments, for instance, arrest, prison life, beaten and even killed for deviance in their sexual orientation.

In past decades, the legal acts criminalised individuals for their homosexual behaviour and also around 1968, American Psychological Association (APA) announced homosexuality as a mental disorder in its list. Along with this, some dominant systems such as religious, moral, cultural and political beliefs are some of the notable factors that contributes to the construction of homophobia, which refers to negative attitudes and afraid of homosexuals. Moreover, homophobic behaviours include making bad comments, teasing and generating hostile feelings on homosexual identity, community, existence and their interest for non-heterosexual behaviour. They are consciously rejected from school, religion, communities, labour and home Therefore, the dominant homophobic attitudes and inadequate

legislation on LGBTQ were deeply grounded almost in all regions of the world.

Homophobic attitudes disempower lesbians from their basic needs, rights, demotes other services required for their personal and social life. Then, homophobia causes severe harm, trauma instantly and victimises lesbians to numerous harassments that cannot be expressed. Altogether these homophobic notions not only hide lesbianism but also views lesbianism as a marginal form of sexuality (Cuesta 2014) that transforms lesbians as one among the sexual minority people. So, it is lucid that the characteristics of homophobia are the root cause for the problems and sufferings experienced by lesbians (Subhrajit 2014) Besides, homophobia gets reflected in different forms through the individuals who practice homophobia are referred to as homophobes. These people support for depicting homosexuals negatively through media, physically harming homosexuals and criticising jokes for their homosexuality.

Problems Faced by Lesbians

For many years, women have undergone oppression throughout their life. They have met oppressions from public and private spheres such as the workplace, academic field, family surroundings and social circles. In addition to this, if a woman is found as lesbian and chooses to lead a life with her fellow woman, she inherently becomes a victim and doubly oppressed as a woman and as a lesbian. Female homosexuals experience numerous violence, stigmatisation and discrimination due to their sexual orientation. The norms of the society force lesbians to adhere to the heterosexual standards rather than to their same sex desires

In this way, heterosexual woman falls under the heterosexual framework and fulfils society's expectations, but whereas lesbians prefer to focus their energies and sexual desires towards another woman alone. Hence, our society refers this type of sexual behaviour as an abnormal activity. So, lesbians are forced to come out often regarding the reasons for their same sex interests and it is obvious that 'coming

out' is a lifelong task for a lesbian woman. The characteristics of a society eventually target lesbians and affects all domains of their life. Lesbians in particular are doubly marginalised, abandoned and socially excluded for not performing their traditional feminine role (Subhrajit 2014). Thus, lesbians are primarily tortured by their own family members to undergo medical treatment to cure their same sex desires and even sometimes forced to sudden marriage. This in turn provokes shame, lessens their self-confidence and even ends up with suicides. Most of lesbians hide their sexual identity in their workplace and with co-workers, (Ali, S., et.al, 2015) because that may change as an insecure environment and lead to dismissal from their job after the disclosure.

Lesbian couples are not privileged with same opportunities or same rights as heterosexual couples' experience and they are controlled in their access to social needs such as housing, education, employment and health care. So, lesbians are rejected and disconnected from family, communities, workplace, society and others contexts. According to Subhrajit (2014), the mentalities and actions of homophobes cause multiple problems to lesbians namely, abandonment from education fields, quitting from parents and family , Unfriendliness of peers, physical bullying, unemployment and inadequate financial support, lack of shelter, detachment from communities and relocation to some other country

Therefore, lesbians could not sustain any of their basic social needs and this inadequacy affects their routine life. So, they go through numerous environmental conflicts and also psychological health difficulties due to their same-sex orientation. According to Peplau (1999), one of the inversion theories distinguished heterosexual women (straights) and homosexual women (lesbians), also they believed straight women as feminine and in contrast lesbians as masculine type. The systematic study has found that compared to straight women, the psychological traits of lesbians are more masculine (aggressive and

liberty) which are not traditionally associated with women. Moreover, though some theories have confirmed that lesbians also possess the same level of femininity as straight women but they are being condemned and judged by society for behaving like and following masculine features.

Patterns of Lesbian Identity

An individual's sexuality is an indivisible part, which forms one's identity throughout their lifecycle (Brunold 1999). However, in recent years, lesbian women lead an intricate way of life compared to heterosexual woman. Being lesbians in a conventional society divides women into two cultural spheres: women under male dominance and women under lesbian culture. So lesbian individuals have additional tensions compared to straight women. As a result, lesbians are navigated to observe this duality (living as a woman and also as a lesbian) and diversity (suppressing their feelings for the societal conditions) that becomes a normal part of their daily lives (Fingerhut, et.al. 2005)

The formation of lesbian identities was prompted in particular due to the two following issues, Primarily, according to society being a heterosexual woman is normal, accepted, but whereas homosexual woman is abnormal and inferior too. Secondly, spontaneous stigmatisation and loads of harassments imposed on female homosexuals has exploded with a decision to form a public identity for themselves. The other name for lesbian identity is referred to as sexual minority identity (Fingerhut 2005). As minority groups, lesbians were criticized continuously and condemned by the government, culture, society, religious fields and medical fields for many decades. So, these attributes make their development of identity as a difficult issue. Here, lesbian sexual identity refers to how individual lesbian women establish themselves within the known categories of sexuality (Levy, 2009)

For further understanding, Levy (2009) indicated about Vivienne Cass's case study on gay and lesbian individuals (homosexuals) in which she proposed a six-stage model of

homosexual identity development. The following are the six stages;

- Identity confusion - refers to when a homosexual individual is perplexed by the dissension between their apparent heterosexuality and their same-sex behaviours. It comprises of a woman's distinct feeling and questioning her own sexuality.
- Identity comparison - refers to a homosexual individual begins to accept that they might be a lesbian or gay and feels that they are deviant from heterosexuals.
- Identity tolerance - they isolate themselves and prefer to discover other gays and lesbians to earn a sense of well-being.
- Identity acceptance - an individual homosexual now feels fixed about their true sexual orientation but reveal their facts only to selected persons who are supportive to them.
- Identity pride - which refers to homosexual individuals strive to cultivate a positive attitude towards their sexuality in order to overcome their mental barriers.
- Identity synthesis - at this level, gays and lesbians seek to acknowledge their sexualities as just one component of broader trends.

Levy (2009), argues that these stage models are only applicable to certain lesbian women and that not all lesbians go through these stages. Sexual identity formation is a course of action which varies from woman to woman and in the modern era, some lesbians publicly declare their sexual orientation.

Overall, female homosexuals progress through these stages and also, they encounter interconnections amidst their identity, self, behaviour, heterosexist and homophobic environment

Lesbians prefer to come out, shape their identity for being a homosexual woman and with that identity occupy their lesbian spaces within the extensive world. They strongly believe acquiring lesbian identity for themselves would definitely help other lesbians, who are still in the closet and also help to lead a life like other heterosexuals. As a result, the lesbian community was the first who strived hard to recognize a separate identity, to label themselves as lesbian among the broad society and later bisexual and transgender people followed the path of the lesbians. For lesbians, their sexuality does not refer to woman to woman sexual contact alone but also her sexual identity as lesbian. Specifically, (Morris, J. F. 1997) mentions the term, "Lesbian consciousness refers to lesbians' relationship to their social environment such as participation in lesbian and gay social or political activities, and identification with feminism". It is one of the important stages among identity patterns where lesbians view themselves in association with the social context and its communication with other activism groups too.

Separating Lesbianism from Feminism

The ultimate goal of feminism is to end gender subordination and it mainly focusses to acquire equality of women's rights in the society. In general terms, both male and female homosexuals felt afraid to openly talk about their homosexuality until late 1960's. In past times, many research works on gays and homosexuality were published to protect the lives of sexual minority people, but specifically, researchers studied less about women's homosexuality, lesbian lifestyle, their identities, and their social features (Baumgarner,1976). As a consequence, these marginalization effects affected lesbians distinctively. So, they joined up with other

social groups to demand for their rights to live with their lesbian tendencies without oppressions (Nicholas, et.al, 1986). Lesbians obtained their voice through feminism, because the movement provided a space in particular where many women met each other and helped to build a communication between them. This close contact resulted as, some feminists choose lesbianism intentionally to escape from male domination. So, lesbians were closely tied to feminists during the protest.

Mostly, feminists felt curious, irritated and dissatisfied with the presence of lesbians in the feminism movement (Whisman,1984). Most of the feminists thought that, lesbianism is simply a personal sexual preference of a woman that can be dealt with in a private sphere itself and nothing left to be concerned in a social or political manner. So, most of the feminist wished to exclude lesbians out, because including lesbian voices and lesbian perspectives in feminism movement would explicitly spoil the true potential of women's right claim. Accordingly, feminist discourse opposed lesbians and showed hostile attitude towards them, referred as lesbophobia (Westerband, 2008). Therefore, feminism unaccepted both lesbians and lesbianism ideology. So, the association between lesbianism and feminism has been a tough one. In addition, lesbians went through many struggles constantly around that time such as, internalized homophobia, gender marginalization, sexual orientation stigma, oppression and discrimination as minority groups.

Reversing Heterosexuality

Society accepts women naturally, only when she is attracted or directed towards a male sex and vice versa, but in this context, lesbianism reverses the case. In brief, lesbian lifestyle does not include male partners, marriage, family structures and childbirth (Gedro 2008) and hence, lesbianism reverses 'compulsory heterosexuality'. The term 'compulsory heterosexuality' was coined by Adrienne Rich. She argues that this notion simply honoured

masculinity and heterosexuality and further she regarded it as an inherent aspect responsible for the oppression of women (Rich, 1980). Likewise, lesbians believed that intimate commitment between men and women (heterosexual relationship) led only to oppression, inequality and domination on women.

As long as, lesbianism urges women to withdraw their efforts, activities, energies and attachments with men at any cause to overcome the male domination (Chenier, 2004). In addition to that, lesbians reject male culture and masculinity completely in terms of their relationships, which leads to reversal of heterosexuality. To dismantle the existing male superiority, a woman locates an intimate bonding with another woman, where her emotional, physical, financial and political support centres around her fellow woman only.

The Rise of Lesbian Feminism

The concept of lesbianism has its historical circumstances that ultimately transformed lesbianism to a social phenomenon. As reported, Betty Friedan, president of NOW (National Organization for Women), used a phrase 'lavender menace' in 1969 to refer lesbians and lesbianism within feminism movement. According to Calhoun (1994), Friedan and other feminists rejected lesbian issues and they also remark lesbianism might deface the serious intensions of women's liberation movement. In consequence to her viewpoint, many lesbians criticized that- "If you can't find it in yourself to love another woman, and that includes physical love, then how can you truly say you care about women's liberation" (Phelan, 1987). Moreover, constant pressures from different groups like lesbophobia from women's liberation movement, sexist attitudes from gay liberation movement and homophobia from society made lesbians to walk out from these groups (Del Rio, 2016). In response to these issues, lesbians decided to segregate themselves from these oppressive groups and stood together to form a separate group.

A group of lesbians named themselves as Radicalesbians and broke out a political manifesto titled as 'the women- identified women' for their unique oppression. As a result, Lesbian feminism emerged as a cultural perspective around early 1970's, specifically from the viewpoint of lesbians. 'The women-identified women' becomes the first emblematic article of lesbian feminism, that gave a new definition for the word lesbian as - "A lesbian is the rage of all women condensed to the point of explosion. She is the woman who, often beginning at an extremely early age, acts in accordance with her inner compulsion to be a more complete and freer human being than her society – perhaps then, but certainly later – cares to allow her" (Phelan, 1987). The article was written in such a way to seek liberation from oppressions for being a lesbian. Radicalesbians defined them in their own terms and attempted to celebrate women, their sexuality and validate their relationship with other women (Chenier, 2004)

The Influence of Daughter of Bilitis'

Before the rise of lesbian feminism, the daughters of Bilitis (DOB) were the first national organization for lesbians in the United States around 1955. Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon were the founders of DOB. Members of DOB formed the organization in an attempt to change the society, which imposed homosexuality as perversion. It was the only network that functioned specifically for lesbians in those days, which helped to mobilise lesbians and also fought for lesbian rights (Del Rio, 2016). Furthermore, the DOB club was open not only to lesbians, but also to all women who were interested to know about homosexuality and different problems faced by lesbians. Most of the women within the organization were teachers and slowly the DOB was able to develop its own policies, unique ideas, membership cards and with increased members, it began to open their offices in other countries too. Therefore, DOB served to be the only significant organization that helped to build a communication between lesbians

One of the notable achievements of the DOB was the publication of a monthly magazine named as 'The Ladder'. This magazine involved only lesbian-cantered writings. So, the daughters of the organization found a space for themselves in journal publication and after their publication, DOB members felt writing is one of the effective ways to change the perceptions of the society on lesbianism and worked passionately together for further developments (Gallo, 2004). So, it becomes obvious that, DOB laid the foundation for building lesbian feminism as a movement and it influenced many young lesbian activists as well.

Significant impacts of lesbian feminism

Lesbian feminism emerged from two social groups namely, - women's liberation movement and gay liberation activism. In the words of Podmore (2016), the movement awakened because of "Confronting invisibility within the gay liberation movement and heterosexism within the second- wave feminist movement, lesbian activists in regions of the urban west began to develop their own autonomous organizations, building what is broadly defined as the lesbian liberation movement (LLM)". It became a dominant and political ideology primarily in Canada, United states and Britain. In the beginning, many young lesbians followed the tracks of DOB ideals. Like other social movements, lesbian feminism fought for its own set of goals and in many aspects, its motive differs from that of gay men. According to lesbian feminists, feminism failed to analyse heterosexism and implicitly accepted that as a ruling norm. But in contrast, lesbian feminism challenges the universality of male dominance and institutionalized heterosexuality that promotes patriarchal practices over women (Calhoun, 1994). The initial achievement of the movement was found between 1971-1973, when American Psychological Association (APA) resolution removed homosexuality from their official association list. Another success followed during the national conference of

NOW in 1971 and their representatives recognized lesbian rights and lesbianism, which has to be regarded within feminism.

Lesbian feminists felt privileged compared to heterosexual feminists, because of their bonding with another woman that broke the ties of male domination completely. The movement attempts to encourage lesbianism for all women and it is very clear with the words of few lesbian feminists, declaring that: "Sexism is the root of all other oppressions.....Lesbianism is not a matter of sexual preference, but rather one of political choice which every woman must make if she is to become woman- identified and thereby end male supremacy" (Del Rio, 2016). These ideas motivate woman to develop a close attachment with another woman, which destroys the power of patriarchal society and male power.

Lesbian feminists regarded lesbianism as a political choice, that can be chosen by any woman and living as a lesbian becomes a political resistance among the dominant patriarchal system. In "Gay liberation and Lesbian Feminism" (n.d.) Raymond mentioned that, "Women are not born lesbians. Women become lesbians out of choice" The objectives of lesbian feminism provided a new political language to think about sexuality, though the embedded heterosexuality left no room to understand the nature of lesbianism politically. The ideology of lesbian feminism was a dominant theorization and interpretation, which has become one aspect that extended feminism (Whisman 1984). The growth of lesbian feminism resulted in a tremendous impact through their active members of the movement. For instance, lesbian activists launched private health centres, banking agency, housing service, women care centres to support women in needs and also opened cafes, bookstores, printing presses to encourage young lesbian activists. Finally, the impact of lesbian feminism can be referred to as the post-closet period for lesbians (Hutson, 2010) and it brought great changes like, many lesbians prefer to come out publicly, Form and acquire lesbian identity, They maintain their identity to

attain legitimacy in society and they choose to lead a life with their sexual orientation visibly.

Conclusion

Thus, it is evident that, prior to the emergence of lesbian feminism, the concept of lesbianism was viewed as mental illness and then as sexual preference (Ellis et al., 2011) and finally it transformed into a social phenomenon. However, lesbian feminism rejected all the earlier definitions of lesbianism and lesbians associated with the patriarchal system and claimed that there may be a sexual aspect somewhere, but the whole elixir of lesbianism does not include sexual aspects alone. The principles of this movement not only aim to normalise lesbians, but also to locate the concept of lesbianism as one kind of acceptable sexuality among the broad social grounds. Also, every lesbian, through this movement strive to reform, reshape and rebel to gain approval for their actions and their relationships by reconceptualizing lesbianism and lesbians for an insightful understanding that helps the society to realise their existence. This notion is transparent with the Cheryl Clarke's (1981) definition that "Lesbianism is a recognition, an awakening, a reawakening of our passion for each (woman) other (woman) and for same (woman). This passion will ultimately reverse the heterosexual imperialism of male culture."

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