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The Abortion Debate in Brazil

An analysis of 11 articles related to the abortion debate in Brazil, focusing on the correlation between religious beliefs, especially Catholicism and Evangelicalism, and opposition to abortion legalization.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the abortion debate in Brazil within the context of Catholic and Evangelical belief systems. Using a systematic literature review and thematic content analysis, the primary objective is to illuminate the intersection of religion and the often taboo topic of abortion. Given the widespread poverty in Brazil, abortion becomes a profoundly critical issue that directly impacts the health and safety of women as it affects their ability to access medical care in safe and regulated settings, thereby reducing the risks associated with dangerous and illegal procedures.

The findings underscore the substantial role played by Catholic and Evangelical belief systems in opposing the legalization of abortion, driven by their deeply held values. This influence is deeply rooted in historical opportunities seized during Brazil's democratization process. Moreover, Catholic, and Evangelical movements have demonstrated remarkable mobilization efforts, engaging in grassroots activities, and fostering mobilization within private spheres. The polarization of the abortion debate has intensified the visibility of these religious groups and mobilized their supporters in various ways.

In conclusion, this study reveals that Catholic and Evangelical belief systems have emerged as influential political actors, significantly shaping public opinion and resistance to abortion legalization, even in cases where it is legally sanctioned. Given that religion's influence shows no signs of diminishing but rather continues to grow, further research in this context is crucial to understanding its profound impact on society.

Keywords:

Abortion Debate, Reproductive Rights, Catholicism, Evangelicalism, Brazil, Legalization

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1. INTRODUCTION

After spending two months traveling in Brazil, I observed the strong taboo surrounding abortion. This encouraged me to question how much religious beliefs influence the abortion debate in Brazil. After some investigation in earlier research, I noticed lack of prior research exploring the connection between religion and abortion in Brazil. This gap intrigued me, considering the challenges women face. Recognizing this gap in knowledge, it becomes crucial to bring attention to this issue. Abortion intersects with social, ethical, and cultural considerations, igniting debates with far-reaching consequences. Therefore, this is a study of how recent research has addressed the abortion debate in Brazil and how it associates Catholic and Evangelical belief systems with the opposition to the legalization of abortion. Of particular interest is understanding how religious values shape attitudes toward abortion, frame public discourse, and potentially impact legislative decisions. By analyzing scholarly perspectives, the research aims to unveil the intricate connections between religion, politics, and the abortion debate, ultimately fostering a comprehensive understanding of this multifaceted issue.

This thesis is structured into 8 chapters, each contributing to a thorough exploration of the link between religion and abortion in Brazil. Chapter 1 introduces the complex abortion law landscape in Brazil. Chapter 2 delves into the debate's historical background, tracing the evolution of abortion as a significant topic. Chapter 3 introduces the Research Question. Chapter 4 introduces essentialization of religion in academic discourse. Chapter 5 explains the thesis methodology. Chapter 6 comprehensively presents the thesis chosen 11 articles and their associated findings. Chapter 7 examines how scholars perceive the abortion debate in Brazil. This chapter also highlights the historical and religious factors driving the growth of Catholic and Evangelical churches, exploring their profound impact on abortion laws, public opinion, and legislative decisions while also critically assessing potential oversimplifications of religion's role. Lastly, Chapter 8 concludes this thesis, by summarizing key insights and suggesting possible research directions in this vital field.

2. BACKGROUND OF THE EVOLUTION OF ABORTION LAW IN BRAZIL

The development of abortion legislation in Brazil has been marked by complexity and sensitivity. The country has had restrictive abortion laws since the 1940s, criminalizing the practice except; in cases of rape, fetal anencephaly, or maternal life (Guedes, 2000). These laws have made Brazil one of the countries in the world with the strictest abortion regulations, e.g. by limiting access to safe reproductive health services (Budó, Rodrigues, & Gindri, 2020).

Despite officially being a secular state, religious groups, both conservative and progressive, have been gaining influence in Brazil's politics (Budó et al., 2020). Especially since the end of the Brazilian dictatorship in 1985, there has been a rising integration of faith into politics and the participation of religious leaders in political campaigns, potentially challenging the country's secular status. Furthermore, it is essential to emphasize that in Brazilian politics, with religion being so intertwined, advocating for an extremely liberal abortion policy is not a viable option for any significant political actor, as it would significantly decrease their chances significantly.

In the past two decades, significant efforts to reform Brazil's abortion laws, including proposals for decriminalization, have been driven by the principles of human rights and gender equality. These initiatives aim to provide women with greater autonomy over their own bodies, as emphasized by Correa (2010). During the 1980s, feminism gained momentum in the National Congress in Brazil, leading to intense debates on abortion. Both, the Catholic and Evangelical Churches supported anti-abortion bills in 1986, making abortion a central topic during the creation of the new Brazilian Constitution in 1987-1988 (Guedes, 2000). However, Brazil's patriarchal society and the underrepresentation of women in key positions have contributed to the limited attention given to abortion as a public health issue rather than a religious moral offense (Guedes, 2000). Therefore, all this considered, this thesis aims to explore how scholars portray the abortion debate and its connections to the influence of Catholic and Evangelical beliefs.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

This thesis analyses academic literature using systematic literature review, primarily concerning 11 articles' perspectives on the extent to which religion influences the abortion debate in Brazil.

The research questions (RQs) that guides this study are:

- RQ1: How does the selected material portray the abortion debate in Brazil?
- RQ2: And how do the scholars correlate the influence of religion, particularly Catholic- and Evangelical belief systems, with opposition to the legalization of abortion in Brazil?

The selected material refers to the selected 11 articles. It is worth recalling that this study does not aim to establish precise definitions for Catholic and Evangelical movements. Instead, the focus is investigating how the selected articles present the Catholic Church and the Evangelical Church. This approach will contribute to a more nuanced understanding of how Catholicism and Evangelicalism are portrayed in academic contexts and their relevance to the topic of abortion in Brazil. Although it is necessary to clarify that in this study, when referring to Evangelicalism, it also refers to Evangelical Christianity or Evangelical Protestantism. These terms also include Evangelical churches as well as Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal movements.

4. ESSENTIALIZING RELIGION IN ACADEMIC DISCOURSE

Religion is a complex and constantly evolving subject. The concept of essentializing religion is relevant to this study as it underscores how researchers, despite acknowledging the role of religion in abortion laws, may not always delve into comprehensive examinations of this issue. This can lead to a one-sided or oversimplified understanding of religion's significance in their research. Therefore, it is important to question whether the selected academics engage in essentialization. This involves simplifying a multifaceted phenomenon into a few basic characteristics. Alternatively, it may reflect constraints in the research's scope or focus, where scholars might not thoroughly explore the role of religion as discussing it more thoroughly might be considered as taboo.

Holmefur (2016) explores the attention religion has received in modern times. He highlights the field of religion and development that emerged in the 2000s. This marked a clear shift as religion went from being underrepresented or absent to being made visible and becoming a sub-discipline called "religion and development" (Holmefur, 2016). He further emphasizes how religion and modernity once again reveal religion as part of people's worldviews, expressed in the public sphere and influencing how societies are shaped. Religion thus also becomes political to some extent. New research shows that it is no longer possible to ignore religion as a societal factor, as it is too vital and important in modern life for it to be disregarded. Furthermore, Holmefur (2016) refers to the sociologist Berger (1999), who published "The Desecularization of the World," in which he claims that the world is still as religious as it has always been, if not more so. Since religion is such a vital part of people's lives and everyday existence, regardless of modernization, churches grow and increase their influence, playing a significant role in the modern world. The sociologist Davie (2000) supports the idea that "religion does not disappear in the modern era," but rather it shifts into the private sphere, away from institutional expressions and loyalty to them.

Interestingly, Davie (2000) and Berger (1999) point out that religion and modernity have not followed the same historical trajectory in Europe. As evident from the clear religious growth occurring outside of Europe, both Davie (2000) and Berger (1999) are critical of the idea that Europe necessarily has anything to say in relation to modernity. Europe might be the exception rather than the norm. An example of this is the explosive growth of the Pentecostal movement in Latin America, as highlighted by the sociologist Martin (2005). Pentecostal churches have

evolved into significant actors, comparable to global phenomena. The sociologist Repstad (2012) notes that religion eventually gained new attention as part of the public and political sphere in aid and development. Furthermore, Jones and Petersen (2011) highlight three weaknesses within the religious research field: First, treating religion too instrumentally by oversimplifying complex relationships, looking at religion only in connection with effective development cooperation or not at all. Second, Representation of religion by actors, faith-based organizations that benefit from being categorized as such. And third, viewing development separately from religion, with religion being presented as a contrast and alternative to "ordinary development." In general, Jones and Petersen (2011) argue that the study of religion has not developed sufficiently due to the strong ties to actors within development cooperation.

More recently, sociological studies have shown how religion is clearly integrated and significant in the lives of especially low-income individuals. This has made it impossible to exclude religion from development studies. Therefore, there has been a reorientation within development studies, with the sub-discipline of religion and development emerging (Holmefur, 2016).

5. METHOD

To address the Research Questions, this study will use thematic content analysis combined with a systematic literature review to explore how academics portray the abortion debate and the role of Catholic and Evangelical beliefs in opposing abortion in Brazil.

5.1. SAMPLING AND DATA COLLECTION

Thematic content analysis method has required a strict search strategy that takes several factors into account to ensure high quality in a study to stimulate new ideas and directions for a particular topic. Since the abortion debate is such a complex topic in Brazil, the study focuses on analyzing secondary qualitative articles to limit the study. To find qualified academic findings, the databases University of Uppsala and ScieloBr have been selected to provide trustworthy data and different perspectives on the subject. In terms of search criteria, the words "Abortion*" or "Reproductive Right*", "Brazil*" and "Criminali*" and "Catholic*" or "Evangelic*" "Religio*" were used to find appropriate literature. Regarding my choice of search terms, I initially used "criminalization" as one of the keywords because my thesis focuses on the opposition to the legalization of abortion. However, I have opted for a different approach in the actual thesis by using the term "legalization" to avoid any potential confusion or complications associated with "criminalization." This decision helps maintain clarity and comprehensibility in the text for readers, while still allowing me to address crucial aspects of the abortion debate.

Furthermore, the selected literature is linked to the religious, political, social, or cultural landscape surrounding abortion in Brazil to gain a broad understanding of the issue. Specifically, this study relies solely on materials written in English. Furthermore, all the selected readings have also been critically evaluated to provide a comprehensive overview of abortion in Brazil. Therefore, several critical decisions have been made to ensure that the study is thorough and reliable by identifying the most relevant keywords, selecting appropriate database searches, and deciding which criteria to include or exclude. Additionally, to answer the RQs it has been essential to compare the empirical findings how academics portray when referring to religious beliefs to determine how important religious attitudes and other factors affect political decision making. To ensure the inclusion of recent narratives and contemporary findings the selected articles have been published between 2010 and 2023.

To select the relevant studies to answer the RQs I followed these steps:

Phase 1. I applied the terms related to the field of this study identified in the selected databases. Then I briefly analyzed the titles, and abstracts, to see if they were relevant to address the research question of this study, obtaining the articles I deemed fitting.

Phase 2. I looked into the main results of each one of the potential articles with the aim to analyze their suitability within the scope and objectives of the present thesis. This led to the selection of 11 studies that were the only articles that were suitable.

Phase 3. In the final phase the 11 selected studies were analyzed in detail to summarize them and compare them to obtain the final discussions to answer the RQs.

5.2. THEMATIC CONTENT ANALYSIS

Snyder (2019) highlights that thematic content analysis is a suitable method for identifying and analyzing recurring patterns, themes, and meanings in the qualitative data to identify and categorize relevant findings to gain a deeper understanding of the subject matter. I chose to use this method as it is a powerful in it help to sort out the material to write an objective and transpired review of all the evidence, in order to understand the different narratives and discourses about abortion in Brazil. Furthermore, the thematic content analysis will take the form of qualitative research. Creswell (2014) highlights the significant benefits of qualitative research. Firstly, it allows researchers to understand the unique meanings people associate with social issues through open-ended questions and real-world data collection. Secondly, the inductive approach helps to uncover patterns and themes directly from the data, leading to a comprehensive understanding of complex phenomena. Additionally, qualitative research values context, individuality, and personal viewpoints, providing a rich exploration of the research topic. Lastly, its flexible reporting allows for conveying the depth and complexity of findings effectively. Therefore, this thesis employs qualitative research to explore how academics describe the "role of Catholic and Evangelic beliefs" in relation to driving opposition to abortion in Brazil.

Although quantifying the strength of religious belief is challenging due to its subjective nature, the study examines how these beliefs are portrayed and discussed in the selected material. Therefore, Content Analysis has helped to identify the recurring patterns or trends from the

finding to discuss the strength of religious belief in relation to abortion. In this study, Thematic Content Analysis has encompassed some essential steps: familiarizing with the data, transcribing to preserve original content, identifying recurring themes, critically evaluating these themes, and defining and naming them to address the RQ. In this perspective Thematic Content Analysis has been crucial for delving into qualitative data depth. It is, complemented by the Systematic Literature Review method, summarizing scholars' depiction of how religious and cultural elements interplay with the criminalization of abortion in Brazil.

5.3. LIMITATIONS

The limitations of this thesis are diverse and multifaceted. Firstly, there is a geographical limitation, as the analysis exclusively focuses on Brazil. This may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other countries with different social, cultural, and political contexts. Furthermore, the study's reliance on secondary data presents a limitation, as it depends on existing literature and research to address its research questions. This could limit access to fresh data and novel perspectives. However, this limitation makes the study particularly valuable as it narrows down the scope of study to how the 11 selected studies portray the abortion debate and the role of religion within Brazil.

Another significant constraint is the scope of the study, primarily concentrating on religion, specifically Catholicism and Evangelical Christianity, influencing the opposition of the legalization of abortion. This may result in the omission of other crucial factors and perspectives in the abortion debate. Despite these limitations, this research provides insights into how the selected material portrays the abortion debate in Brazil and connects religious beliefs to resistance against abortion legalization.

6. RESULTS

All 11 articles will be introduced below in individual subchapters, each with its own title as a subheading. These subchapters will present how the scholars portray the abortion debate in Brazil and share their relevant research findings. The selected material is presented in chronological order based on their publication dates, starting with the earliest and progressing to the most recent study. This way of presenting information shows discussions about religious beliefs and abortion have changed between 2010 and 2023. This presentation not only reflects changes in discussions but also underscores the different scientific approaches to the question.

6.1. BRAZIL: ONE OF THE ABORTION FRONT LINES

Sonia Correa (2010) who holds a PhD in Anthropology, has conducted extensive research on matters related to gender equality, health, and sexuality. Correa (2010) explores a shift in the Catholic Church's stance in Brazil. The progressive Catholic Church played a role in defending rights during dictatorships, but with Pope John Paul II's election in 1979, in Vatican City a more conservative Church emerged. This conservative Church actively opposed sexual and reproductive rights, particularly regarding abortion, and gained influence during Brazil's democratization. Since then, the Catholic Church has remained determinedly against abortion and has been involved in promoting restrictive abortion legislation in Brazil.

The abortion debate in Brazil has undergone significant changes over the years, evolving from attempts to decriminalize abortion to being framed as a matter of public health through initiatives from i.e., the Brazilian National Program for Human Rights. In contrast, Correa (2010) highlights that there was a setback when feminist movements proposed revising the penal code on abortion in 2005. The government did not support the initiative. Afterwards, the Catholic Church became actively involved in lobbying against abortion liberalization. In 2007, during the Pope's visit to Brazil, a Brazilian priest who is a member of Human Rights International publicly announced the goal to make Brazil "a big Nicaragua," where abortion is completely illegal. Additionally, in 2010, the Committee on Family and Social Security (CSSF) approved the "Law of the Unborn" which included both embryos inside and outside the womb. This move raised concerns that it could redefine when human life begins and potentially lead to the repeal of Article 128 of the penal code, which allows abortion in cases of rape and danger to the woman's life. However, an agreement was reached among the commission members to

ensure that Article 128 would not be adjusted, likely as an attempt to reassure voters, since polls indicated that society did not want further restrictions on the right to abortion (Correa, 2010).

The abortion debate played a prominent role in the 2010 Brazilian presidential election, which featured candidates: Dilma Rousseff, Jose Serra, and Marina Silva. Notably, religious leaders, including Catholic bishops and Evangelical pastors, publicly expressed their views on abortion and sometimes even influenced their support for political candidates based on their stance on abortion. Jose Serra, member of the social democratic party, notably reversed his stance on abortion during the campaign. Despite previously supporting abortion access as Minister of Health in 1998, he adopted an anti-abortion position, citing concerns about maternal health and warning against potential "carnage" if abortion were legalized. Marina Silva, a member of the Green Party and the Assembly of God, consistently opposed abortion for religious reasons. Dilma Rousseff, from the Worker's Party, initially expressed support for legalizing abortion as a public policy initiative. However, this stance drew criticism from religious leaders and political opponents, making abortion a major issue in the campaign. Evangelical leaders in Congress and representatives from the National Pastors Conference and Catholic Church officials met with Dilma, urging her to publicly declare her opposition to legal abortion. Additionally, "Pro-life" candidates ran ads in major newspapers pressing voters to vote against abortion. In response, Dilma Rousseff withdrew her statement on legalizing abortion in public, which ultimately made her the first female president of Brazil (Correa, 2010).

Moreover, Correa (2010) presents the abortion debate in Brazil as characterized by a clash between Catholicism & Evangelicalism in contrast to feminist movements advocating for women's rights to make decisions about their own bodies and health. Correa emphasizes the opposition of feminist movements, particularly regarding specific aspects of proposed abortion laws. She points out that offering incentives, such as antenatal support, adoption, or alimony from the father, for women who become pregnant due to rape to refrain from terminating the pregnancy has been met with strong resistance from feminists. They argue that such incentives would legitimize sexual violence, implicate complicity in rape, and disregard the physical and psychological effects of rape on women. However, Correa (2010) also mentions that there are "a few glimmers of light" in this challenging scenario (Correa, 2010, p. 117). Activists and organizations have been working to promote a rational and healthy debate on abortion, despite the entrenched positions of religious groups and the political controversy surrounding the issue.

This suggests that there are efforts to find common ground and address the complexities of the abortion debate in Brazil, although it remains a deeply polarized and contentious issue (Correa, 2010).

6.2. RELIGION AND ATTITUDES TOWARD ABORTION AND ABORTION POLICY IN BRAZIL

Curtis P. Ogland from Department of Sociology, and Ana Paula Verona from Department of Demography, examined the impact of religion on people's views about abortion and its legalization in Brazil. Ogland's & Verona's (2011) study is based on data from the 2002 Brazilian Social Research Survey (BSRS). This survey represented the adult population of Brazil aged 18 years and older and aimed to investigate public attitudes and values on various social issues. The survey revealed that ca., 72% of the participants believed that abortion is acceptable under certain circumstances, while 28% of the participants believed that abortion should never be allowed to terminate a pregnancy (Ogland & Verona, 2011). Furthermore, their findings indicated that frequently practicing Pentecostals are 150% more likely to oppose abortion compared to infrequently practicing Catholics. This supported their initial hypothesis, which predicted that strong opposition to abortion would be observed among frequently attending Pentecostals. Moreover Ogland and Verona (2011) also argued that the disagreement surrounding abortion in Brazil centers on the abortion law, with proponents of the current law prioritizing the rights of the unborn child over a woman's reproductive rights, while opponents emphasize the risks of illegal abortions for women's health and mortality.

Additionally, their findings indicate that the religious landscape in Brazil has changed over the years, which affects people's views on abortion. Ogland and Verona (2011) refer to the number of followers of Protestant faiths that has significantly increased over the past 40 years, from 4% in 1960 to 15,4% in 2000. The rapid growth of Protestantism is primarily due to the Evangelistic efforts of the Pentecostal groups. These groups, once a small minority, have now attracted many followers, especially among the poorer and marginalized segments of the population. This has led to more Evangelical politicians, who want to protect religious values and oppose things like legalizing abortion and same-sex marriage. Their strong belief in traditional family values, grounded in a literal interpretation of the Bible, likely shapes their conservative views on social issues. Therefore, Brazilian Pentecostalism is known for its strict beliefs, practices, moral principles, regular attendance at worship services and active efforts to

convert others (Ogland & Verona, 2011). However, Catholicism is still the main religion in Brazil, with ca., 70% of the Brazilian population. Therefore, the profound influence of the Catholic Church on its followers and its broader impact on Brazilian society should not be underestimated. The Catholic Church strongly opposes abortion and actively promotes the belief that it is a grave sin, in alignment with the Vatican's view that the "right to life begins at conception (Ogland & Verona, 2011).

Furthermore, Ogland and Verona (2011) also mention that when Dilma Rousseff supported the legalization of abortion as a public policy initiative this resulted in the loss of ca., 1 million votes, accounting for around 25% of all the votes she lost at the end of the first round of elections. The opposition to her was primarily driven by Catholic and Evangelical Churches, strongly against the legalization of abortion. Catholic and Evangelical involvement in politics has grown due to the expansion of Evangelical media and an increasing voting constituency. These religious groups participate in politics to counter the rise of secular values in Brazil and to protect their beliefs, especially regarding family matters. Many Pentecostal politicians see their role as a religious battle against laws supporting secular practices like abortion and homosexual marriage and civil unions. While many Brazilian Catholics have a superficial connection to Catholicism and rarely attend religious services, both charismatic Catholic groups and traditional practicing Catholics have helped revive Catholic influence in certain segments of Brazilian society in recent years.

Ogland and Verona (2011) findings indicate that those who frequently attend Pentecostal denominations show the strongest opposition to abortion practices. This aligns with the conservative moral and pro-family discourse prevalent within Pentecostal communities. However, the findings are more nuanced among Catholics. Frequently practicing Catholics do not show as strong opposition to abortion practices as expected, yet they are significantly opposed to the legalization of abortion. Ogland and Verona (2011) suggests a possible "loose coupling" between the official teachings of the Church and the private beliefs of Catholics, as well as an internal polarization within Catholicism regarding abortion issues. Additionally, Ogland and Verona (2011) findings present that biblical literalism, frequent engagement in prayer, and participation in church activities are all strongly linked to opposition against abortion practices and less support for the legalization of abortion.

It is noteworthy that although the Catholic Church's stance on pro-family issues and its opposition to abortion are extensively documented, there has been a lack of comprehensive research into the opinions held by Catholic activists regarding the practice and their preferences concerning its legalization. Regarding this, Ogland and Verona (2011) highlights that research on the association between religion and abortion attitudes in Brazil is lacking, and they admit that study has limitations, like: not capturing all nuances of abortion attitudes and potential social desirability bias among religious participants. Similarly, while the conservative discourse and sectarian orientation of Protestant, particularly Pentecostal, groups are known, there is limited knowledge about how followers of these new faiths assess the practice of abortion and the laws that support it (Ogland & Verona, 2011).

6.3. BRAZILIAN FEMINISMS IN THEIR RELATIONS WITH THE STATE: CONTEXTS AND UNCERTAINTIES

Lia Zanotta Machado (2016) a Professor of Anthropology, questions the connection between Brazilian feminisms and the state, seeking a new perspective on how they interact and influence one another. Supporting the findings of Correa (2010) and Ogland and Verona (2011), Machado (2016) also highlights similar significant impact of religious beliefs on the 2010 presidential campaign as candidates and governments encountered increasing pressure to oppose the legalization of abortion. Additionally, Machado's (2016) research highlights that the Brazilian Commission for Justice and Peace, an organization linked to the Catholic Church, issued a statement urging voters to align with church doctrine and social issues. This move drew criticism due to concerns about potential restrictions on voters' freedom and violation of the separation of church and state. In response, Bishop Geraldo Lyrio Rocha, the president of the CNBB (National Conference of Catholic Bishops of Brazil), defended the Church's right to discuss abortion during elections, asserting it as a matter of freedom of expression and religion. As a result, election campaigns after this has been dominated by a growing religious movement, with Catholics and Evangelical politicians opposing the legalization of abortion and advocating for traditional family values. Machado (2016) therefore argues that the abortion debate is related to fundamentalism and highlights that the Brazilian Parliament has for a long time been influenced by religion.

In particular, the Evangelical Church has been actively promoting its norms not only through pulpits but also through television programs and recordings for several decades. Within these

norms, emphasis has been placed on morality rather than the traditional family roles. Consequently, the abortion debate has revolved around issues of morality, with a strong focus on the commitment to sexual intercourse, fertilization, and motherhood as promoted by evangelical values. According to Machado (2016), *Veja* magazine highlighted a significant rise in the number of hours dedicated to Evangelical programs on TV. The statistics showed a remarkable growth, with only one hour in 1975 escalating to 15 hours in 1983, further increasing to 45 hours in 1992, and finally reaching an impressive 290 hours in 2001. The number of hours represents the duration of time these programs were aired on TV. Additionally, the evangelical recording industry had a total of 96 productions, involving around 1,000 artists and bands. In general, Evangelical values have been defending morality as a fundamental principle. They strongly advocate for maintaining the traditional family model and insist that sexual intercourse should be limited to matters of fertilization and maternity. This has been represented as universal moral principles and has led to less religious freedom in Brazil. The result of this has been a confrontation between secular state and religious moralities that have been put forward to "save politics and society" (Machado, 2016). At the same time, Machado (2016) points out that not all religious individuals are aligned with this wave of resistance, as many religious groups continue to advocate for women's rights and inclusive societies.

Machado further presents the hegemonic "Brazilian tradition" related to family, gender, and sexuality, emphasizing the severe of social inequalities and discrimination between individuals of different sexes. These inequalities were formally stated in state laws during the colonial period, the Independent Empire, and the Republic. Although some legislative reforms established gender equality after the 1988 Constitution, the historical power imbalances have left a lasting impact on gender relations and legal interpretations. Additionally, Machado (2016) delves into the rich history of feminism in Brazil, highlighting the emergence of a diverse range of feminist movements throughout the twentieth century. Feminist movements started to emerge in Brazil when civil society had the opportunity to position itself against the state, which had been a military dictatorship since 1964. These movements were left-leaning, made up of women of different ethnicities and classes, and inspired by international ideas based on civil rights and democracy (Machado, 2016). Unlike the second wave of women's movements in Europe and the US in the 1970s, which included sexual freedom and changes in the public sphere, the feminist movements in Brazil were still fighting against violence against women and femicide where men were acquitted. It was not until 2002 that the "Estado dos

Direitos da Mulher" (State Secretariat for Women's Rights) was established under the Ministry of Justice. This marked an important step towards progress addressing women's rights issues in the country. Additionally, around the same time, the Ministry of Health was created, leading to the development of a new policy on abortion by the Coordination of Women's Health. This policy aimed to provide guidelines and support for women who meet the criteria for legal abortion as outlined in the Penal Code (Machado, 2016).

In recent years, feminist movements in Brazil have made significant progress in combating violence against women. In general, as feminist agendas have sought not only a cultural revolution in terms of subjectivities but also significant political reforms, feminist movements in recent decades have been characterized by constant dialogue and tension with the state. However, they have faced a backlash from conservative movements against gender equality education and the legalization of abortion. Despite these challenges, feminist movements in Brazil remain committed to the defense of the ethics of individual autonomy, plurality and social rights, and are actively engaged in an ongoing dialogue and engagement with the state in order to advance their agenda (Machado, 2016).

6.4. ABORTION, EMBRYOS, EUTHANASIA, AND GENDER THEORY: AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH'S BIOETHICS MANUAL AT WORLD YOUTH DAY

Naara Luna (2018) a Ph.D. student from the Department of Social Sciences, analyzed a manual named "Keys to Bioethics" that was handed out on Catholic World Youth day in Rio de Janeiro in 2012. The article analyzes an instructional manual that addresses bioethical issues from a Catholic perspective, focusing on topics such as abortion, reproductive health, and euthanasia. She argues that the purpose of the manual was to educate young people about the doctrines of the Catholic Church. The manual presents the teachings of the Vatican on family, sexuality, and human life. It asserts that the fetus is a full human being and opposes abortion under any circumstances. The manual denies women's autonomy in making decisions about their pregnancies and portrays them as victims of abortion. Luna (2018) emphasizes that the manual highlights the Vatican's significant symbolic and strategic importance regarding issues of sexuality, family, and human life in its competition with other religions and in its efforts to attract clergy and followers. This emphasis is evident in the Catholic Church's

pronouncements, driven by the need to propagate and sustain Catholicism through heterosexual couples who raise their children in faith (Luna, 2018).

As an example, the first chapter titled "The History of the Small Human Being" defines the beginning of human life at conception, stating that the human embryo is a living being with human genetic material and is, in fact, a human being. The chapter then describes pregnancy from the first day and follows the embryonic and fetal development each month, addressing various bioethical questions related to abortion, assisted reproduction, embryo manipulation, and embryonic stem cell research. Then it further questions whether the embryo is merely a clump of cells, whether it is considered a human being from fertilization, and whether it will become a person. Each question is followed by an answer, and one observation emphasizes that pregnancy begins at fertilization, not when the embryo is implanted in the womb, contrary to certain textbooks.

Further, according to Luna (2018) the manual offers a glimpse into the Catholic Church's specific position on bioethical matters and gender theory, as depicted in the manual. The statement that "the child is always innocent" challenges the notion of the "right to dispose of one's own body," arguing that the child is not a part of the mother's body but rather her guest. Furthermore, Mother Teresa of Calcutta further emphasizes the Church's perspective, denouncing abortion as the "greatest destroyer of peace in the world," a war against the child. The section titled "What the Church says" delves into three items, affirming God as the sole master of life, considering abortion a grave offense, and emphasizing God's mercy. Additionally, the manual explains sexual differentiation through genetics, citing the 23 pairs of chromosomes and the X and Y sex chromosomes. Despite challenging gender theory, the manual employs pink for females and blue for males, adhering to what Luna (2018) refer to as conventional hegemonic gender representations. The manuals further debate on euthanasia and abortion, and the tensions and contradictions that arise concerning individual autonomy, which holds a significant value in contemporary Western society. These values are expressed through movements advocating for the "right of the unborn" and "death with dignity" (Luna, 2018). Consequently, the manual portrays a complex interplay between Catholic and Christian values and the notion of individualism. The manual presents the individual as someone who owes obedience to God, with the Catholic doctrine seen as the correct interpretation of this obedience. The Vatican asserts that the body belongs to God, and only the Church, as God's representative on Earth, has the authority to judge the right and wrong uses of the body. This

is rooted in a value systems that underpin the Catholic doctrine, emphasizing the value of life as a gift from God and nature as the foundation of reality (Luna, 2018). The handbook uses arguments about nature and autonomy to deny women the right to make decisions about their own pregnancy while simultaneously promoting the autonomy and rights of the embryo and fetus. Idealized motherhood is also celebrated in the manual. It upholds the idea of the embryo as an autonomous entity with rights, while also emphasizing the responsibilities of already born individuals as Christians. Following this, the individual is portrayed as someone in relation to God, owing obedience to God, and Catholic doctrine is seen as the correct interpretation of what such obedience entails. In light of this Luna (2018) argue that the biological body has become a contested battleground, with the State, the Church, and individuals competing for control. In summary, the manual reflects a perspective that prioritizes the rights of fetuses and embryos, while neglecting the rights and diverse circumstances of women, LGBT couples, and those seeking medical options (Luna, 2018).

Overall, Luna's (2018). analysis highlights some key aspects of what she refers to as the Church's struggle to maintain its power. These debates consist of protests from feminist and LGBT groups that advocate for a secular state to limit religious influence on legislation and public policies against the Vatican's interference in people's lives regarding sexuality, reproduction, and gender identity. Luna (2018) admit that her analyze is limiting and may not encompass various arguments within the Church. However, she argues that the Vatican has invested significantly in issues of sexuality, family, and human life, both symbolically and strategically, in competition with other religions and in recruiting clergy and followers.

6.5. UNSAFE ABORTION: A PATRIARCHAL AND RACIALIZED PICTURE OF WOMEN'S POVERTY

Mirla Cisne, Viviane Vaz Castro and Giulia Maria Jenelle Cavalcante de Oliveira, from Department of Social Service, undertook a study (2018) based on data on abortion from Brazilian government reports, research institutes, and international organizations. In ancient history, they state that abortion was seen as a natural occurrence and not considered a criminal act or moral taboo in the same way as it often is today. On the other hand, adultery, which means engaging in a sexual relationship outside of marriage, was often considered a serious sin or crime in many cultures in ancient times. However, abortion remained unprohibited in the Western world until the nineteenth century. This transformation was significantly shaped

by the influence of the Catholic Church, particularly in patriarchal societies like Latin America. Since then, abortion has become a highly debated topic in society. It is an ancient practice that has been shaped by religious beliefs, biases, and unequal power dynamics based on gender, ethnicity, and class. As a result, abortion has become one of the most complex and controversial issues for the feminist movement to address. Hence, Cisne et al. (2018) blame that the Catholic Church has been a major force in the shaping of public opinion and political discourse on abortion in Brazil.

Additionally, Cisne et al. (2018) highlight that criminalizing abortion is rooted in religious fundamentalist prejudices, patriarchal values and norms that make the abortion debate an extremely difficult topic. Additionally, they argue that criminalized abortion perpetuates inequalities of gender, ethnicity, and class. Women face inequalities and limitations in accessing reproductive healthcare and rights, particularly marginalized groups. Motherhood can create challenges for women in the workplace, especially for informal workers without social rights like maternity leave. This can lead to lower educational levels and gender discrimination, and it is one of the factors that may lead women to consider abortion. Moreover, Cisne et al. (2018) argue the sexual division of labor in patriarchal societies results in women carrying a significant load of caregiving and responsibility for children and the home.

Overall Cisne et al. (2018) study concluded that the criminalization of abortion reinforces social inequalities globally, with poor and colored women being the most affected. These women experience significant moral, health, and economic consequences due to unsafe abortions which are most prevalent in peripheral economies. Cisne et al. (2018) argue that these inequalities are co-produced within the context of sexage, where women are objectified and controlled by men. Abortion cannot be solely viewed through a single social relation but must be understood in the context of the entire societal framework, where gender, ethnicity, and class play crucial roles in influencing women's choices and paths regarding abortion (Cisne et al., 2018).

6.6. SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS UNDER ATTACK: THE ADVANCE OF POLITICAL AND MORAL CONSERVATISM IN BRAZIL

Elaine Reis Brandão, Cristiane da Silva Cabral (2019) from the Public Health Faculty, undertook a study that focuses on sexual and reproductive rights in Brazil. The study included

analyses of public policy, legislative proposals in the Brazilian Congress and social media from year 2014-2018. Brandão and Cabral (2019) support Correa's (2010) assertion that a new period emerged after the military dictatorship in Brazil in 1985. Brandão and Cabral (2019) refer to this new period as the "new republic". During this period, it became easier for social movements to emerge and draw more attention to sexual and reproductive rights. This was in contrast to religious sectors where heteronormativity and conservative family values were reproductive rights and sexual diversity were not accepted. Brandão and Cabral (2019) argue that these values are rooted in Catholic movements from the Vatican center around the family and the defense of life. Furthermore, their findings indicate that Evangelical and Protestant Churches have played an important role in continuing the rise of conservative moral values that have led to a strong link between the state and religion. The revival of conservative morality has resulted in the dismantling of existing sexuality education programs at schools. This has had repercussions on education and public health sectors.

Further, Brandão and Cabral (2019) argues that the Evangelical and Catholic parliamentarians played a significant role in the lawmaking council concerning sexual and reproductive health and rights in Brazil. These actions resulted in political setbacks that hindered certain policies or rights related to sexual and reproductive health during the period of 2014–2018, inspired by Christian beliefs. In 2019, groups such as the "Evangelical Parliamentary Front" and the "Front in Defense of Life and Family" were represented by over 200 members in the National Congress, including Catholic lawmakers and supporters of the conservative agenda.

Notably, there has been growing acceptance of gender and sexual diversity in the media, social networks, and artistic communities. Despite progress towards choice, freedom, and autonomy, there is also a rise in highly restrictive and regulatory discourses on sexuality. Conservative religious sectors in the country's lawmaking council oppose the expansion of rights for gender and sexual identities by attempting to limit this diversity (Brandão & Cabral, 2019). Besides this, Brandão and Cabral (2019) conclude that western sex and gender education threatens the established religious orders and traditional family values. This has fueled the debate, with religious groups arguing that sexuality is about reproduction, not pleasure. This has further shaped the abortion debate, where slogans such as 'leave our children alone' are promoted. Spreading moral panic emphasizing to restrict the spread of information and education about sexual and reproductive rights, advocating to leave the responsibility of sexual and moral

education to families in private settings. In this way, sexuality has become a component of Brazilian politics (Brandão & Cabral, 2019).

6.7. POLITICAL DISCOURSE ON ABORTION IN BRAZIL'S PARLIAMENT: THE INVISIBILITY OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Marília De Nardin Budó, Carla Cristina Rodrigues and Eduarda Toscani Gindri (2020), from Department of Law, examined how abortion was discussed in Brazilian legislative proposals from 2015 to 2018. Budó et al. (2020) findings reveal the proposals aimed to make it harder for women to have legal abortions, using religious, moral, and family values to support their arguments. Over time, Brazilian law has largely been influenced by male lawmakers. In the timeframe studied, the Chamber of Deputies consisted of 51 women and 462 men, while the Senate had 13 women and 68 men. Despite a slight rise after the October 2018 elections, women's representation in Parliament remains notably low, only increasing from 10% to 15%.

Budó et al. (2020) argue that religious ideologies have notably shaped bills concerning the nature of life and abortion. Some bills explicitly acknowledge their religious roots, while others attempt to present a more scientific facade. Religious discourses occasionally surface in a discreet approach, particularly in the appeals found at the end of bill justifications or in committee reports. An example of this can be seen in the following quote taken from the Justification of bill number 489/2007, known as the Unborn Child Statute: “May God wish that this House of Laws be committed as soon as possible to approve this Statute, for the joy of the children to be born and for the pride of this country” (Budó et al., 2020, p. 84). Another such example is Representative Diego Garcia's report on bill 478, where he raises the question of when human life can be considered to begin. He emphasizes the significance of life developing in the mother's womb, even at the zygote stage. These examples demonstrate the intricate relationship between religious beliefs and the formulation of policies in Brazil, where discussions on issues like abortion are influenced by a blend of religious belief systems and scientific arguments.

Overall, Budó et al. (2020) analysis argues that women's reproductive rights were not the central focus of the discourse within the content of the bills discussed. Instead, these bills emphasized the status of the fetus and proposed increased penalties for self-induced abortions. While the arguments were not directly related to religion, there were some indications or hints

of religious beliefs or values in the way the beginning of human life was defined. The liberal feminist argument for the right to abortion, which emphasizes a woman's choice, freedom, and autonomy, was weighed against the life of the unborn child. In other words, criminalizing abortion was presented as a means of safeguarding the welfare of children and infants, justified by social, economic, and humanitarian considerations. Furthermore, these observations underscore the limited response and acknowledgment of feminist calls for reproductive rights within the parliament, despite the presence of one such proposal in the corpus. Although religion was not openly discussed or mentioned, Budó et al. (2020) argue it had an underlying influence on the argument being presented. Noteworthy, they emphasized at the time of their study's publication their findings seemed rather simplistic compared to the intricate and troubling interplay between religion, the state, and misogyny within the Bolsonaro administration.

6.8. THE BRAZILIAN CONSERVATIVE WAVE, THE BOLSONARO ADMINISTRATION, AND RELIGIOUS ACTORS

Joanildo Burity (2021) a political scientist that focuses on religion and politics, analyzed Brazil's center-left coalition under presidents Lula da Silva and Dilma Rousseff from the Workers' Party from 2003 to 2016. Notably, he highlights, the protests known as the "June journeys" in 2013, which started as a left-wing social movement but were later taken over by far-right groups. These journeys attacked left-wing corruption, "gender ideology", and minority rights, paving the way for a neo-conservative agenda. Debates on social media led to political polarization. Oppositions developed in all different directions and were soon led by right-wingers, with slogans such as "left-wing corruption" and threats to "traditional moral values" taking center stage (Burity, 2021).

Burity (2021) delves into the relationship between the Brazilian conservative wave and religious actors. His study examines the political and social circumstances in Brazil that have contributed to the growth of conservatism and investigates the involvement of religious actors in this development. Burity (2021) also highlights an expansion of religious actors during the early 1980s, as the movement for democracy was at the forefront. This gave opportunities for new social actors to emerge. Further, he argues that the transformation from a military dictatorship to a democratic government in Brazil led to the division of the country's political landscape into two main groups: the left- and the rightwing. The left supports workers' rights,

social programs, and income redistribution, while the right prioritizes market-oriented policies and traditional social values such as family and religion. The right-wing parties often have support from conservative religious groups, including the Catholic Church and Evangelical Christians, who oppose social policies, such as abortion, same-sex marriage, and gender equality (Burity, 2021).

Importantly, Burity (2021) highlights that the Evangelical Church's emergence in politics is not about a sudden appearance or just an empirical recognition of a familiar phenomenon. Furthermore, he examines the public impact of the rise of Evangelicals in public life to understand their explanation over time. Firstly, he mentions that it is important to understand the political development of Brazilian Protestants, what he refers to as Conservative Evangelicals, with around two-thirds being Pentecostals. He argues that the remarkable aspect of Evangelicals in politics in recent years, is that we are dealing with ordinary people, not just the wealthy or intellectual individuals. It is about popular religion, not elite religion. The increased visibility of Evangelicals in public life signifies their previous state of relative invisibility. During the 1970s, the Protestant population in Brazil accounted for approximately 5,2% with 50% being Pentecostals. However, they were often perceived as a marginalized group with limited significance, particularly associated with rural areas. Consequently, they remained relatively unnoticed and overlooked. Thus, the unexpected election of over 20 members, including traditional Protestants, to the National Constituent Assembly in the mid-1980s came as a substantial surprise to politicians, scholars, and activists (Burity, 2021).

Furthermore, Burity (2021) notes that many of the conservative Evangelical speakers come from humble backgrounds and they often do not have many years of education or theological training. While Pentecostalism does have followers from the middle class, its primary growth and influence are concentrated in the outskirts of urban areas, correctional facilities, and remote rural communities, rather than being predominantly focused on the middle-class segment of society. Burity (2021) also notes that, during the past years, Evangelicals effectively mobilized through grassroots communities and emphasized institutional electoral politics. This succeeded in shaping strong relational ties that plays a central role in promoting the oracular voice of the pastor within these communities. Especially, social media particularly WhatsApp has been very important for sharing information and expanding communities (Burity, 2021).

In 2018, the conservative wave reached its peak with the election of Jair Bolsonaro, a far-right politician, as the president of Brazil. According to Burity (2021) Bolsonaro won through as religious politics collaborated by forming small organizations, grassroots social movements, with political parties. This contrasts with the past, where progressive religious activists had a certain place in the Brazilian Congress. In other words, they withdrew from institutional politics to work at the grassroots. Meanwhile, conservative forms of Pentecostal politics emerged, securing larger shares of political representation (Burity, 2021). All of this considered, Burity (2021) argues that there is an obvious connection between conservative Christian leaders and Bolsonaro and the formation of his government, as Bolsonaro's 2018 election campaign was built on support from conservative religious groups, particularly Evangelicals who have gained influence in Brazilian politics since the 1970s.

6.9. ABORTION AND THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: INSIGHTS FOR LATIN AMERICA

Pilecco et al. (2021), from the Department of Public Health, studied how Brazil, among other countries in Latin America, dealt with legal abortion services during the COVID-19 pandemic. They reviewed 75 articles and other relevant sources. They start their article by stating that Latin American countries' access to sexual and reproductive health services, including legal abortion, is heavily influenced by what they refer as "the hegemonic value system" that is rooted in religious patriarchalism. They defend their statement by explaining this has led to a clearly conservative stance on abortion, leading to the exacerbation of socioeconomic gender inequalities. Furthermore, Pilecco et al. (2021) suggest that the use of self-managed medical abortion interrupts established hierarchies of power and truth within the medical field. By centering abortion on women and giving them more agency, it introduces an innovative approach to healthcare. In other words, they contend that the opposition to abortion is deeply intertwined with moral values that undermine women's reproductive rights.

Furthermore, Pilecco et al. (2021) findings indicate that the pandemic made things even more restricted. Access to the "legal abortion" services, in particularly in smaller cities and towns, was limited even more during the COVID-19 pandemic. First, The Ministry of Health initially hesitated to address issues of sexual and reproductive health during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, after some time, they acknowledged support that emphasized the significance of sexual and reproductive health services, including legal abortion. However, only three days later the Ministry withdrew the support due to pressure from higher authorities. Pilecco et al.

(2021) argue that this illustrates the Bolsonaro government's strong opposition to women's reproductive rights and reinforces its conservative stance. Pilecco et al. (2021) highlight that in one case, a ten-year-old girl had to travel a long way to access her legal right to an abortion after being repeatedly raped since the age of six. During this process her name was not only dropped on social media, but also religious extremists protested at the hospital. This illustrates that even in cases where abortion is legal, such as in cases of rape or danger to the woman's life, access to abortion services can be extremely difficult. Therefore, Pilecco et al. (2021) argue that despite Brazil's constitutional claim of being secular, it is evident that religious influence strongly impacts state actions.

Pilecco et al. (2021) state that the restrictions on abortion lead to more social and racial inequality because of how the Bolsonaro government handled the pandemic. Women of color, especially young and low-income ones, who already lack many rights, may resort to unsafe options, risking their own lives. Therefore Pilecco et al. (2021) argue that it was urgent for Bolsonaro's government to adapt sexual and reproductive health services to the pandemic's demands by revising laws to reduce barriers, providing better access to safe abortion, and tackling stigma. Otherwise, maternal mortality could increase significantly, making it harder to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (Pilecco et al., 2021).

6.10. WOMEN VICTIMS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE: CRITICAL PATHS IN THE SEARCH FOR THE RIGHT TO LEGAL ABORTION

Ruschel, Machado, Giugliani, and Knauth (2022) from the Department of Public Health, conducted a study that focused on women who have suffered from sexual violence and face significant challenges in their pursuit of the right to access legal abortion. The study investigated 127 cases of women who had legal abortions following instances of sexual violence. From 2000 to 2018 they analyzed the medical records of these women, focusing on gathering information about their personal histories, psychological and clinical symptoms, and the decision-making processes related to abortion. The study primarily focuses on factors influencing the access to legal abortion for women who have experienced sexual violence. While it does not extensively delve into religious aspects, it does acknowledge that in certain cases, doctors and healthcare professionals refused to proceed with the necessary abortion procedures, citing moral, religious, or ethical principles as impediments. This highlights the impact of personal beliefs and values within Brazil's healthcare system and how they may

affect women's reproductive choices in such sensitive situations. It was found that many doctors are afraid of being called "abortionists" by their peers. Therefore, they argue that religious beliefs and the fear of stigma have a big impact on how abortion is handled in healthcare (Ruschel et al., 2022).

Their study also found that in hospitals and with the police, women often faced judgment and embarrassment, making the experience tougher combined with the taboo and lack of information delaying women's access to legal abortion. Additionally, most women were unaware of their rights, which led to difficulties in accessing abortion services. Their findings also indicated that only 19 of the 127 cases first initially sought assistance from a hospital, as the others sought help elsewhere. This underscores the lack of information among many women regarding their right to terminate a pregnancy. As such, most women often become aware of abortion rights after confirming their pregnancy, typically through other sources; health services, security agencies, friends, or the Internet. Moreover Ruschel et al. (2022) summarize that the challenges include moral judgments, poor infrastructure, bureaucracy, and misinformation. This dynamic perpetuates the lack of information, pushing some women to unsafe alternatives before seeking hospital care. Remarkably, Ruschel et al. (2022) highlights that in a countrywide public opinion poll; 42% of men and 37% of women agreed with the harmful idea that "Women who respect themselves are not raped". Moreover, the article is questioning whether the legalization of abortion reinforces the idea of women being inferior, objectified, and blamed. In conclusion, Ruschel et al. (2022) study demonstrated the strict restrictions, even regarding 'legal abortion services,' which represent a backward step for society and pose a substantial threat to achieving gender equality and democracy.

6.11. THE EVANGELICAL FOREIGN POLICY MODEL: JAIR BOLSONARO AND EVANGELICALS IN BRAZIL

Guimarães, Miquelasi, Ferreira Alves, de Oliveira e Silva, and Stange Calandrin (2023) from Department of International Relations, examined speeches, discourses, and documents from Brazilian evangelical parliamentarians and cabinet members, as well as those affiliated with the Evangelical Parliamentary Front (EPF). Guimarães et al. (2023) explored how evangelical groups and conservative governments work together in Jair Bolsonaro's cabinet from 2019-2022. Throughout history, the role of religion in global politics has often been underestimated or neglected. Until recently, the study of foreign policy often ignored the role of religion.

Scholars mostly focused on rational explanations, considering them the only valid academic approach. However, in the last 20 years, things have changed now experts are discussing the implicit secularism within the discipline and reevaluating traditional theories and methods. As a result, there's a growing realization that religion plays a crucial role in shaping foreign policy, and it is becoming more widely acknowledged and studied (Guimarães et al., 2023).

Guimarães et al. (2023) discuss religion and evangelicalism as complex terms. They highlight that defining Evangelicalism is challenging because it includes distinct movement with its own unique characteristics, as well as church-related, denominational-, various social-, and political viewpoints. Evangelicalism is a widespread religious movement with a global reach. Therefore, the involvement of evangelicals in world politics has become a fascinating topic. The movement is diverse, with many different goals, and there is no central organization or spokesperson representing all evangelicals.

Guimarães et al. (2023) provide a comprehensive description of the evolution of evangelical Christianity in Brazil. The first wave, from the 1950s to the 1960s, was characterized by the establishment of churches such as the Church of the Four-Square Gospel, Brazil for Christ, and God is Love. These early church communities played a significant role in propagating Pentecostalism in Brazil. The second wave, emerging in the 1970s, was marked by the formation of churches like the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (UCKG) and the International Church of the Grace of God. This period also witnessed the growth and prominence of the "Prosperity Gospel" doctrine, which teaches that financial prosperity is a sign of divine approval.

Evangelicals continue to hold significant political power and have successfully elected numerous candidates. Especially since the mid-1980s, Evangelicals in Brazil have been choosing candidates all over the country and have found effective ways to gather and concentrate votes by supporting 'official church candidates'. In 2003 they created the EPF (Evangelical Parliamentary Front) group to represent "family values" in the government. It has grown to include 204 members in 2021, consisting of 196 federal deputies and eight senators. Furthermore, Guimarães et al. (2023) argue that the lobbying system in Brazil lacks proper regulation, and there are no laws overseeing lobbyist activities in Congress. This absence of regulation raises concerns about the transparency of political processes. As such, lobbyists hold

significant influence over political decisions in Brazil, making their interactions with political groups a shadowy area.

Guimarães et al. (2023) also highlight that the former Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro developed a close relationship with Evangelical communities in Brazil. Which resulted in many Evangelical voters and politicians supporting Bolsonaro in the 2018 election. Bolsonaro has emphasized the importance of the Evangelical Church's missionary work in shaping Brazilian politics. Although Guimarães et al. (2023) argue he is not Evangelical himself, Bolsonaro has incorporated Evangelical and religious agendas into his political platform, forming an alliance with conservatives, military, agribusiness, neoliberals, and Evangelical groups. These alliances have a strong focus on family values and nationalism. A significant number of Evangelicals in Brazil tend to align with political conservatism. In 2016, Bolsonaro was baptized in the Jordan River by a Pentecostal pastor, a move that helped him create an image as a messianic anti-establishment figure capable of saving Brazil from its deeply rooted corruption (Guimarães et al., 2023).

According to Guimarães et al. (2023), Evangelicals in Brazil have different views on abortion. Some religious leaders, like Bishop Edir Macedo from UCKG, have shown more liberal attitudes on the issue. A Pew Research survey in 2006 found that while 91% of Brazilian Pentecostals were morally against abortion, additionally 48% believed the government should not interfere with a woman's right to choose. Despite this, Evangelical members in Congress have generally taken a conservative stance on abortion since 1988. Furthermore, the abortion debate in Brazil is extensive and closely connected to foreign policy concerns. E.g., Brazil's position on abortion was significant during the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) in 2019. Brazil emphasized its commitment to defending the right to life and security, which contributed to its selection for the 2020-2022 term, maintaining its anti-abortion stance. Further Guimarães et al. (2023) highlights the close collaboration between pro-life leaders in the Brazilian Congress and ministers in Bolsonaro's government. It underscores their shared commitment to the pro-life agenda and their opposition to abortion rights. This cooperation extends to political and religious leaders in both Brazil and the United States, illustrating how efforts to advance the pro-life cause have domestic and international implications. E.g. American Evangelical pastors visited Brazil to oppose women's reproductive rights and receiving praise from local officials underscores the transnational nature of this movement and its influence on public policy (Guimarães et al., 2023).

7. DISCUSSION

In this chapter the 11 articles, presented above, will be analyzed to answer the Research Questions.

7.1. RQ1: HOW DOES THE SELECTED MATERIAL PORTRAY THE ABORTION DEBATE IN BRAZIL?

One of the challenges in answering the RQ's have been determining how scholars categorize Catholic- and Evangelical orientations in their research. To tackle this, a more comprehensive perspective on religion has been essential. Instead, it delves into how religion is depicted in the selected materials relevant to the research question. As such, inspired by Holmefur's (2016) PhD, the discussion in this thesis abstains from taking a definitive stance on definitional matters.

First, this chapter will examine how the academics portray the abortion debate. Therefore, it will be necessarily to analyze the historical and religious factors that has contributed to the growth on the Catholic and Evangelical Church in Brazil and their influence regarding the abortion debate. Subsequently, I will analyze the relevant findings related to the abortion debate to draw conclusions regarding how academics depict the abortion debate, in order to address RQ 1. To answer RQ 2, I will explore the scholar's analyzes of how religious influence affects the abortion law in Brazil, with a categorical distinction between individual belief systems, public opinion, and religious groups as actors. Following this, I will explore the interplay between the thesis categorical distinctions to analyze how the scholars correlate the influence of religion, particularly Catholic- and Evangelical belief systems, with opposition to the legalization of abortion in Brazil.

7.1.1. THE CATHOLIC AND EVANGELICAL EVOLUTION IN BRAZIL

This subchapter will delve into the historical and religious evolution of the Catholic and Evangelical Churches in Brazil, to better understand how the selected scholars portray the abortion debate. As pointed out by Jones and Petersen (2011), the study of religion has, in many instances, been neglected within the field of development cooperation, partly due to strong ties with actors in development cooperation's. This approach can lead to the oversight of significant aspects of how religion has impacted Brazil's development and politics.

Therefore, treating religion as a dynamic force in history, rather than a frozen block of belief and practice, is crucial to uncovering the deep roots that have nourished and influenced Brazil throughout the ages.

Broadly speaking, the perception of abortion in Brazil has transformed over time, transitioning from being an accepted subject during the 19th century to becoming a sensitive and legally restricted matter (Cisne et al., 2018). The scholars argue that several factors have contributed to what they present as a polarized abortion debate. Three recurring elements are shared among the articles discussed in this thesis. First, the democratization process in Brazil, coupled with the election of Pope John Paul II, created an environment where Catholic and Evangelical movements could thrive and actively participate in the country's social, political, and cultural landscape (Burity, 2021; Correa, 2010; Machado, 2016). Second, Correa's (2010) findings indicate that since Catholic groups already had defended political and civil rights during the dictatorship, they used their legitimate role to gain more followers as the new attention given to democracy gave people more hope for better opportunities to how shape the future of the country. Third, both the Catholic and Evangelical Church strategically focused on empowering their positions by engaging with issues concerning sexual and reproductive rights in response to the rise of various other social movements (Machado, 2016). This aligns with the findings of Brandão and Cabral (2019) who highlight that these social movements advocated for sexual and reproductive freedom, contrasting with conservative religious groups promoting family values and the sanctity of life. This development bolstered the conservative position of the Catholic Church in Brazil, enhancing its influence, particularly on issues related to sexual and reproductive rights. This era marked a period of increased religious diversity, engagement, and influence within Brazilian society.

7.1.2. THE GROWTH OF THE CATHOLIC AND EVANGELICAL CHURCH IN BRAZIL

This subchapter delves into the essential factors that the academics of the 11 articles emphasize as the reasons behind the remarkable proliferation of Catholicism and Evangelicalism in Brazil. Within the articles, there is a notable discourse highlighting how the expansion of the Catholic and Evangelical Churches in Brazil has played a pivotal role in shaping the discourse surrounding abortion. Both Catholic and Evangelical churches have conducted extensive missionary work, that have helped expand their followership (Guimarães et al., 2023). Additionally, Brandão and Cabral (2019) affirm that the period of democratization facilitated a dynamic dichotomy that intensified the discussions surrounding abortion. This dichotomy

also boosted the churches' encouragement within society. This is highlighted by the significant rise in the percentage of Protestant faith adherents from 4% in 1960 to a notable 15.4% in Brazil. On the other hand, Catholicism, which accounted for ca., 70% of the population in 2000 as reported by Ogland and Verona (2011). However, it is important to note that these statistics are over a decade old, and the more recent studies suggest that Catholic influence in Brazil, especially the growth of Evangelical groups, has continued to drastically evolve (Burity, 2021; Guimarães et al., 2023). Furthermore, Ogland and Verona (2011), Guimarães et al. (2023), and Burity's (2021) research underscores the surge of Evangelical politicians in Brazilian politics since the mid-1980s. According to them, the surge was boosted by evangelical media and voter support, a trend validated by Machado (2016). Burity's (2021) findings emphasize that Evangelicals, once marginalized, gained prominence into Brazil's National Constituent Assembly in the mid-1980s, transforming their visibility and impact. He also highlights that the mobilization of Evangelical communities through grassroots campaigns; underpinned by individual activists; rather than relying solely on established religious institutions, has succeeded in effective engagement. Furthermore, this growth has been amplified by the integration of social media platforms (Brandão & Cabral, 2019).

These findings reveal that Evangelical groups have strong grassroots networks that engage in activism and advocacy. Given the significant number of individuals living in poverty, both Ogland and Verona (2011) and Burity (2021) link poverty as an additional factor for the rapid growth of Evangelical organizations. Poverty is particularly relevant in the context of Brazil, where a substantial portion of the population struggles with economic hardship. In this perspective it appears there is a correlation between the socioeconomic conditions described and the growth of Evangelicalism, particularly the swift spread of Pentecostal groups (Ogland & Verona, 2011). Additionally, numerous conservative Evangelical leaders originate from modest socioeconomic backgrounds, often lack extensive educational and theological training. As such, they are more prominent in less central or marginalized areas, instead of mainly targeting the middle-class population (Burity, 2021). As such, these findings underscore the influence of socio-economic factors, particularly poverty, on the growth and dynamics of Evangelicalism in Brazil. This is in line with Holmefur (2016) and Diniz (2007) as poor people attend services more regularly, becoming more influenced by the opinions of their peers and leaders within their religious community, leading to greater conformity in beliefs.

7.1.3. THE ABORTION DEBATE

Moreover, the articles display on the abortion debate in Brazil is characterized by a notable interplay of contrasting viewpoints. As mentioned, following Holmefur (2016) the focus of this study is not to define Catholic and Evangelical doctrines, but to examine how the material addresses Catholicism and Evangelicalism in relation to abortion. From the findings it is worth noting that while some individuals within these traditions may hold more moderate or nuanced views on abortion, the official teachings of these faiths generally align with a pro-life position (Guimarães et al., 2023).

Overall, the scholars primarily emphasize a dichotomy: one perspective views abortion as a "serious moral violation," while the other perspective views it as an assertion of women's reproductive autonomy. This divide shapes societal judgments on abortion, determining its moral acceptability (Burity, 2021; Correa, 2010; Ogland & Verona, 2011). The Churches opposition to abortion stems from its view of abortion as a serious sin, which is influenced by the Vatican's position on life beginning at conception (Brandão & Cabral, 2019). Additionally, Luna (2018) state that Catholic doctrine, which values life as a gift, denies women the right to make decisions about their pregnancies while defending the autonomy and rights of the embryo and fetus. Luna (2018) also emphasizes how the Catholic Church idealized motherhood, which reinforces traditional roles and restricts women's autonomy and equality, aligns the 'sexage' framework that illustrate societal dynamics (Cisne et al., 2018). Importantly, the findings demonstrate that the Catholic Church argue that pregnancy begins at conception, upholding the embryo as an independent individual with rights whilst emphasizing the responsibilities of those already born. Taking this into account, several of the scholars refer to feminist movements as an illustrative example of groups that oppose Catholic-, Evangelical- and what they refer to as conservative values. In this way it becomes evident that a clash exists between certain religious influences and feminists within the Brazilian abortion debate (Cisne et al., 2018). It is important to acknowledge that since feminism is a diverse movement with a wide range of beliefs, the paragraphs below will present only how the selected material portrays these beliefs.

It is necessary to present short how the articles address that gender structures, culture, and feminism play a substantial part in maintaining societal attitudes towards abortion along with religion. Due to word limitations, this will only be presented briefly. In Brazil, abortion is often seen through a moral lens, associating it with taboo, stigma or "unruly" women (Correa, 2010;

Ruschel et al., 2022). This perspective can be related to the Madonna-Whore complex of women as either a virtuous “Madonna” or a morally deviant “whore” (Melhuus & Stolen, 2007). By categorizing women as either pure or promiscuous, leads to perceptions of abortion's morality as being of the same characteristics. Further, the term hegemonic “Brazilian tradition” pertains to how social structures continue to exert a significant influence on family dynamics, gender roles, and attitudes toward sexuality. This mindset remains widespread, with men often assuming dominant positions in both public and private spheres (Machado, 2016). This exerts patriarchal power and control, prevailing the societal norms and values related to family, gender, and sexuality. Additionally, the contention that "the child is always innocent" contradicts the concept of the "right to dispose of one's own body," diminishing women's agency (Luna, 2018). This is comparable with Budó et al. (2020) findings, arguing that the Church's assertion of divine authority over life and judgement of abortion, bolsters patriarchal dominance. Predominantly, it values women as mothers and asserting religious dominance over reproductive decisions. Considering this male dominance in politics and decision-making has resulted in insufficient representation and protection of women's rights and reproductive health. This is in line with Pilecco et al. (2021), who indicate that male authorities and dominance in society is rooted in a "hegemonic value system" imbedded by religious patriarchy. In view of this Pilecco et al. (2021) asserts that the use of self-administered medical abortion challenges these established power structures and notions of what is medically correct or acceptable. This may entail women taking control of their own reproductive decisions without necessarily consulting traditional medical authorities. This potentially disrupts the norms and power dynamics within the medical field as well. Given this, the findings argue that these gender structures regarding women's roles and reproduction contribute to the push against abortion liberalization.

However, in certain instances, it becomes apparent that several authors adopt a notably activist tone in their writing, aligning with specific political viewpoints about abortion. Therefore, the perspectives of these academics seem to me as subjective, which potentially impacts their interpretation of research results and objectivity. Consequently, instead of maintaining complete neutrality, some authors adopt a more biased stance, resulting in a more critical evaluation of the subject matter. This agenda-driven approach is exemplified in statements, E.g., 'but a few glimmers of light can be found in this dark scenario' (Correa, 2010, p. 117).

To summarize, in the 11 articles the scholars portray the abortion debate in Brazil as a conflict with the interplay of gender roles deeply ingrained in cultural structures and the profound influence of both the Catholic and Evangelical Churches. Furthermore, it becomes evident that the scholars portray the abortion debate in Brazil as a clash between a woman's right to choose, her personal freedom, and autonomy, contrasted with the perceived sanctity of the unborn child's life. Considering these considerations, the core issue in the abortion debate revolves around the contentious question of when life begins.

7.2. RQ2: HOW DO THE SCHOLARS CORRELATE THE INFLUENCE OF RELIGION, PARTICULARLY CATHOLICISM AND EVANGELICALISM BELIEF SYSTEM, WITH OPPOSITION TO THE LEGALIZATION OF ABORTION IN BRAZIL?

In the forthcoming two chapters, a categorical distinction will be drawn between individual belief systems, public opinion, and religious groups as active participants, with a focus on understanding how these aspects influence legislation of abortion.

7.2.1. EXPLORING PERSONAL BELIEFS AND EXPERIENCE REGARDING ABORTION, INFLUENCED BY CATHOLIC AND EVANGELICAL BELIEF SYSTEMS

This section examines how research findings illuminate the impact of personal beliefs rooted in Catholic and Evangelical belief systems. These encompass an individual's moral, ethical, and cultural values, intimately tied to their religious faith.

The findings from the Pew Research survey show that 91% of Brazilian Pentecostal members hold strong moral objections to abortion due to their religious beliefs. However, 48% of them believed that the government should not interfere with a woman's right to choose abortion (Guimarães et al., 2023) This suggests that even though their moral beliefs are against abortion, they differentiate between their personal belief systems and what they believe the government should allow regarding reproductive choices. Ruschel et al. (2022) study reveals that 42% of men and 37% of women validated that "Women who respect themselves are not raped". This highlights how moral judgments can impact women, leading to feelings of guilt and self-blame after experiencing violence. This indicates a nuanced approach to the relationship between personal beliefs and views on government intervention in abortion issues. It also highlights that even within religious communities, there can be variability in views regarding the government's role in such matters.

The variability in public opinion regarding abortion is also evident in Ogland and Verona (2011) study which emphasized that approximately 72% of Brazilians are finding abortion acceptable under certain circumstances, while the remaining 28% oppose it entirely. Outstandingly attendees of Pentecostal gatherings are found to be 150% more motivated to oppose abortion when compared to Catholics who attend religious services less frequently (Ogland & Verona, 2011). It indicates that participation in Pentecostal religious gatherings is strongly associated with a stronger opposition to abortion. This finding provides valuable insight into how religious participation and affiliation can influence people's views on controversial topics such as abortion. Burity (2021) emphasizes that the growth of Evangelicals is not a sudden or simple trend but a significant part of recent politics. He highlights something important: regular people are involved, not just wealthy or highly educated individuals. This involvement is linked to everyday faith, not just what the elite believe. Interestingly, the findings suggest that poor people are more likely to have strong religious affiliations as less privileged individuals may be more influenced by Catholic and Evangelical belief systems in varying ways (Burity, 2021; Ogland & Verona, 2011).

It is significant to acknowledge the stigma related to abortion Pilecco et al. (2021) finding reflects the diversity of perspectives within religious communities, even among those who share a common faith tradition. Such divergences can have implications for public policy debates and discussions on reproductive rights. These findings support Davie (2000) idea that "religion does not disappear in the modern era" but rather it shifts into the private sphere, away from institutional expressions and loyalty to them. Because people tend to practice their faith more individually and less through organized institutions. This suggests religion is still present, but the way it is expressed and practiced has changed in line with societal shifts. This could explain how religion continues to play a role in modern society, even though it may seem that fewer people are connected to traditional religious institutions. In contrast to the past where religion was closely associated with institutional expressions like churches or religious organizations, where people practiced their faith as part of a community and showed loyalty to these institutions. In modern society, it appears that individuals practice their faith more independently and less through organized institutions. This means that religion has become more of a private matter, where people practice their beliefs on their own terms without necessarily being tied to or loyal to specific organized religious groups. Although the findings illustrate that personal beliefs are significantly influenced by Catholic and Evangelical influence regarding perspectives on abortion.

7.2.2. CATHOLIC AND EVANGELICAL GROUPS AS INFLUENTIAL ACTORS SHAPING PUBLIC OPINION

Brazil's perception of abortion has undergone significant transformation over time, evolving from a relatively accepted practice during the 19th century to a highly sensitive and legally restricted matter in contemporary society (Cisne et al., 2018). This shift in public perception has profound implications for moral and values-based perspectives, from viewing abortion as normalized to a taboo and criminal act mirrors changing societal norms and values concerning life, reproduction, and individual rights.

Catholic- and Evangelical beliefs play a crucial role in shaping the cultural discourse in society and have lasting effects on public opinion regarding legislation of abortion. Especially, the increase of Evangelical programming has shaped public perceptions and affected moral stands like abortion (Machado, 2016). Additionally, Catholic and Evangelical organizations have their own media outlets, including television networks, radio stations, and publications (Burity, 2021). These platforms allow them to disseminate their messages and shape public discourse on a wide range of issues. This rise in Catholic and Evangelical programming media has impacted the moral landscape as Machado (2016) also supported by Ogland and Verona (2011) and Burity (2021). Additionally, Catholic, and Evangelical groups have actively engaged in debates on critical social issues, particularly gender ideology and sexual education in schools. Their engagement often centers on opposing progressive changes and preserving traditional norms and values (Luna, 2018). To bolster their positions, Catholic and Evangelical groups have effectively mobilized their gatherings, organizing large-scale religious gatherings and protest marches, thus underscoring their numerical strength, and enhancing their ability to influence public opinion (Ogland & Verona, 2011).

Catholic and Evangelical use their religious teachings and moral principles to engage in public discourse and advocate for specific positions. Research findings indicate that Evangelical interpretations of religious teachings from the Bible have played a significant role in garnering a broader following that staunchly opposes abortion. Brandão and Cabral (2019) highlight slogans like “leave our children alone,” reflecting moral panic and reinforcing taboos surrounding discussions on sexual health. Such slogans advocate for private, family-based sexual and moral education. Supported, by Ruschel et al. (2022) argue religious beliefs and the fear of stigma significantly affect how abortion is handled in healthcare settings. This

emphasizes the role of religious affiliation and engagement in shaping perspectives on abortion.

The Catholic Church invests in education and outreach efforts to inform their members and the broader public about their perspective on abortion (Brandão & Cabral, 2019). This education aims to reinforce their moral stand on the issue and maintain support for pro-life policies. According to Luna (2018), the biological body has become a contested battleground, with the state, the Church, and individuals competing for control. In the manual “Keys to Bioethics”, the individual is portrayed as someone who owes obedience to God, with Catholic doctrine seen as the correct interpretation of this obedience. This portrays how the Catholic Church sees it as its role to regulate and guide matters related to biological bodies based on their religious doctrine. From a biopolitical perspective, Luna (2018) argues that the Catholic Church seeks control over biological bodies by regulating practices such as abortion, contraception, embryonic stem cell research, euthanasia, reproductive methods, and marriage. The Vatican asserts that the body belongs to God, and only the Church, as God's representative on Earth, has the authority to judge the right and wrong uses of the body (Luna, 2018). Additionally, Pilecco et al. (2021) state religious influence has exerted its influence to restrict access to sexual and reproductive health services, with the intention to discouraging individuals from seeking abortions. The Evangelical Church has especially played a significant role in shaping public opinion in Brazil by appealing to the poor and marginalized segments of society, (Burity, 2021; Ogland & Verona, 2011). This finding indicates that the Evangelical Church in Brazil has significantly influenced public opinion, particularly among disadvantaged and marginalized groups. It shows that the church has effectively engaged with and gained support from these communities, potentially due to its focus on addressing their needs and shaping their views on issues like the abortion debate. This highlights the church's ability to mobilize and influence specific demographic groups in Brazil. Moreover, all the findings argue the Catholic and Evangelical groups have been functioning as influential actors shaping public opinion within society through religious entities, including churches, faith communities, and religious organizations. In other words, Catholic and Evangelical belief systems have a profound influence on public opinion.

7.2.3. INDIVIDUAL AGENCY AND PUBLIC INFLUENCE RELATED TO THE LEGALIZATION OF ABORTION

The involvement of ordinary individuals in religion has played a pivotal role in the growth of Catholic and Evangelical movements and their impact on politics, as emphasized by Burity (2021). The findings serve as an example of how public opinion in Brazil, which largely opposed stricter abortion laws, had a substantial impact on shaping the "Law of the Unborn". This demonstrates the power of public sentiment in shaping legislation, as Correa (2010) emphasized. Additionally, findings highlight both Catholic and Evangelical groups have demonstrated the ability to mobilize large blocks of voters in support of specific political issues and candidates, as individual voters were strongly influenced by the positions of Catholic and Evangelical groups in a political matter during the 2010 election regarding abortion legislation (Machado, 2016). The fact that Dilma Rousseff experienced a 25% reduction in her voter support following the first round of elections demonstrates how individuals reacted to political decisions that either supported or opposed abortion legislation (Ogland & Verona, 2011).

Importantly Pilecco et al. (2021) highlight that even in situations where abortion has been legally approved, such as cases of rape or when a woman's life is at risk, religious influence still limits the availability of abortion services or make access extremely difficult. This underscores the complexity and practical challenges associated with ensuring that women can exercise their reproductive rights in Brazil. This illustrates that individual agency is not always sufficient to exercise rights when practical or institutional barriers are present. Additionally, Ruschel et al. (2022) findings demonstrate the challenging and stigmatized environment around abortion access in Brazil, where judgment, embarrassment, taboos, and lack of information delay women's access to legal abortion services. Research findings also indicate that some women turn to unsafe alternatives before eventually seeking hospital care. This pattern is attributed to the fact that many women only become aware of their abortion rights after confirming their pregnancy through various means. Although there is still significant resistance to the liberalization of abortion laws in Brazil, feminist movements have played a crucial role in bringing this issue to the forefront and raising awareness and debate around it (Machado, 2016). However, the discussion on abortion rights in Brazil remains highly controversial and polarized (Correa, 2010). To summarize, individual agencies, contribute to the diverse range of viewpoints in Brazilian society. However, the research suggests that, except for participation

in election campaigns, individual agencies in shaping abortion legislation remain constrained due to the stigma surrounding abortion, leading to abortion laws that remain unchanged.

7.2.4. CATHOLIC AND EVANGELICAL GROUPS AS LEGISLATIVE INFLUENCERS

In this chapter, we delve into how the material portrays Catholic and Evangelical group's influence on the legislation of abortion. Evidence shows that Catholic and Evangelical groups often endorse and provide support for political candidates who align with their values and priorities. This support can include financial contributions, volunteer efforts, and voter mobilization drives, which can significantly impact election outcomes (Guimarães et al., 2023). The Catholic and Evangelical churches have significant influence over the abortion debate in the Brazilian National Assembly (Correa, 2010). This is evident through the encouragement of religious leaders for voters to align with their respective church's viewpoints, particularly concerning abortion. Groups like the Brazilian Commission for Justice and Peace and the CNBB work conscientiously to prevent the legalization of abortion and promote traditional family values according to (Machado, 2016). This demonstrates that their efforts have a substantial impact on legislation and politics in Brazil, underscoring the importance of religion in these matters. Additionally, several scholars highlight the Brazilian election in 2010, where Evangelical leaders and organizations like The Assembly of God and The National Pastors Conference exerted significant influence on political candidates, particularly regarding issues such as abortion. This religious pressure led to noticeable shifts in the politicians' viewpoints, impacting the electoral landscape at the time (Correa, 2010). Correa's (2010) findings also indicate that the Catholic Church has been engaged in lobbying against abortion liberalization. Additionally, the CSSF has influenced the definition of when human life begins and has endorsed the "Law of the Unborn," contributing to the shaping of social issues in the debate about human life and forming political alliances. Besides, Ogland and Verona (2011) argue Pentecostal politicians view their role in politics as a religiously motivated battle, this can play a significant role in politics and thus influence public opinion, especially when their political actions are driven by strong religious motivations.

Ogland and Verona (2011) suggests that the engagement of Evangelical groups in politics has been reinforced by the expansion of Evangelical media and their growing voter base among Pentecostals. They see their political involvement as a response to the rise of secular values in Brazil, aiming to protect their religious beliefs, especially regarding family matters. Also, Pentecostal churches, like the Foursquare Gospel Church and UCKG, employ strategies to

mobilize their members' support and votes for candidates officially endorsed by the church. This practice allows these churches to wield political influence by concentrating their members' votes behind these endorsed candidates, often referred to as "official church candidates" (Guimarães et al., 2023). Additionally several politicians, including those running for presidential office, have modified their abortion stances to resonate with these religious voting blocs (Guimarães et al., 2023).

Religious involvement in politics has accentuated polarization within Brazilian society, with divergent groups espousing entrenched and often irreconcilable viewpoints. Burity (2021) suggests this polarization impedes cooperation and consensus on multifaceted issues, delaying political progress and concludes that Bolsonaro's win in 2019 was due to his support from these conservative religious groups. In this perspective the abortion debate can also be portrayed as being utilized as a political tool to mobilize a specific political base and generate political support. This idea is backed up by Guimarães et al. (2023) who assert that Jair Bolsonaro's cabinet formed an alliance with Evangelical groups from 2019 to 2022.

It is notable that some authors tend to employ terms such as "fundamentalism" and "conservative" without thorough problematization. When using these terms, it becomes crucial to provide proper context for their usage. For instance, Machado (2016) uses the term 'fundamentalist' to characterize religious movements that uphold traditional values and norms, particularly in the context of social issues, and actively oppose progressive changes. It is evident that she utilizes this term within a negative context, often in conjunction with 'conservative,' which also carries negative connotations in the work of several academics. Instead of relying on words with strong negative undertones, it may be more appropriate to describe specific viewpoints and attitudes when addressing political or social movements. This approach can foster a more nuanced and constructive dialogue surrounding intricate issues.

To conclude the findings, argue that the Catholic and Evangelical groups take significant part in political activities aimed at influencing opposition to the legalization of abortion in alignment with their religious beliefs.

8. CONCLUSION AND POSSIBLE FUTURE RESEARCH

8.1. CONCLUSION

Several of the selected academics argue that the opposition to the legalization of the abortion debate has been significantly influenced by the Catholic and Evangelical belief systems that have contributed to the polarized debate that mainly centers around when life begins and the definition of life. This can be attributed to the opportunities that Catholic and Evangelical belief systems had to expand in Brazil's democratization process. Furthermore, the mobilization of Catholic and Evangelical movements has been remarkable, with grassroots activities and mobilization within private spheres. This relates to the increasing expansion of Evangelical and Catholic values that is related to the complex interplay between religious affiliation, attendance, personal beliefs, and societal issues. This has also influenced their lobbying efforts, which some have described as questionable or shadowy. At the same time, it is important to mention that the polarization of the abortion debate has contributed to attracting more followers because it has heightened the visibility of these religious groups and urging their supporters. On the other hand, some scholars argue that the abortion debate has been utilized as a political strategy by the conservative right to garner support and votes from religious groups and conservative voters, particularly in contrast to the liberal left. Due to the word limit the thesis did not discuss underlying power structures of the development of Catholic and Evangelical values. However, it is important to recognize that some academics pointed out that socio-economic status, hegemonic patriarchy, and gender structures contribute to shaping perceptions about women and their societal roles, thereby influencing attitudes toward abortion. In the end, abortion relates to the laws themselves. Recognizing the moral gravity of abortion does not automatically require strict legislation. However, findings illustrate that Catholic and Evangelical groups operate as political actors to influence public opinion and opposition to the legalization of abortion. This highlights that individual agency is not always sufficient to exercise rights when practical or institutional barriers are present. This influence persists even in situations where abortion is legally sanctioned, such as in cases of rape or when the woman's life is at risk. As a result, the material argues that there is compelling evidence indicating that Catholic and Evangelical belief systems have played a significant role in opposing the legalization of abortion in Brazil.

8.2. POSSIBLE FURTHER RESEARCH

The abortion debate in Brazil reflects a complex dynamic involving religious values, political strategy, cultural factors, and social movements. The lack of data regarding abortion in Brazil may be attributed to the sensitive nature of the topic and the challenges associated with encouraging women to openly discuss abortion, a situation that poses risks to both research candidates and participants. However, exploring and comprehending these diverse elements is essential for gaining a holistic insight into the discourse surrounding abortion law. For further research investigating the interplay of religious belief systems, socio-economic status, and healthcare access could provide a deeper understanding of these complex decisions. This suggests the necessity for more in-depth investigations into the role of religion in research.

Additionally, it is essential to delve into public attitudes toward abortion, with a specific focus on studying individuals with religious beliefs, as well as those without religious affiliations, who both support and oppose abortion, given the current lack of comprehensive data on this subject. Additionally, investigating the evolving role of religious institutions and their impact on public policy and discourse would provide valuable insights. Analyzing the influence of political strategies, both conservative and liberal, in shaping the abortion debate, as well as the potential shifts in public opinion over time, would contribute to a comprehensive understanding of this complex issue. Furthermore, examining the role of gender dynamics and power structures in the context of abortion rights could shed light on the broader implications for gender equality and reproductive rights in Brazil.

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