

Article

Representative democracy: An intersectional review of the legislative action of the Parliamentary Front to Combat Abortion – “Pro-life”, in the State of Goiás

Democracia representativa: uma leitura interseccional sobre a atuação legislativa da Frente Parlamentar de Combate ao Aborto – “Pró-vida”, no Estado de Goiás

Democracia representativa: Una revisión interseccional de la acción legislativa del Frente Parlamentario de Lucha contra el Aborto – “Provida”, en el Estado de Goiás

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Abstract

Objective: Analyze, from a critical and intersectional perspective, the organization, composition and legislative performance of a commission focused on women's sexual and reproductive rights, called the Parliamentary Front to Combat Abortion – Pró-Vida. **Methodology:** An intersectional reading was carried out regarding the constitution of the Parliamentary Front to Combat Abortion – “Pró-Vida”, of the Legislative Assembly of the State of Goiás (ALEGO), and the sociodemographic profile of its members was outlined, discussed in light of social markers, gender, race/ethnicity, social class and religion and problematized about a topic that directly affects women's health and lives, abortion.

Results and discussion: analysis of the results points to female underrepresentation, the prevalence of white people and the predominance of conservative ideology in customs and religion in the sociodemographic profile considered. In contrast, the literature, when discussing the social markers under investigation, portrays those who choose to have an abortion as black women, with low income and education, and who look to parties with a progressive bias to advocate for their causes.

Conclusion: The traditional structure present in the Parliamentary Front investigated faces challenges in building a representative debate capable of reproducing in public policies the complex identities, needs and experiences of women at risk of miscarriage. In this argument, the construction of political practices and legislative approaches must primarily consider the complexities of identity and the intersections and oppressions that lead women to abortion in order to, ultimately, build an inclusive, equitable and representative democracy.

Keywords: Democracy; Legislative Power; Intersectionality; Abortion.

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Resumo

Objetivo: Analisar, a partir da perspectiva crítica e interseccional, a organização, composição e atuação legislativa de comissão voltada aos direitos sexuais e reprodutivos de mulheres, denominada Frente Parlamentar de Combate ao Aborto – Pró-Vida. **Metodologia:** Foi realizada leitura interseccional acerca da constituição de Frente Parlamentar de Combate ao Aborto - "Pró-Vida", da Assembleia Legislativa do Estado de Goiás (ALEGO), e o perfil sociodemográfico de seus integrantes foi traçado, discutido a luz dos marcadores sociais gênero, raça/etnia, classe social e religião, e problematizado acerca de um tema que implica diretamente na saúde e na vida das mulheres, o aborto. **Resultados e Discussão:** a análise dos resultados aponta a sub-representatividade feminina, a prevalência de pessoas brancas e o predomínio de ideologia conservadora nos costumes e religião no perfil sociodemográfico dos membros integrantes da frente parlamentar estudada. Em contraponto, a literatura, ao discutir os marcadores sociais em investigação, traz o retrato daquelas que optam por realizar o aborto como sendo o de mulheres negras, de baixa renda e escolaridade, e que procuram em partidos de viés progressista advocacia para suas causas. **Conclusão:** A estrutura tradicional, presente na frente parlamentar investigada, enfrenta desafios na construção de um debate representativo e capaz de reproduzir nas políticas públicas as complexas identidades, necessidades e experiências das mulheres em risco de abortamento. Nessa argumentação, a construção de práticas políticas e tratos legislativos devem, prioritariamente, considerar as complexidades identitárias e as intersecções e opressões que levam as mulheres ao aborto para, enfim, construir-se uma democracia inclusiva, equitativa e representativa.

Palavras-chave: Democracia; Poder Legislativo; Interseccionalidade; Aborto.

Resumen

Objetivo: Analizar, desde una perspectiva crítica e interseccional, la organización, composición y desempeño legislativo de una comisión enfocada en los derechos sexuales y reproductivos de las mujeres, denominada Frente Parlamentario de Lucha contra el Aborto – Pró-Vida. **Metodología:** Se realizó una lectura interseccional sobre la constitución del Frente Parlamentario de Lucha contra el Aborto - "Pró-Vida", de la Asamblea Legislativa del Estado de Goiás (ALEGO), y se delineó el perfil sociodemográfico de sus integrantes, discutido a la luz de marcadores sociales, género, raza/etnia, clase social y religión y problematizados sobre un tema que afecta directamente la salud y la vida de las mujeres, el aborto. **Resultados y discusión:** el análisis de los resultados apunta a la subrepresentación femenina, el predominio de personas blancas y el predominio de la ideología conservadora en las costumbres y la religión en el perfil sociodemográfico considerado. En contraste, la literatura, al discutir los marcadores sociales bajo investigación, retrata a quienes eligen abortar como mujeres negras, con bajos ingresos y educación, y que buscan partidos con un sesgo progresista para defender sus causas. **Conclusión:** La estructura tradicional presente en el Frente Parlamentario investigado enfrenta desafíos en la construcción de un debate representativo capaz de reproducir en políticas públicas las complejas identidades, necesidades y experiencias de las mujeres en riesgo de aborto espontáneo. En este argumento, la construcción de prácticas políticas y enfoques legislativos debe considerar principalmente las complejidades de la identidad y las intersecciones y opresiones que llevan a las mujeres al aborto para, en última instancia, construir una democracia inclusiva, equitativa y representativa.

Palabras clave: Democracia; Poder Legislativo; Interseccionalidad; Aborto.

Introduction

Democracy is widely recognized as one of the main foundations of modern social organization⁽¹⁾. It represents a state intentionally built under the aegis of a civilizational pact that seeks to establish the fundamental principle of equality between different individuals⁽²⁾. In its episteme, it does not have an

intrinsic link with a particular form of government, but rather with a concept based on the idea of a political system that aims to represent the wishes and will of the population⁽³⁾.

In the field of political science, democracy is a crucial element in understanding the relationship between individuals and society. Howlet⁽⁴⁾ points out that the institution of the Liberal-Democratic Capitalist State is marked by contradictions, since liberalism, a corollary of capitalism, is based on the constitution and defense of individual rights and property. Whereas democracy aims to guarantee collective rights and the common good. As such, democracy makes the process of policy-making and its implementation in society complex, since, considering the public policy cycle, each stage of its construction requires the articulation and action of different political actors, whether external or domestic.

As this fundamental principle develops, and societies and economies become more complex, the democratic narrative transcends the limits of the direct participation of citizens in decision-making and shapes itself towards representative democracy, at which point legislative houses come to represent the population and begin to play a central role in the public decision-making process⁽⁵⁾.

Considering the Brazilian context, this form of government began with the re-democratization of the country, after more than two decades⁽⁴⁾ under a dictatorial military regime. The advent of the New Republic in the middle of the 20th century marked the beginning of a democracy which, under the principles and values of the 1988 Federal Constitution, sought to re-establish a Democratic Rule of Law combining representative elements with participatory aspects^(6,7).

Within this framework, the legislative branch plays, or should play, a crucial role in representing society's interests and drafting the laws that govern the country, with due regard for the common good⁽⁸⁾. Through free and direct elections, citizens choose their representatives, who in turn participate in the political decision-making process. This is the pillar of Brazilian representative democracy, in which the people exercise their sovereignty through their democratically elected representatives^(4,7).

In Brazil, however, this system is still young, with only 35 years since it was established. Added to this is the country's culture of oligarchic governance. Here, political elites often perpetuate their power of influence, tending to govern for their equals⁽⁹⁾, and with successors coming from their family and/or intimate circle. Traits such as the coronelismo of the Old Republic or more recent fundamentalist and ideological threats weaken and sometimes discredit the democratic regime⁽¹⁰⁾.

The advocacy coalition framework for the formulation of public policies recognizes the disputes between different groups based on values, beliefs and interests in the development of public policies. What's more, the actions of these groups even influence the entire public policy decision-making process, from the inclusion or not of a certain issue or agenda on the political agenda⁽¹¹⁾. As such, the traditional structures of the legislative branch may not reflect the diversity of the population. This results in the under-representation of historically marginalized and minoritized groups, leading to questions about the legitimacy of legislative representation⁽¹²⁾.

Therefore, as societies evolve and become increasingly diverse, a crucial question arises: how can democracy truly be representative and capable of reflecting the complex identities, needs and experiences of all citizens? In order to reflect on the existing challenges in relation to representative democracy, this article seeks to analyze a concrete case of legislative action on a sensitive issue in Brazilian society, the right to terminate a pregnancy - abortion, in a legislative house.

In this sense, the intersectional perspective seems to indicate a broadening of democratic analysis, as it stems from a more complex and in-depth approach to the various forms of inequality

and social subordination⁽¹³⁾. This concept analyzes how different forms of discrimination, such as racism, sexism and class and religious oppression, combine to create inequalities that affect groups of people based on their race, gender, social class and other characteristics. These complex mutualities can result in specific forms of oppression that influence people's social positions and impact policies and actions⁽¹⁴⁾.

In this way, intersectionality can be used as an analytical tool that proposes interpretations that take into account the multiple interactions between collective and social categories and their implications for politics, in order to understand how different social strands intertwine and influence people's experiences, promoting a more complete and sensitive analysis of the dynamics in society⁽¹⁵⁾.

The intersectional perspective is opportune for understanding inequalities and the distribution of power in our society, based on social markers of difference. Minorities are understood as groups subjected to a dominance-subjugation relationship, who, because of their identities and differences, are placed in a situation of inferiority, excluded from the right to full citizenship and deprived of access to spaces of power and political decision-making⁽¹⁶⁾. In this search for greater rights and recognition of their needs, demands and identities, the recourse adopted by minority groups is to set up social movements, such as the black movement, the feminist movement and other movements that have emerged since the 20th century. Because of the tensions and mismatch between the established democratic model and the principle of popular sovereignty, popular assemblies and social movements are challenging political orders in search of a more real and substantive democracy⁽¹⁷⁻¹⁸⁾.

Specifically in the feminist movement, the debate on gender and equality stems from the constitution of norms and structures of oppression and domination that underpin a model of patriarchal society and differentiation based on the biological sexual order⁽¹⁹⁾. From the 1990s onwards, the Catholic movement, the Pontifical Council for the Family, raised the idea of gender ideology, as Butler points out⁽¹⁹⁾, the Christian discourse points to the naturalization of sex differences, and that the debates on gender “[...] were putting the family in danger by challenging the proposition that Christian family roles could and should derive from biological sex”^(19, p.42). In this way, women's rights are submitted to the defence of the family and Christian values. Therefore, the right to abortion becomes a key issue for governments to pursue a political agenda that restricts freedoms and imposes limits on their power⁽¹⁹⁾.

Therefore, the aim of this study is to make contributions about the possible paths between democracy, intersectionality and the Legislative Branch, recognizing this dynamic as a determining factor in shaping political practices, decision-making and truly representative legislative processes. To this end, we began by analyzing the establishment of the Parliamentary Front to Combat Abortion – “Pro-Life”, of the Legislative Assembly of the State of Goiás (ALEGO), installed on August 8, 2023⁽²⁰⁾. It should be noted that among the developments of the agenda promoted in the respective legislative house on the subject, the sanction and publication of Law n. 22.537, of January 11, 2024, which deals with the institution of the Awareness Campaign against Abortion for Women in the State of Goiás⁽²¹⁾.

Methodology

This is a qualitative, documentary and analytical study, through an intersectional reading of the constitution of the Parliamentary Front to Combat Abortion – “Pró-Vida”, established in 2023 by the Legislative Assembly of the State of Goiás (ALEGO)⁽²²⁻²⁴⁾.

The study's methodological approach is based on the phases of the qualitative research cycle⁽²⁵⁾, 1. exploratory phase; 2. fieldwork (considering here the field, the publications and documents collected in the virtual/online environment); 3. analysis and treatment of the empirical and documentary material.

Two analytical categories were worked on: the first related to the socio-demographic aspects of the parliamentarians who are members of the parliamentary front (PF); and the second related to the values, interests and beliefs presented in documents produced and published in ALEGO's own news about the work carried out by the Pro-Life PF.

With regard to the sociodemographic profile, we accessed the information platforms of ALEGO and the Superior Electoral Court (TSE), which present the profile of the MPs who are members of the Pro-Life PF^(27,28) (Box 1).

Box 1. Databases consulted to survey the profile of Pro-Life PF members.

Website	E-mail address
Members in Office	https://portal.al.go.leg.br/deputados/em-exercicio
Candidatures and Electoral Accounts	https://spce2012.tse.jus.br/spceweb.consulta.receitasdespesas2012/abrirTelaReceitasCandidato.action

Source: own elaboration.

The sociodemographic profile of its members was surveyed and discussed in the light of the social markers gender, race/ethnicity, social class and religion⁽¹³⁻¹⁵⁾. The data was systematized in electronic spreadsheets, considering the categories approached from an intersectional perspective. This is because analysis based on intersectionality is useful for understanding the forms and structures of oppression and domination of minority groups, and allows us to analyse how patriarchal, misogynistic, colonialist and racist values can permeate decision-making and the drafting of public policies.

In addition, in order to analyze the discourse presented in the documents produced and news from PF Pro-Life, the Advocacy Coalition Framework model for the process of building and drafting public policies was considered⁽²⁶⁾. The documents analyzed were (Box 2):

Box 2. Documents and data collected on the Pro-Life Parliamentary Front

Identification	Website	Date of publication
Resolution nº. 1.379/2012	https://saba.al.go.leg.br/v1/view/transparencia/public/wEf3qY5ToNFyKEAtA_h83NwSpiyalStGeF4itbqjl5o	05/16/2012
Parliamentary Fronts Installed ALEGO	https://portal.al.go.leg.br/noticias/134921/frentes-parlamentares	06/11/2023
Request for the creation of FP Pro-Life	https://saba.al.go.leg.br/v1/view/spl/public/1_a11sU1fxi0LCeD4D6h-DoAdMG3YDoYrMHpET6bl2A=/requerimento-alego-33938	06/14/2023
Goiás Parliamentary Front in Defense of Life is approved	https://portal.al.go.leg.br/noticias-dos-gabinetes/1267/frente-parlamentar-goiana-em-defesa-da-vida-e-aprovada	06/16/2023

Proposal to create front against abortion is supported by 8 parties and 15 MPs	https://portal.al.go.leg.br/noticias/134304	06/21/2023
Pastors receive tribute for Pastor's Day from deputy Cairo Salim	https://portal.al.go.leg.br/noticias-dos-gabinetes/134462/pastores-recebem-homenagem-pelo-dia-do-pastor-entregue-pelo-deputado-cairo-salim	06/23/2023
Cairo Salim installs Parliamentary Front to Combat Abortion in Alego	https://portal.al.go.leg.br/noticias-dos-gabinetes/135380/na-alego-cairo-salim-instala-a-frente-parlamentar-de-combate-ao-aborto	07/07/2023
Pro-Life Parliamentary Front	https://portal.al.go.leg.br/noticias/135412/frente-parlamentar-pro-vida	08/08/2023
Parliamentary Front to Combat Abortion is installed in the Legislative Assembly of Goiás	https://portal.al.go.leg.br/noticias-dos-gabinetes/135461/frente-parlamentar-de-combate-ao-aborto-e-instalada-na-assembleia-legislativa-de-goias	08/09/2023
Parliamentary fronts may have their term of operation extended, on the initiative of deputy Karlos Cabral	https://portal.al.go.leg.br/noticias/138818/frentes-parlamentares-podem-ter-prazo-de-funcionamento-ampliado-por-iniciativa-do-deputado-karlos-cabral	12/01/2023
Law n. 22.537/2024	https://legisla.casacivil.go.gov.br/api/v2/pesquisa/legislacoes/108399/pdf#:~:text=JANEIRO%20DE%202024-,Institui%20a%20Campanha%20de%20Conscientiza%C3%A7%C3%A3o%20contra%20o%20Aborto,Mulheres%20no%20Estado%20de%20Goi%C3%A1s.	01/11/2024

Source: own elaboration.

Ethical aspects

Since this research was based on the analysis of textual data and did not involve collecting information directly from individuals, submission to a Research Ethics Committee was not necessary.

Results and Discussion

The purpose of the parliamentary fronts set up within the scope of ALEGO is to promote, in collaboration with representatives of civil society and related public bodies, the debate and improvement of legislation and public policies related to a specific sector in the state of Goiás⁽²⁴⁾. According to Resolution no. 1.379, of May 16, 2012, the Parliamentary Front is considered to be:

[...] the minimum association of 10 (ten) deputies, of a supra-partisan nature, with representation of at least 1/5 (one fifth) of the political parties with seats in this House, aimed at promoting, together with representatives of civil society and related public bodies, the discussion and improvement of legislation and public policies for the State of Goiás relating to a particular sector.^(24, p. 01)

The Parliamentary Front to Combat Abortion – “Pró Vida” (FIGURE 1) justifies its creation by considering itself a mechanism capable of discussing and defending any and all threats to the right to life, thus adding to existing criminal legislation, the Brazilian Civil Code, as well as the Federal Constitution itself⁽²³⁾. It was proposed by a state deputy from the Social Democratic Party (PSD), in his second term (2023-2027), and he is assuming the presidency of the respective parliamentary front. In his bibliographic profile, he highlights “[...]fighting for the **rights of Goiás families**, the rights of women and children and, above all, **individual freedoms**” (emphasis added), as a native of Goiânia, a **lawyer and theologian**. And he stands as a representative in **defense of the family and Christian values** in Goiás society⁽²⁶⁾.

Figure 1. Publicity material and invitation to the hearing organized by the Pro-Life Parliamentary Front, ALEGO (2023).



Source: ALEGO news portal. Available from: <https://portal.al.go.leg.br/noticias-dos-gabinetes/135380/na-alego-cairo-salim-instala-a-frente-parlamentar-de-combate-ao-aborto>

Discussions on abortion show how sexual differences constitute the foundations of sexual politics, and give the spheres of reproduction and sexuality a load of meanings and political implications⁽²⁹⁾.

In Brazil, the situation of abortion is based on a punitive approach, and provided for in the Penal Code, with the exception of when there is evidence that the pregnant woman is at risk of death or the pregnancy is the result of rape. In 2012, the highest court in the country included cases of anencephaly in the list of exemptions from punishment, allowing for the termination of pregnancy. In this way, there are various barriers to accessing legal abortion services, such as the fragility of the care network; bureaucratic and judicial demands by health professionals to monitor and follow up on the care of women in a situation where the legal guarantee of termination of pregnancy is provided; and moral and religious barriers overriding legal principles and the constitution of a secular state⁽³⁰⁾.

However, considering the defense coalition model of public policy formulation, it should be noted that other actors and groups are disputing and/or claiming to occupy spaces for the construction of public policies that deal with the issue based on women's rights and their leading role in making decisions about their bodies and lives. These public policies are based on scientific evidence, international agendas and pacts aimed at guaranteeing women's sexual and reproductive rights⁽³⁰⁾.

Gender, Race/Ethnicity and Social Class

From the perspective of intersectionality, the debate on abortion is even more confrontational. Brazilian data shows that for every 15 abortions carried out by black women, 10 are carried out by white women⁽³¹⁾. Furthermore, the main people affected by the criminalization of the practice are low-income women of black origin, who simultaneously face difficulties in accessing information and contraceptive methods, as well as being impacted by discriminatory population control policies⁽³²⁾.

When analyzing the sexual division of labor, it is clear that these women are placed in a position where they are responsible for tasks related to social reproduction, including domestic work and caring for children, the elderly and the sick. These responsibilities result in an almost constant working day, marked by triple working hours. They are often paid less and have precarious jobs, especially black women. These gender and racial inequalities in the labor market make motherhood inaccessible for many women, who often opt for abortion⁽³³⁾.

It is also possible to trace the profile of those who die as a result of the procedure. They are black women, with low levels of education, unmarried and, for the most part, with less than seven years of schooling. The concentration of deaths from abortion in the less privileged social strata, especially among women with low levels of education and of black descent, highlights the connection between death from abortion and health inequalities. It follows that, beyond the question of legality, there are other determinants that influence a woman's decision to seek or have an unsafe abortion⁽³⁴⁾. Therefore, it is possible to consider that the social oppressions that victimize women are shaped by the ingrained acceptance of structural racism in a society that, although it proclaims a racial democracy, denies differences and, at the same time, is sustained by systems of sexism, patriarchy and capitalism⁽³⁵⁾.

The petition supporting the creation of the Pro-Life Parliamentary Front in the Legislative Assembly of the State of Goiás has a majority of representatives who are male, married, of upper-middle social class, of a Christian religious background and with a conservative political-ideological profile (Box 3).

Box 3. Profile of the members of the Pro-Life FP.

Code	Political Party	Ideologic al spectrum	Age	Gender	Race/Color	Marital Statys	Level of Education	Profession
A	UB	Right	51	Male	Not informed	Married	Complete d high school	Agriculturalist
B	MDB	Center	38	Male	White	Married	Complete university degree	Lawyer
C	AVANTE	Center	40	Male	White	Married	High school incomplete	Entrepreneur
D	PSD	Right	40	Male	White	Married	Complete university	Lawyer, theologian, entrepreneur
E	MDB	Center	49	Male	Brown	Married	Complete university	Entrepreneur
F	Solidariedade	Center	57	Male	Brown	Married	Complete university	Colonel of the Goiás Military Police Reserve
G	DC	Right	39	Male	White	Single	Complete d high school	Businessman and communicator
H	MDB	Center	45	Male	White	Single	Complete university	Farmer
I	MDB	Center	62	Male	Brown	Casado	Superior completo	Engineer and politician
J	Republicanos	Right	59	Male	Black	Married	Complete university	Broadcaster and evangelical pastor
K	UB	Right	53	Male	Brown	Married	Complete university	Civil servant
L	Patriota	Right	54	Male	White	Married	Complete university	Entrepreneur
N	Solidariedade	Center	33	Male	White	Single	Higher education incomplet	No information
O	PSD	Right	57	Male	Brown	Married	Complete university	Entrepreneur
P	UB	Right	61	Female	White	Widow	Complete university	Dentist

Source: own elaboration.

The ideological spectrum from which political parties originate is related to the formation of the modern state model after the French Revolution and the rise of the bourgeoisie. The representative democratic model is organized in the right-left binomial, and contrasts the conceptions, values, ideologies and actions between these two poles of power and representation. However, it is important to understand that there are intermediate positions between the two poles in the political and party sphere, such as the center and its center-right and center-left inclinations^(36,37).

It is well known that the problem of the under-representation of socially disadvantaged segments in the spheres of political representation has generated intense debate. Even so, minority groups in society, such as women, black people, LGBTQIAPN+, workers, among others, have pointed out that, despite the expansion of formal citizenship rights, effective political equality has not yet been achieved⁽³⁸⁾. The public agenda involving women's rights, based on the majority of men in the Parliamentary Front, violates the democratic principles of representation and popular participation based on gender equality. Throughout the work carried out by FP Pró-Vida and publicized by ALEGO, the speeches neglect the demands, needs and rights of women. In a news excerpt from August 8, 2023, member deputies said:

In favor of preserving the pregnancy, the parliamentarian argued that abortion is also a form of murder. "Killing a child is wrong, regardless of whether it is inside or outside the mother's womb".⁽²⁰⁾

I believe that this issue is of absolute relevance within the social context we are living in at the moment. Insofar as we are all Christians and believe in life, in human beings, in the good nature of people, it is obvious that we also believe that this movement will gain a great deal of breadth and will be the object of participation by many other members of society and organized movements.⁽²⁰⁾

[...] the issue of combating abortion is "at the heart of parliamentarians who defend the family and Christian principles". "Motherhood is nothing more than a blessing, not only for women, but also for families," he said.⁽²⁰⁾

Among the speeches made, it is worth highlighting the one made by the only member of parliament who participates in the PF Pro-Life, at a working meeting held on August 8, 2023, in which she uses the religious perspective to support the drafting of public policies, because in her view "[...]a Goiás state, Christian. Right now, I'm sure that those who are listening to us are proud to have us as their representatives".

Religion

Along with the social markers gender, race/ethnicity and social class, it is essential to incorporate the marker religion into this discussion about representation from an intersectional perspective. This is because religion plays a significant role in the construction of individuals' identities, shaping not only how they perceive themselves, but also how they are perceived by others in society. The religious dimension can both promote inclusion and exclusion in different social, political and ethical contexts, influencing positions, dealings and actions that reverberate in society⁽³⁹⁾.

The political parties that are predominant in the Parliamentary Front Against Abortion – “Pro-Life” have a right-wing or center-right ideology^(41,42). By conviction, these groups generally adopt

conservative positions on the issue, tend to be against the legalization or relaxation of abortion laws, and align themselves with religious, moral and traditional values⁽³⁹⁾. Among the agendas and values highlighted in the profile of the legislative representative that makes up the respective Parliamentary Front, the following excerpts stand out:

Among his main agendas are the **fight for rural producers**, the fight for the Araújo Jorge Cancer Hospital and better quality in the cities. Taught by his parents when he was still a child, **Christian values based on family** and the importance of helping those who need it most, are conditions that make him take this common good into politics: contributing to a better and more egalitarian state. [Deputy A - emphasis added].

It fights for the rights of Goiás families, the rights of women and children and, above all, individual freedoms. He works to generate jobs and income and defends the family and Christian principles. [Deputy D - emphasis added].

He is a **tireless defender of freedom of expression**, freedom of the press and the right of the population to question and hold public officials to account. He has been a staunch voice **against authoritarianism in Brazil** and intends to use his mandate and influence so that Goiás becomes a **benchmark of freedom, tradition and progress** for the country. [Deputy G - emphasis added].

These conceptions can be fragmented and lack representation, given the political actions of the “Pro-Choice” movement, for example. This is a movement that has been actively working to promote public policies that guarantee women's autonomy over their bodies, access to legal and safe abortion, and is unbound from any religious rhetoric or stigmatizing positions. These movements often seek support and advocacy at the legislative level and, more often than not, they find it in progressive parties, which have no representation on the parliamentary front that is the subject of this study^(41,42, 44,45).

It is also worth highlighting our country's secular stance⁽⁷⁾. Secularism represents the strict separation between the state and religious institutions, ensuring their neutrality in relation to matters of faith. As such, it is considered an indispensable condition for the effective functioning of democracy, since it ensures a clear separation between the public and private domains, preventing religious influences from affecting political decisions and individual rights, especially on sensitive issues such as abortion⁽⁴⁶⁾.

Finally, the Parliamentary Front Against Abortion – “Pro-Life” clearly defines its commitment to promoting and defending the protection of women's lives as pregnant women and unborn children^(20,21). However, it takes up discourses and practices that disregard all the dimensions and needs of women, and gender issues. Its actions have promoted a conservative and punitive agenda related to the termination of pregnancy, and also related to women's sexual and reproductive rights. It has strengthened interest groups and actors who advocate for conservative agendas and who maintain patriarchal, racist and elitist structures, materializing in the sanction of Law n. 22.537, of January 11, 2024, which deals with the implementation of public policies to combat abortion for women in the state of Goiás.

With regard to this law, the date of the State Day of Awareness Against Abortion, on August 8th of each year, coincides with the date of installation of the parliamentary front in 2023⁽²¹⁾. One of the most critical points of the law is article 3, which deals with guidelines, item VI - "ensuring that the

state provides the mother with an ultrasound scan of the unborn child's heartbeat as soon as possible”⁽²¹⁾.

From an intersectional approach, it is possible to recognize that the actions and advocacy of conservative and punitive groups require consideration of how often exclusionary policies, rooted in dogmatic and/or fundamentalist beliefs and values, can affect different groups in different ways. It is essential, therefore, to pay attention to the complex identities that these norms are given, otherwise democratic principles and the guarantee of social and citizen participation will be undermined⁽⁴⁷⁾, especially in contexts pertinent to the agenda of women's health and lives.

Conclusion

Representative democracy seeks to ensure that diverse groups in society are present and have a voice in different contexts and institutions. This is key to ensuring that decisions, policies and narratives reflect the experiences and perspectives of a variety of groups, thus avoiding exclusion and marginalization. However, representativeness should not be a simplistic approach that aims only to count the presence of individuals from different groups, it should also take into account the complexities of these people's identities.

In this sense, the theory of intersectionality recognizes that people are not defined by a single characteristic, such as gender, race, social class or religion, but rather by an intersection of multiple identifications and relations of oppression and vulnerability. For example, a low-income black woman who professes no faith is not just a woman, not just black, not just low-income and not just an atheist; she is a combination of all these characteristics that interact to shape her life experiences, challenges and opportunities.

What we are dealing with here is a cross-section of the representative composition of a parliamentary front in a Brazilian legislative house, specifically in the state of Goiás, on an issue that directly affects the health and lives of women in Goiás. An intersectional reading of this issue can promote the expansion of democratic analysis, leading to more intricate and comprehensive approaches to the various manifestations of inequality and social subjugation.

Finally, intersectionality provides a lens through which to more fully understand and address the issue of representativeness. It reminds us that diversity is not just superficial, but deeply rooted in people's interconnected identities. In this argument, the construction of political practices, decision-making and legislative approaches must primarily consider identity pluralities and the intersections and oppressions that lead women to abortion in order to finally build an inclusive, equitable and, only then, truly representative democracy.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

Authors' contribution

Bentes CSB contributed to the conception/design of the article, data analysis and interpretation, and writing of the article. Parreira FR contributed to writing the article, critically reviewing its content and approving the final version.

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