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The Effects of Social Globalization on Access to Abortion

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Abstract

What effect does social globalization have on access to legal abortion? I contend that social globalization positively influences access to legal abortion. This is because mechanisms of social globalization such as gender parity, internet access, freedom of the press, and civil liberties all have a significant effect on access to abortion. Therefore, as countries become more socially globalized, access to legal abortion will increase. Using cross-national time-series data for the period 1997-2011, I test the relationship between social globalization and access to legal abortion. I find support for the hypothesized relationship. In light of the state of abortion rights around the world today, with many countries expanding abortion access and others restricting it, it is important to examine what factors contribute to whether a country will guarantee access to legal abortion. My findings suggest that increased social globalization contributes to this and plays a significant role in guaranteeing access to abortion worldwide.

Keywords

Abortion, globalization, reproductive rights, social globalization

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Comments

Written for POL 403: International Relations Capstone

The Effects of Social Globalization on Access to Abortion

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POL 403: International Relations Capstone

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Abstract

What effect does social globalization have on access to legal abortion? I contend that social globalization positively influences access to legal abortion. This is because mechanisms of social globalization such as gender parity, internet access, freedom of the press, and civil liberties all have a significant effect on access to abortion. Therefore, as countries become more socially globalized, access to legal abortion will increase. Using cross-national time-series data for the period 1997-2011, I test the relationship between social globalization and access to legal abortion. I find support for the hypothesized relationship. In light of the state of abortion rights around the world today, with many countries expanding abortion access and others restricting it, it is important to examine what factors contribute to whether a country will guarantee access to legal abortion. My findings suggest that increased social globalization contributes to this and plays a significant role in guaranteeing access to abortion worldwide.

Introduction

In 2022, abortion became a prominent topic around the world. While abortion rights have always been debated, the recent backsliding of reproductive rights in countries like the United States has reinvigorated the discussion about whether abortion should be legal. To contribute to the discourse regarding abortion, I examine the effect that social globalization has on access to abortion. Certain aspects of social globalization, including the spread of information and culture, internet access, gender equality, and civil rights, are essential to consider when examining what influences a country to protect the right for its citizens to get an abortion. This is also why I am interested in social globalization specifically as opposed to other measures of globalization, such as economic or political globalization.

In the first section of this paper, I examine the existing literature on globalization and abortion. Important themes within this literature include recent trends in abortion access, barriers to abortion access, and how globalization has affected abortion access. As I will note later, the existing literature is inadequate for addressing the question that I seek to answer. Elements of economic globalization have been a primary focus of the effect of globalization on abortion access, but research on the effect of social globalization is missing. I next detail the methods I

use to answer my research question by outlining the central explanatory variable, dependent variable, and control variables I use, as well as the regression model. Finally, I analyze my results and discuss the implications of the relationship I find between social globalization and access to abortion.

Trends in Abortion Access Around the World

To contextualize my research, I examine the literature on recent trends in abortion access. Restrictions on abortion have typically been introduced for three main reasons: 1) Abortion can be a dangerous procedure if done improperly; 2) abortion is often considered a “sin” or a form of “transgression of morality;” and 3) Abortion is restricted to “protect fetal life in some or all circumstances” (Berer 2017, 14). With the advancement of medicine, abortion has become a safe procedure, so the most common reasons for abortion restrictions today are related to morality and prioritizing the life of the fetus. In countries where abortion is illegal, women have sought alternative ways of having the procedure. This is usually dangerous, and abortion restrictions are often responsible for the “deaths and millions of injuries to women who cannot afford to pay for a safe illegal abortion” (Berer 2017, 14). Restrictions on abortion do not deter women from having them, which puts women in countries where abortion is illegal in a vulnerable position.

Despite many restrictions still in place, recent trends in abortion access indicate a shift to more progressive abortion laws. Countries in Africa have passed laws legalizing abortion in specific circumstances. In 2005, Ethiopia passed a law permitting abortion in cases of “rape, incest, or fetal impairment, as well as if the life or physical health of the woman is in danger, if she has a physical or mental disability, or if she is a minor who is physically or mentally unprepared for childbirth” (Berer 2017, 19). Similarly, Benin, Guinea, and Togo have all legalized abortion when “continuance of the pregnancy endangers the life or health of the

pregnant woman, when the pregnancy is the result of rape or incest, and when the fetus is affected by a very serious condition” (Boland, Katzive 2008, 115). Other countries like Chad and Niger have more limited circumstances under which women can get abortions, but they have also expanded their abortion laws over the previous decade (Lauro 2011). Africa is just one region of the world where abortion laws have become more progressive.

Latin America has also experienced a trend toward more progressive abortion laws. In 2007, Mexico City legalized abortion during the first three months of pregnancy (Millán 2017). This was especially significant because Mexico has one of the world’s largest Catholic populations (Blofield 2008). Additionally, in 2006, the Colombian Constitutional Court deemed the country’s prohibition on abortion unconstitutional. Abortion is now permitted in Colombia when a “woman’s life or health is endangered, as well as in cases of rape, incest, or severe fetal impairment” (Boland, Katzive 2008, 112). In Brazil, Ecuador, and Uruguay, procedures have been put in place to make abortions safer. In Ecuador, a new health code was enacted to authorize health services to “perform abortions that are legal under the penal code and prohibits them from refusing to care for women who are in the course of an abortion or who have had a spontaneous abortion” (Boland, Katzive 2008, 113). While many countries in Latin America still have strict abortion laws, the recent decriminalization and expansion of abortion access in the region is indicative of the worldwide trend toward more progressive abortion laws.

Breaking the Trend: Abortion in the United States and Its Global Implications

Although there has been a worldwide trend toward more progressive abortion laws, the United States is a significant exception to this trend. In 1973, the Supreme Court of the United States decided the case known as *Roe v. Wade*. This Supreme Court decision legalized the right of Americans to get an abortion from the “first to the second trimester of pregnancy, until the

point of fetal viability” (Greenhouse, Siegel 2011, 2031). The court ruled that abortion is within a woman’s right to privacy, so state bans on abortion were deemed unconstitutional under the 14th Amendment. For almost fifty years, the right to get an abortion was guaranteed for American women in all fifty states.

The *Roe v. Wade* decision also had global implications for abortion access. In countries where abortion was illegal, *Roe v. Wade* served as a guide for abortion advocates and feminists worldwide. One example of this was in Taiwan, where activist Annette Hsiu-lien Lu used the United States as an example in advocating for the legalization of abortion in Taiwan. Lu, the leader of the New Feminist movement in Taiwan, cited elements of *Roe v. Wade* in her advocacy for the legalization of abortion in Taiwan. She specifically demanded the “legalization of abortion in the name of a woman’s ‘privacy’ right” (Chen 2013, 85). In the United States, *Roe v. Wade* was decided based on the principle of right to privacy, so Taiwanese feminists echoed this decision and advocated for the same principle to be applied in Taiwan. This shows how the decision to legalize abortion in the United States served as inspiration for abortion advocates around the world.

On June 24th, 2022, however, the *Roe v. Wade* precedent was overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court. In the case *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization*, the Supreme Court decided that the right to get an abortion is not protected by the Constitution, which means that abortion access in the United States is now decided by individual states (Orrell 2022, 2). While certain states have protected the right for its citizens to get an abortion, millions of Americans now live in states where abortion is illegal. For those who can afford it, abortion will “likely remain widely available, either by travel to states with few or no abortion restrictions or through increased use of medical abortions” (Orrell 2022, 5). For low-income people, abortion has

become inaccessible in many states, sparking outrage on the part of abortion activists and those who have been affected by the reversal of *Roe v. Wade*.

Barriers to Abortion Access

Another important focus of the literature on abortion access is barriers to abortion. Even in countries where abortion is legal, there may be significant barriers to accessing the procedure. One of these barriers is low availability of hospital services. This barrier is more significant in developing countries. According to a study by the World Health Organization in 2008, only 55 percent of women deliver their children in hospitals in developing countries (World Health Organization 2008). This indicates that there is a lack of proper facilities for performing abortions in developing countries. Additionally, this barrier is more significant in rural areas. In the same study, it was found that “35 percent of women in Africa and Asia (when excluding the Eastern Asia Subregion where unsafe abortions are negligible) and 60% of women in Latin America have access to facilities in rural areas” (World Health Organization 2008). Without access to proper facilities, it is harder for women to find safe abortion services.

Additionally, cultural factors can be a barrier to accessing abortion. As mentioned, many countries have restrictions on abortion for moral or religious reasons. Countries with a higher Catholic population are typically associated with “significantly more state abortion restrictions” (Medoff 2002, 487). Religious opposition to abortion also manifests itself in countries where abortion is legal. In the United States, for example, violence at abortion clinics is a significant barrier to accessing abortion services. This violence has caused property damage and loss of life, which has “increased the fear and stress of workers at abortion facilities and of women seeking abortion services” (Jacobson, Royer 2011, 190). Protestors at abortion clinics are often associated with religious groups, such as “Army of God” in the United States, which is an

extremist anti-abortion organization. The Army of God emerged because of its “fundamental belief that legalized abortion is a violation of the most basic form of Christianity,” (Altum 2003, 9), which shows how cultural factors like religion can be a barrier to abortion access.

There are also economic barriers to abortion access. Low-income women have more difficulty accessing abortion than high-income women. In the United States, for example, abortion is not covered by all health insurance plans. Abortion is not covered by Medicaid, which is the “publicly funded federal program that covers ‘necessary medical services’ for low-income people” (Fried 2000, 179). People who are on Medicaid or who have a different insurance plan that does not cover abortion have to pay out of pocket for the procedure. Additionally, after the reversal of *Roe v. Wade*, women who have the financial means to travel outside of states where abortion has become illegal can have the procedure done somewhere else. Low-income women, however, may not have the means to do this, so they will still be unable to access abortion if it is illegal in their state.

Globalization and Abortion

While there is expansive literature on topics relating to abortion such as barriers to access, the literature on how globalization has affected abortion access is more limited. Scholars have argued that this is because “gender has rarely been taken seriously in the broader analysis of globalization” (Doyal 2002, 237). The lack of attention to gender and women’s issues within globalization could be one reason why abortion access is not often discussed in relation to globalization. Additionally, male bias within globalization analysis has been “perpetuated by the frequent failure to provide gender-disaggregated statistics and by the use of indicators which obscure gender difference and inequalities” (Doyal 2002, 237). Abortion access is closely linked

with women's rights, so it's important to understand the unique position of women within globalization when looking at its effects on abortion access.

Existing literature indicates that political globalization has a positive effect on abortion access. Membership in international organizations such as the United Nations and World Bank, which is an essential part of political globalization, is associated with improved outcomes for women in terms of health, literacy, and participation in the economy and government (Gray et al. 2006). These international institutions have worked to ensure that "women's equal dignity and human rights as full human beings are enshrined in the basic instruments of today's international community" (Shah 2007, 62). Although this does not directly address abortion, improved outcomes for women most likely means that countries that are part of international institutions are more likely to guarantee access to legal abortion.

Most of the literature that deals directly with this subject examines how globalization has affected abortion access in specific countries rather than focusing on general trends. In 2019, for example, a study examined how globalization has affected abortion access in Ghana. In recent years, there have been efforts in Ghana to reduce maternal mortality caused by unsafe abortions (Aniteye, Mayhew 2019). The researchers who conducted the study in Ghana wanted to determine whether globalization played a role in these efforts. They found that globalization forces, such as interaction between health providers and international NGOs, "contributed to enabling a transition in abortion care in Ghana, from a restrictive interpretation of the law to facilitating more widespread access to legal, safe abortion services" (Aniteye, Mayhew 2019, 12). This study indicates that globalization has had a positive effect on abortion access in Ghana.

Similarly, in 1999 a study detailed the effects of globalization on access to abortion in Mexico prior to its decriminalization nationwide in 2021. According to the authors, "global

communication technology has particularly benefitted the Mexican women's health movement by bringing urban participants with access to new information technology (NIT) tools into the international women's health movement" (Bernal, Bissell, Cortés 1999, 130). While this indicates that globalization has been good for abortion access in Mexico, the authors also write, "economic globalization is leading Mexico into privatization and the reduction of public health services offered in the health care system, including reproductive healthcare services" (Bernal, Bissell, Cortés 1999, 131). Like the Ghana study, this article indicates that access to technology and information had a positive effect on abortion access in Mexico, but other aspects of globalization have had a negative effect on globalization.

As has been the case in Mexico, globalization has affected healthcare services in other countries as well, especially developing countries. This is because developing countries often rely on external actors like the Red Cross for healthcare services, but Reading argues, "While reliance on globalized healthcare may be understandable, the effects of reliance on private or international healthcare providers are generally negative, and positive change is not evident" (Reading 2010, 381). By relying on nonstate actors and privatizing healthcare, many governments have neglected their responsibility to provide healthcare services to their citizens. Reading concludes that this is what has happened in Pakistan. Because of the influence of international actors, the Pakistani government has "neglected its responsibility" to provide healthcare (Reading 2010). This has significant implications for abortion access. Reading's analysis indicates that globalization can have a negative effect on healthcare in developing countries, which includes the availability of abortion services.

Theory: How Social Globalization Can Improve Abortion Access

After examining the recent trends in abortion access and the existing scholarship on the effect of globalization on abortion access, I developed the following hypothesis: The higher the level of social globalization a country has, the higher its access to legal abortion is likely to be. Most of the existing studies examine the effect of economic globalization on access to abortion rather than the effect that social globalization has on abortion access. I believe that social globalization is an essential factor to consider when analyzing what makes a country more likely to grant access to legal abortion. The KOF social globalization index measures gender parity, internet access, freedom of the press, and civil liberties. I believe that all of these factors influence abortion access in a positive way, which is why I predict that countries with higher levels of social globalization are more likely to grant access to legal abortion.

As mentioned, the KOF social globalization index measures gender parity. In this case, gender parity is measured as the ratio of girls to boys enrolled in primary education level in public and private schools. If a country has higher levels of social globalization, then the ratio of girls enrolled in school is also higher. Because women in those countries are more educated, they are less likely to prioritize having children and thus should be more likely to advocate for access to legal abortion. In the Brookings Institute report titled, “What can economic research tell us about the effect of abortion access on women’s lives?”, the authors argue that abortion access affects women’s lives by “determining whether, when, and under what circumstances they become mothers... affecting marriage patterns, educational attainment, labor force participation, and earnings” (Myers, Welch 2021). This supports the idea that when women are presented with more educational opportunities, they will be more likely to advocate for abortion access to be available as a family planning tool.

Additionally, internet access has important implications on access to abortion. The KOF social globalization index measure internet access by the percentage of the population using the internet. With the use of the internet, people are able to share information, ideas, and cultures throughout the world easily. In countries where internet access is restricted, the citizens will be less likely to be exposed to different ideas and beliefs. This has a significant effect on abortion access. Often, abortion is seen as a cultural/ideological issue. If a country is not socially globalized and the dominant belief is that abortion is immoral, then there is less likely to be access to legal abortion. In the article, “Abortion is an Information Issue,” Reilly writes that “social access to information depends on the norms and values of a person’s environment, and these social norms can impact or limit information access” (Reilly 2019, 2). This supports my theory that if a country is not socially globalized, there is less likely to be access to legal abortion due to a lack of information and the influence of cultural norms.

A third aspect of social globalization that supports the theory of how social globalization can improve abortion access is freedom of the press. The KOF social globalization index measures freedom of the press as the quantification of the legal environment for the media, political pressure that influences reporting, and economic factors that affect access to news and information. The media, particularly social media, is a valuable tool for abortion activists. In the chapter titled “Activism” in the book *Reimagining Global Abortion Politics*, the authors write that the media gives abortion advocates the “potential to engage in solidarity actions globally and the ability to connect with those who may not feel comfortable making their activism public” (Bloomer, Pierson, Claudio 2019, 89). In countries where citizens are not allowed to use the media and activism as a way to advocate for abortion rights, it is less likely that there will be access to legal abortion. People in those countries must find other ways to access abortion, which

usually ends up being dangerous. This is another reason why I believe social globalization is the most important measure of globalization to consider when looking at abortion access.

A final aspect of social globalization that I believe has a positive effect on abortion access is civil liberties. The KOF social globalization index measures civil liberties as the quantification of aspects on freedom of expression and belief, associational and organizational rights, rule of law and personal autonomy and individual rights. Personal autonomy and individual rights are important aspects of the debate about abortion access. One of the most popular arguments in defense of abortion is that outlawing abortion interferes with a woman's bodily autonomy and the right to make her own healthcare decisions (Hewson 2001). If a country has a strong commitment to personal autonomy and individual rights, then it is more likely that it will grant access to legal abortion. This is another way that social globalization could have a positive effect on abortion access.

Research Design

The data that I employ to test my hypothesis is from the Quality of Government (QOG) dataset developed by researchers at the University of Gothenburg. This is a cross-national time-series dataset. The time coverage of the variables that I use from this dataset spans from 1997 to 2011. The QOG dataset analyzes each country in the sample per year, so the unit of analysis in my study is country-year.

Dependent Variable

I use the QOG dataset's comparative abortion index as my dependent variable, which was originally taken from the Comparative Abortion Index Project. There are two abortion indexes within this dataset, but I employ the one that is a weighted measure from 0 to 1. Values closer to 1 indicate a country that accepts all criteria for abortion, including on request, while values

closer to 0 indicate a country that has no conditions for legal abortion. I use the weighted abortion index because it is more comprehensive. The non-weighted abortion index designates all criteria for abortion access as equal, but different criteria, such as permitting abortion to save the life of the mother, are more widely accepted, which is accounted for by the weighted abortion index.

Central Explanatory Variable

I use the QOG dataset's measure of de facto and de jure social globalization as my central explanatory variable, which was originally taken from the KOF globalization index. This measure of social globalization is scaled from 0 to 100. Higher values indicate a higher degree of social globalization. The de facto segment of social globalization measures interpersonal contact with reference to international telephone connections, tourist numbers and migration. Cultural proximity is also measured in the de facto segment from trade in cultural goods, international trademark registrations and the number of McDonald's restaurants and IKEA stores. The de jure segment focuses on civil rights (freedom of citizens), gender equality and public spending on school education. It also measures access to TV and the internet, freedom of the press and international internet connections. As described in my theory, I am mostly interested in elements of social globalization measures in the de jure segment, as I believe they have the most significant implications for abortion access.

Control Variables

I use four control variables in this study. The first one is the QOG dataset's electoral democracy index, which was originally taken from the Variety of Democracy dataset. This index is formed by taking the average of the indices measuring freedom of association (thick), suffrage, clean elections, elected executive (de jure) and freedom of expression; and, on the other, the five-

way interaction between those indices. I believe that electoral democracy is an important variable to consider because if a country has higher levels of electoral democracy, then abortion preferences are more likely to be translated into policy (Arceneaux 2002). In a democracy, citizens can elect leaders who will implement laws that most people want, including laws that grant abortion access. Citizens can also protest/vote out the leaders if they do not pass these laws in a democracy.

The second control variable I employ is the QOG dataset's measure of the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments, which was originally taken from the World Bank's World Development Indicators. This variable is measured as the percentage of parliamentary seats in a single or lower chamber held by women. I expect that this variable will have a positive effect on abortion access. This is because female legislators are more likely to favor pro-choice abortion policies than male legislators (Berkman, O'Connor 1993). Women are the ones most affected by abortion policies, which is why female legislators can be expected to be more sympathetic to the issue and thus more likely to vote for pro-choice policies. I thus expect a larger proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments to have a positive effect on abortion access.

The third control variable I use is the QOG dataset's measure of GDP per capita (constant 2010 U.S. dollar), also originally taken from the World Bank's World Development Indicators. GDP is the sum of gross value added by all resident producers in the economy plus any product taxes and minus and subsidies not included in the value of the products. I use this as a control variable because I believe that a higher GDP per capita has a positive effect on abortion access. This is because "poverty and lack of opportunity breed inequality between men and women," and when economic development reduces poverty, the "condition of women improves" (Duflo

2012, 1053). As GDP and economic development increase, more women are lifted out of poverty and can pursue educations and careers. All these factors have positive implications for abortion access.

The final control variable I use is the QOG dataset's measure of religious freedom, originally from the CIRI Human Rights dataset. This variable indicates the extent to which the freedom of citizens to exercise and practice irreligious beliefs is subject to government restrictions. A score of 0 indicates that government restrictions on religious practices are severe and widespread, a score of 1 indicates such practices are moderate, and a score of 2 indicates a country where such practices are practically absent. I use religious freedom as a control variable because I believe that more religious freedom has a positive effect on abortion access. Because abortion is often considered to be a moral issue based on religion, levels of religiosity in society have been implicated in the continuance of restrictive abortion laws (Bloomer, Pierson, Claudio 2019, 53). As a country's religious freedom increases, then it is more likely that legal abortion will be available. One limitation of this variable, however, is that it doesn't measure levels of religiosity.

Methodology

To test my hypothesis, I use a regression analysis in STATA. The variables I use in this study are all continuous, so a regression analysis is the most appropriate statistical test to use for my analysis.

Analysis

The results of my regression analysis are shown in Table 1. I tested the effect that social globalization has on access to abortion while controlling for four other variables. The results of my test indicate that social globalization has a positive and statistically significant effect on

access to abortion. The coefficient of 0.010 is positively signed, which indicates this positive relationship. For every one unit increase of a country's level of social globalization, the mean level of access to abortion increases by 0.010. This relationship is also statistically significant at the $p < 0.001$ level. While I expected the magnitude of the effect of social globalization on access to abortion to be larger, my results are consistent with my hypothesis that as a country's level of social globalization increases, access to abortion also increases.

I also found a positive relationship between the proportion of women in national parliaments and access to abortion. As shown by Table 1, the coefficient is positively signed, which indicates this positive relationship. For every one unit increase of the proportion of women in national parliament, the mean level of access to abortion increases by 0.007. This relationship is statistically significant at the $p < 0.001$ level. I did expect the magnitude of the positive effect of women in parliament on access to abortion to be larger, but not all women have pro-choice ideologies. Overall, this result is consistent with my hypothesis that more women in national parliament will have a positive effect on abortion access.

When controlling for electoral democracy, I found that electoral democracy has a negative effect on access to abortion. For every one unit increase of electoral democracy, the mean level of access to abortion decreases by -0.107. This relationship is also statistically significant at the $p < 0.01$ level. While I initially thought that electoral democracy would improve access to abortion because those who support abortion access would be more likely to get their abortion preferences transferred into policy, there are also large populations of people in democracies that do not support abortion. The United States is one major example of a democratic country that has experienced a backsliding in abortion access, which seems to be consistent with the relationship that I observed in this test.

I also found a negative relationship between GDP per capita and access to abortion. As indicated by Table 1, the coefficient is negatively signed. The coefficient is so small, however, that the impact of GDP per capita on access to abortion appears to be negligible. This relationship is also not statistically significant. I was very surprised by this result as I predicted that a higher GDP per capita would have a significant positive effect on abortion access. While countries with a higher GDP per capita have more economic resources to provide access to abortion, there are still cultural factors that have a significant effect on abortion restrictions in those countries. This may explain why GDP per capita does not account for the negative relationship observed in this test.

For my final control variable, religious freedom, I observed a positive relationship. However, as indicated by Table 1, the coefficient is so small that the relationship is almost negligible. The relationship between religious freedom and access to abortion is also not statistically significant. I originally predicted that religious freedom would have a significant positive effect on access to abortion, so this result mostly disproves my hypothesis. I was perhaps most surprised by this result, as abortion is often debated on religious/moral grounds. I would expect a country with less religious freedom to have more restrictions on abortion, but this result indicates that religious freedom doesn't have a significant effect on access to abortion.

Discussion of Results

My initial hypothesis was that as social globalization increases, access to abortion will also increase. After performing a regression analysis to test my hypothesis, I found a positive relationship between social globalization and access to abortion. This relationship is also statistically significant. My results therefore support my main hypothesis. When controlling for other variables, however, my results were more unexpected. The proportion of women in

national parliaments has a positive effect on abortion access, which I expected. When I controlled for electoral democracy, GDP per capita, and religious freedom, however, the relationships I observed were not what I initially predicted. Both electoral democracy and GDP per capita have a negative effect on abortion access, and for electoral democracy, that relationship is statistically significant. I found these two results to be particularly interesting. I also predicted that religious freedom would have a significant positive effect on abortion access, but the positive relationship I observed was very small and the relationship was not statistically significant.

My results have significant implications for the future of abortion access. While I did not test the individual mechanisms within social globalization, the fact that social globalization has a positive effect on abortion access suggests that factors like internet access, freedom of the press, and education all positively influence access to abortion. As the internet becomes more widely available, women will become more educated about their options when it comes to abortion. This will allow women to advocate more effectively for safe abortion access, which will improve health conditions for women around the world. A similar effect will be seen in countries where more women enroll in school. When women are more educated about their reproductive health, they can make informed decisions about which decisions, whether it be abortion or otherwise, are best for them. Additionally, my results suggest that with greater freedom of the press, access to abortion is more widely available. Like the internet, the media can be a useful tool for women to advocate for safe abortion access.

As shown by my results, the proportion of women in national parliaments has a positive and statistically significant effect on access to abortion. When there are more women in national parliament, abortion becomes more widely available in that country. This indicates that electing

female politicians and legislators is an important way to expand abortion access. If abortion advocates want to make legal abortion more widely available, then one of their priorities should be electing women to national parliaments and other positions of power. This also indicates that electing women to government is an effective way to improve health conditions of women. When abortion is more accessible, women do not have to seek out alternative methods of having the procedure, which are often dangerous. This will lower the number of deaths from unsafe abortions, and electing women to government is an essential component of ensuring this.

Unlike other studies of abortion and globalization, my study focuses specifically on the effect of social globalization on access to abortion. I believe that mechanisms of social globalization such as internet access, gender parity, and freedom of the press are essential components of what make a country more likely to guarantee access to legal abortion for its citizens. As shown by my results, social globalization has a positive and statistically significant effect on access to abortion. Because abortion rights have become a prevalent topic within the last year, my research is especially relevant to the current discourse about access to abortion. While the trend worldwide is toward more progressive abortion laws, the backsliding in reproductive rights in countries like the United States is proof that abortion rights are in no way guaranteed around the world. With increased social globalization, however, people in countries around the world will be better able to advocate for and learn about safe and legal abortion access.

For future research, I would recommend a more in-depth study of the different mechanisms of social globalization and how they individually influence access to abortion. The results of my study indicate that overall social globalization has a positive effect on abortion access, but I did not test the mechanisms that contribute to this relationship. I think that this type

of study would allow for more specific policy initiatives and would provide abortion advocates with more information about the ways they can promote access to safe abortion. I also think that future studies about how economic development affects access to abortion should be conducted. My results revealed that GDP per capita has a negative and statistically significant effect on abortion access, so I think that this relationship should be further investigated.

Table 1. Effects of Social Globalization on Access to Abortion, 1997-2011

Variable		
Social globalization	0.010***	(0.006)
Electoral democracy	-0.107**	(0.038)
Women in parliament	0.007***	(0.001)
GDP per capita	-0.000	(0.000)
Religious freedom	0.000	(0.002)
N	2,284	
R ²	0.248	

Standard errors appear in parentheses. Statistical significance levels: * $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$, *** $p \leq 0.001$

Table 2. Summary Statistics

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Abortion index	0.4790981	0.4092929	0	1
Social globalization	53.31891	20.01914	9.826757	91.80595
Electoral democracy	0.5451616	0.2606416	0.017	0.917
Women in parliament	15.21785	10.26769	0	56.25
GDP per capita	12107.41	17929.72	187.5167	111968.3
Religious freedom	1.0162	4.389012	-77	2

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Appendix

Table 3. Variable Operationalization and Statistics**Dependent Variable**

Variable	Operationalization	Source
Abortion Index	Continuous measure of access to abortion; bound between 0 and 1. Score closer to 0 indicates country in which there are no conditions for legal abortion, and 1 represents a country that accepts all criteria for abortion, including on request.	Teorell, Jan, Aksel Sundström, Sören Holmberg, Bo Rothstein, Natalia Alvarado Pachon & Cem Mert Dalli, The Quality of Government Standard Dataset (version January 2022). Forman-Rabinovici, A & Sommer, U, The Comparative Abortion Index Project (2018).

Central Explanatory Variable

Variable	Operationalization	Source
Social globalization	Continuous measure of social globalization; bound between 1 and 100. Score closer to 1 indicates lower level of social globalization	Teorell, Jan, Aksel Sundström, Sören Holmberg, Bo Rothstein, Natalia Alvarado Pachon & Cem Mert Dalli, The Quality of Government Standard Dataset (version January 2022). Gygli, Savina, Florian Haelg, Niklas Potrafke and Jan-Egbert Sturm, The KOF Globalization Index (2019).

Control Variables

Variable	Operationalization	Source
Electoral democracy	Continuous measure of electoral democracy; bound between 0 and 1. Takes the sum of the indices measuring freedom of association (thick), suffrage, clean elections, elected executive (de jure) and freedom of expression; and, on the other, the five-way interaction between those indices.	Teorell, Jan, Aksel Sundström, Sören Holmberg, Bo Rothstein, Natalia Alvarado Pachon & Cem Mert Dalli, The Quality of Government Standard Dataset (version January 2022). Pemstein, D., Marquardt, K. L., Tzelgov, E., Wang, Y.-t., Medzihorsky, J., Krusell, J., Miri, F., & von Römer, J, Varieties of Democracy dataset (2021).
Women in parliament	Continuous variable bound between 0 and 100; measured as the percentage of parliamentary seats in a single or lower chamber held by women.	Teorell, Jan, Aksel Sundström, Sören Holmberg, Bo Rothstein, Natalia Alvarado Pachon & Cem Mert Dalli, The Quality of Government Standard Dataset (version January 2022). World Bank, World Development Indicators (2021).
GDP per capita	Continuous variable measures as the sum of gross value added by all resident producers in the economy plus any product taxes and minus any subsidies not included in the value of the products.	Teorell, Jan, Aksel Sundström, Sören Holmberg, Bo Rothstein, Natalia Alvarado Pachon & Cem Mert Dalli, The Quality of Government Standard Dataset (version January 2022). World Bank, World Development Indicators (2021).
Religious freedom	Continuous measure of religious freedom; bound between 0 and 2. 0 indicates a country where government restrictions on religious practices are severe and widespread, 1 indicates a country where such practices are moderate, and 2 indicates a country where such practices are practically absent.	Teorell, Jan, Aksel Sundström, Sören Holmberg, Bo Rothstein, Natalia Alvarado Pachon & Cem Mert Dalli, The Quality of Government Standard Dataset (version January 2022). Cingranelli, D. L., Filippov, M., & Mark, S, The CIRIGHTS dataset (2019).

```
. reg cai_cai2 dr_sg vdem_polyarchy wdi_wip wdi_gdpcapcon2010 ciri_relfre
```

Source	SS	df	MS	Number of obs	=	2,284
Model	94.6609225	5	18.9321845	F(5, 2278)	=	149.86
Residual	287.78882	2,278	.126333986	Prob > F	=	0.0000
				R-squared	=	0.2475
				Adj R-squared	=	0.2459
Total	382.449742	2,283	.167520693	Root MSE	=	.35543

cai_cai2	Coefficient	Std. err.	t	P> t	[95% conf. interval]	
dr_sg	.0098584	.0006213	15.87	0.000	.0086401	.0110768
vdem_polyarchy	-.1069552	.0383127	-2.79	0.005	-.1820866	-.0318237
wdi_wip	.0072532	.000786	9.23	0.000	.0057118	.0087946
wdi_gdpcapcon2010	-1.04e-06	6.01e-07	-1.72	0.085	-2.21e-06	1.43e-07
ciri_relfre	.0004136	.0017155	0.24	0.809	-.0029505	.0037778
_cons	-.0865025	.0258847	-3.34	0.001	-.1372627	-.0357424