

# *Radical Feminism and Family Law: Addressing Gender Bias, Reforming, and Beyond*

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**Abstract:** This research undertakes a comprehensive exploration of reproductive rights and abortion within the broader context of gender politics, with a keen emphasis on the influence of radical feminism. Reproductive rights, extending beyond mere health and medical concerns, intersect with societal, ethical, religious, and political dimensions. Through this lens, the study investigates global reproductive policies and the international legal stance on abortion. The ascendancy of radical feminism and its critiques against historically entrenched patriarchal structures form a core component of this discourse. The article further delves into the legal histories and controversies surrounding both reproductive and abortion rights, probing into their evolving legal frameworks, international regulations, and the multifaceted debates linked to their acceptability. Through the interplay of these elements, the research ultimately converges on the broader implications these topics have on global human rights, women's socio-economic standings, and the fluid realm of gender dynamics. The overarching goal is to shed light on these intricate relationships, contributing to a more equitable and inclusive understanding of evolving gender politics.

**Keywords:** reproductive rights, abortion, radical feminism, human rights, legal reforms

## 1. Introduction

As the kaleidoscope of gender politics continuously shifts, reproductive rights have crystallized as a symbolic reflection of broader socio-cultural dynamics. These rights, pivotal in nature, do not merely touch upon the medical and health spheres but deeply entrench themselves within societies' ethical, religious, and political fabric. Amidst the myriad voices contributing to this discourse, the feminist movement emerges prominently, with radical feminism amplifying its assertiveness, advocating for women's health and their autonomy and empowerment.

For numerous individuals and societies, reproductive rights are not confined to decisions about one's body. They transcend this immediacy, encapsulating a broader struggle for autonomy, equality, and mastery over one's life trajectory. When viewed globally, these rights are fraught with disparities, making them a focal point in discussions about equity and justice. Emerging from the feminist wave's momentum, radical feminism offers a potent perspective on reproductive matters. It critiques and challenges the overarching patriarchal systems that historically placed constraints on women, relegating them to marginalized positions.

This study delves into the complex relationship between reproductive rights, abortion, and radical feminism, exploring global reproductive issues and international abortion laws. It includes an analysis

of the legal history of reproductive rights and the influence of radical feminism, as well as discussions on controversies surrounding reproductive control rights. The focus then shifts to abortion rights, examining their legal history, the impact of radical feminism, and the intricate debates surrounding their legality. The study synthesizes these findings, reflecting on the broader implications for global human rights discussions, women's socio-economic landscapes, and evolving gender dynamics. It aims to provide valuable insights to foster a more just, equitable, and inclusive society amidst the ongoing evolution of gender politics.

## **2. Reproduction, Abortion, and Radical Feminism**

### **2.1. Reproduction and Abortion Globally**

Reproductive policies are the laws, regulations, and programs that govern the access and provision of reproductive health services, such as contraception, sterilization, abortion, maternal health, and family planning. Reproductive policies vary widely across countries, depending on their political, economic, social, cultural, and religious contexts. Likewise, the international legal status of abortion fluctuates significantly across the globe.

#### **2.1.1. Variations in Reproductive Policies Across Countries**

In summary, reproductive policies can be classified into four broad categories: pronatalist, anticonatalist, eugenic, and neutral.

Pronatalist policies are those that encourage or incentivize higher fertility and larger families. These policies are often motivated by concerns about low birth rates, population aging, national security, or cultural preservation. Some examples of pronatalist policies are cash benefits, tax credits, parental leave, childcare subsidies, immigration policies, or marriage promotion programs. Some countries that have pronatalist policies are France, Germany, Japan, and Singapore [1].

Anticonatalist policies are those that discourage or limit fertility and smaller families. These policies are often motivated by concerns about high population growth, environmental degradation, poverty, or gender inequality. Some examples of anticonatalist policies are family planning programs, contraceptive subsidies, abortion legalization, sterilization campaigns, or one-child policies. Some countries that have anticonatalist policies are China, India, Iran, and Thailand.

Eugenic policies are those that influence the genetic quality or composition of the population. These policies are often motivated by ideologies of racial supremacy, social Darwinism, or genetic engineering. Some examples of eugenic policies are selective abortion, prenatal screening, genetic counseling, or forced sterilization. Some countries that have had eugenic policies in the past are Nazi Germany, Sweden, the United States, and Australia.

Neutral policies are those that do not interfere with fertility decisions and respect the reproductive rights and choices of individuals and couples. These policies are often motivated by principles of human rights, democracy, or pluralism. Some examples of neutral policies are comprehensive sexuality education, universal health care coverage, gender equality laws, or reproductive justice movements. Some countries that have neutral policies are Canada, Denmark, the Netherlands, and Uruguay [1].

#### **2.1.2. International Legal Status of Abortion**

The international legal status of abortion is shaped by a number of international instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

(CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). These instruments acknowledge women's rights to life, health, privacy, equality, non-discrimination, dignity, autonomy, and self-determination in sexuality and reproduction. However, these instruments' practical interpretations and implementations differ among countries and regions [2].

### **2.1.3. Impact of Reproduction and Abortion on Global Issues**

Reproduction and abortion issues wield a significant impact globally, touching on various sectors of health, human rights, and the overall well-being of millions. These issues permeate complex social, economic, and public health realms, influencing population dynamics, gender equality, and human rights in profound ways. For example, they are instrumental in shaping fertility rates, population growth and aging, and migration patterns, with direct repercussions on a country's development, sustainability, and security [3]. The influence extends to the empowerment of women and girls, directly affecting their education, employment, income, and political participation. These aspects are integral to safeguarding their dignity, autonomy, and human rights.

Maternal mortality and morbidity, reproductive health outcomes, infectious diseases, and mental health are also inextricably linked to reproductive and abortion issues [3]. Furthermore, the interconnectedness of reproductive and abortion policies with broader global issues is undeniable. Countries grappling with limited access to reproductive health services often face challenges like unplanned pregnancies and population surges, leading to resource strains and increased poverty. Restrictive abortion policies can magnify gender inequalities, with women facing health risks, workforce exclusion, and social stigmatization. In societies where reproductive capabilities are highly valued, women's worth often becomes synonymously linked to childbearing, exacerbating gender disparities [4].

## **2.2. The Rise of Radical Feminism and Responses**

### **2.2.1. Historical Perspective on the Radical Feminist Movement**

Originating in the late 1960s and 1970s, radical feminism emerged as a response to perceived inadequacies within the mainstream feminist movement. While earlier feminist waves primarily focused on legal reforms and public policy changes, radical feminists argued that societal structures themselves were inherently patriarchal and needed a more profound, systemic transformation. They posited that the oppression of women was the most fundamental form of oppression, one that cut across lines of race, class, and culture. This belief fueled movements that went beyond policy change, targeting societal norms, family structures, and even language.

### **2.2.2. Core Principles of Radical Feminism**

At its core, radical feminism perceives the patriarchy as inherently and ubiquitously oppressive. Several key principles underpin this movement. The first is the threat of patriarchal institutions. Existing political, social, and other institutions, according to radical feminists, are inexorably related to patriarchy [5]. This includes government laws and legislation that restrict what women may and cannot do with their bodies, as well as the church, which has long confined women to the maternal role and opposes the concept of non-reproductive sexuality. The second element involves questioning gender as a social construct. Gender, according to radical feminists, is a social construct that is acquired and enforced rather than an inherent or biological characteristic. They oppose the notion that men and women are fundamentally different and that these distinctions justify unequal treatment or

status. They also question the binary gender distinction, which excludes or marginalizes people who do not fall into the stereotypical male and female categories [6].

The third principle revolves around asserting control over women's bodies: Patriarchal systems seek control over women's bodies by enforcing reproductive laws that determine whether women have the right to abortion and contraception [5]. Women are also subjected to various forms of violence, such as rape, domestic abuse, and sexual harassment, which are seen as ways of asserting male dominance and power over women.

### **2.2.3. Radical Feminism's Stance and Actions on Reproduction and Abortion**

Radical feminists view reproductive rights as fundamental to women's liberation. They argue that control over reproduction is central to women's physical autonomy and broader socio-economic independence. Therefore, radical feminists advocate fervently for unencumbered access to abortion, viewing it as more than a medical procedure. Instead, it's perceived as a vital tool allowing women to assert control over their reproductive futures. Beyond abortion, radical feminists have critically examined the broader medical establishment's role in shaping reproductive narratives.

They have highlighted how, historically, medical institutions, predominantly led by men, have controlled aspects of childbirth, fertility, and reproductive health. This critique has led to advocacy for alternative birthing practices, such as home births, and a push for recognizing the legitimacy of midwives and other non-traditional healthcare providers. In essence, the fight for reproductive rights is a fight against patriarchal control over women's bodies and, by extension, their lives, according to radical feminists.

## **3. Legal Legislation and Controversies Surrounding Reproductive Rights**

### **3.1. Legal History of Reproductive Rights**

#### **3.1.1. Traditional Legal Frameworks for Reproductive Rights**

Traditional legal frameworks for reproductive rights have historically assumed that reproduction is a natural and sacred duty influenced by religious, cultural, and familial norms. These frameworks often subordinate women's reproductive rights to men's authority or the community's interests, resulting in legal or customary prohibitions or restrictions on contraception and abortion. For example, Indigenous women in Canada have been subjected to forced or coerced sterilization without their consent or knowledge. This is a violation of their reproductive rights and also their cultural rights as Indigenous peoples [7].

Furthermore, these restricted frameworks can obstruct women's access to a variety of reproductive health treatments and information, including prenatal and postnatal care, family planning, and sexuality education. Barriers such as unavailability, cost, quality, or cultural unacceptability can limit women's access to crucial maternal health care. Additionally, in some nations, women might not receive comprehensive information about reproductive health and rights, including contraceptive options, prevention and treatment of Sexually transmitted infections (STIs), or the legalities surrounding abortion. A manifestation of these disparities is evident in the U.S., where Black mothers face a higher risk of pregnancy-related deaths than white mothers, underscoring racial inequalities in maternal health care quality and outcomes.

#### **3.1.2. Evolution of Legal Aspects of Reproductive Rights**

The evolution of the legal aspects surrounding reproductive rights has been a complex and multi-dimensional journey. As modern medicine, technology, and science advanced, deeply rooted views

on reproduction began to shift, paving the way for the reevaluation of both social and legal stances. Notably, the advancement and validation of contraceptive and abortion methods such as condoms, birth control pills, intrauterine devices (IUDs), and surgical procedures resulted in a seismic shift in how civilizations regarded reproduction. With advancements in safety and effectiveness, these methods began to gain social and legal acceptance.

Parallel to these medical advances, feminism and the broader women's rights movement emerged as a potent force challenging societal conventions. These movements, rooted in the ideas of autonomy, empowerment, and equality, heightened the push for complete reproductive rights. Furthermore, pivotal international instruments such as the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, and the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development solidified reproductive rights within the broader human rights discourse. The landmark decisions in *Griswold v. Connecticut* in 1965 and *Roe v. Wade* in 1973 in the United States, Canada's pivotal *R. v. Morgentaler* decision in 1988, and France's Veil Law of 1975 are significant examples. Such legal changes—either expansions or restrictions—varied by country, influenced by public funding considerations, insurance stipulations, waiting periods, and other factors.

### **3.1.3. International Comparisons of Reproductive Rights Regulations**

While seeing significant advancements, the landscape of reproductive rights continues to exhibit global disparities. This variation is influenced by multiple factors, including distinct legal systems, political ideologies, and deeply rooted social norms and values. According to UNFPA, only 62% of countries have mandated sexuality education in their curriculums. While 79% offer post-abortion care irrespective of its legal status, 54% could criminally charge women for illegal abortions. Even in places where abortion is legal to some extent, 28% require a husband's consent for married women. Furthermore, among nations with supportive regulations, several restrictions like marital status for maternity care, age limits for contraceptive services, and the need for third-party authorization for contraception still persist. Some countries even possess legal systems that contradict their positive national laws. Despite these challenges, positive strides are evident. A vast majority of countries guarantee maternity care access. About 95% of countries guarantee access to maternity care, and 93% have decriminalized abortion [8].

Specific to a particular region, take the example of USA, based on a June 2022 report by the Guttmacher Institute, in just the first half of the year, The right to an abortion is seriously threatened in much of the United States. 12 states have enacted 43 abortion restrictions. Meanwhile, several state legislatures that now support abortion rights are poised to pass new abortion-protection legislation. The most likely conclusion is a deeply divided country in which hundreds of thousands of people are denied abortions each year [9]. It is totally opposite to the prevailing international trend in this regard.

## **3.2. Influence of Radical Feminism on Reproductive Rights**

Since the late 1960s, radical feminists have played a pivotal role in the battle for reproductive rights, particularly the right to abortion. They forged a path towards a broader understanding of these rights by challenging patriarchal systems that sought to dictate and suppress women's reproductive choices.

### **3.2.1. Radical Feminist Advocacy for Reproductive Rights**

The emergence of radical feminism in the late 1960s marked a significant turning point in the fight for reproductive rights. Radical feminists were at the forefront of advocating for women's control over their reproductive choices, challenging the deeply entrenched patriarchal norms that had governed society for centuries.

In 1969, the Redstockings, a radical feminist group in New York, organized a public event called the Speak Out on abortion, where 12 women shared their experiences of illegal and unsafe abortions. The event was a groundbreaking act of consciousness-raising and political protest that challenged the stigma and silence around abortion and demanded women's right to control their own bodies. In 1976, the Women's Health Movement, a radical feminist movement that emerged in the 1970s, created the first feminist health center in Boston, called the Women's Community Health Center. The center offered a range of reproductive health services, such as abortion, contraception, sterilization, prenatal care, childbirth, postnatal care, education, and counseling. Operated by women for women, the center embodied the core principles of empowerment, autonomy, and diversity.

### **3.2.2. Radical Feminism's Influence on Legal Reforms of Reproductive Rights**

Radical feminism's impact on the legal landscape surrounding reproductive rights has been profound and transformative. Throughout the decades, this movement has spurred key legal advances, ensuring women's autonomy over their bodies is recognized and protected.

Internationally, the turn of the millennium saw the United Nations General Assembly adopting the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Enforced in 2000, this protocol allows individuals and groups to approach the CEDAW Committee with grievances about reproductive rights violations by their states. This method, advocated by radical feminists, is rooted in the larger struggle for women's human rights, and it challenges states' authority over women's bodies.

A stark illustration of radical feminism's influence on national policies is seen in Mexico's 2006 legal transformation. The Federal Supreme Court of Mexico declared that rape survivors must have unobstructed and immediate access to legal abortions. Radical feminist movements shed light on the nexus between sexual violence and reproductive rights, and legal testimony from feminist groups and organizations bolstered their clout.

The radical feminist momentum on reproductive rights did not stop there. In 2018, Ireland witnessed a seismic change when it repealed the Eighth Amendment, an almost absolute constitutional abortion ban, through a referendum. The 'Repeal the 8<sup>th</sup>' movement, underpinned by radical feminist principles, was instrumental in mobilizing the masses. They not only highlighted the grave injustice faced by Irish women forced to seek abortions abroad or risk illegal terminations but also ignited a broader discourse on a woman's right to choose [10].

In all these instances, radical feminism has consistently demonstrated its role as a crucial driver, pushing the boundaries of established norms and challenging legal systems to recognize and protect women's reproductive rights.

### **3.3. Controversies Surrounding Reproductive Control Rights**

In today's era, the landscape of reproductive control rights has evolved into a rich tapestry woven with legal, ethical, and societal threads. How governments, societies, and individuals perceive and respond to reproductive rights reflects deeper values, beliefs, and priorities constantly shifting in the face of progress and challenges.

#### **3.3.1. Government Intervention and Reproductive Control Rights**

Reproductive control rights, encompassing contraception, abortion, sterilization, and assisted reproductive technologies, sit at the intersection of personal freedom and governmental oversight. These rights, while central to individual dignity, are often swayed by broader considerations like welfare, religion, politics, and economics.

The U.S. is emblematic of this balance, with its history deeply intertwined with governmental efforts to dictate reproduction for national interests. Rooted in European settler ambitions, early U.S. policies sought to bolster labor and military capacities by influencing reproductive choices, leading to the racial categorization of pregnant women and their offspring. In an attempt to cultivate a “white” national identity, laws emerged favoring white offspring, creating racially-biased cultural norms. Over time, restrictive racial and reproductive laws emerged, including policies that encouraged the sterilization of marginalized groups, especially women of color. However, by the late 20th century, a counter-narrative arose. Feminists of color championed “reproductive justice,” advocating for fundamental human rights in sexuality, reproduction, and parenting, pushing back against historical injustices. This continuous tug-of-war between governmental control and advocacy for reproductive rights underscores the importance of active dialogue in safeguarding these universal rights [11].

### **3.3.2. Ethical and Moral Disputes in Reproductive Control**

While laws and regulations provide a framework, the realm of reproductive control is teeming with moral and ethical quandaries as science and technology offer new possibilities—from advanced contraceptives to genetic editing—the ethical compass guiding these choices often wavers.

The debates are not just about the right to use specific methods but delve deeper into questions of autonomy, dignity, justice, and responsibility. For instance, while contraception might be universally accepted, questions around “when life begins” muddy the waters in the abortion debate [12]. The discourse extends to assisted reproductive technologies, with surrogacy or genetic editing presenting profound ethical challenges.

Different cultural, religious, and philosophical backgrounds further diversify these perspectives. For example, the Christian perspective on artificial reproduction may differ markedly from secular or other religious viewpoints. The challenge, then, is to find common ground in a world of disparate beliefs.

### **3.3.3. Societal and Cultural Factors Impacting Reproductive Control Rights**

Beyond the corridors of power and the realms of ethical debate, societal and cultural forces play a pivotal role in shaping reproductive rights narratives. Deeply ingrained societal norms, religious beliefs, and cultural practices can either act as enablers, facilitating access and acceptance, or as barriers, stigmatizing confident choices and even ostracizing those who dare to defy.

The challenges are multifaceted. For instance, while a society may legally permit certain reproductive rights, cultural stigmas might deter individuals from exercising these rights. Conversely, societal movements can push for more progressive reforms, even if governments are initially resistant.

Studies that explore sociocultural dynamics, such as how certain practices impact women’s reproductive health in diverse settings, are instrumental. They not only shed light on women’s challenges but also highlight the resilience and creativity with which communities navigate these challenges.

In conclusion, the discourse on reproductive control rights is a confluence of governmental policies, ethical considerations, and societal influences. Progressing forward, there is a persistent challenge in achieving a harmonious balance that upholds individual rights, addresses ethical considerations, and recognizes the significant impact of societal and cultural norms. The hope is for a future in which everyone, regardless of background, may exercise their reproductive rights with respect, knowledge, and independence.

## **4. Legal Legislation and Controversies Surrounding Abortion Rights**

### **4.1. Legal History of Abortion Rights**

#### **4.1.1. Traditional Legal Frameworks for Abortion Rights**

In many legal systems, the right to an abortion stem from considerations of personal autonomy and privacy. The important *Roe v. Wade* ruling by the US Supreme Court in 1973 emphasized a woman's basic right to privacy and gave her the option of terminating a pregnancy. However, this right is not absolute, and subsequent rulings, such as *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* (1992), have limited its use. Beyond privacy, many countries also consider the health and safety of the pregnant woman. Abortions are legal in some countries to safeguard a woman's physical or mental health, albeit the breadth of this protection varies by jurisdiction.

Time-based restrictions are common, limiting abortions without specific reasons to a certain pregnancy stage. After this period, abortions might be confined to situations like health risks to the woman. Fetal rights or personhood recognition, underpinned by moral and philosophical debates on when life begins, often shape these laws.

While some jurisdiction's view abortion within the rights-based framework, others approach it from a decriminalization perspective [13]. Here, abortion might not be a constitutional or explicit human right, but penalties are absent for those seeking or providing it. On the other extreme, a few countries, like El Salvador, have total bans on abortion, with exceptions only in life-threatening situations for the mother (World Health Organization). Additionally, the matter of public funding for abortions is a contentious topic, framed as an issue of health equity or moral opposition.

#### **4.1.2. Evolution of Legal Aspects of Abortion Rights**

Historically, women have supported each other in obtaining abortions across different eras and civilizations. Abortion wasn't outlawed until the 19th century. The first anti-abortion laws were introduced in Britain in 1803, gradually becoming stronger over the century. By the close of the 19th century, abortion was legally constrained in the majority of nations. European empires like Britain, France, Portugal, Spain, and Italy enforced these laws not only in their territories but also extended them to their colonies, like United States.

The motivations behind historically restricting abortion were multifaceted. They are overall concerns over the dangers associated with the procedure, as many women died during unsafe abortions, moral objections grounded in religious or cultural beliefs., or even an intent to safeguard the life of the fetus in various scenarios. However, as safe abortion methods emerged, these restrictions began to seem outdated and, in many cases, detrimental to women's health. Regrettably, even with the advent of safe abortion methods, many women continued to suffer due to antiquated laws that forced them to opt for unsafe abortion practices.

The 20th century witnessed significant reforms in abortion laws, with countries recognizing the need for change. Data from the World Health Organization demonstrated that broader legal permissions for abortion led to fewer maternal deaths. Yet, the path to decriminalization, whether partial or total, was fraught with challenges due to traditional beliefs, patriarchal systems, and socio-cultural barriers. Abortion regulation became encapsulated in national constitutions, supreme court decisions, religious decrees, medical ethical codes, and clinical standards.

The 21st century saw varied responses to abortion rights across the globe. While many nations leaned towards liberalizing their abortion laws, countries where right-wing factions took power witnessed restrictive backlashes. Nations like Poland and Russia oscillated between progressive and regressive abortion laws, reflecting the evolving political landscape. Progressive models emerged in countries like Sweden, Canada, and Australia, each offering its brand of liberal abortion policies.

Canada, in particular, exemplifies the benefits of a non-restrictive abortion policy. Since 1988, with no explicit legal barriers, Canadian women have enjoyed unhindered access to safe and legal abortion services, setting a precedent for nations worldwide [13]

## **4.2. Influence of Radical Feminism on Abortion Right**

### **4.2.1. Radical Feminist Advocacy for Abortion Rights**

Advocating for abortion rights as a radical feminist is a type of feminist activism that confronts patriarchal and repressive structures that deny women the ability to regulate their own bodies and reproductive choices. Viewing abortion as a fundamental human right essential for women's liberation, they critique moderate pro-choice movements for accommodating the status quo. Rooted in the spirit of activism, radical feminists have tackled a range of issues, from abortion rights to equal pay.

They took direct action, creating underground networks like Jane in Chicago, providing safe, illegal abortions to women. They supported the landmark *Roe v. Wade* case and continue to champion abortion rights, opposing various restrictions and advocating for marginalized groups, including low-income women, women of color, young women, LGBTQ+ individuals, and those in developing countries [14]. Radical feminists aim to reshape the narrative around abortion, presenting it as an ethical decision empowering woman.

### **4.2.2. Radical Feminism in Legal Reforms of Abortion Rights**

Significant legal reforms have been fueled by radical feminism in many different parts of the world. Their influence may be clearly seen in the Canadian context, where radical feminists were instrumental in opposing the prohibition of abortion. The 1969 Criminal Law Amendment Act restricted abortion, allowing it only under hospital committee approval, primarily for reasons of maternal health or life. In reaction, radical feminists organized protests, engaged in civil disobedience, launched public education campaigns, and gave legal assistance to women facing punishment for seeking abortions. The Supreme Court of Canada declared the statute unconstitutional in 1988, ruling that it violated women's right to personal security under section 7 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms [13].

Radical feminists played a significant role in Ireland's efforts to overturn the Eighth Amendment to the Constitution, which recognized the mother and unborn child as having an equal right to life. They exposed the harmful effects of the amendment on women's health, dignity, and autonomy, such as forcing women to travel abroad for abortions or risk prosecution or death at home. In 2018, a referendum was held to repeal the amendment and legalize abortion up to 12 weeks of pregnancy or later in cases of risk to life or health or fatal fetal abnormality [10].

In Argentina, radical feminists were at the forefront of advocating for legalizing abortion as a human right and a social justice issue. They formed alliances with other social movements, such as human rights groups, labor unions, student organizations, LGBTQ+ groups, and indigenous communities. Additionally, they established the National Campaign for the Right to Legal, Safe, and Free Abortion, which fought for legislation permitting abortion on demand up to 14 weeks of pregnancy or later in cases of rape, immediate risk to life or health, or significant fetal harm. The legislation was passed by Congress and signed into law by the president in 2020 after years of controversy and opposition [15].

### **4.2.3. Gender Equality Issues in Abortion Rights**

Abortion rights, in the context of gender equality, address the implications of abortion laws and policies on women's societal status and rights. The debate on abortion is not just medical or moral, but intricately linked to women's empowerment, autonomy, and dignity. The restrictions imposed by punitive abortion laws pose serious threats to women's health. In many circumstances, women are forced to use hazardous or illegal abortion methods, which often end in serious complications or even death. Surprisingly, according to World Health Organization data, 30 women die in developed countries for every 100,000 unsafe abortions. The figure in developing nations rises to 220 deaths per 100,000 unsafe abortions [3].

These restrictions also have significant ripple effects on women's economic. Unplanned or early pregnancies can disrupt a woman's educational and career trajectory, hindering her overall life prospects. According to studies, women who had an abortion were less likely to experience long-term financial issues and uncertainties than women who were refused one. Restricting women's access to abortion may have a negative economic impact [16].

Limiting access to abortion fundamentally threatens a woman's control over her own body and her capacity to make choices about her own life. These limitations can lead to societal stigma, discrimination, and, in some cases, criminalization. A report by the Center for Reproductive Rights reveals that at least 125 countries have some form of criminalization related to abortion, potentially leading to penalties ranging from fines to imprisonment.

## **4.3. Controversies Surrounding the Legality of Abortion**

### **4.3.1. Influence of Religion, Ethics, and Morality on Abortion Legality**

Religion is a major factor that influences the views and attitudes of individuals, groups, and governments on abortion. Different religions have different teachings and doctrines on the sanctity of life, the personhood of the fetus, the rights and duties of the mother, and the circumstances under which abortion may be permitted or prohibited. For instance, the majority of Christian faiths view abortion as a serious sin and a kind of homicide, while some do permit exceptions in situations like rape, incest, or threat to the mother's life. Similarly, most Islamic schools of thought prohibit abortion after 120 days of pregnancy, when the fetus is believed to receive a soul. Generally, traditional Buddhism values all life and considers the intentional ending of a life, including abortion, to generate negative karma [17].

Ethical perspectives emphasize autonomy, personhood, and societal consequences. Pro-choice proponents value a woman's autonomy, highlighting her right to control her own body. Pro-life proponents, on the other hand, emphasize the fetus' intrinsic worth and rights, based on the premise that life begins at conception or shortly after. Ethical discussions also extend to societal consequences, like overpopulation and unwanted children.

### **4.3.2. Legal, Policy, and Social Debates on Abortion Legality**

Abortion legality, while often anchored in personal beliefs, is embedded in a labyrinth of legal frameworks, policy considerations, and societal discourses. These debates, reflecting societal values, religious convictions, historical backgrounds, and individual experiences, vary across nations but share overarching themes.

The legal aspect revolves around constitutional rights and when life begins - at conception, viability, or birth - determining permissible abortion timelines. Regulations, including waiting periods, counseling, and parental consent, are scrutinized in regions where abortion is legal.

From a policy angle, debates ignite around the accessibility and funding of abortion procedures. Central questions arise: Should public funds underwrite abortions? And what about the standards required of clinics, given that rigorous mandates can potentially shut down many facilities? Another pressing issue is conscientious objection—whether medical practitioners can, on moral grounds, decline to perform abortions and the subsequent provisions for the patient.

Argentina exemplifies the intricate dance between policy and activism. Initial legislative attempts to legalize abortion faced continuous rejection until 2020. This landmark change was steered by the relentless National Campaign for the Right to Legal, Safe and Free Abortion, supported by international entities emphasizing Argentina's human rights obligations [15].

Societal dialogues on abortion span a range of topics. There's the undeniable stigma attached to abortion in many cultures, affecting individual choices and overall societal perception. In many societies, the subject of abortion isn't just about the medical procedure itself but serves as a broader reflection of how women's bodies and choices are perceived and governed.

### 4.3.3. The Relationship Between Abortion Rights and Human Rights

International statements and attitudes on treaty monitoring have affected the growing acceptance of abortion rights within the context of human rights more broadly. These rights, deemed universal, link abortion intrinsically to fundamental human rights such as equality, liberty, and dignity. The Supreme Court of Nepal's decision underscores this, tying abortion to women's overarching international human rights. Furthermore, human rights also function as a buffer against antiabortion opposition, reminding states of their obligation to prioritize and protect women's rights. When striking the delicate balance between the rights of the fetus and the rights of the woman, courts frequently use human rights concerns.

However, it's essential to recognize that while human rights arguments advocate for the liberalization of abortion, they don't guarantee universal access or implementation. Reproductive rights discourse can sometimes overlook the unique challenges faced by different societies. The singular focus on legal reform might also overshadow the more pressing concern of service delivery. For instance, while legal permission might be granted for abortions, the lack of proper health infrastructure might still render such rights moot [2].

## 5. Conclusion

In the continually evolving landscape of gender politics, reproductive rights stand as a poignant reflection of society's broader ideologies and values. These rights, deeply rooted in the crossroads of health, ethics, religion, and politics, are more than just decisions about one's body—they encapsulate struggles for autonomy, equality, and empowerment. As this study indicates, radical feminism, with its unwavering commitment to challenge the historical constraints imposed on women, has been at the forefront of advocacy for these rights.

Through a comprehensive exploration of global reproductive issues, abortion laws, and the undying influence of radical feminism, it's evident that the quest for reproductive rights is a journey through turbulent terrains of legal, ethical, and societal debates. By shedding light on the vast complexities surrounding reproductive and abortion rights, this research underscores the urgency and imperative to prioritize these rights in our collective quest for a more equitable, inclusive, and progressive world.

As gender politics continue to shift, it remains essential to keep the discourse on reproductive rights alive, recognizing their undeniable significance in shaping societies that uphold the dignity, autonomy, and rights of all individuals.

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