

The Role Of Women In The Tocantins Legislature From A Gender Perspective

Alessandra Ruita Santos Czapski¹, Temis Gomes Parente²,
Jeany Castro Dos Santos¹, José Fernando Bezerra Miranda¹

Universidade Estadual Do Tocantins-Unitins, Palmas, Tocantins, Brazil

Universidade Federal Do Tocantins-UFT, Palmas, Tocantins, Brazil

Abstract

This study analyzed the performance of state deputies elected in Tocantins between 1990 and 2018, from a gender perspective, aiming to understand whether this perspective was prioritized in their political activities. The research focused on the proposition of bills, identifying challenges faced to approve gender policies. The results showed that, despite the sensitivity of the deputies to women's issues, their performance did not consistently prioritize the gender perspective, concentrating on generalist proposals. Projects aimed at combating domestic violence have encountered difficulties in approval due to the lack of political support, a reduced number of women in politics and high costs for the Executive. Thus, female deputies tend to prioritize actions with a general impact, reflecting the need to preserve their electoral niches. It is concluded that female representation in Tocantins still requires significant advances in relation to the integration of gender issues.

Key Word: *Women; Gender; Politics; Tocantins; Parliamentary.*

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I. Introduction

The democratic system is based on the separation of the three powers: Executive, Legislative and Judiciary, which perform distinct and independent functions, ensuring balance and mutual supervision. This study focuses on the Legislative Branch of the state of Tocantins, seeking to understand the performance of state deputies elected between 1990 and 2018, with an emphasis on the gender perspective.

The Legislative Assembly of Tocantins, created in 1989, is responsible for formulating and approving laws, in addition to overseeing the state Executive. However, it is questioned whether state deputies prioritize gender issues in their legislative activities, a central aspect for the construction of a more equitable society. The gender perspective in this study is based on the theorist Marcela Lagarde y de los Ríos (1996), who proposes a critical feminist approach, as opposed to androcentric patriarchy. For Lagarde, the gender perspective aims to reframe women's history and promote a society with gender equality, without oppression and with more opportunities for women. Thus, the focus of this research is to analyze whether the female deputies from Tocantins incorporate this perspective in their political performance.

In this context, it was decided to use an inclusive language throughout the text, prioritizing the mention of women before men and citing authors in a complete way in the first mention, as a way of valuing their professional career.

The study considers that the representation of women in the Legislature is an opportunity to repair years of subordination and promote more equitable social development. The gender perspective enables not only the inclusion of women in political decisions, but also the formulation of public policies that respond to their specific needs, such as employment, health, and combating violence. According to scholars such as Miranda and Barroso (2013), prioritizing gender issues on the political agenda is fundamental to addressing economic and social inequalities. Esther Duflo (2011) reinforces that development from this perspective favors equal opportunities between men and women, both in the labor market and in the exercise of citizenship.

Based on these premises, this research aims to analyze the performance of state deputies in Tocantins, verifying whether they prioritize the gender perspective in their legislative proposals. The time frame comprises the legislatures from 1990 to 2018, and the study investigates the propositions of laws, especially those focused on gender issues, such as violence against women, job creation and the fight against poverty.

Thus, the following research problem arises: do the state deputies elected in Tocantins prioritize the gender perspective in their political performance? The answer to this question will allow us to understand whether the female presence in the Tocantins Legislature is aligned with the principles that aim to promote gender equality and social justice.

II. Material And Methods

This study used the methodology of Oral History, which enables the collection of personal and subjective accounts of historical events and political contexts, and is widely used in interdisciplinary studies (Alberti, 2004). The choice of Oral History allows us to explore the experiences of women who worked in Tocantins legislative politics, offering a unique perspective on their experiences, challenges and contributions.

The approach adopted followed a methodological rigor to ensure the validity and reliability of the data collected. According to Portelli (1997), Oral History presupposes a co-authorship between the interviewer and the interviewee, which requires special care in the interpretation of the narratives. The study was approved by the Ethics Committee, ensuring that all ethical research standards were complied with, especially with regard to the anonymity of the participants and the confidentiality of the data.

The time frame of the survey covered the period from 1990 to 2018, a period during which eight elections for the position of state deputy in Tocantins took place. 9 deputies were identified who occupied seats in the Legislative Assembly, totaling 18 female mandates. Of these, six deputies consented to participate in the interviews. The sample of six interviews is considered adequate according to Alberti (2010), who argues that the number of interviews should be sufficient to build a well-founded interpretation.

The interviews followed a semi-structured script, which allowed flexibility in the exploration of relevant topics, such as the proposition of bills, difficulties in approving public policies and gender interactions in the legislative environment. The semi-structured interview technique was chosen to capture both the memories and the subjective perceptions of the deputies about their performance. To ensure the reliability of the information, all interviews were recorded and transcribed in full, allowing for later detailed analysis.

To preserve the anonymity of the interviewees, pseudonyms were assigned based on fruit tree flowers typical of the Cerrado biome, characteristic of the state of Tocantins. The pseudonyms chosen were: Buriti Flower, Pequi Flower, Babassu Flower, Murici Flower, Bacaba Flower and Macaúba Flower. Such a choice symbolizes the resistance of these women in a political scenario dominated by men.

In addition to the interviews, a comprehensive documentary analysis of 1,355 bills (PLs) proposed by the deputies was carried out. The documentary research covered the period from 1990 to 2018, with a division between physical and digital documents. Before the digitization, the physical archives of the Legislative Assembly were consulted to examine deputies' files, bills, amendments and requests. From 2014, the documents were analyzed in the LEGIS computerized system and, later, in the SAPL (Legislative Process Support System), used from 2019.

The analysis focused on categories such as the proposition of specific bills for women, combating domestic violence, job creation for women and policies of a generalist nature. The results were systematized to assess whether the deputies prioritized the gender perspective in their legislative activities.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the results, data triangulation was used between the interviews and the document analysis. The narratives of the deputies were confronted with the formal records of the bills to verify the consistency of the information and identify patterns of action. In addition, the analysis of the interviews was conducted following the precepts of Portelli (1997), who highlights the importance of careful interpretation of the voices and memories of the participants, seeking to highlight both explicit and implicit narratives.

III. Result

Parliamentarians in Tocantins: political action

The State of Tocantins, located in the northern region of Brazil, was created in 1988, after the promulgation of the Federal Constitution, separating itself from the north of Goiás. With an area of approximately 277,620 km², it is one of the newest states in the country. Tocantins has a diversified economy, especially agriculture, in addition to being an important logistics corridor between the North and the rest of Brazil, due to its strategic location. The capital, Palmas, is a planned city and also the youngest state capital in Brazil. The state is known for its natural beauty, such as Jalapão, an ecotourism region and lush landscapes.

The active inclusion of women in the political scenario is configured as a process permeated by challenges and obstacles to be overcome. Over the last few decades, women's participation in the political sphere has grown, encompassing both the formal and informal spheres of politics. This advance reflects the change in the relative position of women in Brazil, as emphasized by Biroli (2018, p. 560), "*women's relative position has significantly changed in Brazil in the last decades*". However, even in the face of these transformations, historical challenges remain, from the conquest of the right to vote to the search for effective parity in political participation and representation, challenges that echo in the contemporary context.

The gradual trajectory of progressive inclusion of women in the political stage instigates a renewed perspective in politics that paves the way for a more comprehensive representation and political action anchored in gender agendas. However, the warning issued by Ane Phillips (2001) raises caution about an approach that is

¹"The relative position of women has changed significantly in Brazil in recent decades."

excessively focused on the quantitative discussion about gender parity in politics. From this perspective, the number of women is not the most important thing, but their representativeness in agendas related to women's and minority issues. Phillips (2001) argues that the representativeness of minority groups in the political sphere cannot be restricted to physical presence alone, and that it is imperative to prioritize a politics of ideas. "It is in the relationship between ideas and presence that we can place our best hopes of finding a just system of representation, not a false opposition between one and the other" (Phillips, 2001, p. 289). From this perspective, the fusion of these elements is essential for a genuine and impactful representation. In this sense, in what scenario are the state parliamentarians of Tocantins inserted, in a politics of ideas and/or presence, or in both?

Barbosa (2019), agreeing with the precepts defended by Phillips (2001), argues that the politics of presence, by itself, does not guarantee social equity and substantial justice for women in the political scenario. The effective capacity of women to forge impactful public policies emerges from the synergy between the politics of presence and the politics of ideas. The convergence of these principles establishes a fertile soil for authentic representation, based on gender demands.

In order to constitute democratic and public spaces, these two democratic principles must converge: the politics of ideas and the politics of presence. Women's participation in politics is not only intended to meet the interest of the category to be represented so that their interests are met, but encompasses the entire history of exclusion and denial of the principles of citizenship that require equal rights and obligations for citizens (Barbosa, 2019, p. 84).

Regarding the politics of presence, it is considered that the history of exclusion that marginalized women's political participation reverberates in a scarce representation in spaces of power. According to Matos (2020), Brazil has one of the worst rates of representation of women in the world and one of the worst in the Americas in politics. In the context of Tocantins, the presence of women in the legislatures of the Legislative Assembly remains peripheral, reaching representation rates oscillating between 8% and 10% in the position of state deputy², throughout the period that comprised this investigation - 1990 and 2018.

Women's political representation takes on a crucial dimension in the promotion of inclusive actions that are sensitive to gender demands, ensuring that women feel represented and included in political decisions. The diversity of experiences that women bring with them enriches the political debate, favoring the formulation of legislation that consolidates the creation of more inclusive public policies. In this scenario, the role of women in formal politics in Tocantins can contribute to the fight against discriminatory practices against women, gender violence, poverty, and vulnerabilities.

According to Lagarde (1996), through the gender perspective, a critical view can be developed that allows reflection on alternatives to women's specific problems. To this end, specific economic resources for job creation, combating injustice, violence and poverty are essential, since generalist policies do not meet the specific needs of women. Thus, the purpose of this study is to analyze whether state deputies prioritize the gender perspective in their performance.

Parliamentary action comprises a series of activities that involve the presentation of propositions, analysis by permanent committees³, articulation for the approval of proposals and bills presented. Irllys Alencar Firmo Barreira (2021) highlights that parliamentary work manifests itself in various forms, such as conversations, committee meetings, plenary sessions, cabinet activities, meetings with the technical work team and advisors. In addition to backstage activities and participation in events that are part of the daily life of public work, the parliamentarian maintains strategic contact with the electoral bases. In addition, there is the responsibility to supervise the Executive Branch. Despite the variety of activities that make up parliamentary work, the central issue that guides the legislative function is related to the approval of bills (PL) presented in the Legislative Assembly, which, if approved, may result in public policies adopted by the State Government.

Regarding the procedure for approving projects presented by parliamentarians, Flor de Murici described in her narrative that:

So, we prepare a bill, which is presented on the table. The table distributes it to the committees according to the area, such as the health, education and security committee. There, debates and discussions take place. After the debates, the commission can approve or not approve, create amendments, and the deputies participate in this process. Then, the project approved by the committee is forwarded to the plenary. In the plenary, it can be approved, rejected or amended. It usually goes through amendments and suggestions in the plenary as well. After

²In Tocantins, 24 state parliamentarians are elected every four years, and the number presented corresponds to the period studied.








³Permanent commissions are bodies constituted to debate the proposals of the Legislature, are composed each year and are structured by thematic areas. According to Pinheiro (2007), women can exercise political power in an equal way as men, but sometimes they are concentrated in nests of social policy areas because these are the spaces available to them. According to Grossi and Miguel (2001), in Brazil, it is still believed that the competence of women in politics is the social area, and for this reason they are invited to exercise secretariats and key positions relegated to devalued positions, or even in non-privileged functions in the parties or in their coalitions.

approval, the bill goes to the governor, who can fully sanction it or veto parts, depending on the Executive's view. This is the process of processing (Flor de Murici, 2022).

It is observed that the process of approving laws is a complex process that involves debates and discussions by deputies. The projects originate from demands from society, being the result of the problems presented by the population. However, as observed in Flor de Murici's narrative, for the legislation to be sanctioned and become a public policy on the government's agenda, it depends on the Executive. When Flor de Bacaba narrates that the deputies suggest the laws, but it depends on the Executive: "The governor needs to put his hand because the deputy only suggests", he is referring to the Executive's interest in transforming the sanctioned legislation into public policies.

In addition to knowing the procedure that involves the performance of parliamentary work, through their speeches, it was also possible to analyze the propositions of bills presented by the parliamentarians, through the documentary analysis carried out, and which resulted in the categorized graphs from the gender perspective of Lagarde (1996). In this sense, the author argues that, in order to improve women's quality of life, their specific needs must be considered in government agendas, creating alternatives to solve problems related to women's poverty, combating domestic violence, allocating resources to specific policies for women, and creating jobs. She also emphasizes that generalist policies are not enough to solve the specific problems of women. Thus, the following categories of analysis were created based on what was learned from Lagarde's studies as presented in Table 1.

Table 1 - Categories of analysis from a gender perspective.

Category	Description
 EP - Parliamentary Amendments specific to women	Transfers of resources for specific public policies for women.
 EP - Specific generalist Parliamentary Amendments	Transfers of resources to public policies in the areas of education, environment, infrastructure and health that serve the whole society.
 PLs – Bills to combat women's poverty	Presentation of proposals for legislation to combat women's poverty.
 PLs – Bills to combat domestic violence against women	Presentation of proposals for legislation to combat domestic violence against women.
 PLs – Bills for job creation for women	Presentation of proposals for legislation to create jobs for women.
 PLs – Specific Bills for Women	Presentation of proposals for specific legislation that serve women.
 PLs – Generalist Bills	Presentation of proposals for legislation in the areas of education, environment, infrastructure, health, public safety, granting of citizen title and declaration of public utility for Tocantins associations.

Source: Prepared by the authors based on Lagarde (1996).

The discussions developed throughout this chapter rely on the analysis of interviews and documents referring to the propositions of the bills presented by the deputies in the time frame of this investigation and during the period of their mandates.

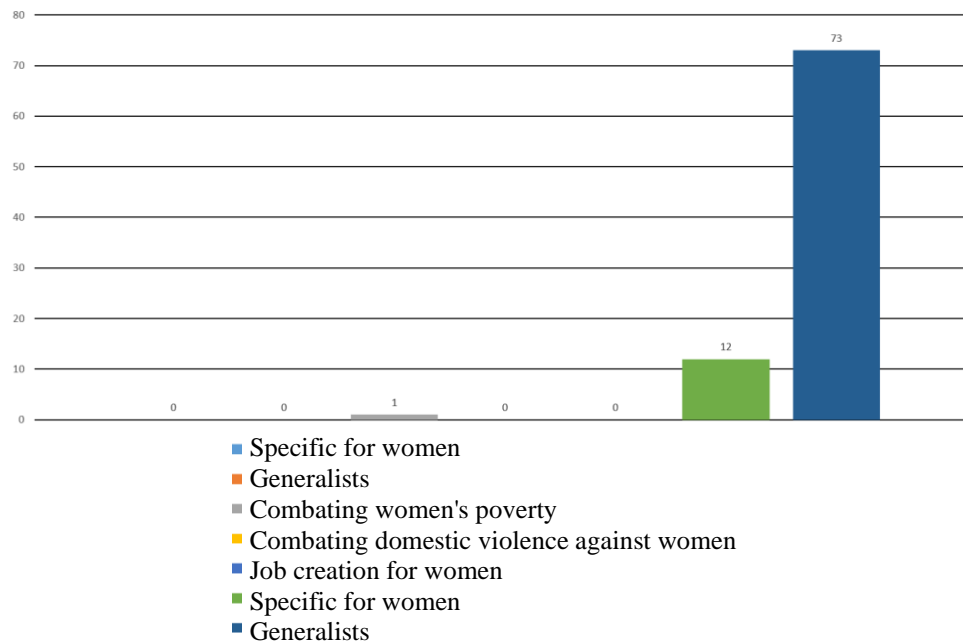
Murici Flower

Flor de Murici was invited to narrate about the propositions presented to meet the specific needs of women. In this regard, Deputy Flor de Murici reported the following:

At the time of my mother and at the time I joined, there were gender discussions, but they were not as striking as they are now, right? And because my mother was from the social sector and I was focused on the area of education, the female public in these two areas brought the demands. So we lived with many mothers, many women, many grandmothers. What were the great difficulties that still belong to women today? It's where to put the children, it's the school, it's the health issue. So this is a very strong concern of women and we sought to revert this in services and in matters, this is the role of the legislature (Flor de Murici, 2022).

Flor de Murici reveals that the term gender was not in evidence at the time she began her political life, however she described, from her perspective, what she understands as the specific needs of women, which, for her, are duly met. It can be seen that the parliamentarian Flor de Murici sought to convince the interviewer that, in her time, the specific needs of women were focused on the demands in the area of education and health. At this point, a question was raised: "What were the great difficulties, and what still are today, for women?" She replied: "It's where to put the children, it's the school, it's the health issue." About this aspect of Flor de Murici's narrative, analyzed from Portelli (1997, p. 24), it is inferred that "[...] relying on an episode can be a way to highlight its importance", that is, it shows that, for her, meeting the specific needs of women is to act on demands that were attributed to women, as in the case of responsibility for children. To analyze the propositions of bills presented by Flor de Murici, we present Graph 1.

Graph 1 - Parliamentary performance of Flor de Murici by Category



Source: Prepared by the authors based on data from the LEGIS and SAPL systems (2023).

Graph 1 shows that the deputy presented 73 generalist bills, such as the PL that provides for the creation of the fourteenth salary for state public education professionals, thus confirming her narrative of working in the area of education: "I focused on the area of education". She also presented 12⁴ bills in specific areas for women, such as the PL that provides for the granting of the right to an annual time off to carry out breast and cervical cancer control exams; and a bill to combat women's poverty, such as the PL that provides for differentiated care for women heads of household in popular housing programs.

Although the parliamentarian has few proposals for bills that comprehensively contemplate the gender perspective, it is observed, in her narrative, a discourse sensitive to the specific issues of women, demonstrating a concern with creating policies focused on their rights:

So, for example, my mother was the first female state deputy in Tocantins, and she sought to implement a state council for the defense of women's rights at the time, but she was unable to implement it at the time. When I took over, the first thing she told me, you are going to create CEDIM. I presented the council's bill at her suggestion, and at the time we managed to approve it, because it did not exist in the state of Tocantins or in the municipalities, it was something that was being born in many states, and it was created at that time in my 1998 term, we managed to approve it, **the government accepted** and sanctioned the creation of these councils, that exist to this day (Flor de Murici, 2022, emphasis added).

It was possible to see with the term "the government accepted" that, even when the propositions are presented by the deputies, if there is no support from peers and the government, the proposals, consequently, are not approved and sanctioned in law. With the analysis of the narratives, combined with the analysis of the documents referring to the bills, it was identified that Deputy Flor de Murici concentrated her work in generalist areas. It is noted the emphasis on assistance service, mentioned by the parliamentarians, especially those with family ties and with municipal management. According to Pinheiro (2007), women can exercise political power in an equal way as men, but sometimes they are concentrated in nests of social policy areas because these are the spaces available to them. Regarding social agendas aimed at women, Flor de Murici shared the following:

My mother during the whole time she was first lady and then state deputy and then federal and I continued, we had an office here. So in this office we did social service. So there has always been this care process

⁴The number of bills associated with the gender perspective is due both to what was narrated by parliamentarian Flor de Murici: "at the time I joined, there were discussions of gender, but they were not as striking as they are now, right?", and to the absence of records by the Legislative Assembly. In this regard, the research on the performance of parliamentarian Flor de Murici was carried out on handwritten files, which may not reveal the reality of what happened. The advisor to the Legislative Directorate warned that many documents with the bill proposals of the deputies have not been cataloged and digitized and may have been lost, so they are not available for consultation.

in the health area and a lot in the social area (Flor de Murici, 2022).

Miguel (2021) argues that women's involvement in the social sphere can be correlated with the acceptance of their electorate, the receptivity of the media, and the relationship with their peers in the political field. This may explain why their entry and performance, that is, their political trajectory, are linked to the political capital delegated to their families. Therefore, the social area, which for years has been the focus of intervention by their families, works as a strategy to maintain their presence in politics.

As Barbosa (2019, p. 219) points out, women, "those linked to family members in politics, insist on following the ideas of husbands or fathers and actions from their families' experience in politics". This fact may explain the performance in the social area of the female deputies from Tocantins, since women, in order to remain in power, work in this area. This scenario refers to the reflection on the Lampedusa Pattern in the parliamentary performance of Tocantins, in which the subjects that are in power change, but the pattern of action of the political families remains.

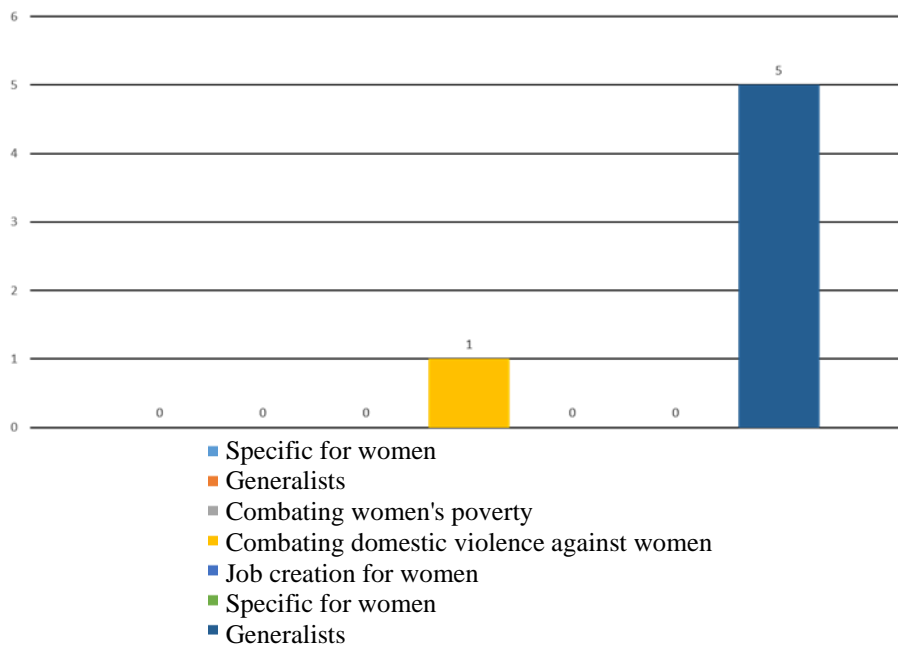
Babassu Flower

Deputy Flor de Babaçu, who also participated in the research, was invited to narrate about the propositions of specific laws for women. The parliamentarian pointed out that in her time gender agendas were not discussed so openly.

I didn't have this concern, what I had was when we went to women's congresses, I don't remember doing any for women. I'm not very satisfied with my first term, I think I failed a lot (Flor de Babaçu, 2022).

Although Flor de Babaçu informed that she did not propose any specific policy for women: "I don't remember doing any for women", in the documentary analysis, it was observed that the parliamentarian presented a bill in the area of combating domestic violence, as shown in Graph 3.

Graph 2 - Parliamentary performance of Flor de Babaçu by category



Source: Prepared by the authors based on data from the LEGIS and SAPL systems (2023).

Graph 3 shows that the parliamentarian presented five proposals for bills in generalist areas, such as the PL that provides for the realization of the State Census of Persons with Physical and Mental Disabilities by the State Executive Branch and a proposal for a bill in the area of domestic violence, such as the PL that provides for the institution of the service to Combat Violence Against Women in the State of Tocantins.

The reason for the forgetfulness may be associated with the fact that all their proposals have been shelved or rejected the feeling of dissatisfaction with their performance may be directly related to the restricted freedom of action. Regarding the performance of women in the Legislative Assembly of Tocantins, during the period in which the parliamentarian fulfilled her term, she reported:

I think they didn't accept women well there in the plenary, and the governor wasn't one to accept us there in the plenary either (Flor de Babaçu, 2022).

Analyzing this narrative, it is evident that the space of the assembly is predominantly male and permeated by sexist attitudes. Rezende (2021) argues that the formal conquest of rights is not enough to guarantee women's

equal participation in spaces of power. At other times in the interview, Flor de Babaçu highlighted that her performance as a parliamentarian was very difficult, especially in relation to the processing of bills, which, for her, is due to the fact that she belonged to a party opposed to the government at the time of her term.

[...] my no, none was approved, none, none! It's because the governor, he was very difficult, if he had to approve, he would have to approve it for his! So much so that things go out for some and don't go out for others! (Babassu Flower, 2022)

The narrative of Flor de Babaçu demonstrates that the political game made his performance significantly difficult, to which it was possible to observe that the Legislature suffered interference from the government: "It's because the governor, he was very difficult", revealing that the bills, in order to be proposed and, consequently, approved, passed through the governor's scrutiny: "If I had to approve, he told him to approve it for his! So much so that things go out for some and don't go out for others," revealing the controlling character of the government at that time. It was identified that the parliamentarian Flor de Babaçu acted in a restricted way in an authoritarian and sexist government. Thus, "even having come a long way towards equality, women who politically aspire to spaces of power are still perceived as a real threat to the political privileges of many men" (Matos, 2020, p. 113).

The analysis of the narratives combined with the documents referring to the bills showed that the deputy concentrated her work in generalist areas. Graph 4 shows the panorama of the processing of the propositions of Flor de Babaçu.

Buriti Flower

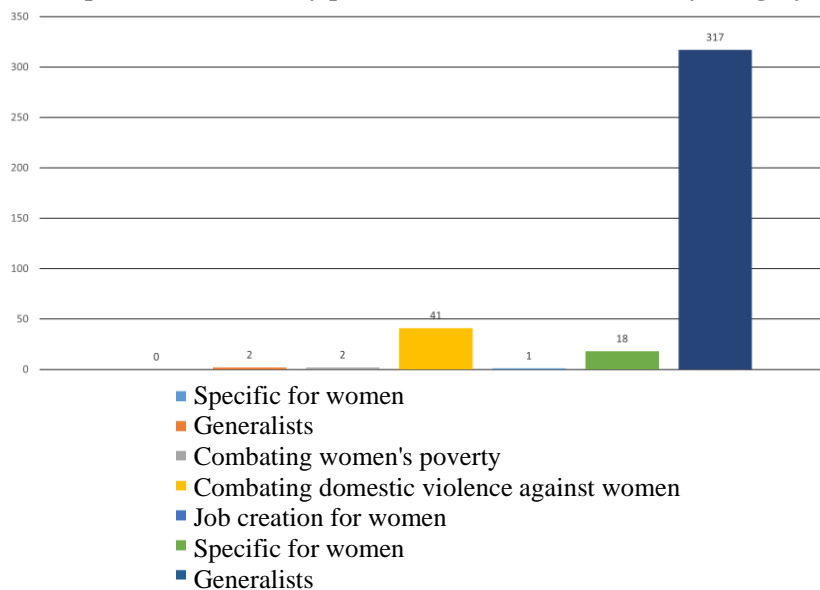
When invited to narrate about her specific proposals for women in her work, Flor de Buriti reported on policies in the area of combating domestic violence.

Look, our work is very broad, it serves several areas, there are several projects that serve women, there is one that I consider very important, which is the Maria da Penha Patrol, the law that regulates the Patrol is my authorship and we know that it is absurd nowadays for a woman to be raped (Flor de Buriti, 2022).

The bill that regulated the Maria da Penha Patrol consists of a national policy that was institutionalized in Tocantins, through the referral proposed by Flor de Buriti. During the interviews, it was noticed that, for the parliamentarians, not only for Flor de Buriti, when talking about specific policies for women, domestic violence always refers to it. In this specific case, the parliamentarian emphasized that her work is broad, serving several areas, and that, despite having many proposals for legislation for women, she serves the population as a whole. This prominence realized and attributed in his broad performance and in Tocantins as a whole can be understood through what Portelli (1997) places as elements of the narrative perceptible only to the attentive eye of researchers.

Regarding the proposition of specific legislation for women, the physical and digital documentation with the proposals for laws presented by Flor de Buriti during the period of her mandates were analyzed, as observed in Graph 5.

Graph 3 - Parliamentary performance of Flor de Buriti by category



Source: Prepared by the authors based on data from the LEGIS and SAPL systems (2023).

It can be seen from Graph 5 that Flor de Buriti presented more projects in generalist areas, in all there were 31 proposals, such as the PL that provides for the institution of the last week of April as the Week Dedicated

to Health, Safety and Prevention of Risks in the Workplace in the State of Tocantins. In the area of combating domestic violence, there were a total of 41 projects, such as the Bill that deals with the Program to Combat Sexual Harassment in Public Transport within the State of Tocantins. In the area of propositions of specific projects for women, there were 18, such as the Bill that provides for the prohibition of health professionals and health care or insurance plan operators from requiring the consent of a spouse or partner to perform or authorize procedures for the insertion of contraceptive methods. In the area of combating poverty, Graph 5 shows two proposals for bills presented, such as the Bill that provides for the State Program for the Evaluation of Policies and Economic Autonomy of Women. In the area of job creation for women, there was a proposal for a bill, the PL that provides for the reservation of twenty percent to women, of the vacancies offered in public competitions to fill positions in the Military Police and the Military Fire Department of the State of Tocantins. The data also show that the deputy allocated 11 parliamentary amendments to the areas of health, infrastructure and public safety.

In her narrative, the deputy made a point of emphasizing the Maria da Penha Patrol Bill, given the effective role that this law has in the protection of women. Flor de Buriti participated in this research in the presence of her advisor, for whom she asked for help to remember other bills that were specific to women, and reported "Let me remember, help me here", and was reminded of the Menstruation without Taboo Project.

[...] It was even a project that has already been shelved, and then it was approved, this project was presented and rejected 10 (ten) times, the tenth time it was approved. It provides the state with the opportunity to provide sanitary pads for people who cannot afford to buy their pads, many girls stop going to school, stop going to class, or use toilet paper, washcloth, right. The state has an obligation to make it available (Flor de Buriti, 2022).

About this bill, Flor de Buriti emphasized the difficulty in approving a project that took years to be sanctioned into law. It is observed that, since men are the majority in the composition of the Tocantins parliament, this agenda, which expresses a specific need of women, would hardly sensitize parliamentarians for discussion, approval and quick voting of the agenda in question. Still on this bill, Flor de Buriti informed that she presented an amendment for the acquisition of machines for the production of sanitary pads and geriatric frauds so that the inmates⁵ could produce these products and the state could distribute them free of charge. About this work, Flor de Buriti pointed out that: "The inmate making sanitary pads or geriatric diapers is a job that serves society, so it ends up that one thing connects with the other". Thus, her understanding is that this proposal would serve not only women, but society as a whole. Even so, the project took ten years to be approved: "This project was presented and rejected 10 times". Projects of this nature reveal that the parliamentarian, even though she perceives gender associated with domestic violence, has an expanded perception, since she demonstrates sensitivity to the physiological needs of women and the elderly.

Women's parliamentary action is also focused on combating gender oppression and promoting more opportunities for access and improvement in women's quality of life, however, when the political scenario does not reflect equity, there are obstacles to solving urgent and specific demands of women, as was the case with this project that took 10 years to be approved.

In this sense, Luzia Margareth Rago (2018, p. 603) clarifies that "the modern public space was defined as an essentially masculine sphere, in which women participated only as supporting actors". As a result, the role of women in the Legislature, which is responsible for formulating laws, needs to be directed towards the creation of legislation that promotes the inclusion and strengthening of aspects related to women's social and economic issues.

In addition, the lack of female representation in political positions is an undeniable challenge. The underrepresentation of women is evident in parliaments and government bodies, resulting in decisions devoid of authentic gender diversity. The lack of female role models in the political arena makes it difficult for other women to identify with this context, limiting interest and engagement in this area.

Regarding representativeness, Flor de Buriti narrates:

So, our female representation is very small. We have already made a lot of progress, but there is still a lot to achieve. Currently, there is real representation, but composed of a smaller group.

With these narratives, it is clear that the acceptance of women in the Assembly, considering that the number of women parliamentarians has always been smaller, is still not ideal, and state deputies need to resist and impose themselves to make room for their performance.

However, in relation to the substantial representation of women's rights and the specific proposition of gender policies, Flor de Buriti stated:

⁵Regarding women prisoners in Tocantins, data from the study carried out by Leonardo Carneiro, Michele Sousa, Igor Ayroza and Reijane Pinheiro da Silva (2022) indicate that there are 242 in number. Of these, most are aged between 35 and 45 years. With regard to race, most of the inmates are brown. The study also showed that women prisoners have a low level of education, thus demonstrating the importance of policies aimed specifically at this public.

[...] We have many projects that are not specific to women, but that benefit women directly, continued campaigns to fight head and neck cancer, Orange December ... There are many projects that are not specific to women, but benefit women and men and benefit the whole society.

Although Congresswoman Flor de Buriti has a very active participation in proposing bills aimed at women, her narrative makes it clear that women are included in broader public policies that benefit all of society. Lagarde (2015) argues that the view of gender is shaped by the cultural view of each person, so the reason why the performance of female parliamentarians in Tocantins does not seem to be linked to a broader gender perspective, with specific action for women, may be a consequence of their gender worldview, shaped in the core of their political families.

The deputy's need to affirm a work that meets the whole of society, not just the demands of women, is highlighted here. The parliamentarian's concern with showing incisively, repeatedly, that her work is for the whole of society, was observed during the interview. This statement may have occurred due to the election period, since the parliamentarian sought to convince the interviewer, like a voter, as can be seen in her narrative: "I work for women and men, I work for the society of Tocantins as a whole".

In addition, gender and political studies have indicated that "family relations" are one of the ways for women to enter politics, these women are "political heirs" to the political estate of their husbands, fathers/mothers, or brothers (Moritz, 2021). To a certain extent, the parliamentarian's behavior may be linked to the strategy of maintaining power, since her voting niche is linked to the capital delegated by her political family.

Pequi Flower

Congresswoman Flor de Pique, regarding the specific propositions for women, also related her work in this area to the fight against domestic violence against women, as follows:

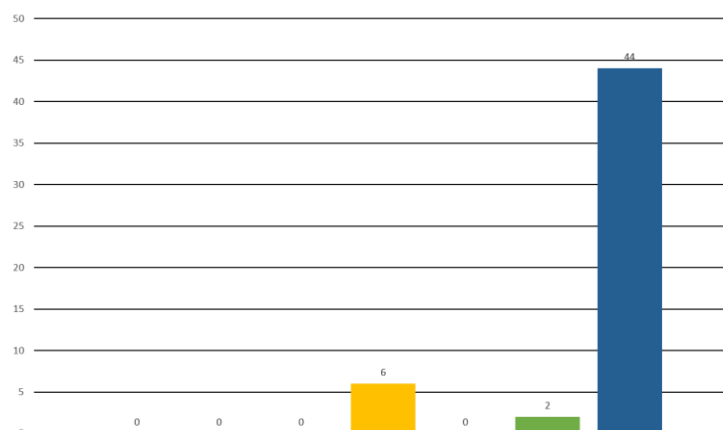
I see the number of women today who are raped... women seek protection and often do not get it and are murdered, so much violence, so much violence against women, the laws, so, in parliaments we present many projects (Flor de Pequi, 2022).

It was evident that when talking about gender, the first thought of the parliamentarians is about violence. The relationship that the parliamentarians establish between gender and gender violence is latent, as evidenced in many moments of the interviews.

Without intending to discriminate against the work of parliamentarians and reduce their performance to criticism, Barreira (2021, p.624) uses the idea, in which "it is possible to raise the hypothesis that the forms of constitution of political capital have an impact on the defense of 'causes' that are effective in the context of social rights". This emphasis on the relationship that parliamentarians make between gender policies and domestic violence does not seek to disregard their actions, but to reflect on the narratives and performance of parliamentarians from Tocantins. The specific bills for women proposed by parliamentarian Flor de Pequi are summarized in Graph 7.

According to Graph 7, Flor de Pequi presented more projects in generalist areas, in total there were 44 proposals, such as the PL that provides for the institution of the Minha Certidão Program, aiming at the issuance of the Birth Certificate before hospital discharge, within the hospitals and maternity hospitals where the birth occurs. In the area of combating domestic violence against women, there were a total of six proposals for legislation, such as the Bill that deals with the Support Program for Women Victims of Violence in the state of Tocantins. In the area of specific bills for women, parliamentarian Flor de Pequi presented two, such as the Bill that establishes the Week for the Prevention and Combat of Postpartum Depression and Reduction of Maternal Death within the state of Tocantins.

Graph 4 - Parliamentary performance of Flor de Pequi by category



- Specific for women
- Generalists
- Combating women's poverty
- Combating domestic violence against women
- Job creation for women
- Specific for women
- Generalists

Source: Prepared by the authors based on data in the LEGIS and SAPL system (2023).

The parliamentarian related her work in the area of gender to domestic violence and highlighted that she presented many projects with this theme. According to Graph 7, this is one of the areas in which the parliamentarian presented projects, confirming her narrative. At another point in the interview, the deputy mentioned the propositions of gender projects, again relating specific policies for women with the area of violence against women.

[...] I presented a bill to guarantee so many percent of popular housing for women, women victims of violence and single mothers and they were approved. We are going to guarantee for women, and it was approved at the time, right, I don't know if they are still respecting, this proportion of having so much percent of housing for women heads of household. And the shelter house, at the time we improved a lot, we created the house and it was a very beautiful house, we received victims of violence, and it was a very beautiful job (Flor de Pequi, 2022).

In the narrative of Flor de Pequi, about the proposition of bills aimed at women victims of violence, a certain romanticization of the space that was prepared for women can be perceived: "A very beautiful house", as if a beautiful place were capable of mitigating the trauma suffered by these women. And he points out: "It was a very beautiful work", in his perspective, Flor de Pequi understood this work as something of great social importance. Romanticized constructions, such as the one elaborated by Flor de Pequi, reveal aspects of subjectivity, as the way in which people attribute meaning to their own experience, materializing it in the form of an argument (Portelli, 1996).

Deputy Flor de Pequi also highlighted her commitment to acting in the social sphere and how the influence of her family connection with municipalism shaped her approach and political performance.

Yes, since I entered politics and militated, my social appeal is very strong. It's not because I was first lady [...] but I've always had this appeal for the social, to fight for the less favored. I like this social policy, I always liked it and identified with it. As for the women's flag, I defend it [...] but I am not the one who defends only women's rights, my flag is the social one, that is what attracts me the most. In the Assembly, I tried to take the "Baby on Board" project, but we ran into the issue of not being able to burden the state. But at the time, I also asked the state to make it possible to provide a minimum wage that could be donated to needy women, so that they could go to decent maternity (Flor de Pequi, 2022).

However, although the work of the deputies is not strictly focused on the comprehensive defense of women's rights, the political representation of women plays a fundamental role in promoting inclusive actions that are sensitive to gender demands. This involves taking a closer look at women's specific issues, which often escape men's perception. In this context, it is worth highlighting the narrative of parliamentarian Flor de Pequi:

So, all this, we need to look at more carefully. When I saw that project to distribute sanitary pads, you know, there are people who think it's absurd. Who is the woman who can't afford tampons? Do you, do you? And when I presented it, I remember that some deputies said: "- What is this? Can a woman not afford to buy a bra? Panties?" I said: "- yes, yours does, now there are women who don't. So, these are the women that we would have to attend, to give a minimum of dignity" (Flor de Pequi, 2022).

The diversity of experiences that women bring with them enriches the political debate and can be a valuable contribution to the formulation of more inclusive policies. In this context, women's role in formal politics can play a crucial role in the development of affirmative public policies, aimed at combating discriminatory practices against women, gender violence, poverty, and vulnerabilities. The parliamentarian's report on male discourse shows how the specific needs of women are undervalued by men. With these narratives, it is clear that the acceptance of women in the Assembly, considering that the number of women parliamentarians has always been smaller, is still not ideal, and state deputies need to resist and impose themselves to make room for their performance. Flor de Pique shares her experience in relation to this issue, saying: "Politics is really sexist, most are men. Women need to survive in this environment, and, in addition, they are not seen as so capable. Sometimes, it is necessary to speak louder to impose yourself. I saw a lot of this in the Assembly in my first term." The parliamentarian's narrative highlights the constant doubt regarding her ability to act in the political field.

Despite the advances achieved in recent decades, women's role in the political sphere is still permeated by a complex set of difficulties and barriers, limiting their effective and equal participation in this crucial domain. Gender inequality, intrinsically rooted in political structures, engenders a series of challenges that hinder female engagement.

One of the first and most evident obstacles is ingrained machismo and gender stereotypes, which stand as imposing barriers for women in politics. They are often the target of sexist attacks, derogatory comments, and attempts to undermine their skills. The persistent undervaluation of their skills and knowledge constitutes a substantial impediment to the full manifestation of their potential.

Even the parliamentarians of Tocantins reproducing the role of traditional politics in expressing the largest number of propositions in a generalist area, when they act to solve specific demands of women, slip into the sexist position of the majority composition of the Tocantins parliament.

In addition, the lack of female representation in political positions is an undeniable challenge, as is the case in Tocantins. The underrepresentation of women is evident in parliaments and government bodies, resulting in decisions devoid of authentic gender diversity. Regarding the difficulties in approving the proposed bills presented, in the narratives it was perceived that, in addition to government intervention and peer acceptance for the approval of a proposed legislation, other elements that involve the bureaucratic and budgetary procedure must be considered, as stated in the narrative of Flor de Pequi.

[...] The laws, like, in parliament, we present many. When I was in the Assembly, there were many laws presented, but why do they stop in the committees? because it usually happens that these bills generate some expense, you know, either for the state or for the municipalities, and then they take us away, we can't, you know, present anything from a project that generates expenses, so it's very limited, right, it's very limited, the performance (Flor de Pequi, 2022).

According to the parliamentarian, the proposals go through the receiving table and are not always distributed to the permanent committees. This is due to several aspects, and the one mentioned by her concerns financial resources: "These bills generate some expense, right, either for the state or for the municipalities" and, therefore, they are shelved. Regarding the shelving of his PL propositions, Flor de Pequi attributes the cause not only to the defect of initiative, when the demand is the responsibility of the Executive Branch and generates expenses for the treasury, but above all due to the political game, highlighting that the processing and approval of the project depends on party interests.

I was an opposition deputy, my projects even without any vice, they didn't move, I wanted to, but there was no way, right, when you are a minority in committee and plenary, you are only in the discussion and on the rostrum (Flor de Pequi, 2022).

With the bills being rejected, the parliamentarian is left to fulfill a merely decorative function of what should be that of a deputy: "When you are a minority in committee and plenary, you only stay in the discussion and on the tribune". The narrative of Flor de Pequi highlights the need for the formation of a support bench, usually composed of party allies.

As it was possible to infer from the narrative of Flor de Pequi, composing a party with many representatives makes a difference in the political game, since this aspect can define whether its propositions will be shelved or will continue to be processed, and may reach approval.

With the analysis of the narratives and documentation containing the propositions of the bills presented by the deputy, it is observed that the parliamentarian works with a main focus on generalist areas, followed by the area of combating domestic violence, and, in her performance, the strong influence of social work is perceived.

Flor de Bacaba

During the interview with Deputy Flor de Bacaba, she asked herself about the specific propositions aimed at women. In her narrative, again, it was evident that, when referring to specific propositions for women, the deputy related her work in this area to violence against women.

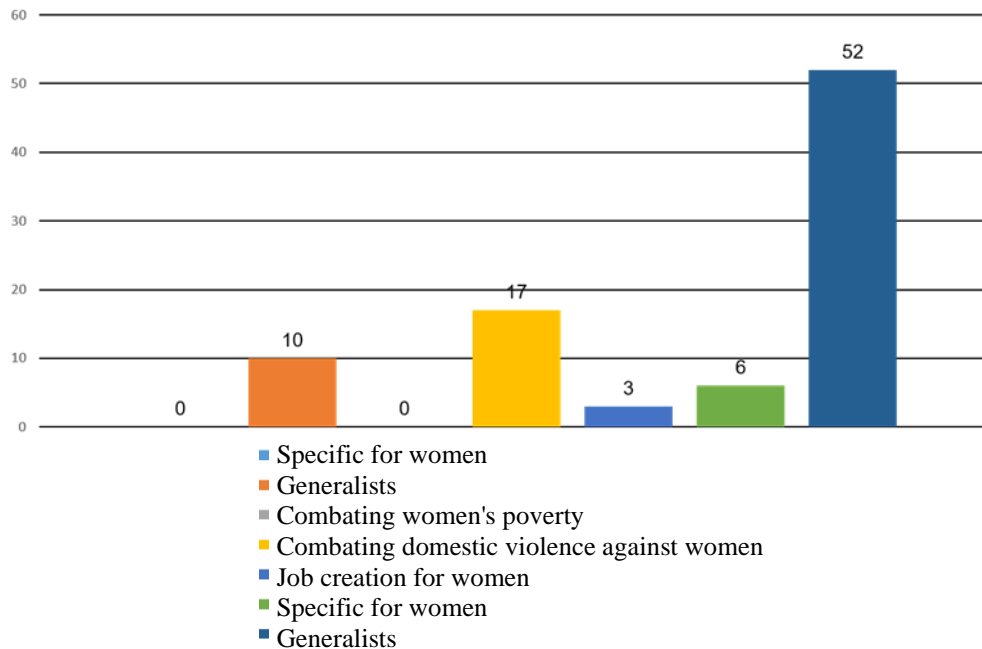
[...] The priority is the end of violence against women. Violence against women is still very high, we can't think it's normal, that it's common. I approved a law that establishes guidelines for the institution of the femicide orphans' program, strengthening the child and adolescent system, prioritizing the social worker's care for orphans of domestic violence, this project is very good (Flor de Bacaba, 2022).

It can be seen that although it establishes a connection between gender and the area of violence against women, Flor de Bacaba broadens the view on the protection of victims of violent relationships. In this case, the proposal was to reach the orphans of femicide. Regarding the difficulty of approving laws for women, parliamentarian Flor de Bacaba said: "The Orphans of Femicide project has become law, but it is not in action"; asked why she was not in action, the parliamentarian replied that the will of the Executive is necessary for legislation to become public policies on the government's agenda. The deputy was asked if she had already presented any bill in the area of promotion for women entrepreneurs or mothers, a topic present in gender discussions, which could demonstrate a broader view of the specific needs for women, she replied that: "In that sense no". However, the analysis of the legislation pointed out that the parliamentarian presented bills for job creation for women, but did not remember at the time of the interview.

Graph 9 summarizes the propositions of Deputy Flor de Bacaba. It can be seen that the deputy presented 52 generalist bills, such as the PL that provides for the incentive to the donation of medicines in the state of

Tocantins; 18 bills in areas in the fight against domestic violence, such as the PL that provides for the obligation of bars, restaurants and nightclubs to adopt measures to help women who feel at risk; three bills in the area of job creation for women, such as the Bill that establishes the State Policy for Technical and Professional Qualification of Women Victims of Domestic and Family Violence in the state of Tocantins. She also presented six specific bills for women, such as PL No. 280/2016, which deals with the creation of a support and care program for alcoholic women. Graph 9 also shows that the parliamentarian allocated 10 amendments to the areas of health, education and infrastructure.

Graph 5 - Parliamentary performance of Flor de Bacaba by category



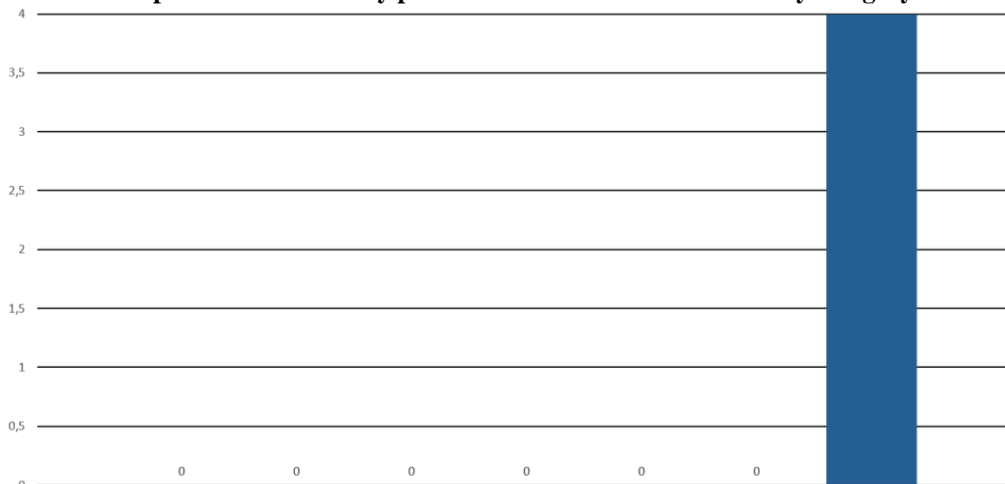
Source: Prepared by the authors based on data from the LEGIS and SAPL systems (2023).

From the analysis of the narratives and documentation containing the propositions of the bills presented by the deputy, it was observed that the parliamentarian works with a main focus on generalist areas, followed by the area of combating domestic violence.

Macaúba Flower

The analysis of Flor de Macaúba's propositions was carried out through the documents, because, in the oral history interview, she said she did not remember her propositions: "Girl, it's been so long, I don't remember". Flor de Macaúba's term took place 33 years ago. This aspect can explain the forgetfulness about specific topics, as is the case with his propositions. Graph 11 summarizes this parliamentary performance.

Graph 6 - Parliamentary performance of Flor de Macaúba by category



- Specific for women
- Generalists
- Combating women's poverty
- Combating domestic violence against women
- Job creation for women
- Specific for women
- Generalists

Source: Prepared by the authors based on data from the LEGIS and SAPL systems (2023).

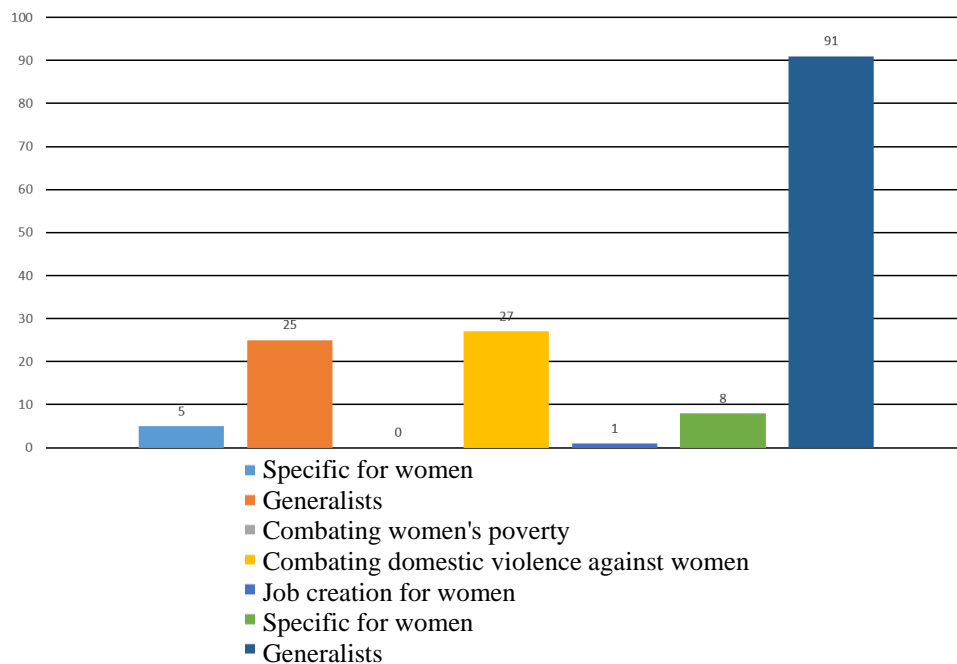
Graph 11 shows that the deputy presented four proposals for projects in the generalist area, such as the Bill that provides for the denomination of the Agricultural Penitentiary of Gurupi. The performance of parliamentarian Flor de Macaúba took place in the context of the creation of the state of Tocantins, in which the Legislative, Executive and Judicial Powers were being sedimented, including the seat of the Legislative Power was installed in a provisional and precarious way. According to information provided by the advisor to the Legislative Directorate of the Assembly, there are few records of legislative action from that period.

From Graph 11, it is also identified that, like the other deputies, the largest number of bills is in the category of generalist proposals, demonstrating that this area still represents the priority of their action.

Puçá Flower

Graph 13 summarizes the propositions of Deputy Flor de Puçá. It can be seen that the deputy presented 91 generalist bills, such as the PL that provides for the institution of the Young Worker Program in the public administration of the state of Tocantins; 27 bills in areas in the fight against domestic violence, such as the Bill that provides for the electronic monitoring of aggressors of domestic and family violence against women, their family members and/or witnesses, within the scope of the state of Tocantins; eight specific bills for women, such as the PL that deals with the creation of the Program to Encourage the Practice of Women's Soccer, in the state of Tocantins; a bill in the area of job creation for women, the PL that provides for the State Policy of technical and professional qualification and provides for the availability of specific vacancies for women victims of domestic and family violence in the state of Tocantins.

Graph 7 - Parliamentary performance of Flor de Puçá by category



Source: Prepared by the authors based on data in the LEGIS and SAPL system (2023).

Graph 13 also shows that the parliamentarian allocated 25 generalist parliamentary amendments in the areas of health, education, infrastructure, social assistance and public security and five specific amendments for women.

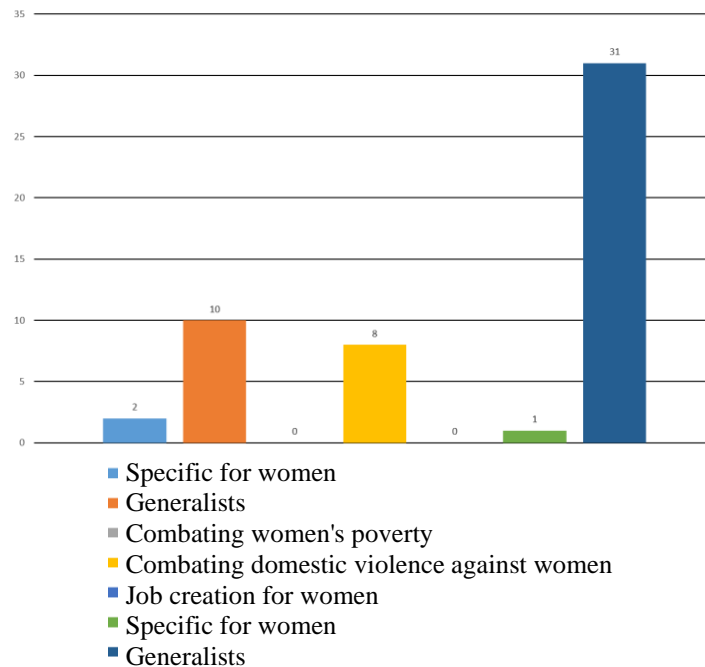
With the analysis of the documentation containing the propositions of the bills presented by the deputy, it is inferred that the parliamentarian acts with a main focus on generalist areas, followed by the area of combating

domestic violence.

Araçá Flower

The data from the documentary analysis of Flor de Araçá are presented, as shown in Graph 15. According to the data, the deputy presented 31 generalist bills, such as the PL that provides for the institution of the Chambaril Festival of Paraíso do Tocantins as an event on the official tourist calendar of the state of Tocantins; eight bills for the area of combating domestic violence against women, such as the Bill that provides for the training of professionals in the area of beauty and aesthetics, so that they can be multipliers of information in the fight against domestic and family violence and a specific bill for women, the Bill that institutes the cervical cancer prevention campaign called "Lilac March Movement", within the state of Tocantins.

Graph 8 - Parliamentary performance of Flor de Araçá by category



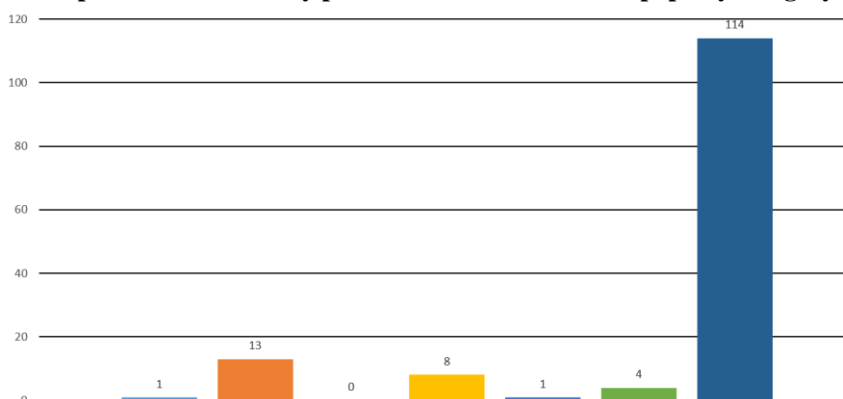
Source: Prepared by the authors based on data from the LEGIS and SAPL systems (2023).

Graph 15 also shows that the parliamentarian allocated 10 generalist parliamentary amendments in the areas of tourism, sports, education, infrastructure, social assistance and public security and a specific amendment for women. From the analysis of the documentation of the propositions of the bills presented by the deputy, it is concluded that the parliamentarian works with a main focus on generalist areas, followed by the area of combating domestic violence.

Jenipapo Flower

The data from the documentary analysis of Flor de Jenipapo, shown in Graph 17, are presented.

Graph 9 - Parliamentary performance of Flor de Jenipapo by category



- Specific for women
- Generalists
- Combating women's poverty
- Combating domestic violence against women
- Job creation for women
- Specific for women
- Generalists

Source: Prepared by the authors based on data from the LEGIS and SAPL systems (2023).

Graph 17 informs that the deputy presented 114 generalist bills, such as the PL that provides for the mandatory nature of the little heart test (pulse oximetry) in children immediately after birth, between 24 and 48 hours of life, in maternity hospitals and similar hospitals in the state of Tocantins; eight bills for the area of combating domestic violence against women, such as the PL that provides for the mandatory dissemination of advertisements against violence against women at public and private events; four specific bills for women, such as the PL that establishes the Day of the Entrepreneurial Women of Tocantins; a bill in the specific area of job creation for women, which provides for the exemption of the registration fee in public tenders for women who have participated in the last two years of the breastfeeding program.

IV. Conclusion

This study analyzed the performance of state deputies in Tocantins, with the objective of verifying whether they prioritize the gender perspective in their legislative activities. The results revealed that, in general, the parliamentarians focused on legislative proposals of a generalist nature, aimed at society as a whole. When they focus on specific issues for women, it is notorious that the area of domestic violence receives priority. However, other important demands, such as job creation, fighting poverty, and allocating resources to women, which are crucial for promoting gender equality, have been little explored.

Based on Lagarde (1996), a broader approach to the gender perspective should include these themes, aiming not only to solve urgent issues, but also to structure public policies aimed at improving women's lives. Although the deputies show sensitivity to some of these demands, the predominance of proposals aimed at combating domestic violence indicates a limited view of the diversity of women's needs. As a result, the interaction between the politics of presence and the politics of ideas was weakened, since the presence of women in the political scene was not sufficient to guarantee a comprehensive representation of their interests.

Another challenge identified was the difficulty that female deputies face in approving specific policies for women. The analysis pointed out that the absence of political support, low individual political capital and concerns about the costs for the Executive are factors that often make the approval of these proposals unfeasible. This reflects a legislative environment that is not yet fully prepared to welcome gender demands as a structural priority.

In addition, female deputies often choose to identify themselves as active in broader social areas, rather than explicitly defending gender agendas. This choice may be related to the desire to preserve their electoral niches, especially in contexts where family political support plays a central role. The assumption that "everything changes so that everything remains the same" was thus corroborated, since, despite the changes in the presence of women, the political dynamics of gender remained little transformed.

This study contributes to the understanding of how the gender perspective is (or is not) integrated in the legislative activities of female deputies from Tocantins and, more broadly, to the debate on the underrepresentation of women in Brazilian politics. He suggests that the presence of women alone is not enough to guarantee the promotion of gender policies. To change this scenario, political strategies that combine presence and ideas are needed, with a focus on promoting greater gender equality.

Future studies can explore the relationship between individual political capital of parliamentarians and their ability to promote gender policies, investigating how strategic alliances within the legislature can strengthen this agenda. In addition, research can address how the support of social movements and feminist organizations can influence the advancement of these agendas in the formal political scenario. Finally, the comparative analysis between Brazilian states can bring insights into regional variations in legislative behavior in relation to gender issues.

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