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## How does IR study children? A Brazilian perspective from the field<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

Children, or people under 18 years-old, represent 30% of the world population. While Childhood Studies gained attention in the last decades, in Brazil this topic remains incipient. In 2022 the Group of Studies on Childhoods and International Relations (GEIRI) mapped the open depositories for dissertations of Brazilian universities with IR programmes to understand how children appear as an IR issue. Using the framework of Global IR, this article presents two main contributions by analysing this novel data: a) ontological contribution by understanding Childhood Studies as a Global IR topic and Brazilian practices and interactions to see IR outside of a Western perspective and b) methodological contribution by analysing how students contribute to the IR knowledge production on Children and IR in Brazil mostly as international security and human rights issues.

**Keywords:** children; childhoods; IR discipline; Brazil; GEIRI; Global IR.

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### Introduction

Children, or people under 18 years of age, represent 30.0% of the world population (United Nations Children's Fund 2022). Children live in all countries. They fight, they buy, they work, they migrate, they participate in international conferences and activism – that is – they are important actors in international relations that tend not to be recognised as such (Watson 2006). There is an international consensus that children have rights and should be protected which was consolidated with the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1989 (United Nations 1990). At the same time, children appear in international discourses as victims and justifications for international

<sup>1</sup> We use the alphabetical order to determinate the authorship order. All authors contributed equally in this article.

and national policies. However, children do not receive a lot of attention in the International Relations (IR) discipline.

While the interdisciplinary field of Childhood Studies was created in 1990, the first studies advocating for the recognition of children and childhoods in International Relations came later in the 2000s (Beier 2020a), especially with the two foundational publications in 2006: Ali Watson's article "Children and International Relations: a new site of knowledge?" and the first edition of the book "Who's afraid of children?: Children, conflict and international relations" by Helen Brocklehurst. Since then, other authors have reflected on different children and childhoods in the discipline of IR. Important contributions (among others) include the book "Discovering Childhood Studies" in 2020b and the Special Issue of the journal *Critical Studies on Security* "Children, Childhoods, and Security Studies"<sup>2</sup> in 2015. However, most of these contributions, published in English, came from Western places of IR knowledge production.

While these reflections on childhoods in the IR discipline happen at the international level and suffer many barriers to be recognised as "traditional IR", there is a lack of understanding in how children have been studied in the IR discipline beyond the West. Acharya (2016, p. 5) explains that a Global IR perspective "draws from a broad canvass of human interactions, with their multiple origins, patterns, and distinctions, to challenge IR's existing boundary markers set by dominant American and Western scholarship and encourage new understandings and approaches to the study of world politics". This article contributes to this Global IR approach by explaining how Children and IR<sup>3</sup> appears in the IR discipline in Brazil considering how undergraduate (UG), Masters (MA) and PhDs dissertations approached this topic in Brazil. Brazil is the largest country in Latin America with a consolidated IR discipline including many IR programmes (UG, MA, PhD), a national IR Academic Association, the Brazilian Association of International Relations (*Associação Brasileira de Relações Internacionais*)<sup>4</sup> and academic journals publishing IR research especially the *Revista Brasileira de Relações Internacionais* (RBPI)<sup>5</sup> and *Contexto Internacional*<sup>6</sup>. However, Brazilian IR knowledge (and Latin American IR knowledge in general) does not receive so much attention in the discipline as perspectives from the West (Deciancio 2016).

Brazilian IR researchers have also paid attention to childhoods by reflecting on how different discourses on children, especially children involved in armed conflicts and migrant children construct the 'international' (Martuscelli 2014; Martuscelli and Villa 2018; Paiva 2018; Tabak 2020; Taquece 2021). Besides that, MA students interested in developing their studies on Children and IR created the Group of Studies on Childhoods and International Relations (GEIRI) (*Grupo de Estudos sobre Infâncias e Relações Internacionais*) in 2021 by. In July 2022,

<sup>2</sup> *Critical Studies on Security* 3, no. 1 (2015). <https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/rcss20/3/1>

<sup>3</sup> In this article, we use the term "Children and IR" to refer to works reflecting on children and childhoods in international relations.

<sup>4</sup> Brazilian Association of International Relations 2022.

<sup>5</sup> Scientific Electronic Library Online – Scielo. *Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional*. <https://www.scielo.br/j/rbpi/>

<sup>6</sup> See the webpage of *Contexto Internacional* <http://contextointernacional.iri.puc-rio.br/cgi/cgilua.exe/sys/start.htm?tpl=home>

GEIRI organised the I Symposium of Childhoods and International Relations (SIRI) (*Simpósio de Infâncias e Relações Internacionais*). This online event was the first conference completely devoted to Children and IR in Brazil.

Acharya (2016, p. 5) explains that “Global IR knowledge can be sourced from “practices and interactions in the non-western world”. We understand that IR teaching and student’s research through their dissertations should be perceived as an important practice and interaction for the Global IR knowledge production. Children continue not to be a topic in IR teaching in many parts of the world. Therefore, it is not expected to see many UG, MA and PhD Dissertations on the topic. However, in Brazil, the report: *Os Estudos sobre infâncias e Relações Internacionais no Brasil: um levantamento acerca das pesquisas na área* (Silva et al. 2022) published by GEIRI mapped this data.<sup>7</sup> We employed this data to reflect on the Brazilian IR Knowledge production on Children and IR as a Global IR practice and interaction. This paper then considers Children and IR from a Brazilian perspective as a way to produce a Global IR that goes beyond traditional concepts and theories produced in Western countries.

The report mapped the open depositories for dissertations of Brazilian universities with IR programmes in the entire country to understand how children appear as an IR issue. We then conducted a thematic content analysis of the titles and abstracts and we came up with five major themes: “International Security”, “Human Rights”, “Development”, “Theory of International Relations” and “Others”<sup>8</sup>. We employed these categories to classify the complete works. Analysing these works produced by students and PhD candidates gives us an idea of what IR students are learning and what they are interested in researching. This study then contributes to the Global IR agenda by explaining how Childhood Studies appears in Brazilian IR Knowledge produced by students and PhD Candidates.

In summary, our contribution, as part of the Global IR agenda, is to shed light on this scientific production in an important effort to understand how the Children and IR agenda is consolidating in Brazil, and what are the next steps. Through the analysis of unpublished data on Brazilian academic production in the field of Children and IR, we find that the themes studied follow global trends of emphasising issues related to International Security and Human Rights. As reflected by Acharya (2016, p. 6) “Western and non-Western approaches to IR can converge or find common ground and be mutually reinforcing”. We believe that mapping this scholarly production in the Brazilian context will contribute to a better understanding of the complexity of IR as an evolving global discipline. In addition, we will contribute to recognising the interdisciplinary nature of Childhood Studies. Furthermore, our study has the potential to be replicated across

<sup>7</sup> Two authors are the coordinators of GEIRI and they also coordinated the work to map these documents with the members of GEIRI to produce a report on the topic. The two other authors contributed to the report with critical reflections on Children and IR in Brazil. The full report in Portuguese is available at: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/11jPAmS0Me8GZW-Al-eJfNZmDGE2k4wr>

<sup>8</sup> For a detailed reflection on the methodology including the limitations of this study, please refer to the report in Portuguese: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/11jPAmS0Me8GZW-Al-eJfNZmDGE2k4wr>

different national contexts, which would be another important contribution to the Global IR discipline by perceiving different national practices and interactions in IR knowledge production.

This article is divided into other four parts besides this introduction. The first part discusses the literature on Children in IR. The following section presents how the discipline of IR was created and developed in Brazil and developments on children discussions in the country. We show an increase in the number of IR programmes including new BA and MA courses and PhD programmes since the opening of the first IR course at the Universidade de Brasília (UnB) in the Brazilian capital in 1974. There is a concentration of IR programmes in the Southeast of Brazil (composed of the states of São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Minas Gerais and Espírito Santo), but we see IR programmes in all 5 Brazilian regions. The fourth section discusses our results. While Children and IR still receive little attention from IR students and PhD Candidates in Brazil, we perceive an increase in the number of works that approach children from an International Security, Human Rights and Development perspective. Our conclusion section discusses our findings considering the possibility to continue to reflect on how Children appear in IR in Brazil and other national contexts as a Global IR approach.

## Children in International Relations

The presence of children in the international scenario and the relation between international politics and childhood is not new. Children have been present in historical events and in research developed in IR. However, we can say that they appear marginally often as victims of violence rescued by States and objects of adult protection (Lee-Koo 2011; Heathcote 2017). Especially in the study of wars and International Security Studies, children are often identified as the main victims of violence caused by armed conflicts, gaining prominence in analyses that address humanitarianism, international interventions, and the work of international organisations (Ruiz-Casares et al. 2017; Watson 2006). In general, we can say that children were present in the discipline as supporting actors in international events narrated by adults in a State-centric Western perspective, in which States are still the main focus of analysis.

The recent more pronounced interest on children in the IR discipline can be explained in the light of four main interrelated aspects:

- 1) New contributions and greater openness in the IR discipline itself, challenging the mainstream areas and bringing more theoretical alternative views to the discipline;
- 2) Emergence and consolidation of human security, bringing the focus of analysis and attention to the individual;
- 3) Development of Childhood Studies, problematizing the ideal of child and childhood and pointing to the construction of the child as a social actor;
- 4) Increasing development of a literature that discusses, deepens and draws bridges

between International Relations, children, and childhoods.

Concerning the first aspect, we can notice that Constructivist and Feminist theories applied to International Relations are examples of a broader and deeper understanding of the need to bring other actors and interpretations that transcend the State-centric logic, especially in the post-Cold War context (Enloe 2014; Guzzini and Leander 2005; Hansen 2000; Tickner 1992). Specially the Feminist Studies in IR provoke a reflection on the spaces mostly occupied by men in positions of power, while women, when mentioned, appear in the margins of the analysis. The expression “womenandchildren”<sup>9</sup> frequently used in international politics summarises how children and women are often portrayed almost indiscriminately as victims of violence and vulnerable parties, reducing their respective roles, without, however, paying attention to the particularities of either women or children (Enloe 2014).

In relation to the second aspect, the emergence and consolidation of the concept of Human Security is the result of a process of expanding and deepening the concept of security. In a narrow sense, Human Security refers to the physical security of people from violence and armed conflict. From a broader perspective, the concept refers to a range of factors that threaten human well-being, development, and dignity (Krause 2005; 2008). It includes issues such as hunger, disease, and poverty (Bajpai 2003). Both of these approaches also draw attention to the physical safety and well-being of children, who are often the victims of different types of violence.

Regarding the third aspect, Childhood Studies has become an important term that includes multiple studies on children from different perspectives. The turn in the Sociology of Childhood can be traced down from the 1980s and 1990s when the studies on Sociology claimed the necessity to see children and childhood as social constructions and subjects of rights and agency. Various disciplines such as Law, Geographies, Anthropology, and International Relations joined these efforts to deepen the studies of children. This influenced not only the literature on children but the practices and actions about and with children, for example, the advocacy for children’s rights.

On a general basis, Childhood Studies, mainly in the United Kingdom and the United States of America, were an attempt to contest rules of child development and family studies and shift the perception toward a more sociological look of the child as a social actor and not only a receptacle of adult wishes, cultures, and norms (Jamielson and Milne 2014; Sarmiento 2012). This is also a way of looking to children as beings in transformation and to tension the dichotomic view of adults as matured beings and children as immature, incomplete, and helpless victims - which leads to exclusion and negation (or at least sub-estimation) - of their citizenship and rights (Qvortrup 1994). In that way, we can stress the importance of Childhood Studies in bringing together different disciplines that recognize the necessity of thinking about new alternatives to adulthood perspectives (James and Prout 1990). By doing so, new and more profound studies on

<sup>9</sup> In the author’s words, “in the torrent of media images that accompany an international crisis, women are typically visible as symbols, victims or dependents. ‘Womenandchildren’ rolls easily from the network’s tongues, because in the network’s minds women are family members rather than independent actors, presumably almost childlike in their innocence of international realpolitik.” (Enloe 1993, 166).

children emerged. In terms of the research agenda, there were room for topics like child sex work (Montgomery 2009), street children (Hecht 1998), and “childhood citizenship” (Sarmiento 2012).

Nevertheless, Jamielson and Milne (2014) argue that Childhood Studies have created new paradigms that have been little problematised such as affirming children and childhood as social constructions; children as social actors and agents; and the importance of considering children’s voices and participation. Besides that, most of this literature comes from Western countries.

Finally, regarding the fourth aspect, it is possible to recognize an increasing literature on “Children and IR”. This literature consists of the production, explanation, and strengthening of bridges between children as social actors and International Relations. Seen in its broad sense, the task of questioning the state-centric and Western logic of the IR discipline can be enriched with the help of Childhood Studies and other sociological, anthropological, historical, and ethnographic studies on children, especially considering the knowledge production beyond the West.

International Relations have already gained various critical contributions involving children: such as iconographic of childhood in global politics (Berents 2020; Burman 1994); children involved in armed conflicts, child soldiers and armed violence against children during armed conflicts (Martuscelli 2015; Rosen 2005; 2015; Tabak 2014; 2020) and multiple acts of violence against children in international scenario – such as genocide and rape (Denov and Cadieux van Vliet 2020).

The literature has also dedicated to the study of children in international security contexts (Beier 2020b; Brocklehurst 2020); militarised children (Beier 2011; Lee-Koo 2011; Watson 2011); children and peacebuilding (Beier and Tabak 2021; Berents 2014; Berents and McEvoy-Levy 2015; Paiva 2016); and child migration (Bhabha 2014; Wells 2015). Based on insights from Childhood Studies, there are also discussions on the political participation of children in global politics (Caputo 2017; Ruiz-Casares et al. 2017) and international organisations and childhood, mainly critical views of the role of NGOs and the UN system on protecting children (Paiva 2021; Watson 2006).

In common, most of these authors propose to see the child as an actor and agent in international relations and draw relations between childhoods and global politics. The books “Discovering Childhood in International Relations” (Beier 2020b) and “Children, Childhoods, and Global Politics” (Beier and Berents 2023) emerge as reference work by bringing several studies on decolonizing children in IR; images of children; women, gender and children; childhood agency; militarization and child soldiering; child migration politics and reflections on the obligation to “save” the children in global politics. Thus, these books consolidate a multifaceted research agenda and discloses the challenges still faced when trying to analyse children in close relation with State’s power and international order.

We can also observe more interest in Children and IR in recent years by analysing IR scholars’ work presented at the International Studies Association Annual Conferences<sup>10</sup> (ISA). ISA is perceived as the main international academic association for IR scholars. Especially between 2018 and 2022,

<sup>10</sup> A complete list of all works mentioned in this part is available at the Supplementary Material.

we noticed a significant number of panels that specifically addressed children and childhood issues. The topics were varied and included several contemporary challenges, such as child marriage, refugee and migrant children, children and the coronavirus pandemic, child trafficking, indigenous children and child activists, children and armed conflict, child mortality, and child labour.

While there is this advance in the study of the interrelationships between children and IR, several challenges demand more research and attention including the methodological difficulties in studying children and IR. Interviews, fieldwork and iconographic analysis have been used as methods to try to capture children's perceptions and bring them to the Academic debate. There were also attempts to analyse the international perception of children, including which images of the child are constructed and disseminated by States, the media and international organisations.

There is also the difficulty of integrating the “agency” of the child in a discipline still dominated by a state-centric, Western and adult-centric view. This view is partly reinforced by the UN system and the child protection perspective, in which children are seen more as “incomplete and naïve beings” (Sarmiento 2012) and less as social actors with the potential of being agents of change and citizens in global politics. Taking insights from Childhood Studies and applying them to the discipline of IR by bringing a Global IR approach requires an effort to theorise the child and childhoods, think about the [often artificially imposed] boundaries of knowledge and problematize concepts and definitions without falling into simplistic dichotomies. Most literature on Children and IR is produced by established scholars in the field. We still lack a study that considers national practices and interactions of IR knowledge production in students' pieces. This article proposes a Global IR approach to Children and IR by considering a Brazilian perspective of knowledge production in the field.

## The institutionalisation of IR as a discipline in Brazil

Although the institutionalisation of the IR discipline in Brazil started around the 1970s and 1980s, similar to other Non-Western regions (Carvalho et al. 2021), this does not mean that debates about international politics were non-existent in the country before that. This section contributes to our effort of adopting a Global IR approach by highlighting how the IR discipline was institutionalised in Brazil. Although there is a consolidated literature on this issue, we decided to do this brief summary to situate an international audience that may not have had access to this literature that is mostly in Portuguese.

Between the 1950s and 1960s, a handful of initiatives around the IR discipline were created<sup>11</sup> — most of them with a strong focus on the Brazilian political context regarding Latin America and Brazil's role as a potential political leader in the region (Herz 2002; Miyamoto 1999; Vigevani et al.

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<sup>11</sup> Among them, we can highlight the creation of the *Instituto Brasileiro de Relações Internacionais (IBRI)*, in 1954 — which led to the launch of the journal *Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional (RBPI)* in 1958 — and the work done by the *Instituto Superior de Estudos Brasileiros (ISEB)*, created in 1955 (Vigevani et al. 2014).



2014). As Brazilian foreign policy and diplomacy started to expand, more plural debates on IR gained territory, as this was also happening internationally (Herz 2002). In 1973, for example, a module called “International Relations” was implemented in the graduate program of Social Science, at the *Universidade de São Paulo* (USP), followed by another called “International Politics” at the *Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo* (PUC-SP) in the Social Science program (Miyamoto 1999). The first IR course came shortly after in 1974 and, 10 years later, the first postgraduate IR programme in Brazil was created, both at UnB (Miyamoto 2003).

The growth of the IR discipline in Brazil in the last decades was concomitant to the presence of the country in the international community, which gained more visibility over the years (Barasoul and Silva 2016; Herz 2002; Miyamoto 1999). Thereafter, the development and institutionalisation of the discipline proceeded and gained momentum with the re-democratization process in the 1980s and throughout the 1990s. Along with that, globalisation was also a significant factor in promoting and making IR debates more prominent in the country.

This same growth led later to the creation of the Brazilian Association of International Relations in 2005 (ABRI). ABRI, the result of a collective effort among IR professionals, became an important institution working in the promotion of IR as a field of study in Brazil and valuing the Brazilian IR knowledge production, including by recognising the voice of IR students in the country. According to its website: “ABRI is an open and plural scientific association that aims to stimulate the academic-scientific production in International Relations and the improvement of undergraduate and postgraduate teachings in the area” (Brazilian Association of International Relations 2022). ABRI currently organises two bi-annual events: a National Meeting of its members and a Brazilian International Relations Seminar for undergraduate and postgraduate students. Just like in the international arena (ISA Annual Conferences), the last five years showed a steady and consistent submission of works on Children and IR, with about 2 to 3 papers presented per event in the last nine years<sup>12</sup>, which is an indication that this issue is also receiving more attention in the Brazilian IR knowledge production.

Currently, according to data on IR programmes in Brazil from the Brazilian government, there are 149 IR undergraduate and postgraduate programmes distributed along the Brazilian territories (Silva et al. 2022). This number has undergone exponential growth. In 1999, there were 21 IR programmes, growing to 97 programmes ten years later, which represented a growth of 361.9%. Since 2009, 52 more programmes have been created, representing another growth of 53.6% in the last 12 years. Among all the IR programmes in Brazil, 114 are in private institutions and 35 in public universities (Silva, Pereira and Guerra 2022)<sup>13</sup>.

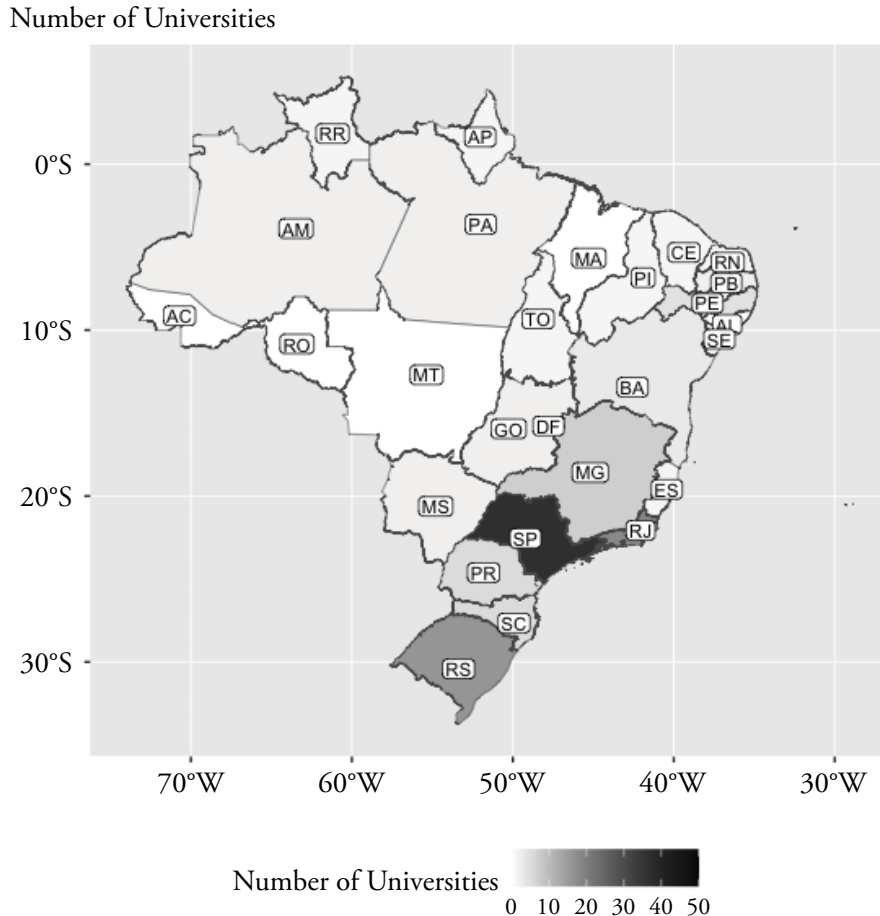
<sup>12</sup> All papers are listed in the Supplementary material.

<sup>13</sup> The Southeast region has 84 private and 15 public universities with IR programmes; in the South, we have 12 private and 7 public universities; in the Northeast, we have 7 private and 6 public institutions; then we have the Midwest with also 7 private and 3 public universities; and finally, the North region presents a total of 4 private and 4 public institutions.

Out of these 149 programmes<sup>14</sup>, we have a total of 128 undergraduate courses and 30 postgraduate programmes. Most UG courses are located in the Southeast and South regions: 95 courses (74.2%) and 15 courses (11.7%) respectively. The Center-West and the Northeast regions come next with 10 courses each (7.8%) and the North region has nine courses (6.3%). The Southeast also has the largest number of postgraduate programmes, with 15 programmes (50.0%). The South, Center-West, and Northeast regions have six (20.0%), five (16.6%), and four (13.4%) programmes, respectively. The North region has no post-graduate programmes in IR (Silva et al. 2022, 23-24).

Apart from the growth in the number of IR programmes in Brazil throughout the years, these numbers also show the predominance of IR courses in the Southeast and South regions of Brazil, which receive more public and private investment. Out of 26 states, the Southeast accumulates half of all IR programmes in the country as you can see on Map 1. Meanwhile, the North, Northeast, and Center-West regions, which accumulate a total of 19 states, register the lowest amount of graduate and post-graduate programmes in the country. This reality is a direct result of Brazil's political history, which has prioritised the Southeast region throughout the centuries, especially the cities of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro (Silva et al. 2022, 35-36).

**Map 1. IR programmes in Brazil by state**



<sup>14</sup> To arrive at this information, some universities were counted twice, that is, for undergraduate and graduate studies.

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

In recent years, we can see a clear predominance of non- and post-positivist work in Brazil (Carvalho et al. 2021). The country, like many Global South countries, embraces different and plural perspectives and approaches in its IR knowledge production over traditional ones (Barasoul and Silva 2016; Carvalho et al. 2021). As a matter of fact, in recent years, a variety of authors have collectively produced knowledge on IR methodologies and theoretical approaches beyond mainstream IR consolidating feminist, decolonial, and postcolonial perspectives, for example, among others (Siqueira et al. 2021; Toledo 2021). These and many other authors and projects have contributed to deepening the plural, non/post-positivist character of the discipline in Brazil and other countries which contributes to a Global IR perspective.

## IR in Brazil and the Research Agenda on Children

The end of the XX century highlighted changes in international relations. In the field of IR, an ontological, methodological, and epistemological opening had taken place, which enabled the inclusion of new approaches, the recognition of non-state political actors, and new IR theories. Among the new actors, we can call attention to non-governmental organizations (Tschirgi 2018), women (Enloe 1991; Hansen 2000), and, paramount for this paper, children and young people (Watson 2006; Berents 2015).

In terms of children, childhoods, and international relations, Brazil's policies and debates can be seen, not exclusively, as a reflection of international changes and campaigns (Costa 2021). We can see a great example with the creation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1989 (United Nations 1990) and its influence on Brazil's policies afterward (Aguilar et al. 2007; Costa 2021). According to Aguilar et al. (2007), the ECA<sup>15</sup> (Statute of the Child and Adolescent), approved in 1990, was a combination of efforts between the Brazilian civil society and international organisations. The ECA showed similarities with the CRC, where it "recognises children and adolescents as 'individuals with rights' (article 3) and as 'persons at a particular state of development' (article 6)" (Aguilar et al. 2007, p. 5). Additionally Brazil created in 1991 the National Council for the rights of the Child and the Adolescent - CONANDA (*Conselho Nacional dos Direitos da Criança e do Adolescente*) composed by members of the Brazilian government and civil society organisations. The CONANDA discusses public policies on children and periodically organises the National Conference on the rights of the children and adolescents.

Brazil also made "a formal commitment, in 2000, to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, which include well-defined guideposts in the effort to improve the situation of children" (Aguilar et al. 2007, p. 5). Brazil has also accepted all the Protocols to the UNCRC including the

<sup>15</sup> The Statute of the Child and Adolescent ECA (*Estatuto da Criança e do Adolescente*) was created on 13 July 1990 under the Brazilian Law No. 8,069. The statute addresses the integral protection of children and adolescents.

Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure that grants children and their representatives the possibility to present communications to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child.

In other words, the theoretical productions of the late 20th century and even the early 21st century in the field of International Relations and other related fields on Children and Childhoods influenced not only the increase in Brazilian academic interest but also political changes in the national Brazilian politics. A new approach to children in Brazil and worldwide was fostered (Aguiar et al. 2007; Costa 2021) from a development, security and human rights perspective, with initiatives from civil society organisations, Academia and national and international organisations,

The next section continues to recognise the Brazilian IR knowledge production as Global IR by considering how IR students and PhD candidates constructed IR knowledge on Children and IR in their dissertations.

## The state of Children and IR in Brazil

As we previously discussed, although the IR discipline started in countries such as the USA and the UK, it does not mean that discussions about international politics were not present in Brazil's universities. Our reflections on the institutionalisation of IR in the country contributes to seeing the Brazilian IR knowledge production and to understanding internal regional differences in how IR programmes are distributed. In the sense of analysing how children are studied in IR in Brazil, in July 2022, GEIRI decided to launch a report to map how students and PhD Candidates have been researching this topic in the country.

Data collection for the report started in August 2021, with the help of some GEIRI members, who were divided between the five regions of Brazil (North, Northeast, Center-West, Southeast and South)<sup>16</sup>. We decided to map only final dissertations from undergraduate and masters students and doctoral dissertations because those are more robust works, which indicate that extensive research has been carried out on the topic. This decision reflects our approach to consider the Brazilian IR knowledge production from national practices and interactions beyond the traditional academic publishing (i.e. journal articles and academic books). Furthermore, we decided to cover only International Relations programmes, to centre our debate in this particular discipline. Therefore, we did not count Political Science programmes, for example, even though we acknowledge that it is possible that some of their works consider children. Our data comes completely from digital repositories open to the public. After the creation of this database, we analysed the main themes presented in the collected works. From this first analysis of titles and abstracts, five major themes emerged: “International Security”, “Human Rights”, “Development”, “IR Theory” and “Others”

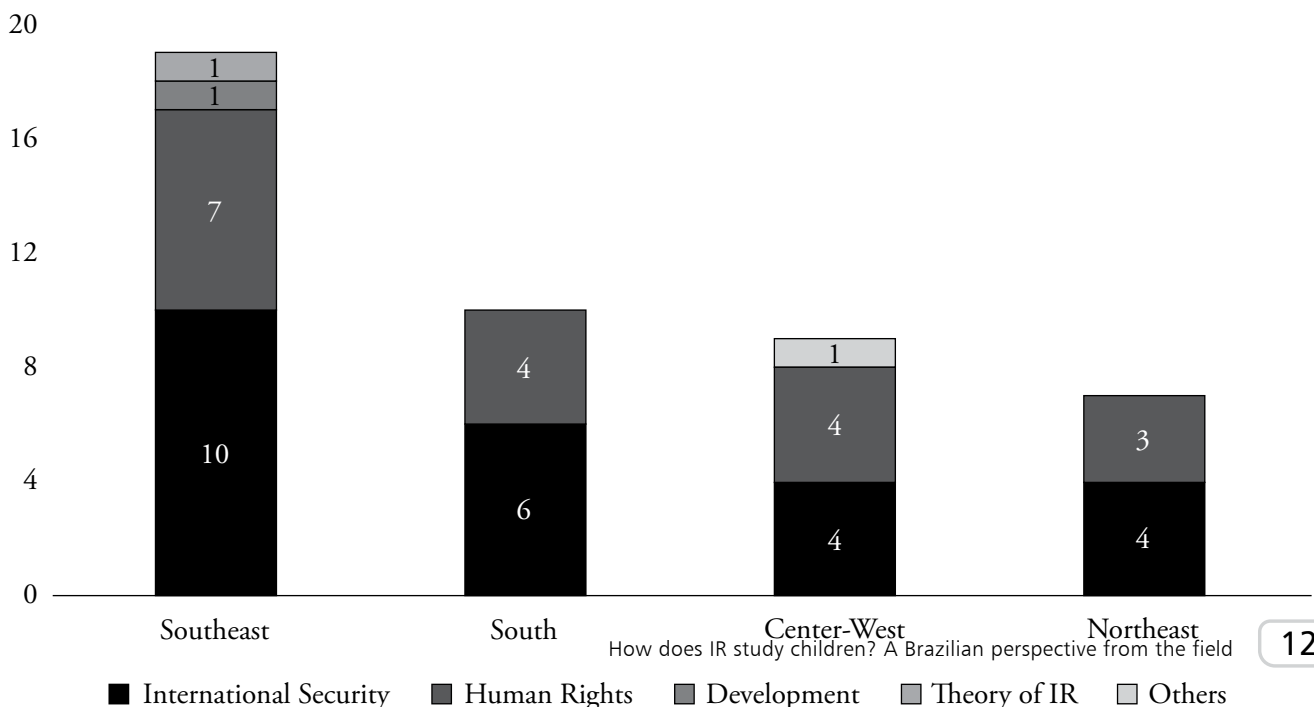
<sup>16</sup> We chose this division because we believe that the states covered in each region share common characteristics with each other, which could impact our analysis.

(like children’s advertising). We opted for this division rather than one focused on “groups of children” (e.g., child soldiers, child migrants, etc.), as we believed that this division reflects better subtopics in which the IR discipline has been divided.

We found many works, especially in the area of gender studies, that dealt with childhood as a secondary category, however, we chose not to include them in our analysis. We did this because there is a general perception within the IR discipline that gender and childhood are two complementary studies, if not parts of the same study. However, such a generalisation is dangerous. By reducing them to the conglomerate *womenandchildren* (as discussed by Enloe (1991)), the analytical dimensions end up being extremely simplified, and do not correspond to the reality of this different social constructed categories. Consequently, Childhood Studies end up occupying a secondary position in relation to Gender Studies.

Between August 2021 and March 2022, we collected 45 works, produced in undergraduate and graduate IR programmes in Brazil that address the issue of childhoods and IR in a central way. First, we have to say that we are conscious that this number may not represent the total production, since many dissertation depositories are not open to the public. Because of that, it is impossible to infer how many IR dissertations are produced in Brazil every year (considering all IR programmes). Our corpus represents an estimate of the Brazilian scenario. It shows that, in almost 20 years, Children and IR does not have as many works as others that are more popular in the discipline, such as security studies or gender studies. Although we acknowledge this limitation, our database can help us to analyse the Brazilian IR knowledge production on children and IR and infer next steps for this agenda. Our Global IR approach recognises practices and interactions in the non-western world as important for knowledge production in the discipline. Therefore, using novel data on UG and MA and PhD dissertations contributes to understanding IR beyond traditional Western forms of academic knowledge production and dissemination.

**Graph 1. Number of works by major themes among the regions of Brazil**



Source: Elaborated by the authors with data from the GEIRI report (Silva et al. 2022)

A first point to highlight is that, within the available repositories, no works on Children and IR were found in the North region (except for those that dealt with childhood in a secondary way as we discussed before). This does not necessarily mean that there is no research on this topic in this region, since we did not have access to all existing repositories. This absence can be a direct consequence of the fewer IR programmes (particularly no postgraduate and PhD programmes when the data was collected) in the region when compared with the South and Southeastern regions.

In general, the Southeast region was the one that had the largest number of works on Children and IR which may be explained by the largest number of IR programmes in the country. With the exception of the “Others” category, all the other themes are present in this region, with 10 works on International Security, seven on Human Rights, one on Development and one on IR Theory, totaling 19 works, 42.0% of the total works on Children and IR that we analysed. In the other regions, the distribution of works in International Security and Human Rights were similar, and another highlight was the Center-West region, with one work classified in the category Others<sup>17</sup>, as we can see in Graph 1. The Southeast concentrated the largest number of works on Children and IR. From the total 45 works, 24 were included in the International Security category, and an equally expressive number (18) were on Human Rights. The categories Development, IR Theory and Others had one work each.

Most of the works on Children and IR in Brazil (93%) are classified under the categories International Security and Human Rights. The area of International Security within Children and IR largely encompasses the topics of child soldiers, as well as the analysis of the role of the United Nations (UN) in trying to put an end to child recruitment in specific cases around the world with an emphasis on regions of the Global South. Next, the works on Human Rights are mainly on refugee or migrant children, and international child trafficking<sup>18</sup>. While it is interesting to see such important issues gaining ground in the study of Children in International Relations, we realised that the productions on childhood within these two “big themes” were restricted to the same subjects.

Both nationally (in Brazil) and Internationally, Children and IR topics connected to International Security and Human Rights have been receiving more attention in advocacy campaigns, events and networks. Carpenter (2007) explains that “[t]he issue of child soldiers was raised not because it fit neatly with existing norms but because it highlighted a *contradiction* in those norms” (Carpenter 2007, 111 emphasis in original). Therefore, we perceive that Brazilian works

<sup>17</sup> This work talks about children’s advertising and economic rationality. So, the report decided to put it in the category “Others” because this work was very different from the others.

<sup>18</sup> Child trafficking is where children are forced or persuaded to leave their homes and are moved or transported and then exploited, forced to work or sold.

follow an international trend regarding the main themes within Children and IR, since these are main subjects of most publications on this topic in Academia (Beier 2011; Bhabha 2014; Lee Koo 2011; 2018) and policy-making debates. Consequently, much of the material available for the Brazilian students' reflection on Children and IR connects to the subfields of International Security and Human Rights.

These results are in line with the literature on Children and IR in the international scenario. Our Global IR perspectives recognise that Western and non-Western approaches may converge and reinforce each other (Acharya 2016). This can be connected to the fact that Children and IR is a marginalised field in the mainstream IR discipline. This result contributes to understanding how researching Children and IR per se can be perceived as a Global IR contribution by expanding the concepts and theories of what is international. Additionally, our results show a convergence between the Children and IR international agenda and the Brazilian knowledge production, which contributes to see how the Brazilian IR production dialogues with the International approach. In fact, many Brazilian IR scholars (such as Martuscelli and Tabak [2018] among others) working on Children and IR publish in English and are part of international networks on this issue. Therefore, having evidence of more student interest on Children and IR continues to highlight the Brazilian IR knowledge production as a Global IR approach.

This does not mean that other themes are “erased” from research on Children and IR in Brazil. Taking as an example the case of children born of rape - a topic that can be framed both in International Security and Human Rights studies. Despite the number of researchers engaged in this issue such as Carpenter (2007), this topic has begun to gain prominence on the international agenda, especially, at the UN, in recent years. In Brazil, the first works on this subject were finished recently (Pereira 2022).

The first work collected was from 2005, and, despite being from a postgraduate program in IR, it deals with juvenile incarceration in the state of São Paulo. Considering papers on Children and IR published in IR journals, most Brazilian peer-reviewed reflections on Children and IR covering the themes of child soldiers and migration were published three years after the first international publications on children and IR (Brocklehurst 2006; Watson 2006). In the past 10 years, there was an expressive “boom” of publications on these topics in IR journals, which allowed Brazilian students and PhD candidates access discussions on Children and IR in their native language - Portuguese (Martuscelli 2014; Paiva 2016; 2021; Tabak 2014; Taquece 2021).

Overall, we see a tendency of increase in the number of students' works on Children and IR in Brazil. This perspective may be connected with an increase in the number of journal articles and books on Children and IR. Graph 2 shows the evolution of the number of works on Children and IR over the years.

**Graph 2. Evolution of the number of works on Children and IR over the years**

Source: Elaborated by the authors with data from the GEIRI report (Silva et al. 2022)

Even with this overall increase in the numbers of students' works, we recognise that there is still a long way for studies on childhoods to gain relevance in the IR discipline in Brazil. The creation of GEIRI was a way of bringing together IR researchers interested in the topic. GEIRI became a space to discover new topics and research approaches on Children and IR through exchanges at meetings and other spaces. Therefore, the GEIRI per se is a contribution to Global IR by recognising the voices of early career Brazilian scholars researching and producing knowledge on Children and IR beyond the West. The configuration of the group in these almost two years shows that, over the years, we will have more and more works in this area from different perspectives including the children born of wartime rape and international representation (Pereira 2022), the Youth Peace and Security Agenda of the UN (Silva 2022), the international circulation of child pornography, to name a few.

As themes involving Children and IR gain relevance in both the Brazilian and the international agendas and Academia, we see that more students and PhD candidates in Brazil are starting to research them. Even so, this topic is still very incipient, initiatives such as GEIRI are necessary to strengthen the debate on Children and IR in Brazil and to expand this discussion to 'traditional' IR places such as ABRI in Brazil and international conferences abroad. This article is a first effort to recognise the Brazilian IR production on Children and Ir by recognising Brazilian practices and interactions in the students' dissertations. We still have work to consolidate the Brazilian research on children and childhoods in the IR discipline in Brazil, however, we already see a Brazilian contribution to Children and IR which illustrates a Global IR perspective.



## Conclusion

Children and childhoods in IR were nearly invisible for a long time. There was almost no interest in the IR discipline to take into account studies of childhood or even to take children as social actors or agents. With the IR opening to other perceptions and critical theories and a Global IR perspective that recognises different practices and interactions beyond the West (Acharya 2016), the attention paid to children as actors and their past and present relationships with themes such as human rights, conflicts, liberal peace, liberal discourses, international security, human security, international politics, climate change, and rights are beginning to leave the fringes of the discipline (Beier 2020a). In a way, studies on children, childhoods and IR such as this one are capable of bringing contributions to both Childhood Studies and IR, which leads us to reflect on the artificial and real boundaries of IR discipline.

Children and IR is this new topic in our discipline that has been receiving more attention in the last 20 years. Its expansion benefited from an opening on IR to new topics and approaches exploring IR beyond the Western national state. Although Children and IR continues to be marginalised in traditional IR publishing and teaching with most of the scholars coming from Western countries, we see more authors, reference books and special issues debating childhoods in international politics. Our article adopted the Global IR approach to recognise the Brazilian IR production on Children and IR considering practices and interactions beyond the traditional Academic publishing logic. Analysing UG, MA and PhD dissertations can be a contribution to Global IR debates since teaching IR involves national practices and interactions.

Our article showed that the topic of Children and IR (especially in the frameworks of international security and human rights) has been receiving more attention in the International Studies Association (ISA) Annual Conferences in the past five years. Therefore, it is expected that more authors beyond the West will continue to work and reflect on this topic which will create more materials for IR students and PhD Candidates. We also perceived these trends in Brazil with more recent publications on Children and IR in Portuguese, papers at the ABRI National Conferences and an increasing number of works from IR students and PhD candidates reflecting on this topic.

As Acharya (2016, p. 6) recalls Global IR “does not seek to displace but subsume existing IR and enrich it with the infusion of ideas and practices from the non-Western world”. In this line, this article presented some important contributions to understanding how the Children and IR agenda is consolidating in Brazil. We showed that, although IR as a discipline in Brazil is recent and much IR teaching is focused on traditional IR topics, there has been an increase in the number of UG, MA and PhD dissertations on Children and IR. Most of these works were published in the Southeast region of Brazil (place with more IR programmes). Just like the international literature on Children and IR, most of these dissertations’ topics are in the areas of International Security (with particular attention to children involved in armed conflicts and child soldiers) and Human Rights (especially children’s rights, migrant and refugee children and child labour). Although we

also see the emergence of different topics including children born of war and the YPS Agenda, another trend that follows the international literature on the topic.

Our study has some limitations. We only collected work from open available repositories from Brazilian high education institutions. Not all Brazilian Universities have open repositories. We received no answers when we directly contacted universities that we could not access their repositories. One could argue that we have found more dissertations in the Southeast region (the richest region in Brazil) due to universities having more resources to support open repositories in this region. However, it's possible to have more dissertations in this region because actually most IR programmes are concentrated in this part of Brazil. Another potential limitation is that our findings may be underestimating and not acknowledging works on Children and IR in different parts of Brazil that we could not map. We recognise the regional disparities in Brazilian IR knowledge production. Nonetheless, this risk does not exclude our contribution to understanding how Children and IR has been studied in Brazil inside the Global IR agenda. There is a clear trend with more Brazilian researchers publishing books and papers in Brazilian and international journals and students deciding to focus on issues related to Children and IR (in areas of International Security and Human Rights) in their dissertations. Further studies could try to map the dissertations that we could not access and/or use different methodologies to continue to perceive how Children and IR have received more attention as part of the IR knowledge production in Brazil. Our study could also be potentially replicated in different national contexts which would be another important contribution to the Global IR approach by recognising national practices and interactions including in IR teaching beyond Western states and traditional academic publishing.

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