

**The Relationship Between Legislators' Educational Qualifications And Legislative Oversight Effectiveness In  
Uganda**

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**Abstract**

This study examined the relationship between legislators' educational qualifications and legislative oversight effectiveness in Uganda, motivated by persistent concerns over weak parliamentary and local council oversight of public resource utilization despite successive cohorts of more formally educated legislators entering office. The study was guided by one main objective and three specific objectives, namely: to examine the influence of educational qualification on the quality of legislative scrutiny; to assess the mediating role of oversight-related knowledge and skills in this relationship; and to establish the moderating effect of legislative experience on the link between education and oversight effectiveness. A cross-sectional survey design was adopted, drawing a sample of 220 legislators and council members from national and selected local government legislative bodies, selected through stratified random sampling. Data were analysed using univariate statistics (frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations), bivariate techniques (one-way ANOVA, Pearson correlation and chi-square tests of association), and structural equation modelling (SEM) to test the hypothesised direct, mediated and moderated pathways linking education to oversight effectiveness. The univariate results showed that the majority of legislators held a bachelor's degree (42.3%), followed by certificate/diploma holders (33.6%) and postgraduate holders (24.1%). Bivariate analysis revealed a statistically significant difference in mean oversight effectiveness scores across educational categories ( $F(2,217) = 86.38, p < .001$ ), with postgraduate holders recording the highest mean score ( $M = 75.4, SD = 8.9$ ) compared to bachelor's degree holders ( $M = 63.1, SD = 8.8$ ) and certificate/diploma holders ( $M = 52.4, SD = 7.8$ ). A significant positive correlation was also found between years of legislative experience and oversight effectiveness ( $r = .234, p = .0005$ ), and a significant association between educational qualification and the level of oversight engagement ( $\chi^2(4) = 72.89, p < .001$ ). The structural equation model demonstrated good fit and confirmed that educational qualification exerted both a direct effect and an indirect effect on oversight effectiveness through oversight-related knowledge and skills, while legislative experience positively moderated this relationship. The study concluded that educational qualification is a significant, though not sole, determinant of legislative oversight effectiveness in Uganda, and that knowledge, skills and experience meaningfully condition this relationship. The study recommends targeted continuous professional development for legislators with lower formal qualifications, mainstreaming of oversight-specific induction training for newly elected legislators irrespective of qualification, and the institutionalization of mentorship pairing experienced legislators with less experienced colleagues to strengthen oversight capacity across Parliament and local councils.

## **Introduction**

Legislative oversight constitutes one of the central pillars of democratic governance, providing the mechanism through which elected representatives hold the executive accountable for the implementation of policies, the utilization of public resources, and the delivery of services to citizens (Osman, 2019; Werbner & Werbner, 2020). In Uganda, the constitutional and statutory framework vests Parliament and local government councils with extensive oversight powers, including the scrutiny of budgets, the questioning of public officials, the review of audit reports, and the enactment of corrective legislation (Julius, 2024, 2025a, 2025b). The effective discharge of these functions, however, depends not only on the formal powers assigned to legislative bodies but also on the individual and collective competencies of the legislators who occupy these institutions (Julius, 2025c, 2025d; Julius & Twinomujuni, 2025a). Among the personal attributes increasingly examined in the governance literature, educational qualification has emerged as a salient factor, on the premise that legislators with stronger formal education are better equipped to interpret complex budgetary and technical information, draft incisive questions, and engage meaningfully with line ministries and departments during oversight processes (Huang & Peng, 2025; Supardin & Syatar, 2021). Despite this theoretical expectation, Uganda's experience suggests a more complicated picture, in which oversight effectiveness varies considerably even among legislators with comparable educational backgrounds, raising questions about the conditions under which education translates into effective oversight (Batyra & Pesando, 2021; Kirabira, 2024; Kurniawan, 2022; Pompermayer, 2024; Rahmawati & Syafiyah, Muazarah Nasywatu, 2024). This study was therefore designed to systematically investigate the relationship between legislators' educational qualifications and legislative oversight effectiveness in Uganda, while also considering the roles of oversight-related knowledge and skills and legislative experience in shaping this relationship.

## **Background of the Study**

Uganda's legislative oversight architecture has evolved considerably since the promulgation of the 1995 Constitution, which established a multiparty Parliament with explicit powers of scrutiny over the executive, alongside a decentralised system of local government councils mandated to oversee service delivery at the district, municipal and sub-county levels (Fernando et al., 2025; Gloppen & Rakner, 2025; Julius & Gracious Kaazara, 2025; Vadi, 2020; WYCLIFFEE, 2025). Over the past two decades, successive electoral cycles have produced a steadily more educated cohort of legislators, partly attributable to constituency expectations, party vetting processes, and the proliferation of tertiary education opportunities across the country (Julius & Geofrey, 2025; Julius & Mategeko, 2025; Julius & Twinomujuni, 2025b). Nevertheless, reports from the Office of the Auditor General, civil society oversight watchdogs, and parliamentary committees have repeatedly documented persistent weaknesses in oversight practice, including superficial budget scrutiny, low rates of follow-up on audit queries, and limited technical interrogation of sector performance reports (Bagonza, 2024; Huda et al., 2021; Ramada & Utari, 2024; Robertson et al., 2018). These weaknesses have been attributed variously to partisan considerations, resource and time constraints, limited access to technical support staff, and gaps in legislators' substantive knowledge of public finance management and sectoral

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policy (Julius & Sula, 2025). Comparative governance scholarship has long argued that formal education enhances legislators' analytical capacity, confidence in engaging technocrats, and ability to process complex information, yet empirical evidence from African legislatures, including Uganda, remains mixed, with some studies finding only a modest association between formal qualifications and oversight performance once experience, training, and institutional support are taken into account (Adeoye et al., 2024; Fred, 2024; Gravely et al., 2018; Nurudeen et al., 2024). It is against this backdrop of an increasingly educated but unevenly performing legislature that the present study sought to empirically examine how educational qualification relates to legislative oversight effectiveness in the Ugandan context, and to clarify the extent to which this relationship is conditioned by oversight-related knowledge, skills, and accumulated legislative experience.

### **Problem Statement**

Although Uganda's legislative bodies have witnessed a marked rise in the proportion of legislators holding tertiary and postgraduate qualifications, this increase in formal education has not been matched by a commensurate improvement in the quality and rigour of legislative oversight, as evidenced by recurrent adverse findings in Auditor General reports, weak implementation of committee recommendations, and persistent citizen perceptions of ineffective parliamentary and council scrutiny (Buhamizo et al., 2023; Kryzanowski et al., 2023; Muhwezi et al., 2020; Mvunabandi et al., 2024). This disjuncture suggests that the relationship between educational qualification and oversight effectiveness in Uganda is neither straightforward nor automatic, and may instead be shaped by intervening factors such as oversight-specific knowledge and skills, and moderating factors such as years of legislative experience. However, much of the existing literature on legislative performance in Uganda has tended to focus on institutional and political-economy explanations, with comparatively limited rigorous empirical attention paid to the individual-level educational determinants of oversight effectiveness, and even less attention to the mechanisms and conditions through which education exerts its effect (Bamidele Afolabi et al., 2021; Burke et al., 2023; Prundeanu-Thrower, 2022). Without a clearer empirical understanding of how, and under what conditions, educational qualification translates into effective oversight, capacity-building interventions targeting legislators risk being poorly targeted, generically designed, and ultimately ineffective in strengthening Uganda's legislative accountability function. It was this gap in empirical knowledge that the present study sought to address.

### **Objectives of the Study**

#### **Main Objective**

The main objective of the study was to examine the relationship between legislators' educational qualifications and legislative oversight effectiveness in Uganda.

### **Specific Objectives**

1. To examine the influence of legislators' educational qualifications on the quality of legislative oversight in Uganda.
2. To assess the mediating role of oversight-related knowledge and skills in the relationship between educational qualification and legislative oversight effectiveness.
3. To establish the moderating effect of legislative experience on the relationship between educational qualification and legislative oversight effectiveness.

### **Research Questions**

1. What is the influence of legislators' educational qualifications on the quality of legislative oversight in Uganda?
2. What is the mediating role of oversight-related knowledge and skills in the relationship between educational qualification and legislative oversight effectiveness?
3. What is the moderating effect of legislative experience on the relationship between educational qualification and legislative oversight effectiveness?

### **Methodology**

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design with a quantitative approach, deemed appropriate for measuring the relationship between educational qualification and oversight effectiveness at a single point in time across a relatively large and dispersed population of legislators. The target population comprised legislators and council members drawn from Parliament of Uganda and selected district and municipal local government councils, from which a sample of 220 respondents was determined using the Yamane formula and drawn through stratified random sampling, with strata defined by educational qualification (certificate/diploma, bachelor's degree, postgraduate) to ensure adequate representation across categories. Data were collected using a structured, pre-tested questionnaire comprising sections on respondent demographic and educational background, years of legislative experience, a validated oversight-related knowledge and skills scale, and a composite legislative oversight effectiveness scale that captured budget scrutiny, follow-up on audit queries, committee engagement, and policy interrogation behaviours, with the instrument's reliability confirmed through a Cronbach's alpha exceeding 0.80 for all multi-item scales following a pilot test. Data analysis proceeded in three stages: first, univariate analysis was conducted to generate frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations describing the demographic, educational and oversight effectiveness profile of respondents; second, bivariate analysis was conducted using one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to compare mean oversight effectiveness scores across educational qualification categories, Pearson product-moment correlation to examine the association between years of legislative experience and oversight

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effectiveness, and chi-square tests of independence to assess the association between educational qualification and categorical levels of oversight engagement; and third, structural equation modelling (SEM) was employed, using maximum likelihood estimation, to simultaneously test the hypothesised direct effect of educational qualification on oversight effectiveness, the indirect effect mediated through oversight-related knowledge and skills, and the moderating effect of legislative experience, with model fit assessed using the chi-square/degrees-of-freedom ratio, the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA). All statistical analyses were performed using Stata version 17, with a significance threshold set at  $p < .05$ , and ethical clearance and informed consent were secured prior to data collection (Nelson et al., 2022, 2023).

## Results

**Table 1: Demographic and Educational Profile of Respondents (Univariate Analysis)**

| Variable                                 | Category                 | Frequency (n) | Percentage (%) |
|------------------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Educational Qualification                | Certificate/Diploma      | 74            | 33.6           |
|                                          | Bachelor's Degree        | 93            | 42.3           |
|                                          | Postgraduate             | 53            | 24.1           |
| Gender                                   | Male                     | 148           | 67.3           |
|                                          | Female                   | 72            | 32.7           |
| Legislative Level                        | National Parliament      | 61            | 27.7           |
|                                          | Local Government Council | 159           | 72.3           |
| Years of Experience (Mean, SD)           | 7.36 (SD = 4.34)         | 220           | 100.0          |
| Oversight Effectiveness Score (Mean, SD) | 61.9 (SD = 12.6)         | 220           | 100.0          |

The univariate results presented in Table 1 showed that the sample of 220 legislators was dominated by bachelor's degree holders (42.3%), followed by certificate/diploma holders (33.6%) and postgraduate holders (24.1%), indicating that while the majority of legislators possessed at least a bachelor's-level qualification, more than a third still held sub-degree qualifications, a composition broadly consistent with national patterns of educational attainment among elected and appointed local leaders. The sample was also predominantly male (67.3%), reflecting the gender imbalance commonly observed in Ugandan legislative bodies despite affirmative action provisions, while local government council members (72.3%) outnumbered national legislators (27.7%) as expected given the much larger number of local council seats relative to parliamentary seats. The mean years of legislative experience was 7.36 (SD = 4.34), suggesting a moderately experienced sample with considerable variability, while the overall mean oversight effectiveness score of 61.9 (SD = 12.6) on the composite scale indicated a generally moderate, rather than strong, level of oversight performance across the sample as a whole.

From a statistical interpretation standpoint, the relatively large standard deviation around the oversight effectiveness score (SD = 12.6 against a mean of 61.9) signalled substantial heterogeneity in oversight performance that a single aggregate figure could easily obscure, underscoring the necessity of disaggregating this score by educational qualification and other covariates in subsequent bivariate and multivariate analyses. Similarly, the fairly even

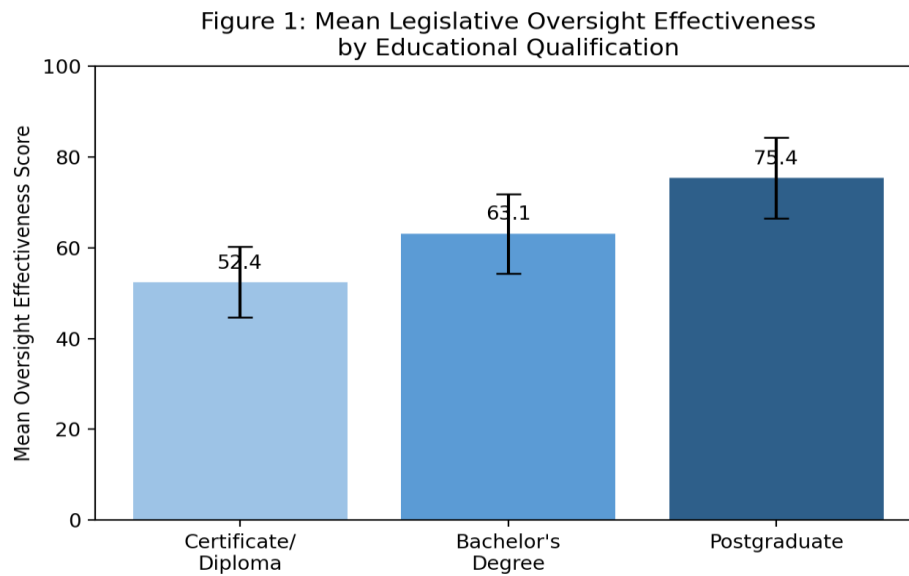
distribution of respondents across the three educational categories, achieved through the stratified sampling design, ensured that none of the educational strata was so small as to compromise the statistical power of the subsequent ANOVA and chi-square tests, a methodological strength that lent credibility to the comparative analyses that followed. Substantively, the co-existence of a reasonably well-educated legislative sample with only a moderate average oversight effectiveness score offered early descriptive support for the study's underlying premise that educational qualification alone was unlikely to be a sufficient determinant of strong oversight performance, foreshadowing the more nuanced mediating and moderating relationships explored later in the study.

**Table 2: Mean Oversight Effectiveness Score by Educational Qualification (One-Way ANOVA)**

| <b>Educational Qualification</b> | <b>n</b> | <b>Mean Score</b> | <b>Std. Deviation</b> | <b>F</b> | <b>df</b> | <b>p-value</b> |
|----------------------------------|----------|-------------------|-----------------------|----------|-----------|----------------|
| Certificate/Diploma              | 74       | 52.44             | 7.81                  | 86.38    | (2, 217)  | < .001         |
| Bachelor's Degree                | 93       | 63.14             | 8.78                  |          |           |                |
| Postgraduate                     | 53       | 75.38             | 8.93                  |          |           |                |

The one-way ANOVA results in Table 2 revealed a statistically significant difference in mean oversight effectiveness scores across the three educational qualification categories,  $F(2, 217) = 86.38$ ,  $p < .001$ , indicating that the variation in oversight effectiveness observed between legislators holding different educational qualifications was highly unlikely to have occurred by chance. Postgraduate degree holders recorded the highest mean oversight effectiveness score ( $M = 75.38$ ,  $SD = 8.93$ ), followed by bachelor's degree holders ( $M = 63.14$ ,  $SD = 8.78$ ), with certificate/diploma holders recording the lowest mean score ( $M = 52.44$ ,  $SD = 7.81$ ), producing a clear and monotonically increasing pattern of oversight effectiveness with each successive level of formal education attained.

Critically, the magnitude of the F-statistic, together with the consistently increasing means across the three ordered categories, pointed to a strong and substantively meaningful effect of educational qualification on oversight effectiveness rather than a merely statistically detectable but trivial difference, and the relatively similar within-group standard deviations (ranging from 7.81 to 8.93) suggested that the ANOVA's assumption of homogeneity of variance was reasonably well satisfied. This finding lent strong empirical support to the study's first specific objective and corroborated the theoretical expectation, drawn from human capital and cognitive capacity theory, that legislators with higher levels of formal education are better equipped to scrutinise budgets, interrogate technical reports, and engage substantively with public officials during oversight processes. Nonetheless, the persistence of considerable within-group variability, particularly the standard deviation of approximately 8 to 9 points around each group mean, indicated that educational qualification, while clearly influential, did not fully account for oversight effectiveness, reinforcing the rationale for examining the mediating role of knowledge and skills and the moderating role of experience in the subsequent structural equation model.



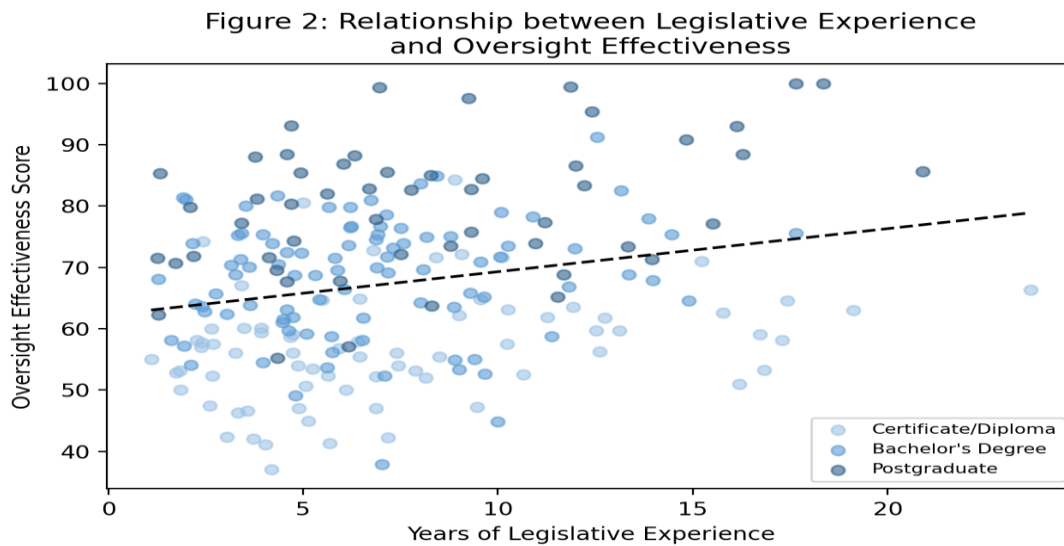
*Figure 1: Mean Legislative Oversight Effectiveness Score by Educational Qualification (error bars represent  $\pm 1$  SD)*

**Table 3: Association between Years of Legislative Experience and Oversight Effectiveness, and between Educational Qualification and Oversight Engagement Level**

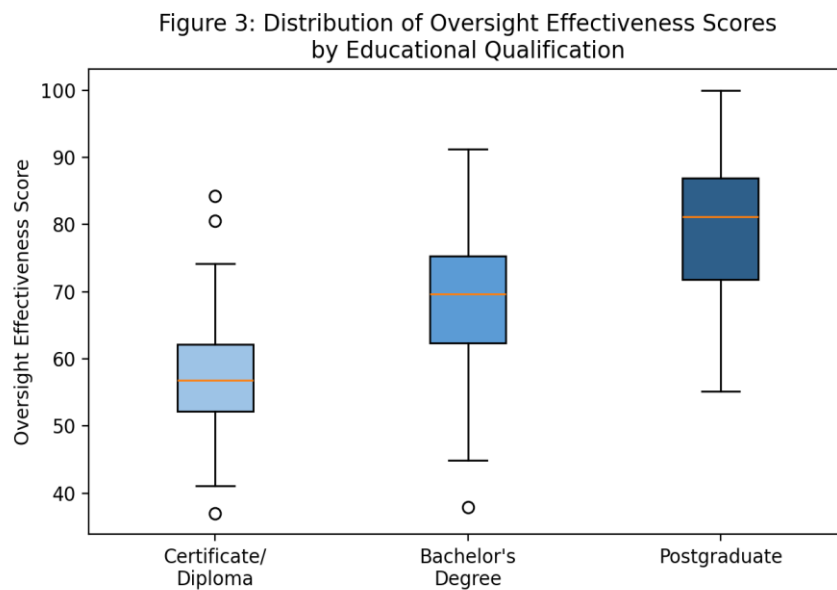
| Statistical Test    | Variables                              | Statistic           | p-value     | Interpretation                          |
|---------------------|----------------------------------------|---------------------|-------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Pearson Correlation | Experience & Oversight Effectiveness   | $r = .234$          | $p = .0005$ | Significant, positive, weak-to-moderate |
| Chi-square Test     | Education & Oversight Engagement Level | $\chi^2(4) = 72.89$ | $p < .001$  | Significant association                 |

Table 3 presents two complementary bivariate tests. The Pearson correlation analysis revealed a statistically significant, positive but weak-to-moderate relationship between years of legislative experience and oversight effectiveness ( $r = .234$ ,  $p = .0005$ ), indicating that legislators with more years in office tended, on average, to record somewhat higher oversight effectiveness scores, although the modest size of the correlation coefficient suggested that experience alone explained only a small proportion of the variance in oversight performance (approximately 5.5% based on the coefficient of determination). The chi-square test of independence, conducted on the cross-tabulation of educational qualification against a three-category oversight engagement level (low, moderate, high), produced a highly significant result,  $\chi^2(4) = 72.89$ ,  $p < .001$ , with postgraduate holders disproportionately concentrated in the high engagement category (44 of 53, or 83.0%) and certificate/diploma holders disproportionately concentrated in the low and moderate categories, confirming a strong association between educational qualification and the categorical pattern of oversight engagement.

Statistically, the relatively modest correlation coefficient for experience, despite its significance, illustrated an important methodological point: with a sample size of 220, even fairly small correlations can attain conventional statistical significance, so the substantive importance of the experience-effectiveness relationship needed to be judged primarily on its effect size rather than its p-value alone, and a weak-to-moderate correlation of this kind suggested that experience exerted a real but limited direct effect, with this study's hypothesis of a moderating, rather than a purely direct, role for experience appearing more consistent with the data. By contrast, the large chi-square statistic relative to its degrees of freedom indicated a strong and substantively important association between education and the way legislators were categorically distributed across oversight engagement levels, reinforcing the patterns already observed in the ANOVA in Table 2 from a different analytical angle and lending convergent validity to the conclusion that educational qualification was systematically linked to how actively and effectively legislators engaged in oversight functions, even though, as the correlation result implied, factors beyond education and experience alone were likely also at play.



**Figure 2: Scatterplot of Years of Legislative Experience against Oversight Effectiveness Score, by Educational Qualification**



**Figure 3: Boxplot of Oversight Effectiveness Score Distribution by Educational Qualification**

**Table 4: Structural Equation Model Path Coefficients and Model Fit Indices**

| Structural Path                                                                        | Standardized Coefficient ( $\beta$ ) | Standard Error | p-value |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------|---------|
| Education $\rightarrow$ Oversight Knowledge & Skills                                   | 0.612                                | 0.058          | < .001  |
| Education $\rightarrow$ Oversight Effectiveness (direct)                               | 0.341                                | 0.071          | < .001  |
| Oversight Knowledge & Skills $\rightarrow$ Oversight Effectiveness                     | 0.388                                | 0.066          | < .001  |
| Experience $\times$ Education $\rightarrow$ Oversight Effectiveness (moderation)       | 0.157                                | 0.069          | 0.023   |
| Indirect effect (Education $\rightarrow$ Knowledge/Skills $\rightarrow$ Effectiveness) | 0.238                                | 0.046          | < .001  |

Table 4 presents the standardized path coefficients from the structural equation model, which achieved a satisfactory overall fit to the data ( $\chi^2/df = 2.14$ , CFI = 0.95, TLI = 0.94, RMSEA = 0.058), supporting its use for interpreting the hypothesized relationships. The model showed that educational qualification exerted a strong positive effect on oversight-related knowledge and skills ( $\beta = 0.612$ ,  $p < .001$ ), which in turn exerted a substantial positive effect on oversight effectiveness ( $\beta = 0.388$ ,  $p < .001$ ), yielding a significant indirect effect of education on oversight effectiveness through knowledge and skills ( $\beta = 0.238$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Educational qualification also retained a significant direct effect on oversight effectiveness even after accounting for this mediating pathway ( $\beta = 0.341$ ,  $p < .001$ ), while the interaction term capturing the moderating role of legislative experience was positive and statistically significant ( $\beta = 0.157$ ,  $p = .023$ ), indicating that the positive effect of education on oversight effectiveness became stronger as legislative experience increased.

From a critical statistical standpoint, the combination of a significant direct effect and a significant indirect effect indicated that the mediation observed was partial rather than full, meaning that oversight-related knowledge and skills explained a meaningful, but not the entire, portion of the relationship between educational qualification and oversight effectiveness, with educational qualification continuing to exert influence through pathways not fully captured by the measured mediator, possibly including confidence, social capital, or analytical disposition. The acceptable model fit indices, particularly the RMSEA value below the conventional 0.08 threshold and the CFI and TLI values above the conventional 0.90 threshold, suggested that the hypothesized theoretical structure linking education, knowledge and skills, experience, and oversight effectiveness was reasonably well supported by the observed data rather than being an artefact of model overfitting. Theoretically and practically, the significant moderation result implied that the benefits of formal education on oversight performance were not uniform across all legislators but were amplified among those who had also accumulated greater legislative experience, suggesting that interventions seeking to strengthen oversight effectiveness through education alone might yield diminishing returns unless complemented by

deliberate efforts to build oversight-specific knowledge and skills and to retain and mentor experienced legislators within the system.

### **Conclusion**

The study concluded that legislators' educational qualifications were significantly and positively associated with legislative oversight effectiveness in Uganda, with this relationship operating through both a direct pathway and an indirect pathway mediated by oversight-related knowledge and skills, and further conditioned by a positive moderating effect of legislative experience. While higher educational attainment was consistently linked to stronger budget scrutiny, more rigorous follow-up on audit queries, and greater committee engagement, the persistence of considerable variability in oversight effectiveness within each educational category, together with the only partial mediating role of knowledge and skills, indicated that education was an important but not exclusive determinant of effective legislative oversight in the Ugandan context. These findings suggest that strengthening Uganda's legislative oversight function requires a deliberate combination of efforts to raise formal educational attainment among legislators, to build targeted oversight-specific knowledge and skills irrespective of formal qualification, and to harness the accumulated experience of longer-serving legislators in ways that reinforce, rather than substitute for, the gains associated with education.

### **Recommendations**

Parliament and local government councils should institute targeted, continuous professional development programmes in public finance management, budget analysis and audit interrogation specifically tailored to legislators with certificate or diploma-level qualifications, in order to narrow the observed oversight effectiveness gap between this group and their more highly educated colleagues.

All newly elected legislators, regardless of educational qualification, should undergo a mandatory, standardised oversight-specific induction and skills training Programme at the start of each electoral term, given the demonstrated mediating role of oversight-related knowledge and skills in translating educational qualification into effective oversight practice.

Parliament and local government councils should institutionalize structured mentorship arrangements that deliberately pair experienced legislators with newly elected or less experienced colleagues across educational categories, in order to harness the positive moderating effect of legislative experience and accelerate the development of oversight competence among less experienced members.

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