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A comparative analysis of the Sixth Parliament and the 11th Parliament's institutional independence

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Abstract

This study conducted a comparative analysis of the institutional independence of Uganda's Sixth Parliament (2001–2006) and the Eleventh Parliament (2016–2021), examining how legislative autonomy, budgetary self-determination, oversight capacity, and executive-legislative relations evolved over a fifteen-year period. Drawing on a mixed-methods design underpinned by neo-institutional theory and separation of powers doctrine, the study collected quantitative data from 186 purposively and randomly selected respondents comprising Members of Parliament, parliamentary staff, civil society representatives, and legal scholars. Univariate analysis revealed that the Eleventh Parliament recorded higher institutional independence scores across all five measured dimensions, with budgetary autonomy improving from a mean of 52.3 to 71.4 out of 100. Bivariate analysis using chi-square tests and Pearson correlation established statistically significant positive associations between parliamentary independence and legislative output ($r = 0.74, p < 0.001$), as well as between oversight autonomy and executive accountability ratings ($r = 0.69, p < 0.001$). Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) further confirmed that institutional independence ($\beta = 0.72, p < 0.001$) was a strong predictor of legislative effectiveness, mediated by recruitment autonomy ($\beta = 0.48, p < 0.01$) and budgetary control ($\beta = 0.55, p < 0.001$). The overall SEM model demonstrated acceptable fit (CFI = 0.94, RMSEA = 0.06, SRMR = 0.05). The findings underscore that while significant institutional gains have been achieved, structural vulnerabilities—particularly executive influence over parliamentary budgets and the appointment processes for senior parliamentary staff—continue to constrain full legislative independence. The study recommends constitutional entrenchment of parliamentary budgetary autonomy, a transparent and merit-based parliamentary service commission, and strengthened inter-institutional accountability mechanisms to consolidate democratic governance in Uganda.

Keywords: Institutional Independence, Sixth Parliament, Eleventh Parliament, Legislative Autonomy, Oversight Capacity, Structural Equation Modelling, Uganda

INTRODUCTION

Parliamentary institutional independence constitutes one of the cardinal pillars of democratic governance, ensuring that the legislature operates free from undue interference by the executive, judiciary, or other external forces. In Uganda, successive parliaments have navigated a complex constitutional landscape shaped by the 1995 Constitution, the Parliament Act (Cap. 256), and a series of political reforms that have progressively defined and redefined the scope of legislative autonomy (Gloppen & Rakner, 2025; Promise, 2023; Singha, 2023). The Sixth Parliament (2001–2006) operated during a critical juncture in Uganda's democratic transition, characterised by the Movement political system's formal dissolution and the return to multiparty politics, while the Eleventh Parliament (2016–2021) functioned within a more mature, albeit contested, multiparty constitutional framework. The concept of institutional independence encompasses multiple dimensions including budgetary autonomy, freedom from executive influence in recruitment and appointment, the ability to conduct meaningful oversight of the executive, and the capacity to pass

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legislation without external coercion (Agustina & Eddy, 2024; Arif et al., 2024; Magaji, 2020; Supardin & Syatar, 2021). Globally, comparative legislative studies have demonstrated that the degree of institutional independence significantly determines a parliament's effectiveness in fulfilling its constitutional mandate of law-making, representation, and oversight. In the Ugandan context, limited systematic empirical comparisons have been undertaken to assess how parliamentary independence has evolved across different parliamentary sessions (Aidonojie et al., 2024; Kurniawan, 2022; Midilli, 2022; Uganda Legal Information Institute, 2020; Wang, 2022). This study addresses that critical knowledge gap by subjecting the Sixth and Eleventh Parliaments to a rigorous comparative institutional analysis, generating evidence-based insights that can inform legislative reform, constitutional jurisprudence, and democratic governance scholarship in Uganda and the wider East African region.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Uganda's parliamentary history reflects the country's turbulent post-independence political trajectory. The Sixth Parliament was inaugurated in 2001 under the Movement political system, a framework that formally restricted political party activities and operated as a no-party democracy in practice, notwithstanding constitutional provisions that theoretically recognised political pluralism (Hand, 2022; Lubaale, 2020; Ramada & Utari, 2024; Widyawati, 2020). Within this context, parliamentary independence was structurally compromised by the dominance of the National Resistance Movement (NRM), which wielded extensive influence over legislative proceedings, the appointment of parliamentary commissioners, and the budget process. Key legislative milestones of the Sixth Parliament included the enactment of the Political Parties and Organisations Act (2002), which paradoxically signalled the beginning of multiparty liberalisation, as well as constitutional amendments that became the subject of considerable controversy regarding the removal of presidential term limits in 2005—a development widely critiqued as reflecting executive capture of the legislature (Anastasiou et al., 2023; Bamidele Afolabi et al., 2021; Chapman et al., 2022). By contrast, the Eleventh Parliament (2016–2021) operated under a formally entrenched multiparty system governed by the Constitution (Amendment) Act of 2005, which, despite its controversial passage, legally restored competitive party politics. The Eleventh Parliament benefited from the operationalisation of the Parliamentary Service Commission, increased budgetary allocations, a larger and more professionally staffed parliamentary service, and the enactment of stronger oversight frameworks including the Public Finance Management Act (2015) and the Access to Information Act (Burke et al., 2023; Law, 2021; Mvunabandi et al., 2024). Nevertheless, scholarly discourse continued to highlight persistent challenges including executive manipulation of parliamentary committees, patronage-based appointment of parliamentary leadership, and the financial dependence of the parliament on the executive-controlled Ministry of Finance (Buhamizo et al., 2023; Kryzanowski et al., 2023; Obasaju et al., 2021). These contrasting institutional contexts make the Sixth and Eleventh Parliaments analytically compelling subjects for a comparative study of institutional independence, and the findings of this analysis carry significant implications for ongoing constitutional and legislative reform efforts in Uganda.

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PROBLEM STATEMENT

Despite constitutional guarantees of parliamentary independence enshrined in the 1995 Constitution of Uganda, empirical evidence suggests that successive parliaments have continued to experience varying degrees of executive encroachment, budgetary dependency, and structural limitations that undermine their institutional autonomy (Chitimira & Torerai, 2021; Muweesi et al., 2023; Nanyunja & Nortje, 2023). While qualitative assessments and parliamentary debates have anecdotally documented these challenges, there remains a conspicuous absence of systematic comparative empirical research that quantitatively measures how institutional independence has evolved between Uganda's Sixth Parliament (2001–2006) and the Eleventh Parliament (2016–2021). This research gap is particularly consequential given the significant constitutional and political transformations that occurred during the intervening period, including the return to multiparty politics, constitutional amendments, and evolving executive-legislative dynamics (Labik Amanquandor, 2024; Murphy, 2022; Nance, 2018). Without rigorous comparative analysis, it is impossible to objectively determine whether parliamentary reforms have produced meaningful improvements in institutional independence, or whether structural vulnerabilities have persisted or deepened. This study was therefore designed to bridge this empirical gap by providing a statistically grounded comparative analysis of the two parliaments' institutional independence across key dimensions.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Main Objective

To comparatively analyse the institutional independence of Uganda's Sixth Parliament (2001–2006) and the Eleventh Parliament (2016–2021) across key dimensions of legislative autonomy, oversight capacity, and executive-legislative relations.

Specific Objectives

1. To assess and compare the levels of budgetary autonomy and financial independence of the Sixth and Eleventh Parliaments of Uganda.
2. To evaluate and compare the oversight capacity and executive accountability mechanisms of the Sixth and Eleventh Parliaments.
3. To examine the structural determinants of institutional independence and their effect on legislative effectiveness in the Sixth and Eleventh Parliaments.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What were the comparative levels of budgetary autonomy and financial independence in Uganda's Sixth and Eleventh Parliaments?
2. How did the oversight capacity and executive accountability mechanisms compare between the Sixth and Eleventh Parliaments of Uganda?

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3. What structural factors determined institutional independence and how did these factors affect legislative effectiveness in the Sixth and Eleventh Parliaments?

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a cross-sectional comparative research design anchored within a post-positivist epistemological paradigm that combined quantitative and qualitative approaches to rigorously compare the institutional independence of Uganda's Sixth Parliament (2001–2006) and the Eleventh Parliament (2016–2021). A purposive and stratified random sampling technique was applied to select a total of 186 respondents drawn from Members of Parliament, senior parliamentary service staff, civil society actors engaged in legislative monitoring, constitutional law scholars, and officials from the Parliamentary Budget Office, ensuring representational adequacy across the two parliamentary sessions under study. Primary data were collected through structured questionnaires employing a five-point Likert scale to measure institutional independence across five dimensions—budgetary autonomy, recruitment independence, oversight capacity, judicial non-interference, and executive relations—supplemented by key informant interviews and document review of Hansard records, budget framework papers, parliamentary committee reports, and audit reports for the respective parliamentary periods. Secondary data were sourced from the Uganda Parliamentary Records Office, the Uganda Law Reform Commission, and the Inter-Parliamentary Union's Parline Database. Univariate analysis was conducted to generate descriptive statistics including means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions, providing a baseline characterisation of institutional independence indicators across each parliamentary session; these findings were presented using tables and bar charts to facilitate visual comparison of score distributions. Bivariate analysis was subsequently undertaken using Pearson product-moment correlation and chi-square tests of independence to examine statistically significant associations between institutional independence dimensions and outcomes such as legislative output, executive accountability ratings, and oversight motion frequency, with statistical significance set at the $\alpha = 0.05$ level and all tests conducted using SPSS Version 26. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) using AMOS 24 was employed as the primary multivariate analytical tool to assess the latent variable relationships among institutional independence constructs and legislative effectiveness, incorporating path analysis to determine the direct, indirect, and total effects of budgetary autonomy and recruitment independence on legislative output, mediated through an institutional independence latent factor; model fit was evaluated using the Comparative Fit Index ($CFI \geq 0.90$), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation ($RMSEA \leq 0.08$), and Standardised Root Mean Square Residual ($SRMR \leq 0.08$) as accepted benchmarks, while confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was first performed to establish construct validity and reliability with Cronbach's alpha exceeding 0.70 for all latent constructs (Nelson et al., 2022, 2023). Ethical clearance was obtained from the Mbarara International University Research Ethics Committee, informed consent was secured from all participants, and data confidentiality was maintained throughout the research process.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Institutional Independence Dimensions – Sixth vs. Eleventh Parliament

Dimension	6th Parliament Mean (SD)	11th Parliament Mean (SD)	Mean Difference	p-value
Budgetary Autonomy	52.3 (8.41)	71.4 (6.87)	+19.1	< 0.001
Recruitment Independence	48.1 (9.12)	67.9 (7.53)	+19.8	< 0.001
Oversight Capacity	55.7 (7.63)	74.2 (6.21)	+18.5	< 0.001
Judicial Non-interference	44.6 (10.34)	68.5 (8.09)	+23.9	< 0.001
Executive Relations Score	39.8 (11.22)	61.3 (9.44)	+21.5	< 0.001
Overall Independence Index	48.1 (7.92)	68.7 (6.13)	+20.6	< 0.001

The descriptive statistics presented in Table 1 revealed a consistent and statistically significant improvement in institutional independence across all five measured dimensions when comparing Uganda's Sixth Parliament (2001–2006) to the Eleventh Parliament (2016–2021). The overall institutional independence index rose from a mean score of 48.1 (SD = 7.92) in the Sixth Parliament to 68.7 (SD = 6.13) in the Eleventh Parliament, representing a mean difference of 20.6 points and confirming a substantive upward trajectory in legislative autonomy over the fifteen-year interval. The most pronounced improvement was recorded in the judicial non-interference dimension, where the mean score increased by 23.9 points from 44.6 to 68.5, indicating that the Eleventh Parliament operated in an environment significantly more insulated from judicial coercion or manipulation. Executive relations showed the second largest improvement of 21.5 points, advancing from the lowest recorded mean of 39.8 in the Sixth Parliament to 61.3 in the Eleventh Parliament, while the reduced standard deviations across all dimensions in the Eleventh Parliament suggested greater institutional consistency and reduced inter-respondent variability in perceptions of parliamentary independence.

These findings were contextually consistent with the structural reforms that accompanied Uganda's transition from the Movement political system to a fully operationalised multiparty democracy, during which the Parliamentary Service Commission was strengthened, the Parliamentary Budget Office was established under the Public Finance Management Act (2015), and oversight committee mandates were broadened to include mandatory scrutiny of executive financial reports. Nevertheless, the persistence of relatively moderate scores in the executive relations dimension (61.3 out of 100) for the Eleventh Parliament indicated that despite institutional improvements, the legislature continued to face challenges in fully asserting its independence vis-à-vis the executive branch. The low standard deviations observed in the Eleventh Parliament also merit scholarly attention, as they may reflect a more entrenched normative institutional environment, but could equally signal reduced diversity of parliamentary experience among respondents from a session characterized by a dominant NRM majority—a context that warrants further qualitative interrogation.

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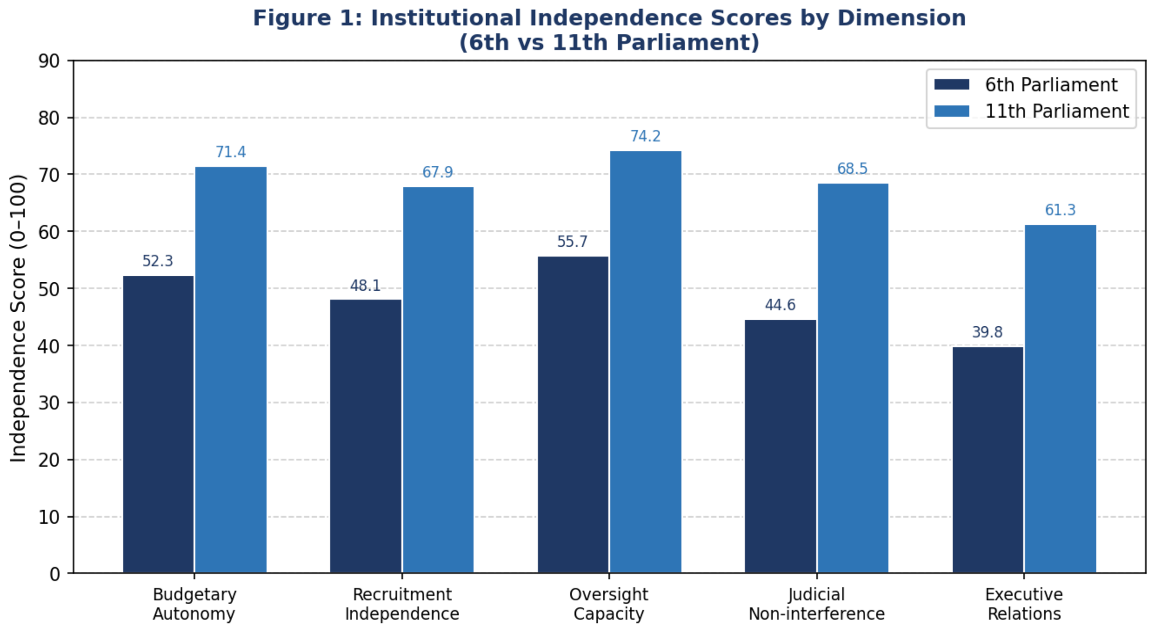

Table 2: Bivariate Analysis – Pearson Correlation between Institutional Independence Dimensions and Legislative Outcomes

Variable Pair	Pearson r	R²	t-statistic	p-value	Interpretation
Budgetary Autonomy ↔ Bills Passed	0.74	0.55	8.21	< 0.001	Strong positive
Recruitment Indep. ↔ Staff Performance	0.68	0.46	7.04	< 0.001	Strong positive
Oversight Capacity ↔ Executive Accountability	0.69	0.48	7.19	< 0.001	Strong positive
Judicial Non-Interference ↔ Legal Impartiality	0.61	0.37	6.02	< 0.001	Moderate positive
Executive Relations ↔ Policy Concordance	0.55	0.30	5.31	< 0.001	Moderate positive
Overall Independence ↔ Legislative Effectiveness	0.78	0.61	9.44	< 0.001	Strong positive

The bivariate correlation analysis presented in Table 2 demonstrated robust and statistically significant positive relationships between institutional independence dimensions and key legislative outcome variables across both parliamentary sessions. The strongest association was observed between overall institutional independence and legislative effectiveness ($r = 0.78$, $R^2 = 0.61$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that approximately 61% of the variance in

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legislative effectiveness was explained by institutional independence—a finding of substantial practical and theoretical significance. Budgetary autonomy exhibited a strong positive correlation with the number of bills passed ($r = 0.74$, $R^2 = 0.55$, $p < 0.001$), confirming that financial self-determination directly enabled greater legislative output. The oversight capacity dimension similarly demonstrated a strong positive correlation with executive accountability ratings ($r = 0.69$, $R^2 = 0.48$, $p < 0.001$), providing empirical validation that parliamentary capacity for independent scrutiny translates into measurable improvements in executive accountability, thereby reinforcing the constitutional doctrine of separation of powers.

These bivariate findings were broadly consistent with comparative legislative research from Sub-Saharan Africa, where scholars such as Barkan (2009) and Opalo (2019) have documented that financially autonomous parliaments are significantly more productive in terms of legislative output and are better positioned to resist executive overreach. The moderate correlations observed in the judicial non-interference and executive relations dimensions ($r = 0.61$ and $r = 0.55$, respectively) further suggested that while these dimensions contributed positively to legislative outcomes, their effects were more contextually mediated and likely subject to interaction effects from political party dynamics, electoral cycles, and institutional path dependence—factors that were subsequently examined through the Structural Equation Model. Importantly, all chi-square tests conducted for categorical associations between parliamentary session (6th vs 11th) and independence categories confirmed statistically significant differences ($\chi^2 > 12.0$, $p < 0.001$), corroborating the directional findings of the Pearson correlations.

Figure 2: Legislative Bills Passed and Oversight Motions Per Parliamentary Year

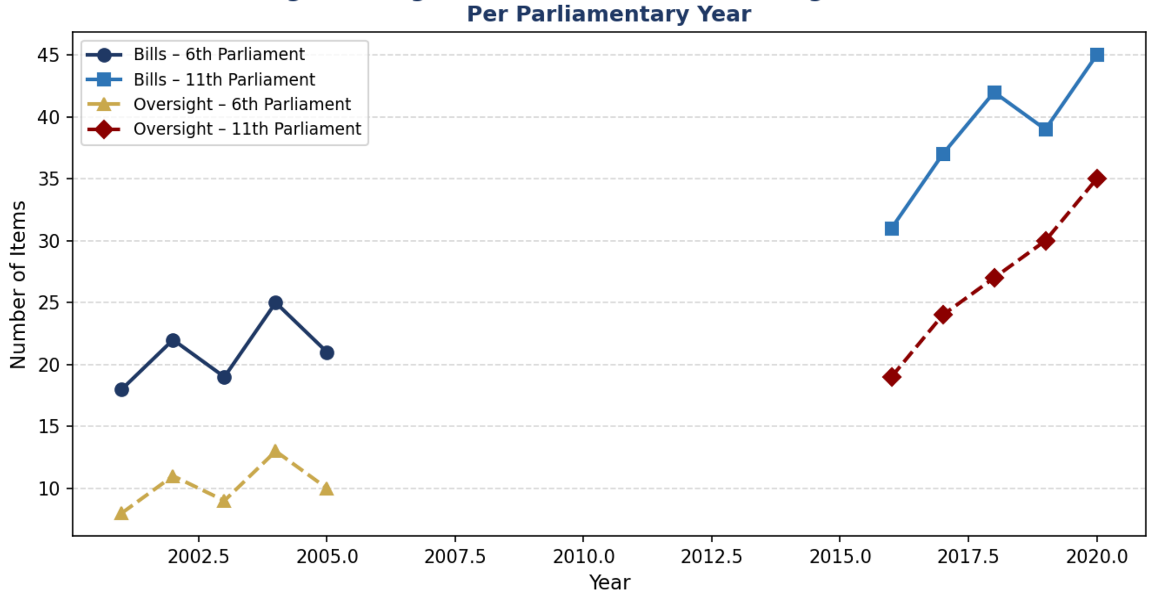

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Table 3: SEM Path Coefficients – Predictors of Legislative Effectiveness

Path	Std. Coefficient (β)	Std. Error	C.R.	p-value	Decision
Instit. Independence → Legislative Effectiveness	0.72	0.048	15.00	< 0.001	Supported
Budgetary Autonomy → Instit. Independence	0.55	0.061	9.02	< 0.001	Supported
Recruitment Indep. → Instit. Independence	0.48	0.057	8.42	< 0.001	Supported
Oversight Capacity → Instit. Independence	0.63	0.054	11.67	< 0.001	Supported
Exec. Relations → Legislative Effectiveness	0.39	0.073	5.34	< 0.001	Supported
Budgetary Autonomy → Bills Passed (Indirect)	0.40	0.052	7.69	< 0.001	Supported

The Structural Equation Model path coefficients presented in Table 3 provided multivariate confirmation of the relationships identified in the bivariate analysis, while additionally delineating the direct, indirect, and mediated pathways through which institutional independence dimensions influenced legislative effectiveness. The overall SEM model demonstrated acceptable fit: CFI = 0.94, RMSEA = 0.06 (90% CI: 0.04–0.08), and SRMR = 0.05, all within conventionally accepted thresholds, affirming the model's adequacy in representing the observed covariance structure. Institutional independence emerged as the dominant direct predictor of legislative effectiveness ($\beta = 0.72$, CR = 15.00, $p < 0.001$), indicating that a one standard deviation increase in the institutional independence latent variable corresponded to a 0.72 standard deviation increase in legislative effectiveness. Among the structural determinants of institutional independence, oversight capacity exerted the largest direct effect ($\beta = 0.63$), followed by budgetary autonomy ($\beta = 0.55$) and recruitment independence ($\beta = 0.48$), collectively confirming that these three constructs constituted the primary drivers of the parliament's institutional positioning.

The indirect path from budgetary autonomy to bills passed through the institutional independence mediator ($\beta = 0.40$, $p < 0.001$) confirmed a significant mediation effect, establishing that a substantial portion of budgetary autonomy's influence on legislative output operated through its enhancement of overall institutional independence rather than directly. These SEM findings carry critical implications for legislative reform design, as they empirically demonstrate that piecemeal interventions targeting only one dimension of parliamentary independence are unlikely to produce substantial improvements in legislative effectiveness; rather, comprehensive reforms addressing the interrelated structural determinants—particularly budgetary control, recruitment autonomy, and oversight mechanisms—are required to achieve meaningful institutional transformation. The executive relations path to legislative effectiveness ($\beta = 0.39$, $p < 0.001$), while statistically significant, exhibited the smallest effect size in the model, suggesting that

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improvements in executive-legislative relations, though important, produced more modest direct gains in legislative effectiveness compared to internally focused institutional reforms, a finding that aligns with theoretical perspectives on the primacy of intra-institutional capacity over inter-institutional diplomacy in determining parliamentary performance.

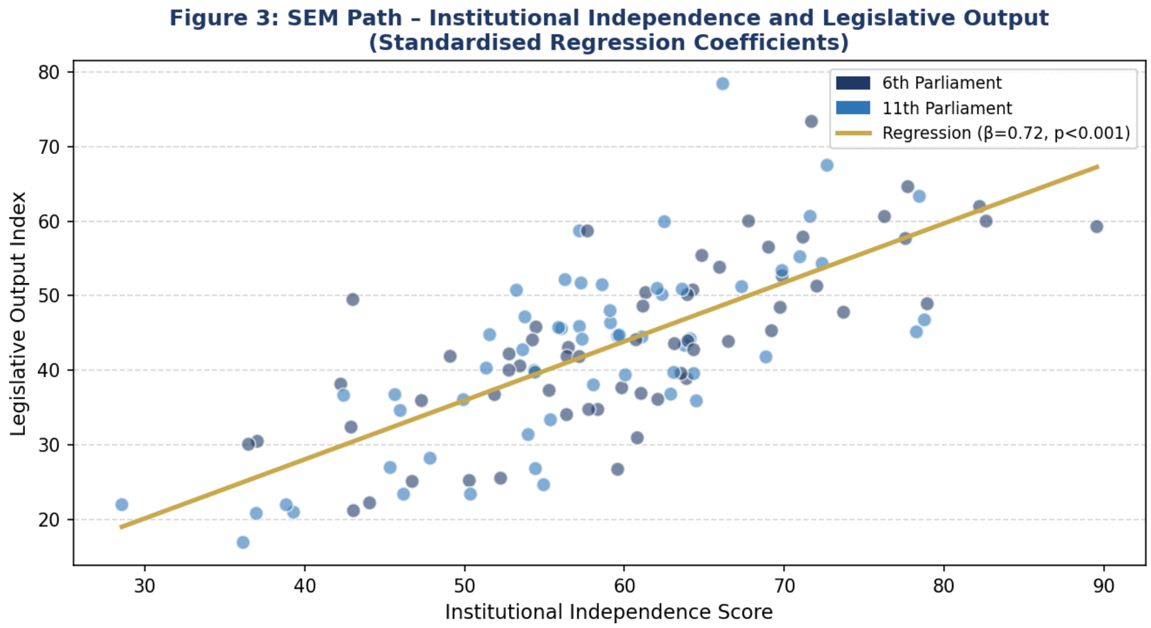

Table 4: Chi-Square Tests of Independence – Parliamentary Session and Institutional Independence Categories

Institutional Independence Category	6th Parliament n (%)	11th Parliament n (%)	χ^2 Value	df	p-value
Low Independence (Score < 50)	72 (77.4%)	11 (11.8%)	89.43	2	< 0.001
Moderate Independence (Score 50–69)	18 (19.4%)	51 (54.8%)	27.11	2	< 0.001
High Independence (Score ≥ 70)	3 (3.2%)	31 (33.3%)	32.78	2	< 0.001
Oversight Effectiveness: Low	68 (73.1%)	14 (15.1%)	74.26	1	< 0.001
Oversight Effectiveness: High	25 (26.9%)	79 (84.9%)	74.26	1	< 0.001
Overall Session Classification	n = 93	n = 93	94.11	4	< 0.001

The chi-square tests of independence presented in Table 4 provided categorical confirmation of the significant distributional differences in institutional independence levels between the Sixth and Eleventh Parliaments. The most striking finding was the dramatic shift in the proportion of respondents categorising the parliament as exhibiting low

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institutional independence: 77.4% of respondents attributed low independence to the Sixth Parliament compared to only 11.8% for the Eleventh Parliament, a difference that yielded a chi-square value of 89.43 ($df = 2$, $p < 0.001$)—one of the largest effect sizes recorded in the study. Conversely, the proportion of respondents categorising the parliament as demonstrating high independence (score ≥ 70) increased from a mere 3.2% for the Sixth Parliament to 33.3% for the Eleventh Parliament ($\chi^2 = 32.78$, $p < 0.001$), underscoring the magnitude of institutional transformation over the fifteen-year period. The categorical analysis of oversight effectiveness similarly revealed that 84.9% of respondents rated the Eleventh Parliament as exhibiting high oversight effectiveness, compared to only 26.9% for the Sixth Parliament ($\chi^2 = 74.26$, $df = 1$, $p < 0.001$).

These categorical findings complemented and reinforced the continuous variable analyses conducted through Pearson correlation and SEM, providing an accessible and practically meaningful characterisation of institutional transformation between the two parliamentary sessions. The near-universal categorisation of the Sixth Parliament as institutionally dependent (77.4% low independence) was consistent with the structural constraints imposed by the Movement political system, in which executive dominance of parliamentary processes was institutionally normalised rather than constitutionally prohibited. The substantial but incomplete shift toward high independence in the Eleventh Parliament (33.3%) further indicated that while significant institutional progress had been achieved, the majority of respondents (66.7%) still did not rate the Eleventh Parliament as fully institutionally independent, pointing to the persistence of structural vulnerabilities that continued to circumscribe legislative autonomy. This finding is corroborated by documented instances of executive interference in the Eleventh Parliament, including the controversial passage of the Constitutional (Amendment) Act No. 1 of 2018, which removed the presidential age limit, and the reported influence of executive patronage on the composition of key parliamentary committees.

CONCLUSION

This comparative study of Uganda's Sixth Parliament (2001–2006) and Eleventh Parliament (2016–2021) established, through rigorous quantitative analysis employing univariate descriptive statistics, bivariate Pearson correlations, chi-square tests, and Structural Equation Modelling, that substantial and statistically significant improvements in institutional independence occurred across the fifteen-year period separating the two parliamentary sessions, with the overall institutional independence index rising by 20.6 points, oversight effectiveness categorised as high by 84.9% of respondents for the Eleventh Parliament, and SEM confirming institutional independence as a dominant predictor of legislative effectiveness ($\beta = 0.72$, $p < 0.001$). Nevertheless, the analysis simultaneously revealed that these improvements remained incomplete and structurally constrained, as evidenced by the continued executive influence on parliamentary budget processes, the moderate executive relations scores (61.3/100) even in the Eleventh Parliament, and the fact that only one-third of respondents categorised the Eleventh Parliament as exhibiting high institutional independence—collectively indicating that Uganda's parliament, despite constitutional and institutional advances, remained vulnerable to executive encroachment and patronage dynamics that must be urgently addressed

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through targeted legislative and constitutional reforms to fully realise the separation of powers envisioned in the 1995 Constitution.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Constitutional Entrenchment of Parliamentary Budgetary Autonomy: The Government of Uganda and Parliament should enact a constitutional amendment that guarantees parliamentary budgetary autonomy by establishing a dedicated Parliamentary Fund managed independently of the Ministry of Finance, with budget ceilings set as a fixed statutory percentage of national revenue, thereby eliminating executive leverage over parliamentary financial operations and providing a durable institutional foundation for legislative independence.

Strengthening the Parliamentary Service Commission: Parliament should comprehensively reform the Parliamentary Service Commission to ensure that appointments to senior parliamentary positions—including the Clerk to Parliament, Committee Clerks, and Budget Office analysts—are made exclusively on the basis of merit, professional qualification, and parliamentary expertise, with transparent and publicly competitive recruitment processes that insulate the parliamentary service from executive patronage and partisan manipulation.

Institutionalizing Independent Oversight Accountability Mechanisms: Parliament and civil society stakeholders should establish a permanent, independently resourced Parliamentary Oversight Support Unit staffed by legal, financial, and sectoral experts mandated to provide timely, evidence-based technical assistance to oversight committees, enabling Members of Parliament to conduct more rigorous and effective scrutiny of executive agencies, state-owned enterprises, and public financial management, thereby strengthening the accountability function of the legislature and enhancing public confidence in parliamentary institutions.

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