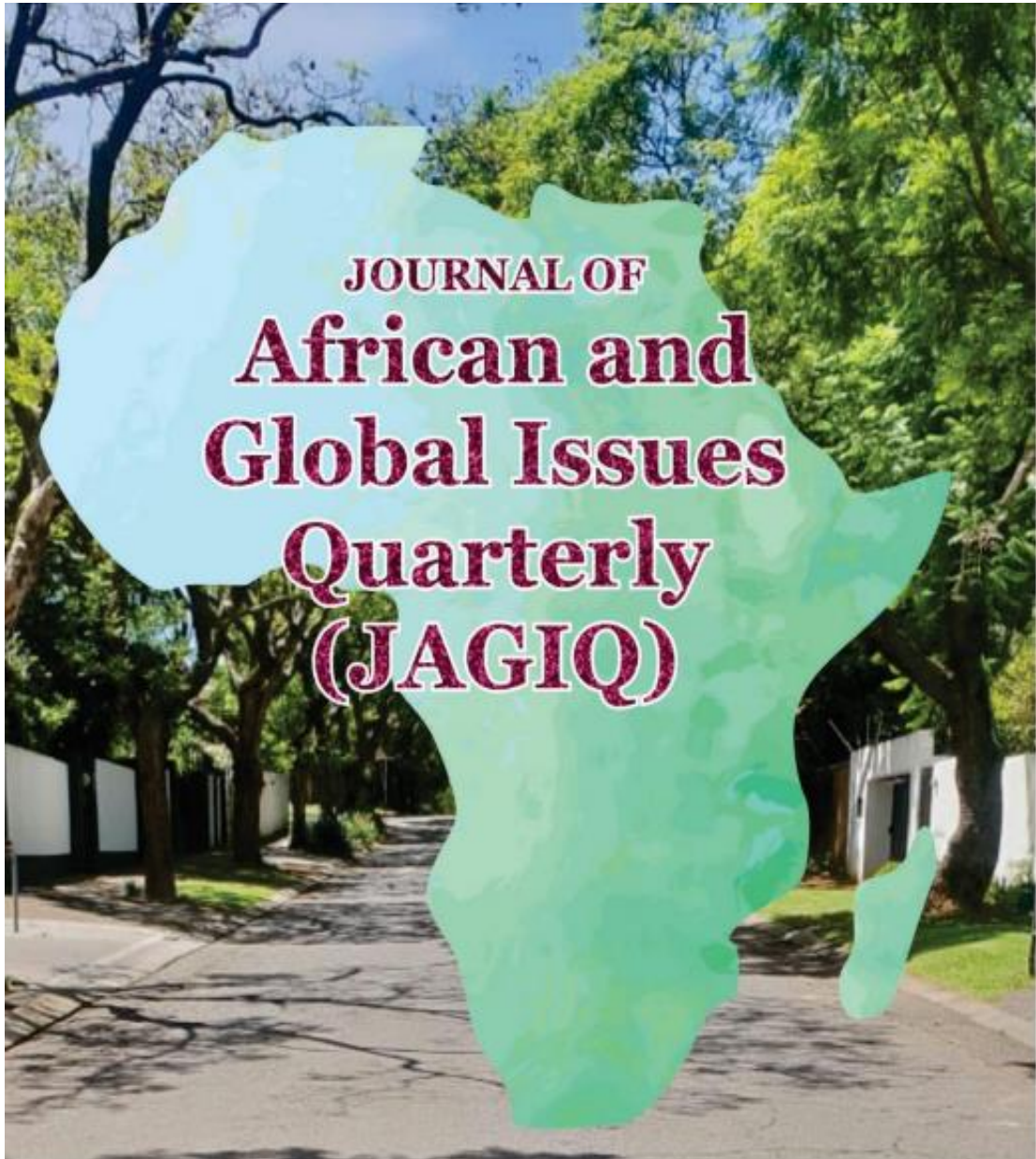




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Editorial Note:

Strengthening Accountability, Confronting Violence, and Reimagining Security in Africa

This Special Issue of African and Global Issues Quarterly arrives at a critical juncture. Across Africa, nations grapple with interconnected crises: the erosion of public trust in financial governance, the devastating rise of organised violence among youth, the persistent marginalisation of vulnerable populations, and the enduring legacy of colonial and neocolonial institutions that continue to shape contemporary realities. The thirteen papers presented here dissect these challenges with intellectual rigour and practical urgency.

We open with Nakabago and Hofisi's forensic examination of Uganda's Universal Primary Education capitation grant. For decades, UPE has been hailed as a pro-poor triumph. Yet, as the authors reveal, weak monitoring and evaluation of internal controls have turned a lifeline into a leaky vessel. Without real-time auditing and community-based oversight, financial accountability remains aspirational. This paper is a clarion call: education funding cannot be separated from forensic vigilance.

The crisis of youth violence, examined across two complementary studies by Somtochukwu, Muyideen, and colleagues, forces us to look where society often refuses to look: inside Ogun State's correctional facilities. Their first paper critically submits that socioeconomic indicators unemployment, broken kinship networks, and educational exclusion are causal pathways into cultism. The second adds a psychosocial layer, revealing how trauma, identity displacement, and the search for belonging drive young inmates deeper into violent collectives. Together, these studies argue that incarceration without therapeutic intervention is not rehabilitation but a factory for recidivism.

History matters. Daniel Oluwafemi John takes us into Igangan Town, Oyo State, between 1973 and 2021. The farmer-herder crisis is often framed as a contemporary emergency, but John demonstrates its long arc: decades of land tenure ambiguity, climate-induced migration, and state neglect. Understanding 1973 is essential for solving 2026. This is a sobering lesson in how unresolved grievances become inherited wars.

Joel Odaudu moves beyond Africa's borders with a multidimensional causal analysis of terrorism. Rejecting single-factor explanations, Odaudu insists on the confluence of political exclusion, economic inequality, and social fragmentation. His framework is a necessary tool for any government designing a counterterrorism policy that does not merely react but prevents.

The international justice system faces a necessary reckoning in Avitus A. Agbor's incisive critique of the International Criminal Court's racist image and agenda. Through comparative analysis of the situations in Ukraine and Palestine, Agbor exposes the selective application of international law a double standard that undermines the Court's legitimacy and perpetuates global hierarchies of victimhood.

Choma, Thobejane, and Rannditsheni's revisiting of human rights for people living with albinism foregrounds a community too often marginalised in both policy and scholarship. Their work reminds us that human rights discourse must move beyond abstract universality to address specific, lived vulnerabilities rooted in superstition, stigma, and systemic neglect.

Governance and accountability receive comprehensive treatment. Mohono, Gabanakgosi, and Shopola's Public Value Theory perspective on parliamentary oversight provides a fresh

framework for understanding democratic governance in Southern Africa. Zweni and Mahlala extend this conversation to grassroots public participation in municipal budget development, demonstrating that budgets are political statements about whose needs are prioritised.

The spectre of fragmentation looms large in Kelechi Johnmary Ani's unravelling of secessionist movements in Ambazonia and Biafra. By examining governance failures, identity politics, and historical grievances, Ani illuminates the root causes of separatist aspirations rather than merely managing their symptoms.

The private sector's challenges in volatile environments are explored by Parsad and Chummun, whose study of operational excellence in VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous) environments focuses on South Africa's insurance industry, offering practical insights for navigating uncertainty.

Academic rigour and methodological integrity come under the spotlight in Musaigwa, Nojiyeza, and Tabane's practical guide to writing strong conclusion chapters, addressing a perennial challenge in research dissemination and preempting reviewer criticism.

Nthambeleni Charles Netshisaulu's conceptual analysis of reversible metaphors in Tshivenda adds a rich linguistic dimension, demonstrating how language reflects and shapes cognition, culture, and social relations.

Taken together, these contributions remind us that accountability is not a bureaucratic checkbox. It is the thread linking school grants to classroom outcomes, correctional policies to safe communities, land history to peaceful coexistence, international law to genuine justice, and linguistic expression to cultural identity. The papers collectively argue that sustainable development in Africa demands simultaneous attention to financial probity, social inclusion, historical reckoning, and institutional reform.

We extend our deepest gratitude to all contributing authors for their intellectual rigour and commitment to advancing knowledge that serves African communities. In a world increasingly characterised by complexity and contestation, the role of critical scholarship has never been more vital. This Special Issue intervenes with rigour, compassion, and hope.

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Table of Content:

1. Monitoring And Evaluation Of Internal Controls In The Financial Accountability Of The Universal Primary Education Capitation Grant In Uganda <i>Johan Nakabago, Costa Hofisi</i>	5
2. Psychosocial Analysis Of Youths' Involvement In Cultism In Ogun State Correctional Facilities, Nigeria <i>Ogunmefun Folorunsho Muyideen, Njoku Daniel Somtochukwu</i>	26
3. A History Of Farmer-Herder Crisis In Igangan Town, Oyo State, Nigeria, 1973-2021 <i>Daniel Oluwafemi John</i>	43
4. The Political, Economic, And Social Determinants Of Terrorism: A Multidimensional Causal Analysis <i>Joel Odaudu</i>	56
5. Blunting The Racist Image And Agenda Of The International Criminal Court (Icc): The Situations In Ukraine And Palestine <i>Avitus A. Agbor</i>	80
6. Revisiting Human Rights And People Living With Albinism <i>Tsoaledi Daniel Thobejane, Vhuhwavho Rannditsheni, Hlako Choma</i>	95
7. The Role Of Parliamentary Oversight And Its Influence On Democratic Governance: A Public Value Theory Perspective <i>SD Mohono, BJ Gabanakgosi, MA Shopola, T Motswakae</i>	110
8. Unravelling The Dimensions Of Secessionist Movements In Africa: Focus On Ambazonia And Biafra <i>Kelechi Johnmary Ani</i>	130
9. Use Of Total Physical Response Method For Teaching Action Verbs To Primary School Learners <i>Farisani Thomas Nephawe</i>	141

10. Implementing Operational Excellence In Vuca Environments: A Study Of The Insurance Industry In South Africa
Sahil Dwarika Parsad, Bibi Z. Chummun
159
11. Reversible Metaphors In Tshivenda: A Conceptual Analysis Of Domain Swapping
Nthambeleni Charles Netshisaulu
177
12. The Catalyst Of Public Participation In The Development Of Municipal Budgets In Category B Municipalities In South Africa: A Community Engagement Perspective
Abongile Zweni, Sandiso Mahlala
201
13. Europe's Manufactured "Migration Crisis": Media, Militarisation, and Mobility in a Time of Global Crisis
Aghogho Akpome, Kofi Takyi Asante
218

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THE ROLE OF PARLIAMENTARY OVERSIGHT AND ITS INFLUENCE ON DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE: A PUBLIC VALUE THEORY PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

This study explores the role of parliamentary oversight in strengthening democratic governance, using Public Value Theory as the guiding framework. Adopting a qualitative, non-empirical approach with an exploratory research design, the study relied on an extensive literature review to examine how effective legislative oversight contributes to public value creation. A case reference is made to the North West provincial legislature for contextual balance in the analysis. The study interrogated five thematic areas including promotion of democracy, climate change governance, corruption control, underground economies, and human rights protection as the core role of parliamentary oversight in strengthening democratic governance. The analysis demonstrates that robust parliamentary oversight enhances transparency,

accountability, and responsiveness, thereby reinforcing public trust and institutional legitimacy. The study concludes that parliamentary oversight is not merely a procedural obligation but a strategic tool for ensuring that governance aligns with the collective interests and values of society. Strengthening oversight functions is therefore essential for South Africa and the North West provincial legislature, especially if the aim is to advance democratic ideals and to foster inclusive and sustainable development.

Keywords: *Parliamentary oversight, Public Value Theory, Democratic governance, Accountability, Public trust,*

INTRODUCTION

Parliamentary oversight is a key function of legislatures in any democratic system. According to Duba and Lehohla (2025), parliamentary oversight entails a process through which elected representatives monitor and evaluate the actions and decisions of the executive branch. This includes reviewing government budgets, examining public policies, and questioning ministers or heads of departments. Oversight ensures that the executive is held accountable for its actions and that government programmes serve the interests of the people (Bar-Siman-Tov, 2020). It also helps to uncover inefficiencies, prevent corruption, and ensure that laws are properly implemented. Tools such as committee hearings, audit reviews, and parliamentary questions are commonly used to carry out these responsibilities. Legislatures have the authority to approve budgets and assess whether funds are being used appropriately (Augustine, 2022). They can summon public officials to explain decisions and provide clarity on national issues. In

doing so, oversight strengthens accountability and supports effective public service delivery. In many countries, however, the full potential of parliamentary oversight is not always realised due to political interference, resource constraints, and weak institutional frameworks (Dahan & Strawczynski, 2020). Nonetheless, the oversight function remains central to building trust between the government and its citizens. The former Speaker of Parliament in South Africa, Max Sisulu made a similar observation, and further argued that:

“If parliamentary democracies cannot demonstrate that they are capable of and engaged in constant reform, then they are vulnerable to the observation that they are insufficiently modern and face the danger of losing influence and credibility” (Max Sisulu, 2013:29)

Democratic governance involves the management of public affairs in a manner that respects the rule of law, promotes accountability, and

encourages active citizen participation (Androniceanu, 2021). It is built on values such as transparency, equality, responsiveness, and inclusion (Sari, 2023). In a democratic system, leaders are expected to act in the public interest and must be accountable for their decisions. The rule of law ensures that no one is above the law, while public participation gives citizens a voice in shaping policies that affect their lives (Sant'Ambrogio & Staszewski, 2020). Institutions must operate in ways that are open, fair, and responsive to the needs of the people. Parliamentary oversight is one of the tools that reinforce these values. Through regular questioning of the executive, review of public expenditure, and monitoring of policy implementation, oversight helps to ensure that governance processes remain democratic (Mlambo, Zubane & Mlambo, 2020). Legislatures act as a check on executive power and promote responsible leadership. The North West provincial legislature is no exception. When parliaments carry out their oversight roles effectively, they create a system where decisions are questioned, debated, and improved (Sari, 2023). This makes government more accountable and strengthens the relationship between the state and its citizens. Therefore, parliamentary oversight is not only a legal responsibility but also a democratic necessity.

Although the importance of parliamentary oversight is widely acknowledged (Uhr & Wanna, 2020),

many legislatures including the North West provincial legislature still face serious limitations in fulfilling this role. In some cases, Duba and Lehohla (2025) affirm that oversight functions are weak due to limited technical expertise, lack of independence, or political loyalty to the executive. These weaknesses create gaps in accountability, resulting in poor service delivery, wasteful expenditure, and declining public trust. In other contexts, oversight tools are available but are not fully utilised or enforced (Ferreya & Gomes, 2023). This study is motivated by the need to understand how parliamentary oversight can be strengthened to support democratic governance more effectively. The main aim is to evaluate the roles of oversight on promoting transparency, accountability, and institutional performance through the lens of Public Value Theory. Understanding these dynamics is important for policymakers, civil society, and governance institutions working to promote democracy. The findings of the study will contribute to ongoing debates on democratic consolidation and institutional reform. Strengthening parliamentary oversight can lead to more responsive and accountable governance, making this study both relevant and timely in the current political and institutional landscape, especially in the North West province of South Africa.

Study Motivation and problematisation

In recent years, the discussion around democratic governance has shifted from general claims about institutional integrity to more focused discussions on the concrete contributions of parliamentary oversight (Sari, 2023). While it is widely accepted that legislative oversight serves as a vital mechanism for ensuring transparency and accountability in democratic systems, the practical impact of this function across key policy areas remains insufficiently explored. Oversight is more than a procedural requirement; it plays a critical role in shaping the quality of governance, influencing how well governments respond to the needs of their citizens, enforce accountability, and uphold the rule of law (Janda & Masango, 2024). Contextually, the North West provincial legislature is one of the legislatures that have experienced several oversight challenges in South Africa, and these include but is not limited to inertia to hold the executive accountable due to capacity limitations. This problem is mainly political, and its effects turn to affect oversight practices in general, but the quality of governance in both provincial and municipalities is also not spared.

This study is motivated by the need to better understand how parliamentary oversight relates to broader outcomes such as democratic resilience, gender equity, environmental sustainability, anti-corruption efforts, and the promotion of human rights. These are not abstract ideals as they are central

pillars of effective governance and public trust. This paper recognises that the strength of oversight is not solely determined by the existence of tools, but also by the environment in which they are used, shaped by political will, institutional arrangements, and governance culture. Rather than treating oversight as a static or isolated activity, this study approaches it as part of a larger process in which legislative bodies interact with executive institutions, civil society, and the public.

The effectiveness of oversight, therefore, seen as the result of both internal capacities and external conditions. Despite this understanding, much of the existing literature and institutional reporting tends to focus on descriptive accounts of how oversight is conducted, often falling short of analysing its tangible effects on policy outcomes. This research paper seeks to contribute to that effort by offering recommendations that links parliamentary oversight with measurable improvements in governance. Through this approach, it seeks to support the academic inquiry and the efforts of legislators, analysts, and governance practitioners who are working to build more accountable and inclusive public institutions. In doing so, the study hopes to bring clarity to how and under what conditions oversight can move beyond formality and make a lasting difference in democratic practice.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The promotion of democracy

The relationship between parliamentary oversight and democracy can be meaningfully understood through the lens of Public Value Theory. At its core, this theory emphasises that the legitimacy of public institutions hinges on their ability to create value that resonates with the needs and expectations of the public (Moore, 1997). Parliaments, as democratic institutions, are entrusted not merely with passing laws, but with safeguarding the broader public interest as an undertaking that aligns directly with the ideals of public value. Through active and responsive oversight, Murphy and De Vrieze (2020) affirm that parliaments can ensure that governance is efficient and equitable, inclusive, and reflective of societal values. In this way, parliamentary oversight becomes a vital tool in enhancing democratic practices, ensuring that public institutions remain aligned with the interests and concerns of the people they serve (Zantsi, 2020).

While democracy has taken root in many parts of the world, public trust in democratic institutions continues to face serious tests (Tsheola & Sebola, 2023). Citizens often feel disconnected from political processes, perceiving parliaments as distant, ineffective, or beholden to elite interests. Public Value Theory addresses this democratic deficit by asserting that institutions must go beyond procedural correctness and focus on delivering outcomes that genuinely matter to the public (Moore,

1997). When oversight mechanisms are weak or symbolic, parliaments risk losing their relevance and legitimacy (Malik, 2023). However, when oversight is effectively exercised through transparent hearings, investigations, accountability audits, and responsiveness to public grievances, parliaments reaffirm their role as custodians of the public interest (Karanicolas & Kwoka, 2022). These actions build trust, strengthen civic engagement, and affirm democracy as a lived experience rather than an abstract ideal.

Crucially, Public Value Theory highlights that the effectiveness of oversight is not simply a matter of having tools and procedures in place (Moore, 1997). The value created through oversight depends on the will to use these tools meaningfully and the capacity to translate oversight into action. Democracies flourish when parliaments use their mandate to challenge misconduct, ensure inclusivity, protect human rights, and uphold the rule of law (Malik, 2023). In doing so, they create a form of public value that goes beyond numbers or reports as it reflects shared values, nurtures a culture of accountability, and contributes to the collective well-being of society. Therefore, parliamentary oversight should be seen not just as a democratic obligation but as a continuous process of value creation in service of the public good (Katz, 2024).

Climate change and the role of parliamentary oversight

Climate change represents one of the most pressing challenges of our time, with its wide-ranging impacts threatening the environment and human development, economic stability, and social equity (Enwereji, 2021). From rising sea levels and prolonged droughts to catastrophic storms and biodiversity loss, the climate crisis is global in scale yet local in its consequences. Vulnerable populations, particularly in developing regions often bear the brunt of these effects, despite contributing the least to global emissions (Ngcamu, 2023). Addressing this imbalance demands not just international cooperation, but national accountability and oversight. Within this national space, parliaments have a critical role to play in ensuring that climate policy is not only adopted but effectively implemented in ways that protect public interest, equity, and environmental sustainability (Willis, 2020).

Public Value Theory provides a powerful lens for understanding this role. The fundamental of the theory suggests that public institutions must be judged not simply on efficiency or procedural compliance, but on their capacity to deliver outcomes that enhance collective well-being (Coghill, 2021). Climate change impact, therefore, becomes a matter of public value creation which requires that oversight structures ensure policies serve the broader needs of both present and future generations (Howlett, 2023). Parliamentary oversight functions such

as committee reviews, budget allocations, policy evaluations, and accountability hearings are tools through which legislators can interrogate and monitor government commitments to national and global climate goals (Duba & Lehohla, 2025). When these tools are used effectively, they ensure transparency in emission reduction targets, stimulate innovation in renewable energy sectors, and drive inclusive adaptation strategies such as those exposed to environmental risks.

Despite these opportunities, many countries struggle to meet their climate commitments due to weak governance structures and limited legislative engagement (Streck, 2020). The effectiveness of climate policy often hinges on the ambition of national strategies, but on the ability of parliaments to hold governments accountable for results (Setzer & Benjamin, 2020). In nations where climate change is framed as a shared societal emergency, parliamentary engagement is typically more robust, leading to stronger enforcement of emission targets, sustainable development budgeting, and broader stakeholder inclusion. Conversely, where oversight is passive or fragmented, progress stalls. This study highlights the importance of sustained parliamentary involvement in governance as a key determinant of national performance. It argues that strong oversight does not merely enforce compliance; it cultivates a political culture where sustainability,

justice, and public value become the guiding principles of environmental stewardship.

Corruption control and the role of parliamentary oversight

Corruption continues to be one of the most pervasive threats to democratic governance and social equity (Morisse, 2023). It undermines public trust, weakens institutions, distorts policy processes, and diverts resources meant for essential public services. Within this reality, parliaments are expected to play a central role in combating corruption, not merely through their legislative function, but more importantly, as agents of accountability (Mlambo, Ngema & Mpanza, 2023). Through tools such as public expenditure reviews, audit follow-ups, and oversight hearings, parliaments can expose misuse of power and hold both public officials and executives to account (Duba & Lehohla, 2025). Their proximity to the electorate further enhances their responsibility to ensure that state resources are managed transparently and in alignment with the public interest.

Anchored in Public Value Theory, the fight against corruption is seen as a moral and administrative imperative aimed at protecting the public good (Nicolaidis, 2024). Public value is created when state institutions operate with integrity, transparency, and justice, and is undermined in environments marked by bribery, embezzlement, and conflicts of interest (Bozeman & Crow,

2021). Legislatures are uniquely positioned to create enabling environments for anti-corruption frameworks. This includes enacting laws that guarantee access to information, protect whistleblowers, and enforce transparent procurement practices. However, the presence of laws alone is insufficient. What matters most is how effectively parliaments use their oversight authority to monitor compliance, sanction wrongdoers, and reinforce accountability systems (Mlambo et al., 2023). When this is done consistently, citizens' experience improved service delivery, fairer governance, and increased trust in democratic institutions.

The COVID-19 pandemic revealed the dire consequences of weak parliamentary oversight in times of crisis. Across many countries, corruption in the procurement of medical supplies and essential drugs flourished due to regulatory gaps, lack of transparency, and poor legislative scrutiny (Chiru, 2024). The most vulnerable groups paid the price, with lives lost to counterfeit medicines and critical shortages of protective equipment (Bolleyer & Salát, 2021). In contrast, countries where parliaments actively interrogated emergency spending, monitored contract allocations, and enforced accountability measures fared better. This illustrates the potential of robust legislative oversight not just to contain corruption but to advance the public value of health, safety, and dignity. As

such, enhancing the role of parliaments in anti-corruption efforts is not simply about legal reform but about reaffirming the principle that governance must serve the collective interests of society, especially in moments of vulnerability (Nicolaides, 2024).

Parliamentary oversight and the growth of underground economies

Underground economies which comprise illicit transactions such as black-market trading, tax evasion, money laundering, drug trafficking, and other economic crimes thrive in environments where governance systems are weak, opaque, and poorly regulated (Sonsuphap, 2022). These shadow markets undermine formal economic systems and erode state authority and weaken the rule of law. A significant driver of these illicit economies is systemic corruption, which often embeds itself into public institutions when legislative oversight mechanisms are either absent or ineffective (Amzuica & Mititelu, 2023). In such contexts, parliaments fail to act as a bulwark against abuse and allow organised criminal networks to infiltrate procurement processes, influence policy decisions, and operate with impunity.

Public Value Theory helps to understand that the legitimacy and effectiveness of public institutions rest on their capacity to uphold values such as transparency, justice, and equity. When oversight is weak or superficial,

the ability of the state to deliver public value is compromised (Wang & Li, 2024). This is particularly evident in bureaucratic systems riddled with inefficiency and red tape, where corruption becomes normalised and, in some cases, rationalised as a necessary evil to “get things done.” As Springer (2023) argues, complex and opaque administrative systems often provide fertile ground for illicit actors who act as brokers between public officials and private interests. The absence of clear, enforceable legal frameworks to criminalise corruption or ensure timely and proportionate punishment further diminishes deterrence and reinforces impunity (Wang & Li, 2024). Over time, the moral stigma associated with corruption fades, and it becomes integrated into everyday governance practices.

Strong parliamentary institutions, however, can play a transformative role in curbing underground economies (Datta, Walker & Amarilli, 2020). Parliaments contribute to strong legal systems and government-wide transparency when they are empowered to legislate effectively, oversee public spending, and hold the executive branch accountable (Ecoma, 2024). They are essential in simplifying bureaucratic processes, eliminating loopholes, and supporting anti-corruption agencies that target illicit financial flows (Jele, 2023). Countries such as Germany, Denmark, and Italy provide strong examples of this dynamic; their legislatures maintain

investigative and fiscal powers and ensure that government procurement, taxation, and administrative justice are monitored through active watchdog bodies (Fasone, 2022). As a result, these countries report lower proportions of their GDP attributed to shadow economic activities. Conversely, in nations where parliamentary authority is weak or symbolic, such as Myanmar, large segments of the economy operate in the shadows which fuels social inequality, financing organised crime, and threatening national security. Reinforcing parliamentary oversight, therefore, is not just a democratic imperative; it is essential to safeguarding the public interest and re-establishing trust in state institutions (Springer, 2023).

Parliamentary oversight and the protection of human rights

The protection and promotion of human rights remain one of the most critical responsibilities of democratic governance, and parliaments sit at the very heart of this mission (Ncube, 2020). As public institutions directly elected to represent the will of the people, parliaments are uniquely positioned to translate international human rights commitments into tangible legislative and policy actions at the national level (Ecoma, 2024). Public Value Theory helps to frame this obligation by viewing parliaments not merely as legal gatekeepers, but as moral custodians entrusted with creating public institutions that reflect shared societal values, justice, equity,

dignity, and inclusiveness (Androniceanu, 2021). When functioning effectively, parliamentary oversight ensures that executive decisions, national policies, and legislative frameworks align with the values enshrined in international human rights treaties and the broader aspirations of the citizens they serve.

In practice, however, many parliaments face significant challenges in fulfilling this role. Some may enact human rights-friendly legislation but fail to follow through with consistent oversight or enforcement. Others may intentionally sidestep scrutiny, using procedural or political barriers to ignore rights violations affecting vulnerable or marginalised communities. The gap between commitment and implementation often stems from a lack of political will, weak institutional structures, or the dominance of the executive over legislative functions (Bar-Siman-Tov, 2020). When parliamentary powers are weak, this oversight function diminishes, resulting in limited accountability for rights violations such as child labour, discrimination, restricted freedoms, and state-sanctioned violence (Khaitan, 2021). Furthermore, in some cases, governments have pursued international human rights council memberships not out of a genuine commitment to reform, but to shield themselves from international criticism (Murphy & De Vrieze, 2020). Without robust parliamentary engagement,

these global frameworks risk becoming symbolic rather than transformative.

Parliaments that possess strong oversight capabilities and a commitment to public value creation are better equipped to ensure that rights-based principles are fully embedded in national governance (Blaser Mapitsa, Ali & Khumalo, 2020). These parliaments ratify and domesticate treaties with clarity, scrutinise the actions of the executive branch, and work closely with independent human rights bodies, civil society organisations, and ombuds institutions to uphold justice (Murphy, 2020). The 2018 Draft Principles on Parliaments and Human Rights emphasise this potential showing that parliaments, by virtue of their democratic legitimacy and proximity to citizens, are often better placed than international courts to interpret and address the specific rights challenges faced within their contexts (Lyer, 2021). However, countries with high parliamentary powers, such as Germany, consistently score higher on the Freedom House Index, while those with weaker legislatures, like Saudi Arabia, lag in ensuring basic civil liberties and political rights (Sieberer, 2020). Strong legislative oversight, therefore, is not just a procedural function, it is an ethical imperative that brings public value to life through the protection of human dignity.

THEORETICAL LENS- THE PUBLIC VALUE THEORY

Public Value Theory, first introduced by Mark Moore in 1995, offers a compelling way to understand the role and purpose of public institutions in democratic societies (Moore, 2014). Unlike private enterprises that define success through profit margins, public institutions are entrusted with creating value that reflects the needs, expectations, and well-being of the broader society. Moore argued that public managers must not only deliver services efficiently but also ensure that these services align with democratic values and public consent (Moore, 1997). Moore (2014) conceptualised this through the "strategic triangle," which comprises three key elements: public value (the outcomes society deems valuable), legitimacy and support (the authorisation from stakeholders to act), and operational capacity (the ability of institutions to deliver). These elements must be held in balance for any public intervention to succeed. The theory challenges public sector leaders to think beyond administrative performance and to focus on outcomes that foster trust, legitimacy, and long-term social benefit. As such, Public Value Theory moves the conversation beyond performance metrics to more complex, citizen-centred understandings of what makes governance meaningful and effective (Moore, 1997).

In the context of this study, Public Value Theory provides a meaningful lens for evaluating the broader impact of parliamentary oversight. Oversight is

not merely a procedural function or a formality; it is a vital mechanism through which parliaments ensure that public institutions remain accountable, inclusive, and responsive (Murphy & De Vrieze, 2020). Whether through legislative hearings, audits, or investigative committees, oversight has the potential to influence financial integrity and policy direction, ethical standards, and institutional transparency (Papadopoulos, 2023). Public Value Theory therefore enabled this study to move past a narrow compliance-based approach and instead explore how oversight mechanisms are used to advance the public good across multiple sectors.

This theoretical approach is particularly relevant to this study because it resonates with the growing demand for democratic institutions to deliver more than formal accountability. In the contemporary governance environments, such as the North West Province of South Africa, citizens expect the parliament to be champions of fairness, inclusion, and justice. They expect public officials to act in ways that serve the collective interest. Chapter 6 of the Constitution (1996), section 114(2) (b) requires the provincial legislature to set up mechanisms to maintain the oversight of the exercise of provincial executive authority in the province, including the implementation of legislation. It is this context that the Public Value Theory captures these expectations and provides the current study with

recommendations that embraces both practical performance and ethical responsibility. It helps illuminate how effective oversight deters misuse of power and fosters public confidence and strengthens the democratic contract between the state and its people. A deeper exploration becomes possible, one that considers whether oversight in practice truly aligns with what the public values and what a functioning democracy demands by grounding this study in Public Value Theory.

RESEARCH METHOD

This paper adopted a non-empirical qualitative approach, relying on an extensive literature review as the main source of data collection. Peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, and legislations. The review revealed five dominant areas such as the promotion of democracy, responses to climate change, efforts to combat corruption, the dynamics of underground economies, and the protection of human rights. These themes were selected based on their relevance to the broader functions of parliamentary oversight within democratic systems. Data analysis was conducted through thematic analysis where five key areas emerged and discussed. This was complemented by using purposive sampling of the relevant literature materials. This involved systematically identifying, organising, and interpreting patterns and themes across the literature to draw meaningful conclusions. The method allowed the researcher to critically

synthesise insights and highlight how parliamentary oversight contributes to democratic governance, accountability, and the realisation of public value.

To ensure trustworthiness, the study adhered to criteria such as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was enhanced using well-established academic sources and a transparent analytical process. Transferability was addressed by providing rich, contextualised descriptions that allow readers to assess the applicability of the findings in other settings. Dependability was maintained through a systematic and well-documented research process, while confirmability was ensured by grounding interpretations in the literature rather than personal bias. Although the study was non-empirical and did not involve direct interaction with human participants, ethical considerations were still observed. Proper citation and referencing were maintained to uphold academic integrity and avoid plagiarism. The study also ensured that all secondary data sources were used responsibly and with respect for intellectual property rights.

DISSECTION OF FINDINGS

This study explored the role of parliamentary oversight in strengthening democratic governance, using Public Value Theory as an analytical lens. The literature reviewed highlights that parliamentary oversight is not merely a constitutional or

procedural requirement, but a dynamic process through which public institutions deliver outcomes that align with societal expectations, enhance accountability, and reaffirm public trust in governance structures. Across the five thematic areas such as promotion of democracy, climate change, corruption control, underground economies, and human rights protection, a consistent pattern emerged which affirms that strong parliamentary oversight is foundational to the realisation of public value in democratic systems.

The analysis of democracy promotion reveals that parliamentary oversight contributes to democratic deepening by aligning governance outcomes with citizens' interests and reinforcing legitimacy (Murphy & De Vrieze, 2020; Zantsi, 2020). When oversight functions are active and meaningful, they help mitigate public disenchantment and close the perceived gap between the state and its citizens. Public Value Theory, as advanced by Moore (1997), supports this by emphasising that legitimacy arises not just from laws and procedures but from the actual delivery of outcomes that reflect the common good. This is especially critical in contexts where democratic institutions face eroding trust, suggesting that revitalising parliamentary oversight can serve as a countermeasure to rising populism and civic apathy (Tsheola & Sebola, 2023; Malik, 2023).

In the context of climate change, parliamentary oversight emerges as a necessary tool to ensure policy coherence, institutional accountability, and long-term environmental sustainability. The discussion on climate change in the North West provincial legislature has been very scant and where it took place very little emphasis is made on how such can be funded. It is clear from Tshamano and Shopola (2021) that the government of South Africa is yet to prioritise climate change from budgetary perspective. These authors argue that this is the main reason climate change remains an unfunded mandate in the local sphere of government. As the literature illustrates, parliaments possess the institutional mandate, and so is that North West provincial legislature, to hold the executive accountable for climate-related commitments, monitor national progress toward global targets, and advocate for inclusive adaptation strategies (Willis, 2020; Howlett, 2023). These roles align with Public Value Theory's proposition that institutions must respond to long-term societal needs, even when those needs are not immediately visible or politically expedient. Oversight, in this sense, is an act of stewardship creating value for future generations while safeguarding present well-being.

Similarly, in combating corruption, the literature affirms the centrality of legislative oversight in reinforcing transparency and upholding the integrity of public institutions (Mlambo

et al., 2023; Nicolaides, 2024). Public Value Theory positions the fight against corruption as a public value imperative, given that corruption undermines service delivery, exacerbates inequality, and erodes institutional legitimacy (Bozeman & Crow, 2021). The reviewed studies demonstrate that parliaments that actively engage in audit processes, enforce procurement laws, and protect whistleblowers are more likely to sustain public trust. Moreover, the pandemic-era corruption scandals reinforce the necessity of continuous and proactive oversight, particularly during crises when the risk of abuse is heightened (Chiru, 2024).

The discussion on underground economies illustrates how weak or symbolic parliamentary oversight fosters environments where illicit financial activities thrive (Sonsuphap, 2022; Amzuica & Mititelu, 2023). These shadow economies weaken the state's capacity to collect revenue, distort market competition, and finance organised crime. Public Value Theory's emphasis on transparency, justice, and trust resonates here, highlighting the damage caused when public institutions fail to regulate and enforce the law. Conversely, legislatures that prioritise simplification of bureaucratic processes, close legislative loopholes, and work alongside anti-corruption agencies contribute to dismantling illicit networks and restoring institutional legitimacy (Fasone, 2022; Jele, 2023).

Finally, the protection of human rights is reaffirmed in the literature as a core responsibility of parliamentary oversight. Parliaments, as the most direct link between citizens and the state, must not only domesticate human rights treaties but ensure their full implementation through legislation, budget allocations, and accountability mechanisms (Ncube, 2020; Ecoma, 2024). Public Value Theory frames this responsibility as a moral one whereby governance must reflect shared values such as dignity, equity, and justice (Androniceanu, 2021). The evidence suggests that parliaments with strong oversight powers are more capable of holding executives accountable for rights violations, working with independent bodies, and responding to societal grievances (Blaser Mapitsa et al., 2020; Sieberer, 2020).

Collectively, the findings affirm that parliamentary oversight is indispensable to realising democratic governance in practice. It is the institutional mechanism through which public value is created, sustained, and defended. The study finds that effective oversight builds transparency, deters abuse of power, advances climate justice, combats corruption, protects fundamental rights, and ensures that the voices of citizens are reflected in policy outcomes. In contrast, weak oversight threatens democratic resilience, promotes elite capture, and fosters systemic inequality. In conclusion, the study highlights that parliamentary oversight should not be viewed as a

routine legislative function, but rather as a continuous process of public value creation. Through this lens, oversight becomes a dynamic and essential instrument for democratic renewal and institutional legitimacy. The recommendations of the study are expounded subsequently.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings from the literature and guided by Public Value Theory, this study makes the following recommendations to strengthen the role of parliamentary oversight in promoting democratic governance:

1. Institutional strengthening of parliamentary oversight functions: Parliaments should be equipped with adequate institutional capacity, including technical expertise, financial resources, and independent oversight bodies, to effectively carry out their oversight responsibilities. This includes establishing or enhancing standing committees, audit units, and legal advisory services that can provide continuous support in monitoring government actions.
2. Embedding public value orientation in legislative practices: Oversight functions should move beyond procedural compliance to focus on creating tangible public value. Legislators must prioritise outcomes that promote equity,

transparency, human rights, and long-term sustainability. This shift requires integrating public value principles into legislative training programmes, performance assessments, and strategic planning.

3. Enhancing civic engagement and transparency: To rebuild public trust and strengthen democracy, parliaments should ensure greater openness and responsiveness to citizens. This includes broadcasting committee hearings, publishing oversight reports, inviting public submissions during inquiries, and using digital platforms for real-time engagement. Transparency should be institutionalised as a core feature of oversight processes.
4. Strengthening climate governance through legislative oversight: Given the growing urgency of climate change, parliaments should institutionalise climate-focused oversight mechanisms. These may include climate committees, regular reviews of national commitments, scrutiny of environmental spending, and partnerships with environmental watchdogs. Legislative oversight must ensure that climate policies are not only adopted but implemented equitably and effectively.
5. Intensifying anti-corruption oversight mechanisms: Parliaments must play a proactive role in the fight against corruption. This can be achieved through more rigorous public expenditure reviews, follow-up audits, whistle-

blower protections, and enforcement of procurement laws. Oversight activities should target sectors prone to corruption, particularly during emergencies, where transparency is often compromised.

6. Addressing underground economies through regulatory reform: Legislatures should initiate, and support reforms aimed at simplifying bureaucratic procedures, closing legal loopholes, and enhancing inter-agency coordination. Oversight committees should monitor financial crimes and illicit trade more closely, collaborating with anti-corruption bodies and revenue authorities to curb informal economic activities that undermine governance.
7. Advancing human rights protection through parliamentary action: Parliaments should institutionalise human rights oversight by ratifying and domesticating international treaties, conducting regular reviews of national compliance, and working closely with human rights commissions and civil society organisations. Legislators should also prioritise issues affecting vulnerable groups and ensure that oversight activities result in meaningful legislative and policy interventions.
8. Building oversight capacity through continuous learning: Ongoing professional development and training for members of parliament and parliamentary staff should be

prioritised. Training should focus on budget analysis, climate policy, legal frameworks, investigative techniques, and public value theory, ensuring that oversight practices remain effective, adaptive, and ethically grounded.

9. Promoting collaboration between parliaments and independent institutions: Oversight efforts should be strengthened through strategic partnerships with independent bodies such as auditors-general, ombudspersons, human rights commissions, and civil society organisations. These collaborations enhance the credibility, reach, and impact of parliamentary oversight.
10. Institutionalising monitoring and evaluation of oversight impact: Parliaments should develop internal mechanisms for tracking and evaluating the effectiveness of their oversight functions. This includes setting performance indicators, conducting annual oversight reviews, and publishing impact assessments that measure the public value created through legislative activities.

The North West provincial legislature and parliaments in general can benefit from the afore-listed recommendations, especially for purposes of transforming the entire society to the direction of the democratic values, social justice, and fundamental human rights. Parliament or provincial legislatures must shape and give meaning to the achievement of substantive equality, but in so doing these institutions must always put in place capacity measures to ensure that as new members are introduced the inheritance, integrity and culture of

oversight is protected and promoted. It is understood that parties and members change with periodical elections, but this should derail the oversight cultures already established.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, this study has demonstrated that parliamentary oversight plays a pivotal role in enhancing democratic governance when guided by the principles of Public Value Theory. Through an examination of key thematic areas such as democracy promotion, climate change, corruption control, underground economies, and human rights protection, it is evident that effective oversight mechanisms promote transparency and accountability and contribute to the creation of outcomes that reflect the collective interests and values of society. When parliaments are empowered, transparent, and responsive, they serve as vital instruments for safeguarding public trust, strengthening institutional legitimacy, and ensuring that governance delivers meaningful public value. In the context of the North West Province, where governance challenges persist at both provincial and municipal levels, strengthening parliamentary oversight is essential for addressing local service delivery issues, restoring public trust, and ensuring that governance outcomes reflect the needs and values of the communities served. When parliaments are empowered and proactive, they become critical agents in fostering inclusive, ethical, and sustainable development rooted in the public interest.

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