

**SKILL MIX AND WORK PERFORMANCE OF HEALTH PROFESSIONALS  
IN GOVERNMENT REGIONAL REFERRAL  
HOSPITALS IN UGANDA**

By  
Mulegi Tom  
BA (KIU). MA (KIU)

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## **ABSTRACT**

There is a growing concern on failure of the health sector to deliver to expected levels of improvement in output and outcome. A study on performance of health workers' in Uganda revealed that difficulties in the health system, affecting the ability to work, would undermine a health worker's self-worth and commitment (Kyaddondo and Whyte 2003). This study, therefore analyzed the extent to which skill mix influences performance of health professionals in Government Regional Referral Hospitals in Uganda. It examined the skill mix in Government Regional Referral Hospitals, the relationship between skill mix and performance of health professionals; and the relationship between skill mix, motivation and performance of health professionals. To collect data, a field survey of four Government Regional Referral Hospitals was conducted using structured questionnaires, review of reports, in-depth interviews and observations at health facilities were used. Descriptive analyses, Pearson's correlation coefficient, single and multiple regression analyses were applied to achieve study objectives. The study was underpinned on two theories: Bourdie's Social Capital Theory and Human Capital Theory (Shultz 1964). Results indicated a shortage of qualified health professionals in all the four regional referral hospitals. Health workers were over-worked since most of the required positions were partially filled. At several regional referral hospitals, nurses, clinical officers, nursing assistants and medical officers worked under minimal supervision due to shortage of qualified health workers. This causes an ethical challenge, because health professionals at lower levels of training offered un-regulated task shifting services with neither a policy framework to monitor their competencies and/or training needs nor a legal framework to protect both service providers and patients served by this category of health professionals. There is also need for soft skills so as to apply technical skills, and knowledge at work. Single regression analyses revealed that, both skills are very strong predictors of work performance of health professionals in government regional referral hospitals in Uganda. Multiple regression analyses showed strong evidence that skills significantly predict health professionals' work performance a confidence interval of 95%. In conclusion, Government Regional Referral Hospitals should adopt more rational work processes. There should be a move towards a competence-based model, according to which the

health sector focuses on individual health workers and their capabilities in order to define jobs. The new conception of a health worker's job should be enforced with an increasing emphasis on empowerment and autonomy. This shall stimulate health workers towards self-management and increased responsibility.