



**INFLUENCE OF SUPERVISOR POLITICAL BEHAVIOR ON DIMENSIONS OF EQUITY IN HUMAN RESOURCE PRACTICES IN KENYA'S PUBLIC SECTOR. THE MEDIATING ROLE OF PROACTIVE WORK BEHAVIOR**

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**Morara, G.,<sup>1\*</sup> Gachunga, H.,<sup>2</sup> Odhiambo, R.,<sup>3</sup> & Muchiri, R.<sup>4</sup>**

<sup>1\*</sup>Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) Candidate, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture & Technology [JKUAT], Kenya

<sup>2</sup>Associate Professor, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture & Technology [JKUAT], Kenya

<sup>3</sup>Professor, Meru University of Science & technology [MUST], Kenya

<sup>4</sup>Senior Lecturer, KCA University, Kenya

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**ABSTRACT**

*As a dimension of perceived organizational politics, this study sought to determine influence of supervisor political behavior on dimensions of equity in human resources practices and, the mediating role of proactive behavior on the relationship between supervisor political behavior and equity in human resource practices in Kenyan public sector. The study involved 384 respondents drawn from Kenya's public sector and, developed a model which was empirically tested. Primary data was collected using a questionnaire and was analyzed using multiple approaches involving; Exploratory Factor Analysis, Confirmatory Factor Analysis and, Structural Equation Modelling. It was found that supervisor political behavior was destructive to attainment of equity in human resource practices and all its dimensions namely, procedural justice, distributive justice and interactional justice. Based on these findings, the study recommended among others; team work, re-engineering of HR systems and procedures, adoption of high performance work practices and recruitment of 'politically' low employees.*

**Key words:** Supervisor Political Behavior, Equity Human resource practices, proactivity, Procedural Justice, Distributive Justice, Interactional Justice

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## INTRODUCTION

Perceived organizational politics (POP) is part and parcel of organizational life whose influence, in the context of human resource management, can either constructive or destructive. Constructively, POP has been reported (Giauque, Biget & Varone, 2013) to positively impact on public service motivation and perceived individual performance. Destructively however, POP has been found to negatively influence fairness of pay decisions (Aino & Jamsen, 2010), employee turnover (Vigoda *et al.*, 2010; Osman, 2013), performance appraisal (Muhammad & Usman, 2014) and promotion (Nwinzia & Ojiabo, 2017). The latter findings are consistent to others showing how POP affect other strands of organizational performance including; organizational image (Eran, 2003), organization citizenship behaviors (Ladebo, 2006) and, work outcomes (Ndung'u & Mwathe, 2014). These findings attest that POP has pervaded many organizations with diverse effects and thus presenting enormous challenges as organizations seek to mitigate the negative effects and sustain the positives.

Supervisor behavior being one of the dimensions of POP involves those undesirable spontaneous actions or considerations which influence decisions by supervisors other than the known policies, systems and procedures of the organization. Supervisors have authority and power to direct and guide employees to perform organizational tasks associated with their jobs. A study by Aino and Sini (2010) found out that high level of perceived supervisor political behavior led to favoritism in performance appraisal which in turn had a negative effect on fairness and effectiveness of the pay system. The study further noted that supervisor behavior contributed positively to decisions relating to effectiveness of pay systems when there were low levels of organizational politics and high levels of distributive justice and or voice. In their study Vogel, Mitchell, Tepper, Resturbog, Changya, Hua and Huang (2015) observed that

supervisor perceived political behaviors characterized by abuse of office; power and authority resulted to unfair decisions which violated employees' expectations of respectful social interaction.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The theoretical underpinnings of this study considered a number of theories including; Perceived Organizational Support theory, Social Exchange theory, Self Determination theory, Procedural Justice theory and Reasoned Action theory. These theories were referred to during conceptualization of this study. Empirical literature review was carried out on all the constructs of the study.

Supervisor Political Behavior is one of the main dimensions of perceived organizational politics which has mixed effects on organizational outcomes (Aino & Jamsen, 2010; Enran, 2003; Ladebo, 2006; Giauque *et al.*, 2013). Supervisors have the authority and power to direct and guide employees to perform organizational tasks associated with their jobs. A study by Aino and Sini (2010) found out that high level of perceived supervisor political behavior led to favoritism in performance appraisal which in turn had a negative effect on fairness and effectiveness of the pay system. Harris and Kacmar (2012) observed that ineffective communication on the part of supervisors characterized by withholding information, purposeful delays and incomplete communication resulted in political behaviors among employees. The study also found out that intentional withholding of information was a common tool that management used to manage employees perceived as errant and anti-management.

While sometimes actions by coworkers or supervisors may be blamed for rising incidences of perceived destructive politics, employee inadequacy can also be blamed in equal measure. Parker, Bindl and Strauss (2010) explain that proactive employees or managers must have three attributes; they must be self-

starters, change oriented, and future focused. Another study on proactivity (Parker & Collins, 2010) indicate that the modern workplace require employees who are proactive for them to be able to exercise creativity, strategic thinking and be innovative in their quest to provide unique solutions at work. This, will among others assist in minimizing the impact of perceived politics at work.

Equity in human resource practices is reflected from procedural, distributive and interactional justice in an organization. De Ceiri *et al.* (2011) observe that effective human resource practices are crucial for an organization's success because they influence employees' behavior, attitudes and performance. Buch, Kuvaas and Dysvik (2010) explain that the key objective of human resource practices in any organization is to align employee behaviors with outcomes associated with organizational effectiveness meaning that among others, they are expected to enhance equity and contribute towards building a value system in employees to have behaviors which support attainment of organizational objectives. Human resource practices must therefore enhance justice in recruitment, appraisal, compensation and reward management.

### RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

Based on the above theoretical underpinnings, the study hypothesized that;

*H<sub>01</sub>: Supervisor perceived political behavior positively influence perceptions of equity in human resource practices in Kenya's public sector.*

*H<sub>02</sub>: Supervisor perceived political behavior positively influence perceptions of procedural equity in human resource practices in Kenya's public sector.*

*H<sub>03</sub>: Supervisor perceived political behavior positively influence perceptions of distributive justice in human resource practices in Kenya's public sector.*

*H<sub>04</sub>: Supervisor perceived political behavior positively influence perceptions of interactional justice in human resource practices in Kenya's public sector.*

*H<sub>05</sub>: Proactive behavior mediates the relationship between perceived organizational politics and perceptions of equity in human resource practices in Kenya's public sector.*

### RESEARCH METHODS

This study was a descriptive survey involving employees working in Kenya's public sector. This research design was appropriate because Kombo and Tromp (2011) observe that descriptive surveys are useful when collecting information about people's attitude, opinions, habits and social issues. Therefore, this research design was adopted in this study because it extensively assisted in analysis and testing of relationships among variables and, explained how supervisor political behavior influenced the dimensions of equity in human resource practices which included; procedural justice, distributive justice and interactional justice.

Data was collected using a questionnaire and this was considered appropriate since it enabled the study to effectively collect data since by getting respondents' opinions concerning the research problem (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2013). It also provided a relatively simple and straight forward approach for collecting the required- both qualitative and quantitative - data for the study. Supervisor political behavior was measured using seven indicator questions adapted from Kacmar and Carlson (1991) POP validated scale, dimensions of equity in human resource practices were measured using twenty four indicator questions adapted from Colquintt (2001) validated scale and proactivity was measured using Bateman and Crant (1993) validated Scale.

Stratified random sampling method was used to select a total of 263 public sector employees participating in the study. In order to confirm the validity and reliability and of the scales, exploratory

factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted. Data analysis and hypotheses testing were conducted using structural equation modelling (SEM).

## FINDINGS

Through EFA, indicator factors for all the respective constructs were extracted and proved to be valid and reliable. All the remaining indicators had a factor loading of above 0.5, communalities of greater than 0.3 and their loadings converged into measuring something in common indicating presence of convergent validity (Hair, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2010). Moreover, the indicator variables for respective constructs loaded in a pattern that discriminated themselves and, the correlation matrix of the extracted factors showed that all the loadings were below 0.7 and this indicated presence of discriminant validity. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the extracted factors was above 0.7 (George & Mallery, 2010) indicating that the extracted factors were reliable.

After EFA, the extracted indicator variables were confirmed through CFA. Out of a total of forty four indicator variables, twenty one factors were confirmed with the following model fit indices;

CIMN/DF= 1.92; CFI= 0.93; GFI= 0.90; RMSEA= 0.06 and P-CLOSE= 0.135. These model fit indices indicated good fit since they were within acceptable range. CIMN/DF<3 (Meydan & Sen, 2011), CFI≥0.90 (Schermelleh-Engel, Moosbrugger, & Müller, 2003), GFI≥0.90 (Bayram, 2013), RMSEA 0.05≤RMSEA≤0.08 (Byrne, 2010) and P-CLOSE ≥0.05.

As shown in Table 1 all the indicator variables for supervisor political behaviour, procedural justice, distributive justice and interactional justice and proactive work behaviour had respective factor loadings of above 0.5 which were all significant at 95% confidence level ( $r>0.5$ ,  $P<0.05$ ). Further, as shown in Figure 1, there was a significant negative relationship (-0.55) between supervisor political behaviour and equity in human resource practices. Similarly as shown in Table 2 supervisor political behavior was negatively related with all the dimensions of equity in human resource practices namely procedural justice (-0.41), distributive justice (-0.52) and, interactional justice (-0.30). The effect of proactive behaviour on the relationship between supervisor behaviour and the dimensions of equity in human resource practices was explored during hypothesis testing through structural equation modelling.

**Table 1: Construct Regression weights and Significance**

Indicator		Observed Variable	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
BH16	<---	DISTRIBUTIVE_JUSTICE	.736			
BH3	<---	DISTRIBUTIVE_JUSTICE	.743	.084	10.393	***
BH18	<---	DISTRIBUTIVE_JUSTICE	.887	.088	13.851	***
BH19	<---	DISTRIBUTIVE_JUSTICE	.811	.081	12.904	***
BN10	<---	PROACTIVITY	.788			
BN12	<---	PROACTIVITY	.619	.243	3.168	.002
BH13	<---	INTERACTIONAL_JUSTICE	.805			
BH14	<---	INTERACTIONAL_JUSTICE	.785	.099	9.245	***
BH24	<---	PROCEDURAL_JUSTICE	.782			
BH23	<---	PROCEDURAL_JUSTICE	.945	.084	13.076	***
BS6	<---	SUPERVISOR_BEHAVIOR	.772			

Indicator		Observed Variable	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
BS7	<---	SUPERVISOR_BEHAVIOR	.957	.113	12.024	***

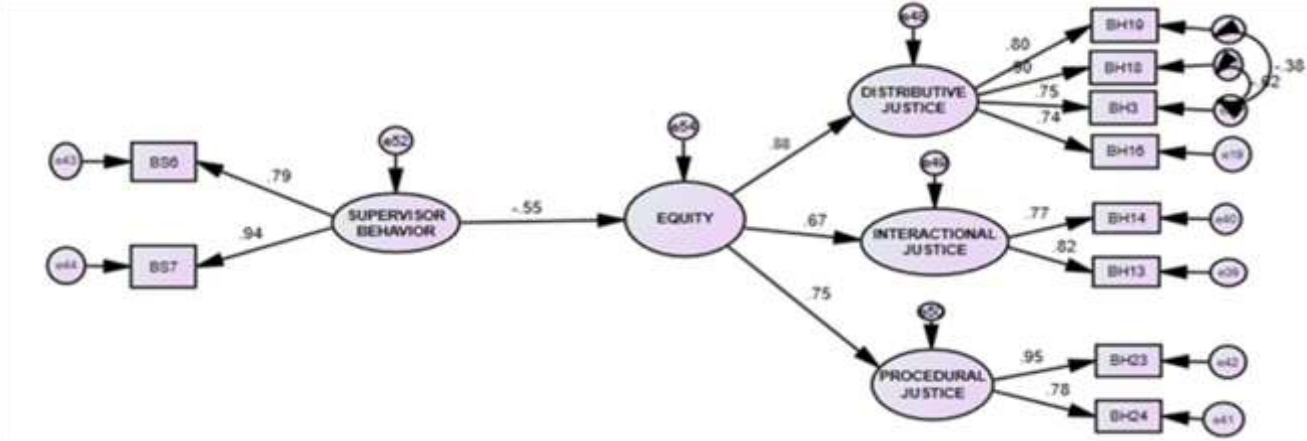


Figure 1: Model for Supervisor –Equity Relationship

Table 2: Coefficients for Relationship between Supervisor Political Behavior and Dimensions of Equity in Human Resource Practices

Dimension of Equity	Coefficient
Distributive Justice	-0.52
Procedural Justice	-0.41
Interactional Justice	-0.30

**DISCUSSIONS**

The objective of this study was to find out influence of supervisor political behavior on dimensions of equity in human resource practices in Kenya’s public sector and, the mediating effect of proactive work behavior on this relationship. As a result, it was found out that supervisor political behavior had significant negative relationship with all the dimensions of equity in namely; procedural justice (-0.41, P<0.05), distributive justice (-0.52, P<0.05) and interactional justice (-0.30, P<0.05) as applied to human resource practices in Kenya’s public sector. These findings were consistent with those of a similar previous study (Nihat, Samet & Ozgur, 2016). Other studies found a negative relationship between supervisor political behavior which includes; - intentional withholding information, purposeful delays and incomplete

communication and abusive supervision- and organizational outcomes (Harris & Kacmar, 2012; Rosen, Levy & Hall, 2011; Bolino, Turney & Bloodgood, 2011). This implies that supervisors have a role to play in enhancing equity in human resource practices by practicing appropriate behavior in decision making which will among others; facilitate the flow of information to organizational members, allow fair distribution of organizational resources such as wages, pay, opportunities for training and development and promotion, facilitate fair implementation of organizational policies and procedures on matters human resource and facilitate organizational cohesion and harmony through fair conduct and impression management tactics.

**Hypotheses Testing**

This study tested all hypotheses using structural equation modelling; where model fit indices were compared with regression weights and their significance levels. The results were as follows;

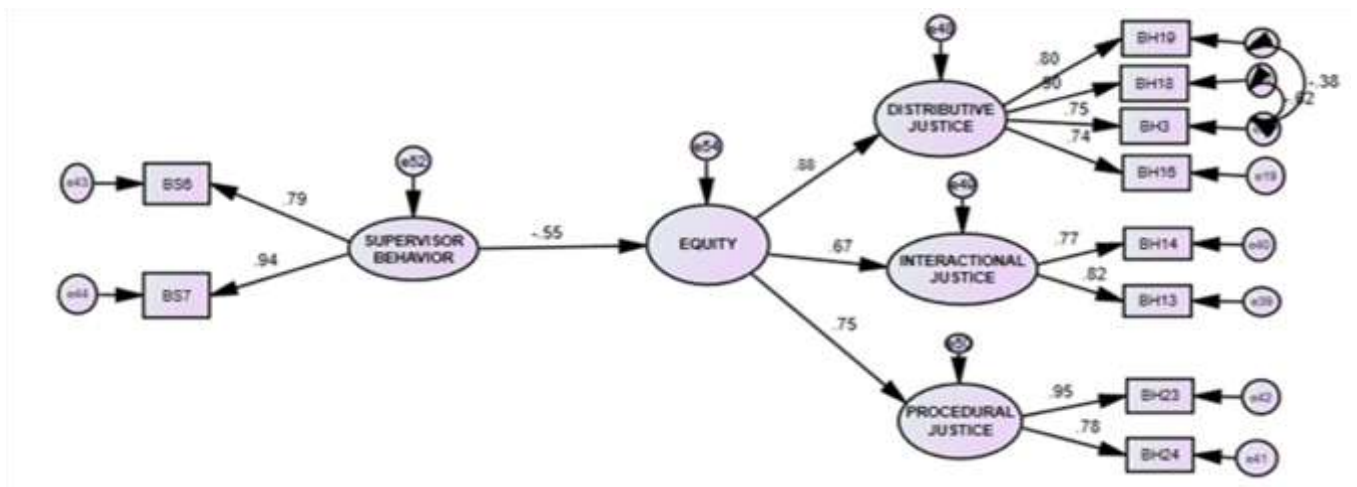
***H<sub>01</sub>: Supervisor political behavior positively influences perceptions of equity in human resource practices in Kenya’s public Sector.***

The results in Table 3 showed that there was a negative relationship (Beta coefficient = -0.55)

between supervisor political behavior and equity in human resource practices. Therefore H<sub>01</sub> was rejected. This was supported by the AMOS generated model of relationship shown in Figure 2 and the accompanying model fit indices which were all within acceptable range. The model was significant at 95% level of significance since P < 0.05. The study therefore concluded that based on the data of this study, *supervisor political behavior negatively influenced perceptions of equity in human resource practices in Kenya’s Public Sector.*

**Table 3: Testing causal Effects of Supervisor Political Behavior on Equity in Human Resource Practices**

		Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
EQUITY	<--- SUPERVISOR_BEHAVIOR	-.550	.065	-6.972	***



**Figure 2: Structural Model for Supervisor Behavior- Equity**

Model Fit Indices: CIMN/DF= 2.42; CFI= 0.95; GFI=0.93; RMSEA= 0.08

The second hypothesis read;

***H<sub>02</sub>: Supervisor political behaviour positively influences procedural justice as related to human resource practices in Kenya’s Public Sector.***

The results in Table 4 indicated that there was a negative relationship (Beta coefficient= -0.41) relationship between supervisor political behavior and procedural justice as related to human resource

practices. Therefore, H<sub>02</sub> was rejected. The model fit indices for the model in Figure 3 were within the acceptable limits implying goodness of fit. Further, the model was significant at 95% level of significance since P < 0.05. The study therefore concluded that based on the data of this study, *supervisor political behavior negatively influenced perceptions of procedural justice in human resource practices in Kenya’s Public Sector.*

**Table 4: Testing causal Effects of Supervisor Political Behavior on Procedural Justice in Human Resource Practices**

Indicator	Latent Variable	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
PROCEDURAL_ JUSTICE	< SUPERVISOR_BEHAVIOR	-.413	.073	-5.166	***

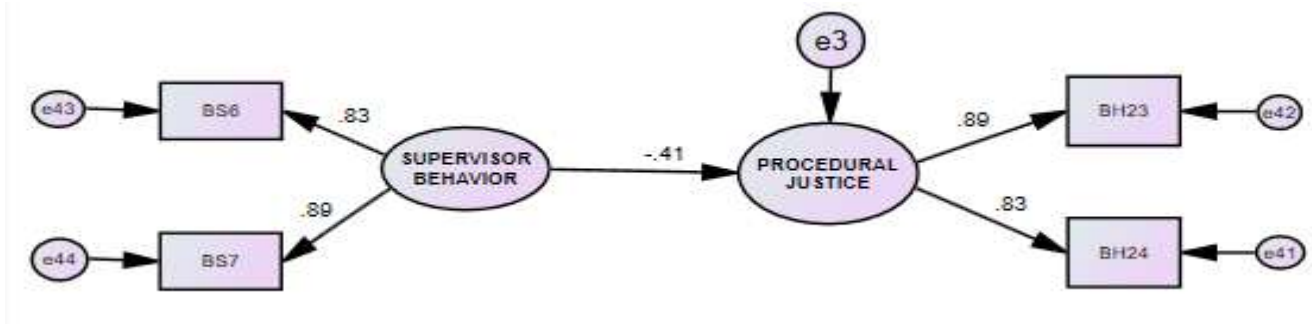


Figure 3: Model for Testing Hypothesis –Supervisor Political Behavior and Procedural Justice

*CIMN/DF= 0.025; CFI= 1.00; GFI= 1.00; RMSEA= 0.00; P-Close= 0.91*

The third hypothesis read;

**H<sub>03</sub>** Supervisor political behaviour positively influence distributive justice as related to human resource practices in Kenya’s Public Sector.

The results in Table 5 and Figure 4 indicated that there was a negative (regression weight= -0.52) relationship between supervisor political behaviour and distributive justice as related to human resource practices. Therefore, **H<sub>03</sub>** was rejected. The model fit

indices for the model in Figure 4 were within the acceptable limits implying goodness of fit. Further, the model was significant at 95% level of significance since  $P < 0.05$ . The study therefore concluded that based on the data of this study, *supervisor political behaviour negatively influenced perceptions of distributive justice in human resource practices in Kenya’s Public Sector.*

**Table 5: Testing causal Effects of Supervisor Political Behavior on Distributive Justice in Human Resource Practices**

Indicator	Latent Variable	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
DISTRIBUTIVE_ JUSTICE	<--- SUPERVISOR_ BEHAVIOR	-.521	.069	-7.215	***

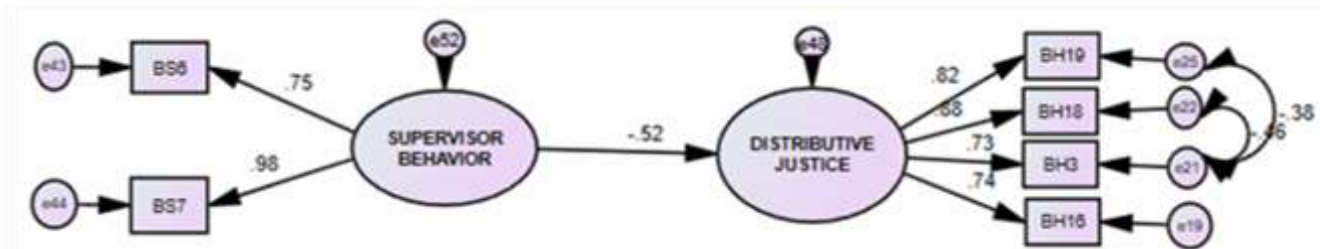


Figure 4: Model for Testing Hypothesis –Supervisor Political Behavior and Distributive Justice

*CIMN/DF= 2.68; CFI= 0.98; GFI= 0.97; RMSEA= 0.08; P-Close= 0.03*



The fourth hypothesis read;

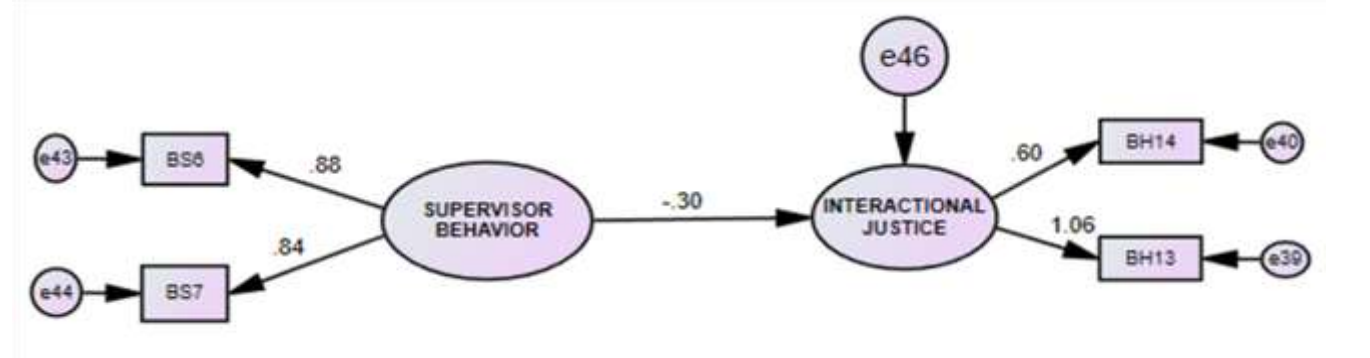
***H<sub>04</sub> Supervisor political behaviour positively influences interactional justice as related to human resource practices in Kenya’s Public Sector.***

The results in Table 6 showed that there was a negative (regression weight= -0.30) relationship between supervisor political behavior and interactional justice as related to human resource

practices. Therefore, **H<sub>04</sub>** was rejected. The model fit indices for the model in Figure 5 were within the acceptable limits implying goodness of fit. Further, the model was significant at 95% level of significance since  $P < 0.05$ . The study therefore concluded that based on the data of this study, *supervisor political behavior negatively influenced perceptions of interactional justice in human resource practices in Kenya’s Public Sector.*

**Table 6: Testing causal Effects of Supervisor Political Behavior on Interactional Justice in Human Resource Practices**

		Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
INTERACTIONAL_ JUSTICE	<--- SUPERVISOR_ BEHAVIOR	-0.30	.076	-4.499	***



**Figure 5: Model for Testing Hypothesis –Supervisor Political Behavior and Interactional Justice**

CIMN/DF= 1.68; CFI= 1.00; GFI= 1.00; RMSEA= 0.05; P-Close= 0.34

The fifth hypothesis read;

***H<sub>05</sub>: proactive work behavior mediates the relationship between supervisor political behavior and perceptions of equity in human resource practices in Kenya’s Public Sector.***

Testing for mediation in SEM is a two-step process involving first; establishing the coefficient of the relationship without a mediator and second, establishing the coefficient of relationship with mediator. For mediation to occur, (Zainudin, 2014) the Beta coefficient of the relationship between the predictor and predicted variable after mediation must

be less than that before mediation and the former becomes insignificant and, the other coefficients must be significant after mediation and the absolute value of their products must be greater that the coefficient of relationship after mediation.

From the results in Table 7 the Beta coefficient ( $\beta_0$ ) before mediation was -.55. After mediation, this coefficient ( $\beta_2$ ) marginally increased but remained significant at 95% level of significance. From the results in Table 8 the Beta coefficients ( $\beta_3$ ) and ( $\beta_4$ ) relating to supervisor behavior and equity and, proactivity and equity respectively were not significant at 95% level of significance. While the

product of these coefficients ( $\beta_3 * \beta_4 = -.02$ ) was higher than the Beta coefficient for the relationship between supervisor behavior and equity in human resource practices after mediation, they were insignificant at  $P=0.05$ . This is summarized as follows;  $\beta_2 > \beta_0$ , but  $\beta_2$  still significant at  $P=0.05$ ) and,  $\beta_3 * \beta_4 > \beta_2$ , and,  $\beta_3, \beta_4$  are not significant at  $P=0.05$ . For mediation to occur, (Zainudin, 2014)  $\beta_2 < \beta_0$ , and  $\beta_2$  becomes insignificant,  $\beta_3$  and  $\beta_4$  should be significant and, the absolute value for  $\beta_3 * \beta_4$  must be greater than the value of  $\beta_2$  where

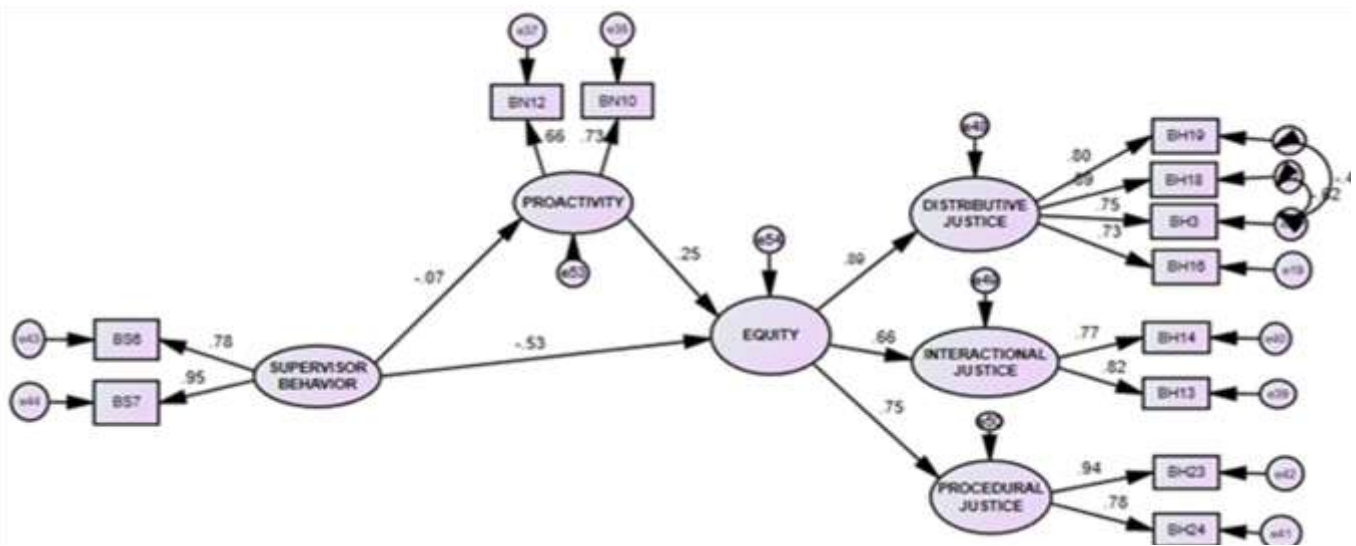
partial mediation is suspected. These conditions were not satisfied and therefore  $H_{05}$  was rejected. However, the model fit indices for this relationship (Figure 6) indicated a fairly good fit. The study concluded that notwithstanding the model fit indices and, *based on the available data, proactive work behavior does not mediate the relationship between supervisor political behavior and equity in human resource practices in Kenya's public sector.*

**Table 7: Relationship Between Supervisor Behavior and Equity Before Mediation**

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
EQUITY	<---	SUPERVISOR_BEHAVIOR	-.550	.065	-6.972	***

**Table 8: Relationship between Supervisor Behaviour and Equity After Mediation**

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
PROACTIVITY	<---	SUPERVISOR_BEHAVIOR	-.070	.050	-.874	.382
EQUITY	<---	PROACTIVITY	.254	.119	2.818	.005
EQUITY	<---	SUPERVISOR_BEHAVIOR	-.534	.064	-6.947	***



**Figure 6: Supervisor –Equity Mediation Model**

$CIMN/DF = 2.58$ ;  $CFI = 0.95$ ;  $GFI = 0.93$ ;  $RMSEA = 0.08$ ;  $P\text{-Close} = 0.05$

## CONCLUSION

Supervisors being managers in Kenya's public sector make crucial human resource decisions based on other considerations other than open and objective execution of their work duties and responsibilities. From the study, it has been observed that supervisor political behaviour has a destructive influence on all the dimensions of equity in human resource practices in Kenya's public sector. This implies that employees working at management level in Kenya's public sector tend to impede the attainment of equity in human resource practices. This undesirable behaviour was observed in previous similar studies (Aino & Sini, 2010; Vogel, Mitchell, Tepper, Resturbog, Changya & Huang, 2015).

## RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the above findings, the study proposes the following;

Kenya's public sector should consider reorienting its human resource development strategy and implement a paradigm shift in terms of scope and content to include aspects of modern human resource development including; talent management, employee proactivity, employee

engagement and high performance work practices. This will in the long run assist in changing the perceptions and conduct of public sector employees at work. This will also enhance strategic fit during HR strategy formulation and implementation on issues relating to curbing destructive perceptions of organizational politics.

Secondly, public institutions in Kenya should continuously improve their human resource policies, systems and procedures to support and accommodate the dynamics of contemporary practice of human resource management. This would assist in addressing any likely negative impact of perceived organization politics (Kacmar & Harris, 2012) on organizational outcomes and, specifically address issues related to equity in human resource practices. This will include; adopting a consultative approach in HR policy formulation and system related reforms to avoid inbuilt gaps or aspects that may promote self-interest at the level of employees or supervisors at work, inculcate a culture that foster teamwork among employees, develop a criteria for hiring politically under-skilled employees and, develop a criteria that will enhance objectivity in human resource decisions.

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