

# **Perceptions of organisational politics and its impact on managerial practices at the National electricity provider in the Southern African Development Community (SADC)**

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

Politics in an organisation is an inevitable element in organisation management. The Southern African Development Community (SADC)'s national electricity providers have been subject to an increasingly intense organisational politics cancer for almost two decades, and it is commonly believed to be behind the current electricity generation crisis that has become synonymous within the SADC region. The electricity challenges have spread to most countries in Africa, making the challenge applicable to Africa as a continent. Even on a global scale, electricity crises are increasingly becoming a matter of concern. Economies the world over are known to be heavily reliant on electricity as an energy source. Most if not all economies would be dysfunctional and non-existent without adequate electricity. This study focuses on organisational politics and its impact on managerial practices at a national electricity provider in a SADC region, in particular, Zimbabwe's national electricity provider and specifically aims to provide a conceptual framework for better cognition and minimisation of negative political behaviour, ultimately enhancing electricity generation capacity for the country. The study is presented in article format covering four areas of study as follows:

- Article one identifies the main role-players and their functions in the generation of electrical power at the national electricity providers. The identification of the role-players is literature based and discusses the influences of the role-players in the equation of electricity generation for the economy. A biographical profile of the national electricity provider is compiled by means of an empirical study.
- The second article explores and interrogates employees' perceptions of organisational politics by employing both theoretical and empirical study focusing on the causes/sources of political behaviour at the national electricity provider.
- The third article investigates the effects of organisational politics at the national electricity provider focusing on the positive and negative effects. The article also employs both a literature and an empirical study.
- The final article provides solutions to the negative effects of organisational politics. It investigates the managerial practices for minimising negative political

behaviour through a review of literature as well as undertaking an empirical study.

A sample of 1400 participants was randomly selected from the population of 2210 employees, representing 63.35% of the population. A total of 358 completed questionnaires were returned by the cut-off date. Of the 358, 11 were discarded as they were incorrectly completed, giving an effective response rate of 24.78%. The study employed the statistical software programme SPSS 21.0 for Windows to analyse the data. Various quantitative statistical techniques that suit the doctoral level of research were used to analyse the data. The techniques include:

- Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy;
- Exploratory factor analysis
- Bartlett's test of sphericity; and
- Cronbach Alpha's reliability coefficient.

The major findings of the study were:

- The first article identified the main role-players within the national electricity provider's political environment as: employees, managers; government; and board of directors. Central to the political environment, are diverse goals from each role-player which in most cases is incongruent, giving birth to the political tempo (organisational politics) within the organisation.
- The second article identified four significant factors perceived as contributing to political behaviour at the national electricity provider. The factors are managerial behaviour, poor communication of objectives, unexpected employee behaviour and unhealthy managerial practices. These factors account for a favourable variance of 74.26.
- The third article identified three factors of significance that explain the effects of political behaviour at the national electricity provider. These factors account for a favourable variance of 74.67%, and the factors include positive departmental actions, negative employee actions and personal consequences.

- The final article sought to provide measures for minimising negative effects of political behaviour, thus the article identified two factors of importance in minimising negative political behaviour at the national electricity provider. These factors are managerial fairness and managerial participation accounting for 70.11% of the total variance.

Organisational politics, by and large, impedes organisational performance and in the case of the national electricity provider, it retards the power utility's capacity to generate the much needed electrical power. Thus an integrated organisational strategy is required to successfully harness negative political behaviour into some significant positive factors that can create a conducive work environment that enhances performance ultimately increasing productivity levels. While the findings of the study holds true of the fact that some political behaviour factors have a hand in the national electricity provider's inability to generate adequate electrical power, further research is needed to substantiate these factors in other regions of the national electricity provider within Zimbabwe as well as in SADC countries. A SADC approach encompassing all the member countries can help reduce negative political behaviour in key organisations such as the national electricity providers and other parastatals. The study concludes by proposing a comprehensive conceptual organisational politics management model (OPMM) which can be used by managers at the national electricity providers to reduce negative political behaviour.

**Key terms:** organisational politics, organisation, perceptions, load shedding, common goals, Southern African Development Community, SADC, factor analysis, national electricity provider, failed state, Zimbabwe

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

SADC	Southern African Development Community
ZESA	Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority
KMO	Kaiser, Meyer & Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
AGM	Annual General Meeting
OPMM	Organisational Politics Management Model
MANCOSA	Management College of Southern Africa
MW	Megawatt

# TERMINOLOGY

## **National electricity provider**

A state owned monopoly that generates and distributes electricity throughout the country.

## **Electricity generation**

The production of electricity in megawatts (MW) by the national electricity provider.

## **Load shedding**

The disconnections of electricity from households and industry due to inadequate electrical power generation capacity.

## **Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority**

Zimbabwe's national electricity provider.

## **Board of Directors**

Senior managers at the national electricity provider responsible for giving strategic guidance/direction to the national electricity provider.

## **Managers**

Managerial employees that perform the functions of planning, organising, leading and controlling activities at the national electricity provider.

## **Employees**

Junior workers other than managers who perform tasks as assigned by managers during their employ at the national electricity provider.

## **Government**

A main role-player in the national electricity provider's political environment that owns and controls the national electricity provider.

## **Southern African Development Community**

The geographical Southern part of the African continent that includes countries such as South Africa, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Botswana, Zambia, Angola, Tanzania, Malawi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Madagascar, Namibia, Swaziland and Lesotho.

## **Zimbabwe**

A country in the SADC region of Africa currently experiencing low output of electricity generation capacity.

## **Organisation**

A bureaucratic goal oriented entity made up of structures, boundaries, people, and resources all linked by lines of communication.

## **Organisational politics**

The struggle for power and influence within role-players of the organisation and the subsequent effort by the players in influencing decisions.

## **Positive politics**

Politics that promotes or improves the functioning of the organisation.

## **Negative politics**

Politics that derails or counters the normal functioning of the organisation.

## **Role-players**

Participants in the national electricity provider's political environment.

## **Political behaviour**

Tendencies or actions by role-players within the political environment that influence outcomes or decisions within the organisation.

## **Political environment**

The political tempo that prevails within the national electricity provider.

## **Labour turnover**

The rate at which employees leave or resign from the employ of the national electricity provider.

# CHAPTER ONE

## THE NATURE AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The world is in deep electricity generation crisis that dates back to the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Amajouyi, 2009:2) with Africa suffering the worst electricity challenges, yet Africa has the largest energy resources that remain untapped since time immemorial. Taking into account that economies the world over are driven by electricity, Africa's economies are likely to continue surging as most of its countries struggle to increase power generation. Electricity is a basic need for powering industries and service organisation as well as for daily domestic uses. Without electricity, the level of development some countries are enjoying would not be a reality. Having said this, it is critical to point out that, most if not all electricity companies in Africa are state organisations, suggesting that government, to an extent, influences the day-to-day management of such strategic companies. Unfortunately, most of the companies have proved beyond reasonable doubt that they cannot generate adequate power for their economies with the Southern African Community (SADC) countries being especially hard hit (Zondi & Mulaudzi, 2010:35-40). Although the study refers to SADC, the empirical analysis was performed on Zimbabwe.

In a state-owned organisation, it is obvious that government involvement will have an influence on the day-to-day management practices, system operations and procedures that tend to affect the smooth flow of work. The matrix between government as the overseer and the management structure at the national electricity provider will obviously become part and parcel of the organisational politics that prevails in state-controlled organisations. Such is the situation in which state-organisations find themselves in.

Organisational politics is no newcomer to the managerial practice environment as well as to academia. For more than four decades empirical studies on managerial practices have focused largely on issues related to power and politics of the organisation (Drory & Vigoda-Gadot, 2010:216). In support Ullah, Jafri and Dost (2011:36) state that organisational politics has received a great deal of attention over the past decades due to its image of pervasiveness, mystery and the potential benefits that accrue to those who successfully play the political game. Despite the extent of current research in the field of organisational politics, there are still scanty empirical studies on organisational politics within electricity companies across Africa, and yet organisational politics is rampant and rife across national electricity providers within (SADC). It is critical to set the record clear from the onset that organisational politics in national electricity providers of SADC cannot be viewed in isolation from government politics for the simple reason that national electricity providers are state-owned institutions which are by and large under the control of the respective government ministry, usually the ministry for energy resources.

Organisational politics is an inevitable phenomenon which has the potential to either make or rip the organisation apart. The study was, therefore, triggered by the prevalence of organisational politics in most national electricity providers against a background of mediocre performance. Most, if not all national electricity providers in SADC, are currently struggling to power their economies, with fingers being pointed at the insurgency of organisational politics as a major contributing force of late, posing as a threat to the future of the SADC region in making meaningful contribution to Africa's economy possibly due to inadequate electrical power. The SADC region is faced with a serious crisis and South Africa, the region's major player, experienced the worst electrical power crisis in 2008, leading to load shedding in most of its towns and cities (Staff Reporter, 2012). The Staff Reporters (2012) further reports that the region relies on Mozambique's vast gas and coal deposits as well as massive hydro-electric power as a potential, to alleviate the crisis set to worsen in the next few years. At the time of study, Mozambique supplies hydro and gas power to South Africa and Zimbabwe while work is at an advanced stage to connect Malawi and Tanzania to its national power grid

in an effort to curtail the power generation crisis that has economically crippled the SADC region. Taking its cue from the rife politicised environment engulfing state utilities that include national electricity providers across SADC, there is every reason to suggest that organisational politics has a physical hand in SADC's electricity crisis. However, despite rampant organisational politics within most of SADC's national electricity providers, there has been meaningful action towards the construction of energy power projects in order to alleviate the crisis.

The coincidence of organisational politics and the electricity crises in most of SADC's national electricity providers cannot be overlooked as it is likely to impact on organisational management. Thus it is critical to what organisational politics is, as it forms the crux of the study. Organisational politics refers to the existence of multiple interests and incompatible goals, beyond the goals of the organisation and the influence used by organisation members to defend such goals (Ullah et al., 2006:37). The term organisational politics can be used interchangeably with terms such as political behaviour, political skill, influence tactics; politicking and political manoeuvring just to mention a few. Ullah et al. (2006:37) further portray organisational politics as resembling the influence processes enacted to manage the multiple competing interests' existent in organisations. In the early years, Pfeffer (1992:82) defined organisational politics as the activities taken within the organisations to acquire, develop and use power and other resources to obtain one's preferred outcomes in a situation where there is uncertainty or dis-census about choices. To date this definition is still relevant and applicable to contemporary organisational developments as echoed by Kurchner-Hawkins and Miller (2010:37) when they summarily perceive organisational politics as an exercise of power and influence that primarily occurs outside the formal organisational processes and procedures with an ultimate goal of furthering one's interests.

The prevalence of organisational politics is an unavoidable development for the simple reason that, organisations are by nature political arenas where battles are fought, won or lost (Gotsis & Kortezi, 2011:450-451). In the process of political battles, the functioning of the organisation is to a large extent negatively affected. Veluri (2009:2)

defines an organisation as a group of individuals, who come together to realise their goals. In essence, an organisation is regarded as a social marketplace where individuals engage in transactions/activities to obtain favourable returns. Jones and George (2009:5) define an organisation as a collection of people who work together and coordinate their actions to achieve desired future outcomes. Taking queue from the above description of an organisation, national electricity providers across SADC depict such description. These are typical organisations which by their very nature of them having goals and employees with deferring goals. However, the mysterious actions from all the organisation members in pursuit of individual goal achievement mark the brewing point of organisational politics which is the crux of the study.

The study focuses on organisational politics at an electricity provider in the SADC region. In particular, it addresses the perceptions of organisational politics and the impact of such perceptions on managerial practices. Despite the research work on the field of organisational politics perceptions that includes Aino and Sini (2010); Muhammad (2007) and Ferris et al. (2002), few of the studies were conducted on the electricity industry within the SADC region, and in particular, on Zimbabwe's national electricity provider commonly known as the Zimbabwe electricity supply authority (ZESA).

### **1.1.1 The African perspective**

Africa is endowed with natural resources that includes huge fossil in the northern, southern and western regions, geothermal in the Red Sea Valley, hydro power from the its major rivers such as the Congo, Zambezi and the Nile, and wind power and solar due to its high altitude (Amajouyi, 2009:2). Despite being endowed with all the resources, Africa continues to lag behind the rest of the continents in terms of providing the much needed energy to its industries and its growing population.

Africa's state owned electricity companies have had a fair share of challenges over the past four decades (The Economist, 2007). The challenges range from power politics,

the struggle for resources, favouritism, backstabbing, image tarnishing, blaming others to whistle blowing, lack of planning and under-capitalisation just to mention some. To compound the challenges, Africa's challenges are increasingly becoming a huge burden with Zimbabwe experiencing the worst crisis since attaining political independence from Britain (Asuelime & Simara, 2013:60-62). For example, huge economies in Africa's economic regions are experiencing severe electricity shortages which negatively impact on industry performance (Sibanda, 2013:16). In West Africa, where Nigeria is the biggest economy, only 17 of its 79 power stations are operating at a capacity of 3500 MW against a total demand of 7,600 (The Economist, 2007). In North Africa; Egypt, which is the powerhouse, is also struggling to power its economy with a capacity output of 27 000 MW, while in East Africa, Kenya is experiencing severe power outages (Amajouyi, 2009:2). The following table shows Africa's comparative position in world electrification:

**Table 1.1: World electrification situation**

<b>World rate electrification</b>						
	<b>Population (Millions)</b>	<b>Population with electricity (Millions)</b>	<b>Population without electricity (Millions)</b>	<b>Electrification rate (%)</b>	<b>Urban (%)</b>	<b>Rural (%)</b>
<b>Africa</b>	891	337	<b>554</b>	<b>37.8</b>	<b>67.9</b>	<b>19.0</b>
<b>Developing Asia</b>	3,418	2,488	930	72.8	86.4	856.1
<b>Latin Africa</b>	449	404	45	90.0	98.4	65.6
<b>Middle East</b>	186	145	41	78.1	86.7	61.8
<b>Developing countries</b>	4943	3,374	1,569	68.3	85.2	56.4
<b>Transition economies and OECD</b>	1,501	1,501	8	99,5	100,0	98,1
<b>World</b>	64,452	4,875	1,577	75.6	<b>90.4</b>	<b>61.7</b>

**SOURCE:** Energy Outlook 2006

The table 1.1 above shows the situation on world electrification. Africa, despite being endowed with natural energy resources, has the lowest electrification rates in both urban and rural set areas, an indication that developmental projections and economic growth of Africa are bound to be negatively affected since economies heavily rely on electricity (The Economist, 2007). Endowed with fossil and renewable energy resources vast enough to cover up all its energy needs, a huge number of Africa's population does not have direct access to electricity (Amajouyi, 2009:2). According to Sikhakhane (2013:1), Africa's power challenges are still imminent, as such an international conference has been planned for 2014 to reconsider, Africa's position on the way forward.

### **1.1.2 The SADC perspective**

According to the Staff Reporter (2012), the SADC region is faced with a serious crisis and South Africa, the region's powerhouse, went through its worst power crisis in 2008 to date, leading to load-shedding in most of its towns and cities. The on-going power outages in the SADC region will persist until 2015 despite new projects being undertaken (Tsimane, 2009:5). On the other hand, Mozambique, Angola, Malawi and Tanzania are all experiencing power generation crisis. The Democratic Republic of Congo, despite being endowed with the Congo River in terms of hydro-electric power generation capacity, is reeling to power its economy; yet, according to the Economist (2007), the Congo River has the capacity to generate electrical power for the entire African continent. Summarily, the SADC region is in a mess in terms of electrical power generation capacity with Zimbabwe experiencing the worst ever electrical power generation crisis of the century. The following table provides work in progress in response to the turbulences of the 2008 power outages that are still imminent up to this present day.

**TABLE 1.2: PROPOSED POWER PROJECTS FOR SADC**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Power project name</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>MW Capacity</b>
2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Benga thermal power station</li> <li>• Moatize thermal power station</li> <li>• Mphanda Nkuwa hydropower station</li> </ul>	Mozambique Mozambique Mozambique	2000 MW 400 MW 1500 MW
2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Itezhi Tezhi hydropower station</li> <li>• Kariba North Bank</li> </ul>	Zambia Zambia	120 MW 350 MW
2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hwange thermal power station</li> <li>• Kariba South hydropower plant</li> <li>• Gokwe North thermal station</li> </ul>	Zimbabwe Zimbabwe Zimbabwe	600 MW 700 MW 300 MW
2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medupi dry cooled coal fired power station</li> </ul>	South Africa	4800 MW
<b>TOTAL ESTIMATED MW</b>			<b>10770 MW</b>

**Source:** Compiled and adapted from the Cremer media reporter (2009).

The table explains a total of 10770 megawatts (MW) to be generated from the current work in progress in SADC with the bulk of power expected to be generated by the Medupi plant of South Africa, deemed to be the largest in the world when completed. The projects are expected to feed into SADC's power grid which is currently experiencing severe shortages of 7709 MW (Tsimane, 2009:5), with an estimated power requirement of 20 000 MW in the next five years (Mtomba, 2013:8). Going forward, effort is being made to improve the power generation situation for Africa, with a

promising international conference to be held in Cape Town, South Africa, 17 – 19 March of 2014 (Sikhakhane, 2013:1).

While the steps taken to improve the power generation crisis are a good cause, organisational politics in national electricity providers continue to ravage, with latest reports of organisational infighting surfacing in Zimbabwe's national electricity provider due to moves taken by top management to unbundle the utility provider for the third time in sixteen years, raising doubts and fears about the national electricity provider's ability to focus on the core business of electrical power generation at a time the economy is in desperate need of electricity (Mtomba, 2013:8).

### **1.1.3 The Zimbabwean perspective**

Zimbabwe has two main sources of domestic electricity supply namely: thermal and hydro sources. The national electricity provider generates electricity from the five plants: four thermal power stations and one hydro-power station (ZESA, 2013). According to Kayo (cited by Kaseke & Hosking 2011:20), Zimbabwe relies mainly on coal fired thermal power generation which accounts for about 75% of domestic electricity supply with the other 25% being generated from the hydro-power of the Zambezi River. The following table shows the megawatt (MW) consumption required by the entire country and the generation capacity available from the installed capacity as at 2013.

**Table 1.3: Power Consumption and Generation Capacity for Zimbabwe as at 2013**

<b>Station name</b>	<b>Plant type</b>	<b>Generation Capacity(MW)</b>	<b>Available Generation capacity (MW)</b>	<b>Consumption (MW)</b>	<b>Consumption deficit (MW)</b>
Hwange	Coal-fired	920	700		
Kariba	Hydro-electric	666	600		
Harare	Coal-fired	135	0		
Bulawayo	Coal-fired	120	0		
Munyati	Coal-fired	120	0		
<b>Total</b>		<b>1960</b>	<b>1300</b>	<b>2200</b>	<b>900</b>

**Sources:** National electricity provider (2013)

As reflected by the above table 1.3, Zimbabwe currently generates about 1,300 MW of electricity against a daily consumption of 2200 MW, falling far too short by 900 MW. To cover this gap, the country imports power from neighbouring countries but most of these countries have since cut off supply due to non-payment of bills by the national electricity provider. The following table presents Zimbabwe's electrical power imports as at 2013.

**Table 1.4: Zimbabwe's power imports as at 2013**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Maximum import capacity (MW)</b>	<b>Available import capacity (MW)</b>	<b>Required import (MW)</b>	<b>Import deficit (MW)</b>
Mozambique	500	100		
South Africa	500	0		
Zambia	700	0		
D.R. Congo	250	0		
Botswana	100	0		
<b>Total</b>	<b>2050</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>900</b>	<b>800</b>

**Sources:** National electricity provider (2009) and National electricity provider (2012)

As shown in Table 1.4 above, Zimbabwe needs to import a total of 900 MW of electricity to operate at full capacity and despite the standing arrangements to import this much, the country can only import 100 MW from Mozambique as most of the neighbouring countries have since cut off supply citing non-payment of bills by the national electricity provider. Unfortunately, as stated by Mangoma (cited in Muleya 2005), the national electricity provider is owed US\$ 550 million by customers of which huge sums are owed by some high profile government ministers making the debt recovery process all the more difficult as the ministers often use their influence to stop possible disconnections of electrical power, ultimately weakening the debt recovery process meant to improve electrical power supply. The electricity situation in Zimbabwe has reached alarming levels that are unimaginable, negatively affecting almost every part of the economy with hospitals, and heavy industries as well as farming being hard hit. For example, load shedding that come as a result of inadequate electricity is forcing the national electricity provider to ration supplies to both domestic and commercial users with most areas going for 10 hours per day without electricity negatively affecting key industries and the delivery of services such as medical care and agriculture, just to name a few (Staff Reporters, 2012). In hospitals, lives have been as medical doctors find it impossible to conduct medical operations using diesel electrical generators to power their operating

equipment, while the agricultural sector suffered the most due to power outages (Kachembere, 2012:11). The following table shows the impact of load shedding on Zimbabwe's agriculture during the 2011 farming season.

**Table 1.5: Impact of load shedding on Zimbabwe's agriculture: 2012 Season**

<b>Province</b>	<b>Total unplanted hectares due to power outages</b>	<b>Job Loss</b>
Mashonaland Central	2020	780
Mashonaland East	1200	550
Mashonaland West	780	301
Manicaland	320	85
Masvingo	80	125
Matebeleland North	20	38
Matebeleland South	30	15
Midlands	250	200
Bulawayo	150	111
Harare	66	78
<b>Total</b>	<b>4916</b>	<b>2283</b>

**Source:** Adapted from Kaseke and Hosking (2011)

Table 1.5 above shows that about 4916 hectares were not cultivated in 2011 due to load shedding leading to massive job losses of approximately 2283 costing the sector millions of dollars and in the overall negatively affecting the economy. In the overall, the load shedding during the 2011 farming season were estimated at a cost of \$ 1.3 billion to the Zimbabwe commercial farmers union (Kaseke & Hosking 2011:22). This constitutes a huge loss that could have been avoided if power was availed. As if this is not enough, farmers have already indicated that they will cut down hectares by almost half due to the predicated load shedding which is estimated to be worse off as from 2014 and beyond (Kawadza, 2013:3). According to Kaseke and Hosking (2011:1) agriculture is the back bone of the Zimbabwean economy contributing approximately 23% to the gross domestic product as well as being a significant export earner and employer.

Industry has not been spared either. Load shedding has crippled the economy, with almost all the major sectors shutting down operations (Marawanyika, 2013:10). Bulawayo, the second largest city of Zimbabwe which boasted of being the hub of major clothing and textile firms in the yester years has become the ghost city with almost all the industries closing down operation due to load shedding. According to the Confederation of the Zimbabwean Industries (as cited in Kaseke & Hosking, 2011:9-15), major industries have closed operation leading to shortages of basic goods as well as frightening unemployment figures. The Economist (2007) highlights that Zimbabwe's unemployment rate currently seats at approximately 85%. Table 1.5 below shows industry closures due to load shedding and the resultant job losses.

**Table 1.6: The impact of load shedding on Zimbabwean industry: 2012 fiscal year**

<b>Sector</b>	<b>Number of Firms closed due power outages</b>	<b>Job losses due to power outages</b>
Manufacturing	450	3500
Food retail	88	1255
Automobile	23	1650
Mining	36	5550
Transport	166	1400
Tourism/hospitality	177	2020
Clothing	136	3400
Information and technology	29	800
Telecommunication	5	725
Energy	14	300
Banking	8	625
<b>Total</b>	<b>1132</b>	<b>21225</b>

**Sources:** Adapted from The World Bank: African economic outlook; Zimbabwe (2011)

As depicted in the above table, load shedding has taken Zimbabwe backwards. As at 2012, a total of 1 132 firms closed operations due to load shedding leaving approximately 21225 people unemployed. The cumulative job losses for 2011 and 2012 period were determined at 23 508 (refer to table 1.4 and table 1.5, respectively).

Such developments revealed by preceding tables can be viewed from an angle that: economies heavily rely on electricity as a significant source of energy (The Economist, 2007). Respective governments are therefore expected to come up with clear cut policy frameworks, measures and strategies on how to continuously, implement and improve on the power generation capacity on a continuous basis in tandem with the growing demand of their respective economies. This has not been the case for Zimbabwe; hence the problem of electricity generation. It is also important to note that the problem of power crisis is not new to the country that used to be the breadbasket of Southern

Africa. As noted by Sibanda (2013:12), Zimbabwe's power supply has been stagnant since the attainment of independence (1980) and in the last three decades there has been near to zero investment in electricity supply projects, despite increasing demand due to the overall expansion of the industry that rely on electricity. Tsimane (2009:8) shares the similar view with Sibanda (2013:12) when he noted that the government of Zimbabwe never made significant efforts in addressing the electricity generation capacity until recently, in about four years. According to Saungweme (cited by Sibanda, 2013:5), the current unprecedented load shedding paralysed social and economic activities in most parts of the country. Saungweme (in Sibanda, 2013:5) further reiterates that Zimbabwe's erratic power supply is a major crisis facing the country in twenty years and it seems that the government remains clueless on how to rectify the crisis. It is critical to note that Zimbabwe's electricity power generation crisis is entrenched into matters of government decisions, choices and priorities made by those in power.

The Zimbabwean electricity situation can never be understood without an examination of the political, economic, social and to some extent, the technical impact of such forces to the economy. The politics of Zimbabwe have dramatically changed over the years from being conducive to the unleashing of policies that are anti-investments (Asuelime & Simara, 2013:50-55). The historic compulsory land seizures of the year 2000 from the white minority commercial farmers, the disputed indigenisation policies that saw foreign owned companies ceding 51% of the share to indigenous black business people had a damming effect to the overall economy (Kaseke & Hosking, 2010). The political developments, obviously impacted on the overall economy with shortage of basic products, brain drain to neighbouring countries and overseas, increasing and unending labour strikes, increasing inflation which rose to incalculable figures in 2008 were contributory factors to the challenges Zimbabwe is currently experiencing (Asuelime & Simara, 2013:50-55). On a social note, poverty levels increased which saw the average individual surviving with less than US\$1 a day in 2008 (Asuelime & Simara, 2013:50-55). Corruption, crime and cronyism became a cancer in all sectors of the economy. The land seizures of the year 2000 contributed to the destruction of the agricultural

sector with starvation affecting most parts of the country. The collapse of Zimbabwe's public health system led to a health pandemic that saw cholera killing approximately 6000 people in 2008 (Asuelime & Simara, 2013:50-55). Prostitution is rife as people resort to it as means of survival. Regarding the technical issues, the entire economy lags behind most of the SADC countries in terms of infrastructural developments, with most organisations still relying on manual business systems and use of outdated equipment (Zhou & Zinyama, 2011:250). Most government departments rely on manual accounting despite concerted efforts by the government to roll out the public service financial management systems (PFMS) that are known for improving financial management in public organisations (Zhou & Zinyama, 2011:230). Unfortunately, the entire political, economic, social and technical factors seem to have contributed to Zimbabwe's failure to cope with challenges, hence becoming a failed state with lack of governance and corruption spreading to all public sector organisations that include the national electricity provider (Zondi & Mulaudzi, 2010).

A dysfunctional economy obviously affects the general conduct and flow of business in the economy and in particular state owned organisation. Due to politics and the economy, the national electricity provider, cannot import the basic spare parts and equipment required to continuously turn the turbines at the Kariba dam's hydro power plant. The available equipment at Kariba is obsolete and dysfunctional too, making it all the more difficult for the power utility to function. The inflation and budgetary constraints has made it difficult for the power utility to pay comparable salaries leading to brain drain and unending labour strikes (Asuelime & Simura, 2013: 60-66). For example, the Zimbabwean economy has close to three million Zimbabweans estimated to be living in South Africa suggesting a heavy brain drain from the economy. The national electricity provider has in the years lost qualified engineers to neighbouring countries (ZESA report, 2013). To be real, the Zimbabwean economy has been reduced into a non-working class society where individuals survive from hand to mouth with only 15% of the population being gainfully employed (The Economist, 2007).

There is no hope that Zimbabwe's electrical power generation will improve in the near future as echoed by Zimbabwe's Minister of Energy, Mangoma, (as cited by Muleya 2005) as he lamented that load shedding was bound to worsen in 2012 and beyond, citing a non-functional economy, catapulted by rampant corruption across all spheres of government and society and worsened by poor decisions by senior managers and government officials such as the awarding of hefty allowances and salaries to senior employees of ZESA as grave organisational political mistake for an already resource stricken company (Staff Reporter, 2012). Even the relationship between the minister of energy and the CEO inclusive of board of directors has been uneven for some time with the former accusing the CEO of making decisions that by-pass the ministry (Sibanda, 2013). To add insult to an injury, negative organisational politics have become rife. Boardroom squabbles have become the order of the day and unbearable. The political battles between the board of directors and the general manager of the biggest power station then have been predicted as influencing unproductive tendencies at the national electricity provider thereby negatively impacting on electricity generation capacity (Muleya, 2005). Unfortunately the boardroom squabbles resulted in the general manager's suspension instead of politically engaging to breed a more productive organisation, a more ignited environment that fosters growth and productivity. Butcher and Clarke (cited by Gotsis & Kortezi 2011:454) argue that organisational politics motivates the workforce in redefining the patterns of activity for organisational benefit. In support of this view, Clarke (2003) posits that organisational politics influences employee motivation that result in overall improvement of organisational productivity. The presence of organisational politics voluntarily compels the role-players to work together in a politicised environment for a better future. In line with this school of thought, managers, employees, government at the national electricity provider can take advantage of the politicised work environment to ignite a productive atmosphere. The study, therefore, seeks to identify and measure employee perceptions of organisational politics at the national electricity provider with an ultimate aim of harnessing dysfunctional politics towards a productive organisation.

## 1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The success of any economy the world over depends on the ability of the respective countries to provide energy resources (The Economist, 2007), for without adequate energy, in particular electricity, a country is destined to collapse. The national electricity provider of Zimbabwe has been experiencing power generation crises for almost two decades without any sign of improvement (Kaseke & Hosping, 2011: 3). It is important to note that the national electricity provider is a state-owned monopoly tasked with the responsibility of generating the much needed electrical power for the economy. It is equally important to set the record straight that the Zimbabwean economy has been experiencing a myriad of economic challenges over the years that can be linked to poor state governance, a weaker public administration and management (Zondi & Mulaudzi, 2010:7-9). Unfortunately, Zimbabwe has proved to be a failed state over the years with poor governance, maladministration, fiduciary bankruptcy, corruption and cronyism as some of the outstanding features (The World Bank Report, 2012). Bhebhe (2013:17:24) argues that Zimbabwe, once a country with immense potential, is in abject poverty due to poor governance and maladministration. This was predicated almost a decade ago by (Ayttey, 1998) that Zimbabwe was heading for a crisis. Zimbabwe's socio-political turbulence, economic difficulties, environmental degradation and cultural dislocation have been well documented by (Bhebhe, 2013; 2002, Bloch, 2004, Ndlovu, 2003), but action to redress these problems and reverse the trend has so far failed to produce the expected results. It is therefore not surprising that the national electricity provider has been engulfed in such a predicament taking into account that the entire state governance structure constitutes a failed state. According to The World Bank Report (2012), a failed state refers to a "collapsed state" that identifies two features as follows:

- *"States that have failed to establish or have lost legitimacy in the eyes of the population under their authority and as a consequence are unable to exercise that authority; and*
- *States that have been run into the ground by corrupt, negligent, and incompetent leaders and officials....."*

According to The World Bank Report (2012) on corruption index, Zimbabwe is ranked 163 out of 176 countries in the 2012 ranking, a ranking order that speaks volumes about how corruption has entrenched public institutions of Zimbabwe that includes the national electricity provider. The challenges facing the national electricity provider at the moment can also be linked to the politics of the country. Over the years Zimbabwe had experienced huge governance challenges within its central government ranks spreading to all state controlled organisations that include the national electricity provider. The over indulgence of government officials such as ministers, permanent secretaries as well as the presidency in the day-to-day management of state utilities to a large extent contributes to some of the challenges the national electricity provider is experiencing. The economic contribution of Zimbabwe within SADC has shifted over the years, from being the breadbasket of Southern Africa to being the misery of Southern Africa (Zondi & Mulaudzi, 2010). The Zimbabwean economy has become dysfunctional with its reserve bank being the chief architect to the problem by printing trillions of Zimbabwean dollars in 2008 against low levels of industry output contributing to almost 600% inflation (Zhou & Zinyama, 2011:218). Unconfirmed reports even suggest that inflation rose to over 1000% at the peak of economic crumbling in 2008, a rise many quarters would agree taking into account that prices were increasing several times in the course of a day.

In a nut-shell, state utilities in Zimbabwe are likely to continue encountering operational challenges as long as the state governance remains dented with mismanagement, corruption, cronyism, nepotism and fiduciary bankruptcy (Zondi & Mulaudzi, 2010). For Zimbabwe, constructing an additional electricity plant requires huge funding and since the country has budgetary constraints that date back to the disputed international monetary fund in the 1990s (The World Bank Report, 2012) as well as the poor international relations that exist between Zimbabwe and the Western countries, there is doubt that Zimbabwe has the capacity to progressively finance the commissioned massive power project such as the Batoka plant estimated to cost a staggering US\$ 4 billion which is expected to solve Zimbabwe's perennial electricity nightmares taking into consideration that similar massive project such as the Zambezi project has been on the

cards since attaining independence (Kaseke & Hosking ,2011). According to Kawadza (2013:3), the government of Zimbabwe muted several power projects that include the massive Batoka power plant and several small power projects which are expected to introduce about 1400 MW into the national grid in four years. If these projects come to fruition, Zimbabwe will even export power to its neighbours (Kawadza, 2013:3). However, huge and massive projects such as the Batoka power plant would require utmost commitment in terms of funding, dedicated project leadership that shuns corruption and a high level of fiscal discipline on the part of both government and the national electricity provider's top management cascading down to the ordinary workforce. Interestingly, it is critical to clarify that although Zimbabwe is naturally endowed with the rich diamond fields situated in the Marange village, Manicaland province, the financial contribution of these fields to the Zimbabwean government is limited. This is because of the high level of corruption within the diamond trade, and as a result the proceeds from these diamonds have never been part of the fiscal income (The World Bank Report, 2012). While there could be several other reasons contributing to the power utility's inability to generate adequate electricity such as lack of generating capacity, the ever increasing demand of electrical power due to industry growth, the deteriorating political situation in the country, illegal sanctions as proclaimed by the Zimbabwean government (cited by Kaseke & Hosking, 2011), the impact of organisational politics cannot be ignored either. According to Muleya (2005), boardroom squabbles that resulted in the suspension of the general managers were predicted as partly causing the current load shedding. As if this is not enough, the national electricity provider continues to deny workers their rights to participate or air their views in the way the organisation is being or should be managed. This study, therefore, seeks to explore the nature and extent of organisational politics at the national electricity provider in SADC.

## **1.3 STUDY OBJECTIVES**

### **1.3.1 Primary Objectives**

The primary objective of the study is to develop a conceptual model for managing organisational politics in national electricity providers within the SADC region.

### **1.3.2 Secondary objectives**

In order to achieve the primary objective, a number of secondary objectives have been formulated. The secondary objectives pertaining to this study are to:

- Explore the nature and extent of organisational politics at the national electricity provider;
- Identify and measure the perceptions of employees of organisational politics at the national electricity provider;
- Determine the positive and negative effects of organisational politics at a national electricity provider;
- Investigate managerial practices to minimise negative politics at a national electricity provider; and to
- Make recommendations for future research on the management of organisational politics at the national electricity provider.

## **1.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research methodology consists of an extensive literature study on specific topics related to the article and an empirical study in which multivariate quantitative statistical analyses were employed to analyse the data.

### **1.4.1 Literature study**

An extensive literature study was undertaken in all the four articles of the study. In the overall, the literature study focuses on the perceptions of organisational politics and its impact on managerial practices. The literature study was drawn from texts books, academic articles, conferences proceedings and newspapers. The following electronic databases have been consulted:

- Internet journals;
- International journals;
- Emerald and;
- Published papers periodicals and newspapers.

To augment the above, professional library assistants at the North-West University and the Management College of Southern Africa (MANCOSA) libraries were consulted to locate the relevant articles and textbooks for the study.

### **1.4.2 Empirical study**

#### *1.4.2.1 Research design*

The empirical research was employed in articles two, three and four in order to determine the perceptions of organisational politics and the impact it has on managerial practices. The research design employed quantitative research, collecting data from a sample within the target population at a national electricity provider.

#### *1.4.2.2 Data collection*

Data were collected by means of a structured questionnaire that was distributed to the sample population at the national electricity provider's headquarters. The purpose of the questionnaire was to gather information to empirically substantiate the findings of the literature study. Permission to undertake the study was granted by the directorate, making it possible and easier for the researcher to convene meetings with respective sections' departments and managers in order to explain the purpose of the study. The

human resource department assisted by formally distributing all the questionnaires physically or electronically to the sample population. Completed electronic questionnaires were emailed to the researcher while the hard copies were couriered to the researcher for data capturing and analysis.

#### *1.4.2.3 Research instrument*

A structured questionnaire was compiled by the researcher based on the literature study in order to address the study objectives. The questionnaire focuses on individual perceptions of organisational politics and consists of the following three sub-sections:

- Perceptions of organisational politics;
- Effects of organisational politics; and
- Managerial practices for reducing negative political behaviour.

A five-point Likert scale questionnaire was used to collect individual perceptions from the respondents. The questionnaire scale ranged from: 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

#### *1.4.2.4 Study population and sampling*

At the time of study, employee establishment for the Harare region totalled 2,210 inclusive of 355 contract workers. All the employees, regardless of tenure constituted the population for the study with the head office serving as the data collection station/point. The Harare region operates from five administrative district offices namely:

- Harare North District;
- Harare East District;
- Harare South District; and
- Chitungwiza District.

**TABLE 1.7: BREAKDOWN OF EMPLOYEES FOR HARARE REGION**

<b>PROVINCE</b>	<b>PERMANENT EMPLOYEES</b>	<b>CONTRACT EMPLOYEES</b>	<b>TOTAL EMPLOYEES</b>
<b>Harare North District</b>	580	80	600
<b>Harare East District</b>	380	77	457
<b>Harare South District</b>	533	110	643
<b>Chitungwiza District</b>	362	88	450
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1855</b>	<b>355</b>	<b>2210</b>

**Source:** National Electricity Provider (2010)

A total of 1 400 participants were randomly selected from the total population of 2 210 employees from the five national electricity provider districts (N employees = 2 210), thus targeting 63.35 per cent of the selected population. According to Baruch (1999) as cited by Saunders and Thornhill (2009:222), a response rate of approximately 35 per cent is reasonable. However, Newman (2005) suggests variability of response rates of between 10–50% as reasonable too, revealing a somehow similar response rate of 10–20%, an indication that response rates do vary to a large extent. For this study, a total of 337 completed questionnaires were returned giving a response rate of 24.78 per cent which is within acceptable range.

## **1.5 STATISTICAL ANALYSIS**

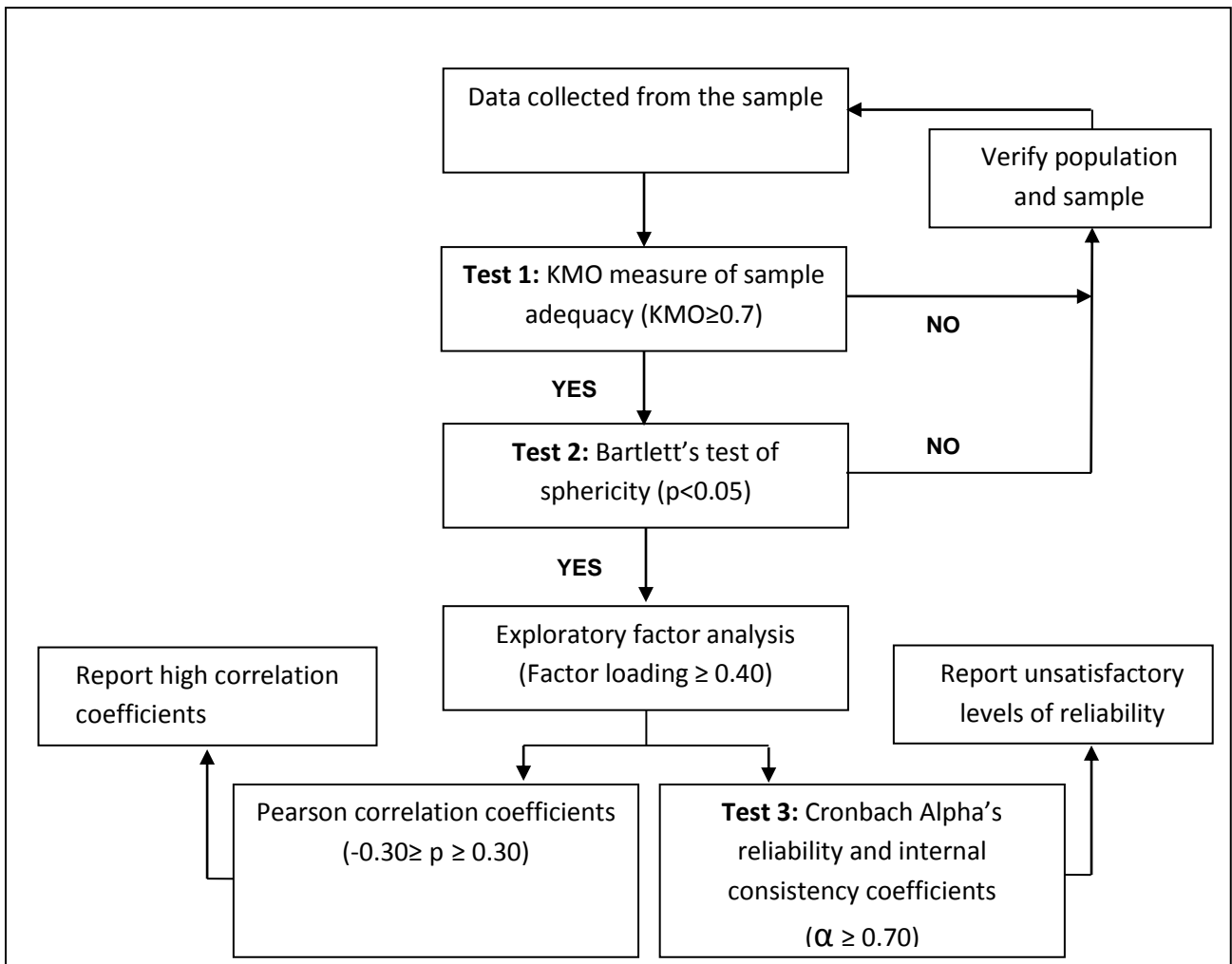
Quantitative analysis was employed to analyse the data, in particular the statistical software programme SPSS 21.0 for Windows (SPSS Inc., 2012) was used. Various quantitative statistical techniques were used. These include:

- Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy
- Cronbach Alpha's reliability coefficient
- Bartlett's test of sphericity; and
- Exploratory factor analysis.

These techniques were selected because of its superiority in providing statistical procedures for analysing data. To determine the reliability and ensuring internal

consistency of the collected data, Cronbach alpha coefficients were calculated for each factor. The KMO measure examines the data collected to determine if the sample size is adequate to use multivariate analysis while the Bartlett test is used to test if the data is suitable to be subjected to multivariate statistical analysis such as factor analysis. The statistical analysis process followed the stages reflected by the decision tree diagram (Figure 1.1). In a study conducted by Naidoo (2011:10) on stress management and its impact on work performance of educators, which had similar constructs to this study, the decision tree diagram provided an excellent data analysis process for the study, as such, this study also followed a similar data analysis process as depicted by the diagram below.

**FIGURE 1.1: DATA ANALYSIS DECISION TREE**



**Source:** Naidoo (2011)

The application and interpretation of the statistical techniques and methods in this study are interpreted below.

### **1.5.1 Kaiser- Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy**

The KMO measure of sampling adequacy seeks to examine whether the relationship between variables is strong enough to proceed with factor analysis (Field, 2007:640). The KMO statistic varies between 0 and 1. A value of 0 suggest that the sum of partial correlation is large relative to the sum of correlations, indicating diffusion in the pattern of correlations while a value close to 1 indicate that patterns of correlation are relatively compact and therefore factor analysis should yield distinct reliable factors. The larger the KMO value, the more reliable the factor analysis for the particular sample size. According to Fields (2007:640-648), factor analysis is likely inappropriate for values smaller than 0.5. Presented with such smaller values, more data should be collected or different factors may be selected for analysis.

### **1.5.2 Cronbach Alpha's reliability coefficient**

Following the use of the questionnaire as the main data collecting instrument for the study, there is a need to ensure reliability of the data collected using the questionnaire. Reliability is when a test measures the same thing more than once and results in the same outcome (Salkind, 2000:106). Reliability is commonly defined as the consistency of a set of measurements or measuring instrument often used to describe a test (Bisschoff & Kade, 2010:4) as cited in Naidoo (2011:22). Cronbach alpha values of 0.70 are deemed to be satisfactory (Field, 2007:666).

### **1.5.3 Bartlett's test of sphericity**

The Bartlett test of sphericity examines whether a variance-covariance matrix is proportional to the identity matrix. It further indicates the suitability of data and ensures that the data could be subjected to factor analysis (Field, 2007:640). Thus, the Bartlett test of sphericity is an indicator of the strength of the relationship among variables as well as an indicator of the suitability of data towards a multivariate statistical technique such as factor analysis UCLA, (as cited in Naidoo (2011:20). This study has values below 0.05 and as suggested by Field (2007:652), the significance of the Bartlett test of sphericity is its associated probability less than 0.005; meaning that all values of 0.05 and below are regarded to be significant and concludes that the variables for the study are very strong.

### **1.5.4 Exploratory factor analysis**

In the social sciences field, researchers strive to measure constructs that cannot be directly measured, often called "latent variables". Factor analysis therefore seeks to fill this gap by measuring latent variables, making the work of social scientist researchers a lot easier. Factor analysis is a multivariate technique for identifying whether the correlations between a set of observed variables stem from their relationship to one or more latent variables in the data, each of which takes a linear model (Field, 2007:731). Factor analysis is thus an important tool that can be used for identifying groups and clusters of variables (Costello & Osborne, 2005:5). Summarily, factors analysis has the following uses:

- Simplifies the structure of a set of variables for better understanding;
- Identifies underlying constructs or variables from data sets; and
- Reducing the data set to a more manageable size.

## 1.6 LAYOUT OF THE STUDY

The layout of the study takes the article route and consists of 6 chapters. This means that chapter 1 provides the introductory framework of the study, followed by 4 separate scientific articles which are presented in chapters 2 to 5, respectively, and then chapter 6 which provides conclusions and recommendations. Chapters 2 to 5 also have separate reference lists that pertain to each of the articles, respectively, while the reference list of the study appears at the back of the study. More specifically, the layout of the study is:

### *Chapter 1: Introduction*

This chapter sets the stage for the study by introducing the study environment and focuses on background of the study, the problem statement, the study objectives and the methodology used for the study.

### *Chapter 2 - Article 1: The nature and extent of organisational politics at the national electricity provider in SADC with particular focus on the role-players.*

In this article of the study, the political environment where all the political players operate is analysed. The role-players include the government, the employees, the managers and the board of directors. The analysis of the political environment is undertaken in order to successfully contextualise and understand the environment in which political participants operate. The biographical profiles of the national electricity provider's workforce are also compiled.

### *Chapter 3 - Article 2: Perceptions of organisational politics at a national electricity provider in a SADC country.*

The second article focuses on the identification of the factors causing organisational politics at the national electricity provider.

### *Chapter 4 - Article 3: An investigation of the positive and negative effects of organisational politics at a national electricity provider.*

The impact of organisational politics on organisational life is very critical to the success of the organisation. The third article analyses, to a large extent, the damage caused by negative political behaviour as well as the gains from political behaviour.

*Chapter 5 - Article 4: Investigating managerial practices for minimising negative politics at the Zimbabwean national electricity provider.*

Article 4 is the final article for the study. It provides means of minimising negative political behaviour while consolidating on the positive aspects of politics.

*Chapter 6: Conclusions and Recommendations*

Chapter 6 is the final chapter for the study. It presents the conclusions and recommendations of the study by providing the summary of the main findings of the study as well as drawing conclusions and recommendations of the study. The chapter also summarises all the findings and provides a conceptual framework for managing political behaviour at the national electricity provider.

## **1.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The flow of study was not without challenges; as such there are some areas where the study encountered limitations. These areas include:

- The geographical spread of the electricity company across the whole country made it impossible to involve all of the employees as respondents of the study, as such generalisations are inferred to the rest of the country as well as to other states' utilities companies across SADC and Africa at large.
- The possibility that respondents may not respond honestly. Although face-to-face administration of questionnaires has many advantages, these are still prone to bias. In addressing this issue, the researcher took every precaution to phrase questions as clearly as possible, to obviate misunderstanding and clarify any important information. The fact that neither of the respondent subjects involved in

the research study were known to the researcher should minimise the risk of bias. Nonetheless, it is critical to note that the responses filled by the respondents are based on how the questions applied to them and therefore subject to bias.

- The national electricity provider is a diverse organisation; hence language barriers exist as a result of the different racial groups, with English presenting as the second language to most of the respondents. Due to this, there may have been misinterpretation and misunderstanding of the questions, although such a situation is unlikely because most of the national electricity provider employees have at least a secondary school certificate, plus English is the official business language in Zimbabwe.
- A low response rate which might affect the reliability of the questionnaire as an effective data collection instrument for the study. Such low rates were attributed to respondents' questionnaire fatigue as well as lack of interest in the exercise of completing the questionnaire. To alleviate respondents' questionnaire fatigue, the researcher, through the management hierarchy explained that the questionnaire could be completed during and after normal working hours so that those experiencing questionnaire fatigue could still complete after hours. On top of that, the researcher also compiled a short and precise questionnaire that could be completed in the shortest possible time supported by a covering note that sought to explain the importance and benefits of participating in the study.
- The low response rate might have a negative influence. However, there was not statistical evidence to support this possible limitation. On the contrary, the reliability coefficients of the data were excellent (0.80 and larger) and consistently exceeded the required Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.70 with ease throughout the study.

## **1.8 SUMMARY**

In this chapter, the overall focus of the study was laid out. The research objectives, methodology, as well as the population, sample and gathering of data were explained. The various statistical techniques required to analyse the data were comprehensively discussed and the criteria pertaining to each technique were set out for this study. The chapter contributes to a general understanding of the research need and the research problems. Finally, an outline of the different chapters in this study is given.

The following chapter presents the first research article of the study which deals specifically with the nature and extent of organisational politics, with particular reference to the role-players in the national electricity provider's political environment focusing on the Zimbabwe electricity Authority (ZESA).

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## **CHAPTER 2**

### **ARTICLE 1:**

#### **THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF ORGANISATIONAL POLITICS AT THE NATIONAL ELECTRICITY PROVIDER IN A SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY COUNTRY (SADC)**

##### **ABSTRACT**

The article investigates the nature and extent of organisational politics at the national provider in a Southern African Development Community (SADC) country with particular focus on the main players within the political environment. The major role-players within the national electricity provider's political system include the government, board of directors, employees and managers. The methodology for the article was largely literature based backed by an empirical survey of the biographical profile of the workforce. Central to the political environment surfaced common goals as the brewing point of organisational politics. It is clear from the literature that organisational politics is rife at the national electricity provider and has huge implications of reducing the organisation's capacity to generate electrical power ultimately affecting the entire economy and the ordinary citizen. The electricity situation in the country has reached alarming levels that are unimaginable. For example, the shortages have forced the national electricity provider to ration supplies to both domestic and commercial users with most areas going for approximately 10 hours per day without electrical power. The study recommends the need for a speedy robust engagement of all the role-players in the political systems in finding a solution to the power generation crisis that has become proverbial.

**Key words:** Role-players, political environment, common goals, Zimbabwe, Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority (ZESA), load shedding, power crisis, megawatts

## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The national electricity providers in the SADC region have struggled to power their respective economies for almost two decades without any significant improvement. The intensity of the power crises differs from country to country with Zimbabwe experiencing the worst crisis since attaining independence from Britain in the 1980s (Kaseke & Hosking, 2011:4). This crisis is also echoed by Sibanda (2013), Kachemebere (2013), Mtomba (2013), Marawanyika (2013) and Tsimane (2009). The fact that national electricity providers are state-owned entities suggests that the respective governments have some influence in one way or the other in the manner in which national electricity providers are run. For a country such as Zimbabwe, the power generation crisis obviously cannot be separated from the political turmoil that led it to be regarded as a failed state, characterised by maladministration, corruption, civil unrest and poor governance structures across all sectors (Bhebhe, 2013; 2002, Bloch, 2004, Ndlovu, 2003). According to Kawadza (2013:3) several power projects which Zimbabwe has just commissioned, that includes the massive Batoka power plant, leaves everyone in doubt on whether the project will succeed or not since the country has been in budgetary distress over the years. And yet the point is, “organisational politics” has become worse and rife, continuously eroding the potential of the power utility to focus on its core business of generating the much needed power for the economy.

The prevalence of organisational politics in organisations in particular at the national electricity provider is an unavoidable development for the simple reason that, organisations are by nature political arenas where battles are fought, won or lost (Gotsis & Kortezi, 2011:450). The political activity becomes even more concentrated in national electricity providers due to government influence as national electricity providers are state controlled as a constitutional mandate. In the process of such political battles, the functioning of the organisation is either positively or negatively affected. Whenever people gather to accomplish a common purpose, there is bound to be organisational politics, concurs Veluri (2009:5). It is therefore critical for managers to establish the nature and extent of organisational politics so as to fully understand the political

environment in which they operate. Understanding the nature and extent of the political environment at the early stages equips managers with the right tools to handle the political pressure whenever it works against the normal organisational managerial practices. This article is triggered by the current state of affairs in most of the Southern African national electricity providers which have had a fair share of organisational politics related challenges over the past two decades, exacerbated by the inability to generate adequate electrical power for the respective economies on the part of the national utility provider. The increasing levels of organisational politics at most of the national electricity providers in SADC are therefore cause for concern, culminating into power politics, fighting for positions, the struggle for resources and promotion, backstabbing, image tarnishing, blaming others, suspension from employment, unlawful termination of employment contracts as well as whistle blowing just to mention a few. In most instances, there are numerous media reports of tensions amongst employees within the national electricity providers where most of the politicking identified previously is prevalent. Failure to handle such challenges on the part of management often degenerates into heated debates that tend to affect the smooth flow of operations as evidenced by the resignation of South Africa's Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the national electricity provider (Eskom) following an altercation with the chairman of the Board (Engineering News, 2012). News of the CEO's resignation sparked the whole country, raising doubts about the power utility ability to handle organisational politics related challenges while at the same time forging ahead in generating the much needed electrical power for Africa's biggest economy.

Zimbabwe generates only 1,300 MW of electricity against a daily consumption of 2,200 megawatts, falling short by 900 megawatts. To cover the gap the country has been importing power from neighbouring countries but most of these countries have since cut off supply due to non-payment (Kawadza, 2013:3). According to Mangoma (cited by Muleya, 2005) the national electricity provider of Zimbabwe is owed US 550 million by customers of which huge sums are owed by some high profile government ministers making the debt recovery process all the more difficult as the ministers often use government political power to stop possible disconnections of power.

The electricity situation in Zimbabwe has reached alarming levels that are unimaginable. For example, the shortages have forced the national electricity provider to ration supplies to both domestic and commercial users with most areas going for 10 hours per day without electrical power (Mananavire, 2012:6). Load shedding has dented the once strong and vibrant economy of Southern Africa due to the electrical power generation crises (Mtomba, 2012). This has hampered the provision of critical services such as conducting medical surgeries/operation. Many lives have been lost as medical doctors find it impossible to conduct medical operations using diesel electrical generators to power their operating equipment (Own Correspondent, 2012). The national electricity supply has been struggling to power the economy for close to two decades without any sign of improvement and there is no hope of improvement in the near future as echoed by Zimbabwe's Minister of Energy, Mangoma, as he lamented that load shedding was bound to worsen in 2012 and beyond, citing the awarding of hefty allowances and salaries to senior employees as a grave organisational political mistake for an already resource stricken company (Own Correspondent, 2012). To add salt to an injury, negative organisational politics have become rife. Boardroom squabbles have become the order of the day and unbearable. The political battles between the board of directors and the general manager of the biggest power station have been predicted as influencing unproductive tendencies at the national electricity provider (Muleya, 2005). For example, the boardroom squabbles resulted in the general manager's suspension instead of politically engaging to breed a more productive organisation, a more ignited environment that fosters growth and productivity. Butcher and Clarke (cited by Gotsis & Kortezi, 2011:454) argue that organisational politics motivates the workforce in redefining the patterns of activity for organisational benefit. In support of this view, Butcher and Clarke (2008:10) posit that organisational politics influences employee motivation that results in the overall improvement of organisational productivity. The presence of organisational politics voluntarily compels the role-players to work together in a politicised environment for a better future. In line with this school of thought, managers, employees, government and the national electricity provider can take advantage of the politicised work environment

to ignite a productive atmosphere. The article, therefore seeks to identify and measure employee perceptions of organisational politics at the national electricity provider with an ultimate aim of harnessing dysfunctional politics towards a productive organisation.

The argument is, if the valuable time and effort spent on resolving matters related to power politics, resource distribution, promotions, backstabbing, favouritism, unnecessary termination of employment and suspension from employment pending investigations, is directed towards finding new ways of improving the power generation capacity, probably, Southern African national electricity providers would not be in such a critical power generation crisis. According to Sibanda (2013:12) there could be other causative factors to the power generation crisis such as under capitalisation due to poor planning, lack of organisational and leadership skills, shortage of specific trade skills such as engineers and fitters, and inadequate resources. Van Niekerk (2013:2), on the same note, argues that undercapitalisation due to poor planning and lack of organisational skills may have far reaching effects regarding the performance of national electricity providers across SADC. However, following the increasing publicity of organisational politics in national and private media ahead of the other factors leaves organisational politics as prime suspect to the current electrical power generation crisis that is affecting most Southern African states (Engineeringnews, 2009).

## **2.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

The national electricity provider is a massive organisation by Zimbabwean standards which employs approximately 6500 employees with an operating budget of US\$ 72 million in the 2012 fiscal year (ZESA, 2013). The newly formed government of Zimbabwe took over the management of the national electricity provider from the then government of the colonial ruler in 1980 inheriting some fair amount of electricity power challenges which were not as intense as they are at the present period. For the ten years while under the control of the newly formed democratic government of Zimbabwe from the 1980s to the 1990s, the national electricity provider managed a rather steady supply of electricity up to the 1990s and since then, Zimbabwe has been reeling with

unending load shedding challenges that has negatively affected the overall performance of the economy at large.

The power crisis facing Zimbabwe is largely influenced by the main role-players in the political systems of the national electricity provider which include the government, the board of directors, the employees and the managers of different portfolios within the organisation. It is critical to note that the national electricity provider's political environment is largely dominated by the government as a constitutional obligation with the CEO serving as the link between the national electricity provider and the government (Zhou, 2012:152-161). It is also paramount to note that the government's involvement marks the beginning of the organisational political process since the government has to influence the developments at the national electricity provider through treasury instructions, policies, rules and regulations. Further, employees of the national electricity provider play a significant role in the political environment since they provide the labour. According to Muleya (2005), boardroom squabbles that resulted in the suspension of the general managers were predicted as partly causing the current power outages. As if this is not enough, the national electricity provider continues to deny workers their rights to participate or air their views in the way the organisation is being or should be managed. The most critical point of significance is that Zimbabwe is not the usual Zimbabwe of the 1980s to 1990s. Zimbabwe dramatically changed politically, economically and socially from good governance to being a failed state characterised by dysfunctional state structures, bankruptcy and corruption complicating the overburdened political environment (Asuelime & Simura, 2013:55). Karombo (2013) illuminates that Zimbabwe has reached a state of collapse that requires urgent attention. Similar sentiments are echoed by Bhebhe (2013:17-24) when he argues that Zimbabwe's economic and social problems have worsened over the years with public administration being mostly affected. Karombo (2012) further reiterates that Zimbabwe has suddenly become unable to provide adequate services that include electricity generation with fingers being pointed at the prevailing political developments within the national electricity providers (ZESA). The article, therefore seeks to explore the nature

and extent of organisational politics at the national electricity providers in Southern Africa.

### **2.3 OBJECTIVES**

The primary objective of the article is to explore the nature of organisational politics at the national electricity provider.

The secondary objectives are:

- to identify the main role-players and their roles in the political system of the national electricity provider;
- explore the political environment at the national electricity provider; and to
- Determine the demographical profile of the national electricity provider.

### **2.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The article explores the nature and extent of organisational politics at the national electricity provider by reviewing and applying related literature. A brief empirical survey on the biographical profiles is also provided to enhance the research methodology. Data were collected from a sample of 1,400 employees identified randomly from a population of 2,210 at the national electricity provider's Harare Region. A total of 337 completed questionnaires were returned giving a response rate of 24.78%.

### **2.5 DEFINING ORGANISATIONAL POLITICS**

Most people in the workplace agree that organisational politics is a reality of organisational life. Politicking is one of the options for those who wish to influence decisions (June, 2003:138) and it is common to find organisational members engaging in influence attempts, such as ingratiation, impression management and developing power coalitions just to name a few, so as to protect or further their own interests, particularly if their workplace is characterised by uncertainty, limited resources,

favouritism and lack of trust. The national electricity provider of Zimbabwe is no exception to these organisational political developments. As a state controlled organisation, the relevant ministry, through the relevant department, appoints a board of directors that oversees the entire running of the organisation. Thus, through policy directives such as treasury instructions, rules, regulations and annual budget processes, government becomes a major player in the national electricity organisational political processes.

In order for one to understand the nature and extent of politics at the national electricity provider, it is pertinent that one has a working definition of the concept “organisational politics”. There are varying definitions of organisational politics with varying perspectives of what it entails. For a better comprehension of the concept, defining the two terms “organisation” and “politics” separately makes one’s understanding of organisational politics a lot simpler.

According to Veluri (2009:2) an organisation is a group of individuals, who come together to realize their goals. Aryee and Budhwar (2004:2), and Othman (2010:43) define an organisation as a social marketplace where individuals engage in transactions to obtain favourable returns. George and Jones (2011:5) seem to agree with the above definitions. They define an organisation as a collection of people who work together and coordinate their actions to achieve desired future outcomes. The national electricity provider is thus, an organisation with employees, managers and structures for carrying out their day-to-day work but who also have individual ambitions of achieving their own goals.

According to George and Jones (2011:5), managers are responsible for supervising and making the most of organisations’ human and other resources to achieve its goals. It is therefore important to note that human beings are born in organisations, educated by organisations and to acknowledge that they do spend most of their lives working in organisations. Even the families, in which they spend most of their time in, are also an organisation. Hence an organisation is a group of individuals who agree to share their

effort in the realisation of common goals. Robbins and Judge (2012:38) identify organisations to be characterized by a distinct purpose, multiple members and a systematic structure. Organisations have emerged and exist primarily because they are more efficient than individuals operating individually and therefore can produce items and/or provide services which an individual could not produce/provide alone. In so doing the organisation is able to meet the needs and demands of current day society through:

- Bringing together resources that are necessary for production,
- Provide the products and services which the society needs; and
- Creating and providing career opportunities for members of the society.

The goals of an organisation are therefore derived from individual goals. Horton (2010:112) posits that an organisation is not merely a rational model of economic activity but rather a place where political activity and conflict takes place. The constraints of bounded rationality and imperfect information limit the ability of organisations to develop a complete set of rules and procedures to guide and govern employees and management's actions and behaviour within an organisation setting. In order to meet the needs and demands of current day society, organisations establish goals which need to be operationalised for the purpose of the organisation to be achieved (Smit et al., 2011:18). Management serves to ensure that such goals are established and operationalised, and in so doing supports the purpose of the organisation.

The national electricity provider squarely fits into the above description and definition of an organisation in that, it consists of people (employees, managers and board of directors) who deliberately agree to share ideas in order to realise a common goal as well as achieving individual goals. The common goal of the national electricity provider is to generate electricity for the entire economy while the individual goals of the workers are mainly focused on achieving individual personal expectations such as high salaries, driving latest car models, as well as receiving the best fringe benefit package. The aspirations of individuals in achieving the goal to earn a living normally boil down to

pertinent matters that lead to a politically poised environment termed organisational politics which this article seeks to unpack.

The term 'politics' has many negative connotations; various academicians agree that managers who are 'political' utilise their power for self-interest purposes and not for the benefit of the organisation (George & Jones, 2011). Politics can be viewed as the management and decision-making processes of social groups (Ullah et al., 2011:37). It is therefore important to note that politics means the influence process enacted to manage the multiple competing interests existing in organisations (Ullah et al., 2011:37). However, while organisational politics can certainly lead to the misuse and abuse of power, organisational politics can also be a positive force within an organisation. According to George and Jones (2011), effective managers engage in politics to gain support for and implement needed changes, and engaging in organisational politics can help managers overcome resistance and achieve organisational goals thereby ultimately enhancing organisational performance. From another angle, political behaviour may represent a threat to overall organisational efficiency and effectiveness. According to Robbins and Judge (2012:199), politics refers to a situation when individual employees in the organisation convert their power into action. Political behaviour in organisations consists of activities that are not required as part of an individual's formal role but that influence, or attempt to influence the distribution of advantages and disadvantages within the organisation (Robbins and Judge, 2012:199). Robbins and Judge (2009:358) analyse the definition as encompassing key elements of what most people mean when they refer to organisational politics. Thus, political behaviour is outside one's specified job requirements.

Organisational politics involves managers and employees within the organisation engaging in activities which serve to increase their power, as well as activities which involve the use of power to overcome opposing parties (George and Jones, 2011:230). In recent decades, organisational politics has become a growing field of interest in management studies. It refers to the activities that managers and other members of the

organisation engage in for increasing and using their power effectively so as to achieve their goals and overcome resistance or opposition (George & Jones 2011:614). The inclusion of “other members” in this definition suggests everyone else in the organisation as well as management can be involved in organisational politics, and this includes the employees as well.

According to Moorhead and Griffin (2009), organisational politics refers to the activities carried out by people to acquire, enhance, and use power and other resources to obtain their desired outcomes. Robbins and Judge (2012:374) concur with the aforementioned sentiments when they say that whenever people get together in groups, power will be exerted. They emphasise that people want to carve out a niche from which to exert influence, to earn rewards, and to advance their careers; and when employees in the organisation convert their power into action, they are then described as being engaged in politics. According to George and Jones (2011:450), organisational politics is a multifaceted construct; most often conceived as inherently self-serving activity that is intended to enhance or secure self-interest, either at individual or group level. It consists of intentional acts of influence, mainly informally exercised, as well as intentional use and exercise of power so as to gain access to scarce resources, and of actions and tactics aiming at influencing decision-making (Fleming & Spencer, 2008). Organisational politics can also be viewed as an exercise of power and influence that primarily occurs outside of formal organisational processes and procedures (Kurchner-Hawkins and Miller, 2006) as cited by Ullah et al. (2011:37). Thus, political behaviour can be considered as “influence tactics meant to perpetuate self and/or organisational interests”, and its basic aim is to reconcile and effectively manage such potentially competing interests (Ullah et al., 2011:37).

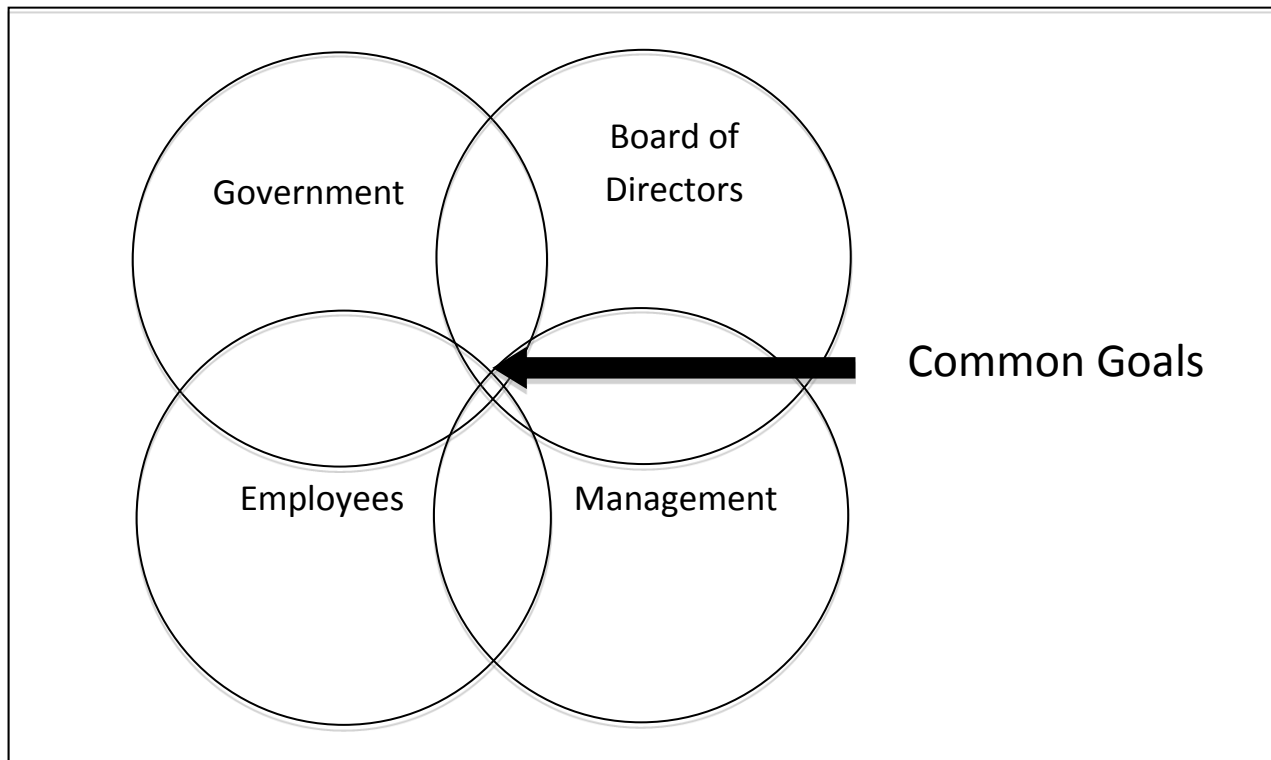
From the aforementioned assertions, it is clear that organisations are deliberately created and maintained by people who have different goals and ambitions. The inherent selfish nature of human beings makes them compete in order to realise their individual goals, thus overlooking or even undermining the goals of others. In order to overcome this, organisations develop common goals that reflect the individual interests of its

members. Despite the development of such common goals, some members will always try to meet their selfish ends; thus, individuals often find themselves having to rely on informal and unsanctioned means in making decisions, thereby marking the beginnings/foundations of organisational politics. It is therefore clear that both informal and unsanctioned means of decision-making within the organisation present perpetrators of organisational politics with the opportunity to engage in political behaviour. The high level political tempo in organisations is manifested by the differences in the positions held by the employees. Differences in positions between managers and employees obviously compound the perceived view of organisational politics. Those placed in management positions always thrive to take advantage of the power vested in them in making decisions to their favour, with employees on the receiving end. The concept of organisational politics is therefore closely related to power in the organisational setting, thus, political behaviour is the general means by which people attempt to obtain and use power. Put simply, the goal of such behaviour is to get one's own way about things.

## **2.6 THE MAIN ROLE-PLAYERS AND THEIR ROLE IN THE POLITICAL SYSTEM AT THE NATIONAL ELECTRICITY PROVIDER**

As explained in the preceding sections, all national electricity providers in Southern Africa are state controlled and so does the national electricity provider of Zimbabwe. Figure 2.1 below shows the main players in the political system at the national electricity provider.

**FIGURE 2.1:      ROLE-PLAYERS AT THE NATIONAL ELECTRICITY PROVIDER'S  
POLITICAL ENVIROMENT**



**Source: Own compilation**

### **2.6.1 The government**

At the heart of any public sector lies the central government which is represented by the various ministries and government departments. According to Minnaar and Bekker (2005:57), government is regarded as the macro-function of making policies in terms of the legislative process. The national electricity provider falls under the ministry of energy resources headed by the minister who has executive control over its management. The minister, through the permanent secretary, makes decisions, formulates policies, rules and regulations that guide the chief executive officer (CEO) and the board of directors on how to manage the organisation. According to Zhou (2012:152-161) the modern government is run democratically, meaning that all the views from all sections of society within a democratic state are considered in the policy formulation process prior to implementation. Asuelime and Simura (2013:51-65) share the same view when they

emphasise that the modern government has shifted from the old approach of dictatorship, where the presidency makes unilateral decisions without any form of consultations. The most critical role of government is dependent upon government power. In a democratic state, government power is vested in the electorate, who elect members of parliament to govern and make laws on their behalf.

Unfortunately Zimbabwe has become an abnormal different unique SADC country that has been experiencing governance related challenges emanating from the poor governance structures and decisions that have been worsened by dictatorship, corruption, maladministration, cronyism and theft (Kaseke & Hosking, 2011:3). Researchers that include (Mhlanga, 2012, Rajah *et al.* 2012), extensively document Zimbabwe social and economic challenges as negatively affecting service delivery systems and structures of the government. In brief, the government of Zimbabwe has been dysfunctional for two decades without any sign of improvement, to the extent that it would be impossible for the national electricity provider to get any meaningful support from a failed government.

The electricity challenges for Zimbabwe could be as simple as making a ministerial decision to explore and implement the various natural resources available. For example, Zimbabwe is endowed with vast natural energy resources that include, gas, coal, 9 hours of broad daylight which is a potential for solar energy and the several steep gorges along the Zambezi River which can be tapped into hydro-power. Unfortunately none of these have been progressively explored on time to bridge the electricity crisis (Kawadza, 2013:3). Clearly, it can be concluded, that government can make or destroy its public corporations. Even the inadequate funding that the government is experiencing could have been resolved by the discovery of the diamonds. Unfortunately, no funding has yet reached the fiscus, an indication of how corruption has become a cancer in the Zimbabwean mining structures (The World Bank Report, 2012). Most of Zimbabwe's state institutions at the time of study are in a chaotic financial and operational state, offering mediocre performance with all the blame

levelled against the inadequate support from the present government (Zondi & Mlaudzi, 2010:40).

The national electricity provider is a state owned institution that falls under the ministry of energy. The minister of energy, through the permanent secretary, formulates the policies, rules and regulations that guide the CEO and board of directors of the national electricity provider on how to run/manage the institution.

### **2.6.2 The board of directors**

The Auditor-General for Australia, Pat Barrett (cited by Minnaar & Bekker, 2005:62), viewed the board of directors as a group of senior management, mostly at director level responsible for providing strategic guidance, how the organisation is managed, how its corporate and the various structures are arranged, its culture, policies and strategies. The processes of ensuring strategic leadership constitute corporate governance. Corporate governance is therefore the process and structure used to direct and manage the business affairs of the organisations towards enhancing business prosperity and corporate accountability with the ultimate objective of realizing long-term shareholder value whilst taking into account the interest of the stakeholders Keasey (cited by Abor & Biekpe, 2007:288). A corporate governance system is the system of monitoring devices, internal and external, specific to the organisation, which defines how these mechanisms are set up and how each fulfils its monitoring role (Pergola & Joseph, 2011:2000). It is therefore critical to note that the governance system is specific to each company, and that the different ownership structures may result in different structures, cultures and outcomes based on their unique governance objectives.

At the national electricity provider, the board of directors refers to the individuals appointed by the minister of energy, entrusted with the responsibility of managing the organisation. The board seeks to ensure continuous generation of adequate electrical power. The board of directors acts as agents of the owners, and in the case of the national electricity providers, the owners are the government. Government is therefore

being held increasingly responsible for controlling the actions of senior management and for evaluating and implementing effective systems (Pergola & Joseph, 2011:2000). The board of directors, through its chairperson is mandated to provide strategic direction in line with ministerial policy statements. According to Robert et al. (2010:1), the board of directors is appointed to act on behalf of the shareholders to run the day-to-day affairs of the business. The board members are directly accountable to the shareholders and each year the company holds an annual general meeting (AGM) at which the directors must provide a report to shareholders on the performance of the company, what its future plans and strategies are and also submit themselves for re-election to the board. Robert et al. (2010:1) provide the following as typical duties of boards of directors:

- Governing the organisation by establishing broad policies and objectives;
- Selecting, appointing, supporting and reviewing the performance of the chief executive;
- Ensuring the availability of adequate financial resources;
- Approving annual budgets;
- Accounting to the stakeholders for the organisation's performance; and
- Setting the salaries and compensation of company management.

A development where the board of directors spends most of the time trying to harness boardroom room squabbles at the expense of positive engagement, as is the case at the national electricity provider is unfortunate as eluded by Muleya (2005) when he said that the boardroom fights and gross incompetence were responsible for the power outages.

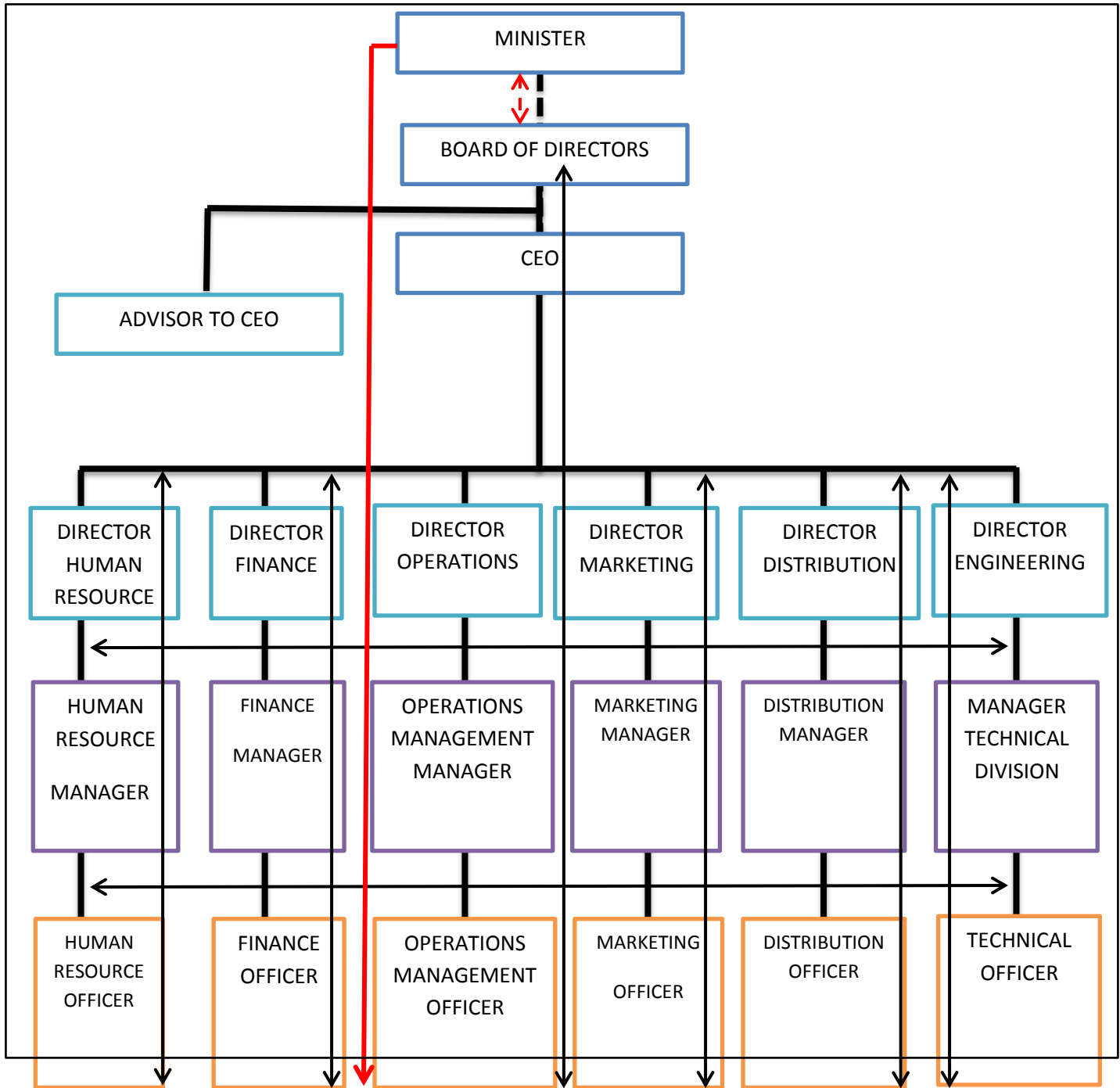
### **2.6.3 Managers**

For any organisation to be successful there has to be a functional management team operating under an ideal management structure that operates in a conducive organisational work environment at different levels of management. According to Minnaar and Bekker (2005:22), a management environment refers to the total

surroundings of the organisation both tangible and intangible which directly or indirectly impact on what the organisation is supposed to do and determines its ability to do it. The environment can be divided into two broad categories namely the internal and external environment. While the internal environment consists of the things that happen within the organisation such as the working relations, the rules and regulations, policies, the management support systems, the procedures, processes and organisational culture which management has control of, the external environment refers to the outside factors affecting the organisation which managers may not directly have control of which include, the community, the suppliers, regulators, inflation and the political situation in a country (Du Toit et. al., 2010:104). The complexity brought by the two environments obviously impact on the manner in which managers at the national electricity provider discharges their day-to-day roles and functions.

The relationship that exists between managers and their subordinates as well as super ordinates, the communication channels and systems, the organisational and the bureaucracy that is endemic in public institutions is bound to affect management roles and functions. The fact that the national electricity provider is a state organisation that is largely controlled by government implies a heavy dependency on bureaucratic systems and structures from the lowest employee to the CEO and to the minister of energy. According to Minnaar and Bekker (2005:11), bureaucracy refers to an organisational system that is unable to respond and provide value in a contemporary world such as the one in which the national electricity provider operates. In support, Du Toit et al. (2010:104), emphasises that it is time public organisations move away from the bureaucratic approach of management where rigidity and red tape are the order of the day. This is a common characteristic at the national electricity provider, however, proponents of bureaucracy, still view it as a means of providing some internal checks and balances within an organisation's structures and systems, hence its heavy presence in public sector organisations such as the national electricity provider. The figure 2.1 below presents the organisational structure of the national electricity provider

**FIGURE 2.1: THE NATIONAL ELECTRICITY PROVIDER'S ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE**



**Source:** National Electricity Provider (2012)

Keys:

- $\longleftrightarrow$   $\updownarrow$  Lines of Communication
- $\downarrow$  Lines of Authority

Figure 2.1 above shows the organisation chart for the national electricity provider focussing mainly on the three levels of management that includes top management, middle management and first line managers. Communication amongst all managers is a two-way process and can be vertical and/or horizontal. The lines of authority and communication represent the bureaucratic processes within the organisation resulting in red tape which is usually associated with public administration. Authority comes from the top management down to the lowest levels of management. The communication processes and the delegation of authority and responsibility by senior managers to lower level managers and the organisation at large signify a political process in its own right, notwithstanding the involvement of the minister.

Below first-line managers would be the various grades of employees who do not hold management positions such as clerks, electricians, drivers, mechanics, secretaries and several others. Such levels are excluded from the above chart as they do not represent management levels, but nevertheless they are part and parcel of the national electricity provider's workforce. The following is a discussion of the various levels of management within the electricity provider.

#### 2.6.3.1 Top management

Top management is entirely the overseer of the organisation and the incumbent appointed to the position is usually called the CEO. The CEO, board of directors and directors constitute the top management of the national electricity provider. The CEO has overall responsibility of the national electricity provider. He/she determines the overall vision, mission, goals, objectives and strategy to achieve the goals of the organisation. To successfully discharge his/her mandate the CEO creates and establishes the organisational structure (figure 2.1) and then monitors the overall performance of the organisation through the chain of command, lines of communication, and reporting structures depicted by the organogram (George & Jones, 2011:3). Top management represents the small group of managers who control the organisation, and who have final authority and responsibility for executing the management function at the

national electricity provider. Du Toit et al. (2010:470) add that top management have overall responsibility for the organisation by providing the strategic guidance. The chain of command from the CEO, to the minister depicts some levels of bureaucracy at the national electricity provider. The main functions of the CEO are purely the provision of strategic guidance and leadership roles. While the CEO enjoys autonomy, there are obviously some challenges bedevilling the work of the CEO and chief among them are the political forces from the government and within the organisation itself. From the government side, political control in the form of ministerial directives represents a form of politicking in the affairs of the organisation while intra-personal relationship amongst employees, the struggle for positions and resource allocation constitute a host of political challenges that can affect the decision-making process. According to Hansen et al. (2012:31), CEO managerial autonomy, good as it may be, is affected by the split between policy and operations.

The split comes in the sense that the central government formulates policy statements that are cascaded to the CEO for implementation. Such a gap obviously leads to structural disintegration that has a potential to negatively affect the smooth flow of work (Bozeman and Feeney, 2009:140). The relationship between the CEO and the minister is a constitutional obligation that needs to be respected especially by the CEO as subordinate to the minister. The CEO has to seek approval before implementing significant decisions. For example, decisions to embark on massive energy projects definitely will not kick-start without the minister's approval. Therefore, the bureaucratic link between the national electricity provider and the parent energy ministry obviously affects the CEO's role and functions with a potential to make or destroy the organisation's management and administrative structures.

#### 2.6.3.2 Middle management

Middle management is responsible for specific functions/departments within the organisation, and is primarily concerned with implementing policies, plans and strategies from top management. Middle management is concerned with medium-term

and short-term planning, organising, functional areas, leading by means of departmental heads, and controlling the management activities of the middle manager's own departments. Middle managers are a necessary link between the upper and lower levels of the organisation. Examples of middle level managers at the national electricity provider would be the human, finance, operation, technical and operation managers. At the national electricity provider, examples of such middle levels managers include the distribution, human resources finance, operations, and marketing and technical division managers.

### 2.6.3.3 First-line management

First-line management often referred to as supervisory management and takes responsibility for the day-to-day operations of a particular section within a department or division (Jones et al., 2009). For the national electricity provider all the officers shown on the level one which include the human resources, finance, operations, technical, and distribution represent the first-line managers.

The three levels of management as depicted in figure 2.1 above and as explained are not by default, they play a major role in the day-to-day management of the organisation. The link between the various positions is made possible by establishing the reporting lines, determining how authority is distributed among positions (Du Toit et al. (2010:202). Managers, however, cannot perform all the tasks within the organisation alone; hence they have to work through delegated responsibility and the decentralisation of power. Power politics represent a formidable form of organisational politics and is usually the strongest tool a manager can use in order to command respect (Minnaar & Bekker, 2005:11). And in an organisation such as the national electricity provider, the use of power by the various managers cannot be underestimated. It is important to note that every manager has some form of power which can be applied in varying degrees and circumstances in pursuit of achieving the goals of the organisation. The bolded lines indicated on the organogram depicts lines of communication and authority taking a top down approach.

Management refers to “the planning, organising, leading and controlling of resources to achieve organisational goals effectively and efficiently” (George & Jones, 2011:5). Management’s task is argued to be the one responsible for examining factors, methods and principles that enable a business organisation to maximise its profits and achieve its objectives (Smit et al., 2011:8). The achievement of this task is reliant on the management process, which comprises the functions of planning, organising, leading and controlling. The above definitions highlight different aspects of management. If the above definitions are combined a consolidated definition of management may be formulated: Management is therefore a discipline, a practice and a process which involves working with and through people. It involves planning, leading, organising and controlling of both human and other resources so as to achieve organisational goals efficiently, effectively and ethically.

This definition points to the critical importance of management within organisations. Management, in enabling the organisation to achieve its goals efficiently, effectively and ethically, essentially determines the success or failure of the organisation. We all have a stake within a number of organisations, as an employee, a client, a business partner or community, and the managers have a responsibility to the organisation’s stakeholders to ensure that the organisation performs well. In this regard Mintzberg (1989:163-170) observes that “no job is more vital to our society than that of the manager”. It is the manager who determines whether our institutions serve us well or whether they squander our talents and resources.

The national electricity provider’s management has been found wanting on several occasions, for example, they have been on record for awarding themselves hefty salaries and allowance (Sibanda, 2012) against the background of mediocre performance characteristic of below capacity generation of electricity resulting in electrical power blackouts that have adversely affected the entire industry ultimately pushing down the country’s GDP figures to the lowest ever.

#### **2.6.4 Employees**

Employees in an organisation can be viewed from the biographical angle that includes age composition, level of experience, gender, level of education as well as position in the organisation. The biographical composition plays a key role in the contribution the employees make towards the organisation's success. Thus, employers keep a record of the demographics of their employees for various reasons. It is interesting to note that for an organisation which is largely heterogeneous as is the case of the national electricity provider, there is bound to be group and team formation following the pattern of the various age groups. In a study on employee diversity by Kunze et al. (2011:2), employees were found to establish groups and teams that include members within the same age range and that more elderly workers showed high commitment to the organisation despite approaching retirement age. Rowold (2010:630) gives support to this by noting that employees who are in the same age group usually team up with the middle age range demonstrating to be more resourceful than the other groups, while those reaching retirement demonstrate high commitment to the organisation.

Thomas and Feldman (2009:90-95) wrote extensively on employee education, experience and performance. According to Thomas and Feldman (2009:94-95), most organisations use education as an indicator of detecting the "person skill". Jalbert et al. (2011:16-19) stated that employee skill is linked to the education and experience that one has. The national electricity provider's recruitment processes stipulates clearly the respective education requirements for each and every position. The above authors summarily agree to the point that the performance and skill of an employee is related to his or her education. It is also important to note that workforce diversity includes gender variables (male and female employees). In the contemporary organisation, with affirmative employment action being considered through increasing the number of women, particularly appointing women on key positions is considered a welcome development. Of note, Thomas and Feldman (2009:90-95), argued that women managers perform higher than men in several managerial circumstances. Women are referred by Rowold (2010:630), as effective managers, capable of taking organisations to the next level.

In general, however, employees in an organisation refer to all the workers in the organisation who are not managers. They are regarded as one of the most critical stakeholders to an organisation because of their basic function in the organisation of providing labour. Employees form the backbone of any organisation and if they are not treated fairly, they may be more likely to be engaged in unethical behaviour. This equitable balance is addressed in equity theory. In equity theory, each employee evaluates his or her inputs (effort, commitment) and outputs (compensation, promotion) versus the inputs and outputs of other employees (George & Jones, 2011:15). Equity theory is a model of motivation which explains how “people strive for fairness and justice in social exchanges or give-and-take relationships” (George & Jones, 2011:20). The national electricity provider has a huge workforce making it a more social organisation. Therefore it depends on the extent at which managers at the national electricity provider uphold fairness in all aspects of management/motivation ranging from sharing of resources, awarding promotions, salary increments and handling conflict as well as their involvement in critical matters that affect the organisation such as, privatisation policies, expansion and employee bonus schemes.

## **2.7: THE POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT AT THE NATIONAL ELECTRICITY PROVIDER**

The political environment, also known as the government environment refers to the various factors that are a result of government actions and these include the degree or extent of government involvement in the affairs of public institutions (Minnaar and Bekker, 2005:21-23). The factors can be in the form of government policy, treasury instructions, political stability or instability, import and export policies on electricity, subsidy policy, labour law, environmental law and trade restrictions (Du Toit et al., 2010:130). It is clear from the list above that political factors have an impact on organisations and how they conduct business. According to Du Toit et al. (2010:130), management decisions are continually affected by the intensity of politics, especially the political pressures that are exerted by the ruling government administration and

management. In particular, government affects the national electricity provider in a regulating capacity through legislation, treasury instructions, the annual budget, taxation, import and export policy on power and price controls. Government has an effect on market developments through its expenditure and in most of the cases where it is a major producer or a monopoly (in the case of the national electricity provider), government competes for labour, resources and capital making the task of a manager all the more challenging since managers are expected to study the various complex activities of government. It is important to mention at this point that government is viewed as the most powerful and highest authority to whom the national electricity provider reports to. As stated by Minnaar and Bekker (2005:21-23), government power originates from its responsibility to deliver services and goods to its citizens as obligated by the constitution.

The manner or approach in which government influences decisions by the powers vested in it speaks volumes about the government politicking at the national electricity provider. In most instances government power is undesirable, undesirable because government interferes with the personal freedom of individual organisations/groups.

The national electricity provider's political environment influences the manner in which the utility provider is run with government playing a superior, powerful and significant role from a constitutional obligation to the normal praxis of public administration and management. In a democratic state, the involvement of government is an obligated move despite the ills of its bureaucratic processes. A point of departure and significance is that government allocates an annual budget to the national electricity provider which it uses as a basis to set the selling price of electricity which is usually pegged at a subsidised rate. Setting prices at a subsidised rate resultantly affects cash flow and financial position for the national electricity provider. In fact, the national electricity provider has been operating at a loss with the blame levelled against government's involvement, which is genuinely a noble accusation. The budgetary bidding process is a political process in its own right that calls for continuous engagements between the senior managers of the national electricity provider and the government. Despite its

obligated responsibility, to provide funding, it would appear that the political engagements between government and seniors managers often reduce the national electricity provider to a beggar or borrower and once funding is extended, government becomes even more powerful and hence dictate the pace.

The government of Zimbabwe provides rules and regulations that guide the board of directors on how to run the organisation while the CEO provides strategic leadership and guidance to the organisation. The CEO does so by inspiring the entire workforce in pursuance of the organisation's vision and mission statement from which the strategic management processes are crafted. By exercising the various powers vested in them, CEOs can determine the future of organisations. On the other hand, junior managers down the organisational structure ladder ensure that the day-to-day operations/management functions are performed through planning, organising, leading and controlling while employees provide service/labour.

For a country such as Zimbabwe, that has of late become abnormal, characteristic of a dysfunctional government that has made headlines in SADC and the international community, the political environment at the national electricity provider is not conducive. It depicts high levels of animosity, political infighting and a culture of intolerance and resistance to change from within the workforce and outside making the life of a manager all the more difficult. Zimbabwe is no longer the Zimbabwe of the 1980s, yet it is required to provide basic products and services to citizens. Organisations of today are presented with political environments which are characterised by change (Robbins, 2009:250), unfortunately the national electricity provider cannot manage all the pressures due to the state of the economy. With workers demanding pay increases and improvement in conditions of services, against near to zero revenue collection from the rate payers, the national electricity provider's political environment remains a threat to the normal functioning of the organisation. Things are not easy as they should be because individuals are concerned with fending for themselves at the expense of the organisation.

## **2.8 COMMON GOALS**

At the centre of figure 2.1, are goals. Organisations are basically social units that aim at realising their goals. Individual employees develop their goals from the goals of the organisation. It is important to note that it is always not possible to reflect all individual goals in organisational goals taking into account that the organisation has so many employees who have different goals. The differences in goals pose a threat to the existing political tempo in an organisation. According to Veluri (2009:569), a goal is the desired state of an organisation's existence. A goal is a primacy of orientation to the attainment of specific goals defining the characteristics of an organisation that distinguishes it from other type of social systems (Talcott and Parson, 2009). According to Drucker (2010), goals are important in every field, more specifically where performance and results are directly related to the survival and growth of the organisation, however, the presence of divergent goals forms the basis of the political environment and whether the environment is highly or less politicised depends on the extent to which the goals diverge.

## **2.9 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The following section discusses the results on biographical data. The analysis of the biographical profile of the national electricity provider's workforce covered age, experience, gender, qualification and employees' position.

### **2.9.1 Age distribution**

The age distribution is shown in table 2.2 below.

**TABLE 2.1: AGE DISTRIBUTION**

		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Valid %</b>	<b>Cumulative %</b>
Valid	Below 20 years	2	0.6	0.6	0.6
	20 - 29 years	25	7.4	7.5	8.1
	30 - 39 years	99	29.4	29.6	37.6
	40 -49 years	160	47.5	47.8	85.4
	50 - 59 years	37	11.0	11.0	96.4
	60 years and over	14	4.2	4.2	100.0
<b>Total</b>		<b>337</b>		<b>100.0</b>	

The table above shows that the majority of the workforce falls in the age group of 40 to 49, which is 47.80%, while the age group of below 20 reflects the lowest at 0.60%.

From this analysis it is clear that the national electricity provider's workforce is largely represented by the middle-aged class. Middle-aged class employees have the advantage of being resourceful and in most of the cases they form groups or team up for good cause (Kunze, 2011:2). Rowold (2010:630) provides a similar view by reporting that middle-aged employees are regarded as resourceful to the company though the elderly are regarded as the most committed to the organisation. Nasurdin and Khuan (2011:273) report that older employees are more inclined to focus on feelings of personal significance and interpersonal values, they have strong social relations with other employees, and they view the organisation as a source of social satisfaction. On the other hand a younger workforce is more likely to be consumed by the need for economic security and successes (Du Toit et al., 2009) and tend to coordinate their needs with those of other individuals in a more transactional manner. Gillert and Schal (2011:98) argue that age is an important factor in influencing the perceived cooperation within and outside the group. The point is, the age factor has an influence on interpersonal relations and perceptions that tend to affect the flow of work. The fact that, the national electricity provider has a fairly younger to middle-aged workforce resembles a promising resourceful workforce that strives to give maximum effort towards their day-to-day task within the organisation.

### 2.9.2 Level of experience

Employees' working experience in an organisation refers to the duration an employee has spent in the organisation. The longer one's experience in the organisation, the more likely the employee is expected to make or give objective contributions to the organisation. Figure 2.2 below analyses this category.

**FIGURE 2.3: LEVEL OF EXPERIENCE**

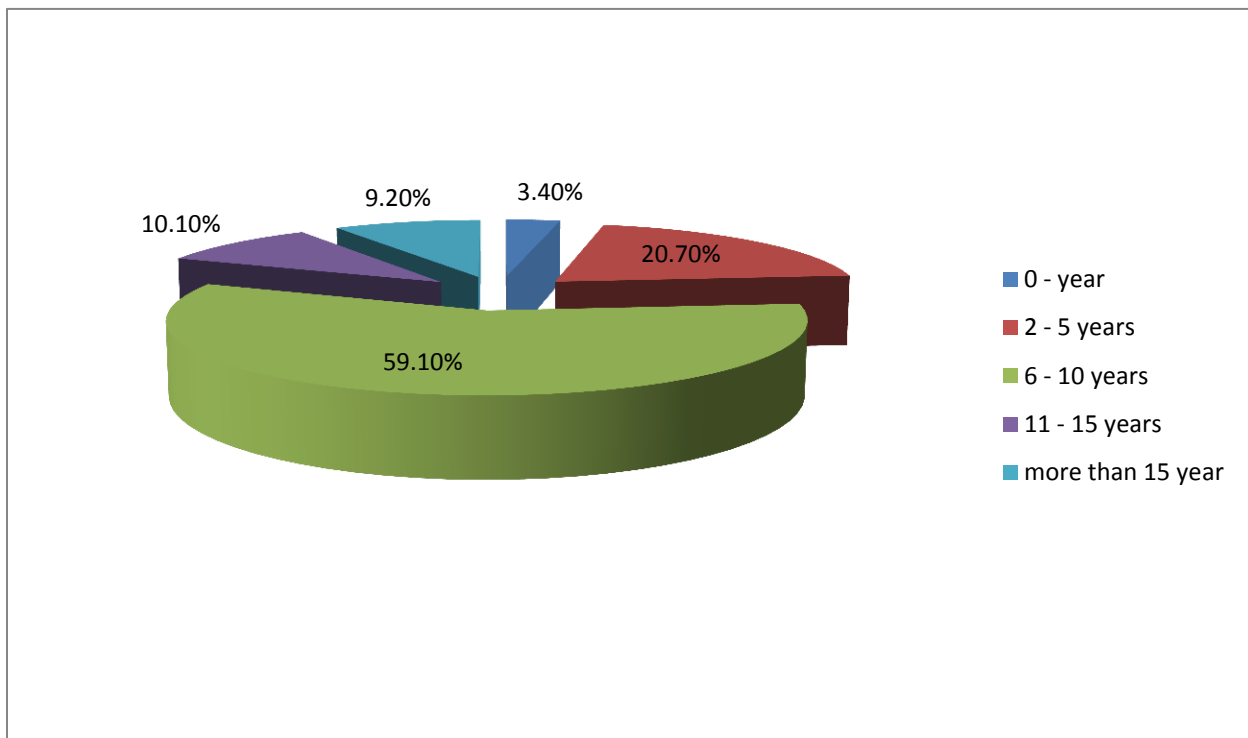


Figure 2.3 above depicts information on the number of years of experience the employees have, spent at the national electricity provider. It is clear from the pie chart above that the majority of the respondents between 6 to 10 years of service, which is 59.10%, while those with experience levels less than one year are only 3.4%.

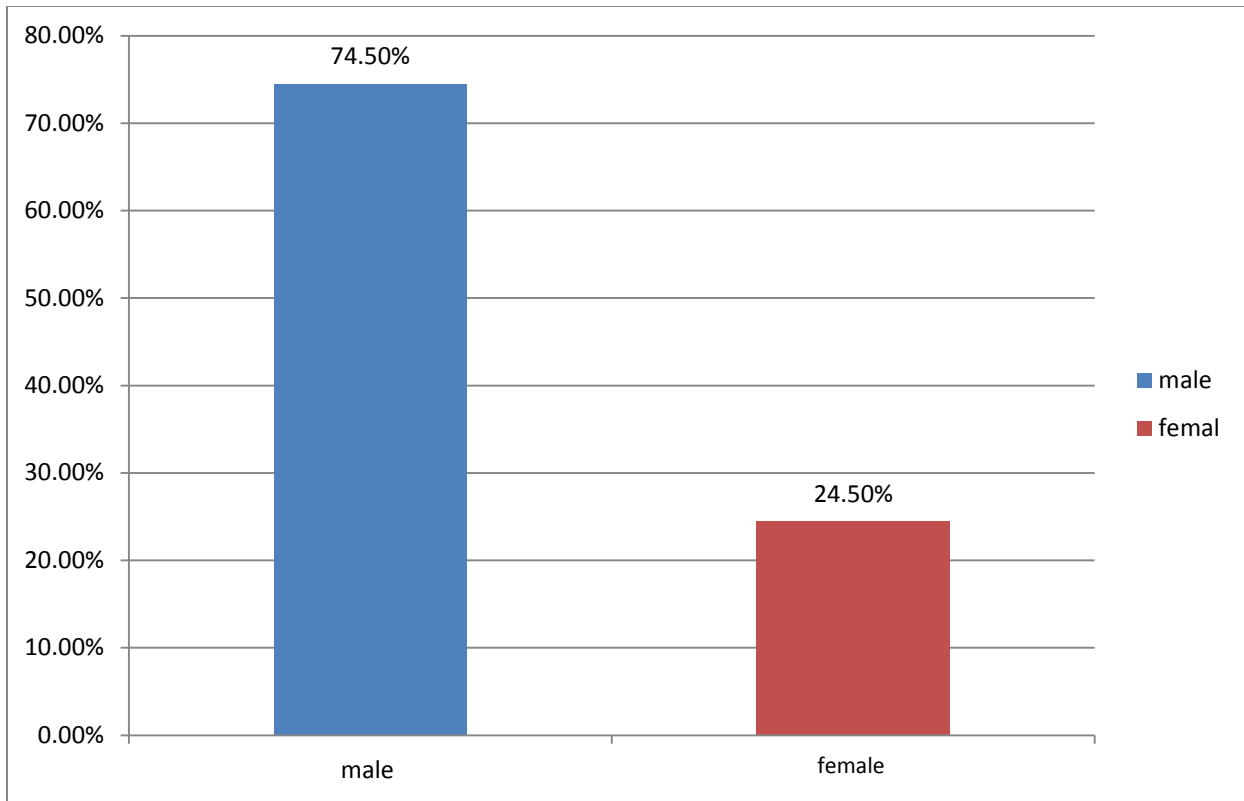
Employee experience plays a major role to both the employer and the employee as both tend to benefit. An experienced employee improves on skill and competencies, while the employer benefits in terms of increased performance levels by the employee; hence an increase in the production levels of the organisation. Studies by Thomas and Feldam

(2009:90-95) and Kunze (2011:4) revealed that experienced employees improve their skills ultimately benefiting the organisation. According to Louw et al. (2011:2-9) experience positively contributes to the development of employee competencies. Competencies represent the synthesis of a variety of skills, technologies, and knowledge streams that generate a competitive advantage for an organisation (Jauhari, 2006). Further, experience improves the employee's social competencies (Louw et al., 2011:2-9). Social competencies refer to a combination of observable and applied knowledge, skills and behaviours that create a competitive advantage for an organisation'(Jauhari, 2006:123). Thus, experienced employees' interpersonal and communication skills can improve the competitive advantage of the national electricity provider. The point underscored by these findings boil to the fact that an experienced employee is a critical resource to an organisation which the national electricity provider cannot afford to lose.

### **2.9.3 Respondents gender**

Figure 2.4 reflects the gender of the respective respondents.

**FIGURE 2.4: RESPONDENTS' GENDER**



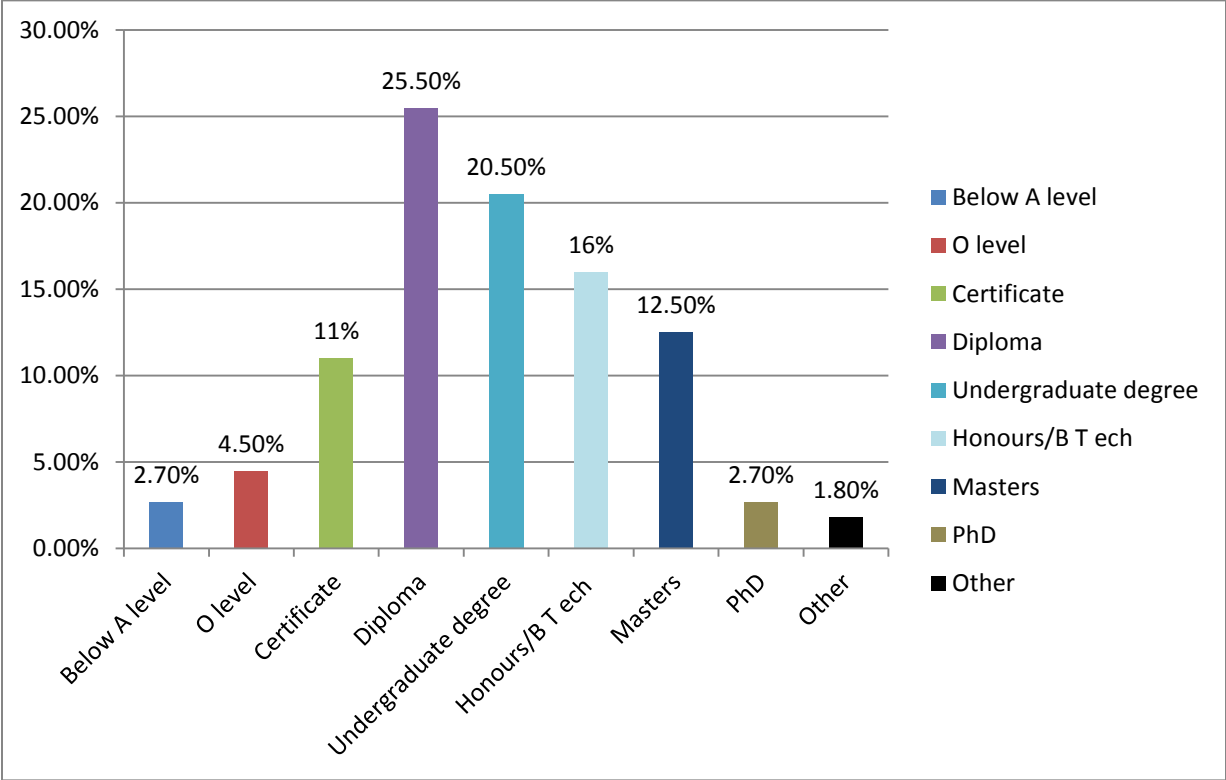
It is clear from the graph above that the national electricity provider is predominantly male dominated with 74.50%, with the remaining 24% representing females. It is important to note that most of the jobs/professions at the national electricity provider are those professions which are predominately preferred by men. For example, engineers, technicians, and fitters. In most African states, there is a stereotyped view that technical professions are for men, which could be the reason, why there are more men than women at this organisation. However, it is critical to note that despite the fact that the national electricity provider has more men than women, women generally proved to be more effective than men particularly when it comes to taking up challenging work. For example, studies by Thomas and Feldman (2009:90-95), found that women leadership can brace up for more challenging tasks in the contemporary world. Rowold's (2010:630) study on gender performance in organisations revealed that women can successfully and effectively tackle challenges better than their male counterparts, an

indication that the national electricity provider may consider increasing female employees as well as appointing them in senior management positions.

**2.9.4 Level of education**

The level of education is shown in figure 2.5 below.

**FIGURE 2.5: LEVEL OF EDUCATION**



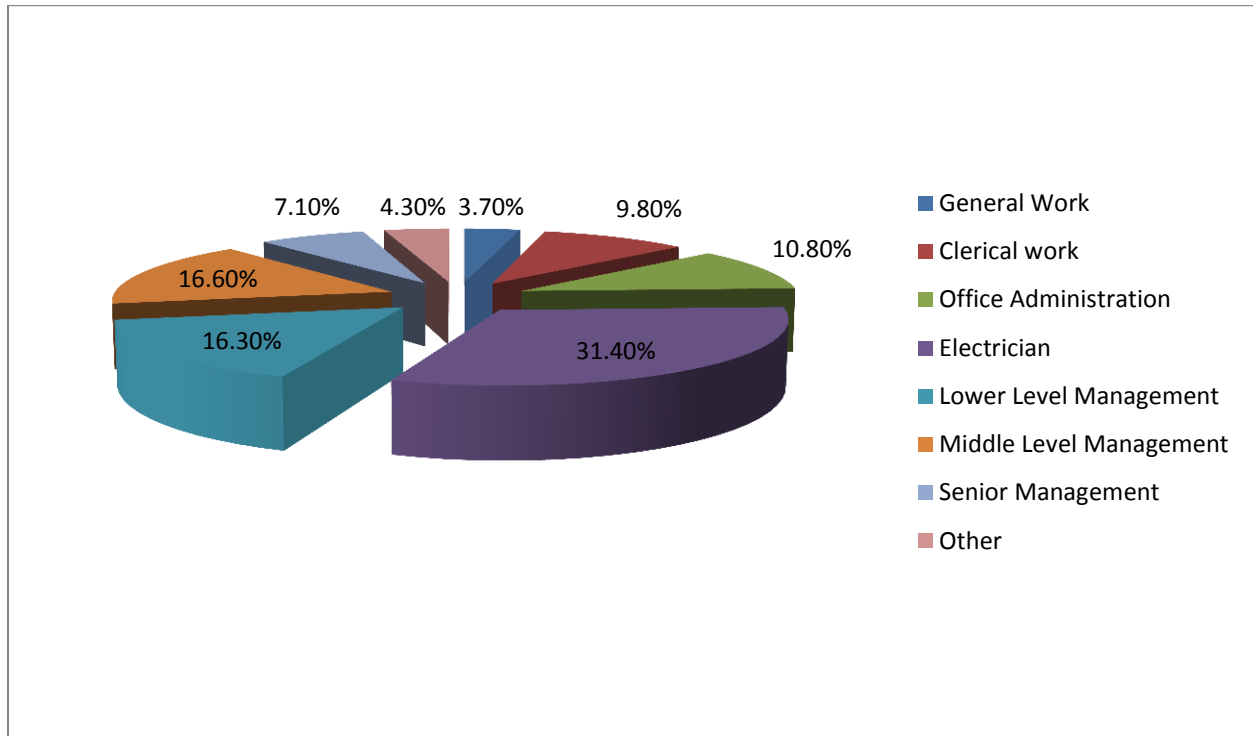
Information presented on the above bar-graph relates to the levels of educational qualifications by the respondents. The majority of the respondents have a diploma qualification (25.50%), followed by those with an undergraduate degree (20.50%), while 16% have an honours degree. The national electricity provider’s core service is to generate electricity and the core profession is the electrician that requires a minimum qualification of a diploma. Overall, the national electricity provider has an educated workforce with almost each and every employee holding an ordinary level school certificate. At least all the employees are literate. Education brings immeasurable benefits to both the worker and the employer. The finding that all the employees have

at least a secondary education level and that the majority have a diploma suggests that the national electricity provider employees are skilled and with time they will acquire or gain considerable experience ultimately improving on their performance and in the overall benefiting the organisation (Thomas & Feldman, 2009:90-95). In support of these views, Bolton and Subramanian (2010:1) emphasise that employee ability constitutes the quantifiable characteristics such as education and work experience of which education is the easiest measurable factor. Thomas and Feldman (2009:90-95) argue that countries that show significant improvements in educating their citizens registered a remarkable increase in economic growth; hence education is key to economic prosperity. Martins and Jin (2010:538) argue that there are even social returns that accrue to core workers when one gets educated, thus an educated employee, by demonstrating what he/she has learnt teaches core workers one or two tricks, can also lead by example and can be a role-model to other employees. In the overall, an educated employee is trainable further as he/she has acquired basic skills before. Taking into account that the national electricity provider has an averagely educated workforce, there is obviously room to staff-develop and train them so as to improve their performance.

### **2.9.5 Position in the organisation**

Figure 2.6 below provides respondents' information on the position held by respective employees in the organisation.

**FIGURE 2.6: POSITION IN THE ORGANISATION**



It is interesting to note that the greater number of the respondents reflects that electricians are employed as electricians at 31.40%, lower level managers at 16.30%, middle level management at 16.60 %, office administrators at 10.80%, clerical staff at 9.8%, general workers at 3.70%, senior management with a 7.1% while other positions such as drivers, painters and maintenance personnel form part of the 4.30%. Electricians are operatives, below the middle level managers. In general, the position an employee holds in the organisation impacts on the decisions they make, thus senior management is involved with strategic matters at the national electricity provider such as vision and mission statements and policy formulation since they are the most senior while the electricians provide labour as delegated to them by first-line managers. It is critical to note that the flow of work within the various positions at the national electricity provider follows the lines of communication as depicted by the organogram.

## **2.10 IMPLICATIONS OF ORGANISATIONAL POLITICS AT THE NATIONAL ELECTRICITY PROVIDER**

At organisational level the implications of organisational politics are very critical in nature (Buchanan & Badham, 2007). Political behaviours are found to have both functional and dysfunctional effects at organisational level. At the national electricity provider, organisational politics portrays a dysfunctional state of affairs as opposed to a functional scenario. It is common knowledge that electrical power generation in most of the Southern African countries is a crisis partly affecting South Africa while Zimbabwe is experiencing the worst ever black out/load shedding challenges. Zimbabwe is now close to two decades without sustainable electrical power generation which has negatively affected its economy. According to Kachembere (2012), industrial expansion, and the manufacturing sectors have drastically scaled down due to inadequate electrical power generation thereby negatively affecting the whole economy.

Several manufacturing firms and industries including the agricultural sectors have since scaled down making the life of the manager all the more challenging. The job creation strategies by the government and partnering industries have suffered a heavy blow due to continuous company closures with some companies such as Nestle Zimbabwe, almost all clothing manufacturing firms, and mining giants such as Mhangura mine and BHP Platinum and many others have since scaled down or closed operations with no hope of reopening due to a lack of electrical power. The majority of the youth are now out of employment, reducing them to mere beggars with the girl child resorting to prostitution which has become rife, ultimately fuelling the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Crime levels in the streets and city outskirts have become increasingly too high. The unemployed boy child has joined the so-called gangsterism fraternity, thereby menacing the once admired streets which are ever dark due to a lack of street lighting. Burglary and robbery have become the order of the night since the cities and locations are most of the time in the dark. Generally, the life of an ordinary Zimbabwean has been worsened by the power crisis reducing the overall life expectancy of an ordinary citizen to just 55 years. Poverty levels have reached alarming levels with the average citizen surviving by under \$4.00 per day. The World Bank Report (2012) reports that the water

reticulation systems for Zimbabwe was no longer functioning due to load shedding, exposing citizens to drinking water from unsafe sources thereby negatively affecting the health of the populace whose life expectancy has shot down to 55 years . The World Bank Report (2012) seconds the view with a damning report on the impact of load shedding in the developing world (of which Zimbabwe is part), as reducing the life expectancy due to lack of clean water caused by electricity inadequacy. The power generation crisis has also affected the functioning of the hospitals since medical personnel in hospitals do require electrical power to carry on with medical operations. According to Mawire (cited by Kachembere 2012), Chinhoyi provincial hospital is reeling under a myriad of operational challenges, chief among them, the current electricity blackouts which have put the lives of patients into danger. The shortage of electricity has forced ZESA to ration supplies to both commercial and domestic users with some areas going for more than 10 hours per day without electricity (Own Correspondent, 2012).

## **2.11 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The article identified four main role-players in the political system as the board of directors, employees, senior managers and the government. Central to all four players are goals, which ignite a rife political environment at the national electricity provider. The study therefore recommends the following measures within the political system:

- The creation of a fund to steer the commissioning of massive power projects from the available natural resources Zimbabwe has such solar energy, coal and hydro power from the Zambezi River;
- A positive engagement of all the role-players in the political system in which players seek to reach consensus in finding means to a permanent solution to the perennial load shedding for the country;
- Involvement of all the key stakeholders to the organisation in dealing with organisational politics matters and company level and from the ministry level;
- Senior managers such as the board of directors and CEOs must strive to amass resources for the organisation (Jones et al., 2009);

- Encouraging a win-win situation in dealing with political dilemmas; and
- Building an atmosphere of fairness and transparency through effective communication.

## **2.12 SUMMARY**

The article provided an overview of the nature and extent of organisational politics at the national electricity provider. It is that the government, managers, employees and the board of directors have a major role in the national electricity provider's political system. The national electricity provider's common goal is to generate electricity for the country; however, in most cases there is always goal incongruence amongst the role-players with individual employees aspiring to achieve their own goals which may be too distant from those of the organisation. Furthermore, the political system that prevails at the national electricity provider is influenced by rules, regulations and policies formulated by government as well as the manner in which management exercise their powers in directing the organisation employees' reaction on these variables. The article concludes that the political tempo presents positive and negative outcomes, though to a large extent negative politics is synonymous with organisational politics. In this view, role-players are encouraged to decisively manoeuvre in the political system with a view to cultivate a conducive working environment that will see a national electricity provider that generates adequate electrical power for the economy and the ordinary citizen tomorrow and beyond.

The following article presents the second article of the study focusing on the perceptions of organisational politics.

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## **CHAPTER 3**

### **ARTICLE 2:**

#### **PERCEPTIONS OF ORGANISATIONAL POLITICS AT A NATIONAL ELECTRICITY PROVIDER IN SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY (SADC)**

##### **ABSTRACT**

This article explores the theoretical perceptions of organisational politics, identifies common factors and proceeds to empirically measure perceptions of organisational politics at a national electricity provider in the SADC region. It is important to note that the degree of organisational politics varies from one organisation to another but the reality is that all organisations have some sort of internal political struggle that can rip it apart. Statistical analysis was done to identify common factors on perceptions of organisational politics. To achieve this, exploratory factor analysis was used. To scientifically subject the data to factor analysis the Bartlett test of sphericity and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy were performed to ensure that factor analysis was the appropriate statistical tool. The article revealed that managerial behaviour, poor communication of objectives, unexpected employee behaviour and unhealthy managerial practices were identified as problematic perceptions of organisational politics at the national electricity provider. The article recommends a continuous organisational renewal process in which the entire workforce engages in effective communication practices through deliberate training sessions across the board. Such openness in communication will clear out mistrust and doubt amongst employees and management leading to a healthy organisational life.

**Key words:** Zimbabwe, political behaviour, power politics, organisation, common goals,

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

The image of any organisation is purely a matter of perception of what goes around within an organisation and its surroundings and it heavily impacts or influences on the day-to-day activities within the organisation. Of particular concern is the perception of organisational politics at a national electricity provider in the SADC country which happens to be Zimbabwe. For a country such as Zimbabwe it has become too obvious and common that the perceived view of organisational politics in the majority of organisations be they private or public would be largely influenced by the economic, political and social challenges the country would be facing. This is because organisations are managed by people who are affected by the political, economic and social forces of the country in which they reside. Such is the perceived view of Zimbabwean companies. Drawing from the negative political developments that have bedevilled the country, one would expect the political tempo at the national electricity provider to be influenced by the developments in government since the national electricity provider is state-owned and controlled. Therefore the organisational politics at the national electricity provider will have an element of government involvement.

Robbins et al. (2009:358) define organisational politics as activities that are not required as one's formal role in the organisation but that influence, or attempt to influence, the distribution of advantages and disadvantages within the organisation. Robbins et al. (2009:358) analyse the definition as encompassing key elements of what most people mean when they talk about organisational politics. Thus, political behaviour is outside one's specified job requirements. In recent decades, organisational politics (OP) has become a growing field of interest in management studies. To date, the major scholarly effort has been dedicated to the exploration of the external organisational environment by customers, clients, and as far as governmental agencies such as the national electricity providers is concerned, by the general public as well. However, one of the important aspects of this phenomenon which has received little attention over the years is the extent at which the key internal clients in an organisational setting such as managers and employees perceive organisational politics.

In order to better understand organisational politics, it is necessary to clearly explain what an organisation is and how organisational politics creeps in the contemporary organisation's management circles and practices. According to Veluri (2009:2), an organisation is a group of individuals, who come together to realise their goals. Veluri sees an organisation as representing a social unit deliberately constructed and reconstructed to seek specific goals.

It is important to note that human beings are born in organisations, educated by organisations and to acknowledge that they do spend most of their lives working in organisations. Even the families, in which they spent most of their time in, are also an organisation. Hence an organisation is a group of individuals who agree to share their effort in the realisation of common goals. The goals of an organisation are therefore derived from individual goals. Individuals, in order to realise their goals, have to join an organisation of their choice. Aryee and Budhwar (2009:2) view an organisation as a social marketplace where individuals engage in transactions to obtain favourable dealings. An organisation is not merely a rational model of economic activities but is also a place where political activity and conflict takes place (Horton, 2010). The constraints of bounded rationality and imperfect information limit the ability of organisations to develop a complete set of rules and procedures to guide and govern employee and management actions and behaviour within an organisation setting.

Moorhead and Griffin (2004:393) define organisational politics as activities carried out by people to acquire, enhance, and use power and other resources to obtain their desired outcomes. Robbins et al. (2003:374) concur with the above sentiments when they say that whenever people get together in groups, power will be exerted. He emphasises that people want to carve out a niche from which to exert influence, to earn rewards, and to advance their careers, and when employees in the organisation convert their power into action, they are then described as being engaged in politics. Organisational politics, therefore, refers to those activities that are not required as one's formal role in the organisation, but that influence, or attempt to influence, the distribution of advantages and disadvantages within the organisation.

From the above assertions, it is clear that organisations are deliberately created and maintained by people who have different goals and ambitions. The inherent selfish nature of human beings makes them compete in order to realise their individual goals, thus overlooking or even undermining the goals of others. In order to overcome this, organisations develop common goals that reflect the individual interests of its members. Despite the development of such common goals, some members will always try to meet their selfish ends, thus, individuals often find themselves having to rely on informal and unsanctioned means in making decisions, marking the beginnings/foundations of organisational politics. It is therefore clear that both informal and unsanctioned means of decision-making within the organisation, presents perpetrators of organisational politics with the opportunity to engage in political behaviour.

The high level political tempo in organisations is manifested by the differences in the positions held by the employees. Differences in positions between managers and employees obviously compound the perceived view of organisational politics. Those placed in management positions always strive to take advantage of the power vested in them in making decisions in their favour, with employees on the receiving end. The concept of organisational politics is therefore closely related to power in an organisational setting, thus, political behaviour is the general means by which people attempt to obtain and use power. Put simply, the goal of such behaviour is to get one's own way about things.

The article defines organisational politics, examines perceptions, explores the individual and organisational factors of organisational politics and concludes by providing strategies on how best to handle organisational politics.

### 3.2 BACKGROUND TO THE ARTICLE

The majority of the national enterprises within the SADC have had a fair share of organisational politics related challenges since time immemorial and most predominantly over the past two decades (Tsimane, 2009). Examples of such organisations include the aviation authorities, municipalities, the national railway companies and the national electricity providers which happen to be the crux of this study (Yelland 2009, Engeneeringnews, 2009). The challenges range from power politics, the struggle for resources and staff promotion, backstabbing, image tarnishing, blaming others to whistleblowing just to mention a few. George and Jones (2011:615) define organisational politics as the activities that managers engage in in order to increase their power and to use power effectively to achieve their goals and overcome resistance or opposition. George and Jones (2011:615) further assert that managers often engage in organisational politics to resolve conflicts in their favour. Managers therefore develop political strategies to enhance their chances of success in the political game.

A closer look into the public sector organisations in the SADC regions reveals that tensions exist amongst employees and their employer. For example, the Zimbabwe national electricity provider which is the focus of the [article](#), the Electricity Supply Commission (ESKOM) of South Africa and the Civil Aviation Authorities of both Zimbabwe and South Africa have been rocked by organisational politics related challenges for the past decade (Sibanda, 2013). A typical example of the challenges is the resignation of the CEO of ESKOM of South Africa following an altercation with the chairman of the board (Yelland, 2009). According to Yelland (2009) ESKOM experienced a generation capacity crisis that led to the power black-outs of 2008 feeding into this period as well as serious skills shortages, and a funding crisis.

In Zimbabwe, the national electricity provider, which commonly known as The Zimbabwe electricity authority (ZESA), has been struggling to generate sufficient electrical power for the local economy for too long without any sign of improvement (Tsimane, 2009). According to Karombo (2012), Zimbabwe generates 1,300 megawatts

of electricity which is considered to be way below the daily national consumption of 2,200 megawatts. The country has plugged the gap with imports from regional suppliers but many of the suppliers have since cut back supplies due to non-payment. Mangoma (cited by Muleya, 2005) laments that ZESA has defaulted in paying its regional suppliers because it was owed more than US\$550 million by customers. The shortage of electricity has forced ZESA to ration supplies to both commercial and domestic users with some areas going for more than 10 hours per day without electricity. Load shedding has dented the once strong and vibrant economy of Southern Africa, which was traditionally known as the breadbasket of Southern Africa, with inadequate electrical power generation crises as one of the contributing factors (Staff Reporter, 2008). To further complicate matters, the Zimbabwean energy minister, Mangoma, announced on 23 March 2012 that, "to date, there is no hope that Zimbabwe's electrical power generation can improve in the near future" load shedding was bound to worsen beyond 2012. In addition, the citing of non-payment of huge amounts of electricity bills by senior members of the government, as well as the awarding of hefty allowances and salaries to senior employees of ZESA further impaired the already resource stricken national electricity provider (Tsimane, 2009). Organisational politics are rife and manifest even in the boardroom. Boardroom fights and gross incompetence are partly responsible for current power outages by the national electricity provider which has the capacity to generate sufficient electricity for the country and beyond (Muleya, 2005). Even the suspension of the then general manager of the biggest electrical power station, Gwariro, was reported as partly contributing to the reduction in the electricity generation capacity (Muleya, 2005).

The extent to which the national electricity provider's employees perceive organisational politics is very critical to the success of the organisation. The national electricity provider is characterised by infighting, favouritism, backstabbing and whistle blowing just to mention a few, thereby posing serious threats to the normal functioning of the organisation, thus the national electricity provider is a highly politicised organisation, hence requires managers with the ability to identify, measure and effectively deal with dysfunctional politics for a better future.

### **3.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Organisational politics at the national electricity provider is physically present in both scale and impact on the Zimbabwean economy with attention given to it by all sectors of the economy due to the critical role the organisation plays in powering industries and service organisations. For none of the interested parties would want to continue to suffer the scourge of the recurrent load shedding the country is currently experiencing. The perceived view of the national electricity provider obviously revolves around the power matrix between managers, government and employees intertwined with communication practices in the management of the organisation. Government provides a budget which in most cases is ever insufficient despite being a huge amount to capacitate the generation of the required power consumptions the Zimbabwean economy would require in any given year.

For example, during the 2012 budgetary bidding process the national electricity received a budget of US \$72 million and in preceding years it topped the list in terms of government spending yet it continued to be a mediocre generator of power of the SADC region (Kachembere, 2012). On top of such a massive budget, the electricity provider still boasts of a skilled staff complement despite the drain of engineers to neighbouring SADC countries making it a potential generator of adequate power for the economy. However, contrary to this belief, the national electricity provider has become a mediocre performer for the past two decades with load shedding becoming the order of the day in the entire country (Sibanda, 2013, Mtomba, 2013). This development has negatively affected the economy as a whole; in particular, the mining sector; agriculture; manufacturing; as well as the service organisations that include hospitals, information and technology; schools and the tourism sector are adversely affected by poor and unreliable power provision (Staff Reporters, 2012, Kaseke & Hosping, 2011).

As if this is not enough, the national electricity provider continues to deny workers' rights. For example, workers are often questioned for engaging in collective job action, and are not allowed to give their opinion regarding the manner in which the organisation is being run or should be run (Muleya, 2005). There are generally mixed feelings and

views on what employees feel and think about organisational politics, its prevalence and how it is perceived. Poor performance in state enterprises such as the national electricity provider could be a result of various reasons such as corruption, undercapitalisation, and sanctions imposed on respective countries and lack of leadership as examples. In such massive organisations, organisational politics is a necessary evil that is beneficial to the organisation if it is identified and measured. Butcher and Clarke (cited by Gotsis & Kortezi, 2011:454) argue that organisational politics motivates the workforce in redefining the patterns of activity for organisational benefit. In support of this view, Clarke (2003:454) posits that organisational politics influences employee motivation that result in overall improvement of organisational productivity. The presence of organisational politics, if identified and measured at strategic points, can be a source of life to an organisation that was already considered a mediocre performer, such as the national electricity provider. In line with this school of thought, managers at the national electricity provider can take advantage of the existing politicised work environment to ignite a productive atmosphere. The article, therefore seeks to identify and measure employee perceptions of organisational politics at the national electricity provider with an ultimate aim of harnessing dysfunctional politics towards a productive organisation.

### **3.4 OBJECTIVES**

The primary objective of the article is to identify and empirically measure perceptions of organisational politics.

The secondary objectives are to:

- provide a theoretical review of organisational politics;
- identify common factors of organisational politics;
- determine the reliability of the data sets in assessing the perceptions; and to
- make recommendations on how to deal with perceptions of politics.

### **3.5 THEORETICAL REVIEW OF ORGANISATIONAL POLITICS**

Morehead and Griffin (2004:394) describes organisational politics as all the visible and the not so visible forces in the organisation that support, undermine, advance, promote, individuals or groups of individuals for the purpose of gain or self-gain. It is present in all organisations and manifests itself differently in different organisational settings. Organisational politics is therefore ubiquitous and have widespread effects on critical processes (e.g., performance evaluation; resource allocation; and managerial decision-making) that influence organisational effectiveness and efficiency (Kacmar and Baron, 2009). Employees may engage in some legitimate, organisationally sanctioned political activities that are beneficial to work groups and organisations (Fedor et al., 2008). For example, managers who are “good politicians” may develop large bases of social capital and strong networks that allow them to increase the resources that are available to their subordinates (Treadway et al., 2009).

Morehead and Griffin (2004:394) asserts that organisational politics often is easier to recognize than to describe. The general term politics simply describes a competition for power, but organisational politics involves those who seek power at the expense of others, with an "I win, you lose" attitude. Organisational politics represents behaviours that maximize self-interest and conflict with the collective goals and interests of others.

These divisive behaviours take many forms. At its worst, organisational politics manifest as outright manipulation and sabotage for the sake of one's own upward mobility, power, or success. These tactics function as a means to win the regard of superiors or key decision-makers, both in and outside of the agency. Instead of honest, professionally built relationships, organisation politicians build relationships through deceit and chicanery (Kacmar and Baron, 2008).

More often though, workplace politics take the more subtle forms of malicious gossip; rumours; or criticism through which the office politician controls the flow of information. For example, office politicians may spread nuggets of bad information that discredit and ruin the reputation of a co-worker, or they might exploit the weaknesses of others to

make them appear less competent. With these tactics, office politicians aim to undermine co-workers whom they perceive as threats to success (Kacmar & Baron, 2008).

According to Morehead and Griffin (2004:401), organisational politics represents all the activities people perform to acquire, enhance, and use power and other resources to obtain their preferred outcomes in a situation where uncertainty or disagreement exists. Research by Schermerhor (2010) indicates that most managers do not advocate use of political behaviour but acknowledge that it is a necessity of organisational life. Because managers cannot eliminate political activity in the organisation, they must learn to cope with it. Schermerhor et al. (2010:227) define organisational politics from different traditions. One tradition builds on Machiavellian philosophy and defines organisational politics in terms of the management of influence to obtain ends not sanctioned by the organisation or to obtain sanctioned ends through non-sanctioned means. It is also considered as an art of creative compromise. Schermerhor et al. (2010:227) assert that managers are often considered political when they seek their own goals, or when they use means that are not currently authorized by the organisation or that push legal limits.

Robbins et al. (2009:374) view the use of power as a central component of organisational politics. He stresses that people want to carve out a niche from which to exert influence; to earn rewards; and to advance their careers and when employees in the organisation convert their power into action, they are then described as being engaged in politics. Organisational politics therefore refers to those activities that are not required as one's formal role in the organisation, but that influence, or attempt to influence, the distribution of advantages and disadvantages within the organisation Robbins et al. (2009:373) Zanzi and O'Neil's (2009) review of the literature shows that definitions of organisational politics fall into two broad categories. The first view sees organisational politics as negative and involves self-serving and unsanctioned behaviour. Such behaviours are said to be divisive; illegitimate; and dysfunctional and can produce conflict (Gilmore et al., 2010). The second view sees politics in a more neutral light and accepts that it can sometimes be functional (Kumar & Ghadially, 1989).

Pfeffer (2008) for instance, defines politics as a social function that can contribute to the basic functioning of organisations. Both definitions agree, however, that organisational politics involves unsanctioned and informal forms of behaviours. George and Konstantinos (2011:1257) identify managerial perceptions as a key factor of organisational politics. According to George and Konstantinos (2011:1258), the debate on managerial perceptions as a contributor to the success of the organisation is still a robust one. Jennifer et al. (2012:412) argue that social support to the employee by a manager is of critical importance as it provides emotional or instrumental resources. Unsupportive managerial behaviour is detrimental to the normal motivational spirit of the employee (1996:174). It is therefore clear that unsupportive management destroys the potential for employees to trust their managers. In contemporary organisations such as the national electricity provider, employees are increasingly losing trust in management and in most cases they end up engaging in unexpected behaviour such as gossiping, undermining fellow employees as well as the organisation. According to Juddy et al. (2007:459), trust is a form of employee behaviour that is variously associated with increased efficiency and effectiveness (Cuthbert and McDonough, 1986), a positive psychological contract (Sparrow, 1998), lower employee turnover (Mishranisatona & Morrissey, 1990), organisational flexibility (Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004), organisational performance (Gould & Williams, 2003), individual performance (Meyer & Gavins, 2005) and successful change (Morgan & Zeffane, 2003).

Ince and Gul (2011:106) argue that communication is at the centre of the organisation's political life, thus communication encompasses all aspects ranging from the objectives of the organisation to the simple daily tasks that are performed by each and every employee. Bovee and Thill (2000), as cited by Mehmet et al. (2011:107), argue that organisational communication "is the exchange of knowledge and opinions in the organisation", while Argenti (2003) sees it as creating a positive atmosphere for all employees of the organisation. For without effective communication, every move taken by the organisation crumbles down. It is thus important to note that organisations are social units that congregate for production, formed by individuals who have different views and knowledge to reach a common goal. According to Donusumknagi (cited by

Ince & Gul, 2011:108) organisational and administrative activities for adapting in and out of organisations and information exchange require an effective and functional communication system. Effective communication helps organisations to strengthen employees to reach organisational goals (Hinbi et al. cited by Ince & Gul 2011:107). Communication at organisational degree helps to transfer organisational objectives and goals to employees and intra organisations groups as well as sharing organisational values and beliefs among employees (Demirel, 2009).

In summary, organisational politics refers to actions by individual members such as managers and employees which are directed towards the goal of furthering their own interest without regard to the wellbeing of others and the organisation.

Perceptions of organisational politics refer to actions by organisational members that are perceived to be self-interested and directed toward furthering own goals (Kacmar & Baron, 2009). Some examples of these actions include withholding information from co-workers; failing to enforce policies and procedures appropriately; using flattery to get favours; shifting blame; and maligning others to make one look better. Although organisational politics are not sanctioned behaviours, Ferris et al. (2008) claimed that they are present in varying degrees in all organisations. Because it is difficult for an individual to determine accurately if another's behaviours are self-serving. Organisational politics researchers have focused almost exclusively on perceptions of such behaviours. Ferris et al. (2009) also pointed out that people's behaviours and attitudes in such settings are largely a result of their perceptions. Thus, when perceptions are high in an organisation, organisational members feel a great deal of uncertainty and ambiguity because they do not know what actions will be rewarded, punished, or even recognized. Not surprisingly, previous researchers such as Ferris (2005) found that these perceptions are consistent predictors of negative outcomes (e.g., Byrne, 2005; Ferris et al., 2002; Harris & Kacmar, 2005; Kacmar, et al., 2009; Rosen et al., 2006; and Vigoda, 2000, 2008).

Traditionally, managers are known for making political decisions that may derail or move the organisation forward. It is therefore critical to explore some of the

management perceptions on organisational politics. Cavanaugh et al. (cited by Morehead & Griffin, 2004:394) provide interesting results of a survey on managers' perception of political behaviour. The results of the survey revealed that political behaviour:

- influenced salary decisions in their organisations;
- has an effect on hiring decisions;
- is more prevalent at higher levels of the organisation than at lower levels;
- is unfair, unhealthy, and irrational; and
- is an undesirable but unavoidable facet of organisational life.

The results of the survey also show that political behaviour in organisations like power is pervasive. Instead of ignoring or trying to eliminate political behaviour, managers might more fruitfully consider, when and how politics can be used constructively. As eluded by Morehead and Griffin (2004:396), managers blame ambiguity of goals; scarce resources; changing technology and environment, the impact of non-programmed decisions and organisational change as causative factors for political behaviour. However, managers perceive that political behaviour can successfully be addressed by way of controlling information and lines of communication, using outsiders experts; controlling the agenda; game playing, image building; building coalitions and controlling decision parameters.

Organisational politics refers to actions by organisational members that are perceived to be self-interested and directed toward furthering members' own goals without regard for the wellbeing of others or the organisation (Kacmar & Baron, 2008). Some examples of these actions include withholding information from co-workers; failing to enforce policies and procedures appropriately; using flattery to get favours; shifting blame; and maligning others to make one look better. Although organisational politics are not sanctioned behaviours, Ferris et al. (2002) claimed that they are present in varying degrees in all organisations. Because it is difficult for an individual to determine accurately if another's behaviours are self-serving, organisational politics researchers have focused almost exclusively on perceptions of such behaviours. Ferris et al. (2002)

pointed out that people's behaviours and attitudes in such settings are largely a result of their perceptions. Thus, when perceptions of organisational politics are high in an organisation, organisational members feel a great deal of uncertainty and ambiguity because they do not know what actions will be rewarded, punished, or even recognized.

### **3.6 FACTORS INFLUENCING ORGANISATIONAL POLITICS PERCEPTIONS (OPP)**

According to Ferris et al. (2002:179-254), organisational Politics Perception (OPP) is underpinned by three categories of "antecedent" influences, namely:

- Job/work influences;
- Organisational influences; and
- Personal influences.

#### **3.6.1 Job/Work influences**

Draf (cited by Muhammad, 2007:237) identifies scarcity of resources and job ambiguity as determinants of organisational politics. According to Muhammad (2007:236), when organisational resources that employees value (for example, monetary incentives, promotions or advancement promotions), are limited, they would need to compete for such resources. Muhammad (2007:237) suggests that one way to influence the outcome of organisational resource allocations is to rely on political tactics in a self-serving fashion.

#### **3.6.2 Organisational influences**

Ferris et al. (2002:179) identified centralisation, formalisation and hierarchical levels as variables for organisational influences. Centralisation refers to the degree to which power is differently distributed within an organisation (Schmike et al., 2000). On the other hand formalisation refers to the rules, regulations and written policies. Highly formalized organisations are characterized by written policies; procedures; rules and so on. Thus, highly formalised organisations attempt to provide clear expectations about how people should behave in certain situations. If perceptions of organisational politics are associated with uncertainty and ambiguity, then we should expect that the more

formalized an organisation, the less likely that organisational members will report perceptions that the organisation is politicised. This relationship is indeed what the research findings suggest.

### **3.6.3 Personal influences**

Personal influences can be referred to as individual influences because they vary from one individual to another. These factors include core self-evaluation, Machiavellianism, narcissism, employee training and several more influences depending on situations prevailing in the respective organisation.

According to Robbins (2012:114), personality refers to the dynamic concept describing the growth and development of an individual's whole psychological system. In a nutshell, personality can be viewed as the sum total of ways in which an individual reacts to and interacts with others in an organisation.

Core self-evaluation refers to the perspective in which individuals see themselves as capable or incapable in controlling the environment in which they work (Robbins, 2012:114). In line with this thought, individuals with a negative core self-evaluation tend to dislike themselves as powerless in the organisation, hence becoming less political. Locus of control is considered very central in influencing organisational politics as it explains the degree to which individuals believe that they are masters of their own fate or destiny.

The personality characteristic of Machiavellianism is named after Niccollo Machiavelli who researched widely on how power can be gained and used. The Machiavellianism study, despite being conducted many years ago, is still relevant to contemporary organisational practices as cited in Robins and Judge (2012:165) when they describe the extent to which power can be amassed and used in a contemporary organisation as a political weapon to control others. Robins and Judge (2012:166) define Machiavellism as the degree to which an individual is pragmatic, maintains emotional distance and believes that ends can justify means. The Machiavellianism study focused on high and

low personalities to behavioural outcomes which are still relevant to contemporary practices.

Narcissism describes a person who has a sense of self importance, who requires much admiration, sense of entitlement and very arrogant (Brown & Hall, 2004:588). Individuals, who are considered narcissists, consider themselves as better leaders than their colleagues. In current management practices, and in particular at the national electricity provider, cases where individual managers consider themselves as the best are innumerable. Some employees view themselves as indispensable and that if they are dismissed from work, the organisation will not function properly. For example, the general manager of the biggest power station, Gwariro, viewed his position as the most influential, to the extent that he believed that the current power outages were partly caused by his suspension from the organisation (Staff Reporters, 2012).

The individual training offered to employees play a major role in enhancing the political life of the respective employees in the organisation. The national electricity provider provides some training to some of its employees. According to Halepota and Shah (2011:283) training is an important positive predictor of individual positive attitudes. By providing training to employees, the organisation has a chance to reshape the organisational culture, which in a way has an impact on the prevailing political environment.

In a nutshell, it is clear from the discussions above that politics in an organisation is influenced by both individual and organisational factors. While organisational factors relate to the organisation as a function of the organisation's characteristics, individual factors relate to all the facets that reside in the individual employee such as Machiavellian and narcissism. By and large both are considered by Robins and Judge (2012:130) as major influencers of organisational politics and managers are warned to identify and measure such tendencies in order to successfully deal with them.

## **3.7 RESULTS**

### **3.7.1 Research methodology**

The article investigates the perceptions of organisational politics. The empirical results of the article are presented thematically in accordance with the questionnaire (See Appendix). Exploratory factor analysis was used as a tool to measure employee perceptions of organisational politics. The primary objective was to identify underlying constructs in the data set. In pursuit of this objective, “exploratory factor analysis” was used as a statistical tool. However, before factor analysis could be employed successfully, the data were subjected to the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO), measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett’s test of sphericity to ensure that the sample of the article was adequate, and that the data is suitable for factor analysis (Field, 2007:619). KMO values of at least 0.6 should be present for factor analysis to be considered, although values between 0.5 and 0.7 are too low (Du Plessis, 2009:26). According to Fields (2007:640), values between 0.7 and 0.8 are regarded as good while values between 0.8 and 0.9 are excellent. Values between 0.9 and 1 are superb.

Bartlett’s test of sphericity is used to test the null hypothesis that the variables in the population correlation matrix are uncorrelated. (Coakes & Steed, cited by Bisschoff et al., 2012). The acceptable significance level is equal or below .005 (Fields, 2007:641). If the value is below 0.005, the data is suitable to proceed with factor analysis (Du Plessis, 2009:58).

The Cronbach alpha was also calculated to determine the reliability and the internal consistency of the data (Wuensch, 2009:58). For this article the minimum Alpha coefficient is set at 0.70.

### **3.7.2 KMO and Bartlett’s Test**

The adequacy of the sample and the suitability of employing factor analysis were determined by the KMO measure of sampling adequacy and the Bartlett test of

sphericity. The KMO measure of sampling adequacy was performed to ensure that the sample employed was adequate. Table 3.1 presents the results:

**TABLE 3.1: THE KMO AND BARTLETT'S TEST**

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy		.906
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	6513.680
	df	253
	Sig	0.000

The KMO value for this article is 0.906. This signifies that, statistically, the sample is adequate. The high KMO value in excess of 0.90 signifies an excellent sample. Regarding the Bartlett's test of sphericity, the value is below 0.005. This means that the strength of the relationship among variables is not strong. Resultantly, this measure shows that factor analysis is a suitable statistical technique to analyse the data.

### 3.7.3 Exploratory factor analysis

The exploratory factor analysis identified three factors by means of Varimax rotation. According to Field (2005:749), Varimax is a method of orthogonal rotation that attempts to maximise the dispersion of factor loadings by loading a smaller number of variables highly onto each factor resulting in a more interpretable cluster of factors. Factor loadings equal and above 0.40 are considered to be significant and used in the analysis (Statistica, 2006). Table 3.2 below shows that all 23 statements loaded onto four factors. The factor loadings are shown in the table below. The four factors explain a very favourable cumulative variance of 74.28%.

**TABLE 3.2: FACTOR LOADINGS: PERCEPTIONS OF ORGANISATIONAL POLITICS**

STATEMENTS	NO	FACTORS			
		1	2	3	4
It is common to push the blame on others	10	.891			
Infighting is prevalent among employees	13	.875			
Criticisms among peers is common	11	.859			
Hiding of important information is common	9	.794			
Favouritism is common	8	.765			
Peers support each other	12	.643			
The central government controls the department	7	.638			
Managers make decisions that derail the organisation	6	.565			
The department is regulated by rules	24		.903		
The department is regulated by policies	25		.888		
The department does have clear objectives	22		.882		
Employees are not sure on how to achieve targets	21		.838		
Employees feel that they can accomplish personal goals	18		.755		
Employees are not sure whether their employment contracts can be renewed	19		.722		
Decisions are made through consultations	16		.646		
Backstabbing is common in this department	2			.864	
Gossiping is a common phenomenon in this department	3			.849	
Employees' views are upheld	1			.823	
The department relies on informal communication for advertising new jobs	4			.748	
The department relies on informal communication when inviting employees to staff meetings	5			.560	
Promotions are based on favouritism	17				.708
Managers' decisions are upheld	23				.599
Employees are not sure of what their targets are	20				.539
<b>% of variance explained</b>		<b>42.42%</b>	<b>16.59%</b>	<b>9.01%</b>	<b>6.24%</b>
<b>Cumulative %</b>		<b>42.42%</b>	<b>59.01%</b>	<b>68.04%</b>	<b>74.28%</b>

## **Factor 1: Managerial behaviour**

A total of eight statements, namely 10, 13, 11, 9, 8, 12, 7 and 6 loaded on factor 1. All the statements under factor 1 relate to the manner in which managers deal with organisational politics within the national electricity provider. The factor is thus labelled as managerial behaviour. Statement 10, 13 and 11 are above 0.80 which suggests that respondents are dissatisfied with the manner in which managers perceive organisational politics. The factor explains a variance of 42.42%. Managers are expected to behave in a manner that successfully reduces dysfunctional politics. Contrary to this, the finding suggests that managers at the national electricity are part of the problem as they contribute to a dysfunctional work environment. For example, they engage in negative criticism, blame their peers, favour other employees and make disastrous decisions. Managerial behaviour plays a major role in an organisation which is predominantly politicised. According to George and Konstantinos (2011:1257), managers negatively contribute to negative politics by withholding support for employees in a politicised environment. Thus George and Konstantinos (2011:1257), argue that the support given by a manager to an employee is a determinant factor to organisational success. It is clear from the article that respondents (employees) are not happy with managerial behaviour when dealing with political challenges that they encounter. Jennifer et al. (2012:210) argue that managerial support to the employee is of critical importance as it provides emotional or instrumental resources. To the national electricity provider, such behaviour on the part of a manager would be unproductive as it affects the morale of the employees. Cohen et al., (2000), are of a similar view when they assert that, unsupportive managerial behaviour is detrimental to the employee's motivation Hence, managerial behaviour has a negative effect of reducing productivity at the national electricity provider.

## **Factor 2: Poor communication of objectives**

Statements 24, 25, 22, 21, 18, 19 and 16 are all loaded on factor 2 and are related to poor communication of objectives within the national electricity provider. The factor is thus labelled as poor communication of objectives. Seven factor loadings out of eight are above 0.75 which shows a good fit to the factor. It, however, gives support that

communication of objectives at the national electricity provider is problematic. For a massive organisation such as the national electricity provider, effective communication is a basic requirement. Without effective communication, the organisation is destined to collapse. The rules, regulations and policies serve as the communication tool for the national electricity provider. Unfortunately, respondents are not happy with the overall communication of objectives. The factor explains a variance of 16.59%. Literature reviewed underscores the importance of communication of organisational objectives as a pillar of strength underpinning the success of the organisation. Ince and Gul (2011:107) posit that organisations that fail to effectively communicate objectives to its internal stakeholders such as the employees, is unlikely to meet its targets. The national electricity provider has fallen prey to this as respondents have decried that objectives are not effectively communicated.

### **Factor 3: Unexpected employee behaviour**

Five statements namely: 2, 3, 1, 4, and 5 all loaded on factor three with statements 2, 3 and 1 reflecting factor loadings above 0.80. Statement 4 had a factor loading of 0.748 while statement 5 had one of 0.539. All the statements loading onto this factor deal with unexpected employee behaviour, suggesting that employee behaviour at the national electricity provider is problematic. This suggests that employees at the national electricity provider engage in dysfunctional politics. The factor explains a variance of 9.01%. Judy et al. (2007:459), identifies a lack of trust by employees towards their managers as a recipe for unexpected employee behaviour leading to gossiping and backstabbing as examples, thereby negatively affecting performance effectiveness and the general healthy flow of work processes.

### **Factor 4: Unhealthy managerial practices**

Only three statements namely 17, 23, and 20 loaded on factor 4. All the statements relate to unhealthy managerial practices at the national electricity provider. The factor loadings confirm that an unhealthy managerial practice presents problems for the organisation, in particular engaging in favouritism, poor decision-making as well as setting unrealistic targets for the employees. The factor explains a variance of 6.24%.

Managers are at the fulcrum of the organisation; as such their practices must unite employees, support the organisational goals as opposed to engaging in favouritism and making decisions that derail the organisation. Managers must be good politicians, they should shun favouritism, gossiping and backstabbing just to name a few. Butcher and Clarke (1999:11) posit that managers who are good politicians must be able to read hidden agendas, work on the informal and formal decision-making processes and be able to decipher the sub-text of what is said and not said. Politics is so central to managerial work; therefore skills to improve managerial practices should also be central to the development of managers (Clarke, 1999:11). Managers at the national electricity provider do engage in managerial practices that are counterproductive (unhealthy) as reflected by the findings.

### 3.7.4 Reliability

The reliability of the four factors is shown in Table 3.3 below. It is clear from the table that all the factors have returned reliability coefficients which is well above the required 0.7. These high alpha coefficients indicate that the four factors possess excellent reliability and internal consistency.

**TABLE 3.3: RELIABILITY STATISTICS**

<b>Data Sets</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>
Factor 1	0.927
Factor 2	0.934
Factor 3	0.889
Factor 4	0.859

## 3.8 DISCUSSION

The aim of the article was to identify and empirically measure perceptions of organisational politics. The findings revealed that managerial behaviour; poor communication of objectives; unexpected employee behaviour; and unhealthy managerial practices are common factors of organisational politics at the national

electricity provider. In a nutshell, managers and employees are the main players in the political game.

The finding suggests that managers at the national electricity provider are part of the problem as they contribute to a dysfunctional work environment. For example, they engage in negative criticism, blame their peers, favour other employees and make disastrous decisions. George and Konstantinos (2011:1257) report that managers negatively contribute to negative politics by withholding support for employees in a politicised environment. They argue that the support given by a manager to an employee is a determinant factor to organisational success. It is clear from the article that respondents (employees) are not happy with the manner in which managers perceive or deal with political challenges that they encounter. Jennifer et al. (2012:210) argue that managerial support to the employee is of critical importance as it provides emotional or instrumental resources. To the national electricity provider, such behaviour on the part of a manager would be unproductive as it affects the morale of the employees. Cohen et al. (2000) are of a similar view when they assert that, unsupportive managerial behaviour is detrimental to the employee's motivation. Hence, managerial behaviour has a negative effect of reducing productivity at the national electricity provider.

The article also found that the national electricity provider's communication is problematic; it lacks the effective interactive communication of organisational objectives across the board. Organisations therefore require effective communication of objectives in order to enable the workforce to be part and parcel of what is prevailing in the organisation. Ince and Gul (2011:106) assert that communication of organisational objectives facilitates internalisation of goals and policy from all employees; give the idea that employees are considered to be important in the communication process; increased job satisfaction; maintain operation of the organisation and attain the objective of the organisation. The efficiency of an organisation is dependent on effective communication of objectives as much as management (Demirtus, 2010). The **article** thus has identified a lack of communication of the objectives at the national electricity provider as cause for concern. If the national electricity provider effectively

communicates the objectives of the organisation across all departments, there is bound to be support of the organisational objectives by the majority of the workforce.

Unwanted employee behaviour has been identified by the article as being problematic. To this effect, trust amongst employees and management has been identified as the dependent variable that gives rise to wanted or unwanted employee behaviour. If there is trust between employees and management, the organisation is bound to be productive, efficient, and flexible as well as posting low levels of employee turnover (Juddy et al., 2007:459). The national electricity provider is characterised by high levels of mistrust amongst employees and management; for example, the prevalence of gossiping and backstabbing as forms of unexpected employee behaviour. Unhealthy managerial practices have been identified as problematic for employees at the national electricity provider with managers being blamed for their negative perceived view leading unfair labour practices; unfairness on allocation of resources and staff promotions are prevalent at the national electricity provider. The point is a managerial hand is vital in changing the landscape of the national electricity provider. The decisions they make on allocation of resources, promotions and when dealing with labour issues to a large extent, impact on the overall performance of an organisation. For example, the suspension of the general manager was predicted as influencing the current power crisis the national electricity provider is facing (Muleya, 2005). Managerial perception regarding the political forces from the side (.0638) through various influences such as policies, rules and regulation suggest that employees regarded managers as failing or unable to cope with government involvement.

### **3.9 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Organisational politics has the potential to have a widespread impact on the effectiveness and efficiency of organisations through various organisational processes such as performance appraisal, resource allocation and improving managerial decision-making (Aino & Sini, 2010:229). The article revealed four (4) factors as negatively affecting organisational life at the national electricity provider. The factors are

managerial behaviour; poor communication of objectives; unexpected employee behaviour and unhealthy managerial practices. The **article**, therefore recommends that:

- Managers should attend regular in-house and outside training on contemporary managerial behaviours. Managers must be abreast of current/situational behaviours in respective industry and in particular, all employees holding positions at managerial level must attend some regular appraisal sessions on expected managerial behaviours in public enterprises. Most managers lack managerial experience, therefore offering some managerial development courses would improve their knowledge and managerial behaviour.
- Organisational objectives must be communicated to all employees. The article therefore recommends that a clear communication strategy of the objectives should be put in place. For example, objectives of the organisation must be part of the mission statement and must be explained and taught to all employees, then openly displayed on company notice boards so that everyone becomes aware of what the organisations attempts to achieve.
- A code of ethics and code of conduct must be compiled, communicated and signed by all employees. The code should be compiled by experts in consultation with the employees. It is in this code of ethics and conduct that “unwanted employee behaviours” would be clearly spelt out and the proposed action specified for those who fail to abide by the code. The code would also address issues related to unhealthy managerial practices and the action taken against managers who engage in such unhealthy managerial practice.
- In the overall, the national electricity provider must regularly have workshops on effective communication; appraisals on company policy; objectives; the do’s and dont’s of organisational life.

### **3.10 SUMMARY**

Organisational politics is an inevitable development in any organisation and is perceived differently by managers and employees. It is evident from the primary research and literature review that the perceived view of organisational politics at the national electricity provider is skewed towards negative perceptions of politics. Managerial

behaviour, employee behaviour, communication of organisation objectives and unhealthy managerial practices present potential challenges for the power utility. The following article explores the effects of organisational politics at the national electricity provider.

The next chapter presents article three of the study. It focuses on the effects of organisational politics.

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## **CHAPTER 4**

### **ARTICLE 3:**

#### **INVESTIGATING THE EFFECTS OF ORGANISATIONAL POLITICS AT A NATIONAL ELECTRICITY PROVIDER IN SADC REGION**

##### **ABSTRACT**

This article investigates the effects of organisational politics. The article takes a slightly different angle of organisational politics, one that includes traditional conceptualisations of politics as typically having a negative connotation to the organisation and the other view of politics as a positive event within the contemporary organisation. Statistical analysis was done to identify common factors on the effects of organisational politics. To achieve this, exploratory factor analysis was used. To scientifically subject the data to factor analysis the Bartlett test of sphericity and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy were performed to ensure that factor analysis was the appropriate statistical tool. The article identified positive departmental actions, negative employee actions and personal consequences common factors of organisational politics. The article recommends that managers and employees must be proactive in dealing with organisational politics. This proactiveness must be encoered in democratic decision-making in which all parties demonstrate the “will” to work with and through organisational politics notwithstanding consolidation of the positive side of politics.

**Key words:** Negative politics, Positive politics, Labour turnover, Load shedding, Boardroom fights.

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

If there is any organisation that caused misery and suffering to the Zimbabwean populace during the past two decades to the present day, it would be none other than the national electricity provider (Muleya, 2005 & Tsimane, 2013). This is simply because the national electricity provider provides the most basic need of human life, “*electricity as a source of energy*” required for domestic purposes as well as turning the engines of industry and lighting service organisation across the spectrum of the economy for the benefit of human life, a function which it has decimally failed. Such is the expected role of the national electricity provider, an organisation which the Zimbabwean government owns, controls and directs through ministerial policies to ensure and safeguard that human kind gets the basics it deserve. It is therefore critical to establish how such a reality can be achieved by a company that is under the control of a government that is suffering from political instability with specific challenges such as fiduciary bankruptcy, corruption and maladministration across public institutions all summed up as “failed state’ (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2003; Bhebhe, 2013).

The challenges faced by managers of today in particular, managers for public organisations such as the national electricity provider in implementing complex decisions, demand that they be sophisticated with respect to dealing with the effects of organisational politics more so in a failed state such as Zimbabwe (Fashoyin, 2010:110-127). Furthermore, the changes that shape the nature of work in contemporary organisations require managers who can develop the political will, expertise and personal skills to deal with organisational politics, a tall order in a country that lacks effective governance structures such as Zimbabwe (Zondi & Mulaudzi, 2010:35-45). Without a sound political awareness and skill, organisations, which include the national electricity provider, will face the inevitable prospect of being immersed in bureaucratic infighting, parochial politics and destructive power struggles that affect organisational life; initiative; innovation; productivity; morale and performance; by unleashing a stressful environment that ultimately retards organisational performance. Yet managers are also expected to consolidate the positive outcome of organisational politics by providing a firm foundation that promotes positive political behaviours.

This article investigates the effects of organisational politics at a national electricity provider in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region. It begins by providing a background of the article, followed by a theoretical review of the effects of organisational politics and then performs an empirical article.

## **4.2 BACKGROUND TO THE ARTICLE**

The national electricity provider is a state-owned company whose task is to generate, transmit, and distribute electricity in the entire country. According to Tsimane (2009), the national electricity provider used to get its electricity supply from neighbouring countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Zambia and Mozambique to counter its supply shortage. Unfortunately the supply was cut off due to unpaid electricity debt amounting to close to \$75 million (Muleya, 2005; Mtomba, 2013). Load shedding is expected to worsen in 2012 and beyond due to non-payment of huge amounts of electricity bills by senior members of the government as well as the awarding of hefty allowances and salaries to senior employees and persistent boardroom squabbles (Staff Reporters, 2012). Muleya (2005) predicted years ago that boardroom squabbles and gross incompetence will contribute to electrical power crises in the future. Boardroom fights resemble a form of organisational politics and if the outcome does not promote organisational performance, it is considered negative politics and vice versa. Negative organisational politics represents an attempt by organisation members to influence others using discretionary behaviours to promote personal objectives (McShane & Glinow, 2000:383). At the national electricity provider, the suspension of the then general manager of the biggest power station in the country was reported as partly contributing to the reduction of the electricity generation capacity (Muleya, 2005). According to Muleya, staff morale has “hit rock bottom levels” due to poor management practices which have resulted in the deterioration of the performance of the power station. According to Mintzberg (cited in Drory & Vigoda, 2010:195), organisational politics reflect illegitimate force relations between the organisation’s members that lead to low morale, ultimately reducing job satisfaction and productivity. Several studies (Eisenhardt & Bourgeois, 1988; Kumar and Ghandially, 1989; Vigoda,

2003 as cited by Drory & Vigoda 2010:195) examined the negative effects of organisational politics on employee performance and concluded that power and influence were at the fulcrum of organisational politics. Kanter (1979:66) argues that the term “power” and politics together create a whole, whose general context is far from positive: its connotations tend to be more negative than positive with meanings such as cunning, manipulation, subversion, mutual degradation or the achievement of goals in improper ways (Drory & Beaty, 2010:199; Morehead & Griffin, 2004). The showdown between the stand-in managers and the suspended general manager had huge implications for the national electricity provider (Muleya, 2005) which led to the exodus of skilled manpower at all ranks, thereby unleashing a demotivating environment and a reduced electricity generation capacity of below 40%.

### **4.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

The political engagements followed by the subsequent management processes in any organisation have a potential to rip or make the organisation. The national electricity provider of Zimbabwe, being a state organisation as it is, cannot escape from the scourge of the political developments the country has endured over the past two decades with no signs of curtailing. Yet one would still expect some positive development in the form of improvement in power supply on the part of the national electricity provider despite the brunt of such politics.

The national electricity provider has a major role of uplifting the economy by generating the electrical power required by all the industries of the country that include mining, manufacturing, tourism, agriculture and the service industry, as well as improving the general livelihood of a country’s citizens by providing the much needed power and light for domestic purposes despite the political forces within and around the organisation’s day-to-day operations. To this end, the government allocates substantial budgets and appoints qualified managers to oversee and manage such a strategic state enterprise. For example, in 2012 the national electricity provider required US\$72 million (Kachembere, 2012), an allocation though insufficient had the potential to take the

power utility to the next level. On the contrary, the national power utility is engulfed in organisational politics matters that include government ministerial involvement through policy directives, interpersonal relations among employees as well as labour unrest. For example, the suspension of senior managers, struggle for power, labour and strikes which many commentators and business analysts accuse of causing the serious power generation crisis that has persisted for nearly two decades (Muleya, 2005 & Staff Reporters 2012).

Several years ago Mintzberg (1989:238) identified organisational politics as illegitimate force relations between the organisation's members, which in turn, led to low morale and ultimately reducing job satisfaction and productivity levels. Such a description of organisational politics, despite being very old, is still relevant to current practice as politics in the form of government involvement in state organisations as well as interpersonal relations amongst the workforce negatively impact on the national electricity's productive capacity. However, some quarters believe that organisational politics has a potential of yielding positive results to an organisation as opposed to being negative. According to Drory and Vigoda (2011:195), organisational politics has some meaningful positive outcomes. In the early years, organisational politics was already an issue in the workplace. According to, Gandz and Murray (1980), organisational politics was a necessary in many cases; especially if one had an interest in advancing the organisation by way of promotion as well as being acknowledged by co-workers. Because of these mixed views between positive and negative politics, the article therefore seeks to investigate the negative and positive effects of politics at the national electricity provider taking cognizance of the prevailing struggle for power; positions and resources; employees' suspensions; gossiping; favours in promotions as examples of political evidence at the electricity provider (Muleya, 2005).

#### **4.4 OBJECTIVES**

The primary objective of the article is to investigate the positive and negative effects of organisational politics at a national electricity provider.

The secondary objectives are to:

- Perform a literature study on the negative and positive effects of organisational politics;
- Determine the reliability of data;
- Identify underlying factors; and to
- Recommend measures to improve on the negative effects as well as finding ways to build on the positive effects of organisational politics.

#### **4.5 POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE POLITICS**

Branner (2005) views negative organisational politics as any dirty tactics by employees or management at the workplace. Thus, negative organisational politics refers to all the purely destructive, often distorting decisions that lead the organisation to wrong directions. At the national electricity provider, such practices are evident particularly amongst government and senior management with government making decisions that derail the organisation. For example the decision by government to sell electricity at heavily subsidised rate negatively affects the cash flow of the organisations (Muleya, 2005).

Robbins (2009:358) concur with Branner (2005) in that they view organisational politics as any illegitimate political behaviour such as sabotaging and whistleblowing that violate the implied rules within the organisation, thus sabotaging and whistle-blowing implies the dirty tricks eluded by Branner (2005) above. Griffin and Moorhead (2009:442) view organisational politics as the activities carried out in organisations to acquire, develop, and use power and other resources to obtain one's preferred outcomes in a situation in which there is uncertainty or decisions about choice. It becomes negative when the motive behind the political behaviour is to undermine the organisation or the individual (Griffin & Moorhead, 2009:442). The developments at the national electricity provider to a large extent resemble sentiments raised above since in several instances managers often utilise the powers vested in them as means of control subordinates. For example,

managers have the power and authority to promote, hire and fire employees which they can utilise in the political process to influence decisions.

It is therefore important to note that when the vision, mission and strategic objectives of a company are vague, they invite personal interpretation that may lead to politicking. Morehead and Griffin (2003:389) posit that a lack of commitment, compliance and increased resistance by employees represent high incidents of negative politics in the organisation. That said, negative politics of this nature is a common event at the national electricity provider where the majority of employees show a lack of seriousness and commitment with some resisting to implement strategic plans in line with the strategic management plans of the organisation. A case in point is the refusal by the CEO to implement decisions made by the board chairman on the basis that they were not in tandem with the CEO's vision.

Negative organisational politics, according to McShane and Glinow (2000:383) represents an attempt by organisation members to influence others using discretionary behaviours to promote personal objectives. Tan (2009) posits that negative office politics can reduce productivity; diminish trust levels; negatively affect morale and increase internal conflict. It drains employees' energy; wastes the organisation's resources; causes merit to go unrewarded; results in loss of valuable talent and, in the worst case scenario, drives away business opportunities. McShane and Glinow (2000:383) further note that negative organisational politics is due to a tense political environment within the organisation that may lead to reduced trust and motivation by those affected. Negative politics is thus part of the process loss that occurs in team discussions and work dynamics. It refers to politics that does not provide the greatest good to everyone, but rather politics that violates the rights by treating parties unfairly. If not rectified decisively, negative organisational politics can spread in an organisation bringing disastrous consequences to both the organisation and its employees.

The developments at the national electricity provider ties up very well with the above assertions. The clash between the board of directors and the CEO was so fierce that it

destroyed the organisation. For example, the suspension of the then general manager of the biggest electrical power station, Gwariro, was reported as contributing to the reduction in the electricity generation capacity (Muleya, 2005). Boardroom fights and gross incompetence were partly responsible for the current power outages by the national electricity provider which has the capacity to generate enough electricity for the country and beyond (Muleya, 2005).

McShane and Glinow (2000:383) identify selective distribution and control of information as forms of negative politics. At the national electricity provider instances where organisation members receive different and varying information is cause for concern; for example, advertisements for key positions are often advertised to selected employees, leaving out those who might be viewed as competent but because of their unpopularity, they are left out. Tan (2009) also provides the following as examples of negative politics:

- Backstabbing and lack of team spirit;
- Pushing the blame onto others and finger pointing;
- Plenty of fault-finding and lame excuses for self-justification;
- Favouritism and preferences based on personality; and
- Accommodating individuals who do not deliver results.

Backstabbing, pushing the blame on others and favouritism are all forms of negative politics which employees can utilise in order to push for their respective agendas or simple as one's moral obligation to do so. Issues of backstabbing, favouritism on recruitment and selection, and promotion are common in the workplace and very rampant in public institutions such as the national electricity provider. Vacant key positions at the national electricity provider are often filled by selected individuals who save the interest of the ruling government resembling some form of cronyism and favouritism.

On the other hand, Robbins et al. (2009:358) provide the flip side of organisational politics referred to as "positive politics" implying all the concerted efforts by the

organisation members that are meant to improve the organisation. Such efforts include framing arguments in terms of organisational goals and objectives; developing the right image for the organisation; gaining control of organisational resources; developing powerful allies; avoiding tainted members and always supporting the boss. In pursuit of positive organisational politics, Tan (2009) argues that positive or constructive organisational politics does not happen by chance. Instead, it is a deliberate effort that can unblock barriers to change, produce greater organisational cohesion and create greater buy-in to key projects. It is encouraged through principled and authentic leadership, corporate cultural factors, such as congruence between corporate values and management practice (walk-the-talk), transparency, thriving in an environment in which ethical and honest behaviour is rewarded and self-serving political behaviour is penalised. Whenever there is ambiguity or change that is not clearly understood or accepted by the organisation, the management must step in quickly and communicate effectively to clear the air. It also helps if staff has self-awareness; aptitude; the right attitude; technical competence to deliver results; awareness of the organisational and political landscape; personal authenticity; honesty; integrity; relationship-building skills to create win-win outcomes; sound analytical skills; and an ability to interpret the formal; informal; internal and external power-plays.

Horan (2008:12) argues that positive organisational politics revolves around ethical ways of being noticed and having ideas accepted without harming relationships. Positive politics is about building relationships, putting ideas forward and getting things done. This requires an understanding of the internal working within organisations and using principled tactics to achieve career success. To get started, individuals need to identify what they would like to achieve and orientate their actions toward those goals. Tan (2009) provides the following as examples of positive organisational politics:

- Networking and building trust through strategic alliances.
- Nurturing reliable, dependable, mutually beneficial working relationships with individuals or groups within and outside the organisation through both formal and informal channels.

- Working with individuals aligned to the same set of principles and values, and focused on delivering results based on merit and performance.
- Each individual is fully accountable and personally responsible for his/her own results.
- All parties involved in the relationship think 'win-win' and believe in teamwork.
- Organisational resources are maximised and optimised to deliver higher levels of efficiency and effectiveness.

#### **4.5.1 The effects of organisational politics**

According to Smith (2007:66), organisational politics does have positive and negative effects to the organisations. Robbins et al. (2009:363) argue that organisational politics can become too much to handle, leading to high turnover, decreased job satisfaction, decreased production levels, increased anxiety, stress and reduced performance. In a study conducted by Smith (2007:66-70) on the effects of organisational politics on the manager's work, the findings were that many participants admitted that they found politics stressful and that they experienced the negative effects of such behaviour. In some cases, organisational politics had led people to leave corporate life; that is "resigning". The study highlighted that increased political behaviour undermines trust between people at all levels in organisations, a mistrust caused by people creating their own hidden agendas and being encouraged to compete with one another rather than work collaboratively. The study further revealed that the effects of political behaviour manifest in organisations, with around 1 in 2 managers reporting political behaviour as a key cause of conflict in their organisation (44%) and the most significant stressor in their working life (53%) (Smith, 2002:68). The major findings of the study were that political behaviour such as a lack of transparent decision-making and hidden agendas remains some of the biggest issues affecting trust at work (Smith, 2002:69).

The negative side of organisational politics is the fight factor where employees respond by fighting when faced with a threatening experience. Fighting does not resolve conflict but rather heighten the negativity and animosity. The more angry organisations' members become, the further they get away from the solution to their conflicts. The ugly

side of organisational politics indulges in distrust, dishonesty and a counterproductive work environment. By allowing aggression, negativity and the fight factor into organisational politics, tips the scale on fairness and welcomes everything that works against finding a meeting ground to naturally occurring disagreements.

McShane and Glinnow (2001:383) argue that organisational politics is more of a problem than the benefits. The major concern is that organisational politics consumes time and disrupts work activities. It is part and parcel of the process of loss that occurs in team discussions and work dynamics. Witt (1998:22) concurs with the view that organisational politics can be a nasty event where people promote their own self-interests at the expense of company goals. Organisational politics can also be secretive, and can cause others to doubt the intentions of other people. Self-serving political actions can negatively influence social groupings; cooperation; information sharing; and many other organisational functions.

McShane and Glinnow (2001:383) lament that many political tasks reduce trust and motivation to collaborate. When people operate in a tense political environment, they have difficulty relating to other employees. This ultimately undermines the conditions for active knowledge sharing. Robbins et al. (2009:363) present organisational politics as a threat to employees with decreased job satisfaction; increased anxiety and stress; increased turnover; and reduced performance. Robbins and co-authors assert that several interesting qualifiers have been noted. First the politics – gap performance relationship appears to be moderated by an individual's understanding of the "how's" and "why's" of organisational politics. Studies by McShane and Glinnow (2001:383) reveal that employees who experience more organisational politics report higher stress, psychological withdrawal and turnover. However, people tend to feel less stress and dissatisfaction as they experience the political tactics.

Explained in another way, lower performing employees tended to report different ranking patterns from their supervisors, and they also were more aware of the organisational politics in their companies. Interestingly, it did not matter which values

came in the first place or last place. It only mattered that the patterns of rankings matched the supervisors' patterns. The findings of the study were enlightening. The agreement in values leads to an improved employee-supervisor relationship with all the good things that such a relationship involves. Value agreement enhances communication and cooperation. Employees would experience these supervisors as invigorating, and the work they did together as important to their supervisors. The lesson drawn from the findings revealed a new way to protect employees from the negative effects of organisational politics and to help employees improve their performance. It all depends upon supervisors moulding employee values to match their own.

According to Robbins et al. (2009), an individual who has a clear understanding of who is responsible for making decisions and why they were selected to be the decision-makers would have a better understanding of how and why things happen the way they do than someone who does not understand the decision-making process in the organisation. Accordingly, when both politics and performance are high, performance is likely to increase because the individual regards political action as an opportunity. On the contrary, when understanding is low, individuals are more likely to see organisational politics as a threat, which would have negative effects on performance. Secondly, when organisational politics is seen as a threat and consistently responded to with defensiveness, negative outcomes are almost sure to surface eventually. When people perceive politics as a threat rather than an opportunity, they often respond with defensive behaviours which are reactive and protective behaviours to avoid action, blame or change, a development which was prevalent at the national electricity provider between the board chairman and the CEO where the two were blaming each another for the power utility's failure to implement an effective turnaround strategy.

According to Nelson and Quick (2010:177), organisational politics is viewed negatively by various organisations, although it may not necessarily always be a negative influence. Because organisations are arenas in which people have competing interests, effective managers must reconcile competing interests. It is critical to note that

organisational politics is central to managing and as people try to acquire power and expand their power base, they use various tactics and strategies. A political behaviour refers to actions that are not officially sanctioned by an organisation that are taken to influence others in order to meet one's personal goals. Sometimes personal goals are aligned to organisational goals, and they can be achieved through other people's interests. But other times, personal goals and interests of others collide, and individuals pursue politics at the expense of others' interests.

Politics is a controversial topic among managers. Some managers take a favourable view of political behaviour; others see it as detrimental to the organisation. Robbins et al. (2009), argue that some workers who perceive their workplace as highly political actually find the use of political tactics more satisfying and report great job satisfaction when they engage in political behaviour. Schermerhor et al. (2008:229) posit that organisational politics is not automatically good or bad. It can serve a number of important functions including overcoming personal inadequacies, coping with change and substituting formal authority. Some people may therefore thrive in political environments, while others may find office politics more distasteful, damaging and stressful. According to Isenberg, as cited in Nelson and Quick (2010:177), a study of 60 executives who had extensive experience in employee evaluation indicated that political considerations were nearly always part of the political appraisal process.

Nelson and Quick (2010:177) contend that, the effects of political behaviour in organisations can be quite negative when the political behaviour is strategically undertaken to maximize self-interest. If people within the organisation are competitively pursuing selfish ends, they are unlikely to be attentive to the concerns of others. Schermerhor et al. (2008:229) allude that organisational politics can help identify problems and move ambitious problem solving managers into breach. It is quicker than restructuring. Organisational politics allows the organisation to meet unanticipated problems with people and sources quickly before small headaches become major problems.

The workplace can seem less helpful, more threatening, and more unpredictable. People focus on their concerns rather than on organisational goals. This represents the negative face of organisational politics. If employees view the organisation's political climate as extreme, they experience more anxiety, tension, fatigue and burnout negatively affecting performance. They ultimately become dissatisfied with their jobs and are likely to leave the organisation.

Although positive political behaviour still involves self-interest, when it is aligned with organisational goals, the self-interest is perceived positively by employees. Political behaviour is also perceived positively when it is seen as the only means by which to accomplish something. According to Schermerhor et al. (2008:229), organisational politics can facilitate adaption to changes in the environment and technology of the organisation. In view of developments at the national electricity provider, this could be a positive factor of organisational politics, where employees and management are made to think outside the box as a result of the pressure from the prevailing political environment.

Organisational politics is endemic to organisations. People come to work situations with many goals, not just one unified goal. These goals invoke conflict and competition among workers for the expenditure of scarce resources. According to Chaudhary (2010), organisational politics involves amassing organisational power for personal benefits, rather than organisational objectives. It is prevalent in most of the organisations and can adversely affect organisational productivity. According to George and Jones (2009), organisational politics can be dysfunctional to the organisation leading to high levels of labour turnover, yet when organisational interests integrates with employee interests and when it is used for the benefit of the organisation then it can be functional and advantageous for the organisation.

## 4.6 RESULTS

### 4.6.1 Research methodology

The article investigates the effects of organisational politics. The empirical results of the article are presented thematically in accordance to the questionnaire (See Annexure). Exploratory factor analysis as an analytical tool was employed to identify underlying factors within the organisational politics. In order to determine if data were suitable to be subjected to factor analysis, the Bartlett test of sphericity and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) were performed (Field, 2007:619). Large values of the KMO measure suggest that factor analysis of the variables is a good idea (Bisschoff et al., 2012). The inverse is also true as the KMO also supplies vital information when not to use factor analysis. For values smaller than 0.5, the factor analysis is considered inappropriate. KMO values of 0.6 should be present for factor analysis to be considered, although values between 0.5 and 0.7 are mediocre (Du Plessis as cited by Bisschoff et al., 2012). Field (2007:640) posits that values between 0.7 and 0.8 are considered good while those between 0.8 and 0.9 are excellent. Values between 0.9 and 1 are superb.

The Bartlett test of sphericity is an indicator of the strength of the relationship among variables and an indicator of the suitability of the data towards a multivariate statistical technique such as factor analysis (UCLA, 2010). It is a test statistic that is used as gatekeeper for further analysis. The Bartlett test examines the hypothesis that the variables are uncorrelated in the population. Thus, the population correlation matrix is an identity matrix; each variable correlates perfectly with itself ( $r = 1$ ) but has no correlation with the other variables ( $r = 0$ ) (Mediaspace, 2007). Bartlett's test of sphericity is used to test the null hypothesis that the variables in the population correlation matrix are uncorrelated (Coakes and Steed, 1997). The observed significance level is .0000. It is small enough to reject the hypothesis. It is concluded that the strength of the relationship among variables is strong. It is a good idea to proceed with a factor analysis because the data should yield a p-value smaller than 0.0001. This indicates that the correlation between the variables is sufficient for factor

analysis (Du Plessis, 2009:58). The Cronbach alpha coefficient was also calculated to determine the level of reliability of the data pertaining to each factor.

#### 4.6.2 KMO and Bartlett's test

The Bartlett test of sphericity and the KMO measure of sampling adequacy was performed and the results are shown in table 4.1 below.

**TABLE 4.1: THE KMO AND BARTLETT'S TEST**

Kaiser-Meyer-Oklin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		.919
Bartlett's Test of	Approx. Chi-Square	6366.838
Sphericity	Df	210
	Sig.	0.000

The KMO measure returned an excellent value of 0.919, indicating that the sample is highly adequate. In addition, table 4.1 shows that the Bartlett's test of sphericity also returned favourable value less than the required value of 0.005> this means that there is no or little relationship between the variables, and that the data is suitable to be subjected to exploratory factor analysis (Field, 2007:641).

#### 4.6.3 Exploratory factor analysis

The exploratory factor analysis identified three factors by means of an ortonogonal normalised Varimax rotation. According to Field (2007:749), Varimax as method attempts to maximise the dispersion of factor loadings by loading a smaller number of variables highly onto each factor. This typically results in more interpretable factors which explain more of the variance. Factor loadings of 0.40 and above are considered to be significant and are used in the analysis (Statistica, 2006). The factors and the criteria loading onto them are presented in table 4.2.

Table 4.2 below indicates that 21 of the 22 statements loaded onto three factors. Resultantly, only one statement was discarded since it did not load onto a specific factor

with a factor loading of 0.40 or higher. The factor loadings are shown in table 4.2 below. Noteworthy is the high cumulative variance explained by the three factors (74.65%).

**TABLE 4.2: FACTOR LOADINGS: EFFECTS OF ORGANISATIONAL POLITICS**

STATEMENTS	NO	FACTORS		
		1	2	3
The department promotes networking	32	.903		
The department plays an important role in promoting growth	31	.863		
The department promotes teamwork	33	.862		
The department makes an effort to solve its problems	30	.855		
The department has clear goals	34	.838		
The department identifies its problems	29	.835		
Infighting amongst employees promotes cohesion	35	.784		
The department is productive	27	.711		
The department promotes change	28	.634		
Employees in the department are satisfied with their jobs	37	.530		
Infighting leads to internal conflict	46		-.904	
Infighting is a source of problems	43		-.804	
Infighting leads to reduced job performance	42		-.820	
Workers in this department are unproductive	45		-.819	
Infighting undermines trust among employees	47		-.817	
Important information is kept a secret	44		-.797	
Infighting among employees destroys teamwork	40		-.675	
Infighting among employees is time wasting	38			.887
Infighting among employees disrupt work activities	39			.883
Infighting among employees increases stress levels	41			.875
The department has high labour turnover	36			.721
<b>% of variance explained</b>		<b>48.41%</b>	<b>14.78%</b>	<b>11.46%</b>
<b>Cumulative %</b>		<b>48.41%</b>	<b>63.19%</b>	<b>74.65%</b>

### **Factor 1: Positive departmental actions**

A total of ten statements, namely statements number 32, 31, 33, 30, 34, 29, 35, 27, 28, and 37 loaded on factor 1. All the statements under factor 1 deal with positive actions undertaken by the national electricity provider to reduce organisational politics and ensure a productive work environment. The factor is thus labelled as Positive organisational actions. Statements 32, 31, 33, 30, 34 and 29 all have factor loadings in excess of 0.80, suggesting that these statements are regarded as very significant by the respondents at the national electricity provider. The first factor explains a favourable variance of 48.41%. This finding is supported by Butcher and Clarke (cited by Gotsis & Kortezi, 2011:454) when they argue that organisational politics motivates the workforce in redefining the patterns of activity for organisational benefit. In support of this view Clarke et al. (2008) posit that organisational politics influences employee motivation resulting in overall improvement of organisational productivity. In support of this finding, Schermerhor et al. (2008:229), highlighted that organisational politics can facilitate adaption to changes in the environment and technology of the organisation. In view of developments at the national electricity provider, this could be a positive factor of organisational politics, where employees and management are made to think outside the box as a result of the pressure from the prevailing political environment.

### **Factor 2: Negative employee actions**

Statements 46, 43, 42, 45, 47, 44 and 40 all loaded on factor 2. Only statements 40 and 44 have factor loadings below an absolute value of 0.80, but well in excess of the cut-off absolute factor loading of 0.40. All the statements relate to negative actions that employees can participate in and create a politicized work environment. Because the factor identifies negative employee (individual) actions, the factor is labelled as such. The factor explains a variance of 14.78%. It should be noticed that the factor loadings on all the statements of this factor are all negative. This means that although the respondents recognize that negative employee behaviour exists, this behaviour is not present at the national electricity provider, and employees do not enter into such unproductive and devious behaviour. Tan (2009) gives support of the finding by arguing

that organisational politics negatively affect employee morale ultimately reducing productivity levels. According to Tan (2009:74), organisational politics drains employees' energy; wastes the organisation's resources; causes merit to go unrewarded; results in loss of valuable talent; and in the worst case scenario drives away business opportunities. McShane and Glinnow (2001:383) echo similar sentiments by stating that employees who experience more organisational politics report higher stress, psychological withdrawal and turnover. Robbins et al. (2009:363) vindicate the above by singling organisational politics as a threat to employees with decreased job satisfaction; increased anxiety and stress; increased turnover; and reduced performance. Obviously, the prevalence of organisational politics was so intense at the electricity provider to the extent of negatively impacting on key stakeholders, "employees". Nelson and Quick (2010:177), contend that though organisational politics can be viewed negatively by various organisations; "it is not necessarily negative". Schermerhor et al. (2008:229) agree that organisational politics is not automatically good or bad. It can serve a number of important functions within the organisation including overcoming personal inadequacies, coping with change and substituting formal authority. Therefore the national electricity provider has a lesson to learn, by taking advantage of the politics as providing some checks and balances to improve the organisation.

### **Factor 3: Personal consequences**

Four statements, namely: 38, 39, 41 and 36 loaded on factor 3. These statements disrupt work, waste time, increase stress levels and cause labour turnover. The factor is thus labelled as personal consequences because it shows the effect organisational politics have on a personal level on the employee. Statements 38, 39 and 41 all reflect factor loadings above 0.80 suggesting that the respondents regard them as very significant. The factor has a variance of 11.46%. The finding is backed by Robbins et al. (2009:363) as they argue that organisational politics can become too much to handle, leading to high labour turnover. Organisational politics can be very stressful to the extent of influencing resignations thereby negatively affecting the organisation's capacity to productive performance (Gotsis & Kortezi, 2011:454). High labour turnover

is an issue to companies as it undermines the production possibilities of a company. George and Jones (2009), argue that organisational politics can be dysfunctional to the organisation to the extent of causing high labour turnover, yet when organisational interests integrate with employee interests and when it is used for the benefit of the organisation then it can be functional and advantageous for the organisation. Muleya (2005) predicted that the boardroom fights, a form of organisational politics which resulted in turnover of employees including the general manager of the biggest power utility then, was responsible for power outages the country is currently experiencing.

#### 4.6.4 Reliability

Cronbach's alpha determines the internal consistency or average correlation of items in a survey instrument to gauge its reliability (Wuensh, 2009:9). For this research, the minimum coefficient is set at  $\alpha \geq 0.70$  (Field, 2007:640).

Table 4.3 below reflects the reliability coefficients for all three the factors. It is clear from the table that all the factors have a return of a very satisfactory reliability coefficient in excess of 0.90. This exceeds the required 0.7 by far and shows excellent reliability and internal consistency of data pertaining to each factor (Field, 2007:666).

**TABLE 4.3: RELIABILITY STATISTICS**

<b>Data Sets</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>
Factor 1	0.950
Factor 2	0.927
Factor 3	0.913

#### 4.7 DISCUSSION

The aim of the article was to investigate the effects of organisational politics at the national electricity provider. The results showed that, positive departmental actions, negative employee actions and personal consequences are prevalent factors that influence the productivity levels at the national electricity provider. While positive

departmental actions motivate employees, negative employee actions and personal consequences have overall counterproductive effects to the national electricity provider.

According to Drory and Vigoda (2010:195), organisational politics has harmful effects resulting from “negative employee actions” ultimately reducing the production levels. For example, the boardroom fights at the national electricity provider resulted in the suspension of the general manager during that time. According to Muleya (2005), the suspension of the then general was reported as partly contributing to the reduction of the electricity generation capacity. Muleya further reports that staff morale in those days “hit rock bottom levels” due to poor management practices which resulted in the deterioration of the performance and production of the power station. According to Mintzberg (cited in Drory & Vigoda 2010:195), organisational politics reflect illegitimate force relations between the organisation’s members that lead to low morale ultimately reducing job satisfaction and productivity. Several studies by Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988; Kumar and Ghandially, 1989; Vigoda, 2003 (cited by Drory & Vigoda 2010:195) examined the negative effects of organisational politics on employee performance and concluded that they have a demotivational effect on the organisation.

The article also revealed the flip side of organisational politics, as the “positive actions” within an organisational setting. As put across by Bacharach, Gandz and Murray (cited in Drory & Vigoda 2010:195) organisational politics has some meaningful positive outcomes. Many of the organisation members believe that political behaviour is necessary in many cases, especially if someone has an interest in being promoted within the organisation (Bacharach, 2005). Some aspects of good organisational politics in general managerial decisions and human resource processes may lead to positive outcomes for both the organisation and the employee. For example, managers may resort to political behaviour in which they deconstruct standing procedures such as staffing, appraisals, compensation, training so as to provide support, justice and empowerment (Dipboye, 1995:55). To a large extent, the national electricity provider circumvents standing rules and procedures that are disadvantageous to the organisation and resort to contemporary management practices that foster employee

support, justice at the workplace and employee empowerment (Drory & Vigoda, 2010:195) as a form of positive political management practices.

Personal consequence at an individual employee level was identified as being synonymous with organisational politics. Robbins et al. (2009:363) argue that organisational politics can become too much to handle, thereby causing high stress levels and labour turnover. The suspension of the general manager led to a staff exodus at the national electricity provider with most employees citing low morale levels in the power utility (Muleya, 2005). In most cases, organisational politics breeds a failed organisation which is associated with lower production levels that lead to lower salaries ultimately leading to increasing labour turnover. Respondents feel that organisational politics is time wasting as well as disrupting workflows.

#### **4.8 RECOMMENDATIONS**

More ever than before, managers would agree that organisational politics make a critical difference when it comes to organisational performance, competitiveness and ultimately business success (Bakker & Schaufeli 2008:147). Organisational politics has the potential to have widespread impact on the effectiveness and efficiency of organisations through various organisational processes such as performance appraisal; resource allocation; and improving managerial decision-making (Aino & Sini, 2010:229). The article revealed three (3) factors as prevalent at the national electricity provider. The factors are positive departmental actions, negative employee actions and personal consequences.

It is evident from the article that organisational politics is inevitable and its effects are skewed to the negative rather than positive. Taking cognisance of the fact that organisational politics brings more harm than good, the article recommends that managers at the national electricity provider need to periodically undergo some form of appraisal workshops on how to deal with contemporary issues that have a potential of demotivating employees thereby negatively impacting on the manager's organisational

life on a daily base. Such a move will benefit managers in familiarising themselves with issues/matters such as employee support; motivation; resources allocation; dealing with fairness; strikes and organisational commitment so that when they are presented with contemporary managerial challenges that are predominantly political, they will not be taken by surprise. They will know how to deal with each situation, case by case. In the case of the national electricity provider, managers are recommended to take a proactive stance by managing the political behaviour that inevitably occurs. The following actions are recommended as ideal actions to effectively reduce negative effects, notwithstanding consolidating the positive aspects of politics:

- recognising that politics exists;
- networking;
- finding key players in the political game;
- open communication;
- participative management;
- encouraging cooperation;
- managing scarce resources; and
- a supportive organisational climate.

#### **4.9 SUMMARY**

Organisational politics brings more harm than good if it is not effectively dealt with. To its extreme, it can reap the organisation apart, yet if successfully managed, can bring about organisational cohesion that has the potential to promote continuous productivity. The article revealed that organisational politics can be a playground of organisations' malfunctioning leading to low production levels if not effectively dealt with. Positive departmental actions, negative employee actions and personal consequences were identified as critical constructs of organisational politics that have the potential to take the national electricity either forward or backward. Whether organisational politics is positive or negative, the bottom line is that managers and employees must be proactive in dealing with politics. Finding alternative action, fostering mutual agreements, collectively and democratically addressing politically related challenges and consolidating on the positive aspects is the way forward in dealing with the scourge of

organisational politics in contemporary organisations such as the national electricity provider. The national electricity provider has a potential of being a force to reckon with, if the senior managers and the entire workforce demonstrates the “will” to work together, today, tomorrow and the future.

The next chapter presents the final article of the study focussing on managerial practices for minimising negative political behaviour.

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# CHAPTER 5

## ARTICLE 4:

### INVESTIGATING MANAGERIAL PRACTICES TO MINIMISE NEGATIVE ORGANISATIONAL POLITICS AT A NATIONAL ELECTRICITY PROVIDER IN SADC

#### ABSTRACT

This article investigates managerial practices for reducing negative politics at a national electricity provider in a Southern Development Community (SADC) country. The article is triggered by rife organisational politics that has rendered the national electricity provider dysfunctional and less productive over the years. The article provides a theoretical review on managerial practices for reducing negative politics as well as exploratory factor analysis that identified common factors of managerial practices. The data was subjected to the Bartlett test of sphericity and the Kaiser Meyer and Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy to ensure that factor analysis was the appropriate statistical tool. The results showed that managerial participation and managerial fairness are potential measures for minimising dysfunctional politics. The article recommends for a comprehensive managerial support strategy that encompasses upholding transparency and fairness, instituting an effective organisational communication strategy, forming alliances, engaging key stakeholders and ensuring equitable distribution of resources as fundamental managerial measures that can take the national electricity provider to the next level.

**Key words:** Positive Politics, Labour turnover, National Electricity Provider, Contemporary Organisations, Load Shedding, Dysfunctional Politics, Zimbabwe.

## 5.1 INTRODUCTION

It has been a long time since citizens of Zimbabwe received a steady supply of electricity. Load shedding dates back to the year 1995 and to date it has reached deteriorating, alarming levels despite being endowed with the natural waters of the Zambezi River's Kariba dam and the Hwange coal plant for hydro and thermal electrical power generation respectively. According to the Business reporter (2011), Zimbabwe has struggled to supply adequate electricity in recent years and is yet to brace up for another four years without adequate supply leading to continuous and increased load shedding. The organisation is struggling to raise US\$125 million required to repair the outdated Hwange power station generators (Karombo, 2012:7). Due to this, the national electricity provider has no capacity to generate adequate electricity for the economy.

Currently Zimbabwe generates 1,300 megawatts of electricity which is short of the daily national requirements of about 2,200 megawatts (Tsimane, 2009). There could be various reasons for the down surge of supply of electrical power such as the effects of the crumbling economy due to the changing landscape of the government's political environment, the changing land redistribution policies that has driven away potential investors, the changing laws on company ownership and acquisitions and the prevailing deteriorating investment climate in the country, corruption, skills shortage and poor planning. While all these could present as valid excuses for the power utility's failure to generate adequate electricity for the economy, inability by managers at the national electricity provider to effectively harness negative politics pose as a serious threat to the generation of adequate electricity for the economy. A case in point is the suppressed industrial action and the rife politicised working relationship amongst senior managers and the board of directors which led to the suspension of the then general manager at the Hwange power plant, the largest power station in the country, triggering an immediate reduction on electricity generation capacity (Muleya, 2005).

This article investigates managerial practices for minimising negative politics, provides an in-depth theoretical review and finally performs an empirical study to identify and measure the pertinent factors surrounding managerial practices. Finally the study

recommends ideal managerial measures for successfully harnessing negative political behaviours.

## **5.2 BACKGROUND TO THE ARTICLE**

The national electricity provider is a state entity tasked by the government to generate and distribute electricity to the entire economy. For nearly two decades the entity has struggled to generate adequate electricity for the economy leading to load shedding throughout most of the cities. There could be several reasons attributing to the inability to generate adequate electricity but chief among the reasons would be the lack of management ability in decision-making and handling organisational politics matters. As predicated by Gwariro (cited by Muleya, 2012) management failure to deal with organisational boardroom fights would have contributed to electrical power crises in the future. According to Muleya (2005), staff morale at the national electricity provider “hit rock bottom levels” due to management inability to harness negative politics resulting in the overall deterioration of production levels. Management support in organisational management plays a major role in improving the performance of employees (Walter et al., 2012:295). According to Walter et al. (2012:294), manager support is most felt when employees perceive their manager as leading by example. A study by Gomez and Rosen (2001) cited by Walter et Al. (2012:296) on managerial support as an antecedent of turnover, revealed that a high quality relationship between the managers and the employees leads to increased psychological empowerment ultimately improving performance levels and ultimately minimising labour turnover. With adequate managerial support, employees are likely to work for longer durations thereby reducing labour turnover as well as returning special skills. The national electricity provider is characterised by high labour turnover that includes junior employees and senior managers with the inability to deal with organisational politics as a major contributor current power crises (Tsimane, 2009).

### **5.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

The national electricity provider has been marred by negative organisational politics rendering it unproductive over the past two decades. A case in point is the rive politicised working relationship amongst senior managers and the board of directors which led to the suspension of the then general manager of the biggest power station, triggering an immediate reduction on electricity supply by 40% with management's inability to handle politics receiving all the blame (Muleya, 2005). Boardroom squabbles; employee strikes; suspensions and employees' discharge; government involvement; whistleblowing and image tarnishing were some of the indicators of negative politics believed to negatively affect the national electricity provider's ability to generate adequate electrical power for the country. The national electricity provider has a major role of generating and supplying electrical power to all industries that include mining; manufacturing; tourism; agriculture and the service industry; as well as improving the general livelihood of citizens by providing the much needed electrical power and light for domestic purposes. The prevalence of organisational politics calls for managers with the ability and skills to deal with the political environment. Gandz and Murray (1980:77) posit that managerial influence in organisational politics was necessary in many cases especially if one had interest in advancing in the organisation by way of promotion as well as being acknowledged by co-workers. The article therefore seeks to investigate managerial practices for minimising negative politics.

### **5.4 OBJECTIVES**

The primary objective of this article is to investigate managerial practices to minimise negative politics at a national electricity provider.

The secondary objectives are to:

- Define negative politics;
- Perform a literature review on managerial practices to minimise negative politics;
- Determine the reliability of data;
- Identify underlying factors on managerial practices; and to

- Recommend measures to improve managerial practices to reduce negative politics.

## **5.5 DEFINING NEGATIVE POLITICS**

In order for managers to effectively deal with organisational politics they need to understand the meaning of negative politics. Some definitions and explanation of negative politics are provided below followed by a myriad of managerial practices to harness negative politics.

Brenner (2005) views negative organisational politics as any dirty tactics by employees or management at the workplace. Thus, negative organisational politics refers to all the purely destructive, often distorting decisions that lead the organisation to wrong directions. Tan (2009) argues that negative, or destructive, politics generally begins in an organisation that is not firmly anchored in its core values and guiding principles. Robbins et al. (2009:358) concur with Brenner (2005) when they view organisational politics as illegitimate political behaviour such as sabotaging and whistleblowing that violate the implied rules within the organisation, thus sabotaging and whistleblowing implies the dirty tricks similar to the ones referred to by Brenner (2005) above.

Moorhead and Griffin (2009:442-443) mentioned that politics becomes negative when the motive behind the political behaviour is to undermine the organisation or the individual. Moorhead and Griffin (2003:389) posit that lack of commitment, compliance and increased resistance by employees presents high incidents of negative politics in the organisation. That said, negative politics of this nature is a common event at the national electricity provider where the majority of employees exhibit lack of seriousness and commitment on their daily work with some employees resisting to implement the organisation's strategic plans.

Negative organisational politics, according to McShane and Glinow (2000:383), presents an attempt by organisation members to influence others using discretionary

behaviours to promote personal objectives. Tan (2009) states that negative office politics can reduce productivity, diminish trust levels, negatively affect morale and increase internal conflict. It drains employees' energy, wastes the organisation's resources, causes merit to go unrewarded, results in loss of valuable talent and, in the worst case scenario, it drives away business opportunities. McShane and Glinow (2000:383) further notes that negative organisational politics is due to a tense political environment within the organisation that may lead to reduced trust and motivation by those affected. Negative politics is thus part of the process loss that occurs in team discussions and work dynamics. It refers to politics that does not provide the greatest good to everyone, but rather politics that violates the rights by treating parties unfairly. If not rectified decisively, negative organisational politics can spread in an organisation bringing disastrous consequences to both the organisation and its employees.

The developments at the national electricity provider ties up very well with the above assertions. The clash between the board of directors and the CEO was so fierce that it destroyed the organisational life. For example, the suspension of the then general manager of the biggest electrical power station situated in Hwange, Mr Gwariro, was predicted some years back as fuelling the future power outages which is being witnessed now (Muleya, 2005).

McShane and Glinow (2000:383) identify selective distribution and control of information as forms of negative politics. At the national electricity provider instances where organisation members receive different and varying information is cause for concern; for example, advertisements for key positions are often advertised to selected employees. Tan (2009) provides the following as examples of negative politics:

- Back stabbing and lack of team spirit;
- Pushing the blame onto others and finger pointing;
- Plenty of fault-finding and lame excuses for self-justification;
- Favouritism and preferences based on personality; and
- Accommodating individuals who do not deliver results.

The scenario prevailing at the national electricity provider corresponds with issues such as backstabbing, pushing the blame and fault-finding are rife incidents at the national electricity provider painting a negative picture on the management and administrative processes.

The negative side of organisational politics is the fight factor where employees respond by fighting when faced with a threatening experience. Fighting does not resolve conflict but rather heighten the negativity and animosity. The angrier organisation members become, the further they get away from the solution to their conflicts. The ugly side of organisational politics indulges in distrust, dishonesty and a counterproductive work environment. By allowing aggression, negativity and the fight factor into organisational politics, tips the scale on fairness and welcomes everything that works against finding a meeting ground to naturally occurring disagreements (Witt, 1998).

## **5.6 MANAGERIAL PRACTICES TO MINIMISE NEGATIVE POLITICS**

Managerial practices for reducing negative politics in organisations depict management efforts to successfully deal with negative politics in an organisation. There are various practices which managers can engage in so as to curb negative politics. Tan (2009) argues that managing negative politics does not happen by chance. Managers must make deliberate efforts that can unblock barriers to change, produce greater organisational cohesion and create greater buy-in to key projects.

### **5.6.1 Managerial communication**

Whenever there is ambiguity or change that is not clearly understood or accepted by the organisation's workforce, management must step in quickly and communicate effectively to clear the air. Subramanian (2006:1) reasons that communication both formal and informal is like blood to any organisation that serves as a medium to distribute important information amongst the organisation's workforce thereby promoting a conducive political environment. Effective communication can simplify successful organisation operation (Ince et al., 2011:107). It also helps in promoting self-awareness; aptitude; the right attitude; technical competence to deliver results;

awareness of the organisation and political landscape; personal authenticity; honesty; integrity; relationship-building skills to create win-win outcomes; sound analytical skills; and an ability to interpret the formal, informal, internal and external power-plays (Tan, 2009). In the overall, managers need to improve their organisational communication strategies so as to ensure that every employee is aware of what is happening. Ince et al. (2011:107), assert that organisational communication is intertwined in politics of the organisation and promotes the exchange of knowledge and opinions. Argenti (cited by Ince & Gul, 2011:107) underscores organisational communication as a management responsibility largely responsible for creating a positive atmosphere for all employees. Barter et al. (2010:213) provides both vertical and horizontal communication as potential tools for an effective manager in masterminding the negative tendencies of organisational politics, with vertical communication defining the organisation and what it stands for, while horizontal communication addresses task related issues on the entire workforce.

### **5.6.2 Managerial support**

Walter et al. (2011:294) argue that manager support exists when employees perceive their immediate manager as leading by example, giving them the support needed to do the job well. In support of this, Richard et al. (cited in Walter et al., 2011:294), concluded from previous research (Guzzo et al., 1994; Rousseau & Greller 1994; and Davies, 2005) that since immediate managers are perceived as agents of the organisation, their behaviours play critical roles in shaping the employees' attitudes and behaviours and their level of commitment to the organisation. The unique contribution of perceived manager support by employees plays a major role in building a working relationship that defeats the breeding of negative politics. It is clear from the foregoing that managerial support is a handy tool that can successfully harness negative politics. Gomez and Rossen (cited by Walter et al. 2011:294) argue that a high quality relationship between a manager and employee breeds a positive psychological empowerment that gives no room to negative political tendencies in an organisation.

### **5.6.3 Managerial interaction**

Horan (2008) argues that an ideal managerial interaction revolves around ways of being noticed and having ideas accepted without harming relationships. Managers must build relationships; put ideas forward in order to thwart negative politics. Managers need to understand the internal working environment within organisations and use principled tactics to achieve career success. To get started, managers need to identify what they would like to achieve and orient their actions toward those goals. Tan (2009) provides the following as managerial practices to minimise negative politics:

- Networking and building trust through strategic alliances;
- Upholding fairness.
- Nurturing reliable, dependable, mutually-beneficial working relationships with individuals or groups within and outside the organisation through both formal and informal channels;
- Working with individuals aligned to the same set of principles and values, and focused on delivering results based on merit and performance;
- Consulting key stakeholders prior to decision-making;
- Fostering accountability and responsibility;
- Encouraging a 'win-win' and belief in teamwork; and
- Maximising and optimising resource distribution.

### **5.6.4 Managerial effectiveness**

While managerial interaction cited above by Horran (2008) is instrumental in harnessing organisational politics, managerial effectiveness provides a supportive role by promoting a sound political environment. Managerial efficiency has a very old history that dates back to the 1970s. Reddin (cited by Analoui, 2010:57) defines managerial effectiveness as the degree to which managers achieve the output requirement of his/her job with and through other employees. The effectiveness of a manager is by and large political in nature for the simple reason that each and every employee plays a role that accounts for the manager's effectiveness. Analoui (2010:57) argues that the effectiveness of the manager must be measured in terms of the output. In line with this reasoning the effectiveness of the senior managers at the national electricity provider must be

measured in terms of the generation of electrical power. According to Drucker (cited by Analoui, 2010:59), the following are managerial practices for fostering effectiveness in a negatively politicised work environment:

- Recognising what needs to be done;
- Engaging all employees and other stakeholders;
- Consulting internal and/or external experts on critical matters;
- Understanding the nature of the organisation;
- Developing action plans;
- Taking responsibility for decision-making;
- Taking responsibility for communication;
- Focusing on opportunities rather than problems; and
- Running productive meetings.

Analoui (2010:58) postulates that effective managers need to be politically sensitive so as to deal with demands, constraints and choices in the course of their daily management practices. An organisation is driven by the demand for the product or service. Managers are unfortunately limited by the constraints; as such they need to make intelligent choices in order to take the firm to the next level. The following are the dependent variables for managerial success as espoused by Analoui (2010:58):

- Demands;
- Constraints; and
- Choices

Managers at the national electricity provider are often confronted with the demand for electrical power that has become a proverbial challenge for the country. Demand is a potential factor for negative politicking if unresolved. Analoui (2010:57) asserts that demands are tasks that the manager has to deal with and he/she can choose to ignore or delegate. Managers at the national electricity provider must also deal with the constraints. Constraints are the factors that limit the manager's actions which include the lack of resources, and people's attitudes. Managers at the national electricity provider must make choices that benefit the generality of the people and the

stakeholders. Analoui (2010:57) posits that choices represent the opportunities which exist in the job that enable the manager to act differently from what other managers are doing.

According to Analoui (2010:57) on managerial effectiveness in the public sector organisation in Ghana, made significant contributions to the study on managerial effectiveness by identifying the following managerial parameters as key to the manager's effectiveness:

- Perception of own effectiveness;
- Managerial skill or lack of it;
- Organisational criteria for effectiveness;
- Motivation of senior manager's effectiveness;
- The degree of demands and constraints;
- The presence of choice and opportunities;
- Nature of inter and intra organisation relationships

The points raised above are deeply immersed in the organisation's political life. The national electricity managers could benefit from such managerial practices by making an introspection of themselves and begin to weigh their effectiveness, skill relevancy, criteria of work effectiveness, motivation, by conducting a SWOT analysis of the organisation as well as assessing their internal and external relationships.

#### **5.6.5 Managerial participation/involvement**

Managers have several ways of reducing negative organisational politics. Morehead and Griffin (2009:397) provide the techniques for managerial participation/involvement in order to reduce negative political behaviour as:

- Controlling of information;
- Holding of meetings with employees;
- Controlling the agenda;
- Upholding transparency;
- Facilitating equitable distribution of resources; and

- Building of coalitions.

### **5.6.6 Other managerial practices for harnessing politics**

George and Jones (2009:616) provide two major effective political strategies for managers to effectively deal with negative politics. These are the political strategies for gaining, maintaining and exercising power with an ultimate aim of reducing negative politics. For managers to successfully gain and maintain power in an organisation, the following strategies can be used:

- Controlling uncertainty;
- Making oneself irreplaceable;
- Being in a central position;
- Generating resources; and
- Building alliances.

#### *5.6.6.1 Controlling uncertainty*

According to George and Jones (2009:616) uncertainty is a major threat for individuals, groups and the whole organisation and can interfere with effective performance and goal attainment. For example, uncertainty about job security poses a serious threat to workers and may trigger organisational political battles that may derail the organisational processes. Therefore, managers who are able to control and reduce uncertainties, on other managers, teams and departments and the organisations as a whole are likely to experience a power upsurge thereby positioning them in a strategic position to effectively reduce negative tendencies of organisational politics.

#### *5.6.6.2 Making oneself irreplaceable*

George and Jones (2009:616) assert that managers can gain power when they have valuable knowledge and expertise that allow them to perform activities that no one else can handle. This is the essence of being irreplaceable. The more central these activities are to organisational effectiveness, the more powerful managers become.

#### *5.6.6.3 Being a central person*

Managers need to position themselves in central positions that make them very important and strategic. This is because managers in central positions are responsible for activities that are directly connected to the organisation's goals and sources of competitive advantage. Thus, according to George and Jones (2009) managers are in key positions, they have control over crucial organisational activities and initiatives, hence are powerful, thus enabling them to politically manoeuvre.

#### *5.6.6.4 Generating resources*

Resources are crucial to any organisation and a manager who generates resources more than any other member in the organisation gains respect. Organisations need three kinds of resources, according to George and Jones (2009), that is, input resources such as materials and skilled labour and financial resources too. The organisation also needs technical resources such as machinery and computers and finally knowledge resources such as marketing, information technology, or engineering expertise. By accumulating or amassing resources in abundance for the organisation, managers end up being very powerful and influential enabling them to politically deal with politics.

#### *5.6.6.5 Building alliances*

When managers build alliances they develop mutually beneficial relationships within both inside and outside the organisation. Alliances provide managers with power and support for their initiatives. It is therefore certain that alliances can help managers achieve their goals and implement needed changes in organisations because they increase managers' levels of power.

### **5.7 POLITICAL STRATEGIES TO REDRESS NEGATIVE POLITICS**

George and Jones (2009: 619) posit that politically skilled managers not only have a good understanding of, and ability to use the five strategies to increase power, they also have good appreciation of strategies for exercising power. These strategies generally focus on how managers can use their power unobtrusively. According to George and Jones (2009:619), when managers use power unobtrusively, other members of an organisation may not be aware that the managers are using the power to influence

them. They may think that they are supporting the manager for a variety of reasons: because they think that it is the rational or logical thing to do, because they believe that doing so is in their own best interest. The following constitute the strategies through which managers can successfully exercise power:

- Relying on objective information;
- Bringing an outside expert;
- Controlling the agenda; and
- Making everyone a winner.

One thing that stands out from the list above is the amount of effort it takes to interact in a politically charged organisation. Most people do get overwhelmed when they first jump into a politicised work environment. The issue to remember is to ease into it, if possible, to understand the landscape first before playing the game. The most important thing about organisational politics is to be prepared. The worst thing one can do is to come into a political situation without all the facts. It is basic to know the landscape, understand the players and the rules.

## **5.8 RESULTS**

### **5.8.1 Research methodology**

The article investigates managerial practices to minimise negative politics at the national electricity provider. The empirical results of the article are presented thematically in accordance with the questionnaire. Exploratory factor analysis was employed as analytical tool to identify underlying factors within the managerial practices. In order to determine if data were suitable to be subjected to factor analysis, the Bartlett Test of sphericity and KMO were performed (Field, 2007:619). Large values of KMO measure suggest that factor analysis is appropriate based on the sample size (Bisschoff et al., 2012). The inverse is also true as the KMO also supplies vital information when not to use factor analysis. For values smaller than 0.5, factor analysis is considered to be inappropriate. Field (2007:640) states that values between 0.7 and

0.8 are considered good while those between 0.8 and 0.9 are excellent. Values between 0.9 and 1 are superb.

Bartlett's test of sphericity is used to test the null hypothesis that variables in the population correlation matrix are uncorrelated (Bisschoff et al., 2012). The acceptable significance level is 0.000. It is small enough to reject the hypothesis. It is concluded that the strength of the relationship among variables is strong. It is a good idea to proceed with factor analysis because the data should yield a p-value smaller than 0.0001. This indicates that the correlation between the variables is sufficient for factor analysis (Du Plessis, 2010:58).

The Cronbach alpha coefficient was also calculated to determine the level of reliability of the data pertaining to each factor. Reliability coefficients of 0.70 and higher are considered to be acceptable.

### 5.8.2 KMO and Bartlett's test

The Bartlett test of sphericity and the Kaiser, Meyer and Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was performed and results are shown in figure 5.1 below.

**TABLE 5.1: THE KMO AND BARTLETT'S TEST**

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		.943
Bartlett's Test of Approx. Chi-Square		4446.486
Sphericity	Df	120
	Sig.	0.000

The KMO measure of 0.943 is an excellent indicating that the sample is more than adequate. In addition, the Bartlett's test of sphericity also returned a favourable value which is less than the required 0.05. This means that there are limited inter-correlations and that multicollinearity in the data is eliminated. As a result the data is confidently be subjected to multivariate statistical techniques such as exploratory factor analysis (Michigan University, 2013).

### **5.8.3 Exploratory factor analysis**

The exploratory factor analysis identified two factors by means of an Orthogonal Varimax rotation. According to Field (2005:749) Varimax as rotational method attempts to maximise the dispersion of factor loadings by loading a smaller number of variables highly onto each factor resulting in more interpretable factors. Only factor loadings of 0.40 and above are considered to be significant and used in the analysis (Statistica, 2006). Resultantly, only two statements (53 & 54) were discarded since they did not load onto a specific factor with a factor loading of 0.40 or higher. Table 5.2 below indicates that, in total, 16 of the 18 items loaded onto two factors. These two factors explain a very favourable cumulative variance of 70%.

**TABLE 5.2: FACTOR LOADINGS: MANAGERIAL PRACTICES TO MINIMISE  
NEGATIVE POLITICS**

STATEMENT	NO	FACTORS	
		1	2
To what extent does management utilise external experts in resolving infighting?	64	.939	
To what extent does management promote neutrality when resolving infighting amongst employees?	63	.933	
To what extent does management utilize internal experts in resolving infighting?	65	.932	
To what extent does management promote teamwork?	62	.843	
To what extent does management make compromising decisions when handling infighting?	61	.779	
To what extent does management avoid confrontation with employees?	58	.697	
To what extent does management promote unity among employees?	59	.645	
To what extent does management encourage compromise amongst infighting employees?	60	.623	
To what extent does management uphold fairness in handling infighting amongst employees?	57	.606	
To what extent does management promote open communication?	56	.602	
To what extent does management consult on key players in the political system?	55	.577	
To what extent does management promote the employment of cronies in the department?	50		.905
To what extent does management promote transparency in the department?	51		.796
To what extent does the department hold staff meetings?	52		.786
To what extent does management promote equitable distribution of resources?	48		.676
To what extent does management uphold fairness in the selection process?	49		.654
<b>%of variance explained</b>		<b>60.70%</b>	<b>9.41%</b>
<b>Cumulative %</b>		<b>60.70%</b>	<b>70.12%</b>

### **Factor 1: Managerial Fairness**

A total of 11 statements, namely: 64, 63, 65, 62, 61, 58, 59, 60, 57, 56 and 55, loaded on factor 1. All these statements deal with managerial fairness, hence the factor is labelled as *Managerial fairness*. Statements 64, 63, 65, and 62 show very high factor loadings of 0.80 or higher. This suggests that these statements are regarded as very significant by the respondents in relation to the extent to which managers exercise fairness as they manoeuvre in a politicised work environment at the national electricity provider. The factor explains a high variance of 60.70%. Tan (2009) provides a myriad of managerial practices for minimising negative politics of which upholding fairness on the part of management is considered one such political weapon to minimise negative politics. By upholding fairness, managers are able to win the hearts of the workforce resultantly cultivating a motivational spirit that leads to a productive organisation.

### **Factor 2: Managerial participation**

Statements 50, 51, 52, 48 and 49 all loaded on factor 2 and are related to managerial participation. Thus the factor is labelled as managerial participation. All the factors are above 0.60 giving support that managerial participation is problematic which could be a source of employee demotivation at the national electricity provider. The factor explains a variance of 9.41%. Morehead and Griffin (2009: 397) provide the techniques for managerial participation in order to reduce negative political behaviour: as the ability to control information; hold staff meetings; controlling the agenda; promoting transparency; facilitating equitable distribution of resources; and building coalitions. Jones and George (2009:616) support the need for managerial participation in harnessing negative politics. They argue that managers need to participate through controlling uncertainties, making themselves irreplaceable, building alliances strategically positioning themselves as well as generating resources for the organisation in order to effectively reduce negative politics.

From the factor analysis, two factors were identified, namely *Managerial Fairness* and *Managerial Participation*. It is important to note that *Managerial Fairness* as first factor explains 60% of the variance while the *Managerial Participation* as the second factor

explains a significantly less (yet acceptable) variance of 9%. This means that the first factor is much more important and that management should focus their efforts on fairness rather than participation: first to instil positive organisational politics because it will yield much better returns on managerial energy spent. However, managerial participation was also identified as a factor, and should by no means be neglected by management.

#### 5.8.4 Reliability

The reliability of the data and the extracted factors was determined by using the coefficient Cronbach's alpha. As is common in reliability analysis, the minimum coefficient is set at  $\alpha \geq 0.70$  (Field, 2007:640; Du Plessis 2010). The table 5.3 below shows the reliability coefficients for the two factors extracted. Both factors have very satisfactory reliability coefficients which are in excess of 0.89 (one is marginally lower than 0.90, which is regarded to be superb, while the other factor exceeds the 0.90 margin with ease). This reliability coefficients show excellent reliability and internal consistency of data pertaining to each factor.

**TABLE 5.3: RELIABILITY STATISTICS**

Data Sets	Cronbach's Alpha
Factor 1	0.941
Factor 2	0.891

### 5.9 DISCUSSION

The aim of the study was to investigate the managerial practices for minimising negative politics at the national electricity provider. The study identified managerial fairness and managerial participation as managerial measures for reducing negative politics. Specifically findings revealed that employees are not impressed by the manner in which managers deal with the differences that arise amongst the workforce. In any case if employees view managerial fairness as lacking, this may contribute to organisational disharmony. A study by Clark et al. (2008:411) revealed similar sentiments of

dissatisfaction on managerial support as contributing to organisational disharmony. Aino et al. (2010:230) reiterate that employees expect managers to exercise fairness in every respect through various means that includes awarding of pay increases, promotions and benefits. Barker and Schaufeli (2008:148:151) regard managerial fairness as meaning the same as positive organisational behaviour and that managers need to support the employees by upholding fairness all the time.

Managers at the national electricity provider fall far too short in discharging these managerial practices. However, in order to successfully foster such managerial practices, effective organisational communication is required. In the overall, managers need to improve their organisational communication strategies so as to ensure that every employee is aware of what is happening. Ince et al. (2011:107), assert that organisational communication is intertwined in politics of the organisation and promotes the exchange of knowledge and opinions. Argenti (cited by Ince et al., 2011:107) underscores organisational communication as a management responsibility largely responsible for creating a positive atmosphere for all employees ultimately opening up a transparent, fair and conducive environment that minimises negative politics. Subramanian (2006:2-5) reports the same view by emphasising that organisational communication (both formal and informal is like blood to any living organisation, and so is the national electricity provider. Managers are expected to open up lines of communication, top and down to promote the follow of information in a transparent way with depriving any group.

Managerial participation, also regarded as managerial involvement is crucial to the handling of dysfunctional politics at the national electricity provider. Holding staff meetings, promoting transparency, controlling the agenda and promoting equitable distribution of resources are all forms of managerial participation. The extent to which managers at the national electricity provider participate in the political process is questionable. If managers were to effectively participate in the political system, this could help in the creation of a conducive work environment. Managerial participation is akin to managerial support which helps in creating positive perceptions by employees

towards their managers. At the national electricity provider, employees have a negative perception towards their managers ultimately destroying a productive working relationship. Walter et al. (2011:294) argue that when employees perceive their immediate manager as leading by example, giving them the support needed to do the job well. The unique contribution of perceived manager support or participation by employees plays a major role in building a working relationship that defeats the breeding of negative politics. It is clear from the foregoing that managerial participation is a handy tool that can successfully harness negative politics. Gomez and Rossen (cited by Walter et al., 2011:294) argue that a high quality relationship between a manager and employee breeds a positive psychological empowerment that gives no room for negative political tendencies in an organisation.

## **5.10 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Organisational politics has proved to be an important part of public organisations with the potential of taking the organisation to the next level or reaping it apart if unsuccessfully managed. Managers at the national electricity provider have decimally failed to provide ideal managerial measure which, according to the finding of the study, has contributed to the current electricity outages. The article recommends the following managerial practices as means of minimising negative political behaviours:

- Interacting with all the employees as well as with the internal and external stakeholders so as to acquire information on what is best for the organisation
- Holding periodic formal and informal meetings with employees as well as with other senior managers
- Strive to uphold fairness and transparency in all matters of management, ranging from recruitment, selections, promotions and distribution of resources
- Encouraging a win-win situation when handling political issues while prepared to taking and/or encouraging compromises when it matters most
- Striving to provide managerial support, involvement and participation all the time while returning responsibility and accountability
- Striving to use contemporary management approaches as a means of achieving management excellence

- Promoting the establishment of alliances

### **5.11 SUMMARY**

Organisational politics is inevitable and therefore prevails in almost every entity that has people. The article was both literature and empirically based which sought to investigate managerial practices for reducing negative politics. Empirically, the article identified managerial fairness and managerial participation as questionable practices by managers at the electricity provider. Managers need to improve on these practices as they provide hope to effectively reduce negative politics. The improvement should take the form of fostering fairness and comprehensively participating in the political organisational life of the power utility.

The following chapter is the final of the study. It comprehensively presents the conclusions and recommendations of the study.

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# CHAPTER 6

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the conclusions and recommendations of the study as well as the scope for further research. The study sought to determine employee perceptions of organisational politics that tend to negatively affect management practices at the national electricity provider in a Southern African Development Community country (SADC). In order to deal with the perceptions of organisational politics, the study examined various factors on organisational politics. Finally, in this chapter the study offers mechanisms on how to reduce negative political behaviour. In addition, as summary measure, the results obtained in this study are combined to provide an overview of organisational politics by means of a conceptual framework. Such a framework can assist managers in comprehending political behaviour clearer in an organisation setting.

In line with the primary goal of the study which was to explore the perceptions of organisational politics and its impact on management practices, the research objectives of the study were:

- Explore the nature and extent of organisational politics at the national electricity provider;
- Identify and measure the perceptions of employees of organisational politics at the national electricity provider;
- Determine the positive and negative effects of organisational politics at a national electricity provider;
- Investigate managerial practices to minimise negative politics at a national electricity provider; and to

- Make recommendations for future research on the management of organisational politics at the national electricity provider.

In an effort to address the above objectives, various scientific articles provided insight on the formulation of a conceptual framework that leads to the clearer understanding of the political behaviour at the national electricity provider. The following section discusses the conceptual framework which is illustrated in Figure 6.1 in section 6.2.5.

## **6.2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR MANAGERS AT THE NATIONAL ELECTRICITY PROVIDER**

Figure 6.1 comprehensively present the factors regarding organisational politics perceptions. The perceptions signify employees' thoughts regarding the actual causes of political behaviour at the national electricity provider and the resultant effect of such causative factors as well as the managerial action needed to quell off the negative tendencies of such political behaviour in order to bring harmony to the organisation. Chapters 3 to 5 empirically explored these factors in greater detail. Figure 6.1, therefore, provides a conceptual framework for dealing with political behaviour at the national electricity provider. Political behaviour, to a large extent defeats the organisation's efforts; therefore understanding its causative factors equips managers with the right tools to manage its negative tendencies as reflected in figure 6.1.

### **6.2.1 Article 1**

Article one investigated the political environment at the national electricity provider. The government, managers, board of directors and employees were identified as the main players in the political environment. The article identified both individual and organisational goals as a centrifugal component for igniting organisational politics. The biographical profile of the national electricity provider's workforce relevant to the study is provided as it would assist in better understanding political behaviour at the national electricity provider.

### **6.2.2 Article 2**

The second article explored employee perceptions of organisational politics in which four factors were identified by means of exploratory factor analysis. The factors include:

- Managerial behaviour
- Poor communication of objectives
- Unexpected employee behaviour
- Unhealthy managerial practices

Based on the explained variance of each of the four factors, it became evident that organisational politics is prevalent at the national electricity provider and that employees are deeply dissatisfied with the nature of politics. This is largely due to the following realities: Firstly, there are various factors perceived by employees as contributing to organisational politics with unsupportive managerial behaviour featuring quite high. Managers are expected to lead organisational processes in a manner that successfully reduces dysfunctional politics. Secondly, the issue of poor communication of objectives which is related to overall organisational goals is also seen as contributing to organisational politics at the national electricity provider. The high factor loadings (which range from .891 to .539) and the goodness of fit as depicted by the cumulative variance of the above factors (in excess of 60%) confirm the preceding findings. It is therefore clear that organisational politics is abundantly prevalent at the national electricity provider.

### **6.2.3 Article 3**

The third article investigated the effects of organisational politics and three factors were extrapolated by exploratory factor analysis. These factors are:

- Positive departmental actions;
- Negative employee actions; and
- Personal consequences.

It is clear from the explained variances of each factor that political behaviour leads to either positive or negative actions on the part of the workforce that tend to affect managerial practices and operations at the national electricity provider. The following

realities exist which highlight the aspects of positive departmental actions, negative employee actions and personal consequences. The high factor loadings (which range from .903 to .721) and the goodness of fit as depicted by the cumulative variance of the above factors (in excess of 60%) confirm the preceding findings. All the three factors indicate that organisational politics at the national electricity provider has the potential to either improve or destroy the organisation.

#### **6.2.4 Article 4**

Article four is the final one for the study. The article focuses on practices for minimising organisational politics at the national electricity provider while consolidating on the positive political behaviours in order to ultimately improve productivity at the national electricity provider. Two factors were identified by exploratory factor analysis. These factors are:

- Managerial fairness; and
- Managerial participation.

It is evident from the explained variance of each factor that managerial involvement is very critical in order to reduce organisational politics at the national electricity provider. The following realities exist which highlights the aspects of managerial fairness and managerial participation as prerequisite measures adopted by managers in order to reduce negative political behaviour. The high factor loadings (which range from .932 to .654) and the goodness of fit as depicted by the cumulative variance of the above factors (in excess of 60%) confirm the preceding findings. These two factors indicate that managerial practices at the national electricity provider need to be supportive of organisational processes in order to reduce negative political behaviour and build on the positive aspects of politics.

#### **6.2.5 Organisational politics managerial model (OPMM)**

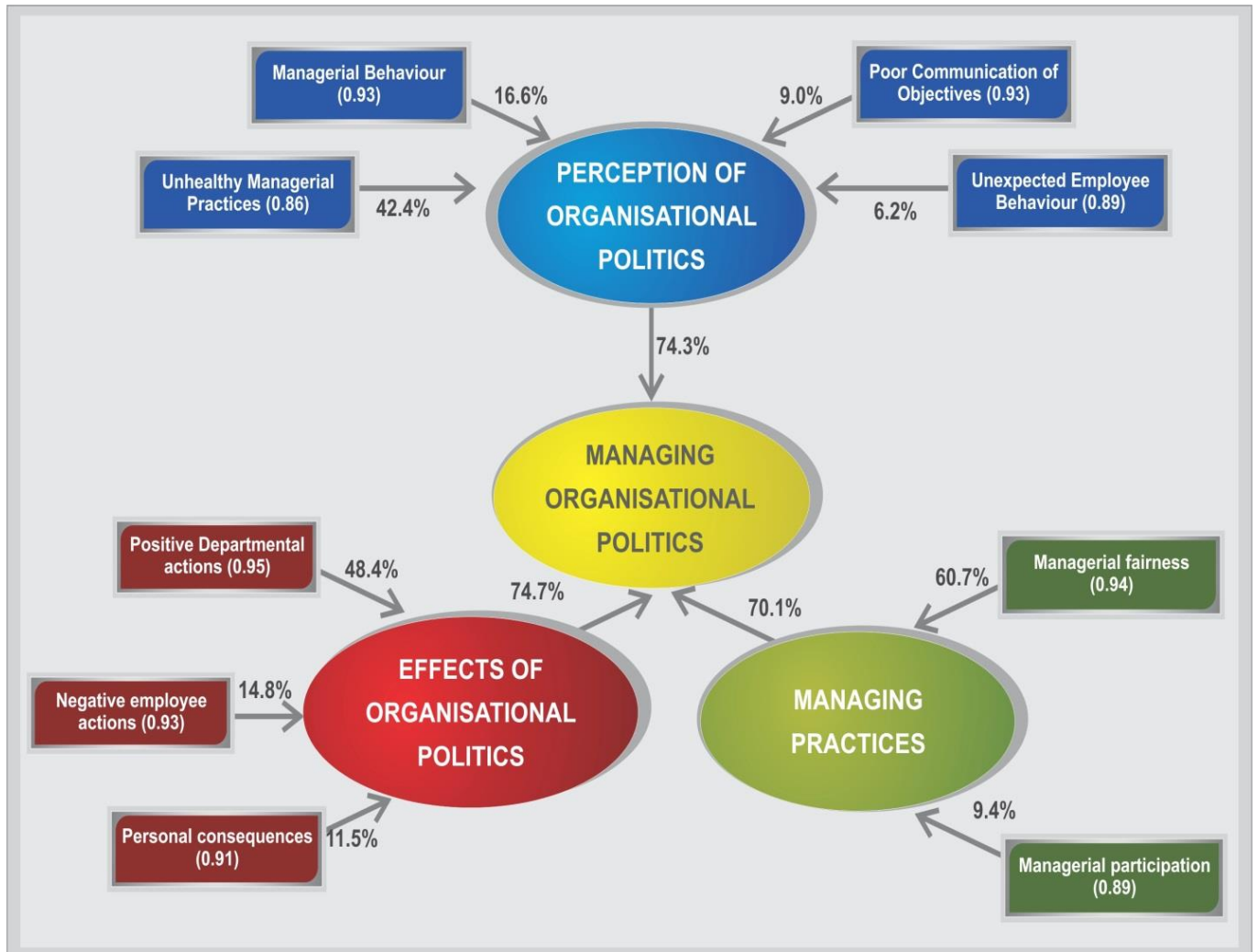
The prevalence of organisational politics at the national electricity provider contributes to the organisation's reduced capacity to discharge its statutory obligations of generating the much needed electrical power for the economy. Managerial and

employee's meddling in organisational politics have been identified through the theoretical review process as the major cause of organisational politics with goal incongruence as the centrifugal political component. Managerial behaviour, poor communication of objectives, unexpected employee behaviour and unhealthy managerial practices have been identified as the main causative factors of political behaviour. Resident in these factors are aspects related to resource distribution, communication, decision making, gossiping, backstabbing and termination of employment contract as some of the examples of political activities. The findings from the empirical study revealed high levels of employee dissatisfaction regarding organisational political issues. By and large, political behaviour at the electricity provider presents more damaging effects.

The consolidated result emanating from the study in the four articles is a comprehensive framework that highlights the causes of organisational politics (political behaviour) at the national electricity provider and the effect of incapable managerial intervention in reducing negative political behaviour. The conceptual framework developed in this study provides a basis for successful minimisation of negative political behaviours at the national electricity provider and possibly for adoption by other national electricity providers across the SADC region. However, as concluded in article three of the study, organisational politics has negative implications that far outweigh the positive ones, hence article four concludes by providing managers with means to minimise such negative implications with an overall objective to improve employee performance levels ultimately improving the capacity of the power utility to generate more electrical power.

Figure 6.1 below presents a summary of the sources/causes and effects of political behaviour as well as the innumerable factors leading to a politicised work environment at the national electricity provider. It also adds considerable value to the study by not only showing the identified and confirmed factors, but it also adds to the relative importance to each of the factors and its sub factors to political behaviour minimization. Figure 6.1 comprehensively show these factors and sub factors as a consolidated approach for minimising political behaviour in national electricity providers.

**FIGURE 6.1: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK TO MANAGE ORGANISATIONAL POLITICS**



Source: Own compilation

## **6.3 CONCLUSIONS**

The conclusions and recommendations for the study are presented in numerical order, meaning that Recommendation 1 follows the conclusion drawn in Conclusion 1.

### **6.3.1 Research Methodology**

The research methods and statistical analyses used in all the four articles of the study were appropriate and the results yielded were valid. North-West University provided the statistical consultation services to test the validity of results of the study. The following discussion proves the point why the research methodology was effective.

#### **CONCLUSION 1:**

Firstly, the use of a relevant and sound literature review sets the stage of the study as well as providing a good foundation that successfully contextualises the background information for the development and execution of the rest of the study as envisaged in all the articles. It provides an in-depth understanding of the research problem as well as the theoretical framework for the causes of organisational politics at the national electricity provider and the impact it has on managerial practices.

#### **CONCLUSION 2:**

The use of theory is a build up to the construction of a research instrument. The literature review provided the basis for good directions on the structure of the questionnaire as well as identification of the various items that needed to be measured. It is concluded that the use of relevant theory is very important in constructing a research instrument for the empirical study.

#### **CONCLUSION 3:**

The statistical analysis showed that the identified constructs such as perceptions of organisational politics, the effects of organisational politics and managerial practices for reducing negative politics and others (see figure 6.1) could be validated. The factor analysis either confirmed the construct and its measuring items, or identified sub-factors within the construct. In all instances, relative importance was calculated (variance

explained and factor loadings), while reliability (Cronbach Alpha), suitability for multivariate analysis (Bartlett) and sample adequacy (Kaiser, Meyer and Olkin) added to conclude that the research instrument compiled from the literature provided a valid questionnaire. Specifically, the empirical validation of the data consisted of:

1. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy showed that the variables in this study were strong enough to utilise factor analysis. The large KMO values in this study indicated that the sample size was very appropriate therefore the factor analysis for this particular sample was reliable. Therefore the KMO test confirmed the adequacy of the sample size, making the results more valid.
2. Cronbach Alpha coefficients were calculated for each factor. The results indicated that there was a high degree of reliability and internal consistency among the items implying that the results were not only valid but that it would be appropriate to use this test in similar studies undertaken.
3. The Bartlett's test of sphericity was also appropriate for this study as it yielded p-values smaller than 0.0001. This indicated that the correlation between the variables was sufficient for factor analysis.

It can therefore be concluded that the questionnaire and the data were reliable and valid.

#### **CONCLUSION 4:**

The sample selected and the collection of data by means of a questionnaire proved to be effective. Data was collected from the head office population. It also allowed for the collection of data from a relatively large number of cases at a particular time making it cost effective and less time consuming. Also, the sample was statistically proven to be adequate by the KMO analysis.

### **CONCLUSION 5:**

- A Statistical specialist and a specialised analysis tool (SPSS V17) was used for the study ensured that no statistical errors exist in the empirical results. Besides the support provided throughout the study, the use of an expert from the Statistical Department of North-West University, ensured correctness of the analysis. It can therefore be concluded that the use of such expert and the specialised statistical software made the whole research process credible.

### **6.3.2 Results**

Regarding the results, the following conclusions can be made:

### **CONCLUSION 6:**

From the results, it is confirmed that organisational politics at the national electricity provider consists of nine constructs (see figure 6.1). All nine of these constructs are vital since they all have proportional values which show their influence on the perceptions of organisational politics. None of the constructs has low values. It can therefore be concluded that all these constructs are vital in understanding organisational politics perceptions and its impact on managerial practices.

### **CONCLUSION 7:**

Within these nine constructs, there are sub-factors to deal with. The values relative to these sub-factors as contributors to the factors are also vital as it also shows their relative value to the perceptions of organisational politics and its impact on managerial practices (albeit through the construct it resides within). It is therefore concluded that these sub-factors are also significant indicators of organisational politics at the national electricity provider.

### **CONCLUSION 8:**

Almost all the factors and the sub-factors are reliable and should represent itself in similar studies on perceptions of organisational politics and its impact on managerial

practices. All the sub-factors have a high reliability coefficient. It can therefore be concluded, that the results obtained from the analysis could be regarded as reliable.

### **CONCLUSION 9:**

The significance of the study as summarised by figure 6.1, provides a clear road map by means of the newly created conceptual framework on political behaviour at the national electricity provider. It can be finally concluded that the conceptual framework is a valuable tool in understanding and conceptualising the concept of organisational politics at a national electricity provider in the SADC region; in particular at the Zimbabwean national electricity provider and that the framework strives to successfully champion the implementation of managerial practices for reducing the prevalence of negative political behaviour

## **6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The recommendations follow the same numerical sequence as in the conclusions. Therefore, they should be interpreted in line with the matching conclusions.

### **6.4.1 Research methodology**

Regarding the research methodology the following recommendations are made:

#### **RECOMMENDATION 1:**

The theoretical base emanating from an in-depth literature review of the study is very important. It is thus recommended that this methodology be used by future researchers because it sets the stage for scientific founded research to follow, for example, the articles. This recommendation is especially recommended in the case of an article-format research document (such as a doctoral thesis or master's dissertation).

#### **RECOMMENDATION 2:**

The successful use of the questionnaire that was compiled by means of a literature review is evident from the statistical analysis. Therefore, the use of theory to compile a

measuring instrument is highly recommended. This is especially true in the case where no existing research instruments are available to use.

### **RECOMMENDATION 3:**

The statistical analysis showed that the questionnaire that was constructed from theory yielded excellent empirical results and explained high variances and reliability coefficients. This success in questionnaire construction then leads to the following recommendations:

1. Questionnaires should be strongly based on theory, as it provides both structure and content;
2. The 5 point Likert-scale proved to be successful in collecting perceptual information from the respondents; and
3. The statistical techniques used in this study are suitable and scientifically sound to:
  - 3.1 determine the reliability of data;
  - 3.2 statically ensure that the sample is adequate
  - 3.3 eliminate the dangers multicollinearity and interrelationships between the variables; and to
  - 3.4 confidently apply factors analysis to extract underlying dimensions within the data set.

It is therefore recommended that future researchers can confidently adopt the research analyses employed in this study when planning similar studies.

### **RECOMMENDATION 4:**

Emanating from conclusion 4 (and strongly backed by conclusion 3 and its matching recommendations), it could be recommended that:

1. Random sampling as a sampling strategy can be employed especially within financial and time constraints as limiting factors; and
2. Sample adequacy should be statistically confirmed by means of the KMO test for sample adequacy.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 5:**

It is recommended that future researchers make use of experts in both statistical analysis and also in specialised statistical software package. Besides the reasons stated above, adhering to this recommendation provides a flawless empirical research process.

#### **6.4.2 Results**

The recommendations pertaining to the results are:

#### **RECOMMENDATION 6:**

In addressing the respective constructs it is important to take note of each one's importance. It is therefore recommended that:

1. Constructs with highest relative importance (values) should be given the most managerial attention; and
2. It should be done within the framework of knowing that all of the constructs are important although some are just more than others. Therefore, the recommendation extends to the effort being given that none of the constructs should be neglected in managerial intervention.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 7:**

Managers should also consider the nine constructs that pose as sub-factors. Although they are of lower importance, these sub-factors are important and should not be ignored. It is thus recommended that:

1. Sub-factors should be given specific managerial attention as they add up to the construct. By giving them attention, the construct itself will be corrected.
2. The relative importance of sub-factors should also be considered when addressing them. Some are less important than others. Managerial focus should be more directed at the areas where the most return is expected, therefore more important sub-factors should receive priority.

### **RECOMMENDATION 8:**

The final recommendation is that the conceptual framework be:

1. employed as a tool to understand the perceptions of organisational politics at the national electricity provider;
2. put to practical use in addressing both negative and positive political behaviours at the national electricity provider;
3. applied to scientifically equip managers with correct managerial measures for reducing negative political behaviours; and the
4. focus of further research.

#### **6.4.3 General observations and recommendations**

Stemming from the inability of the role-players at the national electricity provider to implement organisational politics coping mechanisms, both short term and long term, it is paramount that the role-players take drastic steps to review existing policies to offset the negative tendencies of political behaviour that have almost turned the national electricity provider incapable of generating adequate electrical power. The policy framework regarding political behaviour engagement must involve all players. This would mark the beginning of concerted efforts by all role-players of the organisation in harnessing negative political behaviour while consolidating on the positive behaviours.

Therefore the following general recommendations are made:

1. Emphasis should be placed on engaging in consultative decision-making strategies that ensure a holistic approach to the decision-making process in order to reduce mistrust that can lead to negative political behaviour;
2. Political behaviour coping mechanisms should be work-shopped across the board;
3. Inculcate positive thinking across the board on organisational politics as the basis for providing constructive engagements as opposed to the negative connotations that usually go with it;
4. Implement effective communication strategies to dispel unorthodox means of communication such as gossiping, rumours and backstabbing that have a potential to breed negative political behaviour

5. Allow for the promotion of fairness and shun favouritism in every respect of organisational life and all work processes;
6. Apply contemporary management approaches such as the systems approach and teamwork in dealing with people issues in the day-to-day managerial practices; and

Finally, the Zimbabwean national electricity provider should support the efforts of role-players in the generation of electricity. The support should seek to improve the performance of all employees ultimately increasing productivity (A conducive work environment that can increase electricity generation capacity).

## **6.5 AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

Future research should focus on the following areas:

- An in-depth analysis of any one of the constructs in the conceptual framework (see figure 6.1) to further analyse and study the constructs identified within it;
- A stratified random sample design should be adopted in order to ensure sufficient representation of the different groups in the total population;
- A study with specific international comparative focus that aims to compare national electricity providers in SADC countries to countries with similar problematic conditions.

Despite the innumerable research thrusts by other academicians over the years on organisational politics, there is every reason to confidently express that this study serves as a turning point on *electrical power generation political behaviour research*. This study therefore serves as a springboard for future studies in other countries outside the SADC region.

## 6.6 SUMMARY

The study explored perceptions of organisational politics at the Zimbabwe national electricity provider. The study was presented in scientific article format with each article focusing on a specific sub-topic ready for publication in scientific journals, thus contributing to the body of knowledge. The study consists of an introductory chapter, four articles, and a final chapter. The four articles are:

- **Chapter 2: Article 1**

The objective of the first article was to explore the nature and extent of organisational politics at the national electricity provider. The article also sought to identify the main role players within the national electricity provider's political system. The article compiled a biographical profile of all the employees that participate in the study, thus setting the scene better analysis and interpretation of other articles that follow.

- **Chapter 3: Article 2**

The objective of the article was to identify and empirically measure the perceptions of organisational politics at the national electricity provider. A questionnaire consisting of twenty five items was administered to all the respondents. During the analysis, 3 items were discarded due to non-loading. Four factors were extracted explaining a 74.26 of total variance in data. The four factors showed acceptable alpha coefficients. The factors were labelled as: *Managerial behaviour*, *Poor communication of objectives*, *unexpected employee behaviour* and *Unhealthy managerial practice*.

The first factor extracted was *Managerial behaviour*. The factor dealt primarily with managers' behaviour with particular reference to aspects related to pushing the blame onto others, resolving infighting, criticising others and hiding of important information. *Managerial behaviour* plays an important role in dealing with political behaviour. The second factor extracted was *Poor communication of*

*objectives* and the loaded items dealt with rules, policies, employee targets objectives, employee goals and renewal of contracts. It is important to note that rules, regulations and objectives play a significant role in the organisation by creating a conducive working environment. *Unexpected employee behaviour* is the third factor and the loaded items dealt with backstabbing, gossiping, employee involvement and use of informal communication. The fourth factor focuses on unhealthy managerial practices. *Managerial practices* determine the future of the national electricity provider. The factor dealt with aspects related to favouritism, decisions making and support given to employee in order to achieve their targets.

- **Chapter 4: Article 3**

The objective of the third article was to investigate the effects of organisational politics at a national electricity provider. Three factors were extracted, explaining a variance of 74.65 of the total variance in the data. These three factors also showed an acceptable coefficient. The three factors extracted were: *Positive departmental actions*, *Negative employee actions* and *Personal consequences*. *Positive departmental actions* are very instrumental in an organisational setting as they stimulate motivation. This factor dealt with networking, handling of promotions, teamwork, problem solving and identification and goal setting as some of the items. *Negative employee actions* focused on infighting as a source of conflict, reduced performance, undermining trust and low production levels. Fortunately, employees at the Zimbabwe electricity provider recognise the presence of such negative tendencies *and do not* engage in such devious behaviours. *Personal consequences* negatively affect employee motivation leading to increased labour turnover and resignations. The factor also dealt to a large extent with infighting as leading to time wasting, disruption of work, stress and labour turnover.

- **Chapter 5: Article 4**

The objective of the article was to investigate managerial practices for minimising negative politics at a national electricity provider. Two factors were extracted, explaining a variance of 70.11 of the total variance in the data. These two factors also showed an acceptable coefficient. The two factors extracted were managerial participation and managerial fairness. Managerial participation is imperative to the success of an organisation in that it exhibits the extent to which managers are involved in the day to day managerial matters of the organisation. The factor dealt with use of external and internal experts in resolving conflict, neutrality, the use of teamwork and making compromise decisions on the part of the manager. Managerial fairness is also a key factor influencing motivation levels of employees at the national electricity provider. The factor dealt with the employment of cronies, upholding of transparency, holding of meetings and the equitable distribution of resources.

In conclusion the study has successfully identified the causes of organisational politics from a wide spectrum within the Zimbabwe electricity provider with particular reference to the causes and impact of political behaviour on managerial practices and the overall effect on the organisation's ability to generate adequate electrical power for the economy. The study presents a conceptual framework to the body of knowledge which could assist in minimising negative political behaviour while consolidating on the positive aspects of politics

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# APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE

## INSTRUCTIONS

My name is Emmanuel Mutambara, currently studying for PhD degree program with North – West University. As part of the requirements for the completion of the course, I am required to submit a thesis to the academic council of the university. The study seeks to investigate the impact of organisational politics on management practices with particular reference to the electricity authority of Zimbabwe. The study aims to help improve management's ability to handle negative organisational politics. Therefore this questionnaire requires your views, feelings, opinions and perceptions on the electricity authority. I therefore kindly request you to complete the attached 7 page questionnaire which should take about 10 – 15 minutes of your valuable time. I would like to assure my total commitment to upholding confidentiality on all the information provided by you. Please answer truthfully.

## PART 1: DEMOGRAPHICS

### 1: SECTION A: BIOGRAPHIC DATA

Tick (✓) the appropriate response in the space provided.

#### 1.1: Age

Below 20 years	1
20 – 29 years	2
30 – 39 years	3
40 – 49years	4
50 – 59 years	5
60 years and over	6

### 1.2: How long have you been working for ZESA?

0 – 1 year	1
2- 5 years	2
6 – 10 years	3
11 – 15 years	4
15 or more years	5

### 1.3: Gender

Male	1
Female	2

### 1.4 Your highest qualification

Below Matric	1
Matric	2
Certificate	3
Diploma	4
Undergraduate Degree	5
Honours/B Tech	6
Masters	7
PhD	8
Other.....	9

### 1.5 Your position in the organisation

Senior Management	1
Middle Management	2
Lower Management	3
Electrician	4
Office Administration	5
Clerical Work	6
General Work	7
Other.....	8
Specify	

## PART 2: PERCEPTIONS OF ORGANISATIONAL POLITICS

This section seeks to gather views of employee of ZESA on how they perceive organisational politics. **All the questions in this section regard ZESA.** Please put a tick (√) in the applicable box to rate your level of agreement. Mark one box only for each question

### 2.1 PERCEPTIONS OF ORGANISATIONAL POLITICS AT ZESA

No.	Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	In this department employees views are upheld					
2.	In this department backstabbing is common					
3.	In this department gossiping is a common phenomenon.					
4	The department relies on informal communication for advertising new positions					
5	The department relies on informal communication for inviting employees to staff meetings					
6	In this department managers make decisions that derail the organisation					
7	The central government controls the department					
8	In this department favouritism is common					
9	In this department handing important information is common					
10	In this department it is common to push blame on other					
11	In this department criticism among peers is common					
12	In this department peers support each other					
13	In this department, infighting among employees is common					

14 In your opinion, what are the causes of infighting amongst employees within the department?

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15 comment on whether the level of infighting within the department is productive or counter productive

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16	Decisions are made through consultations					
17	Promotions are based on favouritism					
18	Employees feel that they can accomplish personal goals					
19	Employees are not sure of whether their employment contracts can be renewed					
20	Employees are not sure of what their targets are					
21	Employees are not sure of how to achieve targets					
22	This department does not have clear objectives					
23	In this department managers decisions are upheld					
24	The department is regulated by rules					
25	The department is regulated by policies					

Provide any other perceptions of organisational politics:

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## 2.2: EFFECTS OF ORGANISATIONAL POLITICS

No.	Item	Strongly Disagree	Agree	neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
26	In this department there is job satisfaction					
27	This department is productive					
28	The department promotes change					
29	The department identifies problems					
30	The department makes effort to solve its problems					
31	The department plays an important role in promoting growth					
32	The department promote networking					
33	The departments promotes teamwork					
34	The department has clear goals					
35	Infighting amongst employees of the same department promotes cohesion					
36	The department has high labour turnover					
37	Employees in the department are satisfied with their jobs					
38	Infighting amongst employees is time wasting					
39	Infighting amongst employees disrupt work activities					
40	Infighting amongst employees destroys teamwork					
41	Infighting amongst employees Leads to increased stress levels					
42	Infighting leads to reduced job performance					
43	Infighting is a source of problems in this department					
44	In this department important information is kept a secret					
45	Employees in this department are unproductive					
46	Infighting leads to internal conflict					
47	Infighting undermines trust among employees					

Any other comments \_\_\_\_\_

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**2.3: Management practices to minimise negative politics at ZESA.**

No.	Item	Not at all	Small extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
48	To what extent does management promote equitable distribution of resources?				
49	To what extent does management hold fairness when selecting employees?				
50	To what extent does management promote the employment of cronies in this department?				
51	To extent does management promote transparency in this department?				
52	To what extent does the department hold meetings?				
53	To what extent are meeting decisions implemented?				
54	To what extent does management uphold fairness in promotion of employees?				
55	To what extent does management consult on key players in the political circle?				
56	To what extent does management promote open communication?				
57	To what extent does management uphold fairness when resolving infighting amongst employees?				
58	To what extent does management avoid confrontation with employees?				
59	To what extent does management promote unity amongst employees				
60	To what extent does management				

	encourage compromise?				
61	To what extent does management make compromise decisions when handling infighting?				
62	To what extent does management promote teamwork?				
63	To what extent does management promote neutrality when resolving infighting amongst employees?				
64	To what extent does management utilise external experts when resolving infighting among employees?				
65	To what extent does management utilise internal experts when resolving infighting amongst employees?				

66 Provide any other comments on management practices for reducing negative organizational politics

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67 Recommendations

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**THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME!**

# APPENDIX B: LETTER OF PERMISSION FROM THE ZIMBABWE ELECTRICITY SUPPLY AUTHORITY (ZESA)



## ZESA HOLDINGS (PRIVATE) LIMITED

HEAD OFFICE  
ELECTRICITY CENTRE, 25 SAMORA MACHEL AVENUE, HARARE  
P.O. BOX 377, HARARE  
TELEPHONE: 774491/9, 774508/35  
FAX: 774542, 774543, 753520

DM/pn

OUR REF .....

YOUR REF .....

WHEN CALLING WITH REFERENCE  
TO THIS LETTER PLEASE ASK FOR

..... *Mr. D. Maviva* .....

25 June 2013

Mr Emmanuel Mutambara  
Management College of Southern Africa  
26 Samora Machel Street  
Durban  
**SOUTH AFRICA**

Dear Sir

### **BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION THESIS: PhD STUDIES: SELF**

Reference is made to your letter dated 10<sup>th</sup> June 2013 requesting permission to undertake a PhD degree covering National electricity providers in the Southern African Development Community.

Permission is hereby granted for you to undertake your study, subject to you taking information received from the organization as confidential. You will also be required to provide a copy of your research document to the organization on completion. We take this opportunity to wish you success in your study program.

Yours faithfully

  
**D MAVIVA**  
**MANAGEMENT SERVICES OFFICER**

## APPENDIX C: LETTER FROM LANGUAGE EDITOR

October 14, 2013



To whom it may concern

**Re: Letter of confirmation of language editing**

The PhD thesis "*Perceptions of organisational politics and its impact on managerial practices at the National electricity provider in the Southern African Development Community (SADC)*" by Emmanuel Mutambara (23385189) was language, technically and typographically edited. The sources and referencing technique applied was checked to comply with the NWU Harvard reference style. The dissertation is written in English (UK). Final corrections and printing layout remains the responsibility of the student.

**Antoinette Bisschoff**

Officially approved language editor of the NWU  
Member of SA Translators Institute (SATI) Member no. 1001891