

## Investigating Managerial Practices to Minimise Negative Organisational Politics at the Zimbabwean National Electricity Provider

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**ABSTRACT** The present research investigates managerial practices for reducing negative politics at a national electricity provider in a Southern African Development Community (SADC) country. The study is triggered by rive organisational politics that has rendered the national electricity provider dysfunctional and less productive over the years. The present research 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 Olkin (K-M-O) 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 present research paper recommends for a comprehensive managerial support strategy that encompass 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, proceeding forward continuously.

### 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. Shumba (2014) acknowledged that Zimbabwe's electricity crisis continues to worsen as load shedding has become the order of the day with most key industries that includes mining, agriculture and tourism being negatively affected. Zimbabwe presently generates 1,300 megawatts of electricity which is way short of daily national requirements of about 2,200 megawatts (Matimair 2014). Matimair (2014) viewed that the national electricity provider estimates to generate 6, 200 megawatts in the next decade to sufficiently power the economy but due to organisational politics meddling within the organisation, the challenge may remain a tall order. 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 substantial reasons 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 advancing forward. A case in point is where the current Zimbabwean government has appointed officials whose expertise and experience is questionable in terms of competently managing the affairs of a technical massive organisation such as the national electricity provider by Zimbabwean standards (Staff Reporter 2014). Negative political interferences at the national electricity provider dates back to two decades suggesting that political bickering within was a challenge and is still a real challenge for the utility provider. Evidentially, the suppressed industrial action and the rive politicised working relationship amongst senior managers and

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the board of directors then which led to the suspension of the general manager at the Hwange power plant, the largest power station in the country, triggered an immediate reduction of electricity generation capacity (Muleya 2005).

In brief, the paper 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 present study recommends ideal managerial measures to successfully harness negative political behaviours.

It is critical to note that the national electricity provider is a massive state – owned organisation whose task is to generate, transmit, and distribute electricity across the entire country. For nearly two decades the electricity provider has struggled to provide adequate electrical power for the country, a development which has negatively affected the economic growth of the country. Electrical power cuts, known as “Load shedding”, have become too common, denting the once vibrant economy (Muleya 2005). To date, there is little hope that the country’s electrical power generation capacity will improve in the near future as echoed by Zimbabwe’s minister of energy then, Mangoma when he said that load shedding was bound to worsen in 2012 and beyond citing the none 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 the national electricity provider as a grave political mistake to an already resource stricken electricity provider (Walter et al. 2012: 295). Muleya (2005) predicted years ago that boardroom fights and gross incompetence will contribute to electrical power crisis in future. As if this was not enough the national electricity provider appointed politicians to the board of governors to oversee the nine subsidiary companies attracting vicious public backlash citing inability of the new board to effectively run the utility company (Shumba 2014). Matimair (2014) highlights that political interference and policy setbacks in the energy sector may threaten the country’s bid to generate an estimated 6,200 megawatts in the next decade. Such political interference according to Matimair (2014) could degenerate into boardroom politics which have a potential to influence negative organisational politics within the national electricity provider.

For example, the national electricity provider succumbed to political pressure, a form of negative organisational politics leading to the cancellation of debts amounting to \$170 million, despite being owed in excess of \$600 million by rate payers (Moyo 2013).

### Problems Statements

The national electricity provider has been marred by negative organisational politics rendering it unproductive over the past two decades (Matimair 2014). A case in point which marked the birth of negative politics at the national electricity was the rive politicized working relationship amongst senior managers and the board of directors then which led to the suspension of the then general manager of the biggest power station, triggering an immediate reduction on electricity supply (Muleya 2005). Boardroom squabbles, employee strikes, suspensions and employees discharge, government involvement, whistle blowing and image tarnishing are some of the indications of negative politics that have rendered the national electricity provider ineffective ultimately affecting its 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 improving the general livelihood of citizens by providing the much needed electrical power and light for domestic purposes. To this end, the government allocates substantial budgets and appoints qualified managers to oversee and manage such a strategic massive organisation. For example in 2013, the budget allocation was 72 million dollars, an allocation huge enough to take the power utility to the next level. Contrary, the national power utility is engulfed in organisational politics matters. Shumba (2014) viewed that the current power generation crisis experienced by the national electricity provider could be a result of negative political interferences and the inability by the managers to deal with such political pressures. Drory and Vigoda (2011: 195) argue that organizational politics breeds meaningful positive outcomes only if managers proactively deal with it. The paper therefore investigates managerial practices for minimising negative politics.

## Objectives

The primary objective of the research paper 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.

## 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) viewed 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) argued 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) concurs with Brenner (2005) when they view organisational politics as illegitimate political behaviour such as sabotaging and whistle blowing that violate the implied rules within the organisation, thus sabotaging and whistle blowing implies the dirty tricks eluded by Brenner (2005) above.

Griffin and Moorhead (2009: 442- 443) posit that politics becomes negative when the motive behind the political behaviour is to undermine the organisation or the individual. Griffin and Moorhead (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 em-

ployees 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) posited 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 noted 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 an instance, the suspension of the then general manager of the biggest electrical power station situated in Hwange, Mr Gwariro, was predicted some year 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; as evidence, advertisements for key positions are often advertised to selected employees. Tan (2009) provided the following as examples of negative politics;

- ♦ Back stabbing and lack of team spirit;
- ♦ Pushing the blame on to 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 developments obtaining at the national electricity provider fit squarely with the above where backstabbing, pushing the blame and faulty finding are riving incidents at the national electricity provider.

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 (Witt 1998).

### **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) argued that managing negative politics doesn't 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.

### ***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) posited that communication both formal and informal is like blood to any organisation that serves as medium to distribute important information amongst the organisation's workforce thereby promoting a conducive political environment. Effective communication can simplify successful organi-

sation 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 (2007) underscores organisational communication as a management responsibility largely responsible for creating a positive atmosphere for all employees. Barter et al. (2010: 213) provided both vertical and horizontal communication as potential tools for an effective manager in mastering 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.

### ***Managerial Support***

Walter et al. (2011: 294) argued 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 and Greller 1994; Davies 2005) that since immediate managers are perceived as agents of organisation, their behaviours play critical roles in shaping the employee's 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 handy tool that can successfully harness negative politics. Gomez and Rossen (cited by Walter et al. 2011: 294) argued 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.

### ***Managerial Interaction***

George and Jones (2009) argued 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 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) provided networking and building trust through strategic alliances, upholding fairness, nurturing reliable, dependable and 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 that are focused on delivering results based on merit and performance, consulting key stakeholders prior to decision making, fostering accountability and responsible, encouraging a 'win-win' and belief in teamwork and maximising resource distribution.

### ***Managerial Effectiveness***

While managerial interaction cited above by (Horan 2208) 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 (2006), 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) posited 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 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) assert 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) posited that choices represent the opportunities which exist in the job that give the manager to act differently from what other managers are doing.

Analoui's (cited by Analoui 2010: 57) on managerial effectiveness in the public sector organisation in Ghana, made significant contributions to the paper 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 them and begin to weigh their effectiveness, skill relevancy, criteria of work effectiveness, motivation, conducting a SWOT analysis of the organisation as well as assessing their internal and external relationships.

### ***Managerial Participation/Involvement***

Managers have several ways of reducing negative organisational politics. Griffin and Morehead (2009: 397) provides 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.

In limiting the negative political behaviour, Griffin (2009: 399) provides the following as techniques: opening communication is one very effective technique for restraining the impact of political behaviour; for instance, with open communication the basis for allocating scarce resources will be known to everyone. This knowledge in turn, will tend to reduce the propensity to engage in political behaviour to acquire resources, because people already know how decisions will be made. Reducing uncertainty helps in creating certainty. It means people become aware of the actions that follow. Several of the reasons political behaviour occurs is due to none routine events, unstable environments and organisational change.

### ***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.

### ***Controlling Uncertainty***

George and Jones (2009: 616) viewed that 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 pause 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.

### ***Making Oneself Irreplaceable***

George and Jones (2009: 616) confirmed 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.

### ***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 powerful, thus enabling them to politically manoeuvre.

### ***Generating Resources***

Resources are crucial to any organisation and a manager who generate resources more than

any other member in the organisation gains respect. Organisations needs 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

#### *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.

#### **Political Strategies for Exercising Power in Order to Redress Negative Politics**

George and Jones (2009: 619) posit that politically skilled managers not only have 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 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 politicized work environment. The issue to remember is to ease into it, if possible, understands 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.

#### **METHODOLOGY**

The present research paper investigates managerial practices to minimise negative politics at the national electricity provider. The empirical results of the present research paper are presented thematically in accordance to 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 the Kaiser, Meyer and Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (K-M-O) measure were performed (Field 2007: 619). Large values of the Kaiser-Meyer-Oklin (K-M-O) measure suggest that factor analysis of the variables is a good idea (Bisschoff et al. 2012). The inverse is also true as the K-M-O also supplies vital information when not to use factor analysis. For values smaller than 0.5, the factor analysis is considered inappropriate. K-M-O 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 2009: 26) as cited in (Bisschoff et al. 2012). Field (2007: 640) posit that values between 0.7 and 0.8 are considered good while the 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 (Coakes and Steed 1997 as cited in Bisschoff et al. 2012). The acceptable 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 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.

## RESULTS

### KMO and Bartlett's test

The Bartlett test of sphericity and the Kaiser, Meyer Olkin (K-M-O) measure of sampling adequacy was performed and results are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: The KMO and Bartlett Test**

<i>KMO and Bartlett's Test</i>		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin	Measure of sampling adequacy	.943
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-square	4446.486
	Df	120
	Sig.	0.000

The K-M-O measure returned a value of 0.943, indicating that the sample is adequate while the Bartlett's test of sphericity also returned favourable value which is less than the required of 0.05. This means that the data collected from the sample is suitable to subject to multivariate statistical techniques such as exploratory factor analysis.

### Exploratory Factor Analysis

The exploratory factor analysis identified two factors by means of an Orthogonal Varimax rotation. According to Field (2007: 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). Table 2 indicates that in total 16 of the 18 items loaded onto three factors. Resultantly, only two statements (53 and 54) were discarded since they did not load onto a specific factor with a factor loading of 0.40 or higher. In addition, two factors could be extracted from the data.

#### *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 under factor 1 deal with managerial fairness, hence the factor is labelled as managerial fairness. Statements 64, 63, 65, and 62 show very significant factor loadings of 0.80 or higher. This suggests that these statements are regarded as very significant by the respon-

**Table 2: Factor loadings: Managerial practices to minimise negative politics**

<i>Statement</i>	<i>NO</i>	<i>Factors</i>	
		<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>
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 compromise decision 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
% of variance explained		60.70%	9.41%
Cumulative percentage		60.70%	70.12%

dents in relation to the extent to which managers exercise fairness as they manoeuvre in a politicized 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%. Griffin and Moorehead (2009: 397) provides 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 organizational; 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.

**Reliability**

Cronbach’s alpha determines the internal consistency or average correlation of items in a survey instrument to gauge its reliability (Wuenssch 2009: 9). For this paper, the minimum coefficient is set at  $\alpha \geq 0.70$  (Boshoff and Hoole 1998: 77; Statistica 2006). Table 3 reflects the reliability coefficients for all the three factors. It is clear from the table that both the factors have very satisfactory reliability coefficients which are in excess of 0.80. This exceeds the required reliability coefficient of 0.7 by far and shows excellent reliability and internal consistency of data pertaining to each factor.

**Table 3: Reliability statistics**

<i>Data sets</i>	<i>Cronbach's Alpha</i>
Factor 1	0.941
Factor 2	0.891

**DISCUSSION**

The aim of the paper was to investigate the managerial practices for minimising negative politics at the national electricity provider. The paper identified managerial fairness and managerial participation as managerial measures for reducing negative politics.

The national electricity provider has had unending erratic electrical power supplies which could be attributed to various reasons, chief among them, the failure by the senior managers to decisively deal with negative politics. Managers are thus strategically positioned they are at the centre of the political process and are therefore expected to rise above board by upholding fairness in all the managerial decisions they make.

The study revealed that managerial consultations, taking a neutral position in addressing political dilemmas, avoiding confrontation, promoting unity amongst the workforce, making compromising decisions, promoting teamwork as well as making use of outside experts were identified as effective managerial practices for minimising negative political behaviours. The study thus revealed that managers at the national electricity provider lacked on the effec-

tive managerial practices. A similar study by Koumakh and Ye (2014) found that managers ought to effectively communicate to ensure that information is largely diffused so that all the employees know how limited resources are allocated. Thus managerial communication was identified as a key factor in minimising negative political behaviour. Sibanda et al. (2014) viewed that lack of effective communication negatively affects organisational performance and overall organisational harmony.

Managerial participation, also regarded as managerial involvement was identified by the study as lacking. Holding staff meetings, promoting transparency, controlling the agenda and promoting equitable distribution of resources were identified as forms of managerial participation. The study revealed that managers did not adequately participate in harnessing dysfunctional politics. A similar study by Koumakh and Ye (2014: 10) illuminated that managerial participation is meant to punish dysfunctional political actions that includes favouritism. Benlioglu and Baskan (2014) argue that managers have an important role to influence a positive and productive working environment. If managers 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 a positive perception by employees towards their managers. The study further revealed that employees had a negative perception towards their managers ultimately destroying a productive working relationship. Benlioglu and Baskan (2014) 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. 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. Abbas and Raja (2014) argue that the relationship between a manager and employee breeds a positive psychological empowerment that gives no room to negative political tendencies in an organisation.

### CONCLUSION

Organisational politics is inevitable and therefore prevails in almost every entity that has people. The present study was both literature

and imperial based which sought to investigate managerial practices for reducing negative politics. Empirically, the study 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.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

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

- ♦ **Managerial Interaction:** Managers should effectively interact with employees and all stakeholders to create a better understanding within all members of the organisation.
- ♦ **Managerial Involvement in Staff Meetings:** Managers should hold periodic meetings with all employees where employees and managers share express their views on organisational processes, systems and procedures.
- ♦ **Managerial Fairness and Transparency:** The managers should be fair and transparent in all in all matters of management inclusive of recruitment, selection, promotions and distribution of resources.
- ♦ **Positive Managerial Politicking:** The managers should encourage a win-win outcome when addressing political conflicts while encouraging compromise outcome where necessary
- ♦ **Managerial Support:** The managers should support organisational processes through by taking a participative while returning responsibility and accountability.

In finality, it is clear that the electricity provider should devote active managerial energy in managing negative organisational politics inter-

nally in order to improve the organisational culture and productivity of its employees. Without conscious managerial energy the negative effects of organisational politics will not disappear nor will the valuable human capital be employed to its full extent.

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