

## Investigating the Effects of Organisational Politics at a National Electricity Provider in SADC Region

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**ABSTRACT** The present research investigates the effects of organisational politics. The research 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 for 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 research revealed that, organisational motivators, organisational demotivators, and labor turnover were common factors of organisational politics. The research recommends that managers and employees must be proactive in dealing with organisational politics. The reactivity must be encored 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.

### INTRODUCTION

Organisational politics is a reality which managers and employees usually grapple with and it affects organisational operations (Nyakayaramba and Mutimudye 2014). The challenges faced by managers of today, in implementing complex decisions demand that they be sophisticated with respect to dealing with the organisational politics (Cacciattolo 2014). Further, 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 (Sibanda et al. 2014). Thus, without sound political awareness and skills, organizations, that include the national electricity provider will continue to face the inevitable challenge of being immersed in bureaucratic infighting, parochial politics and destructive power struggles that affects 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 politi-

cal behaviors (Nyakayaramba and Mutimudye 2014).

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

The national electricity provider is a state – owned company owning task to generate, transmit, and distribute electricity in the entire country. For nearly two decades now the electricity provider has struggled to provide adequate electrical power for the country, a development which has negatively affected the economic growth of the economy (Matimaira 2014). Electrical power cuts known as “Load shedding” have dented the once vibrant economy of Southern Africa due to electrical power generation crisis (Shumba 2014). 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 current minister of energy, Mr. Mangoma, when he said that load shedding was bound to worsen in 2012 and beyond citing 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 organisational politi-

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cal mistake for an already resource stricken electricity provider (Tsimane 2013). In this regard, Muleya (2005) has already predicted years ago that boardroom fights and gross incompetence will contribute to electrical power crisis in future. Boardroom fights resembles 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 objective (McShane and 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 (2005), 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. Cacciattolo (2014) investigated that organizational politics is a characteristically a conflict ridden force between the organisation’s members that lead to low morale ultimately reducing job satisfaction and productivity. Several studies (Eisenhardt and Bourgeois 1988; Kumar and Ghandially 1989 as cited by Drory and Beaty 2010: 195) examined the negative effects of organisational politics on employee performance and concluded that power and influence were at the fulcrum 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 and Beaty 2010: 199; Morehead and Griffin 2009). The showdown between the stand - in managers and the suspended general manager had huge implications for the National Electricity provider (Muleya 2005) which lead to the exodus of skilled manpower at all ranks, thereby unleashing a demotivating environment and a reduced electricity generation capacity of below 40%.

### **Problem Statement**

The national electricity provider has a major role of uplifting the economy by generating the

electrical power for all industries of the country that include mining, manufacturing, tourism, agriculture and the service industry, as well improving the general livelihood of a country’s citizens by providing the much needed power and light for domestic purposes. In fact, the government allocates substantial budgets and appoints qualified managers to oversee and manage such a strategic state enterprise. Besides, in 2013 alone, 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. Evidentially, the suspension of senior managers, struggle for power, labour strikes and high labour turnover which many commentators and business analysts accuse of causing the serious power generation crisis that has persisted for nearly two decades now. Mintzberg (1989: 238) has identified organisational politics and stated that it reflects illegitimate force relations between the organisation’s members, which in turn, leads to low morale and ultimately reducing job satisfaction and productivity levels. 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) organizational politics has some meaningful positive outcomes. In the early years organisational politics was already an issue in the workplace years ago. In this regard, Gandz and Murray (1980) already posited back in 1980 that 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, because of these mixed views between positive and negative politics, the article, therefore, sought to investigate the negative and positive effects of politics at the national electricity provider taking into cognizance the prevailing struggle for power, positions and resources, employee’s suspensions, gossiping, favours in promotions as examples of political evidence at the electricity provider (Muleya 2005).

### **Objectives**

The primary objective of the research 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 findings ways to build on the positive effects of organisational politics.

### Positive and Negative Politics

Brenner (2005) viewed that, 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) in that they view organisational politics as any illegitimate political behaviour such as sabotaging and whistle blowing that violate the implied rules within the organization, thus sabotaging and whistle blowing implies the dirty tricks eluded by Brenner (2005) above. Griffin and Moorhead (2009: 442) define 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. However, it becomes negative when the motive behind the political behaviour is to undermine the organisation or the individual (Griffin and Moorhead 2009: 442).

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. Griffin and Moorhead (2003: 389) posit that lack of commitment, compliance and increased resistance by employees represents 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 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.

The negative organisational politics, as McShane and Glinow (2000: 383) viewed, represents 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, and 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 organization. Evidentially, the suspension of the then general manager of the biggest electrical power station, Noah 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; as an instance, advertisements for key positions are often advertised to selected employees, leaving out those who, who might be viewed as competent

but because of their unpopularity, they are left out. Tan (2009) also 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 common incidents at the national electricity provider.

In addition, Robbins et al. (2009: 358) provided 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 organizational goals and objectives, developing the right image for the organisation, gaining control of organizational resources, developing powerful allies, avoiding tainted members and always supporting the boss. In pursuit of positive organisational politics Tan (2009) argued that positive or constructive organisational politics doesn’t 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 an 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.

George and Jones (2009) argue that positive organizational 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 orient their actions toward those goals. Tan (2009) provided the following as examples of positive organizational 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.

### **The Effects of Organisational Politics**

Smith (2007) submitted that, organizational politics does have positive and negative effects to the organisations. Robbins et al. (2009: 363) argued that organizational 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 research conducted by Smith (2007) 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 research highlighted that increased political behaviour undermines trust between people at all levels in organisations, a mistrust caused by people cre-

ating their own hidden agendas and being encouraged to compete with one another rather than work collaboratively. The research 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 2007). The major findings of the research 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 2007).

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 (2000: 383) investigated that organizational politics is more of a problem than the benefits. The major concern is that organisational politics consume time and disrupt work activities. It is part and parcel of the process loss that occurs in team discussions and work dynamics. Witt (1998) 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 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 (2000: 383) explored 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) presents organisational politics as a threat to employees with decreased job satisfaction, increased anxiety

and stress, increased turn over and reduced performance. Robbins et al 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 "hows" and "whys" of organisational politics. Studies by McShane and Glinnow (2000: 383) revealed 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.

Put 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 didn't matter which values came in first place or last place. It only mattered that the patterns of rankings matched the supervisors' patterns. The findings of the research study were pretty amazing. 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.

Robbins et al. (2009) agreed that 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. Contrary, when understanding is low, individuals are more likely to see organisational politics as threat, which would have negative effects on performance. Second 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 opportunity

portunity, they often respond with defensive behaviours which are reactive and protective behaviours to avoid action, blame or change, a development which was prevalent and the national electricity between the board chairman and the CEO where the two were blaming another for the power utility's failure to implement an effective turnaround strategy

Nelson and Quick (2010: 177) commented that organisational politics is viewed negatively in the various organisations, yet it is not necessarily negative. 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. Some of the strategies are suctioned to the organisations while some are not. A political behaviour refers to actions that are not officially sanctioned by an organisation that are taken to influence others to meet one's personal goals. Sometimes personal goals are aligned to organisational goals, and they can be achieved in 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) argues 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) research 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) contented 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) eluded 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.

Though 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 adaptation 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. Chaudhary et al. (2010) observed that 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. George and Jones (2011) accepted that organisational politics can be dysfunctional to the organisation, but 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.

### METHODOLOGY

The present research study investigates the effects of organisational politics. The empirical results of the study are presented thematically in accordance to the questionnaire. Exploratory factor analysis as a 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) measure 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 (cited by 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 and Barkhuizen 2011).

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 KMO measure of sampling adequacy was performed and results are displayed in Table 1.

The KMO measure returned a value of 0.919, indicating that the sample is adequate. In addition, Table 1 shows that the Bartlett's test of sphericity also returned favourable value less than the required value of 0.005. It can therefore be concluded that there is no relationship between the variables, and that the data is suitable to be subjected to exploratory factor analysis.

### Exploratory Factor Analysis

The exploratory factor analysis identified three factors by means of Varimax rotation. Field (2005: 749) noted that, Varimax is a method of orthogonal rotation that attempts to maximise the dispersion of factor loadings by loading a smaller number of variable highly onto each factor resulting in more interpretable cluster of factors. Factor loadings of 0.40 and above are considered to be significant and used in the analysis (Statistica 2006). The factors and the criteria loading onto them are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 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 2.

### 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 department to reduce organisational politics and ensure a productive work environment. The factor is thus labelled as Positive organisational

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

<i>KMO and Bartlett's Test</i>		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of sampling adequacy		.919
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-square	6366.838
	Df	210
	Sig.	0.000

**Table 2: Factor loadings: Perceptions of organisational politics**

<i>Statements</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Factors</i>		
		<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>
The department promote networking	32	.903		
The department plays an important role in promoting growth	31	.863		
The department promote teamwork	33	.862		
The department make 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 t stress levels	41			.875
The department has high labour turnover	36			.721
% of variance explained		48.41%	14.78%	11.46%
Cumulative percentage		48.41%	63.19%	74.65%

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 factor explains a variance of 48.41%. Thus the finding is supported by Butcher and Clarke (cited by Gotsis and 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) posits that organisational politics influences employee motivation that result in overall improvement of organisational productivity.

#### **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 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. Tan (2009) found that 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, and drives away business opportunities

#### **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 these reflected factors loadings above 0.80 suggesting that the respondents regard them as very significant. The factor has a variance of



11.46%. This identified factor 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 (Gotsis and Kortezi 2011: 454).

### 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 research, 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 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.

**Table 3: Reliability statistics**

<i>Data sets</i>	<i>Cronbach's Alpha</i>
Factor 1	0.950
Factor 2	0.927
Factor 3	0.913

## DISCUSSION

The aim of the present research study was to investigate the effects of organisational politics at the national electricity provider. In the overall, the research revealed that organisational politics has both positive and negative effects. More specifically 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. It is observed that, while positive departmental actions strive to motivate employees, negative employee actions and personal consequences have overall counterproductive effects to the national electricity provider. In a similar study Nyikayaramba and Mutimudye (2014) argued that organisational politics is a reality which managers and employees usually grapple with because it

affects organisational systems, functions and procedures raising concerns as to how it can be integrated and consolidated as a strategy to enhance employee and management competence. Sibanda et al. (2014) identify employee engagement as either positively or negatively impacting on the organisation. Thus low levels of engagement lead to employee underperformance ultimately reducing organisational productivity. In support of this view Drory and Vigoda (2010: 195) highlight that 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 then general manager. According to Muleya (2005), the suspension of the then general was reported as partly contributing to the reduction of the electricity generation capacity. Muleya (2005) 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 and Vigoda 2010: 195), organisational politics reflect illegitimate force relations between the organisation's members that leads to low morale ultimately reducing job satisfaction and productivity. Several studies (Eisenhardt and Bourgeois 1988; Kumar and Ghandially 1989; Vigoda 2003 cited by Drory and Vigoda 2010: 195) examined the negative effects of organisational politics on employee performance and concluded that they have a de-motivational effect to the organisation.

The present research study also revealed the flip side of organisational politics, as the "positive actions" within an organisational setting. As put across by Bacharach et al. (cited in Drory and 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 employer. 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 and 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). It is observed that, 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 work workflows.

### CONCLUSION

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 a potential to promote continuous productivity. The present research revealed that organisational politics can be a playground of organisation's malfunctioning leading to low production levels if not effectively dealt with. Organizational de-motivators, organizational motivators and labour turnover were identified as critical constructs of organisational politics that have a 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 in the future.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

More than ever before, managers would agree that organisational politics make a critical difference when it comes to organisational performance, competitiveness and ultimately business success. 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. The present research revealed four (3) factors as prevalent at the national electricity provider. The factors are organisational motivators, organisational de-motivators and labour turnover.

It is evident from the research that organisational politics is inevitable and its effects are skewed to the negative than positive. Taking cognisance of the fact that organisational politics brings more harm than good, the present research study 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 demotivate employees thereby negatively impacting on the manager's organisational life on a daily base. Such a move will benefit managers in familiarising 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 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 the Presence of Organisational Politics:*** The managers should recognise the presence of organisational politics because do-

ing so can place them in a better position to manipulate successfully into, a more positive outcome.

**Networking:** The entire workforce inclusive of managers and employees should network. When employees and managers are networked, they work as a team and teamwork to a large extent defeats negative organisational politics as team members develop a collegial working relationship which is promotes organisational cohesion.

**Finding Key Players in the Political Game:** Managers should identify the key players in the political game and utilise them to good use. For example, troublesome employees can be given some key responsibilities in the organisation which may result in them shunning away from negative political tendencies

**Communicating Effectively to All Employees:** The study recommends for effective communication strategy inclusive of the entire workforce, thus, upwards, downwards, lateral and horizontal communication channels. In brief, the study recommends an open door policy as a measure of reducing negative political behaviour.

**Effective Allocation of Scarce Resources:** Allocation of scarce resources in a manner which does not promote negative political behaviour, thus organisational resources should be distributed/ shared equitably without any favour or bias. There should be clear systems in place regarding how, when and the rationale for allocating specific resources in an organisation to avoid misunderstandings.

**Providing a Supportive Organisational Climate:** The managers should create an organizational climate, that can keep the negative politicking practice away effectively. They can do so through leading by example, setting teamwork as well as rewarding those who promote positive politics

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