

Developing a conceptual managerial model to minimise organisational politics at State-owned electricity providers in emerging markets

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Keywords

Organisational politics, managerial behaviour, state-owned enterprise, electricity crisis, Zimbabwe, factor analysis, political behaviour, managerial effectiveness, SADC utilities.

Abstract

Electricity is a fundamental driver of economic development, yet state-owned electricity providers in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) have struggled with chronic power generation shortfalls for nearly three decades. This crisis, particularly pronounced in Zimbabwe, is increasingly attributed to rampant organisational politics. This study investigates employee perceptions and the effects of organisational politics on state-owned electricity utilities and explores managerial practices aimed at minimising such negative political behaviours. A quantitative research approach was adopted, using a structured Likert-scale questionnaire distributed to a randomly selected sample of 1,400 employees from a population of 2,210. Of the returned 358 questionnaires, 347 were valid, yielding a 24.78% effective response rate. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS 21.0, and exploratory factor analysis was performed to develop a conceptual framework. The results identified four key political behaviour factors: managerial behaviour, poor communication of objectives, unexpected employee actions, and unhealthy managerial practices. Additionally, three consequences of organisational politics and two clusters of managerial mitigation strategies – fairness and participation – were extracted. The study proposes a conceptual model to manage organisational politics in Zimbabwe's electricity sector, with potential applicability to other state-owned utilities across the SADC region. The model underscores the imperative for political sensitivity, transparent communication, and inclusive managerial practices to improve organisational performance and energy delivery.

Introduction

The world is in deep electricity generation crisis that dates to the 20th century (Guan, Yan, Shan, Zhou, Hang, Li, Liu, Nie, Bruckne, Feng & Hubacek, 2023) with Africa suffering the worst electricity challenges, yet Africa has the largest energy resources that remain untapped since time immemorial. Considering 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. 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). In support Ullah, Jafri and Dost (2011) 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 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 (Kaseke & Hosking, 2011). Kaseke and Hosking (2011) 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 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 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., 2011). 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. (2011) 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) 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 (2016) when they summarily perceive organisational politics as an exercise of power and influence that primarily occurs outside the formal organisational processes and procedures with a 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). In the process of political battles, the functioning of the organisation is to a large extent negatively affected. Veluri (2019) 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 (2019) 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 state-owned electricity providers in the SADC region have struggled to power their respective economies for almost three decades without any 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). The fact that the state-owned electricity providers are state-owned entities suggests that the respective governments have some influence in one way or the other in the way these state-owned 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 (Bhebe, 2013). According to Kaseke and Hosking, (2011) several electricity 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 at the state-owned 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). The political activity becomes even more concentrated in state-owned electricity providers due to government influence as the entities are state controlled. 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 (2019). It is therefore critical for managers to establish the nature and extent of organisational politics 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 situation 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 (Kaseke & Hosking, 2011). 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.

Coming to Zimbabwe, the power utility 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 neighboring countries but most of these countries have since cut off supply due to non-payment (Kawadza, 2013). According to Kakoma, Chilala, and Mwanza (2021), 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 more difficult as the ministers often use government political power to stop possible disconnections of power. The electricity situation in Zimbabwe has therefore 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 (Kakoma, Chilala, and Mwanza, 2021). Load shedding has

mented the once strong and vibrant economy of Southern Africa due to the electrical power generation crises (Kaseke & Hosking, 2011). 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 (Kaseke & Hosking, 2011). 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 (Karekezi, and Kimani, 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 (Kakoma et al., 2021). 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. Gotsis and Kortezi, (2011) argue that organisational politics motivates the workforce in redefining the patterns of activity for organisational benefit. In support of this view, Butcher, and Clarke (2018) 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 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. 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), 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).

Section 1 of this paper is followed by Section 2 which reviews the relevant literature. Section 3 presents the methodology used to collect and analyse data, study. Section 4 discusses and interprets the study results while section 5 provides the conclusion and recommendations of the study, limitations of the study as well as the scope for further research.

Literature review

Perceptions of organisational politics

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 most 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 bedeviled 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. (2019) 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. (2019) 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 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.

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 Karatepe (2013), an organisation is a group of individuals, who come together to realise their goals. Veluri (2019) 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, to realise their goals, must join an organisation of their choice. Aryee and Budhwar (2009) 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.

Ferris, and Treadway (2012) 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. (2019) 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, organisations are deliberately created and maintained by people who have different goals and ambitions. The inherent selfish nature of human beings makes them compete to realise their individual goals, thus overlooking or even undermining the goals of others. 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 effects of organisational politics

According to Venugopal (2013), organisational politics does have positive and negative effects to the organisations. Robbins et al. (2019) 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 (2017) 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, 2017). 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 (Venugopal, 2013).

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 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. Jarret (2017) 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. Cacciattolo (2015) 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.

Cacciattolo, (2015) 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. (2019) 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 (2011) 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 molding employee values to match their own.

According to Robbins et al. (2019), 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 Abun, Magallanes, Foronda, Paynaen, Agoot, and Pre (2018), 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 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. Abun, Magallanes, Acidera, Encarnacion, and Domingcil (2021) argue that some workers who perceive their workplace as highly political find the use of political tactics more satisfying and report great job satisfaction when they engage in political behaviour. Abun et al., (2018) posit that organisational politics is not automatically good or bad. It can serve several 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 Zhou and Ferris (2015), 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.

Zhou and Ferris (2015), 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 Kreitner, and Kinicki, (2012), 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 because 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 Landells, and Albrecht (2019), 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 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.

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 to curb negative politics. Kawasaki, Inui, and Miyagawa (2022). argue 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.

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 (2016) argues 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 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. Ince and Gul (2011) 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.

Managerial support

Fedor, Maslyn, Farmer, and Bettenhausen, (2018). 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, Eldor, (2016). concluded 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. Byrne, Manning, Weston, and Hochwarter, (2017) 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.

Managerial interaction

Bender, Bloom, Card, Van Reenen, and Wolter, (2018) argue 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) 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, and working with individuals aligned to the same set of principles and values, and focused on delivering results based on merit and performance. It also includes 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.

Managerial effectiveness

While managerial interaction as cited Bloom, and Van Reenen, (2017), 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 to the 1970s. Ferris, and Treadway (2012) define 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 employee plays a role that accounts for the manager's effectiveness. Landells and Albrecht (2019) argue 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 Vigoda-Gadot, Vinarski-Peretz, and Ben-Zion (2013), managerial practices for fostering effectiveness in a negatively politicised work environment would include 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 organization, and developing action plans. In addition, the practices include taking responsibility for decision-making, taking responsibility for communication, focusing on opportunities rather than problems; and running productive meetings.

Ferris, and Treadway, (2012) postulate that effective managers need to be politically sensitive to deal with demands, constraints, and choices during 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. 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. Miller, Rutherford, and Kolodinsky, (2018), asserts that demands are tasks that the manager must 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) 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 Karatepe, (2013), managerial effectiveness in the public sector organisation in Ghana, made significant contributions to the study on managerial effectiveness by identifying the managerial parameters as key to the manager's effectiveness, and these include perception of own effectiveness, managerial skill or lack of it, organisational criteria for effectiveness, and motivation of senior manager's effectiveness. They also include the degree of demands and constraints, the presence of choice and opportunities and 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.

Managerial participation/involvement

Managers have several ways of reducing negative organisational politics. Morehead and Griffin (2009) provide the techniques for managerial participation/involvement 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.

Research methodology

The study employed a quantitative research design, gathering data from a target population of 2210 employees. A sample of 1400 participants was randomly selected, representing 63.35% of the population. From the 1400, only 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%. Data was analysed using the statistical software programme SPSS 21.0. To develop the conceptual model, the study performed factor analysis on the perceptions, effects of organisational politics, and managerial practices to minimise organisational politics. Before factor analysis could be performed, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy, exploratory factor analysis, Bartlett's test of sphericity; and Cronbach Alpha's reliability coefficient were performed, and thereafter Cronbach's alpha was ascertained to determine the internal consistency.

Discussion and interpretation of results

Exploratory factor analysis was used as a tool to measure constructs on perceptions of organisational politics, effects of organisational politics, and on managerial practices to minimise negative effects of organisational politics. The primary objective was to identify underlying constructs in the data set. In pursuit of this objective, "exploratory factor analysis" was conducted on all the these constructs. However, before factor analysis could be successfully performed, 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, 2018). 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). According to Fields (2018), 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, 2018). 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).

Perceptions of organisational politics

Under this section, the study discusses the results aligned to the perceptions of organisational politics to identify the critical factors to develop a conceptual framework to manage organisational politics.

KMO and Bartlett's Test

The adequacy of the sample and the suitability of employing factor analysis on perceptions of organisational politics 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 1 presents the results:

Table 1: The Kmo And Bartlett's Test

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy		.906
Bartlett's Test of Approx. Chi-Square Sphericity	df	6513.680
	Sig	.000

The KMO value for perceptions of organisational politics was 0.906. This signifies that, statistically, the sample was adequate. The high KMO value more than 0.90 signifies an excellent sample. Regarding the Bartlett's test of sphericity, the value was below 0.005. This means that the strength of the relationship among variables was not strong. Resultantly, this measure showed that factor analysis was a suitable

statistical technique to analyse the data to determine the factors on perceptions of organisational politics.

Exploratory factor analysis

The exploratory factor analysis identified four factors by means of Varimax rotation. According to Field (2018), 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 significant and used in the analysis (Statistica, 2022). Table 2 below shows that all 23 statements loaded onto four factors. The factor loadings are shown in the table 2 below. The four factors explain a very favourable cumulative variance of 74.28%.

Table. 2 Factor loadings on 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 personalgoals	18		.755		
Employees are not sure whether their employmentcontracts 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 foradvertising new jobs	4			.748	
The department relies on informal communicationwhen 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
% of variance explained		42.42%	16.59%	9.01%	6.24%
Cumulative %		42.42%	59.01%	68.04%	74.28%

Source: Own compilation

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 way managers deal with organisational politics at the State-owned 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 way 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), managers negatively contribute to negative politics by withholding support for employees in a politicised environment. Thus, George and Konstantinos (2011), argue that the support given by a manager to an employee is a determinant factor to organisational success. It is clear from the study that respondents (employees) are not happy with managerial behaviour when dealing with political challenges that they encounter. Jennifer et al. (2012) 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) 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), 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 (2018) 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, 2018).

Managers at the national electricity provider do engage in managerial practices that are counterproductive (unhealthy) as reflected by the findings.

Reliability of the factors

The reliability of the four factors is shown in Table 3 below. 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- Reliability statistics

Data Sets	Cronbach's Alpha
Factor 1	0.927
Factor 2	0.934
Factor 3	0.889
Factor 4	0.859

Effects of organisational politics

Under this section, the study discusses the results aligned to the effects of organisational politics to identify

the critical factors to develop a conceptual framework to manage organisational politics.

KMO and Bartlett's test

The Bartlett test of sphericity and the KMO measure of sampling adequacy on the effects of organisational politics was performed, and the results are shown in table 4. below.

Table 4. The KMO and Bartlett's test

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

The KMO measure on effects of organisational politics returned an excellent value of 0.919, indicating that the sample was highly adequate. In addition, table 4. shows that the Bartlett's test of sphericity also returned favourable value less than the required value of 0.005 meaning that there was no or little relationship between the variables, and that the data was suitable to be subjected to exploratory factor analysis (Field, 2018).

Exploratory factor analysis

The exploratory on the effects of organisational politics factor analysis identified three factors by means of an orthogonal normalised Varimax rotation. According to Field (2018), 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 significant and are used in the analysis (Statistica, 2022). The factors and the criteria loading onto them are presented in table 4 below. The Table 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 below. Noteworthy is the high cumulative variance explained by the three factors (74.65%).

Table 5 Factor loadings on effects of organisational politics

STATEMENTS	NO	FACTORS		
		4	5	6
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
% of variance explained		48.41%	14.78%	11.46%
Cumulative %		48.41%	63.19%	74.65%

Source: own compilations

Factor 5: 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 more than 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 Robbins et al. (2019) 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. (2018) posit that organisational politics influences employee motivation resulting in overall improvement of organisational productivity. In support of this finding Smith (2017), 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 because of the pressure from the prevailing political environment.

Factor 6: 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 more than 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 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), 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. Venugopal (2012) echo similar sentiments by stating that employees who experience more organisational politics report higher stress, psychological withdrawal and turnover. Robbins et al. (2019) 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". Jarret (2017), contend that though organisational politics can be viewed negatively by various organisations; "it is not necessarily negative". Cacciottolo (2015) agree that organisational politics is not automatically good or bad. It can serve several 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 7: 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. (2019) 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). High labour turnover is an issue to companies as it undermines the production possibilities of a company. Abu et al., (2018) 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.

Reliability of the factors

Cronbach's alpha determines the internal consistency or average correlation of items in a survey

instrument to gauge its reliability (Wuensch, 2009). For this research, the minimum coefficient is set at $\alpha \geq 0.70$ (Field, 2018). Table 4. 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 more than 0.90. This exceeds the required 0.7 by far and shows excellent reliability and internal consistency of data pertaining to each factor (Field, 2018).

Table 4 Reliability statistics

Data Sets	Cronbach's Alpha
Factor 1	0.950
Factor 2	0.927
Factor 3	0.913

Managerial practices to minimise negative organizational politics

Under this section, the study discusses the results aligned to managerial practices to minimise negative organisational politics towards the development of a conceptual framework to manage organisational politics.

KMO and Bartlett's test

The Bartlett test of sphericity and KMO measure of sampling adequacy managerial practices were performed, and as shown in figure 5. below:

Table 5: The KMO and Bartlett Test

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

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

Exploratory factor analysis

The exploratory factor analysis on managerial practices to minimise negative organisational politics identified two factors by means of an Orthogonal Varimax rotation. According to Field (2018) 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 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 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. factor loadings: managerial practices to minimise negative politics.

STATEMENT	NO	FACTORS	
		7	8
To what extent does management utilise external experts in resolving infighting?	64	.939	

To what extent does management promote neutralitywhen resolving infighting amongst employees?	63	.933	
To what extent does management utilize internalexperts 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 confrontationwith employees?	58	.697	
To what extent does management promote unityamong employees?	59	.645	
To what extent does management encouragecompromise amongst infighting employees?	60	.623	
To what extent does management uphold fairness inhandling infighting amongst employees?	57	.606	
To what extent does management promote opencommunication?	56	.602	
To what extent does management consult on keyplayers in the political system?	55	.577	
To what extent does management promote theemployment of cronies in the department?	50		.905
To what extent does management promotetransparency in the department?	51		.796
To what extent does the department hold staffmeetings?	52		.786
To what extent does manage promote equitabledistribution of resources?	48		.676
To what extent does management uphold fairness inthe selection process?	49		.654
%of variance explained		60.70%	9.41%
Cumulative %		60.70%	70.12%

Source: own compilation

Factor 8: 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 can win the hearts of the workforce resultantly cultivating a motivational spirit that leads to a productive organisation.

Factor 9: 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%. Landells, and Albrecht, (2016). provide the techniques for managerial participation 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(2019:) 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 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 instill 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.

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, 2018; Du Plessis 2010). The table 6 below shows the reliability coefficients for the two factors extracted. Both factors have very satisfactory reliability coefficients which are more than 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 6 reliability statistics

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

Conclusions

This study investigated the pervasive nature of organisational politics within Zimbabwe's state-owned electricity provider and its impact on performance and organisational climate. Through a robust quantitative methodology and factor analysis, the research identified key drivers of organisational politics—namely, managerial behaviour, poor communication of objectives, unexpected employee behaviour, and unhealthy managerial practices. These internal factors, deeply intertwined with government influence in state-owned entities, were shown to contribute to inefficiencies and deteriorating employee morale.

The findings confirm that organisational politics has predominantly negative effects, including stress, reduced job satisfaction, poor collaboration, and low productivity. While some positive political actions were acknowledged (e.g., adaptability and motivation through structured political behaviour), these were overshadowed by the dysfunction caused by infighting, favouritism, secrecy, and a lack of transparent communication. The study underscores the urgent need for deliberate and structured managerial interventions aimed at cultivating fairness, transparency, and inclusive participation. A conceptual framework was developed, providing a diagnostic and prescriptive model for minimising political behaviour and enhancing organisational effectiveness in Zimbabwe's electricity sector, with possible replication across other SADC utilities.

recommendations

Drawing from the various factors identified through factor analyses, the following conceptual model is proposed

to manage organisational politics at SoEs as reflected on Figure 1.

Figure 1: Conceptual model to manage organisational politics at SoEs

Source: Own compilation

Notes on the Recommended Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework developed through this study presents a comprehensive and diagnostic model for understanding and managing organisational politics within state-owned electricity providers, particularly in politically influenced environments such as Zimbabwe. Built on three interrelated dimensions—employee perceptions of politics, the effects of organisational politics, and managerial responses—the model offers both theoretical insight and practical utility.

Central to the model are the identified factors that drive political behaviour. These include managerial behaviour, poor communication of objectives, unhealthy managerial practices, and unexpected employee behaviour. These factors provide a foundational understanding of the sources of internal discord that destabilise organisational cohesion and effectiveness. Their presence signals a breakdown in formal processes, often exacerbated by opaque decision-making and government interference.

The framework also maps the consequences of organisational politics along three pathways: negative employee actions, personal consequences such as stress and turnover, and, to a limited extent, positive departmental actions. While organisational politics is often viewed in pejorative terms, the study recognises that when properly channelled, political behaviour can lead to constructive change, innovation, and increased adaptability.

Perhaps the most significant contribution of the model lies in its proposed managerial practices for minimising negative political behaviour. Two dominant themes emerged from the data: managerial fairness and managerial participation. Managerial fairness—characterised by neutrality, transparency, and equitable treatment—proved to be the more impactful strategy, explaining over 60% of the variance in factor analysis. This suggests that employee perceptions of fairness are crucial to mitigating toxic politics and fostering organisational trust.

Managerial participation, although less dominant, still plays a vital role. By engaging employees in decision-making processes, promoting transparency, and ensuring inclusive communication, managers can dilute the influence of informal political networks and re-establish legitimacy in leadership processes.

The model's strength lies in its adaptability. While developed within the context of Zimbabwe's electricity provider, its components are relevant to other state-owned entities across emerging markets facing similar challenges. By systematically addressing the root causes and consequences of organisational politics and outlining actionable managerial strategies, the framework offers a roadmap for restoring functionality, morale, and performance in politically embattled institutions.

Limitations of the study

While the study offers significant contributions to understanding organisational politics within state-owned electricity providers, it is essential to acknowledge and critically reflect on the limitations encountered. Importantly, steps were taken throughout the research process to minimise the potential negative impacts of these limitations on the validity and reliability of the findings.

A primary limitation lies in the **geographic and organisational scope** of the study, which focused solely on Zimbabwe's national electricity provider. While this context provides a rich case study for understanding political dynamics in a state-owned utility, it limits the generalisability of the results across other national utilities in the Southern African Development Community (SADC). However, this limitation was mitigated by grounding the study in extensive literature across the SADC region and including regional references in the conceptual discussion to establish a broader contextual relevance. The theoretical foundation and proposed model were thus designed with transferability in mind, offering a framework that can be tested in similar environments elsewhere in future studies.

Another concern was the **low response rate**, with only 347 valid responses out of 1,400 distributed questionnaires, resulting in a 24.78% effective response rate. This limitation was anticipated due to the politically sensitive nature of the topic. To mitigate non-responsiveness and potential bias, the study implemented multiple strategies: the questionnaire was kept concise and user-friendly, respondents were assured of anonymity and confidentiality, and the management hierarchy was engaged to encourage participation across departments. Furthermore, despite the relatively low response rate, the reliability of the data remained exceptionally strong. The internal consistency scores – Cronbach's Alpha values ranging from 0.859 to 0.950 – demonstrated excellent reliability, confirming that the responses collected were consistent and dependable for analysis.

Language barriers presented a third challenge, considering that English is a second language for many employees. Recognising this, the questionnaire was carefully crafted in plain, accessible language, with clearly phrased statements aimed at avoiding ambiguity. Pre-testing of the instrument among a small representative group helped refine the wording to ensure clarity and reduce misinterpretation. Additionally, because the majority of employees at the state-owned utility possess at least a secondary education and operate in English-speaking work environments, the likelihood of widespread misunderstanding was significantly minimised.

The **potential for social desirability bias** was another concern, particularly given the sensitive nature of organisational politics in a highly politicised state enterprise. While this cannot be entirely eliminated, efforts were made to reduce it. Questionnaires were administered anonymously, and respondents were explicitly informed that their participation would have no consequences and that no identifying information was required. Moreover, the research was introduced to participants as an academic exercise aimed at improving organisational functioning, rather than as a political audit, which helped lower defensiveness and enhance candour.

Finally, the **cross-sectional nature** of the study limited the ability to track the evolution of organisational politics or managerial interventions over time. Although longitudinal studies may offer richer insights into the progression of political dynamics, the current study mitigated this limitation by embedding a comprehensive historical and contextual analysis of Zimbabwe's electricity sector within the literature review. This contextual grounding offered a temporal dimension to complement the snapshot nature of the data, making the findings more robust and informative.

In conclusion, while the study faced the typical limitations inherent in organisational research within politicised environments, these were carefully anticipated and addressed. Methodological rigor, thoughtful instrument design, and analytical robustness ensured that the findings and the resulting conceptual framework are both credible and valuable for academic and practical application.

Scope for further research

While this study provides valuable insights into the prevalence and effects of organisational politics within Zimbabwe's state-owned electricity provider, it also opens avenues for deeper scholarly inquiry. Future research should consider unpacking the specific constructs identified in the conceptual model. For example, managerial fairness and unexpected employee behaviours emerged as key contributors to political

dysfunction. These dimensions, if studied in isolation using more targeted instruments, may provide a more granular understanding of how political dynamics manifest and evolve within state-owned enterprises.

Furthermore, given the regional focus on Zimbabwe, there is potential for comparative research that explores the manifestation of organisational politics in similar state-owned utilities across other SADC countries. Such studies would not only establish commonalities but also highlight context-specific political cultures and their influence on organisational effectiveness. A regional or international comparative analysis could greatly enrich the model's applicability across different sociopolitical contexts.

Longitudinal studies are also recommended to assess the impact of managerial interventions over time. Since organisational politics is dynamic and often cyclical, tracking changes longitudinally could provide more robust evidence on whether the implementation of the proposed model leads to sustainable improvements in organisational performance and employee well-being.

Additionally, while this study relied on a quantitative approach, future studies could adopt qualitative or mixed-methods approaches to capture the lived experiences and nuanced perceptions of employees and managers. These narratives may reveal deeper, often hidden dynamics of political behaviour that numbers alone cannot explain.

Finally, further research could explore how leadership development programs and political skill training influence managerial effectiveness in politicised organisational environments. Understanding how leaders learn to navigate and mitigate organisational politics could significantly enhance the model's practical utility.

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