

Consequences of Perceived Favoritism in the Workplace

Almost two in five (39%) employees globally* observe favoritism toward certain employees (e.g., friends, family, etc.).



Why Does This Matter?

Trust is eroded when employees believe that favoritism occurs in their organizations. **Such observations are more common among nonmanagement employees than those in positions of greater power.**

Furthermore, most observations (59%) of favoritism go unreported, leaving the organization unaware and unable to address the concern. Some forms of misconduct like conflicts of interest and theft are easy to identify. A subtle though common type of misconduct employees report observing is favoritism towards certain employees.

Employees sometimes hesitate to report favoritism because they may believe it is hard to prove. Yet, it is critical that organizations create an environment where all employees are treated fairly and there are no favorites.

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What Should You Do?

It is a worthy investment to help build a culture of fairness which as a by-product will promote employee morale and encourage speaking up. Ensure that criteria are in place for critical decision-making processes such as rewards, promotions and performance evaluations. Provide examples of what favoritism looks like alongside examples of decisions based on performance. Verify that communication systems include vehicles to identify and address favoritism concerns.

Links to ECI Resources



[Talking the Walk #28](#)



[From the Archive: Conflicts of Interest: An ECI Benchmarking Report](#)

*Note: Data are based on the global median of 42 countries from the 2023 Global Business Ethics Survey® (GBES®).