

An Investigation into the Relationship Between Favouritism and Employee Performance in Selected Quasi Government Institutions

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Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between favouritism and employee performance in quasi-government institutions in Zambia, using a selected quasi-government institution as the case study. The study was guided by three objectives: to determine the most prevalent forms of favouritism practices, to analyse the relationship between favouritism and employee performance outcomes, and to propose strategies for mitigating favouritism and enhancing equitable talent management practices. A quantitative research design was employed, with data collected from 71 participants using a structured questionnaire. Data analysis involved descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, and inferential analysis using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. Prior to conducting correlation analysis, a normality test was performed using skewness and kurtosis statistics, and the results confirmed that both variables were approximately normally distributed within the acceptable range, validating the use of Pearson correlation. The findings revealed that favouritism primarily manifests through unequal access to training opportunities, perceived unfairness in promotion practices, and inconsistencies in performance evaluation systems. Promotion practices emerged as the most significant concern, with 62.0 percent of respondents expressing dissatisfaction with fairness. Descriptive results further showed that 80.3 percent of respondents agreed that equitable access enhances motivation, while 91.6 percent indicated that perceived fairness improves employee performance. The correlation analysis revealed a strong negative and statistically significant relationship between favouritism and employee performance ($r = -0.682, p < 0.01$), indicating that higher levels of perceived favouritism are associated with reduced performance outcomes. From a policy perspective, the study highlights the need for strengthening merit-based systems through transparent promotion criteria, standardised training allocation processes, and objective performance evaluation frameworks. Overall, the study provides empirical evidence to inform governance reforms and human resource practices aimed at enhancing efficiency and accountability in quasi-government institutions in Zambia.

1. Introduction

According to Joseph and Alhassan (2023), human resource management (HRM) comprises a wide variety of employee-centered procedures, ranging from talent acquisition to retention and development, with the objective of aligning workforce happiness with corporate productivity. According to Lasisi, Eluwole, Ozturen, and Avci (2020), human resource management functions such as recruiting, training, capacity building, motivation, and administrative management are essential in this framework. These functions are particularly important in ensuring that personnel are sufficiently supported to achieve at their highest potential while also promoting the goals of the institution. The inherent intricacies of human interaction, workplace hierarchies, and socio-cultural influences make it hard to completely eradicate employee-related issues.

Effective human resource management (HRM) aims to decrease negative stressors associated to work, but it is impossible to completely eliminate them. Therefore, in order to maintain a workforce that is both highly motivated and highly performing, it is necessary to make intentional decisions that strike a balance between the long-term benefits of the business and the well-being of its employees. The requirement to preserve efficiency, transparency, and public trust in the Zambian setting, particularly within quasi-government organizations such as the Zambia Revenue Authority (ZRA), Zambia Development Agency (ZDA), and other statutory bodies, elevates the role of human resource management (HRM) to a higher level. As a result of the fact that these institutions operate at the crossroads of public sector accountability and private sector operational freedom, they are subject to both formal legislative limits and informal socio-political pressures. As a result of this climate, favouritism has developed as a key organizational challenge, which undermines systems that are based on merit and threatens the legitimacy of the institution.

According to Joseph and Alhassan (2023), favouritism is defined as the practice of giving individuals preferred treatment on the basis of social or relationship links rather than any merit they may possess. When it comes to situations in which relatives and community networks have an impact on managerial decisions, it frequently overlaps with nepotism (Iqbal & Ahmad, 2020). It has been proven through empirical study that favouritism has a detrimental impact on conceptions of fairness in the workplace, that it lowers morale, and that it contributes to withdrawal behaviors (Inegbedion et al, 2024). Studies such as Hotho et al (2020) have demonstrated that favouritism and nepotism are factors that contribute to emotional exhaustion and lower job performance, as well as the ways in which individuals attempt to cope with favouritism in recruitment and selection processes by employing communal strategies.

When it comes to quasi-government institutions, favouritism can take the form of the provision of travel advantages to a specific group of employees. These personnel are granted access to allowances, opportunities for professional development, and networking events. Additionally, it may take the form of offering superior working circumstances, making strategic transfers to more advantageous workstations, or selecting permitting specific employees to attend high-level meetings and activities that enhance visibility and career growth. All of these are examples of ways in which they may be implemented. These kinds of activities have the potential to firmly establish inequality inside the business, allowing beneficiaries to develop at a disproportionate rate while colleagues who are equally or more qualified are left at a disadvantage over them. These dynamics are consistent with the idea that favouritism can cause observable performance disparities, which was presented by Verwimp (2023), as well as the observation made by Otundo Richard (2024), which states that favouritism, together with tribalism and ethnicity, impairs the functioning of institutions in a sustainable manner.

According to Arici, Arasli, and Arici (2020), the continued practice of favouritism causes disruptions in the equitable atmosphere of a company, reduces views of fairness, and undermines trust in leadership that has been established. Favoritism has the potential to produce stratified workplace environments in which beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries experience climates that are significantly different from one another (Ibid).

In Zambia's quasi-government organizations, divisions of this kind not only affect organizational efficiency and employee morale, but also pose a threat to public trust in institutions expected to exemplify professionalism, accountability, and fairness. Managers in these organizations face the challenge of maintaining merit-based systems while navigating socio-cultural influences that may encourage favouritism, particularly in areas such as staff deployment, access to training, and allocation of benefits (Hotho et al., 2020; Bryman and Bell, 2015). This challenge becomes more pronounced as governance reforms and workplace professionalization intensify across public institutions (OECD, 2021). If not effectively managed, such tensions can undermine service delivery outcomes and weaken institutional legitimacy (Perry and Hondelghem, 2022).

In light of this, it is critically important for both academics and policymakers to investigate how favouritism influences employee performance within quasi-government institutions in Zambia. Understanding the causes, manifestations, and consequences of favouritism in such strategically significant organizations can inform targeted interventions aimed at strengthening fairness, transparency, and productivity, while preserving public confidence in institutions that are central to national development and service provision (OECD, 2021; World Bank, 2023).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Favouritism has become more widely acknowledged as an obstacle to equitable workplace practices, affecting employee motivation, organisational trust, and overall performance outcomes (Al-Tarawneh, 2020; Baio, Amuzu & Sabbah, 2024). Although this topic has been extensively researched in international settings, there is a lack of context-specific evidence regarding the manifestation of favouritism and its impact on employee performance in Zambian quasi-government institutions. These organisations function within a distinctive governance framework that merges accountability to the public sector with the ability to operate flexibly, creating a demand for them to provide efficient services while upholding transparency and fostering public trust.

Within the Zambian landscape, entities like the Zambia Revenue Authority, Zambia Development Agency, and various statutory bodies are anticipated to maintain meritocratic principles in aspects such as promotions, training opportunities, and the distribution of resources. Nonetheless, recent findings from regional studies and personal accounts indicate that decision-making in comparable institutional environments is frequently shaped by informal networks, managerial discretion, and relational connections, potentially leading to unequal access to opportunities (Ay & Oktay, 2020). Although these patterns have been observed in various countries, there remains a gap in empirical research that definitively determines if analogous dynamics are present within Zambian quasi-government institutions and how they affect employee behaviour and performance.

Moreover, current research on favouritism primarily emphasises outcomes like job satisfaction, turnover intentions, and organisational climate, while paying insufficient attention to its direct and indirect impacts on employee performance, especially in structured institutional settings. Moreover, a significant portion of the existing evidence originates from private sector entities or contexts outside of Africa, which complicates the ability to apply these findings to Zambia's quasi-government sector, where the structures, accountability frameworks, and employee expectations could vary considerably.

This gap holds significant importance as quasi-government institutions are essential for national development and effective service delivery. If favouritism impacts the distribution of opportunities like promotions, training, or assignments, it can influence individual motivation as well as the overall effectiveness of the organization. Nonetheless, in the absence of empirical evidence specific to the Zambian context, it is uncertain if favouritism results in a tangible decline in performance or if employees react through more nuanced behaviours like diminished effort, disengagement, or the withdrawal of discretionary contributions.

Therefore, the problem addressed in this study is the lack of context-specific empirical evidence on how favouritism affects employee performance within Zambian quasi-government institutions. Addressing this gap was important for developing evidence-based strategies that promote fairness, improve employee performance, and strengthen institutional credibility.

1.3 Theoretical Framework

This study employed the Equity Theory (Adams, 1963), Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), and Organizational Justice Theory (Greenberg, 1987). Each of these theories provides a unique perspective that complements the other two theories. When it comes to understanding how favouritism affects individual and organizational performance in Zambia's quasi-government organizations, having a theoretical framework that is well-grounded is absolutely necessary.

When taken into consideration together, the three theories constitute an explanation that is both logical and interrelated. The Equity Theory explains how employees recognise unfairness, the Organisational Justice Theory explains how they make sense of it, and the Social Exchange Theory explains how they react to it.

2. Literature and Theoretical Review

2.1 Quasi-Government Institution Favouritism

Organisational favouritism is rooted in institutional systems, leadership behaviours, and cultural norms, according to empirical research. Favouritism is often hidden in organisational procedures like recruiting, promotions, performance assessments, and opportunity access, according to global studies.

Hotho et al. (2020) use a factorial survey design to reveal recruitment system favouritism. Their study found that managers generally balance formal merit-based procedures and informal social expectations, especially when relational links impact decision-making. Favouritism may be systemically rooted in corporate systems rather than individual wrongdoing. Shah et al. (2025) suggest in a comprehensive literature review that organisational culture and human resource practices nurture favouritism, which shapes how institutions distribute opportunities and resources.

Bauch and Weißenberger (2025) show that biased information processing can perpetuate performance rating system favouritism. They found using eye-tracking technology that evaluators favour particular people when interpreting information. This shows that favouritism is both a behavioural and structural issue in corporate evaluation procedures.

Although researched in Europe, Vveinhardt and Bendaraviciene (2022) and Vveinhardt and Sroka (2020) shed light on how favouritism affects organisational climate. Favouritism undermines leadership, communication, safety, and fairness, according to their results. These findings reveal that common organisational practises including training, promotions, and good working conditions often show favouritism.

African research shows that leadership and institutional institutions shape favouritism. Akuffo and Kivipöld (2020) revealed that authentic leadership can either minimise or unintentionally promote favouritism in Ghana's banking sector through factor analysis and multiple regression. Akuffo and Kivipöld (2021) utilised confirmatory factor analysis and hierarchical regression to show that positional favouritism can negatively impact organisational outcomes, even with strong leadership.

With a survey methodology and linear regression in a Nigerian utility firm, Arubayi and Eruvbedede (2022) found that workplace favouritism lowers motivation and commitment. The study's methodological constraints limit its explanatory depth, but it shows how favouritism can be more prevalent in coordination- and trust-based institutions.

The most common kinds of favouritism in businesses are biased recruiting decisions, unequal access to promotions and training, subjective performance evaluations, and preferred resource distribution, according to these studies. Importantly, company culture, leadership styles, and institutional norms encourage these practises, making them hard to spot and address.

In the context of quasi-government entities, these conclusions are particularly noteworthy. Such organisations function in hybrid systems that mix public sector responsibility with private sector flexibility, blending official and informal standards. This raises the chance of discretionary decision-making favouritism, especially in promotions, training, and performance reviews.

2.2 Favouritism and Employee Performance

Most research have found a negative relationship between favouritism and employee performance. This relationship appears to be complex and regulated by psychological, behavioural, and organisational factors. In a cross-sectional study of 549 nurses, De los Santos et al. (2020) examined favouritism and organisational outcomes using selective sampling and structured questionnaires. Favouritism strongly affected turnover intentions rather than direct performance, demonstrating that employees initially retreat attitudinally. Favouritism may reduce commitment and engagement rather than performance measures.

Favouritism promotes turnover intentions through psychological contract violation, according to Arasli, Arici, and Arici (2019) using a time-lagged methodology. The causal explanation is strengthened by longitudinal evidence indicating that favouritism steadily erodes employee commitment. These data show that favouritism and performance frequently interact indirectly and gradually. Further data supports mediating mechanisms. The three-wave longitudinal survey and mediation analysis of Xu et al. (2024) showed that knowledge-hiding actions caused favouritism to hurt performance. Lasisi, Constanța, and Eluwole (2022) used structural equation modelling to show that favouritism diminishes psychological capital and increases knowledge concealing even without affecting subjective well-being. These studies show that favouritism hurts performance by altering psychological states and interpersonal behaviours rather than effort.

By violating psychological contracts, favouritism fosters organisational cynicism and counterproductive work behaviour, according to Ali et al. (2022). Mumtaz (2025) used Partial Least Squares modelling to show that favouritism raises stress and lowers performance. Stress, attitudes, and behaviour may contribute to favouritism, according to this research.

The literature contains contradictions. Lasisi et al. (2022) showed no correlation between favouritism and subjective well-being, suggesting that employees may tolerate unfair practices in difficult economic times. In some cultures, favouritism is seen as a social norm, which may reduce its negative effects on performance, according to Hotho et al. (2020).

Regionally, Arubayi and Eruvbedede (2022) discovered a negative association between favouritism and performance in Nigeria, but their methodological constraints limit interpretation. Akuffo and Kivipöld (2021) show that favouritism can reduce the good impact of leadership on organisational performance.

Local Zambian quasi-government entities have little empirical information on this link. Existing studies do not adequately capture whether favouritism causes measurable performance decline or more subtle disengagement, such as reduced initiative and discretionary effort. Understudied is the relationship between organisational systems, leadership, and employee behaviour.

The literature suggests a negative relationship between favouritism and employee performance, but it is indirect, context-dependent, and mediated by multiple factors. This highlights the need for context-specific research on how favouritism affects quasi-government institution performance.

3 Methods

The study adopted a mixed-methods approach, specifically an explanatory sequential design, which involves collecting and analysing quantitative data first, followed by qualitative insights to explain the findings. This design is appropriate where the researcher seeks to establish statistical relationships and then provide contextual explanations (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In this study, the quantitative phase examined the relationship between favouritism and employee performance, while qualitative insights were used to explain how favouritism manifests in organisational practices.

The population comprised employees from a selected quasi-government institution, including both management and non-management staff involved in administrative and operational roles. These individuals were well positioned to observe favouritism practices such as promotions, postings, training

opportunities, and allocation of benefits. The total population was 1,045 employees. A sample of 91 respondents was determined using Slovin's formula at a 90 percent confidence level, which is appropriate when population variance is unknown (Saunders et al., 2019).

A combination of purposive and simple random sampling was used. The institution was purposively selected due to its relevance to the study, while simple random sampling ensured that each employee had an equal chance of selection, thereby reducing bias and improving representativeness. A small number of experienced staff were also considered for qualitative insights to support interpretation.

Data collection was conducted in two phases. The quantitative phase used a structured, self-administered questionnaire consisting of Likert-scale and closed-ended questions to measure favouritism, organisational justice, motivation, and employee performance (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The qualitative component provided explanatory insights to complement the statistical findings. Secondary data from organisational documents and relevant literature were also utilised.

Data analysis involved both descriptive and inferential techniques using SPSS. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations summarised the data. Inferential analysis, specifically Pearson correlation, was used to examine the relationship between favouritism and employee performance. Prior to this, normality tests using skewness and kurtosis were conducted to ensure that the data met the assumptions for parametric analysis (Pallant, 2020).

Composite indices for favouritism and employee performance were developed and used in the analysis. Qualitative insights were analysed thematically to provide deeper understanding of behavioral patterns. Ethical considerations were strictly observed, including voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, and secure data handling (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

4 Presentation of Findings

The study gathered 71 finished questionnaires from the total 100 participants who were originally targeted. A quantitative research method was utilised, gathering data from 71 participants through structured questionnaires. Descriptive statistics were employed to examine perceptions of fairness in relation to essential organizational practices, such as training opportunities, promotions, performance evaluations, and leadership behaviour. A Pearson correlation analysis was also performed to statistically explore the relationship between favouritism and employee performance.

4.1 Most Prevalent forms of Favouritism in Practices in Selected Quasi-Government Institutions

The results in Table 1 show that favouritism in the selected quasi-government institution is mainly reflected through unequal access to training opportunities (41%), perceived unfairness in promotion practices (30%), and inconsistencies in performance evaluation systems (20%), with a smaller proportion (9%) indicating broader systemic bias. The findings suggest that favouritism is primarily embedded within key organisational processes rather than isolated actions, indicating that bias is institutional in nature and affects how opportunities and outcomes are distributed within the organisation.

Table 1: Prevalent Favouritism Practices in the Selected Quasi-Government Institution

Favouritism Practice	Description of Manifestation	Percentage (%)	Implication for Organisation
Unequal Access to Training Opportunities	Training and development opportunities are not distributed equitably among employees	41%	Limits skill development and creates perceptions of exclusion and bias
Perceived Unfairness in Promotion Practices	Promotions are influenced by personal relationships rather than merit	30%	Reduces trust in management and lowers employee motivation
Inconsistencies in Performance Evaluation Systems	Performance appraisals are subjective and not consistently applied	20%	Leads to uncertainty, reduced morale, and weakened confidence in systems
Embedded Organisational Bias	Favouritism is ingrained within organisational structures and processes	9%	Reinforces systemic inequality and normalises biased practices

Source: Field data, 2026

4.2 Relationship between Favoritism and Employee Performance in Quasi Government Institutions

The findings on Table 2 show the Pearson correlation results for favouritism and employee performance, findings show that the correlation coefficient ($r = -0.682$), suggesting a significant inverse relationship. This indicates that as perceptions of favouritism rise within the organization, there is a notable decline in employee performance.

The relationship shows a statistically significant result at the 0.01 level, indicating that the probability of this relationship arising by chance is very minimal. Consequently, the findings offer robust empirical backing for the primary aim of the research, which to examine the relationship between favouritism and employee performance in quasi-government institutions in Zambia.

Table 2 Correlation Findings: Favoritism and Employee Performance

		Favouritism	Employee Performance
Pearson's Correlation	Favouritism		
	Pearson Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.682**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	71	71
Employee Performance	Employee Performance		
	Pearson Correlation Coefficient	-.682**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	71	71

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The Pearson correlation coefficient between favouritism and employee performance is $r = -0.682$, suggesting a significant inverse relationship. This indicates that as perceptions of favouritism rise within the organization, there is a notable decline in employee performance.

The relationship shows a statistically significant result at the 0.01 level, indicating that the probability of this relationship arising by chance is very minimal. Consequently, the findings offer robust empirical backing for the primary aim of the research, which to examine the relationship between favouritism and employee performance in quasi-government institutions in Zambia.

4.3 Normality Test Results

A normality test was conducted to determine whether the composite variables favouritism and employee performance met the assumptions required for the use of Pearson's correlation analysis. Given the sample size ($N = 71$), normality was assessed using skewness and kurtosis statistics, which are appropriate and widely accepted for samples greater than 50.

Since Pearson correlation requires approximate normal distribution, normality was assessed using skewness and kurtosis statistics, which are acceptable for sample sizes above 50 ($N = 71$).

Table 3: Normality Test for Composite Variables

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Favouritism	71	3.68	0.74	-0.412	-0.285
Employee Performance	71	3.54	0.69	-0.198	-0.103

The results indicate that both variables fall within acceptable thresholds for normality. According to established statistical guidelines, skewness and kurtosis values between -1 and +1 suggest approximately normal distribution. The favouritism variable recorded a mean of 3.68 and a standard deviation of 0.74, with a skewness value of -0.412 and kurtosis of -0.285. This suggests a slight negative skew, indicating that responses were moderately clustered toward agreement, but without significant distortion of the distribution. Similarly, employee performance recorded a mean of 3.54 and a standard deviation of 0.69, with skewness and kurtosis values of -0.198 and -0.103 respectively, indicating a fairly symmetrical distribution. According to commonly accepted statistical thresholds, skewness and kurtosis values falling within the range of -1 to +1 suggest approximate normality. Therefore, both variables meet the assumptions required for the application of Pearson's correlation analysis. This confirms that the correlation results obtained are statistically reliable and not affected by significant deviations from normality.

4.4 Discussion of Findings

This study's findings offer valuable insights into the characteristics, consequences, and fundamental mechanisms of favouritism in quasi-government institutions. The findings across the three objectives clearly indicate that favouritism is not merely a standalone or obvious issue; rather, it is intricately woven into the fabric of organisational systems, shaping employee perceptions and performance outcomes in multifaceted and often subtle manners.

The study highlights that the primary form of favouritism is evident in the unequal access to training opportunities, perceived unfairness in promotion practices, and inconsistencies in performance evaluation systems. The results indicate that favouritism predominantly functions through established organisational procedures instead of solely through informal or individual actions. The varied feedback on training opportunities, with 40.8 percent of respondents feeling that access is fair while 38.0 percent voiced their dissatisfaction, highlights the inconsistency in the availability of developmental resources. This is consistent with the findings of Hotho et al. (2020), who contend that informal social norms and relationships frequently shape organisational decisions, despite the existence of formal structures. In the chosen quasi-government institution, this indicates that managerial discretion and informal networks could influence access to opportunities, placing managers in the role of gatekeepers and enabling bias to surface within otherwise organised systems.

Concerns regarding promotion practices have become increasingly significant, as 62.0 percent of respondents indicated dissatisfaction with the fairness of these processes. This observation aligns with the work of Shah et al. (2025), who emphasise that favouritism and nepotism frequently permeate organisational cultures and human resource frameworks. The implication here is that promotion decisions could be swayed by factors unrelated to merit, such as personal relationships. This can erode employee confidence in organisational processes and diminish perceptions of procedural fairness. Over time, these perceptions can undermine confidence in leadership and diminish commitment to the organization.

In a similar vein, the results regarding performance evaluation systems reveal notable inconsistencies, with 40.8 percent of respondents viewing them as fair, while 32.4 percent voiced their dissatisfaction. This aligns with the findings of Bauch and Weißenberger (2025), who illustrate that favouritism may continue to influence performance evaluations because of cognitive biases, despite the presence of formal accountability measures. Within the framework of the chosen quasi-government institution, this indicates that evaluation systems might lack full objectivity, possibly strengthening views of favouritism and fostering ambiguity among staff members. The findings collectively illustrate that favouritism is ingrained not just in individual choices, but also within the frameworks and procedures of organisations. This is additionally backed by Vveinhardt and Bendaraviciene (2022), who contend that favouritism plays a crucial role in shaping the organisational climate, affecting leadership behaviour, communication dynamics, and perceptions of fairness.

In addressing the second objective, the research revealed a robust and statistically significant inverse correlation between favouritism and employee performance ($r = -0.682, p < 0.01$). The strength of this finding is bolstered by the normality tests, which verified that the data satisfied the assumptions necessary for Pearson correlation. Nonetheless, aside from statistical significance, understanding this relationship uncovers critical subtleties. Although heightened perceptions of favouritism correlate with diminished performance, the descriptive statistics reveal that performance levels continue to be reasonably elevated. This indicates that the effects of favouritism might not be instant or definitive, but rather emerge through nuanced shifts in behaviour, including decreased discretionary effort, lower levels of engagement, and a decline in initiative.

This interpretation is well-backed by empirical literature. Mumtaz (2025) illustrates that favouritism elevates workplace stress, subsequently harming performance, suggesting that this relationship is influenced by psychological strain. In a similar vein, Arubayi and Eruvbedede (2022) demonstrate that favouritism undermines motivation, productivity, and commitment, especially within utility-based organisations where trust and coordination play a crucial role. Xu et al. (2024) enhance this insight by demonstrating that favouritism results in knowledge-hiding behaviours, which negatively impact collaboration and the long-term effectiveness of organisations. This illustrates how performance can seem consistent in the short run, even as qualitative aspects like teamwork and innovation begin to decline. Ali et al. (2022) support this viewpoint, demonstrating that favouritism heightens organisational cynicism and counterproductive behaviours, which in turn diminishes trust and undermines overall performance quality.

The results provide a solid foundation for and further develop the concepts outlined in Equity Theory (Adams, 1963), Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), and Organisational Justice Theory (Greenberg, 1987). The findings indicate that when employees sense inequity, they tend to modify their effort levels. However, this modification may manifest as passive disengagement instead of an immediate drop in productivity. In a similar vein, the disruption

of reciprocal relationships emphasised by Social Exchange Theory is apparent in diminished discretionary contributions, while Organisational Justice Theory illustrates the wider effects of perceived unfairness on the organisational climate.

Nonetheless, the results also underscore significant inconsistencies present in the existing literature. For example, Lasisi et al. (2022) discovered no direct link between favouritism and subjective well-being, indicating that employees might endure unfair practices in environments marked by economic limitations. De los Santos et al. (2020) also discovered that favouritism mainly affects turnover intentions instead of immediate performance results, suggesting that its impacts might manifest over time. The current study illustrates these viewpoints, showing that performance stays fairly consistent even in the face of significant bias perceptions. Furthermore, Akuffo and Kivipõld (2020, 2021) illustrate that the dynamics of leadership can either alleviate or exacerbate favouritism, indicating that the connection between favouritism and performance varies based on context.

Methodological considerations add layers of complexity to interpretation. The analysis demonstrates a correlational relationship, which does not confirm causality, and the possibility of reverse causation remains unaddressed. Lower-performing employees may have a higher tendency to view organisational systems as unjust. Moreover, external elements like workload, resource limitations, and organisational culture can impact both favouritism and performance, leading to possible confounding effects. The assumption of linearity in Pearson correlation restricts the analysis, as the relationship between favouritism and performance could be non-linear, showing more significant effects at elevated levels of perceived bias.

Ultimately, regarding the third objective, the results offer a robust basis for crafting strategies aimed at reducing favouritism. The findings indicate that successful interventions need to tackle both structural and cultural aspects. Shah et al. (2025) highlight the critical role of transparent and merit-based human resource systems, especially regarding promotion processes. Akuffo and Kivipõld (2021) emphasise the importance of leadership accountability in mitigating favouritism, whereas Bauch and Weißenberger (2025) advocate for the implementation of more objective and multi-source performance evaluation systems. Moreover, Vveinhardt and Sroka (2020) contend that cultivating a culture characterised by fairness, transparency, and accountability is crucial for tackling the overarching organisational climate.

The results indicate that favouritism in quasi-government institutions is a pervasive challenge rooted in the organisational processes and culture. The influence on performance is multifaceted, indirect, and reliant on context, functioning through psychological, behavioural, and structural mechanisms. To tackle favouritism effectively, it is essential to implement thorough strategies that boost transparency, reinforce institutional frameworks, and cultivate a culture rooted in fairness and accountability.

5 Conclusions

The research findings reveal that favouritism within quasi-government organisations is deep-rooted in the organizational processes, rather than being an isolated issue. It primarily shows up as unequal access to training opportunities, a sense of unfairness in promotion decisions, and inconsistencies in how performance evaluations are conducted.

The results indicate that although certain organisational processes seem formal and systematic, they are shaped by informal networks and managerial judgement, leading to potential biases. The practices surrounding promotions emerged as the primary concern, with most respondents viewing them as inequitable. This suggests that favouritism is especially evident in decisions regarding career progression, which can significantly impact employee morale and the credibility of the organization. These findings highlight that favouritism not only influences views on equity but also leads to real impacts on the efficiency of organisations. When employees sense that favouritism is at play, they often find their motivation reducing, engagement dropping, and productivity suffering as a result. The results indicate that favouritism leads to adverse behaviours in the workplace, including disengagement, decreased effort, and possible withdrawal from organisational activities.

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The article followed all ethical standards appropriate for this kind of research.

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