



MAMA TENDO

THE LONG-TERM COST OF FAVOURING CHILDREN

I was talking to an adult lady the other day and she was telling me how her sister hated her because she was their dad's favourite. "She is just too mean and evil to me, just because my dad loved me more than anyone else," she said. There lies the danger of favouritism, it can divide children and families for a long time.

In some families, this is done openly, while in others it is kept under wraps, but it exists. Favouritism, whether in the family, at work, or in school, is bound to create resentment, rivalry and revenge. This is an area no parent should neglect. We must face it boldly and address it intentionally.

Many parents do not realise how their words, actions, or unconscious preferences can shape the emotional lives of their children, sometimes for years to come.

It may start with small things: praising one child more frequently, excusing another's mistakes, giving more attention or resources to one, or assuming one child "understands better" or "needs less guidance." Over time, children notice. They internalise the message that they are less loved, less valued, or less capable.

When parents insist, "I do not have a favourite," children can feel it. Subtle actions accumulate into lasting impressions and the consequences are profound. Children who feel overlooked may become resentful, withdrawn, or rebellious. Sibling rivalry intensifies. Trust within the family weakens. In some cases, the emotional wounds follow children into adulthood, affecting relationships, self-esteem and even career choices.

Favouritism also harms the "favoured" child. They may grow up with entitlement, arrogance, or guilt, knowing that others feel left out. Being constantly praised or excused can create unrealistic expectations and hinder emotional maturity.

Often, parents do not intend harm. They may relate better to one child because of personality, interests, or temperament. However, without conscious effort, these preferences shape the family dynamic.

True parenting requires vigilance, honesty, and effort.

It demands that we check our biases, recognise the unique needs of each child and actively demonstrate equal love.

In doing so, we protect not only the happiness of our children but the unity of our families.

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