"Boomerang Employees"

Dr. Radha.R

Professor & Program Head, Ramaiah Institute of Management Studies, (RIMS), Bangalore 560054

Abstract

Boomerang Employees

Boomerang employees refer to the employees who had previously quit the organisations being rehired by the same organisation. In a few industries like IT industry the concept of boomerang employees seems to be catching up. Very less research has been done on this concept of boomerang employees and the literature available is few. Therefore, this study was undertaken in select IT organisations to understand the perception about boomerang employees both from the perspective of the employees as well as the organisation. A structured questionnaire was deployed to collect primary data from both the employees and the managers. Interviews were also held with them to document their true feelings. The data has been analysed and interpretations have been drawn. The analysis has been presented in the form of pie charts and graphs. The findings have revealed that even though the companies are ready to welcome the boomerang employees due to cost benefits involved, many employees do not approve of this, particularly, the employees belonging to baby boomers and Generation X. Only millennial generation seem to agree with the concept of boomerang employee.

Key Words: boomerang employees, perception, primary data, structured questionnaire

"In an age defined by social media and job hopping, it's much easier for employees to search for new opportunities and equally as easy for recruiters to poach talent from competitors. This fierce competition could be contributing to the changing mindset about boomerang employees. With this boomerang trend on the rise, it's more important than ever for organizations to create a culture that engages employees – even long after they've gone – and organizations should consider how the boomerang employee factor should affect their off-boarding and alumni communications strategies for top performers."

Joyce Maroney, director, The Workforce Institute at Kronos

Introduction:

With the rise of more and younger employees in the work force the concept of boomerang employees has been gaining more traction in the recent times. Defined as former employees rehired after an absence of a few years, boomerang employees have currently become the favourite choice of HR. The rehiring of boomerang employees had hit a stumbling block earlier due to the mindset of the companies and the stigma attached with rehiring the employees who left the organisation earlier, but, recently the companies are more receptive and open to the idea of rehiring boomerang employees. The employees would have previously left the organisation for reasons which may range from dissatisfaction to pursuing higher studies and upgrading the skills. When the purpose of the employee exit is fulfilled and he wants to come back, the organisations welcome him back with open arms because he is the new improved version of old employee.

Need for the study:

With employing the boomerang employees on a rise, it was pertinent to find out the perspectives of both the employer and the employee on this concept. Particularly, when the employee had left the organisation on his own previously, what made him come back to the old organisation was an apparent question which required an answer and hence this study was conducted. The other question which required an answer was about the change in the mindset of the employers in welcoming the boomerang employees while previously they had a different mindset and were not so receptive to the idea of boomerang employees.

Review of Literature:

According to two studies co-written by a University of Illinois expert in organizational behavior and human resources management, organizations of all types are beginning to recognize and embrace the value of recruiting and welcoming back former employees.

"Boomerang Employees" already understand the key components of the organization's work structure and culture, which makes them less risky hires than newcomers, says T. Brad Harris, a professor of labor and employment relations at Illinois. In a paper published in the summer issue of Personnel Psychology, Harris and his co-authors – Stacie Furst-Holloway of the University of Cincinnati, Benson Rosen of the University of North Carolina, and Abbie J. Shipp of Texas Christian University – found that the experiences encountered by boomerang employees were distinct in a number of ways."In addition to understanding the organizational culture, returning employees might also be more committed to the focal organization upon their return because, in essence, they've learned firsthand that the grass isn't always greener on the other side," "After surveying and interviewing hundreds of employees, the researchers were able to see that boomerang employees were more likely to originally leave an organization not because of dissatisfaction with the job, but because of some personal shock, such as a pregnancy, spousal relocation or an unexpected job offer.

Objective of the Study:

The main objective of the study was to decipher the mindset of both the employer and the employees of select IT organisations regarding boomerang employees.

Methodology:

A survey was conducted among the employees and managers of IT organisations in Bangalore. A structured questionnaire was used to elicit information from the respondents. Informal interviews and interactions were also conducted to read the minds of the employees and the managers. The primary data collected through the questionnaires from 100 employees and 50 managers was tabulated and meaningful interpretations have been made to understand the minds of both the employees and the managers of the IT organisations.
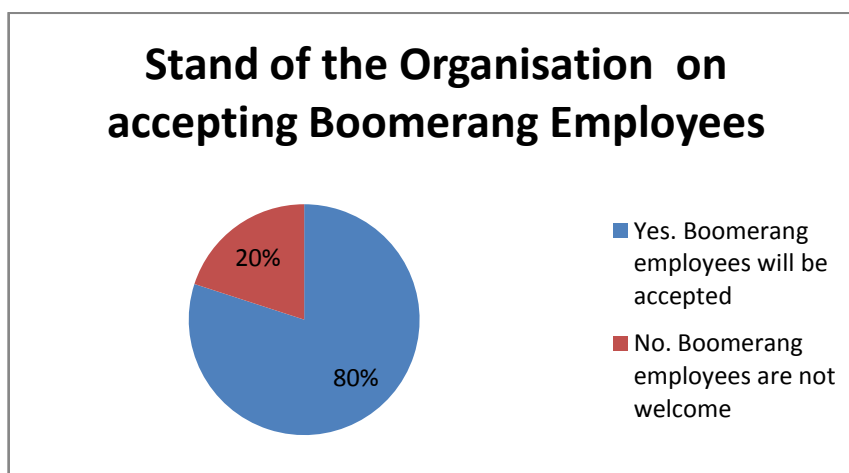
Discussion on Data Analysis:

Table 1 - Stand of the Organisations on accepting Boomerang Employees

Response of the Companies	% of Response
Yes. Boomerang employees will be accepted	80%
No. Boomerang employees are not welcome	20%

Source: Primary Data

**Graph 1 - Stand of the Organisation on accepting Boomerang Employees**

80% of the managers have opined that their organisations have an open policy when it comes to accepting the boomerang employees. Organisations are of the opinion that when an improved version of the old employee is available, they do not mind rehiring him. Only 20% of the managers were sceptical about rehiring the boomerang employees because they were apprehensive about the baggage the employee had left behind at the time of quitting the organisation.

Table 2 - Boomerang Employees of the Organisations

Response of the Employees	% of Response
Yes. I am a boomerang employee	12%
No. I am not a boomerang employee	88%

Source: Primary Data

**Graph 2 - Boomerang Employees of the Organisations**
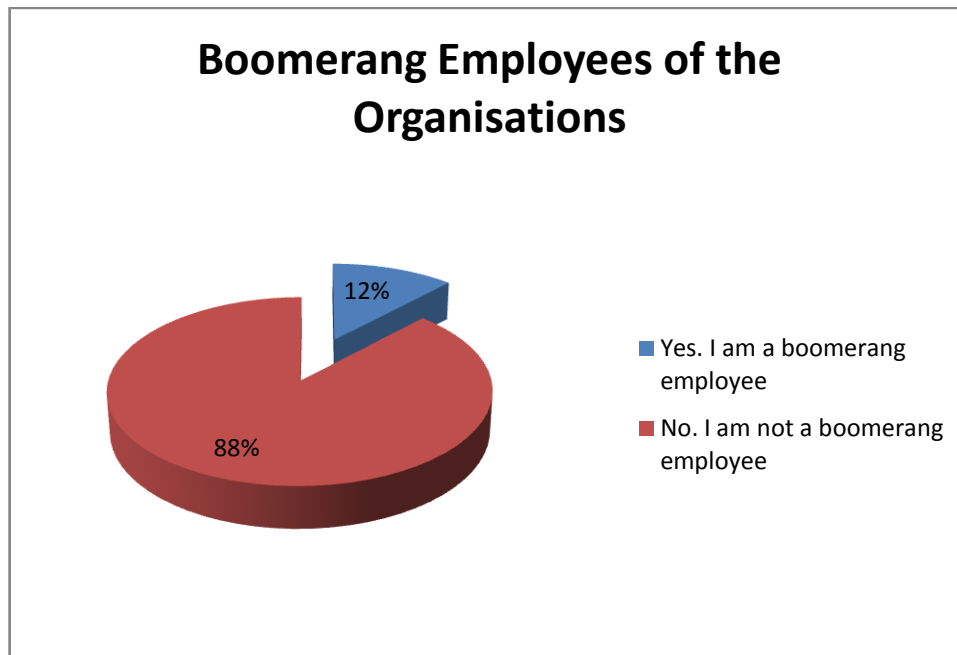
Only 12% of the respondents surveyed were boomerang employees. Considering the fact that there is frequent reference to boomerang employees it was a surprise that only 12% of the respondents were boomerang employees.

Table 3 - Consideration on going back to the previous employer

Response of the Employees	% of Response
Yes. I will consider going back to my previous employer	30%
No. I will not consider going back to my previous employer	70%

Source: Primary data

**Graph 3 - Consideration on going back to the previous employer**
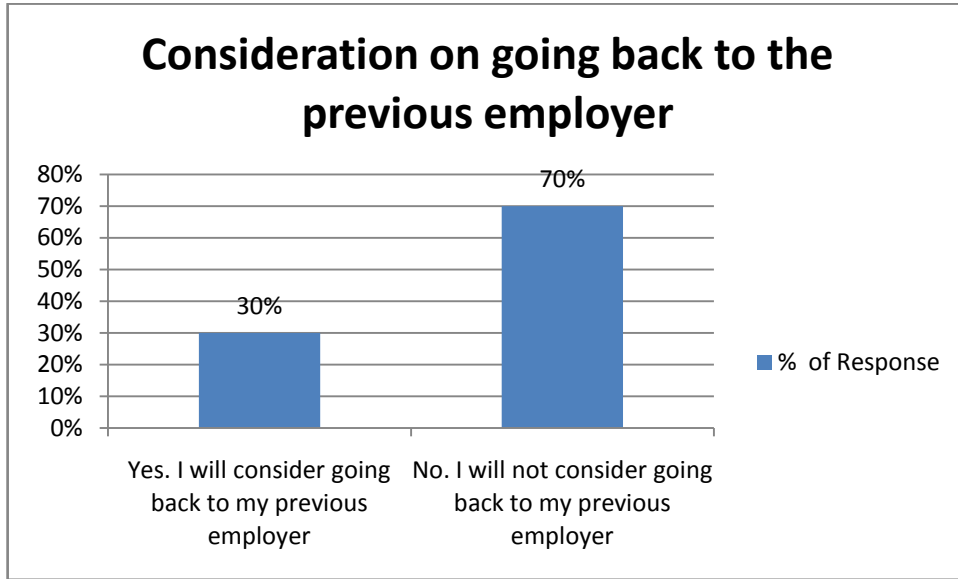
Out of the total respondents only 30% of the respondents considered going back to the previous employer as a viable option. The balance 70% did not believe in the concept of boomerang employees and therefore declined to go back to the previous employer. Again, this finding is rather surprising because contrary to the popular belief many employees felt that it was not good to be a boomerang employee.

Table 4 - Consideration on going back to the previous employer by different generations

Response of different generations	% of Response
Millennial	65%
Generation X	40%
Baby Boomers	18%

Source: Primary data

Graph 4 - Consideration on going back to the previous employer by different generations
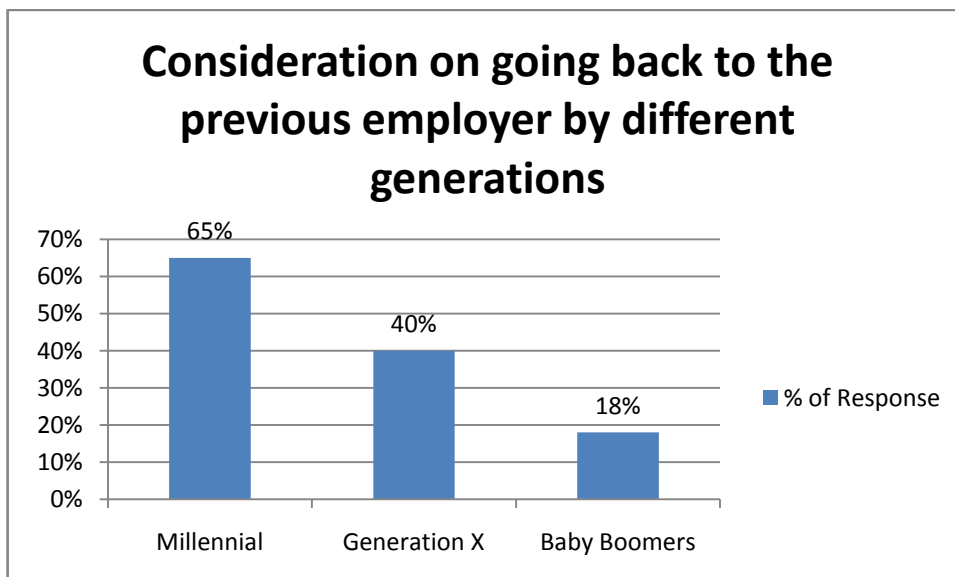
While further analysing the response on whether the employees would want to go back to their previous employer based on the generations of the employees , the results have revealed that the baby boomer generation would not want to switch jobs very frequently or switch back again to the previous employer. Generation X seemed to be little different from the baby

boomers because they opined that going back to the previous employer was acceptable. The generation which was very comfortable in switching jobs and getting back to the previous employer was the millennial generation and more than 65% of the respondents belonging to this generation felt the same. This generation does not mind job hopping and expressed that job hopping and boomeranging was acceptable.

Table 5 – Reasons for organisations being pro boomerang employees

Reasons for encouraging boomerang employees	% of Response
Employees are already aware about the rules, regulations, procedures and familiar about how things work	70%
Very less training is required, easier training	90%
Employees already are aware about the culture of the organisation and therefore adapting will be easy	90%
Boomerang employees bring with them the outside exposure	85%
Boomerang employees bring in inside information about competitors if they are from competing firms	80%
Hiring process is quick because the organisations already knows about the employee	90%
Boomerang employee may be returning after upgrading his shills or after acquiring higher qualification	60%
Low failure rate because boomerang employee's skill set and capabilities are well known	65%
Low cost	80%
Less time consuming	85%

Source: Primary data

Graph 5 - Reasons for organisations being pro boomerang employees
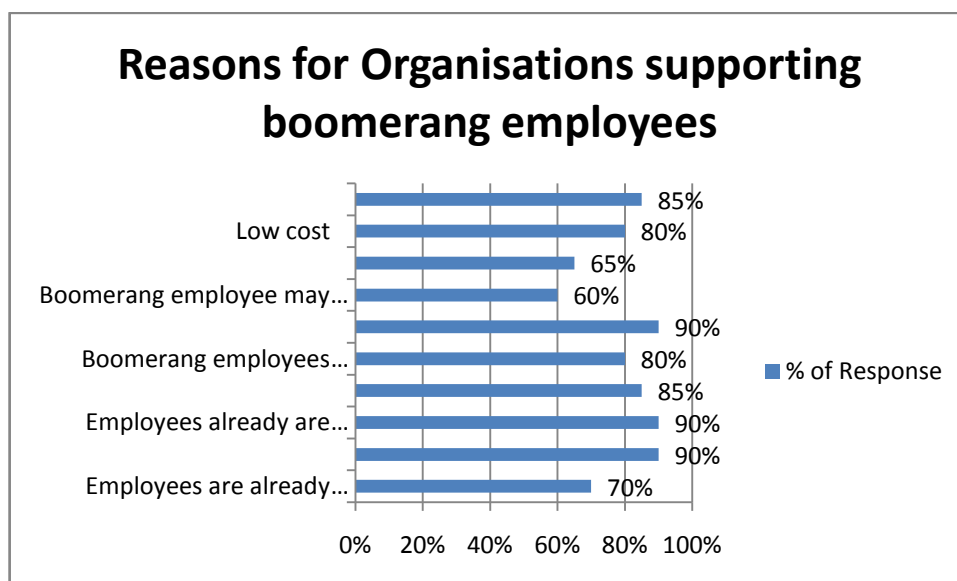
Source: Primary data

90% of the managers surveyed were of the opinion that boomerang employees could be easily hired because the organisation had done their recruitment and selection process before and they already know very well about the employee and his past. They further opined that these

employees already know the culture of the organisation and will not take much time to immerse themselves in the culture and they also need little or no training at all. 85% of the managers felt that hiring of boomerang employees was less costly and less time consuming. 65% of the managers felt that with boomerang employees the failure rate was very less since the employees were already aware about the policies, procedures and processes of the organisation.

Table 6 - Networking with the Boomerang Employees

Strategies to network with boomerang employees	% of Response
E-Mail	40%
Newsletters	50%
Head hunters and Recruiters	80%
Social Media	90%
Others	10%

Source: Primary data

Graph 6 - Networking with the Boomerang Employees
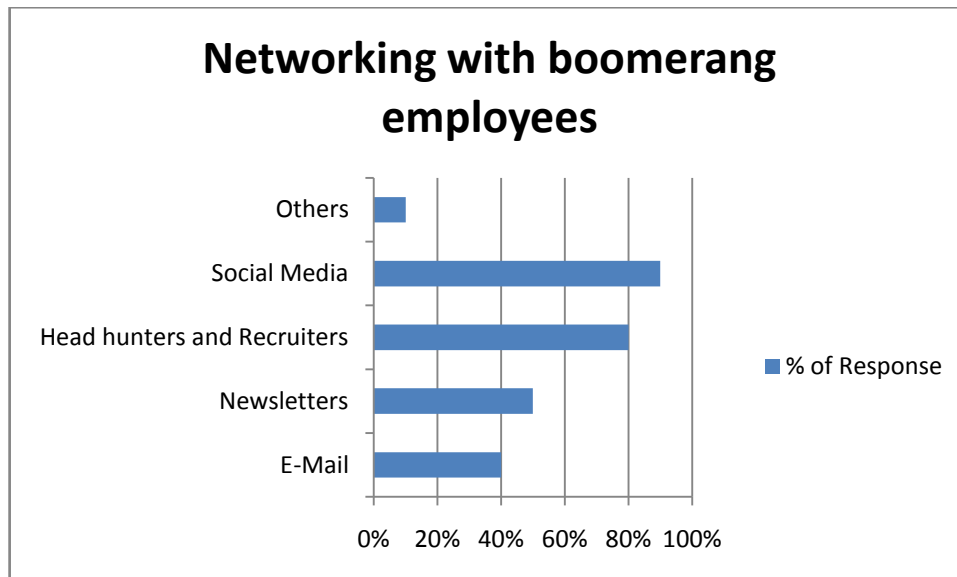
90% of the managers surveyed expressed that they kept in touch with each other on social media platforms including face book, twitter and linked in. 80% of them told that the head-hunters and the recruiters they are in touch with provided them with the latest updates on their old employees. Keeping in touch through e-mails and newsletters was a less popular option of networking with the old employees who have left the organisation.

Findings of the Study:

1. Employee Perspective :
Even though considered as the latest and happening concept, boomerang concept was accepted only by 12% of the respondents. Only 30% of the respondents considered going back to the previous employer as a viable option. Baby boomers and Generation X were wary of the concept of boomerang whereas millennial s was more open to the idea of boomerang employees.

2. Organisation Perspective:
80% of the managers were supporting the concept of boomerang employees and were ready to welcome the boomerang employees. Only 20% of them were against employees being rehired by the organisation. The reasons for rehiring the employees ranged from knowledge of the

employee to cost cutting and time saving. The networking was done through social networking sites followed by interaction with head hunters and recruiters.

Conclusion:

Boomerang concept is there to stay because it provides both the organisations and the employees with immense benefits. Stigma attached with recruiting an employee who had previously quit the organisation is no longer there. The organisations are ready to welcome and embrace the boomerang employee but the employee who leaves the organisation should ensure that he does not burn bridges when he quits the organisation.

References:

The Boomerang Principle: Inspire Lifetime Loyalty from Your Employees by Lee Caraher