



## How Welcoming Boomerang Employees Affects Employees' Perception of Organizational Justice: an Analysis on Air Transport Personnel in Turkey

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### ABSTRACT

**Purpose** - The purpose of the study is to examine the relationship between former employee re-recruitment policies and organizational justice perceptions.

**Aims(s)** - It is aimed to examine the studies on hiring former employees, which are performance-oriented in the literature, in the dimension of organizational behaviour.

**Design/methodology/approach** - The study includes a literature review followed by implementation. In the application, data was collected by questionnaire method and then analysed by statistical methods. The analysed data were then interpreted in line with the literature.

**Findings** - As a result of the study, it was revealed that supporting the reemployment of the former employee by the organization resulted in the employee feeling himself/herself in a more just environment. It was observed that the re-hiring of the former employee had a positive effect especially on the interactional justice sub-dimension.

**Limitations of the study** - The fact that the study covers a single country and sector can be considered as a limitation. Conducting various studies in the context of sector and country may take the subject to different places. In addition, the reasons why employees change their jobs according to sectors should be examined in detail.

**Originality/value** - Its focus on aviation personnel, where staff turnover is generally high and critical, and its focus on the employee perspective rather than performance can be considered original.

### KEY WORDS

Boomerang Employee, Human Resources Management, Organizational Justice, Aviation Industry

JEL Code: M12, M14, M16

DOI: [10.46287/JXKJ7136](https://doi.org/10.46287/JXKJ7136)

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Different approaches and methods are being tried to provide human resources, which is an important input for organizations. Providing human resources options, especially in organization and outsourcing, have diversified from the past to the present. These options include rehiring former employees. Today, some organizations are trying to recapture their former employees and restore their deteriorated relationship with them. On the other hand, it is common for employees to change their current jobs for reasons such as financial reasons and work environment (Puneet and Paul, 2012). In addition to this situation, the option of returning to the organizations they previously worked for and left for various reasons may also be considered appropriate by the employees.

Employees who leave the organization they used to work and return to the organization they left later are also called 'boomerang employees'. Training new personnel for organizations is defined as a laborious and costly process. Filling the place of an employee who leaves the company incurs costs such as recruitment, selection, monitoring and learning the job (Dube and Reich, 2015). Rehiring former employees eliminates the recruitment and orientation processes and minimizes the costs created by these processes (Kumavat, 2012).

Organizations don't want their useful employees to leave, but leaving a useful employees and coming back later can be beneficial for organizations (Laker, 2022). Making the right decision about boomerang employees can save organizations from such costs. According to data, boomerang employee recruitment costs 50% less than traditional recruitment (Mallick and Muckhopadhyay, 2023). Rehiring ex-employees has now become a relatively positive situation for employers. However, the results of some studies show that ex-employees also have a positive view of returning to their old job (Apy and Ryckman, 2015; Kumawat, 2012). It is emphasized by other studies that the concept of 'boomerang employee', which has just started to be studied in the field of human resources, can be an investment in value and cost issues (Kumawat, 2012; Swider et al., 2017).

On the other hand, the concept of organizational justice, which deals with how justice works in organization and how employees perceive this justice, seems to be a concept that concerns every step of human resources functions. The concept of organizational justice perception is defined by Greenberg (1987), who brought this concept to the literature for the first time, as the opinions of the employees about whether the job descriptions of the employees are defined transparently by the organization and whether the organization treats them fairly.

The subject of this research is the relationship between ex-employee recruitment policies and organizational justice. The purpose of the research is to evaluate how the policies of hiring ex-employees affect employee behavior in terms of organizational justice perception. The main question of the research is how the organizations' having or not having recruitment policies for boomerang employees affect the organizational justice perceptions of the individuals working in that organization. The study is important because it aims to show that the concept of boomerang employee is a positive contributor to organizations. Most of the studies on boomerang employees are related to performance.

## 2 BOOMERANG EMPLOYEE: REUNION OF FORMER EMPLOYEE AND EMPLOYER

While rehiring former employees was not a very preferred situation for organizations in the past, today it has become a situation that employers look at positively. However, the results of some studies show that ex-employees also have a positive attitude towards returning to their old job (Apy ve Ryckman, 2015; Kumawat, 2012).

Spending an entire career in a single company used to be more common, but nowadays it's rare (Work Institute Retention Report, 2020). According to 2019 data, the average person works in 12 different jobs throughout their career (Kolmar, 2023). According to Gourtsilidou (2021), despite the pandemic in 2020, 25% of employees in Europe changed their jobs. 20% of employees said that they intend to change their jobs in 2021. According to the research of Businessolver, it is seen that 15 years ago, upon the resignation of the employee, he or she left the company, never to return. Studies with employees and employers show that this need not be the case. Human resource costs are generally related to orientation and organizational commitment. Hiring boomerangs is cost-effective as it minimizes these costs (Kumawat, 2012). It is a time-consuming and costly process for employees and organizations to get used to each other and then internalize. Ex-employees know the organizational culture, the way the organization works, and what kind of practices it involves. For this reason, they need less recruitment process, need for socialization and training compared to candidates who will be recruited without knowing the organization. This situation can be considered as a two-sided advantage from the point of view of the employer and the employee, because the organizations get rid of the cost and the employees get rid of the habituation process (Zimmerman, 2006). Another advantage of boomerang recruitment for employers and employees is that the uncertainty that arises during and after this process is greatly reduced. Those in the human resources decision-making units will have experience with former employees, and this experience will give an idea of where they might best fit into the business (Kumawat, 2012).

According to Mauer's study in 2015, based on the study of 1800 Human Resources (HR) employees, professionals and managers, today 75% of HR professionals and 65% of managers have a positive perspective on boomerang employees. According to HR experts, even if the employee left the company with a good impression, the company does not accept to hire him again. 85% of these professionals stated that

they had received job applications from their former employees in the last five years and that about half of these former employees were hired. The formation of a sense of belonging is important in terms of contributing to the workplace. If the employee does not feel that he/she belongs to the organization, this means that he/she may seek a new opportunity (Filstad et al., 2019). When the employee goes to another organization, he or she may realize the importance of his or her former organization and that he or she can understand satisfied with the former organization. According to Kumawat (2012), the general belief of business owners and recruiting units is that new and external resources can be better, but this belief does not have a supported basis. It is stated in the literature that boomerang employee policy-oriented recruitment can be effective in finding effective human resources and reducing costs in this regard (Kumawat, 2012).

The main goal is not to get the departed employee back, but to leave an open door for employees and to ensure that employees leave with good feelings. According to Kronos (2015), this type of recruitment accounts for the vast majority of hires.

### **3 WHY ORGANIZATIONAL JUSTICE CAN WORK WELL WITH THE BOOMERANG EMPLOYEE CONCEPT?**

Although it is tried to explain that the approach of the organizations to the boomerang employee will yield good results, it is not discussed which organizations are the type that boomerang employees would like to return. The concept of justice is also found in organizational environments in order to ensure a regular organizational life and is called organizational justice. Organizational justice is about how justice works in the workplace and what role it plays (Byrne and Cropanzano, 2001).

According to Kim and Rhee (2011), satisfying employees is just as important as satisfying business partners and key stakeholders. It can be predicted that employees will not want to return to an environment where they think that there is no organizational justice. Although it is thought that welcoming boomerang employees will contribute to organizations, the employee perspective dimension of the job should also be evaluated.

Despite personnel-organization fit is important, studies on this subject are insufficient according to Abraham et al. (2015). Studies have shown that if there is a value congruence between the organization and the employees, more job satisfaction, job commitment and organizational citizenship behavior can be achieved (Akbaş, 2011; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Oh et al., 2014). The right to be treated equally can be considered as the most fundamental value for people (Noonan, 2011). According to several studies, as the employees are treated fairly, the relationship and commitment between the organization and the employees gets stronger (Aryee et al., 2015; Ohana, 2014; Silva and Caetano, 2016; Suurd Ralph and Holmvall, 2016).

The concept of perceived organizational justice affects the emotions of the employees, and for this reason, the attitudes of the employees towards their old organizations in the future will be based on those emotions (Cremer and Bos, 2007). In line with this research, it can be accepted that the concept of organizational justice, which is accepted as a positive situation in organizational terms, should be perceived at a higher level in organizations that welcome boomerang employees.

## **4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **4.1 RESEARCH SAMPLE**

Today, when we look at the organizations in some sectors, the employee turnover problem draws attention as an important issue. Aviation sector is one of the sectors experiencing this problem. It is generally accepted that high employee turnover rate is not something desired by organizations (Al-Suraihi, 2021). In addition, according to Shamsuzzoha and Shumon (2007), although salaries and opportunities are better in the private sector, job security is lower. Civil aviation is dominated by private organizations. This contributes to the high employee turnover rate. (Teepakorn and Chanin, 2018). According to the 2019 annual report, there are 295,547 civil aviation employees in Turkey (Sivil Havacılık Genel Müdürlüğü Yıllık

Rapor, 2019). According to Miles and Mangold (2005), the annual turnover rate of organizations in the aviation sector is between 20-30% (Doğan et al., 2020). Dalmış (2019) defined employee turnover rate as a chronic problem for the sector in his study on civil aviation organizations. Some studies emphasize that the turnover rate in the aviation industry should be reduced as it is a 24-hour business and employee turnover is costly due to the characteristics of the industry (Sever, 2023). These emphasized reasons were the motivation for selecting aviation personnel as the sample of the study. Evaluating the relationship between organizational citizenship behavior and organizational stress, Mert et al. (2020) described the workforce turnover rate as an important problem for the civil aviation industry. Satardien et al. (2019) found that employees in the aviation industry feel a strong workforce turnover intention when they are not supported by their organizations. Re-employment policy, employee turnover was thought to be related, therefore, civil aviation organizations with high employee turnover rates were chosen as the sample.

The universe of the research consists of civil aviation organizations that are active on a global scale. The sample of the research consists of people who work or have worked in civil aviation organizations in Turkey.

## 4.2 DATA COLLETION AND RESEARCH METHOD

This study is included in the explanatory hypothesis-testing research class, which is included in the research classifications. Hypotheses are built around a general research problem and trying to verify the assumptions made through the collected data is called hypothesis-testing research (Padem et al., 2012).

The survey method was determined as the data collection method in the research. In the survey, firstly, there is a question to understand whether there are boomerang employees in the organizations where the participants work. The answers given to the question in question determine whether the participants will answer the questions in the second part. The second part, which includes questions about the situation of boomerang employees in organizations compared to other employees, is for the participants who stated in the first question that there is a boomerang employee in the organization they work for. Participants who do not have boomerang employees in the organization they work for skip the questions in the second section and go directly to the third section, that is, to the section where the attitudes of the participant about boomerang employees are asked. Except for the second part, all parts are common to all participants. In the fourth part, there are questions to understand the organizational justice perceptions of the participants. As the organizational justice concept scale, Colquitt (2001)'s organizational justice scale was used. In the statements in this scale, there are statements about three different organizational justice dimensions (procedural, distributive and interactional justice). In the last part, the participants were asked questions about their demographic characteristics. Due to the Covid-19 epidemic, the surveys were delivered to the participants via social media channels, especially LinkedIn, and through acquaintances. Data collection started on 18.05.2021 and ended on 06.11.2021. Later, these questionnaires were transferred to the analysis program, Jamovi, and analyzed through this program.

## 4.3 EXPLANATION OF ANALYZES

The Shapiro Wilk test was used to determine whether the data were normally distributed or not, and it was concluded that the data were not normally distributed ( $p < .05$ ). Although the data are not normally distributed, the fact that the skewness and kurtosis values are between (-1,+1) gives the opportunity to accept the data as normal (Hair et al., 2013). Since the data were normally distributed, parametric tests were used in the study.

Table 1. Factor Loadings

Factor Loads				
Statements	Components			Uniqueness
	1	2	3	
Management acts without prejudice while making decisions.	0.788		0.322	0.223



Decisions made at the place where I work are clearly notified to us.	0.737			0.327
The management informs the justification of the decisions taken regarding my organization.	0.724	0.366		0.278
I find the decisions made by the management fair.	0.631	0.480		0.367
As employees, we may oppose the decisions taken by the manager or ask our manager to make changes in these decisions.		0.794		0.278
When management makes decisions about my job, they discuss with me the impact these decisions have on me.	0.384	0.731		0.274
When making decisions about my job, management cares about the rights of its employees, that is, my rights.	0.473	0.710		0.230
While the management is making new decisions, it also includes the ideas of other employees outside the management in the decisions.	0.330	0.618	0.383	0.363
When a decision is taken in the institution, the reasons for taking the decision are shared with those other than those who took the decision.	0.506	0.610	0.358	0.244
Management treats me kindly and understandingly when making decisions about my organization.	0.535	0.560		0.318
My salary is fair.			0.793	0.267
All management decisions are applied consistently to all employees affected by these decisions.		0.336	0.761	0.302
I think my workload fair.	0.398		0.707	0.317
The responsibilities given to me regarding the job are appropriate and fair.	0.462	0.340	0.539	0.381
Note 'Varimax' rotation is used.				

Factor analysis was performed and it was concluded that there were 3 separate sub-dimensions. First, the reliability analysis of all the items of the scale was performed, and the Cronbach's alpha result was found to be 0.94, and then the sub-dimension expressions were included in the trust analysis among themselves, and the distributive justice result was 0.82, the procedural justice result was 0.91, and the interactional justice result was 0.85, respectively. Since Cronbach's alpha values are greater than 0.80, they are considered to be of high reliability. When the procedural and distributive justice sub-dimensions are examined, it is possible that the expressions of these two dimensions are similar to each other from time to time. For this reason, the expression of interactional justice, "Decisions taken at the place where I work are clearly notified to us." While going to the procedural justice dimension, the procedural justice statement "When a decision is taken in the organization, the reasons for taking the decision are shared with those other than those who took the decision." and "Management cares about the rights of its employees, that is, my rights, when making decisions about my job." came under the dimension of interactional justice.

After the normality test, confidence analysis and factor analysis, correlation and regression analyzes were applied according to the case to be tested. In order to perform a regression analysis, it was checked whether some conditions were met. As a result of the analysis, the VIF values of the expressions gave results below 4. This is also desirable for regression analysis. In the light of these results, it has been revealed that there is no multicollinearity problem in the data. The autocorrelation between the waste values was measured with the Durbin-Watson test. If this value is between 1.5 and 2.5, it means that there is no autocorrelation. When we put the data into the Durbin-Watson test, a value of 2.12 emerged. This result is considered sufficient for regression analysis. In addition, the Shapiro-Wilk test of normality was performed and the result was greater than 0.05, meaning it was meaningless. At this point, the desired situation is that the normality test gives meaningless results. It was greater than  $p > 0.05$  ( $p = 0.145$ ) and it was concluded that the data were normally distributed. As a result of these analyses, it was concluded that the data were suitable for regression analysis.

## 5 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

## 5.1 PARTICIPANTS PROFILE

Of the 392 participants participating in the study, 158 were women and 234 were men. When the sector gender distribution reports are examined, this distribution reflects the distribution in the sector. Women mainly work as cabin crew in the sector, and they are relatively less involved in fields such as aircraft maintenance, piloting and engineering compared to cabin crew (SHGM, 2018).

When the monthly income level of the participants is examined, 111 participants earn between 3,000-6,000 TL, 121 between 6,000-10,000 TL, 138 between 10,000 TL and above, and 22 between 0-3,000 TL. Considering the feedback given by the participants regarding the aviation sector, it was thought that it should be considered normal that the highest group in the income distribution is higher. Participants said that the wages given in the aviation sector are higher than in other sectors. According to DISK's research (2020), 64 percent of wage earners in Turkey earn below the minimum wage or 1.5 times the minimum wage (2324 TL). This shows that, according to the current study, the civil aviation sector differs from Turkey in general in terms of income distribution.

77.8% of the research participants are under the age of 40. This indicates that research participants are generally early in their careers or with intermediate experience.

According to the meta-analysis of Cohen-Crahash and Spector (2001), it was revealed that there was no significant relationship between the organizational justice sub-dimensions and the demographic characteristics of the participants. Also in the current study, there was no significant difference between the demographic characteristics and the answers given to the statements. Afterwards, the correlations between the statements inquiring about the participants' thoughts on boomerang employees and organizational justice dimensions were measured using regression analysis.

## 5.2 THE EFFECTS OF COMPANY'S REHIRING POLICY ON EMPLOYEES' PERCEPTIONS OF ORGANIZATIONAL JUSTICE

While 230 participants stated that there were boomerang employees in the business they worked, 162 participants stated that they were not. An independent samples t-test was conducted to determine whether there was a significant difference in organizational justice dimensions between those who had boomerangs at the workplace and those who did not, and it was observed that there was a significant difference regarding the interactional justice ( $p < 0.05$ ,  $p = 0.013$ ) dimension. Interactional justice is concerned with how visible and valuable employees feel in their decision-making processes and the functioning of decisions (Bies & Moag, 1986). Based on the definition of interactional justice and the answers given by the sample, it can be concluded that rehiring organizations make their employees feel more valuable and respected.

As a result of the analyses made, it has been seen that the policy of organizations to offer the option of rehiring their boomerang employee, that is, the former employee, has a positive effect on the organizational justice perceptions of the employees. The concept of organizational justice can be seen as a cause in some studies and as a result in others (Cohen-Charash and Spector, 2001). As the result supports, it can be said that organizations that allow former employees to return have more positive effects on their employees, especially in terms of the perception of interactional justice. Positive effects of organizational justice may lead to results that support the harmony between the individual and the organization, such as organizational citizenship behaviour, job satisfaction, and trust in management. Looking at the current study, we can say that boomerang employee policies indirectly contribute to the psychological contract between the individual and the organization.

Another finding obtained from the study is that the positive attitude of the workplace towards the policies towards boomerang employees positively affects the participants' perceptions of interactional justice. This finding can be interpreted as companies that support rehiring make their employees feel more valuable. As a result of the research, it was revealed that when organizations support the boomerang employee concept, they feel more valuable and in the decision-making processes. According to the study of Cohen-Charash and Spector (2001), the organizational justice sub-dimension that best explains the interaction between the leader and the member is interactional justice. The same study questions that if

interactional injustice is perceived, employees' commitment to their managers may decrease. In this case, it can be concluded that the employees of organizations with boomerang employee policies have stronger leader and member interactions than other organizations and it was determined that which factor was associated with which organizational justice sub-dimension in 190 studies. Organizational justice sub-dimensions point to different causes and outcomes. Boomerang employee policies can also be a leading dimension on interactional justice.

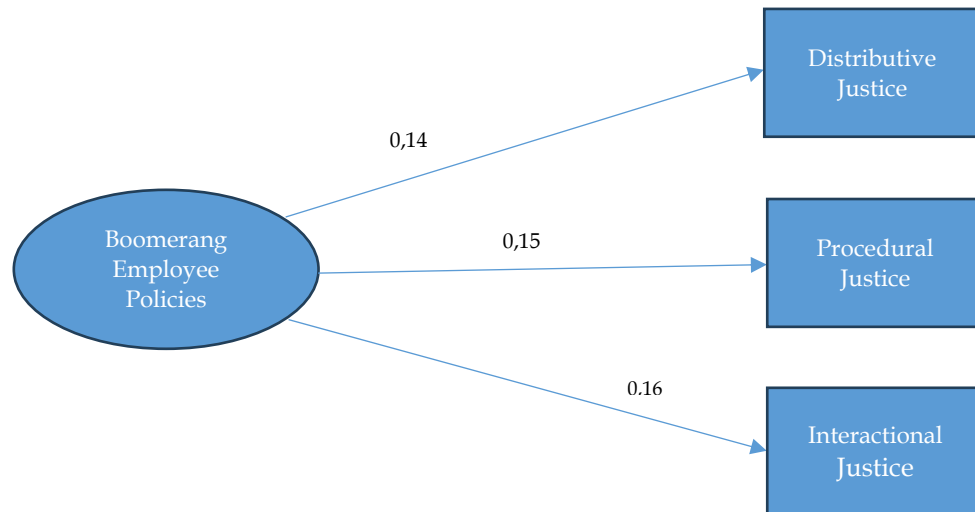
If we examine the current study within the framework of organizational justice theories, we can think in terms of proactive-process theories. Proactive-process theories deal with procedures that should be implemented in appropriate forms of administration from the point of view of justice. Boomerang hiring or not having employees like boomerang employee is a form of procedure. The study also questions the attitude of the employees towards the procedures in terms of its subject. According to Lerner (1977), the viewpoint of the employees to the procedures may vary depending on the relationship between the employees and those who prepare the procedures and are instrumental in their implementation. This is a situation that should be taken into account in organizational justice studies. The organizational justice sub-dimension, which is related to how organizations treat their employees, is the interactional justice sub-dimension. In fact, interactional justice and Lerner's theory are the same and explain each other (Greenberg, 1990).

If the participant thinks that his colleagues will approach the boomerang employee policy negatively, it is concluded that the perception of procedural and interactional justice is negatively affected. From these findings, it can be concluded that while the organization's valuation of performance was a factor that positively affected organizational justice for the participants, the negative approach of colleagues to re-employment negatively affected the perception of organizational justice. It was observed that the participants had a negative tendency in all sub-dimensions of organizational justice as the situation of not finding it appropriate for those who left the company to return because they found a new job increased. It is seen that there is a positive trend in all organizational justice sub-dimensions as the participants approach positively to being a boomerang employee. If the participant thinks that his or her organization gives the message that she can be reemployed to her employees, then again, it has been determined that there is a positive orientation in all sub-dimensions of organizational justice.

In Bernal (2021)'s article on boomerang employees, it is discussed that the new idea of employers should be whether employees prefer to stay in the organization or whether I can treat everyone equally and that the boomerang policy can be an indicator of the mutual trust bond by the employer. The fact that the participants develop a bond of organizational justice against the organization that support them to be boomerang employees also supports this discussion.

It is seen that those who agree with the statement that those who are dismissed due to poor performance are not reemployed have a positive orientation in the sub-dimensions of organizational justice. As a result of the present study, it was concluded that as the time spent by the participants in the same organization or working life increases, their perceptions of distributive justice are also positively affected. As people stay in the same organization, their seniority increases, sometimes they are promoted, and experience and seniority are gained as they are in business life, distributive justice is the comparison of earnings with the general organization in terms of fairness, earnings generally increase depending on experience and time, in business life and The increase in the perception of distributive justice with the increase in the time spent in the same organization can be explained in this way. As a result of the regression analyzes made after the correlation analysis, it is seen that 15 percent of procedural justice, 16 percent of interactional justice and 14 percent of distributive justice can be explained with expressions related to the boomerang employee (Fig. 1).

Figure 1. Beta Coefficients



## 6 CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

There has been some academic work on rehiring recently. Re-employment policies, which were not favored by organizations in the past, have come to the fore again and it has been observed that it brings positive results. In this study, the effects of rehiring policies in aviation organizations in Turkey on employees' perceptions of organizational justice are examined. Due to rehiring studies are new and scarce, this study deals with rehiring policies in the aviation industry with a high employee turnover. As a result of the research, it was seen that the policy of offering the option of rehiring had a positive effect on the organizational justice perceptions of the employees. As the result supports, it can be said that businesses that allow former employees to return have more positive effects on their employees, especially in terms of the perception of interactional justice. The positive effects of organizational justice may lead to results that will support the harmony between the individual and the organization, such as organizational citizenship behavior, job satisfaction, and trust in management. In addition, as a result of the research, it was seen that boomerang employees were treated the same compared to the past, but there was no change in wage or position. Based on these data, it can be said that organizations that support the employment of boomerang employees make their employees feel more valuable and offer a fairer environment.

LeDoux et al. (2019) concluded that boomerang employees are more likely to stay with their current employer than non-boomerang employees. The findings obtained in the current practice study also show that the organizational justice perceptions of the employees are stronger if the organizations are warm to the boomerang employee policy. As a result of the conclusions compiled from the studies in the literature and the findings of the current study, it is concluded that the approval of boomerang employees has positive results in organizational behavior like high performance or commitment level. In the current study, data to make inferences about performance were not collected. However, when we look at the studies in the literature, it is seen that boomerang workers also make a positive contribution to performance.

According to Shipp et al. (2014), besides the practical advantages of boomerang workers, there is little evidence about what motivates them to decide to leave and then return. In addition, the differences between the reasons for leaving the boomerang employee and the reasons for leaving the organization permanently can be a subject for future studies. As boomerang workers grow in popularity, research topics such as the factors behind those who perform well after their return will come to the fore. (Swider et al., 2017). In addition, the factors behind the reasons for the employees to make these decisions regarding the organizations with a high return demand by the employees can also be considered as a research topic. The majority of the existing studies in the literature are related to the performance of boomerangs (Arnold et al., 2021; Keller et al., 2020), although performance is an important factor, more studies should be done on factors such as the psychological contract between the employees and the employer, and the intention to leave. Positivist studies on organizations are insufficient to explain social phenomena and events, so



studies that associate such new concepts with classical concepts should be supported by qualitative studies in order to understand the essence of the issue (Ari, 2020).

While jobs that require qualifications are preferred by the employees, the conditions for a reliable and comfortable work environment have become as important as the wages provided by the job. If organizations are to have a positive approach to rehiring, a reliable and comfortable environment should be provided to employees. It can be predicted that organizations that do not provide a reliable and comfortable environment for their employees will not be successful in rehiring their talented employees.

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