

Ghosting Behavior Of Job Applicants: An Analysis Of Factors Driving The Behavior

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Abstract: Today's job field is witnessing a new development called 'Ghosting' by job applicants that has become a menace to the recruiters. Job-Applicant Ghosting can be attributed to the practice of applying for a job but not getting in touch with the recruiters thereafter and not turning up for the recruitment process and thus disappearing from the process without any communication. World across, companies in various sectors are observing this phenomenon in an increasing level. Now, this trend is observed in India too. An attempt is made here to explore the nature of Ghosting Behavior among the job applicants, to investigate the commonly affected job-levels and functional areas of business and to examine the factors driving this behavior among the job applicants. The study was conducted in Bengaluru city covering the five regions of the city, the central Bengaluru, and East, West, South and North of the city that covering various business sectors like IT, retail, health, education, manufacturing, consultancy and financial services etc. A structured questionnaire is prepared for the purpose of gathering the required data and was sent to the email ids of various corporate offices extracted from a local job consultancy firm. The survey was conducted on 150 respondents who are part of recruiting panel in their respective firms. Various questions were asked to understand the trends of job-applicant ghosting across various functional-areas of business, education background and job-positions and find out the level of preparedness of the firms to tackle the affects of ghosting. The results of the study may be helpful to the recruiting officers in understanding the ghosting trends by job-applicants and strategizing to tackle the affects of ghosting. Future studies can aim for examining the role of job description, image of the company and social-media reviews on ghosting behavior.

Index Terms: Behavior, Ghosting, Job-Applicants, Job-seekers, Recruitment and Work-place

1 INTRODUCTION

Ghosting, once related to dating world, has now entered into job filed. The frequency of job aspirants getting disappeared without even notifying the hirers by phone or through mail, creating troubles to the recruiters ([Othamar Gama Filho](#), 2019). Ghosting in earlier days was seen as a practice followed by employers or recruiters usually. It is found in a survey that 36% of the job-seekers had never heard back from the recruiters, 1 in 5 candidates (20%) are rejected by phone and only 13% had received a personalized rejection email (Ted Maksimowski, 2019). This shows that employers usually ghost their prospective candidates without getting back to them with a personalized feedback. However, this trend is now taking a reverse gear where job-seekers are now ghosting their prospective employers. This trend, once notoriously linked to recruiters or hiring managers, has now taken a turn around and companies across the world are witnessing this trend at workplace more often than earlier (Pilita Clark, 2019). This trend once, more frequently found abroad now being witnessed in India as well. However, since there is no recorded information on how frequently this practice is found in India, companies have a general understanding that they are being ghosted by the job-applicants. In this context, the present study is undertaken to examine the trends of job-applicant ghosting across various functional-areas of business, education background and job-positions and find out the level of preparedness of the firms to tackle the affects of ghosting. The study results would help companies in understanding the ghosting trends by job-applicants and strategizing to tackle the affects of ghosting.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW:

Job-Applicant Ghosting can be attributed to the practice of applying for a job but not getting in touch with the recruiters thereafter and not turning up for the recruitment process and thus disappearing from the process without any communication. While this practice is wide spread across the industries worldwide, certain researches, reporters and analysts had tried to understand the phenomenon and its effects.

2.1 Understanding the term Ghosting

At the first instance, the term ghosting sounds something related spirits or ghosts. However, this term is found to be in use in other walks of life. For example, Isami McCowan (2018) mentioned in her work that the term is in use in dating world and is referred to the practice of one cutting off all communication with one's partner at dating, for whatever reason. According to LeFebvre (2017) Ghosting is different from other types of termination of relationships as it takes place when the one partner (the ghosted) disappears and it is felt by the other partner of the relationship. When a partner ghosts on the other, the impact is immediately felt leading to confusing lack of communication between them. Though the idea of dissolution of relationship by cutting off contact has been in vogue for a long time, the new-age technology highlighting ghosting behavior a more prominent relationship dissolution strategy (LeFebvre, 2017).

Ghosting at Workplace:

Over a period of time, the term ghosting has gradually entered into the field of work. Devashish Chakraborty (January 10, 2019) in his article to Economic Times daily mentioned that silence from the recruiters at a later stage of the process may mean that the candidate is being ghosted by the recruiters. The author also mentioned the probable reasons for the practice would be disorganized process, insufficient qualifications, falling short of the requirements, better competition, warm-up call or change in priorities. A popular career advising website vault.com headquartered in the US mentioned that the age old practice of ghosting has entered

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workplace, in the form of recruiters, after conducting interviews cuts off communication with candidates. GMatus Vagas and David Misko (2018) observed that ghosting is usually considered as a negative practice in an organization. A survey conducted by the researchers revealed that out of 554 respondents, around 25% mentioned that they were ghosted and 22% agreed that some of their previous relationships had the features of ghosting. This phenomenon is witnessed across the business spheres of the world. In a blog report, Jim Stroud (2018), mentioned that this ghosting has been practiced by people in organizations at every level among various industries. Ghosting in workplace all these days has been understood as a practice usually followed by recruiters towards the employees by firing them without sufficient notice. However, as written by Derrick Daren (17 September 2018) in a blog article, at a later stage, employees had started ghosting their bosses or their companies).

2.2 Job-applicant Ghosting:

Surprisingly, in a reverse trend, this practice is now being followed more by job applicants to the recruiters, which is taking the hiring world by storm. In the workplace, an applicant who ghosts the organization leaves it baffled and powerless to do anything, as to do what next (Derrick Darden, 2018). Johnny C. Taylor Jr (2018) in his article to USA Today mentioned that this ghosting behavior has become more common for job candidates to apply for a job and then not respond when a recruiter or HR person follows up. Also, the author stated that job candidate disappears without warning later in the process, even arranging for an interview but not showing up is more frustrating to the hires. Online journalism service provider, Prnewswires in 2018 found that more than 40% of job applicants say it's reasonable to 'Ghost' a company during the hiring process. Paul Davidson (2018) in his study stated that workers are ghosting interviews, blowing off work in a strong job market. He found that 20-50 % of job applicants and workers are pulling no-shows in some form, forcing many firms to modify their hiring practices. It is also identified that while the job applicants ghosting is at 2.1% in December 2000, it dropped to 1.3% in 2010 but, it raised to 2.4% by May 2018, which is considered to be the highest in 17 years. In another similar study conducted by Dhanya Menon (2018), it was found that 73% of the candidates do not show up for interviews rarely while 21% sometimes and 6% often. The study uncovers the facts that 75% of the candidates worldwide opined that they would not likely remain a customer with a company after having a bad interview experience, 79% would likely turn down a job offer if they were treated poorly during an interview, 45% would likely urge their friends and family to stop being customers after having a bad interview experience and 31% worldwide agreed that recruiters did not paint an accurate picture of the hiring company of the job role. Kathy Gurchiek (2018), posited that ghosting behavior has left many HR professionals and hiring managers baffled and attributed that behavior to generational inexperience and immaturity, lack of professionalism, testing the waters to see what's out there. He further observed that even experienced applicants fail to return initial phone calls, and candidates who were interviewed ignore repeated messages from the recruiter who extended a job offer. However, he says, job abandonment is the biggest ghosting trend he has seen in the past decade.

2.3 Research Gap:

From the above literature it is found that though this practice of ghosting has existed for long time it was in personal lives of individuals such as in relationships, ghosting in workplace is something different. Almost all studies are connected to Employer Ghosting, which is recruiters not turning back to candidate after conducting interviews. But, there is hardly a few studies conducted on Job-applicant Ghosting which is candidates not showing on to interviews and other selection processes. Also, there is no study specifically to Indian job market to empirically test this Job-applicant Ghosting practice in India, though experts opine that it prevails in the country. Hence, it is decided to conduct a study to analyze empirically the ghosting behavior of job applicants and factors influencing this behavior in Indian job market.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Objectives of the Study:

In the above backdrop, the study aims at gaining more practical insights on job-applicant's ghosting behavior in Indian job market with the following objectives:

1. To examine the frequency of occurrence of job-applicants' ghosting across the location of operations of business.
2. To analyze the frequency of occurrence of ghosting at various levels of education of the job-applicants
3. To find out the level of preparedness of companies to curb this practice of ghosting.

3.2 Scope of the Study:

The inferences from the study are based on the responses given by the participants across varieties of business areas. This study is helpful in getting insights on ghosting behavior of candidates applying for jobs in Bangalore city.

3.3 Research Design:

The study is based on both primary data and secondary data. The primary data was collected through structured questionnaire distributed to select companies through online channels. A sample of 150 questionnaires was distributed and 127 response sheets were collected back and were evaluated for further analysis. The data was collected during April 2019 in Bangalore city.

The hypothesis statements are as follows:

- H1: Frequency of job-applicants ghosting doesn't vary significantly across the location of operations of business
 H2: Frequency of job-applicants ghosting doesn't vary significantly across the educational backgrounds

3.4 Sampling Technique:

A non-probability convenience sampling method is used to pick 150 respondents by distributing a Google Form to the recruiting officers of various IT, retail, health, education, manufacturing, consultancy and financial services firms in Bangalore. The members of the sample selected were requested to participate in the survey voluntarily.

3.5 Data Analysis:

Out of 150 survey forms distributed, 127 forms were received back and out of them, 110 were found to be suitable for analysis. A filter question is used in the beginning of the survey to make sure if the respondent has been part of

recruitment panel at least in the past 1 year and 81 respondents had answered yes to this. For the purpose of analysis and interpretation, only the primary data is used. However, for conclusion and recommendations both primary and secondary data are used. The data so collected from these sources were analyzed using various tools like percentage analysis, Chi-Square test and Cross-Tables analysis.

4. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Table 1
Profile of the Participating Firms

Business Area	IT	Retail	Telecom	Healthcare	Education	Others
	33 (31%)	28 (25%)	11 (10%)	22 (20%)	9 (8%)	7 (6%)
Size of the Company	Below 50	50-100	100-500	500 and above		
	71 (65%)	27 (25%)	12 (10%)	0		
Company Location	Central	North	South	East	West	
	24 (22%)	22 (20%)	19 (17%)	22 (20%)	23 (21%)	

5. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION:

* Others include Manufacturing, consultancy services, financial services etc.

Interpretation:

The survey is dominated by IT firms making 30% of the total participation followed by retail (25%), healthcare (20%). Telecom come (10%), Education (9%) and others constitute the remaining.

Table 2 Being a Member of a Recruitment Panel

Member of recruitment panel	Yes	No
	81 (74%)	29 (26%)

Interpretation:

Majority (74%) of the participants had been a member of recruitment panel in the last one year. However, the remaining (26%) were either indirectly involved in recruitment process or not at all a part of it. All such respondents were taken forward in the survey.

Table 3 Incidences of the Practice of Job-Applicant Ghosting Found

Whether such incidence of Job-applicant ghosting found	Yes	No
	49 (60%)	32 (40%)

Interpretation:

Job-applicant ghosting was found occurring in 60% of the cases where in the remaining 40%, not found. This reveals the fact that this behavior of ghosting by candidates has well entered into Indian job market and is found in considerably large number of cases.

Table 4 Frequency of the Occurrence of the Practice

Frequency of the Occurrence of the Practice:	Always	Frequently	Rarely	Never
	2 (2%)	55 (68%)	21 (26%)	3 (4%)

Interpretation:

68% of the participants found job-applicants ghosting 'frequently' while only 29% agreed that it happened 'rarely'.

Table 5 Functional Areas in which the Practice is found

Functional areas in which this practice is found	Marketing & Sales	HR	Finance & Accounts	Operations	Others
	13 (16%)	9 (11%)	26 (32%)	11 (14%)	22 (27%)

*Others: Back-end, logistics, front-end etc.

Interpretation:

Job-applicant ghosting is highly found in Finance & Accounts job profiles (32%) followed by Others (27%). While it is found in a considerable number in Marketing and Sales (13%) and in Operations (11%), it is found in a very few instances in HR (9%).

Table 5 Job Levels in which the Practice is found

Job-levels in which this practice is found	Top-level	Middle-level	Bottom-level
	4 (5%)	13 (16%)	64 (79%)

Interpretation:

Job-applicant ghosting is highly found with bottom-level job positions (79%) followed by middle-level job positions (16%). Interestingly, this practice is also found with top-level job positions in a few cases (4%).

Table 7 Typical Education Background of People following the Practice

Education background of candidates who found indulging in the practice	Engineering	Management	Computers	Others
	12 (15%)	27 (33%)	39 (48%)	3 (4%)

*Others: Pharmacy, Architecture, law etc.

Interpretation:

It is found that the candidates with Computer studies as background indulge most (48%) in the practice of job-applicant ghosting, followed by Management studies (33%) and Engineering (15%) while others constitute a small portion of it (4%).

Table 8 Typical Work Experience of the People following the Practice

Amount of work experience (in years) of candidates who found indulging in the practice	Highly Experienced	Moderately Experienced	Freshers
	2 (3%)	30 (36%)	49 (60%)

Interpretation:

It is found that Freshers are mostly indulged in ghosting to interviews while moderately experiences 36% and highly experienced just 3%. This means this practice and behavior is against experience of the candidates.

Table 10 Company's Preparedness

Company's preparedness to tackle such practices	Prepared/Getting prepared	Not yet prepared
	29 (36%)	52 (64%)

Chi-Square Test for Area of Business and Frequency of Occurrence of the Practice

Table 11 Is there any relation between Area of Business and Frequency

Business Area		Always	Frequently	Rarely	Never	Total
	Central	7	4	3	0	14
	North	13	36	7	1	57
	East	4	4	3	1	12
	West	18	11	3	1	33
	South	18	11	3	1	33
	Total	46	58	18	3	125

Degree of freedom (df) = 9,
Level of Significance = 5%
Critical Value = 15.507 (from table)

O	E	O-E	(O-E) ²	(O-E) ² /E
11.0	8.5	2.5	6.3	0.7
7.0	10.7	-3.7	13.7	1.3
5.0	3.3	1.7	2.9	0.9
0.0	0.6	-0.6	0.4	0.6
13.0	21	-8	64	3
4.0	26.4	-22.4	501.8	19
18.0	8.2	9.8	96	11.7
46.0	1.4	44.6	1989	1420.8
18.0	12.1	5.9	34.8	2.9
11.0	15.3	-4.3	18.5	1.2
3.0	4.8	-1.8	3.2	0.7
1.0	0.8	0.2	0	0.1
1462.9				

Chi-square calculated = 1462.9
Ch-square from table = 15.507
Since, calculated value of Ch-square is much higher than table value, Ho is rejected.

Inference:
Business area of the company and Frequency of Job-Applicant Ghosting are dependent
Chi-Square Test for Area of Business and Frequency of Occurrence of the Practice

Table 12 Is there any relation between Education Background and Job-Applicant Ghosting

Education Background		Always	Frequently	Rarely	Never	Total
	Engineering	13	36	7	1	14
	Management	7	4	3	0	57
	Computers	18	11	3	1	12
	Medical	18	11	3	1	33
	Others	4	4	3	1	33
	Total	46	58	18	3	149

Degree of freedom (df) = 12
Level of Significance = 5%
Critical Value = 21.3 (from table)

O	E	O-E	(O-E) ²	(O-E) ² /E
13	5.2	7.8	60.8	11.7
6	6.5	-0.5	0.3	0.0
7	2	5	25.0	12.5
1	0.3	0.7	0.5	1.6
7	21	-14	196.0	9.3
4	26.4	-22.4	501.8	19.0
3	8.2	-5.2	27.0	3.3
0	1.4	-1.4	2.0	1.4
18	4.4	13.6	185.0	42.0
11	5.6	5.4	29.2	5.2
3	1.7	1.3	1.7	1.0
1	0.3	0.7	0.5	1.6
18	12.1	5.9	34.8	2.9
11	15.3	-4.3	18.5	1.2
3	4.8	-1.8	3.2	0.7
1	0.8	0.2	0.0	0.1
4	12.1	-8.1	65.6	5.4
4	15.3	-11.3	127.7	8.3
3	4.8	-1.8	3.2	0.7
1	0.8	0.2	0.0	0.1
128.1				

Chi-square calculated = 128.1
Ch-square from table = 21.3
Since, calculated value of Ch-square is much higher than table value, Ho is rejected.

Inference:
Education background of the job-applicants and Frequency of Ghosting are dependent

6 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION:

Ghosting by job-applicants during the hiring process is found to be a frequently witnessed phenomenon. The findings confirm that a majority (68%) of the hiring managers have witnessed the ghosting behavior "frequently". Further the first hypothesis tested the relationship between Business area of the company and Frequency of Job-Applicant Ghosting and the hypothesis is rejected. It confirms that the two variables

are dependent which means the behavior of job-applicants ghosting depends on the business area of firm. Further, the findings are supported by the previous researchers (Paul Davidson, 2018). In this case, business areas such as Information Technology and retail sector have witnessed the ghosting behavior more frequently than many other business areas. Ghosting behavior practiced by job-applicants is affected by the candidates' education background. Candidates from Computer Studies, Management Studies and Engineering streams are the ones who found ghosting more followed by candidates from pharma and architecture. Further, the second hypothesis tested the relationship between education background of the job-applicants and the incidence of ghosting and the hypothesis is also rejected. Thus, it is confirmed that frequency of occurrence of Ghosting is dependent on education background of the job-applicants. Ghosting behavior among job-applicants is also influenced by certain other factors. Location of the operation of the company is one of the chief factors affecting the trend. It is found that West Bangalore has witnessed the highest percentage of ghosting behavior, i.e., 23%, it is 22% in central Bangalore, 20% each in North and East Bangalore and is 17% in South. The other factor is Functional Area of the applicants. It is empirically found that this behavior by candidates is found across the functional areas of business. Finance and Marketing & Sales are most affected functional areas followed by HR, Operations and Logistics. Also, the effects of the other variables such as level of job-position applied for and experience of the job-applicants are also examined. It is found that Job-applicant ghosting is highly found with bottom-level job positions followed by middle-level job positions. Interestingly, this practice is also found with top-level job positions, though in a few cases. Also, it is found that Freshers are mostly indulged in ghosting to interviews while moderately experiences 36% and highly experienced just 3%. It means this practice and behavior goes against number of years of work experience of the candidates.

7 CONCLUSION:

The purpose of the study is to examine whether the peculiar behavior of the Job-Applicants called Ghosting to recruitment process is prevailing in India as seen mostly in western countries. The study also aimed at empirically finding out the trends in the practice. From the research, it is found that Job-Applicant Ghosting is well visible in Indian job market and it is found in majority of the cases in the recruitment process across the fields. Thus job-applicant ghosting is frequently occurring in majority of the instances and is found mostly in bottom-level positions of the firms. While this ghosting is adopted by freshers, it is also visible with top-level professionals with much experience. While job-applicant ghosting is posing new threats to the recruiting firms, most of the participants are found unprepared to handle this practice followed by job applicants. These results highlight the seriousness of the new practice called Job-Applicant Ghosting which is seriously impacting the operations of companies in India across various sectors. The study throws significant light on the need for curbing this peculiar process of the job candidates.

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