Ghosting Behavior in Dating Apps: Perpetrators and Victim's Experiences

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ABSTRACT

One of the phenomena that are often found in forming relationships on Dating Apps is ghosting. Ghosting is an indirect way of breaking relationships which, according to several previous studies, can hinder interpersonal communication skills for both victims and perpetrators of ghosting behavior. This research seeks to understand the meaning of the ghosting phenomenon on the Dating Apps Bumble. The method used in this study is phenomenology with a qualitative approach, with in-depth interviews and observation data collection techniques. The results of this study indicate that ghosting is interpreted as an unpleasant and uncertain event which makes ghosting seen as immature behavior. The experience of ghosting behavior that is received also encourages obstacles in conducting interpersonal communication. Various attempts have been made to reduce the uncomfortable feelings of the ghosting experience, and all aim to overcome information gaps and avoid uncertainty in relationships.

Keywords
bumble; ghosting experience; ghosting phenomenon; interpersonal communication; phenomenology

INTRODUCTION

The pandemic has increased the use of new media, especially online dating, due to social settlement policies that force people to stay at home to suppress the spread of Covid-19 (CNNIndonesia, 2020; Syabilla & Elmada, 2021; Wu, 2021). Based on the Annual Single Dating Surveys conducted by Lunch Actually, it was noted that as many as 44% of new singles downloaded online dating applications. Particularly in Indonesia, during the Covid-19 pandemic, the growth of Dating Apps increased by 8% in the last five years. In September 2020, Tinder, Tantan, OkCupid, Taaruf ID, Best Talk, and Grindr were Indonesia's most downloaded Dating Apps (Lidwina, 2021). This is because a pandemic situation makes people, especially those still single, want to find love and realize how important it is to have a life partner (Kumparan.com, 2020).

In general, when an individual experiences disconnection or loss of a partner, it can be a traumatic and distressing experience that can interfere with mental health (Jackson-Dwyer, 2013). According to Kendler et al. (2003) and LeFebvre and Fan (2020), separation can also be emotionally painful and is often recorded as one of the most disturbing and painful psychological events.

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Disconnection is often associated with romantic rejection, making individuals feel ashamed, lonely, jealous, guilty, social anxiety, and hurt (De Wiele & Campbell, 2019).

According to Urban Dictionary (2019), ghosting is the act of disappearing from friends without notification or canceling plans with little or no choice. Meanwhile, according to Koessler et al. (2019) ghosting is a technology-mediated, merciless breakup strategy based on avoidance. Furthermore, according to Navarro et al. (2021) ghosting is a strategy for ending romantic relationships that emerged in the digital age to avoid direct confrontation without discussing relationship status. Specifically, ghosting refers to a sudden or gradual disconnection by unilateral access to the individual who prompted the disconnection or non-initiator, usually through a medium. Specifically, in this study, researchers will focus on ghosting behavior through technological media intermediaries, Dating Apps Bumble.

In 2014, Bumble came up with one of a kind Dating App. This is because Bumble has a different concept from other Dating Apps, namely those that focus on women. Bumble itself has a "Ladies Ask First" feature where it is not the men who start the conversation but the conversations starting with the women. This makes Bumble position itself as the opposite of Tinder to show gender equality (Bivens & Hoque, 2018). There are two types of romantic relationships in building romantic relationship: courtship and marriage (Kurniati, 2017). To step into the stage of marriage, each individual must go through the approach stage to dating to get to know each other for a more profound introduction. However, many mature couples often fail or experience disconnection in the approach stage (Fitriandiani, 2018).

The increase in the use of Dating Apps has made the phenomenon of ghosting even more commonplace and is often used indirectly as a strategy for disconnection. This is because Dating Apps can expand the options of targeted individuals or individuals according to their characteristics in choosing a partner and can allow users to communicate easily without any clear rules, such as being able to control who with whom to what message to convey (Carr, 2021). Thus, it will be easier for someone to reject or block someone just by not being responsive or replying to the message. The ease of communication with this technology will make the practice of ghosting easier and more prominent (Timmermans et al., 2021).

The ghosting phenomenon itself can make individuals feel anxious, confused and depressed because it is impersonal and filled with uncertainty (Manning et al., 2019). The research entitled "Individual, interpersonal and relationship factors associated with ghosting intention and behaviors in adult relationships: Examining the associations over and above being a recipient of ghosting" ghosting behavior can influence self-esteem to the moral values one holds. This study also revealed that the meaning of ghosting as a painful event would affect behavioral intentions to carry out the same behavior in the future (Navarro et al., 2021).

Of course, each country has a different level of anxiety which makes each country have a different culture in dealing with ambiguity or unknown situations. Especially in Indonesia according to Hofstede et al. (2005), Indonesia is an index of 48, which shows that Indonesia is a country with low uncertainty avoidance. This makes Indonesian people tend to be able to accept a variety of situations that vary from meeting other people with different backgrounds or cultures (Hofstede et al., 2005).

The results of the 2020 Census research show that the composition of Indonesia's population is influenced mainly by Gen Z, namely the generation born between 1997 to 2012 (Rakhmah, 2021). According to one expert, Brunce Tulgan from Rainmaker Thinking, Inc., several characteristics distinguishes Gen Z from previous generations, such as making new media a bridge for communication and interaction. Gen Z must always be in touch with other people. Gen Z is also used to being connected to many people virtually, which encourages Gen Z to have a global mindset and causes Gen Z to more readily accept different perspectives, thoughts, and diversity (Tulgan, 2013). In addition, according to a report issued by Tinder, Year in Swipe, most users are in the Gen Z age group, young adults. Tinder stated that Gen Z is the generation that can break the stigma that having a romantic relationship can be done in a flexible way (Arradian, 2021).

In particular, the existence of Dating Apps that can provide a connection and the broad personality that makes Gen Z not easily satisfied with one person. This makes Gen Z more interested in building relationships with many people than building relationships with one person

with severe or long-term goals (Nealon, 2019). Accordingly, researchers want to examine whether individuals who experience ghosting behavior on Dating Apps will experience obstacles to growth in establishing interpersonal relationships. The research problem in this study is how the victim and perpetrator of ghosting interpret the experience of ghosting events, especially in Dating Apps.

METHOD

Researchers use a descriptive qualitative approach, in which qualitative research consists of material and interpretive practices that place the observer in the world. Qualitative research studies things in their natural settings by understanding, studying, and interpreting phenomena in terms of meanings brought by humans themselves (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). In this study, researchers used qualitative research because a method that looks at an issue or problem in detail and depth that numbers cannot measure will help researchers interpret the phenomenon being studied (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Researchers rely on various data sources that can be obtained through interviews, observations, and documents (Creswell, 2013).

The method used in this research is transcendental phenomenology by Edmund H. Husserl, which emphasizes subjectivity and discovering the essence of experience (Moustakas, 1994; Vetrix & Bangun, 2022). According to Husserl (2014) phenomenology studies how individuals describe something by experiencing their senses, and initially, all understandings received by individuals come from sensory experience. Such experiences must be explained, interpreted, and understood. The focus of this phenomenology is to collect phenomena experienced by individuals to develop a worldview (Creswell & Poth, 2017). In phenomenological studies, researchers do not make assumptions but instead focus on finding meaning in the descriptions of individual experiences. According to Husserl, data from individual experiences is the primary evidence of a study. Therefore, research questions must be able to form the basis of the course of research so that researchers must formulate questions carefully and systematically to obtain in-depth descriptions of individual experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Husserl argued in a phenomenological study of the transcendental type, which has the central concept in its study, namely *epoche* (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Ephoce in phenomenology is an action in which the researcher puts aside preconceived prejudices, ideas, and biases against a phenomenon. In ephoce, all ideas have the same position and same quality value (Moustakas, 1994). According to Husserl, the ephoce process must be carried out with full attention and concentration, so several ephoce processes must be carried out:

Phenomenological Reduction or Phenomenological Reduction

Phenomenological reduction is carried out using a bracketing technique, in which the research focus only focuses on the research process, only focuses on research topics and questions. In this process, researchers must put aside all subjectivity, starting from theory, habits, and views that shape the mind of looking at the phenomenon under study. This is important so that subjectivity does not interfere with achieving reality or true meaning (Moustakas, 1994). The phenomenological reduction can be carried out in 2 stages, namely developing a structured description ("what" or what experiences the participant experienced) and a structural description ("how" or how the participant went through the experience of related phenomena) (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

Imaginative Variation or Imaginative Variation

This process is carried out by searching for possible meanings by utilizing imagination, frames of reference, polarity, and reversal and approaching phenomena from different perspectives, positions, roles, or functions. This imaginative variation aims to achieve a structural description of an individual's experience. In this process, the researcher tries to think using the participant's imagination to find meanings that were initially invisible to become visible. At this stage, researchers will also assume that nothing is impossible. This stage allows researchers to recognize the themes underlying the phenomena' emergence (Moustakas, 1994).

Synthesis of Meanings and Essences

At this stage, researchers will combine the direct experience of individuals or what elements and how individuals experience these experiences in the phenomena they experience or how elements become one whole phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

Participant

Researchers used data collection with a purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling is a sampling procedure with a bias due to similarities in the population. Purposive sampling involves a sample from a population with the same average(Kruskal & Mosteller, 1979; Creswell & Poth, 2017). This purposive sampling aims to provide diversity within a population, which is very much needed to produce data in interviews and get in-depth results about a phenomenon. In purposive sampling, sample selection lies in the studied case (Patton, 2014). In addition to obtaining in-depth information about a phenomenon, the selected sample must also refer to criteria that refer to the problem, case, or phenomenon being studied (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

In this study, the researchers compiled several criteria to become participants in this study, such as:

- Having experience as a victim of ghosting and ghosting behavior on Dating Apps, Bumble.
- Male or female aged 18-25 (Gen Z, young adults).
- Using Dating Apps Bumble.
- Willing to conduct in-depth interviews and be observed.

Some of these criteria will be used by researchers in sampling. This was taken because the researcher wanted to target individuals who had experienced and performed ghosting behavior to get a deeper meaning.

Data Collection Technique

Researchers used the in-depth interview to collect the data. According to Creswell and Poth (2017) interviews are a place where knowledge will be built in the interaction of researchers with participants. Interviews were conducted so that researchers could better understand the participants' perspectives to express the meaning of the experiences they felt. The interview process will be carried out with two-way communication. Where researchers will ask open-ended questions and focus on participants' experiences as victims of ghosting behavior. As technology develops, currently interviews are not only conducted face-to-face but can be carried out online (Creswell & Poth, 2017). In-depth interviews will be conducted with the help of an online application due to pandemic.

In addition, to get an in-depth interpretation, researchers use observational data collection techniques. Observation techniques according to Creswell and Poth (2017) are the act of recording phenomena carried out in the field through the senses of observers such as note-taking devices and recording them for research purposes. Observation is rejected by the objectives and research questions. Observations can be made by conducting conversations, activities, and interactions with participants. In observation techniques, there are several types of observations such as complete participants (fully involved with participants), participants as observers (involved in activities in the field), non-participants or observers as participants (researchers become people who are outside the field, so researchers research at a distance far away), and complete observers (researchers do not see or are not noticed by participants).

In this study, the researcher used a complete participant observation technique where the researcher would interact with the participants regarding the experience of the ghosting behavior they received. With a combination of in-depth interviews and observations conducted by researchers, it is hoped that they can provide a broader and deeper view of the phenomenon of ghosting behavior in the Bumble Dating App.

Data Validity

In a study, the validity of the data is an effort to ensure, and improve to ensure the truth of the data presented. In the process, there are several techniques for checking the validity of data. In this study, researchers used the validity of the data proposed by Beck et al. (1994). In seeking meaning validity and reliability, Giorgi considers the use of phenomenological reduction and attention to essence in

the participants. Beck et al. (1994) concluded that validity, in a phenomenological sense, has reached a phenomenon if a sensitive description of something truly captures its essence. In addition, according to Giorgi, the act of identification can be considered as a basis for validity and if this action of identification can be carried out consistently. Giorgi also revealed that validity in phenomenological research also means that researchers synthesize all units of meaning into statements about participant experiences. By utilizing the essence and experience of meaning felt by parties, the researcher uses the data validity method proposed by Beck et al. (1994) in this study.

Apart from using the validity of Beck et al. (1994), researchers also used data validity technique from Creswell and Poth (2017), a data source triangulation method. According to Creswell and Poth (2017), data triangulation is needed in a study to build credibility. Usually, this process involves searching for corroborating evidence from various sources to explain the research conducted by the researcher. Thus, researchers must triangulate information from various sources to strengthen the interpretation of the research conducted. Therefore, in this study researchers used various and different sources, methods, researchers, and theories to provide corroborating evidence to validate the accuracy of the research (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

Data Analysis Technique

In conducting data analysis, researchers used data analysis techniques proposed by Moustakas in 1994 (Creswell & Poth, 2017). The researcher begins to describe the participant's own experience of the phenomenon itself, namely the phenomenon of behavior. This needs to be done to put aside the researcher's personal experience so that the focus of this research can be directed to the participants in the study. Usually, this process is known as phenomenological reduction.

Then, researchers make important statements from the results of interviews and other sources to see how participants experience the phenomenon itself, which in this study is the phenomenon of ghosting behavior. Researchers must also treat each statement with the same value.

Researchers group important statements into one meaning or one theme. It is necessary to form the basis of interpretation to create groups and avoid repetition. The researcher makes a description of "what" is experienced by the participants in the phenomenon itself, namely the phenomenon of ghosting behavior. The researcher makes a structural description of the participant's experience to answer the "how" question. The researcher wrote down the background and context of how the phenomenon was experienced. The researcher carries out a meaning synthesis where the researcher writes a combined description, namely textural and structural descriptions. The researcher wrote down "what" the participants experienced with the phenomenon of ghosting behavior and "how" they experienced the phenomenon of ghosting behavior.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the research that has been done to understand the meaning of the experience of ghosting behaviour on victims and perpetrators, all participants have one thing in common, namely the meaning of the experience of ghosting behaviour which has various impacts as the consequences. The experiences felt by participants also say ghosting behaviour on Bumble is typical. In this section, the researcher will describe the meaning of ghosting for of each participant, with several derived themes such as experience using Bumble, experience as a victim or perpetrator on Bumble, their meaning of ghosting as a relationship breaker, withdrawal strategies for experiencing ghosting behaviour and the meaning of ghosting behaviour on Bumble.

The Covid-19 pandemic has succeeded in changing communication behavior in society, especially in building interpersonal communication with other people. Usually, communication is done face-to-face but due to restrictions on movement, communication is using other ways (Abdurrahman et al., 2021). Based on the interview with the five participants, the pandemic, which has reduced their space for movement, is one of the factors that made participants use the Bumble Dating App. This is because the basis of Dating Apps is media mediated through computers or CMC, as stated by Carr (2021) that CMC provides new access to build communication and connections. The first, second, and third participants also acknowledged that the features offered on Bumble helped participants overcome the effects of social life that had been affected by the

pandemic, such as feeling lonely, feeling inhibited from socializing, and having romantic relationships. This is evidenced by a report issued by Bumble.com (2018) that as many as 63% of men admit to choosing Bumble because the ladies-first feature helps them not be intimidated in starting communication relationships with women they meet on Bumble (Luckhurst, 2015).

Ghosting creates uncertainty and is considered an unpleasant event

The meaning of the participant's ghosting behaviour will affect how the participants see the experience of the ghosting behaviour they are experiencing. Based on how the participants explained their experiences of ghosting behaviour, it can be described that all participants were aware that ghosting behaviour occurred in virtual communication media such as Bumble, Instagram to WhatsApp. Ghosting behaviour can also occur because one party disconnects the communication. What the participants experienced also answered the study by LeFebvre and Fan (2020) that ghosting behaviour occurs when there is an "initiator role" in mediated media.

From the first to the fifth participant, the experience of ghosting behaviour as a victim meant that the behaviour the participant received was an adverse event that made him uncomfortable. The first, second, fourth and fifth participants saw ghosting behaviour as a painful and detrimental situation because of the effects left behind and as an uncertain situation because there was no clear information about the relationship they were in. This finding is in line with a study conducted by Pancani et al. (2021) that ghosting victims usually interpret ghosting behaviour as something negative because of the effects it leaves behind.

There needs to be more clarity of information felt by the first, second, fourth and fifth participants due to the sudden disconnection, even though they had admitted that they had a hunch that ghosting behaviour would soon be accepted. However, when the ghosting behaviour is accepted, there are still effects, such as overthinking or overthinking, uncomfortable feelings of being "abandoned", rejection, and difficulty placing oneself up to questioning one's worth. This can happen because participants try to find alternative answers regarding ambiguous situations. After all, participants cannot get answers from ghosting actors, questioning self-worth, and overthinking to the point of having difficulty placing themselves is one of the efforts made to fill in the blanks for answers to ambiguous situations. This is in line with the study put forward by LeFebvre et al. (2017) hat questioning one's worth, overthinking, and difficulty placing oneself must have happened to ghosting victims because that is the only possible way to reduce the uncertainty left by ghosting actors.

Having a hunch before being aware of ghosting behaviour that was felt by four out of five participants also made the researchers interpret the strategy of ghosting behaviour carried out by ghosting actors in steps and when there was no desire to build relationships in the future. This is in line with the indirect disengagement LeFebvre et al. (2017) proposed. Accordingly, there are four ways that a person can do ghosting behaviour, namely disappearing quickly without any desire to build relationships again in the future, disappearing quickly but considering building relationships again in the future, disappearing gradually but considering future relationship building and gradually disappearing and not considering future relationship building.

Meanwhile, the third participant saw ghosting behaviour received as an event that gave colour to the participant's life regardless of the things that made him uncomfortable. Although, based on the participant's confession, the effect felt was the same as that of participants who saw ghosting behaviour as an adverse event; that is, they both felt annoyance and a feeling of being aggrieved. This is in line with a study conducted by Pancani et al. (2021) that one of the effects of ghosting behaviour that leaves an impression on its victims is psychological reactions such as anger and sad emotions. Unlike the first to fourth participants, the fifth participant saw ghosting as an event that wasted time and was a loss because the participant's efforts to build relationships always failed. In the experience felt by this fifth participant, the reason the participant felt, even so, the effect the participant felt remained the same, namely there was a feeling of resentment and questioning the participant's worth. This is in line with the study put forward by LeFebvre et al. (2017) that a ghosting victim will feel disadvantaged. This is because the victim will be filled with information uncertainty that will make the victim full of ambiguity and uncertainty.

The four participants also felt a premonition that ghosting behaviour would be accepted as they felt they had lost interest and did not feel the same energy anymore. The second participant

did not feel any premonition of receiving ghosting behaviour because the relationship that had been built was always a late reply. The first, third, and fourth participants also admitted that they were waiting for a reply from the people they met on Bumble, which made them feel hopeful until they had difficulty placing themselves, which led to questioning how to continue the relationship that had been built. A study by Timmermans et al. (2021) stated that because there was no answer from the ghosting perpetrator, the ghosting victim felt uncertain and delayed the grief process. This is because the ghosting victim doesn't know whether this relationship has ended.

Based on the study results, four out of five participants also admitted that there was a phase where they questioned their self-worth, such as "was there something wrong with speaking?" "Am I less attractive?" to "what steps did I take wrong?". This proves that ghosting behaviour also makes the victim feel a loss of self-esteem or insecurity. This is in line with the findings found by De Wiele and Campbell (2019) that ghosting behaviour received can make victims feel less confident or feel insecure.

Furthermore, all five participants admitted that they were aware that they were accepting ghosting behaviour by realizing that people they met on Bumble no longer replied to their messages. This is in line with research conducted by LeFebvre et al. (2019) that the way a ghosting victim knows that the participant is a ghosted victim is that the other person doesn't reply to the participant's message anymore and feels the same disinterest again.

In this study, researchers also found a variant of self-ghosting behaviour: orbiting. According to Pancani et al. (2021) orbiting is an act in which the ghoster follows the social media of the ghosting victim himself, and sometimes the ghoster makes small interactions such as liking and commenting on the content displayed by the ghosting victim himself. Based on the results of this study, two out of three participants experienced self-orbiting behaviour, although it did not significantly affect the first and third participants.

Uncertainty reduction is not always possible

According to LeFebvre et al. (2017), ghosting creates ambiguity and uncertainty, which makes ghosting victims unable to reach clarity on the relationship they have been in. It is the same as what participants feel about ghosting events. Based on research is conducted because the information vacuum encourages participants to reduce uncertainty. The results of this study are in line with the uncertainty reduction theory put forward by Berger and Bradac in 1982. This theory says that uncertainty can shape communication behaviour because of the motivation created by this uncertainty (Knobloch, 2008).

Of the five participants, they had various ways of reducing perceived information uncertainty. The first, second, third and fifth participants chose to ask or directly confirm the person they met on Bumble. The second and fifth participants also chose to take advantage of the available information by checking the social media of the people they met. Based on the results of the strategy research conducted by the first, second, third and fifth participants in line with the three strategies put forward by Berger and Kellerman (1994), namely in reducing uncertainty, there are usually three strategies used, namely consisting of a passive strategy (involving observing targets that do not interfere with utilizing available information), active strategies (involving investigating the information sought using the help of third parties, such as through relatives, family or acquaintances), and interactive strategies (which are ways that involve direct communication, where information seekers obtain information through direct questions).

It can be concluded that the first, second, third and fifth participants carried out the strategy actively or passively. As for the fourth participant, admitting that the participant's sense of prestige was too great made him not want to carry out information-seeking strategies passively or actively, but the participant preferred to fill in the information gaps with the participant's own content. The strategy carried out by the fourth participant is in line with the results stated by a study conducted byLeFebvre and Fan (2020) that one strategy for reducing perceived uncertainty is not carrying out any strategy.

Furthermore, based on the acknowledgments of the four participants, efforts to reduce uncertainty cannot always be carried out, as did the first, second, and third participants. The results did not yield a definite answer. This is in line with a study conducted by Heath (2013) that sometimes uncertainty reduction cannot always be made because past experience does not always accurately

predict future behaviour. So that makes the participants replace the information vacuum by making efforts such as focusing on themselves, starting by strengthening themselves, doing hobbies and looking for other activities. In addition, the first, third and fourth participants also chose to start new relationships with people they met to fill in the information gaps left behind. Based on findings found these findings are in line with the results found by LeFebvre and Fan (2020), suggesting that one effective strategy for reducing the uncertainty felt by ghosting victims is to carry out positive self-focus followed by self-encouragement and starting new relationships with other people.

Ghosting behaviour as a form of self-protection

Even though there was a feeling of discomfort and the ghosting behaviour left a void of information, the first, second and third participants admitted that ghosting was done as a form of self-protection against the uncomfortable feelings caused by people they met on Bumble. This is in line with the study proposed by Koessler et al. (2019) that a decrease in interest in a relationship usually creates a choice to engage in ghosting behaviour to end the relationship. So, according to the researchers, because there is a feeling of discomfort received by the participants, the feeling of interest in the people they meet on Bumble decreases and encourages ghosting behaviour.

Ghosting behaviour was interpreted as self-protection by the first, second and third participants because, according to them, there was no other way to end the uncomfortable feelings they felt. Especially the third participant admitted that before the participant ghosted the people the participant met on Bumble, the participant had tried to communicate this, but the participant's efforts were in vain. From that, what made the third participant interpret the ghosting the participant was doing as a last resort? This is in line with research conducted by Timmermans et al. (2021) that people who do ghosting are not always for negative reasons but rather as a form of self-protection from aggressive pursuits.

Furthermore, the fourth participant admitted that the reason the participant was doing ghosting behaviour was as a form of avoidance for not feeling ghosted first. This was because the fourth participant interpreted that when the participant received ghosting behaviour, it was painful, and the fourth participant admitted that the participant had a high level of fear of rejection and fear of being abandoned. What the fourth participant felt was in line with Timmermans et al. (2021) that people who have high levels of anxiety and sensitivity to rejection would tend to choose ghosting behaviour. Apart from the high fear of rejection and the fear of being abandoned, the fourth participant meant that ghosting behaviour is a painful thing as the study put forward by Powell et al. (2021) that someone who has experienced ghosting behaviour will feel more anxiety than someone who has never experienced ghosting behaviour, so according to researchers the anxiety that participants get from interpreting ghosting behaviour further encourages the fourth participant to do ghosting behaviour first.

Finally, the fifth participant admitted that the reason the participant did ghosting was that the participant thought the relationship the participant was in was not too deep in living, so the participant thought it would be better if it ended at an early stage. This proves the study conducted by Koessler et al. (2019) that ghosting is usually done at an early stage of the relationship, and that is what makes ghosting not included in the category of a relationship. In addition, the fifth participant also admitted that the participant was not ready to build a romantic relationship with new people and the opinion that the relationship the participant was in was not too deep to be lived. With limited studies on the phenomenon of ghosting behaviour, the reason that was carried out by the five became novelties that the reason for ghosting behaviour was because it was a form of self-protection as a sign of unpreparedness to establish romantic relationships with new people.

Disappearing suddenly and quickly without thinking about building a relationship again in the future is the way the five participants unilaterally disconnected or ghosted. The method used by the participants in carrying out ghosting behaviour is in line with the indirect disengagement model proposed by LeFebvre et al. (2017). There are four ways that a person can do ghosting behaviour, namely disappearing quickly without any desire to build relationships again in the future, disappearing quickly but considering building relationships again in the future, disappearing gradually but considering future relationship building and gradually disappearing and not considering future relationship building.

Ghosting is a less mature act

The five participants also understood and interpreted that ghosting behaviour is not an adult and correct action to end a relationship. This is in line with what was found by Manning et al. (2019) that ghosting behaviour is considered an immature and wrong action because it is considered to have hurt the other person. The five participants also admitted that ghosting behaviour is a way to cut off contact with relationships that have been established before. This proves the definition Koessler et al. (2019) that ghosting is a modern adaptation of avoidance and withdrawal behaviour that is most often implemented through technologically mediated disconnection between romantic partners to facilitate relationship dissolution.

Of the five participants, responding to ghosting behaviour to make it look more mature was by saying goodbye or communicating when the relationship could no longer work. However, based on the results of the research, the first participant preferred not to explain the participant's reasons for carrying out ghosting behaviour because the participant thought it was not the participant's responsibility and preferred to focus on the uncomfortable feelings given by the people the participant met to make him feel indifferent to the effects felt from ghosting behaviour carried out. In line with the results of a study conducted by Timmermans et al. (2021) that sometimes perpetrators of ghosting behaviour, when disconnection occurs or ghosting occurs, don't need to provide clear reasons because it is not something important. Whereas for the second participant, the participant did not want to explain the reason because the participant interpreted it as a waste of energy and was afraid that the participant's efforts would only hurt the other person. This is in line with a study conducted by Timmermans et al. (2021) that the reason someone performs ghosting behaviour is fear of the adverse effects that will result if there is a direct communication of disconnection. While the third and fifth participants preferred to communicate this, and based on the observations from the screenshots, it was seen that the third and fifth participants explained why the relationship that had to be forged had to end. Based on the research results found after explaining, the third and fifth participants felt relief. Furthermore, according to the fourth participant, it should have been communicated, but the participant could not do so because of the participant's sense of prestige.

Ghosting as disconnection

Ghosting as a termination of a romantic relationship or termination of contact suddenly or not suddenly is the meaning of ghosting for participants, as well as being the context of ghosting which will be discussed in this study. Some participants, from their experience of being victims or perpetrators, interpret ghosting as the behaviour of ending relationships or contact that is carried out suddenly or without any explanation and provision of certainty regarding the romantic relationship that is being carried out. This is in line with the definition of self-ghosting behaviour according to LeFebvre et al. (2017) that ghosting behaviour is a strategy for breaking relationships, especially romantic relationships, by cutting off communication, which is done suddenly. However, in this study, it was found that participants used ghosting as a last resort in ending a romantic relationship because their partner did not want to accept the reasons why the relationship had to end.

Sprecher et al. (2010) revealed that one of the strategies for breaking a good relationship is to cut off a romantic relationship directly, namely by explaining to their partner about the relationship that is being forged. So, according to this definition, participants do not carry out the ghosting behaviour themselves. This is due to the definition put forward by LeFebvre et al. (2017) that, generally, ghosting behaviour is usually carried out without providing clarity to the other person or partner. Even so, the participants in this study still interpreted their actions as ghosting behaviour because, in the end, they "left" or no longer replied to messages from their partners. So, it can be concluded that there is no shift in the meaning of ghosting behaviour for participants. That is, ghosting remains one of the strategies for ending a relationship, even though the participant has explained to the participant's partner or interlocutor.

Furthermore, Jiang et al. (2011) revealed that a higher level of self-disclosure mediated by CMC can encourage more perceived intimacy between individuals. In this study, each participant's experience has a span of time that varies from short to quite long in experiencing the ghosting

behaviour itself. Time and intimacy did not affect how the participants interpreted the ghosting behaviour.

Ghosting on Dating Apps is commonplace

Even though ghosting is considered immature, unpleasant behaviour, based on the results of research that has been conducted, the five participants admit that because of the experience they have experienced, seeing ghosting as a victim or perpetrator is commonplace in Dating Apps, especially Bumble. This is in line with the findings by LeFebvre et al. (2017) revealed that the more common use of Dating Apps makes some Dating Apps users must have experienced ghosting behaviour themselves which allows someone to experience ghosting behaviour more than once within a certain period of time. Therefore, because of the ghosting experience experienced when Dating Apps are increasingly being used by other people, according to Bower, Black and Turner in LeFebvre et al. (2017), a person will create memory structures and tend to remember memories when experiencing similar experiences when experiencing the same events in the future. So that when participants experience ghosting behaviour, they will automatically remember the "memory structure" that has been formed and make ghosting a normal thing to do or accept, especially on Bumble.

Apart from the experiences received by the third, fourth and fifth participants, they acknowledged that the access provided by Bumble accelerated the change of people to replace one another, making ghosting behaviour a normal thing. These findings prove the words put forward by Carr (2021) hat the broad access provided by Dating Apps makes communication with anyone easier, and because of that, according to Timmermans, Hermans, and Opree, someone will find it easier to reject or block someone just by not being responsive or replying to the message. Holmes (2022) also stated that the convenience provided by Dating Apps makes it easier for someone to become indifferent to the consequences of behaviour carried out on Dating Apps so that people will easily carry out ghosting behaviour. Besides that, the study put forward by Halversen et al. (2022) that the current behaviour of ghosting has been used as a rejection strategy on Bumble.

According to a study by Timmermans and Courtois (2019) the stigma of Dating Apps, which is usually interpreted as encouraging sexual interaction rather than romantic interaction, is often visited by desperate people so that users may provide false information about who they are and what they are like. In addition, research conducted by Timmermans et al. (2021) also said that interpreting individual stigma against Dating Apps will make individuals adjust their behaviour to the stigma itself towards people or interactions that are built. That's what made the second and third participants limit themselves more when building communication on Bumble so that the ghosting behaviour itself was easier to accept.

CONCLUSION

With the various conveniences offered by Dating Apps, it makes the phenomenon of ghosting or sudden unilateral termination of a relationship more commonplace. Interpreted as a term that describes a sudden termination of a relationship, from the experiences felt by the participants it is revealed that ghosting is an unpleasant event that can leave uncertainty that makes the victim feel overthinking, self-blame, insecure to the point of having difficulty placing oneself. With the lack of information that makes the situation ambiguous, the victim feels that there is an effort to reduce uncertainty.

The uncertainty felt by the participants makes ghosting behavior not a mature way to end a communication that has been established. Based on the research that has been done, participants have a variety of ways to fill in the information gaps. So it can be concluded that efforts to reduce uncertainty in the ghosting phenomenon will depend on the level of perceived uncertainty. Even though the ghosting experience is interpreted as an unpleasant event, the reason for the victim who is also the perpetrator of ghosting is not always negative, but sometimes ghosting behavior is carried out compulsorily with the aim of protecting oneself. With the experiences experienced and received by participants, ghosting behavior in Dating Apps is seen as something that is accepted and commonplace. That's what makes the participants interpret that a serious romantic relationship has little chance to be done.

The implications of this study indicate that there are ways other than ghosting in ending a pre-established romantic relationship without having a negative impact on the partner. As one example is by communicating about the clarity of the relationship that is being undertaken or the termination of the relationship that you want to do with a partner or interlocutor found on Bumble.

With the current development of communication science, many developments in phenomena that occur in Indonesia are interesting for further research, such as the ghosting phenomenon. Suggestions for further research can also combine ghosting behavior that occurs in Dating Apps other than Bumble such as Tinder, Okcupid or CMB or social media such as Instagram or WhatsApp. This is due to the diversity of different features in each Dating Apps and social media that can produce different communication behaviors. As in this study, the ladies first feature on Bumble influences how participants engage in communication behavior and the meaning of ghosting behavior experiences on Dating Apps. In this way, research on the phenomenon of ghosting can be understood more deeply.

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INFORMED CONSENT

The authors have obtained informed consent from all participants.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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