



Consideration Of Future Consequences And Ghosting Behavior As Predictors Of Relationship Quality Among Young Adults

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Abstract: This research explored how ghosting behavior and Consideration of Future Consequences (CFC) predict the frequency of creating positive and negative romantic relationships among young adults. As digital disengagement strategies such as ghosting become more common, understanding how cognitive orientation and relational behaviors affect romantic relationships is very important. A sample of 100 young adults between the ages of 19 and 29 were surveyed using the Consideration of Future Consequences Scale, the Romantic Ghosting Scale, and the Positive-Negative Relationship Quality Scale. Data was analyzed using Pearson correlation and multiple regression analysis. The results suggested that CFC is not related to positive or negative relationship quality and does not predict relationship outcomes. On the other hand, ghosting behaviours, such as being ghosted, were significantly related to lower levels of positive relationship quality and higher levels of negative relationship quality. Being the victim of ghosting is the most significant and consistent predictor of relationship quality than ghosting others when controlling for ghosting victimisation. The model presented an overall predictive value of approximately 25 to 27% of the variance of relationship quality. The research showed that an individual's interpersonal experiences, particularly those involving rejection via ghosting, have a greater impact on the quality of intimate relationships among young adults than any type of prospective, future-focused, cognitive style. The findings indicate how communication and relational behavior patterns shape the romantic relationships of young adults.

Index Terms - Consideration of Future Consequences, Ghosting Behavior, Relationship Quality, Young Adults, Romantic Relationships

I.INTRODUCTION

Personal dispositions of cognition and interactive habits influence each other in determining relational quality among young people, in particular in an increasingly digital relational space. Current relationship science calls for including how people respond to relational disengagement as well as how they anticipate the consequences of their actions in the future. The consideration of future consequences (CFC) and ghosting are two factors especially relevant in this context and also influential on relational quality.

1.1 Consideration of Future Consequences

The degree to which people are concerned for the future has been termed Consideration of Future Consequences (CFC). The CFC is measured using the Consideration of Future Consequences Scale, which was originally developed by Strathman and colleagues. The CFC expresses one's temporal orientation; that is, one's future focus versus present focus. Individuals with low CFC will choose to maximize immediate gratification and short-term outcomes, while individuals with high CFC will give priority to long-term outcomes, delayed gratification, and the long-term maintenance of relationships over the short term.

Although there is little empirical data directly studying the relationship between CFC and romantic relationship quality, there is enough evidence to suggest that future-focused individuals overall are more likely to behave cooperatively, supportively, and positively to promote health in close relationships. In theory, behaviors like this help to build greater stability, commitment, and pleasure within relationships. There is research showing how people having high long-term goal orientation are capable of developing much more autonomy when it comes to managing one's social behaviors in a positive way and consequently developing interpersonal patterns necessary for the growth of healthy relationships.

Consideration for Future Consequence (CFC) Theory, founded on the work of Paschal Sheeran and Alexander Rothman's Temporal Self-Regulation Theory (TST), establishes a theoretical foundation to help conceptualize how the way we think about time impacts our ability to regulate our behaviour. TST proposes that when we make decisions about our behaviour we attempt to weigh immediate behaviours against the long-term consequences of those behaviours with respect to three key factors:

- Weighing our intention to engage in a particular behaviour
- Weighing the habit and/or impulse strength of that behaviour
- Weighing our ability to self-regulate our behaviours once we make a decision

The key factor in all of these processes is the extent to which we value future outcomes at the time of making a current decision. Individuals who are high in future orientation and have strong consideration for future consequences are more likely to make decisions that override their short-term emotional discomfort and lead to long-term outcomes (e.g., establish a solid relationship with a person). For example, rather than just cutting off contact with another person to avoid an awkward conversation, an individual with strong CFC will directly communicate with that person for future regret, a positive reputation with that person, or the emotional effects of cutting off contact would have on the other person. On the other hand, individuals who are low on CFC will likely choose to make a decision or act impulsively based on short-term emotional relief (i.e. cutting off contact). Consequently, TST creates a strong rationale for how thinking about the future can impact our behaviours and the quality of our interpersonal relationships.

1.2 Ghosting Behavior

Ghosting consists of abruptly stopping all kinds of communication with a romantic partner. This also includes stopping to communicate with that specific partner completely and without any prior warning. In recent times, there has been a substantial increase in ghosting behaviour with respect to the context of online dating, very frequently seen among young adults due to the emergence of easier communication methods. It has been observed that a common way of terminating a relationship, ghosting, frequently occurs during the initiality of any relationship especially when its nature is more or less non-committal.

An explanation for ghosting behaviour can be offered through the lens of Attachment Theory developed by John Bowlby and further elaborated upon by Mary Ainsworth. The idea behind the theory relates to how our childhood experiences with our caregivers help to develop internal models that shape how we behave in adult relationships. In the area of romantic relationships, individuals who are securely attached

will generally communicate openly and resolve conflicts in a constructive manner as compared to avoidantly attached individuals; this is likely to lead to fewer instances of sudden withdrawal / ghosting behaviours. On the other hand, individuals who have an avoidant attachment style often have difficulty with emotional closeness, so as an increased emotional connection develops they are prone to disengaging as a means to avoid the potential for emotional vulnerability or confrontation. Anxiously attached individuals, who are overly fearful of being

Uncertainty Reduction Theory, established by Charles Berger, explains how people work to lessen their levels of uncertainty toward others when they are interacting with those persons. People are motivated to reduce their uncertainty due to the need for predictability and psychological comfort. In an ongoing relationship with someone else, effective communication allows one partner to clarify their intentions and expectations, which promotes relational stability. Ghosting disturbs the communication process of the partners involved because it ends the communication from the ghoster to the ghosted abruptly without providing an explanation to the ghosted person (thus creating a state of uncertainty and ambiguity). The ghosted person experiences increased levels of cognitive and emotional distress due to the lack of closure and the inability to understand the manner in which the relationship ended. The ghoster believes they have effectively reduced their correct level of uncertainty by avoiding having to communicate with the ghosted person; however, this action increases the amount of uncertainty and emotional strain experienced by the ghosted person, which, according to Uncertainty Reduction Theory, runs counter to the fundamental human desire to experience clarity and predictability in interpersonal relationships.

Numerous researchers have indicated that ghosting produces various kinds of negative effects on the mental health of individuals, especially those on the receiving end of these ghosting behaviours, such as uncertainty, anxiety, fear, loneliness, and feelings of low self-worth. Some may fully bounce back after being ghosted without suffering any long-term declines in overall life satisfaction, still this can hamper important aspects of relationship quality, such as trust, emotional security, and clear communication. Moreover, ghosting has been seen to have a negative impact on the way people view the quality of their relationships through an aspect of avoidance in their ability to communicate.

1.3 Relationship Quality

Relationship quality is a multifaceted construct that refers to partners' overall assessment of their romantic relationship in both positive and negative terms. High-quality relationships are characterized by mutual trust, emotional intimacy, and good communication, while low-quality relationships are characterized by avoidance, poor communication, and emotional distress.

Understanding how relationship quality and ghosting behave could be illustrated through Caryl Rusbult's Social Exchange Theory and Investment Model. According to Social Exchange Theory, a person will evaluate and assess (the value of) their relational experience (the relationship) based upon how they perceive all the benefits (rewards) received and all the costs associated with having been in that relationship. For example, if the perceived emotional/psychological/temporal costs incurred in the relational experience outweigh the perceived emotional benefits and rewards, that creates a perception of low value of the relational experience. Perceived relational value can contribute to ghosting being used as an exit strategy for situations where ending the relationship would ordinarily create an uncomfortable or effortful situation because of the way the relationship is evaluated by those involved. Ghosting can occur when an individual decides that the relational experience no longer has enough to offer, while those being ghosted will experience the relational experience as positive and therefore would perceive value in the relationship.

The Investment Model also provides an explanation of relationship quality and commitment through a set of three factors; the satisfaction level, the quality of alternatives, and the size of the investing party's

investment. Low levels of satisfaction with the other party will lead to more available and attractive alternatives to the existing relationship, no/reduced investment in the ongoing relationship, as often seen with early and/or cyber relationships, and generally weak levels of commitment that will create greater chances of ghosting. Conversely, if both invest and receive high levels of satisfaction within an existing relationship, this will provide an increase in the level of commitment to the ongoing relationship, and a decrease in likelihood of quickly disengaging from the relationship. The way in which an individual considers future consequences (CFC) will also affect the aforementioned concepts of commitment and the likelihood of ghosting. Individuals who score high on a CFC will have a greater tendency to consider their emotional future and the consequences of their actions, and therefore, be less likely to engage in ghosting behaviour impulsively. In contrast, low CFC individuals may act impulsively to quickly escape their discomfort, thus creating an increased opportunity for the act of ghosting. These theories provide a very well-rounded landscape for understanding ghosting behaviours with respect to the quality of relationship and individual's focus on future events.

1.4 Rationale

Despite the strong empirical support and theoretical support of CFC and ghosting behaviours, there exists very few integrative research studies that investigate how both CFC and ghosting behaviours influence relationship quality to young adults. Theoretically, individuals with high levels of CFC may be less prone to exhibit behaviours which are considered avoidant such as ghosting and are inclined to engage in communication behaviours that facilitate happiness in long-term romantic relationships. Moreover, individuals who are not concerned about the effect of their actions on future relationships are more prone to exhibit impulsive and avoidant behaviours which adversely influence relationship quality. Investigating CFC and ghosting behaviours together may provide a more comprehensive understanding of how cognitive orientation and communication behaviours influence romantic relationship quality in young adulthood.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Karen, R. (2026) examined the shifting landscape of modern commitment and the psychological mechanisms behind deactivating strategies such as ghosting via theoretical analysis and qualitative analysis of personal narratives. The most important factor contributing to a lack of relational connection for people in our society today was found to be the mental health-disrupting phenomenon of dating applications, which exposed people to the overwhelming choice that has been coined decision fatigue and the rejection mindset. The author identified that ghosting has been used as a deactivating strategy by people in relationships to avoid the vulnerability of engaging in authentic relationships. Ghosting served as self-protection to prevent the burdensome task of self-presentation and the accompanying fear of abandonment. The combination of digital convenience and attachment-related avoidance resulted in a societal fear of commitment. This ghosting had been a self-protective defense mechanism in response to the demands of self-presentation and fear of abandonment.

Kay, A.C., & Courtice, E. L. (2025) explored the phenomenon of ghosting and mobile dating application usage and the effect on psychological wellbeing. In this study, the authors investigated the impact of the "always on" culture of technology and the number of potential partners available on dating applications, on the normalisation of ghosting. The study found that, as a perpetrator or victim of ghosting, users had higher levels of social anxiety and lower levels of self-esteem. The authors concluded that the design of the dating platform impacted interpersonal accountability and led to negative mental health outcomes.

Freedman, G. et al. (2024), examined the emotional experience of people in romantic relationships who had either ghosted a partner (ghosters) or had been ghosted (ghostees). A multi-method approach was used to compare the emotional experiences of people who had ghosted and people who had been ghosted. The results showed that, although ghosters and ghostees used similar amounts of positive and negative language to describe their experience, ghosters and ghostees differed in the actual emotions they expressed. Ghosters tended to report feelings of guilt and relief, while ghostees reported sadness and hurt. The results also suggested that ghostees experience a powerful threat to their basic psychological needs (i.e., self-esteem, belongingness, control, and meaningful existence). Therefore, the results suggested that ghosting was a unique form of social rejection that leaves the victim of the ghosting feeling threatened to a significant extent, psychologically and emotionally.

Šiša, A. (2024) examined the phenomenon of ghosting on the mobile dating application Tinder, conceptualizing it as a normalized strategy for digital disconnection among users in Slovenia. In this article, ghosting was conceptualized as a normalized strategy of digital disconnection among users of Tinder in Slovenia. A walkthrough of the Tinder app and 26 semi-structured interviews revealed that ghosting mainly arose from two contexts: a defensive measure against harassment and vulnerability, and a reactive strategy against information overload. The always-on character of Tinder was found to trigger a hyperconnected mode of interacting, in which beings use ghosting to cope with the exhaustion of the on-again-off-again mode of availability. Finally, the findings showed that ghosting was, at least here, perceived as an undesirable but necessary strategy to navigate the digital terrain undermined by the lack of structural options for safe and authentic connection.

Lukas, T. & Matthes, J. (2023) explored the psychological predictors and long-term consequences of ghosting in romantic relationships and friendships in emerging adults. A two-wave panel survey showed that ghosting motives differ across relationship types: Communication overload predicted ghosting a partner, whereas low self-esteem predicted ghosting a friend. Moreover, while ghosting a romantic partner did not affect the well-being of the initiator, ghosting a friend predicts increased depressive tendencies over time. In general, the results showed that ghosting was not only harmful for the recipient but also had long-term psychological costs for the initiator in the context of a friendship.

Powell, D. N. (2023) investigated the psychological motivations behind ghosting and its impact on the initiator's well-being, specifically focusing on the roles of self-esteem, attachment styles, and communication competence. This research examined the psychological factors that may influence ghosting behaviors and the impact of ghosting on the initiator's self-esteem, attachment style, and communication competence. The results of this research indicated that those with higher avoidant attachment were significantly more likely to use ghosting as a relationship dissolution strategy to avoid confronting the emotional intimacy and potential conflict that a direct breakup might entail. The results also suggested that although ghosting may provide the initiator with an immediate, short-term relief, it is a maladaptive strategy that increases the initiator's feelings of guilt, decreases their relational satisfaction, and does not allow them to learn how to communicate in a healthy, long-term manner.

Navarro, R. et al. (2024) provided a comprehensive review of existing research on ghosting, synthesizing the psychological drivers and interpersonal outcomes of this digital disengagement strategy. The phenomenon of "ghosting," a sudden refusal to engage in further communication, was one of the most common forms of digital disengagement. The rapid rise of mobile dating apps combined with the omnipresent nature of smartphones has amplified the prevalence of digital ghosting. This systematic literature review explored the psychological motivations and interpersonal consequences of ghosting. The authors specifically examined the affective and relational response to ghosting by the "victim" of ghosting. It indicated that ghosting was an increasingly common phenomenon in online dating and the primary motivations were to avoid conflict or emotional labor. The most prevalent negative psychological responses to ghosting were loneliness and frustration, with some evidence also indicating that some

victims experienced significant personal distress due to lack of closure. The digital affordances of invisibility and high-choice environments have led to the social norm of disappearing. Understanding the psychological drivers and consequences of digital ghosting was critical for improving digital interpersonal relationships. Future research should investigate the long-term consequences of digital ghosting for the victim. Specifically, they predicted that the act of ghosting may represent a form of social ostracism that has negative consequences for the victim's self esteem and relational trust in the future.

Bane, C. M. et al. (2023) explored the "Dark Tetrad" personality traits of narcissism, Machiavellianism, psychopathy, and sadism as predictors of ghosting in romantic contexts. Findings indicated that a higher score in these traits predicted the use of ghosting as a dissolution strategy as a result of a lack of empathy and an inclination towards low-commitment interpersonal interactions. The study also reported that ghosting was a behavioral representation of an avoidant attachment style in which the initiator's self-protection and emotional distance were prioritized over the partner's well-being.

Boonman, S. (2022) investigated the experience and coping mechanisms following a ghosting experience in a Thai context. 335 Thai young adults were surveyed on their experience and coping mechanisms after being ghosted. An analysis of the impact of prior relationship intimacy level and attachment style revealed that intimacy level played a significant role in the negative emotional experience after being ghosted, with anxiety attachment orientation significantly predicting emotional release and self-blame coping strategies. However, intimacy level was found to be a negative predictor of self-blame. Overall, the findings suggested that the level of intimacy in the prior relationship and the type of attachment style have a significant influence on the experience and coping mechanisms of a Thai young adult following a ghosting experience.

Pancani, L. et al. (2022) compared the psychological consequences of relationship dissolution strategies: ghosting, orbiting, and traditional rejection. The authors examined how 176 participants recalled these experiences. The authors found that ghosting led to significantly worse outcomes than direct rejection, as it threatened the victim's basic needs and emotional well-being. The authors also found that "orbiting," in which the disengager stops communicating directly with the victim but continues following them on social media, afforded a partial buffer against the immediate pain of breakup; the lingering, if ambiguous, digital connection seemed to soften the blow. The authors ultimately found that the absence of closure in ghosting was the most detrimental aspect of social ostracism.

Jonason, P. K. et al. (2021) investigated the psychological predictors of ghosting. They found evidence that people with low "Consideration of Future Consequences" (CFC; i.e., people who choose immediate gratification over long-term outcomes) and the "Dark Triad" (narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy) were more likely to ghost as a relationship dissolution strategy. This indicated that individuals who ghost were more likely to choose an impulsive, short-term approach to avoid the discomfort of a break-up conversation, which caused long-term damage to the social reputation of the initiator and/or harm to the well-being of the recipient.

Navarro, R. et al. (2021) examined the relationship between ghosting victimhood and perpetration, and various psychological and interpersonal predictors of ghosting. In a sample of 626 adults, the authors found a strong association between ghosting initiation and victimization indicating a cycle of ghosting perpetration among those who were victimized. Although the authors examined various factors, including self-esteem, sense of power, empathy, and conflict resolution style, they found that most of these individual qualities did not stand in relationship to ghosting or only had weak associations. The authors concluded that ghosting was an emerging and complex phenomenon in contemporary communication, seemingly more artificial and dependent on the normalization of such behavior in digital social settings than on specific deficits in personality.

Pancani, L. et al. (2021) explored the psychological effects of both ghosting and breadcrumbing (sending a romantic interest minimal messages to keep them "on the hook" without commitment) in online dating. They defined ghosting as a silent treatment used as social ostracism, posing a major threat to the victim's basic psychological needs for belonging, self-esteem, meaningful existence, and control. They inferred that these forms of digital disengagement cause permanent psychological wounds, as the silent and unexplained treatment leaves the recipient in a hurtful state of uncertainty and social exclusion.

Timmermans, E. et al. (2021) investigated the use of ghosting as a communication strategy in the context of mobile dating apps. They highlighted how the digital affordances of MDAs, including perceptions of anonymity and a large number of alternatives, facilitated the use of ghosting as a way to "end" a relationship, and how this use of ghosting was normalised by users. The authors also discussed how, despite its use as a way to avoid conflict or awkwardness, ghosting had negative emotional outcomes for recipients. Finally, the authors argued that the use of ghosting was facilitated by the architecture of dating apps that did not provide social accountability for users.

Freedman, G. et al. (2019) contextualized how people's underlying beliefs about the nature of relationships affect their attitudes towards ghosting. The study focused on whether participants held "implicit theories": destiny beliefs that partners are either compatible or not versus growth beliefs that a relationship is built through effort. The researchers found that people with stronger destiny beliefs were much more likely to view ghosting as an acceptable way to end a relationship. By contrast, people with growth beliefs were more likely to view ghosting negatively, which is not surprising since they were more focused on communication and working through interpersonal problems.

Koessler, R. B. et al. (2019) investigated the emotional effects of ghosting by distinguishing the particular effects of disappointment and hope in the victim. They argued that the experience of ghosting was uniquely painful because the break-up was not explicit, and therefore the "ghostee" was unable to reach closure, often left in a state of "suspended hope" that the relationship would pick up where it left off. This state of ambiguity made the psychological process of grieving more difficult than that caused by a more direct, straightforward break-up.

LeFebvre, L. E. et al. (2019) explored the phenomenon of ghosting as an alternative way of ending romantic relationships among emerging adults. Ghosting, as defined by the authors, was the abrupt and total cessation of communication without explanation given to the partner. The authors determined that ghosting (digital dissolution) was facilitated by the use of technology and social media and that ghosters were able to exit the relationship "in an instant." Furthermore, the authors identified several reasons for ghosting: convenience, a lack of attraction for the partner, negative feelings about the relationship, the state of the relationship, and safety concerns. Overall, although the ghosting tactic afforded the ghoster an effortless exit from the relationship, it was the authors' determination that non-ghosters experienced significant emotional upset from the lack of closure and confusion.

Joireman, J., & King, S. (2016) provided a comprehensive overview of the Consideration of Future Consequences (CFC) construct, defining it as the degree to which individuals reflect upon the potential distant outcomes of their current behaviors. The researchers examined how CFC functioned as a stable personality trait that significantly influenced decision-making across various domains, including health, financial planning, and interpersonal relationships. The review highlighted that individuals with a high CFC score tended to exercise greater self-control and pursued long-term goals, whereas those with a low CFC score prioritized immediate gratification and "proximal" concerns. Ultimately, the authors concluded that understanding an individual's temporal orientation was essential for predicting prosocial behaviors and long-term personal well-being.

III.METHODOLOGY

3.1 Aim

To examine the predictive role of consideration of future consequences and ghosting behavior on relationship quality among young adults.

3.2 Objectives

1. To study the level of Consideration of Future Consequences, Ghosting Behavior, and Relationship Quality among young adults.
2. To examine the relationship between Consideration of Future Consequences and Relationship Quality.
3. To examine the relationship between Ghosting Behavior and Relationship Quality.
4. To study Consideration of Future Consequences as a predictor of Relationship Quality.
5. To study Ghosting Behavior as a predictor of Relationship Quality.
6. To examine the combined predictive role of Consideration of Future Consequences and Ghosting Behavior on Relationship Quality among young adults.

3.3 Hypothesis

H₁: There will be significant relationship between Consideration of Future Consequences and Relationship Quality amongst young adults.

H₂: There will be significant relationship between Ghosting Behavior and Relationship Quality amongst young adults.

H₃: There will be significant relationship between Consideration of Future Consequences, Ghosting Behaviour and Relationship Quality amongst young adults.

3.4 Research Design

Research design is a systematic plan for the collection, measurement and analysis of data to answer research questions and test hypotheses (Polit & Hungler, 1999). It is used to control extraneous variables and to increase the validity and reliability of the findings. Research designs are classified as exploratory, descriptive, correlational, and experimental designs.

The current research used an explanatory research design to generate hypotheses. Descriptive and correlational research designs were then used to evaluate the relationships among variables. In the exploratory design, extensive literature review was performed to identify the gaps and generate the hypotheses. In the correlational design, the relationships among variables were examined. Regression analysis was performed to determine the predictive impact of the independent variables on relationship quality.

3.5 Variables

Independent Variables

- Consideration of Future Consequences
- Ghosting Behavior

Dependent Variable

- Relationship Quality

3.6 Sample and its Selection

A comprehensive review of about 20 research articles/literature reviews published within the past 10 years on consideration of future consequences, ghosting behavior, and relationship quality was carried out and the most appropriate studies were chosen. Among the standardized psychological tools, those with good reliability and validity were chosen. The Consideration of Future Consequences Scale (CFC) by Strathman et al. (1994), Romantic Ghosting Scale, and standardized Positive Negative Relationship Quality Scale were assembled into a Google Form. The participants were young adults aged 19 to 29 years who had currently or previously been in a romantic relationship. Convenience sampling was used to select a total of 120 participants and data were collected online.

3.7 Inclusion Criteria

Participants were young adults aged 19 to 29 years, who had been in at least one romantic relationship. They must be fluent in the questionnaire language and give informed consent to participate in the study by completing the questionnaire.

3.8 Exclusion Criteria

Exclusion criteria were those not of the specified age range, those who had never engaged in a romantic relationship, those who did not complete the informed consent and incomplete, inconsistent responses.

3.9 Description of Tools Employed

The present study utilized standardized and psychometrically robust instruments to assess Consideration of Future Consequences, Ghosting Behavior and Relationship Quality in young adults. Instruments were chosen based on their theoretical relevance, reliability and validity and prior usage in young adult samples. All instruments were administered online through the platform Google Forms.

3.9.1 Consideration of Future Consequences Scale (CFC)

The Consideration of Future Consequences Scale (CFC) was developed by Strathman, Gleicher, Boninger, and Edwards (1994) to measure the degree to which individuals consider the possible future outcomes of their current behaviors, and allow their consideration to guide their decision making. The CFC is a 12-item measure that is scored on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Extremely uncharacteristic) to 5 (Extremely characteristic). The score for total CFC is calculated by summing responses to all items. Items assessing immediate outcomes are reverse scored before the total score is computed. Higher scores on total CFC, and on CFC-I and CFC-F subscales, indicate a greater tendency to consider future outcomes and long-term consequences of their actions.

Although large-scale Indian validation studies are limited, psychometric evaluations in young adult samples from culturally comparable contexts (e.g., Malaysian young adults) have reported high internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values of $\alpha = .90$ for the CFC-Immediate subscale and $\alpha = .87$ for

the CFC-Future subscale. These findings support the applicability of the CFC scale in young adult populations, including the present sample.

3.9.2 Romantic Ghosting Scale

Ghosting behavior was measured using the Romantic Ghosting Scale, developed by Navarro, Larrañaga, Yubero, and VÍllora (2020). The scale assesses ghosting as a form of interpersonal disengagement characterized by sudden cessation of communication, avoidance, and lack of explanation or relational closure within romantic relationships. The scale consists of Likert-type items, rated from 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 5 (*Strongly agree*). Scores are obtained by summing responses across all items to yield a total ghosting behavior score. Higher scores indicate a greater tendency to engage in or endorse ghosting behaviors in romantic contexts. Unless otherwise specified, items are scored in the forward direction.

While Indian-specific reliability data are limited, studies using ghosting measures in young adult and cross-national samples have reported good internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values typically around $\alpha = .88$. These findings indicate that the Romantic Ghosting Scale demonstrates adequate reliability for assessing ghosting behavior among young adults in the present study.

3.9.3 Positive–Negative Relationship Quality Scale (PN-RQ)

The Positive–Negative Relationship Quality Scale (Fincham & Linfield, 1997) reflects on both positive and negative dimensions of romantic relationships. Items include measures of satisfaction, intimacy, support, and closeness as well as conflict, dissatisfaction, and strain. Response format is a 5-point Likert scale. Scoring Procedure Positive Relationship Quality Negative Relationship Quality Subscale scores are derived by summing item scores for each of the items within the positive or negative dimensions. Positive relationship quality is higher on the positive dimension and poorer on the negative dimension. Assuming an overall relationship quality score is needed, this can be achieved by subtracting the negative score from the positive score. Higher overall scores reflect superior relationship quality.

The Positive–Negative Relationship Quality Scale is a measure of relationship quality. Similar measures have shown acceptable to high internal consistency in Indian and young adult samples, with Cronbach's alpha values being reported as $\alpha = .80$ to $.90$. The reliability estimates indicate that the measure is appropriate for measuring relationship quality in the current study.

3.10 Procedure

Prior to data collection, ethics approval was obtained, and informed consent secured from participants, ensuring they were aware of their rights, confidentiality, and the voluntary nature of participation. The survey was administered online through social media, email, and collaborations with various organizations. It remained open for 4-6 weeks, with reminders sent to encourage participation from those who had not yet completed it. A small pilot test was conducted with 10-15 participants to assess the clarity of the survey and the usability of the platform. Necessary refinements were made based on the feedback. After distributing the survey, responses were monitored and data was collected. Once the survey closed, the dataset was cleaned to remove incomplete responses and ensure accuracy. For data analysis, Pearson correlation was calculated for the independent variables and the dependent variable to determine whether there is a statistically significant impact of one on the other. The findings were compiled into a research report, presenting the analysis and insights. Based on the results, recommendations were offered, along with suggested directions for future research.

3.11 Statistical Analysis

Descriptive analysis was done to find the mean, median, standard deviation, maximum and minimum value for all three variables. For inferential statistics, Pearson's correlation as well as multiple regression analysis was conducted.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Results of Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

Table 4.1: Mean, Median, Standard Deviation, Minimum and Maximum of CFC, GB1, GB2, RQP and RQN

	CFC	GB1	GB2	RQP	RQN
N	100	100	100	100	100
Missing	0	0	0	0	0
Mean	40.0	39.0	35.5	23.1	10.5
Median	40.0	41.5	39.0	24.0	6.00
Standard Deviation	5.11	13.7	13.7	11.6	10.9
Minimum	29	15	15	0	0
Maximum	58	70	74	40	39

The sample consisted of 100 respondents, and all data were complete, showing no missing values. On average, participants indicated moderate forms of future-oriented thought, with the mean Consideration of Future Consequences (CFC) score of 40.00 (SD = 5.11) indicating a relatively low amount of variability between respondents (small standard deviation).

Experience of being ghosted with respect to ghosting behavior experience (GB1) had a mean of 39.00 (SD = 13.70). Therefore, there is considerable variation in this respect, as reflected by the relatively large standard deviation for this phantom (ghosting) experience. Experience of ghosting others with respect to ghosting others (GB2) had a mean of 35.50 (SD = 13.70). Again, there is considerable variation between participants, as indicated by the larger standard deviation.

The average positive relationship quality was 23.10 (SD = 11.60). Conversely, the average negative relationship quality was 10.50 (SD = 10.90). Overall, participants indicated they had greater positive relationship experiences than negative relationship experiences (average). However, there was noticeable individual differences among the participants in terms of their relationship quality, as indicated by the moderate to large standard deviations for positive and negative relationships. To summarize, respondents demonstrated moderate future orientation, considerable variations in their ghosting experiences, and overall perceived higher levels of positive than negative relationship quality, with considerable variation among the individual respondents.

4.2 Correlation Analysis

Using Pearson's correlation analysis, correlation analysis was done to determine how CFC, GB1, and GB2 correlated with relationship quality (both RQP and RQN).

Table 4.2: Result table for relationship between GB1 and RQP

S. no	Variable	N	r	Sig
1	GB1	100	-0.514	
2	RQP	100		sig**

**sig at 0.01 level

Table 4.3: Result table for relationship between GB1 and RQN

S. no	Variable	N	r	Sig
1	GB1	100	0.473	
2	RQN	100		sig**

**sig at 0.01 level

Experiencing GB1 had a moderate, negative correlation with both measures of relationship quality ($r = -.51$, $p < .001$; $r = .47$, $p < .001$), indicating that those individuals who had been ghosted reported lower-quality positive and higher-quality negative relationships.

Table 4.4: Result table for relationship between GB2 and RQP

S. no	Variable	N	r	Sig
1	GB2	100	-0.292	
2	RQP	100		sig**

**sig at 0.01 level

Table 4.5: Result table for relationship between GB2 and RQN

S. no	Variable	N	r	Sig
1	GB2	100	0.393	
2	RQN	100		sig**

**sig at 0.01 level

Experiencing GB2 also had moderate but not as strong a correlation with both quality measures as GB1 had, indicating that individuals who frequently ghosted others also reported poorer relationship quality (positive: $r = -.29$, $p = .003$; negative, $r = .39$, $p < .001$).

CFC did not significantly correlate with either measure of relationship quality (positive, $r = .12$, $p = .237$; negative, $r = -.18$, $p = .079$), indicating that being future-oriented was not significantly associated with how individuals viewed their own relationship quality.

GB1 and GB2 were also significantly associated with each other ($r = .62$, $p < .001$), indicating that individuals who had experienced GB1 were more likely to have experienced GB2. The findings from this sample indicate that experiencing ghosting or performing ghosting may have a stronger association with relationship quality than does consideration for future consequences.

4.3 Regression Analysis

Table 4.6: Regression Analysis predicting RQP

Model	R	R ²
1	0.498	0.248

- Predicting Relationship Quality - Positive subscale (RQP)

To determine if CFC, GB1, and GB2 predicted RQP, a multiple linear regression analysis was conducted. The overall model was significant, indicating that 27% of the variability in RQP was explained by the predictors and indicates that the effect size was moderate ($R = .519$; $R^2 = .270$). There was no significant prediction of RQP by CFC ($B = .155$, $p = .452$), there was significant prediction of RQP by GB1 ($B = -.462$, $p < .001$), and there was no significant prediction of RQP by GB2 ($B = .052$, $p = .591$).

Results indicated that experience of being ghosted (GB1) has a significant negative impact on RQP after controlling for CFC and GBP. Experience of being ghosted (GB1) was negatively associated with RQP (for every one unit increase in experience of being ghosted, there was a negative impact on RQP). There was no independent contribution from CFC or GB2 in predicting RQP after controlling for the variables.

Table 4.7: Regression Analysis predicting RQN

Model	R	R ²
1	0.519	0.270

- Predicting Relationship Quality - Negative subscale (RQN)

A second multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine if CFC, GB1, and GB2 predicted RQN. The overall model was also significant and explained 24.8% of the variability in RQN ($R = .498$; $R^2 = .248$).

There was no significant prediction of RQN by CFC ($B = -.203$, $p = .300$), there was a significant prediction of RQN by GB1 ($B = .300$, $p = .001$), and there was no significant prediction of RQN by GB2 ($B = .106$, $p = .248$):

People who have had many experiences of being ghosted (i.e., having someone stop contacting you) actually rated their relationship quality significantly more negatively than those who had fewer ghosting experiences. As stated above, the other variables considered together did not significantly predict negative relationship quality once the predictor variables were adjusted, thus the presence of ghosting above all else should be the primary influence(s) on the negative nature of young adult relationships in your study again highlight the experience for all young adults in the study of being ghosted versus ghosting others as predictive indicators for their negative relationship experiences.

4.4 Hypothesis Testing and Interpretation

The current research explored how Consideration of Future Consequences (CFC) and ghosting behaviour (i.e., the act of either ghosting another person or being ghosted by another person) can influence young adults' relationship quality. The results from this study will be discussed based on each of the hypotheses presented previously.

H₁: There will be significant relationship between Consideration of Future Consequences and Relationship Quality amongst young adults.

This hypothesis was not supported.

There was no noteworthy relationship (either positively or negatively) between CFC and the quality of the relationship (of the present) for young people, which means CFC is not a key factor in how young adults perceive/experience their present relationships. Young adults may use immediate emotional and interpersonal experiences to form the basis of relationship quality rather than a long-term cognitive decision-making process. Thus while CFC is associated with long-term planning, and making responsible decisions, it is not clear that it implies either greater relationship satisfaction or less relationship distress. Moreover, relationship quality may depend more heavily on other factors, including patterns of communication, attachment styles, and conflict resolution skills than on general future orientation.

Regression analysis revealed that CFC was not a significant predictor of either positive or negative quality of relationship. CFC did not have a significant role in accounting for variance in relationship quality regardless of whether ghosting variables were included. Joireman, J., & King, S. (2016) highlighted that individuals with a high CFC score tended to exercise greater self-control and pursued long-term goals, whereas those with a low CFC score prioritized immediate gratification and "proximal" concerns. Although as per the current study, while there are differences in how much people consider their future consequences, there are no direct correlational predictions that will accurately predict relationship satisfaction or dissatisfaction based solely on CFC. These results suggest that a broader cognitive perspective toward the future alone is insufficient to influence relationship quality without a comparable level of relational behaviour.

H₂: There will be significant relationship between Ghosting Behavior and Relationship Quality amongst young adults.

This hypothesis was supported.

There was a significant correlation between both experiencing being ghosted (GB1) and ghosting others (GB2) with regard to relational quality. Experiencing ghosting was positively associated with negative relational quality and was negatively related to positive relational quality. The same patterns were found at the correlation level for ghosting others. Powell, D. N. (2023) suggested that although ghosting may provide the initiator with an immediate, short-term relief, it is a maladaptive strategy that increases the initiator's feelings of guilt, decreases their relational satisfaction, and does not allow them to learn how to communicate in a healthy, long-term manner. These findings suggest that ghosting behaviors are highly correlated with poor relational outcomes. In fact, ghosting can generate a sense of rejection, insecurity, mistrust, and/or emotional distress that can negatively affect individuals' perceptions of their relationships. As a result, ghosting may be an important relational factor impacting relational quality for young adults.

The results of the regression analyses show that being ghosted (GB1) is a strong predictor for both the positive and negative quality of relationships. Conversely, the act of ghosting someone (GB2) does not predict the quality of relationships when one's own experience of being ghosted is factored into the model. LeFebvre, L. E. et al. (2019) stated that ghosting tactic afforded the ghoster an effortless exit from the relationship but non-ghosters experienced significant emotional upset from the lack of closure and confusion. Being ghosted has a larger psychological effect on the quality of future relationships than does

ghosting another person. Experiencing rejection may lead to more severe emotional trauma than if one had acted avoidantly (i.e., ghosting). The main conclusion is that ghosting behavior acts as a predictor of relational quality primarily through one's own experience of being ghosted rather than through one's experience of ghosting others.

H₃: There will be significant relationship between Consideration of Future Consequences, Ghosting Behaviour and Relationship Quality amongst young adults.

This hypothesis was partially supported.

The combined regression model demonstrated statistical significance and explained a sufficient amount of variation in both positive and negative relationships (25-27%). The main contributor to this amount of variance was the occurrence of ghosting variables, particularly being ghosted. When using the ghosting variable(s) in the combined model, CFC does not contribute in a quantitative way. This means that although the combined model explains relationship quality, the primary factor responsible for predicting relationship quality is relational experience and not future-oriented thoughts.

V. CONCLUSION

The current study analyzed the predictive influence of Consideration of Future Consequences (CFC) and the practice of ghosting on the overall quality of relationships between young adults. Overall, the results suggest that ghosting behavior, particularly being ghosted, influences both positively and negatively the relationship quality of the person who was ghosted.

The research found that CFC did not predict the quality of relationships in either a direct or indirect way. Therefore, the way a young adult thinks about the future does not contribute to their evaluations of relationships.

On the other hand, being ghosted was the strongest and most reliable predictor of negative and positive relational quality. Those who were ghosted also exhibited lower levels of positive and greater levels of negative relational quality. Ghosting others had a statistically significant correlation with relational quality, although ghosting behavior did not independently predict relational quality when controlling for being ghosted.

Overall, these results demonstrate that interpersonal experiences, especially being rejected through the act of ghosting, play a much larger role in determining the quality of a relationship than one's cognitive orientation towards future consequences; thus highlighting the importance of communicative patterns and relational behaviors when analyzing the dynamics of a relationship for young adults.

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