

Ghosting Reciprocity in Recruitment: A Conceptual Study of Candidate Ghosting in Generation Z Job Applicants

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the phenomenon of candidate ghosting in Generation Z through a conceptual literature review approach by integrating the perspectives of candidate experience, employer ghosting, digital social proof, and Social Exchange Theory. The research uses the conceptual literature review method by examining various relevant scientific literature regarding recruitment behavior, candidate experience, Generation Z characteristics, recruitment communication, and social relations in organizations. Analysis is carried out through the process of identification, classification, synthesis, and interpretation of various research findings to build a more comprehensive conceptual understanding. The results of the synthesis show that candidate ghosting cannot be understood solely as a form of candidate unprofessionalism, but rather as a phenomenon influenced by the communication experience received during the recruitment process. The practice of employer ghosting, changes in Generation Z's expectations for transparency and speed of communication, and the influence of digital social proof contribute to the formation of candidate perceptions and behaviors in recruitment relationships. This research offers the concept of ghosting reciprocity as a conceptual framework that explains that candidate ghosting can emerge as a form of negative reciprocity that develops from previous communication experiences with the organization. These findings underscore the importance of a more transparent, responsive, and experience-oriented recruitment process to minimize ghosting from both parties.

Keywords

Candidate Ghosting, Employer Ghosting, Generasi Z, Candidate Experience, Ghosting Reciprocity



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INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has changed almost all aspects of human resource management, including the recruitment and selection process. The use of online job search platforms, professional social media, applicant tracking systems, and the use of

artificial intelligence in candidate screening has driven the transformation of the recruitment process to be faster, broader, and more digitalized. The changes allow organizations to reach candidates on a larger scale while providing job seekers with more open access to information. As a result, the modern recruitment process no longer takes place in a relationship that is completely controlled by the organization, but rather evolves into an increasingly interactive and two-way relationship between the organization and the candidate.

In this context, candidates no longer play the role of passive parties who are just waiting for the organization's decision. The ease of access to information gives applicants the ability to compare various job alternatives, evaluate the organization's reputation, and determine for themselves whether a company is suitable to proceed to a more formal employment relationship stage. This change shows that the balance of relations in the recruitment process is starting to shift. Organizations still have the authority to determine which candidates to be accepted, but candidates also have a greater capacity to assess, accept, or reject organizations based on the experience they gain during the selection process.

These changes in relationship patterns increase the importance of the concept of candidate experience. This concept refers to the overall experience that candidates feel while interacting with the organization, starting from searching for vacancy information, the process of sending applications, communication with recruiters, conducting interviews, to the final recruitment decision. Research shows that a candidate's experience has a significant impact on an individual's perception of the organization as an employer. Positive experiences can strengthen an organization's reputation, increase interest in qualified candidates, and encourage the dissemination of positive recommendations, while negative experiences can lower candidate confidence and damage the organization's image in the long run (Miles & McCamey, 2018).

One of the issues that is getting more attention in human resource management studies is the phenomenon of employer ghosting. This term is used to describe a situation when an organization stops communication with applicants without providing clarity regarding the status of the application or the selection results that have been followed. In practice, many candidates spend time, effort, and resources to go through the various stages of selection, but do not get any further information about the process they are undergoing. These conditions

often lead to feelings of disrespect, frustration, and uncertainty that ultimately affect the candidate's perception of the organization.

The phenomenon of employer ghosting is important because communication is one of the main components in forming a perception of fairness during the recruitment process. Candidates tend to give a more positive assessment of the organization when they obtain clear, consistent, and transparent information regarding the ongoing selection process. On the contrary, misinformation and unilateral termination of communication are often perceived as a form of procedural injustice that can lower a candidate's level of trust in the organization. Thus, the quality of communication during the recruitment process not only affects the success of obtaining the right candidate, but also on the organization's reputation as an employer.

Interestingly, developments in recent years show that the practice of unilaterally cutting off communication in the recruitment process is no longer only carried out by organizations. Various reports from human resources practitioners show the increasing phenomenon of candidate ghosting, which is the behavior of candidates who stop communication with the organization without providing an explanation. This form of behavior can include not replying to the recruiter's messages, not attending an agreed interview schedule, resigning without notice after receiving a job offer, or even not showing up on the first day of work despite previously expressing a willingness to join.

From an organizational perspective, candidate ghosting is seen as a problem that can interfere with the effectiveness of the recruitment process. When a candidate who has passed the selection suddenly disappears unnoticed, the organization must reallocate time, cost, and resources to find a replacement. This situation can slow down the fulfillment of labor needs and cause uncertainty in human resource planning. Therefore, most of the discussions about candidate ghosting have focused more on the negative impact it has on the organization.

However, viewing candidate ghosting solely as a form of candidate unprofessionalism has the potential to produce an overly simplistic understanding. In social relationships that are reciprocal, an individual's behavior is often influenced by the interaction experiences they have had before. Therefore, the phenomenon of candidate ghosting needs to be understood not only from the perspective of the organization, but also from the perspective of the candidate as a party who directly experiences various forms of interaction during the

recruitment process.

This perspective becomes even more important when associated with the increasing dominance of Generation Z in the global job market. Generation Z is a group that was born and grew up in an environment that is very close to the internet, social media, and digital technology. These characteristics form different expectations compared to previous generations, especially in terms of speed of access to information, transparency of communication, and quality of user experience. In the context of work, Generation Z tends to expect a more open, responsive, and equal relationship with the organization (Schroth, 2019).

In addition to being influenced by direct experience, Generation Z's decisions are also increasingly influenced by the existence of widely available digital information. Before applying or accepting a job, candidates can obtain information about the organization through social media, professional platforms, employee review sites, and online discussion forums. This phenomenon is often explained through the concept of digital social proof, which is the tendency of individuals to use the experiences and judgments of others as a basis for making decisions. In the context of recruitment, the existence of digital social proof allows candidates to evaluate the organization even before the employment relationship is formed.

These developments show that the modern recruitment process is no longer only an arena for organizational selection of candidates, but also an arena for evaluating candidates for the organization. Candidates actively compare the personal experiences they have with the information they obtain from the digital environment. When the experience received indicates a lack of communication, a lack of transparency, or unfair treatment, the candidate may develop a negative perception of the organization and decide to stop their involvement in the recruitment process.

Although research on candidate experience, Generation Z, recruitment communication, and employer branding has grown quite rapidly, most studies still address these themes separately. Studies on candidate ghosting generally focus on the operational consequences experienced by organizations, while research on employer ghosting focuses more on its impact on candidate perception and organizational reputation. Until now, there is still relatively limited research that integrates candidate experience, employer ghosting, digital social proof, Generation Z characteristics, and Social Exchange Theory into a complete

conceptual framework to explain how candidate ghosting behavior is formed.

In contrast to previous research that generally discussed employer ghosting and candidate ghosting as separate phenomena, this study offers the concept of ghosting reciprocity as a conceptual framework to explain the mutual relationship between the candidate's communication experience and the emergence of candidate ghosting behavior. This concept integrates the perspective of candidate experience, digital social proof, characteristics of Generation Z, and Social Exchange Theory in one complete conceptual model. Through this approach, this study seeks to explain that candidate ghosting behavior is not only influenced by individual factors of the candidate, but can also be understood as a result of relational dynamics formed during the recruitment process.

This gap shows the need for a more relational approach in understanding the phenomenon of candidate ghosting. This perspective is in line with the Social Exchange Theory put forward by Peter M. Blau. This theory explains that social relationships develop through the principle of exchange and reciprocity, in which individuals tend to adjust their behavior based on the experiences received from the other party. In the context of recruitment, the communication experience a candidate receives during the selection process has the potential to shape how they treat the organization in their next interaction.

Based on this thought, this study offers the concept of ghosting reciprocity as a conceptual framework to explain the reciprocal relationship between employer ghosting and candidate ghosting. This concept departs from the assumption that disappearing behaviors in the recruitment process do not always appear as stand-alone individual actions, but can rather develop as a form of negative reciprocity influenced by previous communication experiences. Thus, candidate ghosting is understood not solely as an individual ethical issue, but as part of the dynamics of the relationship between candidates and organizations in the digital recruitment ecosystem.

Based on this description, this study aims to analyze the phenomenon of candidate ghosting in Generation Z through a conceptual literature review approach by integrating the perspectives of candidate experience, employer ghosting, digital social proof, and Social Exchange Theory. This research is expected to enrich the study of human resource management, particularly related to the dynamics of digital recruitment, while offering a new conceptual framework that can serve as a basis for the development of recruitment

research and practices that are more transparent, responsive, and experience-oriented to the candidate.

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a conceptual literature review method to understand, integrate, and synthesize various theoretical ideas and findings of previous research on the phenomenon of candidate ghosting in Generation Z in the recruitment process. The literature was obtained through searching scientific databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus, and national journal portals indexed by SINTA using the keywords candidate ghosting, employer ghosting, candidate experience, Generation Z, Social Exchange Theory, organizational justice, and recruitment communication. Inclusion criteria include scientific articles that discuss related phenomena, use Social Exchange Theory, and have a direct relationship with the research focus; Meanwhile, the exclusion criteria include non-peer review articles, ghosting studies in personal contexts, and sources that are not substantially relevant.

Data analysis is carried out through four stages: identification and collection of relevant literature, critical reading to understand key concepts and findings, grouping of information based on themes such as candidate experience, employer ghosting, characteristics of Generation Z, avoidance behavior, and the principle of reciprocity, as well as conceptual synthesis by comparing and interpreting findings using the Social Exchange Theory from Blau (1964) as an analysis lens. The results of the synthesis were used to formulate the concept of ghosting reciprocity as a conceptual framework that explains the reciprocal relationship between the experience of employer ghosting and the emergence of candidate ghosting behavior.

To increase the credibility of the study results, this study applies the principle of source traceability and synthesis across theoretical perspectives by integrating findings from human resource management studies, organizational psychology, digital communication, and work sociology. This approach aims to gain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of candidate ghosting and minimize interpretation bias in the analysis process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Literature Synthesis Results

Based on the results of the review and synthesis of various literature that discusses *candidate ghosting*, *employer ghosting*, *candidate experience*, characteristics of Generation Z, and *Social Exchange Theory*, four main themes were found that are interrelated in explaining the emergence of *candidate ghosting* behavior in the modern recruitment process. The four themes include: (1) the experience of *employer ghosting* as a trigger for a decrease in candidates' trust in the organization; (2) changes in Generation Z's expectations of work relationships; (3) the influence of *digital social proof* in the career decision-making process; and (4) the formation of a *pattern of ghosting reciprocity* as a form of negative reciprocity in the relationship between candidates and organizations.

Employer Ghosting as the Beginning of the Formation of Candidate Distrust

One of the most consistent patterns in the literature is that a candidate's experience during the recruitment process has a significant influence on their attitudes and behaviors towards the organization. In practice, many organizations still carry out a selection process that does not always provide certainty of information to applicants. Candidates are often asked to take part in various stages of selection, ranging from document submission, administrative tests, interviews, to follow-up assessments, but do not get clear information about the final results obtained. This phenomenon is known as *employer ghosting*, which is a situation when an organization stops communication with applicants without providing an explanation or certainty about their recruitment status. In recent years, this issue has been increasingly discussed in the human resource management literature because it is considered to have a direct impact on the candidate's experience and the organization's reputation as an employer.

Miles and McCamey (2018) explain that candidates' experiences during the recruitment process not only influence their decision to accept a job offer, but also shape long-term perceptions of the organization. Candidates who feel valued tend to maintain a positive image of the company, while candidates who experience information ambiguity are more likely to form negative perceptions. This condition has become increasingly important because the recruitment process is no longer seen as a mere administrative activity, but as a form of initial interaction between the organization and potential employees.

From the candidate's perspective, the absence of feedback after participating in the selection process is often perceived as a form of neglect. While organizations may have specific operational reasons, such as a high number of applicants or limited recruitment resources, the experience still creates the impression that the candidate's time, effort, and expectations are not getting the recognition they deserve. This kind of accumulated experience has the potential to lower the candidate's level of trust in the organization and in the recruitment process in general.

The findings suggest that candidate ghosting cannot be understood in isolation from the applicant's previous experience. Before becoming a *ghosting* perpetrator, many candidates were first in a position as a party who experienced communication uncertainty from the organization. Therefore, the relationship between *employer ghosting* and *candidate ghosting* needs to be understood as part of the dynamics of a relationship that affects each other, not as two stand-alone phenomena.

Generation Z and Shifting Expectations in the Recruitment Process

The entry of Generation Z into the job market brings quite a significant change to the way organizations build relationships with potential employees. In contrast to previous generations who tended to accept the recruitment process as a formal mechanism that was completely controlled by the company, Generation Z showed a more active tendency to evaluate organizations. They are not only looking for a job, but also looking for a work environment that matches their personal values, needs, and expectations.

This characteristic cannot be separated from the social background of that generation. Generation Z grew up in an environment that is highly connected to digital technology. Access to information is fast, open, and almost limitless. These conditions form a different mindset compared to the previous generation. In the context of work, they are used to obtaining information instantly and expect a quick response from various parties, including from organizations that are recruiting.

Schroth (2019) explained that Generation Z has high expectations for transparency, clarity of communication, and value conformity between individuals and organizations. Therefore, experience during the recruitment process is not only seen as an administrative

stage to employment, but also as an early indicator of how an organization treats its employees. The way companies respond to candidate questions, provide information, or convey selection results is often used as a basis for assessing the overall organizational culture.

In this situation, communication is a very decisive aspect. Slow responses, unclear information, or poorly communicated schedule changes can be interpreted as signals that the organization undervalues candidates. For some organizations, these conditions may be considered a relatively minor technical issue. But for Generation Z, the experience can affect their perception of the organization's credibility and professionalism. The results of the literature synthesis show that candidate ghosting behavior cannot be separated from the change in expectations that occur in the younger generation. When organizations still use a one-way recruitment approach and place candidates as parties who are just waiting for a decision, while candidates expect a more equal and communicative relationship, the potential for relationship tension will be greater. In such a situation, the decision to stop communication is not always driven by an unprofessional attitude, but can also be understood as a form of response to a relationship that is considered not to provide equal reward.

These changes in expectations show that the modern recruitment process no longer only functions as an organizational selection tool for candidates. Recruitment is also an arena of mutual evaluation where candidates actively assess the quality of the organization. In other words, the organization is no longer the only party that has the right to vote. Candidates, especially from Generation Z, also have the capacity to accept, reject, or terminate the relationship with the organization if the experience they feel is not in line with their expectations.

This condition explains why various recruitment practices that were previously considered prevalent are starting to be questioned by the younger generation. The absence of feedback after the interview, the unclear status of the application, or the selection process that lasted too long was no longer seen as normal. Instead, these practices are starting to be perceived as a form of communication injustice that can reduce a candidate's trust in the organization. From here, a space arises that allows the development of candidate ghosting

behavior as a form of response to the recruitment experience that is considered unsatisfactory.

Digital Social Proof as the Basis for Organizational Evaluation

The development of digital technology has not only changed the way organizations search for candidates, but it has also changed the way candidates assess organizations. If in the past information about the company's internal conditions was relatively difficult for job seekers to obtain, today the situation is different. Various digital platforms allow candidates to obtain information about work culture, leadership style, employee satisfaction levels, and the experiences of other applicants who have participated in the selection process at certain organizations.

This phenomenon is often explained through the concept of digital social proof, which is the tendency of individuals to use the experiences, judgments, or opinions of others available in the digital space as a basis for making decisions. In the context of recruitment, digital social proof is an alternative source of information that is often considered more honest than official information conveyed by the organization through job advertisements or company websites.

For Generation Z who grew up in a digital environment, this kind of information search process has become part of daily habits. Before submitting an application or proceeding with the selection process, candidates tend to search for information about the organization through various digital channels. Employee reviews on professional platforms, discussions on social media, and other candidate experiences shared online are important considerations in the decision-making process.

This condition indicates that the organization's reputation is no longer fully controlled by the company. The narrative that develops in the digital space has an increasingly great influence on candidate perception. When an organization receives a lot of positive reviews regarding work culture, career development opportunities, or leadership qualities, candidates are likely to show a higher interest in continuing the recruitment process. Conversely, when the digital space is filled with complaints about communication misinformation, high employee turnover rates, or negative experiences during the selection

process, candidates can develop doubts even before the recruitment process takes place.

In this context, a candidate's decision to stop communication is not necessarily due to direct experience with the organization. In many cases, the decision is also influenced by information obtained from the digital environment. Candidates may decide not to proceed with the selection process when they feel that the information found indicates a discrepancy between the values they have and the actual conditions of the organization.

This phenomenon shows a fundamental change in the relationship between the organization and job seekers. The organization is no longer the only party that conducts the selection process. Candidates also carry out an active evaluation process of the organization by utilizing available information sources. Therefore, the quality of an organization's digital reputation is a factor that increasingly determines the success of the recruitment process.

In addition to influencing the decision to apply, digital social proof also plays a role in shaping candidates' expectations for the quality of organizational communication. When candidates encounter a lot of negative experiences regarding the recruiter's slow response or lack of feedback after the interview, they tend to develop an expectation that the organization will exhibit the same behavior towards them. Such expectations can affect a candidate's level of trust even before a working relationship is formed.

Thus, candidate ghosting behavior cannot be explained simply through the individual characteristics of the applicant. These behaviors are also influenced by the information environment that shapes the candidate's perception of the organization. In the digital age, the decision to resume or stop communication is increasingly influenced by an evaluation process that takes place long before formal interaction between candidates and the organization begins.

Ghosting Reciprocity as a Form of Negative Reciprocity in Recruitment

Based on the synthesis of various literature that has been discussed, this study proposes the concept of *ghosting reciprocity* as a conceptual framework to understand the relationship between the experience of *employer ghosting* and the emergence of *candidate ghosting behavior*. This concept departs from the assumption that human behavior in social relationships does not arise in isolation, but is influenced by the experience of interactions

that have been experienced before. The theory of social exchange put forward by Blau (1964) explains that social relations are built through a process of exchange involving mutual expectations, obligations, and principles. Individuals tend to maintain relationships that provide benefits and treat the other party based on the experiences they have received in previous interactions. When a person receives treatment that is considered fair, the relationship tends to develop positively. On the other hand, when a person experiences treatment that is considered unfair, there is a possibility of a negative response as a form of adjustment to the experience.

In the context of recruitment, the experience of not getting clarity of information, not getting feedback, or feeling ignored during the selection process can shape certain perceptions of how an organization works. These experiences not only influence a candidate's assessment of a particular organization, but can also shape broader expectations regarding the relationship between the job seeker and the company.

Through this perspective, *candidate ghosting* can be understood as a form of negative reciprocity. Candidates who repeatedly experience communication uncertainty have the potential to develop a belief that incomplete communication is a prevalent practice in the workforce. As a result, when they are in a position that has a wider range of options or obtains job opportunities that are considered more attractive, they tend to use similar communication patterns towards the organization.

It is important to emphasize that the concept of ghosting reciprocity is not intended to justify candidate ghosting behavior. This concept is used as an analytical tool to explain how past experiences can affect an individual's behavior in the future. In other words, the main focus of this concept is not on the moral assessment of candidates, but on trying to understand the relationship dynamics that develop in the modern recruitment process.

Through this point of view, the phenomenon of candidate ghosting is no longer understood as a matter of individual ethics alone. This phenomenon needs to be seen as part of the reciprocal relationship that engages the candidate and the organization. When the practice of employer ghosting takes place repeatedly and is considered something natural, the possibility of candidate ghosting also becomes greater. Therefore, the two phenomena can be seen as part of a cycle of communication that affects each other.

The concept of ghosting reciprocity formulated in this study shows that the quality of the relationship between the organization and candidates has a very important role in determining the success of the recruitment process. The higher the level of transparency, clarity of communication, and appreciation for the candidate, the less likely it is that a cycle of negative reciprocity will form that encourages the appearance of *ghosting* behavior from both parties.

Conceptual Model of Reciprocity Ghosting

Based on the results of the synthesis of various literature that have been discussed in the previous section, this study proposes a conceptual model called *ghosting reciprocity*. This model was developed to explain that *candidate ghosting behavior* does not appear suddenly as an individual decision on its own, but rather is the result of a series of experiences, perceptions, and evaluation processes that candidates experience during interaction with the organization in the recruitment process.

The literature on *candidate experience* shows that the quality of interaction that applicants receive during the selection process has an influence on the way they perceive the organization (Miles & McCamey, 2018). When candidates experience information delays, do not get feedback after selection, or face unilateral termination of communication from the organization (*employer ghosting*), this experience can lower the level of trust in the company. In the long run, repeated negative experiences not only affect perceptions of one particular organization, but also shape broader expectations of how the relationship between the candidate and the organization plays out in the modern workplace.

The process becomes increasingly complex when associated with the characteristics of Generation Z as a group that grows up in a very open and fast-paced digital environment. This generation has high expectations for transparency, speed of response, and clarity of communication during the recruitment process (Schroth, 2019). When those expectations are not met, candidates are likely to judge that the organization fails to show adequate appreciation for their time, effort, and involvement in the selection process. As a result, the dissatisfaction that arises not only impacts the decision to accept or reject the job, but also affects the candidate's behavior patterns in subsequent interactions.

In addition to being influenced by direct experience, the formation of candidate behavior is also strengthened by the existence of *digital social proof*. Various digital platforms allow applicants to gain information about the organization's reputation through the experiences of other candidates, reviews of former employees, and various forms of discussion that are developing in the digital space. The information serves as a social validation mechanism that helps candidates interpret their experiences. When negative personal experiences are met with digital information that shows similar patterns of treatment from organizations, negative perceptions of the company will be strengthened.

In the perspective of Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), this condition can be understood as the process of forming negative *reciprocity*. Individuals tend to adjust their behavior based on the experiences received from other parties. When relationships are perceived to be fair and mutually respectful, individuals tend to maintain a positive pattern of interaction. Conversely, when relationships are perceived to contain injustice or imbalance, individuals can potentially develop responses that reflect those experiences. In the context of recruitment, the response can appear in the form of candidate ghosting, which is the decision to stop unilateral communication with the organization.

Based on this synthesis, this study views ghosting reciprocity as a conceptual mechanism that connects the experience of employer ghosting with the emergence of candidate ghosting. In other words, the vanishing behavior that the candidate performs can not only be explained by individual factors, such as the abundance of job options or the low commitment to the organization, but it can also be understood as a result of the social learning process formed through previous communication experiences. When the practice of employer ghosting occurs repeatedly and is perceived as normal in the recruitment process, candidates have the potential to internalize the pattern and reuse it in their interactions with the organization. Based on the results of the literature synthesis, the conceptual model of *ghosting reciprocity* proposed in this study can be explained as follows:

Employer Ghosting → Negative Candidate Experience → Declining Trust in the Organization → Ghosting Reciprocity → Candidate Ghosting

The conceptual model shows that ghosting reciprocity serves as a mechanism that bridges the candidate's negative experience with the emergence of candidate ghosting

behavior. In this model, disappearing behavior is not understood as an action that arises spontaneously, but rather as the result of a process of social evaluation that develops through communication experiences, the formation of perceptions of the organization, as well as the influence of the digital environment that surrounds the candidate.

This relationship is strengthened by two main contextual factors, namely the characteristics of Generation Z who prioritize transparency and quick response, and digital social proof which allows candidates to evaluate the organization through various digital information sources. Both factors act as reinforcers that accelerate the formation of negative perceptions and encourage the emergence of candidate ghosting behavior.

This conceptual model is also the main contribution of the research because it offers a more relational perspective in understanding the phenomenon of candidate ghosting. In contrast to most previous studies that tend to view candidates as the main cause of disruption in the recruitment process, the ghosting reciprocity model shows that these behaviors are part of the dynamics of the mutual relationship between the organization and the candidate. Thus, efforts to reduce *candidate ghosting* are not enough to be done through improving the professionalism of candidates alone, but also require improving the quality of communication, transparency of information, and candidate experience built by the organization during the recruitment process.

Implications for Modern Recruitment Practices

The results of this conceptual study show that the phenomenon of *candidate ghosting* cannot be understood only as a matter of individual applicants' behavior. These behaviors are part of the broader relationship dynamics between organizations and candidates in the recruitment process. Therefore, efforts to reduce the rate of candidate ghosting are not enough to be done by demanding professionalism from job applicants alone, but also require an evaluation of recruitment practices implemented by the organization.

So far, many organizations still place process efficiency as a top priority in recruitment. As a result, communication with candidates is often focused only on applicants who are deemed to meet the company's needs. Meanwhile, candidates who do not qualify or have not been prioritized often do not obtain adequate information regarding their status.

This kind of practice may be considered efficient from an organizational standpoint, but it has the potential to create a negative experience for candidates.

The literature on *candidate experience* shows that experience during the selection process has a significant influence on the candidate's perception of the organization. Even when an applicant is not hired, a clear communication process and appreciation for the candidate's time can still form a positive impression of the company. Conversely, unclear information and lack of feedback can lead to the perception that the organization undervalues candidates as individuals.

In this context, organizations need to view the recruitment process as a relationship-building process, not just a labor screening process. Every interaction between recruiters and candidates is part of the experience that will shape the organization's image in the eyes of the public. Therefore, open, responsive, and consistent communication needs to be part of a modern recruitment strategy.

One of the important implications of this study is the need for organizations to reduce the practice of *employer ghosting*. Although not all candidates can be hired, providing information about the selection status is a form of appreciation for the candidate's participation in the recruitment process. Simple communication in the form of notification that the selection process has been completed or that the candidate has not been successful at a certain stage can help reduce the uncertainty that is often a source of disappointment for applicants.

Additionally, organizations need to pay attention to the speed of response in the recruitment process. Generation Z grew up in a digital environment that emphasizes the speed of access to information. Therefore, too long communication breaks are often interpreted as an organization's lack of seriousness in valuing candidates. Under certain conditions, a delay in response can even prompt the candidate to look for other job alternatives or cut off communication with the organization.

The findings of this study also confirm the importance of managing an organization's digital reputation. In the digital age, information about companies is no longer completely controlled by organizations. Candidates can gain a variety of information from employee

reviews, other applicants' experiences, and discussions that develop on social media. Therefore, organizations need to realize that the quality of the recruitment process not only has an impact on the success of acquiring talent, but also affects the company's reputation in the digital space.

A positive digital reputation cannot be built only through company promotions or *employer branding* campaigns. The reputation is also formed by the real experience that the candidate feels during the recruitment process. When candidates feel valued, are well informed, and are treated fairly, they are more likely to share those positive experiences with their environment. Instead, negative experiences can quickly spread through various digital platforms and affect other candidates' perceptions of the organization.

Based on the concept of *ghosting reciprocity* formulated in this study, organizations also need to understand that the quality of communication they build today has the potential to influence candidate behavior in the future. The practice of *employer ghosting* that takes place repeatedly can form the perception that incomplete communication is something normal in a work relationship. In the long run, these conditions can reinforce the cycle of negative reciprocity that encourages the emergence of *candidate ghosting*.

Thus, an effective recruitment strategy in the digital age is not only oriented towards the speed of acquiring the right candidates, but also on the organization's ability to build a positive experience for all applicants. A more transparent, responsive, and *candidate-centered approach* is important to reduce the potential for *ghosting* from both sides.

Overall, this study shows that the relationship between the organization and the candidate needs to be understood as a relationship that is reciprocal. The quality of communication provided by the organization will affect the way the candidate views and responds to the organization. Therefore, efforts to reduce *candidate ghosting* should start from improving the quality of recruitment communication as a whole, not only through ethical demands for job seekers.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to understand the phenomenon of candidate ghosting in Generation Z through a synthesis of various literature that discusses recruitment behavior, candidate

experience, characteristics of Generation Z, and Social Exchange Theory. Based on the results of the study and conceptual analysis carried out, it can be concluded that candidate ghosting cannot be understood solely as a form of unprofessionalism or low commitment of job applicants. This phenomenon is the result of the interaction of various interrelated factors in the modern recruitment process.

First, the practice of employer ghosting that is still found in various recruitment processes contributes to the decline in the level of trust of candidates in the organization. When applicants do not have clarity of information, feedback, or certainty about the status of their application, the experience can form a negative perception of the recruitment process and employment relations in general. In the long run, this condition has the potential to affect how candidates interact with the organization in the next recruitment process.

Second, the characteristics of Generation Z also provide a new color in the dynamics of contemporary recruitment. As a generation growing up in a digital environment, Generation Z tends to expect fast, transparent, and equal communication. They no longer view recruitment as a one-way process that is entirely controlled by the organization, but rather as a reciprocal relationship involving the rights and obligations of both parties. When these expectations are not met, the possibility of a decision to stop communication becomes greater.

Third, the development of digital technology has strengthened the candidate's position in the career decision-making process. The presence of various online information sources allows applicants to evaluate the organization before and during the selection process. Through the digital social proof mechanism, candidates can form a perception of the organization's reputation based on the experience and assessment of others available in the digital space. This factor makes the decision to continue or stop the recruitment process even more influenced by the quality of the organization's reputation and communication.

Based on the synthesis of these findings, this study formulated the concept of ghosting reciprocity as a conceptual framework to explain the reciprocal relationship between the experience of employer ghosting and the emergence of candidate ghosting behavior. This concept suggests that disappearing behaviors in the recruitment process do not always appear as stand-alone actions, but can rather be understood as a response to the

communication experience that the candidate has previously received from the organization. Thus, candidate ghosting and employer ghosting can be seen as part of a cycle of interdependent relationships in the modern recruitment ecosystem.

In practical terms, the results of this study confirm the importance of organizations building a recruitment process that is more transparent, responsive, and oriented to the candidate experience. Efforts to reduce candidate ghosting are not enough to be done through professional demands for job applicants, but also require improving the quality of organizational communication during the selection process. Providing clear feedback, delivering information consistently, and appreciating the candidate's time and participation are important steps to building a healthier relationship between the organization and the job seeker.

This study has limitations because it uses a conceptual literature review approach so that it has not directly tested the concept of ghosting reciprocity in certain empirical contexts. Therefore, further research can develop this study through qualitative and quantitative approaches to test the relevance of these concepts in various industry sectors, age groups, and different cultural contexts. Thus, the understanding of the phenomenon of candidate ghosting can develop more comprehensively and contribute more broadly to the development of human resource management science in the digital era.

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