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The author of this dissertation is:

Christine Elizabeth Davis
J. Mack Robinson College of Business
Georgia State University
Atlanta, GA 30302-4015

The director of this dissertation is:

Dr. Todd Maurer
J. Mack Robinson College of Business
Georgia State University
Atlanta, GA 30302-4015

Vanishing Without a Trace:
Measuring Job Applicant Ghosting Attitudes Across the Stages of Job Pursuit

By

Christine Elizabeth Davis

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

Of

Doctorate in Business Administration

In the Robinson College of Business

Of

Georgia State University

GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY
ROBINSON COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

2023

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ACCEPTANCE

This dissertation was prepared under the direction of the CHRISTINE ELIZABETH DAVIS Dissertation Committee. It has been approved and accepted by all members of that committee, and it has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Business Administration in the J. Mack Robinson College of Business of Georgia State University.

Richard Phillips, Dean

Dissertation Committee

Dr. Todd Maurer (Chair)

Dr. Likoeba Maruping

Dr. Wesley Johnston

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Go confidently in the direction of your dreams. Live the life you have imagined.

– Henry David Thoreau

This doctoral program was like nothing I have ever experienced; it pushed my limits beyond expectations. There were many highs and lows during my three years at Georgia State University. I now understand why only a select few make it through doctoral programs. Along the way, I often questioned my reasons for wanting to endure a process that demanded the highest form of rigor. It challenged everything I knew, thought I knew, and had no idea I was lacking. As a believer in being able to achieve whatever I put my mind toward, failure was not an option. Sleepless nights led to thoughts of construct definitions, methods, and statistical analyses, which have plagued my existence for the last three years. I am so proud to have made it successfully to the end and to cross this lifelong goal off my list of aspirations.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Description
AGFI	Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index
AMOS	Analysis of a Moment Structures
BFI	Big Five Inventory
CFA	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
CFI	Comparative Fit Index
CMIN	Chi-Square
DF	Degrees of Freedom
EFA	Exploratory Factor Analysis
GFI	Goodness of Fit Index
KMO	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin
MAP	Minimum Average Partial
MTMM	Multitrait-Multimethod Matrix
MTurk	Amazon's Mechanical Turk
PA	Parallel Analysis
PCA	Principal Components Analysis
PCLOSE	<i>p</i> Value of Close Fit
RMSEA	Root Mean Square Error of Approximation
TLI	Tucker-Lewis Index
SE	Standard Error
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
VIF	Variance Inflation Factor

ABSTRACT

Vanishing Without a Trace:

Measuring Job Applicant Ghosting Attitudes Across the Stages Job Pursuit

By

Christine Elizabeth Davis

May 2023

Committee Chair: Dr. Todd Maurer

Major Academic Unit: Doctorate in Business Administration

Ghosting, a phenomenon regularly referred to as ‘no call, no show’ by hiring managers (Cutter, Weber, & Smith, 2022), has become a common trend among job applicants during recruitment (Whitacre, 2019). Job applicant ghosting is defined as an “extreme form of applicant withdrawal in which applicants...completely cease all communication” (Karl, Peluchette, & Neely, 2021: 49) and fail to appear for scheduled appointments, such as interviews, screening activities, or the first day of work. Employers are spending unfruitful time making unanswered or unreturned phone calls, scheduling interviews for individuals that disappear (Driscoll, 2021; Gurchiek, 2019; Express Employment Professionals, 2019a), and offering positions to individuals that vanish before the first day of work (Cutter, Weber, & Smith, 2022). These disappearing applicants can have financial consequences for employers (Cutter, 2018), forcing them to restart the hiring process and delay project progress (Gurchiek, 2019).

While the primary method was the quantitative development and validation of a survey, thirty qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted during the pre-test study to ensure survey content, questionnaire structure, and item wording were appropriate for measuring applicant attitudes. After four waves of data collection, exploratory and confirmatory factor

analyses were used to analyze the survey data. Using the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991), this study empirically tests whether applicant ghosting attitudes influence applicant ghosting behavioral intentions.

The main theoretical contribution of this study is the creation of a scale that measures job applicant ghosting attitudes across three stages of job pursuit: extensive search, intensive search, and job choice (Barber, 1998). Findings indicate that applicant ghosting attitudes are best characterized as a single dimension rather than the hypothesized three dimensions. Finally, the practical contribution is a ghosting attitude assessment with easy-to-interpret, built-in respondent feedback, which will allow the instrument to be administered with minimal administrator or participant expertise. The instrument also serves as a diagnostic tool for applicants to reflect on their own ghosting attitudes and to create awareness of possible behavioral modifications that could improve their search strategy. Moreover, the feedback will allow practitioners to create training or coaching interventions that could improve applicant job search effectiveness while minimizing job applicant ghosting.

Keywords: Job Search; Job Applicant Ghosting; Attitudes; Ghosting Behavioral Intentions; Stages of Job Pursuit; Theory of Planned Behavior; Scale Development; Factor Analysis

I INTRODUCTION

In 2018, the recruitment landscape shifted from a job market run by employers to a job market controlled by applicants (Cutter, 2018; Derricott, 2019; Gurchiek, 2018). Job applicants are saturating the market more than ever, flooding employers with job applications and creating extra ‘noise’ in recruitment. Job search platforms make it extremely easy for applicants to send numerous applications to multiple employers with the click of a ‘Submit Resume’ button. The ease of using the Internet for job search makes it quick and straightforward to apply to more jobs than the applicant can reasonably or effectively manage, causing gaps in communication with employers. Applicants have so many options that they do not have time to respond to all the positions for which they apply (Derricott, 2019). Many applicants submit incomplete (missing contact information, omitted employment history), inaccurate (wrong phone number, incorrect name), or duplicate resumes. Surprisingly, applicants apply for positions and are oblivious to the company name, the business activity, the location, or the job for which they have applied—even though this information is often mentioned in the job postings.

Some employers may try to reduce the overabundance of job applicants by using artificial intelligence to remove what appear to be unserious applicants from the pool before reviewing applications (Suen, 2018; Suen & Chen, 2018). However, frustrations mount if recruiters must sort through applications from uninterested or unqualified applicants or from applicants that only apply to meet the requirements of unemployment (Driscoll, 2021). Employers are spending unfruitful time making unanswered or unreturned phone calls, scheduling interviews for individuals that disappear (Driscoll, 2021; Gurchiek, 2019; Express Employment Professionals, 2019a), and offering positions to individuals that vanish before the first day of work (Cutter, Weber, & Smith, 2022). These disappearing applicants can have financial consequences for

employers (Cutter, 2018), forcing employers to restart the hiring process and delay project progress (Gurchiek, 2019).

Ghosting, a phenomenon regularly referred to as ‘no call, no show’ by hiring managers (Cutter, Weber, & Smith, 2022), has become a common trend among job applicants during recruitment (Gurchiek, 2018; Threlkeld, 2021; Whitacre, 2019), and often leaves employers questioning what happened. According to Karl, Peluchette, and Neely (2021: 49), job applicant ghosting is “an extreme form of applicant withdrawal in which applicants fail to appear for scheduled interviews and completely cease all communication.” Consequently, job applicant ghosting cannot occur until after some form of interaction between the applicant and the potential employer. When the applicant discontinues all communication and contact with a potential employer without providing notice or explanation, the applicant has ‘ghosted’ the employer. One limitation of the Karl, Peluchette, and Neely definition is that job applicant ghosting is assumed to occur only at the interview stage of job pursuit. However, I argue that job applicant ghosting may occur at any stage of the job pursuit process. Therefore, for this study, job applicant ghosting shall be defined as an “extreme form of applicant withdrawal in which applicants...completely cease all communication” (Karl, Peluchette, & Neely, 2021: 49) and fail to appear for scheduled appointments, such as interviews, screening activities, or the first day of work.

‘Breadcrumbing,’ another form of ghosting, is where an applicant provides hope to a potential employer, leads the employer into believing the applicant is genuinely interested in the job opening, and, without warning, the applicant pulls away (Taitz, 2021). Breadcrumbing could include job applicants applying for a job they do not intend to pursue or giving minimal effort throughout the process to attain employment. Hence, applicants provide employers with just enough information to remain in the hiring pool without commitment to the employer.

Ghosting continues to increase on both sides of the hiring relationship (HRNews, 2021; Express Employment Professionals, 2019a) and is typically used to avoid confrontation or uncomfortable conversations between the employer and potential employee (Taitz, 2021). Ghosting also extends into the workplace when employees suddenly quit a job without notice (Darden, 2018; Palmer, 2018); “workers may ditch their job without any notice because they lack a sense of loyalty or obligation to the company or its managers” (Gurchiek, 2018: 16).

Recruitment speed and flexibility matter to job applicants (Cutter, Weber, & Smith, 2022; Driscoll, 2021; Hogue, 2022; Express Employment Professionals, 2019a). In the age of technology, individuals want things quicker than they ever expected in the past. Applicants feel ghosted by employers if the employer takes too long to progress through the process, return calls, or extend offers (Palmer, 2018; Shellenbarger, 2019). With long hiring delays, job applicants may perceive lacking or delayed communication from the employer as a form of employer ghosting, causing applicants to return the gesture by ghosting employers at increasing rates (Palmer, 2018). However, more research is needed to determine whether employer ghosting leads to applicant ghosting. Peter Cappelli (2019) suggests that employees are ghosting for the same reason employers are ghosting: they already found something or someone else. Research findings also show avoidance of communication by the applicant and the employer (Palmer, 2018); concerns over risk and liability could add to the fear of communication by employers and applicants (Whitacre, 2019).

A U.S. survey conducted by Indeed in 2021 of 500 job applicants and 500 employers found that 76% of employers believed job applicants ghosted them, and 28% of job applicants claimed to have ghosted an employer (Threlkeld, 2021). Threlkeld (2021) also reported findings that job applicant ghosting appeared to be greater at the preliminary stages of job pursuit and less common

at later stages. Interestingly, 65% of job applicants surveyed by Indeed worried about the repercussions of their ghosting behavior, and 54% regretted having ghosted an employer. Job applicant ghosting is employers' most frustrating part of the hiring process (Pugh, 2022). Still, the COVID-19 pandemic created an environment of high unemployment with numerous job openings, providing job applicants power over employers since there are more open positions than individuals willing to work. With many jobs available, applicants may not consider the negative consequences of ghosting employers. Likewise, job applicants may perceive themselves as having a heightened sense of worth to employers (Express Employment Professionals, 2019b). While applicants hold power in the labor market, ghosting trends could continue to increase. However, applicants should be mindful of the consequences of ghosting behaviors once the tables turn and employers regain control of the labor market (Cutter, 2018). That is, employers are beginning to track applicants that have previously ghosted and may view job applicant ghosting as behavior displaying a lack of seriousness toward employment (Cutter, Weber, & Smith, 2022).

Little research exists on job applicant ghosting; only two empirical articles were found on the subject. One study of U.S. undergraduate students by Karl, Peluchette, and Neely (2021) examined predictors of ghosting behavior for the interview stage of job pursuit. These researchers used an experimental design, signaling theory, and social role theory to determine the likelihood that applicants would participate in ghosting behaviors. Participants read one of four hypothetical scenarios and were asked how likely they would be to ghost the employer. Behaviors measured in their survey included applicants not showing up for an interview, sending emails saying better offers were received, and going to interviews and doing their best. Antecedents of interest were knowledge of the employer, recruiter communication, applicant gender, applicant conscientiousness, and helicopter parenting—parents who hover over their children and intervene

for them. All antecedents, except knowledge of the employer, were found to predict applicant ghosting behaviors.

Following social role theory, these researchers found support for men being more likely to participate in ghosting behaviors during the interview stage than women (Karl, Peluchette, & Neely, 2021). Moreover, frequent communication from recruiters positively influenced attraction to the company and perception of the company's interest in the applicant, thus, decreasing the likelihood of job applicant ghosting. Additionally, unfavorable knowledge of the company was found to negatively influence attraction to the employer, increasing the likelihood of applicant ghosting behaviors. Major limitations of this study include collecting a student-only sample and focusing on a single stage of job pursuit, calling the generalizability of the findings into question. Additionally, using hypothetical scenarios in the study design rather than real situations could bias the results since participants could react differently to real situations than those described in the survey.

Another empirical examination of job applicant ghosting was presented in a study by Osbert-Pociecha and Bielinska (2021). This Polish study focused on the employer and applicant perspectives of job applicant ghosting. Owners, managers, and human resource specialists were asked about the frequency at which they were ghosted by job applicants, the stage the employer was ghosted, and the reasons they believed the applicants ghosted the employer. From the employers' perspective, job applicant ghosting includes labor market and hiring environment considerations such as having many opportunities from which applicants could choose. Reasons related to the organization or employer included poor employer branding, lengthy delays in the process, and uncompetitive job offers. The researchers asked applicants—who ghosted at least once during the recruitment process—when they withdrew from the process. The researchers

found that the number one reason applicants left the recruitment process through ghosting was a negative experience after direct contact with the employer. The small applicant sample ($n = 174$) does not meet the population representativeness requirements, questioning the results' generalizability.

While the first study focused on ghosting behaviors, the second study focused on the frequency of ghosting behaviors, when in the process applicants participated in these behaviors, and why the applicant would participate in ghosting. Neither study mentioned ghosting attitudes, nor could I find any additional literature related to job applicant ghosting attitudes. Moreover, the student-only sample in the first study and the small sample size of the second study suggest that neither study focused on samples broad enough to enhance generalizability. To address these gaps, the present study's focus will be on job applicant ghosting attitudes across all stages of job search using the framework of job pursuit conceptualized by Alison Barber (1998). By collecting three large random samples of U.S. job applicants—with a broad range of demographics—having applied to at least one U.S. job in the past five years, the current study compiled samples representative of the population, enhancing the generalizability of the results within the U.S.

Additionally, the study tests a three-stage framework of job pursuit as a way of conceptualizing and measuring job applicant ghosting attitudes. Understanding applicant opinions, views, and beliefs toward ghosting at all stages of job pursuit will provide further insight into applicant ghosting behavioral intentions. The study aimed to test whether job applicant ghosting is considered more acceptable at earlier, later, or all stages of job pursuit. However, the findings suggest that ghosting attitudes are best characterized by a single dimension, rather than the posited three-dimension scale. Furthermore, based on the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991), a popular theory used to predict job applicant behavior (Griepentrog, Harold, Holtz,

Klimoski, & Marsh, 2012; Jaidi, Van Hooft, & Arends, 2011), I posit that applicants who favor job search ghosting will be more likely to exhibit intentions to ghost a potential employer than applicants who favor job search without ghosting. By testing the effects of ghosting attitudes on ghosting behavioral intentions alongside other established influences in the context of the theory of planned behavior, theoretical rigor is added to my approach. The study also examines the relationships between certain applicant demographics (e.g., gender, personality, education, hiring experience) and ghosting attitudes. For this study, job pursuit refers to positions posted on Internet job posting sites since these sites—such as Indeed or ZipRecruiter—were popular external recruitment sources used at the time of the study.

I.1 Background

Ghosting initially became common as a form of behavior used to withdraw from romantic relationships or friendships (Freedman, Powell, Le, & Williams, 2019). Research suggests that participants with prevalent growth mindsets—believing that a relationship could grow over time through effort—were less likely to view ghosting as an acceptable way to end a long-term relationship (Freedman, Powell, Le, & Williams, 2019). On the other hand, participants with prevalent destiny mindsets—believing that a relationship would either work or not work regardless of effort—were more likely to view ghosting as an acceptable way to end a long-term relationship (Freedman, Powell, Le, & Williams, 2019). Therefore, if individuals believed they could strengthen a relationship by growing and communicating, they were less likely to view ghosting as acceptable. Conversely, if individuals thought relationships were fixed and effort would not change the outcome, they were more likely to view ghosting positively.

“Ghosting is distinct from other forms of relationship dissolution because it occurs in the absence of the ghosted partner immediately

knowing that it has happened...The ease with which [relationship] ghosting can occur in social media (a click of a button or the lack of clicking a button) increases the chances with which this strategy might be employed without consideration of the possible downstream consequences.” (Freedman et al., 2019: 908)

The same applies to job applicants; the ease of applying for jobs electronically using Internet job search sites could increase the probability of job applicant ghosting. Perhaps, only after applying for a position does the job applicant contemplate the responsibilities of being employed (Ployhart, McFarland, & Ryan, 2002).

Because job pursuit is a complex (Barber, 1998) and dynamic (Wanberg, Zhu, & Van Hooft, 2010) process, studies on this topic involve considering multiple antecedents and consequences concurrently (Steffy, Shaw, & Noe, 1989; Van Hoyer, 2018). Job pursuit is a self-regulated process where job search progresses as a sequence of deliberate actions intended to gain employment through earnest, focused, and purposeful effort. It requires increased involvement, sincere engagement, and careful consideration from the applicant. Ghosting, on the other hand, includes a lack of follow-up and follow-through on tasks necessary to gain employment; applicants self-select themselves out of the process without notice, never to be heard from again.

Job pursuit starts with the mindset of the applicant. How an applicant views job pursuit and him/herself while moving through the various stages of the process influences motivation (Caluori, 2014), persistence (Macnamara & Rupani, 2017; Van Hoyer, 2018), and behaviors (Dosi, Rosati, & Vignoli, 2018). Many studies have explored applicant motivation, persistence, and behaviors of the employed (Kirschenbaum & Weisberg, 1994; Tso, Yau, & Cheung, 2010) and unemployed (Barber, Daly, Giannantonio, & Phillips, 1994; Vansteenkiste, Lens, De Witte, De

Witte, & Deci, 2004; Vansteenkiste, Lens, De Witte, & Feather, 2005; Wanberg, Glomb, Song, & Sorenson, 2005). Even though only two studies were found with a focus on job applicant ghosting (Karl, Peluchette, & Neely, 2021; Osbert-Pociecha & Bielinska, 2021), neither researched job applicant ghosting attitudes in the context of employment. The Osbert-Pociecha and Bielinska (2021) study illustrates the importance of exploring ghosting attitudes and behavioral intentions across all the stages of job pursuit since applicants ghosted at different frequencies across those stages.

The literature refers to ghosting as “workplace ghosting” (Darden, 2018), “employee ghosting” (Cappelli, 2019), “employer ghosting” (Threlkeld, 2021), and “candidate ghosting” (Driscoll, 2021; Tornone, 2021). Since this study is concerned with job applicants (potential employees) and not employers, ‘ghosting’ and ‘job applicant ghosting’ will be used interchangeably throughout the sections to follow. ‘Ghosting’ shall mean ghosting that occurs by the job applicant during the job pursuit process and not an employee that has already shown up for at least one day of work.

I.2 Summary of Problem

Cascio and Aguinis (2008) argue that finding qualified candidates is difficult globally. With globalization on the rise, these authors claim that the search for top talent is a growing problem causing talented employees to be treated as a commodity and a necessity for maintaining competitiveness. Many businesses may experience turmoil due to an overabundance of job applicants. The research literature mentions that finding job applicants may be difficult but seems to be lacking in how applicants view the acts of applying for a job or scheduling an interview and then disappearing without further communication with employers. Additionally, the literature does not address applicant ghosting attitudes at various stages of job pursuit. Do job applicants

perceive ghosting in a favorable light the moment their resume is submitted or does ghosting become more favorable after initial contact, an interview, or receiving a job offer? How do these attitudes influence intentions to participate in ghosting behaviors? Do applicants intend to ghost an employer from the start, or does that develop during the process? My research purpose is to understand how attitudes influence actions throughout the applicant's job search journey while testing Alison Barber's job pursuit framework as a way to conceptualize and measure job applicant ghosting attitudes.

I.3 Research Purpose

This study will focus on developing and validating a scale to measure applicant ghosting attitudes. The unit of analysis for this study will be job applicants. By understanding the origin and factors influencing human behavioral intentions and applicant attitudes, I answer the following questions: 1) how do job applicants perceive ghosting behaviors toward employers at various stages of job pursuit; 2) what effects do these attitudes have on actual job pursuit behavioral intentions; 3) how do the effects of ghosting attitudes influence ghosting intentions in the context of other theoretically meaningful influences such as subjective norms or perceived behavioral control (i.e., the theory of planned behavior); and 4) which job applicant characteristics might relate to ghosting attitudes (e.g., gender, personality, education, hiring experience). An in-depth look at why people behave a certain way in particular situations could help explain why individuals would apply for a job without the intention of responding to the hiring manager or accepting an interview or job offer without showing up. Understanding the challenges of the hiring process could also provide details on applicant self-efficacy when progressing through each stage of the process. Furthermore, applicant self-awareness of ghosting and the possible repercussions of ghosting can aid in self-reflection and the development of more effective job search strategies and behaviors.

Emphasis was on individuals applying for jobs in the United States, and the study included participants with various levels of education and experience across multiple ages, races, and occupations. The issue of job applicant ghosting is posited to be higher in positions that offer lower wages and require less education or experience since the proportion of the population that is available to work in these positions is higher. Additionally, the number of open jobs in this market is more extensive. See Table 1 for a summary of my research design.

Table 1: Research Design

Component	Details
Problem	Many job applicants do not return calls or emails from hiring managers, show up for interviews, or report for the first day of work. They are disappearing from the process without providing notice or explanation.
Area of Concern	Job pursuit behaviors
Framing	Alison Barber's phases of job search framework (1998) is used to identify the stages of job pursuit. <i>The theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991) is used to confirm the relationships and predictability of the newly developed attitudinal scale alongside other established influences.</i>
Method	A mixed method approach with an emphasis on quantitative scale development is used to measure job applicant ghosting attitudes across each stage of the job pursuit process.
Research Questions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) How do job applicants perceive ghosting behaviors toward employers at various stages of job pursuit? 2) What effects do these attitudes have on actual job pursuit behavioral intentions? 3) How do the effects of ghosting attitudes influence ghosting intentions in the context of other theoretically meaningful influences such as subjective norms or perceived behavioral control (i.e., the theory of planned behavior)? 4) Which job applicant characteristics might relate to ghosting attitudes (e.g., gender, personality, education, hiring experience)?
Contributions	<p>Theoretical: Development and validation of a scale that measures job applicant ghosting attitudes across the stages of job pursuit. Test the effects of ghosting attitudes on a behavioral intention construct alongside other established influences, increasing the theoretical rigor of my research approach. Test the three-stage job pursuit framework as a way of conceptualizing and measuring job applicant ghosting attitudes.</p> <p>Practical: Tips for how hiring managers can reduce job applicant ghosting at each stage of job pursuit. Provide an easy-to-interpret attitudinal assessment with built-in respondent feedback allowing the scale to be used with little expertise. The instrument also serves as a diagnostic tool for applicants to reflect on their own ghosting attitudes and creates awareness of possible behavioral modifications that could improve their search strategy.</p>

II LITERATURE REVIEW

An overview of research findings on the job pursuit process included applicant job search behaviors (Kirschenbaum & Weisberg, 1994; Van Hove & Saks, 2008), job search persistence (Wanberg et al., 2005), and job search intentions (Kirschenbaum & Weisberg, 1994; Saks, Leck, & Saunders, 1995). Several themes emerged from the literature, including applicant pool characteristics (Turban & Cable, 2003), firm reputation (Cable & Graham, 2000; Turban & Cable, 2003), job choice (Coleman & Irving, 1997), choice overload (Scheibehenne, Greifeneder, & Todd, 2010), unemployed job pursuit (Wanberg et al., 2005), passive job search (Suen, 2018; Suen & Chen, 2018), and goal-directed search (Van Hove & Saks, 2008). The issue of job applicant ghosting did not appear in most literature; only two recent empirical studies focused on the phenomenon (Karl, Peluchette, & Neely, 2021; Osbert-Pociecha & Bielinska, 2021).

Understanding how and why applicants change the weighting of various attributes across stages of job pursuit is essential for recruiters to create better recruitment practices that address job applicants' changing needs (Harold & Ployhart, 2008). This study aimed to shed light on the attitudes that may be causing or influencing individuals to withdraw from each stage of the job search process without notification or reason. Chapter III, Figure 1, shows the stages of applicant job pursuit from Alison Barber (1998). This framework offers insight into where applicants could self-select out of the job pursuit process through ghosting behaviors and was used as a way to conceptualize and measure ghosting attitudes.

II.1 Overview

Identifying journals and other articles that covered job pursuit behaviors offered valuable insight into job applicant behavior at each stage of the job pursuit process. More importantly, understanding applicant behaviors assisted in the determination of which behaviors (or series of

behaviors) led to job applicant ghosting. As recommended by Chris Hart (2018), this literature selection process aimed to avoid the mistake of favoring one type of research over another. Therefore, the search was not limited to top journals; dissertations, conference papers, working papers, trade journals, and newspaper articles were also included. Perspectives from various scholars and practitioners provided pertinent insight into available techniques and theories for addressing job applicant behaviors. See Table 2 for a summary of the literature selection process.

Table 2: Literature Selection

Selection Step	ABI/INFORM Collection	Google Scholar	Sum of Articles
Step 1: Broad search (Feb 9, 2022)	Keywords: 'job applicant or job seeker or job candidate' and 'job search behaviors' and 'job search intentions' and 'job search persistence' 6,282 of 1,600,283 articles <i>Search limited to 300 most relevant articles</i>	Keywords: 'job applicant or job seeker or job candidate' and 'job search behaviors' and 'job search intentions' and 'job search persistence' 3,124 of 20,300 articles <i>Search limited to 300 most relevant articles</i>	9,406
Step 2: Selecting peer-reviewed articles	Result: 1,221 articles	Result: 239 articles	1,460
Step 3: Removing duplicate articles	Result: 1,154 articles	Result: 238 articles	1,392
Step 4: Selecting the most relevant articles	Criteria: Should cover job pursuit behaviors of the application process Result: 46 articles	Criteria: Should cover job pursuit behaviors of the application process: Result: 57 articles	103
Step 5: Reviewing backward and forward citations	Result: 1 article	Result: 3 articles	107
Step 6: Broad search, removing duplicate articles and selecting more relevant articles written in English (Jun 9, 2022)	Keywords: 'job applicant ghosting' or 'job seeker ghosting' or 'job candidate ghosting' or 'workplace ghosting' or 'employee ghosting' 18 of 423 articles <i>Search limited to 300 most relevant articles</i>	Keywords: 'job applicant ghosting' or 'job seeker ghosting' or 'job candidate ghosting' or 'workplace ghosting' or 'employee ghosting' 6 of 645 articles <i>Search limited to 300 most relevant articles</i>	131

The literature identification and selection process began with a keyword search in ABI/INFORM Collection and Google Scholar on February 9, 2022. Broad keywords were used to find the most relevant internationally covered articles within job pursuit behaviors. Initially,

the keywords ‘job applicant,’ ‘job seeker,’ or ‘job candidate’ helped identify research focusing on the application process. Consequently, additional keywords of ‘job search behaviors,’ ‘job search intentions,’ and ‘job search persistence’ were needed to refine the focus of the search. An iterative approach to the keyword search was implemented to include terminology used by other researchers studying this area of literature.

The second step led to selecting only those articles subjected to peer review. The determination to select peer-reviewed journals in the second step was made purely to manage the scope of the study. It is impossible to collect, review, and read all available literature on a vastly researched area; thus, a balancing act between inclusion and exclusion is needed when the number of sources available is high (Rowe, 2014). In the third step, duplicates from both databases were removed. The fourth step is where I manually scanned titles, keywords, and abstracts of the articles found in steps two and three for relevance, narrowing the list down to 103 papers. Unfortunately, many articles found using the ‘job candidate’ keywords produced literature on political candidacy, did not apply to the job application process, and were removed quickly during this step. The fifth step involved reviewing the backward and forward citations, including four more articles to bring the total to 107 articles.

On June 9, 2022, steps one through five were repeated using the keywords ‘job applicant ghosting,’ ‘job seeker ghosting,’ ‘job candidate ghosting,’ ‘workplace ghosting,’ or ‘employee ghosting.’ These findings were combined into the sixth step listed in Table 2. Only articles written or translated into English were considered to narrow the search. Since few empirical articles were published on job applicant ghosting, it became necessary to locate non-peer-reviewed trade journals and newspaper articles on the topic to understand perceptions of the issue from the viewpoint of applicants and employers. Perspectives from various scholars, practitioners, and

others supplied pertinent insights into available techniques and views regarding job applicant ghosting, thus informing the definition and predictability of ghosting behaviors.

It is impossible to locate all articles on a particular area of concern; however, I believe that the current selection of relevant literature on job pursuit behavior and job applicant ghosting is rich enough to inform an adequate literature synthesis on the subject. Nevertheless, literature on job pursuit behaviors includes many synonyms explaining the same phenomenon. Therefore, the literature search could have inadvertently omitted important articles that utilized various combinations of additional synonyms, such as passive or selective job search. Articles using those keywords were only included if they also mentioned job search behaviors, intentions, persistence, or ghosting. Additional insights could be discovered if those keywords were included in the search.

II.2 Job Search Process

Job pursuit is a process that goes together with the recruitment process. Recruitment includes “those practices and activities carried on by the organization with the primary purpose of identifying and attracting potential employees” (Barber, 1998: 5). Barber (1998) suggests viewing the recruitment process from the management perspective and the job pursuit process through the individual applicant perspective. Recruitment involves many variables that influence applicants’ attitudes, behaviors, and job choices (Barber, 1998). “In an ideal hiring pipeline, the process yields a positive outcome for all parties: the candidate is happy that they’ve found a position that aligns with their skills, interests, and values—and the company is confident that they’ve hired a person who will make high-impact contributions to their role” (Behroozi, Shirolkar, Barik, & Parnin, 2020: 71).

The job search process begins with an extensive search of available opportunities (Barber, 1998). J. R. Keller (2018) points out that potential employees are either notified of an opening

through ‘posting’ or ‘slotting.’ Keller (2018: 848) defines ‘posting’ as “a predominantly market-based process in which a manager posts an open job and invites interested candidates to apply.” On the other hand, Keller (2018: 848) defines ‘slotting’ as “a predominantly relational process in which a manager personally identifies a preferred candidate and ‘slots’ him or her into an open job.” Subsequently, posting or slotting could affect the job applicants’ ghosting attitudes. With a focus on the ‘posting’ aspect, this study pertains to applicant behaviors related to searching for job opportunities posted online in the United States.

Internet job search allows applicants, especially passive applicants, to discreetly search for jobs (Feldman & Klaas, 2002). Digitization and digitalization of the job search process provide easy-to-use, low-cost options for applicants (Tso, Yau, & Cheung, 2010), creating opportunities for applicants to submit too many applications (Horton, Vasserman, & Stanford, 2021). Applying for jobs through online recruitment sites like Indeed has never been easier. These sites allow applicants to apply to multiple job listings with the click of a button on computers, tablets, or smartphones. These platforms also provide resume-generating tools for applicants based on information provided by job seekers. While allowing job applicants to apply for a wide range of opportunities, internet job platforms also allow employers to seek out applicants (Feldman & Klaas, 2002). The technology, the connectedness, and the easy-to-use websites may create an environment that encourages job applicant ghosting behavior to occur more freely. Consequently, “the more comfortable individuals are with surfing the Internet, the more likely they are to enter the job market, even if it is in a ‘just looking around’ mode in the beginning” (Feldman & Klaas, 2002: 180).

Previous research has assumed that job seekers applying for jobs intend to gain employment (Creed, King, Hood, & McKenzie., 2009; Fort, Jacquet, & Leroy, 2011; Harold & Ployhart, 2008; Schmit, Amel, & Ryan, 1993). However, that is not always the case; job seekers

may apply for a job, accept an interview, or receive a job offer without intending to take the position. Consider the applicant currently employed and seeking leverage for better benefits or compensation with their current employer (Kirschenbaum & Weisberg, 1994; Van Hoyer & Saks, 2008) or the applicant applying to positions as a way of satisfying unemployment requirements (Creed et al., 2009).

II.2.1 Types of Job Applicants

Active job seekers are applicants engaged in job pursuit to gain employment. These applicants could be employed or unemployed; they are interested in altering their current situation by changing employers, job positions, locations, or careers. Active search includes applying for jobs, following up with employers, and interviewing with hiring managers (Blau, 1994). Active job seekers usually exert more job search effort and intensity than other types of applicants.

Alternatively, passive job applicants are “individuals who are currently employed and not actively looking for a new job, but who may be open to a good career opportunity if one came along” (SHRM.org, 2002). Passive job search includes obtaining job search information with little to no effort (Kirschenbaum & Weisberg, 1994) and does not always lead to turnover with the current employer (Van Hoyer & Saks, 2008). These individuals usually engage in relaxed job pursuits since they are already employed and might not experience financial hardship to the same extent as unemployed individuals (Wanberg, Zhu, & Van Hooft, 2010). Passive applicants may be more likely to ghost a potential employer since the need to gain employment is not driving their behavior. Nevertheless, passive applicants can become active if the right opportunity surfaces (Kirschenbaum & Weisberg, 1994).

Ghosting may be less common among some unemployed individuals depending on applicant-specific situations and goals. Unemployed individuals are most successful at becoming

reemployed when they increase their attention and effort toward job search (Creed et al., 2009; Feldman & Klaas, 2002). Some researchers found that job applicant reluctance is common among unemployed individuals (Blau, 1994; Lindsay & McQuaid, 2004). Suppose the applicant's goal is to continue receiving unemployment benefits rather than seeking reemployment. In that case, the individual may reluctantly participate in job search activities (Wanberg, Kanfer, & Rotundo, 1999) to fulfill the requirements of documenting their job search effort and continue receiving benefits (Creed et al., 2009). The financial burden of being unemployed can influence the unemployment and reemployment relationship; when receiving higher unemployment benefits, an individual may reduce their search activities or be allowed to wait for better employment options (Blau, 1994).

An applicant can intentionally or unintentionally use ineffective job search behaviors, due to a lack of experience with the process or low self-esteem. An applicant could also have effective job search behaviors but not intend to secure new employment. For example, an unemployed individual applying for jobs to appease their unemployment agency and continue receiving benefits could use effective behaviors without intending to gain employment. A passive applicant may engage in job search to collect leverage for advancement at their current employer. These individuals may participate in ghosting if their intent for entering the search does not include gaining employment. Furthermore, unqualified job candidates are applicants that do not meet the skill level, education requirements, or experience prerequisites of the posted job. Although unqualified applicants create frustrations for hiring managers, being unqualified does not necessarily indicate that a candidate may ghost a potential employer.

II.2.2 Prior Research Samples

Applicant samples include undergraduate students (Barber et al., 1994; Blau, 1994; Karl, Peluchette, & Neely, 2021; Saks, Leck, & Saunders, 1995; Steffy, Shaw, & Noe, 1989; Turban & Cable, 2003; Van Birgelen, Wetzels, & Van Dolen, 2008); graduate students (Barbulescu, 2015); college graduates (Feldman & Klaas, 2002); academics (Harold & Ployhart, 2008; Jaidi, Van Hooft, & Arends, 2011); job fair participants (Schaffer & Taylor, 2012); applicants recruited from job service sites (Behroozi et al., 2020); employed individuals (Van Hoye & Saks, 2008); applicants of government positions (Griepentrog et al., 2012; Ployhart, McFarland, & Ryan, 2002); individuals registered for unemployment benefits (Schmit, Amel, & Ryan, 1993; Wanberg, et al., 2005); unemployed individuals (Lindsay & McQuaid, 2004; Noordzij, Van Hooft, Van Mierlo, Van Dam, & Born, 2013; Vansteenkiste et al., 2004; Wanberg, Kanfer, & Rotundo, 1999); and people visiting unemployment offices (Creed et al., 2009; Wanberg, Zhu, & Van Hooft, 2010). Notice that many studies were conducted using student samples or unemployed individuals. To understand which type of individuals are more likely to participate in ghosting behaviors, this study included employed and unemployed job applicants residing in the United States and applying for jobs within the United States. Additionally, since focusing solely on student samples would diminish the generalizability of the results, this study did not specifically seek student participants.

II.2.3 Job Search Intensity and Persistence

Gary Blau (1994) found empirical support for a two-dimensional measure of job search behaviors, including preparatory and active job search behaviors. Preparatory job search entails gathering information on potential opportunities by allocating time and effort toward producing a list of alternatives; active job search entails contacting potential employers by sending resumes, calling companies, and scheduling interviews (Blau, 1994). Blau's (1994: 307) findings suggest

that “preparatory job search may not automatically lead to active job search,” lending itself well to passive job applicants mentioned earlier.

Applying to job postings, scheduling verbal or formal meetings, and participating in interviews are very time-consuming activities. Job search effort is related to the amount of time, energy, and resources devoted to searching for a job (Creed et al., 2009; Fort, Jacquet, & Leroy, 2011). Job search intensity is the frequency with which individuals engage in job pursuit behaviors (Fort, Jacquet, & Leroy, 2011). Moreover, human capital consists of “skills, abilities, effort, and time possessed by an individual and invested in the job-seeking process” (Creed et al., 2009; 806). An individual that believes in growth will attribute achievements to effort, while an individual that believes in fixed qualities will attribute achievement to ability (Creed et al., 2009). The latter is less persistent in their job search than the former. Job-seeking intensity and self-regulation go hand in hand, and applicants may self-select out of the process due to ongoing stress or rejection (Creed et al., 2009), increasing their likelihood to perform ghost behaviors.

Since intentions change due to situational factors of self-efficacy (Noordzij et al., 2013; Van Birgelen, Wetzels, & Van Dolen, 2008; Wanberg et al., 2005), defeatism (Creed et al., 2009; Wanberg et al., 2005), and financial hardship (Schwartz, 2019; Wanberg, Kanfer, & Rotundo, 1999), subsequent applicant behaviors may also change. Jeremy Schwartz (2019) found evidence that applicants increased their search intensity as their savings were exhausted; the increasing financial burden of being unemployed altered applicant behaviors to improve their search intensity. He also found evidence that “the unemployment rate is a mirror image of the...level of search intensity” (Schwartz, 2019: 295). Thus, applicant effort may change as the labor market improves (Schwartz, 2019); unsurprisingly, the harder an applicant works, the more likely they will find a job sooner (Kudlyak & Romero, 2013). The amount of time and effort an individual spends searching for a position may indicate the individual’s seriousness in gaining employment

(Creed et al., 2009; Jaidi, Van Hooft, & Arends, 2011; Kudlyak & Romero, 2013). Unfortunately, the “inability to observe how much effort the unemployed exert” is a limitation of research on applicant persistence and effort (Schwartz, 2019: 296).

What is the applicant’s goal for the search? Are they seeking employment, satisfying requirements from unemployment agencies, searching for higher-paying positions, or advancing their career? Their goals could impact their motivation, intention to gain employment, and work commitment (Creed et al., 2009). Planning the job search before engaging in it could help applicants visualize success or failure in their efforts. It may also lead to self-protective withdrawal if efforts are expected to lead unsuccessfully toward employment (Creed et al., 2009). Not all applicants participate in the job pursuit process to achieve the same goals. Thus, setting goals aimed at favorable career management initiatives may lead to lower intentions for participating in ghosting behavior by the applicant.

As mentioned earlier, job search is a self-regulated process (Creed et al., 2009; Kanfer, Wanberg, & Kantrowitz, 2001), which includes a level of applicant search effort (Blau, 1994; Feldman & Klaas, 2002; Fort, Jacquet, & Leroy, 2011) and search commitment (Blau, 1994; Wanberg, Kanfer, & Rotundo, 1999). Researchers argue that intentions to engage in behaviors favorable to career management along with goal setting and job search planning could increase the likelihood of gaining employment (Fort, Jacquet, & Leroy, 2011). Job applicant ghosting could signify that applicants are not committed to gaining employment or are not serious about accepting positions with specific employers. Additionally, other factors—such as job search self-efficacy or conscientiousness—may also influence applicant search effort and commitment.

III THEORETICAL FRAMING

Much job search literature utilizes planned behavior theory (Griepentrog et al., 2012; Jaidi, Van Hooft, & Arends, 2011; Wanberg et al., 2005), self-determination theory (Vansteenkiste et al., 2005; Welters, Mitchell, & Muysken, 2014), signaling theory (Saks, Leck, & Saunders, 1995; Turban & Cable, 2003), social identity theory (Griepentrog et al., 2012; Turban & Cable, 2003) and expectancy theory (Coleman & Irving, 1997; Turban & Cable, 2003), with a focus on a single stage of the process—applying, interviewing, or choosing. Very few studies focus on search behavior or intentions across all stages of job pursuit. Since job applicant ghosting behaviors, like relationship ghosting behaviors, may be viewed as more acceptable during earlier stages, it is essential to include all stages to enhance our understanding of how ghosting attitudes may differ throughout the job pursuit process. As mentioned earlier, this study tests a framework of three stages of job pursuit as a way of conceptualizing and measuring job applicant ghosting attitudes. Those stages will be discussed in the next sections.

III.1 Stages of Job Pursuit

The applicant recruitment process will be viewed through the phases of job pursuit described by Alison Barber (1998) to understand applicant attitudes toward participating in ghosting behaviors throughout the process. These stages have been well-cited and frequently used in the literature related to recruitment and job pursuit (Barbulescu, 2015; Breaugh & Stark, 2000; Cable & Turban, 2001; Harold & Ployhart, 2008; Jaidi, Van Hooft, & Arends, 2011). With the advancement of technology and the Internet, job applicants have access to all available information regarding job offerings at their fingertips; thus, finding potential employers and open positions has never been easier.

The stages of job pursuit include extensive search, intensive search, and job choice (Barber, 1998). Each stage is described in more detail in the following sections. Figure 1 depicts

the stages and substages of job pursuit. Job applicant ghosting could happen at any stage of the process if the job applicant suddenly vanishes, fails to appear for scheduled appointments, and ceases all communication with the employer without warning or notification.



Figure 1: Stages of Applicant Job Pursuit

III.1.1 Extensive Search

Extensive search requires little contact. In this stage, applicants identify job opportunities, weigh alternatives, select options for which to apply, and submit applications or resumes to prospective employers (Barber, 1998). Since ghosting does not impact employers until after a resume or application is submitted, this study starts with the submit application substage. Ghosting at the extensive search stage includes applying for a job and ceasing communication, ignoring initial emails or phone calls from employers, or contacting an employer and not returning additional calls or emails.

III.1.2 Intensive Search

Intensive search is more involved and includes more interpersonal contact. In this stage, applicants seek more in-depth information about the opportunities, meet with employers by scheduling interviews, and set up site visits (Barber, 1998). Usually, the site visit and initial interview are combined into a single visit, especially with smaller companies. Next, the applicant

will decide whether to pursue the opportunity beyond the initial interview or contact with the employer (Barber, 1998). Some companies have a lengthy interview process whereby second and third interviews are scheduled. After the interview substage, applicants may undergo selection procedures, including drug screens, background checks, personality tests, realistic job previews, and other business-related tests (Barber, 1998). For this study, interviews and site visits will be combined into one substage, and selection procedures will be a second substage. Ghosting at this stage would include setting up an interview and not showing up for it, ignoring subsequent communication and contact with an employer, or scheduling screening procedures and not showing up or completing the tests.

III.1.3 Job Choice

After applicants successfully progress through the intensive search stage, they move onto the last stage, job choice. This final stage is the most intensive and in-depth information-seeking stage; applicants will learn about compensation, benefits, promotion opportunities, training programs, and other company and job-specific requirements and benefits (Barber, 1998). This stage begins when an applicant receives a job offer (Barber, 1998). The applicant may negotiate the salary for the position and decide whether to accept or reject the offer. After accepting an offer, the applicant will schedule their first day of work and show up for the first day of work. The substages of focus are accepting or rejecting a job offer and showing up for the first day of work. Once an applicant shows up for the first day of work, the job pursuit process is complete. Ghosting at this stage would include not responding to a job offer, accepting a job offer and ceasing communication with the employer, scheduling the first day of work and not showing up for it without notifying the employer.

III.1.4 Limitations of Framework

One major weakness of Alison Barber's (1998) job pursuit framework is that it does not consider that an applicant could be at various stages of the process with other organizations at the same time (Creed et al., 2009; Harold & Ployhart, 2008). If this were a longitudinal study, that weakness might have a more considerable impact. By concentrating on job applicant ghosting attitudes at various stages and whether the applicants intend to ghost at any stage, I do not believe this limitation will hinder the results.

Several other job pursuit frameworks were considered before settling on the Barber framework. Harold and Ployhart (2008) studied the college hiring process where applicants were exploring multiple jobs, employers were willing to wait extended periods until the college student would begin working, and the applicants had the opportunity to pick from several great job offers. The Harold and Ployhart (2008) stages consist of submitting applications, receiving offers, and deciding which offer to pursue. The limitation of this study is that it focused solely on students; therefore, the job pursuit process described by Harold and Ployhart may not hold in other contexts. Gary Johns (2006) warns that the wrong context or not being aware of contextual reasons that influence a research topic could cause researchers to draw incorrect conclusions. Generally, employers are not willing to wait prolonged periods to fill a vacant position; thus, employers waiting until students graduate before starting a job is an unusual situation. The Harold and Ployhart (2008) framework excludes the interview stage, which is most susceptible to ghosting (Driscoll, 2021; Express Employment Professionals, 2019a; Karl, Peluchette, & Neely, 2021; Palmer, 2018; Shellenbarger, 2019). Therefore, this framework would not fully cover all the adequate stages to understand applicant ghosting attitudes or behavioral intentions.

Barbulescu (2015) conducted a longitudinal study of MBA students using three stages of job search: searching for a job, contacting employers or submitting applications, and visiting

employers through walk-ins. Creed et al. (2009) studied unemployed individuals across two stages: becoming unemployed and planning job search. Since both frameworks focus solely on the extensive search stage and exclude the intensive search and job choice stages, neither is a good fit for studying job applicant ghosting. Conversely, Taylor and Bergmann (1987) described five stages of job pursuit: the interview, the post-interview communication, the site visit, the job offer, and the job offer decision. Unlike the Barbulescu (2015) and Creed et al. (2009) frameworks, this one excludes the extensive search stage. As noted earlier, applicants can ghost after applying for a job; thus, it is imperative to include the extensive search stage.

In contrast to the other frameworks, Kirschenbaum and Weisberg (1994) suggest a passive job search framework. Their framework contains passive exploratory job search, perceived alternatives, intention to leave current employer, active intensive search, the discovery of real options, and the decision to turn over employment with the current employer (Kirschenbaum & Weisberg, 1994). This framework assumes that the applicant learns and aligns expectations as they move through the process, comparing perceived alternatives with real alternatives. Since the present study intends to empirically measure attitudes toward ghosting behaviors from both employed and unemployed job seekers, focusing solely on passive, employed individuals would significantly diminish the generalizability and hinder the true purpose of this study.

The final framework focused on applicants with minimal educational backgrounds. Schmit, Amel, and Ryan (1993) suggest that the stages of job pursuit include making realistic career decisions, seeking information about job openings, contacting potential employers, and presenting relevant knowledge, skills, abilities, and other personal characteristics to recruiters. The most significant weaknesses of this framework are the assumptions of rational job search behaviors and job applicants wanting to pursue employment. It ignores the applicants who are

only moving through the process to gain leverage with their current employers or to satisfy unemployment benefit requirements.

Hence, the framework described by Barber (1998) fits this study well since it covers all relevant stages where job applicant ghosting has impacted employers. This framework also has the flexibility to include employed and unemployed job applicants in various contexts (students, professionals, minimally educated, etc.).

III.2 Theory of Planned Behavior

The theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991), a popular theory cited in the job search behavior literature, is used to confirm the relationships and predictability of the ghosting attitudes assessment developed by this study. The use of this theory provides a strong theoretical basis for testing the effects of ghosting attitudes alongside other established influences of behavioral intentions and adds theoretical rigor to my approach to examining the effects of attitudes on ghosting behavioral intentions. The theory states that attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control influence an individual's intentions to perform a certain behavior; these intentions then influence an individual's likelihood to participate in the aforementioned behavior (Ajzen, 1991; Miles, 2012).

Intentions “capture the motivational factors that influence a behavior; they are indications of how hard people are willing to try, of how much of an effort they are planning to exert, in order to perform that behavior” (Ajzen, 1991: 181). Understanding what might influence a particular behavioral intention is pertinent for identifying interventions to alter or sustain behavior. Interestingly, Griepentrog et al. (2012) found support for the mediating role of job pursuit intentions on the relationship of attitudes, subjective norms, and self-efficacy on applicant withdrawal. Since job applicant ghosting is an extreme form of applicant withdrawal, it holds that

attitudes, subjective norms, and self-efficacy should predict applicant ghosting through ghosting intentions.

III.2.1 Attitudes

Since the primary goal of this study was to develop a scale that measures job applicant ghosting attitudes, it is crucial to understand the definition and influencers of attitudes. “An attitude is a state of readiness, a tendency to respond in a certain manner when confronted with certain stimuli” (Oppenheim, 1992: 174). It is “reinforced by *beliefs* (the cognitive component) and often attract strong *feelings* (the emotional component) which may lead to particular behavioral intents (the action tendency component)” (Oppenheim, 1992: 175). Attitudes hold content as well as intensity (Oppenheim, 1992). Levels of attitudes, from the lowest to the highest, include opinions, attitudes, values, and personality (Oppenheim, 1992). Attitudes are created or altered by observing, reacting to, or mimicking the attitudes of others (Oppenheim, 1992). Thus, applicants will mimic the attitudes of their family, friends, associates, and coworkers. If any of those influential individuals favor ghosting, the applicant is also likely to favor ghosting. The next subsection on subjective norms explores this outsider influence in more detail.

III.2.2 Subjective Norms

Social pressure inevitably impacts human behavior (Manning, 2009) by creating structure and standards for which individuals assess behavioral appropriateness (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2011). Accordingly, subjective norms are the perceptions an individual has of behaviors referent others would expect that individual to perform or not perform (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2011). These norms could be injunctive or descriptive norms where “injunctive norms refer to perceptions concerning what should or ought to be done with respect to performing a given behavior,” and “descriptive norms refer to perceptions that others are or are not performing the behavior in question” (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2011: 131).

III.2.3 Perceived Control

Behavioral control is related to the degree to which an individual has the opportunity and resources to perform a given behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Incidentally, resources could include internal—self-efficacy—or external—controllability (Jaidi, Van Hooft, & Arends, 2011). The importance of perceived control considers that the individual must believe they have free will to perform the behavior (Ajzen, 1991; Miles, 2012). This study focuses on perceived control in the form of job search self-efficacy.

Job search self-efficacy is the confidence that one can successfully advance through the stages of job pursuit and secure employment (Saks, Zikic, & Koen, 2015). Consisting of two dimensions, job search self-efficacy involves the applicant's confidence to perform certain job search behaviors—such as finding beneficial opportunities or impressing recruiters during an interview—and the applicant's confidence in obtaining job search outcomes—like obtaining an excellent job or great salary (Saks, Zikic, & Koen, 2015). Prior research has found support for job search self-efficacy positively increasing active and social job pursuit behaviors (Schaffer & Taylor, 2012). On the contrary, applicants could perceive low job search self-efficacy as being influenced by external forces beyond their control, which has been associated with applicant withdrawal (Ployhart, McFarland, & Ryan, 2002).

III.3 Hypotheses

The following section contains factors that may influence job applicant ghosting attitudes and applicant intentions to participate in ghosting behaviors. Recall that Karl, Peluchette, and Neely (2021) found support for men being more likely to participate in ghosting behaviors than women. This finding follows assertions of social role theory whereby society expects men to be more assertive or controlling and women to be more interpersonally sensitive (Karl, Peluchette, & Neely, 2021). Therefore, since societal norms tend to influence behavior, women—being more

sensitive and emotional—approach interpersonal relationships with more care than men. Thus, women would be less likely to partake in ghosting behaviors that may negatively impact these relationships; it follows that their attitudes toward ghosting across the various stages of job pursuit would be less favorable than men. In other words, women are more likely than men to favor job search without ghosting. Since society's expectations of gender roles should hold constant regardless of the stage of job pursuit, men should have more favorable attitudes toward job applicant ghosting at every stage. I predict:

Hypothesis 1: Women will have more favorable attitudes than men toward job search without ghosting. The relationship will be consistent across all stages of job pursuit.

Additionally, Karl, Peluchette, and Neely (2021) found a negative relationship between conscientiousness and ghosting behaviors; higher conscientiousness levels led to lower ghosting behaviors. Conscientiousness is related to self-discipline, responsibility, dependability, and hard work (John & Srivastava, 1999). An applicant that is dependable and self-disciplined is not likely to apply for a job, schedule an interview, or accept an offer without the intention to follow through. Since hard-working individuals are likely to reach the final stage of job pursuit more often than lazy individuals, it would seem probable that the lazy individual may be inclined to focus more effort on the final stage; getting to the job choice stage may be considered an achievement and continuation may be necessary based on other financial or family pressures. It is posited that:

Hypothesis 2: Applicants with higher levels of conscientiousness will have more favorable attitudes toward job search without ghosting. The relationship will be stronger at the first two stages of job pursuit.

Subsequently, an individual's level of education is positively related to job search intentions and behaviors (Jaidi, Van Hooft, & Arends, 2011). More opportunities for lower-educated applicants exist in the secondary labor market, which consists of lower-paying jobs with poorer working conditions that require less skill and education (Graham & Shakow, 1990). Unfortunately, these unskilled or undereducated workers are interchangeable (Graham & Shakow, 1990) and easily replaced, instilling doubt in job security among workers in this market. Job applicants are reluctant to pursue these jobs and have poor attitudes toward this type of work, which historically has not provided desirable growth opportunities, stability, or benefits (Lindsay & McQuaid, 2004). Knowing that replaceability is high and accomplished easily, these applicants may not feel organizational commitment toward employers (Creed et al., 2009; Gurchiek, 2018) or adopt an organizational identification with these businesses (Griepentrog et al., 2012).

Expectancy theory suggests that individuals will choose jobs that are expected to produce the highest feelings of satisfaction (Coleman & Irving, 1997). Therefore, based on the opportunities available to less educated individuals, these applicants are more likely to participate in ghosting behaviors since prospective jobs are anticipated to be undesirable and unsatisfying. Similar to lazy individuals, lower-educated applicants that progress through to the job choice stage may consider the achievement commendable and continue through the process by necessity based on other financial or family pressures. It is predicted that:

Hypothesis 3: Applicants with higher educational backgrounds will have more favorable attitudes toward job search without ghosting. The relationship will be stronger at the first two stages of job pursuit.

With the rise in applicant ghosting, it seems reasonable that individuals responsible for hiring employees are likely to have been ghosted by a job applicant at least once in their career

(Threlkeld, 2021). After experiencing the confusion, frustration, or harm related to job applicant ghosting (Taitz, 2021; Whitacre, 2019), hiring managers would be expected to have negative attitudes toward ghosting behaviors and would be less inclined to participate in ghosting when searching for employment. Prior poor experiences with ghosting may shape ghosting attitudes and future ghosting intentions as applicants may be more considerate of how their actions impact other recruiters. An argument is made that recruiters searching for jobs may be more considerate of other hiring managers and respect scheduled arrangements throughout the process. Hence, I hypothesize:

Hypothesis 4: Applicants previously responsible for hiring employees will have more favorable attitudes toward job search without ghosting. The relationship will be consistent across all stages of job pursuit.

In line with the theory of planned behavior, attitudes toward specific behaviors are likely to predict intentions toward partaking in those behaviors (Miles, 2012). The best way to predict and explain an individual's behavioral intention is to understand the attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control that the individual has for completing the behavior. It follows that the more favorable the attitude toward ghosting behaviors, the stronger the applicant's intention to perform those behaviors (Miles, 2012). Therefore, applicants that favor ghosting are more likely to display intentions to participate in ghosting behaviors. It is predicted that:

Hypothesis 5a: Applicants with more favorable attitudes toward job search with ghosting will be more likely to display favorable behavioral intentions toward participating in job applicant ghosting. The relationship will be stronger at the first two stages of job pursuit.

Considering subjective norms in the context of job applicant ghosting, injunctive norms would be the perception an individual has regarding whether people close to them think the applicant ought to ghost a potential employer (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2011). Conversely, descriptive norms would be the perception an individual has regarding whether people close to them have or have not ghosted an employer (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2011). If an individual believes that referent individuals see job applicant ghosting as acceptable behavior or are participating in ghosting behaviors, then the theory of planned behavior argues that the applicant is likely to have stronger behavioral intentions toward ghosting a perspective employer.

Hypothesis 5b: Applicants with higher perceived subjective norms toward participating in job applicant ghosting will be more likely to display favorable behavioral intentions toward participating in job applicant ghosting.

Job search self-efficacy is related to attitudes (Griepentrog et al., 2012) and predictive of behavioral intentions (Fort, Jacquet, & Leroy, 2011; Wanberg, Kanfer, & Rotundo, 1999) according to research on the theory of planned behavior (Griepentrog et al., 2012; Jaidi, Van Hooft, & Arends, 2011). “Individuals who report low levels of job-search self-efficacy are less likely to look for work as intensely and are more likely to use ineffective search techniques than individuals with high levels of job-search self-efficacy” (Wanberg, Kanfer, & Rotundo, 1999: 899). Lower levels of self-efficacy may increase the likelihood of job applicant ghosting primarily when used to avoid confrontation (HRNews, 2021), uncomfortable situations, or negative emotions related to delivering rejection messages (Taitz, 2021). Thus, it follows that applicants with low job search self-efficacy will be more likely to exhibit intentions to participate in ghosting behaviors as they lack confidence in their ability to join in and advance through the various stages of job pursuit. The following prediction is made:

Hypothesis 5c: Applicants with higher job search self-efficacy will be more likely to display more favorable behavioral intentions toward participating in job search without ghosting.

The next chapter covers the method that will be used to create a valid and reliable scale for measuring job applicant ghosting attitudes.

IV METHODOLOGY

A mixed-method study with an emphasis on quantitatively developing and validating a scale that measures job applicant ghosting attitudes was used; hence, the qualitative portion of this study was minimal. U.S. residents over the age of 18 that had applied to at least one U.S. job in the last five years were selected. Thirty semi-structured interviews were conducted with job applicants during the pre-test study to understand ghosting attitudes and behavioral intentions in-depth and provide reasons why applicants self-select out of the pool using ghosting tactics. The interviews helped with wording revisions and structuring the attitudinal ghosting statements included in the pilot tests and final survey. The interviews also assisted with reducing the number of items by informing me of redundant and misunderstood statements that needed to be removed.

Individuals with different occupations, ethnicities, ages, and educational backgrounds were selected for the interviews using convenience sampling and for the surveys using Amazon Mechanical Turk's (MTurk) online panel participants to match the U.S. job applicant pool as best as possible. Once an individual agreed to participate in the study, they were asked to sign a consent form. After the interview, respondents were asked to participate in a pre-test survey to further determine which items needed to be rewritten or removed. As mentioned earlier, the pre-test study consisted of thirty individuals; ten hiring manager participants were selected to determine if the responsibility for recruiting employees influenced attitudes toward job applicant ghosting. Oppenheim (1992) recommends pre-testing or piloting every statement, statement sequence, instruction, and item in the scale, using a sample that is as close to the population of interest as possible. The interview protocol can be found in Appendix A.

For survey administration, panel data can provide rich and diverse samples but requires specific techniques to ensure that potential shortcomings of data are addressed (Aguinis, Villamor,

& Ramani, 2021; Cheung, Burns, Sinclair, & Sliter, 2017; Porter, Outlaw, Gale, & Cho, 2019; Walter, Seibert, Goering, & O'Boyle, 2019). These techniques, which include 'attention check' statements and bot detection, were incorporated into the survey design and administration to minimize challenges and increase validity associated with MTurk data collection (Aguinis, Villamor, & Ramani, 2021; Walter et al., 2019). According to Walter et al. (2019: 426), online panel data usually produces samples that are "more diverse, younger, more educated, but more poorly paid than the general U.S. population." Therefore, a platform such as MTurk suits this study well since the survey is intended for job applicants comprised of individuals from this type of audience.

IV.1 Scale Development

I followed the steps for developing a scale as outlined by the highly cited Timothy Hinkin (1998), which include: 1) item generation, 2) questionnaire administration, 3) initial item reduction, 4) confirmatory factor analysis, 5) convergent/discriminant validity, and 6) replication. The following sections will describe how each step was incorporated into the research design.

IV.1.1 Item Generation

First, questionnaire items were created through deductive reasoning by combining Alison Barber's stages of job pursuit framework with relevant literature on job applicant ghosting. The framework was used as a way to conceptualize and measure job applicant attitudes across three stages of job pursuit. Incorporating the stages of job pursuit described in Chapter III, an initial list of statements was designed to assess applicant attitudes toward job search conducted with and without ghosting behaviors. Oppenheim (1992) suggests balancing positive and negative attitudinal items without using too many extreme statements to reduce acquiescence bias—respondent agreement regardless of survey content. However, current research on negatively worded survey statements recommends avoiding negatively worded or reverse coded statements

since these items may cause a method effect where negative items load onto a separate factor (Baumgartner, Weijters, & Pieters, 2018; Chyung, Barkin, & Shamsy, 2018; Kamoen, Holleman, Mak, Sanders, & Van Den Bergh, 2017). Due to the adverse nature of job applicant ghosting, I felt that avoiding all negatively worded statements may be a disservice to the construct. While most items in the questionnaire are positive statements, a few negatively framed items remained in the surveys. As Chyung, Barkin, and Shamsy (2018) recommend, double negatives were excluded from the questionnaire; additionally, I grouped positive and negative items separately when administering the surveys to ensure participants could cognitively transition between answering each type of statement. Moreover, as Hinkin (1998) recommends, the item statements were kept simple and short using language familiar to the participants, with each item addressing a single issue.

See Table 3 for an outline of the pre-test survey structure and Appendix B for the complete pre-test survey. Note that the attitudinal scale is scored such that higher scores indicate attitudes favoring job search without ghosting and lower scores indicate attitudes favoring job search with ghosting. Stated differently, participants that view ghosting unfavorably will have higher scores while participants favoring ghosting will have lower scores.

Pre-test interviews were conducted between September 28, and November 2, 2022 to elicit feedback from job applicant participants representative of the final sample. The pre-test assisted in reducing measurement error, response burden, and statement inaccuracy (Carpenter, 2018). Participants defined and described job applicant ghosting and the stages of job pursuit as they understood these concepts. Through the interviews, I sought to reveal additional dimensions critical to job applicant ghosting across the various stages of job pursuit. After refining wording and aligning definitions of ghosting and stages of job pursuit, participants were provided with my definition of job applicant ghosting. Participants were also asked to which degree each

questionnaire item corresponded to the agreed-upon definition. Additionally, respondents received descriptions of the three stages of job pursuit and were asked to match the statements to each stage. These tests helped determine the content validity of the questionnaire items. The goal of the pre-test was to reduce the number of items included in the pilot and final questionnaires using factor analysis and other statistical means (Oppenheim, 1992).

Table 3: Survey Structure

Section	Pre-Test Items	Revised Items	Comments
A. Demographics	1 through 14	1 through 14	Basic Demographic Information
B-i. Job Search Self-Efficacy Behaviors	15 through 24	15 through 24	Assess how confident job applicants are with the behaviors of their job search (Saks, Zikic, & Koen, 2015)
B-ii. Job Search Self-Efficacy Outcomes	25 through 35	25 through 35	Assess how confident job applicants are with the outcomes of their job search (Saks, Zikic, & Koen, 2015)
C. Conscientiousness	36 through 44	36 through 44	Assess the applicant's degree of conscientiousness (John & Srivastava, 1999)
D-i. Extensive Search Ghosting	45 through 54	45 through 49	Assess job applicant ghosting attitudes at the first stage of job search
D-ii. Intensive Search Ghosting	55 through 64	50 through 54	Assess job applicant ghosting attitudes at the second stage of job search
D-iii. Job Choice Ghosting	65 through 75	55 through 60	Assess job applicant ghosting attitudes at the final stage of job search
E-i. Injunctive Norms	76 through 83	61 through 65	Assess whether the job applicant believes ghosting behaviors ought to be performed
E-ii. Descriptive Norms	84 through 91	66 through 70	Assess whether the job applicant believes others are performing ghosting behaviors
F. Ghosting Intentions	92 through 99	71 through 75	Assess job applicant ghosting intentions at all stages of job search (adapted from Karl, Peluchette, & Neely, 2021)

The pre-test survey consisted of fourteen demographics, twenty job search self-efficacy, nine conscientiousness, thirty attitudinal, sixteen subjective norms, eight behavioral intentions, and two 'attention check' statements. The demographics statements included items such as age, gender, ethnicity, education, and employment status. The two-dimension job search self-efficacy

scale by Saks, Zikic, and Koen (2015) was utilized; this scale combines all other measurements of job search self-efficacy and includes all stages of job pursuit, creating a great fit with the current study. Participants were asked to rate their level of confidence in performing certain job search behaviors and reaching certain outcomes on a 5-point Likert scale that ranged from (1) not at all confident to (5) totally confident (Likert, 1932). Items on job search self-efficacy behaviors include “prepare resumes that will get you job interviews” and “impress interviewers during employment interviews.” In addition, job search self-efficacy outcomes include items such as “be invited to job interviews” and “obtain more than one good job offer.” This scale was of particular interest since it included all stages of job pursuit in both dimensions of the scale.

The survey also included the conscientious dimension of the Big Five Inventory (BFI) of personality as published by John and Srivastava (1999). Participants were asked if they see themselves as reliable, lazy, disorganized, or efficient workers. Items were scored using a 5-point Likert scale that ranged from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree (Likert, 1932).

All attitudinal statements were scored using a 6-point Likert scale that ranged from (1) strongly disagree to (6) strongly agree (Likert, 1932). Again, the attitudinal scale is scored such that agreement indicates attitudes favoring job search without ghosting and disagreement indicates attitudes favoring job search with ghosting. Some sample items for the extensive search stage were “after applying for a job, you should always continue communication with the employer” and “you should let an employer know when you are no longer interested in the job opening.” Items from the intensive search stage included “it is important to show up for a scheduled job interview” and “when you agree to show up for an interview, you should keep that commitment.” Sample items from the job choice stage were “it is appropriate to email an employer when I change my mind about a job offer” and “I think poorly of someone who accepts a job offer and does not show up for the first day of work.”

Subjective norms items were scored using a 6-point Likert scale that ranged from (1) strongly disagree to (6) strongly agree (Likert, 1932). Similar to the attitudinal scale, subjective norms are scored such that agreement indicates favoring job search without ghosting and disagreement indicates favoring job search with ghosting. The survey instrument seeks to measure two dimensions of perceived subjective norms: injunctive norms and descriptive norms (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2011). Items were created to fit the context of job applicant ghosting and cover all stages of job pursuit. Sample statements for injunctive norms asked participants whether people close to them would expect the participant to “make follow-up calls after applying for a job” and “return calls from potential employers.” Descriptive norm statements asked participants whether people close to them “apply for jobs they intend to accept” and “show up for their first day of work after accepting an offer.”

All behavioral intention statements were scored using a 6-point Likert scale, ranging from (1) extremely unlikely to (6) extremely likely (Likert, 1932). This scale is scored such that higher scores indicate that the respondent intends to participate in job search without ghosting behaviors. Two behavioral statements were borrowed from Karl, Peluchette, and Neely (2021) and contain “send an email saying you changed your mind or have a better offer” and “go to the interview and do your best.” Additional behavioral intention statements were added to cover all stages of the job pursuit process; sample items were “make follow-up calls after applying for a job” and “accept a job and show up for the first day of work.”

Aguinis, Villamor, and Ramani (2021) recommend using ‘attention checks’ to ensure participant alertness and easy removal of incomplete or inattentive responses. Of course, the attention checks become more vital during actual survey administration and were included in the pre-test based on Oppenheim’s (1992) suggestion to incorporate everything in the pre-test and pilot studies. The result of the item generation step was a pilot attitudinal scale that was half the

size of the original pre-test survey. To ensure I obtained adequate internal consistency reliability for each subsection, the pilot, confirmatory, and replication surveys included at least three or four items per subsection (Hinkin, 1998).

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was used initially to analyze the pre-test. First, descriptive statistics—mean, standard deviation, range, skewness, and kurtosis—were calculated to assess normality and the presence of outliers. Per Burns and Burns (2008), to assess normality, the ratio of skewness and kurtosis to its associated standard error should be between ± 2.58 (1% significance level). Second, a correlation matrix was created to see which items had high and low intercorrelations. Note that a 95% confidence level was used as the basis for statistical significance in all other analyses. Third, a substantive validity analysis was conducted to create two indexes: “the proportion of respondents who assign an item to its intended construct” and “the degree to which each rater assigned an item to its intended construct” (Hinkin, 1998: 108). This analysis allows pretesting items using a small sample size to identify the items retained for the initial pilot survey and the confirmatory factor analysis. Fourth, an EFA was conducted. Finally, Harman’s one-factor test was used to determine whether common method bias was present in the pre-test sample since it is widely used by behavioral researchers as a diagnostic technique to assess the degree common method variance may exist (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). If common method bias is present, additional statistical tests—as recommended by Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, and Podsakoff (2003)—would be performed to combat the issue.

Items were retained when the proportion of correct assignments was at least 75% and the degree of confidence in those assignments was on average at least a rating of (4) very confident. Based on feedback from the interviews and to ensure an equal number of attitudinal items were retained from each stage, I rephrased the items that were close to meeting the correct assignment and confidence criteria. Moreover, some items were restated to adequately correspond to any

underrepresented stages in the remaining items. The retained statements were further confirmed by the results of the EFA to ensure items were measuring the intended factor.

IV.1.2 Questionnaire Administration

After the pre-test analysis and content validity assessment, the remaining items were included in the first online pilot survey presented to the job applicant population of interest through MTurk from December 21 through 25, 2022. See Table 3 for the revised survey structure and Appendix C for the attitudinal, subjective norm, and behavioral intention item revisions. The pilot study was conducted to assess the instrument's validity and reduce the number of items included in the final scale. The pilot survey was created using Qualtrics—a software tool for creating surveys—and administered through MTurk. It included demographic, job search self-efficacy, conscientiousness, attitudinal, subjective norm, behavioral intention, and 'attention check' statements that survived the item generation step.

The survey took participants approximately 20-30 minutes, and qualified participants received \$3 for finishing the questionnaire and answering the 'attention check' statements correctly. All participants accepted an informed consent statement and confirmed the qualifying criteria were met. I aimed to collect 225 responses since at least 200 observations are recommended to conduct factor analysis (Hinkin, 1998), and participant attrition due to incomplete surveys or failed 'attention checks' is expected to be approximately 10% (Aguinis, Villamor, & Ramani, 2021). Of the 225 responses collected, 213 observations remained after removing incomplete responses, failed attention checks, and responses completed in less than two minutes. I coded, reverse-scored, and classified all observations retained for importing into SPSS and AMOS software programs. A correlation matrix was compiled to see which items had high and low intercorrelations. Descriptive statistics—such as means, standard deviations, range,

skewness, and kurtosis—were also computed for all items. The demographic information was analyzed to verify population representativeness.

IV.1.3 Initial Item Reduction

Exploratory factor analysis was conducted to reduce the items, determine the structure and communality in the relationships between variables (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018), and ensure item quality (Carpenter, 2018). Before performing factor analysis, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's test of sphericity were assessed. The KMO must be greater than 0.5 to ensure sampling adequacy, and Bartlett's test must be significant at a 95% confidence level ($p < 0.05$) to ensure there is some correlation between variables (Burns & Burns, 2008). If the sample data meets the KMO and Bartlett's test requirements, then factor analysis can be performed (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018).

After that, a common factor analysis was performed to determine the factor loadings for each attitudinal item in the initial questionnaire. Based on recommendations by Serena Carpenter (2018), common factor analysis was used rather than principal components analysis (PCA) since PCA includes error variance and tends to cause a researcher to retain too many items. A Promax rotation was suggested (Carpenter, 2018) and used since an oblique rotation is best when the factors could be related to each other to some extent (Burn & Burns, 2008; Oppenheim, 1992). Kaiser's rule was used for factor selection to include factors with eigenvalues greater than one, and factor selection was confirmed using the scree test—a graphical plot of eigenvalues (Burns & Burns, 2008). According to best practices recommended by Serena Carpenter (2018), the Kaiser's rule and scree test were used in combination with parallel analysis (PA) and minimum average partial (MAP) to figure out the number of factors retained. Furthermore, items with factor

loadings below 0.40 were removed (Hinkin, 1998), cross-loadings were studied, and communalities above 0.80 were analyzed (Carpenter, 2018).

To measure internal consistency reliability, Burns and Burns (2008) suggest using Cronbach's Alpha when Likert scales are used in a survey. Cronbach's Alpha of 0.70 or higher will be used as the cutoff value for retaining those items that contribute to the internal reliability of the scale developed during this study (Hinkin, 1998). "Reliability is a necessary (though not sufficient) condition for validity; a measure which is unreliable cannot attain an adequate degree of validity" (Oppenheim, 1992: 162). Factor analysis of the intercorrelations of item responses will be used to verify construct validity, homogeneity, and heterogeneity (Burns & Burns, 2008). The respondents' anonymity in the survey increased validity and prevented me from correlating the findings with information about the participants. Additionally, to avoid common mistakes when creating a scale, Carpenter (2018) recommends that the final factors have at least three items per factor, and Hinkin (1998) recommends a minimum of four items per factor. Conservatively, this study aimed to create a scale with at least four items per factor.

IV.1.4 Confirmatory Factor Analysis

A new, independent sample of 225 respondents was collected from MTurk from January 15 through 16, 2023 to perform confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), validate the preliminary analysis, provide further evidence of construct validity, determine how well the remaining items fit the model, and avoid creating an invalid scale (Carpenter, 2018; Hinkin, 1998). Of the 225 responses collected, 216 observations remained after removing incomplete responses, failed attention checks, bot responses, and responses completed in less than two minutes. I assessed normality using the ratio of skewness and kurtosis to its associated standard error, which should be between ± 2.58 (1% significance level) per Burns and Burns (2008). After confirming

normality, the maximum likelihood extraction method was used (Carpenter, 2018). The chi-square statistic will be used to assess the goodness-of-fit of the measurement model (Burns & Burns, 2008). “A nonsignificant chi-square is desirable, indicating that differences between the model-implied variance and covariance and the observed variance and covariance are small enough to be due to sampling fluctuation” (Hinkin, 1998: 114). In addition to the chi-square statistic, I reviewed the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) when analyzing goodness-of-fit.

IV.1.5 Convergent and Discriminant Validity

Convergent and discriminant validity have commonly been assessed using the Multitrait-Multimethod Matrix (MTMM) developed by Campbell and Fiske in 1959 (Hinkin, 1998). Yet, the second-generation method by Bagozzi, Yi, and Phillips, created in 1991, which uses confirmatory factor analysis in construct validation, is recommended (Hinkin, 1998). This study used the second-generation method by Bagozzi, Yi, and Phillips created in 1991 to prove convergent and discriminant validity using the second sample of 225 respondents.

IV.1.6 Replication

The final stage in scale development requires replication. A final MTurk survey of 450 job applicants, using the same selection criteria, demographics, and ‘attention check’ statements as the pre-test and pilot studies, was administered from January 31 through February 1, 2023. Of the 450 responses collected, 399 observations remained after removing incomplete responses, failed attention checks, and responses completed in less than two minutes. This data set was subjected to the same statistical tests as the independent sample, which include normality, CFA, goodness-of-fit, and validity analyses. To increase construct validity, some expected relationships and correlates were explored for antecedents such as gender, conscientiousness, level of education, and hiring experience. Additionally, the relationship between ghosting attitudes and behavioral

intentions was examined to determine whether more favorable attitudes toward ghosting would be correlated with an increased likelihood of intentions to participate in job applicant ghosting behaviors.

The product of this step is a reliable and valid measurement of job applicant ghosting attitudes. Furthermore, to add richness to the study, ordinary least-square regression analyses were performed to test the hypotheses outlined in chapter III. The survey was coded such that high scores indicate applicants with favorable attitudes toward job search *without* ghosting whereas low scores indicate applicants with favorable attitudes toward job search *with* ghosting. Stated differently, the higher the score, the less favorable an applicant's attitude toward ghosting. Conversely, the lower the score, the more favorable an individual's attitude toward ghosting.

V RESULTS

This chapter details the results of the four waves of data collection. Table 4 summaries the demographics from each of the study samples: pre-test, pilot, confirmatory, and replication.

Table 4: Participant Demographic Information

Demographics	Pre-Test (n = 30)		Pilot (n = 213)		Confirmatory (n = 216)		Replication (n = 399)	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Gender</i>								
Male	11	36.67	119	55.87	150	69.44	241	60.40
Female	19	63.33	93	43.66	64	29.63	158	39.60
Other/Decline	0	0.00	1	0.47	2	0.93	0	0.00
<i>Age</i>								
18-24 Years	3	10.00	23	10.80	9	4.17	24	6.02
25-34 Years	5	16.67	90	42.25	129	59.72	203	50.88
35-44 Years	10	33.33	59	27.70	49	22.69	100	25.06
45-54 Years	5	16.67	19	8.92	18	8.33	42	10.53
55-64 Years	7	23.33	19	8.92	11	5.09	25	6.26
65+ Years	0	0.00	3	1.41	0	0.00	5	1.25
<i>Ethnicity</i>								
Caucasian	26	86.66	165	77.47	150	69.44	313	78.44
African American	2	6.67	15	7.04	12	5.56	12	3.01
Hispanic/Latino	0	0.00	8	3.76	7	3.24	14	3.51
Asian/Pacific Islander	0	0.00	11	5.16	10	4.63	14	3.51
Native American	0	0.00	12	5.63	36	16.67	44	11.03
Other	2	6.67	2	0.94	1	0.46	2	0.50
<i>Education</i>								
High School or Less	5	16.67	10	4.69	19	8.80	26	6.52
Associate's	11	36.66	7	3.29	8	3.70	7	1.75
Bachelor's	8	26.67	140	65.73	102	47.22	235	58.90
Master's	5	16.67	53	24.88	86	39.82	129	32.33
Ph.D./MD/Beyond Master's	1	3.33	3	1.41	1	0.46	2	0.50
<i>Occupation</i>								
Clerical/Secretarial	3	10.00	10	4.69	12	5.56	9	2.26
Retail/Customer Service	2	6.67	14	6.57	12	5.56	17	4.26
Fast Food/Restaurant	0	0.00	5	2.35	9	4.17	19	4.76
Building Services	1	3.33	7	3.29	9	4.17	8	2.01
Corporate Management	6	20.00	11	5.16	9	4.17	17	4.26
Legal/Accounting/Engineer	3	10.00	10	4.69	14	6.48	29	7.27
Transportation/Logistics	1	3.33	5	2.35	6	2.78	9	2.26
Sales/Marketing	1	3.33	17	7.98	24	11.11	35	8.77
Manufacturing/Production	0	0.00	19	8.92	29	13.43	65	16.29
Education/Research	4	13.34	7	3.29	8	3.70	19	4.76
Information Technology	1	3.33	74	34.74	42	19.43	117	29.32
Health Care	6	20.00	29	13.62	34	15.74	48	12.03
Other	2	6.67	5	2.35	8	3.70	7	1.75
<i>Income (from 2021)</i>								
Below \$25,000	7	23.33	15	7.04	32	14.81	36	9.02
\$25,000-\$49,999	10	33.33	68	31.93	71	32.87	130	32.58
\$50,000-\$74,999	5	16.67	72	33.80	70	32.42	139	34.84
\$75,000-\$99,999	3	10.00	46	21.60	38	17.59	79	19.80
\$100,000+	5	16.67	12	5.63	5	2.31	15	3.76

V.1 Pre-Test Study

Convenience sampling was used to collect responses from applicants seeking employment in a variety of occupations while also targeting ten hiring managers from different industries. Interestingly, three potential participants—two male and one female—ghosted me when scheduling interviews. An additional female participant used the breadcrumbing technique and resurfaced after all interviews had been conducted.

Based on the definition of ghosting, interviewees were asked to place each attitudinal and behavioral intention item into categories of ghosting, not ghosting, or neither. They were then asked to place the same statements into one of the three stages of job pursuit—extensive search, intensive search, or job choice—based on the description of each stage. The items were randomized to avoid leading participants toward the expected answer. During both activities, participants were asked to rate how confident they were with their selection using a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 was not at all confident and 5 was totally confident. All items placed into the expected category by at least 75% of the participants and having an average confidence level of 4 for both ghosting and stages of job pursuit were retained. This matching exercise allowed me to analyze substantive validity; results are shown in Table 5.

After conducting the thirty pre-test interviews, all interviewees were asked to take part in the pre-test survey. Two original interviewees did not complete the survey by the required completion date; therefore, two more respondents with similar demographics were asked to complete the pre-test survey. Of the thirty pre-test participants, 87% were Caucasian, 63% were female, 33% were between the ages of 35 and 44, and 37% had associate's degrees (see Table 4). The income level of the sample was representative of the level of education reported. The interviews and pre-test results allowed the survey items to be reduced from 99 to 75 items, with

attitudinal statements decreasing from 30 to 15 items. Descriptive statistics and correlations for the pre-test study can be found in Appendix D, Table 12.

Table 5: Substantive Validity

Item	Statement Matched Definition of Ghosting		Statement Matched Definition of Stage		Construct Validity		
	Proportion (%)	Ave. Confidence	Proportion (%)	Ave. Confidence	Retained	Reworded	Removed
<i>Extensive Search</i>							
45	63.33	4.37	66.67	4.00			X
46	93.33	4.39	56.67	3.53		X	
47	90.00	4.26	30.00	3.67		X	
48	73.33	4.41	70.00	3.86		X	
49	70.00	4.43	43.33	3.67			X
50	93.33	4.46	13.33	3.50			X
51	80.00	4.38	13.33	3.50			X
52	73.33	4.36	60.00	3.56		X	
53	90.00	4.41	46.67	4.21		X	
54	86.67	4.54	26.67	3.88			X
<i>Intensive Search</i>							
55	90.00	4.56	80.00	4.33	X		
56	60.00	4.22	80.00	4.08			X
57	96.67	4.48	83.33	4.20	X		
58	76.67	4.65	90.00	4.04	X	X	
59	70.00	4.48	80.00	4.29	X	X	
60	56.67	4.18	73.33	4.00			X
61	76.67	4.30	70.00	4.33			X
62	73.33	4.23	66.67	4.30			X
63	86.67	4.19	63.33	4.21			X
64	90.00	4.48	80.00	4.25	X		
<i>Job Choice</i>							
65	93.33	4.54	76.67	4.43	X	X	
66	86.67	4.46	90.00	4.44			X*
67	93.33	4.57	86.67	4.58	X		
68	86.67	4.46	76.67	4.22			X*
69	90.00	4.33	53.33	4.19		X	
70	93.33	4.29	73.33	4.23			X
71	76.67	4.52	90.00	4.37	X		
72	90.00	3.93	10.00	3.33			X
73	86.67	4.12	16.67	4.00			X
74	90.00	4.63	83.33	4.32	X		

*These items met the criteria for retention but were remarkably similar to other retained items and removed for repetitiveness.

In addition, an EFA was performed on the pre-test survey sample to determine whether questionnaire items loaded as expected. The factor loadings were compared with the items retained from the interview matching exercise. Items that met the interview matching requirements and loaded as expected with loadings greater than 0.40 were retained. Furthermore,

items that loaded correctly but did not meet the interview matching requirements were rewritten based on feedback received from the participants. For the most part, the original interview statements measured ghosting attitudes but did not accurately measure the stages (none of the extensive search items were correctly categorized by 75% of the participants). Unfortunately, some of the retained items from the matching exercise loaded onto a separate factor. If a statement was not able to be rewritten to measure the stages properly or was too similar to other statements retained, those items were removed from the pilot survey. To ensure a balanced instrument, an equal number of items were retained for each stage of job pursuit. The revised statements can be found in Appendix C. Changes were only made to items 45 through 75; the original items 1 through 44 remained unchanged. A few interview participants were contacted a second time to verify that the stages were properly included and to verify that the retained statements adequately covered ghosting as per earlier discussions.

Table 6: Internal Reliability (Cronbach's Alpha)

Construct	Pre-Test (α)	Pilot (α)	Confirmatory (α)	Replication (α)
Job Search Self-Efficacy (JSSE)	0.949	0.950	0.949	0.949
Conscientiousness (C)	0.624	0.752	0.741	0.394
Ghosting Attitudes (GA)	0.889	0.911	0.941	0.900
Subjective Norms (SN)	0.926	0.907	0.941	0.890
Ghosting Intentions (GI)	0.737	0.823	0.891	0.787

Interestingly, all measurements except the conscientiousness scale had a Cronbach's Alpha of greater than 0.73 for the pre-test sample. Cronbach's Alpha for conscientiousness was 0.62 from this small sample, while the literature reports Cronbach's Alpha of 0.69 (Gurven, Von Rueden, Massenkoff, Kaplan, & Lero Vie, 2013). Table 6 shows Cronbach's Alpha for the pre-test survey. Job search self-efficacy, conscientiousness, ghosting attitudes, subjective norms, and

ghosting intentions conformed to a normal distribution with skewness and kurtosis ratios between ± 2.58 (skewness ratio = 0.22, -0.60, -0.78, -1.37, and -2.55, respectively; kurtosis ratio = -0.50, 0.16, -0.014, -0.93, and 0.08, respectively). Furthermore, the unrotated EFA had a total variance extracted by one factor of 23.48%; since this does not exceed 50% per Harman's one-factor test, common method bias was not present in this sample.

V.2 Pilot Study

Using the retained and revised items from the pre-test study, 213 usable observations were collected from MTurk during the pilot study. In line with expectations of MTurk sampling demographics, of the 213 pilot study participants, 77% were Caucasian, 56% were male, 42% were between the ages of 25 and 34, and 66% had bachelor's degrees (see Table 4). The income level of the sample was representative of the level of education reported. Descriptive statistics and correlations for the pilot study can be found in Appendix D, Table 13.

After confirming sampling adequacy ($KMO = 0.911$) and ensuring some correlation between variables (Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: $p < 0.001$), the application of exploratory factor analysis was supported. Using common factor analysis with a Promax rotation ($k = 4$), an EFA was performed on the fifteen attitudinal items to determine whether questionnaire items loaded as expected. No communalities were over 0.80 except job choice item 59, and only items with loadings greater than 0.40 were kept for the factor analysis. Unfortunately, the two reverse-coded items from the attitudinal scale loaded onto a separate factor (items 54 and 59). Table 7 shows the attitudinal item factor loadings of the exploratory pattern matrix after rotation.

The analysis resulted in two factors using Kaiser's rule (eigenvalues > 1) and a scree test, although the expectation was three dimensions with one factor per stage of job pursuit. To figure out the number of factors to retain, the EFA based on Kaiser's rule and the scree test were compared with results from a PA and MAP test. The PA suggests that factors with eigenvalues

greater than 0.448 should be kept, which suggests both factors should be retained. The smallest average squared partial correlation was 0.0196 and only one factor was above that mark, indicating that only one factor should be retained based on the MAP test. All fifteen items were retained for the confirmatory study to confirm these findings. Interestingly, all measurements including the conscientiousness scale had a Cronbach's Alpha of greater than 0.75 for the pilot sample (see Table 6). Fortunately, the unrotated EFA had a total variance extracted by one factor of 39.74%; therefore, per Harman's one-factor test, common method bias was not present in this sample.

Table 7: Factor Analysis

Attitudinal Items	Pilot - EFA (n = 213)		Confirmatory - CFA (n = 216)		Replication - CFA (n = 399)	
	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 1	Factor 2
<i>Variance Explained (Post-Rotation)</i>	39.80%	9.92%	48.35%	10.41%	36.66%	10.60%
<i>Eigenvalues (Post-Rotation)</i>	5.969	1.488	7.252	1.561	5.498	1.590
Extensive Search #45	0.695		0.734		0.663	
Extensive Search #46	0.708		0.744		0.678	
Extensive Search #47	.0671		0.743		0.708	
Extensive Search #48	0.449		0.621		0.412	
Extensive Search #49	0.690		0.747		0.686	
Intensive Search #50	0.766		0.772		0.707	
Intensive Search #51	0.702		0.799		0.688	
Intensive Search #52	0.700		0.763		0.688	
Intensive Search #53	0.710		0.772		0.636	
Intensive Search #54 (Reverse Coded)		0.739		0.800		0.793
Job Choice #55	0.628		0.752		0.662	
Job Choice #56	0.751		0.746		0.681	
Job Choice #57	0.673		0.807		0.710	
Job Choice #58	0.598		0.671		0.429	
Job Choice #59 (Reverse Coded)		0.899		0.926		0.901

V.3 Confirmatory Study

Using the same 75-item questionnaire as the pilot study, 216 usable observations were collected from MTurk during the confirmatory study. In line with expectations of MTurk sampling demographics, of the 216 confirmatory study participants, 69% were Caucasian, 69% were male, 51% were between the ages of 25 and 34, and 59% had bachelor's degrees (see Table 4). Again, the income level of the sample was representative of the level of education reported. As with the pre-test and pilot studies, there was a mix of occupations represented in the observations. Descriptive statistics and correlations for the confirmatory study can be found in Appendix D, Table 14.

After confirming sampling adequacy ($KMO = 0.934$) and ensuring some correlation between variables (Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: $p < 0.001$), the application of CFA was supported. Using the maximum likelihood extraction method with a Promax rotation ($k = 4$), a CFA was performed on the fifteen attitudinal items using SPSS and AMOS to determine whether questionnaire items loaded as expected. No communalities were over 0.80 except job choice item 59, similar to findings from the pilot study. Again, only items with loadings greater than 0.40 were retained for the factor analysis. Like the results of the pilot study, the two reverse-coded items (54 and 59) from the attitudinal scale loaded onto a separate factor for the confirmatory study. Table 7 shows the attitudinal item factor loadings of the confirmatory pattern matrix after rotation. The three-factor model fit tests with all fifteen items produced moderate fit results ($\chi^2 = 336.288$, $p < 0.001$; $PCMIN/DF = 3.865$; $GFI = 0.843$; $AGFI = 0.783$; $CFI = 0.870$; $TLI = 0.843$; $RMSEA = 0.115$, $PCLOSE < 0.001$). After removing the reverse coded items 54 and 59, the three-factor model fit improved and sufficient fit resulted ($\chi^2 = 123.471$, $p < 0.001$; $PCMIN/DF = 1.991$; $GFI = 0.915$; $AGFI = 0.875$; $CFI = 0.964$; $TLI = 0.955$; $RMSEA = 0.068$; $PCLOSE = 0.048$).

As before, the factor analysis resulted in two factors using Kaiser's rule (eigenvalues > 1) and a scree test. Again, to figure out the number of factors to retain, the CFA based on Kaiser's rule and the scree test were compared with results from a PA and MAP test. The PA suggests that factors with eigenvalues greater than 0.441 should be kept, which suggests both factors should be retained. The smallest average squared partial correlation was 0.0201 and only one factor was above that mark, showing that only one factor should be retained based on the MAP test. Interestingly, all measurements including the conscientiousness scale had a Cronbach's Alpha of greater than 0.74 for the confirmatory sample (see Table 6). Fortunately, the unrotated EFA had a total variance extracted by one factor of 48.31%; thus, per Harman's one-factor test, common method bias was not present in this sample.

Convergent validity is based on the standardized estimates from SPSS and AMOS. Computations greater than 0.70 show a strong indication that the items measure what they are intended to measure. Of the thirteen retained items, only items 48 and 58 have loadings just below 0.70. Overall, the scale meets the requirements of convergent validity. For discriminant validity, the standardized covariance between the three stages of job pursuit, extensive search, intensive search, and job choice, should be below 0.80. Unfortunately, all standardized covariances from AMOS are 0.96 or higher, showing that the job applicant ghosting attitudes scale does not measure three distinct stages, but rather is a single comprehensive measurement of attitudes. To further confirm that the scale should include thirteen items rather than fifteen, all fifteen items were included in the replication study.

V.4 Replication Study

Using the same 75-item questionnaire as the pilot on confirmatory studies, 399 usable observations were collected from MTurk during the replication study. In line with expectations of MTurk sampling demographics, of the 399 replication participants, 78% were Caucasian, 60%

were male, 60% were between the ages of 25 and 34, and 47% had bachelor's degrees (see Table 4). As before, the income level of the sample was representative of the level of education reported. Like the pre-test, pilot, and confirmatory studies, there was a mix of occupations represented in the replication observations. Descriptive statistics and correlations for the replication study can be found in Appendix D, Table 15. Interestingly, the only demographic that was significantly correlated with job applicant attitudes toward ghosting was ethnicity, specifically, Caucasian, $r(397) = -0.160, p = 0.001$, and African American, $r(397) = 0.145, p = 0.004$.

After confirming sampling adequacy (KMO = 0.896) and ensuring some correlation between variables (Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: $p < 0.001$), the application of CFA was supported. Using the maximum likelihood extraction method with a Promax rotation ($k = 4$), a CFA was performed on the fifteen attitudinal items using SPSS and AMOS to determine whether questionnaire items loaded as expected. No communalities were over 0.80, and only items with a loading greater than 0.40 were retained for the factor analysis. Once again, like the results of the pilot and confirmation studies, the two reverse-coded items (54 and 59) from the attitudinal scale loaded onto a separate factor for the replication study. Table 7 shows the attitudinal item factor loadings of the replication pattern matrix after rotation. The three-factor model fit tests with all fifteen items produced moderate fit results ($\chi^2 = 559.487, p < 0.001$; PCMIN/DF = 6.431; GFI = 0.855; AGFI = 0.801; CFI = 0.804; TLI = 0.764; RMSEA = 0.175, PCLOSE < 0.001). After removing the reverse coded items 54 and 59, the three-factor model fit tests produced improved and sufficient fit results ($\chi^2 = 192.153, p < 0.001$; PCMIN/DF = 3.099; GFI = 0.934; AGFI = 0.934; CFI = 0.937; TLI = 0.921; RMSEA = 0.073; PCLOSE = 0.001).

As expected, the factor analysis resulted in two factors using Kaiser's rule (eigenvalues > 1) and a scree test. Following suit, the CFA based on Kaiser's rule and the scree test were compared with results from a PA and MAP test. The PA suggests that factors with eigenvalues

greater than 0.304 should be kept, which suggests both factors should be retained. The smallest average squared partial correlation was 0.0185 and only one factor was above that mark, showing that only one factor should be retained based on the MAP test. After the four samples were collected and analyzed, I decided that only thirteen attitudinal items would be retained for the final validated scale. Interestingly, all measurements except the conscientiousness scale had a Cronbach's Alpha of greater than 0.78 for the confirmatory sample (see Table 6). Fortunately, the unrotated EFA had a total variance extracted by one factor of 42.26%, ensuring common method bias was not present in this sample per Harman's one-factor test.

Of the thirteen retained items, all except items 48 and 58 had factor loadings above or just below loadings of 0.70 based on SPSS and AMOS results. Overall, the measure moderately meets the requirements of convergent validity. For discriminant validity, the standardized covariance between the three stages of job pursuit, extensive search, intensive search, and job choice, should be below 0.80. Unfortunately, all standardized covariances from AMOS were 0.96 or higher, indicating that the ghosting attitudes scale does not measure three distinct stages, but rather is a single comprehensive measurement of attitudes as found in the pilot and confirmation studies. Since the results indicate that a single dimension of ghosting attitudes is more appropriate than the three-dimensional format originally hypothesized, all hypotheses will be tested in a general sense rather than at each stage.

Progression through the stages of job search reflects escalation. To determine whether the items grouped by stage would reflect this progression, I analyzed the correlation and covariance matrices for the attitudinal items by stage. As can be seen from Table 8, ghosting attitudes of the three stages of job pursuit are highly correlated with each other, and the means are very similar for each stage. Furthermore, the covariances are positive indicating that the variables move in the same direction. Together, this analysis further supports that the items create one overall construct.

Table 8: Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Matrix of Attitude Items by Stage

Construct (n = 399)	Mean	Std. Dev.	Extensive Search	Intensive Search	Job Choice
Extensive Search	4.797	0.692	1.000		
Intensive Search	4.904	0.746	0.770**	1.000	
Job Choice	4.855	0.714	0.737**	0.737**	1.000

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

V.4.1 Hypotheses Testing

Before testing the hypotheses, recall that higher scores on the ghosting attitudes scale indicate favorable attitudes toward job search *without* ghosting while lower scores indicate favorable attitudes toward job search *with* ghosting. Hypotheses were tested using ordinary least-square regression analysis. Average aggregate scores were created for job search self-efficacy, conscientiousness, overall ghosting attitudes, subjective norms, and ghosting intentions. In addition, dummy variables were created, as needed, to assess the relationships between various demographics and ghosting attitudes.

The overall regression analysis of job applicant characteristics on ghosting attitudes was significant ($F = 29.203$, $p < 0.001$) and explained 22.9% of the variance in ghosting attitudes. Multicollinearity was assessed using the variance inflation factor (VIF); the VIF for each predictor is less than 5, indicating a moderate correlation between predictors and a low degree of multicollinearity. The results of the regression analysis are displayed in Table 9.

Table 9: Regression Analysis of Job Applicant Characteristics on Ghosting Attitudes

Predictor	Ghosting Attitudes			
	<i>b</i>	SE <i>b</i>	β	VIF
Gender (Male = 0, Female = 1)	-0.152	.060	-0.114*	1.018
Conscientiousness	0.709	0.067	0.482***	1.054
Education	0.048	0.039	0.056	1.053
Hiring Experience (Yes = 0, No = 1)	-0.184	0.088	-0.097*	1.077

Notes: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Hypothesis 1 predicted that women would have more favorable attitudes than men toward job search without ghosting. The regression results suggest gender significantly influences aggregate overall attitudes toward ghosting ($\beta = -0.114, p = 0.011$). Although the coefficient for gender was statistically significant, it was negative, suggesting women had more favorable attitudes than men toward job search with ghosting. Thus, hypothesis 1 was not supported.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that applicants with higher levels of conscientiousness would have more favorable attitudes toward job search without ghosting. The regression results indicate that conscientiousness significantly influences aggregate overall attitudes ($\beta = 0.482, p < 0.001$). Since the coefficient for conscientiousness was statistically significant and positive, the results suggest that higher levels of conscientiousness predicted more favorable attitudes toward job search without ghosting (or less favorable attitudes toward ghosting). Therefore, hypothesis 2 was supported. Interestingly, the coefficient for conscientiousness is larger than the other predictor coefficients, indicating that conscientiousness is a stronger predictor of ghosting attitudes.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that applicants with higher educational backgrounds would have more favorable attitudes toward job search without ghosting. The regression results suggest the level of education was not a significant predictor of aggregate overall attitudes ($\beta = 0.056, p = 0.219$). Thus, hypothesis 3 was not supported.

Hypothesis 4 predicted that applicants with previous hiring experience would have more favorable attitudes toward job search without ghosting. In other words, applicants with prior hiring experience would view job applicant ghosting more unfavorably than applicants without prior hiring experience. The regression results suggest that hiring experience significantly influences aggregate overall ghosting attitudes ($\beta = -0.097, p = 0.036$). The coefficient for previous hiring experience was statistically significant and negative, suggesting applicants

without prior hiring experience had more favorable attitudes toward job search with ghosting than applicants with prior hiring experience. Therefore, hypothesis 4 was supported.

The overall regression analysis of attitudes, subjective norms, and job search self-efficacy on ghosting intentions was statistically significant ($F = 367.664$, $p < 0.001$) and explained 73.6% of the variance in ghosting intentions. The VIF for each predictor is less than 5, indicating a moderate correlation between predictors and a low degree of multicollinearity. The results of the regression analysis are displayed in Table 10.

Table 10: Regression Analysis of Theory of Planned Behavior Variables on Intentions

Predictor	Ghosting Intentions			
	<i>b</i>	SE <i>b</i>	β	VIF
Ghosting Attitudes	0.376	0.054	0.371***	4.211
Subjective Norms	0.494	0.054	0.489***	4.270
Job Search Self-Efficacy	0.055	0.028	0.056*	1.209

Notes: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Hypotheses 5a, 5b, and 5c predicted relationships of ghosting attitudes, subjective norms, and job search self-efficacy with intentions to participate in ghosting behaviors. The regression results suggest that attitudes, subjective norms, and job search self-efficacy all significantly influence aggregate overall ghosting intentions ($\beta = 0.371$, $p < 0.001$; $\beta = 0.489$, $p < 0.001$; $\beta = 0.056$, $p = 0.048$, respectively). The positive coefficients for all three predictor variables provide support for hypotheses 5a, 5b, and 5c. See Table 11 for a summary of all hypotheses testing.

Table 11: Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis	Support
H1: Gender \rightarrow Ghosting Attitudes	Not Supported
H2: Conscientiousness \rightarrow Ghosting Attitudes	Supported
H3: Education \rightarrow Ghosting Attitudes	Not Supported
H4: Hiring Experience \rightarrow Ghosting Attitudes	Supported
H5a: Ghosting Attitudes \rightarrow Ghosting Intentions	Supported
H5b: Subjective Norms \rightarrow Ghosting Intentions	Supported
H5c: Job Search Self-Efficacy \rightarrow Ghosting Intentions	Supported

VI DISCUSSION

Keller (2018: 850) states that “the posting process should generate a larger pool of candidates, reducing the likelihood that a manager overlooks a superior candidate.” This position does not consider the possibility that posting a job could generate too many applicants or that applicants may ghost the employer during the process. According to Horton, Vasserman, and Stanford (2021), job applicants send too many resumes. “Exposure to information about alternative job opportunities (e.g., similar positions in other firms paying considerably more money) may prompt even further job search behavior” (Feldman & Klaas, 2002: 176). While choice overload is one explanation for job applicants’ lack of motivation in the job pursuit process, the meta-analysis of choice overload by Scheibehenne, Greifeneder, and Todd (2010) found support for having more choices when applicants made well-defined preferences before choice selection. Another factor that could increase the number of job applicants is that “individuals change employers more frequently than they did in the past” (Keller, 2018: 867). Therefore, applicants are entering the job market faster than before.

According to organizational behavior and human resource practices, managers and employees try to achieve large rewards during recruitment with little time and effort (Pfeffer, 2007). Most recruitment research assumes that the applicant’s goal during the job pursuit process is to select the best position and employer for their skills and abilities and to return to the job pursuit process as little as possible. Long-term employment used to be the focus of recruitment practices; however, employees—and hiring managers alike—tend to make the quickest decision to solve the job search issue with a short-term focus. This short-term focus can lead to turnover and a return to the job market for another position or employer. As such, applicants who ghost

prospective employers may harm their potential for getting hired by ghosted employers when returning to the job pursuit process.

The purpose of this study was to develop a scale that measures applicant ghosting attitudes across all stages of job pursuit. A mixed method was utilized with an emphasis on quantitative scale development. I followed the scale development steps suggested by the highly cited Timothy Hinkin (1998) and augmented the steps by incorporating best practice recommendations by Serena Carpenter (2018). Research cannot test theory related to job applicant ghosting attitudes until there is a way to measure the construct, which this study accomplished. In keeping with the theory of planned behavior, applicant ghosting attitudes were predicative of applicant ghosting intentions. In addition to favorable ghosting attitudes, favorable subjective norms for ghosting and low job search self-efficacy also influenced favorable intentions toward participating in job search ghosting behaviors. Together, these findings answer the research questions posed at the beginning of this manuscript.

Contrary to expectations, the ghosting attitude scale did not provide a separate measurement of ghosting at each stage of job pursuit. Rather, the scale represented a single comprehensive measure of job applicant ghosting attitudes which encompasses all stages of job pursuit. This is not surprising since pre-test interviews revealed that the stages of job pursuit were defined differently depending on the position, organization, or industry. Highly regulated industries, such as health care, reported overlap between intensive search and job choice stages as health care professionals may need to undergo blood tests after receiving an offer and before starting their first day of work. To protect patients, health care professionals reported the need for additional vaccines before beginning employment with a new health care facility. Moreover, interviewees in other industries reported drug screens and background checks at the intensive search stage as well as the job choice stage based on organization-specific recruitment practices.

Furthermore, participants applying for financial positions mentioned that credit checks were part of the extensive search stage rather than the intensive search stage. The overlap between definitions of the stages of job pursuit could explain why this study did not confirm separate factors for each stage. Another explanation could be that applicant ghosting attitudes are consistent across all stages of job pursuit; that is, an applicant either favors job search with ghosting or favors job search without ghosting, regardless of the stage. Therefore, the results test this approach and suggest that job applicant ghosting attitudes are best characterized as a single dimension rather than the three dimensions hypothesized earlier.

Interestingly, the negatively worded and reverse-coded items were a consistent cause of trouble with comprehension, as the literature warned (Baumgartner, Weijters, & Pieters, 2018; Chyung, Barkin, & Shamsy, 2018; Kamoen et al., 2017). According to Kamoen et al. (2017: 614), “respondents are more likely to answer *no* to *negative* questions than to answer *yes* to *positive* ones.” During the interviews, the negatively worded statements seemed to invoke more cognitive load than the positive statements as observed by the long pauses after participants read the items, additional questions asked by the participants, and inconsistent responses to negatively worded statements. Furthermore, the two reverse-coded statements may have loaded onto a separate factor during factor analysis because the negatively stated words included in these items may not have been the appropriate counterparts of their positive alternatives (Chyung, Barkin, & Shamsy, 2018). Evidence suggests replacing reverse-coded and negatively worded items with positively worded statements when developing scales (Baumgartner, Weijters, & Pieters, 2018; Chyung, Barkin, & Shamsy, 2018). Therefore, the two reverse-coded items were removed from the final attitudinal assessment. See Appendix E for the finalized ghosting attitude assessment instrument, which researchers can use to measure the construct in future studies and applicants can use to self-assess and understand their own job search ghosting attitudes.

The replication study results show support for hiring experience as a predictor of ghosting attitudes. Since the hiring managers interviewed indicated an increased level of consideration toward other recruiters and strong opinions toward continued communication with potential employers, the interviews further supported this finding. As such, applicants with prior hiring experience are likely to exhibit favorable attitudes toward job search without ghosting and are less likely to develop ghosting intentions.

Although support for the level of education as an antecedent of ghosting attitudes was not found, the findings suggest that conscientiousness is a predictor of applicant ghosting attitudes. Specifically, job applicants exhibiting higher levels of conscientious favor job search without ghosting while job applicants exhibiting lower levels of conscientious favor job search with ghosting. Recall that Karl, Peluchette, and Neely (2021) found support for the antecedents of applicant gender and conscientiousness as predictors of ghosting behavior. Their findings suggest that men were more likely to participate in ghosting behaviors, and conscientious individuals were less likely to take part in ghosting behaviors.

Even though this study found support for high conscientiousness as a predictor of unfavorable ghosting attitudes, it did not find support for women being less likely to display favorable attitudes toward ghosting. Statistically significant results were found, but in the opposite direction of the predicted results; that is, support was found for women having more favorable attitudes than men toward job search with ghosting. While these findings did not confirm the Karl, Peluchette, and Neely (2021) findings related to the relationship between gender and ghosting, the results still align with social role theory. In societies where gender inequality is present in the workforce, men assume the provider role whereas women assume the caregiver role (Eagly & Wood, 2012). Women have historically supplied more unpaid hours of child and elder care than men, and this burden has dramatically increased during the COVID-19 pandemic

(Power, 2020). Balancing the load of maintaining a household, providing child and elder care, and searching for a job is challenging. Favorable ghosting attitudes may arise in women if a higher priority is given to addressing responsibilities at home rather than completing job search activities; ghosting may be intentional or inadvertent in this situation.

Alternatively, ten of the nineteen women interviewed for this study stated that if any interactions with a recruiter or potential employer made them feel unsafe or uncomfortable in terms of personal safety or sexual harassment, they would consider ghosting a prospective employer. In line with research on signaling theory (Karl, Peluchette, & Neely, 2021; Saks, Leck, & Saunders, 1995)—when the actions of one party (e.g., the recruiter) serve as ‘signals’ for how things may function for the other party (e.g., working for the organization)—perhaps women are encountering unsafe or uncomfortable situations and are protecting themselves from further harm by removing themselves from the hiring process through ghosting.

VI.1 Theoretical Contribution

Contributions to the literature include an empirical analysis of applicant ghosting attitudes across three stages of the job pursuit process. To test a theory, it is pertinent that a construct is measurable. Thus, this study assists with that need by developing and validating a 13-item scale that measures applicant ghosting attitudes across all stages of job pursuit. This attitudinal ghosting assessment will allow future researchers to extend and test theory in the context of job applicant ghosting. Moreover, this study used the theory of planned behavior to test the effects of ghosting attitudes on ghosting behavioral intentions alongside other established influences of intentions, such as subjective norms and perceived behavioral control. This places ghosting attitudes in the context of a well-known theoretical framework related to job search behaviors and provides a theoretically rigorous approach to examining the effects of attitudes on ghosting behavioral intentions.

Besides creating a measure of ghosting attitudes, this study was the first to use Barber's stages of job pursuit framework (1998) as a way of conceptualizing and measuring job applicant attitudes toward ghosting. More importantly, "for future research to lead to a better understanding of recruitment issues, studies need to be designed with an appreciation of the complexity of the recruitment process" (Breaugh & Starke, 2000: 430). While many researchers studying job search behaviors focus on a single stage, the current study focused on and measured attitudes across all stages of the job pursuit process. Since job applicant ghosting does not occur at a single stage, but rather at various stages, a measurement tool containing all stages adds broader appeal to the scale.

By replicating the results over three independent, random, large samples across a range of demographics, generalizability was enhanced within the U.S. context. Recall that the other two studies about job applicant ghosting did not focus on samples broad enough to enhance generalizability since the U.S. study used a student-only sample (Karl, Peluchette, & Neely, 2021) and the Polish study had a small sample size (Osbert-Pociecha & Bielinska, 2021); hence, the broader sample demographics and larger sample size enhance the generalizability of the current study over prior studies on job applicant ghosting, especially within the U.S. Additionally, the study found statistically significant correlations between ethnicity and ghosting attitudes; more specifically, being Caucasian was negatively correlated with ghosting aversion attitudes and being African American was positively correlated with ghosting aversion attitudes. These results are in line with the Griepentrog et al. (2012) study which found support for minorities having stronger job pursuit intentions than Caucasians; however, Griepentrog et al. (2012) also found support for withdrawal behaviors being higher for minorities. Since ghosting is an extreme form of applicant withdrawal, future research should explore the role ethnicity plays in predicting ghosting attitudes, intentions, and behaviors.

Furthermore, the study confirmed the predictive power of personality, specifically the conscientiousness dimension of personality, in predicting job applicant ghosting attitudes. Additionally, ghosting attitudes, subjective norms, and job search self-efficacy were predicative of ghosting intentions validating the application of the theory of planned behavior. Saks, Zikic, and Koen (2015) call for future research on the theory of planned behavior to test whether their job search self-efficacy scale predicts job search intentions. The current findings show that job search self-efficacy predicts job search ghosting intentions, expanding the use of their scale into a new context. By showing that conscientiousness predicts ghosting attitudes and ghosting attitudes predict ghosting intentions, greater validity in the measurement instrument was achieved.

VI.2 Practical Contribution

To minimize the likelihood of being ghosted, understanding how recruiting behaviors and processes may influence applicant ghosting behaviors is pertinent. Not surprisingly, “hiring decisions are difficult...Managers report that they regret one-quarter or more of all hiring decisions” (Keller, 2018:852). Thus, “the difficulty in filling jobs has focused organizational attention on the importance of well-designed recruitment activities” (Breaugh & Starke, 2000: 431-432). Tips for effective recruiting practices include focusing on quality rather than quantity, searching for adaptable learners, involving your best workers in the hiring process, and moving quickly (Daub, Kouba, Smaje, & Wiesinger, 2020).

Alternatively, employers should examine internal practices at each stage of the recruitment process that may influence applicant ghosting behaviors and address their organizational shortcomings to minimize the occurrence of job applicant ghosting. Interestingly, “57 percent of job seekers are unhappy with the waiting time after an interview, while 23 percent are willing to wait only one week to hear back” (Daub et al., 2020). Reducing the delay between stages or substages of the recruitment process and updating applicants on their progress through continued

communication are the best ways to reduce the likelihood of job applicant ghosting (Osbert-Pociecha & Bielinska, 2021). “While there may not always be a firm update to give candidates, simply letting them know that their application is still under review is a great way to continue to build the relationship” (Weiss, 2021).

Active engagement with potential applicants allows the employer to hold the applicant’s interest in the open position, decreasing the withdrawal intention (Derricott, 2019; Osbert-Pociecha & Bielinska, 2021). Prior research found that frequent communication from recruiters positively influenced attraction to the company and perception of the company’s interest in the applicant, decreasing the likelihood of job applicant ghosting (Karl, Peluchette, & Neely, 2021). However, as the number of applications received grows, manual responses become increasingly more difficult to manage. Thus, recruitment software can aid in keeping communication open by automatically sending applicants updates on the application review process. Simply sending a reminder that their application is still under review is perceived positively by applicants (Weiss, 2021) and may reduce their withdrawal intentions. Keep in mind that speed is a crucial factor for applicants (Osbert-Pociecha & Bielinska, 2021); therefore, the frequency and timing of feedback or communication should be considered especially if the organization has a lengthy hiring process. Configuring the software to send status updates to applicants at specific intervals would alleviate some of the hiring manager’s burden of responding individually to each applicant. Additionally, providing the applicant with closure if not selected is as important and could also be sent automatically through recruitment software after the position has been filled.

Moreover, prior literature found that recruitment sources (Cable & Turban, 2001; Coleman & Irving, 1997) and recruiter communication (Karl, Peluchette, & Neely, 2021; Osbert-Pociecha & Bielinska, 2021) could lead applicants to self-select out of the process through ghosting behaviors. Furthermore, “recruiter informativeness and personableness” could also impact the

decision of an applicant to self-select out of the job search process (Breugh & Starke, 2000: 423). Likewise, recruitment materials could lead to job applicants self-selecting themselves out of the search process. If an applicant believes the recruitment advertising is discriminatory, inappropriate, or unrelated to the job, the applicant's perception of organizational attractiveness diminishes (Saks, Leck, & Saunders, 1995). While online recruitment materials may not provide adequate and sufficient information about the position or the organization (Feldman & Klaas, 2002), interview questions that seem unrelated to the job duties or requirements could also impact applicant job pursuit behaviors and job offer acceptance (Saks, Leck, & Saunders, 1995). Once discovering that an organization does not meet the job applicant's expectations, or if a recruiter gave the impression of being inconsiderate, the individual might be more likely to withdraw from the process (Taylor & Bergmann, 1987) and ghost the employer. Having a poor experience with a hiring manager or another employee of the prospective company could make the job applicant feel angry or annoyed, causing the applicant to withdraw from the process without notice.

Since job search platforms make it extremely easy (Feldman & Klaas, 2002) and cost-effective (Horton, Vasserman, & Stanford, 2021) for applicants to submit numerous applications, passive job search activities are increasing (Kirschenbaum & Weisberg, 1994). Adding one simple step to the application process, namely forcing applicants to navigate to a separate page and complete added steps beyond the "Submit Resume" button could weed out applicants wishing to exert less commitment or effort to the process. Conscientious applicants are likely to exert more effort and complete the additional tasks. Since the study showed support for individuals high in conscientiousness being less likely to exhibit intentions toward participating in job applicant ghosting, organizations should strive to attract individuals displaying higher levels of conscientiousness. Subsequently, applicants have become less motivated in their job pursuit (Dunn, Times, & Sound, 2015); therefore, a disadvantage to adding an additional step to the

application process is that some qualified applicants may not take the extra step to answer questions on another site, especially if other, similar job listings do not have that same requirement. Hiring managers should determine whether this recommendation will work for their organization and hiring goals.

Although external hiring makes accessing numerous candidates easier, employee referrals and internally hiring individuals through ‘slotting’ could create applicant pools with candidates less likely to participate in ghosting behaviors. Employee referral hiring is a recruitment method that “relies on organizational employees (referrers) to communicate job opening information to individuals in their social network (referred workers)” (Schlachter & Pieper, 2019: 1,325). Alternatively, candidate ‘slotting’ is used when “a manager personally identifies a preferred candidate and ‘slots’ him or her into an open job” (Keller, 2018: 848). The use of ‘slotting’ as a source of recruitment is important because “nearly half of all open jobs are filled internally...[and] internal hires are substantially less expensive and much less likely to fail in their new roles than external hires” (Keller, 2018: 849).

Knowing that a major limitation of human resource management research includes the failure to state the research or findings in a language understood by human resource professionals (Cascio, 2007), I created an attitudinal assessment with “built-in respondent feedback” (e.g., scoring key and descriptions on how to interpret results) based on recommendations by Lake, Carlson, Rose, and Chlevin-Thiele (2019: 104). Practitioners appreciate “easy-to-interpret” scales with “built-in respondent feedback,” which allow hiring managers and applicants to effectively measure and interpret the construct of interest (Lake et al., 2019: 104). The feedback will allow the ghosting attitude assessment to be used with little expertise.

When using the scale, the overall average aggregate scale score should be rounded to the nearest integer. A score at or above 4 indicates that an individual is in favor of job search without

ghosting. A score at or below 3, on the other hand, indicates that an individual is in favor of job search with ghosting. See Appendix E for the complete assessment and instructions on how to compute and interpret the overall assessment score

Furthermore, the scale can be used as a diagnostic tool for self-assessment. Once an applicant understands their ghosting attitudes, they could take part in self-reflection, developing their thinking around a job search strategy and the implications of ghosting. Moreover, they could seek training or coaching aimed at teaching effective and professionally accepted behaviors that minimize ghosting intentions and behaviors in the future and increase the effectiveness of their search strategy. Similar to applicant training sessions on resume creation, professional attire, and effective interviewing techniques, practitioners could design coaching interventions targeted at increasing awareness of job applicant ghosting, the implications ghosting behavior could have on hiring potential, and proper job search etiquette that mitigates the risks of repercussions related to applicant ghosting. Awareness is key and corrective interventions will help.

VII CONCLUSION

Investing less time in waiting for job applicants that vanish from the recruitment process could reduce employer costs. Naturally, “searching for candidates requires effort, and when managers face high search costs, one way they economize is by considering only a small portion of available alternatives” (Keller, 2018: 853-853). If employers reduce the number of candidates they review, it would be great if more of the applications reviewed were from job seekers that favor job search without participating in ghosting behaviors.

VII.1 Limitations

Several assumptions were made to ensure that the stages of job pursuit depicted in Chapter III, Figure 1 fit the research approach. First, I assumed that “recruitment message[s]...generate[d] initial interest from potential job applicants,” were timely presented, were clear and concise, and did not influence whether a candidate self-selected to remove themselves from consideration of the posted position (Breugh & Starke, 2000: 410). The second assumption is that the open position would provide value if accepted and individuals were intelligent enough to “comprehend the information conveyed” (Breugh & Starke, 2000: 417). Furthermore, assuming the job posting was read, the applicant would understand the job position, duties, and employer expectations.

As mentioned earlier, one limitation of Barber’s stages of job pursuit framework is the assumption that an applicant is only applying to one job at a time. In reality, an applicant may apply to multiple jobs, which they may or may not be able to effectively juggle. This study did not collect the number of active job applications. If applicants apply for many jobs at once, the workload could impact their determination to ghost some of those potential employers. Additional insights could have been gleaned if this information had been collected. Nevertheless, the interview participants with unfavorable ghosting attitudes expressed strong intentions of continuing communication with every potential employer regardless of the number of active

applications that were open at the same time. They felt that not responding to an employer would be rude or unprofessional, and out of common courtesy, applicants should politely decline positions rather than becoming nonresponsive. Thus, showing interest in a position created an obligation within these interview participants to provide feedback to potential employers.

Another limitation of a scale that measures attitudes is that “one never knows whether the attitude concerned is structured in the same way in another country” (Oppenheim, 1992: 201). Thus, future research should study job applicant attitudes toward ghosting in countries outside the United States to determine whether this scale holds up for non-U.S. cultures. Moreover, the timing of the survey administration could have impacted respondent fatigue and the quality of responses. The conscientiousness measure in the final replication sample had an alpha of less than 0.70. This could be due to the time of day that the sample was collected, which was an evening on a weekday. Fatigue may have set in, especially if participants had worked a full day before answering the survey. In addition, respondents may not have been paying as close attention to the answers they selected due to depleted energy and effort (Bowling, Gibson, & DeSimone, 2022).

While the use of online panel data, specifically MTurk data, has been cited as creating several challenges for researchers—including high attrition rates, participant inattentiveness, and web robot (or ‘bot’) vulnerabilities (Aguinis, Villamor, & Ramani, 2021)—prior literature reported findings in support of the argument that online panel data “does not systematically affect internal consistency in applied psychology research” (Walter et al., 2019: 433). To combat high attrition, I increased the sample size for each wave of survey collection by more than 10% (Aguinis, Villamor, & Ramani, 2021) to ensure a large enough sample was retained to perform the necessary statistical tests required for analysis. Participant attentiveness was addressed by the use of two ‘attention checks,’ which were placed one-third and two-thirds of the way through the survey (Aguinis, Villamor, & Ramani, 2021). Finally, Qualtrics offered bot detection through the

use of Captcha verification, a systematic technique used to tell human and computer behavior apart. I activated the Captcha service upon confirmatory and replication survey administration to flag potential bot responses in the data and remove them before analysis.

Another concern about using MTurk data relates to the representativeness of the U.S. working population. The nature of online panel data respondents may differ from the general population, and those respondents may view job applicant ghosting differently. When Walter et al. (2019) examined the internal consistency and external validity between conventional data samples and online panel data samples, they found that the online panel data was as appropriate as other samples in applied psychology research. Overall, the MTurk data was representative of the intended population, namely U.S. job applicants using the Internet for job search, and provided a mix of demographics, such as gender, ethnicity, education, and occupation, thus, aiding in enhancing the theoretical generalizability of the study's findings.

VII.1.1 Alternative Explanations

Note that an alternative explanation for applicants not returning recruiter calls or showing up for interviews could be related to the applicants' perceptions of the open positions, the capabilities required by the positions, or the applicants' desires not aligning with the open positions, causing the applicants to self-select themselves out of the job candidate pool (Breugh & Starke, 2000). Additional factors influencing an applicant's choice to self-select out of the process include transportation costs, lack of motivation, poor attitudes, and shortage of people skills (Dunn, Times, & Sound, 2015). As mentioned earlier, lengthy delays in the various stages of recruitment, adverse recruitment activities, and inconsiderate treatment from hiring managers could also cause applicants to self-select out of the hiring process (Taylor & Bergmann, 1987). None of these factors were considered in the current study and all could impact applicant ghosting attitudes.

Interestingly, compensation is not as crucial in the preliminary stages of job pursuit, but it becomes more important later (Harold & Ployhart, 2008); it may influence applicant decisions and commitment to the process (Barber, 1998; Kudlyak & Romero, 2013). Job applicants may assess a minimum required wage and self-select out of any opportunities once they discover that the opportunity is below their minimum wage base (Kudlyak & Romero, 2013). For individuals seeking employment, there is a balancing act between the probability of receiving the expected wage and the likelihood of gaining employment (Kudlyak & Romero, 2013). Thus, applicants may accept a lower-paying job the longer the duration of their search (Kudlyak & Romero, 2013; Schwartz, 2019). However, Schwartz (2019) argues that the applicant's choice of search intensity, not their choice of a minimum level of required wages, influences unemployment duration.

Other factors influencing job search behaviors include ethnicity or gender (Duguid, Loyd, Tolbert, 2012), applicant characteristics (Turban & Cable, 2003), and distance from job loss (Wanberg et al., 2005). Ethnicity and representation within an organization influence behavior when the applicant does not feel represented or welcomed based on race (Kirschenbaum & Weisberg, 1994; Taylor & Bergmann, 1987). Additionally, economic conditions and personal circumstances could also influence attitudes. Rather than measuring ghosting attitudes, the scale may be capturing attitudes that are a byproduct of current economic conditions or applicant circumstances. The length of time in the process, as well as financial hardship, could influence search intensity (Schwartz, 2019) and attitudes. This study explores applicant factors at a single point in time, where the industry at the time of the data collection may have impacted the results. Labor market considerations for each industry may also influence applicant ghosting attitudes.

VII.2 Future Research

Barber et al. (1994) observed changes in applicant job search behavior over time, including decreased search intensity and increased formal source usage. Since data collection occurred at a

single point in time, over a relatively short period, namely, four months, the current study did not capture any changes in ghosting attitudes or behavioral intentions. Therefore, future research should use a longitudinal design to examine whether applicant ghosting attitudes and behavioral intentions change or remain stable over time. Prior research suggests the duration of the search process increases the likelihood that applicants will withdraw from the process (Griepentrog et al., 2012) through ghosting behaviors (Osbert-Pociecha & Bielinska, 2021). In addition to a longitudinal design, it may be necessary to apply theories outside those normally used in human resource management or combine theories (Salipante & Smith, 2012) to further understand this complex phenomenon of job applicant ghosting.

Surprisingly, education was not a predictor of ghosting attitudes, and a post hoc analysis of occupation did not uncover any additional insights. The number of observations for each occupation may have been too small to explore the differences between industries. During the interviews, a theme emerged among the healthcare, retail, and food service industries. Participants working and recruiting in these industries reported experiencing higher occurrences of job applicant ghosting. In light of the pandemic, these industries have experienced higher turnover and more demanding work requirements. The attitude an applicant has at any point may be related to the industry they are applying to at the time. Future research should look into the effects of industry on ghosting attitudes and explore how these attitudes might change over time and across industries.

In addition to job applicant ghosting, workplace ghosting has also started to become a trend and occurs after employment when an employee stops showing up for work without notice or warning (Darden, 2018). Another concerning employee trend is ‘quiet quitting’ which became popular after the 2020 pandemic (Scheyett, 2023). ‘Quiet quitting’ is when an employee puts forth just enough effort to remain employed and disengages from trying to advance or develop

their career further (Scheyett, 2023). Future research should explore the relationship between job applicant ghosting attitudes and workplace ghosting attitudes. It would be interesting to research whether job applicant ghosting attitudes are related to ‘quiet quitting’ attitudes.

Conversely, there are claims that employers have ghosted applicants first, causing applicants to return the gesture by ghosting employers (HRNews, 2021; Lewis, 2019; Osbert-Pociecha & Bielinska, 2021); however, more research is needed to determine whether employer ghosting leads to applicant ghosting. Future research should study hiring managers’ attitudes toward ghosting job applicants. It is possible applicants who have invested a lot of time, resources, and effort into securing a job could suffer higher distress if ghosted by an employer, especially if the applicant did not expect to be ghosted.

Moreover, organizational fit is essential for assessing corporate attractiveness, and job fit is vital for influencing job pursuit intentions (Harold & Ployhart, 2008). Furthermore, the person-organization fit perspective and technological self-efficacy could influence the choice to apply (Van Birgelen, Wetzels, & Van Dolen, 2008) or remain in the applicant pool. Researchers suggest that “employment websites used to inform potential applicants about employment opportunities should be easy to use” (Van Birgelen, Wetzels, & Van Dolen, 2008: 731). As mentioned earlier, this ease of use could increase the likelihood of job applicants ghosting employers. Future research should explore the impact technology and the Internet have on ghosting attitudes, intentions, and behaviors. Does ease-of-use platform design influence job applicant ghosting? Understanding whether the ease of use of online recruitment sites assists applicants in their reluctant job pursuit behaviors is essential to further knowledge in this area and provide tips to hiring managers on increasing the number of serious applicants in their applicant pool. Notably, “college placement services, professional associations, and on-line employment exchanges received below-average ratings” for hiring effectiveness (Breugh & Starke, 2000: 422).

Since ethnicity was found to be statistically significantly correlated with job applicant ghosting attitudes, future research on ghosting attitudes should include ethnicity. Specifically, the relationship between being Caucasian or African American and favoring job search with or without ghosting should be explored in more detail. Furthermore, the results indicated that subjective norms may be a stronger predictor of ghosting behavioral intentions than attitudes. Thus, there is a need for researchers to create better scales that measure injunctive and descriptive norms related to job applicant ghosting.

Nevertheless, pressure from non-personal, external influences or obligations (i.e., governmental) may not be helping the issue of ghosting either. One factor believed to be a significant contributor to job applicant ghosting is the level of unemployment, which may increase job applicant ghosting behaviors in times of higher unemployment. While the results did not indicate support for unemployment influencing attitudes toward ghosting, the sample of unemployed individuals may not have been adequate to measure this relationship. Future research should explore how the state unemployment rules requiring recipients to apply for a certain number of positions each week could encourage applicants to participate in ghosting behaviors. That is, individuals receiving government assistance may be less motivated to secure employment and more likely to ghost employers because the consequences of not securing a job are much lower when receiving unemployment assistance. Interestingly, it seems that many individuals do not actively attempt to gain employment until those government benefits run out or are about to run out (Wanberg, Kanfer, & Rotundo, 1999).

Government pressure or rules could cause individuals to apply for jobs for reasons other than the necessity or desire to gain employment. For instance, Florida Reemployment Services requires unemployment applicants to contact at least five employers weekly to maintain their State of Florida unemployment benefits (Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, 2020). This

requirement could cause an increase in job applicant ghosting if applicants apply for multiple jobs as a requirement to collect unemployment without true intentions of securing a job. The rules do not specify how often an applicant may apply to the same job posting (Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, 2020). Therefore, if applicants apply to the same job posting more than once to satisfy the five weekly applications requirement, a more significant increase in applications could occur. Applicants sending duplicate resumes will likely vanish from the hiring process until the next time the applicant is pressured to follow unemployment requirements and apply for more jobs. These considerations should be included in future research on job applicant ghosting.

VII.3 Concluding Remarks

A weak work ethic is a common trait among applicants; workers leave after working for a week or a month and stop showing up for work without notice (Dunn, Times, & Sound, 2015). Moreover, when applicants hold multiple positions, motivation may be lacking at any one or all jobs (Dunn, Times, & Sound, 2015). Nevertheless, “hiring mistakes are often attributed to the challenges of identifying and evaluating potential candidates” (Keller, 2018: 852). Organizations would rather spend time developing core competencies than taking on the tedious, time-consuming, frustrating process of finding, calling, interviewing, hiring, and training individuals, especially if applicants participate in job search ghosting behaviors. Unfortunately, “due to the limited time, information, and resources at their disposal, managers must make hiring decisions without knowing the complete set of potential candidates in advance, leading to problems of identification” related to choosing the best candidate for the position (Keller, 2018: 852). Cascio and Aguinis (2008: 134) suggest that “the current staffing model has reached its upper limit of effectiveness, that current approaches are not well suited for improving the prediction of

performance in the fast-paced, global organizations that characterize the twenty-first century, and that there are many opportunities for improvement.”

Incorporating the ghosting attitude assessment into hiring practices, could create an intervention that helps organizations determine which applicants are more likely to participate in ghosting behaviors before and after securing employment. “High-quality assessments can provide valuable data to assist with hiring, promotion, or employee development decisions” (Lake et al., 2019: 92). As an added benefit, the assessment could provide job applicants with awareness of ghosting behaviors and their impact on organizations. Unexpectedly, three months after the pre-test interviews, two interviewees reached out to indicate how awareness of job applicant ghosting changed their job pursuit behaviors. Both individuals indicated they made additional efforts to ensure every employer that contacted them received a response related to moving forward or ending the process. Therefore, before completion, this study already made a positive, albeit small, impact on a handful of employers while also improving the search strategy of at least two job applicants.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Research Questions

- 1) How do job applicants view ghosting behaviors toward employers at various stages of job pursuit?
- 2) What effect do these attitudes have on actual job pursuit behaviors?

Background Information

Job applicant ghosting, a phenomenon regularly referred to as ‘no call, no show’ by hiring managers, has become a common trend among job applicants during recruitment. I am interested in measuring job applicant attitudes toward ghosting. This study will focus on the views of U.S. job applicants that have applied to at least one U.S. job in the last five years.

Introduction

The following information will be relayed to the interviewee. I am studying job applicant behaviors and am interested in how applicants view the job pursuit process and different applicant behaviors. There are no right or wrong answers. I want to know how you think and feel, so please answer all questions honestly and to the best of your ability.

All interviews will be recorded after attaining participant consent. The semi-structured interview approach will be used, and the following are examples of the probe questions that will be asked:

Personal Knowledge

- Have you heard of “job applicant ghosting?”
- What do you think is meant by “job applicant ghosting?”
- How would you define “job applicant ghosting?”
- What behaviors do you think “ghosting” consists of?

(The definition of job applicant ghosting will be provided to participants: Job applicant ghosting is when an applicant ceases all communication and contact with an employer without warning. Ghosting can happen at any stage of the job pursuit process, from applying for a job to interviewing to accepting an offer and starting work.)

Ghosting Behaviors

- Have you ever ghosted an employer before?
 - o If so, how or at which stage have you ghosted an employer before?
 - Why did you ghost the employer?
 - What were your reasons for ghosting?
 - In the same situation, would you do it again? Why or why not?
 - How did you feel after ghosting the employer?

- If not, why haven't you ghosted an employer before?
- Do you think you will ghost an employer in the future? Why or why not?
- Have you ever overseen the hiring of employees?
 - If yes, were you ever ghosted by an employee, or were any potential employees classified as "no call, no shows?"
 - If yes, please describe the situation(s).
 - At what stage were you ghosted by a job applicant, and how?
 - In what way has this experience impacted how you view ghosting?

Attitudes Toward Ghosting

- What do you think of people who have ghosted?
- Are there situations where ghosting is necessary?
- At what stages of job pursuit would ghosting be appropriate? Inappropriate?

Survey Design Questions

(A copy of the survey will be provided to the participant.)

- Based on our discussion, which of the following statements do you think are in favor of ghosting?
- Which of the following statements do you think are against ghosting?
- Which of these statements do not relate to ghosting at all?
- Are any of these statements confusing?
- What other aspects of job applicant ghosting are missing from these questions?

(A description of the three different stages of job pursuit will be provided to the participant: Extensive search, intensive search, and job choice. Extensive search involves identifying job opportunities, weighing the opportunities, and applying for a job. Intensive search includes meeting and interviewing with the employer, going on site visits, and participating in selection procedures such as drug screens, personality tests, or other business-related tests. Job choice involves accepting or rejecting a job offer and starting work.)

- Can you match each statement to one of these three stages of job pursuit? Some questions may not fit any of these stages.
- What other job pursuit activities are missing from these questions?
- Name some other behaviors that could be considered job applicant ghosting.

Appendix B: Pre-Test Survey

A- Demographics

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this survey. All answers will be treated anonymously. Click the continue button to start the survey.

Please answer the following demographic questions about yourself to help clarify your answers and allow us to make statistical comparisons.

1. Current age?
 - a. 18 to 24
 - b. 25 to 34
 - c. 35 to 44
 - d. 45 to 54
 - e. 55 to 64
 - f. 65+

2. Gender?
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
 - c. Other or prefer not to say

3. Ethnicity?
 - a. African American
 - b. Hispanic or Latino
 - c. Asian or Pacific Islander
 - d. Native American
 - e. Caucasian
 - f. Other

4. Highest level of education achieved?
 - a. High school graduate or less
 - b. Associate's degree
 - c. Bachelor's degree
 - d. Master's degree
 - e. PhD, MD, or advanced college degree beyond Master

5. Political affiliation or preference?
 - a. Democrat
 - b. Republican
 - c. Other
 - d. None

6. Would you consider yourself religious?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

7. Are you employed?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

8. Are you currently collecting unemployment benefits?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

9. What type of employment did you include in your most recent job search?
 - a. Full-time (at least 35 hours per week or more)
 - b. Part-time (less than 35 hours per week)
 - c. Both full-time and part-time

10. What type of position did you include in your most recent job search?
 - a. Permanent
 - b. Temporary
 - c. Both permanent and temporary

11. Consider your most recent job search. How long did you search for a job?
 - a. Less than 1 month
 - b. 1 to 3 months
 - c. 4 to 6 months
 - d. 7 to 11 months
 - e. 1 to 2 years
 - f. Over 2 years

12. Please check the occupational category that best matches the job duties of your most recent job search.
 - a. Clerical/Secretarial
 - b. Retail/Customer Service
 - c. Fast Food/Restaurant
 - d. Building Services/Maintenance/Security
 - e. Corporate Management
 - f. Legal/Accounting/Engineering
 - g. Transportation/Logistics/Distribution
 - h. Sales/Marketing/Communication
 - i. Manufacturing/Production
 - j. Education/Research
 - k. Information Technology
 - l. Health Care
 - m. Other Job Position

13. Have you ever been responsible for hiring employees?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

14. How much did you (alone) earn from wages in 2021?
 - a. below \$25,000
 - b. \$25,000 - \$49,999
 - c. \$50,000 - \$74,999
 - d. \$75,000 - \$99,999
 - e. \$100,000 and more

B- Job Search Self-Efficacy

(Saks, Zikic, & Koen, 2015)

Read each statement carefully and choose the answer that best describes your level of confidence for each item.

Use the following scale to respond to each item below: Not at All Confident (1), Slightly Confident (2), Reasonably Confident (3), Very Confident (4), Totally Confident (5)

i- Behaviors

Assume you are in the process of searching for a job. How confident are you in your ability to:

15. Use social media networks to obtain job leads.
16. Prepare resumes that will get you job interviews.
17. Impress interviewers during employment interviews.
18. Make “cold calls” that will get you a job interview.
19. Conduct information interviews to find out about careers and jobs that you are interested in pursuing.
20. Prepare a sales pitch that will attract the interest of employers.
21. Plan and organize a weekly job search schedule.
22. Find out where job openings exist.
23. Use a variety of sources to find job opportunities.
24. Search for and find good job opportunities.

ii- Outcomes

Assume you are in the process of searching for a job. How confident are you that your job search behaviors will allow you to:

25. Obtain more than one good job offer.
26. Be successful in your job search.
27. Be invited to job interviews.
28. Get a job offer in an organization that you want to work in.
29. Get a job offer for a job that you really want.
30. Get a job as soon as possible.

31. Get a job with a very good salary.
32. Be invited for second interviews.
33. Be invited for site visits.
34. Obtain a very good job.

35. Before continuing, please select the number “two” from the list below
 - a. 1
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4
 - e. 5

C- Conscientiousness

(John & Srivastava, 1999)

Read each statement carefully and choose the answer that best describes your agreement using the scale below.

Use the following scale to respond to each item below: Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Neither Agree Nor Disagree (3), Agree (4), Strongly Agree (5)

I see myself as someone who:

36. Does a thorough job.
37. Can be somewhat careless.
38. Is a reliable worker.
39. Tends to be disorganized.
40. Tends to be lazy.
41. Perseveres until the task is finished.
42. Does things efficiently.
43. Makes plans and follows through with them.
44. Is easily distracted.

D- Ghosting Attitudes

Please use the next section to answer questions about your opinion and reactions as they relate to your most recent job search activities. Read each statement carefully and choose the answer that best describes your agreement using the scale below.

Use the following scale to respond to each item below: Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Somewhat Disagree (3), Somewhat Agree (4), Agree (5), Strongly Agree (6)

i- Extensive Search

Consider your most recent job search experience when answering these questions.

45. It is expected that you follow up on every job you apply for.

46. It is important to return initial calls or emails from potential employers.
47. Once you have initiated communication with a potential employer, it is considerate to keep up the communication.
48. It is necessary to follow up with an employer after applying for a job.
49. After applying for a job, you should always continue communication with the employer.
50. You should let an employer know when you are no longer interested in the job opening.
51. It is wrong when an applicant stops communicating with an employer without warning.
52. I think poorly of someone that applies for a job and stops responding to the employer.
53. It is okay to stop communicating with potential employers after applying for a job.
54. Ignoring phone calls or emails from a potential employer is acceptable.

ii- Intensive Search

55. It is important to show up for a scheduled job interview.
56. Personality tests should always be completed if an employer requires it.
57. When you agree to show up for an interview, you should keep that commitment.
58. Continuing communication with an employer is important after scheduling an interview.
59. Once you schedule a drug screen, it is important to keep the appointment.
60. Skills assessment exams are necessary for employment and should be taken seriously.
61. Missing a job interview without calling or sending an email is inconsiderate.
62. It is unprofessional to schedule a job interview and not show up for it.
63. It is okay to skip pre-employment activities, like drug screens or other testing.
64. It is acceptable to schedule an interview and not show up.

iii- Job Choice

65. It is appropriate to email an employer when I change my mind about a job offer.
66. After accepting a job offer, you have committed to show up for work.
67. After scheduling my first day of work, it is important that I show up for it.
68. It is important to continue communicating with an employer after receiving a job offer.
69. It is polite to let a potential employer know when you have accepted another position.
70. After negotiating a salary, it is important to continue communication with an employer.
71. I think poorly of someone who accepts a job offer and does not show up for the first day of work.
72. It is okay to stop responding to a potential employer when I am not interested in the position.
73. It is acceptable to stop communicating with a potential employer before receiving a job offer.
74. It is acceptable to stop communicating with a potential employer after accepting a job offer.

75. Before continuing, please select the number "six" from the list below
 - a. 2
 - b. 4
 - c. 6
 - d. 8
 - e. 10

E- Subjective Norms

i- Injunctive Norms

Please use the next section to answer questions about the expectations of people close to you. Consider your most recent job search experience when answering these questions.

Use the following scale to respond to each item below: Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Somewhat Disagree (3), Somewhat Agree (4), Agree (5), Strongly Agree (6)

Most people close to me would expect me to:

- 76. Apply for jobs I intend to accept.
- 77. Make follow-up calls after applying for a job.
- 78. Go to an interview and do my best.
- 79. Show up for a drug screen.
- 80. Send an email saying I changed my mind or have a better offer.
- 81. Accept a verbal job offer and sign all required hiring paperwork.
- 82. Return calls from potential employers.
- 83. Show up for my first day of work if I accept an offer.

ii- Descriptive Norms

Please use the next section to answer questions about the job search activities of people close to you. Consider their most recent job search experience when answering these questions.

Use the following scale to respond to each item below: Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Somewhat Disagree (3), Somewhat Agree (4), Agree (5), Strongly Agree (6)

Most people close to me:

- 84. Apply for jobs they intend to accept.
- 85. Make follow-up calls after applying for a job.
- 86. Go to interviews and do their best.
- 87. Show up for drug screens.
- 88. Send emails saying they changed their mind or have better offers.
- 89. Accept verbal job offers and sign all required hiring paperwork.
- 90. Return calls from potential employers.
- 91. Show up for their first day of work accepting an offer.

F- Ghosting Intentions

(Adapted from Karl, Peluchette, & Neely, 2021)

Please use the next section to answer questions about how likely you are to do each of the following job search activities. Consider your most recent job search experience when answering these questions.

Use the following scale to respond to each item below: Extremely Unlikely (1), Unlikely (2), Somewhat Unlikely (3), Somewhat Likely (4), Likely (5), Extremely Likely (6)

How likely are you to:

92. Apply for a job you intend to accept.
93. Make follow-up calls after applying for a job.
93. Go to the interview and do your best.
94. Show up for a drug screen.
95. Send an email saying you changed your mind or have a better offer.
96. Accept a verbal job offer and sign all required hiring paperwork.
97. Not return a phone call from a potential employer.
98. Not show up to the interview.
99. Accept a job and do not show up for the first day of work.

Appendix C: Attitudinal, Subjective Norm, and Behavioral Intention Item Revisions

Please use the next section to answer questions about your opinion and reactions as they relate to your most recent job search activities. Read each statement carefully and choose the answer that best describes your agreement using the scale below.

Use the following scale to respond to each item below: Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Somewhat Disagree (3), Somewhat Agree (4), Agree (5), Strongly Agree (6)

Consider your most recent job search experience when answering these questions. Assume you initiate contact with a potential employer by walk-in, phone call, email, or by submitting an application or resume.

D- Ghosting Attitudes

i- Extensive Search

45. When a potential employer follows up on your application, it is considerate to respond to that employer.
46. It is polite to return an initial call from an employer if you have applied for a job with that employer.
47. After applying for jobs, you should respond to initial calls or emails from employers.
48. It is wrong when you stop communicating with an employer without warning immediately after applying for a job.
49. It is good manners to return an initial call or email from a potential employer if you submit an application.

ii- Intensive Search

50. It is important to show up for your scheduled job interviews.
51. When you agree to show up for an interview, you should keep that commitment.
52. It is polite to let an employer know if something comes up before your scheduled interview.
53. Once you schedule pre-employment activities, like drug screens or other job-related tests, it is polite to follow through on those tasks.
54. It is acceptable to schedule an interview and not show up.

iii- Job Choice

55. It is good manners to email an employer when you change your mind about their job offer.
56. After scheduling your first day of work, it is important that you show up for it.
57. After receiving an offer, you should let the employer know whether you accept their offer.
58. I think poorly of someone who accepts a job offer and does not show up for the first day of work.
59. It is acceptable to stop communicating with a potential employer after accepting a job offer.

60. Before continuing, please select the number “six” from the list below
- a. 2
 - b. 4
 - c. 6
 - d. 8
 - e. 10

E- Subjective Norms

i- Injunctive Norms

Please use the next section to answer questions about the expectations of people close to you. Consider your most recent job search experience when answering these questions.

Use the following scale to respond to each item below: Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Somewhat Disagree (3), Somewhat Agree (4), Agree (5), Strongly Agree (6)

Most people close to me would expect me to:

61. Apply for jobs I intend to accept.
62. Show up for scheduled interviews.
63. Complete pre-employment activities like drug screens or other job-related tests.
64. Accept a job offer and sign all required hiring paperwork.
65. Show up for my first day of work.

ii- Descriptive Norms

Please use the next section to answer questions about the job search activities of people close to you. Consider their most recent job search experience when answering these questions.

Use the following scale to respond to each item below: Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Somewhat Disagree (3), Somewhat Agree (4), Agree (5), Strongly Agree (6)

Most people close to me:

66. Apply for jobs they intend to accept.
67. Show up for scheduled interviews.
68. Complete pre-employment activities like drug screens or other job-related tests.
69. Accept job offers and sign all required hiring paperwork.
70. Show up for their first day of work.

F- Ghosting Intentions

(Adapted from Karl, Peluchette, & Neely, 2021)

Please use the next section to answer questions about how likely you are to do each of the following job search activities. Consider your most recent job search experience when answering these questions.

Use the following scale to respond to each item below: Extremely Unlikely (1), Unlikely (2), Somewhat Unlikely (3), Somewhat Likely (4), Likely (5), Extremely Likely (6)

Assume you initiate contact with a potential employer by walk-in, phone call, email, or by submitting an application or resume. How likely are you to:

71. Apply for jobs you intend to accept.
72. Show up for scheduled interviews.
73. Complete pre-employment activities like drug screens or other job-related tests.
74. Accept a job offer and sign all required hiring paperwork.
75. Show up for your first day of work.

Appendix D: Descriptive Statistics and Pearson Product Moment Correlations

Table 12: Pre-Test Study Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Matrix

Construct (n = 30)	Mean	Std. Dev.	Gender	Age	Eth.	Edu.	Occ.	Income	HE	JSSE	C	GA	SN	GI
Gender	--	--	1.000											
Age	--	--	0.215	1.000										
Ethnicity (Eth.)	--	--	0.153	-0.029	1.000									
Education (Edu.)	--	--	-0.074	-0.007	0.047	1.000								
Occupation (Occ.)	--	--	0.082	-0.476**	0.228	0.296	1.000							
Income (from 2021)	--	--	-0.253	0.439*	0.009	0.455*	-0.248	1.000						
Hiring Experience (HE)	--	--	0.146	-0.366*	0.195	-0.090	0.248	-0.551**	1.000					
Job Search Self- Efficacy (JSSE)	3.410	0.715	-0.255	-0.266	-0.233	0.231	-0.048	0.250	0.185	1.000				
Conscientiousness (C)	4.074	0.372	-0.182	0.094	-0.131	0.176	-0.004	0.532**	-0.260	0.267	1.000			
Ghosting Attitudes (GA)	5.249	0.413	0.160	0.092	0.239	0.074	-0.036	0.221	-0.005	0.137	0.251	1.000		
Subjective Norms (SN)	5.419	0.494	0.122	0.256	0.236	0.239	0.048	0.392*	-0.093	0.077	0.561**	0.494**	1.000	
Ghosting Intentions (GI)	5.633	0.392	0.196	0.047	0.012	-0.134	0.012	0.092	-0.111	0.236	0.412*	0.552**	0.536**	1.000

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 13: Pilot Study Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Matrix

Construct (n = 213)	Mean	Std. Dev.	Gender	Age	Eth.	Edu.	Occ.	Income	HE	JSSE	C	GA	SN	GI
Gender	--	--	1.000											
Age	--	--	0.139*	1.000										
Ethnicity (Eth.)	--	--	-0.185**	-0.080	1.000									
Education (Edu.)	--	--	0.062	-0.037	0.166*	1.000								
Occupation (Occ.)	--	--	0.071	0.105	-0.046	0.056	1.000							
Income (from 2021)	--	--	0.160*	-0.057	-0.030	0.335**	0.172*	1.000						
Hiring Experience (HE)	--	--	0.029	0.018	0.004	-0.258**	-0.050	-0.273**	1.000					
Job Search Self-Efficacy (JSSE)	3.640	0.744	-0.044	-0.013	-0.028	0.237**	0.212**	0.290**	-0.347**	1.000				
Conscientiousness (C)	3.586	0.635	0.196**	0.053	-0.075	-0.156*	-0.012	0.017	0.187**	0.119	1.000			
Ghosting Attitudes (GA)	4.811	0.717	-0.076	0.157*	0.084	-0.101	0.135*	-0.001	0.083	0.386**	0.309**	1.000		
Subjective Norms (SN)	4.869	0.725	-0.082	0.158*	0.041	-0.111	-0.111	0.162*	0.102	0.430**	0.394**	0.883**	1.000	
Ghosting Intentions (GI)	4.892	0.775	-0.066	0.179**	0.081	-0.152*	0.131	-0.031	0.112	0.353**	0.344**	0.872**	0.879**	1.000

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 14: Confirmatory Study Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Matrix

Construct (n = 216)	Mean	Std. Dev.	Gender	Age	Eth.	Edu.	Occ.	Income	HE	JSSE	C	GA	SN	GI
Gender	--	--	1.000											
Age	--	--	0.306**	1.000										
Ethnicity (Eth.)	--	--	-0.052	0.074	1.000									
Education (Edu.)	--	--	-0.123	-0.072	< 0.001	1.000								
Occupation (Occ.)	--	--	-0.009	-0.129	0.022	0.038	1.000							
Income (from 2021)	--	--	-0.025	-0.026	-0.259**	0.177**	0.080	1.000						
Hiring Experience (HE)	--	--	0.213**	0.114	-0.069	-0.345**	-0.064	-0.271**	1.000					
Job Search Self-Efficacy (JSSE)	3.573	0.754	-0.090	-0.063	0.057	0.227**	0.176**	0.183**	-0.333**	1.000				
Conscientiousness (C)	3.417	0.652	0.246**	0.226**	-0.082	-0.330**	-0.140*	-0.084	0.385**	0.133	1.000			
Ghosting Attitudes (GA)	4.716	0.918	0.072	0.054	0.046	-0.138*	0.053	-0.123	0.288**	0.391**	0.433**	1.000		
Subjective Norms (SN)	4.731	0.982	0.132	0.103	0.073	-0.180**	0.064	-0.043	0.298**	0.425**	0.493**	0.887**	1.000	
Ghosting Intentions (GI)	4.763	1.031	0.131	0.107	0.112	-0.141*	0.056	-0.061	0.329**	0.376**	0.478**	0.838**	0.918**	1.000

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 15: Replication Study Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Matrix

Construct (n = 399)	Mean	Std. Dev.	Gender	Age	Eth.	Edu.	Occ.	Income	HE	JSSE	C	GA	SN	GI
Gender	--	--	1.000											
Age	--	--	0.064	1.000										
Ethnicity (Eth.)	--	--	-0.085	-0.091	1.000									
Education (Edu.)	--	--	0.118*	-0.073	0.074	1.000								
Occupation (Occ.)	--	--	0.039	0.057	-0.002	-0.022	1.000							
Income (from 2021)	--	--	0.123*	-0.006	-0.183**	0.186**	0.158**	1.000						
Hiring Experience (HE)	--	--	-0.051	0.039	0.004	-0.182**	-0.041	-0.195**	1.000					
Job Search Self-Efficacy (JSSE)	3.762	0.678	0.005	-0.039	0.128*	0.181**	-0.021	0.084	-0.371**	1.000				
Conscientiousness (C)	3.577	0.444	0.030	0.169**	0.072	-0.106*	-0.028	-0.164**	0.210**	0.180**	1.000			
Ghosting Attitudes (GA)	4.847	0.653	-0.088	0.046	0.115*	0.009	-0.088	-0.089	< 0.001	0.394**	0.453**	1.000		
Subjective Norms (SN)	4.911	0.655	-0.072	0.083	0.149**	-0.028	-0.039	-0.087	0.019	0.409**	0.494**	0.872**	1.000	
Ghosting Intentions (GI)	4.950	0.662	-0.080	0.051	0.111*	-0.054	-0.061	-0.140**	0.012	0.403**	0.471**	0.820**	0.836**	1.000

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Appendix E: Ghosting Attitude Assessment with Scoring Instructions

Ghosting Attitude Assessment

Assume you initiate contact with a potential employer by walk-in, phone call, email, or by submitting an application or resume. Use the following scale to rate your agreement with each statement: Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Somewhat Disagree (3), Somewhat Agree (4), Agree (5), or Strongly Agree (6).

1st Stage - Applying (Identify opportunities, submit application/resume)

1. When a potential employer follows up on my application, it is considerate to respond to that employer.
2. It is polite to return an initial call from an employer if I have applied for a job with that employer.
3. After applying for jobs, I should respond to initial calls or emails from employers.
4. It is wrong when I stop communicating with an employer without warning immediately after applying for a job.
5. It is good manners to return an initial call or email from a potential employer if I submit an application.

2nd Stage- Interviewing (Interview, visit sites, complete pre-employment activities/tests)

6. It is important to show up for my scheduled job interviews.
7. When I agree to show up for an interview, I should keep that commitment.
8. It is polite to let an employer know if something comes up before my scheduled interview.
9. Once I schedule pre-employment activities, like drug screens or other job-related tests, it is polite to follow through on those tasks.

3rd Stage - Choosing (Accept/reject an offer, show up for work)

10. It is good manners to email an employer when I change my mind about their job offer.
11. After scheduling my first day of work, it is important that I show up for it.
12. After receiving an offer, I should let the employer know whether I accept their offer.
13. I think poorly of someone who accepts a job offer and does not show up for the first day of work.

Scoring Instructions:

Record your responses to each statement here, rounding the overall score to the nearest whole number.

Stage 1: Applying

1. _____ + 2. _____ + 3. _____ + 4. _____ + 5. _____ = _____ Total

Stage 2: Interviewing

6. _____ + 7. _____ + 8. _____ + 9. _____ = _____ Total

Stage 3: Choosing

10. _____ + 11. _____ + 12. _____ + 13. _____ = _____ Total

Totals:

Stage 1 _____ + Stage 2 _____ + Stage 3 _____ = _____/13

Overall Score _____ (rounded to the nearest whole number)

An overall score:

- At or above 4 indicates that you are in favor of job search without ghosting and may be less likely to ghost an employer during the hiring process. Employers appreciate applicants committed to keeping appointments and continuing communication throughout the hiring process. This increases the effectiveness of your job search.
- At or below 3 indicates that you are in favor of job search with ghosting and may be more likely to ghost an employer during the hiring process. Ghosting an employer could decrease the effectiveness of your job search and cause future employers to remove your application from consideration.

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VITA

CHRISTINE ELIZABETH DAVIS

www.linkedin.com/in/christine-davis-cpa

EDUCATION

Doctor of Business Administration, J. Mack Robinson College of Business, Georgia State University, Atlanta, Georgia, May 2023.

Master of Business Administration, College of Business, University of Michigan – Dearborn, Dearborn, Michigan, Concentrations: Accounting and Management Information Systems, April 2005.

Bachelor of Science, School of Business Administration, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan, Major: Accounting, April 2003.

Bachelor of Arts, Department of Mathematics and Statistics, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan, Major: Mathematics, April 2003.



PROFESSIONAL PROFILE OVERVIEW

Christine Elizabeth Davis is a certified public accountant licensed in Florida and Michigan with over 20 years of experience in her field. Dr. Davis currently serves as the controller for The National Center for Construction Education and Research, Ltd. (NCCER). Before joining NCCER, she worked in controllership roles for a drone manufacturer and petroleum wholesaler/retailer. Preceding her transition to industry, the first half of her career was spent working in public accounting. With a passion for utilizing technology to create accurate, efficient, and transparent processes, her research interests include worker recruitment, retention, and training.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

“Effect of Perceived Corporate Social Responsibility on Employee Motivation and Willingness to Lead.” D. Bergere, C. Davis, P. Davis, & T. Maurer. Presented research in progress at the Doctoral Consortium during the Engaged Management Scholarship 2021 Conference hosted by Florida International University in September 2021.