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What is the Relationship between Experiencing Ghosting and Commitment Toward Tinder?

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Master Thesis Economic Psychology

Tilburg University 2018-2019

Abstract

This correlational study examined the relationship between experiencing ghosting and commitment toward Tinder (hypothesis 1). Ghosting means ending a conversation, by suddenly stopping any type of communication. Previous research suggests that experiencing ghosting could lead people to mistrust their dating pool. However, research did not investigate if it could influence future Tinder behavior. Therefore, it was expected that experiencing ghosting and a higher need for closure (hypothesis 2) and negative feelings about ghosting (hypothesis 3) were related to less commitment toward Tinder. Participants were single, active on Tinder and could look up their chats during this quantitative research. In contrast with hypothesis 1, there was no relationship between experiencing ghosting and commitment toward Tinder. Furthermore, a lower need for closure was related to more commitment toward Tinder if one experienced ghosting, which is not in line with hypothesis 2. Also, it was found that experiencing fewer negative feelings about ghosting was related to more commitment toward Tinder, which is not in line with hypothesis 3. In addition, males experienced more ghosting and more negative feelings about ghosting. Future research is needed to investigate potential confounds of the relationship between experiencing ghosting and commitment toward Tinder.

Keywords: ghosting, Tinder, commitment toward Tinder, negative feelings, need for closure

What is the relationship between experiencing ghosting and commitment toward Tinder?

Nowadays, romantic relationships are increasingly developed and maintained by the use of contemporary technologies like text messages, social media platforms or online dating applications (Stanley, Rhoades & Fincham, 2011). Online dating is the practice of using dating sites or applications to find a romantic partner (Finkel, Eastwick, Karney, Reis & Sprecher, 2012). It has become extremely popular in recent years (Tyson, Perta, Haddadi & Seto, 2016). For example, Tinder has already 50 million app users worldwide and generates 26 million matches a day (Smith, 2014). Tinder is a location-based online dating application (Ward, 2017). Based on a few pictures and a short biography one chooses to swipe another person to the right (accept) or left (reject). If there is mutual acceptance, both users will form a match. Next, they have the ability to chat within the application. But what will happen if people have negative experiences on Tinder?

Besides creating and developing romantic relationships, people also use technological innovations as break-up devices (Weisskirch & Delevi, 2013). This is because apps such as Tinder offer the possibility to communicate fast but are also an opportunity to withdraw oneself immediately from a conversation partner. The latter is called ghosting. Ghosting refers to the act of ending a conversation with a match, by suddenly stopping any type of communication or contact with that match (Nunez, 2018). Tinder users could simply push a button to block or ignore the other person. Ghosting more often occurs during a textual conversation compared to when two people meet face to face (LeFebvre, 2017). Previous research suggests that experiencing ghosting can lead to several consequences.

People can experience frustration on Tinder because they do not know why their conversations ended abruptly (Kallis, 2017). Also, research of Zytko, Grandhi & Jones (2014) suggests that those who have experienced ghosting can become cynical and mistrusting of their dating pool. As a result, it is possible that one could become less committed to Tinder due to

experiencing ghosting. This means that one is less likely to use Tinder, chooses to completely stop using it or wanting to delete the application (Huang, 2016). Previous research suggests that experiencing ghosting in prior relationships can lead to a certain fear of rejection or even a loss of confidence in the idea of commitment and establishing a long-term relationship in the future (Stanley et al., 2016). However, research of Zytka, Grandi & Jones (2014) on Tinder did not investigate if the negative emotions due to ghosting will have a spill-over effect on commitment toward Tinder. Overall, existing scientific research has not yet established the relationship between experiencing ghosting and how we subsequently behave or act on Tinder. Therefore, current research tries to fill in this gap, by investigating if experiencing ghosting will be related to less commitment toward Tinder.

In addition, if people who have experienced a lot of ghosting, will use Tinder less or even delete the application, the remaining pool of Tinder users becomes biased with only those people who have (almost) never experienced ghosting on Tinder. Eventually, people who have experienced ghosting are in a disadvantageous position towards those who have almost never experienced ghosting to find a potential partner on Tinder.

Advantages of ghosting

The act of ghosting can elicit several advantages for the ghoster. The ghoster is the one who suddenly neglects any form of contact with the other person. Regarding Tinder, there are several reasons why people use ghosting to end a conversation. First, research suggests that people use ghosting on Tinder due to the lack of commitment they experience after only chatting with another person (Kallis, 2017). Therefore, people do not feel an obligation to provide reasons why they did not wish to continue the conversation. Second, people use ghosting because there are always better alternatives online (Smith, 2014). As mentioned before, Tinder has already 50 million app users. Therefore, people could choose from a large pool of Tinder users with whom one wants to talk to. Also, ghosters can avoid discussions and

direct confrontations with the other person by ignoring them and avoiding any form of contact (Karp & Boulet, 2016). In addition, ghosting can save time and it reduces the cognitive load which is necessary to conduct a rejection message. Sometimes ghosting even occurs without being planned, just because of the busy daily life schedule (Kim, 2015).

Besides, experiencing ghosting can also elicit some benefits for the ghostee, the one who has experienced ghosting and is suddenly left out. Research suggests that a ghostee might even prefer to experience ghosting instead of obtaining a rejection message because it saves their own feelings (Koessler & Campbell, 2018). Also, research suggests that ghosting is becoming normative in online dating (Tong & Walter, 2010). This means that people know that there is a high chance of experiencing ghosting, because they experience a greater social distance online. Therefore, one should not take ghosting too personal (Karp & Boulet, 2016; Tong & Walter, 2010).

Disadvantages of ghosting

As mentioned before, there are several advantages of ghosting. However, there are also disadvantages. First, ghosting can be very frustrating for the ghostee (Kallis, 2017). Research of Nunez (2018) suggests that experiencing ghosting can elicit fears and anxieties. In addition, it can make people doubt if they properly convey a good impression of themselves toward others (Zytka, Grandhi & Jones, 2014). For example, a ghostee might think ‘Is there something about my profile that people do not like?’. This means that they will engage in self-blaming (LeFebvre, 2017). As a result, ghosting can hurt a ghostees’ self-image (Whitbourne, 2015). Psychotherapist Jennice Vilhauer suggests that ghosting can even hurt as much as physical pain does (Essig, 2018). Eventually, people who have experienced ghosting can become cynical and mistrusting of their dating pool (Zytka, Grandhi & Jones, 2014). Thus, people can experience several negative feelings about ghosting.

Lastly, ghostees are left to manage uncertainty without the ability to obtain closure. For example, they might think: ‘Why did I become victim of this rejection?’, ‘How did I not see this coming?’ or ‘What did I do wrong’ (Essig, 2018). Also, the fact that a ghoster remains visible on social networking profiles, does not allow the ghostee for closure, because a ghostee could still observe him or her online (LeFebvre, 2017).

Need for closure

As mentioned before, ghosting creates an ambiguous and uncertain situation for the ghostee. Research suggests that it might be difficult for the ghostee to engage in future relationships if one had no opportunity to obtain any closure in previous relations (LeFebvre, 2017). Some individuals cope better with a lack of closure than others. For example, individuals with a lower need for closure have no need to attain closure and they rather avoid closure (Webster & Kruglanski, 1994). In contrast, those with a higher need for closure want to have any answer on a given topic, as opposed to further confusion and ambiguity. In general, if these individuals experience a lack of closure, they will feel threatened or undermined (Kruglanski & Webster, 1996). As a result, they often experience negative emotions and are more likely to avoid these situations in the future. Therefore, current research investigates if this lack of closure associated with ghosting is related to less commitment toward Tinder in the future.

Gender

Overall, there are gender differences in how males and females behave on Tinder. Males are 3.2 times more likely to start a conversation with a female and they are often the ones who continue the conversation (Valkenburg & Peter, 2007). In addition, males are more active on Tinder and they are less selective compared to females. Therefore, a female knows that there are plenty of other potential matches with whom one can start a conversation if another conversation has ended (Kallis, 2017). In addition, research of Christensen (2019) found that females reported that they began to see ghosting as something normal and ‘part of the process’.

After experiencing ghosting, females would still be likely to continue using Tinder because they want to meet other people on Tinder (Christensen, 2019). Other research suggests that males reported that they received a lot of bruises to their ego while using Tinder (Kallis, 2017). Current research investigates if males and females differ in the extent to how they experience ghosting and how often they experience it.

Current research

Research suggests that eighty percent of online daters has experienced ghosting and that it is increasingly seen as common (Tong & Walter, 2010; Graff, 2017). However, other research suggests that experiencing ghosting can elicit several negative consequences. As mentioned before, it can lead users to be mistrusting and cynical of their dating pool (Zytka, Grandhi & Jones, 2014). Or, it could lead people to re-examine if Tinder is useful to them or not (Kallis, 2017). This could lead users to discontinue using Tinder. This means that they could be less likely to use Tinder or more likely to delete the application from their phones. In contrast, a lot of Tinder users feel good about themselves while using Tinder. For example, one could experience an ego-boost when a lot of people are interested (Kallis, 2017). Thus, Tinder can lead to positive feelings like an ego-boost, but it can also lead to negative feelings when one has experienced ghosting. This research tries to investigate if experiencing ghosting is related to less commitment toward Tinder.

As mentioned before, ghosting can lead to several negative feelings for the ghostee. However, there could be individual differences in how people experience ghosting. Therefore, this research also tries to investigate if the relationship between experiencing ghosting and commitment toward Tinder depends on the negative feelings associated with experiencing ghosting. This means, if experiencing more negative feelings about ghosting will be related to less committed toward Tinder compared to those who have experienced no or less negative feelings about ghosting. Also, this research will investigate if experiencing ghosting and a

higher need for closure will be related to less committed toward Tinder compared to people who have a lower need for closure. The main question of this research is: What is the relationship between experiencing ghosting and commitment toward Tinder?

To sum up, I will test the following hypotheses:

H1: There is a relationship between experiencing ghosting and commitment toward Tinder.

H2: There is a relationship between experiencing ghosting and commitment toward Tinder, and this relationship is moderated by need for closure. Specifically, a higher need for closure is related to less commitment toward Tinder, if one experienced more ghosting.

H3: There is a relationship between experiencing ghosting and commitment toward Tinder and this is moderated by negative feelings about ghosting. Specifically, more negative feelings about ghosting are related to less commitment toward Tinder, if one experienced more ghosting.

In addition to the hypotheses, the moderating role of gender will be explored in the analysis.

Method

Research design

This study was approved by the ethics committee. The main goal of this correlational study was to find out the relationship between experiencing ghosting and commitment toward Tinder. This research is part of a bigger study about Tinder. However, the other hypotheses are not mentioned in this research, because they are not relevant to the current research question.

Experiencing ghosting was the independent variable and commitment toward Tinder the dependent variable. Need for closure, negative feelings about ghosting and gender were included as possible moderators of the relationship between experiencing ghosting and commitment toward Tinder.

Participants

Participants were recruited via convenience sampling, online through Facebook, Whatsapp and LinkedIn. Also, flyers were handed out at Tilburg University. The flyer

contained a short URL and QR code that was linked to the survey. If participants were single and had used Tinder for a minimum of one month, they were directed to the next questions. Otherwise, they were provided with a message that told them that they could not continue the survey. The criterion of having Tinder for at least one month increased the chance that participants already had conversations on Tinder and therefore it allowed them the opportunity to look up their chat history.

Beforehand, G*Power 3 (Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner, & Lang, 2009) was used to find out that a minimum of 196 participants was needed to find a plausible power of .80 and a small effect size of .05 based on a linear multiple regression analysis. Only a small effect was expected because ghosting in online dating is a new topic, and previous research has not yet established the relationship between experiencing ghosting and commitment toward Tinder.

Participation in this study was completely voluntary, and participants were able to stop their participation at any given moment if they wished to do so. In the end, participants could fill in their e-mail if they wanted to take chance on winning cinema gift cards. In general, it took about fifteen minutes to finish the survey. In total, 519 people were willing to participate in this study. However, 87 participants were excluded because they were in a relationship and 40 participants were excluded because they did not have Tinder for at least one month. Also, 184 participants were excluded because they did not finish the survey. After excluding these people, still 208 participants finished the survey (135 females, 73 males). The age ranged from 16 years old up until 43 ($M_{age} = 22.36$, $SD = 3.11$).

Procedure

A survey was conducted in Qualtrics. First, a definition of ghosting was provided: ‘The act of ending a conversation with a match on Tinder, by suddenly stopping any type of communication or contact with that match’. We chose to include Tinder, because nowadays

this is one of the most popular online dating applications (Sumter, Vandenbosch, Ligtenberg, 2017).

First, we recommended participants to fill out the survey on a laptop, tablet or computer, in this way participants could open their chat history on Tinder while answering the survey. Then participants were asked to indicate their current relationship status (0 = in a relationship, 1 = single, 2 = it is complicated, 3 = I would rather not say) and if they have had used Tinder for a minimum of one month (0 = no, 1 = yes). Participants who indicated that they were in a relationship or did not have Tinder for at least one month were immediately sent to the end of the survey with a message ‘Unfortunately we only need single participants who have had used Tinder for at least one month. Thank you for your time’. Next, participants who indicated ‘it is complicated’, ‘I would rather not tell’, ‘single’ and that they have had used Tinder for at least one month were sent to the informed consent, which provided them information about the study and that they have the opportunity to stop at any moment during the survey. If they agreed with the informed consent, they were sent to the next questions. Then, participants were asked to rate statements of the brief Need for Closure Scale (Roets, Hiel, 2011) and about their experience and feelings about ghosting. Also, they answered statements about their commitment toward Tinder.

Lastly, we asked participants to answer a set of demographics, namely their age, gender (0 = male, 1 = female, 2 = I would rather not say) and education (0 = VMBO, 1 = MBO, 2 = HAVO, 3 = HBO, 4 = VWO, 5 = WO). Also, they could fill in their e-mail address if they wanted to take chance on winning two gift cards for the cinema. By including the prize, we wanted to increase the number of participants taking part in the study. In the end, participants were thanked and debriefed about the purpose of the study. Lastly, they obtained the possibility to fill in any questions or improvements regarding the study.

Materials

All these materials were presented in a random order. Since ghosting in online dating applications is a new topic, a new scale was developed to assess the experience of ghosting (Experiencing Ghosting Scale). Participants were asked to answer questions regarding their experience with ghosting on Tinder. It was mentioned that, if it was necessary, they were allowed to open Tinder on their phones to look at previous conversations with their matches to determine if someone used ghosting. Thus, to measure the independent variable experiencing ghosting scale, participants were asked to fill in four statements on a 5-point Likert scale, Cronbach's $\alpha = .89$ (1= *totally disagree*, 5= *totally agree*) (e.g. 'In general, I experienced a lot of ghosting', 'Overall, a lot of my conversations are being ended because the other person used ghosting'). Some items were later reverse coded, so that a higher score means that a participant experienced more ghosting (see Appendix A).

Besides the subjective experiencing ghosting scale, another variable was created to measure participants' objective experiencing ghosting number. First, participants were asked to indicate how much (non) active chats they have on Tinder ($M_{chats} = 50.53$, $SD = 63.66$). As mentioned before, participants could also open Tinder on their phones. Eight participants who indicated that they had no chats were sent to the next part of the survey. Next, 200 participants who indicated that they had chats on Tinder were asked to count how often they experienced ghosting in these chats ($M_{ghosting} = 10.92$, $SD = 18.55$). Participants could fill in this open question by providing a number. To measure the variable experiencing ghosting number, we divided the number of ghosting by the number of chats and multiplied this by hundred. This variable experiencing ghosting number was also considered as an independent variable.

To measure the dependent variable commitment toward Tinder the subscale 'continuance usage of online dating apps' of Azzahro, Maulida, Hidayanto & Zhu (2018) was used. Again, participants answered three statements on a 5-point Likert scale, Cronbach's $\alpha = .92$ (1= *totally disagree*, 5= *totally agree*) (e.g. 'If I could, I would like to use Tinder in the future', 'It is likely

that I will continue using Tinder in the future'). Some statements were later reverse coded, so that a higher score means more commitment to Tinder (see Appendix C).

A new scale was developed to assess the moderating variable negative feelings about ghosting (see Appendix B). The Negative Feelings about Ghosting Scale (NFGS) consisted of four items. These four statements were answered on a 6-point Likert scale, Cronbach's $\alpha = .83$ (1= *totally disagree*, 5= *totally agree*, 6= *that does not apply to me*) (e.g. 'In general, I feel rejected when I experience ghosting', 'Overall, it hurts my feelings when I experience ghosting'). Some items were later reverse coded, so that a higher score means that a participant experienced more negative feelings about ghosting. Also, those who answered the 6th option 'That does not apply to me' (N=27) were coded as pairwise missing values. The moderating variable feelings about ghosting was included as a moderator in the analysis.

Lastly, to measure the moderating variable need for closure, a short 15-item Need for Closure Scale was included (Roets & Hiel, 2011), Cronbach's $\alpha = .80$. Participants could fill in the fifteen statements on a 5-point Likert scale (1= *totally disagree*, 5= *totally agree*) (e.g. 'I do not like situations that are uncertain', 'I dislike questions which could be answered in many different ways'). Also, the items of the Need for Closure Scale were randomly presented. The answer possibilities of the statements were later reverse coded, so that a higher score means a higher need for closure (see Appendix D).

Results

The aim of this research was to explore the relationship between ghosting and commitment toward Tinder. It was expected that experiencing ghosting would be related to less commitment toward Tinder (hypothesis 1). Furthermore, it was expected that this relationship was moderated by need for closure (hypothesis 2) and negative feelings about ghosting (hypothesis 3). In addition to the hypotheses, the moderating role of gender was explored.

Preparing the data for analyses

Prior to the data analysis, a couple of changes were implemented regarding the data. First, the statements of the Negative Feelings about Ghosting Scale (NFGS) were reverse coded, so that for each question a higher score represents more negative feelings about ghosting. In addition, the 6th answering option ‘That does not apply to me’ was recoded as a pairwise missing value ($N= 30$). Also, the statements of the Experiencing Ghosting Scale (EGS) were reverse coded, so that a higher score represents more experience with ghosting. In addition, new variables were computed for the mean score of need for closure ($M_{nfc} = 3.17, SD = .49$; see table 1), feelings about ghosting ($M_{nfgs} = 2.57, SD = .88$), experience with ghosting ($M_{egs} = 2.48, SD = .91$) and commitment toward Tinder ($M_{commitment} = 3.08, SD = .94$). Also, the new variable experiencing ghosting number was created by dividing the number of experienced ghosting by the number of chats. Then this number was multiplied by hundred ($M_{number} = 23.79, SD = 26.05$). If this number was high, a participant experienced objectively more ghosting. In this way, we controlled for the subjectivity of the experiencing ghosting scale.

All the variables were checked for outliers. Outliers were the values located three or more standard-deviations from the mean. Based on this criterion three outliers have been detected regarding the number of chats ($N= 197$), and two outliers regarding the experience with ghosting in these chats ($N= 198$). These outliers were coded as missing values. Also, the assumptions of a regression analysis were checked for any violations. The assumptions homoscedasticity, multicollinearity and linearity were not violated in this regression model.

Table 1

The means, standard deviations, number of participants and the ranges of the scales of need for closure, feelings about ghosting, experiencing ghosting scale, commitment toward Tinder and experiencing ghosting number.

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	N	Scale
Need for closure	3.17	.49	208	1-5
Feelings about ghosting	2.58	.88	178	1-5*
Experiencing ghosting scale	2.48	.91	208	1-5
Commitment toward Tinder	3.08	.94	208	1-5
Experiencing ghosting number (%)	23.79	26.05	197	1-5

Note. Items were recoded. *6th option is coded as a pairwise missing value.

Correlations

Subsequently, the correlations between the five variables, need for closure scale, experiencing ghosting scale, experiencing ghosting number, negative feelings about ghosting and commitment toward Tinder were calculated. These correlations (see table 2) showed that there was a significant positive correlation between the negative feelings about ghosting scale and experiencing ghosting scale ($r = .258, p < .001$). This means that experiencing ghosting was related with experiencing more negative feelings about ghosting. Also, the variables experiencing ghosting scale and the experiencing ghosting number significantly correlated with each other ($r = .560, p < .001$). Thus, a higher score on the experiencing ghosting scale was related to a higher score on the experiencing ghosting number. In addition, we found a significant negative correlation between commitment toward Tinder and negative feelings about ghosting scale ($r = -.160, p = .024$). Thus, experiencing more negative feelings about ghosting was related to less commitment toward Tinder. However, this was only a small correlation. No significant correlations have been found between experiencing ghosting scale

and commitment toward Tinder and experiencing ghosting number and commitment toward Tinder. Also, no significant correlations have been found for the need for closure scale.

Table 2

Pearson correlations between need for closure scale, experiencing ghosting scale, feelings about ghosting scale, experiencing ghosting number and commitment toward Tinder.

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. Need for closure scale	-				
2. Experiencing ghosting scale	-.045	-			
3. Feelings about ghosting scale	.078	.258**	-		
4. Experiencing ghosting number	.006	.560**	.182*	-	
5. Commitment toward Tinder	-.113	.057	-.160*	.037	-

Note. *Correlation is significant at the .05 level, **correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

Regression analyses

First, hypothesis 1 was tested, that there is a relationship between experiencing ghosting and commitment toward Tinder. A regression analysis has been performed to investigate this relationship. Prior to this regression analysis a multiple regression analysis was conducted to investigate if gender interacted with the independent variable experiencing ghosting scale in predicting commitment toward Tinder. No interaction effect was found between the variables gender and experiencing ghosting scale in predicting commitment toward Tinder, $\beta = .191$, $t(203) = 1.296$, $p = .196$. Thus, the relationship between experiencing ghosting and commitment

toward Tinder did not depend on gender. Therefore, the main-effect of experiencing ghosting scale in predicting commitment toward Tinder could be interpreted. The regression analysis showed that there was no significant relationship between experiencing ghosting scale and commitment toward Tinder, $\beta = -.054$, $t(203) = -.499$, $p = .618$. This suggests that there is no relationship between experiencing ghosting and commitment toward Tinder. This is not in line with hypothesis 1.

In addition, a regression analysis was conducted in which commitment toward Tinder was the dependent variable and experiencing ghosting number the independent variable. Again, a multiple regression was conducted to test if gender interacted with the independent variable experiencing ghosting number in predicting commitment toward Tinder. A significant interaction was found between experiencing ghosting number and gender in predicting commitment toward Tinder, $\beta = .013$, $t(192) = 2.372$, $p = .019$. This suggests that the relationship between experiencing ghosting number and commitment toward Tinder depends on gender. Therefore, the simple slopes of gender have been investigated using PROCESS (model 1).

The simple slope analysis with PROCESS showed that there was no significant relationship of experiencing ghosting number in predicting commitment toward Tinder for male participants, $\beta = -.006$, $t(192) = -1.542$, $p = .125$ (see figure 1). Furthermore, the analysis showed that there was a marginally significant positive relationship of experiencing ghosting in predicting commitment toward Tinder for female participants, $\beta = .007$, $t(192) = 1.828$, $p = .069$. This means that experiencing ghosting was related to more commitment toward Tinder for females. This relationship was significant at a p-value of .10, which means it was almost significant. Therefore, it is uncertain to what extent this result will be replicable in the future. Overall, these results suggest that males and females significantly differed from each other.



Figure 1. Simple slopes gender.

To test hypothesis 2, whether need for closure moderates the relationship between experiencing ghosting and commitment toward Tinder, need for closure was included as a moderator into the multiple regression analysis. Again, experiencing ghosting scale was included as the independent variable and commitment toward Tinder as the dependent variable. No interaction effect has been found between the variables experiencing ghosting scale and need for closure in predicting commitment toward Tinder, $\beta = -.155$, $t(204) = -1.253$, $p = .212$. This means that the relationship between experiencing ghosting and commitment toward Tinder did not depend on need for closure. Therefore, we could interpret the main-effect of need for closure in predicting commitment toward Tinder, which was not significant $\beta = .179$, $t(204) = .529$, $p = .597$. Also, the main-effect of experiencing ghosting in predicting commitment toward Tinder was not significant $\beta = .548$, $t(204) = 1.366$, $p = .173$. Thus, there is no relationship between experiencing ghosting and commitment toward Tinder. Overall, these results are not in line with hypothesis 2.

Next, experiencing ghosting number was included as an independent variable, commitment toward Tinder as a dependent variable and need for closure as a moderator into a

regression analysis. A significant interaction was found between experiencing ghosting number and need for closure in predicting commitment toward Tinder, $\beta = -.010$, $t(193) = -2.016$, $p = .045$. Thus, the relationship of experiencing ghosting number in predicting commitment toward Tinder depends on need for closure. The simple slopes of negative feelings about ghosting have been investigated using PROCESS (model 1). Since the variable need for closure was continuous, the conditioning values were set at 1 SD under the mean, which we called a lower need for closure ($SD = 2.673$), at average, which we called a moderate need for closure ($M = 3.166$) and 1 SD above the mean, which we called a higher need for closure ($SD = 3.658$). The analysis with PROCESS (see figure 2) showed that the relationship of experiencing ghosting number in predicting commitment toward Tinder was marginally significant for participants with a lower need for closure $\beta = .006$, $t(193) = 1.795$, $p = .074$. This means that experiencing ghosting was related to more commitment toward Tinder for participants with a lower need for closure. Again, it is uncertain to what extent this result will be replicable in the future because this relationship was only significant at a p-value of .10. Furthermore, the analysis with PROCESS showed that the relationship of experiencing ghosting number in predicting commitment toward Tinder was not significant for participants with a higher need for closure $\beta = -.003$, $t(193) = -.940$, $p = .349$. Also, no significant results were found for participants with a moderate need for closure, $\beta = .002$, $t(193) = .629$, $p = .530$. Overall, these results are not in line with hypothesis 2, which suggested that a higher need for closure was related to less commitment toward Tinder if one has experienced ghosting.

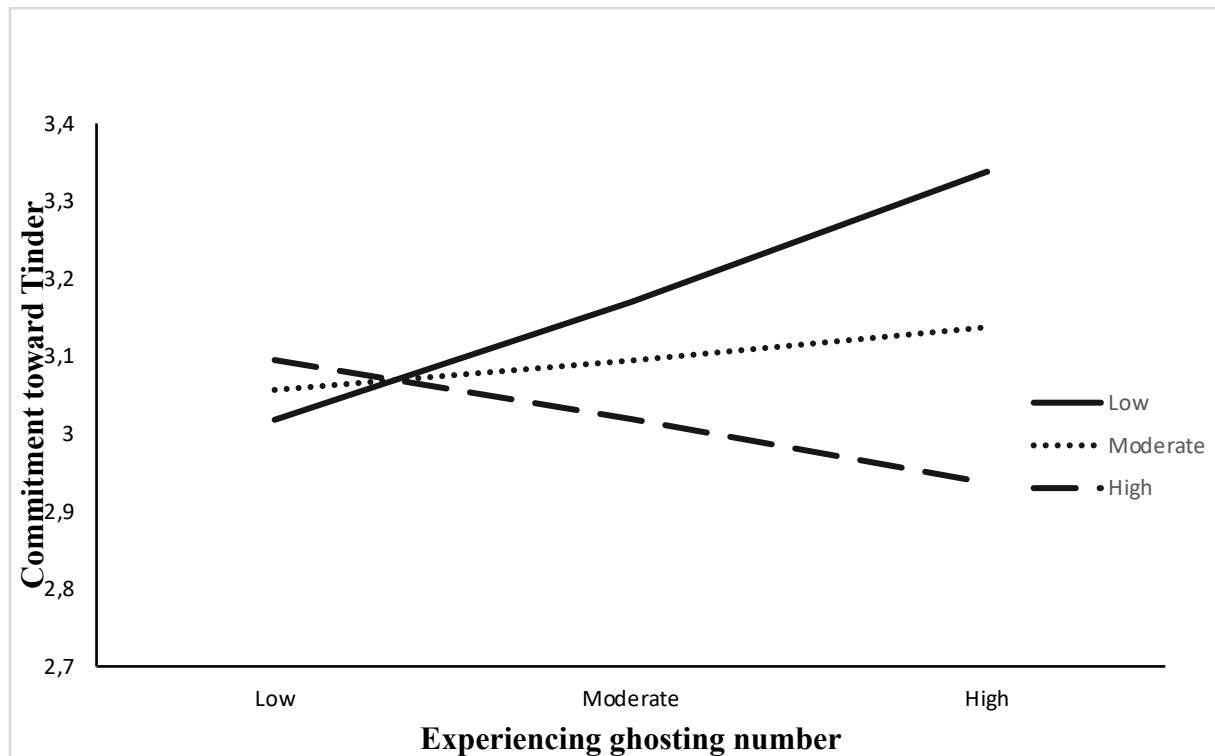


Figure 2. Simple slopes need for closure.

Next, a third multiple regression was conducted to test hypothesis 3, that there is a relationship between experiencing ghosting and commitment toward Tinder, and that this relationship is moderated by negative feelings about ghosting. Specifically, predicted was that experiencing more negative feelings about ghosting was related to less commitment toward Tinder. A significant interaction was found between the variables experiencing ghosting scale and the negative feelings about ghosting scale in predicting commitment toward Tinder, $\beta = -.197$, $t(174) = -2.466$, $p = .015$. Therefore, we did not interpret the significant main-effect of experiencing ghosting scale in predicting commitment toward Tinder $\beta = .668$, $t(174) = 2.914$, $p = .004$, and the non-significant main-effect of negative feelings about ghosting in predicting commitment toward Tinder $\beta = .317$, $t(174) = 1.402$, $p = .163$. The significant interaction suggests that the relationship between experiencing ghosting scale and commitment toward Tinder depends on the negative feelings about ghosting.

In addition, the simple slopes of negative feelings about ghosting have been investigated using PROCESS (model 1; see figure 3). Again, the conditioning values were set at 1 SD under

the mean, which we called a lower score on negative feelings about ghosting ($SD = 1.693$), average, which we called a moderate score on negative feelings about ghosting ($M = 2.569$) and 1 SD above the mean, which we called a higher score on negative feelings about ghosting ($SD = 3.444$). The analysis with PROCESS showed that the relationship of experiencing ghosting scale in predicting commitment toward Tinder was significant for those with fewer negative feelings about with ghosting $\beta = .335$, $t(174) = 2.963$, $p = .004$. Also, the relationship of experiencing ghosting scale in predicting commitment toward Tinder was significant for those with a moderate score on negative feelings about ghosting $\beta = .162$, $t(174) = 2.012$, $p = .046$. These results suggest that experiencing ghosting was related to more commitment toward Tinder for participants with fewer negative feelings about ghosting. However, the analysis with PROCESS showed no significant results for participants with a higher score on negative feelings about ghosting $\beta = -.010$, $t(174) = -.101$, $p = .920$. This means that experiencing ghosting was not related to commitment toward Tinder for participants with more negative feelings about ghosting. Overall, these results indicated that there was a positive relationship of experiencing ghosting scale in predicting commitment toward Tinder for those with fewer negative feelings about ghosting. Thus, the relationship of experiencing ghosting on commitment toward Tinder depends on the negative feelings about ghosting. These results are also not in line with hypothesis 3.

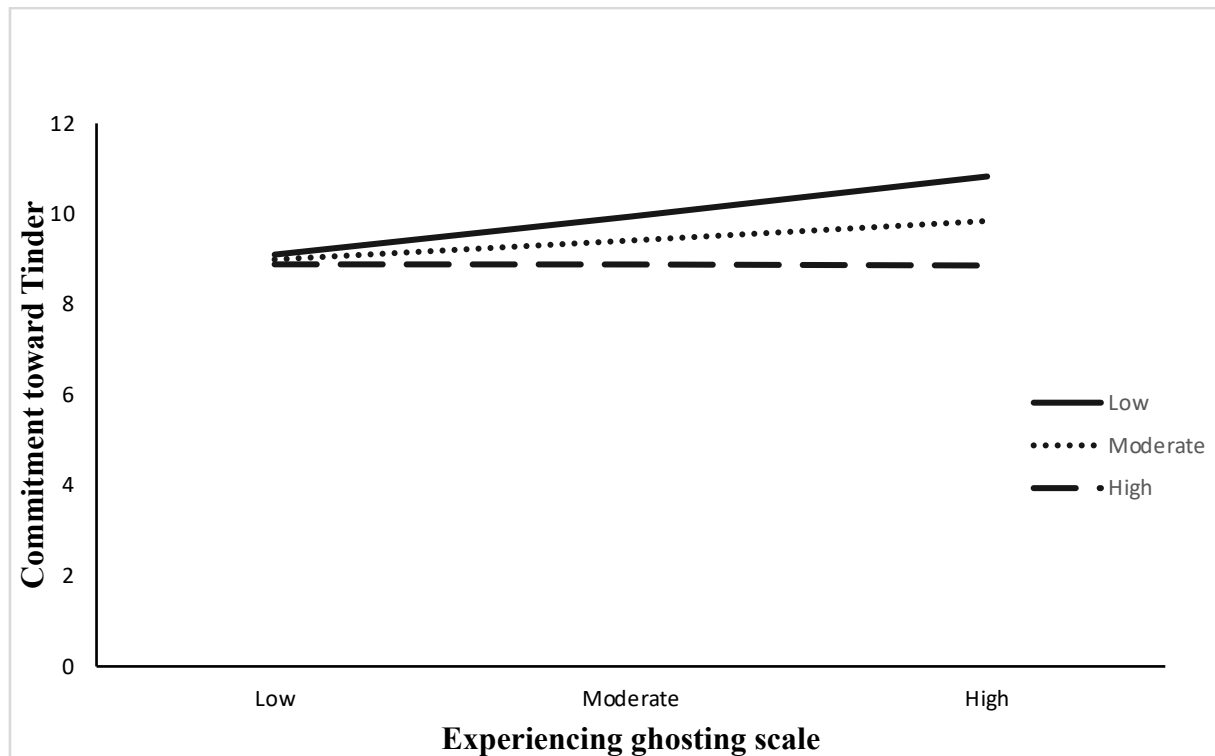


Figure 3. Simple slopes negative feelings about ghosting.

In addition, no significant interaction was found between experiencing ghosting number and negative feelings about ghosting in predicting commitment toward Tinder, $\beta = -.006$, $t(165) = -1.927$, $p = .056$. This means that the relationship between experiencing ghosting and commitment toward Tinder did not depend on negative feelings about ghosting. This is not in line with hypothesis 3. Therefore, the main-effect of experiencing ghosting number in predicting commitment toward Tinder could be interpreted, $\beta = .019$, $t(165) = 2.030$, $p = .044$. This result suggests that experiencing ghosting was related to more commitment toward Tinder. This is not in line with hypothesis 1. No main-effect of negative feelings about ghosting in predicting commitment toward Tinder was found, $\beta = -.034$, $t(165) = -.298$, $p = .766$.

Three-way interaction

A three-way interaction was conducted to test if the two-way interaction between experiencing ghosting scale and negative feelings about ghosting varied for males and females. First, gender was recoded as a dummy variable (0 = male, 1 = female). The analysis with PROCESS (model 3) showed that there was no significant three-way interaction of

experiencing ghosting scale, negative feelings about ghosting and gender in predicting commitment toward Tinder, $\beta = -.061$, $t(169) = -.373$, $p = .710$. As a result, the two-way interaction effects could be interpreted. However, no significant two-way interactions were found. Since these two-way interactions were not significant, the main-effects were interpreted. However, no significant main-effect of experiencing ghosting in predicting commitment toward Tinder was found, $\beta = .353$, $t(169) = 1.007$, $p = .315$. This suggests that experiencing ghosting was not related to commitment toward Tinder. Also, no significant main-effect of negative feelings about ghosting in predicting commitment toward Tinder was found, $\beta = .178$, $t(169) = .471$, $p = .638$. This suggests that negative feelings about ghosting were not related to less commitment toward Tinder. Lastly, no significant main-effect of gender in predicting commitment toward Tinder was found, $\beta = -1.422$, $t(169) = -1.075$, $p = .284$. This means that gender was not related to commitment toward Tinder.

Gender

Independent-samples T-tests were conducted to investigate the main-effects of gender on the variables. First, an independent-samples t-test was performed to compare the mean scores of males and females on negative feelings about ghosting (see table 3). A significant difference in the scores for males ($M = 2.84$, $SD = .84$) and females ($M = 2.42$, $SD = .88$) was found, with males experiencing more negative feelings about ghosting compared to females, $t(175) = 3.023$, $p = .002$. Next, no significant difference was found in the scores on commitment toward Tinder for males ($M = 3.16$, $SD = .90$) and females ($M = 3.04$, $SD = .96$), $t(205) = .911$, $p = .363$. Thus, males and females were equally likely to be committed toward Tinder. Another independent-samples t-test showed that the mean scores on the experiencing ghosting scale significantly differed for males ($M = 2.74$, $SD = 1.03$) and females ($M = 2.34$, $SD = .81$), with males experiencing more ghosting compared to females, $t(205) = 2.870$, $p = .005$. Also, males ($M = 32.84$, $SD = 29.33$) scored significantly higher on the experiencing ghosting number

compared to females ($M = 18.88$, $SD = 22.77$), $t(198) = 3.302$, $p < .001$. Overall, males experienced more ghosting and more negative feelings about ghosting compared to females.

Table 3

Main effects gender

Variable	Group	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i> -test	Sig.
1. Feelings about ghosting	Male	2.84	.84	3.023	.002*
	Female	2.42	.88		
2. Commitment toward Tinder	Male	3.16	.90	.911	.363
	Female	3.04	.96		
3. Experiencing ghosting scale	Male	2.74	1.03	2.870	.005*
	Female	2.34	.81		
4. Experiencing ghosting number	Male	32.84	29.33	3.302	<.001 **
	Female	18.88	22.77		

Note. *Correlation is significant at the .05 level, **correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

Discussion

The present research investigated the relationship between experiencing ghosting and commitment toward Tinder. In addition, it was investigated if need for closure, negative feelings about ghosting and gender were moderating this relationship. No support has been found for the main hypothesis, that experiencing ghosting would be associated with less commitment toward Tinder. In addition, a significant interaction effect was found between experiencing ghosting and negative feelings about ghosting. Surprisingly, these results suggest that experiencing ghosting was related to more commitment toward Tinder, if the associated

negative feelings about ghosting were low. Also, the results suggest that experiencing ghosting was related to more commitment toward Tinder, if need for closure was low. These findings are not in line with the hypotheses.

Theoretical implications

Previous research suggests that experiencing ghosting may lead online dating application users to be mistrusting of their dating pool (Zytka, Grandhi & Jones, 2014). Therefore, it was expected that there was a negative relationship between experiencing ghosting and commitment toward Tinder. However, this relationship has not been found in current research. Surprisingly, the opposite relationship was found, that experiencing ghosting had a positive relationship with commitment toward Tinder, for those with a lower need for closure and fewer negative feelings about ghosting.

As mentioned before, ghosting creates an ambiguous situation for the ghostee because they are left to manage uncertainty without the ability to obtain closure. Individuals with a higher need for closure want to have any answer on a given topic, as opposed to further confusion and ambiguity. (Webster & Kruglanski, 1994). Therefore, it was expected that those who have experienced ghosting and have a higher need for closure were more likely to be less committed toward Tinder. However, it was found that experiencing ghosting and a lower need for closure were related to more commitment toward Tinder. Thus, we found no significant relationship for participants with a higher need for closure, which is not in line with the expectation. Since people with a lower need for closure rather avoid closure, it is possible that they generally are more active on Tinder to look for alternatives instead of only focusing on chatting with one person. If they only focus on chatting with one person, this will feel like closure to them. In addition, it is possible that they do not want to stop using Tinder because this will feel like closure to them.

Previous research suggests that experiencing ghosting can lead to several negative consequences for the ghostee. For example, it can elicit fears and anxieties (Nunez, 2018). Therefore, it was expected that those who have experienced ghosting and more negative feelings about ghosting were more likely to be less committed toward Tinder. However, it was found that experiencing fewer negative feelings about ghosting was related to more commitment toward Tinder, which is not in line with the hypothesis. In addition, people who are more active on Tinder, simply have higher chances to experience ghosting. Therefore, it is likely that these users become to see ghosting as something normal. As previous research suggests, ghosting is becoming normative in online dating (Tong & Walter, 2010). As a result, active Tinder users could experience fewer negative feelings about ghosting.

Lastly, in this study it was found that males experienced more ghosting and were more likely to experience negative feelings about ghosting compared to females. This is in line with previous research of Kallis (2017), which suggests that males generally experience more negative feelings while using Tinder. As mentioned before, research suggests that males are more active on Tinder and they are often the ones who continue the conversation (Valkenburg & Peter, 2007). Thus, males statistically have a higher chance to experience ghosting. In addition, if a male experience ghosting, he is (mostly) not be able to choose between many alternatives because females are more selective on Tinder (Kallis, 2017). Therefore, it is likely that a male experience more negative feelings about ghosting. In contrast, females now that there are there are plenty of other potential males with whom one can start a conversation after experiencing ghosting (Kallis, 2017). Thus, if a female experience ghosting, she would still be able to choose between many alternatives. Therefore, it could be the case that females do not experience a lot of negative feelings about ghosting. Overall, these results are in line with the results of previous studies.

Strengths

A positive factor regarding this research is that participants were all single and active on Tinder for at least one month. Therefore, we could ask them to open their chat history on Tinder while answering the questions. This could provide a more accurate view of how many times they have experienced ghosting in their conversations instead of asking them to recall these situations. In addition, asking them to open Tinder on their phones makes this research more generalizable and reliable compared to a hypothetical research into Tinder.

Another strength of this study is that both an objective and subjective measurement of experiencing ghosting were included. As mentioned before, on the one hand it is important to objectively measure how often someone has experienced ghosting, but on the other side it is also interesting to investigate the psychological effect of ghosting. For example, people might want to forget that they have experienced a lot of ghosting. Or, it could be the case that participants genuinely forgot how many times they experienced ghosting, because they saw it as normal (Tong & Walter, 2010). A significant positive correlation was found between the objective and subjective measurement of experiencing ghosting. This means that a higher score on the objective experiencing ghosting number is related to a higher score on the subjective experiencing ghosting scale. However, the effect size of this correlation was moderate. This indicates that these two variables are not exactly the same. Therefore, it remained important to include both variables in the analyses. As mentioned before, the analyses with experiencing ghosting scale and experiencing ghosting number showed different results. This means that there is a difference between actual ghosting and the psychological effect of it. However, both variables were equal in predicting commitment toward Tinder.

Weaknesses

Next, a limitation of this study is that correlation does not imply causation. Therefore, we can only suggest that there is a relationship between two variables and we cannot assume that one variable cause or changes the other variable. Besides the fact that those who have

experienced ghosting were more committed toward Tinder, it is also likely that those who are already more committed toward Tinder also have experienced more ghosting. This means that those who are more active on Tinder, statistically have a higher chance to experience more ghosting during their time on Tinder compared to those who are less active on Tinder. It would be interesting to ask participants how many hours a day they are active on Tinder. As a result, this confound could be considered in future studies.

Besides, future studies could conduct an experiment to provide insights into the cause-effect relationship by demonstrating what outcome occurs when experiencing ghosting is manipulated. This could for example be done by first measuring participants pre-commitment toward Tinder. Next, a manipulation could take place in which participants experience ghosting. After this, their post-commitment toward Tinder will be measured. Overall, it is interesting to investigate the cause-effect relationship between experiencing ghosting and commitment toward Tinder by conducting an experiment.

Lastly, a limitation of this research is that only people who have had Tinder for at least one month could participate in this study. Therefore, it could have been the case that people who have experienced a lot of negative feelings about ghosting were not participating in this study, because they already chose to delete Tinder. This means that they could have experienced a lot of ghosting and therefore they became less committed toward Tinder and decided to delete Tinder from their phones. For example, future studies could include people who recently deleted Tinder from their phones and they could ask them why they deleted it. In this way, it could be investigated if experiencing ghosting in fact leads people to delete Tinder from their phones.

Also, it would be interesting to investigate if people prefer to experience ghosting over obtaining a rejection message. In this study, we did not ask participants to indicate the number of received rejection messages. Therefore, we could not measure if experiencing rejection

messages is related to less committed toward Tinder instead of experiencing ghosting. Future studies could investigate if Tinder users prefer to experience ghosting instead of obtaining a rejection message. As a result, Tinder users would know the best strategy to save the other persons' feelings when one is no longer interested.

Practical implications

The results of current study suggest that experiencing ghosting had a positive relationship with commitment toward Tinder, for people with a lower need for closure and people with less negative feelings about ghosting. As mentioned before, it could have been the case that those who were already more committed toward Tinder simply experienced more ghosting because they were more active on Tinder. Therefore, Tinder users should be aware that being active on Tinder can be associated with negative consequences like experiencing ghosting. But how can Tinder developers decrease these negative consequences on Tinder?

It would be useful if Tinder developers could find a way to decrease the fact that people use ghosting to end a conversation. In turn, this would lead people to experience less ghosting. For example, developers could conduct a reminder, this means a message which is send to ghosters who have not recently send a message to their conversation partner. This message could tell them 'Hey [name user], do not forget to keep the conversation going with your match [name match]'. As mentioned before, research suggests that people ghost because they forgot to react because of the busy daily life schedule (Kim, 2015). A reminder could remind these people to react to their conversation partner. Also, people use ghosting because they do not feel an obligation to give the other person a reason why they did not wish to continue the conversation (Kallis, 2017). If ghosters receive a reminder, it is possible that they will feel an obligation to react.

As mentioned before, people also use ghosting because it can save time and reduces cognitive load compared to when one chooses to conduct a rejection message (Karp & Boullet,

2016). For example, Tinder developers could implement standard messages. A ghoster could choose from these standard messages the same way as while choosing from a list of emoticons. For example, 'Sorry, I am no longer interested', 'Sorry, at the moment I am very busy' or 'Sorry, at the moment I am seeing someone else'. By providing these standard messages, people do not have to conduct a message by themselves.

Lastly, the results suggest that males and females differ in the extent to how they experience ghosting. Especially females should be aware of the fact that their actions may be associated with negative consequences for the other person, because males experience more ghosting and more negative feelings about ghosting.

Conclusion

Nowadays, online daters will end conversations abruptly when no longer interested or due to a busy daily life schedule. This is called ghosting. Ghosting belongs to online dating, because people generally do not use ghosting to end a face-to-face conversation. Research suggests that experiencing ghosting is becoming normative in online dating. However, other research suggests that experiencing ghosting can elicit fears and anxieties due to a lack of closure. Current research suggests that males are more likely to experience ghosting and they also experience more negative feelings about ghosting. It was also found that experiencing ghosting has a positive relationship with commitment toward Tinder for those with a lower need for closure and with fewer negative feelings about ghosting. Because this study is correlational, we cannot say anything about causality. In fact, people should be aware that being more active on Tinder is related to a higher chance of experiencing ghosting. Future research could for example conduct an experiment to investigate causality and potential confounds of the relationship between experiencing ghosting and commitment toward Tinder. Overall, being active on Tinder may open doors to have conversations with new people but you are immediately more vulnerable to be left in silence, without even the ability to close these doors.

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Appendix A

Experiencing Ghosting Scale

Please answer the following statements regarding your experience with ghosting. Ghosting means ending a conversation with a Tinder match by suddenly stopping any form of contact. In case it is necessary, you can open your Tinder chat history to look up information.

Response categories

1= Totally disagree

2= Disagree

3= Neutral

4= Agree

5= Totally agree

-
- | | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. In general, I experienced a lot of ghosting. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 2. Overall, a lot of my conversations are being ended because the other person used ghosting. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 3. Overall, I have experienced little ghosting. (R) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 4. Generally, I did not experience a lot of ghosting. (R) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Note. Scores are recoded, a higher score means more experienced ghosting.

Appendix B

Negative Feelings about Ghosting Scale

Please rate the following statements regarding your experience with ghosting. Please answer 'does not apply' when you do not have any experience with ghosting.

Response categories

1= Totally disagree

2= Disagree

3= Neutral

4= Agree

5= Totally agree

6= Does not apply

1. In general, I feel rejected when I experience ghosting.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Overall, it hurts my feelings when I experience ghosting.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. In general, it means nothing to me when I experience ghosting. (R)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. In general, I do not care if someone used ghosting during a conversation. (R)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Note. Scores are recoded, a higher score means more negative feelings associated with ghosting.

Appendix C

Commitment toward Tinder

Please answer the following statements.

Response categories

1= Totally disagree

2= Disagree

3= Neutral

4= Agree

5= Totally agree

-
- | | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. If I could, I
would like to use
Tinder in the
future. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 2. It is likely that I
will continue using
Tinder in the
future. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 3. I am planning to
use Tinder in the
future. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Note. A higher score means more commitment toward Tinder.

Appendix D

*Short 15-item Need for Closure Scale**Please answer the following statements.*

 Response categories

1= Totally disagree

2= Disagree

3= Neutral

4= Agree

5= Totally agree

-
- | | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. I do not like situations that are uncertain. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 2. I dislike questions that can be answered in many different ways. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 3. I find that a well-ordered life with regular hours suits my temperament. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 4. I feel uncomfortable when I do not understand the reason why an event occurred in my life. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 5. I feel irritated when one person disagrees with what | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

everyone else in a group believes.

6. I do not like to go into a situation without knowing what I can expect from it.

7. When I have made a decision, I feel relieved.

8. When I am confronted with a problem, I am dying to reach a solution very quickly.

9. I would quickly become impatient and irritated if I would not find a solution to a problem immediately.

10. I do not like to be with people who are capable of unexpected actions.

11. I dislike it when a person's statement could mean different things.

12. I find that establishing a consistent routine enables me to enjoy life more.
13. I enjoy having a clear and structured mode of life.
14. I do not usually consult many different opinions before forming my own view.
15. I dislike unpredictable situations.

Note. A higher score means a higher need for closure.