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The behavioural trend of ghosting in the professional context – a scoping review on the empirical mapping of ghosting in vocational surroundings

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ABSTRACT

This scoping review elucidates the behavioural trend of ghosting in vocational surroundings. Ghosting originates from private contexts, specifically from the dating sector. Due to power shifts within labour markets, the phenomenon entered vocational surroundings, impeding organisations' daily operations and recruiting processes. Ghosting describes the behaviour of one party abruptly terminating contact with another party, without providing explanatory information or indications. Disappearing like 'a ghost' leaves ghosted parties uncertain about the situation. The current state of research on ghosting in vocational surroundings is sparse, mainly focusing on the candidate perspective to generate insights and enhance understanding. By conducting a qualitative content analysis, this scoping review examines the scope of preceding research, generating a scoping map to demonstrate the coverage of current knowledge on the respective research field, as well as outlining overlaps and gaps. Previous research differs substantially in the scope, with each study covering a different area of ghosting in vocational surroundings. The main overlaps are to be found on the perspective of the candidate side, but working towards various research objectives. The state of research to date is sparse and challenging to compare across studies, therefore examined broader by each research focusing on a different scope.

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Introducing three perspectives on ghosting in vocational environments

The terminology of ghosting outlines a prevalent behavioural trend that occurs in private and vocational environments. Ghosting delineates the termination of contact between two parties involved in a kind of relationship, ended by one of the parties involved. Ghosted parties do not receive any explanatory information or indications regarding the reasons and are unexpectedly confronted with ceasing interest and commitment. Ghosting in any relationship is defined as the sudden termination of contact by one of the parties involved. Communication channels *via* social media platforms are blocked, followed by the deletion of corresponding profiles to inhibit the ghosted party from attempting contact. Furthermore, contact efforts are ignored (Freedman et al., 2019; Osbert-Pociecha & Bielinska, 2019).

The phenomenon's origin in private contexts

Ghosting in vocational surroundings originates from ghosting in private contexts, specifically from the dating sector. Developing communication opportunities owing to cutting-edge technologies, as well as the increasing utilisation of social media channels, simplifies the possibility of terminating contact

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(LeFebvre et al., 2019). Online profiles created for dating apps work as a multipliers and are designed similar to online shopping platforms (Aretz, 2017). Dating profiles focus on showcasing a person in terms of appearance, character traits and interests, emphasising the best sides. Reviewing dating app profiles results in basing a decision on given factors and the comparison of interesting alternatives. The comparison of dating profiles is similar to price comparisons, reducing humanity in dealing with other people. The human being behind the offer disappears (Zöllner, 2019). Ghosting mainly occurs because of low commitment to the other person and the relationship. Since the decision to date another person is based on weighing up profile factors, there is rather commitment to the best choice than to the other human being (Beasley & Holmes, 2021). The choice is revoked as soon as a better alternative becomes available. Ghosting in private spheres has taken on alarming proportions, causing problems for those who are ghosted.

Ghosting in vocational surroundings

Ghosting entered labour markets and causes difficulties in organisations' daily operations (Kumar & Narayana, 2019). In vocational surroundings, the behavioural trend manifests in varied modalities, carried out by different actors, for example, among colleagues or in recruitment processes between candidates and potential employers. The involved parties interact with each other on the basis of an informal agreement or psychological contract and have no legal obligation to comply with (Lee et al., 2022; Prasad & Ruchika, 2019; Madan & Madan, 2019; Basavaraj et al., 2022). Most frequently, ghosting occurs in recruiting processes, including a mutual informal commitment to process within the standard framework and depending on the conditions of the respective labour market. Initially, organisations ghosted candidates, facing a surplus of applications (Kumar & Narayana, 2019). Losing potential candidates was bearable, having a suitable recruitment funnel to choose from. Organisations did not need to adhere to informal agreements. The lack of communication towards candidates was handled and understood as a rejection. Labour market conditions have changed, reversing the situation. Due to globalisation and technological development, labour markets have become increasingly international, resulting in international competition. Candidates receive several job offers and are able to choose an employer from various alternatives (Oltén, 2021). Candidates have the opportunity to decide in favour of an offer and to reject other application processes by not communicating the decision, also called candidate ghosting (Kumar & Narayana, 2019).

The perspective academic discourse is taking on the phenomenon

Ghosting in vocational environments has attained proportions, that incur the interest of the scientific discourse (LeFebvre et al., 2019). Evinced by research, several labour markets are struggling with the consequences and extent of this social behaviour. Ghosting in professional contexts does not differ from ghosting in private environments, except for the relationship modalities. Previous research has focused on the background of ghosting, examining factors that trigger such behaviour and leading parties to resort to ghosting. This research landscape is sparse, comprising basic research and mainly concentrating on the candidate perspective, examining the company perspective to a minor extent. Often, ghosters themselves are interviewed, despite the nature of the phenomenon. The level of research on ghosting in vocational environments is limited to date, but the subject is entering the academic discourse.

The scoping review's relevance and purpose

The relevance of this scoping review is defined by the underrepresentation of ghosting in vocational surroundings in the academic discourse. First, the concept of scoping reviews was utilised in medical sciences, but spread to other research disciplines in order to gain an overview of existing research. In general, scoping reviews focus on the scope, objectives, and the approach of the research considered. Ghosting is a recent subject in the research landscape and has therefore not yet received sufficient attention. Previous studies have been conducted in various countries, outlining the status of ghosting in professional environments. The phenomenon has been recognised on a global level, but has not yet

been investigated in detail. Ghosting is defined in a standardised and overarching manner, not in detail with respect to the clarification of categories or levels. The definition of ghosting in vocational surroundings is parallel to ghosting in the context of dating (Koessler et al., 2019). This scoping review concentrates on several previous studies by highlighting the scope, object area and definition of ghosting. It is necessary to collate the knowledge and areas of the examination of ghosting in vocational surroundings to be able to react pursuant to the phenomenon in the future (Grant & Booth, 2009). Therefore, the following elaboration focuses on the object area of previous research. This review concentrates on the subject's delimitation, generating an overview of existing evidence. The key concept of ghosting in vocational settings needs to be clarified. The aim was the development of a map that demonstrates and categorises available evidence on ghosting in vocational surroundings (Von Elm et al., 2019). The scoping map illustrates existing knowledge, as well as overlaps and differences between individual studies. The following chapters are working towards an empirical informed discourse on the concept of ghosting in vocational environments.

Methodology

The structure and methodology of scoping reviews aim at explanatory and flexible methodological designs that do not strictly require adherence to predefined methodologies (Mays et al., 2001). This flexible approach enables the generation of an overview of fields that have not yet been examined in detail. With regard to this scoping review, a content analysis was chosen to evaluate individual studies in more detail. As part of the search strategy, relevant research was identified based on inclusion criteria. The defined inclusion criteria work towards the underlying review question. Selected studies were examined with regard to the definition of ghosting, the research scope, the object area and the level of knowledge acquired. Considered research was categorised and classified based on the category system of a generated coding guide, providing the basis for the development of the actual outcome of the scoping review. Following the categorisation system, a scoping map was created, outlining the examined object areas of preceding research as well as overlaps and gaps. Determined has to be which areas of ghosting in vocational surroundings were already examined, as well as on which areas further research is needed. Finally, the scoping map is interpreted and discussed (Von Elm et al., 2019).

Definition of the review question

The current state of knowledge on ghosting in vocational surroundings covers basic research on the subject as the level of research level to date is sparse. Preceded research mainly deals with the candidate perspective on the phenomenon, differing in the research focus, design and objective. Studies each cover a separate object area, overlapping only in certain elements (Lewis, 2019a, 2019b; Threlkeld, 2021; Osbert-Pociecha & Bielinska, 2019; Karl et al., 2021; Delgado, 2018; Wood et al., 2023; Indeed Survey with Censuswide, 2023, Lyons et al., 2024). The knowledge to date on the subject does not provide insights into every facet of ghosting, as many research fields still need to be addressed. Taking into account the type of review being dealt with, the question arises as to what extent of the phenomenon previous research is focusing on. Specifically, the question is which object area previous research covers. The resulting question the scoping review is based on has to be formulated as follows: Which object areas of ghosting in vocational surroundings does preceding research cover?

Conceptual framework

The scoping review aims at the elucidation of investigated object areas and related objectives of respective research. Initially, an underlying review question was established, shaping the review's aim and interpretation of results. Subsequently, the review question served the determination of inclusion criteria to select relevant research. Based on the defined inclusion criteria, relevant scientific databases, libraries and online sources were used to search for appropriate research to include in the scoping review. After finishing the selection process, the selected research was analysed according to the review question. Generated data was summarised and interpreted. A closer look was taken at the object area, the studies'

aim, whether ghosting is differentiated as a subject, and defined as a term. The scoping review's elaboration process works towards the creation of a scoping map, demonstrating which object area is specifically dealt with by respective research, outlining overlaps and gaps. The scoping map provides information on the state of research on ghosting in vocational surroundings (Von Elm et al., 2019).

Inclusion criteria

The defined inclusion criteria determined the research that is relevant to the scoping review (Von Elm et al., 2019). Outlined as the first inclusion criterion was the investigation of ghosting in vocational surroundings in respective research. Research recording ghosting in a private environment was excluded. Also relevant for inclusion was a clear definition of the term ghosting and a reasonable explanation of the phenomenon's meaning. As ghosting was investigated more closely in its manifestation, a definition had to be made clear and recognisable. Furthermore, the selected research had to be primary research. The defined inclusion criteria limited the selection of relevant research to following factors: investigation of the phenomenon of ghosting in vocational surroundings, clear definition and explanation of the phenomenon within the research and primary research.

Search strategy

The search strategy was based on the definition of inclusion criteria. This scoping review, the underlying search strategy and the selection process were conducted by one reviewer. The first step provided for reviewing scientific databases (Complementary Index, BASE, Regional Business News, Business Source Ultimate, MLA International Bibliography with Full Text, Books at JSTOR, Academic Search Index, wiso, Supplemental Index, IEEE Xplore Digital Library, OAlster, British Library Document Supply Centre Inside Serials & Conference Proceedings, Science Citation Index Expanded, Directory of Open Access Journals, arXiv, Historical Abstracts with Full Text, APA PsycInfo, Social Sciences Citation Index; Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts; Arts & Humanities Citation Index, ScienceDirect, Newswires, Philosopher's Index with Full Text, British Library EThOS, Europeana, Emerald Insight, JSTOR Journals, The New Republic Archive (DFG), APA PsycArticles), involving the search for relevant articles and journal articles using various search terms tailored to the phenomenon of ghosting in the academic discourse: ghosting, candidate ghosting, candidate side ghosting, workplace ghosting, employer ghosting, employee ghosting and company ghosting. Specifically, journals concentrating on human resources and related subjects (Organisation Science, Journal of Applied Psychology, Organisational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, Journal of Labor Economics and Personnel Psychology) were reviewed for suitable articles. Literature cited in the selected research was reviewed for further sources. In the last step, a university library was accessed to locate grey literature (Von Elm et al., 2019).

Selection process

Studies located in relevant databases, journals, and libraries were scrutinised for suitability in the first step with regard to the title and abstract. If the title and abstract matched the scoping review's purpose, a closer look was taken at the research itself with regard to other inclusion criteria. If the study met further defined requirements of being primary research and having a reasonable definition of the phenomenon, the study was qualified for inclusion in the scoping review. The PRISMA Flowchart in [Figure 1](#) shows the detailed selection process 'Insert [Figure 1](#)'. Accordingly, nine studies were found to be suitable for further examination within the scoping review, detailed in [Table 1](#).

Examination of relevant preceded research

In the course of following chapter, selected research is reviewed and described in more detail in the order of the publication year. The focus of the detailed review lies in the study's scope, the examined object area and the level of knowledge acquired. Introductory, selected research is described in regard

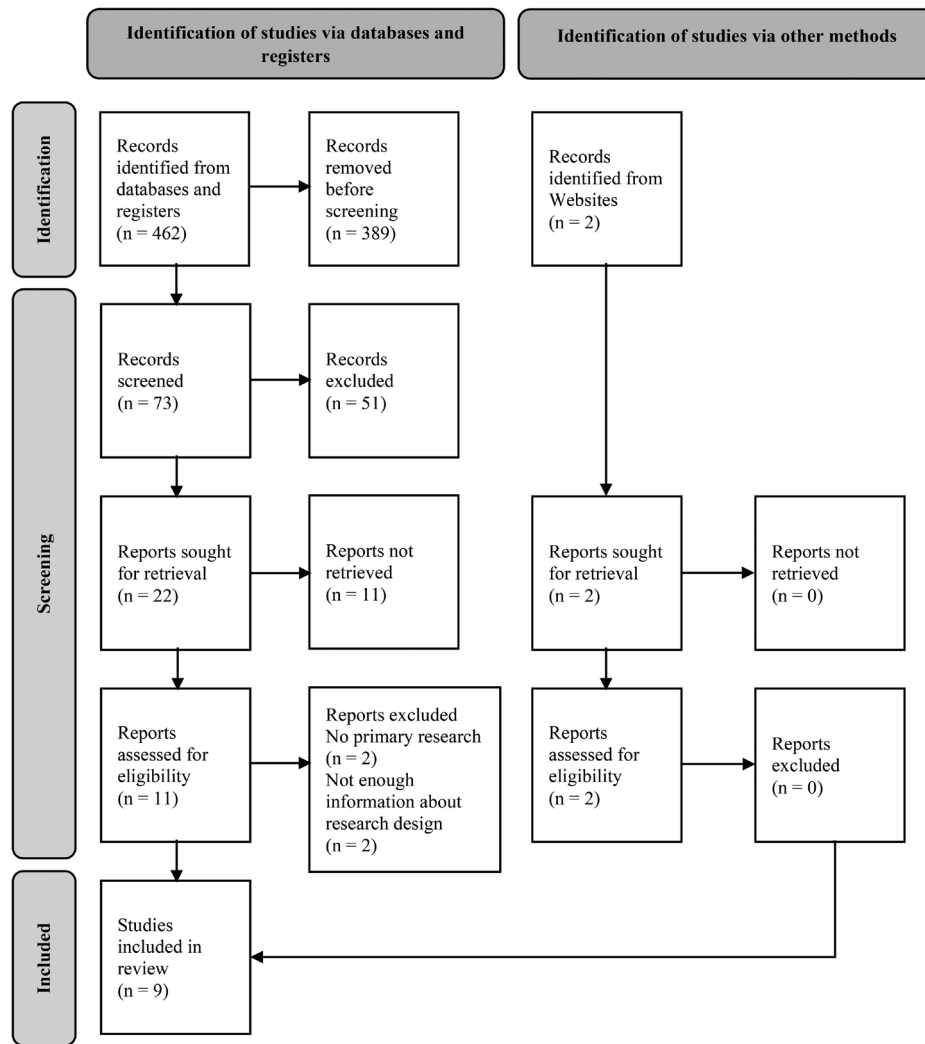


Figure 1. PRISMA flowchart.

to the framework data, outlined by the study's focus, the utilised method and the phenomenon's definition. Subsequently, to define the phenomenon, described characteristics of the object area are delineated. Detailed delineation of selected research works towards the highlighting of the study's scope, object area and level of knowledge acquired.

Acceptance of ghosting by Delgado

The research 'What Causes Workplace Ghosting?' by Delgado (2018) focuses on the phenomenon of ghosting in vocational surroundings in the US labour market, concentrating on the candidate perspective. The acceptance and justification of ghosting in professional contexts were examined. A total of 507 full-time employees were surveyed using questionnaires, requested to share experiences and perceptions regarding ghosting behaviour. Defined is the phenomenon as workplace ghosting: a candidate vanishes from the interview process without providing any explanatory information about the reasons or responding to contact attempts. Candidates not only vanish from interview processes but also disappear after accepting a job offer or ghosting as a no-show on the first day of work. Several manners of ghosting displaying in recruiting processes have been alluded. Despite from which side, ghosting signals the failure of communication. The research mainly focuses on the explanation of ghosting reasons, as well as respondents' conceptions about varied modalities of ghosting. Evinced is the phenomenon's acceptance and reasonability, in particular differentiated to ghosting on the company side and candidate ghosting. Data was generated from the candidate perspective to provide insights for the company perspective. The

Table 1. Selected research.

Study	Author	Year	Research focus
What causes workplace ghosting?	Delgado	2018	Ghosting from candidate side: acceptance of ghosting
Understanding of Ghosting in re-education of human resources in organisation	Vagas and Misko	2018	Evaluation of the Global Indicator of Ghosting to predict company internal ghosting by employees
Study by Indeed: The Ghosting Guide: An Inside Look at Why Job Seekers Disappear; Ghosting unmasked: Listen to the Voices Behind the Epidemic; Employer Ghosting: A Troubling Workplace Trend	Lewis, Threlkeld	2019a, 2019b, 2021	Candidates' reasons to ghost organisations; Background of reasons due to candidates ghost; Impact of Covid-19 on ghosting
Ghosting w polskich Przedsiębiorstwach – perspektywa kandydata/pracownika. Wyzwania dla rekrutacji	Osbert-Pociecha and Bielinska	2019	Ghosting from candidate side: reasons for ghosting
Ghosting Behavior Of Job Applicants: An Analysis Of Factors Driving The Behavior	Kumar and Narayana	2019	Factors influencing ghosting tendencies collected on company side
Slip Out the Back Jack: Why Applicants Ghost Potential Employers	Karl et al.	2021	Factors influencing ghosting tendencies collected on candidate side
When Candidates and Recruiters Vanish: Indeed's Ghosting in Hiring Report	Indeed Survey with Censuswide	2023	International ghosting trends on company and candidate side
Ghosting from the workplace: The impact of feedback (or lack thereof) on applicants' psychological needs satisfaction	Wood et al.	2023	Impact ghosting by organisations has on psychological needs satisfaction of candidates
The vanishing applicant: Uncovering aberrant antecedents to ghosting behaviour	Lyons et al.	2024	Impact of the character traits of the dark triad, self-control and fear of missing out in candidates has on the ghosting behaviour of these respective candidates

Delgado (2018); Indeed Survey with Censuswide (2023); Karl et al. (2021); Kumar and Narayana, (2019); Lewis (2019a, 2019b); Lyons et al. (2024); Osbert-Pociecha and Bielinska (2019); Threlkeld (2021); Vagas and Misko (2018); Wood et al. (2023).

aim is to provide data that delivers insights for hiring managers to address and reduce the phenomenon in recruiting processes (Delgado, 2018).

Company internal ghosting by Vagas and Misko

The research 'Understanding of ghosting in re-education of human resources in an organisation' by Vagas and Misko (2018), conducted in Slovakia, focuses on ghosting in company-internal contexts. The Global Indicator of Ghosting was created as a tool to predict employees' ghosting tendencies within companies, consisting of 12 points of self-assessment to predict how likely a ghosting incident with regard to a specific employee is. To obtain data, the Global Indicator of Ghosting itself was applied. The collected data was evaluated using statistical test procedures. Ghosting has its origin in the dating sector, referring to the research conducted by Koessler et al. (2019), who defined ghosting as a strategy to end a relationship with a partner of romantic interest as a verbal indication of no longer interest. Ghosting in organisations is considered as a negative phenomenon, related to human resources and the well-being of human capital in companies. The competitive advantage of an organisation is jeopardised. One potential solution to ghosting is the re-education of human resources. Communicating difficult situations at work has to be made manageable for employees because difficult communication is otherwise avoided, albeit being one of the key factors to an organisation's success. Inadequate communication skills appear at every hierarchical level, up to management positions. Insufficient communication can demoralise employees, leading to ghosting behaviour and similar behavioural trends. Training and development measures were suggested to avoid company-internal ghosting. The aim is to generate a method applicable to the work environment as well as to recruiting processes in order to predict and mitigate ghosting incidents, taking the perspective of employees to set up a database. The Global Indicator of Ghosting was created to enable companies to prevent such tendencies from being triggered. The research aimed at verifying the method of the Global Indicator of Ghosting. The tool should be used to decide on certain human resource activities or reduce ghosting incidents in organisations (Vagas & Misko, 2018).

Candidate's reasons to ghost by Lewis and Threlkeld (Indeed)

The research by Indeed comprises three sections, describing the phenomenon of ghosting in vocational surroundings in the US labour market. An overarching examination takes the perspective of both, candidates and companies, to work towards a general understanding for a great target group, including public and academic elements. The first section, 'The Ghosting Guide: An Inside Look at Why Job Seekers Disappear' by Lewis (2019a), focuses on the candidates' reasons to ghost organisations in recruiting processes. More than 4000 job seekers and almost 900 companies across various industries were surveyed by providing questionnaires to respondents. The reported results were collected from respondents who were already involved in ghosting incidents. Ghosting arises from the online dating sector, influenced by new technologies that open up possibilities for such behavioural trends. In vocational surroundings, not only social media communication channels but also a tight labour market leads candidates to resort to ghosting. Ghosting is defined as candidates vanishing from recruiting processes without a trace, appearing at different stages of hiring processes: skipping an interview, not responding to recruiters and potential employers, disappearing after accepting a job offer or not showing up to the first day of work. The research scope elucidates the phenomenon's headline, generating a superior understanding of the advent of ghosting in vocational environments. The aim is to look behind respective incidents, candidates' reasons for ghosting and factors evoking ghosting behaviour on the candidate side (Lewis, 2019a). The second section of the research by Indeed, 'Ghosting Unmasked: Listen to the Voices Behind the Epidemic' by Lewis (2019b), elucidates the revealed reasons that lead to ghosting behaviour. More than 250 job seekers were surveyed and requested to share experiences and conceptions about ghosting in vocational surroundings. Examined were backgrounds of ghosting reasons, with ghosting being a frequently exploited possibility to terminate recruiting processes. Aimed is at generating an enhanced understanding of attitudes towards ghosting (Lewis, 2019b). The third section and last part, 'Employer Ghosting: A Troubling Workplace Trend' by Threlkeld (2021), of the research by Indeed deals with the impact Covid-19 had on ghosting. The survey included 500 job seekers and 500 employers across several industries to understand changes due to the pandemic, designating ghosting as not being a recent trend in professional contexts anymore. Companies and candidates are ghosting more frequently than before the pandemic (Threlkeld, 2021).

Outlining generational contexts causing ghosting by Osbert-Pociecha and Bielinska

The research 'Ghosting w polskich przedsiębiorstwach – perspektywa kandydata/pracownika. Wyzwania dla rekrutacji' by Osbert-Pociecha and Bielinska (2019), conducted in Poland, focuses on the problems that occur in organisations and to related employees in the Polish labour market in the advent of ghosting. Data was collected from over 100 respondents through a diagnostic survey and questionnaires. Questionnaires contained a metric for respondents' characteristics and the identification of the phenomenon from the candidate's perspective (causes, conditions, characteristics, intentions and implications for future human resource management). Ghosting is defined as a phenomenon that originates in psychology, describing the breakdown of contact in interpersonal relationships without any explanatory information, also called a failure of communication. The abandonment betides because of fearing confrontation and the exclusive focus on one's own needs. The most obvious visibility attains ghosting in recruiting functions, jeopardising the recruitment of an appropriate quality and quantity of new employees. The research focuses on candidates' and employees' perspectives, gaining insights into the phenomenon and an understanding for the company perspective to create recruiting processes more efficiently. Initially, employers ghosted candidates. Over the last few years, candidates have used growing bargaining power to ghost in return. Ghosting could also be understood as the infringement of an informal agreement, with candidates not complying with the applicable rules of recruiting processes. Ghosting appears as withdrawing from participating in recruiting processes and job interviews, not accepting a job offer or rejecting respective offer on short notice, and abandoning a job after a relatively short period of time, in all cases without leaving any notification, explanation or information. The aim is to identify candidates' perceptions of ghosting and to elucidate characteristics and motives. Initially, the candidate perspective is taken, working towards the generation of data for the organisation and human resource contexts. Younger generations are outlined, indicating that ghosting is linked to generational contexts because

young people have less experience in handling conflictual situations, therefore resorting to ghosting behaviour (Osbert-Pociecha & Bielinska, 2019).

Factors influencing ghosting tendencies collected on company side by Kumar and Narayana

The research 'Ghosting Behavior Of Job Applicants: An Analysis Of Factors Driving The Behavior' by Kumar and Narayana (2019), conducted on the Indian labour market, focuses on ghosting in vocational surroundings, concentrating on the company perspective on ghosting. The data was collected by submitting questionnaires to 110 organisations, that shared experiences of ghosting behaviour in recruiting processes, and was analysed by statistical test procedures. The phenomenon takes place throughout recruiting processes between recruiters and applicants, one party involved not replying to the other party involved. Initially, organisations ghosted applicants, but turning trends resulted in candidates ghosting companies. Aimed is at the examination of candidates' ghosting behaviour in the Indian labour market, as well as factors influencing respective behaviour. The phenomenon originates in the interpersonal field of dating. The term describes the termination of contact from one partner to another, reasons are not communicated and therefore unknown (Kumar & Narayana, 2019). Ending relationships through ghosting results in immediate consequences, leading to confusion on the side of the ghosted parties. This manner of social distancing exists for some time but is fuelled by new technological trends and developments entering professional surroundings (LeFebvre et al., 2019; cited in Kumar & Narayana, 2019). Referred is to the research by Vagas and Misko (2018), considering ghosting to be a negative sort of behaviour in organisations. Stated is that ghosting in vocational surroundings appears at every organisational level across various industries. In first place, organisations stopped responding to candidates throughout recruiting processes. The trend switched sides and candidates are ghosting recruiters and companies, leaving organisational structures unable to act in this regard. Ghosting takes place throughout the entire recruitment process, mostly with regard to the participation in interviews. The research works towards a gain in knowledge for organisational contexts by taking the organisations' perspective. This study examines the frequency of candidate ghosting incidents with regard to the location of the business, several levels of education and the preparedness of companies to face this trend. Generated are insights into ghosting behaviour from the company perspective and factors taking influence on the phenomenon. Based on the obtained data, companies are enabled to detect factors impacting ghosting tendencies in advance and mitigate ghosting incidents in recruiting processes (Kumar & Narayana, 2019).

Factors influencing ghosting tendencies collected on candidate side by Karl et al

The research 'Slip out the back jack: Why applicants ghost potential employers' by Karl et al. (2021) was conducted on the US labour market, focusing on ghosting in vocational surroundings from the candidate perspective and factors influencing ghosting behaviour. Further explored data and hypotheses are based on the signalling theory. Hypotheses aim to prove that distinct factors are related either to ghosting on the candidate side or to the candidate's attraction to the organisation. By providing a questionnaire, students from a US university were asked about fictitious interview situations to generate data about potential behaviour in those recruiting processes. Data was evaluated using statistical test procedures. The term ghosting originates from the dating sector, describing a relationship dissolution process in which one partner disappears like a ghost and silence remains. Referred is to the research by Indeed. Ghosting occurs as not participating in interviews or stopping to respond to recruiters and hiring managers contact attempts throughout the process. Candidate ghosting is described as an extreme form of applicant withdrawal, candidates remove themselves from recruiting processes by failing to communicate declining interest. Usually, informal rules of application processes require candidates to inform potential employers about not attending a job interview or ending the process. As fewer candidates miss to inform employers, the study works towards gaining further knowledge, enabling organisations to manage recruiting processes more efficiently. This research refers to literature on ghosting in the dating sector, guiding the discussion on the subject. The aim is to examine predictors that influence candidates' ghosting behaviour. If one of the parties involved has more or better information about a situation, an attempt is made to reduce this information asymmetry. In this specific case candidates attempt to reduce an information asymmetry on the company side by delivering information, such as high education levels

(Karl et al., 2021). In recruiting processes, the characteristics of the respective processes or recruiters could be interpreted as certain signals and indications of the organisation's interest in the candidate. Therefore, this research examines factors related to ghosting behaviour on the candidate side from the candidate perspective to work towards a gain in knowledge for not only academic discourse but also organisational contexts. The factors investigated were recruiters' communication behaviour, knowledge about the organisation, gender, value of conscientiousness and helicopter parenting. Aimed is at the delimitation of factors influencing ghosting behaviour on the candidate side (Karl et al., 2021).

International ghosting trends by Indeed in cooperation with Censuswide

The Indeed survey in cooperation with Censuswide 'When Candidates and Recruiters Vanish: Indeed's Ghosting in Hiring Report 2023' focuses on international ghosting trends in 2023, elucidating insights for labour markets in the US, UK and Canada. Since 2019, hiring trends have been tracked in the US. The future meaning of ghosting for hiring processes is examined, outlining insights in and experiences with the phenomenon by job seekers as well as employers. The survey included 4517 employers (US: 1502, UK: 1506 and Canada: 1509) and 4516 job seekers, aged 18–64 (US: 1507, UK: 1506 and Canada: 1503). Taken is the candidate as well as the company perspective to work towards a general understanding and further knowledge for the organisation's perspective. Regarding the phenomenon's definition it is referred to previous research by Indeed on ghosting in vocational surroundings, defining ghosting as candidates vanishing from recruiting processes without a trace. Ghosting appears at different stages of the recruitment process from skipping an interview to not showing up on the first day of work. In 2019, the behavioural trend was recent in vocational surroundings, not being clear whether this trend will impact hiring processes in the future. The scope of this study provides new insights into ghosting in vocational surroundings, sheds light on changes, and the development of the phenomenon. Insights are generated for all interested inter alia for organisations to support an enhanced understanding of this social behavioural trend disturbing recruiting processes and developing alongside labour market changes. Examined are insights into the phenomenon provided by candidates and organisations. The research concentrates on ghosting from the candidate side, ascertaining organisations' experiences being ghosted and candidates' experiences of ghosting an organisation. Respondents' reasons for ghosting and conceptions about ghosting trends were also surveyed. As ghosting is declared as a trend to last, developments have to be monitored and shared. The acquired level of knowledge works towards generating on the one hand general insights on the subject and, on the other hand, further knowledge contemplating the 2019' research on the phenomenon. Addressed is a target group requiring knowledge of ghosting in hiring processes as well as indications for an appropriate handling. Further levels are opened up with respect to internationality, sample size and strategic advice for employers to react appropriately (Indeed Survey with Censuswide, 2023).

Impact of ghosting on candidates by Wood et al

The research 'Ghosting from the workplace: The impact of feedback (or lack thereof) on applicants' psychological needs satisfaction' by Wood et al. (2023) concentrates on the consequences of company-side ghosting on candidates' psychological condition. The organisation's decision to close recruiting processes could either be communicated towards the candidate or communication could be ceased, seen as a reasonable alternative by employers because hiring processes are mainly virtual and organisations no longer dependent on these candidates. These two approaches were compared in terms of the influence on candidates' psychological needs. Surveyed is a sample of 554 unemployed people by providing an online job application task, showcasing given feedback of personal feedback, impersonal feedback or ghosting. Collected data was analysed by statistical test procedures, revealing that participants assigned to the task of ghosting reported higher values of self-esteem and control than participants who were rejected with personal feedback, opposed the initial hypothesis. Ghosting is defined as ignorance or termination of communication with another person without explanation, comparing ghosting behaviour to ostracism. In general, people are eager to rather ghost than communicate directly because of being reluctant to communicate difficult information. The purpose of this study is to examine the effect of ghosting on applicants after the submission of a hypothetical job application. The consequences of ghosting by companies on candidates

were investigated. Data was generated from the company perspective towards the candidate perspective, not generating insights behind the phenomenon like other research but on its consequences and impact on ghosted parties. Consequences of ghosting in this case are caused by organisations, although the candidate side is affected as well as data gathered on the candidate side. The study takes the candidate perspective to work towards the candidate perspective, leaving organisations aside in according contemplation. Ghosting is described as a gradual process, meaning that participants might not have understood that they had been ghosted by the time the data was collected. This field is outlined as a necessity for further research on this subject. The acquired data provides insights and further knowledge on the effects of ghosting on ghosted parties. These insights are not aligned to a specific target group but to provide an enhanced understanding of the consequences that ghosted parties face (Wood et al., 2023).

Impact of the dark triad on ghosting behaviour by Lyons et al

The research 'The vanishing applicant: Uncovering aberrant antecedents to ghosting behaviour' by Lyons et al. (2024) focuses on the impact the character traits of the dark triad in candidates themselves has on ghosting behaviour of these respective candidates. Examined is the impact the character traits of the dark triad, self-control and fear of missing out has on ghosting behaviour and tendencies of candidates. Data was collected in a two-wave design of an online survey with a sample of 314 participants. The character traits were reported by respective item scales and analysed by the method of moderated regression. The research results demonstrate that the character traits of psychopathy and fear of missing out predict ghosting behaviour as well the experience of being ghosted before moderates the relationship between ghosting behaviour and self-control as well as fear of missing out. Ghosting is defined as applicant ghosting and the withdrawal of candidates from recruiting processes. Applicant ghosting is categorised as a maladaptive behaviour in the workplace that disrupts and violates workplace standards and norms, consuming organisational resources. The purpose of this research is to frame ghosting behaviour within the framework of maladaptive workplace behaviour, to examine if these character traits predict ghosting behaviour and to bridge the events that occur in professional contexts to respective literature. The study takes the candidate perspective by collecting data on candidate side to work towards the company perspective. Provided is a specified database that helps to bridge the gap between academic findings and the application in organisational contexts as well as the gap between other maladaptive workplace behaviour and the phenomenon of ghosting. The research results provide specified insights into the phenomenon of ghosting behaviour and serve for a database that helps to identify ghosting tendencies in advance (Lyons et al., 2024).

Coding categories

To collect data relevant to the scoping review and provide value to the scoping map, a qualitative content analysis was conducted. The content analysis was driven by a coding guide, guiding through the elements of the respective research being in focus of the review. According to the explanations of the preceding chapters, the coding guide was generated to prepare the data collection. Four factors were further specified: definition of the term ghosting, research scope, examined object area and level of knowledge acquired. The factors were specified more precisely by the elements to search for, as well the source and instructions to collect these data from the selected research. The coding guide precisely specifies how to collect data from the selected research, as detailed in [Table 2](#).

Quality assessment

Intended is the illumination and discussion of the existing research landscape on ghosting in vocational surroundings. Based on the review question, the following quality assessment evaluates the delimitation of the object area of previous research under consideration. The aim is to determine areas already covered by the current state of research, as well as the knowledge derived from previous research. Delimiting a social phenomenon in research contexts appears to be challenging, as these are difficult to define and recognise clearly. In particular, based on a low level of research defining the topic distinctly is even more important in order to render a distinction in the research concept. Social phenomena often overlap, and

Table 2. Coding guide.

Factor	Specification	Source	Instruction for data collection
Definition of the term ghosting	Term definition, term explanation, definition's origin, categories or specifications regarding the term ghosting	Focusing on the abstract, introduction and introductory part of the methodology chapter of respective article	Searching for a definition of the term ghosting
Research scope	Information related to the research scope, aim, objectives	Focusing on the abstract, introduction and methodology chapter of respective article	Searching for an explanation on the research scope or aim
Examined object area	Information related to the examined area of the subject	Focusing on the introduction and methodology chapter of respective article	Combining the data collection and target group in consideration with the definition of the term
Level of knowledge acquired	What level of data and which purpose is aimed at	Focusing on the chapter of methodology of respective article	Considering the target group, source of data and intended aim of research results

must be differentiated by a definition. According to a reasonable definition, bias must be considered for included research. Outlined has to be whether relevant studies clearly define ghosting, excluding the possibility of mixing related phenomena and resulting in a misrepresentation of the extent of the research landscape. To delineate the current state of knowledge, the subject's definition must be addressed specifically to not include any neighbouring phenomena in the scoping review, covering sole ghosting in vocational environments. The generation of the scoping map is based on a four-factor concept, being applied to the included research in the review's course: phenomenon's definition, research scope, object area and level of knowledge acquired. Working on these factors ensures a clear distinction between the phenomenon and related behaviour, demonstrating the starting point and target of respective studies as well as positioning relevant research in the overall context of the research landscape on ghosting in vocational environments. In addition, the purpose of corresponding research and intended utilisation in a holistic context is evinced. Initially, the definition of ghosting in vocational surroundings had to be addressed. Next, the study's aim was discussed, particularly the target in the subject and target groups. The research target must be considered in order to contextualise the study, the research design's aim, and the enrichment of the state of research. It is also important to consider the object area covered, which is characterised by the composition of different elements. Finally, the necessity occurs to consider the knowledge gained, describing the intended handling of research results and the contribution made to academic discourse. The level of knowledge categorises the research, enabling the mapping in generated scoping map. The four-category system works towards the creation of a scoping map, visualising the research landscape of ghosting in vocational surroundings.

Synthesis

The following scoping map demonstrates the categorisation of selected research based on the target group addressed, the source of collected data and the level of knowledge acquired. The overarching interpretation of the scoping map illustrates the scope and object area of considered research. By combining the three elements depicted, the scope and object area of each study is evinced. The elaboration works towards the categorisation of the investigated object areas. One element illustrated is the target group addressed and differentiated into public discourse, academic discourse, corporate context and human resource context. Further distinction determines the level of knowledge acquired. A distinction is made in a four-level system, breaking down the following levels of knowledge gain: general insights, further knowledge, database and database for specific purpose target group. This distinction serves to evince the increase in knowledge and analysed object area more precisely, illustrating a categorisation within the research scope. To differentiate the source of data collection, different geometric forms are utilised: round represents data collection on the employee side, oval represents data collection on the candidate side, rounded square represents data collection on the candidate and company side, and square represents data collection on the company side. The scoping map determines object areas, being the aim of previous research and the research scope, as well as outlining overlaps and research fields that have not yet been examined. Categorised is previous research on the one hand and research fields

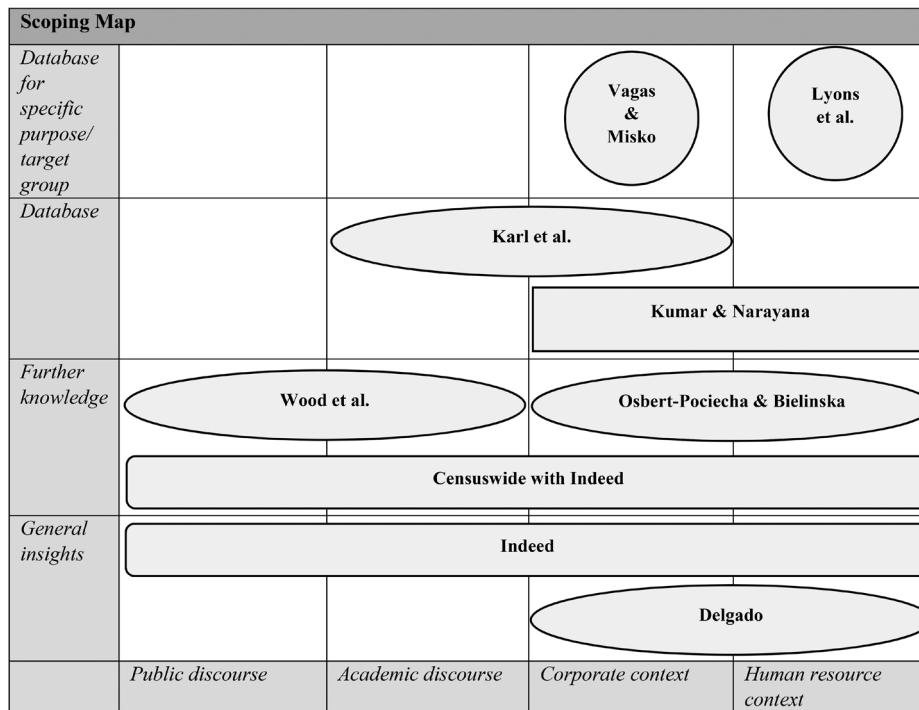


Figure 2. Scoping map.

that still need to be differentiated on the other hand. Most research covers general insights and further knowledge, working towards a gain for organisational and human resource contexts. Few research extends the scope to higher levels of knowledge gain by gathering more specialised data, coincidentally addressing a target group. A detailed illustration of the research landscape on ghosting in vocational surroundings is illustrated by the Scoping Map in [Figure 2](#) (Delgado, 2018; Indeed Survey with Censuswide, 2023; Karl et al., 2021; Kumar & Narayana, 2019; Lewis, 2019a, 2019b; Lyons et al., 2024; Osbert-Pociecha & Bielinska, 2019; Threlkeld, 2021; Vagas & Misko, 2018; Wood et al., 2023).

Review results

Examined research entails overlaps and differences to be considered. Previous research has dealt with the same phenomenon but differs in the course of the object area. Each research was conducted in a different country. Some research specifically addresses a target group, whereas other studies aim at achieving insights into the phenomenon and a general increase in knowledge. The greatest differences are found in terms of the investigation's aim as well as the desired utilisation of data generated. The most obvious overlap is detected with regard to the focus of the phenomenon. Ghosting in vocational surroundings must be considered from different perspectives. Preceded research has mainly concentrated on the phenomenon from the candidate perspective. Research overlaps in terms of the origin of ghosting in vocational surroundings. The origin of ghosting in the private and interpersonal spheres, specifically in the dating sector, is discussed uniformly. The analysed research originates from the same source, differentiating in the increase in knowledge and area of examination. The decisive factor is the problem that necessitates research. Ghosting in vocational environments leads to the extensive impairment of corporate processes and underlying personnel strategies (Kumar & Narayana, 2019). Considered as necessary is the increase of knowledge in order to learn about and understand triggers on the one hand and to generate a data base to increase the efficiency of recruiting processes on the other hand. The review results of each study are summarised in [Table 3](#).

Synoptically, the review question 'Which object areas of ghosting in vocational surroundings does preceding research cover?' can be answered as follows: By combining different elements of the respective research designs, each research claims an object area for itself. Research is not based on each other and has mostly not extended previously conducted research. Overlaps and differences were given within

Table 3. Review results.

Research	Definition	Scope	Object area	Level of knowledge
Delgado (2018)	Workplace ghosting	Generating insights for hiring managers to address and reduce ghosting in recruiting processes and highlighting the problematic nature and the relevance for the academic discourse	Examination of the acceptance and justification of ghosting with an exclusive focus on the candidate perspective	General insights that serve a generalised understanding, dedicated to all those interested in and affected by ghosting
Vagas and Misko (2018)	Negative phenomenon related to human resources and the wellbeing of human capital in companies	Generating a method applicable to organisational and recruiting processes to become aware of, mitigate and prevent candidate ghosting	Verification of the Global Indicator of Ghosting to analyse company internal ghosting from the employee perspective towards the company perspective	Data base for the specific purpose of a targeted increase in knowledge for organisational processes, addressed to human resource and recruiting specialists
Lewis (2019a, 2019b); Threlkeld (2021)	Ghosting	Enlightening the headline of ghosting and the expansion on the candidate side to generate a better understanding and the impact of Covid-19	Candidates' reasons to ghost companies, the impact of Covid-19 on and frequency and experiences of ghosting by reviewing the candidate and the company perspective	General insights that serve a generalised understanding of ghosting in a holistic approach for all those interested
Osbert-Pociecha and Bielinska (2019)	Ghosting: breakdown of contact in inter-personal relationships without explanatory information	Identifying characteristics and motives of candidates who ghost to provide an explanation by considering a specific aspect	Identification of candidates' perceptions, characteristics of and motives for ghosting by including the context of generations as an assumption to be considered	Further knowledge that addresses a specialised audience of human resource professionals and recruiting specialists
Kumar and Narayana (2019)	Ghosting: behaviour taking place in recruiting processes between recruiters and applicants	Examining the company perspective on ghosting, enabling organisations to handle ghosting from the candidate side throughout recruiting processes	Frequency of candidate ghosting in regard to the business location, education level, companies' preparedness to face ghosting	Database to be consulted by organisations as a guidance to adjust recruitment activities
Karl et al. (2021)	Ghosting: candidate ghosting, applicant withdrawal, candidates failing to communicate	Identifying factors that take influence on ghosting behaviour of candidates	Ghosting from the candidate side and factors, attributed to candidates, that influence candidates' ghosting behaviour	Database that addresses the company perspective to adjust and optimise recruiting processes
Indeed in Cooperation with Censuwide (2023)	Ghosting	Shedding light on changes, the development and extent of ghosting in an international context and demonstrating the relevance for organisations	The future meaning of ghosting for hiring processes in the US, UK and Canada, with respect of the aspects of internationality, sample size and strategic advice	Further knowledge that provides strategic advice to organisations and an enhanced understanding for the company perspective on hiring processes
Wood et al. (2023)	Ghosting: ignorance or termination of communication with another person without explanation, comparing ghosting to ostracism	Providing an enhanced understanding of the consequences that ghosted parties face	Consequences of company side ghosting on candidates' psychological condition	Further knowledge that evinces the subject's relevance to the academic discourse and opening up the complexity to the research landscape
Lyons et al. (2024)	Applicant ghosting: withdrawal of candidates from recruiting processes	Providing insights into predictors that help to identify ghosting tendencies in candidates and to connect ghosting to other maladaptive workplace behaviour	Examination of specific character traits of the dark triad, self-control and fear of missing out towards their significant correlation to candidates' ghosting tendencies	Database that helps organisations and human resource specialists to mitigate candidate ghosting in organisational processes

Delgado (2018); Indeed Survey with Censuwide (2023); Karl et al. (2021); Kumar and Narayana (2019); Lewis (2019a, 2019b); Lyons et al. (2024); Osbert-Pociecha and Bielinska (2019); Threlkeld (2021); Vagas and Misko (2018); Wood et al. (2023).

certain elements. The current state of research mainly provides for a general understanding of ghosting in vocational surroundings or an expanded level of basic knowledge by addressing a certain target group, aiming at the enablement of target groups to handle the phenomenon. Considering the scoping map, the state of research mostly takes the candidate perspective while aiming to generate knowledge for a target group on the company side, leading to certain difficulties when applying research results to practical contexts because of organisations having to take another perspective on the phenomenon. Data gathered on the candidate side does not always serve organisational perspectives on ghosting and, therefore, is not applicable to organisational processes. Also evinced is that the research landscape slowly develops in the direction of a more precise and specified examination of the phenomenon. Each research focuses on ghosting in vocational surroundings in a different manner and scope, leading to research not being comparable cross-study, each research standing alone. Preceded research coincides in the level of knowledge, but not in the focus on the phenomenon. Few research is connected to each other, gaps remain in the research landscape and further research approaches are needed.

Discussion

The following discussion considers the strengths and weaknesses of this scoping review, the contributions the review makes to the academic discourse considering the review results in regard of the theoretical background, and the implications for future research approaches.

The scoping review and the scoping map show that the trend of ghosting has shifted from the company side to the candidate side. As well, demonstrated is that the phenomenon has moved from the public to the academic discourse. Research focuses to a great extent on a comprehensive understanding of ghosting in the professional environment, but to a lower extent on solving or preventing the inherent problem. To prevent ghosting tendencies from being triggered, the implementation of general measures is suggested, albeit those are not based on research. Also shown is that the assumptions regarding the phenomenon, spreading and disrupting company processes, are evidenced. The research landscape already covers several scopes, but these are differentiated and do not yet adequately cover all the characteristics of the phenomenon. Taking into account the research question (Which object areas of ghosting in vocational surroundings does preceding research cover?), it can be said that a general understanding of ghosting in vocational environments has been developed. The target groups are diverse and range from a public audience to human resource-specific target groups, much more precisely selected than the specification of the phenomenon in research designs. The research density decreases with increasing data specification and specified target groups. Considering the data-driven age, the research that generates data for the further utilisation of finding solutions, is not sufficient. The contribution of the scoping review made to the academic discourse can also be determined on this basis. The scoping map illustrates which results can be found in which study and whether there is already research on an area of the phenomenon. The main contribution to the academic discourse and the research landscape is the identification of research gaps in this field. On the one hand, further research is needed to obtain data for generalisation in order to find solutions, and on the other hand to create comparability between research designs. At this point the scoping map contributes to the economic and entrepreneurial context. If knowledge is required, the scoping map shows where it can be found. As well, provided are distinct indications of future research fields that also serve the corporate context. These research gaps point to the generalisability and comparability needed to apply research findings in the corporate context. The scoping review leads through the development of the phenomenon from the company side to the candidate side *via* the existing research results to the fields of research that still need to be addressed to make ghosting in the professional context tangible for the target group that currently faces the problem: the company side in recruiting processes.

As well mentioned, has to be that the scoping review can only provide the added value that selected research offers, as the quality of the content analysis depends on the quality of previous research. In case of this review taken into account has to be the state and level of research to date, working on basic research on the subject of ghosting in vocational surroundings. The possibility of focusing entirely on a specific element of the phenomenon was not given, considered is a holistic approach. The research landscape on ghosting in vocational surroundings is sparse to date, leading to the inclusion of every research

dealing with the subject. Due to studies handling each a different element and focusing on the phenomenon, further delimitation of ghosting in vocational surroundings was not feasible. The concept of scoping reviews is the categorisation of previous research, providing an overview of the existing research landscape. The methodological approach is flexible and adaptable to the current state of research, being suitable for the scoping review's research basis, and aims to capture an overview of the sparse state of knowledge. With regard to the current state of research, the scoping review offers an added value, reflecting the knowledge on the phenomenon provided so far, and opening up the possibility of categorising preceding research and drawing conclusions for further approaches. Each research claiming its own object area impedes cross-study comparisons. The scoping map offers a method to provide an adequate overview and select research that complements knowledge attempts of further research. Also highlighted are research gaps and fields necessitating further research, evincing which scopes lack knowledge in order to establish a well-filled and useful field of research.

Future research should focus on generating data that helps organisations to manage ghosting in recruitment processes and to identify a target group to adapt recruiting activities to. As the problem of ghosting has shifted from candidates being ghosted by organisations to organisations being ghosted by candidates, the research landscape should reflect this shift. So far there is a general understanding. In a data-driven era, it would be essential to generate data that can be generalised, compared and adapted to organisational processes. As the phenomenon manifests itself in organisational processes, research should also generate results that specifically address organisational processes. Research needs to be more specific in terms of the target group, the results generated and the resulting application. This specification needs to be reflected in the research approaches and designs.

Implications for business and management

The scoping map shows that ghosting in a professional context has so far been more significant in economic areas than in academic ones. Companies are more affected by ghosting and face greater problems regarding the consequences than parties in academic discourse. For this reason, the studies often do not relate to an academic environment rather to economic and business environments. The scoping map demonstrates which target group is interested in the phenomenon. It also demonstrates that the field needing further research findings on is sparsely researched. The review shows that companies need to take the problem of ghosting seriously. The complexity of the phenomenon should not be underestimated. The scoping map illustrates how diverse the phenomenon of ghosting is. Companies should develop an awareness of the phenomenon to recognise and deal with any manifestation of ghosting in the professional environment. Ghosting is not only a problem due to the quantity of cases, but can also significantly jeopardise company processes in individual cases if a candidate is to hold a key position or to bring important expertise to the company. Solutions must be implemented in daily operations to prevent candidate ghosting. To date, organisations should rely on the general measures and activities suggested by preceded research until research can provide more specified approaches, for example, optimising the candidate experience through an advanced and consistent communication strategy on company side or training human resource specialists in communicating efficiently and according to candidates' expectations. Ghosting has to be handled preventively, that it does not occur in the first place and cannot lead to problems in organisational processes.

Conclusion

Synoptically, given is a decent foundation of basic research, already covering several scopes. Each of the selected research focuses on a different object area, demanding its own field of research. The scoping review demonstrates the sparse level of research on ghosting in vocational surroundings to date. Illustrated in the generated scoping map are also research gaps and fields requiring further knowledge.

Contemplating preceding research, overlaps are outlined with regard to the study's focus, the perspective examined and the origin of the phenomenon. A closer look at the examined research scopes reveals research details to be differentiated, leading the phenomenon to be examined more widely on the one hand because of concentrating on different object areas. On the other hand, comparability across studies

is impeded, differentiating in design and concept. Previous research has reflected on different approaches and objectives. Research focusing entirely on the company perspective is sparse, specifically in this regard, opening up fields for follow-up research and working towards a practice-oriented research concept.

Taking into account the scoping review's purpose, previous research differs substantially in the scope. While certain studies aim to achieve a general increase in knowledge to support insights in and an understanding of the phenomenon, others focus on a specified objective addressing a target group. Considering the compound of further research elements such as objective, methodology and data collection, each study covers a clearly defined area. The most frequently selected object area deals with the candidate perspective on ghosting in vocational environments.

The scoping review demonstrates the level of research on the subject being sparse to date, differing substantially from one another and challenging a cross-study comparison. Further knowledge is necessary, especially covering the corporate perspective on ghosting in professional contexts. Further research approaches should focus on the applicability to organisational processes. A general understanding of the phenomenon is provided, remaining the necessity of generating further knowledge tailored to organisational structures and processes to handle the advent of the phenomenon efficiently. Research should be brought to practical application in business contexts. The subject of ghosting in vocational surroundings is underrepresented in academic discourse.

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Data availability statement

Data that support the findings of this review are on reasonable request from the corresponding author.

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