

Experimenter & Confederates Guide

Ghosting and Rejection Multi-Day Chat Paradigm (Telari, Pancani, & Riva, 2025, *Computers in Human Behavior*)

1. Overview

This paradigm was designed to examine the emotional and behavioral responses to **ghosting**—the sudden cessation of communication without explanation—compared to **explicit rejection** and **ongoing inclusion** in online interactions.

Participants engaged in **daily text-based conversations** with a trained confederate via Telegram for six to nine consecutive days. Each day, they discussed a specific theme provided by the experimenter and subsequently completed a brief Qualtrics questionnaire. On a predetermined day (the fourth, in our studies), the interaction was experimentally interrupted to simulate either ghosting or rejection (vs. a control condition).

The paradigm captures both the **immediate and longitudinal** dynamics of relational disconnection in ecologically valid, technology-mediated settings.

2. Timeline and Procedure

Time	Function	Description
Before Day 1	Introduction	Participants attended a brief online group video call , in which the study was introduced, informed consent was discussed, and practical instructions to set up Telegram were provided. Specifically, they were asked to choose a username that did not correspond to their legal name for privacy purposes. Multiple participants, as well as one confederate, joined the same call.
	Initial setup	Participants were emailed recap materials and a baseline survey , including the chosen Telegram username, demographics, and baseline measures. The day before Day 1, each participant received a Telegram message with the study partner's (confederate) username , and was added to a one-way Telegram channel to receive communications regarding the study.
Days 1–6 or 9	Study procedure	Each morning, participants received a Telegram message containing the daily topic and a link to the post-chat questionnaire . They were instructed to text in a private one-to-one chat with their assigned partner for about 15 minutes throughout the day (not necessarily in a single session) and then complete the survey. In the evening, a reminder message was sent.
Day 4	Experimental manipulation	On Day 4, depending on condition: (a) the confederate suddenly stopped replying (<i>ghosting</i>), (b) explicitly ended the conversation (<i>rejection</i>), or (c) continued to chat as usual (<i>control</i>).
After Day 6 or 9	Final Survey	Participants completed a final questionnaire including the debriefing statement.

Procedural Flow of Days 1-6 or 1-9 from Telari et al., 2025

Condition	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7	Day 8	Day 9
Ghosting									
Rejection									
Control									

Study 1

Study 2

3. Experimental Manipulations

Condition	Instruction	Example Script
Ghosting	Stop replying entirely from the 4th day onward.	(No response)
Rejection	Send a short rejection message, then do not respond further. If participant messages again, follow this template.	“Hi [name], I am not interested in talking with you anymore.” (a) If they ask for an explanation: “I don’t want to talk about it; I simply don't feel like chatting with you anymore.” (b) If they ask about the study task: “Feel free to write to the experimenter and inform them of what I told you.” (c) If they insist further: “As I told you, I’m no longer interested in continuing to chat; please talk to the experimenter about it.”
Control	Continue chatting normally until the final day.	—

4. Chat Guidelines for Confederates

- Maintain a **natural and friendly tone**, comparable to chatting with a new acquaintance. Keep the interactions only on Telegram (e.g., do not meet in person, do not switch social media)
- Avoid sharing personal details and overly personal, intimate, or emotionally charged content.
- Keep responses similar in length and style to the participant’s messages.
- Do not leave excessive time gaps between replies (unless specified by condition).
- Chats should last approximately **15 minutes per day**.
- If the participant is very talkative, reply positively but mention you have other commitments to keep the conversation within the time frame.

- If the participant is too quiet, ask gentle follow-up questions related to the topic.
- If the participant provokes or behaves unusually, stay calm and redirect to neutral ground.
- Initiate the daily interaction if participants do not within a reasonable time.
- After the manipulation (ghosting or rejection), **no further replies** should be sent.

5. Conversation Topics

Over the days, participants discussed various small-talk topics described by the following words: *music, travel, food, sports, TV shows, life online, projects for the future, dating and relationships*.

The order was pseudorandomized to avoid confounding effects.

Confederates were provided with brief prompts and subtopics for each theme (e.g., “travel experiences, favorite destinations, type of traveler,” “music genres or artists they enjoy, dancing, listening to the radio”) to keep conversations natural and comparable in depth across participants.

6. Citation and Contact

Telari, A., Pancani, L., & Riva, P. (2025). The Phantom Pain of Ghosting: Multi-Day Experiments Comparing the Reactions to Ghosting and Rejection. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 172, 108756. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2025.108756>

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