The Academic Procrastination levels as Predictors of Master Two Students Discrepant Achievements

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ABSTRACT: *Procrastination is one of the serious phenomena observed among learners; it is the habit of putting off their assignments until the last moment of deadline. This behaviour also includes master 2 students during writing their research projects at the end of the academic year; which is noticed to create different outcomes in their results. The objective of this paper is to search what results can levels of procrastination have on academic success for master 2 students at Constantine 1 University. We hypothesize that master 2 students who procrastinate and who do not procrastinate attain different grades in their vivas. We have used a qualitative method to assess the validity of our hypothesis; we conducted a correlation study between the scores obtained from the learners' procrastination questionnaire, and the scores obtained from learners' dissertation writing test to study the sum of (r). The procrastination questionnaire aims to divide learners into two sub groups according to their level of procrastination, namely high procrastinators and low procrastinators. Those two sub samples with different measured levels of procrastination are, then, given a test which is a dissertation to write, after that we calculated the coefficient correlation between the two variables. The results show that learners who submit their dissertations very late have the lowest grades, which is not the case for students with low level of procrastination.*

KEYWORDS: Academic Achievement, Academic Procrastination, Levels of Academic Procrastination, Master Degree, Master Research Papers.

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Introduction

We, teachers, have noticed that a large percentage number of learners suffer from putting off their tasks until the last minute, as a consequence they do not reach the deadlines eventually; a phenomenon that is known as procrastination in learning (Elis & Knaus, 1977). Higher education learning, also, is a situation where students with different academic disciplines show different levels of procrastination (Onwuebuzie, 2004). The Department of English at Constantine 1 University is one that contains students as such. As a sample, master 2 students struggle to finish their research papers in the second semester, unluckily, however; many of them do not reach their goals. One reason for their failure is to postpone their research writing until the last month which does not provide enough time to finish or to submit an acceptable work. It is important to notice that although many studies have proved that high procrastinators perform poorly academically (Tan, et al, 2008), and that procrastination is a source of academic failure (Gareau, et al., 2018) which explains that low students level achievement is related to high procrastination (Moriz & Fritz, 2015), it is important, however; to mention that procrastination will not lead to poor academic achievement automatically, and thus the academic likelihood of failure will augment as a result of academic procrastination because some studies have proved procrastination to be a boost to positive performance in diverse disciplines (Kim & Seo, 2013).

In this paper, we would like to know the type of relation that might exist between the levels of procrastination namely high and low, and the marks master 2 learners obtain in their vivas. We aim to investigate whether procrastination has anything to do with the results master two learners obtain at the end of the presentation of their research works; if high procrastinators master two learners' at Mentouri Brothers University attain a weak academic level in terms of their final research projects writing, or whether low procrastinators do not show any positive academic distinction in their dissertations writing results.

This study is a descriptive research about the possible effects of procrastination on master 2 candidates dissertation level. We hypothesize that second year master students at Mentouri 1 University with high level of procrastination are more likely to fail in getting high marks in their thesis researches writing than do students with low level of procrastination.

1. Literature review

1.1. Definition of procrastination

Procrastination is a Latin word in its origin, which is divided into two parts "pro" that means in the next time or later and "crastinus" which means tomorrow (Merriam, Webster's Dictionary, 2015). In other words, procrastination "is to voluntarily delay an intended course of action despite expecting to be worse off for the delay" (Steel, 2007, 66). So, in sum, procrastination is delaying in the fulfilment of any task that should be done to a future time.

1.2. Definition of academic procrastination

In the academic context, procrastinators refer to students doing tasks out of the needed time (Milgram, 1991). In the same context, (Senecal et al., 1995, 607) defined procrastination as "knowing that one is supposed to and perhaps even wanting to complete an academic task but failing to perform the activity within the expected or desired time frame". As a result, if leaners cannot finish their tasks on time for whatever reasons, they feel guilty after procrastinating because they know how much they were capable of doing their tasks better, but they, for a reason or another, did not start on time.

1.3. Types of procrastination

Many researchers talk about many different types of procrastination according to their perspectives of thinking. There are two types of academic procrastination; according to the extent or futility of academic procrastination, and according to the type of task performed by the students.

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1.3.1. According to the extent of effectiveness of academic procrastination

Some researchers have divided procrastination into passive academic procrastination; in which students delay school assignments because they consider them difficult, a reason they justify for being unable to complete the school tasks satisfactorily, and active academic procrastination which refers to the students' deliberate decision to procrastinate in order to feel the challenge in stressful situations (Choi & Chu, 2005, 245).

1.3.2. According to the type of task performed by the students.

There are six types of procrastination of which a person can have one or a combination of them (Sapadin, 2012). They are:

1.3.2.1. The worrier

Anxiety is a natural feeling that may affect a person within the hustle and bustle of life; it is a feeling that none can escape from for the balance of life. However, the worrier is a person who prefers neither to get anxious nor involved, so he stays away from everything that worries or bothers him; he prefers safety to facing difficulties. Thus, a worrier is a person who fears facing hardships which, consequently, makes him procrastinate.

1.3.2.2. The perfectionist

A person who does not accept to be a loser or even not to be in the first ranks is what a perfectionist thinks of himself as how he should be. One of the reasons why a perfectionist procrastinates is his belief that if he does not finish his work, no one will see it and judge him favourably or negatively since no work is submitted for inspection. Another reason is the scrutinizing of the smallest details; a characteristic of a perfectionist which leads him to postpone completing his projects.

1.3.2.3. The pleaser

Pleasers are individuals who postpone tasks because they are busy in satisfying and helping others. They care more about how others picture them. Pleasers do not intend to postpone their tasks, but the reason for their procrastination refers to their belief that they can do both their tasks and others tasks at the same time, which is proved to be a wrong hypothesis eventually.

1.3.2.4. The crisis maker

The crisis maker type of people seeks to create a crisis of procrastination, and then he begins to fight it. Crisis makers postpone their work until the last minute, and they start their fight against time to fulfil their tasks. They believe that working under the pressure of deadlines gives them more energy and effort. No matter how often those people win the race against time, they are supposed to lose lot of their energy and effort in running as the years go by, and thus they procrastinate as an inevitable consequence.

1.3.2.5. The dreamer

Life is characterized by constant ups and downs, a reality that the dreamer does not like. The dreamer is a person who loves constant calm and staying away of danger; he lives this feeling inside his mind by escaping into his dreams, those dreams are not in line with the events of the reality in which he lives. The imagination of the dreamer helps him to enter his peaceful world in dreams and to escape from difficulties in real life. However, it makes him bear the results of those dreams in his reality on several levels among which procrastination disadvantages.

1.3.2.6. The defier

The problem with the defier feeling after procrastination is that it is usually associated with non-negative feeling such as psychological tension, guilt and anxiety mainly after realizing that he has postponed his tasks, even though repeated procrastination in academic or job tasks leads to failure or low evaluation scores that he obtains. The Defier always tries to accomplish his work by promises without keeping them. Expressing verbally out loud the ability to fulfil promises, by the defier, is enough to frighten other people and make them think that he is capable in comparison to others. However, despites these incomplete promises, he does not regret them because he could make people believe in his ability and his effort.

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1.4. University master 2 level

In Algerian universities, we depend on the LMD system since 2005, a system which is, also, depended on in the United Kingdom, France and many other countries universities. The LMD system consists of three levels; which are the licence level, the master level, and the doctorate level. The licence level necessities both the baccalaureate degree, and the first three years of study at the university, then the master level needs both the licence degree and the two years of master study; namely one year of first year master studies and a second year of master two studies, finally; the doctorate level that requires obtaining the first two levels namely both the licence and the master degree. The doctorate level is reached by a written test, and it is characterized by a limited number of academic places according to the need of each university; it is limited only to 4 years of research with one year of extension justified by serious reasons.

In more details, the master level obliges students with two years of study at the university, namely master 1 and master 2, both years need two semesters to fulfil. In the master 2 degree, we have two semesters. In the first semester, learners study in the classroom and later have exams at the end of the first semester usually in January. While in the second semester, learners prepare a thesis to be submitted at the end of the year, mostly in June. They start preparing it in the second semester that starts in January after finishing the exams of the first semester. So, along six months, second year master learners write their research papers under the guidance of their supervisor who corrects their mistakes and directs them along their thesis writing, from the start until the submitting of their research projects. For accepted thesis, to be organized in vivas, the marks of the thesis range from 10 and 16 according to the quality of the candidate's research work. For non-accepted ones, which are justified by wether cases of high plagiarism or cases of low quality level, such learners with those cases need to repeat the semester in the next year, because they get less than 10 marks for their work. Another case for master 2 students' failure is that they do not submit their thesis because they did not complete writing their research work whether for reasons of starting late their research, or they did not start writing their research projects yet at all.

2. The study

2.1. Materials and methods

We applied our practical part of this research paper on 25 master 2 students while preparing their thesis to be submitted at the end of the academic year in Jun 2023. Our participants were chosen from the three options randomly, out of a population that reaches 200 master 2 students, at the department of English in Constantine 1 University. The reason for choosing this sample is the academic continuous observation that most of master 02 students do not submit their research work on time. One of the reasons for their delay, in our assumption, is they do start their research writing late; a process which needs a sufficient time to be completed; otherwise, learners cannot fulfil it on time.

In order to know whether high procrastinators students show low level in their master 02 research projects results than do less procrastinators, we have calculated the coefficient correlation (r) sum which decides about the type of correlation that exists between the two variables; namely students' level of procrastination and their final research projects marks.

For the aim to count the percentage of the correlation coefficient (r), we need to correlate the earlier two mentioned variables scores i.e., the marks obtained from the learners' questionnaire, and marks obtained from their final writing research projects. In more details, the scores of learners obtained from the procrastination questionnaire (APQ) which aims aim to divide our sample into two groups according to their level of procrastination, namely high procrastinators, and low procrastinators; this is done according to the learners answers to the adopted APQ questionnaire, and the scores obtained from their research projects at the end of the year.

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3. Results and discussion
3.1. The academic procrastination questionnaire (APQ)

The APQ is invented by the Jordanian Abu Ghazal in 2012. It is a scale which consists of 21 statements; each of which is given five alternatives; namely completely disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, and completely agree. The version we used in our research study is adopted by us.

For the purpose of our study, we used the procrastination questionnaire that aims to divide learners into two subgroups according to how much they procrastinate at the university studies, and we made some modifications before we administer it to the participants; we adjusted it by adding a part about demographic information named the learners background, and we took only ten statements to measure the level of this phenomenon in every learner's status, which are given on a two-point likert scale. The last change we made is to depend only on two alternatives which are 'agree' and 'disagree' instead of five alternatives.

In the adopted questionnaire of foreign language classroom procrastination, we have ten statements as shown in table 1; five statements of which describe high procrastinators, and the other five statements are compatible with low procrastinator learners. Those ten statements are accompanied with two alternatives which are 'agree' and 'disagree'; each alternative is characterized by a score. To explain more, if learners choose the alternative 'agree' for a statement that reflects high procrastinators, they will score 2, while if they choose the alternative 'disagree' for the same statement reflexion, they will score 1. While if learners choose the statement that indicates low procrastinators students, the alternatives 'agree' will take 1 score, and the alternative 'disagree' of the same statement's indication takes 2. In other words, the score 2 is given for statements that show agreement with high procrastination level or disagreement with low procrastination level, and the score 1 is given for the agreement on statements that show low procrastination level, or disagreement for high procrastination level statements.

The scores given to the two alternatives, 'agree' and 'disagree' will automatically lead to higher scores for procrastinator learners in comparison to scores obtained from alternatives that show low procrastinator learners. In other words, a very low procrastinator learner obtains 10 marks as a maximum in the questionnaire, and a very high procrastinator one will have 20 as a maximum.

To know whether learner is said to be a procrastinator or not a procrastinator student, we need to add 10 to 20 and to divide the result on 2 i.e. 10+ 20/ 2 = 15. Thus, if learners obtain less than 15, they are low procrastinator learners; whereas, if they get more than 15, they are considered as high procrastinators.

High procrastinators > 15 >   Low procrastinators

In order to maintain privacy as elaborated in the students' questionnaire introduction, we did not write the names of learners in our research, but rather we represented them with a letter and a number. We took the first letter of the word student (s) for each student; and we numbered them from one to twenty-five in order to give every student a letter and number. This information is placed in the table 2 which clarifies the mark of each student in the questionnaire.

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The Statements	Level of Procrastination	Scores
1. I usually hurry to carry academic missions before the deadline.	**low**	1
2. I usually start doing study duties immediately after being assigned them.	**low**	**1**
3. I do not postpone a duty; I think it is necessary to do it.	**low**	**1**
4. I try to find excuses to justify my delay in doing study assignments.	**high**	**2**
5. I do lots of entertaining activities so I don't have enough time for studying.	**high**	**2**
6. I always think I have enough time later, so it is not necessary to actually start studying.	**high**	**2**
7. Postponing academic duties is considered a real problem which I suffer from.	**high**	**2**
8. I say to myself that I will do my duties than I change my mind.	**high**	**2**
9. I finish my duties before the deadline.	**low**	**1**
10. I always finish the important assignments and I have extra time.	**low**	**1**
TOTAL	**5 high / 5 low**	**15**

Table 1. The APQ Statements and their Scores

S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10
17	11	13	19	17	10	11	12	16	16
S11	**S12**	**S13**	**S14**	**S15**	**S16**	**S17**	**S18**	**S19**	**S20**
20	19	20	18	19	18	18	13	16	14
S21	**S22**	**S23**	**S24**	**S25**	**ΣN=25**				
10	19	19	12	16	**Σ= 393**				

Table 2. Students' Scores in the APQ Questionnaire.

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3.2. The learners' final research projects marks

Table 3 contains the same sample students' final research projects marks. Students submit their research projects at the end of the second semester. The research projects are evaluated according to their quality, they are evaluated by two teachers namely the examiner and the chairperson; every member gives a mark out of 16, and, thus, the marks are to be gathered and divided by two to have the final mark of the candidates. The research project marks get from the test are to be correlated with the marks obtained from the questionnaire of master 2 students.

S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10
11,50	14.00	14.00	10.00	17.00	14.50	13.00	15.50	12.00	00.00
S11	**S12**	**S13**	**S14**	**S15**	**S16**	**S17**	**S18**	**S19**	**S20**
16.00	11.00	10.50	12.50	10.5	13.00	15.00	16.00	13.00	16.00
S21	**S22**	**S23**	**S24**	**S25**	**ΣN=25**				
15.00	12.00	10.00	10.00	11.00	**Σ= 311**				

Table 3. Students Scores in their Final Dissertation

3.3. The correlation study

The basic goal behind depending on a correlation material in research, as it is the case for our study, is to find the type of correlation between any two variables, and to measure the percentage of the relation between them. In our study, we are concerned with finding the correlation between the procrastination levels and master 2 students' discrepant achievements, in order to find the association between the dependent and the independent variable.

The correlation coefficient (r) is calculated by a certain formula that requires the scores obtained from the questionnaire of learners that are represented by the symbol X, and the scores obtained from the final research projects which are symbolized by the symbol Y as will be clarified in table 4.

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The students	X	Y	XY	X²	Y²
Student 1	17	11.50	246.5	289	132
Student 2	11	14.00	154	121	196
Student 3	13	14.00	182	169	196
Student 4	19	10.00	190	361	100
Student 5	17	15.00	255	289	225
Student 6	10	14.50	145	100	210,25
Student 7	11	13.00	143	121	169
Student 8	12	15.50	186	144	240.25
Student 9	16	12.00	192	256	144
Student 10	16	00.00	00	256	00
Student 11	20	16.00	320	400	256
Student 12	19	11.00	209	361	121
Student 13	20	10.50	210	400	110.25
Student 14	18	12.50	156.25	324	225
Student 15	19	10.50	199.5	361	110.5
Student 16	18	13.00	234	324	169
Student 17	18	15.00	270	324	225
Student 18	13	16.00	208	169	256
Student 19	16	13.00	208	256	169
Student 20	14	16.00	224	196	256
Student 21	10	15.00	150	100	225
Student 22	19	12.00	228	361	144
Student 23	19	10.00	190	361	100
Student 24	12	10.00	120	144	100
Student 25	16	11.00	176	256	121
ΣN = 25	393	311	4796.25	6443	3990

Table 4. The Correlation Coefficient between Students' Adopted APQ Questionnaire Scores and their Dissertation Writing Marks.

3.3.1. The calculation of the coefficient correlation ' r '

$$(r) = \frac{N(\sum XY) - (\sum X) * ((\sum Y))}{\sqrt{[N \sum X^2 - (\sum X)^2] * [N \sum Y^2 - (\sum Y)^2]}}$$

$$(r) = \frac{25 * 4796.25 - 393 * 311}{\sqrt{[25 * 6443 - (393)^2] * [25 * 3990 - (311)^2]}}$$

$$(r) = \frac{-2316.75}{2382.5083} \quad (r) = \text{- 97}$$

The empirical results from the correlation study reveal a strong negative correlation between the learners academic procrastination and their dissertation evaluation level (r = - 97), i.e., the more master 2 learners procrastinate, the more they obtain low grades in their research projects quality.

Conclusion

Academic procrastination is a phenomenon that students cannot avoid even excellent ones may put off their duties from time to time. The results of this field experiment, according to the learners answers, show that procrastination is considered to have a strong negative effect on learners academic behaviours and final results; which is proved through their results in their master 2 research projects scores in comparison to learners who did not procrastinate. The correlation coefficient "r" equal to (r) = - 97, explains that the results are in the direction of our hypothesis, which states that master two students who procrastinate are more likely to have worse results in their research projects by the end of the year than those who do not procrastinate. So, the findings are a solution to stop having poor academic results in terms of obtaining good marks in master two dissertations writing, this is achieved by overcoming the procrastination habit which proves its negativity in the academic life. As a consequence, the present findings oblige instructors to pay learners attention to be aware of the negative effects that may result from the procrastination habit.

It is suggested to study the reasons that lead to procrastination, which may have a relation with the university atmosphere and conditions.

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