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**Academic Procrastination in Dissertation  
Writing:  
Causes, Effects and Strategies to Overcome it**

**A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment for the requirement of the Master Degree in  
Didactics**

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## ***Dedications***

*We dedicate this work with a special feeling of gratitude to our loving parents who supported us all along our studies.*

*Special thanks to our amazing siblings and friends who never dropped us: Akila, Amel, Ines and Khadija, thank you so much for all what you did and for believing in us. This work would never be accomplished without you. We love you always and forever.*

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## **List of Abbreviations:**

MA2: Master two.

EFL: English Foreign Language.

## Abstract

The present study investigates the effect of procrastination behaviour on master dissertations writing. It examines the causes of this behaviour in order to plan strategies for overcoming it. To reach our objectives, we adopted both quantitative and qualitative methods. Data were collected using an anonymous online questionnaire administered to a sample of 120 Master 2 students, and a manuscript interview conducted with three teachers, both from the English section of Ibn Khaldoun University, Tiaret. The major findings were that our participant students are caught by the procrastination behaviour during the process of writing their master dissertations, and that the behaviour is affecting their psychological state and academic achievements. Besides, our participants reported that they procrastinate for different causes; mentioning the lack of supervision, fear of failures, lack of motivation and low self-esteem. Finally, the results demonstrated that MA2 students can potentially overcome procrastination using different efficacious strategies.

**Keywords:** academic procrastination, causes of it, dissertations writing, effects, strategies to overcome it.

## General Introduction

Master dissertation writing is one of the most defying tasks students can work on. It is the students' first academic paper to write showing that they acquired the essential skills and knowledge in order to organise and conduct a study in their field. This dissertation should demonstrate the students' abilities in doing multiple tasks such as: setting research objectives, finding resources, critically analysing data and other several tasks to reach a trusted conclusion. These tasks seem intimidating, especially if students are doing it for the first time. It is easy then to see why students tend to procrastinate to avoid the workload stress.

Deciding about our master dissertation topic, we thought about choosing a topic to help university students. Hence, we supposed what better than helping ourselves and our mates in writing our first academical dissertation.

During our five years' experience as EFL students at the section of English at Ibn Khaldoun University in Tiaret, we observed that MA2 students struggled with writing their master dissertations. We further noticed many of our MA2 mates didn't start writing their master dissertation within the end of the first semester of the submitting year of their dissertations. Accordingly, procrastination is one of the problems among MA2 students which threatens the completion of their dissertations writing. For this, students need to acknowledge it and know its causes in order to tackle it down. They need to be aware of the main reasons of this behaviour, its effects, and the possible solutions that can be used to overcome it. An understanding of the causes of such behaviour could possibly help both teachers and MA2 students to effectively develop strategies and methods to reduce or even overcome it. So, it is important to investigate the academic procrastination in dissertation writing since it is an obstacle for the dissertation writing starting and completion.

Despite the threatening nature of dissertations writing procrastination, none of the Algerian universities, to our knowledge, investigated this behaviour. Therefore, this study aims to identify the procrastinating behaviour and its effects on MA2 students. In addition, it examines the most common causes of delaying the writing of master dissertations; in order to suggest possible strategies to overcome it. Therefore, the present research attempts to answer the following main question:

- How can undergraduate students unlearn and overcome the procrastinating behaviour to get their dissertations done?

In order to provide in-depth answers to the main question, we ask the following targeting sub-questions:

- To what extent do undergraduate students tend to procrastinate in writing their dissertations?
- To what extent procrastination affect these students and the writing of their dissertations?
- What causes stand behind the behaviour of procrastination?

According to the research questions, the following hypotheses is formed:

- Procrastinating the master dissertations' writing is hypothesized to be widespread among the MA2 students.
- Engaging in procrastination may negatively affect the students; causing them to experience various psychological and academics issues such as anxiety, guilt, plagiarism, and low grades.
- As the master dissertation is the first dissertation students are supposed to write, we relate postponing its writing to students' lack of experience and supervision. The students' low self-efficacy and fear of failing in showing their research abilities may also lead them to procrastinate as a way to protect their sense of ability by blaming it on the lack of time instead of lacking efforts.
- Overcoming it is a whole other thing that starts by understanding its roots to weaken it. There are quite a lot of strategies that help people break their procrastinating habits.

In order to reach our objectives, the methodology choice was a use of both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection. The quantitative data collection was based on students' online questionnaire for 120 MA2 students of Ibn Khaldoun University at the English section to explore their procrastination behaviour in dissertations' writing. While the qualitative data were collected through three of their teachers' interviews for more detailed information.

The present research is divided into two chapters. Chapter I is an overview of the literature relevant to this study. Chapter II includes an explanation of the research methods used to investigate the hypothesis, besides the presentations of this study's findings and its discussion in relation to relevant literature. Lastly, a general conclusion will summarize the present study and its limitations besides examining ideas for further research.

# Chapter One: Procrastination Troubleshoot

## 1.1.Introduction:

This chapter provides a clear explanation of the presented issue i.e. procrastination behaviour among university student shedding light on the graduate ones, by exploring the literature for a deeper understanding of the behaviour and its components. For this purpose, we divide the chapter into three initial components: 1) definition of procrastination; 2) causes of procrastination and 3) strategies and intervention to overcome procrastination.

## 1.2.Procrastination:

“Procrastination is a passive human event that there are over 600 self-helping books addressing solutions to this phenomenon” (Ferrari, 2010). The definition of procrastination differs throughout literature because of its endless origins. It is defined by researchers in a multitude ways that there is no universal agreed on definition because of the numerous aspects of the behaviour. Steel (2007) defined it as the irrational postponement of activities despite expecting negative outcomes of putting it off. He added, procrastination is self-handicapping behavior that occurs when people delay carrying out a task they planned to complete, potentially leading to lost productivity, poor performance, and increase stress. Ferrari (1998) stated that procrastination is the purposive delay in the beginning or completion of a certain task, typically accompanied by subjective discomfort. A commonly used definition by Solomon and Rothblum (1984) described procrastination as the tendency to delay initiation or completion of goal pursuit to the point of discomfort. Another study by Knaus (2000) summarized the procrastinating behaviour as wanting to avoid a task, intentional decision of postponement finding other things to do and believing that the avoided task will be accomplished later, and making excuses. Some researchers agreed on the delay factor being a common characteristic of the behaviour, others believed that the intentionality to postpone the completion of a task is an essential aspect in describing the definition of procrastination, and that postponement of a task becomes procrastination only when the person possesses sincere desire to accomplish the task (Schraw, 2007). These definitions are clearly stating that procrastination is a purposive act by the individuals which is characterized by needlessness, and accompanied by psychological distress.

Procrastination happens when people avoid working on big tasks, and completing minor ones. When the tasks are big and long termed, people get foiled for the reason that they are unsure of a way to accomplish them. That is why they prefer to work on smaller tasks that require less time, planning and energy as the bigger ones (Ferrari, 2010). Dr. Heath believed that “procrastination usually happens because the task seems too difficult and the procrastinators think they won't do a good job”. He added:”your unconscious mind thinks it is helping you, but it is misguided”. So, the procrastinator's mind uses a different mechanism-repression- to forget about the task. Tim Urban (2016), a TED talker, suggested that the procrastinator's brain possesses the "instant gratification monkey" part as well as the "panic monster" part. These two metaphors describe a person who aims at the short-term goals with instant gratification by avoiding the important task i.e. procrastinating, until the deadline approaches and the person gets frightened ending up failing to finish the task on time; if not failing to try and do it all. Vik Nithy (2012), another TED talker, states that procrastination is an argument within the brain, between prefrontal cortex (a higher-level part which makes logical decisions) and the limbic system (a more primitive

and subconscious part which controls anxiety and fear). Whenever an individual finds a task overwhelming or unpleasant, the limbic system gets activated, and therefore the person tends to act impulsively and irrationally by delaying the task to avoid any fear and anxiety caused by the task.

According to Ferrari (2010), 20% of the populations are chronic procrastinators. They procrastinate in every domain in their lives. This number is higher than depression and the rate of many other diseases and conditions. Spada, Hion, and Nikcevic (2006) showed that anxiety, depression and worry were highly correlated with procrastination as behaviour, and that people who engage in chronic procrastination tend to experience negative emotions because of the inability to finish tasks on schedule, meet appropriate deadlines or decide about important as well as minor events in their life. Procrastination also “causes higher stress, low self-esteem, depression, cheating, plagiarism, higher use of alcohol, cigarettes and caffeine” (Good, 2008). Research on procrastination documented the problematic nature of this irrational delay, as it relates to increased levels of stress and anxiety, reduced quality of life and lower performance and productivity (Steel, 2007; Ferrari, 1998). Thus procrastination can be considered a problem with both individual and societal impact.

### **1.2.1. Academic procrastination:**

Academic procrastination has been considered as a form of procrastination related to academic setting and tasks (Solomon and Rothblum, 1984). It is the most researched procrastination area, and most common phenomenon among university students. It has been studied extensively by a variety of researchers for the reason that it can have serious consequences for students who are frequently faced with academic deadlines and pressure; especially for those who are writing a long-term dissertation. Academic procrastination can be defined as the irrational postponement of academic goals to the point where optimal performance becomes highly unlikely resulting in a state of psychological distress (Ferrari, Johnson, and McCown, 1995). This definition is similar to that which has been proposed to general procrastination in that it includes the aspects of delay, irrationality, and psychological distress; except, this definition is related to the academic domain. Ferrari and Pychyl (2015) proposed that procrastination is when you know what you have to do, but you are unable to bring yourself to do it. That is to say, procrastination is the gap between intention and action. Many other studies “consider academic procrastination as self-defeating personally flaw that corresponds to the behaviour pattern of choosing short-term gain, over long-term cost of academic performance” (Baumeister, 1997; Baumeister & Scher, 1988).

According to Solomon and Rothblum (1984), about 50% of people procrastinate on regular basis, while the attribution of college students’ procrastination is between 75-95% (Elis and Knaus, 1977). Fifty-two percent of college students reported procrastination as being one of their biggest concern, and moderate it to high need problem for which they needed help (Day, Mensink, and Osulliran, 2000). Moreover, Steel (2007) discussed the currency of the behaviour in undergraduate students, stating that 80-90% of students engage in it. Ferrari (1998) also pointed out that 70-75% of college students claimed that they frequently procrastinate on academic tasks. These high statistics of reported academic procrastination shows how serious the problem is.

Academic procrastination is a widespread phenomenon and potentially harmful to academic performance as well as to mental well-being as it is related to anxiety and depression. Most studies on procrastination reported high levels of affective discomfort accompanying this behaviour. Burka and Yuen (1982) stated that procrastinators, despite of the risk of facing academic consequences, suffer from anxiety, lowered self-esteem, sense of fraudulence, and self-deprecation. Grecco (1984) found that “procrastination correlated positively with neuroticism and depression”. Academic

underachievement, poor grades and course withdrawal have all been found to be results of procrastination (Semb, Glick, & Spencer, 1979). Procrastination also has been reported to be associated with unsatisfactory academic performance and higher levels of stress and anxiety (Ferrari, O'Callaghan & Newbegin, 2005). In another study by Rothblum and Solomon (1984), academic procrastination was found to be leading students to experience various psychological and behavioural problems such as anxiety, shame, cheating and plagiarism, fear of failure and low self-efficacy. Moreover, Steel (2008) pointed out that procrastination affects the self-efficacy and self-actualization, distractibility, impulsiveness, self-control and organizational behaviour of students. It develops the delay tendency in them; either they feel hesitation in doing activities, or fear starting an assignment. More recently, he described the procrastination as being an excellent predictor of academic performance saying that procrastinators obtain low course grades and low final grades (2010).

Little attention is given to procrastination of the students who are supposed to write their first academic dissertations within a given deadline. For those students, academic procrastination seems a big problem that may sabotage their careers. Procrastination makes them feel stressing over starting or completing their dissertations, therefore they cannot do it because they perceive the dissertation as an overwhelming task. McRae & Skelton (1979) found that students perceived themselves as being significantly more depressed, anxious, less optimistic and less friendly during the year(s) when they were writing their thesis. Similarly, more than 50% of those who begin a graduate program with the intention of earning a degree fail to do so (Creager, 1965; Kxon, 1997). Procrastination until the last minute of the deadline may also cause significant problems such as having limited amount of time to search and find credible sources with evidence which surely will affect the overall quality of the dissertation. Besides, grammar, sentence coherence, spelling and citing sources mistakes will be made. Furthermore, those students reported that they go through "brain fog" when trying to write their dissertations, or what Ferrari (2010) called it as a writer's block: an inability to begin writing a paper or documenting a project. According to him, the writer's block happens when they intended to start writing, but they find their minds wondering. Thus they put the writing off until another time when they feel more focused, and find other tasks to do. That is procrastinating through writer's block. Even though the distraction and emotion regulation through other activities may provide temporary relief, the procrastination will be emotionally burdening.

### **1.2.2. Most common causes of procrastination**

Academic procrastination is a real thief of students' time. It grows bigger when students do not acknowledge it, or know its reasons to beat it. Understanding why students procrastinate is the first step to tackle it. Although students' procrastination seems irrational, it grows from rational root causes. Ferrari and Pychyl (2008) stated that students procrastinate when they are unable to set a pace of their learning to meet high performance expectation with a given course of time. Thus they use it as an excuse for their underperforming in test situations (Beck, Knos, and Miligrim, 2000), thereby protecting their level of self-esteem by removing the possibility that their performance levels are due to their abilities (Ferrari, 1994). Moreover, these students appear to lack self-confidence and care about what others think of them, so instead of the risk of shame and embarrassment of failing, they find excuses to underperform (Berry, 1995), and have others think they lack effort than ability (Ferrari, 1994) through procrastinating. Burk and Yuen (1982) suggested numerous reasons for procrastination: evaluation anxiety, difficulty in decision making, rebellion against control, fear of failure, fear of consequences of success, perceived averseness of the task and overly perfectionistic standards regarding competency. Other than the reasons stated

previously, there are reasons which took much importance. Steel (2007) argued that self-regulation failure is extensively acknowledged reason for procrastination (Chu & Choi, 2005; Wolters, 2003; Ferrari, 2001). Helmke and Scherder (2000) also assumed that procrastination is the result of failure in self-regulatory. Fear of failure and anxiety are other reasons addressed by many researchers. Solomon and Rothblum (1984) pointed out that when an individual fear failing the task at hand, procrastination results in relief from anxiety which negatively reinforce procrastination behaviour. Other studies have determined that procrastination is seriously associated with perfectionism, task aversion and fear of failure (Flett, Hewitt, Blankstein & Mosher, 1991; Rothblum & Solomon, 1984).

### **1.2.2.1. Self-regulation failure:**

Self-regulation refers to the way people exercise control over their performance, such as guiding, monitoring, and directing their behaviour to meet a particular goal (Singer & Bashir, 1999). Self-regulation encompasses the process needed to organize cognitive, emotional and behavioural resources in order to reach a desired goals or outcomes (Baumeister & Heatherton, 1996). Failing in self-regulation is failing to make use of the effective strategies and motivational values to reach the desired goals. Procrastination, on other hand, has been called “quintessential self-regulatory failure” (Steel, 2007). Deficits in self-regulatory behaviour lead to the avoidance of tasks. Procrastination and self-regulation are highly correlated because when strategies or goals are picked inappropriately, people become more likely to procrastinate. Thus, if a person has to re-evaluate his or her strategy and goal selection frequently due to incorrectly assessing a task, a person can experience self-regulatory failure (Carver & Scheier, 2002). Similarly, Helmke and Scharder (2000) assumed that procrastination is the result of failure in self-regulatory. Steel (2007) added that procrastination being a failure to self-regulate is strongly supported in the literature. In addition, self-regulation failure is a broadly accepted reason for why people procrastinate (Chu & Choi, 2005; Dewitte & Schouwenburg, 2002; Ferrari, 2001; Schouwenburg & Groenwoud, 2001; Wolters, 2003). Other study done by Park and Sperling to examine reasons of procrastination indicated that people with high procrastination tendencies admitted they did not effectively self-regulate their behaviour and failed completing their task efficiently. Moreover, Zimmerman (2000) discussed the relationship between procrastination and the three phases of self-regulation. He stated that in first pre-actional phase, procrastination is connected to not being self-determined regarding the task at hand, and related with problems in arranging and prioritizing tasks. In the second actional phase, procrastination is associated with problems in focusing on the task and shielding distraction. While in the third post-actional phase, it is associated with low self-efficacy. Furthermore, Senical, Koester and Vallerand (1995) claimed that the issues students have in self-regulating their learning are related to procrastination behaviour, that is to say; failure in self-regulating leads students to delay their activities to the last minute and end up underperforming. To go over the main points, academic procrastination is related to a shortfall use of self-strategies, determination, planning and time management (cognitive), concentration (effective), and making decision (behavioural).

### **1.2.2.2. Low self-efficacy:**

The procrastination behaviour among students in writing their dissertations is what was described by many scholars as a simple delay of the task ,however, the growing body of literature also associated procrastination to psychological issues, such as low self-esteem and low self-efficacy. The first is described as the lack of confidence in one’s ability to perform according to certain standards; which automatically reflects on the self-image or what is known

as losing one's face. Steel stated that low self-efficacy implies having doubts on the ability to perform at a desired level, while low self-esteem can make these doubts negatively affect one's self-image (2007). Therefore, the belief that one might perform badly may cause the students to procrastinate, and by doing so, they might blame the lack of time instead of their ability. That is to say that the procrastination behaviour may serve as a defence mechanism for students with low self-esteem/efficacy; and instead of acknowledging the insufficiency of their abilities, students tend to provide other external factors to justify their slow progress in writing their master dissertations through procrastination. Covington (1993) further argued that procrastination helps to protect feelings of self-worth by avoiding potential failure. McGhie (2012) noted that not managing one's time effectively and giving in to procrastination will result in students experiencing the workload as challenge. Academic procrastination specifically, has been positively and significantly related to many educational and personal variables, such as the lack of positive self-image, self-esteem and self-efficacy during the learning process (Hen & Goroshit, 2012). Bandura (1997) mentioned four primary sources from which self-efficacy is shaped and altered an outcome of people's interpretations of self-efficiency relevant information. First, there is the mastery experiences, or the previous experiences in educational settings where success or failure that students experience in their academic career can be a primary source for building or undermining their self-efficacy. Earlier experiences are very powerful when it comes to shaping the students' confidence in their capacities. Second, the evaluation of one's capabilities in relation to others' success, or the vicarious experience also has a tremendous effect on the learners' self-efficacy. The idealization of others or trying to live up to a certain modal can be quite a disturbing idea which will eventually lead to the diminution of self-efficacy. Admiring a parent, a teacher or a friend could result to the thought that being successful is highly related to living exactly like them; which will eventually lead the learner procrastination to avoid the sense of disability. The third source is the social persuasion; meaning that students who are verbally persuaded that they are capable of carrying out difficult tasks can actually achieve better results than those who are not, and vice versa since the assumptions and expectations put on the learner to have a direct effect on his/her self-esteem and their tendency to procrastinate. Finally, the learner's self-efficacy is highly influenced by their physiological and affective states. When facing new activities students may interpret any obstacle as an indicator of lack of competence and capability, and may be more likely to avoid the task. Individuals who are heavily exposed to doubting message are likely to be influenced by them and act accordingly; retreating from anything that appears like a test. Therefore when it comes to writing their dissertations MA2 students tend to feel apprehensive and think of it as something they cannot do. Even when they take the initiative they might surrender as soon as the least difficulty is encountered. Self-expectations and beliefs of students are likely to be based on their prior achievements and experience, and on the aspirations of parents and teachers (Rubie-Davies 2010).

### **1.2.2.3.Low self-esteem:**

Related to academic procrastination, self-esteem was defined as the individual assessment of own worth. If the students' self-esteem is low, they may feel worthless, which will have a direct effect on their outcomes, and to which they would procrastinate to avoid more negative feelings about their own self-image. Morgan and Klein (2001) noted that childhood experience of being labeled 'thick' and public humiliation caused by failing often; results in choices which reinforce low self-esteem and procrastination may serve as a self-regulating method to mend the self-worth issues caused by previous experiences.

#### **1.2.2.3.1. Family relations:**

Procrastination may be associated with poor family relations and disrupted, or dissatisfying social relationships (Ferrari & Patel, 2004). Parental expectations are various beliefs, assumptions and aspirations regarding students' relationship with the factors that contribute to children's achievement, such as faculty or curriculum (Adeniji-Neill,2008). Parental expectations is arguably an important predictor of student achievement (Aldous,2006; Davis-Kean,2005; Jeynes,2007; Patrikakou,1997); since the beliefs of parents motivate them to support their children towards achievement (Carden,2005). A family that puts so much attention on achievements, puts the students in an insecure position because they are defined by their performance. Also those who receive too little praise or too much criticism are likely to feel valueless. When the focus on achievements ignores other personality dimensions the learner cannot develop a broad based self-image, a problem to which the procrastination behaviour serves as a perfect refuge.

#### **1.2.2.3.2. Teachers' expectations:**

The way teachers treat the learners also has an impact on their self-esteem. Cohen and Manion (1995) noted that it is natural for teachers to form different attitudes and expectations of their students, but these need to be assessed routinely. If not, the students may get caught in a "vicious circle of failure". Teachers make snap judgments about the abilities of their students. in many cases as Hargreaves, Hester and Mellor (1975); and Cooper (1993) who noted these are made on the basis of feedback from other teachers, and on the knowledge of the students' parents and siblings. This approach is directly related to the learners' tendency to procrastinate; as it is responsible for the diminution of their self-esteem. Hargreaves (1972) suggested that teachers' expectations play a large part in how students gain success, even if it is based on inaccurate information. Of course the opposite must also be true, that students who expected to fail, commonly do as form of self-prophecy. Good and Brophy (1987) reviewing all the evidence at that time on teacher expectations concluded that teachers tended to consistently treat high and low perceived achieving students differently, with low perceived achieving students being: chosen less often to answer questions even when they volunteered to answer; given less time to answer questions; were seated further away from the teacher; and verbal feedback tended to be more harsh and critical than those perceived to be high achievers who were given more praise. More importantly, these expectations can determine the students' level of achievement by confining their learning opportunities to those available in a particular class (Cohen & Manion,1995). Teachers' expectations of students can impact on whether they are placed in a high or low ability set, and thus students will achieve to the expectations of their class and peers. It was found that students placed in a low ability-grouped classroom are unlikely to reach their true potential, as the teacher doubt their potential, and consequently doubt their achievement and self-esteem. A research by Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) hypothesized and verified that some students may perform more poorly at schools than their peers as a result of their teachers' low expectations about them. Similarly, Parsley and Corcoran (2003) concluded that teachers' behaviours might affect the self-perceptions of students who might see themselves as potential achievers or the other way around as "at-risk failures". Additional studies in the literature support the argument that teachers' expectations may have a major influence on student achievement ( Good&Brophy 2000).

### **1.2.2.3.3. Self-expectations:**

Self-expectations and beliefs of students are likely to be based on their prior achievements, experience, and on the aspirations of parents and teachers (Rubie-Davies, 2010). Students' self-expectations may be double including their expectations about the level of education that they will attain (Eccles,1983), and their expectations about the grades they will get in specific course (Maskey,2012). The literature on students' academic expectations has argued that these expectations influence students' achievement levels (Lucio Rapp-Paglicci & Rowe, 2011). Furthermore, parental expectation may have an effect on students' academic expectations (Patrikakou,1997). Accordingly, the expectancy-value theory of achievement motivation developed by Wigfield and Eccles (2002) asserted that students' expectations are influenced by students' social context, such as; parents, teachers, peers, neighbourhood or community, and earlier academic achievement. This theory also suggests that there are causal relationships between social context and students' self-expectations, and academic achievement on the other hand (Zhang, 2011). Similarly, many studies in the literature suggest the existence of a reciprocal relationship between students' achievement and expectations (Bui, 2007). That is to say that while teachers clearly hold expectations for students, students will have self-expectations too, and parents will also have certain expectations for their children (Rubie-Davies, 2010). The growing body of literature suggested that academic procrastination is significantly influenced by those factors as they have a direct effect on the learners' self-esteem and therefore their tendency to procrastinate.

### **1.2.2.4. Fear of failure:**

A lot of people are anxious about failing, but fear of failure is when people let that fear prevent them from doing things that are supposed to do to achieve their goals. Thus fear of failure or what it is called "atychipobia" could be a paralyzing feeling which one experience in situations where performance really counts, or when there is a great pressure to excel. Elliott and Thrash (2004) defined it as the dispositional tendency to avoid failure in achievement settings, because humiliation and embarrassment of failure is perceived to be overwhelming. Most of people have this fear occasionally, but sometimes, it brings about the very failure that was feared by being so concerned with this emotion. This fear can be so strong that it leads them to weaken their efforts to avoid the possibility of a larger failure by putting off tasks. For students who are about to write their dissertations for the first time, fear of failing becomes so overwhelming that it can stop them from getting on with writing, and leads them to procrastinate. Solomon and Rothblum (1984) stated that when one fears task at hand, procrastination results in relief from anxiety, which negatively reinforces procrastination behaviour. Moreover, students with high fear of failure encounter anxiety as the deadline of the task approaches. Students procrastinate and when they do so, they internalize negative self-beliefs, which in return increase anxiety. These students appear to lack self-confidence in academic settings, so rather the risk of shame and embarrassment of failing, they often find excuses such as procrastination to underperform (Berry, 1975). He added, for students with a strong fear of failure, one way to preserve self-esteem and self-worth is to procrastinate on academic tasks. Unfortunately, protecting oneself from short-term shame and embarrassment through procrastinating on academic tasks often leads to lower levels of performance, and possible failure (Urda& Midgley, 2001). Solomon and Rothblum(1984) described the interplay of affective, cognitive and behavioural aspects of students with levels of fear of failure. They explained, students with high levels of fear of failure, when faced with an important academic assignment in college, develop excessive anxiety as the assignment deadline approaches. Anxiety reinforces the student's low self-efficacy, and the decision is made to avoid the assignment

altogether. Anxiety relief is short-lived for this student, as the negative ramification for avoiding the assignment, failure reinforces the student's belief that she or he does not have what it takes to be successful in college.

Steel (2007) pointed out that Procrastination and fear of failure are strongly correlated. Thus, people who procrastinate may develop a constricted routine in attempts to avoid certain activities which expose them to the risk of failing on a task. At this point, fear of failure holds back the individuals from making a decision of carrying out an action. Students then become unable to start much less finish a task. Whether the fear of failure is a result of low self-efficacy or lack of confidence, the outcomes of it can be distressing to the students in writing their master dissertations.

Individuals with fear of failure experience lower levels of self-esteem and self-efficacy (Caraway& Tucker, 2003). Fear of failure may have negative, effective and behavioural consequences. Depression, anxiety and lower self-esteem are highly correlated with fear of failure (Solomon, 1984). Five consequences of fear of failure were identified by Conrey, Poczwardowski and Henchmen (2004): 1) shame and embarrassment; 2) low self-esteem; 3) fear of important others losing interest; 4) fear of upsetting other and 5) experiencing uncertainty about the failure. Those consequences are a reason for most of the students to fall in the trap of procrastination in order to avoid facing any of them. Additionally, procrastination seems a hideaway from the accompanying discomfort, especially if the academic environment sets high standards wanting them to exploit all their capacities. Unfortunately, for some students, fear of failure is powerful enough that they withdraw from academic tasks to the point of failing (Urda & Midgley, 2001).

#### **1.2.2.5. Perfectionism:**

Schaeffer Edith (n.d.) argued that “people throw away what they could have by insisting on perfection, which they cannot have, and looking for it where they will never find it”. Perfectionism is mainly the fear of not reaching individuals’ own high standards and expectations that they set for themselves or by others (authorities, peers or family). Greenspon (2008) defined perfectionism as the desire to be flawless, a fear of imperfection, equating errors as personal defect, and viewing perfection as the only way to personal acceptance. Others defined it as striving for flawlessness and setting of excessively high standards for performance accompanied by tendencies for overly critical evaluations of one's behavior (Flett& Hewitt,2002). In other words, perfectionists can be described as the ones who set beyond reaching objectives, strictly abide by them and give meaning to their existence or value with regard to accomplishing the objectives (Shafran& Mansell, 2001). Moreover, Flett and Hewitt (2006) argued that perfectionist people hold on closely to their own standards even when perfectionism is not a subject. In addition to that, perfectionism is explained as setting goals that are out of range, and a structure in which the person experience negative feelings. Frost, Marten, Lahart and Rosenblate (1990) pointed out that the perfectionist people need high power and concentration to do their tasks. Time is valuable to them, and they insist to accomplish their tasks to become prosperous in future; they pay more attention to ideal tasks and lack the insight to consider the required time to accomplish a task, so they may spend more than the hypothetical time to do the work(Boffeli,2007). Perfectionists desire to complete the task they were given in a flawless unique way that drive them to develop a fear of making mistakes, fear of not meeting other's expectations, fear of not being good enough, fear of criticism, and the fear of being incapable to achieve it in the sufficient form. As a consequence, they postpone starting it as long as possible until the arrival of the deadline. This postponement is an attempt to preserve their self-worth and self-esteem. Accordingly, as long as the perfectionists insist on perfection, they will

procrastinate in a way or another for the reason that they will continuously believe that there is another way to make things better, and even more to obtain. Perfectionism already has been identified as a common correlate and possible predecessor of procrastination (Flett, Hewitt, Davis, & Sherry, 2004). Thus many studies were conducted for the aim to discover to what extent perfectionism and procrastination correlate with each other, and to explore the possible link between both concepts of procrastination and perfectionism because of the commonly characteristics they share. For instance, both procrastinators and perfectionists experience the fear of making mistakes (Solomon & Rothblum, 1984). Burka and Yuen (1983) claimed that procrastinators place unrealistic demands on themselves. They observed that procrastinators demonstrate many of the cognitive characteristics associated with perfectionism, including the tendency to endorse the importance of continual success. Flett, Blankstein, Hewitt and Koledin (1992) argued that procrastination behaviours root in settings excessively high objectives and standards. In other words, procrastinators tend to delay required tasks and assignments due to the purpose of idealization, the desire of making certain tasks perfect leads them to procrastinate more and more with time passing by and deadlines approaching. Another study conducted by Jadidi, Mohammakhani, and Tajrishi (2011) revealed the link between perfectionism and academic procrastination indicating that perfectionism and procrastination positively and significantly correlated with each other. When considering the cause and effect relationship between perfectionist and procrastinator, it has been suggested that most individuals demonstrate procrastination since they are Perfectionists (Burke & Yuen, 1983, Onwuegbuzie, 2000). Ferrari (1989) also stated that procrastinators often have a perfectionist feature about how others would evaluate them. Therefore, they are unable to finish the needed tasks because they excessively centre most of their attention on the standards set for them, and over think how others would review them. Moreover, almost 7% of the procrastinating students consider perfectionism as an effective factor on procrastination (Ferrari, 1992). Furthermore, Solomon and Rothblum's (1984) study indicated that perfectionism, alongside other reasons, is principal procrastination factors. Supporting this supposition of the association between perfectionism and procrastination, a study by Smith, Sherry, Saklofske and Mushqaush's (2017) revealed that the perfectionist factor result in procrastination seeing that they have found a positive relationship between perfectionism and procrastination. A further assumption by Walsh and Ugumba-Agwunobi (2002) made it clear in their study that procrastination potentially correlates with perfectionism since it correspond with higher degrees of anxiety as well as over-concern for failure.

Many other studies revealed that perfectionism holds various, harmful, negative and serious outcomes and consequences on people's lives, where the last mentioned recognized to have a negative impact in multiple domains including mental health (Egan, Wade, & Shafran, 2011; Shafran & Mansell, 2001). In educational contexts, where high standards are usually expected, understanding perfectionism is important as it may affect the students' motivation, cognition, and performance (Flett, Blankstein, & Hewitt, 2009). These effects push them to procrastinate in order to release it. Furthermore, Gregersen and Horwitz (2002) argued that perfectionism, similar to anxiety, can be one of the inhibitory factors behind poor school performance. Pishghadam and Akhondpoor (2011) further added that perfectionistic tendencies are related with low and poor academic performance. That is to say; perfectionism affects or rather best say strikes the students' educational and psychological state by influencing it with a set of mental and academics consequences such as depression, anxiety, and low grades.

### **1.2.3. Strategies and interventions to overcome procrastination:**

Procrastination is a burdening behaviour causing the students unpleasant academic and personal consequences. According to Ferrari, Johnson and McCown (1995), academic procrastination is the behaviour of avoiding academic duties which cause students having academic failure. Schraw, Wadkins and Olafson (2007) added those students' procrastination results in them experiencing fatigue, stress, guilt, anxiety, and a lower quality of life. Fifty-two percent of college students acknowledged procrastination as being on top concern and moderate to high need problem for which they needed help (Day, Mensink & Osulliran, 2000). Most research on academic procrastination has concentrated on the nature, etiology and consequences of it. Only few studies and publications focused on strategies to lend a hand to students for coping with it or overcoming it. Therefore, many who procrastinate have a desire for changing their behaviour, but find it difficult to do so (Grunschel & Schopenhauer, 2015). Giving the threatening costs mentioned earlier, no wonder that there is a quest for ways to reduce it or even overcome it.

Procrastinate can be reduced. Support this claims Ferrari (2010) indicated that there are over 600 self-helping books addressing solutions to this phenomenon. Besides, related articles and books contain plenty of strategies that help people reduce their procrastinating habits. Sokolowski (1994) in his study asked respondents what their strategies were. He distinguished the following strategies: making specific plans; increasing time pressure; thinking of positive consequences; thinking of negative consequences of not doing it; removing distractions; suppress negative emotions; anticipating goal attainment and focusing on the responsibility of having to do the activity. Despite that these strategies are not surely effective, but they appear in many articles that address overcoming procrastination. Other strategies proposed by Schouwenburg' study (2004) provided an overview of the three constituents used in interventions designed to help students overcoming procrastination: 1) Training self-regulatory skills; 2) building emotional strength; and 3) using social support to sustain desirable behaviour. First, training self-regulatory skills in order get start with the desired task, mainly planning. Planning could be an issue since we cannot predict what could happen in the future. Procrastinators seem to overestimate their control of their implementation of their plans. Similar to what might be done in overcoming the planning fallacy, the strategies include creating an overview of tasks, setting realistic goals, subdividing and specifying large and vaguely formulated goals, specifying deadlines for these goals, allocating time, training to overcome tempting distractions, monitoring progress and stimulus control techniques that help to ensure that the environment is distraction-free. Second, procrastination interventions are focused on ways to enhance self-efficacy, for instance, building on principles in rational-emotive behavioural therapy to emphasize that thoughts, behaviours, and feelings are interrelated, so that changing thoughts and feelings may lead to changing the behaviour. Emphasis is placed on replacing irrational beliefs by more realistic and positive thoughts. Third, the support of peers is used to help to recognize, support, or disapprove of certain behaviours. The interventions do not only include the cognitive, behavioural, and contextual structuring that helps in organizing, but also devote attention to emotional aspects of procrastination and to invoking social support to sustain efforts in overcoming it. Most interventions have addressed academic and health-related behaviours.

#### **1.2.3.1. Enhancing self-regulation:**

Self-regulated students are academically successful as they control their learning and behaviour through monitoring, directing, and regulating their actions for effectively accomplishing goals (Schouwenburg, Lay, Pychyl, & Ferrari, 2004). Strictly speaking, self-regulated students are not chronic procrastinators (Dietz, Hofer & Fries, 2007). Thus enhancing students' self-regulation will help them decrease their procrastinating behaviour.

Enhancement of self-regulation refers to the working out on self-regulatory strategies (Schouwenburg, 2004). Self-regulation can be accomplished through the management of all internal and external resources when moving towards a goal. Typical aspects of enhancing self-regulation in procrastination interventions are self-reflection and monitoring (Mühlberger & Traut-Mattausch, 2015), stimulus control and self-motivation (Grunschel, Patrzek, Klingsieck & Fries, 2018), and regulation of emotions (Eckert, Ebert, Lehr, Sieland & Berking, 2016). An experiment of self-regulation training for self-regulated learning was evaluated by Schmitz and Wiese (2006). The training involved goal setting, planning and time-management. In addition, volitional strategies; such as avoiding procrastination, shielding distractions and focusing the intention, and self-motivating. Tracing in a diary the use of these strategies, self-efficacy went up and procrastination went down. Another study on self-regulated learning with a longitudinal design showed that after goal achievement during a semester, self-efficacy increased and procrastination decreased. The authors of this study refer to the time paths as vicious and virtuous cycles (Wäschle, Allgaier, Lachner, Fink, & Nückles, 2014).

### **1.2.3.2. Time management:**

Procrastination may result from poor time management. Being uncertain about the time set for priorities and objectives can result postponing tasks. Eeden (2015) described time management as a container concept as it includes numerous tools to organize a given work to facilitate accomplishing tasks effectively and efficiently. In other words, time management is a helping ways that includes other ways to reach it. Time management usually does not address any emotional issues and may not be a good enough strategy to overcome procrastination (van Eeden, 2015). Nonetheless, managing time effectively can help students feel in control of their workload and improve their confidence of balance between studying and other activities. For graduate students, managing time is a fundamental step in the entire process of writing a research dissertation. Typical tools of time-management in overcoming procrastination are goal setting (Gustavson & Miyake, 2017), planning, prioritizing, and organizing (Gieselmann & Pietrowsky, 2016; Van Eerde, 2003), and monitoring time (Broers, 2014).

### **1.2.3.3. Treating perfectionism:**

The nature of perfectionism makes it a very difficult and a challenging problem to deal with. Many researches were conducted to spot possible solutions for such issue. Blatt (1995) suggested that intensive, psychodynamic treatment can help individuals dropping their identification with harsh, judgmental, parental figures by redefining themselves outside the high expectations set for them from an early age. In addition, Glover (2007) argued that a schema-focused approach may facilitate changing the individuals' perfectionistic lifestyle. Sherry & Hewit (2003) established that acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) can help perfectionists deal with the harsh self-criticism, and emotions, such as anxiety and depression through learning how to mindfully accept these inner experiences while moving toward more meaningful ways of living. Perfectionists are usually frightened of being vulnerable, and being discovered to others as people who need help and people who are flawed. Thus they refuse help from mental health professionals, for that reason without the necessity for psychological treatments there are some simple helpful strategies to tackle this problem. Worthington (2015) suggested a set of strategies that based on:

1. Setting more realistic goals and looking for the big picture: focus on the progress you constantly make and avoid focusing on perfection, it is much better to motivated yourself by the work you had done so far rather than the work you did not accomplish yet, look to the big picture that what you are worried about doesn't even matter be confident that you will do it.

2. Share the works in progress: usually perfectionist deny their need to get help, and avoid looking desperate or weak to others, and tend to do everything themselves so the appropriate, smart step that need to be done here is sharing your work with others and/or asking their help this will help you overcome the shame of making mistakes and failure and using the criticism of others as a technique to self-enhancement not as personal attack.

3. Break the addiction to comparing the self to others: people were, are and will always be different, with different capacities and skills with different points of view and preferences, so do not judge yourself by what others made and accomplish, do your best to be the best version of yourself.

Also Josel (n.d.) pointed out some strategies such as breaking larger projects into small achievable tasks and making getting started simple: this technique will help you to not feel overwhelmed, frustrated, and a lot of work is waiting for you, keep in mind that starting from small, easy, and simple task to bigger ones is better than not starting at all and fall in the trap of procrastination.

Moreover, people need to tolerate mistakes, knowing that making mistakes is not the end of world, do not beat up yourself because of mistake, avoid fear of failure because once in our lifetime we all fail. Use more acceptance, tolerance, self-compassion, and self-love with yourself.

#### **1.2.3.4. Building self-efficacy:**

Self-efficacy is the belief in one's ability to manage and carry out actions that will produce positive outcomes (Bandura, 1977). Individuals with high levels of self-efficacy are less likely to perceive academic challenges as anxiety-producing threats, and are less expected to experience fear of failure (Betz & Hackett, 1983). Feeling that one has a producing or controlling ability to achieve a desired result may affect an individual's motivation to begin or complete a task. Hsieh, Sullivan and Guerra (2007) described this phenomenon in a research study that found a correlation between self-efficacy and goal orientation in undergraduate students. The researchers found that students with higher levels of academic self-efficacy were well prepared to carry on through difficulties, and maintain the necessary motivation to complete tasks in an intense effort. These students were more likely to have motivation to complete the required tasks (a whole dissertation) to graduate. According to the social-cognitive theory of Bandura (1977), self-efficacy is dependent on four key factors: 1) performance mastery; 2) vicarious experience; 3) verbal influence; and 4) physiological states. Bandura's (1977) conceptual model of building self-efficacy focuses on the interrelation of one successfully performing an action, receiving vicarious experiences through the modelling of others, receiving verbal rewards, encouragement and influence by others, and the physiological state of being that one experiences before, during or after a successful performance. Mastering a performance is the most essential factor in building a self-efficacy. Being successful raises one's expectations of being able to master a task.

Most of university students have encountered the procrastination behaviour and its consequences in their academics career. It may seem as a self-protecting strategy, but it has done more damage than benefits on academics and personal level. This chapter reviewed the literature about what causes the students population to procrastinate and what techniques were proposed to overcome it.

## **Chapter two: Field Work**

### **2.1. Introduction**

This study is conducted to identify the academic procrastinating behaviour, and investigates the delay tendency among undergraduate students and its effects when writing their dissertations. Moreover, the study sought to examine the factors and causes behind this act in order to present suitable solutions to overcome the issue of procrastinating the dissertations writing.

This chapter highlights the methodology choice, participants, instruments, data collection and data analysis used to provide answers to our research questions and hypotheses. It also presents the finding of our research and discusses them.

### **2.2.Participants:**

The population of this study were students and teachers from the English section at Ibn Khaldoun university of Tiaret. Because of the corona virus pandemic, we could not reach a large population in person, thus the participants were the one who could respond to our survey within a two weeks' period. The participants were 120 volunteered MA2 students who were during the process of writing their master dissertations (80 females, 40males) between 20 and 35 years of old, and from both didactics and linguistics specialty. The participant teachers were three experienced teachers who have supervised MA2 and did respond to our sent survey.

### **2.3.Design and Method:**

The methodology choice was based on the research nature and objectives which sought to examine the reasons of academic procrastination of writing dissertations, and suggest strategies to overcome it. Moreover, the circumstances we have been facing tied us with the methods that could be done from distant only. Accordingly, an online survey approach was considered to be appropriate and adopted for data collection. The survey includes students' questionnaire for quantitative data, and teachers' interviews for qualitative data.

#### **2.3.1. Students questionnaire:**

For the quantitative method of data collection, an online questionnaire was designed on Google form for the students to answer. The aim was to invite MA2 students who were in the process of writing their master dissertations, for the reason of investigating their procrastinating behaviour and its effect, what caused it, and what are they doing about it. The questions of the questionnaire were developed according to our research questions, hypotheses, and related literature. The questionnaire consists of twelve questions; including two personal information about their background(age and gender), series of Yes/No questions, and multiple choices questions to know more about their procrastination in academic and non-academic settings, how it is affecting their dissertations' writing, and what possibly caused it. A single open-ended question was designed to freely let students tell what could possibly help them.

### **2.3.2. Teachers interview survey:**

In our case, the interview was in a form of written survey sent to teacher to answer it, instead of the personal interviewing because of the corona virus pandemic as we mentioned before. The survey was composed of six open-ended questions to have more detailed information from teachers dealing with the procrastinating behaviour in person. Each question helps us to grant deeper information related to our research questions, and the students' responses.

### **2.4.Data collection:**

The process of getting the quantitative data (students' questionnaire) began by sharing the link of the designed questionnaire by Google form on the Facebook group of Ibn Khaldoun university students. The MA2 members of the group volunteered to take the survey by following the link posted leading to the survey. The volunteered students fill out the online questionnaire and submitted their responses once they have done. Once students answered the questionnaire, their responses were anonymously collected by the Google form and stored in confidential file with our e-mail and password protection. The collecting of the qualitative data was done by sending e-mails to ten different teachers from Ibn Khaldoun University. The e-mails contained a word document with six questions related to our research topic. The teachers were kindly asked to fill in the sent document and e-mail it back. Only three teachers e-mailed back in a period of two weeks.

### **2.5.Data analysis:**

The data of the students' questionnaire were analysed by Google form and reported in a form of pie-charts, bar charts, and paragraphs. Concerning the qualitative data, the teachers' responses were analysed by textually stating the answers and interpreting it on the result part.

The quantitative data related to the student questionnaire are reported in pie-charts, bar charts, and paragraphs, while the qualitative data of the interview are presented separately in descriptive manner.

**This section is devoted to analyse and discuss the findings of our undertaken research.**

The quantitative obtained data related to the students' questionnaire are reported in pie-charts, bar charts, and paragraphs, while the qualitative data of the interview are presented separately in descriptive manner.

The results of both quantitative and qualitative method with their analysis are presented as below:

#### **2.5.1. Questionnaire Results:**

The respondents were 80 females and 40 males between 20 and 35 years old.

### Q3: Do you delay your daily life tasks? (119 respondents)

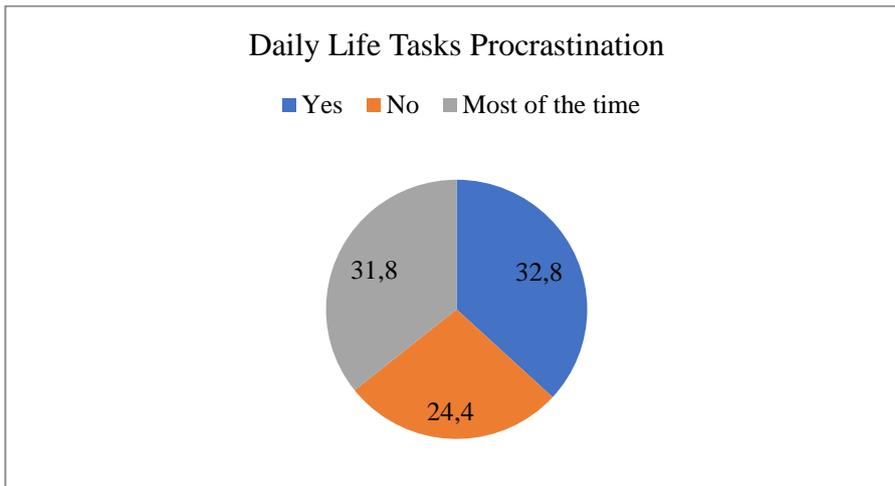


Figure 1

The pie-chart above represents how many students adopt the procrastination behaviour in their daily life. The question was asked to help us know if the academic behaviour rooted from the daily life, or it is just occasional in academic settings. The findings show that 32.8% of the students admitted that they procrastinate their daily tasks always, and 42.9% indicated that they delay doing their tasks most of the time. That is to say, around 75.6% of the students engage the postponement behaviour in doing their daily tasks. However, 24.4% of them reported not being a task procrastinator and did the activities as scheduled.

### Q4: do you delay doing or submitting your academic tasks? (120 respondents)

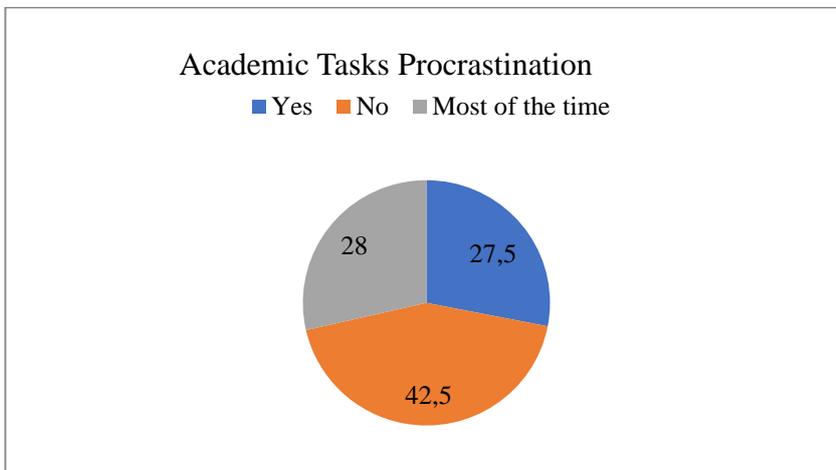


Figure 2

The pie-chart represents to what extent students put off working on their academic tasks. The data of this question will help us know whether the students procrastinating behaviour is related to all academic tasks, or it is just a mechanism when it comes to certain tasks such as dissertation writing. We notice that more than half of the students (55.5%) are engaged totally (27.5%) or most of the time (28.8%) in procrastination when doing or submitting their academic tasks. However, 42.5% of them reported not delaying their tasks.

**Q5: Is master dissertation the first dissertation you are writing?**

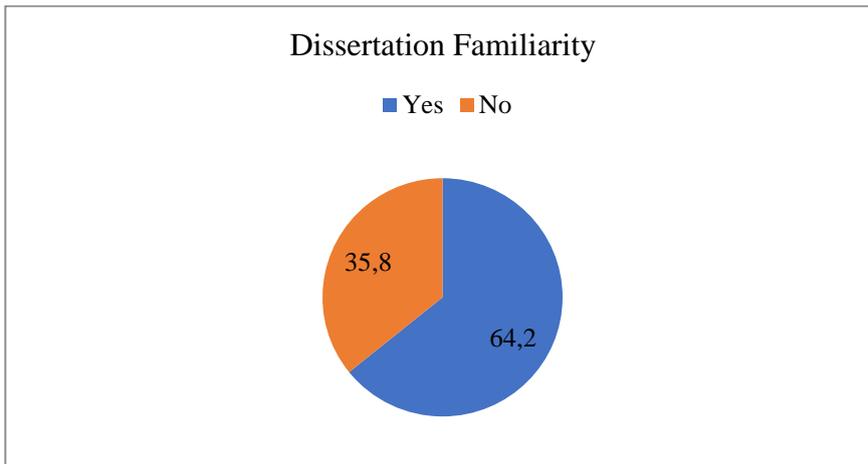


Figure 3

The findings of the chart above represent the students' familiarity with the process of writing a long term paper. The results will help us to know if the postponement behaviour is related to students' lack of experience or not. The results show that most of the students (64.2%) are writing a dissertation for the first time in their academic career. This indicates that that they lack experience in writing which may make it harder for them to process the writing. On the other hand, 35.8% indicated that master dissertation is not their first long term paper to write. Most likely they are students of the classical educational system who wrote a licence dissertation before.

**Q6: have you or are you procrastinating your dissertation writing? (119 responses)**

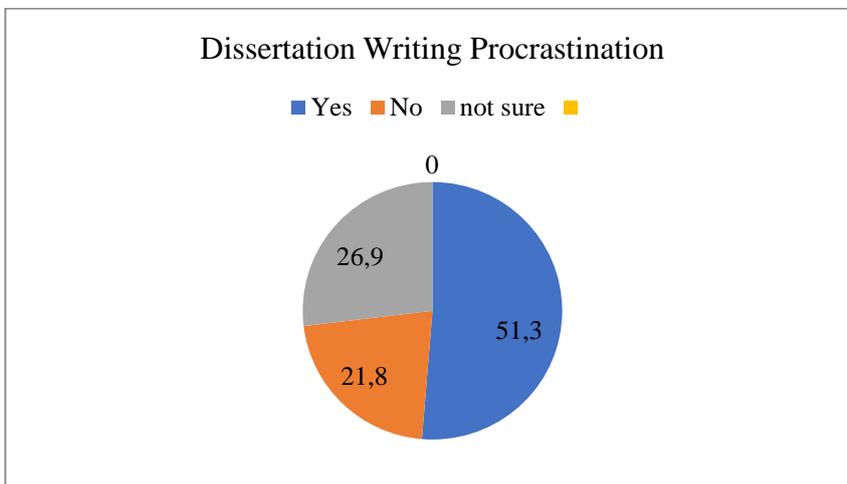


Figure 4

The results above represent the students' level of procrastination in writing their master dissertations. We notice that more than half of the students (51.3%) have been procrastinating the writing of their dissertations, and 26.9% think they are procrastinating but not sure of it it. This percentage of 78.2% demonstrates how big is the students' population that are trapped in putting off their dissertation writing. About 21.8% of them reported that they are writing their dissertations as planned.

**Q7: Does procrastination affect your dissertation writing? (118 responses)**

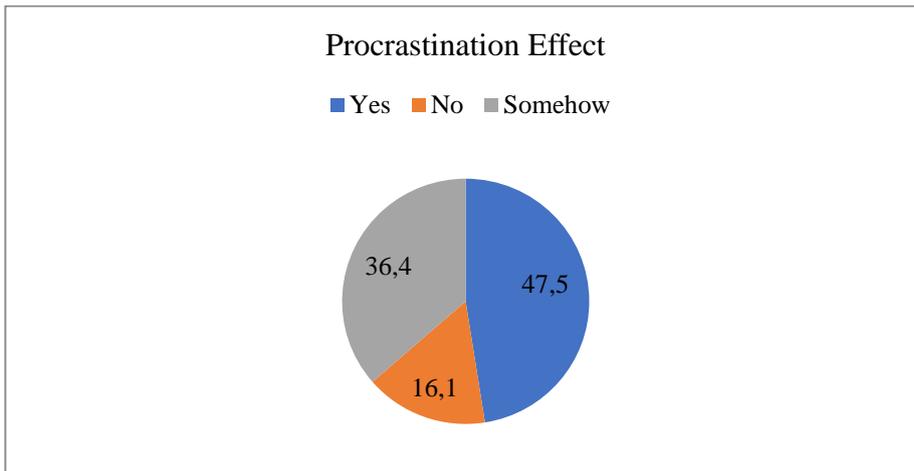


Figure 5

The findings represent how much of effect procrastination has on the students when writing their dissertations. About 47.6% stated that they are surely affected by procrastination when it comes to writing their dissertations, and 36.4% reported that procrastination is somehow affecting their dissertations' writing in a way or another. Only 16.5% disclaim being affected by the procrastination.

**Q8: How did Academic procrastination affect you? (117 responses)**

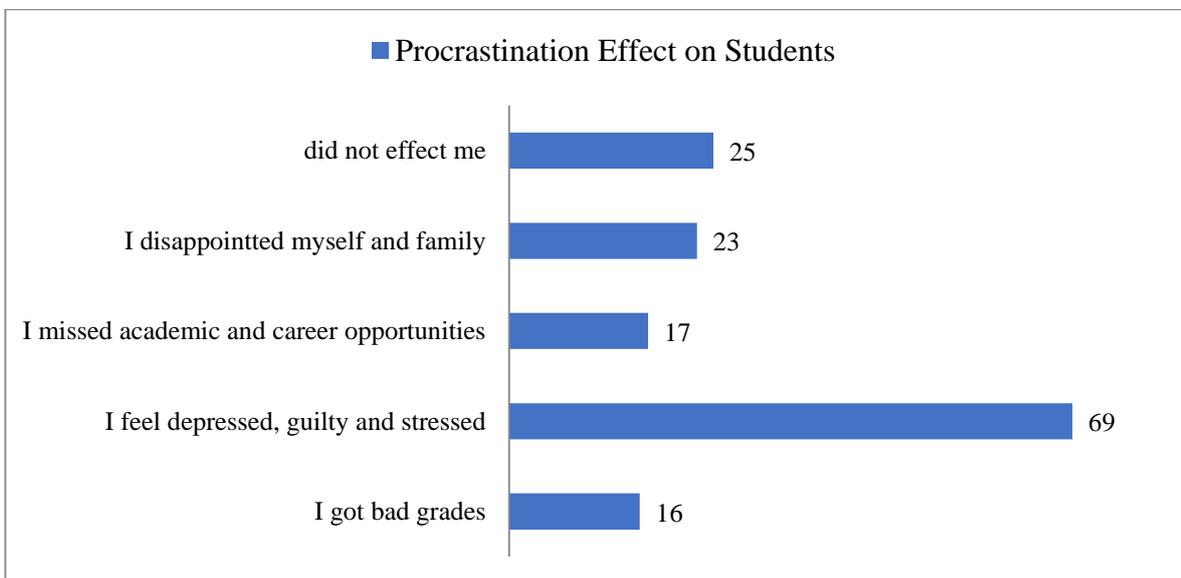


Figure 6

The pie-chart reports how did Academic procrastination affect students. It appears that procrastination affect the psychological and academic state of the student. Its negative effects results in students feeling guilty, depressed and stressed (59%), and causing them to disappoint themselves and families (19.7%). Consequently, it becomes the reasons of missing academic and career opportunities (14.5%), and failing their studies with bad grades (13.7%). Twenty-five of the respondents (21.4%) reported that procrastination did not affect their life in anyway.

**Q9: which of the statement explain your procrastinating behaviour?**

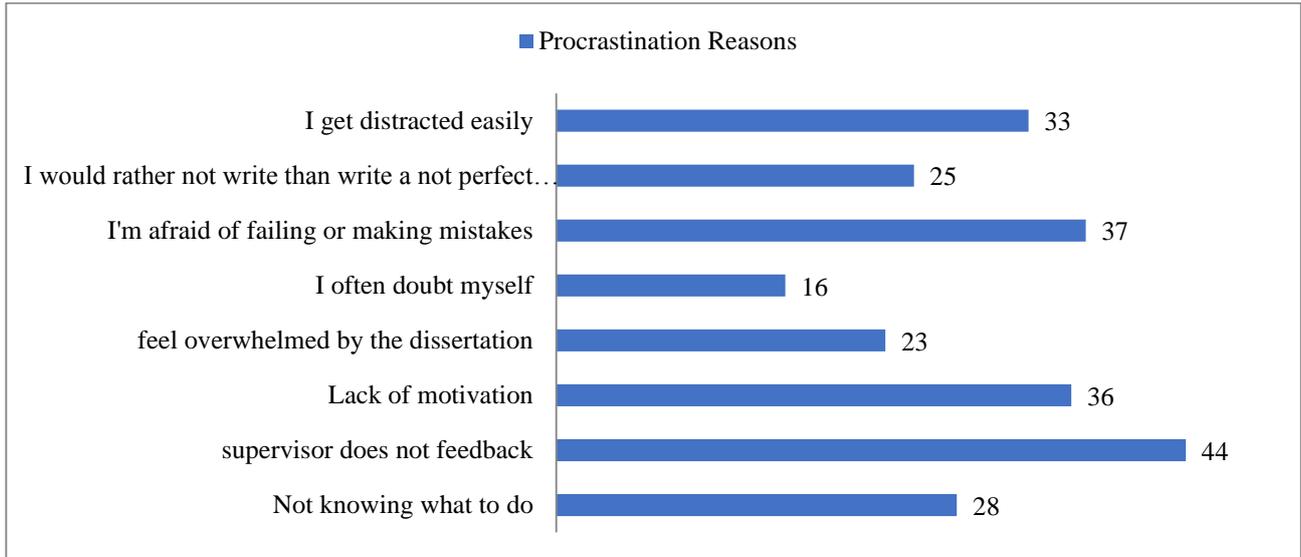


Figure 7

The bar chart reflects different reasons of procrastination. According to the results, the students procrastinate and cannot complete their dissertation in time due to the lack of feedback from their supervisor (37.9%) besides being afraid of failing or making mistakes (31.9%) and lacking motivation (31%). Getting distracted easily by other things is another reason to make students procrastinate the writing of their dissertations. Twenty eight of the respondents (24.1%) indicated that they delay the writing of their dissertation because they do not know what to do. According to 21.6% of them, they put off the work of writing due to perfectionism; they would rather procrastination and not write a dissertation than writing a not perfect one. Low self-efficacy illustrated in feeling overwhelmed by the writing of a dissertation (19.8%), and doubting the self (13.8%) seems to be a reason that compels students to delay the process of writing their master dissertations.

**Q10: did you share your procrastinating behaviour with supervisors or friends?**

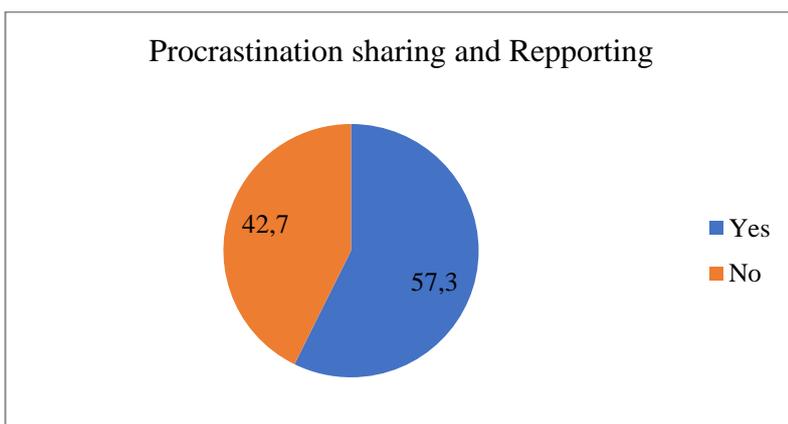


Figure 8

The pie-chart shows how many students shared their procrastination issues and asked for help against it. The results indicate that 57.3% of the students admitted to their supervisors and friends that they were having procrastinating issues. While 42.7% of them kept the fact of struggling with procrastination.

**Q11: What type(s) of supervisor you find yourself procrastinate with? (120 responses)**

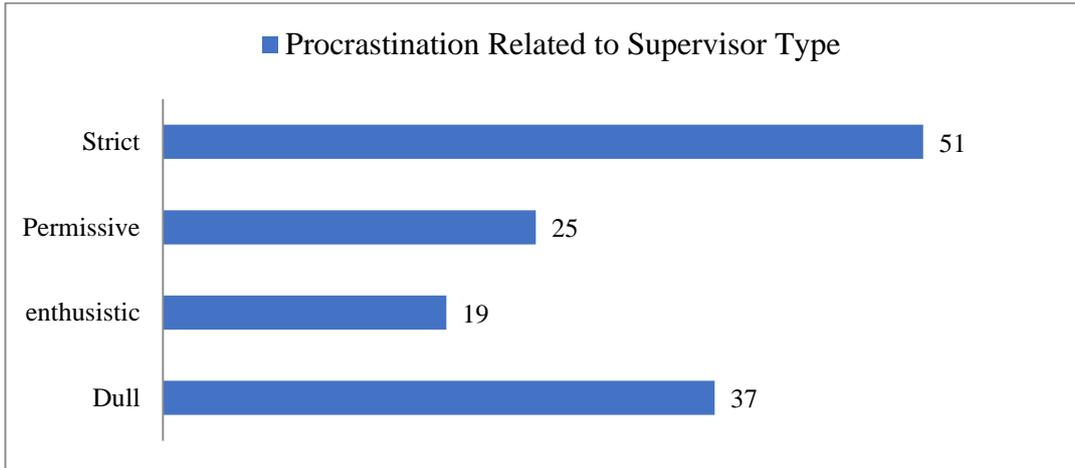


Figure 9

The bar chart above represents the most common types of supervisors and which one helps in increasing or decreasing the procrastinating behaviour in writing dissertations according to the students. More than half of the students (51.5%) reported that they find themselves procrastinate the most with a strict supervisor, while enthusiastic supervisor (15.8%) was reported to be the one to procrastinate less under his supervision. Dull supervisor was ordered second to be procrastinating with (30.8%), and permissive supervisor was less of a reason to procrastinate with (20.8%).

**Q12: what do you think will make you procrastinate less? (75 responses)**

These were some of most repeated solutions provided by the respondents:

- \* Being guided appropriately and well motivated by a committed supervisor especially during these hard situations of lacking resources.
- \*Self-motivation and getting rid of distractions such as spending useless time on social media.
- \*Believing in myself and trusting my own abilities to do the work on time.
- \*Time managing and good planning by breaking the whole work into small tasks and commit myself to finish a part of it each week.
- \*Defeating the fear of failure and rewarding myself each time I finish a task.
- \* Relying mostly on myself and don't wait for supervisor to spoon-feed me the tips.

## **2.5.2. Teachers' interviews:**

### **2.5.2.1. Teachers' experience with procrastination:**

All the three teachers indicted that they have dealt with students procrastinating their dissertations. Many of their MA2 were victims of that act. Teachers when faced with procrastinators, they try to help them by drawing their attention to the seriousness of the act, and give them tips to deal with it; such as managing time, providing samples to follow. However, when the students do not respond to these tips, teachers threaten them to be left alone in case they didn't follow the given instructions and respect the deadlines. They added that procrastination has negatively affected their students. They felt depressed, stressed and caused them to stop the writing of their dissertation in some cases.

### **2.5.2.2. The teachers reasoning of procrastination:**

The result of the interviews data shows that the respondent teachers agreed on failing to self-regulating is the common reason of procrastination. When students lack self-regulation by not being able to make decision, and enable to properly plan and manage their work, procrastination results. Another common reason provided by teachers is perceiving the dissertation writing as burdensome task to accomplish. Fear of failing and perfectionism were reasons presented by one of the teachers. Getting distracted by internet was a reasoning of another teacher. Many provided reason, and the same result; procrastination.

### **2.5.2.3. Teachers opinion about lack of supervision to students:**

The three participant teachers have admitted that not all supervisors are keeping in touch, and providing the appropriate guidance to their candidates for unknown reasons; most likely because the supervisor cannot reach all the students under their supervision as proposed by one of teachers. However, they indicated that students are mainly dependent on their supervisors to do every part of their work, and they are used to the ready-made things. They added: it is not the supervisors' duty to do so; students should depend on themselves more and use other sources such as internet or peer students to get the data needed. One of the teachers suggested that a harmony should be built between supervisors and supervisees; students use their skills to search and collect data, and the teachers get the part of correcting it and providing continuous feedback to guide them.

### **2.5.2.4. Solutions provided by teachers:**

Teachers indicated that student should know what causes their procrastinating behaviour in order to overcome it.

A good planning of an effective schedule according to deadlines, the right outlining of the work, and shielding distractions were agreed on solutions for procrastination. Besides, teachers in charge of the research methodology module are required to be more caring and detailed in order to help students know how to plan their work.

## 2.6. Discussion:

This study sought to identify the procrastinating behaviour and its effects among undergraduate students, and examine the reasons that lie behind this act for MA2 students concerning their dissertation writing. Furthermore, this study sought to suggest solutions for the students to decrease the delaying behaviour when writing their dissertations, or even overcome it. The discussion of the findings presented in the previous section is confronted with previous research findings and our hypotheses.

The analysis of the research findings indicates that definitely most of the students tend to procrastinate in about 75.5% in regular basis (chart1) and 57.5% in academic settings. These findings match with that of Ferrari (1998); and Rothblum and Solomon (1984), except our subject tend to delay their daily tasks more than their academic ones. As hypothesized, procrastinating the dissertations' writing is widespread among MA2 students giving that 78.2% admitted that they have been putting it off (pie-chart3), and the participant teachers confirmed it. This answers the first research question and supporting our claim that undergraduate students engage in procrastinating their dissertation writing and largely.

Our results confirm the negatives effect of procrastination (chart5) in which 83.9% of the students reported being affected by the act. In accordance with Burk and Yuen (1982), our participants seem to suffer from anxiety, guilt and depression (59%) as a result of procrastination, and in line with Steel (2000), it affects the course and final grades negatively (13.7%), That leads to them missing academic opportunities (14.7%), and disappointing themselves (19.7%). These findings answer the second research question of the present study; students are highly affected by procrastination and suffering consequences at both psychological state and academic level.

In the analysis, it is seen that the students procrastinate their dissertations' writing for different reasons (chart 5), mainly due to the lack of guidance and feedback from their supervisors. Most of our subjects are writing their dissertation for the first time, so obviously they need continuous supervision. Lacking experience and supervision make it hard to keep up with the process of writing a dissertation; therefore students procrastinate in order to relieve the stress caused. In contrast with the students' data, teachers indicated that students should count on themselves; for the reasons that not all the supervisors will be in touch to guide every step of their work. Supervisors, then, can be either a reason to increase the already existing tendency of procrastination, or decrease it. Students reported that supervisor way of dealing with them affect their procrastination behaviour. They indicated that they procrastinate the most with a strict supervisor; most likely because strict supervisor set high standards and strict rules that they will be unable to set pace of their learning to meet their expectations within a given time as Ferrari and Pychyl (2008) explained. Moreover, they reported procrastinating less under the supervision of an enthusiastic supervisor (chart6).

According to our subjects, being afraid of failing or making mistakes causes the students to procrastinate in order to dismiss the possibility of failing and protecting their self-esteem, similar to what Berry (1975) argued.

Not knowing what to do is another cause of procrastinating the writing of dissertations; students delay the start of writing their master dissertation to blame it later on lacking time instead of their ability and protect their self-esteem by removing the possibility that their

underperformance is due to their low intelligence in accordance with the findings of Steel (2007) and Ferrari (1994).

Lacking motivation and getting distracted easily were found to be reasons of putting off the writing of our participants' master dissertations. When students lack support and encouragement, they seem to be less interested and caring about the task at hand i.e. writing their dissertations. Consequently, they start losing concentration and get distracted with other tasks ending up with procrastinating the writing of their dissertations. These findings match Zimmerman's (2000).

Moreover, when students are unfamiliar with the process of writing a long term paper, most likely they will feel overwhelmed by the whole task. Feeling overwhelmed increases the tendency of procrastination in order to ease the pressure of doing the task.

Similar to Rothblum and Solomon (1984), and Burke and Yuen (1983), our students procrastinate because of perfectionism and low self-efficacy. They reported that they would rather not write a dissertation and keep putting it off, rather than writing a not perfect one. They set high standards for themselves that they cannot reach and end up procrastinating because of the excuse of not being perfect. Low self-efficacy by doubting the self pushes the students to keep delaying the writing of their dissertation; telling themselves that they are not good enough and will never do the task properly without even trying.

Concerning the how to overcome the predictor of dissertation writing, procrastination, the results of the last questionnaire's question and teachers suggestions demonstrates that students can possibly decrease the procrastinating behaviour if not overcome come it, matching Ferrari's (2010) claim and Sokolowski's (1998) found strategies.

The results indicated that students will be procrastinating less by having a supportive supervisor who is committed to help them and give feedback to their drafts. Supervisors probably need to be more responsible of the students work by keeping in touch with them, motivating them to do better and guide their path of research. The participant teachers' suggestions matches that of Ferrari (2010) arguing that students should count on themselves and do not depends on their supervisor for help, many will not. It's up to them to change and deal with their procrastination tendencies.

According to several researches, elimination of the negative thinking and building self-efficacy are the basis of overcoming the delaying tendency. Similar to that, our students and teachers suggested that trusting the one's abilities to do the required job will decrease procrastination. Students with high level of self-efficacy are less likely to procrastinate because they feel that they have the power to produce and complete the desired tasks. These findings match with what Hsieh, Sullivan and Guerra (2007); and Betz and Hackett (1983) described. Furthermore, successful dissertation requires a good planning and organizing of the study, time managing, self motivation and getting rid of distractions. Within our research, students and teachers highlighted planning and organizing of the work, besides settings deadlines and getting rid of distractions as effective strategies for overcoming procrastination. These strategies make students feel in control of their workload, and help them balance between their dissertation writing and their usual activities. This corresponds with the recommendation of authors in enhancing self-regulation to overcome procrastination; emphasising the management of all internal and external resources by goal setting, planning and time managing, attention control, and dealing with dissertation (Schouwenbug,2004; Schmitz and Wiese,2006).

Breaking the whole dissertation into small tasks and being committed to finish each small task within a given course of time seems to be a helpful strategy to lower the procrastinating

tendency. Rewarding the self or being rewarded after each finished task will help in motivating the students. It also decreases the pressure of writing a long term paper and lessens the procrastination. These suggestions match the social cognitive theory of Bandura (1977).

### **2.7. Conclusion:**

Throughout this chapter we have reported the findings of the present study then discussed them in accordance with previous findings. The analysis and discussion of the results permitted us to reach the needed conclusions to answer our research questions and hypothesis. The analysing of students' questionnaires provided insights on students' perception about academic procrastination and its effects on them, and a deeper understanding of the factors behind their procrastination and how to cope with it. The teachers' interviews supported the students' data, and provide more detailed information from their experience and perspective.

## General conclusion

This study investigated the procrastination behaviour and its effects on master dissertation writing. Moreover, it examined the causes behind this behaviour among MA2 students at the English section of Ibn Khaldoun University in Tiaret, and suggested possible solutions to overcome the students' delay of writing their master dissertations. We hypothesized that if our students understood what reasons lay behind their procrastination, they would know how to tackle it and get their dissertations done on time with less obstacles.

In order to achieve our objectives, we divided our research into two parts; a theoretical part and a practical one. The theoretical part was devoted to review the literature related to our topic to set a ground for our research and provide deeper understanding of the present research variables (procrastination's definition and effects, its causes, and strategies to overcome it).

On the other hand, the practical part was devoted to our undertaken investigation in which we present the main finding of our study and discuss them to reach a valid conclusion.

Our research methodology choice adopted both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection. The quantitative data collection was based on students' questionnaire to explore their procrastination behaviour in dissertations writing. The qualitative data were collected through teachers' interviews for more detailed information. In the light of the data analysis, we have drawn the conclusion that most of our participants procrastinate their dissertations writing, and they need help in solving this problem. Besides, the results indicated that procrastination is affecting their dissertations writing negatively, and they suffer from serious psychological and academics consequences because of it.

In addition, the findings highlighted different causes for procrastination; mainly because of the lack of their supervisors' guidance, fear of failure, low self-efficacy, and perfectionism issues.

Moreover, the analysis of the last question of both questionnaire and interview gave a chance to both students and teachers to suggest possible solutions to overcome the procrastinating of their dissertations' writing. First motivation is an essential factor to reduce the act of delaying by self-motivating and being motivated by others. Second, enhancing students' self-regulation to well plan and organise the work is a recommended strategy to defeat procrastinating the dissertations' writing. Third, students should break the whole task of dissertation into sub-tasks to ease the pressure of writing a long paper, and lower the procrastination tendency. Last but not least, a good collaboration and continuous contact between students and their supervisors by appropriately guiding the students path of research will set things in the right direction; therefore, reduce the possibility to fall in the procrastination trap.

Our results are hoped to make contribution to theory by highlighting an ignored issue in the Algerian universities i.e. dissertations writing procrastination, and providing both MA2 students and university teachers with possible strategies to deal with this threat of completion. Despite these results, some limitations have been faced.

### **Limitations:**

Although we have reached desired findings through conducting this research, there were limitations that affected the study. There were few studies on academic procrastination related to

the process of writing, and even fewer in relation with dissertations' writing. Therefore, we adjust the found literature to suit our objectives.

Another limitation of this study was generalizability. The individuals involved in our study were MA2 students and teachers at the English section of Ibn Khaldoun University in Tiaret only. This limits generalizability because the results cannot be applied to all MA2 students in other departments or universities in Algeria.

The corona virus pandemic was a limitation for both theoretical and practical part. For the theoretical part, the pandemic unable us to reach libraries to consult the written sources. We were tied up to the digital sources available on the net only. Practicality, we could not conduct the interviews in person to collect more valid data, and we could not reach a large students population as in normal terms. Thus both methods were used on the online platform.

Despite these limitations, we could reach important findings to be used in further research.

### **Ideas for further research:**

This study made a contribution in proving how serious is the procrastination issue in writing master dissertations; yet, there are more questions to be answered. Further studies in this area are highly needed.

Little research has been done on the issues facing Algerian students when writing their master dissertations. Given this fact, our study worth re-conducting with the elimination of the mentioned limitations.

Further studies can use this research to investigate other variables of procrastination in relation with dissertations' writing, and use more behavioural and observable measures addressing a great range of population.

It would also be interesting to see this study broadened to all the Ibn Khaldoun University departments, or other universities to test their students' level of procrastination in writing master dissertations, and examine the differences between them. Some examples of the proposed research questions could include: Does the procrastination behaviour differ from a department to another within the same university and different universities? Do universities differ in their abilities to assist their MA2 students in completing their dissertations writing?

Given the consequences of the procrastination behaviour, students' psychological state is an important variable that should be taken into consideration. Thus, a research devoted to the students' psychological state during the process of writing their master dissertations is very recommended to help them cope with their unpleasant feelings.

This research is the first, to our knowledge, to investigate the procrastination involved in master dissertations writing among MA2 students of Algerian universities. Our study is hoped to be making a contribution to the existing literature by introducing a framework shedding light on the negative effects of procrastination on master dissertations writing, as well as examining the causes of the behaviour, and providing strategies to overcome it. It is recommended to carry out further research in the given area to help the struggling students.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Teachers Interview

*Dear teachers,*

*For the sake of helping us fulfilling our research, you are kindly asked to answer these interview questions about the academic procrastination related to writing dissertations. The interview's findings will help us know more the procrastinating behaviour, its reasons and how it could be tackled. Your answers will be in no mean related to you personally. Thanks for your invested time in advance.*

- 1- How do you define academic procrastination?
  
- 2- In your experience supervising MA2 students, have any of them reported a procrastinating behaviour? If yes, what did you do about it?
  
- 3- According to you, what reasons make students procrastinate their daily academic tasks generally, and the process of writing their dissertation specifically?
  
- 4- From a survey findings answered by MA2 students of Ibn Khaldoun university of Tiaret, English department about procrastination, the most common chosen reason of procrastination were that they don't know what to do because supervisor does not provide feedback for their drafts, and that they are afraid of losing or making mistakes. What do you have to say about it?
  
- 5- What do you think that could possibly help limit or overcome procrastination behaviour for both students' and supervisors' sides?
  
- 6- What do you think that could possibly help limit or overcome procrastination behaviour for both students' and supervisors' sides?

## Appendix 2: Students' Questionnaire

### Dissertation Writing procrastination

You are kindly asked to fill out this questionnaire that will be used in academic research for master degree about procrastination behavior in writing dissertations. Keep in mind that is confidential. We personally want to thank you for every second invested in our research. 😊

#### 1. Gender

*Tick all that apply.*

- Male  
 Female

#### 2. Age

*Mark only one oval.*

- 20-25  
 26-30  
 30-35

#### 3. Do you delay your daily life

tasks? *Mark only one oval.*

- Yes  
 No  
 Sometimes

#### 4. Do you delay doing or submitting your academic tasks to the last minute?

*Mark only one oval.*

- Yes  
 No  
 Sometimes

5. Is the master degree dissertation the first dissertation you are writing?

*Mark only one oval.*

Yes

No

6. Have you or are you procrastinating your dissertation writing?

*Mark only one oval.*

Yes

No

Not sure

7. Does procrastination affect/affected your dissertation writing?

*Mark only one oval.*

Yes

No

Somehow

8. How did academic procrastination affect you?

*Tick all that apply.*

- I got bad grades
- I felt guilty, stressed and depressed
- I missed academic and career opportunities
- I disappointed myself and my family
- Did not affect my life

9. Which of the following statement(s) explain(s) your procrastinating behaviour?

*Tick all that apply.*

- Not knowing what to do
- Supervisor does not provide me with feedback
- Lack of motivation
- I feel overwhelmed by the whole dissertation thing
- I often doubt myself
- I'm afraid of failing or making a mistake
- I would rather not write than write a not perfect dissertation
- I get distracted easily

10. What type of supervisor you find yourself procrastinating with?

*Tick all that apply.*

- Dull
- Enthusiastic
- Permissive
- Strict

11. Have you shared your procrastinating issues with friends or your supervisor? *Mark only one oval.*

Yes

No

12. What do you think will make you procrastinate less?

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## ملخص:

الدراسة الحالية تبحث في تأثير سلوك التسويف على كتابة أطروحات الماجستير، وتفحص الأسباب التي تسبب هذا السلوك من أجل مجهول رسم استراتيجيات للتغلب عليه. للوصول إلى أهدافنا، اعتمدنا الأساليب الكمية والنوعية. تم جمع البيانات باستخدام استبيان عبر الإنترنت ومقابلات مخطوطة. كانت النتائج الرئيسية أن الطلاب المشاركين لدينا منخرطون في سلوك المماطلة أثناء عملية كتابة أطروحات الماجستير، وأن السلوك يؤثر على حالتهم النفسية وإنجازاتهم الأكاديمية. إضافة إلى ذلك، أفادوا بأنهم يماطلون لأسباب مختلفة. نذكر منهم: نقص الإشراف، الخوف من الفشل، قلة الحافز، وانخفاض الكفاءة الذاتية. أخيراً، أظهرت النتائج أن طلاب السنة الثانية ماجستير يمكنهم التغلب على التسويف باستخدام استراتيجيات مختلفة.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** المماطلة الأكاديمية، كتابة أطروحات، طلبة الثانية ماجستير، التغلب على التسويف أسباب المماطلة.

## Summary:

The present study investigates the effect of procrastination behaviour on master dissertation writing. It examines the reasons causing the behaviour in order to map strategies for overcoming it. To reach our objectives, we adopted both quantitative and qualitative methods. Data were collected using an anonymous online questionnaire and manuscript interviews. The major findings were that our participant students are engaged in the procrastination behaviour during the process of writing their master dissertations, and that the behaviour is affecting their psychological state and academic achievements. Besides, they reported that they procrastinate for different reasons; mentioning the lack of supervision, fear of failures, lack of motivation and low self-esteem. Finally, the results demonstrated that MA2 students can potentially overcome procrastination using different efficacious strategies.

**Keywords:** academic procrastination, dissertations writing, MA2 students, overcoming procrastination, reasons of procrastination.

## Résumé :

La présente étude étudie l'effet du comportement de procrastination sur les écrits des mémoires de maître et examine les raisons à l'origine du comportement afin de cartographier des stratégies pour le surmonter. Pour atteindre nos objectifs, nous avons adopté des méthodes à la fois quantitatives et qualitatives. Les données ont été collectées à l'aide d'un questionnaire en ligne anonyme et d'entretiens manuscrits. Les principales conclusions ont été que nos étudiants participants sont engagés dans un comportement de procrastination pendant le processus de rédaction de leur mémoire de maîtrise, et que le comportement affecte leur état psychologique et leurs résultats scolaires. En outre, ils ont rapporté qu'ils tergiversent pour différentes raisons; mentionnant le manque de supervision, la peur des échecs, le manque de motivation et une faible efficacité personnelle. Enfin, les résultats ont démontré que les étudiants de MA2 peuvent éventuellement surmonter la procrastination en utilisant différentes suggérées.

**Mots clés :** procrastination académique, rédaction de mémoire, Étudiants de MA2, surmonter la procrastination, raisons de la procrastination.

