International Journal of Educational Best Practices

ACADEMIC PROCRASTINATION AMONG MASTER'S STUDENTS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION: THE LEVEL, AREAS, AND REASONS

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Article Info	Abstract
	Academic procrastination is a persistent challenge in higher education, particularly among graduate students engaged in demanding academic tasks. This study employed a descriptive quantitative research design to explore the level of academic procrastination among English language education master's students, to identify academic areas are most prone to procrastination, and to investigate the reasons underlying this behavior. The study involved 48 graduate students enrolled in the English Language Education Master's Program at Universitas Riau. Data were collected using the PASS questionnaire from Solomon & Rothblum (1984) that included sections on procrastination level, areas of procrastination, and reasons for procrastination. Descriptive analysis revealed that 67% of students exhibited moderate levels of procrastination, while 33% reported high levels. Writing tasks, such as thesis writing and preparing academic papers, emerged as the most frequently procrastinated area, followed by preparing for exams, reading assignments, and administrative tasks. The main reasons for procrastination included difficulty in time management, fear of making mistakes, lack of motivation, perfectionism, and challenges in balancing academic work with employment or personal responsibilities. These findings underscore the importance of addressing both the cognitive and emotional factors contributing to academic procrastination. Interventions that target time management skills and academic self-confidence may help reduce procrastination and improve graduate student performance.

To cite this article: Annisaq, Azhar, F., & Surpiusman. (2025). Academic procrastination among master's students in English language education: The level, areas, and

reasons. International Journal of Educational Best Practices, 9(2), 82–94. https://doi.org/10.32851/ijebp.v9n2.p82-94

INTRODUCTION

Academic procrastination is a persistent issue in higher education, particularly among graduate students who encounter complex academic requirements. Graduate students frequently delay essential academic tasks, including thesis writing, exam preparation, and reading assignments, despite awareness of the negative consequences. Within the English Language Education Master's Program at Universitas Riau, both informal observations and academic records indicate that a substantial proportion of students regularly postpone thesis-related tasks and coursework deadlines. Such delays often result in extended study periods, reduced academic achievement, and increased psychological distress, including stress and anxiety. Procrastination is defined as the intentional and unnecessary postponement of an intended academic action, even when this delay is likely to result in negative outcomes (Solomon & Rothblum, 1984; Steel, 2007). This behavior represents a significant form of self-regulation failure (Steel, 2007), and is associated with adverse academic outcomes such as lower performance, missed deadlines, increased stress, and academic attrition (Kljajic et al., 2022; Rozental et al., 2022). Based on these perspectives, this study is conducted to fill an important research gap. While many studies have explored procrastination among undergraduate students, fewer have examined it within EFL graduate contexts, especially in Indonesia. Existing research often lacks detailed analysis of which academic areas are most affected and why such patterns occur. Thus, this study focuses on graduate students in the English Language Education Master's Program at Universitas Riau to provide context-specific insights. For graduate students in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) programs, procrastination can be particularly problematic due to the additional challenges of academic writing in a second language and navigating complex linguistic and cognitive demands (Ayatollahi et al., 2011; Wirajaya, 2020).

According to Steel's (2007) Temporal Motivation Theory, procrastination occurs when a task is perceived as aversive or difficult, and when immediate rewards are prioritized over long-term goals. Students may choose to delay academic tasks in favor of short-term mood repair or less stressful activities (Rozental et al., 2022). In higher education, procrastination is commonly triggered by tasks that are cognitively demanding or emotionally aversive, such as thesis writing, preparing for exams, or reading dense academic texts. These patterns are especially relevant for EFL graduate students, who must manage both academic content and language challenges.

Zimmerman's, (2008) Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) theory provides another useful lens for understanding procrastination. SRL emphasizes that successful learners can set goals, plan, monitor, and adjust their learning behaviors. Procrastination reflects a breakdown in these self-regulation processes, specifically poor time management, lack of goal clarity, and difficulties with self-monitoring (San et al., 2016; Subekti, 2023). Furthermore, Garcia & Pintrich (1996) suggest that motivation and academic self-efficacy also play a key role: when students doubt their academic abilities or feel overwhelmed, they are more likely to avoid or delay academic work.

Several studies have documented the prevalence of procrastination in higher education. For example, Bekleyen (2017) found that more than 50% of graduate students frequently procrastinate on writing assignments and thesis work. Kljajic et al. (2022), in a meta-analysis of longitudinal studies, concluded that procrastination negatively predicts academic

achievement across multiple contexts. In Indonesia, Wirajaya (2020) reported that 63% of EFL undergraduate and graduate students exhibited high levels of procrastination. Yusuf (2022), in a study of Indonesian EFL Master's students, similarly found that procrastination was particularly high in writing-intensive tasks, reflecting both language anxiety and self-efficacy issues.

Procrastination is rarely uniform across academic tasks. Solomon & Rothblum (1984) pioneering study identified that writing assignments, exam preparation, and long-term projects were the most procrastinated academic activities. More recent studies (Wirajaya, 2020; Yusuf, 2022; Saragih et. al., 2024) confirm that, among EFL students, thesis writing remains the primary area of procrastination, followed by preparing for exams, reading assignments, and academic administration. Writing-intensive tasks are cognitively demanding, language-intensive, and open-ended, making them more susceptible to avoidance behaviors (Ayatollahi et al., 2011).

Understanding the reasons behind procrastination is equally important. Solomon & Rothblum (1984) in their seminal work on academic procrastination, they identified four core reasons for procrastinatory behavior: fear of failure, task aversiveness, difficulty in time management, and low personal initiative. These factors have been confirmed and expanded upon by subsequent research and theoretical models.

Fear of failure reflects students' anxiety about not meeting performance standards. It is often linked to perfectionism and low self-efficacy, causing students to delay tasks as a form of self-protection (Steel, 2007). From the perspective of Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) theory (Zimmerman, 2008), fear of failure undermines the motivational phase of learning, where students set goals and mobilize effort. In this context, fear of failure may also contribute to reduced fear of failure toward academic tasks, as students emotionally disengage to shield themselves from potential negative outcomes. When students experience fear of failure, they may invest less genuine effort, resulting in lower fear of failure and greater procrastination.

Task aversiveness refers to the unpleasant or cognitively demanding nature of a task. According to Temporal Motivation Theory (Steel, 2007) the more aversive a task is perceived to be, the more likely it is to be delayed in favor of more immediately rewarding activities. For EFL students, this is especially relevant in writing tasks, which require both language proficiency and critical thinking (Yusuf, 2022).

Difficulty in time management reflects poor planning and an inability to structure academic work effectively. Within SRL theory, this indicates deficits in the strategic and self-monitoring phases of learning (Zimmerman, 2008). Poor time management is consistently identified as a strong predictor of procrastination (Steel, 2007; Subekti, 2023).

Low personal initiative involves a lack of autonomous motivation and volition to engage with academic work. It reflects both motivational deficits (low intrinsic motivation, as described by Garcia & Pintrich (1996) and volitional failure (Steel, 2007). Without strong personal initiative, students struggle to initiate and sustain academic effort, particularly on complex or long-term tasks like thesis writing.

Together, these four reasons demonstrate that academic procrastination is a multidimensional behavior rooted in both emotional (fear, avoidance) and cognitive-regulatory (time management, self-initiation) factors. When viewed through integrated theoretical lenses, Temporal Motivation Theory, SRL theory, and motivational frameworks, the findings

consistently emphasize that procrastination is not simply about laziness, but rather a complex interplay of internal and external influences that disrupt academic engagement. Based on these perspectives, this study is conducted to fill an important research gap. While many studies have explored procrastination among undergraduate students, fewer have examined it within EFL graduate contexts, especially in Indonesia. Existing research often lacks detailed analysis of which academic areas are most affected and why such patterns occur. Thus, this study focuses on graduate students in the English Master's Program at Universitas Riau to provide context-specific insights.

Situational factors include work-study conflict, lack of academic support, family obligations, and unclear expectations from academic supervisors (Rezkia et al., 2022; Subekti, 2023). In EFL contexts, language-related factors play an additional role: students may procrastinate on writing because of language anxiety, difficulty understanding academic texts, or lack of confidence in expressing ideas in academic English (Wirajaya, 2020; Yusuf, 2022). These barriers increase the cognitive load and emotional aversiveness of academic tasks, raising the likelihood of procrastination.

Despite the growing body of research on academic procrastination, gaps remain. First, much of the existing literature focuses on general levels of procrastination without clearly identifying which specific academic areas are most affected for EFL graduate students. Second, while broad causes of procrastination are well documented, there is a need for more detailed, context-specific insights into *why* students procrastinate on particular tasks. This is especially important in Indonesian graduate programs, where many students balance academic demands with employment and family responsibilities, factors that may influence procrastination patterns in unique ways. Hence, the present study is motivated by two main reasons: (1) the high empirical prevalence of procrastination among Indonesian graduate students, and (2) the limited context-specific understanding of how this behavior manifests in EFL academic settings.

This study seeks to address these gaps by exploring the level of academic procrastination among English Master's students at Universitas Riau, identifying the academic areas most affected by procrastination, and analyzing the reasons behind this behavior. Three research questions guided this investigation:

1. What is the level of academic procrastination among English Master's students of FKIP UNRI?
2. In which academic areas do they most frequently procrastinate?
3. What are the reasons for their procrastination?

By answering these questions, this study not only aims to contribute to the theoretical understanding of academic procrastination but also to offer practical implications. The research is significant because it highlights how cognitive, emotional, and situational factors intersect to influence procrastination among EFL graduate students. Its contribution lies in providing empirical evidence that can inform academic counseling, curriculum design, and time-management interventions tailored for postgraduate learners in Indonesia.

METHODS

This study employed a quantitative descriptive research design to explore the level of academic procrastination among English Master's students, identify the academic areas most affected, and examine the reasons behind students' procrastination behaviors. The descriptive approach

was considered appropriate to provide a clear understanding of procrastination patterns in the target population without manipulating any variables.

The participants were 48 graduate students enrolled in the English Language Education Master's Program at Universitas Riau. The study used total population sampling, with all active students invited to participate. An online questionnaire was distributed to all students, and 48 valid responses were obtained. A notable portion of the students were employed while completing their graduate studies, adding important context regarding external factors that may influence academic procrastination.

Data collection was conducted through an online questionnaire that comprised two sections. The first section measured the level of academic procrastination using an adaptation of the Procrastination Assessment Scale for Students (PASS) developed by Solomon and Rothblum (1984). Items were rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("Never") to 5 ("Always"), capturing the frequency of procrastination across various academic tasks. In this section asked students also indicate the academic areas in which they most often procrastinated, including writing papers, preparing study for exams, completing reading assignments, and handling administrative tasks, attendance, and the study in general. The second section examined the reasons behind their procrastination, based on common factors identified by (Solomon & Rothblum, 1984) such as time management, aversiveness of the task, fear of failure, and personal initiative. The questionnaire was reviewed by academic experts to ensure content validity and was pilot-tested on a small group of students to refine clarity and relevance.

Data collection took place during the second semester of the 2024–2025 academic year. The online survey remained open for two weeks to allow students adequate time to respond. On average, students completed the questionnaire within 5 to 10 minutes.

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 25. Descriptive statistics, including mean scores, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages, were calculated to analyze the level of procrastination, identify the most procrastinated academic areas, and determine the most commonly reported reasons for procrastination. The results are presented in narrative form, supported by tables and figures to aid interpretation and discussion.

FINDINGS

Participants' Demographic Data

The participants are active students at English Master Program FKIP Universitas Riau, where the total number is 48 students from batch 2021-2024.
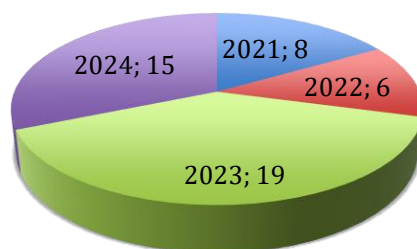
Figure 1

Participants'demographic data

Figure 1 presents the demographic distribution of participants by enrollment year, indicating a balanced representation across four cohorts. The 2023 cohort comprises the largest group, representing 40% of participants (n = 19), which may reflect increased recent enrollment or higher academic engagement. The 2024 cohort follows, contributing 31% of participants (n = 15). The higher representation from the 2023 and 2024 cohorts may suggest greater interest or availability among newer students to participate in the study.

In contrast, the 2021 and 2022 cohorts are less represented, with 8 and 6 participants, respectively. This lower participation may result from graduation, reduced academic engagement, or decreased responsiveness to research invitations. Despite these differences, all cohorts are included, providing a comprehensive cross-sectional overview of the sample.

Participants' Academic Procrastination Level
Research Question 1: *What is the level of students' academic procrastination of English Master Program of FKIP Universitas Riau?*

To answer the research question 1, the result analysis can be seen in figure 2 below:
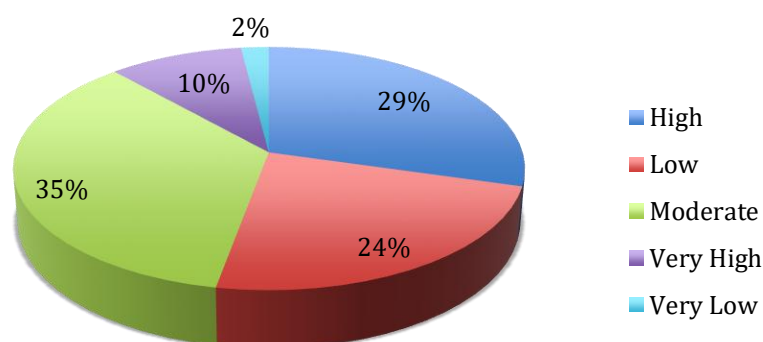
Figure 2

Participants'academic procrastination level

Figure 2 displays the distribution of academic procrastination levels among participants, categorized as Very Low, Low, Moderate, High, and Very High. The Moderate category

comprises the largest proportion, representing 35% of the sample. This indicates that a significant portion of participants engages in procrastination at an average level, which may reflect typical academic behaviors among students balancing multiple priorities and deadlines.

The High and Low categories account for 29% and 24% of participants, respectively. The substantial proportion in the High category suggests that a notable segment of students regularly exhibits procrastination behaviors that may hinder academic progress. Conversely, the Low category reflects students who consistently complete academic tasks on time. The distribution across these categories highlights variation in self-regulation and time management skills within the sample.

At the extremes, 10% of participants reported Very High procrastination levels, while 2% reported Very Low levels. The small proportion in the Very High category indicates that few students experience severe procrastination that may significantly affect academic performance. Similarly, the minimal percentage in the Very Low category suggests that only a few students demonstrate consistently strong self-regulation and time management. Overall, the data reveal a balanced yet varied distribution of procrastination tendencies among participants.
In addition to examining the overall level of academic procrastination among the participants, further analysis was conducted to explore which specific areas of academic activity were most prone to procrastination.

Table 1

Reliability the area of procrastination

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.899	6

To assess the internal consistency of the overall Area of Academic Procrastination scale, a reliability analysis was conducted. The scale consisted of six aggregated area scores (Writing, Exam, Reading, Administrative Tasks, Attendance, and General Academic Tasks), each derived from multiple items. The analysis yielded a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.899, indicating excellent internal consistency (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). This result suggests that the six area scores reliably measure the underlying construct of procrastination tendencies across different academic tasks.

Having established the reliability of the Area of Academic Procrastination scale, the subsequent analysis focused on identifying which specific academic areas were most susceptible to procrastination among the participants. The mean scores for each area (Writing, Exam Preparation, Reading, Administrative Tasks, Attendance, and General Academic Tasks) were calculated to provide a clearer understanding of the variation in students' procrastination behaviors across different types of academic activities. The results of this analysis are presented in Figure 3.

Figure 3

Participants' area of academic procrastination
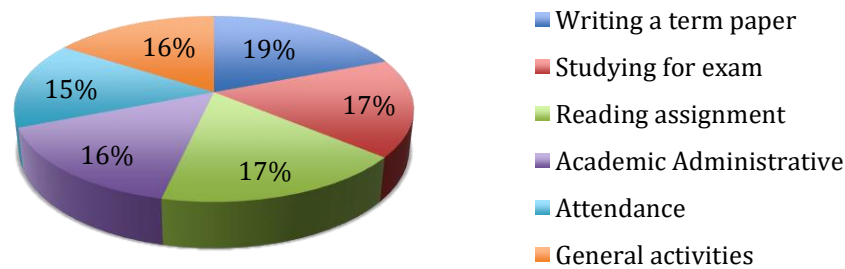
According to the Figure 3, the descriptive analysis of academic procrastination across six major academic task areas revealed variation in students' procrastination tendencies. The area with the highest average procrastination was writing tasks (M = 3.33, SD = 0.97), indicating that students most frequently delayed activities related to writing, such as essays, reports, or term papers. This suggests that tasks demanding sustained effort, creativity, and higher cognitive load are most prone to procrastination.

The next most procrastinated areas included reading tasks (M = 3.05, SD = 0.89) and exam preparation (M = 2.98, SD = 0.96). These results show that activities requiring regular and disciplined engagement also faced moderate levels of delay among students. In contrast, attendance-related activities (M = 2.66, SD = 1.09) and administrative tasks (M = 2.70, SD = 1.04) were among the least procrastinated, likely because such tasks often involve external structures, clear deadlines, or mandatory participation.

Overall, the findings suggest that students tend to procrastinate more on complex and cognitively demanding academic tasks, especially writing, while procrastination is less likely when tasks involve clear external accountability. These insights point to the importance of supporting students' time management and self-regulation skills, particularly in areas that require higher levels of independent effort.

Participants' Reasons of Academic Procrastination

To answer the second research question which is *Why do students of English Master Program of FKIP Universitas Riau have academic procrastination?,* will be explained with the diagram below:

Figure 4

Participants'reasons of academic procrastination
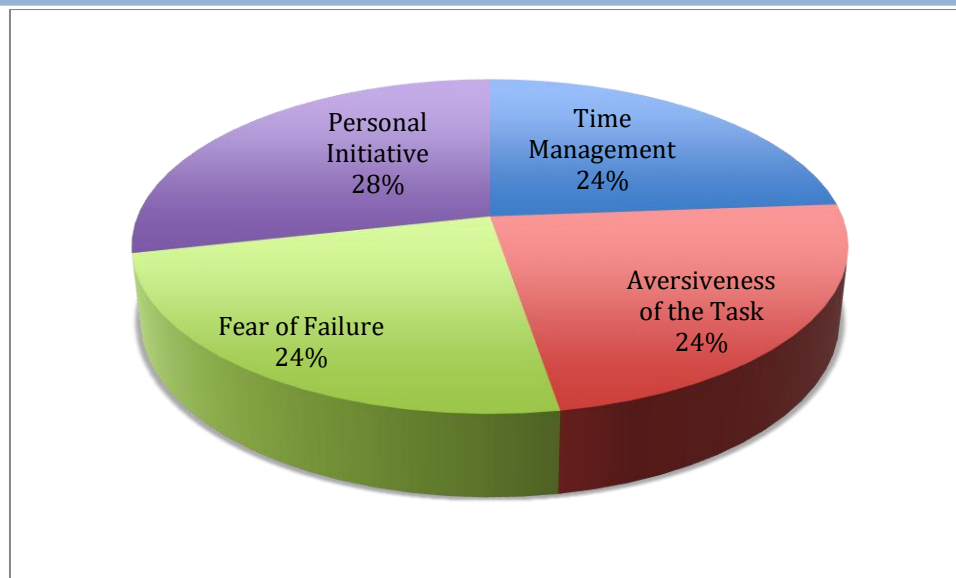
The descriptive analysis of students' reasons for academic procrastination based on the figure 4 revealed varying levels of influence across the four identified factors. Among these, Personal Initiative emerged as the most prominent reason (M = 3.49, SD = 0.77), accounting for 28% of the total responses in the pie chart. This suggests that many students experience challenges related to self-motivation and taking proactive steps in managing academic tasks.

In contrast, Time Management Difficulties (M = 2.92, SD = 0.92), Aversiveness of the Task (M = 2.89, SD = 0.81), and Fear of failure (M = 2.96, SD = 0.89) each contributed around 24% to the overall reasons for procrastination. These findings indicate that poor time management skills, negative perceptions of certain academic tasks, and fluctuating fear of failure or commitment also play significant roles in shaping students' procrastination behaviors.

Overall, the results emphasize that while external factors such as task difficulty and time constraints are important, intrinsic factors such as personal initiative and self-drive appear to be key contributors to why students delay academic work. Targeted interventions aimed at enhancing students' personal initiative and self-regulation could therefore be effective strategies for reducing academic procrastination.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that academic procrastination is highly prevalent among English Master's students at Universitas Riau, with 67% categorized as moderate procrastinators and 33% as high procrastinators. This indicates that no participant demonstrated low procrastination tendencies, suggesting a widespread behavioral pattern across the cohort. This is the first empirical evidence focusing specifically on postgraduate EFL learners in the Indonesian context, thereby filling a gap in the literature that has predominantly examined undergraduate populations.

In alignment with existing literature, the results underscore that procrastination is a pervasive and persistent behavior in graduate education, particularly in EFL settings where linguistic and cognitive demands are heightened. These findings support previous studies (Bekleyen, 2017; Yusuf, 2022; Solomon & Rothblum, 1984), which similarly documented high levels of procrastination among students performing linguistically demanding tasks. However, this

study extends prior work by showing that even at the Master's level, where self-regulated learning is expected to be higher, procrastination remains a critical issue.

Steel's (2007) Temporal Motivation Theory provides a robust framework to interpret these results. According to this theory, procrastination occurs when task aversiveness outweighs perceived reward. Consistent with Steel's argument, this study found that writing tasks were the most procrastinated activity (M = 3.33). In the EFL context, such writing requires sustained effort, higher-order thinking, and advanced linguistic processing, all of which increase perceived difficulty. Thus, the present findings support and empirically strengthen Steel's theoretical proposition within a non-Western postgraduate EFL environment.

Similarly, the results align with Ackerman and Gross (2005) who demonstrated that perceived task difficulty predicts procrastination levels. This study supports their claim and provides additional nuance by showing that linguistic challenges inherent in English academic writing amplify such difficulty. In contrast to some studies that emphasize time management as the dominant cause (e.g., Rozental et al., 2022), this research found personal initiative to be the leading factor, highlighting motivational and volitional deficits rather than purely organizational issues.

The prominence of writing as the most procrastinated academic area also reflects challenges explained by Zimmerman's (2008) Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) theory. According to Zimmerman (2008), students with strong SRL skills manage complex tasks through goal setting, planning, and self-monitoring. The current study supports and extends this theory by showing that SRL deficits are particularly evident among EFL graduate learners who must self-regulate across both cognitive and linguistic domains. This dual-layer difficulty (academic + linguistic) represents a unique contribution to SRL research, as most previous SRL studies have focused on monolingual or undergraduate contexts.

The reasons for procrastination identified personal initiative (M = 3.49), fear of failure, and time management, further reinforce the role of self-regulation and emotional engagement. This finding supports Steel's (2007) multifactorial model that emphasizes volitional control and emotional factors as primary contributors. However, it also introduces a culturally contextualized dimension: in collectivist learning cultures such as Indonesia's, students' reluctance to act autonomously or assert initiative may exacerbate procrastination. This socio-cultural insight represents a novel contribution of the study, suggesting that motivational frameworks like Steel's require contextual adaptation for EFL postgraduate environments.

Moreover, the role of language-related challenges such as anxiety, low confidence, and difficulty in academic reading and writing, emerges as an important mediating factor. Nearly half of participants reported such issues, confirming earlier findings (Wirajaya, 2020) but also extending them by providing quantitative evidence on their direct link with procrastination levels. These data suggest that language proficiency is not merely a background variable but a central determinant of academic self-regulation.

Taken together, these findings suggest that academic procrastination among EFL graduate students results from a complex interaction of cognitive, motivational, linguistic, and emotional factors. The study supports existing theories (Steel, 2007; Zimmerman, 2008) while extending their applicability to postgraduate EFL learners, emphasizing how second-language demands intensify self-regulation difficulties.

In terms of significance, this study provides empirical evidence of high procrastination levels among EFL postgraduate students in Indonesia which population rarely examined in existing literature. It extends the application of both Temporal Motivation Theory and Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) theory to a new linguistic and cultural context, thereby broadening their theoretical scope. Furthermore, the study identifies personal initiative and linguistic anxiety as novel predictors of procrastination in advanced academic settings, highlighting the complex interplay between motivation, emotion, and self-regulation. Finally, it offers practical implications for graduate program design, emphasizing the importance of SRL training, academic writing support, and motivational counseling to mitigate procrastination and enhance student performance.

CONCLUSIONS

This study aimed to identify the level, specific academic areas, and underlying reasons for academic procrastination among English Langage Education Master's students at Universitas Riau. These objectives were designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of how procrastination manifests in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) postgraduate context and what factors most strongly influence it.

The results showed that procrastination is highly prevalent among the participants, with 67% categorized as moderate procrastinators and 33% as high procrastinators. Writing tasks, particularly thesis writing and academic papers, were found to be the most procrastinated academic areas, followed by exam preparation and reading assignments. Personal initiative deficits emerged as the most dominant reason for procrastination, followed by fear of failure and time management difficulties. Students also reported language-related challenges, including writing anxiety, limited vocabulary, and lack of confidence in English proficiency, as significant contributors to their procrastination. These findings align with Temporal Motivation Theory (Steel, 2007) and Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) theory (Zimmerman, 2000), suggesting that procrastination is a product of motivational, emotional, and self-regulatory deficits.

The implications of these findings are both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, the study extends existing models of procrastination by integrating EFL specific factors such as language anxiety and linguistic self-efficacy into the explanation of academic procrastination. Practically, the results highlight the need for universities to implement structured academic writing support, SRL-based training, and counseling programs to help students develop better time management, goal-setting and emotional regulation skills. Supervisors are also encouraged to provide constructive feedback and create supportive academic environments that reduce perfectionism and fear of failure.

However, this study has several limitations. First, it relied on self-reported questionnaire data, which may be subject to bias or over/underestimation of actual procrastination behavior. Second, the sample was limited to one institution (Universitas Riau), restricting the generalizability of the findings to other contexts. Third, the study was cross-sectional, meaning it captured procrastination at a single point in time rather than tracking changes across the students' academic journey.

Future research should address these limitations by conducting longitudinal and mixed-method studies that combine surveys with interviews or behavioral tracking. Expanding the sample to include multiple universities or regions would allow for more comprehensive comparisons.

Moreover, intervention-based studies are needed to evaluate which strategies such as SRL training, language support, or mentoring are most effective in reducing procrastination among EFL graduate students.

Acknowledgment

Authorship Contribution Statement:

Annisaq conducted the conceptualization, designed the research methodology, collected and analyzed the data, and prepared the initial draft of the manuscript. Prof. Fadly Azhar provided academic supervision throughout the research process, contributed to the refinement of the research design, and offered critical feedback on the manuscript. Dr. Supriusman contributed to the supervision of the study, provided analytical input, and assisted in the review and final editing of the manuscript.

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