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EFL university lecturers' schema about research engagement: What are their knowledge, belief, and attitude?

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Abstract

About the background, research engagement is an essential component of higher education, contributing to lecturers' professional development, institutional growth, and pedagogical improvements. However, EFL university lecturers in Vietnam face various challenges that influence their engagement in research activities. This study explores their schema about research engagement, specifically their knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes, to understand the factors shaping their participation. Regarding methods, a convergent mixed-methods approach was employed, collecting data from 97 EFL lecturers at five public universities in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam, through a structured questionnaire and open-ended responses. Concerning the results, quantitative findings indicate a strong awareness of research engagement, with significant positive correlations between knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes. Lecturers highly value research for career advancement and instructional improvement but encounter barriers such as heavy workloads, limited research training, and inadequate institutional support. Qualitative findings further highlight institutional constraints, financial limitations, and time pressures as major hindrances. In conclusion, while some lecturers are intrinsically motivated, external demands and rigid research policies further affect their engagement. The study presents the need for institutional reforms, targeted professional development, and enhanced research support systems to foster a sustainable research culture.

Keywords: Belief, Attitude, EFL Lecturers, Factor, Research engagement, Schema, Knowledge.

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1. Introduction

Research engagement has long been recognized as a cornerstone of professional development within educational contexts, contributing to the growth of individual lecturers, their institutions, and the wider academic community. The National Center for Education Research (NCER) [1] emphasizes that research engagement fosters more informed and effective teaching practices, enhances student learning outcomes, and strengthens the foundation for educational improvement. This aligns with the previous assertion that participation in research is widely considered a crucial aspect of professional advancement, serving as a mechanism for refining instructional practices and cultivating professional growth [2].

Acknowledging these benefits, research engagement has become an integral component of faculty roles in higher education institutions worldwide, including Vietnam. This is formally recognized by Vietnam's Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) through Circular No. 20/2020/TT-BGDĐT, which mandates that faculty members dedicate a significant portion of their annual workload to research activities [3]. This policy underscores the government's commitment to promoting a research culture within higher education. However, despite these policy directives, existing literature reveals a disparity between policy expectations and actual research practices among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) university lecturers, who often exhibit low motivation for research-related endeavors [4]. This discrepancy highlights the complex interplay of factors influencing research engagement and underscores the need for in-depth empirical investigation into the cognitive and affective factors that influence research engagement among EFL university lecturers in Vietnam. Specifically, understanding lecturers' schema about research engagement, including knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes, is crucial for developing effective strategies to promote research participation.

This study investigates the extent to which EFL lecturers at public universities in the Mekong Delta are cognizant of their research engagement. Specifically, this study explores EFL lecturers' understanding of research engagement, their beliefs about their self-efficacy in research-related activities, and their attitudes towards research engagement in relation to their capacity and professional development in research engagement and research activities. By examining these three constructs of EFL university lecturers' schema, this study aims to provide valuable insights for stakeholders to modify their actions and behaviors to motivate and support EFL university lecturers' research engagement. This is particularly important in the Vietnamese context, where research output is a key performance indicator for academics. To achieve this objective, the current study addresses the following research questions:

1. What is the current state of EFL university lecturers' schema about research engagement?
2. What factors influence EFL university lecturers' schema about research engagement?

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Manifestation of Teachers' Schema about Research Engagement

In academic settings, teachers' schemas significantly influence how they perceive, approach, and engage in research activities [5]. Schema refers to the mental processes involved in acquiring, processing, storing, and planning knowledge [6].It encompasses various components, including knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, and self-efficacy, all of which shape behavior [7]. As knowledge represents the accumulation of information through education and experience, EFL university lecturers' knowledge extends beyond language teaching expertise to include research methodologies, academic writing conventions, and awareness of disciplinary trends [8]. As a result, the extent of their knowledge influences their confidence and willingness to engage in research. Similarly, beliefs play a critical role in research engagement, as they shape individuals' perceptions of their capabilities and the value of research [9]. For lecturers, when they believe that research is essential for professional growth and meaningful contributions to their field, they are more likely to invest time and effort in scholarly activities. Closely related to belief is self-efficacy, which refers to an individual's belief in their ability to successfully conduct research. According to Bandura [10] Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), self-efficacy influences persistence and resilience in the face of challenges. Lecturers with high research self-efficacy are more likely to engage in research despite obstacles, whereas those with low self-efficacy may experience anxiety, avoidance, or self-doubt regarding their research capabilities. Finally, attitudes toward research further determine lecturers' levels of engagement, as those with positive feelings view research as an intellectually stimulating, rewarding endeavor and a chance to expand their network in academia [11]. These cognitive components are interconnected and collectively influence lecturers' engagement in research.

According to Wong, et al. [12], research engagement encompasses a wide range of scholarly activities that contribute to the advancement of knowledge and its practical application. It involves reading and critically reviewing research literature, identifying research gaps, and initiating studies with appropriate methodologies. Conducting research, writing for peer-reviewed publications, and presenting findings at academic conferences are integral aspects of scholarly work. Research engagement also extends to building professional networks, collaborating with researchers across institutions, and serving as a reviewer for conferences, proceedings, and journals. Additionally, it includes contributing to dissertation defense committees, participating in university scientific and training committees, and investigating the impact of educational policies and practices. Beyond research production, it involves applying findings to real-world settings, such as teaching and curriculum development, designing educational programs, and compiling coursebooks for university curricula. Securing research grants, mentoring students and junior researchers, and disseminating knowledge through scholarly publications further enrich research engagement. While research is highly rewarding and essential for professional growth, aspects such as formulating research questions, publishing findings, and securing funding can be challenging. Nonetheless, the process of generating and applying research-based knowledge, fostering collaborations, and guiding future researchers makes research engagement a valuable and motivating endeavor. This study collectively adapted these components into the conceptual framework for defining what 'research engagement' is from EFL lecturers' perspectives.

To evaluate and leverage EFL lecturers' research engagement, besides the intrinsic motivation mentioned above, it is necessary to uncover the external factors that shape their schema towards participating in academic activities. Institutional factors also exert a significant influence on research engagement. The extent to which universities provide research support, such as funding, research training, and access to academic resources, determines lecturers' ability to conduct research effectively [13]. According to Truong, et al. [13], institutional policies related to research expectations, tenure, and workload allocation further shape engagement levels. In many cases, heavy teaching loads and administrative duties limit the time available for research, making it essential for universities to implement policies that allow lecturers to balance these responsibilities. In terms of social factors, the presence of a supportive academic community, including mentorship programs and collaborative research networks, could enhance research participation [14]. It is inferred that research-friendly collegiate environments would facilitate knowledge exchange, motivation, and the development of research competencies, particularly for early-career researchers. Regarding logistic factors, London, et al. [15] found that excessive teaching and administrative responsibilities leave little room for scholarly activities. Without sufficient time and institutional recognition, research may become a secondary priority for lecturers. Accessibility to research resources remains a critical challenge, particularly in developing contexts where financial constraints limit participation in research projects and international conferences [16]. Moreover, language barriers present additional challenges for non-native English-speaking lecturers, who may struggle with academic writing and the demands of high-impact journal publications [17]. Without adequate language support and academic writing training, both schema and practices towards research engagement can be noticeably hindered.

2.2. Empirical Studies on EFL teacher's Research Engagement

In the Chinese context, a study by Gao, et al. [18] examining EFL teachers' conceptions of research found that Chinese teachers predominantly associate research with experimental designs and statistical analyses, reflecting a preference for structured, quantitative research paradigms. This perception aligns with a more traditional, positivist view of research that emphasizes rigor and objectivity. In the Indonesian context, findings from a mixed-methods study by Wulyani, et al. [19] indicated that both teachers and academic staff conceptualize research as encompassing a broad spectrum of activities, including evidence-based practice, surveys, literature-based inquiries, professional communication, and observation-driven popular articles. This broader understanding suggests a more inclusive view of research that integrates both theoretical and practical dimensions. Similarly, a survey of English Language Teaching (ELT) practitioners in Iran highlighted that, from teachers' perspectives, high-quality research is characterized by clearly defined research questions, a substantial sample size, and rigorous data analysis. Iranian teachers also demonstrated a preference for studies that directly address pedagogical concerns and have practical implications [20]. A mixed-methods study conducted in Argentina examined EFL teachers' conceptions of research. The study revealed that teachers predominantly conceptualized research within a conventional quantitative framework and perceived it as peripheral to their professional responsibilities [21]. Similar trends have been observed in Turkey and Canada, where EFL teachers' perceptions of research align closely with the scientific research paradigm. Teachers in these contexts advocate for educational research that adheres to standardized frameworks and provides actionable outcomes [22, 23]. At a global level, Borg [24] conducted a comprehensive study involving 505 English teachers across 13 countries, revealing that most teachers' conceptualizations of research align with traditional scientific paradigms of inquiry. This alignment suggests a widespread adherence to conventional notions of research among language teachers worldwide. Their research engagement was largely driven by institutional requirements or considerations of promotion, rather than their own need for professional development [25].

In Vietnam, Pham [26] reported that most university lecturers primarily conceptualize research as an inquiry into classroom practices aimed at enhancing teaching and learning, or a pragmatic approach to research, with a focus on direct applications to pedagogy. To clarify the complex interplay between institutional expectations, personal motivations, and professional identity, Vu [27] explored research engagement within the broader academic landscape. The study identified three key perspectives among faculty members: some view research as an irrelevant imposition, shaped by external pressures and institutional requirements; others see it as a desirable but unfeasible goal due to constraints such as time, resources, and research expertise; while a third group perceives research as an intrinsic professional drive, aligning with their inner calling as educators and scholars. These findings were further echoed in recent studies that increasing research engagement requires not only practical support, such as funding, training, and reduced teaching loads, but also a fundamental reconceptualization of research itself [28, 29]. Despite ongoing challenges, recent policy shifts and logistical supplies encouraging research-driven higher education may gradually reshape and push how Vietnamese university lecturers engage with research in their teaching and collaborative professional development [30, 31]. A clearer understanding of the teaching-research nexus in ELT could have significant implications for how the profession is perceived, influencing faculty autonomy, professional identity, and the overall academic culture in Vietnam.

To sum up, the existing literature reveals a narrow and often rigid conceptualization of research among language teachers, contributing to the persistent gap between research and practice. Teachers' limited understanding of what constitutes research often renders much of the educational research abstract, inaccessible, and ultimately unappealing to them, thereby impeding efforts to bridge the research-practice divide [32]. Addressing these limitations requires a broader reconceptualization of research engagement that accommodates diverse forms of inquiry and emphasizes practical relevance for teaching and learning. From the synthesis of existing literature and Bandura's SCT, in this current study, the "schema on research engagement" is redefined as a construct encompassing knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes, pivoted by influential personal and contextual factors (Figure 1).

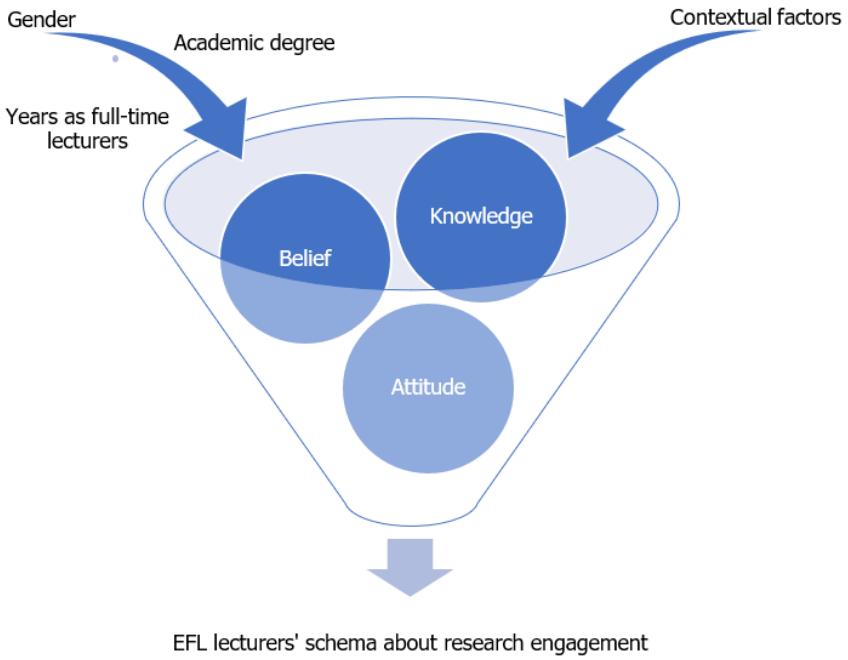

Figure 1.
Conceptual and theoretical framework of the study.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research Design and Participant Recruitment

This study employed a convergent mixed-methods research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches for simultaneous investigations of multiple aspects from the same group of participants [33]. By combining survey data with open-ended questions and answers (OQAs), the study aimed to capture both broad trends in schemas about research engagement and collective factors influencing lecturers' participation in research activities.

The study was conducted at five public universities in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam, all under the management of MoET and housing a Department of Foreign Languages. Critically, research engagement is one of the three obligatory missions that academic staff are required to fulfill annually, providing a relevant context for this investigation. The study utilized purposive sampling techniques to recruit participants who were full-time EFL lecturers at the five public universities and who hold at least an MA degree in English teacher education or a similar qualification. Specific criteria ensure that participants possess the necessary academic background, have the same missions in their careers, and are actively involved in teaching [34]. As a matter of fact, 97 EFL lecturers from five universities in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam, took part in the survey (as summarized in Table 1).

Table 1.
The demographic information on the research-participating lecturers.

Gender		**Academic degree**		**Years as full-time lecturers**		
Female	Male	Master's	Doctor	1-10 years	11-20 years	Over 20 years
63 (64.95%)	34 (35.05%)	83 (85.57%)	14 (14.43%)	36 (37.11%)	23 (23.71%)	38 (39.18%)

Table 2.
Summarization of the research questionnaire.

Section		**Objectives**	**No. of items**	**Response format**
1. Demographic background		Information about lecturers' genders, academic degrees, and years of experience.	03	Fill -in
2. Schema about research engagement (Adapted from Wong, et al. [12]	Cluster 1	Knowledge about research engagement.	15 (01-15)	5-point Likert scale (5 = Strongly Disagree → 1 = Strongly Agree
	Cluster 2	Beliefs about research engagement	15 (16-30)	
	Cluster 3	Attitudes toward research engagement.	15 (31-45)	
3. OQAs about factors affecting schema of research engagement		(3.1) facilitating or (3.2) hindering contextual factors affecting the schema of research engagement.	02	Fill-in

3.2. Research Instrument and Data Collection

A questionnaire comprising three sections and 50 items was used to measure the four constructs of schema regarding research engagement. The questionnaire was developed based on the literature review and refined through expert consultation and a pilot study (see Table 2). The questionnaire was administered electronically using both Google Forms and a paper-based form to collect as much data as possible. Participants received an invitation containing clear instructions and the purpose of the survey and were requested to provide responses.

3.3. Data Analysis

To analyze the quantitative data, this study employed the Software Package for Statistical Analysis in Social Science (SPSS) Version 26 to identify patterns and relationships between variables. The analysis was conducted in three main stages: data cleaning, descriptive statistics, and inferential statistics, ensuring the reliability and validity of the findings [35]. The first stage, data cleaning, involved converting raw data into numeric values and entering them into an SPSS data sheet. A thorough review was conducted to identify and address any errors or inconsistencies in data entry, such as missing values, outliers, or discrepancies in responses. In the second stage, descriptive statistics were calculated to summarize the key characteristics of the dataset. Measures such as mean, standard deviation, and frequency distributions were computed for all variables. The third stage, inferential statistics, involved multiple statistical techniques to examine relationships between variables and test the study's hypotheses. A Pearson correlation test, independent t-tests, and one-way ANOVA were conducted to assess the relationships between participants' demographic characteristics (gender, academic degrees, and years of experience) and the three keys of cognitive constructs, including knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes as dependent variables [36]. The internal consistency reliability of the questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, which resulted in a high reliability score of 0.985. This indicates a high level of internal consistency among the survey items, ensuring that the measurement scales were stable and reliable. Ultimately, the Oxford [37] rating scale was applied for interpreting the data [37].

To analyze the qualitative data from the OQAs, thematic analysis following the six-phase framework outlined by Braun and Clarke [38] was used. The first stage, familiarization, involved the researcher immersing themselves in the responses through repeated readings and note-taking. In the second stage, generating initial codes, key themes and patterns were identified. Relevant sections of the data were assigned initial codes, allowing for a structured organization of emerging insights. The third and fourth stages, searching for and reviewing themes, involved grouping related codes into overarching themes and refining them for coherence and alignment with the research questions. The fifth stage, defining and naming themes, required a precise articulation of each theme's meaning and significance. Themes were given clear, concise names that accurately reflected their conceptual essence, ensuring clarity in interpretation. Member checking involved seeking participant feedback on preliminary findings to enhance confirmability, while triangulation compared findings across multiple data sources to ensure consistency and dependability [39]. Finally, in the sixth stage, producing the thematic report, the report presented key themes, supported by illustrative quotes and examples from the fill-in data, demonstrating how participants' experiences shaped their engagement in research.

4. Results

4.1. EFL Lecturers' Schema about Research Engagement

4.1.1. Knowledge of Research Engagement

Cluster 1 examined EFL lecturers' knowledge of research engagement through the first 15 items of the questionnaire. The overall mean score for Cluster 1 was relatively high (MK=3.88, SD=1.08) (as shown in Table 3).

Table 3.
Descriptive statistics Cluster 1 – Knowledge of research engagement (N=97).

Item	Mean	SD
Cluster 1: Research engagement comprises...	3.96	1.089
1. Reading studies published in scholarly work.	4.14	1.164
2. Initiating research studies from research gaps.	3.71	1.136
3. Conducting research studies.	3.93	1.013
4. Scholarly writing and publication	3.87	.986
5. Being a presenter at a symposium.	3.85	.983
6. Building connections with other researchers.	4.13	1.057
7. Applying research findings in the classroom.	3.93	1.120
8. Developing curriculum materials based on research evidence.	3.85	1.024
9. Developing educational programs.	4.00	1.080
10. Compiling course books for university curricula.	3.80	1.151
11. Being a reviewer for conferences, proceedings, or journals.	3.77	1.113
12. Being a member of dissertation defense committees.	4.08	1.124
13. Collaborating with other institutions to conduct research.	3.64	1.129
14. Investigating the impact of educational policies and practices.	3.51	1.081
15. Being a university's scientific and training committee member.	3.96	1.089

The mean scores for the 15 items exploring EFL lecturers' knowledge about research engagement ranged from 3.51 (item 14) to 4.14 (item 1). Specifically, items 1, 6, and 12 scored very high (M1=4.14; M6=4.13; M12=4.08). Item 1 highlights that reading scholarly literature is a central aspect of research engagement. Item 6 reflects the significance of building professional connections in enhancing engagement. Item 12 emphasizes the role of participation in dissertation defense committees in fostering meaningful participation. The remaining items scored within the moderate-to-high range, from 3.51 to 4.00. Item 2 demonstrates the identification of research gaps and initiating studies, suggesting its recognized importance. Item 3 suggests conducting research studies as a key component. High scores on items 4, 5, and 7 reflect strong agreement on the relevance of scholarly writing and publication (item 4), presenting research at symposiums (item 5), and applying research findings in the classroom (item 7) (M4=3.87; M5=3.85; M7=3.93). Item 8 highlights the role of developing curriculum materials based on research evidence in shaping research engagement, while item 9 mentions the necessity of designing educational programs. High scores on items 10 and 11 showed strong agreement on compiling coursebooks for university curricula (item 10) and reviewing for conferences, proceedings, or journals (item 11), indicating their perceived importance. Lower scores on items 13-15 suggest a relatively lower emphasis on collaborating with other institutions to conduct research (item 13), investigating the impact of educational policies and practices (item 14), and being a university's scientific and training committee member (item 15), though item 15 (M=3.96, SD=1.089) still indicates a considerable level of agreement.

4.2. Belief about Research Engagement

Cluster 2 examined EFL lecturers' beliefs about research engagement through the next 15 items of the questionnaire. The overall mean score for Cluster 2 was relatively high (MB=3.73, SD=0.961) (as shown in Table 4).

Table 4.
Descriptive statistics Cluster 2 – Belief about research engagement (N=97)

Item	Mean	SD
Cluster 2: I believe that…	3.96	.889
16. I can critically review research literature.	3.79	.958
17. I can identify research problems to design proper methodologies.	3.75	.935
18. I can effectively conduct a research study.	3.86	.947
19. I can produce peer-reviewed research publications.	3.82	.935
20. I can effectively present research findings at conferences.	4.00	1.030
21. I can collaborate effectively with researchers from different fields to build productive research networks	3.66	.995
22. I can effectively apply research findings to real-world settings (including teaching, learning, and other educational practices).	3.90	1.015
23. I can develop a curriculum based on research evidence.	3.62	1.023
24. I can create and publish educational resources, such as textbooks, teaching materials, and online resources.	3.64	.974
25. I can effectively evaluate proposals, manuscripts, and scholarly work.	3.73	.978
26. I can help students succeed in their research endeavors.	3.89	1.018
27. I can help junior researchers succeed in their research endeavors.	3.59	.865
28. I can successfully acquire research grants.	3.43	.889
29. I can collaborate cross-institutionally to conduct research projects.	3.56	.878
30. I can be a university's scientific and training committee member.	3.45	.889

The mean scores for the 15 items investigating EFL lecturers' beliefs about research engagement ranged from 3.43 (item 28) to 4.00 (item 20). Specifically, item 20 scored the highest (M20=4.00), highlighting that confidence in presenting research findings at conferences is a key aspect of self-belief in scholarly dissemination. Other relatively high scores were found in items 22 and 26 (M22=3.90; M26=3.89), suggesting strong agreement on the importance of applying research findings to real-world settings (item 22) and supporting students in their research endeavors (item 26). The remaining items scored from 3.43 to 3.86. Item 16 demonstrates confidence in critically reviewing research literature, indicating its recognized role. Item 18 suggests that the ability to effectively conduct a research study is a contributing factor. Scores on items 17, 19, and 25 (M17=3.75; M19=3.82; M25=3.73) reflect moderate agreement on identifying research problems and designing methodologies (item 17), producing peer-reviewed research publications (item 19), and evaluating research proposals and manuscripts (item 25). Items 21, 23, and 24 (M21=3.66; M23=3.62; M24=3.64) indicate a slightly lower emphasis on collaborating with researchers from different fields to build research networks (item 21), developing curriculum based on research evidence (item 23), and creating and publishing educational resources (item 24). Lower scores on items 27–30 suggest a relatively weaker agreement on mentoring junior researchers (item 27), acquiring research grants (item 28), collaborating with other institutions for research projects (item 29), and being a member of the university's scientific and training committee (item 30), with item 28 (M=3.43, SD=0.889) having the lowest mean score.

4.3. Attitude Towards Research Engagement

Cluster 3 examined EFL lecturers' attitudes towards research engagement through the next 15 items of the questionnaire. The overall mean score for Cluster 3 was relatively high (MA=3.91, SD=0.983) (as shown in Table 5).

Table 5.
Descriptive statistics Cluster 3 – Attitude towards research engagement (N=97)

Item	Mean	SD
Cluster 3: I feel that…	3.96	.889
31. Research engagement is valuable and rewarding for professional pursuit.	3.92	.975
32. Research is crucial for enhancing teaching and learning outcomes.	4.05	1.045
33. The creation and dissemination of research-based educational resources are a valuable contribution to the field.	4.07	.971
34. Active participation in the university's research community is essential for my professional growth.	4.06	.988
35. Interinstitutional research collaborations are significantly valuable for advancing knowledge.	3.95	.983
36. Critically reviewing research literature is professionally significant.	4.02	.968
37. Formulating research questions and designing appropriate methodologies are challenging.	3.80	1.077
38. Effectively communicating research findings through scholarly publications is challenging.	3.86	1.000
39. Seeking external funding sources to support my research endeavors is really challenging.	3.88	1.033
40. Being a member of dissertation defense committees is a professionally rewarding experience.	3.91	.980
41. Presenting my findings at academic conferences is interesting.	3.88	.949
42. Collaborating with other researchers to advance knowledge is professionally rewarding.	3.98	.901
43. Disseminating my research findings through scholarly publications is highly motivating.	3.78	1.033
44. Mentoring and guiding student research is a professionally rewarding experience.	3.95	.951
45. Developing and implementing research-informed curriculum materials is an engaging aspect of my teaching practice.	3.43	.912

The mean scores for the 15 items investigating EFL lecturers' feelings about research engagement ranged from 3.43 (item 43) to 4.00 (item 35). The highest-rated item (M33=4.07) underscores the strong perception that creating and disseminating research-based educational resources is a valuable contribution to the field. Similarly, items 32 (M=4.05), 34 (M=4.06), and 36 (M=4.02) indicate a strong consensus on the importance of research findings for enhancing teaching and learning (item 32), the necessity of active involvement in research communities for professional growth (item 34), and the professional significance of critically reviewing research literature (item 36). Meanwhile, items 31 (M=3.92), 35 (M=3.95), 40 (M=3.91), and 42 (M=3.98) reflect moderate to strong agreement on the rewarding nature of research engagement (item 31), the value of inter-institutional collaborations for knowledge advancement (item 35), the professional benefits of serving on dissertation defense committees (item 40), and the significance of collaborating with researchers (item 42). Some aspects of research were also perceived as challenging. Items 37 (M=3.80), 38 (M=3.86), and 39 (M=3.88) highlight difficulties in formulating research questions and designing methodologies (item 37), effectively communicating research findings through scholarly publications (item 38), and obtaining external funding for research (item 39). The lowest-scoring items, 43 (M=3.78), 44 (M=3.95), and 45 (M=3.43), suggest a relatively weaker sense of motivation for disseminating research findings (item 43), mentoring student researchers (item 44), and integrating research-informed materials into teaching (item 45), with item 45 receiving the lowest mean score.

The correlation analysis reveals significant positive relationships among MK (knowledge), MB (belief), and MA (attitude), indicating that these constructs are closely interrelated.

Table 6.
Correlation Matrix of Knowledge, Belief, and Attitude toward research engagement.

Variables	Pearson Correlation (r)	Sig. (2-tailed)	N
MK – MB (Knowledge & Belief)	0.833	0.000	97
MK – MA (Knowledge & Attitude)	0.803	0.000	97
MB – MA (Belief & Attitude)	0.761	0.000	97

The strongest correlation ($r = .833$, $p < .01$) suggests that a higher level of knowledge about research is strongly associated with stronger beliefs in research engagement. This implies that as lecturers develop more research knowledge, they are more likely to perceive research as valuable and essential. The correlation ($r = .803$, $p < .01$) indicates that greater research knowledge is also linked to a more positive attitude toward research. This suggests that lecturers who are more knowledgeable about research tend to find it more engaging and rewarding. The correlation ($r = .761$, $p < .01$) demonstrates that beliefs about research significantly influence attitudes. In other words, lecturers who hold strong beliefs in the value of research are more likely to express enthusiasm and motivation toward research engagement. Two independent t-tests and a one-way ANOVA were conducted to compare EFL lecturers' knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes regarding research engagement between

demographic groups. The results showed that varying genders, highest academic qualifications, and years of full-time lecturing do not impact their schemas about research engagement.

4.4. Facilitating Factors Affecting EFL Lecturers' Schema About Research Engagement

4.4.1. Career Advancement and Institutional Expectations

For many EFL lecturers, engaging in research is perceived as essential for professional growth and academic ranking. Research is often associated with career promotion and institutional re-schema. As one lecturer noted, "Research is a compulsory component of our annual performance evaluation. Without it, career progression is almost impossible" (L44). This institutional push encourages lecturers to engage in research despite other challenges.

4.5. Enhancing Teaching Quality

Many lecturers believe that research directly benefits their teaching practices by keeping them updated with modern methodologies. According to one participant, "My research on student engagement has helped me shift from a lecture-based approach to a more interactive one, like flipped classrooms" (L31). Another lecturer emphasized the importance of classroom-based research, stating, "Conducting research allows me to identify what works and what doesn't in my teaching" (L85).

4.6. Expansive Professional Growth

Some lecturers feel confident in their research skills, particularly in identifying research questions and conducting literature reviews. For example, "After completing my postgraduate studies, I became more comfortable with academic writing and journal selection" (L72). Additionally, participation in workshops and conferences is seen as beneficial: "Attending conferences exposes me to new ideas and helps me refine my research focus" (L12).

4.7. Institutional and Peer Support

Support from colleagues and institutions also plays a role in fostering research engagement. Collaboration within research communities provides motivation, as one lecturer stated, "Working with peers on research projects makes the process less daunting and more meaningful" (L6). Institutional support, such as funding and designated research time, can further encourage participation: "When the university funds our conference participation, it significantly boosts our motivation to conduct research" (L93).

4.8. Hindering Factors Affecting EFL Lecturers' Schema About Research Engagement

4.8.1. Heavy Workload and Time Constraints

One of the most cited barriers to research engagement is workload pressure. Many lecturers struggle to balance teaching, administrative duties, and research. "With all the teaching hours and grading responsibilities, finding time for research is a huge challenge" (L61). Another lecturer echoed this concern, saying, "Most of us are overwhelmed with classes and paperwork. Research feels like an additional burden rather than an opportunity" (L55).

4.9. Limited Access to International Resources

Access to academic resources remains a major obstacle. Some lecturers find it difficult to obtain recent journal articles and essential research tools. "Our university library has very limited access to international journals, making literature reviews difficult" (L28). Another lecturer mentioned, "I often rely on free online sources, but they do not always provide high-quality research materials" (L88).

4.10. Financial Constraints

Manu EFL lecturers express their concerns about insufficient financial support for research activities. As one participant pointed out, "Publishing in reputable journals often requires fees, and without institutional support, it's a financial strain" (L40). Others noted that conference travel expenses are often covered only partially, discouraging participation: "Attending international conferences is beneficial, but the cost is too high for many of us" (L56).

4.11. Overwhelming Mandatory Requirements

While some lecturers appreciate research as part of their academic role, others argue that making research compulsory reduces intrinsic motivation. "Not everyone is inclined toward research, yet we are all required to do it. It should be optional" (L59). Some feel that enforcing research obligations leads to superficial engagement rather than meaningful inquiry: "Many lecturers conduct research just to fulfill requirements, rather than out of genuine interest" (L67).

4.12. Limited Competencies of Research Data Analysis

Some lecturers feel underprepared for research due to a lack of training. "I struggle with data analysis because I never received formal training in it" (L32). Others highlight the need for continuous learning opportunities: "Workshops on qualitative and quantitative methods would be extremely helpful for early-career lecturers" (L48).

5. Discussion

EFL lecturers demonstrate a relatively strong awareness of research engagement activities, particularly in reading scholarly work, networking with fellow researchers, and serving on dissertation defense committees. This suggests that they perceive research as an integral part of professional development and academic discourse, which is in accordance with related

Vietnamese studies. Additionally, the ability to produce research and integrate findings into teaching practices is widely acknowledged. However, collaboration across institutions and engaging with policy-related investigations appear to be less familiar or less prioritized areas, potentially due to a lack of access, institutional constraints, or a perception that these activities fall outside their immediate professional responsibilities. From a SCT perspective, learning and development are fundamentally mediated by social interaction, with knowledge being co-constructed through engagement in a community of practice. Collaboration is central to this process, as individuals do not develop expertise in isolation but through participation in shared activities, guided by more knowledgeable peers, and shaped by the cultural and institutional contexts in which they operate. This principle can be translated into the context of EFL lecturers' research engagement by recognizing that their interactions, whether through reading academic work, networking, or contributing to dissertation defenses, are all meaningful forms of participation in the research community. Even if they do not engage in direct co-authorship or large-scale studies, their involvement in discussions, critical reflections, and the application of research findings in teaching contributes to the collective advancement of knowledge. Understanding research engagement in this broader sense reinforces the idea that collaboration is not limited to writing and publishing but is embedded in the ongoing intellectual exchanges that sustain academic inquiry.

In terms of self-efficacy, EFL lecturers exhibit confidence in presenting research findings at conferences and applying research in practice. This reflects their ability to translate theoretical knowledge into actionable teaching strategies and share insights with the academic community. There is also notable confidence in supporting students with research, reinforcing the notion that research is not only a personal endeavor but also a responsibility in fostering the next generation of scholars. However, there is comparatively lower confidence in collaborating with researchers beyond their immediate circles, developing curriculum based on research, and securing research grants. These areas likely require greater institutional resources and mentorship, which may not be consistently available. Research engagement is not a linear process but a recursive cycle in which skills must be continuously developed, particularly in the post-research stage [40]. Writing for publication, securing funding, and influencing curriculum design all demand sustained participation in scholarly networks and structured mentorship, which can scaffold lecturers' self-efficacy in these areas. The SCT principle of the transformation from external support into self-belief suggests that if institutional structures encourage collaborative research and provide access to professional development, lecturers are more likely to internalize these competencies and engage more confidently in research beyond individual efforts. This suggests the need for systemic academic interventions to bridge gaps in post-research engagement and reinforce the notion that research is an ongoing, socially mediated practice rather than a solitary or isolated endeavor.

Attitudes toward research engagement are predominantly positive, with strong agreement on the value of creating and disseminating research-based educational resources. Lecturers recognize research as a crucial tool for enhancing teaching quality and as a means of professional growth. Nonetheless, there are concerns regarding the complexities of formulating research questions, designing methodologies, and publishing in scholarly outlets. The perceived difficulty of securing external funding further underscores the structural barriers that may impede full engagement with research activities. While enthusiasm for research remains high, these practical constraints suggest the need for targeted interventions to facilitate greater involvement. However, a notable conflict emerges regarding how research engagement should be structured. Some lecturers advocate for mandatory research requirements, believing that such expectations would push them to engage with research, familiarize themselves with its demands, and ultimately develop expertise through a "fake it until you make it" approach. Others, however, argue that research should remain an optional, voluntary pursuit, as enforced requirements may lead to superficial compliance rather than genuine academic inquiry. Viewed through the lens of SCT, this dichotomy reflects how research engagement could be shaped by environmental factors, particularly Vietnam's collectivist culture, where institutional expectations and community culture primarily influence professional behaviors. In such an environment, mandatory research policies may create a sense of shared responsibility and collective progress, but they could also add pressure and diminish intrinsic motivation. Conversely, a voluntary approach aligns with individual agency and self-directed professional growth, but it risks uneven participation. This suggests that institutions should clearly articulate their policies and create flexible mechanisms for research engagement, allowing lecturers to select and apply approaches that best align with their professional identities and career trajectories while still fostering a supportive research culture.

6. Conclusion

Research engagement among EFL lecturers is a complex phenomenon shaped by their knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes. These aspects determine how lecturers interact with research, from reading and conducting studies to applying findings in teaching and disseminating knowledge within academic communities. The findings of this study suggest a generally positive orientation toward research engagement, though certain challenges remain, particularly in areas requiring collaboration, methodological expertise, and institutional facilitators. Overall, this study presents an adapted model for redefining the schema on research engagement, illustrating how lecturers' conceptualizations of research evolve within their professional and institutional contexts. Rather than viewing research engagement as a linear or isolated process, the findings highlight its recursive and dynamic nature, wherein self-efficacy, institutional structures, and sociocultural influences continuously shape lecturers' roles as both knowledge consumers and producers. By mapping their engagement across different stages, from initial exposure to scholarly work to research dissemination, this model provides a more nuanced understanding of how EFL lecturers navigate research within their professional identities and institutional demands.

Despite these contributions, several limitations must be acknowledged. The study relies primarily on self-reported data, which may introduce biases related to social desirability or personal perceptions rather than objective engagement levels. Future research should incorporate document analysis, such as research output records, course syllabi, and institutional

policies, to triangulate findings and offer a more comprehensive picture of lecturers' engagement with research. Additionally, expanding the sample size across diverse institutional settings and geographical regions would enhance external validity, ensuring that findings are more generalizable beyond the immediate study context and accentuating the applicability of the study model. In this study, the independent t-test and ANOVA did not yield substantial findings, likely due to the limited sample size, which may have constrained the statistical power needed to detect meaningful differences. Comparative studies between institutions with differing research expectations, resource availability, and academic cultures could further illuminate how contextual factors shape lecturers' research engagement. By addressing these limitations, future studies can contribute to a more holistic and empirically grounded understanding of research engagement among EFL university lecturers.

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