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ENGLISH-MAJORED STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS AND CHALLENGES OF CONDUCTING UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH

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Abstract. This study aims to investigate the perceptions of English-majored students engaging in undergraduate research at a university in Vietnam. It also explores the challenges that these students face in conducting research at this level. A questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data for the study from 136 students specializing in English Language Studies and English Language Teaching at a Faculty of English. The results show that these students were aware of the importance of conducting research in their professional training and development and showed considerable support for the inclusion of Research Methodology course in their curriculum. However, the findings revealed that they still faced some major challenges when conducting research. The most commonly reported challenges included choosing an interesting research topic, developing a theoretical framework relevant to the research objectives, and identifying research gaps following a review of prior studies.

Keywords: English-majored students, undergraduate research, perceptions of conducting research, challenges of conducting research

I. Introduction

It is inevitable that research has a prominent role to play in human and social development and contributes significantly to the advancement of our lives. Zarah [23] pointed out some reasons why research is important. Firstly, research is a means to increase knowledge and to assist in the progress of learning. It also helps ones to understand issues and increase public awareness and to achieve success in business and career. In addition, he noted that conducting research would allow us to disprove falsehood and accept truths. Acknowledging the significance of research in the development of humans and society, a considerable number of countries have long formulated national educational research policies. As reported by a world survey conducted by Debeauvais [5], most investigated countries introduced measures to enhance the growth of the research areas that are considered to likely improve education policy-making and educational practice. In education contexts, research is no longer a subject of

matter only for educators or teachers, but also a business for students themselves, especially those at higher education levels. In 2005, the Council of Undergraduate Research and the National Conference on Undergraduate Research issued a joint statement acknowledging undergraduate research as "the pedagogy for the 21st century where an inquiry-based model is nurtured within a collaborative enterprise between mentee and mentor" [21, p.5]. Abun, Magallanes, Lalaine Foronda, and Joy Incarnacion [1] highlighted that the vital role of education is to instruct students hon ow to conduct research; therefore, as soon as students set foot in a university, or college, they should be taught how to do research. As a consequence, Research Methodology, which is officially introduced as a compulsory course to students, is considered a crucial element of the undergraduate curriculum throughout the world [10].

Vietnam has recently kept up with the worldwide trend by introducing research to students at the higher education level through national education policy-making. Conducting scientific and technological research become one of the primary responsibilities of undergraduate students. This is prescribed in Paragraph 1-Article 39: Objectives of Higher Education – Law on Education of Vietnam, which says "training a workforce of high qualifications, improving the people's knowledge, fostering talents; conducting scientific and technological research to invent new knowledge and products, meeting the requirements of socio-economic development, ensuring national defense and security, and international integration" [14, p.15]. Universities, colleges, and institutions all over the country have made great efforts to extensively involve and promote students in conducting research in their domains. Notably, the number of Vietnamese students who engage in and do research has increased over the past few years. It is noteworthy to mention that students at the investigated university have been encouraged to conduct undergraduate research in recent years. However, only a tiny minority of EFL students have carried out research in their disciplines, such as English Language Teaching and English Language Study. As reported by the Faculty of English at the university, there were a total of 2718 English-majored students in the 2020-2021 academic years when this study was conducted. Nevertheless, there were only 23 graduation research projects and 06 university-level research projects in science and technology were conducted by English-majored undergraduate students in the 2019-2020 academic year, whereas the number of student research projects conducted in the 2020-2021 academic year dropped by 16 and 05, respectively. The small number of research projects conducted by undergraduate students may partly reflect the reality that doing undergraduate research might not be popular among students. This might be due to the lack of students' awareness of the research movement in the university. More importantly, for students who conducted research, little is known about either what students think of that research experience or what challenges they face when doing research. Although there is an investigation carried out by Phan Canh My Duy [19] concerning

students' problems of doing research at the university, this study focuses only on those in the preparatory stage of the research process. As students are seen as primary agents for doing undergraduate research, there is an urgent need to investigate the implementation of undergraduate research from students' perspectives to explore how students perceive the importance of conducting undergraduate research and to find out the challenges that they might face when doing research. With the aim to fill in the research gaps in this matter, this study was conducted to investigate students' perceptions and challenges of conducting research in an EFL context through two research questions as follows:

- What are English-majored students' perceptions of the importance of conducting undergraduate research?
- What are the challenges that these students face when conducting undergraduate research?

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Research definitions

Research is a term that has been defined in a variety of ways; however, they all share certain similarities. McMillan and Schumacher defined research as "a systematic process of collecting and logically analyzing information (data) for some purposes" [16, p.8]. One might consider this definition general, but they contended that there are several methods for examining an issue or a question, and the ways one collects and analyzes data are called research methods. A similar yet more detailed definition of research is given by Creswell who stated that "research is a process of steps used to collect and analyze information to increase our understanding of a topic or issue" [4, p.3]. These steps are posing a question, collecting data to answer the question, and presenting an answer to the question. Similarly, according to Swindoll [20], research could be referred to as the process of gathering necessary and relevant information, then scrutinizing the collected data to gain a thorough understanding of the problems and find solutions to those under study. When researchers conduct a study, they follow a certain procedure which consists of six steps. Firstly, researchers identify a research problem and then review the literature to specify a purpose for research. After that, they collect data, analyze and interpret the data. Finally, they report and evaluate the research [4], [16].

2.2. Undergraduate research

The term undergraduate research and its incorporation into the curriculum evolved from US practice, most notably the innovative work of Margaret MacVicar that founded the groundbreaking Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program in 1969 while serving as dean of undergraduate education at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology [9]. This program, which assisted selected students in conducting research on student-initiated and faculty-supported projects, became a "cross-institutional initiative". As a result of this initiative, an increasing number of national systems and institutions throughout the world have embraced the term "undergraduate research" and tailored its curriculum to their own academic cultures and financing systems [9]. Healey & Jenkins [8] argued that one of the finest definitions of undergraduate research was offered by the University of Gloucestershire as it inclusively, explicitly links research and inquiry and knowledge exchange. Childs, Healey, Lynch, McEwen, Mason O'Connor, Roberts, and Short described undergraduate research and inquiry as "student engagement from induction to graduation, individually and in groups, in research and inquiry into disciplinary, professional and community-based problems and issues, including involvement in knowledge exchange activities" [8, p.28]. For Healey and Jenkins [9], while acknowledging that undergraduate research may be experienced in a variety of ways, they contended that there are four primary methods to engage undergraduates in research and inquiry, including research-led (learning about current research in a discipline), research-oriented (developing research skills and techniques), research-based (undertaking research and inquiry), and research-tutored (engaging in research discussion). All four proposed ways of engaging students in research are viable and worthwhile; therefore, they believe that curricula should incorporate components of each.

Numerous universities and institutions now provide research methods courses to help students understand different research approaches and develop academic research skills. More importantly, undergraduate students are also given opportunities to conduct research across all fields. Undergraduate research, according to Kuh [12], is one of 10 high-impact educational methods. Walkington [21] suggested that a pedagogy that could be adopted to develop these practices is "Students as Researchers" (SAR). According to Fielding and Bragg [7], SAR emerges from three different kinds of young people's involvement in research. The first tradition is that in their formal education courses, students employ active learning methods in which they examine class or coursework topics through research approaches such as interviews, questionnaires, and examining documentary evidence. Secondly, young students are increasingly involved in adult-led research where they help to plan questions, collect, analyze or report evidence and publicize findings. Thirdly, there is a growing willingness to support and encourage research directed by young people themselves with the assistance of

experienced adults. By engaging students in research through one of these approaches, the "partnerships" in which students work in conjunction with teachers to "mobilize" their grasp of understanding at school would be promoted [7]. According to Walkington [21], SAR in the higher education context is regarded as a "pedagogic approach" rather than a term for students themselves. This approach helps students further their involvement in undergraduate research within and/or beyond the formal curriculum to first broaden their knowledge and comprehension, and then contribute to the broader knowledge base of their discipline. "Students as Researchers" is a term used within schools [7]; [17], as well as in undergraduate education to describe a pedagogy of participation [13] potentially with the opportunity to ease transitions from one situation to the other where it is adopted.

2.4. Previous studies

This section reviews relevant studies related to students' perceptions of conducting research. On the evidence of numerous studies' results, participating in research projects would considerably benefit undergraduate students in many aspects. Kuh [11] noted that students involved in their learning process were more capable of having richer, evocative, educational experiences. The more students who are willing to fully commit to educational activities, the more they will feel purpose-driven and motivated in the learning process and the more they will take responsibility for their learning. Therefore, students' engagement in meaningful and practical research not only familiarizes themselves with scientific concepts and techniques but may also have substantial impacts on students' educational and career paths. Alghamdi, Moussa, Alessa, Alothimeen and Al-Saud [2] did research regarding senior medical students' perceptions, attitudes, and practices toward research at a Saudi Arabian university. This quantitative research involved 172 fourth and fifth-year medical majors in a questionnaire survey. The obtained results revealed that the majority of students considered research crucial in the medical sector. Not to be overlooked was the finding that 67.4% of the students believed that all medical students should be required to undertake research. It is important to mention that while the majority of students felt that research is essential in the medical field, only around half of the medical school students participate in research during their school time.

Conducting research is not a straightforward task for every student, as several studies point out the barriers and challenges that students as researchers encounter when doing research. Mapolisa and Mafa [15] examined the challenges that undergraduate students face in conducting research and revealed the main categories of challenges that influence how successful a student's research experience is. They were mentor-student challenges, for example, the engagement between the instructor and student or advisor's availability; student-related challenges such as students' motivation or commitment, and lack of knowledge; and

institution-related challenges, namely lack of research materials and workshops to help foster a student's computer literacy or research skills. In an attempt to broaden the knowledge of undergraduate research, Yeh [24] investigated Taiwanese students' perceptions of an EFL undergraduate research writing project. The results suggested that the students perceived the research project as beneficial for a variety of reasons, although they encountered difficulties during its implementation. The most common difficulties faced by the EFL students included selecting a topic, synthesizing data from a variety of sources to form coherent and coordinated writing, time and resource constraints, and paraphrasing without plagiarizing. In the Vietnamese EFL context, Phan Canh My Duy [19] shared the same interest in investigating the problems encountered by EFL students throughout the preparatory stage of doing research. She found four categories of problems reported by the students, including (1) problems of selecting topics, (2) difficulties in doing a literature review, (3) challenges in formulating research questions, and (4) lacking the research resources. Elmabruk and Bishti [6] conducted a study to explore the attitudes and perceived challenges of EFL students and staff at a Libyan EFL Department concerning doing a graduation research project. They found that more than half of the students showed a positive attitude toward their graduation research project, whereas the rest adopted a kind of ambivalent attitude. They also identified the causes of this uncertainty were due to both realistic difficulties, including a lack of resources, insufficient research skills, and supervisory issues; and unrealistic difficulties, namely time limits, fear of public speaking, and difficulties identifying research topics.

To sum up, the studies reviewed above yield a range of findings of students' perceptions of doing research, as well as the practices of undergraduate students performing research in a variety of contexts. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that although many studies focus on exploring the benefits and challenges of research, only Alghamdi et al. [2] reported on the importance of conducting research in the medical sector from students' perspectives. Thus, further study should be undertaken to address the lack of students' perceptions of the importance of conducting research. Moreover, in the Vietnamese context, few investigations into EFL students' research have been conducted. Phan Canh My Duy [19] demonstrated that Vietnamese EFL students confront certain difficulties during the preparatory stage of doing research. Nonetheless, the breadth of the study is somewhat limited in EFL contexts, since the researched issues are just in the preparatory stage of doing research. Thus, there is still a need for further research into the problems Vietnamese EFL students might confront in the whole process of doing undergraduate research.

3. Methods

This study aims to explore English-majored students' perceptions of the importance of conducting research and the challenges in doing undergraduate research. It is of descriptive design, employing a quantitative approach to data collection and analysis. The purpose of descriptive research is to describe what is discovered in data collected via questionnaires and statistical analysis. This study was undertaken at a university in Vietnam.

3.1. Participants

The participants for this study comprised 136 English-majored students who were studying at a university in Vietnam. The participants were selected from juniors and seniors majoring in English Language Studies or English Language Teaching. This study targeted these English-majored students as they were already familiarized with scientific research via a compulsory course called "Research Methodology" as a part of their curriculum in their second year; therefore, they might have a basic understanding of research. On top of that, during their time at university, they were likely to gain practical experience in undergraduate research in their chosen field, namely mini-research projects as class assignments, graduation research projects, or university-level research projects in science and technology. These participants were particularly suitable for obtaining reliable data concerning their perceptions and challenges of doing research for this study. The participants included 100 in their third year and 36 in their fourth year. There were 22 males and 114 females, and their English reading and writing proficiency ranged from B1 to C1 level. All of the studied students engaged in different types of research which were presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Types of research that students engaged in

Types of research	Frequency
Mini research project as a class assignment	100
Graduation research project	2
University-level research project in science and technology	15
Mini research project and Graduation research project	2
Mini research project and University-level research project in science and technology	12

Mini research project, Graduation research project, and University-level research project in science and technology	5
Total	136

3.2. Instruments

The research instrument used in this study was a structured questionnaire aiming to explore English-majored students' perceptions of research and challenges that they faced while doing their research. One significant benefit of questionnaires is their capacity to collect a huge amount of data from a large population [22] Wheatley. Another advantage of questionnaires is that they could be used to collect data about attitudes, perceptions, and views that were difficult to observe [16]. The questionnaire included two parts. The first part contained background information about the students, while the second part included 26 question items categorized into two clusters. The first cluster, comprising five items, was designed to investigate students' perceptions of the importance of conducting research, while the second included 21 question items regarding student-related challenges of doing research. In the questionnaire, those students were asked to respond to a five-point Likert scale, which allows them to express how much they agree or disagree with each item by choosing one answer among five given options (1 for "strongly disagree", 2 for "disagree", 3 for "undecided", 4 for "agree" and 5 for "strongly agree"). The questionnaire was written in English on the grounds that the participants majored in the English language and also took a Research Methodology course taught in English, so they might be more familiar with the common English research terms used in the questionnaires. Moreover, they might stand chances of conducting research in domains of English Language Studies or English Language Teaching; therefore, English is a good choice for the questionnaires. It took the participants 5 to 10 minutes to complete the questionnaires.

3.3. Data collection procedure

The following procedures were carried out during the data collection stage. First, the pilot questionnaires were delivered online to 20 English fourth-year majors of the Faculty of English at the university in Vietnam. After receiving all of the responses, the researcher ran SPSS to analyze the pilot data. The result of the reliability test was reliable as the Cronbach's Alpha (α) coefficient was .865. Then, the questionnaire was officially administered to English-majored students in their two final years at the Faculty of English, University of Foreign Languages. Due to the outbreak of Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), the researcher could not meet the students in person and deliver the questionnaires to them directly. As a consequence, the researcher created an online questionnaire survey using Google Forms and

then sent it to the targeted students from 8 different classes. The students completed the questionnaires, and the system saved their answers automatically. There were a total of 207 responses; however, some were not fully answered and some were not suitable for this study as students did not have any research experience. As a consequence, only 136 valid responses were chosen as the official data for this study.

3.4. Data analysis

The quantitative data collected from the questionnaire were analyzed by the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 26.0. SPSS was employed in this study because it has almost all basic and some advanced statistical analysis which assists the researcher in easily adapting to this software, doing the analysis part, and attaining results. This would help the researcher save a considerable amount of time and effort. In addition, the output can be obtained through graphical representation so that the researcher and others can easily understand the result. Three types of tests were applied to analyze the data. Firstly, the Reliability Coefficient Test was computerized to check the reliability of the items in the questionnaire. Secondly, the Descriptive Statistics Test was run to analyze the percentages, means, and standard deviations for the entire questionnaire and its components. Thirdly, the One–sample T-test was conducted to compare each cluster's mean score and a test value, which is 3.2. The test value, which is chosen based on the mean score interpretation adopted from Moidunny [18] is presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Mean Score Interpretation

MEAN SCORE	INTERPRETATION
1.00 – 1.80	**Very low**
1.81 – 2.60	**Low**
2.61 – 3.20	**Medium**
3.21 – 4.20	**High**
4.21 – 5.0	**Very high**

Note: Adopted from Moidunny [18].

4. Findings

4.1. Students' perceptions of the importance of conducting undergraduate research

The responses to 5 statements in the first category of the questionnaire provided the data on the students' perceptions of the importance of conducting research. Overall, the participants who got involved in the research had positive perceptions of the importance of research as the total mean score for this category was relatively high ($M = 4.01$, $t = 17.601$, $df = 199$, $p < .001$). The descriptive statistics are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics on students' perceptions of the importance of research in their professional education

Statements	Min	Max	Mean	SD
1. Doing research is indispensable in my professional training at university.	2	5	**4.01**	.830
2. Research is essential for my professional development at university.	2	5	**4.21**	.751
3. Research is important for enriching my professional knowledge in the English language.	2	5	**4.25**	.707
4. Researching is undergraduate students' responsibility.	1	5	**3.54**	.965
5. Research methodology should be a part of the English language curriculum.	1	5	**4.04**	.902

The results from Table 3 show that the mean values of the statements "Research is important for enriching my professional knowledge in the English language" and "Research is essential for my professional development at university" were the highest ($M = 4.25$ and $M = 4.21$, respectively). This means that students had positive perceptions of the idea that conducting research had a crucial role to play in broadening their knowledge of their chosen disciplines, namely English Language Teaching, and English Language Studies. Also, it is believed to enhance their professional development. The majority of the participants agreed that conducting research was fundamental to their professional training at university ($M = 4.01$), and "research methodology should be a part of the English language curriculum" ($M = 4.04$). It is interesting to note that the mean value of the item "Researching is undergraduate students' responsibility" was the lowest in this group ($M = 3.54$).

4.2. Student-related challenges of conducting undergraduate research

The questionnaire's second category, which contained 21 items, aimed to elicit responses to the second research question regarding students' reported challenges in doing undergraduate research. Although the average mean score of this category was just slightly above the medium level of agreement with M = 3.38, t = 6.576, df = 135, p < .001, it shows that the respondents possibly faced some challenges in doing research. Table 4 illustrates the descriptive statistics of the items in this category.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics on student-related challenges of conducting research

Statements	Min	Max	Mean	SD
6. I do not have time for research.	1	5	**2.76**	.929
7. I cannot manage my time properly when conducting research.	1	5	**3.15**	1.017
8. I lack motivation for doing research.	1	5	**3.23**	1.102
9. I lack confidence when carrying out my research.	1	5	**3.46**	1.154
10. I struggle with choosing a topic of my interest to do research.	1	5	**3.62**	1.047
11. I lack knowledge of the chosen topic.	1	5	**3.36**	1.023
12. I struggle with building a theoretical framework in relation to my research questions.	1	5	**3.65**	.891
13. I have problems in finding previous studies that are relevant to my research topic.	1	5	**3.49**	1.054
14. I struggle with identifying gaps of research after reviewing previous studies.	1	5	**3.69**	.915
15. I find it difficult to develop research questions.	1	5	**3.53**	.910
16. I find it difficult to find information related to my research on the Internet and reliable databases.	1	5	**3.34**	1.130
17. I have difficulty in choosing the right research methodology (whether my research belongs to qualitative or quantitative research or both).	1	5	**3.48**	.973

18. I have difficulty in deciding the best data collection tool (i.e. questionnaire, interview, or observation).	1	5	**3.37**	1.031
19. I cannot collect enough data for my research.	1	5	**3.29**	1.019
20. I do not know how to use the right software to analyze the collected data.	1	5	**3.26**	1.077
21. I do not know whether my findings can answer the research questions and hypothesis.	1	5	**3.31**	1.112
22. I do not know how to connect my findings with the theoretical background and results of previous studies.	1	5	**3.46**	1.095
23. I find it difficult to write implications from the findings.	1	5	**3.50**	.989
24. I find it difficult to use citations and references.	1	5	**3.19**	1.196
25. I do not know what to present in a research defense.	1	5	**3.44**	.972
26. I find it difficult to write a scientific research article based on my research.	1	5	**3.49**	1.040

Overall, the quantitative results from the questionnaire revealed some specific challenges faced by the English-majored students in different stages of doing undergraduate research, including choosing a research topic, doing a literature review, forming research questions, choosing the right research methodology, and writing implications from the findings. The most common perceived challenges were choosing a topic of interest to do research (M = 3.62; SD = 1.074), building a theoretical framework in relation to research questions (M = 3.65; SD = .891), and identifying gaps of research after reviewing previous studies (M = 3.69; SD = .915). Along with these issues, facing difficulties in developing research questions (M = 3.53; SD = .910) and writing implications from the findings (M = 3.50; SD = .989) were also noted.

It is interesting to notice that the mean scores of most items were higher than 3.2, except for items 6 (M = 2.67), 7 (M = 3.15), and 24 (M = 3.19). This indicates that most of the issues mentioned in this category were likely perceived to be challenges in conducting undergraduate research. Besides, if the standard deviations, the minimum and maximum values in the statistical results from Table 4 were taken into serious consideration, it would be noticed that most of the figures for standard deviations were considerably high (>1.00). Besides, the minimum value was 1 and the max value was 5 for all items. This indicates that the participants gave dissimilar answers to the questions, which means that the students experience different challenges in doing research at this level.

5. Discussion and Implications

The objectives of this study are to explore English-majored students' perceptions of the importance of conducting research and the challenges they face when conducting research. The quantitative findings suggest that most of the investigated students, with or without undergraduate research experience, were inclined to agree that research was necessary to enrich their professional knowledge in their chosen fields—English Language Studies and English Language Teaching—as well as foster their professional development at the university level. Also, a great number of students supported the idea that doing research was indispensable in their professional training at university and research methodology should be a part of the English language curriculum. These findings are in line with those that Alghamdi et al. [2] found in their study. Although the sample in this study was not English-majored students but medical ones, the results on the perceptions of research of both groups are similar. Medical students believed that conducting research was crucial in the medical field and research methodology should be a part of the medical curriculum. In this study, the English-majored students also agreed that conducting research was indispensable in their professional training at university, and research methodology should be included in the English language curriculum.

When it comes to the challenges that English-majored students faced, it seemed that they encountered different challenges. However, the most frequently reported difficulties were identifying gaps in research after reviewing previous studies, developing a theoretical framework in relation to the research question, and deciding on a topic of interest to conduct research on. These challenges were comparable to the results of some previous studies conducted in EFL settings. Elmabruk and Bishti [6], Phan Canh My Duy [19], and Yeh [24] all found that EFL students faced considerable challenges in selecting a topic for research. However, only Phan Canh My Duy [19] disclosed that most of the participants selected a broad topic, which challenged them in narrowing it down. However, when it comes to doing the literature review, the majority of students in this study believed that they found it difficult to build a theoretical framework. This challenge was previously presented in the research of Phan Canh My Duy [19] and Yeh [24]. Regarding the difficulty in identifying gaps of research, this finding was not reported in prior studies conducted in EFL settings; nonetheless, it should also be taken into consideration concerning EFL learners' challenges of doing research as this challenge received the strongest support from the investigated students. Besides, this study also found two other noticeable challenges, namely developing research questions and writing implications from the findings. These two problems were reported in Phan Canh My Duy's [19] study but in more detail. She indicated that they faced two main problems in formulating

research questions. Those are difficulties in developing ideas and choosing suitable words for the research questions.

The findings of this study indicate that English-majored students with limited research experience express a strong preference for conducting research at the university level, owing to their awareness of the value of research in developing a thorough understanding of their chosen majors and advancing their professional development as well. This finding implies that, in recognition of the value of undergraduate research, the institution should expand the opportunities for all students to conduct research during their study at the university and students should also actively seek and take up any opportunity to engage in or conduct undergraduate research related to their major. Second, because students, particularly first-time student researchers, may encounter a variety of difficulties while conducting research, university staff, particularly teachers and supervisors, should provide students with substantial and immediate assistance throughout the research process to assist them in overcoming obstacles and achieving satisfactory outcomes. Last but not least, studying possible difficulties in doing research in advance would certainly be of great help to novice student researchers if they intend to do research in the future.

6. Conclusion

This quantitative study investigated English-majored students' perceptions of research and encountered challenges in conducting research at the undergraduate level. The results of the study show that English-majored students had positive perceptions of doing research at the undergraduate level as they were aware of the importance of research in enriching their professional knowledge of their chosen fields and professional development. Additionally, they supported the inclusion of a research methodology course in their curriculum and the inclusion of research in their university-level education program. Regarding challenges in doing research, the most often identified problems were finding gaps in research following a review of prior studies, developing a theoretical framework in connection to research issues, and selecting an interesting topic for study. Additionally, the development of research questions and the writing of implications for the findings were mentioned. This study offered new insight into the body of literature regarding students' perceptions of the importance of conducting undergraduate research in the Vietnamese EFL context and partly supported the findings of previous studies on the challenges that students face when conducting undergraduate research.

This research study still has certain limitations. Firstly, the scope of research was restricted to one university with a limited number of participants; therefore, the findings would not be likely to be generalized for all of the English-majored populations at other universities.

Secondly, this study only investigated the issue from students' perspectives without any investigation into supervisors or relevant staff of the faculty's viewpoints. The limitations in this study may put forward some suggestions for further studies. First and foremost, one of the directions is to widen the scope of study with a larger sample size of English-majored students not only at the university but also at other institutions in similar EFL contexts. With a larger scale of research including different groups of participants, the obtained results would be likely to be more reliable and generalizable to the target population. In addition, further studies should be conducted to investigate the awareness, perceptions, and attitudes of students' undergraduate research by other stakeholders, such as teachers, supervisors, academics, and institutions, to achieve more multidimensional views and ensure the reliability of study's findings.

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