

## Research Engagement among EFL Teachers at Public Schools in Saudi Arabia

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### Abstract

The present study investigates involvement in research by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers, the impact of research practice on teachers' professional development and teaching competencies, and the effects of demographic variables on both reading and research. The study applied a questionnaire adapted from Borg (2009). The participants were EFL teachers (n= 152) from public schools in Saudi Arabia. Following a descriptive-analytical research design, the results showed that the majority of teachers (41%) "sometimes" read research articles. There were statistically significant differences in reading research due to their qualifications and interest in taking research methods courses. On the contrary, there were no statistically significant differences due to experience, teaching grade, and weekly hours of instruction. Additionally, most teachers (35%) "sometimes" conduct scientific research. There were statistically significant differences in conducting scientific research due to weekly hours of instruction and knowledge of research methods, whereas there were no statistically significant differences due to experience, grade the teacher teaches, or educational qualifications. Practical implications and recommendations for future research were provided.

**Keywords:** Research engagement, reading, research practice, EFL teachers.

### المشاركة البحثية لمعلمي اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية في المدارس العامة في السعودية

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#### ملخص

يهدف البحث الحالي إلى التحقق من الوضع الراهن للمشاركة البحثية لمعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية وأثر الممارسة البحثية على التنمية المهنية والكفايات التدريسية بالإضافة إلى أثر المتغيرات الديموغرافية على قراءة وإجراء الأبحاث العلمية. وقد تم استخدام استبيان كأداة للبحث تبناها الباحث من Borg (2009). وتألقت عينة الدراسة من (152) معلماً ومعلمة للغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في مدارس التعليم العام في المملكة العربية السعودية. واتباع المنهج الوصفي التحليلي، توصلت نتائج البحث إلى أن غالبية المعلمين يقرأون "أحياناً" بنسبة تصل إلى 41% وأن هناك فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية في قراءة الأبحاث العلمية تُعزى لعاملَي المؤهل العلمي ودراسة مقرر مناهج البحث، بينما لا توجد فروق دالة إحصائية وفقاً لخبرتهم والمرحلة التي يدرسونها وعدد الساعات التي يدرسونها في الأسبوع. كما توصلت الدراسة إلى أن غالبية المعلمين يجرّون الأبحاث العلمية "أحياناً" بنسبة تصل إلى 35% وأن هناك فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية في إجراء الأبحاث العلمية تُعزى لعاملَي عدد ساعات التدريس ودراسة مقرر مناهج البحث، بينما لا توجد فروق دالة إحصائية وفقاً لخبرتهم أو المرحلة التي يدرسونها أو مؤهلاتهم العلمية. كما تم تقديم عدد من الممارسات الإجرائية والتوصيات للأبحاث المستقبلية.

الكلمات الدالة : المشاركة البحثية، قراءة الأبحاث، الممارسة البحثية، معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية.



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## 1. Introduction

Teachers play an effective role in educating students not only by delivering curricula, but also by solving classroom problems, creating a warm environment, mentoring students, facilitating learning, and assessing learning progress. Therefore, they should adopt the latest trends and new methods of teaching. One way to achieve this is by engaging teachers in educational research to improve the quality of their teaching practices and promote their competencies and skills to solve problems.

Ministries of education worldwide encourage teachers to implement research and development activities in the educational context. There is a big need to assert research culture among teachers, especially EFL teachers. This progress was modelled from other performing educational systems, such as that of Finland, which gives high value and attention to research at every level, especially in the classroom.

In the field of English language teaching (ELT), there have been continued calls for a bridge between research and teaching (McKinley, 2019; Richards, 2011; Rose, 2019). It is thought that research engagement not only influences teachers' quality of teaching but also gives them psychological balance that improves their instructional decision-making processes and increases their professional status. This empowerment of teachers creates a great impact at the teacher, district, state, and national levels (Olson, 1990).

There has been increasing interest in teacher research practice (Altrichter, Feldman, Posch, and Somekh, 2008; Barkhuizen, 2009; Borg, 2007, 2009; Brown & Flood, 2018; Wentworth, Mazzeo, and Connolly, 2017). The findings of the literature show that engaging with and in research contributes to teacher professional development (Cordingley, 2015; Holmqvist, Bergentoft, and Selin, 2018). They highlight the importance of training teachers in practising research engagement in various contexts. However, studies into the ELT context exploring the effects of EFL teachers' research practice on their professional teaching performance are still limited. Hence, the present study sought to investigate the EFL teachers' research engagement and the impact of research practice on their professional development and teaching competencies.

## 2. Literature Review

### *Teachers' research engagement: Importance and barriers*

Teachers are practitioners and have been viewed traditionally as the implementers of research findings concluded by researchers. However, this view has been challenged recently because teachers are considered researchers and practitioners of educational research. Teacher research is conceptualised as a qualitative and/or quantitative enquiry that is systematically carried out by teachers in professional settings to engage in professional development activities, such as reading professional research articles, doing classroom-based research, and improving teaching performance (Borg, 2010).

Teachers should be involved in research either by doing or reading to engage in lifelong learning. Stenhouse (1975) argues that educational improvement can only take place when teachers are engaged in research, and the best curriculum is the result of teacher-researcher collaboration. Through the research, teachers can examine their educational practices systematically and carefully. Furthermore, they can make beneficial changes in classroom teaching and systematically analyse their practices as well as students' performance (Bassey, 1999; Capel, Leask, and Turner, 1997). According to Atay (2008), teachers who conduct and read research become more critical, reflective, and analytical about their practice in classrooms. Roberts (1992) asserts that research engagement can reduce teachers' feelings of frustration and isolation. Hence, Mohammed (2019) recommends that teachers have to be engaged in research to enhance their professional development and the quality of teaching and learning.

However, teachers encounter various barriers regarding research engagement. For instance, researchers have argued that one of the main barriers is the complex research discourse because teachers do not have specialized knowledge of research to understand the academic papers, which can be a daunting task (Zeuli, 1994). Similarly, Nassaji (2012) argued that some research problems are too insignificant or remote from the context of the teachers' interest. Gore and Gitlin (2004) described the power relations between academics and practitioners whereby researchers are positioned as producers

and teachers as consumers of knowledge. Mehrani and Behzadnia (2013) reported various barriers concerning research engagement related to four main issues: The production of research, use of research, lack of collaboration between researchers and practitioners, and educational system.

Shen (2017) indicated that seven factors can hinder teachers' research engagement: Limited research opportunities, lack of motivation, insufficient research knowledge and skills, conventional conceptions of research time constraints, ineffective management system, and inadequate material and supplies. Borg (2009) explored EFL teachers' conceptions of research through a questionnaire and interviews from different countries. This study reported that the teachers' lack of research engagement was due to the lack of time, knowledge, and access to the required materials. In addition, teachers' motivation towards research engagement developed their practical and professional knowledge. Edwards and Burns (2016) pinpointed the challenges to teachers' research, including teaching load, inadequate institutional resources, and lack of research skills. Allison and Carey (2007) listed other barriers, such as shortage of time, lack of encouragement/incentive, lack of expertise and know-how, active discouragement, status issues and, the misconception that teaching and research are unrelated.

Beycioglu, Ozer, and Ugurlu (2010) aimed at identifying teachers' views about educational research. The sample comprised 300 teachers in Malatya. The findings revealed that 68% of the teachers considered educational research in their practices since starting teaching. Academic journals were the most frequent means of accessing research (28.2%), followed by books (18.8%). No statistically significant differences were found between males and females in terms of the views of educational research.

Bulut (2011) investigated 225 EFL teachers' perceptions of research, level of research engagement (either reading or doing), motivation and barriers, as well as institutional research culture. The results showed that teachers' research engagement was limited. Although the teachers appreciated the importance and benefits of research engagement, their perceptions of research led them to regard research engagement as an unsustainable activity. Positive perceptions about institutional research culture and formal master's degree course requirements promoted the teachers' research engagement.

Borg and Alshumaimeri (2012) surveyed university teacher educators' engagement with and in research across a range of disciplinary and pedagogical courses at a leading university in Saudi Arabia. The findings indicated that more academically senior highly qualified and experienced teacher educators read and do more research compared with those who are less senior, less qualified and less experienced. The participants stated that the main reasons for doing research include professional development, promotions, and contribution to their knowledge generally. On the contrary, the lack of time was the main reason for not reading research articles and doing research.

Borg and Liu (2013) examined research engagement among 725 college English teachers. The results showed that the levels of reading and doing research were moderate. An analysis of the factors behind this level of engagement revealed unproductive linear and instrumental conceptions among teachers of the relationship between research knowledge and classroom practice. A perceived discrepancy was also found between teachers' views about the expected research activity and the support they received from their institutions to facilitate such work.

Kutlay (2013) investigated the conceptions of 52 ELT instructors in a public university in Turkey and specified the level of research engagement of teachers by either reading research articles or conducting research. The results showed that teachers evaluated the instances compatible with the scientific research paradigm as research, while the level of engagement in research was low. Similarly, Tabatabaei and Nazem (2013) investigated the conceptions of research among 150 EFL teachers. The finding illustrated that teachers reported insufficient time, knowledge, and institutional support as influential factors restricting their abilities to be engaged in research.

Xu (2014) explored university EFL teachers' research practice through a narrative frame and in-depth interview questions in China. The results showed that the teachers' research practice is limited by teaching overload, a shortage of resources, a lack of support from mentors, and self-efficacy beliefs. University EFL teachers are more engaged with reading research compared with doing research. Moreover, the teachers' motivation towards reading and doing research was more extrinsic (i.e. for promotion) than intrinsic (i.e. for teaching improvement).

Mehrani (2015) investigated the extent to which 24 EFL teachers engaged in doing and reading research. The study

also aimed at exploring the motivations that can promote teachers' research engagement. Analysis of data revealed a moderate level of research engagement. The results also showed a wide range of motivation including teachers' professional development, instrumental incentives, institutional expectations, and pedagogical concerns that can promote teachers' research engagement.

Anwaruddin (2016) examined the responses of 24 EFL teachers to publishing educational research. The results showed that the participants perceived published educational research as both a means of representation and a potential obstacle. Furthermore, Macalister (2018) surveyed the developmental activities among 465 ELT professionals. The participants were both first-language (L1) and second language (L2) speakers of English, working at the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels in five Asia-Pacific countries. The study revealed that reading books or articles was the most popular, while publishing was the least common among the participants. Academic and teaching purposes were the main reasons for reading.

Rahimi and Weisi (2018) explored the current status of EFL teachers' research practice and its influence on the professional teaching practice of (150) EFL teachers who were actively engaged with reading and doing research. The participants' responses indicated that they were engaged with reading and doing research to some extent. Additionally, Vu (2020) provided an in-depth examination of how university ELT teachers conceptualize research and doing research and discussed the issue in connection with the notion of profession. The results showed that ELT faculty construct different versions of research to rationalize their attitudes, self-awareness, and practices, including research as irrelevant impositions, research as desirable but unfeasible goals, and research as practical inner calls.

The review of the literature illustrated that many authors focused on exploring the motivation that promotes teachers' research engagement (Bulut, 2011; Mehrani, 2015; Xu, 2014). Moreover, Kutlay (2013), Tabatabaei and Nazem (2013), and Vu (2020) explored the concepts of research and doing research among participants, which was covered by the current study. Some of these studies addressed university EFL teachers (Kutlay, 2013; Xu, 2014), wherein the present study focused on general school teachers in Saudi Arabia. Matching Rahimi and Weisi (2018) and Tabatabaei and Nazem (2013), the present study explored the current status of EFL teachers' research practice and level of engagement. To collect data, surveys were utilized in most studies (Beycioglu et al., 2010; Borg & Alshumaimeri, 2012; Macalister, 2018). Likewise, the present study adopted the survey of Borg (2009). It sought to investigate the variables that affect EFL teachers' research engagement and fill in this gap in the literature.

### 3. Statement of the Problem

The issue of language teachers' research engagement has not been tackled in the context of education in Saudi Arabia. Borg (2009) suggested that gaining insight into the teachers' attitudinal, conceptual, procedural, and institutional barriers to teacher research engagement is essential to motivate teachers to involve in research engagement and is a more feasible activity in ELT. Hence, the author interviewed 8 EFL teachers in Arar city, Saudi Arabia to explore their perception and implementation of classroom research. None of the interviewees reported conducting research. Only one participant claimed reading research sometimes. Reasons they gave were the shortage of time and lack of how-to knowledge to conduct research. The problem of the present study was determined by the limited size of the research participation of the EFL teachers, whether by reading or preparing the research, due to the presence of many obstacles that affect teaching proficiency. Thus, the author thought that an analytical study of the size of the research participation of EFL teachers, motives, and obstacles is needed.

### 4. Questions

The following research questions are addressed in the present study:

1. To what extent do Saudi EFL teachers read published research?

*This major question can be divided into the following minor questions:*

- 1.1. How often do Saudi EFL teachers read research?
- 1.2. What sources do Saudi EFL teachers prefer?

- 1.3. What is the impact of research reading on their teaching competencies?
- 1.4. What reasons do Saudi EFL teachers report for not reading research?
2. To what extent do Saudi EFL teachers conduct research?  
*This major question can be divided into the following minor questions:*
  - 2.1. How often do Saudi EFL teachers research?
  - 2.2. What reasons do Saudi EFL teachers report for engaging in research?
  - 2.3. What reasons do Saudi EFL teachers report for not conducting research?
3. Do EFL teachers' demographic variables relate to the degree of reading published research?
4. Do EFL teachers' demographic variables relate to the degree of doing research?

## 5. Objectives

The present study aimed at investigating the extent to which EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia read and do research. It explored the significant variables that affect EFL teachers' research engagement in reading and doing research. Moreover, it examined the frequency, reasons, and sources that teachers use to read and implement research.

## 6. Significance

Attempting to identify the current status of EFL teachers' research engagement, the study opens new horizons for authors interested in investigating EFL teachers' level of engagement in reading and doing research. It provides authors with ideas for future research in this area, especially identifying the contextual factors that affect teachers' practices and perception of reading and implanting research. The results of the study guide education stakeholders and decision-makers in Saudi Arabia to determine the appropriate procedures for enhancing research engagement among EFL teachers.

## 7. Methodology

### 7.1. Population and Sampling

The participants of the study numbered 152 EFL teachers working at public schools derived from the population of EFL teachers working in primary, middle, and secondary schools in Arar city, Saudi Arabia. E-mails with the link to the questionnaire were sent to 250 teachers in Arar schools, but only 152 teachers responded. Demographic information of the participants, including teaching grade, qualification, and experience is represented in table 1.

**Table 1: Research participants according to teaching grade, educational qualification, and teaching experience**

Teaching grade		Educational qualification		Teaching experience	
Primary schools	33.55%	Bachelor	86.2%	15–20 years	26.32%
Middle schools	28.95%	Diploma	4.6%	10–15 years	23%
Secondary schools	37.5%	M.A.	7.2%	5–9 years	21%
		PhD.	2.0%	Over 20 years	15.86%
				0–4 years	13.82%

Table (1) shows that the participants worked in primary schools (33.55%), middle schools (28.95%), and secondary schools (37.5%). Most of them held bachelor's degrees in EFL teaching (86.2%), whereas (4.6%) had diplomas, (7.2%) had M.As, and (2.0%) got PhDs. Most of the respondents had teaching experience of 15–20 years in language teaching (26.32%), followed by teachers with 10–15 years (23%), then teachers with 5–9 years (21%) and +20 years (15.86%), and finally teachers with experience from 0–4 years (13.82%).

### 7.2. Instrument

To collect data, the author utilized a questionnaire adapted from Borg (2009). The original questionnaire examines EFL teachers' engagement with and in research, their skills in implementing research, the effect of their research practice on

their teaching practices and students' learning, and the support teachers receive for research practice. The author used only three domains from the questionnaire, namely the research culture, reading research, and doing research. The questionnaire consisted of 20 items on a 5-point Likert scale. The author included the options of "not at all", "very little", "to some extent", "quite a lot", and "a great deal" for 5 out of the 20 items. The author adapted the options to ('agree/disagree' and 'often/never' items) and added multiple-choice and checklist type. The questionnaire was tested for validity and reliability.

### Validity

- **Internal validity**

Using a sample of 22 participants to ensure the reliability of the attitude scale, the Pearson Correlation Coefficient was used to determine the internal validity of the questionnaire according to each domain and the total score of the questionnaire. Table (2) illustrates the results.

**Table 2: Internal validity of the questionnaire domains**

<b>The correlation coefficient of each domain and the total score of the questionnaire</b>	
<b>Domain (1): Research culture</b>	
<b>Correlation coefficient</b>	<b>0.76**</b>
<b>Domain (2): Reading research</b>	
<b>Correlation coefficient</b>	<b>0.81**</b>
<b>Domain (3): Doing research</b>	
<b>Correlation coefficient</b>	<b>0.79**</b>

\*\* Significant at the level of 0.01.

Table (2) shows that the value of the correlation between domain (1) and the total score of the questionnaire was (0.76). The value of the correlation between domain (2) and the total score of the questionnaire was (0.81). The value of the correlation between domain (2) and the total score of the questionnaire was (0.79). All of these values were significant at the level of 0.01, suggesting the internal validity of the questionnaire and its domains.

### Reliability

Using a sample of 22 participants to ensure the reliability of the questionnaire, Alpha Cronbach was computed and scored 0.83. Table (3) illustrates the results.

**Table 3: Reliability values of the questionnaire and its domains**

<i>Instrument</i>	<i>Alpha Cronbach</i>
<i>The whole questionnaire</i>	<i>0.83 **</i>
<i>Domain (1)</i>	<i>0.82 **</i>
<i>Domain (2)</i>	<i>0.86 **</i>
<i>Domain (3)</i>	<i>0.84 **</i>

Table (3) indicates that all reliability values of the questionnaire were significant at the level of 0.01. This finding suggests that the instrument is reliable, and its results can be trusted.

### 7.3. Research Design

The research followed the analytical descriptive design to suit its subject and objectives. It aimed at collecting data about the current status of EFL teachers' research engagement using a questionnaire and analysing the obtained results. The obtained data were analyzed using SPSS and the results were concluded using the following statistics:

- The Pearson Correlation Coefficient to determine internal validity.

- Alpha Cronbach to ensure reliability.
- Frequencies and percentages.
- Chi-square

### Procedures

After reviewing relevant literature and selecting the participants of the study, the author administered the questionnaire electronically after receiving the approval for the application. The questionnaire was shared via a link in the first semester of the academic year 2019/2020.

### Results

The results of the study are presented in light of the research questions.

#### 1. To what extent do Saudi EFL teachers read published research?

For the first domain of the questionnaire, the author asked teachers whether they read research, and if not, what the reasons are. The following findings were obtained.

##### *How often do Saudi EFL teachers read research?*

Out of 152 teachers who completed the questionnaire, 11.84% ( $n=18$ ) reported that they never read research, 36.18% (55) did so rarely, 40.79% (62) did it sometimes, and 11.18% (17) reported that they often read research. To test the significance of differences among the frequencies of sample responses, the chi-square test was used. Table 4 illustrates the results.

**Table 4: Results of the chi-square test on the frequency of reading**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage	Expected N	Chi-square	df	Sig.
<b>Valid</b>				44.895	3	0.001
<b>Never</b>	18	11.84	38			
<b>Rarely</b>	55	36.18	38			
<b>Sometimes</b>	62	40.79	38			
<b>Often</b>	17	11.18	38			
<b>Total</b>	152					

Table 4 shows that there were significant differences in the sample responses in favour of the ‘sometimes’ response.

##### *What sources do Saudi EFL teachers prefer?*

The teachers who reported reading published language teaching research often or sometimes ( $N=79$ ) were asked to indicate the sources they used. Reported sources for reading published research are summarised in Table 5.

**Table 5: Reported sources for reading published research**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Books</b>	63	79.75
<b>Academic journals (e.g. <i>TESOL Quarterly</i>)</b>	32	40.51
<b>Professional journals (e.g. <i>ELT Journal</i>)</b>	36	45.57
<b>Professional magazines (e.g. <i>ET Professional</i>)</b>	36	45.57
<b>Newsletters (e.g. <i>IATEFL SIG Newsletters</i>)</b>	30	37.97
<b>Web-based sources of research</b>	57	72.15

Table (5) shows that books represented the predominant source, as reported by 79.75% of the teachers. This was followed by web-based sources of research represented by 72.15% of teachers. The last source was newsletters, reported by 37.97% of respondents.

*What is the impact of research reading on their teaching competencies?*

The teachers who reported reading research sometimes and often ( $N=79$ ) were asked to indicate the level of influence of reading research on their teaching. Table 6 displays this result.

**Table 6: Impact of reading published language research on teaching**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
No influence	17	21.52
Slight influence	15	18.99
Moderate influence	16	20.25
Fairly strong influence	12	15.19
Strong influence	19	24.05
Total	79	100

Table (6) shows that 21.52% of teachers reported no influence, 18.99% found a slight influence, 20.25% reported a moderate influence, 15.19% experienced a fairly strong influence, and 24.05% reported a strong influence. To test the significance of differences among the frequencies of sample responses, the chi-square test was used. Table 7 illustrates the results.

**Table7: Results of the chi-square test of the frequency of reading impact**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage	Expected N	Chi-square	df	Sig.
Valid				1.696	4	0.791
No influence	17	21.52	15.8			
Slight influence	15	18.99	15.8			
Moderate influence	16	20.25	15.8			
Fairly strong influence	12	15.19	15.8			
Strong influence	19	24.05	15.8			
Total	152					

Table 7 illustrates that there were no significant differences in sample responses regarding the influence of reading on teaching.

*What reasons do Saudi EFL teachers report for not reading research?*

The teachers who reported that they never or rarely read published research ( $N = 73$ ) were asked to indicate the reasons preventing them from reading. The reported reasons for not reading published research are summarised in Table 8.

**Table 8: Reported reasons for not reading published research**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
I am not interested in research.	26	35.62
I do not have time.	32	43.84
I do not have access to books and journals.	8	10.96
I find published research hard to understand.	4	5.48



<b>Published research does not give me practical advice for the classroom.</b>	3	4.1
<b>Total</b>	73	100

Table (8) illustrates that the lack of time was the most common reason, as reported by 43.84% of teachers. A lack of interest in research was ranked second and reported by 35.62% of teachers as an obstacle hindering their reading.

To test the significance of differences among the frequencies of sample responses, the chi-square test was used. Table 9 illustrates the results.

**Table 9: Results of the chi-square test of reasons for not reading**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage	Expected N	Chi-square	df	Sig.
<b>Valid</b>				49.534	4	0.001
<b>I am not interested in research.</b>	26	35.62	14.6			
<b>I do not have time.</b>	32	43.84	14.6			
<b>I do not have access to books and journals.</b>	8	10.96	14.6			
<b>I find published research hard to understand.</b>	4	5.48	14.6			
<b>Published research does not give me practical advice for the classroom.</b>	3	4.1	14.6			

Table 9 illustrates that there were significant differences in the sample responses in favour of the lack of time.

**2. To what extent do Saudi EFL teachers conduct research?**

In the second domain of the questionnaire, the respondents were asked to report the frequency of doing research. Table 10 represents the results for doing research in frequencies and percentages.

**Table 10: Results of doing research in frequencies and percentages**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Valid</b>		
<b>Never</b>	34	22.37
<b>Rarely</b>	49	32.24
<b>Sometimes</b>	52	34.21
<b>Often</b>	17	11.18
<b>Total</b>	152	100

*How often do Saudi EFL teachers research?*

Out of the 152 teachers who responded to this question, 22.37% reported that they never did research, 32.24% did it rarely, 34.21% sometimes did research, and 11.18% often did so. To test the significance of differences among the frequencies of sample responses, the chi-square test was used. Table 11 illustrates the results.

**Table 11: Chi-Square of sample responses of doing research**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage	Expected N	Chi-square	df	Sig.
<b>Valid</b>				20.368	3	0.001
<b>Never</b>	34	22.37	38			
<b>Rarely</b>	49	32.24	38			
<b>Sometimes</b>	52	34.21	38			

<b>Often</b>	17	11.18	38			
<b>Total</b>	152	100				

Table 11 shows the significant differences between sample responses in favour of the 'sometimes' response.

*What reasons do Saudi EFL teachers report for engaging in research?*

The teachers who reported that they sometimes or often do research ( $N = 69$ ) were asked to indicate the reasons for doing so. The reported responses are summarised in Table 12.

**Table 12: Reported reasons for doing research**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>I am studying the research as part of a course.</b>	24	34.78
<b>Because I enjoy it.</b>	18	26.09
<b>Because it is good for my professional development.</b>	13	18.84
<b>Because it will help me achieve a promotion.</b>	1	1.45
<b>Because my employer expects me to.</b>	1	1.45
<b>Because other teachers can learn from the findings of my work.</b>	2	2.90
<b>To contribute to the improvement of the school generally.</b>	2	2.90
<b>To find better ways of teaching.</b>	7	10.15
<b>To solve problems in my teaching.</b>	1	1.45
<b>Total</b>	69	100

Doing research as a part of a course was the most common reason reported by 34.78% of responses. Enjoying doing research was ranked second and reported by 26.09%.

*What reasons do Saudi EFL teachers report for not conducting research?*

The teachers who reported that they never or rarely read published research ( $N = 83$ ) were asked to indicate the reasons preventing them from doing research. The reported reasons for not doing research are summarised in Table 13.

**Table 13: Reported reasons for not doing research**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>I do not know enough about research methods.</b>	32	38.55
<b>My job is to teach, not do research.</b>	26	31.33
<b>I do not have time to do research.</b>	12	14.46
<b>My employer discourages it.</b>	1	1.20
<b>I am not interested in doing research.</b>	3	3.60
<b>I need someone to advise me, but no one is available.</b>	3	3.60
<b>Most of my colleagues do not do research.</b>	5	6.06
<b>I do not have access to the books and journals I need.</b>	0	0
<b>The learners would not co-operate if I did research in class.</b>	0	0
<b>Other teachers would not co-operate if I asked for their help.</b>	1	1.20
<b>Total</b>	83	100

Table (13) shows that the lack of research skills was the most common reason, reported by 38.55% of teachers. "My job is to teach, not do the research" was ranked second and reported by 31.33% of the participants.

*3. Do EFL teachers' demographic variables relate to the degree of reading published research?*

The relationship between the teachers' reported level of reading research and the independent variables in their demographic information was tested via Pearson's chi-squared test. It was found that teachers' engagement in research did not vary according to their experience ( $r\ chi=7.971$ ;  $df=12$ ;  $p=0.787$ ), teaching grade ( $r\ chi=14.659$ ;  $df=9$ ;  $p=0.101$ ) or the hours they teach per week ( $r\ chi=4.962$ ;  $df=9$ ;  $p = 0.838$ ). It was found that teachers' engagement in research varied according to their qualifications ( $r\ chi=24.038$ ;  $df=9$ ;  $p= 0.004$ ) and attending a research method course ( $r\ chi=9.328$ ;  $df=3$ ;  $p = 0.025$ ).

*4. Do EFL teachers' demographic variables relate to the degree of doing research?*

The relationships between the teachers' reported level of doing research and the independent variables in their demographic information were tested via Pearson's chi-squared test. It was found that teachers' engagement in research did not vary according to their experience ( $r\ chi=5.528$ ;  $df=12$ ;  $p= 0.938$ ), teaching grade ( $r\ chi=7.828$ ;  $df=9$ ;  $p= 0.552$ ) or their qualifications ( $r\ chi=10.446$ ;  $df=9$ ;  $p= 0.316$ ). It was found that teachers' engagement in research varied according to the hours they teach per week ( $r\ chi=17.951$ ;  $df=9$ ;  $p = 0.036$ ) and attending a research method course ( $r\ chi=10.466$ ;  $df=3$ ;  $p= 0.015$ ).

## **7. Discussion**

In the present study, teachers' research engagement was investigated in terms of reading published language teaching research and doing such research. Regarding reading research among EFL teachers as a domain of research engagement, the results of the first question showed that there were significant differences in the sample responses in favour of the 'sometimes' response. These results were consistent with Borg and Liu (2013), Bulut (2011), Mehrani (2015), and Rahimi and Weisi (2018). The findings of both the level of engagement and the ambiguity of frequency were in accordance with Borg's (2007, 2009) studies. However, this finding was inconsistent with Kutlay (2013) as the level of engagement in reading research was low as participants reported "rare" reading of research due to the misconception of the impracticality of research findings to real classrooms.

Regarding the sources the participants used for reading research, unlike Kutlay (2013) who found preferences to read web-based sources rather than reading research journal articles, the participants preferred books as the predominant source. Web-based sources were ranked second. These results are inconsistent with Bulut (2011) and Macalister (2018) who found that reading books or journal articles was the top-ranked method for professional development. The author attributed the results to teachers' preference for using traditional library facilities and digital media (Williams & Coles, 2003, 2007). Consequently, it was concluded that teachers' preferences did not change due to the increasing accessibility of web sources.

Concerning the impact of reading on teachers' teaching competencies, the teachers who declared that they are engaged in research at least "sometimes" were asked to indicate the influence level they felt reading research had on their teaching. While 24.05% of the teachers' reported strong influence, 21.52% reported no influence, and 20.25% reported a moderate influence. The findings matched those of Bulut (2011) that showed a moderate influence in most teachers.

Concerning the reasons for not reading published research, the teachers who indicated that they never or rarely read published research were asked to indicate the reasons preventing them from reading. The lack of time and lack of interest in research were the most common reasons. These findings agree with Borg (2009), Kutlay (2013), and Tabatabaei and Nazem (2013).

However, the results of this study did not go in line with other studies. For instance, teachers' engagement in research by conducting it was investigated. First, the teachers were asked to report their level of engagement. It was promising that 34.21% of teachers reported doing research at least sometimes. This result agreed with the findings of Bulut (2011), Borg and Liu (2013) and Mehrani (2015). On the contrary, this result agreed with Kutlay (2013) and Rahimi and Weisi (2018) that found low engagement from their participants. It can be attributed to the teacher's wrong beliefs that doing research is

only for science not for practice. Thus, the findings are contextual and cannot be generalized.

As for the reasons for doing research, the teachers who reported that they sometimes or often did research were asked to indicate the reasons for doing so. Doing research as part of a course, self-motivation, and interest in doing research were shown as the most common reasons. Concerning the reasons for not doing research, teachers who indicated that they never or rarely read published research listed some challenges, including the lack of research skills and the nature of the job.

Considering the differences in teachers' reading research frequencies in terms of demographic variables, it was found that the teachers' frequency of reading research varied according to their qualifications and attending research method courses, which went in line with Borg (2013). Also, it was found that the teachers' frequency of reading research did not vary according to their experience, teaching grade, and the hours they taught per week. This result might be due to the irrelevance of the research to their actual practices or grades they teach, difficulty in accessing resources or journals, or misconception of the impracticality of research findings to classrooms.

Regarding the differences in doing research frequencies in terms of teachers' demographic variables, the results showed that the teachers' frequency of doing research differed according to hours they taught per week and attending research method courses. However, the teachers' frequency of doing research did not vary according to their experience, teaching grade, or their educational qualifications. These results did not go in line with the findings of Bulut (2011) and Macalister (2018) that reported that experience, teaching grade, and qualifications did affect teachers' research doing. They might be attributed to time limitation, lack of incentive or knowledge of conducting research, and misconception about conducting classroom research.

## **Conclusion**

The present study corroborates the previous findings of studies related to teachers' research engagement. The results indicated moderate levels of research engagement whether in relation to reading or conducting research. Saudi teachers reflected their mindsets and barriers, which prevented them to read or do research. The four main constraints reported by the participants through administering the questionnaire were the lack of time, lack of interest, lack of research skills, and nature of the job.

The results indicated that the teachers' frequency of reading research varied according to their qualifications and attending research method courses. It was found that the teachers' frequency of reading research did not vary according to experiences, teaching grade, and the hours they teach per week. In addition, the results revealed that teachers' frequency of doing research varied according to hours they teach per week and attending research method courses. The teachers' frequency of doing research did not vary according to their experience, teaching grade, or educational qualifications.

To sum up, it was obvious that teachers' educational qualifications, hours they teach per week, and attending research method courses have a considerable impact on their research engagement. Therefore, raising teachers awareness of the importance of practising reading and doing research is highly recommended. This recommendation can be done through various means, e.g. holding educational workshops discussing the benefits of reading and doing research and providing teachers with professional training opportunities of practising research engagement.

## **Implications and Recommendations**

The following implications can be shared with the scientific society of EFL specialists and practitioners:

1. Giving adequate training to in-service teachers to help them do classroom research.
2. Providing educational programs for pre-service teachers to prepare them to read research and train them in conducting educational research.
3. Reviewing the system of promotions in schools to encourage research participation of teachers and reduce the time for those who prepare research.
4. Reducing the teaching burden on teachers to allow them to conduct research.
5. Urging the Ministry of Education to amend the regulations and legislation related to scientific research and

research participation to make them more flexible and stimulating to scientific research and make these adjustments flexible and decentralized.

6. Providing scholarships abroad for female teachers by the Ministry of Education to conduct research and exchange experiences by networking with developed countries in scientific research.

7. Directing the teachers of the English language towards practising critical thinking by encouraging educational readings and access to recent studies in the field of specialization to enhance their teaching performance and ensure the continuity of their professional development.

8. Encouraging and rewarding EFL teachers to practice their educational meditation and scientific writing about it.

The study is limited to a sample of 152 participants from public Saudi schools. It is also limited to the geographical location of Arar city, Saudi Arabia. Thus, it is recommended to implement the questionnaire to teachers across Saudi Arabia. In addition, the study focused on investigating EFL teachers' engagement in research reading and doing. Future research can explore teachers' perception that might affect their practices in doing research and the challenges of conducting classroom research. The present study can be also replicated in another sample of teachers of other languages or subjects. It is also noteworthy to examine other variables that might affect the motivation, self-confidence, and level of engagement of EFL teachers.

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