ATTITUDE AS A MEDIATING MECHANISM IN COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH AMONG LECTURERS: EVIDENCE FROM HANOI OPEN UNIVERSITY

Nguyen Thi Huong An[1], Nguyen Quynh Anh[1], Vu Thi Diem Thanh[1]
Email: huongan.nguyen@hou.edu.vn, ORCID: 0000-0003-3128-8070

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Abstract: *This study examines factors influencing collaborative research among lecturers at Hanoi Open University by testing the effects of perceived benefits, research self-efficacy, and technology support, with attitude as a mediator. Data were collected from 220 lecturers and analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). The results indicate that perceived benefits, research self-efficacy, technology support, and attitude have significant direct effects on collaborative research. In addition, attitude significantly mediates the effects of perceived benefits and research self-efficacy on collaborative research. These findings highlight the importance of strengthening lecturers' research confidence, clarifying the benefits of collaboration, and enhancing technology support to foster collaborative research in open higher education.*

Keywords: *collaborative research, higher education institution, perceived benefits, research self-efficacy, technology support*

I. Introduction

Collaborative research in higher education institutions is crucial for generating innovative solutions to complex problems. It enables academics from diverse fields to integrate expertise, strengthen interdisciplinary inquiry, and develop new methodologies (Thibault et al., 2023). Recent research also emphasizes the need to bridge knowledge systems through inclusive dialogue to reduce traditional academic silos (Thibault et al., 2023; Durante, 2022). Despite these benefits, collaborative research often faces barriers such as power dynamics and bureaucratic constraints that may hinder the selection and implementation of collaborative projects (Jung et al., 2021). Accordingly, a key gap remains in clarifying the underlying factors that foster or impede effective collaboration and in identifying strategies to overcome these barriers (Durante, 2022), particularly those that strengthen academics' self-confidence and research capabilities through collaboration (Livinți et al., 2021; Adekunle & Madukoma, 2022).

This study develops and tests a framework for collaborative research among lecturers at Hanoi Open University by examining the effects of perceived

[1] Hanoi Open University, Hanoi, Vietnam

benefits, research self-efficacy, and technology support on collaborative research behavior. More specifically, this study seeks to verify the mediating role of attitude in explaining how perceived benefits and research self-efficacy influence collaborative research among lecturers at Hanoi Open University. This research addresses the following questions:

(1) Do perceived benefits, research self-efficacy, technology support, and attitude affect lecturers' collaborative research behavior at Hanoi Open University?

(2) Does attitude mediate the relationships among perceived benefits, research self-efficacy, and lecturers' collaborative research at Hanoi Open University?

II. Literature review

2.1. Underpinning theory

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) developed by Davis (1989) explains how individuals' cognitive evaluations shape their attitudes and subsequently influence behavior. Although TAM was originally proposed to predict information technology adoption, its core logic has been widely extended to contexts in which behavior is increasingly facilitated by digital systems and depends on users' perceptions of usefulness, support, and confidence (Venkatesh & Davis, 2000). In the context of this study, TAM provides a relevant explanatory lens because collaborative research in open universities is increasingly supported by digital tools for communication, co-authoring, data sharing, and research coordination.

Perceived benefits reflect lecturers' evaluations of the usefulness of collaborative research, particularly in terms of access to expertise, research resources, and academic opportunities. Technology support represents the extent to which available digital infrastructure and platforms make collaborative research easier, smoother, and more manageable. Research self-efficacy is incorporated as an important complementary factor because lecturers who are confident in their research capability are more likely to perceive collaboration positively and to participate effectively in joint research activities.

TAM helps explain why lecturers who perceive collaborative research as beneficial, feel confident in their research competence, and receive adequate technology support are more likely to develop a favorable attitude toward collaboration. This attitude, in turn, increases their engagement in collaborative research behavior. Therefore, TAM offers an appropriate theoretical foundation for explaining how cognitive and contextual factors shape lecturers' collaborative research in open higher education settings.

2.2. Relationship between Perceived Benefits, Attitude & Collaborative Research

Perceived benefits, such as access to resources and improved research outcomes, motivate researchers to engage in collaborative research. However, prior studies suggest that this relationship is largely shaped by researchers' attitudes toward collaboration, which function as a key mediating mechanism (Osman et al., 2024). When researchers perceive clear advantages and hold favorable attitudes, they are more likely to participate in collaborative activities (Osman et al., 2024; Pérez-Morán et al., 2023). Attitudes

toward collaboration are further influenced by trust and confidence in collaborative processes, including perceptions of partnership effectiveness (Pérez-Morán et al., 2023). A positive attitude not only strengthens collaborative engagement but also enhances the perceived usefulness and satisfaction derived from collaborative activities (Muñoz-Carril et al., 2021). Accordingly, attitude is expected to play a central role in translating perceived benefits into actual collaborative research behavior (Li et al., 2021).

H_1: There is a relationship between perceived benefits and attitudes in collaborative research among lecturers.

H_2: There is a relationship between perceived benefits and collaborative research among lecturers.

H_3: There is a mediating effect of attitude on the relationship between perceived benefits and collaborative research among lecturers.

2.3. Relationship between Research Self-Efficacy, Attitude & Collaborative Research

Research self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their capability to perform behaviors required to achieve specific outcomes (Livinţi et al., 2021). Prior studies suggest that research self-efficacy is closely associated with more positive attitudes toward collaboration, as individuals who feel confident in their research competence are more willing to manage shared tasks, contribute effectively, and persist in collaborative settings (Livinți et al., 2021; Osman et al., 2024). In turn, a positive attitude serves as a key mechanism linking self-efficacy to actual engagement in collaborative research. Evidence from educational contexts further indicates that interventions enhancing self-efficacy tend to improve attitudes toward collaborative learning and professional collaboration, thereby strengthening cooperative behaviors (Osman et al., 2024). Accordingly, strengthening research self-efficacy is expected to foster favorable attitudes toward collaboration and, through this pathway, promote collaborative research.

H_4: There is a relationship between research self-efficacy and attitude in collaborative research among lecturers.

H_5: There is a relationship between research self-efficacy and collaborative research among lecturers.

H_6: There is a relationship between attitude and collaborative research among lecturers.

H_7: There is a mediating effect of attitude on the relationship between research self-efficacy and collaborative research among lecturers.

2.4. Relationship between Technology Support and Collaborative Research

Technology support plays a pivotal role in enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of collaborative research by enabling communication, resource sharing, and coordination among research teams through digital collaboration platforms (Schubert & Williams, 2022). Adequate technology infrastructure also strengthens knowledge-sharing mechanisms, which are essential for sustaining a collaboration ecosystem (Kwasnicki et al., 2019). Evidence from technology-supported collaborative learning and research activities further suggests that digital tools can facilitate collaborative processes by supporting joint information seeking, synthesis, and collective problem solving across contexts (Al-Rahmi et al., 2015; Muñoz-Carril et al., 2021).

Accordingly, technology support is expected to positively influence collaborative research.

H_8: There is a relationship between technology support and collaborative research among lecturers.

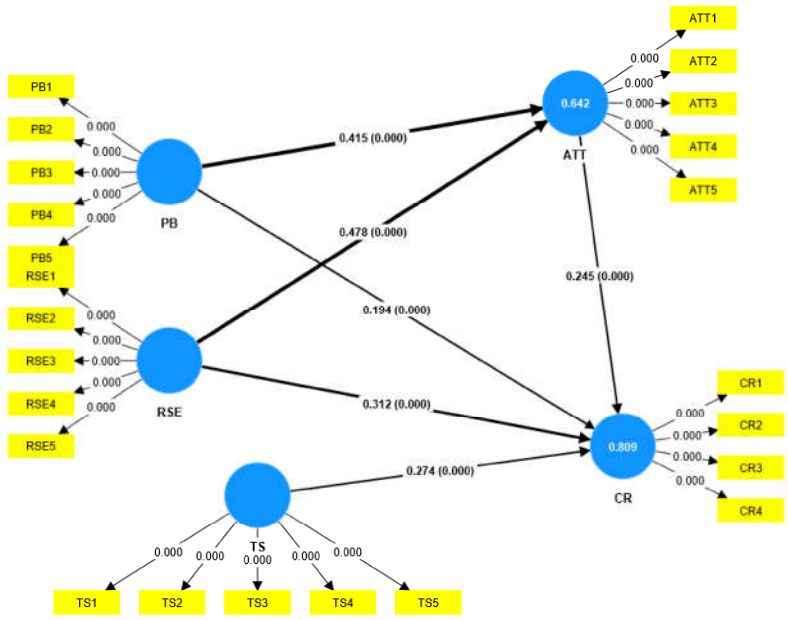

Figure 1. Proposed research model with PLS-SEM results

PB: Perceived benefits; RSE: Research self-efficacy; TS: Technology support; ATT: Attitude; CR: Collaborative Research.

III. Methodology

This study examines the direct effects of perceived benefits, research self-efficacy, and technology support on lecturers' collaborative research behavior at Hanoi Open University, with particular emphasis on testing attitude as a mediating variable. Data were collected through an online questionnaire from April to July 2024, and participant anonymity was assured. After data screening and cleaning, 220 valid responses were retained for analysis. The measurement model consisted of 24 observed variables across five constructs. Perceived Benefits was measured using five items adapted from Garg et al. (2021), Attitude using five items adapted from Chu and Chen (2016), and Collaborative Research using four items adapted from Al-Rahmi et al. (2015). Research self-efficacy was measured using a 5-item scale adapted from Kang et al. (2019), while technology support was assessed using five items adapted from Kwasnicki et al. (2019). All items were slightly reworded to fit the context of Hanoi Open University and were assessed using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The data were analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4, following Ringle et al. (2022).

The sample includes 220 lecturers, with females accounting for 67.73% and males 32.27%. Most respondents are aged 41-50 (50.00%) or 31-40 (33.64%), indicating a predominantly mid-career cohort. The sample represents diverse academic disciplines, with the largest proportions in Language (21.82%),

Information Technology (14.55%), Law (13.64%), Engineering Technology (13.18%), and Economics (11.82%). Regarding work experience, lecturers with 11-15 years (24.09%) and 16-20 years (20.00%) of experience constitute the majority, reflecting substantial professional experience among participants.

IV. Results and discussions

4.1. Common method bias

The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) has been used to evaluate the common method bias in the structural model. All VIF values were below 3.3, which provides preliminary evidence that common method bias is not a major threat; however, as with most self-report surveys, it cannot be fully ruled out (Kock, 2015).

Table 1. Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)

	VIF
PB -> ATT	1.587
PB -> CR	2.241
RSE -> ATT	1.587
RSE -> CR	2.419
ATT -> CR	3.247
TS -> CR	2.859

4.2. Measurement model analysis

This study employed partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) to examine the relationships among perceived benefits, research self-efficacy, technology support, attitude, and collaborative research, using SmartPLS 4 in line with prior methodological recommendations (Hair et al., 2017). Convergent and discriminant validity were assessed to evaluate construct reliability and measurement quality. As reported in Table 2, all constructs met the recommended thresholds for internal consistency and convergent validity, with Cronbach's alpha values exceeding 0.70 (Nunnally, 1979), composite reliability values above 0.70, and average variance extracted (AVE) values above 0.50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). In addition, discriminant validity was confirmed through cross-loading analysis, indicating adequate distinction among constructs. The results support the reliability and validity of the measurement model for assessing lecturers' collaborative research behavior.

Table 2. Evaluation of measurement model test results

	Items	Loadings	CA	CR	AVE
Attitude	ATT1	0.857	0.895	0.922	0.703
	ATT2	0.891			
	ATT3	0.810			
	ATT4	0.855			
	ATT5	0.775			
Collaborative research	CR1	0.919	0.939	0.956	0.846
	CR2	0.913			
	CR3	0.895			
	CR4	0.951			
Perceived benefit	PB1	0.923	0.954	0.964	0.845
	PB2	0.925			
	PB3	0.925			
	PB4	0.963			
	PB5	0.855			
Research Self-Efficacy	RSE1	0.954	0.940	0.955	0.811

	Items	Loadings	CA	CR	AVE
	RSE2	0.930			
	RSE3	0.930			
	RSE4	0.932			
	RSE5	0.742			
Technology support	TS1	0.730	0.938	0.952	0.800
	TS2	0.965			
	TS3	0.952			
	TS4	0.825			
	TS5	0.974			

Another step is to evaluate discriminant validity. Franke and Sarstedt (2019) recommended using the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio to measure discriminant validity in Variance-Based Structural Equation Modelling. The HTMT ratios for the constructs and the original sample are listed in Table 3. All fall below the 0.90 threshold. Therefore, discriminant validity is established for all constructs.

Table 3. Discriminant validity

	ATT	CR	PB	RSE	TS
ATT					
CR	0.868				
PB	0.753	0.781			
RSE	0.776	0.820	0.623		
TS	0.772	0.791	0.675	0.668	

4.3. Structural model analysis

Table 4. Path coefficients, f^2 and Hypothesis testing results

Hypothesis	Beta Coefficients	T statistics	P values	f2	LLCI 2.5%	ULCI 97.5%	Decision
H1: PB -> ATT	0.415	7.515	0.000	0.304	0.313	0.534	*Supported*
H2: PB -> CR	0.194	4.419	0.000	0.089	0.106	0.278	*Supported*
H3: PB -> ATT -> CR	0.102	4.273	0.000		0.061	0.157	*Supported*
H4: RSE -> ATT	0.478	7.499	0.000	0.403	0.336	0.588	*Supported*
H5: RSE -> CR	0.312	7.449	0.000	0.215	0.226	0.391	*Supported*
H6: ATT -> CR	0.245	5.380	0.000	0.098	0.154	0.332	*Supported*
H7: RSE -> ATT -> CR	0.117	4.703	0.000		0.073	0.171	*Supported*
H8: TS -> CR	0.274	6.392	0.000	0.149	0.187	0.353	*Supported*

The structural model was assessed using the bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples in SmartPLS 4 to examine the significance of the direct and indirect relationships in the proposed model. As presented in Table 4, all hypothesized direct paths are positive and statistically significant ($p < .05$). Specifically, perceived benefits, research self-efficacy, and technology support have significant positive effects on collaborative research, while perceived benefits and research self-efficacy also significantly influence attitude. Attitude, in turn, has a significant positive effect on collaborative research. The indirect effects reported in Table 4 further confirm that attitude significantly mediates the

relationships between perceived benefits and collaborative research, and between research self-efficacy and collaborative research. The effect sizes (f^2) range from 0.089 to 0.403, indicating small to large effects across the proposed relationships. In addition, the model explains 64.2% of the variance in attitude and 80.9% of the variance in collaborative research, suggesting substantial explanatory power.

4.4. Discussion

The findings provide strong support for the proposed model and suggest that collaborative research among lecturers is shaped by both cognitive and enabling factors, which is consistent with previous studies emphasizing the roles of perceived value, personal capability, and institutional support in fostering academic collaboration (Durante, 2022; Jung et al., 2021; Osman et al., 2024). Perceived benefits and research self-efficacy not only exert direct effects on collaborative research but also operate indirectly through attitude, confirming the important mediating role of lecturers' evaluations of collaboration, in line with prior evidence on the links among confidence, positive perceptions, and collaborative engagement (Li et al., 2021; Livinţi et al., 2021; Pérez-Morán et al., 2023). Technology support also shows a significant direct effect, indicating that digital infrastructure and research-related technological assistance remain important conditions for collaborative engagement at Hanoi Open University, which echoes earlier studies on the facilitating role of technology in collaborative work and knowledge sharing (Schubert & Williams, 2022; Thibault et al., 2023). The results suggest that lecturers are more likely to engage in collaborative research when they recognize the benefits of collaboration, feel confident in their research capability, and receive adequate technological support (Durante, 2022; Osman et al., 2024).

The perceived benefits factor, with a strong direct impact on attitude (H1, beta = 0.415) and collaborative research (H2, beta = 0.194), confirmed the relationship among perceived benefits, attitude, and collaborative research. The results indicated that the research process should be ensured to be carried out in a fair, transparent, and equitable manner. The research results are made available to all members. The lecturer's awareness correctively that collaboration could bring numerous benefits, such as increasing access to resources can reduce the cost of conducting research oneself, creating new ideas and perceptions by including a variety of group members, then lead to advanced solutions and the expansion of new models or theories; improving communication and collaboration could lead to faster progress and better results as well as better understanding of the field as a whole and identify areas of development. The universities can provide incentives to the lecturers and the faculties that can organize research collaborations with other universities or organizations domestically and worldwide. These programs can better inform lecturers about opportunities to work in a research collaborative and its benefits. Eventually, these will enhance the lecturers' attitudes toward collaborative research, which will transfer into their actual behavior.

Research Self-efficacy is another crucial factor that has a significant impact on both attitude (H4, beta = 0.478) and directly on collaborative research (H5, beta = 0.312). The research found that most lecturers are confident in their ability and tend to join in collaborative research

projects. Through rigorous training in research methodologies and statistical analysis, coupled with their subject-matter knowledge, researchers possess the skills to navigate complex datasets and interpret findings accurately and are more confident in research collaboration. According to Adekunle and Madukoma (2022), this confidence stems from their deep understanding of their disciplines, allowing them to approach data analysis competently, ultimately contributing to group joint achievement. Moreover, research on self-efficacy has been proven to have the highest impact on attitude compared to another construct, perceived benefit. So, open universities need to organize more training programs on research skills to improve lecturers' research self-efficacy. A growing number of workshops, seminars, and conferences must aim to improve lecturers' research skills and attitudes toward collaborative research.

The research result also highlights the direct and vital role of technology support in encouraging research collaboration among lecturers (H8, Beta = 0.274), as is consistent with the research above by Kwasnicki et al. (2019) and Al-Maadeed et al. (2021). Implementing technology support might help lecturers access information, communicate, share ideas on the research processes, and collaborate with each other. Technology helps to exchange knowledge and streamline processes, networks, and social events such as sandboxes, which might be as effective in nurturing collaborative relationships. Moreover, with the exponential development of research data, effective data sharing is principal; therefore, employing standardized and secure technology methods for data access, storage, and sharing is becoming more critical. This can not only help to ensure data integrity but also facilitate accessibility among team members. Consequently, the right choice of technology could make data management more well-organized, allowing the research team to emphasize analysis and interpretation efficiently.

4.5. Implications of the research

This study enhances understanding of collaborative research in higher education and provides clearer insights into the factors that shape lecturers' collaborative research behavior. The findings also suggest that TAM can serve as a useful explanatory lens for collaborative research, particularly when collaboration is increasingly mediated by digital platforms and shaped by lecturers' perceived benefits, research self-efficacy, technology support, and attitudes.

From the lecturers' perspective, the research permitted the members to self-reflect on the implications of their experience in collaborative research. This level of introspection allowed us to discover lecturers' concerns and emphasized the positive influence of working collaboratively in open universities (Muñoz-Carril et al., 2021).

4.6. Limitations and further research

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the cross-sectional design captures lecturers' perceptions and collaborative research behavior at a single point in time; therefore, it does not allow causal inferences or reflect how collaborative research may evolve over time. Second, the study relies on self-reported data, which may be affected by subjective evaluation and social desirability bias, although common method bias was assessed and found not to be a major concern. Third, the sample was drawn from lecturers

at Hanoi Open University, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other higher education institutions or open universities in Vietnam. Future research could employ longitudinal designs, incorporate additional data sources such as institutional records or collaborative outputs, and compare results across different universities and regions to provide a broader understanding of collaborative research in higher education.

V. Conclusion and recommendations

Collaborative research is the engine that propels scientific progress and innovation. It can lead to ground-breaking discoveries, innovative solutions, and a deeper understanding of complex issues. The path to successful collaborative research may be challenging, but it is undoubtedly worth the effort, as it holds the potential to drive significant advancements in human knowledge and understanding. The confirmation of the eight hypotheses in the proposed model allows the study to identify the factors that influence collaborative research among lecturers at Hanoi Open University, with the model explaining 80.9% of the variance in collaborative research and 64.2% of the variance in attitude as a mediating factor.

The findings indicate that perceived benefits, research self-efficacy, and technology support directly and positively influence lecturers' collaborative research behavior at Hanoi Open University. A notable contribution of this study is the verification of attitude as a mediating mechanism through which perceived benefits and research self-efficacy shape collaborative research among lecturers. This research provides valuable insights into how lecturers at Hanoi Open University can strengthen collaborative research practices. The findings confirm that collaborative research remains crucial for strengthening research performance at Hanoi Open University and may offer useful implications for similar higher education institutions.

Based on these findings, Hanoi Open University should strengthen institutional support for collaborative research by investing in digital collaboration infrastructure, expanding research training activities, and creating incentives for interdepartmental and interinstitutional collaboration. Similar higher education institutions may also consider these measures to foster a more supportive research environment for lecturers.

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VAI TRÒ TRUNG GIAN CỦA THÁI ĐỘ TRONG HOẠT ĐỘNG HỢP TÁC TRONG NGHIÊN CỨU KHOA HỌC CỦA GIẢNG VIÊN: THỰC NGHIỆM TẠI TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC MỞ HÀ NỘI

Nguyễn Thị Hương An[1], Nguyễn Quỳnh Anh[1], Vũ Thị Diễm Thanh[1]

Tóm tắt: *Nghiên cứu này phân tích các yếu tố ảnh hưởng đến hoạt động hợp tác trong nghiên cứu khoa học của giảng viên tại Trường Đại học Mở Hà Nội. Nghiên cứu tập trung xem xét vai trò của lợi ích cảm nhận, sự tự tin trong nghiên cứu và hỗ trợ công nghệ, đồng thời đánh giá tác động trung gian của thái độ đối với hoạt động hợp tác trong nghiên cứu. Dữ liệu được thu thập từ 220 giảng viên và phân tích bằng phương pháp mô hình cấu trúc tuyến tính bình phương tối thiểu từng phần (PLS-SEM). Kết quả cho thấy lợi ích cảm nhận, sự tự tin trong nghiên cứu, hỗ trợ công nghệ và thái độ đều có ảnh hưởng trực tiếp, có ý nghĩa thống kê đến hoạt động hợp tác trong nghiên cứu khoa học. Đồng thời, thái độ còn giữ vai trò trung gian trong mối quan hệ giữa lợi ích cảm nhận và hoạt động hợp tác trong nghiên cứu khoa học, cũng như giữa sự tự tin trong nghiên cứu và hoạt động này. Từ đó, nghiên cứu cho thấy việc nâng cao sự tự tin của giảng viên trong nghiên cứu, làm rõ lợi ích của hợp tác nghiên cứu và tăng cường hỗ trợ công nghệ là những điều kiện quan trọng để thúc đẩy hoạt động hợp tác trong nghiên cứu khoa học của giảng viên.*

Từ khóa: *hợp tác nghiên cứu, giảng viên, lợi ích cảm nhận, sự tự tin trong nghiên cứu, hỗ trợ công nghệ, thái độ*

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[1] Trường Đại học Mở Hà Nội, Hà Nội, Việt Nam