

Intrinsic and contextual drivers of agribusiness career intentions: extending UTAUT2 with parental, gender and academic moderators

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Abstract

Purpose – This study aimed to explore the factors influencing students' career intentions in agribusiness, focusing on intrinsic motivation as a mediation variable and external variables such as parental involvement, gender and departmental background as moderator variables. This study applies the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) to analyze how motivational factors shape career choices in this vital economic sector.

Design/methodology/approach – A quantitative research approach was adopted, using a structured questionnaire to collect data from 425 students across various departments. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was employed to test the relationships between UTAUT2 variables (performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, facilitating conditions, hedonic motivation, price value and habit), intrinsic motivation and career intention. Moderation analysis was also conducted to assess the impact of parental involvement, gender and departmental background.

Findings – Performance expectancy and habit significantly influenced intrinsic motivation, with habits also showing a strong direct effect on behavioral intentions. The other UTAUT2 variables had no significant effects. Intrinsic motivation did not significantly mediate most relationships, except for a partial mediation between performance expectancy and behavioral intention. Moderation analysis revealed that parental involvement, departmental background and gender influenced several key pathways. Notably, two-parent agribusiness backgrounds strengthened some motivational pathways, while gender and department moderated the effects of habit and intrinsic motivation on students' intentions. Female and business students reported lower behavioral intentions than their male and non-business counterparts. These findings underscore the contextual and demographic complexities that shape agribusiness career intentions.

Research limitations/implications – This study is limited to students in agribusiness and business programs, restricting generalizability to other fields. Self-reported data may introduce bias. Future research should use longitudinal designs and include diverse populations to explore evolving career intentions and external influences such as labor market dynamics.

Social implications – The findings provide valuable guidance for educators, career counselors and policymakers in designing targeted interventions to promote agribusiness careers. By fostering habitual engagement and considering the influence of family and gender, institutions can better support students in aligning their career aspirations with industry requirements.



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Originality/value – This study extends the application of the UTAUT2 model to the context of career intentions in agribusiness, offering novel insights into how intrinsic and extrinsic factors interact to shape students' career decisions. It also adds to the limited research on how familial and gender-based factors moderate these relationships.

Keywords UTAUT2, Agribusiness students, Business students, Structural equation model

Paper type Research article

Introduction

In the context of growing concerns over youth disengagement from the agricultural sector, the ability to attract young talent into agribusiness has emerged as a critical development priority—especially in emerging economies where agriculture remains foundational to food security and employment (Ikueomonisan *et al.*, 2022; Zaremohzzabieh *et al.*, 2022). Although agribusiness offers broad opportunities across production, processing, and innovation, students increasingly perceive it as outdated or inferior to more modern careers in technology and finance (Che Nawi *et al.*, 2022; Thephavanh *et al.*, 2023). This perception persists even among agriculture students, raising serious concerns about the future of agrifood systems (Rajabi *et al.*, 2012).

Existing literature has attempted to unpack agribusiness career intentions through well-established psychological models, notably the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), and Rational Choice Theory (e.g. Che Nawi *et al.*, 2022; Mohammad *et al.*, 2023; Musa *et al.*, 2021; Pliakoura *et al.*, 2022; Ridha *et al.*, 2017; Thephavanh *et al.*, 2023; Zaremohzzabieh *et al.*, 2022). These models clarify how attitudes, social norms, self-efficacy, and outcome expectations shape decision-making. However, most studies have adopted a fragmented approach. For example, while Che Nawi *et al.* (2022) employed the TPB to show the roles of attitude and control beliefs in agro-entrepreneurship, they did not explore how demographic and contextual factors interact with motivational variables. Similarly, Rajabi *et al.* (2012) applied SCCT to show that outcome expectations and self-efficacy strongly predict intentions, but their model lacked experiential and habitual constructs that are particularly relevant to career decisions in agriculture.

Moreover, most prior studies isolate psychological predictors without integrating them into broader structural models. Studies often examine intentions through either rational evaluations (e.g. expected outcomes) or social pressure (e.g. subjective norms); however, they rarely include emotional or habitual dimensions. For instance, Zaremohzzabieh *et al.* (2022) extended the TPB with sustainability beliefs but did not account for habits or hedonic orientation. Simultaneously, parental occupation, gender, and departmental affiliation are frequently treated as mere controls, rather than potential moderators that shape how students internalize career motivations (Thephavanh *et al.*, 2023). This piecemeal perspective overlooks the complexity of the interaction between internal motivations and contextual experiences in shaping intentions.

A related gap concerns the application of the UTAUT2 to career decision-making. Originally developed to explain technology adoption, UTAUT2 incorporates constructs such as performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, facilitating conditions, hedonic motivation, price value, and habit (Venkatesh *et al.*, 2012). Although UTAUT2 has proven robust across diverse behavioral domains, few studies have adapted it for non-technological intentions, such as career choice. However, its multidimensional structure—especially the inclusion of hedonic motivation and habit—makes it particularly suited to explaining how students form intentions in contexts like agribusiness, which blend emotional appeal, routine exposure, and perceived utility. This broader framework allows us to test not only direct effects but also how deeper motivations (e.g. intrinsic interest) and contextual enablers (e.g. family background, academic training) interact.

Against this backdrop, the present study proposes an integrated model that applies UTAUT2 to students' agribusiness career intention. The model introduces intrinsic motivation as a mediator and examines how parental involvement in agribusiness, academic major, and gender moderate structural relationships. Unlike prior research that tends to test direct effects in isolation, we investigate the sequential pathways through which motivational constructs

operate and test whether personal background factors condition the strength of these pathways. This approach builds on and addresses the limitations of earlier studies by [Che Nawi et al. \(2022\)](#), [Rajabi et al. \(2012\)](#), and [Zaremohzzabieh et al. \(2022\)](#), who did not model habits, intrinsic motivation, and demographic moderators simultaneously.

This study makes three key contributions. First, it extends the application of UTAUT2 beyond technology use to the context of career decisions. Second, it provides empirical insight into the role of intrinsic motivation as a mediating mechanism linking instrumental beliefs to behavioral intentions. Third, it highlights the importance of the demographic context—particularly parental occupation in agribusiness and gender—as moderators that shape career trajectories. Using PLS-SEM, the model tests both direct and indirect effects, offering a theoretically grounded, yet contextually responsive, account of youth engagement in agribusiness careers.

Conceptual framework and Hypothesis development

UTAUT2, or the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2, is an extended version of the original UTAUT model developed by [Venkatesh et al. \(2012\)](#). It is designed to explain user intentions and behaviors related to the acceptance and use of technology ([Tamilmani et al., 2021a, b](#)). UTAUT2 builds upon the original UTAUT by adding new variables and expanding its application to consumer settings, making it more comprehensive for studying technology adoption in both organizational and non-organizational contexts. The UTAUT2 model has performance expectancy, effort expectancy, facilitating conditions, social influence, hedonic motivation, price value, and habit as determinants of behavioral intentions. The study found that performance expectancy, effort expectancy, facilitating conditions, social influence, hedonic motivation, price value, and habit positively affect the intention to choose agribusiness as a future job.

- H1.* Performance expectancy, effort expectancy, facilitating conditions, social influence, hedonic motivation, price value, and habit positively affects behavioral intentions

Intrinsic motivation refers to engaging in an activity for inherent satisfaction rather than for external rewards ([Ryan and Deci, 2000](#)). When individuals are intrinsically motivated, they participate in tasks because they find them enjoyable, challenging or interesting. This type of motivation arises from humans' natural tendency to explore, learn, and grow. [Osei et al. \(2022\)](#) study exhibited that all determinants of intention in UTAUT2 influenced intrinsic motivation. This study hypothesizes that intrinsic motivation mediates the relationship between behavioral intentions and their determinants.

- H2.* Intrinsic motivation mediates the relationship between UTAUT2 predictors (performance expectancy, effort expectancy, facilitating conditions, social influence, hedonic motivation, price value, and habit) and students' behavioral intentions to pursue careers in agribusiness.

Several demographic variables have been shown to affect career intentions, including parental involvement in agribusiness, educational background, and gender ([Kaki et al., 2023](#); [Muenks et al., 2020](#); [Simbeko et al., 2023](#)). Gender in UTAUT2 acts as a moderating variable ([Venkatesh et al., 2012](#)). For categorical variables, such as parental involvement in agribusiness, educational background, and gender, moderators will estimate the effect of the subgroup separately. In this study, the subgroups for parental involvement in agribusiness were no parents, one parent, and both parents were included. Consequently, this study proposes that parental involvement in agribusiness, educational background, and gender moderate the paths between the variables in the proposed model.

- H3.* Parental involvement in agribusiness, educational background, and gender moderate the structural relationships within the proposed model.

All hypotheses are shown in [Figure 1](#).

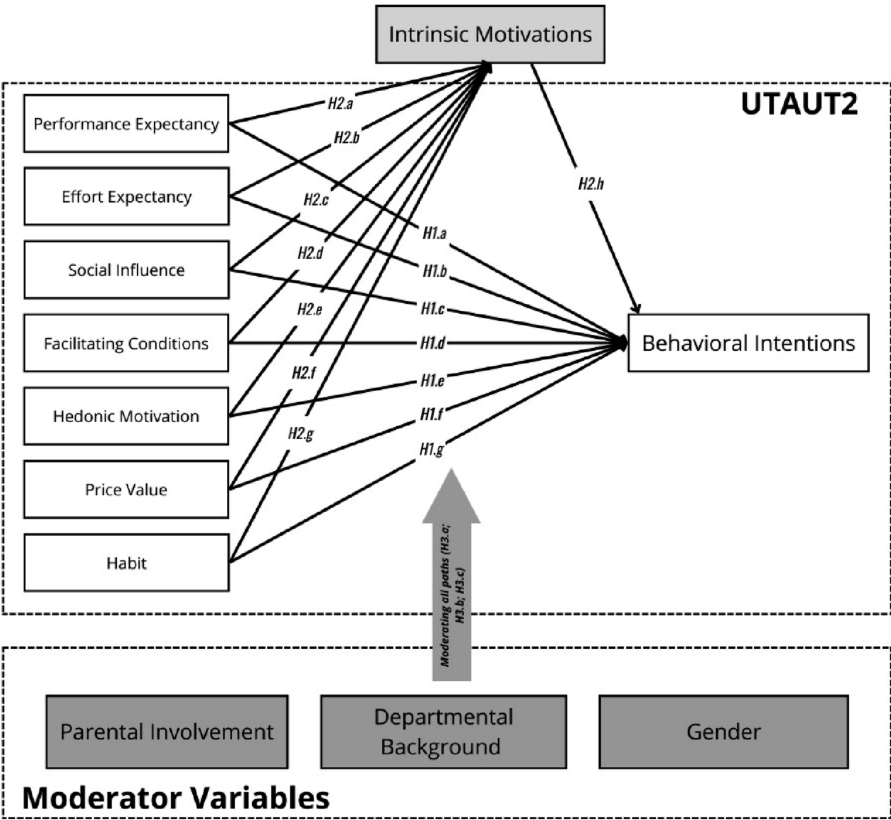


Figure 1. Research framework. Source: Created by authors

Materials and methods

Research design

This study employed a quantitative, non-experimental research design using a cross-sectional approach. This study aimed to assess the relationships between various predictors and university students’ behavioral intentions in a specific area of interest. A non-experimental design was chosen because the study sought to observe and analyze naturally occurring variations among participants without manipulating any variables.

Participants

The study included 425 university students who completed the surveys. The sample was diverse in terms of sex, university type, department, academic year, and parental involvement in agribusiness (Table 1). Of the participants, 19.80% ($n = 84$) were male, and 80.20% ($n = 341$) were female. The majority of the participants were enrolled in public universities (68.90%, $n = 293$), while 31.10% ($n = 132$) attended private universities. In terms of academic background, most students were from business-related departments (64.20%, $n = 273$), followed by those in agribusiness (20.20%, $n = 86$), and other fields (15.50%, $n = 66$). The distribution across academic years was relatively balanced, with 23.30% ($n = 99$) freshmen, 28.20% ($n = 120$) sophomores, 25.40% ($n = 108$) juniors, and 23.10% ($n = 98$) seniors.

Table 1. Distributions of participants based on their demographic variables

Variable	Count	Proportion
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	84	19.80%
Female	341	80.20%
<i>University type</i>		
Private University	132	31.10%
Public University	293	68.90%
<i>Department</i>		
Agribusiness	86	20.20%
Business	273	64.20%
Others	66	15.50%
<i>Years</i>		
Freshman	99	23.30%
Sophomore	120	28.20%
Junior	108	25.40%
Senior	98	23.10%
<i>Parental involvement in agribusiness</i>		
None	184	43.30%
One of Them	158	37.20%
Both	83	19.50%

Source(s): Authors' own creation/work

Regarding parental involvement in agribusiness, 43.30% ($n = 184$) of the participants reported no parental involvement in agribusiness, 37.20% ($n = 158$) had one parent involved, and 19.50% ($n = 83$) had both parents involved in the field. These demographic characteristics were important for understanding the sample diversity and how these factors might influence participants' agribusiness and career intentions.

The gender distribution, with a majority of female respondents, mirrors the actual enrollment patterns in the participating institutions, where female students dominate agribusiness and business-related programs at the participating institutions. Therefore, the sample was representative of the source population. To account for any potential influence of this gender imbalance, gender was included as a moderating variable in the structural model to assess its role in shaping students' motivational pathways toward agribusiness careers in the study.

Data collection and analysis

Data were collected using a self-administered, electronic survey. The survey was distributed using online platforms and social media to a broad range of students. The use of an electronic form allowed for efficient data collection and increased accessibility for participants, particularly those in remote or busy locations. To ensure a high response rate, participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and their participation was both voluntary and anonymous. Informed consent was obtained from all participants at the beginning of the survey.

The data were screened for completeness and accuracy. Of the 452 responses received, 425 were fully completed and included in the final analysis. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to summarize the participants' demographics and the distribution of key variables. To test the research hypotheses, structural equation modeling (SEM) was employed to examine the relationships between UTAUT2-related variables, the mediating factors, and career intentions. A moderation analysis was also conducted to assess the impact of parental background, departmental alignment, and gender on hypothesized relationships.

Measures

This study used an adapted version of the UTAUT2 model (Venkatesh *et al.*, 2012) to assess students' intentions toward agribusiness. The constructs included Performance Expectancy (e.g. "Starting an agribusiness increases my chances of achieving important goals in my life"), Effort Expectancy (e.g. "I feel that running an agribusiness is easy to manage"), Social Influence (e.g. "People close to me think that I should start an agribusiness."), and Facilitating Conditions (e.g. "I have the necessary resources to start an agribusiness."). Other variables included Hedonic Motivation (e.g. "Running an agribusiness will excite me."), Price Value (e.g. "The cost of starting an agribusiness is quite affordable."), Habit (e.g. "I have been involved in managing an agricultural business before."), and Behavioral Intention (e.g. "I intend to start and run an agribusiness in the future.").

Intrinsic motivation was measured using items from the Work Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation Scale (WEIMS) developed by (Tremblay *et al.*, 2009). Intrinsic motivation items were specifically adapted to assess participants' intrinsic motivation regarding their intention to pursue a career in agribusiness. An exemplar item to measure intrinsic motivation is as follows: "I experience enthusiasm when engaging with agribusiness concepts in class and contemplate their application in my future professional endeavors." Both scales were revised to ensure relevance to the agribusiness sector, ensuring that the terminology and context were aligned with the participants' experiences and career considerations in this field.

All items from the UTAUT2 constructs and the WEIMS were adapted to reflect the agribusiness context by rewording terminology and examples to align with agribusiness activities and concepts. Two experts in agricultural education and behavioral research reviewed the adapted items to ensure their clarity, contextual appropriateness, and content validity. The Likert scales used ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree), depending on the construct being measured.

Result

The results of this study are based on Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) analysis, which is divided into two main parts: the measurement model and the structural model (Hair *et al.*, 2022; Sarstedt *et al.*, 2022). The measurement model assessed the reliability and validity of the constructs, including performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, facilitating conditions, hedonic motivation, price value, habit, behavioral intention, and intrinsic motivation. Subsequently, the structural model evaluated the relationships between these constructs and students' agribusiness intentions, tested the proposed hypotheses, and provided insights into the strength and significance of these relationships.

Measurement model

The measurement model assesses three metrics to examine the reliability and validity of the constructs: (1) Cronbach's alpha, (2) average variance extracted (AVE), and (3) the heterotrait-monotrait criterion (HTMT) (Hair *et al.*, 2019). The results of the measurement model for all constructs used in this study are presented in Table 2.

The first metric of the measurement model, Cronbach's alpha, was used to assess the reliability of the construct, with a value of at least 0.700 indicating reliability (Hair *et al.*, 2019). Table 2 shows that all the constructs used in this study were reliable. The second metric, average variance extracted (AVE), was used to assess convergent validity, demonstrating the extent to which all items collectively reflect a single variable. The established criterion for Average Variance Extracted (AVE) is a value of at least 0.50, indicating that the variance of a latent variable is reflected by a minimum of 50% of the variance of its associated items (Dash and Paul, 2021). The results showed that all the constructs had adequate convergent validity. The final metric, HTMT, was employed to assess the discriminant validity of the constructs, indicating the extent to which each construct differed from others. The rule of thumb for the

Table 2. Reliability and validity of constructs

Constructs	Cronbach's α	AVE	HTMT
Performance expectancy	0.942	0.897	0.859
Effort expectancy	0.946	0.861	0.863
Social influence	0.922	0.928	0.868
Facilitating conditions	0.898	0.766	0.883
Hedonic motivation	0.927	0.932	0.889
Price value	0.866	0.790	0.883
Habit	0.924	0.868	0.889
Intrinsic motivation	0.935	0.886	0.887
Behavioral intentions	0.943	0.898	0.887

Source(s): Authors' own creation/work

HTMT is a maximum value of 0.900 (Franke and Sarstedt, 2019; Henseler *et al.*, 2015). All constructs exhibited HTMT values below 0.900, indicating that each construct was a distinct measure for assessing different attributes.

The measurement model demonstrated that all constructs utilized in the model were valid and reliable, indicating their suitability for investigating the relationships between the constructs in the structural model.

Structural model

Structural models were employed to examine the inner model comprising the paths connecting the constructs based on the proposed research framework. Path coefficients were investigated for significance using bootstrapping methods with at least 10,000 replications (Streukens and Leroi-Werelds, 2016).

Table 3 presents the bootstrapping results for path coefficients. Performance expectancy had a significant positive effect on intrinsic motivation ($\beta = 0.519$, $p = 0.030$) and an indirect effect on behavioral intention through intrinsic motivation (indirect $\beta = 0.103$, $p = 0.030$), although its direct effect was not significant. Habit also had significant direct effects on intrinsic motivation ($\beta = 0.388$, $p = 0.047$) and behavioral intentions ($\beta = 0.579$, $p = 0.001$), and the total effect was strong ($\beta = 0.650$). These results suggest that habit and performance

Table 3. Mediation analysis on the relationships between variables

Path	Path coefficient		Total	p
	Direct	Indirect		
Perf. Expectancy $\rightarrow$ Int. Motivations	0.519		0.519	0.030
Perf. Expectancy $\rightarrow$ Behav. Intentions	-0.015	0.103	0.088	0.579
Eff. Expectancy $\rightarrow$ Int. Motivations	-0.063		-0.070	0.803
Eff. Expectancy $\rightarrow$ Behav. Intentions	0.114	-0.015	0.099	0.558
Soc. Influence $\rightarrow$ Int. Motivations	0.132		0.132	0.529
Soc. Influence $\rightarrow$ Behav. Intentions	0.083	0.048	0.131	0.437
Facil. Conditions $\rightarrow$ Int. Motivations	0.138		0.138	0.356
Facil. Conditions $\rightarrow$ Behav. Intentions	-0.164	0.030	-0.134	0.342
Hed. Motivation $\rightarrow$ Int. Motivations	-0.056		-0.056	0.849
Hed. Motivation $\rightarrow$ Behav. Intentions	0.233	-0.012	0.221	0.311
Price Value $\rightarrow$ Int. Motivations	0.218		0.218	0.389
Price Value $\rightarrow$ Behav. Intentions	-0.219	-0.002	-0.221	0.223
Habit $\rightarrow$ Int. Motivations	0.388		0.388	0.047
Habit $\rightarrow$ Behav. Intentions	0.579	0.071	0.650	0.001
Int. Motivations $\rightarrow$ Behav. Intentions	0.217		0.217	0.183

Source(s): Authors' own creation/work

expectancy play a meaningful role in shaping behavioral intentions, albeit through different mechanisms of action.

Effort expectancy, social influence, facilitating conditions, hedonic motivation, and price value exhibited non-significant effects on both intrinsic motivation and behavioral intentions. Although intrinsic motivation did not have a significant direct effect on behavioral intentions ($\beta = 0.217, p = 0.183$), it was a significant mediator in the relationship between performance expectancy and behavioral intentions.

Table 4 presents the results of the moderation analysis of parental involvement in agribusiness. Among all the tested pathways, having one parent in agribusiness moderated only one relationship significantly: it weakened the effect of hedonic motivation on behavioral intentions ($\beta = -0.341, p = 0.048$). This suggests that university students with one agribusiness parent and high enjoyment-oriented motivation for the field may exhibit a lower intention to pursue agribusiness careers.

Table 4. Moderation effect of participant’s parent’s career in agribusiness on the relationships between variables

Path	Path coefficient		Total	p
	Direct	Indirect		
<i>One parent in agribusiness</i>				
1 Parent in Agrib. → Int. Motivations	−0.077		−0.077	0.219
1 Parent in Agrib. → Behav. Intentions	0.053	−0.017	0.036	0.508
1 Parent in Agrib. × Perf. Expectancy → Int. Motivations	0.025		0.025	0.855
1 Parent in Agrib. × Perf. Expectancy → Behav. Intentions	0.102	0.007	0.109	0.354
1 Parent in Agrib. × Eff. Expectancy → Int. Motivations	−0.004		−0.004	0.979
1 Parent in Agrib. × Eff. Expectancy → Behav. Intentions	0.001	−0.001	0.000	0.998
1 Parent in Agrib. × Soc. Influence → Int. Motivations	−0.005		−0.005	0.978
1 Parent in Agrib. × Soc. Influence → Behav. Intentions	−0.029	−0.015	−0.044	0.749
1 Parent in Agrib. × Facil. Conditions → Int. Motivations	0.009		0.009	0.947
1 Parent in Agrib. × Facil. Conditions → Behav. Intentions	0.070	0.002	0.072	0.537
1 Parent in Agrib. × Hed. Motivation → Int. Motivations	0.126		0.126	0.476
1 Parent in Agrib. × Hed. Motivation → Behav. Intentions	−0.341	0.048	−0.293	0.048
1 Parent in Agrib. × Price Value → Int. Motivations	−0.081		−0.083	0.623
1 Parent in Agrib. × Price Value → Behav. Intentions	0.157	−0.018	0.139	0.158
1 Parent in Agrib. × Habit → Int. Motivations	−0.150		−0.150	0.359
1 Parent in Agrib. × Habit → Behav. Intentions	−0.065	−0.033	−0.098	0.469
1 Parent in Agrib. × Int. Motivations → Behav. Intentions	0.168		0.168	0.197
<i>Both parents in agribusiness</i>				
2 Parents in Agrib. → Behav. Intentions	0.062	−0.018	0.044	0.533
2 Parents in Agrib. → Int. Motivations	−0.084		−0.084	0.267
2 Parents in Agrib. × Perf. Expectancy → Int. Motivations	−0.068		−0.068	0.681
2 Parents in Agrib. × Perf. Expectancy → Behav. Intentions	−0.093	−0.014	−0.107	0.467
2 Parents in Agrib. × Eff. Expectancy → Int. Motivations	0.034		0.034	0.833
2 Parents in Agrib. × Eff. Expectancy → Behav. Intentions	0.046	0.007	0.053	0.721
2 Parents in Agrib. × Soc. Influence → Int. Motivations	−0.337		−0.337	0.048
2 Parents in Agrib. × Soc. Influence → Behav. Intentions	−0.120	−0.055	−0.175	0.308
2 Parents in Agrib. × Facil. Conditions → Int. Motivations	0.310		0.310	0.021
2 Parents in Agrib. × Facil. Conditions → Behav. Intentions	0.031	0.060	0.091	0.581
2 Parents in Agrib. × Hed. Motivation → Int. Motivations	0.324		0.324	0.048
2 Parents in Agrib. × Hed. Motivation → Behav. Intentions	−0.194	0.062	−0.132	0.536
2 Parents in Agrib. × Price Value → Int. Motivations	−0.225		−0.225	0.046
2 Parents in Agrib. × Price Value → Behav. Intentions	0.048	−0.049	−0.001	0.995
2 Parents in Agrib. × Habit → Int. Motivations	0.013		0.013	0.943
2 Parents in Agrib. × Habit → Behav. Intentions	−0.055	0.003	−0.052	0.771
2 Parents in Agrib. × Int. Motivations → Behav. Intentions	0.351		0.351	0.048
Source(s): Authors’ own creation/work				

Having two parents in agribusiness significantly moderated five relationships. First, it strengthened the link between facilitating conditions and intrinsic motivation ($\beta = 0.310$, $p = 0.021$), suggesting that students from agribusiness households internalize supportive environments more strongly as motivation. Second, it amplified the effect of hedonic motivation on intrinsic motivation ($\beta = 0.324$, $p = 0.048$). Third, it weakened the impact of social influence on intrinsic motivation ($\beta = -0.337$, $p = 0.048$), indicating a lower reliance on external social pressure among students deeply embedded in agribusiness families than in other families. Fourth, it negatively moderated the effect of price value on intrinsic motivation ($\beta = -0.225$, $p = 0.046$), implying a more cautious or skeptical orientation toward material incentives than younger students. Finally, it positively moderated the link between intrinsic motivation and behavioral intentions ($\beta = 0.351$, $p = 0.048$), suggesting that intrinsic motivation drives career decisions more strongly among those with dual parental role models in the field.

Table 5 presents the moderating effects of the participants' departmental backgrounds. Two significant moderation effects emerged for students enrolled in the agribusiness program. First,

Table 5. Moderation effect of participant's department on the relationships between variables

Path	Path coefficient		Total	<i>p</i>
	Direct	Indirect		
<i>Agribusiness department</i>				
Agribusiness Dept. → Int. Motivation	0.160		0.160	0.198
Agribusiness Dept. → Behav. Intentions	0.007	0.039	0.046	0.609
Agribusiness Dept. × Eff. Expectancy → Int. Motivation	−0.012		−0.012	0.920
Agribusiness Dept. × Eff. Expectancy → Behav. Intentions	−0.092	−0.004	−0.096	0.596
Agribusiness Dept. × Perf. Expectancy → Int. Motivation	−0.113		−0.113	0.659
Agribusiness Dept. × Perf. Expectancy → Behav. Intentions	0.140	−0.025	0.115	0.527
Agribusiness Dept. × Soc. Influence → Int. Motivation	−0.043		−0.043	0.859
Agribusiness Dept. × Soc. Influence → Behav. Intentions	0.021	−0.010	0.011	0.949
Agribusiness Dept. × Facil. Conditions → Int. Motivation	−0.131		−0.131	0.470
Agribusiness Dept. × Facil. Conditions → Behav. Intentions	0.108	−0.028	0.080	0.609
Agribusiness Dept. × Hed. Motivation → Int. Motivation	0.266		0.266	0.381
Agribusiness Dept. × Hed. Motivation → Behav. Intentions	−0.003	0.058	0.055	0.810
Agribusiness Dept. × Price Value → Int. Motivation	0.106		0.106	0.616
Agribusiness Dept. × Price Value → Behav. Intentions	−0.034	0.023	−0.011	0.949
Agribusiness Dept. × Habit → Int. Motivation	−0.228		−0.228	0.346
Agribusiness Dept. × Habit → Behav. Intentions	−0.417	−0.050	−0.467	0.014
Agribusiness Dept. × Int. Motivations → Behav. Intentions	0.384		0.384	0.010
<i>Department business</i>				
Business Dept. → Int. Motivation	0.007		0.007	0.937
Business Dept. → Behav. Intentions	−0.120	0.001	−0.119	0.050
Business Dept. × Perf. Expectancy → Int. Motivation	−0.090		−0.090	0.651
Business Dept. × Perf. Expectancy → Behav. Intentions	0.158	−0.019	0.139	0.353
Business Dept. × Eff. Expectancy → Int. Motivation	−0.109		−0.109	0.575
Business Dept. × Eff. Expectancy → Behav. Intentions	−0.144	−0.024	−0.168	0.274
Business Dept. × Soc. Influence → Int. Motivation	0.058		0.058	0.750
Business Dept. × Soc. Influence → Behav. Intentions	0.026	0.013	0.039	0.776
Business Dept. × Facil. Conditions → Int. Motivation	0.046		0.046	0.759
Business Dept. × Facil. Conditions → Behav. Intentions	0.078	0.010	0.088	0.503
Business Dept. × Hed. Motivation → Int. Motivation	0.129		0.129	0.632
Business Dept. × Hed. Motivation → Behav. Intentions	−0.210	0.028	−0.182	0.379
Business Dept. × Price Value → Int. Motivation	0.030		0.030	0.864
Business Dept. × Price Value → Behav. Intentions	−0.017	0.006	−0.011	0.946
Business Dept. × Habit → Int. Motivation	−0.111		−0.111	0.511
Business Dept. × Habit → Behav. Intentions	−0.166	−0.024	−0.190	0.232
Business Dept. × Int. Motivations → Behav. Intentions	0.384		0.384	0.001

Source(s): Authors' own creation/work

agribusiness enrollment weakened the relationship between habit and behavioral intentions ($\beta = -0.417, p = 0.014$), suggesting that habitual exposure may not consistently translate into intention among students familiar with the domain. Second, intrinsic motivation had a stronger positive effect on behavioral intentions among agribusiness students ($\beta = 0.384, p = 0.010$), indicating that personal interest and value alignment were more consequential in this group.

Similarly, business students also exhibited a significant positive moderating effect between intrinsic motivation and behavioral intentions ($\beta = 0.384, p = 0.001$), highlighting a similar pattern whereby intrinsic drivers strongly predict agribusiness career intentions. However, overall, business students showed lower behavioral intentions toward agribusiness careers than students from other departments ($\beta = -0.120, p = 0.050$), possibly due to weaker exposure or perceived sectoral relevance.

Table 6 presents the moderation analysis of gender, with “being female” as a moderator. The results revealed four significant effects. First, female participants exhibited significantly lower behavioral intentions toward agribusiness careers than their male counterparts ($\beta = -0.203, p = 0.001$), suggesting a gender-based disparity in sector appeal.

Second, being female negatively moderated the effect of performance expectancy on intrinsic motivation ($\beta = -0.293, p = 0.045$), indicating that women’s internal motivation for agribusiness was less responsive to perceived usefulness or expected success in the field. Third, performance expectancy had a weaker direct effect on behavioral intentions among female students ($\beta = -0.213, p = 0.049$), implying that beliefs about agribusiness performance do not translate into strong intentions for women as they do for men.

Fourth, facilitating conditions showed a weaker influence on intrinsic motivation among female participants ($\beta = -0.215, p = 0.041$), suggesting that environmental support and infrastructure are less likely to enhance motivation among women in this context. Taken together, these findings emphasize that while female students may perceive agribusiness positively, the structural and psychological mechanisms linking these beliefs to career intentions function differently than those of male students.

Table 6. Moderation effect of participant’s gender on the relationships between variables

Path	Path coefficient		Total	<i>p</i>
	Direct	Indirect		
Being Female → Behav. Intentions	−0.193	−0.010	−0.203	0.001
Being Female → Int. Motivations	−0.045		−0.045	0.512
Being Female × Perf. Expectancy → Int. Motivations	−0.293		−0.293	0.045
Being Female × Perf. Expectancy → Behav. Intentions	−0.149	−0.064	−0.213	0.049
Being Female × Eff. Expectancy → Int. Motivations	0.070		0.070	0.595
Being Female × Eff. Expectancy → Behav. Intentions	0.080	0.015	0.095	0.458
Being Female × Soc. Influence → Int. Motivations	−0.056		−0.056	0.742
Being Female × Soc. Influence → Behav. Intentions	−0.080	−0.012	−0.092	0.526
Being Female × Facil. Conditions → Int. Motivations	−0.215		−0.215	0.041
Being Female × Facil. Conditions → Behav. Intentions	0.040	−0.047	−0.007	0.960
Being Female × Hed. Motivation → Int. Motivations	0.173		0.173	0.374
Being Female × Hed. Motivation → Behav. Intentions	0.101	0.037	0.138	0.408
Being Female × Price Value → Int. Motivations	0.088		0.088	0.596
Being Female × Price Value → Behav. Intentions	0.173	0.019	0.192	0.160
Being Female × Habit → Int. Motivations	0.123		0.123	0.476
Being Female × Habit → Behav. Intentions	−0.022	0.027	0.005	0.975
Being Female × Int. Motivations → Behav. Intentions	−0.111		−0.111	0.472
Source(s): Authors’ own creation/work				

Discussion

This study offers important insights into the factors shaping students' career intentions in agribusiness, focusing on how intrinsic motivation and external variables such as parental involvement, gender, and departmental background influence their decisions. Agribusiness, a critical sector for both local and global economies, requires fresh talent to sustain growth and innovation. Understanding the motivations that drive students to consider careers in this field is essential for educators, policymakers, and industry leaders to attract young professionals to this field. The Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) framework, which incorporates a range of motivational factors, provides a comprehensive lens through which to explore career intention. In this study, the UTAUT2 model was adapted to the context of career choice by examining key factors such as performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, facilitating conditions, hedonic motivation, price value and habit. These variables were assessed for their direct and indirect effects on students' career intentions, with intrinsic motivation playing a central role in the analysis.

UTAUT2-variables in career intentions

The results of this study show that several UTAUT2 variables play an important role in shaping students' career intentions in agribusiness. Performance expectancy, or the belief that a career in agribusiness offers valuable benefits and fulfilling opportunities, positively influenced students' intrinsic motivation. This result is in line with studies conducted by [Wulf and Lewthwaite \(2016\)](#) and [Tomovic \(2001\)](#), suggesting that enhanced expectations for future performance can strengthen the coupling of goals to actions, thereby boosting intrinsic motivation. This is achieved through motivational and attentional factors that propel cognitive and motor systems in productive directions, preventing self-focused states that hinder performance.

In the agribusiness context, this suggests that students who perceive agribusiness as a promising and rewarding field are more likely to develop an internal interest in pursuing agribusiness careers. However, performance expectancy did not directly influence behavioral intentions, which contrasts with prior research using the UTAUT2 model (for example, [Maruping et al., 2017](#); [Pan and Gao, 2021](#); [Sharma et al., 2024](#); [Yu et al., 2021](#)). Although students view agribusiness as promising, this perception alone does not always lead to a strong intention to pursue it as a career.

Effort expectancy, social influence, facilitating conditions, and hedonic motivation also did not have significant direct effects on career intentions, although they contributed in varying ways to intrinsic motivation. One possible explanation is that students may not perceive agribusiness as technologically complex or socially pressured, diminishing the relevance of effort expectancy and social influence. Furthermore, hedonic motivation may play a lesser role in career decisions driven by practical considerations rather than enjoyment. The non-significant effect of price suggests that financial considerations alone may not strongly motivate students' agribusiness career intentions, potentially because other factors, such as job security or personal interest, exert a stronger influence. These findings diverge from some prior studies using UTAUT2 in technological contexts and highlight the importance of considering sector-specific dynamics in career decision-making (e.g. [Khan et al., 2023](#); [Safitri et al., 2024](#); [Zhao, 2024](#)).

Interestingly, price value showed a negative total effect on behavioral intentions despite a small positive indirect effect through intrinsic motivation. This suggests that while perceiving agribusiness as affordable might slightly enhance intrinsic motivation, it is insufficient to overcome broader concerns about economic risk, income instability, or career prestige in the sector. These opposing effects may reflect the complex financial considerations students associate with agribusiness careers. For instance, students may recognize that initial costs to enter agribusiness could be low, but they might simultaneously perceive high financial uncertainty or low income potential in the long term ([Cirhuza Mwolo and Martinez Espinosa,](#)

2024; Gunashekhar *et al.*, 2024), leading to hesitation in pursuing such careers. This dual perception could explain why price value exerts mixed effects—encouraging interest on one hand, but diminishing firm career intentions on the other.

However, habit stood out as a key factor with strong positive effects on both intrinsic motivation and behavioral intention. This result is consistent with prior studies showing that habits have the strongest effect on behavioral intention (García de Blanes Sebastián *et al.*, 2024; Moorthy *et al.*, 2019). This finding suggests that students accustomed to certain behaviors or routines related to agribusiness, such as engaging with agricultural technologies or environments, are more likely to consider a career in this sector. Overall, while some UTAUT2 variables, such as performance expectancy and habit, strongly impact intrinsic motivation, their direct influence on career intentions is less clear, highlighting the complexity of decision making in this context.

Intrinsic motivation mediation effect

Intrinsic motivation was anticipated to mediate the relationship between UTAUT2 variables and students' career intentions. The analysis revealed that performance expectancy and habit significantly influenced intrinsic motivation, suggesting that students who believe in the value of agribusiness or have established routines related to the field are more motivated. However, the results were only partially consistent with Osei *et al.* (2022) where all exogenous variables significantly influenced intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation did not affect students' career intentions in contrast to Zaremohzzabieh *et al.* (2022) study. The results show that intrinsic motivation did not play a significant role. Although intrinsic motivation helps explain students' interest in agribusiness, it may not lead them to pursue a career in the field. Instead, career intentions may depend on a broader combination of factors, including external opportunities and personal goals (Mitchell, 2015), rather than internal motivations. The lack of a significant mediation effect of intrinsic motivation challenges the assumption that internal drivers alone can determine career choices, emphasizing the need to consider external contexts and support systems in shaping students' career paths. To further understand how individual characteristics shape these dynamics, we examined the moderating roles of parents, departments and gender.

Moderation effect of parents, department, and gender

Parents as moderators

This study explored the role of parents in moderating the relationships between UTAUT2 variables and students' career intentions in agribusiness, focusing on whether having one or two parents involved in agribusiness affects these dynamics. The findings indicate that having one parent in agribusiness negatively moderates the relationship between hedonic motivation and the behavioral intentions of students. This suggests that university students who derive pleasure or enjoyment from agribusiness-related activities but have only one parent working in agribusiness are less likely to pursue a career in the field.

In contrast, having two parents in agribusiness had several significant moderating effects. First, it positively moderated the relationship between facilitating conditions and intrinsic motivation. This implies that students with both parents working in agribusiness who perceive the industry as offering the necessary resources and support are more likely to feel internally motivated to pursue a career in this sector. This could be because they are more familiar with agribusiness opportunities and the workings of the industry. However, having two agribusiness parents negatively moderated the relationship between price value and intrinsic motivation, meaning that students with two agribusiness-involved parents who perceive high economic returns from agribusiness are less likely to be intrinsically motivated. This could indicate that students who grow up in agribusiness households may not find the economic benefits compelling because they are more familiar with the potential risks and rewards of the industry. Finally, having two parents in agribusiness had a positive moderating effect on the relationship

between intrinsic motivation and behavioral intentions, suggesting that students with both parents in agribusiness and high intrinsic motivation were more likely to translate that motivation into a solid intention to pursue an agribusiness career.

Additionally, two-parent involvement significantly weakens the effect of social influence on intrinsic motivation. This implies that students who are deeply embedded in agribusiness households tend to rely less on peer or societal expectations when forming motivation, as their exposure to the sector already provides sufficient information and experiential grounding.

Simultaneously, two-parent involvement significantly strengthened the effect of hedonic motivation on intrinsic motivation. In other words, when both parents work in agribusiness, students who enjoy agribusiness-related experiences are more likely to internalize this enjoyment into meaningful personal motivation. This suggests a reinforcing mechanism between affective engagement and motivational development within agribusiness family.

The negative moderating effect of parental involvement on agribusiness has been contrasted with prior research showing that parental involvement influences children's career choices, especially in agricultural-related fields (Abdul Rahaman *et al.*, 2023; Dorot and Davidovitch, 2023). The weakening of the relationship between hedonic motivation and agribusiness career intentions of students with one parent can be explained through the lens of family expectations and social identity (Chen *et al.*, 2023; Liu and McMahon, 2016). When only one parent is involved in agribusiness, the student may experience a lower level of familial pressure or expectations to pursue a career in the field, allowing them the freedom to explore other career options. While they may enjoy agribusiness-related activities, this enjoyment does not strongly translate into career intention, as their connection to the sector feels less binding. In contrast, students with both parents in agribusiness experience a stronger familial connection and sense of duty to the sector, which neutralizes the role of hedonic motivation in career decision making. This dual parental influence creates a more balanced, neutral effect, in which career intentions are shaped more by familial expectations than by personal enjoyment, preventing any significant strengthening or weakening of the relationship between motivation and career choice.

Departmental background as a moderator

The moderating effect of departmental background was examined by categorizing participants into two groups: agribusiness program participants and business program participants. The analysis revealed two key moderating effects on agribusiness. First, enrollment in the agribusiness program negatively moderated the relationship between habit and behavioral intentions, meaning that agribusiness students with stronger habits related to the field exhibited lower intention to pursue a career. This finding suggests that students in agribusiness programs, despite being highly familiar with the sector, might not always translate their ingrained habits into stronger career intentions, possibly due to over-familiarity or a lack of perceived novelty and challenges in the field.

Second, enrollment in the agribusiness program positively moderated the relationship between intrinsic motivation and behavioral intention. Agribusiness students with higher intrinsic motivation were more likely to demonstrate stronger intentions to pursue careers. This highlights the importance of aligning intrinsic interests and motivations with career intentions, particularly in a specialized agribusiness education context.

Similarly, students enrolled in business programs demonstrated a significant moderating effect, although it was confined to one path. Business program enrollment positively moderated the relationship between intrinsic motivation and behavioral intention. Business students with higher intrinsic motivation toward agribusiness careers were more likely to develop stronger behavioral intentions to pursue careers in agribusiness. However, the results indicated that, overall, business students showed lower career intentions in agribusiness than their counterparts in agribusiness programs. This could be due to the role of behavioral control

related to their knowledge in agribusiness (Ismail *et al.*, 2020; Mohammad *et al.*, 2023; Roy, 2023). Business students may lack exposure to agribusiness opportunities, leading to lower career intention in the field.

Gender as a moderator

The moderating effect of gender on career intentions in agribusiness revealed significant differences. Female student status exhibited negative moderating effects on several relationships in the model. First, female students with higher performance expectancy (the belief that career success in agribusiness is achievable) demonstrated lower intrinsic motivation and weaker behavioral intentions toward agribusiness careers. Although female students may view agribusiness as promising, this does not always increase their motivation to pursue it. This may reflect a gap between external expectations and internal drivers, possibly influenced by social or cultural factors.

Second, female students with higher perceptions of facilitating conditions (such as support structures and resources available for agribusiness) also exhibited lower intrinsic motivation to choose agribusiness as a career. This finding suggests that despite perceiving a supportive environment, female students may still feel less motivated to engage in agribusiness careers, potentially due to factors such as gender stereotypes or a lack of role models in the field.

Additionally, female students with stronger performance expectancy also showed weaker behavioral intentions than their male counterparts, reinforcing the notion that perceived career advantages do not automatically convert to motivation or intention among women. Furthermore, the moderating effect of gender weakened the relationship between facilitating conditions and intrinsic motivation, suggesting that female students may interpret enabling environments differently, possibly because of perceptions of cultural barriers or unequal access.

Additionally, female students exhibited lower career intentions in agribusiness than their male counterparts. This result is supported by prior research showing that males have higher engagement in agriculture-related fields than females (Minyangu *et al.*, 2021; Mulei *et al.*, 2020). Females also perceive agribusiness as a less prestigious and financially rewarding career compared to other sectors and hinder them from pursuing careers in agricultural fields (Prasetyaningrum *et al.*, 2022). Another potential barrier to female participation in agriculture-related fields is the patriarchal land inheritance system (Ogunjimi *et al.*, 2023). These factors may discourage female students from pursuing careers in agribusiness despite having the necessary qualifications or motivation.

In summary, the moderating effects of parents, departmental background, and gender provide valuable insights into how students' career intentions in agribusiness are shaped by various personal and contextual factors. Parental involvement, particularly with two parents in agribusiness, plays a significant role in shaping intrinsic motivation and behavioral intentions, while the departmental background highlights the different pathways that agribusiness and business students follow. However, gender emerged as a significant moderator, with female students demonstrating lower intrinsic motivation and career intentions in agribusiness than male students. These findings underscore the importance of considering family context, educational background, and gender-specific challenges when designing interventions to foster career aspirations in the agribusiness sector.

These findings suggest that interventions aimed at promoting agribusiness careers must be multidimensional, addressing not only individual motivation but also structural and social influences. Tailored strategies that consider gender, family background, and academic orientation are essential for closing the intention–action gap in this sector.

Conclusion

This study examined the factors influencing students' career intentions in agribusiness, focusing on intrinsic motivation and the moderating roles of parental involvement, gender, and departmental background. By extending the UTAUT2 framework to the context of career choice, the findings provide valuable insights into the complex interplay between the internal and external factors that shape students' decisions in this critical sector.

The results revealed that intrinsic motivation is influenced by performance expectancy and habit, highlighting the importance of how useful it seems and what students are used to when fostering interest in agribusiness careers. However, intrinsic motivation did not directly mediate the relationship between UTAUT2 variables and career intentions, suggesting that internal drivers alone are insufficient to determine career choice. External factors such as opportunities, support systems, and personal goals play crucial roles in shaping intentions.

Parental involvement significantly moderates these dynamics. Students with two agribusiness parents exhibit stronger intrinsic motivation and a greater likelihood of translating motivation into career intentions, whereas those with one parent show weaker connections between enjoyment and career intentions. Departmental background further moderates these relationships, with agribusiness students displaying distinct dynamics influenced by habit and intrinsic motivation, while business students exhibit lower overall career intentions in agribusiness. Gender also emerged as a significant moderator, with female students demonstrating lower intrinsic motivation and career intentions due to societal and cultural barriers than their male counterparts.

These findings underscore the multifaceted nature of career decision-making in the agribusiness sector. While intrinsic motivation is important, external influences such as parental involvement, gender norms, and educational contexts are pivotal in guiding career intention. Educators, policymakers, and industry leaders must implement targeted strategies to attract young talent to the agribusiness sector. This should include promoting gender inclusivity, raising awareness of career opportunities in agribusiness, leveraging familial support systems, and aligning educational experiences with students' intrinsic interests in the field. By addressing these factors, the agribusiness sector can inspire the next generation of professionals to ensure sustainable growth and innovation. However, career decisions are not shaped solely by psychological and familial factors; national labor market realities, such as limited job availability in agribusiness, income uncertainty, and perceived low prestige, may also discourage students from translating their motivation into intention. These macro-level dynamics remain underexplored in the present study, highlighting the need for future research to integrate structural labor and income indicators into behavioral models of career intentions.

Limitations and future research

This study had some limitations. First, the sample was drawn exclusively from students enrolled in agribusiness and business-related programs in the university. While this focus allows for deeper insight into the intentions of students already somewhat exposed to the agricultural domain, it limits the generalizability of the findings to students in other disciplines or to non-student youth. Additionally, while the gender distribution in our sample reflects actual enrollment patterns in the participating institutions, the overrepresentation of female respondents may limit the generalizability of our findings to broader student populations, particularly regarding gender differences in career intention.

Future studies should expand the sample to include students from diverse academic backgrounds, including those from non-agricultural faculties and youth outside the higher education system. Such diversity would allow for a more comprehensive understanding of how perceptions and motivations toward agribusiness careers vary across different population segments.

Second, although this study used a robust analytical approach and a theoretically grounded model, the cross-sectional nature of the data prevented causal inferences. Longitudinal studies

could further clarify how motivation and contextual factors evolve over time to shape agribusiness career trajectories.

Finally, while the model tested a set of well-established predictors from UTAUT2, future work could incorporate additional constructs that are more specific to career decision-making, such as personal values, career adaptability, and risk tolerance. These additions could enhance the explanatory power and offer more nuanced guidance for interventions.

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