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NEGOTIATION STYLE PREFERENCES AMONG FUTURE AGRIBUSINESS PROFESSIONALS*

Preferencias por estilos de negociación entre futuros profesionales de los agronegocios
Preferências de estilos de negociação entre futuros profissionais do agronegócio

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ABSTRACT
The withdrawal of government intervention and the inherent challenges of agriculture as an economic activity make negotiation indispensable for farmers and professionals in this sector. The objective of the study was to determine whether a predominant negotiation style exists in the preferences of students trained under the discipline of agribusiness, and to explain the underlying reasons for such a preference. A mixed-methods research approach was adopted to analyze the student body of an undergraduate agribusiness program in Mexico. The study administered a questionnaire to 86 participants, and conduced in-depth interviews with eight of them. The study identifies a negotiation style that clearly predominates in participants' preferences, namely the *tough relationship builder* as referred to in the literature. This style stands out for its performance, efficiency, and the level of satisfaction it generates in the counterpart. The underlying reasons for this preference are associated with professional education in agribusiness, as well as with family education, which includes observation and/or participation in family businesses. Factors are also identified that lead to a preference for negotiation styles—whether less or more competitive—other than the one most prevalent among the students.

KEYWORDS
Agricultural education, agricultural enterprises, Latin America, management, rural

RESUMEN
La desintervención de los gobiernos y las adversidades inherentes a la agricultura como actividad económica hacen que negociar sea imprescindible para agricultores y profesionales asociados con este sector. El objetivo del estudio fue determinar si existe un estilo de negociación predominante en las preferencias de estudiantes que se forman bajo la disciplina de los agronegocios, y explicar los motivos subyacentes a tal preferencia. Para ello, se adoptó un enfoque de investigación mixta para analizar a la matrícula de un programa de licenciatura en agronegocios en México. Luego, se aplicó un cuestionario a 86 participantes y se realizaron entrevistas a profundidad con ocho de ellos. El estudio encuentra un estilo de negociación que predomina claramente en las preferencias de los participantes, el cual es nombrado en la literatura como *tough relationship builder.* Este estilo destaca por su desempeño, eficiencia y nivel de satisfacción que produce en la contraparte. Los motivos que subyacen a la preferencia se asocian con la educación profesional en materia de agronegocios y con la educación recibida en casa, que incluye la observación y/o participación en negocios familiares. También se identifican factores que derivan en la preferencia de otros estilos de negociación menos o más competitivos que el de mayor prevalencia en los estudiantes.

PALABRAS CLAVE
Educación agrícola, empresas agropecuarias, Latinoamérica, gestión, áreas rurales.

RESUMO
A retirada da intervenção governamental e as adversidades inerentes à agricultura enquanto atividade econômica tornam a negociação indispensável para agricultores e profissionais vinculados a este setor. O objetivo do estudo foi determinar se existe um estilo de negociação predominante nas preferências de estudantes formados na disciplina de agronegócios e explicar as razões subjacentes a tal preferência. Para isso, adotou-se uma abordagem de pesquisa de métodos mistos para analisar o corpo discente de um curso de graduação em agronegócios no México. Logo, aplicou-se um questionário a 86 participantes e realizaram-se entrevistas em profundidade com oito deles. O estudo identifica um estilo de negociação claramente predominante nas preferências dos participantes, *tough relationship builder,* conforme referido na literatura. Esse estilo se destaca pelo desempenho, pela eficiência e pelo nível de satisfação que gera na contraparte. As razões subjacentes a essa preferência estão associadas à formação profissional em agronegócios, bem como à formação familiar, que inclui a observação e/ou participação em negócios familiares. Identificaram-se também fatores adicionais que conduzem à preferência por outros estilos de negociação, sejam eles menos ou mais competitivos do que o de maior prevalência nos estudantes.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE
Educação agrícola, empresas agropecuárias, América Latina, gestão, áreas rurais.

Introduction

The word negotiation has its etymological roots in the Latin expressions *Negare otium*, meaning "to deny leisure," and *Negotium*, referring to business, work, and any activity requiring effort and attention. Human beings have engaged in negotiation throughout their entire history. Over the course of 300,000 years, *Homo sapiens* has adopted four approaches to negotiation: imagination, power, markets, and mutual interests (Graham, 2019). Anthropology posits that for approximately 290,000 years, human survival relied on imagination, which, when applied collectively, enabled agreements on how to confront common natural threats such as cold, hunger and wild animals. Later, with the development of agriculture about 10,000 years ago, the negotiation paradigm shifted dramatically, adopting power as the basis for resolving disputes over borders and access to key resources such as water and farmland. Subsequently, in 1776, Adam Smith's publication of The Wealth of Nations gave rise to the concept of market competition, whereby market forces prevailed as mechanisms through which individuals could persuade others. Finally, after World War II, the world was reconfigured around two blocs led by two superpowers—the United States and the Soviet Union. Within this framework emerged the paradigm of mutual interests, advanced by the American School of Social Psychology, which emphasized conflict resolution through verbal exchange.

Negotiation is defined as the social process through which two or more interdependent parties make decisions, allocate resources or resolve disputes (Brett et al., 2017). Two of the most widely studied aspects in the negotiation literature are the negotiation process and its phases, and the behavior adopted by negotiators (Preuss and van der Wijst, 2017). With respect to the process, it has been represented in phases that vary in number and content depending on the authors referenced. One of the most widely accepted representations is the four-phase model proposed by Adair and Brett (2005), which distinguishes the following stages: first, the positioning of the parties; second, the identification and discussion of issues; third, the formulation of solutions; and fourth, the construction of the agreement.

With respect to negotiators' behavior, literature distinguishes between negotiation tactics and styles. Tactics are behaviors adopted by negotiators to achieve their objectives (Brett et al., 2017). Research identifies two predominant tactics among negotiators: competitive and collaborative. The competitive tactic is associated with low trust and relies on persuasion and offers aimed at extracting value from the counterpart (a win–lose game), whereas the collaborative tactic is associated with high trust and relies on information exchange to create value and reach an agreement that benefits all parties (a win–win game) (Kong et al., 2014). However, in practice, negotiators often combine both tactics, and such combinations enable them to achieve better outcomes (Heunis et al., 2024). When these combinations of tactics are consistently displayed throughout negotiation processes, they give rise to negotiation styles (Preuss and van der Wijst, 2017).

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Very few studies have identified negotiation styles. One such study is that of Preuss and van der Wijst (2017), who, interestingly, identified five styles employed by 75.4% of the participants within a sample of 256 students in Germany and the Netherlands. The most frequently adopted style, chosen by 36.3% of participants, was labeled *extreme problem solver*. The remaining four styles—*wolf in sheepskin*, *back stabber*, *tough relationship builder* and *hardline*—were adopted by 10.8%, 10.4%, 9.6%, and 8.3% of the participants, respectively. Among these styles, the *tough relationship builder* stands out as it achieved the highest overall performance according to the measures applied by Preuss and van der Wijst (2017), including individual gains, efficiency in reaching agreements and satisfaction generated in the counterpart.

In the field of agriculture, negotiation is an unexplored topic. There is an important reason that explains the lack of studies. Until the 1990s, agriculture was an economic sector highly dependent on governments, which intervened through policies and programs related to price control, the provision of agricultural inputs and technical assistance to farmers, and the purchase of production through state-owned enterprises (Islas-Moreno et al., 2026). As a result, farmers focused their attention on production tasks and did not need to negotiate as occurs in market-oriented economic activities (Dias et al., 2019). However, the paradigm shifted with the economic liberalization of agricultural markets. For only the past couple of decades, farmers have been recognized as entrepreneurs and as businesswomen and businessmen (McElwee, 2006).

Negotiation is highly important for farmers, not only because, as businesspeople and without the protection of the government, they now have the necessity to engage in it. As an economic activity, agriculture faces adversities such as sharp price fluctuations in products and inputs, strong power asymmetries among participants in agri-food value chains, farmers' low levels of formal education and managerial training, and the high perishability of agricultural goods (Dias et al., 2019; Sandhu et al., 2024). All these factors make it necessary for farmers and professionals associated with agriculture to adopt effective negotiation practices to ensure the sustainability and profitability of their economic activities.

As a result of the economic liberalization of agriculture, undergraduate and postgraduate programs emerged under the discipline of agribusiness. Evidence of this can be found in the Eduniversal portal, which annually ranks the world's top 50 master's programs in the category of Agribusiness & Food Industry Management. According to the 2024 ranking, eight of the top 50 master's programs are offered by universities in Latin America: four in Argentina (Universidad Austral, Universidad de Buenos Aires, Universidad Católica de Córdoba, and Universidad del Cema), two in Peru (Universidad ESAN and Universidad San Ignacio de Loyola), one in Chile (Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile), and one in Uruguay (Universidad ORT). This highlights the importance that has been placed in the region on developing human resources with managerial and negotiation skills within the field of agriculture.

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The objective of the present study was to determine whether a predominant negotiation style exists in the preferences of agribusiness students and to explain the underlying reasons for such a preference. The analyzed population consisted of 86 students enrolled in an undergraduate program related to the field of agribusiness in Mexico. Quantitative and qualitative research techniques were combined to achieve this objective. The methodological procedures are explained in detail in the following section. Subsequently, the quantitative and qualitative results generated by the study are presented, along with their discussion within the framework of negotiation knowledge and its relevance in the field of agriculture. Finally, the last section of the article sets out the study's conclusions.

Methodology

The study adopted a mixed-methods research approach (Hernández Sampieri et al., 2014); that is, quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis techniques were combined to determine whether a particular negotiation style predominates in the preferences of agribusiness students and to explain the underlying reasons for such a preference. The study population consisted of the student body enrolled in an undergraduate program in Agribusiness Management in Mexico. During the first data collection period, from September 2024 to March 2025, the enrollment comprised a total of 90 students, of whom 86 participated in the study. They completed a questionnaire administered in person at the university facilities under the guidance and support of the article's authors. The questionnaire was administered in groups of 5 to 10 individuals to ensure sufficient space and minimize distractions or peer influence on participants' responses.

The questionnaire was structured into two sections. The first section gathered general information about the students, including name, age, gender, years of work experience, level of academic progress (eight semester levels), place of origin (rural or urban), and whether or not the participant's family owned an agricultural enterprise. The second section presented the five negotiation styles shown in Table 1, from which participants were asked to select one according to their preferences. These styles are those identified by Preuss and van der Wijst (2017), based on the four-phase negotiation process proposed by Adair and Brett (2005). For instance, the *wolf in sheepskin* style employs collaborative tactics during the first two phases and then shifts to competitive tactics in the third and fourth phases. The names of the negotiation styles were not disclosed to participants in order to prevent bias in their selection.

Table 1. Negotiation styles examined among agribusiness students
Tabla 1. Estilos de negociación examinados entre estudiantes de agronegocios.

Negotiation style	Phase 1: Initial positioning and familiarization with the counterpart	Phase 2: Discussion of topics and expression of preferences and interests	Phase 3: Generation of solutions, launching offers and persuasion	Phase 4: Review of details to finalize the agreement
Extreme problem solver	Collaborative	Collaborative	Collaborative	Collaborative
Wolf in sheepskin	Collaborative	Collaborative	Competitive	Competitive
Back stabber	Collaborative	Collaborative	Collaborative	Competitive
Tough relationship builder	Collaborative	Collaborative	Competitive	Collaborative
Hardline	Collaborative	Competitive	Competitive	Competitive

Source: own elaboration from Preuss and van der Wijst (2017). Fuente: elaboración propia a partir de Preuss y van der Wijst (2017).

The information obtained from the questionnaires was coded and stored in a database constructed using SPSS version 25. With the aid of this software, statistical techniques were applied, including frequency counts, analysis of variance (ANOVA), multiple mean comparison (Scheffé test), and proportion comparison (Chi-square test), considering negotiation style as the grouping variable. These procedures made it possible to identify the existence of one or more predominant styles in students' preferences and to detect potential factors that motivate them.

The qualitative phase of the study consisted of in-depth interviews with participants selected based on the variables identified in the quantitative phase as potential motives associated with preferences. To ensure greater richness and validation of the motives underlying preferences, interviewees were strategically selected according to the conditions represented by the four quadrants in Figure 1. A total of eight participants were interviewed in depth, two from each of the four quadrants to allow for replication and contrast of arguments (De Massis and Kotlar, 2014). Among the potential interviewees, those whose characteristics of supportiveness and communication skills provided greater opportunities to extract richer empirical evidence were chosen (Stake, 1999).

The interviews were conducted face-to-face and individually during August 2025 on the university premises. Guiding questions were used to explore the reasons for preferring and selecting a negotiation style, the strategy employed to discard other styles, and additional questions formulated in relation to variables associated with potential factors underlying these preferences. Accordingly, four interview guides were developed, one for each type of participant selected. The interview guides

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are presented in detail in Appendix 1. All interviews were audio-recorded and stored on a digital platform with the prior consent of the interviewees. The interviews lasted an average of 23 minutes. The most illustrative testimonies were included in the results in order to empirically enrich the study (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007).

Figure 1. Strategy for selecting interviewees
Figura 1. Estrategia para seleccionar a los entrevistados

		Does she/he meet the conditions of the motives potentially associated with preferences?	
		Yes	No
Does she/he choose the predominant negotiation style(s)?	Yes	I. Interviewee selected to confirm and enrich the premises	II. Interviewee selected to explore other motives associated with preferences
	No	III. Interviewee selected to explore other motives associated with preferences	IV. Interviewee selected to confirm and enrich the premises

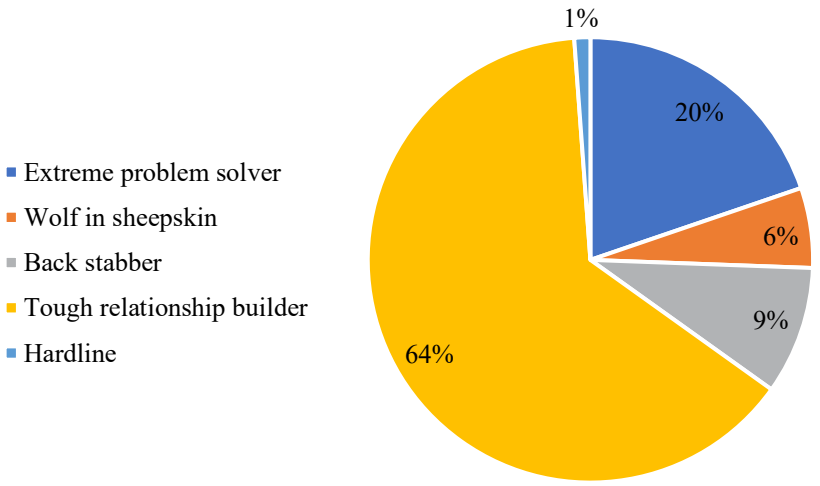
Source: own elaboration using data collected in 2024 and 2025. Fuente: elaboración propia en base a datos colectados en 2024 y 2025.

Results and discussion

Quantitative phase: identification of preferences

Figure 1 shows the preferences of agribusiness students regarding the negotiation styles analyzed. The preferred style was the *tough relationship builder*, with 55 of the 86 students surveyed (64%) choosing this style. The second most preferred style was the *extreme problem solver*, with 17 of the 86 participants (20%). Of the remaining 14 students, eight (9%) preferred the *back stabber* style, five (6%) the *wolf in sheepskin*, and only one (1%) the *hardline*. The predominance of the *tough relationship builder* style in preferences is clear, and for this reason, it deserves greater attention in the study.

Figure 2. Negotiation styles preferred by agribusiness students
Figura 2. Estilos de negociación preferidos por estudiantes de agronegocios



Source: own elaboration using data collected in 2024 and 2025. Fuente: elaboración propia en base a datos colectados en 2024 y 2025.

Table 2 presents the characteristics of agribusiness students according to their preferred negotiation style. The *hardline* style was removed, as only one case was recorded, thereby allowing the application of ANOVA, Scheffé multiple mean comparison, and Chi-square proportion comparison tests. As shown in the comparison of quantitative variables, no significant differences were found among students in terms of age, level of academic progress or years of work experience ($p > 0.05$). Therefore, the preference for the *tough relationship builder* style — the predominant one — does not appear to be influenced by these personal and academic attributes.

With respect to categorical variables, no statistically significant differences were detected ($p > 0.05$) regarding gender, place of origin or family ownership of an agricultural enterprise. This indicates that there is no strong statistical evidence to assert that the preference for the *tough relationship builder* style depends on belonging to a specific gender (female or male), having a particular origin (rural or urban), or having a family-owned agricultural enterprise. Although no conclusive statistical support was found, the comparison of proportions suggests a greater inclination toward preferring the *tough relationship builder* style among students from rural backgrounds and those whose families own an agricultural enterprise.

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Table 2. Characteristics of agribusiness students according to their preferred negotiation style

Tabla 2. Características de los estudiantes de agronegocios de acuerdo con su estilo de negociación preferido

Quantitative variables	Extreme problem solver (n=17)	Wolf in sheeps-kin (n=5)	Back stabber (n=8)	Tough relationship builder (n=55)
Age (years)	20.9 a	22.0 a	19.4 a	20.9 a
Curriculum advance-ment (eight levels)	3.3 a	6.0 a	3.2 a	4.2 a
Work experience or family business expe-rience (years)	2.1 a	2.0 a	2.1a	2.0 a
Categorical variables	Extreme problem solver	Wolf in sheepskin	Back stabber	Tough relationship builder
Gender (p=0.86)				
Female (n=49)	20.4%	4.1%	10.2%	65.3%
Male (n=36)	19.4%	8.3%	8.3%	63.9%
Origin (p=0.30)				
Rural (n=43)	16.3%	7.0%	4.7%	72.1%
Urban (n=42)	23.8%	4.8%	14.3%	57.1%
Existence of an agri-cultural business in the family (p=0.39)				
No (n=48)	20.8%	8.3%	12.5%	58.3%
Yes (n=37)	18.9%	2.7%	5.4%	73.0%

*For quantitative variables, equal letters per row indicate statistical equality ($p > 0.05$) according to the ANOVA and Scheffe tests. For categorical variables the *p*-value corresponds to the chi-square test. Source: own elaboration using data collected in 2024 and 2025. Para las variables cuantitativas, letras iguales por fila indican igualdad estadística ($p > 0.05$) según las pruebas ANOVA y Scheffé. Para las variables categóricas, el valor *p* corresponde a la significancia de la prueba de Chi-cuadrada. Fuente: elaboración propia en base a datos colectados en 2024 y 2025.

Qualitative phase: explanation of preferences

Based on the indications identified through the statistical analysis and according to the conditions established in Figure 1, in-depth interviews were conducted with two participants (S1 and S2) who met the criteria of (i) preferring the *tough relationship builder* negotiation style and (ii) being of rural origin with a family-owned agricultural enterprise; two participants (S3 and S4) who met the criteria of (i) preferring the *tough relationship builder* style and (ii) being of urban origin without a family-owned agricultural enterprise; two participants (S5 and S6) who met the criteria of (i) preferring a negotiation style other than *tough relationship builder* and (ii) being of rural origin with a family-owned agricultural enterprise; and two participants (S7 and S8) who met the criteria of (i) preferring a negotiation style other than *tough relationship builder* and (ii) being of urban origin without a family-owned agricultural enterprise.

First, we confirmed that those who chose the *tough relationship builder* negotiation style believe that it is necessary to compete only minimally, but at a strategic moment in the negotiation process—namely, in the third phase.

> It is good to collaborate at the beginning, but, although it may sound harsh, in phase three—when generating solutions, making offers and persuading—you must fight for what you want to achieve. And it is good to close in a way that benefits both parties. (S1)

> I like that in a negotiation we both end up satisfied, but at the moment when the offer is made and money becomes involved, you must benefit your own side. At the beginning, it is good to build trust; you should only compete when it is necessary. (S2)

> In the third phase, when offers are made and persuasion takes place, it is important to compete because we can obtain better prices and greater profits. Moreover, if I am always collaborative, the counterpart may think I am submissive and could take advantage of me. At the end of the negotiation, competing no longer makes sense—it would be overly aggressive. (S3)

> I chose to compete only in the third phase because that is when I must ensure that the value of my product or service is recognized. Competing in the final stage would lead to an aggressive closure that harms the future relationship. (S4)

Of the four interviewees who did not choose the *tough relationship builder* style, three opted for the *extreme problem solver* and one for the *wolf in sheepskin*. Those who selected the *extreme problem solver* reported perceiving competition as

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the last of their alternatives when negotiating and therefore adopted a style that avoids competition in any phase of the negotiation process.

> I do not like to compete; I prefer to collaborate and not regard people as rivals. At certain moments you must compete, but that would be the last thing I would do. (S5)

> I follow a philosophy of making proposals, but that does not mean that what I propose must necessarily be adopted; it is only a possibility. I prefer that we move forward together based on common needs. For me, negotiation is not about competing, but about jointly finding a solution. (S7)

> I do not like to compete. I am a person who has always cared about what others think, and when negotiating I would not want the other person to believe that I am trying to take advantage. I would even be willing to give in rather than compete. (S8)

In contrast, the interviewee who chose the *wolf in sheepskin* style believes that one should compete more than in the *tough relationship builder* style.

> I chose my style (*wolf in sheepskin*) because it is good to be friendly at first, but starting from phase three—where solutions are generated, offers are made and persuasion takes place—one must be competitive. I do not like the tough relationship builder style because, from my perspective, it concedes in the final phase. I believe that in the last two phases you should steer the negotiation toward where you want to take it. (S6)

As noted in Figure 1, the testimonies of interviewees S1, S2, S7 and S8 were expected to confirm and enrich the premises, which, based on the quantitative analysis, suggest that rural origin and having a family agricultural enterprise influence the preference for and selection of the *tough relationship builder* negotiation style. However, according to the interviewees' statements, rural origin does not appear to be a clear determinant of preferences for this negotiation style, as those who selected it did not attribute their choice to being of rural origin.

> Knowledge and skills (including those related to negotiation) do not come on their own; whether you are from a rural or an urban background, you can acquire them if you seek them. (S1)

> I do not believe that (rural) origin influences my negotiation style. There are rural places, such as the one where I live, that offer similar opportunities to those in the city. (S2)

Likewise, no relationship is identified between the non-selection of the *tough relationship builder* style and urban origin. "I do not consider that living in the city gives me advantages or disadvantages for negotiating, nor does it influence the way I negotiate" (S8).

In contrast, having a family agricultural enterprise does appear to influence the way of negotiating, specifically fostering a preference for the *tough relationship builder* negotiation style. One interviewee even shared an example of how she applied this style in her family agricultural enterprise.

> What has influenced (my negotiation preferences) has been observing how my father and uncle negotiate and the results they achieve. I believe my uncle is a *tough relationship builder*, and I find such people interesting. (S2)

> At my uncles' fodder business, I like to earn the customers' trust and build a connection, but I once had to confront one of them quite firmly. I had to defend my product and convince him that the poor fattening performance was due to his having purchased old and malnourished sheep, and not because of any deficiency in the feed we sell him. He was not entirely convinced, but he continues to buy feed from us. (S1)

Supporting the above, one of the interviewees who does not have a family agricultural enterprise referred to this condition as a limitation for negotiating: "More than rural or urban influence, I feel that someone who knows about these matters and has a greater interest in them (because they have a family agricultural enterprise) has more advantages when negotiating" (S8).

An interesting finding emerged from the other interviewee who does not have a family agricultural enterprise. Her family does not own an agricultural enterprise, but they do operate a business dedicated to the sale of tools and paints, in which she participates actively. She even mentions having negotiation experience as part of her activities. Nevertheless, her preference for the *extreme problem solver* style, which maintains a collaborative approach throughout all four phases of the negotiation process, may be due to a rural–urban interaction.

> We have a ranch that we visit from time to time. When I compare my reality (in the city) with reality there (in the rural environment), it makes me more empathetic because I see and have experienced those needs. I chose to study agribusiness because I want to build a life in the countryside. I see opportunities in providing equipment and tools for farmers. They are open, optimistic, and I believe we can collaborate. (S7)

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On the other hand, according to Figure 1, the testimonies of interviewees S3, S4, S5 and S6 were expected to shed light on other factors associated with negotiation preferences. This is because S3 and S4 chose the *tough relationship builder* negotiation style despite not having a rural background or a family agricultural enterprise, whereas S5 and S6 did not choose this style despite having both a rural origin and a family agricultural enterprise. Education—both familial and professional—appears to be a likely driver of the *tough relationship builder* style, which grounds negotiation in collaboration and employs competition only in a limited and strategic manner (specifically in the third phase).

> The education I received at home has had a strong influence (in the preferences for the negotiation style), because I was taught to serve others and take their needs into account, but without allowing abuses" (S3). "The knowledge I acquired while studying agribusiness has led me to negotiate in this way. The courses and participation in practical activities through which we helped coffee growers market their products have made me aware of the importance of ensuring that the goods offered by farmers are properly valued. (S4)

The interviewees who did not choose the *tough relationship builder* negotiation style and who live in a rural environment while also having a family agricultural enterprise present certain particular backgrounds that either distance them from competitive behaviors or intensify them. Family education again appears to exert an influence, but in a way that discourages competition as an alternative for reaching agreements.

> My mother raised us with words and without any hitting. She herself was raised that way, and that is how I would like to raise my children. When we have a problem, my mother listens to us, gives us her point of view, and never forces us to do anything. Moreover, she really enjoys helping others. On one occasion, she even supported women from the village so that they could see the sea and the beach for the first time. (S5)

In contrast, a negotiation style more inclined toward competition, such as the *wolf in sheepskin*, may be preferred by those who have had negative experiences in their businesses and therefore choose not to make any concessions during the second half of the negotiation process.

> I learned to negotiate from my father. He did not allow abuses because he had bad experiences with losses when selling figs at the wholesale market and when selling cars. I myself have learned the same lesson from the losses I have faced in my greenhouse vegetable production business. (S6)

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Among these styles, the *tough relationship builder* stands out as it achieved the highest overall performance according to the measures applied by Preuss and van der Wijst (2017), including individual gains, efficiency in reaching agreements and satisfaction generated in the counterpart.

The semantic network depicted in Figure 3 synthesizes the study's findings. Clearly, the *tough relationship builder* negotiation style was predominant in the preferences of agribusiness students. In the literature, this style stands out for achieving the highest performance in terms of negotiators' individual gains, efficiency in reaching agreements, and the satisfaction generated in the counterpart (Preuss and van der Wijst, 2017). The preference is driven by: (i) observation of and participation in negotiation activities within the agricultural family enterprise, (ii) professional training in the field of agribusiness, and (iii) education at home, primarily by parents. All these factors orient participants toward preferring a negotiation style that prioritizes collaboration and employs competition only in a limited and strategic manner during the penultimate phase of the negotiation process.

Research on negotiation in the field of agribusiness is virtually nonexistent. Outside the agricultural domain, studies have found that individuals' negotiation styles depend on personal attributes such as age, experience and gender (D'Andrea, 2005); race and socioeconomic status (Simon et al., 2022); emotional capacity (Kelly and Kaminskienė, 2016); and cultural norms, beliefs and values (Brett et al., 2017). In addition to being one of the first pieces of research on negotiation within the agricultural context, our study contributes to knowledge by identifying that other factors, such as the type of education received at home, influence negotiation behavior. It also legitimizes the field of agribusiness as a professional training domain that equips its practitioners with relevant skills, guiding them to negotiate strategically and with greater likelihood of doing so effectively, efficiently, and satisfactorily for all parties involved.

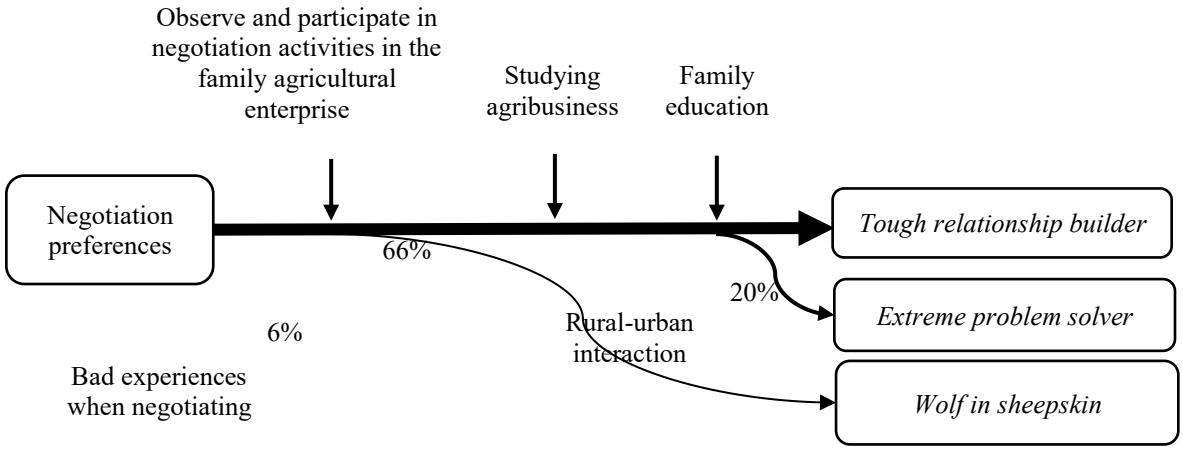
The semantic network also shows that family education can shift behavior toward a preference for the *extreme problem solver* negotiation style, which avoids competition and relies solely on collaboration throughout the negotiation. This choice may be reinforced when individuals are empathetic, for example, by contrasting and becoming aware of the different needs of rural and urban populations. A parallel well documented in the rural entrepreneurship literature relates to lifestyle entrepreneurs. Although negotiation style has not been explicitly addressed, it is known that these entrepreneurs act in a more collaborative and less extractive manner within the rural communities in which they operate. They even contribute to improving the quality of life of employees, customers and communities as a whole (Fortunato, 2014).

Finally, Figure 3 shows that when negative experiences occur while participating in negotiation activities within the family business — such as losses resulting from placing too much trust in the counterpart — the negotiator may adopt a more

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competitive style, such as the *wolf in sheepskin*. This shift in style underscores what some authors have noted regarding the importance of emotions (Kim et al., 2015) and prior negotiation experiences (Thomas et al., 2018). Our findings suggest that collaborative negotiators may reduce such behavior because of having experienced significant losses in previous negotiations and are very likely to assume competitive behaviors in subsequent transactions. The three styles represented in the semantic network account for 92% of the preferences of the agribusiness students who participated in the study.

Figure 3. Semantic network of negotiation style preferences and their underlying factors among agribusiness students
Figura 3. Red semántica de las preferencias por estilos de negociación y sus factores subyacentes entre estudiantes de agronegocios



Source: own elaboration using data collected in 2024 and 2025. Fuente: elaboración propia en base a datos colectados en 2024 y 2025.

Conclusions

The objective of the present study was to determine whether a predominant negotiation style exists in the preferences of agribusiness students and to explain the underlying reasons for such a preference. The study identifies a predominantly preferred style, referred to in the literature as the *tough relationship builder*. Within a process represented by four phases, this style adopts a collaborative behavior in the first two, shifts to a competitive behavior in the third phase, and concludes by returning to collaboration in the final phase. Interestingly, according to the literature, this is the style that generates the highest returns in terms of individual gains, efficiency in reaching an agreement and satisfaction generated in the counterpart.

The combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches enabled the study to identify a complex network of factors underlying the predominant negotiation be-

havior of agribusiness students. Based on these factors, the study is able to determine how behavior can be guided toward effective negotiation styles. This is achieved by integrating knowledge, experiences, and values acquired at universities through formal education—specifically within the field of agribusiness—and at home, through family upbringing and the observation and/or participation in family businesses. To this end, professional training in agribusiness should raise awareness of the importance of valuing agricultural products, and for this reason, defending farmers' interests is not inappropriate. Upbringing should foster concern for the needs of others, without neglecting one's own. Moreover, it is desirable that from an early age young people observe and, whenever possible, participate in negotiations to learn about the behaviors that lead to both positive and negative outcomes.

Declaración de autoría (CRediT)

Stefany Denisse Lagos Jiménez: Conceptualización, curación de datos, análisis formal y redacción – borrador original.

Asael Islas-Moreno: Conceptualización, análisis formal, investigación, metodología, administración del proyecto, supervisión y redacción – revisión y edición.

Adriana Hernández-Lazcano: Validación y redacción – revisión y edición.

Miguel Paúl Conde-Hinojosa: Metodología, validación y redacción – revisión y edición.

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Appendix 1. Interview guides

Quadrant I

1. Why did you choose the *tough relationship builder* negotiation style?
2. How did you rule out other negotiation styles?
3. What role do you play in your family's agricultural business?
4. Have you conducted negotiations as part of your family business activities? How?
5. Do you think being born and living in a rural environment influences your negotiating style? How?
6. What other factors influence your negotiating style?

Quadrant II

1. 1. Why did you choose the tough relationship builder negotiation style?
2. How did you rule out other negotiation styles?
3. Have you ever had a job? Have you negotiated as part of your activities?
4. Do you think being born and living in an urban environment influences your negotiating style? How?
5. What other factors influence your negotiating style?

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Quadrant III

1. Why did you choose your negotiation style?
2. Why didn't you choose the tough relationship builder negotiation style?
3. What role do you play in your family's agricultural business?
4. Have you conducted negotiations as part of your family business activities? How?
5. Do you think being born and living in a rural environment influences your negotiating style? How?
6. What other factors influence your negotiating style?

Quadrant IV

1. Why did you choose your negotiation style?
2. Why didn't you choose the *tough relationship builder* negotiation style?
3. Have you ever had a job? Have you negotiated as part of your activities?
4. Do you think being born and living in an urban environment influences your negotiating style? How?
5. What other factors influence your negotiating style?

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