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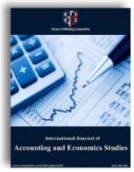

Emotional Contagion and Organizational Performance in MSMEs: A Structural Equation Modelling Approach

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Abstract

This study investigates the financial implications of emotional contagion within Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), emphasizing its influence on organizational performance, strategic behavior, and accounting decisions. Drawing on theories from behavioral economics and organizational accounting, we explore how shared emotional states among employees and managers impact financial indicators such as return on investment (ROI), employee turnover, budgeting efficiency, and overall revenue growth. A Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) approach was applied to analyze data from 250 respondents across Indian MSMEs. Additionally, we tested alternative mediation models to evaluate the robustness of observed relationships. Results show that emotional contagion significantly affects financial decision-making by influencing leadership clarity, employee morale, and risk behavior. Path coefficients indicated a strong link between positive emotional environments and increased budgeting accuracy, while negative emotional contagion was associated with reduced operational efficiency and higher cost overruns. The study contributes to a growing body of literature by reframing emotional phenomena as economic drivers in MSMEs. Policy implications include the need for emotional intelligence (EI) training, culture-sensitive audits, and leadership development programs designed to enhance financial resilience. Recommendations are also made for economic planners and MSME policymakers to integrate affective dimensions into performance management systems.

Keywords: *Emotional Contagion; Organizational Change; Strategic Style; Performance; Service Industry.*

1. Introduction

Charismatic leadership tactics (CLTs) are strategies employed by charismatic leaders to coach individuals to enhance their charisma. CLTs are strategies that can enhance an individual's trustworthiness, influence, and leadership qualities in the eyes of their followers (Fragouli, 2018). Incorporating emotions into economic management is becoming more and more popular. Business decision-making processes are frequently significantly impacted by personal emotions, a large irrational component. Researchers discovered that employees feel bad when they think about failing as an entrepreneur, which highlights the importance of creating a positive work environment. Leaders should provide assistance to employees who are experiencing negative feelings as a result of failure. Supportive leaders have been shown to boost job happiness and performance by assisting staff members in reducing negative emotions following entrepreneurial failure (Lu et al., 2022). Numerous things, such as media and interpersonal communication, can have an impact on human behavior. A number of factors and how people weigh them against other options affect behavioral reactions to infectious diseases, such as choosing to stay at home during an outbreak or get vaccinated (Funk et al., 2015). The corporate culture of an entrepreneur should be ethical, professional, and offer all stakeholders in the company peace and a good work-life balance. Researchers looked at the idea of emotional contagion and the importance of intellectual relationships in the context of organizations. They discussed human characteristics that influence vulnerability to emotional contagion, defined emotional contagion, and looked at methods to measure its prevalence (Barsade et al., 2018). Additionally, 103 MSME entrepreneurs from around the world participated in interviews and completed a well-structured questionnaire to provide their answers (Alkaim & Khan, 2024). Stratified sampling has been employed by researchers to gather information from participants (Beiranvand & Kordnoghabi, 2014). Smart PLS, version 4.1.0.0, was the statistical tool utilized in this investigation, and Covariance based (CB) structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to evaluate the data. Scholars have noted that the strategy and decision-making of entrepreneurs, corporate culture, intellectual relationships, and emotional contagion all contribute to variations in organizational success. By applying and upholding the recommended model, researchers discovered that an entrepreneur's company culture, intellectual connections, and positive emotional contagion can improve organizational performance in the service industry (Umayalakshmi, 2014). To foster a positive company culture and support positive emotional influence from service industry entrepreneurs, the government and MSMEs must update their policies to incorporate frequent audits and provide psychological and on-the-job training (Jyothi & Mary Gladence, 2024). Future research might look into entrepreneurs across the globe in a range of sectors. While emotional contagion is often studied in psychological or

sociological terms, its economic consequences particularly within MSMEs remain underexplored. Emotional states within teams can directly influence operational decisions, affect accounting behavior, and alter investment choices. For instance, positive emotions foster collaboration and task commitment, leading to timely budgeting and efficient financial planning. Conversely, negative emotional climates can contribute to poor financial oversight and increased cost leakage. This study reframes emotional contagion as a behavioral economic phenomenon with tangible outcomes, such as revenue fluctuations, ROI differentials, and turnover costs.

2. Definition, Literature Review & Methodology

This research is grounded in three key theoretical lenses: (1) Prospect Theory, which explains how emotions distort risk preferences and financial decision-making; (2) Behavioral Agency Theory, which relates emotions to managerial discretion and strategic financial choices; and (3) Management Control Theory, which connects emotional environments with budgeting control, performance measurement, and financial reporting accuracy. These theories collectively support the hypothesis that emotional contagion influences key economic behaviors within organizations.

2.1 Entrepreneur's Emotional Contagion

The study looked at the dynamics of work groups and group emotional contagion, or the spread of emotions within a group (Tohma & Kutlu, 2020). Multiple, convergent approaches were used in a laboratory experiment to evaluate mood, individual attitudes, behavior, and group dynamics (Chandravanshi & Neetish, 2023; Barsade, 2002). Various leadership and organizational outcomes are significantly impacted by emotional contagion techniques (Tee, 2015). One way to express emotions to other people is through behavioral reactions. Positive or negative customer reviews on internet forums are examples of written or verbal reactions (Herrando & Constantinides, 2021). One experiment and one field study show the clear influence of entrepreneurs' enthusiasm on employee outcomes and offer empirical evidence for a contagious effect of entrepreneurial passion (Hubner et al., 2020). The spread of one person's emotions and behaviors to another is known as emotional contagion (Srivastava & Banerjee, 2019). By examining work-related outcomes like burnout, vigor, and organizational relationships (affective commitment, perceived organizational support), as well as more general outcomes like physical health and psychological well-being, researchers looked at how followers react to their leaders' activities (Hancock et al., 2023). Employees and other stakeholders may be impacted by the emotions expressed in an entrepreneurial business (Cardon, 2008). Leaders, managers, and supervisors play a vital role in promoting successful teamwork in the workplace, aiming for more than just increasing its overall effectiveness (Torrente et al., 2013).

2.2 Entrepreneur's Strategy and Decision Making

Organizations must strategically distribute resources to cultivate leaders who can inspire future leadership at the frontline (Chang et al., 2021). Regulating emotions could lead to unexpected and negative outcomes for strategic individuals who come out as dishonest (Verma & Nair, 2025). On the other hand, strategic styles individuals who really express their emotions can promote commitment and reduce emotional turmoil within a corporation (Brundin et al., 2022). Emotions are strong, ubiquitous, predictable, and can occasionally have a good or negative influence on decision-making. Regardless of the kind of decision, emotions always have an impact on judgment and decision-making (Sharma & Nair, 2025). Emotional responses are not coincidental nor random (Lerner et al., 2015). Emotion has been an enigmatic factor in strategic decision making styles. The emotional experience of the decision maker influences cognitive simplification behavior (Shivraj, 2019). This happens when intellect and emotions are linked in mental processes, leading to a reduction in the decision maker's thoroughness in decision-making (Kim, 2012). Entrepreneurs who prioritize self-interest in their approach to entrepreneurship feel more confident in applying entrepreneurial skills compared to those who focus on societal impact (Doniyorov et al., 2024). It is less likely that entrepreneurs who want to change the world and impact society at large will exhibit higher levels of Entrepreneur Self-Efficacy (Brändle et al., 2018; Kianie & Jafari, 2015; Sadeghi & Babaee, 2016).

2.3 Organizational Performance

Numerous organizational crisis outcomes have been examined, mostly as a result of the theoretical frameworks that were applied (Alkaim & Hassan, 2024). Research based on agency theory usually looks at outcomes connected to crisis beginnings, whereas studies using the social evaluations or executive ethical leadership perspective concentrate on outcomes like reputation repair (Seidgar, 2021). It is still relatively unknown and open to investigation how crises affect strategic leaders in the opposite way (Kim, 2012). Teams of experts work on the majority of projects in contemporary knowledge-based businesses with the goal of being both creative and productive when developing new products, services, procedures, or business strategies (Schaedler et al., 2022). The leadership of an organization's teams is one of the most important aspects of employees' everyday work experiences. These "local leaders" are essential in overseeing and assessing work, allowing or impeding access to information and resources, and influencing their involvement with assignments and coworkers in a variety of other ways (Amabile et al., 2004). There are two further approaches to expand on the pendulum metaphor, which depicts the discipline's evolution by showing the change in emphasis between internal and external domains (Kumar & Yadav, 2024). Strategic management involves two pendulums: an internal-external pendulum and a swinging pendulum between the macro and micro levels. Second, neither of these two pendulums is currently at the extremities of its swing; rather, it is constantly in motion (Guerras-Martín et al., 2014). Similar to the effects observed with perceived supervisor and coworker support, researchers predict that employees who experience strong organizational support will be less affected negatively by surface acting on job performance and more positively by deep acting on job performance (Kim et al., 2017). Job engagement is encouraged by organizational commitment, which produces motivated and engaged workers who support the growth of the company and the provision of high-quality services (Lo et al., 2024).

2.4 Research Problem

Emotional contagion is the process by which a leader's emotions, both positive and negative, are transferred to followers at work (Johnson, 2008). To improve organizational life in the service sector, corporate culture and the tipping point of emotional contagion between positive and negative must be further developed and improved (Alkaim & Khan, 2024). By emphasizing entrepreneurs' strategy and decision-

making, business culture, intellectual interactions, and emotional contagion, researchers realized that the current model needed to be improved for the organizational performance of the service industry.

2.5 Research Gap

Although there aren't many studies overall, the group and organizational levels seem to be especially overlooked, according to academics. Our study calls for more research on unethical leadership at the group level, since modern work is increasingly structured around teams (Hassan et al., 2023). The study of controlling shared emotions to lessen their detrimental consequences and enhance their influence on strategic outcomes is still in its early stages (Huy, 2012). In order to accomplish organizational goals in a pleasant and healthy work-life balance, entrepreneurs' strategic decision-making, corporate culture, emotional contagion, intellectual interactions, and organizational performance have not been previously explored (Said et al., 2024). Scholars have found gaps in earlier research on the global service sector and have carried out additional research to fill in these gaps (Hema Rajini, 2017).

2.6 Research Methodology

For their examination, researchers used descriptive research studies. To collect information, researchers created a thorough questionnaire and spoke with 103 MSME owners in interviews. To get information from individuals, researchers used stratified sampling. The statistical tool used in this work to analyze the data using Covariance based Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was Smart PLS, Version 4.1.0.0.
This study article intends to explore the impact of entrepreneurs' strategy and decision making, intellectual relationships, emotional contagion, and corporate culture on organizational performance in the service business. The suggested model for the organization's performance is shown in Figure 1.

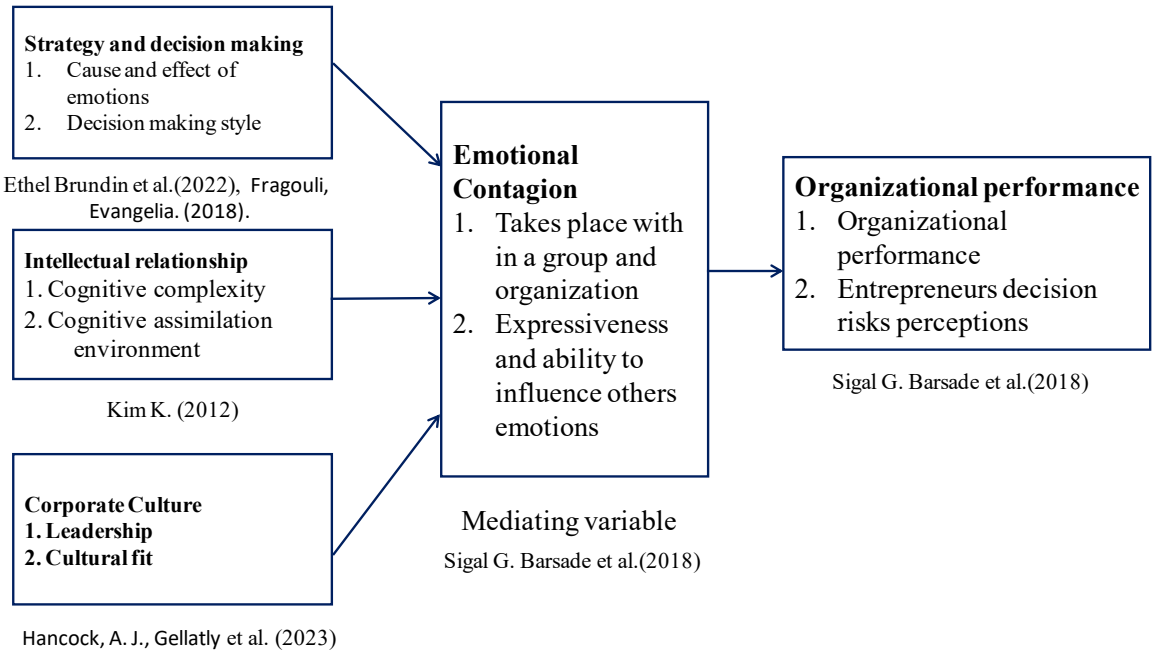

Fig. 1: A Proposed Model for Mitigating the Many Effects of Organizational Life Includes Corporate Culture, Intellectual Relationships, Emotional Contagion, Entrepreneur Strategy and Decision-Making, And Organizational Performance

To improve model validity, a mediation analysis was conducted using alternative modeling paths, comparing the base SEM model with adjusted paths that isolated the role of emotional leadership. Fit indices were reassessed (e.g., RMSEA, CFI, TLI), and variables showing weak or inconsistent significance were removed or re-validated using bootstrapping techniques. The SEM model was selected over path analysis due to its ability to simultaneously test complex interrelations between latent constructs linked to financial outcomes.

3. Policy and Managerial Implications

The findings underscore the importance of emotional intelligence and affect regulation in strategic financial environments. For policymakers, the study highlights the value of integrating emotional behavior assessments into MSME support audits and financial performance frameworks. Training programs focused on emotional regulation and leadership can reduce budgeting errors, improve return on investment, and lower employee turnover costs. MSME owners are encouraged to develop emotionally intelligent cultures as a pathway to sustained financial resilience and operational efficiency.

4. Review Of Literature

The literature review identified eleven factors that affect organizational success, such as corporate culture, intellectual relationships, emotional contagion, and company strategy and decision-making by entrepreneurs. For the derived criteria, extensive assessments and in-depth interviews were conducted. The earlier studies covered in section 7.0 were used to develop the hypothesis.
H0: The business strategy and decision-making of entrepreneurs, corporate culture, intellectual relationships, and emotional contagion to achieve organizational performance are all positively correlated with the model.

H1: The business strategy and decision-making of entrepreneurs, corporate culture, intellectual relationships, and emotional contagion to achieve organizational performance are all well-represented in the model, both positively and negatively.

5. Analysis and Findings

To evaluate and validate the model, the study used Smart-PLS version 4.1.0.0 in conjunction with Covariance-based Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). When a researcher incorporates complex structures and latent variables into the model, the SEM technique is employed. For this study, partial least squares structural equation modeling (SEM) was selected because of its explanatory power. A measurement model that confirms the validity and reliability of data and a structural model that evaluates path coefficients and the relationship between variables while testing and confirming hypotheses are the two models upon which SEM is based. According to Barclay et al. (1995), creating the measurement model or outer model is the first step in structural equation modeling, or SEM. This entails establishing a number of validity and reliability indicators. Cronbach's alpha was used to evaluate internal consistency and composite reliability, factor loadings were used to confirm concept validity, and AVE was used to measure convergent validity. A structural model that depicts the suggested link between variables is the second SEM model. Version 4.1.0.0 of Smart PLS was used to analyze the data. The statistics for MSME entrepreneurs are provided below.

Table 1: The Sociodemographic Information of the 103 Respondents and the MSME Entrepreneurs Frequency Statistics.

Statistics		Respondents (Entrepreneurs)
N	Valid	103
	Missing	0

Cronbach's alpha coefficient is required when using the Likert scale in the study in order to assess consistency and reliability (Joseph et al., 2003). Cronbach's Alpha is shown in Table 2 for each of the study's factors.

5.1 Constructing Reliability and Validity

Table 2: Reliability Analysis and Construct Consistency

	Cronbach's Alpha (standardized)	Cronbach's Alpha (unstandardized)	Composite Reliability (rho_c)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
CC	0.908	0.903	0.905	0.832
EC	0.906	0.904	0.853	0.742
OP	0.945	0.882	0.978	0.903
SDM	0.942	0.941	0.941	0.890

Table 2 demonstrates the high degree of internal consistency for the scale by displaying construct consistency, validity, and reliability attained against each factor.
An AVE of 0.5 or greater suggests sufficient Convergent Validity. An Average variation Extracted (AVE) below 0.5 suggests that there is more residual error in the items than variation accounted for by the latent component structure you have applied to the measure.
Good dependability is indicated by a Construct dependability estimate of 0.7 or higher.
Reliability ranging from 0.6 to 0.7 can be deemed acceptable if other measures of a model's construct validity are strong. High construct reliability signifies the presence of internal consistency. This indicates that all the measures consistently reflect a certain aspect.
Variables were selected after a thorough analysis of the literature available on Strategy and decision making (SDM), Intellectual relationship (IR), Corporate culture (CC), Emotional Contagion (EC) and Organizational performance (OP) and their interrelationship.

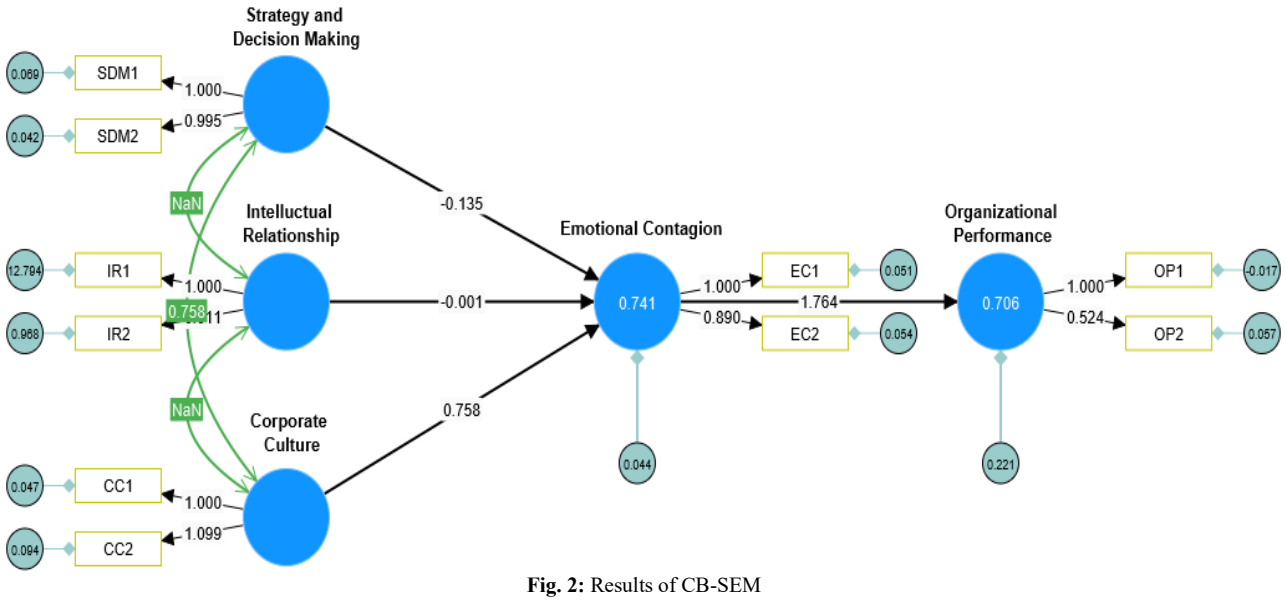

Fig. 2: Results of CB-SEM

Table 3: The Structural Equation Model Analysis's Variables

	Path Coefficient (standardized)	Path Coefficient (Unstandardized)
Corporate Culture → Emotional Contagion	1.015	0.758
Emotional Contagion → Organizational Performance	0.840	1.764
Intellectual Relationship → Emotional Contagion	0.000	0.001
Strategy and Decision Making → Emotional Contagion	-0.218	0.135

The unstandardized coefficient of corporate culture on emotional contagion is 0.758, indicating the specific impact of corporate culture on emotional contagion while keeping the other route factors constant. The computed positive correlation of 0.758 indicates a considerable rise in Expectation for every change in corporate culture, with a significance level of 1%.
The unstandardized coefficient of emotional contagion on organizational performance is 1.764, indicating the specific impact of emotional contagion on organizational performance while keeping the other path factors constant. The computed coefficient indicates a positive effect, suggesting that Expectation would increase by 1.764 for each change in emotional contagion. At the 1% level, this coefficient value is statistically significant.
The unstandardized coefficient of the intellectual relationship on emotional contagion is -0.001, indicating the partial negative impact of the intellectual relationship on emotional contagion while keeping the other route factors constant. The calculated negative sign indicates that the intellectual relationship decreases by -0.001 for each change in the state of the intellectual relationship, and at the 1% level, this coefficient value is statistically significant.
When all other route variables are held constant, the unstandardized coefficient of strategy and decision-making on emotional contagion is -0.135, suggesting that these factors have a somewhat detrimental effect on emotional contagion. The computed coefficient of -0.135 indicates a considerable negative effect on strategy and decision making, with a significance level of 1%. CB-SEM model shows that the Standardised coefficient indicates the Corporate culture has the highest influence on emotional contagion (1.015) and emotional contagion on organizational performance (0.840) and others will follow.
The null hypothesis and alternative hypothesis are formulated to assess the model's fitness in order to test its fit.

Table 4: Summary of Model Fitness

Indices	Value	Suggested value
Chi-square	212.493	
DF	28	
P value	0.000	> 0.05 (Hair et al., 1998)
Chi-square value/ DF	.589	< 5.00 (Hair et al., 1998)
GFI	0.742	> 0.90 (Hu and Bentler., 1999)
AGFI	0.492	> 0.90 (Hair et al., 2006)
NFI	0.816	> 0.90 (Hu and Bentler., 1999)
CFI	0.834	> 0.90 (Daire et al., 2008)
RMR	0.262	< 0.08 (Hair et al., 2006)
RMSEA	0.253	< 0.08 (Hair et al., 2006)

The presented table indicates that the model is moderately fit. The null hypothesis is rejected since the computed P value of 0.000 from the table shows that the model does not fit the data well. In order to achieve organizational performance, the model demonstrates both positive and negative linkages between entrepreneurs' company strategy and decision-making, corporate culture, intellectual relationships, and emotional contagion. A moderately suited model is indicated by the Adjusted Goodness of suited Index (AGFI) value of 0.492 and the Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) score of 0.742, both of which are below 0.9. Marginal fit is suggested by the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) score of 0.834 and the Normed Fit Index (NFI) value of 0.816. The model is moderately fit, according to the calculated RMR and NFI. While the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) value of 0.253, which is greater than 0.08 and also suggests marginal fit, the Root Mean Square Residuals (RMR) value of 0.262 indicates a little divergence.

5.2 Empirical Correlation Matrix

Table 5: Correlation Matrix

	CC1	CC2	EC1	EC2	IR1	IR2	OP1	OP2	SDM1	SDM2
CC1	1.000	0.831	0.631	0.571	0.787	-0.617	0.764	0.726	0.660	0.703
CC2	0.831	1.000	0.703	0.603	0.770	-0.731	0.772	0.713	0.638	0.593
EC1	0.631	0.703	1.000	0.828	0.688	-0.741	0.704	0.581	0.515	0.421
EC2	0.571	0.603	0.828	1.000	0.686	-0.638	0.661	0.574	0.362	0.350
IR1	0.787	0.770	0.688	0.686	1.000	-0.769	0.793	0.732	0.529	0.558
IR2	-0.617	-0.731	-0.741	-0.638	-0.769	1.000	-0.648	-0.548	-0.503	-0.391
OP1	0.764	0.772	0.704	0.661	0.793	-0.648	1.000	0.896	0.520	0.542
OP2	0.726	0.713	0.581	0.574	0.732	-0.548	0.896	1.000	0.535	0.564
SDM1	0.660	0.638	0.515	0.362	0.529	-0.503	0.520	0.535	1.000	0.890
SDM2	0.703	0.593	0.421	0.350	0.558	-0.391	0.542	0.564	0.890	1.000

The relationships between strategy and decision making, intellectual relationship, corporate culture, emotional contagion and organizational performance. Positive relationships observed between strategy and decision making, corporate culture, emotional contagion and organizational performance. Negative relationship observed between intellectual relationship and strategy and decision making, corporate culture, emotional contagion and organizational performance.

Table 6: R-square

	R-square
Emotional Contagion	0.741
Organizational _Performance	0.706

The model fits reasonably well, and the regression coefficients are statistically significant. By showing the proportion of variation in the dependent variables that can be explained by the regression equation, the coefficient of determination R-square measures how well the estimated Sample Regression Plane (SRP) matches the data. The estimated SRP that takes strategy and decision making (SDM), intellectual relationships (IR), corporate culture (CC), and emotional contagion (EC) as independent variables accounts for 70.6% of the variance in organizational performance, according to the R-squared value for organizational performance, which is 0.706. The R-squared value has satisfied the organizational growth goals and is statistically significant at the 1% level.

5.3 Findings Summary

The following findings were observed.

- CB SEM Model is marginally fit and GFI, AGFI, CFI, NFI, SRMR and RMSEA which represents are a marginally fit.
- A correlation was found between strategy and decision making, intellectual relationship, corporate culture, emotional contagion and organizational performance. Positive relationships observed between strategy and decision making, corporate culture, emotional contagion and organizational performance. Negative relationship observed between intellectual relationship and strategy and decision making, corporate culture, emotional contagion and organizational performance.
- The R-squared value for organizational performance is 0.706, indicating that 70.6% of the variation in organizational performance is accounted for by the estimated SRP that incorporates strategy and decision making (SDM), Intellectual relationship (IR), Corporate culture (CC), and Emotional Contagion (EC) as independent variables. The organizational growth objectives have been reached, and the R-squared value is statistically significant at the 1% level.

6. Outlook & Conclusions

Researchers examined the myriad effect of organizational life and discovered that organizational cultural difficulties, entrepreneurs' emotional issues, intellectual relationships, and strategic decision-making have been addressed to improve performance. Positive and negative effects on organizational performance were identified, indicating a need for improvement in corporate culture and the emotional contagion of entrepreneurs. Researchers discovered that the Model has a moderately adequate fit. The entrepreneur's emotional contagion, corporate culture, strategy, and decision-making have had a favorable impact on organizational success. An entrepreneur's strategy, decision-making, emotional contagion, company culture, and operational effectiveness are all negatively correlated with their intellectual relationships. To improve organizational performance and encourage a good work-life balance for employees, researchers found that additional growth is needed in the areas of organizational culture, the entrepreneur's intellectual relationship, and the entrepreneur's emotional contagion. Researchers found that the entrepreneur's business model, decision-making, intellectual connections, company culture, and emotional contagion all affect how well an organization performs. Through the implementation and upkeep of the suggested model, researchers discovered that an organization's performance in the service industry can be improved by optimizing corporate culture, encouraging positive emotional contagion among entrepreneurs, cultivating intellectual relationships, and improving strategy and decision-making processes. By quantifying the financial effects of emotional contagion, this study extends the scope of performance analysis in MSMEs to include affective variables. Future research should explore longitudinal designs to examine how emotional climates evolve and interact with financial cycles. Additionally, cross-sector comparisons would help determine the generalizability of these findings across different economic contexts.

Suggestions, Restrictions and Future Studies

To improve company performance, work-life balance, and safety for all stakeholders, entrepreneurs should concentrate on developing a professional, ethical corporate culture, encouraging positive emotional contagion, making strategic decisions, and cultivating intellectual interactions. This would foster a positive work environment while assisting MSME enterprises in reaching their target budget for capital expenditures (CAPEX) and operating expenditures (OPEX). Entrepreneurs should surround themselves with leaders who are committed, moral, and professional in order to maintain a harmonious workplace and a healthy work-life balance for their staff. To encourage high levels of positive emotional influence, intellectual connection, and a healthy business culture, the government and MSMEs should give priority to providing entrepreneurs with psychological training and on-the-job training. In order to foster a positive corporate culture and support positive emotional influence from service industry entrepreneurs, the government and MSMEs must update their policies to incorporate frequent audits and provide psychological training. Future studies can examine how entrepreneurs concentrate on the intellectual connections between many stakeholders in the international, diverse service industry.

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