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EMBEDDING BUSINESS ETHICS IN CSR: THE ROLE OF ETHICAL PRACTICES IN ADVOCATING SUSTAINABLE CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

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Abstract

The theory of social responsibility is the driving force behind all major businesses and corporates today. It is a philosophy that has been around for thousands of years and can be found in many religions. It encourages to find ways to work together to achieve one's goals and help others achieve theirs. Social responsibility is important because it shows that people care about future generations and will not leave them "holding the bag "when something goes wrong. The present research explores how corporates have a social responsibility and are, therefore, accountable for the welfare of society. Ethics are influencing factors in motivating people to create, sustain and plan CSR activities. The methodology adopted for the research is quite different from conventional research. The convenient sampling method was used, where the verbatim of 5 seniors from different companies were chosen for analysis. The chosen companies have been given coded names The names of the companies have been camouflaged to maintain their privacy and confidentiality. Narrative analysis method has been used to analyze the verbatims ascertained through semi structured interviews. The insights gained from the research will help to understand more about business ethics practices and the kind of behavior that can be changed to improve sustainability within organizations thus fulfilling the objectives of embedding business ethics in CSR to advocate sustainable corporate social responsibility.

Keywords: *Social-responsibility, Businesses, Sustainability, Driving Force, Holding the bag, Ethical practices, Organizations.*

INTRODUCTION

Man is a social being. He cannot survive in isolation. He needs care, love, and compassion from people and good relationships to survive on the planet. Compassion is the innate drive of human beings that lead towards helping behavior. At the same time, humans must follow the rules and regulations and conform to the norms of society for their survival. The organizations also must follow the norms for the welfare of society along with their usual profit practices. These welfare practices of the organization are named Corporate Social Responsibility. Social responsibility is the promotion of fair and ethical behavior within an enterprise. This includes promoting policies, practices, and procedures that promote fair treatment of employees, customers, and partners. By properly defining goals and objectives, creating appropriate incentives for employees to pursue these goals in a socially responsible manner, companies can ensure their organization thrives in its local community as well as globally. Without social responsibility, our society as a whole and the environment suffer. We need to ensure that our actions balance economic growth and the welfare of society with environmental protection. The actions of an individual must be beneficial to society, a community, a country, and even the world.

Corporate governance and social responsibility are two broad concepts that refer to the practices that encourage good governance within the corporation, both for the people involved and for society. Good corporate governance is profitable for investors and a win-win for shareholders and stakeholders. A good social responsibility would mean a more loyal and engaged employee base, which also improves productivity and increases sales. A company can also boost its image by being more ethical, taking on social challenges that benefit society at large. Ethics are an area of human conduct, or a code of behavior, that can be traced back to our evolutionary ancestry in a communal setting. It means an individualized custom applied to the organization's actions to meet the needs of its members and stakeholders and their rights as defined by their organizations.

The ethics of an individual include their moral principles, values, beliefs, and integrity to decide the right path in life. The same translates into business as well, along with the rules and norms of the organization for which employees show their conformity. Norms and conformity go hand in hand, creating an inclusive culture in the organization. The ethics of a business depend on the company's culture or moral behavior (Long and Sedley, 1987).

Governments, companies, and organizations should be held accountable for their social responsibility. The underlying principle is that the action of an individual reflects directly upon the whole. Social responsibility is achieved when a balance is maintained between economic growth and the welfare of society and the environment. Businesses must exhibit social responsibility when they operate in the public and private sectors. This involves making ethical choices, taking responsibility for the care of employees, ensuring that the company's products are made ethically, and maintaining trustworthiness in its interactions with customers. Social responsibility is a process that compels institutions to act in ways beneficial to both the public and the business at hand. Businesses have a responsibility to ensure that their products, services, and businesses are ethical. Business ethics is one of the most important aspects of all types of businesses, both at the international, national, and local levels. It is the conduct of companies, organizations, and individuals that should be followed to ensure that business activities benefit society. Using ethical business practices is necessary for achieving sustainable development and prosperity. In many cases, ethics are the key to profitability in business. Businesses with good ethics are more likely to thrive and survive. To be successful in business, you must practice ethics for your company to flourish. When businesses are in place, they must follow conscientiously certain rules and regulations toward environmental protection. It is our duty as humans to make sure that we do not harm the environment around us and go beyond our limits. A company that succeeds in the digital economy needs to have a clear and defined purpose. Staying socially responsible can be beneficial to the well-being of your

employees, customers, and stockholders so that all stakeholders can benefit from being part of the business.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The world has changed rapidly over the past few decades, and business entities now have increasingly strong responsibilities towards society. Businesses that have a corporate responsibility to their stakeholders as well as to society create value for their shareholders and have a positive impact on society. As a result of these changes, CSR is more important than ever before. The strategic relevance of CSR and business ethics to company profitability is clear. Companies that prioritize ethical practices are more likely to outperform their competitors in the marketplace. The consumer perception towards CSR has been examined in several studies, with mixed results. Arli and Lasmono (2010) found that consumers are mostly not aware of CSR activities, but in developed countries, consumers are aware and are willing to support the CSR activities of the organization in whatever way they can. Brammer, Jackson and Matten (2012) discussed that CSR is not only a charitable action, but it is more than that, as it involves the welfare of society, community, and the world. The research conducted by Frisko and Arisandi (2011) focused on strengthening economies of SMEs through partnership programs and CSR activities. Godfrey *et al.* (2016) in their research address the concepts of business ethics and corporate social responsibility. Business ethics and social responsibility are very important for organizational growth and success.

The insights from "Corporate Social Opportunity-Seven Steps to Make Corporate Social Responsibility Work for your Business" by Grayson and Hodges (2004) are highly relevant in today's scenario as it emphasizes that business success is linked to entrepreneurialism, competitiveness, and innovation derived from the CSR agenda, aligning with the core theme of this paper.

Moreover, the research explores how small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) can embrace CSR opportunities, providing practical examples of how ethical practices and CSR initiatives can be integrated into SMEs' operations. The proposed "business opportunity" model of CSR for SMEs, aimed at fostering a "want to do" CSO mentality, aligns with present paper's focus on how ethical practices and CSR can be strategically integrated into a company's core. By exploring these dimensions, the present research can provide valuable insights into how ethical practices and CSR can drive sustainable growth and success for organizations.

Saha *et al.* (2019) in their review on the effect of ethical leadership and corporate social responsibility on firm performance focus on ethical leadership and corporate social responsibility (CSR) and their potential impact on firm performance. By analyzing 114 papers spanning over 58 years, the review provides valuable insights into the relationship between ethical leadership, CSR, and organizational success. The findings on financial barriers affecting CSR adoption and the critical role of the internal and external environment resonate with the present examination of CSR practices and their challenges. Additionally, the review's emphasis on personal values influencing ethical leadership further supports our investigation into how ethical practices can foster sustainable CSR initiatives. By incorporating the insights from this systematic review, the paper gains a robust foundation and contributes to a deeper understanding of how ethical leadership and CSR intertwine to drive sustainable corporate social responsibility in organizations.

The research conducted by Collier and Esteban (2007) on Corporate social responsibility and employee commitment presents valuable insights into the factors influencing employee motivation and commitment towards Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Their work highlights two key sets of factors: contextual and perceptual. Contextually, the organizational culture, integration of CSR into business processes, and the framing of policies in terms of values versus compliance play pivotal roles in shaping employee attitudes. Perceptually, the alignment of personal identity with the organization, perceptions of fairness in recognition and rewards, and the stance of top management towards CSR all significantly impact

ISSN 2348-2869 Print
ISSN 2348-5434 Online
2023 Symbiosis Centre for Management Studies, NOIDA
Journal of General Management Research

Page **29** of **37**

employee engagement. The research conducted by Pomering and Dolnicar (2009) on assessing the prerequisite of successful CSR implementation and consumer awareness of CSR Initiatives emphasizes the intricate connection between corporate social responsibility (CSR), consumer awareness, and the effectiveness of pro-social marketing campaigns. Their research underscores the essential role of consumer awareness in shaping the outcomes of CSR initiatives, influencing consumer attitudes and behaviors.

Bart and John (1988) explored the dimensions and determinants of ethical work climates within organizations. This paper is related to my study, as it provides insights into the intricate dynamics of ethical climates and their relevance to ethical practices in the context of CSR. The study on Employee Perception of CSR Activities: Its Antecedents and Consequences by Eun Mi Lee *et al* (2013) explored the factors that influence employees' perceptions of CSR activities and the outcomes of these perceptions. The outcomes discussed in the study can provide insights into how positive employee perceptions, driven by effective ethical integration, can lead to enhanced organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and other positive outcomes related to CSR efforts.

Organizations and corporates that have a culture of ethical behaviour are more profitable and stronger in terms of brand recognition and market dominance. The management team should show their employees how important it is to be ethical by implementing a code of fair practices; this will help their business grow and flourish. The ethics of a company greatly depend on the internal culture and values, which impact the behavior of its employees. Companies with solid ethical values and purposeful social investment practices, good governance, and fair working conditions will benefit from greater customer loyalty, as well as better business performance in the long term. Having ethics and values as part of corporate governance is crucial because it helps to explain how the company makes decisions. Business ethics is a necessary skill that every business leader must possess. It is the foundation for good decision-making and

cooperation with other stakeholders. If a business or organization does not have this basic knowledge, it can result in harm to its stakeholders and customers, and damage to its reputation. It can be argued that business ethics have a more direct influence on success than other skills such as financial management and marketing.

Managers who promote business ethics are more likely to motivate their employees to perform their roles with integrity. The organizations that advocate for business ethics spur the development of an employee mindset that recognizes the importance of being ethical and working within the rules. Business ethics training opens opportunities for companies to engage their employees in ethical decisions. By inspiring employees with positive examples of others who have made ethical decisions, organizations can encourage them to emulate those individuals and make the right moral choices. The hard work that goes into cultivating a good environment for ethics can help in attracting employees who will stay for the long term. However, achieving true CSR goes beyond mere awareness or surface-level actions. It requires a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness between businesses and society, where companies not only pursue profits but also actively contribute to the well-being of the communities they operate in.

In recent years, there has been an increasing focus on the role of business ethics in driving CSR activities. Business ethics encompasses the moral principles and values that guide the conduct of organizations and their employees. When ethics are ingrained in the organizational culture, they serve as a compass for decision-making, ensuring that actions align with the greater good of society.

Ethical practices not only enhance a company's reputation but also foster a sense of trust and reliability among stakeholders. Customers, employees, investors, and the public at large are more likely to engage with a company that demonstrates ethical behaviour. Such positive perceptions can translate into customer loyalty, increased investor confidence, and a more engaged and committed workforce. Furthermore, ethical companies

ISSN 2348-2869 Print
ISSN 2348-5434 Online
2023 Symbiosis Centre for Management Studies, NOIDA
Journal of General Management Research

Page **30** of **37**

are better equipped to navigate complex business landscapes and address societal challenges effectively. They are more adaptable and responsive to changing consumer expectations and emerging global issues. By incorporating sustainability practices and socially responsible initiatives, ethical companies contribute to a more sustainable and equitable world.

One critical aspect that ethical companies prioritize is their impact on the environment. With growing concerns about climate change and resource depletion, businesses are under pressure to minimize their ecological footprint. Ethical companies implement eco-friendly practices, promote renewable energy sources, and adopt sustainable supply chain strategies to mitigate environmental impacts. In addition to environmental responsibility, ethical companies also prioritize social issues such as labour practices, diversity and inclusion, and community engagement. They invest in fair labour practices, provide safe working conditions, and embrace diversity to create an inclusive workplace. Ethical companies also actively contribute to their communities through philanthropy, volunteering, and initiatives aimed at social upliftment.

Overall, the integration of business ethics into CSR activities is crucial for organizations to thrive in a rapidly evolving world. As businesses recognize their responsibility towards society, they can position themselves as drivers of positive change. By going beyond profitability and embracing ethical practices, companies become agents of progress, shaping a better future for both their stakeholders and the world at large.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Objectives

1. To elucidate the nuances and intricacies of Business Ethics in the corporate environment and their implications on organizational conduct.

2. To explain the pivotal role of Business Ethics as an effective driving force in initiating and harmonizing comprehensive Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives for positive societal impact.

3. To evaluate the interplay between Business Ethics and CSR and their effect on the development and execution of CSR strategies.

4. To analyze and assess the influence of ethical frameworks in managing CSR practices, determining their efficacy in addressing contemporary social and environmental challenges.

5. To investigate the perceptual link between business ethics and consumer preferences.

6. To synthesize and correlate empirical evidence and theoretical perspectives for fostering sustainable Corporate Social Responsibility practices in organizations.

Research Design

The research employs a non-probability convenience sampling method to select a total sample size of five companies, each representing different domains within the Indian context. Convenience sampling was chosen due to its practicality and accessibility, enabling the researchers to gather data efficiently from readily available participants. The selection criteria for the five companies were based on their willingness to participate in the study and their accessibility to the research team. This method was deemed appropriate considering the time and resource constraints faced by the researchers. Through convenience sampling, the research team could conveniently access and engage with willing participants who met the criteria for inclusion in the study. By exploring the narratives and insights of these companies, the research aims to extract valuable qualitative data, shedding light on the interplay between Business Ethics and CSR across different organizational contexts in India.

Data Collection Process

Narrative interviews serve as a powerful methodological approach aimed at capturing individuals' firsthand experiences within their respective domains of work. By delving into the personal stories and narratives of participants,

researchers gain invaluable insights into the lived realities, challenges, and triumphs encountered in their professional journeys. This qualitative approach enables a holistic comprehension of not only the professional aspects but also the social and emotional dimensions that drive individuals in their pursuit of excellence and fulfillment. Moreover, narrative interviews facilitate a participatory research process, empowering participants to articulate their experiences in their own words and on their own terms.

DATA ANALYSIS

To get a better understanding of the ethics in practice, the researchers identified 5 companies in different domains. People from 5 domains working currently in companies were selected and interviewed regarding their views on how ethics are applied in their daily work practices. This individual narrative analysis led to a combined narrative analysis for a better understanding of ethics being followed and the functioning of CSR in the organizations. The names of the companies have been camouflaged.

Company Alpha

Company Alpha has the largest capacity to produce 5 billion pounds of polymers annually, and with the help of its research and development team. It can provide added innovation to enhance business growth. The company aims to provide safe, economical, and efficient sources of energy for industry. This is accomplished through cost-effective products as well as meeting stringent global quality standards.

Narrative Analysis of Interview of Alpha

This is a story of change and restoration. Alpha is proud to announce that they have acquired 152 acres of land to rehabilitate all evictees, which allowed people to build up their own house and provided them with all basic infrastructure like schools with playgrounds and an extensive storm water drainage system. They helped students through financial assistance and scholarships, assisting NGOs that promote social causes. They are also involved in creating a greenbelt around buildings, organizing seminars and workshops for spreading

awareness about safety and management of environmental issues through training programs. They are proud of their role in the development of millions of people of Kerala. Thousands of people were made homeless after massive cyclone. They are acting on their own and helping those who suffer from lack of shelter, food, water, and electricity and acquired hundreds of acres of land to rehabilitate all evictees facilitating them to build their own houses.

Company Beta

Beta is a global technology leader, with a strong balance sheet, robust financials, and an established customer base across the globe. They are driven by innovation and delivering value for their customers, shareholders, and employees. Their vision is to be recognized as a leading global information technology services company that focuses on innovation, social responsibility, and sustainable growth. Beta has developed a strong record in providing its customers end to end solutions.

Narrative Analysis of Interview of Beta

'Power of One' is the backbone of this organization. This program denotes that even a minute contribution can bring a major change in people's life. It has set an ambitious goal to create a clear, green, healthy, and empowered life for millions of their employees, customers and provide opportunity for developing communities through various high impact programs. Beta made a fresh initiative, aimed at creating a future-ready India. Today's young workforce are tomorrow's leaders but first, they must realize their full potential.

Company Gamma

Gamma is one of the world's leading natural resources companies dealing with diversified resources like Zinc, Lead, Silver, Iron Ore, and Copper, Steel, Aluminum, and power. This company is engaged in mining of aluminum and copper from natural deposits. It brings a great deal on high quality resources that can be used for various industrial applications.

ISSN 2348-2869 Print
ISSN 2348-5434 Online
2023 Symbiosis Centre for Management Studies, NOIDA
Journal of General Management Research

Page **32** of **37**

Narrative Analysis of Interview of Gamma

Gamma is empowering cities with inclusive growth through their performance, social license to operate and community development programs. They are providing children with essential building blocks of life, enabling them to reach their full potential in school, healthcare, nutrition, and safety. They are giving a new hope to mothers who rarely receive treatment once they contract HIV/AIDS. The scope of work for that project is vast and as such, it continues to be focused on both communities and their well-being. One of its biggest achievements has been its role in helping toddlers learn through quality education and building an environment where they can grow up safe and secure.

Company Delta

Delta is one of the largest oil and gas exploration companies in India. Delta operates the world's most modern refineries to produce high quality fuel products and supplies them to customers around the country. The company has been continuously expanding its production capacity over the last three decades, and now imports crude oil from places such as Norway, Brazil and the US. The Company participates in various sectors including retail trading, distribution, and transportation. It also operates in two divisions: marketing and refining and petrochemicals.

Narrative Analysis of Interview of Delta

Delta believes in the empowerment of the weaker section of the society, namely women and children. They are committed to make sure to create this empowerment through their projects and initiatives. Clean India Mission (Clean India, Swachh Bharat) aims to achieve zero open defecation across the country. They have started with Swachh Bharat and environment preservation initiatives like Ensuring Clean Drinking Water Facilities across India; Open Defecation Free (ODF) Initiative, Clean Himalayas Initiatives, Restoration and Beautification of Public Places and Heritage Structure; Ensuring Clean and Sustainable Street Lighting Solution in Remote Villages; Cleaning of Sabarmati Riverbank.

Company Epsilon

Epsilon is an online travel agency which is globally present and has its headquarters in Mumbai and Dubai. The company operates an online travel aggregator website for booking flights and train, hotel reservations, and activities in India and the Middle East countries. It has offices across UAE, India, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Epsilon is a leading player in the Indian market. The company is uniting the best of local and global culture and providing an innovative platform for human interactions without the barriers of language and geography.

Narrative Analysis of Interview of Epsilon

Epsilon believes in creating a sustainable livelihood for vulnerable children. They promote business awareness, vocational skills training and create awareness about financial literacy. They are one of the foremost organizations involved in Children's Development, Education, Health, and Human Rights. They provide unique, innovative, and sustainable solutions to address these needs as well as to meet their vision of 'improving lives'. They are committed to provide children with an equal opportunity for development and a chance to acquire skills and knowledge necessary for their future growth as responsible citizens.

Combined Narrative Analysis

Based on different narrative analyses, it can be concluded that ethics are central to the success of any company. They help us to define our interests and values, guide us in making decisions, motivate us to act ethically, and enforce rules when a deviation occurs. Ethics can also help companies attract and retain employees who share their values. A firm's reputation attracts business prospects who want to do business with ethical organizations. Employer-based benefits like health insurance, pensions, paid leave, and other perks also play a role in attracting top talent by demonstrating the ethical nature of a company. Organizations that build a brand and maintain it at the best level, attract talent and investors by attracting customers. While building a brand may not yield

ISSN 2348-2869 Print
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2023 Symbiosis Centre for Management Studies, NOIDA
Journal of General Management Research

Page **33** of **37**

immediate results, it pays off in the long term; an organization which has built a strong, moral brand will be rewardedwith loyal customers and stands to reap greater rewards as competition becomes fiercer. Ethically driven organizations are profitable in the long term, despite difficulties in the short term. If the organization wants to become financially successful, an ethical approach will make a difference. If a company fails to uphold ethical standards and enforce them, it effectsthe image, working and progress of the company. The ethical practices of a business are not limited to the marketing strategies of product and service development. Business ethics is a collection of principles that govern actions and decisions in the field of commerce and economics. It's about doing good, treating everyone fairly and with respect, creating excellence, treating employees well and giving back to society.

Furthermore, the incorporation of strong ethical practices within a company yields numerous advantages, including the ability to attract and retain employees who share similar values. When employees feel a sense of alignment with the company's ethical standards, they are more likely to exhibit higher levels of commitment, loyalty, and engagement. This, in turn, contributes to a positive and harmonious work environment, fostering productivity and overall job satisfaction. Ethical behavior also plays a significant role in shaping a company's reputation, acting as a magnet for prospective business partners and customers seeking to engage with trustworthy and responsible organizations. A positive reputation for ethical conduct can enhance brand loyalty, prompting customers to choose a particular company's products or services over competitors. Moreover, employers who prioritize ethical practices often offer attractive employee benefits, such as health insurance, pensions, and paid leave, which not only demonstrate the ethical nature of the company but also contribute to employee well-being and job satisfaction. Such benefits serve as a potent tool for attracting top talent and retaining skilled employees in an increasingly competitive job market.

The strategic importance of building a strong brand cannot be overstated, as it not only enhances customer recognition but also attracts potential investors and business partners. While brand-building may require sustained efforts and investment, a brand that is built on a foundation of strong ethical values and principles is more likely to withstand challenges and emerge as a formidable force in the market. Ethical practices are not confined to short-term benefits; rather, they lay the groundwork for long-term profitability and success.

DISCUSSION

After a thorough investigation, analysis, and exploration of the research questions, the study has successfully achieved the six stated objectives:

Objective 1: To elucidate the nuances and intricacies of Business Ethics in the corporate environment and their implications on organizational conduct.

The study comprehensively examined the concept of Business Ethics within the corporate world. through an in-depth literature review, it unraveled the intricate ethical principles that guide organizational conduct. The research highlighted the importance of ethical values in shaping the behavior of businesses and influencing decision-making processes. By delving into various ethical frameworks and theories, the study provided a nuanced understanding of how Business Ethics forms the ethical foundation for organizational behavior.

Objective 2: To explain the pivotal role of Business Ethics as an effective driving force in initiating and harmonizing comprehensive Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives for positive societal impact.

Through narrative interviews with representatives from diverse industries, the study revealed the influential role of Business Ethics as a driving force behind CSR initiatives. The findings demonstrated that organizations with a strong commitment to ethical conduct were more likely to engage in multifaceted CSR projects. Ethical principles acted as catalysts for initiating and harmonizing CSR efforts that aligned with the values of society and positively impacted

ISSN 2348-2869 Print
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2023 Symbiosis Centre for Management Studies, NOIDA
Journal of General Management Research

Page **34** of **37**

various aspects of community welfare and environmental sustainability.

Objective 3: To evaluate the interplay between Business Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility and their effect on the development and execution of CSR strategies.

The study thoroughly analyzed the interplay between Business Ethics and CSR through a combination of literature review and narrative interviews. By critically assessing the relationship between ethical principles and CSR strategies, the research uncovered how ethical behavior influences the direction and implementation of CSR initiatives. The findings emphasized the bidirectional nature of this relationship, with ethical principles influencing the shaping of CSR strategies while CSR activities, in turn, reinforced the ethical reputation of the organizations.

Objective 4: To analyze and assess the influence of ethical frameworks in managing CSR practices, determining their efficacy in addressing contemporary social and environmental challenges.

Through an extensive literature review, the study scrutinized various ethical frameworks in the context of steering CSR practices. It evaluated the relevance and efficacy of these frameworks in addressing contemporary social and environmental challenges. By examining case studies and real-world scenarios, the research shed light on how ethical frameworks guide CSR initiatives to tackle pressing societal issues, such as poverty alleviation, environmental conservation, and social welfare.

Objective 5: To investigate the perceptual link between business ethics and consumer preferences.

The study investigated the perceptual nexus between ethical business practices and stakeholders, including consumers. Through narrative interviews, the research explored how ethical comportment influenced stakeholders' perceptions of companies. The findings indicated that businesses with strong ethical values enjoyed enduring brand loyalty and positive consumer preferences, as consumers increasingly preferred

organizations that demonstrated responsible and ethical behaviour.

Objective 6: To synthesize and correlate empirical evidence and theoretical perspectives for fostering sustainable Corporate Social Responsibility practices in organizations

The study achieved a comprehensive synthesis by combining empirical evidence, theoretical perspectives, and case studies. Through a rigorous analysis of literature and narrative interviews, the research provided a holistic understanding of how Business Ethics serves as a cornerstone for fostering sustainable CSR practices. The findings highlighted the transferability of ethical principles across diverse industries and geographical contexts, showcasing the universality of ethical conduct in driving positive societal impact through CSR initiatives.

In conclusion, the study effectively met all six objectives, leading to a profound understanding of the significance of Business Ethics in shaping CSR practices and fostering positive societal impact. The research has contributed valuable insights into the reciprocal relationship between ethical principles and CSR strategies, offering practical implications for businesses seeking to integrate ethical values into their corporate practices to drive sustainable and socially responsible initiatives.

CONCLUSION

The present study delves into the intricate interplay between Business Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in diverse domains within the Indian context. The world has witnessed a rapid transformation over the last few decades, compelling businesses to embrace greater responsibilities towards society. In this era of heightened social consciousness and ethical awareness, companies that prioritize ethical practices stand to reap significant benefits in terms of brand recognition, market dominance, and sustainable growth. The study explores the significance of ethical conduct in fostering positive societal impact through CSR initiatives and aims to shed light on the

ISSN 2348-2869 Print
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2023 Symbiosis Centre for Management Studies, NOIDA
Journal of General Management Research

Page **35** of **37**

implications of Business Ethics on organizational behavior and strategic decision-making.

The literature review presented in the earlier sections highlights the strategic relevance of CSR and business ethics in company profitability. Arli and Lasmono (2010) found that while consumers may not always be aware of specific CSR activities, the impact of ethical practices resonates strongly in developed countries where consumers are willing to support such initiatives. Brammer et al (2012) emphasized that CSR goes beyond charitable actions and encompasses the welfare of society, communities, and the world at large. The research by Frisko and Arisandi (2011) shed light on the role of CSR in strengthening economies, especially for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) through partnership programs and activities. Godfrey et al. (2016) further emphasized the importance of business ethics and corporate social responsibility in driving organizational growth and success.

The study adopted a non-probability convenience sampling approach to select five companies from different domains in India. The chosen sample aimed to capture the diversity of industries and provide a comprehensive understanding of how Business Ethics and CSR practices manifest across various organizational contexts. While convenience sampling may limit generalizability, its qualitative approach allows for in-depth exploration and detailed insights into the unique experiences and perspectives of the selected companies.

The findings from the narrative interviews conducted with representatives from the chosen companies reveal a compelling description of ethical business practices fostering positive societal impact through CSR initiatives. Company Alpha, a leading polymers manufacturer, showcased their commitment to social responsibility by acquiring land to rehabilitate evictees and providing basic infrastructure and financial assistance for social causes. Similarly, Company Beta, a global technology leader, demonstrated a comprehensive CSR program titled "Power of One," dedicated to creating a sustainable and empowered life for employees and customers through high-impact initiatives.

Company Gamma, a natural resources company, exemplified its commitment to inclusive growth and community development by empowering cities, promoting education, and providing essential services to vulnerable populations. On the other hand, Company Delta, one of India's largest oil and gas exploration companies, exhibited a strong emphasis on social empowerment, environmental preservation, and initiatives like the "Clean India Mission" for cleanliness and sustainability.

Epsilon, an online travel agency, focused on sustainable livelihood for vulnerable children, business awareness, vocational training, and financial literacy initiatives. These findings underscore the significance of ethical business conduct in driving CSR practices that positively impact employees, customers, communities, and the environment. The discussion of the study's objectives revealed a comprehensive understanding of Business Ethics in the corporate world. By exploring the narratives of different companies, the study discerned how Business Ethics plays a pivotal role in driving CSR activities. The reciprocal influence between Business Ethics and CSR was critically evaluated, highlighting the symbiotic relationship between ethical principles and CSR strategies. By incorporating the findings from Collier and Esteban (2007) research, present research offers a deeper understanding of how ethical practices contribute to fostering sustainable CSR by elucidating the mechanisms through which such practices enhance employee commitment to CSR initiatives. The study also investigated the perception of businesses, their ethical conduct, and stakeholders, emphasizing the importance of ethical business practices in attracting and retaining customers and fostering brand loyalty.

The research implications of the study indicate that businesses can achieve sustained success by integrating ethical practices and social investment. The findings highlight the need for organizations to implement ethical frameworks, good governance, and fair working conditions to foster customer loyalty and better business performance. Ethical conduct was found to be a crucial aspect of corporate governance, influencing decision-

ISSN 2348-2869 Print
ISSN 2348-5434 Online
2023 Symbiosis Centre for Management Studies, NOIDA
Journal of General Management Research

Page 36 of 37

making and cooperation with stakeholders. The findings are supported by Pomering and Dolnicar (2009) research where they emphasized upon the intricate connection between corporate social responsibility (CSR), consumer awareness, and the effectiveness of pro-social marketing campaigns. Their research highlights the essential role of consumer awareness in shaping the outcomes of CSR initiatives, influencing consumer attitude and behaviour.

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ISSN 2348-2869 Print
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2023 Symbiosis Centre for Management Studies, NOIDA
Journal of General Management Research

Page **37** of **37**