

RESPONSIBLE INNOVATION: ETHICAL INTEGRATION OF INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY AND CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR) IN BUSINESS

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Abstract

This paper examines the intersection of intellectual property (IP) and corporate social responsibility (CSR) through the lens of ethical benchmarking, proposing a framework that redefines innovation as both a private asset and a public good. While IP protection incentivizes creativity and secures competitive advantage, its monopolistic use often restricts access to essential goods such as medicines, digital technologies, and climate solutions. Conversely, CSR emphasizes inclusivity, sustainability, and accountability, yet is rarely integrated into IP governance. This study addresses this gap by conceptualizing an Ethical Benchmarking Framework (EBF) that evaluates IP practices against four normative pillars—transparency, accessibility, sustainability, and equity—operationalized through a five-step dynamic cycle: assessment, alignment, action, accountability, and adaptation. Drawing on global cases, the analysis demonstrates how CSR-driven IP strategies, such as open licensing in healthcare and open-source initiatives in technology, can reduce inequalities, while highlighting the risks of tokenism, fragmented IP regimes, and measurement challenges. The Indian context provides a distinctive lens, illustrating how generics pharmaceuticals and digital public goods embody ethical approaches to IP while confronting systemic barriers. The paper concludes that ethical benchmarking of IP within CSR is both a moral imperative and a strategic necessity, enabling corporations to align innovation with societal welfare and long-term sustainability.

Keywords: Ethical Benchmarking, Intellectual Property, Corporate Social Responsibility, Innovation, Sustainability, Indian Context

1. Introduction

The twenty first century has brought in a knowledge economy and ideas, innovations and creativity are as important as capital and natural resources (Drucker, 1993). In this context, the main question for corporations is not how much they are able to gain in profit, but how do they manage the knowledge and innovations, that they claim to own, in a responsible fashion (Teece, 1986). Traditionally used to reward inventors, intellectual property (IP) is now a key element in the strategy of global business (Carroll, 1999). At the same time, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has evolved from being a discretionary form of philanthropy to a measure of a company's legitimacy, trustworthiness and sustainability (Porter & Kramer, 2006). IP and CSR are the two key components of the modern business practice which influence the perception of the business and the contribution of the business in the society (Shiva, 1997; Oxfam, 2001).

IP has become an increasingly important part of the global economy and the connection between corporations and society has been changed. During industrial ages past, such physical factors as land, equipment, and facilities were the keys to an organization's success. Patents, copyrights, trademarks, trade secrets, software codes and proprietary knowledge, however, are some of the most valuable resources of a company today. Firms that have a lot of IP, like pharmaceutical companies, technology companies, biotechnology companies, and digital platform companies can get a significant competitive edge from their intellectual property. Thus, IP is not only a legal tool for the protection of innovation, it also is a strategic tool for affecting access to knowledge, health care, education and technological development in societies. With increasing role of corporations in the control and use of knowledge resources, the ethical aspects of intellectual property governance have become more prominent.

Meanwhile, the expectations of stakeholders have significantly changed with respect to companies. Now the companies are not just judged by the bottom-line or return to the shareholders. It is an increasing expectation from governments, consumers, investors, employees and civil society organizations that corporations will practice accountability regarding social and environmental issues at large. This has made the relevance of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as an integral part of corporate strategies as opposed to a philanthropic activity on the periphery, more evident. Today the focus of CSR is on sustainable development, involvement of stakeholders, protection of the environment, ethical leadership and social inclusion. Corporations are thus forced to account not just for what they produce, but for how their innovations impact communities, markets and future generations.

The rapport between IP and CSR is especially relevant considering that both IP and CSR impact on the distribution of opportunities and resources in the society. IP has the capacity to foster innovation through the promise of rewards for creativity and investment, but can also obstruct the access to vital products and services. CSR, however, aims to improve the balance and responsible practices of enterprises. Both of these areas together, demonstrate the interplay of private and public interests. There are ethical issues raised when companies monopolize innovations that are used in the provision of basic human necessities like healthcare, environmental protection, education and digital connectivity. Hence, new ways to assess whether IP systems are being used in a way which promotes social good without undermining incentives for innovation are increasingly needed.

The development of challenges all over the world further strengthens the importance of this discussion. Innovation and collaboration at unprecedented levels are needed to address climate change and public health crisis, digital divide, and sustainable development. In this case, restrictive IP rights may become a hindrance in the development of joint IP activities on urgent social problems. On the contrary, good IP management can also play a role in knowledge and technology transfer. The COVID-19 situation has highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of the existing IP system and the need for an improvement of the system so that it takes into consideration both the commercial interests as well as humanitarian needs. These all developments point to the need for a different approach not only legally and economically, but also ethically and socially when it comes to IP.

However, there are many contradictions in this relationship between IP and CSR (Elkington, 1997). The concept of IP rights stimulates creativity in the form of exclusivity but may also be abused through monopoly practices, which could lead to restrictions in access to essential products like medicine, technology and education (Freeman, 1984). This poses ethical questions, such as: 'Is innovation progressive if it's not available to the people who need it? Is it possible for a corp. to be socially responsible and still own patents that prevent distribution of resources in an equitable way? This set of questions highlights the importance of benchmarking which is more ethical than just financial or industrial (Chaudhuri, 2005; D'Silva et al., 2019).

Corporations are forced to consider the effect of their innovations on human welfare because of ethical benchmarking. It goes beyond profit or market dominance, with the focus being on accessibility, transparency, sustainability and accountability towards stakeholders (Gunawardana Nadeesha, 2023). It is intended as a measuring device and a moral compass which compels business entities to consider themselves as contributing players to a just and sustainable future, not merely as individual economic entities (Gunawardana Nadeesha, 2019).

The main idea of this research is to reveal the social aspect of IP as the sole opportunity for the corporate innovation to be benefited through IP protection. Innovation must be used as a connection between economic and social progress rather than being an exclusive thing for the rich people (Srivastava, A.K, 2022). By implementing CSR concepts into the IP management and ethical benchmarking, corporations will be able to guarantee that their invention has commercial and social value at once. The dynamics are especially visible in India, as in the generics pharmaceutical industry there has been an attempt to ensure the access to life-saving drugs and in UPI – to include everybody (Ashish Kumar Srivastava, 2023). The examples illustrate how IP and CSR integration can broaden the horizon of company responsibility and set new standards for responsible corporate behaviour.

To sum up this paper suggests that if innovation is not accompanied by responsibility, it can exacerbate the social divide and if responsibility is not backed by innovation, it can result in stagnation (Ashish Kumar Srivastava, 2021). Ethical benchmarking brings these dimensions together, aligning and managing IP in ways that align with corporate goals and societal welfare, making innovation a private asset and a public good (Saifullah Khalid, 2024).

2. Concept Of Ethical Benchmarking

Benchmarking is a management strategy of comparing the performance of an organisation with that of best-in-class organisations, and typically includes operational and financial measures, such as cost effectiveness and productivity (Camp, 1989). But, in the present scenario, companies are required to deal with the challenges of the twenty first century and the idea of benchmarking has changed to incorporate ethical dimensions (Elkington, 1997). Ethical benchmarking helps to analyse the corporate behaviour in the light of justice, inclusivity, sustainability and responsibility, not asking “How efficient are we compared to competitors?” but “How fair and socially responsible are we compared to the expectations of society?” (Carroll, 1999).

This is a normative approach that shifts corporate attention from profit-based indicators to a form of social embeddedness that can be seen as a form of accountability and is especially relevant for integrating intellectual property (IP) and corporate social responsibility (CSR). Ethical benchmarking can be used to keep innovation in line with the welfare of society and ensure that the practices of IP can lead to a society's progress instead of exclusion (Boyle & Meyer, 2015).

3. Literature Review

3.1 Ethical Benchmarking in CSR

CSR scholarship emphasizes corporate accountability, which is beyond shareholder profit, and includes environmental sustainability, labor practices, diversity, and community (Carroll, 1999; Freeman, 1984). The factors that are emphasised in CSR benchmarking frameworks are transparency, stakeholder inclusivity and sustainability reporting (Elkington, 1997; Global Reporting Initiative, 2013). Some CSR standards, however, focus on what companies do, not what they achieve: CSR standards may include a company's expenditure on CSR activities but not on the inequity that exists at the structure level (Porter & Kramer, 2006; Banerjee, 2008). Ethical benchmarking, therefore, is part of the discourse since it evaluates the motivation behind and the social implications of business behaviors and ensures that the CSR initiatives address the system differences (Visser, 2010).

3.2 Intellectual Property and Ethical Concerns

IP literature emphasizes the significance of IP in promoting innovation, ensuring protection of the creative process, and offering a competitive advantage (Teece 1986; Merges 1996). Nevertheless, critics point out various moral concerns, including patent abuse and knowledge monopolization, which prevent people from having access to necessary products (Heller & Eisenberg, 1998; Shiva, 1997). Healthcare: patent monopoly may effectively make life-saving drugs unavailable in poor nations (Oxfam, 2001). Similarly, when it comes

to environmental technologies, IP protection prevents people all over the world from accessing climate-friendly solutions (Correa, 2000; Rimmer, 2011). Even amidst these debates, IP literature tends to concentrate on legal and economic frameworks and not necessarily on the ethical dimensions of CSR (Boyle & Meyer, 2015).

3.3 Integration of IP and CSR

Intellectual Property (IP) and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) are emerging fields of academic research with relatively little scholarly work being done despite their increasing practical importance. Currently, CSR literature is mainly on the issues of environmental sustainability, stakeholder management, labour rights, community development and corporate governance; and IP does not seem to be a part of the corporate social responsibility (Waddock, 2004). In contrast, the traditional focus of scholarship in the field of intellectual property has been on legal protection, the creation of incentives for innovation, and commercialization strategies and economic efficiency, and has neglected broader ethical and social issues (Drahoš & Braithwaite, 2002). Consequently, the two lines of work have developed separately and a large conceptual gap has emerged.

In a knowledge-based economy, where the non-material affects access to basic goods and services, such separation is becoming an issue more and more. The issues of patenting, licensing, technology transfer and knowledge dissemination have obvious impacts on welfare. For example, patents on pharmaceutical products can have an impact on the accessibility and cost of health care, copyrights on software can impact digital inclusion, and patents on clean technology can impact how the world responds to environmental issues. These are clear examples of the fact that making IP choices is not just a business decision but also a social and moral choice with wider impacts.

There has been scholarly debate in which the reality of the fact that corporations have obligations outside the legal requirements in managing their intellectual property has been acknowledged. New efforts to integrate IP policies with other social objectives are those of open innovation models, voluntary licensing systems, patents pools, and research collaborations. These show that IP can be an innovation protector and a source of social benefits. However, at present, there is no systematic framework for assessing the ethical aspects of IP management to be effective.

In addition, the combination of IP and CSR is especially significant when it comes to sustainable development. Innovation plays a crucial role in achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) across various sectors, including healthcare, education, renewable energy, and digital infrastructure. Corporations are an important element of the decision of whether technological advances are exclusive commodities or publicly available resources that can lead to societal advancement, since the creation and dissemination of many of these innovations is governed by intellectual property. This accentuates the importance of building an ethical system that can strike a balance between rights and responsibilities of the owners and those of the society.

Hence the present study is a contribution to the literature, which places ethical benchmarking as a link between intellectual property governance and corporate social responsibility. A different approach to IP practices by taking the view of ethical considerations like accessibility, transparency, sustainability and equity, can help corporations to break out of their narrow focus on ownership and profitability to a more comprehensive view on innovation as part of a society's resources.

4. Research Gap And Contribution

4.1 Research Gap

From the literature, it is observed that there exists a gap between CSR and IP scholarship. The need for social responsibility has been neglected in CSR studies as IP is rarely discussed as an ethical responsibility and IP research has been mainly confined to legal and economic aspects (Boyle & Meyer, 2015; Waddock, 2004). There is a lack of literature that explicitly links IP and CSR in a single ethical benchmarking framework and which addresses the question of how to reconcile the promotion of innovation by IP with the wellbeing of the society (Drahoš & Braithwaite, 2002).

4.2 Contribution of This Study

The study hence contributes to the ongoing debate on responsible innovation by constructing a conceptual connection between IP and CSR, using the ethical benchmarking perspective. Although the literature mostly

considers IP and CSR as distinct fields, this paper shows that they are two interrelated aspects of corporate responsibility in the current knowledge economy. The study brings together these fields within one framework of analysis, thereby enhancing the theoretical knowledge of the possibility of creating economic and social value from innovation at the same time.

A major breakthrough of this research is the use of ethical benchmarking as a means of assessing IP practices. Traditional measures of intellectual property primarily include legal validity, economic returns, market competitiveness and innovation performance. In contrast, the current paper recommends that IP practices may also be judged in accordance with their social impacts, considering accessibility, inclusiveness, sustainability, and equity. Such broader evaluation implies that companies should consider the ethical dimension of their innovation management system apart from their commercial aims.

Also, the current research contributes to the existing body of literature by providing an innovative approach to the integration of the CSR concept in the governance of IP through the Ethical Benchmarking Framework (EBF). The proposed framework is valuable not only from a theoretical point of view but is also characterized by its applicability since both sets of pillars and processes are identified in order to make corporations' innovation management socially beneficial. The EBF may be considered as a novel approach to CSR since the responsibility goes beyond conventional CSR activities into the sphere of knowledge management and innovation management.

The other significant aspect is that the paper brings to the fore the need to take into account the Indian experience in the context of the international debates on IP and business ethics. India has some remarkable examples of generic pharmaceuticals, digital public goods and inclusive innovations that show how things could have been done differently in the realm of IP governance. What emerges from all of this is the fact that developing nations have a great deal to contribute to the international debates on ethics and innovation in knowledge sharing.

Finally, the paper outlines future research directions. Scholars are urged to think of empirical methods for assessing ethical IP results, as well as stakeholder perceptions of responsible innovation and regulatory regimes of IP for social good. In this manner, the groundwork is laid for a more holistic approach to the study of innovation, ethics and corporate responsibility dynamics.

5. Role Of Intellectual Property In Ethical Benchmarking

Intellectual property (IP) is the lifeline of the knowledge economy, where the rewards for creativity are given in the form of exclusivity (Teece, 1986). In today's times of growing inequalities and global crises, however, IP is not only a matter of legal ownership, but also a moral challenge of the legitimacy of the corporation (Shiva, 1997).

Ethical benchmarking can be thought of as a socially situated innovation, where IP is an embedded mechanism that considers innovation and collective welfare (Boyle & Meyer, 2015).

5.1 Global Perspectives: IP as a Double-Edged Sword

IP can function as a catalyst for market dominance and technological advancement in the world, but it can also be a stumbling-block for vulnerable people. In the case of COVID-19, some pharmaceutical companies protected vaccine patents but withheld vaccines in developing countries, while others used open licensing to ensure that innovation and public health go hand in hand (Wouters et al., 2021; MSF, 2021). With clean tech, restrictive IP policies stifle equitable dissemination of climate solutions (Rimmer, 2011). Ethical benchmarking moves away from ownership to a societal benefit, separating out those corporations that are more concerned with universal welfare (Moon et al., 2011).

5.2 Indian Perspectives: IP in a Developmental Context

The IP landscape in India is influenced by its dual role as a country of innovation and social justice. The generics pharmaceutical industry has called into question global patent regimes, creating cheap medicine for the Global South (Chaudhuri, 2005). When linked with societal needs, IP can promote inclusion, such as Aadhaar and UPI (D'Silva et al., 2019). But moves towards global IP standards could jeopardise accessibility, as well as calls for ethical benchmarking to ensure equity (Sampat & Shadlen, 2015).

5.3 Reconceptualizing IP Through Ethical Benchmarking

Ethical Benchmarking considers strategies that can be developed by IP to improve human dignity, equity and sustainability and questions:

- Are patents used to exclude or empower?
- Do licensing practices promote access in underserved regions?
- Does IP address global challenges like health, education, and climate change?

Such reframing makes corporations stewards of knowledge, which adds to their legitimacy and makes innovation a shared value (Benkler, 2006).

6. Integrating Csr Into Ethical Benchmarking Of Ip

As a result, CSR is a strategic framework that is transforming the role of business in society (Carroll, 1999). For the knowledge economy where IP is a source of corporate value, CSR should include ethical management of intangible assets (Porter & Kramer, 2006). Ethical benchmarking maintains the balance between an innovation that is publicly relevant and privately protected.

6.1 CSR as A Framework for Ethical IP Practices

CSR provides principles of responsibility, inclusivity, and sustainability for IP management:

- **Responsibility:** Recognizing IP's societal implications in sectors like healthcare and education (Waddock, 2004).
- **Inclusivity:** Reducing inequities through open licensing or tiered pricing (Moon et al., 2011).
- **Sustainability:** Aligning IP with long-term societal resilience, such as climate technologies (Rimmer, 2011).

These principles enable corporations to benchmark their ethical standing against global societal expectations (Global Reporting Initiative, 2013).

6.2 Operationalizing CSR in IP Benchmarking

Practical evaluation metrics for IP benchmarking include:

- Does the licensing strategy prioritize affordability in developing markets?
- Are innovations shared through partnerships with NGOs or governments?
- How transparent are IP policies regarding societal implications?
- Do IP strategies align with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?

These metrics distinguish transformative accountability from superficial CSR compliance (Visser, 2010).

6.3 Case Illustrations: CSR-Driven IP Strategies

Internationally, drug companies that have embraced differential pricing for drugs are representative of CSR-based IP approaches (Moon et al., 2011). In technology, open-source collaborations are examples of knowledge sharing (Benkler, 2006). India has laws that require companies to allocate 2% of their profits towards social activities, incentivizing companies to think of IP as a CSR initiative, such as UPI's efforts to promote inclusion (D'Silva et al., 2019).

6.4 Reframing CSR-IP Integration Through Ethical Benchmarking

Ethical benchmarking is the process of implementing CSR values into the field of IP governance, and rethinking innovation as a two-in-one activity: to maintain profitable business, and to promote the welfare of the society. It forces companies to focus on raising the standard of living of society, rather than on competition, and therefore, it increases their legitimacy in the global spotlight. (Porter & Kramer, 2006)

7. Ethical Benchmarking Framework For Ip And Csr: A Proposed Model

Corporations should be evaluated on what they make possible, not only on what they own, in the twenty first century. The proposed Ethical Benchmarking Framework (EBF) brings CSR principles to the fore in IP governance to make innovation a vehicle for social advancement.

7.1 The Core Philosophy of the Framework

The EBF rests on a dual-value principle:

1. Private Value: Acknowledging corporate benefits from innovation protection.
2. Public Value: Ensuring innovation contributes to societal welfare.
Ethical benchmarking balances ownership with accessibility, fostering responsible moderation of exclusivity (Boyle & Meyer, 2015).

7.2 Pillars of the Ethical Benchmarking Framework

The framework comprises four pillars:

1. Transparency: Disclosing IP holdings and their societal implications (Global Reporting Initiative, 2013).
2. Accessibility: Prioritizing affordability in essential sectors through open licensing or collaborations (Moon et al., 2011).
3. Sustainability: Aligning IP with long-term societal goals, such as the SDGs (Rimmer, 2011).
4. Equity: Reducing global disparities by extending benefits to marginalized groups (Shiva, 1997).

These pillars create a matrix for evaluating IP practices.

7.3 The Ethical Benchmarking Cycle

The framework operates as a dynamic cycle:

Step 1: Assessment: Evaluating IP practices against the four pillars.

Step 2: Alignment: Integrating CSR into IP decisions.

Step 3: Action: Implementing policies like ethical licensing or tiered pricing.

Step 4: Accountability: Ensuring transparent reporting and audits.

Step 5: Adaptation: Refining practices through stakeholder feedback.

Ethical Benchmarking Framework for Integrating Intellectual Property (IP) with Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

Four pillars of the framework, Transparency, Accessibility, Sustainability and Equity, offer the normative approach for the measurement of IP practices. Five-step cycle of the framework is operationalized, helping businesses strike a balance between innovation protection and public good, making IP a social good (Boyle & Meyer, 2015).

7.4 Illustrative Impact: From Concept to Transformation

- A pharmaceutical firm patents a vaccine and establishes equitable licensing for affordability (Moon et al., 2011).
- A technology corporation safeguards innovations while contributing open-source versions for public welfare (Benkler, 2006).
- An Indian firm allocates IP to rural innovation hubs, empowering local entrepreneurs (D'Silva et al., 2019).

These examples demonstrate IP's transformation from exclusion to empowerment.

7.5 Why This Framework Matters

EBF redefines innovation as an ethically based practice, an approach which will enable companies to follow; a process that will be pragmatic and idealistic, whereby they can achieve both profitability and social legacy (Porter & Kramer, 2006). It tackles inequality, climate crisis and knowledge gaps to offer a moral compass for the global economy.

7.6 Policy Implications of the Ethical Benchmarking Framework

The proposed framework on Ethical Benchmarking (EBF) has important consequences for the policy, corporate management, regulation and international institutions aiming for responsible innovation. Today, the importance of mechanisms of governance to balance the interests of commerce and society is greater than ever, especially as IP increasingly affects access to knowledge, healthcare, education and technology. The framework provides effective guidance on embedding ethical issues in IP management without compromising on the incentives to innovate.

The framework provides an approach for corporate leaders to incorporate IP strategies into their sustainability program. Patents, copyrights and proprietary technology can be not just a source of

competitive advantage but also a source of social value. Benchmarking based on ethical principles will encourage businesses to think about how their innovation strategy is going to impact accessibility, inclusion and sustainable development of society. Such an approach can help to legitimize the company, improve its reputation and gain the trust of its stakeholders in an increasingly socially conscious market.

It highlights the necessity to develop the system of IP laws and regulation which would encourage innovation and provide people with access to vital goods and services at the same time – something that needs to be considered by lawmakers and regulatory authorities. There are certain policy options and regulatory mechanisms that can encourage responsible use of intellectual property by giving a reward to socially desirable innovations. Ethical benchmarking may provide a way to develop policies that stimulate knowledge diffusion without reducing incentives for innovation, as it can be seen in such industries as healthcare, renewable energy or digital technology.

This model also has its consequences for the international organizations that work on international development and governance of IP. The importance of aligning the innovations system with sustainable development needs has been increasingly recognized by international organizations such as the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), the World Trade Organization (WTO), and UN organizations. Ethical benchmarking provides a conceptual framework to assess whether IP practices help in the fulfilment of global targets for health, education, climate action or social inclusion. International institutions can help create more equitable and sustainable innovation ecosystems by adding ethical considerations to the current evaluation systems.

The framework is relevant especially in the case of developing economies like India. Ethical benchmarking can help countries find a way to ensure that IP supports inclusive development as they look to increasing their innovation capacity and reducing social inequalities. Examples of innovation in India, such as generic pharmaceuticals, digital public goods, and technology-enabled social projects, illustrate the potential for innovation to create economic and social value. As such, the framework provides concrete recommendations on how to support responsible innovation to achieve national development goals and to assist in achieving global sustainability goals.

8. Challenges And Limitations Of Ethical Benchmarking In Ip And Csr

There are several challenges to the integration of IP and CSR, especially in relation to the implementation of ethical benchmarks, which is a testament to the difficulty of normative ideals to be translated into practice.

8.1 Tension Between Profit and Responsibility

A fundamental challenge is that of balancing profit with responsibilities to society. The dilemma for companies that choose to liberalize patents without compromising their competitive edge is that IP regimes are based on exclusivity, whereas CSR is based on inclusivity (Porter & Kramer, 2006; Banerjee, 2008).

8.2 Variability in Global IP Frameworks

Divergent IP rights across the globe (where rights are more strict in developed countries and less in developing countries) makes uniform ethical standards difficult (Correa, 2000). What might be considered as responsible practices in India may not be enough in other regions and makes the applicability of it to the whole world questionable (Sampat & Shadlen, 2015).

8.3 Measuring Ethical Outcomes

It is hard to measure what should be measured as ethics, such as fairness and inclusivity. The qualitative effect on marginalized communities is not necessarily reflected in metrics such as shared patents, which makes benchmarking not very robust (Elkington, 1997; Visser, 2010).

8.4 Risk of Tokenism and Greenwashing

The risk of tokenism can also be seen in CSR 'ethical benchmarking, which can help to improve reputation, but not to make significant improvements' (Banerjee, 2008). Some such partial “open-source” initiatives, or selective licensing, may not capture systemic inequities (Boyle & Meyer, 2015).

8.5 Institutional and Structural Barriers

There is a need for strong governance, which is not offered by many corporations, to implement ethical benchmarking. Smaller firms are restricted to multinationals (MTNs) by global inequalities in resources and bargaining power (Drahoš & Braithwaite, 2002).

8.6 Contextual Challenges in India

India's CSR mandates and legal reforms promote responsible innovation, but challenges persist:

- CSR is often fulfilled through philanthropy, not IP integration.
- Global IP standards pressure Indian firms, risking accessibility (Sampat & Shadlen, 2015).
- Limited mechanisms exist for auditing ethical IP practices.

These barriers limit widespread adoption in India (Chaudhuri, 2005).

8.7 Summary of Limitations

The paradox of ethical benchmarking is that it strives to reconcile exclusivity and inclusivity, yet is inherently limited by structural, institutional and measurement issues. These challenges call for additional development and cooperation (Waddock, 2004).

8.8 Future Scope of Ethical Benchmarking in Innovation Governance

The relevance of ethical benchmarking is likely to increase a lot in the future, given the growing importance of innovation in the economic development and the transformation of society. The rise of technologies like AI, biotech, renewable energy systems, digital platforms and advanced healthcare solutions has introduced new considerations of how these technologies are owned, accessed, who is held accountable and how the public is benefited. In this changing landscape, companies will be increasingly called on by governments, investors, consumers and civil society groups to prove that intellectual property practices they engage in do benefit society. Ethical benchmarking can thus be a valuable governance control tool to enable organisations to reconcile commercial and other social goals.

A potential field of development is the linkage of the ethical benchmarking with the Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) frameworks. ESG indicators are becoming more relevant to assess companies' performance, and management of IP could prove a significant aspect of good corporate practices. Those organizations that establish ethical practices and policies related to licensing, transparency in innovation, and equity in access will likely secure a competitive edge through increased stakeholder trust and sustainability. As such, intellectual property indicators can become a part of the future benchmarking systems, in addition to the traditional CSR and ESG indicators.

An important direction is also related to the application of digital technologies in monitoring and assessing the ethical outcomes. Measurement of accessibility, inclusivity and social impact of IP practices can be enhanced through data analytics, artificial intelligence and transparency through blockchain. The technologies could help organizations better understand the impact of innovation in the real world, and give stakeholders insights into corporate decision-making processes. Better measurement tools can enhance accountability and mitigate symbolism and/or tokenism in CSR initiatives.

Future scope of ethical Benchmarking is especially very important in the context of the developing economies. Promotion of innovation, economic competitiveness and social inclusion needs to go hand in hand in countries like India. Ethical benchmarking offers a model for policy makers and business to guide technological advancements to help achieve national development goals whilst offering solutions to issues of disparities in access to knowledge and resources. In a more and more globalized world, where challenges are growing interdependent, ethical benchmarking could turn from a voluntary corporate practice to a more broadly acknowledged standard in responsible governance of innovation that would lead to a more inclusive and sustainable knowledge economy.

9. Conclusion And Future Directions

This is one of the most important ethical issues facing contemporary corporations, that of the connection between intellectual property and corporate social responsibility. With the transition to knowledge-based economies, the intellectual resources are a key determining factor in access to sustainable development, technology, education and health services. Therefore, IP management cannot be looked at in the same terms

as a legal or competitive issue only anymore. It should also be seen as a matter of ethics, and social consequences.

In this study, it has been claimed that ethical benchmarking is an effective instrument to balance out the seemingly contradictory relationship between innovation protection and social responsibility. Ethical benchmarking brings the concept of corporate performance to a broader perspective by analyzing intellectual property practices under the lens of principles of transparency, accessibility, sustainability and equity. It's not about whether the innovation is profitable or generates market dominance, but it's about how the innovation is ultimately helping to make society better. In this context, ethical benchmarking can help move intellectual property from a strictly private resource to a socially embedded resource that is able to bring about collective value.

The EBF would be useful in this regard, since it will provide a comprehensive structure that will help in the incorporation of the CSR values in the governance of the IP. The framework provides organizations with a practical process that enables organizations to strike a good balance between the interests of doing business and the CSR value through the use of a cycle of assessment, alignment, action, accountability and adaptation. The framework further recognizes the need for continuous assessments and engaging of the stakeholders to ensure that responsible innovation is attained.

The discussions on the global and Indian experience have shown that the ethical benchmarking of IP has the potential of being viable and beneficial to the organizations. From the various case studies that have been included in the report, namely, the cases related to the healthcare industry, the digital technology industry and public innovations, it has been evident that responsible IP management practices result to better accessibilities, reduced inequality and increased corporate legitimacy. Nevertheless, limitations and challenges in regulation, measurement, institution building and tokenism have been identified.

More broadly, the benchmarking process also has an importance that transcends the realm of business. Building systems that encourage responsible innovation is a responsibility that belongs to everyone from governments to international organizations, academic institutions, and civil society. Close cooperation among these parties can contribute to developing standards, incentives and accountability measures that promote IP practices conducive to the public good. Global issues like climate change, public health crises, and digital inequality require collective action, and such collaboration is essential in solving these problems.

The next step will be to create measurable indicators that are able to evaluate the ethical performance of intellectual property systems. Empirical research can focus on the perceptions of various actors on responsible innovation and on the role of ethics in corporate decision-making in the context of benchmarking. The analysis that was conducted within the sectors and countries can also be further broadened to enhance the knowledge of sectoral and country-specific challenges as well as good practices. Also, the researchers could examine how ethical benchmarking can be connected to the ESG framework, sustainability reporting standards and innovative sustainable models of responsible innovation.

The future of innovation is not only about its creation, but also about principles of its distribution and use. Ethical benchmarking can be considered the way to the more equitable and sustainable future of innovation, when the intellectual property is used in the interests of the public good as well as private good. The corporations can include CSR values in the systems of governance of IP to enhance their legitimacy, build trust among stakeholders and play an active role in making the world better through the use of innovation for the sake of economic prosperity and social justice.

Future directions include:

1. Developing robust metrics for ethical IP impacts (Visser, 2010).
2. Harmonizing global IP and CSR standards (Correa, 2000).
3. Embedding genuine accountability in corporate strategies (Porter & Kramer, 2006).
4. Fostering multi-stakeholder collaborations to democratize innovation (Waddock, 2004).

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