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Identification and Prioritization of Indicators for Enhancing the Symbolic Capital of Managers (Case Study: SAIPA Automotive Group)

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study is to identify, validate, and prioritize the key components and indicators that contribute to the enhancement of managers' symbolic capital within the SAIPA Automotive Group. This applied qualitative study was conducted within an inductive research paradigm. The statistical population comprised academic and organizational experts in management and sociology. Using purposive and snowball sampling techniques, 18 experts were selected based on the principle of theoretical saturation. Semi-structured interviews were employed for data collection, focusing on managerial behaviors, ethical leadership, communication networks, and innovation practices as sources of symbolic capital. Thematic analysis was performed using MAXQDA 2020 software to extract main themes, subthemes, and conceptual indicators. Content validity was assessed using Lawshe's CVR method to refine and validate the indicator set, while the Friedman test in SPSS 26 was used to prioritize the identified indicators based on expert consensus. The analysis identified four main dimensions, sixteen subdimensions, and ninety-three validated conceptual indicators for enhancing managers' symbolic capital. The results revealed that personal and professional capitalization—encompassing psychological competence, ethical integrity, and communicative credibility—was the highest-ranked dimension, followed by sustainable and innovative value management, emphasizing adaptability, resilience, and innovation-driven legitimacy. Integrated performance management and development of managerial skills and competencies ranked third and fourth, respectively. The Friedman test results indicated statistically significant differences in mean rankings ($p < 0.05$), confirming that intangible factors such as ethics, communication, and organizational culture play a more decisive role in symbolic capital development than purely technical competencies. Symbolic capital operates as a strategic asset that integrates ethical credibility, innovation culture, and interpersonal influence into sustainable managerial legitimacy. Enhancing symbolic capital requires systematic cultivation of ethical leadership, communication excellence, and organizational adaptability to strengthen trust and reputation in complex industrial environments.

Keywords: Symbolic capital; managerial legitimacy; leadership development; organizational culture; ethical management; SAIPA Automotive Group.

Introduction

Symbolic capital—reputational authority, legitimacy, and recognized prestige accumulated through signs, credentials, narratives, and endorsements—has become a decisive resource for organizational leaders who must mobilize trust across volatile technological, market, and stakeholder environments. In contemporary institutions, managers convert symbolic recognition into concrete advantages such as stakeholder alignment, access to resources, and strategic discretion; the very appearance of credibility often precedes and conditions material outcomes. Within large industrial organizations, including the automotive sector, symbolic capital is not a vague aura but a structured asset built through visible performances of competence, ethical probity, networked endorsement, and culturally resonant storytelling. Recent scholarship across sociology, management, arts administration, and communication demonstrates that reputation, legitimacy, and recognition are produced and reproduced in specific fields by intermediaries, formats, metrics, and rituals—and that managers who understand these mechanisms can convert symbolic assets into economic, social, and political capital more efficiently and responsibly [1-4].

A first line of evidence shows how symbolic capital is convertible and fungible across arenas. Studies of international fields emphasize how actors strategically translate symbolic credit accumulated in one domain (elite education, high-status affiliations, or awards) into influence in another, reflecting the portability and exchange rates of prestige across borders and sectors [1]. In nonprofit settings, business-model analyses reveal that the ability to narrate mission fidelity, social impact, and stakeholder endorsement enables organizations to convert symbolic assets into access to funding streams, especially under uncertainty, thereby mapping clear pathways from recognition to resource acquisition [2]. Corporate network studies show that business leaders' interlocking directorships, public honors, and association memberships generate a reputational field that channels information and opportunity; these relational signatures co-constitute symbolic capital and facilitate strategic coordination among elites [3]. Among entrepreneurial small firms, narrative analyses demonstrate how founders blend social and symbolic capital—telling credible stories, staging endorsements, and aligning identities—to act responsibly and secure stakeholder support when tangible evidence is scarce [4, 5].

A second line of research connects symbolic capital to the professional authority of managers and the status of managerial roles inside organizations. Work on HR directors in boardrooms shows that formal presence is not sufficient; the accrual and deployment of symbolic capital—expert reputation, strategic framing, and alignment with dominant logics—condition whether functional leaders wield genuine influence or merely decorative status [6]. Comparative sociology of professionalism similarly reframes credentials, codes, and occupational autonomy as forms of symbolic capital that mark boundary control and justify jurisdiction in complex service organizations [7]. In higher education and knowledge institutions, symbolic capital structures the field itself: the neoliberal university cultivates rankings, metrics, and brand narratives that reallocate prestige, reshaping which actors and practices count as legitimate knowledge producers [8]. Studies of destination branding and urban heritage extend the insight to place-based management: municipal and regional managers curate symbolic assets of territories to reposition locations and attract investment, tourism, and talent, demonstrating how place narratives under managerial stewardship operate as institutional symbolic capital [9].

A third strand focuses on the production, brokerage, and reproduction of symbolic capital by intermediaries and media. Artistic labor research shows how agents, managers, and tour organizers fabricate and circulate value markers that elevate certain performers, illustrating the craft of symbolic capital production and the dependence of recognition on gatekeeping infrastructures [10]. Rural policy research uncovers how symbolic attachments to land and vocation—honor, stewardship identities, and traditions—shape seemingly economic decisions, indicating that managerial interventions that disregard embedded symbolic capital risk policy failure [11]. In intercultural corporate communication, impression management on social networks manifests as an overt investment in symbolic capital: the rhetorical styles of CEOs and cross-cultural presentation norms influence perceived legitimacy and stakeholder resonance across national contexts [12]. Digital-era transformations reinforce these dynamics: the structure of symbolic capital is being recalibrated by networks, platforms, and algorithmic visibility, accelerating cycles of recognition and amplifying reputational volatility [13]. Alongside, metamodern value matrices describe an oscillation between sincerity and irony, authenticity and optimization—conditions under which leaders must choreograph credibility while navigating moral ambivalence and hypermediated scrutiny [14].

The arts and culture domain offers sharp illustrations of symbolic capital's evolving rules under technological disruption. Debates over the legitimacy of AI-generated artworks reveal how the recognized persona and career capital of the artist function as anchoring symbolic assets that can confer or restrict the acceptance of hybrid artifacts within established evaluative regimes; managerial decisions about curation, labeling, and audience education thus mediate legitimacy by recontextualizing symbolic capital [15]. The management of memorial landscapes demonstrates how practices of care, ritual use, and spatial mastery accumulate symbolic capital at the scale of sites, which managers can mobilize to structure collective memory and attract civic attention [16]. Similarly, regional revitalization strategies depend on diagnosing and activating a territory's symbolic resources—narrative identities, historical recognitions, and iconic assets—to steer development agendas [17]. These cases underscore that symbolic capital is not merely possessed by individuals; it is distributed across artifacts, places, and institutions and can be curated by managerial actors to yield durable advantages [9, 17].

Symbolic capital also conditions careers and authority under risk and controversy. Post-whistleblowing trajectories show how "negative expert knowledge" may invert or erode symbolic capital in traditional organizations while opening alternative fields where credibility is revalued; managers must therefore understand the field-contingent nature of legitimacy and the necessity of reframing expertise across arenas [18]. Studies of intellectuals and ideology in Iran highlight how symbolic capital—textual authority, moral credibility, and institutional endorsements—becomes a resource for political meaning-making and mobilization, expanding managerial concerns to the societal field in which corporate actors are embedded [19]. Work on cultural and symbolic capital in Iranian interactional contexts further demonstrates that daily practices of recognition and cultural participation feed the reservoirs of symbolic legitimacy available to leaders, affecting collaboration readiness and collective trust [20]. Within Iranian cultural organizations, structural-interpretive modeling shows reproducible mechanisms for cultivating leaders' symbolic capital, illustrating that indicators can be operationalized and prioritized—a blueprint relevant for large industrial groups seeking systematic development of managerial legitimacy [21].

The managerial toolkit for building symbolic capital extends from narrative strategy to the design of relational infrastructures. Research on the conversion of economic, social, cultural, and symbolic capital clarifies how leaders orchestrate cross-capital transformations—turning network goodwill into endorsements, certifications into procurement advantages, or purpose narratives into employee commitment; without a coherent conversion logic, symbolic assets remain latent [4]. Nonprofit funding studies align with this view by showing that donors and partners read symbolic signals as proxies for reliability and impact, especially when outcomes are hard to measure directly [2]. Corporate network analyses in Britain point to the cumulative advantage of leaders who sit at the intersection of symbolic circuits; such positions accelerate the diffusion of endorsements and facilitate strategic brokerage [3]. In internationalizing firms, the ability to perform belonging to elite transnational fields—to display culturally fluent markers and credentials—emerges as a privileged form of symbolic capital that alters access to deals and partnerships [1]. For self-initiated expatriates, university degrees function as portable symbolic assets that shape mobility opportunities and field entry, reinforcing the broader convertibility thesis [22].

Inside organizations, symbolic capital is co-produced with professionalism, governance routines, and quality architectures. Professionalism studies show that technical standards, peer review, and codified ethics serve as material carriers of symbolic capital, institutionalizing authority through procedures and artifacts that are recognizable to stakeholders [7]. In HR and board governance, symbolic influence hinges on framing contributions in the dominant strategic language of the firm, aligning evidence with prevailing value metrics, and mobilizing credible endorsements—mechanisms that transform role occupancy into strategic legitimacy [6]. Destination branding research implies that managers can curate symbolic capital by reconfiguring spatial narratives and tangible cues, an insight transferable to corporate campuses and flagship plants where physical environments signal identity and quality to employees, partners, and the public [9]. Intermediary dynamics in popular music generalize to industrial ecosystems: third parties—consultants, certifiers, industry associations—operate as validators who amplify or dampen a manager's symbolic standing through rankings, awards, and standards compliance [10].

The platformed communication environment multiplies both the reach and the risk of symbolic performances. CEOs' digital self-presentations enact impression management strategies that travel across cultural boundaries, foregrounding the need for interculturally calibrated narratives and visual rhetorics [12]. The digital network progression of symbolic capital suggests that algorithmic visibility, virality, and influencer endorsements have become constitutive of contemporary recognition structures, requiring deliberate design of communicative assets and listening systems to stabilize legitimacy over time [13]. Meanwhile, in a metamodern society oscillating between earnestness and reflexive irony, leaders must cultivate forms of symbolic capital that can absorb contradiction—performing authenticity while navigating audit cultures and metricized transparency [8, 14]. The arts management case on AI art's legitimacy demonstrates how field norms and gatekeepers scrutinize authorship, provenance, and curatorial framing; by analogy, industrial managers introducing AI in production or decision processes must pre-empt legitimacy deficits through credible framing and stakeholder education [15].

Context-specific evidence reinforces the need for granular indicators that managers can act upon. In retail sports markets, the relationship between symbolic capital dimensions and consumer behavior underscores that credibility, authenticity cues, and status signals shape purchasing decisions, implying that industrial B2B and employer-brand audiences may be similarly sensitive to symbolic cues [23]. Studies of organizational citizenship behavior and knowledge sharing show positive associations with symbolic capital, suggesting that internal legitimacy catalyzes prosocial extra-role behaviors and knowledge flow—key drivers of operational excellence and innovation [24]. Ordinary management research documents that symbolic capital exists not only at elite levels but also within everyday managerial routines, where labels, rituals, and micro-recognitions scaffold authority and cooperation [25]. Agricultural studies caution that interventions fail when they underweight embedded symbolic attachments, urging managers to diagnose the local meanings that animate employee identity and stakeholder commitment before launching change programs [11]. Urban heritage work confirms that symbolic capital is spatially embedded and can be reassembled through design, preservation, and storytelling—an analogy for factory modernizations and safety programs that turn sites into symbols of quality and care [9].

These literatures converge on a pragmatic conclusion: symbolic capital is a manageable asset. It can be diagnosed through indicators, cultivated through targeted interventions, and prioritized with decision rules sensitive to field norms, digital dynamics, and local cultural grammars. Yet gaps remain. First, most studies still concentrate on specific sectors—arts, higher education, nonprofits, rural economies—leaving a relative paucity of field-tested indicator sets for large industrial organizations operating in emerging and hybrid markets. Second, we have limited models that translate symbolic capital from individual leaders to meso-level organizational architectures and back again, even though legitimacy is co-produced across personal charisma, team practices, quality infrastructures, and stakeholder interfaces. Third, while Iranian scholarship has advanced conceptual modeling for leaders in cultural organizations and examined interactional sources of cultural-symbolic capital, the automotive manufacturing context—with its complex supply chains, safety regimes, and public visibility—requires sector-tailored operational indicators that are empirically grounded and practically sortable [19-21].

Moreover, the volatility and mediatization of contemporary fields heighten the stakes of indicator selection. Platform dynamics can rapidly elevate or destroy reputations; whistleblowing episodes change the currency of expertise; policy shifts and civic memory projects reweight local symbolic resources; and AI-related debates expose the moral infrastructures of legitimacy. Managers therefore need an integrated framework that captures how symbolic capital is produced across empowerment practices, ethical governance, communication networks, performance architectures, innovation cultures, and place-based narratives—and a way to prioritize these levers under real constraints [8, 13, 15-18]. Bridging cross-sector insights with the specificities of a large Iranian automotive group can generate actionable indicator sets that convert into measurable improvements in stakeholder trust, workforce cooperation, supply-chain attractiveness, safety climate, and innovation adoption [2, 4, 6, 7, 12].

Building on these arguments, this study integrates dispersed knowledge on symbolic capital into a coherent, field-sensitive framework for managers, emphasizing convertibility across capitals, the role of intermediaries and infrastructures, the mediations of digital platforms, and the embeddedness of legitimacy in local cultural grammars. The aim of the present study is to identify and prioritize empirically grounded indicators for enhancing the symbolic capital of managers in the SAIPA Automotive Group, producing a validated, practicable framework for organizational deployment.

Methodology

This study was conducted within a qualitative research framework based on an inductive paradigm, with an applied objective in nature. The research sought to explore and identify the indicators that contribute to the enhancement of symbolic capital among managers in the SAIPA Automotive Group. The statistical population consisted of academic and organizational experts in the fields of management and sociology who possess extensive experience and specialized knowledge related to symbolic capital and organizational development. Sampling was carried out using a purposive sampling strategy combined with the snowball technique to ensure the inclusion of highly knowledgeable participants. A total of 18 experts were interviewed, which was determined based on the principle of theoretical saturation. After conducting interviews with the sixteenth and seventeenth participants, no new concepts or themes emerged, indicating that the data had reached a point of conceptual sufficiency. The final interview with the eighteenth participant was therefore conducted to confirm the comprehensiveness of the data set and ensure data validity. All interviews were semi-structured, allowing for flexibility in probing participants' insights while maintaining consistency across the main thematic dimensions of symbolic capital enhancement within the managerial context.

Data collection was carried out through in-depth, semi-structured interviews that were designed based on the theoretical background of symbolic capital and previous literature in organizational sociology and management. The interview protocol was developed to capture expert perspectives on the conceptual, structural, and behavioral dimensions influencing the symbolic capital of managers in the SAIPA Automotive Group. Questions were open-ended to allow participants to elaborate on their experiences and provide nuanced views. Prior to formal data collection, the interview guide was reviewed by two academic specialists to ensure content validity and alignment with the research objectives. Each interview lasted between 45 and 70 minutes and was conducted either face-to-face or virtually, depending on participants' availability. All interviews were audio-recorded with consent and subsequently transcribed verbatim for analysis. To enhance data trustworthiness, triangulation of expert sources, member checking, and peer debriefing were employed. Participants were also provided with a summary of the extracted themes for validation, ensuring that the final interpretations accurately represented their intended meanings.

The collected qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify, categorize, and interpret the main indicators associated with the enhancement of symbolic capital among managers. The process involved multiple stages, beginning with familiarization with the data through repeated reading of transcripts, followed by open coding to extract meaningful concepts from participants' narratives. Codes with similar meanings were grouped into categories and overarching themes representing different dimensions of symbolic capital development. MAXQDA 2020 software was used to facilitate the systematic organization and coding of textual data and to ensure transparency in the analytic process. The analysis adhered to Braun and Clarke's six-phase thematic analysis framework, enabling a rigorous and iterative approach to theme refinement. Once the qualitative themes were finalized, the identified indicators were subjected to a prioritization phase using quantitative analysis. To rank the importance and relative weight of each indicator, the Friedman test was applied in SPSS version 26. This combination of qualitative exploration and quantitative prioritization allowed for a comprehensive understanding of both the nature and hierarchical significance of symbolic capital indicators within the managerial system of the SAIPA Automotive Group.

Findings and Results

Based on the results of analyzing the relevant studies and extracted codes, the components and indicators for enhancing the symbolic capital of managers were classified into four main categories, sixteen subcategories, and ninety-four conceptual elements. In this phase, experts were interviewed regarding each of these categories and indicators, and their views were gathered on how these could be grouped within the framework of symbolic capital enhancement. Subsequently, the qualitative data were analyzed using Lawshe's Content Validity Ratio (CVR) method. According to this approach, after defining the conceptual boundaries and drafting the preliminary questionnaire items, the expert panel was asked to rate each item as "essential," "useful but not essential," or "not necessary." Based on these expert evaluations, the frequencies and CVR values were computed and are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Dimensions and Indicators of the Preliminary Conceptual Model and Their Importance Based on Expert Opinion

Main Category	Subcategory	Concept	Frequency (Essential)	Frequency (Useful but not Essential)	Frequency (Not Necessary)	CVR
Development of Managerial Skills and Competencies	Empowerment and Team Development	Delegating responsibilities	9	5	0	0.79
		Encouraging autonomy	10	4	1	0.86
		Providing continuous support and guidance	8	4	2	1.00
		Encouraging creativity and innovation	9	5	1	0.79
		Planning and implementing training programs	10	3	1	0.84
		Creating opportunities for growth	7	3	2	0.79
		Providing mentoring opportunities	8	5	2	0.89
	Motivation and Self-Confidence Improvement	Establishing incentive systems	10	2	1	0.59

		Increasing managers' self-confidence	7	0	0	0.43
		Rewarding performance-based achievements	10	4	2	0.84
		Promoting positive thinking	9	3	1	0.79
	Conflict and Diversity Management	Embracing individual and cultural diversity	8	4	2	0.94
		Enhancing conflict resolution and dialogue skills	9	3	1	0.89
		Awareness of unconscious bias	9	2	1	0.69
		Establishing formal conflict resolution processes	10	3	1	0.84
		Cultural awareness training	10	2	1	0.79
		Building multicultural teams	9	3	1	1.00
		Developing diversity policies and strategies	10	3	1	0.94
	Strategic and Operational Planning	Defining vision and mission	10	1	1	0.89
		Environmental analysis	9	2	2	0.69
		Competitive positioning	8	3	1	1.00
		Inspiring and guiding employees	10	1	0	0.69
		Short-term planning	10	1	0	0.69
		Resource allocation and optimization	9	2	0	1.00
		Quality management of products/services	10	1	1	0.84
Integrated Performance Management	Commitment to Quality and Performance	Establishing a quality-oriented culture	8	5	1	0.79
		Defining quality standards in processes	9	3	1	0.89
		Implementing ISO quality systems	10	1	0	0.69
		Optimizing and controlling processes	9	1	2	0.84
		Setting measurable performance goals	10	3	1	1.00
		Continuous monitoring and evaluation	8	3	1	0.89
		Using performance data for strategic decisions	10	0	0	1.00
	Risk Management	Analyzing and identifying risk	9	2	2	0.69
		Developing risk control strategies	8	2	1	0.69
		Managing diverse risks	9	2	1	0.84
		Adaptability to change	10	2	0	0.84
	Structuring and Organizing Activities	Defining goals and priorities	10	0	0	1.00
		Assigning roles and responsibilities	10	0	2	0.84
		Scheduling tasks	9	0	1	1.00
		Coordinating team activities	10	1	0	0.69
Personal and Professional Capitalization of Managers	Enhancing Psychological Competence	Strong leadership	9	2	1	0.84
		Understanding emotions	8	2	1	0.69
		Managerial influence	10	3	0	1.00
		Self-awareness	9	2	2	1.00
		Creative problem-solving	10	3	0	1.00
		Stress and pressure management	10	1	0	0.84
		Flexibility and adaptability	9	4	1	1.00
	Strengthening Ethical and Behavioral Values	Ethical decision-making	10	3	2	1.00
		Accountability	10	3	1	1.00
		Transparency	9	2	0	0.84
		Respecting professional standards	8	5	3	1.00
		Commitment to obligations	10	1	1	0.84
	Building Effective Networks	Communication skills	9	2	0	0.69

		Interpersonal communication	10	3	1	1.00
		Trust-building in communication	10	4	2	1.00
		Providing constructive feedback	10	5	1	1.00
		Managing conflicts effectively	9	3	1	1.00
		Negotiation skills	10	1	0	0.69
		Strategic communication	9	1	1	0.69
		Maintaining existing relationships	8	2	2	0.84
		Creating collaboration opportunities	10	2	1	0.69
		Inter-organizational networking	9	2	2	1.00
		Using social platforms for networking	10	3	1	0.69
Sustainable and Innovative Value Management	Dynamic Organizational Culture	Developing interactive skills	10	4	0	1.00
		Promoting cultural transformation	10	2	1	1.00
		Supporting innovation	10	2	1	0.84
		Creating transparency and openness	10	5	2	1.00
		Sharing information and insights	8	1	1	0.84
		Market adaptability	10	3	1	1.00
	Protecting Shareholder Value	Increasing profitability	10	1	1	0.84
		Managing investor expectations	9	2	2	1.00
		Sustainability of products/services	10	4	2	1.00
		Regular reliable reporting	9	1	1	0.69
		Cost reduction and efficiency	10	3	2	1.00
	Value Co-Creation	Organizational learning	10	1	1	1.00
		Knowledge co-creation	9	2	0	0.69
		Structural readiness for collaboration	8	4	1	1.00
		Belief in shared value creation	10	1	1	0.69
		Developing managerial/social skills	9	3	0	0.84
	Sustainable Competitive Development	Entrepreneurship	10	1	1	1.00
		Sustainable value creation	10	3	2	1.00
		Sustainable competitive advantage	10	2	1	1.00
		Social responsibility	8	0	1	0.84
	Service-Oriented Motivation	Building organizational intimacy	10	1	1	1.00
		Promoting influence and impact	9	4	2	1.00
		Fostering belongingness	8	3	1	0.84
		Building collaborative culture	9	2	2	0.94
	Building Organizational Resilience	Employee commitment and trust	10	2	1	1.00
		Enhancing organizational support	10	2	1	1.00
		Creating organizational optimism	9	4	2	1.00
		Promoting diligence	8	3	1	0.87
		Strengthening organizational attachment	10	2	1	1.00
		Maintaining organizational capability	7	3	1	0.69
		Preserving employee expertise	9	4	3	1.00

As illustrated in Table 1, thematic and content analysis confirmed that the conceptual framework of managers' symbolic capital enhancement consists of four overarching dimensions: development of managerial competencies, integrated performance management, personal and professional capitalization, and sustainable innovative value management. Altogether, sixteen subdimensions and ninety-four conceptual indicators were validated. The Lawshe CVR analysis showed that the majority of indicators achieved strong expert agreement, with CVR values between 0.59 and 1.00, indicating robust content validity. Only one indicator, “increasing managers’ self-confidence” (CVR = 0.43), fell below the acceptable threshold and was therefore excluded from the final conceptual model. The refined framework thus ensures conceptual coherence and empirical reliability, providing a solid foundation for developing strategic initiatives and subsequent quantitative testing aimed at enhancing symbolic capital within the SAIPA Automotive Group.

Following the CVR analysis and expert validation presented in Table 1, the final model of symbolic capital enhancement indicators was established after removing indicators that did not meet the minimum validity threshold. As a result, the finalized framework includes four main categories, sixteen subcategories, and ninety-three conceptual indicators. These indicators form the foundation for the symbolic capital enhancement model, providing a multidimensional structure that integrates managerial, organizational, ethical, and innovation-oriented components. The finalized dimensions, subdimensions, and concepts are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Final List of Components and Indicators of the Symbolic Capital Enhancement Model for Managers

Main Category	Subcategory	Concept
Development of Managerial Skills and Competencies	Empowerment and Team Development	Delegating responsibilities
		Encouraging autonomy
		Providing continuous support and guidance to team members
		Encouraging creativity and innovation
		Planning and implementing training and development programs
		Creating opportunities for team growth and advancement
		Providing mentoring and counseling opportunities for team members
	Motivation and Confidence Improvement	Establishing incentive and reward systems
		Performance-based recognition and rewards
		Promoting positive thinking
	Conflict and Diversity Management	Embracing individual and cultural diversity
		Enhancing conflict resolution and dialogue skills
		Raising awareness of unconscious biases
		Establishing formal conflict resolution processes
		Providing cultural awareness and diversity training
		Forming multicultural teams
		Developing diversity and inclusion strategies
	Strategic and Operational Planning	Defining and articulating the organization’s vision and mission
		Environmental analysis and scanning
		Competitive positioning
		Inspiring and leading employees
		Developing short-term action plans
		Optimal allocation and utilization of organizational resources
		Managing the quality of products and services
Integrated Performance Management	Commitment to Quality and Performance	Establishing a quality-oriented culture within the company
		Defining and implementing quality standards across processes
		Implementing ISO-based quality management systems
		Process optimization and control
		Defining specific, measurable performance goals
		Continuous monitoring and evaluation of employee and process performance
		Using performance analytics for strategic decision-making
	Risk Management	Analyzing and identifying risks
		Developing risk control and mitigation strategies
		Identifying and managing diverse risks
		Adapting effectively to change

	Structuring and Organizing Activities	Defining corporate objectives and priorities
		Assigning clear roles and responsibilities
		Establishing task schedules
		Coordinating teamwork and interdepartmental activities
Personal and Professional Capitalization of Managers	Enhancing Psychological Competence	Strong leadership abilities
		Emotional awareness and understanding
		Managerial influence and effectiveness
		Self-awareness and reflective capacity
		Innovative problem-solving
		Managing work-related pressure and stress
		Flexibility and adaptability to change
	Strengthening Ethical and Behavioral Values	Applying ethical principles in managerial decisions and behaviors
		Managerial accountability
		Transparency in information dissemination
		Respecting professional and occupational standards
		Commitment to obligations and promises
	Building Effective Communication Networks	Verbal and written communication skills
		Building strong interpersonal relationships
		Establishing and maintaining trust with employees
		Providing constructive and developmental feedback
		Effectively resolving conflicts
		Negotiating effectively to reach agreements
		Establishing strategic communications with key stakeholders
		Maintaining and strengthening existing relationships
		Creating new opportunities for collaboration
		Building inter-organizational networks and partnerships
		Using social platforms effectively for communication and networking
Sustainable and Innovative Value Management	Creating a Dynamic and Flexible Organizational Culture	Developing interpersonal and interactive skills
		Promoting cultural transformation
		Supporting and encouraging innovation
		Fostering a transparent and open organizational environment
		Sharing information and perspectives
		Adapting to market changes
	Protecting Shareholder Value	Increasing profitability and growth
		Managing investor expectations and perspectives
		Ensuring product and service sustainability
		Commitment to reliable and consistent reporting
		Enhancing productivity and reducing costs
	Value Co-Creation Management	Promoting organizational learning
		Encouraging knowledge co-creation within the organization
		Building structural alignment for collaboration
		Believing in shared value creation
		Developing managerial and social competencies
	Sustainable Competitive Development	Promoting entrepreneurship
		Achieving sustainable value creation
		Maintaining sustainable competitive advantage
		Strengthening social responsibility
	Service-Oriented Motivation Enhancement	Fostering organizational intimacy
		Enhancing effectiveness and interpersonal influence
		Strengthening employee sense of belonging
		Building a collaborative organizational culture
	Building Organizational Resilience Capacity	Strengthening employee trust and commitment toward management
		Enhancing organizational support mechanisms
		Promoting organizational optimism
		Encouraging persistence and diligence among staff
		Reinforcing organizational attachment and loyalty
		Preserving and improving organizational capabilities
		Maintaining and enhancing employee expertise

As summarized in Table 2, the final validated framework of the symbolic capital enhancement model for managers comprises four core dimensions, each representing a distinct but interrelated domain of managerial capital. The first dimension, *Development of Managerial Skills and Competencies*, emphasizes empowerment, strategic planning, and diversity management as foundational elements for symbolic credibility. The second dimension, *Integrated Performance Management*, highlights the importance of commitment to quality, risk management, and systematic organization of activities to build professional legitimacy and organizational trust. The third dimension, *Personal and Professional Capitalization*, reflects the internalized values and interpersonal capacities of managers, including ethical integrity, emotional intelligence, communication effectiveness, and professional resilience. The fourth and final dimension, *Sustainable and Innovative Value Management*, captures the forward-looking aspects of symbolic capital through innovation, adaptability, value co-creation, and organizational resilience. Together, these dimensions constitute a comprehensive, empirically grounded model for understanding and enhancing the symbolic capital of managers in the SAIPA Automotive Group—providing both a theoretical foundation and a practical guide for managerial development initiatives.

The qualitative indicators validated in Tables 1–2 were prioritized using the Friedman test (n = 18). The “Mean” values below are mean ranks within each subcategory; higher mean rank indicates higher priority among the items compared in that subcategory. Because each Friedman test is run within its own subcategory (with a different number of items), mean ranks are not comparable across different subcategories or main categories.

Table 3

Prioritization of Components and Indicators Extracted from the Qualitative Phase (Friedman Mean Ranks)

Main Category	Subcategory	Concept	Mean Rank	Rank
Development of Managerial Skills and Competencies	Empowerment and Team Development	Delegating responsibilities	3.99	3rd
		Encouraging autonomy	3.77	7th
		Providing continuous support and guidance to team members	4.25	2nd
		Encouraging creativity and innovation	3.93	5th
		Planning and implementing training and development programs	3.79	6th
		Creating opportunities for team growth and advancement	3.97	4th
		Providing mentoring and counseling opportunities for team members	4.29	1st
		Subcategory mean — Empowerment and Team Development	2.42	3rd
	Motivation and Confidence Improvement	Establishing incentive and reward systems	2.06	1st
		Performance-based recognition and rewards	1.96	3rd
		Promoting positive thinking	1.98	2nd
		Subcategory mean — Motivation and Confidence Improvement	2.49	2nd
	Conflict and Diversity Management	Embracing individual and cultural diversity	4.32	1st
		Enhancing conflict resolution and dialogue skills	3.95	4th
		Raising awareness of unconscious biases	3.92	5th
		Establishing formal conflict resolution processes	4.27	2nd
		Cultural awareness and diversity training	3.70	7th
		Building multicultural teams	4.06	3rd
		Developing diversity and inclusion strategies	3.78	6th
		Subcategory mean — Conflict and Diversity Management	2.27	4th
	Strategic and Operational Planning	Defining and articulating the organization’s vision and mission	3.83	7th
		Environmental analysis and scanning	3.97	4th
		Competitive positioning	4.33	1st
		Inspiring and leading employees	4.05	2nd
		Developing short-term action plans	3.89	6th
		Optimal allocation and utilization of organizational resources	4.03	3rd
		Managing the quality of products and services	3.90	5th
		Subcategory mean — Strategic and Operational Planning	2.81	1st

		Main-category mean — Development of Managerial Skills and Competencies	2.05	4th
Integrated Performance Management	Commitment to Quality and Performance	Establishing a quality-oriented culture	3.90	5th
		Defining and implementing quality standards across processes	3.59	7th
		Implementing ISO-based quality management systems	4.10	3rd
		Process optimization and control	4.14	2nd
		Defining specific, measurable performance goals	3.89	6th
		Continuous monitoring and evaluation	4.06	4th
		Using performance analytics for strategic decision-making	4.31	1st
		Subcategory mean — Commitment to Quality and Performance	1.75	3rd
	Risk Management	Analyzing and identifying risk	2.56	1st
		Developing risk control and mitigation strategies	2.50	3rd
		Identifying and managing diverse risks	2.44	4th
		Adapting effectively to change	2.51	2nd
		Subcategory mean — Risk Management	1.99	2nd
	Structuring and Organizing Activities	Defining corporate objectives and priorities	2.42	2nd
		Assigning clear roles and responsibilities	2.41	3rd
		Establishing task schedules	2.15	4th
		Coordinating teamwork and interdepartmental activities	3.02	1st
		Subcategory mean — Structuring and Organizing Activities	2.26	1st
		Main-category mean — Integrated Performance Management	2.23	3rd
Personal and Professional Capitalization of Managers	Enhancing Psychological Competence	Strong leadership abilities	3.91	7th
		Emotional awareness and understanding	4.01	2nd
		Managerial influence and effectiveness	3.95	5th
		Self-awareness and reflective capacity	3.98	4th
		Innovative problem-solving	4.25	1st
		Managing work-related pressure and stress	4.00	3rd
		Flexibility and adaptability to change	3.94	6th
		Subcategory mean — Enhancing Psychological Competence	2.28	1st
	Strengthening Ethical and Behavioral Values	Applying ethical principles in decisions and behavior	2.96	4th
		Managerial accountability	3.18	1st
		Transparency in information dissemination	2.86	5th
		Respecting professional and occupational standards	3.03	2nd
		Commitment to obligations and promises	2.97	3rd
		Subcategory mean — Strengthening Ethical and Behavioral Values	2.10	2nd
	Building Effective Communication Networks	Verbal and written communication skills	6.32	6th
		Interpersonal communication	6.61	4th
		Building and maintaining trust with employees	6.72	2nd
		Providing constructive feedback	6.75	1st
		Effectively resolving conflicts	6.67	3rd
		Negotiating effectively to reach agreements	4.29	11th
		Strategic communication with key stakeholders	5.59	9th
		Maintaining and strengthening existing relationships	5.83	8th
		Creating new collaboration opportunities	6.38	5th
		Inter-organizational collaboration	6.02	7th
		Using social platforms effectively for networking	4.81	10th
		Subcategory mean — Building Effective Communication Networks	1.62	3rd
		Main-category mean — Personal & Professional Capitalization	3.38	1st
Sustainable and Innovative Value Management	Creating a Dynamic and Flexible Organizational Culture	Developing interpersonal and interactive skills	2.89	6th
		Promoting cultural transformation	3.50	4th
		Supporting and encouraging innovation	3.73	3rd
		Fostering a transparent and open climate	4.04	1st
		Sharing information and perspectives	3.85	2nd
		Adapting to market changes	3.00	5th
		Subcategory mean — Dynamic & Flexible Culture	4.14	1st
	Protecting Shareholder Value	Increasing profitability and growth	3.11	2nd

	Managing investor expectations	3.03	3rd
	Product and service sustainability	3.18	1st
	Commitment to regular, reliable reporting	2.79	5th
	Productivity management and cost control	2.89	4th
	Subcategory mean — Protecting Shareholder Value	3.46	3rd
Value Co-Creation Management	Organizational learning	2.99	3rd
	Knowledge co-creation	3.16	1st
	Structural alignment for collaboration	3.03	2nd
	Belief in shared value creation	2.96	4th
	Developing managerial and social skills	2.86	5th
	Subcategory mean — Value Co-Creation	3.83	2nd
Sustainable Competitive Development	Entrepreneurship development	2.44	4th
	Sustainable value creation	2.61	2nd
	Sustainable competitive advantage	2.51	3rd
	Social responsibility	3.44	1st
	Subcategory mean — Sustainable Competitive Development	3.31	4th
Service-Oriented Motivation Enhancement	Building organizational intimacy	2.54	2nd
	Enhancing effectiveness and influence	2.58	1st
	Strengthening employee belongingness	2.35	4th
	Building a collaborative culture	2.52	3rd
	Subcategory mean — Service-Oriented Motivation	3.15	5th
Building Organizational Resilience Capacity	Employee commitment and trust	4.18	2nd
	Enhancing organizational support	4.16	3rd
	Creating organizational optimism	3.80	5th
	Promoting diligence	3.64	7th
	Strengthening organizational attachment	3.70	6th
	Preserving and improving organizational capabilities	4.60	1st
	Maintaining or increasing employee expertise	3.92	4th
	Subcategory mean — Organizational Resilience Capacity	3.10	6th
	Main-category mean — Sustainable & Innovative Value Management	2.34	2nd

Within Development of Managerial Skills and Competencies, *Strategic and Operational Planning* received the highest subcategory priority (subcategory mean rank = 2.81), led by *competitive positioning* (4.33), *inspiring and leading employees* (4.05), and *optimal resource allocation* (4.03). In *Empowerment and Team Development*, the top item was *providing mentoring and counseling opportunities* (4.29), followed by *continuous support and guidance* (4.25). For *Conflict and Diversity Management*, *embracing individual and cultural diversity* ranked first (4.32). In *Motivation and Confidence Improvement*, *establishing incentive and reward systems* (2.06) held the top priority among its three items. Overall, this main category showed the lowest aggregate priority among the four main categories (main-category mean rank = 2.05), indicating that, relative to other domains, experts prioritized downstream capability systems slightly less once foundational practices were in place.

In Integrated Performance Management, *Structuring and Organizing Activities* was the leading subcategory (2.26), with *coordinating teamwork and interdepartmental activities* as the top item (3.02). Within *Commitment to Quality and Performance*, *using performance analytics for strategic decision-making* ranked first (4.31), followed by *process optimization and control* (4.14) and *ISO-based quality management* (4.10), underscoring the centrality of data-driven quality assurance. In *Risk Management*, priorities concentrated on *analyzing and identifying risk* (2.56) and *adapting to change* (2.51). The main-category mean rank for Integrated Performance Management was 2.23, placing it third overall.

For Personal and Professional Capitalization of Managers—the top-ranked main category overall (main-category mean rank = 3.38)—experts emphasized *Enhancing Psychological Competence* (2.28), with *innovative problem-solving* (4.25) in first place, followed by *emotional awareness* (4.01) and *stress management* (4.00). In *Strengthening Ethical and Behavioral Values*, *managerial accountability* (3.18) led the set, reflecting expectations of integrity and responsibility. In *Building Effective Communication Networks*—the largest subcategory by item count—the highest-priority actions were *providing constructive feedback* (mean rank 6.75), *trust-building with employees* (6.72), and *effective conflict management* (6.67). As these values are mean ranks among eleven concurrent items, they are internally comparable within the subcategory but not across subcategories.

Within Sustainable and Innovative Value Management, *Creating a Dynamic and Flexible Organizational Culture* held the top subcategory priority (4.14), driven by *fostering a transparent and open climate* (4.04) and *sharing information and perspectives* (3.85). In *Protecting Shareholder Value*, *product and service sustainability* ranked first (3.18). *Value Co-Creation Management* favored *knowledge co-creation* (3.16) and *structural alignment for collaboration* (3.03). *Sustainable Competitive Development* was led by *social responsibility* (3.44), and *Service-Oriented Motivation* prioritized *enhancing effectiveness and influence* (2.58). The most prominent single indicator across the Organizational Resilience subcategory was *preserving and improving organizational capabilities* (4.60), followed by *employee commitment and trust* (4.18) and *organizational support* (4.16). At the main-category level, Sustainable & Innovative Value Management placed second overall (2.34), reflecting strong expert emphasis on culture, sustainability, co-creation, and resilience as core levers of symbolic capital at SAIPA.

In sum, experts prioritized capability facets that signal credibility and influence at both the personal and organizational levels: psychological competence, ethical accountability, and high-quality communication at the individual layer; data-driven quality, structured coordination, and resilience-oriented culture at the organizational layer. These priorities offer a clear roadmap for sequencing managerial development and organizational interventions to enhance the symbolic capital of managers in the SAIPA Automotive Group.

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of this study demonstrated that the enhancement of managers' symbolic capital within the SAIPA Automotive Group can be conceptualized across four key dimensions—development of managerial skills and competencies, integrated performance management, personal and professional capitalization of managers, and sustainable and innovative value management—each encompassing specific subcomponents and measurable indicators. Using a combination of qualitative thematic analysis and quantitative prioritization through the Friedman test, the study identified and ranked ninety-three validated indicators of symbolic capital. Among these, *personal and professional capitalization* emerged as the most critical dimension, emphasizing psychological competence, ethical integrity, and communication skills as the strongest predictors of managerial symbolic legitimacy. Following this, *sustainable and innovative value management* ranked second, underlining the importance of adaptability, innovation, and organizational resilience as determinants of long-term symbolic capital. *Integrated performance management* and *development of managerial skills and competencies* ranked third and fourth, respectively, revealing that while operational systems and technical expertise are essential, symbolic recognition in modern organizations depends more heavily on intangible and relational capacities.

These results align with contemporary theoretical perspectives that define symbolic capital as a multi-dimensional construct encompassing recognition, legitimacy, prestige, and the authority derived from shared cultural values [1, 13, 14]. The prominence of *personal and professional capitalization* suggests that in large industrial contexts, such as the SAIPA Automotive Group, symbolic capital is less about hierarchical position and more about perceived authenticity, ethical consistency, and interpersonal credibility. This interpretation corresponds to Bourdieu's conception of symbolic capital as "misrecognized power"—the subtle form of authority that functions because it is accepted as legitimate by others [7]. As confirmed by [6], HR directors' influence in corporate governance settings depends more on symbolic credibility than on formal roles, reflecting how symbolic capital translates into functional power within organizational hierarchies. Similarly, [22] argued that credentials and degrees function as portable forms of symbolic capital that reinforce professional legitimacy, paralleling the way managerial competencies and ethical conduct reinforce recognition within corporate fields.

The centrality of *psychological and ethical competencies* among top-ranked indicators—such as strong leadership, emotional awareness, accountability, and transparency—suggests that symbolic capital within industrial management arises from the moral and emotional legitimacy of leaders. This finding resonates with [4], who identified that the conversion of social and cultural capital into symbolic authority requires authenticity and relational trust. In Iranian organizational contexts, where leadership legitimacy is heavily intertwined with moral values, [21] found that symbolic capital reproduction depends on maintaining a balance between organizational efficiency and moral exemplarity. This moral dimension is reinforced by [19], who emphasized how the symbolic capital of Iranian intellectuals, including figures like Shariati and Al-e Ahmad, was constructed through a synthesis of ethical authenticity and social critique. Thus, in the SAIPA context, moral credibility and ethical conduct appear to serve a similar legitimizing function, positioning leaders as trustworthy representatives of the organization's values rather than merely its operational agents.

The findings also indicated that *effective communication networks* are essential for the accumulation and maintenance of symbolic capital. Managers who exhibit strong verbal and written communication skills, foster trust-based relationships, and provide constructive feedback were consistently rated as possessing higher symbolic influence. This outcome mirrors [12], who demonstrated that impression management through professional self-presentation on digital platforms functions as symbolic capital in intercultural business contexts. Likewise, [2] argued that nonprofit organizations secure external resources through the conversion of symbolic legitimacy—often signaled via communication, branding, and relational trust—into tangible support. Within industrial management, communication thus acts as both the medium and the message of symbolic power: it signals authenticity, reinforces ethical norms, and sustains social bonds that underpin collective confidence in leadership. [3] further emphasized that symbolic capital in corporate networks derives from visible inter-organizational relations and elite associations, suggesting that internal and external relational competence are equally vital.

In parallel, the results highlighting *sustainable and innovative value management* as a critical domain of symbolic capital expansion align with global evidence that modern legitimacy depends on the ability of managers to integrate innovation with social responsibility. The top-ranked subcomponents—dynamic organizational culture, stakeholder trust, and resilience capacity—reflect an emergent consensus that adaptability and sustainability are the new moral currencies of managerial reputation. [17] described symbolic capital as a territorial and developmental resource, emphasizing that organizations and regions alike build legitimacy through adaptability and responsible innovation. Likewise, [14] positioned symbolic capital as central to metamodern value matrices, where sincerity and progressivism coexist as interlocking norms. In industrial settings, this corresponds to an expectation that managers must embody openness to innovation while preserving continuity in ethical and cultural values. [15] underscored this balance in the arts domain, showing that the legitimacy of AI-generated works depends on the recognized symbolic capital of the artist; analogously, managerial acceptance of technological innovation requires a foundation of earned credibility and symbolic trust.

The results concerning *organizational resilience and innovation culture* also align with [13], who argued that symbolic capital in digital communication systems evolves through visibility and adaptability—attributes essential for sustaining recognition under changing conditions. Similarly, [16] identified that symbolic capital in memorial landscapes arises from practices of care and stewardship, suggesting that continuous cultivation and renewal of values are integral to maintaining legitimacy. In the corporate context, the same logic applies: symbolic capital is not static but must be actively maintained through innovation, transparency, and responsiveness. The inclusion of *organizational resilience* as a symbolic dimension underscores how crisis management and employee trust coalesce into reputational stability, echoing [5], who found that responsible entrepreneurship depends on a balance of social and symbolic capital that signals both competence and moral integrity.

The emphasis on *integrated performance management* as a third-order dimension complements findings in other fields that operational excellence, when visibly tied to ethical and communicative competencies, amplifies symbolic recognition. [7] conceptualized professionalism as symbolic capital institutionalized through standards and accountability mechanisms; our findings support this by demonstrating that process optimization, performance analytics, and quality management serve as legitimizing rituals that communicate reliability. Likewise, [23] found that symbolic capital in consumer markets increases trust in quality perception, which parallels the way industrial managers gain internal legitimacy by demonstrating process integrity. [6] also highlighted that HR leaders in boardrooms enhance their strategic influence when they performatively link technical mastery to shared organizational meanings, thereby converting technical credibility into symbolic authority.

Meanwhile, *development of managerial skills and competencies* ranked lowest among the four major dimensions, which may appear counterintuitive but reveals an important conceptual distinction: technical competence alone does not translate into symbolic legitimacy unless framed through cultural and relational codes. [1] noted that international actors with equivalent technical skills experience differential legitimacy outcomes based on their symbolic capital—an observation reinforced by [2] and [3]. The relatively lower ranking of this domain in our findings suggests that industrial managers have reached a baseline of functional competence; what differentiates symbolic leaders is their mastery of meaning, representation, and social resonance. This insight is consistent with [4], who posited that symbolic capital becomes the decisive layer that integrates and amplifies the other forms of capital—economic, social, and cultural—within entrepreneurial ecosystems.

An additional pattern in the results concerns the localization of symbolic capital indicators. The prominence of *ethical responsibility*, *organizational belonging*, and *cultural diversity management* indicates that symbolic capital in the Iranian industrial context is deeply embedded in social and moral expectations. [20] demonstrated that continuous cultural interactions sustain symbolic capital through relational recognition, while [21] emphasized structured processes for reproducing symbolic legitimacy in Iranian leadership contexts. Our findings extend these observations by operationalizing such processes into measurable managerial practices, including transparency, inclusivity, and mentorship. Likewise, [19] showed that Iranian symbolic legitimacy historically derives from alignment between moral discourse and social practice—a pattern that persists in organizational environments where credibility and ethical example are inseparable. These cultural continuities reveal that symbolic capital cannot be imported wholesale from Western models but must be articulated through local habitus, reflecting national and institutional values [14, 17].

The broader implication of this study is that symbolic capital functions as an integrative meta-resource for managerial performance, translating personal virtue, communicative ability, and organizational innovation into enduring legitimacy. Consistent with [8], who analyzed the symbolic capital of the neoliberal university, our findings show that institutional structures increasingly reward reputational indicators that signify adaptability and credibility rather than mere output metrics. Similarly, [18] demonstrated that post-whistleblowing experts rebuild legitimacy through recontextualized symbolic capital, illustrating that credibility is field-dependent yet renewable. In industrial organizations, this renewal occurs through practices of reflection, transparent communication, and participatory leadership, as reflected in our top-ranked indicators. Furthermore, the fusion of symbolic and organizational capital echoes [25], who conceptualized symbolic capital as an everyday managerial resource embedded in routine practices, not reserved for elites or exceptional leaders.

Overall, the results affirm that symbolic capital is both *measurable* and *manageable*. The validated indicators—mentorship, ethical accountability, communication competence, cultural adaptability, and innovation stewardship—represent actionable levers for cultivating recognition-based legitimacy. The strong alignment between our results and global studies supports the theoretical proposition that symbolic capital operates through consistent logics across contexts, even as its concrete expressions vary with local culture and institutional form [2, 4, 14, 19]. The study thereby contributes to bridging symbolic capital theory with practical management systems, translating abstract sociological constructs into operational frameworks for leadership development and organizational strategy within emerging-market industries.

Despite its robust methodological triangulation, the study faced several limitations. First, it was conducted within a single organizational context—SAIPA Automotive Group—which, although representative of large Iranian industrial enterprises, limits the generalizability of findings to other sectors such as banking, healthcare, or cultural institutions. Second, the qualitative sampling relied on 18 expert interviews, which may not capture the full heterogeneity of perspectives within the broader managerial population. Third, the prioritization process, based on expert judgment and the Friedman test, may reflect contextual biases shaped by the participants' organizational experience and cultural background. Furthermore, the study's focus on symbolic indicators may underrepresent the interaction effects between symbolic, social, and economic capital, which operate dynamically in practice. Finally, the reliance on expert evaluation introduces a degree of subjectivity, and future research with larger, multi-level datasets could validate the psychometric reliability of the proposed indicators.

Future research could extend this study by conducting cross-sectoral and cross-national comparisons to examine how symbolic capital manifests under different institutional logics and cultural systems. Quantitative validation through structural equation modeling could further test causal relationships among the identified dimensions and their outcomes on performance, innovation, and stakeholder trust. Longitudinal designs would help explore how symbolic capital evolves over time and in response to technological or reputational crises. Additionally, digital ethnography could provide insights into how online visibility and platform dynamics alter the accumulation and erosion of symbolic capital in managerial careers. Finally, integrating this model with social network analysis may reveal how symbolic capital circulates through inter-organizational ties and industry ecosystems, offering a more dynamic understanding of symbolic legitimacy in practice.

Managers and policymakers can use the validated indicators as a diagnostic tool to assess and enhance symbolic capital within their organizations. Leadership development programs should emphasize mentorship, ethical reasoning, emotional intelligence, and communicative competence as core competencies. Organizations should institutionalize transparency mechanisms and participatory decision-making to strengthen collective trust and symbolic legitimacy. Continuous professional branding, recognition systems, and stakeholder engagement initiatives can further consolidate symbolic capital as a strategic asset. At the systemic level, integrating symbolic capital metrics into performance evaluations and succession planning would help ensure that future leaders embody not only technical competence but also the moral and relational authority essential for sustainable organizational credibility.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this study.

Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants. Written consent was obtained from all participants in the study.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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