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Original Paper

Typological Differentiation and Industrial Fit in Local Enterprise-Related Enforcement Reform: A Comparative Study of Three Guangdong Cities and Implications for Shantou

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Abstract

Optimizing the business environment is a pivotal aspect of China's governance modernization. Despite a unified top-level legal framework, local enterprise-related administrative enforcement exhibits significant typological divergence. Based on the theory of Responsive Regulation, this study constructs a three-dimensional analytical framework of "Deterrence—Flexibility—Efficiency" and examines enforcement practices in Jiangmen, Yunfu, and Shantou. Through structured coding of policy texts, the study identifies Jiangmen as deterrence-oriented (characterized by precise discretion), Yunfu as flexibility-oriented (relying on exemption lists), and Shantou as efficiency-oriented (focusing on cross-departmental coordination). The findings suggest that there is no universally optimal enforcement type; rather, each configuration is a conditional response to specific industrial risks and carries intrinsic tensions, such as compliance crowding-out and formalized coordination. Furthermore, targeting Shantou's "Three New, Two Special, One Major" (3N2S1M) industries, this paper proposes a differentiated tool-combination scheme, arguing that local enforcement reform should shift from searching for "best practices" to diagnosing industrial risk structures, thus providing targeted institutional support for local high-quality development.

Keywords

Enterprise-related administrative enforcement, Business environment, Responsive regulation, Tolerant and prudent regulation, Industrial fit

1. Introduction

1.1 Institutional Background and Problem Formulation

Enterprise-related administrative enforcement serves as the most frequent, direct, and sensitive institutional interface between the government and market entities. The Law on Promoting the Private Economy implemented on May 20, 2025, legally confirmed the principle of equal protection for all types of business entities and explicitly addressed enforcement irregularities such as "arbitrary fees, fines, and inspections," requiring the standardization of enterprise-related enforcement. This legislative signal is not isolated. Prior to this, "tolerant and prudent regulation" had gradually expanded from a regulatory concept in the digital economy to encompass market regulation, work safety, environmental protection, and other fields. The system of administrative discretion baselines has been implemented across various regions, with the refinement of discretion gradients regarded as a core tool to compress arbitrary enforcement space.

However, the convergence of top-level institutional frameworks has not led to the convergence of local enforcement practices. Under identical legal constraints and policy orientations, cities within Guangdong Province have evolved distinct enforcement styles. Jiangmen City centers on the "precisification" of environmental penalty discretion rules, exhibiting a deterrence-oriented style. Yunfu City relies on work safety "exemption lists" and supporting soft measures, presenting a flexibility-oriented style. Shantou City utilizes the "one combined inspection" cross-departmental coordination and "consolidated exemption lists," attempting to reduce institutional transaction costs through procedural intensification and substantive leniency.

This empirical contrast constitutes the starting point of this paper: why does local enterprise-related enforcement diverge into different typologies under a shared macro-institutional framework? More importantly, is there a normative logic for combining and adapting these typologies to specific industrial structures? Existing studies often focus on single cities or specific enforcement fields, or evaluate the effects of single institutional tools (such as discretion baselines or exemption lists). They rarely treat local enforcement styles as comparative objects, and even less frequently inquire into the normative implications of "typological differentiation" for specific industrial structures. This paper aims to fill this gap.

1.2 Research Subjects and Core Questions

This paper takes the publicly available enterprise-related enforcement policy texts and practical materials from Jiangmen, Yunfu, and Shantou in Guangdong Province from 2022 to 2025 as its empirical basis, identifying them respectively as "deterrence-oriented," "flexibility-oriented," and "efficiency-oriented" typologies. The core questions are twofold:

First (Explanatory): What are the institutional logics and operating conditions of the three enforcement typologies? What industrial structural constraints and governance incentives do they respond to?

Second (Normative): In this typological spectrum, how should Shantou combine deterrence, flexibility, and efficiency tools to match the differentiated compliance needs of its traditional advantage industries

(textile and garment, toy creativity), emerging industries (new energy, new materials, new generation IT), and the big health industry within its "3N2S1M" layout?

The second question is the focal point of this paper. Shantou is currently in a stage of supporting the construction of a provincial sub-center city through "industry-driven city development and industrial strengthening." The expansion of the "3N2S1M" industrial cluster and the green, compliant transformation of traditional industries are advancing in parallel. Enterprise-related enforcement can neither retreat to the old track of "substituting penalties for management" nor dissolve the bottom lines of safety, environmental protection, and quality in the name of "inclusiveness." Therefore, an industrial-adaptive combination design of enforcement tools, rather than simply advocating "combining leniency and strictness," constitutes the practical orientation of this paper.

1.3 Analytical Framework and Methodological Presuppositions

This paper adopts Ayres and Braithwaite's Responsive Regulation as its unified theoretical anchor. The core proposition is that regulatory intensity should dynamically rise and fall according to the regulatee's compliance willingness and behavior, forming a "regulatory pyramid" from persuasion and warning to punishment. Existing research has noted that responsive regulation in the Chinese local context does not operate in a textbook ladder form, but is reshaped by local governance structures into more strategic variants—such as the "compress first, repair later" enforcement rhythm presented by "targeted responsive campaigns." This observation suggests that the analytical value of responsive regulation lies not in presupposing a "standard ladder," but in identifying how different localities configure weights across the three dimensions of Deterrence, Flexibility, and Efficiency.

Accordingly, this paper constructs a three-dimensional comparative framework: The Deterrence dimension examines whether enforcement agencies transmit credible punitive threats to potential violators through highly deterministic discretion rules, public notifications, and sanction combinations, with its micro-foundation traceable to Becker's rational deterrence model. The Flexibility dimension examines whether agencies embed compliance incentives into the enforcement front-end, replacing immediate sanctions with list-based exemptions, administrative guidance, and rectification windows. The Efficiency dimension examines whether agencies reduce institutional transaction costs from repetitive regulation through cross-departmental coordination and digital platforms. The three dimensions do not presuppose superiority or inferiority, but serve as analytical tools to describe typological differentiation and subsequently discuss industrial adaptation.

Methodologically, this paper adopts a strategy combining multiple-case comparison and structured coding of policy texts. The selection of the three cities follows the principle of theoretical sampling: they constitute maximum differences in geographical location (Pearl River Delta—Western Guangdong—Eastern Guangdong), industrial structure, and enforcement style, making them suitable for identifying the boundaries and conditions of typologies. The data sources are limited to normative documents, policy interpretations, typical case notifications, and work data publicly released by the three municipal governments and their functional departments, all of which are traceable and verifiable.

This paper does not aim for causal identification, but takes "typology identification—mechanism explanation—normative derivation" as its logical chain, providing a foundation for comparative institutional analysis for the subsequent tool combination scheme for Shantou.

2. Literature Review and Analytical Framework

2.1 Three Streams of Literature and Their Limitations

Existing literature broadly follows three streams regarding the relationship between enterprise-related enforcement and the business environment.

The first stream focuses on the causal effects between enforcement intensity and corporate behavior, centered on the deterrence logic. Such studies typically use the implementation of an enforcement system as a quasi-natural experiment to test the impact of refined discretion rules and increased penalty certainty on corporate compliance, investment, and entry behavior. A recent study based on national business registration and administrative penalty microdata found that the implementation of the administrative discretion baseline system significantly promoted the cross-regional inflow of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) (Qi et al., 2025). The mechanism lies in enhancing the publicity of enforcement bases, the fairness of horizontal entities, and the justice of penalty results, thereby reducing institutional transaction costs. This finding provides important empirical support for "deterrence is not equivalent to heavy penalties": precisified deterrence functions through predictability, not through the severity of punishment itself. However, such studies usually treat "enforcement standardization" as a homogeneous treatment variable, rarely inquiring into the path differences in "how to standardize" across localities, and rarely discussing the heterogeneous implications of deterrence intensity for enterprises of different sizes and industries.

The second stream centers on tolerant and prudent regulation and flexible enforcement, focusing on the institutional design of compliance incentives. The contribution of this stream lies in advancing tools such as "exemption lists," "first-violation exemption," and "administrative guidance" from policy advocacy to an operational level of institutional analysis (Lu, 2024; Zhou & Zhou, 2026). Recent studies indicate that flexible environmental enforcement can significantly promote corporate tax compliance (Lu et al., 2026), and the implementation of the "first-violation exemption" system has a positive protective effect on SME employment (Xie et al., 2025). Meanwhile, flexible enforcement norms in specific fields such as work safety are also receiving increasing attention (Liu, 2026). However, its analytical unit often remains at a single tool or a single enforcement field, failing to place "flexibility" within the overall configuration of local enforcement typologies. Whether flexibility operates under a certain deterrence structure and is coupled with what kind of coordination mechanism determines whether it is "compliance incentive" or "regulatory slack."

The third stream discusses the efficiency of cross-departmental regulation from the perspective of Whole-of-Government and collaborative governance. Practices such as "one combined inspection" and "entering one door to check multiple matters" are explained against the backdrop of departmental silos

and information fragmentation (Ma & Liu, 2025). The main channel role of administrative reconsideration in resolving enterprise-related disputes is also becoming increasingly prominent (Wang, 2025). This perspective reveals that the institutional root of the efficiency bottleneck lies not in the individual willingness of enforcement personnel, but in the deep structure of data governance and authority allocation. However, its normative output often remains at the general advocacy of "strengthening coordination," failing to connect with the differentiated needs of industrial structures.

The common gap in existing research lies in: the three streams each deepen the understanding of one dimension, but lack a study that incorporates all three into a unified comparative framework and discusses "combination logic" with local industrial structure as a conditioning variable. Differences in local enforcement styles are treated as background noise or case-specific features, rather than as typological objects that need explanation and can be normatively utilized.

2.2 Responsive Regulation as a Unified Framework: Applicability and Chinese Context

Responsive regulation theory is suitable for this integration task because it views regulation as a tool combination rather than a choice of a single means. Ayres and Braithwaite's "regulatory pyramid" does not advocate prioritizing flexibility or deterrence, but maintains that regulators should retain a complete response capability from persuasion to sanction, dynamically adjusting according to the regulatee's behavioral signals. This structure precisely accommodates the core concerns of the three streams: deterrence is the response capability at the top of the pyramid, flexibility is the compliance incentive at the bottom, and efficiency is the collaborative base that enables the pyramid to operate in a complex administrative system.

However, applying this theory to the Chinese local context requires two modifications. First, the "response" in Chinese local enforcement is not only directed at the compliance willingness of individual enterprises but is also structurally shaped by local industrial development goals, fiscal incentives, and risk governance pressures. Therefore, the unit of analysis cannot remain at the "regulator—regulatee" binary interaction but should expand to how local governance structures configure the weights of deterrence, flexibility, and efficiency. Second, responsive regulation in Chinese local practice often appears in "campaign-style" or "special project" forms, with the rhythm and intensity of response regulated by top-down attention allocation. Recent research on Chinese tech regulation shows that regulators strategically reconstruct the regulatory pyramid into "targeted responsive campaigns," first compressing the space of major violators with high-intensity sanctions, then guiding compliant actors to return with restorative arrangements (Su & Sun, 2025). This finding suggests that the key to typological differentiation lies not in the existence of the regulatory pyramid, but in how its trigger conditions, ascent speed, and descent mechanisms are institutionalized in different localities.

(Note: Sections 2.3, 3.1, and 3.2 from your original text are integrated below).

3. Research Methodology and Structured Coding

3.1 Research Strategy: Typological Comparison and Structured Coding

This paper adopts a research strategy combining multiple-case comparison and structured coding of policy texts. The reason for this choice lies in the nature of the research question: what this paper seeks to answer is not "whether a certain enforcement tool produces an average treatment effect," but "how local enforcement styles diverge and what the differentiated typologies mean for specific industrial structures." The former is suitable for large-sample causal inference, while the latter requires a comparable characterization of institutional arrangements—restoring seemingly heterogeneous practices in different localities to the same set of analytical dimensions for coding, thereby making "typology" an identifiable and testable analytical object rather than an impressionistic summary.

The three cities follow the principle of theoretical sampling. Jiangmen, Yunfu, and Shantou are located in the Pearl River Delta, Western Guangdong, and Eastern Guangdong, respectively, with significant differences in industrial structure and governance endowments, and identifiable differences in dominant orientations in the institutional design of enterprise-related enforcement. This "maximum difference" configuration is suitable for identifying the boundaries and conditions of typologies, rather than pursuing statistical inferences in the sense of sample representativeness. The analysis units are publicly released normative documents, supporting lists, and work data, with a time range limited to 2022—2025. All data sources are from government websites, government gazettes, and public information from functional departments. Every coding can be traced to a specific document or official report, without relying on undisclosed internal materials or interview data.

It is necessary to clarify the methodological boundaries. The function of structured coding lies in systematic description and typology identification, not causal identification. Coding results can reveal "the configuration differences of the three cities in the dimensions of deterrence, flexibility, and efficiency," but cannot infer the independent contribution of a certain dimension to business environment indicators. Causal inference requires enterprise-level microdata and quasi-experimental design, which exceeds the empirical basis of this paper. The normative conclusions (Section 5) are conditional derivations based on typological comparison and mechanism explanation, whose validity depends on whether the institutional logic revealed in Section 4 holds, rather than on the statistical significance of coding data.

3.2 Coding Framework and Operational Rules

The coding focuses on the predictability of discretion rules and the structure of sanction combinations. Specific observation items include: (1) whether a local-level discretion baseline rule has been issued, and whether it provides calculable penalty range rules; (2) whether the sanction combination includes restorative responsibilities (e.g., ecological environmental damage compensation, replanting and greening) or public elements (e.g., typical case notifications, public apology for leniency); (3) whether the discretion rules simultaneously set gradients for aggravating and mitigating circumstances, rather than only prescribing one-way severity.

The coding focuses on the degree of list-based compliance incentives and supporting measures: (1) whether exemption, reduction, or leniency lists have been issued, the number of items and coverage areas; (2) whether the applicable conditions of the list are clear (e.g., "first violation," "minor harmful consequences," "timely correction"), and whether they are verifiable; (3) whether the list is supported by soft law measures such as administrative guidance, interviews, and return visits, and whether there are rectification windows or compliance observation periods.

The coding focuses on the substantive degree of cross-departmental coordination and digital support: (1) whether an institutional arrangement for cross-departmental joint inspections has been established, and whether it has a clear list or operating procedures; (2) whether there are quantifiable work data (e.g., inspection frequency reduction, number of exemption items, platform online rate); (3) whether the digital platform is only used for case filing traces or has extended to risk classification and differentiated regulation.

The coding uses the standard of "whether there is a publicly verifiable institutional arrangement," rather than the actual effect of institutional operation. This limitation is conscious: public texts reflect the institutional design intentions of local enforcement reform. The gap between text and actual execution is itself an object that Section 4 needs to explain, rather than something to be concealed during the coding stage.

3.3 Structured Coding Results of Enterprise-Related Enforcement Tools in the Three Cities

Table 3-1 presents the core coding results of the three cities across the three dimensions. The "Tools/Indicators" in each cell are accompanied by verifiable sources; the "Coding Judgment" column summarizes the configuration characteristics of that cell in the dimension, rather than a qualitative evaluation of the overall enforcement situation in the three cities.

Table 3-1 Structured Coding of Enterprise-Related Enforcement Tools in Jiangmen, Yunfu, and Shantou (2022-2025)

Dimension	Jiangmen	Yunfu	Shantou
Dominant Tools	Environmental penalty discretion rules (Jiang Huan [2023] No. 28), refining the provincial baseline into locally calculable penalty ranges, detailing 7 aggravating and 7 mitigating	Work safety exemption list (Yun Ying Ji [2022] No. 53, issued Nov 22, 2022, valid for 3 years), later revised and expanded into the 2025 Exemption List, supported by soft measures like	"One combined inspection" list system (jointly issued by five departments in Jan 2023), overlaid with the consolidated exemption lists (covering 15 fields and 214 items)

Dimension	Jiangmen	Yunfu	Shantou
	circumstances	persuasive enforcement	
Legal Attribute	Precisification of rigid discretion: compressing arbitrary space with calculable rules, enhancing penalty predictability	List-based flexible exemptions: operationalizing the legal principles of "first-violation exemption" and "minor violation exemption"	Combination of procedural coordination and substantive leniency: cross-departmental inspection intensification + centralized exemption items
Quantifiable Public Indicators	Rules effective from Mar 1, 2023, to Feb 28, 2027; public apology leniency mechanism (30%-50% penalty reduction)	Since 2022, 25 enterprise leaders have received persuasive education; 2025 list further expanded and incorporates upper-level norms	Inspection frequency for listed enterprises reduced by over 75%; exemption lists cover 15 fields and 214 items
Industrial Targeting (Coding Inference)	Deterrence fit for high-pollution manufacturing and high environmental externality fields	Incentive fit for SMEs with insufficient compliance capacity in work safety risk fields	Transaction cost reduction for areas with active private economy and heavy burdens of redundant inspections
Dimensional Configuration	Deterrence-dominated, with flexibility as an auxiliary interface (mitigating circumstances and public apology retained)	Flexibility-dominated, with deterrence retained outside the list (exemptions limited to minor violations, excluding malicious or repeat offenses)	Efficiency-dominated, with deterrence and flexibility achieving "indirect combination" through procedural intensification and list consolidation

Notes on coding results. First, the tool choices of the three cities are not mutually exclusive: Jiangmen's discretion rules include mitigating circumstances and public apology mechanisms; Yunfu's exemption list uses "minor" as a boundary, excluding severe violations; Shantou consolidates exemption items beyond "one combined inspection." The basis for typological division is the dominant dimensional weight configuration, not the exclusive existence of a certain dimension. Second, the comparability of quantifiable indicators is limited: Jiangmen's "7 aggravating and 7 mitigating" is a rule complexity indicator, Yunfu's "25 enterprises" is a soft law measure coverage indicator, and Shantou's "75%" is an inspection frequency reduction indicator. They cannot be directly compared in magnitude and can only be used to judge the institutional input intensity of each city in the corresponding dimension. Third, the coding results present a typological differentiation at the institutional design level; whether the actual execution of the three cities is consistent with the text will be discussed in Section 4 regarding the possible gap between text and execution.

4. Institutional Logic and Intrinsic Tensions of Typological Differentiation

4.1 Industrial Structure as a Selective Environment for Enforcement Styles

The differences in enforcement styles among the three cities cannot be simply attributed to whether their "governance concepts are advanced." A more reasonable starting point for explanation is the differentiated constraints imposed by industrial structures.

Jiangmen is a manufacturing base on the western wing of the Pearl River Delta, with a high proportion of traditional industries such as papermaking, chemicals, and metal products. Environmental externalities are strong, and violations are highly concealed. Behaviors such as secretly setting up hidden pipes or tampering with monitoring data are difficult to detect through routine inspections, and once they occur, the damage is diffuse and irreversible. This structure determines that the core problem facing Jiangmen's enforcement is the credibility of deterrence under information asymmetry: if the penalty range is unpredictable, enterprises will treat violations as a game of probability rather than a conviction in the rules. The "precisification" of discretion rules is precisely a response to this problem.

Yunfu's industrial structure is dominated by traditional industries such as stone, cement, and stainless steel, with work safety risks concentrated in SMEs. The compliance dilemma of such enterprises often lies not in "intentional violations," but in insufficient compliance capacity—requirements for safety training, risk identification, and emergency plans exceed the organizational capabilities of small and micro enterprises. Imposing sanctions of the same intensity as those on large enterprises on such entities not only fails to generate compliance incentives but may accelerate their exit from the market, contradicting the governance goals of "stabilizing employment" and "protecting market entities." Yunfu's exemption list is essentially an institutional response to the compliance capacity deficit: stripping "minor and timely corrected" violations from the sanction list, replacing penalties with administrative guidance, and concentrating enforcement resources on malicious violations that truly require deterrence.

Shantou's industrial structure is dominated by the private economy, with traditional advantage industries such as textile and garment, and toy creativity coexisting with emerging industries such as new energy and new materials. Enterprise density is high, and inspection frequency is large. The pain point most strongly reflected by enterprises is not "excessive penalties," but the institutional transaction costs brought by redundant and repeated inspections. Under this structure, neither the severity nor the flexibility of a single enforcement tool can respond to the core contradiction: the problem lies in the organizational method of inspections, not the choice of penalty intensity. Shantou's combination of "one combined inspection" and consolidated exemption lists shifts the focus of reform from the "penalty end" to the "inspection end" and "procedural end."

The three typologies can thus be understood as the institutionalization of three problem diagnoses: Jiangmen diagnoses "untrustworthy deterrence," Yunfu diagnoses "insufficient compliance capacity," and Shantou diagnoses "excessively high regulatory friction costs." Typological differentiation is not a ranking of governance levels, but a conditional match between the diagnostic object and tool selection.

4.2 Intrinsic Tensions of the Three Configurations

The value of typology lies not only in describing differences but also in revealing the contradictions that each configuration cannot resolve on its own. Each of the three configurations carries structural limitations, which precisely constitute the risks that Shantou must preemptively avoid when combining tools.

4.2.1 Jiangmen: Threshold of Deterrence and Compliance Crowding-out

The technical features of Jiangmen's discretion rules deserve attention: it stipulates not only aggravating circumstances but also mitigating circumstances, non-penalty situations, public apology penalty reduction (30%-50% reduction based on penalty standards, up to a maximum of 300,000 RMB), and rules for installment payment of fines. This means that Jiangmen's "deterrence" is not one-way severity but a gradient discretionary calculation system: the purpose of precisification is not to increase penalties but to make penalty results calculable and predictable.

However, the tension in this configuration lies in the threshold of deterrence effectiveness. When the distance between penalty intensity and enterprise affordability exceeds a critical point, deterrence may transform from "promoting compliance" to "driving exit." Empirical research suggests that although campaign-style environmental enforcement generally prompts heavily polluting enterprises to increase environmental investments, its effect is more significant among SMEs, which also means that SMEs bear disproportionate compliance pressure. For the large number of traditional manufacturing SMEs in Jiangmen, precisely defined discretion improves predictability but does not change the impact of the absolute amount of penalties on cash flow. If mitigating circumstances and public apology mechanisms are prudently applied in practice, deterrence can be maintained in the "promoting compliance" range; if discretion calculations are mechanically executed and the determination of mitigating circumstances becomes conservative, deterrence may cross the threshold and produce compliance crowding-out. Precisification itself does not solve the intensity problem; it only makes the intensity transparent.

Transparent deterrence, if not accompanied by a gradient buffer mechanism, may result in "predictable exit" rather than "predictable compliance."

4.2.2 Yunfu: Boundary of Flexibility and the Risk of Selective Enforcement

The normative structure of Yunfu's exemption list is clear: applicable conditions are "first violation, non-subjective intent, timely correction, and no harmful consequences," supported by soft law measures such as persuasive enforcement, educational persuasion, and administrative interviews. As of early 2023, 25 enterprise leaders were educated through persuasive enforcement to urge rectification. In the sense of responsive regulation, this configuration approaches the "persuasion" level at the bottom of the pyramid, and its legitimacy lies in concentrating limited sanction resources on malicious and repeat offenses.

However, the institutional risks of flexibility are equally clear. Critics of responsive regulation theory have long pointed out that delegating discretionary space to frontline enforcers, in the absence of transparent procedural constraints, may provide fertile ground for selective enforcement: large enterprises with abundant compliance resources are better able to utilize exemption conditions and administrative guidance to avoid penalties, while small and micro enterprises with weak compliance capacity and limited access to information may instead bear disproportionate regulatory pressure because they "do not know how to apply" or "do not understand rectification." In Yunfu's list, the judgment standards for "timely correction" and the identification of "non-subjective intent" all depend on the case-by-case discretion of enforcers. If these judgments lack verifiable written standards and external supervision, flexibility may slide from "compliance incentive" to "relational tolerance." The scale of "25 enterprise leaders" in the Yunfu case indicates that the actual coverage of soft law measures remains limited; the more limited the coverage, the more the risk of selective application needs to be hedged with procedural transparency.

4.2.3 Shantou: Efficiency Bottleneck and Formalization of Coordination

Shantou's tool combination unfolds simultaneously across three dimensions: cross-departmental "one combined inspection" reduces the inspection frequency of listed enterprises by over 75%, the consolidated exemption list covers 214 items across 15 fields, and an enforcement "observation period" has been piloted for new business formats. The uniqueness of this configuration lies in its attempt to reduce regulatory friction through **procedural intensification**, rather than making a binary choice between "strict" and "lenient." From the perspective of institutional design, this is the scheme closest to the "Whole-of-Government" logic among the three cities.

However, the bottleneck in the efficiency dimension lies not in institutional design but in the data foundation and authority allocation. The substantive premise of "one combined inspection" is the effective sharing of enforcement information among departments and the unified scheduling of inspection plans. If the business systems of various departments remain fragmented and data standards are not unified, joint inspections may degenerate into "rotational visits under a joint name"—the number of inspections is reduced in the ledger, but the compliance cooperation costs actually borne by

enterprises have not simultaneously decreased. In Shantou's public information, the "75%" reduction is based on the statistical scope of listed enterprises; whether enterprises outside the list and non-inspection cooperation matters of listed enterprises benefit equally lacks comparable data. More fundamentally, cross-departmental coordination involves the reallocation of enforcement authority: which departments lead, which cooperate, and how inspection results are mutually recognized. If these authority arrangements are maintained only by campaign-style coordination rather than institutionalized rules, the sustainability of coordination will depend on the attention allocation of local leaders rather than stable institutional expectations. Shantou's 2025 measures for standardizing enterprise-related administrative enforcement attempt to institutionalize requirements such as inspection plan filing and frequency caps, which can be seen as a response to this bottleneck, but its actual effects remain to be observed.

4.3 Conditionality of Typological Differentiation: An Intermediate Conclusion

The comparison of the three cities points to an intermediate conclusion with normative significance: there is no "optimal enforcement typology" detached from industrial structure. Jiangmen's precise deterrence has adaptability in fields with heavy pollution and high information asymmetry, but its intensity logic poses risks to SMEs with fragile compliance capacity; Yunfu's flexible list-based approach has adaptability in fields with compliance capacity deficits, but its discretionary space requires procedural transparency for constraint; Shantou's efficiency coordination has adaptability in private economy-intensive areas with prominent redundant inspection burdens, but its sustainability depends on deep reforms in data governance and authority allocation.

This conclusion directly constitutes the methodological premise of Section 5: the tool combination scheme for Shantou's "3N2S1M" industries cannot be a simple superposition or compromise of the three typologies but must be differentiated configuration according to industrial characteristics—retaining the precision of deterrence in areas requiring deterrence, embedding the verifiability of flexibility in areas requiring incentives, and replacing campaign-style coordination with institutionalized rules in areas requiring synergy. At the same time, the introduction of each tool must be accompanied by a hedging design for its intrinsic tensions: deterrence with buffering, flexibility with transparency, and efficiency with authority rules.

5. Differentiated Tool Combinations for Shantou's "3N2S1M" Industries

5.1 Analytical Premise: From "Industrial Classification" to "Compliance Sensitivity Structure"

Shantou's "3N2S1M" industrial layout includes new energy, new materials, and new generation IT ("Three New"); textile and garment, and toy creativity ("Two Special"); and big health ("One Major"). By the end of 2025, the output value of this industrial cluster is expected to account for 60% of the total output value of industries above designated size. Under this volume, blanket advocacy of "combining leniency and strictness" lacks operational significance, and it is necessary to identify the dominant compliance risk types faced by different industries.

The comparison in Section 4 has shown that the choice of enforcement tools depends on the diagnosis of "where the problem lies." Accordingly, the compliance sensitivity of the "3N2S1M" industries can be divided into three structures:

First, environmental externality-dominated, represented by textile and garment (dyeing and printing) and some new material manufacturing. The core risk is the concealment and diffusiveness of pollution emissions, corresponding to the applicable scenario of Jiangmen-style precise deterrence, but the clustered layout of Shantou's dyeing and printing industry (Chaonan and Chaoyang dyeing and printing parks) provides organizational governance space beyond deterrence.

Second, quality, safety, and export compliance-dominated, represented by toy creativity and textile and garment end products. The core risk lies not in subjective malice but in the insufficient capacity of SMEs to follow updates in domestic and foreign standards; the toy industry, in particular, faces dense external compliance pressure from updates such as the EU Toy Safety Regulation (EU) 2025/2509. This structure corresponds to the applicable scenario of Yunfu-style flexible list-based approaches and compliance guidance, but the deterrence bottom line must be retained in non-exemptable fields such as CCC certification and child safety.

Third, new business format uncertainty and safety bottom line coexisting, represented by new energy (offshore wind power, energy storage), new generation IT, and new medical device formats within big health. The core risk is that technological iteration is faster than rule supply, and enterprises face the dilemma of "not knowing what constitutes compliance" rather than "unwillingness to comply." This structure requires using Shantou's existing efficiency-oriented tools such as the "observation period" and "no disturbance if compliant" as the foundation, while delineating the bottom line for emerging risks through special regulatory systems.

The following three sections respectively elaborate on the tool combination schemes for the three types of industries. The structure of each scheme is unified as: Dominant Risk—Tool Combination—Hedging Design, to avoid the intrinsic tensions of various configurations revealed in Section 4 from recurring in the Shantou context.

5.2 Tool Combinations for Traditional Advantage Industries: "Precise Bottom-Line" Deterrence and "Park-Embedded" Flexibility

5.2.1 Textile and Garment: A "Deterrence Bottom-Line + Compliance Assistance" Combination at the Park Level

The enforcement difficulty of the textile and garment industry is concentrated on the environmental externalities of the dyeing and printing segment. Shantou's Chaonan and Chaoyang dyeing and printing parks have formed a clustered layout, providing organizational conditions for tool combinations different from Jiangmen's "enterprise-by-enterprise deterrence." Since 2022, the Chaonan dyeing and printing park has continuously implemented a "enforcement + assistance" model, building a four-party collaborative structure of "ecological environment enforcement department—park management committee—third-party operating unit—park enterprises," promoting enterprises to shift from "being

asked to treat pollution" to "wanting to treat pollution." Since the second quarter of 2023, the municipal ecological environment enforcement bureau has carried out "quarterly assistance" list-based assistance for 18 leading enterprises in the dyeing and printing industry, helping them establish environmental management systems and standardize pollution discharge permit ledgers.

The normative significance of this combination lies in: deterrence does not have to appear in the form of "case-by-case severity" but can be anchored to unified emission standards and online monitoring data at the park level. The object of precise discretion shifts from "the penalty range of a single enterprise" to "threshold triggering of the overall compliance status of the park"—once online monitoring data exceeds the statutory limit, investigation and penalty procedures are initiated, avoiding "grasping the big and letting go the small" or selective enforcement in enterprise-by-enterprise discretion. At the same time, flexible tools (assistance, training, rectification lists) are embedded in daily park management, allowing enterprises to obtain operational compliance improvement paths before triggering deterrence. The Regulations on the Promotion of the Textile and Garment Industry in the Shantou Special Economic Zone, passed in December 2025, further incorporates "green and low-carbon development" and "standardized construction of dyeing and printing parks" into the legal framework, providing a local legislative basis for park-based enforcement combinations.

Hedging Design: Section 4 points out that the risk of precise deterrence lies in compliance crowding-out for SMEs with fragile compliance capacity. The buffer mechanism of the park-based combination should be reflected in centralized pollution treatment facility sharing and rectification windows at the park level—setting rectification deadlines for park enterprises that match production cycles, rather than exerting pressure with a unified short cycle; for exceedances genuinely caused by failures of centralized treatment facilities in the park, leniency or non-penalty shall apply after the cause is ascertained.

5.2.2 Toy Creativity: Export Compliance-Oriented "Guidance-First + Bottom-Line Deterrence"

The risk structure of the toy industry is dominated by quality, safety, and export compliance. The core compliance challenge faced by Chenghai toy enterprises comes from updates to external market rules: the EU Toy Safety Regulation (EU) 2025/2509 takes effect in January 2026, significantly tightening chemical safety requirements and establishing a digital regulatory system; US CPC, eFiling, and EU PPWR packaging regulations are being introduced intensively, and enterprises often encounter customs detention or platform delisting when they are "unaware that new rules have changed." The Shantou Municipal Market Supervision Bureau held a briefing on testing and certification requirements for toy products in key export regions in September 2025 and further held the "Quality Sets Sail, Compliance Escorts" training course in September 2026, precisely a practice of responding to this risk structure with compliance guidance.

The tool combination should follow the logic of "guidance-first as the norm, bottom-line deterrence as the exception." The guidance end relies on the enterprise compliance management administrative enforcement guidance list (196 guidelines) within the "Three Lists," transforming export market access

requirements, CCC certification rules, and chemical safety standards into compliance checklists that enterprises can self-inspect. The deterrence end is strictly limited to bottom-line matters that cannot be replaced by guidance: production and sales without CCC certification, physical safety defects in children's toys, and false certification marks. The case of Shuangzixing Toy Factory's CCC certification violation investigated by the Longhu District Market Supervision Bureau in October 2025 is precisely an example of bottom-line deterrence—for such behaviors, flexible guidance cannot replace sanctions; otherwise, it will dissolve the bottom-line function of quality and safety regulation.

Hedging Design: The risk of flexible guidance lies in limited coverage; large export enterprises are more capable of obtaining briefing information and testing resources, while small and micro enterprises may be at a competitive disadvantage due to information asymmetry. The hedging mechanism should rely on industry associations (Chenghai Toy Association) and cross-border e-commerce platforms to embed compliance guidance into transaction links, rather than relying solely on voluntary training; at the same time, link "guidance coverage records" with the application of "first-violation exemption"—if an enterprise has not received accessible compliance guidance, its "ignorance of the law" should not be simply attributed to the enterprise itself.

5.3 Tool Combinations for Emerging Industries: Replacing "Choice of Intensity" with "Rule Supply"

The enforcement problem of the new energy, new materials, and new generation IT industries is essentially not "enforcement is too strict or too loose," but that the rules themselves respond too slowly to technological iteration. Compliance standards for offshore wind power, lithium battery materials, and new IT formats often lag behind industrial practice, and enterprises face institutional uncertainty of "unclear compliance basis," rather than the level of discretionary range.

This judgment determines that the focus of the tool combination should shift from the "deterrence-flexibility" intensity choice to the rule supply and procedural guarantee of the efficiency dimension. Shantou's existing institutional practices provide an extensible foundation: the municipal ecological environment enforcement bureau carries out "quarterly assistance" for leading enterprises in new energy and new materials, helping them clarify compliance matters such as environmental protection procedures for new projects and pollution discharge permit execution reports; the maritime department customizes the Guidelines for On-Site Inspection of Offshore Wind Power Vessels for offshore wind power projects, making inspection standards publicly predictable before construction; the "sensorless monitoring" items (31 items) within the "Three Lists" allow video surveillance and IoT devices to replace on-site inspections, reducing the interruption costs borne by technology-intensive enterprises due to frequent inspections.

The tool combination can be summarized as "Rule-First—Standard Inspection—Trigger-Based Deterrence": for matters with clear standards, use publicly available inspection guidelines to constrain the on-site judgment space of enforcers, avoiding "same matter, different standards"; for new formats with unclear standards, prioritize providing transitional rules through special regulatory provisions or compliance guidelines, rather than imposing penalties through free discretion in a "no rule to follow"

state; deterrence is initiated only when there is a clear violation of published standards and an identifiable risk. The essence of this logic is to elevate the "predictability" of the efficiency dimension from the level of discretion rules to the level of rule supply—enterprises need not only "predictability of how much the penalty will be" but also "predictability of what constitutes compliance."

Hedging Design: The inherent risk of rule-supply tools is that "regulatory lag is mistaken for regulatory absence." The hedging mechanism lies in establishing a periodic identification of compliance risks in new formats and a trigger mechanism for rule updates, and incorporating representative technical standards of industry associations into enforcement references, shortening the transmission cycle from industrial practice to enforcement basis.

5.4 Tool Combinations for the Big Health Industry: "Classified Regulation + Special Rules for New Formats" on the Safety Bottom Line

The particularity of the big health industry lies in the fact that it simultaneously carries two logics: the life safety bottom line and industrial growth. Enforcement of drugs, medical devices, and cosmetics ("Two Products and One Device") cannot take "flexibility" as the main tone; otherwise, it will dissolve the bottom-line function of safety regulation. However, the cultivation of the entire industrial chain requires that enforcement does not become an entry barrier for new formats.

Shantou's existing practices present an identifiable prototype of combination: in the "Two Products and One Device" field, it implements a "four-in-one" integrated regulation of enterprise self-inspection, routine inspection, cause-based inspection, and online patrol, relying on the "Smart Drug Supervision" system to verify abnormal flow risk signals, shifting enforcement from "casting a wide net" to "precision guidance"; at the same time, for the new format of automated medical device vending machines, in December 2025, it issued the province's first special regulatory provisions, establishing full-chain rules from access to operation around "subject compliance, quality controllability, standardized operation, and effective supervision," filling the rule gap for new formats.

The logic of the tool combination is "rigid bottom line, procedural flexibility, and rule-first for new formats." For behaviors that touch the safety bottom line, such as illegal channel purchase and sale in drug circulation and illegal addition in cosmetics, maintain the certainty of deterrence and the intensity of sanctions. The data of 574 cases of "Two Products and One Device" violations investigated and 25.941 million RMB in fines and confiscations since 2024 indicate that this bottom line has not been relaxed due to "tolerant and prudent regulation." Flexibility is reflected at the procedural level: compliance guidance and quality training (such as cosmetics "small-class" salons and quality night schools) are embedded in daily supervision, enabling enterprises to understand the rules rather than merely bear the consequences. For new formats such as automated vending machines, special regulatory provisions replace the binary choice of "either not regulating or penalizing," and enforcement is carried out according to the rules once they are clear.

Hedging Design: The excessive extension of "flexibility" discourse in the safety bottom-line field may lead to tolerance of systemic risks. The hedging mechanism lies in the strict implementation of the

"exclusion rules of exemption lists" in the safety field—Shantou's 2025 Compilation has clearly stated that illegal behaviors included in key enforcement areas, with relatively high potential risks, and that may cause serious consequences shall not be included in the management of exemption and leniency lists. This exclusionary rule should be strictly applied in the big health field, and the preventive function of safety regulation should not be dissolved on the grounds of "first time" or "minor."

5.5 Overall Logic of the Scheme and Its Correspondence with Sections 3 and 4

Table 5-1 summarizes the tool combination schemes for the three types of industries and their correspondence with the experiences of the three cities.

Table 5-1 Tool Combination Scheme for Enforcement in Shantou's "3N2S1M" Industries

Industry Category	Dominant Compliance Risk	Tool Combination Focus	Source of Experience from the Three Cities	Hedging Design
Textile and Garment (Dyeing)	Environmental externality	Park-based deterrence bottom line + centralized assistance and rectification windows	Jiangmen (precise discretion) + Shantou (park coordination)	Centralized pollution treatment sharing and rectification periods matching production cycles
Toy Creativity	Quality, safety, and export compliance	Guidance-first + bottom-line deterrence (CCC/child safety)	Yunfu (flexible list-based) + Shantou (guidance lists)	Embed guidance in transaction links; link coverage records with exemptions
New Energy/New Materials/IT	Rule supply lagging behind technological iteration	Rule-first + standard inspection + trigger-based deterrence	Shantou (efficiency tools) as primary, Yunfu (compliance observation) as auxiliary	Periodic risk identification and rule update triggers for new formats

Industry Category	Dominant Compliance Risk	Tool Combination Focus	Source of Experience from the Three Cities	Hedging Design
Big Health	Safety bottom line + new format uncertainty	Rigid bottom line + procedural flexibility + special rules for new formats	Shantou (classified regulation and special provisions)	Strict application of exemption exclusion rules in the safety field

The overall logic of this scheme can be summarized in one sentence: What Shantou needs is not to choose one of the three typologies of Jiangmen, Yunfu, and Shantou as the "standard answer," but to carry out constrained combinations within the tool families represented by the three typologies according to the dominant risk structure of each industry. The introduction of deterrence is premised on "identifiable bottom lines," the application of flexibility is premised on "accessible guidance and verifiable lists," and the enhancement of efficiency is premised on "predictable rules and traceable authority." The intrinsic tensions carried by the three tools (Section 4) are constrained in the combination scheme through corresponding hedging designs, rather than assumed to dissolve automatically.

6. Conclusion and Discussion

6.1 Core Conclusions

Taking the publicly available enterprise-related enforcement policy texts of Jiangmen, Yunfu, and Shantou in Guangdong Province from 2022 to 2025 as the empirical basis, this paper identifies three identifiable local enforcement typologies through structured coding within the "Deterrence—Flexibility—Efficiency" three-dimensional framework: Jiangmen centers on the precisification of discretion rules, presenting a deterrence orientation; Yunfu relies on exemption lists and supporting soft law measures, presenting a flexibility orientation; Shantou focuses on cross-departmental coordination and the consolidation of exemption items, presenting an efficiency orientation. The three typologies are not a ranking of governance levels but the institutionalized response to three different problem diagnoses—Jiangmen diagnoses "untrustworthy deterrence," Yunfu diagnoses "insufficient compliance capacity," and Shantou diagnoses "excessively high regulatory friction costs."

The normative conclusion drawn from this is: there is no "optimal enforcement typology" detached from industrial structure. Each configuration has institutional rationality in its adapted industrial

scenario, while also carrying intrinsic tensions that cannot be resolved on its own: precise deterrence faces the threshold risk of compliance crowding-out, flexible list-based approaches face the procedural risk of selective enforcement, and efficiency coordination faces the sustainability risk of data silos and authority allocation. The methodological implication of this conclusion is that comparative research on local enforcement reform should not aim at "searching for best practices" but at "identifying typological boundaries and adaptation conditions."

Based on this judgment, this paper proposes differentiated tool combination schemes for Shantou's "3N2S1M" industries: textile and garment (dyeing) implements a "deterrence bottom line + compliance assistance" at the park level; toy creativity implements "guidance-first + bottom-line deterrence" oriented toward export compliance; new energy, new materials, and IT replace "choice of intensity" with "rule supply"; and big health implements "classified regulation + special rules for new formats" on the safety bottom line. The four schemes share the same design principle: the introduction of tools must be accompanied by hedging arrangements for their intrinsic tensions—deterrence with buffering, flexibility with transparency, and efficiency with authority rules.

6.2 Theoretical Contributions and Practical Implications

This typological study provides three academic implications for understanding local governance transformation in China.

First, the adaptation unit for enforcement efficiency is the "industry-risk structure" rather than administrative boundaries. Traditional studies often use a certain city as the unit of analysis to evaluate enforcement efficiency, which tends to obscure the heterogeneous demands of different industries within a city. This study shows that within the same city (such as Shantou), the environmental externalities of the dyeing segment, the quality and safety compliance of toy exports, the technological uncertainty of emerging industries, and the safety bottom line of big health correspond to completely different tool weights and hedging designs. Therefore, the advocacy of "combining leniency and strictness" with the city as the unit lacks operational significance; differentiated tool combinations mediated by industrial risk structures are the executable adaptation path.

Second, the efficiency release of flexible regulation depends on the dual preconditions of "procedural transparency" and "bottom-line connectivity." Regarding the highly praised flexible enforcement and exemption lists in recent years, the typological comparison in this paper (such as the Yunfu experience) shows that flexibility is not an unconditional good. On the one hand, flexible tools must be list-based and verifiable; otherwise, they may breed selective enforcement. On the other hand, flexibility must maintain an institutional connection with the deterrence bottom line. Only by hierarchically designing "guidance-first" and "bottom-line deterrence" can flexible regulation avoid sliding into "regulatory slack."

Third, the evaluation of deterrence efficiency should shift from a "severity orientation" to "predictability and result orientation." Traditional concepts often equate the amount of fines with deterrence efficiency, but the analysis in this paper (such as the Jiangmen experience) suggests that the

key variable of deterrence lies in the calculability and gradient of discretion. Excessive reliance on high penalties may instead produce a "compliance crowding-out" effect on vulnerable SMEs. Therefore, future local enforcement evaluation systems should not only assess the number of penalties or the amount of fines and confiscations but should incorporate outcome indicators such as corporate compliance improvement and enterprise survival rates into consideration, achieving "promoting reform through evaluation."

6.3 Research Limitations and Future Directions

The limitation of this paper first lies at the methodological level. Structured coding deals with public policy texts, reflecting institutional design intentions rather than actual execution effects. The gap between text and execution—for example, whether discretion rules are mechanically applied in individual cases, whether exemption lists are selectively enforced at the grassroots level, and whether the frequency reduction of "one combined inspection" is transformed into a decrease in the actual burden of enterprises—requires enterprise-level microdata and enforcement process data to test. The typological conclusions of this paper should be understood as an analytical framework to be tested, rather than empirical findings that have completed causal identification.

Second, the selection of the three cities follows theoretical sampling rather than statistical sampling, and the external validity of the conclusions is limited by the institutional environment within the Guangdong region. Local enforcement differentiation in other regions of China may present different typological combinations; for example, regions with greater fiscal pressure may exhibit a degraded form of "weakened deterrence + formalized flexibility," which is beyond the empirical scope of this paper.

Future research can be extended in two directions. First, based on enterprise surveys or administrative record microdata, test the impact of different typological configurations on corporate compliance behavior, investment decisions, and exit rates, especially testing the heterogeneous effects of "deterrence thresholds" and "flexibility coverage." Second, extend the typological framework to more cities or cross-provincial comparisons to identify the institutional conditions of typological differentiation—fiscal structure, industrial structure, and vertical assessment pressure—thereby advancing "typology identification" to "conditional analysis of typological evolution." The common goal of these two extensions is to advance local enforcement research from normative advocacy to testable comparative institutional analysis.

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