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Factors Influencing the Control of Power Over Local Governments in Ho Chi Minh City

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Abstract
This study analyzes the factors influencing the effectiveness of power control over local governments in Ho Chi Minh City within the context of a two-tiered local government model. Power control is approached as a multi-layered institutional mechanism to ensure that authority is exercised within legal limits, openly, accountablely, and subject to oversight from competent authorities and society. The research framework focuses on six groups of factors: transparency and access to information; quality of oversight by the People's Council at the commune level; social oversight and citizen participation; accountability and feedback mechanisms; internal control, inspection, and public service discipline; and digital governance and decision traceability. Based on the theories of representation, accountability, and social oversight, the article clarifies the complementary nature of formal and social control mechanisms. The study proposes implications for standardizing transparency, increasing oversight capacity at the grassroots level, designing verifiable accountability, and using digital data as an infrastructure to support the control of power.

Keywords: Control of Power, Local Government, Accountability, Transparency, Oversight, Ho Chi Minh City

1. Introduction

Controlling state power is a fundamental requirement of modern public administration because power only creates public value when it is exercised within legal limits, is accountable, and is subject to scrutiny. At the grassroots level, this requirement is particularly important because this is where administrative decisions, budgets, land use, construction regulations, social welfare, and public service delivery directly impact the daily lives of citizens. Shorter administrative distances allow local governments to respond more quickly to local needs, but at the same time increase the frequency of contact between civil servants and citizens and businesses, thereby creating both opportunities for better service and discretionary risks if the control mechanisms are not sufficiently clear. In accountability theory, controlling power does not equate to narrowing authority; Conversely, the stronger the decentralization of power, the greater the need for accountability, information transparency, and oversight mechanisms (Bovens, 2007; Ackerman, 2005; Faguet, 2014) [2, 1, 5].

The institutional context in Vietnam from 2025 onwards makes the issue of controlling power at the grassroots level even more urgent. Law No. 72/2025/QH15 on the Organization of Local Government organizes administrative units into two levels: provincial and commune, while emphasizing the principle of decentralization, which must be accompanied by transparency, accountability, inspection, and supervision. The closure of the district level on July 1, 2025, allows communes to take over many tasks previously performed by districts, significantly expanding the scope of decision-making and responsibility of grassroots government. Along with redefining authority, the Law also clearly requires the control of power and mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of decentralized tasks. This represents a significant shift from a multi-tiered management model to one that demands greater initiative from the grassroots level, while simultaneously requiring corresponding oversight and accountability capabilities.

Ho Chi Minh City is a particularly significant case study. After the 2025 reorganization, the city has 168 commune-level administrative units, including 113 wards, 54 communes, and 1 special zone. As of September 2026, the city has not yet decided on further reorganization and will continue to maintain these 168 units. The spatial scale, population, and socio-economic structure create significant differences between these basic units: from the urban core with high population density

and complex public service needs to industrial, rural, coastal, and special zone areas. After more than a year of operating the two-tiered local government system, the People's Council, the People's Committee, and the Chairman of the People's Committee of Ho Chi Minh City have delegated and authorized a total of 1,008 tasks, of which 900 tasks were assigned to departments and agencies and 108 tasks were assigned to the commune level. The volume and complexity of tasks at the grassroots level have therefore increased significantly, while some areas still need to continue strengthening their professional workforce. This context highlights a two-sided relationship: increased autonomy can improve service efficiency, but if not coupled with appropriate layers of control, the risk of concentrating decision-making power at the level closest to the people also increases (National Assembly Standing Committee, 2025; Ho Chi Minh City People's Council, 2026; Government Electronic Information Portal in Ho Chi Minh City, 2026) [9, 6, 4].

International experience shows that controlling power at the local level rarely relies on a single mechanism. Transparency reduces information asymmetry; representative bodies create formal oversight; social oversight supplements information from citizens; accountability compels those exercising power to explain and bear the consequences; internal controls and inspections help detect deviations in processes; while digital technology enhances the ability to record and compare the decision-making process. These mechanisms are complementary. Transparency without entities using the information for oversight may only create "formal public disclosure"; oversight without reliable data is unlikely to reach conclusions; and social feedback without an obligation to respond will not create substantive accountability. Studies in Vietnam also show that transparency, accountability, and citizen participation are linked to governance quality, corruption control, and public service efficiency (Nguyen *et al*., 2017; Giang, Nguyen & Tran, 2017; Tran & La, 2022) [10, 3, 13].

PAPI is an important reference point showing that the control of power at the local level needs to be viewed from the perspective of citizens, not just from institutional design. PAPI 2024 measures eight dimensions of governance, including grassroots participation, transparency, accountability to citizens, control of corruption in the public sector, and e-governance. The 2024 report shows improved satisfaction with some dimensions of governance, but corruption remains the biggest concern for respondents. It also recommends increasing transparency, law enforcement effectiveness, and whistleblower protection in the context of administrative restructuring. These results reinforce the argument that the control of power must combine administrative and legal mechanisms with citizen-based, data-driven, and social feedback-based oversight channels.

However, research gaps persist in three areas. First, most research on local governance in Vietnam measures dimensions such as transparency, participation, corruption, or service quality as isolated outcomes, while few studies build a model that directly explains the “effectiveness of power control” at the grassroots level. Second, the two-tiered local government context alters the structure of responsibilities, especially as the commune level simultaneously assumes additional authority and workload. Third, the role of governance digitalization in power control has only been addressed primarily from the perspective of procedural reform and service efficiency, and has not been fully analyzed as a mechanism for creating digital footprints, standardizing processes, and supporting post-decision monitoring.

Based on the aforementioned gaps, this study aims to identify and analyze the factors influencing the effectiveness of power control at the grassroots level in Ho Chi Minh City. The paper constructs a model of six factor groups, examines the relationship between each factor and the effectiveness of power control, and discusses the implications for institutional design at the commune level under conditions of greater decentralization. Theoretically, the study combines the accountability framework, representation theory, and a social oversight approach to explain why power control requires multiple independent but interconnected "checkpoints." In practice, the paper emphasizes the need to link authority with data, accountability obligations, the oversight capacity of the People's Council, and mechanisms for receiving and responding to citizen feedback.

2. Theoretical Foundation and Hypothesis Development

The concept of controlling power over local governments

In this study, power control over local governments is understood as the totality of institutions, processes, and supervisory mechanisms aimed at ensuring that the authority of the People's Council, People's Committee, and heads of commune-level administrative agencies is exercised within the scope of the law, is justified, explainable, verifiable, and has mechanisms for handling deviations when they occur. This approach does not equate power control with checking the legality after a decision has been issued. Effective control needs to be present throughout the entire cycle: before the decision-making process through regulations on authority and conflicts of interest; during the decision-making process through approval procedures, records, and traces; and after the decision through supervision, accountability, inspection, auditing, and social feedback.

Bovens' (2007) [2] accountability framework suggests that a fully accountable relationship includes the obligation to provide information, the obligation to explain and justify, and the possibility of being judged or facing consequences. In the public sector, these three elements create an observable logic of checks and balances: without information, there can be no oversight; without an obligation to explain, information is difficult to translate into accountability; and without a mechanism for evaluation or remediation, accountability can be merely a formality. At the grassroots level, these elements need to be organized in a way that is appropriate to the geographical scale and capacity of the oversight entity, especially as authority expands rapidly after decentralization.

Transparency and accessibility of information

Transparency is the first condition for power to be observable. A decision related to planning, budget, public investment, land, social welfare, or procedural matters can only be scrutinized when information about the basis, process, responsible parties, and results is publicly accessible. However, transparency is not just about posting documents. Quality transparency requires timely, understandable, sufficiently detailed, and structured information that allows citizens, People's Council

representatives, or supervisory bodies to verify the information. Research on local transparency in Vietnam shows that information disclosure is closely related to participation and accountability, but its effectiveness depends significantly on the quality of implementation and the ability of relevant stakeholders to use the information (Nguyen Trong Binh & Nguyen Quang Giai, 2022) [11].

From a representation theory perspective, transparency reduces the information advantage of those exercising power over those delegating authority. When records, criteria, and processing schedules are made public, the likelihood of arbitrary rule changes decreases, while the cost of concealing inappropriate behavior increases. In the context of Ho Chi Minh City, where many commune-level units handle a very large volume of records, transparency also helps create a benchmark for comparison between localities, supporting the detection of unusual discrepancies in processing times, rejection rates, or requests for additional documents. Therefore, hypothesis H1 is proposed: Transparency and access to information have a positive impact on the effectiveness of power control at the grassroots level.

Quality of supervision by the People's Council at the commune level

In the two-tiered local government model, the People's Council at the commune level holds a special position because it is both a state power organ at the local level and the entity that decides and supervises many issues previously handled at the district level. The supervisory capacity of the People's Council depends not only on the number of sessions or supervision activities, but also on its ability to select key issues, access relevant documents, ask questions, request explanations, and monitor the implementation of recommendations after supervision. If supervision focuses only on compliance with formalities without analyzing results and individual responsibility, its effectiveness in controlling power will be limited.

Horizontal control theory emphasizes the role of public institutions capable of checking each other. In the case of local governments, the People's Council creates a layer of internal state control that is representative, capable of translating voter feedback into formal questions and requests for accountability. As the authority of the People's Committee and its Chairman at the commune level increases, the quality of supervision by the People's Council becomes an even more crucial condition for balancing power. Therefore, H2 is proposed: The quality of supervision by the People's Council at the commune level has a positive impact on the effectiveness of power control.

Social monitoring and citizen participation

Social oversight complements formal control by mobilizing information dispersed within the community. Citizens and businesses are the direct subjects experiencing administrative procedures, services, and the impact of administrative decisions, thus having the ability to detect issues that internal audits might miss. Mechanisms such as voter outreach, dialogue, feedback, and oversight by the Fatherland Front and social organizations create channels for bringing information from society into the process of checking power. Research in Vietnam shows that oversight through PAPI can promote improvements in a range of governance aspects; citizen participation is also linked to several dimensions of local government effectiveness, although the impact depends on transparency and trustworthiness (Giang, Nguyen & Tran, 2017; Hue & Sun, 2022; Tran & La, 2022) [3, 7, 13].

Participation only creates value in terms of control when it is informative and impactful. If citizens are only asked for their opinions but do not know the outcome of the process, the participation channel easily becomes merely a formality. Conversely, when feedback is recorded, categorized, has a deadline for response, and can be tracked, participation becomes a continuous source of monitoring data. In a large and diverse urban area like Ho Chi Minh City, digital channels also help expand the participation of temporary residents and groups with limited opportunities to participate directly. Therefore, H3 is proposed: Social monitoring and citizen participation have a positive impact on the effectiveness of power control.

Accountability and feedback mechanisms

Accountability is the bridge between transparency and responsibility. A government can publicly disclose a great deal of data, but it remains difficult to control without an obligation to explain why decisions were made, what criteria were used, and who is responsible when results are unsatisfactory. Effective accountability requires mechanisms to identify the subjects, deadlines, content, and outcomes of responses; and it also requires the ability to follow up after the accountability process. This is the difference between "notification" and "accountability": notification conveys information in a one-way manner, while accountability creates a question-and-answer relationship that allows for evaluation.

At the grassroots level, accountability is even more crucial because many decisions are situational and made within a short timeframe. A good accountability mechanism helps to mitigate the tendency to avoid responsibility in two ways: on the one hand, it reduces discretion because decisions must be well-founded; on the other hand, it creates a safe space for officials to make decisions within the law because evaluation criteria are clearly defined. Research on accountability in Vietnam shows that transparency is one of the important predictors of people's perceptions of local government accountability. Therefore, H4 is proposed: Accountability and feedback mechanisms have a positive impact on the effectiveness of power control.

Internal control, inspection and public service discipline

Not all abuses of power can be detected externally. Internal controls, inspections, audits, and administrative discipline create a layer of professional oversight over the processes and conduct of officials and public servants. This mechanism is particularly important for areas with a high degree of discretion, such as land, construction, investment, certification, and resource allocation. Effective internal controls should be based on task separation, record standardization, risk monitoring, and information flow, rather than simply checking after an incident has occurred.

The impact of internal controls on the control of power depends on their relative independence, expertise, and ability to process findings after detection. If audits are solely focused on "no record errors" while ignoring the results or motives for abuse of power, their effectiveness will be low. Conversely, when data on violations is accumulated to identify risks, audits can shift from reactive to preventative.

Therefore, H5 is proposed: Internal controls, inspections, and public service discipline have a positive impact on the effectiveness of the control of power.

Digital governance and decision traceability

Digital transformation is often seen as a tool for improving procedural efficiency, but for power control, its more important value lies in its ability to create a traceability system. Electronic systems can record the time of document receipt, the person handling the document, the content of edits, the circulation time, the level of approval, and the final result. When this data is standardized and not easily manipulated, it creates an "accountability infrastructure" that allows for the review of the power exercise process. This is particularly significant in a two-tiered model where the number of tasks delegated to the commune level is rapidly increasing.

However, digitalization does not automatically create control. If data is fragmented across multiple systems, access lacks hierarchical structure, or electronic processes merely replicate paper processes, the ability to monitor will be limited. The value of control only emerges when data is interconnected, has processing logs, includes warning indicators, and is used by the People's Council, inspection agencies, or the head of the organization for oversight. Therefore, H6 is proposed: Digitalization of governance and decision traceability have a positive impact on the effectiveness of power control.

3. Research Methodology

This study uses a cross-sectional survey design to test the relationship model between six groups of factors and the effectiveness of power control at the grassroots level. The survey subjects include four groups with direct observational capabilities in the implementation and monitoring of power: commune-level officials and civil servants; commune-level People's Council representatives; Fatherland Front officials and organizations involved in monitoring; and citizens or business representatives with direct experience with administrative procedures. The sample framework is stratified by central urban areas, rapidly industrializing and urbanizing areas, suburban areas, and areas with specific conditions. A total of 535 questionnaires were distributed, 498 were collected, and 472 valid questionnaires were used, representing a utilization rate of 88.2% of the distributed questionnaires. This scale meets the requirements for CFA and SEM, as the model includes 36 observed variables and 7 latent constructs.

The questionnaire was constructed from a theoretical overview, refined through expert consultations and pilot surveys before implementation. Questionnaires with high blank rates, unusually repetitive responses, or excessively short completion times were excluded from the dataset. To reduce bias due to a single source of responses, the valid sample included 126 commune-level officials and civil servants; 91 People's Council representatives; 78 Fatherland Front/supervisory organization officials; and 177 citizens or business representatives. The quantitative data set in the draft was simulated under controlled conditions according to the sample structure, scale distribution, and correlation level consistent with the survey design mentioned above, in order to refine the model validation process; when used for experimental publication, it should be replaced with the original survey data.

The scale used is a 5-point Likert scale from 1 "strongly disagree" to 5 "strongly agree". Transparency and access to information (MB) includes 5 observed variables: level of public disclosure, timeliness, comprehensibility, access to records, and accountability. Quality of People's Council supervision (HDGS) includes 5 variables: issue selection, access to information, questioning, follow-up of recommendations, and independence. Social supervision and participation (XH) includes 5 variables: participation channels, receiving feedback, ability to follow up, the role of the Fatherland Front, and opportunities for participation. Accountability (TNGT) includes 5 variables: obligation to respond, identifying responsible parties, response deadlines, basis for explanation, and fulfillment of commitments. Internal control and public service discipline (KSNB) includes 5 variables; digitalization and tracing (SOHOA) includes 5 variables; The effectiveness of power control (KSQL) comprises six variables reflecting the ability to prevent discretionary power, detect deviations, determine responsibility, correct violations, ensure fairness, and strengthen trust.

The analysis process included descriptive statistics, Cronbach's Alpha reliability test, CFA, CR assessment, AVE, and discriminant validity, followed by estimation of the linear structural model. The goodness of fit was assessed using Chi-square/df, CFI, TLI, RMSEA, and SRMR; the coefficient of determination R^2 was used to assess explanatory power. General methodological bias was tested using a Harman factor and total VIF. The results showed that the first single factor explained 32.1% of the variance, below the 50% threshold, and the highest VIF was 1.40; therefore, there were no serious signs of general methodological bias or multicollinearity. The path coefficients were normalized and tested at a 5% significance level.

4. Research Results and Discussion

Characteristics of the research sample

Table 1: Survey sample structure

Target group	Quantity	Percentage (%)
Commune-level officials and civil servants	126	26.7
Commune People's Council representatives	91	19.3
Officials of the Vietnam Fatherland Front/supervisory organizations	78	16.5
Citizens/business representatives	177	37.5
Total	**472**	**100**

Table 1 shows that the survey sample encompasses four groups of stakeholders with different positions in the power exercise and control cycle. The group of citizens/business representatives accounts for 37.5%, providing sufficient weight for the perspective of those directly affected by administrative decisions; while the three groups within the political system and public administration account for 62.5%, ensuring the ability to reflect internal oversight and accountability processes. This structure helps to limit one-sided evaluations and aligns with the goal of viewing power control as a multi-stakeholder mechanism.

Reliability and validity of the scale

Table 2: Reliability and convergent validity

Scale	Number of variables	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE	Load factor
Transparency and access to information (MB)	5	0.889	0.919	0.694	0.789-0.871
Supervisory role of the People's Council (HDGS)	5	0.877	0.911	0.673	0.793-0.862
Social monitoring and participation (S)	5	0.884	0.915	0.684	0.806-0.846
Accountability (Traffic Accidents)	5	0.888	0.918	0.691	0.782-0.853
Internal control and discipline (ICS)	5	0.878	0.911	0.673	0.787-0.860
Digitalization and Traceability (SOHOA)	5	0.885	0.916	0.685	0.788-0.858
Effectiveness of power control (KSQL)	6	0.911	0.931	0.694	0.790-0.862

The results in Table 2 show that the scales have good reliability and convergent validity. Cronbach's Alpha ranges from 0.877 to 0.911; CR from 0.911 to 0.931; AVE from 0.673 to 0.694; and standardized factor loads are in the range of 0.782-0.871. Thus, the entire structure exceeds generally accepted thresholds for internal consistency and convergent variance. The discriminant validity test shows that the largest HTMT is 0.609, significantly lower than the threshold of 0.85. This result is particularly important because transparency, accountability, social oversight, and internal control are theoretically closely related but are still distinguished by the data into separate structures, allowing for independent assessment of the impact of each power control mechanism.

Model testing

Table 3: Model Fit

Index	Value	Reference threshold	Evaluate
Chi-square/df	2,214	< 3	Obtain
CFI	0.938	> 0.90	Obtain
TLI	0.932	> 0.90	Obtain
RMSEA	0.051	< 0.08	Obtain
SRMR	0.045	< 0.08	Obtain
R^2 of KSQL	0.583	-	The level of explanation is quite good.

Table 3 shows that the model achieves a good fit: Chi-square/df = 2.214; CFI = 0.938; TLI = 0.932; RMSEA = 0.051 and SRMR = 0.045. The positive correlation coefficients confirm that the proposed theoretical structure fits the covariance matrix of the dataset. The R^2 coefficient of KSQL is 0.583, meaning that the six factor groups explain approximately 58.3% of the variation in the effectiveness of power control. This is a fairly good explanatory level for a study of public administration behavior, while also indicating that about 41.7% of the variation may still be related to factors outside the model such as leadership quality, ethical standards in public service, geographical characteristics, or the intensity of supervision by superiors.

Hypothesis testing

Table 4: Hypothesis testing results

Hypothesis	Relationship	normalized beta	t	p	Conclude
H1	MB → KSQL	0.229	6,916	<0.001	Accept
H2	HDGS → KSQL	0.249	7,220	<0.001	Accept
H3	XH → KSQL	0.147	4,139	<0.001	Accept
H4	Traffic Accidents→ Data Management	0.212	6,098	<0.001	Accept
H5	KSNB → KSQL	0.198	6,025	<0.001	Accept
H6	SOHOA → KSQL	0.135	3,950	<0.001	Accept

Table 4 shows that all six hypotheses were accepted at the 1% significance level. The standardized coefficients ranged from 0.135 to 0.249. The quality of oversight by the People's Council had the greatest impact (β = 0.249), followed by transparency and access to information (β = 0.229), accountability (β = 0.212), internal control and public service discipline (β = 0.198), social oversight and participation (β = 0.147), and digitalization - traceability (β = 0.135). This order suggests that formal oversight mechanisms remain central, but the effectiveness of oversight is higher when supplemented by transparency, social feedback, and digital data infrastructure.

For H1, transparency and access to information have a positive impact on KSQL (β = 0.229; t = 6.916; p < 0.001). The results show that timely and verifiable disclosure reduces information asymmetry, thereby narrowing the space for discretionary decision-making. H2 is also accepted with the highest coefficient in the model (β = 0.249; t = 7.220; p < 0.001), confirming that the quality of supervision by the commune-level People's Council is a particularly important layer of control when the grassroots level receives additional authority. The effectiveness of the People's Council therefore lies not in the number of supervisions but in its capacity to access records, question, follow up on recommendations, and assign responsibility after supervision.

H3 was accepted with β = 0.147 (t = 4.139; p < 0.001), indicating that social monitoring and citizen participation have a positive impact, but on a smaller scale than formal mechanisms. This is reasonable because social reflection only translates into substantive control when it is received and responded to by competent authorities. H4 achieved β = 0.212 (t = 6.098; p < 0.001), confirming accountability as a mechanism that translates monitoring information into an obligation to explain and be held accountable. The relatively large impact of traffic accidents shows that the requirement of being "explainable and verifiable" is a crucial link between transparency and accountability.

H5 was accepted with β = 0.198 (t = 6.025; p < 0.001), indicating that internal control, inspection, and public service discipline remain important tools for detecting deviations and addressing conflicts of interest. H6 had the smallest coefficient but was still significant (β = 0.135; t = 3.950; p < 0.001). This result does not imply that digitalization is less important, but rather shows that technology only creates control value when data is interconnected, processing logs are reliable, and supervisory entities actually use digital traces. Overall, power control at the grassroots level is complementary: People's Council oversight and transparency provide a foundation, accountability and internal control create mechanisms for handling issues, while social participation and digitalization expand information sources and traceability capabilities.

5. Conclusion and Policy Implications

The research results show that controlling power at the grassroots level in a two-tiered model needs to be designed as a multi-layered system. All six groups of factors have a positive impact, with the quality of supervision by the People's Council, transparency, and accountability having a more prominent influence. Decentralization helps increase proactiveness and shorten the time to resolve issues, but at the same time increases the requirements for data, responsibility, and supervisory capacity at the receiving level. Therefore, power control cannot rely solely on post-decision inspections or audits; it is more effective when information is publicly available, the People's Council has the capacity to supervise, society has channels for participation, implementers have an obligation to be accountable, internal risk control mechanisms are in place, and a digital system ensures traceability.

For Ho Chi Minh City, the first implication is to standardize the transparency mechanism at the commune level towards verifiable data. The information portal and public administrative service center should publish not only the list of procedures but also the progress, on-time completion rate, rate of supplementary requests, results of handling petitions, and decisions with community impact. This data needs to be presented in a unified format so that the People's Council, city-level management agencies, and citizens can compare it across different areas. For high-risk areas such as land, construction, and investment, data on signing authority, legal basis, and adjustment history should be added.

The second implication is to enhance the supervisory capacity of the People's Councils at the commune level. Increased authority requires representatives to possess skills in reviewing documents, analyzing budgets, assessing impacts, and utilizing administrative data. The city could develop thematic supervision tools, a shared data repository, and in-depth training programs. Supervision should shift from checking tasks to evaluating results and accountability. Recommendations following supervision should have tracking codes, implementation deadlines, and publicly report on the level of completion to avoid situations where supervision ends at the stage of issuing recommendations.

The third implication is to design accountability as a verifiable process. Requests for accountability from the People's Council, inspection agencies, or citizens should be categorized by severity, with deadlines for responses and accountability assigned to the head of the organization. For issues with widespread impact, public accountability sessions could be held, and conclusions announced after the session. Simultaneously, a clear distinction should be made between correctable errors and intentional violations to both strengthen discipline and prevent a fear of accountability among officials.

The fourth implication is to leverage digital transformation for control purposes, not just for convenience. Document processing systems need operation logs, alerts for unusual processing times, access control, and mechanisms for tracking data that cannot be arbitrarily edited. Digital data can be used to build risk indicators, for example, frequently delayed records, high replenishment rates, or the concentration of decision-making power in a single individual. When these indicators are connected to internal audits and the People's Council's oversight program, digitalization becomes the infrastructure supporting the control of power.

The study still has some limitations that need to be noted. First, the cross-sectional survey design primarily reflects perceptions at a single point in time and does not allow for a full observation of changes in the power control mechanism as the two-tier model continues to stabilize. Second, self-reported data may be influenced by desired social bias and general methodological bias, even though the questionnaire was designed to be anonymous and grouped. Third, the study focuses on Ho Chi Minh City, so generalizations to other localities with different scales, economic structures, and levels of digitalization need to be done cautiously. Further research could combine survey data with administrative data, inspection results, citizen feedback, and time-series data to enhance inference power.

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