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Administrative Burden in Public Policy and Service Delivery: A Comprehensive Literature Review

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Abstract

Administrative burden, as a core research topic in the field of public administration, focuses on the various frictional costs faced by actors (citizens, businesses, administrative personnel) in interactions with the government and the implementation of policies. With the deepening of public governance practices, the theoretical system of administrative burden has gradually expanded from its Western origins to the localised context in China, forming a systematic research framework covering conceptual definitions, structural dimensions, measurement methods and influencing factors. Based on existing literature, this paper systematically reviews the conceptual evolution and connotation analysis of administrative burden, thoroughly examines its core structural dimensions and multiple measurement approaches, comprehensively explains the influencing factors at the political, policy and individual levels, and evaluates the achievements and shortcomings of existing research, ultimately looking forward to future research directions. The study aims to integrate the academic framework of the field of administrative burden and provide a theoretical reference for administrative reform and the optimisation of public services.

Keywords

Administrative Burden, Red Tape, Literature Review.

1. Introduction

Administrative burden is a core issue in public administration that focuses on the "friction between government and citizens". Its essence lies in the non-essential costs incurred by subjects when accessing public services, complying with administrative procedures, or participating in policy implementation, due to rule design, institutional operation, or individual capability differences (Madsen et al., 2022). This concept originated from Western public administration practice and gradually formed a systematic theoretical framework after 2012, becoming an important tool for analysing policy implementation efficiency, social equity, and government governance effectiveness (Burden et al., 2012; Moynihan et al., 2015).

From a global perspective, research on administrative burden initially focused on the "hidden costs" in citizen-government interactions, such as procedural obstacles in welfare applications or cumbersome compliance procedures for businesses, and later gradually extended to the rule pressures faced by administrative personnel in policy implementation (Herd & Moynihan, 2018). In the Chinese context, with policies such as the "delegation, regulation and service" reform and the modernisation of grassroots governance, the localisation characteristics of administrative burden have become increasingly prominent – encompassing the "learning costs" and "compliance costs" in Western theory, as well as special forms of burden arising from informal institutions (such as a society based on personal connections and networks) (Ma Liang, 2022; Liao Fuchong, 2020). For example, businesses may face hidden costs caused by "red-top intermediaries" when handling administrative approvals, and citizens may need to comply with repetitive documentary requirements from multiple departments when applying for social

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assistance. These phenomena require theoretical interpretation based on local Chinese practices (Ma Liang, 2025; He Yanling, Wang Zheng, 2022).

However, existing research still faces issues such as insufficient theoretical integration and inadequate exploration of local contexts. On one hand, although the three-dimensional classification of administrative burden in Western theory (learning costs, compliance costs, psychological costs) is widely recognised, its applicability to the Chinese administrative system (such as bureaucracy and a pressure-driven system) still needs testing; on the other hand, domestic research often focuses on a single group (such as businesses or citizens) or a single policy field (such as the business environment), lacking systematic analysis of the generation mechanisms of administrative burden (Zhu Chunkui, Tong Peishan, 2023). Therefore, systematically reviewing the theoretical context and empirical results of administrative burden is of great significance for improving the public administration theoretical system and promoting administrative burden reduction practices.

2. Research on the Concept of Administrative Burden

Administrative burden, red tape, sludge, and ordeal mechanisms all fall under the category of 'friction costs' in public administration, but there are significant differences in their core subjects, focus areas, and generating logic. Clarifying these differences is key to accurately defining administrative burden (Madsen et al., 2022).

2.1. Difference from Red Tape

Red tape is rooted in the 'pathological failure' of internal organisational rules and was initially defined as 'ineffective rules that increase compliance burdens', with a core focus on resource waste within the public sector caused by redundant rules (Campbell et al., 2023). For example, duplicate approval processes and excessive documentation requirements within government departments fall under red tape. The research tradition focuses on the internal operation of public organisations; although it has recently extended to citizen experiences, a contradiction remains between the 'requirement for objective ineffectiveness' and 'reliance on subjective empirical measurement'—in theory, red tape should meet the objective standard of 'rule ineffectiveness', but empirical research often measures it through the subjective perception of administrators or citizens (Guo Jinyuan, Chen Zhixia, Yuan Shuai, 2021).

The core difference between administrative burden and red tape lies in: first, the research subject. Red tape centres on 'organisational rules', focusing on the effectiveness of the rules themselves; administrative burden centres on 'individual experience', focusing on the impact of rules on citizens, businesses, or administrators (Madsen et al., 2022). Second, the context differs. Red tape mainly exists within internal public sector management; administrative burden occurs in the external context of 'government-citizen interaction' or 'policy implementation' (such as applying for public services or business compliance). Third, the intentionality differs. Red tape often results from organisational evolution or management loss of control and is non-intentional; administrative burden can be a by-product of the system or a deliberately designed policy tool by the government (Herd & Moynihan, 2018).

2.2. Differences from Sludge

Sludge was proposed by Sunstein (2019) and is defined as "irrational procedural obstacles present in both the public and private sectors," with core characteristics of "cross-sector universality" and "non-functionality" — encompassing both cumbersome processes in government services (such as complex tax return forms) and unreasonable requirements in the private sector (such as redundant steps for opening a bank account) (Sunstein, 2019; Sunstein, 2022).

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Sunstein refers to it as "uncompensated frustration," emphasising that the essence of sludge lies in "procedural redundancies with no substantive benefits," causing widespread inconvenience for all users without differential effects on specific groups (Sunstein, 2022). The distinction between administrative burden and sludge mainly lies in three aspects: First, the scope of the field differs. Sludge covers both public and private sectors, whereas administrative burden is limited to the "public sphere," i.e., interactions between individuals and the government (Madsen et al., 2022). Second, the distribution characteristics differ. Sludge is "universal," with all users facing similar barriers; administrative burden is "differential," with disadvantaged groups often bearing a heavier load due to limited resources (Chudnovsky & Peeters, 2021). Third, the generation logic differs. Sludge often results from cumulative institutional processes or technical design flaws, whereas the generation of administrative burden is closely related to political logic (such as policy objectives) and institutional environment (such as bureaucracy), exhibiting greater systemic characteristics (Heinrich, 2016).

2.3. Differences from Ordeal Mechanisms

Ordeal mechanisms originate from economic research and specifically refer to "compliance obstacles deliberately designed to screen target groups," with the core logic being "rational cost-benefit trade-off" — assuming that citizens, by assessing "compliance costs" and "welfare benefits," autonomously decide whether to apply for services, thereby helping the government precisely identify the groups most in need (Nichols & Zeckhauser, 1982). For example, the government can optimise resource allocation by requiring welfare applicants to submit a large number of supporting documents, increasing compliance costs and prompting those who are not urgently in need to forgo applying (Sunstein, 2019).

The key differences between administrative burdens and ordeal mechanisms are: first, intent. Ordeal mechanisms are "deliberately designed" screening tools with clear objectives; administrative burdens may be either deliberately designed policy tools or unintended outcomes of system operations (Herd & Moynihan, 2018). Second, ethical orientation differs. Ordeal mechanisms prioritise "efficiency" while neglecting fairness — for example, people with disabilities may be forced to forgo necessary benefits due to complex procedures, worsening inequality; administrative burden research focuses more on "balancing fairness and efficiency," emphasising the equitable distribution of burdens (Heinrich & Brill, 2015). Third, application scenarios differ. Ordeal mechanisms are mainly used in welfare distribution; administrative burdens have broader applications, covering public services, policy implementation, business compliance, and other fields (Moynihan et al., 2015).

3. Structural Dimension of Administrative Burden

The structural dimension of administrative burden is central to theoretical operationalisation. Existing studies are based on the "three-dimensional cost framework" proposed by Moynihan et al. (2015) and, combined with the characteristics of different subjects (citizens / enterprises, administrative staff), have developed differentiated interpretations of the dimensions.

3.1. Learning cost

Learning cost refers to the time and effort that citizens or enterprises invest to understand policy information, eligibility requirements, and application procedures, with the core being the "barrier to information acquisition and comprehension" (Ma Liang, 2022). Its main manifestations include: firstly, "information unknown," meaning not knowing the policy exists (such as some low-income groups being unaware of the minimum living security policy); secondly, "eligibility ambiguity," meaning difficulty in determining whether one meets the application criteria (such as complex tax reduction policies); thirdly, "operational confusion,"

ISSN: 2710-0170

meaning unclear about handling channels, required materials, or procedural steps (such as elderly people not knowing how to use government apps); and fourthly, "language/cultural barriers," meaning policy texts are obscure or have cultural adaptation issues (such as difficulties faced by ethnic minorities in understanding Chinese policy texts) (Wang Hongru, 2020). The root of learning costs lies in the lack of transparency in policy information and the complexity of rules beyond citizens' cognitive abilities—for example, some policy documents use a large number of professional terms that ordinary citizens find difficult to understand; multi-department policies lack coordination, leading to dispersed and difficult-to-integrate information (He Yanling, Wang Zheng, 2022). Groups with low education levels and limited information access channels (such as the elderly and residents in remote areas) often face higher learning costs (Madsen et al., 2022).

3.2. Compliance costs

Compliance costs: refer to the time, effort and direct financial expenditure that citizens or enterprises incur to meet government regulations and complete administrative procedures. The core is the 'obstacle to action execution' (Liang Pinghan, Zou Wei, Hu Chao, 2020). Their main manifestations include: first, 'cumbersome document preparation', such as repeated stamping and providing redundant proofs (like the cyclical proof of 'proving I am myself'); second, 'lengthy processes', such as running across multiple departments and long waiting times (for example, enterprise registration requires multiple approval stages); third, 'financial expenditure', such as paying licence fees, intermediary fees or travel expenses; fourth, 'time loss', such as taking leave to handle administrative affairs and repeatedly modifying documents (Ritzel et al., 2020). In the Chinese context, compliance costs also have an 'informal' characteristic — for example, citizens or enterprises may incur social costs by 'leveraging connections' or additional expenses due to 'premium intermediaries' (Ma Liang, 2025). Moreover, actual compliance costs vary by enterprise type depending on their relationship with the government: state-owned enterprises generally face lower compliance pressures than private enterprises, and local enterprises find it easier to benefit from process simplification compared to foreign-invested enterprises (Liao Fuchong, 2021). The root of compliance costs lies in overly complex procedural design and excessive bureaucratic discretion — front-line administrative staff may arbitrarily add requirements, increasing the difficulty of compliance (Altreiter & Leibetseder, 2015).

3.3. Psychological cost

Psychological cost: Refers to the negative emotions and mental stress experienced by citizens or enterprises during interactions with the government due to frustration, unfair treatment, complicated procedures, or fear of failure, also known as "self-esteem cost" (Thomsen et al., 2020). Its main manifestations include: first, "pre-application shame", such as fear of being discriminated against when applying for welfare (e.g., the "poverty stigma" of low-income applicants); second, "anxiety during the process", such as concern that materials do not meet requirements or that procedural errors may lead to application failure; third, "humiliation after encountering obstacles", such as anger when facing the indifference or unreasonable demands of administrative staff; fourth, "helplessness", such as despair after multiple unsuccessful applications (Barnes & Henly, 2018). The root of psychological costs lies in the "stigmatization" in institutional design and the "power asymmetry" in interactions—for example, some welfare policy application processes implicitly carry negative assumptions about applicants, reinforcing the stigma of "dependence on the government"; administrative staff control the process, leaving citizens in a passive position, which can easily lead to a sense of dignity being undermined (Heinrich, 2016). The cumulative effect of psychological costs not only weakens citizens' willingness to access services but may also damage government credibility and even exacerbate social conflicts (Wang Hongru, 2020).

ISSN: 2710-0170

4. Research on the Measurement of Administrative Burden

The measurement of administrative burden is the basis of empirical research, with existing methods revolving around two main approaches: 'subjective perception' and 'objective statistics', which are further divided into unidimensional and multidimensional measurements, with different methods suitable for different research scenarios.

4.1. Subjective measurement

Subjective measurement is based on the assumption that "burden is a subjective experience" and obtains respondents' perception of the burden through questionnaires, interviews, and other methods. Its core advantage is capturing intangible burdens such as psychological costs, but it may be influenced by social desirability bias (Madsen et al., 2022). It can be further divided into subjective unidimensional measurement and subjective multidimensional measurement.

Subjective unidimensional measurement asks respondents directly about their overall perception of administrative burden through a single question or a composite score, suitable for quickly screening burden distribution or macro-level comparison. Its core logic is the "cumulative effect of burden"—even if specific types of costs cannot be distinguished, the overall perception still reflects the severity of the burden (Mack et al., 2021). The advantage of subjective unidimensional measurement is its ease of operation and high data collection efficiency, suitable for large-sample surveys or cross-domain comparisons; its drawback is that it cannot distinguish the specific contributions of learning, compliance, and psychological costs, making it difficult to analyse the mechanism generating administrative burden, and a single indicator may miss key information.

Subjective multidimensional measurement strictly follows the three-dimensional framework of "learning cost—compliance cost—psychological cost", evaluating separately through structured questionnaires, and is the mainstream approach in academia. Its core logic is "classified measurement, systematic integration"—differentiating the manifestation of three types of costs through contextualised questions, and then integrating them into an overall burden index using factor analysis, structural equation modelling, and other methods (Madsen et al., 2022). The advantage of subjective multidimensional measurement is its high theoretical adaptability and ability to accurately analyse the effects of different costs, suitable for mechanistic research; its drawback is that it relies on respondents' self-reporting abilities, which may be affected by memory bias or social desirability bias (such as respondents being unwilling to admit they "do not understand the policy"), and the questionnaire design needs to be highly contextualised, with weaker applicability across domains.

4.2. Objective Measurement

Approaches Objective measurement is based on the assumption that 'burden is an observable consumption of resources' and quantifies the burden by statistical indicators such as actual time spent, process complexity, and number of rules. Its main advantage is the objectivity and comparability of the results, but it is difficult to cover intangible dimensions such as psychological costs (Fox et al., 2020). It can also be further divided into objective unidimensional measurement and objective multidimensional measurement.

Objective unidimensional measurement directly counts a key indicator, reflecting the severity of administrative burden, and is suitable for evaluating policy effects or international comparisons. Its core logic is 'key indicators substitute for overall burden'—choosing observable indicators highly correlated with the burden to simplify the measurement process (Barnes & Henly, 2018). The advantage of objective unidimensional measurement is the strong comparability of results, suitable for comparative studies across regions and over time; the drawback is the singularity of indicators, which makes it difficult to comprehensively reflect

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the multidimensional characteristics of the burden—for example, 'total time spent' may simultaneously include learning costs and compliance costs, making it impossible to distinguish their contributions (Carey et al., 2021).

Objective multidimensional measurement systematically quantifies the objective manifestations of three types of costs through cross-validation of multiple data sources, combining theoretical depth with empirical rigour. Its core logic is 'multi-indicator synergy'—collecting information from multiple channels such as policy texts, administrative records, and behavioural data to comprehensively reflect different dimensions of the burden. The advantage of objective multidimensional measurement is that the results are objective and highly reliable, suitable for policy evaluation and theoretical validation; the drawback is the difficulty of data acquisition, requiring internal data such as policy texts and administrative records, and the objective measurement of psychological costs is still in the exploratory stage.

5. Research on the influencing factors of administrative burden

The generation of administrative burden is the result of interactions among multiple factors. Existing studies summarise these factors into three dimensions: political, policy, and individual. Together, they form a causal chain of 'institutional environment — implementation process — individual differences': the political system establishes the institutional basis for burden generation, policy implementation translates institutional pressure into concrete burden, and individual differences regulate the perceived intensity of the burden and coping ability (Heinrich, 2016).

5.1. Political Factors

Political factors, through the threefold mechanism of government capacity, organisational structure, and ideology, shape the fundamental institutional environment of administrative burdens and are the deep-rooted causes of their generation (Lavertu et al., 2013).

5.1.1. Deficiencies in Government Capacity

Deficiencies in Government Capacity Government capacity, particularly the lack of information and coordination abilities, directly leads to the transfer of administrative burdens — when the government is unable to effectively obtain or verify information, it shifts the burden of proof onto citizens or businesses, creating a "proof loop" paradox (He Yanling, Wang Zheng, 2022). In addition, insufficient governmental service capacity can also exacerbate administrative burdens. For example, some local governments lack professional staff to interpret policies, forcing citizens to understand rules through obscure policy texts on their own, increasing learning costs; insufficient business competence of administrative personnel may result in incomplete initial notifications, causing citizens to make multiple trips and increasing compliance costs (Stanica et al., 2022).

5.1.2. Fragmentation of organisational structure

The 'fragmented' structure of modern bureaucracy leads to insufficient departmental coordination, creating procedural burdens of 'multiple departmental repetitive requirements'. The core issues are 'information silos' and 'overlapping responsibilities' (Moynihan et al., 2016).

'Information silos' manifest as the inability of different departments' databases to communicate and the lack of unified data standards. For example, when citizens apply for housing subsidies, they need to provide proof of household income to the civil affairs department, housing documents to the housing and urban-rural development department, and payment certificates to the social security department, but these departments cannot share data, requiring citizens to submit materials repeatedly. When enterprises handle administrative approvals, they must register and report data separately in the systems of multiple departments such as market

ISSN: 2710-0170

regulation, taxation, and environmental protection, where system functions overlap but data do not communicate, increasing compliance costs.

'Overlapping responsibilities' occur when multiple departments have approval authority over the same matter, leading to lengthy processes. For example, the approval of a public project may involve the National Development and Reform Commission, the Natural Resources Bureau, and the Housing and Urban-Rural Development Bureau, each with its independent approval procedures and lacking coordination mechanisms, requiring enterprises to go through each step individually, which is time-consuming and labour-intensive. Additionally, unclear boundaries of authority and responsibility between departments may lead to 'shirking and buck-passing', with citizens or enterprises being sent back and forth between multiple departments when handling business, increasing both time and psychological costs.

5.1.3. Ideological Differences

Ideology shapes the logic of policy design, making administrative burdens an implicit tool to achieve political goals, primarily reflected in the influence of "partisan stances" or "value orientations" on the distribution of burdens (Lavertu et al., 2013).

For example, Lavertu found that in the American Bush administration's "Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART)", liberal-leaning agencies faced higher administrative burdens — even when controlling for objective factors such as project scale and organisational capacity, liberal managers still had to cope with more cumbersome evaluation processes and stricter reporting requirements. This phenomenon stems from conservative governments' distrust of liberal agencies, limiting their policy influence by increasing administrative burdens (Lavertu et al., 2013). In the field of welfare policy, conservative governments tend to reduce welfare spending by raising application thresholds (such as requiring more proof of documentation), resulting in greater administrative burdens for low-income groups; liberal governments, on the other hand, tend to simplify procedures and reduce burdens (Baekgaard et al., 2021).

In the Chinese context, the impact of ideology on administrative burdens is mainly reflected in differences in "policy orientation". For instance, under a "strict regulation" policy orientation, the government may increase compliance requirements for enterprises (such as more frequent inspections and more complex reporting), leading to higher compliance costs; under a "convenience and benefit for citizens" policy orientation, the government reduces citizens' administrative burdens by simplifying processes and reducing documentation requirements.

5.2. Policy-level factors

Policy-level factors focus on the design and implementation of policies, directly determining the specific manifestations of administrative burdens through two mechanisms: the discretionary power of street-level bureaucrats and exclusionary policy design (Altreiter & Leibetseder, 2015).

5.2.1. Discretion of Street-Level Bureaucrats

Street-level bureaucrats (such as grassroots civil servants and social assistance staff), as the "last mile" of policy implementation, have discretion that has a "double-edged sword effect" on administrative burden — it can simplify processes and ease the burden, but can also be abused to increase it (Baekgaard et al., 2021).

Positive effects of burden relief: Street-level bureaucrats can simplify rules through informal communication, reducing the burden on citizens or businesses. For example, in social assistance applications, if administrative staff find that the applicant's materials are incomplete, they may allow them to provide verbal supplementation or submit documents later instead of formal proof, reducing the number of trips for the applicant. In business compliance inspections, administrative staff can reduce the frequency of inspections for trustworthy businesses, lowering their compliance costs (Altreiter & Leibetseder, 2015). Additionally, street-level

ISSN: 2710-0170

bureaucrats can provide personalised guidance to help citizens understand policy rules, reducing learning costs (Barnes & Henly, 2018).

Negative effects of burden increase: Street-level bureaucrats are more likely to impose heavier burdens on certain groups through differentiated rule enforcement. For instance, Altreiter and Leibetseder (2015) found that Austrian social assistance staff classify applicants as "deserving" (such as diligent single parents) and "undeserving" (such as "lazy" unemployed people), simplifying document review and offering more assistance to the former, while strictly checking materials and increasing behavioural monitoring for the latter (e.g., requiring regular job-seeking reports), resulting in higher compliance and psychological costs for the "undeserving" applicants (Altreiter & Leibetseder, 2015). Baekgaard et al. (2021) propose the concept of "burden tolerance," indicating that the ideological tendencies of street-level bureaucrats affect their attitude towards burdens — right-leaning administrators are more tolerant of high burdens on vulnerable groups and may exacerbate inequality through strict rule enforcement (Baekgaard et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the "goal substitution" behaviour of street-level bureaucrats can also increase administrative burden. For example, to meet assessment metrics (such as "completeness of documents" or "approval efficiency"), some administrative staff may require applicants to provide materials beyond policy requirements or frequently urge them for additional information, increasing the psychological cost for applicants (Stanica et al., 2022).

5.2.2. Exclusionary Design of Policies

Some administrative burdens stem from the policy's own "exclusionary design"—the government deliberately increases process complexity and compliance requirements to filter target groups or reduce service coverage, with the core logic being "achieving implicit exclusion through burden" (Moynihan et al., 2022).

For example, exclusionary design in welfare policies: the government sets high thresholds to exclude non-core beneficiaries in order to control welfare spending. Exclusionary design in immigration policies: the government reduces immigration applications through cumbersome procedures and psychological deterrents. Exclusionary design in business regulation: the government restricts the development of certain types of enterprises through high compliance costs.

5.3. Individual-Level Factors

Individual-level factors focus on differences in individuals' "capital endowment," which, through human capital, social capital, and economic capital dimensions, modulate the perceived intensity of administrative burdens and the ability to cope, and are the core reasons for the "unequal distribution" of administrative burdens (Chudnovsky & Peeters, 2021).

Human capital refers to the sum of individuals' innate endowments and acquired abilities, including education level, health status, cognitive ability, life experience, etc., directly affecting an individual's basic capability to cope with administrative burdens (Wang Hongru, 2020). Social capital refers to resources and connections embedded in an individual's social network, including family support, friendships, community organisation participation, etc., which is an important mechanism for buffering and transferring administrative burdens (Peeters et al., 2020). Economic capital refers to an individual's economic resources, including income, wealth, and the opportunity cost of time, directly affecting the ability to allocate resources to cope with administrative burdens (Li Peng, Zhang Qilin, 2024).

ISSN: 2710-0170

6. Research Conclusions and Future Research Prospects

6.1. Research Conclusions

In terms of conceptual evolution: The definition of administrative burden has gradually evolved from "perceived complexity" to "three-dimensional cost function" and "implicit policy instrument", encompassing subject experience, interaction processes, and political logic, with the theoretical framework becoming increasingly sophisticated. Its differences from red tape, quagmires, and torment mechanisms are reflected in core objects, focus areas, and generative logic, which must be clearly distinguished to avoid conceptual confusion.

In terms of structural dimensions: From the perspective of citizens/enterprises, administrative burden manifests as learning costs (information barriers), compliance costs (action barriers), and psychological costs (emotional barriers), which are interrelated and unevenly distributed; from the perspective of administrative staff, it manifests as informational dimension (cognitive load), execution dimension (institutional conflicts), and psychological dimension (responsibility pressure), requiring differentiated analysis based on subject characteristics.

In terms of measurement methods: Subjective measurement is suitable for capturing experiential burdens, while objective measurement is suitable for quantifying resource consumption; the choice of method must match the research objectives. Multidimensional subjective measurement has become mainstream due to its high theoretical compatibility, while objective measurement is suitable for policy evaluation due to its comparability of results.

In terms of influencing factors: At the political level, government capacity deficiencies, organisational fragmentation, and ideological differences lay the institutional foundation; at the policy level, the discretionary power of street-level bureaucrats and exclusive policy design directly shape the form of burden; at the individual level, human, social, and economic capital moderate the distribution of burden, forming a causal chain of "institution — implementation — subject".

6.2. Future Research Outlook

Based on current research gaps, future studies can be deepened in the following directions: Firstly, strengthening theoretical integration to analyse the interaction mechanisms of multiple factors: constructing a multidimensional integrated analysis framework of "politics – policy – individual" and using methods such as structural equation modelling and fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis (fsQCA) to explore the interactions of different factors. For example, analysing the synergistic effects of "organisational structure fragmentation" and "street-level bureaucratic discretion," or the moderating role of "social capital" on "policy exclusionary design," to reveal the dynamic generation mechanisms of administrative burdens. Secondly, innovating measurement methods to enhance tool adaptability: one is to explore objective measurement techniques for psychological costs, such as combining physiological indicators (heart rate, cortisol levels) or behavioural experiments to improve measurement accuracy; two is to develop universal measurement tools across fields, achieving comparative results in different domains through the design of "core dimensions + contextualised indicators"; three is to integrate big data technologies, such as analysing administrative record data (application duration, number of document revisions), to reduce subjective bias.

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