

METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

Questionnaires were used to collect data from taxpayers. The importance of a well- designed questionnaire that elicits valid and reliable information from respondents and additionally facilitates analysis and interpretation cannot be overemphasized (Creswell, 1999, Bell, 1999 cited in Yeboah, 2010). While validity is concerned with accuracy of the questionnaire, reliability has to do with consistency and stability over time. The questionnaire used in the collection of data for the study was closed-ended with mutually exclusive and exhaustive responses. The closed-ended questions made the analysis much simpler. Since some of the taxpayers were illiterates, they were assisted by the researcher through the researcher-administered questionnaire whilst the literates used the self- administered questionnaire. The researcher-administered questionnaire enabled questions to be explained to respondents and also result in higher response rates (Yeboah, 2010). After the construction of the questionnaire, it was pretested. Pretesting and its importance is discussed in the next section.

DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter begins with the descriptive analysis of background characteristics of respondents sampled for the study. This is followed in by the Bivariate analysis of the independent variables cross-tabulated with the dependent variable establishing relationships between the variables which help to determine if the hypotheses advanced for the study is supported or not supported. The multivariate analyses results which establishes the significant determinants and effects of the set of independent variables on the dependent variable (relationship) is then presented.

TAXPAYERS CHARACTERISTICS AND PERCEPTION OF THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH TAX OFFICIALS

Table 1. Taxpayers' Relationship with Tax Officials by Gender

VARIABLE	Fq	%	<u>Good Relationship</u>			<u>Bad Relationship</u>		
			Fq	%		Fq	%	
MALE	188	75	175	70		75	30	
FEMALE	62	25	154	62		96	38	

Source Data: AlimatuFartoma 2021.

Table 1 shows that a higher percentage 188 (75%) of males were taxpayers compared to females 62(25%). This finding contradicts the assertion that most taxpayers are females. The high number of male respondents recorded for the study can however be attributed to the fact that data was collected from sample areas mostly dominated by males.

In spite of the large difference in the sample with regards to gender, a high percentage of females 96(38%) reported that they have a negative relationship with tax officials compared with males 75(30%) who indicated they had a negative relationship with tax officials. Male taxpayers as can be seen from Table 1 are more likely to develop a positive relationship 175(70%) with tax officials than female taxpayers 154(62%).

Table 2. Taxpayers' Relationship with Tax Officials by Age

VARIABLE	Fq	%	<u>Good Relationship</u>			<u>Bad Relationship</u>		
			Fq	%		Fq	%	
18 - 28	60	24	168	67		82	33	
29 – 39	84	34	167	67		83	33	
40 – 48	60	24	194	78		56	22	
49 – 59	35	14	125	50		125	50	
60	11	4	----	----		----	----	

Source Data: Alimatu Fatorma 2021

Age wise, a higher percentage 84(34%) of respondents were between the ages of 29 and 38 years. This result suggests that the youth are more into trading than adults. The dominance of the youth in trading can be attributed to the fact that the youth are strong and would be able to meet the demanding nature of the work. Also the aged constitute the marginal percentage due to the fact that most of them have handed over their work to their children and grandchildren. It is clear from the table that trading in the Kenema city is dominated by the youth of school going age. Compared to the other age cohorts, older taxpayers as can be seen from Table 2 were more likely to develop a positive relationship (100%) with tax officials. Taxpayers within the age category of 49- 59 were more likely to have a negative relationship (50.0%) with tax officials than any other age group.

Table 3. Taxpayers’ Relationship with Tax Officials by Marital Status.

VARIABLE	Fq	%	Good Relationship		Bad Relationship	
			Fq	%	Fq	%
Married	159	64	169	68	81	32
Single	91	36	173	69	77	31

Source Data: Alimatu Fatorma 2021

Compared to singles 91(36%), higher percentages 159(64%) of taxpayers were married. This finding reflects the actuality on the ground as trading is mostly done by married couples, in most instance joint ventures. From Table 3 it can be observed that taxpayers who were married were less likely to have a positive relationship with tax officials 169 (68%) than tax payers who are unmarried 173(69.0%). Taxpayers who were married were again more likely to develop a negative relationship with tax officials 81(32%) than taxpayers who were single 77(31%). The inference drawn from this result is that marital status to some extent may be related to developing a positive or negative relationship with tax officials.

Table 4. Taxpayers' Relationship with Tax Officials by Education

VARIABLE	Fq	%	Good Relationship			Bad Relationship		
			Fq	%		Fq	%	
Non Literate	16	6	125	50		125	50	
Primary	48	19	172	69		78	31	
Junior	129	52	181	72		69	28	
Senior	57	23	145	58		105	42	

Source Data: Alimatu Fatorma 2021

Considering the educational attainment of taxpayers, 129(52%) of taxpayers had completed Junior School. Taxpayers who had attained Secondary education also constituted 57(23%) of the sample, which recorded the second highest percentage. From table 4 it can be realized that most of the taxpayers had at least attained some form of formal education, however, 16(6%) of taxpayers indicated that they had not attained any level of formal education. This result gave a fair distribution of education as a variable in the sample and supported the assertion that most traders are semi literates. Table 4 also shows that taxpayers who had attained Junior education are more likely to develop a positive relationship 181(72%) with tax officials. Taxpayers who had not attained any form of formal education were not surprisingly found to develop a negative relationship (50.0%) with tax officials as education to a large extent determines traders' knowledge on tax issues.

Table 5. Bivariate relationship between independent variables and taxpayers perception of relationship with tax officials

Relationship between independent variables and dependent variable

Coercion: Frequency of shop locked up	Good Relationship		Bad Relationship	
	freq	%	freq	%
Once	53	21	29	12
Twice	32	13	20	8

Thrice	15	6	13	5
Never	62	25	26	10
Persuasion: Ample Time To Pay Tax	freq	%	freq	%
Enough Time	115	46	57	23
Not Enough	47	19	31	12
Tax Process Explanation	freq	%	freq	%
True	104	42	37	15
False	58	23	51	20
Tolerance	Freq	%	Freq	%
True	132	53	56	22
False	30	12	32	13
Taxpayers Knowledge Of Tax Issues	Freq	%	Freq	%
Knowledge Of Uses Of Taxes				
Yes	131	53	61	24
No	29	12	29	12
Knowledge of tax system	Freq	%	Freq	%
Much knowledge	99	40	34	14
Limited knowledge	46	18	44	18
No knowledge	16	6	11	4
Corruption: Demand money to reduce tax	Freq	%	Freq	%
Often	17	7	16	6
Sometime	32	13	27	11
Never	112	45	47	18
Demand money to waive arrears	Freq	%	Freq	%
Often	11	4	9	4

Sometime	27	11	22	9
Never	123	49	58	23
Tax Officials Attitude: Patients	Freq	%	Freq	%
Yes	132	53	55	22
No	30	12	33	13
Display of Professionalism	Freq	%	Freq	%
Yes	139	56	55	22
No	23	9	33	13
Politeness	Freq	%	Freq	%
Yes	133	53	51	20
No	29	12	37	15
Preferential Treatment	Freq	%	Freq	%
Yes	129	52	59	24
No	31	12	31	12
Good treatment	Freq	%	Freq	%
True	91	36	39	16
False	71	28	49	20

Source data: Alimatu Fatorma 2021

This section is dedicated to presenting the results of the Bivariate analysis conducted to establish the relationship between the independent variables of the study and the dependent variable; taxpayers' perception of relationship. The chi-square test of independence was utilized. Results of the analysis are presented in the Table 5.

Though the frequency of shop lockups, submission of tax returns, settlements of arrears, and tax officials response to part payment of taxes as independent variables did not relate

significantly to taxpayers perception of their relationship with tax officials, each of these variables either negatively or positively affected the relationship between taxpayers and tax officials as can be seen from Table 5. The chi-square test of independence as depicted in Table 5 also shows that the persuasive measures that significantly relate to taxpayers perception of their relationship with tax officials are tax process explanation, and tolerance, of tax officials. In all the measures of persuasion a high percentage of taxpayers reported that tax officials offer of ample time (57%), explanation of the tax process (51%), and tolerance (56%) positively affected their relationship with tax officials.

According to Table 5, all the measures of taxpayers' knowledge of tax issues significantly related to taxpayers perception of their relationship with tax officials. From the table it can be observed that a high percentage of taxpayers who indicated that they had knowledge on the uses of taxes (53%) and those who had much knowledge of the tax system (40%) reported a positive with tax officials.

Though demand of money to waive arrears and demand of money to give certificate did not significantly relate to taxpayers perception of their relationship with tax officials, a high percentage of taxpayers indicated that tax officials non demand of money to waive arrears (58%) and non-demand of money to reduce tax (45%) positively affected their relationship with tax officials. Table 5 it can be seen that a high percentage of taxpayers indicated tax officials' patience (53%), display of professionalism (56%), politeness (53%), preferential treatment (52%) and good treatment (36%) positively influenced the relationship.

The implication of this result is that tax officials' attitude towards taxpayers largely or is more likely to affect a positive relationship between taxpayers and tax officials. In sum, the variables that significantly related to taxpayers perception of their relationship with tax officials identified in this study include: Due payment of tax, Tax process explanation.

4.4DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

As far as the demographic characteristics are concerned, the study revealed that the male respondents (75%) far outnumber the females and this counters the assertion that most

taxpayers in the trading sector are males. The study also revealed a negative relationship between female taxpayers and tax officials than male taxpayers and tax officials. Pertaining to age, this study showed that trading in the Kenema city is dominated by the youth and this can be attributed to the fact that the youth are strong and able to meet the demanding nature of the work. The study revealed that older taxpayers have a positive relationship with tax officials as compared to the youth. The study on marital status reflects the actuality on the ground as trading is mostly done by married couples, in most instance joint ventures.

The study also showed that, taxpayers who are single (64%) have a positive relationship with tax officials than those married. On education, the study disclosed that most of the taxpayers had at least attained some form of formal education and that half of those who had no education (50%) had a negative relationship with the tax officials. All of them can be seen in Table.



On coercion, the study found that taxpayers who conformed to coercive measures were likely to have a positive relationship with tax officials as those who submitted returns on time and those who made payments to avoid locking of their shops testify a positive relationship with tax officials. A high percentage (25%) of taxpayers who indicated that they never had their shops locked up by tax officials, taxpayers who submitted their tax returns and tax officials' acceptance of taxes positively affected their relationship with tax officials. However, most of taxpayers who reported having frequent shop lockups (three times), and taxpayers who did not submit their tax returns reported a negative relationship with tax officials. This study did not give credibility to the first research hypothesis and as such a conclusion can be drawn at 65% confidence level that coercive measures by tax officials has a positive effect on the relationship between tax officials and taxpayers This is contrary to the studies by Prichard (2010), which states that when taxation remain purely coercive, taxpayers may

angrily reject taxation and could result in animosity. In all the measures of persuasion a high percentage of taxpayers reported that tax officials offer ample time (46%), explanation of the tax process (42%), and tolerance (53%) positively affected their relationship with tax officials and revenue mobilization would therefore be impeded.

In all the measures of persuasion a high percentage of taxpayers reported that tax officials offer ample time (46%), explanation of the tax process (42%), and tolerance (53%) positively affected their relationship with tax officials. This study shows that persuasive measures lead to a positive relationship. In answering a major research question as to whether taxpayers' level of knowledge on taxation influence their relationship with tax officials, the table confirms that a high percentage of taxpayers who indicated that they had knowledge on the uses of taxes (53%) and those who had much knowledge of the tax system (45%) reported a positive relationship with tax officials. The study therefore reveals that, if a taxpayer has knowledge on tax issues and knows what taxes are used for, their relationship with tax officials is likely to be positive. This was also confirmed by the analysis results which revealed knowledge of tax system to be one of the significant predictors of a positive relationship between taxpayers and tax officials. On the basis of this result, the second hypothesis advanced by the study, which predicted that taxpayers level of knowledge on tax issues leads to a positive relationship is supported.

Furthermore, another research question was to find out whether tax officials' attitude affects their relationship with taxpayers. From Table 5, it can be seen that a high percentage of taxpayers indicated tax officials' patience (53%), display of professionalism (56%), politeness (75.3%), preferential treatment (52%) and good treatment (36%) positively influenced the relationship. These are the variables that significantly relate to the relationship between taxpayers and tax officials. The study found that, good attitude exhibited by officials to taxpayers encourages a healthy and positive relationship between the two parties. This was further confirmed by the analysis results in (Table 5) which provided support to the third research hypothesis advanced by the study, which was: Tax official's positive attitude

has a positive effect on tax officials and taxpayers relationship.

The positive values obtained for each of the attitudinal measures (see, Table 5) leads to the conclusion that indeed tax officials' positive attitude correspondingly has a positive effect on their relationship with taxpayers. This validates the popular opinion that positive attitude of tax officials encourages voluntary compliance which eventually promotes a good relationship with taxpayers. In all, the study has it that most of the taxpayers are of the perception that, the relationship between the tax officials and them is a positive one. This study answers the major research question which was to find out taxpayers perception of their relationship with tax officials.

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION.

This chapter presents appropriate recommendations made on the basis of the findings of this study. In addition, it summarizes the findings of the study with particular emphasis on the contribution of the study to knowledge.

SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

The study was an exploratory research set to investigate taxpayers' perception of their relationship with tax officials in the DTRD of the Kenema city. The target population comprised of taxpayers who have traded for two or more years and with active files within the main trading areas of the Kenema city namely Big Market, Fisheries market, Gbomgbotor market and How for Do. A background study was conducted on the development of the now National Revenue Authority. The theoretical bases of the taxpayers and tax officials' relationship were also reviewed. It was realized that the relationship existing between taxpayers and tax officials could be motivating or de-motivating to the generation of revenue for development. A search for literature on empirical studies conducted to ascertain the relationship between taxpayers and tax officials after the Internal Revenue Service and Value Added Tax (VAT) merger revealed no study carried out in this area.

A survey questionnaire was used as the principal tool for data collection. The

questionnaire was pre-tested and post-tested to ascertain its validity and reliability before it was finally used for the data collection. The data was analyzed quantitatively using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The descriptive statistics consisted mainly of frequency tables which permitted comparison of responses. The inferential statistics used included chi-square and binary logistic regression which also permitted tests of hypotheses. In all, three hypotheses were tested; the first of which showed that coercive measures by tax officials does not have a negative effect on the relationship of tax officials and taxpayers. The second test of hypothesis also proved that taxpayer's level of knowledge on taxation issues leads to a positive relationship. Finally, the third hypothesis was tested which also showed tax official's positive attitude has a positive effect on tax officials and taxpayers relationship.

RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of the findings, the following recommendations are suggested: Since relationship between two persons is very vital, it is suggested that a better relationship be established between tax officials and taxpayers. This is because the study in spite of indicating a positive relationship between taxpayers and tax officials also reveals a negative relationship between the two parties. As taxpayers respond in a systematic way to how tax officials treat them, persuasive treatment is recommended to ensure voluntary compliance. Tax authorities need to put persuasive measures in place to raise tax morale.

Further, it is recommended that tax authority take tax education serious to increase the level of knowledge of taxpayers. The study reveals that majority of (53%) and (40%) who had knowledge on the uses of taxes and much knowledge of the tax system respectively reported a positive relationship with tax officials.

The tax authority therefore must be committed to prioritizing tax education through suggested means including developing a free taxpayer bulletin, hosting tax fairs throughout the country and disseminating important information through newspapers and brochures.

Finally, it is recommended that a positive attitude be shown by tax officials in their dealing with taxpayers. The positive attitude exhibited by tax officials is likely to shape the perception of taxpayers about them and better enhance their relationship. The study has revealed how the positive attitudes of patience, politely and professionalism contributed to ensuring a positive relationship between the officials and taxpayers.

CONCLUSION

The relationship between tax officials and taxpayers is likely to shape the perception taxpayers have about tax officials. It is very important in ensuring reciprocal benefit between the tax official and taxpayer. This is possible when each plays the significant roles which are legally required of them.

The importance of a positive relationship between the two parties has to be understood. Moreover, the roles that the respective parties need to play to enhance the relationship must be known. For instance, since the principal goal of taxpayers is to have their tax issues resolved quickly and fairly, they are expected to give information about their tax return to help tax officials reach the right tax conclusion. This goes a long way to strengthen the relationship between the tax officials and taxpayers. Officials have to widen tax education to all so as to strengthen their relationship by reducing tax evasion.

The roles that the variables play in determining a positive relationship between tax officials and taxpayers have been clearly defined.

Though the study has corroborated the contribution of other researchers pertaining to the relationship between tax officials and taxpayers, a major aspect of the contribution of this study to knowledge has been to examine and employ persuasion to better enhance the relationship between the said parties. For instance, when tax officials collaborate and cooperate with taxpayers, the latter according to the study responds to the tax demand which eventually promotes a healthy relationship. When taxpayers are given enough time to settle their arrears, it boosts their morale to fulfill their tax obligations. Such persuasive measures according to the study stabilize a positive relationship.

Secondly, the use of the coercion variable has to be minimized as it scares taxpayers. Though it forces taxpayers to honour their tax obligations, it negatively affects their relationship with officials. As some taxpayers respond systematically to how tax officials treat them, coercive measures applied to them leads to misunderstanding and verbal exchanges as argued by anecdotal evidence. To raise tax morale and increase voluntary compliance among taxpayers, tax officials are enjoined to reduce coercion. Again, level of knowledge has much role to play in the taxpayer/tax official relationship. The variable has revealed why those with much knowledge about the tax system have a positive relationship with tax officials. Those who have little or no knowledge on the tax system do not appreciate or understand it and it ends up affecting their relationship with officials. Example is traders who do not know anything about Income Tax or what taxes are used for. Therefore it is proposed that tax officials increase tax education to enlighten taxpayers about their tax obligations.

Corrupt tax officials are likely to have a negative relationship with taxpayers especially those who bribe such officials reluctantly. As the study has shown, most taxpayers in the Kenema City have a positive relationship with tax officials because of the absence of corruption in their dealings. This reflected in the reduction of their taxes and examination of returns. Since the absence of corruption see to a positive relationship with taxpayers, conscious efforts need to be put in place to alleviate it from the system. For instance, criminalizing corrupt activities and simultaneously motivating tax officials is likely to clamp down corruption and reinforce a healthy and positive taxpayer/tax official relationship.

Furthermore, the attitude variable has an impact on the taxpayer /tax official relationship. As this variable in the study promotes a positive relationship between the two parties, it is proposed that tax officials put up quality attitude by being patient, polite and professional in the discharge of their duties. This is likely to deepen the positive relationship that exists between them and their clients.

In conclusion, the factors that contribute to a relationship between tax officials and taxpayers have been discovered. The factors including persuasion, coercion, level of knowledge, corruption and tax officials' attitude are responsible for either a positive or negative relationship. These variables when applied well are likely to promote tax morale and voluntary compliance and by these there will be reduction in tax evasion. These variables are introduced knowing that they contribute to knowledge and enhances a positive tax official/taxpayer relationship.

REFERENCES

Oboh (2012), the concept of taxation has been a concern of global significance as it affects every economy irrespective of national differences.

Allingham and Sandmo (1972), tax revenues are one of if not the main income source for many governments throughout the world.

Gupta (2007) is of the view that developing countries need to rely substantially on domestic tax.

(Olaseyitan & Sankay, 2012; Omotoso, 2001); Tax is a compulsory charge imposed by a public authority on the income of individuals and companies as stipulated by the government decrees, acts or cases laws irrespective of the exact amount of services rendered to the taxpayer. (2007) Organization for Economic Corporation and Development (OECD) affirms that, the revenue body expects taxpayers to be fully transparent in their communications and dealings.

Wang (2010); stated that taxpayers' confidence is largely dependent on the efficiency and efficacy of government services, that is, whether the services provided are cost-efficient (that is, perceived to represent "value for money") Fjeldstad (2006) states that taxpayers' unwillingness to pay is not perceived to be the main problem in revenue collection but rather misuse of tax revenues.

Ho and Wong (2008) submitted that individuals with stronger ethical mind may have favorable compliance attitude as they will regard complying with rule and regulation as an obligation that must be honored. Manaf (2004) reported that taxpayers who see tax evasion as unethical are likely to comply more than those who regarded tax evasion as not unethical