

Abstract

Reminder letters by tax authorities are typically to the point and brisk, if not threatening. While appropriate from a deterrence-based regulatory approach, they may lack qualities conducive to a regulatory approach based on a more cooperative relationship between tax authorities and taxpayers. In particular, they may be considered to violate principles of procedural justice. In an experimental questionnaire study with a student sample, reactions to two alternative reminder letters, designed to incorporate principles of informational justice and interpersonal justice respectively, were compared to the standard letter. Furthermore, the effects of the letters were tested when three different rights (informational, interpersonal, conciseness), as granted in the *Taxpayers' Charter*, were made salient. It was predicted that respondents would regard a letter as fairer when the salient right was matched in the letter than when it was not. This prediction was confirmed for the two letters that incorporated justice principles. Furthermore, overall the interpersonal letter was regarded most fair; and making respondents aware of the interpersonal right increased their perceptions of fairness. However, while perceived fairness was related to hypothetical compliance, the experimental factors had no influence on compliance. There was only correlational evidence that perceived letter qualities were related to compliance; for interpersonal justice, this relationship was fully mediated by perceived justice.