

# **Young People and the Police in Lagos**

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The mission of CLEEN Foundation is to promote public safety, security and accessible justice through empirical research, legislative advocacy, demonstration programmes and publications, in partnership with government and civil society.

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## Preface

The relationship between young people and the police has normally been characterized by mutual suspicion and hostility. However, in Nigeria, very little data has been collected regarding this seemingly acrimonious relationship. Given the current political and social dynamics in Nigeria, it's important to better understand the attitudes young people and police hold towards each other. Today, the police often pay special attention to the activities of young people, largely because of the perceived increase in youth crime in recent years. Pressure from both the media and elites on the police to crack down on young delinquents has brought about increased contact between juveniles and the police and led to the use of more aggressive forms of intervention (Alder et.al, 1992). A natural consequence of these negative interactions is mutual tension and suspicion.

The negative relationship has several unsettling consequences. Young people, feeling persecuted and targeted by the police, are less likely to report criminal activities or seek out help when they are in distress. The hostile relationship also contributes to increased criminal activity among juveniles ( Alemika and Chukwuma, 2001). Young people, viewing the police with little respect or legitimacy, feel emboldened to commit criminal acts.

This study was conceived against the backdrop of the palpable dangers posed to citizen safety and public order by an adversarial relationship between young people and the police. It sets out to explore and empirically determine the nature of the relationship between youths and the police in Lagos State, to establish the factors that define it, and to provide recommendations for how to improve it.

Respondents to the study were drawn from three different Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Lagos State: Ajeromi Ifelodun, Surulere and Eti- Osa. The LGAs were selected based on variations in their population density and income levels. Attempts were also made to capture the views of in-school and out-of-

school youths, as well as other relevant stakeholders, including school principals and various categories of community leaders. The logic was both to ensure the inclusion of divergent views and to highlight the influence of varied neighbourhood statuses on attitudes. Does the neighbourhood where a young person lives and goes to school impact his or her attitudes toward the police? And to what extent do differences in neighbourhood status affect the way police treat youths?

The study was expected to generate useful data that will serve as the basis for the design of policies and programmes that will assist in engendering a healthier relationship between young people and police in Lagos state.



## Chapter One

### Youth-Police Relations in Literature and Theory

#### **Introduction:**

There are numerous studies in the academic literature focusing on public attitudes towards the police. However most of the research, has focused on adults (Amorso and Ware 1983; Hurst and Frank 2000; Levy 2001; Taylor et al. 2001; Williams 1999). Until recently, comparatively little research has dealt with juvenile attitudes toward the police (Nihart et al, 2005). Even less literature employs a theoretical context to better understand juvenile attitudes toward the police and other authority figures. Only within the last few years have researchers expanded the literature and started to make concerted efforts to examine the complexity of this matter in Europe and North America. However, research on this issue in Africa and many other parts of the developing world has been limited.

A number of social factors that influence the relationship between young people and the police has been identified in the literature. These include race/ethnicity, gender, neighbourhood, parenting/early orientation, nature and extent of contact, procedural justice and police decision making practices. In this chapter we shall examine the explanatory powers of these social variables in understanding relationship between youth and the police as well as the theories that underpin them.

The most common variable examined in recent studies is the effect of race (Hurst et al. 2000; Hurst and Frank 2000; Janeksela 1999; Jones-Brown 2000; Leiber et al. 1998; Taylor et al. 2001). Results of these studies have been mixed. While most researchers have reported that minorities tend to have less favorable views of the police, a number of studies have found that minorities have more favorable views of the police than do white youths (Brown and Benedict 2002; Sims et al. 2002). Other contributing factors to the attitudes of youths toward the police that have been explored include gender, contact with police, neighborhood context, and fear of crime. Studies have failed to

show if gender consistently contributes to differences in attitudes toward police (Brown and Benedict 2002; Griffiths and Winfree 1982; Taylor et al. 2001). Those that found a difference have difficulty explaining it

#### *Neighbourhood Context*

Research also emphasizes the importance of neighbourhood context in shaping young people's attitudes towards police. In a US study of young males who were either accused or adjudicated as delinquents, Leiber et al. (1998) reported that socio-cultural context is more significant in developing attitudes towards police than the nature of police-youth contact(s). While contact with the police reinforced and magnified young people's negative attitudes, the formation of negative attitudes was a function of social environment: young people's attitudes toward police develop as 'a function of multiple factors', including 'the direct and indirect effects of the social environment in which juveniles are socialized' and 'personal interactions with the police' (Leiber et al., 1998:153). Other studies of the influence of social context include Taylor et al. (2001), who reported that city of residence shaped young people's attitudes toward police in a study of eighth grade students in 11 US cities. A Study by Frank and Cao et al. (1996) reported that neighbourhood factors, including perceptions of disorder and incivilities, may be more important in shaping people's attitudes toward police than individual-level factors, including race.

#### *Parenting/Early Orientation*

Police-youth relationships are generally described as problematic. People's earliest attitudes towards the law and legal authorities, including police, are formed in childhood as part of the socialization process. Easton and Dennis (1969) argue that positive attitudes towards police acquired in childhood exert a lasting effect on adult's judgment of police. During the maturation process, adolescence in particular is a period during which social norms and values, including beliefs about the law and legal institutions, are challenged and subject to change, as personal experiences, and the opinions and beliefs of friends, peers and others in the wider community exert a greater influence than the family (Easton and Dennis, 1969; Adelson and Bell, 1970).

### *Nature and Extent of Contact with the Police*

The impact of personal encounters with police on shaping people's attitudes has received considerable attention by scholars. Research shows that people's satisfaction with their contact with police influenced their general attitudes towards them (Dean, 1980), that the influence of a negative contact with the police is stronger than a positive contact on shaping views (Dean, 1980; Skogan, 2005, 2006), and that people's satisfaction varies by the type of contact, with voluntary citizen-initiated contacts (such as reporting a crime) being generally associated with higher satisfaction levels, compared with involuntary contacts (such as police-initiated traffic stops for driving offences), which are associated with lower public satisfaction (Dean, 1980; Schafer et al., 2003; Skogan, 2005, 2006).

Negative contact with police during adolescence may have a significant impact on their attitudes towards them. As extensive users of public space(s), young people are often the subjects of involuntary contact(s) with police, which are often negative and adversarial in nature (White, 1994; Cuneen and White, 1995; Loader, 1996). Using a dichotomized rating of negative or positive, Griffiths and Winfree (1982) reported that the primary factor that shaped adolescents' attitudes toward police was the nature of contact they had with them. In a study of the attitudes of juveniles toward police in two high schools in Cincinnati in Ohio, Hurst and Frank (2000) reported that fewer than four in ten young people either trusted police or were satisfied with them, with negative attitudes significantly associated with police contact. These findings are consistent with research on adults: negative contact(s) shape people's general attitudes towards police.

### *Procedural Justice*

While a number of studies have explored young people's attitudes, support or satisfaction with the police, only two studies by Fagan and Tyler (2005) and Piquero et al. (2005) have specifically addressed the influence of procedural justice on young people's attitude towards the legitimacy of police. Legitimacy is defined as 'a property of an authority or institution that leads people to feel that the authority or institution is entitled to be deferred to and obeyed'

(Sunshine and Tyler, 2003: 514). For Fagan and Tyler (2005), procedural justice significantly predicted perceived legitimacy in a study of 10 to 16 year-olds' interactions with police officers, school disciplinary personnel and private security personnel, and that reduced legitimacy negatively influenced compliance with the law. Similarly, in a longitudinal study of adolescents charged with serious offences, Piquero et al. (2005:296) reported a relationship between situational-based procedural justice perceptions and the legitimacy of legal authorities (i.e. police and courts), suggesting 'situational experiences with criminal justice personnel influence more general attitudes about the law and legal system'. These findings are consistent with research on the views of adults: Judgments used by police in decision-making, and the legitimacy of police influences compliance with the law (Tyler, 1990; Tyler and Huo, 2002). In another study of young people's attitudes towards police legitimacy, gathered from a written survey of children and young people aged between 14 and 16 years enrolled in an Australian public (i.e. state) school in mid-2005, findings show that young people's views on the legitimacy of police are positively linked to police use of procedural justice, higher expectations of police, judgments of better police-youth relationships, and better police performance. Police legitimacy among young people is significantly lowered by negative assessments of police behaviour during encounters. It equally suggests that police can enhance their legitimacy by the use of procedural justice during their encounters with young people (Lyn Hinds, 2007).

As gatekeepers to the formal criminal justice system, the police play a fundamental role in deciding which youths get arrested, charged, and detained. Police discretion is an aspect of everyday police work by knowledgeable and experienced police officers who belong to the police culture of rank and file (Goldsmith, 1990). In this sense, police officers learn from each other a set of beliefs, values, attitudes, rules, and occupational practices as they work together within a community. Thus, police develop theories about the neighbourhood and people they police that are "used as recipes for interpreting and labeling their daily activities" (Cicourel, 1965, p.105).

When the police arrest a young person, they are publicly defining him as delinquent (Morash, 1984). According to prior research, a youth tends to be defined as a delinquent if he or she is “the kind of person who doesn’t respect the law, making him or her a perfect candidate for arrest, detention, and eventual incarceration” (Morash, 1984; Werthman & Piliavin, 1967 p.74). The suggestion is that the police are more likely to arrest and charge a young person who is perceived as a delinquent by the officer. Although much research has been conducted on police perceptions of delinquency, there has been very little empirical attention devoted to this issue.

#### *Police Decision Making Practices*

Research has also found that there is continuity and discontinuity within and across police agencies in terms of decision-making practices. Across agencies, police officers provided similar responses in their definition of delinquency (Schulenberg, 2006). A delinquent is a young person with a prior record, a bad attitude, and often a poor home environment with very little parental involvement, and a non-delinquent is someone who is actively involved in activities outside of school, has highly involved parents, tends to fraternize with other youth whom the officers do not perceive as delinquent, and as a result, exhibits a good attitude by acting scared and remorseful during the interaction with the police. Young people are increasingly perceived as either ‘at risk’ or ‘posing a risk’ (Goldson, 1999, 2002; Swadner and Lubeck, 1995). Life for young people in contemporary society is both challenging and uncertain. The individual life course is no longer mapped out and predictable (Giddens, 1991, 2001). Youth has become the ‘prism’ through which the social ills of society are perceived (Brown, 2005), although such distortion of youth are hardly new (Pearson, 1983). Whilst there is continued debate about the role of risk in criminology, crime control and penal policy (Kemshall, 2003; O’Malley, 2006), there is little doubt that risk (however practically deployed) has become a significant factor in the responses to crime and, in this context, youth crime (Goldson, 2000; Kelly, 2000, 2001; Muncie, 2006). For some scholars, the ‘problematizing of youth’ has resulted in a blurring of social policy and crime policy in which social problems are reframed as crime problems and crime control strategies are increasingly deployed to manage intractable social ills.

### **Police Attitudes Towards Youths**

Police attitudes towards youths have not been studied as much as those of youths towards the police. An important argument advanced by Hayes is that “consistent contact with individuals involved in criminal behaviour might have an unfortunate consequence of distorting perceptions about the propensity of all youth toward offending behaviour.” Because police frequently deal with young people under the guise of criminal suspicion, a stereotypical view about the potential criminal intentions of youths develops. Hayes further argues that police who are assigned to units specially designated to deal with young people have a less biased and more nuanced view of juveniles. This is informed by the nature of the contacts they have with young people. By encountering young people outside of the narrow confines of a law enforcement setting, such as at crime prevention programs at schools and forums, police have more positive interactions and therefore a less negative attitude.

Almost all of the studies on youth and police attitudes analyzed above were conducted in Europe, North America or Pacific region, leaving a significant quantitative gap in the developing world. This study will help to plug that gap by providing information that will determine if the findings of studies in the developed world hold water in a developing country context. Nigeria, with its large population and significant police and justice sector issues, needs data that will be vital to improving youth-police relations.

### **Theoretical Context**

Relatively little research concerning juvenile attitudes toward the police has been theoretically driven (Janeksela 1999; Lieber et al. 1998). In one such study, Leiber, Nalla, and Farnworth (1998) employed subcultural theory to better understand the phenomenon. Subcultural theory is based on the classic works of Cohen (1955), Miller (1958), and Cloward and Ohlin (1960). In his analysis of juvenile gangs in Chicago, Cohen concluded that groups of largely male adolescents had developed a distinct culture, one that emphasized very different norms, values, and expectations than the dominant culture. This

new subculture arose when youths, especially those from lower-socioeconomic status families, struggled to succeed. When compared to their middle class peers, poor minority youths were at a disadvantage in competitive environments such as schools. Because they were unsuccessful in measuring up to middle class standards, they sought to establish a new culture in which they could find success and elevate their status. According to Cohen, this new subculture rejected middle class values such as academic achievement, courtesy, and delayed gratification. As summarized by Akers and Sellers (2004:167), “If polite classroom behavior and making good grades will gain greater standing in the eyes of the teachers, then classroom disruption and disdain for academic achievement will gain greater standing in the delinquent subculture.”

Miller (1958) advanced the work of Cohen and identified a number of “focal concerns” of the lower class culture. These focal concerns included such elements as trouble, toughness, smartness, excitement, fate, and, most importantly for this analysis, autonomy. For Miller, lower class autonomy was marked by a resentment of authority and rules, which were often based on middle class values. Thus, youths who were members of a delinquent subculture would reject and resent symbols of social control, such as the police and other authority figures. According to this view, one would expect to find a correlation between negative feelings toward teachers, parents, and the police. Youths who voiced negative opinions about their teachers would express similar feelings toward the other symbols of authoritative, coercive control in their lives.

Richard Cloward and Lloyd Ohlin (1960) added an additional component to the groundwork established by Cohen and Miller, which emphasizes the type of environment in which the youths reside. Drawing on social disorganization theory (Shaw and McKay 1942), Cloward and Ohlin agreed that boys from lower socioeconomic classes experience the greatest amounts of personal frustration and strain when competing with middle class youths in competitive environments. Lower class boys would therefore be involved in higher levels of delinquency than youths from middle and upper socioeconomic classes.

This is especially true among minority youths. However, Cloward and Ohlin also considered that just as some neighbourhoods do not provide legitimate opportunities for youths, not all neighbourhoods provide illegitimate opportunities for crime and delinquency. Different types of subcultures would ultimately develop based on the opportunities available to the youths. In areas marked by extreme social disorganization, a specific type of “conflict” subculture would be most likely to develop. Since both legitimate and illegitimate pathways to success are blocked in these areas, the strain is especially intense. In these types of communities, few authoritative controls will be placed on the youths. Adult role models will be few and far between; adults that the youths do encounter will be viewed as powerless and met with disrespect (Akers and Sellers 2004; Vold, Bernard and Snipes 2002). Success and status in these neighbourhoods are derived from the ability of youths to be perceived as tough and violent. Boys growing up in these neighbourhoods would be rewarded for fighting and other predatory acts.

A study carried out by Nihart, Lersch, Sellers and Meiczkowski (2005) to explore the differences in attitudes that juveniles report towards their teachers, parents (or parent figures) and the police, employed sub-cultural theory to discover that students’ attitudes toward the police are significantly and positively correlated with their feelings towards their parents and their teachers. Additionally, significant correlations are found between the students’ attitudes toward the police and a number of other variables of interest.

This study employs sub-cultural theory in seeking an understanding and explanation of young people’s attitude towards the police in Lagos and police response to it in exercising their powers of discretion. Based on the theory, we would expect that young people’s attitudes toward the police, teachers, and parents would be strongly correlated. Youths who adopt values consistent with a delinquent subculture would be more likely to voice negative opinions toward a variety of authority figures. Further, sub-cultural theory suggests that young people’s attitudes toward the police and other authority figures would be influenced by social class (lower class youths would be less supportive), gender and race (males would report less favourable attitudes).



Additionally, we suspect that youths who report contacts with the police as a result of their suspected involvement in delinquent behaviours would also report lower evaluations of the police and other authority figures due to their willingness to engage in deviant acts, which is an indicator of commitment to the delinquent subculture. We also predict that students who have little confidence in the police to perform their jobs effectively (a rough measure of the youths' respect for the authority of the police) would also report lower evaluations. Finally, we suspect that juveniles who reside in neighbourhoods they perceive to be unsafe would report lower evaluations of the police and other authority figures (Nihart et al, 2005)

Understanding juvenile attitudes toward police is a very vital, yet often neglected, area of crime reduction strategy in Nigeria. If law enforcement agents better understood the causes and nature of juvenile attitudes toward police, they may be able to positively influence the outcome of interactions with youths more often and, subsequently, reduce the disproportionate amount of juveniles involved in the criminal justice system. The next chapter presents the methods of data collection and analysis.

## Chapter Two

### Methods of Data collection and Analysis

#### **Introduction**

This study sets out to ascertain the nature of the relationship between young people and the police in Lagos State and the probable factors that shape this relationship. Additionally, it seeks to determine what could be done to make for a healthier and friendlier relationship between the two groups, with the goal of reducing youth crime. The methods adopted for data collection and analysis in the study are described below.

#### **Population and Sample**

The study adopted a triangulated research method comprising cross sectional surveys, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions to generate both quantitative and qualitative data. One major advantage of adopting the triangulated research design is that it enhances the validity and reliability of data obtained because of the high likelihood that information that is missed by one method will be captured by the other.

Respondents to this study were drawn from three local government areas of Lagos State that have contrasting social, economic and demographic characteristics. Ajeromi Ifelodun, Surulere and Eti- Osa. Ajeromi Ifelodun is largely a low income area while Surulere and Eti- Osa are medium and high income areas respectively. The three areas also contrast in terms of population density, crime rates and frequency of skirmishes between the youth and the authority<sup>1</sup>. The choice of local government areas with contrasting social, economic and demographic characteristics was to determine whether youth perception towards the police and policing will be uniform in the three local government areas and if not, to provide explanations for any variations. The table below depicts the local governments involved in the study and their characteristics.

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<sup>1</sup> According to the 2006 population census, Ajeromi Ifelodun local government area has a population figure of 687,316; Surulere has 502,865 and Eti- Osa has 283,791.

**Table 2.1: Local Government Areas selected for the study**

<b>L.G.A</b>	<b>Description</b>
Ajeromi Ifelodun	Low Income, high density
Surulere	Medium Income, medium density
Eti-Osa	High Income, low density

A total of 357 and 119 questionnaires were successfully administered to the youths and the police respectively. The respondents were polled through the multi stage sampling process. In the first stage, two settlements were randomly selected from each of the local government areas based on predetermined criterion of studying settlements with diverse socio economic backgrounds. The settlements that were selected are Ajegunle and Tolu in Ajeromi Ifelodun local government area; Surulere and Alaka in Surulere local government area; and Ikoyi and Victoria Island in Eti- Osa local government area.

To select the in- school youths, two public secondary schools were chosen randomly from a list of the schools in each of the sampled settlements in the selected local government areas in order. The schools selected were Express Way Senior Secondary School, Tolu, Adeolu Senior Secondary School Tolu, Oluwa Memorial Secondary School, and Reservation Secondary School, all in Ajeromi Ifelodun local government area. In Surulere, the schools sampled were Aguda Grammar School Aguda, Community Grammar School, Iponri Estate High School and Stadium High School; while the schools sampled in Eti- Osa local government area were Eti- Osa Community High School, Government College Ikoyi, Kuramo College and Victoria Island Secondary School. An average of seventeen students aged between 15 and 24 years were subsequently sampled from upper secondary classes (SS1-3) in each of the secondary schools. Students in the junior classes (JS1-3) were presumed to be too young to have significant opinions about the issues studied.

Out of school respondents in the study were selected from street corners, recreation centres, stadia, motor parks and shopping malls in the various

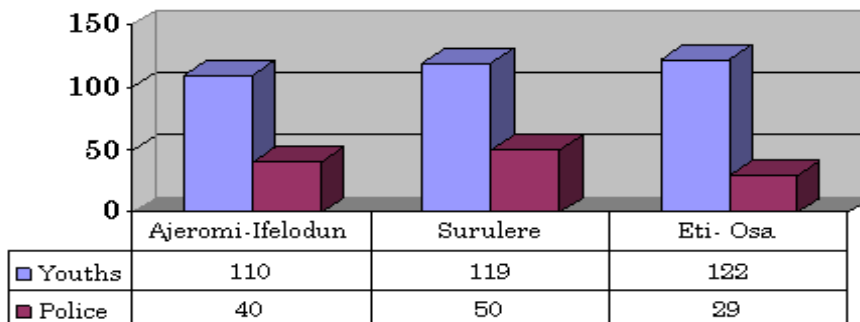
settlements through the purposive technique. There were a total of 205 in – school youths and 152 out – of- school youths involved in the study.

The selection of police respondents followed a similar pattern. In the first stage, two police stations were randomly picked from a list of police stations in each of the local government areas. The police stations that were sampled are Soloki and Bode Thomas police stations in Surulere local government area, Dolphin Estate Police Station and Bar Beach Police Station in Eti –osa local government area; Ajegunle Police Station and Tolu Police Station both in Ajeromi- Ifelodun local government area. Twenty police respondents were subsequently selected through the purposive sampling technique from each of the sampled stations. Indepth interviews were also conducted for some key officials of the police.

**Table 2.2: Distribution of respondents by Local Government Areas**

LGA	Youths		Police	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Ajeromi- Ifelodun	116	32.5	40	33.6
Surulere	119	33.3	50	42.0
Eti-Osa	122	34.2	29	24.4
Total	357	100.0	119	100.0

**Fig 1: Distribution of Respondents by LGA**



In addition to the questionnaires administered, a total of thirty-six focus group discussions and thirty-six in- depth interviews were conducted. Twenty-four of the focus group discussions were held with in–school youths while twelve were held with out- of- school youths. Similarly, thirty-six in-depth interviews were held with identified youth leaders and other relevant stakeholders including principals, teachers, community leaders, market women, the police and several other individuals who were presumed to be in a position to volunteer information on the subject. The respondents to the focus group discussions and the in-depth interviews were selected in such a manner as to ensure gender balance.

**Table 2.3: Distribution of FGD and In-depth Interview Respondents by L.G.A and Sex**

L.G.A	Settlements	Focus Group Discussions				In-depth Interviews			
		Male		Female		Male		Female	
		In- School Youths	Out of School Youths	In- School Youths	Out of School Youths	In School Youth/ Stake-holders	Out of School Youth/ Stake-holders	In School Youth	Out of School Youth
Ajeromi	Tolu	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1
Ifelodun	Ajgunle	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1
Surulere	Surulere	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1
	Alaka	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1
Eti- Osa	Ikoyi	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1
	Victoria								
	Island	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1
Total		12	6	12	6	12	6	12	6

The number of participants at the FGDs ranged from seven to twelve. Generally, participants at the FGDs participated actively.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

Two sets of instruments were designed and used in the study to elicit quantitative and qualitative data. . These were questionnaire schedule and interview/Focus Group Discussion (FGD) guides. The questionnaires consisted mostly of closed ended questions to allow for standardization of responses and ease of coding while the in-depth interview guides were open ended to allow for generous expression of opinions to clarify statements or reported attitudes and perceptions. The questions in the In-depth Interview/ FGD guides were adopted from the questionnaires. The youths were questioned on their personal profiles, contact and experience with the police, perception of the police and participation in police organized programmes. The police on the other hand were questioned on their personal profiles, general duties, training and police/ youth relations. The socio-demographic profile of the respondents is presented in the tables below.

**Table 2.4: Socio-demographic Characteristics of Youth Respondents**

	<b>Youth</b>
<b>Sex</b>	
Male	<b>50.7% (181)</b>
Female	<b>48.7% (174)</b>
<b>Age</b>	
<b>15-20</b>	<b>73.7%</b>
<b>21-25</b>	<b>22.7%</b>
<b>26-30</b>	<b>0.8% (3)</b>
<b>Education</b>	
No formal Education	0.6 (2)
Primary	25.8% (92)

Secondary	59.4% (92)
Tertiary	6.4% (23)
Non response	7.8% (28)
<b>Place of Residence</b>	
With parents/guardian	79.8% (285)
With relatives	7.3 (26)
With friends	2.0 (7)
Squatting	0.6% (2)
Own accommodation	8.7% (31)
<b>Type of Accommodation</b>	
Single room	38.4% (137)
Room and Parlour	34.7% (124)
Flat	22.4% (80)
Duplex	3.9% (14)

**Table 2.5: Socio-demographic Characteristics of Police Respondents**

<b>Sex</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Number</b>
Male	<b>73.9</b>	<b>88</b>
Female	<b>26.1</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Age</b>		
<b>Less than 20</b>	<b>0.8</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>20-29</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>30-39</b>	<b>46.2</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>40-49</b>	<b>17.6</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>50-59</b>	<b>4.2</b>	<b>5</b>

<b>Years in Service</b>		
<b>1-5</b>	<b>21.0</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>6-10</b>	<b>47.1</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>11-15</b>	<b>9.2</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>16-20</b>	<b>13.4</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>21-25</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>26-30</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>31 and above</b>	<b>0.8</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Education</b>		
<b>No formal education</b>	<b>0.8</b>	<b>1</b>
Primary	0.8	1
Secondary	62.2	74
Tertiary	35.3	42
<b>Rank</b>		
Constable	30.2	36
Corporal	34.5	71
Sergeant	15.1	18
Inspector	12.6	15
Assist. Superintendent	1.7	2
<b>Department</b>		
Motor Traffic	4.2	5
General Duty	81.5	97
Human Trafficking	0.8	1
Criminal intelligence	4.2	5
Anti-robbery	1.7	2
Human Rights	1.7	2
Public relations	1.7	2
Others	1.7	2



### **Data Analysis**

Completed questionnaires were analyzed using largely descriptive statistical methods while data from the FGDs and In-depth Interviews were analyzed using content analysis. The descriptive methods involved the use of percentages, frequency tables and charts to explain the attitudes and perceptions of youths towards the police and vice versa. Cross tabulations were also adopted to make inferences of associations between the possession of certain background or experiential characteristics and the display of particular attitudes, opinions or behaviours towards the police by the youths in Lagos State. The detailed responses from the FGDs and the in-depth interviews were summarized on topic basis and selectively used to enrich, illuminate and provide context to the patterns in the attitude of young people and the police to each other.

### **Quality Control**

Various control measures were put in place in order to ensure the validity and reliability of the information that was generated. Apart from the careful selection of experienced interviewers for the field work, they were also given intensive one-day training on how to administer the instruments and worked under two supervisors. The supervisors provided overall field direction. The supervisors stayed with the enumerators from the beginning to the end of the day's activities. They identified and facilitated access by interviewers to selected study locations and respondents. The processed data were also subjected to rigorous quality control measures such as on-screen visual checks, range checks, and random validation checks.

## Chapter Three

### Lagos State Background

Before delving into the findings from the survey, it is important to contextualize the study within the demographic and economic factors that shape Lagos State.

Lagos is the most populous and urbanized state in Nigeria. According to the state government's records, Lagos has a population of over 15 million, with a high population density (Onyemobi 2009).

2 out of every 3 Lagosians live below the poverty line, converging in the slums that dot the landscape of the sprawling city. These slums face many seemingly intractable problems such as weak infrastructure, high unemployment, and a lack of basic amenities like quality health care and social security (Onyemobi 2009).

Lagos, once notorious for its crime problem, has recently seen a significant decrease in crime rates. The findings from the Crime Victimization Survey recently conducted by the CLEEN Foundation shows that Lagos has in fact become one of the safer cities in Nigeria. 72.7 percent of respondents of that survey felt very safe walking about during the day, while 60.9 percent felt very safe out in their area at night (Alemika and Omotosho 2010).

**However, Area Boys still present serious problems to the police, patrolling notorious areas of the city and threatening public safety. This certainly contributes to police perceptions of young people as potential criminal threats, which is discussed in greater detail in the section on police attitudes towards youths.**

The police are, to say the least, heavily prevalent in Lagos State. Lagos State has more than 33,000 police officers, which is far and away the largest police force in any state in Nigeria. The sheer number of police officers increases the likelihood of interaction with juveniles on a daily basis.

## Chapter Four

### Youth Perception and Experience with the Police

#### **Introduction**

If the findings from this study fall in line with the existing literature, we should find strong support for many of the theoretical underpinnings of police-youth relationships. Indeed, in most cases, the data in this study supports the literature produced in Europe and the United States. The evidence confirms the assertion that the quality of police contact has a positive relationship with youth impressions of the police. It also supports the theory that the income level and population density of neighbourhoods also impacts juvenile views on the police (Lieber et al 1998; Reisig and Parks 2000; Taylor et al. 2001).

The evidence collected reveals a strong suspicion and dislike for the police on the part of young people. When asked about their level of respect for the police, respondents were very negative. 51% of respondents reported that they have little respect for the police, while another 16% expressed mixed feelings about the police. 30.3% of the respondents reported that they have great respect for the police. One respondent, in an interview, offered insight into some of the reasons why young people have little respect for the police. Many young people look at the police as more of a threat to safety and security than a protector. He said:

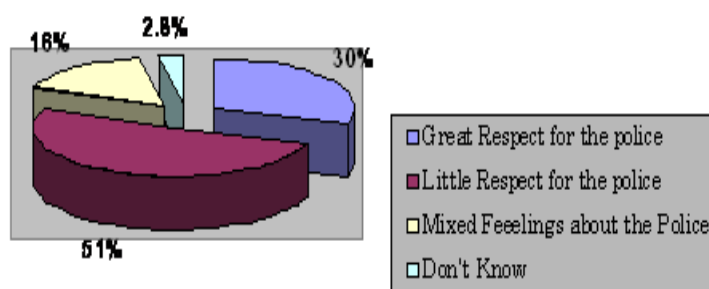
*Instead of protecting, they go against the law. It is obviously known that most of the police are there who have gun and give armed robbers information and engage in corruption.*

When broken down between in-school youths and out-of-school youths, a separation emerges. 76 percent of out-of-school youths reported having little respect or mixed feelings towards the police, compared to 60 percent of in-school youths. This is not surprising, given that out-of-school youths are far more likely to be from more disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds. The academic literature shows a strong correlation between higher poverty and

more unfavourable views of the police. Interestingly enough, when these figures are broken down into LGAs, the responses show no significant differences between the high density, low density, and medium density communities, in regard to levels of respect for the police. This could be a result of a higher proportion of respondents' for this particular study attending school in the high density neighbourhood.

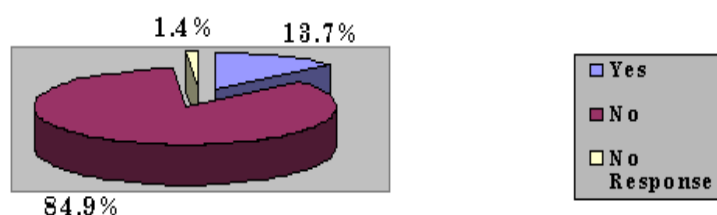
When we cross tabulated to examine the impact that gender had on young people's respect for the police, it was found that females have slightly less respect for the police than males. 27 percent of females surveyed have great respect for the police, compared to 33 percent of males. However, 51 percent of females surveyed have little respect for the police, compared to 52 percent of males. The results are clearly mixed and do not show significant differentiation to indicate a clear correlation between gender and level of respect for the police.

**Fig: How Much Respect Respondents Have for the Police based on what the Know of how they do their jobs**



Data from the study revealed that only 49 or 13.7% of the youths polled had asked the police for help, while the vast majority (303 or 84.9%) had never done so. These low numbers can be explained by the negative perceptions of the police by most young people, and a fundamental lack of trust that's developed over the years. Young people do not believe that the police will provide them with competent assistance and have their best interests at heart.

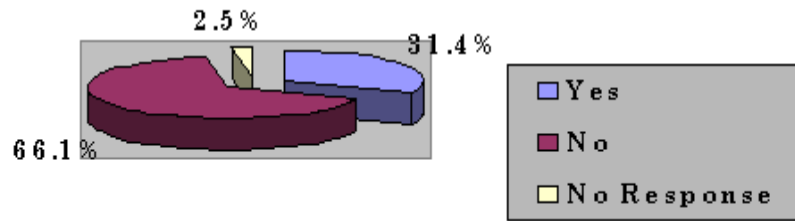
**Fig : Whether Respondents Have Ever Asked Police for Help**



Data showed a positive variation when compared across local government areas in terms of the proportion of respondents who ever asked the police for help. In Ajeromi- Ifelodun local government area, which is low income and high density, 8.9% of the respondents had asked the police for help in the past year. The figures for Surulere, which is a medium income and medium density area, and Eti- Osa which is a high income and low density area are 12.6% and 20.3%, respectively. These findings support findings from the US and Europe, which asserts that youths in higher income areas tend to bestow more legitimacy on the police than those in low income areas, thus making them more likely to seek help. In high crime, low income areas, young people often blame the poor conditions on police incompetence and failure to deal with crime effectively. Therefore, they do not view the police as a viable option to turn to in times of distress (Leiber et al. 1998; Reisig and Parks 2000; Sims et al. 2002; Taylor et al. 2001; Williams 1999) .

A total of 348 of the respondents volunteered information on whether they have ever been stopped by the police. 31.4% responded in the affirmative while 236 or 66.1% reported that they have not been stopped by the police before.

**Fig : Whether Respondents Have Ever Been Stopped by the Police**



The sheer number of young people stopped by the police is striking. Youths tend to spend a lot of time in public spaces, which increases the likelihood that they will encounter the police. It also increases the likelihood that they will be victims of violent crime or property crime. When police initiate the contact with juveniles, Hinds suggests that it's more likely that the contact will be viewed as negative by the youth. With more than 31 percent of respondents stopped by the police, there is a risk that a large proportion of these encounters are fomenting negative attitudes (Hinds 2007).

Looking at those youths taken to the police station, only 32 percent of respondents said that they believed they were treated fairly while in custody, as opposed to 38 percent who said they were treated unfairly and another 30 percent claiming they were treated very unfairly. Of those respondents who claimed they were treated unfairly or very unfairly, 56 percent view the police with little respect and 14 percent have mixed feelings about the police. This data supports the theory that negative experiences with the police lead to negative attitudes towards the police and their overall legitimacy, supporting the ideas brought forward by researchers like Griffiths and Winfree (1982), Hurst and Frank (2000), and Janeksela (1999). One female respondent provided a chilling account of a negative experience that permanently altered her attitude towards the police:

*I remember when my father had a police case, a D.P.O. that was supposed to help us was trying to have contact with me and my elder sister that before he will help my father he is going to make love to us so we rejected it.*

Furthermore, when looking at the attitudes of those young people who witnessed poor treatment of their peers by the police, a similar pattern emerges. Of those respondents who witnessed the police treating other juveniles poorly, 52 percent viewed the police with little respect and 18 percent had mixed feelings. This validates the idea that young people who have witnessed mistreatment of their peers by the police will also view the police in an unfavourable light.

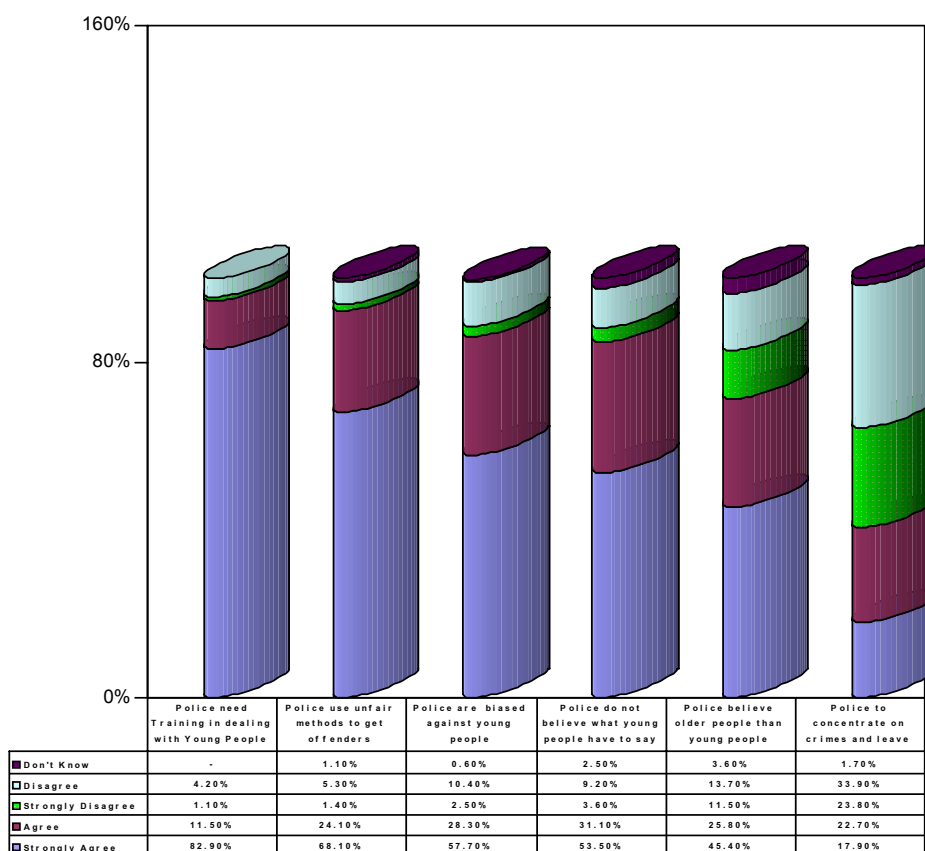
In our employment of sub-cultural theory to explain the antagonistic views youths hold towards the police, we have found mixed evidence. The vast majority of those surveyed, regardless of social status, neighbourhood of residence, or income level, have high levels of respect for teachers, the government, elders, their parents, and other authority figures. In fact, one of the only institutions that does not engender high levels of respect among youths is the police. These findings somewhat contradict the claims that young people in high risk environments such as slums, broken homes, and socioeconomic insecurity are more likely to participate in a subculture that rejects most symbols of authority. The reason for the disparity between the findings in Nigeria and Europe and North America could be related to the nature of this survey. The survey threw out a wide net and targeted youths generally, from a variety of backgrounds and economic circumstances. A survey that targeted youths who have been through the criminal justice system would probably generate more support for sub-cultural theory. Also, the origin of the police in Nigeria as a colonial occupation force has coloured perceptions to this day. Therefore, where Nigerians tend to bestow great respect upon other institutions, respect for police lags behind, due to the memory of the militarized and repressive police apparatus of the colonial era.

The claims of Cloward and Olin (1960) are largely supported by the findings of this study, however. Young people from the poorer, higher density Ajeromi-Ifelodun LGA bestow less legitimacy on the police than the more affluent LGA's included in the study. This stems from the feelings of inadequacy that young people face in competition with their better prepared middle class peers, as well as the anger and resentment that's borne from the chaotic slum environment where they reside (Cohen 1955).

Looking at gender, we found that no discernible pattern of differentiation emerges when we cross tabulate for gender. Girls have slightly less favorable views of the police, but the findings are not significant enough to lead to the conclusion that gender has a significant impact on the way young people view the police.

Clearly, the negative perception of the police is palpable among youths. When looking for answers to the problem, respondents shined some light on possible solutions in their response to several statements.

**Fig. :Respondents Opinions About the Police**





Most importantly, a staggering 82.5 percent of respondents strongly agreed that “the police need more training in dealing with young people.” The responses to this and other statements shows that youths hold a strong perception that police are not properly equipped to respond to their needs and concerns, that they are essentially out of touch.

In Nigeria, there is no special police unit designed solely to deal with young people, as there is in many parts of the United States and Europe. The police, therefore, deal with criminal youths such as Area Boys on a daily basis, and then suddenly must interact with juveniles who are not criminal threats. The experience of dealing with hardened criminals leads them to treat even harmless juveniles as potential threats. Without proper training to work with young people, the police view them all through a criminal lens (Hayes 1998).

## Chapter Five

### Police Perception and Handling of Youth Issues

The findings from the surveys with the police reveal that, as one would expect, the distrust and hostility in the relationship between police and young people is mutual. In our analysis, we will attempt to explain some of the reasons for this hostility on the part of the police. We will also analyze how police perceptions impact their behaviour towards young people, and therefore, the attitudes young people garner that were discussed above. We will also discuss whether the findings from this study supports the academic literature mentioned in the first section, which claims that negative interactions with delinquent young people among general duty police officers contributes to an overall negative attitude and suspicion towards juveniles.

In the survey, when asked whether they found young people difficult to deal with, 63 percent of respondents answered in the affirmative.

**Table 5.1: Do you find young people difficult to deal with?**

	Frequency	Percentage
YES	75	63.0
NO	43	36.1
NO RESPONSE	1	0.8
TOTAL	119	100

When asked why this is so, 37 percent of respondents said it was because youths are disrespectful, 16 percent because they are unruly, and 24 percent because they are violent. Clearly, police view many young people as a potential criminal threat and often treat them as such. One police officer, in an in depth interview, discussed why youths are often criminalized:

*Like I told you most of the crime being committed in our society is being committed by the active segment of the society those between the age of 16, 25 to 40.*

**Table 5.2; If yes, why is this so?**

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	UNRULY	19	16.0
	VIOLENT	28	23.5
	DISRESPECTFUL	44	37
	INTELLIGENT	4	3.4
	EXPOSED TO FOREIGN INFLUENCE	13	10.9

When we cross tabulate the data on police views towards young people with the socioeconomic environment where police work, the attitudes become more sharpened. While 54.5 percent of police who describe their work environment as low density neighbourhoods find young people difficult to deal with, that number jumps to 64 percent in medium and high density neighbourhoods. Police working in slums encounter more young criminals than those in affluent neighbourhoods. As a result, they are more prone to view young people as a criminal threat and difficult to deal with. Experiences with Area Boys and gangs in these poor neighborhoods exacerbate those perceptions. Although the criminal elements are only a fraction of the total youth population, these experiences help foster a blanket view of young people as trouble among the police. Additionally, young people spend a lot of time in public spaces, where most crimes are committed. The time spent in public places also increases the likelihood that young people will encounter the police on a daily basis, and that there will be suspicion of criminal activity (Hinds 2007).

When we cross tabulated for gender, we found that slightly more women view young people as difficult to deal with than men. 67 percent of female police officers found young people difficult to deal with, compared with 62 percent of male police officers. These findings are not strong enough to suggest a possible pattern of female police officers viewing young people more negatively.

The sample size of female police officers, at 32, is too small to accurately give an impression of female officer attitudes towards youths.

Lack of training on how to deal with young people makes the problem worse. When asked about whether they have received in service training on how to deal with young people, only 28 percent of respondents replied in the affirmative, while 68 percent admitted that they had received no formal training. Of those who received training, 56 percent found young people difficult to deal with, compared to 69 percent of those who did not receive the training. Clearly, exposure to the issues facing youths and learning constructive methods of communication with juveniles positively impacts the way police view them.

The need for training is further highlighted by the responses to a question asked about the main problems in police-youth relations. The most common response, from 42 percent of respondents, was misunderstanding.

**TABLE 5.3: What do you think are the main problems in police-youth relations today?**

	RESPONSES	NO RESPONSE	TOTAL
MISUNDERSTANDING	49(41.2%)	70(58.8%)	119(100%)
DISOBEDIENCE	49(41.2%)	70(58.8%)	119(100%)
INADEQUATE TRAINING	6(5.0%)	113(95.0%)	119(100%)
VIOLENCE AMONG YOUTHS	9(7.6%)	110(92.4%)	119(100%)
YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT	31(26.1%)	88(73.9%)	119(100%)
LACK OF EDUCATION ON THE PART OF THE YOUTH	30(25.2%)	89(74.8%)	119(100%)

Misunderstanding breeds mutual suspicion, and ultimately, hostility on both sides. Training that deals with some of the issues that engender misunderstanding is crucial to improving the relationship.

Turning towards police views towards the use of force on young people, the police themselves admit that too much physical force is used on juveniles. 62 percent of respondents' said that some police officers use too much force on young people.

**Table 5.4 Do you think some police officers use too much force in dealing with young people?**

	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
YES	74	62.2%
NO	42	35.3%
NO RESPONSE	3	2.5%
TOTAL	119	100%

While readily acknowledging that their colleagues too often abuse their power in their interactions with youths, their responses also reveal a skewed impression of when the utilization of force is necessary. Nearly 50 percent of respondents said that they had found it necessary to use force on a young person in the past year. When asked why, 16 percent claimed it was because they were disobedient and almost 12 percent claimed it was because they refused to answer. For the most part, these are not behaviors that necessitate the use of force on the part of police, yet police officers saw it differently. One respondent from the in depth interviews, when asked about the use of force, says:

*... it is only when we have people that are hardened we use minimal force.*

**TABLE 5.5: Why did you have to apply force on a young person?**

	RESPONSE	NO RESPONSE	TOTAL
UNRULY	(14)11.9%	105(88.1%)	119(100%)
DISOBEDIENT	19(16.0%)	100(84.0%)	119(100%)
VIOLENT	31(26.0%)	88(74.0%)	119(100%)
REFUSE TO ANSWER	14(11.8%)	105(88.2%)	119(100%)
RESISTED ARRESTED	21(17.6%)	98(82.4%)	119(100%)

The unnecessary use of force is largely a result of the broad perception of youth criminality discussed above. In thinking that juveniles pose a threat, police are more likely to overreact and abuse their power. This contributes to the perception among youths that they are treated unfairly and with hostility by the police.

Certainly, there are real crimes committed by youths and real bad behaviour by young people that contributes to this attitude among the police. Nearly 74 percent of respondents reported having been harassed or assaulted by young people in the past year. 76 percent of respondents believe that very few young people that they contact have respect for authority and the police.

**TABLE 5.6: How many young people that you come in contact with have respect for authority, particularly the police?**

	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
VERY FEW	29	24.4
A FEW	62	52.1
ABOUT HALF	4	3.4
MOST	15	12.6
NEARLY ALL	8	6.7
NO RESPONSE	1	0.8
TOTAL	119	100

The negative nature of encounters between young people and the police exacerbates the already strained relationship, and leads to some of the poor treatment already mentioned. Part of the reason for this is because there is very little contact with police ever initiated by young people. In the survey of youths discussed in the previous section, the vast majority never went to the police for help or initiated contact. A contact that is initiated by a young person is much more likely to be positive in nature. Almost all interactions are initiated by the police, making it more likely that the encounter is based on suspicion of wrongdoing. The likelihood that the encounter is going to be

hostile is clearly greater when there is police discipline involved. Because they spend the majority of their time dealing with youths who may be causing trouble, rather than the youth population as a whole, police have developed negative perceptions that youths often harass them and show little respect. This supports the literature asserting that the negative nature of police encounters with youths often leads to a suspicion of criminality among youths in general, and a negative overall attitude (Hinds 2007).

## Chapter Six

### Conclusions and Recommendations

This study has revealed that the majority of interactions between juveniles and the police take place in a law enforcement capacity. Interactions within this sphere are bound to be hostile and rife with suspicion. Young people distrust the police enough to avoid seeking their assistance, often limiting police contacts to these negative encounters. Because police experience limited positive contacts with youths, a stereotypical attitude that views juveniles as troublemakers and potential criminals has emerged. Young people, because their encounters with police almost always involve interrogation and suspicion from the authority figures, feel persecuted and abused by law enforcement.

These attitudes are likely to be more prevalent in low income communities, where crime rates are higher and the threat of criminal activity raises tensions and increases distrust between police and youths. The mutual suspicion decreases the likelihood that young people will go to the police for help and also decreases the possibility that they will cooperate with the police.

The following recommendations should be implemented to improve the relationship between the police and young people:

- A special unit trained to deal with young people will foster better relationships by initiating more positive interactions. They will also participate in more constructive engagements, such as crime prevention workshops at schools. Officers in the unit will better understand youth culture and youth perspectives to prevent many of the misunderstandings that often lead to conflict. Through positive police-youth contacts, we can begin to mitigate the unhealthy cycle of mistrust and suspicion that defines the current relationship.
- Youth and police forums can provide a healthy environment for both the police and young people to address grievances. Through dialogue, greater understanding can be reached and ideas for improving youth-



police relationships can be brought forward. Problems can be addressed and possible solutions can be discussed. A constructive dialogue will emerge that will improve the quality of youth-police contacts, as well as contributing strategies to enhance the quality of contacts when police officers are out on the beat and youths are occupying public spaces.

Additionally, the problem of youth-police hostility should be looked at through a broader societal lens. There are a number of socioeconomic factors that lead to youth vagrancy and disillusionment, which fuels hostile relations between the two camps. Poor education and lack of economic opportunities leave many young people marginalized. Feeling unrepresented politically, many youths drift through their adolescence and become vulnerable to conflict with law enforcement. Here are several educational, economic, and political remedies which the Lagos State government should look to implement in order to improve relations between youths and the police.

#### **Educational Solutions:**

- Prioritize technical education in secondary schools by reviving old and establishing new technical colleges in all states of the federation in order to equip young people with the skill sets and competencies that would enable them to be meaningfully engaged after graduation.
- Establish skill acquisition and vocational education centres across the states to equip young people who are not able to go to tertiary institutions with artisanal skills that would enable them to establish small businesses of their own instead of engaging in endless search for non-existent jobs. This would promote artisanship as a foundation for the development of the productive base of our economy should be encouraged
- Carry out a fundamental review of curricula used in schools from primary to tertiary institutions in Nigeria in order to make them more responsive to manpower needs of Nigeria in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**Economic Solutions:**

- Government should encourage financial institutions to give more start up credits to young business people by relaxing the stringent collateral facilities required before loans can be granted and focus more on financing sound business plans and ideas.
- Manpower needs audits should be conducted by federal and state governments in order to identify skill set areas where more young people are needed and areas where we have surplus for outsourcing. This would enable the targeting of resources to areas where more qualified young people are needed and areas that we need to promote for overseas jobs through economic diplomacy.

**Political Solutions:**

- The vote of the electorate must count so that only people who won through the ballot can be entrusted to political positions.
- Laws and policies that impede the aspiration of young people to highest positions of political authority need to be reviewed.

Through dialogue and increased mutual understanding, much of the hostility between police and young people can be mitigated. A stronger relationship between the two stakeholders will mean that young people will be more likely to report crimes and ask for help when its needed, less likely to commit criminal offenses, and more likely to cooperate when questioned by the police. The police will be less likely to abuse or harass youths and will benefit from increased cooperation. If the proper steps are taken, the relationship can and will improve for the better.

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