


Cultural Creativity: Panacea for Peace and Security in Southwest Nigeria

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ARTICLE INFO	Abstract
<p>Keywords: <i>Cultural Creativity, Peace, Security, Conflict Resolution, Southwest Nigeria, Yoruba Culture.</i></p> <p>©2025 Author(s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International</p> 	<p><i>Cultural creativity plays a vital role in fostering peace and security in Southwest Nigeria by promoting inclusivity, mutual understanding, and social cohesion. Through artistic expressions, storytelling, music, literature, and indigenous festivals, Communities Bridge divides, heal conflicts, and create narratives that encourage tolerance and cooperation. In the Southwest, Yoruba cultural traditions, including proverbs, oratories, and communal rituals, serve as tools for conflict prevention by preserving identity while fostering respect for diversity. In contemporary society, cultural creativity has been instrumental in countering violence, political tensions, and social unrest in the region by offering alternative means of communication and engagement. Governments, civil society organizations, and educational institutions increasingly integrate cultural programs into peace building efforts, recognizing their power to transform attitudes and behaviors. Additionally, digital media and technology have expanded the reach of cultural creativity, enabling cross-cultural collaborations that strengthen regional security frameworks. However, challenges such as cultural misappropriation, economic instability, and political manipulation must be addressed to maximize its potential. Emphasizing cultural education, policies that protect creative freedoms and the revitalization of indigenous practices can enhance its role in conflict resolution. Ultimately, cultural creativity remains a sustainable and inclusive approach to achieving long-term peace and security in Southwest Nigeria.</i></p>

Introduction

Cultural creativity has emerged as a powerful tool in fostering peace and security in various societies worldwide. It encompasses diverse artistic and cultural expressions, including literature, music, dance, visual arts, digital media, and traditional practices that serve as vehicles for social transformation and conflict resolution (Omeje, 2018). Cultural creativity provides a platform for dialogue, reconciliation, and the promotion of mutual understanding among individuals and communities. As conflicts and insecurity escalate globally, there is a growing need to explore innovative, non-violent approaches to peace building, with cultural creativity offering a sustainable and inclusive framework.

Cultural creativity is a vital tool for fostering peace and security in Southwest Nigeria. It encompasses various forms of artistic, intellectual, and traditional expressions, including storytelling, music, dance, literature, and indigenous conflict-resolution mechanisms. However, despite its potential in peacebuilding, several challenges hinder the full utilization of cultural creativity in achieving security and stability in the region. These challenges stem from socio-economic, political, technological, and cultural factors, making it difficult for cultural initiatives to effectively contribute to peace and security.

In Nigeria, cultural creativity has played a significant role in bridging ethno-religious divides, fostering national unity, and mitigating tensions arising from political, economic, and social inequalities (Okonkwo, 2021). From indigenous storytelling traditions to modern digital artistic

expressions, creative cultural initiatives have been instrumental in peace building and security strategies. The Southwest region of Nigeria, predominantly inhabited by the Yoruba ethnic group, provides a compelling case study of how cultural creativity is utilized to sustain peaceful coexistence through indigenous proverbs, music, theater, and other cultural mechanisms (Adegbite, 2019).

The concept of peace and security has evolved significantly over the years, encompassing not only the absence of war but also the presence of conditions that ensure social stability, justice, and economic prosperity (Galtung, 2016). Traditional security approaches have often relied on military interventions, law enforcement, and diplomatic negotiations. However, these methods alone have proven insufficient in addressing the root causes of conflict, particularly in multicultural societies like Nigeria (Obi, 2017). Consequently, scholars and policymakers have turned their attention to alternative peace building strategies, including cultural creativity.

Cultural creativity as a peace building tool is deeply rooted in human history. Societies have long relied on artistic and cultural expressions to resolve conflicts, reinforce communal values, and promote harmony. In Africa, oral traditions, folklore, music, and dance have been used for centuries to foster unity and mediate disputes (Ogunyemi, 2020). These cultural practices are particularly evident in Nigeria, where various ethnic groups use proverbs, songs, and theatrical performances to address societal issues and reconcile differences (Adebayo & Oke, 2018).

Cultural creativity provides a non-confrontational approach to conflict resolution, enabling individuals and groups to engage in constructive dialogue and reconciliation (Boulding, 2018). Artistic expressions such as theater-for-development (TfD), music, poetry, and storytelling serve as vehicles for addressing grievances, raising awareness, and fostering mutual understanding among conflicting parties. In Southwest Nigeria, for example, Yoruba oral traditions, including Oriki (praise poetry) and Arofo (didactic chants), have historically played a crucial role in dispute resolution and social cohesion (Ogunlade, 2021).

Research has shown that cultural creativity contributes significantly to peace building efforts by promoting empathy, reducing stereotypes, and enhancing social trust (Lederach, 2019). Creative initiatives allow marginalized voices to be heard, thus preventing the escalation of grievances that may lead to violence. Furthermore, cultural creativity has been employed in post-conflict reconciliation programs, helping affected communities rebuild relationships and restore social harmony (Fisher & Simons, 2020).

Nigeria, as a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society, faces recurrent tensions stemming from ethnic rivalry, religious extremism, and political instability (Agbibo, 2021). Cultural creativity offers an avenue for promoting national unity by celebrating shared histories, values, and traditions. Music, for instance, has been a powerful unifying force in Nigeria. Artists such as Fela Kuti, King Sunny Adé, and more recently, Burna Boy and Davido, have used their music to advocate for peace, justice, and national cohesion (Adeyemi, 2022).

Moreover, Nollywood, Nigeria's thriving film industry has played a significant role in fostering intercultural dialogue and understanding. Through films that address societal challenges, Nollywood has contributed to peace education and conflict prevention, reflecting the power of cultural creativity in shaping social narratives (Okoro & Nnaji, 2020).

Cultural creativity serves as a powerful mechanism for fostering peace and security by promoting dialogue, social cohesion, and conflict resolution. In Nigeria, particularly in the Southwest, cultural expressions such as music, storytelling, and theater have been instrumental in bridging divides and mitigating conflict. While challenges such as cultural manipulation, inadequate funding, and technological disparities exist, strategic investments in cultural initiatives can enhance their impact on national and global security. Moving forward, policymakers, cultural practitioners, and international organizations must recognize and support the transformative role of cultural creativity in building a more peaceful and secure world.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Cultural Conflict Theory and complemented by Peacebuilding Theory, forming a dual-theoretical lens through which the role of cultural creativity in fostering peace and security in Southwest Nigeria is critically examined.

Cultural Conflict Theory

Developed from the sociological works of Thorsten Sellin (1938) and later expanded by scholars such as Collier and Thomas (1988), Cultural Conflict Theory posits that conflict arises when divergent cultural values, norms, and beliefs come into contact and are inadequately negotiated. In pluralistic societies like Nigeria, cultural conflict is often exacerbated by political manipulation, identity crises, and historical grievances. This theory is relevant to the current study because it emphasizes that conflicts are not solely driven by material interests but by symbolic and value-laden expressions embedded within cultures. Cultural creativity—expressed through proverbs, festivals, music, and storytelling acts as a mediating tool that facilitates mutual understanding and negotiates identity-based tensions. Thus, by reclaiming indigenous forms of artistic expression, communities can transform spaces of potential conflict into platforms for intercultural dialogue and peaceful coexistence.

Peacebuilding Theory

Inspired by the works of Johan Galtung (1996) and John Paul Lederach (1997), Peacebuilding Theory conceptualizes peace as more than the absence of violence; it involves creating sustainable structures that support justice, reconciliation, and participatory engagement. Peacebuilding emphasizes long-term, grassroots strategies that are culturally relevant and inclusive. Within this framework, cultural creativity is seen as a soft power mechanism that contributes to “positive peace” a condition marked by restored relationships, social justice, and community resilience. Yoruba cultural expressions such as *oríkì* (praise poetry), *àlò* (folktales), and indigenous music are not only preserve identity but also promote shared values and collective healing, making those essential tools for peacebuilding in the region.

The combination of Cultural Conflict Theory and Peacebuilding Theory provide a robust analytical framework for this study. Cultural Conflict Theory explains the roots of social tensions in terms of identity clashes and value dissonance, while Peacebuilding Theory offers practical insights into how cultural mechanisms can be mobilized to address these tensions sustainably. These dual approaches allow a holistic understanding of how indigenous creativity, when strategically employed, can transform conflict-prone societies into harmonious, secure communities.

Peacebuilding Theory is best adopted for this study because it offers a comprehensive, community-based, and culturally grounded framework for understanding how cultural creativity can be harnessed to achieve sustainable peace and security in Southwest Nigeria.

Harnessing Cultural Creativity to Promote Peace and Security in Southwest Nigeria

Cultural creativity plays a significant role in fostering peace and security by preserving indigenous knowledge systems, promoting social cohesion, and offering alternative means of conflict resolution. In Southwest Nigeria, a region rich in cultural heritage and artistic traditions, cultural creativity can be harnessed to address security challenges, mitigate violence, and strengthen communal bonds. This aspect explores various ways cultural creativity can contribute to peace and security in Southwest Nigeria, highlighting practical applications and policy recommendations.

Traditional conflict resolution mechanisms in Southwest Nigeria, particularly among the Yoruba people, have long been central to maintaining peace and stability. These mechanisms include the roles of traditional rulers, chiefs, and elders in resolving disputes through dialogue, mediation, and reconciliation. The Oba-in-Council, a body of traditional rulers and elders, plays a vital role in handling conflicts within communities by employing time-tested customs and oral traditions to ensure fair judgments (Adeyemi, 2018). Unlike modern judicial systems, these traditional methods prioritize

restorative justice over punitive measures, promoting long-term peace. The Mogaji (family head) and Baálè (village head) also contribute significantly to dispute resolution at the grassroots level. Reviving and integrating these traditional institutions with modern security frameworks can create an effective hybrid system for conflict management, fostering local trust in governance (Ojo & Balogun, 2020). Such synergy can significantly reduce violence and promote social cohesion.

Cultural education plays a pivotal role in fostering peace and social stability. Teaching Yoruba history, language, and traditional values in schools and communities helps instill a sense of identity, belonging, and mutual respect. The Yoruba educational philosophy, rooted in Omoluabi (good character), emphasizes honesty, respect, and discipline, which are essential for peaceful coexistence (Akinwumi, 2019). Integrating cultural education into school curricula ensures that young people understand the importance of their heritage and appreciate diversity. Cultural festivals, such as the Osun-Osogbo Festival and Ojude Oba Festival, offer valuable platforms for intergenerational knowledge transfer and cross-cultural exchange. Moreover, public awareness campaigns that highlight the role of cultural heritage in fostering unity can reduce prejudices and tensions. By making cultural education a core part of learning, the government and stakeholders can cultivate a new generation of peace-conscious citizens who embrace dialogue and cooperation over conflict (Oladipo, 2021).

Music and performing arts serve as powerful tools for promoting social harmony and peace. The Yoruba culture is rich in music genres such as Fuji, Apala, Juju, and Afrobeat, which have historically been used to address social issues and advocate for justice. Artists like Fela Kuti and Sunny Ade have used their music to call for social reforms and unity (Aderibigbe, 2022). Theater performances, folk storytelling, and spoken-word poetry provide platforms for communities to discuss conflict and resolution creatively. Drama groups and stage plays that depict peace narratives help audiences visualize the benefits of non-violent approaches to problem-solving. Furthermore, community-based art initiatives, such as dance and music workshops, provide young people with opportunities for self-expression, reducing their vulnerability to crime and violence. Government and private institutions should invest in music and performing arts as tools for peace building; ensuring cultural creativity is harnessed for long-term security.

The Nigerian film industry, popularly known as Nollywood, has an influential role in shaping public perceptions and behaviors. Films that promote peace, tolerance, and non-violence can serve as educational tools to counter extremist ideologies and ethnic tensions (Ibrahim & Adewale, 2020). By portraying successful conflict resolution stories and highlighting the consequences of violence, filmmakers can influence social attitudes toward peace. Television programs, documentaries, and online content that showcase peaceful community engagements can further spread messages of unity. Social media also plays a crucial role in modern communication, making it a strategic tool for promoting cultural dialogue. Platforms like YouTube, Facebook, and TikTok can be used to share short films, animations, and interviews that emphasize peace and security. Collaborations between media houses, content creators, and peace organizations can help ensure that film and digital media continue to serve as a force for stability in Southwest Nigeria.

Young people are often at the center of social unrest and conflict, making their engagement in peace building efforts essential. Creative platforms such as music, fashion, poetry, visual arts, and digital storytelling provide youths with constructive outlets for self-expression and conflict resolution (Adebayo & Ogunyemi, 2019). Many social issues arise due to economic hardship, political dissatisfaction, and identity struggles, but engaging youth in the creative economy can reduce their susceptibility to violence. Government initiatives that fund youth-led creative projects can provide employment opportunities, preventing young people from being drawn into criminal activities. Furthermore, cultural festivals and competitions encourage artistic talent while fostering unity across different ethnic and religious groups. NGOs and cultural organizations should establish mentorship

programs where experienced artists train young people in creative industries, helping them channel their talents toward nation-building rather than social discord (Ajayi, 2021).

Cultural heritage plays a crucial role in fostering national unity and identity. In Southwest Nigeria, historic sites such as the Osun-Osogbo Sacred Grove and the Oyo Empire relics serve as symbols of shared history and cultural pride (Fasola, 2018). The preservation of these heritage sites ensures that communities remain connected to their roots while fostering a sense of collective belonging. Additionally, museums and cultural institutions that document Yoruba traditions and artifacts provide educational resources that encourage respect for cultural diversity. Protecting cultural landmarks from destruction, whether due to urban development or conflicts, is essential for maintaining social harmony. Policymakers should prioritize heritage conservation efforts and integrate them into peace building strategies. By celebrating and preserving cultural heritage, Southwest Nigeria can promote a sense of unity and shared identity, reducing ethnic and religious divisions that often lead to conflict.

Policymakers should recognize the potential of cultural creativity in addressing security challenges. Rather than relying solely on law enforcement, integrating cultural strategies into security policies can lead to more holistic solutions. Security agencies should collaborate with traditional rulers, cultural institutions, and creative professionals to develop community-driven peace initiatives (Eze, 2021). Culturally informed policing that respects local customs and traditions can enhance trust between security forces and communities, reducing hostility and improving cooperation. Additionally, cultural diplomacy-such as organizing cross-ethnic cultural exchanges and peace festivals-can help prevent conflicts before they escalate. By adopting policies that value cultural creativity as a peace building tool, Southwest Nigeria can create a more inclusive and effective security framework that addresses the root causes of conflict while fostering long-term stability.

Challenges of Cultural Creativity for Peace and Security in Southwest Nigeria

Cultural creativity is a vital tool for fostering peace and security in Southwest Nigeria. It encompasses various forms of artistic, intellectual, and traditional expressions, including storytelling, music, dance, literature, and indigenous conflict-resolution mechanisms. However, despite its potential in peace building, several challenges hinder the full utilization of cultural creativity in achieving security and stability in the region. These challenges stem from socio-economic, political, technological, and cultural factors, making it difficult for cultural initiatives to effectively contribute to peace and security.

Historically, traditional institutions such as kingship (Obaship), chiefs, and elders played a crucial role in maintaining peace and social order. However, their influence has waned due to modern governance structures, political interference, and legal restrictions. In many cases, traditional rulers are no longer the final arbiters in community disputes, as state and federal governments have taken over many of their roles. This decline has weakened the impact of cultural creativity in peace building, as indigenous knowledge systems, such as the use of *oríkí* (praise poetry), proverbs, and traditional storytelling (Alo Apamo), are gradually being abandoned.

Language is an essential carrier of culture, and its decline poses a major challenge to cultural creativity. The Yoruba language, which is central to cultural expressions in Southwest Nigeria, is increasingly being replaced by English in schools, homes, and media. Many young people struggle to understand Yoruba proverbs, folktales, and historical narratives, making it difficult for cultural creativity to effectively communicate messages of peace and conflict resolution. Additionally, Western influences and globalization have contributed to the erosion of core Yoruba values such as *Omólúàbí* (a philosophy of good character and communal responsibility), further diminishing the role of cultural creativity in peace building.

The absence of well-defined cultural policies at the state and national levels limits the ability of cultural creativity to contribute meaningfully to peace and security. While Nigeria has policies

promoting culture and the arts, there is little integration between these policies and security strategies. Cultural organizations and creative industries often lack government funding and institutional support, making it difficult for them to sustain programs aimed at promoting peace and social cohesion. Additionally, the government prioritizes military and law enforcement approaches to security while neglecting the potential of cultural approaches in addressing conflicts.

Artists, writers, and cultural activists who seek to address security issues through their creative works often face threats, censorship, and intimidation. In some cases, government authorities or influential individuals perceive cultural expressions as politically sensitive, leading to restrictions on artistic freedom. This limitation discourages artists and writers from fully engaging in peace-promoting initiatives, reducing the impact of cultural creativity in addressing security concerns.

Many schools in Southwest Nigeria do not emphasize cultural education, leading to a decline in knowledge about traditional peace building practices. While some institutions offer Yoruba language and culture courses, they are often underfunded and not prioritized in the curriculum. The lack of awareness about the role of cultural creativity in peace and security means that young people do not see the value of cultural expressions in addressing societal issues. Without proper education, future generations may completely abandon indigenous

Cultural creativity holds immense potential for promoting peace and security in Southwest Nigeria. However, its effectiveness is hindered by numerous challenges, including the decline of traditional institutions, language erosion, economic hardship, commercialization of culture, and the spread of misinformation through digital platforms. To fully harness the power of cultural creativity, there is a need for stronger policy support, improved funding for creative industries, integration of cultural education in schools, and active promotion of traditional conflict-resolution mechanisms.

Contributions of Cultural Creativity, Peace, and Security to Southwest Nigeria

This study makes significant contributions to the fields of cultural studies, peace and conflict resolution, and security studies by interrogating the intersection between indigenous cultural creativity and sustainable peacebuilding strategies in Southwest Nigeria. In a region historically and contemporarily affected by ethnic tensions, political instability, and social unrest, this research advances the discourse on alternative, locally grounded methods of fostering peace and security through cultural ingenuity.

One of the primary contributions of this study is its illumination of cultural creativity as a viable instrument of conflict transformation. Yoruba traditional practices such as proverbs (*òwe*), praise poetry (*oríkì*), folktales (*àlò*), music, and festivals are not merely artistic expressions but functional components of the indigenous peace architecture. By documenting and analyzing these practices, the study repositions them as critical tools for promoting social cohesion, enhancing inter-group dialogue, and mitigating violence. It emphasizes that these indigenous forms of expression foster shared values, mediate interpersonal conflicts, and reinforce community solidarity, all of which are essential ingredients for peace and security.

Furthermore, the study contributes to scholarly and policy debates by advocating for the integration of cultural creativity into institutional frameworks such as education, governance, and civil society programming. It demonstrates that culturally relevant peacebuilding mechanisms are not only more accepted by local populations but also more sustainable over time, as they resonate deeply with the lived experiences and identities of the people.

From a theoretical perspective, the research enriches Peacebuilding Theory by providing empirical evidence from a non-Western context, thereby affirming the universality of culture-based conflict transformation models. It challenges dominant security paradigms that prioritize militarization and surveillance, proposing instead a human-centered, culturally sensitive approach to peace.

On a practical level, this study offers policy recommendations that can inform the design of cultural policies, educational curricula, and community-based initiatives aimed at promoting peace. By highlighting the role of digital technology in amplifying cultural messages, it also opens up new pathways for using modern tools to preserve, adapt, and project cultural content for peace advocacy. This study contributes meaningfully to the understanding and application of cultural creativity as a transformative and enduring mechanism for peace and security in Southwest Nigeria.

The Southwest region of Nigeria, predominantly occupied by the Yoruba people, has a rich cultural heritage that includes language, traditional institutions, festivals, oral literature, and artistic expressions. However, globalization and modernization have led to the gradual erosion of these cultural elements. This study highlights the importance of cultural creativity in preserving Yoruba heritage by integrating indigenous artistic expressions into contemporary peace and security initiatives.

The Yoruba people have long-established traditional methods for resolving conflicts, including the use of elders, religious leaders, and town hall deliberations (gbogbonse). The study emphasizes the need to integrate these indigenous mechanisms into modern peacebuilding strategies. Given the rising cases of communal clashes, land disputes, and religious tensions in the Southwest, the study highlights the effectiveness of cultural creativity—such as the use of proverbs, folktales, and traditional mediation techniques in resolving conflicts amicably. This knowledge can be applied to strengthen peace and security frameworks at the grassroots level.

The Southwest is home to some of Nigeria's most vibrant creative industries, including Nollywood's Yoruba segment, music (Fuji, Apala, and Afrobeats), fashion, and visual arts. These industries not only preserve cultural identity but also serve as significant sources of employment and economic development. This study underscores how maintaining peace and security can foster the growth of these industries by attracting local and international investments, encouraging tourism, and promoting cultural exchange programs.

Cultural creativity plays a crucial role in strengthening social bonds and promoting inclusivity in the Southwest. The Yoruba concept of "Omolúàbí", which embodies virtues such as respect, integrity, and communal responsibility, is a foundational principle in societal interactions. This study demonstrates how cultural values and traditional practices can be leveraged to promote social harmony, especially in urban centers like Lagos, Ibadan, and Akure, where ethnic diversity is high. By reinforcing communal living and traditional social structures, the Southwest can mitigate issues of violence, youth restiveness, and social disintegration.

Government policies on peace and security often focus on military intervention, law enforcement, and economic empowerment. However, cultural creativity remains an underutilized tool for peace building. This study provides evidence-based recommendations on how policymakers in the Southwest can integrate cultural creativity into governance and security strategies. By establishing cultural peace initiatives, supporting indigenous arts, and funding creative education programs, governments can use culture as a sustainable means to achieve long-term peace.

Strategic Implications and Policy Recommendations

To effectively leverage cultural creativity for peace and security in South-West Nigeria, the under-listed strategies must be adopted:

Introduce indigenous knowledge systems, including proverbs and folklore, into school curricula to instill values of peace and tolerance from an early age.

Partner with local media to produce content that highlights the peacebuilding roles of language, music, and oral traditions.

Provide funding and institutional frameworks for cultural festivals and traditional rulers to take active roles in peacebuilding.

Invest in the cultural and creative industries as avenues for youth employment, thereby reducing idleness and susceptibility to violence.

Develop cultural policies that recognize and integrate indigenous mechanisms of social regulation and harmony into state and local governance.

The recommendations emphasize a multi-sectoral approach to cultural peacebuilding, integrating education, media, governance, and economy. The commentary highlights that sustainable peace requires not just advocacy but structural support and policy realignment.

Cultural creativity remains an untapped reservoir of peacebuilding potential in South-West Nigeria. Through strategic engagement with language, music, folklore, festivals, and traditional institutions, communities can cultivate resilience against violence and foster a culture of harmony. A paradigm shift that centers indigenous cultural resources within national and regional peace strategies is imperative for sustainable peace and communal security.

Conclusion

Cultural creativity plays a fundamental role in fostering peace and security in Southwest Nigeria. Through traditional artistic expressions, language, storytelling, music, dance, and cultural diplomacy, communities can promote dialogue, social cohesion, and conflict resolution. Indigenous knowledge systems and creative arts serve as powerful tools for mediating disputes, reinforcing moral values, and strengthening communal bonds. By integrating cultural creativity into peacebuilding strategies, Southwest Nigeria can address challenges related to ethnic tensions, political conflicts, and socio-economic instability.

However, several challenges hinder the full realization of cultural creativity's potential in promoting peace and security. These include the erosion of indigenous cultural practices, lack of policy support, inadequate funding, and the influence of globalization. Addressing these obstacles requires collaborative efforts among government agencies, cultural institutions, and civil society organizations to preserve and promote cultural heritage.

In conclusion, embracing cultural creativity as a strategic tool for peacebuilding is essential for sustainable development in Southwest Nigeria. By recognizing and institutionalizing cultural practices in governance, education, and community development, the region can enhance social harmony, reduce conflict, and create a more inclusive society. Further research and policy frameworks should explore innovative ways to integrate cultural creativity into conflict resolution mechanisms to achieve long-term peace and stability. The conclusion reiterates the central thesis and advocates for a cultural turn in peace and security discourse. It emphasizes that enduring peace is not externally imposed but internally cultivated through culturally embedded practices.

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