



Arts and Culture and International Relations in Nigeria

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.51244/IJRSI.2026.1305000181>

Received: 25 April 2026; Accepted: 30 April 2026; Published: 06 June 2026

ABSTRACT

The general objective of the study was to examine the role of arts and culture in international relations. The study pursued the following specific objectives: to examine the roles of creative and performing arts in international relations, and to examine the roles of culture (sports and games) in international relations. The study employs liberal theory and soft power theory as its backbone. The study adopted the in-depth interview. The population was drawn from all 100 employees of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA); the total population was used due to its small size. The findings revealed that the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) were actively involved in art and culture, primarily through a non-profit initiative that partners with over 2,000 cultural institutions, museums, and archives from 80 countries. The agency was involved in Performing Arts: Music, sports and dance. Visual Arts: Painting, sculpture, and photography, Festivals and Culinary Arts, Symbolic Art and Public Diplomacy. Also, there is no need to finance art and culture activities, as they do not contribute to national or international development. Based on the results, it was concluded that arts and culture play significant roles in international relations. The paper recommended that Nigeria needs to fund and sponsor the creative and performing arts to give them greater prominence and further its national interests. The use of celebrity diplomats who wield influence in their respective fields should also be considered, and global actors (leaders and institutions) should value elements of local cultures in policymaking, even for organisations doing business in foreign lands. Such considerations are essential not only in policymaking but also in doing business.

Keywords: Arts, Culture, International, Relations, Sports.

INTRODUCTION

International relations is not just about policies and decision-making. It also has a profound impact on people's lives around the world. International relations play a crucial role in shaping our world today. It is a broad field that encompasses a wide range of social, economic and political interactions between nations. International relations are essential for understanding the complex interactions and connections between nations in the contemporary world. International relations is a dynamic and multifaceted field that encompasses various social, economic and political interactions between nations (Ahmed, 2020).

It also shapes the global economic system, regulates state behaviour, and determines the nature of the global order (Reus-Smit, 2020). In today's interconnected world, international relations are more crucial than ever. They promote peace and prevent conflicts by de-escalating tensions, reducing misunderstandings and promoting dialogue (Ahmed, 2020; Al-Rawashdeh & Al-Majali, 2017). International organisations like the United Nations and the International Court of Justice play a critical role in promoting peace and stability in the international system. The critical role of international relations is to promote international cooperation to address global issues



such as climate change, public health, poverty, and terrorism (Tsygankov, 2003). It also shapes the global economic system, regulates state behaviour, and determines the nature of the global order (Reus-Smit, 2020).

Arts and culture play a significant role in international relations by fostering mutual understanding, tolerance and cooperation. Art is a powerful medium through which people and communities may express their cultural identity. Cultural views, values, and experiences can be expressed through creative works in the visual arts, music, dance, literature, or theatre. Artists, as cultural ambassadors, can articulate universal thoughts and experiences that resonate with individuals from all walks of life (Reynolds, 2021). Cultural diplomacy plays a crucial role in international relations by fostering cross-cultural understanding and cooperation. Art, as a powerful medium of communication, transcends linguistic and political barriers, making it an essential tool for diplomacy. Historically, cultural diplomacy has been employed to ease tensions, rebuild post-conflict societies, and enhance international reputation through cultural exchange programs, exhibitions, and festivals (Tiberewa, 2025).

The importance of art and culture in human life cannot be underestimated. Since the beginning, men have tried to make their society pleasurable and beautiful. There are diverse works of art across different ethnic groups and tribes, with varying sociological compositions, in contemporary human society. Arts, in this regard, are classified into various areas such as visual arts, creative arts, performing arts, and so on. According to Tolstoy (2013), art is the area in which human activities are carried out and involves deliberately trying to exploit a range of outward and emotional signs to transmit their experiences to others. Art reflects the character of a society and reveals cultural and civilisational change. Art is regarded as the result of human reflection, thought, imagination, and artistic abilities (Abaci, 2013). Hence, art could be considered as representative of the society in which it was founded. There are numerous classifications of arts and culture. Arts, in this regard, are classified into various areas such as visual arts, creative arts, performing arts, and so on. Culture is also classified into various aspects, such as sports and games and music. However, this study focused on determining the roles of the creative and performing arts, sports, and games in international relations. Failing to incorporate arts and culture into international relations, a practice known as cultural diplomacy or soft power, results in significant negative consequences, including increased misunderstandings and conflicts, reduced global influence and trust, and missed economic and collaborative opportunities. Therefore, this study on the roles of arts and culture in international relations will help to ameliorate the challenges in international relations.

Nigeria's arts and culture are vital in international relations for enhancing its soft power, improving national image (nation branding), fostering mutual understanding, strengthening bilateral ties, and boosting economic opportunities through cultural diplomacy, with Nollywood, music, and festivals serving as powerful tools to project identity, counter stereotypes, and build bridges for deeper cooperation beyond traditional politics.

Unfortunately, political interference (propaganda/censorship), stereotyping, funding/resource issues, cultural clashes/misunderstandings, bureaucracy, and challenges in representation and inclusion all hinder genuine cross-cultural understanding and cooperation, despite art's potential for soft power, identity building, and peace building. Governments often struggle to balance artistic freedom with national interests, leading to art being used for political ends rather than genuine dialogue. There are various arts and cultures that countries can use to enhance their soft power, improve their national image (nation branding), foster mutual understanding, strengthen bilateral ties, and boost economic opportunities through cultural diplomacy. However, this study focused on creative and performing arts, sports and games in international relations. However, no research has been undertaken on the roles of art and culture in international relations in Nigeria. To fill this gap, this study investigated the roles of art and culture in international relations.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the roles of arts and culture in international relations. Specifically, this study sought to examine the following;

- i. To examine the roles of creative and performance arts in promoting international relations.
- ii. To examine the roles of sports and games in the country's international relations.



Research Questions.

This study aimed to answer the following research questions.

- i. What is the role of creative and performance arts in promoting international relations?
- ii. What is the role of sports and games in the country's international relations?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated for this study;

- i. Creative and performance arts do not play a significant role in international relations.
- ii. Sports and games do not play a significant role in international relations.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE.

Art

Banjoko (2000) defined art as the universal language through which man expresses himself in his cultural and natural environment, using materials, skills, and techniques to produce various works of beauty and aesthetic value. Art encompasses three common planes: "expression", "process", and "product". In other words, an idea is first expressed through a process such as drawing, sculpting or painting, and the result of the process is the product.

Culture

Culture, on the other hand, is a complete way of life for a specific society. (Familugba, 2021). Culture encompasses shared beliefs, values, practices, customs and artefacts that characterise a group or society, including language, religion, social organisation, arts and technology (Birukou, Blanzieri, Giorgini, & Giunchiglia, 2013). It shapes individual and collective identity, behaviour, and communication (Polletta & Jasper, 2001). It serves both as an adaptive mechanism and a social construct that influences power relations and social norms (Fukuyama, 2018). Culture is dynamic and evolving, influenced by globalisation, migration, technological advancement and social and political transformations, resulting in significant variations across and within different societies.

Creative and Performance Arts

Creative arts refer to activities that use creative expression and imagination through art forms such as music, visual arts, dance, storytelling, and other related forms. Arai (2013) contends that creative arts entail the kinds of specialised skills required to create symbolic representations of human and social experience. Arai points to the role of creative arts in orchestrating a holistic experience that creates a deeply humanising social space in which individuals and communities use art's symbolic representations to come to terms with their identities and their lived experiences.

Sports and Games

Ademola (2018) defined sports as any activity that uses physical and intellectual capacity, performed by an individual or between individuals, usually following established rules and regulations to determine an outcome, which could be a win, loss, or draw. It is important to note that sports could be professional (earning a living) or amateur (not earning a living).

Sports are usually competitive; however, the spirit of fair play is essential, as winning at all costs is not encouraged. Sports usually carry penalties for breaking their rules, and the worst outcome an athlete can face is a lifetime ban from participating competitively. While Hadfield (1990; Quoted in Deesri, 2002) describes games as "an activity with rules, a goal and an element of fun.

Creative and Performance Arts in Promoting International Relations.

Art (in the form of the creative and performing arts) serves as a form of soft power in international relations, appealing to emotions and mentalities. Cultural diplomacy, which shapes perceptions through culture, is increasingly recognised globally as a complement to economic and military strategies. As cultural consumption rises, so does the importance of this diplomacy. Soft power involves attracting and co-opting rather than coercing, with cultural allure being pivotal. Art, integral to culture, shares these soft-power properties and functions as a diplomatic tool. Its diverse values can shift audience perceptions, fostering positive images and congenial relations between countries. Promoting art on the international stage can enhance mutual understanding, particularly among nations in conflict. Countries recognise the economic benefits of cultural investment, yet overemphasis on profit can lead to negative perceptions. The sharing and promotion of cultural initiatives enhances a nation's influence and reputation. Smaller cultural initiatives have proven more effective than large campaigns, encouraging greater investment. Cultural diplomacy evolves, aiming to reshape or affirm national identities in a global context. Nations project images to support or counter existing perceptions, with varied motivations for cultural diplomacy investments. Since the 19th century, cultural diplomacy has been linked to public diplomacy and strategic choices in promoting national identity within global dynamics. Thus, the strategic use of art and cultural initiatives is essential for fostering understanding and coexistence among diverse nations (Nye 2021, Bhat, Rajeshwari & Diasporic 2022).

Art transcends cultural boundaries, serving as a powerful medium for cultural diplomacy. It facilitates the sharing of emotions and ideas that go beyond mere words, fostering dialogue and understanding among those with no common language. Understanding a culture's art is essential for tolerance and appreciation of its history and lifestyle. Various forms of art—visual, performing, and literary—are crucial for cross-cultural communication, offering diverse representations of human creativity that shape perceptions of communities. Engaging with another culture through films, exhibitions, or concerts provides pathways to empathy and understanding, especially when complex cultural differences arise. The arts have demonstrated the ability to bridge divides and foster communication among former adversaries. Cultural diplomacy through art, such as architecture, painting, and photography, has succeeded where traditional diplomacy may struggle. Cultural exhibitions can reveal new perspectives on history and identity, fostering awareness of foreign communities and their roots. It's important to note that artists and cultural entities also play a vital role in public diplomacy. Addressing conflicts isn't solely a diplomatic task; art can tackle challenging issues effectively, evoking emotions and reinforcing the psychological impact on audiences in ways that traditional measures cannot (Badawi, 2024)

Sports and Games and International Relations

A remarkable feature of sports diplomacy is that Australia is acknowledged the world over as an outstanding sporting nation. Australians' affection for playing, watching, and outshining in unpretentious to multifaceted games across the country and region is unmatched worldwide. To that effect, the Australian government developed the Australian Sports Diplomacy Strategy (2015-2018) as a strategic tool to showcase and promote the country's distinctive sporting culture and to advance its interests abroad. A first-of-its-kind, the strategic plan endorses the prominence of using sports and games to advance a country's economic and diplomatic interests, country-wide and worldwide, utilising interpersonal relationships between nations and organisational collaborations to promote economic cooperation.

To achieve this, the government appointed professionals to head the sports sector in the country with the view of ensuring full implementation of the strategic plan (Stuart Murray, 2019). On close analysis, Australia's governance in international sports relations has created immense goodwill and helped establish significant corporate prospects for the state and the sports industry locally and regionally. And yet, there is a prospect of achieving more. Now, there is a spirited effort to engage researchers and professionals in developing an effective sports diplomacy strategic plan that will advance Australia's strategic national interests exclusively in the Indo-Pacific and reinforce Australia's sports industry internationally (Stuart Murray, 2019).

Furthermore, sports and games have become increasingly significant for modern economies, cultures, countries, and sportspeople. As a result of the substantial international importance of competitions such as the World Cup and the Olympic Games, which are characteristically demonstrated by features such as rewarding profitable



contracts and communications agreements, wide-ranging spectator assessments and mass media publicity, small and micro-enterprises have stood out as significant probable instruments for a home country in the quest for getting hold of soft power (Rookwood, 2019). Cultural diplomacy has over and over again been termed as a method of "soft power", as the third pillar of foreign policy, in the company of political and economic international relations. Secondly, it has a significant role in state imprinting and has demonstrated to be highly effective in advancing a state's image overseas. Consequently, state branding is nowadays well recognised as a significant means of promoting trade and developing exports, alongside a country's cultural legacy and value system. On the other hand, it needs to be used with caution to avoid it being understood as barefaced publicity, and it wishes to emphasise attainable, as well as necessary, objectives. Above all, the prominence of cultural diplomacy, specifically state branding, is duty-bound to be assimilated into a nation's teaching and development (Tomalin, 2013).

THEORETICAL REVIEW

The study utilised soft power theory in attaching this examination. The delicate power hypothesis was initially presented by Joseph Nye in 1990. Around then, researchers in international relations were hunting for new models to clarify the ongoing processes, as the current ones were not ready to provide all the answers (Phythian, 2009). It would not be right to say that soft power theory, introduced by Nye (2021), is a new concept in theories of international relations

Cultural diplomacy is principally connected with soft power. Nye (2021) clarifies "culture" as one of three wellsprings of a country's delicate power. He distinguishes three wellsprings of a country's soft power: its way of life, political values, and foreign policy, with universal credibility and moral authority (Nye, 2021). Nancy Snow composes that "soft power is culture power" and the three methods in which delicate power preferred standpoint of a nation is measured are: when culture and thoughts coordinate winning worldwide standards; when a country has more noteworthy access to various correspondence channels that can impact how issues are surrounded in worldwide news media; and when a nation's believability is upgraded by local and global conduct (Snow, 2009) However, governments underline the multilateral idea of Cultural Diplomacy supported by standards of social differing qualities and intercultural exchange not just for Cosmopolitan Constructivism. They likewise plan to improve the validity and successful execution of foreign approach targets by shaping the worldwide standard of values and ideas through culture. Cultural diplomacy aims to encourage delicate power by legitimising its foreign policy in line with the global social standard. This is accomplished by using the transformative and constitutive force of culture to target remote citizenry (UNESCO, Council of Europe).

The bipolar nature of public diplomacy during the Cold War era has been supplanted by a large number of states practising public diplomacy as key interests in soft power have expanded. Joseph Nye traces the idea of soft power as a global concept, specifically highlighting the qualities hidden within an administration's interests. For instance, US soft power is the capacity to draw others in through the authenticity of its activities. The linkage with public diplomacy lies between the hypothetical universal-relations idea of various "forms" of force and the commonsense components of how states extend or enhance their soft-power limits. It arises from a nation's military or economic might; soft power emerges from the engaging quality of a nation's way of life, political standards, and strategies. Hard power remains essential in a world of states seeking to safeguard their sovereignty and of non-state groups willing to resort to violence (Nye, 2021).

As indicated by Nye, the neo-preservationists who advise the president are making a noteworthy erroneous conclusion: They concentrate too intensely on utilising America's military power to drive different countries to do their will, and they pay too little attention to soft power. It is soft power that will keep fear-based oppressors from enlisting supporters among the broader public. Also, it is soft power that will manage basic worldwide issues that require multilateral participation among states. (Nye, 2021).

At the heart of public diplomacy is "cultural diplomacy," or the spreading of a state's way of life abroad. Truth be told, one might say that: "Cultural diplomacy is the linchpin of public diplomacy; for it is in cultural activities that a country's concept of itself is best spoken to." Cultural diplomacy can turn into the quest for governments to rehearse public diplomacy, "requiring a long haul responsibility to winning the hearts and brains of sensible individuals all over the place" through the advancement of a country's popular culture (Advisory, 2005).



Cynics of soft power contend that hard power is the best instrument for remote influence. Others argue that hard power must remain the key instrument of diplomacy, as soft power is unsatisfactory for operational purposes and control, as it depends heavily on the recognition of remote nations. Others, for example, Ferguson, state that there is nothing surprising about soft power; it used to be called government. Promote, he feels that soft power's span is constrained, and contends that social government's genuine motor is hard power. (Jackson & Sorensen, 2010). Joseph Nye distinguishes between two kinds of power. Hard power is 'the capacity to motivate others to act in ways that are opposed to their underlying inclinations and techniques'. This is the capacity to constrain, through dangers and incitements ("sticks" and "carrots"). The study, in this manner, argues that, by utilising the soft power approach, Nigeria can use cultural diplomacy to maintain its vital significance between the acting and target countries, as well as within each country separately.

Relationships along these lines make culture feel human and, in this manner, more believable and convincing than a separate social affair. Cultural diplomacy can offer a counter-story in which individuals from different parts of Nigeria and their traditions can coexist, reinforcing each other through shared understanding and building new customs together.

Roles of Creative and Performance Arts in International Relations.

Hernandez (2021) examines the role of art as a powerful medium of cultural diplomacy, facilitating international relations and cultural exchange in the contemporary global landscape. It delves into the historical context of cultural diplomacy through art, highlighting how artistic expressions have been used as tools of soft power to foster mutual understanding and build bridges between diverse cultures. By analysing various case studies and diplomatic initiatives, the study showcases the effectiveness of art in promoting dialogue, peace, and cooperation across national boundaries. It explores the strategies employed by governments, cultural institutions, and international organisations to incorporate art into their diplomatic efforts, including art exhibitions, cultural festivals, and artist exchange programs. Furthermore, the paper addresses the challenges and opportunities presented by cultural diplomacy in the digital age, where digital platforms and social media have expanded the reach and impact of cultural exchange. The findings suggest that art possesses unique qualities that transcend linguistic and cultural barriers, making it an essential component of international diplomacy. The study concludes with recommendations for enhancing the role of art in cultural diplomacy, advocating for increased investment in cultural exchange programs and the integration of digital technologies to further global understanding and cooperation.

Familugba and Odudele (2024) examined how these works of art influence and facilitate peace education, social transformation, and justice in modern society, in line with these aspects of the arts. The paper focuses on the interconnections and relationships among artistic works, culture, peace education, social transformation, and justice; it also investigates the impacts of works of art on peace education and social transformation. Qualitative and quantitative methods, including interviews and an organised questionnaire, were used to carry out this study. Data have been collected from both first- and second-source sources in this study. To obtain information from key informants, the interview was tailored to include the royal fathers who are custodians of Arts and Culture in African Societies, peace advocates, public affairs analysts, and educationists. Secondary information was derived from textbooks, journals, newspapers and internet sources. This work adopted "Structural-Functionalist Theory". The study revealed that if the works of art and culture are adequately and effectively used, they will go a long way toward alleviating the various ills in society and guarantee lasting peace in the global space. Insofar as arts and culture constitute essential elements of developing countries such as Nigeria, that opinion provides a religious defence against claims made by some Christians and society against the arts. The artist should be advised to live a disciplined and civilised life. Do not think, live like a greedy person, because artwork is a divine calling and a religious obligation.

Singh (2025) explores the intersection of visual art and IR theory and analyses how art contributes to contemporary diplomatic practices. Through a content analysis of visuals and art in cultural diplomacy, this study found that visual art advances liberal ideals by fostering intercultural dialogue and promoting mutual understanding. It challenges realism's power-centric narratives by offering alternative, often peace-oriented perspectives on conflicts and negotiations. From a Constructivist viewpoint, art plays a crucial role in shaping national identities and redefining foreign policy orientations. This study further examines India's evolving



deployment of art as a form of soft power, rooted in its rich tradition of cultural dissemination and increasingly evident in contemporary diplomatic art. By integrating visual art into IR discourse, this study underscores its strategic relevance as a theoretical construct and a practical diplomatic tool.

Ogbang, Ukomi, and Egaga (2025) explore the intersection of visual art and IR theory and analyse how art contributes to contemporary diplomatic practices. Through a content analysis of visuals and art in cultural diplomacy, this study found that visual art advances liberal ideals by fostering intercultural dialogue and promoting mutual understanding. It challenges realism's power-centric narratives by offering alternative, often peace-oriented perspectives on conflicts and negotiations. From a Constructivist viewpoint, art plays a crucial role in shaping national identities and redefining foreign policy orientations. This study further examines India's evolving deployment of art as a form of soft power, rooted in its rich tradition of cultural dissemination and increasingly evident in contemporary diplomatic art. By integrating visual art into IR discourse, this study underscores its strategic relevance as a theoretical construct and a practical diplomatic tool.

Zeynep, Aydemir, and Hatice (2025) investigated the use of music as soft power, the concepts of cultural diplomacy and musical diplomacy in detail, and the role of music in historical and contemporary diplomatic strategies. In this context, it is concluded that music can serve as a diplomatic tool in international relations, helping strengthen cultural ties and increase mutual understanding. It has the potential to create bonds across cultures and promote international cooperation by fostering intercultural interaction and expressing identities. In line with the research findings, it is thought that this can help us better understand the role and impact of music in international relations and contribute to future diplomacy strategies by emphasising the importance of musical diplomacy.

Roles of Culture (Sports and Games) in International Relations

Ogo, Nwokike, and Jacob (2024) argue that cultural diplomacy is an area of Nigeria's foreign policy that demands attention and that Nigeria can employ it as a soft-power approach to improve its international relations. The study uses both primary and secondary sources for data collection and employs historical analysis to distil the data. With a huge population, sound and enterprising youths, but mitigated by massive unemployment, the study argues that Nigeria can deploy its available cultural potentials through Nollywood, Scholarship, Artists, and the like to increase her relevance in the international system while addressing domestic problems of unemployment and poverty. The study concludes that the full realisation of such an objective is predicated on a conscious, deliberate policy adopted by the Nigerian government to enhance her cultural diplomatic prowess in international relations.

Danyaya and Rashida (2024) explore the cultural ties between Nigeria and Niger Republic, focusing on the period preceding the recent military coup in Niger, using a historical approach to data analysis. By examining the historical, social and economic dimensions of their relationship, the paper provides insight into the nature and significance of cultural interactions between these neighbouring nations. The study emphasises the importance of cultural diplomacy in fostering regional integration, promoting peaceful coexistence and fostering socio-economic development between the two Nations.

Msugh-tier and Martina (2022) examine the rise of Nollywood and how it can contribute to a positive image of the country, using the example of Hollywood. The study notes, amongst other things, that Nigerian filmmakers, through their offerings, have showcased the nation's cultures, beliefs, dress, food, music, and languages. On the other hand, more attention has been paid to negativity than to representing the country's positive side. It recommends that filmmakers should consciously offer better values and attitudes of Nigeria in their products.

Zipporah and Mutundu (2023) sought to establish the role of cultural diplomacy as a tool for advancing African foreign relations, using Kenya as a case study. The broad objective of this study was to assess the performance of the cultural pillar in promoting Kenya's foreign relations from 2015 to 2020. The study used the soft power theory and liberal theory. A descriptive research design was used to obtain information concerning the status of the problem. The population was drawn from all 850 employees across the following offices: Diplomatic officers, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Sports, Culture and Heritage, Ministry of Tourism, Kenya



National Theatre, and Kenya Cultural Centre. The sample comprised 255 respondents drawn from this population using stratified sampling. The primary data were collected using questionnaires that comprised both open- and closed-ended questions. The study concludes that sports and games significantly affected Kenya's foreign policy from 2015 to 2020. In addition, the study concludes that music and dance significantly affected Kenya's foreign policy performance from 2015 to 2020. Based on the findings, this study recommends that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs focus on increasing the number of sports ambassadors, international sports tournaments, and sports tourism.

Nam and Cường (2025) explore the role of culture and diplomacy in enhancing Vietnam's soft power on the global stage. While Vietnam has made significant progress in cultural diplomacy through the promotion of its cultural heritage, arts, cuisine, and international cooperation, there remain challenges in fully optimising its potential due to institutional fragmentation, a lack of cohesive cultural branding, and underutilisation of digital diplomacy. This study aims to provide a comprehensive framework for strengthening Vietnam's soft power by integrating cultural diplomacy with strategic diplomatic goals, leveraging digital innovation, and engaging the diaspora. By proposing key institutional reforms, cohesive branding strategies, and expanded international participation, the paper offers actionable recommendations for enhancing Vietnam's global influence, cultural visibility, and diplomatic relations. The findings emphasise the need for long-term commitment, cross-sector collaboration, and international partnerships to effectively project Vietnam's cultural richness and strengthen its soft power in the 21st century.

Jibrin and Garba (2025) critically examine the impact of cultural diplomacy on nation-branding and foreign policy, assessing its effectiveness as a strategic tool in global diplomacy. Through an analysis of historical and contemporary examples, this research explores how various states have employed cultural diplomacy to enhance their global reputation and achieve foreign policy objectives. The study further evaluates the limitations of cultural diplomacy, addressing concerns about its perceived authenticity, political instrumentalisation, and varying degrees of success in influencing international relations. The research adopts Soft Power Theory, Public Diplomacy Theory and Nation-Branding Theory. By integrating these theoretical perspectives, this study provides a comprehensive analysis of the interplay between cultural diplomacy, nation-branding, and foreign policy formulation. The findings suggest that while cultural diplomacy significantly shapes national identity and fosters cross-cultural exchanges, its impact on concrete foreign policy decisions remains context-dependent. The study concludes that for cultural diplomacy to be an effective component of soft power, it must be strategically aligned with broader diplomatic objectives and supported by long-term policy commitments. This research contributes to the growing discourse on soft power and offers insights into how states can optimise cultural diplomacy in an increasingly interconnected world.

Kimani (2024) presents a comprehensive analysis of the role of cultural diplomacy in shaping public perceptions of foreign policy across diverse cultural contexts. Drawing on Social Identity Theory, which posits that individuals define themselves through their membership in social groups, the study explores how cultural diplomacy initiatives shape attitudes towards a country's foreign policy objectives. The review of related literature highlights examples from the United States, Canada, Europe, and African countries, showcasing the multifaceted nature of foreign policy perceptions influenced by political affiliations, media framing, historical legacies, and regional dynamics. The study's objective is to investigate the extent to which cultural diplomacy efforts impact public perceptions of foreign policy, addressing research gaps through controlled experimental scenarios and surveys. The study aims to fill a gap in empirical research by examining how exposure to cultural diplomacy activities affects individuals' attitudes and perceptions towards foreign policy, with a focus on different types of cultural initiatives and demographic factors. The beneficiaries of the study's findings include policymakers, cultural institutions, and the general public, who stand to gain insights into designing effective cultural diplomacy strategies, enhancing cross-cultural understanding, and promoting informed perspectives on global affairs. The study's conclusion highlights the significant role of cultural diplomacy in shaping positive perceptions of foreign policy, fostering understanding between nations, and emphasising the importance of considering cultural context in diplomatic efforts. The study contributes to theory by extending Social Identity Theory's framework to understand how cultural diplomacy strengthens social identity ties and influences perceptions. In practice, the study offers policymakers insights to design targeted cultural diplomacy strategies, strengthen diplomatic relations, and engage in public diplomacy. Policy recommendations include expanding

cultural diplomacy initiatives, promoting diversity in programs, and leveraging cultural exchanges for diplomatic dialogue. Academically, the study advances cultural diplomacy research by providing empirical evidence and encouraging further exploration into its impact on foreign policy perceptions. Additionally, the study contributes to public engagement and awareness about the significance of cultural diplomacy in promoting global understanding and cooperation.

Abubakar and Kiran (2024) explore the transformative role that sports play in fostering positive global connections and promoting peace among nations. By examining various case studies and theoretical frameworks, we aim to establish a strong foundation for understanding how sporting events can serve as catalysts for diplomacy, cultural exchange, and social development. The study will delve into historical examples, such as the Olympic Games' impact on post-World War II reconciliation efforts, while also analysing contemporary instances, such as the FIFA World Cup's ability to unite diverse communities across borders. We propose that sports have unique potential to bridge gaps between countries, promote mutual respect, and facilitate dialogue amidst complex geopolitical landscapes. Through an interdisciplinary approach combining sociology, political science, and communication theory, our findings will contribute valuable insights towards enhancing international cooperation through sports. Ultimately, this research aims to provide evidence that sports are not merely recreational activities but powerful tools for advancing global harmony and unity.

Shaik and Ashok (2024) examine how sports diplomacy, combined with the principles and practices of physical education, can lay a foundation for sustainable diplomatic engagement. It analyses the role of sports in bridging cultural and political divides, discusses case studies in which sports events have served as diplomatic platforms, and explores how integrating physical education can further enhance these efforts. By promoting physical education alongside sports diplomacy, nations can build stronger international relationships, foster a culture of mutual understanding, and address pressing social issues through a shared commitment to health and fitness.

Ekpo and Ugwu (2021) analyse the role of culture in developing and sustaining diplomatic relations in contemporary times. As cultural diplomacy has become an evolving practice of establishing diplomatic relations and formulating foreign policy, the study examines its application in Nigeria's efforts to expand and improve foreign relations with countries abroad, particularly the United States of America. The Post-Cold War era has continued to witness the growth in the use of culture to foster relations among nations to promote peaceful and secure ties in the face of growing tensions of "nuclear power".

Nigeria has been a non-nuclear and a "third world power"; the study suggests that harnessing Nigeria's rich cultural diversity and uniqueness (as the most populous black nation) remains an excellent means of improving diplomatic relations, especially with the United States of America. The goal of this paper is to present, in a scholarly manner, how the use of culture can inform foreign policy to improve and strengthen diplomatic ties between Nigeria and the United States.

The study further aims to highlight various aspects of culture that have impacted Nigeria's diplomatic relations with the USA and to identify ways to improve their use in the future. The historical-analytical method was adopted to reach a conclusion. Findings from the study show that culture is a soft point in negotiations and a veritable platform and medium for offering solutions. Moreover, culture is identified as the most compelling way to gain alliances and establish relationships between countries.

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative data were collected through an in-depth interview with 100 staff members of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA). They are a commission dedicated to promoting and developing the best of living arts and culture in Nigeria. The interview guide was used to collect data from different stakeholders in the organisations. The researcher formulated the questions therein in line with the study's research questions and objectives.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Section A

Personal Information of Staff of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA), Staff

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of the Respondents

S/N	Characteristics	Respondents Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Gender	Male	45	45
		Female	55	55
		Total	100	100
2	Age	18-25	10	10
		26-33	20	20
		34-41	35	35
		42-49	20	20
		50-above	15	15
		Total	100	100
3	Marital status	Single	20	20
		Married	50	50
		Divorced	15	15
		Widowed	15	15
		Total	100	100
4	Educational Qualification	School Certificate	25	25
		Polytechnic/ Diploma	40	40
		University Degree	15	15
		Postgraduate Degree	20	20
		Total	100	100
5	Length of Service with the centre.	0-5yrs	15	15
		6-10yrs	25	25
		11yrs and above	60	60
		Total	100	100
6	Permanent Staff or Political Appointee.	Yes	75	75
		No	25	25
		Total	100	100

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 1 shows the characteristics of the respondents, including gender, age, marital status, educational qualification, length of service, and whether they are Permanent Staff or Political Appointees. The respondents' gender, as displayed in the table, indicates that the males (45, 45%) were fewer than the females (55, 55%), which shows that females were more involved in the study than the males.

Regarding age, 18-25 were 10 (10%), 26-33 were 20 (20%), 34-41 were 35 (35%), 42-49 were 20 (20%), while 50-above were 15 (15%). On the marital status, 20(20%) were single, 50(50%) were married, 15(15%) were divorced, while 15(15%) were widowed. Regarding educational attainment, 25 (25%) had a school certificate or a polytechnic/diploma. holders were about 40(40%) while others with University Degree were about 15(15%).

These statistics further indicate that most respondents had higher education. In contrast, a relatively small number had at least a high school education, which was necessary for respondents to have informed knowledge of the study's subject. On the Length of Service, with the centre of respondents, the table shows that of the 100



respondents, 15 (15%) had spent 0-5 years, 25 (25%) had spent 6-10 years, and 60 (60%) had spent 11 years or more.

Section B

Analysis of Qualitative Data (Interview of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA), Staff) Relating to the Roles of Arts and Culture in International Relations.

The staff of the five selected organisations were interviewed, both in person and by telephone, to elicit information on the roles of art and culture in international relations. A voice recorder was used during the interview, which was later transcribed from words to letters and analysed for themes.

As explained earlier, this study examines the roles of art and culture in international relations. Is your organisation/ Agency involved in any form of art and culture in international relations?

Yes, we are actively involved in art and culture, primarily through a non-profit initiative that partners with over 2,000 cultural institutions, museums, and archives from 80 countries.

If yes, kindly tell us the nature of the arts and culture your organisation is involved in?

Performing Arts: (Music, sports and dance), **Visual Arts:** Painting, sculpture, and photography, Festivals and Culinary Arts, Symbolic Art and Public Diplomacy.

Do you agree that there is no need to finance art and culture activities as they do not contribute to national and international development?

Yes, I agree with the above question because arts and culture are not merely aesthetic pursuits but significant contributors to national and international development.

Do you agree that, through arts and culture, the North-South imbalance will be redressed?

I do agree. Even though arts and culture hold significant potential to bridge gaps in regional inequality and global power dynamics, they are not a silver bullet and must be part of a broader, well-funded, and intentional strategy.

Do you agree that prejudice and misconceptions foster ignorance of other people's art and culture?

Yes, I strongly agree, it is widely recognised that prejudice and misconception have historically fostered, and continue to foster, ignorance regarding the art and culture of other peoples. This phenomenon operates as a cycle in which negative attitudes, lack of exposure, and stereotypes lead to a diminished understanding, and, in turn, that ignorance reinforces prejudice.

How will art and culture be used to bridge the gap between cultures and subcultures around the world?

Art and culture will be used to bridge the gap between mainstream culture and subcultures, serving as a universal language that fosters empathy, challenges prejudices, and provides shared spaces for dialogue. Through intentional, creative, and participatory methods, these initiatives allow subcultures to assert their identities while inviting mainstream society to move from tolerance toward appreciation.

Can art and culture serve as a vehicle for social mobilisation and as a communication medium for redressing problems in the international system?

Well, yes. Art and culture can serve as powerful vehicles for social mobilisation and communication media to address, mitigate, and redress problems within the international system. By operating as soft power and cultural diplomacy, they facilitate dialogue, foster empathy, and bridge divides where traditional state-led diplomacy may fail.



Please comment on the critical interrelatedness between art, culture and international relations as an important element of human and societal development?

The critical interrelatedness among art, culture, and international relations is a foundational, often underestimated pillar of human and societal development. This synergy moves beyond mere aesthetic appreciation or artistic exchange, acting instead as a vital mechanism for fostering "soft power," building mutual understanding, and bridging ideological divides in an increasingly globalised world.

Section C

Mechanisms for the implementation of these objectives;

- **Seminar workshops on art and culture in international relations:** Effective implementation involves leveraging international networks, securing funding through public-private partnerships, and utilising both in-person and digital formats to facilitate cross-cultural dialogue.
- **Cultural exchange in international relations:** Implementation is achieved through structured, long-term programs that promote dialogue, reduce tensions, and build "goodwill reserves" that support diplomatic and economic objectives.
- **Exhibition on art and culture in international relations:** Effective mechanisms for implementing these initiatives include the following strategies:
 - i. Institutional Frameworks and Partnerships, such as State-Funded Cultural Agencies, Bilateral Agreements and Protocols, and International Networks
 - ii. Operational and Curatorial Strategies such as Thematic Curation for Diplomacy, International Touring Exhibitions, and Involvement of Cultural Professionals, among others.
 - iii. Diplomatic and Governmental Support, such as embassy-led cultural outreach, High-Level Diplomatic Events, and addressing regulatory hurdles.
 - iv. Digital and Innovative Approaches, such as Virtual and Online Exhibitions, Social Media, Digital Diplomacy, and Online Collaborative Projects.

Educational exchange on art and culture in international relations

- i. Educational and Academic Exchange Programs, such as scholarships and fellowships, University Partnerships and Joint Research, and Language and Culture Training.
- ii. Artistic and Cultural Exchange Mechanisms such as Artist Residencies and Exchanges, International Festivals and Exhibitions, and Cultural Institutes and Centres.
- iii. Policy and Institutional Frameworks, such as Bilateral and Multilateral Agreements, UNESCO Frameworks, and Sister Cities International.
- iv. Digital and Virtual Exchanges such as Virtual Residencies and Exhibitions, Social Media and Digital Platforms

The extent of the success of art and culture centres in the process of cultural promotion?

Art and culture centres have achieved significant, albeit challenging, success in promoting culture, serving as critical, multifunctional hubs that bridge local, national, and international audiences. Their success is particularly visible in community engagement, heritage preservation, and economic revitalisation, where they act as "third spaces" that foster social cohesion and identity.

Likely problems encountered by art and culture centres in cultural projection in the host country?

Art and culture centres face significant challenges in projecting their culture abroad, primarily due to inadequate funding, a lack of government support, and security concerns. Other major obstacles include navigating cultural dilution through modernisation, a lack of skilled, professional staff, and the difficulty of balancing authentic cultural representation with local audience expectations.



Do you agree that art and culture can act as a positive influence on international diplomatic relations and also in promoting international peace?

Yes, I strongly agree because it is widely recognised that art and culture are powerful, positive influences on international diplomatic relations and effective tools for promoting peace. This form of "soft power" often builds trust, fosters empathy, and breaks down stereotypes that traditional political and economic negotiations may fail to address.

Do you agree that understanding other people's art and culture fosters better relationships with them?

Yes, I strongly agree that understanding other people's art and culture fosters better relationships by promoting empathy, reducing prejudice, and highlighting shared humanity. Engaging with diverse artistic traditions provides insight into different perspectives, values, and beliefs, helping build trust, encourage open-mindedness, and strengthen community connections.

FINDINGS

The results of the interview revealed that the selected organisations/agencies said they were actively involved in art and culture, primarily through a non-profit initiative that partners with over 2,000 cultural institutions, museums, and archives from 80 countries. Their organisations/agencies were involved in Performing Arts (Music, sports, and dance), Visual Arts (Painting, sculpture, and photography), Festivals and Culinary Arts, Symbolic Art, and Public Diplomacy. They all agreed that there is no need to finance art and culture activities as they do not contribute to national and international development. They reasoned that arts and culture were not merely aesthetic pursuits, but were significant contributors to national and international development. Also, they all agreed that through arts and culture, the imbalance between the North and the South will be redressed. They asserted that, although arts and culture hold significant potential to bridge gaps in regional inequality and global power dynamics, they are not a silver bullet and must be part of a broader, well-funded, and intentional strategy.

Respondents strongly agreed that prejudice and misconception fostered ignorance of other people's art and culture. This is because it is widely recognised that prejudice and misconception have historically fostered, and continue to foster, ignorance regarding the art and culture of other peoples. This phenomenon operates as a cycle in which negative attitudes, lack of exposure, and stereotypes lead to a diminished understanding, and, in turn, that ignorance reinforces prejudice. It was also deduced from the interview that art and culture can bridge the gap between mainstream culture and subcultures by serving as a universal language that fosters empathy, challenges prejudices, and provides shared spaces for dialogue. Through intentional, creative, and participatory methods, these initiatives allow subcultures to assert their identities while inviting mainstream society to move from tolerance toward appreciation. It was gathered from the interview that yes. Art and culture can serve as powerful vehicles for social mobilisation and communication media to address, mitigate, and redress problems within the international system. By operating as soft power and cultural diplomacy, they facilitated dialogue, fostered empathy, and bridged divides where traditional state-led diplomacy may fail. Respondents also asserted that the critical interrelatedness among art, culture, and international relations constitutes a foundational, often underestimated pillar of human and societal development. This synergy moves beyond mere aesthetic appreciation or artistic exchange, acting instead as a vital mechanism for fostering "soft power," building mutual understanding, and bridging ideological divides in an increasingly globalised world.

Mechanisms for implementing seminar workshops on art and culture in international relations involve leveraging international networks, securing funding through public-private partnerships, and utilising both in-person and digital formats to facilitate cross-cultural dialogue. Cultural exchange in international relations is achieved through structured, long-term programs that promote dialogue, reduce tensions, and build "goodwill reserves" that support diplomatic and economic objectives. Exhibition on art and culture in international relations can be achieved through Institutional Frameworks and Partnerships such as State-Funded Cultural Agencies, Bilateral Agreements and Protocols, and International Networks; Operational and Curatorial Strategies such as; Thematic Curation for Diplomacy, International Touring Exhibitions, Involvement of Cultural Professionals among others; Diplomatic and Governmental Support such as; embassy-Led Cultural Outreach, High-Level Diplomatic Events, and addressing regulatory hurdles; Digital and Innovative Approaches such as; Virtual and Online



Exhibitions, Social Media and Digital Diplomacy and Online Collaborative Projects. Educational exchange on art and culture in international relations can be achieved through Educational and Academic Exchange Programs such as; scholarships and fellowships, University Partnerships and Joint Research, and Language and Culture Training; Artistic and Cultural Exchange Mechanisms such as; Artist Residencies and Exchanges, International Festivals and Exhibitions, and: Cultural Institutes and Centers; Policy and Institutional Frameworks such as; Bilateral and Multilateral Agreements, UNESCO Frameworks, Sister Cities International, and Digital and Virtual Exchanges such as; Virtual Residencies and Exhibitions, Social Media and Digital Platforms.

Regarding the extent of the success of art and culture centres in cultural promotion, respondents stated that art and culture centres have achieved a significant, albeit challenging, level of success, acting as critical, multifunctional hubs that bridge local, national, and international audiences. Their success was particularly visible in community engagement, heritage preservation, and economic revitalisation, where they acted as "third spaces" that fostered social cohesion and identity. On the Likely problems encountered by art and culture centres in cultural projection in the host country. They maintained that art and culture centres face significant challenges in projecting their culture abroad, primarily driven by inadequate funding, a lack of government support, and security concerns. Other major obstacles include navigating cultural dilution through modernisation, a lack of skilled, professional staff, and the difficulty of balancing authentic cultural representation with local audience expectations.

On the issue of whether art and culture can act as a positive influence on international diplomatic relations, and also in promoting international peace. Yes, they strongly agreed because it is widely recognised that art and culture act as powerful, positive influences on international diplomatic relations and are effective tools for promoting peace. This form of "soft power" often builds trust, fosters empathy, and breaks down stereotypes that traditional political and economic negotiations may fail to address. Finally, whether they agreed that understanding other people's art and culture encourages a better relationship with them, yes, they strongly agreed that understanding other people's art and culture fosters better relationships by promoting empathy, reducing prejudice, and highlighting shared humanity. Engaging with diverse artistic traditions provides insight into different perspectives, values, and beliefs, helping build trust, encourage open-mindedness, and strengthen community connections.

CONCLUSION

Culture and art have a tangible impact on how people interact both within and across borders, making it important to recognise and embrace diversity in international relations. Bridging cultural differences through cultural diplomacy and language learning can promote cooperation and mutual respect, tapping into the creative potential that comes from diverse perspectives and experiences and working towards a more peaceful and harmonious world.

Central to international relations is the recognition of cultural heritage's influence on our behaviour, values, and beliefs, and the importance of understanding and appreciating these differences to promote social inclusion, diversity, and respect for human rights. Recognising and embracing different cultures means building bridges, encouraging cross-cultural exchange and promoting cultural diplomacy, enabling mutual understanding and cooperation in tackling global challenges such as climate change, poverty, and conflict. At its core, international relations is about working together towards a common goal - a world where everyone is valued, respected, and able to contribute to a better future.

In a connected world, cultural differences can hinder effective communication. Developing cultural competence and sensitivity is key to building strong relationships and promoting harmony between diverse groups. This requires open-mindedness, active listening and respect for cultural norms. Adapting communication styles to fit different cultural contexts can help avoid misunderstandings and promote cooperation. By developing cultural competence, sensitivity, and adaptability in our communication, we can foster better relationships and avoid conflicts, working towards a more harmonious and understanding world.

Cultural diplomacy promotes peace and understanding through the exchange of cultural elements such as arts, music, films and literature. By showcasing different cultures, countries can build bridges of friendship that go



beyond borders, creating an environment of mutual respect and understanding. Successful cultural diplomacy programs from around the world have brought people together and fostered long-lasting relationships, making it a powerful tool for promoting international cooperation.

Creative and performing arts are key instruments for promoting the legacies and cultures of states. While it establishes relations between states, it also serves as an advertising tool about the given state, its cultural diversity and its consequent beauty. This study has also shown that intercultural correspondents are key in providing unity between states, after analysing how a lack of cultural commonality trickles down to strain business practices between the states. International relations are further enhanced by the creative and performing arts, which are seen as an internationally understood language to promote reconciliation, further economic and political agendas, and facilitate socialising. It can lessen the impact of blows from previous offences by opening channels for dialogue and interaction.

Lastly, in the field of international relations, culture and art are crucial components of a state's soft power, the ability to achieve foreign policy goals through attraction and co-option rather than coercion or force. By promoting national symbols, traditions, and values, states can utilise culture and art as a means of soft power in their foreign affairs. However, it is important to recognise the challenges and limitations of using culture and arts as soft power, such as the potential for cultural imperialism and appropriation. To effectively use culture and arts as soft power, policymakers and diplomats must approach it with sensitivity and respect for other cultures and traditions. They must also have a nuanced understanding of the complexities of identity and culture in the international arena to ensure that their efforts to promote their own culture do not inadvertently create misunderstandings or conflicts with other nations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study's results led to the following recommendations being made:

Nigeria needs to fund and sponsor the creative and performing arts to give them greater prominence and further its national interests. The use of celebrity diplomats who influence their respective fields should also be considered. The education system in the United States should also foster a culture in which both sciences and arts are perceived as equally important. The issuance of grants by governments to further research on effective ways to use the creative and performing arts to advance their national interests is key to cultural diplomacy. This area also needs to be acknowledged.

The effective use of cultural diplomacy through the creative and performing arts cannot begin until the officials and legislators in charge of policymaking fully understand the identity a country takes on. When understanding of the states one wishes to engage in develops, negotiations are then eased, as they are coming from an informed and considered place. This also plays a vital role in dispelling any previous notions of prejudice, dictatorship, or cultural imperialism. The current state of the world, as a global village, courtesy of better technology, transport, and communication, should be explored to ensure exhaustive research and data on another state and its cultural identity are achieved.

Improve Arts Education: Diverse cultural expressions should be included in arts education, which should be a top priority for governments and educational establishments. People would be able to appreciate and respect other cultures more by better understanding them.

Encourage Cultural Festivals and exhibits: Cultural groups and governments should take the initiative to sponsor and encourage cultural festivals, exhibits, and other activities that highlight a variety of artistic media. These kinds of programs provide forums for celebrating and exchanging cultures.

Promote artistic Collaboration: Encourage artists from all cultural backgrounds to collaborate. Collaborative artistic projects may foster artistic fusion and cross-cultural understanding, leading to the creation of distinctive, inclusive artworks.



Integrate Art into Social Programs: Incorporate art-based initiatives into programs addressing prejudice, social integration, and cultural diversity. In communities, artistic expressions may be a potent tool for fostering empathy and conversation.

Preserve Traditional Art Forms: Because they are essential to maintaining cultural identity and fostering a respect for a diverse history, efforts should be undertaken to preserve traditional art forms and indigenous cultural manifestations.

Promotion of Cultural Diversity: Governments should adopt policies and initiatives that promote cultural diversity, artistic freedom, and the protection of cultural heritage to foster intercultural dialogue, mutual understanding, and social cohesion within diverse societies

Global actors (leaders and institutions) should value the elements of local cultures in policymaking, even organisations doing business in foreign lands. Such considerations are essential not only in policymaking but also in doing business.

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