



QUANTIFYING SEXUAL AND NYARSH DISCOURSE IN CHINUA ACHEBE'S *A MAN OF THE PEOPLE*: A STATISTICAL AND SOCIO-DISCURSIVE ANALYSIS

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Abstract

This study examines how sexual and *nyarsh* or *nyash* discourse are distributed and function in Chinua Achebe's "A Man of the People." It analyses 49 coded references from the novel, organized by chapter, discourse type, character or narrator, gender, explicitness, and relation to *nyash*. (Cham, 1985, pp. 243-265) *Nyash* specifically refers to language emphasizing female buttocks, hips, or hip movement, distinguishing it from general references to female body or sexuality. (Nyash, 2026) The analysis combines frequency analysis with interpretation to reveal how sexual language and bodily depiction influence ideas of gender, desire, rivalry, power, political privilege, and social identity. Results show that Chapter Six contains the most coded references (12, or 24.49%). The most common category is sexual insinuation and objectification (12 references, 24.49%). Odili accounts for 28 references (57.14%), and male-coded references comprise 42 of the 48 gender-specific references (87.50%). Veiled sexual discourse appears more frequently than explicit references among male-coded cases. Only three references (6.12%) explicitly relate to *nyash*: two are purely *nyash* references, and one overlaps with sexual discourse. (Lynn, 2023, pp. 215-234) Overall, the study indicates that sexual discourse is extensive and significant in the novel, while *nyash* discourse is less frequent but culturally and socially salient. Sexuality is used to portray and critique masculine agency, political authority, social privilege, rivalry, objectification, and moral contradictions.

Keywords: *A Man of the People*; Chinua Achebe; gender and power; *nyash* discourse; quantitative literary analysis; sexual discourse; socio-discursive analysis

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INTRODUCTION

Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People* is one of the most important political satires in African literature. Published in 1966, the novel presents an unnamed postcolonial African state in which political leadership is increasingly shaped by corruption, patronage, material acquisition, public performance, and personal ambition. Through irony, humour, satire, exaggeration, and character contrast, Achebe (1966) exposes the contradictions of a political order in which public office is repeatedly converted into private advantage. The novel's political significance is reinforced by its portrayal of Chief Nanga, a popular political leader whose public image of accessibility and generosity coexists with opportunism, self-interest, and moral excess.

Critical scholarship on *A Man of the People* has primarily focused on political corruption, failed leadership, postcolonial instability, elite privilege, and the relationship between political power and social morality. Nevertheless, the novel's political world is also distinctly gendered and sexualised. Political authority shapes social visibility, access, prestige, and powerful men's ability to convert public influence into private privilege. Sexuality is therefore not an incidental narrative feature but actively contributes to the construction of power, status, rivalry, masculinity, and social identity. The relationship between language and sexuality extends beyond the naming of sexual acts or identities. Sexuality is also discursively constructed through representations of desire, attraction, bodily appearance, erotic evaluation, relationships, and social practice (Cameron & Kulick, 2003). Sexual meaning may therefore be produced through explicit vocabulary, indirect reference, humour, implication, bodily description, or culturally shared knowledge. In literary discourse, readers frequently infer sexual meanings from the interaction of language, narrative context, character relationships, and social expectations.

In Achebe's *A Man of the People*, sexual discourse is connected to attraction, bodily representation, romantic relationships, marriage, sexual access, masculine competition, and political privilege. Female characters

are often observed, described, evaluated, desired, pursued, or positioned within relationships structured by male authority. These representations do not merely provide background detail. They contribute to the novel's social critique by revealing how private desire and public power may reinforce one another. The present study focuses on a specific but analytically distinct dimension of bodily discourse: *nyash*. In Nigerian English and related West African popular linguistic practices, *nyash* commonly refers to the buttocks or posterior body. (Nyash, 2026) Depending on context, the term may carry descriptive, humorous, evaluative, erotic, crude, or derogatory meanings. (Oppong-Adjei, 2015, pp. 195-202) However, *nyash* should not be treated as a synonym for the female body, bodily representation, or sexuality in general. A reference to beauty, dress, breasts, physical attractiveness, romance, or sexual desire is not automatically a *nyash* reference.

This distinction is central to the present study. The dataset comprises 49 coded references to sexual and sexualised discourse in *A Man of the People* (Cham, 1985, pp. 243-265). The analysis retains the full corpus but introduces *nyash*-related Yes/No as an independent coding variable. The new framework enables a distinction between sexual discourse without a direct focus on *nyash*, *nyash* discourse without a clear sexual proposition, and references in which sexual and *nyash* meanings overlap. The study combines quantitative literary analysis with socio-discursive interpretation. Quantification is used to identify patterns of frequency and distribution, while socio-discursive analysis explains how those patterns relate to gender, power, ideology, culture, narrative perspective, and social interaction. Discourse is understood as a form of social practice through which social relations and ideological meanings may be reproduced, negotiated, or challenged (Fairclough, 1992). Critical discourse approaches similarly emphasise the importance of relating textual patterns to broader structures of power and social meaning (Wodak & Meyer, 2016). The study addresses the following research questions:

1. How are the 49 coded references distributed across the chapters of *A Man of the People* and which broad categories of sexual discourse occur most frequently?
2. Which characters or narrative sources are most strongly associated with sexual discourse, and how are the explicit and veiled sexual references distributed?
3. What patterns emerge from the comparison of male- and female-coded references, and to what extent is *nyash* represented within the broader sexual corpus? And
4. How does the sexual discourse, *nyash* discourse, and sexual–*nyash* overlap contribute to the representation of gender, power, and political privilege in the text?

The analysis demonstrates that sexual discourse in *A Man of the People* is broad, recurrent, and structurally linked to masculine agency, social status, political authority, rivalry, and objectification. *Nyash* discourse constitutes a narrower, culturally marked form of embodied discourse. Although infrequent, it remains socio-discursively significant by foregrounding the posterior body, hips, bodily movement, dress, visibility, humor, and culturally recognizable forms of bodily evaluation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Political Satire and Postcolonial Power in *A Man of the People*

A Man of the People represents political power as a social practice that extends beyond formal institutions. Political authority influences access to wealth, prestige, social recognition, and personal privilege. Achebe's satire exposes the contradictions between public political language and private political conduct. Chief Nanga presents himself as a representative of ordinary people, yet his political position enables forms of self-enrichment and personal advantage that undermine the ideals associated with public service (Achebe, 1966). The novel's political critique is strengthened by its attention to everyday social practices. Corruption is not represented only through public institutions or financial misconduct. It is also reflected in interpersonal relationships, patronage, competition, public display, and the conversion of influence into private benefit. The political and the personal are therefore closely connected. The sexual dimension of the novel contributes to this critique. Political power may increase masculine prestige and facilitate access to women. Sexual privilege consequently becomes one of the social expressions of political authority. The representation of sexuality therefore helps to reveal how power operates across both public and private domains.

Gender, Power, and the Representation of Women

Gender is not merely a biological category; it is socially and discursively constructed through institutions, practices, identities, and systems of representation. Feminist discourse scholarship examines how language may sustain unequal gender relations and reproduce ideological assumptions concerning masculinity, femininity, authority, and social value (Lazar, 2005). The representation of women in literary texts is often shaped by narrative perspective and cultural expectations. Female characters may be described through beauty, sexuality, marriage, motherhood, domesticity, or their relationships with male characters. Such representations may limit female agency by positioning women primarily as objects of observation or desire. However, individual female characters may also negotiate, resist, or complicate these positions.

In *A Man of the People*, the female characters occupy different social and narrative positions. Elsie, Edna, Jean, Mrs Nanga, and Eunice should not be treated as a homogeneous group. Their experiences differ according to education, class, marital status, political association, and relationship to male authority. Nevertheless, the narrative frequently introduces women through male observation or positions them within structures of male desire and competition. The relevant analytical question is therefore not only whether women appear in the novel but how they are discursively represented. A female character may be evaluated through physical appearance, associated with sexual desirability, positioned as a romantic or marital prospect, or treated as an object of competition between men. These representational practices contribute to the construction of gendered social meaning. The male dominance identified in the present dataset should not be interpreted as a natural difference in male and female language. It reflects the narrative organization of the novel and the distribution of agency, perspective, observation, and power.

Sexual Discourse and the Construction of Social Meaning

Sexual discourse includes the linguistic and semiotic resources through which sexuality, desire, attraction, bodily appearance, erotic identity, sexual access, romance, and gendered relationships are represented. Cameron and Kulick (2003) argue that the study of language and sexuality should extend beyond fixed sexual identities to include the discursive construction and communication of sexuality. Sexual meaning may be explicit or indirect. Explicit discourse may directly name sexual acts, sexual desire, body parts, or sexual access. Veiled discourse may depend on implication, euphemism, metaphor, humors, bodily description, or contextual inference. Indirectness is especially important in literary texts because meanings may be generated through narrative context rather than through isolated lexical items. Sexual discourse may also perform ideological functions. It can normalize masculine desire, construct women as objects of evaluation, reinforce gender hierarchies, legitimize privilege, or expose social contradictions. The interpretation of a sexual reference therefore requires attention to who speaks, who observes, who is represented, and what relationship is being enacted. The present study treats sexual discourse as a broad analytical domain encompassing sexual desire, attraction, objectification, romance, marriage, sexual access, sexual reputation, and sexualised bodily representation. This broad definition permits the identification of recurring patterns while retaining distinctions among different forms of sexual meaning.

Discourse, Ideology, and Social Practice

Discourse is not limited to the transmission of information. It is also a social practice through which identities, relationships, values, and ideologies are produced and negotiated (Fairclough, 1992). Critical discourse scholarship therefore links textual analysis to broader questions of power, inequality, representation, and social change (Wodak & Meyer, 2016). A socio-discursive analysis of sexual representation examines how language constructs social relationships. In *A Man of the People*, sexual discourse is linked to political authority, masculine prestige, rivalry, social status, and access. The meaning of a reference depends not only on its lexical content but also on its narrative context and social function. Feminist critical discourse analysis is particularly relevant because it investigates how gendered ideologies may be sustained through language and representation (Lazar, 2005). The present study applies this insight without assuming that every representation of women is necessarily oppressive. Instead, it examines the patterns through which women and men are positioned as speakers, observers, agents, objects of desire, or participants in social competition.

Quantitative Literary Analysis

Quantitative methods provide systematic procedures for identifying patterns that may not be immediately apparent through impressionistic reading. Frequency counts, distributions, classifications, and comparative statistics can reveal the relative prominence of themes, characters, discourse categories, and linguistic practices. However, quantitative evidence does not replace literary interpretation. Frequency alone does not determine thematic importance, ideological force, or aesthetic value. A rare reference may be highly significant, while a frequent pattern may perform a limited function. Quantitative findings are therefore most useful when combined with close reading and contextual analysis. The present study adopts this integrated approach. The 49 coded references provide a measurable corpus, while socio-discursive interpretation explains their narrative and ideological significance. The statistical findings establish patterns concerning chapters, categories, characters, gender, explicitness, and nyash-relatedness. The qualitative discussion then relates these patterns to power, masculinity, femininity, political privilege, and social morality.

Conceptualizing Nyash

Nyash is treated in this study as a culturally recognizable lexical and embodied category. It generally refers to the buttocks or posterior body and may carry descriptive, humorous, evaluative, erotic, crude, or derogatory meanings. Its interpretation depends on context, speaker position, audience, and communicative

purpose. For the present analysis, nyash is not used as a general synonym for the female body. A reference is coded as nyash-related = Yes only where it directly names or foregrounds:

1. the buttocks or posterior body;
2. hips or hip movement in a manner that makes the lower body discursively salient; or
3. a culturally recognizable lexical form such as *nyash* or *nyarsh*.

This operational definition excludes general references to beauty, breasts, dress, physical attractiveness, romance, sexual desire, or the female body unless the posterior body or hips are directly foregrounded. The distinction is analytically necessary. If all references to female bodily appearance were coded as nyash-related, the category would become excessively broad. It would obscure differences among beauty, dress, breasts, body shape, sexual desire, and posterior-body representation. The present study therefore treats sexual discourse as the broad parent domain and nyash discourse as a specialized embodied sub-discourse.

THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The study combines socio-discursive analysis with quantitative literary analysis. The socio-discursive perspective assumes that language both reflects and contributes to social relations. Discourse may reproduce, negotiate, or challenge ideological meanings and unequal structures of power (Fairclough, 1992; Wodak & Meyer, 2016). Three concepts guide the analysis: discourse, power, and embodiment. First, discourse concerns the patterned representation of social reality. Sexual references in the novel contribute to the construction of masculinity, femininity, desire, status, and interpersonal relationships. Their meanings are shaped by narrative context and by the roles of the speaker, observer, and represented character. Second, power concerns the unequal capacity to define, evaluate, access, influence, or control others. Political authority may produce social and sexual privilege, while masculine status may influence how women are represented and treated. Sexual discourse can therefore reveal the operation of power beyond formal political institutions. Third, embodiment concerns the representation of the body as a bearer of social meaning. Bodies are interpreted through cultural assumptions concerning beauty, attractiveness, morality, gender, class, and status. Nyash discourse is especially relevant because it foregrounds a culturally marked bodily region and may activate meanings concerning movement, visibility, sexuality, humour, dress, or public evaluation.

The conceptual relationship adopted in the study is: Sexual discourse signifies a broad domain encompassing desire, attraction, objectification, sexual access, romance, marriage, sexual reputation, and sexualised bodily representation; further, Nyash discourse indicates specialised embodied discourse involving buttocks, posteriority, hips, or hip movement and lastly, Sexual–nyash overlap demonstrates the intersection between sexual or erotic meaning and direct nyash-related bodily representation. The framework allows sexual and nyash discourse to be studied together without treating them as synonymous.

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

The study adopts a mixed quantitative and qualitative research design. The quantitative component identifies frequencies and distributions, while the qualitative component provides socio-discursive interpretation. The research is descriptive and text-based. It does not attempt to establish causal relationships. Rather, it examines patterns within a defined literary corpus and interprets those patterns in relation to gender, sexuality, power, political privilege, and narrative perspective.

Data and Unit of Analysis

The dataset consists of 49 coded references identified in *A Man of the People* (Achebe, 1966). Each reference constitutes a unit of analysis. The corpus includes direct and indirect expressions concerning sexual desire, attraction, bodily representation, objectification, romance, marriage, sexual access, sexual reputation, and related gendered meanings. The references were coded according to:

1. reference identification number;
2. chapter;
3. page;
4. character or narrative source;
5. textual excerpt or precise reference;
6. broad discourse category;
7. gender orientation;
8. explicitness;
9. sexual-relatedness;
10. nyash-relatedness;
11. sexual–nyash overlap; and
12. socio-discursive function.

Coding Procedure

The initial dataset was reviewed to identify the references that were genuinely nyash-related. The revised coding did not replace “female body” with the word *nyash*. Instead, nyash was introduced as an independent variable. A reference was coded as nyash-related = Yes only where it directly named or foregrounded the buttocks, posterior body, hips, or hip movement. References concerning beauty, breasts, general physical appearance, dress, romance, or sexual desire were not coded as nyash-related unless the relevant lower-body focus was textually present. A reference was coded as Sexual–Nyash Overlap = Yes where:

1. it contained a direct nyash-related focus; and
2. the same reference clearly constructed sexual or erotic meaning.

A nyash-related reference was coded as Nyash Discourse Only where the posterior body or hips were foregrounded. Still, the immediate context did not contain a clear sexual act, proposition, desire, or erotic relationship.

Statistical Procedure

Frequencies were obtained by counting the number of references in each category. Percentages were calculated using the following formula:

$$\text{Percentage} = (\text{Frequency} \div \text{Total number of relevant references}) \times 100$$

The total corpus consists of 49 references. Where a specific subset was analyzed, the relevant subset was used as the denominator. For example, the male–female comparison uses 48 references because one reference was mixed, collective, or not sufficiently attributable to a single binary gender category.

Analytical Reliability and Limitations

The coding of literary discourse necessarily involves interpretation. A textual reference may perform more than one function, and some categories may overlap. To reduce conceptual ambiguity, the nyash category was defined narrowly and was applied only to direct posterior- or hip-related references. The findings should therefore be interpreted as systematic results generated through the stated coding framework rather than as an exhaustive measure of every possible sexual meaning in the novel. The quantitative analysis identifies patterns, while the socio-discursive interpretation explains their possible significance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overview of the Coded Corpus

In Table 1 below, the 49 references constitute the parent corpus of sexual and sexualized discourse. The revised nyash coding does not remove the earlier categories. It introduces a new analytical dimension through which the relationship between general sexual discourse and culturally specific embodied representation can be examined.

Table 1: Overview of the Coded Corpus

Variable	Result
Total coded references	49
Chapter with the highest concentration	Chapter Six
References in Chapter Six	12
Percentage in Chapter Six	24.49%
Most frequent broad category	Sexual insinuation/objectification
References in the leading category	12
Percentage in the leading category	24.49%
Most prominent character/source	Odili
Odili’s references	28
Odili’s percentage	57.14%
Nyash-related references	3
Nyash-related percentage	6.12%

The findings indicate that sexual discourse is distributed throughout the narrative but concentrated in particular chapters, categories, and character perspectives. The quantitative evidence therefore supports the interpretation that sexuality is a patterned feature of the novel rather than an incidental element.

Chapter Distribution with Coded Sexual References

Chapter Six contains the highest number of coded references, with 12 instances (24.49%). Chapter Two contains 7 references (14.29%), while Chapter One contains 2 references (4.08%). Chapter Three contains no coded references under the adopted framework. (Kareem, 2014). This is demonstrated in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Chapter Distribution of Coded Sexual References

Chapter	Frequency	Percentage
Chapter One	2	4.08%
Chapter Two	7	14.29%
Chapter Three	0	0.00%
Chapter Six	12	24.49%
Other chapters combined	28	57.14%
Total	49	100.00%

The concentration in Chapter Six suggests that sexual discourse becomes especially prominent when interpersonal rivalry, political competition, masculine prestige, and access to women intersect. The chapter's statistical prominence is therefore also narratively meaningful. Sexuality contributes to the development of conflict and to the exposure of the moral contradictions surrounding political authority. The uneven distribution further indicates that sexual discourse is activated at particular points in the narrative. It is not uniformly distributed across the novel. This pattern supports a functional interpretation in which sexual discourse becomes more visible when it contributes to rivalry, desire, status, political conflict, or social critique.

Broad Discourse Categories

Sexual insinuation and objectification in Table 3 below constitute the most frequent broad category, with 12 references (24.49%). Female body and physical description account for 10 references (20.41%), while marriage, romance, and sexual possession account for 9 references (18.37%). (Kramer, 2006).

Table 3: Leading Broad Categories of Sexual Discourse

Broad category	Frequency	Percentage
Sexual insinuation/objectification	12	24.49%
Female body/physical description	10	20.41%
Marriage/romance/sexual possession	9	18.37%
Other sexual and gendered categories	18	36.73%
Total	49	100.00%

The three leading categories account for 31 references (63.27%). (Kramer, 2006, pp. 14-25) The result indicates that sexual discourse in the novel is largely organized around objectification, bodily representation, and relationships involving romance, marriage, desire, or possession. The prominence of sexual insinuation and objectification demonstrates that sexual meaning is frequently produced through evaluation rather than direct sexual description. Female characters may be represented through attractiveness, desirability, physical appearance, or perceived availability. Such discourse constructs women as objects of observation and male interest, a pattern that can be examined through feminist approaches to language, gender, and power (Lazar, 2005; Mills, 2008). The category of female body and physical description is substantial, but it should not be equated with nyash. Bodily representation may concern beauty, dress, breasts, body shape, or general attractiveness without directly foregrounding the posterior body. The revised coding therefore provides a necessary distinction between general bodily discourse and nyash discourse. Marriage, romance, and sexual possession form the third major category. Their prominence shows that sexual discourse extends beyond physical attraction. It also concerns social legitimacy, relationships, masculine entitlement, rivalry, and the symbolic control of women.

Character and Narrative-Source Distribution

Table 4 below indicates that Odili accounts for 28 of the 49 references (57.14%), making him the dominant character or narrative source. Chief Nanga accounts for 7 references (14.29%). (A Man of the People Character Analysis, 2023)

Table 4: Distribution by Major Character or Narrative Source

Character/source	Frequency	Percentage
Odili	28	57.14%
Chief Nanga	7	14.29%
Other characters/sources	14	28.57%
Total	49	100.00%

Odili's prominence reflects his dual role as narrator and participant. He does not merely experience events; he interprets and describes them. His perspective therefore influences the representation of women, attraction, desire, and sexual competition. The findings also demonstrate the importance of narrative focalization. The high frequency of Odili-related references indicates that much of the novel's sexual discourse is filtered through a male narrative consciousness. The pattern is therefore both a character pattern and a perspective pattern. Chief Nanga's prominence connects sexuality to political power. His authority gives him social access and personal privilege. Sexual conduct becomes part of the wider representation of political excess and moral corruption. However, the contrast between Odili and Chief Nanga should not be reduced to a simple opposition between moral innocence and corruption. Both participate in systems of masculine observation, desire, competition, and evaluation, although their degrees of political power differ.

Explicit and Veiled Sexual Discourse

Among male-coded references, as illustrated in Table 5 below, 18 of 42 (42.86%) are sexually explicit references, and 24 (57.14%) are veiled. Among female-coded references, 3 of 6 (50.00%) are explicit, and 3 (50.00%) are veiled.

Table 5: Explicit and Veiled Sexual Discourse by Gender Coding

Gender coding	Explicit	Veiled	Total
Male-coded	18 (42.86%)	24 (57.14%)	42
Female-coded	3 (50%)	3 (50%)	6
Total	21	27	48

The greater frequency of veiled discourse among male-coded references indicates that sexual meaning is often communicated indirectly. Implication, humors, euphemism, bodily description, suggestive language, and contextual inference are important discursive resources. This finding is consistent with the broader understanding that sexuality is communicated through social and contextual meanings rather than through direct lexical naming alone (Cameron & Kulick, 2003). Veiled discourse permits sexual meaning to operate without explicit naming. It may also normalize sexual evaluation by presenting it as casual observation, humors, or socially familiar commentary. Indirectness is therefore socio-discursively important because unstated meanings may still influence the representation of gender and power. The equal distribution among female-coded references should be interpreted cautiously because the female subset is small. Nevertheless, the findings indicate that female sexual representation occurs through both direct and indirect forms.

Male–Female Comparative Analysis

Of the 48 references as illustrated in Table 6 assigned to a binary gender category, 42 (87.50%) are male-coded, and 6 (12.50%) are female-coded (Lynn, 2023).

Table 6: Male–Female Distribution of Coded References

Gender category	Frequency	Percentage
Male-coded	42	87.50%
Female-coded	6	12.50%
Total	48	100%

The result demonstrates substantial male dominance in the production and mediation of sexual discourse. This does not mean that men are always the objects of sexual representation. Rather, men more frequently occupy the roles of narrator, speaker, observer, desiring subject, or social agent. The female characters are more often

positioned as objects of observation, desire, evaluation, or competition. The pattern reflects the gendered organization of the novel's social world, in which masculine agency is connected to political authority, social mobility, sexual access, and public status. The narrative perspective also contributes to this imbalance. Odili's first-person narration gives his perceptions considerable influence over the representation of women. However, the narrative structure does not eliminate the ideological significance of the pattern. It demonstrates how masculine observation becomes a dominant framework for constructing sexual meaning. Feminist discourse scholarship is useful here because it relates linguistic representation to broader gendered relations of power (Lazar, 2005).

Odili, Chief Nanga, and the Female Characters

The comparative analysis records 35 character-involvement instances for Odili and Chief Nanga combined and 14 instances for the selected female characters. The resulting male-to-female involvement ratio is approximately 2.50: as illustrated in Table 7 (Lynn, 2023)

Table 7: Comparative Character Involvement in Sexual Discourse

Character group	Involvement instances	Relative ratio
Odili and Chief Nanga	35	2.50
Selected female characters	14	1.00
Total involvement instances	49	—

The figures confirm that male characters dominate the organization of sexual discourse. Odili and Chief Nanga are central agents through whom sexuality becomes connected to rivalry, prestige, political power, and personal ambition. The selected female characters: Elsie, Edna, Jean, Mrs Nanga, and Eunice—occupy different social positions. Their representations should therefore not be homogenized. Some demonstrate greater agency than others, and their relationships with male authority vary. Nevertheless, the statistical imbalance indicates that female characters are more frequently positioned within male-centered structures of desire and evaluation. The quantitative evidence provides a broad pattern, while qualitative interpretation reveals differences among individual characters. Female representation is neither completely passive nor uniformly empowering. It is shaped by social context, narrative perspective, and the relationships in which the characters are located.

Nyash-Related Discourse

Below in Table 8, the coding identifies three genuinely nyash-related references, representing 6.12% of the 49-reference corpus (Lynn, 2023).

Table 8: Distribution of Sexual and Nyash Discourse

Discourse category	Frequency	Percentage
Sexual discourse only	46	93.88%
Nyash discourse only	2	4.08%
Sexual–nyash overlap	1	2.04%
Total	49	100%

The three nyash-related references are analytically distinct. The first concerns “breast-throwing, hip-jerking, young women” (Achebe, 1966). It is coded as sexual–nyash overlap because hip movement foregrounds the lower body while the wider representation is clearly eroticized. The body is represented as active and visible, and movement contributes to the construction of attractiveness. The second concerns a dress caught “between the buttocks” (Achebe, 1966). It is classified as nyash discourse only because the posterior body is directly foregrounded. Still, the immediate expression does not necessarily contain a clear sexual act, sexual proposition, or erotic relationship. The reference nevertheless demonstrates the role of dress in making the body visible and socially interpretable. The third contains the lexical form “nyarsh,” a colloquial representation of *nyash* (Achebe, 1966). It is also classified as nyash discourse only because the focus is on the posterior body rather than on a direct sexual act or proposition. The expression illustrates the use of nyash as a culturally recognizable resource for informal commentary, humors, or crude evaluation. The low frequency of nyash-related references is an important result. It demonstrates that nyash is not the dominant form of sexual representation in the novel. Most sexual references concern desire, attraction, romance, marriage, sexual access, objectification, or general bodily representation without directly focusing on the posterior body. At the same time, nyash is socio-discursively salient. The category is semantically concentrated and culturally marked. Each occurrence directs attention to a

specific bodily region and activates meanings involving movement, visibility, dress, attractiveness, humour, or public commentary.

Sexual–Nyash Overlap

Only one reference, representing 2.04% of the corpus, is coded as an overlap between sexual and nyash discourse. (Akano & Afolabi, 2024). The limited overlap demonstrates that sexual meaning and nyash meaning are related but non-identical. A reference may be sexual without being nyash-related. Similarly, a nyash-related reference may concern bodily appearance, clothing, movement, humors, or public commentary without constituting explicit sexual discourse. The relationship can be represented as follows:

- Sexual discourse: desire, attraction, sexual access, romance, marriage, objectification, sexual reputation, and sexualized bodily representation.
- Nyash discourse: direct reference to buttocks, posteriority, hips, or hip movement.
- Sexual–nyash overlap: simultaneous construction of sexual or erotic meaning and direct nyash-related bodily focus.

This framework prevents the analytical inflation of nyash. If every reference to a woman's body were coded as nyash, the category would lose conceptual precision and obscure differences among beauty, dress, breasts, body shape, sexual desire, and posterior-body representation.

Integrated Socio-Discursive Interpretation

The combined findings demonstrate that sexual discourse is closely connected to power in *A Man of the People*. Sexuality is not restricted to private relationships. It is embedded in political privilege, masculine competition, social status, patronage, public reputation, and access. Odili's statistical dominance reflects the importance of male narrative perspective. His descriptions and evaluations contribute to the construction of women as visible and desirable subjects. His sexual discourse is connected to attraction, observation, rivalry, self-presentation, and political opposition. Chief Nanga's representation connects sexual privilege to political authority. His social power enables personal access and contributes to his public image. Sexual conduct becomes one of the signs through which political corruption is represented. The transformation of public authority into private advantage is therefore reflected in both political and interpersonal behaviors (Achebe, 1966). The prominence of sexual insinuation and objectification indicates that women are frequently represented through desirability-based frames. The body becomes a site on which gendered meanings are projected. Feminist discourse approaches are useful for examining how apparently ordinary descriptions may reproduce assumptions concerning gender, agency, and social value (Lazar, 2005; Mills, 2008).

The nyash analysis demonstrates that bodily discourse is internally differentiated. Different body parts and bodily practices carry different social meanings. Nyash functions as a culturally specific embodied sign. It may signify attractiveness, movement, visibility, dress, humors, or public evaluation. Its limited frequency indicates that it is not the principal organizing structure of the novel's sexual discourse. The broader system is more strongly concerned with desire, possession, romance, objectification, rivalry, and access. The predominance of veiled discourse further demonstrates the importance of pragmatic meaning. Sexual significance is frequently inferred rather than directly stated. Readers interpret expressions through narrative context, character relationships, cultural knowledge, and the interaction between language and action. This pattern supports the view that sexuality is discursively constructed through multiple linguistic and social resources (Cameron & Kulick, 2003). The statistical patterns therefore support a socio-discursive interpretation in which sexuality contributes to Achebe's political satire. Sexual relationships and bodily representations expose the moral contradictions of political power. Masculine privilege operates across public and private domains, while women are frequently positioned within structures of observation, desire, competition, and social evaluation.

CONCLUSION

This study quantitatively and socio-discursively examined 49 coded references to sexual and sexualized discourse in Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People*. The findings demonstrate that sexual discourse is patterned across the novel and concentrated in particular chapters, categories, and character perspectives. Chapter Six records the highest concentration, with 12 references (24.49%). Sexual insinuation and objectification constitute the most frequent broad category, also with 12 references (24.49%). Odili accounts for 28 references (57.14%), confirming the importance of the male narrative perspective in constructing sexual meaning. Chief Nanga's prominence further demonstrates the relationship between sexuality and political power. The gender analysis reveals substantial male dominance. Male-coded references account for 87.50% of the binary-gender-coded subset. The comparison of Odili and Chief Nanga with the selected female characters produces a male-to-female involvement

ratio of approximately 2.50:1 (Lynn, 2023). These findings indicate that sexual discourse is largely mediated through male observation, male agency, and male competition.

The explicitness analysis shows that veiled sexual discourse is more frequent than explicit discourse among male-coded references. Sexual meaning is therefore often produced through implication, humour, euphemism, bodily description, and contextual inference. Indirectness is not merely a stylistic feature; it contributes to the normalization and satirical exposure of gendered practices. Introducing nyash as an independent coding variable improves the conceptual precision of the study. Only three references, representing 6.12% of the corpus, are genuinely nyash-related. Two are classified as nyash discourse only, while one constitutes sexual–nyash overlap. (Lynn, 2023, pp. 442–462) The findings demonstrate that nyash should not be used as a synonym for the female body or for sexual discourse generally. The study concludes that sexual discourse is broad, recurrent, and structurally important in *A Man of the People*, whereas nyash discourse is quantitatively limited but culturally and socio-discursively salient. Nyash functions as a specialized embodied sub-discourse that foregrounds the posterior body, hips, movement, dress, visibility, humors, and culturally recognizable forms of evaluation. Sexuality contributes to Achebe's critique of political corruption by revealing the relationship among masculine privilege, social status, political authority, rivalry, objectification, and private desire. The novel's political world is therefore also gendered and sexualized. Public power and private conduct are mutually illuminating, and sexual discourse becomes one of the resources through which the moral contradictions of leadership are represented and critically exposed.

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APPENDIX

Table: Distribution of Sexual References across the Chapters

Table: Distribution of Sexual References across the Chapters					
Chapter		Frequency	Percentage		
Chapter One		2	4.08		
Chapter Two		7	14.29		
Chapter Three		0	0.00		
Chapter Four		3	6.12		
Chapter Five		3	6.12		
Chapter Six		12	24.49		
Chapter Seven		3	6.12		
Chapter Eight		3	6.12		
Chapter Nine		2	4.08		
Chapter Ten		1	2.04		
Chapter Eleven		2	4.08		
Chapter Twelve		4	8.16		
Chapter Thirteen		7	14.29		
Total		49	100.00		
No.	Chapter	Page	Character/source of reference	Excerpt or precise reference	Category
1	Chapter One	10–11	Odili, the narrator	Odili repeatedly describes Edna as “ the beautiful girl ” and “ the beautiful young girl ” in Chief Nanga’s entourage.	Physical attractiveness/female beauty
2	Chapter One	12	Journalist in Chief Nanga’s party	The journalist suggests that Edna may be “ im girl-friend, or im cousin ” and warns Odili not to approach her.	Implied romantic or sexual relationship
3	Chapter Two	15	Odili about Peter	Peter is said to be reading a book entitled <i>How to Solve the Fair Sex</i> .	Sexualised representation of women
4	Chapter Two	16	Andrew Kadibe	Andrew identifies Edna as Chief Nanga’s “ girl-friend ” and says Nanga intends to marry her as a “ parlour-wife ” because his existing wife is supposedly too “bush” for his social position.	Polygamy, romantic possession and sexual relationship
5	Chapter Two	16	Odili	Odili says Edna deserves to be “ somebody’s first wife—not an old man’s mistress. ”	Mistress/sexual relationship
6	Chapter Two	17	Odili, narrator	Odili states that Elsie was “ the only girl I met and slept with the same day—in fact within an hour. ”	Direct reference to sexual intercourse
7	Chapter Two	17–18	Odili, narrating Elsie’s sexual response	Odili recounts taking Elsie to his room and describes her vocal response “ in the heat of the thing. ”	Sexual intimacy/intercourse
8	Chapter Two	18	Odili, narrating Irre	Irre’s sexual conquest of the female student known as “ Unbreakable ” is described.	Sexual conquest

9	Chapter Two	18	Irre	Irre emerges after the encounter holding up a used condom as proof of his sexual conquest.	Explicit sexual reference
10	Chapter Four	26	Odili	Odili is pleased that Mrs Nanga will leave because he intends to bring Elsie to the house and spend private time with her.	Planned sexual intimacy
11	Chapter Four	31	Odili	Odili interprets Agnes's appearance and gaze as suggesting that she is ready to "drag Chief Nanga off to bed."	Sexual insinuation
12	Chapter Four	32	Odili	Odili imagines that Chief Nanga, despite being older and barely literate, is probably going to sleep with Agnes that night.	Anticipated sexual intercourse
13	Chapter Five	34	Odili	Odili refers to a film featuring "breast-throwing, hip-jerking, young women."	Eroticised female body and movement
14	Chapter Five	35	Jean	Jean interprets Odili's leg-shaking as indicating that he wants badly to "go to bed with some woman."	Sexual desire
15	Chapter Five	35	Jean	Jean explicitly says: "Sex means much more to a woman than to a man. It takes place inside her. The man uses a mere projection of himself."	Direct discussion of sex and sexual anatomy
16	Chapter Six	37	Odili	Odili describes Elsie as "as desirable as ever," despite her sleep-swollen eyes.	Eroticised female attractiveness
17	Chapter Six	37	Odili	Odili and Elsie arrange for her to spend two free days at Chief Nanga's residence, while she brings a female friend for Nanga.	Arrangement facilitating sexual intimacy
18	Chapter Six	37-38	Odili and Elsie	Odili jokingly asks whether Chief Nanga will request a "swop" of the women.	Sexual exchange/partner-swapping implication
19	Chapter Six	39	Chief Nanga	Chief Nanga tells Odili about a married woman who refused to remove her brassière because her husband had allegedly placed protective juju on her breasts.	Female breasts and sexual fidelity
20	Chapter Six	39	Chief Nanga	Nanga dismisses the husband's attempt to protect the woman's breasts, saying in Pidgin that "na bobby them de take do the thing?"	Sexual body reference; breasts and intercourse
21	Chapter Six	39	Chief Nanga	Chief Nanga comments on women's intelligence and agency, arguing that a woman who refuses something may do	Sexual agency in context

				so by choice rather than from ignorance.	
22	Chapter Six	44	Odili	During the drive, Odili puts his arm around Elsie's shoulders; his hand then moves "under her arm to her breast," and he presses her against his side.	Physical sexual intimacy; female breast
23	Chapter Six	44–45	Odili	Odili anticipates going upstairs to Elsie's room after Chief Nanga retires. He describes her as "ripe and ready."	Sexual anticipation
24	Chapter Six	45	Odili	Odili waits for Chief Nanga to settle in bed before quietly going upstairs to Elsie's room.	Intended sexual encounter
25	Chapter Six	45–46	Odili	Odili hears voices and laughter from Elsie's room and suspects that Chief Nanga is with her.	Implied sexual encounter
26	Chapter Six	46	Odili	Odili hears Elsie "deliriously screaming" his name and initially imagines that she is calling him to rescue her from a "ravisher."	Implied sexual intercourse
27	Chapter Six	46–47	Odili	Odili realises that Chief Nanga and Elsie are sexually involved and waits for Elsie to return.	Sexual betrayal
28	Chapter Seven	48	Chief Nanga	Nanga tells Odili: "After all she is not your wife." He dismisses Odili's objection to his sexual involvement with Elsie.	Sexual possession and rivalry
29	Chapter Seven	48	Chief Nanga	Nanga apologises and offers to bring Odili "six girls this evening."	Direct sexual solicitation
30	Chapter Seven	48	Chief Nanga	Nanga says Odili will "do the thing" so much that he will beg for it to stop.	Direct sexual proposition
31	Chapter Eight	50	Odili	Odili says another man has "wrenched my girl-friend from my hand and led her to bed under my very eyes."	Sexual rivalry and intercourse
32	Chapter Eight	50	Odili	Odili describes Chief Nanga's wife as having a dress that becomes caught "between the buttocks."	Female body reference
33	Chapter Eight	50	Odili	Odili's humiliation over Elsie's sexual involvement with Nanga motivates his decision to pursue Edna.	Sexual jealousy/revenge
34	Chapter Nine	58	Mrs Nanga	Mrs Nanga discusses Edna's planned marriage to Chief Nanga and refers to Edna as "our new wife."	Marriage and polygamous intimacy
35	Chapter Nine	58	Mrs Nanga	Speaking sarcastically about Edna's youth, Mrs Nanga says: "Let her come and suck," while indicating her left breast.	Female breast reference

36	Chapter Ten	65	Odili	Odili tells Edna that “a beautiful young girl like you deserves better than to marry an ancient polygamist.”	Female attractiveness and marital/sexual relationship
37	Chapter Eleven	69	Odili	Odili observes that Edna folds her arms beneath her “perfectly formed breasts.”	Detailed eroticised description of the female body
38	Chapter Eleven	71	Odili	Odili recalls a car whose seats could be converted into a bed “in a matter of seconds.”	Possible sexual implication, though indirect
39	Chapter Twelve	83	Odili	Odili watches Eunice’s “beautiful profile” and later reflects on the person she “came to sleep with.”	Female beauty and sexual relationship
40	Chapter Twelve	85	Odili	Odili jokingly says that he will marry Eunice.	Romantic/marital proposition
41	Chapter Twelve	87	Local council policeman	The policeman uses the word “nyarsh” and crudely asks to see the opponent’s buttocks.	Crude body reference
42	Chapter Twelve	87	Odili, in his letter to Edna	Odili tells Edna to marry Chief Nanga and adds that if Nanga is “not up to it” , she can “steal away to his son’s bed.”	Sexual insult and sexual insinuation
43	Chapter Thirteen	90	Narrator	Edna is positioned beside Chief Nanga during the marriage-related ceremony, while Mrs Nanga’s bosom is also mentioned.	Female body reference and polygamous marriage
44	Chapter Thirteen	91	Chief Nanga	Nanga publicly identifies Edna as “our custom is my wife—this girl here.”	Marriage and sexual possession
45	Chapter Thirteen	93	Narrator	The narrator describes Chief Koko’s wife’s political activity as “breast-feeding the ballot.”	Metaphorical female-body reference
46	Chapter Thirteen	95	Edna	Edna explains that she did not genuinely want to marry Chief Nanga and says that the girls in her college were attracted to his wealth.	Marriage, desire and material motivation
47	Chapter Thirteen	95	Edna	Edna refers to Odili’s earlier warning about Chief Nanga’s wife’s jealousy.	Marital/sexual rivalry
48	Chapter Thirteen	96	Odili’s father	Odili’s father says that he frightened a woman away by claiming that he intended to marry her for one of his sons.	Marriage proposal
49	Chapter Thirteen	96	Odili	Odili objects to his father’s proposed marriage arrangement and insists that the woman should be married to him instead.	Marriage/romantic claim