

My father murdered my mum, I'm fine if he's killed too — Son

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Twenty-four-year-old Lagos resident, Paul Odu. Photo: Biodun Busari.

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Twenty-four-year-old Lagos resident, Paul Odu, tells BIODUN BUSARI how his mother, Temitope, died a day after his father allegedly subjected her to severe physical and verbal assault shortly after she returned from her call-to-bar ceremony in Abuja

What led to your mum's death?

My father beat my mum a few days after she returned from Abuja, where she had gone for her call-to-bar ceremony. While she was away, he also beat me up. He called my mum all sorts of despicable names, including a prostitute and worse. He kept cursing her out.

I confronted him, telling him to stop insulting her, and that angered him even more, so he turned on me. He started beating me with plywood, chasing me all over the house.

I called my mum on the phone while he was attacking me. She told me to find a way to escape, but I couldn't because he had locked the door. When I managed to run into my room, he broke down the door and continued the assault. This happened on Monday, October 13. I cried for help, but the neighbours didn't intervene because they already knew him as a violent man and habitual wife-beater.

When my mother returned from Abuja, he immediately started insulting her, accusing her of sleeping with men during her stay in Abuja. She ignored him. Later that day, my elder brother came to visit. Before he arrived, my father had already called him, saying, "Come and carry your mother now if you don't want her to die."

Where does your brother live?

He lives close by, in Banana Estate, while we live in Liberty Estate, Ikorodu.

Are you the only child living with your parents?

Yes. I'm the last of three male children. My two elder brothers are married.

How long did your mum stay in Abuja?

She stayed for about a month. My father didn't want her to travel at all. He was uncomfortable with her going to Abuja in the first place.

But he didn't beat her the day she returned?

No, he beat her the next day. He deliberately took some of her belongings into his room, probably to provoke her and start an argument. When my mum went to collect them, he started cursing and insulting her again. At first, he refused to open the door, but when she asked, "Why can't I access any room in my own house?" he opened it and began hitting her with his hands. He even struck her in the eye.

I rushed to the nearest police station to report the assault. When the police invited him, he denied everything and was released. Afterwards, he went around the neighbourhood telling some cult boys that I had beaten him. Later that day, those boys confronted me, asking why I had assaulted my father. It didn't surprise me because he had often told his brother that I "beat" him whenever I tried to defend my mum from his abuse.

Why did he tell those guys you beat him?

He said that to paint me as the aggressor. In reality, I was only trying to protect my mum from his attacks. Even the guys he told knew the truth; they were well aware that he had been beating my mother for years.

How did your mum die?

She died on a Wednesday. She had complained of body pain and called her friend, a nurse, who came to treat her at home. The nurse promised to return the next day, but that was the day my mother passed away.

That Wednesday morning, she called me into her room and said the beating from the previous day had left her in severe pain. I asked how she felt, and she told me to get her some pap and warm the rice she had cooked the previous day. She also asked me to make zobo for her because she had high blood sugar levels; she was diabetic. Those were the last things she asked me to do.

Before then, she told me to go back to my room, saying she wasn't ready to eat yet. I went to sleep for about an hour. When I woke up from a disturbing dream, I rushed to her room and found her unresponsive. I touched her and realised she was cold.

Where was your dad when this happened?

He was at home the entire time. Everything happened early in the morning, around 7 a.m. Earlier, my mum had called a friend to send scent leaves for soup. The woman sent her son to deliver them, and it was my father who opened the door and collected the leaves. That must have been around the time my mum died.

When I discovered her lifeless body, I knocked on my father's door and told him, but he neither responded nor opened the door. I ran out to call for help. My mum's friend followed me home, checked her, and confirmed she was dead.



Temitope Odu

You earlier mentioned that your dad had the habit of beating your mum.

Yes. Anytime my mother went out, he would get angry and accuse her of sleeping around. That had always been his excuse. There was a time my friend came to our house to charge his phone, and my father accused him of having an affair with my mother. That was the worst of it all. I was furious that my father could think that way, especially since my friend was only about 26 or 27 years old. He even went as far as reporting to the police that my friend was sleeping with my mum, and the police began looking for the boy at that time.

When did this happen?

It was last year, 2024. There was a time when my dad fasted and prayed that my mum should die. He didn't eat for three days but prayed aloud every morning that his wife should die.

What was your mum's reaction to this?

She wouldn't say anything. She would just tell him that what he was doing was not good and that she didn't offend him.

Who owns the house you live in?

My mum built the house.

What did your mum do for a living before becoming a lawyer?

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She was a civil servant. She worked with the Ministry of Agriculture.

Which school did your mum attend to study law?

She studied law at the National Open University. Everybody knew about this among family and friends.

Did your dad support her when she was going to school?

Support? He never supported my mum in anything. That had been the problem in the family.

What does your dad do for a living?

He is a printer.

Did he go to school?

I don't think so. There has never been any discussion about that in the family.

Whenever your father maltreated your mother, what did the family or neighbours do to intervene?

No effort had yielded any result. When we reported to the police station, they would come to settle the matter amicably between them, and everybody would move on. My dad was notorious for denying that he assaulted my mum. My dad's family would support him. He would report to my uncle that my brothers and I were beating him to support our mother. The challenging issue about this is that my mum's siblings don't live nearby.

Where is your dad now?

He is in police detention at Yaba. He was first arrested by the police station close to our area. I was even surprised to see him at home the next morning after my mother's death. He came home, saying the police didn't have evidence that he killed his wife. He said it was a false allegation. My mum's family ensured he was re-arrested a few days after he was released. My maternal aunt in the United States called her brother in Ijebu-Mushin, Ogun State, and reported the case at another police station. So, they came to arrest my dad.

What do you want the government to do to get justice for your late mum?

I can not decide for the government, but whatever punishment is meted out on him is fine with me. He should be punished.

What if the government condemns or jails him?

Whatever penalty the court pronounces on him is okay with me.

What is the family's decision on this matter?

My family's decision will align with the government's ruling on the case. My mum's elder sister in the US took up the case, and so the family wants justice.

I regret not telling my sister to leave her abusive marriage – Brother

The deceased's elder brother, Mr Gbeyi Olorunfunmi, says he regrets not advising his sister to leave her husband after all efforts to restore peace between the couple failed

Are you aware that your late sister's husband was abusive?

Felicia, my younger sister, often complained about the domestic violence she faced in her husband's home. He beat her several times. We tried to intervene, but he never listened.

What types of interventions did your family make?

I spoke to him many times, as an elder brother, advising him that it was wrong for a man to abuse his wife. But he never changed. One thing I deeply regret now is not urging my sister to leave her matrimonial home. It was difficult to say those words then, but looking back, if I had known it would lead to her death, I would have told her to leave.

Was there any misunderstanding before their marriage?

No. There was no conflict between them or between our families before they got married.

Are you taking legal action?

Yes. He is currently in detention at the State Criminal Investigation Department, Panti, Lagos. The family intends to charge him to court.

Do you know if your brother-in-law drinks or smokes?

I can't say for sure. It's their last child, Paul, who lives with them. He can answer that better.

How well did your family know him before the marriage?

Honestly, I didn't know him before they got married. That was a long time ago. I didn't attend their wedding because I was unwell at the time. My sister's husband is from Delta State, while my sister was from Ijebu, Ogun State.