

# Controversy trails death of six-year-old girl in Abuja school

From **Odita Sunday**, Abuja

**T**HERE is controversy over the death of a six-year-old girl, Modadeoluwa Lawal, who allegedly died at Startrite School in Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja.

Already, the family and the Nigeria Police are at loggerheads over the circumstances surrounding the girl's demise.

While the family claimed that the girl drowned during a swimming tutorial, the police said that she died as a result of food aspiration and asphyxia.

Aspiration happens when something you eat or drink "goes down the wrong pipe" and enters your airway or lungs, while asphyxia is a condition arising when the body is deprived of oxygen, causing unconsciousness or death; suffocation."

The family, who based their claims on the footage from the Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) installed in the school, called for the arrest and prosecution of the swimming instructor in accordance with the law, but the FCT Police exonerated the school and its staff from culpability.

A woman, Aderinola Adeleye, who claimed to be a

cousin to the deceased girl, rejected claims by the police, alleging that the law enforcement agency's intention was to exonerate the school and its staff from what transpired before and after Modadeoluwa's death.

Adeleye expressed the family's stance through her official social media handle, stressing that the family had concluded plan to publish the autopsy report to counter police stance.

She maintained that the swimming instructor tossed her multiple times at the shallow end of the pool and allowed her to hit her head, thereby suffering internal bleeding, must be prosecuted.

Adeleye added that the school refused to take responsibility for the incident.

According to her, the school has remained open, carrying and carried out its activities as if nothing happened. She said: "Startrite killed my baby cousin! She had a swim day in school, and the "coach", who was teaching her a stunt, threw her up and she hit her head, and had internal bleeding. We asked for footage and they released a doctored tape.

"On November 2, due to the

school's negligence (Startrite school), my cousin was killed. We found a way to get evidence from the CCTV footage even though the school deliberately tried to cut the scenes of what exactly happened. Our efforts to access justice have been frustrated by the school. All we want is justice. She was only six-year-old. #justicefor-Modadeoluwa."

Another family member, who identified himself as David, said: "My little cousin had a swim day at school. Apparently, the coach advised her to swim as far as possible and swim back, but when she got back, he tossed her multiple times in the air at the shallow side of the pool, she hit her head and had internal bleeding."



Modadeoluwa Lawal

"We later requested the CCTV film and when we arrived, we saw them doctoring the tape. Presently the school is open like nothing happened and they aren't assuming responsibility as well as misleading us."

Efforts to reach the school management for comments were unsuccessful, but the FCT Police Command disclosed that investigations so far revealed that the child didn't die by drowning, but as a result of food aspiration, which led to asphyxia.

Spokesperson for the FCT Police Command, Josephine Adeh, in a statement, said:

"On November 2, Modade Lawal had a swim day as part of the school curriculum and had earlier celebrated her birthday that same day before hitting the pool in the company of other pupils, under the supervision of the lifeguards, instructors, and teachers.

"At about 11:45 a.m., while being coached, the instructor noticed she wasn't properly responding as she naturally would, he stopped and brought her out of the 4-2 feet deep poolside to examine her and noticed she was having difficulty in breathing."