

Strike tragedy: Undergraduate son of lecturer on joyride with friend dies in auto crash

THE protracted strike by the Academic Staff Union of Universities has claimed a casualty in Lafia, Nasarawa State capital with the death of a 300 level student of Public Administration at Nasarawa State University in an auto crash.

But for the prolonged strike, the 30-year-old victim, Felix Odonye, would be in school and would not have engaged in the car ride with a friend from Lafia to Jos, Plateau State capital, during which their private car had a head-on collision with a truck and he died instantly.

His father, Dr. Osekweyi Joel Odonye, a lecturer in the Department of Economics at the same university said although Felix had been at home since the ASUU strike began in February, he never told him that he was traveling with his friend until he got a call that he had died in an accident.

The bereaved lecturer, who narrated the events that culminated in the tragic incident during a chat with our correspondent, reflected on the life and time of his deceased son as well as the moments they shared and lamented that his life had been ruined.

"God has ruined my life. He rendered me useless and hopeless. There is absolutely no point keeping me alive," he said.

The university don, who reckoned that he faced a bleak future with the death of his only son, said: "My name is Osekweyi Joel Odonye, PhD. I am a lecturer at the Department of Economics in Nasarawa State University, Keffi. I am also the Coordinator of the Post Graduate Studies of the same department.

"I am Alago by tribe and I am an indigene of Obi Local Government Area of Nasarawa State. I started my lecturing career at the State Polytechnic in Lafia from 2001 till 2006 before I proceeded to the University where I work till date.

"Felix Odonye is my son. He was 30 years old before his untimely death. On that fateful day, July 22nd, 2022, I was in Abuja for a meeting when I received the shocking news that my son had died in a motor accident.

"I was shocked to the extent that I lost balance and could no longer stand well when I heard the sad news.

"I was so shocked because I was with Felix in Lafia two days before he died. He was even the one who washed my car before I travelled to Abuja.

"He was so healthy and he hardly complained of any illness. He was a very strong young man. So, that was why the news of his death hit me so hard.

■ From LINUS OOTA, Lafia ■

"I was not aware of his plan to travel on that fateful day, but he and his friend decided to travel from Lafia to Jos, Plateau State capital, in a vehicle his friend uses for business.

"Felix's friend appealed to him to accompany him to drop a particular machine in Jos, promising that they would return to Lafia that same day.

"It was while they were returning from Jos that they had a head-on collision with an oncoming vehicle on the federal road in Fadan Karshi, which links Nasarawa, Kaduna and Plateau states, and he died on the spot.

"It was the police in the area who picked his phone and called to inform me about his death."

He attributed the death of his son to the poor condition of the road, saying: "The terrible nature of the Lafia-Jos Road caused the untimely death of my son because they were trying to dodge a very deep pothole on the road which made them run into the oncoming vehicle.

"When I heard of the sad news of his death, I immediately made arrangements to travel to Fadan Karshi so that we would know how to handle the situation."

Odonye described his late son as a very peaceful young man who never had issues with anyone.

"He loved God so much and he was very mindful of how he related with people because he does not like having misunderstanding with anyone.

"He was a student of the Nasarawa State University, Keffi. He was a 300 level student of the Public Administration Department.

"I was not aware of his plan to travel on that fateful day, but he and his friend decided to travel from Lafia to Jos, Plateau State capital, in a vehicle his friend uses for business.

"Felix's friend appealed to him to accompany him to drop a particular machine in Jos, promising that they would return to Lafia that same

"

we hardly took any of our faulty devices out for repairs.



•Dr Odonye Joe

"Since he became mature, he did not bother me and my wife about money for school expenses and other needs. What we did was to pay his school fees and buy food items for him whenever a new session began.

"He used his talent of repairing electronics to raise money and settle some of his little bills in the university.

"It is often said that man proposes but God disposes. My plan for him and all my children was to support them in their educational pursuit at least to PhD level, so that in the

future, they will have a great impact in the society.

"I want them to be financially stable so that they can help the less privileged in the society and contribute to the growth of Nasarawa State.

"Felix is dead now but I won't give up in my efforts to ensure that my children are all educated."

Odonye said that no other life was lost in the accident.

He said: "Both vehicles had two passengers each. So, there were four people in both vehicles. It was only my son that died. Others were rushed to the hospital for treatment.

"The sudden death of Felix is really a big blow to us. My wife and I have all been crying since the day Felix died.

Odonye said his appeal is that the government should fix the roads.

"The number of potholes on the Lafia-Jos Road is too much. My son died because of the bad nature of the road.

"They should work on the road and other roads needing attention across the country in order to avert this kind of situation in the future," he said.