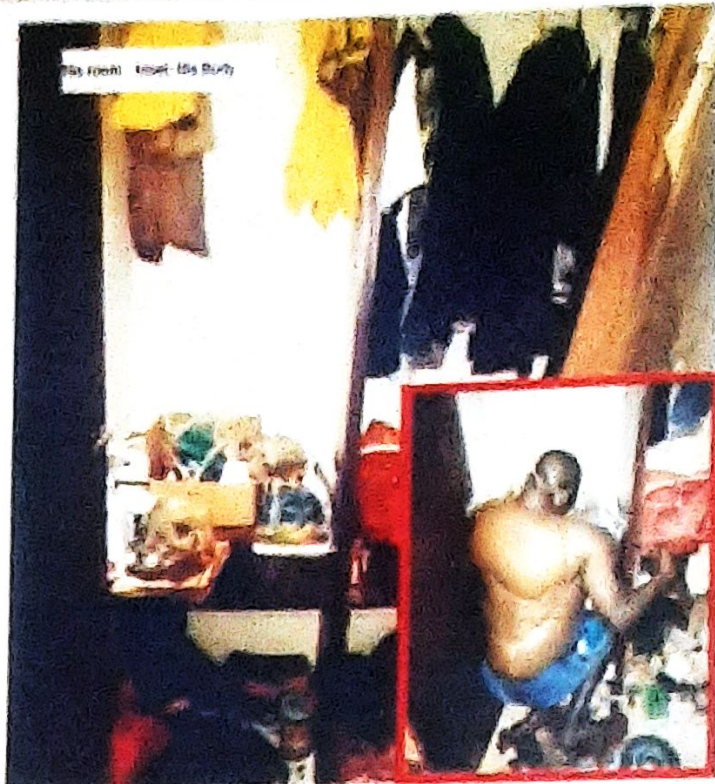


FEATURE

WITH BAYO AJALA | 08055081747 | aladebayo747@yahoo.com



My son's suicide story allegation is a fallacy

• Father of 29-year-old Ph.D student cries out, alleges murder

OLAKUNLE MARUF reports that Ayodeji Ajala, a 29-year-old Ph.D student was found dead in his room two days after returning from a visit to his parents. People, especially Ayodeji's parents, are wondering what could have happened and disputing the claim that their son committed suicide.

WHEN 29-year-old Ayodeji Ajala, a Ph.D student of Kebbi State University of Science and Technology, Alhoro, Kebbi State visited his parents last week Sunday and went back on Tuesday, 15 June, little did the latter know that they were seeing their calm, gentle and easy-going promising son for the last time.

Apart from discussing academic issues with his parents, Ayodeji also came to introduce his fiancée to his parents and also inform them that he had resigned from his job to concentrate on his Ph.D programme and have more time for his own small businesses of barbing, painting and photography, with which he had been supporting himself in school.

Two days later, Thursday, 17 June, news came to his parents that Ayodeji had

committed suicide. It was a shocking piece of news. His parents wondered how a lively young man with focus on a bright future could have decided to take his own life after all the discussions he had with them just days before.

His father, Mr Ayodeji Adekunle Ajala and the entire family were left distraught, wondering what could have happened. Their conclusion was that there was more than met the eye when they went to Ayodeji's school to see for themselves and found his corpse with a rope around his neck and blood on the floor covered with sand.

At the family house in Sokoto, Mr Ajala who spoke glowingly about his son, said he could have turned 30 on August 12 and that he had his first degree at Usmanu Dan Fodiyo University Sokoto, before proceeding to Kebbi State University of

Science and Technology for his Master's degree and later his Ph.D which he was studying for before his demise.

"To let you know he was not having any issues disturbing him, it was on Sunday that he came to introduce his fiancée to us officially.

"He said 'Daddy, this is the lady I intend to marry and spend the rest of life with.' I told him to go and see his pastor and explain to him who would then pray for him; he did this obediently.

"It was even that same weekend that he resigned from his work place. His room and I had been telling him to resign from the workplace so that he could focus on one thing at a time.

"He came back that weekend and said, 'Daddy, Mummi, I have reasoned along with you and I am glad to tell you that I resigned from work already. I want to

focus on my small businesses and my education which I believe is paramount to me at this moment,' Mr Ajala narrated to Sunday Tribune.

Mr Ajala, who is yet to come to terms with the death of his son, stated further that "right from his primary school days, he had always been the best in his class up till his Ph.D level.

"I don't know why someone will want to punish me with such a promising son by cutting short his life. Is it envy or jealousy of his achievement or what exactly could be their reason?

"I want the Nigerian Police and concerned Nigerians to help me ask the management of the university to tell me what exactly happened to my son.

"As of today (six days after his corpse

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FEATURE

'The School authorities have not deemed it fit to pay a condolenc



Pa Ajala, Ayodeji's father



Mathew Samuel



Pastor Mustapha

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was discovered), there is no official statement from the school either to condole, sympathise, or even visit the family over this unfortunate incident.

"The claim or rumour that my son committed suicide by hanging himself in his room is fallacy which doesn't hold water.

"He lacked nothing and was full of life as at the time he left home for school. They must find the killers of my son and stop playing God."

Speaking further, Mr Ajayi said that both he and his wife called Ayodeji several times the day after he left for school, but his phone kept ringing without response.

"I was surprised because my own Ayo will respond to every missed call on his phone but to our amazement, none of our calls was responded to throughout that Wednesday.

"He earlier told us he wanted to go to school and read to prepare for his exam on Thursday. On Thursday morning, I went to the church he attended to inform his pastor about the situation and to know if I can get across to some of his friends in church after I explained what happened to him.

"He now told us that his wife who is a lecturer in the same school was already in school and he called her to tell her our dilemma in getting across to Ayodeji. She promised to get across to Ayo's supervisor in school and to get back to us.

"I went back home and called his younger brother, Olanrewaju, to bring out car and let us go to Allero ourselves. About 61 kilometres away from Sokoto, the pastor's wife called me and asked where I was and I told her I was on my way to Allero. She asked me to come, I was surprised.

"On getting to the school, we met a lot of people in front of the hostel and I was asked to sit down. That was how they told me they broke into Ayodeji's room that morning and found his dead body inside.

"I was shocked, his brother had started crying and I was asked to come and see his corpse but I told them, in our tradition I can't see my son's corpse. At that point, my son-in-law arrived and followed them to the room," he added.

An in-law to the family, Pastor Ola Mustapha, also spoke on the tragic incident. He said by the time he arrived at the school, Ayodeji's corpse had been taken in an ambulance to the hospital and he went there to see it.

"I requested to go back to his hostel to see how the room was and I was taken back to the hostel. The room was under lock but I was told that the key is with the DVC and will not be opened to anybody.

"I later opened the window, peeped through the window. I saw his bed neatly arranged as if no one slept on it. On the ground, I saw plenty of sand and I asked what purpose it was supposed to serve. They told me they found blood on the ground and the sand was used to cover the blood.

"As of that time, the school authority did not give us any explanation or what actually happened and all I was

The most annoying part of the situation is that the school authorities did not deem it fit to either pay or send a delegation for condolence visit or even issue a statement about the sad development.

thinking of was how to get Daddy (Ayodeji's father) and my brother back home.

The only explanation the Ajayis got from any source was that the Police were already investigating the matter but no officer spoke to them until the family left for Sokoto with the corpse, accompanied by a doctor, nurse and the police officers provided by the school authority and some elders of the family church.

At the hospital, the doctors said the corpse can't be embalmed because it was already decomposing and could not be accommodated and no autopsy would be needed. So it was rejected.

Pastor Mustapha spoke further, saying: "We couldn't bear it anymore and we had to take a decision to bury him and let the school continue with their investigation on that Thursday.

"We went back to the school the following day to clear his belongings but on getting there, we were taken to the office of the Chief Security Officer (CSO) of the school who told us that police are already investigating the matter and that we can't access the properties including his phone and laptop.

"He (CSO) said we should give the school authorities till the following week after which we would be briefed. Later when we met with the Vice Chancellor, he attested to the fact that Ayodeji was a brilliant student and that all his lecturers confirmed that.

"To our amazement, on getting down from his office,

my brother from Sokoto sent a message being circulated on social media by one Johanna that Ayodeji hanged himself, which surprised us. The school authority never told us the circumstances that led to his death.

"That was the first time we were hearing that he hanged himself and it came as a surprise to the family as we wondered why our son would hang himself.

"It is very unfortunate that the authorities are actually investigating a case of suicide, which means they have already concluded even before the commencement of their investigation. They said there was a rope on his neck. I saw the rope on his neck that Thursday but it was not a very strong rope and not even long enough.

"Remember we said we couldn't get access to his room but we were told that he committed suicide in his wardrobe and from what I saw through the window, the wardrobe is not even as tall as the deceased.

"If someone hanged himself, it means he should be dangling, but the position we saw him was quite different from that."

Pastor Mustapha was not alone in smelling a rat in the case. Ayodeji's younger brother, Olanrewaju Ajala, also suspected foul play. He called on security agencies in conjunction with the school authorities to unravel the circumstances that led to Ayodeji's death urgently, while condemning the authors of the social media news that his brother committed suicide.

"The most annoying part of the situation is that the school authorities did not deem it fit to either pay or send a delegation for condolence visit or even issue a statement about the sad development.

"We (the bereaved) still went to the school to meet with them (management) but to our utmost surprise, none of them offered to meet us, and after spending over two hours in the school premises, we decided to leave.

"The situation of things as at now is not acceptable to us in the family. We want the school to talk to us on their findings so far, instead of keeping mute," he said.

The Christian fellowship of the school, Joint Christian Fellowship, described the death of Ayodeji as callous and unacceptable. The General Secretary of the group, Mathew Samuel, described the deceased as an easy going person who was focused on his studies.

Meanwhile, the school management said it had set up a committee to look into the circumstances that lead to the death of their student. The institution's Public Relations Officer, Hussaini Adamu, said the school authorities and the Nigerian Police were on the case.

When contacted on the issue, the Police Public Relations Officer in Kebbi State, DSP Nafiu Abubakar, promised to get back to our correspondent but up till the time of going to the press, he was yet to do so.

However, as the family continues to mourn their beloved son and while awaiting the outcome of the police investigation, the question that would continue to blow in the air is: why would an ambitious young man who had just introduced his fiancée to his parents and looking forward to a bright future take his own life? Only time could give an answer.