

SPECIAL REPORT

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Who stole my genitals?

• Myths, fallacies of genital disappearance



In this report, IFEDAYO OGUNYEMI takes a look at the reported cases of genital theft and disappearance presently rife in the country.

THE claims of manhood theft, snatching and disappearance have increased like wildfire in many communities in the country in the past weeks.

In most cases, victims of manhood snatching claimed they were slightly patted on the shoulder before they noticed their manhood was gone or shrunken. Others claimed their manhood was stolen after shaking hands with suspected manhood snatchers.

1 In Bauchi State, a group of three men—Yonana Abubakar, Joshua Yonana and Bitrus Iliya—specialised in the snatching of manhood. Their mode of operation is to rub a certain charm in their palms with the purpose of shaking victims in public with the same hand.

Upon successfully carrying out this operation, members of this syndicate pass the manhood up the chain to Abubakar, who led the syndicate. What Abubakar does on receiving such manhood today is still a mystery.

Joshua, who claimed to be a first-timer in the operation said he was promised an undisclosed commission for any successful operation.

On this fateful day in Nabardo area of the state,

30-year-old Joshua approached Usman Sale, shook hands with him and allegedly snatched his manhood. Almost immediately, Joshua passed the manhood to Bitrus, who thereafter took it up the chain and delivered it to Abubakar.

But that event was the last operation carried out by the syndicate whose members have now been arrested by police authorities. In the events leading to their arrest, Abubakar, who led the group, was killed after he was hit with a gun by a hunter as he attempted to run away.

Abubakar had told the hunters who first apprehended him he would return the manhood by 8 p.m. but he died before the set time.

Narrating his role in the operation while being paraded by police in Bauchi, Joshua, who is also a farmer, said: "I shook hands with the victim in Nabardo and stole his penis. When I stole the penis, I handed it over to my colleague, Bitrus, for onward delivery to our boss, Yonana Abubakar."

He further said: "I do not know what our boss did with the stolen penis because this is my first time taking part in the assignment. They did not tell me how much I will be paid for each penis and this is my first experience and the only penis

I have stolen."

Speaking in the same vein, 27-year-old Bitrus Iliya, who confirmed the receipt of Sale's manhood also disclosed that they were promised undisclosed cash rewards by the deceased, Abubakar for their involvement in the "operation". He also claimed not to know the purpose for which the manhood was stolen or what they would be used for.

"It is our boss that has the secret of the charm to steal and return the penis of the victims. Before his death, he confessed to security men that he had received the penis of the man we stole at Nabardo," Iliya told newsmen.

Narrating his experience in a video, Sale said he suddenly became numb after shaking hands with Joshua. On getting home, Sale took a shower and tried masturbating by stimulating his manhood for arousal but the effort did not yield desired results. According to him, it was an experience he had never had.

"It did not disappear; it just shrunken totally and I could still ease myself normally," Sale recounted. "My elder brother and I went to the residence of the suspect with a plea to restore my manhood

before the intervention of local hunters who beat him in the process leading to his death."

Sale claimed he approached the General Hospital in Toro Local Government Area of the state where it was confirmed to him that his genital completely shrunken.

"I got some prescribed drugs and many herbal medications that I am currently taking to restore my manhood," he further disclosed in the video.

PRNigeria, which initially reported the incident, further noted that Sale's manhood is now fully back and functional after undergoing full medical treatment.

The Bauchi State Police Commissioner, Auwal Musa Muhammad, who claimed investigation into the matter was ongoing, noted that Iliya and Joshua would be charged before the court for their involvement in the manhood theft.

2 Similar claims in Kogi, Abuja

In Kogi State, Usman Abubakar, used to fend for himself and his immediate family with the proceeds of his daily motorcycle operations,

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Manhood snatching has no clinical place — Experts



Dr Ajidahun



Dr Ogah



Prof Ikuorowo

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among other things, before his life was cut short by a mob who believed he had mysteriously "snatched" the manhood of his friends.

His visit to his friends—Harish Abdurashied, 18; Yakubu Mohammed, 25; and Haruna Adamu, 28—in Ayetoro Gbade in Kabba/Ijumu Local Government Area of the state earlier this month, though his last act of kindness and companionship, was what led to his death.

As he purportedly shook hands with his friends, the trio claimed they felt a sensation in the pubic area which made them believe Abubakar "snatched" their manhood.

They thereafter raised the alarm which drew the intervention of community leaders in the area and police authorities were involved but that did not stop an angry mob from lynching Abubakar.

In a similar event in neighbouring Abuja, operatives of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) were reported to have assaulted an unnamed man for allegedly stealing the manhood of two unidentified persons.

In a 5:41-minute video which has since gone viral, the civil defence officers brutalised the suspect in the Sauka area of Abuja where the agency's headquarters is located. The officers hit him with sticks, footwear and other objects while demanding that he should return the stolen manhood.

As he was being commanded to kneel, stand up, remove the ring on his fingers, put on his trousers, and pick up his personal effects, blood oozed out of his bruised and swollen face.

Though the suspect denied 'stealing' the alleged victim's genitals while swearing with his life, this did not deter the officers from carrying out the duties of a judge, jury and executioner by brutalising the accused. The two victims also had a swell time slapping the accused.

Between the weeks leading up to the end of September and now, dozens of cases of penis theft, disappearance and shrinkage linked to diabolical reasons have been recorded in Abuja, Kogi, Enugu, Benue and Cross River State, among others, in the country.

The phenomenon is not new as it has been recorded in times past in the country and other parts of Africa such as Kenya, Gambia, Ghana and the Democratic Republic of Congo where several victims were wounded or lynched.

A 2008 report by the US-based National Public Radio stated that the belief which was also recorded in China and India has deep roots that date back to 300 B.C. Some even believe the phenomenon is part of the illegal trade in human organs that is reported to be worth between \$840 million and \$1.7 billion every year globally.

In Nigeria, many people believe there are individuals with supernatural powers to collect, snatch or steal penises after the slightest contact in their will to exert power, dominance or even extort victims for monetary gains.

For fear of falling victim to such occurrences, some men in the rural parts of the country now go about with charcoal and bitter kola or pepper based on the belief that charcoal has absorbent properties that neutralise or ward off evil forces.

Sceptics who do not believe in spirituality and or *juju* believe most cases of organ snatching or theft are psychological in nature as it has no medical premises. They, however, agree that occasionally, penises tend to shrink into the abdomen due to fear or anxiety.

One of those sceptics is a Resident in Internal Medicine and Health Influencer, Dr Olusina Ajidahun, who believed the men only experienced *Koro*—a cultural-bound syndrome where people have a delusional disorder that their genitals disappeared, were stolen or snatched.

"People who experience this may become suicidal or suspect people around them," he said. "It usually occurs to a particular type of people. Most of the reported cases are from Abuja and some are in Lokoja. It is culturally bound and within a set of people."

As a doctor who believes in clinical evidence, Ajidahun has periodically educated the public on X (formerly Twitter) on the non-spirituality of the condition, adding that there is no research that has linked the phenomenon to spirituality.

"It is something psychiatric and the person should see a psychologist for but the approach in Nigeria is naturally poor such that anyone accused of snatching such genital is beaten without confirmation by a doctor or medical practitioner."

"What should be done is a proper examination by doctors at the hospital. A lot of these cases are not diabolical. Most likely, it is a psychiatric problem," he pointed out.

According to a study authored by Yukino Strong of the School of Medicine, Medical College of Wisconsin and nine other researchers that was published in the *2023 Health Psychology Research*, *Koro* syndrome is usually predominant among young males who believe in sex-related myths and many individuals can co-present with anxiety, depression, or even psychosis. It revealed that the syndrome has grown to become an epidemic in East and Southeast Asia and can be recorded anywhere worldwide in its non-sporadic form.

The study entitled "*Koro Syndrome: Epidemiology, Psychiatric and Physical Risk Factors, Clinical Presentation, Diagnosis, and Treatment Options*" described it as a multi-tiered disease presenting as an overwhelming belief that one's sex organs are shrinking into the body. It listed the symptoms of culturally rooted *Koro* in Asia to include "deep, panic-like anxiety over penis



A mob descending on a suspected manhood snatcher

retraction with fear of impending death," adding that the same symptoms (except for the feeling of impending death) are exhibited by those with sporadic *Koro* which is experienced elsewhere in the world. "They are usually secondary to schizophrenia, affective or medical disorders, and even recreational drug use."

The study also noted that "individual episodes of these anxiety attacks usually last several hours but can persist for as long as two days," adding that "chronic sufferers of *Koro* can experience these episodes for decades."

The study also revealed that the men who believe in culturally rooted myths and present symptoms of *Koro* can be treated with the use of psychotherapy that has a sex education component, adding that the disorder can be treated using anxiolytics, antidepressants, sedatives, or psychotics.

When contacted over the prevalence of penis snatching among men in the country, a professor of Urology at the Lagos State University, Professor Odunayo Ikuorowo, said there is no clinical placement for the disappearance of penises.

"There is nothing like that. Did people confirm that it is no longer there?" he queried. "Of course, if you have anxiety or you are afraid, the manhood may become shrunken and look small."

He expatiated further that "there are human beings who naturally have hidden or concealed penises. These are usually people with lots of fat in their pubic area. But for someone to say he used to see it and now he does not see it anymore, it does not exist, I have not seen anyone with that condition before."

"If it did happen, why did not they bring the person to the hospital? Why do not we see the medical doctors that attended to such people after they must have presented themselves?"

He also hinged the belief of such phenomenon on the spiritual belief, religious preponderance in such communities and "the fear of what people believe in and propagate."

"You can only hear about this kind of thing in poverty-ridden communities where there is ignorance and fear. You will not hear such in civilised communities and among civilised people. If you take religion or anything to poor communities, most of the time, they accept it without verification or second opinion," he said.

He advised anyone in that kind of situation to see a specialist for his informed opinion, warning that "the danger in this is raising false alarm to the detriment of the person accused. I am sure several people have been injured or even killed for this kind of thing."

Corroborating his claim, a consultant urologist at Ogah Hospital and Urology Centre, Fagari, Edo State, Dr Daniel Ogah, said there is no clinical place for manhood theft, snatching or disappearance, but also declared it as a ruse while bursting into uncontrollable laughter.

"It is just a ruse. It used to happen every seven years. After another seven years, we will still hear about it. Since I was born, it has happened several times. If people are afraid, they can see what is not present."

"If you are afraid, your manhood can retract but it will rise again. A story does not need to be true before it spreads like wildfire. Anyone who feels affected should visit the doctor," he said.