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Boy's death stirs controversy

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BY MOLLY KILETE ON SEPTEMBER 24, 2014 ·

ABUJA METRO

•Police accuse father of killing son

•Man denies, says I just spanked him slightly

A 32-year-old man is now a guest of the police for beating his seven-year-old son to death. The suspect, Johnson Adikwu, who is jobless, was said to have beaten the boy, Promise, to death on August 25 at their home in Karmo, a suburb in the Federal Capital Territory, when he could no longer tolerate the frequency at which the son suffered epileptic fits.

Adikwu from Benue State, however, told *Abuja Metro*, that it was never his intention to kill his son whom he loved dearly despite his health condition but that he only spanked him on the buttocks, on the day of the incident, not knowing he was going to die.

The suspect, while narrating the sad incident that led to the death of his son to *Abuja Metro*, said he never knew his son had epilepsy, as he had been in the custody of one of his elder brothers at Masaka, a town in Nassarawa State, near Abuja.

He said his elder brother had to take custody of the child after he separated from his wife, who got married to another man and that he never knew about his son's health condition until he took him from his brother to live with him.

Adikwu, also told *Abuja Metro* that even though his brother had informed him that his son was ill, he did not understand the nature of the illness until he visited the village sometime last year when his brother came with the boy and he saw injuries all over the boy's face and body and concluded that his brother was maltreating his son and had to take him.

Shortly after the boy started to stay with him, he said he observed that he would just fall and start jerking with foam, coming out of his mouth and wondered what was actually wrong.

When the attack became frequent, he said he called his brother to tell him about it and the brother told him



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it was the same thing the boy was passing through that resulted in the wounds he saw on his body, as it most times threw him on the hard floor.

Without a good job and no money to seek medical attention for his son, Adikwu decided to manage the problem the best way he could until the sad incident.

According to him, he got fed up with the situation when on the night of the incident he woke his son up, as he usually did to make him urinate but found that the boy had urinated and defecated where he was sleeping.

He said the situation got him so angry as he took him outside, removed his clothes, washed him up and spanked him on the buttocks with a warning never to do that again before asking him to go back and sleep since it was not yet daybreak.

That was the last time he saw the boy alive.

But at daybreak, he observed that his son did not wake up and thought he was tired and needed to sleep some more and gave him a little time.

But after sometime and the boy still did not wake up, he moved closer to him, only to find out the boy had foam on his mouth and thought he was having yet another attack.

At this point, he decided to help straighten the boy's leg like he usually did and waited for him to come out of it. But after waiting for more than the usual time, he shook the boy but he did not respond and he raised alarm that attracted his neighbours, who came to his aid, only to confirm that he was dead.

Not knowing what to do, he contacted his Idoma brothers in the area, who took him to the chief of the area to seek for permission to bury he boy in the cemetery, which he approved.

But before he could commence the burial, the police came and arrested him, following a report from a relative of the boy's mother that he had killed his son and took him to the station while the body of the boy was deposited at the mortuary.

Adikwu, who is now married to another woman from Edo State, and has a child, said he had two children from his ex-wife before their separation.

After their separation, he said he had to leave the village and relocated to Benin, Edo State, where he worked as a farmer and was doing well before his brother asked him to relocate to Abuja. Since his relocation, he said life had never been the same, as he could barely afford to provide food for his family.

Apart from being a farmer, Adikwu, said he is also a mason and sometimes goes out to look for job but has never been so lucky.

However, he said someone who took pity on him, linked him with a construction company where he just gained employment, as a mason and had just started working there when the sad incident occurred.

Adikwu, who cried throughout this interview said: "There is no way I would have intentionally killed my son but since it has happened this way, I only pray God to forgive me and accept my soul."

He said: "On that day Promise, my son, died, when I woke him up in the night to ease himself, I found that he has urinated and messed the whole place up, so I took him outside and removed his clothes and bathed him and beat him on the buttocks, after which I dressed him up and asked him to get back to bed."

"But by morning, when I saw that he had not woken, I thought he was tired and needed to sleep and gave him sometime, but by the time I wanted to wake him up finally, I saw foam on his mouth.

"I cried that day. If I had known that hitting him on he buttocks would kill him, I would not have done so. I miss Promise, Promise was a good boy, he was quiet, he was very respectful and intelligent.

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"I only pray to God to forgive me and have mercy on my soul."

But the police wouldn't hear any of this as it has vowed to prosecute Adikwu for the death of his son.

The FCT Police Public Relations Officer, Altine Daniel, said Adikwu's wife had in her testimony to the police told of how she had been warning her husband to stop beating the deceased child because of his health condition and he would not listen until he finally killed the boy.

Daniel, told *Abuja Metro* in an interview that Adikwu's wife's account was what the police are using to prosecute the suspect.

She said the woman, who was looking very pale and emaciated when she visited the police to give an account of what happened, told the police that even though she was not the biological mother of the late boy, she did not like the way his father beat him at the slightest provocation and that she had talked to him on several occasions to desist from doing so because of the health of the boy so that he would not kill him, but he refused.

Even though she says she feels bad that her husband was now in police custody over the death of his son whom she described a very good child, she says she misses the boy most and wished she could have saved him from dying.

For now, Adikwu, is still in custody, pending when investigation into the matter is concluded.

However, the police say it has a big problem on its hands, as the family of the boy's mother that reported the matter is unwilling to cooperate with them. None of them has agreed to show up to give evidence to the police but one of them called to ask the police to release the body for them for burial without conducting an autopsy, which is what the police needs to prosecute the accused father.

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