

(CASE REPORT)



Baby factories in Nigeria: Mothers giving birth without evident sign of pregnancy

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Abstract

It is an immeasurable joy when a baby is safely delivered in all of our homes. That a mother had borne the pregnancy with all of its challenges successfully for a period of at least nine months, then fall into labour with its attached contractile pains and ultimately delivered the baby. The mother was loudly celebrated and a party is thrown for her on the occasion of child naming ceremony. All family members, in-laws and friends would necessarily be invited and if one can afford it, a life music band would be invited to add colour to the happy occasion. A baby has been delivered; his mother had successfully given birth to a baby. All is well, because the society saw the pregnant mother with her bulging abdomen, saw her go for delivery. However, if there were doubt of motherhood, or was there a pregnancy or not! This is the situation some women find themselves, having children that are not biological theirs.

Keywords: Birth; Delivery; Doubt; Pregnancy; Society

1. Introduction

The achievement of a pregnancy is highly celebrated when this desirous milestone happens in wedlock. The married couples usually quietly congratulate each other and may announce it to the extended families that soon there will be an addition to the ever-growing family size. She will be pampered by the extended families, given monetary assistances when needed. Her delighted husband books her for ante-natal clinic and ensures that all routine medications are promptly ingested regularly. Labour and eventually delivery will be monitored by concerned family and friends who kept an open communication with the expectant but anxious father. Successful delivery will instantly be announced to all by the doting father with loud ovations and shouts of congratulations from all well-wishers. By the next available permitted visiting time, a troop of honestly excited people related to her by family, friends and neighbours alike will come visiting. Everyone seemingly talking at the same time, happiness flows with lots of handshakes and back-slapping: A truly happy scene indeed.

Every visitor, as the Africa custom is, Knows that you do not visit a new born with empty hands, drops present, mostly fresh mint money notes to the parents. This was usually meant for purchasing of baby needs, and whatsoever the proud mother may need.

Home coming is a ceremony awaiting the new mother, with lots to drink and food to eat. The scenario is one of public knowledge at every stage of the pregnancy.

No secrecy assumed nor is anyone left to imagine if what was being displayed was a fact beyond doubt.

But, the switch over is the amazement experience by a people when out of nowhere a woman is announced by a beaming husband to have delivered a baby, usually at night and in a private hospital located out of town.

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The bewildered neighbours are surprised at the news, wondering if madam was pregnant or not. Nobody noticed a protruding belly, no signs of pregnancy such as excessive salivation and spitting or vomiting, nor swollen legs. Madam was as strong as ever, but only to have delivered a baby just last night, and delivery was out of town.

They silently questioned who drove madam all the way to the other town, and in muted voices asked why her husband was in their home and not with madam. But nobody was courageous enough to ask, only low-voiced mutterings among themselves.

Before the amazed neighbours could arrange to go and visit, madam had arrived back home with a new baby, looking very excited at her and her achievement. Doubtful as it may look, a baby had been delivered but was the baby birthed by her mother?

2. Case report

A case of a mother of a teenaged son, who was living in a flat building with his family. Everyone in the compound knew each other and generally took interest in each other's welfare. Suddenly, out of the blues, her husband announced to the neighbours and friends that his wife had delivered a baby girl over the night at a town that was at least six hours drive away from their residence.

The neighbours and friends were surprised to say the least, but loudly congratulated the new father, especially when they learnt that the new-born was a girl. The new father claimed that he drove back home all night to set the house in order before madam and the new baby returned. Nobody could ask who would then drive madam and baby back home or if father would make a round trip back to hospital and then back home.

Father left home quite early the following morning before anybody could possibly ask for him to escort him, and later in the day drove back in with mother and baby all looking great. They were welcomed lovely with happy laughter's and knuckle snapping with handshakes. Although, there were silent doubts, unspoken but there. Nobody noticed symptoms of pregnancy, in a compound with three other mothers who had achieved pregnancy and delivered multiple times combined, so had a high level of experiences. Therefore, a baby had been delivered and brought home, but was she birthed by the mother?

3. Discussion

A mother gets pregnant inside of a proper wedlock, had some visible symptoms and signs manifesting, goes to a proper hospital or maternity home, gets registered for ante-natal clinic and was seen serially on appointment by a caregiver.

While a chart for documentation is opened for her, and routine investigations are conducted and all results are acted upon and filed.

She would be monitored closely and eventually went into labour and gave birth to a healthy baby.

She had given birth, baby alive, mother alive! A recurring reports in many national daily newspapers reports on the law enforcement agents bursting some "baby making factories" and rescuing several pregnant un-named teenagers.⁽¹⁻⁴⁾

These unfortunate young women would have been lured into this illicit activity by some patrons who promised them huge sums of money on delivery.

They would have been made to take some blood chilling oaths at some traditional shrines or frightened into agreement at the threat of lives.

They are reportedly made pregnant by some gigolo member of the home, a tested male who had achieved good success with several other victims.

There are usually women, with needs to have baby by the side, waiting to claimed these babies as soon as possible after birth. These waiting women are put in the know as soon as a prospective teenager in the baby industry gets pregnant.

Suspected negotiation between the patrons and the women would have taken place and settled. But these women reportedly never get to meet each other.

So, they know the possible date of delivery, probably starts getting ready, and may even act out the looks and habits of a pregnant woman.

This was aimed at preparing the minds of the people when eventually the acts gets carried out.

Ultimately, the pregnant teenager delivers her baby, which is retrieved from her immediately and handed over to the waiting woman promptly.⁵

Thus, an announcement by her knowing husband is made that his wife had delivered a baby to the community. But had she given birth to a baby?

We can only hope that a need would arise for a DNA study to be conducted sometimes in the future.

We also can only hope that the national law enforcement agencies should burst many more of these baby making factories and free those unfortunate teenagers.⁽⁶⁻¹⁰⁾

We also ask that the relevant women affairs ministries would engage those freed young women and improve their skills on any trade or hands craft to improve their monetary earning powers.

This was because if those young ladies get involved because of the need to feed, clothe and shelter themselves. A trade with inappropriate poverty, or were trafficked against their will. Therefore, empowering these young ladies will prevent future reoccurrence.

We therefore urge the agency responsible in preventing human trafficking, The National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons(NAPTIP) to stand up and reverse this national calamity from continuing.

But how do we explained a delivery by a mother that was generally doubted by all persons who knew her and lived in the same community with her. They all collectively agreed that the new mother was never noticed to have been pregnant, probably never attended any anti-natal clinics that they knew of or any of the local health centres in the community.

They would have known if there were any such activities since their own family members sought for care in those centres and their relations worked in those centres. Except maybe the new mother attended a clinic outside of the community.

So, the un-answered question and doubt persisted, and nobody would dare speak out. However, there had recently been an out-cry about the notorious baby making factories where babies can be procured by desperate mothers at top level secrecy. Nobody would ever know that a mother did not birth her new child.

4. Conclusion

Baby making factories is rampant in Nigeria, couples should be encouraged to adopt babies legally, go for surrogacy or invite fertilization when having fertility issues.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

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