

Nigerian Women Interview

Mary Haggai

Note: Mrs. Haggai is the Head of Department of the Department of Arts and Social Sciences in the Faculty of Education at the University of Jos. She lives with her husband and two of her children – the second son and lastborn, a daughter. Another young, male family relative lives in her house; a common practice for Nigerians. She lived in Houston, TX for about 5 years while completing her education.

Demographics

1. Age: 51
2. Age at which married: 22
3. Children: Panshan (29, boy), Zuhuman (26, boy), Gampan (23, boy), Fwangmun (20, boy), Faith (18, girl)
4. Grandchildren: None
5. Education: Currently working on her PhD in education. Completed a National Certificate of Education, a bachelors in education from the University of Houston, and an M.Ed in psychology and child development from the University of Houston,
6. Husband's profession: Deputy Director of Education in the Ministry of Education, in Plateau State

Behavior

B1. Daily Schedule:

- A. *What is your daily schedule?* Wake up at 2 am for quiet time. 2:00 – 4:00 is quiet time. 4:00 – 6:00 write papers or mark student projects. 6:00 – 6:45 is family prayers. 6:45 – 8:00 prepare to come to work including eat breakfast and bathing. Daughter cooks the breakfast. If she is not around, I do it. She is now at home because she is waiting to begin university. She was admitted to UniJos in medicine and will start when the next term classes begin. I will be in uni from about 8:00 – 5:00. Leave uni after 5:00. Tuesdays and Thursdays I go to church for women's fellowship. Reach home make dinner about 6:30. Make dinner then eat dinner 7:30/8:00 then wait for news. Sometimes when I am too sleepy, after I hear the headlines at 9:00, I go to sleep. If I am not tired, I watch the news to end at 10:00. My sleep is about 4 hours. The days I do not go for women's fellowship, I go straight home. Fridays I go to the student fellowship for secondary schools near my home. Fellowship is from 4:00 – 5:30. Fridays I try to join them so leave here around 3:30 and join at 4:00 and finish fellowship at 5:30.
- B. *What activities do you spend the **most time** on each day?* Working at the university.

B2. Non-Daily Routines

- A. *What are the activities that you regularly do, but not everyday?* Church activities are not everyday. Most times we have meetings because I am a national official for FCS [Fellowship of Christian Students – a fellowship group and Christian Education curriculum because religion is a mandatory school subject]. Most times I have meetings slated from time to time; meetings and paper presentations [like mandatory PhD presentations] for teaching. I am invited to speak a lot at FCS conferences and meetings and church meeting and conferences. Like this, if it is farming season like

this, from time to time also visit them in the village to go see the farm – see how they are doing at the farm. We go on the weekends. Our parents are there. We give them money to do the farming. They are family-owned farms. I have 2 women who do the cleaning around the house. One she cooks and she cleans. She minds the kitchen and cleans the house. The second one is responsible mainly for washing, and cleaning the outside of the compound then she keeps the compound clean and she washes. The two women come to work everyday.

B3. Responsibilities around the house

- A. *In your household, what duties are you responsible for?* Contribute, help my husband like for ingredients [spices, vegetables] mostly. Make sure there is something to take for soup and something for breakfast and then certain things that are not thoroughly done in the house, I do them myself like washing the toilets. I make sure every morning I try to do that immediately after prayers. Then that's all.
- B. *What duties are your husband responsible for?* Mostly he buys the food stuff [the staples] in bulk. He brings in rice, maize, yam, potato, most of them he buys them. The children too – when they tell him their needs, we put our heads together and see how much we can generate to solve the problems especially for those in school.
- C. *What duties are your girl children responsible for?* She wakes up, run errands. She likes running errands, you want you to do anything, she will go and do, get a scratch card [for phone credit], send her to make breakfast, she is prompt and she likes cooking. If the lady [cook] is not coming or if she [the daughter] is around she likes making the soup and she makes breakfast before the woman comes to do work. Breakfast, running errands, doing things like that. Anything you want to get done quickly you call my daughter. She will jump excitedly to go and do it. She likes taking care of the dogs. She likes feeding them.
- D. *What duties are your boy children responsible for?* He does some part-time work with Plateau House of Assembly so he gets up in morning and gets ready to go to work. He is more or less a leader of the peers in the place [of residence] so most times he is having meetings with the youth in our community and he visits them a lot from house to house so his day is waking up, getting ready, go to work, come back. He is a church youth leader – secretary of youth fellowship. Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays his afternoon is in the church. After coming back from the church he goes round to visit his youth members. That's all he does. There is another boy that stays with us. If he [the other boy] is not around then he [the son] washes the car in the morning. Once there is some younger male here, he doesn't do it.

B4. Holidays

- A. *How do you celebrate festivals?* We celebrate the traditional one in my village is called Riyem. It is a cultural festival every year and it is done in February or March. Christmas and then we also celebrate, observe Easter. All of the family members come around during Christmas or Easter. We celebrate it with our parents, grandparents at home in the village.
- B. *For major holiday celebrations, what role do you have in the ceremonies?* You arrange for entertainment [see more later in the answer]. You cook for the Christmas but personally for the past 5 years I fast every Christmas. But I will prepare all the

things for them. I will prepare everything but then after coming back from church I will just take my time go to a quiet place and pray in the evening until 7:00 pm then we come back for family Christmas prayers. Then I break my fast then I have a Christmas dinner together with the whole family. Entertainment: Our children, everybody has his friends, everybody bring groups and groups of friends. When they come they expect to eat and drink. You get the drinks, like minerals, the things to eat like you make rice. Every year I cook either fried rice, jollof rice, or if anybody wants anything special you could request for it. You can make snacks available if you want to entertain your friends with a snack. Meat is a major one for Christmas, chicken, beef, fish – prepare them in different ways. Just keep, whichever one wants to entertain for whichever one you can just do it.

Values

V1. General Societal Views

- A. *What makes a good woman?* Good woman is the one that looks after the affairs of her home. She knows what is happening in the home, she has care for every member of the family beginning from her husband and the children the activities that are to be done in the home like those of us that have house help, we supervise those things they do, what they have done is ok.
- B. *What makes a good man?* A good man gives good leadership. His role is the leadership of the family so he should be able to coordinate the activities of everyone. He should be able to know where everybody is. The welfare of everybody, he should be interested in that and lead family decisions family discussions, dialogue. He should be able to call the attention of anyone whose attention needs to be drawn to anything. Basically is leadership.
- C. *Think of differences between men and women. What are things that women should do that men shouldn't?* Apart from childbearing, is there anything? Um...well, women are more sensitive to mood changes, emotional things especially with the children, they are closer to the children. They are better counselors than the husbands. They should be able to...more intimate with children. Children open up more to them so you find that they are closer to children. They get more involved in talking with children and understanding children, like in my family, more than the man. It is I that tell him [the husband] things that are happening with the children.
- D. *What are things that men should do but women shouldn't?* I don't think so. Discipline, but women are also involved in discipline in the home. I think most of the things are jointly done rather than...Like talking to a child about her problems. For us in our own family most of the things are jointly done. For us, even in the provision of the food. I do it to from time to time so there is no exclusive, that this is exclusively, that is a man that does this. This is exclusively a woman that does this. Even if it is major role, but it is not exclusive.
- E. *Is there anything you would you like to do but can't because you are a woman?* For me, oh, personally no. I don't seem to have any limitation based on my gender. I have been able to enjoy a lot of being in leadership with men in the society like in the village, at counsel meeting I am in that one, if it is giving advice to traditional rulers. The only thing I can say is this traditional ruler title. They don't give the traditional

ruler title to women in my place – to be the local chief because it is because of this paternal inheritance. Only men that can inherit those titles and positions.

V3. Marriage

- A. *Did you look forward to marriage?* Yeah...yes because I had, being in FCS right from teachers college [NCE degree] and we have, they have taught us a lot about marriage, choosing a life partner. Actually when I finished college I was looking forward to marriage.
- B. *How did you find your husband?* In an FCS conference. We met at the FCS conference, the December annual conference of FCS. We were involved together in the same bible study group and that was how we met for the first time. We saw each other 11 months before getting married because it was December conference then we got married in November of the following year.

V4. Children

- A. *What are things you want to teach your girl children?* Her dignity as a woman. The preservation of her dignity as a woman in terms of dressing, purity of life, in terms of responsibilities her womanhood roles that she has to play. So far she is doing so well. At least she likes cooking and others so...The Word of God. For all my children, the thing that I strive to make sure to have attained is a personal knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ and personal salvation. So far I think all of them have committed their life to Christ and many are already serving in various capacities. Teach them about what God says about every aspect of their life: social life, economic life, educational life and when you teach that to children it can curtail a lot of things in their family.
- B. *Is there anything different you want to teach your boy children?* Their responsibilities as men now. They should learn to take care they know that they are heads of whole family and they should learn to give responsible leadership in their homes, they must also know that as leaders, they should be able to get a good source of income because the welfare of the family depends on them. They should be able to take care of their family in terms of their earnings. As parents we have tried to educate them. It is also financial prudence. What I always told them is to watch against extravagance that the money you have and how you get your money. In Nigeria you can make the money in one way, but we have tried to tell them to get their own money God's way because there is blessing in what you get thru your own earning. Whenever you are given a job, to be faithful. Do not look at the job as a way to make you rich apart from what is legally due to you. Do not touch any public funds. Our first son is already a worker. We try to tell him you shouldn't get any money outside of what is due to him as a worker. Issue of exploiting, extorting, embezzling. He should not make himself rich thru extortion but hard work, as a man he should be working hard and earning everything that is coming to him. He is a lecturer in polytechnic near Lagos and a post-graduate student at the University of Lagos.