

# Childcare services and its impact on women economic participation



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## Preface

Most of the responsibility for caring for family members, especially children, the elderly and the disabled, falls on the shoulders of women. Providing alternatives to provide care services to family members who need it is one of the means to reduce the burden on women, which allows them to participate in the labor force on the one hand, and on the other hand work in care services can provide job opportunities for women.

This paper is part of a series on the care economy in an attempt to frame the role of the care economy vis-à-vis female labor force participation, while looking at the opportunities from both the supply and demand sides., This paper focuses on childcare, while the others look at the elderly care, and the care for the disables.



## I- Introduction

Egypt has a young population. As per the data of 2017 census, 37.9 million in Egypt are less than 18 represents 40% of the Egyptian population. The number of children less than 12 is estimated at 28.9 million and is expected to reach 31.8 million in 2030.

The unpaid care<sup>1</sup> for families reflects gender inequality as most of these care activities are done by females. The latest statistics of the time use in Egypt in 2015 shows that unpaid housework accounted for 70% of the total value of unpaid work, while child and elderly care take around 26% of total value of unpaid work which equivalent to 170 billion EGP. Around 82% of the value of the child and elderly care activities are done by females. The following table show the unpaid work distribution between males and females in terms of monetary value.

**Table (1): Distribution of the value of the unpaid activities in billion EGP**

Unpaid activities	Females	Males	Total	
			%	Total value (Bn)
Unpaid housework activities	356.7	103	70	458
Child and elderly care activities	139.5	27.5	26	170.1
Local community activities	20.7	6.9	4	26.2
Total	516.9	137.4	100	654.3

Source: Time use survey, 2015, CAPMAS

<sup>1</sup> Unpaid care work is care work provided without a monetary reward by unpaid care providers.



Therefore, providing childcare services may reduce the burden that women bear, and lead to their entry into the workforce, increasing their working hours and hence their productivity. On the other hand, the increase in the number of children in Egypt may represent a great opportunity to generate job opportunities for citizens who can work in the field of providing home care services for children, and women may have the largest share of these opportunities, which we will try to clarify in the following sections of this paper.

The paper analyzes the data collected by the Egyptian center for public opinion research (baseera) through a phone survey from a sample of 2016 Egyptians from all the Egyptian governorates. The data were collected during the period from March 22<sup>nd</sup> to April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

## **II- The need for Childcare services in Egypt**

The survey shows that 57% of the respondents have children in their households. In 68% of these HHs, females are the main responsible for childcare inside the house, and in most of these HHs the main caretaker of children is the mother.

Among the respondents who said that they are the main childcare provider in the HH or they participate in the childcare, around 59% of total respondents said that they spend their whole day taking care of their children. This percentage decreases from 86% among females to



35% among males. The average time spent in childcare among those who mentioned number of hours is 6.5 hours. The average increases from 6.2 hours among males to 7.9 hours among females.

Respondents were asked if childcare providers are available, would they hire them to take care for their children. The results indicate that 97% of the respondents opposed hiring someone to be the main care worker for the children and only 3% would be willing to hire someone. The percentage reaches 4% among respondents who are the main childcare providers and are currently working. It is worth noting that no significant differences were observed among respondents in different regions of residence and educational levels.

These results indicate that the number of job opportunities that will be generated in childcare services could be estimated at 400 thousand opportunities and will increase to 500 thousand opportunities in 2030 if the demand size remains at the same level.

Around 83% of the respondents who expressed their willingness to hire a childcare provider prefer the service provider to be a female, 11% prefer a male and 6% don't have gender preferences. This indicates that childcare services may provide 365 thousand job opportunities for women in Egypt.



“To be trustworthy” is the requirement that almost all the respondents who are willing to hire a childcare provider mentioned followed by knowledge about the job (20%). Around 76% requires the service providers to be trained on both care and basic health services, 2% requires them to be trained on at least the childcare services and 3% requires them to be trained on at least the basic health services and 19% didn’t require them to be trained at all.

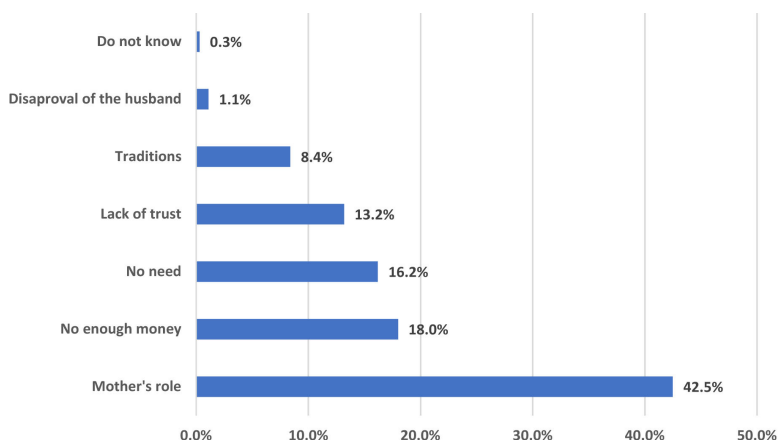
On average, the respondents need the childcare provider 4 days per week with average of 6.5 hours per day. The average salary that the respondents mentioned for the care worker was around 1066 EGP in return of his services and 56% of them preferred a nursery over a service provider at home.

Those who are against hire a childcare providers mentioned many reasons include that it’s the mother’s role (44%), they don’t have enough income to hire one (18%), and lack of trust (13%).





**Figure (1): Reasons for not hiring a childcare provider**



Despite the current opportunities for women to work in childcare, there is still a greater opportunity for increased demand for childcare services.

### **III- Perceptions towards childcare service providers**

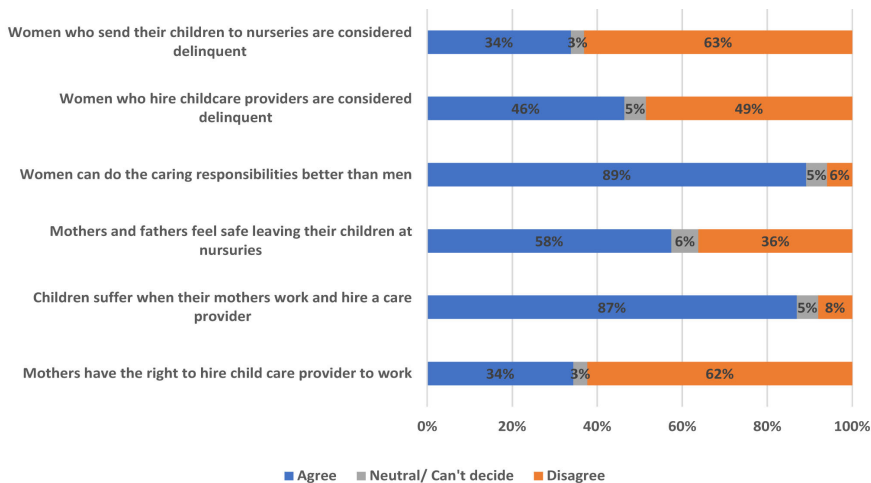
The low demand for childcare services revealed by the survey is related to perceptions towards childcare providers and the childcare services. The survey shows that 87% of the Egyptian believe that children suffer when their mothers go to work and hire a care provider. Moreover, only 22% of Egyptians think that having a childcare provider is necessary even if the mother is available at home. Around 34% think that mothers have the right to hire a care provider for their children



and go to work, 34% think that mothers who leave their children at a daycare center to go to work are considered negligent in their duties and 58% think that it is safe to leave the children at a daycare or nursery. Only 18% feel that it is safe that the childcare provider could be left alone with the children at home. These perceptions have a negative impact on the demand on the care service, and consequently, on women economic participation.

While 87% of Egyptians stated that the childcare provider should be specialized in childcare service, only 20% believe that childcare providers in Egypt are specialized, and only 38% believe that childcare providers are trustworthy.

**Figure (2): Egyptians' perception towards childcare services and services providers**





## **IV- Recommendations and suggested policy implications**

The data shows that 3% of families are willing to use a childcare providers. Most of these families prefer the health care provider for their children to be women trained to provide these services, which creates 400 thousand jobs for women. This suggests the following:

- Opening opportunities for women who want to work to provide home care services for children and preparing training courses to train them and strengthen their capabilities in providing basic care services for children, including training on follow-up children's daily needs, the basic health care for children and behavioral change.
- Establish offices and online platforms to connect women who want to work in childcare field with families that want to employ them. It is essential to collect all the data of both parties, in order to ensure the regularity of service and ensure the safety of women and children.

The idea of leaving children in kindergarten is favorable among many Egyptians. This suggests the following:

- Simplifying the procedures that are required from women to open new nurseries and put guiding manuals for those women to be able to manage their nurseries.



- Providing training courses for the childcare providers in the nurseries and prepare guides to ensure that make the time the children spend in the nurseries useful and improving children physical, social, cognitive, and behavioral skills and knowledge.
- Facilitating and encouraging companies to understand the childcare needs of their workers and learn from good practices in implementing solutions through several options such as on-site nurseries, and fostering to partnerships with governments and local childcare providers.
- To encourage the employers to provide care services for their employees children, it is suggested that the government provide incentives for them such as tax deductions and banking facilities.

The willingness to pay for childcare provider is low and one fifth of those who are not willing to hire a childcare provider mentioned that the cost is the reason behind that. The burden of the childcare provider's fees may reduce the willingness of the HHs to use a childcare provider. In this regard, the following is suggested:



- Introducing policies that allocate resources to provide childcare and study the best practices of other countries such as Singapore that introduced childcare subsidies to help parents defray costs related to raising young children before they enter school, depending on the eligibility. That subsidy is higher for full-day childcare for working mothers than that for full-day childcare for non-working mothers .

Most families with children are not willing to use a childcare provider. This percentage is governed by a number of perceptions and values unfavorable to dependence on childcare providers from outside the family as well as negative perceptions about trusting care providers. Moreover, there is a preference for the role of women in caring for children over their role in work and economic participation. These values on one hand can hinder the participation of women in the work force, and on the other hand they will make the creation of new job opportunities in the field of childcare limited despite the expected increase in the number of children during the next decade. In this regard, the following is suggested:

- Raising Egyptians' awareness on the importance of using childcare services due to its positive impact on the health, knowledge and skills of the child, as well as opening the way for mothers' economic participation.



- Raising Egyptians' awareness on the positive impact of women work on the education and health of her children.
- Changing the perceptions of Egyptians about childcare service providers by presenting successful models in this field in mainstream media.
- Training the service providers to work in a professional manner to help them gain the public's trust.