

# Care services for elder people and their impact on women economic participation



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**Hanan Girgis, Ph.D.**

The executive vice president  
of the Egyptian center for  
public opinion research  
(baseera)



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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.

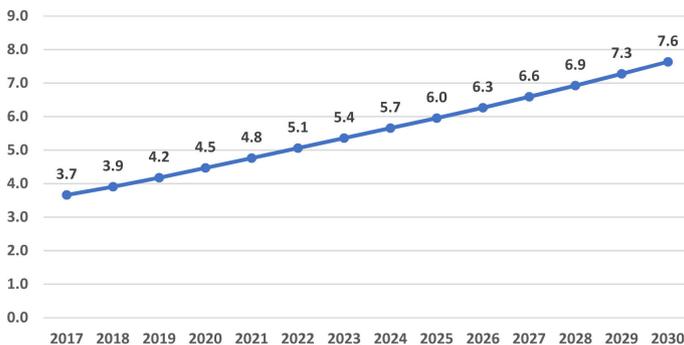
This paper is part of a series on the care economy in an attempt to frame the role of the care economy vis-à-vis female labor force participation, while looking at the opportunities from both the supply and demand sides., This paper focuses on elderly care, while the others look at the childcare, and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



## I- Introduction

Most of the world populations are heading towards aging as a result of low fertility rates and high quality of health services, which leads to an increase in the life expectation of the population. The World Health Organization data indicate that by the year 2050, the global population ages 60 years or above will exceed 2 billion people, 80% of them will be living in developing countries<sup>1</sup>. According to the 2017 census, the number of people aged 65 years or above reached 3.7 million, or 3.9% of the total population. This percentage increased to 4.6% at the beginning of 2020, according to estimates by the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics. The size of the population ages 65 years or above is expected to reach 7.6 million in Egypt in 2030, representing 6.3% of the total population<sup>2</sup>.

**Figure (1): Population growth in the age group 65 years and over in**



Source: Estimates calculated by the author.

<sup>1</sup> [https://applications.emro.who.int/dsaf/EMROPUB\\_2015\\_EN\\_1901.pdf?ua=1&ua=1](https://applications.emro.who.int/dsaf/EMROPUB_2015_EN_1901.pdf?ua=1&ua=1)

<sup>2</sup> Estimates calculated by the author.



The increase in the number and percentage of the elderly population (65 years or above) represents a burden on the state in terms of providing them with the necessary services, such as health services, care centers and others. Taking care of elder people inside the home is a burden on family members, especially with the elderly suffering from chronic diseases. Services provided to the elderly may include attention to follow-up treatment of, physical therapy, dealing with hearing and speech impairment problems, psychological care for the elderly, and empowerment to promote health and prevention.

Numerous studies indicate that caring for the elderly is carried out by family members who are not necessarily trained on that, which may lead to greater health problems for the elderly. This burden falls in most cases on women, which affects women's economic opportunities, and her working hours<sup>3</sup>.

Therefore, the provision of care services for the elderly may help decrease the burden of women, and lead to their entry into the labor force, increasing their working hours and thus their productivity. On the other hand, the significant increase in the number and proportion of elderly people 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 the elderly. Women may have the largest share

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<sup>3</sup> Richard W. Johnson and Anthony T. Lo Sasso, 2006, *The Impact of Elder Care on Women's Labor Supply*,



of these opportunities, which we will try to clarify in the following sections of this paper. The paper is based on the results of the survey conducted by Baseera Center, on a sample of 2016 Egyptians from all governorates of the Republic. Data was collected by phone during the period from March 22 to April 4, 2020.

## **II- The need for elderly care services in Egypt**

The results of the survey show that 19% of the respondents stated that they have elderly members in their households (HHs). Some HHs have one elderly person and some have 2 elderly persons, with an average of 1.3 elderly per HH. In most HHs, these elderly people were the parents of the respondents or their parents mother-in-law. About 96% of the respondents who mentioned that there are elderly people in their HHs are the main responsible members for taking care of these elderly people or take part in their care.

As for the main responsible respondents, 52% are males and 48% are females. Regarding the number of hours the respondents spend in taking care for the elderly, 84% of the women stated that they taking care of them all day, compared to 43% of the males. For the respondents who mentioned a specific number of hours caring for the elderly, the data show that the average number of hours that women spend in caring for the elderly 7.5 hours, compared to 5 hours among males.



While the number of hours that women spend in taking care for the elderly does not differ according to the employment status, the percentage of those who mentioned that they care for the elderly throughout the day varies according to the employment status, where the percentage is 38% among employed women compared to 66% among unemployed women and rises to 84% among those who are out of labor force.

The respondents who have elderly people in their HHs were asked, if someone was available to take care of the elderly, would they hire him/her to provide care service for the elderly in their HHs. Around 3% of them answered that they would hire them, and this percentage increases from less than 1% among female respondents to 5% among males, as well as it increases from 2% among those with less than intermediate education to 7% among those with a university or higher education. No differences were observed among the different regions.

This percentage means that the number of job opportunities that will be generated in care services for the elderly is estimated at about 110 thousand job opportunities, which will increase in 2030 to reach 182 thousand job opportunities by 2030, if the demand continues at the same level. If the demand for these services is raised, this could double the number of jobs. Most of these opportunities will be directed at women, as 97% of these families prefer that the elderly care service



provider for their families be girls or women, which means that the activation of this service will currently provide about 107 thousand job opportunities for women.

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Most of the HHs wishing to hire an elder care provider require that the service provider be a specialist or study methods of elderly care, which requires the creation of training courses to train women who will provide care for the elderly.

On average, these HHs need the care service providers for 20 hours a week, which means that it can be half-time job for women, which may provide women with suitable job opportunities, especially for women who have family care responsibilities and want to strike a balance between their work and taking care of their family. HHs who want to hire an elder care officer are willing to pay an average of EGP 1,728 per month to the caregiver.

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



### **III- Perceptions towards caregivers for the elderly**

The low demand for elderly care service providers shown in the survey is related to perceptions towards elderly care service providers that are not conducive to increasing this demand. While 86% of the survey respondents believe that the elderly care provider should be a specialist, only 20% of the respondents believe that care providers in Egypt are really specialized. Around 51% of believe that the care providers cannot be left alone with the elderly at home, which means that in all cases, a family member must be with the elderly at home, even in the presence of the care service provider. This percentage decreases slightly with the increase in the educational level, as this percentage reaches 53% among those with less than intermediate education and decreases to 48% among those with a university education or higher.

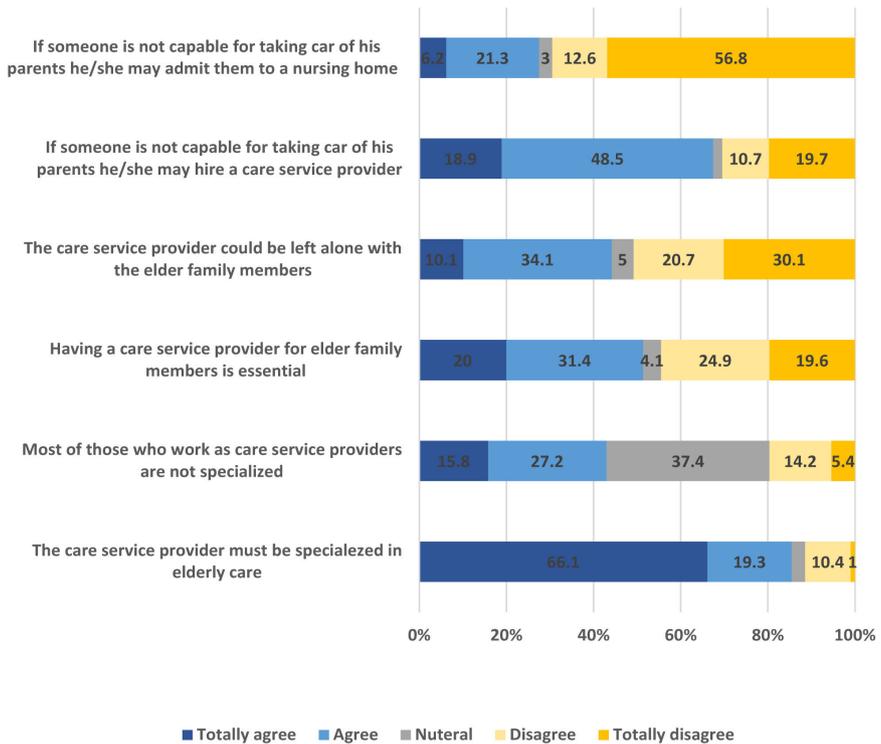
However, there are perceptions that support to some extent the idea of hiring an elderly care provider, as 51% of the respondents believe that the presence of an elderly care provider is necessary, and this percentage rises from 45% among males to 58% among females and increases from 48% in the countryside to 57 % in urban areas, while no differences were found according to educational status.

While 28% of the respondents agree that in case that family members are unable to care for the elderly, they can be admitted to a nursing home, 68% of respondents agree that in case that family



members are unable to care for the elderly, they can hire a care service provider. This percentage increases from 63% among those with less than intermediate education to 78% among those with a university or higher education.

**Figure (2): The extent of Egyptians agreeing with some sentences related to elderly care**





The data indicate that a significant percentage of Egyptian society does not accept the idea that women - as the one in charge of family affairs – hire care service providers, as 46% of Egyptians say that a woman who uses people from outside the family at home is considered negligent, which may put burdens on women in providing care services within her family.

#### **IV- Recommendations and suggested policies**

The data shows that 3% of HHs are willing to hire a care service providers for their elderly relatives, and most of these families want the health care provider for their elderly relatives to be women who are trained to provide these services. This could create 107 thousand job opportunities for women. Achieving this requires the following:

- Open the opportunity for women who want to work in providing home care services for the elderly, and prepare training courses for them to train them and strengthen their capabilities in providing basic care services for the elderly, including following up on their psychological state, the treatment they undergo, and other needs of the elderly.
- Establish offices and online platforms to connect women who want to work in this field with the 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.



Data indicate that most HHs with elderly members are not willing to use a care service provider to provide the necessary care for the elderly. This percentage is governed by a number of perceptions and values unfavorable to dependence on caregivers from outside the family as well as negative perceptions about trusting the caregivers of the elderly. The low demand for these services on the one hand can hinder the participation of women in the labor force, and on the other hand it will make the provision of new job opportunities in this field limited. It also deprives the elderly of the opportunity to obtain specialized and safe care, which requires raising the demand for this type of services through the following:

- Raising citizens' awareness about the importance of a care service provider to provide the necessary care for the elderly.
- Changing the perception of Egyptians about providers of care services by providing successful models in this field to the general public, and training caregivers to work in a professional manner that helps them gain the public's trust.
- Changing the values of Egyptians and increasing their acceptance of the use of a health care provider for the elderly so that families that are willing to use them do not feel stigmatized or that they are negligent in the right of their relatives.



Although a significant proportion of male respondents admitted that they are responsible or share the responsibility of caring for the elderly in families, the comparison of the number of hours that female respondents spend in care is greater than that of males, which confirms that the greatest burden is on females, and requires alleviate this burden by organizing the participation of different family members in caring for the elderly in the family.

It is important to take safety measures for elderly care at home given COVID-19. Support for older people, their families and their caregivers is an essential part of the countries' comprehensive response to the pandemic. During times of curfew and quarantine, older people need safe access to nutritious food, basic supplies, money, medicine to support their physical health, and social care. Dissemination of accurate information is critical to ensuring that older people have clear messages and resources on how to stay physically and mentally healthy during the pandemic and care givers need to receive proper training around safety procedures.