The care economy in Palestine: Exploratory analysis and policy implications

Belal Fallah
Palestine Polytechnic University
Introduction

• Similar to other MENA countries, LFPR in Palestine is low; PCBS’s LFS data shows it has stalled over the past decade at around 40%.

• Gendered labor division. Female LFPR is about 20% for women whereas for men is about 80%.

• In addition, differences in Female LFPR between married and never married women are substantial: 21% versus 47%, respectively, based on recent LFS.

• Many single women who join the labor market drops out upon marriage, which is in part related to the role of unpaid care, as more housekeeping responsibilities are expected from married women.
Research Objectives & Policy Implications

Research Objective:

• Explores the scope and distribution of unpaid care work in Palestine, with a focus on estimating the extent of time allocated to unpaid care work by gender, employment status, and by other demographic and socioeconomic characteristics.

• Explores the size and characteristics of the paid care sector (education, health, and social care services), and

• Examines the extent to which the paid care sector provides decent jobs, a necessary condition to ensure that care services provided are of high quality.

Policy Implications:

• The findings of the analysis set the stage to recommend policies to reduce and redistribute unpaid care work as well as to promote and expand decent employment within the paid care sector.
Time allocated to unpaid care at the national level (hours per week)/2012/2013 Time Use Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unpaid care work (total)</strong></td>
<td>19:38</td>
<td>4:55</td>
<td>34:55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Direct unpaid care work</strong></td>
<td>4:30</td>
<td>1:11</td>
<td>7:57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unpaid childcare</strong></td>
<td>4:13</td>
<td>0:53</td>
<td>7:41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unpaid elder care</strong></td>
<td>0:11</td>
<td>0:08</td>
<td>0:11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indirect unpaid care work</strong></td>
<td>15:07</td>
<td>3:45</td>
<td>26:58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Weekly time spent in unpaid care work (hours per week) is disproportionately allocated to Females, mainly married.
Employed females, mainly married, spend more time in paid and unpaid care work.
Exploratory Analysis of Paid Care (Education, health, and Social Care) main findings

• According to the PCBS’s census of population in 2017, the total number of paid care workers in Palestine is 98,000, comprising 13% of the overall employed.

• The majority of paid care workers (72%) are educators. In total, educators and health workers constitute 97% of total paid care occupations, whereas social care and domestic workers constitute only 3% combined.

• About 57% of the paid care workers are women.

• In fact, about half of the overall employed women are paid care workers. But, can not absorb more of the unemployed women.

• The Palestinian government hires half of paid care workers, followed respectively by the private sector, and the UNRWA.
Employment Condition: Informality (lack of severance payment and paid vacation)
Most of paid care workers in the government and UNRWA are formal. Incidents of formality is lower in the private sector.
Extent of Decent Jobs in the Paid Care Sector

Compliance to Minimum Wage:

• It was ratified at the end of 2012 with a minimum wage of 1450 NIS (about $450). Last month, it was upgraded to 1880 NIS (about $590).

Based on 2018 LFS data:

• Among the paid care workers, the minimum wage share in the West Bank (share of workers earning above the minimum wage) is 90% (85% for women versus 99% for men).

• By type of employer, the data shows that all paid workers in the non-private sector (government, UNRWA, and other sector) earn above minimum wage.

• Nonetheless, the corresponding share for women in the private sector is little above 50%.

• On the contrary, almost all men in the private sector earn above the minimum wage.
Main Conclusion...take away message.

Unpaid Care Work

• Time allocated to unpaid care is gendered, disproportionately shifting the burdens to females.

• Among all characteristics considered, marital status is most influencing factors among females in which the married cohort spend disproportionately more time.

• **There is a need to reduce and redistribute unpaid care work more fairly.**

Paid Care Sector

• As far as working conditions are concerned, most of those employed in care work enjoy some employment rights.

• **However, more efforts should be exerted to expand coverage in the private sector. Low pay, mainly among women, is the main caveat.**
Policy Recommendations
• **Enhance labour law compliance: Minimum Wage**

• Low compliance can be attributed to lack of proper enforcement.

➢ It is vital to increase the cost of sanctions, raising fines to a level that would eventually deter non-compliance (this needs law revision).

➢ It is also crucial to raise employees’ awareness regarding their rights, including minimum wage, and encourage them to file complaints against non-complying employers.

➢ Many employees, particularly women, may choose not to report to the authority if paid below minimum wage fear from retaliation and potential job loss. To address this, the Government could issue a decree obliging employers to pay salaries via cheques/bank deposits and grant MoL inspectors access to firms’ payroll records.
• **Improve working conditions and benefits: necessary to enhance FLFPR.**

  - Expanding coverage of work benefits including maternity leave, severance pay, paid vacation and health coverage.

Solution: adopt a **social security scheme** in which the cost of mandated benefits is mutually shared between employers and employees.

- The Social Security law of 2016 is suspended due to widespread opposition.

- To this end, revisiting social security law and successfully renegotiating the labour relations terms and financial contributions could pave the way for wider approval and eventual effective implementation.
Redistribute the responsibility for unpaid care work by expanding Early childhood education.

- Reducing the time that women spend on unpaid care is vital to expand their opportunities to enter the labour market.
- To this end, the Government should mobilize resources to enforce the newly ratified education law of 2017 to make kindergarten education universal.

- Also, So far, the market has failed to expand nursery services, as few young children are enrolled in nurseries, the Government should intervene to establish more public nurseries or provide financial incentives to the private sector and NGOs to deliver these services.
- Given the fiscal challenges facing the Palestinian Government, different provision models and financing options should be explored (taxes).
• *Raise awareness regarding gender equality*

- A key component to raise awareness about gender equality is confronting entrenched social norms and attitudes about gender roles.
- Awareness-raising should also target younger generations, introducing gender equality in curricula at various educational levels.
- These efforts can capitalize on positive attitudes that have recently surfaced in Palestinian society.