The Population of Senior Citizens in Indonesia:
The issues of caregiving in some international migrant sending areas

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Abstract

As their abilities continue to deteriorate, most senior citizens are assumed to need expansion in the caring for them. The weakening of their physical ability, for instance, requires constant family proximity, as it is the family's responsibility to provide support for their elderly family members. However, previous studies found that instead of being care recipients, many elderly actually provided support for their families. Specifically in migrant worker source areas, the main support that is usually provided by the elderly is the care for grandchildren who are left behind by their migrant parents. A study in two migrant worker villages in Indramayu district, West Java province, confirmed earlier studies. Senior citizens were the main caregivers in one-fourth of households with at least one left behind child that were interviewed in the study. De facto, the figure was higher because in-depth interviews and FGDs with several children left behind revealed that those who were taken care of by fathers often asked grandparents’ assistance in many activities. Although the elderly were never asked about their willingness to take over the chore, they accepted it readily and saw it as their contribution in rearing the grandchildren. Some elderly encountered several problems while caring for the grandchildren. The financial matters and the disciplining of grandchildren were amongst the problems faced by elderly caregivers. This was particularly so because they did not receive a sufficient amount of money to meet the grandchildren’s needs. In turn, this forced them to remain working to make ends meet. Regarding the disciplining of grandchildren, the problems were mostly caused by the preteens and teens grandchildren. There were tendencies of teenagers skipping school hours and spending their leisure time arbitrarily, which brought about a difficult problem for the elderly caregivers.

Keyword: elderly population; grand parenting; children left behind; West Java

Introduction

The number of Indonesian elderly\(^1\) increases overtime. It raised about 2.16 million and 4.6 million during the period of 1990 – 2000 and 2000 – 2010 respectively. Although the percentage has not been as much as the more developed countries in Asia,\(^2\) the number is

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\(^1\) The Indonesian Law No. 13/1988 on Senior Citizens' Welfare stated that senior citizens refer to people at 60 years of age and above.

\(^2\) The Percentage of the population aged 65 years and over in Singapore and Japan were 8.3 percent and 26.0 percent respectively in 2010. The projection shows that in 2025 they may
quite immense. In 2010, for instance, there were 18,043,712 people at aged 60 years and over. As the fourth biggest population nation in the world, Indonesia ranks number seven in the world's oldest population (Kreager, 2006). In the Asia region, specifically, the number of Indonesian senior citizens was below China and Japan (Jones, 2007). The enormously increasing number of senior citizens will in turn create implications for the family, the community, and also the nation, especially in the provision of caring for them. The family that has an elderly or more in its household, in particular, is affected the most as it is regarded to be the primary source to care for the elderly wellbeing. When a person grows old and starts becoming dependent on a caregiver, traditionally it is the family members, usually the women, who have the responsibility to provide for the care (McCulloch, 1995; Eeuwijk, 2006; Wahyudi 1999).

However, changes in the social and economic conditions unfavorably create a new phenomenon in the daily lives of families. One of such changes is the growing tendency of the productive-age villagers to urbanize and migrate. This leaves a condition where almost no family members can be given the responsibility of taking care of the elderly. This condition worsens in rural areas where a lot of the women there travel internationally for work and leave behind their children in their villages. While most of these children usually live with their fathers, the care for them, however, especially the very young ones, is predominantly taken over by the grandparents, mainly grandmothers. In such conditions, instead of being taken care of by their offspring, the elderly have to take care of their grandchildren.

This phenomenon could be viewed both positively and negatively. On the positive side, the involvement of the elderly in looking after their young grandchildren while the mothers are away is a form of participation to gain family income. It can also create a sense of usefulness and purpose in them. They may have a sense of pride for feeling that they are still needed. On the other hand, looking after the young ones can create burdens for them. They have to act as caregiver, while at the same time are actually in the need to be cared for themselves. These burdens are not only related to physical capabilities, but also to financial matters. In some cases, they often have to cover some of the grandchildren’s expenses because the mothers fail to send home enough money in a timely manner.

This paper discusses the issues of caring provided by the senior citizens for their family, mainly the grandchildren while the mothers work abroad. The paper also describes their characteristics in order to portray the Indonesian senior citizen population. The analysis of the paper is based on data from some studies on related issues concerning senior citizens, carried-out by the author and a research team of The Centre for Population – Indonesian Institute of Sciences (PPK-LIPI) in several places in Indonesia, particularly in international labor migrant source areas. Some published data relating to the topic is also employed.

increase to up to 14.8 percent in Singapore and 32.2 percent in Japan (UN Population Division, 2004, medium projection, cited in Jones, 2007).
Senior Citizens and Their Roles in Supporting Family Lives

When one is experiencing aging, there are changes in one's overall abilities. These changes are mostly the deterioration of the mental and physical capabilities. The condition requires extensive care that comprises of the provisions of assistance for their personal hygiene, meal preparation, and other daily activities (Thompson, 2003). The care may have to be extended for elderly with frail conditions. Geographical proximity with potential caregivers is a relevant issue in maintaining family supports for their elderly (Baldock, 2000). In many cases, financial support is also needed, mainly among those who do not receive a pension or any other type of social security plans. These decreasing physical capabilities impede senior citizens from carrying out their roles in economic activities which in turn force them to rely on others to sustain a living. The reliance on the family's support for people of advanced age continues to be the norm (Kreager, 2006). This is probably based on the assumption that the absence of the family's support negatively affects the elderly's welfare, physical, and psychological conditions. A study that was conducted in Mexico confirmed this argument. It was found that the absence of at least one child at home in order to work in the United States generated the deterioration of the elderly parents' health conditions, both mental and physical (Antman, 2010).

Despite the deterioration of their abilities, many senior citizens are not as fragile as what is commonly deemed. Some studies actually argued that some senior citizens, especially the ones that can be considered 'young-old', are still able to live independently. A study in rural China, for example, found that nearly half of the respondents aged 60 – 69 were still actively participate in productive work and can take care themselves (Shen, et.al., 2012). Another study that was conducted in three rural communities in Indonesia (East Java, West Java, and West Sumatra provinces) found that some respondents were not only able to maintain parenting duties but also continue being the breadwinners in their families (Butterfill, 2004). During the economic crises that struck Indonesia in the late 1990s, the pension recipients and agricultural land owners offered significant financial support to their children who struggled to earn a living due to job loss and high unemployment.

Furthermore, in most out-migration source areas, senior citizens play a crucial role in the care for children that are left behind by their migrant parents. Some studies also found that left behind children live with their extended family, with the grandparents, particularly grandmothers, as the main the caregiver. This situation mostly occurs in countries where intergenerational family living arrangement is commonly practiced, such as in Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand, China, India, and the Philippines (Hoang, et.al., 2012; Knodel & Chayovan, 2011; Guo, et.al, 2009a; Guo, et.al., 2009b; Locke, Hoa & Tam, 2009; Krishnaswamy, et.al., 2008; Parrenas, 2005). The increasing proportion of

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3 In many literatures on senior citizens, this group of people is categorized into three different categories according to their ages. The first category constitutes those who are 60 – 69 years of age, the second is those who are 70 – 79 years of age, and the last consists of those at the age of 80 years and above (see Knodel and Chayovan, 2011).
the elderly, particularly the 'young old', residing in urban areas may be responsible for their increased roles as the grandchildren’s caregivers. The recent trend that stirs the participation of young and economically productive urban females in the workforce leads to the need of caregivers for their children. While there is not any precise empirical data, some families tend to leave their children in the caring of their grandparents. Thus, the reason why senior citizens who originally lived in rural areas are often living in urban areas and caring for their grandchildren. Regarding such condition, it can be said that while some senior citizens receive care, others provide care for their family members.

The elderly helps in parenting the grandchildren is also practiced by families in several western countries. In the United States, where the nucleus family is mostly the main family arrangement, grandparenting is still a common practice (Meyer, 2012). The high rate of parental migration in Romania leads to a high number of children being left at home, which leaves very little choice but for the parents to ask for the grandparents' involvement in the care for the children. In order to do so, sometimes these grandparents need to leave their own houses and live in their children's (Pantea, 2012). This arrangement is mostly temporarily, not for the whole of their remaining lives. Still, the grandparents have to cope with changes caused by having to alter their lives to fit the arrangement, and that is not always easy. A similar trend was also observed in 10 European countries (excluding Romania). As one study revealed, the grandparents' involvement in caring for their grandchildren was considered quite a common practice. There can be any number of reasons for that practice to be carried out, and it is not always necessarily because of the migration of the parents (Hank & Buber, 2009, cited in Pantea, 2012). Therefore, it should not be seen as an exaggeration that in her writing Li-Sun (2012) pointed out that grandparents’ participation in child care can be viewed as a norm in many countries.

**The Portrayal of Indonesian Senior Citizens**

This section describes the Indonesian senior citizens with the special focus on numbers and characteristics such as sex, education, occupation, place of residence (urban vs rural areas), and living arrangement. They are particularly useful to give the description of the nature of the elderly. Understanding their nature may become important for all the participating parties in forming and arranging programs and services for the elderly, especially in respect to their care.

*The number, sex, and place of residence*

The number of Indonesian elderly varies between the different groups. In 2010, for instance, of the entire Indonesian senior citizen population, the highest number was among those at the age group of 60 – 69 years (59.6 percent), followed by the senior citizens in the age group of 70 – 79 years (30.1 percent). The remaining (10.3 percent) were among the ages of 80 year old and above. Since more than half of the elderly are at the 'young-old' group, the family burden that may be generated by the elderly, such as the provision of support for daily activities, may not yet be a problem. A study on elder care in rural Yogyakarta showed that on average, senior citizens that fall in the category of
'young', were still able to live independently in terms of conducting instrumental and personal daily activities like cooking meals, boiling water, cleaning the house, bathing, using the toilet, getting dressed, and walking outside for about five minutes without resting (Keasberry, 2001). This condition proves that elderly in the younger category have been fit enough to not only care for themselves but also become a potential source of support for their family daily activities by taking up the chore of care giving.

Looking at numbers in the advanced age group, the males are outnumbered by the females, as shown by the 2010 Indonesian Population Census data. The sex ratio was 0.84 among the people at 60 years of age and above entirely. The ratio varies at every age group. Within the younger group (60 – 69), the sex ratio was 0.92, while for the 70 – 79 age group and the 80 year old and above were 0.78 and 0.80, respectively. The females higher life expectancy at the earlier and also older ages is the factor that contributes to the figures (Jones, 2007). There are significant differences among the elderly in terms of the marital status. The 2010 Indonesian Population Census noted that more male elderly (84.14 percent) were married than their female counterparts (39.13 percent). As a consequence, the proportion of male elderly who were widowed was far less than the females (13.59 percent and 56.50 percent, respectively). This may be caused by the tendency of men to remarry as their wives passed away. The unwillingness to live without a spouse and the social acceptance for men to remarry seem to be the prominent factors that cause the higher percentage of the male elderly who were still married (Jones, 2007).

In term of residential area, the percentage of senior citizens who live in rural areas was higher than those who live in urban areas. In 2010, of the overall Indonesian elderly population, around 57.4 percent resided in rural areas. The figure was higher in 1990 (74.1 percent) before started to decrease to 63.5 percent in 2000. One possible reason for the decreasing trend was the tendency of the senior citizens to stay with their children in urban areas (Noveria, 2007). This is influenced by the traditional views that say that living with children or relatives is an appropriate living arrangement for the elderly. Consequently, as their adult children move to urban areas to work, which gradually increases overtime, the aging parents join the move. A survey that was conducted on 200 respondents in a densely populated urban area in Indonesia revealed that the majority of senior citizens lived with their family although the housing condition was not adequate for co-residing (Niehof, 1995). Another study also revealed the same situation where familial arrangement was stronger among the urban elderly than their rural counterparts. This was probably designed to simplify the children to see their parents, thus co-residing in urban areas becomes logical (Mohd, et.al., 2010). Another reason why elderly parents stay with their children is their need of constant support should they are no longer be capable of living independently, especially the frail and destitute elderly.

The Economic activities

Some Indonesian senior citizens are still considered as economically productive since many of them continue to exist in the labor force. The data concerning this matter shows that in 2010 around 44.76 percent of the elderly still worked (BPS, 2010). In line with
their spatial distribution, the proportion of the elderly who still worked in rural areas was higher than their urban counterparts, which was 51.14 percent and 36.18 percent respectively. The data also shows that most elderly engaged in informal sector type of occupations which do not require certain age qualification. Indeed, in rural areas they most worked in the agricultural sector, which relies on physical capability to do the work. This means that most senior citizens can continue working as long as they are physically able to do so.

The involvement of senior citizens in economic activities can also be viewed as a strategy for them to maintain their livelihood. The small amount of pension coverage in the country forces some senior citizens to remain working even in their advanced age. This is a common phenomenon in most Asian countries, where the pension plan only covers less than 20 percent of senior citizens and is exclusively provided for retired government workers (ESCAP, 2005). In some circumstances, being senior also requires more budget for the health care, especially since the deterioration of health is to be expected in old age. Unfortunately, most health insurance plans only offer small coverage of the elderly's health needs. Arifianto (2004) stated that only 10 percent of Indonesian senior citizens were covered by health insurance managed by either the government or privately owned companies. Of all the senior citizens' health insurance coverage, 1.8 percent is under the social safety net plan. In facing such conditions, to remain working is almost the most reasonable option for most elderly, particularly those who are impoverished and not able to rely on their offspring for support. To entertain a different argument, senior citizens who engage in economic activity may and should be viewed positively. This may reflect on their fitness that enables them to carry out jobs as well as prevent them from experiencing economic dependency on their offspring at later ages.

The Living arrangement

Similar to the situation in other Asian countries, Indonesian elderly mostly live with family members. It is socially believed that to let aging parents live alone or send them to institutionalized homes for elderly is not a wise living arrangement. It was not surprising, therefore, to find 92.7 percent of Indonesian elderly in 1997 lived with others, mainly their spouse and children/grandchildren (United Nations, 2005 cited in Jones, 2007). Of the figure, the highest proportion (68.9 percent) lived with child/grandchild, followed by spouse (16.9 percent). Other studies in several areas in Indonesia also found a similar trend (Keasberry, 2001; Noveria & Djoohan, 2001; Niehof, 1995). The proximity to family members was considered as very important as a person grows older.

The 2010 Indonesia Population Census found that more than half (57.7 percent) of senior citizens were the head of the household (BPS, 2011). There were two reasons for this circumstance. Firstly, they were actually the head of the household, in the sense of being fully in charge of running the household daily life. Secondly, they lived with other relatives, including their married children, but were honored as the head of the household because the children and their spouses co-reside in the elderly parent’s house. Furthermore, 21.04 percent of the senior citizens were parents/in-laws of the household head; this percentage was for those who co-resided in their children's houses.
The Study on Caregiving Provided by the Elderly: the location and methodology

As previously mentioned, this paper is based on studies related to the care for children that are left at home by their migrants parents, provided by elderly (the children's grandparents). These studies were conducted by a research team of the Centre for Population Studies, Indonesian Institute of Sciences (PPK-LIPI). The data is mainly obtained from a study on social cost and families left at home in two Indonesian international labor migrants source villages in Indramayu District, West Java Province. The main focus of the study is the social costs that family members of international migrant workers, mostly mothers, have to face as they the mother away. The caregiving of the children is an issue that is explored in the study. Since some of the children are cared for by their aging grandparents, the issues related with elderly caregivers, especially concerning both the support and also the obstacles they may face while grandparenting are also taken into account.

The study was conducted in Juntikebon and Juntikedokan villages, two villages among the international female migrant source villages in the sub-district of Juntinyuat. In general, villages in Indramayu district had a long history of international labor migration, especially the females. The onset of female labor migration from the areas started in the early 1980s, as there were high demands for housemaids to be employed in Saudi Arabia during Ramadhan (the holy month of Islam). The supply of female migrant workers continues to take place and involve migrant workers from other areas in Indonesia. This puts Indonesia as one of the major international migrant workers suppliers. In these two studied villages in particular, the young and economically productive females were found to be highly enthusiastic to work overseas.

The main reason for the enthusiasm was the promise to generate more income compared to conducting similar jobs in the country. Due to that, along with job scarcity in the villages and the adjacent areas, quite a number of young and economically productive women then tried their luck in other countries, mainly in the Middle East, to work as housemaids. It was rare, therefore, to find a household without at least one female member who was either working or had experienced working overseas as a housemaid. Other factors that also contributed to the decisions to work overseas were to build a house for their family, to buy economic assets such as agriculture land, and to celebrate family events such as a son's circumcision. The families in the studied villages had the habit of spending a large amount of money to celebrate events such as boy circumcision.

The study applied the quantitative and qualitative methods to collect primary data from various sources. The quantitative data was collected through a survey on 201 selected households with at least one child aged 13 to 21 years left at home by migrating parent(s). The questionnaires were answered by the children caregivers. There were also questionnaires for a child at particular age groups of each household. Questions in the questionnaire were related to issues such as the carer with whom the children live and his/her socio-demographic characteristics, the means to support for migrant’s family at
home, the financial problems that may be encountered by the caregivers during the time when the migrant parents were away and the strategy to solve it, and other problems including the disciplining of the children. Furthermore, the qualitative data was collected through indepth interviews and focus group discussions (FGD) with relevant sources such as the children left at home, the caregivers, the formal and informal leaders, and the government officials at the sub-district and district levels.

The Care for Children Left Behind by Their Elderly Grandparents in the Female Migrant Families

The study found that many female migrants left their children at home to be cared for by their grandparents, mostly the maternal grandparents, during the overseas contract periods. Figure 1 shows the living arrangement for the left behind children that were selected as respondents in the study. It can be seen from the figure that nearly one fourth of the 201 children interviewed lived with their grandparents, mostly the maternal grandparents. It was not surprising since intergenerational family arrangement was a common practice in the study areas. The availability of extended family members, including parents, to help more likely reinforced the desire to work overseas among potential female migrant workers. De Jong, et.al. (1996) pointed out that those who lived with three-generational extended families were more likely to move for work than those from a nucleus family living arrangement.

![Figure 1](image)

Living arrangement of children left at home in Juntikebon and Juntikedokan villages, Indramayu, West Java (%) (N = 201)

Source: PPK-LIPI, 2011.

While the data shows that the main caregiver of the children is their fathers, in many cases, the true situation may have been a bit more complicated. Interviews conducted with many children left at home by their migrant mothers and living with their fathers in their own houses revealed that they frequently asked their grandmothers’ assistance on a lot of matters. It was not rare to find fathers that were unable to meet the childrens’
needs, especially young ones. Inasmuch as nurturing and caring for children are not men’s traditional gender role, fathers find the practice of typically motherly duties complicated. In the situation when a responsibility for caring for the children is on a male’s shoulders, he is likely to hand the responsibility over to a relative, usually the parents or one of them (Perez, 1994). It is not surprising to find that eventually other female relatives take over the job of caring and nurturing for the children, as also occurs in others countries (Hoang, et.al., 2012: Locke, et.al., 2009; Perrenas, 2000). A boy that was interviewed in the study confirmed this conclusion with the following quotation:

"My father is busy working every day. He sells boiled noodles in a place quite far from my house. He leaves home in the morning and comes back in the afternoon. I am left at home with my younger brother, who is three year old. During the day, I have to care for my brother, including preparing his meals. This makes me stressful and I often come to my grandmother to ask for her assistance to care for my little brother. My grandmother always assists me anytime I ask for her help." (Yd, a 15 year old boy whose mother works in Saudi Arabia).

The study also found that the grandparents' work to care for the children was unfortunately taken for granted, especially since the majority of these grandparents were not asked about their willingness to accept such a chore. The job simply fell in their laps. This, however, is not only typical in Indonesia - many elderly caregivers in other countries such as Vietnam also face similar situations (Hoang, et.al., 2012). Having grandparents taking care of their grandchildren seems natural because the children are already familiar with their grandparents, especially if they are reared in the intergenerational family living arrangement. The following quotations describe the situation that was faced by elderly who had to do caregiving chores handed over to her by their daughter and son-in-law.

"My daughter and her husband never came to me to ask for my willingness to care for their two kids (14 years old boy and 7 years old girl). They just told me that they were going to work overseas and left the children with me. I could not say anything because they went abroad to earn money. It was better for them to go rather than staying here with no permanent job." (Mrs. Sp, 60 years old, carer of two grandchildren – she passed away 6 months after the interview after suffering of stroke).

"My daughter went to work abroad and left her 9 month old girl with me. My willingness to care for the girl was never requested. My son in law now joins his parents in his ancestral’s house and left the baby girl to live with me. Even though I live with my other daughter’s family in my house, the main responsibility for caring for the baby is in my hands." (Mrs. Tm, 65 years old who takes care of a 9 month old granddaughter).

Fortunately, the elderly caregivers mostly voluntarily received the noble task since the reason for the mothers to be away is to gain income to sustain their family's life. Mrs.
Sp's statement above clearly expressed her acceptance for the caregiving chore. This is a common phenomenon in many other migrant source countries. Elder respondents in a study on female outmigration in Nigeria and Bulgaria, for instance, mentioned that caring for grandchildren left behind by migrating parents was seen as a natural chore for grandmothers (Harper, et.al, 2008). Moreover, they also viewed the task as their contribution for the children's growth when the mothers were absent because of working abroad. From the positive perspective, the job may very well raise the elderly's self esteem because of their indirect contribution to their migrant children's family economy.

The Management of Remittances

The main reason for working abroad is to gain higher income compared to the similar jobs they may have in their countries of origin, as mentioned previously. Parenas (2005) pointed out that many Philippine women workers that were interviewed in some European countries stated such reason for their international labor migration. The money that was obtained during the overseas work was remitted home to sustain the family life, which also served as a way to maintain a relationship between the migrant workers and their family in their home country. PPK-LIPI study found that three fourths of the elderly caregivers received the money sent home by their migrant worker children (figure 2). This is in line with their role as caregivers, especially since they were the person responsible to carry the parenting duty during any working contract period that forces the children's parents to leave.

![Figure 2](image1.png)  
Migrant workers’ family left behind who receive remittances in Juntikebon and Juntikedokan villages, Indramayu, West Java (%) (N = 48)

![Figure 3](image2.png)  
Migrant workers’ family left behind who decide the use of remittances in Juntikebon Juntikedokan villages, Indramayu, West Jawa (%) (N = 48)

The elderly caregivers did not only receive the money remitted to them by their migrant children, but also made the decision on how to use the money. The highest percentage of family with left behind children who were the decision makers of the usage of remittances was the elderly caregivers, as shown by figure 3. The percentage was a bit higher than the percentage of others who also received the money (75 percent and 77.1
percent respectively). Figure 3 also shows that migrant workers’ husbands had less power in the decision making for the use of the remittances, while the elderly who took care of the children somehow had more to say about the particular subject.

The Lack of Financial Support for the Grandchildren Left Behind: Problems that are faced by some elderly caregivers

It is commonly assumed that children left behind are financially supported by their migrant parents while being cared for by the grandparents. Consequently, elderly who care for the migrants’ children are unlikely to have to deal with financial problems during their migrant children’s contract period. Knodel & Chayovan (2011) pointed out that in Thailand, most elderly were unlikely to be burdened financially by grandchildren left behind they cared for. Unfortunately, this is not always the case within the elderly respondents in PPK-LIPI’s study. Those who took over the children caregiving duty actually had to deal with financial related problems to sustain their daily lives. The in-depth interviews with elderly female caregivers showed that the family still faced financial difficulties because they did not receive a sufficient amount of money in order to raise the grandchildren. In some cases the amount of money they usually received from their migrant daughters was less than what they actually needed. Quite a number of migrant workers did not remit money on a monthly basis, as mentioned by respondents in the following quotations:

"I receive money from my daughter who works overseas once in three – five months. She sometime sends one million rupiah (almost $ US 100.00) and sometime two million rupiah (almost $ US 200.00). The amount of money I receive is certainly less than what we need. It is indeed insufficient for buying formula for my granddaughter. Can you imagine receiving only one million in three months? What can such amount of money buy in current economic situation ... " (Mrs. Tm)

"My daughter sent money home only once in the last 7 months. I have received remittance once in a year, indeed. My daughter mentioned that she did not have money because her employer had not paid her salary yet. I then had to borrow some money from our neighbor to fulfill my grandson’s need and pay the debt once I received remittance from my daughter." (Mrs. Ws, carer of 15 years old grandson left at home by his mother)

The tough financial situation pushes the elderly caregivers to continue working even at their advanced age. The study pointed out that around two thirds of the elderly caregivers still engaged in various kinds of jobs, ranging from the agricultural sector to services and small tradings in their houses (warung – small store selling various daily necessities). Those who do not work are the female elderly who relied on their husband's income. This means that the male elderly remains working in order to support their family lives. The poor social security plan also brings about difficulties within the elderly to sustain their daily lives. It is worsened by the lack of financial support from their migrants children/in laws in helping with their needs while at the same time caring for the grandchildren. In
some cases, the financial support from the migrant children stops completely, unless the elderly caregivers asked for the money to be remitted. This situation unfortunately, is quite common, as stated in the following quotation:

"I have to support our lives financially. I feel it is hard because raising children needs a large amount of money. They need money to buy meals or snacks at school and at home every day. This forces me to keep working. I continue to sew clothes if there is a neighbor asks for my services. In case I have no more money, I ask my son (father of the granddaughter she takes care of) and sometimes I ask it from her aunt. I feel as if I rear children twice because now I care for my grandchild left at home by their parents like I previously did for my own children. I also have to make sure that all her needs are met." (Mrs. Si, 65 year old, carer of a 7 year old granddaughter left at home by her parents).

Interviews that were conducted with ex-migrant women in the study revealed that there were two reasons why the migrants could not send a sufficient amount of money home to their children and parents. Firstly, they intended to keep the money themselves and bring the money home as soon as their working contract was finished. This was a strategy that could facilitate them to bring home a large sum to be used for any kinds of purpose such as building a house or financing a party (mostly to celebrate a son’s circumcision, which is commonly and widely practiced among villagers). Secondly, they were not paid by the employers every month, and that hampered them from sending money home on a monthly basis. The practice of the intergenerational family arrangement assured migrant women before departing abroad that their children would be safe living under the care of their families.

The study suggested that there was no social networking related to the provision of support for elderly caregivers who had to deal with financial difficulties. The provision of support is seen as a family's own problem which then of course has to be solved by family members themselves, especially the elderly caregivers. Those who have wealthy relatives may rely on assistance from their extended kin in the form of a loan. Once they get the remittance from their migrant children, the elderly caregivers repay the debt. The lack of the community's awareness in supporting the financial needs of the elderly who shoulder the burden of caring for their grandchildren should therefore be recognized and altered.

Tough financial situations do not seem to be experienced by those who are adequately supported by their migrant children. Another study that was conducted by the research team of PPK-LIPI in Tulungagung district, East Java province, revealed that many elderly caregivers were unlikely to encounter financial problems while caring for their grandchildren left at home since their migrant children remitted a sufficient amount of money regularly. The elderly parents were able to arrange a living, including meeting all the grandchildren's needs. Mrs. Jm (68 year old) whose son and daughter-in-law worked in Malaysia, for example, could be called a “finance manager” for her family with three left behind grandchildren. She managed all the money her son remitted and used it to
meet all the family members’ needs. Mrs. Jm saved the remaining money until the savings was sufficient enough to buy economically valuable things, such as agricultural land. She also used the savings to invest in economic activities, such as raising chicken poultry. She then ran the poultry business with assistance from other relatives. In-depth interviews that were conducted with Mrs. Jm revealed that she was less likely to experience substantial problems in sustaining her life while at the same time caring for three grandchildren.

There was another elderly caregiver who enjoyed not having financial problems while grandparenting children left at home. Mrs. Rh, whose daughter and son-in-law migrated to Malaysia to work, lived with only her two elementary school age grandchildren in a house owned by her migrant daughter’s family. The parents of the two children regularly remitted a sufficient amount of money home. The money that Mrs. Rh received was not only able to meet the children's needs, but also helped cover other necessities. The adequate sum of money she received and her good physical condition enabled Mrs. Rh to conduct the caregiving well.

The Non Financial Problems Enjoyed by Some Elderly Caregivers

A study that was done by PPK-LIPI’s asked about other problems other than financial ones, that may have been encountered by elderly caregivers in parenting their grandchildren. Although the problems that occurred may have been pretty insignificant, some elderly caregivers did experience them. Seventeen percent of 48 elderly caregivers encountered a variety of non-financial problems. The problems that were encountered differed depending on the age of the grandchildren. Among the earlier aged grandchildren, the major problem was the difficulty in fulfilling their needs in relation to the caregivers' weak physically condition. Waking up at midnight for various reasons such as preparing formula and changing diapers were the main difficulties that were met by elderly caregivers as expressed by Mrs. Tm:

"My granddaughter always woke up and asked for milk at night. I have to wake up and prepare formula for her. This bothered my night sleep. I feel this is the hardest part of caring for the baby. It is not like washing her clothes, for which I have no burden in carrying out the chore."

For those elderly caring for children in the pre-teen and teen age groups, the main problem related to disciplining them, particularly in spending their leisure time. Some of them even had to face bigger problems, such as children skipping school hours. Many male children frequently spent their after school time at paid public internet facilities, mainly for playing online games. They played these games for hours and went home late in the afternoon on school days. This habit was not only a waste of their time, but also their money because they had to pay for the internet services. Mrs. Sp, whose grandson was 14 years old, mentioned that she became stressed out thinking about her grandson who often did not attend school despite leaving for school every school day, as expressed in the following quotation:
"I was informed by the school that my grandson often was not present at school. When I asked the boy, he told me that he always came to school. He lied to me because if he attended school, his school would not tell me differently. He always came home very late. I got mad at him frequently, but it did not seem to have any difference. He just kept silent but did not change his behavior."

**Conclusion**

It is undeniable that as a person is getting old, his/her ability is deteriorated which in some cases intervene his/her life. This leads to him/her becoming heavily reliant on others’ support, particularly the offsprings and other relatives. Fortunately, for many elderly, deteriorating in abilities at advanced ages does not prevent them from provision support for their family. Instead of requiring expansion in caring at their late ages, some elderly remain playing a crucial role in the family. This emerges a question of “who supports for whom?” as many elderly contribute significantly for their children’s family.

The main form of support provided by elderly for the family is the assistance of caring for their third generation. In migrant worker sending areas, in particular, senior citizens are more likely to be the main caregivers for children whose parents migrate for work. The care giving support is usually provided by 'young elderly' who still possess relatively good health and can still afford to live with their own financial plan. Regarding the financial matters, caring for grandchildren left at home seems not to bear any kind of problems as long as the elderly caregivers receive a sufficient amount of money from their migrant children. Since they are the main caregivers for the grandchildren, the elderly have the power to fully managed remittance, in the sense of receiving and deciding on the usage of the money. The power they acquire to control the remittance is sometimes even stronger than their sons-in-law, the father of the grandchildren they care for.

Unfortunately, caring for grandchildren left behind pose financial and psychological burdens for some elderly caregivers. Financial burden emerges because they do not always receive a sufficient amount of money from the grandchildren’s parents. This was possible because the migrant workers usually trust that their children are in the right family hands, thus the children will continue having adequate care even without sufficient financial support from the migrant parents. Furthermore, disciplining of the grandchildren, particularly teenagers, was among the pressing problems that are faced by elderly caregivers. This is particularly related to schooling issues and spending leisure time effectively. The elderly have to struggle to deal with such problems to sustain their living while at the same time caring for their grandchildren left at home by their migrant parents.

In regards to the difficulties that are faced by the elderly caregivers, the support from others is needed to assist them in dealing with daily life activities. The community members who live adjacent to the elderly are expected to be more aware of their difficulties and offer support to help them running their lives well while at the same time
caring for their grandchildren. Ideally, continuous intervention from informal local leaders will stimulate the community to establish social networking that provides support for elderly caregivers.

References


