



# Ethics of Care: An Authentic Approach to the Islamic Concept

## The stage of old age as a model

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### Abstract:

This article deals with the topic of ethics of care as a relatively new philosophy, which is an applied ethics based on a value system that deals with relationships between individuals or entities. The ethics of care has attracted considerable attention, particularly within contemporary Western philosophy, and is seen as a promising alternative to traditional and idealistic ethical theories that dictate what ought to be. These philosophical approaches are often transcendent and detached from reality, failing to address the needs of individuals for each other in order to sustain human existence. Therefore, this article aims to present an authentic approach to the ethics of care and its manifestations within the Islamic worldview and its practical applications. The focus is on the stage of old age as a practical and effective model for this ethic, highlighting the need of the elderly for an ethic of care. Old age is a sensitive and critical phase of human development in all societies, characterised by fragility, weakness and health, mental, emotional and social decline. However, the Islamic perspective proposes a qualitative form of appropriate treatment for this age group, characterised by a dignified approach rooted in deep Islamic cultural values, which provides compassion for the elderly to prevent them from becoming victims of need, decline and mistreatment.

**Keywords:** ethics of care, ethical philosophy, stage of old age, Islamic perspective, social solidarity.

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### Introduction:

The ethics of care has emerged in contemporary moral philosophical thought as a result of the intellectual shift that has transformed the logic of ethical questioning from abstract, nihilistic, confrontational and individualistic reasoning to participatory ethical action that opens up to others and establishes values of relationship between self and other. The ethics of care thus places great emphasis on emotions, feelings and human relationships. Moreover, ethics is a supreme goal and noble objective within sound Islamic methodology. The purpose of the prophetic guidance and the message of the last prophet is summarised in his saying: "I was sent only to perfect good morals"<sup>1</sup>. The ethics of care, as derived from the Islamic perspective, shows a pronounced concern for dealing with various stages of age, whether in childhood or in old age, especially in the stage of senescence. These practices encompass all stages of life, as the Hadith indicates: "He is not one of us who does not show mercy to the young and does not recognise the rights of the elderly"<sup>2</sup>.

Contemporary human societies are increasingly faced with the problem of a significantly growing elderly population. Statistics show an increase in the proportion of older people in both developed and developing countries, which has attracted the attention of modern sciences such as psychology and sociology to address the needs of this group within a framework of developmental characteristics. Given that today's youth, if they live long enough, will become tomorrow's elderly, there is an urgent and pressing need to focus on and care for the elderly. While caring for the elderly is a relatively new issue, largely due to the growth of this population in contemporary Western societies as a result of scientific

<sup>1</sup>- Al-Muwatta of Malik: (3357), Musnad Ahmad: (9094).

<sup>2</sup>- Sunan Abu Dawood: (4943), Sunan Al-Tirmidhi: (2054), Musnad Ahmad: (6848).

advances and the availability of health care, the values of caring for this group are deeply rooted in the value system of Islamic culture. They are an integral part of the practical ethics and interactions mandated by the noble Islamic religion.

It is perhaps justified to choose the ethics of care for the elderly as a model, because most provisions for the care of the elderly in positive legislation focus on the secular aspect, primarily addressing material needs by meeting physical and health requirements, while neglecting the spiritual dimension. Human life cannot be complete or balanced if one aspect is prioritised over the other. This has led us to emphasise the ethics of care, which the Islamic perspective has established as a comprehensive framework that is consistent with sound human nature and fulfils the ultimate purpose of human existence, which is the worship of God and the cultivation of the earth through righteous deeds.

The article also seeks to highlight the significant status of the elderly in Islam by examining the determinants of the Islamic perspective at the levels of vision and methodology, and by elucidating the principles and means of care that Islam has emphasised and promoted.

One of the central questions that the article seeks to answer is how to contribute to the enrichment of the field of Arabic research in this area. The ethics of caregiving, like many philosophical discussions, has been largely produced by Western thought, and the available Arabic literature on the subject remains very limited, if not scarce. Similarly, the stage of old age has not received sufficient attention in studies compared to other stages of development such as childhood, adolescence and youth. An Arab researcher wishing to explore the ethics of care for the elderly will be forced to consult foreign studies and rely on translations to derive their principles, means and ends. Many Arab and Islamic societies still rely on foreign studies, sources and approaches to interpret social dynamics and reforms, adopting views and ideas rooted in foreign cultures that clash with their values and are not in line with their identity. This reliance leads to inappropriate criteria and inadequate results, as they relate to a social fabric and cultural identity that contradict the spirit of Islam.

On the basis of the above, we pose the following fundamental question: How does the ethics of care for the elderly materialise in the Islamic perspective at the levels of vision and methodology?

### **First: Basic conceptual approaches**

#### **1. The concept of the ethics of care:**

The ethics of care has a relatively short history, spanning only a few decades. Some theorists prefer not to use the term “care” to describe this approach to ethical issues and have tried to replace it with terms such as “ethics of love” or “relational ethics”. But the discussion keeps coming back to care as the most appropriate term among those considered, even if some remain dissatisfied with it. The concept of care has the advantage of not neglecting the work with people and of avoiding the interpretation of ethics as something ideal and impractical<sup>3</sup>. Care is both a value and a practice. In this sense, the ethics of care is characterised by its realism, i.e. it is a practical ethics that can be applied and practised in real life, in contrast to traditional idealistic philosophies that focus on how things should be.

There is a diversity and richness in the meanings that the concept of care carries in the ethics of care. In this context, we will refer to some definitions. Nel Noddings defines it as: “the careful attention to the feelings, needs, desires and ideas of those we care for, and the ability to understand a particular situation - from the perspective of a particular person - are central to caring for someone”. Joan Tronto and Bernice Fisher define caring as an activity that includes everything we do to preserve, maintain and repair our world so that we can live well. Care can be directed towards things, the environment and other people<sup>4</sup>.

Diemut Bubeck presents one of the more precise definitions in the literature on the ethics of care, stating: “Care is the meeting of a person’s needs by another person, where the personal interaction between the

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<sup>3</sup>- Hild Virginia, *Ethics of Care*, translated by: Michel Hanna Matias. Om Al-Ma'arifah Series, Kuwait: National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters, Issue: 356, October 2008, p. 13.

<sup>4</sup>- The same reference, pp. 46–47.

carer and the cared for is a crucial element in the activity of general care, and where the person in need of care can never meet his or her needs alone". This is the difference between caring for someone and providing that service to that person. For example, cooking a meal for a child is an act of care, but when a wife cooks for her husband, who is fully capable of cooking for himself, she is not performing an act of care but providing a service to him. Bubeck emphasises that care is a response to a basic category of human need, namely that which makes us dependent on others<sup>5</sup>. Peta Bowden, however, takes a different view of the nature of caring relationships from Bubeck, stating: "Care expresses important moral ways of reflecting our importance to each other, and elevates the bonds between people to a level that transcends ontological necessity or instinctual survival."<sup>6</sup>

"The ethics of care is a system of values that concerns the relationships between individuals, defined as a system of concepts and ideas that emerge from the practice of care, and is an organic part of that practice, responding to its material requirements and prominently fulfilling needs."<sup>7</sup>

## 2. On the concept of senility

In Al-Mu'jam Al-Wasat (The Intermediate Dictionary), the term (شَاخ) refers to a person who becomes old, with (شَيْخُوخَة) indicating old age. A plant is said to be "shakh" when its inside dries out and becomes fibrous. An elderly person (shaykh) is one who has reached old age, typically around fifty, beyond middle age but not yet senile. A shaykh is also someone of status, knowledge, virtue or leadership. The term "shaykh al-balad" refers to local administrative figures below the mayor. The plural forms are (شُيُوخ) and (أَشْيَاخ).

One of the changes associated with ageing is the appearance of grey hair. The linguistic connotation of "shayb" (شَيْب) indicates someone whose hair has turned white. It means that a person's hair has turned grey (شَاب). Therefore, an elderly person is often called "ashayb" (أَشَائِب) for men and (شَمَطَاء) for women<sup>8</sup>. The linguistic meaning of someone who has reached old age refers to a stage in human life marked by external changes, such as grey hair, and internal changes, reflected in the loss of vitality, passion and energy, similar to a plant whose stem has dried up. In addition, senility refers to those with experience, wisdom and the ability to manage household and community affairs.

In Arabic, the term "shaykh" is often used as a synonym for (مَسْن), indicating old age. The term has reached the peak of old age<sup>9</sup>. (كَبْر) and (ضَعْف) indicate ageing and frailty. In this article, we will use these terms interchangeably. Researchers in the field of gerontology sometimes use the term "senility" and sometimes the term "aging" as synonyms indicating the same meaning<sup>10</sup>. Various measures have been used to define the stage of senility, including chronological age, biological age, psychological age and social age<sup>11</sup>.

Senility can also be defined as the set of usual natural changes that occur in an adult individual as he advances in chronological age. These natural changes are not the result of sudden organic, psychological or social disturbances, nor are they those changes resulting from diseases that lead to the appearance of one or more signs of ageing. It is important to emphasise that these changes do not only affect the body and its organs in terms of structure or function, but also extend to the individual's behaviour, attitudes, emotions and social relationships. From a social perspective, senescence can also be seen as a series of

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<sup>5</sup>- the previous reference, p. 48.

<sup>6</sup>- The same reference, p. 50.

<sup>7</sup>- Fathi Hasan Malakawi, The Family as a Source of Values, Islamic Knowledge Journal, Beirut-Lebanon: World Institute for Islamic Thought, Issue: 55, Volume 14, Winter 1430-2009, pp. 7-8.

<sup>8</sup>- Arabic Language Academy. Al-Ma'jam Al-Wasit, supervised by: Shawqi Duyf, Arab Republic of Egypt: Al-Shorouk International Library, 4th edition, 2004, p. 502.

<sup>9</sup>- See: The same reference, p. 456.

<sup>10</sup>- The same reference, p. 983.

<sup>11</sup>- Abdul Monem Al-Miladi, Psychology of Aging and the Elderly: Psychosocial Aspects, Alexandria: Youth University Foundation, 2014, p. 38.

successive changes that affect social status and roles during the successive age stages of an individual's life<sup>12</sup>.

There are colloquial terms used to describe older people, such as (العجوز), (المتقاعد), (الشايب), "ash-shaykh" (الشيخ), and (الحاج) "" which often hurt their feelings or diminish their status and may carry an implication of ridicule. Efforts are being made to find alternative words or terms. Western European countries and the United States have addressed this issue by using the term "senior citizen" to refer to older people, which implies a respected and senior citizen<sup>13</sup>. Despite the various synonyms for senility, they ultimately describe the later stages of human life, characterised by the conditions of old age, including frailty and disability.

### **3. The concept of care and support for older persons**

Care of the elderly encompasses a range of efforts, services, activities, programmes, and international and governmental legislation aimed at addressing the needs and problems of older adults. The aim is to facilitate their social interaction with the community and its members, to enable them to adapt to their environment and to achieve self-sufficiency. This care also includes improving the social life of the elderly through various legislative, institutional, economic, recreational and social services to create better conditions for them.

The American National Association of Social Workers (NASW) defines social welfare as: a set of organised activities carried out by governmental and voluntary not-for-profit organisations to provide protection and prevention, to reduce the impact of social problems and to work towards their resolution by finding appropriate solutions. It also focuses on improving the standard of living of individuals, groups, families and communities. These activities are supported by a community of professionals such as social workers, psychologists, therapists, doctors, nurses, lawyers and educators.

It is clear from the above that the care of the elderly is largely the responsibility of the state and its social institutions<sup>14</sup>. This is in contrast to many Islamic societies where the family is responsible for caring for its elderly members. In the absence of family and relatives, the state assumes the responsibility of protecting this vulnerable group.

### **Second. Aging: A debate between blessing and curse (positive and negative)**

Ageing has become a major issue, raising fears of disability, loneliness and need among the elderly. Perspectives on ageing vary widely; some view it with disdain and contempt, while in other societies the elderly are treated with respect and esteem. This can be outlined as follows:

#### **1. Ageing in the eyes of older people themselves:**

From the perspective of older people, ageing is not seen as a positive or desirable stage. Despite an awareness of the inevitability of approaching this stage as the years go by, the prevailing feeling among most older people is that ageing has suddenly come upon them without any prior preparation. In reality, it has crept up gradually over many years. However, people generally do not feel that they belong to the elderly category until they face the challenges of ageing and realise that their suffering is due to advancing age. Ageing occurs only once in an individual's life, so no one has any prior experience of ageing. Our knowledge about ageing comes mainly from books, newspapers, TV series, films or from observing some older people from a distance or up close.

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<sup>12</sup>- Saleh Hasan Ahmad Al-Dahri, *Psychology of Aging: Foundations and Theories*, Amman: Safa Publishing and Distribution House, 1st edition, 2018, p. 23.

<sup>13</sup>- Medhat Muhammad Abu Al-Nasr, *Social Work in the Field of Elderly Care from the Perspective of General Practice*, Mansoura - Arab Republic of Egypt: Al-Maktabah Al-Asriyah for Publishing and Distribution, 2019, p. 19.

<sup>14</sup>- Jalal Abdul Halim' *Special Social Groups in Algerian Society: The Elderly and Persons with Disabilities: Characteristics and Areas of Care*, Amman: Al-Yazuri Scientific Publishing House, 2016, pp. 98-99.

As a result, some older people do not accept ageing when it is forced upon them; they react negatively. Some resign themselves to the pains and losses of ageing, reaching a state of despair and frustration. Others protest against their present state and spend their time reminiscing about the past, comparing their old state with their youth, which is another form of suffering. However, there are those who try to adapt to the new situation and accept ageing in all its aspects, without expressing rejection or protest<sup>15</sup>.

In addition, the period of retirement that begins when people stop working is not usually welcomed; it is seen as a period of loss, with different types of loss following one another. There is the financial loss of reduced income, as the pension retired people receive is usually less than half of what they earned during their working life. There is also the health loss represented by the age-related illnesses that gradually appear over time. Retirement means the loss of the influence that a person has derived from his or her job and position. If they become disabled through illness, they also lose the ability to live independently without relying on others. In addition, there are many negative feelings associated with retirement, such as the feeling of having become superfluous and having to wait for death<sup>16</sup>.

## **2. Ageing from the perspective of non-elderly people of different age groups:**

Ageing is often viewed with disdain; some may see older people as unnecessary individuals because they are completely dependent on others for all their needs. This perception frames them as a heavy burden - according to some - without considering the past of these individuals, which is often filled with struggle and hard work. Unfortunately, feelings of hostility and rejection of the elderly by subsequent generations are a real phenomenon, expressed by some, although others may hide these feelings. This tendency to resent the care of the elderly can be observed and is justified by the belief that they monopolise attention and resources, depriving younger generations of them.

In some countries where the number of older people is increasing, this attitude can lead to feelings of stigma among older people, with some expressing frustration at being labelled 'pensioners' or 'retirees'. In the United Kingdom, this label can cause resentment, while the United States has recognised the sensitivity of older adults to such terms. As a result, they have adopted the title "senior citizen" for anyone reaching old age as a form of respect and reassurance<sup>17</sup>.

It is likely, however, that the growing numbers of older people in developing countries will place a heavy burden on health services, which will struggle to meet the needs of patients due to a lack of resources and skills. This, in addition to the many other problems that plague developing countries, places issues such as elderly care at the bottom of the list of priorities considered by the authorities, further complicating matters for older adults in the Third World<sup>18</sup>.

Similarly, in Western societies, the growing number of older people has exacerbated the health, psychological and social problems associated with ageing. The effects of ageing in these societies, together with the reduced productivity of the elderly sector, have increased the burden on health and social services, creating significant challenges for those responsible for medical care. The elderly are one of the groups most in need of medical care and most susceptible to various ailments and diseases. The accumulation of these factors over the years leads to a complete breakdown of bodily functions with advancing age, much like aging machinery that frequently breaks down<sup>19</sup>.

In the United States, some have a negative view of aging, describing older adults as frail, physically and mentally exhausted, unproductive and accident-prone, with eccentric ideas and moods. There is a feeling that they should be removed from society because their days of usefulness are over and the younger generation needs to be given opportunities. Some studies show that young people have negative attitudes

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<sup>15</sup>- Lotfi Abdul Aziz Al-Shurbini, *Secrets of Aging: Problems of the Elderly and Treatment Methods*, Beirut - Lebanon: Dar Al-Nahda Al-Arabiya, no date, pp. 14-15.

<sup>16</sup>- The previous reference, p. 13.

<sup>17</sup>- The same reference, pp. 15-16.

<sup>18</sup>- The same reference, p. 20.

<sup>19</sup>- The same reference, p. 23.

towards the elderly, highlighting their aggression towards this population group and their short-sighted belief that ageing only goes from bad to worse, from a weakened state of health to an even more fragile state. They believe that any health intervention is bound to fail sooner or later, and therefore assert that care should be directed towards the younger generation of patients<sup>20</sup>.

Today, many younger generations are becoming increasingly frustrated with their parents and grandparents. The reasons can be educational, social or economic. For example, living with parents and grandparents and a limited materialistic perspective play a role. In the past, people cared for the elderly and the weak out of a desire for moral benefit and to please God, filling their hearts with compassion and love without expecting any worldly return. Today, however, a spirit of greed has spread, and some measure everything in terms of its merits and demerits. So it is clear that society's view of old age and the attitudes and opinions held towards it can sometimes be limited<sup>21</sup>.

### **3. The positive view of ageing in Islamic thought**

Elderly people have a high status in Islam, which guarantees them comprehensive care for several reasons that are valued by the Islamic perspective on this segment of society. These reasons include

Ageing and longevity are blessings from God: The Qur'an refers to longevity as a grace bestowed by God on His servants, allowing them to make up for what they missed in their earlier years. Allah says: "But We have given these and their forefathers enjoyment until their life span became long for them" (Surah Al-Anbiya: 44). The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) also said: "The best among you are those who live the longest and do the best deeds"<sup>22</sup>.

Moreover, old age is a stage of human development characterised by weakness and need, which necessitates human fragility and dependence on others. Allah says: "It is Allah Who created you from weakness, then made you strong after weakness, then made you strong after strength, weakness and grey hair. He creates what He wills, and He is the Knowing, the Capable" (Surah Ar-Rum: 54). The weakness of old age reflects a decline from childhood in all its aspects, and when a person becomes old and unable to care for himself, his needs for food, clothing, shelter and assistance multiply<sup>23</sup>.

Elderly believers have a special status with God, and as they age, their goodness only increases. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: "None of you should wish for death, nor should you pray for it before it comes, for when one of you dies, his deeds come to an end, and the life of the believer is only increased by goodness. An elderly Muslim with grey hair has a special status in Islam, as indicated in the Hadith: "Whoever grows grey hair in Islam will have it as a light on the Day of Resurrection"<sup>24</sup>.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) also said: "He is not one of us who does not show respect to the elderly, have compassion on the young, and command what is right and forbid what is wrong"<sup>25</sup>. Islam has accorded high status and honour to the elderly, requiring that they be respected and cherished. Conversely, it is unpopular for those who hold this status to act contrary to it: "God does not love the ignorant old man"<sup>26</sup>. In a sound narration it is mentioned: "Three people will not be spoken to by God on the Day of Resurrection, nor will He purify them, nor will He look upon them, and they will have a painful punishment: an old fornicator, a lying king, and a proud poor man"<sup>27</sup>.

#### **Aging does not mean retiring from work**

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<sup>20</sup>- Kamel Alwan Al-Zubaidi, *Psychology of Aging*, Amman: Al-Waraq Publishing and Distribution Foundation, 2009, p. 22.

<sup>21</sup>- The same reference, p. 23.

<sup>22</sup>- Musnad Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal: (7212).

<sup>23</sup>- Ahlam Rajab Abdul Ghafar, *Elderly Care*, Cairo: Dar Al-Fajr for Publishing and Distribution, 2003, p. 35.

<sup>24</sup>- Adel Muhammad Mursi Jawhar and Jamal Shahat Habib, *General Practice of Social Work in the Field of Elderly Care*, Alexandria: Modern University Office, 2019, p. 201.

<sup>25</sup>- Musnad of Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal: (2329).

<sup>26</sup>- Musnad of Al-Bazzar, published as *Al-Bahr Al-Zakhar*: (860).

<sup>27</sup>- Mukhtasar Sahih Muslim: (1787).

In Islam, ageing is not a reason for retirement as long as one is able and willing to contribute. Although roles may change and the physical participation of the elderly may diminish due to the frailty of their bodies and bones, they still play a vital role in providing experience, wisdom and leadership. Historically, Islam has not recognised retirement in its present obligatory sense; rather, a Muslim should work to the best of his ability and capacity. It has been observed that compulsory retirement in modern times has created many problems for the elderly that were not previously known in Islamic societies. Islam only allows retirement due to incapacity or old age. That is why the Prophet (peace be upon him) taught us to seek refuge from such conditions: "O Allah, I seek refuge in You from incapacity, laziness, cowardice and senility"<sup>28</sup> and "O Allah, make my provision abundant when I grow old and my life comes to an end"<sup>29</sup>. This reflects an acceptance of the ageing process<sup>30</sup>.

**Ageing is not the end:** For Muslims, death is not the end of worldly life, but a transition from this life to the eternal hereafter. In this worldly life, one prepares for the hereafter by doing righteous deeds and drawing closer to Allah, and this inclination often increases with age as one senses the approach of one's time. This perspective allows for a harmonious aging experience for the believer and provides a model for ideal coexistence with the elderly. It can offer solutions to many of the problems of ageing that psychologists and sociologists have struggled to explain in terms of the phenomenon of good adaptation, an area in which Islam has already provided guidance through its teachings<sup>31</sup>.

Based on the above, we observe a variance in perceptions of the elderly from one society to another, as well as different views within the same community from place to place. These conflicting perspectives urge us to seek a balanced approach that protects and upholds the rights of this population group.

### **III. Rooting the Ethics of Caring for the Elderly in Islam: Vision and Methodology**

#### **1. Rooting the ethics of care in Islam at the level of vision:**

The Islamic perspective reflects and applies the principles of Islam - its thought, spirit and implementation - in various spheres of life, including political, economic, social, humanitarian and moral aspects. Islam uniquely addresses the issue of existence with all its elements and relationships as an integrated system with its inputs, processes and outputs<sup>32</sup>.

Theory in Islam is based on fundamental concepts and principles, such as the belief in monotheism and the purpose of human existence. Various concepts of Islam form the intellectual framework of Islamic Theory, which aims to realise these principles and tenets through the development of a Muslim's faith and understanding of the Creator, the universe and existence. This aims to build the Muslim personality in all its physical, mental, spiritual, emotional and social dimensions as a coherent and harmonious unit with a distinctive and unique character. The foundation of its unity, cohesion and harmony is anchored around a solid core that is divinely created and wisely ordained<sup>33</sup>.

The Islamic perspective on the ethics of caring for the elderly is crystallized in its content, methods, and foundations, and is based on the Holy Quran, the purified Sunnah, and the efforts of the righteous predecessors, as well as some modern scientific approaches that do not contradict Islam. This perspective focuses on human nature - the innate aspect with which God created man - and ensures that nothing is imposed that contradicts this nature. It follows a comprehensive and integrated methodology that encompasses the individual and his or her components: physical, spiritual, mental, emotional, and his or her relationships with others.

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<sup>28</sup>- Sunan Abu Dawood: (1540).

<sup>29</sup>- Al-Du'a by Al-Tabarani: (1049).

<sup>30</sup>- Ahmad Rajab Abdul Ghaffar, Caring for the Elderly, previous reference, pp. 36-37.

<sup>31</sup>- Previous reference, pp. 37-38.

<sup>32</sup>- Adel Muhammad Morsi Jawhar and Jamal Shahata Habib, General Practice of Social Work in Elderly Care, previous reference, p. 198.

<sup>33</sup>- Same reference, pp. 198-199.

This perspective provides a holistic view of the human being, leaving nothing unaddressed in his body, mind, spirit, material and spiritual desires, and all activities on earth in accordance with the principles brought by Islam. It frames the purpose of human existence as the worship of Allah and the positive occupation of the earth, ensuring that the community flourishes through righteousness and action, thus promoting the well-being of both the individual and society at the same time.

Islam encourages care for the Islamic community and its members and outlines the principles of social solidarity, recognising that Muslims are a cohesive nation. Relationships among Muslims are based on mercy, cooperation, affection and selflessness. In an Islamic society, the weak do not perish. Allah the Exalted says: "And they prefer [others] to themselves, even if they are in want. And those who are protected from the greed of their souls will be the successful ones" (Surah Al-Hashr: 9).

Islam encourages cooperation and helping those in need, as Allah says: "And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression"

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: "A Muslim is the brother of another Muslim; he does not oppress him or abandon him. Whoever is in need of his brother, Allah will be in need of him. And whoever relieves the suffering of a Muslim, Allah will relieve his suffering on the Day of Resurrection"<sup>34</sup>. Thus, Islam regards social welfare as a form of worship through which a person draws closer to Allah, and its fulfilment depends on belief in God and revelation. Allah says: "The example of those who spend their wealth seeking the pleasure of Allah and for their own security, is like a garden on a hill, which is rained upon, so that it yields double its fruit. But if it does not receive a shower, then a drizzle will suffice. And Allah sees what you do" (Surah Al-Baqarah: 265).

The act of worship prescribed by Islam to ensure social welfare within the community is zakat (almsgiving). The performance of zakat guarantees social care in the Islamic community and ensures the alleviation of need. Zakat is not a voluntary charity at the discretion of the individual; it is a right of wealth that must be fulfilled. Wealth is private, but its benefits are public and it serves a social function. It is Allah's wealth to which humanity is entrusted, as stated: "And spend out of that which We have made your inheritance" (Surah Al-Hadid: 7)<sup>35</sup>.

## **2. Rooting the Ethics of Care in Islam at the Methodological Level**

### **A. Comprehensiveness and Integration:**

The Islamic theory on the ethics of caring for the elderly derives its comprehensiveness and integration from the comprehensive nature of Islam in relation to all major and minor issues of life, what precedes it and what follows it. It encompasses all principles and values relating to individuals and communities, as well as the Islamic creed and its answers to all questions.

Its comprehensiveness and integration are further enhanced by Islam's holistic view of humanity and community, the nature of knowledge, its sources and its goals. In addition, Islam emphasises the achievement of a principle of balance in all aspects of spiritual, material, human and moral life, balancing individual goals with community and societal goals.

Thus, the elderly can be viewed from all physical, psychological, mental and social dimensions, in addition to the spiritual dimension represented by the elderly person's relationship with the Creator, the Exalted. The human being consists of two aspects: the material and the spiritual<sup>36</sup>.

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<sup>34</sup>- Al-Jami' Al-Kabir – Sunan Al-Tirmidhi: (1426).

<sup>35</sup>- Medhat Muhammad Abu Al-Nasr, *Social Work in Elderly Care from the Perspective of General Practice*, previous reference, pp. 85.

<sup>36</sup>- Adel Muhammad Morsi Jawhar and Jamal Shahata Habib, *General Practice of Social Work: In the Field of Elderly Care*, previous reference, p. 199.



## **B. Universal and global humanity:**

This characteristic arises from the Islamic perspective, which sees humanity as a single entity, without distinction between one individual and another, or one nation and another, or one tribe and another. Rather, cooperation and goodwill form the basis of relations between them, and no one is preferred over another except through piety. Allah says: "The most noble among you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous among you" (Surah Al-Hujurat: 13). The message of Islam was sent to all mankind without discrimination between the sexes. Allah states: "And We have not sent thee, O Muhammad, except to all mankind as a bringer of good news and a warner" (Surah Saba: 28).

The humanity of Islamic theory is further affirmed by its approach to human affairs, which is based on the innate nature of human beings, which does not differ between one gender and another, or one nation and another. This nature is stable and fixed, as described by Allah: "So set your face towards religion, inclining to the truth. And hold fast to the Fitrah of Allah, on which He has created [all] men. There should be no change in the creation of Allah. This is the right religion, but most people do not know it" (Surah Ar-Rum: 30).

Islam addresses the needs, instincts and essential demands of humanity based on the unity of this innate nature in all people without distinction. Therefore, its solutions are stable and consistent, reflecting the stability and consistency of this innate nature. The ethics of caring for the elderly from an Islamic perspective emphasises the principles and values based on this inherent nature<sup>37</sup>.

## **C. Positivity and balance:**

One of the results of the integration and interconnection of all the capacities of a human being is the transformation of the human being into a positive force in the reality of life. Human beings, as God wants them to be, are active and positive forces in their circumstances - driving forces that propel progress and dominate material forces, using them for the betterment of the earth. Allah says: "And He has subjected to you what is in the heavens and what is in the earth, all of it. Verily in this are Signs for a people who reflect" (Surah Al-Jathiya: 13).

This power allows God to change the reality of humanity through it, as He states: "Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves" (Surah Ar-Ra'd: 11). Therefore, the elderly possess energies that should be harnessed, and they must be given the opportunity to use these energies to actively participate in the development of their communities. It is important not to generalise about all older people, as there are individual differences in these capacities.

## **D. Realism and Idealism:**

Islam deals with human beings as they are, recognising the limits of their capacities, their needs and necessities, and valuing both. This means a realism that embraces idealism, where idealism does not overlook the realities of life. This principle recognises the changes that occur in older people as they age, the demands of this stage of life, and the need to meet these needs and demands with understanding and realism<sup>38</sup>.

## **IV. Foundations of the Ethics of Caring for the Elderly from an Islamic Perspective**

### **1. Foundations and Principles of the Ethics of Caring for the Elderly**

Islam is a religion of humanity; it respects the individual and upholds his or her dignity. Allah honoured the children of Adam and made them stewards of the earth to cultivate it. Islam emphasises the organisation of family and social relations on the basis of justice, cooperation, equality, solidarity and unity. Allah says: "And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression" (Surah Al-Ma'idah: 2).

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<sup>37</sup>- Adel Muhammad Morsi Jawhar and Jamal Shahata Habib, General Practice of Social Work in Elderly Care, previous reference, pp. 199-200.

<sup>38</sup>- Same reference, pp. 200-201.

The teachings of Islam are rooted in solidarity and mutual support, as expressed in the saying: "Muslim to Muslim is like a building whose parts strengthen each other"<sup>39</sup>. Islam commands care for the young: "And care for the young until they grow up"<sup>40</sup>, and it commands respect for the elderly, especially parents, as stated: "And worship Allah and associate nothing with Him, and do good to parents, and to relatives, orphans, the needy, the near neighbour, the far neighbour, the companion by your side, and those whom your right hands possess. For Allah does not like those who are self-deceived and boastful" (Surah An-Nisa: 36).

The ethic of care in Islam encompasses all sectors of society. Therefore, care for the elderly has many dimensions - social, psychological, economic, legal and humanitarian. Islam encourages the maintenance of family ties and the strengthening of family bonds by showing compassion and kindness to relatives, as it states: "And fear Allah, through Whom ye seek each other, and the wombs [that bore you]. For Allah is always watching over you" (Surah An-Nisa: 1). In addition, Allah says: "Those who join what Allah has ordered to be joined" (Surah Ar-Ra'd: 21)<sup>41</sup>.

The stage of aging and old age is an important stage to which Islam has given special attention, respect, appreciation and honour. Islam calls for caring for the elderly, who have spent their youth and middle age contributing to society, only to find themselves weakened in their ability to earn and strive as they grow older. This applies equally to Muslims and non-Muslims as long as they live under the protection of Islam. This emphasis is evident in the Holy Qur'an, the Sunnah, and the practices and attitudes of the Companions and the righteous predecessors.

Islam calls for respecting the dignity and humanity of the elderly and for meeting their health, psychological, material and social needs, which increase with age and in response to the rapid material and social changes in society.

Islam has made it obligatory for Muslims to show kindness and care for their parents, especially when they reach old age and need help from others. Allah says: "And your Lord has decreed that you worship no one but Him, and that you treat your parents well. If one or both of them reach old age while they are with you, do not say to them, 'Ugh,' and do not reject them, but speak to them a noble word. And lower to them the wing of humility out of compassion, and say: 'My Lord, have mercy on them as they brought me up when I was small'" (Surah Al-Isra: 23-24).

Moreover, Abu Yusuf in his work "Al-Kharaj" narrates the text of the treaty in which Khalid ibn al-Walid made a peace agreement with the people of Hira in Iraq, who were Christians. This document contains a clear provision to insure these people against poverty, illness and old age, with the state treasury - "Bayt al-Mal" (the house of wealth of the Muslims) - responsible for funding this insurance, which is considered to be the first social security system of its kind in history<sup>42</sup>.

In the same context, Caliph Umar ibn Abdul Aziz wrote to Abu Wattah, the governor of Basra, advising him on certain duties he should uphold in his governance. He stated: "Look among your subjects from the People of the Covenant who have aged, whose strength has waned, and who have lost their means of earning. Provide for them from the Bayt al-Mal (Treasury of Muslims) what suffices them." It was reported that the Commander of the Faithful, Umar, passed by an elderly man from the People of the Covenant who was asking about the doors of people's homes. Umar said: "We have not dealt justly with you. If we took from you the jizyah (tax) in your youth, then we have neglected you in your old age." He then allocated funds from the Bayt al-Mal to support him<sup>43</sup>.

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<sup>39</sup>- Tartib Al-Amali Al-Khamisiya by Al-Shajari: (2302).

<sup>40</sup>- The Classified Book in Hadiths and Narrations\*: (21301).

<sup>41</sup>- Abdul Moneim Al-Miladi, Psychology of Aging and the Elderly: Psychosocially, previous reference, p. 177.

<sup>42</sup>- Lamia Hasni Abdullah, Social Work and Elderly Care, Alexandria: Youth University Foundation, 2019, p. 53.

<sup>43</sup>- Saleh Hassan Ahmed Al-Dahiri, Psychology of Aging, previous reference, pp. 53-54.

Care for individuals should not be seen as a favor or pity but rather as a fundamental right and duty to be provided by the community in which they live. Islam emphasizes a holistic approach when addressing social issues, proposing comprehensive and effective solutions to the entire problem rather than temporary and partial solutions that do not resolve or treat the issue properly. Islam believes in the individual's ability and potential to confront the pressures and problems they face, especially when they receive guidance and support<sup>44</sup>.

## 2. Means and mechanisms:

Islam is concerned with ensuring the social integration of individuals and clarifying the roles and responsibilities of both governments and individuals in this regard. Since the time of the Prophet and the eras of the Rightly Guided Caliphs, Islam has emphasised the provision of institutional social services. Throughout the flourishing periods of Islam, it has sought to provide at least a minimum of the basic necessities of life. Under this right, the state guarantees each individual a decent standard of living, especially in old age. This decent standard is what Islamic jurists call "minimum sufficiency"<sup>45</sup>.

Islam has paid considerable attention to the means of social care. Examples include the possibility of leaving a third of one's wealth in one's will for charity and community support, as well as the obligatory spending of wealthy individuals on their relatives, and the compensation required of Muslims in certain situations. Islam also emphasises the principle of mutual support and compassion among family members, stating that human relationships within families, especially among relatives, are the foundation of social care among people.

Endowment (waqf) is a source of pride for Islam, encompassing all forms of charitable giving such as mosques, schools and nursing homes. Muslim endowments have historically provided financial support for the elderly. The basis for this practice is found in the saying of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him): "When a person dies, his deeds come to an end, except for three things: continuous charity, knowledge that is used, or a righteous child who prays for him"<sup>46</sup>.

Muslims have adopted this practice out of compassion and a desire to be rewarded in Islam - ensuring that their deeds continue after their death by dedicating their wealth to the public good. This includes digging wells, building roads, providing shelter for orphans and the blind, welcoming strangers, treating the sick, educating the ignorant, burying the dead, supporting orphans and any other noble humanitarian cause. In addition, there are substantial endowments for mosques, social institutions, hospitals, orphanages, homes for the elderly and various types of schools<sup>47</sup>.

The Muslim community is one of compassion and solidarity, where individuals support each other. Allah says: "And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression" (Surah Al-Ma'idah: 2). The Prophet also said: "Whoever fulfils his brother's needs, Allah will fulfil his needs"<sup>48</sup>. Here the ethic of care is manifested in its highest meanings and expressions<sup>49</sup>.

An example of this is when Umar ibn Al-Khattab (may Allah be pleased with him) saw an elderly Jew wandering the streets, stretching out his hand to ask for help. Umar gave him a stipend from the Bayt al-Mal (treasury) to save him from begging and said to the Muslims and the people in general: "You spent his youth, but you have no compassion for his old age. The early Muslims treated the elderly in their communities - both Muslim and non-Muslim"<sup>50</sup>.

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<sup>44</sup>- Abdul Moneim Al-Miladi, *Psychology of Aging and the Elderly: Psychosocially*, previous reference, pp. 177-178.

<sup>45</sup>- Same reference, pp. 177-178.

<sup>46</sup>- Sunan Abu Dawood: (2880).

<sup>47</sup>- Lamia Hasni Abdullah, *Social Work and Elderly Care*, previous reference, pp. 53-54.

<sup>48</sup>- Makarim Al-Akhlaq and Their Virtues and Praiseworthy Methods: (108).

<sup>49</sup>- Adel Muhammad Morsi Jawhar and Jamal Shahata Habib, *General Practice of Social Work in Elderly Care*, previous reference, p. 201.

<sup>50</sup>- Abdul Moneim Al-Miladi, *Psychology of Aging and the Elderly: Psychosocially*, previous reference, p. 5.

When the spiritual needs of the elderly are met, their material needs for food, clothing, shelter and personal care remain. To meet these needs, Islam opens the doors of assistance to all who are in need, including the elderly who may have no offspring or relatives to care for them. The sources of this assistance can be divided into two categories:

### **First Category: Voluntary contributions**

This includes all forms of charity, whether ongoing (*sadaqah jariyah*) or one-off donations. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) encouraged honouring the elderly by saying: “No young man honours an old man because of his age, but Allah will appoint someone for him who will honour him in his old age”<sup>51</sup>. In addition, the Islamic world is familiar with endowments (*waqf*), whether agricultural land, buildings or businesses, the proceeds or benefits of which are earmarked for the needy, including the elderly.

### **Second Category: Compulsory contributions**

This includes Zakat, one of the five pillars of Islam. Zakat is given to those who are entitled to it, including the poor, the needy, orphans and others. The elderly, whether poor or needy, are among the most deserving recipients of zakat. They often lack the means to provide for themselves and may not be able to work and earn a living<sup>52</sup>.

In addition to material means such as zakat and endowments, there are also moral means that encourage the promotion of ethics in caring for the elderly, coupled with the promise of reward in the hereafter. This is achieved through both encouragement and admonition regarding care and kindness towards parents.

From the perspective of encouragement, Allah has made the reward for good deeds in Islam to be good in return, as evidenced by His saying: “Is there any reward for good but goodness?” (Surah Ar-Rahman: 60)<sup>53</sup>. The Qur’an contains clear injunctions urging children to take care of their parents, as it states: “And your Lord has commanded that you worship no one but Him, and that you treat your parents well” (Surah Al-Isra: 23). In addition, “And We have enjoined man to care for his parents” (Surah Al-Ankabut: 7), and “And We have enjoined man to care for his parents” (Surah Luqman: 14).

There is no doubt that caring for the elderly in this way preserves their dignity and gives them peace of mind in their later years. This approach far surpasses the services provided by Western societies, which have failed to ensure the happiness of the elderly in nursing homes or in isolation, leading some to contemplate suicide<sup>54</sup>.

On the other hand<sup>55</sup>, the aspect of admonition is reflected in the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him): “Shall I not inform you of the greatest of sins? Associating partners with Allah and disobeying parents”<sup>56</sup>. He also said: “All sins may be postponed by Allah as long as He pleases until the Day of Resurrection, except disobedience to parents; Allah hastens its punishment for its perpetrator in this life before death”<sup>57</sup>. He also said: “Whoever causes grief to his parents has disobeyed them”<sup>58</sup>.

## **3. Manifestations of the Ethics of Caring for the Elderly in Islamic Culture**

### **A. Encouragement to honour the elderly and speak with kindness**

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<sup>51</sup>- Al-Jami' Al-Kabir – Sunan Al-Tirmidhi: (2022).

<sup>52</sup>- Saleh Hassan Ahmed Al-Dahiri, *Psychology of Aging: Foundations and Theories*, previous reference, p. 71.

<sup>53</sup>- Aadel Muhammad Morsi Jawhar and Jamal Shahata Habib, *The General Practice of Social Work in the Field of Elderly Care*, previous reference, p. 202.

<sup>54</sup>- Lotfi Abdul Aziz Al-Sharbini, *The Secrets of Aging: Problems of the Elderly and How to Address Them*, previous reference, p. 167.

<sup>55</sup>- Saleh Hassan Ahmed Al-Dahari, *The Psychology of Aging: Foundations and Theories*, previous reference, p. 69.

<sup>56</sup>- *The Evils of Morality and Its Blameworthy Aspects*: (149).

<sup>57</sup>- *The Mustadrak on the Two Sahihs*: (7263).

<sup>58</sup>- *The Sea of Benefits, Famous for Its Meanings of News*: p. (159).

Islam emphasises the importance of respecting and appreciating the elderly, as reflected in the saying of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him): “He is not one of us who does not honour his elders and show mercy to his young.<sup>59</sup>” This noble hadith serves as a general call to all members of society to show compassion to the young and respect to the old. The meaning of this behaviour is so profound that failure to observe it excludes a person from the community of the Prophet Muhammad: “He is not one of us”.

This moral aspect of interacting with the elderly is crucial because the sense of appreciation expressed by society makes the elderly feel valued, loved and accepted by others. Moreover, expressing respect for the elderly does not require much effort; it can be as simple as a kind word, a good deed or a kind gesture that conveys appreciation for the elderly individual<sup>60</sup>.

The etiquette of honouring the elderly also includes the positive behaviour of teaching younger people - those who are younger than the elderly - how to address those who are older than them. This includes being considerate of their feelings, especially when speaking in their presence, and avoiding any remarks that might hurt their feelings, especially if they are parents, grandparents or other relatives. This is supported by the verse about honouring parents and doing good to them in Surah Al-Isra: “And if one or both of them reach old age [while living with you], do not say to them, ‘Ugh,’ and do not reject them, but speak to them a noble word” (Surah Al-Isra: 23)<sup>61</sup>.

### **B. Prioritizing and Socially Integrating the Elderly**

The etiquette of honoring the elderly includes elevating their status by prioritizing them over those younger in age, even above oneself, family, and children, in terms of service, food, drink, and clothing. This ensures that they do not feel a sense of inadequacy in the society in which they live. The highest and most noble forms of honoring the elderly are manifested in alleviating the burdens of aging and making them feel that they are not a heavy burden on the community they inhabit. On the contrary, they are seen as a valuable asset to society—an asset that must be preserved and respected. Their life experiences enable them to play an important role in the social fabric, and those who have contributed significantly in their youth are still capable of producing to the best of their ability. They should not feel compelled to withdraw into isolation<sup>62</sup>.

### **C. Islam’s Command to Be Good to the Elderly and Those in Similar Positions**

Islam considers honoring parents as one of the great deeds. Abu Abdul Rahman Abdullah ibn Mas’ud (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that he asked the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him): “Which deed is most beloved to Allah?”<sup>63</sup> He replied: “Prayer at its appointed time.” I asked, “Then what?” He said: “Honoring parents.” I asked, “Then what?” He said: “Jihad in the way of Allah.” The Prophet also stated: “A son cannot repay his father unless he finds him as a slave and buys him to set him free<sup>64</sup>.”

A son should stand by his father in times of hardship and distress to ease his burden. Islam encourages maintaining family ties as a means of strengthening relationships, protecting the family, and supporting the vulnerable. The Prophet said: “Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should honor his guest, and whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should maintain the ties of kinship, and whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should say good or remain silent<sup>65,66</sup>.”

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<sup>59</sup>- Musnad of Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal: (6937).

<sup>60</sup>- Saleh Hassan Ahmed Al-Dahari, *The Psychology of Aging: Foundations and Theories*, previous reference, pp. 70-71.

<sup>61</sup>- Abdul Moneim Al-Miladi, *The Psychology of Aging and the Elderly: "Psychologically-Socially"*, previous reference, p. 178.

<sup>62</sup>- The same reference, p. 179.

<sup>63</sup>- *The Branches of Faith*: (2544).

<sup>64</sup>- *Al-Jami' Al-Kabir - Sunan Al-Tirmidhi*: (1906).

<sup>65</sup>- *Sahih Al-Bukhari*: (6138).

<sup>66</sup>- Abdul Moneim Al-Miladi, *The Psychology of Aging and the Elderly: "Psychologically-Socially"*, previous reference, p. 180.

Furthermore, Allah commands kindness towards parents by saying: "And We have commanded man to care for his parents" (Surah Al-Ahqaf: 15) Islam emphasises treating parents well, especially as they grow older<sup>67</sup>.

Islam also calls us to treat our relatives well, even if they do us wrong, as illustrated in the hadith where a man said: "O Messenger of Allah, I have relatives with whom I maintain relations, but they cut me off; I do good to them and they harm me; I bear with them and they act ignorantly towards me<sup>68</sup>. The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied: "If you do as you say, it is as if you were throwing dust in their faces, and you will have Allah as your support against them as long as you remain in this state. He also said: "The ties of kinship are suspended from the Throne, saying: 'Whoever sustains me, Allah will sustain him, and whoever cuts me off, Allah will cut him off.'<sup>6970</sup>"

### **Pray for mercy and forgiveness for your parents: Recognising their virtues**

A Muslim prays for his parents' mercy, as stated in the Qur'an: And say: "My Lord, have mercy on them as they brought me up when I was a child" (Surah Al-Isra: 24). They seek forgiveness from Allah for their parents and acknowledge their merits in raising them, as reflected in the verse: "And We commanded man to care for his parents. His mother bore him with difficulty and gave birth to him with difficulty, and his term of pregnancy and weaning is thirty months. Be grateful to Me and to your parents; to Me is the [final] goal" (Surah Luqman: 14)<sup>71</sup>.

### **Facilitating provisions for the elderly**

Muslim jurists have agreed on certain mitigating circumstances for the elderly in cases of infirmity, weakness or hardship. For example, an elderly person is exempted from attending Friday prayers, is exempted from fasting, and is allowed to speed up his pilgrimage rituals<sup>72</sup>. In addition, those who are unable to participate in jihad are exempted from the obligation. These are some of the manifestations of caring for the elderly and ensuring that they are not burdened by certain religious obligations, in accordance with the principle that "hardship brings relief".

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this article has highlighted the philosophy of the ethics of care and aimed to provide a basic approach to this philosophy from an Islamic perspective, emphasising the value dimension of this ethics. This framework expands to address real-life issues and the complexities of practical life, directing the ethics of care towards human relationships, such as considering the feelings of those we care for and meeting the needs of those who are unable to care for themselves. These ethical practices elevate the relationship between self and others to a dignified level of mutual coexistence.

This philosophy is applied to a sensitive issue that is closely related to the entire human community: the ethics of caring for the elderly. This demographic group suffers in silence, since the image of ageing in the collective consciousness is often associated with deteriorating health, physical weakness, numerous illnesses, reduced mobility and activity, lack of vitality, inability to meet personal needs and withdrawal from the social environment.

The results of this question reveal the following key points:

1. Acknowledgement of ageing: We affirm that ageing is a stage of life characterised by a noticeable decline in the physical and mental functions of older people, as well as changes in their roles and social status. This makes it necessary for older people to receive care and attention from others, whether from

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<sup>67</sup>- The same reference, Al-Miladi, p. 179.

<sup>68</sup>- Musnad of Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal: (7992).

<sup>69</sup>- Sahih Muslim: (2555).

<sup>70</sup>- Abdul Moneim Al-Miladi, The Psychology of Aging and the Elderly: "Psychologically-Socially", previous reference, p. 180.

<sup>71</sup>- The same reference, p. 179.

<sup>72</sup>- Lamiya Hosni Abdullah, Social Work and Elderly Care, previous reference, p. 91.

family members or state institutions such as social care facilities. The lifestyle of the elderly differs between Western societies and Islamic contexts in terms of the quantity and quality of care provided to older adults. While Western societies provide substantial services for this population, their solutions often focus primarily on material aspects, overlooking the fact that the elderly are highly sensitive individuals who lack the family environment that provides the emotional warmth essential for psychological stability and social equilibrium. In contrast, in many Islamic communities - including those in developing countries - the elderly are often treated with honour and dignity. Their families provide for their needs and ensure their well-being, with both immediate and extended family members involved in their care.

2. Human, social and religious responsibility: We emphasise that caring for the elderly is a humanitarian, social and religious issue, as well as a personal one, driven by an individual's moral conscience. People empathise with the plight of the elderly and are affected by their weakness and vulnerability, which leads them to offer assistance and care to the best of their ability. In addition, legal frameworks have established numerous guidelines to ensure optimal care for this group. Islamic legislation places special emphasis on the elderly and mandates respect for them as symbols of contribution who have provided valuable services to their families and society. As a form of gratitude, respect for the elderly is a commitment to the authentic social values dictated by the religious and ethical principles that underpin society.

3. A positive view of older people: It is important to view the elderly in a positive light and to recognise the importance of this population group as an active and constructive part of society. They are mature individuals who have experienced life and have a wealth of knowledge accumulated from their years of experience. Therefore, caring for this group should be seen as a valuable human resource capable of contributing and engaging. We must elevate their status to make them active, effective, vital and productive members of society, ensuring that they are not crushed by the passage of time or the isolation that comes from withdrawing from the cycle of give and take. In this way, the hope for a meaningful life can continue and their well-being can be enhanced.

Islamic teachings honour and protect human dignity at all stages of life, making the elderly a true treasure for any nation. It is essential to take care of them, maintain their health and enhance their cultural, social and economic roles. If we give them the attention and care they deserve, they will be an asset to development. Conversely, if we neglect their needs and allow their health, psychological and social conditions to deteriorate, they risk becoming a burden on development itself. Moreover, caring for older people is fundamentally about the future of each individual, family and community.

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