



# **The “At Home” Program: Students Residing with Older Adults**

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# At Home

- “At Home” is a social program, run jointly by the Ministry for Social Equality (includes the senior citizens) and the Student Union in Israel, in which students reside in the homes of older adults.
- The student occupies a free room in the house of an independent older adult (aged 65 and over) who is living on his/her own in the community.

# The aim of the program

- To relieve the loneliness of older adults and encourage them to remain in the community.
- To provide a solution to student housing.
- To strengthen intergenerational bonds.

# The program

- Students are required to spend at least 3 nights a week in the house for about a year.
- Students interact socially with the older adult for at least 5 hours a week, for example, eating dinner together; computer studies; walking together.
- *“I returned with Rebecca to her favorite beach”.*



- In exchange, the students enjoy accommodations, paying 80\$ a month to cover the extra utility costs and get a scholarship of 2200\$.



# Theoretical background

- *Aging in Place*

Most older adults wish to continue to live in their own homes in the community they are familiar with.

In Israel, 96% of the population aged 65 and over was living in private households in 2022.

- *Loneliness among Older Adults*

Loneliness is a common problem among older adults and has become increasingly prevalent in recent decades.

- ***Intergenerational Relations and Ageism***

Social interactions in which older adults can contribute to the lives of younger people, are associated with decreased ageism (stereotypes regarding older adults).

- ***Intergenerational housing programs***

In some countries, there are several programs, in which young and old people live together such as, living in sheltered housing, in nursing homes, and on university campuses.



# The studies

- Two studies designed to evaluate the program from the perspective of the students and older people.
- The studies employed qualitative methodology based on Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) for understanding the significant meaning of the students' and older adults' experiences.



# Sample - Study 1. – 16 Students

- 14 female and 2 male.
- Age ranged from 19-35 (M=24.2).
- Most defined themselves as traditional or religious.
- 4 reported an economic status above average, 3 below average, and the rest average.
- 3 had been in the program in the past.

# Sample - Study 2. – 7 older women

- Age ranged from 72-88 (M=81.4).
- 6 widowed, and 1 single.
- 4 reported good health, and 3 noted health problems such as diabetes or a previous stroke.
- 4 defined themselves as secular and 3 as traditional.
- 6 were retired and 1 was still working.
- 1 woman was participating in the program for a second year.

# Methods

- The interviews followed a semi-structured in-depth interview guide that included several open-ended and general questions.
- For example,
- *“I’m interested in hearing about your experience of living in the home of an older adult.”*
- *“I’m interested in hearing about your experience of living with a student.”*

# Methods

- The interviews were conducted by social work students.
- **Study 1.** – The interviews were conducted via telephone with the students, and lasted about half an hour.
- **Study 2.** - The interviews were held in the women's homes, and lasted from half an hour to an hour.
- All interviews were recorded and transcribed.

# Findings –

## Study 1. The perspective of the students

**Two reasons for deciding to join the program:  
Practical and ideological.**

*I joined because of the scholarship and the apartment. It's very convenient.*

*I also wanted to be part of a project with social value.*

# Relationship between the Student and the Older Adult

*It's hard for me to connect with her. Her personality is very different from mine. We come from different ethnic backgrounds.*

*At the beginning of the year, there was a lack of communication between us ...But gradually I got to know her, and we learned to trust each other and adapt to the situation...*

*We have a good and warm relationship. We have a lot to talk about. It's interesting and I feel comfortable with her. One example is that once I got home close to midnight and she had stayed up to make sure I was okay.*

# Shared Activities

- *Cooking and eating dinner, watching the news and discussing current affairs, listening to the older adult's stories, and taking an interest in each other's daily life.*
- *Teaching the older adult to use a computer, helping to clean the house, and playing cards.*
- *Taking walks, going shopping, and going to a movie or a restaurant.*





# Contribution of the Program

*It changed the way I look at them [older adults]. It exposed me to their difficulties and limitations. For example, getting in and out of a car, working in the kitchen... And because of what I learned, I visit my grandmother more often.*

Most of the students referred to the financial benefit. Not only did they receive a scholarship that helped pay their studies, but their participation also obviated the need to pay rent.

# Contribution of the Program-

## With respect to the loneliness of the older adults

*In my opinion, she was a lot less lonely. The older woman told me recently that she was glad there was someone with her, someone in the house, because now she has a reason to get up in the morning and cook.*

But -

- *We're not home most of the day... The program is only temporary. Nobody will be with the older person when the student leaves.*

# Satisfaction and Recommendations

- Most of the students expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the program, and about half were interested in continuing the following year.
- They would recommend At Home to other students.

- *There should be more training days before the program begins and you start living together.*
- *We should be given more information about things we should know about...All sorts of situations might arise with older adults, so we'll be more prepared.*

# Findings – Study 2. The perspective of the older adults

## Background to Participation

Most of the women learned about the program from their daughters. Two joined after hearing about it on the radio.

*I was alone, and my grandchildren would come, every day the kids would come, each time someone else, and I thought, they have their own room with a computer, It bothered me that they had to come and stay here.*

# Shared Activities

- *We watch television, have tea, eat together, and go for a pizza downstairs. She tells me personal stories...Sometimes we sit and talk. Sometimes we watch a movie.*
- *If she's going shopping she'll ask me if I need anything and get it for me.*
- *She really makes an effort, but she doesn't have time. She wants to be with me...She comes to talk to me and then from eleven at night until the morning she sits and learns.*



# The household chores

- *She isn't required to do anything. She keeps her room clean, and does the dishes sometimes...we straighten up together.*
- *She didn't change the sheets, nothing, just went home. She left the room like that and walked out.*

# Relationship between the Older Adult and the Student

*We get along very well, understand each other... Watch television together... If I need something she helps me and I worry about her as if she was my granddaughter... I just feel good with her. I know that if I ask for something she'll come right away. When I didn't feel well she helped me, and gave me tea and medicine. She's really good.*





*Everything was very nice until two months ago. I was in physical therapy, and when I left, I fell...They called an ambulance. I was very upset, and in a lot of pain. I called her [the student] and she said, "I'll be there right away." But in the end, she didn't come... Right after that, I asked her to leave.*

# Satisfaction and Contribution of the Program

Most of the women expressed a high degree of satisfaction and would like to continue in the program.

*So, I'm not alone... It's great to be with someone. It's just that now I can sleep without worrying and that's very important to me. I recommend it from the bottom of my heart for anyone who's alone.*

*A connection between youngsters and older people is good, it's nice. I tell her about my life and she tells me about hers... She learns from me and I learn from her.*



# Recommendations

A number of women recommended that the student be required to spend more time in their homes.

*They're only required to sleep here for three nights. But I think that is wrong. In general, the whole program should change. If they come to stay with an older woman, for three nights she feels comfortable and that's fine. But what about when they're not here? What happens then!?*

# Conclusions

- The program strengthened intergenerational bonds.
- The students became more familiar with the world of older adults.
- The older adults were given the opportunity to share their past and values with the young people.
- Staying with young students caused positive, vital emotions, and increased feelings of joy among the older adults.
- The program helped to relieve loneliness among older adults.
- Older adults wished to remain in their own homes and, at least in some cases, participation in At Home helped make this possible.



# Practical Implications

- The results of the two studies indicate that both the students and the older people felt the program was successful.

**In addition, they offered a number of practical suggestions for improvement.**

- **The students** related primarily to the need for more guidance and emotional support at various stages in the process
- **The older adults** recommended increasing the number of nights the students are required to sleep in their homes.



<https://youtu.be/I09IK9hF7f8>





**Thank you for your attention!!!**