

# **The Perception and Attitude of Residential Care Elders at the House of Elders in Tirana towards Residential Services and the Approach of Integrated Social Services**

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## **Abstract**

This study is a quantitative study which is aimed at showing the perception and attitude of residential elders at the House of Elders in Tirana. For three different days, I obtained questionnaires from all elders of these institutions. At the start of this study, I analysed the available literature as a method of data collection, from which I got the topic of this analysis. From the collection of the basic data of this study, I created and used a 10 question questionnaire. The method of census was chosen as the method of deciding the measurements, because of my intention of studying all the elders of the House of Elders in Tirana. The excel program was used for working through the statistics. After analysing the quantitative data, there were three conclusions. Firstly, males and females prefer more integrated social services than residential services. Secondly, even though the elders feel protected and safe at the House of Elders in Tirana, they mostly expressed that they missed the family environment. They emphasized that if the System of Social Defence offered them home social services, a high number of elders will not remain at the House of Elders. However, this study can be used by policy makers of the elders services and institutions from which we obtained the data for this study to improve their services as well as offer services in the home-family way.

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**Keywords:** Elders, residential service, integrated services

## **Introduction**

In our country, and other developed countries, there is an increase in the indicators of human lifespan. These indicators show not only an increase in the quality of life, but also a reduction in mortality. In the last few years,

the notion of “Age population and the increase in the elders demographic prespective” is becoming more undersood.

In our society, the care of elders has mostly been the responsibility of the family. The family is an institution that has been seen as the best alternative of caring for elders. In special occasions or in the absence of family, the second best alternative is the asylum or, as it is being called these days, the House of Elders. The family’s role as the main institution of caring for elders is reducing, as a result of depreciation of family traditions and embracing the individualism of the modern society. In this context, the number of elders that seek care outside the family is increasing, meanwhile residential capacities remain the same.

### **Study’s Purpose**

This study focused on the elders of the House of Elders in Tirana, and their attitude towards residential services, part of which is their perception of the integrated services offered to families or communities.

### **Questions Arising in this Study**

What situation propels elders to decide to live in a residential centre? Is community service or home service a better alternative for them?

### **Study’s Hypotheses**

The considerations of residential services are generally negative, because most elders living in the House of Elders prefer to live in their homes and to benefit from alternative services like family visits, home service assistance, etc.

### **Literature Analysis**

Elders’ care is a never ending problem. The number of elders being refered to the House of Elders is increasing. The system of social defence and the structure of social defence have added to the types of services these last few years.

Hence, it is prudent that services that elders do not need should be identified and avoided.

Alternatives proposed in this study are<sup>25</sup>:

1. Home services for elders is a good alternative to avoid residential care. Home services offer health care and home meals. These services might be covered by the nation’s budget, partly from the personal pension of the elders, or from civil society.

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<sup>25</sup> [www.lamoro.it/pdf/erderlyneverlonelyguida.pdf](http://www.lamoro.it/pdf/erderlyneverlonelyguida.pdf)

2. Home services for elders that live alone include daily activities like cleaning the place and clothes or other personal objects, food, assisting in monthly payments of water bills and electricity bills, friend visits, etc. It does not connote professional care. It is managed and might be supported by the civil society.
3. Let us expand the network of community services by empowering the family. In this way, the elders should not be an obstacle for the social and professional life of their family members. Daily care offers health services and social services like social and religious activities, and creative and supporting services for elders with disorders.
4. An assisted life<sup>1</sup> is midway between living individually and caring for the elders that need daily assistance but not continuous health care. This kind of service can be in the form of rented apartments for 3-4 elders. Part of this service are common meals, transport services, social and creative activities. It might be supported partly by the civil society or by the local government.

Other developed countries, like Italy, are giving special importance to the family as a primary institution for caring for their elders these last few years. This will be replaced by the public sector if the families do not realize their role. The Italian state seems more concerned about the beneficiaries of the offers of the elders' care rather than building a stable system of formal care insurance.<sup>2</sup> In Italy, community services for elders, like home visits and assisted home services, are evaluated as the most desirable services for elders. Meanwhile, residential service was seen as the last alternative for the care of elders with specific needs.<sup>3</sup>

In our country, the Defence Social System for elders mostly offers residential services. There are only two national centres which offer community services<sup>2</sup>, meanwhile home services for elders are offered in special occasions by the Red Cross, Albania, or volunteer organizations in middle school.

## **Methodology**

Literature analysis was the first instrument used in the collection of data. From the analysis of materials was created the initial idea of the study field and the first hypothesis. Also, I even determined which characteristics will be studied.

## **The Measure of the Sample**

The method of census was used. The participators in the study were all the beneficiaries of the House of Elders in Tirana.

### **The Characteristics of the Sample**

Total: 55 persons.

Age: above 60 years old.

Profession: varied.

Residential Beneficiaries at House of Elders, Tirana.

The age range was determined to be above 60 years, according to VKM No. 425 for the determining criteria in filling the files to be part of residential centers of national institutions.

### **The Procedure of Collecting Data**

It took 5-7 minutes to complete the questionnaires, and they were helped the whole time. All the participants were inclined to contribute during the whole process that lasted 4 days.

### **The Questionnaire in its Index**

The basic instrument used in collecting data in this study was a structured questionnaire of 10 questions. The questionnaire was divided into four special sections. The first part presented the general purpose of the study. All the participants were assured of the private nature of their responses and were instructed on how to fill the questionnaire.

### **Statistics Analysis of Data**

Excel program was used to analyse the collected data. After this, the data was shown using special boards for each question and in special graphics. This presented the data in total and specified it according to the gender of the participants.

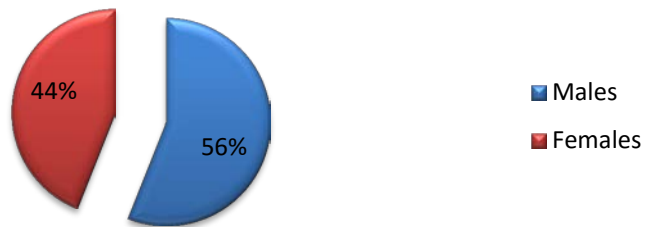
### **Data Analysis**

The presentation of the data analysis will be developed in four sections, where each one of them is made of some undercases.

#### ***Secton a: Demographic Data***

In this study, a total of 55 elders from the House of Elders Tirana were involved

#### **4.a.1 % of males and females that participated in the study**



According to the age groups, we recognized:

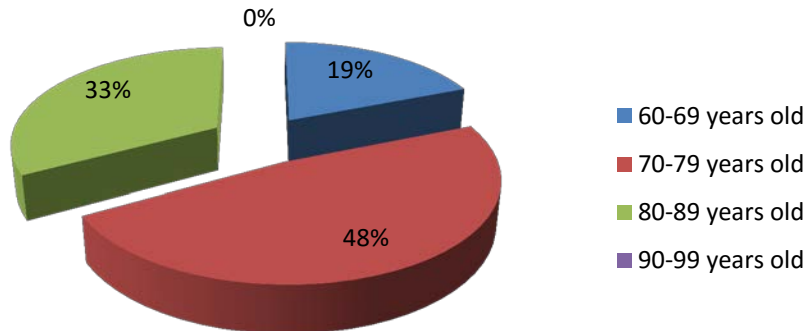
10 elders are 60-69 years old

26 elders are 70-79 years old

18 elders are 80-89 years old

0 elders are 90-99 years old

#### **4.a.2 % of elders according to age groups**



Following this analysis, we see the introduction of a description to appointed age groups of elders relating to their opinion about residential services and integrated alternative services.

75% of elders at House of Elders in Tirana come from urban areas, and only 25% come from rural areas. During the analysis, we noted a correlation between the main factors affecting the placement of elders in institutions and their residence.

### Majority of the Elders in SH.M Tirana come from Urban Areas

Previous residence	% according to their previous residence
<b>Urban areas</b>	75%
<b>Rural areas</b>	25%

Section b: Attitude and Perception of elders about Residential Services

*Result: Majority of elders at the House of Elders in Tirana do not think that the institution where they live offers a family environment.*

89% of elders do not think that the institution offers a family environment. From their responses to the questionnaires, they expressed that their opinion is not influenced by the quality of services offered by the institution, but by the absence of their family. From this, 40% were female and 49% were male. Only 11% of the elders expressed that the institution offers a family environment.

#### 4.b.1 Thinking House of Elders Offers a Family Environment

	Yes	No
Male	7%	49%
Female	4%	40%
Total	11%	89%

*Result: Almost all the elders felt safe and protected at the House of Elders.*

Almost (99%) all the elders felt safe and secured in the institution. 50% were males and 49 % were females. Only 1% expressed insecurity. However, from conversations with the social workers of the centre and other elders, these elders suffered from mental illness.

#### 4.b.2 Thinking House of Elders Tirana is Secured and Protected

	Yes	No
Male	50%	0%
Female	49%	1%
Total	99%	1%

*Result: Living in the House of Elders has improved the life situation of elders, nonetheless they feel the absence of their relatives and their family.* 40% of elders expressed that the situation of their life improved immediately they were placed in the center. They were continuously cared for, regarding food, hygiene, and health care. Meanwhile, 30% of the elders expressed that they felt the absence of their relatives and family. 30% of the other elders expressed that they felt the absence of their home and personal objects.

4.b.3. Their lives have been improved by the House of Elders, but...

	% of elders
My situation has improved. All the time, someone is taking care of my food, health care, and cleans my room.	<b>40%</b>
I miss my relatives, friends, and family.	<b>30%</b>
I miss my home where I lived especially my furniture and my personal objects.	<b>30%</b>
Total	<b>100%</b>

40% of the elders expressed that their lives were improved by the House of Elders. Generally, 85% of them come from urban areas, while 15% come from rural areas.

30% of the elders still felt the absence of their family and relatives. 90% of them come from urban areas, while a part of them come from rural areas. They are placed in a House of Elders after they lost their husband or their wife and do not have children.

From the 30% of the elders who feel the absence of the house where they lived or where they have personal objects, 50% come from urban areas and the other 50% from rural areas.

***Section c: Attitude and Perception of Elders about Alternative Services offered at their Home.***

*Result: Majority of the elders think they would prefer integrated social services because it makes it possible for them to stay at home near their relatives and family.*

The majority (94%) of elders expressed that they would prefer integrated social services because it makes it possible to stay at their home, close to the family. From this, 54% are female and 40% are male. Only 6% expressed that they preferred residential services because they did not have a home or a private property. From this, 5% are male and 1% female.

4.c.1 The Elders prefer Integrated Home Services (near/in homes).

	Residential services	Integrated services
Male	<b>5%</b>	<b>40%</b>
Female	<b>1%</b>	<b>54%</b>
Total	<b>6%</b>	<b>94%</b>

Result: Home service is most preferred.

The majority of the elders prefer integrated social services. 80% of them prefer the services from an assistant, from which 35% are female and 45% male. 10% of the elders prefer community services near their houses, from which 7% males and 3% females. Only 4% of the elders prefer the experience of assisted life, from which 3% are male and 1% female. Meanwhile, 6% of them chose the residential service.

## 4.c.2 The Elders prefer Home Services

	Residential service	Daily services nearby home	Assistant service	Home life assistance
Male	5%	7%	45%	3%
Female	1%	3%	35%	1%
Total	6%	10%	80%	4%

*Result: The elders expressed that if the Defence Social Service will offer integrated social services, the majority of elders will live at their houses.*

The elders emphasized that if home services were offered, the majority (94%) of them would choose to live close to their relatives or family. Only a few elders expressed that they would still choose to live in residential centres because they did not have a house or close relatives.

4.c.3 The Reformation of Defence Social System will help a lot of Elders to live in their Homes.

	Will choose home	Will not choose home
Male	<b>39%</b>	<b>5%</b>
Female	<b>55%</b>	<b>1%</b>
Total	<b>94%</b>	<b>6%</b>

***Secton d: The Determining Factors Influencing the Selection of Elders to live in A Residential Service.***

*Result: The absence of financial opportunities to pay the home assistant, the husband/wife lost, and incapability for selfcare are the most important factors that influence the selection of elders living at the House of Elders.*

In the questionnaire, the elders were allowed to choose two or three alternatives. The immigration of children abroad, husband/wife lost, and the absence of financial opportunities to pay a home assistant were chosen by 35% of the elders. Conflicts with family members and the absence of a personal home were the factors chosen by 40% of the elders. Meanwhile, 20% of the elders expressed that they took the decision of living at the House of Elders after they became incapable of selfcare. Only 5% of the elders chose the alternative. Others expressed that with the loss of a husband/wife, they did not have children and they preferred living with others. In the following table, we present this data according to gender and residence area.



## 4.d.1 The Main Factors in Determining the Decision of Elders to live at SH.M Tirana

	Imigration of children, loss of husband/wife, absence of financials to pay a home assistant	Conflict with family members, absence of a personal house	Incapability for selfcare	
Male	24%	30%	14%	3%
Female	11%	10%	6%	2%
Urban areas	28%	35%	15%	3%
Rural areas	7%	5%	5%	2%
Total	35%	40%	20%	5%

These questions were determined to have been analysed according to the areas where the elders had lived before.

### Conclusion

*The males and females mostly prefer integrated social services rather than residential services. Even though the elders feel protected and safe at the House of Elders, most of them expressed that they missed the family environment.*

*They emphasized that if the Defence Social System will offer home social services, a high number of elders will not live at the House of Elders.*

*The majority of elders in residential services come from urban areas. The motives or the main factors influencing their selection are many, for example conflicts with family members, the loss of husband/wife, their children's imigration, the incapability for selfcare, or the absence of finance for paying a home assistant.*

*Consequently, a relatively low number of elders in the House of Elders come from rural areas. The main factors include the loss of husband/wife, no children, or relatives living near their residence.*

### Further Proposals

This study gives its contribution by identifying the most desirable, acceptable, and integrated social services for elders.

The results of this study are useful, especially for further and deeper studies on social services for elders.

It stimulates the initiative of the private sector for offering integrated services for elders and emphasizes the immediate importance of reviewing the actual system of national social services for elders.

## References:

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<http://www.cespi.it/EP/DOC4-10%20Izzo.pdf>

## Additional Materials

### Appendix 1

#### *Questionnaire*

##### *Questionnaire's Purpose*

I am Brunilda Dervishaj, student at the Faculty of Social Science in Tirana. I am currently running my PhD studies on integrated systems for the service offered to elders. This questionnaire will be used for academic/reaserch purpose. The data provided will be treated as confidential and will not be used in any kind of file that violates your privacy. I will give the questionnaire to each one of you and I will help you in filling them.

##### *Section a: Demographic data*

1. Gender :
  - a. Male
  - b. Female
  
2. How old are you? \_\_\_\_\_
  - a. Interval 60 - 69 years old
  - b. Interval 70 - 79 years old
  - c. Interval 80 – 89 years old
  - d. Interval 90 – 99 years old
  
3. Before being part of the House of Elders in Tirana, where did you live?
  - a. In rural areas (township/village, periphery)
  - b. In urban areas (in cities)

##### *Section b: Attitude and perception of elders about residential services*

4. Do you think that residential services offer a family environment?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No

5. Do you feel safe and protected in this centre?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
6. How has living in the House of Elders affected you?
  - a. My situation improved
  - b. All the time, someone is taking care of my food, my health, and my room
  - c. I miss the home where I lived, especially my personal objects and the furniture
  - d. I miss my family, relatives, and friends

***Section c: Attitude and perception of the elders towards alternative services offered in their homes***

7. Would you prefer the residential services or the integrated services (near/in home)
  - a. Residential services
  - b. Integrated services (near/in home)
8. If you had the opportunity of choosing, which service would you choose that best fits your needs? (*a detailed verbal explanation of each alternative was given during the filling of the questionnaire*).
  - a. Residential service
  - b. Community services or daily services nearby in every neighbourhood
  - c. Home assistance service
  - d. Assisted life
9. Do you think that if Defence Social System offers integrated services, you might stay with your family?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No

***Section d: The determining factors in the selection of the elders for living in a residential institution.***

10. In choosing to live at the House of Elders, which one of the following was the main determining factor?
  - a. The loss of a husband/wife
  - b. The immigration of children abroad
  - c. Conflict with family members
  - d. The absence of a private/personal house
  - e. The incapability for selfcare
  - f. Inability to pay a home assistant.
  - g. Others: