CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION
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Generations connect every time an older person teaches a child to make a family recipe, a teenager shows an older person how to use a computer, or different generations play a sport together. The benefits of interaction between generations are far reaching: friendships are formed, assistance is provided, lessons are learned and the young and old break through the generation gap. Intergenerational relations refer to any informal interaction between youth and senior adults.

In 1963, the first Intergenerational Program, the “Foster Grandparent Program”, was designed as a component of the “war on poverty.” The program’s primary purpose was to provide opportunities for low income persons aged 60 and over to provide supportive one-to-one services in health, education, welfare, or related settings to help alleviate the physical, mental, or emotional problems of children with special or exceptional needs. Since that time, Intergenerational Programs have evolved to address a broad array of social concerns. Topics covered through Intergenerational Programming include changes in family structure, drug use, violence, and bridging stereotypes and cultural differences. “Generations United” (GU) is the only national organization focused solely on promoting Intergenerational strategies and currently maintains a database of over 350 Intergenerational Programs from around the country (Generations United; 2002).

INDIAN SCENARIO :

In traditional Indian society, people lived within a multicultural extended family comprising one or more adult, children, grandchildren and other kin. The aged in these societies enjoyed unparalleled sense of honour, legitimate authority within the family or community, had
decision-making responsibilities in the economic and political activities of the family and were treated as repositories of experience and wisdom. The elderly acted as a link between traditions and customs and were responsible for enforcing them in day-to-day life. There was division of labour within the family and the aged had an important role to play, which made their life meaningful. The elders in the Intergenerational lineage played the role of a historian providing information about the cultural and familial past; that of a role model, which the youngsters could follow; of a mentor who could guide the young with their valuable experiences and of a nurturant who cared for the kin in crisis. The youngsters also reciprocated by respect and reverence towards parents, teachers and the aged.

The family thus was prominent in performing numerous functions for the elders. It assisted with medical and health care at the primary level. On the emotional and psychological level, it ensured that the elders felt loved and valued besides providing for their social and interactional needs. The Intergenerational cement or the lineage line enforced members of different generations to perform functions favourably in the maintenance of this solidarity and integral harmony.

Large-scale industrialization and modernization however brought about various economic, social and cultural changes, weakening the family and community bonds. These changes not only affected the family's traditional role of providing care and financial support to its members, but also hampered the Intergenerational ties.

Modernization led to large-scale mobilization of family members, thus breaking down the multigenerational family to a nuclear family. The traditional concept of joint family as a residential unit underwent change because of the heterogeneity of occupations of the family members. Large-scale dissatisfaction with rural life and the glamour
and temptations of city life acted as both 'push and pull' factors for the migration of the younger generation. The elderly were thus left behind without whatever traditional support they had from their children. Changes in the family structure and values led to the breaking of the norms of mutual obligation and resulted in the dilution of both the role and position of the elderly within the family.

WHAT ARE INTERGENERATIONAL PROGRAMS?

Many people in their own ways have defined intergenerational Programs. However, the understanding of the term is, more or less, the same. Intergenerational Programs may be defined as activities or programs, which aim at increasing cooperation and understanding through interaction between any two generations. These programs involve sharing of skills, knowledge and experiences between the young and the old.

Hill (1987) said that Intergenerational activities between youth and elderly in the community provide meaningful experiences both for the elderly participants as well as for the youth participants. Generally speaking, intergenerational activities are those systematically planned activities with the overall aim of developing mutually beneficial relationships between the old and the young. Examples of intergenerational activities may include shopping trips, tutoring, talent programs, educational activities such as oral history presentations, telephone reassurance and friendly visiting activities, home care assistance and tutoring. All involve the participation of both the young and the elderly.

Generations United (2002) defined Intergenerational Programs as activities that increase cooperation, interaction or exchange between any two generations. These programs purposefully bring together people of different age groups in ongoing, mutually beneficial, planned
activities, designed to achieve specified program goals. Intergenerational Programs provide children, youth, and older adults with opportunities to volunteer while contributing meaningfully to society. At the same time, Intergenerational Programs are designed to provide a supportive environment conducive to supporting emotional, intellectual, and social growth and physical activity. Intergenerational Programs may take many forms but all demonstrate benefits across the ages.

According to Corda and Kulkarni (2005), Intergenerational programs are those, which focus on establishing associations between people who are 21 and below, and people who are 60 and above, with the intention of benefiting one or both age groups. The (re-)connection theme includes programs of intervention developed in a wide variety of settings (including schools, community organizations, hospitals, and places of worship). The talent and potential of the elderly could enrich the lives of everyone. They can show community concern through volunteerism, and support programs and activities that ensure a better future for children.

NEED OF INTERGENERATIONAL PROGRAMS:

Every non-static society and specially one, which is developing at a fast rate, will find that the tensions and differences between generations are inevitable. The change generates its own tensions and conflicts. The older generation clings to its own norms and system of values, which are challenged. The younger generation becomes the carrier of the change due to their education and exposure to affairs of the world and the improved means of communication, which has made the world a small place (Prasad, 1991). To overcome this generation gap, Intergenerational Programs are needed.
Intergenerational Programs are needed to:

- Strengthen and deepen learning and understanding for both children and elders.
- Promote intergenerational respect, caring, and cooperation.
- Honour each generation's values and perspectives.

Intergenerational approaches are also needed for the following reasons:

- Older people as a Resource: Senior service may be utilized in many non-traditional organizations and raises public awareness of the value of the older adult volunteers.
- Youth as a Resource: Younger volunteers are able to provide companionship to older people and participate in service projects to assist older adults and other community members.
- Change within Families: Family members are living further apart from each other and are losing their natural intergenerational composition.
- Age Segregation and Isolation among Generations: Society has become more age-segregated, providing very little opportunity for Intergenerational Interaction.
- Gaps in Services Provided to Children and Youth: There is a strong need for tutors, role models, and mentors.
Gaps in Services Provided to Older People: Increasing numbers of older people with varying supportive service needs will require more innovative adult care programs. Successful programs are based on reciprocity, are sustained and intentional, and involve education and preparation for all ages.

(Generations United, 2002)

TYPES OF INTERGENERATIONAL PROGRAMMING:

★ Young serving the Old: Friendly visits in homes or institutions, chore/maintenance service, and teaching computer skills or English as a second language.

★ Old serving the Young: Mentoring programs and child care centers with older adult staff and volunteers.

★ Young and Old serving together: Performing/visual arts programs, family support programs, environmental preservation, and community service.

(Generations United, 2002)

BENEFITS OF INTERGENERATIONAL PROGRAMS:

FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH:

▷ Enhances Social Skills: Interaction with older adults enhances communications skills, promotes self-esteem, develops problem-solving abilities, and fosters friendships across generations. Positive attitudes are developed regarding sense of purpose and community service.
Improves Academic Performance: Intergenerational programs increase school attendance and performance. Students tutored by older adults made significantly greater gains in achievement test scores than other students.

Decreases Drug Use: Youth involved in intergenerational mentoring programs are 46% less likely to report the initiation of drug use, and among minority youth, this statistic increased to 70%.

Increases Stability: Children and youth gain positive role models with whom they can interact on a regular basis. Older adult volunteers help to provide children and youth with consistency through mentoring and in child care facilities.

FOR OLDER ADULTS:

Enhances Socialization: Older adults remain productive, useful, and contributing members of society. They increase interaction with children and youth and engage more with one another to prevent isolation in later years.

Stimulates Learning: Older adults learn new innovations and technologies from their younger counterparts.

Increases Emotional Support: Intergenerational programs afford older adults an opportunity to participate in a meaningful activity. This decreases loneliness, boredom, and depression while increasing self-esteem. Older volunteers report more enriched lives, a rejuvenated sense of purpose, and increased coping skills for their personal struggles.
• **Improves Health**: Helping contributes to the maintenance of good health, and can diminish the effect of psychological and physical diseases and disorders.

**FOR THE COMMUNITY:**

• **Strengthens Community**: Intergenerational programs bring together diverse groups and networks and help to dispel inaccurate stereotypes. Sharing talents and resources help to create a unified group identity. Children, youth, and older adults are less alienated while the community recognizes that they are contributing members of the society.

• **Maximizes Human Resources**: Intergenerational community service programs tend to multiply human resources by engaging older adults and youth as volunteers.

• **Maximizes Financial Resources**: When groups representing young and old approach local funders, those funders are more likely to respond positively because they can see broad-based community support. Intergenerational programs can save money and stretch scarce resources by sharing sites and/or resources.

• **Expands Services**: Intergenerational community service programs can expand the level of services to meet more needs and address more issues.

• **Encourages Cultural Exchange**: Intergenerational programs promote the transmission of cultural traditions and values from older to younger generations, helping to build a sense of personal and societal identity while encouraging tolerance.
Inspires Collaboration: Intergenerational programs can unite community members to take action on public policy issues that address human needs across the generations. (Generations United, 2002).

Intergenerational programming also benefits the community-at-large by:

- Erasing stereotypes that keep these age groups separate;
- Strengthening their informal support systems;
- Allowing for identification of common concerns;
- Utilizing and recognizing the talents of citizens of all ages; and
- Allowing active involvement between the ages in understanding and problem solving the issues of current events (Interages, 2004).

Corda and Kulkarni (2005) stated that Intergenerational programs could bring both young and old together in a time when our society is increasingly fragmented. When elders are involved in intergenerational volunteer programs, they can share their years of experience with a future generation of adults. When youth participate, they can experience a meaningful relationship with an older role model. Many of society’s stereotypes are shattered for both generations. Intergenerational Programs can ultimately bring together the generations and strengthen communities, improving the quality of life for people of all ages.
According to Newman (1982), “a consistent interaction between the young and the old in intergenerational school programs can and does impact on older persons' feelings of life satisfaction and on children's growth, learning, and attitudes towards the elderly”.

Older generation is the backbone of our society and the youth is the future hope. Therefore, it is very important to understand the values and needs of both the sections. The Elderly have immense experience to guide and enlighten the Youth. On the other hand, the forthcoming generations have immense caliber and potential to make the dreams of the older generation come true.

Thus, for the smooth survival of the society, it is a prime concern that we maintain and enhance the respect and dignity of each section of mankind. And that is possible only by bridging the gap between them and bringing the two generations together.
RATIONALE OF THE STUDY:

The emphasis on the present topic is due to the recent increasing concern of Intergenerational Conflicts. Both the elderly and the Youth are integral and productive members of the society. Both generations have a lot of knowledge, skills and experiences to share with each other.

It is true that Intergenerational ties are not as strong today as they used to be in the traditional times. But the situation is still not completely out of hand. The younger generation may have drifted away from the older generation, but bringing them back together is not an impossible task.

Thus the study "Development of a Module for the Enhancement of Interaction Between Youth and Elderly" becomes a topic of significance and focus for every member of the society.

In the following study, an attempt will be made to understand the perceptions of college students towards the elderly. It is also an attempt to bring about a positive change in their perceptions by giving them opportunities to work with the older generation.