CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Worldwide statistics on chronic diseases are daunting. 70% of the death today could be attributed to them. Mortality and morbidity due to these chronic diseases, commonly known as life style diseases is on rise. What is noteworthy is that behavior pathogens like temperament, stress, coping and emotions play a major role in their etiology. These are modifiable risk factors.

As chronic diseases are lifelong disorders, management and compliance play a major role and that is why psychologists have to be more and more involved in the treatment of chronic diseases rather than just the conventional medicine treatment.

Children and adolescents with chronic mental health problems are even more vulnerable physically than adults. Adolescence is a period in which a lot of changes are taking place. Adolescents are already undergoing many developmental changes requiring adjustment. There are physical emotional and sexual changes to adapt to. At such a phase, learning to cope with stress of chronic disease is an added hassle. Illness may be accompanied by repeated academic failures, poor school performance, poor attendance, restrictive social interaction, symptoms of pain, fatigue, irritability, despair, physical disfiguring - all of which require active interventions both for the ill adolescent and family members looking after the chronically ill adolescent.

It is a common knowledge that some adolescents thrive despite of illness. Most of the ill effects of chronic illness are absent. One witnesses resilience and positive attitude in many such ill adolescents. If one understands the dynamics of this resilience, then this information may be useful in tackling the emotional and behavioral problems of chronically ill adolescents. The present study did just that: it focused on investigating the role of, and identify those psychosocial factors which mitigate the negative effects of chronic disorders in children.
Conclusions, Implications and Suggestions for Future Research

For this purpose, 3 distinct groups were chosen: the gastrointestinal group, the respiratory group and the skin disorder group. One knows that chronic disorder is one which lasts for long term and its consequences are debilitating. After onset, the course of illness is such that some may show improvement, some remain stable and some become progressively worse. The present study divided the selected sample into high and low mental health groups using GHQ. Results clearly revealed that high mental health group among the chronically ill scored higher on parental bonding and self-esteem and lower on depression, stress experienced, psychoticism, neuroticism and ineffective coping styles.

As regards perception of family environment dimensions viz. personal growth, System maintenance and relationship, it was found that families of adolescents showing high mental health emphasized personal growth in terms of achievement, independence and cultural orientation. They allowed free communication and expression of feelings and were well organized.

Implications of the study are that family plays a very crucial role in promoting resilience, mental health and positive attitude. The via media/pathways are social support, parental bonding and appropriate family environment: by encouraging personal growth, emphasizing achievement and independence, active recreation, free expression, providing a cohesive family environment and maintaining discipline and structure at home; showing love, care and affection, giving unconditional support- the parents and family members can pave the way for resilience among the chronically ill adolescents.

Psychological interventions to reduce anxiety, stress and depression and raise self esteem may prove beneficial. Teaching coping skills viz. positive re appraisal, planful problem solving and accepting responsibility may help these adolescents to fare better.

Regarding gender differences it was found that male adolescents emerged more at disadvantage as regards psychosocial dimensions of stress,
anxiety, depression and inappropriate coping techniques. They scored lower on protective factors like perceived social support, parental bonding and had poorer perception of family environment dimensions. May be chronically ill adolescents are more vulnerable because society has differential expectations from males and females.

May be one need to explore this dimension of gender differences in greater detail.