CHAPTER-VIII
IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

Realizing the importance of healthy ageing, an interdisciplinary approach using psychological and anthropological methodologies of research was followed in the present study. The study focuses on a comparison between institutionalized and non-institutionalized elderly on the indices of healthy ageing viz. happiness, optimism, social support, spiritual intelligence and emotional intelligence and their effect on stress and coping among them. An elaborative understanding of the indices of healthy ageing would have many implications for policymakers as well as the aged population to promote healthy living among them.

The study is unique in its integration of two research methodologies: quantitative research and qualitative-phenomenological research, which together facilitate the examination of a theoretical model and comprehension of the experiences of elderly people – the significance and explanations that these people attribute to their situation.

This study would help in improving an understanding of the process of ageing across the lifespan, the actions needed to support health throughout life and factors that support and impede healthy ageing such as happiness, optimism, social support, emotional intelligence and spiritual intelligence. If the vision of increased healthy and productive life among elderly is to be realized, the relevant evidence based findings needs to be further developed, acknowledging the needs of all the stakeholders involved, i.e. policy makers, practitioners, and the wider community. This knowledge then needs to be disseminated effectively to support policy development, program delivery and individual lifestyle decisions.

Through this study, an effort has been made to propagate ‘active’ ageing by pursue of which elderly continue their participation in social, economic, cultural, spiritual and civic affairs. Active ageing is not just the ability to be physically active or to participate in the labour force. It also refers to the notion that older people who retire from work, ill or live with disabilities can remain active contributors to their families, peers, communities and nations. Active
ageing aims to extend healthy life expectancy and quality of life for all people as they age.

The studies on the elderly people have been largely descriptive, documenting the socio-economic differences but not providing the reasons for the differences in the socio-economic conditions, attitudes and problems of the elderly. Stress among elderly has been widely studied and but not much emphasis has been given to coping and coping styles. The research work done on the social support among elderly is quite extensive both at the national and international level. But the number of studies on emotional and spiritual aspects of elderly is quite small. The problems and adjustment of the institutionalized elderly have rarely been studied. Researchers in the area of gerontology rarely view the elderly people as human resources and active participants in society. The present study aimed to fulfill these gaps.

The literature reviewed helped in determining the key research needs for policy development in healthy ageing, through current and planned research in healthy ageing, and identifying the key players. The review involved consultation with researchers, policymakers, advocacy groups and other stakeholders and reported social and policy research priorities.

The findings of the study could have important and significant implications in the approaches for policy making to ensure healthy and active ageing. Through observations made during the entire research, the researcher proposes some of the areas where the study could have some direct implications. For any attempt towards maintaining healthy and active ageing requires a constant interaction between the aged concerned and the society at large. Negative feelings like loneliness, neglect, rejection, etc. which have profound impact on the overall health of the aged need to be countered with positive interventions, which must be inculcated at the level of self and society. The skills which could be inculcated in the elderly to maintain this balance includes:

- **Physical skills**: For healthy and active ageing, maintaining physical health is imperative. Various efforts must be made to engage elderly in
physical activities through either home based or community based care services.

- **Financial skills:** Elderly earning a living in form of pensions, social security schemes through government support must be made aware of investing some amount of money for themselves as well as not simply spend away the complete amount for family purposes. Economic independence at this stage of life gives boost to self-confidence of the individual. It is one of the most important factors responsible for healthy and active ageing.

- **Social skills:** Involving elderly in all major decision making strategies, giving them support and care that they need give them a feeling of belongingness and being cared. Making them feel accepted and loved and acknowledging the status and role, both within and outside the family domain, is a positive impetus towards healthy ageing. They must be encouraged to participate in socializing activities to increase their participation at societal level.

- **Psychological skills:** Ageing brings along with it numerous psychological changes. It is important to turn these into positive frame in order to avoid psychological problems like depressions, stress, etc. Regular counseling could help achieve better acceptance of their state. Apart from professional care, personal support and love of near and dear ones is a definite boost towards healthy psychology of the aged. Professionals involved in caring of the elderly must maintain a patient and loving attitude towards them.

The elderly are a repertoire of age old wisdom for not only their family but society as well. Demographic changes in a population must be kept in mind before devising any public policy in relation to the elderly. The elderly could be made a very significant and important contributing part of development of any society. Policy making for elderly must involve their direct contributions through their representation because it is them who would ultimately be influenced by those policies.
The present study has laid emphasis on an integrated multi-disciplinary approach. This approach may prove to be a best way for considering the complex and interactive influences on people's health as they grow older in their social and physical environments. Links are needed among these various research fields so that knowledge gaps are bridged and great ideas are generated as disciplines interact.