

## “When the birds fly”: the family in an “empty nest” moment”

“Quando os pássaros voam”: a família em momento de “ninho vazio”

“Cuendo vuelan las aves”: la familia em tiempo de “nido vacío”

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**Abstract: Objectives:** to identify changes and feelings presented in the family after the child (ren) left home and the coping strategies used to minimize this lack. **Method:** qualitative and exploratory study, developed in the town of Cuité-Paraíba, from April to May 2018, with 11 participants. The material was collected from interviews and analyzed according to the content analysis technique. **Results:** it raised three empirical categories: “Reframing the nest”, which addressed the main changes that took place in the family; “The sounds of birds: feelings that arise with the absence”, a category in which feelings experienced by family members were identified; and “In search of new flights: coping with the emptiness of the nest”, where the strategies used to minimize the lack of the child were observed. **Final considerations:** currently, the empty nest moment is expressed as a common event, thereby directly affecting health and family dynamics.

**Descriptors:** Parent-child relationships; Family nursing; Mental health

**Resumo: Objetivos:** identificar mudanças e sentimentos apresentados na família após a saída do(s) filho(s) do lar e as estratégias de enfrentamento utilizadas para minimizar essa falta. **Método:** estudo qualitativo e exploratório, desenvolvido no município de Cuité-Paraíba, no período de abril a maio de 2018, com 11 participantes. O material foi coletado a partir de entrevistas e analisado conforme a técnica de análise de conteúdo. **Resultados:** emergiram três categorias empíricas: “Ressignificando o ninho”, que abordou as principais mudanças ocorridas na família; “Os sons dos pássaros: os sentimentos que surgem com a ausência”, categoria na qual se identificou sentimentos vivenciados pelos familiares e “Em busca de novos voos: enfrentando o vazio do ninho”, em que foram observadas as estratégias utilizadas para minimizar a falta do filho. **Considerações finais:** o momento de ninho vazio se expressa como um evento comum na atualidade, repercutindo diretamente na saúde e na dinâmica familiar.

**Descritores:** Relações pais-filhos; Enfermagem familiar; Saúde mental

**Resumen: Objetivos:** identificar los cambios y sentimientos presentados en la familia después de que el niño (s) dejó el hogar y las estrategias de afrontamiento utilizadas para mitigar esta falta. **Método:** estudio cualitativo y

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exploratorio, desarrollado en el ayuntamiento de Cuité-Paraíba, entre abril y mayo de 2018, con 11 participantes. El material se recopiló de entrevistas y se analizó según la técnica de análisis de contenido. **Resultados:** surgieron tres categorías empíricas: “Redefiniendo el nido”, que abordó los principales cambios que ocurrieron en la familia; “Los sonidos de las aves: los sentimientos que surgen con la ausencia”, una categoría en la que se identificaron los sentimientos experimentados por los miembros de la familia; y “En búsqueda de nuevos vuelos: afrontando el vacío del nido”, en el que se observaron las estrategias utilizadas para mitigar la falta del hijo. **Consideraciones finales:** actualmente, el momento del nido vacío se expresa como un evento común, afectando directamente la salud y la dinámica familiar.

**Descriptor:** Relaciones padres-hijos; Enfermería familiar; Salud mental

## Introduction

The concept of family is unstable and mutable, especially because the social and cultural aspects will directly affect the structure, dynamics and way of living of this social group.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, when the values of a society change, the structures of family groups also change. Therefore, there is no single definition of what family is, but, in an objective and, perhaps, unfinished way, it is believed that it is a social group that coexists and interacts with each other, which is influenced by the environment and, at the same time, also influences it.<sup>2</sup>

In this sense, contemporaneity has been producing several family configurations, thereby influencing family development and affecting members of this group at different levels. In other words, the systemic concepts of circularity and retroactivity are brought up for discussion, as it is not only the family structure that changes, but also the roles of each member and, consequently, this transformation also changes society. Usually, this process is understood as a crisis, and is perceived differently by each individual in the family. This is the way of manifestation of a new stage for mothers and fathers who go through the “empty nest” phase.<sup>3</sup>

“Empty Nest” is the term commonly used to designate the moment when the last child leaves the family home to gain independence, whether personal, financial or otherwise. It is worth underlining that, although used as synonyms by several authors and by the population in general, nowadays, two different terms are applied: the Empty Nest Syndrome (ENS), which would be the psychological malaise of mothers and/or fathers when seeing their children leaving

the house; and Empty Nest (EN), which describes the emotional period in view of the change in the role of each family member.<sup>4</sup>

Some authors believe that both terms are inappropriate and that the term “post-paternity” should be adopted, since this would better translate the phase that mothers and/or fathers would be going through and would not, necessarily, denote the presence of distress or the need for treatment.<sup>5</sup> It is worth mentioning that, in this research, the expression “empty nest moment” will be used to designate this phase in which the children leave their homes, which can entail different consequences for the couple.

In some families, this stage is regarded as a moment of enjoyment and completion, as well as a second way of consolidating or expanding, establishing new possibilities and new roles, which can often lead to the disruption, the feeling of emptiness/loss and the family disintegration. This period needs a new arrangement in the marital relationship, since the paternal and maternal responsibilities are no longer needed.<sup>6</sup>

The “empty nest” moment, in some cultures, can be configured as the suffering associated with the loss of the role of the parental role with the departure of the children from the parents’ house in search of their independence and autonomy.<sup>7</sup> Conversely, some authors refer that, after the children’s departure, some couples succeeded in re-approaching and even the relationship with the child who left home also improved.<sup>8</sup>

In summary, this is a period full of emotions, where men and women experience and overcome it in different ways. Accordingly, based on systemic thinking, it is important that health professionals are attentive to this stage, taking into account the family’s potentialities and having the conviction that their participation in this phase is collaborative.<sup>3</sup>

In addition, although international studies<sup>8-9</sup> related to the issue of “empty nest” are found in Brazil, this topic is still little explored, being a theme that is not easily found in journals, and the majority of national surveys were developed by psychologist professionals,

which may suggest that other health professionals are not yet involved with this problem in the scope of mental health.

At the Academy, this topic is also poorly addressed and, frequently, goes unnoticed and ignored by those who study the issues of aging and mental health. It becomes necessary that, in educational institutions and also in health services, professionals come closer to families, listen to them and welcome them, thereby avoiding a centralization only with respect to illness or biological dysfunctions and paying attention to the production of subjectivities, which give meaning to the very existence.

Given this context, the question is: what are the parents' changes and feelings after the departure of their children and the strategies used to minimize this lack? In order to answer this question, it was designed as an objective: to identify changes and feelings presented in the family after the departure of the child (ren) and the coping strategies used to minimize this lack.

## **Method**

It is a descriptive and exploratory study, with a qualitative approach, which was anchored in systemic theory, thereby seeking to enhance the focus on the phenomenon and its possible characteristics, as well as recognizing its inconstancy and considering the social construction of the attribution of meanings.<sup>10</sup>

This research took place from April to May 2018, in the town of Cuité, located in the hinterland of Paraíba (PB), 235 km from the capital João Pessoa. Regarding the provision of Primary Care services, the city has nine Family Health Units (FHU), five of which are located in the urban area and four in the rural area.

The selection criteria for family members were: being over 18; Mothers and/or fathers who were linked to the FHU in the urban area; Mothers and/or fathers who have gone through the “empty nest” moment. It is worth underlining that only those people who experienced the

“empty nest” and sought out a professional from the local FHU or who were identified by this worker were considered.

Initially, visits were made to the FHUs in the urban area of the town. The previous contact was made with the nurses and with the Community Health Workers so that they could identify the people who would meet the selection criteria. After identifying the likely participants, visits were made to introduce the research, ending with a total of 11 participants.

In order to collect the empirical material, a semi-structured script and the audio recorder were used to better capture the testimonies. The interviews were conducted at the home of each family member, individually and according to the availability of each participant, with the duration time ranging from 15 minutes to one hour.

After collecting the material, the interpretation was guided by Bardin’s content analysis. At first, pre-analysis was carried out, which consisted of organizing ideas through reading the collected material and defining what would be analyzed; subsequently, there was the exploration of the empirical material, which enabled an in-depth study of the documentary *corpus*; and, finally, the treatment of results, inference and interpretation, based on the synthesis of information for analysis, that is, the moment of critical and reflective analysis.<sup>11</sup>

Therefore, the participants were characterized through variables such as: gender, age, education level and occupation, in order to establish the profile of the interviewees in this study. After that, the results were analyzed based on the verification of the thematic units and the elaboration of the following categories: Category I: “Reframing the nest”; Category II: “The sounds of birds: feelings that arise with the absence”; Category III: “In search of new flights: coping with the emptiness of the nest”.

This study was approved by the Research Ethics Committee (CEP, as per its Portuguese acronym) of the Federal University of Campina Grande-PB, on February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2018, through the CAAE number: 80745317.1.0000.5182, as recommended by Resolution 466/12. In order to

preserve anonymity, the names of the interviewees were replaced by names of birds (written in Portuguese language), as well as it was stated that the research could be abandoned at any time, without prejudice.

## **Results and discussion**

Initially, the results obtained enabled the characterization of the 11 participants, 10 mothers and one father, aged between 44 and 80 years. It is worth emphasizing that three respondents were aged 60 years or over, that is, most were in “middle age”. Moreover, considering that the family system aggregates several subsystems and that this research was directed to the parental subsystem (fathers and mothers), it was observed that mothers were more accessible in granting interviews, which allows reaching the frontier of the category of gender, which will imply more specific speeches due to the functions and roles presented by this group.

As the interviews were conducted at the families’ homes, the presence of only one father as a participant in the interview may suggest that women, even those who work outside the home, are still tied to the private and domestic space, unlike most men.<sup>7</sup> Due to the occupation of this private space and the role of taking care of children, socially destined, many women feel more affected by the departure of their children, either positively or negatively, because they are more dedicated to them.<sup>7</sup> In addition, they are often experiencing other striking changes in their lives, for example, menopause, which is fraught with significant signs and symptoms, such as mood swings, anxiety and depressive symptoms.<sup>12</sup>

Women who dedicated most of their lives to raising their children, exclusively, suffer when they see them walking away, generating for themselves a self-concept of “powerlessness”, thereby reflecting a low self-esteem and favoring a depressive condition and even the

confinement of social life. However, it is worth highlighting that the father figure is also vulnerable to the involvement of these symptoms.<sup>13</sup>

Regarding the education of the participants, it showed different levels. Four completed higher education, three completed high school, two completed technical education and two did not complete elementary school. Commonly, mothers and fathers with incomplete elementary school suffer more when their children leave home, since they are more emotionally affected, in terms of dependency, of their children. While mothers and fathers with a higher level of education tend to be less affected, as their bonds are more balanced.<sup>8</sup>

With regard to occupation, eight worked in public spaces, two were housewives and one was self-employed. Most lived with a husband and/or other family members, with only one participant living alone. It is worth noting that, when asked about the time the child left home, the average answer ranged from one month to 14 years.

In view of the interviews carried out, three empirical categories were raised, which addressed the changes in life and feelings experienced by the participants, after the departure of their children, and also made it possible to identify the coping strategies that were used during this experience. In this sense, concerning the changes that occurred in the family dynamics after the children left the affective home, the categories mentioned and detailed below emerged.

### **Category I: “Reframing the nest”**

In this category, it was possible to identify, through the following statements, the significant changes that took place in the marital life of mothers and fathers who went through the “empty nest”. Accordingly, it has demonstrated that, these transformations can produce other ways of living, coexisting and acting.

*We didn't stray, on the contrary, we got closer and we always try to help each other. (Águia)*

*Because we got more alone! I only have him to talk to and he only has me practically [...]. It has changed in this sense, there is more conversation.*  
(Gavião)

*We started to have more conversation, chats, and even to go out together! Because before the boys held us a lot and, after they left, we started to go out more, talk more [...].*(Andorinha)

From the testimonies, it was noticed that, with the departure of the children from home, there was a closer relationship between the spouses. This fact was also observed by authors<sup>14</sup> who stated that mothers and fathers started to have more time for a relationship, thereby perceiving the spouse in a position beyond the paternal or maternal one, reviving the relationship as a couple and the intimacy, which, throughout the children’s rearing and birth, remained reduced or displaced to them.

The “empty nest” moment may be a period of freedom, a time for a new opportunity, to redesign the relationship, improve marital quality, rekindle previous interests, discover new ways, redefine roles and even include others. Couples with independent children have more time for themselves, being able to develop new activities together, have more availability to do something they enjoy. This availability of time may also contribute to the couple’s conversation, by strengthening intimacy, as they now have the opportunity to meet and live together as husband and wife again, thereby increasing the quality of life with the effective possibility of a greater dedication to yourself and others beyond the family core.<sup>9-15</sup>

It was possible to observe that the departure of the children has a different impact for each father and each mother, as previously mentioned. Some changes take place more abruptly only for one of the spouses, where this person becomes available to perform new pleasant activities, in order to restore his/her self-esteem. On the other hand, for some couples, there were no significant changes, as observed below:



*It hasn't changed! Because we've always had a very close relationship, we've been married for 32 years, we're very close to each other [...].*  
(Papagaio)

*I think it has changed! I don't know if it changed due to their departure [children] or if it changed due to the normal wear and tear of a relationship, like many [...]. I no longer had motherhood to get involved so much, they had grown up; then, I found myself like that, with time to do something for myself, not just for the marriage [...]. I don't think we got more united. We were just the two of us at home, but I don't see that we used the children's departure to get more together.* (Sabiá)

The results of a survey<sup>7</sup> reveal that there may be no significant changes in the lives of couples after their “nests” are emptied. They continue their daily activities as if there had been no change in the Family context, thereby demonstrating that the child’s departure did not affect the couple. Conversely, there may also be crises in the marriage right after the emptying of the “nest”, due to the fact that some women are more willing to carry out the personal plans that were interrupted, in some way, by motherhood, thereby starting to prioritize their own accomplishment.

In the study, it was found that some women, soon after the departure of their child (ren), felt free and with the possibility of resuming their previous life, returning to stopped projects or starting new ones, such as studying, working and traveling, thereby improving the quality of life, regardless of the husband’s opinion. Usually, these women no longer see themselves trapped in the obligation and role of “mother”, but rather as a woman with time to fulfill wishes and projects, that is, showing that it is part of a couple’s relationship to understand, accept the limits and also recognize that it will not always be possible to meet the needs of the other.<sup>16</sup>

It is worth emphasizing that, considering systemic thinking, it is important to observe the circularity in the scope of the family system. The child’s departure from home may entail complications in the marriage, such as quarrels; reflections of past problems that have not been

resolved; lazy husbands, preferring to stay in the domestic environment, which may increase the risk of disagreement between the couple.<sup>17</sup> These conflicts may have a positive side, because, through them, the couple may have a new chance to readapt and follow the course of life, but there is also the possibility that one of them to prefer to pursue other solutions, alone.

If the dynamics of the family system changes, the values can also be reviewed/renegotiated by the couple, as well as the possibility of experiencing new experiences, new roles, which, consequently, will imply the exercise of new responsibilities and tasks.<sup>10</sup> The listening free of judgments and the welcoming on the part of the health professionals are necessary in the search for strategies to identify whether the partners are at a similar or differentiated moment with the “empty nest”.

## Category II: “The sounds of birds: feelings that arise with the absence”

In the following statements, it was possible to identify different types of feelings and changes in the lives of mothers and fathers after their children left home. Among them, sadness, anguish, fear, suffering, insecurity, concern, panic and, above all, emptiness are highlighted, which is one of the feelings most mentioned by these mothers. But it was also possible to identify positive feelings, such as joy and pride.

*I suffered a lot, I got dejected, I thought the world was over [...]. Nobody fills out the lack of a child [...] I knew he'd come back, but it was a very heavy load, which left me completely devastated. When I arrived at the room that I didn't see him, I panicked [...]. When he arrives it looks like a star has arrived! GOD! He has arrived at my home, it's joyful! My joy today is to see my son well! If he's fine, I'm fine too, nothing else matters to me, just him!* (Beija Flor)

*So, you feel insecure! The first moment is this, insecurity, but I [...] have never been afraid of this new discovery and I have always tried to transmit safety for them [...].* (Águia)

*Awful, bad! Every day I went to his bed! I spent a lot of time sniffing and sleeping with his shirt on. His bed, I spent a few days without undoing, the way he left, sheet, everything was on top and the room closed. Therefore, every day I dropped there to check. [...] one of the worst things when my son left home was his absence in my bed, because he slept with me. It was that emptiness, and his comforter remained a lot of time next to me, in the position that he slept [...]. (Andorinha)*

*Oh, I felt very worried because he does not know how to cook [...] the concern is very great, every day I has to talk, every day I has to call to know how he is doing, if he got rain, if he got sick [...]. (Gavião)*

*I was feeling empty, very empty, every part of the house, bedroom, living room, where he used to be, it was empty[...]. (Papagaio)*

*We feel a little, we are parents. I would rather have him here, because I saw him every day, every hour, but now he is working far away. The life around the world, we don't realize it, so what we should do is to pray and pray, ask God and Jesus to bless him, deliver from every evil, every type of envy[...]. (Azulão)*

There are countless reasons why children leave home. Although mothers and fathers recognize that their children need to leave, or that leaving is inevitable due to the choices that they make for their lives, the feelings of separation and physical detachment override the needs of this departure, even if for reasons of improvement in quality of life.<sup>5</sup>

The departure from home is the culmination of a process of growth and development, both for young people and their families. Based on emotional or financial independence, the young man/woman ends up leaving home, without having to dispel his/her family relationships, since he/she starts to progress in new sectors of his/her own life. This departure, mandatorily, causes a change in the dynamics and bonds among fathers, mothers and children who go out.<sup>15</sup>

Some researchers<sup>7</sup> highlight that mothers suffer more than fathers, a fact that may be associated with the loss of the role of caregiver of their children, a function culturally linked to

the female role. Women who donated their lives exclusively to raising their children find it distressing to see them leaving homes and their self-concept becomes “I am of no use”, which confirms the depreciated self-esteem of some of them.

It should be emphasized that, some authors refer that the “empty nest” moment may affect mothers and fathers in similar or totally different ways. However, they believe that other factors should be taken into account in addition to the children’s departure, such as retirement, menopause and illness or death of the spouse. These situations can make the "empty nest" moment more complex, often leading to psychological disorders.<sup>8</sup>

Health professionals should be aware of symptoms that may be indicative of psychological distress, so that the intervention is carried out as soon as possible. Observing and activating, when necessary, the support network of this family member, as well as promoting continuous multidisciplinary care through home visits, listening and welcoming, are important in the prevention of mental illness.

According to an investigation held,<sup>9</sup> the moment when children leave home is considered a painful experience for spouses because they suddenly no longer have their children, thereby requiring constant care. The fact of not being part of the children’s daily lives any longer becomes a challenging situation of loss and, usually, of mourning. For this reason, it is common to cry and even go to the child’s room to try to reduce the child’s absence, since the feelings of absence, sadness and anguish are recurrent during the children’s departure, and may last for a long time.<sup>13</sup>

The nurse, due to the fact of being a wide-ranging professional, should be aware of situations that may be interfering with the mental health of mothers and fathers who are experiencing the “empty nest”. When negative symptoms become persistent and prolonged, the psychological impairment may lead to more severe clinical conditions.

It is important to assert that it was also possible to observe positive feelings such as joy, pride and happiness, as, over time, these parents demonstrated to understand the situation as something natural, where their children needed to pursue their own independence.<sup>15</sup> In addition, with the advances in the media and the Internet in the current days, the use of cell phones, e-mail, video calls, new possibilities are configured for the family to remain closer to the child who left home.<sup>8</sup>

### **Category III: “In search of new flights: coping with the emptiness of the nest”**

It was possible to observe that the most used strategies for coping with the “empty nest” were: the search for family support, religiosity, work and physical activities, which served as support to relieve the moments of sadness and the feeling of emptiness.

*The church helped me a lot! If it weren't for the God's word, I don't know if I was here telling these things [...] My family always supported me and was by my side in the most difficult times [...] they arrived and said what was right, what was wrong. Moreover, I had to let my son fly, I couldn't have him under my wings. (Beija-flor)*

*My family is a safe harbor! We're always together at all times, in difficulties and in good times [...] I like to relate to many people, and precisely for this reason, to overcome this gap. Because when we are with the family, there is no emptiness. There is a filling, and when someone leaves, even with sadness and absence, we can overcome it. And if you get involved with other movements, church, communicate with other people, groups, does that help? It's surely a way of helping to fill out someone's lack. (Águia)*

*During the afternoon, I'll go out, I'm going to take my walk because it seems like the outdoors stimulates you more, you understand it? It get's better [...]. (Curió)*

*I think my work has helped me! Because my work is like this, it's a visit, it's a conversation [...] I always talk to people, sometimes I even talked*

*about it with someone who was going through the same situation [...].*  
(Arara)

Researchers<sup>18</sup> define coping strategies as forms of thought or behavior that the individual uses to cope with some type of burden. According to some scholars on the subject,<sup>19</sup> religious strategies serve as a buffer against negative events, as protective means that people use to deal with stressful events, but, most importantly, helping in cases of acceptance.

Faced with suffering, the individual turns to religiosity as a way of supporting himself/herself in the coping process, as a “food” to fill himself/herself emotionally and spiritually, thereby favoring his/her well-being by knowing that there is a transcendental element, where he/she believes and places his/her faith, since some people cling to a deity as a cognitive and/or emotional alternative to deal with difficult times.<sup>18</sup> Accordingly, religiosity is perceived as adherence to beliefs and practices related to a church or religious institution. The church, then, can be used as a space for health promotion, taking into account its capacity for insertion and social penetration.<sup>20</sup>

In addition to religion, family support was also cited as a coping strategy, as it is an essential element in the process of living for every human being. Families are perceived as support for the protection of their members, a “place” of refuge and are also considered as the “place” in which people feel safe, establishing a space for dialogue, when it is possible to remove doubts, especially in difficult times, thereby becoming able to protect their loved ones socially and emotionally.<sup>21-22</sup>

Just as religiosity and family are considered support points for coping with difficult and sad moments, work can also be classified as a strategy for overcoming these times, which was observed in the speeches. Accordingly, work stands out as a central and very important element for the individual in social life, as it materializes the way in which people interact and transform the environment, which can favor the development of self-esteem and personal achievement,

thereby ensuring survival and establishing interpersonal relationships, which, theoretically, would serve to reinforce identities and sense of contribution.<sup>23</sup>

Another coping strategy used by the research participants was the practice of physical activities. Although, in the reviewed articles, there is no direct relationship between the practice of physical activity and the “empty nest”, it is believed that, commonly, when going through this moment of transition, the couple or one of the spouses may present symptoms of sadness, hopelessness, anguish, as it was perceived in the statements. Therefore, physical exercises can minimize these feelings, even many mental health professionals suggest such practices as a non-drug therapy for depressive symptoms.<sup>24</sup>

Accordingly, the frequent practice of physical exercises influences the improvement of mood, the reduction of anxiety and depression, and may also lead to the reduction of stress. Active people, when exercising at the appropriate intensity, release a hormone called endorphin, which is linked to the feeling of well-being. The continuity of these activities may change attitudes, thereby increasing self-confidence through the victory provided by periodic training, since systematic physical exercise can produce several benefits, both in the physical and psychosocial spheres, then providing a better quality of life.<sup>25</sup>

In view of the exposed scenario, different forms of parenthood were observed, which are rooted in the changes in society, as well as in the changes of the roles performed by men and women, which is anchored in the systemic concept of circularity and retroactivity. It is expected that, in view of the family dynamics in contemporary times, mothers and fathers can exercise their roles together in front of their children, in an exercise of coparenthood,<sup>2</sup> where the health professionals, such as, for example, the nurse, may be acting as a collaborating agent for these families.

## Final considerations

The present study had as a proposal to expand the knowledge about the “empty nest” moment. Most participants were middle-aged women, with different levels of education and occupation.

Through the empirical categories, it was possible to observe that, after the children left home, some couples started to enjoy their marital lives in a positive way, as they perceived themselves as husband and wife again, although other participants did not report significant changes. It was highlighted that some mothers also found themselves with more time to fulfill personal wishes that were interrupted during motherhood.

As for the feelings aroused in the participants, it was observed that loneliness and insecurity were more present in the testimonies, although some couples could perceive their children’s departure in a positive way. Moreover, among the coping strategies, it was possible to observe that religiosity and family support were crucial in the process of overcoming this delicate moment, which is the emptying of the “nest”.

As limitations of the research, there was little male participation, which poses a challenge for new studies, in terms of knowing if the “empty nest” moment takes place in a similar way between men and women. The fact that the research was carried out in a city in the hinterland of the northeast also brings different configurations, since many people move away from their families with the purpose of trying to improve their living conditions in a larger city.

At the end of this study, it was noticed a gap in scientific production in relation to the subject in question. The existing academic productions were mostly produced by psychologist professionals, showing a lack of knowledge or lack of interest on the part of other professionals in addressing this topic. Accordingly, the importance of knowing and understanding the “empty nest” moment, its characteristics, consequences on the family dynamics and on the mental health of mothers/fathers who experience it should be emphasized.



Given the above, there is a need to offer support to families through new care strategies, as well as social projects, which ensure the inclusion of people who are going through this moment, thereby avoiding the loss of collective functionality and minimizing the social isolation of individuals. These factors are directly associated with the suffering caused by the “empty nest” moment.

It is expected that this study will contribute so that people and health professionals can understand that each family has a particular dynamics, which can involve both losses and gains, and, in any case, this social institution needs to be supported, in such a way as to enable its members to create new relationship strategies and (re) elaborate roles in the community panorama, since society expects/requires from individuals and families constant reformulations.

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Interpretation of the datas, reduction and correction of the text.

#### **3 – Alyne Mendonça Saraiva Nagashima**

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### **How to site this Article**

Costa VBS, Bulhões CSG, Nagashima AMS. “When the birds fly”: the family in an “empty nest” moment”. *Rev. Enferm. UFSM*. 2020 [Acesso em: Anos Mês Dia]; vol.10 e41: 1-19. DOI:<https://doi.org/10.5902/21797692366601>