



IMPACT OF EMPTYNESST SYNDROME ON SLEEP QUALITY AND WELL-BEING AMONG MIDDLE AGE GROUP

¹**Prekshaa Verma**, Masters in Arts, Psychology, Amity Institute of Psychology and Allied Sciences, Noida, India
prekshaa04@gmail.com

²**Dr. Sandhya Bhatt**, Assistant Professor – III, Amity Institute of Applied Sciences, Noida, India
sbhatt@amity.edu

ABSTRACT

The present study explored the impact of empty nest syndrome on the well-being and sleep quality of middle-aged adults. A total sample of 106 was collected in the age 40-60 years of age. Standardized scales were used to study Empty nest syndrome, well being and sleep quality. Results revealed a significant association between empty nest syndrome and both well-being and sleep quality. The findings indicated that empty nest syndrome explains a substantial amount of the variance in middle-aged people's well-being and sleep quality. The emotional discomfort and feelings of loss associated with children leaving home significantly affect parents' mood, self-

worth, and psychological health. Additionally, the study found a significant correlation between sleep difficulties and empty nest syndrome, suggesting that significant life transitions such as children moving out may disrupt sleep patterns due to increased stress, anxiety, or adjustments to daily schedules and sleeping arrangements. Healthcare professionals should be aware of the negative effects of empty nest syndrome on middle-aged adults' health, particularly regarding sleep disorders. Screening for sleep disorders and providing evidence-based therapies such as cognitive behavioral therapy for insomnia or sleep hygiene education may be beneficial in managing empty nest syndrome and promoting good health outcomes during this life transition.

Keywords: *Empty Nest Syndrome, Middle-Aged Adults, Well-Being, Sleep Quality, Emotional Discomfort, Sleep Disorders*

Introduction

For parents, especially those in the middle of their life, the departure of their children in the family home marks a major milestone: empty nest status. Although it may represent parents' newfound independence and possibilities, it may also cause a variety of psychological and emotional changes known as the syndrome of empty nests (ENS). Because of the possible effects on middle-aged persons' health and happiness, this phenomenon has attracted a lot of interest. Loneliness, bereavement, changes in daily routines, and changes in one's identity are all parts of the complex idea of empty nest syndrome. When children leave home, it may leave many people feeling empty and purposeless, particularly those who have spent a significant amount of time

caring for and raising them. Therefore, as they go through this new stage of life, middle-aged individuals may face several psychological and social obstacles.

Firstly, this study is relevant and timely because, due to aging demographics of many nations, a large section of people is either going through or will soon be going through the empty nest transition. Secondly, it is crucial to find effective ways to cope and support systems to lessen the negative impacts of empty nest syndrome because of the possible consequences on people's physical and mental health.

This research seeks to explore the effects in empty nest syndrome upon the health and quality of sleep of middle-aged people. The purpose of this research is to shed light on the mental and physical processes that underlie the connection between empty nest syndrome while its effects by reviewing the current literature, investigating pertinent theoretical frameworks, and doing empirical studies. It also aims to find those mediators and moderators who might change the trajectory of this interaction. The overarching goal of this dissertation is to improve the health and happiness of middle-aged individuals going through the empty nest shift by providing new insights into these dynamics via an in-depth analysis of them. Helping people better navigate the intricacies at empty nest syndrome is the goal of this study, which aims to increase knowledge about the difficulties of this phase of life and offer evidence-based solutions to these problems.

Empty Nest Syndrome

The growing rural empty-nest syndrome is one of the negative consequences of China's aging population, which is a worldwide concern. The issue of rural empty nesters' sleep quality has been gaining more and more attention as of late. Examining the relationship between social

support, resilience, and sleep quality in the target group was the main objective of this paper, which aimed to examine sleep quality and its affecting variables in rural empty nesters. This research looked at 250 rural residents who have just left the nest. Data was gathered about socio-demographics, the quality of sleep, social support, and resilience. To identify the variables impacting sleep quality, both univariate and multivariate analyses were performed. To assess the linear relationships among social support, resilience, and sleep quality, the Spearman correlation index was used by Li (2021). After establishing a relationship between social support & sleep quality, bootstrap-mediated analysis was used to test the mediating influence of resilience. Rural empty nesters had a sleep quality score of 6.74 ± 3.80 . Relationship status, monthly income, quantity of chronic conditions, and frequency of contact with children were shown to have a substantial impact on sleep quality. Sleep quality was also favorably associated with resilience and social support. The relationship between social support & sleep quality was moderated by more than just resilience.

Empty nesters are at increased risk for depression among the elderly. The causes of sadness in empty nesters were the focus of this research. A multi-stage randomized cluster sampling procedure was used to choose the participants in a study by Fan (2019). We used the scale for elderly people to measure depressive symptoms. Factors such as social support, self-care abilities, unpleasant life events, underlying illnesses, habits, and lifestyles were all included of the study. The likelihood of depression among empty nesters was higher for those with chronic health concerns, such as becoming overweight or obese, quitting smoking, cancer, or chronic pain, and for those who had experienced bad life events, such as the loss of a loved one or financial hardship. Furthermore, empty nesters were more likely to suffer from depression if they were unable to take care of themselves. There was a significant frequency of depression

among empty nesters. Depression was more common among empty nesters who had the following health problems: being overweight or obese, malignancy, chronic pain, quitting smoking, losing a loved one, experiencing financial hardship, and not being able to take care of oneself. Encouraging a healthy diet and regular exercise to control weight, offering psychological counseling to help overcome traumatic experiences, and instructing people on how to quit smoking are all part of the comprehensive measures that should be implemented to improve health interventions over this group.

Impact of Empty nest Syndrome on Well-being

It is well-known that the empty nest syndrome (ENS) is a major life change that may affect people's health and happiness in many ways. The research shows a connection between empty nest syndrome and different aspects of happiness. The effects in empty nest syndrome upon people's health and happiness go beyond just emotional suffering and affect many other parts of their lives. To help people through the empty nest transition, it is crucial to understand the factors that moderate and mediate this connection. Only then can we identify at-risk groups and provide tailored treatments to meet their needs. Recognizing the health effects associated with empty nest syndrome further highlights the need to address this transitional period as part of comprehensive health promotion initiatives.

Sleep Quality and Empty Nest Syndrome

The departure of kids in the family home, known as the empty nest change, may greatly affect the quality of sleep for middle-aged individuals. Here we look at the link between empty nest syndrome (ENS) & sleep problems, possible causes, and solutions for getting a good night's rest while you're going through this transition.

Sleep Disturbances and Empty Nest Syndrome

When it comes to middle-aged individuals, research shows a strong correlation among empty nest syndrome & sleep problems. When kids move out, it may throw off established sleep patterns, leading to issues including insomnia and disturbed sleep. Loneliness, worry, and mental discomfort are common symptoms of empty nest syndrome, and they may make it much harder for people to sleep.

Anxiety and Stress

As parents deal with grief and the changes that come with raising a family without children, they may experience increased stress and anxiety throughout the empty nest transition. Problems getting to sleep or staying asleep at night are symptoms of chronic stress and worry, which disrupts normal sleep cycles.

Deviations from Customary Practices

The premature departure of children might cause parents to reevaluate their daily habits and sleep patterns. Disruptions to typical sleep patterns, such as irregular sleep-wake cycles as sleep fragmentation, may occur when caregivers are not present and when children's activities keep them up at night.

Mental Anxiety

Feelings of melancholy, loss, and isolation are common reactions to empty nest syndrome. It might be challenging for people to relax and get a good night's sleep when they're emotionally distressed since it makes them worry and dwell on the past.

Overall, middle-aged individuals may find that empty nest syndrome significantly affects the quality of their sleep, leading to disruptions and even sleeplessness. To treat sleep issues during this transitional time, it is vital to understand the underlying factors, including stress, anxiety, and shifts in daily routines. Only then may focused therapies be developed. Improve your sleep and general health using tactics including cognitive behavioral therapy for insomnia (CBT-I), stress management, and sticking to a regular sleep schedule if you're dealing with empty nest syndrome.

Rationale of the study

For parents, especially those in the middle of their lives, the empty nest is a watershed moment. It is traditionally a sign that a kid is leaving the nest to seek other chances, such as more

education, a career, or starting a family of their own. This change is a normal part of growing up, but it may cause a lot of people to go through a lot of mental, emotional, and social changes all at once. It's called empty nest syndrome (ENS). The impacts between empty nest syndrome tend to manifest most noticeably in middle-aged people, who are usually between the ages of 40 and 60.. Many parents experience increased emotional sensitivity & introspection during the empty nest transition, which occurs at the same time as a time of reflecting on their accomplishments, ambitions, and future objectives.

The correlation among empty nest syndrome & poor sleep quality is one topic that is gaining more and more traction in the academic literature. A lack of quality sleep may have serious consequences for your mental and physical health, increasing your risk of conditions including obesity, cardiovascular disease, and mood disorders. Insomnia, disturbed sleep, and excessive daytime sleepiness are common among middle-aged individuals, and they may be exacerbated by the emotional turmoil and stress that comes accompany the empty nest transition. This research aims to fill that knowledge gap by taking a closer look at how empty nest syndrome affects the health and quality of sleep of middle-aged people. To better understand the complicated relationship between empty nest syndrome & its impacts on people's health and functioning, this study takes a multi-dimensional approach by integrating social, physiological, and psychological viewpoints. In addition, this research aims to provide light on targeted treatments and support methods that might mitigate the negative effects in empty nest syndrome on the well-being & sleep quality of middle-aged individuals by identifying possible moderators and mediators.

Methodology

Purpose

The purpose of the study was to analyze the impact of emptiness syndrome on wellbeing and sleep quality among middle-aged adults.

Hypothesis:

- There will be no significant impact of emptiness syndrome on wellbeing and sleep quality among middle age adults.
- There will be no significant impact of emptiness syndrome on sleep quality among middle age adults.

Sample

The sample size was 106, using a purposeful and random sampling technique that included both men and women. The majority of the group's members were middle-aged people.

Measures

A demographic questionnaire, the **“WHO-5 Well-being Index, the Empty Nest Syndrome Scale-Indian Form, and the Athens Sleep Questionnaire”** were used to collect the data for this study.

- ***Empty nest Syndrome Scale- Indian Form (ENS-IF)***

A measure of the psychiatric condition known as empty nest syndrome—which happens when parents feel depressed, alone, and other feelings when their children leave the house—is the Empty Nest Syndrome Scale-Indian Form (ENS-IF). There are 50 statements in the grading system; 38 of them are positive and 12 are negative. The ratings for positive statements vary between Never (0) to Always (5), where higher scores denote higher levels of agreement. Negative statements are rated in reverse order: a score of Never (0) denotes a strong disagreement and a score of Always (5) denotes a strong agreement.

- ***WHO-5 Well being Index***

A brief, self-administered questionnaire called the World Health Organization-Five Well-Being Index (WHO-5) gauges psychological well-being over the course of the preceding two weeks. Respondents assess each of the five favorably phrased items using a 6-point Likert scale.

- ***Athens Sleep Questionnaire***

An evaluation tool used in psychometric self-assessment to gauge sleep problems is the Athens Sleep Questionnaire (ASQ). The Athens Insomnia Scale (AIS), often known as the ASQ, consists of eight items. The first five items address sleep induction, awakenings, length, and quality of sleep, while the final three measures address wellbeing, functional ability, and daytime drowsiness.

Procedure

The participants were informed about the purpose of the research and the questionnaires were filled through offline. Each participant was thanked for cooperation. Standardized tests were administered for the participants.

Analysis of the Data

Results

Table 1

Descriptive statistics of all variables

	<i>Empty Nest Syndrome</i>	<i>Wellbeing</i>	<i>Sleep Quality</i>
Mean	116.9057	15.34906	9.603774
Standard Deviation	39.29826	5.217265	4.04423
N	106	106	106

Table 2

Regression analysis on impact of Empty Nest Syndrome on Wellbeing among middle age adult.

<i>Regression Statistics</i>	
Multiple R	0.422263
R Square	0.178306
Adjusted R Square	0.170405

Standard Error	4.751995
Observations	106

ANOVA					
	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Significance F</i>
Regression	1	509.6131	509.6131	22.56777	0.00006
Residual	104	2348.472	22.58146		
Total	105	2858.085			

Null Hypothesis (H_0): There is no significant impact of Empty Nest Syndrome on Wellbeing among middle-aged adults.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_1): There is significant impact of Empty Nest Syndrome on Wellbeing among middle-aged adults.

Table 3

Regression analysis on impact of Empty Nest Syndrome on sleep quality among middle-aged adults

Regression Statistics	
Multiple R	0.571678
R Square	0.326816
Adjusted R Square	0.320343

Standard Error	3.334116
Observations	106

ANOVA					
	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Significance F</i>
Regression	1	561.2603	561.2603	50.48972	0.0001
Residual	104	1156.098	11.11633		
Total	105	1717.358			

Null Hypothesis (H_0): There is no significant impact of Empty Nest Syndrome on sleep quality middle-aged adults.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_1): There is significant impact of Empty Nest Syndrome on sleep quality among middle-aged adults.

Discussion of Results

There is a statistically significant outcome ($p < 0.05$) from the regression analysis looking at how middle-aged people' wellbeing is affected by empty nest syndrome. According to the ANOVA results, a sizable amount of the variance in wellbeing can be explained by the regression model ($F(1, 104) = 22.57, p = 0.00006$). We reject the null hypothesis (H_0), which states that there is no significant effect of Empty Nest Syndrome on middle-aged individuals' wellbeing, according to the low p-value (< 0.05) linked with the regression coefficient associated

with the syndrome. Rather, **Alternative Hypothesis (H₁) is accepted**, which states that middle-aged people' wellbeing is significantly impacted by the empty nest syndrome.

There is a statistically significant outcome ($p < 0.05$) from the regression analysis looking at how middle-aged people' sleep quality is affected by empty nest syndrome. According to the ANOVA results, a sizable amount of the overall variance in sleep quality can be explained by the regression model ($F(1, 104) = 50.49, p = 0.0001$). The findings imply to **reject the Null Hypothesis (H₀)** that the regression coefficient for Empty Nest Syndrome has no significant effect on middle-aged individuals' sleep quality, given the low p-value (< 0.05) related with the syndrome. Rather, there is an **agreement with the Alternative Hypothesis (H₁)**, which states that middle-aged people' sleep quality is significantly impacted by Empty Nest Syndrome.

Conclusion

The present study was aimed to study the impact of empty nest syndrome on quality of sleep and well being among middle aged people, A total sample of 106 were collected in age 40-60 years of age. Standardized scales were used to study empty nest syndrome, quality of sleep and well- being. The results of this study highlight the substantial effects which empty nest syndrome may have on middle-aged people's health and quality of sleep. Regression analysis supported the findings, which showed a strong connection among empty nest syndrome as well as wellbeing as well as sleep quality.

Similarly, middle-aged people' sleep difficulties and empty nest syndrome were significantly correlated, according to the examination of sleep quality. A significant amount of the variation in sleep quality was explained by the regression model, suggesting that the

syndrome of empty nests was an important factor causing sleep problems in this group. This result supports the theory that significant life transitions, like kids moving out, might cause sleep patterns to be disturbed because of increased stress, anxiety, or adjustments to daily schedules and sleeping arrangements.

The study concludes that middle-aged people' sleep quality and general well-being are significantly impacted by empty nest syndrome. For healthcare providers to effectively assist their patients in managing empty nest syndrome and achieving good health outcomes throughout this life transition, they must have a thorough awareness of the psychological, social, as well as environmental aspects linked to it.

References

- Chang, Y., Guo, X., Guo, L., Li, Z., Yang, H., Yu, S., ... & Sun, Y. (2016). Comprehensive comparison between empty nest and non-empty nest elderly: a cross-sectional study among rural populations in Northeast China. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 13(9), 857.
- Hao, X., Li, M., Li, J., Lv, M., Qin, Y., & Li, K. (2021). Sleep quality in relation to social support and resilience among rural empty-nest older adults in China. *Sleep medicine*, 82, 193-199.
- Lachman, M. E., & James, J. B. (1997). Multiple paths of midlife development. In S. L. Willis (Ed.), *Life in the middle: Psychological and social development in middle age* (pp. 19-75). Academic Press.
- Li, W., Yang, S., Li, J., Li, Z., Yan, C., Gui, Z., & Zhou, C. (2022). Social capital and self-rated health among Chinese rural empty nesters: a multiple mediation model through sleep quality and psychological distress. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 298, 1-9.
- Marks, N. F. (2008). Does it hurt to care? Caregiving, work-family conflict, and midlife well-being. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 70(4), 978-994.
- Nayak, I., Siddhanta, A., & Panda, B. K. (2022). Does Empty Nest Elderly Experience More Depressive Symptoms than Non-Empty Nest Elderly? Evidence from Longitudinal Aging Study in India. *Hospital topics*, 1-12.
- Proulx, C. M., Helms, H. M., & Buehler, C. (2007). Marital quality and personal well-being: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 69(3), 576-593.

- Umberson, D., Pudrovska, T., & Reczek, C. (2010). Parenthood, childlessness, and well-being: A life course perspective. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 72(3), 612-629.
- Wang, P., Zhang, Y., Fang, L., & Xie, H. (2020). The effect of empty nest on the sleep quality of elderly people in China. *Health and Quality of Life Outcomes*, 18(1), 1-9.
- Xu, S., Yang, X., Liu, J., Chong, M. K. C., Cheng, Y., Gong, W., & Zou, G. (2023). Health and wellbeing among the empty nest and non-empty nest elderly in China—Results from a national cross-sectional study. *Plos one*, 18(9), e0291231.
- Yao, Y., Ding, G., Wang, L., Jin, Y., Lin, J., Zhai, Y., ... & Fan, W. (2019). Risk factors for depression in empty nesters: a cross-sectional study in a coastal city of Zhejiang Province and China. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 16(21), 4106.
- Zhang, C., Chang, Y., Yun, Q., Lu, J., Zheng, X., Xue, Y., ... & Zheng, J. (2022). The impact of chronic diseases on depressive symptoms among the older adults: The role of sleep quality and empty nest status. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 302, 94-100.