

## Chapter 5

# Role of Interpersonal Communication in Adoption of Elective Caesarean Section: A Study of Couples in Nairobi, Kenya

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### ABSTRACT

*This study focused on how interpersonal communication among married couples in urban areas promotes preference of elective caesarean section birth surgery. Elective c-section is the birth surgery requested by the mother for non-medical reasons before she goes into labour. Although it can save lives, elective c-section is often performed without medical need putting women and their babies at risk of short-and long-term health problems. C-section can cause significant and sometimes permanent complications, disability, or death, particularly in settings that lack the facilities and/or capacity to properly conduct safe surgery and treat surgical complications. However, in Kenya, despite the complications it may cause, more women are reported to undergo elective caesarean section birth surgery. The study found out that interpersonal communication was effective in influencing women to go for elective c-section more so among couples who share the belief that normal birth permanently changes experience of sexual intercourse among couples. The study adopted qualitative research approach.*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Wood (2010) defines interpersonal communication as a distinct type of interaction between people that is selective, systematic, unique, procesual transactions that allow people to reflect and build personal knowledge of one another and create shared meanings.

Interpersonal communication is central to our everyday lives. We count on others to comprehend what is happening in our lives and help us sort through problems and concerns. We communicate to develop identities, establish and build relationships, coordinate effort with others, have impact on issues that matter to us and work out problems and possibilities (Wood, 2010). Interpersonal communication has been identified as the most effective means of influencing individual behaviour or a small group of people because the message is delivered by a person who belongs to that particular group to who the message is constructed and content is harmonized with local culture, traditions, norms and values (Hanan, 2009). In addition, interpersonal communication is important because of the functions it achieves. Whenever we engage in communication with another person, we seek to gain information about them. We also inform through a variety of verbal and non-verbal cues (Ndeti, 2013).

Elective C-section is the birth surgery requested by the mother for non-medical reasons before she goes into labour (WHO, 2015). Over the last few years, governments and clinicians have expressed concern about the rise in the numbers of caesarean section births and the potential negative consequences for maternal and infant health (WHO, 2015). Despite the benefits of natural birth and the side effects of caesarean section, especially when not medically recommended, in Kenya the National Hospital Insurance Fund has noted that the number of women who are opting for caesarean section had increased and was nearly at par with women giving normal deliveries. Records show that 24,492 mothers covered by NHIF opted for C-section in the half of 2016, from 22,411 in a similar period a year earlier representing a 9 percent increase. C-section accounted for 61 percent of the NHIF maternity cost and more than a third of the women covered by the fund preferred elective C-section (Daily Nation, September, 18<sup>th</sup>, 2017). Therefore, the current trend of urban women preference for elective caesarean section than normal delivery forms the reason this study was conducted: to establish how interpersonal communication among married couples in Nairobi promotes preference for elective caesarean section birth surgeries. In order to aid our findings, the following research questions were asked: What are sources of information on caesarean section among married couples? Why do urban women prefer elective caesarean section birth surgery than normal delivery? Does communication between husband and wife influence the choice of child delivery method? What is the influence of health professionals on uptake of elective C-section by urban women?

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