



Economic and Demographic Drivers of Non-Marital Childbearing: The Interplay of Age and Income among Women in Mushin, Lagos State

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Abstract

Background: The rising prevalence of non-marital childbearing constitutes a significant demographic and socioeconomic challenge across sub-Saharan Africa, yet the phenomenon remains under-examined in the Nigerian context.

Objective: Anchored in Preference Theory which underscores the role of individual lifestyle preferences within socioeconomic contexts in shaping women's reproductive decisions; this study investigates the economic and demographic drivers of non-marital childbearing among women in Mushin Local Government Area (LGA) of Lagos State, with a specific focus on the interplay between age and income.

Methods: Adopting a qualitative research design, the study employed snowball and purposive sampling techniques to select 40 women currently residing in Mushin who had given birth outside of marriage. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and analysed using content analysis.

Results: Advancing age constitutes a primary demographic driver, as women approaching or fearing menopause frequently opted for non-marital childbearing to fulfil biological and social aspirations before their reproductive capacity declined. Income emerged as a pivotal economic determinant, operating through distinct pathways based on socioeconomic status: financially independent women leveraged their resources to pursue medically assisted reproduction (including in vitro fertilisation and surrogacy) outside of marriage, while economically disadvantaged women sometimes sought childbearing relationships with affluent men as a strategy for financial security.

Conclusion: The findings contribute to the growing literature on family formation in sub-Saharan Africa and carry implications for reproductive health policy, social welfare programming, and gender-responsive development planning in Nigeria.

Keywords: Non-Marital Childbearing; Age; Income; Demographic Determinants; Mushin; Nigeria

Introduction

The family, as the fundamental unit of social organisation, has undergone profound transformations globally, with one of the most striking demographic shifts being the rise in non-marital childbearing defined as births occurring outside the institution of marriage (Moore, 2000). In Western contexts, this shift has been extensively documented and is largely attributed to the decoupling of marriage and childbearing, the normalization of cohabitation, and widespread secularization (Ventura & Bachrach, 2001; Schnor & Jalovaara, 2020). However, this phenomenon remains underexplored in sub-Saharan Africa, particularly in Nigeria (Bongaarts & Casterline, 2013), where the social fabric differs significantly from the West. In Nigeria, non-marital fertility is intensified by rapid urbanisation, shifting gender norms, and persistent cultural expectations that inextricably link motherhood to female identity and social worth, irrespective of marital status (Caldwell, 1976; Egbemode, 2012). The traditional Nigerian society is profoundly pronatalist; a woman's transition to adulthood and her social validation are predominantly contingent upon her reproductive capabilities (Izugbara, 2014). Thus, the increase in non-marital births is not merely a demographic anomaly but a complex social negotiation between deeply ingrained cultural imperatives and evolving modern realities. Current statistics highlight the magnitude of this shift: approximately 1.6 million births occur annually among girls aged 10–19, with about 145 babies born per 1,000 adolescent girls aged 15–19 (Oluwatobi, 2019).

Despite these high prevalence rates, the socioeconomic drivers of non-marital childbearing in Nigeria remain inadequately theorised. Specifically, while age and income are recognised as critical determinants, their interplay has rarely been examined in an urban Nigerian context. Age introduces a unique biological imperative for women; the reproductive deadline of menopause often compels older, unmarried women to pursue childbearing to avoid the profound social stigma associated with childlessness (Nyarko & Potter, 2021; Sobotka & Beaujouan, 2014). In many Nigerian communities, childless women face severe social ostracization, psychological distress, and marginalization, making motherhood a crucial survival strategy for social inclusion (Uche, 2019). Furthermore, the delay in marriage often driven by prolonged educational pursuits or the quest for economic stability places many women in a precarious position where their biological windows are narrowing faster than their marital prospects (Mberu, 2018). Conversely, at the younger end of the reproductive spectrum, early sexual debut significantly elevates the probability of non-marital fertility (Clark et al., 2017). This early exposure is often compounded by inadequate access to comprehensive sexuality education and contraceptive resources, leading to unintended pregnancies that disrupt educational trajectories and perpetuate cycles of poverty (Sedgh et al., 2020).

Income presents a complex, bidirectional relationship with non-marital childbearing. For economically marginalised women, the financial and emotional prerequisites for marriage often exceed those for parenthood, paradoxically increasing the likelihood of unplanned non-marital births despite a reduced capacity to provide for the child (Gibson-Davis, 2009; Smock et al., 2005). The "marriageability bar" requiring substantial financial capital, bridewealth, and stable housing is often too high for economically disadvantaged couples, whereas the biological capacity for parenthood remains accessible (Edin & Kefalas, 2005). In some cases, lower-income women may also engage in transactional sexual relationships or become "baby mamas" for affluent men, viewing non-marital childbearing as an economic strategy or a pathway to financial security (Zulu & Musenge, 2021). In stark contrast, high income can facilitate deliberate non-marital childbearing, providing women with the financial autonomy to access assisted reproductive technologies (ART) such as in vitro fertilisation or surrogacy without a marital partner (Smock & Greenland, 2010). These affluent women often view marriage as an institution that imposes restrictive patriarchal roles, preferring instead to achieve motherhood independently while maintaining their professional and financial independence (Ola, 2022). Thus, non-marital childbearing can represent either a circumstantial outcome of economic disadvantage or a conscious lifestyle preference (Edin & Kefalas, 2005).

Situated within this complex landscape, this study investigates the economic and demographic drivers of non-marital childbearing among women in Mushin Local Government Area (LGA) of Lagos State, with a specific focus on the interplay between age and income as determinants of this practice. The study is guided by three objectives: (1) to investigate how age influences non-marital childbearing decisions among women in Mushin; (2) to examine the effect of income level on non-marital childbearing; and (3) to assess the interplay between age and income as jointly shaping non-marital reproductive decisions. Mushin LGA, characterised by its dense population and socioeconomic diversity, provides a highly productive urban context for this inquiry. As a microcosm of Lagos's broader urban dynamics, Mushin encapsulates the intersection of extreme poverty, a vibrant informal economy, and a growing class of financially independent women, making it an ideal site to observe how divergent economic realities shape reproductive outcomes (Adelekan, 2020). The study is anchored in Hakim's (2003) Preference Theory, which posits that women's reproductive choices reflect genuine lifestyle preferences shaped by the structural conditions and socioeconomic opportunities available to them. While originally developed in Western contexts, Preference Theory offers a valuable lens for the Nigerian setting, where women increasingly navigate between traditional pronatalist pressures and modern economic realities. By utilising this framework, the study aims to provide nuanced empirical insights into how agency and structural constraints intersect to drive non-marital fertility in Nigeria.

Materials and Methods

Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative research design appropriate to the exploratory nature of the research questions and the sensitive characteristics of the study population. Qualitative approaches are particularly well-suited to investigating complex social phenomena such as non-marital childbearing, as they permit the capture of rich, contextualised data that quantitative instruments cannot easily yield (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A cross-sectional, non-experimental design was employed, with data collected through face-to-face in-depth interviews (IDI) guided by a semi-structured interview instrument.

Study Location

The study was conducted in Mushin Local Government Area (LGA) of Lagos State, Nigeria. Mushin is located approximately 10 km north of Lagos city centre and constitutes one of the most densely populated local government areas in the state. With a population of over 633,000 at the 2006 Census, Mushin is characterised by predominantly low-to-middle-income residential populations, vibrant commercial activity, and diverse ethnic representation, with Yoruba-speaking residents predominating. The area's socioeconomic diversity and dense urban population make it a suitable research site for investigating the economic and demographic determinants of non-marital childbearing among urban Nigerian women.

Study Population and Sampling

The study population comprised unmarried women of various age groups residing in Mushin LGA who had given birth outside of marriage. Given the sensitive nature of the subject matter and the challenges associated with locating participants, two non-probability sampling techniques were employed: snowball sampling and purposive sampling. Snowball sampling was used because women practising non-marital childbearing were difficult to identify and were not spatially concentrated within the study area, necessitating a referral-based recruitment strategy in which initial participants referred the researcher to additional eligible women. Purposive sampling ensured that all participants met the study's eligibility criteria specifically, that they were currently residing in Mushin LGA and had given birth outside of formal marriage. A total of 40 respondents were recruited.

Data Collection

Data were collected through face-to-face in-depth interviews guided by a semi-structured interview instrument divided into two sections. Section A captured sociodemographic information, including age, marital status, educational qualification, ethnicity, religion, and occupation. Section B comprised open-ended interview questions organised around three thematic areas corresponding to the study's research objectives: the influence of age, the influence of income level, and the influence of male control on non-marital childbearing decisions. Interviews were audio-recorded with participants' informed consent and subsequently transcribed verbatim for analysis.

Data Analysis

The transcribed data were analysed using content analysis, a systematic method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns and themes within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Responses were organised thematically in alignment with the study's research objectives. Emergent themes and sub-themes were identified through iterative reading and coding of the transcripts, and representative direct quotations from participants were selected to illustrate and substantiate the identified themes.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to established principles of research ethics throughout. Participants were fully informed of the study's academic purpose and voluntarily consented to participation. No participants were coerced or offered material incentives to participate. The confidentiality of all personal information was maintained, and no identifying information is included in this report. Audio recordings were stored securely and accessed only by the researcher.

Results and Discussion

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Forty (40) women participated in the study; all residing in Mushin LGA and having given birth outside of formal marriage. The majority (57.5%, $n=23$) were between 31 and 40 years of age; 27.5% ($n=11$) were aged 41 years and above; and 15% ($n=6$) were between 21 and 30 years. In terms of educational attainment, 12.5% held primary school certificates, 42.5% possessed the Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE), 17.5% held National Certificate of Education (NCE) or Ordinary National Diploma (OND) qualifications, and 27.5% held B.Sc. or Higher National Diploma (HND) certificates. The majority of respondents were employed as traders, business owners, or entrepreneurs, reflecting the commercial character of the Mushin LGA economy (Table 1).

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents (N=40)

Characteristic	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age group	21–30 years	6	15.0
	31–40 years	23	57.5
	41 years and above	11	27.5
Education	Primary school certificate	5	12.5
	SSCE	17	42.5
	NCE/OND	7	17.5
	B.Sc./HND	11	27.5

Note: SSCE = Senior School Certificate Examination; NCE = National Certificate of Education; OND = Ordinary National Diploma; HND = Higher National Diploma.

Theme 1: The Influence of Age on Non-Marital Childbearing

Age emerged as a significant and multifaceted driver of non-marital childbearing among all respondent cohorts. The dominant narrative across age groups was the perception of biological urgency specifically, the fear that advancing age would eventually eliminate women's reproductive capacity through menopause prompting decisions to bear children outside of marriage before this threshold was reached.

A 45-year-old accountant articulated this perspective clearly:

"I believe that when a lady is reaching a certain age especially 30 years and above and they are not married, they start considering ways to give birth and at least have a companion. So yes, I believe age can affect women to practice giving birth outside marriage."

A 28-year-old administrative assistant elaborated on the medical dimensions of this concern:

"Health wise and due to some medical conditions, women are usually advised to give birth before they reach menopause, because when they get to that age, they stop producing eggs and their hormones reduce, therefore, pregnancy becomes difficult and almost impossible."

Respondents also articulated social dimensions of age-related reproductive pressure. A 42-year-old business owner observed:

"The only reason you see many women becoming second wives is because they are already old and want to settle down and give birth. We women are very jealous in nature, if we have any other choice, we won't go and marry someone that is already married."

This observation reflects the broader social stigma associated with childlessness in Nigerian society, where motherhood confers social recognition and status that childlessness withholds (Egbemode, 2012; Durojaye, 2015). The finding is consistent with Nyarko and Potter's (2021) documentation of a positive association between women's age and nonmarital fertility risk in sub-Saharan African contexts.

A consistent and theoretically significant finding was respondents' articulation of the gendered asymmetry in the age-fertility relationship: men retain reproductive capacity well into advanced age, while women face a biologically imposed deadline. A 28-year-old tailor stated plainly:

"For me, age will only affect women to give birth outside wedlock. Men can always decide to have a child at any point in their lives."

A 37-year-old accountant similarly observed:

"Women practice non-marital child bearing more because they are the ones that will carry the child unlike men, who will only impregnate the women."

This gendered dimension underscores the disproportionate reproductive pressure faced by women and its implications for non-marital childbearing decisions, aligning with Sobotka and Beaujouan's (2014) finding that women increasingly pursue parenthood independently of marital status as age advances.

A 33-year-old business owner added an important perspective on the physiological dimensions of age-related decision-making:

"To me, age can determine if a woman will give birth without marriage. As we all know that when women reach a certain age, their body might not be able to go through the wahala of pregnancy and child birth, so many of them prefer to give birth when they can before they get to menopause."

This framing positions non-marital childbearing as a rational, time-sensitive response to biological constraint, consistent with the preference theoretic explanation that lifestyle choices are shaped by the interaction of individual aspirations and the structural conditions, including biological ones, that constrain them (Hakim, 2003).

Theme 2: The Influence of Income on Non-Marital Childbearing

Income emerged as a pivotal economic determinant of non-marital childbearing, though its influence operated through distinct and sometimes opposing pathways among women of different economic positions. Among higher-income women, financial independence emerged as an enabling factor for deliberate, voluntary non-marital childbearing; particularly through expensive assisted reproductive technologies such as IVF, intrauterine insemination (IUI), and surrogacy.

A 45-year-old senior hair stylist explained the financial independence pathway clearly:

“When a lady is financially stable and on her own, she can decide not to get married before having a child, just because she can take care of the child on her own. Most of the time, ladies are forced to marry someone that they do not love just because the person has money to take care of her.”

This statement simultaneously identifies financial independence as a precondition for autonomous non-marital childbearing and implicitly indicts economic dependence as a driver of involuntary marriage. A 30-year-old business owner reinforced the economic dimensions of technologically mediated non-marital childbearing:

“Money can affect giving birth outside marriage because all these IVF, Surrogacy are very expensive and it is only those that can afford it that practice it. So yes, I believe that money is very important when we talk about intentionally giving birth outside marriage.”

A 30-year-old entrepreneur elaborated in vernacular terms:

“In my opinion, high income matters shar. Most of these people doing IVF, Na because say they get the money oh. If you no get the money, you won't think of it. That is why those that cannot afford to go through the IVF route just end up being a second wife to an older man.”

These observations illustrate how income differentiates the pathways through which non-marital childbearing is pursued, with higher-income women accessing biomedically sophisticated options and lower-income women navigating more constrained alternatives.

Among lower-income respondents, the income–non-marital childbearing relationship was more complex and reflected economic vulnerability as a driver of specific patterns of non-marital childbearing. A 31-year-old accountant described a pattern in which economic disadvantage could motivate women to seek childbearing relationships with wealthier partners:

“There are some women who are not financially stable and probably have an opportunity with a man that is rich, she might not care if she could just have a child with that man even if the relationship will not end up with marriage. That is where we have cases of baby mama where you see women getting pregnant for celebrities or important people. Because she believes that having the child with the rich man would result in her having some sort of benefits and money indirectly being given to her even if they end up not getting married.”

This account illustrates the 'baby mama' phenomenon documented by Durojaye (2015), in which non-marital childbearing becomes entangled with economic strategy and aspiration. A 43-year-old HR manager articulated the reciprocal relationship between income and childbearing decisions:

“As for me, I can't give birth to more children if there is no financial means because how will I take care of the child. The last thing I would ever do is beg for money from people to take care of my kids. So, marriage or not, money is something to consider when we talk about giving birth.”

A 27-year-old business owner was more emphatic:

“Money answereth all things. In this life, there is nothing money cannot do. Money get things done. I think if a lady decides to give birth irrespective of her age, she will give birth and take care of the child herself because she has the means.”

These accounts collectively affirm income as a necessary though not sufficient condition for non-marital childbearing, consistent with Gibson-Davis's (2009) financial expectations and family formation thesis. Importantly, some respondents identified unplanned pregnancy as the dominant income-independent pathway to non-marital childbearing among younger women. A 37-year-old trader observed:

“Most of the time, the girls that are young that get pregnant outside marriage, is not because of money but because it is most times a mistake. If they were given option, they might not have gotten pregnant and that is why we see many of them becoming single mothers and eventually not getting married.”

This observation points to the distinct dynamics of unplanned non-marital childbearing, consistent with Nyarko and Potter's (2021) finding that women from poor households with unmet need for family planning demonstrate higher nonmarital fertility risks.

The Interplay of Age and Income

The data revealed an important and theoretically productive interaction between age and income in shaping non-marital childbearing decisions. Among respondents, age-related biological urgency frequently combined with income considerations to produce distinct decision pathways. For financially independent older women, advancing age combined with economic resources to create conditions for deliberate, technologically mediated non-marital childbearing. For economically marginalised older women, the same biological urgency was channelled through different strategies including polygamous marriages entered reluctantly, baby daddy arrangements, or unplanned pregnancies. For younger women, income constraints were more likely to operate through limited access to contraception, producing unplanned non-marital childbearing rather than deliberate reproductive choice.

This differentiated pattern is consistent with Edin and Kefalas's (2005) observation that the meanings and contexts of non-marital childbearing differ substantially across income groups, even when the demographic outcome—a child born outside of marriage is identical. It also supports Smock and Greenland's (2010) argument that pathways to parenthood are increasingly diverse, with income shaping not merely whether non-marital childbearing occurs but how, when, and through what mechanisms it takes place. These distinct pathways align with the differential access to reproductive resources and autonomy observed across socioeconomic strata in urban Nigeria (Odimegwu & Zerai, 2013; Izugbara & Ezeh, 2010).

Table 2: Summary of Thematic Findings on Age and Income Drivers with Illustrative Quotations

Theme	Key Finding	Illustrative Quotation
Influence of Age	Biological urgency driven by approaching menopause propels women toward non-marital childbearing.	“Health wise ... women are usually advised to give birth before they reach menopause, because when they get to that age, they stop producing eggs ... pregnancy becomes difficult and almost impossible.” (28-year-old administrative assistant)
	Gendered asymmetry: women face a reproductive deadline that men do not.	“Men can always decide to have a child at any point in their lives.” (28-year-old tailor)
Influence of Income	High income enables intentional non-marital childbearing through ART (IVF, surrogacy).	“All these IVF, Surrogacy are very expensive and it is only those that can afford it that practice it.” (30-year-old business owner)

Interplay of Age and Income	Low income may encourage “baby mama” relationships with wealthy men for financial security.	“There are some women who are not financially stable ... she might not care if she could just have a child with that man ... That is where we have cases of baby mama.” (31-year-old accountant)
	Older financially independent women use ART; older poor women enter polygyny; younger poor women experience unplanned pregnancies.	“If you no get the money, you won't think of it. That is why those that cannot afford to go through the IVF route just end up being a second wife to an older man.” (30-year-old entrepreneur)

Discussion

The findings of this study illuminate the intricate ways in which age and income function as economic and demographic drivers of non-marital childbearing among women in Mushin, Lagos State. The data demonstrate that advancing age operates as a primary demographic driver through the mechanism of biological urgency, while income acts as a pivotal economic determinant that shapes the pathways and intentionality of non-marital reproduction. Critically, the interaction between these two factors produces socially differentiated reproductive strategies, reinforcing the central premise of Preference Theory that individual choices are enacted within structural constraints and opportunities (Hakim, 2003).

The salience of age-related biological urgency in driving non-marital childbearing aligns closely with established demographic research. Sobotka and Beaujouan (2014) posited that most individuals seek parenthood regardless of marital status, particularly when age becomes a pressing consideration. The present study extends this finding to the Nigerian context, revealing that women across educational and occupational strata perceive menopause as a definitive reproductive deadline that must be pre-empted. This perception is deeply gendered: as several respondents noted, men remain reproductively capable into old age, while women's capacity is time-limited. The gendered asymmetry in reproductive timelines thus constitutes an under-examined structural driver of non-marital fertility, particularly in societies where marriage is culturally normative but increasingly delayed for socioeconomic reasons (Nyarko & Potter, 2021). The qualitative evidence gathered here suggests that for many women, the imperative to achieve motherhood overrides the imperative to do so within marriage, a dynamic that Bledsoe (2002) conceptualised as the management of “contingent lives” in West African reproductive culture.

Income emerged as a critical mediator of how women navigate the age-fertility bind. Consistent with Smock and Greenland's (2010) argument about the diversification of pathways to parenthood, higher-income women in this study described deliberate strategies involving expensive assisted reproductive technologies such as IVF and surrogacy. These women exemplify Hakim's (2003) adaptive preference profile individuals who value motherhood but are willing to pursue it without a marital partner when economic resources permit. For these women, non-marital childbearing is less a departure from traditional norms than a reprioritisation of motherhood over marriage within a context of financial autonomy. This finding corroborates the global trend wherein economic independence for women expands the range of acceptable family forms (Trimarchi & Van Bavel, 2018).

In contrast, lower-income women faced more constrained choices. Some described entering transactional or “baby mama” arrangements with wealthier men as a strategy for financial security, a phenomenon previously documented in Nigerian urban settings (Durojaye, 2015). Others experienced

unintended pregnancies due to limited access to contraception, echoing Nyarko and Potter's (2021) finding that economic marginalisation correlates with higher rates of unplanned non-marital childbearing. These diverging experiences underscore the socioeconomic stratification of reproductive choice: high income expands the autonomy with which women can enact their preferences, while low income channels reproductive decisions through pathways of economic vulnerability and contraceptive marginalisation (Edin & Kefalas, 2005).

The interplay of age and income further refines this picture. Older women with financial means actively managed their reproductive timelines through ART, converting economic capital into reproductive agency. Older women without such resources frequently regarded polygamous marriage as a pragmatic last resort an option that satisfied both the cultural mandate for motherhood and the practical need for some measure of economic support. Younger women, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, were more likely to experience early, unplanned pregnancies that propelled them into single motherhood, a pattern consistent with the broader literature on adolescent fertility in sub-Saharan Africa (Clark et al., 2017; Garenne & Joseph, 2002). These findings collectively illustrate that while biological age creates a common pressure toward non-marital childbearing for all women, income differentially structures the agency, technology, and social support through which that pressure is resolved.

Preference Theory provides a robust interpretive framework for these patterns. The theory's emphasis on the interaction between individual lifestyle preferences and the enabling or constraining socioeconomic context (Hakim, 2003) captures the dual reality observed in this study: women's desires for motherhood are shaped by cultural scripts and biological clocks, but their ability to realise these desires on their own terms depends critically on economic resources. Financially independent women could enact work-centred or adaptive preferences by commissioning ART; economically marginalised women, by contrast, found their preferences constrained into more traditional (polygyny) or less planned (unintended pregnancy) pathways. The theory thus helps to explain why identical demographic outcomes children born outside marriage emerge from profoundly different constellations of preference, agency, and constraint.

The implications of these findings extend beyond academic theorising. The study highlights the need for policies that address both the demographic and economic dimensions of non-marital childbearing. Reproductive health programmes must acknowledge the powerful influence of menopause-related anxieties on women's childbearing decisions and provide comprehensive fertility education that includes information about age-related fertility decline. At the same time, the economic stratification of reproductive pathways whereby wealthy women access costly ART while poorer women face elevated risks of unintended pregnancy calls for broad-based interventions. These could include subsidised family planning services for adolescents and low-income women, expanded access to affordable assisted reproduction for those who desire it, and social protection measures that support single mothers and their children irrespective of the circumstances of their birth.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has demonstrated that age and income constitute significant, interrelated, and socially differentiated economic and demographic drivers of non-marital childbearing among women in Mushin, Lagos State. Age-related biological urgency, shaped by the gendered asymmetry of reproductive capacity, propels women toward non-marital childbearing as a strategy for fulfilling maternal aspirations before reproductive capacity declines. Income shapes the pathways through which non-marital childbearing occurs, with financially independent women accessing technologically mediated reproduction, lower-income women navigating more economically constrained reproductive strategies, and younger economically marginalised women experiencing higher rates of unplanned non-marital childbearing.

These findings carry several important implications for policy and practice. First, government-funded reproductive health education programmes should address the biological dimensions of age-related fertility decline, equipping women of all socioeconomic backgrounds with accurate information about their reproductive options and timelines. Second, subsidised access to assisted reproductive technologies should be considered for women of lower income who wish to pursue medically assisted conception but cannot afford market prices, thereby reducing the income-based stratification of reproductive pathways. Third, comprehensive social protection policies should be formulated to support single mothers and their children, recognising that the diverse economic realities underpinning non-marital childbearing demand differentiated policy responses rather than uniform approaches.

Further research is recommended, including longitudinal investigations of the income–fertility nexus in Nigerian urban contexts, studies examining the long-term welfare outcomes for women and children across different income-based pathways to non-marital childbearing, and policy evaluations of existing reproductive health and social protection programmes in their effectiveness at addressing the needs of non-marital mothers across income groups.

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